

109TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. RES. 521

Commending the people of Albania on the 61st anniversary of the liberation of the Jews from the Nazi death camps, for protecting and saving the lives of all Jews who lived in Albania, or sought asylum there during the Holocaust.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 27, 2006

Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. McCAIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Commending the people of Albania on the 61st anniversary of the liberation of the Jews from the Nazi death camps, for protecting and saving the lives of all Jews who lived in Albania, or sought asylum there during the Holocaust.

Whereas at the start of World War II, approximately 200 Jews lived in the Republic of Albania, and approximately 1800 Jews escaped to Albania from Western Europe and the former Yugoslavia;

Whereas in 1934, United States Ambassador to Albania Herman Bernstein wrote that, “There is no trace of any discrimination against Jews in Albania, because Albania happens to be one of the rare lands in Europe today where religious prejudice and hate do not exist, even

though Albanians themselves are divided into three faiths.”;

Whereas based on their unique history of religious tolerance, Albanians sheltered and protected Jews, even at the risk of Albanian lives, beginning with the invasion and occupation of Albania by Mussolini’s Italian fascists in 1939;

Whereas after Germany occupied Albania in 1943 and the Gestapo ordered Jewish refugees in the Albanian capital of Tirana to register, Albanian leaders refused to provide a list of Jews living in Albania, and Albanian clerks issued false identity papers to protect all Jews who traveled to and hid in Tirana;

Whereas Albanians considered it a matter of national pride and tradition to help Jews during the Holocaust, and due to the actions of many individual Albanians, virtually the entire native and refugee Jewish community in Albania during World War II survived the Holocaust;

Whereas Albania had more Jewish residents after World War II than before World War II;

Whereas in June 1990, Jewish-American Congressman Tom Lantos and former Albanian-American Congressman Joe DioGuardi were the first United States officials to enter Albania in 50 years and received from the Communist Party leader and Albanian President Ramiz Alia a thick file from the Communist archives containing the records of the unpublicized heroic deeds of hundreds of Albanians who rescued Jews during World War II;

Whereas Joe DioGuardi, upon returning to the United States, sent the file for authentication to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Museum in Jerusalem, Israel;

Whereas Yad Vashem has thus far designated 63 Albanians as “Righteous Persons” and Albania as one of the “Righteous Among the Nations”;

Whereas in February 1995, Congressmen Tom Lantos, Benjamin Gilman, and Jerrold Nadler and former Congressman Joe DioGuardi spoke at a ceremony at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, commemorating the addition of Albania to the museum’s “Righteous Among the Nations” installation;

Whereas based on the information authenticated by Yad Vashem, Jewish-American author and philanthropist Harvey Sarnet published “Rescue in Albania” in 1997, to call international attention to the unique role of the Albanian people in saving Jews from the Nazi Holocaust;

Whereas in October 1997, the Albanian American Civic League and Foundation began the distribution of 10,000 copies of “Rescue in Albania” with forewords by Congressmen Lantos and Gilman to bring to the attention of the Jewish people and their leaders in particular the plight of Albanians living under Slobodan Milosevic in order to forestall another genocide;

Whereas on May 15, 2005, Jews and Albanians gathered in New York City in a “Salute to Albanian Tolerance, Resistance, and Hope: Remembering Besa and the Holocaust” on the occasion for the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps; and

Whereas in a statement presented at the ceremony Dr. Mordechai Paldiel, Director of the Department for the Righteous at Yad Vashem, commemorated the heroism of Albanians as “the only ones among rescuers in other countries who not only went out of their way to save

Jews, but vied and competed with each other for the privilege of being a rescuer, thanks to besa”, the code of honor that requires Albanians to save the life of anyone seeking refuge, even if it means sacrificing his own life: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) commends the people of Albania for pro-
3 tecting and saving the lives of all Jews, both native
4 and refugee, living in Albania during the Holocaust;

5 (2) commends Yad Vashem in Israel and en-
6 courages others to recognize Albanians who took ac-
7 tion to protect Jews during the Holocaust for their
8 great courage and heroism; and

9 (3) takes this occasion to reaffirm its support
10 for close ties between the United States and Albania.

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