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The Development of the Communist Movement in Albania, 1928/29-1944

In Albania the communist movement was relatively late in developing - not until the Second World War was the Communist Party of Albania (Partia Komuniste e Shqipërisë; PKSh) even established. Due to the extreme backwardness of the country and its dependence on foreign powers, the process of founding the party was a difficult and protracted one. Nevertheless, the Albanian communists succeeded in mobilizing and unifying the majority of the population to follow its leadership in resisting the fascist forces occupying the country. Under the conditions of military suppression and illegality, the PKSh proved its organizational capabilities in both the political and armed struggle against the fascist occupation, as well as in the defeat of the Albanian monarchy and the establishment of its own political power.

Remarkably, the domination of the party that grew out of the PKSH in 1948, namely the Labour Party of Albania (Partia e Punës e Shiqipërisë; PPSh), was not shaken until rather late, that is following the collapse of "socialism in practice" in the other Eastern and Southeastern European countries. Yet even in Albania, there is now no stopping political and social change following the embassy occupations in Tirana in the summer of 1990, the massive protests throughout the country, the emigration of thousands, and the first democratic elections in March 1991. Even the PPSh, which renamed itself the Socialist Party (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë; PSSh) at its tenth party congress in June 1991 and which now propagates pluralism, has begun to reckon with its own past.

That the Albanian communists were able to hold onto the reigns of absolute power for such a long period of time is not due so much to the "prudence, intelligence and wisdom" of the party and of the man who headed it as General Secretary, or more specifically as First Secretary, for over forty years, Enver Hoxha, as it is to the fact that the Communist Party rigorously distinguished itself as a "new type of party". The implementation of a democratic centralism that demanded military-like discipline, meant that it was nearly impossible to conduct open discussions on ideology and political issues, and that all opposition was relentlessly suppressed.

In his works Hoxha attempted to argue that the PPSh had "always preserved and protected Marxism-Leninism from all its enemies" because "the creation, development, consolidation and steeling of our party differed completely from the establishment process of the former communist parties in both the East and West, parties that have since transformed themselves into revisionist parties." The particular characteristics of the course of development in Albania can actually be traced back to the period of the party's formation; they are due especially to the adoption of an extremely dogmatic Marxism-Leninism of the Stalinist type. Under the rule of the Stalinist PPSh, a dictatorial regime emerged that was to lead the country into isolation.

1. Historiography: Sources and Secondary Literature

The most important sources on this topic are to be found in the Central State Archives (Arkivi Qendror Shtetëror), in the Central Archives of the PPSh (Arkivi Qendror i Partisë së Punës së Shqipërisë) and in the Archives of the Ministry for the People's Defense (Arkivi i Ministrisë së Mbrojtjes Popullore). Although the war years took their toll, these archives include materials from state bureaucracies on the national and local levels, from the police and other security surveillance forces, funds of political associations, organizations and from individuals, contemporary newspapers and journals, documents on the activities of the communist groups and their relations to communist movements in other countries and to the Communist International CI), on the activities of the PKSh especially during the resistance against the fascists, as well as material on the effectiveness of

¹ See Wissenschaftliche Konferenz über das marxistisch-leninistische theoretische Denken der Partei der Arbeit Albaniens und des Genossen Enver Hoxha. 3.-4. Oktober 1983 (Tirana, 1984), p. 5.

² Enver Hoxha, "Die PAA wurde unter anderen Bedingungen als die übrigen kommunistischen Parteien gebildet", Albanien heute, 5 (1987), p. 17.

the Italian and German occupation authorities during the war.³ A complete compilation is not possible because to date foreign researchers have rarely been permitted access to this material.

There is only a limited amount of published sources. Prior to 1945 nothing was published on the communist movement, with a few exceptions⁴ pertaining to statistical data, statute books and documents on foreign policy. Primarily the material available has been the official publications of party and state documents,⁵ chiefly on certain selected topics in recent decades, and official works by the leading Albanian politicians, including Enver Hoxha⁶ and his successor Ramiz Alia.⁷ These sources serve to substantiate further recollections, namely Hoxha's,⁸ which create a basis despite their subjective view of the events, as well as from other participants of the resistance movement.⁹ It has only been very recently that contemporaries who suffered from the reprisals of the Stalinist leadership under Hoxha have spoken out in the publications of the opposition parties.¹⁰

The available monographic studies and depictions on the history of the labour movement and especially on the development of the communist movement are in greater abundance. Those which should be mentioned are the official history of the Labour Party of Albania¹¹ and Albanian history in the period covered here.¹²

³ As reported in the Tirana newspaper *Bashkimi*, the Central State Archives recieved approximately 20,000 pages of documents on various aspects of the country's history from 1800 up until the period of the national antifascist liberation movement in 1990. *Bashkimi*, 7 February 1991,

⁴ See Statistika e tregtisë së jashtme të shtetit shqiptar për vitet 1921-1938 (në 19 vëlline) (Tirana, 1922-1939); Shqipëria përpara Konferencës së paqes, 2 vols., (Shkodra, 1921); Ligje, dekretligje e rregullare të viteve 1926-1934 (Tirana, 1938-1942).

⁵ See Enver Hoxha, Raport në Kongresin e Drë të Partisë Kommuniste të Shqipërisë. Mbi punën e Komitetit qendror dhe detyrat e reja të partisë (Tirana, 1949); Dokumenta kryesore të pushtetit revolucionar nacional-çlirimtar (1942-1944) (Tirana, 1962); Dokumente të Shtakit të Përgjithshëm dhe të Komandës së Përgjithshme të Ushtrisë Nacionalçlirimtare, 2 vols., (Tirana, 1976); see also Dokumente e materiale historike uga lufta e popullit shqiptar për liri e demnokraci (1917-1941) (Tirana, 1959); Mbi influencën e Revolucionit të Madh Socialist të Tetorit në Shqipëri (1917-1924) (Tirana, 1957); Lufta e popullit shqiptar për çlirimin kombëtar 1918-1920 (Përmbledhje dokumentesh), 2 vols., (Tirana, 1975-1976).

⁶ Enver Hoxha, Vepra, vol. 1ss. (Tirana, 1968ss.).

⁷ Ramiz Alia, Our Enver (Tirana, 1988).

⁸ Enver Hoxha, Begegnungen mit Stalin. Erinnerungen (Dortmund, 1980); id., Kur lindi partia. Kujtime (Tirana, 1981); id., Die Titoisten. Historische Aufzeichnungen (Tirana, 1983); id., Kur u hodhen themelet e Shqipërisë së re. Kujtime dhe shënime historike (Tirana, 1984).

⁹ Shefqet Peçi, Kujtime dhe dokumente nga lufta Nacionalçlirimtare, 2 vols., (Tirana, 1968-1969). Precise references to the developments in Albania are also to be found in the memoirs of Yugoslavians who fought in the people's liberation struggle. See Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, Mein Weg mit Tito (Munich and Zurich, 1972); Dušan Mugoša, Na zdatku (Belgrade, 1972).

¹⁰ See "Bedri Spahiu revizionon Bedri Spahiun. Kujtime", *Republika*, 6 June 1991; "(Mos)marrëveshja e Mukjes. Sipas bisedës me Dr. Ymer Dishnicën", *ibid.*, 9 June 1991; "PPSh e ka humbur të drejtën dhe mundësinë për të undhëhequr vendin. Intervistë e zonise i iri Belishova, dhënë redaktorit tonë, Bashkim Trenova", *Rilindja Demokratike*, 12 June 1991; "Sad. — te deshmon", *ibid.*, 3 July 1991; "PKSh nuk është thëmeluar nga Enver Hoxha. Intervistë e zotit Sada Bekteshi me gazetarin tonë Mëhill Tanushi", *ibid.*, 6 July 1991.

¹¹ Historia e Partisë së Punës së Shqipërisë (Tirana, 1968).

Despite their specific political purpose, many studies shed light on the economic situation,¹³ the political conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s,¹⁴ and the origins of the communist movement.¹⁵ Additional information can be found in special studies, usually biographical works - on the active representatives of the national and revolutionary movement.¹⁶ A great deal of literature deals with the antifascist liberation struggle,¹⁷ dealing not only with military aspects of the resistance but also with the emergence of communist youth and women

¹² Historia e Shqipërisë, Vol. 3 (1912-1944) (Tirana, 1984).

¹³ See Mentar Belegu, "Vendosja e regjimit feudo-borgjez të A. Zogut. Intervencioni i fuqive të huaja imperialiste", Buletini i Shkencave Shoqërore, no. 2 (1957); id., "Masat e para të qeverisë së A. ogut në vitim 1925 për forcimin e pushtetit çifligaro-borgjez dhe qëndresa popullare", Studime historike, 1964, no. 1; id., "Politika zogiste e dyerve të hapura 1925-1926", ibid., 1964, no. 3; A. Haxhi, "Politika financiare antipopullore e regjimit zogist", ibid., 1966, no. 1; see also Iljaz Fishta, Ndërhyrja e kapitalit të huaj dhe pasojat e saj skllavëruese për Shqipërinë (1925-1931) (Tirana, 1979); I. Fishta and V. Toçi, Ndërhyrja e kapitalit te huaj në Shqipëri dhe qëndrimi i qarqeve demokratike (1921-1925), Tirana 1974.

¹⁴ See Selim Shpuza, Revolucioni demokratiko-borgjez i qershorit 1924 në Shqipëri (Tirana, 1959); Viron Koka, "Lufta ideologjike e revistës 'Bota e re' kundër reaksionit zogist (1936—1937)", Studime historike, 1964, no. 2; id., "Gazeta 'Liria Kombëtare' tribunë e ideve të revolucionit demokratik (1925-1935)", ibid., 1965, no. 1; Muin Çami, Lufta çlirimatare antiimperialiste e popullit shqiptar në vitet 1918-1920 (Tirana 1969); Mentar Belegu, "Revolucioni i Qershorit 1924 - nje ugjarje e shënuar shqiptare e ballkanike", Studime historike, 1966, no. 3; id., "Lëvizja Antizogiste e vitit 1935. Karakteri dhe rëndësia e saj", ibid., 1975, no. 4.

¹⁵ See Lefter Dilo, Greva e tipografëve të Gjirokastrës (21 janar 1921) e para në Shqipëri (,); Stilian Adhami, Kronikë e lëvizjes punëtore e sindikale në Shqipëri (Tirana, 1969); Krista Misha, Lëvizja punëtore në Shqipëri (Tirana 1970); Vangjel Moisiu, Lëvizja punëtore dhe kommuniste në Shqipëri para Krijimit të Partisë Kommuniste Shqiptare (1917-1939) (Tirana, 1958); Ndreçi Plasari, Krijimi i Partisë Komuniste të Shqipërisë (1939-1941) (Tirana, 1958).

¹⁶ See Vehbi Bala, Jeta e Fan S. Nolit. Portret-monografi (Tirana, 1972); Lefter Dilo, Avni Rustemi (Tirana, 1979); N. Jorgaqi, Qyemal Stafa. Jeta dhe lufta (Tirana, 1976); V. Koka and S. Xhelo, Halim Xhelo-militant e ideolog i shquar revolucionar (Tirana, 1975); Sotir Manushi, Ali Kelmendi militant i shquar i lëvizjes Komuniste shqiptare (Tirana, 1960); Mane Nishova, Riza Cerova (Tirana, 1961); P. Tako, Luig Gurakuqi, jeta dhe vepra (Tirana, 1980).

¹⁷ See Shyqri Ballvora, "Vendosja e regjimit kolonial fashist të pushtimit në Shqipëri", Studime historike, 1967, no. 3; id., "Bashkëpunimi i popullit shqiptar me popujt ballkanikë gjatë Luftës Nacionalçlirimtare", ibid., 1974, no. 2; I. Fishta and V. Toçi, "Mbi gjendjen ekonomike të Shqipërisë në vitet e pushtimit fashist (1939-1944)", Probleme ekonomike, 1977, no. 4; Xhemal Frashëri, "Organizimi dhe zhvillini i kryengrytjes së armatosur në Shqipëri", Studime historike, 1976, no. 1. Cf. also N. Hoxha, Lufta Antifashiste Nacionalçlirimtare - revolucion i madh popullar i udhëhequr uga Partia Komuniste e Shqipërisë (Tirana, 1974); N. Hoxha, N. Plasari, L. Omari, V. Hoxha, Über den antifaschistischen nationalen Befreiungskampf des albanischen Volkes (Cologne, 1975); Konferenca kombëtare e studimeve për Luftën Antifashiste Nacionalçlirimtare të popullit shqiptar, nëntor 1974 (Tirana, 1975); Kongresi i Përmetit. Kongresi i popullit në fuqi (Tirana, 1979); Ndreqi Plasari, "Bashkimi i popullit rreth PKSh në Frontin Nacionalçlirimtar", Studime historike, 1974, no. 4; Ndreçi Plasari and Shyqri Ballvora, Historia e Luftës Antifashiste Nacionalçlirimtare e popullit Shqiptar (1939-1944) (Tirana, 1975); Arben Puto, "Pozita udërkombëtare e Shqipërisë gjate Luftës së II botërore e në mbarim të saj", Konferenca kombëtare e studimeve shaqërare (Tirana, 1969); L. Zelka, Mbi thirrjet dhe traktet e Luftës Antifashiste Nacionalclirimtare (Tirana, 1980); P. Mitrojorgji, Histori e shkruar me gjak. Lëvizja revolucionare e rinisë gjate luftës Nacional-Clirimtare nën udhëheqjen e PKSh (Tirana, 1961); S. Tarifa, "Qëndresa e rinisë shkollore të kryeqyteti kundër pushtuesve fashistë italianë (prill 1939 - nëndor 1940", Studime historike, 1967, no. 3; Gruaja shqiptare në Luftën Antifashiste Nacionalçlirimtare (Tirana, 1975).

organizations, 18 the political seats of power 19 and with the position taken towards bourgeois-nationalist resistance organizations. 20

Outside of Albania, numerous studies have appeared in English on the history of the country, within the context of which aspects of the Albanian labour movement are addressed,²¹ as well as works specifically on the history of the communist party and the resistance movement.²² From the Soviet point of view, N.D. Smirnova examined problems of the Albanian labour movement, although her interest was directed more towards aspects of diplomatic history²³ and the founding of the People's Republic of Albania.²⁴ Noteworthy contributions by Yugoslavians are those by Vladimir Dedijer²⁵ and Ali Hadri²⁶ due to their thorough analyses of the sources. The same can be said of the study by the Bulgarian historian Elena Atanasova.²⁷ Finally, various German works can be found that address this topic,²⁸ specifically the ideology of the communist movement in

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¹⁹ See M. Dezhgiu, "Veprimtaria politiko-shoqërore e Këshillave nacional-çlirimtare (maj-nëntor 1944)", Studime historike, 1978, no. 2; Xhemal Frashëri, "Disa probleme të organizimit të pushtetit demokratik popullor në periudhën e Luftës Nacionalçlirimtare", ibid., 1974, no. 1; Luan Omari, Revolucioni popullor në Shqipëri dhe çështja e pushtetit (Tirana, 1977).

²⁰ See Petro Lalaj, "Çështja e partive politike në Shqipëre në periudhën e Luftës Nacionalçlirimtare", Studime historike, 1975, no. 1; F. Lama, "Formimi i 'Ballit Kombëtar' si reakcion ndaj Frontit Nacionalçlirimtar (nëntor 1942-mars 1943)", ibid., 1977, no. 1.

²¹ See Elisabeth Barker, British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War (London, 1976); A History of East Central Europe, Vols. 8, 9 (Seattle, 1974, 1977); Anton Logoreci, The Albanians (London, 1977); Ramadan Marmullaku, Albania and the Albanians (London, 1975); Nicholas C. Pano, The People's Republic of Albania (Baltimore, 1968); Peter R. Prifti, Socialist Albania since 1944: domestic and foreign developments (Cambridge, Mass., 1978); Stavro Skendi (ed.), Albania (London, 1957); Robert Lee Wolff, The Balkans in Our Time (Cambridge, Mass., 1956).

²² See Julien Amery, Sons of the Eagle (London, 1948); Jani I. Dilo, The Communist Party Leadership in Albania (Washington, 1961); "History of the Albanian Communist Party", News from behind the Iron Curtain, 1955, no. 4; W.S. Vucinich, "Communism Gains in Albania", Current History, 21 (1951), no. 122, 212-219; no. 124, pp. 345-352.

²³ N.D. Smirnova, Balkanskaja politika fašistskoj Italii. Očerk diplomatičeskoj istorii (1936-1941) (Moscow, 1969).

²⁴ N.D. Smirnova, Obrazovanie Narodnoj Respubliki Albanii 1939-1946 (Moscow, 1960).

²⁵ See Vladimir Dedijer, Jugoslavensko-albanski odnosi 1939-1948. Na osnovu službeni dokumenata, pisama i drugog materijala (Belgrade, 1949).

²⁶ See Ali Hadri, "Stvaranje komunističke partije Albanije", Prilozi za Istorija Socializma, 1966, no. 3; id., Narodni oslobodilački pokret na Kosovu 1941-1945 (Belgrad, 1973).

²⁷ See Elena Atanasova, "Georgi Dimitrov i albanskoto demokratično i komunističesko dviženie (1920-1939 g.)", *Istoričeski pregled*, 1975, no. 6.

²⁸ L. Dudic, Historischer Rückblick auf die Stellung Albaniens im Weltkommunismus (1941-1968) (Trittau, 1970); Karl Lange, Grundzüge der albanischen Politik. Versuch einer Theorie politischer Kontinuität von den Anfängen der albanischen Nationalbewegung bis heute (Munich, 1973); Otto Rudolf Lieβ, Albanien zwischen Ost und West (Hanover, 1968).

2. The Emergence of the Communist Movement in the Interwar Period

From 8 - 14 November 1941, a secret meeting of the various communist groups in Albania was held in Tirana during which it was agreed on the very first day that the groups would merge into the Communist Party of Albania. The historical depiction of this event varies greatly. On the one hand, party history emphasizes the important autonomous contribution of the Albanian communists. The impact of external factors, among others the influence of the development of the communist movements in other Balkan countries, is not denied, but the maturity attributed to the revolutionary movement in Albania here appears to be exaggerated. On the other hand, internal factors in Albania are played down in a number of foreign works. Sometimes the importance of external factors is too greatly stressed, such as the depiction in which the KPSh was allegedly founded by two Yugoslavian delegates as "Tito's branch establishment". Other times they are virtually ignored.

In order to achieve an objective evaluation, it is necessary to study the interaction between both the internal and external factors that led to the founding of the CPA, whereas special attention should be paid to the connection between the revolutionary movement that was evolving within the country and the Comintern. The initial period of the party's history starts then with the origins of the organized communist movement and concludes with the founding of the KPSh.

At the time of its independence from five hundred years of Turkish rule in 1912, Albania was one of the most backward regions of Europe, and it continued to be so in the following years. It was primarily a rural country. Although market relations had become of some importance in agriculture, feudal forms of production were still the dominant ones. They were the cause for the low productivity, the relative overpopulation - only 15% of the entire population lived in urban communities - and the low standard of living. The relationship between goods and money that emerged remained restricted to the sphere of circulation and did not initiate a revolutionizing of the production forces. In the cities the predominant form of production were small workshops and primitive tools. As late as the 1920s, only 17,000 of the 140,000 inhabitants of communities with a population of over 3,000 were working in approximately 9,000 artisan workshops.³⁵ The incorporation of the country into the capitalist world market - chiefly following the First World War - caused the structure of production to gradually change and the beginnings of industrial production to become evident, such as tobacco processing, rice mills, olive processing and textile manufacturing.

Despite pressure exerted by foreign capital, it was thus possible in Shkodra to establish five power mills, five cigarette factories and a soap factory between 1920 and 1923. In 1923, businessmen from Durrës, Tirana and Elbasan founded the country's first stock company, "Stamles". This albeit small expansion of industrial production led to an increase in the number of wage labourers. On the whole, the importance of such factories was rather marginal, particularly because they rarely employed more that ten or twelve people.³⁶ The

²⁹ See Bernhard Tönnes, Sonderfall Albanien. Enver Hoxhas 'eigener Weg' und die historischen Ursprünge seiner Ideologie (Munich, 1980).

³⁰ See Historia e PPSh, p. 70.

³¹ See Hoxha, Die Titoisten, p. 3

³² Skendi, Albania, p. 77. Cf. also Lieβ, Albanien zwischen Ost und West, p. 28; Georg Hermann Hodos, Schauprozesse. Stalinistische Säuberungen in Osteuropa 1948-54 (Francfort, etc., 1988), p. 26.

³³ W. Höpker, Das Mittelmeer - ein Meer der Entscheidungen (Francfort, 1961), p. 41.

³⁴ See Atanasova, "Georgi Dimitrov", p. 9.

³⁵ See Wolfgang Russ, Der Entwicklungsweg Albaniens. Ein Beitrag zum Konzept autozentrierter Entwicklung (Meisenheim am Glan, 1979), p. 41.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42

concentration of workers in the industrial centres was very weak with the exception of the mines in Selenica (bitumen) and Puka (copper) that were in the hands of foreign companies.

Characteristic for the plight of the labour force were exceptionally poor labour and living conditions, low wages, a lack of housing, a lack of job safety standards and health care, and heavy sentences for petty offenses. Although the development of class consciousness was by no means completed, many workers spontaneously resisted incidents of entrepreneurial arbitrariness and struggled for an improvement of their situation. The first strike broke out in January 1921, in Gjirokastra among the local print shop workers. They were successful in attaining their demand for shorter work hours. Their example was followed by the tobacco workers in Shkodra, who were locked out by the employer, in late 1921 and 1922, and by the Puka copper miners in March 1923. The most significant action of this period proved to be the strike in October 1923, among the workers of the Selenica asphalt mines, where five to six hundred were employed. They were paid according to the so-called Qesim system (a particular form of piecework) which forced workers to labour up to 14 hours a day and sometimes even two days in order to earn a single day's pay. The strike lasted more than a month and was successful.³⁷

Occurring concurrently to such strike action were the founding of the first relief organizations, such as the Society for Workers' Mutual Aid in Shkodra. However, these did not last long. In Korça, small groups of workers and intellectuals formed in which socialist literature from Greece was distributed. As early as June 1923, the attempt to establish a socialist party is supposed to have been made. It is possible that this was the result of the proposal made by the Communist Federation of the Balkans at its conference in February 1921, that a communist party should be formed in Albania in order to channel the efforts of the peasants and workers and other democratic and patriotic forces into a united front for freedom and progress. However, the abovementioned attempt failed due to the insufficient maturity and level of development of Albanian labourers.

An important turning point in the social and political development of the country occurred in 1924. A strong revolutionary-democratic movement seized Albania. The threat of famine and the political intrigues of the feudal forces in government following the elections for the Constituent Assembly in December 1923 provoked dissatisfaction and unrest among the rural masses and the urban poor, as well as among bourgeois classes. Heading this were, first, representatives of the bourgeois-liberal Democratic Party under the leadership of Fan Stylian Noli and Luigi Gurakuqi, who advocated the demise of the old feudal structures and the establishment of a bourgeois democracy, and second, revolutionary-democratic elements that had merged into the organization "Unification" (Bashkimi) since October 1922. The assassination of the leader of this organization, Avni Rustemi, led to an armed uprising in June 1924. The government of Ahmet Zogu was overthrown and a democratic government under Fan S. Noli was established. The events in Albania received even international attention.⁴⁰

Radical reforms in all areas were propagated in the new government's program. Politically, democracy was to be broadened through the introduction of free and direct elections. Socio-economically, the peasants were to be emancipated and their lot improved; a new system of taxation benefitting the population at large was to be introduced. In addition, friendly relations were to be established with all other countries, especially Albania's neighbours. The reform program met with opposition from conservative forces both domestic and foreign, with the latter initiating a campaign against the "bolshevik" Albanian government. Under this type of pressure the reforms remained mere rhetoric. The government did not redistribute land to the peasants as promised. Ahmet Zogu used the internal disagreements within the Democratic Party to overthrow the Noli government in December 1924 with help both from Yugoslavia and the Russian White Guards. He established his rule first as the head of a presidential regime and then in 1928 as the king of a hereditary monarchy.

Once the democratic mass movement had been put down, a wave of terror swept over Albania. Many people were arrested and imprisoned; many others, especially progressive intellectuals and patriotic elements,

³⁷ See Adhami, Kronikë e lëvizjes punëtore, p. 47.

³⁸ Misha, Lëvizja punëtore, pp. 92-93.

³⁹ See Atanasova, "Georgi Dimitrov", p. 6.

⁴⁰ Inprekorr, 21 June 1924, p. 572; Pravda, 25 June 1924.

⁴¹ See Dokumenta e materiale historike, p. 152.

were forced to go into exile. For all practical purposes, the president was vested with full powers; he was both head of government and chief commander of the armed forces. Technically, the legislative branch of government was a parliament composed of two chambers, the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives, whereby the former was made up in part by presidential appointment.⁴²

Economically and politically, the regime leaned heavily on Italy, as became obvious in its so-called Open-Door policy and its increasing dependence on its neighbour on the other side of the Adriatic. Between 1925 and 1928, the Albanian government awarded concessions to foreign concerns for the exploitation of petroleum, coal, copper, bitumen, the setting-up of industrial factories and businesses in agriculture, as well as the establishment of finance and credit institutions. All told, the use of 23% of Albanian territory was turned over to foreign capital.⁴³

By comparison, interested Albanian entrepreneurs received minimal support for the establishment of factories. Despite this, small domestically-owned industrial concerns emerged. Their number increased from 25 before 1913 to 151 by 1928. The establishment of Italian firms, a growing number of domestic concerns, and the mounting impact of foreign goods on the Albanian market resulted in the economic demise of the crafts and led to an increase in the number of workers. This was evident in mining, the construction trade and the food industry. Two other industrial centres developed in addition to the well-known ones of Selenica and Puka, namely Durrës (port construction) and Kucova (oil) where 2,000 workers were employed by Italian concerns. Such concentration of industry, economic suppression and political disfranchisement effected the unionization of the workers.

In 1925, a workers' union (*Lidhja e pnětorěve*) was established in Gjírokastra, bringing together workers from various occupations. In Tirana, workers from taylor workshops founded the society "Pěrparimi" (Progress) in 1926, which opposed night shifts and demanded that apprentices be paid. A similar society was also founded in Korça the following year. A series of strike actions continued, such as the one in Selenica in 1926 to defend the rights acquired in 1923 or those against the Italian companies "Maxorana" in Durrës and "Vanzetti"in northern Albania in 1928. In many cases, these associations and actions were strictly local phenomena; very often the police disbanded them. However, they indicated the growing necessity for political organization and unionization among the working classes.

One positive influence on this development were the political emigrants. Since all political and democratic organizations were forbidden and their respective press possessed no legal means of impact - even the foreign press sold within the country was subjected to censorship - the leaders of the democratic movement emigrated. Following his takeover, Zogu dismissed a large number of employees from governmental service who had expressed democratic sentiments in any manner. The War Ministry was dissolved because sections of the army had participated in the June events of 1924. They were replaced with a well-armed gendarmerie that was placed directly under the president's command. The Ministry of Education was also closed since the teachers had played an active role in the democratic revolution.

Many of the punished and persecuted Albanians regrouped in Austria, France, Switzerland and the Soviet Union where they were granted political asylum. On 25 March 1925, a conference of the various anti-Zogu forces in exile was held in Vienna. At this meeting the "National Revolutionary Committee" (Komiteti Nacional-Revolucionar; KONARE) was formed. Among the most prominent members were Fan S. Noli as chairman, Sejfulla Malëshova, Noli's former personal secretary, Llazar Fundo, Tajar Zavalani, and Halim Xhelo. The Committee published a program on 5 May which included the central demands that had been made by the democratic government in the summer of 1924. It advocated rescuing Albania from Zogu and the feudal landowners, establishing a democratic republic, implementing agricultural reform in the interests of the

⁴² See Belegu, "Politika e dyerve të hapura", pp. 82-84.

⁴³ See Fishta, Ndërhyrja e kapitalit të huaj, pp. 98-102. Cf. also Misha, Lëvizja punëtore, pp. 112-120.

⁴⁴ Historia e Shqipërisë, p. 56.

⁴⁵ See Misha, Lëvizja punëtore, pp. 149-154. Cf. also Adhami, Kronikë e lëvizjes punëtore, pp. 86-88.

⁴⁶ Skendi, Albania, p. 77.

rural masses, and undertaking further democratic restructuring.47

Within KONARE differences flared up due to the influence of the Communist Balkan Federation, Men such as Xhelo, Riza Cerova and Ali Kelmendi, who were committed to a revolutionary-democratic path and advocated an energetic policy directed against the Zogu regime, left the Committee in the spring of 1927 to form their own group known as the "Committee for National Liberation" (Komiteti i Çlirimit Nacional). This new committee maintained direct contact with the Comintern by way of the Balkan Federation, or more specifically the Balkan Secretariat of the CI's Executive Committee (ECCI). In its mouthpiece Liria Kombëtare (National Freedom) published in Geneva, the Committee was able to illegally make its views known, views that were influenced extensively by the political line of the Comintern.

As an alternative to the anti-national policy of the monarchy that had been proclaimed on 1 September 1928, and its government, the *Liria Kombëtare* propagated the expropriation of property without compensation from the landowners, the Church, and foreign owners, the free redistribution of land to the landless and nearly landless peasants, the refusal to acknowledge the debts of the state or people, and the elimination feudal remnants, such as tithes, which had overburdened and hindered the development of Albanian society. The "National Liberation" committee was active in its efforts to be effective within the country, for example by creating committees of unemployed and other organization-like groups of the lower classes.

At the end of the 1920s, Albania was also hit by the Great Depression. Contrary to the impact it had in industrially developed countries, the Depression first caused a crisis in agriculture and only later effected the industrial sector. Exports, which composed primarily of agricultural products, decreased from 15.7 million gold francs in 1929 to 12.4 million in 1930 and 4.5 million in 1932. Yet within the country there was an overproduction of agricultural products. At the same time, the Albanian market was flooded with cheap industrial and consumer goods. The price drop effected first and foremost the masses of small producers both in the villages and in the cities. Small-scale factories, artisan shops and businesses were forced to close. In Vlora, sixty such businesses and companies folded in one year alone. Unemployment soared due to the suspension of road and bridge construction and other government projects. The public debt reached 20 million gold francs in 1930, a sum comparable to the national budget itself.⁵¹

The situation in agriculture proved to be particularly difficult. The distress of landless and nearly landless peasants grew even more desperate due, first, the to insufficient amount of land available and its unjust distribution to the benefit of rich land owners at the cost of the masses - a situation that was not significantly changed by the agrarian reform of 1930⁵² - and second, to the increasing ruin of small farms as a result of the crisis. The danger of chronic famine loomed large. Thousands of peasants and workers gathered in front of gendarmerie prefectures with their families and demanded bread. In the cities, starving children populated the streets. In June 1931, famine riots broke out in Kukës in northern Albania and in Gjirokastra in the south. Fearful that the monarchy could be endangered by the starving masses, the gendarmerie drove the people back to their homes by force.

Against this background, an anti-monarchial opposition grew up within the country which also included the first communist organization. Favourable conditions for this existed in the southern Albania city of Korça, where Albanian students had already begun to acquire Marxist literature from Athens and distribute it. It was here that in 1927-1928 workers and artisans formed communist cells committed to "revolution". By June 1929, additional sympathizers had been successfully recruited and organized into a group with a committee headed by Mihal Lako.⁵³ Its expressed aims were to acquire new members through active educational work, to spread

⁴⁷ See Historia e Shqipërisë, p. 340.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 341.

⁴⁹ See Liria Kombëtare, 10 October 1930.

⁵⁰ Historia e popullis raiptar, Vëllim i dytë (Tirana, 1969), p. 578.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 580. Cf. also Fishta and Toçi, "Mbi gjendjen ekonomiko-shoqërore te Shqipërisë", p. 93.

⁵² See Adhami, Kronikë e lëvizjes punëtore. p. 91.

⁵³ See Historia e PPSh, p. 24.

communist ideology, and to advocate the economic and political demands of the workers. In this manner a group of initially forty members was formed who conspired among themselves, making few contacts outside their small circle. Still, the foundation was laid for the Korça group, the first and most important communist group in Albania.

Developments within the country were not isolated from what was happening among the Albanian émigrés and from the influence of the Comintern organizations. In August 1928, an Albanian communist group was formed also in Moscow. The majority of its members were young émigrés, most of whom were former members of the organization "Bashkimi". They arrived from the Soviet Union and other countries of emigration for a stay at the various education centres of the Comintern, such as the Communist University of National Minorities of the West, the Communist University of the Toilers of the East or the Lenin School, and formed the group's core. The Moscow group became a type of cadre school. Its members - Ali Kelmendi from Kosovo was representative of many - contributed decisively to the organizational and political establishment of communist groups within the country. 55

The creation of the first formal communist groups in Albania was actively supported by the Balkan Secretariat of the ECCI. The Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov in particular called for the creation of a Communist party in Albania at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in the summer of 1928. He also drew up specific plans for the activities of the Albanian communists in exile. This included publishing material in the Albanian language on the situation of the working classes, as well as on the concepts of those opposing Zogu and on the peasant movement. Dimitrov advocated close cooperation with the "National Liberation" committee, which would evolve into an organization with a large membership. Yet the tasks he otherwise proposed reflected his automatic adherence to the unrealistic, ultra-left guidelines that had been stipulated by the Sixth Comintern Congress. These tasks included the creation of a youth organization in Albania modeled after the Communist Youth Organization in the Soviet Union, for the creation of communist cells in the army, and the formation of mass organizations of workers, for which few of the necessary prerequisites existed.

In early September of 1928, the Eighth Congress of the Communist Balkan Federation passed a resolution supporting the political and organizational preparations for establishing a communist party in Albania. The communist emigrants were urged to return to their homeland and to form groups with the aim of drawing together as many of the progressive and revolutionary forces within the country as possible. This was argued to be necessary since Albania was the only Balkan country in which no proletarian, communist party existed. In view of the country's economic backwardness and the dependence on foreign capital, the immediate concern was the establishment of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. The social base of the party would be recruited from the existing, although not numerous workers in both the cities and the countryside and from the poorest and most oppressed sector of the Albanian peasantry. With regards to the party's tasks, it is stated in the resolution: "The Albanian CP, independent from the Albanian national movement, will also take up the cause of the agrarian revolution and the struggle against the imperialist yoke on the Albanian people in addition to representing the general and immediate class interests of the proletariat." In order to achieve this, the influence on the peasantry as well as on the urban artisans and intellectuals would have to be increased, and close contact be established with these social groups.

However, the time was not right for the creation of an Albanian communist party and this initiative

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁵ Ibid.. Because their role in the process of establishing the Communist Party is undisputed, it appears necessary to also include in equal measure the activities of the communists who were residing in other countries, such as in France or Switzerland.

⁵⁶ See Protokoll. Sechster Weltkongreβ der Kommunistischen Internationale. Moskau, 17. Juli - 1. September 1928, 1: Die internationale Lage und die Aufgaben der Komintern. Der Kampf gegen die imperialistische Kriegsgefahr (Hamburg and Berlin, 1928), p. 244.

⁵⁷ See Atanasova, "Georgi Dimitrov", pp. 11-13.

⁵⁸ See Inprekorr, 3 May 1929, p. 919.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 920

failed. External conditions were proving to be anything but favourable, as the creation of the monarchial dictatorship in Yugoslavia, the banning of the Yugoslavian revolutionary unions, or the disbanding of the revolutionary unions in Rumania show. The activities of the Albanian communists within the country remained limited. Not until the return of Ali Kelmendi, who came to Albania on orders of the ECCI in 1930 and went to Korça two years later in order to expand "an organizational centre of communist activity", 60 did the Korça group experience any impetus. In order to escape local confines and isolation, Kelmendi advocated increased involvement in the workers' and artisans' associations so to thus benefit from the legal possibilities that such involvement would offer. At his prompting, miners organized into a union named "Labour" (*Puna*). In addition to workers, it included master craftsmen and journeymen from the various artisan associations. "Labour", with its approximately 500 members, was officially acknowledged as a mutual relief association, but its goals and demands transcended those of a strictly economic nature. The miners elected a representative of the Korça group, the Communist Pilo Peristeri, to be chairman.⁶¹

In 1934 the group was able to exert even greater influence in the workers' organizations in the shoe factory, and are the taylors are suck drivers. In Korça, the employees in trade and in the restaurant and hotel business united form the "Association of Private White Collar Workers". This development doomed the government's attended to create a national union dependent on it. In its publication *Përpara* (Forwards), the Korça group called for the improvement of living and working conditions for workers and propagated the demands of the Committee for National Liberation for a reinstatement of the republic. Their arguments against the advances of Italian capital and the total relinquishment of the country to Italy found increasing acceptance among secondary education pupils and democratic intellectuals.

Among those group members who were effective in Kelmendi's sense were Sotir Vullkani, Pilo Peristeri, Koço Tashko, Temi Konomi, and Enver Hoxha. However, the organizational structure of the group, which was based on three-man cells, offered little opportunity to be active beyond city limits. In addition, there were disagreements and conflicts over the course of action among the communists themselves. Thus Niko Xoxi, who was greatly influenced by Greek arch-Marxists, differed from Kelmendi in that he persisted in limiting his work to the small cells and in concentrating chiefly on indoctrination. For all practical coses, the Korça group remained isolated from the workers and the rural population in its surroundings. It was not until October 1935 that the group participated in founding the Union of Petroleum Workers in Kucova. The union, which initially had 680 and later 3,000 members, had to be acknowledged by the government under the name Puna.

As recorded in a report by Ali Kelmendi, who was expelled from the country in September 1936 following a series of arrests, the members of the Korça group had agreed among themselves in the summer of 1934 to concentrate their organizing work in the centres and prefectures in which no communist organization existed. He himself only succeeded in starting a few communist cells in Tirana, Kruja and Elbasan. However these plans never got further than on paper. Certain individual Albanian communists, such as Halim Xhelo or Riza Cerova, who had also returned from Soviet exile in 1932 and 1935, respectively, took part in a secret movement initiated in bourgeois and anti-monarchial circles. This movement began an armed uprising in August 1935 in the city of Fieri. However, this uprising was put down, over 1,000 people were arrested and 533 were tried, among them the Communist Mustafa Kaçaçi, Fifty-one participants were sentenced to death.

The height of the conflicts prompted new labour conflicts and a series of demonstrations against the

⁶⁰ Quoted in Manushi, Ali Kelmendi, p. 28.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 8; see also Historia e PPSh, p. 28.

⁶² See Historia e Shqipërisë, p. 375.

⁶³ History & PPSh, p. 29.

⁶⁴ See Adhami, Kronikë e lëvizjes punëtore, p. 93.

⁶⁵ See Manushi, Ali Kelmendi, p. 31.

⁶⁶ Historia e Shqipërisë, p. 381.

monarchy all over the country during the course of 1936, such as in Korça, Gjirokastra, Berat, Fier, Pogradec.⁶⁷ There was still an evident need for independent communist organizations in other parts of the country. In such a situation, the unification of communist elements in Shkodra, where a similar attempt had been made in 1934, was an important, positive step.⁶⁸ In the beginning, intellectuals dominated the Shkodra group; workers joined only later. The group was successful in setting up footholds in Durrës and Tirana. On its initiative, a union was formed in February 1937 in Tirana for print-shop workers, followed by one for cabinet makers. The Shkodra communists organized a theatre group in their city to perform plays of a political nature. Young activists such as Qemal Stafa, Vojo Kushi and Vasil Shanto were especially able to call attention to themselves. However, the leaders of the group, headed by Zef Mala, limited their pursuits in good part to local interests. Rivalry with the Korça group prompted them in 1938 to accept Niko Xoxi into their ranks after he had been expelled from the other group. From here, Xoxi spread the view that the cadre should be maintained. Specifically he argued that first cadre needed to be trained, to protect themselves and should not be permitted to participate in any action directed against the ruling regime.

In addition to the above-mentioned groups in Korça and Shkodra, two other groups existed in the country: One was the so-called Fire group - after the pseudonym "Zarri" (fire) of its founder Andrea Zisi; the other was the youth group. The former was formed in Athens in early 1936. Three years later, Zisi arrived in Albania where he claimed to represent the "Central Committee" of an independent, Albanian communist party - a claim which led to internal conflicts primarily with the Korça group. In 1940, the youth group became independent of a faction existing since 1938 within the Korça group. It was active chiefly in Tirana, but also in other cities such as Vlora. The group was heterogenous in composition with most of its members being students and intellectuals. The spokesmen of the group were Anastas Lula and Sadik Premte. The youth group did not present itself as a very unified group. Its members advocated different political opinions. However, it was widely believed that no base existed in Albania on which a communist party could be built due to the country's socio-economic backwardness and the nonexistence of a working class.

The ineffectiveness of the communist groups, their isolation from workers and other social groups in the populace, and the disagreements and conflicts among themselves, prompted the ECCI to again turn its attention to the problems of creating an Albanian party. This was preceded by controversies beginning with the fascist takeover in Germany in 1933 over a change in the left-sectarian course of the communist movement, and especially over the antifascist policy on unification efforts and people's front movements as introduced at the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935. In this connection, exiled Albanian communists, actively supported by the Balkan Secretariat, met in Moscow in December 1936 in order to restate their demands.⁷¹

In his report,⁷² Kelmendi advocated overcoming the narrow self-containment of the groups and to create a new organizational centre within the country which would include all communist elements, activate the groups, form new groups and hold a convention to found a party. It was to cooperate directly with the ECCI in all of its activities and be responsible to it. Funds were to be made available to support the work. Further, it was conceived that this centre would strengthen the unions in Korça and Kuçova, organize additional associations for teachers, students and white-collar workers, and revive the democratic movement. With regards to this last point, Kelmendi proposed uniting the various groups, such as the "National Liberation" committee and the "National Unification" (Bashkimi Kombētar) that had evolved out of KONARE and was supported by bourgeois elements, and then forming committees like "People's Aid for the Victims of the Zogu Dictatorship", among others. The purpose of this was to build a united organization to oppose the existing regime and fascist influ-

⁶⁷ Misha, Lëvizja punëtare, pp. 286-305.

⁶⁸ See Historia e PPSh, p. 39

⁶⁹ See Enver Hoxha, Ausgewählte Werke, Vol. 1: November 1941-Oktober 1948 (Dortmund, s.d.), pp. 5-7.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Cf. also Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, p. 202.

⁷¹ See Historia e PPSh, p. 42.

⁷² See Manushi, *Ali Kelmendi*, pp. 36-40. A condensed version of Kelmendi's report is included in the appendix.

ences. This oppositional force was to offer a generally democratic platform and advocate the establishment of a democratic republic and the annulation of all treaties signed with Italy that enslaved the country. The proposals agreed upon at the meeting were approved by the ECCI and summarized in a binding directive. Kelmendi and Koço Tashko were to take this to Albania.

Seeing as how no mass base of support existed for the groups, the ECCI directive⁷³ planned to disband the old forms of organization and to establish a new communist party from the bottom up. Further, an illegal, democratic and anti-fascist organization would be set up and headed by communists and committed Albanian nationalists. It was thought that an alliance of national liberation forces could be achieved within the country in this manner. Consequently, the directive concentrated on two tasks in its program: First, the struggle against semi-colonial exploitation, national disenfranchisement, and the threat of military occupation by Italy; second, the overthrow of the monarchy in favour of democracy. The ECCI directive first circulated in Albania in 1937. The Korça group supported it, but the scepticism of others prevented any action being taken on it on the eve of the Second World War. The signing of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 may also be interpreted as a reason for the marginal success of the attempts to establish a communist party in Albania.

3. The Founding of the PKSh

The occupation of Albania by Italy on 7 April 1939, created a new situation for communist agitation. The Albanian king escaped into exile, and on 15 April 1939, the Great Fascist Council in Rome sanctioned the formation of the "Union of Albania and Italy", thus finally making the country an Italian colony. Resistance among the Albanian populace grew as it witnessed the installation of a fascist occupational regime, the economic plundering of the country, the transformation of Albania into a bridgehead for further Italian military endeavour in the Balkans, and the political divestment of its population—by banning strikes, demonstrations and gatherings and by administering harsh punishments including execution by a firing squad. On 28 November, the anniversary of the 1912 declaration of independence, antifascist demonstrations occurred in many places. Yet such actions remained isolated and unorganized. The fruitless conflicts between the groups handicapped them incredibly. Even though the Korça and the Shkodra groups agreed in October 1939 to set up a common if provisional operation and in the spring of 1940 to establish a mediating commission, these remained only half-hearted measures. Increasingly obvious became the need to secure the conditions leading to a unification of the communist movement.

Finally, the representatives of the various groups whose common goal it was to resist the country's occupation agreed to meet in order to discuss unification. Delegates from the Korça, Shkodra and Youth groups participated in this meeting held in Tirana. The Fire group turned down the invitation. The number of participants vary according to source. According to Hoxha, the Korça group sent Koço Tashko, Pilo Peristeri,

⁷³ Historia e PPSh, p. 43.

⁷⁴ See ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

⁷⁶ See Hoxha, Ausgewählte Werke, p. 9. Cf. also Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, p. 180.

⁷⁷ See Peter Danylow, Die auβenpolitischen Beziehungen Albaniens zu Jugoslawien und zur UdSSR 1944-1961 (Munich and Vienna, 1982), p. 21.

⁷⁸ See Adhami, Kronikë e lëvizjes punëtare, pp. 195-196.

⁷⁹ See Dokumenta Kryesore të PPSh, Vol. 1: (1941-1948) (Tirana, 1960), p. 14.

⁸⁰ Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, p. 439. In the recently published memoires of Bedri Spahi, who was arrested and in interned in 1958, reference is also made to a group of communists in the military in Tirana and a communist group in Gjirokastra, in addition to those mentioned above. See "Bedri Spahi revizionon", p. 3; Tönnes, Sonderfall Albanien, p. 442, refers to four different groups.

Sotir Vullkani, Koçi Xoxe and himself; from the Shkodra group came Qemal Stafa, Vasil Shanto, Kristo Themelko, Tuk Jakovy and Ramadan Çitaku, while Anastas Lula and Sadik Premte represented the Youth group. Also present were two representatives of the Yugoslavian CP, Miladin Popović and Dušan Mugoša. 81 Yugoslavian accounts, however, speak of 20 or 22 persons participating. 82

At this meeting, each delegation reported on the activities of their group and agreed on the central purpose, namely to overcome the divisions among themselves and to create a unified leadership for the antifascist resistance. According to party history and Hoxha's recollections, it was Qemal Stafa and he himself, as well as other members of the Korça and Shkodra groups, who, from a "Marxist-Leninist" standpoint, advocated the formation of a communist party that would be robust ideologically and organizationally and pursue an aggressive political course. Anastas Lula and Sadik Premte from the Youth group attempted to block this, but their views were supposedly rejected in the ensuing conflict. Hased on Hoxha's brief references to their position, however, it cannot be concluded absolutely that Lula and Premte's opposition was of a "fundamental" nature. Instead, all that resurfaced were the familiar squabbling between the groups, such as when Koço Tashko, the leader of the Korça group, stated that his was the only group that had agreed to the 1936 Comintern directive, the other groups having fought bitterly against it. Stafa countered this by charging that the Korça group had attempted to use the directive to take advantage of the other groups and to pose itself as the leading organization. Significantly enough, the participants unanimously endorsed Hoxha's proposal to create the PKSh on the very first day of the meeting.

The founding resolution outlined the central political aspiration of the party as being the unification of the impoverished, i.e. primarily workers and the majority of the peasants, and all genuine patriots willing to resist the fascist occupation in the struggle for the "national independence of the Albanian people and a democratic

⁸¹ Hoxha, *ibid.*, pp. 163, 174-75; According to Sadik Bekteshi, who is not mentioned by Hoxha, he himself belonged to the Shkodra group. See "PKSh nuk është thëmelnar nga Enver Hoxha", p. 3.

⁸² See Dedijer, Jugoslavensko-albanski odnosi, p. 16; Mugoša, Na zdatku, p. 32.

⁸³ A protocoll of the congress no longer exists; Hoxha reports that it fell into the hands of the Albanian police in the spring of 1942. Cf. Hoxha, *Kur lindi partia*, p. 305.

⁸⁴ See Historia e PPSh, p. 71.

⁸⁵ Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, p. 202.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 195-198.

⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 220. According to Sadik Premte, Hoxha was appointed provisional General Secretary by Popovic. ("Sadik Premte deshmon", p. 3). Sources also vary with regards to the number of members belonging to the executive committee of the PKSh. Dedijer, *Jugoslavensko-albanski odnosi*, p. 18, names 11 members.

⁸⁸ See Dokumenta Kryesore, pp. 19-22.

government by the people in a fascist-free Albania". 89 In this context, the founding of the PKSh represents an important turning point. In particular, it took upon itself the various burdens of military resistance, a factor which historically shaped the party considerably. The second period in the party's history dates from 1941 to 1944, during which the PKSh organized the antifascist struggle for liberation.

According to the founding resolution, the PKSh was the party of the working class, guided by Marxist-Leninist ideology: "Therefore the party is not permitted to be the old type of party, similar to that of the Social Democratic Second International [...]. We want a disciplined party in which the members subordinate themselves to the superior forums (committees), a party that will be in a position to lead the working class through the struggle to victory." In other words, the party was structured on the basis of the qualifications for acceptance into the Comintern as a "centralistically" organized party in which strict military discipline reigned and led by an authoritarian body vested with considerable power. The centralistic form of organization was considered to be an indispensable means for unified action and success of the communists, especially in a period of illegality and military struggle. Yet the principle of minority subordination to the majority could also be misused. With the adoption of Stalinist ideologization of theory and its final deformation following the show trials and purges of the 1930s within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Comintern, this was all the more so since a judge of sorts even on "theoretical deviations" had developed in the communist parties.

This point is illustrated by the course of events during the Tirana meeting. For the purpose of fighting against theoretical deviations, a stipulation was included in the founding resolution that required the "adoption of Marxist-Leninist theory through the study of the Short Course of the History of the CPSU in the USSR". From the very start, the confrontation with other ideas therefore had every appearance of vengeance. As was typical for the zeitgeist, Hoxha considered deviating opinions to be Trotskyist deviations. One such example was the argument that no strong industrial proletariat existed in Albania, and therefore the chances for revolutionary changes in the near future were minimal. Hoxha labelled supporters of such ideas, such as Niko Xoxi, Zef Mala, Andrea Zisi, and Aristidh Qendro, among others, as hostile elements. Whoever had been labelled a "Trotskyist" was considered to be an agent of fascism and charged with being a party enemy. Differences of opinion or tactical disagreements were "repoliticized. into sabotage, espionage and betrayal. In this manner there emerged a vicious circle: Whoever failed to support the measures taken against party members charged by the party leadership with deviating from the given party line, risked not only being criticized themselves, but also being labelled as a "party enemy".

4. The Role of the Comintern

It is obvious that the ECCI attempted to influence the establishment of the Communist Party in Albania beginning in the late 1920s. Against the backdrop of the ultra-leftist politics of the Comintern in 1928/1929, the first attempt merely prompted activity at the local level in Korça. However, the guidelines set down by the ECCI following the Seventh Comintern Congress in the mid-1930s had a much greater effect. Although initiated late and carried through rather half-heartedly, the turnabout in the Comintern that aimed at overcoming the differences between the various factions of the labour movement and at attaining the broadest, most comprehensive antifascist alliance possible awakened the communists in Albania to the necessity to join forces among themselves. As Teni Konomi, a leading member of the Korça group, noted in February 1937, efforts to unite all Communist elements were stepped up. He was convinced "that with moral and material help and with

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 12, 22-23.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 20.

⁹² Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, p. 170. One of the closest supporters of Fan S. Noli, Llazar Fundo, who had emigrated to the Soviet Union with Kelmendi and Tashko and was able to save himself from the purges there because he left the country in time, characterized Hoxha as "a dangerous and thoroughly sly Trotskyist". See Enver Hoxha, Anglo-amerikanische Machenschaften in Albanien (Tirana, 1982), p. 354.

⁹³ Hodos, Schauprozesse, p. 35.

the political directives of the Comintern, we will be able to establish a strong and well-organized party within a short period of time". 94

However, a third attempt was necessary in order to achieve the long sought goal once the war had started. With respect to assessing the Comintern's input into the founding of the party, it becomes important to study the participation of the delegates from the Yugoslavian CP, Miladin Popović and Dusan Mugoša, at the Tirana meeting. The weight given to their participation varies greatly depending on the source. Albanian party history makes no mention of it. In his memoirs, Hoxha tries to play down the role of the two Yugoslavian functionaries, who belonged to the regional committee of the Yugoslavian CP for Kosovo and Metohija, Mugoša was to have attended the meeting in the capacity of "translator" and as Popovic's companion. Hoxha contends that Popovic, who was interned in Albania while in route from Kosovo to Montenegro in the summer of 1941, was not sent to Albania by the Yugoslavian party leadership in the first place. Instead he was to have been freed by Albanians and asked to stay in the country in order to witness the founding of the PKSh as a so-called "third" or "impartial" party. According to Hoxha, he was therefore present at the meeting without any sort of guidelines, directive or instructions.

The opposite conclusion is drawn by Yugoslavian contemporaries such as Vukmanovič-Tempo⁹⁷ as well as the above-mentioned authors, namely that it was the Yugoslavian delegates who created a united PKSh out of the different Albanian groups. This conclusion also appears to be one-sided and exaggerated despite documentary evidence dating from the second half of 1939⁹⁸ that contact between Yugoslavian and Albanian communists was established on order of the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian CP. Taking the various political positions of the respective authors into account, one tends to agree with the view held by Danylow that the representatives from the Yugoslavian party participated as "mediators" as it were between the Albanian communist groups and the ECCI. Since the war made it difficult to send Albanian or other Comintern representatives from abroad, such a role offered itself to the Yugoslavian communists. They "acted not as Yugoslavians in Albania, but as advisors with regards to the policies of the Communist International". ⁹⁹

5. The Politics of the PKSh in the Resistance Movement

Following the party's founding, its development was shaped completely by its role in the resistance to the Italian and German occupational forces. Its course of action was based on the objectives stipulated in the resolution drawn up at the Tirana meeting; namely, the liberation and independence of the country and the creation of a new, democratic Albania. It had been taken for granted that the PKSh would assume the leading role in the national people's liberation war, and the Albanian communists considered armed conflict to be indispensable. Immediately following the party's founding, it organized the antifascist demonstrations of 28 November 1941, that took place in the most important cities to commemorate the anniversary of Albanian independence, during which there were clashes with the Italian conquerors. In March 1941, the Provisional Central Committee switched to forming armed groups, i.e. small, mobile guerilla units which ambushed the enemy, destroyed lines of communication, blew up depots and bridges, attacked Italian outposts and attempted to free political prisoners from prison.

In early April, PKSh activists met in Tirana for their first consultation. Aware of the party's weak points, this group turned its attention to the necessity of increasing its numbers, establishing contact with the

⁹⁴ Quoted in Manushi, Ali Kelmendi, p. 52.

⁹⁵ Danylow, Die außenpolitischen Beziehungen Albaniens, p. 19.

⁹⁶ See Hoxha, Die Titoisten, pp. 38-41.

⁹⁷ See Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, Revolucija koja teče. Memoari (Belgrade, 1971), p. 334.

⁹⁸ See Dedijer, Jugoslavensko-albanski odnosi, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁹ Danylow, Die außenpolitischen Beziehungen Albaniens, p. 21.

¹⁰⁰ See Dokumenta kryesore, p. 23.

population and activating it, and above all, organizing military operations. The activists were inspired by the long tradition of guerilla warfare in Albania dating from the era of resistance to Turkish rule and critical of pettiness, sectarian behaviour and passivity. This core of activists aimed to strengthen the party's organization by carefully selecting new members. At the same time, "liberal" and "conciliatory" attitudes towards "hostile" ideas were denounced. One such idea was that no propaganda material should be distributed in areas where most people could neither read nor write. In his report, Hoxha stressed that such "Trotskyist" views should not be underestimated; that, in fact, they should be "countered even more rigorously and exposed to the people". The resolution then passed by the party activists stated that "every faction and deviation either right or left from party line is to be fought [...] and all unhealthy elements are to be ruthlessly banned from the party."

All party organizations were required to step up their activities and to become more energetic in creating partisan units and irregulars. Nationalist-minded and democratic forces from the ranks of the peasantry and the intelligentsia ("sincere nationalists") were to be incorporated, in order to make it possible to create a unified national movement or front in which all patriotic forces would participate. ¹⁰³ In addition, the party activists decided to notify the ECCI of the founding of the PKSh, to apprise the leadership of the world party of their own ideas of armed resistance, and to apply for admission to the Comintern. Connected to this was the need to ask for ECCI permission to conduct the first nationwide congress of the PKSh in the near future. It was decided in May to contact the ECCI over the Yugoslavian CP. Vasil Shanto, Vojo Kushi and Dušan Mugoša were assigned the task of presenting the proposals to the Yugoslavian leadership. ¹⁰⁴

In the spring of 1942, larger partisan units (*ceta partizane*), each with its own staff (commander, commissar), evolved from the guerilla groups. Among the first of these were the units in Peza - led by the patriot Myslim Peza - in Skrapari, Gora, Mokra and Kurveleshi. A significant, nationwide action occurred in the night of 24 July 1942, the "Night of the General Offensive Against the Enemy", in which a majority of the telephone and telegraph connections were interrupted. The increase in armed resistance had a positive impact on the political unity of the different sectors of the population with regards to the formation of an antifascist people's front organization. In July, the Provisional Central Committee set about tackling this task, one that had been envisaged at the PKSh founding meeting, and decided to organize a national congress in order to bring together all patriotic forces. The PKSh publication Zēri i Popullit (The People's Voice), which first appeared on 25 August 1942, stated that what was now necessary was "the unification of all those sincere and antifascist forces, regardless of belief, political persuasion and differing factions" in support for the cause of an independent, free, and democratic Albania.

On 16 September 1942, a national congress convened in the central Albanian city of Peza in which delegates from various social strata and from differing political and religious outlooks participated in addition to the communists. Even though the congress was attended by a relatively large representation of the population, the PKSh's invitation had not been accepted by all of the bourgeois-nationalist forces, such as the influential opponents of the former monarch Zogu headed by Mithat Frashëri. The central aim of the communists was to

¹⁰¹ Hoxha, Ausgewählte Werke, p. 19.

Dokumenta kryesore, p. 64. Named were Fundo, Qendro and Xoxi. Anastas Lula and Sodik Premte were admonished. A few months later at the special party congress in June 1942, Enver Hoxha charged them with pursuing factionalist activities and labeled them as party enemies, Trotskyists, saboteurs of the political, ideological and organizational line, as well as renegades. Both were expelled. Lula was banned to a partisan unit and supposedly shot while attempting to escape. Premte succeeded in saving himself by reaching France via Italy. "Sadik Premte deshmon", p. 3; see also Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, pp. 320-321; Hoxha, Ausgewählte Werke, p. 118. Premte maintains that more than a hundred partisans were killed in this manner.

¹⁰³ Dokumenta kryesore, p. 64.

¹⁰⁴ See Hoxha, Die Titoisten, p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ See Historia e PPSh, p. 97.

¹⁰⁶ See Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, p. 326.

¹⁰⁷ Dokumenta Kryesore, p. 90.

consolidate the majority of the population into an alliance and organize it for guerilla warfare. In accordance with this, the Peza congress made a series of important decisions; namely to strengthen the uncompromising, armed resistance to both occupiers and collaborators, to unite all sincere Albanians in a unified antifascist liberation front, to create national liberation councils everywhere that would act as agents of mass mobilization as well as organs of authority, and finally, to prepare for the armed uprising of the population as the last step and logical consequence of the guerilla war.¹⁰⁸

The acceptance of this platform, which was also supported by non-communist participants such as the Zogu-supporter Abaz Kupi, formed the basis for the National Liberation Front. Contrary to the situation in other occupied or dependent countries, this was not a coalition of antifascist parties; instead it was based on the unorganized antifascist forces of the population. The creation of the Front represented an important political success for the PKSh. However, criticism was also voiced, for example from Halim Begeja, a representative of the "national youth" who spoke out against an a priori given leadership by the communists. Those elected at the congress to the governing body, namely the seven-member General Council of the National Liberation, were Myslim Peza, Abaz Kupi, Ndoc Çoba and Kamber Qafmolla, in addition to the communists Ymer Dishnica, Mustafa Gjinishe and Enver Hoxha.¹⁰⁹

In September 1942, the ECCI received and accepted the PKSh request for acceptance to the Comintern and the proposals for expanding resistance operations. In turn, the Comintern leadership sent instructions for the continuation of the national liberation struggle in a reply brought to Albania in December by Blazo Jovanovič, a representative of the Yugoslavian CP. The main demand made of the PKSh by the Comintern was to unite all Albanian patriots in a broad alliance. The ECCI guidelines corresponded with the course followed since 1941 in which the broadest possible national fronts were to be formed in order to combat the fascist Axis powers. They were considered to be an important part of the international front to smash the aggressors.

The Albanian party was informed in February 1943 of the "Directives of the Communist International". At the conference of the Provisional Central Committee, Hoxha summed them up in the following concise points: "1. The organization and expansion of the national liberation struggle of the Albanian people against the Italians and the Germans. 2. The creation and strengthening of the National Liberation Front by incorporating all patriots. Any plans that went beyond the goal of liberating Albania were to be avoided temporarily 3. In addition to communists, as many patriots and sincere Albanian nationalists as possible were to be included in conducting the guerilla war." His commentary to this consisted primarily of pointing out that these instructions coincided with the course of action pursued by the party leadership and of demonstrating "how well our Party works". 112

In addition to the Comintern guidelines, Jovanović presented to the PKSh Central Committee a letter from Tito¹¹³ in which the Yugoslavian party leader offered recommendations to the Albanian party based on the experience gained by conducting the resistance in Yugoslavia. He recommended that the Yugoslavian organizational structure for the struggle for independence be adopted and that an effort be made to set up national liberation councils throughout the country in order to organize the mass movement and to administrate their own territorial bases. Since the partisan units were recruited chiefly from the peasantry, it would be necessary to be active in the villages, to anchor the resistance movement within the population and to prohibit narrow-minded, sectarian outlooks. With regards to the later point, Tito demanded that the Albanian communists correct their view of equating guerilla units with the party's armed forces. Without even mentioning this letter, recommendations from it were indeed adopted, such as Hoxha's argument that the partisans were to be "not an

¹⁰⁸ See Historia e PPSh, p. 100.

¹⁰⁹ See Hoxha, Kur u hodhën themelet e Shqipërisë, p. 172. Dedijer, Jugoslavensko-albanski odnosi, p. 85, differs in his account of this.

¹¹⁰ See Historia e PPSh, p. 110; Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, pp. 332-333.

¹¹¹ Hoxha, Ausgewählte Werke, pp. 86-87. The exact wording has never been published.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 85.

¹¹³ See Dedijer, Jugoslavensko-albanski odnosi, pp. 28-31.

army of the Party, but an army of the people".114

Once the National Liberation Front had been formed, the number of resistance operations increased. By the end of 1942, 2,000 fighters had joined the partisans and had successfully fended off the several "clean-up operations" that the Italians had launched. In southern Albania alone, several places and smaller regions were liberated, namely Peza, Kurveleshi, Skrapari, Opari, Mokra, and Martaneshi. In the north, where clan leaders enjoyed a greater degree of influence due to the patriarchal code, the resistance movement did not grow to the same extent. From then until the spring of 1943, more regions were freed by the partisans. Both the successful military operations within the country as well as the altered situation following the battle of Stalingrad helped lay the groundwork for establishing a regular army.

This development was taken into account at the first party congress of the PKSh on 17-22 March 1943, in Labinoti. The party had become firmly established, numbering approximately 700 members at the time, 70 of which attended the congress as delegates. Using the party cells as a base, the structure was expanded, and new committees arose at the regional level which no longer secluded themselves, but became the vanguard of the resistance. In accordance with the Comintern directives and obviously influenced by the Yugoslavian experience, the resolution resulting from the party congress stipulated concrete tasks for conducting and organizing the armed struggle. The central aims were to expand and intensify resistance and to form an organized army with the corresponding chain of command. An emphatic appeal to undertake this task was made by Vukmanovič-Tempo, the Yugoslavian CP representative, who had been staying in Albania on the eve of the congress. In order that our party become the real leader in the national fight for liberation, we must understand just how important it is to establish and build up the National Liberation Army. It must be clear to all members that this is now the central focus of our work.

The resolution was very specific in mapping out the necessary steps to be taken in dealing with the bourgeois-nationalist members of the resistance and in ensuring the further organizational and political development of the PKSh. The national congress approved the "irrevocable" suppression of the Fire group, which was tantamount to the physical elimination of its members. ¹²¹ It also demanded that firm action be taken against any type of factionalism and that all bourgeois, small bourgeois and religious elements be quickly rooted out. The only way the set goal could be achieved was to strengthen the party cells among the workers and in the villages and to activate women and youth for party work. It was considered exceptionally important that the political and theoretical level of the members be raised and that new cadre be constantly in preparation. The resolution criticized the view that the gun alone, and not the word, was necessary for the fight. The party leadership was called upon to propagate "Marxist-Leninist literature" and especially the Short Course of the History of the CPSU, a rich source of experience on adopting theory as one's own. ¹²²

The national congress placed the Albanian resistance into the context of the international war scenario and of the struggle for liberation in the neighbouring Balkan countries. It called for popularizing the USSR - as the "fatherland of workers and peasants" - and its Red Army, strengthening the alliance between the powers of

¹¹⁴ Hoxha, Ausgewählte Werke, p. 99. Not until the appearance of his "historical notes" did Hoxha assess Tito's correspondence as being a "letter of belated advice" and incontestable "evidence" that the PKSh "had no help, no instructions, no guidelines of any kind" from the Yugoslavian CP. Hoxha, Die Titoisten, p. 35.

¹¹⁵ See Historia e PPSH, p. 104.

¹¹⁶ See Alia, Our Enver, p. 69.

¹¹⁷ Historia e PPSh, p. 114,

¹¹⁸ See Dokumenta Kryesore, pp. 95-119.

¹¹⁹ See Hoxha, Die Titoisten, p. 58.

¹²⁰ Dokumenta kryesore, p. 114.

¹²¹ See ibid., p. 109. Cf. also Hodos, Schauprozesse, pp. 26-27.

¹²² Dokumenta kryesore, p. 117.

the anti-Hitler coalition and supporting the fraternization of the Balkan peoples in the common struggle for freedom.¹²⁵ The congress confirmed the political course set down and carried out be the Provisional Central Committee and elected the new Central Committee. The candidates for this election were not proposed by name but in a conspirative manner in which characteristics were described, among them strengths as well as weaknesses. The Yugoslavian Velimir Stojnić viewed this practice as a major mistake, while Hoxha called it an oversight in the "procedure".¹²⁶ The Committee consisted of 15 members and five candidates, among which were Hoxha, Nako Spiru, Hysni Kapo, Gogo Nushi, Mehmet Shehu, Vasil Shanto and Ramadan Çitaku. Enver Hoxha was elected to be General Secretary.¹²⁵

In the summer of 1943, the success achieved by the military and the progress being made in expanding the partisan units could not be overlooked. The partisans liberated Leskovik near Korça, an important transportation centre, and conquered the Italian garrison in Përmeti following several days of battle. Many Italian soldiers were taken prisoner, and the partisans captured a large arsenal of weaponry. It became clear that the fall of the occupational regime was drawing near and could no longer be prevented by desperate counter offensives and acts of terrorism. At the congress held on 4 July 1943, the General Council of the National Liberation passed the resolutions necessary for forming the National Liberation Army and its general command. By that point, the number of armed partisans had increased to more than 10,000. The General Staff, to which Hoxha belonged as political commissar, took over the strategic and operational command of the military resistance. Under its command, the army was streamlined. Evidence of this was the creation of battalions, brigades, and regional staffs, such as the Staff of the First Operative Zone Vlora-Gjirokastra. In August, the First Shock Brigade of the National Liberation Army was formed under the command of Mehmet Shehu. 127

In addition to military issues, the General Council also turned much of its attention during the congress to terms under which cooperation could continue with bourgeois-nationalist resistance forces and the respective political organization, the National Union (Balli Kombëtar). The members of this Union were recruited chiefly from among those bourgeois property owners or large landowners who had formerly been opponents of Zogu, had lost their privileges under his regime and had thus emigrated. Following the monarch's flight into exile, they had returned to find that their interests collided with those of the Italian occupational regime within the country. Men such as Mithat Frashëri, Muharrem Bajraktari and Nuredin bej Vlora refused to compromise themselves by cooperating with the Italians, as did others like Shefqet bej Verlaci, Mustafa Kruja. They were able to influence intellectuals, merchants as well as wealthy farmers. However, these so-called nationalists were not willing to join the ranks of the National Liberation Front that had been initiated and headed by the PKSh. Thus, the National Union was formed in November 1942, also claiming to be the leader of the national resistance movement. 128

One of the most important controversial issues within the PKSh leadership was the question concerning its position towards the National Union. In view of various propaganda activities in its press *Lufta e çlirimit Kombëtar* (The National Liberation Struggle) and the formation of armed units by the Union, the PKSh opted for cooperation. In a letter to the district committee in Korça dated January 1943, Hoxha wrote, "that there are many good and committed elements there (in the National Union - E.L.) who truly seek alliance and armed resistance." Further, the party leadership supposedly established contact with the nationalists out of the

¹²³ See ibid., p. 107.

¹²⁴ See Hoxha, *Die Titoisten*, p. 45. Stojnić was head of the Yugoslavian military mission and liaison between the PKSh and the Yugoslavian CP.

¹²⁵ Historia e PPSh, p. 121. Other sources refer to 11 members and six candidates. Cf. Dokumenta kryesore, p. 94.

¹²⁶ See Historia e PPSh, p. 126.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

¹²⁹ Hoxha, Ausgewählte Werke, p. 73.

conviction that the war could not be fought alone, but solely with the support of the entire population.¹³⁰ At the party congress in March, sectarian behaviour and excessive measures against bourgeois-nationalist forces were still being deplored. Yet Hoxha's emphasis was clearly placed elsewhere. He called the National Union the work of feudal-bourgeois reaction and the counterforce to the National Liberation Front. In his opinion, it would be very harmful to become dependent on such elements and to underestimate the leading role of the party in the Liberation Front.¹³¹ As long as the National Union did not discredit itself, the PKSh would have to attempt to convince the members to ally themselves with the National Liberation Front. The leaders would have to be isolated, and should this not succeed, then the PKSh would be forced to openly take action against the National Union. Those who voiced opposition to this were refuted as being "vacillating and opportunistic elements". Among them were the former head of the Korça group Koço Tashko, who had already argued for a more flexible attitude following the Peza congress.¹³²

Relations between the PKSh, or more specifically the National Liberation Front, and the National Union were to be clarified at a meeting set for early August 1943 in Mukja. In the meantime, Vukmanovič-Tempo had made it perfectly clear that he considered the PKSh stance towards the National Union to be "opportunistic and inadmissible". The communists should wage "war" and not offer to enter negotiations. Consequently, Hoxha presented a platform to the General Council in Labinoti that offered no such concessions, but instead enumerated the following conditions which would allow for the two organizations to make common cause: Balli Kombëtar was to wage a relentless armed assault against the Italian occupational forces, to acknowledge the national liberation councils as the sole representatives of democratic authority, to immediately halt its attacks on the National Liberation Front, to disband its own authoritative bodies (councils), and, in conjunction with its "positive elements", to join the Liberation Front.

According to Hoxha, the delegates representing the National Liberation in Mukia on 1-2 August 1943. Ymer Dishnica and Mustafa Gjinishi, deviated from the conditions that had been stipulated. They agreed to form a "Committee to Save Albania" that was to comprise of a parity of both organizations and to resemble a provisional government. The commonly sought goal was to be the attainment of the country's independence and an "ethnic Albania", meaning that all regions with a primarily Albanian population were to be united. 135 From the prescribed standpoint, this was equivalent to the renunciation of PKSh's leadership role and a complete capitulation to the National Union. Hoxha emphasized in two letters to Dishnica (dated August 6th and 9th) that this agreement "is a decisive blow to our political course and is condemned by the Central Committee". 136 In Dishnica's account, the purpose of the meeting in Mukia was to coordinate resistance to the conquering forces. "The central issue concerned the organization and evaluation of military actions, followed by the efficiency of the councils and the propaganda against the occupational forces and collaborators."137 According to Dishnica, the delegates from the National Liberation Front adhered precisely to this. A major role in the talks was played by the question introduced by the National Union's delegation concerning the common approach to the Albanians in Kosovo. It was in this context that the agreement that Hoxha condemned in the name of the party's leadership came about. Hoxha's position was induced in good part by Miladin Popovič, who initiated the attack against the "opportunist" and "nationalist" Dishnica. The Second National Liberation Conference held in early September 1943 repudiated the Mukia agreements as unacceptable since they compromised the principles set forth by the Peza congress. It recognized the national liberation councils as the sole authoritative bodies and decided to strike

¹³⁰ See ibid.

¹³¹ See Hoxha, Kur lindi partia, pp. 362-364.

¹³² Ibid., p. 370.

¹³³ Hoxha, Die Titoisten, p. 70.

¹³⁴ Hoxha, Kur u hodhën themelet e Shqipërisë, pp. 272-274.

¹³⁵ See Historia e PPSh, p. 134.

¹³⁶ Hoxha, Vepra, 1, p. 340.

^{137 &}quot;(Mos)marrëveshja e Mukjes", p. 3.

out against both the National Union organization, which it labelled as "anti-nationalist" and an "enemy of the people", and the German troops that had entered the country following Italy's surrender. This meant the final break with bourgeois-nationalist and conservative forces. As Dishnica recounts, the break in talks with the National Union contributed not insignificantly to the fact that extremist elements within the Union prevailed who, as a result, cooperated with the fascist occupational power. In turn, only those people were considered as antifascist who agreed with the PKSh led National Liberation Front, while all others were attacked as "traitors". 138

This position was rationalized by the difficult situation in which the PKSh found itself following the German occupation of the country in the autumn of 1943. German military offensives beginning in late 1943 and especially in the winter of 1944 led to considerable losses for the National Liberation Army. In addition, the potential for political conflict increased through efforts on the part of the Germans to consolidate all non-communist groups favouring an "independent Albania" into a force to counter the National Liberation Front. Specifically, this led to the founding of the organization "Legitimacy" (Legaliteti) by Abaz Kupi in September, an organization that - as its name implies - aimed to reinstate under King Zogu the monarchy overthrown in 1939. The position of the PKSh leadership was influenced considerably by Kupi's departure from the General Council of the National Liberation as well as by the declaration of Albania's independence on 18 October 1943, by other non-compromised bourgeois-nationalist elements. In a letter addressed to the member organizations, the PKSh leadership demanded that "parties of this sort [meaning Legitimacy - E.L.] and any such alliances of forces other than the Front and the National Liberation Army be fought as parties which were playing the enemy's game. He same time, there was every indication that by declaring independence for the area encompassed by "ethnic" Albania, national conflicts were to emerge, especially concerning the Yugoslavian provinces of Kosovo and Metohija.

In August 1941, Kosovo and Metohija were returned to the Albanian motherland by decree of the Italian king, thus ending the separation that had been caused by a decision in 1913 at the Ambassadors Conference of the Great Powers. In this way, so-called Great Albania was created. This reunification brought about difficulties for expanding the resistance movement. The Albanian majority in these regions had been exposed to national repression in the 1920s and 1930s by monarchial Yugoslavia. For them, the reunification introduced improvements. Albanians were posted in the bureaucracies, Albanian schools were opened, Albanian newspapers and books could be published. Although real power lay in the hands of the Italian occupational forces, this was not so conspicuous to the masses. Therefore it was difficult for the communists to set up a partisan movement in the regions inhabited by Albanians where the population needed to be mobilized in the struggle against an oppressor that presented itself as a "liberator" to them.¹⁴¹

In addition, the Albanian party leadership placed no claims on Kosovo and Metohija. It called for the Albanian population to rise up against the enemy under the leadership of the Yugoslavian CP. Following the expulsion of the occupational forces, the Albanians in these regions themselves should then decide their own future based on the rights of nations to self-determination including secession. Albanian communists who were of another opinion on this issue, such as Koço Tashko, were eliminated. Enver Hoxha argued that an expansion of the PKSh to the Kosmet would entail the elimination of a greater part of the Yugoslavian CP, resulting in dangerous manoeuvres yielding no positive results. Therefore, the Albanian party accepted the existing status of the Yugoslavian CP to the benefit of the cardinal question, namely the organization of

¹³⁸ See Dokumente të organeve të Larta të pushtetit, p. 58; cf. also Dokumenta kryesore, p. 161.

¹³⁹ See Historia e Shqipërisë, p. 556.

¹⁴⁰ Dokumenta kryesore, p. 173.

¹⁴¹ Following the invasion of German troops into Kosovo, a "Second League of Prizren" was even formed. This organization was named after its historical precursor which advocated Albania's autonomy from 1878 to 1881 in order to aid in securing the existing territorial boundaries of "Great Albania". See Tönnes, Sonderfall Albanian, p. 458.

¹⁴² See Alia, Our Enver, pp. 93-94.

¹⁴³ See Hoxha, Die Titoisten, p. 94.

resistance to the occupation.

In practice, however, problems arose and contradictions erupted. Even Hoxha admitted that the results expected did not materialize. In the ensuing correspondence on this issue, the leadership of both parties obviously found it hard to go without making insinuations about the other. In the autumn of 1943, the PKSh pointed out that the Yugoslavian CP was not taking the patriotic feelings of the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija sufficiently into consideration and demanded that in these regions the Albanians should be given their own leaders, staffs and commands - all subordinate to the Yugoslavian General Staff: "This is the only way to get the Albanians living in Yugoslavia to fight valiantly." Both the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian CP and Tito himself objected strongly to this in several letters received by the Albanian leadership between late October and mid-December 1943. As is to be expected, the "revolutionary internationalist policy of the PKSh has been celebrated and the National Liberation Army's role in liberating Kosovo and Metohija emphasized in Albanian historiography, according to which approximately 20,000 Albanian partisans participated in the fighting in Kosmet and in other parts of Yugoslavia in the years between 1942 and 1945. 147

6. The PKSh Takeover of Government

In the spring of 1944, the Albanian partisans stopped the German offensive in its tracks and launched their own offensive. The National Liberation Army was expanded to include new units - several brigades - and at anned a manpower strength of 35,000 partisans. By summer they succeeded in liberating the greater part of southern and central Albania, where the national liberation councils assumed power. As had been agreed upon at the Second National Liberation Conference, the councils increasingly became the sole source of authority. They provided administrative services, sustained law and order, and persecuted "traitors of the people" in conjunction with the partisans. It was also one of their tasks to provide for the population. In view of growing needs, especially with regards to the dimensions of the military struggle in the regions still occupied, it was necessary to reorganize and legally sanction the national liberation councils. Therefore, the General Council of the National Liberation summoned a congress of the National Liberation on the initiative of the PKSh in April 1944.¹⁴⁹

In preparation for this, the PKSh Central Committee convened on 15 May in Helmes. The executive committee called for unwavering adherence to the solutions of the party and to popularize the leading role of the PKSh even more. Because of his willingness to compromise in Mukja, Ymer Dishnica was ousted from the Central Committee. In addition, all attempts were to be made to dismiss any notion that the partisans would surrender their weapons and return home once the Germans had been driven out. On the contrary, it would be more important than ever following the country's liberation to protect the newly achieved freedom from every enemy. In this context, the plenum warned that national independence was endangered by the activities of the British and American military missions in Albania. 150

On 24 May 1944, the First Antifascist National Liberation Congress (Kongresi Antifashist Nacional-

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 122; see also Hoxha, Raport në kongresin e I-rë, p. 238.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 116; see also Hoxha, Ausgewählte Werke, pp. 200-202.

¹⁴⁷ See Historia e Shqipërisë, pp. 634-639.

¹⁴⁸ See Historia e PPSh, p. 161.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164. Members of the Anglo-American Mediterranean command had been stationed in Albania since May 1943, With respect to this warning, the attempts of monarchical supporters to activate non-communist resistance with the support of the Allies proven not to be very successful. See Tönnes, *Sonderfall Albania*, p. 430.

Clirimtar) met in liberated Përmet.¹⁵¹ Two hundred delegates from all parts of the country and members of the General Staff of the National Liberation Army and the national liberation councils participated. The delegates elected the Antifascist National Liberation Council (Kësilli Antifashist Nacional-Clirimtar) to be the supreme legislative and executive body. The functions of a provisional government were assumed by the Antifascist National Liberation Committee (Comiteti Antifashist Nacional-Clirimtar) as established by the Council, Heading this committee was Enver Hoxha. The Përmet congress lay the legislative groundwork for the National Liberation Front's takeover of government. King Zogu, who had fled the country, was forbidden to return to Albania and no other government was to be recognized, be it formed inside or outside the country. Finally, the delegates decided to continue military operations until the entire country was liberated. Military rank was introduced into the National Liberation Army; Hohxa was appointed chief commander of the Army.

The antifascist resistance entered its decisive phase following the Përmet congress. By October, nearly three-fourths of Albanian territory had been liberated. At its second conference in Berat on 20 October 1944, the Antifascist National Liberation Council reorganized the Antifascist National Liberation Committee into the Democratic Government of Albania, headed by Enver Hoxha, who was already the Committee's president. With the passage of legislation concerning the national liberation councils, the Liberation Council prepared the way for the takeover of governmental authority. The councils were no longer to perform both combat and governing functions, but were to become solely organs of the new power. In Berat, democratic civil rights were declared and the government charged with organizing elections for a constitutional assembly that would decide on the final form of government and would work out a constitution. On 28 November 1944, the government moved to Tirana; on the following day the last Albanian city, Shkodra, was liberated. The PKSh had achieved its goal, namely the assumption of power in liberated Albania.

The resistance struggle had barely been successfully completed when internal party conflicts within the PKSh, which had increased to 2,800 members,154 began to increase. These conflicts would influence further developments. On the eve of liberation, namely on 23 November, the Central Committee met in Berat to take stock of the partisan war and the effectiveness of the PKSh. Leading members such as Koçi Xoxe or Sejfulla Malëshova criticized the state in which the party found itself, a party which had not yet become a "real" communist party. They charged the party's political line as being permeated with vacillation, be it in adopting sectarian positions or making opportunistic concessions. 155 This criticism, supported by the Yugoslavian delegate Stoinič, was directed primarily at General Secretary Hoxha. Malëshova proposed electing a party chairman with broader theoretical training. The only way Hoxha could counter these accusations was to volunteer extensive self-criticism. Although party history has attempted to blame the conflict on the intervention of the Yugoslavian party leadership, it is obvious even in the few references available that there was real cause for the criticism expressed. 156 The conflict, that was undoubtedly accompanied by efforts on the part of Yugoslavia to retain its dominant influence in Albania following its liberation, was not settled in Hoxha's favour until November 1948 - at the high point of the conflict between the Yugoslavian CP and the Cominform Buro. "The Yugoslavian Trotskyists and their accomplices led by Koçi Xoxe, attempted to weaken and destroy our Party through their hostile actions [...]" formulated the report to the first PKSh party congress, "however, the Party will not permit its sacred interests nor those of the people to be played with, and the Party will never give anyone the right to harm these interests; it will relentlessly persecute all those who do not fulfil or violate its position, laws and rules."157 Just what this meant in practice was shown by the secret trial conducted against Xoxe and by his

¹⁵¹ See Historia e PPSh, pp. 163-169.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁵³ See Mbledhja ë dytë e Këshillit Antifashist Nacional-Çlirimtar te Shqipërisë (s.l., 1944), p. 29.

¹⁵⁴ See Historia e PPSh, p. 177.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 177-184. Cf. also Hoxha, Raport ne kongresin e I-rë, pp. 240-241.

¹⁵⁶ A closer analysis of the events is only possible on the basis of the protocoll of the conference, which has not yet been published.

¹⁵⁷ Hoxha, Raport ne kongresin e I-rë, pp. 281-282.

execution on 8 July 1949, ushering in the era of Stalinist purges in Eastern Europe.

Translated by Dona Geyer