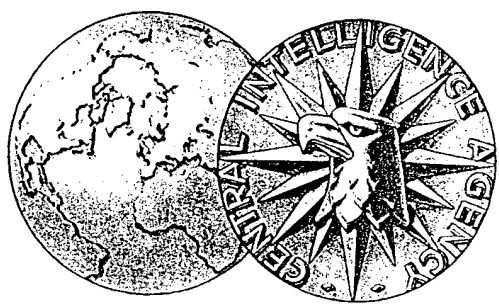


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COPY NO. 136
FOR THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
FOR REPORTS AND ESTIMATES

CURRENT SITUATION IN ALBANIA

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL



ORE 71-49

Published 15 December 1949

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Document No. 001
NO CHANGE in Class.
 DECLASSIFIED
Class. CHANGED TO: TS S C
DDA Memo, 4 Apr 77
Auth: DDA REG. 77/1763
Date: 23-1-78 by: 024

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CURRENT SITUATION IN ALBANIA

SUMMARY

The present isolation and weakness of the pro-Soviet Albanian regime are important factors contributing to its basic instability. However, neither Yugoslavia nor Greece, whose extensive support would facilitate the overthrow of the unpopular Hoxha regime, is likely to furnish such overt support under present circumstances. Meanwhile, Soviet policy in Albania apparently entails (1) maintaining the pro-Soviet government in power and (2) using Albania in support of peripheral pressure against Tito.

The Albanian Government, under close Soviet supervision, has greatly strengthened its internal control mechanism. Repeated purges of dissident elements in both the government and Communist Party have occurred until only pro-Soviet stalwarts remain in any positions of importance. Overt opposition against the regime exists in the country, but as yet it is largely uncoordinated and its effectiveness is an unknown quantity. Albanian exile groups must overcome their mutual jealousies before they can exert any significant pressure against the Communist regime.

The USSR is supporting only those sectors of the impoverished and primitive Albanian economy necessary for carrying out its policy.

Thus, although a large part of the population exists on a semi-starvation level, the USSR has been stockpiling sizable quantities of grain in the country. The USSR must sustain the economic liability which Albania represents because of its political and strategic importance.

A combination of factors makes any overthrow of the pro-Soviet Albanian regime unlikely this winter. Tito, though capable of ousting the Moscow-controlled government, is wary of making such a move because of possible Soviet reaction. Pressure from the Western Powers will probably serve to dissuade Greece from any military action against Albania. On the other hand the pro-Soviet Communists directing the Albanian regime, with the active support and assistance of the USSR, seem able to avert any likelihood of a successful internal revolt in the near future. With little other basis for support the Albanian Stalinists are necessarily dependent on the USSR for maintaining their power. In addition, their loyalty to the USSR is under constant surveillance by an estimated 1,000 Soviet "advisory" personnel attached to key positions throughout the Albanian Government and Communist Party.

Note: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force have concurred in this report. It is based on information available to CIA as of 23 November 1949.

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CURRENT SITUATION IN ALBANIA

1. International Significance of Albania:

Albania, although a small and impoverished country, has assumed unusual importance because of its strategic location in an area of shifting power relations. The Yugoslav break with the Soviet Union has served to isolate the pro-Soviet Albanian regime from its Cominform support and surround it with unfriendly neighbors desirous of its overthrow. Tito's Yugoslavia, hemming in Albania from the north and east, is grooming the Albanian Kossovian minority, as well as Albanian refugees, for use against the Cominform-backed Albanian regime. In Greece, on Albania's other flank, strong public sentiment exists for eliminating Albania as a base for further anti-Greek guerrilla operations.

The isolation and weakness of Albania have augmented the difficulty of its use by the Kremlin as a base against either Greece or Yugoslavia. The same factors have also served to increase the danger of retaliatory action from either of Albania's neighbors. However, neither Yugoslavia nor Greece is prepared to undertake at the present time the action required for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime. Although Tito has the capability of successfully staging an anti-Hoxha coup within Albania, he is apparently fearful of Soviet reaction. On the other hand, although there is widespread sentiment in Greece for terminating Albania's role as the principal guerrilla base, any Greek violation of Albanian territory would serve to raise the threat of major hostilities. Greece, unlike Yugoslavia, has no sizable Albanian minority which it can exploit, many groups in Albania being opposed to Greek claims on northern Epirus. Moreover, Greece would hesitate to impair the past support, by the Western Powers and the UN, of its stand against the Kremlin-supported guerrillas by taking any overt action against Albania.

The Soviet Union will attempt to maintain its grip on Albania, because Soviet prestige, as well as a desire to have a naval base on the

Adriatic, is involved in preserving the Hoxha regime. Albania is also useful as a flanking area for supporting Soviet pressure against Tito. With Albania under continued Soviet control, the Kremlin can always return to a policy of intensified activity against Greece. In the meantime, the USSR may pursue an Albanian policy of (1) maintaining the pro-Soviet Hoxha regime in power and (2) using Albania in support of peripheral anti-Tito pressure. The fact that the USSR has neither concluded a Mutual Assistance Treaty with Albania nor admitted the latter to the Cominform may indicate that the USSR desires to maintain a certain flexibility of action with respect to its isolated satellite.

2. Internal Political Situation.

a. *The Tightening of Party Controls.*

The concerted efforts of Premier Enver Hoxha to carry out Soviet policy in Albania are proving to be difficult, even though the Cominform Communists are apparently in full control of the governmental organization and the security system. The vast majority, perhaps as much as 90 percent, of the Albanian people have consistently opposed the Communist group which seized power after the Germans were driven out of the country in the fall of 1944. Since then the Albanian people have been undergoing an increasingly oppressive process of communization. Like its pre-Communist predecessor, the Hoxha regime in the backward country has been dependent on a stronger neighbor for support. For a Communist regime in Albania it was natural to turn to Tito's Yugoslavia for such support. Under Tito's patronage, the Albanian Communist regime managed with moderate success in a country which has always had a low standard of living.

After the break with Tito, and attributable at least in part to a severance of Yugoslav supplies, the living standard declined further, making the population increasingly dissatisfied and restless. Additional factors which

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probably have tended to increase the unrest among the Albanian people within the past year have been (1) Tito's efforts to undermine the Hoxha regime in place of his former close support of it; (2) evidence of a weakening of the Communist Party by nationalism; and (3) strong Greek pressure against the Hoxha regime for its support of the guerrilla movement. The Hoxha government has accordingly found it necessary to strengthen its grip on the people by tightening police controls, increasing restrictions on the activities of everyday life, and generally terrorizing the population.

The behind-the-scenes struggle for control of the Albanian Communist Party between Premier Hoxha and Minister of the Interior Xoxe, which had been brewing since the Communists took over the government in 1944, broke out into the open in September 1948. The Kremlin allowed Premier Hoxha to remain as titular head of the government, while Xoxe and his immediate followers were first dismissed from the government and later arrested. Xoxe's trial in May 1949 allegedly exposed his plot to purge Hoxha's followers and make Albania a Yugoslav colony. According to the prosecution's "evidence," Xoxe had replaced top Communists in the government with anti-Soviet and pro-Tito nationalists. Xoxe was finally executed in June 1949 and his immediate followers were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment and to loss of civil rights. The Soviet Union has followed up the Xoxe affair with a thorough and ruthless purge of the entire Albanian Government until few, if any, of the Xoxe appointees remain. The replacements are young, pro-Soviet militants lacking administrative experience. The purges indicated, first, that the Kremlin was determined to maintain in power only a completely subservient Albanian regime and, second, that in the internal party struggle Hoxha triumphed by adhering to Moscow's change of policy toward Yugoslavia while capitalizing on his rival's alleged nationalism. The Xoxe trial served as an important part of the Kremlin's campaign against anti-Soviet nationalism. Staged in the isolated satellite bordering a defiant Yugoslavia, the trial of Albania's second-

ranking Communist seems to have had the dual purpose of (1) emphasizing the effectiveness of Soviet controls in Albania and (2) dramatizing to the Yugoslav Communists the procedure to follow in purging Tito.

After Xoxe's downfall, the return to power of several members of the government, apparently in temporary eclipse, further indicated a strengthening of Kremlin control in Albania. Ardent pro-Muscovite Major General Bedri Spahiu conducted the trial against Xoxe. Xoxe's ideological leadership of the Communist Party has been assumed by Lt. Gen. Mehmet Shehu. Shehu, who attended the Voroshilov Military Academy during 1945-46, was, reportedly on direct Kremlin orders, made Minister of Interior following Xoxe's dismissal. He was elevated to Lieutenant General in July 1949. Other loyal pro-Moscow personalities in the Albanian Government have had their military ranks raised consistent with the Soviet policy of rewarding undeviating loyalty. Hoxha's recent pessimistic view of his own future, reported to a Western observer, may be an acknowledgment that even tighter Moscow control is being developed with his own purge awaiting only a slight misstep.

b. Factors Tending Toward Instability.

Any government would have difficulty in molding a stable nation from the diverse groups making up the Albanian people. Lacking a common culture, religion, or political objective, they have been subjected to various external influence. Although ex-King Zog did a great deal to eradicate the tribal idea of justice as well as its practice, intertribal feuds and jealousies still exist, augmenting the present political unrest. The Hoxha regime must also contend with the firmly rooted suspicion and hatred of an oppressed population for traditionally corrupt and cruel rulers. The Albanian mountaineer knows little of ideology or politics, but he understands the enforced collection of his produce.

An additional factor contributing to the instability of the Albanian Government is its isolation from the Soviet orbit, on which it is now entirely dependent. Albania's immediate neighbors are on anything but friendly rela-

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tions with the Hoxha regime, although Italy has established diplomatic relations with that country. On the other hand, Albania has always had to depend on outside assistance to maintain a viable economy. With Yugoslav support no longer existent, the Hoxha regime must depend on Cominform support by either a roundabout sea route which could offer no emergency aid, or on air connections which Yugoslavia is momentarily capable of severing. Soviet attempts to overfly Greece with Albanian aid would undoubtedly meet with resistance as well.

The rugged Albanian terrain also adds to the control problems of any Albanian regime. The Albanian mountaineers have traditionally opposed any central authority. The Albanian mountains which extend over a large part of the country are, like those in northern Greece, ideal for guerrilla operations. Covering most of the Albanian borders of Yugoslavia and Greece, the mountainous regions facilitate clandestine operations.

Although religious differences currently seem to have little importance in Albania, these divisions make up a potential factor which might sway loyalties, should the Albanian situation really become unstable. Approximately ten percent of the population living in north and central Albania is Roman Catholic, intensely opposed to Communism, and might have some pro-Italian sentiment. Another twenty percent of the Greek Orthodox faith is influenced culturally, but not politically, by Greece. The remaining seventy percent are Moslems with a traditional fear of Slav oppression. The Communists, in demanding loyalty from the largest segment of the population, have found it almost impossible to eradicate the Moslem clan system with its deeply rooted tribal traditions which are antagonistic toward any centralized control. Yet the individual Moslem has proved willing to collaborate with the regime for reasons of expediency.

During the inter-war regime of ex-King Zog, the government had some success in "Albanizing" the youth of the Orthodox Greek population by allowing only Albanian language schools. From this element has arisen a substantial number of the present Communist

leaders in Tirana. The Communist government, meanwhile, has embarked on a campaign of currying favor among the more progressive Greek-speaking population in southern Albania by establishing Greek language schools.

It is estimated that, currently, there are approximately 5,000 reliable members in the Communist Party of Albania, although a report at the party congress in November 1948 claimed 29,000 members and 16,000 alternates, giving a total of 45,000 members or 3.9 percent of the population. The party's leaders have admitted during the past year the opportunistic and unreliable character of its membership. Popular support of the Communist regime is probably limited to less than ten percent of the 1,193,000 population.

c. Strength of the Resistance Groups.

No large-scale organized resistance against the Communist regime is known to exist within Albania. Although sporadic resistance activity against the government is widespread, it is as yet unorganized and ineffective, apparently being held in check by the intensified activity of loyal security units. The strongest anti-government activity is reported from the northern mountainous areas adjacent to Yugoslavia, less from the Greek border regions, and weakest in the central areas of the country. Accusations of the Albanian Government indicate that the Hoxha regime mainly fears an internal revolt with large-scale backing from its unfriendly neighbors.

Albanian anti-Communist groups in Egypt, Greece, Italy, and the United States have only recently succeeded in sufficiently subordinating mutual jealousies to form a "Committee for Free Albania." Active anti-Communist elements among the emigres consist of the Balli Kombetar, a nationalist group made up of the remnants of those who opposed the merger of the Nationalist and Partisan (Communist-backed) resistance movements during World War II, and ex-King Zog's entourage who form the "Legaliteti" party campaigning for the restoration of the monarchy. Unrepresented on the committee is the Independent Nationalist Party (BKI) whose influence is allegedly greatest among the Catholic tribes

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of northern Albania. Few of the exile groups, however, seem to be in close touch with, or representative of, the sentiments of the Albanian people.

Friction within the various emigre groups, arising from conflicting selfish aims, has served to hinder the development among them of an Albanian anti-Communist political front. The issue of supporting ex-King Zog, around whom centered the difficulties accompanying former attempts to activate an effective exile resistance movement, has assumed minor importance when compared to disagreement between the BKI and the BK stemming from their wartime enmity. Although Zog as the most prominent exile is not popular among most Albanians, who cannot forget his encouragement of Italian domination during the 1930's, a restoration of the monarchy would probably be accepted by many Albanians as preferable to oppressive Communist rule. However, the Albanian exile groups represent widely divergent interests difficult to reconcile. The settlement of differences among the exiled Albanians to provide leadership and a coordination of effort is a prerequisite for any effective Albanian resistance against the Hoxha government. Not even this turn of affairs, however, would insure the achievement of any successful resistance without material aid from an outside power. This combination of factors necessary for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime is, as yet, lacking.

3. Economic Situation.

In recent months, the Albanian people have sustained a decline in the living standard. Despite sizable stockpiles of grain, shipped largely from the USSR, the government has not taken measures to relieve the present general food shortage. It is possible that stockpiling is designed for future military or political ends.

Albania's basic deficiency in raw materials has prevented it from establishing even the essentials for industrial growth. Its embryonic industry cannot now, or in the foreseeable future, develop sufficiently to establish trade ties with the West. Albanian crude petroleum is known to be of low quality though

marketable, while agricultural exports do not lend themselves to large-scale trading.

There is little likelihood presently of dislodging Soviet economic influence in Albania. Any aid offered for the purpose of diverting the country to the West could be only in the form of food and consumer goods. Aid in the form of light industrial equipment would have little effect.

Soviet economic influence in Albania is paramount. The current two-year Plan was first cleared in Moscow before it was promulgated by the Tirana government. The Plan is designed not so much for the general economic benefit of Albania as it is to increase production in some categories to strengthen the state and to align it more closely with the USSR. The Soviet Union has already requisitioned the country's chrome ore output, and is siphoning off production of petroleum and some agricultural products. Exports to the USSR, however, are small in comparison with imports from the Soviet orbit to keep the Hoxha regime in power.

Although Albania's transportation system, such as it is, will gain by the greater orbit interest recently displayed, it is likely that transportation facilities may have more military than economic value.

Albania's economic position is such that any expansion in foreign trade will be very small. Current foreign trade is almost exclusively with the USSR and the Soviet orbit.

a. Standard of Living.

The standard of living in Albania is the lowest of any European country. The food supply of a large part of the population has been cut since the summer of 1948 so that the present rations are below those of the prewar period. The January 1949 ration regulations provide that only state employees shall receive ration cards, which means that a part of the non-farm population, consisting of artisans, merchants, and the like, is at a disadvantage in the distribution of food. Farmers and private merchants receive ration points only in proportion to the amount of goods which they release to the State enterprises.

b. Agricultural Production.

Average yearly prewar production of all grains was 193,000 metric tons with average

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imports of 11,000 metric tons annually. In 1948 production of all grains reached a record total of 238,000 metric tons. Imports of grain since July 1948 have been about 75,000 metric tons (about 60,000 metric tons from USSR, and the remainder from Bulgaria and Rumania), or a total supply of 313,000 tons. Based on prewar rates of consumption, the present annual requirements would be about 223,000 metric tons. This would leave a surplus of some 90,000 tons, of which 7,000 tons probably would be required to meet the annual cereal needs of the Greek guerrillas either already in Albania, or supplied from that country. On the basis of the above information, it would probably be safe to assume that there are in the country 83,000 tons of cereal stocks left from the 1948 harvest and imports. Meanwhile, crop prospects for 1949 are good. Thus there is a sizable grain reserve which can be used for possible military or political purposes.

The land reform instituted by the present regime has redistributed the land and limited the size of the holdings to five hectares. This has caused the peasants to attempt to hoard their products with a consequent decrease in the quantity of agricultural goods available for off-farm sale. The government probably intends eventually to overcome this problem through collectivization. Thus far, however, progress in this direction has been relatively slow probably owing to the antagonism which would be aroused among the peasants.

Lack of necessary materials as well as manufacturing facilities for processing fibers and leather account for the fact that clothing and shoes are very short in supply and extremely costly.

c. Two-Year Plan.

A two-year plan (1949-1950) adopted by Albania in June 1949, after approval by the Soviet Union, calls for sharp increases over 1948 in the industrial and agricultural development of the country. Preliminary official announcements envisage high goals for 1950 production levels, which are unrealistic. The financial implementation of the plan will undoubtedly depend on assistance from the Soviet Union and the orbit countries acting together through the Council of Economic Mu-

tual Assistance, to which Albania was admitted in February 1949.

Even though Albanian economy may eventually expand as a result of aid from the Council of Economic Mutual Assistance, this may not be to Albania's advantage, for a significant part of its production will probably in the long run be siphoned off to the USSR and the satellites. In prewar years, about eighty percent of Albania's exports consisted of agricultural produce and petroleum.

d. Manpower.

It is reported that the number of Albanian non-agricultural workers has increased to 80,000, while the total agricultural labor force may have risen to nearly 300,000. Large numbers of those who might otherwise be idle have been employed on public projects, such as roads, canals, and bridges. About 15,000 youths are expected to work on various projects this year. In addition to these youth brigades, members of the political opposition, idlers, and other persons are included among those on the forced labor projects which were openly introduced in August 1947. In early 1948, an order was issued requiring the employment of all able-bodied citizens between the ages of 16 and 50.

e. Transportation.

The impoverished economic condition of Albania is reflected in its primitive transport system. Although railroad construction has been emphasized during the postwar period, first with Yugoslav and more recently with Soviet help, there are only 48 miles in operation, including the Durazzo-Peqin and the Durazzo-Tirana lines. The road system has been increased by 20 miles since the 1930's, with a current total of 1,400 miles. It includes 450 miles of asphalt-surfaced roads. The inventory of trucks has decreased considerably and is woefully inadequate even for impoverished Albania.

The merchant fleet is limited to a number of small sailing vessels and a few coastal vessels of under 1,000 gross tons. Attempts have been made recently to increase this modest inventory by purchase of two 500-ton vessels from Italy. Maritime commerce, except for some short hauls to Adriatic ports, is largely

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borne by foreign bottoms, predominantly Soviet and satellite.

The expansion of the transport system, however, has not been halted by the Tito-Cominform rift. Yugoslav engineers who were supervising railroad construction have been replaced by Soviet specialists, and Soviet deliveries of railroad and motor transport equipment have exceeded quantities previously shipped by Yugoslavia. Moreover, Rumania, Hungary, and Poland have contracted to supply railway equipment. It appears that the transportation system will gain by the greater orbit assistance which has been furnished to Albania since the Tito break with the Kremlin.

That Albania has been isolated from the Soviet orbit by the Tito rift is true in a partial sense only. Commerce with Eastern as well as Western Europe, even with Yugoslavia, has always been largely maritime, and maritime communications with the Soviet orbit have not been interrupted.

f. Foreign Trade.

In the postwar period prior to June 1948, Albania had trade relations among the orbit countries only with Yugoslavia. Following the abrogation of the Yugoslav trade treaty, Albania concluded trade agreements with the USSR and the other orbit countries. The Soviet-Albanian trade agreement, signed in September 1948 and renewed in 1949, is the largest in volume and value, with the Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Polish, Hungarian, and Bulgarian trade treaties following in order of importance. The chief commodities which Albania will receive from the USSR and the satellites are grains, transportation equipment, textiles, agricultural equipment, chemicals, industrial equipment, gasoline, and minerals. For the most part these agreements are on a credit basis since the value of Albanian exports would not cover the cost of its imports. Albania exports in small quantities crude oil, bitumen, copper, chrome ores, pyrites, cotton, hides, and tobacco.

In the period from 1 September through 15 December 1948, the USSR reportedly delivered a total of 38,000 tons of merchandise to Albania. Much of the material received by Albania was undoubtedly destined for use by the Greek guerrilla forces. These shipments con-

sisted, for the most part, of wheat, barley, 133 Zis trucks, two 75-ton railroad engines, a few rail cars, 6,000 tons of rails, 2½ million square meters of textiles, 221 automobiles, 3,000 pieces of agricultural equipment, 10,000 tons of chemical fertilizer, medical supplies, 1,000 tons of coal, some sugar; and \$310,000 worth of oil and oil products. There are some indications that the value of Soviet shipments to Albania during 1949 may be around \$1,500,000 a month, and probably not less than the average Yugoslav monthly deliveries up to July 1948.

In spite of the announced severance of trade between Albania and Yugoslavia, trade relations on a limited scale have, at least until recently, continued between these two countries. It appears that the Soviet Union and the orbit countries, in order to implement Soviet policy in Albania, will take steps to bolster Albania's economy and possibly expand it in some categories.

Although Albanian trade with the West is virtually non-existent, that country has indicated an interest in expanding commerce with the West. The practical possibilities of such trade are difficult to foresee, however, because of (1) the character and small amount of raw materials, goods, and produce that Albania can export, and (2) the lack of western confidence in the Hoxha regime.

4. Foreign Affairs.

a. Soviet Domination of Albania.

Despite the fact that Albania has consistently been an economic liability, the USSR for political and strategic reasons in June 1948 assumed the close supervision over Albanian affairs formerly exercised by Yugoslavia. The Kremlin, however, had anticipated the public break with Yugoslavia as early as March 1948 by raising the Soviet military attaché in Tirana to the rank of a major general and increasing his staff to a total of fifteen officers. Subsequently the Kremlin-backed Hoxha regime ousted some 350 Yugoslav "advisors" who had been supervising all phases of Albanian public life, and replaced them with Soviet personnel.

The USSR was aided in its assumption of Yugoslavia's previous role as protector of Albania by the schisms existing within the top echelons of the Albanian Communist Party.

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The trial of Xoxe in June 1949 allegedly revealed that Hoxha himself was on Xoxe's proscribed list, and had it not been for the Moscow-Tito rift Hoxha would in all probability have been eliminated sooner or later. The factions within the Albanian Communist Party, a strong belief that Moscow would make short shrift of Tito, and resentment by the Hoxha clique of their treatment by Tito combined to play the decisive role in the decision of the Albanian Communist Party to side with Moscow. The Soviet quarrel with Yugoslavia thus saved the Hoxha faction within the party from liquidation by Xoxe. On the other hand the split in the Albanian party may have been decisive in enabling the USSR to hold isolated Albania in spite of the Soviet break with Tito.

With no other basis for support the Hoxha regime, in order to maintain itself in power, remains entirely dependent on military and economic assistance from the USSR. The leading Albanian Communists who have immediate control of the security forces, the army, and the government, must of necessity remain faithful to the USSR. As a further factor insuring the continued domination of a pro-Soviet regime in the isolated satellite, the Soviet Union has an estimated 1,000 Soviet advisers in the country. Recent first-hand reports have described Soviet personnel as exercising a predominant influence at the top echelons of the Albanian Government. The Soviet diplomatic mission in Tirana, headed by Minister Chuvakin, reportedly sends instructions to the Albanian cabinet ministers, each of whom has a Soviet "technical advisor" permanently attached to his office.

Complex problems in retaining its predominant influence in Albania have arisen and been squarely faced by the Kremlin during the past year. In order to preserve a pro-Soviet orientation, the Hoxha regime instituted purges of widespread Titoist deviationism three times during this period. In an important address to the Albanian Communist Party Congress in November 1948, Tuk Jakova, organizational secretary of the Party, criticized the past laxity of the Albanian Communists and prescribed greater attention to Soviet ideology. Repeated efforts to wipe out anti-Soviet devi-

ation in the Albanian party and to bolster the latter's loyalty to the USSR are indicative of the Kremlin's anxiety regarding this problem. Soviet guidance has meant an accelerated campaign to "reorient" the Albanians, through emphasis on Russian cultural relations and language study.

The Soviets in impoverished Albania have the complicated logistical problem of supplying the Albanian Army, the Soviet and guerrilla personnel in the country, as well as funneling aid through Albania to the remaining guerrillas in Greece. With Yugoslav aid to the guerrilla movement apparently terminated, the burden of supplying and giving refuge to the Greek guerrillas has had to be met by the USSR largely through Albania. Between 1 January and mid-August 1949, the Soviet bloc is reliably reported to have dispatched approximately sixty ships with a total capacity of approximately 250,000 tons into Albanian ports. Although no accurate breakdown of cargoes is available, a sizable portion of them is known to have consisted of war matériel. A recent study has indicated a definite connection between the magnitude of past guerrilla operations in Greece and the amount of Soviet-satellite shipping transiting Albanian ports. Soviet arms shipments to Albania may not only be used for the military support of Albania and guerrilla operations against Yugoslavia or Greece, but also to maintain an arsenal for supplying the Communists in southern Italy.

Air connections between Albania and the Soviet orbit have been hampered by Yugoslav restrictions on overflights of its territory, including visa checks of passengers. The Soviet Aeroflot which had been servicing Albania three times monthly is recently reported to have stopped all flights. On the other hand, the Hungarian Mazsovlet airline, which opened a biweekly air service into Tirana in the spring of 1949, is now operating on a weekly basis. Cargo space in the DC-3 type planes is taken up mainly by Soviet and Albanian officials, as well as supplies for the Russian colony in Albania. Recent outgoing flights from Albania have been evacuating wounded military personnel to Hungary.

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b. Ties with the Soviet Orbit.

Prior to June 1948 Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia were the only Soviet satellites, aside from Yugoslavia, which maintained diplomatic relations with Albania. Albania seemed to be generally regarded as a Yugoslav satellite, with the USSR exercising only indirect control. Within the Soviet bloc Albania had mutual assistance treaties with only Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Since the Soviet-Yugoslav rift, Albania has extended its intra-orbit representation to Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Outer Mongolia, and Northern Korea. The countries of the Cominform bloc have greatly enlarged their military, economic, and propaganda support of Albania. Significantly, however, no additional military assistance pacts with the Albanian Government have been made public by the orbit countries. Of the Cominform bloc, Bulgaria alone has a mutual assistance treaty with Albania. Moreover, Bulgaria seems to be giving the Hoxha regime the closest support from among the satellites.

c. Deteriorating Relations with Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia held a dominant position in Albanian affairs from 1944 until June 1948, when the Hoxha regime suddenly realigned itself with the USSR against Tito. Despite probable internal dissension, the entire Hoxha government, including the subsequently purged Minister of Interior Xoxe, officially denounced Tito. Hoxha probably considered that Tito would be unable to maintain his position against the Soviet bloc, perhaps expecting that the Kremlin would bring Yugoslavia back into the orbit by purging Tito or resolving the existing differences. The Albanian Government followed the Cominform resolution in renouncing its past close relations with Tito. Trade relations were officially severed on the initiative of the Albanian Government in June 1948. The Yugoslav Government in November 1949 abrogated the Treaty of Mutual Assistance.

Provocative incidents between the two countries have included mutual violations of recognized diplomatic immunities, Albanian trials against alleged Yugoslav espionage and subversive activities, and discriminatory actions against each other's nationals.

Charges and countercharges of hostile activities have been exchanged between Albania and Yugoslavia during the past year by both press and radio. There are reports that a number of border incidents have occurred between the two countries. It is obvious that Albania and the other members of the Soviet bloc bordering on Yugoslavia are carrying out Soviet directives to harass and pressure the Tito government in every way possible short of armed action.

Evidence is available that Tito is exploiting the Albanian Kossovian minority, consisting of a half million people in the Kosmet region of Yugoslavia, against the Hoxha regime. Albanian propaganda has charged Tito with releasing a number of important Albanian refugees imprisoned while Albanian-Yugoslav relations were cordial, and encouraging them to recruit a resistance force from the Kosmet Albanians for use in subversive activity against the Hoxha regime. The Albanian minority in Yugoslavia, after a period of persecution by the Tito regime, has recently been granted special privileges and reforms probably to lessen antipathy for the Tito regime and to encourage sentiment for Hoxha's overthrow, in order to free their countrymen across the border. The Yugoslav promise of a semi-autonomous Albania, even though it were governed by Tito's henchmen, would probably secure the support of a significant number of the Albanians in the Kosmet region of Yugoslavia. Some evidence is available to support the Albanian charges that Tito is providing military training centers for Albanian political refugees. Moreover, meetings of Tito's Kossovian leaders with representatives of the exiled "Committee for Free Albania" have been reported, the purpose of which has been the formation of a common anti-Hoxha front. The combined forces of Kossovars and refugees from the Hoxha regime available to Tito would present a formidable menace to the Hoxha regime, especially if their efforts were timed with Greek pressure on the southern Albanian border.

The virulent propaganda attacks exchanged between Yugoslavia and Albania reflect the progressive deterioration in Tito's relations with the Soviet bloc. Hoxha's propaganda

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machine has repeatedly accused Yugoslavia of colonial imperialism in its past relations with Albania. The Albanian Government also attributes its worsened economic condition, since the break with Tito, to prior Yugoslav sabotage of plans for aiding Albania. Yugoslav rebuttals present the Hoxha regime as a tool of the Soviet Union, blaming it for the numerous incidents between the two countries as well as for the chaotic internal condition of the country. Tito has publicly promised aid to opposition elements in Albania in ridding themselves of the oppressive Hoxha government. Cominform and Albanian propaganda, meanwhile, accuses Yugoslavia and Greece, with the support of western imperialists, of plotting the overthrow of the Hoxha government and the substitution of a fascist regime.

Despite the virulence of the propaganda war between Yugoslavia and Albania, it is evident that neither government is anxious to precipitate any major overt action against the other. The Tito government is reported to be fearful of the consequences, for Yugoslavia, of any external aggression against the Hoxha regime. On the other hand, the Hoxha government faces complex internal problems which preclude any large-scale Albanian activity against Tito. Even without the previous considerations, it is unlikely that either side would initiate aggressive action with the UN General Assembly in session. In addition, winter weather will soon prevent any major operations by either Tito or Hoxha. It is thus estimated that Tito will not take the action necessary for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime prior to the spring of 1950. Subsequent developments between Albania and Yugoslavia will reflect the deterioration of the Tito-Cominform situation.

d. Relations with Greece.

Diplomatic relations between Albania and Greece have been suspended since 1940, when the Italians invaded Greece via Albania and enjoyed some Albanian cooperation. The Greek Government contends that normal diplomatic relations with Albania are impossible because that country has waged an undeclared guerrilla war on Greece. In addition, the Greek Government, partly out of internal political considerations, is unwilling to re-

nounce Greek claims to southern Albania (northern Epirus). An Albanian census of 1945 shows that 34,500 Greeks or Greek-speaking people inhabit northern Epirus. Some of them may be loyal to the Greek cause, but many perhaps no longer have strong feelings having consistently been under foreign domination. Communist indoctrination in the past few years has also taken its toll.

With the growing curtailment of Yugoslav aid to the guerrilla movement since 1948, the Soviet Union was increasingly forced to use Albania as a base to maintain Greek guerrilla operations. Thus, by the summer of 1949 some 90 percent of the aid to the Greek guerrillas was coming from Albania. By far the greater part of the equipment and supplies channeled through Albania for the guerrillas originated elsewhere in the Soviet bloc, since Albania itself was both economically and militarily dependent on external aid. In addition to its use as a supply base for the operations in Greece, Albanian territory was increasingly utilized by the guerrillas for maneuver and refuge purposes, and as a rest and training center.

With the completion of the successful Greek military campaign against the guerrillas in the late summer of 1949, a new phase of Albanian-Greek relations began. The escape of large numbers of the guerrillas into Albania, raising their total in that country to above 10,000 (including those not fit for combat), has resulted in widespread Greek public agitation for military action to neutralize Albania as a guerrilla base. The Greek Army, repeatedly thwarted in its attempts to wipe out the guerrillas, through the latter's retreat into Albania, might conceivably attempt to invade Albania to destroy guerrilla positions. It is more probable, however, that the Greek Government will leave the solution of the Albanian guerrilla problem to the Western Powers in the United Nations. Any Greek military action against Albania would serve to unite the Albanians, who have a traditional nationalist fear of Greek claims on northern Epirus. Unlike Tito, the Greeks have no significant Albanian minority whose services they might utilize against the Hoxha regime. Precipitate Greek action against Albania could also

serve to upset the uneasy stability between the Cominform and Tito forces in the Balkans, with unknown results.

All present indications point to at least a temporary curtailment of Albanian-based guerrilla activity against Greece. The Albanian Government, with the apparent approval of the Kremlin, has announced its intention of interning all Greek guerrillas in Albanian territory. Hoxha is reported recently to have warned the Kremlin of the danger to his regime in further attempting to use Albania as a base for both guerrilla operations against Greece and pressure against Tito. The reported evacuation, from Albania into other satellites, of large numbers of guerrillas may be another indication of a shift in Soviet tactics de-emphasizing Albania's role against Greece.

e. Attempts to Renew Relations with the West.

Since the withdrawal of the US and British missions from Albania in 1946, France has maintained the only western legation in Tirana. Yugoslavia assumed the responsibility for the protection of Albanian interests abroad, but terminated that service after Tito broke with the Cominform. Albania's decision to renew diplomatic relations with Italy in May 1949 culminated negotiations which had been in progress since 1947 and opened the way for a possible economic accord. Previously the negotiations had never achieved any satisfactory result because of Albanian intransigence. A subsequent Italian-Albanian agreement was reached for the return of approximately 500 Italian professionals and technicians who had been forcibly retained in Albania after World War II.

Reliable information indicates that the Albanian Government is eager to resume relations with the United States. The USSR may thus hope to raise the prestige of the pro-Soviet Albanian regime, render possible western support of any revolutionary anti-Hoxha movement more difficult, and obtain relief from Albanian groups in the United States.

5. Military Situation.

The curtailment of relations between Albania and Yugoslavia resulted in a marked in-

crease of Soviet influence over the Albanian armed forces. The latter now provide the main prop for maintaining the Soviet-dominated Hoxha regime in power. Yugoslav military and technical advisers to the Albanian armed forces were ousted and the Soviet military mission to Albania increased proportionately. Recurring reports indicate that the Soviet Union has been supplying the Albanian military forces with equipment including artillery, tanks, and military vehicles.

At present, there are about 1,000 Soviet personnel in Albania, many of whom are functioning as advisers, instructors, and technicians in the Albanian military and security forces which are estimated to total about 65,000. No Soviet tactical units are known to be stationed in the country. The Soviet mission is allegedly attached to the Albanian Army General Staff, and a joint Albanian-Soviet Inspectorate General of Armed Forces reportedly has been established, permitting high-ranking Soviet officers to make direct inspections of all Albanian troops.

Albanian Army training is supervised by the Soviets who have introduced Soviet drill methods and tactics as well as political indoctrination. An unknown number of Albanian officers and NCO's have been sent to the USSR for advanced training. This group allegedly includes Albanian air force personnel who are receiving flight training.

The Albanian Air Force was first organized in 1947 under Yugoslav guidance. Soviet supervision and instruction have since replaced that of the Yugoslavs, and most of the equipment is probably of Soviet origin. Some forty Yak-3 fighter aircraft were originally loaned to Albania by Yugoslavia and presumably were returned sometime after the Yugoslav-Cominform rift. The Albanian Air Force has degenerated to such a degree that there is no further evidence of an Albanian Air Arm.

The Albanian Navy also has a Soviet advisory group, reportedly headed by a Soviet captain. A secret naval agreement between Albania and the USSR was allegedly concluded in late 1948. Under this agreement the Soviets were granted concessions in certain ports, including Valona. Recurring reports indicate that the Soviets are constructing permanent

defense emplacements on the rocky Karaburun peninsula and Saseno Island, which guard the entrance to Valona harbor. Submarine pens have also been reported to be under construction on Saseno Island. The Albanian Navy itself has no combat usefulness. Its present main function is that of patrolling the Albanian coast to prevent communication between Albania and anti-Hoxha forces abroad.

An element of the Albanian armed forces over which the Soviets have established especially close control is the DMP (Division of Peoples Security). The security forces are estimated to comprise 15,000 carefully selected men, over 50 percent of whom are reported to be Communist Party members. The Soviets also control the gendarmerie, which is Al-

bania's police force. Both of these organizations are subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior, in which a Soviet adviser is the director of the Administrative Board. A recent report states that Soviet advisers are now attached to the Chiefs of Police of each prefecture throughout the country. A civilian defense organization "For the Defense of the Fatherland" is also being formed in the country through mass mobilization.

As a result of Soviet indoctrination and preferential treatment, the officers and NCO's of the Albanian military forces are generally considered loyal to the regime, but the loyalty of the ranks is questionable. The Albanian armed forces, however, are incapable of offensive action against any foe, or of defensive operations against any neighbor.

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