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NIE-42: The Current Situation in Albania, with Particular Reference to Greek, Yugoslav and Italian Interests and Pretensions

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The Current Situation in Albania

The Stability of the Regime and Extent of Soviet Control

Prior to the Cominform-Yugoslav rift in June 1948, Albania had been closely tied, both politically and economically, to Yugoslavia. Rather than follow Marshal Tito's heresy, however, Hoxha chose the Moscow camp and launched a vigorous campaign for the elimination of "nationalist" elements in Albania. This campaign was initiated by Hoxha's chief lieutenant, Koci Xoxe, and culminated in the latter's own arrest, conviction, and execution. Hoxha not only skillfully extricated Albania from its ties with Yugoslavia, emphasizing his loyalty to Moscow, but also removed his leading rival. Xoxe was replaced by the present Minister of Interior, Lt. Gen. Mehmet Shehu^U, and although there are reports of rivalry between Shehu^U and Hoxha, the latter apparently enjoys the favor of the Kremlin, and Shehu^U, Moscow-trained but undistinguished as a politician, appears to have little chance of supplanting Hoxha.

Moscow, for its part, has recognized the importance of Albania as a pro-Stalinist outpost in the Mediterranean area, and following the Tito-Cominform rift, increased its aid and support to the Hoxha Government, replacing the support formerly received from Yugoslavia.

Albania is dependent upon Soviet economic support to the extent that, without it, the country's economy would collapse within a few months. In addition to the control with which this situation provides the USSR, an estimated 1,000 Soviet military and civilian "experts" hold

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... cooperation among the various groups despite their common desire to rid Albania of Communist control.

of the Mountains," "Liberty," "Skanderbeg," and "Bashkimi i Kombit,"

"call"

but specific information regarding these groups is lacking.

active in resistance movements

Of the Albanian emigre movements, the Committee for a Free Albania, an affiliate of the National Committee for a Free Europe, with operational headquarters in Rome, is probably the most influential with resistance groups within Albania. The Committee's activities within Albania have, *(to propaganda work and some subversive activity by agents)* of necessity been limited, and its most effective operation thus far has been the dropping of propaganda leaflets over Albania. The leaflets caused considerable excitement within the country, prompting a note of protest to the Italian government, and encouraged numerous Albanians to ~~leave~~ flee Albania with the hope of joining the Committee in its struggle against the Hoxha regime. Three groups make up the Committee: (1) the National Agrarian Democratic Party Balli Kombetar headed by Hasan Dosti, (2) the Legality Party (pro-King Zog) headed by Abos Kupa, and (3) the League of Peasants and Villagers headed by Said Kryeziu. The first, Balli Kombetar, has the strongest following in southern Albania, the second, the Legality Party, in central and northern Albania, and the third, the League of Peasants and Villagers, has its strongest following in the extreme north and in the neighboring Yugoslav provinces inhabited largely by Albanians.

In addition to the Committee for a free Albania, there is in Italy a party known as Biloku Kombetar Independent made up of pro-Italian Albanians. This group cooperated with Italy before and during the war and it allegedly enjoys the full support of the present Italian government,

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Of particular current interest is the recently created League of Albanian Political Refugees in Yugoslavia claiming to represent some 50,000 Albanian refugees. The League is composed largely of Albanian Communists who fled Albania since 1948, and, despite its proclaimed objective of "an independent, free, indivisible democratic and republic" Albania, was actually created by Belgrade as an instrument of Yugoslav policy. While the League has ~~already engaged in some subversive activity and propaganda work,~~ ^{and obviously possesses a considerable potential.} Yugoslavia's own exposed position has probably deterred Tito from yet using the League to the full.

In Greece, most of the Albanian refugees are from southern Albania (Northern Epirus), which Greece claims, and their activities are aimed at eventual Greek annexation of that area. Their efforts have, therefore, been largely in the field of espionage, propaganda and encouragement of additional refugees.

Thus, in addition to the local resistance groups, there are operating within Albania, agents of these four major refugee organizations: The Committee for a Free Albania and the pro-Italian, Greek, and Yugoslav organizations. Their activities are unrelated and their objectives frequently ~~in~~ conflict. These factors, plus the lack of coordination among the local groups, has considerably simplified the task of the Albanian security forces in isolating and destroying individual groups.

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-5-

Under present circumstances, resistance activity constitutes a constant problem of harassment to the Hoxha regime. It is not, however, on such a scale as to present an immediate threat to the regime. As long as the resistance effort is diffused and does not receive substantial external aid, the Albanian security forces will probably succeed in containing the problem.

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Next 3 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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