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OIR Contribution to NIE-42: THE CURRENT SITUATION IN
ALBANIA, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO GREEK, YUGOSLAV,
AND ITALIAN INTERESTS AND PRETENSIONS

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I. CURRENT INTERNAL SITUATION

A. Stability of the Regime

1. Popular Discontent and Relations Among the Top Leadership. Evidence exists of widespread discontent among the Albanian people, the overwhelming majority of whom are opposed to the present Communist regime of Enver Hoxha. The regime maintains itself in power solely by police terror and by strict control of all means of subsistence. The secret police, controlled by the Minister of the Interior Lt. Gen. Mehmet Shehu, has developed a vast net of local spies who keep close watch over the population. In addition, the Ministry of Interior has special pursuit battalions, which operate chiefly in the mountainous areas, where they track down isolated active resistance groups and spread terror among the peasantry. Other means used by the regime to cow the people into submission are the village guard, composed of a few faithful Communist ruffians; agitators from among the Communist youth organization; and formations of the regular army, which is at present numerically stronger than ever before in the history of modern Albania. Through all of these means the Hoxha regime controls the situation, and its stability is not likely to be threatened in the immediate future by an organized internal revolt.

Purges of the top leadership of the Albanian Communists have been extensive since the advent of Communism in late 1944. The current leadership, composed of General of the Army Enver Hoxha, Lt. Gen. Mehmet Shehu, and Major Generals Bedri Spahiu and Hysni Kapo, appears to be working cohesively, although there is an under-

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current of rivalry for power between Hoxha and Shehu dating from the war. However, Moscow seems to prefer that Hoxha remain at the helm because of his popularity among party members and some army officers; and as long as Hoxha enjoys the Kremlin's favor, Shehu's chances of supplanting him remain slim. It will be recalled that by early 1948 all of the top leaders except Hoxha had been shouldered aside by Hoxha's powerful rival, Koci Xoxe. Hoxha handled this situation so well in the critical spring and summer of 1948 that he mastered the threat to his position posed by Xoxe, and later had him executed. His other rival, Shehu, although a capable military man, is undistinguished as a politician.

2. Control of the Police and Armed Forces. Although the rank and file of the Albanian Army appear to detest the present regime, most of the officers and politruks are faithful party members. Above these are Mehmet Shehu, who has a firm control of all security forces, and Enver Hoxha, who is Commander in Chief and Minister of National Defense. Still higher are the numerous Soviet MGB and military "experts" who are today the real masters of the Albanian armed forces and security forces.

B. Regime's Dependence on Soviet Support

1. Extent of Soviet aid. The Soviet Union contributes both directly and indirectly to the support of the Hoxha regime. Economic aid, war materiel, and military and technical experts constitute open, direct Soviet assistance. An estimated 1,000 Soviet military and civilian "experts" now hold key positions in

the police, military, and civil administrations as well as in the top echelon of the party bureaus. The importance of the economic aid may be gauged by the fact that without this aid from the USSR and its satellites the country's economy would collapse within a few months. In spite of Albania's present geographic isolation from the other Soviet orbit countries, the Hoxha regime remains in the Soviet grip, largely because of the complete awareness of the Albanian top leadership that its very existence depends wholly on moral, political, and economic aid from Moscow.

2. Military and Political Agreements. During the post-war period Albania has concluded mutual assistance pacts only with Yugoslavia (July 1946)¹ and Bulgaria (December 1947). Until June 1943, when Yugoslavia broke with the Cominform, the Albanian Government was in effect a puppet of Marshal Tito. The conclusion of the Albanian-Bulgarian mutual assistance treaty was reportedly originally agreed to by Tito and Bulgarian Prime Minister Dimitrov as a preliminary step toward making Albania eventually a member of a projected Balkan Federation composed initially of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

Since Albania has not signed any mutual assistance treaties with the Soviet Union or its present satellites other than Bulgaria, it is virtually excluded from the postwar alliance system of the USSR in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. There have been several reports since July 1948 that Albania has made unsuccessful overtures

1. Yugoslavia abrogated this pact in November 1949.

for the conclusion of open political and military agreements with the Soviet Union and the other Soviet orbit countries. Probably because of Albania's geographically isolated position, the Soviet Union appears to be unwilling at present to make any political or military commitments to the Hoxha regime in the form of a mutual assistance pact. Nor has Albania been granted membership in the Cominform.

Albania has, however, been admitted to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and has in the past three years signed several trade and credit agreements with the Soviet Union and its satellites. It is probable that most of these trade agreements have contained clauses for supplying Albania with military materiel. Also, special agreements, either verbal or in writing, dealing only with military matters have perhaps been concluded in the past several years, although direct evidence of this is not available. All that is known is that from 1946 Albania has been sent armaments and other supplies for the Greek guerrillas from the Soviet orbit countries, as well as military equipment and technical advisers for its own army. There is reliable information that the Polish-Albanian trade agreement of January 1949 was actually drawn up in Moscow, although signed in Warsaw, and that Poland's major obligation was to supply Albania with arms and to transport Czech arms and ammunition consigned to Albanian ports from Praha across Poland to Odynia.

C. Resistance to the Regime

1. Resistance groups and Methods of Operation. In addition to widespread dissatisfaction among the Albanian people

toward the Hoxha regime, there has been some overt although probably not too effective resistance in the past few years. There is no definite information about specific resistance groups, but the Tirana authorities have themselves admitted that "diversionist" elements, chiefly among the peasantry, have often ambushed army transport convoys and state transport trucks, killed their drivers, and seized their supplies. In other instances local party and government officials have been assassinated; on still other occasions fire has been set to state grain depots and factories, and economic sabotage, so far the most effective type of resistance, has been committed on the railways, in factories, and elsewhere. When brought to trial, such "diversionists" have been accused of being members of Balli Kombetar or Legaliteti, and followers of the northern tribal chiefs, such as the Kryeziu family, the Marka Gjonis or other tribal leaders. Refugees who have fled Albania in recent years have reported the existence of local underground organizations, such as the "National League of the Mountains," the "Liberty," the "Call," "Skanderbeg," and "Bashkimi i Kombit," but nothing definite is known of these organizations. In any event, such facts as the bombing of the Soviet Legation in Tirana in February 1951 and the establishment in the past two years of a large number of concentration camps in many parts of Albania indicate the existence of some open resistance to the Hoxha regime.

2. Relationship Among Resistance Groups. Despite their common desire to rid Albania of the Communist regime, there does not appear to be any cooperation among the various resistance groups and no definite political aims or program in common.

Indeed, on several instances some of these groups have vitiated their work by their attempts to belittle each other's activities and political beliefs. The situation is complicated still further by the fact that agents infiltrated by intelligence agencies of Greece and Yugoslavia and parachuted from Italy work at cross purposes, creating confusion and frustration among indigenous resistance elements and among the population at large. The frictions, animosities, and jealousies caused by these various agents have also frequently contributed to their detection and liquidation by Shehu's security pursuit battalions.

3. Relationship Between Resistance Groups and Emigre Movements. Most of the resistance groups in Albania at present appear to derive their inspiration, and probably their direction, from the Committee for a Free Albania, an affiliate of the National Committee for a Free Europe, which has its operational headquarters in Rome, although the Committee itself has its seat in New York, where it also publishes its organ, Shqiperia. So far the most effective operation of the Committee has been the printing in Rome and the dropping into Albania of propaganda leaflets. The reaction to these leaflets appears to have been great. Evidence of this is the anxiety expressed by the Tirana regime in its notes of protest to Italy, as well as the numerous Albanian fugitives who have been inspired by the leaflets to cross into Greece with the hope of joining the Committee in its struggle to liberate Albania from Communism. It now appears that the Committee for a Free Albania is considered by the great majority of the Albanian people as the representative body abroad which is

offering effective resistance to the pro-Moscow regime of Enver Hoxha.

Of the three groups which compose the Committee -- the National Agrarian Democratic Party Balli Kombetar headed by Hasan Dosti, the Legality Party headed by Abas Kupi which works for the restoration of ex-King Zog, and the League of Peasants and Villagers headed by Said Kryeziu -- Balli Kombetar has the strongest following in southern Albania, the Legality Party in central and northern Albania, and Kryeziu's group in the most northern tip of Albania and in the Yugoslav provinces of Kosovo and Metohiya, which are occupied largely by Albanians.

In addition to the Committee for a Free Albania and its component organizations, there is in Italy Blloku Kombetar Independent made up of Albanians who cooperated faithfully with Fascist Italy both before and during the war. This group works for the restoration of Italian influence in Albania and is said to have the full support of the Italian Government. Its organ, L'Albanie Libre, is published with funds supplied by the Italian Navy. Some of its members have been parachuted by Italian planes into central and northern Albania, in which areas they have organized active resistance bands and have encouraged the peasantry to carry on economic sabotage and other anti-government activities.

The recently created League of Albanian Political Refugees in Yugoslavia is composed of Albanians, mostly Communists, who have escaped into that country since 1948. It claims to represent some 5,000 Albanian refugees in Yugoslavia and to work for "an

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independent, free, indivisible, democratic, and republican" Albania. Actually, this organization was established by the Belgrade authorities as an instrument for furthering Yugoslav designs concerning Albania, such as infiltrating agents, spreading pro-Tito and anti-Hoxha propaganda, and encouraging other Albanians to flee into Yugoslavia. Under present circumstances, the League of Albanian Political Refugees in Yugoslavia is in a position to harrass the Hoxha regime effectively.

In Greece most of the Albanian refugee organizations are composed of persons from southern Albania (Northern Epirus). They are usually called Epirote societies, and they work for the annexation of that area to Greece, whose government has laid official claim to it. Most of the agents infiltrated by the Greeks into Albania for propaganda and espionage activities are Albanian Moslems from the border areas. As a rule, their activities are designed to spread pro-Greek propaganda among the population and to entice additional refugees into Greece. Their activities, like those of the agents infiltrated by Yugoslavia and by Blloku Kombetar Independent in Rome, are wholly unrelated to the operations of those agents infiltrated in the name of the Committee for a Free Albania. In the past two years all sorts of agents have swarmed into Albania, each of whom has worked for the particular organization or state which sent him.

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II. EXTENT OF INTERESTS AND CONFLICTS IN ALBANIA OF ITALY, GREECE,
AND YUGOSLAVIA

A. Background of Political, Economic, and Strategic Interests
of Albania's Neighbors

1. Italy. Italy has taken a direct and active part in Albanian affairs since the beginning of this century. It supported the creation of an independent Albania in 1912 primarily for strategic reasons, in order that Albania's long Adriatic coast line, which at one point at the Strait of Otranto is less than 50 miles from the Italian coast, might not fall into hostile, particularly Russian, hands. Because of this predominantly strategic importance of the Albanian coast, Italy occupied the Island of Saseno in Vlore Bay in October 1914 and two months later Italian sailors and infantrymen landed at Vlore. In the spring of 1915 Italy concluded the secret Pact of London with the Entente Powers, articles 6 and 7 of which gave Italy full sovereignty over Vlore and the Island of Saseno, most of the remaining Albanian territory going to Serbia and Greece. Although Italy repudiated the clauses of the pact dealing with the partition of Albania and the Italian commander at Gjinokaster in June 1917 proclaimed the independence of Albania under the protection of Italy, the Venizelos-Tittoni Agreement of July 1919 provided again for the partition of Albania between Greece and Italy. This agreement was later vetoed by President Wilson.

Italian troops remained in Albania until the summer of 1920, when the Albanians, aided by indecision and confusion in Rome,

defeated the Italian garrison in Vlore and forced Italy to evacuate the Albanian mainland. Italy refused consistently, however, to cede Albania the Island of Saseno, and during the interwar period turned it into a strong naval and submarine base.

On November 9, 1921 the Ambassadors of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan, known collectively as the Conference of Ambassadors, signed an agreement in which it was stated, inter alia, that should Albania find it at any time impossible to maintain intact its territorial integrity the "Governments of the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan will instruct their representatives on the Council of the League of Nations to recommend that the restoration of the territorial frontiers of Albania should be entrusted to Italy....and that any modification of the frontiers of Albania constitutes a danger for the strategic safety of Italy." Thus, the then Great Powers gave Italy a virtual protectorate over Albania. From this date until the capitulation of Italy in 1943 Italian influence predominated in Albania and was manifested by financial loans to Zog's regime, Italian management of nearly all important Albanians economic enterprises, and Italian training and equipping of the Albanian armed forces. By a pact of friendship and security of 1926 with Albania, Italy established a legal basis for its sphere of influence, which was further strengthened by a 20-year treaty of defensive alliance in 1927. Thereafter Albania became for all practical purposes an Italian colony. In April 1939 Mussolini finally invaded Albania and united Albania with Italy under the

Crown of King Victor Emanuel. The following year Mussolini used Albania as the base for an attempted invasion of Greece.

By the terms of the Peace Treaty of 1947, Italy recognized the independence of Albania, to which it ceded the Island of Saseno. It renounced, moreover, all property, rights, concessions, and interests in Albania which had belonged to the Italian state or to Italian private institutions, as well as all claims to special interests or influence in that country.

Soon after the end of World War II, Italy sent a mission to Albania to examine questions of interest to both countries, but the mission was soon asked to leave. It was not until May 1949 that diplomatic relations between the two nations were reestablished, and later that year ministers were exchanged between Tirana and Rome.

As defined in statements emanating from the Italian Foreign Office during the past two years and confirmed by other intelligence, Italy's policy regarding Albania is directed toward maintaining that country's independence, seeking its friendship, and restoring Italy's prewar economic and political influence. In August and again in October of 1949, Italian Foreign Office sources emphasized that continued Albanian independence and territorial integrity corresponded with Italian interests. An article in the April 30, 1951 issue of Esteri, a Rome foreign policy bimonthly which is said often to reflect Italian official views, called for revision of Article 29 of the Italian Peace Treaty of 1947. Terming this Article "unjust and illegal," especially with reference to Italy's reparations commitments to Albania, Esteri pointed to Albania's

strategic importance and natural resources and observed that the Island of Saseno was only about 50 miles from Otranto, adding that the age-old Italian policy with regard to the Albanian coast rested on these two factors of economics and strategy. The article concluded that these two factors compelled Italy to follow a policy favorable to the existence of a sovereign and friendly Albania.

Italy hopes to reestablish its influence in Albania through the Albanian exile group in Rome organized in the Blloku Kombetar Independent, whose leaders, as stated above, collaborated closely with Fascist Italy both before and during World War II. Some of these hold important positions now in Rome both in the government and in high educational institutions.

The present Italian policy regarding Albania is motivated not only by the hope of gaining future economic, strategic, and diplomatic advantages from good relations between the two countries, but also by apprehension over the possibility of a Yugoslav move into Albania in the event of the Hoxha government's overthrow. In short, Italy definitely does not wish to see any other power establish a foothold in the area, and prefers the continuation of the status quo to the creation of a power vacuum into which Yugoslavia, and possibly Greece, could move. In this connection Italy is also suspicious of the designs of the British vis-a-vis Albania. In the interests of maintaining a link with the Albanian Government, however tenuous, Italy undoubtedly intends to keep its legation in Tirana, in spite of Communist restrictions on its activities.

2. Greece. Greece has never reconciled itself to the existence of an independent Albania. It opposed the creation of an Albanian state in 1912 and occupied most of southern Albania (which the Greeks call "Northern Epirus") from 1912 to 1916 on the pretension that it was Greek territory and populated largely by Greeks. In 1926 the Greek Government reluctantly submitted to the request of the Conference of Ambassadors that Greece and Yugoslavia accept Albania's frontiers as delimited in 1913; but Greece never gave up its claim to Northern Epirus, which it demands on historical, ethnical, strategic, and economic grounds.

Since the beginning of World War II Albania has been a thorn in the Greeks' side. It was from Albania that Mussolini's forces attacked Greece in October 1940, and it was in Albania that a large number of Greek Communists took refuge and re-organized after the Varkiza agreement of February 1945. From 1946 to 1949 Albania was the chief base from which the Greek Communist rebels launched their repeated attacks on the Greek National Army, and became their sanctuary when they were defeated by the Greek forces. Even at present groups of Greek Communists, trained in Poland and other satellite countries, are shipped into Albania and thence infiltrated into Greece with the connivance and support of the Tirana authorities.

In the opinion of Greek officials, the ideal solution to the Albanian problem would be the partition of that country between Greece and Yugoslavia. However, they are aware that such an event is not likely to occur, and for this reason the

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Greek Foreign Office drafted a paper a few years ago in which it suggested that the best solution to the Albanian problem would be a union between an "independent" Albania and Greece, with the King of Greece reigning in both countries.

The Greeks would probably prefer the present regime in Albania as long as they fear Yugoslav or Italian domination there and have no Allied assurances that such domination will not occur, and as long as the Hoxha regime does not revive large-scale support of the Greek guerrillas.

The Greeks can be expected to move into southern Albania if Albania is ever invaded by Yugoslavia. Military cooperation between Greece and Yugoslavia for the defense of the area is possible, but might break down so long as the Greeks suspect Yugoslav intentions with regard to Albania and Aegean Macedonia.

Greece, like Italy and Yugoslavia, is harboring a large number of Albanian refugees, most of whom have come from southern Albania and are called "Northern Epirots" by the Greeks. As of June 1951, there were in Greece 5,673 "Northern Epirots," a name applied to Albanian refugees who are members of the Greek Orthodox Church and are considered of Greek origin, and 450 "Albanians," probably meaning Albanian Moslems. The Greek Government generally does not permit the "Northern Epirots" to emigrate and does not allow them to become Greek citizens. They are apparently held in reserve in camps along the Albanian border, especially at Yannina, to be used for any eventuality in southern Albania. Some of those in the Yannina camp are said to be formed in military units and are probably trained by the Greek Army.

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3. Yugoslavia. Serbia and Montenegro before World War I, and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after the war, were opposed to the principle of an independent Albania, chiefly for strategic and economic reasons. Serbia submitted to the will of the Great Powers in 1913, when Albania's boundaries were originally delimited, but only after as many Albanians were left under Serbian domination as were included in the Albanian state. During and immediately after World War I the Serbs occupied nearly all of northern Albania, and withdrew in 1921 beyond the 1913 frontier only after strong pressure was brought to bear by the League of Nations. Finally in 1926 the Yugoslav Government accepted as definitive the frontier with Albania as delimited by the Conference of Ambassadors, and since then no Yugoslav Government has officially advanced any territorial claims on Albania. Aside from a brief period in 1924-25 when Belgrade assisted Ahmet Bey Zogu (later King Zog I) to return to Albania and overthrow Bishop Fan Noli's revolutionary government, Yugoslavia was unable to exercise any influence in Albania before the outbreak of World War II because of Italian domination of that country. During World War II Tito managed to obtain control through Albanian Communists of the Albanian National Liberation Movement, which he directed through his own emissaries attached to the headquarters of the Albanian Army of National Liberation. From late 1944, when the Albanian Communists assumed control of the country, to June 1948, Albania was a puppet of Marshal Tito.

While since his break with the Cominform in June 1948 Tito has publicly been the champion of Albania's independence, sover-

eighty, and territorial integrity and has repeatedly condemned Greek territorial claims on Albania and alleged Greek proposals that Yugoslavia and Greece partition that country between themselves, his actual intentions appear to be the creation in Tirana of a pro-Tito, anti-Moscow regime and the reversion of Albania to its dependent status of 1944-48. It was probably with this end in view that he created at Prizren in May 1951 the "League of Albanian Political Refugees in Yugoslavia" with a program for a "free, democratic, independent, indivisible, and republican Albania." The League, which also declared itself against the Western-supported Committee for a Free Albania and other Albanian exiles living in Western countries and in Greece, is reported to be receiving considerable funds from the Yugoslav Government, whose purpose in organizing the League/^{was} reportedly the creation of a well-knit corps of Albanians sympathetic to the Yugoslav regime, which in the event of a political upheaval in Albania could take power as a government friendly to Tito. The League's chief function at present appears to be to assist and keep in touch with some 4,000 Albanian refugees in Yugoslavia, so that at an advantageous moment they can be assembled and organized, and to infiltrate agents into Albania for espionage and subversion, dissemination of anti-Hoxha and pro-Tito propaganda, and assistance to local leaders with pro-Tito leanings in escaping to Yugoslavia.

B. Possibilities of a Compromise

1. Current Conflicts and Mutual Suspensions. Ever since Albania was isolated geographically from the Cominform countries

it has become a bone of contention among Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia, each of which is attempting to establish a position from which it can dominate that country in the event of the overthrow of the Hoxha regime. For this reason, each has been alert to, and has expressed sensitiveness over, any move made by either of the others relative to Albania. The Yugoslavs have revived the charge which they made originally at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, to the effect that Greece had privily suggested to them the partition of Albania between themselves. They have also given notice that they would object to any unilateral action on the part of Greece to invade Albania, and have officially expressed dissatisfaction against the alleged dropping by Italian planes of parachutists and leaflets into Albania, some of which, including two parachutists, were inadvertently dropped into Yugoslav territory early this year. The Yugoslavs have also waged in the past several months a propaganda campaign against Italy relative to Albania, accusing Rome of encouraging the Albanian political exiles in Italy in their campaign for the creation of an "ethnic Albania," that is, an Albania which would include the Yugoslav provinces of Kosovo and Metohiya, both populated chiefly by Albanians.

Greece has also shown uneasiness over Italy's intentions toward Albania and has stated officially that it would not countenance any solution to the Albanian problem in which Greece was not consulted. At the same time, Rome's recurrent statements that Italy stands for the independence and territorial integrity

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of Albania have been aimed at both Greece and Yugoslavia.

2. Areas of Probable Agreement. There appears to be sufficient ground for a satisfactory solution of the Albanian problem between Italy and Yugoslavia provided these two countries arrive at a general agreement between themselves and settle more important issues, such as that of Trieste. Both countries have come out officially for the preservation of Albania's independence and territorial integrity; neither has advanced political or economic claims on Albania. The area of disagreement is, therefore, narrowed down to the type of regime that would be acceptable to Belgrade and Rome in the event of the fall of the Hoxha government.

Belgrade may not be expected to acquiesce in a new Albanian regime composed wholly of the ultra-nationalist followers of Blloku Kombetar Independent, most of whom held high positions in Kosovo and Metohiya after those Yugoslav provinces were annexed to Albania by Italy in August 1941. They have also come out for the reannexation of these provinces and the creation of an "ethnic" and "greater" Albania at the expense of Yugoslavia. Nor may Rome be expected to sanction a government in Albania composed wholly of Yugoslav stooges. However, sufficient pressure from the Western Powers, the complete isolation of Albanian elements who are identified too closely with Rome or Belgrade, and assurances from the Western Powers of a sovereign and independent Albania may induce the Italian and Yugoslav Governments to accept a new regime at Tirana composed of uncompromised and moderate elements.

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There is no likelihood of a compromise between Italy and Yugoslavia by a division of spheres of influences in Albania, as Yugoslavia would not tolerate a resurgence of Italian influence in the Balkans.

Because of its persistent claims to "Northern Epirus," Greece would find it more difficult to arrive at an international understanding on the Albanian question. Any new regime recognized by the Western Powers would mean to the Greeks the end of their claims for "Northern Epirus." Nor will Greece tolerate a pro-Tito or pro-Italian regime in Albania. The Greeks will, therefore, press for Allied assurances against Yugoslav and Italian aspirations in Albania. They will also perhaps want to be informed of British and American plans and intentions concerning Albania.

However, competent observers of Greek affairs feel that a Yugoslav assurance on Aegean Macedonia and a British promise of the eventual return of Cyprus to Greece would probably make the Greeks more amenable to a solution that would give Albania a government truly representative of the Albanian people, independent of foreign influences, and friendly to Greece.

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IV. CONFLICTING INTERESTS AND SECURITY OF THE AREA

A. Probable Attitude of Albania's Neighbors Forward A New Regime

1. Behavior of neighbors will depend on what elements succeed Hoxha's regime. In the event of a successful insurrection against the Hoxha regime by Albanian non-Communist elements, Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia may not intervene directly to influence the successor regime, but each may be expected to work feverishly to win to its side the leaders of the new government, probably in the same manner as they did between 1920 and 1926, with Italy then winning out because it was the most powerful of the three and because it could offer larger amounts of economic and military assistance.

If Hoxha's overthrow is accomplished by purely Albanian elements who are independent of Albania's three neighbors but under the direction of the Western powers, the activities of Rome, Athens, and Belgrade may be expected to be confined to political and economic maneuvering to win over the new government. However, should the leadership of a movement to oust the Hoxha regime be controlled by any one of the neighboring governments, or by such organizations as the League of the Albanian Political Refugees in Yugoslavia, the Blloku Kombetar Independent in Rome, or the Epirotic societies in Greece, serious friction, although probably no actual hostilities, may arise, leading perhaps to the occupation of southern Albania by Greece, northern Albania

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by Yugoslavia, and Saseno Island and Vlore Bay and its environs by Italy.

2. Nature of the probable successor regime.

The nature of the new regime in Albania in the event of a successful revolt against Hoxha will depend on the elements leading the revolt. A palace revolt, which under present circumstances seems to be the most likely way in which the Stalinist group headed by Shehu and Hoxha might be unseated, could bring about a left-wing regime composed chiefly of disgruntled anti-Moscow Communists and left-wing army officers. Such a regime would probably be patterned at first on that of Tito, although it would not necessarily be tied to Tito if it obtained direct military, political, and especially economic support from the US, the UK, and France. In the long run such a regime would perhaps fall in to the hands of Albanian intellectuals and professional men, the country's democratic elements, most of whom are currently languishing in prisons and forced labor and concentration camps, assisted by certain independent emigre elements who are not at present working with any of the recognized exile groups.

Should, however, the Hoxha regime be overthrown by internal and external non-Communist elements, the successor regime would in all probability be composed at the outset chiefly of leading elements that make up the

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Committee for a Free Albania. But in view of the distrust and ideological differences existing among these elements, the stability of such a regime might be short-lived. The problem would then probably be resolved by the restoration of ex-King Zog and the formation of a national Government firmly under his control, composed of all non-Communist elements.

Qualified observers of Albanian affairs are of the opinion that even though in the prewar days Zog's popularity was confined to the privileged classes in Albania, his stand against Fascist Italy just prior of its invasion of Albania, his consistent pro-Allied policy during the war, and the vicissitudes and general oppression and economic suffering of the populace under the present Communist regime have enhanced his standing among the people. Under present conditions, Zog would probably receive an almost universal

^{not} welcome, only in central Albania, where he had his greatest following during his reign as king, but in other parts of the country as well, and would be welcomed by a large section of the Albanian Army. Furthermore, he is believed to be the only leader who could restrain the various right-wing groups from embarking on mass reprisals against persons who have, either willingly or by force, collaborated with the Communist regime or differ ideologically among themselves, such, for instance, as is the case with the

followers of the National Agrarian Democratic Party Balli Kombetar and the members of the pro-Italian Blloku Kombetar Independent, whose antagonism has been unabated since Italy invaded Albania on April 7, 1939. Moreover, Zog would probably be acceptable to Italy and Greece.