

Speech Delivered at the Plenary Session of the Paris Peace Conference

August 21, 1946

From [Selected Works Volume I](#), 8 Nëntori Publishing House, Tirana, Albania, 1974, pp 593-614;

First published in the newspaper Bashkimi, N° 540, September 22, 1946.

Mr. Chairman,
Messrs. Delegates,

On behalf of the Albanian people and their government, I greet the Paris Conference, wishing it full success in its noble work.

I feel it my duty also to greet the French government and the heroic French people, and to thank them for their traditional hospitality.

Following this incomparably savage war, during which the civilized nations, their very existence menaced by German Nazism and Italian fascism, threw themselves into the terrible conflict with the single slogan: "Victory or death", we have arrived at this high-level conference, which must establish the lasting peace which is so greatly desired. The civilized nations waged a liberation war, and now they are waiting anxiously for this peace to be established in accordance with the principles and ideals for which millions of people gave their lives, in order to ensure mankind a happier future and genuine justice.

The Paris Conference has been convened to work out the peace treaties between the former allied countries and the satellites of Germany, and to put an end to aggression by ensuring sound relations among the peace-loving peoples, eager for freedom, justice, and democracy.

To this end, Albania, too, has been invited to put forward its point of view in relation to the Peace Treaty with Italy. However, Albania considers that the decision not to invite it as a participant in this Conference was unjust. The Albanian people were the first to take up arms against the Italian fascists, who had brought the torch to set Europe ablaze, and they ceased their fight only when Hitlerite Germany was defeated. They deserved greater justice.

The Albanian people, loyal to their fighting traditions for freedom and independence, and loyal to the end to the allied cause, from April 7 1939 till the day of victory, never shirked any sacrifice. Albania rendered a major and unstinting contribution in bloodshed for the common cause. Albania's fight earned it the right to participate in this Conference, with the same title and same rights as those of the twenty-one victorious nations.

The small Albanian nation, alone and defenceless, was the first victim of Italian aggression. The fascist Italy of Mussolini attacked our country on April 7, 1939, thus crowning the predatory policy of expansion it had obstinately pursued against our country for half a century.

The civilized world recalls that black Friday in the year 1939, when 173 warships moved into our ports, 600 bombers roared in our skies, and over 50,000 soldiers armed to the teeth hurled themselves like wolves on our small but valiant people. The Italian fascists wanted to capture us, to crush us, to rob us forever of our freedom and independence and enslave us. But Mussolini's fascists were wrong in their reckoning. The Albanians are not the kind of people who endure slavery. Our history is proof of this; our mountains and forests are filled with the echoes of the heroic struggles of our ancestors, who fought fiercely for centuries against their oppressors.

In 1939, while Europe stood by in silence, our country's sons were falling on the field of honour for a just cause which, before long, would become the cause of all mankind.

The Italian fascists might invade our country, but they could never crush us. Our bones were tempered by the suffering that had befallen our country over the centuries.

Completely alone, facing a ruthless enemy, we have kept our head erect in the storm, and have declared war without quarter on the enemy. Our mountains, plains and valleys, our cities and villages testify to the heroic struggle of my people, who are jealous of their independence and freedom, and would rather die arms in hand than bow their heads in servitude.

Fifteen thousand Albanian volunteers fought heroically in Durrës, Vlora, Saranda, and Shëngjin as well as in the interior of the country, against the hated occupier. But what could this small nation do, with so few arms and so little ammunition, against such an enemy? But, although the country was occupied, our people never considered themselves defeated. With heads held high and unshakable will, we followed the path of suffering and glory. We were sure of victory, for our cause was just.

Following the bloody days of April, the resistance continued and grew; 3,000 armed Albanians took to the mountains, our people's eternal strongholds. The whole people knew the perils and sacrifices of the heroic deed they were undertaking, but at the same time they also knew that their destiny, their very existence, would be decided in those battles. In the towns, bloody skirmishes against the occupiers followed hard one on another; our men fell under the bullets of the enemy's machine-guns as it tried to break our resistance.

From the towns and villages, from the streets and alleys, the Albanian partisans hurled themselves on the enemy to sabotage its military machine, to attack roads, transport, and bridges, blow up munitions depots and to kill spies, officers, and collaborators. It was a ruthless war. The Italians responded with a reign of terror in the towns and villages. The prisons were filled with patriots; dozens of Albanians were hanged and thousands more were exiled to the death islands of Lipari, Ventotenè, and elsewhere.

But all this terror, these hangings and shootings, merely increased our people's hatred for the Italian fascists and incited them to fight. When the Italians attacked Greece, the daring and powerful armed actions of the Albanians were a great assistance to the Greek people who were suffering the same fate as ours. We were bound to each other by the same misfortune, caused by our common enemy. Along the roads of Durrës, Tirana, and Gjirokastra, the Albanian partisans attacked Italian military convoys heading for the Greek front.

Clearly seeing the danger threatening them, the Italians and the Albanian quislings redoubled their efforts and stepped up their terror. The mountains were full of partisans, organized in regular formations, who made incessant attacks on the enemy.

In reprisal, hundreds of villages were burned, but we defended the liberated territory inch by inch. The Italians were obliged to take refuge in the towns, because the mountains were not so good for their health. The quisling governments, under Italian domination, fell and were replaced every ten months. The Albanian people made life impossible for both them and their bosses. This showed the great gulf which separated the quislings from the heroic Albanian people.

Following the capitulation of Italy and the occupation of the country by German troops who came from Greece, the Albanian people closed their ranks still tighter because they knew they had to deal with another ferocious, bloodthirsty enemy.

As soon as they entered Albania, the Germans were attacked by our partisan formations along the Berat-Korça highway. Dozens of trucks were set on fire, and hundreds of Germans were killed. As a

reprisal, the Germans razed the village of Borova, and murdered everyone in it: women, old men, and children. With the aim of annihilating us, the Germans mounted two great offensives. Four German alpine divisions, expert at fighting partisans, were thrown in against us. We were in the middle of winter, without food, without boots, but the partisans fought bravely and emerged victorious.

When the British and the Americans, our allies, landed in France, we were fighting furiously against four German divisions. We felt proud, in this bloody clash, to be doing our duty towards the allies and the friendly French people.

The war of the Albanian people against the Germans was crowned with the heroic battle of Tirana, where we fought day and night for 19 days on end, from street to street, from house to house, liberating every inch of our capital, sacrificing our best fighters, but killing thousands of Germans. The remnants of the German army tried to get through to help their besieged garrison in Tirana, but they were wiped out at Krraba Pass. The National Liberation Army had received from our General Staff a firm order not to let the Germans cross Albania's borders, but to annihilate them on Albanian territory.

This was how we understood the great anti-fascist alliance, this was how we understood loyalty towards the allied cause.

The pursuit of the German troops outside our borders, in the Yugoslav territory of Montenegro, Sandjak, and Hercegovina, is another clear proof for those who really want to know and have the heart to feel how great the sacrifices of our small nation were.

For more than five years the Albanian people fought the Italian and German fascist occupiers as well as their Albanian lackeys. Organized in the National Liberation Front, they fought an unequal but decisive war. Facing hunger and cold but armed with courage and unshakable confidence in their own forces and in those of the allies, they marched forward boldly towards their objective, the liberation of Albania and the destruction of fascism.

Albania became a bastion of the struggle for freedom and independence. Our liberation war was soon recognized abroad. In December 1942 Messrs. Eden, Hull, and Molotov sent their congratulations to the Albanian people for their resistance, which ensured their independence, and contributed to the common struggle.

The National Liberation Army, which arose from the first partisan units, was organized and consolidated through fierce battles, and became a strong and valiant army. It crushed the enemy's military machine and seized the weapons, with which it triumphed. It successfully coped with the great offensives organized by the Italians and the Germans, who tried to crush our National Liberation War. The enemy suffered heavy losses during these offensives, whereas our army emerged ever stronger and more tempered. Our war was essentially a people's war, inseparable from the people; it was their sole means of salvation. The fascist and Nazi occupiers resorted to the blackest terror in order to alienate the people from the just liberation war; thousands of people were murdered or hanged in the towns and villages; more than 300 were gunned down in broad daylight in Korça, Tirana and Vlora, during the protest demonstrations against the occupation, 10,000 Albanians were thrown into Albanian prisons, into the concentration camps of Porto Romano, Mborje, Burrel, Kavaja and Prishtina, as well as the death camps in Germany, because of their anti-fascist sentiments and activities.

They burned down and drowned in blood entire towns, such as Leskovik, Pogradec, Saranda and Përmet, and whole regions, such as Mallakstra, Kurvelesh, Peza and Skrapar, were laid waste and

suffered savage reprisals at the hands of the fascist and Nazi soldiers. But, despite these things the Albanian people themselves, with their incessant war, and with great sacrifices, liberated the whole of their country with their own forces.

The following figures clearly show the size of our resistance on the eve of the liberation of Albania: our National Liberation Army had 70,000 fighters in its ranks, including 6,000 women. Italy was obliged to maintain over 100,000 soldiers in Albania, and Germany over 70,000 to counter our resistance forces.

The sacrifices of our people were very great. Out of a population of one million, 28,000 were killed, 12,600 wounded, 10,000 were made political prisoners in Italy and Germany, and 35,000 made to do forced labour; of the 2,500 towns and villages of Albania, 850 were ruined or razed to the ground; all the communications, all the ports, mines and electric power installations were destroyed, our agriculture and livestock were plundered, and our entire national economy was wrecked.

On the other side, the enemy suffered these losses: 53,639 Italians and Germans were killed, wounded or taken prisoner, about 100 tanks and armoured cars knocked out, 1,334 artillery pieces and mortars, 1,934 trucks and 2,855 machine-guns captured or destroyed, not to mention the rifles, munitions, and stores destroyed or captured.

The allies appreciated our contribution to the common cause. In June 1943, they sent military liaison missions to the General Staff of our National Liberation Army and dropped supplies by parachute. I want to mention here some of the heads of these missions: the Englishmen Major Bill Mclean, Lieutenant-Colonel Palmer, and General Davies, the American Captain Thomas Stephen, and the Russian Major Ivanov. From 1944 an Albanian military mission was accredited at the Allied Mediterranean High Command in Italy. The allied leaders have often acknowledged our people's contribution to the common cause. Mr. Winston Churchill, answering a question in the House of Commons on November 4, 1943, declared:

"Thousands of Albanians are fighting in their mountains for the freedom and independence of their country and, according to the reports of the British military mission in Albania, they are carrying out brilliant actions."

Mr. Cordell Hull, on the occasion of Albanian National Day, November 28, 1943, in a letter to Mr. Charles Hart, ex-ambassador of the United States of America to Albania, and President of the "Friends of Albania" Association, wrote:

"The Government and the people of the United States have always been aware of the struggle of the Albanian people to safeguard the integrity and independence of their own country.

We have followed closely, with sympathy and admiration, their resistance against fascist Italy, as well as their patriotic determination to defend their national sovereignty. Today these valiant fighters are continuing their war, fighting the Nazi enemy, like all those who love freedom, as we do ourselves.

On November 28 1912 the Albanians proclaimed their independence. Today, on the anniversary of this date, they could hope for the complete fulfilment of their great objective.

Although the Albanians do not have a government abroad to express their national aspirations, we see in their national will the ideals and principles which inspire us and our allies, as well as the desire to carry on the war until Nazism is totally wiped out."

Mr. Hull's successor, Mr. Edward Stettinius, on May 22, 1945, sent me the following message:

"I am well aware of the incessant war the Albanian people have waged against the aggressor, and I fully appreciate the sacrifices they have made to achieve the liberation of their country, and their contribution to the attainment of the ultimate victory against the common enemy. . . I want to assure you of the sympathy and friendship the people of the United States cherish for Albania and its people, and I know that in the future Albania will make the same important contribution to the cause of peace as it has made to the achievement of victory".

The General Commander of the allied forces in the Mediterranean, Maitland Wilson, wrote me these words on the October 12, 1944:

"I have watched with admiration the way your National Liberation Army has fulfilled its tasks, in its brilliant attacks on our common enemy, for our common goal".

I could, gentlemen, also cite a great number of documents demonstrating how much our efforts were appreciated by the allies. But the brave deeds of our people do not need documents. They speak for themselves: when the aeroplane in which they were travelling was damaged, 13 American women were obliged to land in German-occupied territory. Those women let the whole world know about the sacrifices and selflessness of the Albanian partisans who risked certain death to save them from the Germans' clutches. As the New Zealand and Australian airmen whom our men rescued from the German shells were leaving our Staff Headquarters, they shook hands with me and said: "Our wives and children will be grateful to you for saving our lives".

But our partisans were merely doing their duty by their comrades-in-arms and allies.

With the aim of distorting history and denying facts that are as plain as day, great efforts are being made to prevent those who fought heroically for the common cause from being treated equally. A great deal has been said at this high-level Conference about defending the interests of the small nations, but in reality the opposite has occurred as far as our people are concerned. The Albanian people, few in number but mighty in terms of the deeds they have done, should have been present now, at this Conference, with the same rights as the other victorious nations, rights for which they have paid very dear.

The Albanian people feel offended at being put on the same plane as Austria, which did not fire a single shot against the Germans, but on the contrary, sent its soldiers to murder our women and children, and burn out towns and villages, in collaboration with the Germans.

No one can deny the Albanian people's loyalty to the allies and the great anti-fascist cause. All those who try to prove the contrary, using false arguments, will make themselves ridiculous and suffer a great defeat.

The Albanian people come proudly to this Peace Conference convinced that they have completely fulfilled their duty as allies. Albania appears here to claim its right to reparations and to demand justice from Italy, which set it ablaze and drowned it in blood, and to dictate its will as a victor, so that Italy may no longer represent a threat to peace in the world, or to the independence and sovereignty of my country.

However, before stating the viewpoint of my country on this question, I feel it my duty to answer the false accusations of Mr. Tsaldaris, the head of the Greek delegation, accusations and claims that he has formulated against Albania at various earlier sessions of this Conference.

Mr. Tsaldaris tries to prove that Albania is not an allied country, that Albania attacked Greece, and consequently, is in a state of war with Greece. On the other hand, Mr. Tsaldaris lays claim to South Albania, pretending that it is Greek territory and belongs by right to Greece.

On the question of whether Albania is an allied country and whether it has fully deserved this title, Mr. Tsaldaris has our reply in the words I have just spoken. The Albanian people contemptuously reject the vile accusations of the Greek delegate, who labels my country an aggressor. The Albanian people have never attacked the honest Greek people and have never declared war on them. On the contrary, they sympathized with their cause, which was also the cause of the Albanian people, since both nations had suffered the same fate and had to deal with the same enemy.

The Albanian people demonstrated, not only during the anti-fascist war, but also during the First World War, their determination to fight Italian imperialism, which had its eye on our land and resources. Between the Albanian people and the Italian fascists, a terrible and merciless war was waged. That is why Mr. Tsaldaris will not succeed in convincing anybody, even the stupid, with his "famous" arguments; Mr. Tsaldaris should demand a settlement of accounts from fascist Italy for its disgraceful attack against his country, and not from us. He should call to account the war criminal Victor Emmanuel, not the Albanian people, who were invaded by the same enemy as Greece, and who, like the Greek people, fought furiously for their independence and sovereignty.

It would be ridiculous to think that, by a paltry decree, Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy, could lay the blame on the Albanian people who waged a merciless war against Italy right from the first days of the occupation, and who even made an attempt against the king's life during his only visit to Albania, in May 1941. Mr. Tsaldaris uses the declaration of war on the part of the Albanian quisling Vërlaci as an argument to defend his thesis. The Albanian people lumped the occupiers and quislings together and made no distinction between them. The Albanian quislings, like all the other quislings of Europe, have nothing in common with our people. They were the filthiest enemies of the people and, as such, have been fought consistently. The Albanian quislings were not able to muster more than a few weak battalions against the liberation army and the allies, whereas the Albanian people rose as one man against the oppressor and the traitors. That is the difference between our people and the quislings. Would Mr. Tsaldaris like to know in addition what the Albanian people did with those quislings. Just this: they wiped them out, all of them, and thus they paid with their lives for the crimes they committed. And if he wants to know more about the fate of their associates in the war, who fled with the German troops, he should know that these criminals may be found in the best hotels in Rome, the city from which the planes which so cravenly bombed Albanian and Greek women and children took off.

I would like to ask Mr. Tsaldaris: why does he not mention the quislings of Europe who so gravely damaged the allied cause, and in particular, those quislings who, after having committed horrible crimes, now walk freely in the streets? Why is it that Mr. Tsaldaris dare not confuse the other European quislings with their respective nations?

I would like to remind you that during the Italian-Greek War, some hundreds Albanian soldiers, forced into service by the Italians, rose against them and made common cause with the Greek people; some deserted and went over to the Greek troops, to fight alongside them, but they were treated as prisoners of war and sent to Crete, where during the German landing, they fought valiantly beside the British soldiers. Some joined the Albanian partisans, while others were disarmed by the Italians, withdrawn from the front, confined to the Shijak concentration camp, and court-martialled for "high treason".

On December 22, 1940, the Reuter news agency sent out the following item from Manastir:

"The Albanian soldiers, forcibly conscripted into the Italian army, yesterday rebelled in a sector of the Italian rear-lines, causing the enemy heavy losses before being captured. Some have taken to the hills and are continuing to offer resistance."

On December 4, 1940, the "Anatole" news agency reported from Athens that "an Italian general taken prisoner by the Greeks has declared that the Italian army is suffering heavy losses because of the defection of the Albanians".

Mussolini himself, in a letter to Hitler on November 22, 1940, tried to justify the Italian losses in the same way.

Here is what Badoglio says in his memoirs:

"The campaign has begun. The entire world knows of its progress. The Greek troops in Epirus are resisting valiantly on the Calamas river, while the Albanian bands and troops which were part of our divisions have either betrayed us, sabotaging our operations, or have gone over to the Greeks."

The newspaper "Le Figaro", in its issue No. 588 of July 4, 1946, referring to the Italian-Greek war, writes:

"The Albanian partisan detachments, for their part, attacked Italian convoys and troops on the roads leading to the front."

On October 26, 1940, the BBC broadcast:

"We are informed from Albania that Albanian partisan units, operating behind the Italian lines, are cutting and sabotaging lines of communication, sowing terror among cut-off Italian detachments. Armed groups have succeeded in entering the capital and have posted proclamations on all the government buildings, and even on the palace of the Italian government, calling on the Italians to get out of Albania."

Likewise on January 4 1941 the AA (BBC) broadcast:

"In military circles it is pointed out that the Albanians are giving the Greeks great aid against the Italians."

But along with his lying accusations against the Albanian people, perhaps Mr. Tsaldaris should give us here some explanation of these questions:

Does he also consider as aggressors, as he does Albania, the various nations of Europe, whose quislings not only sent battalions but even organized entire expeditions against the heroic Red Army, which was an example of heroism and valour to all nations and, at the same time, their surest support? It is difficult for him to answer this question.

Does Mr. Tsaldaris perhaps consider France, from which Hitler intended to launch his offensive against England, to be an aggressor country? He will find it difficult to answer this question too. Mr. Tsaldaris thinks that he can say what he likes against tiny Albania, but he is mistaken. His worthless arguments will not hold water.

No, the Albanian people have never been and never will be aggressors, and do not pose any threat to the Greek people, as Mr. Tsaldaris claims. The attacks on our country by the chief Greek delegate and his claims that it is we who are causing trouble remind us of one of Lafontaine's fables. We

have always lived in harmony with the Greek people, with whom we fought shoulder to shoulder against the Italian and German fascist occupiers.

During our anti-fascist war, the Albanian people established links of sincere friendship with their neighbours, the Yugoslav and Greek peoples.

In the light of these facts, the Greek accusations are seen for what they really are: lies devoid of any foundation. But has Mr. Tsaldaris so quickly forgotten the fact that the Greek quislings, together with the Germans, often fought against the Albanians, and are responsible for a thousand atrocities?

Here are some facts:

On September 8, 1943, the day of Italy's capitulation, the Germans, coming from the Sajadha region and guided by a Zervas captain named Vitos, entered Konispol and burnt down more than 50 houses. During the great 1943-1944 winter offensive launched by the Germans against our National Liberation Army, the German troops, together with Zervas bands, came to Albania from Greece, and set fire to the Zagoria and Pogon regions.

Other Zervas bands, together with the Germans, fought against the Albanian partisans in January 1944, and set fire to the villages of Krane and Dermish, as well as the houses of all the partisans from the Greek minority of Dropull, while in February 1944 these bands burned down the village of Dhrovjan.

During the other large-scale offensive unleashed by the Germans in June 1944, Zervas forces again came, together with the German troops from Greece, crossing the border at Voshtina, and set fire to everything in the Zagoria region they had left the first time. Each time the Germans came from Greece to attack the forces of the National Liberation Army, their main support was the armed bands of the Greek quisling, General Napoleon Zervas.

The Greek delegation has claimed that the present Albanian government is pursuing a policy of denationalizing the Greek minority in Albania.

Gentlemen, the Greek minority in Albania, consisting of 35,000 people, fought shoulder to shoulder with all the Albanian people against the fascist and Nazi occupiers, and against the Albanian and Greek quislings. Today in the People's Republic of Albania it enjoys equal rights with the Albanian population. It has 79 Greek language schools, one Greek language secondary school, has its own autonomous local administration, just like the Albanian population, and sends representatives to the People's Assembly; there are also citizens of the Greek minority in the army and the government. On the other hand, I do not know if the honourable delegates are aware of the terror exercised against the Albanian minority in Greece. Of the 60,000 Albanians left in Greece according to the Treaty of London, from 1913 to 1923, 35,000 Albanians were forcibly transferred to Turkey as "Turkish subjects" in exchange for Greeks from Asia Minor; contrary to the solemn pledges made by Greece, the Greek governments have always pursued a policy of exterminating the Albanian minority in Greece and have never recognized that it had any rights. In June 1944 and March 1945, the armed bands of the quisling General Napoleon Zervas tried to wipe out the remaining Albanians: they set their villages on fire, plundered their property, and killed thousands of men and women, old people and children. More than 20,000 Albanians who managed to escape fled to Albania where, although they are assisted by the Albanian government and people, they live in great poverty.

But the real aim of all these allegations by the Greek delegate is to take two regions from Albania, those of Korça and Gjirokastra, which have always been among the most ardent centres of Albanian

patriotism, both during the long Turkish occupation and during the National Liberation War against the Italian and German occupiers. These aims reflect the old policy of the protagonists of the "Megale idea", that is to say, Greek imperialist expansion over the entire Balkan region, an idea which has also germinated in the heads of the present Greek rulers. In fact these people, with their claims on Albania, their daily provocations on our borders, and their intrigues, like the proposal Mr. Tsaldaris made to the Yugoslav delegate that Albania be partitioned between Yugoslavia and Greece⁴, are trying to disturb the peace in the Balkans.

Gentlemen, we consider it to be out of place and unacceptable for this Conference to examine the question of the territorial integrity of Albania. The Albanian people, few in number, but great in the sacrifices they made for the common cause, are not here to discuss their borders, but to express and demand their rights.

We solemnly declare that within our present borders there is not one inch of foreign soil, and that we will never permit anyone to encroach upon them, for to us they are sacred.

ALBANIA AND THE PEACE TREATY WITH ITALY

Honourable delegates, Italy is fully responsible for the losses and damage caused to the Albanian people during this war. The capitulation of September 8 1943 put an end to the aggression and infamy of fascist Italy, but we demand, in the name of the thousands who have fallen, and because of the misfortunes inflicted on our country by Italy — that the Peace Treaty put an end, once and for all, to the aggressive and imperialist policy of Italy.

Albania has suffered much at the hands of fascist Italy, but it has also suffered at the hands of pre-fascist Italy, of so-called democratic Italy, and many signs and expressions of the present Italian government warn of the continuation of the same Italian policy towards Albania, that is to say, a policy of domination and occupation.

Present-day Italy is sheltering all the Albanian war criminals who managed to escape their just punishment by the people. There they have found an appropriate field for their propaganda and plots against new democratic Albania. The Italian war criminals, responsible for the aggression against Albania and the countless sufferings they caused the Albanian people, are at large, and even filling important posts. In March 1946 at Bari, the Italian fascists killed an Albanian sergeant from the Albanian military mission attached to the Allied Mediterranean High Command. In speeches made during the election campaign last spring, statesmen of the present Italian government expressed greedy intentions towards Albania's independence, and even here, among the members of the Italian delegation, there are men who were Mussolini's faithful agents in imposing Italy's will on Albania, in occupying and martyring our nation.

The Albanian delegation has carefully studied the draft-peace treaty with Italy and expresses its gratitude to the Council of Foreign Ministers which, during the elaboration of this treaty, has not passed over Albania's interests in silence. Nevertheless it takes the liberty today of making some suggestions about this treaty, reserving the right to express its views in detail before the competent commissions on specific questions whenever it sees fit.

Albania demands that the Peace Treaty give it strong guarantees avoiding any future recurrence of Italian imperialist policy of aggression towards Albania, depriving Italy of any possibility of repeating the past, both that of the period before April 7 1939 and after, and of presenting claims of any kind against Albania.

For this reason the Albanian delegation takes the liberty of suggesting some improvements:

1. The Albanian delegation estimates that the military forces — land, sea and air — permitted to Italy allow it to threaten the peace and security of its neighbours and the Balkan countries. Albania is of the opinion that these forces should be further reduced so as to make it impossible for Italy to endanger peace, thus permitting us to live and work in security.

2. The Albanian delegation wishes to make an observation about a very important clause in this treaty, which is closely connected with the economic development of Albania. I am referring to the section on reparations for war damage. The Council of Foreign Ministers has left it to the Conference to decide on the reparation demands presented by France, Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania and Ethiopia. In his speech, Signor de Gasperi, although somewhat hesitantly, tried to absolve his country from the just obligations it has incurred from fascism through its criminal aggression. Gentlemen, for 54 months on end, the Italian occupiers, fully aware of their actions and pursuing well-determined aims, plundered our land and subsoil resources, our agriculture and livestock, reduced our cities and villages to ashes in order to alienate the people from their just liberation cause, and transformed our peaceful country into a battlefield, thus causing incalculable damage to our national economy. Thousands of patriots were killed, tortured, jailed or confined in concentration camps, plunging thousands of mothers, wives and children into mourning. Italy is responsible to Albania for losses and damages amounting to a sum of 3,544,232,626 gold francs.

The Albanian delegation will present its reparation demands in detail, as well as the necessary amendments to the treaty, but as of now, it demands, as an indisputable right, that the Peace Treaty define the sum which Italy should pay to Albania as well as the conditions of payment.

3. From what has been said, it is clear that the Peace Treaty with Italy is of particular importance to Albania.

There are also other important points, which I do not want to elaborate on here, such as the articles on war criminals, on the restitution of stolen property, on the property of the citizens of the allied nations in Italy, besides some details, which are, nevertheless, not unimportant, and which directly concern our country.

This treaty provided Albania with rights and obligations of great importance. They are closely connected with its independence, its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and its economic and political future. Nevertheless, the Albanian delegation is forced to observe that, despite all that has been said already and despite the fact that Albania, through its contribution to the common war, has aligned itself, body and soul, with the victorious allied nations, the Peace Treaty with Italy in the draft form presented to us today does not guarantee Albania all the rights it is properly entitled to (is this not a legal paradox?), and does not permit it to sign this treaty as a contracting party, because it is not considered as an associated power.

The Albanian delegation expressed the hope that the Conference will eventually accept the following amendment, to be numbered "Article 26 a" in Part II, Section V, or added to the Foreword, which would eliminate a series of misunderstandings and a source of continuous interventions on the part of our delegation.

The amendment we suggest is as follows:

"Article 26 a"

"In the implementation of this treaty, Albania is considered as an associated power".

I want to emphasize that the Albanian delegation reserves the right to expound its views to the plenary session of the Conference, as well as to the competent commissions, whenever it sees fit to intervene on the question of the Peace Treaty with Italy.

The Albanian delegation feels duty bound to present its just demands towards Italy so that the latter ceases to pose a continuous threat to small, peace-loving Albania, pays compensation for the damage it has caused, returns everything it has taken by force, and hands over the Albanian and foreign war criminals who have found asylum in Italy and are wanted by the Albanian government. The People's Republic of Albania will be happy to maintain normal relations with a new and genuinely democratic Italy, which honours its international obligations, keeps within its natural borders, and respects those of others, an Italy that is not a lair of neo-fascists and war criminals of all countries, or a new hot bed of aggression, but is disposed to cooperate with other democratic countries for peace and collective security.

Albania has spared nothing for the common victory. It is also determined that, side by side with its wartime allies and with all the democratic countries, it will make its contribution to the establishment of a just peace and collective security.

The Albanian delegation will be happy if this modest contribution to the present Conference helps in carrying out this difficult task.