

## The beginnings and the main problems of the Communist regime in Albania from November 1944 to October 1945

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**Abstract:** *The beginnings of Communist rule in Albania during November 1944-August 1945, were full of challenges. The main, however, was that of understanding how to run the country through detailed information on every district where the Communist power had been established by now. Over such period the first frictions showed up among districts' leaders who were trying to take over more and more responsibilities in an attempt to earn praise from the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party. In the international relations of Albania, it seems that the principal problems were the relations with the western allies (Great Britain and USA) and above all, the complicated relations with Greece, with the latter being at the focus of the leadership's attention until 1949. In order to secure the newly seized power, the Albanian Communist Party focused on three tenets: first, information on the internal situation; second, the identification through information of all those who were or would be considered potential elements against the Albanian Communist Party; third, striking hard all those who were identified as opponents to the party or, would potentially be against the party.*

**Keywords:** *History, Albania, postwar, power, stability, government.*

### Introduction-The beginnings of the communist power in Albania

Albania was one of the first countries that was liberated some months before the end of War World II. The economic problems, the questions of politics and security that the country was facing were enormous. The new communist prime minister Enver Hoxha since the beginnings of exercising his power had made the utmost to consolidate it. But, to achieve this, first he desperately needed the aids from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration<sup>1</sup> [hereinafter: UNRRA\*].

Before that and a month prior the liberation of Albania, in Berat on 23

1 Hamit Kaba, *UNRRA në Shqipëri, 1944-1947*, Tiranë: Shkenca, 2000, p. 5.

\* United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration – UNRRA, established when the Second World War was at its peak, signed from the 44 representatives of independent countries in the White House in Washington in 9 November 1943. For a more detailed information see Hamit Kaba, *UNRRA në Shqipëri...*, p. 17.

October 1944, in the statement delivered by him, stated that the government would faithfully stick to the decisions taken in the Congress of Përmet (24 May 1944) and also would organize free and democratic elections for the new National Assembly.<sup>2</sup> The aim was the complete liberation of Albania and to exercise complete authority in every corner of the country by the new government. With the liberation of Albania from the nazi-fascist invaders on 29 November 1944, the provisional government was facing delicate and emergent duties. The country was almost entirely destroyed. The new provisional government of Enver Hoxha had promised the organization of free and democratic elections for the new Constitutional Assembly, the definition of the regime vote and the new Constitution.<sup>3</sup> According to the provisional government, the Albanian people had suffered tremendous losses and damages. The data presented from the government after the war were the following: 28.000 killed<sup>4</sup>, 12.600 wounded, 10.000 prisoners and deported in the concentration camps in Italy and Germany, 46.700 burned houses, the financial damage towards Albania according to the provisional government was: 3.833.303.099 Albanian golden francs.<sup>5</sup>

The Albanian Communist Party (hereinafter: ACP) being the only winning force in the war after the liberation, took all the necessary measures to remain the only political force to run the country. For this purpose, since December 1944, through the newspaper “Bashkimi (Unity)” publicly stated that the opponents of the new state were those who propagated that “the state was destroyed, Albania is ruined...there is no democracy but dictatorship”.<sup>6</sup> For these people there would be no place in the country’s

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2 *Arkivi i Ministrisë për Evropën dhe Punët e Jashtme të Republikës së Shqipërisë/The Archive of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania* [hereinafter: AMEPJ], Year [hereinafter: Y.] 1944, File [hereinafter: F.], A-1/a, p. 1. Statement of the Democratic Government of Albania before the second meeting of the Antifascist National-Liberation Council of Albania; see also *Enver Hoxha dhe katër ditët e Beratit 23-27 tetor 1944*, Documents prepared for publication by Ndreçi Plasari and Luan Malltezi, Tiranë: 55, 1996, p. 13-46.

3 AMEPJ, Y. 1944, F. 1, Nr. A-1/a, p. 1. Statement of the Democratic Government of Albania before the second meeting of the Albania’s Antifascist National-Liberation Council. Article from Enver Hoxha published in the newspaper *Bashkimi*. The speech of Enver Hoxha on the occasion of Independence Day and the entering in Tirana of the Democratic Government.

4 See: Teodor Kareco, *Jo: 28.000 dëshmorë partizanë; vetëm: 3500; të korrigjujmë mashtrimet e historiografisë komuniste*, Tiranë: ENEAS, 2015.

5 AMEPJ, Y. 1944, F. 2, A-3/a, p. 47. Different documents of the period prior to the liberation were used in the work of the Ministry for Foreign Relations in 1944 (speaking about the National-Liberation Antifascist war of our people).

6 Demir Dyrmishi, “Spastrimi i administratës shtetërore nga kundërshtarët politikë (1944-1960)”, in *Studime Historike*, Nr. 3-4, Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, 2006, p. 107.

government, therefore it would be better for them to leave the country and work abroad because they didn't fit with the new regime, because "our power would clean all the barns of the occupation and of Zog and Judas".<sup>7</sup>

Another very important element for the new provisional government of Enver Hoxha, was beyond any doubt its international recognition. Being the leader visibly headed at the side of the Soviet Union, was impossible for Enver Hoxha not to be enthused by the declaration of Vyacheslav Molotov<sup>8\*</sup> from London on 18 December 1942 concerning the war of the Albanian people against nazi-fascism.<sup>9</sup> This was a very important declaration for the then occupied Albania, but above all for the postwar Albania because it was a formal expression through which it recognized the independence of Albania and was in the same spirit with the declaration made by the American Secretary of State Cordell Hull.<sup>10</sup>

The alignment of the National Liberation Front at the side of the antifascist alliance between USA-Great Britain-Soviet Union, was a key element that would help postwar Albania when time would come to settle the peace. During the war hundreds of reports were sent by the British and American missions acting in Albania about the efforts made by the Albanian national liberation army against nazi-fascist invaders.<sup>11</sup> The US Department of State itself through a confidential note dated on 27 November 1944 wrote that:

*"The Albanian people has contributed in the defeat of the common enemy through courageous resistance against the aggression and the occupation made by the Axis. They [Albanians] have supported this war for more than five years. The patriotic forces in collaboration with the Allies operations along the*

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7 *Ibid.*

8 \* Vyacheslav Molotov: 9 March 1890 – 8 November 1986; Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union; in duty 3 May 1939 – 4 March 1949; 5 March 1953 – 1 June 1956.

9 *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 10,B/1-3, p. 1-2. Statement of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs through which recognizes the rights of Albania's independence.

10 *Ibid.* The text of Molotov's declaration: "The Soviet Government is certain that the struggle that the Albanian people for its freedom would be connected with the common war to free the other countries of the Balkans who are suffering under the oppression of the Italian-German invaders and they would be victorious to oust the Italians from their country. The question of the Albanian state is an affair of Albania and would be solved from the Albanian people himself. The Soviet Union sees with complete sympathy the fight of the Albanian patriots against the Italian invaders; declares that it does not recognize any pretension from the Italian fascist imperialism on the Albanian soil and desires to see Albania free and independent. Concerning the structure of the State, this is an internal affair of Albania and should be solved by the Albanian people itself".

11 *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 11. Statement of the British leaders on Albania. Years 1939-1943; see also *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 17. Documents on the activity of the American mission in our country.

*entire the Balkan region, have ousted the German invader from the southern and central areas of the country and from the capital Tirana. Today in the thirty second year of Albania's independence, they continue the war until the total liberation of the country. The Government and the People of the United States of America hope that with the reestablishment of complete freedom, the Albanian people would unite to fulfill the duty of reconstruction that lies ahead*".<sup>12</sup>

The statement of the State Department on 27 November 1944 (presented on 28 November on the day of Albania's independence) was very meaningful. Though the Second World War continued with great intensity, the National Liberation Movement of Albania was considered an allied force in the antifascist war. Alas, as Prof. Hamit Kaba has written, Albania was considered a moral and not an official ally of the alliance as Greece and Yugoslavia.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, it was very important to be maximally exploited at this moment from the provisional government of the National Liberation Front to consolidate this great achievement. Wasn't easy at that time to be considered an ally without having the proper information about the attitudes kept during the war.

Albania's approach with the United States of America posed a problem. The political system of the USA was different from what Enver Hoxha wished to install in his country. The USA made clear their position in favor of Albania even during the war.<sup>14</sup> But, Albania was materially and economically ruined by the war and had an emergent need for American aid. The problem that the Albanian communists and personally Enver Hoxha had was that the American aid was to be managed by the members of the National Front and not by a single representative of the Ancien Régime in Albania. The National Liberation Front and the Communist Party were conscientious that only by force would keep the power gained during and after the war. Albanian political experience has shown that the turmoil in Albania since the proclamation of independence to the end of the Second World War has been present. The unification of the country under a single leadership was another dilemma.

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12 *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 16, p. 13. Original statement in English from the American State Department issued on 28 November 1944, Confidential, nr. 583. The date of note drafting is 27 November 1944.

13 Hamit Kaba, *Nga lufta në paqe, Shqipëria dhe SHBA 1939-1946*, Tiranë: ASA, 2020.

14 *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 16, p. 18. "On 3 June 1944, Mr. Cordell Hull, the then Secretary of State, for Foreign Affairs of the United States and Mr. Pepper Sentaro member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the United States of America, solemnly declared that: The United States of America and the three Great Powers do not recognize the annexation of Albania made on April 7 1939 and recognize the right of Albania to live free under a government of her choice".

## **The main problems the Albanian government had to face to stabilize power**

The historic experience has shown that different countries in the world have experienced different stages to stabilize their countries. In my perception, the stability of one country does not depend at all from the strength that is exercised, but from the compromise that is necessary to be achieved from the different political forces. At the end of 1944, in Albania, the existing political forces were at the eve of beginning the ancient rivalries that have characterized them during the war. Enver Hoxha and the ACP, chaired by him, sought to have a strong and unwavering power. Since the beginning of exercising power by him, was made clear that the compromise with the other political forces such as National Front (hereinafter: Balli Kombëtar) or Legaliteti (hereinafter: Legality) was totally out of every consideration and above all these two forces were considered sworn enemies after the meeting of Mukje in 1943. The impossibility to compromise didn't rely only on the ideological distinctions between the political forces, but above all from the charges made by the Communist Party towards the open collaboration that has made Balli Kombëtar with the German invaders in a fierce and exterminating war against the partisans.<sup>15</sup>

The Second World War was a war that put on the spotlight the unprecedented genocide from the extremist forces against the human race. The hatred that the peoples of the world, especially those in Europe had against the Germans was beyond any possible imagination. For example, in Czechoslovakia, the Sudeten Germans, whether or not Nazis sympathizers, were all considered traitors.<sup>16</sup> The Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš went beyond where he stated on 12 May 1945 that "the German problem was to be liquidated as soon as possible".<sup>17</sup> Also, statements were made to oppose the Christian order in the Bible "love your neighbor" that this

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15 *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 14, p. 4. "P.P... Mehdi Frashëri was very zealous to urge the Germans to exterminate the partisans. ... Tirana, 28.12.1944"; see also *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 52, p. 45. "Tract from an American plane sent from the general Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, Allied General Commander of Mediterranean, who has a remark towards the government of Tirana against the support that is shown at the side of the German army: "I have been informed that the Government of Tirana is making efforts to recruit soldiers to support the German army in the Balkans. This is a hostile action against the United Nations, and those who are responsible are informed about the consequences that bring such actions. All those armed forces, whatever they are called, that are used to support the German army, may it be against regular powers from the United Nations or against those who support the United Nations which are resisting in the Balkans, are informed that would be considered as enemies, now and in the future days of freedom". The document has no date.

16 Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back; Europe, 1914-1949*, St Ives: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 476.

17 *Ibid.*

lesson should not be applied in the case of the Germans.<sup>18</sup>

The departure of the Germans from Albania on 29 November 1944, didn't give a chance to the overthrown Albanian political class to regain the previous political positions, but they still possessed the country's economy. Another essential problem that made it impossible to compromise was the element of the civil war between the nationalists and the communists during World War II.<sup>19</sup> The problem of collaboration with the nazi-fascists of Balli Kombëtar and Legality was the primal element that was exploited from the ACP, because it was a known fact. With the inevitable defeat of nazi Germany, the former Albanian political class wouldn't be tolerated anymore and had no shield where to shelter. Many from the central figures of that class ran out of the country with the last German forces remaining in Albania. The United States of America, Great Britain and the Soviet Union had encircled Germany in a stranglehold of iron and fire with no chance of escape. The ACP and Enver Hoxha himself were conscientious that had no obstacle to run the country, but in order to calmly rule, they should annihilate every element of the Ancien Régime remaining in Albania. A good part of persons that had collaborated with the invaders and had no chance of escape with the main leaders, were encircled within Albania with few loyal persons. Very soon the communist power in Albania called these groups of anti communist resistance as criminal gangs. With these bands would be the first military clash of the communist regime to consolidate power.

Another problem that the new communist government would deal with was the problem with the southern neighbor, Greece. The complexity of relations with the southern neighbor was of a very specific nature. Very soon the Albanian-Greek problems would occupy an important part of the international relations of the new Albanian state. These problems started with the Greek territorial claims at the expense of Southern Albania and were made more visible since World War II and specifically from the Italian-Greek war. Professor Arben Puto in his book "Lufta Italo - Greke, diktatorë dhe kuislingë/The Italian-Greek war, dictators and quislings", contributes a lot to understanding the problems of these relations. Albania was invaded from the fascist Italy on 7 April 1939. The Albanian Kingdom under the leadership of King Zog I, ceased to exist. After more than a year after the invasion of Albania, by a decree of the emperor Victor Emmanuel II on 9 June 1940, it was proclaimed that "The Albanian Kingdom would

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18 *Ibid.*

19 Sonila Boçi, "Situata politike në Shqipëri (tetor-dhjetor 1943): rezistencë, bashkëpunim e luftë civile", in *Studime historike*, Nr. 1-2, 2021, Tiranë: Akademia e Studimeve Albanologjike, 2021, p. 193-228.

enter war with those countries in which the Kingdom of Italy is at war".<sup>20</sup> What worsened even more the situation of Albania, was the fact that beside the signature of Victor Emmanuel was the signature of the puppet Albanian prime minister Shefqet Vërlaci, according to which the state of war between Italy and France directly included Albania on 10 June 1940. This fact would be used after the Greek government in exile during and after the Second World War to territorially gain at the detriment of Albania. The signature of Shefqet Vërlaci beside the signature of Victor Emmanuel II was the most serious blunder that an Albanian politician has ever made. That signature remains to this day one of the most essential problems in the Albanian-Greek relations.<sup>21\*</sup> Concerning this issue, professor Beqir Meta has another approach in his book "Tensioni greko-shqiptar (1939-1949)/The Albanian-Greek tension (1939-1949)". He writes the following:

*"A day after the Italian army attacked Greece, the Albanian Legate in London, by applying the instructions of the Albanian government in exile, offered to the Greek minister in London the collaboration of Albania against the common enemy. But, during this war the Greeks have not encouraged the Albanians".<sup>22</sup>*

The problem was that the representatives of the Albanian government in exile offered their collaboration to the Greek government, but there was something important to mention. The Albanian government in exile was not recognized by any government of the free countries, while the Greek government, yes, was recognized. At the moment when Albania was occupied by fascist Italy, neither king Zog nor any member of the royal cabinet didn't signed any decree of proclaiming war against Italy and with the Axis. This was another big harm that was made to the Albanian question when World War II would end and would continue to be a following problem in the international relations of Albania after the war.

The question of preserving power required high vigilance among the lines of the new communist clique. Except what has remained from the Ancien Régime, the new communist power of Enver Hoxha would pay attention to the aids that would receive from the activity of UNRRA.<sup>23</sup> According to professor Hamit Kaba who has dedicated a serious research to the UNRRA's activity in Albania, it was impossible for the latter to start

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20 Arben Puto, *Lufta italo-greke; diktatorë dhe kuislingë*, Tiranë: Toena dhe UMSH press, 2011, p. 39. The text of this decree was published in the newspaper Tomorri on 10 June 1940; see also the pages 92-93.

21 \* At the time when this paper was presented for publication, the Greek parliament had not yet abrogated the war legislation with Albania of 28 October 1940.

22 Beqir Meta, *Tensioni greko-shqiptar (1939-1949)*, Tiranë: GEER, 2002, p. 54.

23 Hamit Kaba, *UNRRA në Shqipëri...*, p. 5.

the reconstruction without the help of this organization..<sup>24</sup> UNRRA gave for free to Albania an economic aid exceeding \$31-32 million dollars. of that time value exchange.<sup>25</sup> Approximately 46% of UNRRA's program was composed of equipment, machineries and raw materials, while the other part was given to the Albanian provisional government in the shape of furnishings destined for consumption by the country's civil population.<sup>26</sup>

Officially, the Albanian government sought the help of UNRRA on 11 January 1945.<sup>27</sup> However, the Albanian communist government started at the end of October 1944 to be interested in the activity of the section on Albania of this organization.<sup>28</sup> Since the beginning, the Albanian government was informed on UNRRA and how it would be kept under surveillance for its activity in Albania.<sup>29</sup> In the information with the inscription "Top Secret" sent from Albania on 9 December 1944, found in the archives of the former Sigurimi secret police, a person called Cyril was addressing information to another person about the general situation in Albania.<sup>30</sup> The person who wrote that report very probably was a member of the British military mission in Albania because he exchanges a lot of correspondence with the military British bases in Cairo of Egypt.<sup>31</sup> The letter in essence was an information on what could possibly deal with the mission of UNRRA in Albania and if the political environment would be favorable for the mission.<sup>32</sup>

According to this information, it was aimed that the mission of UNRRA was not to be accompanied by a large military power to protect the materials because could erupt misunderstandings with the local population and could be called as an occupying force.<sup>33</sup> Another element that was included in this secret report was the difficulty of transportation

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24 *Ibid*, p. 11.

25 *Ibid*, p. 12.

26 *Ibid*.

27 *Ibid*.

28 *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 50, p. 1. Letter by UNRRA addressed to Kadri Hoxha on the work of this organization and the establishment of the sector in Albania. 22 October 1944, CO. B, 2677 REGT. OSS (PROV), APO 534 - US. ARMY.

29 Arkivi i Ministrisë së Punëve të Brendshme/Autoriteti për Informimin mbi Dokumentet e ish-Sigurimit të Shtetit/The Archive of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Albania/The Authority for Information on Former State Security in the Republic of Albania [hereinafter: *AMPB/AIDSSH*], Year [hereinafter: Y.] 1944, File [hereinafter: F.] 20, p. 1. "Correspondence exchange between the personnel of UNRRA and the military mission in Albania on their actions in our country".

30 *Ibid*.

31 *Ibid*, p. 2.

32 *Ibid*.

33 *Ibid*, p. 2.

in Albania. According to the information, Albania has no possibility of transport and this fact was a serious problem concerning the distribution of the materials in the country.<sup>34</sup> Another serious problem and perhaps more important was the financial situation of Albania which was considered as catastrophic.<sup>35</sup> Taking into consideration these two essential difficulties, in another report dated 28 December 1944, was informed UNRRA's office in Cairo that Albania for the moment couldn't be included in the list of the goods that should be sent.<sup>36</sup> According to this secret information, the members of the British-American military mission that were in Albania, thought that the country could be assisted with the goods by UNRRA if they would enter Albania through Yugoslavia and Greece, but this depended on how Enver Hoxha would react.<sup>37</sup>

Was clear that for the moment, Albania had to accept every kind of assistance. In the case of Greece, the Albanian communist leadership was determined to not accept the help from UNRRA to pass from there, and this not without reason. Since 24 September 1944, when the Nazis troops were still in Albania, the Greek Propaganda Minister in exile Kartalis, had made a statement in the BBC radio saying:

*"With Albania we have good relations. We have some divergences with it because we have there a Greek minority, but these differences-disagreements we would solve between us in a friendly manner".<sup>38</sup>*

But, in November 1944, the Greek prime minister in exile Papandreou welcomed in London the delegates of the Council for the Central Committee for the war of Northern Epirus chaired by Gjirokastra Metropolitan Pandeleimon. To Papandreou was handed a report signed after the conclusion of the general meeting kept after Papandreou's statement on 18 October 1944 and in it was written that "The Northern Epirus is an integral part of Greece, sanctified by the graves of our heroes fallen in

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34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 8. Excerpt from the secret report of 28 December 1944: "...without doubt you perhaps are thinking how would be affected the situation of Albania from the Yugoslav and Greek developments. As concerning Yugoslavia, I don't think that the limited success of the ML Easton group in Dalmatia, affects the Albania position. The ML for Albania would propose something totally different to Hoxha, and I don't see any reasons to revise my opinion on how it could be refused the terms of ML. As concerning Greece, at the time that I'm writing this letter I don't know the outcome of Churchill's visit. If, as I hope applies a withdrawal from extreme positions taken by Leeper then this, later could lead to a modification of the ML instructions on Albania".

38 *AMEPJ*, Y. 1944, F. 36, p. 56. Documents on the so-called Northern Epirus (Vorio-Epir).

war”.<sup>39</sup> The statement had expressed the belief of the people of Northern Epirus according to the information that the media had made in Britain. Papandreou himself added that:

*“Our people is voluntarily aligned at the side of the government with strong and true discipline and with the will to fight for the freedom of the people until those who ruined the peace of the world to be punished. Certain on the good cause of their war, all the Greeks, united with those who help us and with our powerful allies will march towards the national unification”.*<sup>40</sup>

As we have mentioned above, Greece for the moment after the liberation of Albania was the main problem for the government of Enver Hoxha in international relations. As far as could be kept from the questions of Albania and in the relations of the latter with the British-Americans, the better would be for the power of Hoxha. The power that was won from the war and not by free and fair elections could be kept only by force. The hopeless economic situation of Albania had to be in my opinion the primal concern of Enver Hoxha. The New Year 1945, was approaching Enver Hoxha with the true challenges of keeping the power. Albania was one of the first countries that was liberated from the nazi-fascist occupation. In these conditions, the questions to answer were simple: how could political and economically Albania survive? Could it be a political compromise not only with the political forces within the country, but also with countries such as Great Britain and the United States of America, especially with those which had real possibilities to help in Albania’s recovery?

To give an answer to these questions, it was necessary for the provisional government to be recognized from the great western allies. Indeed, the first effort according to the documentation I have seen was on 21 December 1944.<sup>41</sup>

### **“The gun or the soul” – the first armed movement against the communist regime in Albania, Koplik [Kelmend] January – February 1945**

For a political force to have a stable political power, it’s necessary for her to be thoroughly informed. The knowledge on the country’s political

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39 *Ibid*, p. 53. “Taken from News Digest”, November 1944”.

40 *Ibid*.

41 *Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit i Republikës së Shqipërisë i Republikës së Shqipërisë/The Central State Archive of the Republic of Albania* [hereinafter: *AQSH*], fond [hereinafter: f.] 14/ Këshilli i Ministrave/Council of Ministers [hereinafter: *KM*], Year [hereinafter: *Y.*] 1945, File [hereinafter: *F.*] 1, p.1-11.

situation were the main elements concerning the new power. Was not by coincidence that the most frequent information coming to Tirana was from Shkodra. According to intelligence reports coming from the high Albanian communist leadership, the district of Shkodra since the day of its liberation, presented a particular political situation. The most visible element that was highly underlined was the fact that this district has kept itself out of the national-liberation war.<sup>42</sup> Concerning the situation in Shkodra, the reports were stressing to keep under surveillance every political opponent and former members of “the traitor organizations” such as Balli Kombëtar, Legality and above all the catholic clergy.<sup>43</sup>

From the beginning of 1945 and precisely in the middle of January, the ACP was forced to deal with a true challenge within and specifically in north of Albania, in Koplik and Shkodra. The attack that the partisan post suffered in Koplik by armed elements brought the immediate reaction of the general staff of the National-Liberation Army by sending huge forces in the north under the command of Mehmet Shehu. The armed movement of Koplik came soon to an end and the entire area of Shkodra with all its districts was put under a severe regime of control and terror. Enver Hoxha himself on 2 February 1945, after the authority of the Communist Party had been reestablished, ordered Mehmet Shehu to immediately execute everybody who had been caught alive from the side of the resistance.<sup>44</sup> This armed movement was badly organized from the opponents of the communist regime, but was the first signal that the power of the ACP would always be threatened if weren't taken severe terror measures to stabilize the situation. North of Albania the Communist Party structures during the war had been both weak and inexistent. It is a fact that as we shall see in the following lines, the political organization and above all the military one of the ACP was incomparably more organized with the sporadic and unorganized anti communist movements of the Albanian anticommunists in the north. The swift conclusion of the military operations in Shkodër and Koplik clearly demonstrated that the anti communist forces could not win

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42 *AQSH*, f. 14/Strukturat/Structures [hereinafter: Str], Y. 1945, F. 1, p. 2. Reports and information of the District Committee of the Party in Shkodra sent to the Central Committee of the Party in Tirana on the political, organizational and economic situation, on mass organization, power, etc. 31 March 1945.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 215, p. 3. Reports, radiograms, minutes, indexes between the General Command of the National-Liberation Army, the Headquarter of the Operational Command of Divisions and Brigades located in Shkodra concerning the measures undertaken and the actions during the general operation against the anti communist elements north of Albania. The military operations in the area of Koplik started on 14 January 1945 until 16 February 1945. See in the same file the report of 21 February 1945, page 98.

an a open clash with the regime forces. The arrests and the mass shooting as shown by the documents and the fear that was installed in Shkodra clearly show that the new power could not be overthrown with an armed rebellion. Though the military structures of the national-liberation army were merciless even with those partisans from the north of the country which refused to take part in Koplik's operation by deserting, many of them who were caught alive were instantly shoot, their homes burned, the livestock confiscated and their families suffered the hunger.<sup>45</sup> Also, the wave of arrests was also expanded in Shkodra where 40 people were arrested among them three catholic priests Mikel Koliqi, Dionis Makaj and Ndre Zadeja.<sup>46</sup>

Koplik was the center of the armed rebellion and for this reason the main reprisals were made in this area. With no court verdict and by direct order of Enver Hoxha on 10 February 1945 twelve people were shot.<sup>47</sup> On that same day, still by order of Enver Hoxha, is approved without standing trial the execution of the catholic priest Lazër Shantoja and of Sulçe Beg Bushati.<sup>48</sup> Dom Lazër Shantoja was the first martyr of the Albanian Catholic Church that would be shot without a court verdict by the communist regime. He was executed on 19 February 1945 according to the telegram that general Spiro Moisiu sent to Mehmet Shehu.<sup>49</sup> The list of the catholic priests executed or dead in prisons would belong. Mehmet Shehu's operational order to follow the cleansing of the political adversaries in the area of Koplik and Dukagjin continued on 12 February 1945.<sup>50</sup> What made the most impression and sadness at the same time was that following the order of surrendering all types of weapons that the inhabitants of that area could possess, those who disobeyed had to be immediately shot without attending trial.<sup>51</sup> Also, all the deserters had to be sequestered, the entire goods, the livestock and their houses to be burned to the ground, their families deported and they had to be immediately shot.<sup>52</sup> At the end of the order signed by Mehmet Shehu was written with capital letters: "THE REACTIONARY FORCES MUST BE ANNIHILATED. THE PEOPLE SHOULD BE ORGANIZED AND MOBILIZED. TO WHOM IS REQUIRED TO

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45 *Ibid*, p. 16, 19, 20.

46 *Ibid*, p. 22.

47 *Ibid*, p. 23.

48 *Ibid*, p. 24.

49 *Ibid*, p. 89. "To Mehmet Shehu, Reply to the telegram nr. 17 date 17.II.1945. The persons to be deported should be sent here. Sulçe Beg and Dom Lazër were executed. General Spiro Moisiu".

50 *Ibid*, p. 28.

51 *Ibid*, p. 29.

52 *Ibid*, p. 30.

SURRENDER THE WEAPON HAS TO MAKE A CHOICE, BETWEEN THE GUN OR HIS SOUL”.<sup>53</sup> Every person that escaped by chance to execution was condemned with heavy imprisonment from 20 to 30 years. The sentence was to be suffered not in the prison of Shkodra but in that of Berat.<sup>54</sup> People were being arrested almost every day of February 1945.<sup>55</sup> The same, tens of people by order of Mehmet Shehu were deported.<sup>56</sup> Also still by Shehu’s order 42 persons were released, but without clarifying why or the reason for their liberty.<sup>57</sup> The given information by the military commanders about the releasing of the above mentioned persons, draws attention to the phrase: “following the order...”. This fact showed beyond any doubt that all those that were being arrested, shot, deported or released had no court verdict, simply a military order.

Two months passed since the liberation of Albania, and the ACP was facing a true and very complicated challenge within the country. Since 19 October 1945 in the areas north of Albania especially in the district of Shkodra was required the continuation of the military operations “to annihilate all the reactionary elements, the total disarmament of the population, the radical mobilization of the young people, the consolidation of power in general and the establishment of a real intelligence network”.<sup>58</sup> After all the possible reprisals, from Tirana came the political instruction for the moment to softly behave with the local population, but to continue to keep the same harsh and firm stand against the traitors, saboteurs and the war criminals.<sup>59</sup> However, the lists with the names of the arrested people with ridiculous charges as “is thought to have connections with the international reaction” without presenting a single proof of such a claim are really shocking. In Shkodra and surroundings were arrested within two weeks 233 persons, men and women and even teenagers.<sup>60</sup> The military authorities in their information sent to Tirana were speaking of a true occupation by the communist forces and the terror was reigning in the city of Shkodra.<sup>61</sup> The word “occupation” for Shkodra shows how from now on the communist power would behave with this city. Shkodra would be the city that to the end of communist regime would suffer the

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53 *Ibid*, p. 31.

54 *Ibid*, p. 39.

55 *Ibid*, p. 64, 65, 70. 74.

56 *Ibid*, p. 72.

57 *Ibid*, p. 73.

58 *Ibid*, p. 117.

59 *Ibid*, p. 120.

60 *Ibid*, p. 150-158.

61 *Ibid*, page with no number.

epithet “reactionary” and always would be seen with a doubtful eye from the leading bodies of the regime.

### **The political, cultural and economic situation in the main cities of Albania in the first months of 1945 according to the reports from the Shock Brigades and the Directory of People’s Protection**

The idea of power’s consolidation continued to be the main concern for the new regime. The army remained a necessary asset to keep the power, nevertheless the cultural level of the partisans remained catastrophic as was written on one of the reports.<sup>62</sup> Would be exactly this catastrophic cultural level that would serve as the tip of the sword to be unleashed against the opponents of the regime. The level of the party propaganda wouldn’t be difficult to absorb from this oceanic wave of illiterate people, to be used then at every corner of Albania as tongs from the ACP power. To have complete confidence in using the partisan army to defend the power, it was sought from the Central Committee to have as much as possible blind communists to accept and execute every order from the Central Committee and Politburo. For every recruit was required a detailed personal and familial biography.<sup>63</sup> Those who showed blind loyalty towards the party, even though they could be totally incapable and illiterate, the path was open to move forward in the party ranks.

At that time in Albania, over 95% of the population lived in poverty and this would be one of the key elements to be exploited by the ACP to consolidate power. Was not a coincidence that for every report that was sent in the Central Committee in Tirana, it was boldly highlighted that the bases of the army were coming from the poor people, above all from peasantry.<sup>64</sup> In Gjirokastra, the army had established special commissions

62 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 11, p. 2. Reports sent to the Central Committee of the Party from the First Division in Gjirokastra on the political situation on the ground and the cultural situation.

63 *Ibid*, p. 4. Excerpt from the statistics for the leading element in the division of Gjirokastra: “The Commander, good element, honest, but politically weak and not a true leader for the detachment. Is hopeful that he might advance. The Commissar, very low politically, is not active in the work and is very difficult to assess that he might fulfill his duties. The Deputy Commissar, very underdeveloped in every point of view. He cannot properly help the organization because lacks the experience and barely can advance”.

64 *Ibid*, p. 4/1; see also 7. “The element in this Brigade (X Brigade) comes from peasantry, totally lacking the general culture. Politically low. Are organized different conferences, but not with the proper effect. There are lacking enough political floor walkers here, making this sector very weak. From the Headquarter of the Brigade to the elements of the companies all lack the political culture. The Commissar of the Brigade is hopeless to get improved and is not helping in any way to advise and he was prepared to go into other battalions to assist the commissars of the battalions, but he never went”.

to chase the war criminals and “to cease the wealth of the merchants”.<sup>65</sup> In the reports sent during the first semester of 1945 (12.2.1945) from Veis Gjebero concerning the military situation, it was accepted that in the XII Brigade, the members of the party were of a very low level, both culturally and politically. This is because they haven’t any job experience, were young, uneducated and were assigned high responsibilities and the worst was that they were transferred in the brigade of people’s protection without any kind of recruitment criteria.<sup>66</sup>

In order to start the blow against the political opponents, it was necessary to start as soon as possible the disarmament process of the population. In Përmet, this process was not welcomed from the locality.<sup>67</sup> Also in Shkodra, the level of the military leaders was very weak and also the level of the partisans.<sup>68</sup> In order to maintain the mobilization in Shkodra’s district, to those who deserted, the order was to burn their houses.<sup>69</sup> But it was worse. From the low level of education that the local leaders had, the level of crimes increased. In the information were presented data for e certain Ndreko [the surname is not given in the document and also his rank and position in the division lack], that during the disarmament of the population had tortured many people with the slogan “the gun or the soul”.<sup>70</sup> More or less the same situation was presented in Peshkopia when from the report itself of 11 March 1945 presented by Arif Hasko, Commissar of the VIII Division, was written that were made mistakes, the party members have shown themselves very brute in behaving with the people and have tortured many locals and in some cases they’ve “won” the hate of the population.<sup>71</sup> But it was not only that. The commissar himself,

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65 *Ibid*, p. 6.

66 *Ibid*, p. 24.

67 *Ibid*, p. 37.

68 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 12, p. 1. Military reports on Shkodra. “[For I Brigade] The Staff as we have informed the first time, are young and generally culturally low and without work experience. The movement of the staff and the continuous removal has and is weakening the job. Shkodër, 3.I.1945, Mihal Prifti, signature”; see also p. 14. “The comrades in charge do not possess the proper rigidity and the critical eye when it comes for the good of the Party. Shkodër, 24.II.1945, Veis Pippa, signature.

69 *Ibid*, p. 22. Excerpt from the information for Shkodra: “There are only two defectors (one of which returned after his home was burned) and nowhere is whispered for demobilization”.

70 *Ibid*, p. 26. “Ndreko during the operation in Dukagjin has made mistakes. The disarmament of the population has tortured many people. He has not properly understood the order ‘the gun or the soul’. He has ordered to torture the commissar of the company as you know, and in this mistake he involved the deputy chief of the III Region of People’s Protection Vangjel Kocani. Shkodër, 5 April 1945, Veis Pippa, signature”.

71 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 18, p. 16-17. Excerpt from the report for the VIII Division in

Arif Hasko, admits that within the VIII Division had started the arrestment of people who were suspected for anti party work and wanted to escape from the country, but without presenting any evidence for their guilt, only in the papers was written prior to any arrest “apparently...”.<sup>72</sup> The same in the district of Mirdita, the chief of the party in that locality Myqerem Fuga, was instructed by order of the Central Committee to continue at any cost the process of disarmament and for this he required an additional force of 400 people.<sup>73</sup>

The aim of the Albanian leadership was that since the beginnings of exercising power, within the partisan lines, had no anti government slogan or discontent. This is because within the I Shock Brigade, some individuals have expressed their discontent.<sup>74</sup> In Tirana the partisan forces were more and more widened by the Secret Service by using methods and ways to be integrated as much as possible within the population.<sup>75</sup> Within the same spirit was coming information for the II Shock Brigade sent by the senior leaders which almost all of them were illiterate.<sup>76</sup> For the individuals that were considered of keeping anti communist attitude as in the case of the XII Shock Brigade stationed in the south of Albania, the arrests were daily and also the chasing of the elements considered dangerous from the headquarter of the brigade.<sup>77</sup> The coast in southern Albania was one of

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Peshkopia: “The march of our forces should consist not only in chasing and catching the reactionaries, but also to make the masses be on our side. We have made many mistakes, we have been savage with the people, we have unjustly tortured, and in many cases the people are not trusting us and in a few cases hate us. Our partisans on many occasions and you, have not get the importance of this operation and was seen by you as something usual and you wait to be finished as soon as possible. The party and youth organization are not taking the proper decisions for every situation. This has caused the loss of orientation and the falling in errors”.

72 *Ibid*, p. 27-28.

73 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 23, p. 30. Orientations on the way of work from the Central Committee sent to the District Committees.

74 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 24, p. 4. Report on the situation of the I Shock Brigade. Part from the report: “There were no slogans by the reactionaries within the lines of the brigade, according to some elements that tried to sow dissatisfaction through some words hoping to introduce a certain Astrit Leka that before was a party member in the organization of Tirana. The latter is very dissatisfied and is trying in every possible way to be reintroduced in the Party, sometimes he praises a responsible person and later he tries to find some others dissatisfied as himself, but there was nothing he could do”. 30 March 1945, I Brigade Deputy Commissar Ziqiri Mero).

75 *Ibid*, p. 8.

76 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 25, p. 13-14. Statistics of membership of the party organization in the II Shock Brigade. Elbasan, 1 April 1945, The Deputy Commissar Niko Koleci, signature.

77 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 34, p. 1-2. Information from the XII Shock Brigade on the coastline.

the hottest areas as a consequence of the tense situation with neighboring Greece. For this purpose, the information coming from the XII Brigade, the situation was considered difficult because in that area lived a Greek minority and they were considered as V Column.<sup>78</sup> Himara was considered as the most difficult zone from the reports coming and the connection of the people with the communists and was considered weak even as a consequence of the disarmament process.<sup>79</sup>

In the information coming from the shock Brigades dislocated in every corner of the country, they had all the attention in Tirana. The Central Committee was more and more interested to know every detail of Brigades' work. The Organization Secretary of the Central Committee in Tirana, Koçi Xoxe, always demanded explanation from the political commissars of the brigades that never had to delay the sending of information and no few times has called them of being tendentious in the information they were sending.<sup>80</sup>

It can't be said that the new power established in Albania was on the right path to be consolidated and legitimized. The road ahead was presented very difficult and if weren't enough the internal affairs, the new regime in Albania had to deal with high precedence even with the problem of identifying and possibly striking on the escaped Albanian political elements in the West that were the true threat in the concept of Enver Hoxha which might overthrow his power.

### **The economic difficulties of Albania, the gold question and the first political-economic and social changes by the Albanian communist government**

The new relations that were necessary to be established between Albania, Italy and Germany, wouldn't be easy. On 13 January 1945, the new postwar Albanian government enacted the law to confiscate the properties of Italy and Germany in Albania by justifying this action that all these goods were created during the nazi-fascist occupation of Albania from

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78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*, p. 13. Excerpt from the report of 29/3/1945: "During the two first weeks of march are manifested the following slogans from the reactionaries: 1) The National-Liberation Army would be disarmed like EAM in Greece from the British and through a plebiscite would be elected the government with the participation in it of Medi bey. 2) The British have proposed to be removed the red star from the army and here Greece would come. In the last two weeks of the month are manifested the following slogans that the allied missions would left Tirana and in Skamilë (Saranda) were shown the Zervists and have slaughtered some Chams. Saranda, 29/3/1945, the Deputy Commissar Kiço Broko, signature".

80 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1945, F. 38, p. 1. Request for information addressed to the Deputy Commissar of the XVII Shock Brigade, Tirana, 21 February 1945.

these two countries.<sup>81</sup> According article 7 of this law, all the owners, the administrators or those who possessed the Italian and German goods in Albania, were forced that within a month since the proclamation of this law to present by writing in three copies the National Liberation Council of the district all the necessary data on these properties and their location. In case of refusal or presenting false statements, they would be punished by the military court as saboteurs of the national-liberation war.<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless the primal concern for the new Albanian government was to receive as much as possible aid from the western countries and no one better than UNRRA could fulfill that demand. Thus, on 26 February 1945, Enver Hoxha in the quality of the prime minister, addressed a letter to UNRRA's Central Commission where he expressed the belief that the Albanian people as an ally of the United Nations both in war and peace, wouldn't be spared the aid because desperately needed food, clothes, medicaments, constructions and communications means and everything else in order to restore the economy and "to build once again our burned country".<sup>83</sup> For this reason, on 1 August 1945 signed the first agreement between the democratic government of Albania and UNRRA for the latter to send in Albania the necessary aid to rebuild the destroyed country from the war.<sup>84</sup> The first agreement with UNRRA was beyond any doubt a big help, but of course didn't meet all the expectations Albania had. 1945 was a very difficult economic year for Albania. The country needed urgently to find revenues to fulfill the most vital necessities. Except receiving aids from UNRRA, firmly believing in the Soviet Union, Enver Hoxha as prime minister didn't hesitate to ask a loan from the great communist country as he called it. The loan was granted to Albania on 8 August 1945<sup>85</sup>, and this would be the first step of a close relationship that would last until 1961. Also, Albania since 25 February 1945, signed an agreement with another communist country, its northeastern neighbor, Tito's Yugoslavia. This agreement was primarily based on trade prices and the payments between the two countries, where Yugoslavia was visibly more advantageous.<sup>86</sup>

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81 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 138, p. 1-3. Law on confiscation of the properties situated in Albania possessed by Italy and Germany.

82 *Ibid*, p. 2.

83 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 107, p. 23-24. Letter of Enver Hoxha addressed to the Central Commission of UNRRA.

84 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 21, p. 11-20. Agreements signed between the Albanian Democratic Government and the administration of UNRRA concerning the UNRRA's furnishing and services in Albania. See also Hamit Kaba, *UNRRA në Shqipëri...*, p. 122.

85 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 5, p. 2.

86 *AQSH*, f. 14/Str, Y. 1949, F. 690, p. 4. Nevertheless the agreement with Yugoslavia and the proclamation of the great and lasting friendship and brotherhood, the "honey moon" between the two countries would be short-living. Indeed the relations would

Prior signing the agreement with UNRRA, the Albanian government, still before the end of the Second World War and precisely in 12 April 1945, Albania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has sent a memorandum to the Council of Ministers about the gold deposit of the former National Bank of Albania that was withdrawn from the German authorities after the capitulation of Italy.<sup>87</sup> From this document we see that the gold deposit was in Rome and was withdrawn from the German authorities to be sent in Berlin and deposited in Reichsbank.<sup>88</sup> From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it was recommended that it was opportune to inform the Allied Powers even why the war was not over because now they were fighting at the doors of Berlin.<sup>89</sup> Concerning this vital issue for Albania in 1945, professor Ksenofon Krisafi has dedicated an important study. According to Prof. Krisafi, that gold amount that was transferred in Germany from the head office of the Bank of Rome and the Bank of Italy on 16 September 1943 was 2.338.7565 kg Albanian gold.<sup>90</sup> Also, along with the Albanian gold equal of 8.062.826.90 golden francs at that time, in Rome was taken the currency reserve of Albania, approximately 12 tons, in the amount of 120.523.902 Albanian francs, and also all the samples of printing money.<sup>91</sup> The lack of such gold amount and of the currency was a heavy blow for the Albanian finances.

Nevertheless, as all this was not enough, the partisan forces after the capture of Tirana looted the city, but in small proportions. In an information of 7 July 1945, the minister of Civil Engineering, Spiro Koleka, informed the Council of Ministers that the partisan forces of the First Brigade theft the safety books of Post and Telegraph by appropriating this institution's revenues in the amount of 17.635.10 francs, the personal revenues of the director Sadik Duro in the amount of 2.480 francs, in total 20.115.10 francs.<sup>92</sup> The worst was that the commander of the First Brigade Muhamed Prodani and the commissar Arif Hasko (Patrioti) knew everything about

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break in 1948.

87 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 22, p. 1. Correspondence between the Council of the Ministers with the Foreign Ministry concerning the deposit of gold of the former National Bank of Albania withdrawn from the German authorities after the capitulation of Italy.

88 *Ibid*, p. 2.

89 *Ibid*.

90 Ksenofon Krisafi, *Në kërkim të arit; historia e arit shqiptar të rrëmbyer gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore*, Tiranë: Dita 2000 & UET Press, 2008, p. 33.

91 *Ibid*, p. 34.

92 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 121, p. 1-2. List of compensations and the demand of reparations to be paid to Albania by Germany.

this, but didn't do anything.<sup>93</sup> The reply towards the information sent by the minister Koleka came from the Council of Ministers on 28 September 1945 where was refused without giving any further explanation of the compensation of the personal loss and the damage of the post revenues from the partisans of the First Brigade.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, the Albanian government was more interested to participate in every international commission or committee that had to deal with the question of reparations. Because it was a country who suffered the Italian-German occupation and was suffering the consequences of that invasion, to obtain the reparations was a vital importance for the Albanian government. In 14 December 1945, the Albanian ambassador in Belgrade, Hysni Kapo, informed that was to be established in Brussels of Belgium the International Agency for the Reparations where every interested country could send its delegation.<sup>95</sup> As soon as this information reached Tirana, the Albanian government immediately within the month of December presented the list of compensations to the Common Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Great Britain, Soviet Union, United States of America and France with its headquarters in London concerning the reparations that Italy and Germany had to pay to Albania. The amount that the Albanian government required by both above-mentioned countries was 3.544.232.626 golden francs equal to \$684.214.792 dollars.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, the Albanian government had started the procedures to present its demand for compensation from Italy and Germany since 22 November 1945 when the prime minister Hoxha himself addressed a letter to the Presidency of the Commission for the Reparations with its center in Paris through the chief of the Soviet Military Mission in Albania, colonel Sokolof, where was expressed the readiness of the Albanian government to create all the necessary conditions for the commission to verify its claims and also informed that the chair of the Albanian delegation to present and defend the demands of Albania would be appointed the Albanian ambassador in

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93 *Ibid*, p. 2.

94 *Ibid*, p. 7.

95 *Ibid*, p. 8. Excerpt of the radiogram sent by Hysni Kapo addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana: "To apply the decision of the reparations conference will be established the International Agency for the Reparations with headquarters in Brussels. It will have an assembly where every interested state would send a delegation. It will have special sections for the fulfillment of the functions. We have to present our candidates for some positions until 15 December 1945. Appoint four elements that speak French or English. One of them should at least graduate in Economic, Trade or Law Sciences, the others should be technical assistants. Urgently send the name, surname, date of birth, the titles of the studies, the functions they had. Hysni Kapo".

96 *Ibid*, p. 8/1-28.

Yugoslavia, Hysni Kapo.<sup>97</sup>

Nevertheless, as we have pointed out in the lines above of this paper, the greatest concern for the Albanian government remained the gold reserve taken from the Germans. The careful research in the archives has helped me a lot in finding an important element. It's about a signed agreement in March 1944 in Berlin between the Albanian deputy prime minister Vehbi Frashëri and the representative of the German government Wiehl.<sup>98</sup> According to the secret protocol of this agreement, the Albanian gold was taken from the Administrative Committee of the National Bank of Albania in Rome from the German authorities and was situated in a warehouse of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin and would be given back to the Albanian government from the German government.<sup>99</sup> The rights on this amount of gold belonged solely to the Central Directory of the National Bank of Albania, but before this directory could act, it should come into terms with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin.<sup>100</sup> According the agreement, the German government for as long as the gold was deposited in Reichsbank, would take full responsibility on every risk that could be caused from the actions of the enemy [understand: British-Soviets-Americans] with the conditions that in case of annihilation of gold, the German Reich was obliged to replace the Albanian gold with the same quantity of gold and the same weight and quality.<sup>101</sup> However, in the information that was sent at the time from the representatives of the German government in Berlin, was said that the deputy prime minister Frashëri on behalf of the Albanian government stated that that Albanian government had no intention to remove the Albanian gold from the Reichsbank warehouse to bring it in Albania.<sup>102</sup> Also, the Albanian gold that was taken from Rome was to be deposited in Berlin because it was more safe under German custody.<sup>103</sup> This information reached Tirana on 29 March 1944.<sup>104</sup>

This paper unfolds a dilemma for us: perhaps the Albanian government was convinced that the Third Reich would lose the war and in this way was

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97 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 122, p. 1-2. Information of the Prime Minister sent to the Chairmanship of the Reparations Commission in Paris, on the appointment of Hysni Kapo as representative near this commission.

98 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 123, p. 1-2. Correspondence of the Council of Ministers with the Albanian State Bank, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finances on the withdrawal of the gold deposited in the Reichsbank in Germany.

99 *Ibid*, p. 1.

100 *Ibid*.

101 *Ibid*.

102 *Ibid*, p. 2

103 *Ibid*.

104 *Ibid*.

seeking a guarantee for its future when the war was over? It's very difficult to give a proper answer to this question when still has not occurred the allied landing in Normandy. But half of Italy was liberated from the rule of Benito Mussolini and the Anglo-American forces that were south of Italy, made everyone in Albania think that storming the German forces in the small Balkan country from the western allies was totally possible. However, until that moment the German forces had shown no sign of withdrawal from Albania, so maybe the Albanian government thought to have another financial guarantee in Berlin because it had no other way to preserve its gold.<sup>105</sup>

The Albanian gold that was taken from the National Bank of Albania through a note dated 17 February 1944 to be delivered in Rome on 7 - 9 March 1944, by two officials of the Bank of Italy in the Italian capital, the director Lorenzo Musani and Dr. Sandro Bressan. These two had secured the surveillance of the Albanian gold through its journey to be deposited in the Reichsbank under the custody of inspector P. Schmidt on 6 April 1944.<sup>106</sup> In total, on 6 April 1944, in Reichsbank were deposited 198 pieces of gold lingot of weight 2211,108.5 kg, 36 gold bars of weight 106.972.0 kg, 22 purses with gold coins of weight 138.430.5 kg, 430.040 different golden francs, 20 Austrian golden crowns, 15 golden Russian rubles.<sup>107</sup>

With this very delicate and very important information for the new Albanian government, on 2 May 1945, the General Directory of the State Bank of Albania, through a note addressed to the Council of Ministers, was informing that the general quantity of the Albanian gold was 8.062.826 golden francs.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, the information of the Bank for 1945, calls the presence of the Albanian gold in the Reichsbank as a theft made by the Germans, where as we have mentioned above was delivered with normal procedure from the Albanian authorities in April 1944. But, the State Bank of Albania had all the rights to encourage the Albanian government

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105 *Ibid.* "The German government is expecting this, ready to undertake according to the first point of the Protocol, a guarantee which until now has not been undertaken in any other circumstances that secures the Albanian gold deposited in Reichsbank against every risk".

106 *Ibid.*, p. 3, 4, 5.

107 *Ibid.*, p. 5. Excerpt from the protocol signed in Berlin on 6 April 1944: "Also the gold under the responsible surveillance of two representatives of the Albanian National Bank and in presence of the representatives of the Foreign Ministry and Reichsbank in Berlin, was introduced in 55 boxes with the note AN1-55. The content of these boxes is separate and is seen from the appendix attached Nr. 1-8, which is a part of this protocol. The boxes were sealed and also secured with a steel strip. The representatives of the Albanian National Bank have sealed with the lead once again the boxes with the mark of the Albanian National Bank. Follow the signatures of Lorenzo Musani, Sandro Bressan, Walther Schwenn, P. Schmidt".

108 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

to make all the necessary efforts on this “treasure” because it belonged to the receiver and to the passive account of the former National Bank of Albania.<sup>109</sup>

Except for the gold located in Germany, the State Bank of Albania, with a note dated 6 September 1945, demanded from the chairmanship of the Council of Ministers the content of the damages that the country had suffered from the Italian occupation.<sup>110</sup> According to the information presented from the Bank, the Albanian currency “gold napoleon” was equal in currency exchange with the golden franc in the international stock exchanges.<sup>111</sup> Also, according to the information stated from the Bank, the damage that the Albanian economy had suffered from the Italian four year occupation was 124.145.496 golden francs, equal with 1.519.418.000 Italian lira.<sup>112</sup> All this amount according to the information from the Bank had to be liquidated to Albania and also Italy had to deliver in Albania the quantity of 9.062.827 golden francs deposited in the Reichsbank of Berlin.<sup>113</sup>

All this monetary quantity, if given back to Albania and if the Albanian government would know how cautiously diplomatically to move especially with the Western allies which had under control the most developed areas of the conquered Germany after the war, the country [Albania] would positively recover from the economic side. Moreover, in 31 December 1945, the State Bank of Albania informed the government that the allied forces that have occupied Germany through an agreement signed in Paris on 21 December, in its third part was stressed that “the robbed gold from the Germans that the allied armies has found in Germany, would be assembled and distributed to the participant nations in proportions with the amount of gold they have lost”.<sup>114</sup> Unfortunately, the wrong alliances that Albania would embrace during the Cold War that was starting and the incident of Corfu Channel of October 1946, would deprive Albania from her right to take what belonged to her.

With the new power that was under way to be installed in Albania, it was a necessity to suppress the existing institutions called by the communist as “obsolete”. On 13 January 1945 by order of National-Liberation Council,

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109 *Ibid.* Excerpt from the Bank information: “For your information, we inform you that the gold can be easily identified according to the attached list which contains the letters and the number of the sealed boxes, the marks and the numbers of each bar and the kind of coins”.

110 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

111 *Ibid.*

112 *Ibid.*

113 *Ibid.*

114 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

was suppressed the Ministry of Reconstruction<sup>115</sup>, a very important governmental department to rebuild the postwar country. Also, the entire net of food supply [provisions] by governmental order of 15 March 1945, was entirely concentrated in the Ministry of Economy liquidating in this way the institution of the High Commissariat for the Provisions which was established on 18 June 1943.<sup>116</sup> Another important decision that was taken from the government was that of 12 April 1945 to suppress the Central Committee of Social Assistance.<sup>117</sup> Also, another decision that would remain for some time nailed in the attention of the people was that of 9 July 1945 to name the National-Liberation Army as the National Liberation Army of Albania.<sup>118</sup> With this new denomination, postwar Albania was taking on its shoulder the prerogatives to militarily defend all Albanian within and outside the borders of 1913.

Nevertheless the changes that were made, again the solution of the economic crises remained a far problem to solve. Enver Hoxha, in the quality of prime minister, knew well that without acceptable economic assistance he would be short of power. The Albanian people, at least since the age of the Albanian-Ottoman wars of the XV century, and perhaps earlier in the Byzantine period, were not recognized as living in a higher economic standard. On the contrary, always dependent from “the mercy” of the great powers, its existence was dependent on adapting with at least the policy of a great power during the times. I think that the self proclaimed prime minister Hoxha knew this historic experience well. The Albanian people was brought up in poverty and now in these very difficult economic moments when the Second World War has not yet finished, Enver Hoxha took one step forward towards the policy of imposed equality which continues to remain one of the worst recidivisms which the Albanian society inherited from the communist system and still has remained stuck in. On 12 January 1945, the prime minister Hoxha sent for “approval” to the National-Liberation Antifascist Council Chairmanship the copy of decision of the Council of Ministers dated 11 January 1945 with the respective laws where the gravest was that of extraordinary taxation on the war profits.<sup>119</sup>

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115 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 72, p. 1. On the abrogation of the previous regime institutions.

116 *Ibid*, p. 2, 9. “Was call it necessary to remember to you that the fast liquidation of the above mentioned Commissariat is at the interest of the state, as figures in the registers of this agency there are names that are indebted towards the state coffer and the state and if are not taken fast measures for their liquidation, every other measure that could be taken later from the time circumstances cannot have the right effect”.

117 *Ibid*, p. 6.

118 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 73, p. 1. Change of institution names.

119 *AQSH*, f. 490/KM, Y. 1945, F. 74, p. 2. Extraordinary taxation and confiscation of goods. The decision of the government of 11 January 1945 contained these following points:

To show that he was attentive towards “the proposals” coming from the other governmental departments, Enver Hoxha indeed had approved the proposal coming from the Ministry of Finances on the extraordinary taxation signed by the minister Ramadan Çitaku on 5 January 1945.<sup>120</sup> In fact, the proposal of minister Çitaku included only the first three points (see the footnote below). Certainly, this proposal was not entirely applied, but brought the first changes in the government of Enver Hoxha. On February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945, the minister of Education, Gjergj Kokoshi, presented his resignation. He was replaced by Kostaq Cipo.<sup>121</sup> Gjergj Kokoshi until the final days of his life would remain in opposition with the official policy of the communist Albania [he would be arrested and convicted with 30 years of imprisonment in 1946 and would die in prison in 1960] and he was to never be forgiven by Enver Hoxha.

## Conclusions

The information coming to the Central Committee of the ACP in Tirana gave a clear view to the high communist leadership and to Enver Hoxha himself how the power could be maintained and how to identify the anti communist elements. Enver Hoxha himself would take in his hands the entire situation and he himself would identify his opponents and would act without delay. All those that would be identified as potential dangerous opponents towards the ACP power would be qualified as enemies of the party and people. The ACP under the leadership of Enver Hoxha would start to take the necessary measures to consolidate the power. The beginnings of the communist regime in Albania were very difficult concerning the strengthening of authority by the new governmental structures. The identification of the essential problems and the extension of the ACP influence across the country. For the power to be steady was necessary for Enver Hoxha and ACP to take into consideration three elements to achieve consolidation. Information was the first element and the most necessary for the moment. The identification of the opposite element would be the second pillar and the third, their total annihilation.

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“1. On the extraordinary taxation and war profits; 2. On the confiscation of the goods in Albania of Italy and Germany and the taking under control over the properties of their nationals; 3. On the abrogation of the stocks and shares of the Albanian National Bank; 4. On the definition of tax tariffs and the registration of the vehicles and the issue of drive licenses”.

120 *Ibid*, p. 3.

121 *Ibid*, p. 4.