

PROFOUND MARXIST-LENINIST ANALYSES  
OF THE SITUATION OF CLASSES AND SOCIAL STRATA,  
THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INFLUENCES  
WITHIN ALBANIAN SOCIETY DURING THE YEARS  
OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION WAR

*From the book «Laying the Foundations of the New Albania» (Memoirs and Historical Notes)*

In the many centuries of the history of Albania, our people's state power and the monolithic unity of our people, embodied in the organization of the Democratic Front, are two of the greatest and most brilliant achievements, two of the most monumental works of the epoch of the Party.

These two immortal monumental works, like the Party itself, which was and remains for ever their powerful brain and heart, were not born in marble halls, were not the product of «great minds», lolling in the easy chairs of cafés or parliamentary seats. No, they were born from the barrel of the partisan rifle, in the fire of the war for freedom, were nurtured in the bosom of the people, and the humble homes of the people became their place of residence.

Today, looking back over more than four decades, we Albanian communists feel proud that ever since the days of their creation, the Democratic Front of Albania and our people's state power, under the leadership of our glorious Party, have performed their tasks and mission for the people and the Homeland with honour, have been tempered in the sternest battles and tests, have withstood and defeated the plans of all internal and external enemies and have been turned into impregnable fortresses of triumphant socialism and the fine new life which is flourishing in Albania.

Their honour and glory will be raised higher and higher in the future, because the blood of 28,000 of the finest sons and daughters

of this land<sup>1</sup> has been poured in foundations of the Front and our people's power, because they have been set up, raised and cemented with sweat, toil, countless efforts and sacrifices by our people and our Party. They have been and will remain for all time the inviolable creation of the people, defending and expressing their lofty aspirations, and the Marxist-Leninist line and ideology of our Party of Labour will always inspire them and pervade them like a red thread.

As to how we managed to create and build these immortal works, that is a whole history. Many documents of that time, besides providing vivid evidence of our work and struggle for the creation of the Front and the state power, also, comprise, to some degree, the first written history of the process of their birth and construction. Later, in the years of Liberation, we have written and spoken again and again about them and about that whole glorious period of our history, when the people, enlightened and led by the Party, succeeded in liberating the Homeland from the chains of foreigners and themselves from any kind of class oppression and exploitation.

These two colossal achievements of ours will continue to exist and function through the ages, but the earliest times, the moments when we laid the foundations, when in the heat of the war we created the National Liberation Front and our people's state power, shall never be forgotten. We have looked back over that unforgettable period again and again, not from nostalgia, but in order to illuminate the problem from all aspects and to make as clear and concrete as possible to the younger generations how we, their parents, managed to overthrow the old and set up the new.

This is the purpose of these notes of mine, written at various times in the form of reminiscences about historical events, which I am now handing over for publication.

On the eve of the 40th anniversary of the Liberation of the Homeland and the triumph of the people's revolution, they are intended both to pay great homage to the outstanding deed of our Party and people in the years of the Anti-fascist National Liberation War and to refresh the memory of the past, which has always been the foundation of the future which it has always served and illuminated.

The emergence of the Communist Party of Albania on November 8, 1941 as a powerful current enlivened the energies of the Albanian people, roused their hopes in the future and terrified the enemy.

This was a decisive event, a most important act, because for the

first time in the many centuries of the history of the Albanian people the Party of the working class, the only Party which, having the revolutionary ideology as its guide, would lead the people in the struggle and to victory, had placed itself at the head of the people.

This historic moment was very quickly reflected in the struggle of the Albanian people, which grew steadily stronger, becoming ever better organized.

With joy and enthusiasm we communists welcomed this great victory of which we had dreamed and for which we had struggled for a long time. Now we had the Party which was to guide all our efforts, which would teach and educate us, would lead us in the struggle for the liberation of the Homeland and, later, towards the realization of our ultimate ideal — communism.

The newly formed Party was faced with many great tasks.

Linking up with the people, acquainting the masses with the program and aim of the Party, the mobilization and organization of the masses in the life-and-death struggle with the fascist occupiers and local traitors was one of these tasks, indeed, one of the main and most important tasks. Without the people, without the masses, a communist party, whether newly formed or with a long period of existence and activity, can achieve nothing.

We, Albanian communists, understood this axiom of Marxism-Leninism. What made our work difficult was the fact that in the grave conditions of the occupation and terror we had to come out before the people, to win them to our cause, to organize and lead them at a time when we also had to organize ourselves, to build and temper the Party and to prove it in struggle as a capable, reliable and irreplaceable leading force.

This was something unprecedented in history, but as you might say, this was our «fate». Had we waited until the Party was built and strengthened, until it extended to all parts of the country, had we worked only within the Party and then addressed ourselves to the people with our program for struggle, this would have been catastrophic, not only for the Party, but also for the fate of the people and Homeland. Therefore, conscious of the situation through which we were passing and the difficulties which we had, we did not wait. We went into action at once, facing up to all the tasks at the same time, including that of making the people conscious and uniting them in that fighting union which was soon to take the name of the Anti-fascist National Liberation Front of Albania.

Hence, the formation of the Party found us in a situation when all the objective and subjective possibilities for the formation of the Anti-fascist Front were in existence. What was most important was

<sup>1</sup> As one of the more active participants of the world anti-fascist coalition, Albania occupies one of the first places in regard to human and material losses during the Second World War, compared with the size of its territory and its population.



the fact that in the ranks of the communists and cadres of our newly formed Party, as a result of the earlier work and the analyses made at the Founding Meeting of the Party, the conviction was being implanted that our Party could and must create the Anti-fascist Front of the Albanian people through direct concrete work with the masses, without waiting for and without seeking agreements and machinations with the self-styled leaders, that is, as a Front formed from below.

As is known, in the Resolution which the Founding Meeting of the Party adopted, this unity was called «the fighting unity between the working masses of town and countryside», and this was nothing but the idea of the Anti-fascist National Liberation Front of the Albanian people. Likewise, the first document of our Party, which came out simultaneously with the Resolution, was the first open militant Appeal which our Party addressed to the people, making its program clear to them and inviting them to unite in the struggle for freedom and independence!

Now the Party, with organized and multiplied forces, with its clear militant program, was to intensify and further extend the work to build up that powerful fortress of the united people against the strength and vitality of which the nazi-fascist legions would smash their heads and the efforts and plans of internal and external reaction would be thwarted.

This unity of the masses, under the leadership and banner of the Party, would make possible the outbreak and successful accomplishment of the revolution, for which the conditions existed in Albania.

The feudal regime of Zog, with its oppression, poverty, hunger, imprisonments and thefts, had angered, enraged and filled the people with hatred for that regime, bringing them to the point of revolt. Precisely when this revolt and anger of the masses was seething, the occupation of the country prepared by Zog and the feudal bourgeoisie filled the cup to overflowing. Now the hatred of the people and the antagonistic struggle between oppressors and oppressed reached its culmination. Thus, the occupation of Albania by Italian fascism had marked the beginning of a change of national importance. This situation had to be understood and handled correctly, because it was pregnant with revolution. The Albanian communists and their Party understood this state of affairs precisely and decided to emerge as masters of the situation and become the leaders of the revolution. Hence, the grave, difficult, but glorious historic task devolved on our Communist Party to raise the people in revolution, lead them in struggle for the liberation of the Homeland and take them and the working class, of which it was the vanguard, to victory.

The National Liberation War, which the Party undertook to lead, had to have clear aims, a program acceptable to our people, a program which would mobilize and enliven healthy energies. The people, and first of all, the working class and the peasantry had to know and understand why they were fighting and what the victory would bring them. The bitter past, when the people's wars and uprisings were bloodily suppressed by the feudal lords, aghas and usurers, was fresh in their memory. The people could not be aroused to fight and shed their blood for their age-old oppressors. The Communist Party of Albania was a guarantee that the past would never again be repeated, but this had to be proved in practice with a program, with action, with fighting and with policy.

Through its program, the Party had to make clear to the people that this would be a great, fierce, complicated and difficult war. Therefore, great political and military organization was necessary. All this the Party made clear to the people and it told them (just as it demonstrated in deeds) that the communists would be in the forefront of the fight, would be the first to hurl themselves into the flames, would give their lives fighting, but the war could not be waged only by them, without the masses.

This resulted from the idea that the communists could not fight and triumph without the people. The people make the revolution.

In all this activity, the question of alliances and the definition of allies would be decisive. The leading role of the working class, on the basis of our main principles, and the alliance of the working class with the friendly class — the peasantry, especially with the poor peasants with no land or little land, is known. Precisely this alliance, to which we devoted the greatest importance and attention, was to be the key to the victory in our National Liberation War.

However, we also knew the other side of it: this alliance of the working class with the peasantry, under the leadership of the working class, which was to become the pivot of the unification of other patriotic and progressive strata, had to be created in accord with our concrete conditions and situation, and to this end, our Party had to make analyses not only of the political-economic situation of classes and strata, but also of the specific, special links of groups and clans, of the positive and negative influences, old and new, within Albanian society.

We recognized the truth that the Albanian working class was still few in numbers and without great experience in the class struggle, but right from the outset we were convinced that this working class was and would be the first to embrace the call and program of the Party and would play, just as it did, the great role which belonged to it in the popular revolution as the vanguard class of the society. Its

most faithful ally undoubtedly would be the peasantry which not only suffered under a mediaeval exploitation, but had always been the source of liberation and social struggles in the past. The brilliant patriotic and democratic traditions of our peasantry, now kindled to a fierce blaze by the intolerable state of occupation, were the most powerful argument, also, for the necessity and possibility of the creation of the alliance between the working class and peasantry and to refute those reactionary views which presented the peasantry as an ignorant, down-trodden mob, useless and unreliable in war. The fact that in the conditions of our country, this class would be the greatest source and the broadest base of manpower for the National Liberation War made our work to win the support of the peasantry for the program of the Party even more necessary.

So, while we were conscious that the working class and the peasantry would constitute the main basis of the fighting unity of the people, at the same time, we knew that the past had left its mark on our society, blemishes which were obstacles to unity and made the creation of alliances difficult. Religion had done its work and continued to poison the minds and hearts of individuals. The clergy, the beys and bayraktars<sup>1</sup> had striven not only to exploit but also to «subdue» and «tame» our brave and indomitable people, whom the regimes of the past had kept in cultural and political obscurantism.

True, when the country was occupied there were no parties, either reactionary or progressive, leftist, etc., but the factors which I listed above, and many others like these, operated as if there were innumerable «parties» which shrivelled the energies of the people and kept them divided in order to be enslaved and exploited more completely.

Another danger which threatened the struggle and fighting alliance of the people was that section of political emigrants, sons and representatives of oppressing and exploiting classes who, like scores of revolutionary patriots and democrats, had gone abroad when Zog came to power,<sup>2</sup> but unlike the true patriots and democrats, had never been linked with the troubles of the Homeland and the people. They remained abroad for 15 years and the majority of them degenerated completely politically, becoming the trusted men, allies and agents of that foreign power which fed and paid them. They posed as anti-

Zogites, but were also anti-communists, and they returned to Albania together with the Italians in 1939. Their pretensions that they «should govern the country» were categorical. They were completely divorced from the life, opinions and aspirations of the people. They thought that the outdated ideas of corrupted bourgeois democracy, which they nurtured, were appropriate to the time and applicable to the country. And when? After the world had undergone such great changes. They had returned to Albania as «the cream of Albanian nationalism», and, regardless of the fact that many of them received fat salaries from the occupiers and had completely entered their service, they maintained contacts with those «anti-fascist and anti-Zogite» elements who thought that these emigrants, who returned from abroad, were politically as they were 15 years earlier(!) The danger which these individuals posed to the National Liberation War became clearer later, when they created the traitor organization Balli Kombëtar, which, to the very end, assisted the fascist and nazi occupiers with demagoguery and arms against the Anti-fascist National Liberation Front and its leadership, the Communist Party of Albania.

Being rabid anti-communists, they in no way welcomed the formation of the Communist Party of Albania and its program proclaimed in the Resolution.

These elements, together with the fascists, called the Communist Party of Albania «a party of foreigners and not of Albanians», «a party of Slavs, Russians, etc., and not of Albanians». They described the National Liberation War as «a crazy war, without prospects and harmful to Albania». They said that the leaders of the Communist Party of Albania and the Anti-fascist War were «hot-headed youths who do not know how to conduct politics», and spread a thousand other slanderous rumours.

This was the situation at that time amongst this collection of individuals, a situation which the Communist Party of Albania and its leadership studied many times both during 1942 and later.

During this period the Party also had to carry out a similar study in regard to religious beliefs in Albania. We analysed the religious beliefs in two directions: the concrete influence of religion among the broad masses of the people, and the danger from the religious hierarchy. I shall not go into these analyses at length, but it is necessary to define certain main features on which the Central Committee of the CPA based itself in its work with the masses immediately after the founding of the Party and through the whole period of the war.

It is known that there were three religious beliefs in our country: the Moslem faith, which was the most widespread, the Orthodox Christian faith, which ranked second, and the Roman Catholic faith, less widespread, was centered in Shkodra and extended to the high-

<sup>1</sup> Representatives of the gentry in the mountainous areas, especially in North Albania.

<sup>2</sup> After the triumph of the June 1924 Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution, Ahmet Zog, who had taken refuge in Yugoslavia, in December 1924 suppressed the June Revolution and established his reactionary regime with the encouragement and assistance of the reactionary Serbian government and the support of its troops as well as of internal Albanian feudal reaction.



lands of Shkodra, to Lezha and down to Durrës, where there was a bishopric. In Albania there were also some Moslem believers included in minor sects, without influence among the people, with the exception of the Bektashi sect.

In regard to the clergy, their influence was as follows: The Catholic priests, irrespective of their various "orders", such as Jesuits, Franciscans, etc., were men without a homeland who depended on the Vatican even for the smallest thing. In Albania, as in other countries of the Catholic world, the Catholic Church had the same pyramid organization, the same organization of churches, parishes, monasteries, religious or state schools, the same rites and liturgy, the same method and style of work, in general. Their incomes, their salaries and everything else came from their plunder of the believers in the forms of donations, or even through compelling their believers to bequeath their liquid and fixed assets to the Church.

All the clergymen of the Catholic Church, from the upper one down to the deacons and parish priests, were learned people who had gone through theological schools with iron discipline, had learned the methods and tricks of suppressing the will of people through the fear of God, Christ and the apostles. The Catholic believers had to obey the Church *perinde ac cadaver*\*. The spider's web had entangled the believers in the laws of the church, the canons and laws of the reactionary bourgeoisie, and these were all a collection of chains which bound and oppressed the believers. The Catholic Church and its clergy were extremely obscurantist and conservative, as well as adaptable and flexible when necessary, but always in alliance with the reactionary regimes like those of Prince Wied<sup>1</sup> and Ahmet Zog (indeed, they did not fail to poke their fingers into the bourgeois-democratic regime of Fan Noli), as well as with every foreign occupier of Albania, including the Austro-Hungarians, the Italian fascists and the German nazis.

Only our regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat put an end to the evil reactionary and collaborationist activity of the Catholic Church.

But let us not depart from the period that we are analysing. This was the situation in the hierarchy of the Catholic faith and its believers in this historical period. The senior priests were double agents of the Vatican and the Italian occupiers. For us, however, for the National Liberation War, there was a broad field, the people of

\* as a dead body (Latin in the original) in this context, blindly.

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm von Wied, German prince, a tool in the hands of the imperialist powers. In February 1914 the Great Powers proclaimed him "Prince of Albania". His rule lasted from March to September 1914.

the North, the Catholic laity. There were also some poor members of the lower clergy, who following in the footsteps of outstanding figures of our national cause and culture such as Budi and Bogdani, Ndre Mjeda and Shtjefën Gjegovi, might now listen to what we had to say, because they lived closer to the sufferings and problems of the people. In these directions we were to work and make progress.

The Moslem religion and its hierarchy were not a serious obstacle to the struggle against the Italian occupiers as the Catholic religion was. Even before the occupation of the country, but still more so after it, the hierarchy of the Moslem religion was weak, without any experience to worry us. The mosques existed. They had a hodja, but those who practised the religion were very few. The rites had been abandoned, no marriages were conducted according to the Shariat and everything else, such as the observance of Ramadan and the feast of Bajram had become routine customs which were practised here and there in certain regions mostly "from force of habit". The hodjas were all ignorant, none of them was able to propagate the philosophy, ethics and the morality of the Koran, and no one understood the Koran, because it was recited in a foreign language (Arabic). Although the hodjas were conservative in their customs they had neither the ability nor the political capacity to exert any influence through the Islamic thought. The broad masses of the people were virtually liberated from the bonds of religion, the development of the intellect of the Moslem believers was more extensive, and there was much greater liberalism and tolerance. Hence, the work of the Party in arousing the people to fight encountered almost no serious obstacle in this direction.

Among the Bektashi sect, also, a large proportion of the believers traditionally have displayed patriotism and have fought for the liberation of Albania.

The situation was similar with the Orthodox Christian faith, too, both in the hierarchy of the church and among the believers.

Historically, a section of the Orthodox priests, especially the simple priests in the villages and even some in the cities, those who lived close to the people, who after religious services laid aside their priest's hats to take up the hoe or some other tool to do some work, have fought and striven both to gain the independence of the Church and, especially, to introduce the Albanian language into the church services. It is self-evident that these efforts of theirs would run into opposition from the Patriarchate of Constantinople and later, especially from the reactionary Greek Church, and it was by no means rare for the latter to commit monstrous crimes against patriotic priests who loved the people, the Homeland and the Albanian language, who wanted the independence of the Albanian Church. Their

efforts and aims in these directions, in the historical context, had great value and were expressions and components of the struggle for independence which was waged in all the Albanian territories. Our people honoured and respected these martyrs, not simply of the Church but of the cause of Albania. They include Papa Kristo Negovani, Father Stath Melani, Dhimitër Misha, Papa Llambro Ballamaçi and others who, like other outstanding patriots who strove for the Albanian language and school, Naum Veqilharxhi, Petro Nini Luarasi, Koto Hoxhi, Pandeli Sotiri and tens of others, were poisoned or murdered in the most barbarous ways by the Greek Patriarchate.

The «reasons» for which the Greek clerical reaction acted in that way towards these patriots were astonishingly cynical! It murdered and eliminated them simply because these sons of Albanians proclaimed that they were Albanians, that they wanted Albanian spoken in the church just as in the homes, the streets, fields and the schools, murdered them because they defended the legitimate right of the people to their territories. In reality, however, behind the «reasons» and «religious motives» of the bishops lurked political motives and aims, the territorial ambitions of Greek chauvinists towards Albania. This anti-Albanian chauvinism was so unrestrained that it «linked» its territorial pretensions with and «based» them on the extension of the Orthodox religion! Their chauvinist blindness went so far that reactionary bishops did not want to see that the Orthodox religion extended not only to certain zones on the border of our territory with Greece (which include the villages of the Greek minority with about 20,000 inhabitants in the first years of the National Liberation War and about 50,000 inhabitants today), but this religion, like the Moslem religion, extended all over Albania, to precincts and regions of Gjirokastra, Saranda, Përmet, Korça, Vlora, Tepelena, Fier, Lushnja, Berat, Elbasan, Durrës, Tirana and so on! Precisely on the basis of this absurd logic, certain reactionary bishops of Great-Greek chauvinism pretend that 400 thousand Albanian citizens, formerly linked with the Orthodox religion, are Greeks. Hence, were the religion to be the basis for determining the national identity of a people, according to this crazy logic of the chauvinist bishops, more than half of Albania would belong to Greece(!), a thing which the Greek chauvinists, the champions of Greater Greece<sup>1</sup> have always dreamed of and demanded! Precisely in favour of these dreams of occupation and annexation they had persecuted and murdered our honoured patriots, including patriotic priests and believers who had risen, together with their brothers

<sup>1</sup> Ideological platform of the chauvinistic Greek big bourgeoisie which sought to create a great empire including a good part of the Balkan Peninsula, which was considered Greek only because it was of Christian Orthodox faith.

of the Moslem and Catholic religions, to defend the territorial integrity of Albania from the annexationist appetites of neighbouring chauvinists.

Hence, this close combination of the cause of the Church and religion with the national cause, giving priority to the latter, had brought about that not only the laity of the Orthodox faith but also most of the simple priests, were brought up and educated with the feeling of patriotism.

So, the Party had the question of religious beliefs at the centre of its attention during the whole period of the National Liberation War, but also after the war, because in order to arouse the people to fight for the liberation of the Homeland and build a new Albania we had to avoid hurting their feelings.

In regard to the intelligentsia, extensive, qualified, differentiated work at various levels had to be done. In general, the terrain of the work with the intellectuals was suitable. The exception to this were the top officials who not only accepted fascism but also secured fine material gains from it. In general, «cultured» officials of this category were corrupted by all the regimes, and were among the first who willingly enrolled in the «Albanian» fascist party set up by the occupiers.

However, generally speaking, the intelligentsia of our country was patriotic, anti-fascist, and opposed to the occupation of the country, therefore, the Party was to give great importance to this stratum of the people, too, because by means of it, the patriotism of the boys and girls would become more and more tempered and encouraged.

Such wide-ranging and detailed analyses of situations, the ratio of forces, etc., were the fruit of debates which we held in the meetings of the leadership, in meetings with comrades of the Party in the capital or from the terrain. They were a great assistance in our day-to-day and future work, because the first and indispensable thing in order to accomplish our tasks as communists, that is, as leaders of the masses, was to orientate ourselves correctly in that difficult situation of enslavement, terror, intrigues and spiritual and physical sufferings and hardships which had descended upon our people.

Thus, its unshakeable loyalty to and faith in the revolutionary theory of the proletariat, as well as its thorough knowledge of the reality of our country, were two fundamental factors which enabled our Party to determine a correct line, to give precise instructions on ideological, political and organizational matters, including building the militant unity of the masses around the program of the Party and all the other problems.

In speaking about these analyses and studies which the Party carried out and on which it relied, it should never be thought that first we waited until these were carried out in complete and final



form and then began the work with the masses, or that we charged working groups or mobilized specialists and experts to do them. No, the «specialists», the «working groups», were we ourselves, all the communists, from the rank-and-file members to the main leaders, who acquainted ourselves with and summed up the situations along with the concrete day-to-day work.

All of us, then, from the main leaders and cadres of the Party to the ordinary members, set about this great task with determination. Now, after the founding of the Party, the very situation in which we were obliged to live and fight helped us to enter more widely into contact with the working people. Almost all of us were sons and daughters of the working people, many of us were illegal and as such we spent the days and nights in the poor quarters, going from one house to the other, amongst the common folk, workers and craftsmen, some of whom were unemployed or plied their trade from their homes. Everywhere we were surrounded and protected by the love and care of the ordinary people for our fate and we felt that in essence this was an expression of the love and concern of the people for the fate of the country.

Basing ourselves on this situation, we worked and instructed all the comrades to exploit every possible opportunity, personal acquaintances and friendship, celebrations, funerals, weddings, chance or organized meetings, and, you might say, in a natural and daily conversation with the masses we propagated the line and program of the Party at every moment. And the fact is that what we said was readily accepted, because we touched on the most sensitive problem of the nation. War against the occupier, war, merciless war against the occupier and traitors! — that is what the communists and our sympathizers propagated day and night and, of course, this could not fail to warm the hearts of our people who have always distinguished themselves as great fighters for the cause of freedom.

This intensive propaganda, day by day, by word of mouth, with leaflets, communiques and appeals, was made clearer, more credible and acceptable to the people, because the communists accompanied their words with deeds. They were propagandists and fighters at the same time, they attacked fascism and were pursued by fascism. This could not fail to make a profound impression on the masses. Our comrades in the cities fought, organized actions, acts of sabotage, executed enemies, at a time when the rifle fire of guerilla units and partisan ceta was being heard increasingly everywhere.

Right from the outset our Party correctly laid down that the whole people, all social classes and strata, without distinction as to political, ideological, religious and other views, should be included in the war

for the salvation of the country. The main thing which could and must unite these forces was the stand towards the foreign occupiers, the uncompromising war against them. This was the basis on which the Anti-fascist National Liberation Front would be organized, a front in which, apart from the working masses of town and countryside, all the other forces and elements, all those who were interested in the freedom and the existence of Albania and the Albanian nation, would take part. And in this context, a major, wide-ranging job, frequently extremely complicated and wearisome, was that which we had to do with the patriotic elements or those who posed as patriots, that is, with all those who at that time were called nationalists.

The term «nationalists», as we used it in that period, must not be confounded with the meaning which this term has assumed today in political literature to denote elements with bourgeois-nationalist views, as opposed to the Marxist-Leninist principle of proletarian internationalism. The term «nationalist» was applied to those fighters who in past times had fought against foreign occupiers who aimed to eliminate us as a nation. Precisely from the word «nation», taken from the Latin language, emerged the term «nationalist» which we used during the war and is found in my writings of that period.

The truth is that this term included a wide range of people, from the elements with a patriotic past and activity to the intellectuals who were known or proclaimed themselves as people with patriotic and democratic sentiments. Thus, in a certain sense with the term «nationalist» we made a differentiation between communists, on the one hand, and other people with whom we had contacts and worked. As early as the time of the communist groups, but especially after the founding of the Party, the work with the «nationalists» was a sector in which all the communists were involved. Naturally, this was done according to the possibilities which each member had, according to his social circle of acquaintances and relatives. In the cells to which we belonged we reported on all our work, including the work with intellectuals and patriots, exchanged opinions and consulted one another about our activities. When some member encountered difficulties with the person with whom he had been appointed to work, then he handed over the job to another comrade and found the way to introduce him to that person.

The formal aspect of the work was a problem in itself: you had to be introduced to them and then to enter into their circles, to take part in the conversations which they held and to manage to understand as far as possible, for example, what political inclinations a person might have, how far you could go with him, when you should go ahead and when you should stop at general conversations in order to disguise yourself from a spy. Because we should not forget that

the regime of Zog, and subsequently the fascist regime, were regimes of spies who watched and saw with whom you associated, with whom you talked and what you talked about and who «branded» you accordingly. From this aspect at that time there had to be both a special strategy and tactics, because amongst the intellectuals, teachers, professors, merchants and nationalists, there were good people but also weak ones, as well as all kinds of rogues down to outright spies and collaborators of the enemy.

In the talks which we held with them, after we were convinced about their predisposition, we put forward our stand as communists and as a Communist Party. Our fundamental thesis was that in this grave situation for the Homeland all Albanians had a common aim — the fight against the occupiers for the liberation of Albania. In the face of this imperative duty all the differences in ideological convictions and political sympathies, religious and regional differences, had to take second place. This was the moment, we communists stressed, when we must reflect deeply on the words of the patriotic poet<sup>1</sup> that «the religion of the Albanian is Albania».

This was one of the most difficult tasks which the Party and its members, from the leadership to the individual communists, had to do. Here I am not referring to the danger that threatened us in this work, the possibility of being spied upon or betrayed, or the probability of the introduction of some agent provocateur element into our ranks. Of course, these dangers existed, but what work could the communists and honest patriots do without danger? They had taken these dangers into account since they had entered the struggle against a savage, cruel and cunning enemy.

The greatest difficulties were in another direction, in which mere bravery did not count for much, but which required tact, political acumen, cool-headedness and prudence. The Party comrades had to stand up to great tension, not only physical, but also nervous and psychological. We had to talk and quarrel for whole hours, time after time, with all kinds of blockheads who were not only unconvinced by our correct arguments which were as clear as the light of day, but also tried to convince us of the opposite with ridiculous «arguments» and pettifogging sophistry! Apart from other things, it took great patience and self-restraint to avoid telling these «patriots» bluntly, «To hell with you!». However, the work of the Party and the cause of the war demanded something else. Sometimes a comrade would come to us seething with disgust to report about a meeting which he had had and ask us to relieve him of this task and seek our approval to brand this or that person as a traitor. «No!» we would

tell him, «the day will come when the cup is filled and then we shall do this, but meanwhile, carry on with the work, refute and expose his arguments and when you are convinced that he truly does not want to fight, then we'll give him up as hopeless.»

The readers, and especially young ones, may open their eyes and ask why such niceties were necessary with these elements who should be put in their place. Of course, the moment would come when the Party and the people would also turn the rifle on all those who united with the nazi-fascists in words and deeds, but before this, efforts had to be made to turn them from the road of betrayal and involve them in the war against the occupier.

In working with the nationalists, the Party had in mind the strategic aims of the war it was leading, the major interests of the people and the Homeland. First of all, the Party proceeded from the view that the broader the mass participation was in the Popular Front, the more furiously the war would be waged and the more certain the final victory would be. Then, it must not be forgotten that many of the known nationalists of that period had, to various degrees, a certain influence in different districts and cities of the country or among the circles of the intelligentsia. The incorporation in the Front of tens and tens of outstanding patriots, known to the people for their progressive sentiments and democratic opinions and as anti-Zogite fighters, was a victory of the policy of the Party, because these people, besides their contribution, their personal abilities and capacities, possessed great authority among the people, which they put at the disposal and in the service of the National Liberation War.

The struggle of the Party to unmask such pseudo-patriots as Lumo Skëndo, Ali Këlcyra, Qazim Koculi and others, and to bring them out in their true colours, yielded similar results. Many of these individuals were neither stupid nor without influence. Some of them profited from the reputation of the families whose names they bore, some from the two or three shots they had fired in Vlora in 1920,<sup>1</sup> some others from their stands adopted in opposition to Zog or the momentary participation in the June Revolution of 1924.

It would have been political short-sightedness to have turned the rifle on all of them as early as 1941, as some might think. This would have been harmful both to the war and to the Party. This human «ore» had to undergo a process of selection and from it, apart from the filth which would be thrown aside, pure metal would emerge, and time and the war would do this sorting out. The line of the

<sup>1</sup> Pashko Vasa (1825-1892).

<sup>1</sup> Reference is to the War of Vlora of 1920 against the imperialist Italian invaders which ended with the victory of the Albanian people.



Party was correct: the patriotic elements should be brought into the war and their influence amongst the masses used for the benefit of the war; the demagogues, the disguised tools of the occupiers, should be unmasked by asking them the question: «Are you going to fight for Albania or not?» And the people would see, as they did, who were true patriots and who pseudo-patriots.

In the context of extending the work with the nationalists we devoted special attention at that time, especially, to work with the intelligentsia, aiming to make its patriotic and democratic elements participants in the war.

The Albanian intelligentsia at that time was numerically small and this was a result of the low level of economic and cultural development and the obscurantist policy of the regime of Zog. Apart from all the other evils which they perpetrated on the country, the «august» monarch and his circle did their utmost to leave Albania in darkness and ignorance, because the darkness and ignorance of the masses are the best allies of oppression and exploitation. Zog and his regime did nothing for culture, art and science, however much he, together with his degenerate and corrupt sisters, who ironically, despite their utter ignorance, took the arts, culture and sport, which virtually did not exist in Albania, under their «patronage», posed as supporters of these things.

Nevertheless, through the efforts of the people, of the sons and daughters of the people and contrary to the desire of the feudal-bourgeois regime, it was made possible to set up an education system with primary and secondary schools to teach the sons and daughters of the people, who with their unerring intuition and their broad horizon of history prepared the youth for the new days. With great difficulties and coping with many economic privations, some of the young people went abroad where they attended higher studies. All these people comprised the soundest part of the Albanian intelligentsia which was opposed to the anti-popular and reactionary section which originated from the beys, usurers and merchants.

At the time of which I am speaking the teachers and professors comprised the majority of the intellectuals, while there was a smaller number from other professions, such as doctors, engineers and jurists. The intelligentsia was not a homogenous mass, either from its social composition or from its political convictions, which were ill-defined. Besides this, with the exception of one section, especially the village teachers, the intelligentsia was not so closely linked with the people and was acquainted only superficially, at second-hand, with their problems. This does not mean it was not patriotic. No, in general, the Albanian intelligentsia was patriotic and anti-Zog, and subsequent-

ly proved its patriotism in its stand in the war against the occupiers.

Those closest to the people were the teachers who were more intimately linked with their sufferings and problems. Under the regime of Zog they were at the bottom of the small pyramid of the education system, scorned by the intellectual «aristocracy», regarded with suspicion by the regime, and received a pittance. And even that tiny salary was paid once in five months, and occasionally once in nine months. So, in order to live they had to go and sell their pay vouchers to the moneylenders, of course, at a discount. I myself did this during the few months that I worked in the secondary school in Tirana at the end of 1936 and the beginning of 1937, for which I was paid by the hour without any fixed salary and received nothing at all when I was sick or during school holidays.

In general, the teachers had completed or half completed their secondary schooling within the country. Rarely one of them knew some foreign language, but there was no foreign literature which they could read in order to develop themselves. The intellectuals of this category were with the people and detested the regime of Zog and its top functionaries. They were closely linked with the pupils and their families, were patriots and democrats and when Albania was occupied they united with the workers and pupils in demonstrations against the occupiers and most of them took part in the partisan war.

The «professors», as we called the secondary school teachers of that time, figured higher in the hierarchy of the education system and the intelligentsia, in general. Unlike the ordinary teachers, generally speaking, they were more remote from the people and the work with them was more complicated. Of course, even among the professors there were many who loved the Homeland and the people, who hated the feudal-bourgeois regime and the fascist occupation and linked themselves with the National Liberation Movement and the Party. But the majority of them were integrated into the oppressive system of Zog and fascism, were content with their own situation, and as for the condition of the masses, they did not worry their heads about that. Intellectuals of this type considered themselves the «élite» of the education system and boasted that they were the «intelligentsia of the country» and that «the regime had need of them». Many of them had been abroad where they had graduated from higher schools, some in Italy, some in France, some in Austria or Germany, some in Greece, a few in the United States of America. Some of the older ones had graduated from Turkish schools.

Other members of the «intellectual élite» were the doctors, engineers, architects, agronomists and others, without forgetting either those who had graduated in law and became advocates or judges, or

the journalists, in the ranks of whom there were some who were well-known, a section with progressive democratic tendencies and views, while the remainder were completely in the service of the reactionary and anti-popular regimes. Of course, here I exclude such intellectuals as Medar Shtylla, Omer Nishani, Xhafer Kongoli, Gago Tashko and tens of others who I mention in these notes, and who knew the difficult situation of the masses and who proved themselves with deeds to be democrats and patriots. Here I am referring to those intellectuals, who after gaining higher education, through the money which their fathers had fleeced from the workers and peasants, came back to Albania with the pretension that they were bringing culture and civilization, but who, in fact, came to share in the exploitation of the masses. They had taken nothing of real value from European civilization, apart from some foreign language, a certain amount of knowledge of the craft they had learned and «modern etiquette», along with the top hat or bowtie, without which they were never seen in the streets or cafés. And these civilized intellectuals were not ashamed to put themselves up for auction on the marriage market, because almost all of them were fortune-hunters. It is natural that many of them became bourgeois, were «pushed» into high offices and became «examples» for the less fortunate. These individuals were lost to the cause of the people, were superficial «democrats», «liberals» only in certain manifestations which were hangovers from the countries where they had attended school.

In general, the intellectuals with higher schooling and in top positions either integrated themselves with and became pillars of the regime, or, even when they were democrats and anti-Zog, did not see the future of the country clearly. There were some of them who did not like Zog and his regime and who deep down were anti-Zogites, but who did not have the courage to act or even to express their views openly. There were only a few of them who spoke openly, of course, not out in the street, against Zog and his regime. But even these few engaged in «academic» talk about laws, measures, prices, ministers, and so on. But it was extremely difficult, not to say impossible, to find in them a consistent spirit of resistance, or even less, any attempt at resistance. Of course, this came about also from the fact that Zog, whom they abused, had shut their mouths because it was a time when economic misery reigned among the people, when the worker toiled the whole day breaking stones in the heat of summer for two to three leks a day, while people of this category received ten to fifteen gold napoleons a month, and were well-dressed, owned comfortable homes, furniture and radios. Thus, these elements with some democratic and anti-Zogite veneer found it more suitable to take a comfortable position:

to enjoy the blessings which the regime provided for them and to whisper the occasional criticism against it.

In general, these intellectuals, as soon as they returned from abroad, aimed to get a good job and especially in Tirana. At that time whether you had graduated as an agronomist or an engineer, the place for you was in the ministry, and if there was no job for you, it was created, because neither the agronomists nor the engineers had anywhere to work, agriculture was at a very low level and no investments were made to boost it; nothing was built except the odd prison and homes for the wealthy. Thus, the agronomist was found a job in some office, while the engineer residing in Tirana drew the plans for the home of the big merchant. The doctors, for their part, set about making money, while the professors competed with one another to get a job in Tirana or in the ministry, or if they could not manage this, went to the few cities in which there was a secondary school.

There could be no talk about organization in the ranks of the intelligentsia. Especially amongst the soundest part of it, of course, there were efforts to do something to change the existing situation. Some of them established links with the communist groups, but these were sporadic or on an individual basis. In the ranks of the intellectual «élite» which included the professors, the doctors, the jurists, the journalists and individuals of other professions, there was a kind of division, on the basis of their links and affinities created by the type of culture and the country in which they had received it. Hence, opinions circulated that «so and so is of Deutsche Kultur» because he had been to university in Austria or Germany, «so and so is of French culture» because he had been in France, he who had been to university in Italy was of «Italian culture», and so on. This tendency, which created formal affinities between groups, encouraged a spirit of xenomania and brought about the isolation of the intelligentsia from the main problems which were preoccupying the Homeland and the people.

When I was in Tirana, prior to the occupation of the country by fascist Italy, apart from contacts with progressive and democratic intellectuals, I was given the opportunity to come into contact also with the milieus, opinions and psychology of that section of intellectuals that the regime pampered. In the Royal Road there was a small café, which at that time seemed a big one, called *Bella Venezia*. This *Bella Venezia* was frequented by the «élite» of the capital and the major sycophants of the regime from Fuad Asllani, the foreign minister, and other ministers, to the «top personalities of culture». They gathered there according to the English custom, at five o'clock,



Once or twice, a comrade took me with him to this club of the intellectual «élite». And what did I see there? A circle of arrogant, conceited cosmopolitans. It was sickening to watch them eating cake and drinking tea with their «aristocratic» ways and whims like ladies in drawing-rooms. There you could hear all sorts of languages spoken, according to the particular clans, and Albanian was spoken mixed with whole phrases in foreign languages, just as we have read in Tolstoy about the Russian aristocracy which mixed Russian and French. The talk in these circles was about «politics on a grand scale» and discussions about art. There you could hear judgements delivered with «absolute competence» about Chamberlain, about Titulescu, about Hitler, about Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, about Goethe's *Faust*, about the *Niebelungen*, but not a word was said about the suffering of the peasant of Myzeqe, whom Zog, the Vronis and the Vërlacis fleeced and who died of malaria.

To speak openly with these people was dangerous. They would hand you over to Zog or the occupier, if not directly, indirectly, by denouncing you. As I said, however, the whole intelligentsia was not like this.

I personally was aware of this truth from the contacts which I had established with a whole circle of teachers and intellectuals of various professions during the years I worked in the secondary school of Tirana and the *Lycée* of Korça. The fact is, however, that our links with the intellectuals were extended further and placed on a sounder basis after the Group of Korça shifted the centre of gravity of its work to Tirana, at the beginning of 1940, and especially after the founding of the Party, when we evaluated the work with the intellectuals as one of the most important fields of the work of the Party with the nationalists.

We have always mentioned the fact that the Communist Party of Albania was the only political party which operated in Albania as a positive factor and aid for our work. But while affirming this truth, it must in no way be thought that the leading role in the war, in the Front, etc., belonged to our Party and would be given to it automatically, since there was no other party to «compete» with or anyone else to whom this role could be given! No, the reality was quite different, extremely complex, difficult and with major problems.

True, there were no bourgeois political parties of various hues in our country, but there were all kinds of groups and circles and trends of the most varied hues and tendencies all of which, to a greater or lesser extent, had influence and connections. True, these

groups and trends did not rise or express themselves against the occupiers, but they were not and no one allowed them to remain inactive, aloof from politics and activity. And since, in general, they were not against fascism, necessarily they would be against us, against our Party, and its program and line about the Front, the national liberation councils, the war, etc.

We were bound to clash with all of them and this clash became extremely complicated because, just as they did not come out openly against the occupiers, at first most of them did not come out openly against us, either, but on the contrary, engaged in trickery and manoeuvres.

Let us not forget, either, that the inherited backwardness and ignorance, backward mental outlooks, both feudal and bourgeois, and in this context, the feverish propaganda against communism carried out by Zog and fascism for many years, were to remain major obstacles to our work.

Hence, all these groups, tendencies and mental outlooks stood alongside fascism, confronting our Communist Party as expressions of the bourgeois and feudal partisanship. Therefore, although in our work we were not confronted with organized political parties of the bourgeoisie and reaction, we were confronted with the class interests of the bourgeoisie and reaction, and their aims to safeguard their dominant positions, which were no less fierce and complex, no less cunning, undermining and dangerous and the outlooks and backwardness of the past. We had to do battle and fight against these, to clarify the minds and win the hearts of the people in order to make them aware of the right road which had to be followed.

It was essential that the Party increase its struggle and efforts a hundred-fold with the aim not merely of extending its leading role in the Front and the national liberation councils all over the country, but also, and most importantly, of safeguarding and ceaselessly strengthening it and ensuring that others did not seize this role from the Party. We had foreseen clearly that even that section of internal reaction which still had not declared itself as such, also, would organize itself and try to destroy the Front and the national liberation councils with the aim of sabotaging the people's war for freedom and democracy. So, it can be imagined what a catastrophe would have occurred in these new situations had our Party, after the Conference of Peza, considered its tasks for the Front and the councils «completed», and subsequently concentrated its own forces, let us say, simply as an «assault force» to carry out combat actions. With the Abaz Kupis and Halim Begejas not only would Ali Këlcyrë and company never be brought out in their true colours, but on the

contrary. Balli Kombëtar, which was to be set up with all its criminals and gentry, would seize the reins and the Party would suddenly find itself faced with the organized and lethal attack of the forces of fascism and reaction.

At the moments when we were in the heat of the work to put into practice the decisions of the Conference of Peza, especially in the month of November, a number of comrades from Tirana and other districts reported to us about many movements, meetings and contacts of certain «nationalist» chiefs, prominent amongst whom was Mithat Frashëri. We were certain that something was being prepared and issued instructions that the greatest vigilance must be displayed and everything must be reported to us.

Not much later, about the end of November and the beginning of December, through the first issue of the paper, *The War for National Liberation*,<sup>1</sup> which had been published and distributed «illegally», we learned the news about the formation of the «nationalist» organization called the Balli Kombëtar. As soon as we received the news about this organization and its leaders, as well as a little later, when we were acquainted with its program, the notorious «Decalogue», we were convinced that we had to do with an organization spawned by the enemy occupier which had thrown this «reserve» into the struggle against the Communist Party of Albania, the Anti-fascist National Liberation Front and the partisan National Liberation War.

The name of the Balli Kombëtar itself explains the whole plan of the local feudal-bourgeois reaction and the aims of the occupiers. «Balli» is not simply a literal translation of «front» and likewise «Kombëtar» is not simply a translation of the word «national». No, the term does not have a patriotic or linguistic character but has a profound ideological significance. For reaction «Balli» would not mean «war» as the «Front» meant for us. For them «Balli» meant the «head», the «predestined national leadership», that is, the old unchangeable world «without end», the conservative world with oppressors and oppressed, the «Albanian national» world which rejects and fights progress and communism. This was the meaning of the Balli Kombëtar created by the Italian occupiers and by means of which the heads of Albanian reaction dreamed of how they could organize and run Albania in the future. The word «war» did not exist in the name of this organization or in its content, because it represented a world in its death throes. The Balli Kombëtar was to engage in war, both with

<sup>1</sup> Organ of the Balli Kombëtar.

propaganda and with arms, not against the occupier, however, but against the Communist Party of Albania, against the National Liberation Army and the new state power of the national liberation councils.

Mithat Frashëri, an arch-traitor, was placed at the head of this assembly of traitors, and around him such notorious elements as Ali Këlcyra, Kolë Tromara, Faik Quku, Nuredin Vlora, and others such as Fuat Dibra, Hasan Dosti, Lef Nosi and so on, but in fact the Balli Kombëtar was led by Jacomoni, the viceroy of King Victor Emmanuel III and General Dalmazzo, the commander of the Italian army in Albania.

As to the local scum who formed and led this organization, which they advertised as «patriotic» (!), the majority were precisely those pseudo-patriotic nationalist elements with whom we had been trying for more than two years on end and had done everything possible to win their support for the war, the National Liberation Front and the cause of the freedom and independence of the Homeland.

Earlier, when I mentioned the meetings and fierce debates which we had with them, I also said something about their character, origin and their political and ideological baggage. Now, however, I want to dwell somewhat more extensively on this aspect, to indicate the essence and origin of these individuals who, at the end of 1942, were advertising themselves as the «head», the «cream» of the nation, and what Albania could expect from their organization, the Balli Kombëtar.

The bulk of these «certified patriots» comprised the caravan of the «anti-Zogite» elements who after a 15-year asylum on foreign soil had returned to Albania in the wake of the Italian army and under the protection of fascist bayonets. In the past they had been deputies to the Albanian parliament, prior to the government of Fan Noli, and had been present at the funeral of Avni Rustemi and taken part in the Revolution of 1924. They had differences in their political convictions because they expressed the most varied opinions in a number of newspapers which they brought out during the bourgeois-democratic regime which the coalition of beys and feudals headed by Ahmet Zog overthrew. The democratic views of some of them were superficial and quickly faded while most of those who had posed as «partisans of Opinga»<sup>1</sup> were in fact champions of the aghas and the mercantile bourgeoisie which was building itself up by buying the lands of bankrupt feudal families. All of them, even including those who posed as farthest to the «left», were far from being revolutionary democrats, like Avni Rustemi, Halim Xhelo

<sup>1</sup> The common people.



and others who were loyal sons of the people and consistent fighters for democracy.

All the elements of the «anti-Zogite» emigration with the exception of the communists, or «reds», as the «anti-Zogites and democrats» in exile called them, claimed to be supporters of Fan Noli.

But after the failure of the Revolution of 1924, that erudite writer, Fan Noli, travelled from place to place, visited the Soviet Union, spoke and wrote well about it, stayed in Germany, wrote beautiful and powerful anti-Zogite verses, went to the United States of America where he became head of the Church, became more bourgeois, assumed all kinds of colours, and from being an anti-Zogite, came to terms with Zog and his men. True, he did not become a convinced and active Zogite, nevertheless, he accepted money from Zog. He never fully understood our National Liberation War, did not prove to be a zealous champion of it to the end, while, when the people were driving out the occupiers and traitors and establishing their own power, Fan Noli approved the British plan for the formation of an «Albanian government in exile». Nevertheless, we appreciate Fan Noli as a bourgeois-democratic writer and politician, limited in his views, it is true, but who, on the whole, loved Albania.

Whereas these «disciples of Fan Noli» in exile were not even supporters of his, and before they worried about Albania, they hastened to ensure the manger from which they would eat. Mussolini's Italy paid some of them, Alexander's Yugoslavia others, while still others were paid by the French secret service, the British Intelligence Service, the Greek Asphalia, the American secret service, and so on. They were divided into groups, but not according to their political tendencies and views, each with its own program and organization, newspaper and other publications. Although they tried to present their political squabbles as originating from differences in their political views, in fact they were grouped according to the sources from which they received their subsidies, their flow of income. Each group had its «premises» in a café which the members of other «groups» did not enter. All their activity as «great politicians» amounted to reading that newspaper which was provided by the café where they sat all day indulging in idle talk and «academic» discussions about international problems which were accompanied by a few curses about Zog. When they ran out of words and their «opposition» spirit dried up, they began playing poker and bridge and each tried to rob the other at gambling.

The chiefs, of course, conducted the financial policy, sharing out the money according to the orders of the centre from which they received it, as well as according to their personal sympathies.

The pockets of some of them were full but there were others who had nothing to eat for days on end. This undoubtedly created quarrels amidst groups feeding from the same manger and frequenting the same café. Of course, there were some who received income from more than one source, came afloat again, and if one of them were asked where he found this money, he would reply, «I won it at gambling». In fact, however, these individuals were spies for various agencies.

I am not exaggerating these things. When I was a student in France, on my way back to Albania for holidays or on the return journey, I stopped both in Bari, where I caught the ship, and in Paris. During these transit stops I have seen how they lived with my own eyes. For instance, I was several times in the *Stoppani* Café in Bari which was one of the «best known» cafés of these emigrants in which the «honourables», former deputies and other members of the «Zogite opposition», like Bahri Omari, Sheh Karbunara, Muharrem Vilamasi, Qamil Çela, whom they considered a «red», an officer called Lekë Margjini and others of the same type, gathered. In Bari there were other emigrants who came around, but these were the main ones, the «heirs to the anti-Zogite policy» and the *Stoppani* café was their «parliament». Allegedly to protect their lives the Italian government had openly appointed an official police guard for these «honourables» apart from others who shadowed them. When I passed through Bari on my way to France, they asked me: «What's the news from Albania, what is going on? Do they or do they not like Zog? When is he going to die?» and lots of other questions like these. I don't remember any time when they asked me about the troubles of the people, the workers and peasants, or expressed revulsion about the way the workers and peasants were plundered and exploited. When I spoke about these things they listened to me with indifference, because the situation and movements of the masses were of no importance to these «partisans of Opinga»; for them the best news was if you told them that Zog had been ill because it seemed to them that the way was being opened for them to take power in Albania.

In the *Stoppani* café they dealt in «grand politics». Each of them expressed his own tendencies and sympathies in their conversations. Sheh Karbunara, for example, apparently ate the bread of the Italians but had a special admiration for the English. The Sheh was lively in conversation and attracted attention with his manner of speaking in the Myzeqe dialect and his loud laughter. He was clever and cunning but had not the slightest culture. He waited for Bahri Omari to read him a newspaper because Bahri knew several eastern and western languages. Bahri's culture however, was «a little of everything», and of no depth. In his political views, he posed as a radical

socialist because he had great admiration for Edouard Herriot, one of the leaders of the French radical socialists. *Le Temps*, a liberal newspaper with great influence in France at that time, was the source of Bahri's information and interpretations. Sheh Karbunara and the others waited for him in the *Stoppani* café with the newspaper *Le Temps*, in front of them.

These pseudo-politicians, these supporters of the mercantile bourgeoisie and aghas had hatred for communism in their blood stream and this they demonstrated later. As for any organization on their part within the country, not only did this not exist, but they had not sent any newspaper, pamphlet or even a single leaflet into Albania. Their «activity» could not be compared even with that of democratic elements among the exiles like Omer Nishani or Fan Noli himself, whose disciples they claimed to be, let alone with the activity of revolutionary communist militants like Ali Kelmendi, Halim Xhelo and Riza Cerova, who worked abroad but also entered Albania legally or illegally, and worked under the threat of imprisonment, internment and murder. But what sort of organization could the clients of the *Stoppani* café claim to have when their links with the country were non-existent? Apart from a few former acquaintances, men of the bourgeoisie, aghas, top officials or some old intellectuals, no one in Albania remembered them.

The latter had considered it more advantageous to make their peace with Zog than to rove the cities of Europe, had submitted to the regime, lived and carried out their activity under the protection of the Krosis and Zog's ministers and had even gained some posts in the capital or were appointed its prefects in the districts. The Skënder Pojanis, Reiz Selfos, Vehip Runas, Qemal Vrionis and many others were of this type. Now even their opinions were unified, they had become convinced Zogites, although some posed as apolitical, others as neutral and when they went abroad, especially to Italy, because that is where they went mostly to strike trade deals, they did not forget their old friends. They would meet in the *Stoppani* café, crack a few jokes, pose as democrats, relate some of the crimes of the regime and, as «friends and acquaintances», put a bit of money in their pockets.

Hence, the contacts of the emigrant «politicians» with Albania were made through men of the Zogite regime who went abroad, through officials, big merchants, land-owners and aghas, and these contacts were maintained not in order to conspire or do something against the regime, but in order to get some economic aid from it and to delude themselves by saying that they had not lost contact with Albania. This was not surprising. Even in the time of the Fan Noli govern-

ment when these men were members of it, or elected as deputies, their links were not with the masses of the people but mainly with the liberal gentry of the city and, up to a point, with the gentry of the countryside. It was not the idea of the progress of Albania which linked them with the gentry, but their family and marriage links, and chance friendships which were widely developed in the social life of that time.

The «anti-Zogite democrats» of Paris comprised another group of this category of political exiles. That included Ali Këlcyrë, Kolë Tromara, Qazim Koculi, Sejfi Vllamasi, Rexhep Mitrovica and others, but Tromara, Ali Bey Koculi and Mitrovica posed as leaders. In fact none of them recognized the other as leader, because they all «led», but they were leaders in words, commanders without an army.

Their centres were *La Coupole*, *La Source* and other well-known cafés. There they gambled, played politics, «overthrew Zog», «aroused the Albanian people», and shared out the francs and the dollars which the course of betrayal on which they had set out secured for them. The «anti-Zogites» of the *Stoppani* café had good relations with this group while they quarrelled with the group of Mustafa Merlika which Mussolini kept in Dalmatia and prepared for his future plans of invasion.

As soon as fascist Italy invaded Albania all these exiles returned from the cafés of Europe. Naturally, they were pleased to see their friends and established political contacts with other «anti-Zogites» who had remained within the country or had returned earlier. Now, with the occupation of the country, these so-called anti-Zogite democrats either still held the posts which they had had in the time of Zog, or had been raised in responsibility, and with the aid of fascism, were further enriching themselves at the people's expense.

The «outstanding patriots» returned from Europe, sounded out the terrain, sniffed out where the lure came from and how, sounded out the quislings, the Italian and Albanian fascist hierarchs, posed as politically «undefiled», as «able men and politicians», as «men who had made sacrifices for this nation», while «languishing» on foreign soil, so now that the «sea had turned into yoghurt», they ought to be given not spoons but ladles. They were installed in homes, their salaries continued, but in what way, nobody knew. The occupier wanted to legalize these salaries, but the «fathers of the nation» put up resistance in this direction because this would mean that the pseudo-patriots would be compromised in the eyes of the people and committed to the dance. However, fascist Italy was to allow them to retain their disguise, just as long as it was in its interests, because it had taken into account the role of the reactionary chiefs of the political exiles in its plans for the occupation of Albania. It was not



for nothing that Zog's «great friend» had long been working to organize them, had kept and subsidized them, allegedly in secret ways, because Zog did not dare make the slightest protest. Fascism had considered and was to use these men as a reserve for the domination of Albania and they were an important card in the Italian game of «the liberation of Albania from Zog». These elements had become puppets and as such nobody was going to ask them what role they were going to play in the prepared plot. And fascism divided the roles amongst the groups of these political exiles. Some of them, such as Mustafa Kruja and others, it used directly to govern its «colony», while the others it kept in reserve.

It was not that fascist Italy had no need of them, but it knew that it could not bring them into use before Verlaci, Mustafa Merlika, Eqrem Bey Libohova, Maliq Bushati, and so on. They were «the first violins», while the others had to submit to the quiescent regime of the occupiers and work for it and, moreover, at first shed the odd tear for Albania and Albanianism. All this was a puppet play but the captor Italy had not staged it for nothing. In this way, these pseudo-patriots, pseudo-democrats and fascists were brought into the dance of the Italian fascist occupiers. Some of them were made members of the «Council of State» created especially for them, while, as I said, the others became local fascist chiefs, and others still received «pensions» and bribes without occupying any definite post, so that they could retain for a while the reputation of «unblemished patriots», although all the time they carried on disguised propaganda against the people's resistance. The elements of this group temporarily left in reserve were closely linked with fascist Italy, but their role was to carry out subversive activity within the struggle of the Albanian people and to co-ordinate their demagogy with the bludgeon which Mustafa Merlika wielded openly. Their mission was to link the maximum number of people to the fascist band-wagon through deception and threats and to win over the peasantry and the intellectuals. In the end this dangerous activity of theirs had some results, especially among vacillating and cowardly elements. Thus, in order to suppress the people and their struggle, the fascist occupier worked from both sides: from the side of the Albanian fascist officials placed in government posts from which they oppressed and exploited the people, and from the side of the pseudo-patriots, pseudo-democrats and Zogites allegedly fallen in disgrace. These latter were the «politicians» of the *Kursaal* café and gambling clubs like the *Savoy* and other notorious establishments.

The fascist secret agency, which was everywhere and reported everything, turned a blind eye and a deaf ear when one of these «politicians» expressed some «criticism» of persons in power or the fascist regime in the country. The whole lot of them were a filthy

scum among whom it was hard to find even one, however insignificant who was undefiled.

Of course, apart from the knowledge which we had from the period prior to the occupation, we created a more complete and accurate opinion about them during our many attempts to «fan up» their patriotism, that is, to unite them with the war, with the Front, with the great cause of the Homeland. As I have already shown in detail, however, initially they treated us with total disregard, and, indeed, implied that they could hardly deign to talk with us «hot-headed young reds». There were two main reasons for this stand of theirs towards us in the initial stage of our contacts with them:

First, among these «nationalist-democrats», who lived on fascist hand-outs and who were neither nationalists nor democrats, the idea prevailed that they were the «most capable», were «proven politicians», that «the people loved and respected them» and, hence, they thought they were destined, when the favourable moment came, to take power and govern the country. Thus, with their delirium and these absurd illusions they had about themselves they could not even think, let alone accept, that their time had passed and that now new men were emerging from the ranks of the common people ready to take over responsibility for the fate of the Homeland. Second, this «disdainful» attitude towards us in this first phase of the war was dictated to them by the fascist occupier and open reaction, with the aim that we, «young people», would be overawed by their «profound reasoning» and lose heart, hence, would «come to our senses», as they advised us, reconcile ourselves to the situation and, while swallowing the misfortunes of the Homeland, «enjoy the blessings of the fascist order»!

After years of idle talk and dreams in cafés, however, their calculations went even further than this, for them the occupation of the country by fascist Italy was a passing phenomenon for Albania and they thought that, when the Italians left they «would still have them as a support, provided we don't annoy them, as these boys are doing». Their ideas went further still: «If nazi Germany replaces Italy, that will be even better and it will help us; on the other hand, if both Italy and Germany are defeated, then Britain and the United States of America will triumph, they will make the law and in that case we shall be even better off.»

As a result of these dangerous views and their economic and political interests they regarded the war of the Albanian people against the occupier, for which we were appealing and striving, as something terrible. In no way did they want to fight the fascist occupier, therefore, they did their utmost and employed every means to strangle the revolution in its embryonic phase.

Of course, regardless of the «disdain», «gibes» and «remonstran-

ces» of these old men, harnessed to the fascist plough, we carried on with our work and were to witness all their metamorphoses which appeared ridiculous but, in fact, were done under orders. When, to their astonishment, they saw that we were really taking the reins of the war in hand, they were obliged and ordered to come and seek us out, to try and persuade us «for the sake of suffering Albania» to proceed no further on the course of «adventurism» which we had taken. Quietly and patiently, we explained our stand to them once again and continued on our course.

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