

(2002/C 40 E/139)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1891/01**by Ioannis Marinos (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(27 June 2001)

Subject: Persecution of the Greek minority in Albania and activities of Albanian extremists in Greece

According to a report by the Athens News Agency from Gjirokastra, the former Prime Minister of Albania, Mr Fatos Nano, formally condemned the leader of the official opposition, Mr Sali Berisha, on 29 May 2001 for the harsh policies he had pursued as President of Albania against the Greek minority living in the south of the country. Mr Nano described how he used to share cigarettes in the prison cells with Greek Albanians imprisoned by Mr Berisha. He also estimated that USD 1 billion in currency was flowing into the country from the hundreds of thousands of Albanians working in Greece.

The weekly magazine, Zoom, published in FYROM reported on 25 May 2001 that a major offensive was about to be launched by Albanian extremists in Greece, who have already formed a force called the 'Tsamouria Liberation Army'. Citing secret service sources, the magazine reports that a complete plan of operations was drawn up early in the year in Switzerland (where most of the leaders of the Albanian extremist organisations live), the objective being the annexation of Greek territory to a 'Greater Albania'.

What is the Commission's response to the information that terrorist operations may be launched on the territory of a Member State of the Union? What information does the Commission have concerning the persecution of the large Greek minority — which even the former Prime Minister of Albania has condemned — which was also repressed for decades by Hoxha's totalitarian communist regime? Is the Commission considering linking EU economic aid to Albania with respect for the human rights of the Albanian people and the ethnic minorities living in that country?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 2001)

The Commission is not aware of any terrorist operations which might be launched by possible Albanian extremists in Greece.

Repression in Albania during the Hoxha era was, regretfully, quite widespread, and it certainly included representatives of the Greek minority. The situation has, however, evolved since 1991. Today, Albania is signatory of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and, in general, takes a constructive approach towards minority issues. It recognises the existence of an important Greek minority and is attempting to bring its legislation and practice up to international standards. During discussions in the framework of the Union/Albania High Level Steering Group in May 2001, the Albanian Government stressed its intention gradually to complete the legal framework for minority protection and to abolish the concept of 'minority zones'. These steps will contribute to enhancing minority protection in Albania.

Community assistance to Albania has been, and will continue to be, linked to the respect of essential political criteria such as human rights and protection of minorities. The Commission closely follows up developments in these sensitive areas.

(2002/C 40 E/140)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1895/01**by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(28 June 2001)

Subject: Non-disbursement of appropriations under the second CSF for Greece

What is the amount of appropriations made available to Greece under the second CSF which have not yet been disbursed? Which specific programmes are concerned and what are the reasons for the delay?