

**HISTORY
OF THE PARTY OF LABOR
OF ALBANIA**

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Workers of all countries, unite!

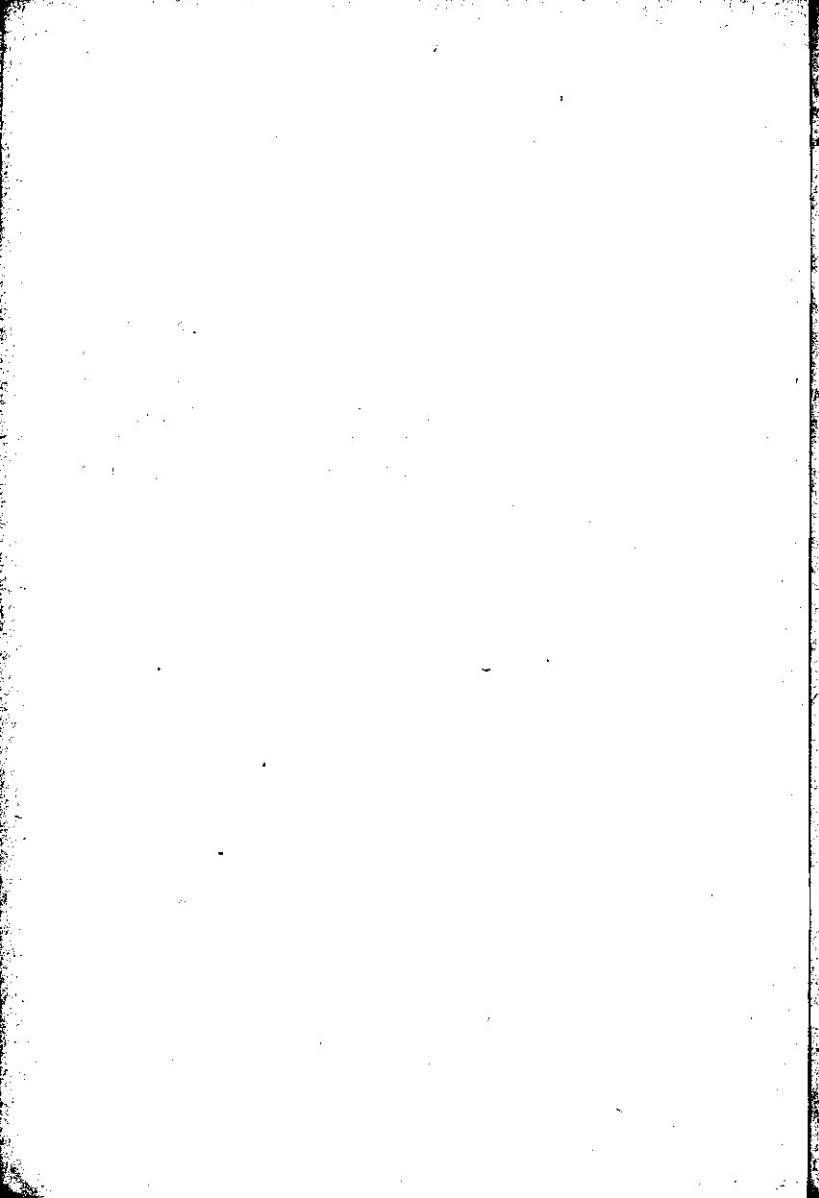
**HISTORY
OF THE PARTY
OF LABOR OF ALBANIA**

FIRST AND SECOND CHAPTER

**THE INSTITUTE OF MARXIST-LENINIST STUDIES
AT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY
OF LABOR OF ALBANIA**

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INTRODUCTION

The period since the founding of the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA) is the most brilliant in the age-long history of the Albanian people. During this period deep revolutionary changes have been brought about in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country, major achievements of vital importance have been attained, putting an end to oppression and exploitation and ensuring a rapid and uninterrupted development of the country towards socialism.

These achievements have been attained by the Albanian people, first and foremost, thanks to the correct line pursued by the Party of Labor of Albania. With the formation of the Party, the working class, the laboring masses, brought forth from their ranks, in the heat of battle against the fascist invaders and traitors to the country, a revolutionary national leadership absolutely

determined to defend the interests of the people, capable of bringing about national liberation and social emancipation.

The Party of Labor of Albania has always been guided solely by Marxism-Leninism. It has always held aloft the militant banner of the immortal ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Loyalty to Marxism-Leninism is the source of its inexhaustible strength, its wisdom and farsightedness, its courage and determination to surmount all difficulties and obstacles in order to forge ahead with unshakable confidence towards attaining its objective and fulfilling its tasks to the letter.

The Party of Labor of Albania has succeeded in carrying out the major tasks lying before it because it has firmly relied on the people. It inherited from the people marvellous patriotic and revolutionary traditions. In their struggle against the foreign yoke and social oppression, the Albanian people have forcefully demonstrated their love of country, their deep hatred of bondage and oppression, their ardent aspirations and uncurbed will for progress, their unshakable confidence in victory, their matchless valor in battle against enemies superior in numbers and means, their sincere love and generosity towards their friends and comrades and their irreconcilable stand towards enemies and traitors. They have had to fight against many and powerful enemies in order to pro-

protect their lives and future and to ward off the danger of their extinction as a people and nation. The stand the Albanians have maintained and the wars they have waged against their enemies have always been of a popular and liberation nature; theirs have been just wars. The progressive patriotic traditions and rich historical experience of the people have served as a very sound support for the activity of the Party. Inheriting these traditions the Party elaborated this age-long experience in the light of Marxist-Leninist teachings and embodied it in its revolutionary activity. The leadership of the Party of Labor of Albania brought to the fore in all their splendor the noble virtues of our people, raised their vitality as a nation to a higher level and made patriotic and revolutionary traditions a major driving force in the liberation of the country and construction of socialism.

The Party linked its struggle for freedom and independence with the struggle against the exploiting classes in order to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, to do away with all forms of exploitation, to build socialism. Under the guidance of the Party, the patriotism of the people was raised to a higher level turning into socialist patriotism. Love of country was organically linked with love and loyalty towards the People's state power, towards socialism.

Enlightened by the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, based on the experience of the revolutionary struggle of the masses, of the people, firmly relying on the people who had brought it into being, and reared and guided by the lofty ideal of loyally serving the people and socialism, the Party of Labor of Albania has succeeded in working out and always implementing a correct general line and has gained the maturity to find its bearings under all situations. It has always honorably fulfilled its obligations towards its own working class and people as well as towards the international communist and workers' movement.

The Party succeeded in becoming the sole leading force of the Albanian people in their struggle for national independence, freedom, democracy, and socialism. It organized and led the victorious and most glorious national-liberation war the Albanian people have ever waged. It organized and led the reconstruction of the country devastated by the war and its social, economic, and cultural development, on the road to socialism.

The History of the Party of Labor of Albania is the history of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Party which has solved and continues to solve with success these main problems:

— doing away with all kinds of political and economic dependence on foreign imperial-

ist Powers and securing full national independence;

— developing without interruption the people's revolution from the anti-imperialist democratic to the socialist stage;

— forging the alliance of the working class with the laboring peasantry and with the other popular masses of the country, uniting these masses into a common front around, and under the sole leadership of the Party;

— establishing, consolidating and constantly perfecting the State of people's democracy as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat;

— doing away with age-long economic, social, cultural and technological backwardness of the country, leading it from its backward semi-feudal state to socialism by-passing the phase of advanced capitalism;

— establishing and developing socialist industry as the directive force of people's economy;

— collectivizing agriculture, developing and mechanizing it;

— abolishing the landlord and the bourgeois classes, the exploitation of man by man, building the economic basis of socialism in urban and rural areas;

— training new cadres for the various branches of economy and culture, creating the socialist intelligentsia;

— educating the workers to become revolutionaries and inculcating in them the

scientific Marxist-Leninist world outlook;
developing the revolution in the field of ide-
ology and culture;

— protecting our socialist homeland from
the hostile intentions and acts of the impe-
rialists, of the revisionists, and of their stooges;

— establishing new relations of the Alba-
nian State with other countries on the basis
of equality, respect for national independence
and territorial integrity, of non-intervention
in internal affairs, and of mutual advantage;

— preserving the monolithic ideological
and organizational unity in the ranks of the
Party;

— establishing and consistently preser-
ving fraternal relations between the Party
of Labor Albania and other fraternal commu-
nist and workers' parties on the basis of pro-
letarian internationalism; protecting the in-
dependence of the Party from the great na-
tion chauvinistic intentions and attempts of
the Yugoslav and Khrushchevite revisionists.

The Party of Labor of Albania is leading
the Albanian people with determination and
unshakable confidence towards completing
the building of socialist society, solving ma-
jor and complicated problems connected with
carrying the socialist revolution through to
the end in all fields — political, economic
and social, ideological and cultural, — with
the struggle to bring about the complete
triumph of Marxism-Leninism over revisio-

nism, the complete triumph of socialism over capitalism, on a world scale.

The History of the Party of Labor of Albania portrays the creative application of Marxism-Leninism under the conditions of Albania and in concrete international circumstances. The study of this History is an integral and important part of the study of Marxism-Leninism in order to bring about the ideological uplift of the members of the Party and of all the working people of the country. It helps the workers, peasants and the socialist intelligentsia to enhance their knowledge of social development and political struggle, to enrich the experience of their struggle, to build socialism and communism, to assess and solve aright their actual tasks and understand the trend of development in the days to come. The study of the History of the Party of Labor of Albania helps to arouse the political vigilance of the people in battle with imperialism and revisionism, to strengthen their confidence in the ultimate triumph of Marxism-Leninism over modern revisionism, and of socialism on a world scale.

«In publishing its History, the Party of Labor of Albania is placing in the hands of the communists and workers of our country, a sharp and powerful political and ideological weapon of which they will be legitimately proud. The History of the Party

will open for them new and brilliant horizons and perspectives. It will further imbue the communists and people with the mighty Marxist-Leninist ideas of the Party, tempering them more and inspiring them in the struggle to defend Marxism-Leninism, to conquer all bastions and to score further, magnificent successes in the complete building of socialist society and communism.¹⁾

* * *

In this book the first attempts are made to give a concise, systematic, and all-round picture, of the process of development of the Albanian communist movement, of the life and struggle of the Party of Labor of Albania, of its decisive role in the victory and uninterrupted development of socialist revolution, of the brilliant results of the policy and revolutionary activity of the Party.

The History of the Party of Labor of Albania covers three main periods.

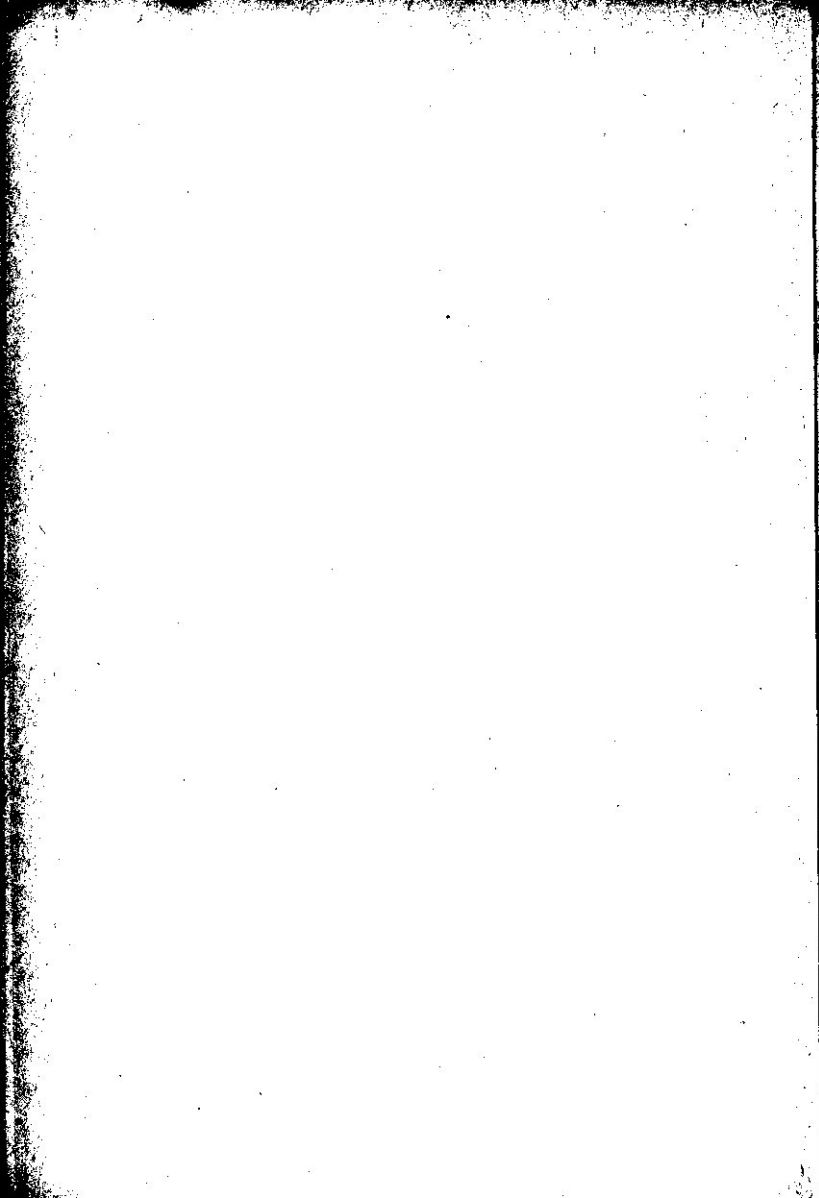
The first period begins at the initial stage of the workers' movement and the or-

1) ENVER HOXHA — Speech delivered at the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CC of the Party of Labor of Albania on June 30, 1967. Central Archives of the Party.

ganized communist movement to the founding of the Communist Party of Albania (November 1941)

The second period covers the activity of the Party to organize and lead the National-liberation War of the Albanian people against the fascist invaders and traitors and to bring about the triumph of the people's revolution (November 1941 - November 1944).

The third period is that of the struggle of the Party, as a guiding party of the People's Power and of the whole life of the country, for the building of socialist society.



CHAPTER I

THE STRUGGLE TO FOUND THE ALBANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

(1929-1941)

1. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE WORKERS' MOVE- MENT. THE GROWTH OF THE DEMOCRATIC AND ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENT DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE 20th CENTURY.

Ottoman domination in Albania lasted nearly five centuries. This was the period of the feudal-military regime, of ruthless national oppression, of unbearable feudal exploitation, of frequent devastating wars and of deplorable backwardness in the field of education and culture. But, at the same time, this was also the period of the indomitable struggle of the Albanian people for freedom and national independence, for material and spiritual progress,

for social justice. This struggle became the decisive factor which led to the proclamation of independence on November 28, 1912.

The proclamation of independence and the establishment of the new State were events of major historical significance for the Albanians. But to the head of this State there came the landlords and the bourgeoisie while the people who fought and shed their blood did not get rid of oppression and exploitation by the ruling classes. In addition, independent Albania found itself surrounded by neighboring bourgeois States which pursued a chauvinistic policy towards it. The imperialist Powers in collusion with these States not only dismembered Albania, wresting half of its territory in 1913, but never gave up their intentions of wiping it out completely from the map of the Balkans or of placing it under their control.

**Albania — a Semifeudal
Agrarian Country**

The proclamation of independence found Albania in a backward agrarian state. Although capitalist relations had begun to develop in urban and less so in rural areas, in general they were only at the initial stage. The system of landlordism had spread in the lowlands and in parts of the uplands, whereas patriarchal survivals still reigned supreme in the life of the mountaineers, especially, in the North.

The tenants were mercilessly exploited by

the landlords. The poor peasants, who made up the majority of the rural population, were not better off. These owners of small plots of land could hardly make both ends meet. Want kept them continually in the clutches of the landlords, the well-to-do peasants, merchants and usurers. The ruined peasants became agricultural hired laborers. Some of them, finding no market to sell their labor power in the cities, emigrated abroad. Unjust distribution of land, ruthless exploitation by landlords, religious institutions and the State, the use of primitive tools and methods in farming, were the cause of the great poverty of the peasant masses and of the starvation which beset the country time and again.

The cities in general were small and under-developed from the economic and social point of view. In their inner life they still preserved vestiges of mediaeval times. Small-scale handicraft production prevailed in them with the exception of larger towns like Shkodra, Berat, Elbasan, Korça etc. where capitalist handicraft factories had sprung up as early as in the XIX century. An average of 10-15 wage earners worked in these factories. With the growth of the production of goods and the expansion of markets, the merchant bourgeoisie had accumulated considerable capital by exploiting the work of cottage handicraftsmen and by becoming landowners. But in general, they made no investments in industry. Thus, in the newly-set up Albanian State, there

were only 25 minor factories which engaged mainly in processing a few agricultural products. These were primitive concerns employing about 150 workers all told.

During the first decade following independence, the rate of industrial development was extremely low. About 50 new factories and workshops were set up. But even the largest factories employed no more than 30 workhands each. A larger number of workhands were employed at the salt pits, in lumbering and building construction enterprises. Some tens of workers were also employed in the Selenica (Vlora) bitumen mines run by foreign concession holders.

The majority of workers employed by capitalist concerns were seasonal workers. When the seasonal work was over, they would return to their native villages to engage in agricultural pursuits. The factory workers and miners were also of handicraft and peasant origin. They had not yet formed a politically class-conscious stratum.

The workers were ruthlessly exploited by the capitalist owners. The working day was 10 and, in some cases, 14 hours long while the wages were very low, barely enough to feed the workers and their families. But even such as they were the wages were not guaranteed. Cheap labor power grew continuously and made it easy for the capitalist proprietor to lower wages or arbitrarily delay payment for months on end. There was no law whatsoever to

enforce labor insurance and the capitalist proprietors took no safety measures for the workers.

By the side of factory workers there stood the broad masses of apprentices in handicraft workshops and trade units. Their exploitation became more unbearable because it was interwoven with mediaeval forms and methods. Most of them were children or young people. In addition to working in handicraft or trade shops, they ran also a number of errands for their masters. They were severely punished for the slightest mistakes.

Since the early years of the XXth century, the apprentices had begun to struggle in a more or less organized way against the exploitation to which they were subjected by the proprietors of workshops and merchants. But this movement, which developed mainly in Shkodra, was of a local and spontaneous character. In general, the socialist ideas that spread here were distorted and, in some cases, degenerated into petty bourgeois «socialism». The early workers' organizations had the character of associations of mutual assistance and promoted the spirit of solidarity among workers rather than the struggle against exploitation. Membership in these organizations was extended also to private handicraftsmen who needed the help of apprentices in the struggle against the merchant bourgeoisie and factory owners in order to protect small-scale production. But they were short-lived.

Under foreign domination, the workers'

movement also assumed a pronounced patriotic character.

The events immediately after the proclamation of independence in 1912 made it impossible for the Albanian State to develop along normal lines. The internal political clashes during 1913-14 and the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 created a favorable situation for the imperialist and the neighboring chauvinist Powers to attain their objectives towards Albania. Albania was turned into a battlefield on which the political and military interests of the belligerent States clashed. In the 1915 April secret agreements, the imperialist Powers of the Entente decided to deprive Albania of its independence and to partition its territory. The armies of the imperialist Powers occupied the whole territory of our country up to the end of the war.

Foreign occupations and military operations caused the Albanian people innumerable misfortunes. The economy of the country was wrecked. Whole villages were ransacked and turned to ashes. Starvation became widespread while epidemics exterminated part of the population.

**The Great October
Socialist Revolution
And Its Impact On
Albania**

At this time when the Albanian people were in distress, oppressed, thought little of, and their rights were ruthlessly trampled upon by the

imperialists, a major event shook the world, namely, the triumph of the Great Socialist Revolution in Russia.

On November 7 (October 25 old style), 1917, the working class and peasantry of Russia, led by the party of Bolsheviki headed by V. I. Lenin, overthrew the regime of the capitalists and landlords and established the dictatorship of the proletariat. The banner of socialism was raised over one-sixth of the world.

In Soviet Russia, the October Revolution created the necessary conditions to wipe out every kind of exploitation of man by man, every form of social and national oppression, for the victory of the new socialist order.

The Socialist Revolution in Russia inaugurated a new epoch in world history, the epoch of the overthrow of capitalism and of the triumph of the socialist order, the epoch of proletarian revolutions in capitalist countries and of national-liberation revolutions in colonial and dependent countries, the epoch of the creation of a single revolutionary front of the proletariat and oppressed peoples of all countries against imperialism.

The triumph of the Great October Revolution was the triumph of Marxism-Leninism over social democracy, opportunism, revisionism. Marxist-Leninist ideology received a new impetus in its triumphant march in the international workers' movement.

The October Revolution and the Soviet Republic exerted a major influence on the revolutionary movement of various countries. They pointed out the way to the laboring masses and to the world as a whole, inspired them by the example they set, giving an unprecedented impulse to the workers' and national-liberation movements in the world.

The October Revolution echoed in Albania too. Its ideas and the policy pursued by the Soviet Government influenced the rise of the movement for national liberation, for the preservation of the territorial integrity of the homeland, and in expanding the revolutionary democratic movement.

Of special significance was the disclosure by the Soviet Government of the secret treaties of the imperialist Powers. Among these treaties, published by decision of the 2nd Congress of the Soviets, was the secret treaty of London, April 1915, according to which Albania was to be divided up among Italy, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece. The content of this Treaty was made known at once to Albania. A great wave of indignation swept the Albanian people. The anti-imperialist liberation movement to safeguard freedom, independence and territorial integrity against the London Treaty took broad proportions. The anti-imperialist National Congress of Lushnja in January 1920 and the heroic Battle of Vlora in the summer of that year, which ended with the expulsion of the Italian imperialists from Albania, bear witness

to the high sense of patriotism of the Albanian people as well as to the influence exerted by the Leninist anti-imperialist policy.

Following the triumph of the October Revolution and under conditions of a general revolutionary upsurge in Europe, the news about the victory of the Russian Bolsheviki began to spread among the Albanian workers, handicraftsmen and intellectuals whose sympathy for Soviet Russia was increased. Lenin's name became a symbol of «the lofty principles of mankind», of the new society without exploited and exploiters. The first pamphlets about the Soviet Union and communism infiltrated into the country from abroad. They were read in close circles of intellectuals and workers. The October ideas spread among the masses of the city poor who were in great economic difficulties due to the devastating consequences of the First World War and the anti-popular policy of the landlord-bourgeois governments in power.

The 1924 June Revolution

Following the expulsion of foreign imperialist and neighboring chauvinist forces, in the political and social life of the country there arose, first and foremost, the struggle to establish the democratic order and, especially, to solve the agrarian question. This battle was waged by the peasant masses and the ordinary towns people including the workers.

The working class had not yet reached that point of ideological and political maturity to set up their Trade Unions, even less, their own party. Consequently, the workers' movement in general could not overcome its initial weakness. The new associations formed during the 1920-1923 period by artisans and workers performed functions of assistance and were extremely unstable. A movement began among the workers of an occasional factory or mine, as well as among apprentices. But their strikes were always spontaneous and their demands purely economic. In addition to objective causes, a hindrance to the workers' movement was the continuous anti-socialist activity of the ruling classes which took larger proportions after the October Revolution.

The workers' movement merged into the broad popular movement which spread throughout the country. Its main strength lay in the peasantry and poor city masses of people who bore the brunt of the ruthless landlord-bourgeois oppression and exploitation. From all regions protests were sent to the Government and Parliament demanding the abolition of tithes and of the high customs duties on grain. In March 1923, thousands of city people and peasants in Korça demanded that bread be provided for the population and that the depots of the grain speculators be opened up. About three thousand city people and peasants of the Vlora district protested against the anti-popular policy of the government, broke into the ware-

houses of the speculators, seized the grain and distributed it free of charge.

The poor and oppressed peasants demanded land. The fight for land had become acute and, in many cases, it was expressed in open attacks to take it from the landlords and the State by force. The solution of the agrarian question also in Soviet Russia exerted its influence on intensifying our anti-feudal struggle. In a backward agrarian country like Albania, Bolshevism signified the expropriation of the landlords without compensation and distribution of their lands to the peasants free of charge. But these radical demands of our peasants were not backed up by the bourgeois political groups which led the democratic movement. These groups gave a narrow meaning to agrarian reform. They aimed at reconciling the interests of the peasants with the landlords and at «improving» the state of farmers without affecting the landlord class. The Albanian bourgeoisie was made up mainly of merchants and small-scale manufacturers, some of whom were also landowners. As a class, they were not in favor of radical changes. In the democratic movement they took part as opponents of the dictatorial intentions of the Zogite clique and of the overlordship of landowners in the political life of the country. The most important role in inciting and organizing the democratic movement was played by the revolutionary democrats combined mainly in the «Bashkimi» asso-

ciation. Most of them came from the ranks of intellectuals of petty bourgeois origin. «Bashkimi» gathered in its ranks and organized the youth, especially, the school youth who made names for themselves in the revolutionary democratic movement. This organization and other democratic elements firmly supported the radical demands of the peasants for land and enlivened the political scene of the country by raising the most urgent political and social problems which required solution.

In the spring of 1924 the spread of the movement created a revolutionary situation. The murder by the landowning reactionaries of Avni Rustemi, one of the leaders of the democratic movement, served as the signal for the armed uprising.

The uprising, which broke out in May, ended with the victory of the revolutionary forces on June 10, 1924. A bourgeois-democratic government headed by Fan Noli came to power.

The program proclaimed by the Government contained a number of tasks and reforms which aimed at embarking the country on the road of bourgeois-democratic development. In the political field, it envisaged the establishment of democracy through free and direct elections, the radical change of the State civil and military apparatus. In the social and economic field, it envisaged the uprooting of feudalism, the emancipation of farmers from landlord exploitation, the modification of the tax sys-

tem to benefit the people, facilitation of the penetration of foreign capital, the encouragement and protection of local capital. In education it required a system based on national and up-to-date lines. In foreign affairs, the Government would pursue a policy of friendly relations with all and, especially, with neighboring states.

This program was supported by the broad masses of people who demanded that it be carried out to the letter. On the other hand it came up against the frenzied opposition of the local landlords and imperialist reaction. At the same time, the revolutionary drive of the masses scared the chiefs of the local bourgeoisie who made common cause with the landlords and imperialists, and fighting together against implementing this program exerted great pressure on the new government.

Under these circumstances, the bourgeois democratic government was shaken in its resolve, pursued a policy of class reconciliation, and showed itself incapable of carrying the revolution through to the end. It did not rely on the masses nor did it strive to carry out its declared program. This led to its alienation from the popular masses who had brought it to power. As a result of the pronounced inactivity and waverings of the government the idea sprang up among the radical democrats that the popular masses should themselves settle accounts with the landlords and irresolute chiefs of the bourgeoisie by electing a new

parliament with representatives from the farmers and workers. But this was not achieved.

Of positive significance was the government's anti-imperialist stand which was the result of the democratic nature of its program. It rejected the servile submission of the country to fascist Italy as well as the chauvinist pretensions of the Yugoslavs and Greeks to Albanian territory. It established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. But in foreign affairs too, it yielded to British and U.S. imperialist pressure.

The imperialists and the reactionary governments of the neighboring states launched a wide campaign against the democratic movement in Albania. Counting on their support, the landlords and other reactionaries of the country made preparations to suppress the revolution.

On December 24, 1924, the Albanian counter-revolutionary forces led by Ahmed Zogu, coming mainly from Yugoslavia with the direct support of the imperialists and reactionary Serbian and White Russian forces, entered Tirana and overthrew Fan Noli's Government. Ahmed Zogu's regime came to power in Albania.

The June Movement was an integral part and active element of the powerful revolutionary movement of peoples, which had begun following the triumph of the October Revolution. But it triumphed at a time when the reactionary and fascist forces in Europe were

on the offensive and the revolutionary movement had begun to ebb. It was precisely at this time that Albania became a revolutionary hotbed in the Balkans. The significance of the June Revolution transcended the borders of our country. European communist and democratic circles showed particular interest towards it, for they assessed aright its revolutionary, anti-feudal, and anti-imperialist nature. George Dimitrov considered the suppression of this revolution as the loss of one of the bases of the revolutionary movement in the Balkans and as an expansion of the Balkan reactionary front.

2. — THE BIRTH OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

In January, 1925, the Zogite clique proclaimed Albania a Republic with Ahmed Zogu as its President. In September, 1928, the Republic was turned into a Monarchy, while Zog proclaimed himself King of the Albanians.

The Economic and Social Plight of the Country Under Zog's Regime Zog's regime remained from the beginning to the end a ruthless anti-democratic dictatorship of the landlords and the reactionary bourgeoisie.

The internal support of Zog's regime came from the reactionary forces of the country: the landlords, the big merchant bourgeoisie, the

rural bourgeoisie, and the chieftains of the highlands. These forces served as a social basis during the whole 15-year existence of this regime.

Zog pursued an anti-popular and anti-national internal and external policy. Zog's dictatorship maintained intact the survivals of feudal relations, consolidated landlord and capitalist exploitation, set up a whole system of plundering the masses of the people. He hindered economic and cultural development leaving the country in backwardness and ignorance.

Zog abolished all democratic institutions and freedom, banned the formation of political parties and organizations, and suppressed all attempts of freedom of thought and organization. He ruled by the method of terror and combatted any progressive idea under the banner of anti-communism.

The oppressive apparatus of the regime was corrupt from top to bottom. It relied especially on the mercenary armed forces, the gendarmerie and the police. The army had a thoroughly anti-popular character and it was maintained for protecting the bourgeois-landlord political regime from the revolt of the working masses. All the armed forces were trained and led by foreigners, agents of imperialism.

Feeling insecure in power, the Zogite clique sought the aid of imperialist states. At

first it rewarded Yugoslavia for its aid by giving away part of the territory of Albania. Later it linked up with Italy and Britain, two of the big imperialist Powers most interested in the Balkans, in general, and in exploiting the subsoil riches of Albania, in particular.

Towards foreign capitalist Powers, Zog pursued the «open door» policy. This policy was gradually concentrated on close economic and political ties with fascist Italy which made every effort to place Albania completely under its influence. These agreements paved the way to fascist colonization. As a powerful means to place our country under economic and political bondage, the Italian financial groups set up «The National Bank of Albania» and the «SVEA» (the Association for the Economic Development of Albania). The latter laid hands on the most important mines, most of the public works, the custom houses and nearly all the foreign trade of the country. Italian capital infiltrated also into the light industry. In 1938, Italy's capital investments in Albania mounted to 280,000,000 gold francs while the annual budget was little more than 28,000,000 gold frcs. Their plundering aims were also served by the high interest loans the Rome Government made to the Zogite clique which were used, first and foremost, for the personal enrichment of Zog and his retinue. Thus, Italian capital became the real master of the national economy of Albania. It turned the

country into a market for the sale of industrial goods and a source of raw materials.

The economic agreements which paved the way to the infiltration of Italian capital were accompanied by political pacts like those of Tirana of the years 1926 and 1927, which entitled Italy to protect Zog's regime from any internal or external attack even by the force of arms. These pacts hitched Zog's clique to the charriot of fascist Italy. Albania was thus being turned into a semi-colony of Italian imperialism.

The penetration of foreign capital into Albania gave a one-sided character to the economy of the country. The Italian colonialist policy, the pronounced survivals of feudalism and the failure to encourage a national economic policy caused the country to remain virtually without industry. In 1938 Albania had about 300 small factories and workshops which for, the most part, engaged in processing agricultural products, especially, flour, oil and tobacco. Nearly half of them employed fewer than 10 workers each. These factories, workshops, and mines, employed about 7,500 workers all told. The working class by now had increased to about 15,000 but it was scattered and bound to primitive forms of production. Apprentices in handicrafts and trade made up a good part of this number. Mass unemployment and the lack of any labor code enabled the capitalist concerns and owners, backed by the state apparatus to exploit the workers

mercilessly. In enterprises employing Albanian and foreign workers, the Albanians were subjected to ruthless discrimination. For equal work the Albanian worker was paid much less than an Italian worker.

Capitalist relations were further developed in agriculture as well. The well-to-do peasants grew stronger and stronger as a result of the further division of large estates and of the continuous ruination of the small landholders. Nevertheless, they did not succeed in becoming an advanced agrarian bourgeoisie. Capitalist relations spread especially in state-owned farms and in farms set up by foreign Italian capitalist companies by confiscating the lands of tens of peasant families. They employed some thousands of farmhands.

During Zog's regime, Albania remained the most backward agrarian country in Europe. In 1938, of the population engaged in material production about 87% worked in agriculture while only 13% were engaged in industry and in the other branches of our national economy; industrial and handicraft production made up only 9.8% of total production while income derived from industry represented 4.5% of all the national income. The capitalist form of economy, which was mainly in the field of trade, did not succeed in becoming the dominant form in the Albanian national economy. Taxes were heavy and brought ruin to the broad masses of people. Want and misery prevailed throughout the country.

Economic backwardness also brought with it a pronounced cultural backwardness. More than 80% of the population were illiterate. The number of schools was limited while higher education and cultural and scientific institutions were entirely lacking. No concern was shown for public health. The people were continuously afflicted with grave endemic diseases.

The Formation of the Korça Communist Group The anti-popular and anti-national policy of Zog's regime aroused a general dissatisfaction among the popular masses. The struggle to solve the anti-imperialist democratic tasks was again on the order of the day. Conditions for a fresh upsurge of the democratic movement had become very difficult because of the Zogite terror which had burst forth throughout the country. In spite of that the opposition to Zog did not cease. The anti-Zog democratic forces carried on their struggle in different forms.

The resistance of the democratic forces was now expressed especially in the revolutionary acts of the peasants and workers. The peasants of many districts rose against the violence of landlords who wanted to evict them from their properties or appropriate their lands, as well as against the heavy taxes. In certain cases, this conflict developed into bloody clashes with Zog's gendarmes.

The working class began to play a role of

ever greater importance. Its ranks had been swelled by ruined peasants and handicraftsmen. Most of them engaged in public works subsidized by foreign (Italian) funds. As far back as 1925, these workers, ruthlessly exploited by the entrepreneurs, raised their voice against injustices, protested and went on strike time and again demanding that they be paid their wages on time instead of one or more months in arrears. In 1927, the workers employed by the British concessionary oil companies and the Selenica miners joined them in a strike to demand higher wages. The intervention of Zog's gendarmerie often forced them to return to work without achieving their rights.

Some other workers' organizations were also set up during this period. Such were: «The Workers' League» in Gjirokastra (1925), the «Përparimi» (= «Progress») association of tailors in Tirana (1927), the «League of Tailors» in Korça (1927). These were associations of apprentices whose objective was to develop solidarity and organize mutual aid among workers, to limit the power of what was left of the merchant guilds, to settle conflicts between apprentices and employers, etc. The Korça «League» admitted also master artisans to membership and tended towards reconciling their interests with those of the apprentices. Such associations could not and did not play a significant role in organizing the workers' movement.

Right from the start the struggle of the

peasants and city workers assumed an anti-Zog character because Zog's regime put in motion its military and police apparatus to suppress by force every movement which aimed at improving, no matter how slightly, the miserable plight of the masses. But this struggle was unorganized and developed sporadically because it lacked a revolutionary leadership.

The movement of the democratic forces, the enlivenment of the workers' movement and the general dissatisfaction of the people towards the regime had at last created the necessary background for an organized communist movement. A significant role in this direction was played by the Marxist literature which circulated among workers, handicraftsmen and intellectuals. This literature was brought from outside by the Albanians who studied or worked abroad and who had embraced communist ideas and tried to propagate them.

In 1928, advanced elements among workers and handicraftsmen set up the first communist cell in Korça. The cell members were not well trained theoretically and politically, but they realized the need for the organization of the communist movement as an essential condition for the successful development of the workers' movement and of the fight of the popular masses against the landlord-bourgeois regime.

Soon other cells had sprung up in Korça. This called for a reorganization of the work. In June 1929 a meeting of the representatives

of the communist cells was called for this purpose. At this meeting a managing committee was set up headed by craftsman Mihal Lako. A decision was taken at the meeting to work to form new cells. The cells would spread communist ideas through educational groups. It was likewise decided at the meeting to get in contact with the masses and the workers' movement through the legal workers' associations. The task of the establishment of revolutionary workers' associations to demand economic and political rights was laid down for this purpose.

The 1929, June meeting marks the creation of the Communist Group of Korça and the beginnings of the organized communist movement. Under the direction of a committee the Korça communist movement got well underway. Within a short time there were 8 cells in operation totalling 40 members. Each of them directed from 3 to 4 educational groups.

The Korça Communist Group was the first revolutionary political organization of the Albanian working class, but it took only the initial steps. The Group was still weak, not well organized and lacking experience. The literature on communism which was studied by the members of cells and sympathizers was not all Marxist. It included Trotskyite and anarchist material which spread ideological confusion among its readers. Among these, the most widespread were the archaeo-Marxist publications of the organization of Greek Trot-

skyite intellectuals. The archaeo-Marxist views were adopted by certain elements who took part in the Korça Group. One of them, Niko Xoxi, was a member of the managing committee. They professed Marxism in words but in reality they distorted its basic theses and struggled in every way against putting them into practice.

The formation of the Korça Group coincided with the beginning of the economic crisis of world capitalism, which had ruinous economic consequences in Albania as well. The landlords, and capitalist proprietors tried to throw the whole burden of the crisis on the shoulders of peasants and workers. Reduced prices for agricultural products aggravated the plight of the peasantry. This compelled many peasants to abandon their lands and to look for means of subsistence in the towns. Many artisans and small merchants were ruined because they could not find markets for their commodities. At the same time, many workshops and factories suspended or restricted production. All this brought about a tremendous increase in the number of unemployed and a lowering of wages. Therefore the workers' movement of strikes in defense of their rights assumed wider proportions. In 1929, the builders at Librazhd, the quarrymen at Shëngjin, the road builders on the Kruja-Burrel highway and others went on strike. In 1930, the builders in Tirana clashed with the capitalist entrepreneurs. That summer, the workers at the Vau Dejës work

sites in Shkodra went on strike and so did the copper miners in Puka, those working on an irrigation canal in Kavaja, on a bridge near Rubik and on the Sinanaj bridge near Tepe-lena, the crews of the fishing boats and coastal fisheries.

The worsening of the general economic situation and the starvation suffered by the poorer strata of the population greatly increased the dissatisfaction towards the regime.

The growth of the workers' movement was a good opportunity for the Korça Communist Group to broaden its activity and to link itself with the masses. But it kept aloof from this movement because of its pronounced ideological and organizational weaknesses. An important change in the activity of this group was made with the assistance of the prominent communist militant Ali Kelmendi.

The Albanian Communist Movement and Comintern Efforts to organize the Albanian Communist Movement were made outside the country also. The Communist Third Internationale (Comintern) rendered valuable aid through the Balkan Communist Federation in organizing the Albanian revolutionary democrats who had been obliged to emigrate after the suppression of the June Revolution and the establishment of Zog's dictatorship.

The lessons they drew from the 1924 events enabled the Albanian revolutionary de-

mocrats to define correctly their general political orientation on the international arena where two antagonistic world forces — imperialism and socialism — were in action. They turned to the Soviet Union, which they called «the natural protector of all oppressed peoples», and to the world communist movement. On March 1925, they formed in Vienna (Austria) the democratic organization known as the «Komiteti Nacional Revolucionar» (KONARE) (= «The Revolutionary National Committee»), while a group of young revolutionaries, former members of the «Bashkimi» association, went to the Soviet Union. Some of them who had embraced communist ideas enrolled in the schools and political courses of the Comintern to acquire Marxist-Leninist knowledge. In August 1928 they formed the Albanian Communist Group in the Soviet Union centred in Moscow. The VIIIth Balkan Communist Conference, which was held that same year, instructed the Albanian communists to do a long and careful preparatory work for setting up communist groups in Albania «to organize and unite the most advanced elements among workers and peasants» so that they may eventually form the Albanian Communist Party. 1)

The Albanian Communist Group in the Soviet Union drew up its own Constitution which was approved by the Comintern. Accord-

1) George Dimitrov's Letter addressed to the EC of the Comintern, Sept. 12, 1929. (Central Archives of the Party).

ding to this Constitution, the Group's principal task was to work for the founding of the Albanian Communist Party as the Albanian section of the Comintern.

In the «National Liberation Committee» (KONARE's new name after April 1927) the Group set up at once its own communist fraction which strove to keep alive the revolutionary spirit of the organization and of its organ «Liria Kombëtare» (= «National Freedom»).

In line with the Constitution the primary task of the Albanian Communist Group in the Soviet Union was to develop concrete revolutionary work inside Albania and to help the communist movement there. Among the communists who returned home for this purpose in 1930, the most prominent was Ali Kelmendi.

On his return home, Ali Kelmendi set to work and created new underground communist groups in Albania. He formed a communist cell in Tirana and organized the communist fraction in the «Perparimi» (= Progress) Association of Tailors. On his initiative, communist cells were set up also in Vlora, Kruja and Elbasan. In general, these cells were small and unstable. Their members were mainly elements of petty bourgeois origin — teachers, employees, army men, and handicraftsmen lacking sound ideological and political training.

Ali Kelmendi also established connections with the Korça Communist Group in which the situation was unsatisfactory. The Group was locked in its own shell and the anti-

Marxist elements in its ranks had begun to erode it from within and paralyze its activity.

Ali Kelmendi helped the Korça Group to pull itself out of this situation. He instructed it to combine illegal with legal work, to take active part in the legal associations of workers and artisans and to turn them into revolutionary organizations, to extend its operations into other cities and especially to work centers, to translate Marxist literature which would help raise the ideological level of communists. Although he was deported to different cities by the Zogite authorities, Ali Kelmendi tried to maintain connections with communist organizations and to give them all aid. His deportation to Korça in 1932 enabled him to collaborate directly with the communist group there. Ali Kelmendi's speech at an enlarged meeting of the managing committee which was held in July 1932 opened clearer perspectives to the group. The Korça Group adopted a sounder political and organizational platform. Consequently, its activity also entered a new phase of development.

The First Workers' Organizations Led by the Communists

The communists were engaged in much more fruitful work with the masses. The continuation of the economic crisis created favorable conditions for this kind of work. Strikes by workers followed one after another. The building workers continued to lead this

movement. Therefore, it was natural for the Korça Communist Group to direct its attention, first and foremost, towards this category of workers. On its initiative, the «PUNA» (= «Labor») Association was formed in Korça in September 1933. Membership in this association included not only workers but also master builders of various categories who were exploited by the capitalist entrepreneurs. The «Puna» Association was led by the communist fraction. Its chairman was Member of the Committee of the Korça Group Pilo Peristeri. Quickly the membership of this association rose to about 500. The non-seasonal nature of their job constituted a stable basis for the organization. To avoid persecution by the gendarmerie, in its constitution approved by the government, the «Puna» Association was presented as a non-political aid society. But its real program was approved at a semi-legal meeting organized by the communists. According to this program, «Puna» was a revolutionary organization to protect the rights of workers which would, at the same time, fight against Zog's regime and for freedom and democracy.

This initial success encouraged the communists of the Korça Group to extend their activity. Following the example set by «Puna» and on the initiative of communists there were set up during 1934 Trade Unions of shoemakers, tailors, motor vehicle drivers etc.

The Korça Communist Group exerted its

influence also among the secondary school students of the city who were imbued with progressive patriotic sentiments. The most revolutionary elements among them even formed a communist cell.

But the Group continued to confine itself within the city. Its links with other communist organizations were either weak or entirely lacking. At the August, 1934 meeting it decided to extend its communist activity to other towns of the country, but no perceptible progress was made in this direction.

The extension of the revolutionary activity of the Korça Group was accompanied by a sharpening of the ideological conflicts within its ranks. The Trotskyite elements launched a fierce attack against Ali Kelmendi's line and against the more sound elements of the Group. They did their uttermost to hinder the extension of the influence of communists among the masses. Their chief representative Niko Xoxi aimed at seizing the leadership of the Group and at compelling it to adopt Trotskyite views. In order to justify his hostile work, Niko Xoxi propagated far and wide «the theory of cadres» borrowed from Greek archae-Marxists. According to this «theory», the communists should not act, should not approach the masses and organize them, but they should shut themselves up in their cells and engage only in theoretical education.

The Korça Group could not successfully develop its activity without dealing a hard

blow at Trotskyite Niko Xoxi. Therefore, the enlarged meeting of the Managing Committee decided to expel him from its ranks but did not deprive him of his membership in the Group. This halfway measure allowed him and the other archaeco-Marxist elements to intensify their divisive hostile activity within the Group and among the members of workers' associations. It was only through great clarifying efforts of the sounder communists that Niko Xoxi was almost completely isolated.

Participation of Communists in Democratic anti-Zog Movement The Communist movement had already spread to a number of cities

in Albania: New communist organizations were set up during the 1934-1935 period in Tirana, Shkodra, Fier, Vlora, Elbasan and Gjirokastra. But these organizations were not made up of workers either. They were small and, in general, operated in isolation from one another. They spread communist ideas but their propaganda work was limited, sporadic and detached from the political and economic problems facing the country. The ranks of the new organizations, especially in Tirana, contained also a few communist officers.

There was very favorable ground for the development of the communist movement in Albania due, as Ali Kelmendi wrote at the time:

«to the spirited and irreconcilable nature of the struggle of the people against the regime, on the one hand, and to the treachery, irresoluteness and inactivity of the politicians of other trends, on the other» 1)

In these circumstances the consolidation of the communist movement could be brought about by establishing sound links among the various communist organizations and by organizing a wide democratic, anti-Zog and anti-imperialist movement among the workers, peasants, army men and youth, who made up the overwhelming majority of the population and who suffered deeply the consequences of Zog's anti-popular and anti-national policy.

Although the National Liberation Committee, which had taken upon itself the obligation to organize the anti-feudal and anti-fascist movement, had done good propaganda work through the press and leaflets, it had remained an organization of political exiles and had not established a foothold within Albania itself. Illegal work under Zog's oppressive regime demanded great sacrifice which the leaders of the organization were not ready to make. On the other hand, the communists inside Albania in general had not attained ideological maturity enough to understand the urgent

1) A. Kelmendi: Report sent to Comintern on Dec. 14, 1936 (Central Archives of the Party).

need of setting up a broad democratic and anti-imperialist movement. It was only the hatred of Zog's regime and their patriotism that brought the communists into active participation in the anti-Zog movement during the 1934-35 period.

In 1934, the relations between Albania and Italy became very tense. Seeking to turn Albania into a semi-colony of its own as quickly as possible and to exert pressure on Zog to capitulate, the Rome Government dispatched its navy to Durres. Zog's yielding to Italy's pressure gave impetus to the anti-Zog movement. As far back as April in 1934, a group of former officers and bourgeois intellectuals had formed a secret organization whose aim was to overthrow the Zog Monarchy, to establish a republican regime and to eliminate Italian intervention in Albania. This organization had confined its activity to military circles and bourgeois intellectuals. Fascist agents also joined its ranks with the intention of turning the movement to the advantage of fascism. The Tirana communist organization and a number of communist officers known for their anti-Zog militancy also joined this secret organization.

The Korça Communist Group also took up the question of participating in the secret organization at its 1934 August meeting. It decided to exploit this occasion in favor of the anti-Zog democratic movement and, if the uprising broke out, to take part in it as an

independent force with its own program. This program envisaged: the proclamation of the people's democratic republic; the abrogation of all enslaving agreements with fascist Italy; the abolition of monopolies and concessions; an amnesty for political offenders. But the Korça Group did not set to work to broaden the anti-Zog movement and exert its influence in it. It maintained a wait-and-see attitude and envisaged acting around its program only when the uprising had triumphed, by taking over power in the city of Korça where it enjoyed more influence among the masses.

The ranks of the anti-Zog movement were further strengthened by the help rendered by communist Riza Cerova who had returned from the Soviet Union in March 1935. He strove to draw the Skrapar and Mallakastra peasants into the movement.

Zog's government scented the movement and began to take measures. The chiefs of the movement were compelled to start the uprising ahead of schedule, on August 14, 1935, in Fier. However, it was soon suppressed by the government forces. Lack of organization and the premature start of the uprising gravely jeopardized the plan of operations. The forces led by Riza Cerova failed to attain their objective. Riza Cerova fell fighting against Zog's gendarms, convinced, as he had written to his family, that the people would be free only when the exploiting classes were overthrown.

The Fier uprising failed. It was foredoomed to failure because it lacked a sound revolutionary leadership, it lacked organization and because it was detached from the urban and rural masses of the people who had not been prepared for an uprising. The bourgeois anti-Zogite opposition showed itself entirely incapable of organizing and leading a broad popular movement. Moreover, the movement had a medley of reactionary fascist elements in its ranks who tried to utilize it as a means to carry out fascist Italy's plans towards Albania. The communists who took part in the movement, although determined to carry it through to the end, did not succeed in becoming the leadership of the movement, in making all-round preparations for it or in issuing a clear-cut political program. All this resulted in turning the uprising into a mere putsch. Nevertheless, it was a manifestation of indignation and dissatisfaction against the oppressive landlord-bourgeois regime. It was of political significance and its echo reached beyond the country's boundaries. Public opinion among democrats inside Albania and abroad rose against the terrorist measures of reprisal that Zog undertook after the suppression of the uprising. On the other hand, the uprising, as Ali Kelmendi wrote, was «the ordeal by fire and the touchstone» for the Albanian communists. He added, «They passed this test with honor and showed themselves to

be worthy brothers of the communists of other lands»¹⁾

3. — GROWTH OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE FASCIST DANGER DURING THE 1935-1939 PERIOD

The period from 1930 to 1940 witnessed major transformations in the economic and political life of the Soviet Union and the capitalist world. For the Soviet Union this was the period of the struggle for the construction of socialist society. Guided by their Communist Party with J. V. Stalin at the head, the Soviet people turned their country into a major industrial Power with advanced collectivized agriculture. The triumph of the socialist order in the Soviet Union was of world historical significance.

On the other hand, the deep economic crisis of the period from 1929 to 1933 had shaken the very foundations of the capitalist world and had greatly aggravated the contradictions which were eroding it from within. In order to pull itself out of this predicament, the imperialist bourgeoisie of many countries supported the spread of fascism and the establishment of fascist regimes, that is, the most reactionary, terrorist and chauvinist dictator-

1) A. Kelmendi: Report to Comintern on Dec. 14, 1936. Central Archives of the Party.

ship of financial capital. The advent to power of the nazis in 1933 created a dangerous hotbed of war in Germany. The fascists launched a frenzied attack on the workers', communist and democratic movements and made feverish preparations for aggressive wars. The danger of another world war became greater with the attack of militarist Japan on China in 1932 and fascist Italy on Ethiopia in 1935.

The world was threatened by the fascist danger, by the danger of a second world war. The so-called «democratic» Western Powers like Britain, France and USA took no effective measures to ward off this danger but aided the militarization of the fascist countries and, through their ill-famed «non intervention» policy, encouraged fascist aggression with a view to directing it against the Soviet Union.

Only the Soviet Government and the Communist Parties of the different countries struggled with all their might to restrain the aggressors.

The VIIth Congress of the Communist Internationale

The new situation created by the danger of fascism set new tasks for the World Communist Parties. The VIIth Congress of the Communist Internationale meeting in Moscow in July 1935 stressed the need to intensify the battle against the onslaught of capital and fascism. In connection with this, the Congress set the task of striving to set up a unified front of the working class against fascism, by securing the

unity of action of the workers and, on this basis, to form the broad anti-fascist people's front. In order to accomplish these tasks and penetrate among the broad masses of workers, it was necessary for the communist parties to surmount a range of weaknesses such as the survivals of sectarian traditions, to change the methods of agitation and propaganda, which were in most cases of an abstract nature, and to make them as concrete as possible by linking them with the direct needs and day to day interests of the masses. The Congress called on all the peoples to mobilize their forces to aid the countries fighting for their independence against the imperialist yoke.

The resolutions of the VIIth Congress of the Comintern mark a new stage in the further development of the international communist and workers' movement. Their creative implementation under the specific conditions of each country paved the way for the communists to take the lead among the broad masses of the people and to become the principal guiding force of the democratic and anti-imperialist workers movement.

These resolutions drew the peoples' attention to the danger of fascism and pointed out the course they should pursue to prevent its advent to power. They were of major importance to all countries and, especially, to those countries like Albania which were directly menaced by fascism.

Communists in the Lead of the Growing Revolutio- nary Movement

Under the pressure of fascist Italy on Albania, in March 1936, Zog

concluded the Italian-Albanian agreements which marked a big step in the further subjugation of Albania by fascist Italy.

In these circumstances, in Albania, in addition to the fight against oppressive capitalist exploitation and Zog's regime, that against the fascist enslavers was ever growing in importance. The Albanian bourgeoisie was closely bound to Zog's regime and could not lead the struggle to safeguard the freedom and independence of the country although it had economic contradictions with Italian monopoly capital. Even those bourgeois democratic forces which continued their struggle against Zog's regime and against subjugation to Italy after the failure of the Fier uprising, were no longer capable of leading the anti-Zogite and anti-fascist movement because of their lack of determination and organization.

The communists were now the only revolutionary force which could lead the popular masses in the struggle to attain democratic rights and safeguard the freedom and independence of the country.

The Fier uprising had shaken the Zogite regime and had discredited its policy. The King was compelled, as Ali Kelmendi wrote, «to resort to a demagogical maneuver to gain time, to recuperate from the blow he had received

and to prepare a second attack against the people». In October 1935, he appointed a new «liberal» government which made high-flown promises of reforms.

The policy of the new government aimed at consolidating Zog's regime, but the very limited freedoms it proclaimed were used by the communists to extend their organizing of the working class and to spread their influence among the broad masses of people.

In the fall of 1935, the movement started at the most important work center of the country, namely, Kuçova (now Stalin-city) run by the concessionary company AIPA (the Italian oil company in Albania). About 1,600 Albanian workers were employed in extracting oil and in the auxiliary sectors of the oil field. As far back as 1934, a clandestine nucleus to organize the trade union of the oil workers had been formed on the initiative of the communists. In October 1935 it formed the «Puna» association. At the beginning it had about 700 members but one year later this number had risen to over 1,500. In November it was recognized by the government. Although the Constitution stipulated that «Puna» was established to «safeguard the dignity and the interests of its members and to help them morally and materially», in order to avoid any obstruction from the government, it was at once turned into a revolutionary anti-Zogite and anti-fascist workers' organization.

Even prior to receiving official recognition the «Puna» association of Kuçova, presented to

the government and parliament a petition requesting the establishment of the 8-hour workday, measures to improve the conditions of lodging, food, and hygiene, as well as certain measures of social insurance. The workers demanded also that they should not be compelled by the foreign proprietors to give the fascist salute. When the representative of the government sent to Kuçova rejected the demands of the workers, they protested by launching a short strike and a demonstration against him. With the government's support, AIPA sacked the leaders and other activists of the association. As an open anti-Albanian reprisal, AIPA declared November 28, 1935, the Day of Independence, as a workday. On this day the «Puna» association organized a powerful manifestation directed mainly against the Italian fascists.

The ranks of organizations created on the initiative of the communists and led by them, increased in December 1935 with the formation of «the League of the Private Employees of Korça». Its membership was made up of workers and employees of trade, bakeries, restaurants, banks, etc. Since it was not officially authorized, the League began to work in semi-legality.

The Communists were placed at the head of the working class movement, and the people's anti-Zogite movement, which, in 1936, entered a new stage of development.

In January of that year the "Puna" association decided to take strike action to win its

demands. The first to strike were 400 workers building the oil pipe-line to the «Ujë e Ftohtë» (Cold Springs) in Vlora. This strike was followed by that of the workers at the Kuçova electric power station, and, on February, 11 it took the character of a general strike. To suppress the strike the government dispatched a large contingent of gendarms headed by the Minister of Interior himself, who arrested 60 of the most advanced workers and deported 300 others to various other cities. The general strike was suppressed after three days by the intervention of the gendarmerie. The «Puna» association practically ceased to exist.

Although it failed, this general strike had a major significance. It was a revolutionary school for the workers. On the other hand, it compelled the government to demand, at least formally, that the entrepreneurs create more suitable working conditions.

Parallel with this, a powerful movement of protest against famine and against the Zogite regime was spreading in the other regions of the country. In the fall of 1935 hunger had reached its height. Thousands of people were threatened with famine. The army of the unemployed had increased by leaps and bounds. The discontent and indignation of the people of various walks of life, especially of the masses of the urban and rural poor, was directed, first and foremost, against the grain speculators with whom the high functionaries of the regime collaborated. An active role in this

movement was played by the handicraftsmen who were being ruined by the competition of industrial production. Their struggle was nourished by petty bourgeois illusions of perpetuating small-scale production and putting a stop to factory production. Although these demands were utopian, the handicraftsmen's movement was in essence a movement directed against the misery which had befallen the country.

The Korça Communist Group managed to take advantage of the situation created to lead the popular masses and to impart to their struggle a political character. The communist fraction of the builders' «Puna» association, of the association of shoemakers, tailors, and others, got busy organizing the movement, in making it a more compact movement of the masses and in directing it against the Zogite regime. On February 21, 1936, there broke out in Korça the mass demonstration which has gone down in history as the «Demonstration for Bread». Bloody clashes with the gendarmerie did not prevent the workers and handicraftsmen, who were joined by the secondary school students, from staging another demonstration in the afternoon. The clashes with the gendarmes assumed a more bitter character.

The demonstration for bread in Korça was the first popular anti-Zog mass action organized and led by the communists. Although suppressed, it caused a big sensation throughout the country and sowed panic among the authorities and the ruling class. On the other hand,

it inspired the masses of the people in other districts by its example. Hunger demonstrations broke out also in Gjirokastra, Saranda, Leskovik, Bilisht, Pogradec and Berat. The discontent of the masses towards Zog's regime was expressed also by the popular demonstrations which took place in Vlora in July 1936, and in Elbasan in October of the same year.

In September 1936, Ali Kelmendi was expelled from the country by Zog's government. Before departing, in Gjirokastra he met Enver Hoxha who had just returned to Albania and who distinguished himself as an active communist militant.

The Communist-led Press The 1936 events testified to the spreading of the influence of the communists among the masses, but on a national level these successes were still very limited. The communists carried out their political work of exposing Zog's regime and its anti-people and anti-national policy only through agitation among individuals. Rigorous Zogite censorship prevented them from expressing their views openly through the press. Nevertheless, they succeeded in having their writings of a progressive democratic nature published in the bourgeois press organs. In 1934 and 1935, the communist fraction of the Committee for National Liberation had published two pamphlets depicting the whole rottenness and reactionary character of Zog's regime. These publica-

tions included a new program of the popular movement in Albania which envisaged the organization of the armed uprising of the popular masses led by the working class to overthrow Zog's regime and establish the People's Republic. The Albanian Communist Group in Lyons (France), on its part, had begun to publish «Populli», a militant anti-Zog paper which was later replaced by «Sazani». But these materials were confined in Albania mainly to a narrow circle of intellectuals.

The need to give wider publicity to the democratic, anti-feudal, and anti-imperialist ideas within the country made it necessary for the communists to use new forms of agitation. They had begun to utilize with success the cultural and artistic associations. The «Besa Shqiptare» (= «Albanian Fidelity») Association, founded by the students of the Shkodra Gymnasium as far back as 1929 and the dramatic group of the «Puna» Association in Korça won great popularity through their performances of plays of patriotic, democratic, and anti-imperialist content. In addition, the various communist organizations got busy in publishing legal organs which would become tribunes for them and the progressive elements of the country. The communists of the Tirana and Korça organizations immediately took advantage of the situation created by the advent to power of the «liberal» government and published such organs which exerted a wide influence throughout the country.

Of these, the publication that lasted longest was the review «Bota e Re» (= «The New World») first published in April 1936. Although it was written in Aesopian language to escape the censorship, the «Bota e Re» in communist hands became a powerful weapon for criticizing the regime in power and the ills of Albanian society in general. It waged a bitter battle against the reactionary fascist ideology and treated the basic social and political problems facing the people in a revolutionary democratic spirit, calling on Albanian democratic public opinion to strive to solve them. The «Bota e Re» became the favorite organ of the democratic youth and intellectuals whom it imbued with love for the working people and hatred towards the exploiting classes of the country.

The Multiplication Of Communist Organizations. The Shkodra Communist Group

The revolutionary events of the years 1935 and 1936 were an important success for the communist movement, but, at the same time, they had revealed a series of shortcomings in the organization of the workers' and anti-Zog movement. The first obvious task was to spread the communist movement all over the country, to establish sounder relations among the organizations and to coordinate their activities.

For this purpose in December 1936, the Korça Communist Group set up a new Managing Committee charged with the task of

developing activities in all the districts of the country. This Committee's aim was to become the guiding center of the Albanian communist movement. But it did not attain this objective. New organizations of the Korça Group were set up only in Berat and in Tirana, where the typographers also formed their own association. The work accomplished by this Committee in the various districts of the country was of a superficial and sporadic character. Recruitment of new elements was not on the basis of a thorough acquaintance with them. This was how anti-Marxist elements entered the ranks of the organization and caused damage to the communist movement.

Meanwhile, a new important center of the Albanian communist movement was forming in Shkodra. The first communist organization founded there as far back as 1934 had extended its field of operations. New cells and groups of sympathizers were set up. The **Shkodra Communist Group** extended its jurisdiction to Tirana, Elbasan, Gjirokastra, Korça and elsewhere. Regional Committees were set up in 1937 in Shkodra and Tirana for the purpose of directing these organizations. The chairman of the group was Zef Mala, an intellectual with distorted theoretical views and seriously lacking political clarity.

The activity of the group among the masses was confined to school and handicraft circles and to a few work centers. Its most outstanding achievements were the creation

of the youth organizations in Shkodra and Tirana and the carpenters association in Tirana.

The Shkodra Group lacked a clear, defined political line, a clear-cut organizational form, sound discipline and secrecy among its ranks. The cells which, in general, were made up of three members, engaged mainly in their own theoretical studies. The literature in use for this purpose, which included a number of the classic works of Marxism-Leninism, helped spread communist ideas. But Trotskyite and anarchist literature also circulated among the organizations of the Shkodra Group, just as in other groups.

In its course of development, the Albanian communist movement came up against serious obstacles caused by the Trotskyites. Coming from Athens to Albania at the beginning of 1937, Andrea Zisi (under the pseudonym «Zjarri» = «Fire») claimed that he was the chairman of the so-called «Albanian Communist Party» formed in Greece and allegedly recognized by the Comintern. In fact, he was the leader of a Trotskyite group set up in Athens in 1936 and known by the name «Zjarri». A. Zisi had undertaken the task of merging the Albanian communist groups with his «party» and force them to accept his anti-Marxist line. The Korça Group gave no recognition to the A. Zisi's «party» and expressed its willingness to collaborate with him provided he accepted the Group's platform. Meanwhile, A. Zisi established links with factionist Niko

Xoxi with whom he found a common language. The two coordinated their efforts to fight the Korça Communist Group.

Aristidh Qendro, on his part, had begun to engage in hostile activity against the communist movement in Tirana. Formally he figured as a member of the Korça Group. Lack of control by the leaders of the Group had enabled him to act without being exposed. On behalf of the Group he had recruited a number of members in Tirana whom he imbued with his own anti-Marxist views. By 1937, these had completely degenerated into a group of Trotskyites.

It was at this time that the Shkodra Group made its initial efforts to link up with the Korça Group. In a letter addressed to the Korça communists in 1937 it asked them, as the more experienced, to help in matters of organization. The readiness shown by the Korça Group to help was sabotaged by N. Xoxi. Posing as the representative of the Korça Communist Group, he had informed the Shkodra Group of the creation of «the Albanian Communist Party» in Greece and of the imminent arrival of «its Central Committee» in Albania. Niko Xoxi accused the leaders of the Korça Group and Ali Kelmendi of being nationalists and splitters of the communist movement. His views found favorable soil among the leaders of the Shkodra Group among whom ideological unclarity prevailed. Zef Mala and Niko Xoxi became, in fact, the principal

leaders of the group. The approach and collaboration between these two main communist groups was undermined.

This split greatly jeopardized the communist movement and, consequently, the revolutionary democratic movement as a whole. It was in this plight when the frenzied anti-communist campaign broke out following the advent to power of the new reactionary government in November 1936. This government resorted to brutal persecutions against the communists and all the progressive elements. It dissolved the workers' associations, prohibited the formation of new associations and permitted only the formation of workers' corporations of the fascist type under the direct supervision of government authorities. Progressive publications were banned and strict censorship was imposed on all books and organs of the press published in the country or brought from outside. In 1937, Zog imprisoned most of the communist officers.

Zog's government, on the other hand, had allowed the spread of fascism far and wide in Albania. Mussolini's special envoys set to work to organize the Albanian youth after the fascist pattern. In Korça, they set up «the committee of action» composed of Albanian fascist elements, and throughout the country they organized a wide network of agents whose duty it was to pave the way to the complete enslavement of the country by Italy. The

reactionary Catholic clergy had a special mission in the achieving of this end.

Zog unreservedly supported the counter-revolutionary uprising which had broken out in Spain in 1936 and recognized Franco's fascist government.

Zog's deeply reactionary and pro-fascist policy aroused great concern among the Albanian communists and patriots for the future of the country's independence. They were becoming more and more aware of the fascist danger to Albania and all the peoples of the world. In this direction, the resolutions of the VIIIth Congress of the Comintern were of great assistance. The Albanian communists considered the just war of the Spanish people as a war in defense of the interests of Albania as well. Their hatred towards fascism and their spirit of proletarian internationalism was expressed with special force by the Albanian communists and anti-fascists through their willingness to go to Spain as volunteers. As far back as 1936, the Communist Groups sent members there to fight side by side with the Spanish people. The Albanian volunteers, among whom were Mehmet Shehu, Asim Vokshi, Thimjo Gogozoto, Ramiz Varvarica, Zef Hoti, Musa Fratari and others fought courageously against fascism in the ranks of the International Brigades. Many of them fell martyrs in the field of battle, while Teni Konomi, member of the leadership of the Korça Communist Group, was murdered by the fascists before setting foot on Spanish soil.

The New Line of the Albanian Communist Movement

In circumstances of the increasing fascist danger for Albania, it became imperative for the communist groups not only to collaborate more closely, but also to re-organize all their work to comply with the resolutions of the VIIth Congress of the Communist Internationale. The first attempts to carry out the new line of the Comintern were made by the Albanian communists abroad. On the initiative of the communist fraction of the National Liberation Committee in Paris, there was set up in March, 1936, the «Democratic Front» of the political organizations of Albanian exiles. But the conservative section of the anti-Zog bourgeoisie in exile, represented at this front by the Bashkimi Kombëtar (= «National Union»), had degenerated politically and was incapable of undertaking patriotic and revolutionary actions. The result was that the «Democratic Front» was soon dissolved.

The communist groups within the country had not yet established regular communications with the Comintern because here was no officially recognized party. Nevertheless, the Comintern was now and then informed of the activity of the communist groups in Albania by Ali Kelmendi and the Albanian communists residing in France.

In December 1936, Ali Kelmendi submitted a report at a meeting of the Albanian communist activists working abroad. This meeting was

called together in Moscow on the initiative of the Balkan Section of the Comintern for the purpose of analyzing the situation in the Albanian communist movement and of determining the tasks that lay before it in the light of the directives of the VIIth Congress of the Comintern. Ali Kelmendi called for an intensification of the work to organize and set up a communist party. An important measure in this regard would be to set up an organizational center in Albania which would rely on the existing groups and, primarily, on the Korça group. The duty of this center would be «to consolidate and guide the existing communist groups, to organize the communist movement throughout Albania as well as to call a Constituent Congress of the Communist Party of Albania» 1). Ali Kelmendi considered it necessary to have an independent communist organization which would lead the trade union and anti-fascist movement. On the initiative and under the guidance of the communists, an underground and centralized organization of a democratic and anti-fascist character should be set up to fight against Zog's regime and the Italian imperialists, to establish a democratic republic, and to annul the enslaving agreements with fascist Italy. A popular front would be set up on the basis of this organization.

1) A. Kelmendi. Report to the Comintern, 14th December, 1936. Central Archives of the Party.

After examining the report, the meeting took decisions which were also approved by the Comintern. In line with these decisions, a clandestine organization of a democratic and anti-fascist character was to be set up in Albania. It would be under the leadership of a Central Committee composed of communists and patriotic nationalists. The communist nucleus of this committee would be made up of five persons who would work on the spot. This organization would serve as a vantage point for the establishment of the popular front. With regard to the communist organizations, Comintern proceeded from the fact that the old cells were detached from the masses and shut in their own shell and, as such, they were incapable of carrying out the new line. Therefore, they and their leading forums should be temporarily dissolved and re-organized on a party basis after having established sound foundations among the masses by working through the legally authorized associations. Contacts among communists should be personal. The functions of the communist organizing center should be exercised by the communist nucleus of the Central Committee pending the formation of the party. The minimum program of the communists, which would also be the political platform of the new organization, consisted of two principal tasks, namely, (a) the struggle in defense of national rights and (b) the struggle in defense of democratic rights,

based on the most elementary demands of the masses of the people. For the defense of national independence, the new organization would collaborate with all classes, social strata and elements who were in favor of the struggle against fascist bondage. The propagation of the new line would be done by a clandestine paper which would be published by the communists.

Ali Kelmendi and Koço Tashko were charged with transmitting these instructions to Albania. Ali Kelmendi went to France to make arrangements to enter his homeland. While there, he had to do a lot of persuasive work among the Albanian communists and exiles to carry out the new line. He devoted special attention to exposing the hostile activity of a member of the communist fraction of the National Liberation Committee, Llazar Fundo, who tried to wreck the whole work done by the Albanian communists in France. Llazar Fundo sabotaged the work of sending Albanian volunteers to Spain to fight against fascism and, finally, came out in the open against the Soviet Union taking under his protection the Bukharinites, Trotskyites, and other hostile elements condemned by the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of the Soviet Union. He was condemned as a traitor to communism, as an agent provocateur of imperialism, and was expelled from the ranks of the Albanian communist movement.

Illness prevented Ali Kelmendi from return-

ing to his home country to carry out the mission entrusted to him. He died in Paris on February 11, 1939.

Attempts to Carry Out the New Line in Albania The Korça Group was the first to learn of the new instructions of the Comintern in the fall of 1937. After studying the new line, the leaders of this Group accepted it as a platform for their further activity, although they had some reservations about dissolving the communist cells and committees and hesitated at first to carry it out. The Group appointed its own representative in the communist nucleus of the Central Committee. It decided to put the new instructions into practice, intensifying the work with the masses in legally set up organizations like the handicraftsmen's associations, county, municipal and chamber of commerce councils, among para-military groups, students' out-of-school associations, in the legal press organs, etc.

From the beginning, the spread of the new line in the other communist organizations of the country came up against the obstruction of the leaders of the Shkodra Group. Zef Mala and Niko Xoxi rejected the new line, saying that, in principle, they were for direct social and not for national revolution, that they were opposed to imperialism but unwilling to collaborate with the nationalists, that they were in

favor of direct action when the time came, and not of dilatory and round-about actions, and so on.

The new line was opposed also by the Tirana Trotskyite organization headed by Aristidh Qendro who, like Zef Mala, considered collaboration with patriotic nationalists and the establishment of the People's Front as a betrayal to the working class.

The political and ideological enlightenment of the communists, exposure of Trotskyites, and the incorporation of the sound communist forces into a single Albanian communist party required hard and persistent work. But those who took this task upon themselves recoiled before difficulties. The communist nucleus in the Central Committee of the new organization which was to be formed never acted as such at any time. Its members were not people prepared to make sacrifices. Koço Tashko himself, who had brought the new directives and had the main responsibility for applying them, proved to be quite incapable, from the political and organizational point of view, of carrying them out.

The Korça Group, on their part, remained confined to their city. In March 1938, they dissolved their cells. This caused some confusion and disintegration among the communists who considered the cell as the most suitable form in which to be educated with the Marxist ideology and to examine collectively the pro-

blems of the workers' movement. Nevertheless, both before the dissolution of cells and after, the communists of the Group did their best to carry out the new line in Korça and scored important success. They assumed the leadership of the city's democratic movement and extended their influence among the masses of the people who considered the communists as the most resolute champions of the people's interests. This became evident in the elections to county councils, to the council of the chamber of commerce, to the «Rinia Korçare» (= «Korça Youth») out-of-school organization etc, and especially, at the municipal elections. The communists presented the list of candidates of the democratic bloc, which included side by side with them also progressive bourgeois elements, for the new municipal council. In the June elections, the communists scored a brilliant victory. The democratic bloc won 86% of the votes, against the list sponsored by the capitalist group of the «General Electric Company», although the latter spent large sums of money for elections and had the powerful backing of the State organs. With their work the communists shook the masses of electors out of the political lethargy and indifference into which they had sunk, and involved them actively in the political life of the city. The new municipal council of Korça led by the communists took a number of steps of a democratic nature which were unprecedented in the practice of the municipal councils of the country. It held

open meetings so that the electors might supervise its activity, it rid the municipal administrative apparatus of reactionary employees and replaced them with communists and democrats. It used part of the municipal funds to give financial aid to the poor and to build streets, aqueducts etc, in the city quarters of the poor. It brought charges in court against the «General Electric Company» with a view to annulling the concession it had obtained through bribery, etc.

The democratic bloc put forward by the branch of the Korça Communist Group in Durrës also won at the municipal elections held in July that year in that city. There were similar successes in Gjirokastra and Peqin.

The Disputes Between the Korça Group and that of Shkodra Become More Acute

The Korça Group attached special importance to the struggle against fascism which was jeopardizing the freedom and independence of the country. This struggle was a fundamental strategic task of the communists. The «Përpara» (= «Forward») illegal organ which the Group started to publish in autumn 1937, for the purpose of educating its members and propagating the new line, denounced fascism as a regime of exploitation, oppression and war, laid bare the true features of the initiators of the fascist movement in Albania and of their supporters — the landlords, the upper merchant class and

usurers — and exposed them as enemies to the people. This periodical warned the communists against the fascist danger threatening the country and called on them to mobilize the people in struggle against it. The Korça Group did not confine themselves to propagating the idea of setting up a broad anti-fascist movement, but resorted to direct action as well. In 1938, the communists engaged in street fighting with the members of the «Fascist Committee» operating in Albania. They frustrated all attempts to organize our youth on Italian fascist lines.

The Korça Group pursued a correct general line towards the internal problems of the country. In conformity with the resolutions of the VII Congress of the Comintern, in their periodical «Përpara» they expounded in theory the necessity for the communists to establish close links with the broad masses, to lead the masses in their day to day struggle for their most elementary political and economic rights, and to set up a people's front which would mobilize the masses for struggle against the fascist menace. On this basis the Korça Group put forward their minimum program calling for struggle a) for the national rights of the people against imperialism; b) for the democratic rights of the people against violations of the national constitution and attempts to implant fascism in Albania; c) for peace against war and d) for the elementary economic rights of the people.

«Përpara» pointed out that in a semi-colonial country like Albania there existed not only a social but a national problem as well, that the latter had priority and that the national movement in which the broad masses of the people were interested, could and should be helped by the social movement of the working class, that this was the only class capable of leading the masses and loyally defending their interests. To confine oneself to and engage in battle with the forces of the working class alone, without mobilizing the national forces, «Përpara» emphasized, was dangerous adventurism.

«We are obliged to work wherever people come together,» the Korça Group organ wrote, «in State organizations, schools, clubs, religious congregations, women's associations and elsewhere. Our legally-approved program and tactics are to facilitate our work in organizations authorized or set up by the State. Now we are obliged to work in a round about way for the sole reason of gathering forces in order to eventually engage in direct actions. Power lies with the people; without the masses we are but a handful of persons. . . .» 1).

1) «The National Movement and the Social Movement» — «Përpara», Sept. 1938. Central Archives of the Party.

The Korça Communist Group attached major importance to the movement against Italian imperialism. This movement had swept with it various social strata and was considered a sound basis on which to set up the popular front.

The application of this line brought a number of successes to the Korça Communist Group, but only within the city. The Group had a very narrow view of the basis on which the popular front should be formed in a backward agrarian country like Albania at that time, where the peasantry made up the overwhelming majority of the population. While preaching the need to proceed from the working class to the other strata of the people, this group did almost nothing for the countryside, for the alliance of the working class with the laboring peasantry without whom no popular front could be set up.

The Shkodra Group, on their part, had not drawn the necessary lessons from the successes scored by the communists in the elections of councils of various institutions in Korça, Durrës and elsewhere. Instead of striving to unite the communists of the country and to extend their contact with the broad masses of the people, the top leaders of this Group pursued the course of splitting and fighting against the Korça Group which had adopted the new line of action. A negative role in this conflict was played by «Buletini Jeshil» (= «The Green Bulletin»), the illegal publication.

of the Shkodra Group appearing in the latter half of 1938. This organ published fragments from the classics of Marxism-Leninism, materials speaking of the successes achieved by the Soviet Union in socialist construction, of the superiority of the Soviet socialist system over capitalism, materials which exposed the Zogite regime, fascism and Italy's enslaving policy towards Albania, and so on. These writings were a positive contribution of great significance to the Albanian Communist movement. But, on the other hand, through the «Buletini Jeshil», the Shkodra Communist Group tried to justify theoretically the line they pursued, advancing erroneous theses and maintaining an anti-Marxist stand imposed by Zef Mala and Niko Xoxi towards the basic problem of setting up a popular anti-fascist front.

The anti-Marxist views of the leaders of the Shkodra Group had their origin in their erroneous concepts of the role of the social classes and strata in the Albanian revolutionary movement and in the situation created in Albania by the enslaving policy of Italian fascism. They said that in Albania there existed no proletariat and bourgeoisie in the real sense of the word, that the handicraftsmen were the most revolutionary part of the population and that the peasantry would become the allies of the proletariat when the latter emerged as a result of the further capitalist development of the country and became capable of taking

up the banner of socialist revolution. In their view, since there was no proletariat and no bourgeoisie, no genuine class struggle could be waged and, as a consequence, conditions for revolution were not yet ripe. They also maintained that the communist movement had come into being in Albania not as an absolute necessity of the working class in order to fight against the capitalists but as a result of foreign influences. Under these circumstances, since this movement was already afoot, the duty of the communists was to educate and train cadres who would eventually start agitation among the broad masses of people, would draw the proletariat behind them and would take the direction of the communist revolution into their own hands. It was with these cadres, theoretically educated and trained, that they intended to form the Albanian Communist Party.

Failing to grasp the political changes that had taken place in Albania and in the world the leaders of the Shkodra group were unable to work out a correct revolutionary line compatible with these conditions. They rejected the Comintern's directive to set up a popular front, saying in justification that Albania was a semi-colonial country without distinct classes, without a proletariat, without a communist party, without other political parties, beset with general ignorance, and so on. The leaders of the Shkodra Group were not opposed to the establishment of a democratic, anti-imperia-

list and anti-fascist order, but they wanted to direct the main forces towards the establishment of a proletarian socialist democracy. For this reason, they wanted to proceed along the path of establishing a Socialist Federation in the Balkans. These views sowed ideological confusion among the members of the Group.

The ideological and political disagreements between the two Groups regarding the application of Marxism-Leninism under the concrete historical conditions of the country became more acute. This conflict extended also to the field of organization and assumed an unprincipled character.

The War Against Fascist Aggression

Meanwhile, the danger of Italian fascist aggression against Albania became more and more imminent. In January 1939, fascist Dictator Benito Mussolini endorsed the plan of the military occupation of Albania. The leaders of the Korça Communist Group were of the opinion that the appropriate conditions had arisen for the formation of a broad front against Italian imperialism. They tried to persuade the communists of the other groups and the patriotic nationalists of the necessity of uniting and collaborating against the imminent fascist aggression. But these efforts were not persistent enough and therefore came to naught.

On the other hand, Zog had no intention whatsoever of organizing resistance against

Italian aggression and, least of all, of collaborating with the communists. Up to the last moment he hoped to come to terms with the Italian fascists making new concessions to them for the purpose of retaining his royal throne. At the same time, he took ruthless repressive measures against the communists. Zog's police detected and arrested most of the members of the Shkodra Group. Under examination and at their trial in January 1939, the leaders of this Group, Zef Mala and Niko Xoxi betrayed the activity of the Group, the names of their comrades and of some of the members of the Korça Group. 75 persons appeared before the court accused of attempting to overthrow the regime by force. 18-year old communist Qemal Stafa, like many of his comrades, maintained a manly stand in court. He declared that he was and would remain dedicated communist and that communism would save the masses of oppressed workers. The court imposed various sentences on 52 persons.

This was a heavy blow to the Albanian communist movement. It resulted from defective security and the betrayal by the leaders of the Shkodra Communist Group who did not consider it a grave blunder to betray their collaborators to the police and in court. They pretended that this was a test of the resoluteness of their comrades under torture.

The international situation was worsening. The fascist States had greatly increased their war preparations. Hitlerite Germany had occu-

pied Austria in 1938 and, after the Munich capitulation by the Western Powers, occupied Czechoslovakia in March 1939 while the fascist troops in Spain were achieving the suppression of the Spanish republican forces.

On March 23, 1939, fascist Italy took the final decision on the military occupation of Albania. Zog tried his utmost to conceal the tension that had arisen in Albanian-Italian relations. Nevertheless, the Albanian people had learned of the sinister plans of fascism at the beginning of April. A wave of indignation swept the whole country. The Albanian communists, though few in number, became the organizers of powerful anti-fascist demonstrations throughout the country. On the initiative of the communists and patriotic nationalists, centers were set up in Tirana and other cities, to recruit volunteers to offer resistance to fascist aggression. The communists held in jail and in concentration camps asked the government to be sent to the forefront of battle against the aggression. But the organization of popular resistance was sabotaged by Zog and his clique. The Albanian people, who were all up and ready to fight in defense of their freedom and independence, found themselves unarmed, betrayed by the ruling classes, the government and the king, and without assistance and support from abroad. At these critical moments for the destiny of their homeland, the communist groups, split and at logger-

heads with one another, were unable to set up a single leadership and mobilize the people for armed action against the aggressors.

On April 7, 1939, Italian fascist troops attacked Albania. Zog and his clique fled the country leaving it to the mercy of fate. The Albanian army, paralyzed by the Italian military specialists and their own pro-fascist officers, broke up without offering any resistance. Against all these odds, groups of patriots fought heroically, rifle in hand, against the aggressors in Durrës, Saranda, Shëngjin, Shkodra and Vlora, but the superior forces of the enemy suppressed this resistance. In a few days the country was overrun by the fascists. But the Albanian people were not subdued. They openly manifested their deep hatred against the Italian invaders and never recognized the foreign occupation regime.

The occupation of Albania came as a logical consequence of the aggressive policy of Italian fascism, of the capitulating, anti-national and anti-popular policy pursued by Zog's regime, and of the policy of «non-intervention» of the western capitalist powers which hastened to recognize this occupation. Only the Soviet Union, loyal to its policy of defending the countries menaced by fascism, raised its voice against this aggression. A wave of indignation and protest broke out among the Albanian colonists abroad. Progressive public opinion in general throughout the world also denounced the Italian aggression against Albania.

4. — THE FOUNDING OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY — HISTORICALLY IMPERATIVE UNDER CONDI- TIONS OF THE WAR FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

The occupation of Albania was part of the general plan the fascist powers had begun to put into effect for establishing their domination of the world. The policy of repeated concessions pursued by Britain, France and the USA had further incited the aggressive aims of fascism. The talks which England and France had begun in 1939 with the Soviet Union under pressure from public opinion, were used by these powers as a smokescreen behind which to conceal their attempts to come to terms with Hitler. With a view to gaining time for strengthening its defenses and to avoiding a war on two-fronts — against Germany and Japan, — the Soviet Union, in 1939, signed a treaty of non-aggression with Germany. In the early days of September, after the Hitlerites had attacked Poland, Britain and France, faced with fascist aggression which was being directed against them also declared war on nazi Germany.

Thus, the Second World War started as a war between the two main imperialist blocs. It was a result of the inevitable contradictions of the capitalist system in the epoch of the general crisis of imperialism. But, on the other hand, the people had risen against the fascist aggression and bondage. Their fight in defense of freedom and independence and to rid themselves of foreign bondage was a just anti-fascist war.

The Establishment of the Fascist Regime of Occupation

The occupation of Albania by Italy began a grim period of fascist enslavement for the Albanian people. The Italian invaders kept the landlord-bourgeois order intact. On the other hand, they took immediate steps to carry out a broad program of political, economic and organizational measures aimed at legalizing and enforcing the occupation regime, at Italianizing the country and plundering its resources with a view to turning it into a base for extending their aggression in the Balkans and towards the East.

The Italian fascists tried to achieve these ends through both demagoguery and force. With a view to concealing the annexation, they called together a «Constituent Assembly» which proclaimed the «personal union» of Albania with Italy, offered the crown of Albania to the Italian King, Victor Emmanuel, and appointed an Albanian puppet Government headed by big land-owner, Shefqet Verlaci. In reality, Albania was turned into a province of the Italian Empire under the fascist dictatorship. The Italian «Viceroy» (Luogotenente) exercised all state power on behalf of and in the name of the king carrying out to the letter the orders of the Rome Government. The Albanian puppet Government was simply an intermediary organ transmitting the will of fascist dictator Mussolini and the Viceroy. The Albanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs was closed.

Its functions were turned over to the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The other Ministries were, in fact, directed by the Italian «advisers». The Albanian armed forces became part of the imperial army and took their orders from the Italian headquarters. The Convention on the «equality of civil and political rights» in Albania between Italian and Albanian citizens was accompanied with the influx of tens of thousands of Italian colonists (workers, farmers, specialists, teachers, entrepreneurs, merchants, employees etc.). These, together with the occupation troops made up the force which aimed, inter alia, at the complete colonization and fascistization of the country.

On the one hand, the Italian invaders tried to preserve the semblance of an Albanian State while, on the other, they officially proclaimed Italy and Albania as a «single territory». There was an unimpeded onflow of Italian capital into Albania. The Italian capitalists became the absolute masters of the economy of the country, turning it wholly into a base for raw materials and a closed market for their goods.

The Italian Government made feverish preparations to transform Albania into a military base for aggression against the neighboring Balkan countries. The building of new strategic roads, barracks, airfields, fortifications etc. served this purpose.

In its policy of occupying Albania and turning it into a province of Italy, Mussolini's

Government had the full support of the reactionary ruling classes of the country. As far back as 1939, fascist Italy had set up a powerful agency among these classes and among the ranks of the bourgeois political exiles which served it faithfully in the enslavement of the Albanian people. Tending to place their property interests above those of the nation the Albanian landed gentry in general maintained the same attitude. They had always maintained close relations with the foreign rulers who could ensure their class privileges. As traditional political turncoats, the landed gentry had no difficulty in abandoning Zog and linking up with the Italian invaders and supporting their policy in Albania since Italian fascism championed their class interests. Similar interests threw the tribal chieftains into the lap of fascism, too. The Italian invaders managed to take advantage of the ignorance of these patriarchal survivals and fondle their ambitions, thus making them blind tools of fascism in Albania.

The interests of the country were betrayed also by the Albanian reactionary bourgeoisie the greatest part of which was made up of the upper merchant bourgeoisie. They had long given up fighting in defense of the freedom and independence of the country and had become a counter-revolutionary and anti-national force. The Italian invasion promoted the development of trade. The Albanian upper merchants together with the landed gentry

and the high fascist functionaries became intermediaries and collaborators of the Italian monopolies in exploiting the Albanian market. Many of the local industrialists who had their factories closed because of difficulties created by Italian competition became traders and accumulated considerable wealth. Thus the grand bourgeoisie became an appendage of the occupationists. The reactionary clergy, too, became a tool in the hands of fascism. The invaders appointed representatives of these classes and social strata to high posts in the fascist administration hoping in that way to ensure for themselves a quiet domination over Albania.

The consequences of the establishment of the fascist regime were very soon felt by the Albanian people who lost all their freedom and national independence. Right from the start hundreds of Albanian patriots were confined in jails and deported to concentration camps in Italy. The fascists set up a powerful police apparatus in order to mop up «suspects and persons potentially dangerous to the regime». The employees were forced to swear allegiance to the king or lose their jobs. Fascist law created an atmosphere of terror and insecurity throughout the land.

On the other hand, the apparent improvement of the economic situation brought about by the temporary elimination of unemployment through large construction schemes, mainly of military character, and through dumping cheap Italian commodities on the

market, ended very soon in fiasco. Workshops of Albanian handicrafts closed door one after another because they could not compete with Italian industry. Ruin of the craftsmen became general. Albanian workers were forced to work ten hours a day for wages which with the constant rise of prices, could provide only for a hand to mouth existence. Discrimination between Albanian and Italian workers after the occupation became even more blatant. There was no protection or labor insurance for Albanian workers. The Italian enterprises had the right to extend the workday whenever they judged their work to be of an extraordinary and essential nature.

The systematic plunder by the invaders also affected the interests of the peasantry. Compulsory delivery of agricultural products at very low prices to capitalist firms, the expropriation of small farmers by the Italian banks, and the confiscation of thousands of hectares of land for military needs, deepened the process of impoverishment of the masses of the peasantry.

The Beginnings of the National-liberation Movement. In the Order of the Day: The Union of the Communists.

The loss of freedom and national independence shook the Albanian people, deeply affected their traditional sentiments of

ardent love of country and national pride. Their hatred of the invaders grew from day to day. This resentment was expressed in

various ways: in their sabotaging all plans of Italianizing and fascistizing the Albanian people, in their refusing to enrol in the fascist party and other fascist organizations, in their resistance against the laws of the occupation regime, etc. The workers and school youth were outstanding in this resistance.

Under Italian occupation, the workers' movement assumed a pronounced anti-fascist political character. Factories and large work-sites became hotbeds of opposition against the capitalist exploiters and the invaders. Frequent strikes took place in various cities. The workers went on strike not only for economic claims but also to express their indignation and to sabotage production for the invaders.

Secondary schools became centers of a fiery movement against fascism. Even before occupation, the school youth had stood out for their patriotic and democratic sentiments. Under the influence and guidance of the communist groups, they had become resolute fighters against Zog's regime, against obscurantism, and against fascism. In addition they had become the bearers of communist and revolutionary democratic ideas to the masses. After occupation, the school youth were among the first to express firmly their hatred towards the fascist invaders. They opposed and sabotaged the spread of fascist culture, leading demonstrations and protests against fascism, propagating ideas of militant patriotism and

communism. In this respect, the school youth served as a sound support of the communist and the anti-fascist movement in general.

The new situation created after occupation raised the fundamental task of arousing all the people in struggle to frustrate the fascist plan of Italianizing and plundering the country, to free Albania and to regain national independence.

The accomplishment of this task called for a revolutionary leadership to work out the political platform of the anti-fascist fight, to mobilize and organize the people for this struggle.

A leadership of this kind was lacking. The Communist Groups were the only political organizations concerned about the destiny of the homeland and people in those critical days. These groups maintained a resolute stand against the regime of occupation. But discord prevented them from working out a common line for the liberation struggle, for linking up with the popular masses and becoming their leadership.

The necessity for the uniting of these groups and the creation of a single communist party was a matter of urgency. The accomplishment of this task was not easy. It was necessary to overcome major obstacles in order to remove all disagreements and divisions which were nurtured especially by their leaders, although the need for unity was already felt by the majority of the communists.

To achieve the union of communist forces and organize the antifascist struggle, the old course of negotiations among the leaders was pursued. The two opposing views regarding the character of the war again came to grips at these negotiations. The leaders of the Korça Group insisted on organizing the national-liberation war with the participation of all the classes and social strata who were willing to fight against the foreign invaders. The leaders of the Shkodra Group and other organizations, who had not given up their sectarian stand adapted their old views to the new situation. They were of the opinion that, as a result of the Italian occupation, Albania was embarking on the road to a speedy capitalist development. Consequently, the growth of the working class would create the basis for a socialist revolution!

The negotiations between the leaders of the Korça and Shkodra Groups led to the formation, in the fall of 1939, of a so-called joint «Central Committee» made up of an equal number of members, two from each group. This agreement was nothing but a «social democratic compromise». 1). It did not envisage the fusion of the two groups into a single organization. The groups still remained separated each preserving its own views and not purging their ranks of anti-Marxist elements.

1) Resolution of the Meeting of Communist Groups, November, 1941. Principal documents of the Party of Labor of Albania, Tirana 1960; vol. I, p. 14.

The leaders of the Shkodra Group accepted only the expulsion of Trotskyite Niko Xoxi. Built on such weak foundations, this «union» from above remained altogether formal.

While the negotiations among the leaders of the communist groups dragged along for months, the popular anti-fascist movement was growing all over the country. The communists stood at the head of this movement. After the occupation of the country, a radical change had taken place in their understanding. The rank and file members of these groups were becoming more and more aware that unity could not be achieved through sterile talks among chiefs but through a common struggle against the fascist invaders. This gradually pushed the political and ideological differences into the background. The authority and influence of the chiefs upon the rank and file of the groups had declined. On their own initiative, the communists threw themselves into struggle against the foreign occupiers and became agitators for the liberation war. On Flag Day, November 28, 1939, they led mass anti-fascist demonstrations in the principal cities of the country. The demonstrations were conducted under the slogans: «Long live free Albania!», «Liberty or death!». The communists were the inspirers and leaders of the anti-fascist movement of the workers and the school youth.

«At war and at grips with the invaders and Quislings, united, for a single

purpose: the liberation of the country from the invaders, the sound communists at the grassroots of the various groups were forging links with one another in blood, forgetting their squabbles and feuds, crystallizing out a correct communist line, and demanding union into a single party as 'a *conditio sine qua non*' for organizing and guiding the war of liberation»¹⁾.

The successes scored by the communists in organizing the anti-fascist movement during the early months after the occupation of the country served as an encouragement for the Kërça Communist Group to strengthen and extend its field of activity to the other districts of the country and to put an end to the localism which had been an obstacle. At the beginning of 1940, it organized a branch in Tirana. Enver Hoxha was assigned to the leadership of this branch.

Enver Hoxha

Enver Hoxha was born on October 16, 1908 in Gjirokastra. He spent the early years of his life at a very critical period for the country when foreign invaders, who followed in succes-

1) Enver Hoxha: Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania. The 1st Congress of the Communist Party of Albania, Tirana 1950, p. 59.

sion, burnt and laid waste whole districts, committed mass murders of the population and spread misery everywhere. Life taught him to hate the enemies of the country and, although still young, to join the 1924 democratic movement.

At the Korça Lyceum, from which he graduated in 1930, Enver Hoxha experienced for the first time the brutality of the Zogite authorities and their jail, for having organized with his comrades a rally of protest against thefts perpetrated at the expense of the student body.

He went to France to pursue his higher studies. His pronounced democratic propensities made Enver Hoxha a sympathizer of the French communist movement. In Paris he established connections with the editorial board of «L'Humanité», organ of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, to which he contributed materials denouncing Zog's regime in Albania.

When his scholarship was discontinued, Enver Hoxha was obliged to go to Belgium where he worked for a period at the Albanian Consulate in Brussels and continued his studies at the same time. But Zog's agents abroad detected his anti-Zog activity. He was dismissed from his job and was obliged to return to Albania in 1936.

By this time, Enver Hoxha had become a communist and, as such, devoted himself to the struggle to liberate the people. The oath he took on the grave of patriot Bajo

Topulli in Gjirokastra, that he and all the youth would fight for «a better Albania», for «the welfare of the country,» for «the real unification of the nation» was a program of action for him.

Enver Hoxha began his revolutionary activity in his home country as a teacher first, at the Tirana Gymnasium and then at the Korça Lyceum. He joined the Korça Communist Group and became one of its most active members. He made skilful use of the school platform in order to impart democratic and communist ideas to the students. He became also one of the principal educators of the «Rinia Korçare» (= «Korça Youth») out-of-school organization and an indefatigable militant for the unity of the Albanian Communist movement.

On the eve of the fascist occupation Enver Hoxha, together with the other comrades of the group, worked with might and main to organize popular resistance. He kept up these efforts also after the invasion of the country. His revolutionary activity brought him under the eye of the fascist invaders and they dismissed him from his job as: «an anti-regime element». The leadership of the Korça Communist Group decided to send him to Tirana charging him with the task of extending the activity of the group on a sound basis, by organizing the anti-fascist movement in the capital and other districts of the country.

Under Enver Hoxha's leadership, the

Tirana Branch became an important center of the communist and anti-fascist movement in the capital.

Appreciating the determination of the rank and file of the communist groups to fight against fascism and their ardent desire for the union of the communist movement and the founding of the party, Enver Hoxha carried on with them, patiently and wisely, a tireless work of enlightening and organizing them. At the same time he established connections with patriotic nationalists who hated the fascist invaders and were willing to fight against them.

Further Difficulties

On the Road to Unity.

The Group of «Youth»

Precisely at the time when the union of groups and the creation of a single

communist party had become imperative further difficulties arose to hinder this purpose. A faction which had begun to form in the ranks of the Korça Communist Group before the occupation of the country, emerged as a separate group in February 1940. Eventually it assumed the name the **Group of Youth**. The emergence of this new group had been encouraged by the split and other shortcomings in the communist movement, factors which favored the activity of anti-Marxist elements.

The Group was headed by Anastas Lula and Sadik Premte, elements of pronounced

Trotskyite and anarchist inclinations. Taking advantage of the lack of sound connections between the Korça Group and its organizations in Tirana, Anastas Lula and Sadik Premte had succeeded in persuading some members whom they had recruited that the leaders of the Korça Group were incapable of directing the communist movement and that their ideological views and political line were erroneous. They were soon able to swell the ranks of their faction with intellectual elements of bourgeois and petty bourgeois origin among whom anti-Marxist views, borrowed partly from those of the leaders of the Shkodra Group, struck root at once. The «Youth» Group set up branches in the principal cities of the country, even in Korça where it took advantage of the dissolution of the cells which had caused discontent and confusion among some of the communists.

The «Youth» Group began to violate openly the joint decisions of the «Central Committee». The leaders of the Shkodra Group, thinking that these factionists acted in line with instructions from the Korça Group with which they were formally associated, accused them of insincerity and disloyalty. They used this as a pretext to withdraw from the «Central Committee» thus bringing about its dissolution.

This is how the 1939 autumn agreement was annulled. Instead of achieving closer contact and unity, the gap between these groups

became deeper. The «Youth» Group declared open struggle against the Korça Group and established connections with the Shkodra Group. The minor communist organizations fused gradually into three principal communist groups.

The leadership of the «Youth» Group issued an anti-Marxist ideological and political platform of its own. It held that in Albania there was no proletariat, no class struggle and, therefore, no basis existed for the formation of a communist party, that the peasants were conservative, reactionary, and could not become the ally of the working class. They had adopted the Trotskyite theory of educating and preserving cadres. They considered connections and work with the masses as dangerous, for that would endanger the cadres!

The political views of the chiefs of this group were thoroughly mistaken and dangerous to the communist and anti-fascist movement. Like Zef Mala and Niko Xoxi, they thought that the fascist invasion would bring about the development of capitalism, the growth of the proletariat, and the consolidation of the relations between the Albanian and Italian working classes, thus class struggle would develop creating favorable conditions for founding a communist party to lead the struggle for socialism. They did not grasp the reasons which obliged the Soviet Union to sign the treaty of non-aggression with Ger-

many or the aim of this treaty, therefore they assessed it as harmful to the anti-fascist struggle of the people.

The chiefs of the «Youth» Group and some of their followers degenerated into a sect of anarchists.

The simultaneous formation of the «Zjarri» (= «Fire») Group organization in Albania added greatly to the confusion created by the formation of the «Youth» Group. Trotskyite Andrea Zisi, having done his utmost to dissuade the Albanian anti-fascist youth residing in Athens from coming to their native land to fight the fascist aggressors, returned to Albania, bent on sabotaging the communist and anti-fascist movement. In Korça he formed a «Central Committee» and in both Tirana and Vlora a «Regional Committee.» The whole work of the group was concentrated on «educating» its members.

Andrea Zisi had hatched up a new «theory» according to which the fascist stronghold should be taken from within and, therefore, instead of fighting the fascists openly, the communists should merge with them in their political and organizational apparatus. Bedri Spahiu, incited a few communist officers to adopt these views, too.

The Stand of the Communists and the Albanian People Towards Fascist Aggression Against the Neighboring Peoples

In June, 1940, when the sound communists of the groups in Albania were fighting against fascism and against the Trotskyites for unifica-

tion of the communist movement, Italy entered the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany. The Italian fascists tried to use the Albanians as cannon fodder. Starting from Albania, the Italian troops attacked Greece on October 28, 1940. Following a number of initial successes, they were compelled to retreat under the blows of the Greek army, withdrawing from Korça in November, and from Gjirokastra at the beginning of December 1940.

The Greek-Italian war brought further suffering and devastation to the Albanian people. Far from supporting the fascist aggression against Greece, the Albanian people did what they could to help the fraternal Greek people in their war of liberation. The communists launched a wide propaganda campaign to expose the imperialist and fascist schemes, and to lay bare the rottenness of the fascist regime. They issued a call to the Albanian soldiers and militiamen who had been conscripted to desert from the front and to the youth not to report to the recruiting centers but to take to the mountains. The work of communists and anti-fascist patriots completely frustrated the fascist plan of military and «civil» mobi-

lization of the Albanians. The Albanian soldiers forced to go to the Greek front by the Italian fascists refused to fight and deserted 'en masse'. Sabotaging the fascist military machine behind the lines took place more frequently. Since Italian fascism was a common enemy, the population of the districts occupied by Greek forces gave the latter all the assistance they could. But the Greek Government maintained an openly chauvinistic attitude towards the Albanian people. It hindered militant unity between the Albanians and Greeks against the fascist invaders and tried to carry out the plans of the old Great Greek bourgeoisie to annex Korça and Gjirokastra.

The Korça communists, too, came up against this hostile attitude of the Greek occupation authorities. As soon as the Italian troops withdrew, the communists set up the «Committee for Defense of the City» and formed a small armed detachment of communists and sympathizers of the Group to maintain order. A conflict arose at the first contact between the «Defense Committee» and the Greek military authorities on the status of Greek occupation. The Committee rejected the Athens demand that the coming of Greek troops should be considered as «the liberation of the Greek city of Korça». The Greeks, on their part, rejected the Committee's proposal to form a number of Albanian battalions to fight under their own national flag against the Italian invaders. They dispersed the

Committee. On Independence Day November 28, 1940, the communists organized a major rally in the city of Korça with a view to raising the morale of the population and to demonstrating to the Greek Government that the Korça people, like all the rest of the Albanian people, hated the Italian fascists but would not accept the claims of the Greek chauvinists to Albanian territory.

The Greek occupation of the southern regions of Albania did not last long. The events that took place in the spring of 1941 totally changed the situation in the Balkans. Having occupied Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and France, Hitlerite Germany marched its troops into Finland, Rumania, and Bulgaria, and in April 1941, assaulted Yugoslavia and Greece. In a few days the German army occupied these countries and made it possible for the Italian troops to re-occupy South Albania and enter Greece.

The Greek-Italian war, during which Albania was turned into a battlefield, had important consequences here. The heavy losses in lives, the great material damage incurred and the consolidation of the colonialist plundering policy of the invaders greatly aggravated the plight of the masses of the people. The defeats suffered by the Italians in this war clearly revealed the rottenness of Italian fascism and completely discredited it in the eyes of the Albanian people.

Italy extended its zone of occupation

creating «Great Albania» which included the piece of Albanian territory which had been turned over to Serbia by the Conference of Ambassadors of the Big Powers held in London in 1913. In order to make their positions secure in the Balkans, the German and Italian fascist invaders fomented the old national and chauvinistic quarrels of the reactionary classes of the Balkan countries. But the communists and the people as a whole did not fall into the trap of fascist demagogy. They exposed the provocative policy of «Great Albania» and pursued the course of intensifying the war against the fascist invaders and of strengthening the collaboration with the neighboring people in their liberation struggle against their common enemy, relying on the right of self-determination of the people.

**The Unity of the
Communists in Battle
Against Fascism**

The fascist regime in Albania had been dealt a hard blow. It was beset with a political crisis which continually worsened, one expression of which was its inability to suppress the popular anti-fascist movement. In the spring of 1941, the group of freedom fighters led by patriot Myslim Peza had begun to carry out armed operations against the fascist invaders. The latter retaliated by undertaking their first mopping up operation in Peza. Mass desertions began from the ranks of the Albanian detachments. In May, popular resentment towards

the foreign oppressors was expressed by a notable event. In the center of Tirana, young Vasil Laçi fired a pistol shot at the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel, who had come on a visit to Albania.

The revolutionary situation was ripening in Albania. The fascist invaders increased their measures of repression. They arrested and jailed thousands of patriots others of whom in order to escape police persecution or conscription for military service, took to the mountains and harassed the enemy singly or in small armed groups.

Assessing the importance of the Peza patriotic group of freedom fighters, Enver Hoxha and his comrades decided to send communists to give it an organized character and uplift the political consciousness of its fighters. In talks conducted between Enver Hoxha and Myslim Peza, the latter gladly accepted the proposal to have communists in the band.

By taking to the mountains in order to organize and extend the national-liberation movement the communists marked the beginning of a new stage in their activity. The communists took the initiative and tried to organize the armed anti-fascist movement in the other regions of the country as well.

Their propaganda work among the masses was assuming wide proportions. In addition to individual agitation, a role of significance was played in the communications of the communists with the masses by the leaflets and

proclamations distributed, at first, in the cities and, later, in the rural areas. But some of these writings carried incorrect political slogans like «For a Soviet Albania!», «For Communist Albania!», «For the Organization of an Albanian Red Army!» which had their origin in a wrong assessment of the conditions existing in Albania.

The development of the movement and the persistent demand of the communists for unity prompted the Korça and Shkodra Groups at this time, to make a new attempt to establish collaboration. For the sake of internal peace and with a view to coordinating their anti-fascist activities, the two sides set up a «Committee of Arbitration» as a first step towards complete union. But this attempt did not yield satisfactory results either.

The Tirana Branch of the Korça Communist Group, on its part, had carried on a wide range of activities among the ranks of the communists and patriotic nationalists and had established sound connections with them. Inspired by his ardent desire to achieve as soon as possible the unity of the Albanian communists into a single party, Enver Hoxha had not recoiled before the new difficulties that had arisen from the factionalist work of the «Youth» and «Zjarri» trends. He found a common language with the outstanding activists of the Shkodra Group, Vasil Shanto and Qemal Stafa. Under Enver Hoxha's lead, the Tirana Branch, became gradually the real orga-

nizing center for all the communist and anti-fascist movement in Albania. Dedicated communists of the different groups had united around this branch. They constituted the basis of the coming communist party.

While the anti-fascist resistance of the Albanian people was growing from day to day and a powerful national-liberation movement led by the communists had begun to develop in the other countries occupied by the fascists, an event of significance took place which brought about a radical change in the international political situation. After having boosted its military potential by exploiting the economic and manpower resources of the countries it had enslaved and of its satellite allies, Hitlerite Germany treacherously attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. German imperialism had decided to annihilate the first socialist State. Intoxicated by the easy victories he had scored in Western Europe and in the Balkans, Hitler hoped to score a quick victory in the USSR.

Led by the Communist Party headed by J. V. Stalin, the Soviet people rose in a body to wage their Great Patriotic War in defense of the freedom and independence of their socialist homeland. This just war opened a new stage in the Second World War, strengthened the liberation anti-fascist character of the struggle of peoples against the fascist bloc, and laid the foundations for the unification

of all the anti-fascist forces of the world into a single front.

The war between the Soviet Union and Hitlerite Germany was a life and death struggle between socialism and fascism. The exploited masses the world over were interested in the victory of the Soviet Union over international fascist reaction. The people in countries under bondage were right in considering the Soviet Union as the main guarantee for the anti-fascist war to be carried through to final victory, to their liberation from fascist domination. Faced with a dangerous enemy like Hitlerite Germany, and under the growing pressure of their people who demanded a powerful anti-fascist coalition, the governments of the two biggest capitalist countries — Britain and the USA — formed an alliance with the Soviet Union. This frustrated Hitler's plan of isolating the Land of the Soviets. The main strength of this big antifascist coalition lay in the Soviet Union without which no victory over the enemy was possible.

The treacherous fascist assault on the Soviet people and the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, had deep repercussions in Albania. While the Italian invaders, who had also declared war to the Soviet Union, and the home reactionaries, intoxicated by the preliminary successes of the nazis, launched a frenzied anti-Soviet and anti-communist campaign, the broad masses of Albanian patriots were indignant at the Hitlerite aggression.

The attachment the Albanian patriots felt for the Soviet Union had its own historical background. In their age-long struggle against foreign oppressors, the Albanian people had almost always been alone, without allies. The capitalist States had either maintained an openly hostile attitude towards them or had posed as «friends» for the purpose of stabbing them on the back and placing them under their control. Only the Soviet Union had defended the rights of Albania and had raised its voice against the injustices perpetrated against her. With the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against fascism, the Albanian people had, for the first time in their history, a powerful and sincere friend and ally and, like all the other oppressed peoples, a sure guarantee of the inevitable destruction of the fascist bloc.

«Our struggle», Enver Hoxha said, «did not begin after the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, but after the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, our people felt that the blood they shed would not be shed in vain» 1)

Under the new circumstances created by the formation of the anti-fascist coalition of

1) Enver Hoxha: Speech at the session of the Leadership of the General National-liberation Council, April 15, 1944. Minutes of the meeting (Central Archives of the Party).

peoples, with the Soviet Union as the vanguard, a major historical responsibility devolved upon the Albanian communists, namely, to provide, as soon as possible, a political leadership for the Albanian people by forming the Communist Party as a fundamental condition for organizing, directing and intensifying the anti-fascist national-liberation war. There was no other way out, and none but the communists could take upon themselves such a task under the specific historical conditions of the country. The sound internationalist communists of the groups became well aware of this. Regardless of the ideological differences existing among them, the Albanian communists were united by the boundless affection they all nurtured for their country and for the Soviet Union. This became a very important factor in the closing of the ranks and the collaborating between them. Thus, a new stage began also for the communist movement itself. Now:

«... more than ever was felt, especially at the grassroots, the great harm that was caused to the communist movement by the sterile squabbles between the groups, and the pressing need to put an end to this conflict in order to achieve the necessary conditions for the unity of the movement in Albania»¹⁾

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups. Principal documents of the Party of Labor of Albania, vol. I, p. 14-15.

Immediately, the fighting against fascism which was to unite the communists, assumed wide proportions. A good number of the members of all the groups were linked with one another in fighting operations against the invaders and traitors to the country. The desire to fight of the rank and file communists after the Hitlerite aggression against the USSR could not be opposed even by the leaders of the Shkodra Group who had expressed their view that «the communists should fight when the Soviet Union entered the Second World War.» Now the main role in the Shkodra Communist Group was played by Qemal Stafa and Vasil Shanto who had begun to collaborate with Enver Hoxha. The line of anti-fascist national-liberation war had become predominant in this group. The instructions issued to the group members at the time contained, among others, such exhortations as «As people who love your country, integrate with the masses, win their sympathy, come to terms with them and prepare them for an armed national movement». 1)

Their common political line brought the Shkodra Communist Group close to that of Korça and made possible the conclusion in August 1941, of the agreement to collaborate in and organize together a number of anti-fascist

1) Instructions issued by the Shkodra Group to its members (Central Archives of the Party).

operations. Later the «Youth» Group, too, joined this agreement, while the «Zjarri» Group did not respond to the call for collaboration. Among the most important of the joint anti-fascist operations of the groups was the mass anti-fascist rally in Tirana on October 28, 1941, the anniversary of the fascist celebration of the «March on Rome». Broad masses of the people of the capital took part in it. Enver Hoxha was the chief organizer of this demonstration. The fascists retaliated fiercely. Hunted by the fascists, Enver Hoxha was obliged to resort to clandestinity. The fascist authorities passed a death sentence on him 'in absentia'. The Tirana demonstration was the touchstone for the unity of the Albanian communists. It showed the strength of this unity in the heat of battle against fascism as well as its importance in mobilizing the popular masses for the national-liberation movement.

The Tirana demonstration was followed by another big rally in Korça on November 8, 1941, also organized by the communist groups to protest against the mass arrests the fascists had made in the capital. It resulted in a bloody encounter with the carabinieri and fascist police. It was there that Koci Bako, a veteran member of the Korça Group, was killed.

The political success of these demonstrations exerted a great influence on public opinion in the country. They further enhanced the name of the communists among the people. Their success, on the other hand, greatly embar-

passed the fascist occupation authorities. They were given to understand that they had to deal with an opponent who was growing stronger, consolidating and becoming ever more of a menace to them.

The struggle of the Albanian communists themselves, created, at last, favorable conditions for founding their party. Among the ranks of the communist groups there had sprung up professional revolutionary cadres who had been able to rise above the disputes among the groups, had definitely embraced the line of an uncompromising war against the fascist invaders and traitors to the country, and had striven to unify the Albanian communist movement on this basis. It was these cadres who, through their tireless efforts, prepared the ideological and organizational framework of the Albanian Communist Party.

The anti-fascist war waged by the communists of the various groups shook the very foundations of the sectarianism and of the group spirit, which had prevailed up to that time. This struggle and their common ideology became the decisive factors which led to the 1941 August agreement to organize a meeting of representatives of all the principal communist groups which would take up the question of amalgamating these groups and founding the Communist Party of Albania.

5. — THE FOUNDING OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF ALBANIA

The Meeting of the Communist Groups to found the party was held in secrecy in Tirana from 8th to 14th of November, 1941. It was attended by 15 persons. Among them were Enver Hoxha, Qemal Stafa, Vasil Shanto, Pilo Peristeri and others.

The main problem for which the meeting had been called was solved in principle right at the start. On November 8th, the historic decision was taken to merge the groups and found the **Communist Party of Albania**.

The meeting heard the reports on the activity of each group, pointed out the successes and shortcomings of the communist movement in Albania and took up for discussion the vital problems which faced the party.

The majority of the representatives expressed their determination to put an end to the divisions and build a single Marxist-Leninist party based on a sound organizational and ideological unity and a militant political line.

Only Anastas Lula and Sadik Premte, the principal leaders and representatives of the «Youth» Group, tried to obstruct the attainment of this objective. They did not dare express themselves openly against the union of the communist groups, for a union of this kind was persistently demanded from the rank and file. But they advanced and defended the

familiar Trotskyite views of their group and of the other traitors to Marxism-Leninism. They tried to prove especially «the lack of a proletariat», the «reactionary and conservative nature of the peasantry», the «lack of trained cadres», the «danger to which the cadres were exposed by open propaganda and agitation against fascism», the «vain hope of relying on the aid and support of the Soviet Union». By these arguments they aimed at creating the belief that the formation of a single communist party would be only a formal thing and that the party would never succeed in becoming the leader of the Albanian people and of directing the struggle for national liberation.

Enver Hoxha, supported by Qemal Stafa and other participants at the meeting who stood on Marxist-Leninist positions, waged a principled struggle against these liquidatory theses. When they saw themselves beaten, Anastas Lula and Sadik Premte agreed in a formal way to submit to the majority and pledged their word that they would abide by the decisions of the meeting.

The Meeting of the Communist Groups defined the ideological and organizational bases of the party and worked out the fundamental questions of its general line for the period of the national-liberation war.

A Provisional Central Committee composed of seven persons was elected to lead the party. Enver Hoxha was charged with heading it though no secretary was appointed.

A stipulation approved was that none of the former principal leaders (chairmen and assistant chairmen) of the groups would be elected to the leadership. This was not the result of a simple agreement but an exigency of the development of the communist and revolutionary movement. Endowed with a pronounced spirit of groupism, the group leaders had long been a stumbling block to the union of the Albanian communists into a single party and had shown themselves incapable of directing the communists and revolutionary masses.

**The Ideological
and Organizational
Basis of the Party**

The Meeting denounced the social-democratic views on the party of the working class which

Llazar Fundo tried to disseminate in Albania; it exposed the entirely Trotskyite line and activity of the «Zjarri» Group, which tried to legalize itself as «the Albanian Communist Party», and decided without reservation that the Communist Party of Albania would be organized and consolidated as a party of the new type:

«The party should not be a party of the old type, a party similar to that of the Second Social-democrat Internationale infested with decay, inactivity, nepotism, factionalism and betrayal of the interests of the working class. We want a party capable of

leading the working class in battle to victory. . . » 1)

The Meeting denounced all the erroneous views alien to Marxist-Leninist ideology which had existed among the ranks of the Communist Groups. The «theory of cadres» was particularly stigmatized as defeatist and opportunist for it isolated the communists from the masses, kept them as a sect trailing behind the masses, and would finally lead to the dissolution of the party.

Marxism-Leninism was adopted as the vanguard theory which would guide the Party in working out its program and in all its activity. In this connection the task was set:

«We should strive energetically to uplift the cadres ideologically, theoretically and politically by imparting to them the Marxist-Leninist theory. . . » 2)

The Provisional Central Committee was charged with the task of purging all the literature of the Communist Groups of anti-Marxist, Trotskyite and anarchist material and of organizing the publication, in Albanian, the distribution and study, of the «Short Course of the

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups. Principal Documents of the Party of Labor of Albania, Vol. 1, p. 19.

2) *ibid.* p. 20.

History of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of the USSR» as well as of a number of works by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Ilich Lenin and Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin.

Thus, right from the start, the Communist Party of Albania raised to a higher level the importance of the Marxist-Leninist theory and the communist understanding of its members as a force imparting life and vigor, opening up prospects and pointing the way to victory to the workers' and the liberation movements of the oppressed and exploited masses.

The Meeting decided to put an end once for all to the rotten organizational structure of the communist groups, to their loose discipline, their spirit of factionalism and groupism, and to set up a party on a sound Marxist-Leninist organizational basis. Sound organization was considered as the principal means of making the Party indestructible and of ensuring the application of its political line.

The first task assigned to the leaders of the Communist Groups was to turn all the links they had with their members over to the Provisional Central Committee. Thenceforth, the communists were obliged to carry out only the organizational norms defined by the Meeting and the Central Committee based on the principle of democratic centralism which is the fundamental organizational principle of a Marxist-Leninist party.

Directives were issued to replace, as soon as possible, the old, narrow cells of two or

three persons with new cells. These would include the former members of the groups after their ranks had been purged of persons who had shown pronounced trends of sectarianism, opportunism and groupism. Besides the cells, Regional Party Committees would be set up. Strong ties should exist between the committees and cells. The Meeting demanded that the cells show more initiative, merge with the broad masses of towns and countryside and that the committees continually assist them and supervise their activities.

At the same time it was deemed necessary to introduce new blood to increase the ranks of the Party with new members, with resolute fighters, workers and poor peasants, eliminating fear and sectarianism in admitting them to membership.

For admission to membership in the Party the meeting approved V. I. Lenin's familiar formula which he put in these terms:

«Any one can become a member of the Party if he accepts the program of the Party, takes part in a Party organization (cell) and pays his dues.»¹⁾

Special attention was attached to the unity and discipline of the Party:

«Without steel-like party discipline and unity, our Party which has a great

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups. Vol. I, p. 20.

number of enemies, will not be able to lead the struggle with success.»¹⁾

To ensure sound unity and strict discipline the communists were called upon to keep their eyes open and not tolerate the infiltration into the Party ranks of careerist, trouble-making elements of a pronounced petty bourgeois spirit who can not accept discipline and who create favorable ground for anti-Party activity. At the same time, the Party organizations were charged with the task of expelling from their ranks without hesitation any one manifesting anti-Marxist, opportunist and liquidatory trends. It was stressed that nepotism, groupism, factionalism and lack of discipline had no place in the Party.

A basic problem which the meeting took up for discussion and placed on the order of the day was that of linking the Party with the masses. It was persistently demanded that the malady of groupism should be wiped out without fail.

The meeting advised the communists never to forget J. V. Stalin's words:

«If they do not detach themselves from the people, from the mother who has given them birth, the communists will be unbreakable»

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups. Vol. I, p. 22.

In order to link themselves with the broad masses of the urban and rural areas, with the youth and the women, in order to persuade them of the correctness of the Party's political line, the Meeting pointed out this road to them: to carry out militant and intensive propaganda and agitation work among all strata of the people, to carry out as many active political and combative activities as possible; to accompany the Party's work of political enlightenment and its political and fighting activity with the organization of the masses.

In order to ensure sound links with the masses, the Meeting called for a change in the work with youth and with women, for an end to sluggishness, sectarianism and other blunders the groups had committed in this regard. The Provisional Central Committee was charged with the task of setting up without delay an Organization of the Communist Youth through which all the Albanian youth would be mobilized for the anti-fascist struggle. While among women, the task was to do careful work to see that women workers were enrolled in the Party and that the female population were mobilized for the liberation struggle.

The Meeting attached special attention also to the preservation of the Party from its enemies who would do their utmost to destroy it. The Italian fascist invaders and their Albanian lackeys would launch their main attack on the Communist Party rather than on the groups. They were backed up in this by the

Trotskyites of the «Zjarri» Group and the renegates from communism. Therefore, the Meeting called on the Party members to display high vigilance, to keep Party secrets and to accustom the Party to work in complete clandestinity. In this connection the Meeting sharply condemned the views of certain opportunists and traitors among group members who held that, under torture by the police or carabinieri, a communist might confess without necessarily committing treason. These were stigmatized as views alien to the party of the proletariat which had to be eliminated mercilessly.

Demanding that the communists maintain strict secrecy, the Meeting, at the same time, drew attention to the need to understand this correctly, and not to make it a reason to limit their activity with the masses:

«Our secrecy is to safeguard the organization from the enemy, not to hide behind a screen and shut ourselves up in our own shell» 1)

The Political Line for the National-liberation War The political line of the Party was embodied in the political tasks which the Meeting of the Communist Groups worked out. The strategic aim of the Party for the historical period which the country was passing through was expressed in these terms:

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups. Principal Documents of the PLA, Vol. I, p. 21

«To fight for the national independence of the Albanian people and for the People's Democratic Government in an Albania free from fascism.»¹⁾

This strategic objective was dictated by the basic antagonistic contradiction existing at the time in Albania which demanded an urgent solution in order to clear the way for national, social, economic and cultural development, namely, the contradiction between the people and the fascist invaders. Another contradiction existed also between the masses of the people and the exploiting classes but at that time this was of second importance. Under the concrete conditions, this contradiction could not be solved apart from the primary antagonistic contradiction because the landlords, chieftains and the reactionary bourgeoisie constituted the social support of the invaders in our country. The interests of the principal exploiting classes of the country were closely bound to those of the fascist invaders. Therefore, the attainment of the strategic objective of the Party could not but affect the interests of these classes, of these tools of the foreign enslavers as well.

The Italian fascists were the plenipotentiary rulers in Albania and, as a consequence, they were also the **principal enemies** of the Albanian people at the time. Further, all those

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups, Vol. I, pp. 22-23.

who had sided with the invaders and had served them to oppress the Albanian people were stigmatized as traitors, as tools of fascism, and war was declared against them, the same as against the invaders.

The principal force and those most interested in attaining this strategic objective, were the workers and peasants who bore the main brunt of the fascist oppression. Therefore, the Party set as one of its most important tasks:

«to set up military units and spread them among the masses of workers in urban and rural areas»¹⁾

The non-worker patriotic strata were also interested in ensuring national independence. Therefore, the Party could not afford to neglect these strata and it set down the rule of carrying on ceaseless work in order to mobilize them in the national-liberation movement.

**«...Unite with all the nationalists²⁾
who really want a free Albania, with**

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups. Principal Documents of the PLA, Vol. I, p. 22.

2) **Nationalist** was the usual name for the patriots who loved their country and wanted its liberation

all the honest Albanians who want to fight against fascism» 1).

With this was launched the idea of the **National-liberation Front**, an idea which would be more thoroughly worked out in a more definite and concrete form during the development of the war.

Anticipating that the fascist invaders and local reaction would resort to all means and methods to prevent the militant unity of the Albanian people, the Meeting of the Communist Groups called for the exposure and defeat of all the manoeuvres of the Italian fascists and of the Quisling government to disrupt the national-liberation front of the Albanian people.

When the Communist Party of Albania was founded, there was not a single anti-fascist political party which could represent the interests of the bourgeoisie or of any other

from the foreign yoke but nurtured no ulterior revolutionary aims. But the name of **nationalist** was also appropriated by the pseudo-patriots from the ranks of landlords, chieftains and the reactionary bourgeoisie. Therefore, in order to draw a line between the reactionary and traitorous elements and the real patriots, the latter were referred to as «honest nationalists» or «patriotic nationalists.

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups. Principal Documents of the PLA, Vol. I, p. 12.

class or stratum of the population. Nevertheless, in principle, the Meeting was in favor of the Communist Party's collaboration with other anti-fascist political parties in matters pertaining to the organization of the war against the invaders, if such parties were to be formed.

For the liberation of the country and the establishment of a People's Democracy in Albania, the Meeting reached the conclusion that the only real and sure path to follow under the existing circumstances was that of an **armed uprising** against fascism. It decided:

«...to prepare the people politically and militarily to engage in a general armed uprising, embracing all the patriotic and anti-fascist forces in the struggle». ¹⁾

While choosing the general armed struggle as the principal form, the Party did not neglect the other forms of struggle like strikes, anti-fascist demonstrations, sabotage, oral and written exposure of the enemies and so on. But the objective of all these activities was to prepare the people for a general armed uprising.

The organization of an armed uprising required, of course, the organization of the

1) Resolution of the Meeting of the Communist Groups. Principal Documents of the PLA, Vol. I, p. 23.

armed forces, of the National-liberation Army. The Meeting stressed that without setting up a real people's Army capable of dealing ceaseless blows at the enemy, of smashing their military and political apparatus, there could be no question of an armed uprising, no question of liberating the country, of winning national independence or of establishing a People's Democratic Government.

Under conditions of the occupation of Albania and of the Second World War, it was impossible for the armed uprising to break out immediately, for the People's Revolutionary Army to be created all at once. The development of the armed uprising and the creation of the National-liberation Army was a whole process in itself. This idea was clearly reflected in one of the political tasks defined by the Meeting for the organizing of the partisan movement, the setting up of guerrilla units and bands as the framework of the future People's Army and as a tangible basis for the preparation of the general uprising.

In line with its strategic objective and the conditions created in the international situation as a result of the entry of the Soviet Union into the Second World War, the Communist Party of Albania also designated the external allies of the Albanian people as well as their attitude towards these allies.

On an international scale, the Albanian National-liberation War was an integral part of the anti-fascist struggle the world over. In

their struggle the Albanian people should align themselves with the most active participants of the great anti-fascist coalition.

In this connection, the Meeting of the Communist Groups considered the Soviet Union, Great Britain, the United States of America and all the enslaved people who fought against the common enemy — the German, Italian and Japanese fascists, — as the allies of the Albanian people. It set the task of **linking the Albanian National-liberation War with the Great Anti-fascist World War.**

The Party made a very correct assessment of the alliance of the Soviet Union with Great Britain and the USA as a military alliance dictated by the circumstances in order to save the world from the menace of fascist bondage. At the same time, it made different assessments of these allies and maintained a differentiated stand towards them.

The Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania issued a call to the Albanian people, who should link their National-liberation War closely with the heroic war of the Soviet Union which stood at the forefront of battle against fascism ¹⁾

The Communist Party of Albania considered the Soviet Union as the loyal and sincere ally of the Albanian people which would also

1) The first proclamation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania. Principal Documents of the PLA, vol. I, p. 27.

help them to establish and consolidate People's Power in Albania. Whereas Great Britain and the USA were only temporary allies in the war against the fascist States.

The Meeting of the Communist Groups called to found the party, assigned the task of «developing love for the Soviet Union» by popularizing its role as a vanguard fighter against fascism and, at the same time, its major achievements in socialist construction.

It issued instruction also «to promote love and close militant collaboration between the Albanian people and the Balkan peoples, particularly, the Serbian, Greek, Montenegrin and Macedonian peoples» who had risen in the anti-fascist liberation struggle.

Finally, the Meeting expressed its confidence that the newly-set up Communist Party would soon put an end to the sickly state in the communist movement in Albania, that it would take the lead in battle and that it would become capable of accomplishing its great historic task as leader of the Albanian people for their national liberation and social emancipation.

The historic significance of the Meeting of the Communist Groups lies in that that it founded the Communist Party of Albania as a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party of the working class, a party of the new type.

It armed the Party with a clear political program that responded to the demands and aspirations of the broad masses of people, of

the Fatherland and of socialism. This program was far from complete and the tasks had not been worked out in detail, for such a thing required a much wider experience of the revolutionary work and struggle of the Party and of the masses. But this program was built on Marxist-Leninist scientific foundations.

The results of the Meeting mark the triumph of Marxism-Leninism over Trotskyism and opportunism in the workers' and communist movement in Albania.

In its primary capacity as a representative of the interests of the working class, the Communist Party of Albania assumed the responsibility of defending, at the same time, the interests of all the laboring masses, of the enslaved people of Albania. Therefore, the founding of the Party was a major victory of the Albanian people as a whole.

For all these reasons, the Meeting of the Communist Groups had the significance of a Constituent Congress.

