



ENVER HOXHA: ALBANIAN DICTATOR.

THE Cominform's offensive against Tito, the ominous question of Macedonia and current events in Yugoslavia and Greece have once again focused the spotlight on Albania—poorest and smallest of the Soviet satellites and Europe's Forgotten Country. A key position in the complex pattern of Balkan politics but cut off from the rest of the world by natural and man-made barriers, Albania has been for some time past in the grip of an acute political and economic crisis which in the light of recent developments assumes only added importance. Those of an older generation may remember her as one of the imperial "headaches" of the pre-1914 Great Powers. To Stalin and the Cominform present-day Albania forms the most westerly "promontory" of the Iron Curtain, and a vital base for action in the Adriatic and Central Mediterranean. Her history is a record of fearful oppression, ruthless exploitation and a prolonged struggle for national independence. After the death of Skanderberg in 1467, under whom the Albanians had gallantly fought Turkish domination for twenty-five years, Albania passed under Turkish suzerainty and thus remained until 1912. On December 17th, 1912, the London Conference of Ambassadors acknowledged the principle of

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT

Declassified and Approved for Release
by the Central Intelligence Agency
Date: 2005

Albanian autonomy, and on July 29th, 1913, declared Albania an independent sovereign state. • From 1920 to 1925, Albania was a Republic, and from 1925 to 1939 a Kingdom under Ahmed Zogu, better known as King Zog I. With an area of 10,629 square miles—nearly the size of Belgium—the population totals 1,120,522, of whom 69 per cent. are Moslems, 20 per cent. Orthodox Christians, followers of the Albanian Orthodox Church, and 10 per cent. Roman Catholics. Another estimated 900,000 Albanians live outside their country's frontiers, particularly in Greece (Epirus) and Yugoslavia (Kosovo).

The lack of communications has largely conditioned the history of the country and the character of its people. The Albanians are still mainly mountain folks occupying the hilly interior rather than the coastal lowlands. History and geography combined are responsible for the wide assortment of types and communities; and their division into two principal language groups—the Ghegs (in the north) and the Tosks (in the south). The Turkish domination, too, has left a lasting imprint on the national character, as did the English colonial period upon the United States of North America. The aloofness of the land as a whole, and of its centres of settlement in particular, accounts for Albania being one of the least-known parts of Europe, a land where the ultra-modern and the primitive are much in evidence side by side.

Since January 1946 she has been in form and substance a People's Democracy—the mild post-war euphemism to denote a Soviet colony—with the ubiquitous Enver Hoxha (pronounced Hodja) as Premier, War and Foreign Minister and Supreme Commander. The post of Head of the State is not exactly a sinecure. Many were called for it but, having been chosen, very few survived. Prominent among the unhappy candidates was the German Prince zu Wied, who became "Mbret" (King) of Albania in March 1914, when but for British arbitration an Albanian "crisis" threatened to precipitate a world war. The French, with characteristic Gallic wit, labelled him "Le Prince du Vide," and the nickname was, if nothing else, only too apt. Six months later he relinquished the position, quite happy to return to the peace and privacy of his Rhineland estate. But—other days other ways. The present holder of this rather dangerous dignity seems to have been far more successful, at least, until further notice, for—"you never can tell" in a well-regulated New Democracy.

Enver Hoxha has been his country's Chief Executive since October 1944—an unparalleled record for Albania, where in the past Presidents and Premiers succeeded one another with startling frequency. A Soviet nominee, Moscow-inspired and absolutely reliable, Enver has served his masters well. What is more, he has even contrived to render his country great service without reaping the ignominious reward of Tito or other "deviationists" from the thorny straight and narrow path of Marxism-Leninism. His own choice of a profession would have been that of a school teacher. It was only through a combination of circumstances that he became Albania's one-man Government and Moscow's watchdog on the Mediterranean. A leader by virtue of intellect, with the power of explaining profound dogmatic ideas in simple terms to the most simple-minded people, Hoxha is in his forty-first year, but looks much younger. When in plain clothes, sturdy and handsome, Enver could easily be mistaken for some affable beau-about-town. But as Colonel-General Enver Hoxha he is a different man altogether—flamboyant, self-assertive, and full of picturesque idiosyncrasies (some of them strangely reminiscent of

Danilo in *The Merry Widow*). He shares with Goering the doubtful distinction of possessing a wide collection of uniforms and a perpetual desire to wear them. Like his German prototype he, too, has carefully built up his personality on the Prussian model of Führer worship. Yet, in defence of the man and his work, it must be admitted that he is no mere theorist or poseur, but a resourceful organiser who can think in terms of planning and development. He leapt into prominence in a world war unique in its magnitude and complexity, owing his success as much to his acute grasp of realities as to an excellent insight into the nature of his fellow-men. Whether one approves of him or not, the fact remains that he is a force to reckon with. Compared with other Balkan star performers he is perhaps imperfectly educated in an academic sense, but his character has qualities which no university could have taught him in a lifetime. Whether he thinks of himself as standing in symbolic relation to his age is not known. What is evident, however, is his determination to endow poor primitive Albania with a New Deal. That and that alone is certainly the most praiseworthy feature of his dynamic personality.

Enver is admirably suited to the troubled times in which we live. Born in Gjinokaster (Argyrocastro) in 1908, scion of a Moslem middle-class family, his early childhood was one of misery and want. Small wonder that after finishing his studies at the French Lycée at Korcha (Koritza) he longed to escape from his dreary environment, and improve his knowledge by travel abroad. History is full of examples of men like him whose unhappy adolescence drove them into a search for learning and culminated in the attainment of genius. None is more eloquent than the life story of another Moslem youth, Mustapha Kemal, who worked his way up from the slums of Salonika to the glory of Kemal Ataturk. In 1930 Enver left for France to study natural science at Montpellier University. A year later occurred the episode which was to have a decisive influence on his whole outlook: the Albanian Government stopped his scholarship, leaving him high and dry in France. Forced to earn his living, Enver proceeded to Paris. There he made the acquaintance of Vaillant-Couturier, chief editor of the Communist daily, *L'Humanité* (the French *Daily Worker*), who commissioned him to write a series of articles on Albania. Presently, Enver went to Brussels as Secretary of the Albanian Legation. Precisely how he embraced a diplomatic career perhaps even he could hardly explain. In addition to his official duties he took a law course at Brussels University, while contributing several more articles to *L'Humanité*, all highly critical of his Government's administration. His appointment was abruptly terminated when the home authorities discovered that the Legation Secretary had somehow overstepped the bounds of diplomacy. Hoxha was recalled, dismissed and forced to take a post of professor of French at the Korcha "Lycée." There, untamed and undeterred, he combined "French without tears" with political agitation—a dual occupation which ended with his arrest in January 1939 on a charge of conspiracy, followed by a brief spell in prison.

Then occurred the second most important event in his life, and the first that revealed his true vocation—the Fascist invasion of Albania on April 7th, 1939. For years past Mussolini, in quest of an easy but spectacular victory, had coveted Albania's territory and natural resources. His military conquest had long been prepared by a systematic extension of Italian control over Albania's army, finances,

customs and trade monopolies. After Hitler's rape of Czechoslovakia, the Duce felt his hour had come. Early on Good Friday, Italian sea and air forces attacked the hapless little country, overcoming its gallant resistance after a few days' bitter fighting. The Italians set up a puppet Government headed by the Quisling Shefret Bey Verlaci, and for the next five years Albania became part of the ramshackle Roman Empire. But the matter did not end there. The initial stupor of defeat soon gave way to a grim determination to oppose the unsolicited "Empire-builders" and their hateful minions. A nationwide movement of guerilla and Resistance groups came into being, gathering momentum as time went on. In September 1942 a convention of patriots met at Peza to co-ordinate and unify the activities of all Resistance groups throughout the country. Eventually three main bodies emerged: the Nationalist "Balli Kombetar," the Royalist "Legality Movement," and the Communist-dominated "National Liberation Front," or F.N.C. (Fronti Nacional Chirimtare), of which Hoxha became one of the principal organisers. The amateur revolutionary had at last found his soul.

The Italian invasion had surprised him at Korcha. Well-known for his anti-Fascist views, he was soon dismissed by the new educational authorities. Leaving for Tirana, he set to work organising clandestine resistance to the Fascist New Order. Thereafter, his rise was rapid. He became Political Secretary of the illegal Communist Party, and chief editor of its paper, *Zeri I Popullit* ("The Voice of the People"). His activities attracted the attention of the Italians, who sentenced him to death *in absentia*, and put a price on his head. In July 1943 followed his appointment as military and political head of the F.N.C. Partisans. He directed military operations from a secret H.Q. in the mountains. British and U.S. liaison officers were attached to his troops, who waged intensive warfare on the Italians and—after the Germans had taken over Albania in September 1943—against the Nazis. Though Communist in character, the "National Liberation Front" was often supported by Nationalist Resistance groups. Side by side with military unification, a civil and political organisation grew up which provided the framework of Albania's post-war administration. In October 1944 a Provisional Government was formed, Hoxha being elected Premier and C.-in-C., with the rank of full General. A month later, the Government was transferred to Tirana. On December 4th Hoxha announced that the last Germans had been driven out of Albania. The hecatomb was over. The "National Liberation Front" controlled the whole country. It had carried on the struggle for national independence to its victorious conclusion. The original ill-armed guerillas had changed beyond recognition. December 1944 found Hoxha Supreme Commander of a seasoned, well-disciplined army of 70,000 men equipped mainly from British and U.S. sources. Presently, two Albanian divisions were sent to Yugoslavia, and played a notable part in Tito's liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For Albania the wheel had come full circle. On November 10th, 1945, the Provisional Government was recognised by Britain, the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R. and France, on the understanding that it would hold elections free of intimidation and police state practices. A General Election took place on December 2nd, at which the "National Liberation Front" secured an overwhelming majority. Full recognition by the Big Four followed on January 5th, 1946. Six days later the Constituent Assembly proclaimed Albania a "People's Democracy."

Hoxha's beginnings as a post-war Premier were tough. Albania had paid a heavy toll in human life and treasure as a price for her liberation; 28,000 of her citizens had been killed, 1,600 villages wrecked or destroyed, transport and administrative services had broken down, and large sections of the population were threatened with starvation. To cope with its appalling difficulties Hoxha's Government applied desperate remedies to a desperate situation. Mines, industries and factories were nationalised, an agrarian reform was adopted, an intensive anti-illiteracy drive initiated, and a beginning made with the reconstruction of roads, bridges and public utilities. With Yugoslavia Hoxha signed a 30-year economic treaty, providing for joint State planning in both countries, a Customs Union, Yugoslav technical and financial aid, and monetary equality between the Yugoslav dinar and the Albanian lek. Yugoslavia also undertook to represent Albanian interests in countries where no Albanian diplomats were accredited. Close economic co-operation was maintained until Tito's quarrel with the Cominform, when Hoxha—at Moscow's behest—broke off all trade relations with Yugoslavia in July 1948. Tito retaliated with a "counter-blockade," Yugoslav deliveries and technical aid ceased, experts and engineers were recalled, and Yugoslav diplomats stopped representing Albania abroad. Deprived of his principal supplier, Hoxha turned to the U.S.S.R. and the Cominform countries for badly needed food and consumer goods. Considerable numbers of Soviet experts, technicians and "advisors" have since reached Albania to replace the expelled Yugoslavs, the result being that Albania is now almost exclusively dependent on Soviet Russia, and more isolated from the rest of Europe than any other country. Hoxha's visit to Moscow a fortnight ago was therefore of particular importance. It was generally believed to have been closely connected with Albania's economic plight and increasing difficulties.

Since the liberation significant changes have also taken place in Hoxha's home and foreign policy. The Communist Party, masquerading as a "National Liberation Front," had won the General Election in December 1945. But, as in all "New Democracies," the national unity motive served as a façade behind which effective power was retained by the Communists, who controlled the police, Press and propaganda. Once firmly established they immediately set to work to build up the one-party State. This process was not completed without the familiar purges, arrests and total liquidation of real and potential opposition elements. Nor was this all. Tito's excommunication by the Cominform was marked by far-reaching repercussions in Albania. On instructions from Moscow, Hoxha began to purge his own party of all "unreliable" followers. A ruthless nation-wide "heresy-hunt" was staged, culminating in the dismissal of Koci Xoxe (pronounced Djodje), the Vice-Premier, and Pandi Christo, Minister and chairman of the State Planning Board, in October 1948. Xoxe's dismissal was nothing short of sensational. Considered Albania's Communist No. 2, he was among the "first of the few" of the Albanian Communist party, had a distinguished war record, and was until his sudden "treachery" the second most powerful man in the country. A month later, Xoxe, Christo and scores of others were arrested as "deviationists" and "enemies of the people."

The pattern of Hoxha's foreign policy became abundantly clear in the spring of 1949, when his relations with Britain and the U.S.

rapidly deteriorated. The British Military Mission in Tirana became the target for violent attacks in the Albanian Press, and every manner of obstacle was put in its way. The British War Graves Commission was expelled. On April 4th, 1946, it was announced in London that "owing to the unfriendly and unco-operative attitude of the Albanian Government, the British Minister-designate, Mr. T. C. Rapp, would not proceed to Tirana, nor would an Albanian diplomatic representative be received in London at this stage." Five months later occurred the incident which made the breach complete. On October 22nd, 1946, two British destroyers, H.M.S. *Saumarez* and H.M.S. *Volage*, struck mines in the Corfu Channel, with the consequent loss of 44 lives and considerable damage to both ships. Britain brought the matter before the U.N. Security Council, which recommended to both Governments to submit it to the Hague International Court. On April 9th, 1949, the Court decided by 11 votes to 5 that Albania was responsible for the mines. U.S. relations with Hoxha were broken off in November 1946, when his Cabinet refused to confirm the validity of treaties in force between the two countries on April 7th, 1939—date of the Italian invasion. Since the Cominform quarrel with Tito, Hoxha has been honoured with the invidious task of abusing the Belgrade Government with unabated violence bordering on hysteria. Shrill denunciatory tirades are poured forth non-stop from the Tirana wireless, synchronised with savage attacks in the official newspapers *Bashkimi* and *Luftitari*. But Hoxha's democrats never do things by halves. Britain, too, has come in for some vilification. A recent editorial in *Zeri i Popullit* entitled "The British Lion under the Whip of Wall Street Marjacs" regaled its readers with lurid accounts of life in a Britain dominated by mass unemployment, scanty food rations and a low standard of living.

Hoxha's personal feelings for his war-time Allies were most eloquently expressed at the Communist Party's congress in Tirana on November 8th, 1948. The congress itself was an outstanding performance in mud-slinging, self-criticism and vitriolic denunciations by Hoxha and a bevy of leading lights, against men who had been their close friends and political co-religionists. Apart from the usual "unanimity," characteristic of every Communist convention, this one was marked by nothing more sensational than a "unanimous" decision to change the name of the Albanian Communist Party to "Albanian Labour Party." The rest of the time was spent in endless disquisitions on Marxist-Leninist "scientific" theories. Hoxha himself spoke for three days running on his Government's stewardship, and fiercely attacked Albania's enemies—Anglo-American Imperialists, King Zog, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., etc., etc. Singled out for particularly harsh treatment were Sir Robert Hodgson, the British Minister to Albania (1928-36), who, according to Hoxha, "had together with King Zog sold Albania to the Italians," and the British and U.S. Military Missions.

The latter he described as "agencies for espionage, sabotage, and conspiracies," and "rally-points for all enemies of the people—reactionaries, war criminals, prostitutes and the dregs of the country." Next, he stigmatised pre-war British Imperialism, which "had used King Zog as a jail, whip and scaffold with which to crush all popular movements in Albania," and post-war Anglo-American Imperialism, which "had sought to turn Albania into another Greece." But his hardest hammerblows were reserved for Tito, whom he accused of

having planned the annexation of Albania, and of innumerable other crimes. On November 14th he announced that the Central Committee of his Communist Party had asked the U.S.S.R. for military experts and technicians, "to train the Albanian army in the spirit of the Red Army and Stalinist strategy." Two days later, Touk Yakova, Secretary of this Central Committee, summed up the party's aims thus: "Ours is the party of the People's Revolution, social and economic reforms, and constant struggle against Yugoslav Trotskyism, based on the sound and solid foundation of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin."

Albania to-day has a planned economy. Hoxha's Two-Year Plan for the economic development of the country is a comprehensive and ambitious document, designed to transform backward and undeveloped Albania into a modern industrialised "going concern." Its emphasis is on industrialisation—factories, power stations, public utility projects, and further development of basic industries old and new. In 1949 about 80 per cent. of all investments are to be allotted for industrial and building purposes. Provision has also been made for national education. Primary schools are to be increased to 311 per cent., and secondary schools to 913 per cent. of the 1938 level. Targets for agriculture aim at a 10 per cent. increase in the 1948 total of cultivated land, which was already 19 per cent. higher than in 1938. Precisely how well this planned economy is working out in practice is difficult to assess. Official statistics in the *New Democracies* are issued for the benefit of the gullible and the converted. According to Hoxha's propaganda, the nationalisation of mines and factories has resulted in an increase of 220 per cent. in industrial production and 134 per cent. in mining output compared with the 1938 figures. Stakhanovite methods are being used to intensify the turnover in goods in State-managed concerns. A co-operative movement on the Soviet pattern has been developed both in industry and agriculture, and is playing an ever-increasing part in the national economy. Much has also been done to stimulate production in the oil wells, and the chrome, copper and coal mines. A new oil refinery is to be built, which, it is hoped, will ensure Albania's requirements in fuel and motor fuel. In 1945 the Albanian trade union movement had 25,000 members. In 1948 the figure had risen to 57,000. Education has followed apace. Up to now 109,000 people have been taught to read and write. In agriculture Albania has still a long way to go before reaching anything like peak production. Before the war, only six per cent. of the total area of 2,700,000 hectares was under cultivation of field crops. Since the liberation, various measures have been taken to intensify agricultural output. But that is only half the problem. In industry and agriculture alike Albania is hampered by a desperate shortage of modern equipment, which must be obtained from abroad, and the lack of technicians and skilled workers. If the Two-Year Plan is to succeed, Hoxha will have to find the experts, capital goods and machinery from somewhere.

Hoxha rules Albania from Tirana, but Tirana is not Albania. The capital is a mixture of east and west, and regarded by the more conservative countryside as something of a snob. In the villages the Albanian "People's Democracy" is measured with a different yardstick. The Albanian peasant—the strongest force in the country's life—cares little for the subtleties of Marxism-Leninism or the theories on class struggles. His own struggle for self-preservation is at present

