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SINO-ALBANIAN RELATIONS DURING
THE COLD WAR, 1949-1978:
AN ALBANIAN PERSPECTIVE

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PHD

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2017

SINO-ALBANIAN RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR, 1949-1978:
AN ALBANIAN PERSPECTIVE

by
Ylber MARKU

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

Lingnan University

2017

ABSTRACT

Sino-Albanian Relations During the Cold War, 1949-1978: An Albanian Perspective

by

Ylber MARKU

Doctor of Philosophy

This thesis is an exploration from the Albanian perspective of the Sino-Albanian relations during the Cold War. Based on primary sources, I look at the Sino-Albanian alliance in the broader context of the Cold War, and international relations' system. In particular, I explore this alliance as an asymmetric role-based Cold War alliance, in which Albania provided political support to China, whereas China provided economic and military support to Albania.

As a small country with little political leverage on the international stage, following the Second World War Albania became first a Soviet satellite and the Soviet outpost in the Southeastern European flank, providing Soviet Union with a strategic position in front of the NATO bases in Italy – around forty miles from Albanian coasts. Eventually, two factors undermined the Albanian-Soviet alliance: Khrushchev's reformation, reflected in the destalinization process, and the Soviet rapprochement with Yugoslavia – by then Albania's main antagonist. In this context, China emerged as the new ideal ally for Albania, for political, ideological, and economic support. The Albanian leadership's decision to intensify relations with Beijing was motivated also by the new Soviet leadership's refusal to assist Hoxha in his economic plans to prioritize the development of heavy industry. The combination of the economic aspects with those concerning the political reforms after Khrushchev's model, which undermined Hoxha's Stalinist rule, pushed Albania to seek in China an alternative to the Soviet Union. For China instead, following the Sino-Soviet split, Albania became the only European country to provide Beijing with support in its claims for leadership in the international communist movement, and to support – although not fully endorsing – Mao's domestic policies. Albania, arguably, became the only country to provide external support to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, mitigating China's self-imposed isolation.

In the broader context of the Cold War, Albania served as the only European platform for China's power projection in the western hemisphere. It also became the

strongest voice in supporting China and Chinese interests on the international stage, and international organizations, the most important being the United Nations. In this context, for a limited time and for limited tasks, Albania's diplomatic network, and Albania's foreign policy, was put at China's disposal. During the 1960s, between China and Albania developed a surrogate diplomacy: Tirana, acting on behalf of Beijing, provided China with the diplomatic infrastructure Beijing lacked because of its underrepresentation.

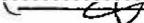
The Sino-American normalization, however, undermined the ideological axis upon which Albania had allied with China. Later, Deng Xiaoping's reformation era reshaped China's foreign aid principles, reducing also the aid to Albania. Finally, towards the end of the 1970s, the Sino-Albanian alliance ended.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.



SIGNED


(MARKU Ylber)

6 October 2017

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

SINO-ALBANIAN RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR, 1949-1978

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMPJ	Arkivi i Ministrisë së Punëve të Jashtme [Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
AQSH	Arkivi Qëndror i Shtetit [The Central Archive of State]
AQU	Arkivi Qëndror i Ushtrisë [The Central Archive of the Army]
BCP (m-l)	Belgian Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CC	Central Committee
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPSU	Communist Party of Soviet Union
FYP	Five-Year Plan
GDR	German Democratic Republic [East Germany]
GMD	Guomindang
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
LCY	League of Communists of Yugoslavia
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PCF	Parti Communiste de France [Communist Party of France]
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano [Communist Party of Italy]
PCP (m-l)	Polish Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist)
PLA	Party of Labor of Albania
PRA	People's Republic of Albania
PRC	People's Republic of China
PUWP	Polish United Workers' Party
RDC	République Démocratique du Congo [Democratic Republic of Congo]
UN	United Nations
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WPO	Warsaw Pact Organization

INTRODUCTION

Between 1945 and 1961, Albania passed from being under Yugoslavian protection to a Soviet satellite, and then definitely allying with China once relations with the Soviet Union soured. Although a country unknown to Albanians prior to 1949, China had the greatest impact on Albania during the entire Cold War period. Albanian leaders ditched the alliance with Moscow after the coming to power of the new leader in Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, who reversed Stalin's repressive manners and reformed the communist system altogether, undermining Albanian leaders' regime. In addition, Khrushchev pursued a policy of rapprochement between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia which, for the Albanian leaders, by then was deemed a threat to national independence.¹ In the same period, deep divergences emerged between China and the Soviet Union, and so Albania and China offered their respective assistance to each other.²

Albania could offer its ideological and political support on the international stage, acting as China's spokesperson in international organizations where the People's Republic of China (PRC) was unrepresented. China, in turn, provided Albania with substantial economic and military assistance. By 1961, this peculiar alliance had been fully established and it endured until 1978. Following a long-standing yet tacit national strategy, Albania could continue to rely on a 'big protector',³ in an asymmetric relationship in which, according to Womack, 'the disparities in capacities create systemic differences of interests' that make asymmetric relations often unstable.⁴ Indeed, Sino-Albanian relations were not immune from trouble and disputes – sometimes openly and others veiled. Only

¹ William E. Griffith, *Albania and The Sino-Soviet Rift*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1963).

² For the Sino-Soviet conflict see Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet conflict 1956-1961*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Mingjiang Li, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet split: ideological dilemma*, (London: Routledge, 2012).

³ Elez Biberaj, *Albania and China. A Study of an Unequal Alliance*, (Washington: Westview Press, 1986).

⁴ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam. The Politics of Asymmetry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 17; See also Anthony Reid and Yangwen Zheng, eds., *Negotiating Asymmetry: China's Place in Asia*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).

following the recent declassification of important documents, mainly in Albania, is it possible to analyze more accurately this alliance.⁵

The scholarship regarding the Cold War has been broad and extensive. However, due to the gradual opening of archives in the former Soviet Union and East Europe, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the most fruitful research work has been done. Yet most of the historiography has concentrated on the East-West (United States-Soviet Union) dichotomy, and historians have preferred, for good reasons, to focus more on the macro factors and variables of the Cold War and the role and interplay between superpowers.⁶ This has caused debates among scholars regarding even the definition of Cold War: some restricting the term to the East – West confrontation with its epicenter in Europe;⁷ others, without denying the primary role of the superpowers' confrontation, expand their use of the term to include many peripheral 'Cold Wars';⁸ and others still focusing on ongoing debating its effects.⁹ Recently more studies have been finalized regarding the role of smaller powers

⁵ The main historical documents regarding the Sino-Albanian relations are at the Central State Archive, in Tirana, [Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit – AQSH, hereafter], Party's Archive [Arkivi i Partisë – AP, hereafter], Leading Organs, [Organet Udhëheqëse – OU, hereafter], and relations CCP-PLA, [Marrëdhëniet PKK-PPSH/AP-MPKK, hereafter]; Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Arkivi i Ministrisë së Punëve të Jashtme – AMPJ, hereafter]– The United Nations Organization, [Organizata e Kombeve të Bashkuara – OKB, hereafter]; Archive of the Ministry of Defense, [Arkivi Qëndror i Ushtrisë – AQU, hereafter]; File, [Dosje – D., hereafter]; Viti, [Year – V., hereafter]; page, [fletë – f., hereafter]. Translation from the original into English is mine.

⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War*, (London: Allen Lane, 2006); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2005); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Jeremy Scott Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, *The New Cold War History*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Mingjiang Li, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet Split: Ideological Dilemma*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); Jussi M. Hanhimäki and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Odd Arne Westad ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*, (London and Portland, OR : F. Cass, 2000); Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2000*, 9th ed., (Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill, 2002). John Gaddis view of the Cold War has been recently scrutinized and debated by Geir Lundestad. See Geir Lundestad, "The Cold War According to John Gaddis", *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, no. 4, (2006): 535–542.

⁷ Federico Romero, "Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads", *Cold War History*, Vol. 14, no. 4 (2014): 685-703.

⁸ Pierre Grosser, "Looking for the Core of the Cold War, and Finding a Mirage?", *Cold War History*, Vol. 15, no. 2 (2015): 245-252; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁹ Vojtech Mastny, "The Cold War in Retrospect: Too Early to Tell?", *Cold War History*, Vol. 14, no. 4 (2014): 487–499.

during that period.¹⁰ In this context, the Balkans have been at the margins of the scholarship, with some exceptions.¹¹ Albania, however, has been almost completely neglected.¹² Regardless of the definition we give to the Cold War, Sino-Albanian relations were a Cold War alliance built upon the divisional lines that the Sino-Soviet split created within the eastern bloc. This research will elaborate the role Albania played, during its intense relations with China, as a small country with a unique position in Europe and the world. It will also explore China's role in its attempt to be an alternative to the Soviet Union's leadership within the international communist front.

An Important but Understudied Alliance

Scholars thus far have done very little study of Albania's role during Cold War, let alone Sino-Albanian relations. Elez Biberaj has conducted the only extant study on the Sino-Albanian alliance in 1986. This remarkable work however, for obvious reasons, was mainly based on officially-released documents, public declarations and secondary sources. Biberaj's perspective is that of a political scientist who, among others, poses questions to some of which only now is possible to give an answer thanks to the recent declassification of archival documentation. Nonetheless, his study remains a milestone for any scholar aiming to study Albania's history during Cold War. William E. Griffith has also conducted research on this topic, but his

¹⁰ László Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War, 1945-1956: Between the United States and the Soviet Union*, (New York: Central European University Press, 2004); L. Borhi, "Empire by Coercion: The Soviet Union and Hungary in the 1950s", *Cold War History*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (January 2001): 47-72; János Radványi, *Hungary and the Superpowers: The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University, 1972); Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, eds., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2010).

¹¹ Laković and Tasić, "The Tito-Stalin Split and Yugoslavia's Military Opening toward the West, 1950-1954"; Ivo Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist splits in Yugoslav Communism*, (London & Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Jovan Cavoski, "Overstepping the Balkan Boundaries: The Lesser Known History of Yugoslavia's Early Relations with Asian Countries, (New Evidence from Yugoslav/Serbian Archives)", *Cold War History*, Vol. 11, no. 4,(2011): 557-577; A. A. Ulunian, "Soviet Cold War Perceptions of Turkey and Greece, 1945-58", *Cold War History*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (2003): 35-52; Konstantina Maragkou, "Favoritism in NATO's Southeastern Flank: The Case of the Greek Colonels, 1967-74", *Cold War History*, Vol. 9, no. 3 (2009): 347-366.

¹² Elez Biberaj, *Albania and China: A Study of an Unequal Alliance*, Westview Special Studies in International Relations, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986); Elidor Mëhilli, "Defying De-Stalinization", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 4 (2011): 4-56. These are at the moment the most known scholars (if not the only) to have conducted, in different periods, limited research on this topic.

study is limited to 1963. The merit of this work was the central position it found for Albania in the Sino-Soviet rift.

My aim is to advance what these scholars have started, in light of accessible new sources, and add to our understanding of the Sino-Albanian alliance, China, Albania, and Cold War in general. More specifically, this research will try to answer, but not limit to, the following questions. First, what were the factors that led to the Sino-Albanian entente first, alliance later, and split eventually? What was the role of political, economic, and ideological factors during the Sino-Albanian alliance? How these different factors played a role in different periods of the Sino-Albanian relations? Second, what was the role Albania had in China's international relations during the "Global Cold War"? What was the role that China played both in Albania's international relations and in communist dictator Enver Hoxha's power inside Albania?

One of Biberaj's main arguments is that Albania sought many concessions from China, highlighting Albania's capacity to convince China that Tirana could play an important role. The last part of his argument is corroborated by archival documents. They show that Tirana not only convinced Beijing of its capacity to play a role in international politics, but really did fulfill its promises, in particular by capturing many communist groups and political parties from Europe, Africa, and Latin America under Beijing's sphere of influence. Less true, I will argue, is the rest of the argument of Biberaj. China prioritized Albania as a recipient of foreign aid, and no other country in times of peace received from China such economic and military assistance, proportionate to population, as did Albania. This seemingly corroborates and reinforces Biberaj's cost-benefit analysis, according to which Albania benefitted enormously by extracting concessions from China with no guaranteed political return. But this analysis neglects the long term consequences of the relationship, and is true only in the short term, 1961-1978.

However, my argument is that this did not come about because of China's generosity, but as a reward for the challenge Albania had posed to Soviet influence. In Europe, only Yugoslavia pursued a policy of departure from dogmatic communism, and it was backed by the West. Albanian leaders, in order to legitimate their decision to not undertake any reformation, challenged the Soviet Union by calling on the original principles of communist ideology, for them embodied in

Stalinism. Moreover, unlike other communist countries, Albania strongly supported China's claim for leadership within the international communist movement, and recognized and praised China's importance and emergence as a global player. On the other hand, China's support for Albania was an investment which did indeed have a return. In retrospect, it can be said that China used Albania for political support during the "turn left" period of its policy in the 1960s. No country supported China's revolutionary policy with greater conviction than Albania – not even Asian communist countries in China's historical area of interest and influence. In addition, Tirana tried and often played an important role regarding Beijing's integration into the international system by continuously bringing attention to China and trying to put Chinese issues on the agenda, be it in the United Nations Organization (UN) or other agencies. Albania contributed to China's integration into the international system, which China once wanted to disintegrate. On this point, here I try to show how Albania's diplomacy replaced China's lack of representation, by becoming Beijing's voice in international organizations. In this way, I argue that a surrogate diplomacy developed during the 1960s, by which term I mean the use of Albania's diplomatic network for China's exclusive interests in its international relations, and in pursuing China's agenda in general. China eventually became a global player, while Albania turned even more dogmatic and self-isolated. Although for a short time, the Albanian regime survived thanks to Chinese economic assistance, the economic projects that had been implemented, which largely consisted of poor technological equipment, deteriorated quickly and made Albanian industry obsolete. In a way it is possible to say that after the 1970s, China moved West, while Albania remained East.

Biberaj argues that both countries held the same views of Stalin, but documents reveal instead that Chinese and Albanian leaders had diverged on Stalin since the very beginning of the alliance and that later the Chinese Cultural Revolution brought these differences into the open. Another of Biberaj's arguments is that Albania's alliance with China diminished the former's maneuverability. However, Albanian leaders seem to have thought the opposite. The choice was either to, on the one hand, remain an appendage of the Soviet Union, subject to commands from Moscow, with national sovereignty limited at best, certainly menaced by the presence of Soviet soldiers in the naval base of Vlora, or on the other hand, seek an alliance with Beijing. The latter choice allowed Albania to pursue its way of communism more

easily than it had while cooperating with Moscow. Moreover, Tirana mattered much more on the international stage – or at least the leaders there thought so – and gained a prominent position for promoting the struggle against Soviet Union’s “revisionism” by collaborating with China and actively promoting Chinese interests instead of defending Soviet policies.¹³

One of my arguments is that Sino-Albanian relations were a Cold War asymmetric role-based alliance, wherein Albania served as China’s power projection platform in the international communist movement and as a spokesperson in international organizations where China was unrepresented. In this way, Albania, to a certain degree, mitigated China’s international isolation, in particular during the first phase of the Cultural Revolution. China, on the other side, served as an economic source for the Albanian regime and, comparatively to other small countries, raised Albania to a prominent position on the international stage. Albania served as a platform for China’s interests, and for the time these interests were common: the struggle against Soviet revisionism, against American imperialism, support for Tirana’s fierce struggle against Tito’s Yugoslavia, the assistance to communist parties that adhered to rigid ideological principles legitimizing both Chinese and Albanian policies. In this sense Sino-Albanian relations were a role based asymmetric alliance. Albania supported China politically in international forums. In return China supported Albanian efforts to develop its economy and provided huge amounts of armaments for Albania’s defense.

It may be disputed if Albania has to be considered a small power at all since no small nation necessarily projects power. However, according to the definition of small power given by Robert Rothstein, as ‘a state which recognizes that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states’, Albania should be considered a small power.¹⁴ Biberaj in his study endorses Rothstein’s definition but, perhaps unintentionally, ignores Robert Keohane’s refutation of that definition as

¹³ The term “revisionism” was first used to attack Tito’s Yugoslavia following the Soviet-Yugoslavian split in 1948. Following the Sino-Soviet split, and the Albanian-Soviet split, the term was used also by Chinese and Albanian leaders to attack the CPSU and the Soviet leaders.

¹⁴ Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), 29.

‘anachronistic’, restrictive and vague.¹⁵ Keohane has his own definition of a small power, ‘a state whose leaders consider it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the international system’. More interesting is his definition of middle power, ‘a state whose leaders considers that it cannot act alone effectively but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution’.¹⁶ If one refers to the public discourse of Albanian leaders during their friendship with China, often corroborated by archival documentation, it seems they did believe they could impact the system by supporting China’s claims in the international stage. Whether or not this makes Albania a middle power, this study will try to show how much it says of the particular and prominent position Albania acquired by cooperating with China.

In any case, specific definitions aside, I will prefer to call Albania, for the purposes of this study, simply what it is: a small country. For David Vital, small countries pay a big price for security from big partners ‘in terms of sacrifice of autonomy in the control of national resources and loss of freedom of political maneuver and choice’.¹⁷ I will try to show that Albania, by allying with China, tried precisely to avoid constraints that could reduce its autonomy. Indeed, from Tirana’s viewpoint, the alliance with China seemed, initially at least, to leave more room for political maneuvering on the international stage. This autonomy, although limited, nonetheless was comparatively higher than the autonomy Albania had maintained within the Soviet alliance. Though this poses another important question – what definition, or definitions, can we give to alliance? As Keohane has argued, ‘The imprecision of international relations terminology is nowhere more obvious or painful than in discussions of alliances’.¹⁸ Besides, certain definitions of alliance would not fully apply to the Sino-Albanian relations, not at least if we assume that an

¹⁵ Robert O. Keohane, “Lilliputians” Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics”, *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 291-310. For Keohane even big states in western Europe could possibly be under this category.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁷ David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 5. This work was aimed at the study of unaligned states.

¹⁸ Some of early definitions of “alliance” are given by these authors: Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*; Robert Endicott Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968); George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962); George Liska, *Alliances and the Third World*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968).

alliance would require ‘an arrangement between independent states that involves treaty agreements’.¹⁹ In this case a treaty of alliance never existed, only arrangements in the form of trade agreements, common declarations or joint communiqués. After all, China and Albania had a community of interests that ‘so obviously call for concerted policies and actions that an explicit formulation of these interests in the form of... a treaty of alliance appears to be redundant’, particularly where ‘an alliance adds precision, especially in the form of limitation of the concrete measures to serve’ these common interests.²⁰

Contrary to the rhetoric flaunted at the time, and contrary to the perception among scholars and observers of Sino-Albanian relations as a solid alliance, divergences between Tirana and Beijing were persistent even at the peak of their collaboration during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In the beginning of their partnership, both countries based their collaboration on shared communist ideology and principles. Both sides thought that adherence to common communist ideals would be sufficient to shadow possible differences in their cultures. In fact they were wrong, as both China and Albania would come to suffer from a mutual lack of knowledge of each other’s past cultural identity, and the respective impacts on national identity, which led to grave misunderstandings regardless of shared contemporary ideology. These faults showed when China proposed Albania an alliance with Yugoslavia, lacking sensitivity to the Albanian national question yet unresolved. Tirana, for its part, did not fully understand, nor easily accept, some aspects of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, in particular those surrounding Mao’s thought, the demolition of political power, and the *tabula rasa* China sought regarding its own cultural heritage.

On this point it is important to note that another important aspect that emerges through archival documents is the previously-unknown fact that once Chinese communist revolution turned towards Maoism (a manifestation of Mao’s thought) as a further step in the development of socialism, Albania did not receive it without resistance. Indeed, I will argue that Albania refused to consider any sort of Chinese way of communism that was not Stalinism, no matter the implications this could

¹⁹ Paul H. Nitze, “Coalition Policy and the Concept of World Order”, in Arnold Wolfers, ed., *Alliance Policy in the Cold War*, (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), 22.

²⁰ Hans J. Morgenthau, “Alliances in Theory and Practice”, in *ibid.* 185–186.

have had in its relations with China. This refusal led to an open confrontation which almost ended the alliance, but was eventually resolved in the most mutually-beneficial ways. Both sides managed to conceal their differences very well, in particular when China most needed Albanian support – during the first years of the Cultural Revolution.

Patterns of the Alliance

Many were the factors that impacted the Sino-Albanian alliance, the common communist ideology undoubtedly among them. Viewing this ideology as the common ground upon which the alliance could be built, we also see that to keep it standing required other factors as well. Most obviously, the geographical distance, at least from a Chinese perspective, made Albania a very unusual ally. Indeed, after 1949, China had attempted to build alliances mainly with communist countries (and with communist parties in non-communist countries) within its traditional area of influence: East and Southeast Asia. Historically China's relations with its neighbors in East Asia were hierarchic, where Beijing occupied the central position from which legitimacy drifted. Although Mao's China claimed equality in international relations, even more so with communist countries, Beijing's power could not help but shadow its smaller allies making any possible alliance an asymmetric one. In addition to considerations of its size, China's refusal to be an appendage of Moscow's power within the communist bloc, created *ipso facto* a hierarchic situation between China and any smaller communist country it cooperated with. Sino-Albanian relations, as mentioned, were certainly asymmetric, but they were also less hierarchic than those China could have imposed had the two shared a border, or had Albania been within China's reach.²¹ More importantly, at least for the Albanian leaders, they were less unequal than those Tirana had had with Moscow.

Not much time after the proclamation of the People's Republic, China established and announced in 1954 its own principles of foreign policy, the so-called Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Although initially aimed at the relations between China and Third World countries, not necessarily communists, as Sophie Richardson has shown, these principles came to be part of a universal guideline of

²¹ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*. The author's arguments in this book cannot easily, if not at all, be applied to the Sino-Albanian relations.

China's foreign policy.²² Nonetheless, although China applied these principles even to relations with countries ruled by communist parties, they did not constitute the framework of Sino-Albanian relations. China, as Zhou Enlai and other high officials often used to say, preferred to put these relations in the category of the 'special and particular relation, different from any other'.²³ My impression is that, unlike Chinese relations with many other countries, the principles that guided Sino-Albanian relations were dealt with on a moment-to-moment, issue-by-issue basis, depending on the particular subject of contention or agreement. The fact remains that Sino-Albanian relations were, in the first place, relations between two communist countries, and it is not possible to explain the interstate relations without the interparty relations, nor is it possible to separate the two levels since the communist parties in both countries led the state and its policies. This leads us to consider the importance of the ideology that both countries – though more so Albania – used to measure and question the alliance depending on the level of loyalty to the communist dogma. But Tirana and Beijing held different interpretations of the communist ideology at times. No matter the solidity of the alliance both sides espoused publicly, these interpretations caused continuous disputes regarding the very founding principles of Tirana-Beijing friendship.

Agreements or disagreements came about from both visible and invisible factors. Some concerned the very role Albanian leaders and their internal positions. Other national factors, on both sides, as economic and political domestic issues, were reflected in the two nations' behaviors towards the alliance. Still others existed regarding their respective views on communist ideology, Stalin's place in history, class struggle or which strategy to adopt against Soviet Union. The divergences can be comprised into three main sources of conflict, each containing its own variety of conflicts of interests: domestic policies and their impact on the alliance; international relations and politics; and ideological disputes. Each kind of conflict could be understood in terms of both countries' very different historical and cultural backgrounds, which permeated their national identity. Lastly, of course, is the geographical dynamic – the distance between Tirana and Beijing that was

²² Sophie Richardson, *China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

²³ "Notes from the conversation of comrade Rita Marko with comrade Kang Sheng, in Beijing, 11 September 1969", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D7, f.4.

determinant in shaping the alliance. Indeed, Tirana's distance from Beijing allowed great autonomy in dealing with its ally and in disputing eventual policies, but also affected Albania in its dealings with closer nations, some of which were perceived enemies, capable of threatening Tirana without fear of the great but distant ally. In all cases, what seems to be clear is Albania's stubbornness in most of these situations and China's flexibility towards its small ally.

Another important aspect is the role played by policy makers and the interplay between their economic and security decisions and the existing ideological factors. This could explain better when and to what extent the political leaders were moved exclusively for reasons of national interest or were idealists, acting according to their ideological beliefs. In addition, it is important to see how respective domestic policies impacted drastically the alliance because they impacted the respective domestic and foreign policies. This is clear, for instance, when the rise of Deng Xiaoping in mid-1970s changed China's approach to foreign aid, consequently changing one of the main reasons of Albania's support for China.²⁴ The same can be said of the Cultural Revolution, which had great impacts on the ideological dimension of the alliance. Domestic policies, in particular in Chinese domestic policies, at times were reflected in Chinese leaders' attempts to address Albanian economic problems, or military issues. This is reflected in many conversations Zhou Enlai, Li Xiannian and other Chinese leaders had with Albanian officials. This however, did not escalate into any interference in Albanian internal affairs, something Chinese officials had learned from Soviets to be counterproductive in the case of Hoxha's Albania, nor did the Chinese even have any interest to interfere. Again, Albania, geographically far from China, did not belong to the core area of Chinese national interests in East Asia.

Some years ago, in the bulletin of the Cold War International History Project, (CWIH) parallels were drawn between Cuba and Albania's roles during Cold War. In fact, for the authors, from Beijing's viewpoint: 'Much as Fidel Castro's revolution

²⁴ Ming Ruan et al., *Deng Xiaoping: Chronicle of an Empire*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994) This is an account of the period from 1976 onward, focused on Deng's policies to modernize China; Maurice J. Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978-1994*, 1st ed, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996); Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); Alexander Pantsov and Steven I. Levine, *Deng Xiaoping: A Revolutionary Life*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015);

had given the Soviet leaders a highly valuable strategic outpost in the US-dominated western hemisphere, Enver Hoxha's break with Moscow provided the People's Republic a political beachhead at a neuralgic spot on the southern edge of the WPO [Warsaw Pact Organization]. Much as Moscow supported the infant regime in Havana with generous military and economic aid, Chinese leaders stepped up aid in grain, industrial materials and knowhow to the Albanians after the fall-out with Khrushchev'.²⁵ Although tactically-speaking, this comparison makes sense, yet in strategic terms, Albania did not have the same importance for the Soviet Union that Cuba had for the United States. Nor did Beijing even believe that Albania could matter so much. On the other hand, as Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali have shown, in the case of Cuba ideological issues were less incisive in Castro's decision to embrace the Soviet system. Cuba's revolution initially was just a revolution, not a specifically communist revolution. Castro is even reported to have said that he was '... against communism', during his Operation Truth travel to the United States four months after the political takeover in Cuba.²⁶ Nixon noted that Fidel Castro's 'primary concern seemed to be to convince me that he was not a communist'.²⁷ Beyond these considerations, the fact remains that because of Cuba's strategic importance for the United States, two superpowers went to the verge of an atomic war. Albania's split from the Soviet Union, however, did not cause any real military escalation between China and the Soviet Union.

Differently from the Soviet-Cuban alliance, in Albania's case, ideological implications were paramount in building the alliance with China. Hoxha, eventually backed by Beijing, had initiated a crusade against Khrushchev over the reformistic path he had undertaken, which undermined Hoxha's rule. Cuba or not, Albania offered to China greater presence within the communist camp led by the Soviet Union and an opportunity to challenge Moscow from an eastern European spot – the Soviets' core area of interests, power and influence.

²⁵ Ana Lalaj, Christian F. Ostermann, and Ryan Gage (edited and introduced by), "Albania is not Cuba", in *CWIH*, Bulletin 16, (2007/2008): 183-340, 183.

²⁶ Aleksandr V. Fursenko and Timothy J. Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1997), 9. For the authors Raul Castro, Fidel Castro's brother, was Moscow's man in Havana. For an analysis of Fidel Castro's political background and his eventual lean to Soviet system see pages 5-34.

²⁷ Jussi M. Hanhimäki and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 389.

Structure and Sources

To understand the reasons for the alliance between China and Albania it is necessary to go back and explain shortly the reasons of the Albanian-Soviet split. So the first part of the thesis will be dedicated to explaining this rift and concurrent alliance with China. Since both these moments were contemporary, it is interesting to see the interaction in the Moscow-Tirana-Beijing triangle and what role Albania played, if any, in the Sino-Soviet split. In this part I also try to explain the main patterns of Albanian communism, which was Stalinism, as shown by Hoxha's refusal to embrace the reformistic path that Khrushchev promoted. As we will see, these patterns – Hoxha's menacing personal rule and the national security dilemma derived from Khrushchev's rapprochement with Yugoslavia – were the main factors instigating the Albanian split with the Soviet Union.

The second part will be dedicated to the peak of Albanian collaboration with China during 1962-1971. During this period, Albania strongly supported the Chinese revolutionary path and made great efforts to defend Chinese interests in international forums and organizations. Yet, it is also in this time that ideological differences emerged, but both countries found a way to solve them and continued to support each other. In the same period, at a time when China was going through great economic hardship, Chinese economic and military aid to Albania reached the unprecedented amounts. In fact, Albania occupied a central place among recipients of Chinese foreign aid, ranked third after North Korea and North Vietnam. The third part will review the beginning of the decline of the alliance and how both countries began to move in opposite directions. China started to open to the West and reform its economy in the mid-1970s, although this process would move speedily only after Mao's death in 1976. During this period, ideological considerations in the Sino-Albanian relations started becoming less important on China's side, while Albania showed signs of intolerance and impatience. This was reinforced by difficulties in the implementation of the economic projects China had committed to in heavy industry. The last chapter concerns the end of the alliance following the deaths of Mao and Zhou Enlai in 1976, and the emergence of a new class of pragmatic reformers in Chinese leadership who promoted drastic changes in Chinese foreign policy. These changes inevitably impacted the alliance with Albania, reflected in the lack of

commitment to assist in its new five-year economic plan. The Sino-Albanian split was less dramatic than the Albanian-Soviet split, and did not result in a complete interruption of relations. Indeed, diplomatic relations were not interrupted and limited economic and cultural exchanges continued.

The main sources for my research come from the Albanian central state archives. In particular the archives of the Party of Labor of Albania. Other valuable sources were those coming from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Culture and Education, and finally the Ministry of Defense. In addition a number of former officials and protagonists of that time – students, specialists and scholars have contributed with their valued interviews and comments. I am confident that these documents may say much of China's competition within the communist bloc. Most part of the primary sources I used for this research, consisting mainly on archival documentation, are here for the first time revealed. Being the first study based on primary sources, I am sure my work will not be exhaustive. Besides, a complete study of this alliance would require first of all access to Chinese documents. Unfortunately, in part because of Chinese limitations on archival research, and in part because of the limited time, the main sources for this research are Albanians. However, I have used some Chinese sources, recent publications, and interviews with Chinese specialists that worked in Albania – a courtesy of Radio Beijing which had conducted most of these interviews for one of their rubrics.

PART ONE

THE FOUNDING OF THE SINO-ALBANIAN ENTENTE

1954-1961

CHAPTER ONE

SHIFTING ALLIANCES

Introduction

Albania's security dilemma was the main factor that pushed Albania, and Hoxha, from Yugoslavian to Soviet arms. For the same reason Albania embraced China and ended Moscow's support when Soviet leaders undermined his power. The destalinization process, undertaken by Khrushchev in Soviet Union, undermined the despotic and personalist-style rule of Enver Hoxha. In fact, following the events in East Europe in 1956, Albania was the first European socialist country to oppose the destalinization process, consequently the first to support China in defying Moscow's leadership of the international communist movement.

The above points can be explained if firstly, and shortly, traced the national security vicissitudes of the Albanian state since its independence in 1912. In fact, at the end of the Second World War, Albania's quest for security was still pending due to the expansionist policies of Greece and Yugoslavia. The first entered in a civil war, which moved away the possibility for Greece to constitute a real threat for Albania. Yugoslavia instead, passed from the main supporter of Hoxha, to his main antagonist. Initially the Yugoslavians had thought that Hoxha could be maneuvered, and Albania would unite with Yugoslavia, as part of Tito's plan for a Balkan Federation. Tito, working on his plan, to which Albania initially agreed, convinced Hoxha to agree to joint economic development. In desperate need to rebuild the economy and provide some benefits of their rule to their people, the Albanian leaders accepted Yugoslavian assistance in the form of basic equipment and technologies to build small factories in light industry, and agreed to a united customs regime.

The state changed in 1947-48, however, with a series of rapid political developments, which would eventually go in Hoxha's favor. Tito, upon seeing the possibility of a Balkan Federation as unrealistic, and the economic integration with Albania in serious risk, thought to move towards a *fait accompli* by deploying the army in Albania. In late 1947 he had managed to impose within the Albanian Communist Party a purge of any elements against Yugoslavia. In early 1948 Belgrade pressed Tirana to allow the deployment of the Yugoslavian army in

Albania under the pretense of defending it from possible Greek attack. After the Second World War the political confrontation in Greece between leftist and rightist groups had escalated into a large-scale civil war.¹ Hoxha knew that politically conservative parties in Greece did not conceal their animosity towards Albania, but he sensed that the real danger now became Yugoslavia instead. This posed the first serious threat to the communist regime. The stake was not the survival of the communist regime as such, rather than Hoxha's personal rule and the Albanian independence. Fortunately for Hoxha, Tito was too ambitious, and Stalin too paranoid. The Soviet leader was unwilling to allow any challenge to the hierarchy of power within the communist camp, and saw a Balkan Federation under Tito's rule as a threat to his influence over Southeastern Europe. Tito had shown some autonomy in his standing towards Soviet Union, due to the fact that unlike the rest of eastern Europe, Yugoslavia was not liberated by the Red Army, and Tito had fought almost alone against the Nazi occupation. Consequently he felt less tied to the Kremlin and its many commands. Yugoslavian leaders soon discovered that Tito's plans crushed also with Hoxha's ambitions. Hoxha did not want in fact to become a vassal of Tito, but wanted to rule in his own, possibly undisputed by any force, externally or internally. Fortunately for him, Hoxha was assisted by historical circumstances which made possible his political survival, and made also possible for him to master the art of the international politics and take advantage from the confrontation between great countries and superpowers. From a marginal leader during the war, to the liberation of Albania, which he accredited himself as the partisan's leader, to the undiscussed and absolute leader of Albania, the jump was short for Hoxha. A jump that decided the fate of the country for almost half a century.

Albania and its Short Independence

After the 1912 proclamation of independence, following almost five centuries of Ottoman rule, Albania barely managed to survive. In 1913, the Conference of the Ambassadors in London – a forum of the great European powers – decided to recognize Albanian independence. They imposed a monarchic regime and offered the

¹ Philip Carabott and Thanasis D. Sfikas, eds., *The Greek Civil War: Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences*, (Aldershot, Hampshire, U.K. and Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2004); David Close, ed., *The Greek Civil War: Studies of Polarization*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1993).

crown to Prince William Wied (German aristocrat from Bavaria), who ruled for only six months until the outbreak of the First World War.² Albania's internationally recognized borders, however, included less than half of the Albanian inhabited territories, and half of Albanian population. After the end of the First World War, Albania proclaimed itself a republic, but the new state remained weak, with an extremely poor economy.³ Its security was threatened by its southern (Greece) and northern (Yugoslavia) neighbors, which never easily accepted Albanian independence.

In 1928 Ahmet Zogu, a long-ruling and controversial politician, reinstated the monarchy. In his new role as "King of Albanians", after decades of political instability and internal conflicts, he tried to consolidate the state, ending the internal disputes, and promoting western style laws and systems of state building.⁴ A process of economic restructuring and revitalization began thanks to limited foreign investments, which facilitated the emergence of the first true, albeit small, middle and working class. It was precisely within this class of people that the communist movement took place in the mid-1930s.⁵ During this period, a flow of Italian specialists, from across many fields entered the country. King Zog tried to balance the overwhelming Italian influence by attempting closer relations with Yugoslavia, but ultimately Italy prevailed, being able to offer much greater assistance than Yugoslavia could – particularly in terms of infrastructure: still today the national road network follows that planned and in part built by the Italians. It is thanks to Italian architects that Tirana, from a little more than a village, transformed into a modern Western-style city in the late thirties. This contributed to the Albanians'

² Duncan Heaton-Armstrong, Gervase Belfield, and Bejtullah D. Destani, ed., *The Six Month Kingdom: Albania 1914*, (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

³ Bernd Jürgen Fischer, *Albania at war, 1939-1945*, (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1999). According to Fischer, at the time of the Italian invasion, Albanian people had the lowest living standards in Europe. The country had a non-existent health care system, three fifth of the arable land was owned by 150 land owners, the education was very limited with 85% of illiterate population, and Albania did not have any university yet.

⁴ Bernd Jürgen Fischer, *King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Jason Tomes, *King Zog of Albania: Europe's Self-Made Muslim King*, (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

⁵ Kristo Frashëri, *Historia e lëvizjes së majtë në Shqipëri dhe e PKSH-së, 1878-1941* [The History of the left movement and of the communist party in Albania, 1878-1941], (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave, 2006).

perception of Italy as a friendly nation. April 7, 1939, the day Italian troops marched into Albania and ended its short independence, would prove them wrong.

The Italian occupation found the communist movement consistent of only a few small groups of young students and intellectuals, mainly in urban areas, who did little, and little could do, to become a complete and fully-functional political organization. Moreover, due to their limited number, they lacked capacities to create a strong field of work to convey their ideas to the peasantry, which at the time constituted the most part of the population. To this lack of organization had contributed also the monarchic regime and its persecution of the communists, pushing many into self-imposed exile. Some, such as Mehmet Shehu, who later became Hoxha's lieutenant and Albania's prime minister, went to fight for the republican cause in the Spanish Civil War.⁶ Despite these issues, the Italian occupation, and the Second World War, resulted in an historic chance for the communist groups to merge into an organized political party. During the war, both the British and Americans had sent military emissaries to assist local rebellion in their efforts against Fascist and Nazi occupation.⁷ They all reported that the communists, with their partisan units, were the most active in their struggle against the invaders. The war created the ideal conditions for the communists to expand both their illegal activities in the country, and the base of their supporters. In the meantime, the conflict gave them the opportunity to crush all of their rival groups, mainly the nationalists grouped under the National Front. However, not until late 1943 did the Communist Party emerge on the national stage as a main protagonist in Albanian politics – and fierce opponent of foreign occupation – as not until late 1943, after the fall of Mussolini, was the Italian occupation replaced by the much harsher German Nazi invasion.

⁶ Mehmet Shehu, prime minister of Albania for 27 years and second in command after Enver Hoxha in the regime's hierarchy, he died in disgrace in December 1981 committing suicide.

⁷ Peter Lucas, *The OSS in World War II Albania: Covert Operations and Collaboration with Communist Partisans*, (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007); Bernd Jürgen Fischer, *Albania at War, 1939-1945*; Reginald Hibbert, *Albania's National Liberation Struggle: The Bitter Victory*, (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991); Julian Amery, *Sons of the Eagle. A Study in Guerrilla War*, (London: Macmillan, 1948). Hibbert and Lucas, who both were sent to Albania during the war, offer insights highlighting how the partisans were effective to fight against the invaders, while the National Front collaborated at times with the Nazis against the partisans. Amery instead had great admiration for the deposed King of Albania, Ahmet Zogu, whom he called 'the most wise person ever met', but recognized that the biggest effort against Nazi occupation were made by communist partisans, not Zogu's followers.

The Founding of the Communist Party in Albania

The history regarding the founding and the emergence of the Communist Party is still subject to disputes in Albania, especially regarding Yugoslavian role therein. Regarding the founding of the Communist Party, ‘there is nothing to show that he [Communist Leader Enver Hoxha] was one of the organizers’;⁸ yet his emergence to its leadership was most likely due to Yugoslavian support. Some historians have argued that the Communist Party of Albania became powerful only after strong assistance from Tito, the Yugoslavian communist leader. Tito’s interest was in preventing the emergence of a communist leadership in Albania that would demand the handover of Kosova (Albanian inhabited territory left under Yugoslavian sovereignty) to Albania after the war. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that many prominent communist leaders – and proponents of a post-war united Albania, inclusive of the Albanian territories then under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, today Kosova and parts of Macedonia (FYROM) – died under unclear circumstances during the war. Others still were purged by Hoxha once he consolidated power towards the end of the war. In fact, the initial aim of the communist groups in Albania was to liberate the country and rectify historical mistakes imposed by the great powers in 1913. They wanted a united Albania, including Kosova. Hoxha instead, few historians argue, left the Kosova issue in silence, reinforcing the allegations that he had been a Yugoslavian investment within the Albanian communist movement.⁹ If this was the case however, Yugoslavia soon discovered that Hoxha was much more ambitious and less maneuverable than they had thought.

⁸ Blendi Fevziu, *Enver Hoxha: The Iron Fist of Albania*, ed. Robert Elsie, trans. Majlinda Nishku, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 43. According to the author, who brings first hand documents and testimonials of key protagonists, Yugoslavia played a crucial role for both the founding of the party and the rise of Enver Hoxha to the leadership (pages 37-46). Enver Hoxha was the leader (officially the “First Secretary”) of the Communist Party, later called Party of Labor of Albania. He ruled the country from 1944 until 11 April, 1985, day of his death; Thomas Schreiber, *Enver Hodja: le sultan rouge*, (Paris: J.C. Lattès, 1994). The author focuses more on Hoxha’s life during his long stay in France in the 1930s and also on his trips to Moscow and relations with other countries. He, however, did not have access to the primary sources Fevziu had instead.

⁹ Ana Lalaj, *Dosjet e Luftës* [War Files], (Tirana: Toena, 2014). She is one of the main historians that has broken some taboos regarding Albanian narrative of the anti-fascist resistance. During my talk with her, she confirmed her view that the coming of the communist regime was in part due to strong Yugoslavian support. In addition, she considers the last phases of the resistance to the Nazi occupation as a sort of civil war between communists and other factions, in particular nationalists of the National Front; Paskal Milo, *Shiptarët Në Luftën e Dytë Botërore. Vëll. I. 1939-1943* [The Albanians in the Second World War. Vol. I. 1939-1943], (Tirana: Toena, 2014). The author affirms that is difficult to

At the end of the war, because of the communist efforts against Fascist and Nazi occupation, Albania sat on the winners' side at the Paris Peace Conference after the Second World War. There, Albania met strong opposition, and even calls for exclusion from the conference, from the Greek government. Since the Italian attack on Greece in October 1940 had been launched through Greece's northern borders with Albania, the Greek government had proclaimed a state of war with both Italy and Albania. After the war, Greece attempted to put Albania in the same ranks with Italy, and tried unsuccessfully to undermine Albania's claim of being a victim of the war. Eventually, the Greek declaration of war was removed only towards Italy, and never towards Albania, paradoxically being officially in force still today.

During the negotiations among the three big powers about the post war arrangements in Europe, Albania was at margins of the talks and was left as an open issue until the end of the war.¹⁰ Stalin had agreed to give Churchill free reign in Greece and accept 50/50 control over Yugoslavia. They both agreed to an independent Albania, but left open the issue of the borders. Perhaps this was due to the divergences between the United States and Britain regarding post war Albania; where Churchill backed Greek territorial claims, the United States supported Albanian pre-war borders.¹¹ And so, Albania's post war future was ultimately left largely to chance. At the beginning of 1946 the Communist Party called a constituent assembly and proclaimed Albania a Popular Republic. Since 1945 Hoxha had maintained close relations with Yugoslavia. Because of his ideological bent, Hoxha was persuaded to rely on Yugoslavia for economic recovery and, most importantly, for defensive arrangements towards eventual Greek threats from the south. Hoxha knew that Britain would support the Greeks, but he lacked the experience, as historian Ethem Çeku puts it, 'to understand that the United States instead differed from the British stand towards Albania'.¹²

write the history of the first acts of the founding of the Communist Party of Albania, as the main protagonists either did not survive the war or did not survive the regime. However, he affirms that the truth most likely is different from the narrative offered by the regime according to which Enver Hoxha was the main protagonist of the war against Nazism and Fascism.

¹⁰ James L. Gormly, *From Potsdam to the Cold War: Big Three Diplomacy, 1945-1947*, (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 1990).

¹¹ Ethem Çeku, *Kosovo and Diplomacy since World War II: Yugoslavia, Albania and the Path to Kosovan Independence*, trans. John Nash, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 7-12.

¹² Çeku, *Kosovo and Diplomacy since World War II*, 24-29.

Stalin and the End of the Yugoslavian Influence in Albania

In July 1947, Enver Hoxha visited Moscow where he met for the first time with Stalin.¹³ Hoxha was very anxious to meet the *father of the nations*, and had great expectations regarding the course his country would take. In fact, that same summer the relations between Albania and Yugoslavia had encountered a series of difficulties and Hoxha looked to Moscow to help find a way out. In the Albanian leadership, great concern had been raised over the Yugoslavian attitude towards Albania; concerns primarily about the use of the economic resources and the lack of Yugoslavian commitment to implement the investments it had promised.¹⁴ Yet the greater cause of tension was the national sense of resentment. One of the main opponents of the ever-strong cooperation with Yugoslavia was Nako Spiro, in charge of the supervision of the economic affairs. He was the only outspoken Politburo member to state openly that Belgrade's intentions towards Tirana were not friendly.¹⁵ Keeping to economic affairs, he suggested that without necessarily breaking economic ties with Belgrade, the Soviet Union, instead, be the nation with which relations must increase. Tito's plans were to unite Albania with Yugoslavia as a first step towards a Balkan Federation that would possibly also include Bulgaria.¹⁶ In this

¹³ Enver Hoxha, *Me Stalinin* [With Stalin], (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1979). The meeting happened on 16 July, 1947, the second instead was on 23 March 1949. On Stalin see Sarah Davies and James R. Harris, eds., *Stalin: A New History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Miklós Kun, *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait*, (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2003); Zhores A. Medvedev, Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev, and Ellen Dahrendorf, *The Unknown Stalin*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007); Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography*, (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

¹⁴ "Records of the Politburo, 29 May 1947", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1947, D17, f.1-5.

¹⁵ Ibid., f.2. He lamented the unequal treatment Albania was subject to, mentioning the fact that Yugoslavia imported raw materials from Albania with cheap prices for then re-exporting these same goods - presumably with international prices.

¹⁶ Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, trans. Michael Petrovich, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962); T.V. Volokitina, G. P. Murashko, A.V. Noskov, T.A. Pokivaylova, *Moscow and Eastern Europe: The Formation of Soviet-type Political Regimes, 1949 – 1953. An Historical Outline*, [Russian original title: Т.В. Волокитина, Г.П. Мураш ко, А.Ф. Носкова, Т.А. Покивайлова, *Москва и Восточная Европа. Становление политически режимов советского типа 1949 – 1953. Очерки истории*, [Москва, РОССПЭН, 2002] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002); Çeku, *Kosovo and Diplomacy since World War II. Yugoslavia*, 15-35; Jeronim Perović, "The Tito-Stalin Split: A Reassessment in Light of New Evidence", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (2007): 42-57; Leonid Gibianskii, "The Soviet Bloc and the Initial Stage of the Cold War: Archival Documents on Stalin's Meetings with Communist Leaders of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, 1946-1948", *CWIHP, Bulletin* 10, (1998): 112-118; Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*, (London: Sinclair - Stevenson, 1996), 217-228.

context, in July 1946, Albania and Yugoslavia had signed the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance which was the first step towards their full integration.¹⁷

However, Yugoslavian-Albanian relations soon escalated into disagreements over economic cooperation, as the agreements signed were not fulfilled by Yugoslavia. In this way, discontent emerged within the Albanian communists, as the country, rather than recovering, was further impoverished.¹⁸ Within the Albanian leadership the pro-Yugoslavian man was Koçi Xoxe, an almost illiterate individual who had become minister of security for his blind execution of the orders of his boss Enver Hoxha.¹⁹ Even Spiro feared Xoxe, who had been merciless in the execution of the political opponents, or suspected opponents, after seizing political power. Xoxe strongly supported the discussed union of Albania with Yugoslavia. In May 1947, when Hoxha informed the Politburo of the Yugoslavian request to deploy military troops in Albania, to defend it from possible attack from Greece, where a bloody civil war was ongoing, Xoxe reinforced Belgrade's request with information that '...the monarch-fascist Greeks have accumulated troops at the border with us, and in order to encircle the [Greek] partisans, they will cross the Albanian border'.²⁰ Hoxha did not answer to the Yugoslavian requests, preferring to procrastinate on the issue until his visit to Moscow in July 1947. But when Yugoslavia's leadership was informed of Hoxha's trip to Moscow they promptly reacted by trying to prevent any rapprochement with the Soviet Union by instigating a clash within the leadership in Tirana, with the conviction that the pro-Belgrade faction would prevail. In fact, after some meetings with Nako Spiro, and one with Koçi Xoxe, the Yugoslavians managed to inflect the economic problems of Albania with a political color, and soon began to criticize Albanian leadership for its irresolute decisions, or lack of decisions altogether. Tito's man in Tirana, Savo Slatiç, referred to the 'emergence of another line' within the Albanian communist party, reinforced by Xoxe in the meeting of the Politburo when he stated that 'in practice a line of suspicion [towards Yugoslavia] is

¹⁷ Çeku, *Kosovo and Diplomacy since World War II*, 24–28.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁹ Fevziu, *Enver Hoxha: The Iron Fist of Albania*, 103–115 & 127–142.

²⁰ "Records of the Politburo, 29 May 1947", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1947, D17, f.1; For the Yugoslavian, and in part, Albanian support to the communist party in the Greek civil war see Nikos Marantzidis, "The Greek Civil War (1944-1949) and the International Communist System", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 15, no. 4 (2013): 25–54.

crystallized within our party' clearly alluding to Spiro and to factions within the leadership against Belgrade. During the discussion in the Politburo meeting of July 1947, Spiro reacted by criticizing the submissive behavior of Tirana and suggesting that Albania would soon be relegated as Yugoslavia's satellite. Apparently the Soviet diplomats in Tirana backed Spiro, who was seen going back and forth to the Soviet embassy. This emerges from the Politburo records where among others, he reported that even 'Soviet engineers said that Yugoslavians are wrong in their stand towards you [Albanians]'.²¹ Other prominent members of the Politburo supported Spiro, expressing their criticism for the interference of Yugoslavia. But Hoxha would not take any side yet, perhaps waiting to hear the voice of Moscow during his planned trip in mid-July 1947.

During Hoxha's trip to the Soviet Union, Moscow's stand was ambiguous. Economically the Soviets showed readiness to assist Albania, and granted an initial loan of six million dollars. In addition, they agreed to provide technical and academic education to dozens (later becoming thousands) of Albanian experts in industry and the military. They agreed also to send more Soviet specialists to Albania together with more equipment for the manufacturing and the building of light industry, related to the production of consumer goods.²² Stalin is even reported to have been so impressed by the Albanian request for the high number of Soviet experts to have wondered if 'the Albanians will work at all?'.²³ If this seemed to envisage a new perspective for Albania's economic development, on the other hand, Soviets made clear that although 'your relations with us [Soviets] are good, our assistance for you will pass through Yugoslavia, it is with them you will have to deal'.²⁴ Therefore for Hoxha it was clear that the way to Moscow would pass via Belgrade. From Albanian sources it is not clear if the Soviets informed Belgrade of the talks with Hoxha in Moscow, but they thought Stalin would not oppose their plan towards Albania.

²¹ Records of the Politburo, 01 July 1947, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1947, D20, f.2-15.

²² Records of the Politburo, 27 July 1947: "Report of Enver Hoxha about the talks he and the Albanian delegation had with the Soviet Union's leadership and government during their visit in Soviet Union, 14-24 July, 1947", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1947, D23, f.5-6.

²³ This is what Elidor Mëhilli, a historian of Cold War period who was speaking based on Soviet archives, reported during an interview on 10 March 2013 to the VOA [Voice of America]. In, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I179DyiYo2g>, last accessed 20/02/2017.

²⁴ Records of the Politburo, 27 July 1947: "Report of Enver Hoxha about the talks he and the Albanian delegation had with the Soviet Union's leadership and government during their visit in Soviet Union, 14-24 July, 1947", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1947, D23, f.7.

Almost one year later Stalin is even reported to have wished the ‘swallowing of Albania’ by Yugoslavia.²⁵ Back in Tirana, Tito pressed Hoxha to limit any possible reticence and remove obstacles to the further integration with Belgrade. On this point Hoxha and Xoxe met many times with Slatiç, Yugoslavian emissary in Tirana, in November 1947.²⁶

Afterwards, Hoxha called the meeting of the Politburo. The meeting, which went on for three days, 18-20 November 1947, resulted in a dramatic moment in the history of the Albanian Communist Party. Hoxha led the Politburo in a positive turn towards Yugoslavia and called on Spiro to speak on his motivations against Belgrade. Spiro had been establishing a favored channel of contacts with the Soviet diplomats in Tirana who were sympathetic to him, but the decision for Albania to strengthen relations with Yugoslavia was to be made at the highest level: in Moscow, not the Soviet embassy in Tirana. Spiro requested five days of preparations, perhaps looking for a signal from the Soviet embassy, but Hoxha gave him twenty-four hours. In the Politburo even those who had backed Spiro earlier, now supported the pro-Yugoslavian faction. Under great pressure and feeling abandoned, Spiro committed suicide on 20 November 1947.²⁷

Having removed the most serious opponent to the Yugoslavian plan for union with Albania, Tito’s representative in Tirana had a series of meetings with Enver Hoxha and Koçi Xoxe. Yugoslavia pressed Albania to move forward ‘towards the union in a federation’, because, as they claimed, Albania would not survive without external assistance.²⁸ To prevent a close up with the Soviet Union, Slatiç asked Albania to avoid ‘the implementation of Soviet projects in Albania that are not part of the common economic plans [with Yugoslavia]... Nako Spiro has taken advantages in the past of Soviet advices’.²⁹ By mid-December 1947, following the events in Tirana, Hoxha paid a visit to Belgrade on his way to Bulgaria. He spoke with Tito who mentioned the idea of a federative economy between Yugoslavia and

²⁵ Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, 143.

²⁶ “Records of the Politburo, 18-19 November 1947, regarding the grave accusations that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia against Albania. It is also discussed the issue of Nako Spiro and the accusations against him...”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1947, D33.

²⁷ “Records of the Politburo, 18-19 November 1947”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1947, D33.

²⁸ “Records of the Politburo, 07 December 1947”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1947, D40, f.11-16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, f.12.

Albania. Then would follow the political union, which would eventually include Bulgaria as well. Hoxha basically seemed to agree with Tito, but when he visited Bulgaria, to his surprise, in Sofia he did not find the same readiness to join in a Balkan Federation. On the contrary, Bulgarian leaders seem to have suggested to Hoxha that they wanted closer relations with Soviet Union instead.³⁰

Events took a turn when an alarming report was delivered to Hoxha by a general of the Yugoslavian army, whose name in the documents is deleted. He reported of an imminent Greek attack on Albania. To face the possible attack, Tito sent a message to Hoxha asking to deploy two military divisions in Southeast Albania, to which Hoxha initially agreed.³¹ Regarding this issue, some years ago Svetozar Rajak has stated that ‘Tito’s alleged unauthorized deployment of two Yugoslav divisions to Albania was nothing more than Belgrade’s willingness to consider Albania’s request for military assistance’.³² Unfortunately Rajak brings no evidence to prove this statement, whereas Albanian documents, (here above mentioned, but also others more) show that Albania never requested such assistance. On the contrary, it was precisely because of Belgrade’s request to deploy two military divisions in Albania that Hoxha was suspicious of the alarmistic information given by the Yugoslavians, and decided to inform also the Soviet diplomats in Tirana. To his surprise, the Soviets replied that they had no information of such Greek plans, nor had they been informed by Yugoslavia of this move. Hoxha decided to put the Yugoslavs on hold and intensified his contact with the Soviets.³³ In February 1948, Stalin met with Yugoslavian leaders (not Tito) and attacked Belgrade’s foreign policy bringing as an example their actions towards Albania. So followed months of reciprocal accusations between Belgrade and Moscow, which at the end of June 1948 resulted in the expulsion of Yugoslavia from Cominform.³⁴ Tito’s split with Moscow made Hoxha’s

³⁰ “Records of the Politburo, 23 December 1947”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1948, D52, f.1-3.

³¹ “Records of the Politburo, 03 March 1948”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1948, D64, f.7-9.

³² Svetozar Rajak, “The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945-1956”, in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 212.

³³ “Records of the Politburo”, during April and May 1948, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1948, D82, D87, D89.

³⁴ Ernst Halperin, *The Triumphant Heretic: Tito’s Struggle against Stalin*, (London: Heinemann, 1958); Laković and Tasić, “The Tito-Stalin Split and Yugoslavia’s Military Opening toward the West, 1950-1954”; Adam Bruno Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1971); Svetozar Rajak, “The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945-1956”, in Leffler and Westad, *The*

decisions easier and finally in July 1948 Albania interrupted the relations with Yugoslavia.³⁵

According to Ivo Banac, the main reason behind Moscow's split with Belgrade 'was Stalin's fear that Yugoslavia was beginning to see itself as a regional communist center, with all the possibilities for mischief in relations with the West that such a role implied'.³⁶ This view is reinforced by Soviet archives which '...indicate that the main reason for the conflict was Stalin's dismay when Tito continued to pursue an expansionist foreign policy agenda towards Yugoslavia's neighbors, especially Albania...'.³⁷ Regardless the real motivations, Tito and Stalin's falling out provided an opportunity for Stalin to establish a stronger position in the Balkans by making Albania the only Soviet bridgehead in the Adriatic coast. This was a departure, in Stalin's favor, from his informal agreement with Churchill to concede partial control of the western Balkans. Stalin saw the Yugoslavian-Albanian split as an opportunity to thwart Tito's ambitions and plan for a Balkan Federation, and stood on Tirana's side to prevent the possible annexation of Albania by Yugoslavia. This made Stalin an idol and point of reference for Hoxha for the next forty years; and it made Stalinism the non-negotiable model of communism for Albania. Another way to see the Soviet-Yugoslavian split is that Stalin might have used Hoxha and Albania to outmaneuver Tito once he lost control of Yugoslavia, provided that he ever had it fully. This hypothesis, however, remains to be proved. The fact remains that Albania became the Soviet Union's bridgehead in the Southeastern European flank. In turn Soviets provided Albania with political, military, and economic support.

Once out of the Yugoslavian yoke, Albania became the strongest ideological opponent of Tito and a fierce bridgehead of Stalinism in the Balkans. Following the Tirana-Belgrade split, Hoxha purged Koçi Xoxe – who was shot later – and

Cambridge History of the Cold War, 210–11; The Soviet secret service prepared also a plan to assassinate Tito, in Hanhimäki and Westad, *The Cold War*, 451–452.

³⁵ "Records of the Politburo", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1948, D104.

³⁶ Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist splits in Yugoslav Communism*. The author provides extensive information regarding Tito's aid to the Greek communists and also of Tito's plans for a Belgrade-ruled Balkan Federation. He also shows how not just Soviet Union but also some Bulgarian prominent leaders had opposed this plan.

³⁷ Jeronim Perović, "The Tito-Stalin Split: A Reassessment in Light of New Evidence", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (2007): 34.

rehabilitated *ex post* Nako Spiro. A huge campaign was launched in the country to denounce the “revisionist” policies of Yugoslavia. Unlike in any other European communist country, in Albania, Stalin was cherished and celebrated as much as in the Soviet Union, if not more. Enver Hoxha, more than any other leader, was personally dedicated to promoting of Stalin’s cult. For him, love for the Soviet Union became a guiding principle of the Albanian people; Stalin represented a great leader, ‘the genius³⁸ ... a milestone in the entire people’s [Albanians’] life and future’.³⁹ Hoxha co-opted Stalin’s policy towards Yugoslavia purely to legitimize his own policies, because he probably knew well that Stalin may not have even truly cared about Albania, let alone been the one to save it. Nonetheless, this furthered the split between Stalin and Tito, and furthered Stalin’s ambition to maintain Soviet influence in the Balkans.⁴⁰

CONTACTS WITH CHINA AND A NEW LEADER IN MOSCOW

The further re-alignment towards Moscow forced Hoxha to pay more attention to international affairs. There is no evidence of any contact between Chinese communist officials and Albanian authorities prior to October 1949. Even after this date, Tirana’s contacts with Beijing were only through Moscow. Immediately after the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), a note dating October 1st 1949 from Zhou Enlai was sent through Moscow to all European communist countries inviting them to recognize the PRC. But, with the explanation that Moscow received it late from Beijing, it was delivered to Albania only in January 1950.⁴¹ Albania recognized the PRC before receiving the letter, though it was the last of the eastern European countries to do so, in November 1949.⁴² It is not clear why this happened; there may be no specific reason beyond the fact that, in that period, not

³⁸ Tirana, 30 October 1952: “Report of Enver Hoxha on his participation at the works of the 19th Congress of the CPSU”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1952, D25, f.2.

³⁹ “Report of Enver Hoxha at the Second Plenum of the PLA First Congress, 28-30 April 1949”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, D1, f.5.

⁴⁰ Charles G. Stefan, “The Emergence of the Soviet-Yugoslav Break. A personal View from the Belgrade Embassy”, *Diplomatic History*, 6, (1982): 387-404; Halperin, *The Triumphant Heretic. Tito’s Struggle Against Stalin*.

⁴¹ “Report of the Albanian Legation in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana, 6 January 1950”, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1949, D51, f.1-4.

⁴² Records of the Politburo, 15 November 1949, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1949, D63.

many issues regarding Asia were high on Albania's agenda. Tirana did not have diplomatic missions in any Asian countries, and clearly China was not a priority yet. So, in a few words, this delay perhaps was simply due to neglect, which nonetheless raised many discussions in the diplomatic circles in Moscow.⁴³ The fact that not until 1954 did the two countries establish diplomatic missions in their respective capitals shows how far away China, and Asia in general, remained from the attention of Tirana.

In April 1951 Enver Hoxha visited Moscow again. By this year, a number of loan agreements, (barter agreements), were signed between the Soviet Union and a number of East European countries in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), which Albania had joined in February 1949. These agreements, which would fund the first Albanian five-year plan (FYP) from 1951-55, totaled 254 million rubles. The lion's share was the Soviet Union's grant of 83 million rubles, followed by Poland's 46 million, Czechoslovakia's 55 million, the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) 50 million, and Romania's 20 million.⁴⁴ The most important conditions of these agreements were the obligations they imposed on Albania. Some countries, East Germany and Czechoslovakia specifically, put clauses in the agreements which had penalties in case Albania did not meet quotas of exports of raw materials as part of the barter agreements. Another aspect was their focus on the investments in consumer goods and light industry in general and the refusal to invest in the Albanian plans of developing heavy industry.⁴⁵ In addition to these investments, Albania needed specialists, which began to arrive en masse. Interestingly, the Soviet Union and the other East European countries asked Albania to 'treat them [the specialists] with other criteria [than the locals]: the best wages for them and their families, and the best living standards'.⁴⁶ All this shows that despite

⁴³ "Legation of the People's Republic of Albania in Moscow, 19 October 1949", in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1949, D51, f.8. See also AMPJ, Kina, V.1949, D51, f.9-18: on 19 November 1949 Enver Hoxha sent the note of recognition to Zhou Enlai through the Chinese representatives in Moscow, and Zhou Enlai replied through the same channel on 23 November 1949.

⁴⁴ Records of the Politburo, 21 May 1951: "Discussion on the results of the agreements with Soviet Union and the other People's democracies regarding our five-year plan, 1951-55", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1951, D28, f.17-24.

⁴⁵ "Report on the reached agreements for the FYP 1951-55", in *ibid.*, f.31-49.

⁴⁶ "Discussion on the results of the agreements with Soviet Union and the other People's democracies regarding our five-year plan, 1951-55", in *ibid.*, f.24.

the public narrative of brotherhood, none of the eastern European countries, nor Soviet Union, were sensitive to Albania's situation.

Enver Hoxha, in order to build a base from which to legitimize his policies created a myth around Stalin, portraying him as the savior of Albanian independence. He knew that Stalin did not know anything of Albania before 1948. In fact, it had not been a Soviet mirage but a historical coincidence that Albania became an ally of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, he could all but have expected the turn Khrushchev gave to Stalinism in the Soviet Union and East Europe.⁴⁷ The destalinization process and Albania's close up with China are two inseparable processes precisely because the latter hardly would have occurred without the first. It is with the destalinization and the Hungarian upheaval that followed that the Chinese and Albanian vicissitudes came to overlap enough to make possible the collaboration which eventually resulted in an alliance.

When Stalin died in March 1953, Hoxha called for national mourning such that Albania would not see again until Hoxha's own funeral more than three decades later. On 9 March 1953, the day Moscow was holding Stalin's funeral, in Tirana, Hoxha together with thousands of citizens in a public ceremony bowed in front of Stalin's statue and made the oath to follow Stalin's line.⁴⁸ This would perhaps be the promise he most faithfully kept until the day of his death.⁴⁹ Soon after, in June 1953, Enver Hoxha, together with a lengthy entourage, paid a visit to Moscow, but did not meet with Nikita Khrushchev who had not yet risen to leadership.⁵⁰ Hoxha's visit was preceded by a report courtesy of the economic adviser of the Albanian embassy in Moscow, who wrote of the difficulties they had encountered regarding the trade

⁴⁷ Donald A. Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era: De-Stalinization and the Limits of Reform in the USSR, 1953-1964*, Studies in European History, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); Melanie Ilić and Jeremy Smith, eds., *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011); Martin McCauley, *The Khrushchev Era: 1954-1964*, Seminar Studies in History, (London: Longman House, 1995).

⁴⁸ "Documents regarding the activities organized in Tirana on occasion of the death of Joseph Stalin, 5-9 March 1953", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1953, D1/5.

⁴⁹ Arshi Pipa, *Albanian Stalinism: Ideo-Political Aspects*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

⁵⁰ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, (New York: Norton, 2003); William J. Tompson, *Khrushchev: A Political Life*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1995); Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982); Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era*.

agreement for that year.⁵¹ Despite the fact that Hoxha's main interlocutors in Moscow were still the old guard of the Kremlin, Beria, and Molotov, there was a new attitude in Moscow. Both of them strongly criticized Albania's economic course: they mainly opposed Albanian state apparatus inflation, neglect of agriculture in favor of heavy industrialization, and the situation of the peasantry. This criticism was understandable in the context of the East German turmoil that year, with the workers' strikes demanding better living standards.⁵² But a similar critique had been applied to Hoxha, by Stalin himself, in 1951 when he had sought to 'devote serious attention to the industry, but insufficient attention to agriculture. Soviet institutions in charge of agricultural issues almost never receive any request from Albania regarding agriculture'.⁵³ In addition, for Moscow, economically it did not make sense to invest disproportionately in a country of around one and a half million people, when Soviet attention was focused on assisting countries strategically more important for Moscow. Furthermore, they told Hoxha that one third of the army was composed of enemies, which was a sign that the party 'was not in the right course'.⁵⁴ Basically Soviet leaders were asking Hoxha to purge the army of the old [Stalinist] elements. Most importantly, to Hoxha's surprise Molotov suggested 'a revision of your relations with [neighbors] ... and Yugoslavia', because Soviet Union would improve them too.⁵⁵ If Stalin had come to Hoxha's aid in his dispute with Tito, now Molotov asked Hoxha to make a complete reversal of his foreign policy. Hoxha did not oppose in principle, but he was surprised and did not take any concrete steps to

⁵¹ "Report, 16 April 1953, of the work of the Albanian trade delegation for the conclusion of the agreements [with Soviet Union] for the year 1953", in AQSH, Ministry of Foreign Trade, F. 503, V. 1953, D21, f.38-41.

⁵² Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Germany: June 17, 1953*, (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1972); Christian F. Ostermann, Malcolm Byrne eds., *Uprising in East Germany 1953: The Cold War, the German Question, and the First Major Upheaval behind the Iron Curtain*, (Budapest and New York, N.Y.: Central European University Press, 2001); Jonathan Sperber, "17 June 1953: Revisiting a German Revolution", *German History*, Vol. 22, no. 4 (2004): 619-643.

⁵³ Moscow, 2 April 1951: Records of I.V. Stalin's Conversation with E. Hoxha about Certain Foreign and Domestic Problems of Albania, in <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134391>, (last accessed 20 February 2017).

⁵⁴ "Report of Enver Hoxha to the Politburo, 20 and 22 June 1953, about his visit to Moscow during the first half of June 1953" in AQSH, F.14, OU, V.1953, D23, f.1-12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f.2; This course towards Yugoslavia would be confirmed also by Khrushchev in his speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. See, Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 20th Party Congress, February 14, 1956*, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 30-47.

enforce Soviet directives. He could not easily accept a rapprochement with Tito, so he awaited new leadership in Moscow with the hope it would bring better times. A hope that soon fell in vain.

In fact, ‘Khrushchev wanted Yugoslavia to integrate itself back into the alliance which the Soviet Union had built with other eastern European countries’.⁵⁶ At the end of May 1955, Khrushchev visited Belgrade and blamed the past mistakes of the Soviet Union, thus excusing Tito, for the Soviet-Yugoslav split. Albanian leaders, in a meeting with Peng Zhen in Tirana a few years later, claimed to have sent a letter to Khrushchev just before his departure for Belgrade, requesting that before his trip to meet Tito, ‘it should first be discussed Yugoslavian position with all the parties’ including, of course, Albania.⁵⁷ If this letter really was sent then in hindsight it is possible to say it was ignored. This did not have immediate repercussions in Soviet-Albanian relations, as Albania did join the Warsaw Pact Organization (WPO) that same year, but the new Soviet course in eastern Europe and the Balkans was clear. Curiously, the WPO was founded just days after the Soviet disarmament proposal – the proposal was issued on 10 May 1955, and four days later the WPO was founded.⁵⁸

China’s Approach to Albania

In September 1954, China invited an Albanian delegation to Beijing to participate in the celebrations of the fifth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. The small delegation headed by the Albanian minister of foreign affairs, Behar Shtylla, who later served as Ambassador in Beijing, did not have great expectations since the visit was intended to be merely for formalities. Instead, unexpectedly, they were impressed by the ‘particular regards’ China showed for them. After the celebrations, just when Shtylla was about to leave, Zhou Enlai called him for a short informal conversation and asked him about the economic situation. Chinese leaders ‘had already discussed about Albania earlier’, and probably they knew the shortages of consumer goods for the population. China most likely was informed, although not by

⁵⁶ Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era*, 23.

⁵⁷ “Record of the meeting between the PLA delegation and the Chinese parliamentary delegation led by comrade Peng Zhen, in Tirana, 16 January 1957”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1957, D1, f.21.

⁵⁸ Laurien Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955-69*, (New York & London: Routledge, 2015), 21.

Albania, about the attrition between Tirana and Moscow. Zhou Enlai, to the surprise of the Albanian minister, asked him ‘what are your main urgent [economic] requests to make’ as China felt obligated, Zhou said, to help a communist country.⁵⁹ Although the Chinese move was a way to engage more with Albania, at this stage this step did not harm Albania’s relations with Soviet Union. China too was enjoying a ‘honeymoon’ with Moscow, which would endure until 1956-57.⁶⁰ Albania was not yet thinking of China as a replacement for the Soviet Union, but perhaps a complementary source of aid for projects the Soviets did not support. China itself was benefitting from substantial Soviet economic assistance. While the Albanian delegation was in Beijing, Khrushchev expanded Soviet assistance to China further than even Stalin had done.⁶¹ After all, China’s readiness to meet Albania’s still modest requests was within the global readiness China was beginning to show towards many other countries.⁶²

But in light of the mutating situation with the Soviet Union, Shtylla immediately took the chance and asked Zhou Enlai, to whom he did not explain the difficult talks Hoxha had had with Beria and Molotov in Moscow, if they could possibly provide assistance for the coming second FYP of 1955-60. Zhou Enlai confirmed without any hesitation China’s readiness ‘to help... for the FYP as well’.⁶³ By mid-November 1954, the Politburo in Tirana made a request for a loan of 50 million rubles.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ “Report of the minister of foreign affairs, Behar Shtylla, at the Politburo in Tirana, 03 November 1954, about his visit to China on occasion of the fifth anniversary of the founding of the PRC”, in, AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1954, D39, f.11-14. The minister reported that “the entire leadership, except Mao, came to meet us at the train station, something they had not done for other eastern European delegations”.

⁶⁰ Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959: A New History*, The Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 101–131. The authors call the two years from 1954 to early 1956 the ‘honeymoon’ of the alliance because were the most cooperative among the two countries.

⁶¹ Shu Guang Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949-1991*, (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014), 59–71; Shu Guang Zhang, “Sino-Soviet Economic Cooperation”, in Odd Arne Westad, *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963*, (Stanford University Press, 1998), 189–226; Sergei Goncharenko, “Sino-Soviet Military Cooperation”, in *ibid.*, 141–164.

⁶² John Franklin Copper, *China's Foreign Aid: An Instrument of Peking's Foreign Policy*, (Lexington, Mass: Heath, 1976), 19–40; Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1963*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001), 153–156; Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 97–121.

⁶³ AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1954, D39, f.14.

⁶⁴ “Reports, decisions and records of the Politburo, 13 November 1954: On the request of a loan from the PRC”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1954, D40, f.69 & f.99; “Politburo, Tirana, 13 November 1954:

Following the visit of Behar Shtylla, the first agreement between China and Albania regarding the trade between the two countries was signed.⁶⁵ The first aid China provided, however, was a collection of basic goods that came as a donation, not part of the loan.⁶⁶ It was the first in a long list of donations China would offer during the two decades to follow. Chinese signals were reinforced again in 1955 when Deng Xiaoping reported to Hoxha that he had criticized the Yugoslavian ideological course during the conversation with two members of the Yugoslavian leadership.⁶⁷ This step was in a direction opposite that which the Soviet Union was taking. Furthermore, in July 1956 China granted an additional loan of 30 million rubles to Albania, for an 80 million rubles sum of Chinese aid for the second Albanian FYP.⁶⁸

1956 AND ITS AFTERMATH: LEANING ON CHINA'S SIDE

In early 1956 Enver Hoxha visited Moscow again, this time to participate in the works of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1956 – a turning point in the history of the communist camp.⁶⁹ To his dismay, there he heard the famous speech delivered in secret, in which Khrushchev revealed Stalin to have been a criminal who had caused tremendous suffering to his

About the request of a loan to the People's Republic of China", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1954, D40, f.69-70. All the exchange and loans were calculated in Soviet Union rubles; the loan was approved and the agreement signed on 03 December 1954. See "About the relations of our country [Albania] with China", in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1960, D110, f.3.

⁶⁵ "Agreement on the exchange of goods and payments between the People's Republic of Albania and People's Republic of China for the year 1955", in AQSH, Ministry of Trade, F.503-504, V. 1955, D270, f.1-3.

⁶⁶ "List of the Ministry of Trade for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the goods Chinese Government donated to us", in AQSH, Ministry of Trade, F.503-504, V. 1955, D76, f.1-2.

⁶⁷ "Memorandum of conversation between Deng Xiaoping and the members of the CC of the Yugoslav Communist League, Begovic and Stamenkovic, 26-27 May 1955", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1955, D1.

⁶⁸ "Correspondence between the PLA CC and the CCP CC, and the Chinese ambassador in Tirana Xu Yixin, July 1956", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1956, D1. For the second FYP 1956-60 China granted a total of 80 million rubles. With the official rates of the 1950s (0.25USD=4 rubles, was around 20 million USD; All the loans Albania had from the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist camp carried an interest rate of 2 percent, but China instead, granted Albania an interest rate of only 0,5 percent. See "Notes from the talks in Tirana with the Chinese parliamentary delegation, headed by Peng Zhen, 16 January 1957", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1957, D1, f.33. Later China granted some loans without any interest.

⁶⁹ Vittorio Vidali, trans. Nell Amter Cattonar and A.M. Elliott, *Diary of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, (New York & London: Lawrence Hill & Co, 1984).

people over the long years of his regime.⁷⁰ Curiously it was Beria – a known contributor of Stalin’s purges – who led the first investigations into Stalin’s actions and whose conclusions were eventually reflected in Khrushchev’s speech.⁷¹ It is not clear if Hoxha adopted what he had read and heard of Stalin’s rule as a guideline for his rule in Albania, or was shocked as many in attendance were.⁷² Yet he did not comment on the report, he merely informed the communist establishment in Albania of its content while prohibiting any press releases or discussion with the people.⁷³ During the congress Khrushchev outlined Moscow’s new line on international relations which was comprised of three notions: peaceful coexistence, peaceful transition, and peaceful competition.⁷⁴ On the relations within the socialist camp, Khrushchev stated that ‘the rift with Yugoslavia had been an unnecessary and shameful mistake’.⁷⁵ Hoxha also heard Khrushchev advocating multiple (national) ways of transitioning to socialism, an authorization to undertake reformistic paths which Hoxha, preferring Stalin’s manners instead, would avoid.⁷⁶ To the further denunciation of Stalin, in April, Khrushchev disbanded the Cominform, less than ten years after Stalin had founded it.

Not long after Hoxha’s return from Moscow, in Tirana in April 1956, came the local party conference. Inspired by the events in the Soviet Union, and the speech of Khrushchev in particular, the conference turned into open criticism of Hoxha’s

⁷⁰ The report-speech was titled “On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences”, see Bertram David Wolfe, *Khrushchev and Stalin’s Ghost: Text, Background, and Meaning of Khrushchev’s Secret Report to the Twentieth Congress on the Night of February 24-25, 1956*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1983); For Stalin’s cruel regime instead among many works see: J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Zhores A. Medvedev, Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev, and Ellen Dahrendorf, *The Unknown Stalin*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); Robert W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin’s Russia, 1934-1941*, (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1996); Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁷¹ Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 137–140.

⁷² Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, 87–88.

⁷³ “Records of the PLA CC 17th Plenum, 02 March 1956. Report of comrade Enver Hoxha about his participation in Moscow at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, 14-25 February 1956”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D24, f.15-29.

⁷⁴ Khrushchev, *Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 20th Party Congress, February 14, 1956*.

⁷⁵ Johanna Granville, “Reactions to the Events of 1956: New Findings from the Budapest and Warsaw Archives”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (2003): 261-290, 272.

⁷⁶ Pipa, *Albanian Stalinism*; James S. O'Donnell, *A Coming of Age: Albania under Enver Hoxha*, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999).

totalitarianism, with many participants asking Hoxha to cease his repressive measures and reduce the gap in the living standards between the leadership and the people.⁷⁷ Hoxha, for the last time in his long rule, allowed the emergence of critical voices; later, he purged all those that had so criticized him. Frightened by the prospective of losing control, Hoxha had some executed and others detained for many years. Personally, he still avoided giving any assessment of Stalin or of Khrushchev's speech. However, he did not conceal his suspicion that behind the transgressions at Tirana's party conference was Yugoslavia. Hoxha was among the first eastern European leaders to face an internal challenge to the Stalinist-style rule after Khrushchev's speech, but also the first and the last to react by strongly reaffirming it.⁷⁸

At first, Chinese leaders did not entirely dispute Khrushchev's evaluation of Stalin and his cult.⁷⁹ What they eventually disputed was the way Khrushchev delivered it.⁸⁰ Even years later, Soviets held that the Twentieth CPSU Congress 'was of exceptionally great importance for the further improvement of Soviet-Chinese relations. It created an atmosphere of... amicable exchanges of candid views'.⁸¹ Perhaps too candid, as on 5 April 1956, *Renmin Ribao* published the article 'More on the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat', which was personally supervised by Mao and marked a veiled departure from the Soviet Union regarding Stalin's position. As Roderick MacFarquhar has argued, the article defended Mao, without explicitly mentioning him, on the one hand, with the argument that he had not pursued his cult, and on the other hand reappraised Stalin 'by assigning him credit for achievements which entitled him still to be described as "an outstanding Marxist-Leninist fighter" [although] acknowledging that he had committed a number of major errors'.⁸² For MacFarquhar communists may have looked at the article as a 'first attempt at establishing Peking as a fount of doctrinal guidance on at least an

⁷⁷ Mëhilli, "Defying De-Stalinization."

⁷⁸ Pipa, *Albanian Stalinism*.

⁷⁹ Li, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet Split*, 21–34.

⁸⁰ Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 149–150.

⁸¹ Comment of the head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Far Eastern Department, Mikhail Zimyanin, on Sino-Soviet relations, 15 September 1959, in Westad, *Brothers in Arms*, 356–360.

⁸² Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1: Contradictions Among the People 1956-1957*, (London: Columbia University Press, 1974), 43-44.

equal footing with Moscow'.⁸³ A similar point is also affirmed recently in the work of Shen Zihua and Yafeng Xia. Although they see the Chinese reaction to the issues that emerged during the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU as contradictory, to them it is clear that, for Mao at least, the doctrine of peaceful transition to communism was hard to digest.⁸⁴ In fact they have argued how 'the CCP felt that violent revolution to gain political power was a proud example of CCP's emulation of the Russian October Revolution and CCP's contribution to the world revolutionary process'.⁸⁵ Regarding the peaceful coexistence however, Chinese foreign policy was already acting based on its own 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence', which had been announced in 1954.⁸⁶ Later on, as Chen Jian has argued, 'With the radicalization of China's political and social life in 1957-58... he [Mao] had no intention in opposing personality cult in general and his own in particular'.⁸⁷ For Benjamin Schwartz, 'the entire previous history of Marxism-Leninism, from Lenin to Mao, had somehow demanded the creation of space for the notion of transcendent leader, and for the cult of personality'.⁸⁸ In Mao's eyes was also correct Stalin's model of development based on heavy industrialization, and for the former, the mistakes of the latter were limited to methods rather than the model.⁸⁹ Thus China came to reconsider destalinization in the light of a new assessment of Stalin which concluded that Stalin's merits overshadowed his mistakes.⁹⁰

Hoxha visited Moscow again in May-June 1956. By now, Khrushchev knew Hoxha's sensitivity towards Yugoslavia and to show fairness between Tirana and Belgrade he accepted Hoxha's invitation to visit Albania three years later. More importantly, he summoned Hoxha to inform him of the talks he had had with Tito in Moscow. Khrushchev's standing apparently was contradictory. On one hand, he

⁸³ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁴ Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 145-152.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 141.

⁸⁶ Richardson, *China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*.

⁸⁷ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 67.

⁸⁸ Benjamin Isadore Schwartz, *China and Other Matters*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996), 13.

⁸⁹ Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 151-152.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 147 & 149. Mao used the formula of 30 percent wrong and 70 percent correct to describe Stalin's rule.

claimed to have blamed Tito for not being cooperative with Albania. Khrushchev had reminded Tito that ‘...you have turned the Yugoslav Legation in Tirana into an espionage center against Albania... your agents organized the Conference of Tirana to overthrow the leadership’.⁹¹ On the other hand, Khrushchev was critical of Hoxha too. He asked Hoxha ‘to put an end to the past [with Yugoslavia]’ and seek reconciliation.⁹² Hoxha agreed out of necessity rather than conviction, but did not take concrete actions towards that end. This was the second time the Soviet leaders urged Hoxha to improve relations with Yugoslavia.

In September 1956, when China invited a delegation from Albania to attend the CCP Eighth Congress, Hoxha decided to pay his first (and last) visit to China. This was clearly intended to show that Albania prioritized increasing collaboration with Beijing. The visit came after China had not shown particular enthusiasm about Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin; this was not lost on Albanian leaders, who were well informed of, and themselves read, articles in the Chinese press. On the way to Beijing Hoxha and his entourage also visited North Korea. Hoxha and Kim Il Sung had in common a Stalinist ruling system and rejection of destalinization.⁹³ But contrary to Hoxha, Kim eventually managed to find balance between Beijing and Moscow.⁹⁴ Hoxha was impressed by the Soviet Union’s generosity towards Pyongyang when he was told the amounts of economic aid the latter had received from all eastern European countries.⁹⁵ This contrasted with the hesitations of the Soviet Union and East Europeans to back Hoxha’s plans of industrialization, which

⁹¹ “Records of the Politburo, 28 June 1956, where Enver Hoxha and Spiro Koleka reported of the meeting of the COMECON in Moscow”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D45, f.13.

⁹² *Ibid.*, f.21.

⁹³ Andrei N. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960*, (London: Hurst & Co, 2002); Andrei N. Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai i Press, 2005).

⁹⁴ Elidor Mëhilli, “States of Insecurity”, *The International History Review*, Vol. 37, no. 5, (2015): 1037-1058. The author draws parallelisms but also outlines differences between the North Korean regime under Kim Il Sung, and Albania’s regime under Enver Hoxha.

⁹⁵ Charles K. Armstrong, ““Fraternal Socialism”: The International Reconstruction of North Korea, 1953-62”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (2005): 161-187; Records of the Politburo, 09 October 1956: “Report of Mehmet Shehu about his visit to Mongolia and the Democratic Republic of Korea”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D54, f.1-9. The report here is of both, Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu. As Armstrong argues, in Korea the eastern European assistance was not conditioned on the economic address. In fact they assisted in building even industrial projects that clearly were not profitable. The main difference, however, with Albania lays in the fact that North Korea had come out of the Korean War completely devastated.

in comparison, he thought to be modest. If for Mikoyan ‘without bread, butter and meat there is no socialism’, for Hoxha without industrialization there was no working class, and consequently no communist base.⁹⁶ Due to more than just ideological considerations, Hoxha’s plans for industrialization came as a consequence of his belief that making use of the rich natural resources he thought Albania possessed would have contributed to economic self-reliance. In fact, Hoxha’s plans for heavy industrialization were based on the projects that had in-part existed before the war and were drafted mainly by Italian engineers who had attempted to conduct careful research regarding Albania’s underground resources. Their conclusions were very promising.⁹⁷

In his speech to the CCP’s congress Hoxha praised ‘China’s emergence in the international arena as a big power’.⁹⁸ In Beijing, Hoxha found great rapport with Mao Zedong about international issues of common interest, and had confirmed China’s availability to assist Albania, as ‘one hand helping the other’.⁹⁹ After all, as Zhou Enlai said, satisfying Albanian requests was going to be ‘nothing but a very small thing’.¹⁰⁰ Significantly, in his meeting with Hoxha, Mao wanted to know Hoxha’s opinion on some of the most preoccupying issues for Albania. On the tense relations between Albania and Yugoslavia, Mao stated that ‘...it is neither your fault nor Yugoslavia’s, the big mistake was made by the Cominform’, clearly alluding to the Soviet Union.¹⁰¹ He also asked what the Albanian leader thought of Stalin. Hoxha answered in a Chinese way: he appreciated Stalin’s contribution but also admitted some minor mistakes. Mao appreciated that Khrushchev’s speech had not been published in Albania, in a way marking the difference but also indicating a link

⁹⁶ Records of the Politburo, 28 June 1956, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D45, f.9.

⁹⁷ Alessandro Roselli, *Italy and Albania: Financial Relations in the Fascist Period*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

⁹⁸ Daniel Tretiak, “The Founding of the Sino-Albanian Entente”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 10 (1962): 123–143.

⁹⁹ Records of the Politburo, 09 October 1956: “Report of comrade Enver Hoxha on the works of the CCP Eighth Congress and about his meeting with Mao Zedong”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V.1956, D54, f.9-26 (18).

¹⁰⁰ Hoxha was about to ask to meet Zhou Enlai in order to thank him he said, for the loans China had provided, but Zhou anticipated Hoxha and went himself at the residences of the Albanian delegation, and urged Hoxha to ask directly to the Chinese Embassy in Tirana in case of further requests. In AQSH, F.14, OU, V.1956, D54, f.18.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, f.17.

between denouncing of Stalin and the first strikes in East Europe.¹⁰² Finally he endorsed ‘the right course of the [Albanian communist] party’: a statement quite different from what Hoxha had been hearing recently from Soviet leaders. Most importantly, China’s political endorsement put Hoxha in a stronger position in his uneasy situation with Khrushchev. In fact, not long time before Hoxha’s visit in Beijing, Khrushchev met with Tito. For Hoxha, China’s support became a card to play in the possible case of disagreements with Moscow. This trip definitely laid the basis for further intensifying ties between Tirana and Beijing.¹⁰³

But in Beijing, in meetings with other delegations from Europe, Hoxha also spoke of the complicated situation within the Hungarian leadership. During a conversation with Mikhail Suslov, member of the CPSU Presidium, he was told of Yugoslavian possible involvement in the situation. Of the Yugoslavian activities of espionage complained also the Romanian leader, Gheorghiu-Dej, to whom the events in Hungary would later teach a lesson.¹⁰⁴ When Hoxha had visited Moscow earlier in June 1956 he had stopped one night in Budapest on the way back to Tirana. Received by many members of the Hungarian Politburo, he had heard that ‘intellectuals, and members of the party want to take possession of the thesis of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU’ and undermine the communist rule.¹⁰⁵ The suggestion was that Khrushchev, by denouncing Stalin, had unleashed a spread of reformistic sentiment that could potentially cripple the authority of the communist establishments throughout East Europe – those same regimes Stalin had imposed and supported. Hoxha had seen such sentiments in Tirana. His fear of losing control in this new environment was further reinforced when he heard about the workers’ strike in

¹⁰² By the time of this meeting, workers’ strike in the city of Poznan in Poland had already taken place in June, and Mao was well informed.

¹⁰³ In 1962 Daniel Tretiak wrote that “The foundations for this alliance were probably not laid as early as the period of the aftermath of the Hungarian and Polish revolutions”, in Tretiak, “The Founding of the Sino-Albanian Entente,” 124. As shown above instead, already in 1954 the relations with China intensified and further strengthened with the visit of Hoxha to Beijing, just before the events in Hungary.

¹⁰⁴ Johanna Granville, “Hungary, 101: Seven Ways to Avoid a Revolution and Soviet Invasion of Romania”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (2010): 81–106.

¹⁰⁵ “Record of the Politburo, 28 June 1956 where Enver Hoxha and Spiro Koleka reported of the meeting of the COMECON in Moscow”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D45, f.23.

Poznan, Poland.¹⁰⁶ This possibility seemed especially real when, in October 1956, events in Hungary escalated into a popular uprising against the dictatorship and the Soviet Union such that Moscow had to send the army to re-establish the local communist party's control.¹⁰⁷ The drama of the events in Hungary reached its peak when Imre Nagy, the Hungarian communist leader, once supported by Soviets, joined the protesters and announced in early November 1956 the neutrality of his country and withdrawal from the WPO.¹⁰⁸ This provoked a second Soviet military intervention which dismissed Nagy and definitively put an end to the revolution.

The Hungarian Uprising: A Turning Point for the Sino-Albanian Entente

With the events in Hungary, China passed from being a passive actor to an active protagonist in the affairs of East Europe. Later, Mao would blame Khrushchev for his attack on Stalin, which, to some, is a reason for the Sino-Soviet split, but at the beginning of the events in Poland and Hungary, his standing was not clear.¹⁰⁹ Initially China's eagerness for economic and cultural exchanges, which increased from 1949 to 1957, pushed Beijing to support Khrushchev's relaxation and openness in East Europe because 'only after Stalin's death Sino-East European relations intensified'.¹¹⁰

Actually, China's relations with the Soviet Union, and Mao's with Stalin, had been controversial, if not tense at times because of Stalin's hierarchic perception of

¹⁰⁶ Tony Kemp-Welch, "Dethroning Stalin: Poland 1956 and Its Legacy", *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 8 (2006): 1261–84. For the author the destalinization in Poland began before Khrushchev's secret speech, immediately after Stalin's death in 1953.

¹⁰⁷ Aleksandr Stykalin, "The Hungarian Crisis of 1956: The Soviet Role in the Light of New Archival Documents", *Cold War History*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (October 2001): 113–144; Csaba Békés, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics*, CWIHP, Working Paper No. 16, (Washington D.C: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1996).

¹⁰⁸ Csaba Békés, "The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Declaration of Neutrality", *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, no. 4, (2006): 477-500.

¹⁰⁹ Chen Jian, "The Beginning of the End: 1956 as a Turning Point in Chinese and Cold War History", *Modern China Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2015): 99–126. For the author Khrushchev's attack on Stalin is one of the reasons of the Sino-Soviet split.

¹¹⁰ Lorenz M. Lüthi, "China and East Europe, 1956-1960", *Modern China Studies; Norfolk* 22, no. 1 (2015): 233-257; Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 59–96; David G. Tompkins, "Red China in Central Europe: Creating and Deploying Representations of an Ally in Poland and the GDR", in Patryk Babiracki and Austin Jersild, ed., *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War: Exploring the Second World*, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, c2016), 273–301; Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History*, (Chapel Hill, [North Carolina]: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 58–104; Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*.

China as a Soviet appendage, as most visibly manifested in Stalin's hesitations to support China's intervention in the Korean War.¹¹¹ As Mercy Kuo has pointed out, Stalin's death allowed China 'to reach an equal footing with Moscow which raised concomitant issues of independence, sovereignty, autonomy... matters which in effect emboldened the East European communist leaders, namely Poland and Hungary, to contend for the independence of their own country'.¹¹² Scholars have also connected the events in Poland and Hungary in 1956 with the Hundred Flowers Campaign launched by Mao during that year.¹¹³ In fact, during the workers' strikes in Poznan, many in Poland – in particular students and intellectuals in the universities – thought that China was on their side, as reported by Chinese ambassador in Warsaw Wang Bingnan.¹¹⁴ Although initially Mao called on people to speak out without fear, when, in early 1957, this eventually happened, as many scholars have argued, China's Hundred Flowers Campaign was proven to be a well-orchestrated trap by Mao to draw out critical voices and then crush them for good.¹¹⁵ In October 1956, just before the uprising in Hungary, Mao is even reported to have expressed his support for Poland in the possible case of Soviet military intervention.¹¹⁶ Shen Zhihua and Yafeng Xia report how 'it was rumored that China, Poland and

¹¹¹ Dieter Heinzig, *The Soviet Union and Communist China, 1945-1950: The Arduous Road to the Alliance*, English-language ed, (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2004); Zhihua Shen, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s*, (Milton Park, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2012); Shen Zhihua, "Sino-Soviet Relations and the Origins of the Korean War: Stalin's Strategic Goals in the Far East", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (2000): 44–68; Xiaoming Zhang and Joseph G. Dawson, *Red Wings over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); S. N. Goncharov, John Wilson Lewis, and Litai Xue, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1993); Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

¹¹² Mercy Kuo, *Contending with Contradictions: China's Policy toward Soviet Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1953-1960*, (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2001), 62. The author argues that the relations between China and the Soviet East European bloc were problematic, which derived from the contradictory nature of the Sino-Soviet relations. See pages 45-65.

¹¹³ János Rádányi, "The Hungarian Revolution and the Hundred Flowers Campaign", *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 43, no. 43 (1970): 121-129; Edward Friedman, "The Revolution in Hungary and the Hundred Flowers Period in China", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (1965): 119–122; Dandan Zhu, "The Hungarian Revolution and the Origins of China's Great Leap Policies, 1956–57", *Cold War History*, Vol. 12, no. 3 (2012): 451–472; Dandan Zhu, *1956 Mao's China and the Hungarian Crisis*, (Ithaca, N.Y: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2013).

¹¹⁴ Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance*, 116–120.

¹¹⁵ Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 71; Roderick MacFarquhar, ed., *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals*, (New York: Praeger, 1960).

¹¹⁶ Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance*, 119.

Yugoslavia would form an anti-Soviet united front'.¹¹⁷ However, as argued by Shen Zhihua, China played no role in the Polish strikes during summer 1956.¹¹⁸ Poland in all cases avoided Soviet military intervention because its leader Wladyslaw Gomulka assured Moscow sufficiently that they would not allow any subversion of political order.

In Hungary, however, the course of events went differently. At the beginning of the conflict, Chinese leadership lacked clear information about the situation, due perhaps to the difficulties in communication between the Chinese ambassador in Budapest, Hao Deqing, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing.¹¹⁹ Yet in Hungary, Mao clearly saw how political dissent could easily transform into “counter-revolution”. As Lorenz Lüthi argues, Mao since 1955 ‘had promoted policies similar to those of Stalin from a quarter of century before... So Khrushchev’s criticism of Stalin’s mistakes was potentially dangerous to Mao... [because] destalinization threatened to undercut Mao’s domestic position’.¹²⁰ Yet it will be the Great Leap Forward campaign a few years later to weaken ‘for the first time the Chairman’s leadership of the party and state’.¹²¹ Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and other Chinese leaders were in Moscow, invited by Khrushchev for consultations, when the crisis in Budapest erupted. In continuous communication with Beijing, they were first instructed by Mao to suggest to Khrushchev the extension of the five principles of peaceful coexistence to the interstate relations within the communist camp, thus suggesting equality among states and, most importantly, non-interference in internal affairs. Only when the situation seemed to escape the local communist party’s control were they instructed by Mao to solicit a firm Soviet military intervention in order to prevent further instability within the bloc.¹²² Not long after, a connection was posited between Tito and the uprising. Indeed, as Csaba Békés has argued, ‘the

¹¹⁷ Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 183.

¹¹⁸ Shen Zhihua, “The Polish-Hungarian Crisis and China”, Part I, *Lishi Yanjiu*, no. 2 (2005): 119-143, in Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 168.

¹¹⁹ Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 169.

¹²⁰ Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, 2008, 46.

¹²¹ Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 82.

¹²² Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 172–176; Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 156–157.

Yugoslavian model of non-aligned communism was appealing to many Hungarian communists who were seeking reformism within the socialist regime'.¹²³

Hoxha took this event as a chance to attack Tito and to show the Soviets how dangerous Tito was to the communist camp. Moreover, some participants at the Tirana communist party conference in April 1956 who had attacked the cult of Hoxha, attempted to escape to Yugoslavia.¹²⁴ For Hoxha, it was becoming clear that Khrushchev had wrongly judged the political situation in Hungary, especially in that he had permitted Yugoslavian interference. But what Hoxha saw as a Soviet recognition of the Yugoslavian way of communism, Khrushchev instead saw it as '...provisional concessions and gestures... to sweet-talk Tito back into the communist community, including Yugoslavia's entry into the WPO'.¹²⁵ News of Tito's involvement, combined with the lack of official information from Moscow alarmed the Albanian leadership. For Hoxha the moment when Tito attempted to overthrow him and unite Albania to Yugoslavia in 1948 was still recent. In short, Tito and Yugoslavia had become Hoxha's primary concern. Most importantly, Hoxha was trying to use these events to convince the Soviet Union of a step backward in the rapprochement with Yugoslavia Khrushchev had promoted. With the Belgrade-Moscow axis re-established, Albania's position was marginalized in the Soviet geostrategic policy, and Hoxha's position vulnerable.

Only when events in Hungary became internationally known did the Soviet ambassador in Tirana meet with Hoxha. The meeting came after Hoxha had been personally and publically attacked by Tito as an opponent of reformism and example of tyranny: 'Where are these roots? In the bureaucratic apparatus, in the methods of leadership and the so-called one-man rule... in various Enver Hoxhas... who are resisting the democratization of the decisions of the 20th Congress and who contributed a great deal towards strengthening Stalin's system and who are working today to bring it back to life and power – here are the roots which must be

¹²³ Csaba Békés, "The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Declaration of Neutrality", *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, no. 4 (2006): 480.

¹²⁴ Pipa, *Albanian Stalinism: Ideo-Political Aspects*, 1990, 62–64. The author had been imprisoned by the regime in Albania, and once released he escaped in 1957 through Yugoslavia, and then to United States where he became a scholar and university professor.

¹²⁵ Békés, "The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Declaration of Neutrality", 480.

corrected'.¹²⁶ The Soviet ambassador delivered to Hoxha the letters between Moscow and Belgrade regarding the events in Hungary. Hoxha reacted angrily to the fact that Soviet leaders had not informed him of the crisis in Poland and Hungary until it became evident.

First, Hoxha was reported to have noted to the Soviet ambassador that the Soviets did not even criticize Tito's attack, although Tito was in part responding to the attacks Hoxha had made through *Pravda* in the first place.¹²⁷ Second, Hoxha was surprised that the Soviets had preferred the ascent to leadership of Hungary of János Kádár, whom Hoxha had called, in his meeting with the ambassador, a 'betrayed of communism', because initially Kádár had supported Imre Nagy.¹²⁸ From the documentation, is not clear if Hoxha knew of the meeting between Khrushchev and Tito in the Yugoslav island of Brioni in the night between 1 and 2 November 1956, at which the Yugoslavs clearly stated their preference for János Kádár.¹²⁹ Hoxha certainly would have preferred to see the rise of Matyas Rakosi in Budapest, known to have been the most Stalinist Hungarian leader.¹³⁰ The fact that Hoxha accused Kádár of 'collaboration with Yugoslavia and Tito', means that he was suspicious of Tito's role in his emergence as a leader of Hungary and noted that Albania gave this issue maximum priority and concern. Hoxha had already sent word to Moscow through the ambassador in Tirana that he suspected of Tito's involvement in the events in Hungary. Therefore he noted to the ambassador that '...the CPSU knows very well that in addition to the imperialists [West] our party is convinced that Tito also is hundred percent involved in the counter-revolution in Hungary. We say this

¹²⁶ Belgrade Radio. Home service, 15 November 1956, in Tretiak, "The Founding of the Sino-Albanian Entente", 130. The speech of Tito was broadcasted in mid-November but was held earlier on 10 November in the city of Pula (Croatia).

¹²⁷ "Enver Hoxha, 15 years of the Albanian Party of Labor", *Pravda*, 08 November 1956, in Zoltán Ripp, "Hungary's Part in the Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict, 1956-58", *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (1998): 206.

¹²⁸ "Records of the PLA Politburo 13 November 1956 where were read the letters between the CPSU and the Yugoslav Communist League from 04 to 09 November 1956 regarding the Hungarian situation. Information of comrade Enver Hoxha about his conversation with the Soviet ambassador in Tirana Leonid Krylov about the Hungarian events, the Yugoslav interference, the Tito-Khrushchev contacts, the lack of information from Moscow for Albania on the Polish and Hungarian events", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D59, f.2-36.

¹²⁹ Zoltán Ripp, "Hungary's Part in the Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict, 1956-58", 203–204.

¹³⁰ Borhi, "Empire by Coercion", 48–56.

because it is Tito who is defending Nagy'.¹³¹ Hoxha was furious of the fact that the Soviet Union had completely neglected Albania with regards the events in Hungary. He had preferred some consultations between Moscow and Tirana before the contacts with Tito. On this point he had to say that 'Marxism-Leninism does not consider the size of a country when it comes to [communist] principles... Thus we think we should have been informed of these events, because they are strictly related to the very defense of our party. The CPSU knows very well that we accuse Tito of interference in our internal affairs and that he wants to overthrow the rule of our party'.¹³²

Hoxha's concern was that Albania, a full member of the WPO, had been left at the margins, its interests towards its neighbor ignored, and the ideological legitimization of the regime undermined. Hoxha told Krylov that '...we could go public and explain to our people this entire situation', implying an exposure of the Soviet position. Hence the message was for Soviet leaders to reconsider Soviet relations with Tito in light of the recent events, because otherwise 'Tito tomorrow may act against us with still more force'.¹³³ Hoxha certainly feared for his own personal future as leader, but he disguised this as a worry about the 'compromising of the unity of the communist camp'. Therefore, he claimed that for Soviets the best to do was to rectify their policies of the last several years.¹³⁴ Furthermore, from the Albanian viewpoint, the recent Soviet-Yugoslav reconciliation did not result in any better position for the Soviet Union. On the contrary, Tito had been left with more room to maneuver, and in Tirana it did not pass unobserved the fact that during both meetings between Tito and Khrushchev in May 1955 and June 1956, Tito, as Zoltán

¹³¹ Records of the Politburo, 13 November 1956, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D59, f.2. For Tito's involvement in the case of Imre Nagy see, Aleksandr. S. Stykalin, "Soviet-Yugoslav Relations, and the Case of Imre Nagy", *Cold War History*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (2005): 3–22. Imre Nagy had entered the Yugoslav embassy in Budapest when he was overthrown and Tito committed to assure him a safe exile. After intense negotiations in November the Soviets agreed to allow him go to Romania, but in contrast with their promises when Imre Nagy accompanied by Yugoslavian diplomats left their embassy in Budapest on a bus, the Soviets conducted him to a Soviet military garrison. Later they sent him to Romania but later that year Hungarian authorities convicted Nagy as traitor and executed.

¹³² Records of the PLA Politburo, 13 November 1956, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D59, f.3.

¹³³ All the quotations of the paragraph in *ibid*.

¹³⁴ Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, 46–79, the pages refer to the chapter "The Collapse of Socialist Unity, 1956-57".

Ripp puts it, 'did not trade concessions in its international position for normalization'.¹³⁵

The Soviet ambassador, perhaps unaware he would further aggravate the situation, asked Hoxha about the fate of Dali Ndreu, a critic of Hoxha who had attempted to escape to Yugoslavia but was arrested and later executed. Hoxha noted in the Politburo that the fate of a dissident was of no concern to the Soviets. This, together with the fact that Ndreu had tried to escape to Yugoslavia, reinforced Hoxha's suspicion that Tito was involved in supporting dissidence during the Tirana conference earlier that same year. The ambassador's remark would be later interpreted as proof that Moscow too was behind the Yugoslavia's supposed attempt to challenge Hoxha's personal position. The rise to power of Kádár in Hungary – a Yugoslavian preference – together with the fact that Khrushchev supported him, strengthened Hoxha's fear of a similar scenario playing out in Albania. If the Soviets backed the Yugoslavian choice for Hungary's leadership, what would impede Moscow from supporting Tito's choice for the leadership in Albania if there was a chance? Having to do with his own position, Hoxha noted to the Soviet ambassador that '...the interests of Albanian people require us to defend the unity of our party...'. He reinforced that '...in this situation we have not acted wrongly... and we do not agree with you'.¹³⁶ For the first time Hoxha did not comply with the Soviet course, but openly disagreed with it instead.

When Mao advocated resolute Soviet military intervention in Hungary, he did not realize that China had taken a decisive step towards become the new lighthouse for Hoxha, who had begun to see himself as one of the increasingly few opponents of destalinization. Hungarian events convinced Hoxha that Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin had contributed to the emergence of political turmoil and so, from his point of view, his refusal of destalinization, and the purge it went with, was correct. Consequently, Albania's mounting divergence with Moscow pushed Hoxha to seek new allies. For Albania, it was now China, rather than the Soviet Union, which advocated and upheld the unity of the bloc. With its unexpected involvement in the events in Hungary, China had risen to a prominent position within the socialist camp. Although Chinese leaders claimed to support Soviet leadership within the camp, they

¹³⁵ Zoltán Ripp, "Hungary's Part in the Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict, 1956-58", 197-225.

¹³⁶ AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1956, D59, f.3.

well realized that China could claim to co-lead, if not lead, the socialist camp. Albania would be the first to support it. From this moment onward, Albanian archives show how it is because of the events in Hungary that, for the first time, the correspondence between Tirana and Beijing drastically intensified, which explains the increasing coordination of political positions between Beijing and Tirana that followed.

China's position as an advocate of the unity of the socialist camp was reinforced when, in January 1957, Khrushchev invited Zhou Enlai to Moscow to mediate between the Soviet Union and Polish and Hungarian governments. In what is called Zhou Enlai's shuttle diplomacy, he visited Moscow, Budapest, and Warsaw, for two weeks with the intention, according to Shen and Xia, to 'consolidate the socialist camp on a new basis... the modification of leadership principles in the international communist movement, that is, the transition from "the Soviet Union as the head" to "joint Sino-Soviet leadership" of the movement'.¹³⁷ During his stay in Europe Zhou stressed the importance of the unity of the bloc under Soviet leadership, but in the meantime stressed his desire to avoid intervention in internal affairs, avoid Soviet hegemonic tendencies, and also '...avoid great-nation chauvinism'.¹³⁸ In fact, in Moscow, Zhou did not conceal his criticism of the Soviet Union, while in Budapest and Warsaw he advocated unity under Soviet leadership, which for him was not to be understood as the right of Moscow to interfere in domestic issues nor the obligation for other parties to take orders from Moscow.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, his trip was a success in that it accredited Beijing as a reliable partner within the communist bloc and opened to China new channels in East Europe – once Moscow's exclusive domain.

At the same time that Zhou Enlai was pursuing his shuttle diplomacy, Peng Zhen, as the head of a Chinese parliamentary delegation, was paying a visit to Albania, in a trip that ended in Belgrade. Albanian leaders greatly appreciated the fact that Peng had chosen to go to Albania first and then to Yugoslavia. To meet him in Tirana was Premier Mehmet Shehu and the Politburo member Hysni Kapo – one of the most important ideologues of the PLA. In Tirana, the leadership knew of Zhou Enlai's visit to Moscow. When they met with Peng Zhen on 16 January 1957, the

¹³⁷ Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 179.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 182

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 181-188.

main topic of the conversation was the situation in East Europe in the aftermath of the Hungarian upheaval. Kapo told Peng that they would like to discuss issues regarding Albanian-Yugoslavian divergences. Mehmet Shehu, in a very straightforward language, started with pointing out that ‘for Albania the most important issue is the relation with Yugoslavia... and these relations have not just a local character but are an important issue of principles [communist] ... whoever wants to assess properly the political and ideological position of the Yugoslavian leadership, should study the relations between Albania and Yugoslavia’. The message for China was that the Soviet Union on this point had ignored Albania, and that any friendship with Albania underscored a lack of it with Yugoslavia. In fact in a more direct way Shehu told Peng how in May 1955, they had tried to persuade Khrushchev that before visiting Belgrade it would have been better to hold consultations with other communist parties, in particular Albania, ‘because we know better [than the Soviets] the Yugoslavian leadership’.¹⁴⁰

In a long speech, Shehu explained to Peng the historical roots of the disagreements between Albania and Yugoslavia. When explaining the Albanian position about Yugoslavian involvement in recent events, Shehu stressed how Tito ‘was involved in a plot in Tirana on the same grounds Hungarian counter-revolutionaries organized one in Budapest’, in an attempt to overthrow the leadership in Albania in April 1956 with the collaboration of local communists. Shehu also told Peng that, ‘yet based on our own experience we are convinced of the Yugoslav involvement in the counter revolutionary actions in Hungary’, although he admitted that he had no evidence of this. Peng, who mostly listened in silence the long explanation of Shehu, affirmed that he too ‘personally’ thought Yugoslavia was involved ‘but we have no evidence of such intervention’. Nonetheless, Shehu said that such evidence could be found in the statement of the Yugoslav minister of Defense to the Soviet ambassador in Hungary that if the Soviet Union would have not intervened militarily then Yugoslavia would have. This meant for Shehu that ‘Tomorrow Yugoslavia might consider to intervene militarily also against Albania’.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Quotations of the paragraph: “Records of the meeting between the PLA CC delegation and the parliamentary Chinese delegation led by comrade Peng Zhen, in Tirana, 16 January 1957”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1957, D1, f.4 & f.25.

¹⁴¹ All quotations of the paragraph in *ibid.*, f.23-24.

Peng and the Albanian leaders also discussed problems that perhaps more directly concerned China – issues related to the international communist movement. It is significant the position regarding Stalin. Shehu stated that ‘we are completely in agreement with you... about the fact that Stalin should be assessed with both his negative and positive aspects ... [yet] it should be highlighted first of all his positive aspects and only then perhaps mention some negative’. Regarding the class struggle in the transitional phase from capitalism to socialism, contrary to the principle of peaceful transition announced by Khrushchev, Shehu stated that the ‘Soviet Union perhaps is in another situation because socialism there is consolidated, but different instead is the situation in other socialist countries where class struggle is needed to resist counter revolution, as Hungarian events showed’. Shehu then accused Tito of completely denying class struggle while pursuing the ‘national way of socialism’, which for him was against the principles of Marxism. On all these issues, Shehu emphasized not only the difference between Yugoslavian revisionism and the Marxist course, but also the fact that ‘Albania will always take into account the CPSU and CCP standing towards Yugoslavia’ and related issues. This meant that for Albania, China was already on equal footing with the Soviet Union. Peng Zhen assured Albania that China would avoid the ‘great nation chauvinism in dealing with all countries’, a way to affirm that the size of the country was not a criterion in Chinese relations with Albania.¹⁴² It was also a way to mark the difference in principles between China – which claimed to base its foreign relations on the principle of equality – and a Soviet Union that often was guilty of great-nation chauvinism, as Zhou Enlai was remarking in the same moment during his trip in Moscow. Finally, Albania found a common understanding with China regarding these issues. Nonetheless, at this point rather than opening the divide with Soviet Union, China called and worked for unity.

Albanian Official Assessment of the Events in East Europe

To further assess the recent events in light of the positions of the actors implicated, in Tirana was called a plenum of the PLA in February 1957. The report of Enver Hoxha to the Plenum was centered upon issues that had emerged since the Twentieth

¹⁴² Quotations of the paragraph in *ibid.*, f.25 & f.28.

Congress of the CPSU.¹⁴³ In this plenum, Hoxha wanted to seal definitely his Stalinist line of opposing any and all reformation, and he needed legitimation through a formal act of a party institution which would give the semblance of a collegial decision.

Some aspects of this long report are very important. First, it reinterpreted the recent events, from destalinization to the Hungarian upheaval, in a way analogous to China's public assessment and placed China in a central position in his analysis. Second, it highlighted the importance of struggling against revisionism – embodied, from the Albanian perspective, in the Yugoslavian course. Third, it shut down any possible rapprochement with Yugoslavia, in light of the Yugoslavians' presumed involvement in recent events. Fourth, and most importantly, it stated, in open but careful language, an association between Khrushchev's policies and the events in East Europe.¹⁴⁴ Regarding the Hungarian leadership, Hoxha briefly mentioned Imre Nagy as the main internal cause, and praised and supported Janos Kádár whom Hoxha had earlier attacked in front of the Soviet ambassador. The report gave great merit to the Soviet Union for having repressed the counter revolution, and it criticized the Yugoslavian interpretation of the events as 'a popular revolution of all the working people'. For Hoxha, it was instead a counter revolution of all the reactionary classes that had survived the proletarian dictatorship.

Regarding Poland, there was mention that the 'nationalist elements took advantage of some true mistakes of the Soviet Union in its relations with Poland' – alleging clearly to the Soviet Union's great national chauvinism that Zhou Enlai had mentioned in January. Hoxha disputed the Polish rehabilitation of many political prisoners, the purging of old revolutionaries from leading positions in the army and the party, and the freedom (limited) of the Catholic clergy that Gomulka had allowed. The point he aimed to make was that Soviet intervention in Hungary had

¹⁴³ Records of the PLA Third Plenum, 13-16 February 1957: "Report of comrade Enver Hoxha on the international situation and the party's duties, 13 February 1957", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1957, D1, f.140-208. Specifically the points discussed in the report of Hoxha were: the unity of the socialist camp, the events in Hungary and Poland, the international role of the Soviet Union, the relations among socialist countries, the relations between communist parties, the international communist movement, the class struggle in the transition from capitalism to socialism, the role of the dictatorship of proletariat in the transition from capitalism to socialism, and the need for ideological struggle to protect Marxism from opportunists and revisionists.

¹⁴⁴ The report of Enver Hoxha was sent in five copies to Soviet Union and one copy to China. Unlike his previous assessments, which blamed solely Yugoslavia for the events in Hungary, in this report he added also 'the imperialist camp headed by the United States'.

reestablished the full control of the party, while the lack of intervention in Poland had left room for an autonomous path which could be dangerous for the unity of the camp. Hoxha appreciated that Zhou Enlai's recent visit to Warsaw had contributed to improving the relations between Poland and the Soviet Union – clearly appraising China.¹⁴⁵ It is significant that when analyzing the events in Poland and Hungary Hoxha did not even mention Khrushchev by name, but referred to the Soviet Union in general. But his criticism of Yugoslavia was also a veiled critique of Khrushchev for the trust he initially had placed in Belgrade. Hoxha strongly emphasized that with its 'revisionist course' Yugoslavia was the most direct menace to the socialist unity. Belgrade, Hoxha said, denied the class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the leading role of the communist party 'using as a mask the struggle against Stalinism'. This 'came immediately after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU... which opportunist elements used to discredit socialist countries, the communist parties and their leaders... But our party acted correctly... we learned important lessons from the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and took all the measures to fight against those that in the conference of the communist party of Tirana, backed by Yugoslavia using the pretext of "struggle against the cult of individual", wanted to push our party out of the Marxist-Leninist path'.¹⁴⁶

Hoxha affirmed that within the international communist movement the leading role belonged to the Soviet Union for historical reasons: it was the fatherland of the October Revolution and consequently the first country to have experienced socialism, and it had the merit to have defeated Nazism and Fascism in the Second World War. The factors mentioned all occurred under the reign of Stalin, and so in a way he was affirming that the leading role was subject to the return to the old values of Stalinism. To this point, he also quoted Stalin to affirm the necessity of defending the Soviet line. To affirm the leading role of the Soviet Union, Hoxha quoted parts of the article "More on the Historical Experience of Proletarian Dictatorship" published on 29 December 1956 by *Renmin Ribao* in China. So Hoxha was again endorsing and following China's analysis. Significantly, the quotation he cited did not refer to

¹⁴⁵ Records of the PLA Third Plenum, 13-16 February 1957: "Report of comrade Enver Hoxha on the international situation and the Party's duties, 13 February 1957", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1957, D1, f.148-151.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., f.170-71.

the Soviet Union as the leader of the socialist camp but as its center – which implied less hierarchy, if not equality, among socialist countries.

Regarding Stalin, Hoxha stated that, ‘We do not agree with those that liquidate the revolutionary side of Stalin and see only the dark side. He should be assessed on the right light...’ After extolling Stalin’s merits, Hoxha did mention some of his mistakes, but exonerated him because ‘his tragedy lays in the fact that even when he made mistakes he thought they were necessary for the sake of the revolution.’ Here he also emphasized how ‘Hungarian events show again... how dangerous it is to disorient the working class with the theory of denying the class struggle’ in the transition from capitalism to socialism. Clearly he alleged that Khrushchev’s theory of peaceful transition had undermined the ideology at the base of the class struggle. Further yet, ‘The Twentieth Congress of the CPSU considered that was wrong Stalin’s thesis that with the building of socialism it escalates also the class struggle... some liberal elements in some countries interpreted in an opportunist way the thesis [of the 20th Congress] that the class struggle does not escalates... they made a distorted analogy between the Soviet Union where socialism is consolidated, and their countries where it is still in the transitional phase’. Ultimately, contrary to what he had affirmed to the Soviets but in light of the events in Hungary, Hoxha stated that ‘we do not want to have any interparty relations with Yugoslavia, although we will try to have friendly relations with the Yugoslavian people’.¹⁴⁷ Hoxha used the tension of 1956 in East Europe to legitimate his decision not to improve relations with Yugoslavia, and not undertake any internal reformation. On the contrary, for him these events were reason to strengthen his personal rule. All of this report, which was a clear re-assessment of the Khrushchev line since 1953, came only after Beijing had emerged as a possible safety net with which Hoxha might defend his course.

In order to outline more clearly Albania’s position on all the controversial issues within the bloc, as well as to find common understanding with Beijing, just after the plenum, in early May 1957, a delegation of PLA officials headed by Rita Marko (among which Nexhmije Hoxha, wife of Enver Hoxha and member of the Politburo) visited China. But when they met with Liu Shaoqi, Liu told them that it was perhaps

¹⁴⁷ Quotations of the paragraph in: “Report of comrade Enver Hoxha on the international situation and the party’s duties, 13 February 1957” in “Records of the PLA Third Plenum of the Third Congress, 13-16 February 1957”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1957, D1, f.171 & f.187 & f.188-89.

a mistake, in 1948, when China had considered Yugoslavia an enemy of communism, and invited Albania to make efforts to improve relations with Belgrade.¹⁴⁸ To Albanian officials, this statement seemed contradictory. In a ciphered telegram to Hoxha that day, Marko noted that ‘the view of Liu Shaoqi [on this point] seemed to me very similar to that of the CPSU’.¹⁴⁹ In their meeting with Mao, Yugoslavia was not even mentioned. Mao focused more on Albania’s relations with the western countries, particularly the communist parties of the western countries.¹⁵⁰ He suggested that Albania extend its diplomatic network towards African, Arabic and other countries.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, he said that the African countries, and the developing countries in general, have good potential to lean on the communist side – China had been one of the main promoters of the Bandung Conference in April 1955.¹⁵² It seems that Mao wanted to know if Albania had any potential to be a channel of communication through its diplomatic network with communist parties in countries where China lacked recognition.

The most important meeting during this visit, which might explain the attitude of Chinese leaders towards Yugoslavia, was perhaps the one with Peng Zhen, who informed Marko of his visit to Yugoslavia in January, just after his visit to Albania. His motivation for going to Belgrade, parallel to that of Zhou Enlai with regards to the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary, had been to convince Yugoslavia to join the

¹⁴⁸ “Notes from the meeting of the Albanian parliamentary delegation headed by the Politburo member Rita Marko that visited China, with vice Chairman of the CCP Liu Shaoqi, 9 May 1957”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1957, D2.

¹⁴⁹ “Radiograms of the correspondence between comrade Enver Hoxha and comrade Rita Marko during the visit to China of the parliamentary delegation...”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1957, D5, f.3.

¹⁵⁰ “Short resuming of the conversation of the Chairman of the CCP of the PRC Mao Zedong with the parliamentary delegation of the PRA headed by Rita Marko in Beijing, 12 May 1957”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1957, D3.

¹⁵¹ Joseph E. Khalili, *Communist China’s Interaction with the Arab Nationalists since the Bandung Conference*, (New York: Exposition Press, 1970); China and Enlai Zhou, eds., *China and the Asian-African Conference: Documents*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1955); Had been Israel the first Middle East country to recognize the PRC, see Yitzhak Shichor, *The Middle East in China’s Foreign Policy, 1949-1977*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 21.

¹⁵² Richard Wright, *The Colour Curtain, a Report on the Bandung Conference*, (London: D. Dobson, 1956); Christopher J. Lee, *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, c2010); Nataša Mišković, Harald Fischer-Tiné, and Nada Boškowska Leimgruber, eds., *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi-Bandung-Belgrade*, (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY : Routledge, 2014); Robert B. Rakove, “Two Roads to Belgrade: The United States, Great Britain, and the First Nonaligned Conference”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 14, no. 3, (2014): 337-357.

conference of the communist parties in Moscow. Tito would not agree to sign any document wherein the Soviet Union was described as the head of the communist camp and so eventually he refused to participate. At the same time, according to Peng, Tito had expressed the will to improve relations with Albania, but in the context of improving relations with all other socialist countries.¹⁵³ What is clear at this stage is China's efforts to contribute to the unity of the socialist camp, which inspired the invitation for Albania to try improving its tense relations with Belgrade. The Soviet Union also sent a signal to Tirana by approving most of Albania's economic requests in 1957 and seemed to leave behind any attrition there had been over political and economic issues.

The Conference of Moscow, 1957 – A Brief Moment of Unity

As Niu Jun has argued, 'the relationship of leading (Soviet Union) and being-led (China) that had been created during the formation of the alliance [Sino-Soviet] could not be sustained after the shock of the revolts in Poland and Hungary in 1956'.¹⁵⁴ Yet both Soviet and Chinese leaders at this point seemed to want cohesion within the socialist camp. These efforts to re-strengthen unity resulted in the Moscow conference in November 1957 – the meeting of sixty-four communist parties from throughout the world. For some Chinese scholars the conference was a Chinese initiative, and Mao personally played a great role in its successful outcome. For others however, it was an initiative of CPSU, and China was involved only after Khrushchev failed to convince Yugoslavia to participate. Clearly this confirms that, if nothing else, China participated in the conference 'on an equal footing'.¹⁵⁵

Moreover, regarding the transition to communism in capitalist countries, Mao successfully managed to convince the Soviets to include in the declaration, next to the principle of peaceful transition, also the revolutionary option. At the end, two

¹⁵³ "Notes from the conversation of Rita Marko with Peng Zhen in Beijing, 12 June 1957", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1957, D4.

¹⁵⁴ Niu Jun, "1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy", *CWIHP*, Working Paper No. 48, (2005): 4.

¹⁵⁵ The role of Mao is highlighted with particular emphasis in Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 241–271; The role of China for Lüthi is less incisive instead, see Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 74–79. Lüthi affirms that the conference was a public defeat for the Chinese ideological positions. Moreover, he emphasizes in his analysis the difference that Mao and Khrushchev had which led them to confrontation during their meetings.

declarations were issued: the first was the Peace Manifesto, signed by all parties, Yugoslavia included, and the second and more important was the declaration of the ruling parties that Yugoslavians refused to sign. This final declaration came to be ambiguous and vague on many issues upon which the ruling parties did not reach a full agreement – Polish communists in particular had opposed many aspects since the very beginning. Consequently, after the conference this declaration was interpreted by all parties in their own way, becoming little more than a useless piece of paper. Yet following the conference the unity of the camp seemed to be assured for a short period.

But it was short indeed. In 1958-59 Mao launched two campaigns that signified a dramatic shift in his domestic policies: first the Great Leap Forward campaign in 1958 with the task to surpass the industrial production of western countries, first the United Kingdom, and in a longer period the United States.¹⁵⁶ The real goal of the Great Leap, however, according to Shen and Xia, was to surpass the Soviet Union by establishing the People's Communes as new units of Chinese society 'as a result of the merging of the industry, agriculture and the army'.¹⁵⁷ Initially the Soviets assisted China in its industrial production but later Khrushchev attacked the Chinese People's Communes' experiment as a return to the dark time in history when, in the Soviet Union under Stalin, similar communes had caused such great suffering. For Lüthi, the Great Leap Forward was not necessarily a campaign addressed against Moscow; rather, it was the first domestic mass movement Mao launched after the political takeover, when 'all elements (charismatic leader, salvational mission, mass mobilization, and an illegitimate authority structure as the target of the struggle) of Mao's continuous revolution merged'.¹⁵⁸ Similarly Chen Jian argues that 'China's alliance policy towards the Soviet Union was always an integral part of Mao Zedong's grand continuous revolution plans designed to transform China's state,

¹⁵⁶ John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History, Second Enlarged Edition*, (Harvard University Press, 2006, c1992), 365–382; Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 261–310; Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, *China's Road to Disaster: Mao, Central Politicians, and Provincial Leaders in the Unfolding of the Great Leap Forward, 1955-1959*, (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

¹⁵⁷ Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, "The Great Leap Forward, the People's Commune and the Sino-Soviet Split", *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 20, no. 72 (2011): 861–880.

¹⁵⁸ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 83; The four characteristics of Mao's continuous revolution were theorized and analyzed by Lowell Dittmer, *China's Continuous Revolution: The Post-Liberation epoch, 1949-1981*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 4–11.

society, and international look'.¹⁵⁹ Then, once the Great Leap Forward resulted in a disaster, which in turn resulted in the purging of Peng Dehuai and his followers who had criticized it, subsequently Mao launched another anti-rightist campaign in 1959.¹⁶⁰

Although Mao was promoting a left turn in domestic policies, the real attrition with Moscow was the Soviet hesitation to collaborate with China in developing its atomic arsenal. Furthermore, with an attitude similar to that which Moscow had previously taken regarding satellite states in East Europe, Khrushchev demanded a joint military radio transmitter station co-led by Moscow on Chinese soil, and a joint submarine fleet under a similar scheme. Mao reacted angrily to this proposal because he understood it as a Soviet attempt to limit China's military maneuverability towards Taiwan, as Moscow was pursuing a policy of relaxation with United States.¹⁶¹ Khrushchev had to rush and visit Beijing secretly in order to settle these misunderstandings, and eventually agreed with Mao to give up the joint submarine fleet. Less than a month after this meeting, Mao provoked a crisis of international dimensions when, in August 1958, the People's Liberation Army bombed Jinmen Island in what is known as the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis.¹⁶² For MacFarquhar with this crisis 'the Chinese were responding to external events: the Middle East crisis and the Soviet failure to take a strong action'.¹⁶³ For Lüthi, instead, the main aim of this crisis was to boost Chinese people's enthusiasm in order to increase steel production in the Great Leap Forward campaign, but also as a protest against the lack of progress during Geneva ambassadorial talks from 1955-57 on Taiwan.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 49.

¹⁶⁰ Li, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet Split*, 71; MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1*, 261–310. For MacFarquhar the anti-rightist campaign was launched since 1957, on the wave of the Hundred Flowers Campaign.

¹⁶¹ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 93.

¹⁶² Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 163–204; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 9–26; Bruce A. Elleman, *Taiwan Straits: Crisis in Asia and the Role of the U.S. Navy*, (New York & London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); Li, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet Split*, 48–51.

¹⁶³ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3. The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961-1966*, (Oxford and New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 297.

¹⁶⁴ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 95-113; Eventually Chinese leaders concluded to be willing to resolve the Taiwan issue 'peacefully' and through open 'negotiations' with United States. See Niu Jun, "1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy", 15-16.

This left turn was reflected also in the Beijing-Belgrade-Tirana triangle, when in April 1958 China transmitted to Albania the correspondence between the CCP and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), wherein was reflected China's refusal to participate at the Seventh Congress of the LCY. The CCP considered many of the theses of the project drafts to the congress as 'non-conform with the Marxist theory and in contradiction to the Moscow declaration'.¹⁶⁵ This for Tirana, was the most desirable turn of Chinese policy towards Yugoslavia, which contrasted with the conciliatory tones towards Belgrade Liu Shaoqi had adopted with Albanian officials in May 1957. Furthermore, the rapprochement between Tirana and Beijing was made stronger yet when in late 1958, despite the fact that the failure of the Great Leap Forward had become clear since October 1958, yet China granted to Albania a loan of 55 million rubles (barter agreement) for its third FYP 1961-65.¹⁶⁶ To inform about this campaign, Chinese officials summoned the ambassadors of the socialist countries at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in early June 1958 where Bo Yibo had a long talk explaining the Great Leap Forward, and mentioning goals and the first results which seemed very optimistic regarding China's industrial production.¹⁶⁷ In fact his speech was concentrated on the economic implications of this campaign, highlighting how the steel production had increased. In Tirana, this campaign was interpreted as proof that China would soon reach the level of Soviet economy, and possibly surpass it. Therefore, China could possibly replace Soviet economic assistance to Albania, if necessary.

¹⁶⁵ "Letters of the CCPCC addressed to the CPSU CC and to the CC of the LCY, regarding the refusal of the CCP to send a delegation at the works of the 7th Congress of the LCY because many of the thesis published by the LCY regarding the works of the congress, are against the Marxist theory and in contradiction to the Moscow declaration of the communist parties of the socialist countries", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1958, D3.

¹⁶⁶ "Correspondence, 7 October – 25 December, 1958, between the PLA CC (comrade Enver Hoxha) and the CCP CC (comrade Mao Zedong), regarding the request of the PLA and the Government of the People's Republic of Albania to the People's Republic of China to grant a loan of 55 million rubles for the third FYP 1961-65, the acceptance of the CCP CC and the letter of gratitude of the PLA for the assistance granted", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1958, D1. Albanian letter with the request was sent in early October, when the crisis in China had not escalated yet, and Chinese reply came in early December 1958.

¹⁶⁷ "Information of the Albanian embassy in Beijing addressed to the PLA CC, regarding the meeting that the Foreign Ministry of China organized on 6 June 1958, where participated Wang Jiaxiang and Bo Yibo who talked of the 2nd Plenary meeting of the Eighth Congress of the CCP about: the speech of Liu Shaoqi and Mao Zedong regarding the general line of the party on the building of socialism according to the principle of producing more, faster and better; on the report of Deng Xiaoping regarding the Moscow declaration and the program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, that will be published later", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1958, D5.

Khrushchev's Visit to Albania

Between the end of May and early June 1959 Khrushchev visited Albania for the first (and last) time in a run from north to south, meeting people and giving speeches for around ten days. During the visit, Khrushchev largely ignored the most important political and ideological issues Albania had been concerned with in recent years. Indeed, as shown in the records of the Politburo in Tirana, before his visit, Albanian leaders did not even expect to have long talks on their main concerns, which at this moment were the economic requests they would present to Khrushchev. Although the visit of the Soviet leader was not aimed at negotiating economic agreements, for Albania it was a chance to introduce him to the plans for long term investments in heavy industry.¹⁶⁸ In fact, Hoxha was seeking a political endorsement of his national policies.

At first, the Soviet leader praised Albania's political and ideological developments, what Hoxha called, 'a fist to the revisionist Yugoslavs... because we are with them in an open war [ideological]'.¹⁶⁹ Regarding economic issues, contrary to Albanian expectations, Khrushchev made clear that he 'did not come here to talk about these issues', and then criticized and demolished most part of the Albanians' plans for developing the heavy industry. The communist regime in Albania wanted at all costs to fill the gap – which was a gap with the course of history – and develop their heavy industry to exploit the national resources. But Khrushchev questioned the economic profitability of these industrial projects – for instance he reminded that Albanian oil had high sulphur, which made its quality low. Yet he left room for 'further studies' and possible revision in the near future. On the other hand, Khrushchev suggested a full concentration on agricultural projects and perhaps light industry with focus on the production of consumer goods. Already in 1956, he had suggested to Hoxha a complete concentration of the economic efforts on agriculture

¹⁶⁸ "Records of the Politburo, 12 May 1959, regarding the program for the visit of the Soviet delegation of the party and the government headed by Nikita Khrushchev that will come on 25 May", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1959, D15; In particular see "On some issues and requests regarding the economic plan that will be discussed with the Soviet delegation headed by Khrushchev, that will visit our country" in Records of the Politburo, Tirana 15 May 1959", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1959, D16.

¹⁶⁹ "Records of the Politburo, 06 June 1959, where comrade Enver Hoxha reported on the talks held with Nikita Khrushchev, during his visit in Albania, Khrushchev remarks and suggestions on our problems in industry, agriculture and army", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1959, D18, f.2.

with priority on wheat, citrus, cotton, and cattle breeding. Now, that position was further cemented when he was most impressed by Albanian climate and its geographical position. Now, he suggested ‘to make treasure of your land, sun and water’ to produce products to sell in foreign markets – firstly, of course, the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁰ Khrushchev audaciously also asked to revise the Albanian policy towards Yugoslavia. Hoxha responded passively to the Soviet demands, since he did not have much choice.

Agriculture was not the only focus, however, of Khrushchev’s visit. He was very impressed by the southern coast of the country, particularly Vlora bay and the nearby island of Sazan, where the mountains descend steeply onto the Adriatic coast – with the clear sky it is possible to see the Italian coast just around forty miles on the other side of the Adriatic Sea. There he committed to build a joint naval military base – which Hoxha claimed to have requested in Stalin’s time.¹⁷¹ Eventually the base would pass to Albanian control once it was properly equipped and the Albanian army properly trained. From a Soviet point of view, this base was Moscow’s bridgehead in Southeastern Europe, which could be used as leverage towards NATO and the West. In fact, it was precisely during this visit in Albania that Fidel Castro was consolidating his political power in Cuba, which eventually leaned to the Soviet side, opening the door to one of the most dangerous crises of Cold War history. But Soviet attention to faraway places such as Cuba also pushed Moscow to rationalize its foreign economic assistance, and Albania had to pay its price – which explains in part the Soviet Union’s refusal to back Albania’s expensive plans for the developing of the heavy industry.

At the time of his visit to Albania, Khrushchev knew of Hoxha’s increasing ties with China and might have interpreted it as a tactic to get concessions from Moscow. Khrushchev however, did not cede. Either by declining or procrastinating on Hoxha’s requests for support, Khrushchev perhaps wanted to study the Albanian

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., f.1-19; Later in November 1960, Khrushchev sustained that he had ‘ordered that everything should be done in order that Albania becomes a garden’ referring to the economic plan focused in agriculture. In “Report of the Meeting of the delegation of the Party of Labor of Albania with Leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 12 November 1960”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, V. 1960, L.14/1, D24.

¹⁷¹ Report of the meeting of the Albanian Labor party delegation with leaders of the communist party of the Soviet Union, 12 November 1960. This document was made possible with support from the Leon Levy Foundation, in <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117494>, (last accessed 25 Feb. 2017).

situation with Beijing. An additional blow came later for Hoxha when in February 1960 Albania requested from the Soviet Union, and other East European governments, a loan of 500 million rubles exclusively in consumer goods, in addition to the possible loans of the FYP 1961-65. Hoxha argued that ‘the request comes due to the low level of living standards of Albanian people, [and] ... it should be modest if compared with the Soviet possibilities’.¹⁷² Khrushchev turned down Hoxha’s request by the end of April 1960 in a very short letter which did not even mention what Albania had requested, but instead granted a delay of fifteen years of the repayments of the instalments of previous loans Soviet Union had provided. Khrushchev, ironically, argued ‘you can use those resources to increase the living standards of your people’.¹⁷³ For Albania, Soviet doors in Moscow were closing.

In this situation, Hoxha, who had mastered the skill to march along parallel roads, looked for other options. In January 1959, a barter agreement of 55 million rubles between Albania and China was signed in Beijing for the FYP 1961-65, and aimed at increasing investments in industry.¹⁷⁴ Only a month before the visit of Khrushchev in Albania, Hoxha had sent to China his most faithful lieutenant, Hysni Kapo, with the task of ‘studying the Chinese experience in building socialism’.¹⁷⁵ It is significant how, for Hoxha at this point, China had emerged as a model regarding domestic policies. In fact, he had always followed a model, but he remained faithful only to the model that better assured his power: the communist party had been founded with the Yugoslavian model in mind. When Belgrade undermined Hoxha’s leadership, he changed course and adopted Stalin’s model until Khrushchev ditched it. And now Mao’s model had emerged. Kapo’s reports of his talks with Chinese leaders – which were not confined to economic problems, the expressed aim of his visit – were impressive, in particular when compared to those Hoxha had in Albania with Soviet leaders. For Mao’s turn left policy, the year 1959 was a difficult one, and

¹⁷² “Correspondence during 1960 between the PLA and the CPSU regarding the request of Albania to Soviet Union, and other governments of the People’s democracies, for a loan intended to increase the living standards of the people”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, V. 1960, D11.

¹⁷³ Ibid., f.10.

¹⁷⁴ Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania: “About the relations of our country with China”, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1960, D110, f.3-4.

¹⁷⁵ “Letters of the correspondence between the PLA and the CCP regarding the visit to China of a delegation of the PLA, headed by the member of the Politburo, comrade Hysni Kapo, with the task of studying Chinese experience of the building of socialism”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1959, D1.

he needed allies. First, when an uprising erupted against the Chinese regime in spring 1959, in Tibet, Soviet standing came as a shock to Beijing. The Dalai Lama and part of the Buddhist clergy of Tibet, together with thousands of people, fled to India. India openly accused China of repression in Tibet. The crisis later in 1962 escalated into border clashes between China and India regarding the McMahon line. The Soviet Union initially showed solidarity with Beijing, but soon declared neutrality in this matter, for fear of pushing India towards the western camp.¹⁷⁶ For China, this was a gift to the United States ahead of the planned visit of Khrushchev, as for ‘the first time, United States became a major issue in the evolving Sino-Soviet disagreements’.¹⁷⁷ In summer 1959, Peng Dehuai, Chinese minister of defense questioned, effectively so, the economic results of the Great Leap Forward, and he praised the Soviet economic system instead. He was purged after a dramatic conference in Lushan in August 1959, and materials on this issue were relayed to Albania.¹⁷⁸

In this context, while Soviet leaders showed resistance and reticence regarding Albanian economic development, Chinese leaders in Beijing instead told Kapo that their economic principle is ‘to walk with two feets [*sic*], which mean develop in parallel the industry and the agriculture, the heavy industry and the light industry’. Significantly, Zhou Enlai told Kapo that ‘you have requested to us very few things... our assistance to you is not a big deal for us’.¹⁷⁹ The most important aspects here were Zhou Enlai’s remarks regarding Albania’s ideological standing. He stated that ‘China knows well your position... we stand on the same side, we are a united front against revisionists’. In this sense, ‘your [ideological] struggle against Yugoslavia is absolutely right’ as you are encircled by dangerous enemies.¹⁸⁰ This position was reinforced by Mao as well. In his meeting with the Albanian delegation in mid-May

¹⁷⁶ Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959*, 328–335.

¹⁷⁷ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 135.

¹⁷⁸ Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 2. The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 187-251; “Decisions of the Eighth Plenum of the CCP. On the mistakes of the anti-party group headed by Peng Dehuai”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1959, D7.

¹⁷⁹ “Notes of the meeting of the Albanian delegation in China headed by Hysni Kapo with Chinese leaders Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, and others on 15 April 1959”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1959, D2.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, f.1.

1959, Mao praised ‘the bravery with which you stand against Titoism and Yugoslavian revisionism’. Mao endorsed Albania’s political struggle against Yugoslavia again in June 1960, when meeting an Albanian delegation, telling them that ‘Albania is not alone [against Yugoslavia], behind you stands all the socialist camp’.¹⁸¹ Mao however, mentioned also the Soviet assistance to both China and Albania, and the fact that, at that moment ‘we are tied to the Moscow declaration’.¹⁸² A tie that was soon broken.

Conclusion

Enver Hoxha had thought that Albania would have a central role in Soviet Union’s policy towards Southeastern Europe. Albania’s inclusion in the WPO, and the subsequent construction of the military base in southern Albania, spoke in this sense. He also thought that because of this role, Soviet Union would include Albania in the making of the Soviet agenda in issues regarding the socialist camp. Khrushchev, not only did not consult Tirana on such issues, but he undermined Hoxha’s rule by promoting both, the destalinization process, and the rapprochement with Yugoslavia. It was this latter step that definitely jeopardized Hoxha’s trust in Moscow. Khrushchev in fact prioritized the rapprochement with Yugoslavia, in order to reintegrate Belgrade within the communist camp. Between Albania and Yugoslavia, from a strategic point of view, Khrushchev had seen correctly that Belgrade was fundamental for Moscow’s control of the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, which was also the Southwestern flank of Soviet Union’s area of influence in Europe. In this way, Khrushchev would have recovered what Stalin had lost by expelling Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948. This removed that centrality that Hoxha’s Albania had acquired in that area by acting as a counterbalance, under Soviet leadership, of Tito’s Yugoslavia.

The events in Hungary further convinced Hoxha that Khrushchev did not regard Albania as a strategic point as had been considered by Stalin. Furthermore, Tito initially had been a supporter of the reformers that caused the turmoil in Hungary. Hoxha feared that Yugoslavia might foment similar policies in Albania. He became

¹⁸¹ “Records of the meeting of the Albanian delegation headed by Liri Belishova and Haxhi Lleshi with comrade Mao Zedong in Hangzhou, 7 June 1960”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D3, f.5.

¹⁸² “Notes from the meeting of the Albanian delegation headed by Hysni Kapo with the Chairman of the CCP, comrade Mao Zedong, on 13 May 1959”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1959, D5.

even more convinced of this by the fact that the Soviet Union completely bypassed Albania in its talks with Yugoslavia regarding the Hungarian events. The Soviet leaders did so even when Albania asked to have a say on these issues. In this context, China emerged rapidly as the new chance for Hoxha to reassure the legitimacy of his regime. Chinese leaders, after initial hesitations, considered Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin, and the reformism in general, as an open door for counter-revolution to emerge. Mao praised Hoxha, and Albania's standing towards the events in eastern Europe. In this way China gave the space Hoxha had expected to have from Khrushchev. But most important, Mao emerged to be the new defender of Marxism that Khrushchev instead, in Hoxha's eyes, had seriously undermined. In this way, both countries found to be on the same line against the full reformism of Khrushchev, and to defend Stalin. For China, Albania emerged as a golden possibility to challenge Khrushchev from a European position, central area of Cold War division. The last factor that determined Hoxha's close up with China, in addition to ideological considerations, was China's readiness to assist economically Albania. Indeed, China not only showed availability to provide assistance to Albania, but it did encourage Albania to prioritize the industry. This says much of how China had understood Hoxha's sensitivity to the developing of the industry. Perhaps something they later regretted, considering how insatiable Hoxha became in the coming years towards China.

Therefore, for Hoxha, China emerged as an alternative to Soviet Union regarding both, ideological and political axis, and economic model. This even more after that in 1959, contrary to the expectations of Hoxha, Khrushchev during his visit in Albania reaffirmed his disagreement with Hoxha regarding the relations with Yugoslavia, asking to improve them, and regarding the economic model, asking to concentrate in the agriculture. For Hoxha, who had had enough of Khrushchev's hold over his country, China was the opportunity he was waiting for to end the alliance with Soviet Union, which by now had become inconvenient if not an obstacle to his plans for Albania's future. The events that followed, shows how Hoxha managed to find a way out from the Soviet joke without risking a Soviet intervention which could have possibly ended Hoxha's rule.

CHAPTER TWO

BREAKING AN ALLIANCE, BUILDING AN ALLIANCE, 1960-61: THE COLLAPSE OF THE UNITY OF THE COMMUNIST CAMP

Introduction

There were three forums during 1960 at which the Sino-Soviet split manifested with great evidence, which also collectively and definitively sealed the alliance between China and Albania. First, the meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in Beijing at the beginning of June. Second, the meeting of the communist parties at the Eighth Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party in late June, and third, the Moscow Conference of eighty-one communist parties in November the same year. Though these meetings alone did not entirely bring about the Sino-Soviet split, they effectively ditched Soviet-Albanian relations. For those few scholars, here above mentioned, who earlier have conducted research on this alliance, it was in these events that lays the foundations of the Sino-Albanian alliance. As shown in the previous chapter, the foundations of the Sino-Albanian entente lays in the aftermath of the Twentieth CPSU Congress, followed by the destalinization process and the East European turmoil. I instead, argue here, that the period 1960-1961 is a conclusive process of both the Soviet-Albanian split, which had begun with the disagreements since the rise to the leadership of Khrushchev, and his undermining of Hoxha's regime, and of the establishing of the Soviet-Albanian alliance. Related to these arguments follows the other: paradoxically Albania's best entente with China was precisely in the period 1956-61 – when the alliance was not yet established – contrary to the later period when attrition would be continuously persistent. The destalinization process and its immediate consequences pushed Beijing and Tirana to build a united front in opposing the reformation process that Khrushchev had instigated. Therefore, in this chapter I show how the events during these two years were tactically used by Hoxha as an opportunity to pursue his strategy of disengagement from the cumbersome Soviet ally. In the same time, he skillfully frustrated the Soviet leaders pushing them to fully expose their positions towards Albania, for then give to Hoxha arguments he used internally to convince his

Politburo that the Soviet Union had become a threat rather than a protector. It is through these events that he channeled his uneasiness with Moscow, and established the alliance with Beijing instead. Contrary to Soviet Union's standing towards Albania during the turmoil in East Europe, when Moscow had avoided consulting with Hoxha, China, on the other hand, either coordinated, or informed Hoxha of all the steps and the backstage of the Sino-Soviet disagreements.

The process of the split with Moscow, however, would not be easy for Hoxha and his leadership. In fact, part of the Albanian leadership was known to be strong supporters of Soviet Union. In addition, after Hoxha's request, which dated before Stalin's death, Khrushchev had started the building of the WPO military base in Vlora bay, in southern Albania. Although a WPO base, yet the soldiers stationing in Vlora, in addition to the Albanians, were all Soviets, managing powerful weapons. Albania's disengagement with Soviet Union would be potentially difficult also because of a large number of cadres and Albanian officials of all ranks that for years had attended Soviet academies. Documents shows that Soviet Union looked for the possibility to open a breach within the Albanian leadership, precisely counting on those Albanian officials that had been educated in Soviet Union. Therefore, Hoxha's challenge to the Soviet leadership, and his subsequent decision to ditch the alliance with Moscow, could have been a risky step. Yet Hoxha used skillfully the combination between many factors: China's support for him; the Soviet difficulties in international relations after Moscow's intervention in Hungary; Albania's geographical position, which would have made possible but undesirable any Soviet military intervention to overthrow Hoxha; Soviet attention to the emerging Cuban issue.

The Meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Beijing

To participate in the meeting, which was scheduled to begin on 31 May 1960, Albania sent a delegation headed by Gogo Nushi, representing Albanian trade unions. Another delegation from Tirana, apparently unrelated to the first but travelling in the same time and headed by Liri Belishova and Haxhi Lleshi, all old comrades of Hoxha since the war, toured China. The delegations landed in Beijing on May 30, and Nushi prepared the matters drafted prior, and slated for discussion the following day: the international situation and the role of the unions, and their

contribution in the struggle against colonialism. In the meeting, according to Albanian accounts, there were to be at least 300 delegates from all over the world – mainly from the communist bloc. To the surprise of many, however, the meeting did not begin the next day. Despite the fact that Albanian leaders knew of the Sino-Soviet divergences, it was in Beijing where they witnessed for the first time how serious they were.¹

On 1 June 1960, Chinese officials informed Albanian delegates that the delay was due to disagreements between China and the Soviet Union regarding the draft of the report to be submitted to the conference of the unions. Liu Ningyi, the Chinese representative of the unions, asked to amend parts of the draft, which his Soviet counterpart did not agree. These disputes – at least as the Chinese told the Albanians – were caused by the Soviets' lack of acknowledgement of the Chinese achievements during the Great Leap Forward campaign, which Soviets had criticized heavily. Trying to understand both sides, the Albanian representative of the Unions asked to meet also with Soviet representatives, who instead told him that the disputes came about from Chinese views on issues such as the peaceful coexistence (that China refused), peaceful transition, or the general disarmament. The Soviet Union promptly sent a letter on June 2 to the ruling parties, and others, inviting them to discuss the international situation during the works of the Romanian Workers' Party congress scheduled twenty days later. The meeting in Beijing eventually began on June 5, and the Albanian delegation noted how in the days before the meeting, 'Chinese officials met with many delegations trying to bring them on their side'.² That same day some seventeen delegations were invited to have dinner with the Chinese leaders, including Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi. The aim of the dinner, according to Zhou, was 'to inform you of the disagreements we have with Soviet Union on issues of line and principles concerning our epoch'.³ Then Deng Xiaoping, in more than an hour long speech, explained how, contrary to the Soviets, China

¹ "Radiograms between the PLA First Secretary Enver Hoxha and comrade Gogo Nushi: On the delay of the meeting and the suggestions of the Chinese representatives on the reports to be discussed at the Council of the World Federation of Trade Unions", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D4, f.1-6 and the report of Gogo Nushi once back in Tirana, f.6-15.

² "Radiograms between the First Secretary Enver Hoxha and comrade Gogo Nushi, June 1960", in *ibid.*, f.9.

³ *Ibid.* Participated mainly those from socialist countries, but also from France, Italy, Indonesia, India, Uruguay, and others.

‘considers our time the last stage of imperialism and capitalism... an epoch of the proletarian revolution’.⁴ After that, Zhou Enlai took to the floor, but many delegations, among which the Soviet, opposed the continuing of these discussions because ‘these issues should be discussed in a bilateral meeting among the CPSU and the CCP’. Zhou Enlai accepted but argued that ‘we only want to clarify all the Soviet objections to the Great Leap Forward and other Chinese domestic policies’.⁵ The next day, Zhou Enlai met with the Albanian delegation and told them that China considered ‘impossible the peaceful coexistence with imperialism’. He added also that divergences with the Soviet Union ‘already existed, but now they are becoming visible’. The Albanian delegates in Beijing noted ‘a marked anti-Soviet tone in Chinese standing’. Albanian leadership showed extreme interest in the emerging Sino-Soviet disputes, but also a calculated caution before taking any position. Hoxha instructed his comrades to ‘avoid any comment’, and not to take sides in the dispute.⁶

Ultimately, China renounced the plan to include its views in the final communiqué of the meeting, a step that Andropov, some days later in Bucharest, attributed to Albania’s refusal to sign a document that did not reflect unity between the Soviet Union and China.⁷ Although ideologically leaning towards Chinese leadership, Enver Hoxha decided to advance without openly supporting Beijing, as shown by the letters sent to Belishova in China, suggesting not just caution, but ‘to emphasize the decisive role of Soviet Union’.⁸ His closeness to China instead, was shown by his praise of the Chinese position on the issue of peaceful coexistence,

⁴ “Notes of the conference organized by the CCP CC on 05 June 1960 with some delegates of the World Federation of Trade Unions”, in *ibid.*, f.16-20.

⁵ In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D4, f.10. On similar terms this meeting is accounted also by Lorenz Lüthi in *The Sino-Soviet split*, 167-68.

⁶ “Urgent: Telegram of Enver Hoxha to Gogo Nushi in Beijing, 07 June 1960” in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D4, f.4.

⁷ “Telegram of Hysni Kapo from Bucharest sent to Enver Hoxha, 21 June 1960, informing of the meeting he had with the Soviet representative of the CPSU, Yuri Andropov, on 20 June 1960, who informed Kapo of the divergences surged between China and the Soviet Union, in “Correspondence during the year 1960 between the PLA First Secretary, comrade Enver Hoxha, and comrade Hysni Kapo who headed the Albanian delegation at the Third Congress of the Romanian Workers Party and the meeting of the communist and working parties in Bucharest”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtoresh në Bukuresht[Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers’ Parties in Bucharest] – Qershor 1960, D1, f.10.

⁸ “Telegram of Enver Hoxha, 04 June 1960, sent to Liri Belishova that was in Beijing, instructing her on the content of her speeches with Chinese leaders in Beijing”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D2.

‘because otherwise how communists could assist the countries struggling for national liberation’ if they would have to commit to the peaceful relations with imperialism. Liri Belishova however, who among the Albanian leaders was the most pro-Soviet, interpreting Hoxha’s messages as support for the Soviet side, reported to the Soviet ambassador in Beijing what Chinese leaders had told her about the disputes.⁹ For this reason, once the Soviet-Albanian split became evident a few months later, she was the first to pay the price, being condemned and expelled from the party and from political offices. In Beijing, however, China had reached its objective to bring to the world’s attention its position on the most important questions regarding the international communist movement. In the Politburo in Tirana, Hoxha analyzed the situation, and officially maintained equal distance between Beijing and Moscow. From the records of the Politburo has emerged that Hoxha was informed by the Soviets that disagreements between Moscow and Beijing persisted on, and were limited to, issues concerning the international relations between camps. Yet he preferred to ‘see carefully how they [Soviets and Chinese] pose these issues in detail and then we will say our opinion’.¹⁰ In this sense Hoxha sought to first see the road ahead in its entirety, in order to better calculate his steps. To this aim, when Beijing informed Albania that most of their members did not wish to attend the Bucharest meeting, Hoxha strongly urged the Chinese part to participate.

Bucharest, June 1960: A Twofold Split

The great convergence between China and Albania, and the great divergence between China and the Soviet Union, and between Moscow and Tirana emerged very clearly at the meeting of the representatives of the communist parties that participated in the congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party in Bucharest.¹¹ In a letter sent by Soviets in early June (Albania received it on 4 June 1960), the Soviet Union mentioned the necessity for consultations among the communist parties on the international situation, in light also of the disagreements between the Soviet Union

⁹ Ibid., f.8-9.

¹⁰ “Records of the Politburo, 06 June 1960”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D14, f.3, f.9.

¹¹ For the first account of Albanian role during these events see William E. Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1963).

and the United States.¹² The meeting eventually took place between 24 and 26 June 1960, right at the margins of the Third Romanian Workers' Party Congress (20-25 June). Soon, however, this letter was interpreted, at least in hindsight by Albania, as a duplicitous means of convening the communist parties to discuss the Sino-Soviet divergences.¹³ In fact, for Albania it had become clear that Soviet intentions from the beginning were to turn the Bucharest meeting into a forum of revenge against China for its attempt to gain support from the communist parties during the WFTU in Beijing just days earlier.

Immediately after the Albanian delegation's arrival in Bucharest, Yuri Andropov, head of the CPSU's CC International Liaison Department, together with a member of the Romanian government, Alexandru Moghioros, met with Kapo for the first time on 20 June 1960.¹⁴ But instead of mentioning disputes regarding international relations, as mentioned in the letter of invitation, Andropov repeated all the Sino-Soviet disagreements since 1956.¹⁵ Moghioros reinforced Andropov's point by labelling Mao 'a warmonger' for not accepting the peaceful coexistence; he accused China of taking the 'wrong course' and of disloyalty, referring to the events in Beijing earlier.¹⁶ Albania's official position had not changed from Beijing and so Kapo had instructions to take no side, but reminded Andropov how harmful these divergences were for the unity of the socialist camp. The fact that almost all the leaders of the communist countries of eastern Europe were participants in Bucharest

¹² "Records of the Politburo, 06 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D14.

¹³ "Report on 11 July 1960 of the head of the Albanian delegation, comrade Hysni Kapo, who participated at the Third Congress of the Romanian Workers Party, 20-22 June, and the meeting of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties in Bucharest 24-26 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtores në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D8.

¹⁴ "Telegram of Hysni Kapo sent to Enver Hoxha, 20 June 1960, informing him of his talk with Yuri Andropov and Alexandru Moghioros, where they informed Kapo of the disagreements with China", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtores në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D1, f. 4-12.

¹⁵ "Letters of the CCP to PLA informing of the disagreements between CCP and CPSU", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D7, f.1-93 (in Chinese language), and D7/a, f.245-361; "Records of the talks between the CCP and CPSU delegations in Moscow, 17-22 September 1960, relayed to Albania", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D9, f.1-140.

¹⁶ In AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtores në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D1, f. 4-12 Andropov mentioned, among many issues, Sino-Soviet divergences on China's standing against the peaceful coexistence with the capitalist camp, Chinese refusal of the peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism, and Chinese policy of pursuing the cult of individual.

reinforced Albanian suspicion that this meeting had been prepared in advance, that its aim differed from that stated in the letter, and that Albania once again had been left at the margins by the Soviet Union. In fact, in Bucharest, Hoxha was almost the only leader absent – which had been his decision. But the fact remains that he had just received a short letter in which no information was provided on the nature or content of this meeting except Soviet-American disagreements. Since the discussion switched to problems that had emerged after the Twentieth CPSU Congress – issues on which Albania was now closer to Beijing – Hoxha eventually choose to abort his plans to attend the meeting he saw as a Soviet maneuver to isolate Beijing. Most important, he wanted to survey of the situation and be well prepared to defy Moscow only after full exposure of its position. Nonetheless, he remained continuously informed through intense correspondence with Hysni Kapo, head of the Albanian delegation. On this point, based on the *Selected Works* later published by Hoxha, Lüthi states that ‘the Albanian party was struggling over how to respond to the situation’.¹⁷ On the contrary, what apparently seemed to be a struggle was actually a calculated tactic to frustrate the now inconvenient partner, so as to force and test Soviet leadership’s determination, or lack thereof, to interfere with China and Albania, indicated by the correspondence between Hoxha and Kapo as Albania awaited China’s seeking a more definitive alliance with Albania.

Regarding the Soviet attempt at bringing Albania to its side on key issues, which had undermined his very rule since 1956, Hoxha instructed Kapo to respond firmly by rejecting the third portion of the meeting, Moghioros’ ‘...lessons of the right or wrong course of China. Moghioros can go and sell his goods in another market, not to Albania’.¹⁸ More specifically, on the Sino-Soviet quarrel, Hoxha’s tactic since the very beginning consisted in taking no side – no matter how the situation evolved. But Albanian refusal to unconditionally support the Soviet Union was already a challenge to Moscow, and did not pass unobserved as the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov told

¹⁷ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 171.

¹⁸ “Top-Secret: Telegram sent by Enver Hoxha to Hysni Kapo, 22 June 1960, informing Kapo of his views on his meeting with Andropov and on the issues he had raised”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtorë në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers’ Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D1, f.19-26.

Kapo that ‘you Albanians do not agree’, with Moscow.¹⁹ Indeed, the statement was true. When the Chinese and Soviet views became a matter of public contention in Bucharest, Albania took the chance to criticize the way Moscow and Beijing were dealing with these disputes – a criticism that per se was addressed to the Soviet Union as the provocateur of the situation. In his interventions, Kapo, after disapproving of China’s maneuver earlier in Beijing, affirmed that before involving other communist parties in resolving disagreements, Moscow and Beijing should have established bilateral talks in order to settle their disputes.²⁰ Even when other parties (and parts) were involved, for Albania, ‘both sides were trying to explain to others their position through gossip, by word of mouth, in informal talks, from ear to ear’, thus jeopardizing the unity of the camp.²¹ The Soviet Union instead challenged Albania, trying to force it to take a position. During those days, Mikoyan had spoken to two Albanian diplomats in Moscow, and mentioning Sino-Soviet disputes, had stated ‘I am surprised that the leadership [Hoxha] did not inform you of these disputes’. He was referring to the conversation of Mikoyan with Hoxha and Shehu on the Sino-Soviet disputes in May.²² Furious at this statement, Hoxha instructed Kapo to remind Andropov that since it had been Mikoyan who had asked Hoxha to keep secret the conversation, then ‘our party keeps always its given word, and does not treat these issues as a public gossip’. The most important point for Hoxha was that ‘Albania notes two dangerous tendencies in the Soviet standing: first, underestimation for revisionism [Yugoslavia], second, the tendency to blame the

¹⁹ “Telegram of Hysni Kapo from Bucharest sent to Enver Hoxha, 21 June 1960 at 9pm, informing of the short conversation he had with the Bulgarian leader Todor Živkov, during an informal meeting and informing of the speech of Khrushchev and the reactions to it”, in *ibid.*, f.14-16.

²⁰ “Speeches of the head of the Albanian delegation to the Bucharest meeting of the representatives of the communist and workers’ parties, 24-26 June 1960”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtoresh në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers’ Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D3. At the beginning Kapo expressed Albanian disagreement with China for how Beijing had seized the opportunity to talk of these issues in Beijing in an event that apparently was not related.

²¹ “Top-Secret: Telegram sent by Enver Hoxha to Hysni Kapo in Bucharest, 22 June 1960, expressing Albanian view on the Sino-Soviet disputes and instructing Kapo of the Albanian standing on this issue”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtoresh në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers’ Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D1, f.19-26.

²² Rather than a conversation it was a short briefing where Hoxha did not expose any of his views on the matter.

[Albanian] leadership' by insinuating secrets between the leader and the Politburo members.²³

Contrary to their letter of invitation, the sixty-eight page document that the Soviets distributed in the afternoon of 23 June, just one night before the meeting of all parties, focused on issues concerning Chinese domestic policies, such as the Great Leap Forward or the Hundred Flowers campaign.²⁴ In fact, the next day, Peng Zhen wondered rhetorically, in the presence of Khrushchev, whether the aim of this meeting was, 'to exchange views on international issues, or judge and accuse our party? [for its domestic policies]'.²⁵ Peng Zhen had known already by 17 June of the document – although not its content – during his stopover in Moscow on his way to Bucharest. There he had 'battled over international politics' with Kozlov, a CPSU Presidium member, who warned him of issues 'that we will discuss... after we have arrived in Bucharest'.²⁶ The document was urgently sent to Albania, where Hoxha noted his views in handwriting over the draft.²⁷ In Hoxha's handwritten notes, he clearly stands on China's side. For instance, to the Soviet remark that 'we cannot agree with Chinese declarations such as "we should not fear war"', Hoxha noted that 'to imperialists we should show firmness not flatteries', rejecting the Soviet claim and embracing Chinese view. To the Soviet affirmation of the possibility of peaceful coexistence between countries with different social systems, Hoxha wondered 'how should the class struggle develop then'. Regarding the general world disarmament, Hoxha noted that 'for me this is quite an illusion', as China had also affirmed. He

²³ *Top-Secret*: AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtoresh në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D1, f.20-21.

²⁴ "Informative material distributed by the CPSU in the meeting of Bucharest, 21 June 1960: "On the different views that exists between the CPSU and the CCP on important issues of foreign policy, on the ideological front, and on the building of socialism", and others", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtoresh në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D2.

²⁵ "The meeting of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties in Bucharest, 24 June 1960", in "Records of the meeting of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties in Bucharest, 24 -26 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtoresh në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D7, f.1.

²⁶ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 169–70.

²⁷ In AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtoresh në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D2. Hoxha outlined with the red pen the most important points, and next to them in the blank page wrote his opinions.

reinforced, some pages later, that this was a soviet ‘lie... is this not but a propagandistic issue?’. When, in the report, the Soviets mentioned how they had always defended the right course of the Marxist line, citing their ‘unmasking of the Yugoslavian revisionism’, Hoxha noted how the Soviet position towards Belgrade ‘has been opportunistic’ instead.²⁸ Clearly, Hoxha at this point was ideologically on Beijing’s side. Yet, officially he refused to declare his position.

The next day, 24 June 1960, after receiving another telegram from Hoxha, Kapo met with Andropov, to whom he transmitted Hoxha’s message for the Soviets: that Albania did not take lesson of right and wrong [referring to Moghioros affirmation that China was wrong], and that they stood firm on the decision that these divergences should be discussed in Sino-Soviet bilateral talks. This came immediately before the Soviet attack on China on that day, in the meeting of the twelve ruling parties. To Albania’s suggestion of bilateral Sino-Soviet talks, Andropov answered that this was not a bilateral issue, but a matter of all the communist parties, because Beijing had violated the Moscow declaration (of 1957). Andropov pressured the Albanians, implying this meeting may have been their possible last chance to align. He mentioned that regardless of the coming conference in Moscow, since all parties were already in Romania, it was there they wanted to resolve these issues for good. After this meeting, Hoxha instructed Kapo to not sign any document or communiqué that was not first studied by Tirana – in fact he wanted to see if Beijing would sign it first. He also authorized Kapo to make known to others ‘what you have told Andropov’.²⁹

But the situation was evolving rapidly, and with the intention of bringing participants to the Soviet side, Khrushchev wanted the parties to speak in the meeting just some hours after they had received the material. According to Kapo, ‘the way things are evolving here are quite strange... I told Andropov that we don’t agree with this situation... The fact is that the other socialist countries, their leaders, must have agreed before on everything... The Soviets are concerned if we will speak against

²⁸ “Informative material distributed by the CPSU in the meeting of Bucharest, 21 June 1960: On the different views that exists between the CPSU and the CCP on important issues of foreign policy, on the ideological front, and on the building of socialism, and others”, in *ibid.*, f.17-40.

²⁹ “Top-Secret: Telegram sent by Enver Hoxha to Hysni Kapo in Bucharest, 24 June 1960”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtore në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers’ Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D1, f.36-37.

China or not. They have organized everything in the way that others must speak against China'.³⁰ It is not clear if Peng and Kapo discussed this issue – years later they affirmed to have not³¹ – but it is significant that a telegram with similar content was sent by Peng to Beijing.³² Among the European socialist countries, and among all the other world communist parties, Albania was the only one that did not support the Soviet Union.³³ The North Korean and Vietnamese representatives, although refusing to attack China, remained in silence.³⁴ To persuade Albania, Khrushchev sent Andropov again, around midnight of 24 June, to speak with Kapo before the opening of the next session. He told Kapo that 'Khrushchev is very concerned of Albania's consideration that these disputes are first of all between the two parties... the issue is that China has gone against the Moscow declaration'. Kapo reported that 'the point is that they [Soviets] want to know which side we will take'.³⁵ Kapo repeated to Andropov the official standing of Albania. At the plenary meeting next day, Kapo delivered an official speech that reflected Hoxha's instructions, which moved the attention to procedural issues such as the necessity of CPSU-CCP bilateral meetings, and the necessity for the unity of the camp. Albania's stubborn position to not support officially any side was frustrating for the Soviet leadership.

Khrushchev exacerbated the situation when he exposed publically his frustration and disappointment with the Albanian standing. Khrushchev spoke at the end, and when attacking China he turned towards Kapo, wondering aloud '[do you share my view] or not, comrade Kapo?'. Kapo, who had been instructed to respond firmly 'to

³⁰ "Telegram of Hysni Kapo sent to Enver Hoxha, 24 June 1960, 4pm, informing of the situation in the meeting of Bucharest", in *ibid.*, f.39; "Remarks regarding the meeting, 29 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtorë në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D7, f.83-86.

³¹ Such affirmations came during Kapo's trip to China in 1962. Documents are in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.42.

³² Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 170.

³³ China was attacked by most of the participants, including the African, Asian and Latin American delegations: "Records of the meeting of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties in Bucharest, 24-26 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtorë në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D7, f.1-85.

³⁴ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 171.

³⁵ "Telegram from Bucharest sent by Hysni Kapo to Enver Hoxha, 24 June 1960, midnight, informing of his meeting with Yuri Andropov", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtorë në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D1, f.40.

possible accusations' (and provocations), promptly took the floor, trying to calm Khrushchev by saying 'please, I just have expressed the view of our party'. The quarrel followed with Khrushchev affirming provocatively '[since] I don't get to understand the Chinese comrades, perhaps we should send you [Albanians]'.³⁶ Kapo replied in a polemic tone that he considered this an accusation against his party. In a menacing tone, Khrushchev replied that 'then I want to express the point of view of our party. We have taken note of your standing, but you do not want to take note of ours instead'.³⁷ Therefore, the meeting on the Sino-Soviet disputes resulted into a Soviet-Albanian quarrel.³⁸ Kapo responded to Khrushchev by affirming again the official standing of Albania, but took the chance also to remind him of issues that revealed part of reasons of the real dissent between Tirana and Moscow. Kapo pointed out that Moscow did not have a clear standing against Yugoslavia, 'which only in the last years has sent 194 spies to our country... and you know very well that Belgrade sells to United States every possible information it can collect from our camp'. At the end he affirmed the need for a conference of communist parties and stated in a tone, also menacing, that 'there our party will state clearly its view'.³⁹ Curiously after this polemic, Kapo's telegrams to Hoxha denoted an ironic standing towards Khrushchev, who is mentioned as 'the big' which in Albanian can sardonically mean "the boss".⁴⁰ At the end all the parts decided to appoint an Editorial Board, (consisting of the twelve ruling parties and fourteen largest parties of the non-communist camp), which would convene in Moscow in early October,

³⁶ "Records of the meeting of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties in Bucharest, 24-26 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtore në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D7, f.73.

³⁷ "Speeches of the head of the Albanian delegation to the Bucharest meeting of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties, 24-26 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtore në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D3, f.31; "Records of the meeting of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties, Sunday 26 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtore në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D7, f.73.

³⁸ "Telegram from Bucharest that Hysni Kapo sent to Enver Hoxha, 24 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, Mbledhja e Përfaqësuesve të Partive Komuniste e Punëtore në Bukuresht [Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Bucharest] – June 1960, D1, f.42-44.

³⁹ Ibid., f.43-44.

⁴⁰ "Telegram sent from Bucharest by Hysni Kapo to Enver Hoxha, 25 June 1960, 8.45pm" in ibid., f.48-49.

and draft the documents to be discussed at the conference of the communist parties in Moscow, eventually taking place in November 1960.

The Road to Moscow

William Griffith wondered in 1963, ‘when and how Albanians took their final decision to defy Khrushchev and ally with Peking’?⁴¹ The answer is that Albania had defied the Soviet Union on two unpublicized occasions: the meeting with the Soviet ambassador in November 1956, and the plenum in February 1957, both here above analyzed. More recently, for Lorenz Lüthi ‘It was only the outcome of the Albanian intraparty struggles in late summer [1960] that triggered a clear pro-Beijing line in Tirana’s stance’. Relying on Griffith and Biberaj, who wrote of the events in 1963 and 1985 respectively, Lüthi concludes that ‘Ultimately, Hoxha’s pro-Chinese policy was not the result of ideological concord but intraparty struggles and Khrushchev’s strong-arm tactics’.⁴² On the contrary, the archival documents suggest that the events in 1960 were not determinant, but rather consequential of a process of estrangement between Moscow and Tirana that had begun shortly after Stalin’s death.

Moreover, we now know, by 1960, no such intraparty struggle within the Albanian leadership was strong enough to challenge Hoxha’s position. Even when it seemed so, he prevented further escalation by purging, after 1956, many party members and high officials. Khrushchev’s denouncing Stalin and the events in Hungary had eroded further Albania’s ties with Moscow. Now, it was not a matter of if, but when and how the split would occur. With Khrushchev’s last steps, he gave this opportunity to Hoxha to move forward towards denouncing the alliance with Moscow. Yet in Bucharest Albania pursued caution rather than confrontation, and Hoxha’s instructions to Belishova to praise Soviet leadership of the communist camp during her stay in Beijing were just a calculated contradiction in Hoxha’s policy. In a way he was waiting for the best offer, and fully maximize the benefits, from the Sino-Soviet split. Meanwhile, his caution was a way to prevent Moscow from stretching relations with Belgrade – which could possibly have happened in case of Albania’s conflict with Moscow. The road to Moscow’s Conference went through a summer of intense contacts between Tirana, Moscow and Beijing. Clearly Albania

⁴¹ Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 41.

⁴² Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 202.

was on the verge of a break with the Soviet Union, but the leadership in Tirana waited for an opportune moment for the official split. In fact, the situation was not easy for Hoxha. In the military base of Vlora, hundreds of Soviet soldiers were stationed after the agreement reached in 1959 to build the joint military base. Moreover, Albania was tightly tied to the WPO and to a series of agreements with the Soviet Union and the East European bloc in general.

Yet from Tirana's viewpoint, the Soviet Union, and Khrushchev personally, had directly undermined Hoxha's rule by not supporting his policies. Additionally, the Soviet Union had impeded Hoxha's economic plans, thwarting his projects of industrialization, which in turn undermined the communist regime's long term project for the country's development. But the one issue stronger than any other in causing the Albanian-Soviet split, was Khrushchev's contradictory standing towards Yugoslavia. First courting Tito, then blaming him for the Hungarian events, and then again pursuing a pragmatic policy towards Belgrade, Khrushchev pushed Hoxha to think that the time might return when Tirana's road to Moscow must pass through Belgrade. For a short period in 1959, Hoxha thought that Khrushchev, by stretching even further the relations with Albania, he wanted to balance Tito. Khrushchev's visit to Albania in early 1959, and more importantly, the decision to build the naval base of Vlora, were interpreted in Tirana in this sense. At a time when Khrushchev had accused Tito of intervention in Hungary, Hoxha believed the military base of the WPO in Albania would provide a clear and definitive protection to Albania against any Yugoslavian interference, or possible expansionist ambitions that Belgrade may have retained. On the other hand, the existence of the naval base in Vlora could have also turned in a boomerang for Hoxha – Soviet direct intervention to overthrow him. But to avoid a permanent Soviet presence, Hoxha had been farsighted enough as to stipulate in the length of the Soviet army's stay in his country – the time necessary to build the infrastructure and train Albanian soldiers with the new technique. His plans designed that the base would become and remain a WPO naval base, managed and directed by Albania. The base had the advantage of giving Albania its first military advantage in a key area, with the most modern Soviet equipment, enabling Albania to exercise control over Otranto channel, the strip of sea where Albanian and Greek coasts face the Italian, and where the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea meet. Only through this channel could Yugoslavia access the Mediterranean Sea. Hoxha labelled years

later the base as the key to the Adriatic Sea through which ‘not even the Soviet fleet could pass’.⁴³

The events during summer 1960 reinforced Hoxha’s conviction that the alliance with the Soviet Union under Moscow’s conditions had come to an end. In fact, Moscow used the time between the Bucharest and Moscow conferences to pressure Albania, rejecting its economic requests. This came after a formal agreement had been reached in April 1959, when the Soviet Union granted a loan of 300 million rubles for the period 1961-65, but they had left to further negotiations to decide the annual barter agreements.⁴⁴ But, during summer 1960, when Albania, due to drought, struggled to provide the necessary amount of wheat for the population, two letters with request for assistance, one to the Soviet and the other to Chinese government were sent in mid-July by Albanian authorities. Only Beijing replied, providing fifty thousand tons of grain, which paradoxically China purchased in part from the Soviet Union.⁴⁵ China argued that this was a good way to thank Albania for its support in Bucharest.⁴⁶ Soviet rejection was a hard blow for Albania, especially if it was true, as Hoxha claimed sometime later to have been told by the Soviets: ‘the grain Albania needed was nothing but the amount the mice eat in Soviet warehouses’.⁴⁷

Moreover, when Albania asked to conclude the agreements on the annual quotas of exports for the FYP 1961-65, the Soviet government wanted the Albanian economic delegation to visit Moscow in November 1960, concurrent with the meeting of the communist parties – a way to test, and pressure Albania. In Moscow,

⁴³ The speech was addressed in 1982 to the parliament. It is available in youtube, and also in the archives of the party.

⁴⁴ “Protocol of the talks between the delegations of Albania and Soviet Union regarding the exchange of goods and some issues concerning the economic collaboration in the period 1961-65”, in AQSH, Ministry of Trade, F.503-504, V. 1961, D256, f.1-2.

⁴⁵ “Protocol between the Govt. of the PRC and the Govt. of the PRA about the grain China provides to Albania, and the correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the prime minister on this issue”, in AQSH, Ministry of Trade, F.503-504, V. 1960, D332. The letters were sent on 22 July 1960, one addressed to Khrushchev, the other to Zhou Enlai. Soviet Union eventually provided only ten thousand tons of grain.

⁴⁶ “Records of the meeting of comrade Mehmet Shehu with the first secretary of the Chinese Embassy in Albania, Van Dun, 01 August 1960”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D5, f.1-3.

⁴⁷ Twentieth PLA Plenum, 01 November 1960: “Report of the PLA Politburo that will be held by the Albanian delegation, headed by comrade Enver Hoxha, at the meeting of the communist and workers’ parties in November 1960 in Moscow. The report is consistent of: the line and the correct view of our party on political ideological issues; the problems regarding the disagreements between the CPSU and CCP, the meeting of Bucharest; the grave mistakes of the leadership of the CPSU in his political and ideological line, etc.”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D5, f.44.

the Albanian delegation was left behind the door for more than two months before the Soviets decided to receive them. Even once talks started, there were continuous obstacles put in place by the Soviets, further delaying the talks.⁴⁸ Ultimately, instead of concluding agreements for the entire FYP 1961-65, Soviet authorities insisted that the talks only regarded possible assistance for the year 1961. Albania agreed to sign the agreement, but understood that it was a Soviet signal to Tirana to conform to the Soviet course, and therefore only one year of time to see if Albania would submit.

During June-October 1960, different telegrams from Albanian diplomats abroad noted the cold attitude of Soviet diplomats towards Albania.⁴⁹ In October 1960, one of the directors at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, named Pisarev in the document, told clearly the Albanian ambassador in Moscow that ‘you are against the CPSU and against Khrushchev’.⁵⁰ In Moscow, Albanian generals of the general staff of the army, met in mid-October 1960 to discuss the Soviet military assistance. In the reception given by Andrei Grechko, commander in chief of the WPO forces, the Soviet minister of defense, Rodion Malinovskij stated that ‘Albanian people are going away from the friendship [with Soviet Union] because of some personal standing which lead to the individual cult [of Hoxha]’.⁵¹ The next day, general

⁴⁸ “Report [of the Albanian Ambassador in Moscow, Nesti Nase] on the work of the trade delegation [in Moscow] to close the agreements for the period 1961-65”, in AQSH, Ministry of Trade, F.503, V. 1961, D256, f.13-16. The report has no date but presumably was drafted during or just after the visit of the trade delegation in Moscow, in November 1960.

⁴⁹ For instance, a telegram from Budapest reported how distant the Soviet ambassador kept from the Albanian diplomats in a reception at the Czechoslovakian embassy in Hungary. Another telegram from Sofia told of the Soviet ambassador in Bulgaria trying to postpone a courtesy visit the Albanian ambassador wanted to make, and other telegrams from Baghdad and Berlin shared similar stories. Most likely the Soviet diplomats were following instructions received from Moscow. Albania also changed the diplomatic post service, after that a telegram from Pyongyang informed them of the Soviets continuously asking whether the Albanian embassy had any diplomatic post to deliver – an interest that raised suspicion for a service that until then was provided with hesitations by the Soviet diplomatic post service. See “Budapest, Report of the second secretary of the Albanian embassy in Budapest, Kleanthi Gjini, 01 September 1960, about the reception organized by the Czech Embassy in Budapest on 31 August 1960”, in AMPJ, V. 1960, D110, f.19; “Telegram on 24 September 1960 from the Albanian embassy in Pyongyang sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking how to deliver the diplomatic post through channels others than the Soviet post service”, in AMPJ, V. 1960, D68/1, f.20; “Telegram from the Albanian embassy in Sofia, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 September 1960”, in AMPJ, V. 1960, D68/1, f.13-14; “Report of the Albanian embassy in Berlin to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 04 August 1960”, in AQSH, F.14/AP, OU, STR, V. 1960, D621, f.16.

⁵⁰ “Report of the Albanian ambassador in Moscow, Mihal Prifti, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 October 1960, informing of the meeting he had at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 20 October 1960, and the conversation with the Head of the Fifth Directorate, Pisarev”, in AMPJ, V. 1960, D68/1, f.9-11.

⁵¹ “Information and records (not signed) of the Albanian military delegation to Moscow, headed by the ex-Chief of the general staff of the army, general Petrit Dume: on the reception given by marshal

Grechko went further yet, menacing that ‘your party is going far from the CPSU and it would be better if you think about this before it is too late’.⁵² The last time the WPO members assisted Albania with military equipment was in March 1961, mainly spare parts of armaments that were already becoming obsolete or needed maintenance.⁵³ In Albania instead, a letter that the Albanian ambassador in Moscow, Mihal Prifti, had received from Tirana, informed of the ‘provocative Soviet interfering in the internal affairs of Albania... the Soviet ambassador Ivanov went so far as to ask to some Albanian generals, to who is loyal the army?...’.⁵⁴ All this leaves room for the hypothesis of a Soviet search for a breach within the Albanian leadership.

In fact, from the Soviet viewpoint, the possibility must have been real. Within the Albanian establishment, a large number of cadres had been educated in the Soviet Union, including the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, the minister of defense Beqir Balluku, the members of Politburo Ramiz Alia and Liri Belishova, and nearly all the commanders of the general staff of the army.⁵⁵ That summer, Hoxha purged Liri Belishova, the most pro-Soviet of the Politburo who in all cases never displayed any serious opposition to Hoxha’s disputes with Moscow. Her fault was to have reported to Soviet diplomats in Beijing of the conversation she had had with the Chinese leadership about the Sino-Soviet divergences during her trip in early June in China. Her purge captured the attention of Soviet diplomats. In Pyongyang, the Soviet ambassador asked the Albanian ambassador ‘why have you purged Liri Belishova?’

Grechko on 20 October 1960 and the speech of Malinovskij on alleged Albanian moving away from its friendship with Soviet Union; on the meeting of the Albanian delegation with marshal Grechko on 21 October 1960, regarding Albanian military requests for the new technique and the spare parts, etc”, in AQSH, F.14, Traktati i Varshavës [Warsaw Pact], V. 1960, D1, f.2.

⁵² “Records of the meeting between the Albanian military delegation, headed by General Petrit Dume, and the Soviet military delegation headed by Marshall Andrei Grechko (Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact forces), Moscow, 21 October 1960”, in AQU, Fondi i Shtabit të Përgjithshëm, [General Staff of the Army], V. 1960, D480 (?), f.61-63 (1-3).

⁵³ AQU, Shtabi i Përgjithshëm, [General Staff of the Army], V. 1961, D480 (486?), f.3.

⁵⁴ Telegram of Pirro Biti, responsible of the PLA CC international relations department, sent on 08 August 1960 to the Albanian ambassador in Moscow, Mihal Prifti, informing him of the letter the Albanian government had sent to the Soviet government three weeks earlier, asking to prevent the provocative standing of Soviet diplomats and officials in Albania, in AMPJ, V. 1960, D68/1, f.10-12.

⁵⁵ Ramiz Alia was member of the Politburo of Central Committee and in charge of Cultural Affairs during the years of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. He became successor of Enver Hoxha in 1985, as Leader of the country. Alia died in 2013 in Tirana, and a public funeral ceremony was held for him.

and to the Albanian response that she was against the party's line, he added 'but what if she was right instead?'.⁵⁶

In a lower level hundreds of officials in the army had passed through Soviet military academies, and a large number of the intelligentsia had been educated in Soviet universities, where many of them had also encountered their partners. No Soviet soldier had passed through Albania during the Second World War, so Albanian people did not experience any of the horrors East Europeans went through when the Red Army marched to Berlin.⁵⁷ Moreover, the Albanian people in general had been imbued for more than a decade, through the official propaganda, to appreciate the Soviet Union and to love it as the fatherland of the revolution. On the other hand, the economic relations with China were not very assuring for many Albanians. Although China had made clear its decision to assist Albania, the first Albanian delegations had noticed how poor China was compared to the Soviet Union. Some wondered how they could expect help from a country they perceived poorer than Albania. Even Hoxha in his trip in 1956 had noted China's backwardness, in particular within the working units, because he had seen the lack of machinery. From the economic perspective, it was objectively difficult to imagine China as an alternative to the Soviet Union. In this context, Hoxha had a difficult situation to manage. But considering not the best for his country, but for himself, he found the choice with ease.

The Sino-Soviet situation was evolving at this time as well. In July, the Soviet Union withdrew all the specialists from China, interrupting around 200 projects.⁵⁸ Soon followed the mediation work of Ho Chi Min – who aimed to put both sides on the same table of negotiations in bilateral talks, hoping that by November 1960, they could come to the Moscow meeting with at least closer positions.⁵⁹ So, in August the CPSU invited the CCP for bilateral talks, with the aim to find a common

⁵⁶ Telegram of the Albanian embassy in Pyongyang sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 03 October 1960, informing of the conversation between the Albanian ambassador and the Soviet ambassador in North Korea on 01 October 1960, in AMPJ, V. 1960, D68/1, f.21-22.

⁵⁷ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of occupation, 1945-1949*, (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995); Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2013).

⁵⁸ Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961*, (New York: Atheneum, 1964); Soviet Note was sent on July 18, Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 174.

⁵⁹ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 183-184.

understanding and settle the issues in advance of the conference.⁶⁰ A long informative document was sent from Beijing to Moscow, on 10 September 1960, just before the bilateral talks took place, outlining the CCP's line on all the issues arisen since Khrushchev's secret speech until the recent confrontations in Bucharest.⁶¹ Significantly, Hoxha's notes in handwriting, praised China's answer to the CPSU, and commented negatively on the Soviet position instead – Chinese and Albanian standing definitely converged, if not merged. The CCP-CPSU bilateral talks eventually took place in Moscow, in mid-September, and ultimately concluded unsuccessfully, with the two parties still holding their previous positions.⁶² The Soviet Union promoted bilateral talks also with Albania. Initially they invited Enver Hoxha for vacations, where they hoped to convince him to support Moscow. After he refused, by 13 August, they sent a letter to the PLA inviting a delegation for talks, to which again Hoxha refused, 'because we could not go there and talk behind CCP's back'.⁶³

In October 1960, Chinese and Albanian delegations appointed teams, headed by Deng Xiaoping and Hysni Kapo respectively, to participate in the Editorial Board of the Moscow Conference. They met twice in Moscow, with the clear purpose to coordinate their standing and action. In their meeting on 2 October 1960, Deng Xiaoping told Kapo that 'your ideas [on all the issues] are correct', and encouraged him to 'speak out openly during the conference'. He reinforced further, 'because certain issues are vital for the communism... like the problem of the metallurgic industry in your country... certain problems require a long struggle, at least ten years, no matter if we are the minority, with us is ninety percent of the world's

⁶⁰ "Letters of the CCP, 02 September 1960, sent to the CPSU, and relayed to the PLA, informing of the acceptance by the CCP of the CPSU's proposal that the Editorial Board of the 26 sister parties (12 ruling and 14 largest of the non-communist camp) shall begin the works in Moscow, 26-30 September 1960. Informing also that the CCP accepts the bilateral talks in Moscow between the CCP and CPSU before the commission drafts its project", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, D6.

⁶¹ "Letter of the CCP sent to the PLA, with which informs of the letter of the CCP sent to the CPSU on 10 September 1960, answering to the informative material distributed by the CPSU in Bucharest on 21 June 1960", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D7 [Chinese language] – D7/A [Albanian language].

⁶² "Records of the talks between the CPSU and the CCP, Moscow, 17-22 September, 1960. Document relayed to Albania in September 1960", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D9.

⁶³ Records of the PLA Twenty-first Plenum, 19-20 December 1960: "Report of Enver Hoxha, head of the Albanian delegation at the meeting of the eighty one communist parties that met in Moscow, 10 November – 01 December 1960, on the standing of the Soviet comrades towards our delegation and our meetings with them", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D6, f.38-39.

population that wants revolution’.⁶⁴ But the most important meeting between Deng and Kapo was on 23 October 1960. Deng first reported that conciliation with Khrushchev would be impossible, and then spoke of the talks he claimed to have had with Khrushchev regarding Albania. Khrushchev, according to Deng, told him that ‘to Albania we have given everything and now they spit on us... Now our relations with Albania will be the same as with Yugoslavia [tense]’. On the bilateral issues, Deng claimed to have been told that ‘you defend Stalin, and Molotov, why you don’t just take to China Molotov... Gao Gang [purged by Mao] was my friend... if you want to rise high Stalin we will do the same with Gao Gang’, and accused Kang Sheng to be ‘China’s Ežov [Nikolaj Ežov, the head of the NKVD who led Stalin’s purges in the late 1930s before being shot]’.⁶⁵ On Soviet-Albanian disagreements, Deng said that ‘it is clear that yours and our party’s divergences with Soviet Union are the same’.⁶⁶ By this time Albania had accumulated a number of documents that Beijing had relayed, and on the other hand the CCP was also informed of the Albanian position on each and all issues of dispute. This was the moment of major agreement between China and Albania.

Moscow Conference, November 1960: Hoxha’s Attack on Khrushchev

Enver Hoxha decided to lead the Albanian delegation to Moscow, where eighty-one communist and workers’ parties met in November 1960. When the possibility to participate in Bucharest had been mentioned – after the meeting had begun – Hoxha refused to go with the excuse that had not been prepared any summit, and did not fall into to the Soviet traps. Now, after digesting pros and cons all summer, re-assessing years of relations with the Soviet Union, and thinking of his personal future and rule, he had prepared enough to face Khrushchev and to ditch the alliance with the Soviet

⁶⁴ “Notes from the conversation of Deng Xiaoping with Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia in Moscow, 02 October 1960”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D10, f.1-4.

⁶⁵ A similar view on Kang Sheng is stated also in John Byron and Robert Pack, *The Claws of the Dragon: Kang Sheng, the Evil Genius behind Mao and His Legacy of Terror in People’s China*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992); For the purges in Soviet Union during the 1930s see Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin’s Russia, 1934-1941*.

⁶⁶ “Notes from the conversation of Deng Xiaoping with Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia in Moscow, 23 October 1960, where Deng spoke of his recent meeting with Khrushchev”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1960, D10, f.5-17.

Union. Beijing's reassurances of political and economic support were further determinants in Hoxha's decision.

Hoxha until this moment often had been called "Commander" for his participation in the war. However, beyond the official propaganda narrative, his name does not appear in the records of a single battle, and his lieutenants knew this.⁶⁷ By contrast, those under him, beginning with the prime minister, but also most of the Politburo members, had fought on the front line in the mountains. Hoxha knew that this contrast could discredit him, and used the visit to Moscow as a chance to show bravery to the Albanian people and the party officials some. The split with Khrushchev, displayed in front of hundreds of world communist parties' leaders, where Hoxha claimed to defend Marxism from revisionism, was a marvelous spectacle that he knew would increase even further his credibility, and his cult, among his people.

The Albanian delegation arrived in Moscow in early November 1960, in time to participate in the annual celebrations in honor of the October Revolution and the military parade on 7 November. To attend Hoxha and his entourage, to the airport went Frol Kozlov, member of the Soviet Presidium. The next day, Soviet officials relayed to Albania the Soviet response to the CCP's letter in September, where at a certain point were listed all the socialist countries, except Albania. In that response, Albania was also mentioned as an example of tyranny where the democratic centralism and party's democracy had been ignored, 'as the expulsion of Liri Belishova shows... and for what? ... for being friends of the Soviet Union'. Hoxha accused Khrushchev of pressuring Albania, when he had mentioned to Deng Xiaoping that 'we will treat Albanians the same as Yugoslavians...' and congratulating Deng because now 'we lost an Albania, and you gained an Albania'. Under such conditions Hoxha refused to meet with Khrushchev on 9 November 1960, because 'there were no equal conditions after these accusations against Albania were distributed to eighty one parties'. An attempt, on that same day, to talk with Hoxha was made by Maurice Thorez, head of the French communist party, who reminded Hoxha in a three hour long speech of the 'dogmatic line' of the CCP and

⁶⁷ Fevziu, *Enver Hoxha*.

also of the great Soviet assistance to Albania.⁶⁸ Thorez was interested in the Sino-Soviet unity, because his party ‘struggled to preserve an identity that was revolutionary without the Chinese type of “adventurism”... and orthodox without the heavy Soviet bureaucracy’.⁶⁹ His talk failed to change Albanian leadership’s final position, but convinced Hoxha to meet with their Soviet counterparts. Over the next three days, the Albanian delegation met three times with Soviet leaders, the last meeting being on 12 November 1960 with Khrushchev. According to Albanian accounts, in the first meeting, the Soviets asked ‘what do you want in exchange of improvement of your relations with us’, to which Hoxha reminded them of all the incidents that had happened during the summer: the Soviet attempt to undermine the Albanian leadership’s unity; the comments on political dissidents; the incidents in the military base of Vlora between Albanian and Soviet soldiers and officials; and others. At the end, Hoxha asked them ‘to accept, condemn and not to repeat such actions in the future’.⁷⁰ He was asking them for an endorsement and to accept his way of ruling without questioning it. The Soviets rejected the Albanian demands, and affirmed that in Albania ‘an anti-Soviet spirit has been put in place’. The second meeting on 11 November 1960 did not change the position of the two sides.

It was the meeting between Hoxha and Khrushchev that better revealed the real divide between Tirana and Moscow. In both Soviet and Albanian records it is well documented how this meeting contributed to the further deterioration of the relations rather than their improvement. After the formal greetings Khrushchev said that ‘I do not understand what has happened since my visit to Albania in 1959. If you have been unhappy with us since then, I must be very dense and naïve not to have understood this’. Hoxha was very nervous, showed by his passionate tone and replied that, ‘We have had disagreements before, such as about the Yugoslavs, but the

⁶⁸ Quotations in Records of the PLA Twenty-first Plenum, 19-20 December 1960: “Report of Enver Hoxha, head of the Albanian delegation at the meeting of the eighty one communist parties that met in Moscow, 10 November – 01 December 1960: On the standing of the Soviet comrades towards our delegation and our meetings with them”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D6, f.34 & f.35 & f.40-41.

⁶⁹ Alessandro Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 257.

⁷⁰ Records of the PLA Twenty-first Plenum, 19-20 December 1960: “Report of Enver Hoxha, head of the Albanian delegation at the meeting of the eighty one communist parties that met in Moscow, 10 November – 01 December 1960: On the standing of the Soviet comrades towards our delegation and our meetings with them”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D6, f.42. In this meeting participated Mikhail Suslov, Yuri Andropov, Frol Kozlov, Anastas Mikoyan, and Peter Pospelov who had directed Pravda and had been a staunch Stalinist before supporting Khrushchev.

change in attitude happened after Bucharest, and it is all coming from your end'. Khrushchev answered 'that we have had different views on this issue is news to me. I hear it for the first time. We have held talks in Albania [Khrushchev's visit in 1959] and you never raised this issue... The Yugoslav matter, which you consider as contentious between us, we may set aside for the moment. That is not a principal issue'.⁷¹ But for Hoxha this was indeed a principal issue, one which Khrushchev had neglected to understand for long time. Hoxha then blamed Khrushchev for the deterioration of the relations after Bucharest. But Khrushchev realized correctly that 'The issue seems to be that even before Bucharest you have not been in agreement with us... The fault with all this rests with me for having trusted you too much'.⁷² In fact Shehu reminded Khrushchev that the Soviet Union had clearly ignored Albania in dealing with Yugoslavia since 1955. Then they exchanged very animated accusations regarding the possible Soviet support for recently expelled prominent Albanian leaders such as Liri Belishova. On this point Khrushchev attacked Hoxha for 'expelling a strong woman like Belishova in a Stalinist way', and reminded also that the Albanian minister of defense Beqir Balluku had accused Khrushchev of being not a Marxist on many occasions. Then, the already-tense conversation switched to the issue of the military base of Vlora, to which Hoxha showed particular attachment. To Albanian accusations of Soviet officials' quarrels with the Albanians within the base, Khrushchev said 'if you want we can remove our base', and retold how Albania's membership in the WPO had been opposed by Molotov, who had wondered why the Soviet Union should fight for Albania.⁷³ Hoxha took this as a provocation intended to pressure Albania and replied that 'this issue should be discussed in the meeting of the WPO'. For Hoxha, however, the message was clear: the Soviet Union was not reliable as Albania's partner in its tense relations with

⁷¹ "Report of the meeting of the Albanian Labor party delegation with leaders of the communist party of the Soviet Union, 12 November 1960". In <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117494>, (last accessed 25 Feb. 2017).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered*, 37; Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University, 2004), 194; "Report of the meeting of the Party of Labor of Albania's delegation with leaders of the communist party of the Soviet Union, 12 November 1960". In <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117494>, (last accessed 25 Feb. 2017).

Yugoslavia. The meeting continued with reciprocal accusations until the Albanians literally just left the room.⁷⁴

Unlike in Bucharest, this time the Albanian leadership had gone to Moscow prepared to take a side on all issues that had emerged in the Sino-Soviet divergences. Hoxha had approved a report in the end of October 1960 to be read in Moscow.⁷⁵ Consulting with the Chinese party, Hoxha endorsed Chinese consideration of the present as a revolutionary period, wherein the decolonization process was but part of the broader struggle for the people's emancipation from exploitation. In this sense he interpreted and supported Mao's affirmation that 'the east wind prevails on the west wind'.⁷⁶ Both sides, China and Albania, made great efforts to convince other parties to bring them to their side, but the success was minimal. Nonetheless, unlike at the Bucharest meeting, when China had been left almost completely alone, in Moscow, some parties, mainly from Asia, agreed in part or completely with the Chinese thesis.⁷⁷ Albania's real dissent with Moscow was however, on issues, regarding Albania's national security – possible conflicts with neighbors – and issues regarding the legitimation of Hoxha's personal rule. In this sense Hoxha reminded his Politburo that 'we have disagreed with the Soviets since 1955... on the relations with Yugoslavia... when they ignored the Cominform [in fact ignored Hoxha]... they took unilateral actions and rehabilitated Tito's cliqué'. He continued that 'we have been in disagreement with Soviet comrades also regarding their evaluation of the Hungarian events, with their hesitations to intervene resolutely to eliminate counter-revolution and their hesitation to condemn and unmask Yugoslavian interferences in

⁷⁴ "Report of the meeting of the Albanian Labor party delegation with leaders of the communist party of the Soviet Union, 12 November 1960". In <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117494>, (last accessed 25 Feb. 2017).

⁷⁵ Records of the PLA Twentieth Plenum, 01 November 1960: "Report of the PLA Politburo that will be held by the Albanian delegation, headed by comrade Enver Hoxha, at the meeting of the communist and workers' parties in November in Moscow. The report is consistent of: the line and the correct view of our party on political ideological issues; the problems regarding the disagreements between the CPSU and CCP, the meeting of Bucharest; the grave mistakes of the leadership of the CPSU in his political and ideological line, etc", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D5.

⁷⁶ This statement was made by Mao in meeting Chinese students in Moscow, in November 1957, during his last visit to Soviet Union. In Byron S. J. Weng, *Peking's UN Policy. Continuity and Change*, (New York and London: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 113.

⁷⁷ Records of the PLA Twenty-first Plenum, 19-20 December 1960: "Report of Enver Hoxha, head of the Albanian delegation at the meeting of the eighty one communist parties that met in Moscow, 10 November – 01 December 1960", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D6, f.3& f.19. Mainly Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malay, Ceylon, Thailand, and South American communist parties on specific issues, as Venezuela, Brazil, Chili, Peru, Cuba, Uruguay.

this'. Furthermore, 'our party has disagreed also with some issues emerged in the Twentieth CPSU Congress... criticism of Stalin, and Stalin's cult... because this was done with no prior consultations with other parties... ignoring that Stalin had been not just Soviet Union's leader but also the leader of the world proletariat'. Hoxha mentioned also the intervention of the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Albania, 'in issues such as the problem [Soviet support] of the party's enemies such as Liri Gega and Panajot Plaku, [all purged by Hoxha]'. The final aim of Soviet leaders 'was to undermine the leadership's rule, divide the people and the party, and as a way to establish a new leadership'.⁷⁸ Hoxha was going to Moscow with the intent to defy the Soviet Union, eventually becoming the only WPO member to do so after the failed Hungarian upheaval. This would accredit him as the most reliable partner for China with which to eventually create a united front against Soviet Union.

At the meeting, Khrushchev's opening speech ignored the disputes with Albania and China and Moscow's attitude to Beijing seemed to be conciliatory, yet China assumed a conflictual position.⁷⁹ The conciliatory attitude is reflected also in Hoxha's report from December (after his return from Moscow), although he did sustain that Soviet concessions were due to China's and Albania's struggles. In fact, he stated that 'of the 175 pages of amends to the draft, our delegation had 20 pages and China 40 pages... none of our arguments was rejected, although not all was included... nonetheless the draft changed drastically, growing from 36 to 52 pages'.⁸⁰ Most importantly for Hoxha, the final declaration included a paragraph which condemned the 'Yugoslavian revisionism'. Some days later, Deng Xiaoping delivered his speech, which was less neutral than Khrushchev's, as he criticized the events of Bucharest. Although less passionate than Hoxha, who spoke later, Deng reminded the Soviet Union that 'not because Soviet Union provides assistance to Albania, gives to it the right to interfere in Albanian internal affairs... The CPSU in its letter of 5 November to the CCP goes so far as to support anti-party elements in Albania, calling them friends of Soviet Union'.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Quotations in Records of the PLA Twenty-first Plenum, 19-20 December 1960, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D6, f.21-23 & 28.

⁷⁹ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 189.

⁸⁰ Records of the PLA Twenty-first Plenum, 19-20 December 1960, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D6, f.29.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, f.85-86.

The tone of confrontation reached a crescendo on 16 November 1960, when Hoxha delivered his fiery speech, certainly that which provoked the most negative reactions – intentionally so, if the speech’s title is any indication.⁸² He began by praising the Soviet Union’s leadership in the communist camp and its aim for peaceful coexistence. But on this he added that ‘some [Khrushchev] even go so far as to assert such absurdities as China and Albania are allegedly opposed to peaceful coexistence. Obviously, such harmful and erroneous views should be rejected once and for all... But this does not imply, as the modern revisionists claim that we should give up the class struggle’.⁸³ Then, however, Hoxha exploded in personal attacks against not only Khrushchev, but the Italians, Bulgarians, Polish, Hungarians, and other communist leaders. Disputing peaceful transition and the parliamentary system as viable means for the communist parties of the capitalist countries to achieve their goals, Hoxha asked rhetorically: ‘Will they do this by violence or by the peaceful parliamentary road? This question has been clear and it was not necessary for Comrade Khrushchev to confuse it in the 20th Congress, and do so in such a way as to please the opportunists’. He rallied further against Soviet leadership, ‘They say that we are in favor of war and against coexistence. Comrade Kozlov has even put to us, Albanians, these alternatives: either coexistence, as he conceives it, or an atomic bomb from the imperialists, which will turn Albania into a heap of ashes and leave no Albanian alive. Until now, no representative of American imperialism has made such an atomic threat against the Albanian people. But here it is and from a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’. Then he attacked Bulgarian leadership for promoting complete disarmament in the Balkans, which they had mentioned in correspondence with the Greek government. Then he attacked the economic relations among socialist countries, in particular the Soviet assistance. For Hoxha, before assisting India or other countries,

⁸² “REJECT THE REVISIONIST THESES OF THE XX CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE ANTI-MARXIST STAND OF KHRUSHCHEV’S GROUP!”, in: Twenty-Second Plenum of the PLA, 1 November 1960. “Report of the Politburo of the PLA that will be held by the Albanian delegation, headed by comrade Enver Hoxha, at the meeting of the communist and workers’ parties in November in Moscow. The report is consistent of: the line and the correct view of our party on political and ideological issues; the problems regarding the disagreements between the CPSU and CCP, the meeting of Bucharest; the grave mistakes of the leadership of the CPSU in his political and ideological line, etc”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D5. The document is available also in English in, *Enver Hoxha, Selected Works, Vol. 2: November 1948-November 1965*, (Tirana: the «8 NËNTORI» Publishing House, 1975), 794-869.

⁸³ AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D5, f.19.

the Soviet Union should have assisted its fellow communist countries – and he did not conceal that Albania deserved more support for its economic plans. He attacked also the Polish leader Gomulka for his proposal in the United Nations to not expand further the military bases between camps. On this point he posed, ‘why should China not have the atomic bomb?’.⁸⁴ Hoxha strongly emphasized the tense relations of Albania with the ‘revisionist’ Yugoslavians and ‘chauvinist’ Greeks, both among which he rejected any peaceful coexistence.

In Moscow, Hoxha condemned the Bucharest meeting as an ‘anti-Marxist Soviet trap’, where Khrushchev had accused China ‘without any fact... in that case our party thinks that Soviet leadership made grave mistakes towards China’. He followed by accusing Khrushchev directly for having pursued in Bucharest a tactic of dividing the communist camp.⁸⁵ Moving on, he addressed issues such as the Hungarian upheaval, about which he restated publically what he had affirmed in the plenum of his party in Tirana in February 1957. However, back in Tirana, in order to blame the Soviet Union for the split with Albania, Hoxha had lied to the plenum when he said that ‘Bucharest signed the beginning of the irritation between the Soviets and us’.⁸⁶ Hoxha would also claim that the divide between Moscow and Tirana had started to develop in 1955, but he only made this statement after showing Albania’s standing in Bucharest to be correct and decidedly Marxist. The situation Hoxha wanted to portray was one in which the PLA had done exactly what a communist party should do, following and defending the Marxist line, so as he put it, Albania had been attacked unjustly by the Soviet Union and could be blamed for nothing. Continuing his speech in Moscow, Hoxha attacked Soviet leadership for having rejected the Albanian request for grain, for having tried to undermine Albanian leadership, and all the other issues for which Albania and the Soviet Union had been quarrelling in the last year. The final major issue for Hoxha was the revisionist assessment of Stalin. On this point he claimed that: ‘The Party of Labor of Albania solemnly declares that it is opposed to these acts and to these assessments of the work and person of Joseph Stalin’. Throughout his speech Hoxha carefully attacked only the

⁸⁴ Ibid., f.20-31.

⁸⁵ Ibid., f.35-38.

⁸⁶ Records of the PLA Twenty-first Plenum, 19-20 December 1960, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D6, f.26.

current leadership of Soviet Union, not the country, which he praised many times in the long speech.

Outrage at Hoxha's speech came from all directions. It began with Dolores Ibarruri, the leader of the Communist Party of Spain, who labelled it 'the most shameful speech during the long years of the communist movement'.⁸⁷ She went so far as to call Hoxha 'a dog who bites the hand that feeds it'.⁸⁸ The Polish leader, Gomulka, found it to be a 'disgusting speech'.⁸⁹ Similar reactions were expressed by western communist parties and almost all the European ruling parties.⁹⁰

Eventually all parties approved the final declaration, which did not settle any of the issues, and was similar to Moscow's declaration of 1957 – another useless piece of paper that all the parties would interpret it in their own way. Before leaving Moscow, some members of the Albanian delegation in Moscow, namely Mehmet Shehu and Hysni Kapo, met with a Soviet delegation, Kozlov and Mikoyan, on 25 November 1960. The meeting was a total failure, with each repeating the previous accusations against the other. The Soviets, however, made clear two important points: first, they intended to discuss the issue of the Vlora base in the meeting of the WPO; second, they would be more reticent to assist Albania economically. For Albania the result was that in a disunited camp, between Moscow and Beijing, Hoxha clearly embraced Beijing. In Tirana, Hoxha warned that the Soviet Union might reinforce its assertive policy towards Albania, but in Moscow Chinese leaders had assured them that 'regarding economic issues, do not worry, we will assist you unconditionally'.⁹¹ At the same time, Chinese leaders suggested that Albania remain pragmatic, and try to maintain good relations with the Soviets, at least formally – Hoxha would later ignore this suggestion. On the last day of 1960, Hoxha decided, in a meeting of the Politburo, to go public in Albania about Albanian-Soviet disagreements and discuss them in all the local party's committees.⁹²

⁸⁷ Ibid., f.63.

⁸⁸ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 189.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Records of the PLA Twenty-first Plenum, 19-20 December 1960, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D6, f.64-67.

⁹¹ Ibid., f.77-88.

⁹² Records of the PLA Politburo, 31 December 1960: "On the approval of the letter that will be sent to the local organizations of the party regarding the results of the meeting of the eighty-one communist and workers' parties in Moscow, 10 November – 01 December, 1960, on the political and ideological

The Final Break with Moscow, 1961

After their return from Moscow, Albanian leaders were invited back in December 1960. In fact the invitation was the response to Albanian requests to close the barter agreements that had been left to further negotiations. But Hoxha understood that the Soviet Union actually wanted to open talks in Moscow on issues regarding the Soviet-Albanian divergences. In their letter, the Soviets did not make mystery of their intention when they stated that, ‘the economic issues are directly related to the normalization of the relations, which under present conditions should be discussed at the highest level of the parties and governments’.⁹³ Thus, Hoxha rejected the invitation. He was also working in parallel with China, in order to assure the FYP in case of Soviet withdrawal. To this aim, vice Prime Minister Spiro Koleka paid a visit to China, in January 1961. By early February, following the letter he had received from Koleka, Hoxha could inform his plenum that ‘the plan [FYP 1961-65] has not just been assured in case Soviet Union provides anything [loan], but even in case all the socialist countries provides anything’.⁹⁴ Furthermore, China assured the quantity of grain and wheat for the coming five years, and the support for the industrial projects that the Soviet Union had refused to support. By the time of these agreements the disastrous economic outcomes of the Great Leap Forward had been known to Chinese leaders – making Chinese loans to Albania even more valuable, and showing how important Albania’s support for China had become.

During this time, the Soviet Union decided to withdraw some of its specialists from Albania – the experts of oil extraction.⁹⁵ More important to Albania, though, China provided a loan of 500 million rubles for the Albanian FYP 1961-65, with two thirds of it dedicated to industrial projects.⁹⁶ To seal conclusively the new course of

disagreements within the international communist movement, on the violations of the principles by the current Soviet leadership, on the defense of Marxism by our party, and other issues. It is decided that the letter be discussed by all party organizations”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1960, D28.

⁹³ “Correspondence between the PLA CC and the CPSU CC... Letter of the PLA CC sent to the CPSU CC in response to Soviet invitation of a high level delegation in Moscow for talks on economic issues, sent on 14 January 1961”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, V. 1961, D6, f.2.

⁹⁴ Records of the PLA Twenty-second Plenum, 06 February 1961, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1961, D29, f.49.

⁹⁵ Ibid., f.49-52.

⁹⁶ “Notes from the meeting of comrade Spiro Koleka with comrade Zhou Enlai in Beijing, 17 and 30 January 1961, and the letter Koleka sent to comrade Enver Hoxha on the Sino-Albanian relations and

Albania, Hoxha called in February 1961 the Fourth Party Congress. Now the only step left was the definitive break with Soviet Union, which by now had become a cumbersome partner. China was looking forward to this split, which Mao used ‘to radicalize the domestic political discourse’.⁹⁷ Hoxha’s speech to the congress was conciliatory towards the Soviet Union, perhaps because the message that Li Xiannian, head of the Chinese delegation, brought from Moscow on his way to Tirana, affirmed that Soviet leaders wanted this to be ‘the congress of the friendship’ between Albania and the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ In fact, its leading role within the communist movement, in Hoxha’s report to the congress, was praised and highlighted. However, the struggle against revisionism was outlined throughout the report, together with the need to fight against Titoism. Khrushchev was never mentioned.

Hoxha’s stubborn refusal to go to Moscow drew a Soviet delegation to the congress to seek a meeting with Hoxha. In a way, it would replace the talks Moscow desired between Hoxha and Khrushchev. In Tirana, Hoxha received Piotr Pospelov, Yuri Andropov, and the Soviet ambassador in Tirana Josif Shikin at the end of the congress, on 20 of February 1961. Unfortunately this meeting was as futile as all the meetings between Albanian and Soviet leaders since the confrontation in Bucharest the previous year. Here, the Soviets made a point of reminding Hoxha of Khrushchev’s role as their leader – and that to improve relations with the Soviet Union meant Hoxha would have to improve his relations with Khrushchev.⁹⁹ Hoxha on the other hand, stated that ‘Albania wanted to move forward with the issue... resolve these relations in a gradual and long process... only through a Marxist way, not other ways’.¹⁰⁰ Significantly, Hoxha said it was with the current leaders that

their struggle against imperialism and revisionism; the issues Albania should consider in its economic collaboration with China, Chinese loan of 500 million rubles provided to Albania for the years 1961-65, the long-term trade and collaboration, the military supplies; on Chinese remarks to the third FYP of Albania, on the development of Industry and Agriculture”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D1.

⁹⁷ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 194.

⁹⁸ “Records of the meeting between the Albanian leadership headed by Enver Hoxha, and the Chinese delegation, headed by Li Xiannian that has come on occasion of the PLA Fourth Congress, Tirana, 09 February 1961”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D2, f.4.

⁹⁹ “Records of the meeting between Enver Hoxha and the Soviet delegation that came in Albania to participate at the Third PLA Congress, 20 February 1961”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, V. 1961, D7, f.2-26.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, f.6.

Albania would possibly improve relations, naming Khrushchev first, prompting Andropov to mention for the first time that the Soviet Union too ‘wants that this friendship be with comrade Hoxha, comrade Shehu...’.¹⁰¹ In this way, Soviet leaders, out of necessity, were endorsing Hoxha’s leadership. To the Soviet insistence on Hoxha’s visiting Moscow to re-discuss economic issues, for which agreements existed already, Hoxha refused on grounds that were the conditions of the agreement to be violated, the Soviet Union would be responsible. So, the meeting resulted in another stalemate, the Soviet half-endorsement came too late, and without sufficient sincerity, for Hoxha.

Khrushchev again invited Hoxha and Shehu to visit Moscow only one month later, to attend the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the WPO.¹⁰² Hoxha and Shehu refused to participate, ‘for health reasons’, appointing the minister of defense Beqir Balluku, and the minister of foreign affairs Behar Shtylla as their delegates.¹⁰³ In the meeting between Balluku and Grechko on 28 March 1961 in Moscow, both parties accused each other of provocations in the military base of Vlora. To Albania’s insistence on the fulfillment of the agreements to provide the base with the military equipment, Grechko replied, ‘our relations have changed, we don’t know in which hands this equipment will be... you have removed Khrushchev’s photos everywhere and you would like to have him overthrown... if you strengthen the friendship [with Soviet Union] as it was in the past, then everything will be fine’.¹⁰⁴ Grechko affirmed the necessity to send a commission of the WPO to Albania to study the military issues of dispute and report to the respective leaders in Albania and the Soviet Union. Balluku agreed, but on condition that the commission reported also of the violations of the agreements by the Soviet Union towards Albania. Eventually no commission was sent.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., f.8.

¹⁰² “Correspondence between the CPSU and the PLA regarding the meeting of the Consultative Political Committee of the Warsaw Pact, in Moscow, 28-29 March 1961”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, V. 1961, D4, f.2.

¹⁰³ In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, V. 1961, D4, f.8.

¹⁰⁴ “Top-Secret: Notes from the meeting of comrade Beqir Balluku with Marshal Grechko in Moscow on 28 March 1961”, in “Letters, speeches, decisions and the communiqué of the political consultative committee of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow, 28-29 March 1961”, in AQSH, F. Traktati i Varshavës [Warsaw Pact], V. 1961, D1, f.28-31.

Another issue emerged in this meeting, which aggravated the Albanian position in the WPO. The Bulgarian leader, Todor Zhivkov, asked ‘why Albania did not inform the WPO regarding the Yugoslavian-Greek plot’.¹⁰⁵ What he was referring to was Hoxha’s speech to the PLA congress the month earlier and his conversation with the Soviet leaders in Tirana, where he had affirmed that the ‘Governments of Greece and Yugoslavia, in collaboration with internal reactionary enemies, agents, and the sixth American fleet, had organized an attack on Albania’.¹⁰⁶ On this point Gomulka accused Hoxha of ‘fabrication of such facts’ and attacked him for ‘undermining the unity of the entire communist camp’.¹⁰⁷ At the end Khrushchev proposed to remove the naval base from Albania, or ‘have a sole command of the base in Soviet hands, without Albanian interferences, and the military vessels should have only Soviet crew’.¹⁰⁸ This meant total revision of the status quo agreed upon in 1959 – the warships would have mixed Soviet-Albanian crews, and a common command. So the plot Hoxha announced in the congress turned into a boomerang, against which Balluku, in Moscow, had to go on the defensive, reconsidering the magnitude of the plot, and reducing it from ‘an organized attack against Albania’ to ‘the arrest of internal conspirators before the organizing of the attack against Albania’.¹⁰⁹ Finally the Soviets, imposing their authority, approved a document according to which ‘Albania has violated the articles 3 and 5 of the WPO by having provided no information on the alleged foreign attack... [Furthermore] the situation in the naval base in Vlora has become unsustainable... [consequently] is approved the [Soviet] proposal that the warships in Vlora bay should be served only by Soviet crew and their command should depend on the Commander of the WPO forces [Soviet general]’.¹¹⁰ Alarmed by these decisions, Albania promptly replied with a letter

¹⁰⁵ “Notes from the speech of Todor Zhivkov”, in *ibid.*, f.46.

¹⁰⁶ “Record of the meeting in the PLA CC with the Soviet delegation that came in Albania to participate at the PLA Third Congress, 20 February 1961”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, V. 1961, D7, f.12.

¹⁰⁷ “Notes from the speech of Gomulka” in “Letters, speeches, decisions and the communiqué of the political consultative committee of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow, 28-29 March 1961”, in AQSH, F. Traktati i Varshavës [Warsaw Pact], V. 1961, D1, f.51.

¹⁰⁸ (Dok.Nr.11.) “Notes from the speech of Khrushchev” in *ibid.*, f.57.

¹⁰⁹ “Letters, speeches, decisions and the communiqué of the political consultative committee of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow, 28-29 March 1961”, in *ibid.*, f.71.

¹¹⁰ “Top-Secret: Of special importance - Decision of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact, (approved with majority of votes, 1 against – Albania)”, in *ibid.*, f.107-108.

rejecting all the accusations against it, and explaining better the supposed foreign attack by reassessing it in the sense expressed by minister Balluku in Moscow. Most important, to avoid further Soviet interferences, which could possibly escalate into clashes involving the WPO, Hoxha affirmed that ‘Albania will create all the necessary facilities for the evacuation of Soviet forces from the naval base’ if it is decided to remove it.¹¹¹

The situation in the Vlora base was very tense, and Hoxha sensed that could not be sustainable for long. In a voluminous document, information was collected about the tension between the Soviet and Albanian crews, which nearly escalated to physical confrontations.¹¹² Between May and June 1961 the Soviets decided to withdraw the vessels, but had to leave those already in the hands of Albanian crews because Albania claimed all the vessels as its own – in accordance with the agreement. The base was eventually built with Chinese assistance in the coming years. In August, another invitation came from East German leader Walter Ulbricht, who informed Hoxha of the meeting of the WPO members to discuss the Treaty of Peace with Germany and the Berlin issue – in fact, the meeting was to discuss the building of the Berlin Wall.¹¹³ To Moscow, Hoxha sent Ramiz Alia, one of his lieutenants who spoke fluent Russian, who was denied to take the floor, because ‘Albania was under-represented in the meeting, and the invitation was for the first secretaries of the parties’.¹¹⁴ Only China, which participated as observer during all these WPO meetings, defended Albania, because it was also a chance for Beijing ‘to sever the institutional links of the People’s Republic with the WPO’.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ “Letter of the PLA CC sent to the members of the Warsaw Pact (relayed also to China, North Korea, Vietnam and Mongolia), in response to the decisions taken in the last meeting of the members of the Warsaw Pact”, in *ibid.*, f.115.

¹¹² “Information and declarations of the Governments of Albania and the Soviet Union, and the Warsaw Pact regarding the naval base of Vlora”, in AQSH, F. Traktati i Varshavës [Warsaw Pact], V. 1961, D3.

¹¹³ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 203.

¹¹⁴ “Notes from the meeting of 03 August 1961 of the representatives of the communist parties of the members of the Warsaw Pact Organization”, in “Letters, information, declarations, and decisions of the representatives of the communist parties of Warsaw Pact’s member countries, in Moscow, 3-5 August 1961, on: exchange of views on the Peace Treaty with Germany and the question of West Berlin”, in AQSH, F. Traktati i Varshavës [Warsaw Pact], V. 1961, D4, f.22-29.

¹¹⁵ Lorenz M. Lüthi, “The People’s Republic of China and the Warsaw Pact Organization, 1955-63”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 7, no. 4 (2007): 484; Hope M. Harrison, “Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953–1961”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 1, no. 1, (2000): 53-74.

However, what saved Hoxha from possible, and feared, Soviet intervention was the international situation. It is not the case that Hoxha actively decided to aggravate relations in 1961, knowing that Khrushchev's international attention was elsewhere, tackling issues such as the Berlin Crisis. In this same year, the situation in Cuba grew into a military collaboration between Havana and Moscow – which led to the missile crisis the following year.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Albania had not been part of the Yalta division of Europe; therefore the Albanian-Soviet split did not challenge post-war European division. Hoxha realized that the Soviet Union hardly could afford another crisis in its already large list of confrontations with the West, with countries, and on issues, much larger than Albania. Soviet intervention in the Adriatic Sea ‘would have required a major naval operation... to which America could not have remained indifferent. This in turn would have affected the build-up of missile capability in Cuba’.¹¹⁷ In August 1961, the Soviet ambassador left Albania, officially for the holidays, but never to return. During the rest of the year followed an intense correspondence of accusations between Albanian and Soviet leadership, ending what little was left of the Soviet-Albanian entente.¹¹⁸ In October 1961, during the Twenty-second CPSU Congress, Khrushchev ‘criticized [attacked] Enver Hoxha by name’, whom only Zhou Enlai defended.¹¹⁹ Finally, in early December 1961, the Soviet Union interrupted all diplomatic relations with Albania.¹²⁰

Although formally a full member of many of the eastern bloc's organizations, following the interruption of the relations with Soviet Union, Albania either refused or was not allowed to participate in all international forums of the eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union such as the WPO and COMECON. Albania, the smallest and weakest of the European socialist countries had defied the Soviet Union, the greatest

¹¹⁶ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*; Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 260–280.

¹¹⁷ Klaus Lange, “Albania: Security Policies - Concepts, Meaning and Realization”, in Jonathan Eyal, ed., *The Warsaw Pact and the Balkans: Moscow's Southern Flank*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 215.

¹¹⁸ “Correspondence between the PLA CC and the CPSU CC during 1961, 15 March-12 October, 1961”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, D4; “Correspondence between the PLA CC and the CPSU CC during 1961, 03 July-21 November, 1961”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, V. 1961, D5.

¹¹⁹ Danhui Li and Yafeng Xia, “Jockeying for Leadership: Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split, October 1961–July 1964”, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 16, no. 1 (2014): 30; Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 207–208.

¹²⁰ “Records of the Politburo, 05 December 1961, where Enver Hoxha informed of the Soviet decision to interrupt diplomatic relations with Albania”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1961, D47.

and most powerful socialist country in the world. Albania urged China instead to become the leader of the international communist movement. It was the only country to offer such a crown to China, and was ready to struggle for it. It cannot have been easy for Khrushchev to digest such defiance, as several initiatives to bring Albania within the ranks were undertaken between 1961 and early 1962 – most likely instigated by the Soviet Union. Ho Chi Minh's initiative, in summer 1961, to mediate talks between Albanian and Soviet leaders was the first. Although Ho Chi Minh said it was his personal initiative, most likely he had been persuaded by Moscow. This seems to have been suggested also by both the Albanian and Chinese leaders. Eventually neither Beijing nor Tirana welcomed his initiative. Albania refused even to receive him in Tirana, and his planned trip to Albania was simply postponed *sine die*.¹²¹ Furthermore, when the Soviet ambassador in Beijing, Chervonenko, told Liu Shaoqi that the Soviet Union would like to invite Albania to participate in the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU scheduled in October 1961, Hoxha refused the invitation – although Chinese leaders welcomed this initiative.¹²² During the CPSU congress, Zhou Enlai discussed with Khrushchev the problem of Albania, and defended his ally against the attacks Khrushchev had made in his speech. For Zhou, 'regardless many Albanian mistakes...' it had been unjust to interrupt the assistance to Albania.¹²³ However sincere the attempt to ease tension between Tirana and Moscow may have been, Zhou Enlai's allegations of Albanian 'mistakes' to Khrushchev sounded unpleasant when they reached Hoxha's ears. When the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, Lo Shigao, informed Hoxha of Zhou Enlai's meetings in Moscow, Hoxha reacted by denying any 'mistakes' in relation to the Soviet Union. The Chinese ambassador retreated, stating that the document had been translated wrong.

In December 1961 another attempt was made, this time by the Indonesian communist party, to convene a meeting of all the communist parties, after the model

¹²¹ "On the initiative of President Ho Chi Minh to visit Soviet Union and Albania and to mediate for the solution of the disagreements between CPSU and the PLA" in, "Information from the Albanian embassy in Beijing sent to the PLA CC, regarding the meetings of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Reiz Malile with Chinese leaders during August 1961", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D14.

¹²² "The meeting of Hysni Kapo with the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, Lo Shigao, 12 October 1961" in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D16.

¹²³ "Records of the meeting between Enver Hoxha and Chinese ambassador in Albania Lo Shigao, 28 October 1961", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D17, f.1 & 14.

of the last Moscow conference, intending ‘to discuss the Soviet-Albanian disputes’.¹²⁴ Similar initiatives were undertaken also in the first months of 1962, when letters from communist parties of New Zealand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Sweden, and England, were sent to China calling for a meeting of the international communist movement to settle the Soviet-Albanian disputes. China did not oppose in principle and relayed to Albania the correspondence with the Soviet Union. China remained convinced that these parties had not been after Moscow’s support.¹²⁵ But Hoxha firmly opposed, posing unacceptable conditions to the Soviet Union, such as the public admittance by Khrushchev of his alleged mistakes towards Albanian leadership, the revival of all interrupted economic and military agreements, and rectification of Soviet policies in international relations with particular reference to the policy of peaceful coexistence.¹²⁶ Hoxha’s strategy had become clear: accredit Albania as an undiscussed and exclusive ally and supporter of China. In turn, Albanian leaders expected China to prioritize the economic and military assistance to Albania, even at the expense of other countries if necessary. On this point, when Li Xiannian visited Albania in February 1961, meeting with Enver Hoxha, had clearly outlined the roles of the two countries in their alliance: China provided Albania with economic assistance, whereas ‘you [Albania] supports us [China] in the political field’.¹²⁷

Conclusion

Although officially Albania protested the Soviet interruption of diplomatic relations, Hoxha – we can say in hindsight – must have enjoyed very much the end of Soviet influence over Albania. Now his hands were free of any regional or continental alliance system which could have been used against him, as Yugoslavia first and

¹²⁴ In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D3.

¹²⁵ “Top-Secret: The sixth official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing at 4pm, 26 June 1962”, in “Records of the talks between the PLA delegation headed by Hysni Kapo and the CCP delegation headed by Deng Xiaoping, in Beijing, 09-26 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.134.

¹²⁶ “Letter signed by Enver Hoxha, in the name of the PLA, delivered to the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, Lo Shigao, by Ramiz Alia, on 28 April 1962, in response to the initiative to convene a meeting of the communist parties to discuss of the Soviet-Albanian disputes”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D4, f.51-69.

¹²⁷ “Minutes of the second meeting between comrade Enver Hoxha, Mehmet Shehu, and the Chinese delegation headed by comrade Li Xiannian, Tirana, 25 February 1961”, in *ibid.*, f.19.

later the Soviet Union had done. In this sense, China's geographical distance was highly advantageous. Hoxha tied himself to China also for reasons concerning the very nature of the allies' political power. After Stalin, Khrushchev had showed to be more flexible and less ideological. Biberaj argues that it was economic necessity rather than ideological affinity to push Albania towards China.¹²⁸ This is only partially true; ideology was of equal importance to economic necessity – if not more. The events since the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU showed that it was Soviet undermining of the ideological legitimacy, not only the lack of Soviet economic support that eroded Hoxha's power. To Hoxha, Khrushchev's leadership could not guarantee continuous support because it depended on factors others than ideology – and consequently, was unpredictable. On the contrary, China was ruled by a single man, Mao, who yet retained unquestioned control, and who showed a Stalinist-style zeal for the communist cause which permitted solid legitimation of Hoxha's rule. In 1960-61, Hoxha tried to play the ideology card to accredit himself as the true upholder of the banner of Marxism, so as to align himself with China and distance himself from Khrushchev. Once he successfully played this card, and his hands were free of ties to the Soviet Union, the ideological considerations became less important, and economic construction could be prioritized. In fact, China was so geographically distant, if necessary he could afford to take from it only in part Mao's own ideas of socialism, still pressuring to get as many concessions as possible for his model of economic development. Yet, if from 1956 to 1961 the ideology was paramount to Hoxha's hold on his power, after that period, ideology and economy became equally important. However, this policy did pose limitations: Hoxha's room to maneuver ideologically, and take from Mao's ideas whatever suited him the most, became larger, but his economic hands were tied very strongly to China, and eventually this became one of the biggest limits and failures of Albanian socialism.

¹²⁸ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 40.

PART TWO

ALLIES, 1962 – 1970

CHAPTER THREE

A RESTLESS ALLIANCE

Introduction

The alliance between China and Albania came only after the estrangement of both Tirana and Beijing from Moscow that had begun in the mid-1950s. Albania emerged as the only ideologically-similar ally of China in Europe. Similarly, Mao Zedong, for Albania, emerged as the upholder of the right line of Marxism and possibly the new leader of the international communist movement. In this way, China was greatly appealing to Hoxha. First, it was a great country, with a long revolutionary tradition forged in the war against Japan, which, for the public narrative in Albania, was very important. Second, Mao was indisputably a leader, who claimed adherence to the orthodox dogma of communism. This was important to the legitimation of Hoxha's personal initiatives in Albania. Third, China, albeit poor, was also perceived as a resourceful country, at least in Hoxha's eyes, capable of replacing the Soviet Union's economic and military assistance to Albania. In addition, China's ideological rigidity would be a reason for Albania to strongly support China internationally, though the alliance remained informal. In opposing Khrushchev's reformism, Tirana and Beijing had come to form a common front in an unexpected way, and once the partnership was established, China and Albania coordinated their actions on the international stage – whenever common interests were at stake.

Initially, it was beneficial to both countries to maintain an informal system, which allowed both sides to take their own steps towards problems on a case by case basis. Although no treaty was ever signed between Beijing and Tirana, joint communiqués were released on certain occasions to affirm the countries' unity. These could be used as official propaganda in Tirana to challenge the image of Albania as an isolated country – the most isolated in Europe. The other benefit of these communiqués was that they accredited Albania worldwide as a supporter of China and vice versa, consequently making Tirana an important interlocutor in the attempt to bring other small communist parties and revolutionary groups to China's side. The intention was to build an alternative international communist movement,

which tried to challenge the Soviet Union's leadership of communism. Eventually, all this became part of what is known as Global Maoism – a form of internationalism opposed to that of Soviet Union. Another factor that made a formal treaty of alliance superfluous was the geographical distance. However strong the Chinese will to support Albanian security and sovereignty might have been, the obstacle of geographical distance rendered impossible Beijing's implementation of any obligations deriving from a formal treaty. When Albania invited China to sign a formal treaty of friendship in 1964, it was also the geographical factor that Beijing, among many factors, cited in refusing the offer. China was not willing to commit to expensive operations that did not guarantee political return, as Albania was outside the core area of China's security – which was (and is) East Asia. Moreover, Chinese refusal of a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance was intended to discourage possible provocative actions of Albania in the region, especially when considering its tense relations with Yugoslavia during the sixties. Eventually, the Sino-Albanian alliance's informality was entirely overshadowed by its substantial outcomes.

Yet the alliance began with attrition because China tried to seat Albania in talks with Moscow, and seemed to show a conciliatory attitude towards the Soviet Union. Later, with the Khrushchev's dismissal from office, China had the illusion of a possible improvement of the relations with the Soviet Union. Both these moments negatively impacted Hoxha's image of China. He, in fact, perceived Chinese standing often weak, contradictory, and ideologically not as solid as he had expected Beijing to be. It is in this period, however, that the Sino-Albanian efforts to capture small communist parties worldwide intensified, and the collaboration with them became systematic. It is also during this period that strong efforts were made by Albania to defend Chinese interests on the international stage, which made of Albania China's spokesperson in issues such as the Sino-Indian border clash in 1962, the issues of Tibet in United Nations, and other important issues.

Disagreements Between Tirana and Beijing

Following the interruption of the diplomatic relations between Tirana and Moscow, to further advance the alliance with Beijing, an Albanian high political delegation headed by Hysni Kapo visited China in June 1962. The visit was at the invitation of the CCP and was significant because of the political issues that the two sides

discussed. Kapo met six times with Deng Xiaoping; their long conversations entirely centered upon ideological issues, and on both the Sino-Soviet disputes and the Albanian-Soviet split. Deng, from the first meeting to the last tried unsuccessfully to convince Albania to participate in a possible meeting of the world communist parties, which among other issues would try to settle the Soviet-Albanian disagreements.¹ More specifically, what Deng had in mind was the Soviet proposal, submitted to China at the beginning of March 1962 by Soviet ambassador Chervonenko, ‘to mend relations with Albania and set aside Sino-Soviet differences’.² Then with another letter, delivered at the beginning of June 1962, the Soviet Union proposed to have a meeting of the communist parties in Moscow that same month, just before the World Congress for Disarmament and Peace, scheduled in Sweden, 9-15 July 1962.³

In Chinese correspondence with Soviet Union, Khrushchev had listed Chinese support of Albania as one of the causes of the Sino-Soviet split – at least this is what Deng Xiaoping told Kapo.⁴ Finding it impossible to bring Albania to talks with Soviet Union, Deng changed his position and reinforced instead the divide with Soviet Union, affirming that Moscow had made mistakes of ‘great state chauvinism’ with both China and Albania. Deng tried to accredit China as a supporter of Albania against the Soviets, and also defended Stalin against Soviet attacks. Moreover, he claimed that the Soviet Union ‘pursues a tactic of convincing China... to marginalize Albania’ and then normalize Sino-Soviet relations.⁵ Deng was affirming that China was paying a certain price to maintain its support for Albania. But Kapo returned the favor the next day affirming that ‘you well know that our relations with Soviet Union begun to deteriorate after the Bucharest meeting’, although the affirmation was only

¹ “Records of the meeting between the delegation of the Party of Labor of Albania and the delegation of the Chinese Communist party in Beijing, 09-26 June, 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D8, f.2-142; “Report about the talks of the delegation of the PLA CC with the delegation of the CCP CC, May-June 1962, (prepared by Agim Popa and Pirro Biti)”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D9.

² Li and Xia, “Jockeying for Leadership”, 33.

³ “Letter of the CPSU CC sent to the CCP CC, and the information of the Albanian embassy in Beijing sent to the PLA CC regarding the meeting of the Albanian adviser at the embassy in Beijing, Vasil Skorovoti with Yeo Sheng, Head of a Sector in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D17, f.4-5. The letter has neither date nor name or sign.

⁴ “Top-Secret: The first official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing at 4pm, 11 June 1962, in “Record of the talks between the PLA delegation headed by Hysni Kapo and the CCP delegation headed by Deng Xiaoping, in Beijing, 09-26 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.7-23.

⁵ Ibid., f.8-10.

partially true as Soviet-Albanian relations had deteriorated before Albania's sympathy for China in Bucharest.⁶ Deng, however, insisted on participating in the meeting of the world communist parties, where China, he argued, would have to give its opinions on issues that it had been prevented from giving in the past. In particular, he referred to the Soviet consideration of Yugoslavia as a 'socialist country', and to the defining of the concept of dogmatism for which China had been attacked by the Soviets, and other related issues. In this sense, Peng Zhen reinforced Deng's arguments affirming that a meeting after the Moscow Conference would be an opportunity to speak to communist parties from within capitalist countries, 'where China has no diplomatic representation'.⁷ At the same time that the Albanian delegation was in China, the CPSU sent a long letter, relayed to Albanian delegation on 10 June 1962, inviting the Chinese to defend the unity of the communist camp. It explained to the CCP all the reasons why, according to the Soviets, Soviet-Albanian relations had deteriorated. The letter was full of accusations against the Albanian leadership, but was friendly to the CCP. With the intention to open a breach in the Sino-Albanian interparty relations, the Soviets eventually wished that 'the Albanian question should not be a reason for the Sino-Soviet tension', and for not promoting an international meeting of the world communist parties.⁸

But Albania's position remained irremovable. Beijing was inclined to support the meeting of the communist parties after the model of the previous Moscow conferences, whereas Tirana, fearing the forum would further isolate Albania, did not want such a meeting to take place. In this sense, Kapo argued how Albania had already become a reference point for communist parties in the West, pointing to the Italian Communist Party [Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI], and Pietro Secchia, an Italian communist who had come to Albania asking Hoxha for support and

⁶ "Top-Secret: The second official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing at 4pm, 12 June 1962", in "Record of the talks between the PLA delegation headed by Hysni Kapo and the CCP delegation headed by Deng Xiaoping, in Beijing, 09-26 June 1962", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.45.

⁷ "Top-Secret: The first official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing, 11 June 1962, 4pm", in *ibid.*, f.15.

⁸ Radiogram of Hysni Kapo sent to Enver Hoxha, 10 June 1962, in "Radiograms of the correspondence of Enver Hoxha with Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia during their visit to China", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D8, f.55-67.

suggestions on the possible split with the PCI – eventually no split took place.⁹ Knowing the passionate public discourse of Albanian leaders against Soviet Union, which could be counterproductive, Deng noted ‘the necessity to say always the truth, act in our benefit, and be moderate’ in the ideological struggle against Soviet Union.¹⁰ Albania instead wanted an open and firm polemic through the parties’ propaganda channels (press and diplomatic contacts) to ‘unmask Khrushchev’. This could be pursued through both ‘the press... and capturing the revolutionary groups within communist parties’.¹¹ Hoxha’s instructions for Kapo also included underscoring the Yugoslavian revisionism, and fostering resistance towards it – because during Kapo’s visit to China, Khrushchev was in Bulgaria, praising Yugoslavia.¹² Hoxha sought also to establish an air route between Beijing and Tirana, which he deemed ‘absolutely necessary... regardless of how expensive it could be for Beijing’, but the issue was postponed by Chinese leaders.¹³

Chinese moderation and Deng’s initial attempt to persuade Albania to participate in a meeting of communist parties were interpreted as a “sway” of the CCP. Moreover, Hoxha thought that Deng’s arguments were ‘weak’ and China ‘fears too much to be isolated in the international communist movement’. In this way China ‘underestimates the capacity of resistance of the revolutionary forces in the world, and overestimates the Khrushchevian influence... they [Chinese leaders] seek a way out by claiming that the struggle [against revisionism] would be long’. Deng’s suggestion to temper the polemic against the Soviets was deemed ‘a wrong tactic, unacceptable for us’. For Hoxha, the first and the best way to deal with the Soviets would be ‘the revolutionary struggle against revisionism’. The other options would

⁹ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.33; For the PCI see Alexander Hobel, “Il Pci nella crisi del movimento comunista internazionale tra Pcus e Pcc (1960-1964)” [The PCI in the crisis of the international communist movement between the CPSU and the CCP (1960-1964)], *Studi Storici*, Anno 46, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 2005): 515-572

¹⁰ “Top-Secret: The third official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing at 4pm, 13 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.64.

¹¹ “Top-Secret: Records of the second official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing, 12 June 1962, 4pm”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.52-54; Secchia had met with Hoxha while Kapo was in China, but he received a radiogram from Hoxha who explained what then Kapo said to the Chinese. In: “Top-Secret: Radiogram of Enver Hoxha sent to Hysni Kapo, 01 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D8, f.25-30.

¹² “Top-Secret: Radiogram of Enver Hoxha sent to Hysni Kapo, 26 May 1962”, in “Radiograms of the correspondence of Enver Hoxha with Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia during their visit to China”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D8, f.1.

¹³ “Top-Secret: Radiogram of Enver Hoxha sent to Hysni Kapo, 01 June 1962”, in *ibid.*, f.12-14.

be either Chinese participation in communist parties' meetings, but not Albania's participation, or 'going all us to the meeting and getting out of it exhausted' – disregarding China's choice, 'we [Albania] will choose the first way... and in all cases never the last [Albanian participation in Moscow meetings]'.¹⁴ Hoxha also rejected Deng's argument that since Khrushchev used the Soviet diplomatic network to convey Moscow's positions to other communist parties, a meeting of world communist parties would be a proper forum for China and Albania to talk to these parties. For Hoxha 'this position is absolutely baseless... do our friends [Chinese leaders] think that after such a meeting the Soviets will not try to push other parties against us?' Such a view was noted also in Hoxha's personal diary, where he affirmed that 'Chinese friends fear to be accused by the Europeans of interference in internal affairs' if they openly assisted Marxist parties in these countries.¹⁵ Hoxha instructed Kapo to make clear that Albania considered this a primary issue of principle for the international communist movement, because 'had we taken into consideration the economic and political potential of Khrushchev [Soviet Union]... then we should have not opened any dispute with him for two centuries to come... but our position has to be avant-garde, not behind the lines'.¹⁶ Eventually, Deng retreated, affirming in the third meeting with Kapo that China would not participate in any meeting of world communist parties to which Albania was not invited, nor would they go without guarantees of equality among all parties. On this issue, however, Albania's position was 'clearly opposed to Chinese standing'.¹⁷

In 1962, several events further motivated Hoxha's refusal to talk with the Soviets. First, a Czechoslovakian newspaper attacked the Albanian leader, and in mid-June of that year, Walter Ulbricht, the East German leader, also attacked Albania and the CCP, concluding that he would not participate in any meeting to which Albania was invited.¹⁸ In each case, Hoxha's decision was not to participate in

¹⁴ "Top-Secret: Radiogram of Enver Hoxha sent to Hysni Kapo, 13 June 1962", in *ibid.*, f.81-92.

¹⁵ Enver Hoxha, 27 December 1965. We informed the Chinese of the founding of the "Polish Communist Party", f.2, (Document in my possession).

¹⁶ "Top-Secret: Radiogram of Enver Hoxha sent to Hysni Kapo, 13 June 1962", in "Radiograms of the correspondence of Enver Hoxha with Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia during their visit to China", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D8, f.92-100.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 123.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, f.148-158.

any meeting, unless Soviet leaders ‘accept publically all the mistakes they have made to us’. Chinese efforts to convince Albania to participate in possible meetings of the international communist movement were for Hoxha ‘contradictory... with a strong mark of opportunism’. But the impact of Hoxha’s refusal on Sino-Albanian relations was well calculated because Hoxha thought that China ‘will not go without us [Albania], as this would be... a political loss in the eyes of the communist revolutionary parties’.¹⁹ Hoxha informed Kapo also that soon he would open the new session of the parliament with an attack on Soviet revisionism – a step that went against Deng’s suggestion about being moderate in the polemic towards the Soviets. Finally, despite the stubbornness the Albanian delegation displayed with Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai tried to convince Albania to participate in the proposed meeting of the communist parties, but to no avail. Then Zhou informed the Albanians that it would not be possible to implement most of the important industrial projects China had agreed to build in Albania for the ongoing FYP, reducing the commitment from 29 to 10 such projects. The reasons given were Chinese ‘internal economic difficulties’, and the lack of foreign currency to purchase equipment from other countries.²⁰ The meeting with Zhou took place after the long conversations between Hysni Kapo and Deng Xiaoping. Leading Kapo to assume, ‘these economic problems are connected with the others [political issues discussed with Deng]’.²¹ More likely, the decision to back out of these projects came as consequence of the failed Great Leap Forward.²² But neither Zhou Enlai nor other Chinese leaders elaborated upon it, leaving Albanian leaders with room for speculation. In times of hardship for China, Albania was proven to be an expensive ally.

The period 1961-1962 was characterized by marked contradictions in Sino-Soviet relations. In a brief period of relaxation in 1961, China left the door open on

¹⁹ Ibid., f.128-135.

²⁰ “The meeting of comrades Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia with the Head of the Council of State of the People’s Republic of China, comrade Zhou Enlai, at 11am, 27 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D7, f.22-35.

²¹ “Radiogram of Hysni Kapo sent to Enver Hoxha, 28 June 1962”, in “Radiograms of the correspondence of Enver Hoxha with Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia during their visit to China”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D8, f.181-183.

²² Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3. The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961-1966*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 184-208.

possible improvement in its relations with the Soviet Union.²³ Lüthi argues that Mao did not really want any rapprochement with the Soviet Union, but lacked consensus from other Chinese leaders, bringing as an example Liu Shaoqi's affirmations that the Soviet Union was 'central to the socialist camp', and how 'harmful to essential Chinese interests would be' a split with Moscow.²⁴ But then in 1962 the Sino-Indian border clashes, particularly Khrushchev's neutrality on the issue, stoked Chinese distrust of Moscow. Eventually, in 1962, the Soviets gave China the promised designs of the Mig-21 fighter plane, but after that such planes were also offered to India.²⁵ Not long after, widespread dissent broke out in Xinjiang among the non-Han population. There 'the deterioration of the Sino-Soviet relations led to the mass flight of 67,000 people' to Soviet Union.²⁶ In this context the Chinese attempt to bring Tirana to the table with Moscow is not to be understood as an attempt to push Albania towards rapprochement with Moscow. Beijing clearly knew that political tensions between Tirana and Moscow were too extreme to be settled; but Beijing also knew that Tirana would not abandon China politically. Nonetheless, Albania's possible re-establishment of relations with the Soviet Union could have potentially given Hoxha access to Soviet economic resources by establishing normal trade relations. In this way Albania would have been politically supporting China but economically relying less on it, dividing efforts between Moscow, East Europe, and Beijing.

Another way to explain Deng's attempt to seat Tirana and Moscow together is to look to the Chinese internal dynamics in that period. The negative outcomes of the Great Leap Forward had divided Chinese leadership. Their differences had manifested at the Lushan Conference in 1959, and led to the Seven Thousand Cadres Conference of January-February 1962, which was a 'watershed in the post-Great Leap Forward process'.²⁷ During the Thousand Cadres Conference Mao and Zhou admitted that some of their recent policies had caused economic hardship. Liu

²³ Li, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet Split*, 81–86.

²⁴ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 236–245.

²⁵ Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967*, (Chicago: Stanford University Press, 2009), 29–30.

²⁶ Li and Xia, "Jockeying for Leadership", 34–37; Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 214–218.

²⁷ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3. The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961-1966*, (Oxford and New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 137.

Shaoqi, in his report ‘supervised by Deng Xiaoping’, although praising Mao’s leadership, also gave to ‘human errors’ and to the ‘practical implementation’ some of the blame for the economic problems, clearly alleging to the leadership’s directives.²⁸ The divide was between people like Peng Dehuai, Zhang Wentian (both purged in 1959), Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Peng Zhen, Wang Jiaxiang, and to a certain extent Zhou Enlai, who were more prone to the economic development of the Soviet model, and Mao, who took mass mobilization as a way to boost economic production. The first, with a different tone, had opposed the Great Leap Forward, although eventually they also contributed so as to mitigate its effects.²⁹ Wang Jiaxiang had gone so far as to ‘advance the three conciliations and one reduction: conciliate with the imperialists (United States), conciliate with revisionists (the Soviet Union), conciliate with the reactionaries (India), and reduction of aid to the world revolutionary forces’.³⁰ It was now possible to envisage two different agendas within the Chinese leadership. In case Albanian leaders would have accepted a rapprochement with the Soviets, in particular one regarding economic relations, it would have been a clear political message of disagreement with Mao’s policy, giving political credit to those within Chinese leadership who had disputed the chairman’s chosen course. The timing of such a message would have been opportune, as just two months after the Kapo-Deng meetings, Beijing hosted the Beidahe Conference, and later in September 1962 the Tenth CCP Plenum, where opposite views regarding China’s economic path came once again to the fore.³¹ Furthermore, the re-establishment of Tirana-Moscow contacts would have lessened the tension between China, Albania and the Soviet Union.

Eventually, two events brought China and Albania to a common front again in late October 1962. First, on 20 October 1962 Chinese and Indian troops clashed at

²⁸ Ibid., 137-181.

²⁹ Kenneth Lieberthal, “The Great Leap Forward and the Split in the Yan’an Leadership, 1958-65”, in Roderick MacFarquhar, ed., *The Politics of China: The Eras of Mao and Deng*, 2nd ed, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, c1993), 87–147.

³⁰ Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens*, 28; Niu Jun, “1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China’s Foreign Policy”, 28-34.

³¹ Lieberthal, “The Great Leap Forward and the Split in the Yan’an Leadership, 1958-65”, in Roderick MacFarquhar, ed., *The Politics of China: The Eras of Mao and Deng*, 122-125.

the border in the disputed areas along the McMahon line.³² Chen Yi, Chinese minister of foreign affairs, promptly informed the Albanian ambassador of the events.³³ Albania revealed to be a good ally in these times of need as it firmly defended the Chinese position in the United Nations' General Assembly, refuting attacks from other countries following the military confrontation. The Albanian delegation was instructed to 'defend China with great force, and condemn the aggressors'.³⁴ Albania attacked India, blaming it for having rejected a presumed Chinese plan for resolution. This face-to-face confrontation between Albania and India even drew the attention of *New York Times*, which published the polemics.³⁵ Albania, using documents provided by China, made a long presentation of the causes of the conflict, explaining how China always 'made efforts to resolve the border disputes with India only through negotiations'. Nevertheless, despite China's efforts, 'it was not possible to achieve an agreement reciprocally acceptable because of Indian insisting in putting conditions' to eventual talks.³⁶ Albania blamed India, because it was 'the Indian troops who first attacked China's border'³⁷ instigating the conflict.³⁸ It is interesting that the language used in the Albanian speeches differs from that in the Chinese documents relayed to Albania before the session. China's language was softer, more pragmatic, diplomatic and practical to the issue to be discussed. Albanian diplomats however, acting on behalf of China in the UN, took an inflammatory tone, attacking the United States' leaders as 'warmongers' and

³² Kin Wah Wun, *The Sino-Indian Border Confrontation of 1962: A Himalayan Miscalculation*, (Hong Kong: Contemporary International Relations Research Centre, 1970); Siba Pada Sen, *The Sino-Indian Border Question: A Historical Review*, (Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1971); Xuecheng Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994); Amit R. Das Gupta and Lorenz M. Lüthi, eds., *The Sino-Indian War of 1962: New Perspectives*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

³³ "Notes of the Albanian embassy in Beijing for the PLA CC regarding the meeting of the Albanian ambassador, Reiz Malile with the Chinese minister of foreign affairs Chen Yi, on 21 and 31 October 1962", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D19.

³⁴ Radiogram of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania to the Mission in New York, 22/10/1962, in AMPJ, OKB, V.1962, D156, f.36.

³⁵ Radiogram from the Albanian Mission in New York to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, 30/10/1962, in *ibid.*, f.40-41.

³⁶ AMPJ, OKB, V. 1962, D503, f.73. The reference is to the talks Zhou Enlai had had with Nehru in April 1960 about the border disputes.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, f.74.

³⁸ "La question de la frontier Sino-Indienne, [The issue of the Sino-Indian border]", in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1963, D662/22, f.74-89.

‘blackmailers’, their policy as ‘submerged into sludge’, and their actions as ‘shameful’.³⁹ In November 1962, the general secretary of the UN, U Thant (Maha Thray Sithu U Thant), called the Albanian representative in UN, Halim Budo, to ask what Albania thought about possible mediation he might attempt regarding the Sino-Indian conflict. U Thant knew very well that by speaking to Albanian representative on this issue, he was in fact talking to Beijing.⁴⁰ Instructed by Beijing, Albania rejected the mediation and insisted on a solution based on Sino-Indian bilateral talks.⁴¹ For China, since Beijing was not allowed to have its legitimate seat in UN, then the mediation of the head of this organization was non-sense. On this occasion, Albania and Soviet Union were antagonists rather than collaborators. When the Albanian foreign minister Behar Shtylla delivered his speech, the Soviet delegation left the hall, although the speech did not attack the Soviet Union. On the contrary, Albania supported the Soviet position on the Berlin issue, and on the issue of peace treaties between the Soviet Union and both East and West Germany.⁴² The Chinese position was defended also by the Soviets, but Khrushchev’s transgression had been calling for Sino-Indian talks instead of pledging full support for Beijing.⁴³ This event reinforced Mao’s animosity towards the Soviet Union. At the same time, China defended Albania from attacks during the congresses of the ruling parties of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary during November-December 1962.⁴⁴

The second event was the Cuban missile crisis only two days after the Sino-Indian border clashes. Chinese leaders ‘disapproved of Khrushchev’s policy of

³⁹ “China’s UN Representation”, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1962, D502, f.62-63.

⁴⁰ AMPJ, V. 1962, D156, f.48-49.

⁴¹ “Report on the meeting of comrade Behar Shtylla with the Chinese ambassador Lo Shigao, in Tirana, 04 December 1962, 1pm”, in AMPJ, Kina, V.1962, D156, f.62-64.

⁴² AMPJ, OKB, V. 1962, D503, f.12; The speech of Behar Shtylla instead is in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1962, D503, f.26-33.

⁴³ Li and Xia, "Jockeying for Leadership", 48; MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3: 312-314*; Although Moscow supported the PRC in this session, Albanian documents say that the representative of Soviet Union, the minister of foreign affairs Andrej Gromyko, did not strongly oppose United States on this issue, limiting the initiative only to the presentation of the resolution for the readmission of the PRC. Instead Gromyko attacked the United States very strongly on the matter of Cuba, a sensitive matter, since a nuclear war had been averted about the control and influence on this island. This emerges in, “From the conversation of comrade Behar Shtylla with diplomats during the UN General Assembly regarding the beginning of the 17th General Assembly, September 1962”, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1963, D662/22, f.1-3.

⁴⁴ Files in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D20, D21, D22.

placing missiles in Cuba’, but both China and Albania disapproved also Khrushchev’s proposed solution to the crisis.⁴⁵ For both Beijing and Tirana, Khrushchev “lost” the confrontation, betraying in the process Fidel Castro and his communist regime⁴⁶ – although Khrushchev claimed the resolution of the crisis as a ‘triumph’ for the Soviet Union.⁴⁷ Because of Khrushchev’s attention to Cuba, he ‘almost completely neglected Soviet interests in Asia, where China’s influence grew remarkably at Soviet expense’.⁴⁸ Following the Cuban missile crisis, Khrushchev seemed eager to pursue the unity of the communist camp. In this direction should be read also his initiative in February 1963 to hold bilateral talks between the CCP and the CPSU.⁴⁹ With the proposal of bilateral talks came also the Soviet invitation to cease the open polemics – basically to stop the propaganda articles in China and Albania that continuously, with different tones, attacked Soviet revisionism. Mao underlined Soviet contradictions on this point: just when the Soviets made their request, Khrushchev attacked China at the congress of the Socialist United Party of East Germany. Eventually Mao welcomed the bilateral talks, and China stopped, for a short time, their polemics against the socialist and communist parties that had offended it.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Volume 3*, 318; For Mao’s role during the Cuban missile crisis see, Enrico Maria Fardella, “Mao Zedong and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2015): 73–88.

⁴⁶ Ernesto Guevara [known as Che Guevara] said that “while the United States wanted to destroy us physically, Khrushchev’s concessions destroyed us legally”, in Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 270. Guevara was referring not to the Soviet decision to withdraw the long range missiles and atomic equipment, but to the withdrawal of almost all Soviet troops and other conventional armaments such as air fighters, artillery, and others; For the Sino-Albanian talks on the issue see, “Notes from the meeting of comrade Chen Yi with comrade Reis Malile”, in “Notes of the Albanian embassy in Beijing for the PLA CC regarding the meeting of the Albanian ambassador, Reiz Malile with the Chinese minister of foreign affairs Chen Yi, on 21 and 31 October 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D19, f.11-14.

⁴⁷ Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, trans. ed. Strobe Talbott, *Khrushchev Remembers*, (London: Bantam Books, 1970), 504; Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 278.

⁴⁸ Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens*, 74.

⁴⁹ “Letter of the CPSU CC sent to the CCP CC, 21 February 1963”, in “Correspondence between the CPSU CC and the CCP CC (21 February and 09 March 1963) and summary report of the CCP relayed to the PLA CC about the conversation between comrade Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping with Soviet Ambassador in China, Stepan Chervonenko”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D2, f.2-7.

⁵⁰ “Letter of the CCP CC sent to the CPSU CC, 09 March 1963, in response to the letter received by the CPSU on 23 February 1963”, in “Correspondence between the CPSU CC and the CCP CC (21 February and 9 March 1963) and summary of the CCP relayed to the PLA CC about the conversation between comrade Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping with Soviet Ambassador in China, Stepan Chervonenko”, in *ibid.*, f.39-46; The CCP chose to send letters to some of these parties rather than polemicize with them in the press: “Letters of the CCP CC sent to the communist parties of Belgium,

Mao, meeting the Soviet ambassador in Beijing, also touched upon two important issues for Albania. First, he told Chervonenko that there would not be a united socialist camp without Albania. Second, that China, in line with Albania, did not consider Yugoslavia as part of the communist camp.⁵¹ Regarding the first point, the Soviet Union feebly attempted a solution following the Mao-Chervonenko meeting. In early March 1963 the Czechoslovakian embassy in Tirana contacted the Albanian leadership. On behalf of the Soviet Union, they informed Albania of the letter they had sent to the CCP regarding CPSU-CCP bilateral talks, and relayed also a short letter addressed to Albania, calling for talks before those of CPSU and CCP. But this, at least to Albanian leadership, implied that the Soviets saw Albania as an appendage of China. Consequently, Albania refused to attend any talks under such ‘unequal’ conditions.⁵²

Despite some disagreements, Sino-Albanian relations intensified in 1963. At least six Chinese delegations from different fields visited Albania during the second half of 1963, and the visit of Fang Yi, vice president of Chinese State Planning Commission was among the most important.⁵³ On 31 December, 1963, Zhou Enlai made his first visit to Albania.⁵⁴ This was after he had toured ten African nations, where he ‘convinced them more in the struggle against American imperialism and less in that against Soviet revisionism’.⁵⁵ During the first meeting between Enver Hoxha and Zhou Enlai, Hoxha accredited Albania as a strong interlocutor with parties and countries where he saw possible to foment sympathy for Sino-Albanian Marxist cause. He indeed affirmed, that ‘especially addressing Arab countries is our

Morocco, East Germany, Japan, Indonesia, relayed to the PLA CC”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D3.

⁵¹ “The comments of Chairman Mao Zedong with the Soviet ambassador Chervonenko, 23 February 1963”, in “Correspondence between the CPSU CC and the CCP CC (21 February and 09 March 1963) and summary of the CCP relayed to the PLA CC about the conversation between comrade Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping with Soviet Ambassador in China, Stepan Chervonenko”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D2, f.14-18.

⁵² “Letter of the PLA CC sent to the CPSU CC, 13 March 1963, in response of the letter received by the CPSU on 11 March”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1963, D6, f.7-8.

⁵³ For all the visits see AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D13-D18.

⁵⁴ “The welcoming speech of comrade Mehmet Shehu in Rinas airport (Tirana) on the occasion of the visit of Zhou Enlai, 31 December 1963”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D31; “Records of the talks between comrade Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of China, and the leaders of the party and state of Albania, headed by comrade Enver Hoxha, 02-08 January 1964”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D25-25/1.

⁵⁵ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3: 359.

duty to create a fertile terrain for the political aims of our countries [China and Albania]... because we are a small and Muslim country... let alone our people's revolution and socialist building'.⁵⁶ Then Hoxha delivered a long prepared speech attacking American imperialism, all East European revisionist regimes, and the Soviet Union and its leadership. On this issue, Hoxha privately had considered Chinese hesitations, at times, as a sign of weakness, and he defended his position by stating that the polemic against the Soviet Union 'was always for the sake of the socialist camp and the international communist movement'. Furthermore, for Hoxha 'it is imperative to further strengthen and organize the struggle of communists worldwide'.⁵⁷ Regarding Albania's relations with the neighbors, in particular the relations with Yugoslavia and Greece, he depicted a dark situation, but Hoxha also committed to 'pay attention to develop with Italy and Yugoslavia normal interstate relations based on the principle of the peaceful coexistence with countries with different systems, and make all efforts to avoid tension'.⁵⁸ Zhou Enlai recognized Albania's important role as 'the upholder of the banner of Marxism in Europe against imperialism and revisionism, giving a great contribution to the socialist camp... which is made even greater by the small size of your country'.⁵⁹ Then Zhou praised Hoxha's remarks on all the points he had mentioned during the first meeting. He pointed out how China and Albania could use in their favor four existing contradictions in the world: contradictions among imperialists, between imperialist and socialist camp, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and between imperialist and oppressed nations. Zhou fully endorsed Hoxha and also gave a long speech attacking Khrushchev and Soviet Union.⁶⁰ Then Zhou urged and endorsed Albania's will to be active in its contacts with the Arab and African countries and

⁵⁶ "Minutes of Conversation between comrades Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CCP, and leaders of the Party and the State of Albania. First session, 02/01/1964" in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D25-25/1, f.12-13.

⁵⁷ Ibid., f.18 & 20.

⁵⁸ Ibid., f.23.

⁵⁹ "Minutes of Conversation between comrades Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CCP, and leaders of the Party and the State of Albania. Third session, 03 January 1964", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D25-25/1, f.44.

⁶⁰ Ibid., f.47-54.

communist groups. Regarding Latin America Zhou seemed to rely more on Cuba, although he had to admit that Castro could not ‘openly’ oppose Soviet Union.⁶¹

In his fifth meeting with Zhou Enlai, Hoxha focused on explaining that ‘the center of revisionism is in Europe, consequently the struggle against it there is more difficult’. Even though ‘our party has some authority over the European communists, yet the role of China is and remains decisive in assisting revolutionary Europeans’. Therefore Hoxha asked for ‘more coordination... as we have embassies in France, Italy and elsewhere where you do not, you instead have in Soviet Union where we do not’. To this aim he proposed to China to create a unit at the Chinese embassy in Tirana, which would stay in ‘close collaboration’ with the Albanian authorities in coordinating the assistance for the revolutionary groups. Interestingly, Hoxha mentioned that in Poland there existed at least 30 groups which opposed Gomulka’s revisionist regime, and that even a coup d’état had been prepared but eventually was not implemented.⁶² All this data provided by Hoxha was aimed at increasing China’s perception of Albania’s role in Europe as important, and consequently increasing Chinese assistance. Moreover, Albania was testing how far the Chinese could go in the ideological struggle against Soviet Union, since only some months earlier Zhou himself had tried to convince Albania to talk to the Soviets. This time in Tirana, however, Zhou Enlai came to be supportive of the Albanian determination to fight with firmness against Soviet revisionism. China also launched a campaign of polemics (nine articles) against Soviet Union from September 1963 to July 1964, which was a reflection of Mao’s radicalism rather than Albania’s influence.⁶³

The Fall of Khrushchev: Attrition Between Tirana and Beijing

In October 1964, through a soft coup in the Soviet power’s cupola, Khrushchev lost his power.⁶⁴ The event was received with mixed feelings by both Soviet and Chinese

⁶¹ Ibid., f.59.

⁶² “Minutes of Conversation between comrades Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CCP, and leaders of the Party and the State of Albania. Fifth session, 05 January 1964”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D25-25/1, f.85-90.

⁶³ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 274-285; Li, *Mao’s China and the Sino-Soviet Split*, 110-116.

⁶⁴ Tompson, *Khrushchev*, 257-285.

leaders regarding the Sino-Soviet relations, which soon came to a stalemate.⁶⁵ Hoxha, on the other hand, was convinced that Khrushchev had been removed by his close comrades, who were just as revisionist and who would not change the course of the Soviet Union for the better. In hindsight, perhaps he was right. Immediately after the removal of Khrushchev, Zhou Enlai took the initiative, without consulting Tirana, to promote a close up between Tirana and Moscow. Zhou asked the Soviet Ambassador in Beijing to pressure his government to invite an Albanian delegation to Moscow, for the celebrations of the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution.⁶⁶ Zhou Enlai then personally invited Hoxha to re-establish links with Moscow. When Hoxha was informed of the Chinese actions, he became furious. In meeting with his close comrades, he stated the need to reconsider all relations with China, because, for him, China was taking a renegade path. The Albanian Premier Mehmet Shehu went further still, revealing to the Politburo that Albania had prepared a secret plan to deal with the possibility of being completely isolated without any assistance from any other country [China], but only normal trade ‘with those that still wants to trade with us’.⁶⁷

Hoxha called the diplomatic representative of China in Albania, and through Ramiz Alia asked China officially to not take any initiative on behalf of Albania.⁶⁸ The Albanian leadership continued imposing conditions for rapprochement with the Soviet Union. These conditions were impossible and humiliating for the Soviet Union: a complete rectification of the line followed by Khrushchev since the Twenty-second CPSU Congress; the rehabilitation of Stalin; the calculations and eventual repayments of the damages to the Albanian economy caused by the interruption of the Soviet aid; the end of the talks on the disarmaments with the West; the reconsideration of the peace treaties with Germany, and the retaking of

⁶⁵ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 285–301; MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3, 364–66; Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance*, 171–175.

⁶⁶ Radiogram of the Albanian Ambassador in China, Nesti Nase, to the Secretary of the PLA, Hysni Kapo, informing on his meeting with Zhou Enlai, 29.10.1964, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1964, D39. In this meeting Zhou Enlai said to have suggested to the CPSU that Moscow should invite delegations from 12 countries; Cuba, China, Albania, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Mongolia, Romania, Vietnam and North Korea.

⁶⁷ Records of the Politburo, 31 October 1964, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V.1964, D13, f.29.

⁶⁸ In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1964, D39, f.8.

severe attacks towards Tito.⁶⁹ Certainly, these were merely intended to justify Hoxha's lack of will for any bilateral talks with the Soviet Union. For Hoxha, highlighting the divergences with China regarding such rapprochement had only internal implications, to reinforce his rule and reaffirm a sense of autonomy for Albania. He knew that China was in great divergence with the Soviets, and he was perfectly aware that those disputes were not easy to settle even with the change of leadership in Moscow.⁷⁰ Hence, his refusal to approach Moscow could not have had serious implications for Albania's relations with China. Eventually, during the mid-1960s – early 1970s, China came to understand that Brezhnev was no better than Khrushchev – if not worse. In the same time, however, China's repeated attempts to bring Albania to talks with the Soviets eroded Hoxha's perception of Chinese position as rigid and irremovable towards the revisionist Soviet Union.

FORMING THE “ANTI-REVISIONIST” FRONT: CHALLENGING THE SOVIET UNION’S LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

The Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1955 (known as Bandung Conference) was the first attempt at forming an alternative bloc of the emerging world outside the East-West confrontation.⁷¹ Its failure, shown most clearly by the Sino-Soviet border clashes, pushed China to seek other ways to make space for its ambition as a global player. Coinciding with the domestic radicalization following the Sino-Soviet split, China sought to be a model for the revolutionary forces in the emerging world, in particular in those countries where the national struggle for independence on the

⁶⁹ Politburo, Tirana, 31 October 1964: “On the anti-Marxist standing of the Chinese Communist Party towards the Party of Labor of Albania, after the fall of the betrayer Khrushchev”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1964, D13, f.50-70.

⁷⁰ “On the divergences between the CCP and CPSU, disputes on the Sino-Soviet border, the assistance that the Soviet Union provided to China, the issue of the Soviet specialists, the trade between Soviet Union and China, the ending of the open polemic and the proposal of the CCP for the international meeting, the continuing of the Sino-Soviet talks on 10-25 October 1964”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1964, D15; “Letters of the correspondence between the CCP CC and the CPSU CC in the period 20 February – 07 May 1964”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1964, D18 & the period June-July 1964, D20; “The meeting of Liu Shaoqi with Soviet Ambassador Stepan Chervonenko in Beijing, November 1964”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1964, D21.

⁷¹ Mišković, Fischer-Tiné, and Boškowska Leimgruber eds., *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi-Bandung-Belgrade*, (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2014); Sandra Bott, Jussi M. Hanhimäki, Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl and Marco Wyss eds., *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War: Between or within the Blocs?*, (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2016).

wave of the decolonization left room at least for revolution, if not necessarily communist revolution.⁷² This required a twofold struggle for China: against imperialism, embodied in the United States, which for China had ‘replaced German, Italian and Japanese fascism as the principal enemy of the people of the world’, and against Soviet revisionism.⁷³ If the Soviet Union’s struggle to gain support in the Third World came from a logic of Cold War division of spheres of influence⁷⁴ – with its borders that outside Europe were fluid – Chinese struggle instead had to focus more, and at times primarily, against the Soviet revisionism and its powerful political machine. This was made even more difficult by China’s lack of economic means compared to Soviet Union.

During his meetings with Hysni Kapo in Beijing in June 1962, Deng Xiaoping had affirmed the necessity ‘to make long efforts to create a revolutionary nucleus in the international communist movement’.⁷⁵ Deng emphasized the need to open a breach within the world communist movement and bring to the Sino-Albanian side the many revolutionary parties and communist groups of the Global South, namely Latin America, Asia and Africa. Nonetheless, China had begun to create some space for such manoeuvres, even before relations with Moscow sank, as the case of Guinea, in Africa, shows.⁷⁶ Khrushchev some years earlier had mentioned Albania as ‘a precious gem that would attract the rest of the Muslim world towards communism, especially in the Middle East and Africa. That’s what our intentions were and the kind of policy we were pursuing’.⁷⁷

⁷² Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake, eds., *Decolonization and the Cold War: Negotiating Independence*, (London: Bloomsbury), 2015; Raymond F. Betts, *Decolonization*, 2nd ed, (New York; London: Routledge, 2004); See also part 2 and 4 in Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, 1st ed, (Oxford, U.K: Oxford University Press, 2013); Dan Berger, ed., *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 2010).

⁷³ Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking’s Support for Wars of National Liberation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 24. This is a quote from Peng Zhen’s speech in Indonesia in May 1965.

⁷⁴ Lloyd C. Gardner, *Spheres of Influence: The Great Powers Partition Europe, from Munich to Yalta*, (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1993).

⁷⁵ “Top-Secret: The first official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing at 4pm, 11 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.14.

⁷⁶ Austin Jersild, “Sino-Soviet Rivalry in Guinea-Conakry, 1956-1965: The Second World in the Third World”, in Babiracki and Jersild ed., *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War*, 303–325.

⁷⁷ Sergei Khrushchev ed., trans. George Shriver, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Vol. 3: Statesman 1953–1964*, supplementary material translated by Stephen Shenfield, (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 516.

On this same line, Deng invited Albanian leaders to overcome apparent prejudices towards these parties, some of which had attacked Albania during the Moscow Conference in November 1960. Deng stated that their attack on Albania came due to Soviet pressure, ‘but in deep heart they admire the PLA’s struggle for the Marxist cause’.⁷⁸ Deng was interested also in the West European communist parties, for which Albania could have more knowledge given its proximity and diplomatic relations with some of these countries. Hysni Kapo affirmed that Albania had already received ‘numerous letters from communist parties and groups from 32 different countries’.⁷⁹ Kapo stated that the ruling parties in the eastern European bloc had experienced great difficulties which left space for groups within these parties to emerge against revisionism. The same he affirmed for the communist parties of the western Europe, where the situation was even easier for the creation of new communist groups. Regardless the accuracy of Kapo’s affirmations, he was trying to argue for the lack of necessity for any close up with the Soviets as the breach within the communist movement led by the Soviets had already occurred. Albania’s strategy, elucidated by Kapo, was to promote an open international struggle against Khrushchev’s revisionism.

It was not the first time that the leading role of Soviet leaders in the international communist movement was challenged. Even in the early 1930s, Trotsky had been the first to challenge the Soviet (Stalinist) model of communism by forming what then he called International Left Opposition.⁸⁰ More consistently, during 1960 on the wave of the Sino-Soviet disagreements, some communist parties had supported China, although not as openly as Albanians.⁸¹ The deterioration of China’s interstate relations with Soviet Union further motivated both China and Albania to try to capture the sympathy of the small leftist groups or communist parties. This was not

⁷⁸ “Top-Secret: The first official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing at 4pm, 11 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.19-20; Radiogram of Hysni Kapo sent to Enver Hoxha, 11 June 1962, in “Radiograms of the correspondence of Enver Hoxha with Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia during their visit to China”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D8, f.68-78.

⁷⁹ “Top-Secret: The second official meeting between the delegations of the PLA and the CCP, in Beijing at 4pm, 12 June 1962”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D6, f.26.

⁸⁰ A. Belden Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States*, (New York: Praeger, 1988), 41; For more on international Trotskyism see Robert Jackson Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

⁸¹ Li and Xia, “Jockeying for Leadership”, 51.

pursued for purely ideological reasons, but also in solidarity with the Third World's struggle for emancipation. From this perspective, China and Albania did not make much distinction between the Soviet Union and the United States of America. The world, for them, was trapped into the American "imperialist" and Soviet "revisionist" struggle for world supremacy. Therefore, however low the potential to project effective power worldwide, Beijing tried to accredit itself as an alternative to the Soviet Union for the newly emerging world.⁸² But 'China's other rival in guiding the Third World in the struggle against "imperialism" was East Germany', the Soviets' most powerful and dedicated protégé.⁸³ Tirana tried to play for Beijing the role that East Germany played for the Soviet Union, but with less power.

In early July 1963, Hysni Kapo met in Tirana with the Chinese ambassador Lo Shigao, and asked a pledge of joint support for all those groups in the world that would join the Sino-Albanian struggle against both 'imperialism' and 'revisionism'.⁸⁴ The moment he chose showed Albania's willingness to test Chinese leaders' intentions. Albanian leaders knew of the Sino-Soviet interparty bilateral talks, which started in Moscow the same day Hysni Kapo met in Tirana with the Chinese ambassador. The Albanians perhaps were correct to doubt the Chinese conviction against the Soviet Union as the Chinese response to Albanian initiative came on the last day of the Sino-Soviet bilateral talks in Moscow.⁸⁵ Chinese leaders kept all of their options on the table, waiting to see the outcomes of these talks before taking any step in opposing Soviet Union. For Radchenko 'the word "talks" is perhaps inadequate' to describe Sino-Soviet talks, as they were more 'heating exchanges'.⁸⁶ Eventually they resulted in a complete stalemate, with both sides

⁸² Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War. The Sino-Soviet competition for the Third World*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Li and Xia, "Jockeying for Leadership. Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split"; Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns In The Heavens*; Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*.

⁸³ Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance*, 159; Quinn Slobodian, ed., *Comrades of Color: East Germany in the Cold War World*, (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015). An intense competition between East and West during the Cold War which had, among many countries, Germany as one of the protagonists, developed also regarding the international humanitarian aid. See, Young-Sung Hong, *Cold War Germany, the Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁸⁴ "Notes from the meeting of comrade Hysni Kapo with the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, comrade Lo Shigao, 06 July 1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D4, f.25-48.

⁸⁵ "Notes from the meeting between comrade Ramiz Alia and the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, comrade Lo Shigao, 20 July 1963", in *ibid.*, f.49-50.

⁸⁶ Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens*, 61–64.

holding their positions on all the issues which had been matter of contention between Soviet Union and China since the 1950s, ‘with the only benefit that... each side had the opportunity to explain its position in full’.⁸⁷ As Lüthi has stated, ‘Mao’s comeback in the late summer 1962 provided the impetus for renewed ideological radicalism in China’s foreign policy... only a complete ideological surrender of one side could save Sino-Soviet relations’.⁸⁸ Therefore, ‘it was impossible for the Sino-Soviet relationship to develop as long as the ideological disputes continued’.⁸⁹ The Soviet Union asked to stop the open polemic, and wanted a communiqué in this sense, but China refused. The Soviet Union reiterated again its invitation at the end of November 1963 to stop the polemics in the press. China instead challenged Moscow by calling for a meeting of the communist parties of all East Asia, New Zealand, Australia and Albania to be held in early 1964.⁹⁰ Eventually the meeting was postponed, as Zhou Enlai later told Hoxha that this meeting ‘does not present any immediate necessity’.⁹¹

In autumn 1963, the roles of China and Albania in support of revolutionary forces were better outlined. To China, together with the Albanian minister of defense Beqir Balluku, went also Pirro Bitu, Head of the PLA Directorate for Foreign Relations (International Liaison Department) – a man that would play a crucial role in the years to come in the contacts between the PLA, CCP, and the revolutionary

⁸⁷ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3: 352; The CCP relayed to Albania a copy of the Transcript of the talks. In, “Records of the meeting between the representatives of the CCP and the CPSU in Moscow, 06-20 July 1963, and the information of the Albanian Charge d’Affaires in China, Vasil Skorovoti, about his meeting with the Chinese vice director of the International Liaison, 27 July 1963, where he relayed to Skorovoti these materials regarding the talks between the CCP and the CPSU regarding important issues of today’s world development, the international communist movement and the Sino-Soviet relations (among which they talked about the causes of the emergence of the divergences [Sino-Soviet], Moscow’s declarations of 1957 and 1960, the 20th and the 22nd CPSU congresses, the issue of Stalin, Yugoslavian revisionism, the Albanian-Soviet relations, etc)”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D23-23/8.

⁸⁸ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 244; For Mao’s radicalization in this period see also, Niu Jun, “1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China’s Foreign Policy”, 1-36; Mingjiang Li, “Ideological Dilemma; Mao’s China and the Sino-Soviet Split 1962–1963”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (2011): 387 – 412.

⁸⁹ Niu Jun, “1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China’s Foreign Policy”, 22.

⁹⁰ “Letter of the CPSU sent to the CCP, on 29 November 1963, asking to stop the opened polemic, among other issues. Correspondence between the CCP and the PLA, regarding the possibility for a meeting of 12 communist parties in China”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D12.

⁹¹ Tirana, 02 January 1964. “Minutes of Conversation between comrades Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CCP, and leaders of the Party and the State of PR of Albania. Second session in the afternoon of 02 January 1964”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D25-25/1, f.39.

groups worldwide. In Beijing he met many times with officials of the CCP International Liaison Department who told him of the Chinese role in Asia, and informed him of the Asian communist movements.⁹² The Albanian minister of defense Beqir Balluku also had long conversations with Deng Xiaoping with focus on the international communist movement and the strategy to be adopted by China and Albania to build a united front against revisionism.⁹³ For this purpose, China committed also to building a foreign languages' publishing house in Albania and a powerful radio station.⁹⁴ Liu Ningyi told Bitu that China needed a base in Latin America, and Bitu promptly mentioned Albania's embassy in Brazil.⁹⁵ China had attempted to establish contacts in Brazil even before Albania, when 'the Brazilians dispatched to China, shortly after the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU, a group of cadres for six months of indoctrination'.⁹⁶ But following the military coup in Brazil in April 1964 in which nine Chinese citizens were arrested, eventually accused of plotting a communist revolution, Chinese contacts became more difficult. The Chinese citizens were sent back in China after one year of imprisonment, but this case caused the interruption of the diplomatic talks between Brazil and China until 1974.⁹⁷

From 1964 onward, that assistance for the revolutionary forces became increasingly systematic and intensive. The Albanian leadership established in June 1964 the first monetary fund (named solidarity fund) to assist Marxist and revolutionary parties – a fund which would continue to exist until 1990. Hoxha appointed two of his most faithful comrades, Hysni Kapo and the head of the PLA

⁹² "The Conversation between Pirro Bitu and the vice director of the CCP international liaison department, 11 September 1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D9; "The meeting of Pirro Bitu with the vice director of the CCP international liaison department, Liu Ningyi, 18 September 1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D11.

⁹³ "Top-Secret: The meeting of comrade Beqir Balluku with Deng Xiaoping in China, 09, 12 and 24 September 1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D7, in particular f.1-22 and f.31-63.

⁹⁴ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D10.

⁹⁵ "The meeting of Pirro Bitu with the vice director of the CCP international liaison department, Liu Ningyi, 18 September 1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D11, f.15. Eventually the Albanian embassy in Brazil closed in 1964 following the military coup.

⁹⁶ Cecil Johnson, *Communist China & Latin America, 1959-1967*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 183.

⁹⁷ Cica Guedes e Murilo Fiuza de Melo, *O Caso dos Nove Chineses* [The Case of the Nine Chinese], (Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2014). Albania protested, through the association of the journalists first, and then that of the lawyers, which respectively participated in international meetings, and asked for the immediate release of the Chinese citizens.

International Liaison Department Pirro Biti, to run this program.⁹⁸ A document of March 1966 states that the fund was created with an initial Chinese and Albanian contributions of 500,000 USD, and 200,000 USD, respectively.⁹⁹ In 1967 the fund reached almost one million American dollars, with an annual Chinese contribution of half a million.¹⁰⁰ Financing the activities of these groups continued for many years, in particular the South American and European groups taking the lion's share of the fund. To the solidarity fund was added also the political and military training offered by the party's school in Tirana and by the Albanian army.¹⁰¹ Regarding the last aspect, it is interesting to note that most of the groups that came to Albania for military training were from Latin America and Africa. Some members of the OLP (Organization for the Liberation of Palestine) also came. On this point, according to a recent Albanian publication by a former journalist of the Albanian army, groups from eleven countries received military training in Albania from mid-1960s to mid-1970s, among them were people that later would become famous such as Lula da Silva from Brazil, who later became president of his country, Laurent Kabila from Congo, Abu Jihad, who was Yasser Arafat's right hand, and many others.¹⁰² Albania's regime established relations with dozens of parties and revolutionary groups worldwide, including groups from at least sixteen African countries, eight parties from Latin

⁹⁸ "Top-Secret: Decision Nr. 293, 22 September 1964: On the decision to provide monetary assistance to Marxist parties and groups", in AQSH, F.14/AP, Sekretariati, V. 1964, D26, f.36-37. In this file they refer to the Politburo decision taken on 10 June 1964, to establish an organic financial fund for the assistance to Marxist groups; recently a book was published in Albania by a journalist of the army who had privileged access to some classified documentation, in Ylli Molla, *Guerillas Made in Albania. Historia e Arafatit, Kabilës, Lulës, Amazonas dhe luftëtarëve nga 11 shtete që u përgatiten politikisht në ushtarakisht nga pedagogët shqiptarë*, [Guerrillas Made in Albania. The History of Arafat, Kabila, Lula, and Amazonas and of the fighters from 11 states that were trained militarily and politically by Albanian teachers] (Tirana: Botart, 2016); China gave to Albania every year 500 thousand American dollars to finance small revolutionary communist groups or parties in West. In "The meeting of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing Behar Shtylla with Li Yimen", in AQSH, F14, AP-MPKK, V. 1976, D11.

⁹⁹ Tirana, 19 March 1966: "Top-Secret: Report on the situation of the special fund at PLA CC disposal and the proposals for the year 1966", in AQSH, F.14/AP., Sekretariati, V. 1966, D28, f.91.

¹⁰⁰ Tirana, 19 January 1966: "Top-Secret: Information on the implementation of the decision of the Secretariat of Central Committee of 19 March 1966 on the use of the solidarity fund", in AQSH, F.14/AP., Sekretariati, V. 1967, D20, f.1-2.

¹⁰¹ "Report about the military and political training of the foreigners in Albania", in *ibid.*, f.167.

¹⁰² Ylli Molla, *Guerillas Made in Albania*, 155-207.

American countries, sixteen from Asia, two from Oceania, still others from the Middle East, the West, and (limitedly) East Europe.¹⁰³

The activities of these groups consisted mainly of publishing and publicizing propaganda that China and Albania continuously provided. The aim was to promote China and Albania and attack Soviet Union (revisionism) and the United States (American imperialism). In Africa and Latin America though, many of these groups were involved in illegal activities. In particular in Latin America, the political repression against the leftist movement made difficult and dangerous even simple political activities such as distribution of pamphlets or meetings in university circles. But these were also years of revolutionary fervor which affected most of the so called Third World, therefore making fertile terrain for political activities.¹⁰⁴ In Albania, for the first time in 1964, came also a limited number of political asylum seekers from Africa. For instance the president of the revolutionary committee of the People's Union of Cameroon, Ndeh Mtumazah, asked in November 1963 to house his family in Albania, after that they had escaped to Ghana.¹⁰⁵ His wife and his three children reached Albania in April 1964, but their stay was short as in October 1964 they were authorized to leave Albania and go to East Germany where her husband had gone after 'becoming an instrument of the Soviet revisionists', as an Albanian report stated.¹⁰⁶ By 1970 the number of African students increased to twenty, many

¹⁰³ In AQSH, F.14, AP-Africa. The list contains parties and groups from Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, Dahomey (Benin), Ghana, Guinea, Congo, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Togo; Also in AQSH, F.14/AP., Sekretariati, V. 1971, D62, f.36.

¹⁰⁴ Samantha Christiansen and Zachary A. Scarlett, eds., *The Third World in the Global 1960s. Protest, culture and society*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Ronald H. Chilcote, *Brazil and Its Radical Left: An Annotated Bibliography on the Communist Movement and the Rise of Marxism, 1922-1972*, (Millwood, N.Y: Kraus International Publications, 1980); Brian Loveman, *The Constitution of Tyranny: Regimes of Exception in Spanish America*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993); John Sheahan, *Patterns of Development in Latin America: Poverty, Repression, and Economic Strategy*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987); William Jerman, *Repression in Latin America: A Report on the First Session of the Second Russell Tribunal, Rome, April 1974*, (Nottingham: Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation for Spokesman Books, 1975); Cecilia Menjivar and Néstor Rodríguez eds., *When States Kill: Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror*, 1st ed, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁵ In AQSH, F.14/AP, Marrëdhëniet me Komitetin Revolucionar të Bashkimit të Popullit të Kamerunit, [Relations PLA-Revolutionary Committee of the People's Union of Cameroon], V. 1964, D2.

¹⁰⁶ In AQSH, F.14/AP, Marrëdhëniet me Komitetin Revolucionar të Bashkimit të Popullit të Kamerunit, [Relations PLA-Revolutionary Committee of the People's Union of Cameroon], V. 1964-1965, D5.

of them children of rebels who passed their whole childhood alone in Albania.¹⁰⁷ All the foreign communist activists staying in Albania were provided a monthly salary, a house or apartment, and education for children.¹⁰⁸ Many of them became successful doctors, or engineers after completing university in Tirana, and in a few cases remained in Albania for their entire lives. All these activities were in coordination with Chinese officials, as indicated by hand written notes from Hoxha.

The Anti-Soviet Front: Two Examples of Sino-Albanian Internationalism

In February 1966, an Albanian ship carrying special cargo was about to leave from the Polish port of Gdansk. Two men, one diplomat and the Albanian trade attaché in Poland, had organized the embarkation. Their task was to take out of Poland two leaders of the new Polish Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), [PCP (m-l)], Dajti and Drini (Albanian pseudonyms) who had organized illegal activities opposing the ruling party in Poland.¹⁰⁹ It was a covert operation that, if discovered, could have repercussions on diplomatic relations between Albania and Poland which had already deteriorated after the Soviet-Albanian split in 1961. Polish authorities later discovered the operation, and the Albanian embassy in Poland was closed for some time. One of the men that Albanian authorities helped to exile to Albania was Kazimierz Mijal. Born in 1910, he had been active with the communists during the Second World War. After the war he served as a minister in Poland, as Mayor of the city of Lodz, and occupied other offices. But when Khrushchev reshaped Soviet policy denouncing Stalin's crimes, Mijal colluded with the ruling Polish United Workers Party (PUWP), and in 1964 illegally founded his own communist party. Since Mijal was not unknown to Polish authorities, organizing his exile from Poland was a matter of both concern and pride for the Albanians. Eventually the operation was a success, and Mijal reached Albania on 18 February 1966, where he would stay

¹⁰⁷ "Information prepared by the foreign sector of the PLA CC, on the data collected by the District's party offices regarding the situation of the African children that are living in our country, 16 August 1971-January 1972", in AQSH, F.14, STR, V. 1971, D464/1.

¹⁰⁸ Decision No. 9, 10 January 1968 of the PLA Secretariat, in AQSH, F.14/AP, STR, V. 1971, D374, f.1-2.

¹⁰⁹ "Letter to comrade Koço Prifti, from Hysni Kapo, 19 January 1966", in F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D1, f.1-4.

for more than a decade, establishing the Polish section of Radio Tirana, and trying to organize activities in the capacity of general secretary of the PCP (m-l).¹¹⁰

Once safe in Tirana, Mijal's concern was how to expand the network of connections in Poland, in the vain hope of undermining Wladyslaw Gomulka's rule. From Tirana, Mijal managed to distribute his party's communiqués to some factories in Warsaw. As a result, the Polish authorities had many arrested, and the Politburo of the PUPP criticized the minister of internal affairs, who is reported to have admitted that they had not surveyed enough.¹¹¹ For Mijal's task the Chinese embassy in Warsaw was as helpful as the Albanian embassy. Not unlike a great spy movie, the Chinese embassy collaborated with the Albanian diplomats in Poland to confound the secret police tasked with keeping an eye on them.¹¹² Albanian authorities tried to use Mijal's party as a possible nucleon of further actions in other East European countries. Albanian authorities sent instructions to the embassies in Budapest, Berlin and Praha asking to establish contacts with Polish citizens that lived in these cities.¹¹³ Poland was the biggest (and important) East European country, and Mijal was the most experienced man among those supporting the Sino-Albanian cause in all East Europe.

The Chinese embassy also worked to create contacts between Mijal and others, including a professor at Warsaw University, Stefan Matuszewski.¹¹⁴ According to the information given by the Chinese embassy in Warsaw, following the self-imposed exile of Mijal, the Polish authorities had arrested many political dissidents, many of whom were members of the newly born PCP (m-l). In addition, the Albanian embassy in Poland told of Polish police continuously following the movements of its diplomats and staff. Back in Tirana, Mijal proposed reducing the contacts for some

¹¹⁰ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D3; Enver Hoxha, personal diary, 20 February 1966, (document in my possession). Two days after his arrival in Tirana Hoxha received Mijal in a welcome meeting.

¹¹¹ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D11, f.24-25.

¹¹² Mijal told the Albanians in Tirana that would be useful the use of the cars of the Chinese embassy in Poland. Since the police would follow anyone going outside the Albanian embassy, then Chinese embassy could send a car to the Albanian embassy with a man and a woman, but on the way back the car would carry an Albanian woman which then would move out from the Chinese embassy, which they thought was less surveyed. From there she would meet with Mijal's wife, and then with other people he indicated and eventually meet always in private apartments and not the embassies. In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D2.

¹¹³ "Information, 17 March 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D2, f.1-6.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., f.9.

time to only one person in Poland: the 'lady with glasses'. A woman from the Albanian embassy could meet her at the cinema, once the light were off, they could exchange the bags, but had to avoid speaking, 'not a single word'.¹¹⁵ In the bag there would be correspondence and materials to spread among a restricted number of people in Warsaw. It is interesting that most of the recipients were bureaucrats and state employers, including a former deputy chief of the post-war Polish parliament. The work of Mijal proved difficult, dangerous, and even deadly, as information arrived in Tirana that an assassin had been sent for him, although this is unverified and most likely from an unreliable source.¹¹⁶ In Poland, the illegal activities of communist groups had been taking place since 1964, with Albanian and Chinese support. Radio for communications, pamphlets for illegally distribution, and money for operations had all been provided by Tirana. Enver Hoxha seems to have had great enthusiasm and expectations for Mijal's role in Tirana. Not long after Mijal arrived, Hoxha organized a reception for him, and promised him assistance.¹¹⁷ Hoxha also advised Mijal to select five Polish comrades with which to reinforce the Polish section of Radio Tirana, and he suggested building up a section of the PCP (m-l) in Paris, considering the large Polish diaspora in France. Moreover, Mijal was told to collaborate with Jacques Grippa, the head of the Belgian communist party, another party which was receiving assistance from both Albania and China.

The second case regards West Europe, that of Jacques Grippa in Belgium, who among all the western communists was the first to establish a party that supported a hard line against the Soviet Union. Jacques Grippa was also an experienced man, as much as Mijal, and seriously committed to the communist cause. He had been part of the resistance against Nazism in Belgium. Arrested by Gestapo in 1943, he was tortured, and then sent to the concentration camp of Buchenwald. But he had the fortune to survive and return to Belgium, where he became a known official of the Communist Party of Belgium. The work with the West European communist groups was easier. Their leadership did not have to work in exile, their meetings with the people, and their propaganda were not suppressed, although in some cases, other

¹¹⁵ These modalities are explained and suggested by Mijal in Tirana. In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D8, f.1-4.

¹¹⁶ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D11, f.2.

¹¹⁷ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D4.

forms of repression were used, in particular against the distribution of pamphlets that called for the rebellion and overthrow of the democratic regimes in West Europe. After the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, Grippa supported Mao, becoming one of the most known supporters of Maoism in Europe. In 1963, he was expelled from the Communist Party of Belgium, but soon he founded the new Belgian Communist Party, Marxist – Leninist [BCP (m-l)].¹¹⁸ He was important for Albania and for China because of his extended contacts with communist parties worldwide. He personally claimed to be in contact with as many as sixty communist parties and groups.¹¹⁹ And initially, he supported even more strongly than Mijal the Chinese struggle against the Soviet Union.

Therefore, for Hoxha, these two men were precious keys to establishing a strong network of communists in Europe, which could be faithful to China and Albania. Grippa collaborated with Albania from Brussels, and published documents of Mijal's party, such as the declaration of the PCP in *La Voix de Peuple*, (People's Voice), the official party press of the Belgian Communist Party, although they censored the comments on Jews and other issues. Grippa proved hard to deal with, and it seems that in 1966 he was behaving very selectively towards the Marxist groups. He disagreed with the Albanian leaders about a Spanish communist party, recently founded, and its illegal activities. Then, in Spain, followed the founding of another communist party. Albania established contacts with both parties, although just one of them was deemed fully Marxist. Grippa did not agree with the fact that Albania was helping both of these groups, preferring to assist only the party led by someone called Valera.¹²⁰ Perhaps Grippa accredited himself as the reference, as a filter, for the Albanian and Chinese contacts with the western European communist groups, and claimed a certain role. He might have felt bypassed, therefore he blamed Albania for assisting many groups that often were in conflict with each other. However, considering that most of these parties and groups were small, and almost none of them had consolidated power, Albanian leaders thought that having more options on the table was better than having none left. Grippa, on the contrary, thought that, given the limited resources, it was wiser to concentrate their efforts only towards

¹¹⁸ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1966, D9, f.63.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., f.31.

¹²⁰ Ibid., f.41-44.

those parties that had toed the right line. He looked, for example, at France, where two groups, one in Marseille and the other in Paris had been assisted, where only the groups of Paris truly shared their ideology. Kapo and Alia accepted that in the case of France, Albania had been mistaken, and reminded Grippa to address his criticisms to the PLA, and not its Chinese comrades, whom Grippa had also blamed.¹²¹ These groups were also competing for resources, and Grippa could have had concerns regarding the use of these resources. China, not Albania, had been the first to assist Grippa in building his new communist (m-l) party, after his expulsion from the Communist Party of Belgium in 1963. Beijing not only recognized the new party, but assisted them materially and received Grippa in Beijing. In 1964, divergences about the tactic and the approach to new European communist groups emerged between China and Grippa, as Beijing wanted to establish relations with any possible communist group that diverged from the Soviet Union, while Grippa remained selective, using ideological boundaries and practical performances as his criteria for evaluation.¹²²

Beyond the propaganda narrative, neither Beijing nor Tirana were promoting revolution – not at least in Europe. They wanted cells of Marxist-Leninists within, but mostly outside, the communist bloc to provide legitimation for their split with the Soviet Union. Following the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, many political parties in the West had been taking the side of China, including groups within the European big communist parties such as in France, Belgium, and Italy. In addition, these groups could be useful as a bridgehead for further expansion of Mao's, and eventually Hoxha's, thought. The work in the West, however, would not be easy. In western Europe, the leadership of the communist movement was in the hands of the largest communist parties of the western camp, the Italian Communist Party and the French Communist Party. Both had strong ties with the Kremlin, which even the United States found difficult to cut, as shown recently.¹²³ They shadowed almost every attempt by leftist movements to gain political influence. Moreover, the

¹²¹ Ibid., f.45-49.

¹²² AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D5, f.28-30.

¹²³ Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*. The author, among others, outlines and analyzes the differences between the two parties, arguing how the French communist party was “more subordinate to the Soviet dictates”, (p. 15).

economic growth in West Europe reached its peak during mid-1960s, in what is known as the “*Trente Glorieuses* [The Glorious Thirty]”, the time of thirty years 1945-75 of economic growth after the Second World War.¹²⁴ This undermined the power base of the revolutionary forces. In this context, China and Albania could only proselytize among extra-parliamentary leftist groups, which opposed both the parliamentary left and the right.

These political communist groups were notable for the division amongst themselves at this time. Each country had many groups that supported the Sino-Albanian alliance, but none were strongly collaborative with each-other.¹²⁵ There are at least three reasons for this. First is the fact that many of these groups claimed to be the real communists in their country and they wanted to be recognized as such by others. The second factor is their competition for resources, as they knew China and Albania would support those most adherent to rigid ideological principles. The third factor concerns the Albanian and Chinese strategy to not prioritize or even pursue unity in these groups – because, in the case of betrayal by one group or party, they could have other available groups to support their policy. Another significant aspect of this assistance concerned the armed struggle, or lack thereof. No evidence has emerged to suggest that China and Albania supported armed struggle in any European country. This is likely due to the fact that, among other reasons, both Beijing and Tirana had correctly seen that conditions for communist revolutions in West Europe remained far from being ripe. Therefore, when asked to provide military equipment, Hoxha was quite categorical in denying the western European groups, as in the case of an Italian communist group. One Chinese concern about the assistance provided to European groups was to avoid being accused by any European country for intervention in internal affairs. Hoxha, in his personal diary in 1965, criticized China for fearing too much. It seems, however, that China, although not explicitly, was content to leave the “dirty work” of directly intervening on behalf of these European groups to Albania, and in turn Beijing provided the financial and material assistance.

¹²⁴ Robert Gildea, *France since 1945*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹²⁵ Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism*, 87–130.

Regarding Latin America and, in particular, Africa, both China and Albania thought there could be good chances for these revolutionary groups to assume political power. Perhaps they were right, because following the decolonization process, in many African countries' leftist groups seized, or nearly seized, authority – demonstrating in the process that these revolutions were more than just remote possibilities. The same could be said of the Latin American groups. As the economy in these countries was in the hands of oligarchies, with great support from United States, and the political power was mostly in the hands of corrupted and authoritarian military regimes, both China and Albania believed communist revolutionary parties could gain support from the masses.¹²⁶ In a visit to Albania in January 1964, Zhou Enlai affirmed that ‘the revolutionary flame... exists today in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, countries where there is ongoing national revolutionary upheaval, there are revolutionary conditions’.¹²⁷ Their concern in this case was not the oppression of the authorities, but the Cuban hold on these groups. They deemed Cuba revisionist, although they both supported Castro.

CHINA’S ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SUPPORT FOR ALBANIA

Unlike Kim Il Sung, Hoxha did not seek economic advantages from both China and the Soviet Union – by playing Beijing and Moscow against each other.¹²⁸ Although during the party congress in February 1961, Hoxha mentioned to Kozlov and Andropov that the Soviet call for peace would remain unanswered until complete implementation of the economic assistance according to the agreements; Hoxha did not push for further negotiations. From documents, it is clear that Hoxha prioritized

¹²⁶ A classic case of American intervention to overthrow a democratic government and support instead an oppressive military regime in South America is Chile. See Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Jerry Dávila, *Dictatorship in South America*, (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Francesca Lessa and Vincent Druliolle, eds., *The Memory of State Terrorism in the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal S. Pérez-Liñán, *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America: Emergence, Survival, and Fall*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); See aspects of transition instead in William Columbus Davis, *Warnings from the Far South: Democracy versus Dictatorship in Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile*, (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1995).

¹²⁷ “Minutes of Conversation between comrades Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC, vice Chairman of the CC of the CCP, and leaders of the Party and the State of PR of Albania. Third session, 03 January 1964”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D25-25/1, f.47.

¹²⁸ Balazs Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005), 161–166.

the Chinese economic assistance, regardless of his eventual relations with Soviet Union. This is shown by his conversation with the Soviet delegation in Tirana, which focused more on the cause of Soviet-Albanian disagreements, rather than looking for a way out of the stalemate.¹²⁹ In fact, Hoxha's position towards the Soviets was even stronger by then, backed by the political and economic support of Beijing.¹³⁰ After all, Albania was not in the same position as North Korea, and a fight to control Albania hardly would have occurred between China and the Soviet Union.

Chinese leaders actually contributed quite directly to Hoxha's hostility towards Moscow. For instance, Li Xiannian told Hoxha in February 1961 in Tirana, that China would not provide as much military assistance to Albania as it received from the WPO members.¹³¹ This left Albania at the mercy of Moscow's conditions, but since Moscow was providing no assistance by that time, Hoxha could not choose to stay between Moscow and Beijing. Of course, he fully embraced China. Therefore, when, between December 1960 and January 1961, an Albanian economic delegation headed by Spiro Koleka, member of the PLA CC and vice head of the State Planning Commission (a powerful state institution that used to plan and supervise the FYP), visited China, their aim had not been to request a complementary loan, but substantial assistance to replace the Soviet planned aid for the entire FYP. Eventually, China approved a loan of 500 million rubles for the Albanian FYP 1961-1965. Although Albania formally was tied to agreements with Soviet Union for the same FYP, the lack of Soviet implementation of these agreements made Albania economically a client state of China. This came also as a consequence of the continuous assurances China made to Albania, regarding its support, which as they said, was going to be 'unconditional'. As the events that followed would show, this statement was not entirely true.

China's promise was functional to both the Soviet-Albanian split, and to the Sino-Soviet split. Other factors may have played a role as well. Chinese leaders knew

¹²⁹ "Record of the meeting between Enver Hoxha and the Soviet delegation that came in Albania to participate at the Third PLA Congress, 20 February 1961", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKBS, D7.

¹³⁰ "Record of the second meeting of the comrades Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu with the Chinese delegation headed by Li Xiannian, 25 February 1961, that has come to Albania on occasion of the Fourth Party Congress", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D4, f.2-11.

¹³¹ "Minutes of conversation between comrade Enver Hoxha, Mehmet Shehu, Spiro Koleka with the Chinese delegation headed by comrade Li Xiannian that has come in Albania to participate at the Fourth Party Congress, Tirana, 09 February 1961", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D2, f.27-28.

that the Albanian quarrel with the Soviet Union resulted in Albanian quarrels with all the other eastern European countries, and negatively impacted their economic assistance to Albania. Hoxha personally had contributed to this situation by attacking one by one nearly all the eastern European leaders during the Moscow Conference in November 1960. Once relations with Moscow further deteriorated, and Albania was isolated by the Soviet East European bloc, China perhaps was confident to persuade Albania to give up at least some of its requests for assistance in developing their heavy industry, and follow Chinese suggestions to prioritize light industry and the production of consumer goods. This seems to have been the case when, in January 1961, in Beijing, Zhou Enlai confirmed China's readiness to assist Albania, but also asked for revisions to the Albanian plan. Zhou's demands were similar to those Khrushchev had made a few years earlier. China had confirmed the loan of 500 million rubles to Albania, which signed the beginning of many years of Chinese assistance to the Albanian economy and to its FYPs, and replaced entirely the once-promised Soviet assistance.¹³² However, Zhou did not agree with the Albanian plans of building sixteen industrial projects for the period 1961-65. Although he eventually ceded to their requests, he made three criticisms: first, of building large, complex industrial projects while the agriculture was still backward, because '...if there is no progress in the agriculture then there are also obstacles to the development of the industry...'; second, of the manpower required for these industrial projects, manpower that Albania's small population – then around 1.6 million – could not muster; and third, of the difficulties posed for China in providing products that required advanced chemical processes, both for agriculture and industry.¹³³

Zhou Enlai, knowing that Albania had run out of alternatives, thought he could push Albanian officials to revise the FYP. In fact, only 100 out of 500 million rubles of the Chinese assistance, less than one third, was addressed to agricultural

¹³² "About some issues Albania should consider in its economic collaboration with China, the loan of 500 million rubles for the period 1961-65". Albania asked officially 700 million rubles but China could approve 500 million rubles, in AQSH, F14, AP-PKK, V. 1961, D1. The loan was equal to 125 million USD.

¹³³ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D1, f.8. Just before the Great Leap Forward, China had decided to focus more on agriculture, eventually instead promoting the forced industry with disastrous results. See, Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution. Vol. 2. The Great Leap Forward, 1958 – 1960*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 33. Zhou suggested Albanians to not make the same mistake China had made, although he did not explain to them the real outcomes of the Great Leap Forward.

investments. But Hoxha's firmness withstood Zhou's attempts. Significantly, Zhou affirmed that his suggestion to focus on agriculture and light industry came 'from our [Chinese] experience'.¹³⁴ By now the consequences of the Great Leap Forward had been clear for Chinese leaders, and its outcomes had reduced China's capacity to project abroad the economic power they had planned when they launched it in 1958. Zhou Enlai did not mention the Great Leap Forward explicitly, however, and there is no evidence that Albanian officials came to know of its real consequences. On the contrary, Li Xiannian told Albanian leaders in Tirana in February 1961 an outright lie, affirming that Chinese economy 'has been growing speedily... the industry has developed greatly, in particular in the last three years'.¹³⁵ Li Xiannian, who seems to have been in contact with Beijing during his stay in Albania, was the first to propose to send Chinese experts to Albania, and committed to assist as much as possible in all fields. Despite the hardship in China, Beijing committed also to provide Albania with the necessary wheat for the coming five years, part of the grain would have to be imported from Canada.¹³⁶

Finally Developing the Industry

Following the interruption of all relations with the Soviet Union, in early 1962 Albania asked China to revise the agreements regarding the FYP reached less than a year earlier, to increase the investments in heavy industry. Albania had three priorities: first, building a strong metallurgic sector; second, considering the existence of a large number of rivers, the construction of a network of powerful hydroelectric power plants; third, utilization of the oil fields. Another priority was the building of plants for the production of chemical fertilizers to help boost agricultural production. From December 1961 to January 1962, the Albanian head of the State Planning Commission, Abdyl Këllezi, paid a visit to China. He re-

¹³⁴ "What Zhou Enlai told us in the second meeting, 30 January 1961," in "Notes from the meeting of comrade Spiro Koleka with comrade Zhou Enlai, on 17 and 31 January 1961", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D1, f.7.

¹³⁵ "Minutes of conversation between comrade Enver Hoxha, Mehmet Shehu, Spiro Koleka with the Chinese delegation headed by comrade Li Xiannian that has come in Albania to participate at the Fourth Party Congress, Tirana, 09 February 1961", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D2, f.17.

¹³⁶ "Minutes of the second meeting between comrade Enver Hoxha, Mehmet Shehu, and the Chinese delegation headed by comrade Li Xiannian, Tirana, 25 February 1961", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D4, f.32-39.

negotiated the agreements of the FYP 1961-65 in the light of the recent interruption of economic credits to Albania from the Soviet Union and East European bloc. China accepted the requests for an additional loan of 30 million rubles (33 million USD), and moreover, agreed to provide the technology (tubes) for the oil extraction – one of the most important raw materials in Albania and a possible source of foreign currency – by purchasing them directly from western countries in foreign currency.¹³⁷ In this new agreement, in total Albania was approved assistance of an additional 29 industrial projects for a total loan of 151.9 million rubles¹³⁸ (168.609 million USD).¹³⁹ The two countries also decided to create a joint shipping company.

Zhou Enlai mentioned that Albania was one among more than 22 countries China was then assisting.¹⁴⁰ Unlike the Soviet Union, China had great problems with its technological capabilities, forcing it to import technology from West Germany, Canada, and Japan.¹⁴¹ For Albanian leaders this was not much of a concern as far as ‘all our plan is assured’, as Këllezi reported in Tirana.¹⁴² Zhou Enlai stressed that Albania’s share of Chinese foreign aid was even larger than that of North Korea.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Records of the Politburo, 31 January 1962: “Report of Abdyl Këllezi on the work of the economic delegation that visited PRC”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V.1962, D5, f.94-107. In January 1961, when Spiro Koleka had requested the same equipment for oil extraction, China had rejected it because unable to produce such equipment.

¹³⁸ According to Shu Guang Zhang the aid for the five-year plan was 112 million rubles. In Zhang, *Beijing’s Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 197. Instead, according to the Albanian documents the total amount of the loan reached almost 152 million rubles.

¹³⁹ The official exchange rate was 1 rubles=1.11USD Converted into today’s value would be around 1.35 billion USD. Data retrieved: <http://www.saving.org/inflation/inflation.php?amount=100&year=1960> (last access, 08/03/2017).

¹⁴⁰ Including not communist and not Asian countries. Indeed the first Chinese assistance (credit) to an African country had been an aid of 5 million USD to Egypt during the Suez crisis in 1956. See Bruce D. Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949-1970: The Foreign Policy of the People’s Republic of China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 25.

¹⁴¹ At the beginning China imported grain, mainly from Canada, later instead the trade included also some technologies. See Chad J. Mitcham, *China’s Economic Relations with the West and Japan, 1949-79: Grain, Trade and Diplomacy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 49; Julian Gewirtz, *Unlikely Partners: Chinese Reformers, Western Economists, and the Making of Global China*, (Cumberland: Harvard University Press, 2017).

¹⁴² AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1962, D5, f. 97.

¹⁴³ In October 1960 China and North Korea signed an agreement for a loan of 96 million rubles for the period 1961-64, which makes the Chinese assistance to Albania higher than the aid to North Korea, but China had granted another loan of 42.5 million USD in 1958. After 1964 seems that Chinese economic assistance to North Korea went decreasing. See Karoly Fendler, “Economic Assistance from Socialist Countries to North Korea in the Post-war Years: 1953-63”, in Han S. Park and Dongwha Research Institute, eds., *North Korea: Ideology, Politics, Economy*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1996), 168.

Perhaps that was partially true, but differently from Albania, North Korea was also (and mainly) receiving assistance from Soviet Union. In addition, the total economic aid granted to Albania was a long term loan, whereas before 1960 China had provided to North Korea free aid totalling 1.6 billion rubles.¹⁴⁴ Later, China granted North Korea another long term loan of 420 million rubles for the years 1961-64.¹⁴⁵ The fact remains that Albania was among the top beneficiaries of Chinese foreign aid, on the same level as Vietnam and North Korea.¹⁴⁶ In the 1960s, following the Great Leap Forward, China was forced to re-assess its assistance to the African countries, reducing that share of its efforts to the ‘minimum resources’ possible.¹⁴⁷ In return, China, in competition for influence with the Soviet Union, offered more ideological assistance, scholarships for students and Chinese experts abroad.¹⁴⁸ Significantly, because Albania was the only European communist ally of China, it was not affected by the Chinese reduction in foreign aid, but for the losses of others, it now enjoyed the lion’s share of Chinese foreign assistance. This came about as China’s bordering countries, after the 1960s, as mentioned above, chose to stay mainly under Moscow’s umbrella, politically and, consequently, economically, as in the cases of North Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam.¹⁴⁹

The negotiations for this new agreement were not as easy as Albania had expected. In fact, due to its own economic hardship, China seemed to step back in its

¹⁴⁴ Zhang, *Beijing’s Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 170.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁴⁶ Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁷ Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949-1970*, 54–55; Ian Taylor, *China and Africa: Engagement and Compromise*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 27; *China and Tanzania: A Study in Cooperative Interaction*, (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1970), 50; David Hamilton Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 1st ed, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 36–37.

¹⁴⁸ Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*, 49.

¹⁴⁹ Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964*; Kim Il-sung, the North Korean leader, promoted the de-Stalinization process after 1956, and purged the pro-Chinese faction within his party known as “Yan’an faction”, reinforcing in this way his links with Moscow, although trying to “not irritate Beijing”. For the other countries see Shu Guang Zhang, *Beijing’s Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 172. More recently, the western view (and fear) of China’s engagement in Africa as a practice of protection of “rogue states” and exploitation of natural resources, is opposed by an accurate analysis of Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, “Friends and Interests: China’s Distinctive Links with Africa”, *African Studies Review*, 50, no.3, (December 2007): 75-114. Their analysis is centered on the differences between the Washington consensus (WC) and Beijing consensus (BC) in providing foreign aid to Africa.

commitment towards part of Albania's industrial projects. At a certain point, Zhou Enlai told Këllezi that it was impossible for China to 'assume the entire burden they [Soviet Union and other European countries] had assumed for you'.¹⁵⁰ China's hesitation to commit to building the Albanian heavy industry projects was received with astonishment in Tirana, because China had initially offered to provide 'unconditional' assistance. A stunned Këllezi told Zhou that 'you have assumed the responsibilities to overcome our difficulties', to whom Zhou Enlai replied that 'only in part'.¹⁵¹ For Zhou, it was better to speak less about the economic and more of political collaboration, stressing the political importance of the alliance. For Albania, however, economic survival was as important as the political – though the latter did not depend as much on the alliance, or non-alliance, with China. From the Chinese perspective, Albania had opposed the Soviet conditional economic assistance because it found in China an alternative to Moscow's interference. To the Chinese, Tirana seemed desperate, in a position of tied-aid, and without any clear alternatives. Therefore, when China made the same criticism the Soviets had to Albania, it seemed possible to persuade the Albanian government not to undertake an economic path that could prove burdensome for China (despite official rhetoric sustaining the opposite) and prove neither efficient nor profitable for Albania. This was a miscalculation, for Albanian leadership was determined to decide in full autonomy the economic course of their country. It was precisely this determination that had tied Albania to China, not simply the lack of alternatives, which Beijing did not understand immediately.

On the other hand, the Chinese objection to Albania's plans of prioritizing heavy industry was coherent with the lessons China learned from the outcomes of the Great Leap Forward. This experience changed China's model of foreign aid, by emphasizing 'the light industry and agriculture in the early stages of development'.¹⁵² Albania, however, doggedly pursued the heavy industrialization

¹⁵⁰ "Information to PLA CC from the Albanian embassy in China, about the talks that the economic delegation of Albania had with Chinese leaders, Zhou Enlai, Li Xiannian, Chen Yi", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D1, f.9.

¹⁵¹ "Information from the Albanian embassy in Beijing, sent to the PLA CC, regarding the meetings of the Albanian economic delegation headed by Abdyl Këllezi, with Chinese leaders, during the visit in China (23 December 1961 – 10 January 1962)", in *ibid.*, f.19.

¹⁵² According to Friedman, the investments in the heavy industry (mining and metallurgy) were predominant in Soviet assistance model, whereas China offered a model of assistance focused more

that the Soviets had first promised (then denied), which had become an obsession for Hoxha. Zhou Enlai blamed the Chinese struggles in part on the Soviet Union, which had withdrawn all of its specialists from China, abandoning the joint industrial projects. In this way, Zhou argued that China was going through a period of economic difficulties and thus could not play the economic role it had planned had the Great Leap Forward's outcomes been according to the expectations.¹⁵³

Among the many complex industrial projects Albania wanted to build was a chemical fertilizer plant, inclusive of a unit for the extraction of gas from oil. China did not have the adequate technology for the plant, but was willing to enter into negotiations on behalf of Albania with “Montecatini”, one of the biggest Italian companies specializing in chemical products. China was interested in acquiring advanced foreign technologies.¹⁵⁴ This was a chance to do exactly that, in conjunction with Albania's needs. Albania also requested the necessary technical assistance from China to study, plan and eventually transform the Drini River, in the North, into a hydropower cascade. At that stage, China agreed to study the idea, but preferred (and suggested) using oil to generate electricity instead. But for Albanian leadership, which were farsighted in this case, the oil extraction and processing was much more complex, requiring technology and capital that Albania did not have, whereas the Drini would be a reliable source of clean energy. During the negotiations, China conceded the investments for nearly all of the heavy industrial projects – neglecting, at Albania's behest, agriculture and light industry.

But in its economic relations with China, Albania neglected (or preferred to ignore) the technological gap between China and the rest of the communist camp, not

on the production of primary goods for the people and building the infrastructure. See Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War. The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, 119.

¹⁵³ In late 1958, when the Leap was launched, the investments towards the industry dropped high drastically, at expenses of the agriculture, but the objectives were not reached anyway. Interesting comparative data are in the research of Joseph C. H. Chai, *An Economic History of Modern China*, (Cheltenham, U. K. : Edward Elgar, 2011), 120–141; See also the tables in MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution; Vol. 2 : The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960*, 327.

¹⁵⁴ Bruce H. Billings, *China and the West: Information Technology Transfer From printing Press to Computer Era*, 1st ed (Long Beach, CA: Intertech Press, 1997); Douglas B. Fuller and Murray A. Rubinstein, eds., *Technology Transfer between the US, China and Taiwan: Moving Knowledge*, (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013); Richard Li-Hua, *Technology and Knowledge Transfer in China*, (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Pub, 2004) Amy King, *China-Japan Relations after World War II: Empire, Industry and War, 1949-1971*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Amy King's study, however, is focused more specifically on the reciprocal influence of ideas and not merely technology transfer.

to mention the advanced capitalist nations. Despite the sincere efforts of Zhou Enlai to convince Albania not to rely too heavily on China, because of this lack of development, Albania trusted more in China's potential than even China did. In their second meeting, on 31 January, 1962, Zhou reaffirmed to Këllezi that China would assist Albania without hesitations, but suggested that the leadership in Tirana should not assume that China could resolve every problem, because 'if then this plan is not implemented, the people would lose its trust in the leadership', warning that the plan might not be implemented according to the schedule.¹⁵⁵ In short, Albanian leaders simply thought their country 'was never a big cost for China, and the exaggerated requests were a test of our alliance with Beijing'.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Chinese assistance was not direct financial aid to Albania but a loan to be repaid through exports after barter agreements were negotiated.¹⁵⁷

In June 1962, Hysni Kapo accepted an invitation to visit China. In January 1962, Zhou Enlai had told Këllezi that China was committed to help as much as possible, now in June 1962, only six months later, he confessed to Kapo that some of the industrial projects for which China had offered its assistance would need to be postponed to the next FYP, but that China remained committed to provide to Albania whatever they could produce.¹⁵⁸ Kapo eventually posed this problem directly to Mao when the two met on 29 June, 1962, in Wuhan, but Mao showed less interest in economic issues than political and ideological ones. Most of the projects began late, as the blueprints came from China only after gathering the necessary information in Albania.¹⁵⁹ These delays were also a tactic China used to discourage Albania from

¹⁵⁵ "Information to PLA CC from the Albanian embassy in China, about the talks that the economic delegation of Albania had with Chinese leaders, Zhou Enlai, Li Xiannian, Chen Yi, (December 23, 1961-January 10, 1962)", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D1, f.16; In their calculations, the Albanian leadership considered it more convenient to access the international markets with the final products of the heavy industry, rather than selling the raw materials. In turn, with the foreign currency from this trade they could have possibly purchased consumer goods – at least this was the plan. Another reason to prioritize the heavy industry lied in the fact that by acquiring skills and technology in the heavy industry, it could have been easier to build in Albania the light industry and the mechanization for the agriculture.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Hajdar Muneka, former Albanian diplomat and student in Beijing: In Tirana, 04 August 2015.

¹⁵⁷ "Ministry of Trade: "Agreement and protocols between the PRC and PRA", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1962, D336, f.1-2 and D30-31; AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1965, D28.

¹⁵⁸ "The meeting of comrade Hysni Kapo...with the President of the Council of State..., comrade Zhou Enlai..., 27 June 1962", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D7, f.22-35.

¹⁵⁹ Ministry of Economy, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1962, D307, f.1-6.

making further requests. Eventually this proved ineffective, as a tireless Albania increased its requests, believing that the more it asked, the more it got. One form of aid that did reach Albania at this time was the Chinese specialists in charge of planning and implementing the industrial projects.¹⁶⁰

In 1963, the flow of Chinese aid had greatly increased Albania's trade deficit, exacerbated by the Chinese refusal to import anything Albania proposed to export.¹⁶¹ By the end of 1963, the bilateral trade reached 53 million rubles, compared to 1960 when it was only around 8 million rubles. Due to the increasing trade, the embassy in Beijing was reinforced with a staff and trade representative with the main task of following and supervising the delivery from China of the equipment for the industrial projects. Of the 24 industrial projects China committed to build in Albania for the FYP, only a small number of them had begun construction in 1963.¹⁶² More than likely, the delays were due to the lateness of agreements reached with China, after the withdrawal of the Soviet assistance, and, for some, also for the technological problems in China. Around 284 Chinese specialists went to Albania at this time to help with the implementation of these agreements, with particular regard to the

¹⁶⁰ Ministry of Trade: "The steps taken to guarantee the construction of the industrial plants given by PRC", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1962, D338, f.51-76. In this document there is information of the number of the specialist for each plant.

¹⁶¹ The exchange of goods for the year 1963 was particularly intense and exceeded the agreements for a total amount of 5.4 million rubles. China exported towards Albania a total of almost 4 million rubles of goods, and Albania instead exported towards China goods for a total of almost 1.5 million rubles. See, "Report of the Albanian Embassy in Beijing – On the implementation of the Trade Agreements for the year 1963 between the PRC and PRA", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1963, D298, f.19-35; Ministry of Economy, "On the conclusion of the commercial agreements for the year 1963, between Albania and China, January 1964", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1963, D293, f.1-6. Albania exported goods for a value of 23 million rubles, and imported instead goods for a total of more than 28 million rubles; "Protocol between the People's Republic of Albania and People's Republic of China regarding the exchange of goods for the year 1963 and the payments, with related report", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1963, D293, f.7-14; Albania begun the repayment of the previous loans contracted with China, but had to delay most of the instalments, and China always accepted to postpone the repayments: "Information of the Finance Ministry sent to the Government and to the Ministry of Commerce, on the repayment of the installments of the loan of 30 million rubles that was part of the agreement signed on 13.01.1962, Albania and China, 19.11.1963", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1963, D297, f.1; "The talks that Beqir Balluku had with Zhou Enlai in Beijing on 07 and 30 September 1963, First meeting, 07/09/1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D6, f.13

¹⁶¹ "The talks that Beqir Balluku had with Zhou Enlai in Beijing on 07 and 30 September 1963. First meeting, 07 September 1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D6, f.13

¹⁶² "Reports and information of the trade office of the embassy in Beijing to the Government, on the state of the implementation and decisions to be taken on the building if the industrial combines imported from China, 26 March 1963", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1963, D300. In this file there is detailed information of each of the factories and plants, and the updates on the construction.

building of 19 out of the 24 projects. In this first period, 104 Albanians also went to China to acquire expertise in building and managing complex industrial combines.¹⁶³

During his visit to China in September 1963, the defense minister of Albania, Beqir Balluku, in a time when it was impossible to implement fully even the agreements of the 1961-65 plan, asked Zhou Enlai to assist Albania with the FYP of 1966-70. China committed to this FYP but Zhou stressed that Albania should ‘base the development on its own forces’.¹⁶⁴ The goal of a self-reliant economy was one of the principles of China’s foreign aid, which for Beijing marked the difference with the Soviet assistance.¹⁶⁵ As Jeremy Friedman argues, the Chinese model of development concluded in economic autonomy, not necessarily meaning a socialist economy.¹⁶⁶ This principle, although explicitly manifested in African (non-communist) countries, did not correspond with the Albanian plan to pursue the socialist economy at all costs. This was reinforced further by Balluku, who expressed the intention of his government to rely on China for future economic development, as ‘Albania cannot implement its FYP ’66-70 without the assistance of the PRC’.¹⁶⁷

At the end of 1963, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited Albania for the first time, and celebrated the New Year in Tirana. China had first shown readiness to assist Albania, but once the Soviet-Albanian split was definitive, Tirana met some resistance in Beijing over the promised ‘unconditional assistance’ it had expected. The visit of Zhou, therefore, was a chance for Hoxha to personally address this issue with his Chinese counterpart. Although Hoxha promised to pay more attention to agriculture, in his conversation with Zhou, Hoxha emphasized three sectors for which he stressed the importance of Chinese assistance, none of them agriculture.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ “Decision of the Government to accept the Chinese specialists in the People’s Republic of Albania and the sending of the Albanian practitioners that goes in the People’s Republic of China to learn on the industrial plants, 10 April 1963”, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1963, D302. In this document are listed the factories and the number of specialist for each of them.

¹⁶⁴ “The talks that comrade Beqir Balluku had with Zhou Enlai in Beijing on September 7 and 30, 1963, First meeting, 07 September 1963”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D6, f.13

¹⁶⁵ These principles were better explained by Zhou Enlai in Accra, in January 1964, during his tour in Africa. See Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*, 117–118.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁶⁷ “The talks of Beqir Balluku with the General Secretary of the CC of the CCP, comrade Deng Xiaoping, on 09, 12 and 24 September 1963”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D7, f.28.

¹⁶⁸ “Records of the talks between comrade Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC and Vice chairman of the CC of the CCP, and the leaders of the party and of the State of the PRA led by

Zhou received a number of drafts of studies of Albania's economic perspective.¹⁶⁹ The documents given to Zhou Enlai were anticipations of the future FYPs, trying to engage China in a long term aid agreement. Although through these documents Albania sought to accurately depict the situation to Zhou, their main purpose was to highlight the potential yet unrealized. It would have not been easily possible to convincingly exaggerate their situation, because hundreds (later thousands) of Chinese specialists were staying in Albania at that time, and Albanian officials knew that they had reported diligently to their home country. Zhou visited Albania after announcing, during his African tour, the eight principles of Chinese foreign assistance:¹⁷⁰ 1. China always follows the principle of equality and mutual benefit in providing aid to other nations; 2. China never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges; 3. China helps lighten the burden of recipient countries as much as possible; 4. China aims at helping recipient countries to gradually achieve self-reliance and independent development; 5. China strives to develop aid projects that require less investment but yield quicker results; 6. China provides the best-quality equipment and materials of its own manufacture; 7. In providing technical assistance, China shall see to it that the personnel of the recipient country fully master such techniques; 8. The Chinese experts are not allowed to make any special demands or enjoy any special amenities. Some of the principles that guided China's cooperation with Africa underlined the neutrality and 'non-alliance' of those countries, in a postcolonial logic of relationship.¹⁷¹ During Sino-Albanian summits these principles were not mentioned as a guideline in the economic cooperation between Albania and China. The application or not of the eight principles to Sino-Albanian economic collaboration was marginal to the major ideological and

comrade Enver Hoxha, 02-08 January 1964", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D25-25/1. The sectors were the metallurgy, the oil extraction and refining, and the hydroelectric power plants.

¹⁶⁹ "Study from the Albanian ministry of geology and mines regarding the estimated reserves and the plans for exploitation. In: Information of the Minister of Mines and Geology, comrade Adil Çarçani, on the geological researches in Albania and the results on them, given to Zhou Enlai during his stay in Albania", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D29; Chinese premier received also a study about the situation and the needs of the Albanian agriculture and the perspectives for its development. In "Information of the Minister of Agriculture, comrade Peti Shamblli, on the situation of the agriculture in our country, given to comrade Zhou Enlai during his stay in Albania", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D30.

¹⁷⁰ Yasutami Shimomura, Hideo Ōhashi, eds., *A Study of China's Foreign Aid: An Asian Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 63.

¹⁷¹ Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 116-117.

geostrategic principles that guided the alliance. To Hoxha's gratitude for the generous Chinese assistance, Zhou Enlai emphasized the reciprocity of the aid. Moreover, in proportion to Albania's population, 'you should not thank us on the contrary, we should thank you more' Zhou said.¹⁷² At the end, he reaffirmed China's commitment to assist Albania's economy.

In 1964, China pushed forward the implementation of many industrial projects, and also approved an additional loan of 6.5 million rubles for the remaining year 1964-65.¹⁷³ Soon, however, some technological problems emerged, in particular in the construction of a steel plant (Kombinat) in the city of Elbasan, 30km southeast of Tirana. The problems began even before putting the first stone in its foundations.¹⁷⁴ The Chinese experts' laboratory tests were inconclusive regarding whether the Albanian mines yielded the right minerals for producing the steels they wanted.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, the preparation for the next FYP, 1966-70 had already begun, and in January 1965, the Albanian Government sent a letter to the Chinese Government with a long list of requests for the FYP.¹⁷⁶ Some of the Albanian requests for the new plan were considered by Chinese officials unreasonable – perhaps rightly so. For instance, while the construction of the metallurgic combine in Elbasan was still in its initial phase, Albania already asked to enlarge its processing capacity from 100

¹⁷² "Records of the talks between comrade Zhou Enlai, Head of the Council of State of the PRC and Vice chairman of the CCP CC, and the leaders of the party and of the state of Albania led by comrade Enver Hoxha, 02-08 January 1964", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D25-25/1, f.44.

¹⁷³ Ministry of Trade, 27 March 1964: "Draft-protocol of the between the Government of the People's Republic of Albania and the People's Republic of China about the loan of the PRC for PRA and the draft notes on this draft-protocol", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1964, D192. The loan was addressed to build the ancillary infrastructure for some of the industrial projects.

¹⁷⁴ Ministry of Trade, 06 December 1964: "Information from our economic adviser in Beijing on some problems emerged during the experimental tests in China on our iron and nickel and on our metallurgy in Elbasan", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1964, D199.

¹⁷⁵ Other problems instead were caused by both the technological problems and the weak transportation system, which left outstanding loans. For instance the loans of the year 1954 (11.250.000 rubles=50 million old rubles) in part were yet to be used ten years later, in: Ministry of Trade, Beijing, 10 June 1964, in "Letters of the correspondence between the Ambassador of Albania in Beijing and the Chinese vice Minister of Foreign Trade, on the ratification of the confirmation of the agreement of 1964 between the two parts, for the outstanding loan", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1964, D193.

¹⁷⁶ "Copy of the letter of the Government of the PRA, 22 January 1965, to the Council of State of the PR of China, asking for a new economic assistance for the forth five-year economic plan 1966-70", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1965, D25.

thousand tons to 300 thousand tons per year. The total loan for the FYP they planned to ask was 250 million rubles, mainly focusing on the industrial projects.¹⁷⁷

In late March 1965, Zhou Enlai visited Albania for the second time.¹⁷⁸ The occasion came after his attendance, in Bucharest, of the funeral of Romanian leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Zhou had taken initiative of visiting Tirana in order to settle the Chinese disagreements with Albania that had emerged after Khrushchev's removal. Zhou considered this visit a good chance to reduce the gap with Tirana regarding the views of the two parties over international issues, in particular those concerning the communist camp. For Hoxha and Shehu instead, it was a good chance to discuss again with Zhou about the forth FYP, 1966-1970, and for which a delegation was about to visit China. While Hoxha began his talks with the economic collaboration and the need for Chinese assistance, Zhou, instead, started with the political issues, underscoring that the important issues over which the two parties were somehow in disagreement were political, not economic.¹⁷⁹ Regarding the economy, Zhou Enlai reaffirmed repeatedly the Chinese commitment to assist Albania in order to for the latter better play its role on the international stage – the role for which China was providing support.¹⁸⁰

During April-June 1965, an Albanian economic delegation visited China to discuss the unfinished projects of the FYP 1961-65, and to negotiate the FYP 1966-70. The talks with Zhou Enlai and Li Xiannian revealed some difficulties.¹⁸¹ What mostly displeased Chinese leaders was Albania's request for large quantities of grain,

¹⁷⁷ Records of the Politburo, 19 January 1965: "On some changes to the forth five-year economic plan, 1966-70, which had been discussed and reviewed during the Politburo meeting on 09 November 1964", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D3, f.113-130.

¹⁷⁸ "Meeting of the PLA First Secretary, comrade Enver Hoxha, with the Chinese Ambassador in Albania, comrade Xu Jianguo, 21 March 1965", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1965, D2. Zhou Enlai stayed in Albania in the period 27-29 March 1965.

¹⁷⁹ "Record of the talks between the leader of the party and the State, Enver Hoxha, with the President of the Council of State of China Zhou Enlai, 27-29 March 1965", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1965, D4.

¹⁸⁰ In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V.1965, D4, f.99-102; He also addressed some criticisms of the Albanian plan; first Albania was in short of arable land, so he suggested to avoid the building of huge combines that occupied large portions of land. In addition, in case of war the small factories would be easier to transfer in safer places. Moreover, the factories should be close to the inhabited areas, not where it was needed to settle new population, since that would have additional costs, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1965, D4, 103-106.

¹⁸¹ "Meetings of Spiro Koleka with Zhou Enlai, Li Xiannian, Fang Yi, in Beijing, 20 April -10 May 1965", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1965, D27.

something China had to purchase in foreign currency from other countries such as Canada.¹⁸² Chinese officials repeated to Albanians that the living standards were higher in Albania than in China, therefore Albania could not claim that it did not have enough food for its own population. This contrasted with massive Albanian efforts to develop industrial projects which for China were often even of doubtful profitability.¹⁸³ Two factors influenced China's almost unfriendly response to Albania's demands for crops: first, China's difficulties since the failed Great Leap Forward; second, the Vietnamese requests for food supplies were deemed to be far more urgent.¹⁸⁴ China responded by making great efforts to supply huge quantities of food to Vietnam – a country then in a bloody conflict.¹⁸⁵ Eventually, China and Albania reached an agreement on the total amount of the loan for the FYP 1966-70, and on the list of industrial projects.¹⁸⁶ China provided a total loan of 170 million rubles, 82 million of which went for 18 new industrial projects, for a total of 45 industrial projects.¹⁸⁷ Despite the confrontations with the Albanian delegation about the request for crops, China approved 400 thousand tons of grain for the five year period. China also agreed to help Albania to build its first major hydroelectric power plant, with a dam 60 meters tall, in the city of Vau i Dejës. Beijing also postponed by

¹⁸² See Mitcham, *China's Economic Relations with the West and Japan, 1949-79*.

¹⁸³ Records of the Politburo, 15-16 June 1965: "Report of comrade Spiro Koleka on the Governmental economic delegation in People's Republic of China, during the period April-June 1965", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D8, f.201-229.

¹⁸⁴ In 1966 only the amount of food that China provided to Vietnam was 500 thousand tons. See Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam. The Politics of Asymmetry*, 176.

¹⁸⁵ Hong Zhou (周弘) and Hou Xiong (熊厚), eds., *Zhongguo Yuan Wai 60 Nian [副主编, 中国援外 60 年=]: China's Foreign Aid: 60 Years in Retrospect*, (Beijing: , [北京: 社会科学文献出版社] She hui ke xue wen xian chu ban she, 2013), 183–212.

¹⁸⁶ "Results of the concluded agreements between the Government of the PR of Albania and the Government of the PR of China, on 08 June 1965: for the factories and plants we asked and those approved by China; for the equipment, machinery and materials requested as a loan for the years 1966-70; as well for the goods to export in China", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1965, D29. See also the Agreements in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1965, D30.

¹⁸⁷ Records of the Politburo, 15-16 June 1965: "Report of comrade Spiro Koleka on the Governmental economic delegation in People's Republic of China, during the period April-June 1965", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D8, f.223-224. China refused to import the Albanian tobacco because of its bad quality; Converted into today's value the total loan of 170 million rubles that China provided, would be around 1.6 billion USD.

Data retrieved: <http://www.saving.org/inflation/inflation.php?amount=100&year=1960> (last accessed, 08/03/2017).

ten years the Albanian repayment of the instalments for the previous loans.¹⁸⁸ Undoubtedly, Albania was proving to be a costly ally.

Chinese Military Assistance and Albania's War Doctrine

There is perhaps no other field where Albania benefitted more from Chinese assistance than in the military cooperation. This can be explained by the fact that since the establishment of the PRC, China had faced many military challenges, such as wars in Korea and Vietnam as well as the Sino-Indian clashes, which obligated Beijing to build its own military industry. Even more so after the Soviet interruption of military cooperation with China, and the technological transfer that went with it. In this context, however high the Albanian requests were, they were still a minor request compared to the amount of armaments China was producing and transferring to Vietnam or North Korea. For the first time since winning its independence, Chinese assistance allowed Albania to build a relatively modern and potent professional army that could face any regional threat – at least this is what Albanian leaders sustained. At the beginning of the 1960s, however, China had made clear its position that it would assist only if the Soviet Union would interrupt its military aid to Albania. When the Soviet Union isolated Albania in the WPO, China answered Tirana's call for aid.¹⁸⁹ As confirmed by Hoxha's talks to his officials, not only was China going to help, but their (economic and military) assistance was going 'beyond the expectations'.¹⁹⁰ Chen Yi, then China's foreign minister, said in 1961 that the Albanian requests 'are a small thing, not a heavy burden for China'.¹⁹¹ According to the Albanian ambassador's report, Chen Yi said to him that 'we provide military

¹⁸⁸ Ministry of Trade, 23 November 1964, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1965, D223. The rest of the loan was 11.5 million for agriculture, 12.8 million for oil extraction, and 9.65 million for the transportation and other 54 million in other fields.

¹⁸⁹ "Notes from the meeting of Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu with Chinese ambassador in Albania, Lo Shigao, 25 April 1961", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D7. The ambassador informed Shehu of the Chinese decision to help Albania with military supplies. Further confirmation came also in June 1961, after that Soviet Union withdrew its military base. When Chinese leaders received the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Mihal Prifti, they all reaffirmed Chinese intention to assist Albania in all fields, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D11.

¹⁹⁰ "Records of the 22nd PLA Plenum, 06 February 1961", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1961, D29, f.236-248. Hoxha was reporting based on the correspondence he had with an Albanian delegation that was in China negotiating military supplies.

¹⁹¹ "Information regarding the meetings of the Albanian ambassador in China, Mihal Prifti, with the leaders of the party and the state of the PRC", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1961, D11, f.3. In his meetings with Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and Deng Xiaoping in 1961, the Albanian ambassador in Beijing was told that China had decided to assist Albania at all costs.

assistance to Laos, Cuba, Algeria, and UAR (United Arab Republic: Egypt and Syria)... we provide almost the entire military needs of Korea and Vietnam... To us, your military requests don't represent a burden at all'.¹⁹² If not all the economic requests for the FYP 1961-65 could be satisfied by China, the military demands, instead, 'were fully accepted, and the supplies will be delivered exactly as we asked'.¹⁹³ China provided Albania with the type of armaments and the techniques that the Soviets had promised, and with 'whatever China can produce for itself'.¹⁹⁴ Soon in Albania arrived also the Chinese military experts in order to train the Albanian army in the use of the new techniques.¹⁹⁵ Since the very beginning, the Albanian requests were, in the eyes of Chinese officials, disproportionate to its small territory and population. Albania asked for hundreds of tanks, aircrafts, and jets, all supported by an official narrative that portrayed Albania as the westernmost outpost of communism, completely besieged by imperialist and revisionist countries.

Whereas the economic assistance was offered as long term loans that Albania had to pay back in the years to come, either in foreign currency, or (and mainly) through exports of raw materials, the armaments received from China were completely free of charge, as shown by the protocols signed each year.¹⁹⁶ Regarding this point, it seems that Chinese leaders thought differently after signing the agreement. In summer 1965, Zhou Enlai raised the question of including the materials for military constructions as a part of the economic loans. He was not talking about the armaments, but only construction materials that Albania had requested to build the tunnels and bunkers for its army.¹⁹⁷ At Albania's insistence,

¹⁹² Ibid., f.2-3.

¹⁹³ Records of the Politburo, 31 January 1962: "Report of Abdyl Kellezi on the work of the economic delegation that visited PRC", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1962, D5, f.102.

¹⁹⁴ Beijing, 27 June 1962: "The meeting of comrades Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia with the Head of the Council of State of the PRC, comrade Zhou Enlai, at 11am, of the day 27 of June, 1962", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1962, D7, f.26.

¹⁹⁵ Beijing, 29 December 1962: "Protocol of the agreement signed in Beijing on 29 December 1962, between the representative of the defense ministry of Albania and that of China, to send in Albania the Chinese military specialists in order to provide the technical assistance to the Albanian army", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1962, D137.

¹⁹⁶ Beijing 27 October 1962: "Protocols signed in Beijing between the representatives of the governments of Albania and China for the free of charge military assistance China offers to Albania for the year 1963", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1962, D134. For the year 1962 the protocols had the same formulation "military assistance free of charge", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1962, D136.

¹⁹⁷ Records of the Politburo, 15-16 June 1965: "Report of comrade Spiro Koleka on the Governmental economic delegation's visit in People's Republic of China, during the period April-June 1965", in

Zhou had to step back. Eventually Albania received military aid from China so large that it had ‘no comparison [in quantity] with that received from the Soviet Union’.¹⁹⁸ The fortification of the country, through the construction of tunnels and bunkers, took a real and successful leap forward with great Chinese assistance. By the end of 1964, more than 150km of tunnels were built, these did not include the tunnels in the inhabited areas, but only those for storing the armaments, and to be used by the soldiers in case of war.¹⁹⁹

In 1963 the Albanian leadership decided to send the minister of defense, Beqir Balluku, to China to discuss political, ideological, and military issues with the Chinese leaders.²⁰⁰ The minister had to make some additional requests for new armaments. The whole strategy, expressed to Zhou by Balluku, was based on the use of heavy artillery to reject the first wave of a possible attack. This would require artillery powerful enough to face a large-scale attack. Hence the request for heavy armaments. There were two main arguments behind this doctrine: first, Albania, the minister affirmed, was ‘completely isolated and surrounded by enemy states... which are drafting plans to annihilate Albania... because we stand firmly in our position of Marxism-Leninism’; second, in case of war, it ‘will fight in conditions of inferiority to the enemy, and under complete siege’.²⁰¹ The Albanian minister argued that in

AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D8, f.206. Not only the armaments, but even the huge tunnels that were built to host the armaments which were expensive, were built in many cases with the generous assistance of Beijing.

¹⁹⁸ This was what Spiro Koleka, Minister and member of the Politburo, said in his report about his visit in China in 1965. In AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D8, f.223.

¹⁹⁹ “Protocol between the representatives of China and Albania, for the assistance free of charge that China provides to Albania for the building of the Ship Overhaul Base”, in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1975, D7; One of the first agreements with China was the assistance China provided to start immediately the production of some factories, were the Albanian army could start to produce materials for explosives, automatic rifles and other military products. In AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1962, D133 (signed in Beijing in August 1962 for the military object nr.75), and D135 (signed in November 1962 for the military object nr.55); The Chinese assistance to build the Albanian bunkers, illustrated also with pictures, is mentioned in a recent daily publication: 老朋友入北约腰杆硬了中国勒紧裤带援建的工程变菜地 (图): <http://www.wenxuecity.com/news/2016/01/14/4873788.html>, (last access, 14-01-2016).

²⁰⁰ Tirana, 05 & 12 August 1963: “The conversation of comrade Mehmet Shehu with the Chinese ambassador in Albania, Lo Shigao, on 05 and 12 August 1963. About sending a delegation in China, headed by comrade Beqir Balluku, regarding the army and the military supplies”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D5, f.8-10, 14.

²⁰¹ Records of the Politburo, 29 August 1963: “Decision to send the defense minister, comrade Beqir Balluku, in China to discuss...On some military issues, regarding the acceleration of the delivery of the armaments, according to the existing agreement with the Chinese government, and the review of the list in order to replace the armaments with the new technology”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1963, D12, f.47-48.

case of war Albania did not want to give up at the first battle, retreating into a guerrilla war in the mountains. It wanted instead to break the first wave of attack by facing the strategic supremacy of the adversaries with the tactical and operational maneuverability of Albanian troops, and by using in their favor the terrain.²⁰² He then explained that since the enemy would have the air supremacy, the construction of tunnels and bunkers all over the country was a necessary defensive measure, in order to conceal the armaments and to protect the people from air strikes. It is interesting to note who he believed might become the aggressors. For the minister, if China would provide the requested weapons, Albania could face without any hesitation, and defeat any attack, coming separately from any of the neighboring countries, Yugoslavia, Greece, and even Italy. But Albania feared a coalition of these countries, or the military alliances of NATO or WPO. Albania feared an alliance of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, as this ‘could provoke Albania to create incidents, pushing the WPO to turn Albania into a second Hungary’.²⁰³

Albanian leaders knew that they could not realistically defend against all those depicted as their enemies, but the strategy was to transform a hypothetical war into an international conflict, so that eventually NATO would play a role of deterrence, as the Albanian coasts are just in front of Italy. It was a concern of gaining time, the time necessary to transform any eventual war against Albania in an international issue, guaranteeing to any enemy that an invasion of Albania would not become a *fait accompli* on the international stage. The obstacle to this strategy would be a treaty of non-aggression between NATO and WPO, which would transform Albania into an easy target for the Soviets. Such a hypothesis was not remote, as during the Geneva talks on disarmament in February 1962, the Soviet delegation had proposed a treaty of non-aggression between NATO and the WPO.²⁰⁴ Balluku, in fact, did not conceal Albania’s fear that Soviet Union ‘might use the WPO for aggressive

²⁰² Beijing, 30 September 1963: “The talks of comrade Beqir Balluku with comrade Zhou Enlai in Beijing on 30 September 1963”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK,V. 1963, D6, f.31. Most part of Albania was hardly accessible because of the high mountains which cover more than half of its territory.

²⁰³ Ibid., f.32-34.

²⁰⁴ “Letter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, sent to the diplomatic representatives of the European socialist countries, 14 March 1963, where is manifested Albania’s position, and opposition, to the Soviet initiative of a treaty of non-aggression between the NATO and the WPO, made on 20 February 1963, in Geneva”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1963, D6, f.9-23.

purposes against Albania'.²⁰⁵ Fortunately, for Hoxha, such a treaty between NATO and WPO did not find any support, yet the Soviet Union and United States signed the Partial Ban Test Treaty at the end of July 1963. Both China and Albania, for different reasons, firmly opposed it.²⁰⁶ China was not against the ban of atomic tests in principle, but understood this treaty as an attempt to prevent the Chinese from developing an atomic arsenal. For China, it would not be enough to stop specific tests, rather, all atomic arsenals in the world should be eliminated. Albania, however, saw it as the first step of a larger understanding and consensus between the Soviet Union and the western camp, which would leave more room for Khrushchev to maneuver and close the ranks within the socialist camp.²⁰⁷

Albania's Proposal of a Treaty with China

It was in this context that Albania, through its minister of defense, proposed discussion with China on the possibility of signing a treaty of mutual friendship and assistance between China and Albania, or, alternatively, a treaty of collective defense that would include China, Albania, North Korea, and Vietnam.²⁰⁸ Chinese leaders also had 'planned to construct an alliance system with neighboring socialist countries including Mongolia, North Korea, and North Vietnam'.²⁰⁹ From documents, however, it is not clear if Albanian leaders knew of such plans. A formal alliance with China, in case of any sort of conflict, would mean for Albania to have on its side a large and powerful country, which could have exerted significant influence in Albania's favor among the big powers, although militarily, this would make no difference. The Albanian minister too stated that such a treaty would 'be a political act' and nothing more.²¹⁰ China, however, was not willing to sign such a treaty. First, as Deng

²⁰⁵ "Draft thesis to be discussed with the Chinese comrades", in "Records of the Politburo, 29 July 1963", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1963, D12, f.40.

²⁰⁶ "Records of the conversation between the Albanian Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu and Chinese ambassador in Albania, Lo Shigao, 05 and 12 August 1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D5.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., f.11-16.

²⁰⁸ Beijing, 10 September 1963: "First meeting of comrade Beqir Balluku with Deng Xiaoping, 10 September 1963", in "Records of the meeting of comrade Beqir Balluku in Beijing with the Secretary of the CCP Deng Xiaoping, on 09, 12 and 24 September 1963", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D7, f.21.

²⁰⁹ Niu Jun, "1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy", 24.

²¹⁰ Records of the Politburo, 29 July 1963: "Draft-thesis to be discussed with the Chinese comrades", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1963, D12, f.45.

Xiaoping said to Balluku in their third meeting, it was highly unlikely that NATO and WPO could come to terms for a mutual non-aggression treaty, because ‘there are many complicated issues, especially Germany... the positions of the Soviets and Americans are different also regarding the banning of the nuclear tests... the Soviets might be very interested in a treaty, but United States would ask for a high price in turn’.²¹¹ The second and more important motivation was China’s existing military assistance to North Vietnam and North Korea, making it impossible to similarly assist Albania. Any formal treaty could not offer more to Albania than it was already receiving from China.

By rejecting this treaty, China was admitting that beyond the propaganda, it could not assist Albania directly in the event of a war. Albania’s position was unlike those of North Korea and Vietnam for Chinese national security. Albania was simply a precious political ally far away, which had to be satisfied with the supplies it was receiving. Deng Xiaoping denied the presumed threats Albanian leaders claimed they would possibly face. To the Albanian claim that the United States and NATO could attack the country, Deng replied that America was even avoiding a war with Cuba, which is only some miles from American coasts, and had no interest at all in attacking Albania. Only Yugoslavia, Deng admitted, could potentially threaten Albanian security, but would an attack on Albania ‘be in their best interest?’, he wondered. Deng also considered that an eventual attack from the Soviet Union would come only if NATO or the United States attacked Albania, but since this probability was low, the Soviet threat was also less imminent. Deng also suggested that Albania should not exit the WPO, but stay as a member for tactical reasons. He expressed doubts about Albania’s necessity for the heavy armaments it had requested, repeating that would be ‘better to concentrate on the agriculture and construction’.²¹² But Balluku insisted on his point, reducing the threats to a more realistic dimension – Albania’s neighbors. He reminded Deng of the fact that Albania did not have diplomatic relations with Greece, which had been in a state of war with Albania since the Second World War.²¹³

²¹¹ Beijing, 24 September 1963: “The third meeting of Beqir Balluku, Albanian defense minister with Deng Xiaoping 24 September 1963, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK,V. 1963, D7, f.65.

²¹² Ibid., f.77 & f.78.

²¹³ The state of war between Albania and Greece formally is still in force today, having never been abolished by the Greek parliament.

Albania asked that at least 90 thousand tons of military equipment be delivered as soon as possible, and requested to update some armaments, replacing them with new, more modern and powerful technologies that China might have developed by then.²¹⁴ Regarding the transportation of these materials from China to Albania, according to Rrahman Parllaku, a general of the army who visited China on three occasions, the armaments were disguised as civil goods, and some of these armaments, such as airplanes and tanks, were dismembered before loading, and reassembled in Albania.²¹⁵ The costs of shipping were paid half by China and half by Albania.²¹⁶ At this stage the army was provided with land-air missiles, and the Navy was also reinforced.²¹⁷

During Zhou Enlai's visit in December 1963-January 1964, Enver Hoxha, in his first meeting with the Chinese minister, alluded to the WPO as a threat to Albania, and again explored the possibility of collective defense with China. Hoxha had to admit that Yugoslavia was avoiding border incidents, but was still '...calling openly for the overthrow of the Albanian leadership'.²¹⁸ Zhou said that he was sending a message to Yugoslavia by visiting Shkodër, a city bordering Yugoslavia. The presence of Zhou and the Albanian minister of defense at the border area was 'a warning to them [Yugoslavia]'.²¹⁹ Zhou Enlai reinforced Deng's idea that the United States was concentrating more on the struggle and competition with the Soviet Union in other regions and was less interested in escalating tension in Europe – due also to the American involvement in Vietnam. Throughout the talks, Zhou Enlai stressed that the imperialist countries and in general 'our enemies have not prepared the

²¹⁴ Politburo records, 29 August 1963: "Decision to send the defense minister, comrade Beqir Balluku, in China to discuss on some military issues, regarding the acceleration of the delivery of the armaments, according to the existing agreement with the Chinese government, and the revision of the list in order to replace the armaments with the new technology", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1963, D12, f.51.

²¹⁵ Interview with Rrahman Parllaku. Tirana, Monday, 10 August 2015.

²¹⁶ AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1968, D236, f.4-5.

²¹⁷ Beijing, 10 September 1963: "First meeting of comrade Beqir Balluku with Deng Xiaoping, 10 September 1963, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1963, D7, f.25.

²¹⁸ Tirana, 02 January 1964: "Minutes of Conversation between comrade Zhou Enlai, head of the State Council of China and the leaders of the party and the state of Albania", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1964, D25-25/1, f.24.

²¹⁹ Tirana, 03 January 1964, in *ibid.*, f.55.

conditions to move to war'.²²⁰ In this way, he rejected Albanian claims that their country was under siege and about to face an attack.

Enver Hoxha, instead, reaffirmed the Yugoslavian threat, drawing some parallels between Tito's indirect involvement in Hungary in 1956, and a similar scenario for Albania. He emphasized his point by providing information from the State Security (the secret police at the time, known in Albanian simply as "Sigurimi"), according to which, in Yugoslavia 'there are three centers [of espionage] against Albania, with eleven outposts, involving a hundred officials...'.²²¹ The Soviet secret services were reported to be collaborating with the Yugoslav espionage to gather information about, and undermine, Albania. The same was reported of Greece, which the Americans had supposedly used as their base for espionage against Albania. These countries were allegedly gathering mercenaries, mainly Albanian exiles, '2000 in Greece, 1800 in Yugoslavia', trying to organize incursions in Albania, in order to foment rebellions, and overthrow the regime.²²² It is not clear how reliable the information was, or if it was fabricated in order to persuade Chinese officials to support the Albanian requests. But it was no secret that although Albania did not openly claim Kosova, they supported the claims of the Albanian population in Yugoslavia for greater autonomy, possibly self-governance. This, Hoxha believed, was another reason Tito opposed Albania and its leadership.²²³

Zhou Enlai reiterated his view that Albania should not leave the WPO, but should wait for when the alliance would violate its rules, providing an excuse for Albania to denounce it. Hoxha agreed, but still saw the alliance as dangerous, as if one of Albania's neighbors were to attack it, then this alliance, instead of defending the country, would give license to the Soviets to intervene, officially to defend Albania, but actually to occupy it. In that case, the WPO would be an obstacle to any sympathy from the West towards Albania, officially a member of the alliance.²²⁴

²²⁰ Ibid., f.56.

²²¹ Tirana, 12 December 1964: "Report on the activities of the enemies against the P.R. of Albania, and the work of the state security organs during the years 1963-64", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D3, f.35-36.

²²² In AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D3, f.37.

²²³ Tirana, 05 January 1964: "Minutes of Conversation between comrade Zhou Enlai, head of the State Council of PRC and the leaders of the party and the state of Albania, headed by comrade Enver Hoxha", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V.1964, D25-25/1, f.58-89.

²²⁴ Tirana, 07 January 1964, in *ibid*, f.127-128.

Zhou Enlai reconfirmed China's commitment to help Albania's army, and stated that China 'will send the supplies according to the plan... in case of new advanced armaments we will send them without waiting for a request, albeit not in big quantities... for the tunnels and fortifications it would be better if you send someone to Korea to see and get experience'.²²⁵ This visit revealed to Hoxha that although China would provide Albania with armaments, it would not commit to a formal military alliance. China indirectly warned Hoxha not to provoke any tension in the region. As a result of the new equipment from China, one of the main problems that surfaced was the lack of manpower to manage the armaments. In 1964, the army had only 16 generals, and only around 120 colonels.²²⁶ The military schools were trying to solve the problem by accepting more students each year, but these problems persisted until 1970.²²⁷ With Chinese assistance, Albania could enlarge its navy from a single base, in Vlora, to three – covering the entire coast. Moreover, the Chinese armaments enabled reorganization of the entire army, adding for the first time new branches, such as a unit against chemical attacks, and restructuring the chain of command. With the new organizational structure, the army could mobilize a contingent 'twice larger than the previous structure'.²²⁸

In 1965, when an Albanian delegation visited China, Zhou Enlai firmly opposed Albania's defense strategy, recommending guerrilla warfare instead.²²⁹ Zhou brought the example of Vietnam, but the Albanian minister argued that Vietnam was an occupied country that had no choice but to fight accordingly, whereas Albania was an independent country with a regime in power, controlling the entire territory and in case of attack had to make efforts to defeat the aggressors. Zhou Enlai's remarks most likely were also a reflection of a similar debate in China about Chinese military

²²⁵ Tirana, 08 January 1964, in *ibid.*, f.136-137 & 227-228.

²²⁶ AQSH, K.Mb, V. 1964, D1.

²²⁷ Tirana, 12 December 1964: "Report on the political-military preparations of the army and its military (fighting) readiness in Politburo, 19 January 1965", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D3, f.8-24.

²²⁸ In AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1965, D3, f.13.

²²⁹ Within the Chinese leadership there had been two different lines regarding the war strategy. One, embodied in Peng Dehuai (former minister of defense) pushed towards a professional army, armed with heavy armaments as the only way to face large scale war. In Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution. Vol. 2. The Great Leap Forward, 1958 – 1960*, 15; Zhou brought the example of Vietnam and stated that since Albania was a small country, it did not permit a large scale use of the heavy artillery.

strategy.²³⁰ That debate was mainly between those who were in favor of a strong professional army, like Luo Ruiqing, and those who emphasized more political preparation and peoples' war, such as Lin Biao.²³¹ Luo defended building a professional army 'able to use conventional weapons' to oppose the enemy. Lin, on the other hand, prioritized 'political preparations, and Mao's Thought'.²³² Mao favored Lin's argument, but many years later, after Mao's death, Luo was rehabilitated and reinstated, after he had been purged during the Cultural Revolution.

Albania did not draft its first official document regarding a war strategy until 1967. The first document possible to track in the archives regarding the defense strategy was drafted under the supervision of the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu. In November 1967, the Council of Defense discussed the draft and apparently there were no disputes among the Council members about the document. However, some discrepancies emerged between Shehu and the defense minister Balluku regarding their idea of war. For Shehu, the partisan war (guerrilla tactics) should be considered auxiliary to a frontal clash as Albania was building up a modern army. Balluku instead wanted to emphasize in the document those aspects regarding the preparation of a partisan's war. Decisively, Hoxha offered his more support to Shehu.²³³

Conclusion

The period that preceded the alliance were years of great convergence between Albania and China, owing to their corresponding interests and mutual opposition to the destalinization process. Once the alliance was established, however, and Albania's economic support was exclusively in China's hands, the relations became more complexed. Contrary to the perception, Sino-Albanian alliance begun with

²³⁰ Chen-Ya Tien, *Chinese Military Theory: Ancient and Modern*, (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1992); Edward C. O'Dowd, *Chinese Military Strategy in the Third Indochina War: The Last Maoist War*, (London: New York: Routledge, 2007).

²³¹ Long He, *Democratic Tradition of the Chinese People's Liberation Army*, 1st ed., (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965).

²³² “罗瑞卿与林彪在军事战略上的一场争论”, 发布时间 [Luoruiqing yu linbiao zai junshi zhanlue shang de yi chang zhenglun”, fabushijian]: 2015-06-30 作者: 夏明星沈珂高桃源来源: 党史博采,[Zuozhe: Xia minxing chenkegao Taoyuan lai yuan: Dang shi bo cai] 2014-10-16. In http://www.hprc.org.cn/gsyj/rws/qtgjld/201506/t20150630_334760.html (last accessed on 26-02-2016).

²³³ Council of Defence, 25 November 1967: “Draft thesis on the People's Military Art in the People's Republic of Albania”, in AQSH, K.Mb, V. 1967, D2, f.583-601.

attrition. Hoxha, in supporting China against the Soviet Union, had successfully gambled on a positive outcome, which in fact resulted in the peaceful end of Albania's relations with the Soviet Union. This, from Hoxha's perspective, was a political and strategic victory. He, however, wanted China to believe that for Albania, the split with Soviet Union was not only a Tirana-Moscow issue concerning only Albanian regime's security. Hoxha made efforts for China to see Albania's struggle against Soviet Union as a struggle concerning the communist principles that Moscow, for Hoxha, had betrayed. Related to this, the Albanian leaders claimed to have defended Chinese interests by opposing Moscow, as far as those interests corresponded with their interpretation of the communist ideology. Consequently Hoxha did not expect any reversal of the policy towards the Soviet Union. With China's attempt to convince Albania to seat on the same table with the Soviets, Hoxha discovered that Beijing's policy towards Soviet Union was not as linear as Tirana's policy. For Hoxha keeping away from any rapprochement with the Soviet Union was paramount. But was also fundamental for him that China keeps equally distant from any rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Both, interstate and interparty close relations between Moscow and Beijing were two undermining factors for his regime who had built a huge propagandistic narrative of the Sino-Albanian common struggle against the Soviet Union – attacking it as a “revisionist” country.

On the other hand, China perhaps had neglected Hoxha's determination to continue firmly his opposition to the Soviet Union. If China found impossible to convince Albania to normalize relations with Soviet Union, or even just with East European socialist countries, it thought instead it could have a say regarding Albania's economic policy. In fact this was more related to practical issues involving China's foreign aid. But on this point too Albania's stubborn standing and Hoxha's determination to pursue the heavy industrialization were difficult to overcome by Beijing. At the end China and Albania continued their antagonism towards Moscow, and Beijing also accommodated Albania's economic and military requests. Yet, Beijing refused to establish a treaty of alliance (for defensive purposes) with Tirana, turning down Albania's request which in a way was a message to Tirana that China's assistance to Albania had also limits. One unknown aspect of the Sino-Albanian relations during this period is their common effort to challenge Soviet power within

the international communist movement, by trying to bring on their side communist parties and Marxist and leftist movements which supported the Chinese course. More specifically, if China's rivalry with Soviet Union, among others, because of Beijing's claims of equal footing with Moscow in the communist camp, is an established fact for the historians, less established, if not known at all, is that part of China's design to acquire a prominent position, alternatively to the Soviets within the international communist movement, was Beijing's use of Tirana in this sense. In fact China saw in Tirana a solid ally in promoting China's claim for leadership in both, the international communist movement, and the so called Third World. As the next chapter shows, Sino-Albanian coordination and common action further intensified during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which although initially received with reticence in Tirana, eventually the Albanian leadership strongly supported.

CHAPTER FOUR

TURBULENT TIMES, 1966-1970: THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON THE SINO-ALBANIAN RELATIONS

Introduction

The Chinese Cultural Revolution was a moment of great instability in Chinese history; one that left its mark on Chinese attitudes towards the world, creating similar instability in China's international relations. Those with Albania were no different. When the Cultural Revolution started in 1966, almost all Chinese ambassadors abroad were called back to Beijing for 'education' and disputes emerged in 'more than thirty out of roughly forty countries with which it [China] had diplomatic relations'.¹ Though Albania was not among the countries that openly disputed the Chinese Cultural Revolution, it feared the effects this turmoil could have on its alliance, and the benefits thereof, with China.

Initially, Albanian leadership attacked the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and in private, secret debates rejected its main patterns as anti-Marxist. Eventually, though, Albania ended up promoting also its own form of Cultural Revolution, which was not motivated by any internal political necessity – there were no lines of dispute within the leadership – but it served to strengthen the alliance with China and further consolidate the party's control over the Albanian society. Through his own Cultural Revolution, Enver Hoxha achieved three important objectives: first, Albania gained more economic and military aid from China, as a reward of the support for the Chinese Cultural Revolution; second, the Albanian Cultural Revolution removed within Albania, through controlled mobilization of the masses, any obstacle to the complete dominance of the party over all aspects of the Albanian society – mainly religion; third, it was a further step towards the emancipation of women.

By the time of the beginning of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the communists in Albania had already been ruling the country for twenty-two years, and

¹ Barbara Barnouin and Changgen Yu, *Chinese Foreign Policy during the Cultural Revolution*, (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998).

the country was in a state of relative welfare, owing almost entirely to China's economic assistance. The Chinese Cultural Revolution came unexpectedly for Albania, and its leaders were caught by surprise and were confused about its nature, its aims, and the possible outcomes. To gather more information, from April 1966 to September 1967 Hoxha sent many delegations to China, until he was assured that this revolution could be a political and economic opportunity for Albania if he supported China. Albania's support, however, did not come immediately: instead, when Hoxha first called a meeting in the Politburo in October 1966, he attacked the 'chaos' in China and the cult of Mao which for him had reached a 'disgusting level'. Despite the fact that from documents emerges a Hoxha able to make very lucid analyzes of Chinese (and international) politics, he and the PLA, thought it unconceivable that a political crisis like China's could be induced by its leaders themselves. Therefore, he did not fully understand, nor consequently accept, that the top of the pyramid of an established system like the CCP, could decide to shake its own foundations, making the Chinese Cultural Revolution a 'unique' revolution.² Later, to sweep away doubts, Hoxha received Zhou Enlai and, importantly, Kang Sheng, who definitively convinced him that supporting the Cultural Revolution would be the right choice. Gradually, what started as a nightmare for Albania became a great opportunity for the regime.³

Perceptions of the Chinese Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution in China is one of the most debated events in the second half of the Twentieth Century. The historical narrative about it is mainly negative, that of a great calamity and a dark period in China's history.⁴ Recently, however,

² Harry Harding, "The Chinese State in Crisis", in Roderick MacFarquhar, ed., *The Politics of China: Sixty Years of the People's Republic of China*, 3rd ed., (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 147–245.

³ Ylber Marku, "China and Albania: The Cultural Revolution and Cold War Relations, *Cold War History*, 2017. Online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14682745.2017.1307179>. In this thesis I retrace some of the moments analyzed in the article.

⁴ Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006); Jicai Feng, *Ten Years of Madness: Oral Histories of China's Cultural Revolution*, (San Francisco, Calif: China Books, 1996); Barbara Barnouin and Changgen Yu, *Ten Years of Turbulence: The Chinese Cultural Revolution*, (London and New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall Inc, 1993).

new research has been conducted which, without denying the violence unleashed during those years, also reveals overlooked aspects of the Cultural Revolution.⁵

In the mid-1960s a line was drawn within the CCP, leading to a confrontation, the line was between Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi.⁶ The first signs of the struggle within the CCP had appeared during the Great Leap Forward, in the late fifties, early sixties.⁷ Among many, three moments here above mentioned were indicative of the coming clash: first, the Lushan conference in 1959, then both the Beidahe conference, and then also the Tenth Plenum of the CCP in 1962. The economy was the main concern over which the so-called rightists, later called revisionists, and leftists, the group supported by Mao, argued until they reached an open confrontation. According to Gao, before this happened, both sides ‘did not object to the idea that something had to be done in China in order to avoid events like those in Budapest in 1956 happening in Beijing’ too.⁸ Mao and Liu, however, saw the problem from different perspectives. For Liu the problem was grassroots corruption by elements outside the party.⁹ Mao, instead, thought that the problem was inside, and was not organizational but ideological.¹⁰ Mao wanted to prevent any deviation like that of Khrushchev in the Soviet Union, and he thought revisionism could be

⁵ Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009). The author accredit to that period the forging of the economic elites, which contributed to the Chinese economic growth in the coming decades; Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For the author the Cultural Revolution fostered the cultural production; Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014); Dongping Han, *The Unknown Cultural Revolution: Educational Reforms and their Impact on China's Rural Development*, (New York: Garland Pub, 2000). For Dongping Han, the Cultural Revolution “democratized village political culture and spurred the growth of rural education” (p.1).

⁶ Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shaoqi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, ed., (Armonk, N.Y. ; London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

⁷ For the origins of the Cultural Revolution in China see: Roderick MacFarquhar, (in three volumes); Vol 1: *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Contradictions Among the People, 1956-57*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Vol 2: *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, The Great Leap Forward, 1958-60*, (Oxford University Press, 1983); Vol 3: *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961-66*, (Columbia & Oxford University Press), 1997.

⁸ Mobo C. F. Gao, *The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution*, (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 129. The entire book is among the few in English that challenge the view of most part of the studies that categorize the Cultural Revolution as a “great calamity”. This study, however, does not reject completely the negative aspects of the Cultural Revolution.

⁹ Of the phenomenon of corruption in the CCP during Mao's era see, Xiaobo Lü, *Cadres and Corruption: The Organizational Involution of the Chinese Communist Party*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2000), 31–153.

¹⁰ Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China's Past*.

prevented only by suppressing within the CCP those that might have similar temptations. By doing this, he wanted to avoid any challenge to his power within the party. Indeed, at a certain point, at the beginning of the sixties, Mao thought he had no authority over the party. The Cultural Revolution became a formidable weapon in his hands to regain the total control of the party and the country. But this weapon could not be developed or used without great turmoil and many casualties.

When the Cultural Revolution became known to the Albanian embassy, diplomats sent a radiogram from Beijing proposing open support for the Cultural Revolution.¹¹ The embassy was running too fast. Uncertainty dominated perception abroad about Chinese events, and the embassy's will did not correspond to the official stance in Tirana, where the party lacked an official position regarding the events in China. Consequently, Albania decided to proceed with caution. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana stated that, '...what is happening there is China's internal affair', and emphasized the fact that it was too early and not necessary to either support or deny it.¹² As has been explained by scholars, the Cultural Revolution was mainly (not only) a struggle within the leadership of the CCP, not aimed at becoming a world revolution.¹³ China, more desperately than ever, needed foreign friends, in particular due to the Cultural Revolution's impact on China's diplomacy and foreign affairs.¹⁴

In April of 1966, the Chinese government officially invited an Albanian delegation to visit China, and the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, led it personally.¹⁵ The Albanian leaders were anxious to know more about the events, and expected this visit to be fruitful in this sense. During his visit, which began on 29 April 1966,

¹¹ "Top-Secret": Radiogram from the Albanian embassy in Beijing to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 August 1966, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1966, D80, f.2.

¹² "Top-Secret": Radiogram of the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in Beijing, 28 August 1966, in *ibid.*, f. (1) 137-138; "Top-Secret": Radiogram of the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in Beijing, 30 August 1966, in *ibid.*, f.3.

¹³ Jiaqi Yan, Gao Gao, and D. W. Y. Kwok, *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996).

¹⁴ Jisen Ma, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), 72–89, 151–189, 307–349; Barnouin and Yu, *Chinese Foreign Policy during the Cultural Revolution*; Michael Y. M. Kau and Christopher J. Szymanski, *The Chinese Foreign Ministry Elite and the Cultural Revolution*, (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, 1972); Melvin Gurtov, *The Foreign Ministry and Foreign Affairs in China's "Cultural Revolution"*, (Santa Monica, Calif: Rand Corporation, 1969).

¹⁵ *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 27 April 1966, V. 25, Nr.99, BK, Periodiku, ShG 28/3D

Shehu and his delegation were warmly welcomed with a rally of one million people in Beijing, the equivalent of half of the Albanian population at the time.¹⁶ The fact that Liu Shaoqi, President of the PRC, received them in person, did not belie the struggle to occur within the Chinese political system in the coming months, when Liu would be one of the main victims, perhaps the most notable, of the Cultural Revolution. The delegation toured China for two weeks, until 11 May, 1966, but there are no reports showing that they had any conversations focused on the Cultural Revolution. Mainly they spoke of economic collaboration and ideological and political coordination, issues Albania and China had long been discussing. Only in his meeting with Mao did the Chairman allude to unpredictable events, when he said, ‘...we must prepare, it can happen that revisionists enter Beijing and our comrades can happen to transform into revisionists. This is one of the possibilities’.¹⁷ There was no explicit mention of the Cultural Revolution, but Mao expressed his idea that a cleansing campaign was necessary in China, where he suspected highly ranked officials to be revisionists. Mao stated that since there were counter-revolutionaries, there must be revolution, ‘where leftists are, there are rightists too’ For Mao therefore, to act against them was necessary.¹⁸ He then asked Shehu if there was bamboo in Albania, because, Mao added, with revisionists should be as with bamboo ‘...it should be removed the bamboo layer... while keeping only the center, the good part of it... we have removed the layer [of the party] like in bamboo, Gao Gang, Peng Dehuai, Peng Zhen, etc. This is what we will do with those still undiscovered that are sleeping next to us yet’.¹⁹ Shehu did not get the point on ‘revisionists in Beijing’ and Mao did not elaborate. The revisionists for Mao were precisely those receiving Shehu, Liu Shaoqi, and Deng Xiaoping.²⁰ Shehu did not understand, nor did the other leaders in Albania, the dynamics of Chinese politics in those years, that

¹⁶ *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 29 April 1966, V. 25, Nr.101, BK, Periodiku, ShG 28/3D

¹⁷ “Notes form the meeting with comrade Mao, 05 May 1966”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D3, f.2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, f.1-14 and f.17-21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f.7.

²⁰ For a study on Deng Xiaoping, see Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*; Ruan et al., *Deng Xiaoping*. Ruan Ming's focus is only on Deng's period in power, from 1979 to 1992; For Liu Shaoqi instead see Dittmer, *Liu Shaoqi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution*.

identifying a potential danger within the party did not always lead to an immediate purge.

Even though the CCP had fewer years in power in China than the PLA in Albania, it had a longer tradition of political internal debates.²¹ If, in Albania, the political power of the communist party was reduced to the personal power of Enver Hoxha, the CCP instead had a long tradition of collegial deliberations, some tracing back to its foundation in 1920s.²² Therefore, unlike Albania, in China the purges often were preceded by a process of analysis and assessment of effective power because in China political power was less concentrated than in Albania. Nonetheless, as scholars have outlined, of the fifty-seven founders of the CCP, eventually only two survived purges.²³

During his visit, Mehmet Shehu also had talks with Deng Xiaoping regarding the ideological and political issues that concerned, united, or divided both parties. What most divided them was the issue of the existence of the bourgeoisie as a class in an established socialist society. For Deng ‘even after the revolution and the taking of power... capitalism or revisionism can still restore to power.’²⁴ This was Mao’s position too, but in Albania, this possibility was not worthy of consideration because they claimed that in a truly socialist country, only the communists held power, and what was left was perhaps only *remnants* of the bourgeoisie, but not the class as a political entity. The response of Mehmet Shehu predicted just how the Albanian Cultural Revolution would evolve in the following years. Shehu said that ‘your experience is very valuable for us... [Yet] ... we take from it what is appropriate for

²¹ For the founding of the CCP see Hans J. Van de Ven, *The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party and the Search for a New Political Order, 1920-1927*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1987); Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966); Lucien Bianco trans. Muriel Bell, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1971); Saich and Yang, *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party*; Maurice J. Meisner, *Li Ta-Chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); For the European experience of some of the main founders of the CCP see Marilyn A. Levine, *The Found Generation: Chinese Communists in Europe during the Twenties*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993).

²² Saich and Yang, *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party*.

²³ Jacques Guillermaz and Anne Destenay, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-1949*, (New York: Random House, 1972), 54–60.

²⁴ “On the causes of the emerging of revisionism and restoration of capitalism in Soviet Union, discussed in the meeting of 30 April 1966”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D2, f.56.

the conditions of Albania'.²⁵ When Shehu met Liu Shaoqi, unexpectedly for Shehu, Liu expressed many critiques of Stalin's, listing his major mistakes. These included: Stalin's claim that socialism had won in Soviet Union, lowering the Soviet people's vigilance against internal enemies; Stalin had underestimated the masses by relying primarily on the party's bureaucrats, and he had denied class differences between the peasantry and the proletariat.²⁶ Shehu reported that for Liu, 'these are the reasons why revisionism has emerged in the Soviet Union'.²⁷ In addition, Liu alleged that the Soviet Union was imperialist in its attitude towards China, with regard to border disputes regarding territories that once formed part of the Chinese Empire.²⁸ Although Shehu avoided entering into discussions on this issue, he deemed Khrushchev, not Stalin, responsible for the birth of revisionism.

At the end of this visit, the two parties decided to prepare and release a joint communiqué. This revealed the oft-disputed 'question of classes in the socialist society and the causes of the emerging of revisionism and restoration of capitalism...'.²⁹ Shehu complained about the fact that Chinese comrades did not accept the Albanian formulation that 'the class struggle exists between two lines, the socialist and capitalist, but not between socialist and bourgeoisie'. For Albania, after communist rule had been established, the bourgeoisie as a class should have been extinguished otherwise the communists would have not accomplished a key task: overthrowing the bourgeoisie class. Instead, the Chinese comrades considered that 'during... the socialist era, in the socialist countries, there exist the bourgeoisie class too and [only] based on this [assumption] the class struggle is between proletariat and bourgeoisie'.³⁰ Neither party renounced its position, and in order to agree the

²⁵ "Talks of Mehmet Shehu with Liu Shaoqi in Beijing, 01 May 1966" in *ibid.*, f.132

²⁶ "Memorandum of conversations between the Albanian Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu and the leaders of the PRC, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, Beijing, 28 April – 02 May 1966. Transcript of the talks held on 01 May 1966", in AQSH, F14, AP-MPKK, V.1966, D2, f.71-72. During these talks Liu Shaoqi admitted that, "After the coming of revisionism to power in Yugoslavia we did not give that much importance, because we thought it was an isolated case, not a general phenomenon. Just when the revisionism came to power in Soviet Union it made us reflect deeper".

²⁷ Transcript of the PLA Politburo, 14 May 1966: "Report of comrade Mehmet Shehu... about the visit of the Albanian governmental delegation in China, 28 April–11 May 1966", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1966, D14, f.11-12.

²⁸ Tai Sung An, *The Sino-Soviet Territorial Dispute*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973).

²⁹ "Talks between comrade Mehmet Shehu, Hysni Kapo, Zhou Enlai, and Chen Yi, 11 May 1966, regarding the divergences on the Joint Communiqué", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D4, f.1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, f.3.

joint communiqué, both agreed to general declaration regarding socialist society and the necessity of class struggle.³¹

Another explanation of these differences rests in the different natures of the communist revolutions in China and Albania. In Albania, the revolution had been organized by a restricted group of middle class people, formed in the urban areas of Albania, and in some cases educated in western Europe. In China, instead, although ‘the CCP had little concern for rural matters during its first few years’³² from foundation, the peasantry had a central position in forging the identity of the Chinese communist revolution.³³ In China the delegation received a “top-secret” document from the CCP regarding the Politburo’s dismissal of the group of five persons in charge of the Cultural Revolution.³⁴ The document is mainly the discussion, and decision, to dismiss Peng Zhen and his group that had been ‘totally’ wrong for (not) criticizing “Hai Rui Dismissed from Office”.³⁵ The criticism of this literary work was one of the first stage curtains to open on the Cultural Revolution in China and made Peng Zhen its first target and victim.³⁶ Mao wanted an open and strong criticism of this piece but Peng Zhen, Mayor of Beijing and member of the Politburo, did not have the same zeal and tried to protect the author, Wu Han, who was the deputy mayor of Beijing.³⁷

On 24 June, 1966, Zhou Enlai returned to Albania, on a tour of many countries. In the meantime, the Cultural Revolution became rougher and this captured the

³¹ The preparatory works in Beijing for the Joint Communiqué, drafts and definitive version, are available in, AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D5, f. 1-58, and D6, f.1-80.

³² Barry Sautman, *Retreat from Revolution: Why Communist Systems Deradicalize*, (New York: Columbia University, 1990), 317.

³³ Xiaorong Han, *Chinese Discourses on the Peasant, 1900-1949*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Xiaorong Han, *Red God: Wei Baqun and His Peasant Revolution in Southern China, 1894-1932*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014); Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*, 1st ed., (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

³⁴ Document of the Chinese Communist Party’s Politburo meeting (09-12 April 1966), in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D10, f. 2-11.

³⁵ It is a theater play, written by Wu Han in 1960, centered on the figure of Hai Rui, an adviser who dared to criticize his Emperor in the Ming Dynasty. Mao thought that this play was an allegory for him.

³⁶ He was one of the first high-ranking officials to be hit by the Cultural Revolution. Instead, according to other sources, the first casualty of the Cultural Revolution was Bian Zhongyun, a teacher in a school in Beijing. See Ma Beiming, in Gao, *The Battle for China’s Past*, 134-136.

³⁷ See also Yan Jiaqi & Gao Gao, trans. DW. Y. Kwok, *Turbulent Decade. A history of the Cultural Revolution*, (University of Hawaii’s Press, 1996, c1986), 23-38.

attention of the Albanian leadership. Shortly before Zhou landed in Tirana, page three of *People's Voice* included Albania's first article about the Cultural Revolution in China.³⁸ In a regime where details were often symbols transmitting political messages, it is worth noting that the first article mentioning the Cultural Revolution was not front page news. The event was described only in general terms such as a '...vital part of the further and broad socialist revolution', against remnants of the bourgeois culture and against the possibility for revisionists to take the political power.³⁹ There was nothing on battles between factions, red guards, work groups, struggle sessions, or any violent action. In retrospect, this article seems like Albanian authorities' wishful thinking. The visit of Zhou Enlai could have been useful to remove the uncertainties the Albanian leadership still had about the Cultural Revolution, but not even Zhou could, at that stage, know what was to come.

In his political diary, Enver Hoxha wrote nothing of this visit, mainly because he considered that nothing relevant came into the open with Zhou Enlai's visit, as 'not even Mao' could have predicted the evolving of the situation.⁴⁰ His expectations to understand better, however, were great, as he told the Chinese, '...you are running a great revolution of extraordinary importance'.⁴¹ In his welcoming speech, Enver Hoxha expressed his deep gratitude for Chinese assistance in his country and his 'solidarity with Mao's thought'. But Hoxha also made clear that Albania would not faithfully adhere to the Chinese path. For Albania to 'learn very much from you [China]... we adopt [and adapt] to the real [specific] conditions of our country' the policies promoted in China. For reasons concerning Albania's national security and independence from Yugoslavia, Stalin always remained for Hoxha the central figure in world communism, and this was a good chance to respond to the criticism of Stalin that Liu Shaoqi had addressed in meeting Mehmet Shehu earlier that year. For Hoxha, any attempt to use the Cultural Revolution to attack Stalin was rejected. In

³⁸ "The Great Ideological and Cultural Socialist Revolution in the People's Republic of China Goes Ahead Unstoppable". [Revolucioni i Madh Ideologjik e Kulturor Socialist Në Republikën Popullore të Kinës Shkon Përpara me Hap të Pandalshëm], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 21 June 1966, V. 25, Nr. 147, BK, Periodiku ShG 28/3D

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Shaoguang Wang, *Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan*, (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995). For Wang the Cultural Revolution developed out of Mao's control; MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1, 2*.

⁴¹ "Talks between the Chinese delegation headed by Zhou Enlai and leaders of the party and the state of Albania headed by Enver Hoxha, 24-28 June 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D13, f.1.

his long experience, Hoxha said, ‘...our party has no documents... that allow us to... determine any responsibility of Stalin... [Therefore]... the line followed by Stalin... has always been a Marxist-Leninist line, a revolutionary line’.⁴² Then, in talking to Zhou Enlai, Hoxha followed up with a long explanation on why, according to him, Stalin had made no mistakes regarding either political power concepts, the theory of class struggle, or any of the other issues discussed in Beijing a few months earlier. Hoxha alleged that if the Cultural Revolution in China was aimed at the substitution of Stalin’s position, as a great figure of international communism, with Mao, and substitution of the Stalinist way with the Maoist, using Mao’s thought, then Albania would not follow the same path.

Enver Hoxha was anxious to explain to Zhou Enlai another point that had been cause for dispute in Beijing between Shehu and Liu; the existence of the bourgeoisie class in a socialist country. He stressed Albania’s specifics and why there were only remnants of the old classes, but no class other than proletariat which had retained political power. Albania, for Hoxha, had always been a poor country and that did not allow the emergence of a class of capitalists and bourgeoisie. Therefore, the bourgeoisie lacked conditions to become a powerful class and remained small. Moreover, after the liberation, the communists could immediately solve the problems of political power and the class struggle by violently overturning the other classes, leaving them no chance of survival. Hoxha praised his party’s proletarian dictatorship, which through public trials and merciless campaigns had eliminated almost all its enemies. In Albania, definitely, the only class in power was the proletariat. Nevertheless, a merciless class struggle was necessary and it mainly served to suppress the *remnants* of the overturned classes, their ideologies, religion, and old traditions.⁴³

In his intervention, Zhou Enlai ceded nothing, and repeated the same criticisms of Stalin that Liu Shaoqi had expressed in Beijing to Mehmet Shehu. Zhou stated that if current leaders assessed Stalin’s merits and mistakes and gave him a grade, ‘we can say he has three mistakes and seven merits’.⁴⁴ He also said to Hoxha that maybe

⁴² Ibid., f.3-7.

⁴³ Ibid., f. 3-48.

⁴⁴ King C. Chen, ed., *China and the Three Worlds: A Foreign Policy Reader*, (London: Macmillan, 1979), 13. Zhou Enlai was quoting Mao, who earlier had given to Stalin a grade. See Mao Zedong, “On the Ten Major Relationships”, 27 April 1956, p.24.

in Albania the antagonist class remained small, but ‘in China we are speaking about sixty million people, and for sure we cannot just eliminate them’.⁴⁵ Zhou’s visit certainly did not clarify any parts of the Cultural Revolution, as Hoxha hoped it might. On the contrary, the visit left more confusion and room for speculation.

After Zhou Enlai’s visit, the bilateral correspondence between the parties intensified, probably because China sensed Albania’s confusion, and possible misperception, of Chinese events. Among many documents, the PLA received the official communiqué released after the Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee of the CCP, simply known as Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth Party Congress held in Beijing on 1-12 August 1966.⁴⁶ For Albania, it was important that this document expressly deemed Soviet revisionism as dangerous as American imperialism.⁴⁷ That is, by identifying Soviet Union as one of the targets of the Cultural Revolution’s struggle, Chinese leaders were identifying a target in common with Albania, at least one target that the Albanians would not miss. The CCP passed to the PLA other files, in order to ‘exchange the experience’, regarding the ‘socialist education campaign in the countryside... the campaign for the four cleansings movement’, and other documents of this nature.⁴⁸

The *People’s Voice* still wrote on the importance of the Eleventh Plenum Communiqué, albeit without much zeal, by publishing an article that emphasized how this revolution was ‘...the best evidence of the class struggle in the actual period in the People’s Republic’.⁴⁹ By saying ‘in the People’s Republic of China’, they inferred that the Cultural Revolution was still a Chinese phenomenon. Mainly, the *People’s Voice* used *Xinhua* – the Chinese official news agency – as the source of its information and published *Xinhua*’s articles, or parts of them. Indeed, another article reported much of what *Xinhua* had officially published regarding a rally Mao held

⁴⁵ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D13, f. 49-71.

⁴⁶ Yongnian Zheng, *The Chinese Communist Party as Organizational Emperor: Culture, Reproduction and Transformation*, (New York: Routledge, 2010); Hung-mao Tien, *The Communist Party of China: Party Powers and Group Politics from the Third Plenum to the Twelfth Party Congress*, ([Baltimore, Md: School of Law, University of Maryland, 1984).

⁴⁷ Communiqué of the 11th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, *People’s Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 16 June 1966, V. 25, Nr. 196, p.4, BK, Periodiku ShG 28/4E.

⁴⁸ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D11.

⁴⁹ Great historical event in the life of the party and our brothers, the Chinese people, *People’s Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 21 August 1966, V. 25, Nr. 201, (National Library), Periodiku ShG 28/4E.

Beijing with one million students and teachers on 15 September, 1966.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that *People's Voice* reported only some parts, those appropriate according to them for the Albanian reality, and not the entire space *Xinhua* had given to the event in Beijing. The events in China were becoming too important and an intervention of Hoxha that could orientate the restricted group of high officials of the party was necessary.

Condemning the Chinese Cultural Revolution

In his diary, published after the Sino-Albanian split in 1979, Enver Hoxha wrote about his first impressions of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.⁵¹ Published once the relations with China were interrupted, with the purpose of sharing his thoughts regarding Chinese politics, this diary is not reliable. Nevertheless, in many of its passages it is possible to observe a certain coherence between the diary and the archives, in this way motivating those voices that see his political diary written *ex post* intending to rewrite history in Hoxha's favor after the split with China.⁵² The first issue about the Cultural Revolution that Hoxha touched upon was the cult of Mao, which Hoxha considered unacceptable. Mao, Hoxha said, was venerated in China as a God. The Chinese, by so doing, were diminishing the role of the masses and the role of the communist party, '...they are turning the cult of Mao into a religion'.⁵³ Hoxha did not see Mao as the successor to Stalin. For he saw himself as the most loyal follower of Stalin, the only one to be internationalist, leading the only 'communist castle in the Adriatic coast'. Hoxha emphasized with pride that '...we [Albanians] are, in fact, the only ones defending the figure of Stalin'.⁵⁴

Besides, Mao had criticized Stalin and therefore, in Hoxha's eyes, did not deserve the same consideration. For Hoxha, raising the cult of the individual was to subordinate the role of the CCP to that of Mao. He argued that the party should be

⁵⁰ Great Rally in Beijing [Miting i Madh Në Pekin], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 17 September 1966, V. 25, Nr. 224, p.4, BK, Periodiku, ShG 28/4E.

⁵¹ Enver Hoxha, *Reflections on China, I, 1962-1972. Extracts From The political Diary*, (Toronto: Norman Bethune Institute, 1979).

⁵² Elidor Mëhilli, "Mao and the Albanians" in Alexander C. Cook, ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 165–184. Mëhilli considers this a hypothesis.

⁵³ Enver Hoxha, *Reflections on China*, 223.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 225.

the protagonist, instead of relying on Mao's figure. Mao, in contrast, challenged the limits of the party and became a leader above the CCP. There is no doubt that the political leadership in Albania was conscious of China's great international importance, they even would often publically and openly deem Beijing a protagonist, but for them this was only a consequence of China's size and vast resources. In Hoxha's view, China was important because it was China, not because it was ruled by Mao. The point, however, concerned Albania's autonomy from China. If Mao had to become the new personification of world communism, then Hoxha was pressured to follow Chinese path. The experience with the Soviet Union under Stalin was significant in this regard. Hoxha wanted to maintain autonomy from China, because Chinese policies were not fully endorsed by Hoxha, and autonomy of action for him was paramount. Hence came his criticism of Mao's cult.

On 10 October, 1966, Enver Hoxha, in a meeting of the Politburo, commented for the first time on the Chinese Cultural Revolution.⁵⁵ After reminding his colleagues of the secrecy of his speech, Hoxha blamed China for the lack of information in his hands, so it was not easy to analyze the Cultural Revolution. For Hoxha, China, as so big a country, was very important for the communist cause, and the events in Beijing resonated internationally. He warned to not confound his criticism of this revolution with the many other criticisms coming from three different directions; from the capitalists, revisionists, and real Marxist-Leninists. Despite the fact that Albania was among the real Marxist friends of China, it feared that it would be a 'great mistake if our Chinese friends confound these three directions... In that case, they would lack Marxist objectivity'. Hoxha was not alone in criticizing the Cultural Revolution, though alone in doing it secretly, as the 'revisionist' countries, Soviet Union, and its allies 'will use the words of Marx and Lenin to criticize the Cultural Revolution'. By so doing, our criticism, he argued, will 'be in the same form but not the same purpose with these betrayers'... [Therefore] Chinese comrades have the heavy burden of distinguishing friends from foes'.⁵⁶ Hoxha intended his criticism to be constructive, and not a challenge to his best, and only, ally. This was also an occasion for him to remind the party's cupola members

⁵⁵ Records of the Politburo, 10 October 1966: "On Chinese Cultural Revolution, referred by comrade Enver Hoxha", in AQSH, F14, OU, V. 1966, D21, f.376-408. See also AQSH, F14, OU, V. 1966, D4.

⁵⁶ AQSH, F14, OU, V. 1966, D21, f.376-408.

of some of the issues that had motivated dissent with the CCP. Therefore, eventual disputes on the Cultural Revolution would not be the only reason for a hypothetical split with China.

Hoxha resumed all the disputes that had emerged between Albania and China during the visit of Shehu in Beijing, and the visit of Zhou Enlai in Tirana earlier that year: Chinese leaders never showed enough firmness against Yugoslavian revisionism, and they did not ‘have clear idea of Tito’s betrayal’ of communism;⁵⁷ ‘Chinese comrades did not realize how dangerous Khrushchev’s line was... Despite the fact that they did not openly accept Khrushchev’s defamation and slander on Stalin, within them they believed it... they even strengthened their thoughts with alleged [Stalin’s] mistakes’;⁵⁸ the different assessments of Stalin’s figure, emerged between Hoxha and Zhou Enlai during Zhou’s visit to Albania in June 1966 when Zhou had had a long conversation with Hoxha. Regarding Stalin’s rise to power, Zhou tried to convince Hoxha that Stalin was not infallible. Hoxha listened to Zhou, ‘but he did not convince us at all’. Regarding the Chinese ‘soft tactic’ in the propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union, during which China ‘tried to convince us to dismiss the open polemic [with the CPSU]’. Hoxha decided that ‘the Chinese comrades... had few illusions and a punishable attitude’. And regarding Albania’s dissent with China on the ideological controversy, over ‘the existence of feudal bourgeoisie class as the class that fights us from a position of power’. Finally, Enver Hoxha understood that ‘factions within the [CCP] leadership should be very deep... dangerous enemies stay in the Central Committee and inside the Politburo’.⁵⁹ Before taking any side in the struggle within the Chinese leadership, Hoxha decided to wait and see who would win and who would lose before risking standing on the wrong side.

⁵⁷ In his talks with Albanian Premier Mehmet Shehu in Beijing on 01 May 1966, Liu Shaoqi admitted that, “After the coming of revisionism to power in Yugoslavia we did not give that much importance, because we thought it is an isolated case, not a general phenomenon. Just when the revisionism came to power in Soviet Union it made us think deep and raise our vigilance”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D2, f.70.

⁵⁸ Chinese considered that some small annexations to the Soviet Union, taken from China in Northeast during last phases of the Second World War, were imperialist policies and against the principles of Marxism. They considered this as a continuation of the Russian Tsarist policies, when the Unequal Treaties had been imposed to China.

⁵⁹ Quotations in Records of the Politburo, 10 October 1966: “On Chinese Cultural Revolution, referred by comrade Enver Hoxha”, in AQSH, F14, OU, V. 1966, D21, f.381-382.

Then Hoxha showed interest and concern in the CCP leadership's changes as 'Lin Biao came out being the second after Mao [Eleventh Plenum], and comrades like Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De pass to be eighth or ninth in the list... how?... we know nothing'. Hoxha attacked the Red Guards that had been formed before the plenum was held, and attacked the 'cult of Mao... which is reaching a disgusting level'. Some issues, therefore, were clear, but in general, there remained many uncertainties as 'we do not see clear orientations of this revolution'. Hoxha could not see what truly comprised this revolution. At this stage the Cultural Revolution consisted in, and was veritably reducible to, the actions of Red Guards that 'change the names of the streets... raid and loot the people's homes... spreading the feeling of the arbitrariness... and what's even more dangerous, attack the party's committees, burn libraries and destroy old monuments. It is very difficult to call this revolution a cultural one'.⁶⁰ He attacked also the policy of making *tabula rasa* with the past, like the Cultural Revolution, he said, seemed to attempt. On this point, one scholar recently had to say that 'The Cultural Revolution destroyed China's traditional culture in a way that the most iconoclastic reformers of the twentieth century could not have imagined'.⁶¹ Other scholars instead accredit to that period the conservation of old monuments, and new discoveries such as the famous Army of Terracotta.⁶² Hoxha did not approve of the fact that in China the party seemed to leave every initiative in the hands of young people that were not workers but students. This caused him to wonder where the proletariat was in the event, and why these masses had gotten so out of control. Probably because Chinese comrades, 'have drawn the conclusion that all these problems will be resolved by red guards... This is... a way of anarchy... This revolution, I think, is nothing but a rectification of the party's line'. He warned that 'our purpose and great care is, and should be, to avoid falling into error', thus in Albania a similar path now was foreclosed.⁶³ For Hoxha, all this data was enough to decide that the experience of the Chinese Cultural Revolution at least should not be imported *tout court* in Albania.

⁶⁰ Ibid., f.383-398.

⁶¹ Julia F. Andrews, "The Art of the Cultural Revolution", in Ralph C. Croizier, Shengtian Zheng and Scott Watson, eds., *Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-76*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 29-30.

⁶² Mobo Gao, *The Battle For China's Past. Mao & The Cultural Revolution*, 15-30 and 97-115.

⁶³ AQSH, F14, OU, V. 1966, D21, f.399-401.

This speech is extremely important as it shows the feelings that the Albanian leadership truly had towards the Chinese Cultural Revolution. It proves equally the vacillation of the pro-China policy in Tirana, because while this speech was full of resentment towards some aspects of Chinese politics, only one month later, came strong support for the Cultural Revolution – although they did it for strategic reasons. This is comprehensible because the situation in China was changing so rapidly that any definitive assessment would have been misleading and likely belied by future events. At the same time, in the *People's Voice*, the space dedicated to the Cultural Revolution was limited. The decision to keep a low profile about the Cultural Revolution in this early stage came from the top leadership. In Hoxha's words, '...our press does not speak about the Cultural Revolution in a manner and the same way Chinese propaganda does'.⁶⁴ In the spirit of this phrase it is possible to denote a certain defensive attitude. The CCP tried to persuade Albania to offer open support to the Cultural Revolution but it seems that Hoxha decided to wait for a better time. Hoxha, before supporting it, was waiting for political assurances and of economic benefits. He was hopeful that the Chinese delegation for the PLA Fifth Congress in Tirana, in November 1966, would be able to clarify his many doubts. Fortunately, Kang Sheng would do exactly that.

Kang Sheng's Visit and Albania's Support for the Cultural Revolution

In November 1966, the PLA organized its Fifth Congress. In late October of that year, the Chinese delegation led by Kang Sheng arrived in Tirana. In his first meeting with Enver Hoxha, on 28 October, 1966, Kang explicitly asked for stronger coordination between the two parties in the struggle against imperialism and Soviet revisionism.⁶⁵ Kang did not mention immediately the Cultural Revolution until Hoxha pressed him to do so, but he reserved the right to later comment on it, after the congress.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid., f.407.

⁶⁵ "Record of the meeting of the First Secretary of the PLA Enver Hoxha and the delegation of the CCP, headed by Kang Sheng, who visited Albania on occasion of the PLA Fifth Congress, 09 November 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D31, f.1-24.

⁶⁶ As happened often at the time, probably Kang Sheng needed to get permission from the top leaders regarding the content of his discussions in Albania, or simply he needed more time than that in his first meeting.

At the reception in honor of the Chinese delegation, held on 30 October, 1966, Enver Hoxha confirmed general support for the Chinese ‘revolutionary actions’. In turn, Kang Sheng emphasized that when all revisionist parties and imperialist countries were defaming the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Albanian comrades were among the few parties that supported China and that this was greatly appreciated by Mao. Kang appreciated the fact that Albania ‘in its own way, is carrying out a proper Cultural Revolution’.⁶⁷ This proclamation, however, seemed premature, as Albania had not yet announced any such initiative, unless we consider the Albanian political public discourse in which the term “revolution” described nearly every policy and action in the country. What, indeed, Albanians had done, was to call for a stronger and larger mobilization of the masses for a further and deeper “revolutionization” of socialist life throughout the country. In practice, this meant participation by the party’s officials in the production of goods and volunteer work by the youth: building dams, roads, and railways. It also meant reinforcement of the ideological education in the schools, and winning a stronger hold of the party, through the political commissars, as well as over the army. These steps were already adopted at the beginning of the year and Albanians did not associate these actions with any official “cultural revolution”. In his salute to the congress, Kang announced the decision in China to carry on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution with the ‘main objective to struggle against a group of people that hold high positions in the party and follow the path of capitalism’.⁶⁸ Kang gave no further explanations on the Cultural Revolution.

In his speech to the congress, Enver Hoxha, on the other hand, used ambiguous terminology to refer to recent events in Albania, be they a Cultural Revolution or mere continuation of existing policies. He called for less bureaucratization, more ideological work, and deeper class struggle – an oft-heard call to the Albanian ear. New in this speech, though, were the terms “further” and “less”. A new extent and level of the struggle were the outcomes of his speech to the congress, together with a deeper struggle against religion and more efforts for the emancipation of women.

⁶⁷ “Notes taken from the Kang’s speech during the reception in honor of the Chinese delegation headed by Kang Sheng, 30 October 1966, at the Palace of Brigades”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D32, f.2.

⁶⁸ The text of the greetings of comrade Kang Sheng addressed to the PLA Fifth Congress, 02 November 1966, in AQSH, F14, OU, V. 1966, D1/26, f.7.

At Hoxha's solicitation, Kang Sheng had a long conversation with Hoxha and other important leaders, almost entirely about the Cultural Revolution in China. Until this moment, the Albanian leadership had been only scarcely informed of it, mostly by those who had become its targets: Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Consequently, Kang Sheng dispelled many doubts about the main aims of the Cultural Revolution. According to Kang, first of all the Cultural Revolution's aim was to '...destroy the social bases for capitalistic restoration'. He then explained how the struggle had been mainly against the Beijing faction, meaning Peng Zhen, and how it had started in early June 1966 with the first *Dazibao* and the mobilization of the masses that led to the 'reorganization of the party's committee in Beijing'.⁶⁹ This, in Hoxha's eyes, was the reason why Zhou Enlai could not provide any exhaustive information during his visit in June the same year. It was because even Zhou could not have predicted how violent and destructive the movement would become. Kang Sheng emphasized that Mao himself was leading this revolution and was strongly supporting the Red Guards. Hoxha in his diary had been very harsh in judging the Red Guards, whose only ability was to '...defend Mao Zedong and cheer him to the sky, to regard him as a God'.⁷⁰ Now he was told that Mao supported them because they were fighting the revisionists within the party. Mao, Kang said, was so enthusiastic about the Red Guards that he decided to endorse them as 'a revolutionary movement... all over China'.⁷¹

Kang then listed the main characteristics of the Cultural Revolution in China. First, this revolution was a step in the 'class struggle, a necessary step in the socialist revolution'. Second, and most important, it 'was aimed to fight those that, holding high positions within the party... want to take the capitalist and revisionist road, like Khrushchev in Soviet Union'.⁷² Kang thus was saying that the Cultural Revolution intended to eradicate what Hoxha feared most, the rise of revisionism within the CCP that would look for appeasement with Moscow, undermining the Sino-Albanian alliance. Third, the Cultural Revolution was trying to improve proletarian democracy

⁶⁹ "Records of the meeting of the First Secretary of the PLA and the delegation of the CCP, headed by Kang Sheng, who visited Albania on occasion of the PLA Fifth Congress, 09 November 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D33, f.3-4.

⁷⁰ Enver Hoxha, *Reflections on China*, 263.

⁷¹ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D33, f.4.

⁷² *Ibid.*, f.5.

through the introduction of criticism and self-criticism among the masses. Fourth, the Cultural Revolution was laying the foundation of a class of intellectuals who would show solidarity with the workers and the masses, representing them and their efforts better. Fifth, through the Cultural Revolution it was possible to improve productivity and increase economic production. He then explained that those revisionists within the party, in addition to the Beijing group and Peng Zhen, were Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. It was possible, Kang added, that still other members within the party would need to be purged. He also told that a committee for the Cultural Revolution (Cultural Revolution Small Group), which he himself was part of, had been established and was headed by Chen Boda. His explanation, however, was more about the events, targets, and first results of the political struggle during this early stage of the Cultural Revolution. He omitted every analysis regarding the historical roots of these confrontations within the CCP, concentrating more on the effects – how the Cultural Revolution pursued the socialist education of the masses and how this improved the struggle against revisionism and imperialism – rather than explaining the real point – the radical confrontation between the lines of Liu Shaoqi and Mao Zedong. This, however, was all of little import to Hoxha. He knew that Kang would never reveal the full truth of the Cultural Revolution. Hoxha gleaned two important points from all that Kang did and did not say: China was struggling against revisionists, and Mao was leading this struggle. Now, for Hoxha it was clear which side to support, Mao's anti-revisionist line as represented by Kang Sheng.

After Kang's speech, the first step for Albania was to begin openly supporting the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and to learn more about it. Hoxha could learn, as he stated, from Kang Sheng's gift to him, a book of Mao's quotations – in French, no less, 'the language of the Parisian communards'.⁷³ Enver Hoxha expressed his happiness to be in the same standing with China and with a bit of sarcasm he expressed his disappointment with the CCP's leniency towards the revisionists. He said, in Albania instead, 'those like Peng Zhen we kick them out [shot them] of the

⁷³ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D34, f.1-13; In addition, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent explicative materials about the Cultural Revolution to Albania: "Files regarding the Chinese Cultural Revolution from the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for comrades Enver Hoxha, Hysni Kapo, Mehmet Shehu, Ramiz Alia", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D43.

party'.⁷⁴ Hoxha never fully accepted the "leniency", according to him, that the CCP sometimes reserved for Chinese officials. Following the visit of Kang Sheng, stronger support for the Chinese Cultural Revolution was possible but had to be under the party's strict control. In November 1966, the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent via radiogram its official standing towards the Chinese Cultural Revolution. It stated, '...Regarding the Chinese Cultural Revolution read and study the speeches of comrade Enver, Mehmet and Ramiz during the congress.'⁷⁵ The Cultural Revolution has the purpose to fight the remnants of revisionist bourgeois ideology... revisionism and capitalism, and for a definitive victory of the socialist system'.⁷⁶

The detailed speech of Kang Sheng constituted a turning point for the Albanian leadership's perception of the Cultural Revolution, but passed unnoticed by the great mass of the people which continued to be informed through *People's Voice*. After Kang Sheng left Albania, on 13 November, 1966, the first article of *People's Voice* regarding the Red Guards was published, and it explained their 'oath to... Chairman Mao'.⁷⁷ On 28 November 1966, in a reception in Beijing, Petro Dode, the head of the China-Albania Friendship Association, and Chu Tunan, met and spoke about the Cultural Revolution.⁷⁸ The perception was that Kang Sheng, and thus China, intended to engage Albania in supporting the Cultural Revolution more strongly. A persuasive policy was the great economic support that Albania received precisely during the Cultural Revolution, at a time when China had enormous problems with its own economy. China had sent clear signals to Albania during Shehu's visit in April 1966 that stronger political support for China would correspond to stronger economic assistance.⁷⁹ Then in summer 1966, a delegation of oil extraction

⁷⁴ Record of the meeting of the PLA First Secretary with the delegation of the CCP, headed by Kang Sheng, who visited Albania on the occasion of the PLA Fifth Congress, 09 November 1966", AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D33, f.29.

⁷⁵ The PLA Fifth Congress, 01-04 November 1966.

⁷⁶ "Top Secret": Radiogram of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Diplomatic Representations, 19/11/1966, in AMPJ, V. 1966, D72, f.78.

⁷⁷ The long march is our oath to the Standing Committee of the party and Chairman Mao Zedong, *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 20 November 1966, V.25 Nr.280; BK, Periodiku, ShG 29/3C.

⁷⁸ Chu Tunan was responsible for the cultural relations of the CCP with foreign countries.

⁷⁹ "Talks between the Albanian delegation headed by comrade Mehmet Shehu, and the leaders of the CCP and PRC, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, 28 April – 02 May 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1966, D2.

specialists went to Albania, to help build one of the most important sectors in Albania's economy. To the Albanian demand for an additional effort from China in assisting with extracting and refining the oil, China responded by approving a new long term loan of 14.3 million rubles without interest, which would be used exclusively as oilfield investments.⁸⁰

Later, in 1967, Enver Hoxha wanted to express once again his view on the Chinese Cultural Revolution. His opinion had not changed much from his first address. First, he reviewed for the participants the speech of Kang Sheng from which, Hoxha claimed to have learned exactly what he had suspected, that within the CCP was a very dangerous faction. The spirit of Hoxha's speech was to highlight the correctness of his previous analysis, when 'our plenum of the Central Committee, was right in its evaluation that people like Peng Zhen could not be an isolated case'. The PLA plenum he mentioned actually did not count at all when it came to decision-making. Nonetheless, he used these party institutions to give to his absolute personal power the semblance of collegiality, the appearance of legitimacy and the party's democracy. Then he explained how the CCP, before the Cultural Revolution, was totally in the hands of revisionists, such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, and 'that is why slogans such as "Bombard the Headquarters" appeared and the masses were mobilized'. For Hoxha, the most important thing was that the army remained on Mao's side, otherwise it would not have been possible to regain any control. The battle between the two factions was still ongoing and was a bloody fight because 'the enemy knows it is fighting for life or death... creating confusion and anarchy all over China.' Hoxha's main concern was keeping China from a close up with the Soviet Union, as well as earning further Chinese economic and military assistance. Hoxha clearly linked the Albanian support for China with the Chinese aid, as the importance of this support was shown by, 'their exemplary complaisance, and readiness in meeting our demand... [with the]... colossal aid they provide us'.⁸¹

⁸⁰ The loan was in addition to the loans China had approved for Albania's plan 1966-70. In Ministry of Trade – "Agreement and Protocols between the Government of the PR of Albania and PR of China, regarding the loan China provides to Albania in the field of the oil extraction industry", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1966, D95.

⁸¹ Quotations in: "Meeting of the second Plenum of the Central Committee of the PLA Fifth Congress, 15-16 June 1967. Report of Enver Hoxha: On the Further Developing of Chinese Cultural Revolution", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1967, D1, f. 188, 203, 206, 207.

In his first speech Hoxha had been very critical of the Cultural Revolution, and even Mao. Now, he argued ‘if we [privately] spoke sometimes a little bit too badly about Mao, about the Cultural Revolution’ that was ‘in our interest, in the interest of our great cause’. This seems to suggest that initial hesitations were a way to turn China more complacent towards Albanian demands; otherwise, how can one explain that once Albania turned to be a zealous promoter of the Cultural Revolution, ‘China in turn supported us more and more?’. It is true that, for Hoxha, some events were characteristic of China and he did not approve of them, but he came to believe that the overall line of the Cultural Revolution was a proper instrument for staying the revisionism in China. Albanian leaders considered that if Liu Shaoqi’s revisionist stable came to power, China would have approached the Soviet Union, and then Albania could have met pressure to improve relations with Yugoslavia. The same demand, years before, had come from Khrushchev and had been one of the main reasons for Albania to break with the Soviet Union. Now, for Hoxha it was vital that China should stay away from the Soviet Union, ‘this is the most important thing for our cause... which would not be possible if it was not for Mao’. Nevertheless, if mistakes persisted in Chinese politics, that was something they had to deal with, and we (Albanians) must ‘learn the lessons and not repeat them here’.⁸²

Prelude to Albanian Ideological and Cultural Revolution

In China, the Cultural Revolution did not come unexpectedly.⁸³ For MacFarquhar the origins can be traced back to the late 1950s, in the debates about the Great Leap Forward’s policies.⁸⁴ In 1963 came the “Four Clean-ups” Campaign, to purify the country’s politics, economics, organization, and thought known as the Socialist Education Movement.⁸⁵ Then came the criticisms of “Hai Rui Dismissed from Office”, which led to the dismissal of Peng Zhen, the secretary of Beijing

⁸² Ibid., f. 206 and 212.

⁸³ For the first phase of the Cultural Revolution see the documents of the CCP in, Michael Schoenhals, *China’s Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not a Dinner Party*, (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

⁸⁴ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1*; See also Dali L. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change since the Great Leap Famine*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1996); David M. Bachman, *Bureaucracy, Economy, and Leadership in China: The Institutional Origins of the Great Leap Forward*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁸⁵ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3. The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961-1966*, 334-348

Communist Party and Mayor of the city. Later came the creation of the group for the Cultural Revolution, the use of *Dazibao* and the Red Guards –and then the call of Mao to “Bombard the Headquarters” in his struggle against the line of Liu Shaoqi.⁸⁶

In Albania, similar developments arose, but the chain of events was shorter and less dramatic, and the leadership propagandized all policies under the label of the Cultural Revolution as a *continuation* rather than interruption of the revolutionary action for the building of socialism. At the beginning of February 1966, Enver Hoxha decided to address a letter to the people, preparing them for revolutionary measures necessary for the further development of socialism.⁸⁷ In the army, ranks were promptly removed and political commissars were introduced. Their power over the army was extended, in this way reinforcing Hoxha’s political control over the armed forces. State officials and employers of public administration were sent to participate in campaigns of physical work, collectivization started everywhere – including those areas economists knew to be unproductive.⁸⁸ The decision to remove the ranks in the army initially did not earn enthusiasm, as shown in the discussions of the Council of Defense in February 1966. The political chief of the army, Sadik Bekteshi, accused the chief of the general staff, General Petrit Dume, of opposing the removal of the ranks.⁸⁹ The dispute was among a professional general of the army and a political commissar. In this short debate, it is significant that the defense minister Beqir Balluku, in his private talks with Hoxha, defended the chief of the general staff, and attacked the head of the political directorate in the army.⁹⁰ Hoxha did not take a side, perhaps not wanting to upset the army, but more likely, intending to later identify all those opposing the removal of the ranks. However, it was decided that before May 1st, 1966, this decision had to be implemented.⁹¹ Nonetheless, Hoxha had thought of

⁸⁶ For a full chronology and history of the Cultural Revolution in China, among many studies here also mentioned, I would suggest Jiaqi Yan and Gao Gao, trans., D. W. Y. Kwok, *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution*.

⁸⁷ “On the preparation of e public letter addressed to the party, army and the people, regarding the importance and the understanding of some revolutionary measures that the party has undertaken” in “Records of the Politburo, 09 February 1966”, in AQSH, F.14 OU, V. 1966, D9, f.1-16

⁸⁸ AQSH, Ministry of Education, F.511, V.1966, D66.

⁸⁹ Records of the meeting of the K.Mb, 25 February 1966, in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1966, D1, f.1-90.

⁹⁰ Enver Hoxha, “The issue of comrade Beqir”, 28 February 1966, (personal diaries, document in my possession), f.1-10.

⁹¹ “Decision of the Parliament Presidency to reintroduce the office of the political commissar in the armed forces of Albania, Nr.172, 07 March 1966”, in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1966, D3, f.8-9.

removing the ranks years earlier. In his personal diary in 1964 he had noted that ‘I am afraid of the ranks in the army’, and ‘our army should not be an army of a military cast, a cast of marshals, generals, colonels... who one day can claim to have the political power through a putsch... it should be an army of proletarians, commanded by the party and an army of the party... the party should command the army, not the other way round’.⁹² It is highly plausible that part of these measures might have been undertaken following the Chinese model.⁹³

This, however, was not yet the launch of the Cultural Revolution in Albania. The Chinese authorities in Beijing expressed their happiness that similar steps to those in China were being taken in Albania. Chinese vice president Dong Biwu told the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Nesti Nase, in April 1966 that ‘...we are happy that your party has undertaken a range of revolutionary steps... analogous with those undertaken here by our party’.⁹⁴ Yet they were only steps, perhaps towards a revolution, but not yet an Albanian Cultural Revolution. Some of these measures were met with limited resistance. A letter assumed to be written by the Head of the Army’s State Security Police (Sigurimi), Halil Xhelo, ‘in name of many officials’, expressed great dissatisfaction with these policies.⁹⁵ He was immediately arrested, but it is worth noting the mood expressed in the letter – feelings likely shared by many in the country. The letter, addressed to Enver Hoxha, criticized the entire course of policies in Albania, ‘First were Yugoslavians... then came Soviets... now came Chinese. The Chinese put the physical work, we run to emulate it, the Chinese do gymnastics in the street, we run to copy it too. The Chinese remove ranks in the army we rush to remove them too... This is the peak of being servile, obsequious; this is the burial of everything national’.⁹⁶ This letter did not stop any of the

⁹² Enver Hoxha, “How should be our army,” 25 July 1964, (personal diaries, document in my possession), f.1-3.

⁹³ For instance, the removal of the ranks from the army could possibly have been influenced by the Chinese decision which had been two years earlier than in Albania, when Mao had deemed the rank system as “dogmatic and bourgeoisie”. In, 毛泽东为何要取缔军衔制, 2008年11月03, in: http://blog.people.com.cn/blog/trackback.do?wlog_id=1225696602101251, (last accessed, 04-05-2016).

⁹⁴ “Top-Secret”: Radiogram of the Albanian embassy in Beijing, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Foreign, 16 April 1966, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1966, D72, f.24-25.

⁹⁵ Records of the Politburo, 09 February 1966, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1966, D9, f.38-40. The letter was sent with no name or sign, but eventually the authorities claimed to have identified the author here above mentioned and no one in public came to know of this letter.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

decisions taken to involve the masses in socialist education. They were extended to education and culture, copying aspects of Chinese socialism, which Albania had been observing carefully since the beginning of the relations with China.⁹⁷ Every school and every office was obligated to participate in annual military training – called *zbor*⁹⁸ – and the military education had to be integrated with physical education.⁹⁹

In December 1966, *People's Voice* reprinted an article from *Xinhua* emphasizing the fact that art should serve 'workers, soldiers, and peasants'.¹⁰⁰ Shortly after the publication of this article, *People's Voice* announced that a 'revolution' in the school was necessary, because '...in the context of deepening the Cultural Revolution¹⁰¹ is required a further "revolutionization" of our education and our school'.¹⁰² Now there was a link between the two events, one in China, and the other in Albania. In a call on 28 December, 1966, the PLA CC proclaimed the beginning of 'revolutionary' volunteer actions for the construction of a railway. In the past, Albania had mobilized the youth for such purposes, to accomplish their key economic objectives. On 5 January, 1967, the *People's Voice* republished an article first published in China, for the New Year in *Renmin Ribao* and *Hong Qi* (Red Flag), informing the readers that they were reading not the entire article but 'that part of the editorial entirely dedicated to the Cultural Revolution'.¹⁰³ It was the beginning of a long series of articles in *People's Voice* 'entirely dedicated' to the Cultural Revolution in China. In an article published in early January 1967, Nexhmije Hoxha, the wife of Enver Hoxha and Politburo member, invited scholars in social sciences to no longer separate theory from practice, arguing that scientists should not 'stay closed in their

⁹⁷ "Report of the Education's Delegation that visited the PRC", in AQSH, F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1961, D148 (15).

⁹⁸ Is the name of the general military training that the adult population (man, women, students) had to go through at least 2 weeks every 2 years, unless differently decided. The term was adopted from the Russian language.

⁹⁹ AQSH, F.511, V. 1966, D48, f.2-12.

¹⁰⁰ Literature should serve workers, peasants and soldiers, *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 07 December 1966, V.25, Nr.294, BK, Periodiku, ShG 29/3C.

¹⁰¹ Here the term "Cultural Revolution" means only the revolutionization of the culture.

¹⁰² Let us strength more the effort for the further revolutionization of our school, *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 11 December 1966, V.25, Nr.298, BK, Periodiku, ShG 29/3C.

¹⁰³ Be taken to the end the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Editorial of *Renmin Ribao* and *Red Flag*, [Të çohet deri në fund revolucioni i madh kulturor proletar. – Kryeartikull i gazetës "Zhenimzhinbao" dhe i revistës "Flamuri i Kuq"], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 05 January 1967, V.26, Nr.4, p.3, BK, SHG 32/1B.

ivory tower... disconnected from... the revolutionary practice'.¹⁰⁴ To rely on the masses was always a slogan of Albanian communism, but here the point was different. The improvement of education and the founding of some universities had made many institutions able to do research and educate generations of scholars, who in their specific fields enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, albeit limited. Now this autonomy was going to be permeated by the spirit of the communist party, by its ideology. In fact, 'it is necessary that with the problems concerning social science the party cadres too should be involved... to apply the theory of M-L to the conditions of our country'.¹⁰⁵ This meant that research in social science must conform to the Marxist interpretation of history. The censorship threatened works that did not conform to Marxist ideology because now, as the party used to say, 'Ideology comes first'.

In the *People's Voice*, on 10 January, 1967, a party's secretary of a small agricultural commune, labelled some local comrades as 'bad elements', a term taken from China.¹⁰⁶ The next day, *People's Voice*, for the first time, reported on the struggle within the CCP. Great debates ensued in the main factories and working centers, bringing the Chinese Cultural Revolution to the Albanian masses. It did not mention any specific names, only a 'group of revisionists, capitalist roaders'.¹⁰⁷ The implied leader of this faction, Liu Shaoqi, could not be mentioned explicitly, as he was still officially the President of China. On 15 January, 1967, *People's Voice* opened with an editorial regarding an initiative from writers and artists in Shkodër, an important city in north Albania. They seemed to have drawn inspiration from the earlier article of Hoxha's wife, and had taken actions 'to revolutionize the entire artistic, cultural and literature movement'.¹⁰⁸ The *People's Voice* now associated

¹⁰⁴ Nexhmije Hoxha, To Vitalize the Creative Thinking in Social Sciences, *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 06 January 1967, V.26, Nr.5, p.2, BK, SHG 32/1B.

¹⁰⁵ *People's Voice*[Zëri i Popullit], 06 January 1967, V.26, Nr.5, p.2, BK, SHG 32/1B.

¹⁰⁶ Koço Bihiku, Të Forcojmë Frymen e Partishmërisë ne Letërsi [Let strength the Spirit of the Party in the Literature], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 13 January 1967, V.26, Nr.11, p.3, BK, SHG 32/1B.

¹⁰⁷ The revolutionary line of Mao Zedong is shattering the reactionary actions of a group of plotters and revisionists, [Vija Revolucionare e Mao Ce Dunit po Shkatërron Veprimet Reaksionare të një Grushti Revizionistësh dhe Komplotistësh], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 14 January 1967, V.26, Nr.12, p.4, BK, SHG 32/1B.

¹⁰⁸ Initiative of the workers of art and culture in Shkodra District for closer links with the life, for new revolutionary creations, [Inisiativë e punonjësve të artit dhe kulturës të rrethit të Shkodrës për lidhje

more strongly the events in China with those in Albania and promoted the Cultural Revolution with great zeal. Many factories organized meetings, open discussions, and even rallies to support the Chinese Cultural Revolution.¹⁰⁹ On 24 January, 1967, open discussions were reportedly held in working units all over Albania, expressing great admiration for Mao and felicity for the working class in China ‘for keeping high the flag of Mao’s thought’.¹¹⁰ Now even Albania was joining the cult of Mao, probably the only foreign country to do so. Enver Hoxha, who had been very critical of Mao’s cult, now relented, when it served national interest. Hoxha knew his personal cult was not in danger, in any case, and knew very well that Mao’s cult in Albania, unlike in China, would be tame and expressed through small acts only: putting Mao’s photos in public celebrations, giving his name to some industrial projects, maybe citing Mao’s quotations.

From December 1966 to January 1967, a delegation headed by Hysni Kapo and defense minister Beqir Balluku visited China. Their reports from Beijing were enthusiastic. Balluku, went to China with the specific aim ‘to present a new request to China for additional armaments’.¹¹¹ The minister, in addition to being received with great honors, was also rewarded with all the expected assistance – a reward for Albania’s support of the Cultural Revolution. Balluku took with him a long list of requests for armaments, reaching a total weight of nearly 200 thousand tons, to be delivered in lots within the period 1967-71, with a value of 650 million rubles – but for Albania, free of charge.¹¹² With this new plan, the leadership planned to extend

më të ngushta me jetën, për krijime të reja revolucionare], *People’s Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 15 January 1967, V.26, Nr.13, p.1, BK, SHG 32/1B.

¹⁰⁹ Our working Class is in solidarity with the revolutionary workers of Shanghai, [Klasa jonë punëtore solidarizohet me punëtorët revolucionarë të Shanghait], *People’s Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 15 January 1967, V.26, Nr.13, p.3, BK, SHG 32/1B .

¹¹⁰ Salutes to the revolutionary workers of Shanghai that keeps high the red flag of Mao Zedong’s Thought, [Përsëndetje punëtorëve revolucionarë të Shanghait që mbajnë lart flamurin e kuq të ideve të Mao Ce Dunit], *People’s Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 24 January 1967, V.26, Nr.20, p.3, BK, SHG 32/1B.

¹¹¹ Records of the Politburo, 19 December 1966: “Decision to send to the P.R of China a military delegation headed by comrade Beqir Balluku in order to make a new request for military assistance in the field of defense”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1966, D23, f.259.

¹¹² The lists of all the military equipment requested included 100.000 assault rifles, 42 torpedo-destroyers boats, 60 air fighters, 36 helicopters, more than 300 tanks, and hundreds of missiles, bombs, and communication equipment, thousands of machine guns and cannons, missiles land-air, and air-air, construction materials for the concreting of the tunnels and bunkers, etc. see in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1967, D233, f.234-299; China approved in large part the requests, among which providing Albania with hundreds of tanks T-59 and T-62 (265 in all), dozens of air fighters Mig-19 and Mig-21, 400

the number of the military forces to 400 thousand by 1970, from 229 thousand in 1966.¹¹³ In Beijing, Balluku met Ye Jianying, a member of CCP's Politburo who was assigned to discuss and deal with the Albanian requests. Balluku was surprised to see that his requests were accepted without hesitation, and his presentation of the military strategy was not disputed, as Zhou Enlai had done months earlier. On the contrary, Ye Jianying affirmed that 'your cause, is our cause... we stand together, fight together, and win together'.¹¹⁴

If Kang Sheng had left some doubts about the Chinese Cultural Revolution's righteous purposes in his speech in Tirana in November 1966, Kapo's talks with Chinese comrades during this visit were going to remove them all. He met with Kang Sheng many times and had one meeting with Mao, and the focus of their talks was the Cultural Revolution.¹¹⁵ Mao was happy to meet the Albanian delegation and for the photo-taking invited Kapo and others 'to smile because the photo should be full of life, the proletariat should look like live but not dead people'.¹¹⁶ Mao then blamed Albania for attaching too much importance to his salute to the PLA Fifth Congress, in November 1966. He, probably unconsciously, touched upon Hoxha's criticism of Mao's cult. Mao blamed the Albanians for 'having raised it [Mao's salute to the PLA congress] too high, do you want to raise even higher my cult?'¹¹⁷ In China too, he

million ammunitions, 1000 military vehicles (cars, armored vehicles, troop-transportation vehicles, etc). Information available in, "Records of the Politburo, Tirana, 15/2/1967", in "Report of comrade Hysni Kapo and Beqir Balluku on the results of the military delegation headed by Beqir Balluku that visited China", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1967, D5, f.35-54; See the list, its value and tonnage in AQSH, Council of Defence, V. 1966, D2, f.1; Detailed list of modern armaments that Albania got from China in full Cultural Revolution period is in: "Top-Secret": AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1967, D15, f.1-30; From all delegations Hoxha sent to China, from April 1966 – to October 1967, including twice the prime minister, he particularly wanted assurances regarding the possibility that the Cultural Revolution might affect positively the assistance for his country. China increased the amount of the armaments, providing Albania even with weapons it had to import for itself, and granted huge aid for the FYP 1970-75, modifying in Albania's favor agreements previously signed.

¹¹³ AQSH, K. Mb, V. 1966, D2, f.2.

¹¹⁴ Beijing, 12 January 1967: "Notes from the talks between our military delegation and the representatives of China headed by Ye Jianying, member of the Politburo, Tirana and vice head of the defense council, on 12 January 1967", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1967, D233, f.16.

¹¹⁵ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1967, (Talks Kapo – Kang Sheng, 26 January 1967) in D2, (Talks Kang Sheng – Kapo, 29 January 1967) in D3, (Talks Kapo – Kang Sheng, 01 February 1967) in D4. The meeting with Mao, 03 March 1967 is in D6.

¹¹⁶ "Record (available a copy in Chinese) of the Conversation of the Chairman of the CCP CC, comrade Mao Zedong, with the Secretary of the PLA CC, comrade Hysni Kapo...., 03 February 1967", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1967, D6, f.12.

¹¹⁷ AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1967, D5, f.14-15.

said people gave him many epithets such as ‘great teacher, great leader... but I have been a teacher, in primary school... being a professor, no way, I never went to university’.¹¹⁸ Mao then admitted, with a bit of irony, the confusion in China: ‘Look at the mess in China, see, things do not go well’.¹¹⁹ He said that since 1962 he had identified the problem, and then had warned that there was a revisionist threat in China. Now, Mao added, through the Cultural Revolution, ‘solving definitively the problem will require maybe one year... Many years ago I said we should purge millions... I had no other choice!’¹²⁰ The Albanian delegation reported back that the struggle against revisionism in China was ‘as has never been before’, and this not only ‘will strengthen China... [But]... reduce definitely the possibility for capitalist restoration’.¹²¹

Some diffidence, however, still persisted in Hoxha. Commenting on the reports from Beijing, he wondered, ‘if the [political] power exists in China today? Who are the Red Guards?... Who are the Rebels?’ Hoxha was also told about the role of the army, which was very active on the revolution’s side and sometimes supported the Red Guards. He, however, considered that this could be dangerous since it should always be the party that rules over the army, never the opposite. In Albania, the role of the army was subordinated to the rule of the party and no challenge to Hoxha’s power was impossible. But China, as Hoxha saw it, had become a ‘non-revolutionary democracy... and there is not anymore the party but just Mao... and the army that plays a great role’. Nevertheless, once back in Tirana, the delegation confirmed that ‘Mao’s line has won strategically’, and this reassured Enver Hoxha that he stood on the right side, that his support for Mao was the support for the victorious faction.¹²² In this way the relations with China, and its assistance, were not threatened. The visit of Kang Sheng to Albania and that of two Albanian delegations to China swept away any doubt of the Albanian leaders about the Cultural Revolution in China. Albania

¹¹⁸ Ibid., f.22-23.

¹¹⁹ “Record of the Conversation of the Chairman of the CCP CC, comrade Mao Zedong, with the Secretary of the PLA CC, comrade Hysni Kapo, 03 February 1967”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1967, D6, f.15.

¹²⁰ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1967, D6.

¹²¹ “Top-Secret: Records of the Politburo, 15 February 1967. Report of comrade Hysni Kapo and Beqir Balluku on their visit in China”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1967, D5, f.3

¹²² Quotations of the paragraph in *ibid.*, f.7, f.24, f.3.

had been courted to support China in exchange for extraordinary economic and military assistance, exceeding even what had previously been agreed. Enver Hoxha had prepared the public opinion through the *People's Voice* on the importance of the Cultural Revolution and had announced small steps in that direction for Albania. The time was ripe for a similar revolution in Albania.

The Ideological and Cultural Revolution in Albania

On 7 February, 1967, *People's Voice* published on the front page a speech Hoxha addressed to the entire nation. The Albanian Ideological and Cultural Revolution had begun. The ties with China had been strengthening for years, and though the Maoist Cultural Revolution had at first confused the Albanian leadership, Enver Hoxha was now convinced that the Chinese Cultural Revolution was a step forward in the struggle against revisionism, and as China increased its aid to his country, he decided to launch the Cultural Revolution in Albania. His speech tackled “Further Revolutionization of the Party and the Power”.¹²³ This speech is assumed to be the official beginning of the Ideological and Cultural Revolution in Albania. The use of the word “further” in Hoxha’s speech, was not accidental, for two reasons: first, as mentioned, this was a continuation of the path of building socialism in the country – which started in 1944 when the communists came to power – not a rupture with the post liberation social and political order. Second, this was a “furthering” of all the steps undertaken in the very recent past, it was a continuation, more fervent, perhaps, of the measures adopted (but adapted) from China during the last years. Hereafter, the historical legacy (the rule of the party since the end of the Second World War) and the new opportunity (alliance with the Chinese) would be merge along a unique path. Yet intending to mark the differences from China, Hoxha’s speech welcomed the most representative strata of the country: students, soldiers, workers, and

¹²³ Joint Meeting of the Party’s Base-organizations of the Coal Mines of Krraba, of the Plant (Combine – Big factory) Enver, of the Agricultural Cooperative (commune) Vilhelm Pik, of the Military Garnison nr.5009, and the State University of Tirana. COMRADE ENVER HOXHA, FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PLA CENTRAL COMMITTEE, DEALT [tackled] WITH THE TOPIC: <<THE FURTHER REVOLUTIONIZATION OF THE PARTY AND THE POWER>>, [Mbledhje e perbashket e Organizatave-baze te Partise te Minieres se Qymyrgurit te Krrabes, Uzines <<Enver>>, Kooperatives Bujqesore <<Vilhelm Pik>>, Repartit Ushtarak nr.5009, dhe Universitetit Shteteror te Tiranës. SHOKU ENVER HOXHA, SEKRETAR I PARE I KOMITETIT QENDROR TE PPSH, TRAJTOI TEMEN: <<REVOLUCIONARIZIMI I METEJSHEM I PARTISE DHE I PUSHTETIT>>], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 07 February 1967, V.26, Nr.32, p.1, Periodiku, BK, SHG 32/1B.

intellectuals. This differed from China, where only young students had promoted the Cultural Revolution, at least in its early stages. China's experience was not lost on Hoxha, who wondered where the working class was in this revolution.

The Albanian Cultural Revolution performed three tasks: first, it displayed sympathy to an important ally – and in repaying the kindness, China was very generous with Albania; secondly, it was a good chance to remove any obstacles within the country that could challenge the party's objectives for development, with particular reference to religion; third, it gave a great leap forward to the emancipation of women. Hoxha did not just use slogans and unleash the masses, like Mao had done, but gave precise indications of what he wanted people to fight for, what the role of the masses was, and what the limits were. The terminology he used, however, was nothing new. What was new was the increased pace of the policies; in building the country, sacrificing everything for the homeland, devoting life to that of the masses – and the role of the masses; in mobilizations to eradicate religion, emancipate women and increase productivity. Hoxha stressed the importance of “accountability”. This required open discussions in the party's base-organizations, meaning the local parties of each economic unit, each factory or institution, and each commune. In these organizations, the masses could fulfill their true role, in collective criticism sessions similar to the Chinese “struggle sessions”. The difference was that in Albania these sessions did not result in collective violence. These sessions aimed only to seek the “truth”, because ‘only in these collective sessions, the truth can come into the open and the masses can have the control.’ However, Hoxha warned that these sessions must never become battlefields because ‘our party is not an arena for developing the class struggle. It is the party itself who leads the class struggle, it does not allow the existence of groups or factions of revisionists, Trotskyists, or liberals within it’. If, in Albania, revisionism did not come to power, according to Hoxha, it was because of these rules, and because ‘the party is not a den of people without ideology.’ It is clear, therefore, that in Albania the leadership defined itself as being above the masses, and not subject to their criticism, unlike in China, because ‘our party has at its foundation... the democratic centralism... a central leadership... All the other organs must obey and apply its decisions’.¹²⁴ It was impossible to be

¹²⁴ Quotations of the paragraph in *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 07 February 1967, V.26, Nr.32, p.1, Periodiku, BK, SHG 32/1B.

clearer. The masses, instead, if a struggle was necessary, could sacrifice the local communist leaders, those of the party base-organization. The masses in China, incited by Mao, caused the removal and dismissal of almost the entire leading group of the CCP. Hoxha, on the contrary, had already achieved the goal years before by purging any groups or individuals who challenged or were merely suspected to challenge his political wishes. Hoxha simply did not have anyone left as a target within the leading organs of the party.

The first step of the Cultural Revolution in Albania was the ‘struggle without compromise against religion and the old habits and consuetudes’.¹²⁵ In Albania, the struggle against religion had some particularities considering the fact that the country had had a very active class of religious elites in the past. The clergy, Muslim and Christian, were involved in the national public life. The Ideological and Cultural Revolution was a good chance for the party to remove all these ‘ruins’ of the old society. The day after the publication of Hoxha’s speech, students of a high school in Durrës, the port city near Tirana, started their struggle against religion, opening a debate at school and attacking religious beliefs as remnants of the old society that must be eradicated. Enver Hoxha made no better efforts to preserve the traditions of his country than had Mao, whom he privately once criticized for making ‘tabula rasa’, the old religious monuments. In the context of the Albanian Cultural Revolution, hundreds of Churches, Mosques, and other worship monuments were razed to the ground. The work was meticulous because religion was an organized community of clergy and had deep roots in people’s conscience – it was precisely ‘the opium of the people, that poisoned them and therefore their [party’s] task was to cure them’.¹²⁶ It was, therefore, necessary to fight against religious philosophy, their everyday practice, and the links they had with people’s life. Everything had to be planned and ‘nothing should be left to chance’. In this struggle, the authorities made key differentiations. For them, ‘the clergy, except the Catholics, is very ignorant, and the practice of the religion is through an archaic liturgy in Arabic that no one can understand’, which made it easier to defeat. ‘The Catholic clergy’ however, was

¹²⁵ *People’s Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 07 February 1967, V.26, Nr.32, p.1, Periodiku, BK, SHG 32/1B.

¹²⁶ “Party of Labor of Albania, Central Committee: Top-Secret; Prot. Nr.133, Tirana, 27 February 1967, To the District Party Committees. [Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë. Komiteti Qendror. Top Sekret, Nr.133 Prot. Tiranë 27 February 1967, Komitetit të Partisë të Rrethëve]”, in AQSH, F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1967, D20, f.2.

‘richer’, highly educated and disciplined, the fruit of a long tradition, and so more difficult to eradicate.¹²⁷

Since the very beginning of communist rule in Albania, religious schools had been closed and education was totally in the hands of the state. The education of new generations of clergy was made further impossible because education abroad was prohibited without official permission – which the regime never gave. Therefore none of the clergy could go to Italy, traditionally the home of Catholic education, nor did the state allow any other member of other religions to pursue their religious studies abroad. Now, the only task for the authorities was a struggle against the institutions where people went to pray, against Churches and Mosques, and against the last generation of clergy yet living. The instruction for the local party committees was ‘to destroy churches, mosques, monasteries, temples, the only places where clergy can meet the faithful people.’ However, as the letter admitted, this would not be easy, because there was still part of the population that was practicing, thus, ‘the destruction of Churches... of course is more difficult because we must not go directly against that part of the people that still believes’. Nevertheless, the determination must be firm ‘until total disappearance [of the religion] from the earth’. Among its means, the party had used propaganda to direct nationalism as ‘a weapon in our hands against religion, because Islam has been the ideology of the Ottoman invaders, Christian Orthodox is the ideology of the Greek chauvinists and Catholic religion was the ideology of the Italian invaders’. By associating these religions with these “enemies”, the masses were closer to rejecting their religions. The leadership feared that people’s sentiments against this atheist policy may lead them to turn against the party, and so the leaders did not use the same space in mass media that they gave to other policies of the Cultural Revolution. In the above letter, they warned the local committees to be determined but, if possible, without provoking the people’s feelings, ‘not entering an open conflict with the population’, because this be an obstacle for generations to come. Hence, the party must treat the people that have religious feelings, ‘as the doctor who cures the disease, which turns people into the joys of life’.¹²⁸ In the meantime, propaganda did prioritize the link

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Quotation of the paragraph in: AQSH, F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1967, D20, f.2-8.

between religions and the oppressive practices of the past, the link between clergy and how they supported the property owners and moreover the exploitation of the masses, and to show how, for them, religion enslaved man by glorifying only God and diminishing man's capacities and creativity.

It is worth noting that *People's Voice* largely omitted mass revolutionary actions against religion, despite a clear desire to promote other maneuvered public initiatives that was expressed in its writing almost daily in 1967. The struggle against religion had to continue without any leniency, but partially out of sight. This was very comprehensible because the population perceived the struggle against religion as an oppressive policy, and an extremist interference in a most intimate, centuries-old tradition. In addition, the religions had a long history of peaceful cohabitation and did not threaten the national unity. People simply did not see any concrete threats to national security that justified eradicating the religious influence. The older generation especially did not welcome this policy, despite the fact that they could do nothing but comply, and sometimes were even forced to support it. Aware of this, the party instructed the local districts to pursue this goal with determination but avoid '...public discussions... everything must be done without fuss'.¹²⁹ The destruction of some historical worship monuments met resistance from not only the people but even from the minister of education and culture, Thoma Deljana. He wrote a letter to Enver Hoxha demanding more care and eventually protection from 'this desire without brakes to deepen artificially the Ideological and Cultural Revolution that is causing violent and extreme actions... In Vlora there is insistence to destroy the only ancient monument of the city, the Muradije's Mosque. In Fier, trying to remove the cross in the Saint George Church, they destroyed all the architecture... in Saranda the Church of pre-Ottoman era was turned into fertilizer's deposit... Is flagrant the case of the Church of Vau i Dejës [District of Shkodër) that was razed to ground with explosives.'¹³⁰ Concluding the letter, he asked for these issues to be discussed within the highest organs of power. He was rewarded years later with a purge and long years of imprisonment. The anti-religious campaign, in only its first months, caused the closure of 2169 religious buildings, 740 Mosques, 765 Churches and

¹²⁹ AQSH, F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1967, D20, f.10.

¹³⁰ "Letter of Thoma Deljana to Comrade Enver, Tirana, 24 June 1969", in AQSH F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1969, D66, f.67-68;

monasteries, and 530 monuments of other religions. The properties were promptly confiscated by the state.¹³¹ Some of these monuments were razed to the ground, like the monumental Orthodox Cathedral in the center of Tirana, where the state built “Hotel Tirana”, at the time famous for being the highest building in the country (15 floors), still a landmark of the city. It was a way to show that socialism was rising higher from the ashes of the old world. A small fraction of these monuments, however, survived, and these are those monuments that had historical importance for their architecture, art, and national history. Of all the worship monuments surveyed in 1967, prior to the Cultural Revolution, a year and a half after the Cultural Revolution had begun, only 111 had the fortune to be put under state custody as national heritage in a second survey in 1969.¹³² The rest of them, if not literally razed to ground, were transformed into the army’s deposits, small theaters, or even stables for animals.¹³³ Some had the better fortune to serve as spaces for “Culture Houses”.¹³⁴ The uses of some worship monuments for civil purposes were dictated not by the good will to preserve them but because the construction of new buildings was expensive. Most of the clergy’s members also had a sad destiny, many were executed after farce trials, and the rest were condemned to long years of work camps and prisons. When the regime fell, in 1991-92, of hundreds of clergy from various religions, less than a dozen were still alive. Curiously, during this campaign it was reported that many people expressed opinions linking this struggle with the Cultural Revolution in China. For instance, in the city of Fier someone was reported to have commented ‘Why do we imitate China?’. In Shkodër someone else said, ‘They [the

¹³¹ “Informative Report, 07 July 1967: On the first results in the struggle against religion and some measures to further deepen it”, in AQSH, F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1967, D20, f.22; Decree Nr. 4263 of the Presidium of the National Assembly, in AQSH, F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1967, D20, f.20

¹³² AQSH, F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1969, D66, f.18-20.

¹³³ Ibid., f.73-80

¹³⁴ The Culture Houses (Culture Halls) were spaces dedicated to the performance of artists, mainly singers, dancers and theater companies where usually, after working, people gathered to assist their performances. Their activity was a job of propaganda being under the Party’s control and their performance used to show the greatness of the socialist life and be a tribute to the homeland. They were widespread all over the country, and even the small communes used to have one.

Albanian leadership] follow the way of China', and in Gramsh, a small city, someone affirmed that 'now entered a new religion, that of Asia'.¹³⁵

The second task of the Cultural Revolution in Albania was the emancipation of women. Women at this time, despite having been marginalized in the past, were not excluded from the public debate and life in the country. In Albania, women played an important role in history, for their contribution in the national struggle against foreign rule over the centuries. Strong women had acquired prominent positions in the national historical narrative – and myth. In the 15th century, for instance, when Scanderbeg – an Albanian national hero – was fighting against Ottoman Empire, his sister Mamica was alleged to be one of his bravest soldiers. She died fighting on the battlefield, passing into the legend as a great warrior. In the early Twentieth century, another woman became very famous. Her name was Shote Galica and her fame came from her fight alongside her husband against the Ottoman rule first, and Serbian incursions later. She became so well known that her fame eclipsed her husband's. Then, in more recent times, there were dozens, if not hundreds, of women who had made great contributions to the arts, education, languages, and many other fields – a common pattern with the rest of European countries. Therefore, in shaping the new historical narrative, the regime knew that women would play an important role.

But these were privileged women and not representatives of the society as a whole. The emancipation project of the Cultural Revolution, however, became a massive endeavor across the strata of society, focused not only on women's emancipation, but also revolutionizing men's views of women. The process can be traced back to the liberation war, when, as in the rest of Europe and world, women participated actively in the war. Now the process had to proceed a step further. Already in November 1966, during the Fifth Congress, Hoxha had mentioned the necessity for a leap forward in the emancipation of women. Two days after launching the "Ideological and Cultural Revolution", the *People's Voice*, reporting on a discussion in a small commune of Gjirokastra, noted that it was time 'to remove the rope from the [women's] back'.¹³⁶ In another article, *People's Voice* highlighted the

¹³⁵ AQSH, F.511, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kulturës [Ministry of Education and Culture], V. 1969, D66, f.27.

¹³⁶ The last breath of a waste of the past [Frymëmarrja e Fundit e një Mbeturine të së Kaluarës], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 09 February 1967, V.26, Nr.34, BK, Periodiku, SHG 32/1B.

local actions for the emancipation of women all over the country.¹³⁷ In accordance with the established public narrative of that time, every revolutionary action was reported to have started from the base, from the people. The party wanted to show that there was independence, autonomy, and democracy among the masses. After these first local actions, the propaganda massively publicized Enver Hoxha's visits to factories and cooperatives, and his supposed correspondence with the people and organizations of the party that participated in demonstrative revolutionary actions, upgrading these actions from local initiatives into national policies.¹³⁸ The masses were used as the actors in a movie, to play their part in actions promoted by the top leaders, by pretending to have initiated such actions.

The primary motivation behind the women's emancipation campaign was Albania's economic development. Albania was building, with Chinese assistance, hundreds of industrial projects. The Chinese leaders wondered many times if this small country could muster a sufficient workforce for these projects. In some parts of the country, women were still excluded from public life and from access to many offices. This revolution intended to bring these women into the economic system. Despite the propaganda's focus on gender equality, this was the primary reason for the emancipation project. There were other causes too, such as political control. In a regime where the only legitimate authority to lead the people and control them was the party, it was not acceptable to leave a large part of the female population under the rule of their family's male members. In some remote areas of the country marriage was still arranged during childhood and women's roles in society were established by these antiquated mores. This, for a part of the population, especially in the countryside, meant living in a parallel situation where old habits were more meaningful than state laws. This situation would not be tolerated any longer by the regime. The population, especially the young and the middle aged, welcomed this policy and actively supported the female emancipation campaign. The emancipation was, and is still deemed by some, a great achievement. Still though, even redeemed from their previous condition of servility, women were still denied many freedoms

¹³⁷ Women – Great Social Force in the Construction of the Socialism [GRATË – FORCË E MADHE SHOQËRORE NË NDËRTIMIN E SOCIALIZMIT], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 19 February 1967, V.46, Nr.43, BK, Periodiku, SHG 32/1B.

¹³⁸ *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 22 February 1967, V.26, Nr.45; 23 February, V.26, Nr.47; 25 February, V.26, Nr.48; BK, Periodiku, SHG 32/1B.

due to persistent gender norms. The emancipation in Albania was far from what feminist movements protested for across Europe in the late 1960s, unbeknownst to many isolated and uninformed Albanian women. For instance, the family was incentivized to have many children, since the state claimed to take charge of all the basic needs for their growth. For this reason, despite the fact that abortion was sanctioned as a right, it was discouraged unless for life-saving measures. Similarly, the right of divorce, which on paper was fully guaranteed to women (and to men), was minimized by the courts of the time, which received political instructions to make every effort to pacify couples before granting any requests for divorce. The process, however, was successful in promoting equality of gender in the sense of the women's participation in public life, and in their access of many important offices. Still today, Albanian women participate actively in politics, which most likely is a legacy of that regime.

One of the ways of practicing the revolution in Albania was to use the Albanian *Dazibao*, known as *Fletërrufe*.¹³⁹ It is a term composed by two words, *fletë*, which means page or sheet, and the word *rrufe*, which means lightning or thunderbolt. *Fletërrufe*, therefore, were pages written to criticize – sometimes attack – someone or something, and were posted in public spaces. The importance given to them was very high, as they served as 'powerful tools for the ideological-political and moral education of the masses'.¹⁴⁰ It is true that the mobilization of students and the *fletërrufe* were similar to the practices of the Cultural Revolution in China, however, the difference is that these *fletërrufe* did not become the instruments of different groups to struggle against each other, nor did they inspire violence like the *Dazibao* did in China. The students in Albania never held the power the Red Guards did, nor did they play so great a role. The similarity, therefore, was limited to their form.

One of the outcomes of the Albanian Cultural Revolution was the increase of economic production. Contrary to China, where in the first wave of the Cultural

¹³⁹ Revolutionary initiative of students and professors of the school "Naim Frasheri" in Durrës. In the sharp sword of the Party's ideology against religious ideology, prejudices, superstitions and backward customs [Iniciativë revolucionare e nxënësve dhe pedagogëve të shkollës "Naim Frashëri" në Durrës. NË SHPATËN E MPREHTË TË IDEOLOGJISË SË PARTISË KUNDËR IDEOLOGJISË FETARE, PARAGJYKIMEVE, BESTYTNIVE E ZAKONEVE PRAPANIKE), *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 08 February 1967, V.26, Nr.33, BK, Periodiku, SHG 32/1B.

¹⁴⁰ Let's make the page-lightning be a powerful tool for the ideological-political and moral education of the masses [Ti bëjme fletë-rrufetë një mjet të fuqishëm për edukimin ideopolitik e moral të masave), *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 01 April 1967, V.26, Nr.78, BK, Periodiku, SHG 69/3T.

Revolution the economy greatly suffered, in Albania the economic production during this period drastically increased. In particular, many infrastructural works were completed. On the other hand, greatly affecting the households' economy was the drastic reduction of family yards. These yards were the only private property left to the peasants after the expropriation and nationalization of the land since the 1950s. Now, officially, as a step towards the further "revolutionization" of the country, these yards were almost entirely nationalized because private yards were considered bourgeois remnants of the old society. These measures, sometimes extreme, were deemed necessary, because it was the only way '...to demolish the feudal-bourgeoisie remain'.¹⁴¹ The speech of Enver Hoxha that started the Cultural Revolution in Albania was the pretext not only to begin the revolution itself, but also to further raise the cult of Enver Hoxha. There was no day that widespread propaganda did not report the "greatness" of Enver Hoxha in supporting the revolution and the socialist cause. The first page of the Albanian Cultural Revolution concluded with a declaration of the Government and the Central Committee addressed to all the people through the *People's Voice*, concerning certain measures decided in the context of the Cultural Revolution, like the reduction of the personal yards in the communes, the further participation of the state officials in the productive works and the reduction of the high salaries. While China's Cultural Revolution came to an official conclusion in 1976 – and for Mao, 1969 – Albania's Cultural Revolution had no such finale. In a way, it had never started either.

Chinese Cultural Revolution: Strengthening Mao, Weakening the Anti-Revisionist Front

As usual, the PLA congress in November 1966 was an arena of meeting for many communist parties and groups coming from different continents. By now the Chinese Cultural Revolution had become a known event within the international communist movement – although with unknown dynamics. Kazimierz Mijal, the Polish exile in Albania and head of the PCP (m-l), told Albanian leaders that he would want to meet the communist groups during the congress but that he was concerned of what the

¹⁴¹ All and with all forces for further revolutionization of the party and People's power [Të Gjithë Me Të Gjitha Forcat Për Revolucionarizimin e Mëtejshëm Të Partisë Dhe Të Pushtetit], *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 11 February 1967, V.26 Nr.36, BK, Periodiku, SHG 32/1B.

CCP could think about his activities, implying that his main aim probably was to enter the good graces of the CCP in addition to Hoxha.¹⁴² Initially he expressed his full support for the Chinese Cultural Revolution and appreciated Mao's figure as a great Marxist leading to spur forward the world communist movement. Considering Albanian leadership's suspicion of Mao's cult and thought, most likely they did not appreciate Mijal's pledges of admiration for Mao. Mijal proposed to support publically the Chinese Cultural Revolution, but the cult of Mao, to him, in the European context was unconvincing and hard to accept.¹⁴³ Mijal met with Kang Sheng in Tirana on 31 October 1966. Kang offered all Chinese readiness to assist the PCP (m-l), and invited Mijal to visit China, which he did from 14 November to 29 December, 1966.¹⁴⁴ It is interesting that this trip was under cover, presenting Mijal not with his real name but as part of an Albanian delegation. With Mijal went Koçi Xengo, a high official of the PLA, who knew Polish after working as a diplomat for years in Warsaw.

Mijal met with Chinese officials alone several times, Mao included. But he told his Albanian friend that he did not fully understand the Cultural Revolution – or perhaps he pretended as such. He affirmed that certain aspects of the Chinese Cultural Revolution were characteristic of China, and that Europe would always struggle to understand them. Hoxha, also very suspicious of the Chinese events, asked Mijal to set aside his concerns and support China for the time being. Still, after Mijal's return to Tirana, he remained unconvinced of the real aims of the Cultural Revolution, and how could it impact the cause of international communism. He sustained two main objections: first, the prominent role of Mao and his personal cult; second, perhaps consequently, the diminished role of the working class.¹⁴⁵ During his visit, Mijal was pressed continuously by Chinese officials to make any requests for assistance he might need. Mijal did not make material requests but only wanted recognition, asking China to publish documents of his party and make known in the propaganda that his party supported China and the CCP. The fact that Mijal was

¹⁴² AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D12, f.5.

¹⁴³ Ibid., f.12; AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D14.

¹⁴⁴ Information about the meeting of comrade Mijal with the Chinese delegation, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (Polonia), V. 1966, D19.

¹⁴⁵ "The visit of comrade K. Mijal in the People's Republic of China, 14 November-29 December 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKP (m-l), V. 1966, D20.

based in Tirana for his activities, but sought Chinese recognition, shows the different, complementary, role Tirana and Beijing played for these parties. Tirana was geographically more appropriate, being in Europe, as a logistic base from which to organize political, legal, and in particular illegal, activities in the western hemisphere. Consequently the material assistance from Tirana was more effective. In addition, they could use Albania's diplomatic network in the West for coordination with other groups. On the other hand, Mijal's emphasis on Chinese recognition shows that China was for most of these groups the ultimate source of legitimation. Still, Hoxha had a strong hold over his guests, and tried to use them to get more credits from Beijing. Chinese authorities knew that the support for these groups, in particular those assisted directly by Albania, should go through the Albanian political filter and that Hoxha could influence either their support or their lack of support for China. Hence, when Mijal visited China, Chinese officials hastened to tell him that 'Enver Hoxha strongly supports the Cultural Revolution'.¹⁴⁶

Regardless the disagreements concerning some aspects of the Cultural Revolution, Albania used this period to accredit itself as China's most precious ally, by trying to maximize foreign support through the establishment of a contact network and expanding the assistance to foreign communist groups everywhere. For instance, with the collaboration of Jacques Grippa in Belgium, strong ties were established with illegal communist groups in Congo Brazzaville, where Grippa had good connections with the revolutionary groups, and where Cubans had also intervened. To the allegations and the gossip about the possible participation of Che Guevara in the revolution in Congo, Grippa in Tirana said that Cubans, probably Che Guevara too, had entered the country, but had turned back because of conflicts with the Congolese groups.¹⁴⁷ In late 1966 a meeting was organized in Rome, with the help of the Albanian embassy, and was attended by Congolese members of an illegal group.¹⁴⁸ Secretly these members went to Albania for military and political training. Eventually, fighting among themselves for power in a very fragmented context, where the ideological boundaries were often hard to distinguish, these groups ceased

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., f.33.

¹⁴⁷ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1966, D9, f.32-34.

¹⁴⁸ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1966, D5.

effectively fighting for the revolution.¹⁴⁹ Consequently Albania, in coordination with China, did not train these groups with the exclusive goal of a communist revolution. What was most important was to challenge the Soviet power and influence in Africa. The two Congolese states, Congo Brazzaville and the Democratic Republic of Congo, were emblematic in this. But did Albania really want to engage in armed conflicts over uncertain political returns? Most likely, had it not been for the Chinese support, Albania would not have had the power to finance parties and train illegal groups from four continents. It was acting indeed, not just in its own interests, but China's as well, in cases when the latter went beyond Asia in competition with Soviet Union, seeking to become a revolutionary world power. The limit to China in this period was the turmoil caused by the Cultural Revolution, and its lack of international recognition. Precisely because of these two factors, Albania's assistance to China became crucial in mitigating China's (largely self-imposed) isolation. At the same time, very subtly, Hoxha used his contacts with foreign groups as a backup for the undesired event of a split with China. Hoxha wanted to make sure that if a split with China became reality, he would retain international political support and recognition.

In November 1966, Jacques Grippa, the leader of the BCP (m-l), participated in the Fifth PLA Congress and met with the Albanian leaders on many occasions. He reported to have organized meetings in Belgium with students and other youths to inform them about the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Youth attendance at these meetings was high, but high also was the number of those who were not fully convinced of the good intentions of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵⁰ Even Grippa was not fully convinced. When he went on vacations with his wife in Albania in August 1967, he vented his great dissatisfaction with certain Chinese policies. He had been in China during 1966, and lamented the fact that not only had he been kept completely uninformed about the Cultural Revolution, but he was also not allowed to

¹⁴⁹ In a meeting of Behar Shtylla with the Belgian communist Hauvert Arnord Pierre, in July 1966, Shtylla affirmed that too much trust should not be put on the African students (and militants), in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L) e Belgjikes, Jacque Grippa, V. 1966, D6, f.1.

¹⁵⁰ Grippa told in Tirana that in one meeting with around 500 students in Brussels, one third of the participants did not show much enthusiasm, in "Records of the meeting of comrade Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia with comrade Jacque Grippa, 11 November 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-PKB (M-L) e Belgjikes, Jacque Grippa, V. 1966, D9, f.15.

meet the Indonesian communist party officials in Beijing.¹⁵¹ Grippa was not alone in his frustrations over the lack of information. Kazimierz Mijal told similarly of his meetings with Chinese diplomats in Tirana, that the information provided about the Cultural Revolution was ‘very vague’, or sometimes clearly inaccurate, as it was when he was told the Cultural Revolution would be over within the year (1968).¹⁵² China contributed very much to the communists’ suspicions in Europe about the Cultural Revolution, when for instance they refused to allow Mijal to visit China again in 1968, claiming the Chinese leaders were too busy.¹⁵³ China might have thought that Mijal was used by Albania to extract information from China that it did not otherwise have.

Grippa’s divergences with Chinese comrades dated back to 1964, mainly regarding the criteria upon which assistance was granted or denied to communist groups in West Europe. Grippa complained of China’s lack of distinction between authentic and imposter Marxist-Leninist groups. Furthermore, ‘in dealing with us, China’s representatives in Europe were not ideological comrades, but bureaucrats, who feared the consequences of contacting with us’. He brought as example the fact that China did not protest when French communists were arrested in Switzerland, ‘just because they had visited Chinese embassy in Berna’. Grippa had thought that the Cultural Revolution in China would have positively impacted the CCP’s foreign relations, ‘but it did not happen instead’, lamenting that in 1966 China had impressed him negatively with respect to his visit in 1962.¹⁵⁴ As he explained, when he visited China in August 1966, he had an overt polemic with Kang Sheng regarding which principles new Marxist parties in Europe should follow. Kang told Grippa that sometimes they should work even with groups that have different ideas, while Grippa showed more dogmatism. At the end Kang suggested Grippa to concentrate more on Belgian affairs, rather than expanding his contacts. This visit of Grippa, in a few words, was a complete failure, and divergences with the CCP seemed to be difficult to repair. It was about all this that he reported to Ramiz Alia, Hoxha’s close comrade,

¹⁵¹ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (m-l), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D5, f.28.

¹⁵² AQSH, F.14, AP-PKP (m-l), V. 1968, D17, f.2.

¹⁵³ “Information from the meeting of comrade Mijal with the Chinese Charge d’Affaires in Tirana, 23 March 1968”, in *ibid.*, f.3.

¹⁵⁴ Quotations of the paragraph in: AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D5, f.30.

in Tirana. Although CCP leaders used to inform Tirana often about their relations with other communist parties, regarding Grippa it seems that the CCP did not inform Tirana. This can be deduced from the warm welcome Grippa received in Tirana when he returned from China. Considering how he was later criticized for his standing against China, he would have not been so well-received had Albanian leaders known in advance his divergences with Beijing.

Grippa criticized some of the slogans being promoted by the Cultural Revolution in China. For instance, he did not agree, and refused to publish in his newspaper in Belgium, the Chinese slogan “it’s right to rebel”, as he considered it too vague and could even be used to rebel against communists. He also criticized the little space Chinese propaganda had reserved for the communist struggle in Europe. This, for him, was due to China’s disregard for the urban working class in Europe, in favor of, he believed, rural mobilization. He was also disappointed with the marginal role the Cultural Revolution seemed to reserve for the working class, compared to the grand emphasis placed on students and peasants. On this point, Hoxha’s view was identical to Grippa’s. Grippa also opposed the Chinese slogan “one splits in two”. For him the Chinese comrades did not explain with this slogan the difference between the antagonist contradiction and the non-antagonist contradiction.¹⁵⁵ Following his talks with Alia, Grippa planned a meeting with Hoxha. After learning of Grippa’s many criticisms of China, almost the same arguments Hoxha had made in private conversations with close comrades, Hoxha refused. Commenting on the conversation between Grippa and Alia, Hoxha rejected completely Grippa’s criticism of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and a week later he sent to the Chinese embassy the records of the conversation between Alia and Grippa.¹⁵⁶ But Grippa reminded Alia that, after all, the BCP (m-l) was not a branch of the CCP, and Grippa therefore had the right to publish whatever he considered appropriate. Hoxha noted that perhaps the message was also to the PLA, in a clear attempt to challenge Albania to rethink its position. What worried Hoxha most about Grippa was the latter’s defense of Liu Shaoqi. Although Grippa did not take Liu’s position in the internal CCP struggle, he

¹⁵⁵ He expressed all this criticism in the same session of talks with Alia, who was very surprised. In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D5, f.34-43.

¹⁵⁶ Hoxha wrote his opinions on the notes extracted from the records of Grippa-Alia meeting. In, AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D6.

wondered, ‘are all the accusations against Liu well-founded?’.¹⁵⁷ For Hoxha this was too much. Despite most likely sharing similar concerns, privately, Hoxha accused Grippa of taking Liu’s – meaning the revisionist – side, instead of defending Mao. He could not but reject Grippa’s position as anti-China.

One week after sharing his sincere thoughts, Jacques Grippa was called in Tirana to meet Alia again. Alia read a note he claimed was written by Hoxha, which considered Grippa’s view on China, ‘deeply wrong, not based on arguments, was an attack to the great revolutionary Mao Zedong and completely anti-Marxist’.¹⁵⁸ Alia told Grippa that Hoxha and the PLA considered the Cultural Revolution as a great contribution to the communist cause. He invited Grippa to call a meeting of the central committee of his party in Belgium, to hold a session of self-criticism and revise his position towards Beijing. Grippa, on the other hand, rejected Albanian accusations, and kindly warned that ‘If our party is mistaken the repercussions are limited, but if you instead are wrong the repercussions abroad are more severe, and if the CCP is wrong, then the repercussions internationally are even greater’.¹⁵⁹ With this meeting Grippa was dismissed, and a letter from the PLA was sent to Paris to the Albanian ambassador (covering also Belgium) recommending him to keep an eye on Grippa.¹⁶⁰ If Grippa had warned Albanian leaders of repercussions, he had not imagined that he would be the first to suffer from them. Immediately after his return to Belgium, within his party emerged a group that opposed Grippa’s line. Eventually, not long after his sojourn in Albania, he faced a putsch and was expelled from his own party. Although there is no clear evidence that Albania was behind this, the timing and the accusations against Grippa by the new faction seem to leave little room for alternative interpretation. This is reinforced also by the fact that the new group rushed to send a letter to Hoxha after Grippa’s dismissal, in which they rejected entirely Grippa’s position on the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and fully supported it as a great event for the world communism.¹⁶¹ In December 1967, Grippa

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., f.12.

¹⁵⁸ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D7, f.1.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., f.14.

¹⁶⁰ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D8.

¹⁶¹ “Declaration and the resolution of the Belgian Communist Party (M-L): On the denunciation of the revisionist line of Jacque Grippa; On the solidarization with the Great Chinese Cultural Revolution”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), V. 1967, D1.

was expelled from the party, mainly for having attacked the Chinese Cultural Revolution, as shown in the declaration of the central committee.¹⁶²

The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Increasing Aid to Albania

In September - October 1967, Albanian Premier Mehmet Shehu visited China once again, this time at the peak of the Cultural Revolution, and Albania this time needed greater assurance that the Chinese Cultural Revolution would not affect negatively China's economic assistance to Albania. Indeed, it did affect the assistance, but only positively for Albania. In his talks with Zhou Enlai, Shehu was surprised by Zhou's willingness to increase the technological and economic assistance to Albania. In 1965 Zhou had been critical regarding the building of hydropower plants, and recommended oil to generate electricity instead, now China agreed to accelerate the works on the hydropower plant of Vau i Dejës (Mao Zedong Plant) that was under construction, and to a bigger plant in accordance with the plans Albania had presented years earlier, but which had been postponed by China.¹⁶³ China promised also to increase the production capacity of some existing factories. The Albanian premier also requested additional armaments that had been denied to Balluku during his visit in February of the same year. Zhou Enlai was ready to meet any Albanian requests.¹⁶⁴ Although the Cultural Revolution caused enormous difficulties to the Chinese productive system and to the economy in general, Albania was assisted as never before, and as it never will be again. In 1967, an attempt was drafted for completing the industrial projects by the following year.¹⁶⁵ China began its

¹⁶² Ibid., f.7.

¹⁶³ Records of the Politburo, 18 October 1967: "Report of Mehmet Shehu on the visit of the Party's and State delegation in China", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1967, D15, f.16-22.

¹⁶⁴ It was the case of the plant for the processing of the nickel-iron that passed from a planned capacity of 100 thousand to 500 thousand tons per year. The combine of the Ferro-chrome plant, passed from a capacity of 60 thousand to 300 thousand tons per year. In, "Records of the talks between the Albanian delegation headed by Mehmet Shehu and Chinese delegation headed by Zhou Enlai, in Beijing 29-29 September and 12 October 1967", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1967, D19, f.36-48. Also in, D21: The talk of Mehmet Shehu with comrade Zhou Enlai in Beijing, 13 October 1967, f.11-15; Ministry of Trade: "Protocols on the exchange of goods and payments, between the Government of the PR of Albania and the Government of the PR of China, for the year 1967, as well as the list of added goods for import, sent to the Trade office in Beijing", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1967, D95.

¹⁶⁵ Ministry of Trade: "Reports and Information of our trade office in Beijing on the state and changes of [factories] capacities of the fourth five-year plan, the contracting duties for the importation of these plants and the correspondence between the trade ministry and other organs", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1967, D97.

geological studies regarding the remaining hydropower plants along the Drini River, where Albania wanted to build 5 projects, with a capacity of more than 1.3 million kWh energy.¹⁶⁶ This, along with technology for the oil extraction, was very demanding for China to supply.¹⁶⁷

During Shehu's visit in China, September-October 1967, Beijing committed to anticipate the delivery of the military supplies they had promised to Balluku earlier in January 1967, and promised an additional 100 air fighters and around 130 tanks, after questioning Albania's capacities in human resources to manage such large quantity of heavy armaments.¹⁶⁸ As shown in the discussions of the Council of Defense, 80 percent of the entire military equipment, which was part of the agreement for the period 1967-71, was delivered in 1968, three years in advance of the schedule.¹⁶⁹ This came due to two international events. First, in April 1967, a coup d'état led to the rise of the regime of the colonels in Greece, who in their rhetoric did not conceal territorial claims over southern Albania.¹⁷⁰ After the establishment of the military regime of the colonels, the Albanian leadership seriously feared an armed conflict. At the border with Greece a few Albanian casualties were caused as a consequence of the armed clashes. Hoxha did not want any further escalation, and ordered the border patrol troops to not react 'to the Greek

¹⁶⁶ At the end of the alliance with China, Albania had almost finished the second plant, and later build the third.

¹⁶⁷ In one report of the trade office of the Albanian Embassy in Beijing, the situation regarding the delivering of the oil extraction equipment from China was considered "very bad". In, Ministry of Trade, 24 January 1967: "Report of the trade office of the embassy in Beijing on the state of the import of goods for 1967", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1967, D100, f.2.

¹⁶⁸ The Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army asked the Albanian premier if he was sure that Albania could manage all the supplies he was asking (page 19-20 of the report). In Politburo, Tirana, 18 October 1967: "Report of comrade Mehmet Shehu about the visit of the Albanian Party's and governmental delegation in the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1967, D15, f.2-30.

¹⁶⁹ Top-Secret: Council of Defence, 25 November 1967, in AQSH, K. Mb, V. 1967, D2, f.20.

¹⁷⁰ Kostis Kornetis, *Children of the Dictatorship: Student Resistance, Cultural Politics, and The "long 1960s" in Greece*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Robert V. Keeley, *The Colonels' Coup and the American Embassy: A Diplomat's View of the Breakdown of Democracy in Cold War Greece*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, c2010); Formally Greece had still in force the state of war with Albania, approved since when Greece declared war to Italy in 1940. In 1944, after the withdrawal of the German troops, the Greek army established a regime of terror in Chameria (northern Greece, bordering Albania), expelling with force the Albanian population of the zone. Those that survived, some tens of thousands, left their homes and escaped to Albania, but they would never see again their land. Those few that remained in Greece instead, had to convert to Christian orthodoxy and change their names and language, being completely assimilated within decades.

provocation without authorization from the capital'.¹⁷¹ Yet, the Albanian army drafted operational plans based on hypothetical attacks from Greece. Rather than an invasion, they thought that the colonels could launch a massive air attack, destabilizing the country and destroying its fragile economy.¹⁷² With its small ally in this precarious situation, China accelerated the delivery of military supplies to Albania.¹⁷³ In 1967 alone, the value of the total amount of armaments Albania received reached 84 million yuan.¹⁷⁴ Curiously, during 1967, China and Albania hired a Greek ship for the transportation of part of the armaments.¹⁷⁵ This was intended to be a message to the colonels in Athens, despite the fact that Chinese military assistance to Albania was not a secret. Some years later, in 1971, the same colonels would ask Albania to establish diplomatic relations with Greece, and Albania agreed, not without first warning them that any aggressive policy towards Albania would fail.

The second event was the Soviet military intervention in Czechoslovakia to repress what has been remembered as the Prague Spring, and the subsequent proclamation by Brezhnev of the Soviet doctrine of the 'limited sovereignty'.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Enver Hoxha, "Regarding the defense", from the personal diary, 05 August 1967, (document in my possession).

¹⁷² In one document of the defense ministry were listed all the armaments the Albanian army thought Greece might have, and how the colonels could use them against Albania. Their fear was mainly of air strikes, and this in part explains the high number of air-defense armaments Albania asked China. In, "Hypothesis on the possible actions of the Greek air forces against the People's Republic of Albania, and our measures for counteraction", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1967, D221. Albania considered possible additional supply from the US army to the Greek forces in order to allow them long range attacks that could cover most part of the country.

¹⁷³ "Report of the tank's office to the defense minister, on the works done for the construction of the tank's plant, and the order and act of taking over of the object CA-50", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1967, D100; Only construction materials for military purposes, China exported to Albania a total of 63162 tons: "Beijing, 28 September 1967. Information of the Albanian military attaché in Beijing, sent to the defense minister, on the delivery of the materials for the period 1965-67", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1967, D161, f.1-2; In July 1967, 3062 tons of armaments reached Albania: "List of the military equipment that has come with the ship "Vlora" during 1967", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1967, D200; Another amount of 17.727 tons left China in April and 4.250,975 tons of supplies left China in November 1967: "The acts of the value of the object nr.75, and the shipping expenses for the transportation of the military supplies with the ship 'Vlora' and a Greek Ship", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1968, D236, f.4-5.

¹⁷⁴ 30 December 1968: "Financial reconciliation on the free assistance that China provided to Albania for the year 1967", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1969, D102.

¹⁷⁵ In the Albanian records (and report) is mentioned as "Maria Georgidis" and seems to have been the only year in which was hired to transport armaments from China to Albania. Information in: AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1968, D236.

¹⁷⁶ Bischof, Karner, and Ruggenthaler, eds., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, c2010); M. Mark Stolarik, ed., *The Prague*

Following this event, in September 1968, Albania denounced the WPO and withdrew from it. The fear that incidents might give an excuse to Soviet Union for an intervention had always been high, and Hoxha seized this opportunity to make the step he had been waiting for. Albania was *de facto* expelled from the WPO in 1961, as the minister of defense had not been invited in the meetings of the member countries, nor had Albania been invited to participate in any common military maneuver since then. It was the right moment, according to the leadership, to break the juridical ties that still kept Albania in an alliance that in their view had become a hostile, Soviet-controlled stable.¹⁷⁷ Hoxha feared an extension of the conflict to Romania and Yugoslavia, Albania being more worried about the latter possibility. Operative plans to face an eventual attack from the Soviet Union were quickly drafted following the formal ousting of Albania from the WPO.¹⁷⁸ The situation was further complicated when in autumn 1968, the Albanian population staged massive protests in Kosova, seeking better conditions and autonomy for their region. Tito was caught between two potential fires, the Soviet threat on one side, on the other was the nationalistic movement of the Albanian population in Kosova, whose claims were supported by Albania. But in this situation, Hoxha did not hesitate to stand on Yugoslavia's side in case of Soviet attack, showing a clear conciliatory attitude towards Tito – whom he saw as the lesser of two evils. Through public speeches and indirect diplomatic contacts the message to Tito was that he could concentrate his troops on Yugoslavia's eastern border, to defend his country from a possible Soviet invasion, rather than the southern border with Albania. Hoxha also knew that Yugoslavia was too precious for the western bloc and for NATO, and therefore would have been well defended, but in this eventuality, Albania would have been

Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968: Forty Years Later, (Mundelein, Ill: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2010); Vladimir V. Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia, 1956-1967*, (Cambridge [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1971); For the concept of the "limited sovereignty" see Robert A. Jones, *The Soviet Doctrine of "Limited Sovereignty" from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Brezhnev Doctrine*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990).

¹⁷⁷ "Records of the PLA Fifth Plenum, 05 September 1968 - Report of Mehmet Shehu: On denunciation of the Warsaw Pact by the People's Republic of Albania", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1968, D1, f.145-167.

¹⁷⁸ Tirana, 23 October 1968: "Top-Secret: Report on the further preparation of the Armed Forces of Albania against possible air and marine attacks of the revisionist armed forces of the Warsaw Pact", in AQSH, K. Mb, V. 1968, D3, f.1-45, Also the discussion during the meeting of the Council of Defence on 31 October 1968, f.49-96.

trapped between the two biggest military alliances of that time, not sure at all that its borders would have remained immune from this possible conflict.

The withdrawal of Albania from the WPO preceded another visit of the Albanian defense minister to China in September 1968, officially on occasion of the celebrations for the founding of the PRC. His real motivations were to review some agreements regarding new armaments from China. The last agreement had been just one year earlier, and the delivery of the military supplies was going according to plan. Therefore, Zhou Enlai, and the leadership in China, were not enthusiastic to review the agreements, nor to provide any further armaments. Shocked by Tirana's new requests, China decided to send to Albania the chief of the general staff, Huang Yongsheng, to assess the situation.

Zhou Enlai nearly caused an incident with Balluku – so perceived at least by the Albanian leadership. Balluku reported that Zhou Enlai had opposed Albania's plans to heavily arm the country. Zhou argued that because of the size of Albania, in case of war the country 'would be wiped out at the first attack'. Then later in another meeting, Zhou told the Albanian minister that 'with Yugoslavia, in the present situation [Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia] you could establish a military alliance. The Romanians, Czechoslovakians, and Yugoslavians are now our indirect allies'.¹⁷⁹ This conversation initially was not reported to all Politburo members in Tirana, but only to Hoxha. Eventually, he decided to share it with the others, although reminding them of its secrecy. Hoxha perceived Zhou's invitation for a rapprochement with Belgrade outrageous. Zhou had indeed stepped on Hoxha's Achilles' heel. Balluku in his prompt response to Zhou Enlai considered Yugoslavia 'the biggest enemy of our country'. Zhou then moved quickly to other issues in an attempt to diminish the damage, but then, when Balluku was discussing Albania's defense strategy, mentioning the Greek threat, Zhou again provoked Balluku by asking, 'But don't you think that the Soviet Union would defend you from a Greek attack'? These positions were deemed by Shehu in Tirana as 'anti-Marxist, hostile, and anti-Albanian', and by Hoxha as 'harmful to the international communist movement, to the revolution and to the struggle against imperialism and modern

¹⁷⁹ Records of the Politburo, 26 October 1968: "Top-Secret: On a new incident with the Head of the Council of State of China, comrade Zhou Enlai, during the visit of the Albania's party and state delegation headed by the minister of defense Beqir Balluku, that visited China during September-October 1968", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1968, D13, f.225-243.

revisionism'. Hoxha drew the conclusion that Zhou Enlai was 'a revisionist, and despite his active participation in the Cultural Revolution, he in fact is against this revolution'.¹⁸⁰

At the end Zhou Enlai accepted some of the new requests by Albania, including, among many materials, hundreds of tanks, tens of air fighters, many torpedo-destroyers, missiles, and other equipment. Zhou agreed to provide immediately 200 million shells (bullets and rockets), part of the plan for one billion shells, 10 thousand machine guns, 2500 anti-air strikes machine gunners and hundreds of artillery pieces.¹⁸¹ China also committed to provide, by 1969, 90 percent of all the armaments that it had agreed to provide by 1971.¹⁸² Huang Yongsheng stayed for one week in Albania, visiting many military garrisons.¹⁸³ Following his visit, a load of 19,000 tons of military supplies reached Albania that same month, and another load of around 80,000 tons of materials were delivered by the end of 1968.¹⁸⁴ Some problems did emerge with the Albanian officials, mainly pilots of fighter jets, who went to China for training. One report from the Albanian embassy in Beijing, complained about the poor discipline they showed, and the 'immoral acts' (trying to approach local girls, and even a case of rape), consequently, an entire group of 18 pilots was called back to Albania in the first year of their study in China.¹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, the military equipment continued to be readily and rapidly supplied. In celebration of the Albanian National Day, at the end of November 1969, Li Xiannian visited Albania, accompanied by a large number of officials of the Chinese army. It

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., f.232.

¹⁸¹ Politburo, Tirana, 14 October 1968: "Verbal report on the work of the delegation of the party and government of Albania that visited China on occasion of the 19 years of the proclamation of the PR of China", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1968, D12, f.1-41. A more detailed record of the talks between Beqir Balluku and Zhou Enlai is in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1968, D8, f.1-18.

¹⁸² Beijing, 06-07 September 1968: "Records of the talks of Beqir Balluku with Zhou Enlai and Huang Yongsheng", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1968, D8, f.2-3.

¹⁸³ AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1968, D232. It is interesting to see that the programme was done in order for the Chinese generals to visit the units for which Balluku had asked heavy artillery, like the garrisons of tanks, the naval base of Vlora, and the military air base.

¹⁸⁴ Tirana, January 1968: "Report on the conversation with the Chinese military attaché Li Yifang, regarding the military supplies for the Albanian army", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1968, D102; "The list of armaments that has arrived from the P.R. of China", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1968, D241; China sent also a number of experts, around 34 in 1968, that could train the officials in Albania in the use and management of the new weapons, in Tirana, 12/7/1968. AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1968, D140.

¹⁸⁵ Albanian Embassy, Beijing, 23 July 1962: "Information about the return in Albania of the group of 18 pilots", in AQSH, STR, V. 1962, D548, f.26-32.

is curious to see that by the end of 1969, Albania expected to have received a total of 160 thousand tons in ammunitions (shells and bullets), which, according to the calculations, ‘requires a storage space of 16km tunnels, at least 7m large’.¹⁸⁶ The last load for the year 1969 reached Durrës in December 1969, carrying more than 1400 tons of materials.¹⁸⁷ At the beginning of 1969, the two governments signed an agreement to speed up the fortification process in Albania by sending a group of Chinese experts who had experience in constructing tunnels from their time in Vietnam.¹⁸⁸ Meanwhile, regardless of Albanian leadership’s rhetoric aimed against Yugoslavia, by the late 1960s Albania’s foreign policy towards its northern neighbor had changed from unconcealed enmity to timid openness, and even to collaboration, accompanied by Yugoslavia with a substantial improvement of the status of the Albanian population in Kosova. Belgrade also changed its attitude towards Tirana, and in 1969 officially asked to raise the diplomatic representation from the level of legation to that of embassies. Albania, not completely trustful of Yugoslavia, waited until 1971 before accepting the Yugoslavian proposal.¹⁸⁹

In this context of Chinese enormous assistance to Albania, in 1968 the Albanian government initiated the study of an economic plan for the entire decade 1970-80, which would completely rely on Chinese assistance.¹⁹⁰ Although most of the new

¹⁸⁶ A detailed list of all armaments Albania expected to receive during 1969 was drafted by November 1968. Available in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1969, D114, f.9; In the heavy artillery instead, the total amount of load was expected to reach 266.218 tons. In, “The résumé of the tonnage of the military equipment, divided in categories that will arrive from China during the year 1969, and the first half of 1970”, in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1969, D114, f.2.

¹⁸⁷ “List of the equipment that arrived from China with the ship “Hainan” on 13 December 1969”, in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1969, D116.

¹⁸⁸ Tirana, 14 March 1969: “Contract (agreement) of the group of experts of the air photographing with helicopters MI-4, design of tunnels, missiles and anti-air artillery (AKA, in Albanian), from the experience in Vietnam”, in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1969, D285. These experts, 19 in all, were mainly engineers.

¹⁸⁹ Mehmet Shehu affirmed Albania’s lack of trust on Yugoslavia, conveying any close up to the improved status of the Albanian population in Kosova, where since 1968 there had been a progressive improvement of their political and national status within the Federation, allowing them to use their language, found a university, and strengthen the cultural ties with Albania. In Politburo, Tirana, 20 January 1971: “On the establishment of embassy-level diplomatic representations between Albania and Yugoslavia”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D41, f.188-193.

¹⁹⁰ Politburo, Tirana, 15 April 1968, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1968, D7. There were two fields in which Albania aimed to make big investments: the construction of the big hydropower plants in Drini River – Fierza plant, and Komani plant, and the deep and complex processing of oil. Albania had discovered new oilfields rich but its quality was not very good because of the high percentage of Sulphur. This required the construction of complex combines that could process it and consequently extract other products from oil such as gasoline and benzene for industrial use.

plan concerned the expansion of production capacities of existing industrial projects, the planned investments would cost the equivalent of 46 new projects.¹⁹¹ In July 1968, Albanian Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu sent a letter to Zhou Enlai asking China to accept an economic delegation from Albania in order to negotiate a new loan. Zhou Enlai accepted and a delegation headed by vice Prime Minister Adil Çarçani went to Beijing in September 1968.¹⁹²

China eventually accepted most of the Albanian requests, including the building of another large hydroelectric power plant in Fierza, and the completion of the metallurgic plant in Elbasan – a gigantic project for Albania which required the participation of around 15 thousand workers during its construction, and a permanent workforce of 10 thousand workers employed in the production line.¹⁹³ The two governments signed the agreement on 20 November, 1968, for a new Chinese loan, totalling 1.56 billion yuan (252.4 million rubles),¹⁹⁴ and 35 million USD cash,¹⁹⁵ which was additional to the loan approved in 1965 for the fourth FYP 1966-1970.¹⁹⁶ The total amount of the loan China approved for Albania in November 1968 and then again in October 1970 reached almost 3 billion yuan, (697.8 million rubles).¹⁹⁷ On at least two occasions, China used Albania for technological transfer purposes. First, the constructions of chemical fertilizer plants, and second the hydropower plants. In the second case, when the hydropower plant of Vau i Dejës (Mao Zedong plant) begun construction, it was necessary to import equipment that China could not

¹⁹¹ “List of plants and factories planned to expand, in Politburo, 15 April 1968”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1968, D7, f.113-117.

¹⁹² “Files of the Albanian governmental economic delegation in People’s Republic of China (17 September – 19 November 1968)”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1968, D4.

¹⁹³ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1968, D4, f.16.

¹⁹⁴ In this case the loan was calculated in yuan according China’s decision to take as reference from first of January of 1969 the Yuan rather than rubles, with an exchange rate of 100 rubles=22.22 yuan. All the previous loans Albania had had from China, were converted into Yuan. See, “Correspondence of the Trade Ministry with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, about the correspondence between our Embassy and China’s authorities regarding the constructions with China’s assistance in Albania and the use of the Chinese currency instead of the Soviet rubles in the agreements between the two countries”, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1969, D134, f.12.

¹⁹⁵ “Files of the Albanian governmental economic delegation in People’s Republic of China (17 September – 19 November 1968)”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1968, D4, f.20.

¹⁹⁶ Records of the Politburo, 10 December 1968: “On the results of the talks of the Governmental economic delegation of the PR of Albania that visited China, reported verbally by comrade Adil Çarçani”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1968, D15, f.275.

¹⁹⁷ A comparative table of the amount of the loans China approved is in the Records of the Politburo, 19 October 1970, AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1970, D10, f.19.

produce. China entered into talks with Italian companies regarding the production of particular trucks for the transport of the materials and equipment to build the dam. Those trucks were produced in China later. The delegation that had been in China to discuss the loan, managed to increase and modify in Albanian favor some of the agreements concerning the exchange of goods within the plan 1965-70. They also managed to assure most of the cables and wires needed for the electrification of the country. In fact, in the 1970s, in some remote parts of Albania, people still relied on candlelight. It was not surprising that China perceived paradoxical the Albanian determination to pursue heavy industrialization whilst in many respects Albania was still backward.

The building of these industrial projects shaped the entire national life of Albania during the 1960s and 1970s, as it required a huge mobilization of the workforce and building from the ground of entire cities in the country. The city of Elbasan, which hosted the metallurgic plant, needed an additional workforce of more than twelve thousand people along with their families. This required the construction of additional six and a half thousand apartments for a new population of thirty-five thousand people.¹⁹⁸ This necessitated the building of related social and cultural institutions such as schools, theatres, libraries, and other facilities. In some places, this meant ancient and tiny villages became new-born cities overnight. The city of Laç that hosted the workers of the superphosphate plant was such a case. The same happened in the small city of Ballsh, where for the building of a large and complex plant for oil processing, it was necessary to employ more than three thousand people, and afterwards a permanent workforce of around two thousand people, plus another two thousand in smaller factories related directly to this plant. In all, an entire city of thousands of people was built around this factory, which still exists and is partially functional.

In 1969, China faced many challenges. The tension with the Soviet Union along the border resulted in armed clashes, while internally China faced problems created by clashes between groups because of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁹⁹ In this context, it

¹⁹⁸ In AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1969, D3, f.70; Politburo, Tirana, 30 January 1969: "On the decisions regarding the sites of the building of the new plants with the Chinese assistance, in accordance with the agreement of 20 November 1968", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1969, D3, f.65-78.

¹⁹⁹ In the talks of Zhou Enlai with Haki Toska he mentioned some clashes in factories between different factions. In Ministry of Trade: "Report of the trade office of the embassy in Beijing on the

was expected that China might not fulfill the contractual obligations with Albania as scheduled. Instead, as shown in a report of the trade office at the Albanian embassy in Beijing, precisely during these conflicts, China accomplished more for the Albanian economy than in any previous period. With only some limited delays, all of the agreements were kept for this year.²⁰⁰ In 1970, the PLA Politburo assessed the achievements of the fourth FYP 1965-70, which was nearing conclusion. According to the discussions, most targets of the plan had been reached, and in many industrial sectors the targets were even surpassed.²⁰¹ The national income in Albania increased by 30 percent in five years, certainly owing to the Chinese assistance. Because of these results, Albania's economy in these years seemed relatively flourishing. Agriculture was the only major sector of the economy where the targets were not achieved, with many farmers lacking the necessary level of mechanization, but this did not cause any shortage of food, or primary goods in general.

In the early 1970, the Albanian government had good reasons to celebrate these achievements; and good reason for optimism as they began preparations for the new FYP 1971-75. This new plan had some marked differences with those previous. First, since most of the heavy industry projects were still under construction, only eight new projects required complete Chinese assistance.²⁰² In total, 36 new industrial projects were planned for construction – some new factories, and some enhancements to existing plants. That so few were put completely on Chinese shoulders indicated that Albania had acquired in these years, thanks precisely to the Chinese expertise, the capacities to develop its own industry. Another fundamental aspect was Albania's planned diversification of its commercial portfolio with different countries regarding some specific equipment that China could not provide.

state of projects, exchange of goods and respective implementations for the year 1969, and the review of the report by the Ministry", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1969, D130, D131, D134

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Politburo, 25-27 February 1970: "On the review of the Study presented by the Government and the additional explanations of the State Planning Commission, regarding the preplan of the development of the economy and culture during the Fifth five-year plan 1971-75; On the request of a new loan from China", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1970, D3, f.490-491.

²⁰² "Letter of comrade Mehmet Shehu to comrade Enver Hoxha (10.03.1970) and copy of the letter that the Albanian Government addressed to the Council of State of China, and the respective attached documents, regarding the request for a new loan for the five-year plan 1971-75, also the request to send to China a governmental economic delegation headed by Abdyl Këllezhi to discuss about our request of the loan to China and to negotiate and conclude the agreements", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1970, D6.

For instance, Albania decided not to ask for all the transportation trucks from China, but decided to purchase them from Czechoslovakia and Poland – an old Chinese suggestion.

To finalize the assistance for the FYP 1971-75, a delegation visited China in August 1970, led by the head of the Albanian State Planning Commission, Abdyl Këllezi, who stayed in China for more than two months, until October of that year, for negotiations.²⁰³ During the stay the delegation toured many provinces in China, where they were told that the Cultural Revolution had won everywhere, and Mao's thought had triumphed. By 16 October, 1970, the two sides signed the agreements regarding China's new loan to Albania. Although it was less than Albania had asked – 1,880 billion yuan or, equal to 445 million rubles (534 million USD)²⁰⁴ – it included funds for the construction of the great hydropower project of Fierza.²⁰⁵ In addition, China approved a loan in foreign currency of 14 million USD cash to be used for importing goods China could not provide.²⁰⁶ In these agreements, Albania was granted two great advantages: first, it could start to repay this loan after 1990; second, the loan was without any interest. Curiously, while throughout Europe in the 1970s, television was the most important means of propaganda diffusion and entertainment, Albania was still the age of the radio. Now, finally, with Chinese assistance, Albania had the possibility to build a powerful television station, together with the technological capacities to manufacture its own televisions.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Records of the Politburo, 21 May 1970: "Decision to send a governmental economic delegation in China for the conclusion of the barter agreements on the new loan for the five-year plan 1971-75", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1970, D6, f.60; "Files of the governmental economic delegation of Albania, led by Abdyl Këllezi that was in China regarding the request for a new loan for the fifth five-year plan 1971-75", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1970, D7.

²⁰⁴ The official exchange rate in that period was approximately 1USD=0.80 rubles (1ruble=1.20USD).

²⁰⁵ "Copy of the agreements and protocols signed in Beijing on 16 October 1970, between the Government of Albania and the Government of China: On the new loan without interests China approved for Albania for the years 1971-75, etc.", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1970, D8. Today's value would be more than 3 billion USD.

Data retrieved: <http://www.saving.org/inflation/inflation.php?amount=100&year=1960> (last access, 08/03/2017).

²⁰⁶ Records of the Politburo, 19 October 1970: "Report on the conclusion of the talks between the Albanian economic delegation and the PR of China and related agreements", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1970, D10.

²⁰⁷ China had built its own television station in 1959, and now promised to finish the first phase of the station in Albania, which mean the capacity to cover with signal Tirana and some inhabited areas around it, on occasion of the thirty years of the Party's foundation, by 08 November 1971. Ministry of Trade, 03.04.1970: "Correspondence of the Trade office in Beijing with the Ministry of Trade about the Chinese assistance to build the television station", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1970, D89, f.10-12

MITIGATING CHINA'S ISOLATION. SURROGATE DIPLOMACY

China had delivered great economic and military assistance to Albania. To make good on its end of the bargain, Albania dramatically increased efforts to defend Chinese interests in international organizations. At sessions of the United Nations, Albania fought a determined battle over the legitimate seat of the PRC. It also strongly defended the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the international forums and organizations where it had its representatives. The entire diplomatic network of Albania was at China's disposal. In November 1966, the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed its diplomatic network to defend the Cultural Revolution and the '...international authority and prestige of China that has become a shield against imperialism and revisionism'.²⁰⁸ The Sino-Indian border clashes, the Sino-Soviet territorial disputes, the issue of Tibet, and the question of China's representation in UN were the main issues about which Albania lent support to Beijing.

In 1945, China had been one of the founders of the UN, but it was Chang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) who signed the Charter in China's name. As the leader of Kuomintang (Guomindang - GMD), he was then internationally recognized as China's leader. During China's civil war, Chang Kai-shek was defeated, resulting in the foundation in 1949 of the People's Republic of China.²⁰⁹ When, in November 1949, the PRC claimed its seat in the United Nations, it was still occupied by the Republic of China (ROC), which as a consequence of the civil war *de facto* represented only the island of Taiwan.²¹⁰ The United States had assisted the Nationalists during the civil war, but eventually they realized that Chang Kai-shek's cause was lost. Washington 'affirmed the traditional open-door policy' for China,

²⁰⁸ "Top-Secret": Radiogram nr.4955 & 4956, 19.11.1966, in AMPJ, V. 1966, D72, f.78.

²⁰⁹ Edward R. Hooton, *The Greatest Tumult: The Chinese Civil War, 1936-49*, (London and New York: Macmillan Pub. Co, 1991); Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003); Christopher R. Lew, *The Third Chinese Revolutionary Civil War, 1945-49: An Analysis of Communist Strategy and Leadership*, Asian States and Empires 1, (London: Routledge, 2009); Christopher R. Lew and Pak-Wah Leung, *Historical Dictionary of the Chinese Civil War*, 2nd ed., (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2013); Joshua Fan, *China's Homeless Generation: Voices from the Veterans of the Chinese Civil War, 1940s-1990s*, (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2011).

²¹⁰ David Brook, *The U.N. and the China Dilemma*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1956), 25.

and the desire ‘for its unity’, but it maintained ‘recognition for the Nationalist (GMD) government’.²¹¹

More specifically, the United States managed to turn the issue of the PRC’s representation into an ‘important matter’ that required the vote of the two-thirds of UN member states.²¹² So the question was formally reduced to whose credentials were valid, those of Taipei or Beijing. Thus the issue became one of representation, not admission.²¹³ From a larger perspective, the United States had hoped in vain that Mao’s China would embrace the Yugoslavian path, meaning friendly relations with the West without giving up the communist party’s rule, never blindly following Soviet dictates.²¹⁴ Scholars have even sustained that without Chinese involvement in the Korean War, the United States would not have opposed the PRC’s representation in the United Nations.²¹⁵ In fact, the United States’ closest ally, the United Kingdom, recognized Beijing’s government just months after the establishment of the PRC, in January 1950 – not without causing attrition between London and Washington.²¹⁶

Beijing sustained that resistance to its participation in the UN ‘has not actually caused any damage to China, but has impaired the prestige of the United Nations and made it unable effectively to play its role in accordance with the Charter’.²¹⁷ Nonetheless, as Byron Weng argued long time ago, although Beijing was not represented, the ‘UN has been a constant factor in Peking’s foreign policy

²¹¹ Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1990), 14.

²¹² Blythe Foote Finke, *China Joins the United Nations*, (Charlottesville, N.Y: SamHar Press, 1973); Byron S. J. Weng, *Peking’s UN Policy: Continuity and Change*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 77.

²¹³ John George Stoessinger, *The United Nations & the Superpowers: China, Russia & America*, 4th ed., (New York: Random House, 1977), 36–39.

²¹⁴ Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 5–26; John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia*, (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 11–34.

²¹⁵ Charles V. Reynolds, *Why Not Admit Red China to the United Nations?* (Berkeley, Calif: McCutchan Pub. Corp, 1970), 1–5; For an assessment and analysis of the Sino-American Relations between the end of the Second World War and the end of the Korean War see, Harry Harding et al., eds., *Sino-American Relations, 1945-1955: A Joint Reassessment of a Critical Decade*, (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 1989); Zhigang Liu, *Sino-American Relations, 1945-1950, with Emphasis on the Outcome of China’s Entry to the Korean War*, (Boston University, 1996).

²¹⁶ Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 43–50.

²¹⁷ “The Question of the Representation of the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations”, in AMPJ, V. 1960, D372, f.14.

deliberations'.²¹⁸ Because of its importance, China used Albania as a favored channel to transmit its messages to the UN, and every year sent explicative materials to the Albanian government presenting China's views and policies.²¹⁹ The pivot of Beijing's policy towards its representation in UN was represented in the "One China" argument, placing the Taiwan issue as strictly an internal affair of the PRC. The second axis of China's policy was its rejecting any solution that would include their dual representation in United Nations – an option Beijing always rejected because it was clear that would legitimate Taiwan's *de jure* independence. Therefore any resolution to admit the PRC in UN, had to go in parallel with one pushing for the ousting of Taipei from the organization.

Albania joined the United Nations on 14 December, 1955, and immediately participated actively in all its related agencies. At the beginning, Albania acted in accordance with Soviet directives, and passively supported decisions made in the Kremlin. Following the Sino-Soviet and Soviet-Albanian split, however, Albania became active in using the United Nations as a stage from which to loudly speak out on international relations and the division of the world in spheres of influence between superpowers. As one scholar has noted, during the Cold War, the United Nations was 'the conspicuous and most highly publicized arena'.²²⁰ Albania's voice in this arena became even louder after 1961, when the alliance with China was consolidated. Representing China also had many benefits for Albania. Beyond the Chinese assistance it received for its role, Albania also acquired certain notoriety in the international scene that it had not enjoyed in at least four centuries. In addition, Albania tried to position itself to carry the banner of the struggle for liberation of nations across continents as it strongly supported the decolonization process. This process helped enormously to increase, year after year, the support for China in the UN. The new states became so numerous that, at a certain point, the Albanian ambassador noted how the UN had turned into a 'world exhibition'.²²¹ This activism

²¹⁸ Weng, *Peking's UN Policy*, 3.

²¹⁹ "Taiwan is one part of China, [Taiwan Est Une Partie De La Chine]", in AMPJ, V. 1960, D372, f.1-10.

²²⁰ Stoessinger, *The United Nations & the Superpowers: China, Russia & America*, xxiii. The quotations is not from the author but of Andrew Cordier (former UN official), who wrote the introduction to the first edition.

²²¹ Radiogram from New York, 20 September 1962, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1962, D503, f.8.

of Albania came to be useful to China, which used the network Albania had been building in UN, and beyond, to promote its policies and eventually also to join the UN. Now, during the Cultural Revolution, Albania's diplomatic network became almost the only channel to convey China's voice in international organizations. This situation was caused by two factors: first, Albania was ideologically China's closest ally; second, among China's supporters, Albania was also the most stable, with a consolidated diplomatic network, and was internationally recognized. This situation enabled China to use Albania's diplomatic network to promote its interests via what we can call surrogate diplomacy – although this term is not used by scholars in analyzing foreign policy and international relations, yet for a limited period and for some concerted tasks Albania did perform exactly as a surrogate for Beijing. Although China did not rely exclusively on Albania to promote its interests in forums where it was unrepresented, Albania remained the most active promoter of China until early 1970s.

The first time Albania presented a resolution in China's favor in the UN was in October 1963, in conjunction with many African and Asian states.²²² The *Journal-American*, a newspaper closed in 1966, called the resolution a challenge to the Soviet Union, reflecting both, Sino-Soviet and Albanian-Soviet tensions.²²³ In this same session, Albania presented to the UN General Secretary a declaration from the Chinese government advocating the total destruction of nuclear arms, and proposing an international conference of world leaders.²²⁴ China had made great efforts in the 1950s to possess nuclear technology, but the Soviet Union, which at the beginning had promised to help, eventually reneged its promise and withdrew all nuclear experts from China. Chinese declaration followed the meeting between the governments of the United States, United Kingdom, and Soviet Union, resulting in the agreement on the partial cessation of nuclear tests. China saw the agreement as an attempt by these countries to keep their monopoly of the world's nuclear weapons, rather than a genuine effort for peace, proposing instead the total destruction of the

²²² Seems that the suggestion to have other countries as co-authors came from the Syrian ambassador in UN, in a conversation he had with the Albanian ambassador. In, "Radiogram from New York to the foreign ministry, 26 September 1963", in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1963, D662/26, f.46.

²²³ The *Journal-American*, 17 September 1963, in *ibid.*, f.51.

²²⁴ New York, 20 September 1963, in *ibid.*, f.124.

nuclear arsenals.²²⁵ The declaration included a frontal attack on the Soviet Union, describing it as a country that ‘aligns with the forces of war against the forces of peace, allies with the imperialism to oppose socialism, allies with United States to oppose China’.²²⁶ The Soviet ambassador Andrei Gromyko and the American ambassador Adlai Stevenson had a long conversation, alleged to be very friendly, and allegedly to keep the Cold War outside the works of that session of the UN. When Albania raised the issue of China’s seat in the UN, in a speech on 16 October, 1963, the Soviet delegation stayed in complete silence, neither approving nor opposing, a silence which the *Journal-American* called a ‘a sign that shows the depth of the quarrel between Beijing and Moscow, a path towards a complete split between them’. The same interpretation was given by *New York Times*.²²⁷ In another analysis *The Post* considered that Beijing and Moscow were in a race for the leadership of the anti-colonialist countries, but ‘the more Soviet Union would try to isolate Beijing, the more China would want to join the United Nations’.²²⁸ All the debates in the General Assembly devolved into attacks between the American ambassador in the UN, Adlai Stevenson, and the foreign minister of Albania, Behar Shtylla. Certainly, Albania’s standing was very radical, even more than China requested it to be. Albanian diplomats used extreme language, often with direct offenses to the United States, but this was not enough to call much attention from Washington, which did not see Albania as a threat on the international stage. The reason behind the furious reaction of the American diplomats, rather, was China, which they mentioned in nearly every attack they directed at Albania. Adlai Stevenson, in a declaration to the press in 1963, correctly affirmed that ‘the foreign minister of Albania in this case was absolutely China’s spokesperson’.²²⁹

In 1964 instead, China faced another challenge in UN. The UN Commission for Decolonization discussed the territories of Macao and Hong Kong. China asked

²²⁵ “Declaration of the Chinese Government [Declaration du Gouvernement Chinois]”, 31 July 1963, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1963, D662/22, f.125-131.

²²⁶ Ibid., f.128.

²²⁷ Ibid., f.51-52.

²²⁸ *The Post*, 19.09.1963, in Ibid.

²²⁹ The text of Stevenson’s declaration to the press correspondents at UN regarding the speech of comrade Behar Shtylla of 27 September 1963, New York, 27 September 1963, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1963, D662/26, f.60-62.

Albania to defend Chinese claims over these territories. Consequently, Albania opposed the interference of the members of this commission in the issue of the decolonization of Macao and Hong Kong.²³⁰ China was a great supporter of the process of decolonization, but it feared that on the wave of the process worldwide, territories that Beijing claimed under its sovereignty could proclaim their independence as well. When the Albanian vice foreign minister Vasil Nathanaili met with the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, Xu Jianguo, the ambassador asked Albania to oppose any claim that these colonies be treated as colonial countries – as such subject to a process of independence. China's ultimate goal was their unification with the Mainland. It was a paradox: China preferred to keep Hong Kong and Macao under British rule, eventually negotiating later their return to China, rather than see Beijing's control precluded by their becoming independent cities.

During 1964, Albania had tried to mediate on behalf of China on different issues. For instance, on Beijing's request, Tirana asked the Turkish authorities to invite a trade delegation from China. This was a very sensitive issue, as Turkey held an important, delicate position in NATO, was a strong supporter of the United States, and had only recently improved relations with Tirana. In many other forums, Albania actively put forward China's interests in the agenda, such as in April 1964, at the Geneva conference for trade and development. The Albanian minister of foreign trade, Kiço Ngjela, asked the immediate ousting of the representative of Taiwan, and the consequent representation of the PRC. In the same time at the Universal Postal Union Congress, the Albanian delegate protested because of the lack of representation of China. The same happened at the World Health Assembly, where the representative of Albania opposed the credentials of the representative of Taiwan, but in the end it had little choice but to relent.²³¹ That same year Albania opposed the presence of Taiwan at the eighth conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In November 1965, the Chinese ambassador in Albania, Xu Jianguo, alarmed by the decision of the UN to open a debate in the General Assembly on the question of Tibet, asked Albania to oppose both the United States and India, which had both

²³⁰ "Information about the meeting of comrade Vasil Nathanaili with the Chinese ambassador Xu Jianguo, 07 October 1964", in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1964, D147, f.12-13.

²³¹ "On the relations [of Albania] with the People's Republic of China during 1964", in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1964, D163, f.56-57.

insisted on raising the issue, and to defend the PRC against attacks. The issue was not new for China. In August 1959, during the consultative preparatory meeting of the socialist countries in Sofia (Bulgaria), following the Tibetan turmoil, Chinese representatives brought the issue of Tibet to the attention of the entire socialist bloc. China was afraid that the United States might raise this question for discussion at the UN General Assembly. For China, behind all this was India, which according to Beijing had the full support of the United States. Beijing feared that the United States would also support India's eventual effort to transform Tibet into an international conflict, potentially compelling the UN to act against China.²³² The Albanian foreign ministry urged the Albanian diplomats in New York to make efforts to persuade Afro-Asian countries to oppose America, as China had expressly 'asked us to assist on this issue'.²³³

The support of Albania became even more precious because of the disagreements within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The NAM was a sequel of the Bandung meeting of 1955. One of the most relevant members of the movement was Egypt, the most important North African country at the time, ruled in 1960 by Nasser (Gamal Abdel). Nasser attempted to organize a second conference, after Bandung's model, possibly in Cairo, and tried to convince Nehru, the Indian premier, to improve the relations with Zhou Enlai in order to involve China as well. But Nehru opposed the organizing of this conference, as it would be perceived as an anti-American event. Nehru instead promoted a movement of the non-aligned countries later the same year.²³⁴ This was confirmed only some months later by the Chinese ambassador in Berlin in a conversation with the Albanian ambassador.²³⁵ Later, during 1961, this conference was organized in Cairo as a meeting of the neutral countries, which China, it seems, did not appreciate because of the contradictions among the participating countries. This meeting indeed served as a

²³² "Report on the consultative meeting of the socialist countries delegations to share views on the 14th session of the general assembly of the UN that is going to begin in New York on 15 September 1959", in AMPJ, V. 1959, D354, f.10. Tibet remained a factor of American policy towards China even after the Sino-American normalization. See, Dongdong Tian, *The Tibet Issue in Sino-American Relations: United States Policy Making since Rapprochement*, (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University, 1995).

²³³ Radiogram from Beijing, (Albanian embassy), 02 November 1965, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1965, D408 (608), f.7.

²³⁴ Radiogram of the Albanian embassy in Cairo, 21 March 1961, in AMPJ, V. 1961, D410, f.45.

²³⁵ Radiogram of the Albanian embassy in Berlin, 15 May 1961, in AMPJ, V. 1961, D422, f.6.

preparatory meeting for the foundation of one of the most debated organizations during the Cold War, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), founded in Belgrade in the meeting of the neutral countries in 1961.²³⁶ The only positive fact for China, at least according to Beijing's ambassador in Berlin, was Cuba's participation, since Cuba was clearly a country that opposed the United States.²³⁷

The disunity of this movement was noted by China's diplomats, who divided the participants into three groups: first, those that served the American interests, such as India and Yugoslavia; second, those that could oppose the American policy but were weak, such as Cuba, Mali and Algeria; third, those countries that moved right and left according to different interests, such as Indonesia and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).²³⁸ In Belgrade, in the founding meeting of the NAM in early September 1961, the Egyptian correspondent noted that to have a joint declaration 'not even 50 days would be necessary considering the very different content of each delegation's speech'.²³⁹ The contradictions among the organizers were confirmed also by the Chinese diplomats in Cairo, who, speaking with the Albanian ambassador, confirmed NAM's division into three groups: the right-leaning group headed by Tito-Nehru, the centrist group led by Sukarno-Nasser, and the small left-leaning group headed by Cuba.²⁴⁰ Some years later, in 1967, the Syrian diplomats in Paris, talking to the Albanian ambassador, affirmed that the non-aligned bloc was finished when 'Nehru died, pushing India in America's arms... and Nasser is trapped in the Yemenite war'.²⁴¹ These contradictions often made the support of these countries for China uncertain – or if they were certain – weak. Even more so during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

²³⁶ Rakove, *Two Roads to Belgrade*; Mišković, Fischer-Tiné, and Boškowska Leimgruber, *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War*; Lorenz M. Lüthi, "The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War, 1961–1973", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 18, no. 4 (2016): 98–147; Pramila Srivastava, Govind Narain Srivastava, eds., *Non-Aligned Movement: Extending Frontiers*, (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, 2001); Peter Willetts, *The Non-Aligned Movement: The Origins of a Third World Alliance*, (London: Pinter, 1978).

²³⁷ Radiogram of the Albanian embassy in Berlin, 14 June 1961, AMPJ, V. 1961, D422, f.23.

²³⁸ Report from the meeting, 26 August 1961, in *ibid.*, f.41-43.

²³⁹ Radiogram from the Albanian legation in Belgrade, 05 September 1961, in AMPJ, V. 1961, D422, f.62.

²⁴⁰ Radiogram from the Albanian embassy in Berlin, November 1961, in *ibid.*, f.86.

²⁴¹ Radiogram from Paris, 10 April 1967, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1967, D300, f.1-2.

In December 1965, during the Twentieth General Assembly of the UN, the question of Tibet was again included in the agenda. Following Chinese instructions, Albania rejected the mere existence of a ‘question of Tibet’ and any discussion on this issue was deemed meaningless.²⁴² For Albania, Tibet was a place where ‘until recently people lived in conditions of total slavery and indescribable misery... but at that time the representatives of Nicaragua, Philippines and Salvador [promoters of the issue in UN, supported by the US] never showed any concern about the human rights in Tibet’.²⁴³ Then, the Albanian delegate warned that, by becoming American spokespersons, would not save these countries from eventual American aggression if any their policies would not align to American interests in the future.²⁴⁴ On the other hand, the Albanian minister praised China for its great achievements in improving the lives of the people in Tibet. He mentioned the agrarian reform and the investments in agriculture, education, and infrastructure, generally improving the living standards, specifically in the building of a network of health care centers, and increasing the number of Tibetan cadres. The minister declared that if there would be a country about which the UN should debate on human rights, ‘there is no need to go far since it is just in our face, here in the United States where 20 million black people are continuously discriminated against’.²⁴⁵ Since speculations over the human rights in Tibet proliferated, China allowed a number of foreign correspondents to visit the region in summer 1965.²⁴⁶ They could visit only places where the Chinese government granted permission, and Albanian correspondents, aimed at disproving

²⁴² “Speech of comrade Behar Shtylla at the General Assembly on 24 September 1965, that opposed putting in the agenda of the 20th session of the so-called question of Tibet”, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1965, D397/1, f.9-12.

²⁴³ Ibid., f.10.

²⁴⁴ The warning of the Albanian minister seems prophetic considering the American military intervention in some of these countries years later. See, among others, Susan Eikov Green and Andrew MacMillan, *Witness to History. U.S. Intervention in Latin America*, (Alexander Street Press. World History in Video, 1987); Max Hilaire, *International Law and the United States Military Intervention in the Western Hemisphere*, (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997); For a historical perspective of the American military interventions against sovereign countries see Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America’s Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, 1st ed., (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2006).

²⁴⁵ AMPJ, OKB, V. 1965, D397/1, f.11; On the discrimination and the emancipation of the black population in US see, among many studies, Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004).

²⁴⁶ Radiogram from Beijing, (Albanian Embassy), 02/09/1965, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1965, D408, f.1.

what they called American defamations of China, wrote enthusiastic articles about Tibet.

During all these years Albania also strongly attacked the American intervention in Vietnam.²⁴⁷ In many meetings with Chinese officials Albanian officials talked about Vietnam and about the American aggression, but China did not ask for any Albanian concrete support on this issue. The reason might be the fact that Vietnam was also supported by Soviet Union, and in the UN, Moscow had more power than the other socialist countries. The Albanian speeches in favor of the Vietnamese cause, however, can also be explained as an attempt by China to accredit Beijing with a certain role, since China provided enormous assistance to North Vietnam, as it considered all Indochina to be of strategic importance for its own national security, because of geographical proximity, and historical links. The permanent representative of Albania in the UN, Halim Budo, in a speech addressed to the General Assembly on 17 December 1965, attacked American policy in Vietnam, using the same arguments reflected in Chinese documents relayed to Albania, but with a characteristic Albanian combative tone. The speech was full of contempt against the United States for ‘trying to use this tribune for their aggressive purposes... keeping away the public opinion from the serious problems of our time... concerned instead of reducing the wave of indignation for the barbarian aggression against Vietnam’.²⁴⁸

In June 1966, just some months before the Twenty-first UN General Assembly, Albania, Cambodia and Algeria, together with other countries, coordinated to promote again the inclusion in the agenda of the question of the PRC’s representation in UN.²⁴⁹ Although likely untrue, a Cambodian representative sustained that his government did not consult China about its initiative to promote China’s rights in the UN, and queried if Zhou Enlai during his visit to Albania, in June 1966, had expressed any change of policy.²⁵⁰ Indeed something new was expressed in Tirana

²⁴⁷ “The Speech of comrade Behar Shtylla at the General Assembly on 05 October 1965”, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1965, D397/1, f.20-23.

²⁴⁸ “The speech of comrade Halim Budo on Tibet, addressed to the General Assembly, 17 December 1965”, in *ibid.*, f.122-123.

²⁴⁹ Radiogram from New York to the foreign ministry, 16 June 1966, in AMPJ, OKB, V.1966, D235, f.87-91; Radiogram to the Mission in New York, 09 July 1966, in *ibid.*, f.95.

²⁵⁰ This was, according to the Albanian ambassador, the response of the Cambodian representative to the question of the Guinea’s ambassador, who had asked if Cambodia had had the approval from

but not from Zhou Enlai, rather than it was from the Charge d'Affaires of China in Albania, who in a meeting with an official of the foreign ministry had said that China would not join the UN regardless of the result of this year's vote, 'as long as that organization would remain under American control'.²⁵¹ In this way, he implied as well that any resolution in China's favor would fail. This position however, reflected the self-inflicted isolation of Beijing from the first year of the Cultural Revolution in China. In any case, the Albanian delegation in the UN was instructed to defend the Chinese Cultural Revolution in accordance 'with the speech of Enver Hoxha', to the congress of the party.²⁵² In 1966 information warned Albania of a coming Canadian initiative seeking proper resolution of the PRC's recognition in the UN, without removing Taiwan's seat, in harmony with the American plan for two Chinas.²⁵³ According to the Canadian ambassador, their initiative was aimed at 'provoking negotiations between China and the United States', because 'the situation is so tense that either they negotiate or there would be a war between China and America'.²⁵⁴ Although the Albanian initiative was joined and supported by other countries, such as Cambodia and Algeria, their stances differed in modality and language. During the talks of the authors among the authors of the resolution, Albania claimed that the text of the "Memoire Explicative" was weak, so it pressured the group to make some changes, possibly using the strong language Albania was familiar with. In particular, the non-aligned countries, such as Cambodia, did not accept the Albanian suggestion to refer Taiwan as 'the Chang Kai-shek Clique', opting instead to adopt the formula of 'the representatives of the pseudo regime of Chang Kai-shek'.²⁵⁵ Albania also lamented resistance from some countries – which in the document are mentioned as 'mainly African countries, Algeria included' – to attack the American 'aggressive

Beijing. Eventually the Guinean ambassador asked directly China. In AMPJ, OKB, V. 1966, D235, f.88 & f.95; Radiogram from New York, 05 July 1966, in *ibid.*, f.94.

²⁵¹ "Information about the meeting with the Charge d'Affaires of China", 16 July 1966, in *ibid.*, f.97.

²⁵² Radiogram from Tirana to the Mission, 15 November 1966, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1966, D235, f.148-149.

²⁵³ Radiogram from New York, 19 August 1966, in *ibid.*, f.117-118.

²⁵⁴ Radiogram from New York, 25 November 1966, in *ibid.*, f.154-155.

²⁵⁵ The Cambodian representative told the Albanian representative that he had "clear instructions from his government to not accept this term", in *ibid.*, f.11.

policy against China'.²⁵⁶ Albania, based on China's arguments, sustained that the United States had invaded Taiwan, and therefore, had invaded China. Albania was not optimistic about the votes China would receive in this session, mainly because of 'the changes that have occurred in some African countries due to the military coups supported by the United States'.²⁵⁷ Ultimately, the resolution in favor of China was rejected, 46 countries voting for it, 57 against. It is interesting to note the remark of the Albanian ambassador to his ministry in Tirana after the vote. He considered the work of United States to oppose China easier that year 'probably due to the internal situation in China', alluding to the Cultural Revolution and all the inertia it had created in China's diplomacy and foreign affairs.²⁵⁸ In this session, those that voted against China included some countries that had supported it the year before, such as Morocco, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, Congo, Ruanda, and Libya. The newly admitted members, Lesotho and Guyana, also voted against China, while Burundi and Senegal, having abstained the previous year, supported China in 1966.²⁵⁹

During 1967, China entered its second year of the Cultural Revolution, which further paralyzed its diplomacy. In June 1967, Pakistan and Mauritania joined as co-authors of the resolution for China's readmission into UN.²⁶⁰ In the discussions among the co-authors, Albania disagreed with Algeria which promoted the use of a conciliatory language. Albania proposed mentioning Taiwanese representatives as 'the clique of Chang Kai-shek', rather than the Algerian version of 'the regime of Chang Kai-shek', but at the end, Albania had the support of Congo, Mali and Guinea and its proposal passed.²⁶¹ Albania and Algeria also opposed each other over the Albanian suggestion to emphasize China's respect for sovereignty of the other countries and its policy of non-intervention in their internal affairs. Algeria proposed

²⁵⁶ Radiogram from Albanian Mission in New York to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 02 August 1966, in *ibid.*, f.110, f.99 & f.110.

²⁵⁷ "On the question of the restoration of the lawful right of China in UN", in *ibid.*, f.109.

²⁵⁸ Radiogram from the Albanian Mission in New York to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 November 1966, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1966, D235, f.166-167.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, f.168-169.

²⁶⁰ Radiogram from New York to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 August 1967, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1967, D358, f.10; "The question of the representation of China. Conclusions from the meeting of the co-authors at the Mission of Cambodia, 13 August 1967", in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1967, D358, f.17. See also, Radiogram from New York, 08 June 1967, in *ibid.*, f.4-5.

²⁶¹ Radiogram from the Albanian Mission in New York, 30 August 1967, in *ibid.*, f.11.

to avoid any similar mention in light of what had happened in Beijing, where as a result of the turmoil the British embassy had been set on fire, and a British journalist held hostage.²⁶² But for Albania, precisely because of these events, China needed to be defended even more. Finally, the Albanian suggestion passed because of the support of the African countries. It is worth noting that among the communist countries, only Albania was active in defending China. Romania, which participated as a co-author of the resolution, barely said a word during the discussions between Algeria and Albania over the content of the documents.²⁶³ Preparing for these meetings, the Albanian foreign ministry instructed the Albanian delegates to the UN that the documents (resolution and memoire explicative) should not leave space to any interpretation that alludes to a possible isolation of China in the international community. For this reason, the Albanian ambassador proposed to remove the part of the document in which China was described as a ‘victim’ of American expansionism, instead emphasizing that ‘our governments did not stop the denouncing of the aggressive policies against China’.²⁶⁴ By the end of the meeting, all the Albanian remarks had been accepted by the authors and incorporated into the documents, and the resolution. Yet, these small disagreements were a symptom of the larger divide that existed between Albania, as a communist country, and the Third World countries – although Albania never accepted the Three World’s theory. But they also show that through the first phase of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Albania remained faithfully on China’s side, supporting its interests internationally.

Conclusion

Although the Sino-Albanian relations during 1962-1970 saw some mutual distrust and persistent attrition, this was the most fruitful period of the alliance. The attrition came about due to China’s contradictory policy, at least in Albania’s eyes, toward the Soviet Union, at times conciliatory and at times inflammatory. If the change of leadership in the Soviet Union was seen as a chance for China to better relations with Moscow, Albania instead was determined to avoid any rapprochement. Moreover,

²⁶² Anthony Grey, *Hostage in Peking*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1970).

²⁶³ Radiogram from the Albanian Mission in New York, 30 August 1967, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1967, D358, f.13.

²⁶⁴ Radiogram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Albanian Mission in New York, 02 September 1967, in *ibid.*, f.15.

from Hoxha's perspective, there was no reason for rapprochement with Moscow when there had already been efforts to breach the Soviet leadership of the international communist movement. In this sense, Albania had moved forward in capturing small movements and leftist parties that supported the Chinese line. Fortunately for Hoxha, the combination of the assertive policies of Brezhnev and the radicalization of China, which resulted in the Cultural Revolution, kept China and Albania tied together. Albania had decided to promote China as an alternative to Soviet leadership within the international communist movement. Although fully aware that this objective was difficult to achieve, Albania claimed an active role for China and defended China in international forums and international organizations – chiefly, the United Nations.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution had initially confused Albanian leaders – for a moment they even feared China might turn revisionist – but when the domestic turmoil further isolated China, Albania clearly recognized, and seized, the opportunity for economic and political benefits. Yet this event did reveal some of the divergences between the two allies that would resurface later. Albania did not accept any revision of the Stalinist dogma, therefore any Chinese claim of Mao's thought as an original contribution to communism was met with skepticism. Hoxha's ideological inflexibility pushed China to look for common grounds to accommodate Albania's expectations. Eventually, Albania and China found a common understanding: China assured Albania of its antirevisionist (anti-Soviet) course, Albania consequently supported more than ever China within the international communist movement, and on the international stage. In turn China provided Albania with an exceptional amount of economic and military aid. Nonetheless, Albania did not imitate China, and its Cultural Revolution was similar to the Chinese one in the shape and in terms of public discourse, but different in practice. The Albanian political system was dominated by one man, who had purged and executed most of his comrades, and who now had no rivals. His control over the party (and the country) was complete, and his ideology – a mix of nationalism and Marxism – faced no challenges by any other line within the power system. In Albania, with no revisionists to contend, the Cultural Revolution could address more practical goals. Albania's Cultural Revolution was a struggle for total control of the party. The Chinese one instead was a struggle within the party, defined by an inter-party

ideological struggle. Therefore, the two cultural revolutions were connected, but had more differences than similarities. Although there is no evidence that China put pressure on Albania to promote the Cultural Revolution, certainly many facts show that China at least succeeded in persuading Albania that the Cultural Revolution would be beneficial. The Chinese Cultural Revolution put Sino-Albanian relations to the test, which they passed successfully, and the alliance lasted for another ten years.

In this period, the Chinese assistance transformed Albania into a construction site, building hundreds of kilometers of railways, tens of new factories, industrial projects, and hydropower plants, and reshaping the agriculture. In a short period of time, Albania pursued, and attained forced economic industrialization, and paradoxically achieved higher living standards than even China, thanks to Chinese aid.

China assured Albania's military defense through the provision of an unprecedented amount of armaments. This assistance did not dictate any predetermined military strategy to Albania, because for Beijing, Albania was not of strategic military interest, therefore the Chinese leadership never went beyond providing some suggestions – at least partially aimed at containing the high requests. This is understandable considering the different role Albania played for China as compared to the Soviet Union. For the Soviets, especially after the Tito-Stalin rift, Albania was a strategic outpost of the communist bloc in Southeastern Europe, whereas for China, the alliance with Albania was important politically, but not militarily, or strategically. Therefore this different role, together with the geographical distance, shaped the alliance and the military assistance. Albania was interested in arming itself, and it did not serve the interests of China to assist in that process, whereas in the case of the Soviet Union, it was prudent to arm the Albanians and to maintain a military base in their country (the naval base of Vlora), for its proximity to the NATO bases in Italy. In this way, the Soviet Union had its only military base in the Adriatic coast. The Soviet Union, at least under Stalin, was interested in using Hoxha to balance Tito, whereas, to China, this aspect was irrelevant. Nonetheless, China showed great readiness to defend Albania from its real or perceived threats.

PART THREE

THE END, 1971-1978

CHAPTER FIVE

CHINA MOVES WEST, 1971-1974

Introduction

The first years of the Chinese Cultural Revolution were a golden period for Hoxha to maximize the benefits of his relations with China by exploiting China's isolation from the international community. Economically, the period from 1966 to 1974-5 was the most fruitful for Albania. Politically, the Chinese Cultural Revolution seemed to guarantee the continuation of the left turn in Mao's policies in China. This had, in Hoxha's eyes, reinforced the revolutionary path in China. No matter mass mobilization used to purge adversaries, Mao, the Albanians were convinced, had pursued the Marxist line and defeated revisionism in China. For Hoxha, this meant a further radicalization that reaffirmed their common ideological struggle against the Soviet Union's revisionism. Albanian leaders could all but have expected the drastic turn in China's foreign policy at the beginning of the 1970s, least of all normalization with the United States. Hoxha was shocked by hearing of the direct communication between Chinese and American leaders. He would not accept Mao's policy of balancing the Soviet Union with the United States. In fact, he did not believe what Chinese leaders then seemed convinced of – the Soviet military attack against China following the border military clashes between the two countries.

The Chinese decision to engage in direct talks at the highest level with United States came without notifying Hoxha. Once he came to know of Henry Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing, and the decision to receive the American President Nixon in China, Hoxha realized that Albania had begun losing the importance it had for China, together with all this implied. Hoxha's disappointment, which reflected a veiled despair, was expressed in his letter addressed personally to Mao – a plea to reconsider receiving Nixon. To Hoxha's dismay, Mao completely ignored the letter, deigning not even to return correspondence. Hoxha's letter can show how far removed from the realities of international relations he was at this time, in abject denial of his country's isolation. Mao's response (lack of it) to the letter, meanwhile, shows how strongly he had started to embrace openness, in a way, rectifying his mistakes and missed opportunities as the leader of the world's largest population.

Mao's decision not only balanced the Soviet threat, but shaped China's policy for decades to come, although only after his death would China fully open its doors. Yet for the time Mao was alive, a feeble hope remained in Albanian leadership for another possible "turn left" for China. The Tenth CCP Congress, which praised the Cultural Revolution, and the campaign against Lin Biao, were interpreted in this sense in Tirana. However, even though the political relations between China and Albania begun deteriorating, China's openness to the West obligated Hoxha to revise Albania's priorities. In fact, seeing that China was losing the ideological Marxist solidity Hoxha so dearly treasured, he prioritized the economic relations with China – at least as far as China's reorientation of its international relations did not negatively affect Chinese economic assistance to Albania.

From Tension to Distension in China's International Relations

In May 1969 the newly appointed Chinese ambassador in Albania, Geng Biao, visited Enver Hoxha during the latter's vacation in Vlora. China could not have chosen a better person for such role in Albania in that period. Geng Biao was an old revolutionary who had fought in the war against Japan, and was untouched by the purges of the Cultural Revolution.¹ In his long meeting with Hoxha, including also a lunch, the conversation between Biao and Hoxha centered on the struggle against Soviet revisionism, American imperialism and Yugoslavian Titoism. Hoxha's lingering obsessions with these issues reflected Albania's political stagnation. The ambassador informed Hoxha that the Cultural Revolution in China 'is over, but perhaps needs one year to definitively triumph'. Hoxha reinforced that 'we consider this experience [the Cultural Revolution] a great treasure, a colossal experience from which we all should learn'.² Hoxha panegyricized Mao and China, and Geng endorsed this adoration in his notes. But Hoxha seized again the opportunity to remind the ambassador of Albania's support in the Sino-Soviet territorial disputes. These disputes nearly brought the Soviet Union and China to war when they resulted in

¹ Larry M. Wortzel and Robin Higham, *Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese Military History*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1999), 103–104.

² "The meeting of the First Secretary of the PLA CC, comrade Enver Hoxha, with the ambassador of the People's Republic of China, comrade Geng Biao, in Vlora [city in South Albania], 25 May 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D5, f.6-9.

armed clashes at the Ussuri River in March 1969.³ The tension was high because, among others, Moscow ‘encouraged the belief that it was ready to launch war with China that could begin with a nuclear strike’.⁴ Following the first border clashes, Albania denounced the Soviet Union as the instigator of the disputes and the aggressor of China.

The first step in resolving these disputes was a short meeting at the Beijing airport between the Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin and Zhou Enlai. Kosygin stopped at Beijing’s airport on 11 September 1969, on his way back to Moscow from the funeral of Ho Chi Min in Vietnam. This meeting coincided with the Beijing meeting of Rita Marko, an Albanian Politburo member, with Kang Sheng, who informed Marko that ‘while we are speaking here, at the airport should have arrived Kosygin to speak with our officials’.⁵ Later, Zhou Enlai also briefed Marko on his meeting with Kosygin. Marko, reflecting both Albania’s fear of any Sino-Soviet distension, and political inflexibility in international relations, affirmed that ‘I think this meeting was completely inappropriate’. Zhou Enlai, who was not new to opposing Albanian officials, retorted ‘you [Albanians] are too much extremists... Stalin talked even to Ribbentrop’. Zhou’s remark on Albanian extremism was relatively accurate, if so was Marko’s report to Hoxha. Marko had gone to Beijing at the invitation of Li Xiannian, after they had met in Hanoi at the funeral of Ho Chi Minh. After landing in Hanoi, Li Xiannian requested to meet Marko, to warn him that they each would likely come face to face with Kosygin during the funeral ceremony, and in that case perhaps they should shake hands with the Soviet leader. Marko opposed firmly even this simple gesture, claiming that ‘considering the events [border clashes] Soviet

³ An, *The Sino-Soviet Territorial Dispute*, 58–121; Peter S. H. Tang, “Sino-Soviet Territorial Disputes: Past and Present”, *The Russian Review* 28, no. 4 (1969): 403–415; Neville Maxwell, “A Note on the Amur/Ussuri Sector of the Sino-Soviet Boundaries”, *Modern China* 1, no. 1 (1975): 116–126; Lyle J. Goldstein, “Return to Zhenbao Island: Who Started Shooting and Why It Matters”, *The China Quarterly*, no. 168 (2001): 985–997.

⁴ Neville Maxwell, “How the Sino-Russian Boundary Conflict Was Finally Settled: From Nerchinsk 1689 to Vladivostok 2005 via Zhenbao Island 1969”, *Critical Asian Studies* 39, no. 2 (June 2007): 249. The author makes a historical short review of all the Sino-Soviet territorial disputes and how they finally were settled. For China’s approach to these disputes in early Cold War see Zhihua Shen and Julia Lovell, “Undesired Outcomes: China’s Approach to Border Disputes during the Early Cold War”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2015): 89–111.

⁵ “From the conversation of comrade Rita Marko with comrade Kang Sheng and others in Beijing, 11 September 1969”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D7, f.4; “Notes from the meeting of comrade Rita Marko with comrade Zhou Enlai in Beijing, 14 September 1969”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D8.

Union is your enemy, therefore shaking hands with them is unjust'. On 9 September, 1969, the day of Ho Chi Minh's funeral, Li Xiannian and Kosygin did come face to face during the ceremony. Kosygin stretched his hand to Li, who refused to shake it and instead turned the other direction, under the vigilant eye of Marko – this is at least what Marko reported to Hoxha.⁶

In Beijing, however, Zhou Enlai assured Marko that in his meeting with Kosygin at the airport, 'there was nothing of party questions, but interstate issues... our polemic in the field of ideology will continue', in a way alleviating Albanian concerns that the Sino-Soviet tension on border disputes could turn into an opportunity for a revision of the Sino-Soviet relations altogether, possibly resulting in rapprochement.⁷ So high was the fear of such possibility that Hoxha instructed one of his secretaries that was about to visit China in September 1969, to air his many grievances over the Zhou-Kosygin meeting.⁸ Hoxha opposed any and all talks with the Soviets, although he affirmed 'it is right to have talks, but not at this high level'. To the Chinese argument that this was a tactical meeting, he countered his vague one that 'history has proved that those that are fascists [the Soviets] cannot be tricked with tactics'. Moreover, Hoxha doubted also of the Chinese claims that Soviet Union could unleash war against China, and that, already, 70 Soviet divisions had been moved to their border. 'Soviet Union has in all 150 divisions, some of its divisions are in Europe, some in Soviet Union, how could be possible to move war to China with 70 divisions?'. Hoxha concluded that 'Chinese leaders are predisposed to help the Soviet revisionist traitors, they are in favor of large scale friendly relations with Soviet Union'. Yet Hoxha warned that in talking with Chinese leaders 'we should consider the great socialist interests, but also our internal political economic interests... We have not been in agreement with Chinese leaders even in the past, but

⁶ Tirana, 19 September 1969: "Top-Secret: Notes from the verbal report given to comrade Enver Hoxha by comrade Rita Marko, 19 September 1969, who led the Albanian delegation to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to participate at the funeral ceremony of Ho Chi Minh", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D9, f.11-43.

⁷ "Top-Secret: Notes from the meeting of comrade Rita Marko with comrade Zhou Enlai in Beijing, 14 September 1969", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D8, f.1-3.

⁸ Eventually Haki Toska expressed Albanian's contrariety of the meeting Zhou Enlai-Kosygin. Yet the meeting between Haki Toska and Zhou Enlai was overall positive. See "Memorandum of conversation in Beijing, 09 October 1969, between the Albanian delegation headed by Haki Toska, that went to China on occasion of the celebrations for the twenty years of the proclamation of the PRC, and the Chinese delegation headed by Zhou Enlai, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D11, f.27-29.

we thought that things improved. The way how Zhou Enlai poses these questions means that our disagreements with them are deep, therefore if they continue on this way we will certainly confront with them because these are essential questions of line'. In the past Hoxha had also criticized Zhou Enlai and, as discussed in previous chapters, the two had debated important ideological issues. However, Hoxha had then rested assured that Mao remained the ultimate decider of China's political course. Now instead, Marko reported that 'from what I could see, Zhou Enlai is in charge in all fields'.⁹ This could have raised suspicions in Hoxha – who allowed nothing without his personal approval – that Zhou could pursue a proper agenda in China's relations with Soviet Union.

The fact is that Mao remained strongly in command of China's agenda, but he had left in the capable hands of Zhou Enlai the everyday goings-on of the country, trusting him to mitigate the negative impact of the Cultural Revolution's turmoil. Zhou Enlai eventually reassured Albania, in his talks with Haki Toska in Beijing, that 'we [China] will continue the struggle against modern [Soviet] revisionism'.¹⁰ In June 1970, the minister of security of Albania, Kadri Hazbiu, met with Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng in Beijing. Some days earlier, they had also met with a Romanian delegation. According to Zhou Enlai, the Romanians had asked the Chinese to assist them in building their military industry, in a cooperative effort that would include Albania. This came after Hoxha, in a tour of northern Albania, bordering Yugoslavia, had affirmed that in case of Soviet attack to Yugoslavia or Romania, Albania would not hesitate to stand at their defense. The Albanian minister noted how Hoxha's speeches have been understood 'as a larger policy of openness and collaboration with these countries... [but] these [are] illusions'.¹¹ Had such policy been pursued by Albania, Zhou Enlai would most likely have seized the opportunity to disengage from Albania's requests for military supplies, if not their collaboration as a whole. But Zhou might have also interpreted Hoxha's speeches as a reorientation of

⁹ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D9, f.21, f.33, f.39, f.42.

¹⁰ "Top-Secret: The meeting of comrade Enver Hoxha with comrade Haki Toska, 14 October 1969, who led the Albanian delegation in China on occasion of the celebrations for the twenty years of the foundations of the People's Republic of China", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1969, D13, f.15.

¹¹ "Short summary of the conversation between comrades Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, and Kadri Hazbiu and Xhorxhi Robo [Albanian ambassador in China], Beijing, 16 June 1970", in AQSH, F14, AP-MPKK, V. 1970, D5, f.10.

Albania's foreign policy towards a feeble openness. Eventually no steps were taken in this direction anyway.

China did not pursue any rapprochement with the Soviet Union that Hoxha had feared; in fact the two remained inimical toward one another. However, and because of the tension with Soviet Union, Beijing drastically reoriented its policy towards United States – which to Hoxha came as a complete shock. Regardless of the meeting between Zhou Enlai and Kosygin, China continued, from 1969 to the early months of 1970, to believe that the Soviet Union posed a nuclear threat. For this reason, Mao had instructed his four marshals, Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian, and Nie Rongzhen to evaluate the possibilities of war. In this context, the United States sent some signals of overture to China, in particular, resuming their ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, but also of normalization of the relations in general.¹² Initially, the Chinese marshals put the United States and Soviet Union on the same front as equally serious enemies.¹³ But when the Soviets followed the Zhenbao Island incident (eastern Sino-Soviet border) in March 1969 with an attack on the border in Tielieketi in August of that year, (in the western Sino-Soviet border), it 'pushed the four marshals, as well as Mao and other Chinese leaders, to reconsider the necessity of playing the American card'. Subsequently, they differentiated their enemies, and discussed the necessity 'to ally with the less dangerous enemy in order to confront the more dangerous enemy'.¹⁴ In the United States, President Richard Nixon arrived at the same conclusion that '...in the existing circumstances, the Soviet Union was the more dangerous party'.¹⁵ This was the most radical departure in Chinese foreign policy since the PRC's foundation, but also a departure in American policy from the 1960s when following the Sino-Soviet split, Washington had 'considered forming an alignment with the Soviet Union against China'. For the American policy under Richard Nixon, the rapprochement with

¹² Yang Kuisong, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969: From Zhenbao Island to Sino-American Rapprochement", *Cold War History*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2000): 44.

¹³ Report by Four Chinese Marshals, Chen Yi, Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian, and Nie Rongzhen, to the Central Committee, "A Preliminary Evaluation of the War Situation" (excerpt), 11 July 1969.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117146.pdf?v=81762c8101f0d237b21dca691c5824e4> (last access, 23 April 2017).

¹⁴ Yang Kuisong, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969", 45.

¹⁵ Henry Kissinger, *On China*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 218.

China served to ‘end the war in Vietnam, and promote détente with Soviet Union’.¹⁶ Talks between the United States and China had been taking place since 1953 at irregular intervals in Warsaw.¹⁷ But for Henry Kissinger, who was the key protagonist of the Sino-American rapprochement, before the early 1970s, due to Mao’s radicalism – his refusal of the peaceful coexistence, and his concept of continuous revolution – rapprochement with China had been impossible.¹⁸

In the early 1970s, Kissinger, initiating the first direct talks with the PRC, ordered the American ambassador in Warsaw ‘to approach Chinese diplomats... the occasion was the Yugoslav fashion show in Warsaw’.¹⁹ Eventually two teams of negotiators met in Warsaw on 20 February, and on 20 March, 1970. These talks did not result in major changes but they opened the door to further developments resulting in Nixon’s call, during his trip to Pakistan and Romania in July 1970, for ‘high level exchanges with China’.²⁰ In September 1970, the Albanian vice Premier Abdyl Këllezhi met with Mao. Mao, at a certain point in talking about Nixon’s visits in Europe stated that ‘before dying, Nixon wants to visit China’. Këllezhi did not grasp Mao’s remark, and affirmed that ‘if he comes here he would be beheaded’. But, for Mao, was ‘not exactly what would happen, because if he comes here means he wants something. The Americans say that Warsaw is not anymore the appropriate location where to have talks... Then we told them to come here to Beijing’. Mao was trying to dig into Albania’s thought on what he already had decided would happen in the near future. He continued querying his country’s closest ally, asking Këllezhi ‘do you think there is more contradictions or more possibility for collaboration between United States and Soviet Union?’. But Mao realized that there was not much to glean from his Albanian friend’s mind when Këllezhi responded that ‘in the struggle against

¹⁶ Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972*, (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1992), 23–24, 36.

¹⁷ Kenneth Todd Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists: The United States Experience, 1953-1967*, (New York: published for the Council on Foreign Relations by McGraw-Hill, 1968).

¹⁸ Henry Kissinger, *On China*, 2011, 197–200; For an account of the events from an American perspective see also John Holdridge, who was a protagonist working under Henry Kissinger. John H. Holdridge, *Crossing the Divide: An Insider’s Account of Normalization of U.S.–China Relations*, (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997).

¹⁹ Kissinger, *On China*, 221.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 222–225.

China, against Albania and the revolution, their collaboration is clear'.²¹ The events that followed showed that the opposite was true.

China signaled its openness in October 1970, when Mao gave an interview to Edgar Snow, who had been granted occasional preferential access to Mao since 1936, followed by Snow's book on Mao.²² Mao, according to Kissinger, pronounced revolutionary words in his interview to Snow, which was published months later, but Kissinger admitted that the United States did not grasp the meaning of Mao's words. Mao in fact stated that even Nixon 'would be welcome, either as a tourist or as a president'.²³ However, beyond ideological considerations, the biggest obstacle to Sino-American direct talks was the question of Taiwan, which eventually China and the United States chose to put aside. In Washington, in January 1971, a message through Romania arrived from Zhou Enlai, affirming that President Nixon would be welcomed in Beijing.²⁴ The United States ignored the invitation for the President, but welcomed direct talks. But then it was China which, for some time, did not respond, until an American table tennis (Ping-pong) team participated in an international tournament in Japan. Mao seized this opportunity and invited the American team to visit Beijing, which eventually they did in mid-April 1971, giving life to what became known as the "Ping-Pong diplomacy".²⁵ Then, in late April 1971, Zhou Enlai, through Pakistan, sent a message to Washington inviting an American

²¹ "Minutes of conversation between Mao Zedong and Abdyl Kellezi, 28 September 1970", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1970, D7, f.68-78.

²² Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, Rev. and enlarged ed, Pelican Books, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, c1937).

²³ Edgar Snow, "A Conversation with Mao Tse-Tung" *Life* 70, no. 16, (30 April 1971), 47, in Kissinger, *On China*, 226.

²⁴ Kissinger, *On China*, 230.

²⁵ Nicholas Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History behind the Game That Changed the World*, (New York: Scribner, 2014). The study is centered on the figure of Igor Montagu, a British table tennis player, who founded the International Table Tennis Federation, and was also a communist activist; Mayumi Itoh, *The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Forgotten Architect of Sino-U.S. Rapprochement*, 1st ed., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). According to this study instead, without the determination and decision of Gotō Kōji, president of the Japan Table Tennis Federation, to have the Chinese team in the competition, the Ping-Pong Diplomacy would have not been possible. The author gives the definition of Ping-Pong Diplomacy: "the use of table-tennis tournaments as a diplomatic vehicle during the Nagoya's World's in 1971, which paved the way for Sino-US rapprochement in 1972". It gives also a wider definition: "the employment of international table tennis tournaments as a diplomatic tool to break the stalemate in relations among nations where the official diplomatic channels are absent or stalled" (both definitions in p.3); Zhaohui Hong and Yi Sun, "The Butterfly Effect and the Making of "Ping-Pong Diplomacy", *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 9, no. 25 (2000): 429-448.

emissary to visit China, naming Henry Kissinger, ‘the Secretary of State William Roger, or the President himself’.²⁶ Eventually was Henry Kissinger who made two trips to Beijing, one secretly on 9 July 1971, and the other publicly in October 1971 which concluded with the Shanghai Communiqué.²⁷

Zhou Enlai called the Albanian ambassador in China, Xhorxhi Robo, on 17 July, 1971 to inform him of the secret visit of Kissinger days earlier, and of the decision to welcome Nixon in China. Not dissimilarly from the Soviet’s attitude towards Albania in its rapprochement with Yugoslavia in mid-1950s, China decided to not inform Albania of any of the steps leading to Kissinger’s visit. The new ambassador of China in Albania, Liu Zhenhua, had met Hoxha in February 1971, but in their conversation the ambassador did not touch upon any of these questions, preferring to explain the purge of Chen Boda instead.²⁸ The ambassador met also with the PLA member responsible for external relations, Pirro Biti, twice in April 1971 and foreign minister Behar Shtylla once in June 1971, but he did not provide any information on these events. He only mentioned in April that Mao appreciated the American writer Edgar Snow, and that he had decided to open China for visits to rightists, centrists, and leftist elements.²⁹

But Albania also failed to recognize the importance of some signals it had received earlier. For instance, in a conversation between the Albanian ambassador in the UN and his Romanian counterpart, Diakonesku, in the UN in September 1967, the latter said that very soon China will be in the UN, but that this ‘will be accompanied by major changes in the American foreign policy, and they are preparing for this’. He revealed also that China and the United States were having talks not only in Warsaw, but also ‘in other locations’, without specifying where. These talks would have the intention to normalize the bilateral relations between China and the United States, as after all for America ‘the question of Chang Kai-shek

²⁶ Kissinger, *On China*, 233.

²⁷ Evelyn Goh, “Nixon, Kissinger, and the “Soviet Card” in the U.S. Opening to China, 1971–1974”, *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 3 (2005): 475–502; Kissinger, *On China*, 236–274.

²⁸ “Minutes of conversation between comrade Enver Hoxha and the new ambassador of the People’s Republic of China in Albania, Liu Zhenhua, 23 February 1971”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1971, D1.

²⁹ “Information about the meeting that Behar Shtylla [Albanian minister of foreign affairs] and Pirro Biti have had with the Chinese ambassador in Liu Zhenhua, on 26, 28 April and 22 June 1971”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1971, D13.

is not important at all, and America would be ready to sacrifice it for the relations with China, which for them is much more important... the Americans do not want a war with China, I can assure you for this'.³⁰ The Romanian ambassador's words could be a message addressed to Beijing, but most likely instead, they are the best evidence of how China had kept Albania away from the insights of the Sino-American talks that led to the normalization. Yet, in 1967, with the fervent left radicalism unleashed by the Cultural Revolution, for Albania was effectively hard to perceive the possibility that soon China would reshape its foreign policy. Another sign of China's slow openness came in June 1971, when the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a tour outside Beijing for foreign journalists, including those from the West. The Albanian reporter noted how in Xi'an, the journalists 'were allowed to take any picture they wanted, without any restriction'.³¹ To Albanian leadership's dismay, their allies' openness extended as far as the White House.

When Zhou Enlai called the Albanian ambassador on 17 July, 1971, Kissinger's visit was no longer a secret, as two days earlier, both Beijing and Washington had issued simultaneously the declaration that had been drafted during Kissinger's visit in Beijing. What Zhou Enlai told the Albanian ambassador is quite similar to the account that Henry Kissinger gives of these events. Zhou affirmed that 'Nixon for three years has been asking to visit China... he will not come as a tourist but as a president... we have been talking to the Americans for sixteen years in Warsaw but with no progress... this is a continuation of those talks in another level... an overall escalating of the talks [and relations]... Nixon immediately after taking office authorized Kissinger to take contact with us... in December 1969 the Yugoslav embassy in Warsaw organized an exhibition where the American diplomats called our diplomats but they refused to respond and left the room avoiding the Americans... the main problem to discuss is Taiwan, but also other issues'. Then Zhou justified these steps not as consequences of the Soviet threat, which seemed to serve as the main catalyst in this rapprochement, but other reasons. For him 'the situation in United States is worsening, there could be a revolutionary storm in the near future... we need to be in contact as much as possible with the American

³⁰ New York, 06 September 1967, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1967, D358, f.32-33.

³¹ "Report of Thoma Naqe, in June 1971, on the tour organized by Chinese comrades with all the correspondents", in AQSH, F.14/AP, STR, V. 1971, D505, f.3.

masses, of all elements... hence the visit of the Ping-Pong team... United States is sincere in these talks because is interested to end the war in Indochina [Vietnam]'. Then Zhou explained that Kissinger's visit had two objectives: preparing the visit of President Nixon, and preparing high level discussion on many issues.³² In a meeting in Cairo, between the Chinese and Albanian ambassadors, the Chinese ambassador argued that the American talks with China 'demonstrates the American isolation.'³³

After the meeting with Zhou Enlai, the Albanian ambassador returned to Tirana and personally briefed Enver Hoxha on these talks. Hoxha, who had feared Sino-Soviet rapprochement, now saw that China was instead reshaping its relations with the leader of the "imperialist" camp. He expressed his discontent in a letter addressed personally to Mao:

'We should have been consulted on these important issues... In particular for such steps that largely resonate internationally... For us is understandable that for the sake of the people, and of the revolution, China should develop diplomatic relations with all the nations, included with the United States... Yet the American imperialism is the number one enemy of the peoples... in particular of the Vietnamese people...'. [In this way Hoxha was suggesting that China, pursuing normalization with the United States, was betraying the Vietnamese people's war]. 'Therefore your decision to welcome Nixon is for us unjust, undesirable, we do not approve it, we do not support it... If you really had to open talks with President Nixon, then at least these should be on an equal footing, with the United States recognizing the PRC, and removing the obstacles to its readmission in UN, removing the troops from Taiwan, withdrawing the troops from Indochina, and moreover removing the threats from China's borders... Under these circumstances there could be talks, but without necessary pass from a very low level to a very high level... Nixon's visit could have many negative impacts on the revolutionary movement, and on our cause... This will even lower the internal resistance in United States to Nixon's policies, which he seizes as an opportunity for re-election... The visit will encourage the centrists and opportunists, the various Togliattists [the reference is to Palmiro Togliatti, head of the Italian Communist Party until 1966 when he died, considered revisionist] and the Romanians, who are already speaking of the new unity in the international communist movement, that now new perspectives are opened also for the settlement of the Sino-Soviet

³² "Top-Secret: The conversation of comrade Zhou Enlai with Xhorxhi Robo in Beijing, 17 July 1971", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1971, D3, f.1-21.

³³ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in Cairo, sent to Enver Hoxha, 21 July 1971, informing on his meeting with the Chinese ambassador in Egypt, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1971, D148, f.28/1-28/5.

divergences... The talks with Nixon gives strength to the revisionists to devalue all the struggle of China against the Soviet renegades... Perceiving the Sino-American talks as against Soviet Union, Moscow will strengthen even more the revisionist cliques, and try to debilitate the revolutionary position of China... The American imperialism will never give up its strategic objectives, the war, and aggression. Otherwise it would not be imperialism... When it comes to issues regarding the Soviet Union, we think we should have a common standing regarding possible Soviet actions against China and Albania... The view of the American imperialists towards the Soviet Union, expressed by Kissinger, should not be kept secret to us... Now that the Cultural Revolution triumphed everywhere in China, that China came out of it stronger than ever, suddenly the fake friends pretend to be your sincere friends... China has always been standing as an invincible castle of socialism and revolution... This [revolutionary policy] is in contradiction with the decision to welcome Nixon'.³⁴

China never replied directly to this letter, but Beijing's message was clear when, in November 1971, at the PLA Sixth Congress, China, for the first time, refused to send a delegation. This put Hoxha in a difficult situation, who had to justify the Chinese absence to many foreign small communist delegations. His excuse was that 'the great tasks they [Chinese leaders] are carrying on in China did not allow them to participate... But the CCP is always among us, in full unity with our parties in the struggle for the full socialist triumph'.³⁵ Although Albania remained committed to oppose the Soviet Union, this could never be pursued through a close up with United States, according to Hoxha's regime, for the leader of the imperialist camp demanded similar opposition. In a way, Hoxha sent a public message to China through his speech to the congress. Despite praising China and Mao as the main support for the world revolutionary forces, and differently from his speeches in previous party congresses, where he concentrated on the evils of Soviet Union, throughout this speech, Hoxha now attacked the United States with the same fervor. He concluded

³⁴ "Top-Secret: Letter of the PLA CC, (signed by Enver Hoxha), addressed to the CCP, to Mao Zedong, 06 August 1971, regarding the coming visit of the American President Nixon to China", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1971, D3, f.49-67.

³⁵ "The speech of comrade Enver, on 31 October 1971, during the meeting with the foreign delegates participating at the PLA Sixth Congress", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D6, f.1-3. The delegations were from Latin America (Chili, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, etc), from Europe, (England, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Poland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain etc.), and Asia, (Indonesia, Malay, Japan, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, etc), Australia and New Zealand; In total there were 41 parties that either sent a delegation or a message addressed to the congress, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D22, f.1-2.

that ‘the standing towards American imperialism is the test for all the political forces [Marxist] in the world’.³⁶ Significantly, with regard to the kind of standing towards the United States, Hoxha mentioned frequently in his speech the Vietnamese resistance to American occupation.³⁷ Nonetheless, Mehmet Shehu, in his report on the FYP’s achievements, and the coming FYP’s objectives gave vast credit to Chinese assistance for Albania’s economic progress. More specifically, he mentioned that in ten years from 1960 to 1970 the gross domestic product (GDP) of Albania had more than doubled. In 1970, the national income was 55 percent higher than in 1965, the agriculture output 1.8 times higher, and the industrial production 2.5 times.³⁸ The government, in its report, gave direct credit to Chinese assistance for all this growth, and blamed the Soviet Union for what they called an attempted blockade against the Albanian economy. The industrial production from 1965 to 1970 increased by 83 percent, but the agricultural production in the same period increased only by 33 percent.³⁹

The Communist Parties’ Reactions to Sino-American Talks, and China’s Seat in the UN

During the informal meetings with many foreign communist delegations that that occurred at the Sixth PLA Congress in November 1971, China’s absence did not pass without comments, some of which indicated dissatisfaction with China’s acts within the communist camp. The Austrian delegate, Franz Strobel, commenting on Nixon’s visit, wondered rhetorically, ‘when is Nixon coming to Albania?’. He labelled the Chinese decision to not send a delegation to foreign party congresses as ‘extraordinary, as the same internal situation in China... Nixon’s visit to China has caused confusion within communists’. Some of these delegates met in Tirana with the Chinese ambassador in Albania, Liu Zhenhua. One of them, David Benkis, representing the communist party of Chile (m-l), lamented the lack of financial

³⁶ “Report of comrade Enver Hoxha addressed to the PLA Sixth Congress on 01 November 1971”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D14, f.26.

³⁷ Ibid., f.1-73.

³⁸ “Report of Premier Mehmet Shehu about the directives of the PLA Sixth Congress on the five-year economic and cultural plan 1971-75”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D16, 1-30.

³⁹ “Top-Secret: Records of the PLA Politburo, 25-26 February 1970”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1970, D3, f.491.

assistance that Geng Biao had promised to give him in Albania during this congress. In another meeting, he complained of the treatment that the CCP had reserved for certain parties, which he alleged was not based on the equality among parties. The Australian delegate also met with the Chinese ambassador, and then asked the Albanians to host a communist activist, wanted by the Australian police, named Armstrong who sought to leave China for Albania. The Belgian delegate, after meeting Hoxha, is reported to have said, 'You are different from China', without further elaborating. Kazimierz Mijal, representing the PCP (m-l), in presence of the Brazilian delegate, affirmed that the 'Chinese refusal to send a delegation leaves room for speculation by the revisionists that there is no unity between China and Albania'.⁴⁰ Mijal reinforced his contrariety to China's decision to not participate at the congress, when on 5 November he told the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, Liu Zhenhua, 'I am against Chinese decision to not participate at the congress, which itself has raised debates and speculations of a possible disunity between China and Albania'.⁴¹ A meaningful comment came from the Chilean delegate on Chinese policy when he affirmed in an informal meeting that 'China now prioritizes the inter-state relations, rather than inter-party relations'.⁴² This offered the best explanation of the departure in Chinese foreign policy from its ideological radicalism, to state pragmatism in international relations.

During the congress, Albania accredited itself with the restoration of the PRC's rights in the United Nations. All the foreign delegations praised Albania's efforts in New York to promote China's interests. This work had continued since the very founding of the Sino-Albanian alliance and was pursued with great determination. The PRC, however, did not owe its admission to the UN, to Albania's efforts, but to the Sino-American rapprochement. Yet, even after the visit of Henry Kissinger to China, Albania dutifully promoted China's interests in United Nations. Even after being informed of Kissinger's visit, Albania worked hard during the Twenty-sixth General Assembly in 1971 to restore China's rights in the organization. At the beginning of the session no one was sure that this would become so crucial a year in

⁴⁰ "Information prepared for the leadership by the Foreign Sector of the PLA CC, during the works of the PLA Sixth Congress, October-November 1971", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D25, f.42.

⁴¹ "Information prepared by Koçi Zengo, 06 November 1971, on the meeting of K. Mijal with the Chinese ambassador on 05 November", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D25, f.96-100.

⁴² All quotations of the paragraph in: AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D25.

that sense, not even China. The key issue at that time was how best to deal with Taiwan, and the risk that many countries which might not otherwise oppose China's seat, would recoil from the ousting of Taiwan, and only accept in full a solution that included two Chinas. In the meeting with Kissinger, the issue had been left to future discussions, which itself was already a step forward from the previous Chinese policy towards Taiwan.

As far back as 1955, China and the United States had discussed renouncing the use of force in Sino-American relations, and during the Bandung conference Beijing had stated that it was against a war with United States.⁴³ However, China claimed that the tension, which implied eventual war, was due to what China called occupation of Taiwan by American forces. Therefore, the preclusion of the use of the force implied the withdrawal of the American military support to Taiwan. China considered that 'to what means China will use to liberate Taiwan, this is entirely a matter of China's sovereignty and internal affairs. Therefore, any Sino-American announcement must not interfere with this matter by no means'.⁴⁴ At that time and for long after, Albania fully supported Beijing's stance, and in October 1962, the Albanian ambassador in the UN called the Taiwan representatives 'private citizens representing nothing'.⁴⁵

In 1971, Albania tried to coordinate and incite some countries to influence others in their regions to vote against separating the admission of the PRC from the ousting of Taiwan. For instance, Algeria could exercise a certain influence over its neighbor Tunisia, which had supported the two Chinas solutions. The other obstacle to overcome was the Americans' eventual resolution requiring a supermajority (two thirds of the votes) for the PRC's admission, which was seen as very difficult, despite Albania's coalition already representing a simple majority. To address this, Albania wanted Algeria to launch the initiative to include the PRC, in order to maximize the support among the African and NAM countries.⁴⁶ China, however,

⁴³ "Conditions of the Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks, 20 October 1956", in AMPJ, V. 1960, D372, f.25.

⁴⁴ Ibid., f.26.

⁴⁵ "The speech of comrade Halim Budo to the United Nations General Assembly, 29 October 1962", in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1962, D503, f.64.

⁴⁶ "On the issue of the Chinese representation, in the 26th session of the General Assembly, Tirana, 15 May 1971", in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1971, D479/1, f.2-4.

preferred Albania as its spokesperson in the UN. In a meeting with the Albanian foreign minister, the Chinese ambassador in Tirana expressed the idea that, in this session, the issue of the PRC seat would be more complicated than usual, saying – without fully explaining the reasons for this complication – that United States had been pressuring Taiwan to accept the PRC as a member of the UN, eventually preserving the Taiwanese seat as well.⁴⁷ On the other hand, China did not seem to expect any surprises this year, and did not even want to join UN this year, and their authorization to Albania, rather than to Algeria, to present the resolution speaks to this. Albania was an isolated member of the international community, in continuous verbal tension with both the West and the East, whereas Algeria had friends in both blocks and probably could have garnered more support for China. Yet neither of these countries necessarily could have changed the balance of power within the United Nations General Assembly.

Signs of the balance tipping in China's favor in the UN had appeared since 1966, when a member of the Austrian delegation confirmed to Albania, certainly sending a message to Beijing, that Canada in 'six months will recognize China', and Austria would follow.⁴⁸ From the talks of the Albanian representatives in the UN with foreign diplomats and representatives of different countries, it became quite apparent that, in principle, many European countries of the western bloc, at least those that claimed neutrality, such as Austria and some Scandinavian countries, would willingly vote for China; they were just waiting the right moment – a moment of lower tension between China and the United States. Canada, on the other hand, had asked Cambodia in 1969 to encourage China to establish diplomatic relations with Canada, in the spirit of the talks they had in Stockholm.⁴⁹ The Canadian step was followed by Italy, which in 1969, for the first time, did not dispute the existence of only one China. Italian diplomats in the UN told Albanian diplomats that they were watching the Sino-Canadian talks, and would possibly take similar steps.⁵⁰ This change in the Italian attitude towards the PRC was a consequence of the changes of

⁴⁷ "Information regarding the meeting of comrade Nesti Nase with the Chinese ambassador Liu Zhenhua, Tirana, 15 June 1971", in *ibid.*, f.18-20.

⁴⁸ Radiogram from New York, 28 November 1966, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1966, D235, f.170-171.

⁴⁹ Radiogram, New York, 29 October 1969, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1969, D319, f.35. This was what the Cambodian ambassador reported to the Albanian ambassador during an informal conversation.

⁵⁰ Radiogram, New York, 20 October 1969, in *ibid.*, f.31.

the internal politics of Italy in 1969, wherein Pietro Nenni became the foreign minister, and then Aldo Moro assumed the post later the same year, both of them prone to the normalization of the relations with the PRC.⁵¹ This line was reinforced by the Italian ambassador in the UN, who in a conversation with the Albanian ambassador, said that Italy had not decided yet how to vote, but had decided to ‘not vote against China’.⁵² He then added that Italy was most welcomed to normal relations with China among the ‘trade circles’.⁵³

Eventually, by mid July 1971, Albania, together with all the other authors, presented the request to the UN to introduce in the agenda of that session the question of China’s restoration to its seat. The United States, just one month later, presented the same request. For the first time, the United States proposed accepting the PRC in the UN, but the second part of the American resolution opposed the ousting of Taiwan from the organization, by asking instead that the vote to expel Taiwan should require two thirds of the UN General Assembly members. Indeed, according to Albanian informal surveys, the United States saw could no longer afford to keep China out of the UN, but at least, at that precise moment, wanted to avoid the ousting of its small ally, therefore asked that the second part of the Albanian resolution – which concerned the ousting of Taiwan – should be valid only if voted by two thirds of the General Assembly members.⁵⁴ The American move put Albania and the United States on the same front regarding the admission of the PRC, but at odds over Taiwan, with Albania in a serious dilemma. The initiative to grant Beijing a seat, and deny any to Taipei, was imperiled, as its authors estimated that the United States could get the necessary votes against the ousting of Taiwan, but at the same time, by not opposing the supermajority threshold for restoring China’s seat, Albania’s main task would become much more achievable. This, however, would mean no less than the division of China, and the acceptance of Taiwan as a separate entity in the UN.

⁵¹ Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni ed., *La Cina luci e ombre. Evoluzione politica e relazioni esterne dopo Mao*, [China Lights and Shadows. Political Evolution and Foreign Relations after Mao], (Milano, Italy: Franco Angeli, 2010); Enrico Fardella, “A significant periphery of the Cold War: Italy-China bilateral relations, 1949-1989”, *Cold War History*, Vol. 17, no. 2, (2017):181-197.

⁵² Radiogram, New York, 20 October 1969, in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1969, D319, f.30.

⁵³ Radiogram, New York, 29 October 1969, in *ibid.*, f.36.

⁵⁴ “On the question of the restoration of the lawful rights of China in UN, September 1971”, in AMPJ, OKB, V.1971, D479/1, f.60-64; See also Finke, *China Joins the United Nations*, 6-8.

To respond to this challenge, Albania prepared to withdraw its resolution in case the United States did not step back on its support for Taiwan. In the worst case scenario, Albania prepared a declaration in the name of the People's Republic of China, stating that Beijing would never take its seat in UN, regardless of the votes, before the ousting of Taiwan. More concretely, Albania prepared a resolution that would see the General Assembly vote on the American request to apply the two thirds rule for the ousting of Taiwan: meaning that the American demand for the two thirds supermajority would be valid only if previously authorized by two thirds of the UN General Assembly members. This aggressive move by Albania invited an unexpected reaction from China. By late September 1971, in a run of consultations with China, the Charge d'Affaires in Tirana, Li Xiaolin, asked Albania on behalf of his government to modify the Albanian position on the United States' initiative. Albanian diplomats in New York were furious about this request, proposing to the government in Tirana to persuade Li that the Albanian initiative was the only one capable of challenging the American's two Chinas policy. Albania did not know, however, that China and the United States were agreeing to set aside this matter, and the rapprochement between them was proceeding in this sense, implying that the United States would not challenge China and at the right moment, soon, would agree to accept PRC and accept in the meantime the ousting of Taiwan. Now, Albania's position was seen as a challenge to both China and the United States.⁵⁵ The end of the deadlock came to the surprise of Albania, and probably many other countries, which could not see backstage in this situation, when Taiwan announced its unilateral withdrawal from United Nations.⁵⁶ The ROC ambassador to the United Nations, Liu Chieh, in his own words, admitted 'defeat with dignity'.⁵⁷ Perhaps with dignity also for Washington, although the vote of admission of the PRC 'signified the first major defeat of the United States in the General Assembly, and marked the emergence of the Third World as a dominant force'.⁵⁸ China's admission 'marked a

⁵⁵ "Memorandum – On the restoration of the rightful seat of the PRC in UN", in *ibid.*, f.130-133.

⁵⁶ New York, 25 October 1971: "Declaration de son excellence Chow Shu-kai, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères de la République de Chine, à l'occasion du retrait de son gouvernement de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, 25 Octobre 1971", in AMPJ, OKB, V. 1971, D479/1, f.269.

⁵⁷ Finke, *China Joins the United Nations*, 13.

⁵⁸ Stoessinger, *The United Nations & the Superpowers*, 28.

real watershed in the evolution of the United Nations... and China emerged as the self-appointed champion of the new actions initiated by the Third World'.⁵⁹

China not only avoided consulting Albania on any of its steps leading to its rapprochement with the United States, but also of Lin Biao's death, of which Albania was not informed officially until almost one year later. In fact, the death of Lin Biao had occurred in September 1971, when trying to escape to the Soviet Union, his plane crashed in Mongolia. Only in mid-July 1972 was the Chinese ambassador in Tirana informed of this event, explaining it as an escape from justice after Lin had been unmasked in his attempt to kill Mao and seize political power.⁶⁰ In 1972, Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia visited Albania. Hoxha met with him four times. After the restoration of China's rights in the UN, and in particular the process of distension with the United States, Albania had lost its role as China's spokesperson on the international stage. Sensing that he was no longer needed, Hoxha assumed that China would be less inclined to support his country militarily and economically, and that such aid would not last long unless he reshaped his policy too – a step he had no intention to take, not at least to the extent China had. Consequently, during Hoxha's four meetings with Prince Sihanouk, he emphasized China's great role for him in helping the Cambodian people. Hoxha was trying to play the card of the interlocutor, trying to find a role to Albania in its alliance with China. Sihanouk, in fact, had no need for Albania's intermediation in his relations with China.

Yet Cambodia's relations with China, as Richardson has shown, were complicated at times, and the role of Sihanouk controversial.⁶¹ Sihanouk stopped in Tirana after visiting Yugoslavia, where he endured treatment as a Chinese satellite by some Yugoslavian ministers. Albanian leaders emphasized instead that China was Cambodia's best ally, but Sihanouk had no need for such a message because Beijing was his second home.⁶²

⁵⁹ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁰ "The meeting of the Politburo member Ramiz Alia, with the Chinese ambassador Liu Zhenhua, 21 July 1972, who informs Alia of Lin Biao's treason against the Chinese Communist Party, his attempt to escape to the Soviet Union, and the crush of his airplane", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1972, D3.

⁶¹ Richardson, *China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*.

⁶² "From the meeting of Ramiz Alia with the Chinese ambassador in Albania, Liu Zhenhua, 24 July 1972, where Alia informed the ambassador of the talks in Albania between the Albanian leadership and Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1972, D4.

The Last Economic Benefits

Although Richard Nixon's visit to China 'changed the world', as at least one scholar has affirmed, those days were not followed with particular interest in Albania, if anything, perhaps with some embarrassment.⁶³ Hoxha did not want any such change, but from archives, it seems the event was not accompanied in Albania by any Politburo meetings. After all, the visit concluded an ongoing crescendo of events which had enabled Albania to absorb their initial shock at this drastic change in China's policy. The Sino-American normalization, however, from Albanian perspective changed the patterns of the Sino-Albanian relations. Hoxha understood that the Sino-American rapprochement was the beginning of China's integration into the international system. Therefore, from this moment onward, he prioritized more the economic rather than the ideological aspects in Albania's relations with China, although Albania continued its revolutionary rhetoric. Since Hoxha had made up his mind to avoid any drastic openness in Albania's foreign policy – on the contrary, to close the country even more – he decided to extract whatever economic and military assistance he still could from China, predicting, correctly, that the opportunity to do so would not last forever. Albania's refusal to follow China's path of openness is shown by what Hoxha told the Chinese ambassador in Albania, Liu Zhenhua in September 1972. During this meeting, to the Chinese announcement that West Germany had decided to recognize China, Hoxha replied that Albania would not take such steps to establish relations with that country before receiving German war reparations. He made clear that China could now purchase from West Germany the equipment needed for its work on the industrial projects in Albania – showing how far from the West Hoxha wished to stay while maximizing his Chinese aid.⁶⁴ Two more factors contributed to Albania's relative trust in the continuity of China's assistance. First, Hoxha was conscious that however Chinese foreign policy may change, the country would remain under Mao's leadership. Second, the Tenth CCP Congress, in August 1973, had fundamentally reconfirmed the communist course

⁶³ Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World*, 1st ed., (New York: Random House, 2007); For the conversation between Nixon and Mao on 21 February 1972 in Beijing, see William Burr, ed. *The Kissinger Transcript. The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow*, (New York: The New Press, 1999), 59-66.

⁶⁴ "Minutes of Conversation between Enver Hoxha and the Chinese ambassador in Albania, Liu Zhenhua, 29 September 1972, on occasion of the celebrations for the Twenty-third anniversary of the PRC foundation", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1972, D5.

under Mao's leadership, offering an umbrella of legitimacy that included the alliance with China.⁶⁵ This convinced Hoxha that during Mao's lifetime, China's openness to the United States was a strategic move in China's international relations, but not a drastic revision of its internal economic and political course. Hoxha continued portraying Albania still, as 'China's most faithful ally'.⁶⁶ And China responded by continuing its economic and military assistance for Albania. Curiously, China provided also medical treatment for Enver Hoxha. From October 1973 to March 1974, a group of doctors from China stayed in Tirana where they provided specialized medical treatment to the aging Albanian dictator for his heart and diabetes problems.⁶⁷

In September 1971 China approved a new loan of 30 million rubles (70 million yuan) for the years 1972-75, entirely dedicated to the agricultural investments in Albania.⁶⁸ The general staff of the army in Tirana had proposed in April 1971 new requests of military equipment from China, for a total of 229.000 tons, with an estimated value of 1.165 billion yuan.⁶⁹ Regarding the FYP 1971-75, the Albanian government predicted a GDP in 1975, around 55 percent higher than in 1970, in particular an industrial production that in five years would be, they said, 62-66 percent higher than in 1970, with particular emphasis on the increasing of the heavy industry while the light industry would increase only by around 40 percent.⁷⁰ In 1971 the two governments agreed to make minor change to the FYP by increasing the part of the loan that goes for the industry by 184 million yuan.⁷¹ This was due to new

⁶⁵ Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era: Chinese Politics during the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972-1976*, (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 93-109.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, f.1.

⁶⁷ "Top-Secret: Letter of the PLA CC sent to the CCP CC, expressing gratitude for having sent the group of doctors that took care of the leader of our party and our country, comrade Enver Hoxha", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D4; "Top-Secret: The meeting of comrade Hysni Kapo, and comrade Nexhmije Hoxha with the head of the group of Chinese doctors, Zhou Shien Yi, during the reception on 09 March 1974, on occasion of the departure of the Chinese doctors", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D5.

⁶⁸ Ministry of Trade: "Report on the work done and the problems that surged, 10 September 1971 – Agreement between Albania and China on the loan China granted to Albania for the years 1972-75 regarding the agricultural machineries and equipment", in AQSH, F.503, V.1972, D125, f.1-8.

⁶⁹ Council of Defense, 22 April 1971. In AQSH, K. Mb, V. 1971, D3, f.23.

⁷⁰ In AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1971, D16, 31-102.

⁷¹ Ministry of Foreign Trade, November 1971: "Correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Trade of the PRC and the Albanian Embassy in Beijing, on some changes to the "Agreements on the China's loan to Albania", signed on 20 November 1968, and changes to the "Agreement for a long

calculations for those industrial projects that were in delay and required updated and more careful calculations regarding the equipment.⁷²

In November 1972, the Albanian defense minister Beqir Balluku, for the last time in his life, visited China.⁷³ He stayed almost 45 days, met often with Chinese leaders, and presented a new, long list of requests for military supplies for the period 1973-77.⁷⁴ In Albania, in his meeting with the commander of the Beijing garrison, Hoxha had stressed that his country was surrounded only by enemies, regardless of what he called conjectural normalcy. He highlighted more what divided Albania from, rather than what had in common with, the other Balkan countries.⁷⁵ Balluku attempted the same in China, but the Chinese generals disproved the Albanian minister's alarms with the fact that he had already, in 1968, presented the same situation to Zhou Enlai, while now in 1972, 'with all its neighbors Albania had gone through an improvement of the relations', to which the minister replied that this was only to gain time needed for challenges that might come in the future.⁷⁶ One such challenge for Balluku, following Hoxha's instructions, was Yugoslavia. For Albanian leaders, seemingly prophetic in this, 'once Tito will die, will bring a war for hegemony between Serbs and Croats', which could threaten Albania.⁷⁷ Fearing the consequences of a possible Yugoslavian disintegration, Hoxha, in many speeches, expressed a preference for Yugoslavia 'exactly as it is', defending its status quo as a Federation.

term loan of China to Albania, without interests" signed on 16 October 1970", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1971, D154.

⁷² It is the case of the cement factories, for which Albania asked to increase their production capacities in order to satisfy the internal demand as a consequence of the spread of the constructions all over the country. In Ministry of Foreign Trade, August 1971: "Correspondence China's Ministry for the Foreign Economic Relations and our Embassy in Beijing, about the changing of the capacities of the cement factory", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1971, D156.

⁷³ He was heading a delegation of more than 30 persons, mainly officials and experts from all the branches of the army. In "Notes taken during the visit of the Albanian military delegation, headed by comrade Beqir Balluku in China", in AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1972, D246.

⁷⁴ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1972, D9, f.10-48; AQU, Sekretariati, V. 1972, D246, f.24-46.

⁷⁵ Hoxha pictured Albania as completely surrounded by enemies and expressly said that he is making this picture in order that "the General Staff of the Chinese Army could better know the situation by a strategic and military perspective" rather than political. In, "Meeting of comrade Enver Hoxha with the delegation of the People's Liberation Army, on 13 October 1972", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1972, D6, f.10.

⁷⁶ "The first meeting of the Albanian military delegation with the Chinese comrades...07 November 1972", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1972, D9, f.5.

⁷⁷ Ibid., f.16.

Zhou Enlai suggested including the military supplies in the commercial channels as a loan. This idea was reiterated by Huan Yuanbing, director at the Chinese defense ministry, who estimated the Albanian requests to total 3 billion yuan, which he said ‘should be considered as a loan, based on the same criteria China grants credits to other countries’.⁷⁸ After meeting firm opposition from Albanian officials, China stepped back and approved most of the Albanian requests for armaments, but made clear that Albania was being treated in a privileged way. According to Zhou Enlai, Albania was placed second after Vietnam in Chinese military assistance to foreign countries. In total China committed to provide 884 artillery pieces, 36 military aircrafts, 200 tanks, and 18 different military ships for the navy, 1872 different vehicles, and 20 thousand tons of ammunition.⁷⁹ China provided also construction materials for the further fortification through the building of hundreds of thousands of bunkers that soon started to become part of the landscape across Albanian territory. Today, those yet resisting the ravages of time are a famous, and infamous, touristic attraction. This would be the last important agreement regarding the military assistance China provided to Albania.

Yet complications surged in the implementation of this assistance. Some industrial projects took far longer than expected.⁸⁰ For instance, the biggest industrial project, the metallurgic plant, presented problems beyond what Albanian and Chinese experts had expected, and its construction in 1972 was in a complete stalemate, almost a failure.⁸¹ China sent to Albania a delegation headed by the vice minister of industry who tried to deal personally with the difficulties that the Chinese

⁷⁸ “Top-Secret: Information of the head of the military delegation Beqir Balluku about the visit in China and the military equipment China will give to Albania”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1972, D12, f.5; Also in: “Top-Secret: Minutes of Conversation of the Head of the Council of State of China, comrade Zhou Enlai, with the Albanian military delegation, headed by Beqir Balluku, 01 December 1972”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1972, D11.

⁷⁹ “Report to the Council of Defense - Preparative measures for receiving the armaments and military equipment from China during the period 1973-75, 23 January 1973”, in AQSH, K.Mb, V. 1973, D2, f.1-12.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Trade: “Report on the meeting at (China’s) Ministry for economic relations with the world, 22 September 1971”, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1972, D125, f.11-13.

⁸¹ “Reports, information, and correspondence of the Ministry of Trade with the prime minister’s office and the trade representative in Beijing, about the state of the industrial projects, January – December 1972”, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1972, D128.

experts encountered.⁸² From December 1972 to January 1973, this industrial project was visited also by the Chinese minister of metallurgy, and the director of the institute for research on iron, in Beijing, Lu Da. Lu blamed the followers of Lin Biao as saboteurs, who became an excuse, in Albanian eyes, for any failure in their economy.⁸³ In meeting with workers in the city of Elbasan, where the plant was located, the Chinese minister apologized for ‘the delay of seven years’, and promised the full mobilization of the energies to finish the plant successfully.⁸⁴ Once back in Beijing, he tried to accelerate progress by radically changing some aspects of the projects.⁸⁵ The Albanian minister of industry, Koço Theodhosi, asked China to make possible the first production of iron in this plant by the end of 1975 at the latest.⁸⁶ This case shows that Albania relied too heavily on China’s capacities, and China agreed too readily to build what Albania demanded, even when those demands would be impossible to meet.

In April 1973, the Politburo in Tirana analyzed a plan by the government regarding the economic development of the country until 1990, including the FYP 1976-80. In this document, for the first time the government considered that, in the early 1980s Albania would pass from an agricultural to an industrial country. For the government, industrialization promised to narrow the differences in living standards and income per capita between the cities and the countryside.⁸⁷ None of these objectives – the modern industrialization and the increase of income – were achieved. So unrealistic was the plan that it affirmed the objective to study and eventually build

⁸² “The conversation of Enver Hoxha with the Chinese ambassador in Albania Liu Zhenhua, 29 September 1973, on occasion of the dinner in honor of the 24 years of the foundation of the PRC”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1973, D5.

⁸³ Ministry of Trade, January 1973: “Record of the talks between the delegation of the Ministry of the Mines and Industry of Albania and the Ministry of the Metallurgic Industry of China, on the problems in the metallurgic plant of Elbasan”, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1973, D81, f.2-10.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, f.9.

⁸⁵ Albanian Embassy in Beijing, 23 February 1973 – To the Prime Minister and to the Ministry of Trade, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1973, D81, f.11-16; Since 1961, the first time the plant was designed, it had undergone many changes, in 1965, 1968 and 1970.

⁸⁶ The minister first expressed the wish of the Albanian leadership to inaugurate the first production by 1974, on occasion of the 30 years of the liberation. In, Ministry of Trade, 29 October 1973: “Short information on the talks with the Chinese metallurgic delegation”, in AQSH, F.503, V. 1973, D81, f.205-207.

⁸⁷ Records of the Politburo, 11 April 1973: “General orientations for the drafting of the development prognosis of the economy and culture of Albania until 1990, and of the 6th five-year plan 1976-80”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1973, D6, f.8-9.

the first nuclear reactor, with the long term goal of building a nuclear center to produce electricity, together with the electronic industry.⁸⁸ The spirit of this document was completely disconnected with the real economic possibilities and situation of Albania. In late 1973, almost all of the big industrial projects, including those started in 1962, were still under construction. By 1974, only 9 out of 31 industrial projects China had committed to in 1968 were built, the remaining being either under construction, or had yet to start.

Conclusion

The end of the 1960s, beginning of the 1970s, corresponded to a turning point in China's international relations. Among many, two main factors convinced Chinese leadership that the path of confrontation with the world's great powers would lead at best to a further isolation of China, but could lead also to war. The first factor (not in order of importance) was China's internal situation, related to the mass mobilization and the Cultural Revolution, which had made possible for Mao to regain total control of the party, and marginalize potential competitors. Therefore, Mao did not necessitate any longer radicalism and mass mobilization to defeat power challenges. But Mao also came to understand that, beyond the official narrative, China could not base only on the ideology its claims to have a strong voice on the international stage. The second factor concerned the Soviet Union's threat to China's national security. The border conflict, in fact for the first time since the end of the Second World War, pushed Chinese leaders to think of the possible war between the two countries, with uncertain outcomes, except the fact that perhaps for China would have brought tremendous sufferings. Mao could not risk losing what he had gained through internal political struggle because of an external enemy which could have tried to annihilate Mao's rule. Moreover, the world revolution rhetoric, so much propagandized by Mao, had lost its zeal because the decolonization process was towards its end. China must have realized that most of the new born countries did not exchange nationalism for communism, and China's influence over these countries was not a permanently achieved goal. This tells much of China's world weight altogether. Definitely, Chinese leaders understood that China could not challenge forever the world order without first being part of it. Hence the normalization with

⁸⁸ Ibid., f.14.

the United States suddenly became part of the new Chinese strategy of pursuing coexistence with, and integration in, the international system. Chinese leaders were far sighted enough to see how their ideological struggle with both the Soviet Union and the United States, did not bring any concrete benefit to Chinese people. Therefore, the Chinese leaders, tried to find a common understanding between the communist ideology and the economic and political objectives of their rule.

For Albania this turn came unexpectedly. The Chinese leaders under any circumstance bothered to consult, or simply let know, the Albanian leaders of part of the backstage which led to their decision to normalize the relations with the United States. In hindsight, perhaps they were right to not do so because Albania's reaction of total disagreement was predictable, which eventually is what happened. On this point, China's behavior towards Albania was quite similar to the Soviet Union's treatment of Hoxha regarding Khrushchev's decision of rapprochement with Yugoslavia. Hoxha disapproved of China's change in its foreign policy because it undermined Hoxha's political legitimacy. He had been propagandizing for more than a decade how China was the leading country in the struggle against United States. Not only Sino-American normalization undermined Hoxha's political rule but also he correctly understood that this change might impact also China's foreign aid. Indeed, as the next chapter shows, Albanian leaders' suspicion of this were confirmed when in power was shortly rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping. His rehabilitation was a clear sign that not only China's foreign policy had changed, but that this change was accompanied by China's internal policy changes affecting the power cupola of the country and rectifying part of the policies recently pursued. Yet, until 1974 China did not give up assistance for Albania.

Consequently, since China's normalization with United States, did not immediately, and drastically affect Chinese assistance to Albania, Hoxha decided to prioritize the economic collaboration with Beijing. Partially this was also due to the fact that the most important industrial projects planned with Chinese assistance were still under construction. Therefore, any political decision to ditch relations with China, because of ideological disagreements concerning Chinese foreign policy, would have had an enormous negative impact on the Albanian economy. On the other hand, despite the beginning of the process of normalization with the United States, the CCP Tenth Congress, in a way alleviated Hoxha's suspicion that China's

change would be drastic. In fact for the time Mao would lead, Hoxha came to think that China's course, at least its main patterns, would resemble and reflect some of the Marxist ideology. In that way he could still use the Albanian friendship with China in its internal politics. Nonetheless, the years 1971-74 were a shifting sand period for the Sino-Albanian alliance which would not resist very long the death of Mao Zedong and the second rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping.

CHAPTER SIX

THE END OF THE ALLIANCE, 1974-1978

Introduction

The Tenth Congress of the CCP was followed with interest in Albania, although no delegation had been invited to participate. Hoxha deemed it an important moment in the Sino-Albanian relations because apparently it upheld the political line of the CCP. It actually seemed to strengthen Mao's position – dogmatic opposition to revisionism – and highlighted the Cultural Revolution. This perception was reinforced further with the launch of the campaign against Lin Biao, and the anti-Confucius campaign. Denouncing Lin as a traitor and revisionist assured Hoxha that China still was struggling against revisionism. All this seemed a sort of revival of the first phase of the Cultural Revolution, which Wang Hongwen called it the 'second Cultural Revolution'. For Teiwes and Sun '...in 1973 Mao's emphasis shifted to strident reaffirmation of its [Cultural Revolution's] 70 percent achievements... this was the essence of the Tenth Congress'.¹ At least, this is also the light in which the Albanian embassy in Beijing assessed it.² As Maurice Meisner has argued, 'yet, the "criticize Lin, criticize Confucius" had less to do with Lin Biao or Confucius, than it did with conflicting evaluations of the Cultural Revolution and the question of who was to lead China into the post-Cultural Revolution era, and in what direction'.³ Although Deng Xiaoping was reinstated in state offices in 1973, he, initially, kept a low profile, and it was not yet possible for the Albanian leadership to understand the political meaning of Deng's rehabilitation, that China's period of left radicalism would soon end.⁴

¹ Teiwes and Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era: Chinese Politics during the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972-1976*, 111. Here is also the quotation of Wang Hongwen.

² "Report of the Albanian embassy in Beijing, 12 March 1974, on the Tenth CCP Congress", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D6.

³ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China And After. A History of the People's Republic*, 3d ed., (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 393.

⁴ For the return of Deng Xiaoping in office see, Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping, and the Transformation of China*, 49-90.

Finally, in 1975, China drastically reduced the economic assistance to Albania, although both countries claimed strong relations. This, however, put Hoxha in a difficult position. From Albania's perspective, the Sino-American normalization had jeopardized the ideological axis upon which Hoxha built its narrative of China as the leading country of the struggle against both the United States and the Soviet Union. Yet, for the time Mao was alive Hoxha thought that there would be perhaps benefits by keeping the good relations with China. When in 1976 Zhou Enlai first, and Mao Zedong later died – which were followed with the definitive emergence of Deng Xiaoping – Albania lost any sympathy within the CCP. At this point Hoxha would understand that his country either adapts to the changing world, following the Chinese path of openness and reformation, or ditch definitely the alliance with China. Hoxha, again, thinking of the best for his personal power, and not the best for his country, found easy the choice.

Changing Winds. Purges in Albania

Following the visit of Kissinger first, and Nixon later, foreign diplomats had been alluding to the deterioration of the Sino-Albanian relations. They were not wrong as shown by China's response to Albanian leader's request to send a high political delegation for talks.⁵ To test Chinese intentions towards Albania, in summer 1973, Hoxha mentioned the idea to send a high delegation to China, possibly headed by the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu. Shehu's last visit had been in 1967, and no high delegation, if we exclude ministers, had been exchanged between Albania and China since then. Hoxha's step was discussed only with Shehu and Kapo, which shows that they were suspicious of the Chinese response. Only on 23 January, 1974, did Shehu propose such a visit to the Chinese ambassador in Albania, Liu Zhenhua. Liu responded enthusiastically, but his enthusiasm was shadowed by the lack of enthusiasm of the Chinese leaders in Beijing, followed by weeks of silence. Then in mid-February 1974, the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, in a meeting with Geng Biao solicited a response, but Geng Biao only affirmed that they had received the proposal and the CCP CC would soon decide. Liu, in Tirana, received

⁵ The Chinese ambassador in Tirana met the Premier Mehmet Shehu, to whom he said that the Chinese leaders were not against a visit, but that would not be possible to receive them until autumn as they were busy. Eventually this visit will never occur. In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D3.

word of the decision on 20 February 1974. China agreed in principle but wanted such a visit to take place during the second half of 1974. For Albania this postponement, and the feeble response given, were a clear sign that China was not intending to strengthen relations with Albania.⁶

In February 1974, in meeting an African delegation, Mao launched the theory of the “Three Worlds”: in the first world were United States and Soviet Union, in the second world were Japan, Canada, and Europe, and in the Third World, almost all Asia (China included), Latin America and Africa. This theory was Mao’s re-elaboration of the older theory of the intermediate zone, which had appeared in 1964 in *Renmin Ribao*.⁷ In April 1974, Deng Xiaoping, who led the Chinese delegation at the annual UN General Assembly, emphasized the theory to a world audience.⁸ Hoxha later would vehemently oppose this theory, clinging to the classical division of the world between socialist and capitalist countries. But Hoxha’s attack reveals to have been clearly orchestrated in conjunction with his country’s split from China. From documents emerges that Albania did not initially oppose this theory. Asked by He Ying, Chinese vice minister of foreign affairs, if he agreed with Deng’s speech, the Albanian ambassador in China Behar Shtylla affirmed to ‘completely agree’.⁹ The meeting took place on 12 April, 1974, one day after *Renmin Ribao* published Deng’s speech in UN.

Deng’s rehabilitation in 1974 was followed with concern by Albania because when Deng had been purged, he had been attacked also by the Albanian leadership. His rehabilitation left room for concern over possible revision of policies previously promoted in China. Information arrived in Tirana from a Chinese source, affirming

⁶ Records of the Politburo, 22 February 1974: “Verbal information of Mehmet Shehu on the proposal made to China on 24 January 1974, for a visit to China of a high level delegation of the party and the government”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1974, D4, f.185-188; “Top-Secret: Letter of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent to the minister of foreign affairs in Albania, Nesti Nase, 26 March 1974, on the relations of Albania with China, and the last events: the postponement of the visit of the high level delegation to China, the tendency to postpone the construction of the Metallurgic Kombinat of Elbasan, and the tendency to not support the plan for the hydropower plant of Fierza, the lack of publicity of our campaign in Albania against Lin Biao, and others”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D7.

⁷ Chen, *China and the Three Worlds*, 3.

⁸ Here is the speech of Deng Xiaoping addressed to the UN General Assembly in April 1974. The axis of all his speech was around this theory. In *ibid.*, 85–98.

⁹ “Information on the meeting of comrade Behar Shtylla with the Chinese vice minister of foreign affairs, He Ying, in Beijing on 12 April 1974”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D8, f.20.

that ‘many mistakes had been made during the Cultural Revolution’, with particular emphasis on the purge of old comrades ‘who have given great contribution to the Chinese revolution’, mentioning the case of Deng Xiaoping. Moreover, the source affirmed that most of the people in China did not approve of such policies.¹⁰ Although not approving of many aspects of the Cultural Revolution, Hoxha ultimately fully supported it because it had purged the revisionists (pro-Soviets) within the CCP, at least, so he was told. Now one of the most prominent revisionists purged during the Cultural Revolution emerged again as a prominent political figure in China. Worse yet, for Hoxha, this revisionist was also bringing forward political ideas regarding the world division that did not entirely correspond to the communist dogma. In November 1974, Yao Wenyuan, heading a Chinese delegation in Albania, tried to assure Hoxha on this issue, affirming that ‘Including China in the Third World does not mean we are like the nationalist countries [decolonized], but we do this to help them from the hegemonic countries’.¹¹ Deng’s rehabilitation in 1973 had not been discussed in any PLA forum; or if it was, no evidence of such a discussion was recorded.

To the rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping, corresponded in Albania instead, the furthering of the politics of isolation and repression – which in fact begun already before Deng’s return in office. In late December 1972, in the annual national song competition, many artists performed music clearly influenced by modern jazz and soul, which in Albania was expressly forbidden. The new year, 1973, began with a purge of nationally known artists including, but not limited to, those musicians. Tens of artists went into long years of detention, some died in prison, others executed. The same fate befell the PLA Politburo members in charge of culture, Fadil Paçrami and Todi Lubonja, only the latter surviving the regime. Another purge, involving less people, but resonating much more, followed in 1974 in the army, which included the defense minister Beqir Balluku, the chief of the general staff, Petrit Dume, and the generals of the general staff Hito Çako and Rrahman Parllaku. Only general Parllaku

¹⁰ Beijing, 24 July 1974: “Information regarding the conversation between Jovan Andoni [Albanian employee at the embassy in Beijing], and a Chinese employee of the Ministry of Communication”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D9, f.2-4.

¹¹ “The talks between the delegation of the party and the government of Albania, headed by the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, and the delegation of the People’s Republic of China, headed by the member of the CCP Politburo, Yao Wenyuan, 30 November 1974”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D16, f.13.

survived.¹² It all began with the study of the thesis of the Council of Defense. This purge is still subject to disputes among Albanian historians, concerning why Hoxha promoted it. However, it seems that is not due to a struggle for the leadership of the party, as Balluku, the highest ranked victim, was only third in the line of succession, after Hysni Kapo and Mehmet Shehu. In 1973, the defense minister had promoted updating a strategic document, the defense thesis, but disputes emerged between the minister and the chief of the general staff, Petrit Dume, concerning aspects of the new document. Substantially, the minister did not promote the drafting of new thesis, only a review of the war doctrine that had been approved by Mehmet Shehu, and by the Council of Defense (Enver Hoxha) in 1967. Eventually his review turned into revision, hence he was purged as revisionist, defeatist and traitor. The minister took such step without informing Enver Hoxha. The extent to which the minister promoted changes in the document was overall limited – even the difference in the terminology is minimal – and it did not completely reject the previous document’s conclusions.¹³ The crucial point for Hoxha, however, was that the minister could mobilize the armed forces, its general staff, put them under his orders, and use for his personal purposes for years without even informing Hoxha.¹⁴ If he could do this to prepare and review an important document, he could possibly have also used this influence to foment consensus to overthrow the leadership. Hoxha’s suspicions were reinforced also by information about Balluku’s misappropriation of funds. In his

¹² I interviewed general Parllaku in Tirana in August 2015.

¹³ The discussion and criticisms to Beqir Balluku were done during the PLA Fifth Plenum 25-26 July 1974. Hoxha accused him of treason, sealing definitely his condemn. In: “Records of the Plenum... On the expulsion of Beqir Balluku from the Central Committee and from the party”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1974, D1, f.228-443.

¹⁴ When minister Balluku met with Hoxha in June 1974, he first said that the study was partial, concerning only the defense strategy of the coastal border, but pressed by Hoxha he then admitted that his study was parallel to that of the Council of Defense, and in part not compatible with it. In, “Records of the meeting of comrade Enver Hoxha with comrade Beqir Balluku on some important issues concerning the People’s defense, 15 June 1974”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V.1974, D8/1. It seems to have been limited more to the change of some tactics rather than the entire strategy, as for instance, in case of foreign attacks from the sea, it promoted the “counterstrike”, rather than the “counterattack”, in the first case implying that the enemy would penetrate into the territory, while the second term meant the counterattack when the forces of the enemy were still at bay. In addition, and would be one of the main accusations moved against him, he promoted what was called the “Theory of Sliding”, combining the initial counterattack with the withdrawing of the forces deep into the territory trying to avoid the destruction of the soldiers and the armaments for then passing into the partisan’s war. This for the leadership implied to accept that at a certain point would have been impossible to reject the landing of foreign troops, which implied to accept the defeat.

personal diary Hoxha noted that Balluku had used his position to access public funds for the wedding of his son, and to buy expensive gifts abroad with and for his wife.¹⁵

Although there was no apparent connection to the relations with China, this purge in a way was a message to the past objections of Zhou Enlai to the Albanian war doctrine. Beqir Balluku had visited China three times, and one of the accusations against him during the debates in the party's plenum, was his acceptance of Zhou Enlai's suggestions to adopt a strategy of guerrilla war, rather than a conventional confrontation with modern armaments.¹⁶ These accusations were contradictory as Albania then still considered itself a close ally of China, and no anti-Chinese policy was promoted yet by the leadership. Albanian leaders actually made this purge seem to the Chinese officials that it was against those who 'had been anti-Chinese, and against the Chinese Cultural Revolution'. In the talks with Chinese officials, Beqir Balluku was continuously associated with Lin Biao.¹⁷

In October 1974 a sensitive issue was raised for Hoxha – Chinese criticism of Stalin. Behar Shtylla was called by Yu Zhan, Chinese vice minister of foreign affairs, who levied serious accusations against Stalin, different from those Hoxha had already heard from Chinese leaders since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Yu Zhan in fact went back in time, to the 1940s when the leader of the CCP had been Wang Ming. For Zhan, because of Stalin's support for the leftist line of Wang Ming, 'in the first civil war the CCP lost ninety percent of its forces'. Then Yu Zhan accused Stalin of not having supported strongly enough the struggle against Chiang Kai-shek, which, Yu claimed, had damaged the party. Yu then called Stalin's line 'dogmatic... of leftist opportunism... in Yalta Stalin recognized Chiang Kai-shek as China's leader', concluding that Stalin 'wanted to control the war [its outcomes] in China', but most importantly that 'for the revolution it should not be any center', and

¹⁵ Enver Hoxha, "Notes on the issues to discuss with Beqir Balluku", March 1973, personal diary (document in my posses).

¹⁶ Records of the Politburo, 02-03 July 1974: "On some important issues concerning the situation in the leadership of the People's Defense Ministry", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1974, D8, f.169.

¹⁷ This is what Mehmet Shehu told Yao Wenyuan during their official meeting in Tirana, 30 November 1974: "The talks between the delegation of the party and the government of Albania, headed by the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, and the delegation of the People's Republic of China, headed by the member of the CCP politburo, Yao Wenyuan, 30 November 1974", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D16, f.38; "Notes from the meeting of the politburo member Hysni Kapo with the Charge d'Affaires of the PRC in Albania, Ang Po, 29 July 1974", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, D10; AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D16, f.37-38.

each country should follow its own proper way.¹⁸ This was followed by a string of discussion points which stretched the affinity between Albania and China further yet.

On 29 November 1974, on occasion of the celebrations in Albania for thirty years of liberation from Nazism, Hoxha asked the head of the Chinese delegation, Yao Wenyuan, about Tito's possible visit to China, because 'we have heard about this' Hoxha said. Yao Wenyuan did not deny the visit happening, but simply and shortly affirmed that 'Tito hasn't asked for any visit of high level delegation'.¹⁹ The Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement had been one of the motivations of the Soviet-Albanian split, and Tito's presence in Beijing certainly could lead Albania to distrust China's course, regardless of the recently-relaxed relations between Tirana and Belgrade. One day after Hoxha's conversation with Yao, during the official meeting between the Chinese and Albanian delegations on 30 November, Mehmet Shehu made clear the Albanian disagreement with China regarding the Sino-American normalization. For Shehu, 'although on strategic issues we agree with you, when it comes to the tactic instead we have some differences', bringing as an example the fact that 'you have talks with the Americans, whereas we have decided to not have any relations with United States'. Yao Wenyuan responded curtly that 'we do not ask you to follow our policy'. Shehu, highlighting the supposed threat to Albania's national security, was underscoring China's rapprochement with Albania's enemy, and how this policy undermined the Sino-Albanian relations. Nonetheless, for Albania, according to Shehu, 'the most precious thing on the international stage for us has been and still is the friendship with the Chinese people'.²⁰

In May 1975 another purge concerned the head of the State Planning Commission, Abdyl Këllezi, and the minister of the industry and mines, in charge

¹⁸ "Notes from the conversation of the Chinese vice minister of foreign affairs, Yu Zhan, with the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, 27 October 1974, regarding the relations between China and Soviet Union at the time of Stalin (Stalin's mistakes towards China)", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D13, f.3-11.

¹⁹ Tirana, 29 November 1974: "The meeting of Enver Hoxha with Yao Wenyuan, head of the Chinese delegation that has come [in Albania] on occasion of the celebrations for the anniversary of the liberation", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D15, f.8. Part of the delegation were also Geng Biao, head of the CCP International Liaison Department, and Yu Zhan, vice minister of foreign affairs of China.

²⁰ "The talks between the delegation of the party and the government of Albania, headed by the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, and the delegation of the People's Republic of China, headed by the member of the CCP politburo, Yao Wenyuan, 30 November 1974", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1974, D16, f.29-34.

also of the oil fields, Koço Theodhosi. Both of them had been several times to China, and both were severely criticized, dismissed from all offices, expelled from the party and a few years later executed.²¹ These events were a paradox considering that the annual oil extraction had surpassed the two million tons, more than ever before in Albanian history. But their problems were political rather than economic, as Abdyl Këllezi was also the head of the China-Albania Friendship Association. His disgrace in China was perceived as politically meaningful, the same as the disgrace of Qazim Kapeszyzi, military attaché in Beijing, and Pirro Gusho who had served as official in Beijing, and after the purge committed suicide. An Albanian student in Beijing, Hajdar Muneka, reported to the Albanian embassy, that his Chinese roommate, and also one of his Chinese professors, told him that the purging of some officials in Albania, including the defense minister Beqir Balluku, was perceived in China as a political message and sign of the break of the friendship.²² One year later, in 1976, the minister of agriculture, Pirro Dodbiba, and the minister of education and culture, Thoma Deljana, were both purged – eventually both survived to the fall of the regime.²³

These purges are still subject to disputes in Albania over why Hoxha condemned people that never challenged him. An explanation may lay in Albania's relations with China. This wave of purges came once China's path of openness was traced, and it deeply undermined Hoxha's power's legitimacy. Albania was about to remain completely isolated while its closest ally moved West, and the economy would be the first to suffer the consequences. By 1974 Hoxha had already understood that the possibility of relying on China for much longer was becoming remote. The split with the Soviet Union had been accompanied by concerned voices, but Hoxha silenced

²¹ "Record of the PLA Seventh Plenum, 26-29 May 1975: On some conclusions and tasks resulting from the hostile work and sabotage in the oil industry", in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1975, D1.

²² Tirana, November 1977: "Letter of the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu to Enver Hoxha... and the information of the foreign ministry about the meeting of the vice minister Reis Malile with the Chinese ambassador Liu Xinquan, 24 November 1977, regarding the Chinese failure to implement the agreement for the building of the deep refining oil plant of Ballsh, Information, 27 January 1977", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1977, D6, f.3-5. In my interview with Hajdar Muneka, in summer 2015 in Tirana, he affirmed that "many reports from the Albanian embassy in China sent to Tirana, were written in the way the officials of the embassy and the ambassador knew Tirana wanted to hear from them", implying the little reliability of these reports. On the other hand, it could have been also a deliberate move of the Chinese authorities to send a message to Albania but through an informal low profile channel.

²³ Records of the PLA Ninth Plenum, 19-20 July 1976, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1976, D37.

these by painting China as a better alternative. Now, with a break from China in the horizon, and with no alternatives, those voices related to the real problems Albania would be facing: its economy and defense. Silencing them enabled Hoxha to avoid any challenge within his party over the impending split with China. They might even had gone further, asking to intensify economic relations with the West – something Hoxha himself eventually limitedly, but unsuccessfully, attempted.

Prelude to the Break

The events of the last two years prior to 1975 saw continued reductions in Chinese assistance for Albania. The leadership in Tirana sensed that the alliance with China was coming to a conclusion. Because of these feelings of distrust, when the FYP 1976-1980 was drafted, the debate on the request for assistance from China captured Hoxha's personal attention more than its predecessors had. Mehmet Shehu had sent a letter asking Chinese leaders for economic assistance for the FYP, and China accepted an Albanian economic delegation to negotiate the request. Nonetheless, Hoxha personally supervised the details of the delegation's trip, their speeches, and the priority of economic projects. The fact that Albanian leaders doubted China's willingness to assist Albania is shown by Hoxha's preparation of three alternative decrescendo requests, accompanied with three respective speeches depending on Chinese reaction. Interestingly Hoxha suggested the delegation praise Deng Xiaoping in its speech. It is also meaningful that he suggested the removal from the prepared speech of the delegation any reference to specific names of the recently purged officials in Albania.²⁴ Those ministers and officials had been to China many times, and had negotiated many agreements with Beijing in the past. This confirms that their purging had some political connotation in Albania's relations with China, and that such a connotation could be perceived also on the Chinese side.

In Albania the government had discussed a first plan requiring 813 million rubles. But Hoxha deemed it unrealistic and three alternatives were prepared. The first two included 665 and 600 million rubles respectively. In the worst case scenario,

²⁴ "Top-Secret: Notes from the meeting comrade Enver Hoxha, 15 June 1975, with the main comrades of the economic delegation that will visit China, headed by the first vice Prime Minister Adil Çarçani, where are given some suggestions regarding the new loan to be asked China for the FYP 1976-1980 and some remarks regarding the speeches to be hold in China", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D2.

Albania expected from China to approve the third option, that of 550 million rubles.²⁵ To Albanian leadership's dismay, China granted only 225 million rubles, and financed 10 out of the 20 industrial projects Albania had requested.²⁶ For the first time, the delegation was expecting to negotiate exclusively with Deng Xiaoping. Eventually Deng did not receive the delegation, and was Li Xiannian who negotiated with the Albanians. When, during the Cultural Revolution, Deng had been purged alongside Liu Shaoqi, Hoxha on many occasions had attacked Deng publically as a capitalist roader and betrayer of the socialist revolution in China. Before the departure of the Albanian delegation, Hoxha admitted that the economy for the next five years would grow very modestly, suggesting the delegation to delete the part of the speech that depicted a flourishing economy, 'when instead we neither predict, nor expect it at all'.²⁷ The delegation met with Zhou Enlai in mid-June, for only fifteen minutes at a hospital, where Zhou was recovering, while the economic issues were negotiated with Li Xiannian.²⁸ Li had been in Albania at least twice, and knew very well not only the situation of the industrial projects in Albania, but also how to negotiate with Albanian officials.

The records of the meetings in Beijing between Li Xiannian and Adil Çarçani, shows that despite initial courtesy, the talks were very tense, and China's attitude had drastically changed towards Albania. Moreover, this time China showed to not cede to the Albania's requests as had done in the past. During the first meeting, Li Xiannian told Çarçani the amount of the loan that China could grant to Albania, arguing that China was a poor country. The departure from previous Chinese economic policy toward Albania became clear in reading the specific reduction of Chinese aid. First, China, Li Xiannian said, 'will not provide any longer wheat for your population which we have always imported from other countries for you...

²⁵ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D4.

²⁶ Tirana, 11 July 1975: "Information provided by Adil Çarçani, on the work of the delegation in China and the conclusion of the economic agreements", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D6, f.3-7.

²⁷ Tirana, 11 June 1975. "Top-Secret: Notes from the meeting of comrade Enver Hoxha, with the main members of the Albanian economic delegation headed by... Adil Çarçani, that will visit China, where are given instructions for the new loan to request from China for the sixth five-year plan 1976-80, and some remarks to the speech the delegation has prepared", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D2, f.4.

²⁸ "Notes form the meeting of the Albanian economic delegation with the head of China's Council of State, comrade Zhou Enlai, 15 June 1975", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D6, f.8-11.

second, we will commit to build only 10 industrial projects, and third, the military supplies will be included in the loan'. The head of the Albanian State Planning Commission, Petro Dode, doubted that its alleged backwardness motivated China to reduce the aid, arguing how 'China today is much more powerful than has been in the past'. The Albanians asked Li to revise this decision by submitting it again to the leadership, mentioning Mao.²⁹ After a week, in the second and last meeting with Li Xiannian, following instructions from Tirana, Adil Çarçani affirmed 'all the dissatisfaction of our leadership... this is an unexpected decision which drastically reduces your assistance to us'. Adil Çarçani asked Li to reconsider their decision and asked to transmit to Mao their complaint. Li instead affirmed that 'our party, Mao included, has already seriously considered this issue... that our assistance to you is already very big... Chinese assistance per capita to Albania has been higher than to any other country'. Adil Çarçani insisted to have a response 'from the CCP Central Committee [Mao] on this issue', but Li Xiannian responded back that 'what I told you is not just my personal opinion... no other response will be given to you'.³⁰ Albania, with no other choice, accepted the small loan, and the economic agreements regarding the FYP 1976-1980 were signed at the beginning of July 1975 – the last Chinese economic grant for Albania.³¹

The problem was clearly of political nature. Deng Xiaoping offered Chinese assistance to foreign countries no longer on the basis of ideological affinity but on practical calculations. First and foremost, Deng wanted, and began pursuing, China's modernization, where foreign policy decisions '...have to be based on anything other than practical considerations...'.³² In fact for Deng, 'all the policies were to be judged by the economic criteria', and the foreign aid made no exception.³³ He surely knew very well the criticism he had received from Albanian leaders, and now he

²⁹ "Minutes of conversation on 17 June 1975 in Beijing, between the Albanian economic delegation headed by Adil Çarçani, and Li Xiannian, CCP Politburo member and vice head of China's Council of State", in *ibid.*, f.29-52.

³⁰ "Minutes of conversation on 24 June 1975 in Beijing, between the Albanian economic delegation headed by Adil Çarçani, and Li Xiannian, CCP Politburo member and vice head of China's Council of State", in *ibid.*, f.53-74.

³¹ Agreements are in, *ibid.*, f.75-93.

³² John F. Copper, *China's Foreign Aid and Investment Diplomacy, Vol. I. Nature, Scope and Origins*, (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 63.

³³ Meisner, *Mao's China And After*, 401.

could have his revenge, although most likely, he was motivated by political and economic considerations rather than personal feelings. China, however, intended to preserve relations with Albania, but on a new basis, which required a political adaptation of Hoxha's regime to China's new course of openness. This would prove difficult for Enver Hoxha to agree to, though he certainly wished also to maintain good relations with China.³⁴

This friendship was to be tested again when Albanian leaders forwarded to China a new request for armaments in November 1975.³⁵ The request contained a long list of new armaments for a total of 380 thousand tons of equipment.³⁶ Albanian leaders did not expect a complete acceptance of their requests, but neither did they expect a near interruption of the aid. For Hoxha, it was significant that among all the countries relying on Chinese military assistance, Albania was the only one exclusively dealing with China, whereas both Vietnam and North Korea received military assistance also from the Soviet Union. Regarding the Chinese assistance to Third World countries, Albania argued that China should give priority first of all to a socialist country like itself, and then to the rest of the world.³⁷ At the end, in late December 1975, an agreement was signed. China not only rejected the Albanian requests, but 'the Chinese military assistance practically was interrupted', as Mehmet Shehu wrote to Hoxha of the conclusion of the negotiations.³⁸

According to a document of the Council of Defense in September 1976, Chinese military assistance had reached an amount of more than 450 thousand tons of

³⁴ Hoxha told the Chinese ambassador in Tirana that Albania had only one great friend, and that was China. In, "Notes from the conversation of Enver Hoxha with the Chinese ambassador in Albania Liu Zhen Hua, 30 September 1975, on occasion of the reception of the ambassador for the 26 years of the PRC's foundation", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D8.

³⁵ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D10.

³⁶ Top-Secret: Letter of the PLA CC, signed by comrades Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, sent on 12 November 1975 to the CCP CC, regarding the situation of the army and its further strengthening with new Chinese armaments", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D8. In the letter the requests included 800 new tanks, 65 air fighters, 38 helicopters, 42 ships of different kind, billions of rockets (more than two billion, combined shells for guns and machine guns), hundreds of missiles (8 groups in total), thousands of cannons, thousands of submarine torpedoes, etc.

³⁷ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D12.

³⁸ This is what the Premier Mehmet Shehu wrote to Hoxha to inform him about the conclusion of the negotiations, in "Letter of comrade Mehmet Shehu to comrade Enver Hoxha about the Chinese response to the military delegation", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D13, f.3. Similarly to the negotiations for the economic assistance, for the delegation were prepared in advance three speeches: if the requests were accepted at 80% then express gratitude, at 40-50% not happiness, and less than 30% a speech of protest.

armaments over the years.³⁹ In particular, the amount of ammunition provided had been so large that decades later Albania had to build four factories in order to dismantle them due to the obligations resulting from its membership in NATO. Albania joined NATO in 2009, but only in 2015 did the process of dismantling the old armaments finish, and not before an accident in one of the plants near Tirana, a blast which caused 26 deaths after an accidental explosion on 15 March 2008.⁴⁰ Despite the cessation of military assistance, however, it should be noted that China did invest enormously in Albania's industry, totalling 132 industrial projects with its assistance.⁴¹

The End of the Alliance with China, 1976-78

In early January 1976, Zhou Enlai died. Chinese leaders decided to not receive foreign delegations at his funeral. In fact, in Albania, Mehmet Shehu and Ramiz Alia prepared to participate at Zhou's funeral, but Deng called the Albanian ambassador and asked to cancel their visit, affirming that they had asked the same to other diplomatic representatives.⁴² After the death of Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping came under attack once more in 1976. This campaign was followed with great interest in Albania because Deng's rehabilitation two years earlier corresponded to a drastic change in Chinese attitude to Albania, which in turn was a consequence of the more pragmatic and less ideological turn Deng was trying to give to Chinese policy

³⁹ This emerged during the meeting between the Albanian ambassador in China and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army, Yang Chengwu. In "Notes from the conversation between comrade Behar Shtylla and comrade Yang Chengwu in Beijing", 08 September 1976", in AQSH, K. Mb, D5, f.10-18.

⁴⁰ About the real business behind the dismantling of these weapons, and the alleged government corruption, see C. J. Chivers, "Supplier Under Scrutiny on Arms for Afghans", *New York Times*, 27 March 2008. Also Nicholas Kulish, "After Munitions Explosion, Albanians Ask Why Danger Was Placed So Near", *New York Times*, 19 April 2008.

⁴¹ "Files from the State Planning Commission: The speech of the Responsible of the work group of the Chinese Ministry for economic relations with the world, Han Chun Zhen, that has come in our country, 20 January 1975, on the industrial projects built, the ongoing projects and those begun construction, with the Chinese assistance", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1975, D1. This emerges from the visit, at the beginning of 1975, of a delegation from the Chinese ministry for economic relations with the world, intentioned to see closely the situation of more than 100 industrial projects with Chinese assistance. They visited the most important sites where Chinese experts worked, and could see that 75 industrial projects were already finished, 35 were under construction, and 25 had still to start construction.

⁴² Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Behar Shtylla, sent to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, informing of his meeting with Deng Xiaoping regarding the funeral of Zhou Enlai, 09.01.1976, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1976, D171, f.11.

altogether. Considering that Enver Hoxha had publically attacked Deng Xiaoping as a revisionist, affirming Hoxha's support for Mao during the Cultural Revolution, then Deng's rehabilitation was a negative signal for Tirana regarding the Chinese course. Therefore, news of Deng being purged once again should have been received with relief in Tirana, were it not for information from the Albanian embassy in March 1976 that affirmed the campaign against Deng had not impacted China's foreign policy, but was only for 'internal purposes' of the party. According to the information, Mao had stated that despite the campaign against Deng, 'the possibility for revisionism to succeed in China is higher'.⁴³ To further criticize Deng, were summoned also the foreign teachers in Beijing. They were told that Deng had opposed the class struggle, and this was shown by 'his theory that the main moving forces of the society are the productive forces, not the revolutionary forces'.⁴⁴ Other documents were relayed to Albania by Chinese officials where Deng Xiaoping was accused of pursuing the restoration of capitalism.⁴⁵

Small signals of the deterioration of relations emerged on many occasions. For instance, talking to an Albanian diplomat in Beijing in March 1976, an Egyptian diplomat affirmed to have heard voices in the diplomatic circles about divergences between China and Albania, and that the relations had deteriorated.⁴⁶ An information reached the Albanian embassy in Beijing that one of the Albanian students in Shanghai had been put under observation by Chinese authorities, eventually though, this proved false.⁴⁷ In early April 1976, the military attaché of the Albanian embassy was approached by a man introduced with the name of Fang Zhan, who claimed to have been in Albania in 1964. He told the attaché that there was a struggle in China between two lines. He then sustained to have suffered during the Cultural Revolution

⁴³ Beijing, 11 March 1976: "Information of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, on the Deng's *Dazibao* in Beijing, which are used within the CCP to prove the rightist line of Deng Xiaoping", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1976, D3, f.1-2.

⁴⁴ "Information of the Albanian embassy in Beijing regarding the meeting organized at the Beijing's Institute of Foreign Languages in order to criticize Deng Xiaoping, who denies the class struggle as the main moving force of the society and predicates the productive forces theory instead", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1976, D4.

⁴⁵ AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1976, D5.

⁴⁶ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Behar Shtylla, sent to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 13 March 1976, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1976, D186, f.20.

⁴⁷ Radiogram of Behar Shtylla from Beijing, sent to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 17 March 1976, in *ibid.*, f.31.

because he had been in the Soviet Union studying Russian, and often worked as translator for them. Referring to the campaign in the press against the rightist deviationism, the man affirmed that, in fact ‘it was addressed against Deng Xiaoping’, anticipating what next happened to Deng.⁴⁸ When the new Chinese ambassador in Albania Liu Xinquan, wanted to hold a reception for the Albanian leadership, upon his arrival in Tirana in late September 1976, he was told that the leadership could not attend because ‘they are busy’.⁴⁹ In Buenos Aires (Argentina), the Chinese ambassador asked the Albanian ambassador ‘when the Albanian population did migrate to Kosova?’ The Albanian ambassador responded with irritation that there were no migrations in Kosova because that area had always been inhabited by an autochthonous population of Albanians.⁵⁰ The Hong Kong based newspaper, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, was reported to have written an analysis on the Chinese politics, alluding to the possible improvement of Sino-Polish relations, ‘corresponding to the deterioration of the Sino-Albanian relations... now that China does not need any more Albania, the dogmatic standing of the Albanian leaders put in difficult position Chinese leaders’.⁵¹

After Mao’s death Albanian leaders waited anxiously to see what next will happen regarding China’s course. On 28 October, 1976, Li Xiannian told the Albanian ambassador that the criticism of Deng will continue – which for the Albanian leaders meant that Deng ‘will not be rehabilitated very soon’.⁵² This was reassuring for Albania, at least regarding the Chinese economic assistance, which albeit having been substantially reduced, remained Albania’s main economic source. On this point, Albanian leaders had good reasons to fear a reshaping of the Chinese

⁴⁸ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Behar Shtylla, sent to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 05 April 1976, in *ibid.*, f.30-34.

⁴⁹ ‘Information of the meeting of the chief of the protocol branch at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kostaq Çifligu, with the new Chinese ambassador Liu Xinquan, on 13 and 18 October 1976’, in AMPJ, KINA, V. 1976, D166, f.22-23.

⁵⁰ Radiogram of the Albanian embassy in Buenos Aires sent to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 15 April 1976, informing of the meeting between the Albanian and Chinese ambassadors in Buenos Aires, in AMPJ, KINA, V. 1976, D168, f.12.

⁵¹ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 07 September 1976, in AMPJ, KINA, V. 1976, D186, f.87-91.

⁵² Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 28 October 1976, informing of his meeting with Li Xiannian, in AMPJ, KINA, V. 1976, D161, f.162-167.

foreign aid by Deng Xiaoping. In April 1976, information arrived at the Albanian embassy attributing to Deng the claim that ‘Now Albania has already a solid economic base, let it then walk on its own feet’.⁵³ Other similar signals came from the diplomatic circles. In the reception of the Swedish foreign ministry in Stockholm the Chinese ambassador was openly asked by the Swedish officials if ‘there would be changes in China’s foreign policy after Mao’s death’. The ambassador denied such voices affirming that ‘China will follow Mao’s line’.⁵⁴ A similar story came from the Albanian embassy in Vienna, where the Chinese ambassador went so far as to affirm that ‘China will never change Mao’s line... the CCP will not improve the relations with the revisionist parties, neither will China take any initiative to improve relations with the revisionist countries’.⁵⁵ On the other hand, the direct contacts between Chinese leaders and Albanian officials and leaders became an occasion to show all the divide that was created between the two countries. In October 1976, the planned courtesy visit of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing to the new Chinese leader, Hua Guofeng, was postponed.⁵⁶ The preparations for the celebrations of the anniversary of Albania’s liberation, on 29 November 1976, organized by the Albanian embassy in Beijing, resulted in a harsh confrontation between the ambassador and the vice minister of foreign affairs of China Yu Zhan. The cause was the decision of the Albanian diplomats to put three portraits during the celebrations in the reception of the Hotel Beijing. The Albanian ambassador was not allowed to put the portraits of Mao Zedong and Hua Guofeng next to that of Enver Hoxha.⁵⁷

The political divide was reflected, expectedly, in problems with the economic collaboration. In October 1976, only 22 percent of the goods listed in the barter

⁵³ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in Beijing, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 14 April 1976, in AMPJ, KINA, V. 1976, D186, f.36-38.

⁵⁴ Radiogram of the Albanian embassy in Stockholm (Sweden), sent to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 09 October 1976, informing of the comments of the Chinese ambassador during the reception of the Swedish foreign ministry for the diplomatic corps, in AMPJ, KINA, V. 1976, D168, f.43-45.

⁵⁵ Radiogram of the Albanian embassy in Vienna (Austria), sent to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 28 November 1976, informing of the meeting with the Chinese ambassador, in *ibid.*, f.150-153.

⁵⁶ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Albania, 12 October 1976, in AMPJ, KINA, V. 1976, D169, f.161.

⁵⁷ Information regarding the conversation of comrade Behar Shtylla with comrade Yu Zhan on 29 November 1976, 4.15pm, in *ibid.*, f.183-186.

agreements for that year had been exported from China to Albania.⁵⁸ This also can be explained with the fact that 1976 was a difficult year for China. Politically, there was the death of Zhou Enlai in January, then during the year two major earthquakes devastated some areas, in particular Sichuan province. Later, in September 1976, died Mao Zedong. Therefore, is understandable that these events may have certainly affected the economy. Chinese leaders instead blamed the “gang of four” for the delays in delivering supplies to Albania.⁵⁹

In November 1976 at the Seventh PLA Congress, China again for the second time refused to send a delegation, although affirming that ‘this does not harm the fraternal relations between the two parties and countries’.⁶⁰ But the relations were harmed when Hoxha, during his speech to the congress, subtly attacked China’s policy of openness. He had told the Politburo that during the congress he would not conceal the political disagreements with China, which for him were a consequence of the anti-Marxist standings of Chinese leaders ‘supporting every sort of fascist organization such as the European common market, or NATO’. For Hoxha ‘political and ideological contradictions existed, and continue existing, between us and the Chinese comrades’. China had become, for him, an opportunist country, because ‘when China was isolated on the international stage, it did support Albania’. But during these years, ‘we have succeeded to not fall into their line, and keep our own path’.⁶¹ Importantly, Hoxha thought that ‘after the death of Mao the situation [Sino-Albanian relations] will deteriorate... but perhaps Mao also did know of this, or perhaps he did not, or perhaps he allowed deterioration to balance the opposite groups within the leadership’.⁶² Albanian leadership made the decision to underline

⁵⁸ Information about the meeting of Behar Shtylla with the Chinese vice minister of foreign trade, 18 October 1976, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1976, D201, f.167-179.

⁵⁹ Radiogram from the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 November 1976, in *ibid.*, f.296.

⁶⁰ “Information from the Albanian embassy in Beijing, regarding the meeting of the ambassador Behar Shtylla, with the vice director of the CCP International Liaison, Li Yimen, on 26 June and 12 July 1976”, in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1976, D11.

⁶¹ “Top-Secret: Records of the PLA Politburo, 23 September 1976”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1976, D45, f.342-343.

⁶² *Ibid.*, f.351.

divergences with China in October 1976, just before the opening of the congress, but after the arrest of the Gang of Four.⁶³

Hoxha might have looked with increasing interest to the possible seizure of power by Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen – called the Gang of Four – whom he hoped capable of reversing China’s path of openness. To Hoxha’s expectations regarding Mao’s succession had contributed also Mao some years earlier, when at the Tenth CCP Congress, in 1973, ‘Mao had chosen him [Wang Hongwen] to be the leading candidate to succeed him as head of the party’.⁶⁴ Eventually Wang Hongwen lost Mao’s trust in 1975, but Albanian leaders did not know of this.⁶⁵ Hoxha firmly defended them [the Gang of Four] once they were arrested at the beginning of October 1976, and years later convicted in a public trial.⁶⁶ Their arrest was for Hoxha the end of the Cultural Revolution, and he well understood that was also the end of the entire revolutionary path China had claimed to have followed under Mao. Immediately after receiving a report from the Albanian embassy in Beijing, which informed of their arrest and the accusations of conspiracy against them, Hoxha summoned a restricted number of people to discuss the issue. This shows that the Albanian leadership correctly understood the arrest of the Gang of Four as the end of an epoch for China. Hoxha defended Wang Hongwen, and rejected the accusations against him as ‘baseless’. He considered the four of them revolutionaries, overthrown by counter-revolutionaries behind which for Albanian leaders stood Deng Xiaoping, and also Zhou Enlai. But Hoxha blamed also Mao, and considered him responsible, ‘because he supported the rightist elements within the party... such as Deng Xiaoping’. Basically Hoxha was blaming Mao for not having assured continuity of his line before dying. For Hoxha, they were arrested because they had opposed the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng, and in

⁶³ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao. Chinese Politics In The Age of Deng Xiaoping*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994): 27-42; Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 175-80; Teiwes and Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era*, 563-82. They were arrested on 06 October 1976.

⁶⁴ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 74; See also Roderick MacFarquhar, “The succession to Mao and the end of Maoism, 1969-82”, in MacFarquhar, ed. *The Politics of China*, 280-281.

⁶⁵ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 114-116.

⁶⁶ Alexander C. Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on Trial: Justice in the Post-Mao Transition*, Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, (Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

general had opposed the policy of openness pursued by China. Behind all this action for Hoxha, had been Zhou Enlai ‘who supported by Mao, brought around him all reactionaries and revisionists... placed them in key positions in the state and the party... plotted to purge all the adversaries, first Lin Biao... then Chen Boda... and finally reinstated Deng Xiaoping’.⁶⁷ Hoxha concluded that the four had been the last real Marxists within the CCP who were arrested by a group of revisionists. A few months later, in December 1976, Hoxha argued that ‘Hua Guofeng is a transitory leader of compromise, who is trying to get the support of the rightist elements left by Zhou Enlai’.⁶⁸

In the PLA Seventh Congress that year participated more than 19 foreign delegations, mainly members of small communist parties.⁶⁹ During the informal talks, they discussed also the events in China. From Asia came communists from Laos, Vietnam and North Korea. Some delegations, such as those of Peru, Ecuador and Brazil, asked to meet the Chinese ambassador.⁷⁰ The main topic of their discussion in Albania was the extent of the reformation in China. These small parties were concerned about their futures, of the ideological axis upon which they had built their action. Among these groups, Reginald Birch, a British communist, affirmed to have a confidential document for Hoxha regarding a meeting he allegedly had with Chinese comrades, with whom he had discussed the current situation in China.⁷¹ No such document was found in the archive, nor is it clear if he relayed it to Hoxha. Chinese events reflected also in a rally organized at the end of the congress in Tirana, in particular among the European delegations. Since not all of them could address greetings to the people gathered in the rally, they were suggested to choose one representative to stand in the name of all the European communist (m-l) parties. Albania suggested the representative of the Marxist party of Germany, Ernst Aust,

⁶⁷ “Top-Secret: The daily meeting of the PLA Secretariat, 23 October 1976”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1976, D101, f.12-29;

⁶⁸ “The speech of Enver Hoxha during the daily meeting of the PLA Secretariat, 04 December 1976”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1976, D103, f.7.

⁶⁹ “Reports Nr.1-16, of the Information Office of the Seventh Congress of the PLA, 29/10-09/11, 1976. On some issues discussed by the foreign delegations that have come for the Seventh Congress of the party”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1976, D36/8.

⁷⁰ “Information Nr.1, 29 October 1976”, in *ibid.*, f.3.

⁷¹ “Information Nr.2, 30 October 1976”, in *ibid.*, f.5-6. The document doesn’t say if he eventually gave any document to Hoxha.

but the Scandinavian parties opposed him, with the motivation that the German communists did not recognize the new leadership of China, Hua Guofeng, as a communist leader, choosing instead to support the ‘Gang of Four’.⁷² Hoxha did not react to this seeming provocation, as with his closest comrades, he too had expressed all his disappointment about the treatment the gang of four had received.

After the congress, the message of Hua Guofeng for the celebrations of the anniversary of the Albanian independence in late November ‘for the first time was not published’ in the Chinese press.⁷³ On 8 December, 1976 the CCP sent an official letter of protest for the accusations of the Albanian leaders during the congress, which, it claimed ‘were against the ideas of Mao Zedong’.⁷⁴ Information was collected by the Albanian embassy in Beijing indicating certain distance the Chinese officials kept from the Albanians in China, mainly students and diplomats.⁷⁵ A report of the Albanian embassy in Beijing in late 1976, affirmed that ‘here are rehabilitating everything that has been attacked during the Cultural Revolution’.⁷⁶ Hoxha concluded that ‘now with China we are ideologically enemies’ because for him now China had become a ‘social-imperialist country’.⁷⁷ Then, in June 1977, Hoxha permanently abandoned the alliance with China, affirming that ‘China has deviated from Marxism-Leninism, and is preparing a regressive turn like Yugoslavia and Soviet Union’, and went into a long analysis of the theory of the Three Worlds, rejecting it as non-conformant to Marxist division of society and the world.⁷⁸ This came after a Chinese parliamentary delegation had visited both Romania and

⁷² “Information Nr.13, 06 November 1976 – On the greetings of the delegations at the rally of 08 November 1976”, in *ibid.*, f.49-50.

⁷³ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Albania, and to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 30 November 1976, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1976, D186, f.228-230.

⁷⁴ “Top-Secret: Records of the Politburo, 20 December 1976”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1976, D48, f.182-183.

⁷⁵ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Albania, 15 December 1976, in AMPJ, KINA, V. 1976, D186, f.249-258.

⁷⁶ Information Nr. 14 (not dated), of the Albanian embassy in China, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1976, D188/1, f.187-188.

⁷⁷ Politburo, Tirana, 20 December 1976, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1976, D48, f.304; Had been Deng Xiaoping who in his first speech in 1974 at UN, on the occasion of the restoration of China’s lawful seat, had invited the developing countries that in case China would become a tyrant or exploitive towards them, then they could expose China as a “social-imperialist country”. In Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 84.

⁷⁸ “Records of the PLA Second Plenum, 28-29 June 1977”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1977, D1, f.322.

Yugoslavia, two countries which Chinese leaders had suggested Hoxha to intensify relations with, but which Hoxha had continuously deemed revisionists and enemies. In May 1977, two musical groups, one from Romania and the other from Yugoslavia toured China. In the official reception, the Romanian group was received by Ji Pengfei, secretary-general of the standing committee of the Chinese National Assembly (Parliament), but the Yugoslavian group was received by Wu De (Li Chunhua), a closer collaborator of Hua Guofeng. After asking about this differentiation, Albania's embassy reported to have been told 'now the relations [of China] with Yugoslavia are very important... they will be strengthened even more in the future...'.⁷⁹

The turning point however came on 7 July 1977, when the *People's Voice* in Albania published the article "The theory and the practice of revolution". The article was a frontal attack to the Chinese theory of the Three Worlds. It stressed the importance of Lenin's works and the characteristic of the current epoch as one of contradiction between capitalism and socialism, and the necessity of proletarian revolution. Then the article, after praising Lenin and mentioning neither China nor Mao by name, but referring to 'the authors', attacked Mao's theory of the Three Worlds. The theory was an attempt 'to hide the class character of the political forces'. Furthermore, 'the world is definitively divided between two camps: socialist and capitalist. The struggle between these two camps is the axis of the entire life of our epoch... the so-called theory of the three worlds, ignoring socialism as a social system, it ignores the fundamental contradiction of our time, that between capitalism and socialism... this theory is aimed at preventing revolution and defending capitalism'.⁸⁰ In this way Hoxha went public in his disagreements with China, and vehemently attacked China and Mao's idea of world division as anti-Marxist. In a long elaboration, he alluded to the rise of China as just a superpower among other superpowers, competing for influence and world markets, but not the cause of revolution. Curiously, the article appeared just when Deng Xiaoping was about to be reinstated.

⁷⁹ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent to the ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, on 30 May 1977, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1977, D231, f.57-59.

⁸⁰ "The Theory and the Practice of Revolution", *People's Voice* [Zëri i Popullit], 07 July 1977.

The article was soon publicized worldwide by the daily press, as it was Albania's first and most violent, public, and dramatic attack of China. But different sources would interpret the attack differently. The Greek daily *Kathimerini* wrote of 'unexpected Albanian action', motivated by the decrease in Chinese economic assistance to Albania. The Japanese *Kyodo News* connected the article to divergences in foreign policy. The *Sunday Times* wrote that 'Albania is seeking new friends'. Very accurate seems to have been the analysis of *Daily Telegraph* in mid-July, which, among others, stated that 'Hoxha was mistaken to think and hope that the gang of four would take over the political power after Mao's death', and linked the disagreements also with Tito's planned visit to China. For the British *Times*, this was the signal of the 'complete interruption of the special relations between China and Albania' due to ideological divergences, but also due to Chinese invitation for the Yugoslavian leader Tito.⁸¹ To Albania's dismay and anxiety, in August 1977, Deng Xiaoping received in Beijing Josif Broz Tito, the Yugoslavian leader and Hoxha's oldest enemy. What a blow for Hoxha to see the honors with which Tito was received in Beijing, when Hoxha's request to send Mehmet Shehu three years earlier had been postponed by Chinese leaders *sine die*, eventually never taking place.

In addition to the press, this article also caused a vivid debate in the diplomatic circles.⁸² But it caused also the first public reaction of Deng Xiaoping. During an interview with the France Press Agency (known as AFP/Agence France-Presse), on 21 October, 1977, he was asked what he thought of the Albanian attacks on the Three Worlds theory. He responded that 'this criticism is irrelevant to us... in the future the theory of the three worlds will be the foundation of our foreign policy... the most fanatic opponent of this theory is Soviet Union'.⁸³ This was a clear message for Hoxha regarding the Chinese course. A more interesting piece of information for the Albanian leaders came from Paris. In December 1977, the Albanian ambassador in

⁸¹ The above mentioned articles were resumed in a report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania. In AMPJ, Kina, V. 1977, D249, f.37-45.

⁸² Radiogram from the Albanian ambassador in Beograd, Sokrat Plaka, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, 27 July 1977, informing of the talks between Albanian diplomats in Beograd and Japanese diplomats. In AMPJ, Kina, V. 1977, D231, f.71-77; Radiogram from the Albanian ambassador in Rome, 25 July 1977, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1977, D246, f.223-224.

⁸³ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, on 27 October 1977. In AMPJ, Kina, V. 1977, D231, f.100-103.

Paris met with the journalist of the AFP that had interviewed Deng Xiaoping in Beijing. According to the journalist, Deng had affirmed that ‘I am not interested’ in Albania’s considerations of Chinese policies. According to the French journalist, Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng were in a rivalry, ‘and soon Deng will replace Hua Guofeng’ he affirmed.⁸⁴ China’s reaction towards Albania, however, was generally cautious, and perhaps calculated, trying to avoid direct and open tension. In fact, had Chinese leaders reacted through a public polemic, Albania’s role in this dispute would have been highlighted. In that case Albanian leaders would have had an undeserved space and attention. Indeed, the European and American press did publicize Albania’s article, highlighting it as a turning point for Sino-Albanian relations.⁸⁵ Therefore China decided to lower the profile of the disputes, through small steps, such as the slow interruption of the economic supplies.

Information from the Albanian embassy, from unspecified sources, mentioned the possibility for China ‘to interrupt completely the military supplies’, and that ‘within the general staff of the Chinese army there have been disagreements regarding the standing towards Albania...’.⁸⁶ The source did not clarify in what specifically these disagreements consisted. Foreign newspapers speculated of a wave of arrests of pro-China elements in Albania, which were reproduced in China in the party cadres’ newspaper. Albania submitted an official note of protest, claiming their publishing as an attack on the Sino-Albanian friendship.⁸⁷ The Chinese response came through a verbal note in mid-October 1977, which considered the Albanian note an interference in China’s internal affairs since they were not published for the public but for the party cadres’.⁸⁸ Reis Malile, Albanian vice minister of foreign affairs, who had also served as ambassador in China, met on 29 October, 1977, with the Chinese ambassador in Tirana Liu Xinquan, and demanded a definitive response

⁸⁴ Radiogram of Dhimitër Lamani from Paris, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on 12 December 1977, in *ibid.*, f.113-115.

⁸⁵ AMPJ, Kina, V. 1977, D249, D37-45.

⁸⁶ Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, on 03 December 1977. In AMPJ, Kina, V. 1977, D231, f.111-112.

⁸⁷ Tirana, 22 September 1977: Note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, for the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China, in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1977, D248, f.9-10.

⁸⁸ Radiogram from Beijing of the Albanian ambassador Behar Shtylla, 16 October 1977, in *ibid.*, f.15-20.

about the completion of construction works in the integrated oil refinery, and the metallurgical project, which had been continuously postponed due to technical problems. The ambassador replied in a meeting one month later, when he protested the way Albania was dealing with this problem, and expressed his indignation for the interferences of the Albanian minister of mines and industry, Xhafer Spahiu, who according to him, 'has accused the Chinese experts of delays without any base'. He said that all the recent delays were due to the sabotage of the "gang of four", who damaged the economy and created great turmoil, and China expected Albania to understand this situation. Malile rejected the Chinese statements and asked for a response specifically concerning the delays of that industrial project, affirming that issues such as the sabotage work of the gang of four were internal affairs, which should not impede China from respecting the agreements signed between the two countries. Hence the consideration that this statement of the Chinese ambassador, full of political notes beyond the issues about which they had met, 'have specific and determined purposes', alluding that China was using the quarrel on one industrial project as an excuse for escalating the tension of its relations with Albania. From Albania's standing however, the impression may be that Albania was similarly guilty, stressing the economic issues to find a political way out of its alliance with China, which by now had become an uneasy partner. The Albanian vice minister noted that the indefinite postponement of the projects 'is damaging very bad the economy of the country', an affirmation full of implied notes of sabotage of the economy.⁸⁹ Between October 1977 and May 1978 Albania addressed other notes of protest to the Chinese ambassador in Tirana, urging the completion of some pending industrial projects. Difficulties were encountered also during the visit to China of an Albanian trade delegation in November 1977. The delegation went to China to conclude the trade agreements for the year 1978, but disagreements soon surged

⁸⁹ Tirana, November 1977: "Letter of the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu to comrade Enver Hoxha...and the information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the meeting of the vice minister Reis Malile with the Chinese ambassador Liu Xinquan, on 24 November 1977, about the Chinese failure to implement the agreement for the building of the deep processing oil plant of Ballsh. Information Nr.24, 25 November 1977", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKK, V. 1977, D6, f.14-20.

regarding the currency in the bilateral trade between China and Albania, eventually resolving it by adopting the American dollar.⁹⁰

On 7 July, 1978, China decided to interrupt economic and military assistance to Albania, and withdraw its many specialists from Albania. The official notice of the decision, delivered to the Albanian embassy in Beijing by the vice minister of foreign affairs of China, Yu Zhan, came exactly one year after the *People's Voice's* article published on 7 July 1977 had attacked the Chinese Three Worlds theory.⁹¹ After 24 years of intense relations, and 17 of effective alliance, China and Albania downgraded their fraternal relations to 'normal relations'. Unlike the split with the Soviet Union, Albania's split with China was not radical. In fact, both countries maintained their embassies and ambassadors in the respective countries, and trade and communication, although on a lower scale, continued between the two countries.

Conclusion

The period from 1974 to 1978 saw the end of Albanian leaders' feeble hope that China would never become so open that it would question, and consequently reshape, the entire course of history since the founding of the PRC. Hoxha's hope lied, at first, in Mao's hold of the leadership, and after Mao's death, on those close to him who had promoted the Cultural Revolution. This mass movement, aspects of which had been severely criticized by Hoxha, remained the reference to which Hoxha attached his hope regarding his ally's future. But the arrest of the Gang of Four extinguished his expectations to see China reverse the policies of openness. That Hoxha found China's openness reversible shows how desperately he lacked the realism during this time – a time when China's strategic interests on the international stage required Chinese integration into the international system. Hoxha's distance from political reality in analyzing Chinese policies is shown also by his attention to the Gang of Four, and the fact that he considered it possible for the Gang to seize political power. In fact, with the purges of 1972-74, Hoxha had proven determined to

⁹⁰ Ministry of Trade, November-December 1977: "Report of the working group that went to China for the trade agreements for the year 1978, and the graphs of the delivering of the goods that were not delivered for the years 1975, 1976, 1977", in AQSH, F.503, V. 1977, D74.

⁹¹ "Top-Secret: Radiogram of the Albanian ambassador in China, Behar Shtylla, sent on 07 July 1978 to the minister of foreign affairs of Albania Nesti Nase, and relayed to Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, regarding the Note of the Chinese Government on the interruption of the economic and military assistance to Albania", in AMPJ, Kina, V. 1978, D283, f.3-45.

walk in the opposite direction of China. He would not concede any sort of isolation, nor allow any degree of openness. On the contrary, those purges were precisely signs that he would follow, at all costs and alone if need be, the path of Stalinism. He had worked for this continuously, and the purges were aimed at preventing any reversal of these policies in Albania.

On the other hand, with the second and definitive rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping, China opened even further to the West, and solidified the steps taken since the visit of Kissinger to Beijing. Slowly, but irreversibly, what would remain of Mao's revolutionary policies were only symbols, which for Albanian leaders were not enough to justify the existence of solid political relations between China and Albania. Eventually, Albania lost the most impacting ally it had during the post war period. Although Hoxha called for increasing the economic relations with European countries, his country had been so deeply isolated that after 1978 it lacked any serious initiative to open to the world. Hoxha remained a Stalinist until the day of his death. And he had created the conditions that even after him, there would not be any sort of Albanian Deng Xiaoping to open Albania's doors. In fact, the only survivors of Hoxha's purges in the Politburo had been Hoxha's lackeys, who even after his death in 1985 faithfully carried out his orders.

CONCLUSION

Before the communist regime established its rule in Albania, following the Second World War, the country had never enjoyed guaranteed sovereignty, although it had international recognition. Between the two wars, both Yugoslavia and Italy had strongly interfered with the internal policies of Albania, competing for its control, until Italy invaded it at the beginning of April 1939. The war and the geographical location of Albania decided its political fate for the coming half century, as the communists were the only force that organized a strong resistance to the foreign invaders during the war, assisted in this first by the British officials and later by the Yugoslavian emissaries, whose role was determinant in opening the path to Enver Hoxha to reach the position of the military commander first, and political leader second, a position he kept until he died, ruling the country with an implacable iron fist.

During the war period, with his astute tactics, Hoxha led the Yugoslavs that sponsored him to believe he would be easily maneuverable, that he could be used against those in the Albanian intelligentsia that were given to strong nationalism, which had openly claimed the province of Kosova – mainly inhabited by Albanians – into post war Albania. After the war, Yugoslavia not only managed to keep Kosova, but almost to annex Albania as its seventh republic. I have showed in the first chapter that Hoxha survived because he maximized the newly-emerged Tito-Stalin disputes, and so consolidated both his regime and his personal power. Yugoslavia's threat to Albania and to Hoxha's personal rule, accentuated Hoxha's nationalism, which, before the split with Belgrade, had been shadowed by the socialist brotherhood narrative. Subsequently, Hoxha, in his public discourse, resumed the threat historically the neighbors represented for Albania's existence, and so nationalism together with ideology (Marxism), became determinant factors in Albania's foreign policy after the Second World War.¹ It is precisely in this context of national (in-) security and ideological implications that the Albanian-Soviet alliance was forged. The Warsaw Pact became a good umbrella in this sense, had the Soviet Union

¹ Elez Biberaj, *Albania. A Socialist Maverick*, (Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), 85. For Biberaj "Nationalism no doubt was the most important determinant".

interfered not with the internal affairs of Albania – until attempting to change the leadership – showing that its aims were to treat Albania simply as its satellite, good enough to protect the Southwestern flank of its empire by using it as a base, but subject to Soviet impositions. As far as Soviets did not threaten the power position of Hoxha, they were courted to assist Albania, which they did, but once Stalin died, and Khrushchev initiated a policy of revising Stalin's policies and place in history, Hoxha grew wary. Khrushchev not only rectified Stalin's policies, but openly promoted (at least he tolerated) similar revisions in all the other communist countries of East Europe, with the consequence of pushing towards the change of the leadership. He did not conceal that Albania too should undertake reformative steps toward total destalinization. Hoxha felt his personal power threatened, and so he sought new allies, and for a safe way to disengage from his now burdensome ally. As shown in the first part, the East European turmoil in the aftermath of Khrushchev's reformation brought both China and Albania on the same line of resistance, for different reasons, to this course. Therefore, Albania found soon a friend in China, who offered economic and military assistance, and unlike the Soviet Union, did not manifest any intention to interfere with the internal policies of Albania, with Hoxha's Stalinist manners. The successful management of the Albanian-Soviet split, made Hoxha a good survivor and offered to his people the image of a leader that could guarantee the national sovereignty and the economic sufficiency. In addition, he made clear to the new allies that he was seeking more a partnership, based on mutual benefits and built over a solid common ideological ground, not a top-down servile alliance.

In the second part of this research I have shown how from 1960 until the end of Albanian communism, Albania's history was inextricably related to Chinese vicissitudes, its foreign and internal policies. Since Albania had won independence, no other foreign power impacted Albanian life and history as China did with its years of great assistance; and no other small communist country in Europe played such a particular role for China as did Albania during the Cold War. As shown in my research, its particularity lies in its exclusive relationship, its common ideology, but most importantly in the fact that Albania more than any other country supported convincingly and dogmatically China's alternative to the Soviet power as a leading actor of the international communist movement. Their respective leaders managed to

intersect idealism with realism, both in China and in Albania, and successfully build an alliance that for more than a quarter of the Cold War period resisted internal and international challenges. The leaders manipulated the masses, by convincing the people of their respective countries of the idealist and sincere communist reasons behind the friendship, hiding the disputes that came to emerge at times, when instead, this alliance often corresponded to practical necessities experienced by China when trying to expand its influence in competition with the Soviet Union, and by Albania when seeking new suppliers and its own eventual autonomy. An autonomy that derived first of all from its geographic distance with China, but also by internal considerations of Hoxha's regime that following entirely China's path, economically and politically, would have undermined his power and Albanian regime's consolidated policies. Consequently, Albania took from China what most suited Albania's regime.

Nonetheless, as I have shown in the second and third part of my research, Hoxha refused to reconsider his established communist ideology. He criticized aspects of the Chinese revolution, such as the centrality of the peasantry and the nature of the class struggle, and also refused to acknowledge in full the Chinese claim that Mao's thought was a novel and vital contribution to communist ideology. In fact, beyond public appraisal, Hoxha hardly digested Mao's thought. This, however, reflected Hoxha's linearity in internal and international policies, which did not allow much flexibility. In fact, as far as the communist ideology remained the driving axis of China, Hoxha did not hesitate to fully support Beijing. Indeed, Albania became the most – and only – fervent supporter of China and Mao, in particular through Mao's most leftist policies, essentially throughout the 1960s. It is in this period that Albania partially replaced Chinese diplomacy in the international organizations, and became China's spokesperson in United Nations. In this role, Albania's diplomatic network was at complete China's disposal. Albania's international interests converged with China's interests, making possible the pursuit of common agendas.

In the final part I have shown how the Sino-Albanian split also was as particular as the alliance itself had been. When, in 1961, the Soviet-Albanian split occurred, the two countries had interrupted even their diplomatic relations. This did not happen in the Sino-Albanian split. In fact, amid the notes of mutual protest and accusations between Beijing and Tirana, the two governments maintained diplomatic relations

and continued to trade together, although now based on international trade rules and laws, and no longer based on ideological principles. The economic exchange after the split remained very limited. In the Balkans, China decided to increase relations with Yugoslavia instead, and later continued supporting Serbia – a policy that continues today. If China would have continued approving Albanian requests, most likely, Albania would have prioritized its economic ties with China, setting aside all the political divergences about the new policy of openness promoted by Deng Xiaoping. After all, China's open doors policy did not begin in 1978, when China interrupted the assistance to Albania, but was a process that had started with Kissinger's visit in 1971. Since then, Albania had had the time to interiorize and to find a way to adapt to this new situation. The new requests sent to Beijing after 1971 were a sign of the fact that Albania had already prioritized the economy in its relationship with China, but it was too late, as for Beijing the alliance with Albania had now become obsolete.

Here lies the answer to a fundamental question; who benefitted more from this alliance? Because of the Chinese assistance, Hoxha's regime survived the Soviet threat, and also managed to gain support due to the relative economic progress of Albania. Thus, it is possible to argue that it was Hoxha's Albania to mostly benefit in the short-term. However, in the long-term, China reaped great fruits from this friendship. China managed to break out of international isolation thanks to countries that did not align with the Soviet-American exclusive predominance in their respective areas of influence. Albania, for a relatively short period, was almost the only open door for Beijing in Europe, and certainly the only to support Mao, and an indefatigable voice in the United Nations. This helped China's engagement with the world in a long-term process, one China started then, and is still carrying out today, whereas China's interrupted assistance to Albania led to the complete collapse of the Albanian economy. Chinese leaders, and China, did not lose from the alliance with Albania, nor from the break of it. On the contrary, China did use this alliance for the time it was necessary to its own interests on the international stage, and dismissed it once it became an obstacle to the new course undertaken, in particular after Mao's death. If Hoxha had been farsighted to seek an alliance with China after the split with Soviet Union, he had not been thereafter farsighted enough to find alternatives, should the alliance with China dissolve. On the contrary, he had prohibited any

economic concession or grant with ‘revisionist, or capitalist companies or countries’ – sanctioned in the new constitution that had been approved in 1976.²

Hoxha had decided to keep Albania away from any possible openness, included away from any economic collaboration that would include credits from foreign states or companies. During the communist period, China was, in fact, the last country from which Albania received credits. Thereafter, the Albanian leaders, in complete contradiction with the reality, sustained that their country was among the fewest in the world to flourish thanks to the socialist economy. How much Hoxha had decided to ignore the reality is shown better by his own assessment. For Hoxha, in a time ‘when the inflation, unemployment, and other negative phenomenon affects the living standards of the working people in the capitalist and revisionist countries, in Albania, on the contrary, ... there is no inflation, no unemployment and no economic migration’.³ In 1982 Hoxha would further reinforce affirming that ‘the great economic crisis, and consequently the political one, is further deepening in all worlds’ continents and all states, with the only exception of Albania’.⁴ But after the Sino-Albanian split the reality for Albania, however, became quite dark. The break of the Chinese aid was a huge blow that caused Albania enormous problems, plunging its small economy into full crisis from which did not recover until the end of the regime in 1991.⁵

The interruption of Chinese assistance was immediately reflected in the economic development plan for the years 1980-85, where, although with a language full of optimism, the regime expected a very modest growth.⁶ Another consequence of the interruption of the assistance was the fact that Albania, although it had developed its industries greatly, lacked the technological equipment to produce and use new machinery. In some cases, this could not even be supplied by western

² Biberaj, *Albania. A Socialist Maverick*, 67-83.

³ Records of the PLA Tenth Plenum 15-16 June 1981, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1981, D109-109/1, f.86.

⁴ Records of the Politburo, 24 February 1982, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1982, D6, f.122.

⁵ For Albania’s transition from dictatorship to multiparty system see, Fred C. Abrahams, *Modern Albania. From Dictatorship to Democracy in Europe*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2015). For an account of the transition process from the death of Hoxha to the establishing of the first democratic government see in particular pages 15-110; Elez Biberaj, *Albania in Transition. The Rocky Road to Democracy*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998).

⁶ Records of the Politburo, 25 September 1978: “On the preliminary plan for the economic and cultural development for the seventh five-year economic plan 1981-85”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1978, D12, f.9-72;

sources, as those parts would not be compatible with the entire chain of the unit, and since there were no available funds to purchase full equipment, many Albanian factories ceased work altogether. Some industrial projects were inefficient because the technology they used was obsolete. For instance, the metallurgic plant (Kombinat) in the city of Elbasan, once the “feeding plant” of all the industry, as the regime used to call it, became instead the source of the worst pollution in the country, and remains so to this day. It worked only for 12 years, but it impacted the health of the local population for decades, causing many casualties, and its consequences for the environment were catastrophic.

Moreover, China assisted Albania, providing every sort of armament and all of them without demanding any payment in turn. This assistance did not dictate any predetermined military strategy to Albania, because for Beijing, Albania was not of strategic military interest, therefore the Chinese leadership never went beyond some suggestions regarding the war strategy Albania should build with the Chinese armaments, in case of war. When Chinese military assistance struggled to meet the overwhelming requests, in addition to Chinese internal impediments in production, it became necessary to pressure Albania to come to terms and accept eventual restrictions in the amount of supplies. This is understandable considering the different role Albania played for China compared to the Soviet Union, and in this lies the main difference in Albania’s relations with these two countries. If for the Soviets, especially after the Tito-Stalin rift, Albania was a strategic outpost of the communist bloc in Southeastern Europe, for China instead, Albania was an important political, not a military geo-strategical ally. Therefore, this different role, together with the geographical distance, shaped the alliance and the military dynamic therein. Albania was more interested to arm itself, rather China being so interested to arm Albania, whereas in the case of Soviet Union it had been also the interest of the Soviets to arm the country and to have a direct military base in Albania (the naval base of Vlora - Pashalimani), for its proximity with the NATO bases in Italy. Albania managed to play well the role of a tiny ally, in particular during the years of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, extracting concessions and, according to China, placing Albania only second to Vietnam in Chinese military assistance to foreign countries. The entire country was fortified during those years, building hundreds of thousands of bunkers with Chinese aid, still today visible in many parts of the country.

Ignoring Chinese calls for a diversified trade network, Albania had chosen the exclusive link to China. This worked for the time that relations among the two countries stayed stable, but once disputes came to the fore, Albania was unprepared to open towards international trade market, and not having a big country on which rely, it had to adapt (unsuccessfully) to international trade rules. The main base for trade was to sell minerals – chrome in particular – that Albania had at its disposal. The problem however was that the technology to process the minerals was backward, revealing how obsolete, inefficient, and unprofitable some investments in the heavy industry had been, making it difficult for foreign markets to accept many Albanian products. Albania reacted to the break up with China trying to approach economically Yugoslavia and improved its relations also with Greece and Italy, and strengthened contacts with Turkey.⁷ All of these measures proved insufficient to replace the huge assistance China had provided during all those years. After 1980 the country entered into the list of the poorest countries in the world, with people in long queues for hours for very basic goods. The crisis ended with protests and the fall of the regime in 1991, and the embracing of an opened capitalistic system, which did bring more wealth to the country, but also discomfort and pain for many citizens, caused by the savage use of the resources and the huge gap between the rich oligarchs and the rest of the population.⁸ Not very differently has been the course of Chinese capitalism, or its socialist market economy, (officially, neo-liberalism with Chinese characteristics),⁹ but at least China retained, on the international stage, the centrality that, in Mao's era, it had achieved through its ideological struggle.

It is a fact that no other country could have played such a big role as China played for Albania, no other country was ideologically so close and geographically

⁷ One railway was built appositely to facilitate the trade, and it led from Tirana to the border with Montenegro, at the time one of the republics of Yugoslavia. At the beginning it was planned the building of a railway to connect some industrial projects in the south, but once China interrupted the assistance, this plan changed and it was prioritized the connection with Yugoslavia. See Records of the Politburo, Tirana, 06 December 1978, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1978, D13, f.129-135; “Daily meeting of the Secretaries of the PLA CC, 21 June 1979”, in AQSH, F.14, OU, V. 1979, D72.

⁸ Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 114-222; For the understanding of the fall of communism and the transition to the free market in East Europe see Anders Aslund, *How capitalism was built: the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Thomas Blanton, Svetlana Savranskaya, Vladislav Zubok, *Masterpieces of history: the peaceful end of the cold war in Europe, 1989*, (New York: Central European University Press, 2010).

⁹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 120–51.

so far. A perfect combination for Tirana to maximize the profits from such an alliance, and to get the maximum benefits from its big ally without fearing it in case of a split. The Soviet Union had been a direct threat to Albania, because it was hypothetically able to sustain a war for its relative geographic proximity and had already intervened in Budapest and in Prague. Albania managed to avoid the Soviet threat with Beijing's support. China was for Albania exactly as the Sun stands to the Earth; not too close to burn it. But Albania chose to burn anyway, through a harsh self-imposed isolation shown most visibly in the massive bunkerization of the country. At a certain point, particularly in the late 1970s, this fortified Albania was very similar to the situation described in the famous novel of the Italian novelist Dino Buzzati, 'The Tartar Steppe', in which a military garrison is kept permanently into a mobilized state waiting to face the tartar invasion, which will never take place.¹⁰ It transformed instead the self-sieged into a collective state of paranoia. That garrison in Buzzati's novel, is the most authentic metaphor for what Albania, and in particular Enver Hoxha, had become towards the end of the Cold War.

¹⁰ Dino Buzzati, *The Tartar Steppe*, (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1990, c1952).

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