

The following information from the Registry of the International Court of Justice has been communicated to the Press:

On May 19th, 1953, His Excellency the Italian Minister at The Hague, on behalf of his Government, handed to the Registrar of the International Court of Justice a Declaration accepting the jurisdiction of the Court in accordance with the Resolution of the Security Council of October 15th, 1946. Jurisdiction was accepted in respect of the disputes referred to under (b) of the Statement to accompany publication of the Agreement between the Governments of France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America for the submission to an arbitrator of certain claims with respect to gold looted by the Germans from Rome, drawn up by the said Governments in Washington on April 25th, 1951, and, at the same time, the Italian Government filed in the Registry an Application instituting proceedings in the International Court of Justice against the Governments of France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America with regard to monetary gold removed from Rome in 1943.

According to the Application, the facts are as follows. In 1943 the Germans seized some 2,338 kilograms of monetary gold in Rome, which was the property of the National Bank of Albania, and transferred it to Germany. The Final Act of the Paris Conference on Reparation, signed in 1946 by 18 States, including the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom and Albania, and to which Italy subsequently adhered, provides that monetary gold found in Germany should be pooled for distribution among the countries entitled to participate in the pool, in proportion to their respective losses of gold as the result of looting by Germany. The United States, France and the United Kingdom were responsible for this distribution. In respect of the gold removed from Rome in 1943, they were confronted with competing claims by Albania and Italy. They therefore requested the opinion of an arbitrator who, in February, 1953, declared that the gold belonged to Albania.

The three Governments had agreed that in the event of such a finding they would deliver the gold to the United Kingdom in partial satisfaction of the Judgment given by the Court in 1949 in the Corfu Channel case, in which Albania had been condemned to pay some £843,000 to the United Kingdom as compensation due as the result of the explosion of mines in the Corfu Channel in 1946. It was, however, agreed that Albania could, within 90 days after the communication of the arbitrator's opinion, apply to the Court for the determination of the question whether such delivery to the United Kingdom was proper; or that Italy could apply to the Court for the determination of the question whether the gold should not be delivered to Italy rather than to the United Kingdom.

This is the object of the Application filed by Italy in the Registry on May 19th. The Italian Government requests the Court to declare that the gold should be delivered to it, in particular, on the ground that the gold was the property of the National Bank of Albania which had been established with Italian capital in accordance with the terms of a Convention concluded in 1925 between the Albanian Government and an Italian financial Group. This Convention, which was promulgated as a Law of the Albanian State, also provided for a loan to the Albanian Government for the carrying out of public works, under which some 62,000,000 gold francs were made available for this purpose. This Convention was abrogated by Albania in 1945 and the rights of the National Bank of Albania thereunder, and all its assets, were confiscated without indemnity. A further consequence of the Albanian action was the abrogation of that State's obligation to make repayment of the loan, under which the liability amounted in 1945 - in respect of capital and interest - to 117,000,000 gold francs.

The Italian Government further asks the Court to declare that, its right to compensation for the wrongful measures taken by Albania having been established, this right must have priority over any rights which the United Kingdom may have as a result of the incidents in the Corfu Channel, these incidents having occurred after the wrongful act of which Italy complains.