

June 21, 1947

The Hon. James C. Dunn
Ambassador of the United States of America
Rome

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

The representatives of the National Independent Bloc of Albania have written an appeal to President Truman in behalf of the Albanian people.

They would like to ask you, Mr. Ambassador, to forward the appeal, and request therefore the honor of an audience with you or any Embassy official you may indicate.

Respectfully,

(Dott. Ismail Verlaci)

President of NIB

Via Eleonora Duse N. 37
Tel: 875246
Rome.

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Memorandum Truman

Rome, July 3, 1947

Hon. James C. Dunn
Ambassador of the United States of America
Rome

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We are enclosing an appeal to President Truman in behalf of all Albanian political refugees who look upon the United States as the only power that could save their country from the grave threat to her independence and sovereignty.

It seems to us, Mr. Ambassador, that the problem of Albania's future is as important to the United States, as the problem of Greece's and Turkey's future. In the documentation which accompanies the appeal we have outlined some of the reasons why, in our opinion, the Albanian problem should be of interest to your government.

We respectfully ask you to forward this appeal and its documentation to President Truman, in the hope that he will heed the anguished cry for help of the Albanians who ask nothing more than to be given a chance to work out their destiny as a democratic nation.

Respectfully,

I. Verlaci

Via Eleonora Duse 37
Tel. 87-52-46

DOCUMENTATION

ALBANIAN POLITICAL REFUGEES

Within Albania itself the Albanians have no possibility of expressing any opinion whatever that does not conform with the directives of the present terrorist regime.

The members of the United States diplomatic mission are fully aware of the absolute lack of freedom of the press and of ~~thoughtful~~ speech, after the treatment they received from the present heads of the Government -- aye treatment which made it impossible for the Mission to carry out its work.

Only those Albanians who escaped from death and prison to Greece, Italy and Austria are able today to raise a cry of alarm for the salvation of their country. About 4,000 Albanians have emigrated abroad: 2,300 of them are in Greece, 1,400 in Italy, 300 in Austria and a few more in Egypt and Turkey.

The Albanian political refugees live for the most part in Allied refugee camps in the most precarious conditions and forgotten. There are many old people, women and children among them. Many ~~new~~ have tuberculosis.

Today the Albanian and the Greek people, both different in race and language from the nearby Slav people, and both under the same danger which is threatening their countries, should unite to form a joint defensive front. The reciprocal advantages of an agreement between the two Balkan nations would be immediately felt. But in order to reach a sincere and lasting agreement, which is being advocated by enlightened statesmen both Greek and Albanian, Greece should renounce with an official declaration her claims to the Southern provinces of Albania: Korca and Argirocastro. A declaration of this kind would weaken at once the present Albanian communist regime which is posing as the defender of Albania's territorial

REACTION TO THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE

The reaction in Albania to the Truman doctrine was distinctly favorable. Here is an incident that shows how the Albanian people long for and invoke the intervention of America and of UN to help them out of their present tragic situation.

In Scutari, last April, the population of the city, joined by groups of peasants and mountaineers from nearby villages formed a procession to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Good Council, Patroness of Scutari. This religious manifestation was held in spite of the prohibition by the Communist authorities who, in keeping with their doctrine, remain hostile to all religious display. During the procession the people ~~shouted~~ shouted the names of America and President Truman whom they invoked as a Liberator.

ALBANIA'S STRATEGIC VALUE

If the United States are concerned with the security of the Mediterranean zone, and as a means to implement this policy are aiding Greece and Turkey, the value of Albania as one of the pillars of the Adriatic should not be overlooked. For Albania in the hands of a foreign power which is hostile to the United States, represents a short-cut to the Corfu Channel, through the harbors of Valona and Santi Quaranta.

The high rocky Albanian coast faces the opposite Italian shore. Control of the ~~is~~ Island of Saseono, at the entrance of the vast and well protected Bay of Valona, means control of the Adriatic. Once in possession of the Valona base, Russia may be said to have bypassed the Dardanelles ~~is~~ and to have attained freedom of movement in the Mediterranean.

Saseno, which was to a certain extent fortified by the Italians, is less than 73 nautical miles from Brindisi. At present it is under the control of Russian military experts. No Albanian is permitted to go to the island, and recently even the Yugoslavs, who were cooperating with the Russians, ~~returned~~ returned to the mainland.

RELIGIOUS SITUATION OF ALBANIA

65% of the Albanian population is Mohammedan, 25% Orthodox and 10% Catholic.

The Mohammedans are divided into a great number of sects of which only one, however, that of the "bektashi" (80,000 followers) is a legally separate community. The Orthodox Albanians belong to the Albanian Orthodox Church, independent from the other Orthodox churches, governed by the Archbishopric of Durazzo-Tirana and the Bishoprics of Korca, Berat and Argirocastro. There are also small groups of members of the Orthodox faith who depend from the Roman Orthodox Church.

The Latin-rite Catholics are divided into six bishoprics: Scutari, archbishopric with the suffragan dioceses of Sappa, Alessio and Pulati; Durazzo, archbishopric without dependent dioceses, St. Alexander of the Mirdits, "nullius" abbey depending directly from the Holy See. The Catholics of the Oriental rite (united) form an eparchy to themselves, in all the territory to the south of the parallel of Tirana, and depend from the Sacred Oriental Congregation (while the Catholics of the Latin rite depend from the Propaganda Fide) and are at present under the administration of the Latin Archbishopric of Durazzo.

The Latin parishes are administered by the Albanian secular clergy and to considerable extent also by Albanian Franciscan monks. Among the regular clergy are the Minorites, in ~~the~~ their own province, with their own novitiate and student body; the Jesuits of the Venetian-Milanese province who direct the Albanian Pontifical College (which is the national Seminary) for the secular clergy in Scutari; the Sons of Divine Providence (Orionites); while among the Orthodox and the Oriental-rite Catholics are working some Basilians of the Grottaferrata Abbey (Italo-Albanians), Lazarists, Conventual Franciscans, and some secular priests. There are various female ~~religious~~ religious congregations: the "Mantellate"

the "Stimmatine of Scutari" 7 -

of Scutari, (the Albanian province of a vaster congregation), the Daughters of Mary Auxiliatrix, the Sisters of Charity of Zagabria, the Servants of Charity of Brescia and some small groups of nuns, mostly Italo-Albanians for the religion of the South and the Orthodox Church.

The Franciscans and the Jesuits directed great institutes of secondary instruction in Scutari; various institutes of secondary and elementary instruction and kindergartens were directed by the nuns, especially the "Stimmatine"; the Orionites and also the Daughters of Mary Auxiliatrix had an orphan asylum; almost all the hospitals of Albania were served by the various congregations of nuns.

Although the greater part of the Catholic clergy in Albania were Albanians, the religious congregations, with the exception of the Minorites, included Italians to more or less extent.

Although the Catholic clergy did not take any greater part in the Italian regime than did the clergy of other Churches, and did not form a part of the Albanian Fascist Party, they were still considered, because of their well known occidental tendency, not to be hostile to the regime of union with Italy. In reality, the various members of this clergy gave their support to the patriotic movement of resistance and most of them kept completely out of politics, limiting themselves to a notable contribution to the renewal of national culture which, it cannot be denied, was greatly favored by the regime of union with Italy.

When the Bolshevik "Front of National Liberation" came to power, the Catholic, more than the other two Churches, was persecuted for collaboration with the Italians, with the Germans after September 1943 and with the Party of the National Patriotic and Anti-Communist Front.

It can certainly be said that all the Catholic population remained faithful to the line of conduct laid down by the best and most numerous political and cultural leaders of the nation who were in agreement in not

accepting the new regime, held to be anti-national, anti-religious and dangerous to the economic and cultural interests of the nation.

The political result has been that while at one time the Catholics occupied traditionally 25% of State positions of some importance, at present they only have 1% (as in the Chamber of Deputies, etc.).

The following measures which have been suffered by Albania may be held to be religious persecution:

a) Members of the clergy murdered (22): Father Lorens Mitroviq, Franciscan, while on a trip in the winter of 1942-43; a conventual father, killed while carrying out his mission of sanitary assistance at Lushnja in 1943; the Mother Superior of the Servants of Charity of Korca, wounded by a shot while travelling, towards the end of 1944, and held by the partisans so long that it was impossible to save her life; Father Lekë Luli, Minorite, once head of the Albanian Front of Resistance allied with the analogous Serbian front, murdered at the end of 1944; Rev. Lazarus Shantoja, well known poet and member of the Institute of Albanian Studies, tortured and shot in March 1945; Rev. Andrew M Zadeja, well known poet, shot in Scutari on Palm Sunday 1945 for having sheltered the preceding; Father Giovanni Fausti, Vice Provincial of the Jesuits; Father Daniel Dajani, rector of the Albanian Pontifical College; Father John Shllaku, Minorite, with two seminarists of the Pontifical College, accused of plotting against the security of the State and of organization of Christian Democracy, tortured and shot in February 1946; Father Anthony Harapi, well known writer and former Franciscan provincial head, shot in the same period for having accepted the office of Regent of Albania; Father Matthew Prendushi, Provincial head of the Franciscans, shot with two other Franciscans; Rev. Louis Pici, secular priest who at one time adhered to the Communist movement and later abandoned it with heroic protests against the violence and abuses of the Red regime; Rev. Mark Cuni, Rev. Gjon Tusha, Father Frano Kiri, Father Ciprian Nikaj, also shot. Two monks and two priests died under torture while others (35)

priests, monks and Jesuits, languish in prison, under various sentences; among these last is also included the Abbot of Mirdizia, Monsignor Gjini.

Mohammedan clergy: Arrest and uncertain destination of the well known patriot Hafiz Ali Kraja of Scutari and of four other Mohammedan priests.

Bektashi clergy: Mysterious killing of the three highest prelates in the Bektashi hierarchy: Baba Abaz, Baba Faje Martaneshi and Baba Fejzo, in the middle of March 1947.

Orthodox clergy: The Bishop of Argirocastro, Irene' Banushi, imprisoned and not heard of since.

b) All the Italian priests, monks and nuns, except those in prison, expelled from Albania with only their limited personal belongings.

c) The Albanian priests and nuns driven away from their residences in the mountain parishes with nothing but their personal belongings.

d) The Bishops forced to live in only two rooms and the parish priests in only one room of their residences and all the furniture for which they were responsible confiscated, as well as the churches, which were declared property of the people.

e) The Pontifical College occupied and turned over to profane use, and the students scattered.

f) The 5 Catholic magazines suppressed and their printing shop confiscated.

g) The Apostolic Delegate expelled and his successor (of American nationality) prevented from entering Albania.

h) Religious instruction for the young prohibited.

i) A continuous strong press campaign against the clergy, the Bishops and even the Holy See.

j) Entrance to the churches controlled.

k) Two bishops having died (Scutari and Alessio), the appointment of successors practically prevented.

POLITICAL PERSECUTION

The propaganda of the present terrorist regime in Albania tries to present a picture of all the anti-Communists as collaborationists, Nazis and Fascists. The tiny Albanian nation has always been the object, never the subject, of history. Because of the exigencies of circumstances far superior to the possibilities of national will, Albania's foreign policy always has depended on first one and then the other great power. Therefore it is absurd to accuse of collaborationism a people who have always suffered all kinds of impositions by the foreigners, although they have managed, by a miracle of tenacity, to conserve their own ethnic characteristics. At any rate, among the patriots who have ^{been} done away with, Kolë Tromara and Bahri Omari, formerly Presidents in Boston of the Albanian-American patriotic society "VATRA", and the first also the founder of an Albanian Democratic Party with a Laborist tinge, can certainly not be listed as Nazi-Fascists. Many of the patriots who had been persecuted by the Fascists and the Nazis were later shot by the Communists after a hasty sentence by improvised tribunals. In the same way, many Fascists and Nazis passed over to Communism as soon as it seemed to stand a good chance of success: Dr. Omer Nishani, at present an influential member of the Presidium and of Parliament, did Fascist propaganda and held various offices under the Italo-Albanian regime; Col. Kadri Hoxha, before beginning his brilliant career as a Communist officer, was a proud member of the Elbasan Fascio. Many other cases are similar.

The aims of the regime, inspired and fomented by foreign agents, is not to punish those who may have been collaborationists, but to eliminate every individual of some worth, who might stand in the way of the "Slavization" of the country. Whoever represents a threat of opposition to the Pan-Slav objectives, even in the far future, is suppressed without mercy. Not even merits acquired in Communist service are sufficient to save such a man. On the other hand, former agents of Italian, Greek or Austrian politics

Below is a list of the better known Albanians who were done away with from 1943 to 1947, in addition to those already mentioned:

POETS:

Rev. Lazar Shantoja

Rev. Andrew Zadeja

WRITERS:

Father Anthony Harapi

Rev. Gjon Tusha

Lef Nosi

JOURNALISTS:

Prog. Gjergj Kokoshi

Nebil Cika

Aleks Mavraqi

Rev. Gjon Shllaku

Hilmi Leka

POLITICAL PERSONAGES:

Fejzi Alizoti

Sulco Bushati

Dr. Terenzio Toci

Fazli Frasheri

Kolë Tromara

Bahri Omari

Beqir Walter

Kostantin Kotte

Idhomen Kosturi

Hysejn Mushqeta

MILITARY PERSONAGES:

General Akif Permeti
" Gustav Myrdacz
Colonel Shukri Borshi
Tahsin Bishqemi
Daut Çarçani
Ismail Golemi
Llesh Marashi
Ndok Gjeloši
Skender Çami
Aziz Çami
Dik Çami
Adem Boletini
Ndrez Prenga
Kolë Zadrina

MOUNTAIN CHIEFTAINS:

Preng Cali
Ded Tzoku
Malil Alija
The sons of Muharrem Bajraktari
The brother of Hysni Dema

HIGH OFFICIALS:

Javer Hurshiti
Zef Kadarja

ECONOMIC SITUATION

Albanian economy is similar to that of Yugoslavia rather than complementary. Yugoslavia produces a larger quantity and a better quality of wool, hides, tanned leather, building lumber and fuel wood while Yugoslav industry cannot export to Albania the manufactured products and other articles of which Albania has great need. The iron curtain between Albania and the Occident has destroyed every possibility of free trade and of finding a good market abroad for Albanian products.

Today Albania suffers an extreme of poverty unknown even in the darkest years of the Turkis domination. Great confusion reigns in the economic life of the country, especially for the following reasons:

a) The impossibility of export of the products of the country (wool, hides, tanned leather, horses, eggs, cheese, etc.) because of the hostile attitude taken by the Communist regime towards the nearest nations to the west, the only market for these products.

b) The end of commerce caused by the 1945 tax on war profits and profits of the regime: the application of this tax has been left to the arbitrary will of the executive organs. This tax, out of all reason for Albania, was supposed to bring a total of one and a half billion Albanian francs: it is to be noted that all the paper money put in circulation by the National Bank of Albania is not more than 350 million Albanian francs. Since the merchants were not able to pay the quotas imposed on them, they have been obliged to submit to the confiscation of their goods and their real estate; many of them, however, not being able to reach the exorbitant figure set them, are still in prison.

c) All industries have been taken over by the State and their management given into the hands of incompetent persons.

Also worthy of consideration is the figure for the State budget 1945-46: a billion and sixteen million Albanian francs.

Before 1939 it had never gone above 24 million a year, and between 1939 and 1943 it reached the figure of 40 million Albanian francs.

More than the half of the State budget for 1945-46 (one billion and sixteen million Albanian francs) that is about 600 million, is reserved for military expenditures. The figure for the 1946-47 budget is not known.

COMMUNIST PENETRATION

Beginning in 1935 the weak cells of the Albanian Communist party began to receive new impulse, and were organized with iron discipline by two mysterious Slav agents known by the name of Duscian and Miladin. Both of them disappeared as soon as the Communist regime was installed in Albania. Their place was taken by three Russian missions: a military mission that oversees the teaching of the Albanian officers and the organization of the army; a civil mission that controls the various ministries and state services; and a technical mission that directs public works and those of the coastal and frontier fortifications, and work in the mines. Hundreds of Russians with their families have settled down in the best buildings of the ~~city~~ Albanian cities, especially in Tirana.

Communism as an ideology cannot take roots in Albania where the people are tenaciously attached to their century-old traditions. Another reason why the Albanian is inclined to have nothing to do with the ~~arbitrary~~ impositions of the doctrine of Moscow is that he fears that this doctrine masks an attempt at Slavization, which is only too true. The common man in Albania thinks that the Slavs, not having been able to subjugate Albania by force of arms, are now trying to attain their end through the expedient of an idea that destroys at

the roots the national traditions.

A proof that the people do not love the present regime is the support given by them to the movement of anti-Communist ~~xxx~~ resistance. The son of Markagjoni and many other ~~xxx~~ heroes would never have been able to avoid capture by the numerous Government forces sent against them, had not ~~xxxx~~ the population helped by giving them shelter and bringing them food.

The anti-Communist movement of resistance of 1943, the period of the installation of the Red Communist dictatorship, has never been interrupted. The people venerate the by now legendary names of Prince Markagjoni, Jup Kazazi, Sefedin Biçaku and of others who fell fighting against the Communist government forces. Every day other defenders of liberty fall on the mountains, and their places are taken by new ranks of courageous youths, who have refused to accept the Moscovite ideology. During the last few months the bands of anti-Communist partisans have also increased in Southern Albania. Their action renders life difficult, especially in the out of the way regions, for the authorities of the Red regime.

The history of Albania for the last few centuries is nothing but a long series of epic ~~xxxxxxx~~ struggles against the Southern Slavs who press fearfully against the tiny nation in their march towards the Mediterranean. Entire Albanian populations have been literally exterminated by the Slavs in the fertile Kosova plain and to the north of Scutari. All the Albanian folksongs bear clear testimony to Slav ferocity and to the irreducible instinct for national liberty of the Albanians, who were hindered in the complete development of their possibilities of progress not so much by the static and apathetic Ottoman domination as by the continuous assaults of the Southern Slavs, urged and upheld in their march towards Durazzo and Viona by their great Patron, Russia. Catherine II, with the peace treaty of Kutchku Kainardji (1774) obtained from the Ottoman Porte,

various concessions for the protection of the Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire, and in that way acquired a trustworthy weapon for Russian penetration and expansion in the Balkans. Naturally the Russians consider all the Orthodox as Slavs, which is not true, because in the Balkans religion is not always identified with race.