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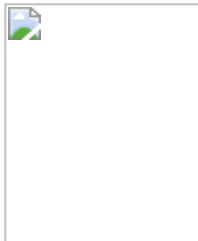


Albanian Dossier:

CIA and British MI6 in Albania

Posted on Tuesday, September 06 @ 20:55:00 GMT by [classiclady](#)

The first major paramilitary operation by the CIA in the Cold War took place in



Mithat Frasheri

Albania. The secret CIA operation was conducted in conjunction with British MI6 and was known by the codename Operation Valuable, or as BG/FIEND by the CIA. The operation was conceived by British intelligence to depose the Communist regime of Enver Hoxha. It was one of the first attempts at "regime change" during the Cold War in the "denied areas" or "captive nations". There were several reasons why the UK sought to achieve a regime change in Tirana. It was meant as a "rollback" action, to deprive the Soviet Union of a client state.

Strategically, Britain sought to deny the USSR naval bases on the Adriatic coast, which threatened British and US control of the Mediterranean. Britain was a naval power and securing sea lanes was of paramount concern. The operation was to consist of inserting UK and US trained commandos into Albania to organize guerrilla groups who would mount a coup that would overthrow Enver Hoxha. For the CIA, it would be "a clinical experiment to see whether large roll-back operations would be feasible elsewhere."

Direct British and American involvement in Albania and the Balkans began with their support of anti-German and anti-Italian resistance and guerrilla groups during World War II. The goal was to undermine the German and Italian occupations. This necessitated supporting Communist resistance groups. In Albania, the US and UK supported the Communist movement headed by Enver Hoxha. Why did the US and UK support Communist groups which were determined to set-up Communist regimes? The policy was: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Winston Churchill stated that the only criteria of support was whether the guerrillas were killing German soldiers.



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backed the Balli Kombetar. They all were right-wing, upper echelon apparatchiks of the British Empire who disdained any progressive or democratic movement. In their own words, they detested anyone or anything that smacked of "progressive ideas." It was natural that they were the principal backers of the ultra-nationalist, right-wing Balli Kombetar movement.

Ironically and quixotically, they were forced to arm and support the Communist LNC Movement and Enver Hoxha. This was an absurd result. But the game was all about power. British and American intelligence operations in the Balkans make sense on the rationale that they were based on realpolitik, or power politics. The US and UK objective was to obtain pliant puppets and satellites and stooges in the Balkans. During the war, it was only the Communist forces that were perceived as fighting the German and Italian occupation forces. Part of this misperception was due to Communist sympathizers and double-agents such as H.A.R. "Kim" Philby who consciously and purposefully sought to create this image of the Communist resistance as the only genuine resistance against the Germans. So absurdly the US and UK were forced to support the very Communists that they later would attempt to overthrow through regime change. It was a short-term marriage of convenience necessitated by the fact that the major enemy that the US and UK faced at the time was Germany. It was a matter of priority. The US even sent aid and weapons to a Communist country. Following the 1948 split between Joseph Stalin and Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav government requested through CIA channels that the US provide arms to Yugoslavia, fearing an invasion by the USSR. Frank Lindsay, the Office of Policy Co-ordination (OPC) deputy to Frank Wisner, recalled: "Tito was the man for the West to back... We sent him five shiploads of weapons."

The US and UK were also determined to keep the Communist guerrillas in Greece from taking power. Operation Valuable/Fiend was also a diversionary operation meant to deny bases for Greek Communist insurgents and to divert Soviet or Communist resources away from Greece.

In Italy, the first successful CIA operation was to sabotage the national elections in 1948 where the Communists were favored to win. The US and UK supported "democracy" only when it meant that anti- or non-Communists would win.

A primary concern for both the British and US governments was the presence of Soviet advisers and potential Soviet naval and submarine bases on the Albanian coast. For Britain, always a colonial and imperialist sea power, securing sea lanes to British colonies, such as India, was paramount. Soviet submarines and destroyers in the Albanian port of Valona threatened British control of the Mediterranean, an important sea route to India, the largest British colony, and to the Suez Canal and the oil of the Middle East. Albania under Hoxha established close ties with the Soviet Union and neighboring Yugoslavia following the war. There were even plans to form a Balkan federation which would have included Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria. Soviet advisers were reported to have arrived in Albania at this time.

Outright military clashes between Albanian and British forces began on October 22, 1946 when two British navy destroyers, Saumarez and Volafge, were damaged by mines in the three-mile-wide Corfu channel. The British destroyers sustained heavy damage while 43 men on board the vessels were killed. Britain retaliated by retaining ten million pounds of gold which the Albanian government had deposited in the Bank of England during the war. In April, 1946, the International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled against Albania,

British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin approved the MI6 operation to overthrow the Hoxha regime in February, 1949. The chief of MI6, Stewart Menzies, was not enthusiastic about the paramilitary operation but saw it as a way to appease the former SOE "stinks and bangs people." The Albanian regime change was a rollback operation meant to "detach" Albania, a "captive nation", from the Soviet bloc. Strategically, the UK and US objective was to establish a strategic presence on the Balkan peninsula. The British wanted the US to finance the operation and to provide bases. Senior British intelligence officer William Hayter, who chaired the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), came to Washington in March with a group of Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) members and Foreign Office staff that included Gladwyn Jebb, Earl Jellicoe, and Peter Dwyer of MI6 and a Balkans specialist. They met with Robert Joyce of the US State Department's Policy and Planning Staff (PPS) and Frank Wisner, who was the head of the Office of Policy Co-ordination (OPC), which was administered by the CIA. Wisner had been an attorney who had represented the financial interests of wealthy Albanian refugees, the Balli Kombetar. So there had also been a monetary connection between US intelligence and Albanian Balli Kombetar members.

The strategic goal was to establish a foothold on the Balkan peninsula. Before this could occur, the Soviet-backed Hoxha regime had to be overthrown. According to Wisner, the Albanian operation was to be "a clinical experiment to see whether larger rollback operations would be feasible elsewhere." Amery revealed that the British planned to recruit Balli Kombetar insurgents in the regime change against the Hoxha government. He outlined his plans for the proposed operation to the military commander of the Balli Kombetar, Abas Ermenji.

On May 20, 1949, Harold Perkins, the director of the Special Operations Branch, Neil McLean and Ermenji flew to Rome to meet with Midhat Frasheri, the wartime leader and founder of the Balli Kombetar, to discuss the operation. Frasheri was supportive of the operation. Amery believed that "clandestine operations directed at Hoxha would lead to a major uprising" the success of which would "depend on the million odd Albanians living in the Yugoslav Kosovo region." So Kosovo was always crucial to the planners and organizers of Operation Valuable/Fiend.

Recruiting Albanian Nazis and Fascists

The recruitment for Operation Valuable/Fiend consisted of 40 per cent from the Balli Kombetar, 40 percent from the monarchist Legalite or Legaliteti, and the rest from other Albanian factions. Midhat Frasheri (1880-1949) was a founder and leader of the Balli Kombetar (National Front). He was a known Nazi and fascist collaborator committed to creating a Greater Albania that would include Kosovo-Metohija. He initially fled to Turkey after the war to escape war crimes charges and prosecution as a Nazi-fascist collaborator, then moved to Italy. He later settled as a refugee in London. He was brought to New York City by the US to lead the émigré Albanians. He died suddenly, however, on October 3, 1949 of a heart attack at the Lexington Hotel in New York.

Frasheri had initially approached the US Ambassador in Rome in 1947 proposing to bring 50 Albanian former pro-Nazi, pro-fascist refugee leaders to the US to allegedly combat Albanian Communist infiltrators in the United States. That same year, the Hoxha regime had made a request to the Italian government that Albanian collaborators and war criminals be extradited to Albania. Many of the Albanian BK leaders were interned in Italian camps at the time. Fearing extradition, Frasheri sought US help.

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Partnership

The way the US government got around these restrictions was by creating "private organizations" and "fronts" which would provide "plausible deniability" because official sanction and connections could be concealed. The privatization ploy was effective in organizing former Nazi and fascist war criminals by the US and UK governments during the Cold War. It was part of a larger US government scheme known as Bloodstone which recruited "collaborators" and "war criminals" for covert operations, "émigré liberation projects". Carmel Offie was one of the major organizers. Hasan Dosti was brought to the US in April, 1949, although he lacked a passport. Dosti was to set up an Albanian National Committee in Exile. On May 12, Robert Joyce obtained a passport for Midhat Frasheri to enter the US based on the rationale that it was in the "national interest". So Frasheri was granted a US visa, due to the efforts of Robert Joyce, the US State Department liaison with the CIA. Frasheri brought with him Mustafa Merlika-Kruja, the former fascist premier



Mustafa Merlika -
Kruja

of Greater Albania from 1941 to 1943 who advocated the genocide of the Kosovo Serbs, Hasan Dosti, a Justice Minister in the fascist regime, and Kosovar Muslim Xhafer Deva. These former Albanian Nazis and fascists established the CIA-financed National Committee for a Free Albania. Among other things, this group recruited Albanian refugees who were sent on failed infiltration missions in Albania. The British double agent Kim Philby oversaw Operation Valuable/Fiend and kept the Soviets and the Hoxha regime apprised of the clandestine operations. Many of these Albanian recruits were captured and tried as spies and imprisoned or executed by the Communist Enver Hoxha regime.

One person's war criminal is another person's freedom fighter. This is clearly exemplified by the US and UK position on alleged Albanian war criminals and collaborators such as those of the Balli Kombetar. Enver Hoxha recalled making official requests that Albanian war criminals and collaborators be turned over for trial, but the US and UK refused his requests:

We made official requests to the British and American governments for the extradition of war criminals, not only Albanians, but also Italians and Germans, who had stained their hands with blood in Albania and were now under their jurisdiction. Contrary to the declarations and the joint commitments of the allies during the war and the decisions which were taken later on this question, they turned a deaf ear and did not hand them over to us. On the contrary, they kept the chiefs in luxury hotels, while they trained their 'fighting men' in Rome, Munich, London, Athens and elsewhere.

Xhafer Deva, who was from Kosovo, had been the Kosovar Albanian Muslim Minister of the Interior under the Italian fascist-sponsored Greater Albania. Deva lived in the United States after the war. He died in 1978 in Palo Alto, California. Hasan Dosti had been the Minister of Justice in the Italian-sponsored Greater Albania regime. He lived in Los Angeles, California in 1988. Mustafa Merlika-Kruja had been the Albanian premier of Greater Albania from 1941 to 1943. He died in 1958 in New York. Rexhep Mitrovica was an Albanian official in the Nazi German-sponsored Greater Albanian government in July 10, 1944, when Germany had re-occupied Kosovo and Albania.

The Balli Kombetar (BK) or National Front was founded and led by the former Albanian diplomat Midhat Frasheri and Abas Ermneji. The BK was set up essentially to retain Kosovo as part of Albania after the war. This was the defining platform of the BK Movement, the annexation of Kosovo. The BK was a right-wing, ultra-nationalist Greater

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monarchist Legalite Movement headed by Abas Kupa established in November, 1943, the Balli Kombetar was unique in that its platform consisted of retaining Kosovo as part of the Axis-created Greater Albania. The war-time collaboration of the Balli Kombetar with the German and Italian forces was well-documented. In a December 17, 1943 SOE report, Brig. E.M. "Trotsky" Davies acknowledged that the Balli Kombetar and the Zogist groups "are co-operating with Germans, who are exploiting them with arms in large quantities, setting them to guard main roads, police towns, and lead patrols thus freeing the German troops." He further noted that the Balli Kombetar had consistently refused to fight the German occupation forces: "I consider the Allies' attitude should be made public forthwith, showing quislings, traitors and non-resisters to Germans will receive appropriate punitive treatment from the Allies in due course." The musketeers themselves conceded that the BK nationalist "collaborate with the Germans." Three weeks after making his report, Davies was ambushed by a pro-Nazi BK group in Albania. Moreover, the German emissary in Tirana had acknowledged that there had been "direct collaboration with the BK."

In the July 1944 R and A report L38836 by the OSS on Albania entitled "Political and Internal Conditions", it was stated that "Xhafer Deva, Rexhep Mitrovic and Midhat Frasheri are with the Germans." Deva was also accused of responsibility for "the Tirana massacre" which occurred on February 4, 1944, carried out by the German Gestapo "in collaboration with the Albanian gendarmerie." By the summer of 1944, units of the Balli Kombetar were "integrated into the German command."

When the Germans occupied Kosovo and Albania following the Italian surrender in 1943, they lacked the manpower to control Greater Albania. What the Germans relied on was "political conciliation," that is, gaining Albanian support for the German occupation by promising them fulfillment of their Greater Albania illusions by ensuring them that Kosovo would be part of a Greater Albania. The Germans appealed "to the type of Albanian nationalist and republican represented in the Balli Kombetar." The German forces created a Regency Council to govern Greater Albania, which consisted of Lef Nosi, Anton Harapi, and the pre-war Prime Minister Mehdi Frasheri, the brother of Midhat Frasheri, the leader of the BK. The German occupation forces also created an Albanian army which was under the leadership of General Prenk Previsi and a gendarmerie under Xhafer Deva, the Minister of the Interior from Kosovo. The German occupation authorities also sponsored the creation of the Second League of Prizren and put Deva in charge of it as the president. The Germans expanded the Kosovo Albanian four armed battalions in the SS Division Skanderbeg in 1944, which fought against the Communist LNC, the Yugoslav partisans, and systematically murdered Kosovo Serbs and which rounded up Kosovo Jews who were subsequently murdered.

Pixie insertions

Midhat Frasheri was "the lynchpin" of the plan to send commandos into Albania. The Committee for Free Albania included several collaborators, and alleged war criminals. James McCarger, the first US commander of Operation Fiend, was dissatisfied that Hasan Dosti was part of this group. Dosti had been the Justice Minister of the fascist Italian-sponsored Greater Albania. McCarger stated: "I and several others screamed bloody murder on this. I said, you can't use somebody with that background, it's a blot on everybody's escutcheon." Dosti was accompanied by "a bevy of Hitler-era stooges" which included the Kosovar Muslim Xhafer Deva "who used the SS Skanderbeg Division in a massacre of Albanian partisans" and to round up Kosovo Jews who were murdered in the concentration camps. There were "voluminous files" in the possession of the US

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thus Nazis and there were Nazis. Some former Nazis were of much greater service to the US in the Cold War so their Nazi past was spin doctored away as if by magic.

The National Security Act of July 27, 1947 established the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The President Harry Truman Administration created the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) as the successor to the war-time Office of Special Operations (OSS), which Truman had disbanded in 1945. The CIA was known as the Central Intelligence Group initially when it was headed first by Rear Admiral Sidney Souers and then by Hoyt Vandenberg. Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter headed the CIA from 1947 to 1950, he was the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). The CIA was set up specifically as a tool in the Cold War, an independent agency that reported to the President and was overseen by Congressional panels.

In September, 1949, British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin came to Washington to discuss Operation Valuable/Fiend with US government officials. The CIA released a report that concluded that "a purely internal Albanian uprising at this time is not indicated, and, if undertaken, would have little chance of success." The CIA asserted that the Hoxha regime had a 65,000 man regular army and a security force of 15,000. There were intelligence reports that there were 1,500 Soviet "advisers" and 4,000 "technicians" in Albania helping to train the Albanian army. NATO was concerned that the USSR was building a submarine base at Valona. On September 6, 1949, when NATO met for the first time in Washington, Bevin proposed that "a counter-revolution" be launched in Albania. US Secretary of State Dean Acheson was in agreement. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted to use Valona as a potential forward naval base for NATO to establish US control of the Mediterranean. NATO, established as a defensive military alliance of the North Atlantic region, was now committed to launching offensive covert operations against a sovereign nation in the Balkans. NATO member countries agreed to support the overthrow of the Hoxha regime in Albania and to eliminate Soviet influence in the Mediterranean region. Bevin wanted to place King Zog on the throne as the leader of Albania once Hoxha was overthrown.

On October 3, 1949, the first group of 20 Albanian commandos, known as the "pixies" by SIS, were landed on the Albanian coastline south of Valona, which was the former territory of the Balli Kombetar. This was the start of Operation Valuable/Fiend. The pixies had been brought across the Corfu channel on a British vessel, Stormie Seas. British intelligence officials had trained the Albanians since July on Malta. Albanian government security forces interdicted the commandos, killing four and forcing the others to flee south to Greece.

The US became directly involved in the pixie insertions in 1950. The US recruitment of the OPC commandos was disguised by creating "labor battalions" under US Army command in Germany. Carmel Offie set up Company 400 with the help of Lawrence de Neufville, a CIA "special adviser". The Albanian recruits were assembled in July, 1950 by Major Caush Ali Bashom, a member of the Balli Kombetar. A Radio Free Albania was set up as well to broadcast CIA propaganda into Albania. In August, 1950, the US air dropped propaganda leaflets over Korca. On November 19, the US airdropped 9 Albanian commandos by parachute drops into Albania. They were either captured or escaped into Yugoslavia. The Sigurimi, the Soviet-trained Albanian secret police, was able to anticipate the landings and to interdict the commandos. By 1952, the CIA had taken over all the intelligence operations of the British in the Balkans. On July 23, 1951, the US air dropped 12 commandos in Albania. Six were killed immediately, four were surrounded and burned to death in a house, and two were captured. The operation was a complete disaster. Abas

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the experience we need for the next war."

Up to 200 agents would be killed during the operation with an estimated additional several thousand Albanian civilians killed in reprisal. Abas Ermenji stated: "Our 'allies' wanted to make use of Albania as a guinea-pig, without caring about the human losses, for an absurd enterprise that was condemned to failure." Halil Nerguti stated: "We were used as an experiment. We were a small part of a big game, pawns that could be sacrificed." There is no question that the CIA and MI6 used the operation as a small-scale exercise in regime change. The stakes were small. Failure would not be noticed. John H. Richardson, the CIA Director of the South-East Division, terminated Operation Fiend and by 1954 the Company 400 was disbanded and the training facilities in Heidelberg, Germany shut down, as well as the CIA base on the Greek island. The remaining Albanians were resettled in the US, UK, and the Commonwealth countries.

The CIA financed a new Albanian Committee of the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN) which was controlled by the Political Committee, made up of former members of the Balli Kombetar, who dominated this organization for much of the 1950s. The ACEN was headed by Nuci Kota, Zog's military commander, who had lead the Free Albania Committee and had founded the Albanian National Committee. The former Nazi-fascist wartime collaborator Hasan Dosti was a key figure in ACEN. Gratian Yatsevich, the new commander of Operation Fiend, inserted Albanian members of the Catholic Indipendenza group, many of whom had collaborated with the fascist Italian regime, into the Free Albania Committee.

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