

JOHN T. MALAKASSES

THE AMERICAN POSITION 1946-1949,  
ON GREECE'S CLAIMS TO SOUTHERN ALBANIA

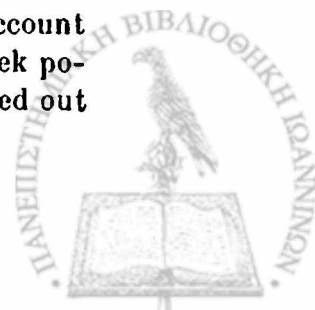
The first post world war two administration that Greece was to have was installed in Athens, by a British expeditionary force which had arrived on Greek soil at the heels of the retreating German army. Of course, it is worth emphasizing here, that the country had already been liberated by the resistance armies, and an indigenous administration was operating in the land by the partisan armies of EAM, the ELAS.

The Papandreou government, which was carried over from the Middle East by the British was a most subservient<sup>1</sup> and totally depended on the later for its very existence. Not surprisingly then, that lacking mass popular support and at variance with the political institutions of the land, as had evolved during the occupation of the country by the Germans, it resorted to a campaign of an unprecedented, even for a Balkan state, jingoism, that was wiping to a frenzy the revanchist passions of the most politically retarded, elements of the population. Indeed, the market alienation of the traditional political parties<sup>2</sup>, not excluding the liberal and

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1. On the proverbial servility of Papandreou to the British, see a study by the OSS, British Policy toward Greece, 1941-1944, R & A No. 2818, Washington 9 February 1945, pp. 22-26. In the annex pa. vi of the same study the following are contained on Papandreou: «Papandreou's habit of dealing directly with the British and of disregarding the existence of his cabinet has been exemplified on two occasions since the liberation of Greece (1) The order that the resistance groups must disband by December 10 1944 was announced after Papandreou had been in conference with General Scobie, but without the acquiescence of his cabinet. (2) At the end of November 1944 Papandreou had agreed with his cabinet that the Mountain Brigade should be disbanded; but on 29 November, after consultation with the British, he presented a statement that the Brigade should be retained. Siantos, present at the meeting, said on this occasion: «So, between ourselves we agree; it is only the British who keep us from coming together and solving our problems». Ibid, p. 51.

2. Both the Liberal and the Populist parties, the two main bourgeoisie parties were not to be differentiated by their programs but rather they differed on account of the personalities in charge. In a study by the State Department on the Greek political parties on December 1944, the above is quite evident: «It is again pointed out



the populist ones, with the body politic of Greece, was the very cause of the preposterous campaign for territorial aggrandizement against the neighboring states that was sweeping Greece.

So much so that the American observers on the spot could not but underline this phenomenal rise of expansionism that had mushroomed by leaps and bounds in Athens, as one of the most striking developments in post war Greece. In a report to the well known diplomatic historian Dr. William Langer then serving with the OSS, the following analysis was offered:

*In order to embarrass EAM and the left, and apparently in an effort to outdo one another, the rightist parties, including the Liberal and Popular parties, are making extreme demands for post-war territorial aggrandizement of Greece.*

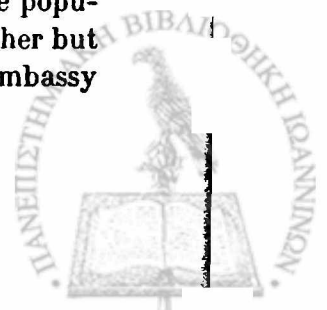
*The rightists realize that they have no popular backing and that they have been caught without a program for the reconstruction of Greece. EAM, conversely, is the most powerful political group with the largest following (in the Athens area, at least) and has a well-defined recovery program. However, EAM has been quite conservative in its international program. In order to appeal to the popular imagination and attack EAM in a most negative manner the old line parties are trying to revive, among other things, a Megal-Ellas.*

*Starting with the Rila Dagh-Avloni-Nisi demands as a basis, and supporting their claims with specious and unrealistic arguments they have demanded the following:*

1. *All of southern Albania (northern Epirus to them) south of a line which runs roughly between Valona to Pogradec*

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that the distinction between some sections of the Liberal and the Popular Party is not well defined. In internal affairs the Party has no programme except opposition to EAM, and would possibly favour a dictatorial regime, with or without the King, in order to break the power of the Left.» National Archives of the United States, Department of State, PIC/G/61, A Short Guide to Greek Political Parties and Personalities, pp. 4. On the same issue see a quite revealing interview of the Greek politician K. Karamanlis with the third secretary of the American embassy in Athens Mr. Oliver Crosby. There, among other thing, Karamanlis said the following: «In this respect, Karamanlis observed that the populist party is similar to most other Greek political parties... When I pressed him for his opinion as to the position of the populist party Karamanlis said that there is little that differentiates one from another but the leaders». Ibid, Department of State, despach no. 629 by the American embassy in Athens to the State Department of August 30, 1949.



*and Lake Ochrida. This is claimed on historic and ethnic grounds.*

2. *Since Papandreou's speech claims to Yugoslav territory, including the Monastir area, have been hushed up<sup>1</sup>.*

In this context, therefore, and in order to divert the attention of the country, then at the verge of a most destructive civil war, the Greek coalition government of Sophoulis<sup>2</sup>, decided to officially press for the incorporation into Greece of the area designated by the rightist<sup>3</sup> propaganda

1. Ibid, RG 226, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, 103578, of November 15, 1944.

2. The Greek government was pressing also for the «rectification» of the Greco-Bulgarian frontier at the same conference. The position of Washington on this was also negative. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in a memorandum to the Secretary of State, who had sought their recommendations on the matter, since the Greek government was citing military considerations for the «rectification», rejected it on the following reasons: «Greece desires to advance her Bulgarian frontier an average of about thirty-six miles northward... approximately doubling the present width of her territory between Bulgaria and the Aegean sea. This would require the transfer of a strip of more than 6,000 square miles of Bulgarian territory along the full length of the Greco-Bulgarian frontier with a population of about 400,000, the majority of whom are Moslem Pomaks or Turks.

d. Advancing the Greek boundary at the expense of Bulgaria, as proposed, would not strengthen the Greek position sufficiently for her to participate effectively with Turkey in the defence of the Dardanelles....

c. Transfer of this territory from Bulgaria to Greece would likely be followed by violent resentment and partisan activities. The peace of the Balkans would thereby be endangered without decisive strategic gain.» Ibid, RG 218, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, CCS 323.33 (4-30-46), pp. 1-2.

3. The American naval attache in Athens in May 1945, submitted a report to the Navy Department in Washington, Intelligence Division, on the issue of the Greek claims to southern Albania. His source was an important, according to him, Greek communist who was «generally respected in KKE-EAM as an intellectual». The naval attache seems to share the validity of his source's conclusions considering them «factual not argumentative». «Subsource's views were elicited by source's references to recent articles in Athenian rightist newspapers demanding that all of northern Epirus be cut off from Albania and given to Greece as its rightful, historical heritage. One rightist opinion, extreme and not shared by all rightists, is that the territory should include all that is now Albania south of the River Shkumbin (near Elbasan).....The rightist argument (that everybody in Koritsa and Argyrokastron is Greek) is misleading. The fact is that in Koritsa approximately one-third of the population is truly Greek, and in Argyrokastron about 1,500 of the 11,000 inhabitants are real Greeks. The rest of the residents in these two towns are Albanian, although a large number of them speak Greek and are members of the Orthodox church». Ibid, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, intelligence division, Navy Department, C-10-d, 6087-B. FA-6 (633), pp. 1-2.



as Northern Epirus or Southern Albania, in the forthcoming meeting of the Council of foreign ministers in Paris on April 26, 1946. The support of the United States, naturally, was judged to be of critical importance by the administration in Athens. In the absence of any high level consultations on the matter, Sofianopoulos, presented the State Department through the Greek embassy in Washington with the following note:

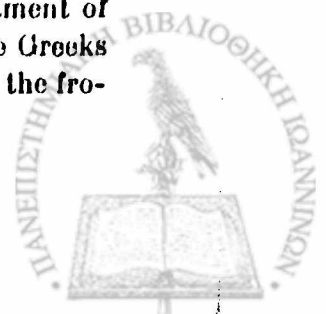
*«The Greek Government considers further postponement of this question as highly detrimental to the interests of Greece and hopes that the assurances given by both the United States and British Governments at the time of recognition of Hoxha's regime by their respective countries, to the effect that such recognition would not prejudice Greece's territorial demands against Albania, will prompt them to see to it that the Albanian question will come up for consideration at an early date and that a settlement thereof involving the cession of Northern Epirus to Greece will be reached soon»<sup>1</sup>.*

The State Department was lukewarm if not outright rejective of this challenge to the territorial *status quo* in the Balkans. The request of the Greek administration was not given any consideration by the State Department for the ethnic reasons advanced in the Greek memorandum<sup>2</sup>. Instead, the matter was referred to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their estimate of the strategic value to Greece and/or Albania of the disputed region.

The case then being stripped of its emotional nationalist overlook was to be evaluated on the basis of the overall American strategy and interests in the area and to the possible ramifications in the balance of power in the Balkans. In this context, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a highly analytical study declared categorically against any American position at the Paris conference supportive of the Greek claims: Citing reasons, among others, a possible confrontation in the Balkans, thus not precluding the possibility of an American military involvement, which the

1. Ibid, RG 218, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, 092 Greece (4-11-46). Memorandum by the State Department member of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee. Greek claims to Northern Epirus (Southern Albania), p. 2

2. «The Greek Government is attempting to secure all of Northern Epirus (Southern Albania) on a basis of ethnic and strategic considerations. The Department of State is obviously not qualified to assess the validity of any claims which the Greeks have made which relate to the latter. The Albanians on the other hand, wish the frontier to remain as it was in 1939». Ibid.





American military establishment was neither prepared nor in a position to undertake.

- a. *The Northern Epirus area is mountainous. In this area are the most important passes and terrain barriers between the northern plains of Albania and the Greek frontier. The zone(?) includes no ports or airfields of importance. It has some mineral wealth and the meager surplus food production of the area is of considerable importance to Albania, which as a whole is deficient in food production.*
- c. *The loss of Northern Epirus by Albania would deprive that nation of her only natural defensive positions against attack from the south. The converse is not true with respect to Greece, since her present boundary gives her control of terrain (along the Albanian frontier) well suited to defence.*
- e. *Albania is now depended upon import of some food from Yugoslavia. Loss of Northern Epirus, considered by Albania to be part of her territory, coupled with loss of the food production of that area, would inevitably force even closer economic and military cooperation with Yugoslavia and possibly might result in Albania joining as a part of the Yugoslav confederation.*
- f. *Cession of this territory to Greece is likely to be followed by guerrilla warfare, which could endanger peace in the Balkans<sup>1</sup>.*

The recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff not only were heeded to by the State Department but for years to come they spear-headed the main arguments on which the successive American administrations strenuously barred the attempts of the client regimes of Athens to raise the issue. Not, of course, that the Greek governments, especially of the civil war years and the first post civil war did not, continue<sup>2</sup> to agitate for purely domestic considerations.

1. Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of April 20, 1946, to the Secretary of State. Ibid.

2. As it can be seen from a report by the National Security Council on the «U. S. Objectives with Respect to Greece and Turkey», the Greek administration in 1948 continued to obstruct a peaceful settlement with Tirana on account of the ever present Greek claims on the southern part of that country: «...claims by both Greece and Yugoslavia to portions of Albanian territory, maintenance by Greece of a legal state of war with Albania...». At another point the same report notices: «Conciliation efforts by the President of the General Assembly during November and December, 1948, between Greece on one hand and Albania... broke down on the insistence of Albania that a clause be included in the Albano-Greek agreement stipulating, first, that Gre-



This jingoism advanced by the administration in Athens, as it might be expected, incited various nationalist ultras to press with the most ludicrous and adventurous schemes to «liberate» «Northern Epirus» and incorporate the region to Greece. One such a preposterous plot was hatched by a former Greek bishop of the area, then an emigre in Athens, working in cahoots with one, Thales Retorides.<sup>1</sup>

Lacking any known financial means and of course, deprived of popular support in either Albania or Greece<sup>2</sup>, the said bishop Eulogios Kourilas, sought the aid of the American secret services, in fact the execution of the conspiratorial designs depended exclusively on the willingness of the Americans to endorse and take it under their auspices. It is not accidental that the chief architects of this coup d'theatre, according to the learned Lincoln MacVeagh, then ambassador of the United States in Athens, had a most interesting and in words of the ambassador «malodorous» past. Thomas Karamessines<sup>3</sup>, then in charge of security matters at the embassy, acting on the explicit orders of Mr. MacVeagh, to procure «some background information» on the bishop and Retorides reported as follows:

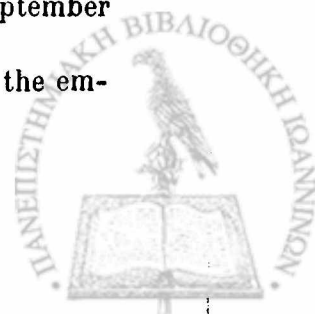
*Our files contain a brief note on bishop Kourilla, dated 1944, and describing him as a quisling who contributed to the arrest of Archbishop Damaskinos by the Germans by accusing him of aiding the resistance movement. A late note, November 1945, states that Kourila has resisted communist pressure on the Orthodox Church, and that he is not in good favor with the Hoxha Government.*

ece recognize not only that a state of war with Albania no longer exists but had never existed in the past, and second, that the present border between the two countries is irrevocable». Ibid. Record Group 319 (Army Staff) P+ O-092 Europe. T. S. (Section II-A) (Case 22 only) (Book I) (Sub-NOS-), pp 10-14.

1. A Greek pamphlet published in Yiannena by a local man of letters, quite recently, attributes many a virtue to Mr. Retorides, for instance he is presented as a personal friend of Nixon, a protege of the late Robert Kennedy and a receiver of favours from Jimmy Carter. Also as a poet, publisher, and a musician. Georgios Vrelles, *Genike Theorese sten Poiese tou Thale Retoride*, Rome 1982, p. 8.

2. Karamessines in his report to the ambassador on the strength of the organization of the would be «revolutionists» wrote the following: «There is no information to lead to belief that the Bishop's organization includes, at this time, members other than the bishop and Mr. Retorides». National Archives of the United States, Department of State, Report by ambassador MacVeagh to the State Department of September 26, 1946, 355020, p. 1.

3. A Greek American then an attache in charge of security matters at the embassy and later the first head of the CIA in Greece.



*We are advised, on good reliability, that Evlogios Kourilla, Metropolitan of Koritsa, was on very close and friendly relations with the Germans and the Italians during the war, and that he acted often against Allied interests. In addition to his clandestine cooperation with German and Italian figures, notably General Tzelozo with whom he was in frequent contact, he published several articles in Greek newspapers against Allied interests. It is believed that these pro German publications were made in an effort to win German approval for his designation as Archbishop of Athens<sup>1</sup>.*

Originally, the bishop wanted to see Mr. MacVeagh personally to make him a privy to the conspiracy and to seek his aid to bring about a revolution in Albania to overthrow the regime. Failing to grasp the true nature of the bishop's visit the ambassador suggested that he meet with Dr. Blegen<sup>2</sup>, then cultural attache of the American embassy: «This I did in my innocence, supposing that his business could only be religious or educational. The true nature of the Bishop's mission then popped out of the bag».

Kourila's emissary to the American embassy, however, was set to meet with an officer of the political section. The startling revelation to a dumb-stricken third secretary of the embassy of the extraordinary designs of the two co-conspirators, to overthrow single handed the regime in Albania prompted Mr. MacVeagh to write to the State Department that instead of seeking an audience with the embassy staff they ought to have met with a «lunacy commission»<sup>3</sup>.

In unfolding the web of the intrigue, bizarre as it was, Retorides, stressed the importance of the infiltration of agents into Albania under the disguise of UNRRA and other relief agencies a method well tested, according to the Albanians at that precise time<sup>4</sup>. It is worth noticing also that the new government to be established in Alba-

1. Ibid. Enclosure No. 2 to Despatch No. 3150.

2. A noted American archaeologist who worked for a number of years in Greece and is known for the excavations of Troy. He was also a distinguished member of the OSS. In the fifties he became chairman of the classics department at the University of Cincinnati, where I had the opportunity to meet with while a graduate student at the history department there.

3. National Archives of the United States, Department of State, Report by ambassador MacVeagh to the State Department of September 26, 1946, p. 1.

4. On that see the comments of Enver Hoxha on the activities of the UNRRA personnel in Albania and how the Albanians had requested that they be expelled from their country on account of these activities. Enver Hoxha, *The Anglo-American Threat to Albania*, Tirana, 1982, pp. 353-433.



nia at the wake of the uprising would be of followers of the former king Zog and that they would placate Greece by ceding «Northern Epirus» to Greece. Furthermore, the triumph or the collapse of the conspiracy depended «upon hope of substantial foreign support, not only in preparing the coup, but in maintaining it by immediate recognition...»<sup>1</sup>. And as to lure that «foreign support» the plotters were prepared to satisfy the Italian and above all the American interests in that region, foremost of which was the ousting of the Soviets and the establishment of an American sphere of influence there<sup>2</sup>.

However, because of the onerous past of the would be beneficiaries of the overthrow of the regime in Albania, the followers of Zog and former big landowners along with war time collaborators with Germans and the Italians, special care was taken by Retorides, to assure the Americans of the moral character of «organization». «Mr. Retorides stated... that the Organization had decided to inform the United States Government of its existence so that it would have the 'true picture' of the Organization and would not believe false rumors which undoubtedly would reach it»<sup>3</sup>.

Three years later in 1949, a Caucasian resident of Turkey since the end of the first world war, one Gasi Khan Bessolt<sup>4</sup>, proposed to the Americans a similar to Kourila's plan for the overthrow of the communist

1. National Archives of the United States, Department of State, Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 3150, September 26, 1946, from the American embassy in Athens, p. 2.

2. «The establishment of government oriented toward the West.....The entire scheme as explained by Mr. Retorides appears to be based upon hope of substantial foreign support not only in preparing the coup, but in maintaining it by immediate recognition, in order to ward off retaliation from other Soviet-supported Balkan states». Ibid, p. 3.

3. Insinuating, quite evidently, that the «organization», that is the bishop had been compromised during the war, as the Karamessines report to MacVeagh was to document.

4. National Archives of the United States, Record Group 319, Records of the U. S. Army Staff, «Albania». Despatch by the American military attache in Ankara to the Director of Intelligence, General Staff, U.S. Army, of July 13, 1949. Bessolt, who according to the American military attache was supplying them «over the past several years...information....both accurate and useful», was an agent of the former king Zog. Zog, in Bessolt's report was presented as quite an unprincipled individual, one whose sole aim was to reconsolidate his position in Albania regardless the means or the type of authority that was to be established: «My opinion is that if the Albanian people vote for the Monarchy, the king will be Zog I; and if the vote takes the side of the Republic, the party elected as President will, just the same, be Ahmet Zogu». Ibid.



regime in Tirana. The essence of Bossolt's scheme was again based on foreign support which alone could assure the success of the enterprise, but essentially he was acting on behalf of Zog, who in case of victory would be either a king or president of a republic. Bossolt, who for years had been a source of information to the American embassy in Turkey, and as the latter admitted, was also an agent of the Turkish National Security Service, in order to induce the Americans to espouse his cause, gave them able proofs that Albania would sway, under Zog to their sphere of influence. Furthermore, bases would be offered, the naval base of Saseno was mentioned, and Albania would be used as the springboard for launching operations against the other socialist states in the area.

But the prerequisite, in sharp variance with the aims of Kourila, for the operation to have even a modicum of success was a definitive statement on the inviolability of the Albanian state. The guarantee, on the part of Greece with an allied endorsement, for good measure, of the Albanian national frontiers as they existed prior to 1939, that is the abandonment of the Greek claims on northern Epirus<sup>1</sup>. That an emphasis was placed on Greece's public and unequivocal acceptance of the *status quo* as it existed in the area, since it was stated no «revolt» could be launched and no invasion could be attempted without such a declaration by Athens.

The futility of this chimeric scheme of Zog, needless to say, was demonstrated by the fact that it never left the drawing board. The State Department and the Department of Defence in Washington at about the same time were formulating a policy on Albania which in essence was reaffirming the principle of a sovereign independent Albanian state, free of the encroachments of both Yugoslavia and Greece. In a State Department position paper on the U. S. objectives on Albania, one incorporating the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the then undersecretary of State Dean Rusk was more than categorical on the American determination to safeguard and preserve the national boundaries of that Balkan state from the encroachment of its neighbors:

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1. «Greece, if possible with the Allies, must officially and solemnly declare that she recognizes the Albanian frontiers of 1913... She must renounce her unfounded claims upon southern Albania (the fertile provinces Korça and Argirokastro, also called Northern Epirus) and inaugurate a new policy of friendship and good neighborliness with a truly free and independent Albania. Such a declaration will have enormous consequences. The Albanian people prefers to suffer voluntarily under the communist yoke. It will not attack the communists for fear that Greece may profit by the occasion to invade southern Albania». Ibid, p. 5.





- (a) *Prevention of partition of Albania by Greece and Yugoslavia.*
- (b) *Utilization of US, UK and French influence in Athens to prevent the Greek Army from entering Albania (except in case of a direct military aggression from Albania).*
- (c) *Utilization of US, UK and French influence at the proper time, in Belgrade to prevent Yugoslav military intervention in Albania<sup>1</sup>.*

To such an extent the United States was committed to maintain and respect the «existing frontiers in the Balkans»<sup>2</sup>, that appropriate warnings were to be delivered to Belgrade, judged to be the most visible aggressor, to refrain from anything that could threatened peace in the Balkans:

*Yugoslav authorities, however, should be given clearly to understand that the US would be forced to re-examine its present policy toward the Belgrade Government should that Government provoke, or be mainly instrumental in participating in, a situation Albania which might involve grave risks of a general conflict in Southeast Europe<sup>3</sup>.*

The State Department and to lesser extent London were also «controlling any action on the part of Albanian groups, particularly the Albanian National Committee»<sup>4</sup>, aiming at the overthrow of the Hoxha regime, least such an attempt provoke a general conflagration in the area.

1. Ibid, RG 218, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, CCS 092, Albania (10-20-49) Sec I.

2. Ibid, p. 3. «On a recent occasion Tito informed Ambassador Cannon that it was vital to Yugoslavia that Albanian independence be respected, and that Yugoslavia's chief concern was the danger of action on the part of Greece. Cannon replied that we had given the Greeks strong advice to stay out and that the US had always stood for the independence of Albania.

The US Embassy in Belgrade need not at the present time take any further initiative in discussing the Albanian situation with the Yugoslav authorities, If the latter should again approach the US officials on the subject the reply should be that US naturally shares Yugoslavia's distaste for the present Hoxha regime, but believes that whatever regime replaces it should be freely determined by the Albanian people themselves and not under the domination of any foreign power.» Ibid, p.2.

3. Ibid, p.3.

4. A committee, according to the same report, founded with the aid and approval of the western powers who were attempting to make it as «representative as pos-



Extending this new dogma of the foreign relations of the United States in the Balkans the State Department made conscientious efforts by the governments of Belgrade and Athens to bring about a diplomatic rapprochement with the regime in Tirana with a view that such a development would preclude that «foreign influence in the country (Albania) should not be allowed to take the form of domination, that it should be directed towards helping the Albanians to govern and to support themselves and that it should not be unfriendly to the US»<sup>1</sup>.

To that end, the Greek claim on southern Albania, according to the same dogma, was to be held in abeyance, to be decided at a later time by «an appropriate international body»<sup>2</sup>, which in view of the above was rather an academic issue at best.

A few months earlier prior to this reaffirmation of the American commitment to the territorial integrity of Albania, the Greek government of Sophoulis, through the then undersecretary for foreign affairs Pipinelis<sup>3</sup>, in a rather detailed memorandum submitted to the State Department by means of the American embassy in Athens, raised, in a most provocative manner, the whole issue of the vexing Greco-Albanian relations. Challenging, officially, for the first time the very essence of Albanian independence, Greece advanced three proposals, which if were to be adopted, would have meant virtual extinction of Albania as a national state.

Basing their arguments mainly on the premise that «Albanian in-

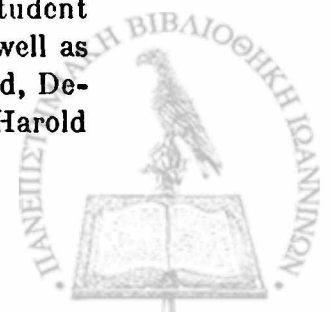
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sible», so as to be less onerous to the public opinion which was aware of the discredited personalities surrounding Zog and his entourage of former chieftains. Ibid, p. 2.

1. «We would expect that such developments would make possible good relations between Albania and Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy respectively, and would orient Albania toward the West». Ibid, p. 1.

2. «With respect to the Greek claim to Northern Epirus, we would of course, be willing, as we have indicated in the past to have this claim considered by an appropriate international body at some later time. We should not permit this issue to interfere with the more important immediate objective of ending the guerrilla menace and establishing more normal relations between the two countries». Ibid, p. 3. Italics mine.

3. «As the Department is aware, wrote the charge d' affaires ad interim of the American embassy in Athens Harold B. Minor, Mr. Pipinelis is a thorough student of Balkan affairs, an experienced diplomat, and by virtue of his position as well as his abilities, plays a leading role in the formulation of Greek foreign policy». Ibid, Department of State, 350 Albania, Despatch by the American charge d' affaires Harold Minor to the Secretary of State of May 12 1949.



dependence has never been more than a theory»<sup>1</sup>, and furthermore that in the form it existed constituted a grave threat to the national security of the neighbouring states<sup>2</sup>, Athens envisioned the partitioning with or incorporation by either Yugoslavia or Greece, of the Albanian state. This total eradication from the political map of Europe of a sovereign state, was rationalized also on the assumptions that such an event would serve best the interests of the western powers, essentially the United States, with the elimination of the Soviet influence in the area.

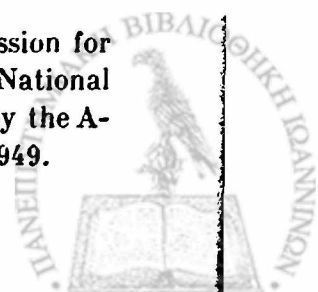
Of the three proposals, the one which according to the author merited the most attention, was the scheme providing for incorporation of Albania into Greece and the formation of two self-governing communities. Under this indeed pungent plan Pipinelis not only was «solving» the north Epirus claim but, also the demographic dilemmas of Greece. For Albania was destined to absorb all the surplus population of the Greek cities which would be colonizing, on the precedent of the Italians in 1939, the fertile plains and the coastal regions of that country.

The American charge d' affaires, while recognizing that the Pipinelis views «represent a step forward in Greek thinking on the Albanian question», because of Pipinelis' admission that there was also an Albanian side on the question of northern Epirus<sup>3</sup>, was rather absolute in his conclusions that no Albanian administration even a non-communist one would have accepted a merger of the country with Greece. Such a merger he continued would have been taken as a veiled attempt «to bring Albania under Greek control», and as such would be rejected by the Albanians irrespective of their political affiliations.

1. «In this connection reference is made to the pre-war Italian control of the country and the post-war subordination of Albania first to Tito and later directly to the USSR». Of course, both the author of the memorandum and the writer of the commentary on it, failed, in fact dismayed, to understand the policies of Enver Hoxha who was steering, amidst those very real threats to a truly independence course, making Albania for the first time in her history an independent national sovereign state, and in the process instilling a new pride in the inhabitants of the country as members of a homogeneous national entity. Ibid, p. 1.

2. «The dangers arising from the present subjugation to Russian tutelage are considered to extent...and to include the menace to Italy and Mediterranean communications of a potential Russian naval bridge-head on Adriatic». And here again a parenthesis is necessary to underline the vigilance of Enver Hoxha who successfully countermanded all the various plots to reestablish a counterrevolutionary regime in his country. Ibid. Enver Hoxha, *The Titoites*, Tirana, 1982.

3. «Paranetically, it may be remarked that it is a remarkable admission for any Greek to recognize that there is an Albanian side to this question». National Archives of the United States, Department of State, 350 Albania, Despatch by the American charge d' affaires Harold Minor to the Secretary of State of May 12, 1949.



What to him, however, seemed feasible, and advisable to the Greek government was that the latter should inaugurate a policy of friendliness among the two countries, «altering its propaganda regarding Albania». That is Greece ought to modify, in a radical manner, the scope of its claims to Albania and instead press for the «regulation of the Epirus question on the basis of local- self government and to seek the establishment of a customs union»<sup>1</sup>.

While, the latest Greek proposals, did indeed reveal a rather unparalleled Greek expansionism, which in conjunction with Tito's standing thesis to dismantle<sup>2</sup> Albania, was threatening the very essence of Albanian independence, the State Department and the Department of Defence in Washington, were taking steps to either harness this menace to peace in the Balkans or to channel it in a way not inimical to American interests. Working in accord with London in this matter Washington was urging both the governments of Athens and Belgrade to scrupulously avoid any military intervention in Albania in the «event of, or in the face of the imminence of, a Cominform attack on Yugoslavia...»<sup>3</sup>. At worst if both states were bound to invade Albania, acting unilaterally of the wishes of the western powers, Washington wanted to stress the desirability that such an intervention not to take place «without prior consultation with the United States and United Kingdom concerning the advisability of such intervention»<sup>4</sup>.

The other feasible possibility that such an upset in the map of the Balkans could take place, in the reasoning of the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff existed in the case that the counterrevolutionary forces, aided and abetted of course, or at the least endorsed by Washington itself, could have effected an overthrow of the regime in Tirana. Since such an occurrence would have been a welcomed change in the balance of power in the strategic flanks of the Adriatic, and would have been the

1. Pipinelis' thoughts on that seem to run on parallel lines with the aims pursued by Tito in his efforts to absorb Albania. Hoxha, *Titoites*, pp. 299-352.

2. *Ibid*, pp. 353-39.

3. National Archives of the United States, RG 330, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defence, CD 092 (Yugoslavia) (1952) IS. Memorandum to the Secretary of Defence by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Omar N. Bradley

4. «In arriving at this opinion the Joint Chiefs of Staff were influenced by the belief that, from a military point of view, it is unlikely that Yugoslavia would be willing to permit Albania, a hostile nation of Kremlin orientation, to remain unattended on its flank in the event or imminence of a Cominform attack on Yugoslavia». *Ibid*. p. 2.



beginning of the establishment of American bases there, denying it at the same time to the Soviets<sup>1</sup> the State Department was repugnant at any idea of dismantling Albania among her two traditional encroaching neighbors:

*Further, it also appears plausible, in view of the vulnerability of the communist Albanian regime and the possibility of its fall, that both the Yugoslav and Greek Governments may be under strong inclination to effect the military occupation of Albania if that Government should fall even though a Cominform attack on Yugoslavia is not imminent. Such intervention would be undersirable since it would deny the new regime an opportunity to prove itself friendly to the West<sup>2</sup>.*

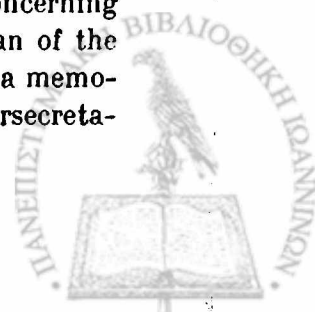
Nevertheless, since it was a known fact to the policy makers in Washington the determination of both Yugoslavia and Greece<sup>3</sup>, to annex the Albanian territory and divide the spoils, the State Department judged proper to seek an understanding with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the line of partition preferable to the United States and Britain. In arriving at such a decision the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended, and it was accepted by the State Department, that the line of demarcation should be withheld from the two Balkan governments, since «any suggestion of a line of partition preferred by the United States and the United Kingdom ...would serve only to detract from the force of the United States and United Kingdom effort to prevent this intervention».

Another power which according to the same sources should not be a privy to the Anglo-American plans on Albania in reference to the Yu-

1. Enver Hoxha in his work *The Khrushchevites*, writes these on the significance of the Albanian bases to the Soviet Union: «What a secure bay, said Khrushchev looking at the Vlora bay, at the foot of these mountains. With a powerful fleet, from here we can have the whole of Mediterranean, from Bosphorous to Gibraltar, in our hands. We can control everyone». Hoxha, *The Khrushchevites, Memoirs*, Tirana, 1980, p. 377.

2. See also the following from a memorandum by the assistant Secretary of Defence Frank C. Nash to the Secretary of Defence: «A combined US/UK diplomatic approach should be made to Yugoslavia and Greece, urging them not to intervene in Albania in the event of a Cominform attack upon Yugoslavia, since this might preclude the establishment of an Albanian regime favorable to the West.» National Archives of the United States RG 330 Records of the office of Secretary of Defence.

3. «In the face of the known attitudes of both Yugoslavia and Greece concerning an occupation of Albania territory....» Ibid. Memorandum by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defence of August 7, 1952. See also a memorandum by the Secretary of Defence Robert A. Lovett to the Deputy undersecretary of State Matthews on the same. Ibid.





goslav designs on the later, was France. That country along with the United States and Britain was engaged at precise the same time in military talks with Yugoslavia, in Belgrade aiming at strengthening the military ties of Yugoslavia with the western powers after the rift of the later with the Soviet Union. The French patronizing the great Serbian expansionism had sounded the Americans on the eve of the impending tripartite negotiations in Belgrade, on the advisability of having the issue of Albania discussed if that was to be raised by the Yugoslavs<sup>1</sup>.

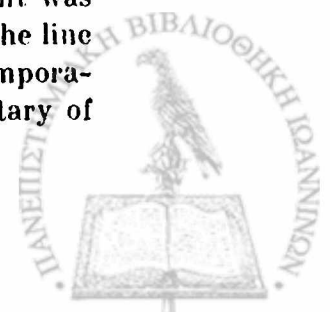
Both the Department of State and the Defence Department, especially the later were unwilling to compromise their plans on Albania by provoking a recurrence of the Yugoslav demands for partition of that country. But most importantly, the State Department wanted to keep the French in the dark about the various plots it was hatching for the overthrow the regime in Tirana and the establishment of a pro-American administration in Albania. In a memorandum to the British embassy in Washington, labeled top secret, the State Department precluded any such announcement to the French on the ground «...that arrangements in the field of covert activities not to be disturbed or expanded at the present time. It therefore, contemplates omitting any reference to such activities from communications as it may make to the French Government in reference to Albania»<sup>2</sup>. Reverting once again to its original doctrine on Albania, the State Department was placing its main thrust of its policies on that country, not on its dismemberment but rather on the replacement of its regime with one willing to adopt a pro-American stand.

The line of demarcation between the respective zones of occupation by the Yugoslavs and the Greeks according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, should be one best «conforming to United States interests» and the criteria for were both political and military<sup>3</sup>. Both the State Department

1. «A more troublesome proposal by the French is that the question of Albania should be discussed if that point is raised by the Yugoslavs. We believe this would provoke an undesirable extension into the political sphere of conversations which are substantially military in character; moreover, Albania until now has been the subject of only US/UK diplomatic exchanges, not tripartite». Ibid. Memorandum by the undersecretary of Defence to the secretary of August 8, 1952.

2. Ibid. Memorandum by the Secretary, Department of State to the British embassy of August 8, 1952.

3. There were also significant political reasons for selecting that line as the border between the Yugoslav and the Greek zones in Albania. The State Department was of the opinion that by extending that far north the zone of Greek occupation, the line of the Shkumbi river, «would not have lend color of permanent title to any temporary (Greek) military occupation». Ibid, Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of Defence to the Secretary of Defence of August 8, 1952.



and the American embassy in Athens had recommended «that a line running approximately east and west and about ten miles north of the Shkumbi River would represent the best compromise line of demarcation between Greek and Yugoslav occupational forces on the basis of several political and military criteria»<sup>1</sup>.

To that the American military was opposed as being rather arbitrary. On the contrary taking into account that historically rivers have proved to be good international borders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were of the opinion that the center line of the Shkumbi River «appropriately extended eastward to the present Albania-Yugoslavia border would offer distinct advantages»<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, either line it was admitted by the American military since it would have represented an approximate extension to the west of the existing frontier would be a compromise accepted by both the Greek and the Yugoslav governments. And taking into account the possibility that the military occupation of Albania by the two countries in question could have assumed a permanent character and even in the long run change into a permanent partition of the country, the last solution of the American military would be more advantageous. The line then accepted with the concurrence of the Department of State was the one representing the center line of Shkumbi river, from its mouth to its juncture with the Bishtrice river, thence the center line of the Bishtrice to the point where it turns abruptly to the north, thence an east west line to the present Albania-Yugoslavia border<sup>3</sup>.

The evolution of America's foreign policy on Albania, if someone can do justice to the term, throughout the years following the abrogation of the diplomatic relations of the two countries, showed little, if any at all diverseness. The guiding principle which was scrupulously upheld by the Washington policy makers evolved around the thesis that Albania's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be preserved from the expansionist drives of its neighbours. That a change in the territorial *status quo* in the area could only usher in a period of upheavals to the detriment of America's interests. What the State Department, nevertheless pursued and in the process clashed with its proteges and allies in the Balkans, Greece and Yugoslavia, was the smashing up of the socialist regime in Tirana and its replacement with a conservative state. And in order to achieve as broad as possible an international acceptance and

1. Ibid. p. 2.

2. Ibid, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defence by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff general Bradley.

3. Ibid.



have even the meagrest change of being tolerated by the Albanians themselves the Americans were attempting to build up «representative» bourgeoisie opposition of the emigres and of the Albanians of the diaspora.

The Greek claims on Albania, officially projected or with governmental connivance propagandized<sup>1</sup>, and spanning the period from 1945 to the 1950's were never positively entertained or even remotely sanctioned by the United States, the then overlords over the client state of Greece. Greece herself had not ever seriously threatened the territorial integrity of neighbouring Albania. Notwithstanding the governmental proclamations on the Greek rights in southern Albania or «northern Epirus» the various Greek administrations of the period were neither capable nor really willing to either take a unilateral action or demand of the United States the satisfaction of those claims. On the contrary, it should be emphasized that the steering up of this commotion was a wanton act, one cultivating the basest nationalist impulses of the populace, so as to divert its attention from the pressing issues at home.

Moreover, the *raison d'etre*, of the Greek administrations' demands for the incorporation of that a large slice of Albanian territory was based on feeble grounds and on utopian assumptions. The use of the statistics of the orthodox church in the area did prove if anything the religious affiliations of the inhabitants rather than their national consciousness. The identification of religious preference with nationality, that an orthodox Albanian was necessarily an individual of Greek proclivities could not effectively persuade of the righteousness of the Greek case. The not so veiled attempts to incorporate Albania into Greece under the pretext of a federation of the two states as it was expounded in the Pipinelis memorandum, were also doomed to fail since no Albanian of whatever political persuasion was willing to abandon the independent status of his cou-

1. The report that follows is quite illustrative of the manner that the Greek administrations employed in order to incite a public outcry against Albania and fanaticize the Greek people: «On July, 11, 1945, ATHENS radio broadcasting in Greek stated: The people of Agrinion and of the suburbs gathered at a huge meeting at which 20,000 persons took part in order to protest to the Government and the Governments of Allied countries as well as to the whole civilized world for the persecutions and slaughter undergone by Greeks (sic) in Northern Epirus...

(i) It expresses great sympathy and fraternal love for unfortunate compatriots in Northern Epirus and protests with great indignation against the ordeals which they are undergoing and which one day will be recorded by history...

(ii) It demands the immediate liberation of Northern Epirus and its occupation by Greek and Allied forces». Ibid, RG 38, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Intelligence report by the U.S. Naval Liaison Officer in Alexandria to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington of July 20, 1945.



ntry for a vassalage to a foreign state. Needless to say the Greek expansionist policy besides being handicapped for the reasons outlined above, was also victimized by the haphazardous and conflicting manner of its aims. The inclusion in the Greek claims of territories far north of the areas inhabited by the Greek minority and purely Albanian in character and tradition, besides their immense value as the breadbasket of that country, underlined the impreivity of the Greek policy.

However, immesurable ill effect had this inconsistent Greek policy on the state of relations of the two countries, since besides the sponsoring by the various Greek administrations of these novel claims against Albanian territories, Greece permitted at times the use of her national soil to be used by Albanian emigres and the secret servises of the United States as base for operations aiming to overthrow the socialist regime in Tirana<sup>1</sup>.

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1. «Radio Free Albania, an anti-Communist transmitter directed to Albania, was first heard on 10 September 1951.... Information syplied... the Free Albanian radio transmitter's location is belied to be within ten miles of a line joining..... (Agrenion-Patras Area). Radio Free Albania announced that it was sponsored by the «Free Albanian Committee». In a memorandum for record the author of the above writes:» The information on which to base a reply to this letter was received from CIA through Liaison Section, Requirements Branch. The information classified SECRET and thereby necessitating that it be transmitted through official channels. No reference is made to CIA in the reply». The transmitter as well as the «committee» no doubt were sponsored by the same people the American secret services. Ibid, RG 319. Records of the U.S. Army Staff, «Albania».



APPENDIX

The Pipinelis Memorandum<sup>1</sup>.

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1. National Archives of the United States, Department of State, 850 Albania.





No. 344

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAN EMBASSY  
Athens Greece,  
May 12, 1949.

SUBJECT: Transmitting a Memorandum on the Albanian Question  
Prepared by Greek Foreign Ministry.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit, in English translation prepared by the Greek Foreign Ministry, a study of the Albanian question, which was drafted under the personal direction of Mr. Pipinelis, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Greece, and representing his considered views on the subject. As the Department is aware, Mr. Pipinelis is a thorough student of Balkan affairs, an experienced diplomat, and by virtue of his position as well as his abilities, plays a leading role in the formulation of Greek foreign policy. His views, therefore, on the vexing problem of Albania merit consideration.

The enclosed analysis of the Albanian situation is based on the premise that Albanian independence has never been more than a theory. In this connection reference is made to the pre-war Italian control of the country and the post-war subordination of Albania first to Tito and later directly to the USSR. This dependence of Albania is attributed not merely to the greediness of its neighbors or to the absence of Albanian nationalism but rather to the economic backwardness, the racial differences and the absence of a «sufficiently enlightened ruling class» in Albania. The dangers arising from the present subjugation to Russian tutelage are considered to extend beyond the threat to Greece and Yugo-



slavia and to include the menace to Italy and Mediterranean communications of a potential Russian naval bridgehead on the Adriatic.

The presence of 600.000 Albanians within Yugoslavia and the Greek claims on Northern Epirus are mentioned as complicating further the position of the Albanian state in the Balkans. Unlike the usual comment on this subject in the Greek press, the enclosed study shows some awareness of the real problem in stating:

*«The question of Northern Epirus has deeprooted sentimental foundations which render its solution for the Greek people more difficult than [that for] any other question.*

*On the other hand, to the Albanians Northern Epirus constitutes the southern part of their country and its union to Greece would be looked upon by them as conquest».*

Parenthetically, it may be remarked that it is a remarkable admission for any Greek to recognize that there is an Albanian side to this question.

Three solutions of the Albanian problem are examined: (1) partition of Albania either between Greece and Yugoslavia or among Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy; (2) administration of the country under a trusteeship of an international organization or a disinterested power; (3) federation of Albania with Yugoslavia or with Greece. Partition is considered as likely to be unacceptable to international public opinion which would regard this as an act of aggression by Greece and other participating countries. Furthermore, in what appears a most sensible fashion, the study points out:

*«Particularly as far as Greece is concerned annexation of the whole territory south of the river Skoumbi inhabited by large heterogeneous population well known for its spirit of insubordination would further complicate her [Greece's] own problems and would certainly not lead to stabilization of the situation.*

International trusteeship, although theoretically possible, is discarded on the grounds that it would entail the difficulty of evolving and implementing a common policy by various nations, would leave unanswered the basic issues of Albania's relations with Greece and Yugoslavia and would perpetuate:

*«...one more small state in Europe's intricate economic and political organization...and additional economic administrative and cultural frontiers in an European area where 'Balkanization' has already gone too far».*



The merging of Albania with a neighboring state is considered the most rational solution. Yugoslav-Albanian federation is declared to be difficult as it would add to the already complex minority problems of Yugoslavia and would encounter what is stated to be age-old racial animosity between Slavs and Albanians. On the other hand, certain scattered incidents from the past are adduced as evidence that the merger of Albania with Greece has a respectable historical tradition and would be mutually advantageous strategically, economically and politically. Local self government and self determination for the two participating peoples are stated to be indispensable prerequisites but there would be joint management of economic, military and diplomatic affairs of the two countries. The exact form of this merger, it is stated, would require detailed study but precedents could be found in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the British Empire or the Swiss Federation.

In conclusion, it is pointed out that this solution of the Albanian problem would automatically resolve the question of Northern Epirus inasmuch as citizens of Albania and Greece would be allowed free movement within boundaries of their common political community and satisfactory local self government procedures could be easily devised.

These views represent a step forward in Greek thinking on the Albanian question. The proposed solution would, of course, encounter great difficulties even if a non-Communist government were to be established in Albania. By reiterating its claims to Northern Epirus, failing to make any distinction between the present Albanian Government and the Albanian people and by treating Albanian refugees in Greece as enemy aliens, Greece has aroused the suspicion and hostility of all prominent non-Communist Albanians. On the other hand, of course, the blatant and continued aid to the guerrillas by the present Albanian regime as well as the utilization of Albanian territory as a base for the Italian attack on Greece in 1940 have engendered a deep bitterness among the Greek people which can be counteracted only with the assistance of constructive acts and deeds by the political and intellectual leaders of Greece.

It is likely that non-Communist Albanians would see in the proposed merger of their country with Greece only a device to bring Albania under Greek control. However, certain intermediate proposals, such as establishment of a customs union and regulation of the Epirus question on the basis of local self government, would, it is believed, be highly acceptable to non-Communist Albanians and might assist in facilitating the overthrow of the present Hoxza regime in that country. It appears advisable, therefore, that Mr. Pipinelis should be encouraged to consi-



der the above possibilities and concurrently assist in alleviating hostility between Greece and Albania by altering its propaganda regarding Albania and affording better treatment to Albanian refugees in Greece, some of whom might prove to be leaders in any future non-Communist government.

Respectfully yours,

Harold B. Minor  
Charge d'Affaires ad interim

Enclosure:

Memorandum on Albanian Question,  
prepared by Greek Foreign Ministry.

Original to Department.  
Copy to CTI.



Enclosure no 1.  
to despatch no. 344, dated  
May 12, 1949,  
from AmEmbassy, Athens.

CONFIDENTIAL

C O P Y

Recent development concerning Albania are bound to bring to the foreground the wider issue of that country's future. When the present tension in the Balkans subsides and is succeeded by a more normal situation, the question will arise what is to become of that country and how it may be given an internal regime ensuring that the painful experiments of the past are not repeated.

Politically and nationally, Albania is at present in a vacuum. There has been no expression of the people's spontaneous will since Albania first became an Italian protectorate in 1926, if not before that. Article 27 of the Treaty with Italy, recognizes the independence of Albania but this recognition must be viewed only in conjunction with the reservations formulated when Albanian independence was first mentioned (see Mr. Eden's letter of December 30th and Mr. Hall's statement of December 17th 1942). There is no binding obligation of an international character regarding this country's political status. From a strategical and political view point, Albania is actually nothing but an advanced post for Russian penetration into the Mediterranean.

The tenseness of the situation as it has developed in Albania today, however, makes these questions particularly timely. It is not unlikely that a sudden eruption of the Albanian question may place the principal world-powers before an immediate problem requiring speedy solutions.

To such solutions, it only the experience of the past that might serve as a guide. This experience shows that from the very start, when it was founded in 1913 as an autonomous hegemony, and until its complete submission to Italian rule in 1939, the Albanian State came under successive foreign tutelages which rendered Albanian independence a mere theoretical notion. As a result of the treaties of 1926 and 1927, Italy managed gradually and unobtrusively to assume control over all Albanian administrative services through the method of advisers and technical missions and to obtain far reaching political and economic concessi-





ons from Albania in return for successive loans made necessary by increasing budget deficits, until at last the Italian Government had in actual fact gained a firm hold on the entire political and economic organization of Albania. So, it was rather easy, at the appropriate time, for Italy to flood Albania with her armies and to use its territory as a springboard for the invasion of Greece and the Balkans.

After World War II, Albanian independence came under the control of Tito's Yugoslavia. Common ideological ties, the iron solidarity existing among Balkan communist parties and a series of economic and political agreements had enabled Tito, even before the formal restoration of Albanian and Yugoslav independence and certainly much more so since, to exert until the middle of 1948, an absolute and oppressive guardianship over Albania.

After the Tito-Cominform clash, Albania appears to have become completely subjugated to Moscow, and it is obvious that any relaxation in the exercise of this tutelage would make it necessary for Albania to seek, under new leaders and under a different political regime, a new guardianship in the neighbourhood.

The disease from which Albanian independence suffers is not due merely to the greediness of the aforesaid countries or to the absence of national conscience on the part of the Albanians. It is due to more profound reasons pertaining to the economic status of this country, to racial differences among its peoples and, particularly, to the absence of a sufficiently enlightened ruling class capable of inspiring the Albanian people to follow the hard policy of preserving their national independence. Lacking communications, poor in raw materials, deprived of economic exploitation methods and technical personnel, Albania is in dire need of generous economic aid which, however, if given by a neighbouring Power, would entail terms and conditions that would lead to political and economic dependence. Large-scale investment of capital, in its classical form, is not possible in Albania, on account of the meagreness of its returns due to the limited scope of production and consumption, to political uncertainty and to lack of suitable labor and of specialized business. Aid of a gratuitous and disinterested character is possible only in the form of temporary assistance; naturally, such aid could not be envisaged as an assumption of permanent financial obligations for the country's economic management. It was accordingly natural that Albanian's economic reconstruction should be undertaken exclusively by such neighbouring countries as sought to secure political and strategic advantages there, and were willing, in return, to assume the burden of a precarious

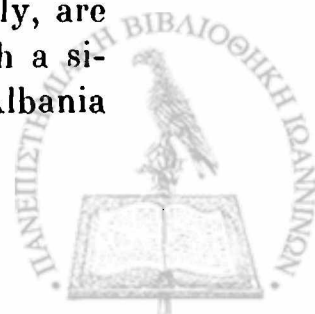


economy which would involve covering the permanent deficits of Albanian budgets.

But the submission of Albania to a foreign influence affects not only the Albanian people but their neighbours as well and particularly Greece. The subjugation of Albania to Italy would expose Greece to the immediate danger of a military invasion at a distance of only a few dozen kilometres from Metsovo and Thessaly in such a way as to split the territory of Greece in two and place the plain of Thessaly, a vital centre of production, under the invader's control. For Yugoslavia as well, the bridgehead provided by the territory of Albania constitutes a mortal threat against Macedonia and more generally against Southern Yugoslavia, where only a corridor, about 150 kilometres long, separates converging political and possibly military incursions from Sofia and Tirana. For Yugoslavia, this threat is all the more ominous in view of the fact that a good-sized minority of Albanian descent lives on Yugoslav territory, in the districts of Kossovo, Jekova and Tetovo adjoining Albania, while large masses of Slav population, mostly of Bulgarian ancestry, have penetrated further south, in the direction of Vardar Macedonia.

More specifically, the reduction of the Albanian State to Russian tutelage in the form that it appears today, in addition to the dangers it involves against Albania's immediate neighbours, also entails the danger of a Russian naval bridgehead leading to the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. No daring forecast as to the eventualities of a future war is really necessary for the significance of this bridgehead to become apparent. It is a threat against Italy and consequently against France and Western Europe; it endangers communications in the Adriatic leading to Yugoslavia and Central Europe; and it threatens Greece as well as communications in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The unsettled character of Albanian relations with Yugoslavia and Greece complicates still further the position of the Albanian state in the Balkans. As regards Yugoslavia, the Albanians foster national claims on the Kossovo district where over 600,000 Albanians live under Yugoslav rule. Furthermore, having repeatedly experienced political incursions from Yugoslavia, as in the years 1921-1924 and, more recently, under the Tito regime, the Albanians are naturally extremely suspicious of Yugoslavia. Similarly, the Yugoslavs assuming that Albania would sooner or later be subjugated by a foreign Power, most probably by Italy, are naturally anxious to neutralize the dangers engendered from such a situation and to forestall events by establishing their influence in Albania fully.

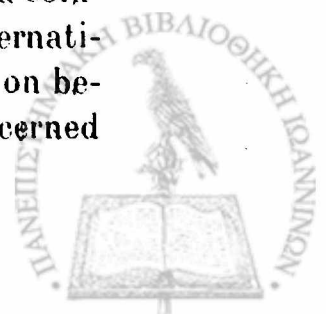


As regards Greece, the question of Northern Epirus has formed an unbridgeable gap between the two peoples. For the Greeks, Northern Epirus is an old Greek district which for long generations prospered under Greek leadership and culture but which since the days of Ali Pasha has been getting gradually dehellanized through persecution, depatriation and oppression of all sorts. Like all major political issues in the Balkans, the question of Northern Epirus has deep-rooted sentimental foundations which render its solution for the Greek people more difficult than any other question. On the other hand, to the Albanians, Northern Epirus constitutes the southern part of their country and its union to Greece would be looked upon by them as a conquest.

In view of these general considerations it is rather easy to foresee what would happen in the event that, when the present diplomatic tension is over, Albania returned to her old political and national form. Latently or otherwise, her relations with Greece and Yugoslavia would remain inimical. Deprived of the indispensable economic and political foundations for the stabilization of an independent political life, Albania is bound to turn again to a foreign Power willing to assume, the costs of Albanian independence, in return for gains to be obtained. The present tension in the Balkans would thus not be relieved, and a source of friction and danger would continue to exist.

What is then left to be done so that the Albanian problem may be solved in a way that would serve international peace and appeasement in the Balkans?

The first solution, one which was in the past repeatedly discussed and which formed the subject of international acts between Greece and Serbia in 1913 and among Great Britain, France and Italy in 1919, consisted in the dismemberment of that country and its partition either between Greece and Serbia or among Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy. This solution appeared at the time to be the most natural and radical way of liquidating a source of trouble. The Albanian State had at that time not yet been accepted by public opinion as a viable entity, and everybody took it for granted that that country would break apart on account of internal conflicts and its economic insufficiency. Today, after a generation's independent (though only nominally so) political life, such a solution of the Albanian question would run decidedly counter to international public feeling and would be regarded as an act of aggression on behalf of Greece and Yugoslavia. Particularly as far as Greece is concerned



an annexation of the whole territory south of the river Skoumbi inhabited by a large heterogeneous population well known for its spirit of insubordination, would further complicate her own problems and would certainly not lead to stabilization of the situation.

The second solution that comes to mind is the administration of this country under the trusteeship of an international organization or a disinterested Power. This solution, though theoretically possible under the condition that a number of great powers would be willing for a long period of years to provide for the covering of the deficits of an typically insolvent economy and to assume the political responsibility for the management of Albanian independence, would meet with the difficulty of following a common policy by a collective body. Neither would this solution constitute an answer to the basic issue of the relations between Albania on the one hand and Greece and Yugoslavia on the other, a problem which, in its final analysis, is vital just as much for these countries as it is for Albania itself. Finally, this solution would definitely sanction more or less the existence of a new political entity in the Balkans by adding one more small state to Europe's intricate economic and political organization and by establishing additional economic, administrative and cultural frontiers in a European area where «balkanization» has already gone too far.

There necessarily remains as the most rational solution that of admitting Albania into the political framework of a neighbouring country, and particularly that of Greece. Under prevailing conditions in Europe, which are leading European countries in spite of their numberless differences gradually to articulate their economic potentialities, such a solution of political merging would appear to be the most rational solution of all.

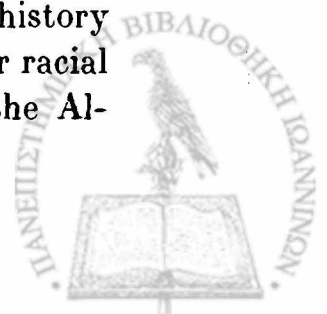
A fusion in the form of a federative state between Yugoslavia and Albania would be difficult, because the Yugoslavia is already heavily burdened with considerable number of minorities and because their increasing centrifugal power has, ever since 1919, been leading toward a state of internal decomposition not to speak of the old Slav-Albanian racial opposition. Conversely, political union of Albania with Greece appears to be natural and called for. As far as Greece is concerned, the merging of the Albanian area with that of Greece would provide a radical solution to the problem of its strategic security in respect to its northwestern frontier and in respect to Italy. The last war has demonstrated the vital significance of this threat to Greece. This solution would also add to Greek resistance potentialities and to the political balance of power in respect



to the Slavic countries in the Balkans a noteworthy military and geographic element, which would render the Greek bridgehead infinitely more powerful. Assuming that the policy of the western democracies is indeed served by the strengthening of the Greek bridgehead in the southern end of the Balkans and in the entrance to the Adriatic and the Aegean Seas, there could be no better way of achieving this strengthening than by including the entire territory of Albania into framework of the defence of Greece. Economically also, the Greek Peninsula, whose cities population has reached a saturation point, would find an interesting outlet into Albania which is predominantly a cattle raising and agricultural country and who is lacking precisely a developed urban population.

On the other hand, so far as Albania is concerned, its inclusion within Greece would provide an answer to the problem of its security from a Balkan point of view, as its rear would be covered and its position strengthened in respect to both Italy and Yugoslavia. Its livestock and agricultural economy, properly developed, would find on Greek territory, deficient in livestock and farm products, relatively good markets. Its southern district of Korce (Korytsa) and Gjinokaster (Argyrokastron), which was once administratively and economically connected with Salonika and Yannina and which has fallen into decay since it was severed from the latter two cities, would regain its old economic prosperity as a centre of local production and consumption.

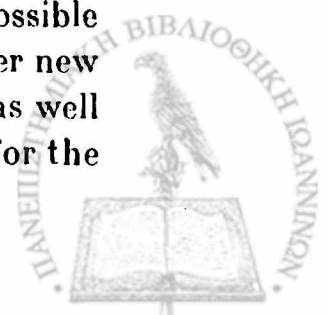
Obviously, the insuring of local self government and self determination for the two participating peoples would be an indispensable prerequisite if this merging of Greek and Albanian territories into a wider political unit were to form a viable reality. The exact form of this political unit would naturally have to be studied in detail with the understanding that absolute freedom in the management of the domestic affairs of the two participating countries by their own democratic agencies will be fully assured with provision for a joint management of the economic, military, and diplomatic affairs of the two countries. It would be easy to find the suitable legal formula for such a political unit by referring to the past, either in the history of dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, or of the British Empire, or in the constitutional development of the Swiss Federation. The idea of this cooperation between the Greek and the Albanian peoples in a political unity of some sort is too well grounded in fact to merit the distinction of originality. On the contrary, the history of the Albanian and the Greek peoples and in many respects their racial affinity have themselves paved the way for such a solution of the Albanian question.





The first agreement to this effect dates back to the War of Greek Independence, when Greek and Albanian chieftains met at Souli on 15 January 1821 to form an alliance and to pledge themselves «to be brothers, one in body and soul». Later, on 2 June 1829, Albanians made proposals to the then Greek Government asking for the incorporation of the entire district of Valona (Avlon) into the Greek State under condition that they would be granted freedom of religious worship and of having the honour of their harems preserved!. Later again, on 15 August 1847, a large number of Albanian notables under Culeka sent a memorandum to King Otto of Greece requesting the union of Albania and Greece. In the memorandum submitted to Lord Boaconsfield by the Albanian Committee during the Congress of Berlin, the idea of a Greek-Albanian Union was again suggested. Said the memorandum: «Our defensive power could well be doubled in a federation and through a natural alliance with Greece». Nor were similar expressions of willingness lacking on the Greek side. The Greek—Albanian Society of Athens proposed in 1899 «the union of the two races on the model of Austria and Hungary». The proposal was signed by Botzari, Tzavella, etc. Still later, Ismail Kemal Bey, representative from Valona to the Turkish Parliament and would-be head of the Albanian State, repeatedly visited Athens during the years 1904, 1906 and 1908 and reached an agreement with the then Greek Prime Minister George Theotoki for the liberation of Albania and its union with Greece. The last proposal on the Albanian side for a union of Albania with Greece was made in Salonika in February 1944 by former Albanian Prime Minister Kosto Kotta through the then Greek Military Governor of Salonika. The proposal provided for a union of Greeks and Albanians on the condition that due regard be accorded to Albanian dignity and that the boundaries of 1940 be maintained. The two states were to form a dual kingdom; they were to have a common administration of foreign affairs, a common military staff, customs and postal unions and all ministries in common with the exception of those of education, finance and justice.

The reference to the boundaries of 1940 in this proposal touches also upon the question of Northern Epirus, which is the most knotty issue in Greek-Albanian relations. It is therefore obvious that the indicated settlement of the question of the future fate of Albania by having this country united with Greece would automatically provide the best possible answer to this knotty issue. The North-Epirote question would offer new possibilities of satisfactory solution as soon as a common frontier as well as a common economy and a common military and foreign policy for the





two states were established and their respective citizens were allowed to take residence where they please and to move within the boundaries of their common political community, while a satisfactory arrangement based on the principle of local self-government could easily be devised. This would probably not be the least benefit to be derived from the indicated new political settlement as it would wipe off one of the most dangerous sources of friction in the relations among the Balkan countries.

