

Speech Delivered on Independence Day and on the Arrival of the Democratic Government in Tirana, November 28, 1944

From Selected Works Volume I, 8 Nëntori Publishing House, Tirana, Albania, 1974, pp 399-40.
First published in the Bulletin of the National Liberation War, N° 52, November 30, 1944.

People of Albania,

On a memorable day such as this, in 1912, after a long period of bondage, independent Albania was born. When our country was menaced from all sides by foreign enemies, when new chains of slavery were being forged for our people, old Ismail Qemali (1) with a handful of valiant patriots hoisted the banner of freedom in Vlora, and the Albanian people paused for breath. We emerged victorious, but new cruel waves dashed over our poverty-stricken people, and that banner of freedom was violated. It was misused and became an object of barter for the satraps of past regimes; it was used to hide the shameful deeds and robbery perpetrated upon our people. But the banner of the people, the banner of Ismail Qemali, remained unsullied in the hearts of Albanian patriots; that banner was raised high, held aloft by the steel hands of the people's fighters, and passed through storms and tempests, always defiant and unbowed, the symbol of freedom and independence.

Today, after so much heroic fighting against fascism, the red banner of Vlora, dyed with the blood of the people's heroes fallen in this anti-fascist war, flies proudly in the skies of free Albania. Five years have passed since the beginning of the cruel fascist slavery, and five times over on each November 28 the blood of the heroic sons of the people, who faced the bayonets of the occupiers and traitors, has flowed in the streets of Albanian cities. The Day of the Flag has become doubly sacred, the day of the independence and the union of the Albanian people.

On April 7 1939 we fell into bondage, into heavy servitude, when fascism, the greatest enemy of our people and of all mankind, invaded our country. The great war was in the making, the great slaughter was being prepared by Hitler and Mussolini. We paid the first toll. The international outlook was gloomy. Europe was arming at a feverish pace, and not a single voice was raised in our defence save the cries of our people betrayed by the government of the time, crying out for weapons to fight the Italians. The betrayal was complete. The intriguing politicians, the speculators were riding high. They extended their hands to the occupiers who made common cause with them in order to suppress the people, to make them slaves, fodder for their guns. The fascists and the traitors worked systematically to quell any resistance, to smother all patriotic feeling, to trample underfoot the honour of our country, to obliterate our customs and language, and to colonize Albania, so that the Italians could strike out from our country at our neighbours and at the Soviet Union. But amidst the black terror, the great resistance was born among our people, who rose to their feet to win back the freedom which had been stolen from them. Barbarous fascism, armed to the teeth with the most modern weapons and aided by the traitors, came up against our brave fighters who had freedom in their hearts, their iron will, and infinite self-sacrifice. The sons of the people, who felt the agonies of their homeland and who bore on their shoulders the sufferings, the hardships and the sorrows of an entire people, stood up to fight. Many of those who, in the first hours of the war, fell martyrs for this people whom they loved so much, fell with a song on their lips, happy because they knew what they were fighting for, and that with their life's blood they would raise a new Albania. This was the battle cry and the people's call to arms sounded by the vanguard; it told them that the country was threatened with death, that they must take up arms and, with merciless and unceasing war, liberate the homeland. The Albanian people heard the call of their sons; the blood flowing in the streets of towns and villages was their own blood, and so the people took up arms.

Our glorious National Liberation War began. It was an unequal war, we were unarmed, barefoot, and empty-bellied, but we were strong, for we were fighting for a great cause, fighting for the liberation of the people, to give them a happy life and to take our revenge on the enemy who sought

to drown us in blood. We were a small people face to face with a huge beast; but we were strong, for in our hearts we nurtured a deep hatred for those who had invaded our homes and robbed us of our possessions. We took up arms and threw ourselves into the fight, certain of victory, because justice was on our side, and because in this war we were not alone. The whole of the progressive and anti-fascist world, united in a solid front, was at war against the same enemies, the enemies of mankind: Nazism and fascism.

People of Albania,

Three years of armed struggle: glorious pages in the history of our country, written with the precious blood of the sons and daughters of the Albanian people. Our national liberation movement grew and gathered strength in a fierce armed struggle, in a political struggle. Our enemies were strong and cunning, they resorted to terror and demagoguery and exerted all their efforts to crush our resistance. The traitors to the country, Mustafa Kruja, Mehdi Frashëri, Ali Këlcyra, Mithat Frashëri, Abaz Kupi, Shefqet Vërlaci and all the other quislings used every tactic to divide our people; their demagoguery was powerful, and at the beginning a section of the people was duped to some extent by these bandits, who were always the short-sighted instruments of our internal and external enemies. The "Balli Kombëtar," "Legaliteti" and all the other terrorist organizations became active weapons of the occupiers. With extraordinary ferocity, together with the Germans, they hurled themselves upon the people, killing and cutting down innocent people en masse, women, old folk and children, while they looted and raped. These murderers hurled fire and venom upon our national liberation movement, upon our army, but our movement was undamaged, because it had sound foundations; because it was a people's movement, a progressive, democratic movement. Around our National Liberation Front rallied the honest people, the working people, the people who earned their bread with their own sweat, and not with intrigues and treachery. Our National Liberation Front rallied all the democratic elements, without discrimination as to political or religious tendencies, and became the sound and proper body to carry out this difficult and sacred mission. Our National Liberation Army, which grew and gathered strength in bloody battles, was the army of the people, where the peasants, workers and intellectuals, united as one, fought for a common goal, for a free Albania, for an independent Albania, for people's democracy. After three years of heroic efforts, after so much bloodshed, suffering and sacrifice, we emerged victorious, we smashed the German barbarians and their traitor lackeys.

In the course of these three years of war, our National Liberation Front became a reality; the national liberation councils were created as organs of the war and as the foundations of state power, and these, in turn, were strengthened and became the true democratic state power of the people. This new people's power overthrew the old power, which had been the blind tool of the occupiers and the traitors. To create the Front and the state power, thousands of sons of Albania fell, fighting selflessly, convinced of our people's happy future. Our movement, with its correct political platform, opened broad vistas to the people and showed them the road to victory. Our national liberation movement had as its goal the unification of the whole Albanian people; by shedding its blood, it tried to make the misguided understand that the road they were following was harming our homeland. The Anti-fascist National Liberation Committee and the Presidium of the Anti-fascist Council of Albania, in the call they sent out to those who still remained in the ranks of the enemy, gave still another vivid proof of the aims of our movement.

After three years of heroic efforts, after so much bloodshed, we emerged victorious. The bloodthirsty German enemy has been driven from almost all our country, (2) the reactionary bands who committed fratricide have been smashed, and today the 28th of November is being celebrated with indescribable enthusiasm by the Albanian people, who have won their freedom with their blood. Today, to Tirana, liberated after fierce fighting from street to street and from house to house, today to the capital of free, democratic Albania, and to the midst of those heroic people who stood

unflinching in the vanguard of our war, who were undaunted by the massacres perpetrated by the Germans and the traitors, which only strengthened their resolve, came the Democratic Government of Albania.

People of Albania,

Our victorious war raised high the prestige of our country and made the name of Albania and of the Albanians honoured in the progressive world. Thanks to that struggle, we are spoken of with respect, for we stood and shall stand loyal to the great alliance of the anti-fascist bloc and have poured out our blood in torrents beside our allies in the war to save mankind from the clutches of German Nazism.

Our heroic war was closely linked with that of our great allies, the Soviet Union, Britain and America, and with the war of the enslaved nations. In our struggle we had unshaken faith in victory, for we had the great support of the Anglo-Soviet-American alliance. When the glorious Red Army, led by the great strategist of our time, Marshal Stalin, was ruthlessly crushing the Hitlerite hordes, liberating its territories and triumphantly marching towards the West for the decisive attack on Hitler's last citadel, our people's fighting strength was refreshed and multiplied, and their energy and confidence increased. The brilliant victories of the Red Army were also our victories, and the victories of the entire world, because they were the principal factor in the destruction of Nazism. Thanks to these victories, the national liberation wars of the enslaved peoples grew stronger; these victories of the Red Army contributed to the arrival of this day which we are now celebrating so wonderfully.

Our nation, small but unbroken, expresses its boundless gratitude to the heroic peoples of the Soviet Union and to the glorious Red Army. In this great war, Britain and the United States did not yield to German Nazism; they fought and are fighting bravely for the common cause. Their land, air and sea war, which is doing so much damage to the German war machine, is an invaluable aid for our people. (3) The opening of the second front and the smashing of the German resistance in France hasten the final victory.

In their National Liberation War, our people have had the support of the heroic struggle of the Yugoslav peoples. Our neighbours and brothers, from the very first days they were occupied, threw themselves into a resolute liberation struggle. Our army and that of Yugoslavia are shedding their blood side by side on the fields of Kosova and Metohia: our soldiers and the Yugoslav soldiers bind each other's wounds suffered in fierce battles against the same enemy, and our friendship is being consecrated in the mingling of their blood; our brigades, which have been ordered not to let a single German escape alive from our country, are crossing into Montenegro, (4) where together with the Yugoslav brigades, they will put an end to the German resistance in those areas. The bonds of friendship between our people and the peoples of Yugoslavia are bonds of blood and hardships faced together. On this great festive day for our country, we send our greetings to the fraternal peoples of Yugoslavia.

We have fought and bled together with the neighbouring Greek people. We have bandaged each other's wounds in this common anti-fascist war, and it is our desire to be always on good terms with this generous people. With regret, we observe that the chauvinist and reactionary bands of Zervas (5) are martyring the Albanian minority, robbing them of their possessions and hounding them out of their territory. Zervas elements are crossing the border on the sly to kill or wound our partisans. We will never tolerate such acts in our country. The Greek Prime Minister, Papandreou, has presented claims to annex our regions of Gjirokastra and Korça, or as it pleases him to call them, Northern Epirus. Such claims, naturally, do not make for good relations with our Southern neighbours. Our borders are indisputable, because within them there is nothing but our land, the

land bequeathed to us by our forefathers, land on which our blood has been shed. No one will dare to touch them; we shall know how to defend them if they do.

Our national liberation movement has given the Greek minority in Albania equal rights with the Albanian people. The Democratic Government of Albania will guarantee the Greek minority in our country the freedom, and the democratic and national rights, for which their sons fought heroically in the national liberation brigades.

People of Albania,

Today another page is being opened in our history, a page which it is in our power to write, and which we shall make as glorious as our war against the occupiers: this is the battle to reconstruct Albania, restore the economy, raise the culture and education of our people, and raise their social, economic and political level. At the critical moment, our movement undertook that gigantic and unequal war and emerged victorious because our people were united as one around the National Liberation Front. Our national liberation movement will undertake this second struggle too, and will emerge victorious, because that is the dying wish of those who fell on the field of honour, because that is the entire life of the people and their future. The German Nazis and the traitors have sown disaster and sorrow in our country, entire regions have been burned, the fields have been desolated, the economy of our country has been ruined, thousands of families are without shelter and without food, schools need to be opened and the people's health must be protected. We shall accomplish all these important tasks if we strengthen our state power and bring into it those who deeply feel the sufferings of the people. Therefore, the task before us is to put everything we have into our state power to make it strong, and to mobilize all the people around it so that it can accomplish these vital tasks. We must strengthen our National Liberation Front, and this, in turn, should rally round itself the entire people, whom it should nurture with our correct policy, link closely with the state power, and make conscious of the tasks ahead of them. Here too, we must understand, as we did in the war with guns, that in order to carry out these tasks, in order to guarantee the people a happier and more prosperous life, it is vital for the entire people to become involved in this great undertaking. No honest Albanian should remain outside the Front, no energy should be wasted. On the occasion of the 28th of November, on the occasion of the Liberation of Tirana, the Presidium of the Anti-fascist National Liberation Council grants a general amnesty to all the members of the "Balli Kombëtar," "Legaliteti" and other organizations which collaborated with the invader. Excluded from this amnesty are the war criminals, all those who killed, burned, raped, or looted the wealth of the people. This is an additional proof of the lofty aims of the national liberation movement, the movement which fought and will fight for the people, and which has the greatest justice as its principle.

Let the whole of Albania become a construction site and let old and young understand that they are not working for foreigners, but working to build their own country. For the country for which we did not spare our lives, neither should we spare our sweat or toil. We must exert all our energies so that our army, the major factor in these victories, will be strengthened and become a modern army in the true sense of the word. It must be the true defender of the people and of their state power. In order to fulfil this main duty, it is necessary to make it a politically conscious army, for only thus will it be in a position to finish the war with the greatest success and become the living defender of the interests of the people.

People of Albania,

You must gather the fruits of your heroic war yourselves, because they belong to you, and you have paid for them in blood, so that they will not be snatched from you and stolen by thieves, speculators, intriguers, and tricky politicians, by those parasites who used to live on your backs. We

must close our ranks more tightly than ever, all of us must rally round the state power, round the Front, round the Democratic Government, and thus march together towards our desired objectives, the improvement of the social and economic life of our country.

Long live free democratic Albania!

Long live the Albanian people!

Long live the National Liberation Army!

Long live our great allies: Britain, the Soviet Union and America!

Long live the brotherhood of the freedom-loving Balkan peoples!

Long live the heroic people of Tirana!

Notes

1. Ismail Qemali (born in 1844), diplomat, politician, patriot and undaunted fighter for the freedom of Albania. On November 28 1912 he hoisted the flag of independence in Vlora and led the first Albanian government. He was poisoned by the Italian imperialists in 1919. People's Hero.
2. Shkodra, town in Northwest Albania, was liberated a day later, on November 29, 1944, and this date marked the complete liberation of Albania.
3. Despite the attempts made by the British and US governments to sabotage our National Liberation War, the British and US armies fighting against fascism and nazism, despite the ends pursued by their governments, objectively accelerated the victory of our people.
4. Immediately after the liberation of Albania, upon decision of the CC of the CPA and on order of the Commander-in chief, Comrade Enver Hoxha, the 5th and 6th divisions of the NLA of Albania followed the Hitlerite troops into Yugoslavia. In December 1944 and January-February 1945, the Albanian fighters, together with detachments of the NLA of Yugoslavia, liberated Montenegro, Sandjak and the southern part of Bosnia and Hercegovina.
5. During the Second World War, he was a tool in the hands of British imperialism, a rabid chauvinist.