

AIR

SECRET

Tactical file

223.4

Chief, SE
Attn: []
Senior Representative, []

INFO: Chief, KUGOWN, []
Attn: []

OBOPUS/PSYCH

Local Reaction to Apprehension of Zejnel Shehu Group

REF: [] 30 December 1953

1. Attached herewith is an open letter to the members of the Legalitet party at Lavrion. The letter was written by Faik Bukmiri and he advises his countrymen of the Tirana broadcast on the capture of the Zejnel Shehu group and the capture of Hamit Matiani. Bukmiri expresses bitter sorrow, commends the valor of the captured and killed men and advises his compatriots to remain calm but determined.
2. The local press published the Tirana broadcast but expressed doubt as to its accuracy. No editorial comments were made in any of the local papers.
3. The general feeling among the operational teams spending the winter in the Athens area was one of distress and sorrow over the loss of Matiani, whom all of them knew and most of them had worked with. They consider Matiani a hero and believe that he must have been drugged or so surprised that he could neither fight nor take his own life and therefore was captured. The team members are even more resentful of Communism now and feel that Matiani's capture must be revenged. They indicated that this whole incident had given them even more motivation for activity against the regime. However, they did hint that Albanians who are not members of teams would be more cautious when considering recruitment for operational teams.
4. HITGRUBBY members have reported the shock that this incident had on the local Albanians. They also indicated that this incident would make recruiting much more difficult.

Attachment herewith
Bukmiri letter

15 January 1954

RMW/WFH/lgk

Distribution:

- 3 - Washington, w/attachment as noted
- 2 - [] , w/attachment as noted
- 1 - Chrono, w/attachment
- 1 - Subject, w/attachment
- 1 - XO, w/attachment
- 2 - OBOPUS, w/attachment

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SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2D
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

SECRET

Attachment to

JAN 18 1954

SECRET

Athens, 31 December 1953

Dear Brothers,

The following is to inform all of you concerning the capture and deaths of some of our brothers in Albania. I have just learned of this bitter news, and perhaps some of you also are aware of it.

I am notifying you of the declaration made by Radio Tirana (which completes this year's broadcasts tonight) many of our comrades have been killed or captured by the Sigurimi forces of Mehmet Shehu. In our sorrow over the dead I wish to inform you that among them are Nuri Flaka and Zemin Gjonlana.

Unbelievable, but included in the list of captured is Hamit Matiani. Naturally Radio Tirana, Albanian Communist newspapers and all blind instruments of Moscow in Albania accuse our brothers of being traitors to the homeland and foreign hirelings. You all know as well as I that our captured or dead brothers are not traitors, all of these people were patriots, who risked danger, and as true soldiers gave their lives performing duties for the liberation of their brothers and sisters who are suffering from the heavy Russian boot.

I am sure that close and noteworthy friends as well as I, are extremely grieved because of this bitter news. But let us not forget the day we all swore that we would fight tyranny in spite of losses and sacrifices. The loss of our brothers is evidence of the battle taking place for the liberation of our fatherland. From those unfortunate ones who were captured alive we are commanded to be patient, cold-blooded, and sworn and bound to continue the struggle and war for freedom until we have extricated our country from the red yoke.

I take this opportunity as the political representative of the Legalitet movement, to request all members of this organization to fully understand that the sacrifices made by our brothers behooves us to be calm and decisive. I urge all the friends and comrades-in-arms of Hamit Matiani to have faith in God and not to lose courage and hope. I assure everyone that no-one feels more sorrow over the fate of Hamit than I do.

With this letter I hereby urge Hamit's nephew "Kadri Sinen" to be calm and patient with Hamit's friends. God willing, at the close of this year 1953, that the year 1954 will bring us and our brothers our freedom and desires. We know that freedom can not be won without sacrifices. Heroes do not die, since their memory lives on. With sturdy hearts, we shout Long Live Albania and the Albanian People. For these people we are ready to make any sacrifice including our lives.

Faik Bukmiri

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