WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

ENVER HOXHA

Among Simple People

Excerpts from the Memoirs

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ENVER HOXHA

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FOREWORD

(The Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies at the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania)

The book "Among Simple People" forms part of a series of memoirs by Comrade Enver Hoxha on the theme of the years of the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War.

The book is dedicated to the simple, brave and patriotic people who amid great dangers sheltered, protected and befriended the leaders of the Party, including Comrade Enver himself, in two of the hardest periods of the war: in the spring and summer of 1942, when the Communist Party of Albania and its leaders had to face one of the most difficult phases of illegality and of the terror imposed by the occupation forces in Tirana; and in the winter of 1943-44, when a part of the General Staff of the National Liberation Army, headed by Comrade Enver Hoxha, had to face the enemy's winter offensive and to break successfully out of the all-round German-Ballist encirclement of the villages, forests and mountains of Elbasan, Librazhd, Gramsh and Korça.

Such people — who turned their poor houses and cottages into "headquarters" where some of the most important meetings, conferences and activities in the history of the CPA and of the National Liberation War successfully took place; who sheltered outlaws and partisans despite countless dangers and difficulties; who shared with the sons

and daughters of the Party their last morsel of bread; who gave everything, often even their lives, for the Party and the war — such people were counted in thousands throughout Albania.

The Party and the people have always valued highly the patriotic and revolutionary activity of these simple people. Comrade Enver Hoxha himself — in such works as "When the Party Was Born" and "The Anglo-American Threat to Albania," in speeches, in discussions, in letters, in meetings with the people, etc. — has often written and spoken with deep affection and gratitude about many of the people of these illegal bases, where he or other comrades of the Party lodged, worked, issued directives and fought in those glorious years. In the press, on the radio, on television, in scientific publications and in the memoirs of veterans, other illegal bases of those years have been described with gratitude and respect.

To this great and unforgettable theme has now been added the book "Among Simple People," the material in which was written at various times but principally during the 70s.

Sent for publication in the jubilee year of the 40th anniversary of the Liberation of the homeland and of the triumph of the people's revolution, the author in these memoirs expresses once again the high esteem and deep gratitude felt by the Party and the people to all these simple people throughout Albania, who in the years of the National Liberation War not only sent their sons and daughters to the mountains, but placed at the disposal of the Party and the war their homes and their lives,

fought and made every sacrifice for the liberation of the homeland and the establishment of people's power.

THE NUSHIS' CABIN

On the banks of the Lana, near where the building of the "Albania Today" exhibition stands today, there stood in the days of the National Liberation War a little, old cabin, built of boards worn by rain, snow and wind.

What its name was before I do not know, but we all called it "the Nushis' cabin," since it was occupied by the simple, well-liked, militant family of Gogo and Kozma Nushi. For all of us who, in the difficult days of illegality, came and went there as if it were our own home, this cabin will remain unforgettable. It was the cabin of revolutionaries, of outlaws, of memorable meetings with comrades who shared the same ideal; it was the cabin where plans were drawn up — plans for immediate action and plans for the future days of freedom.

The cabin consisted of only a small room and a hallway, with a clay floor. A part of it was divided off by a curtain to serve as kitchen and sleeping quarters, so creating the impression that there were two rooms. Its roof was of tinplate and, when it rained, this made such a deafening noise that the inhabitants and their friends could make themselves heard only by shouting. Generally, however, people spoke within the cabin in lowered voices, for it was a cabin of communist and anti-fascist conspirators.

In front of it was an almost barren strip of land and the road, which passed some five me-

tres away to snake away into the briars. Behind was another similar piece of land which sloped down to the banks of the Lana. In front, to the right, stood two or three fairly large houses. The cabin could easily have been surrounded, but it was guarded by the vigilant eye of Valide.

How many people lived in that cabin? It was hard to know exactly, since, apart from the permanent residents — Valide; her sons Kozma, Gogo, Çeno; her daughter Lilo — others also came. So, during the time I was going there, there came and stayed for some months Valide's elderly brother Milo Andoni; Milo's sons and other members of his large "band" came and went as if it were their own home; and later Valide's elder daughter Shana stayed for a month or two when she returned from France with her husband Thoma Kokushta. But these were, so to speak, only the "official" residents of the cabin for, besides them, there came day and night outlaws like myself, partisan couriers and various comrades of the Tirana Party organization. One would come and stay all day; another would be caught by the evening curfew and stay the night. The cabin, like a hive of bees, produced "honey" for the Party, but outside its people stung the fascists and the traitors like wasps.

The cabin was presided over by the revolutionary Mother Athina, known as "Valide." This name had been given to her by the comrades in Lyons when she was living in France, and all of us continued to call her this until she

died many years after Liberation. Valide was a lovable old woman, extremely astute, who never raised her voice and ended every sentence with the word "*jeto*," lengthening the "o" in the manner of those who live on the coast. She treated us all as her sons; we were her life. If Kozma and Gogo were away from the cabin, it was just the same — indeed, she would caress us all the more.

"Taras darling," she would say; "you must be careful! These are bad times. Don't move around by day if you can help it; the streets are full of spies. Those blackshirt bastards want to kill you!"

"I am being careful, Valide. See, I'm wearing spectacles and I've shaved off my moustache!"

She would often stand at the window, which was covered by a thin curtain, and point things out to me, saying:

"I make it my business to know everybody living in those houses. I visit the women myself. I pretend to be an ignorant old peasant woman. I talk to them about the coast, about the church at Vuno, about the icons (if they are Christians), and find out what kind of women they are and where their husbands work. As far as I can tell, they are good women. I leave it to the boys to find out about the menfolk, and they tell me that one of them is dangerous. You see those windows there on the first floor: a man from Gjirokastra lives there."

"What's his name, Valide?" I asked.

"Njazi Bimi, *jeto*."

"I knew him," I said. "We were at school together in Gjirokastra, but he became one of Zog's officers and now he's a fascist. Yes, he's dangerous; we must be on our guard and not attract his attention to the cabin."

Sometimes I would tell Gogo that the comings and goings must be restricted, whether of comrades or cousins, and Gogo would reply:

"The comrades we can sort out, Enver, but just try and control Valide's relatives — especially Uncle!"

"We must find a way of cutting down unnecessary visits to the hut."

"I'll speak to them," Gogo would reply. And he and Kozma did speak to them, but the visits continued unchanged.

The Nushis' cabin was a strange world — a world of revolutionaries. From outside it looked miserable, but inside it was always clean, swept and scrubbed. Within its walls plans for the war, for operations, for attacks on the fascists were discussed. No one expressed surprise or curiosity; everyone remained calm. Valide kept watch while she washed the dishes, darned socks or performed other household tasks. When she had finished these, Milo, pretending to do some job or other, would cast an eagle eye around outside, while Çeno, who had worked in the Communist Youth from its beginning, was reading "The Foundations of Leninism" in French. Almost everybody in the hut understood French. Waiting for Gogo, I

would take little Lilo on my knee and say to her:

"Raconte-moi quelque chose."

"Que veux-tu, que je te raconte?"

"Une fable de La Fontaine, par exemple."

"Bon, je vais te réciter 'La cigale et la fourmi'."[1]

And Lilo's voice would carry me far away — back to school benches, back to Daudet's "Lettres de mon moulin,"[2] and for a moment I would forget the strain of the war.

What a great heart our cabin had! How many times I slept there, in the room or in the little hallway, where Mother Valide would lay down a mattress for us to sleep with Gogo. Being taller than Gogo, my feet would stick out and this became a subject for jokes which, in spite of our worries, never dried up.

I entered and left the cabin in disguise — sometimes dressed as a housepainter, sometimes as a plumber, sometimes as an electrician — but still putting the Nushis and their cousins in danger. Valide's brother Milo, who was master of all trades, would castigate his sons and nephews, telling them they were so clumsy and awkward they would never learn a trade! Kozma worked as a loader, Gogo as a messenger, but they changed jobs according to

[1] Tell me something.
What do you want me to tell you?
A fable of La Fontaine, for example.
Right. I'll recite "The Cicada and the Ant" to you.

[2] "Letters from my Windmill."

the needs of the Party, being wholly dedicated to illegal work. Çeno, who must then have been about 15 years old, worked in a repair-shop.

There was much work for me to do: I had to meet and talk with comrades, to write articles and directives, and for these tasks I did not move from the cabin during the day. Father Milo did not like the fact that I did not go to work, that while I mended the occasional tap or painted the odd house to earn a lek, I spent most of my time "gossiping" with comrades or writing. He had become suspicious of me, for I was clearly not the craftsman I made myself out to be. One day he said to Valide:

"This friend of the boys, Thine, doesn't seem like a craftsman to me!"

Valide, who was a born conspirator, replied:

"Well, he is; so don't worry about it."

The shrewd old man was puzzled.

"I've never seen a carpenter use a pencil like a plane! No, he's no craftsman!"

"Put it out of your head," Valide told him; "he's had some schooling and, since he can't find work, he's teaching our boys."

"Well," said the old man, "I hope he teaches them properly; but..."

"Right!" said Valide firmly, "it's not our business what he and the boys do. It's enough that he's doing us a favour."

"Yes, yes," said Milo; "up to now we've heard nothing bad about him."

"Indeed, we've heard nothing but good," responded Valide, and went away to prepare a meal.

Valide's character was such that, without realizing it, she became a mother to us and to the other outlaws and couriers who came and lodged in this simple cabin: she became a mother to the brave militants of the Party, to the partisans of Peza. She had a great heart — sensitive but forceful. Her hard life, filled with suffering, had given her the deep conviction that the old world had to be overthrown.

Many times I have seen Mother Valide seeing off comrades who were setting off on dangerous missions. She would go right to the gate in the fence that surrounded the cabin, with comrades dressed as porters, electricians, plumbers, painters — carrying their tools, but with hand grenades and revolvers in their pockets — off into the enemy's lair to carry out the task the Party had assigned them. They would go on their way, while Mother Valide would go back indoors with a worried frown.

"They're somebody's sons," she would say to me, and I understood her anxiety.

"They'll be back!" I would say to calm her, but I shared her anxiety and her hope that nothing would happen to the comrades.

Valide would put a big cauldron on the fire to wash our clothes. Time after time she would raise her head and look towards the door in case the outlaws should be returning, or turn her head away so as not to hear some shots or

explosion. But even when everything was quiet, this gave her little comfort.

"They're very late!" she would say to me.

And I would pretend to look at my watch, and reply:

"It's still early!"

And when I saw that this had failed to soothe her worries, I would add:

"They may not come back here; they may go to another base."

But only when she saw them enter would her eyes light up. She could not express her joy, but simply took them in her arms, pulled them inside, and gave them some simple but tasty food to eat.

"Eat, *jeto*, eat! You must be starving!"

Valide would never let you leave without eating if lunch- or dinner-time caught you at the cabin. One day I had been working there all morning with some comrades and, at lunch-time when I got up to go, she said to me:

"No, you must eat something. I have it ready. It's a poor lunch, but it's all I have."

"Bring it in, Valide," I told her, "anything you cook is fine with me."

"Oh, we peasants can't cook," said Valide, "not like your town mothers."

"You're joking, Valide," I said, "your cooking's wonderful."

"No, I'm not joking. I mean it. But a moment ago, while you were working, I went out to look around and I gathered some chicory. I've cooked it, and put a little vinegar on it.

And I've kept a piece of cheese for you; I know you like it. And there's a few maize rolls."

"Bring it, Valide," I repeated, "there's a revolution going on in my guts!"

"Long live the revolution!" said Valide. And she brought in my lunch, which I ate with gusto.

Such was Valide, the dear mother and unforgettable comrade to all the outlaws. Such, too, was the atmosphere in her cabin where I lodged in those difficult days and worked for the cause of the Party, cooperating especially with her two militant sons, Kozma and Gogo.

Kozma was the eldest child of the Nushi family. He was politically developed and rapid in reaching decisions. He was one of the earliest and most loyal members of the Party, which assigned to him responsible tasks which he carried out with the devotion of a proletarian communist.

Particularly after the founding of the Party, Kozma became one of my closest collaborators. I consulted with him and we often changed each other's opinions. Kozma had the qualities of a true proletarian. He was a talented comrade — mature, sharp-witted and very sympathetic. With an attractive, infectious laugh, which was peculiar to him, he had the simplicity characteristic of the Nushis.

It seemed, from one point of view, that Mother Valide had cast all her children — Kozma, Gogo, Çena, Shana and Lilo — from

one mould. Kozma had the habit, common to all the Nushis, of shaking his head as he walked. He had sharp, intelligent eyes, and he was an experienced conspirator: he would peer into every nook and cranny; he would mingle with every crowd; he would watch every "safe house" from the corner of the street for any suspicious movement or for any stranger "posing as a bewildered onlooker," as he referred to police spies. As with all the other comrades, I first discussed with him any task assigned to him, explaining its reason and purpose, and he would execute it without hesitation. Finally, when he had completed it, he would report to me. I always told Kozma where I should be, so that he could find me whenever he wanted, day or night.

Kozma was very fond of the epic songs of the coast, which he sang with rare passion. When he sang, everything was forgotten, drowned in song. Often he would pause in the middle to say:

"Drone, lads, drone!"

and because of this he was nicknamed "Drone." The poetic landscape of the Ionian coast had made Kozma himself a poet. He would enchant conspirators and warriors by weaving verses. He would take photographs and find beauty everywhere — that beauty for which he fought and wished to make eternal.

Kozma was a man of few words, but each one was carefully weighed and aimed directly

at its target. He never indulged in flattery. He had the respect of a communist towards leading comrades, but when he clashed with those who did not behave well, he was merciless. I had experienced this wonderful characteristic on many occasions, but one incident — involving myself, Kozma and a person we regarded as close to the leadership — remains unforgettable. Kozma had known this person in France, where the Nushi family, like many other peasants from Vuno and the coast, had gone to work in the coal mines of the Lyons district and at Firmin.

Their home in Décines became the principal centre — indeed, the only safe centre — of the Albanian communists who worked in France. Lyons was a great working-class centre, its town hall dominated by the Radical Socialists, headed by Édouard Harriot. The Communist Party held strong positions there and there were many communists' cells around the coalfields.

Kozma and Gogo were among the most active members of the Communist Party of France. The Albanian newspaper "Sazan" was prepared by Halim Xhelo, Qamil Çela, Kozma and Gogo, and printed by the Nushi brothers. When Zai Fundo turned traitor, he stayed in Paris with the Trotskyists. And Sejfulla Malëshova, before he returned to Albania in the summer of 1943 to give his "mind" to the Communist Party of Albania and our National Liberation Movement, had once gone to Paris

where, on his own initiative, he had attempted to meet Zog and had plotted an alliance with this murderer. Sejfulla told me of this "brilliant political line," which I rejected indignantly as an expression of political myopia and extreme opportunism. But of this "idea" and of how Sejfulla Malëshova "defended" it, we will speak elsewhere.

Let us come to the firm stand taken by Kozma Nushi in relation to the person mentioned above, who had for years been a member of the Communist Party of France. The Lyons comrades and the Nushis knew how "interested" this person was in the work which was developing there; they also were aware of his flippant character, his liberalism and his political opportunism. When they came back from France, Gogo and Kozma talked about the affair, saying about this person:

"Let's use him as a Party member, for he knows how to speak and write. He is anti-fascist. Let us try and harden him in the struggle, but always be wary of him."

Once this comrade came to Tirana to report to me on the work in the area to which the Party had sent him. As soon as Kozma heard this, he came to find us in the illegal base where we were to be found. I was reading to this person a letter I had prepared for Nexhip Vinçani and his comrades.

"Hi, Kozma!" I said to him; "we need some

red peppers for 'Xhipka'[1] and 'Pëllumb'.[2] Will you help us?"

"That's what I've come about," he said, "without knowing what you were preparing. Permit me to speak to you, Comrade Enver, as General Secretary of the Party about this comrade, and to ask why he is not following the correct Party path."

This attack of Kozma's surprised me, but it was his style. I saw that the other man had turned pale and was glaring angrily at Kozma.

"Speak out, Kozma," I told him.

Kozma began to speak in a voice that cut like an axe.

"This man," he said, "prefers to make love to a woman from Paris than to put his back into working and fighting. And this at a time when comrades are being murdered in the streets."

The other man, now red in the face, got to his feet and shouted:

"This insult is intolerable, Comrade Enver!"

"Sit down," I responded, "and keep calm."

"You can keep calm," he said, "you have not been insulted!"

Kozma never flickered an eyelid, but retained the coolness of a prosecuting counsel.

"I am sure that Kozma does not wish to insult you, but is concerned firstly for the welfare of the Party, and then for your own. So let's

[1] Nexhip Vinçani

[2] Pëllumb Dishnica

hear him out."

And Kozma continued to speak quietly, giving concrete facts, merciless in his criticism of the comrade's faults. When I learned from him that the comrade had been sending stockings to a woman in Paris, the blood rushed to my head.

"Listen," I said, "facts are facts and Kozma is right. How can you allow yourself to be busy with things like that, especially at a time when the Party is fighting and the people are suffering! Look," I went on, "if I hear of any other matter like this involving you, I shall lay it before the Party leadership and we shall take severe disciplinary measures against you."

"I give you my word, comrades," he promised, "that I shall not make such mistakes again."

In a little while he got up and left, and I remained alone with Kozma.

"It's good that you came, Kozma. You were blunt. It's been a good lesson for him, but will he learn from it?"

Kozma thought for a moment, and then said:

"Don't put any faith in such people. They forget the struggle. They betray it!"

"You're hard, Kozma."

"Listen Enver, keep an eye on people like that: they're more democrats than communists, and they'll leave you in the lurch!"

"I won't forget your advice, Kozma," I told him. And with that we parted for that day.

Such was the communist Kozma Nushi. He spoke the truth as he saw it, and made such criticism as he considered necessary, without kid gloves, without opportunism. The unhealthy, petty bourgeois attitude towards the faults or errors of comrades was quite alien and unacceptable to the frank, courageous character — tempered by experience — of Kozma Nushi.

Now that I am writing these lines, I recall the mature stand and contribution of Kozma Nushi at the First National Conference of the Communist Party of Albania on the faults of Gjin Marku. Kozma Nushi loved the workers with his whole heart and soul, and had unshakable faith in their strength. This confidence arose, in the first place, from deep experience of the great transforming power possessed by the working class. When Gjin Marku began to speak of the lack of organized work in Kuçova, Kozma Nushi sprang to his feet and said to Gjin: "You don't know what is needed for Kuçova and its oil workers, because to know the workers you must live among them." And Kozma Nushi said to Gjin Marku's face that the state of affairs in Kuçova was not as he had described it, and that this had come about because Gjin Marku had not carried out Party work in close liaison with the oil workers.

The sessions of the First National Conference of the CPA in April and the first part of May in Tirana were among the last meetings I had with my unforgettable comrade Kozma

Nushi. While I set out for Vlora to unmask the faction of Sadik Premte (Xhepi), he departed for Durrës, where he was elected District Political Secretary, a duty which he performed with devotion, as he carried out all the duties with which the Party charged him.

I liked Kozma very much, and Gogo too — these steadfast comrades of the Party, faithful to its ideals, prepared to make the greatest sacrifice for it. I have learned much from the ideas and stands of these two proletarian communists.

Later I noted that the person we had spoken about with Kozma had joined with Sejfulla Malëshova. I drew his attention to his opportunist mistakes many times, for I was alarmed by his position. And in fact he betrayed us. When I learned of his treachery, I banged my fist on the desk of the Staff room and said: "The dirty traitor!" And at that moment I seemed to see before me the face of my dear comrade Kozma Nushi.

As courageous, determined and consistent as Kozma in the cause of the Party and the people was his brother Gogo who was linked, apart from the stormy days of the war, with whole decades of common work and endeavours for the construction of socialism.

The unforgettable Gogo was and remains one of the most distinguished sons of our Party. His name is dear not only to those with whom he worked and fought, not only to those

who knew him and shared his joys and sorrows, but to the whole people — whose worthy son he was and will always remain.

I shall never forget the first meeting of the Political Bureau from which our well-loved, simple, untiring comrade Gogo was absent. All of us felt deeply the great loss which the Party and the working class had sustained by his death. There had been torn from us one of our closest, most devoted comrades, whose words and deeds had left their mark on the life of the people, of the homeland and of the Party. The comrades of the Bureau were silent. Then I rose and, restraining the grief I felt, proposed a minute's silence in memory of the unforgettable Gogo Nushi. We pledged that the life, deeds and great heart of the proletarian communist Gogo Nushi would always inspire us.

I became acquainted with him for the first time at the beginning of September 1940, when I was working at the Flora shop. Just as it was getting dark, three people came into the shop, sat down at one of the small tables and began to talk. I had met one of them on another occasion — a member or supporter, as far as I can remember, of the Korça Communist Group. The two others I did not know, so I was wary.

Our movement had problems at that time. The Korça Communist Group was extending its membership and activity, but the enemy did not sit with folded arms. Its spies poked everywhere to bring to light the activities of the communists. But that day's "customers" did not

arouse any feeling of suspicion: they seemed quiet, honest people and, when I took their order, the comrade I knew said to me:

"This is Gogo Nushi; he wants to meet you."

I looked at Gogo, and we both smiled at the same time, so that I immediately felt the strangeness which can occur at a first introduction melt away. It was the smile of comrades dedicated to the same ideal, who were happy to meet, whose strength and faith in the struggle that had begun was increased by cooperation. I felt sure that in this young man, with his face chafed by the waves of the Ionian Sea (they had told me that day about him, and I knew that Gogo Nushi came from the coast), with his dark, wavy hair and bright, intelligent eyes, I would find a loyal and devoted comrade-in-arms in our struggle. While the three of them raised their glasses, like three customers, I noticed no suspicious movements in the street, so I went back to the table and said to them:

"I should like to take Gogo away from you for a while."

Gogo got up and followed me into the "secret" room where we usually discussed the various problems of the communist group and the broadening of our movement. As soon as we were alone, we shook hands and embraced like two friends after a long separation. Gogo immediately demonstrated his simplicity and warmth, and the respect with which he listened

to other people. He spoke slowly, sometimes repeating his words — a habit I noticed even more later. The thought that a mature, modest and steadfast member, a man with a great heart, was being added to our communist movement, filled me with pleasure and optimism.

Gogo began to tell me of his life in France, where he had gone at the age of 14. On going to work, he had come into contact with revolutionaries, whose ideas he had immediately embraced — and not only himself, but his whole family: father, mother, brother and sisters. Their house in Décines became a revolutionary base, as later the cabin which stood on the banks of the Lana. He spoke with special respect of the militant Ali Kelmendi and of Halim Xhelo.

The occupation of Albania by fascist Italy had made his absence from the homeland intolerable, and he had returned to fight with the communists and the Albanian people for its freedom.

Gogo Nushi was well-informed about the events of April 1939, but he wanted me to tell him the position in detail. I told him, and then I spoke about the state of the communist movement, about the great tasks which lay ahead and which, although they would seem difficult at first, were not impossible of achievement because our country had never lacked sons ready to sacrifice themselves for it. Gogo listened to me and nodded his head in

approval. In his eyes I saw faith in our movement; I saw proletarian readiness to throw himself into the struggle; I saw the maturity and coolness which would make him a distinguished leader of our Party.

From that day we would continually clasp hands when we took important decisions. My relations and collaboration with the unforgettable Gogo Nushi became ever closer, especially after the foundation of our Communist Party, and after my election as District Political Secretary in Tirana these links became of daily occurrence. No action of the guerilla units in Tirana took place without the thought, care and direct participation of Gogo Nushi. He was the military leader of the district and became the closest comrade of the brave fighters in these guerilla units and of their legendary commander Vojo Kushi. Through his activity and devotion, Gogo Nushi became one of the pillars of the Party organization in the capital. In the midst of fire and numerous enemies, he was everywhere; he met and advised the comrades as they worked, as they fought.

During the period in which I lodged and worked in the Nushis' cabin, when Gogo was involved in some action or important meeting, I would wait for his return impatiently. Valide would call on me to sit down, and lay before me a plate of steaming food.

"Eat while it's hot," she would say. "I've put a little flour in it to thicken the gravy."

"I'll wait for the others," I would reply,

"then I'll eat."

"What do you want with the others?"

"There's Gogo coming now!" I would say, pointing to the gate through which Gogo was entering in his usual raincoat and cloth cap.

Then we would sit down and eat, and he would tell me how things had gone. When everything had gone as it should, Gogo spoke quietly; but when something had gone wrong, he would pace the room without explaining why the task had not been carried out.

I recall vividly the pain which Gogo and Kozma felt when they heard of the killing of Qemal Stafa. They said: "We will take revenge!" Gogo was the more self-controlled, and expressed his grief only by repeating, as was his habit, the words: "Yes, yes, we'll take revenge!" to emphasize what was most essential and must certainly be done. But Kozma, with his poetic outlook, went immediately to the worker Gaço Trola, a co-worker of the Nushis, told him about the killing of Qemal and said that he must write a song about the hero such as our people had always sung. The song was born and spread immediately.[1]

[1] These are the words of the well-known song:

Within Tirana,
near the hospital
Qemal Stafa was killed...
A brave man from the mountains,...
He fought with revolvers
till the spirit left him...
I have three wounds
from Italian bullets.

Kozma himself wrote some of the verses. When I heard this song — so simple, yet so full of feeling — it was as though Qemal appeared before me as I had seen him on that last occasion — an intelligent, well-loved, distinguished Party militant, unafraid and believing completely in the victory of our struggle.

Among so many events in the Nushis' cabin, I shall not forget two incidents, one of which involved Mihal Duri.

Mihal was one of the oldest comrades in the Tirana branch of the Korça Communist Group and, later, one of the most dedicated members of the Party. He vas a typesetter, and so a proletarian, originating from the village of Erind in Gjirokastra district, from where Misto Mame also came. Mihal was daring, quick and energetic. He was enthusiastic, but his impulsiveness sometimes made him undisciplined. This was his only fault, which I pointed out to him, explaining it from the theoretical standpoint so that he would thoroughly understand this danger. Mihal, if I am not mistaken, had gone for some months for experience to a printing works in Turin, where he had come into contact with Italian anarchist printing workers. But his "anarchism" was so infantile that it did not present any danger.

Let me take revenge,
and never forget his blood.

which from that day was learned and spread with great speed among the masses of the people and the youth.

When we decided to cut the telephone wires all over Albania on the night of July 24, 1942, after I had notified all the committees of the precise day and hour, I gathered in Tirana the leaders of the guerilla units and informed them about the action, about the sectors where each would operate, and of the exact date and hour. One of these guerilla leaders was Mihal Duri.

On the day after the action I went to Gogo's cabin and waited there to be informed of the results in Tirana, since those from the rest of Albania would only reach us later by various codes. The operation would be a great success for the whole country; it would demonstrate the organizational strength and daring of the communists. The prestige of the Communist Party of Albania would be raised to a high level.

I waited impatiently for Gogo to return and inform me of the results of the Tirana action.

He turned the corner of the street, shaking his head from side to side as usual, but his impassive face revealed nothing. Gogo entered the room, smiled, embraced me and said:

"Taras, the whole operation went off successfully, without injury, without loss!"

I kissed Gogo and told him:

"Much of the credit for this success goes to you."

Gogo, as a true, simple communist replied:

"All the credit goes to the Party!"

I was overjoyed. The telephone and tele-

graph wires had been cut, and our guerillas had cut them. This was a great victory for us and a great defeat for the enemy. It confused and frightened the enemy not only in Albania: even the Italian forces in Greece were alarmed by this situation.[1]

Valide poked her head into the room and looked at us with questioning eyes.

"Valide," I said, "kiss Gogo! He's done a good job!"

"Long live the Party!" responded Valide, "we are all its soldiers! Now you deserve some coffee — real coffee!"

After we had drunk the coffee, Gogo said to me:

"Everything went like clockwork; only in Mihal Duri's sector were the wires not cut."[2]

"Why?" I asked in surprise. "What happened?"

"Mihal never came to report to me," said Gogo.

I was indignant. "Ah, Mihal, Mihal!" I cried, and told Gogo:

"Go and find Mihal, and send him to me immediately."

Gogo went away and I paced the room. Af-

[1] The Italian forces in Greece sent an urgent message to their command: "The alarming situation in Albania also places in danger the forces we have in Greece. We do not feel our rear to be secure." ("Zëri i Popullit," No. 3-4, October 1942)

[2] The sector of Mihal's unit was the Tirana-Elbasan line.

ter three-quarters of an hour Mihal arrived — thin, quick in movements, his black beret on his head, his famous check pullover clinging to his body. He came in, gave me his hand and said:

"You wanted me, Taras?"

"I wanted to know what had happened," I told him. "Why did you not carry out the task I gave you, and cut the wires in your sector?"

"What are you saying, Taras?!" replied Mihal. "The action was fixed for tonight."

"Leave off!" I told him. "The action has been carried out successfully all over Albania. Only your sector was unaffected."

Mihal put his hands to his head, took off his beret and hurled it to the floor and, weeping, said to me:

"Forgive me, Taras, I mistook the date. I thought it was today, not yesterday. What have I done!? Give me a more important job, Taras, and I'll do it this minute! I'm not afraid."

It was explained. Mihal had mistaken the date. I calmed down, and to calm Mihal I said:

"You don't have to tell me you're not afraid. I knew who you are, Mihal Duri. But you must be more careful. If all our comrades were like you, they would continually burn their feet."

"Taras," Mihal went on, "I'll carry out the operation tonight without fail."

"No, no," I ordered. "No way! The whole police and fascist militia are running about everywhere. They know in which sector the

wires weren't cut, and they'll be watching it. So don't put yourself in danger, it has no importance now." And I believed that I had pacified him by these words.

Glancing out of the window, I saw in the street a young man in spectacles, and with a beret on his head like Mihal's. I asked the latter:

"Who is that watching us from the street?"

"That's one of 'my' men," Mihal told me; "I'm training him; he's a painter."

"What's his name?" I asked.

"Foto Stamo."

I gave Mihal my hand and he left. Next morning I learned that, despite my advice, Mihal Duri had gone out with his unit and cut the wires in the sector assigned to him!

Another event involved a coward — quite the opposite to the brave and daring Mihal Duri.

In the spring of 1942 our Party was faced by one of the gravest and most difficult situations of the time of the war. As is known, after the formation of the Party, our struggle broadened and became everywhere more severe. Particularly in Tirana, we organized armed clashes with Italian officers and quislings and executed spies by day and night; we continually put out leaflets, painted up slogans, burned depots and seized weapons for the arming of units which fought day and night. The enemy also grew more savage — arresting and executing comrades — but we sharpened our

struggle. Tirana was ablaze under the enemy's feet.

Especially in April and May — when the enemy, as a result of an act of treachery, managed to get hold of the addresses of our bases and the names of almost all our comrades — the enemy's terror and the attempts to annihilate us became ever more savage. They searched houses, set up road blocks, sealed off whole areas. We had given the order that some sick comrades should be moved to Peza and the villages around it. Others we had ordered to remain in safe places, on the alert and not sleeping two consecutive nights in the same house. We had instructed those who were not outlaws to exercise extreme care and to follow orders strictly in giving the enemy the reply it deserved.

To the white terror of the enemy the Party replied with red terror. It was in these days that Valide's cabin became the centre of the terror, and each evening at dusk two couriers would report to me on the situation. One morning Koço Tashko appeared there.

As I have written elsewhere, he was a coward, a pseudo-intellectual with such astonishing ideas that sometimes one had the impression that he was unbalanced. He posed as a specialist on international affairs, making what he claimed to be analyses of situations from which he drew the conclusions of a confused man trying to give the impression that he has a high political level. His ideas, and the conclu-

sions he drew from a mishmash of disconnected news items which he had heard on the radio, were muddled and I never took them seriously. This, naturally, made him very angry. Sometimes, to give added weight to his ideas, he would say in the middle of a discussion: "Listen to what I say. I have had diplomatic experience. I was Fan Noli's Vice-Consul in New York. I graduated from Harvard."

"If Harvard," I said to myself, "produces people like Koço Tashko, it must be a very flawed university."

And so, in the difficult moments of the spring of 1942 when we were doing everything to overcome these difficulties without loss and without panic, Koço turned up to face me. Valide showed him into the room. He sat down and I asked him:

"What's up? Why have you come here?"

He flushed, taking it hard that I should ask him to give an account of himself, and told me:

"What are we doing?"

"We are fighting," I answered. "Have you still not understood this?"

In the part of the passage which served as kitchen and which was separated from the room by a partition, Milo, the father of Meno, was sitting:

Koço continued:

"I know that we are fighting, but are we to remain here in the middle of the terror? Do you know what is going on in the city?"

Growing angry, I told him:

"No one is forcing you to stay here! Go where you will!"

"No!" he said. "I want both of us to go. In such situations staff officers should move to safe places!"

"First of all, you do not have the head or the function of a staff officer: you are an ordinary soldier — and a cowardly soldier. I should leave Tirana at this time!? I should desert the Party organization, which we are building and which must be strengthened!? I should abandon the comrades and the people who are fighting under conditions of hardship and terror!? No, Koço Tashko; neither I nor the other comrades will ever do such a thing! We will die here, fighting with the people!"

I was shouting at this coward in anger, forgetting precautions, and Valide's brother, Milo, could not have avoided hearing the row. He got up and went quietly outside to the porch, where he told Valide:

"They'll cut each other to pieces! You must intervene!"

Valide, drawing her black shawl over her forehead, told her brother:

"Go into the street and keep watch. Enver knows what he's doing."

I rose to my feet and told Koço curtly:

"This is my reply! You may set off for Peza today or tomorrow morning!"

Koço went away and, without wasting a day, was in Peza that night. When he had left the cabin, Valide came in with a cup of coffee.

She watched me drinking the coffee and, when I had finished, put her hand on my knee and said:

"May you succeed in the struggle, *jeto*. I love the boys. But whoever does not obey the Party, that should be the reply!"

I embraced affectionately this brave mother, who quietly and firmly expressed so well the determination and defiant stoicism which characterize the whole people. The fact is that true communists like Mihal Duri, simple people like Valide, do not tremble for a moment at fascist violence and terror.

The simple people of Tirana, as in these moments and during the entire war, showed themselves to be unafraid, heroic, like giants — especially the Tirana women. I saw this with my eyes, I felt it in my heart in those terrible, tempestuous days when they opened the doors of their houses to us and took us into their families. So fanaticism disappeared. Whether they knew us or not, it sufficed to pass the word to them to be immediately received as one of the family. These mothers, these women, these heroic girls did not know fear, even if the fire reached the roofs of their houses.

"Those boys and girls," they said, "are fighting to save us from the enemy."

I knew almost all the houses used as bases for outlaws. At any moment of danger I went to them.

Late one evening, as I was hurrying by bicycle to reach a certain base because the cur-

few had begun, I realized that I was about to run straight into a patrol of militiamen. To evade search and other consequences I had to hide somewhere. I knew that in a nearby alley was the house of one of our comrades. I had been shown the house, but I had never been inside nor did I know the comrade. If you asked me today precisely where that house was, I could not say. I went there only once and in the dark; further, much time has passed and I have had no occasion since to visit those alleyways.

So I slowly pushed open the gate and entered a small courtyard. I pushed open the inner door to find myself in a typical Tirana house and said in a low voice:

"Mother, is there anyone here?"

An elderly woman came out of the darkness. Only the white kerchief on her head enabled me to distinguish her.

"They're after you, boy?" she asked me.

"Yes," I said.

"Go upstairs. You'll find a mattress there. Lie down and rest. I'll keep guard."

She did not ask my name, and I did not know the name of her son. But the mother knew her son and the son knew his mother. After I had rested for a while, I went slowly back downstairs and found the mother sitting at the bottom of the stairs. I said to her:

"Mother, go and see — is there any patrol or suspicious person in the street?"

She went outside at once, checked to the right and left and, when she returned, told me:

"Not a sign of anyone!"

Seeing that I was ready to leave, she placed her hands on my shoulders and said in an affectionate but trembling voice:

"You must go, boy, if you have work to do. But this house is always open to you. May God protect you!"

She pressed me to her breast and in the darkness of the night I felt her put something in my pocket. Outside I saw that it was a small quince.

O my beloved Tirana mother! I never learned your name, nor did you learn mine. I regret that I did not know you, that I never met you again. But you glow in my memory and my heart, and until I die the memory of that night will never be extinguished!

Such were the heroic mothers of communists, of the freedom fighters. Such too was my dear Valide. I have many unforgettable memories of you, of your brave sons, of your simple cabin where for entire days and nights I lived and worked in the stormy period of illegality during 1942.

Later the affairs of the Party and of the war obliged me to move away from Tirana where at the head of the Party organization we left one of our best and most distinguished comrades, Gogo Nushi — "Hysen," as the communists and people of the city of Tirana knew him and called him. And our dear Nushi carried out with honour and devotion the tasks with which the Party charged him, not only as District Po-

litical Secretary in Tirana but also as liaison officer of the Central Committee with the district committee, and later when we were working and fighting in Labinot, Kucakë, Panarit, Vithkuq, Helmës and Odriçan.

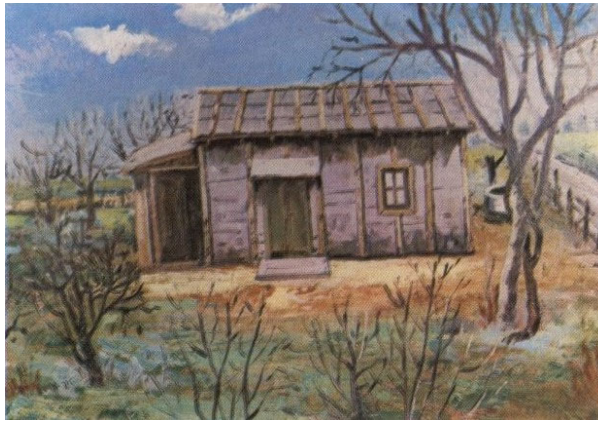
At the end of the year 1944 I had a nostalgic meeting with Gogo in liberated Berat and I asked him about everything that had happened since we had last been together. During all this time we had corresponded regularly on matters concerning the Party and the war, but I wanted to know all about Mother Valide, about Shana, Çeno and Lilo. I shared with Gogo concern for his beloved brother and my dear comrade, Kozma. The nazis had sent him away to their concentration camps and we did not know whether he was alive or not.[1]

After we entered Tirana, which resounded with the joy of victory, I went to meet our Mother Valide and we talked nostalgically over old times. She was delighted at everything. We had fought, we had shed our blood, but we had won. The war had deprived many mothers of their sons, but they were proud of all they had given for victory.

You, my dear Valide, were strong, and your children were like yourself. Fierce was the milk you gave them!

As long as Valide lived, we remained close. I often went to see her, went up to her room,

[1] People's Hero Kozma Nushi was killed in the Mauthausen concentration camp on March 3, 1945.



“For all of us... this cabin will remain unforgettable. It was the cabin of revolutionaries, of outlaws, of memorable meetings with comrades who shared the same ideal.” (Sketch of the Nushis’ cabin)

Athina Nushi, Valide. The simple, ardent revolutionary woman. “The mother of two of the most distinguished communist heroes, Gogo and Kozma.”

Kozma Nushi — Hero of the People. (Interned in Mauthausen and killed on March 3, 1945)

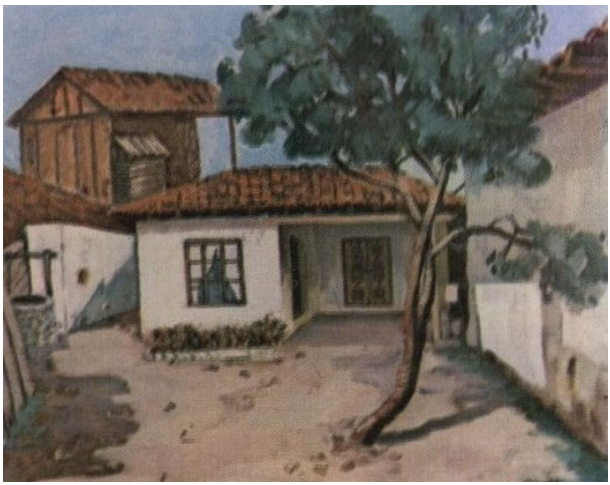
Gogo Nushi — 1913-1970

“Hatixe Farka’s house was situated in an alley on Red Hill. The Party preserved this dwelling, which was turned into a museum visited by thousands of people — young and old.”

Red Hill, where Vojo, Xhoxhi and Sadik wrote a glorious epic in blood.

“Hatixhe Farka, the brave mother of Tirana whom, like her own children, we all called Ije.”

Vojo Kushi on the Enemy Tank
(*Painting of the People's Painter Sali Shijaku*)



The house of Mother Mine Keta continued to be, until the day of Liberation, the house of all illegal comrades, the house of the Party. It was never closed.

"My loyal friend, the brave communist Dullë Keta."

"Nazmije Keta became one of the best activists of our war."

Comrade Enver Hoxha with Mine Keta and her son, Haki Keta.

“When Tefta and Kristaq were married, I went to their wedding, which was very simple and without useless ceremony.”

embraced her and, away from the others, we reminisced about the unforgettable life in the cabin.

But eventually the site of the cabin was required for large new buildings. They asked Valide for permission to demolish it and to raise nearby a memorial pedestal. Valide told them:

"Ask Enver and Gogo. Let it be as they wish."

"How can we destroy the cabin, Gogo!" I said to him. "It's an historic place for us. We lived there in difficult times. How many meetings did we hold there?"

"Enver," said Gogo, "we cannot obstruct progress. This is going to become a beautiful area. Over that cabin will go up palaces, day-nurseries, schools."

I was sorry that our beloved cabin was to go, even though on its site would be erected beautiful, many-storeyed palaces. But the palaces and other majestic edifices we have built everywhere in our country can never be dissociated from the cabins, huts and single-storeyed houses of the war, which opened their doors to us and sheltered us with love as if we had been their own sons. These can never be demolished in our memory and in the hearts of the people.

One day Valide said to me:

"Taras, I'm going to leave you. I'm going away."

"Where are you going, Valide?" I said,

making an effort to smile, for I saw that she was suffering.

"I'm going to the boys, to Kozma," she told me.

"I'll get you a passport," I said.

The courageous old woman smiled and said:

"A passport isn't needed where I'm going."

And Valide died in January 1956: the mother of two of the most distinguished communist heroes, Gogo and Kozma; the mother of the firm communist and partisan Çeno; the mother of the brave girls Shana and Lilo; the mother of all of us. I remember this simple, passionate, simple woman with deep love and respect. I remember her sons — who were also the Party's sons — Kozma and Gogo. And these memories reinforce my determination to fight always for the Party.

THREE LEGENDARY COMMUNISTS

In the difficult but heroic days of our Anti-Fascist National Liberation War, the simple houses of the people were our bases, were our places of work, of shelter, of illegal printing; they were "hospitals" for wounded comrades. Simple people gave their poor houses over to us young communists, who had made our aim the liberation of the homeland. The boys and girls from these houses became our comrades in this cause, increasing daily the ranks of the fighters against fascism. Their mothers became our mothers, whose hearts beat with anxiety when their sons and daughters were with us, but whose lips smiled every time they welcomed us.

They did not fear fascism and its servants, nor terror, nor reprisals. They did not fear for their children or for their houses, which they placed at the disposal of the Party and its work. These poor houses, these ground-floor rooms, these basements, became "halls" and "offices" of the Party, where we held meetings and issued the first directives. Out of them would develop the congress halls of today.

Many houses in Tirana were bases of our war, of the city's guerillas. Many of them were inherited from the various communist groups which, on the formation of the Party, handed them over to the Provisional Central Commit-

tee of the Party along with their lists of members, sympathizers and bases.

Naturally, with the formation of the Party and the broadening of the war, we not only created many other bases — the houses of patriotic families, which would be turned into local war headquarters throughout the towns — but we began to make strict rules about comings and goings in relation to them, since care had to be taken and the necessary conspiratorial methods adopted — something which did not exist during the time of the groups and in the first months of the occupation of the country.

The bases had to be kept highly secret and could not be made known to everybody; although we were comrades in the same cause, each had to know only a limited number of bases. We made it a rule that the cell secretaries and the leaders of armed action groups, before every action, should know a certain number of bases in the neighbourhood of the site of the action so that, in case of emergency, they could hide or place their wounded, if any, there.

A number of bases were known only to members of the district committee. These bases served as arms depots, for the illegal press, for the storing of secret materials and for important meetings. Naturally we had our preferences as to bases: for outlaws and wounded we attempted to find in old Tirana houses of patriots which were inconspicuous — especially houses which had small gardens with trees or were surrounded by walls, generally of brick,

from which in case of emergency and siege, one could pass from garden to garden, from street to street, from quarter to quarter. We had as bases for outlaws also big houses on boulevards, the owners of which were officials trusted by the regime, or merchants, or professors, or well-known singers like Tefta Tashko and others. The Party, by its work, had won these people over, had enlightened their minds and hearts, so that they placed everything at the service of the war, at the service of the great cause of the people.

The struggle broadened; new warriors swelled the ranks of the National Liberation War; the number of anti-fascist sympathisers grew. Helpers in the war against the occupiers multiplied; more and more doors were opened to us. The people of the towns learned how to struggle in conditions of illegality, by day and by night. Revolver and rifle shots were exchanged in the middle of the night between our comrades and the Italians; officers and spies were executed, depots were burned and attacked. The enemy would surround areas and streets, but among the people no one talked and comrades were rarely caught by surprise.

In this way, for example, when Qemal Stafa and some comrades were surrounded for the first time, in 1942 at the end of the Street of the Barricades, he managed to escape because he was sheltered and hidden by a poor family who did not know him but knew of and supported the struggle of our Party. So the people came

to the defence of the communists, of those who fought fascism without reservations.

News of the heroism of the Albanian communists spread rapidly. The "oral newspaper" of the people penetrated everywhere; the prestige of the Party grew — but so, likewise, did the enemy's terror. But the comrades shewed no fear, only an exemplary heroism. The people followed us loyally; the people defended us. Naturally, I speak particularly of poor people, who were in the vanguard of the struggle.

The Party had given its members the directive:

> "Strike without mercy at enemies and traitors: fight to the death! If you see no possibility of escaping from encirclement, do not throw down your arms and deliver them to the enemy! Whoever falls in battle becomes a flag: one of us may fall, but a hundred others will be drawn into the war!"

Under this historic slogan of the Party — which set aflame the hearts of the people, which inspired feelings of hatred and vengeance and the desire to defend the homeland and the Party and to fight the foreign enemies and the native traitors mercilessly — our communists in every corner of Albania performed acts of great heroism. They made the enemy and his quisling administration tremble.

One of these heroic acts about which the history of our people will speak generation af-

ter generation was the great battle, carried to the supreme sacrifice, of comrades Vojo Kushi, Xhoxhi Martini and Sadik Stavaleci. These three legendary warriors of our people I met for the last time, one day before they fell heroically in the house of Hatixhe Farka, the brave mother of Tirana whom, like her own children, we all called Ije.

Ije Farka was a widow with five sons. She worked herself to death by day and never seemed to rest. She was lively, skilful with her hands and kept her house scrupulously tidy. She was a brave woman and remained strong in spite of the severe wounds which life had dealt her. During the war years her eldest son, Shyqyri, who was connected with the movement, died of illness. Later the fascists arrested her third son, Ramazan, tortured him, and then interned him in Prishtina concentration camp, where he was executed. Although quite young, about 19, he had taken part in guerilla units. Nevertheless Ije did not waver, but continued to work for the National Liberation War, for she was one of those mothers who said with pride:

"I have given the blood of my son to the Party!"

Ije's house was situated in an alley on Red Hill. The Party preserved this dwelling, which was turned into a museum visited by thousands of people — young and old. And Mother Ije Farka was made its curator, for she had been there from the beginning to the end of the he-

roic struggle of our comrades.

Vojo, Xhoxhi and Sadik were three legendary communists, fearlessly brave, loyal unto death to the Party and the people. Vojo Kushi was from Shkodra, Xhoxhi Martini from Tirana, Sadik Stavaleci from Kosova. All three came from different communist groups. They were as close as flesh and blood to their Party, the Communist Party. In accordance with their ideals, they fought for Mother Albania as a single body. But however brave and determined they were, they were simple people.

I became acquainted with Vojo in Tirana not long after the foundation of the Party, in the period when I was District Political Secretary for Tirana. The guerilla units of the capital, shrewdly led and directed by the district committee, had carried out daring actions there, where the enemy and its agents had never expected them. But the development of the war demanded that actions be better organized and more frequent, so that the people could see who the communists were and so that the ground should shake under the enemy's feet. I had been told much about the courage and directing skill of a young man named Vojo Kushi, and I wanted to get to know him because we had decided to place him at the head of the guerilla units in Tirana. On the day fixed for the meeting, when I was working at the home of Dullë and Mine Keta along with a comrade from the district committee, there entered a porter with a powerful phy-

sique, ragged and dusty.

"I am Vojo Kushi," he told me in a masculine but gentle voice. "I come from Shkodra."

I took his hand and then, in the middle of the courtyard of the Ketas' house, I embraced Vojo Kushi — who would become some months later the legendary hero of Red Hill along with his comrades Xhoxhi Martini and Sadik Stavaleci.

We went inside and remained silent for a moment. There I noticed for the first time that, despite the impression created by Vojo's athletic physique, he was shy and sensitive, and blushed easily.

Vojo was a tall boy, with broad shoulders, a healthy, candid face, and hair which was always cut short. He held his body erect and his head high. I stayed with Vojo in Mine Keta's house and was happy that such a fighter — determined and brave, simple and shrewd, should have been added to the ranks of the guerilla units in Tirana.

When he had told me how he had come, I spoke about the task with which the district committee had charged him. I stressed that this was a difficult task, but very important, and that the Party had unshakeable faith that its member Vojo Kushi would carry it out successfully.

"You will have at your side," I told him, "comrades tested in battle, with whom you will work closely. This close cooperation begins today," I added.

"I will do all in my power to carry out this task with honour," said Vojo. From our first unforgettable meeting I noticed that Vojo was extremely economical with words. I noticed this characteristic even more when later we were working out plans of action together.

While we were talking, I drew out my new revolver and held it out to him. His eyes brightened. He took it in his hands and kissed it.

"I shall make it sing like a nightingale against the enemy, Comrade Taras," he said. And then, as if had remembered something, he looked me straight in the eye and added: "But you'll be without it!"

"It doesn't matter; I'll find another," I said.

Vojo thanked me again and, shaking hands with each other, we parted for that day.

My dear comrade Vojo Kushi became a member of the Tirana District Committee and one of its bravest, most logical, simplest and most energetic workers in struggles and actions. As a member of the District Committee we appointed Vojo director of guerilla warfare in Tirana. Although from Shkodra, he knew Tirana like the back of his hand,

"You, Vojo," I told him, "will become a great strategist in our war."

"Comrade Enver," he replied, "I want to always be a soldier of the Party. But the Party must not spare me."

I stayed with Vojo at various bases until the night when, over a map of Tirana which the comrades had captured from the Italians, we

were drawing up plans of action, working out methods of search and investigation, planning routes for withdrawal and bases where comrades could hide materiel captured from the enemy. So in the light of the lamp, which had been burning the whole night, we both worked with Vojo, who suggested astonishing forms and methods of organizing the work.

"Vojo," I told him, "you must not expose yourself so much. I know that you can't stand being left out of actions, but think of the great help you are to the Party. Consider what is most important: to organize and direct all this activity, or to kill a spy and be killed in return."

"I understand," said Vojo, "but there it is! If only I could sit back and let others do the shooting!"

"We must shoot, and we must take part in actions even where there is the greatest danger, but organization comes first," I told him.

"I agree," he said, but I saw that he was far from happy.

One night, after the completion of an action against an Italian depot, when we were standing opposite one another round the stove, I told him:

"Vojo, what fools we were in the time of the groups. We bickered, quarrelled and fought. We were divided and clannish. Look how big and beautiful our united struggle is! The Party has made us all sons of the eagle. We are bound together like reinforced concrete. Marxism-Leninism has welded us into a new

Party for the brave and determined; the great misfortune of the people and the homeland binds us together forever."

"Listen, Enver," said Tarzan, "we have and we shall have amongst us some 'comrades' who are not loyal to this unity. They want to destroy the Party we have forged with blood."

"I know, Vojo," I told him, "we are aware and must be aware of this; we must never lose sight of this. We must be vigilant. Naturally, we shall try and convince them, but if they continue their factional work, we must rout them."

On other nights we read with Vojo articles by Lenin and Stalin, and discussed them. One day Vojo brought to the base a worn book, with many pages missing.

"It's in French," he told me; "I brought it because you know French. It's the trial of the Trotskyist traitors: Zinoviev, Kamenev and others."

I took it from his hands and said:

"Stay here tonight, Vojo. I'll translate it and we'll read it all. How many things we have to learn!"

And so we did.

Along with Vojo I "reviewed" the comrades of the Tirana organization. I knew them a little better, and I told him:

"Vojo, this is a job for you. Select the most enterprising and the most determined, and organize assault teams. But don't send them out without detailed instructions. They must know everything; we don't want foolhardy bravery,

but intelligent bravery. Our struggle does not consist of one action, but of thousands of actions organized in various forms and taking place in the four corners of the country. Bear in mind, brother, that we are fighting to create Party cadres, cadres with experience in action. We must be aware of every action, otherwise we could be taken by surprise. We could endanger comrades and bases through one small detail, so we must not permit anarchy in actions; as you know, we have some comrades of the former 'Youth' Group who are courageous, but are strongly infected with anarchism. We must work with them and inject into their blood the order and discipline of the Party."

Vojo Kushi was a wonderful militant. Our joint work and struggle continued in this way day and night, until the day before the hero fell, when I went to meet him in Ije Farka's house. It was my last meeting and talk with Vojo Kushi, and with his two comrades Xhoxhi Martini and Sadik Stavaleci.

Xhoxhi Martini was a young comrade from Tirana. He was a worker. I had met him several times and he had made a deep impression on me, for he was a vanguard fighter. He was as mercurial as Misto Mame, as Mihal Duri and tens of other young people who worked in the Tirana organization. Vojo and Gogo spoke to me with admiration about him, as about Shygyri Ishmi, Lym Shyri, Lym Keta and others. I had in fact met Xhoxhi Martini twice, but I had heard his name many times, for he had

taken part in a number of actions.

Xhoxhi Martini participated in the burning down of a fascist school and, along with Sabaudin Gabrani also burned down the Tirana telephone exchange. This action, aside from the daring and courage which our comrades never lacked for a moment, required also coolness and intelligence. The detachment of which Xhoxhi and Sabaudin were members entered the exchange, disarmed the gendarmes and set the building ablaze with petrol. The flames engulfed the sky, warming the hearts of the people. Much was said about this action and a justified pride was felt by all.

This action occurred in the middle of August 1942 and, less than a month later, in September, Xhoxhi Martini and Shygyri Ishmi would carry out another action, as dangerous and as daring, an action to seize materiel from the Tirana postal depot. The depot was situated right in the centre of the city and to the comrades of the unit which included Xhoxhi Martini and Shygyri Ishmi it presented great difficulties: the action had to be carried out not at night, when traffic had stopped, but by day. Xhoxhi presented himself to the guard as if he had authorization to remove materials and, while the guard was inspecting his forged authorization, the comrades of the unit captured him and tied him to a chair. Their vehicle was loaded with printing materials and moved off, at midday, to drive straight to the appointed place. By the time the fascists learned of this

operation, it had been successfully completed and Xhoxhi Martini and Shygyri Ishmi were already thinking about new actions.

It was precisely in one of these actions that the fascists captured our unforgettable comrade Shygyri Ishmi, put him in prison and tortured him in a barbarous manner; but not a word came from his mouth.

Shygyri Ishmi's stand was heroic, before the court as before the gallows, until he died. "Long live the Communist Party of Albania!" "Down with fascism!" "Stand like men, comrades!" he called from the courtyard of the prison when they took him out to be hanged in the square which today bears the name "Avni Rustemi." Meanwhile from the cells came the roar of "The Internationale," the hymn of victory, sung by comrades to accompany our comrade Shygyri Ishmi to his death. Before his execution he would not allow the fascists to read out the sentence of hanging, but cried out: "I am a communist and a member of the Albanian Communist Youth, and I am not afraid to die! The Albanian Communist Youth will not end with my death. I shall be revenged. The Albanian youth is like the grass mown down in the meadow, which grows again even stronger."

Xhoxhi Martini was also wounded in this action, but he managed to escape without falling into the hands of the enemy. The comrades had taken the wounded to Ije Farka's house, where Vojo went to see him. They reported the whole affair to me, telling me that Sadik

Stavaleci was also there and wanted to meet me, since he was going to Kosova and wished to know if I had any requests for the comrades there.

I set off by bicycle, zigzagging through the alleys so as not to be followed. When I was sure that no spy was on my trail, I went into the alley where Ije's house stood and knocked on the door with the signal we had.

I went inside. I embraced Xhoxhi, who was sitting on a divan, then Sadik and Vojo, and began the conversation with a rebuke for Xhoxhi. He was sitting on the bed and had taken his "Turkish ten-shooter" to pieces and was cleaning every part.

"You have a reserve revolver, as you've taken yours to bits?" I said. Xhoxhi was young and intelligent; he understood and, turning red, replied:

"No, I haven't; but Vojo and Sadik have theirs."

"Two revolvers are not enough; you need three," I told him; "every soldier must have his own weapon ready, so reassemble it quickly. We communists must always have our weapons ready. We never know what is going to happen."

I congratulated Xhoxhi on the action and embraced him warmly.

"Your wound must heal," I told him, "then we'll move you."

"It's healed!" said Xhoxhi.

"Get away!" I said.

Then we went into another room with Sadik and Vojo. It was the second time I had met Sadik. He was a firm communist, who loved the Party with his whole heart. He was a quiet, self-effacing man. Sadik had been an orphan all his life, and when the Party was born (he was accepted as a party member from its creation) he found there the warmth of comrades united by the same ideal around our great mother — a warmth he had lacked till then. Sadik devoted all his strength to the triumph of the ideas of the Party. As he had affirmed at the fascist trial of the communists in February 1939, alongside Qemal Stafa and Vasil Shanto, he was a convinced communist, and remained so to the end of his life. Physically he was not strong; unfortunately he had a disease of the lungs. The Kosovar comrades had asked him to go there to work and we, as we had done for many others, decided to send him. He was to leave the next day.

I informed him fully about our situation here, about our work experience and other things, and asked him to inform Fadil Hoxha and other comrades about these and to give them my best wishes. "Take every measure for his trip," I told Vojo and, embracing Sadik, I parted from him and from the comrades. How could I know that I was embracing these three dear comrades, these three heroic communists, for the last time?!

As I was descending the stairs, Ije stepped in front of me:

"Let's go into the room below," she said. "I have something to tell you."

"Surely," I said, and we went in.

"Listen Taras," Ije told me. "You know very well that I'm not afraid for myself or for my boys. Let them burn my house! But I am concerned for the lives of the comrades. People come and go here including, as you know, Anastas Lula and Xhepi (Sadik Premte) when they were in Tirana. This is not right. The police will spot it, especially now that we have Xhoxhi wounded here."

"Ije," I said, "you're quite right. I will tell the comrades what you have said. Listen, Ije, scrap the signal we had. Open the door only when you hear this signal" — and I fixed a new signal — "and you will know that whoever knocks has been sent by me"

"Right," said Ije, "arrange this!"

I went on my bicycle directly to the house of Picuk (Perikli Borova), on what used to be Fortuzi Street and is now Asim Vokshi Street, where I met one of our comrades. I gave him orders to stop all visits to Ije Farka's home without my authorization, and then rushed straight over to the other side of Tirana. There I lodged in a house which had been rented by Syrja Selfo. She was shortly to be married but the house — near the Mosque of Zami — was still empty. Behind this house was that of a cousin of Nexhmije's, an engineering worker called Mersin Qyflaku, who was a sympathizer of our National Liberation Movement. From

the entrance to this house came Nexhmije, who brought me news and something to eat. Then Nexhmije and I worked together on an article.

Just before dawn we heard rifle shots, the rattle of machine guns and the explosions of grenades.

We extinguished the lights and went to the window. I listened to the firing with anxiety and deep sadness, for I felt sure that somewhere comrades were fighting under siege. But who were they and where were they fighting? These questions beat at my head like a hammer. There was nothing we could do in those moments — except to hope, as always, that the comrades could break out of the encirclement.

At last the noise of the shots and explosions died away.

"I'll go and see," I said to Nexhmije.

"Certainly not," she told me; "there will be road blocks. Wait, and I'll go out later and try and find out what has happened."

After about half an hour Nexhmije, as the intrepid communist she was, went out. When she returned, she came into the room and burst into tears, embraced me and said:

"Vojo Kushi, Sadik and Xhoxhi have been killed. They fought heroically. Vojo hurled bombs into an enemy tank; many fascists were killed."

My legs gave way beneath me and I fell on to a sofa, crying like a child. But I quickly recovered my self-control. War must have its

martyrs, I thought, and I sat down at the desk and wrote in one breath the leaflet "Three Heroes for the Freedom of the Motherland,"[1] which Nexhmije took to the comrades, who printed and distributed it the same day.

Later two comrades came and informed me in detail about this painful incident. After this Ije Farka's house remained surrounded for some weeks, but the mother did not give way to fear in spite of the enemy's pressure. She was a brave woman and had great faith in the Party and its struggle.

Since Liberation I have gone several times to visit Ije and she has received me as lively, talkative, sunny and optimistic as ever. And she has often come to visit us. We have talked together about the difficult years of the war. Once Mother Ije told me:

"When you first came in your spectacles, with your briefcase and on your bicycle, I thought you must be a doctor. But the comrades told me that the enemy was trying to capture you, to cut you up into little pieces."

"Well, the enemy didn't capture us," I responded, "because we were many and because you protected us from them, because you sheltered us with great generosity in your houses."

[1] Comrade Enver Hoxha wrote two special articles on the heroism of Vojo Kushi, Sadik Stavaleci and Xhoxhi Martini in "Zëri i Popullit" — one in No. 3-4 of October (which was first printed in the form of a pamphlet), the other in No. 5-6 of November 1942. See: Enver Hoxha: "Works," vol. 1, 2nd Alb. ed., pp. 140-142, 145-146).

Afterwards we recalled and spoke with sorrow about our comrades of the war — about Vojo, about Xhoxhi and Sadik, who wrote an epic with their blood.

The epic of Red Hill, where Vojo the Partisan fell with his comrades, forms part of the history of our people. Everyone has learned it, and will learn it generation after generation. The bravery of the communists who fought and fell heroically for the liberation of the homeland will always be a source of inspiration for our people, who have closed ranks around our steel Party, which is now leading the construction of socialism so successfully. The foundations of the Party are laid upon the blood of thousands of martyrs, upon the blood of those legendary communists, those heroes of the people, Vojo Kushi, Xhoxhi Martini and Sadik Stavaleci.

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF TEFTA TASHKO AND HER BROTHERS GAQO AND ALEKO

Tefta Tashko was one of the best singers of that dark and backward time which was the Zog regime. Artists were not highly thought of. Ignorant and reactionary officials not only despised art and culture, but denigrated them, and obstructed in every way those few artists who, through their own efforts and those of their families, managed to attain a high standard without benefit of art or music school.

Those few young men and women who managed to achieve this had nowhere to practise their profession. There were no theatrical companies, no galleries where they could exhibit their artistic works. Democrats, friends of art and those who wished these artists well for personal reasons strove to make a hall and a piano available, since any piano to be found in Tirana was the property of some businessman, who kept it in his own house only for its appearance, to decorate the room rather than to play. In fact, no one in these well-to-do families knew how to play — such families having money but no culture, and the majority being quite ignorant. In such a lamentable state was the development of art and culture under the Zog regime. What am I saying? Development! It was like putting water on the fire to begin to

go along such a path.

I can say that our pioneers in singing were Tefta Tashko (later Koço) Jorgjia Filçe (later Truja), Marie Paluca (later Kraja) and their inseparable and untiring accompanist Lola Aleksi (later Gjoka).

Tefta Tashko was the sister of Koço, Gaqo and Aleko. It seems to me that they had another sister, but I did not know her and never saw her in Albania. Tefta Tashko studied singing at the Paris Conservatoire. With her went her mother and Aleko. Gaqo, if I am not mistaken, went to Austria, where he studied agriculture.

Aleko and Tefta came back from Paris, one as a teacher of mathematics, the other as a singer. Aleko was appointed a teacher at the Tirana high school, while Tefta remained without work, and her friends Jorgjia and Maria were obliged to become teachers at the secondary school for girls at the Women's Institute in Tirana. Nevertheless, Tefta did not give in. Although she seemed frail and delicate, she was courageous and determined. She forced her way forward: she began to give concerts wherever she could, in difficult conditions, not only in Tirana but also in other towns and even in tiny villages, where she was received with affection and enthusiasm by our long-suffering people — a people with the soul of an artist, a people which had always loved song and had passed through joys, sorrows and unfinished struggles with a song on its lips. The people

knew Tefta also through her broadcasts from Radio Tirana. Tefta took a house in Tirana and at first lived with her mother — an elderly woman, short, sympathetic, wearing spectacles and dressed always in black. All her children resembled her, more or less, in features, and especially in their short stature. Tefta was very fond of her mother and was rarely seen outside without her; they always used to walk arm-in-arm.

I first became acquainted with Tefta through Koço, who was like myself a member of the Korça Communist Group. It was through him, too, that I met Gaqo, while I knew Leko earlier in Tirana, when I was unemployed and looking for somewhere to stay with friends or comrades. They were good people and — apart from Koço, who was a communist — all the others were consistent democrats, anti-Zog and anti-fascist. One felt the inspiration and culture they had received from their father, the distinguished patriot Thanas Tashko, and from the environment in which they had lived for many years in emigration, amid many well-known patriots of our National Renaissance, in Egypt and elsewhere.

Gaqo Tashko was later accepted into the Party. He was an honest and devoted communist. The Party nominated him as Minister of Agriculture at a time when the difficulties were great. He made every effort, worked well and distinguished himself for his Party fidelity and determination. Until his death, Gaqo

Tashko lived and fought like a loyal Party communist. From the time of the occupation I was friendly with Gaqo and greatly respected him, because he was one of the most learned young men under the Zog regime, and one who fought that regime with his whole heart. I always listened to Gaqo attentively when he spoke about the problem of the impoverished peasantry.

From the beginning he introduced me to his close friends, who were very well-educated people. Such were Naum Stralla, Pasko Milo and others. I had gone on several occasions to Gaqo's house and to that of Pasko Milo. I had seen gather there economists, teachers, architects like Anton Lufi and others. Naturally, they spoke about politics and all were true democrats who hated the regime and fascist Italy, which had filled the administration with its people. All these patriots, whom I had known under the Zog regime, later helped the National Liberation War and the Party, and after Liberation they were among the most capable experts in the country. They worked under the direction of the Party and made a great contribution to the construction of socialism. Some, like Gaqo and Naum Stralla (Hero of Socialist Labour) have died; Milo, Lufi and others are respected pensioners who continue to work.

Gaqo Tashko was married to a girl from Elbasan, from the patriotic family of the Budas. All the boys and girls of this family were well-educated people who had been to university.

Only Sofokli, the youngest, had not been to university, since he was at secondary school at the time of the occupation. But he made the illegal struggle in the towns, the National Liberation War and the struggle to build socialism his "university." "Little" Sofokli was linked with me at the time of the groups, since he too was a member of the Korça Group. He became a member of the Party when it was formed and took part in the foundation conference of the Communist Youth (November 23, 1941). A little while later, although still young, he died.

Gaqo's wife, Liri Tashko, an intelligent, capable and cultured woman, took an active part in the National Liberation War, and after Liberation fought with all her strength — and continues to work untiringly today — as an active and distinguished cadre of the Union of Women of Albania for the emancipation of the Albanian woman.

Her brother, Aleks Buda, is the most noted historian in our country, a true scholar who is guided by Marxist-Leninist theory. He is now President of the Academy of Sciences of Albania.

This was Gaqo Tashko's circle — a circle of patriotic democrats — as I knew it at that time. Later I cooperated closely with them for the reconstruction of our homeland, ravaged by the war.

Aleko Tashko, as I said above, I had known when I was unemployed in Tirana. The regime had cut off my salary and dismissed me

from my job.

One day I said to Leko:

"Can you pull some strings to get me appointed a teacher in a secondary school? I'm broke and I'm becoming a burden on the comrades."

Some days later Leko told me:

"They're bastards! They told me: 'Enver Hoxha is a dubious character. He associates with people who are against the government.' I told them: 'But he always stays with us.' And do you know what they replied? 'Then you should help to expose him'... But have patience!" Leko told me; "we'll keep on trying."

And done it was: I was appointed a teacher in a secondary school, but without a salary. I was paid for each hour of teaching I gave. If I was ill, or when the school holidays came round, I received no pay like the others; I was paid like a casual labourer, and this continued when they transferred me to Korça and after the country was occupied, until the quisling government dismissed me because I was against the occupiers and had communist ideas.

Nevertheless, I commenced work. I was assisted in my first steps in the honourable profession of teacher by Leko Tashko, Lele (Vangjel) Gjikondi and others like Minella Karagjani who, although younger than I, had more experience as a teacher. In these first days and months, they would come into the classes where I was giving lessons and would

greet me, encourage me and speak highly about me to the pupils, knowing that the latter had great respect for them as masters of their subjects. Gradually I learned my new duties, got to know the pupils and became a part of the school.

So began my friendship with Leko Tashko. He was a fine man, pure in heart and well-disciplined. He was small in stature, but strong. He held his head and body very erect, and had a handsome, sympathetic face. He was a man of few, but thoughtful, words. He had authority and tended to dominate others. He was a skilled mathematician, but had a broad culture. I had a great respect for him, and said to Koço:

"Let's get Leko involved in things. He has all the qualities."

"No," said Koço, like the pope. "It wouldn't do for me to be exposed again."

This surprising reason I never understood, particularly later with all that happened in Korça. Our group made Leko leader of the Korça youth, a task he accepted eagerly and tackled with determination and courage, since here we clashed with the Zog regime and its representative, General Aqif Përmet. But we will say no more here about this episode.

Koço and Leko invited me several times to their home, and it was there that I became acquainted with their mother and with Tefta.

Tefta had a beautiful, melodious voice. She was a marvellous soprano, a singer with com-

plete mastery of her voice. She interpreted with rare talent operatic arias by the most renowned composers of France, Italy and other countries. She was an impassioned singer, who valued her profession highly and possessed not only musical culture, but also a general culture. She had a high political level and was an ardent patriot. She had an especial love of folk songs, which she interpreted with deep feeling.

Although short in stature, she had an attractive appearance, with a round face and dark, bright, laughing eyes. She combed and arranged her hair so as to form a sort of crown around her head. She was very serious and of high moral principles.

One day Tefta was giving a concert in a small cinema in the town. I met her in the street and as we shook his hands she said to me:

"Enver, I'm giving a concert tonight. It would make me very happy if you would come and hear me."

"If only I could!" I replied. "It would give me great pleasure."

"Then sort everything out with Leko," replied Tefta.

Dear Tefta Tashko: she knew my deplorable financial position and said: "Sort everything out with Leko." And indeed Leko met me and gave me a ticket to go to the concert. It was a wonderful concert. Tefta sang well-known classical arias and folk songs — among the latter "The Spring in Our Village." There

was much applause. She was pleased at this, but her friends and comrades also felt pleasure for their talented comrade.

Some days later I paid a visit to her hone to congratulate her. Leko was married, and Tefta lived with her mother. Their house was by "The Pantaloons." There has been so much building there that I have difficulty now in deciding just where it was, and I do not know if it still stands. It was a two-storeyed house, fairly new, tastefully furnished, and Tefta kept it spotlessly clean. It had a big gate, not opening into "The Pantaloons" but in the opposite direction — in the direction, if I am not mistaken, of the Nushis' cabin some way away. In front of the house there was a small garden. Tefta, her brothers and her close friends did not use the big gate, but entered by a small gate. This led, on the opposite side to the big gate, into "The Pantaloons," some 200-300 metres away. Tefta received me cordially and I congratulated her warmly and wholeheartedly on her beautiful concert.

"Tell me your impressions as a comrade," said Tefta.

"Tefta," I told her, "I do not understand music as you do. I have not had the chance to go to the opera, but I have heard records of famous singers. I'm not in the habit of paying compliments, but you sing like Galli-Curci — indeed better than she."

Tefta laughed and said:

"That is a compliment, Enver."

"No," I replied, "when I hear that melodious voice of yours, I think that even the song of the nightingale could not surpass it. Ah, Tefta, when the day comes that the people take power, when we have our own theatres and opera houses, then your voice will be heard as it should, and will inspire many girls to follow in your path. When I hear the folk songs you sing, our country, the sky, the stars, the countryside — all become a thousand times more beautiful."

"Enver," Tefta said, "you are a poet."

"I wish I were, but I am not; my heart simply burns for this land and this people."

I remember, at another meeting, Tefta saying to me:

"Enver, I have some news that will please you: I'm engaged and am to be married soon."

I embraced her happily, offered my congratulations and asked to whom she was engaged.

"To Kristaq Koço, a singer like me; he's a fine boy."

"I've seen him with you on the boulevard, and he certainly looks a fine boy. I don't know him personally — I've never had the opportunity — so I can only say what I have heard and what I have observed from the outside: they tell me that he is a singer with talent and prospects, a good straightforward boy, tall as a cypress, with fair hair. You'll make a fine couple."

"Enver," Tefta went on, "will you come to

my wedding?"

"Of course," I replied, "if you'll come when my sister is married."

And, when Tefta and Kristaq were married, I went to their wedding, which was very simple and without useless ceremony.

When the country was occupied by the Italians and the guerilla war and the National Liberation War began, I went underground. One day in the street, disguised by spectacles and a moustache, I met Tefta. I approached her and held out my hand. She did not recognize me at once, but soon pressed my hand tightly and said to me:

"Enver, how are you? I've been longing to see you. I ask Koço about you, but I don't often see him."

"Tefta," I said, "the struggle is boiling up and we shall win, as we have often said."

"Don't spare us, Enver," responded Tefta, "for we too want to fight. You know our house: it's at the disposal of the Party whenever you want; whenever you are in danger, come to us. Go through 'The Pantaloons,' for we have good neighbours. Take care! We shall win."

"We shall win," I repeated, and I parted from Tefta.

Some time passed. Tirana was burning; we were being struck down in the streets; the terror was severe. I gave the order that a number of the sick and wounded comrades should go to Peza. I myself, in spite of the terror, stayed in the capital, but left the central bases and

went to what is now New Tirana. But at that time there were no buildings there — only fields, meadows and some scattered houses.

At the edge of New Tirana, by the hill, stood a two-storeyed house, fairly large, painted grass green. A communist comrade lived there — a barber, whose name I have forgotten. It seems to me that he was from Kosova. We went and lodged there, along with another comrade. The situation was good — one could see from far off any danger and take measures. But we did not stay there long. Our intelligence informed us that we should leave as soon as possible, since the house had come under notice and could be raided. In the evening, as soon as it grew dark, both of us left, along with the comrade. But where were we to lay our heads? We had no base nearby. We were in danger, and we gripped revolvers and hand grenades in the pockets of our coats. Immediately I thought of Tefta Tashko's house.

"Ah!" I told the comrade, "I've found a place for us to shelter."

And we went quickly to the big gate, went into the courtyard and knocked at the front door of Tefta's house. We pushed it, but it did not open. We heard rapid footsteps, then silence fell again. We stepped back and finally I heard the sweet voice — a little breathless — of Tefta:

"Who is it?"

"Open up, Tefta," I said. "We are friends."

The door opened.

"Welcome, Enver!" she said. "It's good to see you."

I introduced her to the comrade and she took us into the drawing-room.

"Have you eaten?" Tefta asked us.

"We've eaten," I told her, but she was not deceived and went into the kitchen.

Another door opened, and Koço Tashko came in, his face pale and frowning. He did not greet us, but said:

"You compromise Tefta by coming here. You'll get her arrested!"

I was annoyed; I realized that he was a coward. Koço Tashko was hiding in his sister's house, while others were fighting and falling in the streets for the homeland. I had not thought to find Koço Tashko here.

Angrily, but in a low voice so that Tefta would not hear, I said:

"Koço Tashko, I have not come to your house, but to that of the patriot Tefta Koço. She told me herself to come when I was in a tight spot, and Tefta received us like the brave woman she is. We will not compromise her. It is you who are complaining, not her."

Tefta came in, and we abandoned this conversation. She laid the table. As usual, the meal was simple: tea, a little cheese, jam, butter and bread.

"This is all I have," she told us, "but my heart and house is yours."

We thanked her and begged her pardon. We were very pleased that a non-communist

woman comrade should give a fine lesson to a pseudo-communist like Koço Tashko.

We talked about the great struggle which had been unleashed everywhere against the nazis, about our people's war, about the future of our country. Tefta's eyes shone; she took a lively part in the conversation and expressed the hope insistently that we should activize it to ever greater heights, saying that she too would be glad to give everything for the homeland and the people. I said that she, by her songs, with her voice, was lighting the flame of patriotism in the hearts of the people, and so was a participant in the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War.

"Everyone," I told her, "must fight with his own weapons — some with bombs, others with pen and fiery words, you with songs and your beautiful voice. But what about tonight? If they find us here, with revolvers and grenades, you will at least end up in prison."

"Don't worry, Enver," said Tefta, laughing. "I'm not frightened. But let's put the radio on. I can't live without music."

"We shouldn't do that," said the coward. "We might not hear some danger outside."

We sat until late and Tefta kept us entertained.

"I'll go and make up a bed for you. Where will you sleep?" said Tefta. "Better downstairs, Enver."

"We're being a nuisance to you," we said. "But we were in a tight corner."

"What are you saying?" said Tefta. "You're insulting me! You can stay here as long as you wish."

In the middle of the night we went to sleep on mattresses laid on the floor with white sheets. In the morning we got up early. Tefta made us coffee, and then gave us breakfast of tea and some slices of bread. The comrade turned on the radio to listen to the morning news and took notes. At that moment Tefta came in and, finding us up and ready to leave said:

"You have somewhere to go? If not, stay here."

"We have," I told her. "We thank you very, very much. We shall never forget the kindness you have shown to us, to the Party and to the people's war." And we shook hands and left.

As we were going through the courtyard, the coward Koço Tashko ran after us and gave the comrade his notes of the news, which he had forgotten.

"Here," he said. "You leave papers everywhere you go!"

"We'll have a talk with you later, Koço Tashko!" I said, and we left.

"What a bastard!" said the comrade. "And he calls himself a communist!"

"And we made him Chairman of the Korça Group!" I responded. "But don't worry: he will show himself in his true colours!"

"Where do we go now?" asked the comrade. "The streets are on fire."

"Keep a grip on your revolver," I said. "I'll go in front and you follow me."

In this way we went to a little base on the Durrës road, by the Italian Belotti building, near the Tirana power station.

We stayed there two days, making contact with Gogo and other comrades. The owners of the house gave us food and shelter without the slightest trace of fear.

With nostalgia, pain and affection I remember my comrades and friends Tefta, Gaqo and Leko, who died working and fighting. All three died suddenly while still young and from the same incurable disease, but their lives ended with honour.

Now I am happy when I see that Tefta's son, Eno Koço, has become a talented conductor, but sorry that neither Tefta nor Kristaq can enjoy their son, nor that Eno himself, when he grew up, did not have the opportunity of experiencing the pleasure and happiness which he would have brought to his parents with his talent. However, he is proud that, in the conditions created by the Party, he can follow the path taken by his distinguished parents, who are remembered by comrades, friends and the whole people with love and respect, and will be so remembered and honoured forever.

THE NOVEMBER 8TH PUBLISHING HOUSE

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