

NATIONAL & KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS
FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

MASTER'S DEGREE IN SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

HOXHA'S COMMUNISM AS THE ROAD TO NATIONAL UNITY:
Explaining the Synthesis of Communism and Nationalism in Post-War Albania

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Athens, September 2017

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes an unanticipated synthesis of two mutually exclusive ideologies, nationalism, and communism, the key feature of the communist regime of Enver Hoxha. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate that it was indeed during the forty years of Hoxha's totalitarian rule that the Albanian nation-building process achieved its full maturity. The following chapters will refer to both domestic changes and the alterations in Albanian foreign policy of the time, interpreted as the ceaseless struggle of the Albanians for the righteous cause.

Keywords: communism, nationalism, Albania, Enver Hoxha

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Pantelis Lekkas, for his guidance, instructions and an immense help during the whole Semester and in the time of the writing of this Dissertation. I am also grateful to all academic staff at the faculty, as well as the Programme Administrator, Dr. Anna Vallianatou, for an opportunity to experience an outstanding academic year.

A special thank you goes to Mr. Fatos Lubonja, for his invaluable help and for having shared his personal stories of the life in Hoxha's "fortress". I would also like to express my gratitude to David Rama for all the support and encouragement.

Most of all, I would like to thank my parents for always believing in me and supporting me my entire life.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- **BK** - Balli Kombëtar, or National Front
- **CPA** – Communist Party of Albania
- **CPY** – Communist Party of Yugoslavia
- **PLA** – Party of Labor of Albania, (CPA changed its name into PLA in 1948)

INTRODUCTION

There are at least two myths concerning the relation between nationalism and communism (Mevius, 2009). The first myth asserts that the concepts are mutually exclusive, the second one that nationalism was suppressed during the Communist era, only to reemerge with the fall of Communism (Mevius, 2009: p.377). However, the reality was utterly different. Not only did state leadership in Central and Eastern Europe use the strong nationalist rhetoric to fortify its dominance, but also fostered national cohesion through various state-led policies. Communist Albania is certainly a unique example of communism and nationalism going hand in hand and reinforcing each other from the outset.

In the last decades before the fall of Communism, Western scholars began to analyze peculiar rapprochement between nationalism and communism behind the Iron Curtain, in Central and Eastern Europe. However, they were rather reluctant to embark on a thorough scrutiny of the Albanian case study, mostly owing to the country's isolation and the lack of valid sources. Only after the fall of Communism did scholars begin to explore the country's communist legacy, although the vast majority was preoccupied with the country's troublesome transition to democracy.

Albanian nationalism emerged quite late and primarily as a response to the rival Greek and Serbian nationalisms. Ethnic Albanian population was scattered in a wider space, divided along religious lines, lacking the historical experience of a singular political unit. And once it emerged, it was mostly confined to the intellectual and political elites, as the vast majority of peasantry became fully acquainted with their Albanian self only with the waves of modernization in several decades following the independence. The spread of a national consciousness was made possible owing to the centralized state apparatus and mainly through a national program initiated by King Zog, aimed at acquiring mass literacy and establishing secular education. Enver Hoxha adopted the program of his predecessor and slightly modified it so that it could meet new

political circumstances. His policies, nevertheless, immensely contributed to the development of a uniform Albanian national identity.

Although an adherent to Marxism-Leninism, Hoxha resorted to nationalism from the very outset, as the circumstances dictated the fusion of communism and nationalism in a so-called national-communism. The Communist party was very young, formed in the wake of the Second World War and, therefore, had no social base, unlike nationalism, which instigated Albanian communists to fuse national interests with the ones of the Party. The final outcome of the forty years of the contradictory alliance is sometimes defined as the “coming of age of Albania” (O’Donnell, 1999).

The following Dissertation will thus be an attempt to explain the paradox that marked a communist episode in the history of Albania. Therefore, it will seek to provide an answer to the question of whether Hoxha’s communism was crucial to the consolidation of an Albanian national identity. The primary objective of the Dissertation is to demonstrate that, paradoxically, it was during Hoxha's communist regime that a uniform national identity was imposed on Albanian nationals and that, what once began as a defensive nationalism, became a nation in a permanent “defense mode”, owing to the manifold enemies and threats that Hoxha continuously invoked. Hence the hypothesis that **the perpetuation of a struggle against a myriad of enemies and threats to the Albanian independence and national unity, i.e. the entrenchment of a “state of siege” mentality, enabled the communist regime both to secure broader legitimacy and finalize the nation-building process.** The following chapters will seek to demonstrate that the resort to the manifold enmities and conspiracies against the Albanian people proved a very useful tool that “speeded up” the nation-building process.

Methodologically, the following research is based on a qualitative analysis of various primary and secondary sources, aimed at providing a thorough understanding of the issue and proving the formulated hypothesis. In order to gain a better understanding of the phenomena, a qualitative assessment of the primary sources was required. In addition, the secondary sources were analyzed as they helped to strengthen and enrich the arguments. Moreover, personal

communication with Mr. Fatos Lubonja, an Albanian writer and a person quite conversant with the research topic, proved to be of an immense help for the completion of the Dissertation.

The paper consists of three chapters. The first one will offer a brief overview of the ambiguous relation between nationalism and communism, followed by the explanation of the peculiarities of Albanian nationalism through the prism of a theory developed by Miroslav Hroch. The following chapter will be an attempt to elaborate on the assertion that Albania, in the years of Hoxha's totalitarian rule, finally came of age, having both consolidated its statehood and markedly advanced in the nation-building process. In the last chapter, I will address foreign actors, the United States and Great Britain, Yugoslavia, the USSR, and China, illustrate the pattern of transition from a friend to an enemy, placing an emphasis on *how* the perceptions of aggressive foreign "others" fostered the development of a "state of siege" mentality and shaped the Albanian national identity.

1. THEORETICAL ISSUES

In the following passages, I will offer a brief overview of how theoretical Marxism dealt with the notion of nationalism. The failure of theoretical Marxism to fully grasp the nature of nationalism left plenty of space for the practical Marxism to experiment with and embrace nationalism whenever it suited Marxist practitioners. The first subchapter will, at the very end, offer an argument as to why many communist, in their pursuit for the social homogeneity, often resorted to ideology so heavily despised by Marxist theoreticians. In the second part, I seek to explain the troublesome development of an Albanian national identity, thus referring to the setbacks the Albanian national movement had encountered from the very outset. For this purpose, I will refer to the famous ‘Three phase’ theory developed by a prominent Czech historian and Marxist theorist on nationalism, Miroslav Hroch. A reference to the manifold impediments to Albanian nation-building project is deemed necessary, as it offers an explication as to why a uniform national identity became accepted nationwide long after the attainment of the independence of Albania.

1.1. Marxism’s faulty understanding of nationalism

Socialism and Nationalism are contemporaries. They both emerged in the wake of the French revolution and modernization waves that had overwhelmed the Western Europe. Both appeared as a response to the atomization of industrial society in making and to the weakening of communal ties, due to rapid urbanization, and gave the primacy to the community and communal bonds over an individual. Although socialism based its legitimacy on the reason and pursued to build a state on a solely rational basis (Schopflin, 1995), it often used an element of sacred in its endeavors. It indeed employed historical facts, ethnicity, tradition and collective remembrance to create, or modify existing myths, and use them for its own purposes. As Walker Connor notes,

Marxists not only learned how to adjust and co-exist with growing nationalism, but they also developed strategies on how to manipulate nationalism to serve Marxist purposes (Connor, 1984). The hostility notwithstanding, communism often resorted to the rhetoric of its antipode.

In the following paragraphs, I will give a brief overview of the evolution of a Marxist thought on nationalism. I will offer different views on the issue, thus stressing the most contentious questions and the weakest points and inconsistencies of various theoreticians' writings on the 'National Question'. Despite the utter hostility towards nationalism, they soon realized that Marxism should primarily find a way to accommodate forces of nationalism, rather than simply uproot them following the demise of the bourgeoisie.

Marx's premature prophecy did not fulfill since nationalism became stronger with every subsequent decade, and his problematic theoretical legacy created a problem for future Marxist theoreticians, as the aforementioned ambiguous relationship had not been systematically scrutinized until very recently. Apart from the equivocal theoretical treatment of nationalism, he, too, refrained from offering a political strategy to the proletariat for the matter of concern (Lowy, 1976), which inhibited both the proletariat and Marxist scholars in their attempts to pursue any systematic and cohesive explanation for such an ambiguous relationship. Those scholars, who tried to reconcile Marxism with nationalism and offer an unbiased conceptualization of the phenomenon (e.g. Bauer), were castigated by ardent adherents to 'Orthodox Marxism'. The inability or/and the lack of will to deal with the phenomenon more thoroughly and unbiasedly led to the inability to conceive the possibility of successful co-existence of nationalism and communism, as the myths of the mutual exclusiveness (Mevius, 2009) overshadowed the reality.

Numerous scholars claimed that Marx had failed to develop a systematic theory of nationalism and that his 'ad hoc' theorizing on 'National question' was rather a corollary of greater historical events of the mid-XIX century (e.g. Avineri, 1991; Davis, 1967; Löwy, 1976; Talmon, 1991). As Talmon (1991) argues, Marx and Engels were hardly able to face the nationalities' problem once it was forced upon them during the 'Spring of nations' in 1848, due to the previous ignorance and underestimation of the issue.

Avineri (1991), for instance, summarizes Marx's desultory statements into two analytical units, pre- and post-1848 one, naming them 'pre-modern paradigm' and 'bourgeois paradigm',

respectively. According to Avineri, the paradigm I treats national peculiarities as pre-modern traits of particular societies that would be swept away by universalizing forces of capitalism. *The Communist Manifesto* clearly depicts Marx's conviction:

National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto (Marx and Engels 1848, Ch. II).

The experience of the revolutions of 1848/9 and subsequent redrawing of borders, and the emergence of new states, didn't leave Marx indifferent. Paradigm II is related to the famous assertion that treated nationalism as a capitalist superstructure and a mere tool in the hands of bourgeoisie used to manipulate the working class and bind it to itself.

One of the weakest points of Marx's and, particularly, Engels' theorizing on nationalism that the critics often referred to, is the inconsistency in the way they treated certain national movements. Ranging from a firm support given to the Poles, the Irish, and the Hungarians, to the condemnation and degradation of other Slavic peoples, Marx's and Engels' inconsistent formulations were sometimes even characterized as an outcome of the "great-nation chauvinism" (Purvis 1999: 219).

To illustrate, Marx became a fervent advocate for Polish independence in the 1850s. However, Marx's and Engels' support had little to do with the general trend of national awakening throughout Europe and the pursuit of the right for self-determination. Rather it was the fear of the bastion of reaction in Europe, Tsarist Russia, and its intervention in Poland that triggered the reaction of the scholars (Löwy, 1976; Avineri, 1991). Independent Poland would, therefore, become a serious setback to Tsarist reactionary aspirations, thus making Russia's counter-revolutionary intervention less probable (Avineri, 1991).

Although both authors expressed their antipathy for the Slavic population within the confines of Habsburg Empire (with the exception of Poles), Engels was by far more adamant in his condemnation uttered against small Slavic peoples, especially following the abortive revolutions of 1848. Paradoxically, he used to express his sympathy for 'South Slavs' as much as for other oppressed peoples, calling for the end of national oppression on the very eve of the

revolution (Davis, 1967; Talmon, 1991). As Connor notes, Engels was instantly and more markedly affected by the “Spring of nations”, and a further increase in the number of national movements (Connor, 1984). In an attempt to elucidate the failures of 1848/9 revolutions, he revived Hegelian terminology and modified it to encompass new circumstances. His infamous classification of “historic” and “non-historic” peoples re-appeared in several issues of the well-known *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1848/9, where he condemns and denounces the small Slavic peoples’ urge for liberty, labeling them as “ruined fragments of peoples”, which “are not viable, and will never be able to achieve any kind of independence” (MECW, Vol. 8: 367).

Contrary to a number of above-mentioned theoreticians, who resorted to classifying Marx’s and Engels’ seemingly unsystematic and disjointed writings as biased and without theoretical significance, Ephraim Nimni claims that the two scholars had a coherent view on the national question and extracts the basis for their theory from the social-evolutionary and economic reductionist parameters (Nimni, 1989). He thereby reflects upon two contested issues – Marx’s general formulations, and the theory on the “nations without history”. For Marx and Engels, a modern nation is a direct outcome of the supersession of the feudal mode of production by the capitalist one and the universalization of the latter (Nimni 1989, 1991). The tumultuous process led to the gradual unification of a feudal society under a modern centralized state, which, together with the national unification and “absorption” and assimilation of small national communities, was perceived as the only viable path to social progress (Nimni, 1989: p.302). It is important to note that Marx often used the terms “nation” and “state” intermittently (Talmon, 1991; Nimni, 1989). He defined the nation as the population of a nation-state or the population destined to become one, as opposed to nationalities which were perceived as ethnic groups doomed to live within multinational states, owing to the inability to form a state of their own. Those nationalities unable to embrace a capitalist mode of production, develop its own bourgeoisie needed for the subsequent revolution, and embark on a path of state formation, are named “non-historic nations”, and labeled as intrinsically reactionary, as they can only survive as “feudal enclaves” (Nimni, 1989, 1991).

Although it is not quite certain if Marx was primarily an internationalist (Bloom, 1941) or an unconscious nationalist (Davis, 1980), he, nevertheless, commenced a debate on the ‘National Question’, which his successors carried forward with much greater fervor.

A very significant event occurred by the end of the XIX century, when the Second International, at the Congress in London, granted nations a right to self-determination. Building on Marx's ambiguous legacy, the International lacked a coherent position on the national question and fell short of giving a substance to the notion of self-determination. Ranging from the "national-cultural autonomy", favored by Austromarxists (Van Ree, 1994), to the exclusive right to secession, advocated by Lenin, the inconsistencies regarding the substance of the right to self-determination only reflected serious divergences in the conceptualization of the nation and nationalism among Marxist theorists.

Probably the fiercest opponent to nationalism and any concession to plentiful nationalities, such as the right to self-determination, is Rosa Luxemburg. For Luxemburg, the concept of national self-determination is an empty phrase, a "metaphysical cliché", alien to historical materialism, whereas the "nation-states" are envisaged as mere tools the bourgeoisie employs to maintain its class rule (Luxemburg, 1909).

Another theoretician worthy of note is certainly Otto Bauer, who, contrary to most of the Marxists, assumed a rather conciliatory position towards nationalism. He employs notions such as "national character" and "community of fate", alien to already established Marxist paradigms, and defines the nation as the "totality of human beings bound together by a community of fate into a community of character" (Bauer, 1924: p.117). As Bauer (1924) notes, it is the function of the community of fate, a unique experience not only of the same historical circumstances but the common ones, what distinguishes the nation from other collectivities of character, such as the working class. By stressing the importance of communal ties, and the totality of common historical experiences, for the development of the nation, Bauer's theory breaks with Marxist Orthodoxy. Although severely criticized, Bauer managed to depart from the economic reductionism and the rigidity of Marxist interpretations, by seeing the nation not as a mere by-product of capitalism, but as a more complex phenomenon.

As noted before, Luxemburg, together with the Austromarxists, supports the idea of the national-cultural autonomy, as opposed to Lenin, who ardently asserts that the right of nations to self-determination implied only the right to secede and form an independent national state (Lenin, 1914). Lenin links the resolution of the national question and the formation of the national state to distinctive historical period, the one related to the development of productive

forces under capitalism. On the other hand, at the time of a fully formed and mature bourgeois-capitalist state and an intensified class' antagonism, support for the national movements becomes obsolete, as the developed capitalism, in a quest for the new markets, brings nations closer together, dilutes national differences, and brings class antagonism to the forth. He goes further than his contemporaries, in that he pegs the national question to a political dimension, thus making a break with the economism and subjectivism of the previous positions on the national matter.

However, it is worthy of note that only in 1912 did Lenin really get involved in the debates on the national question, primarily out of pragmatism and political necessity, rather than theoretical interest (Van Ree,1994). Lenin pursued, what Walker Connor refers to as a strategic Marxism (Connor, 1984), i.e. formal support of national movements and the right to political secession. The vanguard party was assigned to embrace nationalism, rather than the mere class consciousness, and manipulate it in order to gain nationwide support. Thus, contrary to the previous epochs, the immediate post-revolutionary one would be characterized as the "flourishing of nations" and the period of national equality (Connor, 1984). For Lenin, the national symbols were a mere construct, molded by the party and subordinated to its interests, serving as conveyors of its propaganda. Stalin would later refer to Lenin's approach as "national in form, socialist in content" (Stalin, 1925). He, too, maintains that the first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat would witness the development of formerly oppressed nations, their cultures and languages, the equality among nations, and gradual the rapprochement of nations (Stalin, 1929). Lenin and, consequently, Stalin maintain that the strengthening of international ties and the coming together of nations would continue until, as Lenin puts it, the definite amalgamation of nations in the higher unity (Lenin, 1913), leading to the creation of a new, socialist identity.

Stalin's position on the national question changed with the time and could be divided into pre- and post-revolutionary (Van Ree, 1994). His pre-revolutionary views on nationalism resembled those of Luxemburg, as he supported the idea of a centralized multinational state and strongly opposed the right of nations to secession. Only after the revolution did Stalin assume a rather conciliatory position towards the nationalities' problem, as he realized that the nations were tenacious enough to outlive capitalism (Van Ree, 1994). This is where he adopts Lenin's

pragmatic reasoning. Stalin makes a distinction between the socialism in one country and socialism on a world scale (Stalin, 1925, 1929), and stresses that the period of socialism in one country, e.g., Soviet Union, would witness the blossoming of nations and national languages that had been repressed by tsarist imperialism. Thus, the gradual amalgamation of nations becomes a reality only in the latter period, which will lead to the definite abolishment of imperialism, coming together of different nations and the eradication of national enmity, and the creation of a uniform socialist economic system.

However, nationalism proved to be more tenacious and powerful than both Lenin and Stalin had anticipated. Thus, as Connor (1984) rightfully asserts, where nationalism and communism went hand in hand, Communist movements could count on a broader acceptance, whereas the contrary could only instigate people's contempt for the movement.

The fusion: Communism, nationalism and social homogeneity

I will briefly reflect back on Stalin, as his post-revolutionary treatment of nationalism provides a framework for the subsequent discussion on the unanticipated coalescence of two ideologies. In the years following the revolution, the idea of "socialism in one country" caused an intra-party struggle. As Stalin discredited Trotsky's concept of "permanent revolution"¹, the main focus was directed towards the legitimization of newly conceived policies and the creation of a new socialist identity. Already Lenin comprehended that, in the post-revolutionary period, the Party would have to rely on and embrace nationalism, and combine the international character of the ideology with the deeply rooted national consciousness in order to acquire broader acceptance. Stalin, on the contrary, staunchly opposed any kind of nationalism, yet it was him who destroyed the traditional Marxist assertion, which even Lenin had followed, that the victory of socialism would bring about the demise of nationalism (Van Ree, 1994).

Lenin's idea of post-revolutionary national equality was sentenced to oblivion and a "new Soviet man", instead of appearing as an identity built from scratch, begins to resemble the state's dominant national group. In addition, there was scarcely any reference to the building of

¹ Trotsky found that Soviet Union would not survive as the only socialist state, as either capitalism or socialism would win in the long-run (Mayer, 1968).

socialism on a world scale. Thus, the socialist quest for internationalism ended up subordinated to strategic interests of the USSR and Stalin himself, as one of the main criteria by which to determine the direction of Bolshevik policies appeared to be, nevertheless, Russian national interest (Demaitre, 1969).

For instance, in the domestic arena, Stalin embarked on an endeavor to homogenize society and mobilize it with greater ease in the time of need. Connor (1984) reminds on Stalin's subsequent resort to past events, cultural tradition, and memorable personalities from the pre-revolutionary times. However, as Connor notes, not only did he evoke the glorious moments of Russian history and tradition, but he also made sure that the personalities and actions he evoked were compatible with the existing boundaries, i.e. he resorted to venerating figures considered as Great Russian, such as Ivan the Terrible. Both Stalin and his successors were prone to making correlations between the old Russia and the present Soviet Union, in that both states were surrounded by a myriad of hostile 'others' that posed serious threats to their independence. To illustrate, the mention will be made of the one of Stalin's numerous speeches, delivered at the First all-union conference of managers of socialist industry in 1931:

One feature of the history of old Russia was the continual beatings she suffered for falling behind, for her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol khans. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords. She was beaten by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the British and French capitalist. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her – for her backwardness: for military backwardness, for cultural backwardness, for political backwardness, for industrial backwardness, for agricultural backwardness. (...) In the past we had no fatherland, nor could we have one. But now that we have overthrown capitalism and power is in the hands of the working class, we have a fatherland, and we will defend its independence (Stalin, 1954: pp.40-41).

Although treated like antitheses, communism and nationalism in practice came to resemble each other, as they employ similar mechanisms when confronted with dissent – repression in the name of unity (Stokes, 1994). Social homogeneity, therefore, evolved in one of the key priorities of numerous communist regimes, which resorted to repression and extensive manipulation of national sentiments. Thus, the perpetual recollection of past struggles, perennial enmities and a plentiful of hostile "others", proved to be the most efficient psychological tool to

keep the vast majority of people trustful and obedient. Daniel Bar-Tal, an Israeli social psychologist, conducted a broad research on aforementioned phenomena and formulated a specific term to be used for societies in question – a *siege mentality*. Bar-Tal defines siege mentality as “a mental state in which members of a group hold a central belief that the rest of the world has highly negative behavioral intentions toward them” (Bar-Tal, 1992). The key element of the belief is a notion of a threat, real or potential, to the group’s existence, stemming from non-members of the affected group. Hence the group is doomed to stand all alone against the hostile world (Bar-Tal, 1992). Although the author initially focused his attention on Israel, he, nevertheless, applies the phenomenon on the experiences of other countries, including the early Soviet Union and communist Albania (Bar-Tal, 1992).

1.2. Hroch’s stage theory and the case of Albania

The final part engages with the tumultuous development of an Albanian nationalism through the prism of the theoretical framework developed by a prominent Czech historian and Marxist scholar on nationalism, Miroslav Hroch. The aim of this overview is twofold: a) to offer an account of specific structural conditions, which predestined the troublesome evolution of Albanian nationalism and b) to explicate the belated emergence of a national mass movement and a singular and all-encompassing Albanian national identity.

Hroch, just like the other modernist theoreticians, asserts that the nation was a modern phenomenon, a direct result of the transformation of traditional into a modern society, induced by socio-economic and political transformations that had commenced in the Western Europe. However, contrary to some modernists (e.g. Gellner), who maintain that nationalism indeed created nations, for Hroch, nationalism is only one of many forms of national consciousness which presupposes the existence of a certain nation (Hroch, 1985). He differentiates therefore between nationalism, which he uses for the extreme manifestations of national consciousness characteristic for the Twentieth-Century Europe, and programs of classic national movements aimed at achieving a fully-fledged nationhood. Another formative feature of Hroch’s theorizing on nationalism is his adherence to the Marxist school of thought, as he links the gradual rise of national consciousness to the emergence of a new bourgeois class, which eventually comes out as a sole representative of the national interest.

Hroch mostly concentrated his work on the struggle of small, oppressed nations for the nationhood. He made a great contribution to nationalism theories with his model of nation formation consisting of three distinct phases, conceptualized according to the character and role of activists and the degree to which national consciousness is present in a relevant ethnic group (Hroch, 1985, 1996). The initial phase, or Phase A, is marked as a period of scholarly interest for cultural, linguistic and historical attributes of the oppressed nationality. Although there was no reference to national identity during the initial phase, the foundation of a subsequent national identity was certainly laid. It is only during the second stage, or Phase B, that the national interests are brought to the forefront. In the so-called period of patriotic agitation, a group of activists seeks to “awaken” the national consciousness among the people of a relevant ethnic group. Finally, once the national movement, previously confined to intellectuals and political activist, acquires a mass character, the process of nation formation enters a third, Phase C.

Before placing the Albanian case in the context of Hroch’s stage theory, I will briefly turn the focus to specific structural conditions that one should take into consideration when reflecting upon the evolution of the Albanian national consciousness. One of the defining features of the nineteenth-century socio-political circumstances in Balkans, as Hroch notes, is that “an ‘exogenous’ ruling class dominated ethnic groups which occupied a compact territory but lacked ‘their own’ nobility, political unit or continuous literary tradition” (Hroch, 1996: p.80). In addition, following his analysis on the nationalities of Habsburg and Ottoman Empire (Hroch, 2013), Hroch points out to several structural conditions significant for the shaping of relevant national movements in the Balkans, including the Albanian one. First, as Ottomans had destroyed all the pre-existing institutions and local nobilities in a conquered territory, the oppressed nationalities could not base their claims on centuries’ old rights. Rather the claims depended on the interests and whims of Ottoman authorities. Second, with the exception of Albanians, the religion played a crucial role in defining one’s national identity. Third, in the economic terms, the nineteenth-century Balkans was far less developed than central Europe that had already experienced the onset of industrialization and capitalism. On the contrary, the new national movements in the Balkans emerged in an economic background marked by the pre-modern forms of production and the traces of the old feudal system. Fourth, owing to the lack of domestic scholarly research of relevant ethnic groups, the understanding of a relevant national identity was rather based on the myths and misunderstanding shaped by power politics. Fifth, the

general rate of literacy in the Balkans was extremely low and the secular education was an inconceivable notion. Lastly, the two empires (including the nationalities existing within their confines) experienced a different treatment by the rest of the international community. Hroch notes that, while the national movements within the Austro-Hungarian Empire were rather ignored by the other powers, the actions of the national movements in the Ottoman Empire were often used as a pretext for diplomatic and military interventions in the region.

All the structural features listed above (with the exception of the one pertinent to the role of religion) should be taken into account when referring to Albanian nationalism. Moreover, the Albanians found themselves in a more disadvantaged position compared to their immediate neighbors, as they lacked the experience of having a political unit of their own in the past, their own national bourgeoisie and an administrative center. In addition, they faced regional divisions, coupled with cultural and religious disunity, which had a negative impact on the identity-building process. The last remaining factor with the potential to become an element of a national identity in making was, as Piro Misha (2002) puts it, the language. Yet, the Ottomans undertook all necessary measures to prevent the teaching of the Albanian language and, since the education was only available in the foreign language (Turkish or Greek), Albanian culture was scarcely scrutinized and thus remained mainly popular and folkloric (Misha, 2002). It was against the backdrop of these structural features that Albanian intellectuals and patriotic activists advocated the Albanian national cause.

The beginning of Hroch's Phase A in the case of Albania is connected with the domestic reforms in the Ottoman Empire (e.g. Tanzimat) and the growing interests of the Albanian language and culture in the mid-nineteenth century. Rrapaj (2013) thus marks the publication of the first Albanian alphabet in 1844 as a symbolic date for the first stage in the nation-building project. The transformation from a purely romantic to a political national movement appeared as a direct consequence of the events following the Russo-Turkish war (1877-8). Thus the creation of the League of Prizren marks the onset of the Phase B. However, the aforementioned structural conditions and a set of events in the early twentieth century led to the continuation of the second phase even after the attainment of independence. Albania remained a divided country in which the minority of people defined themselves primarily as Albanian nationals, due to, as Misha (2002) puts it, extreme poverty, inadequate infrastructure and the lack of communications. Thus,

only after the restoration of independence in 1920, and the development of a viable state structure, one can speak about the onset of the Phase C. However, as Hroch (2013) asserts, it is quite difficult to consider interwar Albania a nation-state, as it was governed by a semi-feudal aristocracy of landowners who successfully suppressed demands for a constitutional government and civil rights. Hroch maintains that it was only after 1945, under Hoxha's regime, that a uniform national identity was able to spread both in communist Albania and Kosovo, despite the differences in religion and dialect (Hroch, 2013). It was during the regime of Enver Hoxha that the Albanians became "masters of their own destiny" and that, as O'Donnell (1999) puts it, Albania, at last, came of age.

2. “LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE NEW ALBANIA” - SCULPTING THE NATIONAL IDENTITY ANEW

The aim of the following chapter is to elaborate on the assertion that Albania, in the years of Hoxha’s totalitarian rule, finally came of age, having both consolidated its statehood and markedly advanced in the nation-building process. First, a brief overview of the historical context in which Hoxha came to power will be offered, as it to a large extent influenced Hoxha’s conduct in the postwar period. Then, the government’s attempt to eradicate all the backward and divisive elements hostile to an Albanian national identity and achieve cultural homogeneity will be depicted and assessed. Finally, a resort to one of the core elements in the nation-building, a national history, will be scrutinized together with a number of national myths, reconstructed to comply with the interests of the Party. In addition, a mention will be made of the means that Hoxha’s regime employed in order to perpetuate the all-encompassing national-communist mythology and preserve and strengthen its rule.

2.1. Favorable historical context

A detailed account of the constraining factors offered in the previous chapter will enable a firmer grasp of the developments in post-war Albania. In order to understand all the peculiarities of Hoxha’s regime and the type of nationalism he resorted to, one ought to look back at the numerous mournful points in Albanian history. The history of Albania is a history of incessant foreign domination and dependence. Even in the years following the attainment of the independence, Albania continued to be a divided, vulnerable country, dependent on foreign tutelage, as the president and, from 1928, king Zog could not combat the internal divisions and external threats. Thus, Albania lost its short-lived independence and became an Italian protectorate in 1939. It is because of this legacy that Hoxha perpetually stressed the maintenance of independence as the primary goal of the communist regime. He capitalized on a deep desire of

the Albanians to become masters of their own destiny, without foreign powers occupying them and dictating how Albanians would practice their culture, language, religion, and traditions (Turku, 2009). Albanian independence regained in 1944, and the legacy of centuries-long foreign oppression enabled Hoxha, as Turku (2009) puts it, to seize the opportunity for political supremacy based on hyper-nationalism, security, stability, and isolationism.

King Zog sought to instill the national consciousness within the divided Albanian society by eliminating some of the constraints to Albanian identity, like illiteracy or religious divisions, i.e. he emphasized the importance of the secular education and the state surveillance over religious affairs. He, nevertheless, failed to create a national community that would supersede existing tribalism and localism. He did not succeed to overcome all structural impediments and modernize his country. Instead, Zog relied mostly on the support coming from traditional landowning class, and, in return, represented the interests of those willing to preserve the old system intact (Jelavich, 1983; Fischer, 1995; Rrapaj, 2013).

Hoxha, on the contrary, was in a more favorable position in comparison to Zog to pursue his own policies. Bernd J. Fischer (1995, 1999) discerns several factors that facilitated Hoxha's seizure and maintenance of power. First, the victory of the Partisans in the National Liberation War gave Hoxha the legitimacy and the freedom to exercise his power. Hoxha capitalized on the fact that Albania was liberated almost without outside help. Second, the traditional ruling classes had been destroyed or, at least, discredited by the end of the war, owing to their collaboration with the fascists, or their failure to help the resistance movement. In addition, he could learn from Zog's example and address the issues differently.

As the seizure of power occurred during the time of struggle, the wartime experience served as a cornerstone for the post-war organization of the Albanian society. In order to regain the legitimacy and maintain the power, the regime ceaselessly invoked the notion of an eternal struggle against enemies, both external and internal. Due to a somewhat limited base of support the Partisans had - the Communist party was very young, formed in the wake of the war - and, given the quitclaim of Kosovo, extreme nationalism emerged as the best means by which Hoxha would maintain his power (Fischer, 1999). Thus, in addition to the fierce Stalinist rhetoric and totalitarian methods of rule, nationalism became the chief constituent of his future policies.

2.2. The elimination of elements hostile to Albanian national identity

Apart from a highly centralized, authoritarian political structure that alleviated the regime's address to pressing economic and social problems, Hoxha's incessant appeal to national sentiments, i.e. the perpetual reflection upon the legacy of foreign domination, wartime experience, and the possible foreign intervention, helped him to cement his power and address certain issues more successfully than his predecessor (Fischer, 1995). The following passages will depict Hoxha's assault on two major divisive elements of the Albanian nation – tribalism and religion.

“Toskicization” of the society

The end of the war brought about the transfer of political power from the Ghegs to the Tosks and the latter's imposition of an all-encompassing hegemony over the former. The postwar power shift was followed by extensive repression and the “cultural imperialism” (Blumi, 1997) performed by the Tosk dominated Communist party. Hence a mention of the turbulent intergroup relations and the policies of the Communist regime towards the Ghegs is deemed noteworthy.

Throughout history, the Shkumbini River divided the Albanian people into two distinct groups. The Ghegs inhabit the territories of northern Albania and Kosovo and Metohija, whereas the Tosks are concentrated mainly in the south of the country. The multiple foreign invasions of Albania notwithstanding, the Ghegs enjoyed a large amount of political autonomy in the Ottoman Empire and, due to the remote mountainous region they inhabited, they had almost no contact with the outside world, including the Tosks (Pano, 1968). Thus, before the late nineteenth century, the interaction between the two groups had been very limited. Isa Blumi (1997), for instance, asserts that even the exceptions of the temporary alliances between the two groups were exaggerated by nationalist literature, hence deemed unreliable.

In the interwar period, as Pano (1968) observes, Albanian government was rather in favor of the Ghegs (Zog himself was a Gheg). In order to broaden its control over the Ghegs, the

government used to grant them state positions and invest a large amount of money on the social welfare programs in northern Albania, whereas the Tosks acquired by far fewer benefits from the state (Pano, 1968). The dissatisfaction with the existing political, social and economic circumstances instigated some of the Tosks to embrace communism. Blumi (1997) also points out to the interwar Gheg-Tosk rivalry that in the wake of the Second World War took on the ideological marker, as the split between the Monarchists/nationalists and the Communists became apparent.

As the majority of the members of the CPA belonged to the Tosks, one of the most striking domestic issues following the end of the war was to create a homogeneous Albanian society, and extend the authority of the newly established regime over the Ghegs, who traditionally were in the opposition to any strong, centralized state. In addition, the relations between the Communists and the Ghegs were further aggravated following the revocation of the Mukje agreement in 1943 by Enver Hoxha and eventual restoration of Kosovo to Yugoslavia. Thus, the new government was relentless in its attempt to win over the obedience of the Ghegs. It embarked on a large-scale project to destroy the “preserve of reaction” and bring the Ghegs out of their “feudal isolation” (Blumi, 1997).

Following the seizure of power, the Communists staged a series of trials aimed at persecuting “war criminals” and the, so-called, “enemies of the people”, who, in reality, were nothing else but “the enemies of the party” (O’Donnell, 1999). Soon, the list of suspects was expended as to include Gheg nationalists, tribal leaders and Catholic priests (Blumi, 1997), i.e. all the real or potential opponents to the type of national unity constructed by the CPA. The perpetual persecutions had a twofold aim – to “pacify” the opponents among the Ghegs and, on the other hand, to maintain the fear and respect for the regime among the Tosks themselves (Blumi, 1997).

The country’s north was perceived as staunchly anti-communist, especially following the abortive 1947 peasant rebellion in the city of Shkoder (Draper, 1997), The Catholic priesthood in the north was, in addition, accused of having supported the Ghegs’ opposition to the government’s quest for the elimination of the “barriers” that had separated the Albanian people for centuries. In order to finally subjugate the Ghegs, Hoxha also resorted to the invocation of the internal and external threats and enmities. For instance, he based his campaign on the fight

against imperialism and the seeds of reaction, thereby accusing the Ghegs of unpatriotic loyalties to Vatican, a “center of reaction, a tool in the service of capital and world reaction” (Hoxha, 1979: p.154).

Hoxha’s assault of Gheg’s identity certainly peaked once the policies aimed at linguistic homogenization came to the fore. The purpose that the regime gave to the “unified literary Albanian” was, allegedly patriotic (Pipa, 1989: p.97), as the homogenized language was supposed to strengthen national self-consciousness and accelerate social homogenization. However, the “coming together” of the two dialects did not occur “naturally”, as a result of a longer historical process. Instead, the new government immediately imposed the Tosk dialect as the country’s official language and put an end to Ghegs’ linguistic tradition. The arguments in favor of the move ranged from the linguistic ones, aimed at proving the uniformity and superiority of the Tosk dialect, to the ideological ones, stressing the “progressive” character of the dialect.² Whereas the Tosk dialect remained almost intact, the Gheg vocabulary had to be “Toskicized” (Pipa, 1989), although the Gheg vocabulary and grammar was proved to be richer than their Tosk counterpart (p.91). What ensued could be characterized as the consolidation of the Tosk cultural hegemony. As Arshi Pipa, a prominent Albanian-American intellectual notes:

United literary Albanian” is a political stratagem devised to perpetuate the cultural hegemony of a minority part of the nation over the rest. (...) The result will be the institutionalization of the language inferiority of Ghegs with respect to Tosks (Pipa 1989: pp.98-99).

Eradication of religion

Hoxha followed the assertions of his predecessors, who maintained that the gravest setback to the monolithic Albanian nation was certainly the religious disunity. Throughout history, numerous religious communities in the lands inhabited by Albanians had been influenced and guarded by several religious and political centers (Marmullaku 1975). Thus, the Albanians, as a society divided along religious lines, has been seen as having perpetually fallen victim to imperialist pretensions of foreign powers. Hoxha, consequently, directed regime’s

² Tosk dialect was deemed more progressive as opposed to the Gheg, as many Gheg writers were Catholic clergymen, often targeted as “reactionaries” loyal to the Vatican (Pipa, 1989: p.126).

coercive power and propaganda activities towards the final break with the realm of religion, which had “tormented” Albanian society throughout history.

Contrary to their contemporaries in the rest of the Balkans, nineteenth-century Albanian nationalists sought to make nationalism an alternative to existing religions and thereby adopted Vaso Pasha’s assertion that “the real religion of Albanians is Albanianism” (Misha, 2002: p.45). The creation of a national identity, independent from and superior to narrow religious one, was rather an exceedingly difficult endeavor. Even following the creation of the new state in 1912, religious divisions remained seeds of discord among the Albanian nationals. King Zog, nevertheless, employed a strategy that would, in the years following the Second World War, be the initial point of his successor’s treatment of religion. He sought to impose a state control over the religious institutions and minimize their connection with respective religious centers (Misha, 2002). However, only with the advent of Hoxha’s regime, the campaign commenced by Zog was fully consolidated.

The new Albanian government embarked on an ambitious program to eliminate religion from the lives of Albanian nationals. The tensions between the religious institutions (particularly the Catholic Church) and the state commenced during the war, as the clergymen were accused of collaborating with the fascists and calling on the faithful to disobey and defy the Partisans (Prifti, 1978). In the years following the end of the war, the “reactionary” clergy was overwhelmed with an avalanche of accusations of counterrevolutionary activities by means of “the word of God” (Hoxha, 1982a: p.436).

Despite the fact that members of all religious communities were sooner or later targeted as the “enemies of the people”, the government adopted different strategies for different religious groups, depending on Party’s temporary interests. Gjon Sinishta (1983) notes divergences in strategies towards the Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic communities. Initially, the new government tolerated Islam, as, with a few exceptions, it did not pose major threats to the regime. In addition, the regime at the onset favored the Bektashi sect, as a number of its adherents gave their support to the Communist movement. Hoxha’s regime, too, sought to capitalize on the “harmonious” coexistence between communism and Islam and propagandize Moscow’s line in the Middle East and North Africa (Sinishta, 1983).

The Orthodox Church, too, was often used by the regime in its foreign policy. In the period of the Soviet tutelage of Albania, Albanian Orthodox Church was obliged to cooperate only with the Orthodox Churches of Stalin's "socialist camp", thus being subjugated to the Moscow Patriarchate (Tönnies, 1982). Although less reliable because of the opposition of a number of clergymen to the new communist reality, Albanian Orthodox Church was, nevertheless, used by the government, due to its traditional patriotic character, as an instrument for the mobilization of the Orthodox populace.

Both Muslim and Orthodox clergy were on numerous occasions labeled as "enemies of the state" and, consequently, imprisoned, tortured and, eventually, executed. For instance, the Archbishop Kristifor Kisi, head of the Albanian Orthodox Church, who opposed the subjugation of the Church to the Moscow Patriarchate, was removed from office and imprisoned in 1949 on charges of detaching the Church from the Eastern Orthodox community and surrendering it to the Vatican (Prifti, 1978).

However, despite being the smallest of all religious communities in Albania, the pressure and assaults directed towards the Catholic Church were much heavier in comparison to aforementioned groups. The reasons are manifold. During the war, the Catholic Church was charged with supporting and collaborating with Fascists. Following the war, the Church became linked with the "imperialist and aggressive West" (Prifti, 1978: p.152), because of its reliance to Vatican. In addition, it was concentrated in the country's north and among the Ghegs, thus posing the gravest obstacle to the central government in Tirana. The persecutions of Catholic clergymen commenced immediately, so that, by the end of 1946, almost half of the clergy were imprisoned, all foreign clergymen expelled and 20 priests and religious executed (Sinishta, 1983: p.9). Moreover, the Catholic Church opposed the "nationalization" more fiercely than the other religious communities, as the Statute imposed by the government prohibited "any organizational, economic or political relations with the Pope" (Tönnies, 1982: p.249). The Statute was, nevertheless, accepted in 1951, the Church became "nationalized" and forced to sever its ties with the Vatican.

In addition to coercive measures, Hoxha resorted to a ceaseless public agitation in favor of the state atheism. The communist leadership asserted that religion was an element alien to the Albanians, a mere tool in the hands of foreign power to keep the Albanian people divided and

subjugated. The Church was marked as a culprit for all the plagues that had affected Albania throughout history, and the general backwardness of the nation. According to Hoxha:

All the religious sects that exist in our country have been brought into Albania by foreign invaders and have served them and the ruling and exploiting classes of the country. Under the cloak of religion, God and the prophets there operated the brutal law of the invaders and their domestic lackeys. The history of our people (...) how [religion] engendered discord and fratricide in order to oppress us more cruelly, enslave us more easily, and suck our blood (Prifti, 1978: p.158).

Hoxha's relentless fight against religion peaked in 1967, during the Ideological and Cultural Revolution. On 6 February 1967, Hoxha held a speech at the Naim Frasheri High School in Durres, during which he launched a campaign aimed at obliterating religion from the Albanian national being. The outcomes of the campaign were striking. During 1967, almost 2200 mosques, churches, and other religious objects were demolished and closed (Sinishta, 1983: p.13). Then, on 22 November 1967, the government published a decree ordering the abolition of all existing religious statutes. Finally, almost a decade later, religion was officially wiped out of the Albanian state with the introduction of the new Constitution in 1976. According to Article 37, "The state recognizes no religion whatever and supports atheist propaganda for the purpose of inculcating the scientific materialist world outlook in people". Thus Albania became the first officially atheist state in the world.

2.3. Distorted historical facts, myths, and propaganda

The "nationalization of history" (Misha, 2002), i.e. the reconstruction of the past as to create a common history of the nation in making is the essence of every nation-building process. Not only does the national history prove the existence and historical continuity of a nation, but the mere existence of shared historical circumstances gives evidence of the existence of a unique "community of fate", as Bauer puts it, and facilitates social cohesion of the respective group. Both the early Albanian nationalists and Enver Hoxha resorted to the selective use of past events in order to establish and preserve social cohesion of the Albanian nation. In addition to the creation of, what Hoxha depicts as a "monolithic unity of the Albanian people" (Hoxha, 1984), the selective use of history served a purpose of giving legitimacy to the regimes of both Hoxha

and his predecessor, King Zog. Hoxha was particularly prone to employ manipulated historical facts and myths so as to appeal to national feelings of a wider population and legitimize regime's oppressive policies.

Thus, as Lubonja (2002) notes, the conduct of the communist regime engenders a certain paradox - the communist government's attempt to break with the past, evil and backward as it is, collides with, on the other hand, the need to make use of certain relics of that past. As the national history, myths and tradition were deeply rooted in the collective memory of the Albanians, the Communists, in order to stay in power, resorted to the selective use of history. Hoxha's regime made use of the so-called glorious moments (Lubonja, 2002) of the Albanian history, out of which the most exalted were Skanderbeg's resistance to the Ottomans and the Partisan war.

As previously noted, the wartime experience had played a key role in shaping Hoxha's postwar policies. His attempt to maintain the "state of siege" mentality had to be laid on the firm historical ground. The resort to the history of the perpetual struggle for the national independence thus seems logical.

Early Albanian nationalists, just like most of their Balkan counterparts, made the most of medieval history in their attempt to shape the Albanian national being. The absence of a historical political unit and the infamous legacy of perpetual foreign domination, led to the creation of the myth of a permanent resistance against a myriad of foes throughout history, the embodiment of which became the figure of Skanderbeg. For the writers of the Albanian renaissance, Skanderbeg, a fifteenth-century feudal lord, who unified Albanian-speaking landlords under his leadership, ousted the Ottomans from the northern territories, and succeeded in maintaining resistance to the Ottomans until his death, served as a symbol of a united Albanian people resisting Ottoman conquest (Sugarman, 1999). The construction of such a myth "enabled them to posit the existence of a pre-Ottoman, medieval 'Albania', that could then be 'reborn' as a modern Albanian state" (Sugarman, 1999: p.431). In addition, the reference to the five centuries of the Ottoman rule as the mere occupation of Albania, rather than the conquest (F. Lubonja 2017, pers. comm., 15 Sep), gave validity to the myth of a permanent resistance of the Albanians, who had never fully surrendered to their enemy. Skanderbeg was presented as a national hero, although he had ruled just a part of today's Albania and his endeavors had never

involved all Albanians (Misha, 2002). Some adjustments were also needed in relation to his connection to Christianity, which was omitted from the nineteenth century's narrative that aimed to transcend the existing religious divisions.

In the years following the independence, the Skanderbeg myth became highly politicized. The proclamation of the new state followed by the raising of Skanderbeg's flag was thus understood by the Albanian nationalists as the posthumous realization of Skanderbeg's efforts (Schmidt-Neke, 2008). The myth had been re-shaped continuously to serve the purpose of every successive regime. Zog, for instance, appropriated the national myth of Skanderbeg and made it his personal myth, presenting himself in this manner as Skanderbeg's successor, who after five centuries fulfilled his mission and ruled an independent Albania. Just like his predecessor, Hoxha, too, attempted to present himself as the heir of Skanderbeg and the guardian of the Albanian freedom and unity throughout his reign.

Hoxha resorted to the exaltation of Skanderbeg's endeavors for multiple reasons. During the war, the CPA used the nationalist rhetoric and sought to appeal to national sentiments in order to acquire wider legitimacy. The partisans, for instance, sworn in on "Skanderbeg's Banner", just like their domestic adversaries (Schmidt-Neke, 2008). In addition, the Communists sought to present the "National Liberation War" in the light of Skanderbeg's struggle against the Ottomans, placing an emphasis thus on the self-reliance and isolation of the two movements (Draper, 1997). The resemblance between Hoxha's postwar activities and Skanderbeg's struggles was further exaggerated in the light of the continuous resistance to imperialists and revisionists, the necessity of self-reliance, and eventual isolation of Albania. Hoxha used the national myth of Skanderbeg in order to both entrench his rule and, especially following the break with Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, reinforce the Albanian national consciousness. Skanderbeg, therefore, became a symbol of a new Albania and the embodiment of the post-war national-communist syncretism. He was presented as a direct link between the past and the presence. In Hoxha's narrative, Gjergj Kastrioti was depicted as a prince who "loved the people" (Schmidt-Neke, 2008: p.5), a leader of the masses (Schmitt, 2009) and a man who surpassed class divisions, becoming in this way the ancestor of the People's Republic (Schmidt-Neke, 2008). Skanderbeg had, nevertheless, failed to wage the victory and grant his people freedom. As for the

national-communist historiography, the historical victory would be only waged five centuries later.

The National Liberation War was, in the light of Hoxha's materialist and teleological interpretation of the Albanian history, a final stage in the three-thousand-year struggle for the realization of national unity and class equality. The victory of the partisans was presented as a fulfillment of what the Albanians had been fiercely fighting for throughout history – their freedom and independence. The Albanians had failed to achieve their freedom and independence in the past, because, as Hoxha puts it, they “had not succeeded in creating a monolithic, consistent leadership” (Hoxha, 1982a: p.179). As for Hoxha, the Anti-fascist National Liberation War was “the most heroic and triumphant war the Albanians have waged throughout their history” (Hoxha, 1982a: p.174), owing to the leadership of the CPA, “the architect of victory” (Hoxha 1982a: p.179).

The incessant reiteration of the wartime experience and the partisan victory served to legitimize the rule of the CPA, which had waged the historical victory, and justify the continuous oppression of the system. The war was analyzed within a national narrative of resistance and collaboration, i.e. the partisan struggle was glorified, whereas the other political and/or military groups were condemned as traitors and collaborators (Kera, 2017). The same resistance/collaboration dichotomy was employed throughout the years following the Second World War, in order to give grounds for ceaseless purges and nationwide paranoia.

The new government sought to foster a sense of national belonging and social cohesion through education, whose role in the creation of a new socialist man was of utmost significance. Thus, the Hoxha regime launched a campaign against illiteracy in 1946, which proved successful. By the time of the completion of the first phase in 1950, the illiteracy rate had fallen from 60 percent to 31 percent (Pano, 1968). In addition to the curricula and textbooks used for the early indoctrination, the extreme nationalism and Hoxha's paranoia were continuously disseminated nationwide by the means of mass communication, art, and literature. Just like his counterparts in other socialist states, Hoxha asserted that art and literature had to “become a powerful weapon in the Party's hand for educating the workers in the spirit of socialism and communism” (Turku, 2009: p.85).

It was Albanian social-realist literature played a significant role in the perpetuation of Albanian nationalist myths of resistance and continuous struggle. Literary works conserved and eternalized all the glorious moments and protagonists of the national-communist mythology of Albania. In order to further elaborate national-communist syncretism in literature, it is necessary to reflect upon the opus of Ismail Kadare, whose role in the Albanian identity construction has been immense. Kadare was also venerated by Hoxha's regime for his resort to national-communist mythology. His novel *Këshjtjella* (the Castle, 1980) is the best example of the synthesis of nationalist and communist mythology that Hoxha's regime fiercely propagated. The novel glorifies Skanderbeg's lengthy and valorous war of resistance against the Ottoman aggression. Written in 1960, the novel mirrored Hoxha's fight against imperialism and revisionism. The depiction of Albania as a strong, impregnable fort had a strong influence on, what Lubonja (2002) frames as a myth of isolation of the country.

A continuous resort to glorious moments in the national history proved an extremely powerful tool for both the advancement in nation-building process and consolidation of Hoxha's totalitarian regime. A climate of constant insecurity, suspicion and growing isolationism created a fertile ground for the dissemination of propaganda. A notable event of the 1960s, when the monument of Stalin was removed from the main square in Tirana, and replaced by the equestrian statue of Skanderbeg, reveals the extent to which Hoxha's communism was dependent on the nationalist mythology. The preservation of Albanian independence, obtained following a centuries-old struggle, became a focal point of Hoxha's national-communist ideology and a key argument to justify his numerous wrongdoings, as will be analyzed more thoroughly in the subsequent chapter.

3. FILLING THE GAPS – CAPITALIZING ON ENSUING THREATS TO ALBANIAN INDEPENDENCE AND MONOLITHIC UNITY

We must always be vigilant, always at work and on the attack to defend the victories achieved and carry them further forward. We must allow no one, whoever he may be, to violate and negate our immortal and sacred work, the People's Socialist Republic of Albania. In this way, our fortress, socialist Albania, will be strengthened and rise even more majestically from generation to generation!

- Enver Hoxha, *Laying the Foundation of the New Albania*, 1984

The idea of a perpetual struggle of the Albanian people against a myriad of enemies, excerpted from a nationalist mythology, proved very useful for Hoxha, as it offered a convincing pretext for a number of infamous moves and policies of the regime. A ceaseless struggle against various “agents of imperialism” who threatened the very existence of the People's Republic of Albania became a focal point of Hoxha's totalitarian rule. A list of real or potential miscreants was getting broader with every subsequent split, whereas the justification mechanisms remained identical. The aim of this chapter is thus to present an overview of Albania's ambiguous relations with a number of friends and benefactors and the corollaries of its split with each one of them, characterized by a resort to extreme nationalism, xenophobia, and a collective victimization. The following paragraphs offer a list of all “false friends”, traitors and malefactors, whose efforts to exploit, subdue, and destroy the People's Republic of Albania went down the grain by virtue of the vigilance of the CPA/PLA and the Albanian people, as Hoxha would frame it.

The distrust of the British was aroused quite early. The British played a very important role during the war, as their mission was present in the country throughout the period of struggle. The British military mission sought to create a unified front against the German occupiers consisting of both the Partisans and the non-communist groups. However, the attempt was doomed from its onset, as the seizure of the power and the fight against their domestic adversaries was by far more important for both the communists and non-communists.

The relations aggravated following the end of the war, as both the United States and Great Britain refused to recognize Hoxha's government and support Albania's admission into the United Nations, as they had previously required the recognition of all bilateral treaties they had signed with the government of King Zog. In addition, the passage of the Pepper Resolution in the United States Senate in July 1946, which favored the award of Northern Epirus to Greece (Pano, 1968) and the support of the British for the Greek Prime Minister Tsaldaris, who at the Peace Conference accused Albania for siding with Fascist Italy during its aggression against Greece (Fevziu, 2016) especially ignited anti-British and anti-American sentiments in Albania. Lastly, the Corfu Channel incident³ in October 1946 was the final nail in the coffin of the British-Albanian relations that would be restored only 45 years later.

The descent of an "iron curtain" and a rift between the West and the East further contributed to Albania's hostility against the United States and Great Britain. In addition, Hoxha staunch anti-Western stand was, at least in part, influenced by Xoxe and the Yugoslavs, who feared that the presence of the United States in Albania might obstruct the plans for eventual Albanian-Yugoslav union (Pano, 1968). Enver Hoxha, nevertheless, seized the opportunity to present himself as an Albanian nationalist, entrench his power throughout the country, especially following the cession of Kosovo and Metohija, and wage a final victory against all internal enemies. Hence he linked the hostile activities of the US and Great Britain with those of the main opponents of the CPA. Hoxha stated that "what the imperialists had been unable to achieve during the war, they would try to achieve now, after the war, with the remnants of the BK and Legaliteti (...), the internal reaction" (Hoxha, 1982b: p.365). The abortive insurgence in Shkshkodra in September 1946 was thus officially interpreted as an attempt against Albania by reactionary circles, "incited by the functionaries of American and British missions, which had promised their military intervention from abroad" (Frasheri, 1964: p.335). The aforementioned unrest was the last armed attempt against Hoxha's Albania, as further attacks became impossible due to, according to Albanian socialist historiography, the nationwide sympathy, and support for the new regime (Frasheri, 1964).

Contrary to the relations between Albania and the two Western powers, relations between Albania and Yugoslavia improved steadily during the war, as the CPA, in its formative years,

³ Corfu Channel incident refers to the series of incident which culminated when the two British warships collided with mines in the Albanian territorial waters.

related mostly on by far more experienced CPY. The decision of the CPA to establish relations with the CPY showed, according to Hoxha, maturity and courage of Albanian communists to overcome their grievances, and a widespread belief that that CPY would free themselves from the old Yugoslavia and its infamous legacy (Hoxha, 1982b: pp.630-640). Following the end of the war, Yugoslavia emerged as Albania's closest ally and one of the first countries to recognize Hoxha's Provisional government and establish diplomatic relations with Albania on April 28, 1945 (O'Donnell, 1999). In addition, Yugoslav delegation was a fierce advocate of the participation of Albania at the Paris Peace Conference and its membership in the United Nations. However, Albania's initial admiration of CPY would vanish completely in following years.

The CPA was from its onset dependent on the aid and the support of the CPY and the leadership of the CPY seized the opportunity to influence the activities of Albanian communists to a large extent (e.g. the repudiation of Mukje agreement). The Yugoslavs continued to dominate the CPA in the first postwar years as well and Hoxha seemed willing to make any concessions to them (Fezviu, 2016). Therefore, in 1946, two parties concluded a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Aid, which foresaw the establishment of an agency to coordinate the two countries' economic plans, the standardization of the countries' monetary systems, the creation of a common price system and a customs union between Albania and Yugoslavia (Pano, 1968). Although the Yugoslavs provided Albania with considerable financial support, the agreements were by far less beneficiary for Albania, as it became economically more and more dependent upon Yugoslavia. By making Albania a satellite state, Tito gradually paved the way for its prospective unification with Yugoslavia. The protests of a part of the Albanian leadership against the unfair economic relations and Tito's intensifying pressure notwithstanding, Hoxha sought not to disrupt the relations with Yugoslavia for at least two interrelated reasons. First, Hoxha's primary goal was to remain in power, hence the reason he approached sensitive issues with utmost care. His pragmatism in relations with the Yugoslavs was influenced by Yugoslav distrust of Hoxha ever since the war and their support for Koci Xoxe, the second most powerful man in Albania. For this reason, it is important to make a mention of the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party, which took place between February 26 and March 8, 1948. During the plenum, which is seen as the culmination of the Yugoslav plot to isolate and, eventually, oust Hoxha from power (O'Donnell, 1999), Hoxha admitted his past errors and condemned the ones responsible for

“having poisoned Albanian-Yugoslav relations” (Pano, 1968: p.81), in order to stay in power. Second, Stalin was quite indifferent toward Albania in the first postwar years and showed no interest to assume a role of Albania’s “big brother”. Still weak and underdeveloped, Albania could not afford to be self-reliant and had to accept the help of the Yugoslavs.

However, already in the mid-1948, a major shift in the Soviet-Yugoslav relations created a great opportunity for Hoxha and gave him enough confidence to finally break with the Yugoslavs. Hoxha capitalized on the ensuing rift between Tito and Stalin and annulled all economic agreements between Albania and Yugoslavia (Vickers, 1995). In addition, Albanian leadership immediately embarked on a large-scale propaganda offensive against Tito, the “arch-enemy of the nation”, which was to be found on posters, placards and in other means of mass communication throughout the country (Hamm, 1963). According to Hoxha, American imperialism used Titoism, a symbol of an ideological deviation, to create disunity within the international communist movement and impede the revolution and national liberation wars (Hoxha, 1982c). Hoxha began to reveal a myriad of facts proving the Yugoslav malicious intentions and a hidden agenda behind a pledge of a great friendship. The Communist Party of Albania was praised for having led the resistance of the people against the traitors who tried to isolate Albania from the rest of the world, subjugate it and liquidate its independence (Hoxha 1975, 1982b). Harry Hamm, a West German journalist, depicts his encounter with the anti-Yugoslav propaganda of the Albanian regime during his visit to Tirana in 1961. As he reports, one could find large stocks of books, brochures, and pamphlets about the numerous misdeeds of the Yugoslavs in the bookstores of Tirana (Hamm, 1963).

In addition, the faith of Kosovo and the Albanians of Yugoslavia permeated a number of patriotic utterances, which were intensively resorted to in the 1950s. For example, in a text published in the Albanian party daily *Zeri i Populit* in February 1957, Hoxha accuses the Yugoslav leaders for maintaining “a chauvinist and inhuman attitude towards the population of Kosova”, “a policy of extermination (...) [that] not even the Kings of Serbia pursued” (Hoxha, 1975: p.715). As the great mass of the people did not understand the abstract peculiarities of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, the appeal to national sentiments proved to be a powerful tool in the hands of the government (Hamm, 1963).

Hoxha may have thought that by taking a prompt and firm stand against Tito, he would convince Stalin of the Albanian loyalty to the USSR (Pano, 1968). As Pano (1968) notes, the Albanians were far more willing to subordinate themselves to the Soviets than to Yugoslavs, as the USSR was geographically farther and did not pose a threat to Albanian territorial integrity and independence and, on the other hand, was able to provide Albania with greater material and technical assistance. Stalin, too, was willing to strengthen the alliance with Hoxha, primarily due to a fear that a strong pro-Yugoslav faction might seize the power in Albania and a sudden strategic importance of the Albanian Adriatic coast. As the plan to build a submarine base in the vicinity of Dubrovnik failed following the break with Tito, the Soviets seized the opportunity to proceed with the project on the Albanian island of Sazan. Albania benefited to a large extent from being a satellite of the USSR, as it was given both a sense of security and generous financial aid. Stalin's sudden death in 1953 generated a public unease and endangered a short-lived stability enabled by Stalin's tutelage.

A shift in Soviet conduct towards Yugoslavia and a gradual rapprochement within the Soviet policy of de-Stalinization appeared to have caught the Albanian leadership by surprise. Khrushchev placed an immense pressure on Hoxha to change his attitude towards Tito and embrace a new reality. Although he unwillingly accepted to follow suit and announced during the Third Party Congress in May 1956 that all accusations against Yugoslavia were unjust and that Albania would restore friendly relations with the Yugoslavs (Vickers, 1999), he refused to comply with the demand pertinent to the rehabilitation of Koci Xoxe and the other members of the pro-Yugoslav faction of the APL. Hoxha was caught here between a rock and a hard place. He could not completely follow suit and condemn the Stalinist measures he had carried out throughout the 1940s, as he had committed numerous crimes. In order to secure his position, and, more importantly, save his life, he had to defend Stalinism as a right way to communism (F Lubonja 2017, pers. comm., 15 Sep.).

As the struggle for the national unity implied the relentless fight against both the external and internal enemies, a pretext for a series of purges of Hoxha's political opponents that followed each of the shifts in Albanian foreign policy was the punishment of all domestic traitors and "agents of imperialism". Koci Xoxe, the minister of interior and, as noted above, the second most important man in the Party, became a personification of internal subversion and betrayal.

The purges of Xoxe and other Titoist elements from the CPA were followed by later purges of the pro-Soviets, spies and other enemies of the state.

Although Hoxha continued to pay lip service to the USSR, he, on the other hand, sought to reduce dependence on the Soviets in the same way as he had previously done with Yugoslavia. In October 1954, Albania and China signed a number of agreements related to cultural, scientific, and technical cooperation, which marked the first step in the establishment of the Sino-Albanian alliance (Pano, 1968). At the same time, he used the renewed tensions between the USSR and the Yugoslavia following the Hungarian uprising in 1956 to further antagonize the Yugoslavs and anti-Stalinists for revisionism and the disintegration of the communist camp, in an abortive attempt to create an anti-Tito coalition within the movement (Pano, 1968).

The major impediments to the Albanian-Soviet relations in the late 1950s were both the Kremlin's policy towards Yugoslavia and the Albanian siding with the Chinese. Khrushchev's two-week visit to Albania in 1959 was supposed to demonstrate the importance of Albania to the USSR and establish firmer links between the Soviet block and Albania. Not only did Khrushchev insist that the Albanians improve their relations with Yugoslavia, but also that they should focus their economy on the growing of fruits as they would bring more income, rather than on industrialization and oil industry (Vickers, 1999). Khrushchev's attempt to persuade Albania to become socialism's "orchard" (Turku, 2009: p.114) encountered Hoxha's firm resistance. In Hoxha's view:

[Khrushchev] wanted Albania to be turned into a fruit-growing colony which would serve the revisionist Soviet Union, just as banana republics in Latin America serve the United States of America. But we could never allow ourselves to take this suicidal course which Khrushchev advised (Hoxha, 1984b: p.384).

The ensuing Albanian-Soviet rift became apparent during the congresses in Bucharest and Moscow in 1960, when Hoxha publicly sided with the Chinese against Khrushchev. Following the official break with the Soviets in 1961, Hoxha's ideological struggle against the revisionists and imperialists intensified. Thus the Soviet Union became another potential threat to Albanian independence and territorial integrity, particularly following the discussion between Khrushchev and a Greek left-wing politician Sophocles Venizelos on cultural autonomy for the Greek

minority in southern Albania in June 1960 (O'Donnell, 1999), for which Hoxha denounced Khrushchev, interpreting the outcome of the meeting as a backing of Greek territorial claims toward southern Albania (Turku, 2009). Albanian leadership received the news about the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 with great unease as it feared that Albania might be one of the next republics to face the implications of the infamous Brezhnev doctrine. Hoxha condemned the “utterly reactionary policy of Soviet social-imperialism”, and compared Brezhnev foreign policy of “great-state chauvinism, expansionism, and hegemonism” to the one of the imperialist United States (Hoxha, 1984b: p.9).

In the years following the Soviet-Albanian split, Hoxha's Albania became self-reliant, isolated from the outer world and extremely impoverished. The short-lived alliance with China was not taken very seriously as its main purpose was to secure the economic aid for Albania and to ensure a deterrent against potential Soviet attack (Fevziu, 2016). The Albanian people were finally given an opportunity to become “masters of their own destiny”, as they had waged heroic victories against imperialist, revisionist, and a myriad of traitors and built an “impregnable fortress” (Hoxha, 1984a). As noted in the previous chapter, art, literature and all kinds of media were in service of the “Homeland” and the vanguard Albanian Party of Labor. Kadare's *Kështjella*, written in the wake of Albanian isolationism, deliberately or not draws a parallel between Skanderbeg and Hoxha. However, contrary to Skanderbeg, and, according to the national-communist mythology, Hoxha succeeded in establishing and preserving the national unity and protecting the Albanian “fortress” from every hostile attempt. Hence the reason why the statue built in Hoxha's honor was made bigger than the one of Skanderbeg (F. Lubonja 2017, pers. comm., 15 Sep.).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The resort to national sentiments, recollection of past struggles for freedom and a right to self-determination were key components of Hoxha's power-based approach. Hoxha heavily capitalized on the victory in the Second World War, so-called National Liberation War, as the war was a turning point in Albanian nationalism, the first war fought in the name of Albania and the first one during which nationalism was used as an instrument for a mass mobilization and/or a feeling of solidarity among compatriots (Rrapaj, 2013). He perpetuated the heroic role of the Party and himself in the liberation of the "Homeland", generating thus a valuable asset, which he ceaselessly employed in order to legitimize and consolidate his own power, purge the opponents, and launch large-scale structural reforms, modernize the country and further consolidate Albanian nationalism. The resistance/collaboration dichotomy, based on the mournful history of perennial resistance and used throughout the war to expose and eliminate the adversaries, proved to be of an immense value even following the end of the warfare. In order to eliminate real or potential threats and achieve social homogeneity, Hoxha paved the way for the creation of a monolithic nation. A radical attempt to do away with all constraining and divisive factors, including tribalism and regional differences, and religious divisions, was of crucial value for the cultural homogenization of the society and the subsequent entrenchment of a uniform and all-encompassing national identity. The manipulation with and the elevation of a nationalist mythology to permeate every facet of daily life was just a part of this broader social engineering carried out by the Party-state. Fatos Lubonja (2017, pers.comm. 15. Sep.), for instance, points out to the monuments devoted to early Albanian nationalists that were erected during the communist regime.

In addition, the interpretation of every Hoxha's act of hostility towards the foreign powers as an attempt to safeguard Albanian independence and a right to self-rule, followed by a striking propaganda campaign against each one of potential threats, i.e. the continuous resort to nationalist mythology for political purposes, provided Hoxha with a valuable leverage to pursue his domestic goals. Additionally, as a group can hardly define their "I" identity without relating it to the outside, usually hostile world, cohesion in the nation is best maintained by creating

antagonistic pictures of friends and enemies and highlighting the inalienable differences, which Hoxha was very well aware of, as was depicted in the previous chapter.

It is not quite certain if the resort to nationalism was exclusively pragmatic, or if he was a nationalist inasmuch as he was a communist. It is of a lesser importance for the completion of this Thesis. Important is though, that Hoxha, by using all the means of a totalitarian regime, succeeded in imposing a uniform national identity on the populace, homogenizing the society and eliminating the constraining conditions that had been tormenting the construction of an Albanian identity from the outset.

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