

Enver Hoxha

By Joachim Joesten

Naughty Boy Of The Balkans

POB A COUNTRY about the size of Vermont, with a population of just over a million, Albania has made a remarkable amount of news lately—and most of its come under the heading of "trouble." Indeed, Albania has given the postwar world more trouble than all of Europe's other human states put together. The United States, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, the Vatican, all have had cause for concern, and the United Nations since the Albanians' ouster of their ruler, Enver Hoxha, more than a year ago.

At the head of this cocky little country stands a young man who combines in his hands the offices of Premier, Defense Minister and commander in chief of the 80,000-man Albanian army. He is Enver Hoxha, 38-year-old, Col. Gen. Enver Hoxha. The youngest chief of government in Europe, he has already required a reputation as a "naughty" bundle of statecraft.

Hoxha's life story reads like a Berardus Alger tale. Born in 1908 in the town of Gjirokastra (Astrakhan) in the Balkans, the son of a cotton factory worker, his father had been employed for some time at a plant in Huddersford, England. He had a modest education of his parents' own making, received a good secondary education in his home town, he attended a British boarding school in his home town, he attended one of the country's few secondary schools at Korcha (Korral). He was such a good student that, upon graduation, the government awarded him a scholarship enabling him to continue his studies at French and Belgian universities. However, before Hoxha could complete his college education abroad, the war broke out in France and his schooling was discontinued. He then took a job as secretary at the Albanian Legation in Berlin, where he stayed for several years.

In 1927 he returned to Albania, ostensibly to become a professor of French at the Korcha High School, but probably also for political reasons. At that time, he immediately joined the opposition which plotted for the downfall of King Zog. The latter, a King by his own grace, had lost whatever popularity he once may have possessed through his intrigues and shady dealings with Mussolini. Ironically, however, when Zog eventually was ousted on April 7, 1929, it was not by his enemies in home, but by his former friends and professors, in Rome.

and in December 8, Hoxha, who in the meantime had supported himself a colonel-general, triumphantly entered Tirana, which his hands had captured a few days earlier in a bloody house-to-house struggle. He took up residence in former King Zog's palace, which had survived years of fighting and bombings only slightly the worse for wear.

POSTWAR developments in Albania have closely followed the well known pattern set by the Soviet Union. In the years since the war, the Albanians have been absent that it is generally believed a Balkan federation, with perhaps Dimitroff's Bulgaria as the third partner, will eventually spring from their bankruptcy under Soviet auspices.

Under his friends and neighbors Tito and Dimitroff, Hoxha is not a party-line Communist with a conscience. He is very capable, a "naughty" boy, though. He understands very well the importance of the hour of December 3, 1948, in which Hoxha's "Democratic Front" pulled 98 per cent of the votes and got all the seats in Parliament; the police state set up now existing in Albania, and the radical economic reforms and measures carried out in the past two years all bespeak communist tendencies. Since January 14, 1949, when Gen. Aleksander Popovic's republic was overrun by Soviet troops, Hoxha has ruled his country with the same faith, vigor and in the same style, as Stalin, Tito, and Dimitroff are ruling theirs.

Perhaps even more than his bigger brothers elsewhere in the Soviet orbit, Hoxha has followed his road with surprising shrewdness and a sovereign disregard of other people's views. He has refused to sign the 1948 treaty with the Soviet Union, he has refused to sign the general trade treaty with the United States, a budding feud with Greece, a bitter dispute with Britain over the tragic Corfu incident, and a running fight with the Vatican over the persecution of the Catholic clergy in Albania. Hoxha is a shaman by upbringing, but he now professes indifference to religious matters. His efforts to bring his country into the United Nations have failed. He has had the face of wilderness for which he had only himself to thank.

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT

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