

I. HISTORY

1.1. Antiquity - The Illyrians

Written sources from antiquity state that the western Balkan regions were inhabited by the Illyrians since ancient times, and were one of the largest populations on the peninsula. These facts can also be supported by archaeological, linguistic and anthropologic studies and findings, and validate that the Illyrians were an ancient population, native to the territory and developed over a long period of time through both the bronze and iron ages (the second millennium B.C.).

References to Illyrian tribes can be found in the earliest works of Hellenic literature in both Homer and Hesiod's poems. Interest about Illyria and the Illyrians grew among Hellenic writers soon after the first Hellenic colonies settled along the eastern Adriatic coast in Dyrrachium, Apollonia and Orichon during the 7th to 6th centuries B.C. The close links that these cities kept with the metropolis and the continuous visits by both Greek travellers and merchants in order to become acquainted and make deals in both rich minerals and agricultural and dairy products of Illyria, helped the ancient Greek world acquire full and exact knowledge of Illyrians, and such firm data can be easily found throughout the well-known works of historians of the ancient world, such as Herodotus and particularly, Thucydides.

Records of Illyrian history were kept in abundance from the 4th to 2nd centuries B.C. Among them, Polybius' works give key and precise data about the Illyrian Kingdom. Also of note are the works of Appian and Strabo.

In contrast, historic records during the first centuries A.D. appear to be very limited, whereas literary works by ancient and Byzantine authors grow in number in the period that follows the 4th to 7th centuries A.D. (which offer many important facts about the history of Illyria during late antiquity).

Ancient and early-recorded sources of the Middle Ages make up a strong foundation for recon-



"Albania" by Ibrahim Kodra, (famous modernist Albanian Painter)



Map of the Illyrian territories , year?

structuring the history of the Illyrians and Arbërs. The records appear to be fragmentary and somewhat incomplete making it very difficult to compile a thorough reconstruction of the full historic development in the territory of Albania during antiquity. However, if we are to explore and view them thoroughly with the support of archaeological findings, we can in fact reconstruct a fair standpoint of the Illyrian culture.

The Illyrians inhabited a large territory, whose northern fringes went as far as Danube's branches (Sava and Drava), while southward covering the bulk of prehistoric Epirus and extending up to Ambracia Bay (Preveza). Its eastern boundaries went as far as the Morava and Vardar rivers, while in the west the Adriatic and Ionian coasts. A few Illyrian tribes like Mesapsa and Japygs were situated in Southern Italy.

The geographical position of Illyria seems to have played a key role in their economic, social and political development for the simple reason that they were much closer to the great ancient civilisations – Hellenic and Roman, and later the early Byzantine.

The first **polis** was established in Southern Illyria during the 6th to 5th centuries B.C. From a political standpoint, these city-states were hereditary monarchies, thus representatives of the aristocracy of slave owners reigned. The administrative centre was at the city-state, and the dynasty in power was appointed by the king. Within the monarchical framework of the state, the Illyrian cities and surroundings were self-governed in the form communities directed by an executive council that was elected yearly. During the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., the Illyrian state became fully established. The most energetic king was Bardhyl who conquered and subdued the Macedonians, and in 359 B.C. he dared to challenge Philip II of Macedonia in order to restore the eastern borders. Under the rule of King Glaukia, the Illyrian state continued to strengthen rapidly. In 355 B.C. war broke out against Alexandër of Macedonia to free the eastern territories and the Illyrians entered in alliance with Epirus by bringing to power Pyrrhus of Epirus (309 B.C.).



Pyrrhus of Epirus, known for his painful Victory as it is called "Victory like Pyrrhus"

At this time, Dyrrhachium joined the Illyrian state, and Apollonia was liberated from Macedonian subjugation. Glaukia's successors — Monun and Mytyl — strengthened the Illyrian state economically and minted bronze and silver coins. Soon after the middle of the 3rd century B.C, under the reign of Pleurat and Agron, the Illyrian state once again began to prosper. In 231 B.C. they defeated Etols and made an alliance with Epirus and Acarnania which would become the most powerful force in the Balkans. For this reason, the alliance gained strength against the hegemonic schemes of Rome in the Adriatic. In the course of two wars against Rome (229 and 218 B.C.), the Illyrian state, led by Queen Teuta, saw defeat twice. Later, under Gent's reign (186-168

B.C.), the Illyrian state once again restored its anti-Roman policy and joined an alliance with Macedonia and Dardania. During the *Battle of Shkodër* (168 B.C.), the Illyrian army was defeated and the Illyrian state turned to ruins.

After the Roman Empire conquered the Illyrian Kingdom and Epirus, they settled in Illyria and began to force their way across the entire Balkan peninsula as far as Asia Minor. Rome carried out an administrative policy in the Illyrian state that served its aim of having it *Romanised*. Southern Illyria was divided into four provinces: Preval (with Shkodër as its centre), Dardania (with Skopje as its center), Nova Epirus (with Dyrrhachium as its centre) and Ancient Epirus (with Nicopoja as its centre).

During the 1st century A.D, great changes took place in urban living. Some cities like Dyrrhachium, Shkodër, Bylis and Butrint were given the status of colonies. Their further development was related to the growth of handicrafts, trade and transport. An important military and trade route known as Via Egnatia joined Dyrrhachium and Apollonia and went past Thesoloniki to reach Constantinople. The road from Dyrrhachium (Durrës) to Byzantium (Istanbul) totaled 696 miles (1,120 km) and was built in the 1st century B.C. by the consul of Macedonia – G. Egnatius.

In late antiquity, when the power of the empire was decentralized to the provinces, many cities flourished. Dyrrhachium became one of the biggest cities of the late antiquity and the early Byzantine Empire. Documented visits of distinguished Roman and Byzantine personalities are abundant including the spokesman Asin Epikad, the jurist Prisk, and Emperors of the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. — Claudius, Aurelian, Diocletian, Maxim Daza, Constantine, Constantine I, Justin and Justinian.

The Illyrians are referred to by that name as late as 601 A.D. in St. Demetris' chronicle, while in 1079, the Byzantine chronicler Michael Ataliat writes about the Arbër population that inhabited the same territories were descendants of Illyrians.

Many historians, archaeologists and linguists share the same view that the Arbërs are direct successors of the Illyrians. Despite the lack of historic records from the 7th to 10th centuries A.D, there is little doubt or other theories about their origin.

Linguistic studies have not only anticipated such theories, but have also rendered a valuable contribution to the Illyrian-Albanian continuity, which is supported by the simple fact that the Albanian language is spoken today in the same region where the Illyrian language was once spoken. A great deal of archaeological evidence as well as other evidence from the tangible and intangible culture testify that there is an incessant cultural continuity from Illyrians to early Albanians. Valuable discoveries of the earliest Albanian medieval culture in Koman, show this development began during the late antiquity and prospered during the 7th to 11th centuries all over the territory of present-day Albania.

1.2. Byzantine Period (395-1380 A.D.)

When the Roman Empire was divided in 395 A.D, most Illyrian lands were included in the Eastern Roman Empire, later known as Byzantium. This year was a decisive turning point that determined the whole course of events to follow for the next ten centuries of Byzantine rule. The Illyrian territories presented a favourable geographical position - meaning a vital gateway from the West to the East, with the Egnatia route (Via Egnatia) as its main artery.



View of Via Egnatia route and station, 2nd century B.C.

During the 4th to 9th centuries A.D, the Illyrian territories were raided by the Visigoths, Huns, Ostrogoths and Slavs, of whom only the Slavs settled in scattered parts and in Macedonia. In the north and east, where they outnumbered the Illyrian population, the latter were Slavicized, while in the south, where the Illyrian population was more compact

and the Illyrians assimilated the Slavs. In the 9th century, the native population is referred as "Arbër" and their country as "Arbëria". At the beginning of the 18th century, these names were replaced by "Shqiptar" (Albanian) and "Shqipëri" (Albania). Both forms are used to this day.

The Arbër were distinguished from other nations by their name, language, culture and territory. Arbëria was raided by waves of invaders

and for about 150 years (816-1018) a large part of the country fell under the Bulgarian rule. From the end of the 11th century to the end of the 13th century, Albania turned into a battlefield between the Normans of south Italy and Byzantium. The coasts were used as a passageway for crusaders on their way to and from the Holy Land. Being situated away from Constantinople, the Arbër get little mention in Byzantine sources, though they were involved in crucial events in Constantinople, such as the revolt of George Maniakes (1043), Niqifor Brieni, Duke of Durrës (1077) and Niqifor Vasillaqi (1078).



Main Roman Empire routes maps :Via Appia and Via Egnatia

Along with the existing towns of Durrës, Ulqin, Shkodër, Lezhë, Vlorë, Orik and Butrint, new towns emerged including Berat,

Gllavenicë, Prizren, Drisht, Dibër, Sarandë and Himarë. They were organized in guilds associated with Christian names of saints, such as Synergasia, Villaznia (Frataglia) and Shkolla (Scuola). A number of towns were renowned for their products: Vlorë and Ulqin were noted for their swords, Shkodër and Ulqin for their bells, Prizren and Shkodër for their gold and silver ornaments. The Albanian farriers were distinguished for their specific way of shoeing the horses, as were the Albanian masons and carpenters for their craft.

Albanian towns were not only trade centres, but also served as hubs among Albanian regions on the one hand, and between the country and the outside world on the other. Albanian traders had established networks with many Mediterranean towns and foreign traders from Venice, Ragusa, Rimini, Ancona, Kotor, Florence and Thessaloniki settled in Albania. As a result of economic and political development, some Albanian towns managed to wrest certain privileges from the central government, which served as the basis for the statutes of their towns.

The statutes served as a constitution and were recognized by the feudal chief as well. The communal legislative and executive bodies were elected and operated under these statutes. The highest body of the town was the Town's Council. Albanian language was used in the councils of several towns.

The Arberësh nobility formed an independent principality in the midst of the Byzantine Empire. The Principality of Arbër (1190-1216) was founded by Progon, and bore the characteristics of a feudal State with a ruling dynasty, a feudal hierarchy of seniors and vassals, and legislative and executive functions.

After the death of Progon, his sons Gjin and Dhimitër succeeded him, with the principality reaching its pinnacle under Dhimitër. He was acknowledged by the same titles as other European monarchs, such as "Great Archon", "Panhyrpersebast", "Prince" and "Judge". The principality extended from Pult in the north to the Devoll River in the south and from Shkodër and Durrës in the west to Dibër and Ohër in the east. It had under its possession one third of the territories inhabited by Albanians. Dhimitër established links with Ragusa and Pope Innocent III, whom he asked to send a prelate to practice the Catholic religion. The Pope described him as "a nobleman and a prince of the Arbëresh"

The founding of the principality of Arbër marked the first political union of a considerable part of Albanian territories and their liberation from foreign rule. It laid the foundations for the State tradition amongst Albanians. In 1272, upon the request of some Albanian nobles, Charles I of Anjou - The King of Naples - founded the Kingdom of Arbër (Regnum Albanie). The king pledged to honour the property, privileges, autochthonous customs and traditions of the Albanian nobility, clergy and towns. During their stay in Albania, the Angevins introduced elements of Western European feudalism and

Franciscan Catholic missions.

In the mid-14th century, the Albanian territories were invaded by Stephen Dushan. The Serbian invasion had a negative effect in the north, particularly in Kosovo, which was colonized by the Slavs, who adopted a policy of religious persecution. Draconian measures were taken against the Albanians who refused to convert to the Orthodox religion, like branding, cutting off of ears and noses, banishment and even death. Nonetheless, the Albanians of Kosovo defied the Serbian assimilation.

With the collapse of the Serbian Empire (1355), a number of feudal principalities were established within Albanian territories; the principality of Balshads in the North, with Shkodër as its capital; that of Topiads with Durrës as its capital; Muzakads with Berat as its capital; Zenebisht with Gjirokastër as its capital; and the Bishopric of Shpatads with Arta as its capital. The leader of the principality of Topiads held the title “Count from the Kingdom of Arbëria” and “Ruler of the whole land of Arbër”. Karl Topia claimed his origins from France, and the emblem of his principality was a lion with Angevin lilies. The principality of Balshads reached the highest stage of organization during the reign of Balsha II and a whole state apparatus was built up with employees brought from Venice. For several generations in the people’s memory, he remained a “King”. The principality stretched from Kotor and Prizren in the north to Vlorë, Himarë and Kostur in the south.

The leaders of the principalities were in bitter rivalries, so much so that Karl Topia, in his fight against the Balshads, sought the assistance of the Ottomans (the Turks), who did not leave the country for centuries to come.

Due to foreign invasions, Albanian feudalism was a mix of Byzantine and Western European institutions. Byzantine and Norman estates existed side by side. The Angevins and the Venetians in particular adopted the Western feudal organisation.

1.3. Albanian-Ottoman War and the Albanians’ defence of European civilization.

When aware of the Ottoman threat, some Albanian princes joined the Balkan coalitions against the Ottomans. In 1371, the bishop of Vlorë, Aleksandër, fought in a battle that took place in Marica, Bulgaria. In 1387, Gjergj Balsha II and Teodor Muzaka in alliance with the King of Serbia Lazar and the prince of Bosnia defeated the Ottomans in Ploshnik. Two years later Gjergj Balsha II, Teodor Muzaka and Dhimitër Jonima fought in the battle of Kosovo, known as the “Battle of Nations”.

A quarter of the military force in the anti-Ottoman coalition was Albanians. The battle of Fushë-Kosovë (Kosovo Plain) marked the end of the independence of the Albanian feudal states, which had

submitted to the Ottoman yoke. Other local leaders such as Gjergj Araniti and Gjon Kastrioti continued to fight important battles, and when Araniti defeated the Ottomans between 1432 and 1435, his victories were welcomed in several European countries. He won the sympathy of the Pope and the German Emperor, Sigismund, who pledged to assist him, however their assistance proved to be inadequate.

Albanian resistance (1380 – 1506) culminated in the 25 years of war under the leadership of Skanderbeg, who kept the Ottoman hordes at bay. Though the Ottoman State used its entire human and military potential, two of the greatest sultans of the Empire were ignominiously defeated in battles outside the castle walls of Krujë. In this way, the Albanians led by Skanderbeg safeguarded European civilization from the Ottoman threat. Being aware that he could not resist the offensive of the mightiest empire of the time, Skanderbeg sought the assistance of European leaders, who followed news of the war with concern. He established good relations with Pope Calixtus III and Pius II, who offered invaluable moral and material assistance. Friendly relations were also established with the Kingdom of Naples and Venice and after 1463, with the cities of Ragusa and Burgundy.



Skanderbeg portret Uffizi Gallery Florence

Gjergj Kastrioti– Skanderbeg

Gjergj (George) was born of a noble Albanian family. He was the youngest of the four children and spent his childhood with his family in Albania. As to his youth, there is no common ground in the historiographic writings of Skanderbeg. Most authors support Marin Barleti's "History of Skanderbeg" 1508-1511, where it is stated that young Gjergj was taken as a hostage to the Sultan's court at the age of 8, where he followed the School of Ichoghians. Some others maintain that he was taken hostage at the age of 18, and others hold that he had gone as a vassal to the Sultan's court between 1423 to 1426. In any case, he received the name of Skënder (Alexander). In his first battle, fought on behalf of the Sultan, Skënder stood out as a capable and brave fighter and before long he won the title of **bey**, thus Skanderbeg, and was promoted to the position of a Sanjak-Bey. During 1436 and 1437 Skanderbeg served in several positions in Albania. On his father's death, Skanderbeg was expected to succeed him as the head of the principality of Kastriots, instead he was appointed to serve the Ottoman empire away from his native land. Such an appointment was rather an exile.

He had long been awaiting an opportunity and one was given to him on the occasion of a battle between Hungarians and Ottomans in 1443. According to a long-prepared plan, along with hundreds of Albanian fighters, Skanderbeg deserted the battle at Nish and made for his motherland. This act was the signal for a general uprising. Skanderbeg was declared "Chief of the independent principality of Kastriots with Krujë as its capital".



Medal with Skanderbeg portret -conserved in Zagreb

The victories won until then had to be carried further by making use of all human and material sources. After some preparative meetings with the leading Albanian nobles, on March 2nd 1444, the Albanian princes called a conference at Lezhë. Some landmark deci-

sions were taken there, including the creation of an Albanian League at Lezhë as a political and military alliance with Skanderbeg at the head, the creation of an army with a commander in chief and the coffers to meet the expenses of the wars. In the 1440's, the Albanian army defeated the Ottomans on several occasions and forced Sultan Murat II to retreat from Krujë in 1450.



Frontpieces of books published for Skanderbeg in Europe

Experience taught Skanderbeg that the victories won until then could not be carried further under the existing political-military alliance. Therefore he created an independent State, which was his second major achievement after the liberation of the country from the Ottomans. The Albanian State extended from the Highlands of Dukagjin in the north to Devoll and Seman Rivers in the south and from the Adriatic littoral in the west to the Drin valley in the east. Skanderbeg fought the Ottomans for 25 years in succession and won 24 battles.

He was an ingenious fighter, captain and strategist. He would prepare the strategy of war, lead the army and fight valiantly as a soldier in the open field of the battle. His preferred tactic in war was to act in the offensive. When on the defensive, Skanderbeg applied the principle of "defence through attack". The element of surprise was part of his tactics. He established the principle that "victory is not dependent on the size of the army". Skanderbeg's abilities as a

distinguished commander were appreciated by a number of prominent dignitaries in Europe. The British statesman of the 17th century, William Temple, ranked Skanderbeg among the seven great captains, alongside Belisarius, Hunyadi, etc. The French philosopher Voltaire wrote, "if the Byzantine emperors had been Skanderbegs, the Eastern Empire would have been saved".

Skanderbeg was also a capable diplomat. He appealed to European countries to fight side by side with Albanians against the Ottomans. He was grateful for the contribution of the Popes and Italian States in general, which is evident in the treaties he signed — one with the King of Naples (March 26, 1451) and two with Venice. On occasions he would make truces even with the Sultan to encourage European States to provide their promised assistance.



"Small" (above) and "Big" (below) Seals of Skanderbeg

For his invaluable contribution to the protection of European lands and their way of life, Skanderbeg earned during his lifetime the titles of "Protector of Christianity", "Champion of Christ", and many others.

After the liberation of the country and the political-military alliance he assured in Lezhë (March 2, 1444) he followed by creating an independent state which extended from Devoll and Seman Rivers in the south to the Dukagjini Highlands in the north, from Adriatic littoral in the west to Drini i Zi Valley in the east.



Though not yet crowned a king, (for the Pope had decided to do it when he reached Albania at the head of crusaders in 1464), the Albanian State nonetheless was a feudal monarchy with Skanderbeg as its "monarch". Enjoying the title of "Lord of Albania", he exercised all the powers of a monarch. He issued decrees for the total conscription of the population, for imposing the tax system, the customs and so on. He was entitled to bestow lands upon Albanian nobles who distinguished themselves by bravery and loyalty, and he also directed the State administration and exercised judicial powers.

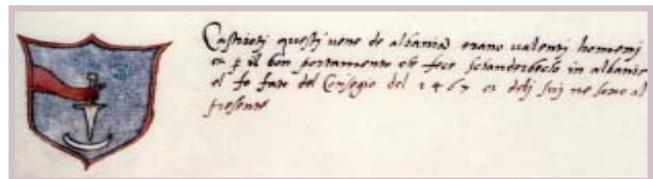
Skanderbeg set up a number of state departments such as the Assembly of Albanian Princes, the Supreme Council and the Council of War. The State had its coffers, its army and administration, its own emblem, flag, coat of arms and official seal. The State used the flag of the principality of the Kastriots with a coat of arms representing an open-winged two-headed eagle and a six-pointed star above it.

The State under Skanderbeg had all the characteristics of any state of the time. During this time, certain elements of law acted in a parallel way, a characteristic feature of the feudal society. Along with the laic law, both religious and customary law also existed, while penal and civil institutions based on the Roman and Byzantine tradition were established.



The Albanian people made an invaluable contribution in preventing the Ottomans from extending their empire towards the west, thus protecting Europe and allowing the steady economic and cultural development of these states to continue. The Albanians won the admiration of European nations because they fought alone against the most powerful empire of the time. They became known internationally as a brave and peace-loving nation. An expression of this admiration was the influx of volunteers from various countries of Europe including Germans, Italians, English, Bulgarians, etc. In 1494 the Albanian people accepted the invitation of King Charles VIII of France to unite against the Ottomans, but on account of disagreements he was met with in Italy, King Charles did not land in Albania. Despite the praise from European leaders, frequently Albanians were left alone in face of the Ottoman fury.

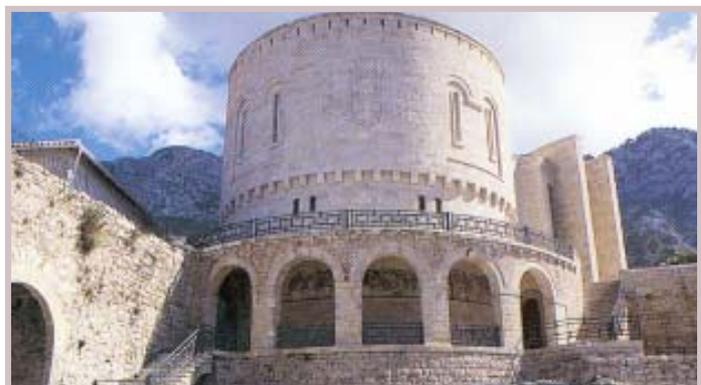
Emblem of Karl Topia, Albanian prince and one of Skanderbeg's allies



Emblema dedicated to Skanderbeg to European allies as a protector of Christianity

Marin Barleti (1460-1512?)

Marin Barleti is perhaps the most distinguished figure among Albanian humanists. He is considered as the first and the greatest historian of Albanian historiography. Born in Shkodër, he was a scholar and clergyman and fought in the battles for the defence of Shkodër in 1474 and 1478. After the fall of Shkodër, Barleti migrated to Venice where he continued to live within the Church. He became a profound connoisseur of history, classical literature and the Latin language in which he wrote his works: "Historia de vita et rebus gestis Scanderbegi" (Rome 1508-1511), "The Siege of Shkodër" (De obsidione Scodransi, Venice, 1504) and "A Brief History of Lives of Popes and Emperors" (Compendium vitarum ponticum et imperatorum, Venice, 1555). He regarded history as a science and stated that the main task of history is to seek the truth. By examining various sources, he has tried to present through his work the objective character of history.



Skanderbeg Museum in Kruja Castle established in 1958



Original Flag of the Arber princes similar to the current Albanian Flag

Of the three works, “The History of Skanderbeg” has been recognized as a treasure of Albanian national culture, and can be seen as an Albanian contribution to World history. Its numerous editions in foreign languages attest this: four in Latin, seven in German (1533), and four in Portuguese (1582). It has served as a basic source for many publications on Skanderbeg’s history in many countries of Europe. To this day, it provides the main source of information on the history of the Albanian people in Skanderbeg’s time and their fight against the Ottomans under his leadership. The writings also detail the life and activity of George Kastrioti, the spiritual strength of Albanian people, their customs and morals and national consciousness.

1.4. The Ottoman feudal military rule (1506-1912)

After the fall of Albania to the Ottomans, a feudal-military regime was established in the country, except for the highlands where the autonomous rule was maintained on the customary traditional basis.

In their fight for national liberation, Albanians never abandoned their hopes that Europe would help them. They held a number of national conventions in which they discussed how to organize the resistance against the invaders and come up with certain unified demands to Europe. Albanian feudal patriots toured European capitals, both Catholic and Protestant, seeking military support. Encouraged by the Catholic and Orthodox clergy, Albanians initiated four Balkan conventions in which ideas were discussed on how to liberate the Balkans. By the end of the 17th century, Albanians had liberated some territories supported by the Venetians and the Austrians. Thanks to Albanians, the Austrian Army managed to arrive in Skopje. In his appeal to the people of the Balkans, Emperor Leopold I of Austria singled out the Albanians as the prime supporters.

Part of the Albanian feudal class broke with the Ottoman class and established separate polities (entities), known as pashaliks (military districts), within the Ottoman State, thus embarking on the road of autonomy. The largest were those of Shkodër, Kosovo, Berat and Ali Pashë Tepelena.

BUSHATIDS

Bushatids were a large feudal family who ruled the pashalik of Shkodër for three-quarters of a century as a hereditary and almost independent dynasty. This pashalik stretched from Kotor in the north to Tiranë and Elbasan in the south, and from Prizren, Prishtinë and Tetovë in the east to Kavajë in the Adriatic Sea in the west. It included a population of 600,000 people.

1. Mehmet Pashë Bushati (1747 - 1810) – founder of the pashalik of Shkodër. He created favourable conditions for the growth of trade in the north of Albania.

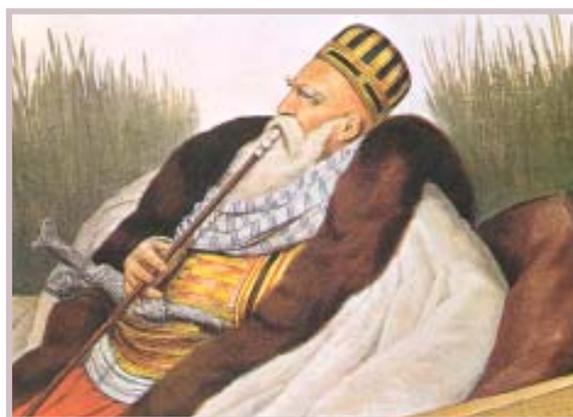
2. Karamahmut Bushati (1749 -1796), the most powerful ruler of this pashalik, second son of Mehmet Pasha Bushati, followed a policy of religious tolerance and promoted economic growth. During his 20 year rule, the city of Shkodër grew in size and prosperity and turned into a centre of transit trade between the Balkans and Italian cities and states. He aspired to have Albanian territories politically united into an independent State, and to achieve this he took up arms against central government after building an alliance with the chiefs of northern Albania and the Vezir of Berat, Ahmet Kurt Pasha. Twice the sultan attempted to crush the revolts in 1787 and 1795 but was defeated. Karamahmut established friendly relations with the Republic of France and established links with Napoleon Bonaparte and other emperors. In total there were nine foreign consulates opened in Shkodër, and Mark Bryer represented France. Bushati was killed during or after battle while fighting to restore Albanian territory from Montenegro.

3. Ibrahim Pashë Bushati (-1809) pursued the policy of his brother Karamahmut by promoting religious tolerance, building Catholic churches, etc. Ibrahim was distinguished by a broad cultural background, which can be attested by his rich library, preserved as an antiquity in the State Archives and the National Library. He was an ingenious leader and unlike previous chiefs, he refrained from leading a life of luxury.

4. Mustafa Pashë Bushati (1796-1860) was the last ruler of Bushatids dynasty, who, though with some vacillations, continued the struggle for the Pashalik's autonomy. He preferred to stay under the sultan rather than Ali Pasha Tepelena; indeed, he took sides with the Porte (Ottoman court) for overthrowing Ioannina's pashalik by helping the sultan with his participation at the head of a great army. During the Russian-Ottoman War in 1828-1829, he took sides with Russia and when it was expected that he would rush against Istanbul, he withdrew from war. In 1830, after having crushed the revolts in South Albania, the Porte turned against Mustafa, who now understood the mistakes he had made. He asked the leaders of northern Albania, Millosh Obrenoviç and Mehmet Ali of Egypt (of Albanian descent), to help him. A plan was drafted, by which both Albanian pashas would meet at the walls of Istanbul. Mustafa Pasha defeated the army of the Turkish Prime Minister in Perlep (April 21, 1831), but instead of pursuing the routed army, he sent the bulk of his army towards Bulgaria, in so giving the Prime Minister the opportunity to reorganize and defeat Mustafa's army.

Ali PASHA TEPELENA (1740-1822) is the founder of the autonomous pashalik of Ioannina. He was born in the village of Beçisht in the Tepelena region, into a feudal military family and there was no apparent reason for him to begin as a robber and highwayman, as some authors, foreign and Albanian, have written of him. In 1784 Ali Pasha Tepelena was promoted to the rank of Pasha as a military commander with the Vali of Rumelia in Sofia. In the same year, through battle and intimidation, he managed to become the governor of Delvina's Sanjak and later he became a watchman of gorges in the mountains of northern Greece and southern Albania (Pasha of Highways) and the governor of Trikala. One year later, with the support artisans and traders of the country, he took over the Sanjak of Ioannina. Being engaged in wars with Russia, in 1788 the Porte recognized him as the legitimate ruler of Ioannina. He eliminated the old feudal families to support new ones, established peace in the area by crushing the gangs of bandits, he created a new police force, a new army trained by European specialists, the intelligence service and the legal system which he presided over himself.

Ali Pasha resorted to all means in his ambition to create an independent state, and even entered into alliances with enemies of the Ottoman State such as Russia, France and England. Both Napoleon Bonaparte and the British government promised that they would rec-



"Ali Pasha Tepelena" by Louis Dupre in 1819

ognize him as an independent ruler in western Balkans, promises that were never fulfilled, and from a friend Ali Pasha turned into a furious enemy. His pashalik extended throughout southern Albania, northern Greece, and the western part of Macedonia. Having failed in his efforts to unite Shkodër's pashalik with his own through the marriage of his niece with Mustafa Pasha, Ali resorted to waging war. He encouraged and helped the Greek revolution and put at its disposal some Greek intellectuals that had been educated in his court. He called a convention in Ioannina, where he proclaimed the creation of a monarchic constitutional state made up of southern Albania and Thessaly. He was not offered any broad support, indeed, his sons and his closest collaborators deserted him.

Alone, with only his garrison, he put a stubborn resistance until, after having entrenched himself in an islet of Lake Ioannina, he was perfidiously killed. His head was sent to Istanbul. After being left exposed for several days, an Albanian buried him with the following inscription: "Herein the head of the famous Ali Pashë Tepelena is buried, ex-governor of Ioannina, who for over 30 years governed in Albania in his own way!"

Independently, Ali Pashë Tepelena became a factor of international importance. France, England, Austria, etc. set up their consulates in Ioannina. Ali Pasha governed in his own way for 34 years and came to be called "King", and "Sovereign". He established diplomatic relations with Napoleon Bonaparte in France as well as with England and Russia. To Ali Pasha's court, Napoleon sent the physician, naturalist, diplomat and historian F. Puqueville. In 1809, the English Romantic poet, Lord Byron, author of the poem "Childe Harold", visited Albania and was received with honour at Ali Pashë's court.

Ali Pasha aspired to create an autonomous and independent Albanian State, but he was met with the stiff opposition of the Bushatids who preferred to submit to the Sultan rather than to Ali Pashë. He promised to draft a constitution for Albania, the first of its kind in the Balkans, however due to a number of internal factors, Ali Pashë's efforts ended in failure

The Ottoman invasion caused a temporary disruption in the direction of daily activities, and economy, education and culture often became interwoven with the Islamic religion. Yet in major towns such as Shkodër, Prizren, Elbasan and Berat, the craftsmen were organized in syndicates, called guilds, which represented the revival of the former corporations. In Elbasan and Shkodër, 80 trades were incorporated in 30 guilds, with another 22 in Berat, 14 in Voskopojë and 20 in Korçë. The training of craftsmen followed the same pattern as that of Western Europe, ie. apprentice, tyro (novice) and then master of the shop.

Links between Albanian ports and foreign countries were revived. Trade societies were created with joint capital. Albania exported agricultural and dairy products and imported industrial and manufac-

tured products. By the end of the 18th century, Albania had an strong balance of trade, wherein exports exceeded imports.

1.5. Albanian National Renaissance (1840-1912)

The collapse of the Albanian pashaliks (1831) marked the beginning of a new period known among Albanians as the “Albanian National Renaissance”, a movement aiming at liberating the country from Ottoman invaders, uniting all Albanian territories in a single, autonomous or independent state and advancing the Albanian language and culture. Under the influence of European Renaissance and the French Revolution of the 18th century, a large number of patriots made their contribution “**with rifles and pens**” to the Renaissance of the Albanian nation by invoking the period of Skanderbeg.

The Tanzimat reforms (reorganization of the Ottoman Empire), which were supposed to democratize the Ottoman State and manage the crisis, worsened the situation in Albania so much that Sami Frashëri described it as the second invasion of Albania. Albanians opposed the negative sides of the reforms, and at Mesaplik’s Convention (1847), they demanded the security of life, honour and property, one of the principles of the French Revolution included in the Tanzimat. For the fulfilment of their demands, the Albanians followed both the armed struggle and the struggle with their pens. In the period between 1830 to 1870 a number of armed revolts took place. They culminated in the Albanian League of Prizren, which formulated the demand for the full territorial autonomy of the country.

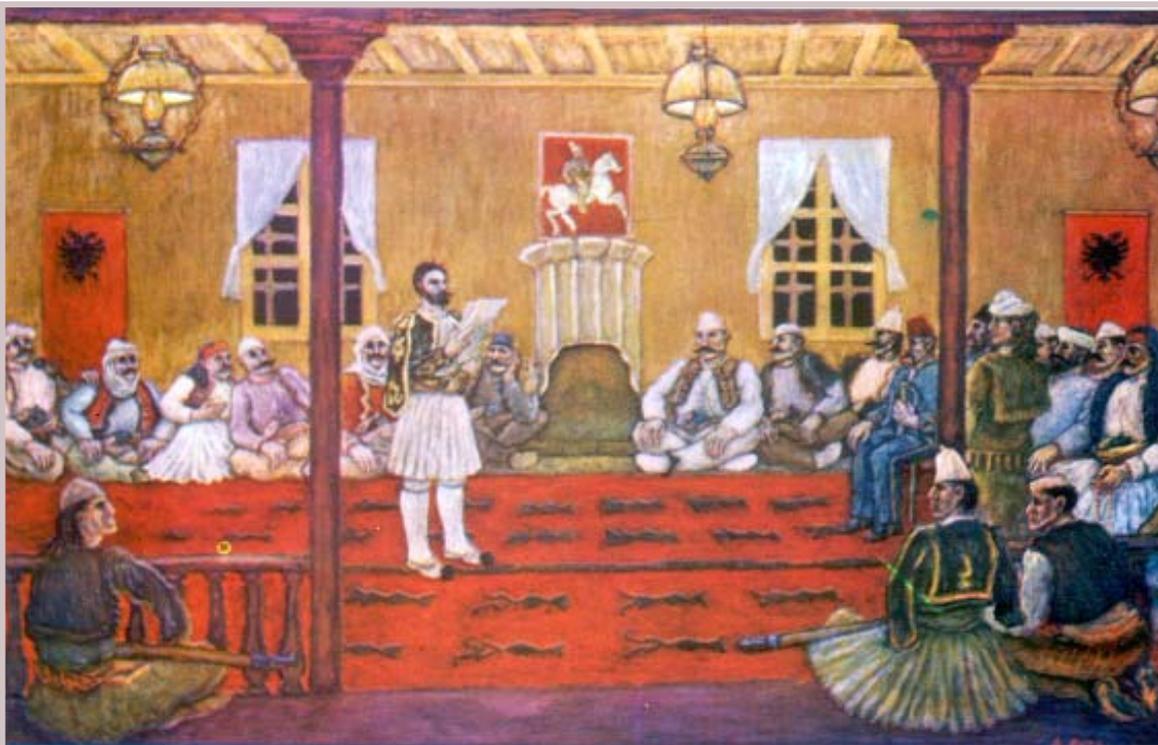
Along with the armed struggle, a cultural movement was promoted. Its new ideas were embodied in the activity of Naum Veqilharxhi, Konstandin Kristoforidhi, Pashko Vasa, Th. Mitko, Zef Jubani, Hasan Tahsini, Jani Vreto and others, as well as among the Arberësh in Italy represented by Jeronim De Rada. A special role was played by the three brothers Frashëri - the political leader Abdyl Frashëri, the ideologist and scholar Sami Frashëri, and the national poet Naim Frashëri.

The rationale that underlay the Albanian Renaissance movement was that the Albanians were an ancient people in the Balkans - they had their own traditions, culture and language and the right to develop and prosper through the benefit of their autonomy and full independence. These patriots



evoked the historical past, Skanderbeg's period in particular, to stir the national awakening. They worked hard to promote national education, the publication of books and newspapers, and to create a new national literature. They faced religious dissension through the slogan "The religion of Albanians is being Albanian". The nationalism of the Albanian Renaissance had at its core the principle of nationality rather than religion.

In 1877, a Central Committee for "The Protection of Albanian National Rights" was formed in Istanbul, headed by Abdyl Frashëri



"Albanian League of Prizren" by Abdurrahim Buza

who would lead the Albanian National Movement. On his initiative, "The Society for Printing Albanian Letters" was founded in Istanbul.

This period reached a climax with the Albanian League of Prizren in 1878 (1878-1881). It was the first Pan-Albanian political and military organization, led by a General Council with legislative powers and a Central Committee with executive powers. The League set up its branches all over Albania. The League was headed by Abdyl Frashëri, Sulejman Vokshi, Iljaz Pashë Dibra, and Ymer Prizreni. Among the the league's objectives were to demand the recognition of the Albanian nation, maintain the inviolability of the Albanian territories and their unification into a single entity under an Albanian administration, with Albanian as its official language and with its own capital.

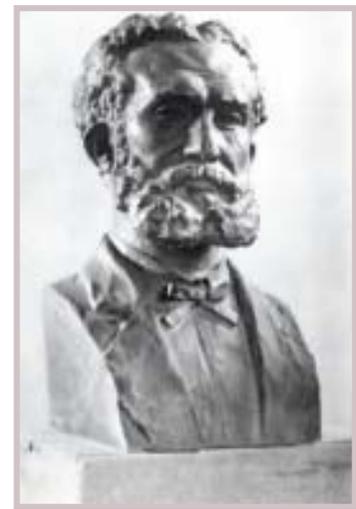
The St. Stephen Treaty and the Congress of Berlin gravely infringed the rights and national interests of the Albanian people by cutting off large chunks from Albanian territories. The latter would

expand Serbia towards Mitrovicë and Prishtinë by giving it the regions of Pirot, Tren and Nis; Montenegro was given the regions of Tivar, Pod, Podgoricë, Plavë, Guci, Rugovë and Kolashin, and Greece was given Albanian territories such as Çamëria. In the spring of 1879, an Albanian delegation visited the major capitals of Europe in an attempt to find support from European Powers to prevent the further partition of the country. The Albanian League of Prizren organized the defence of Plavë and Guci, Hot and Grudë.

As a result of the determined struggle of the Albanian people, the Great Powers changed their decisions three times before reaching consensus. Indeed, they helped Montenegro militarily to take Ulqin.

Apart from fighting in defence of its territories, the Albanian League also fought to secure the autonomy of Albania. In 1881 the Provisional Government was formed. The League established the Albanian State over the territories liberated from the Ottoman regime. The Ottoman State crushed the League and set up a regime of terror. Thanks to the League of Prizren, the Albanian issue was taken up for discussion in the international diplomatic arena as an intense Balkans issue in the scope of the Eastern issue.

Under conditions of real terror, with clubs and patriotic societies being banned, a number of other patriotic societies were created in Rumania, Bulgaria and Egypt. They made efforts to publish books and newspapers in various alphabets. In 1879 an alphabet suggested by Sami Frashëri was approved. It was known as the Alphabet of Istanbul, but it was not as practical as needed.



Abdyl Frashëri

ABDYL FRASHËRI (1839-1892) Frashëri can be described as an outstanding patriot of the Renaissance Movement, elaborator of the platform of National Renaissance of Albania, and one of the principal leaders of the Albanian League of Prizren.

Born in Frashër, Përmet, he entered politics at the age of 18. As the head of the Albanian Committee of Ioannina, he drafted the blueprint for the declaration of Independence in the hope that European powers would support the country as a counterbalance to the increase of Russian influence in the Balkans. The neighbouring countries were against an ethnic Albania with ethnic borders.

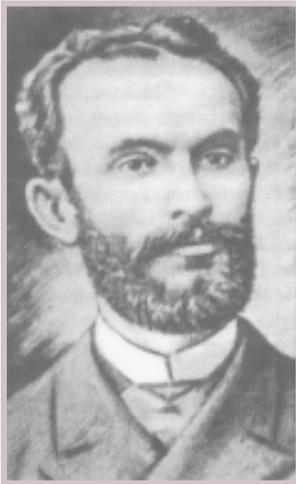
He was elected a deputy to the Turkish parliament where he played a significant role in the lawmaking process. In 1877 he was chosen as President of the Central Committee for the Protection of the Albanian National Rights in Istanbul. He contributed to the drafting of the Albanian political platform and to presenting this platform to European decision makers. He took an active part in the founding of the Albanian League of Prizren as well as participating in all conventions organized in Albania and abroad.

In spring 1879, Abdyl Frashëri headed the League delegation in Europe to present their demands to the European powers. He promoted the notion of an autonomous Albanian state through an armed struggle. He was a member of the Provisional Government and distinguished himself by fighting for the defence of the country's autonomy.

After the League was crushed, a special court sentenced Frashëri to death but the sentence was changed to life imprisonment. He spent three years in prison and was released on the grounds of health issues, and providing he gave up his political activity. Instead, he continued to be involved in politics until the last moments of his life. His life has been studied extensively by Kristo Frasher (1984).

The long struggle of Albanian patriots was crowned with the opening of the first Albanian School in Korçë in March 7, 1887. It was the first national secular school in Albanian, and was followed by schools in other parts of the country, including Prizren in 1889.

Seeing that the threat of the partition of Albanian territories was imminent and their demands were not being considered, Albanian patriots led by Haxhi Zeka put forward the task for the revival of the Albanian League. In 1899 the Albanian League of Pejë (or “Besa-Besë”) was founded in defence of the Albanian territories from the claims of the neighbouring Balkan monarchies.



Sami Frasher

In the memorandums submitted to the Porte and the Great Powers, Albanians demanded the unification of the four Albanian vilayets and their administration under a special constitution, which would lead to the formation of a single territorial-administrative entity governed by Albanians. At this time, Abdyl's brother Sami Frashëri published his work “Albania — her Past, Present and Future” as a support for the League of Pejë, showing in it the paths the Albanian people must follow. The Porte crushed the League brutally.

SAMI FRASHËRI (1850-1904) Born in Frashër, Përmet, he was a major figure in the Albanian National Movement, a great scholar, savant, writer and publicist. Along with his younger brother Naim who became the national poet of Albanians, he followed his studies at the “Zosimea” secondary school of Ioannina, where he learned ancient and modern Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Arabic and Persian.

In 1872 he moved to Istanbul where he was involved in intense patriotic activity dealing with the unity and liberation of the Albanian people. Sami was one of the founders of “The Central Committee for the Protection of Albanian National Rights” and chairman of “The Society of Printing Albanian Letters”. He published the first journals in the Albanian language, in which he wrote a number of political articles.

In 1899 Frashëri published the pamphlet: “Albania — her Past, Present and Future”. Dealing with the Movement's programme, its strategy and tactics as well as the democratic ideals of political and social progress, it was considered the manifesto of the Albanian National Renaissance. It consists of three chapters, the first addressing the historical past, the ancient origins of Albanian civilization and their fight against foreign occupations, the Ottomans in particular. The second chapter describes the geographical position of Albania, its population, and the economic, cultural and political state, and the need for an elaboration of the Albanian language as well as the role it could play in unifying the Albanian people. For the first time the republic was being defined as a form of governance for the country, with a group of wise men that would have legislative powers, while a Cabinet of Ministers would exercise executive powers. The Sultan as the head of the government would appoint an official. The book was impregnated by the democratic spirit and was translated into Turkish, Italian and German.

Sami Frashëri addressed the Albanian issue in a series of articles in the Turkish language. He is the author of 57 books in Albanian and Arabic, the author

of a normative dictionary of the Turkish language still functional today, and the author of the encyclopaedia "Kamus-ul alam" in six volumes. He also wrote novels and plays and made translations from the French language.

At the beginning of the 20th century, armed units started to operate in many parts of the country. In 1905 "The Committee for the Liberation of Albania" was founded in Manastir headed by Bajo Topulli. It set up branches in many towns of Albania. The first armed unit, headed by Bajo Topulli himself, operated in the region of Korçë.

Albanians took an active part in the movement of the Young Turks. Albanian areas were among the first initiators of the 1908 Revolution. The detachment of the Albanian Njazi Beu in Resnjë gave the first spark. The convention held in Ferizaj and the Manastiri's meeting forced Sultan Abdyl Hamit to proclaim the Constitution of 1876. The Albanians welcomed the Constitution of 1876, hoping that through it the Young Turks would grant them political rights. In point of fact, they made some concessions in the educational and cultural fields. Albanians took advantage of these concessions and set up many patriotic clubs and schools that helped publish newspapers and books in Albanian.

In 1908 a congress was held in Manastir to come to a decision on a single alphabet. Among the delegates were some distinguished patriots such as Luigj Gurakuqi, Mit'hat Frashëri, Gjergj Fishta, and Gjergj Qiriazzi. Instead of one, two alphabets were approved, the *Istanbul* and the *Latin* alphabets. The Latin alphabet was easier to use for the printing of books and before long it became the only alphabet of the Albanian language.

The increasing number of schools required the training of teachers and textbooks. A congress held in Elbasan in 1909 decided on the opening of a secondary teacher training school, known as the *Normal School*, and the setting up of a society that would engage in the opening of other schools and the publication of textbooks in the Albanian language.

Soon after coming to power not only did the Young Turks fail to keep their promises, but they strongly opposed the Albanian National Movement. They sent a punitive expeditionary force under the command of Djavit Pasha to Kosovo in an attempt to crush the Movement but it was unsuccessful. Expeditions, tough administrative measures and conscription into the army led to the outbreak of a revolt in Kosovo in 1910. That year 40,000 troops were sent to quell the uprising under the command of the Minister of War, Shefqet Turgut Pasha. After a heroic resistance, the insurgents lost the battle. Following this victory,



"Azem & Shota Galica"
Albanian warriors for
independence, photo by
Marubi, date?

the Ottomans pursued a policy of terror in northern and central Albania under which clubs and newspapers were closed and the forceful disarmament of the population was effected.

This anti-Albanian policy led to the outbreak of another revolt in the region of Malësi e Madhe (Shkodra) in 1911.

The Kosovo revolt taught Albanians the lesson that victory could not be achieved unless they combined political activity with military activity. The democratic and progressive circles in Italy, headed by Garibaldi's son, General Ricciotti Garibaldi, sympathized with the Albanian cause, but the Italian government prevented the dispatch of Italian volunteers. The insurgents demanded the unification of the Albanian vilayets, the establishment of a civil and financial administration, legal structures, the Albanian gendarmerie and a police force. Along with the Turkish language they also demanded the use of Albanian in administration. These steps would lead to the creation of an autonomous Albanian province, but the uprising led by Dedë Gjo Luli and Mehmet Shpendi came to grief because of the lack of foreign support and the betrayal of the Montenegrin Knyaz (Prince).

Despite the defeat, the uprising prepared the ground for a general insurgence that took place in 1912. On the initiative of Ismail Qemali, a meeting of senior patriots was held in Istanbul, which decided on a general insurgence for the liberation of the country. Some Albanian patriots set about organizing the uprising while others visited Europe in search of allies. The Junik assembly drew up a political programme for the territorial autonomy of Albania. The uprising led by Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri, Isa Boletini, Abdi Toptani, Themistokli Gërmenji, etc. swept the whole country and forced the Porte to accept some of the demands for autonomy, which failed to materialize because of the First Balkan War.

As the Balkan States troops passed through Albanian territory, they routed the Turkish troops. Under these circumstances Albanians ceased to demand the autonomy of the country, instead they decided to take arms to fight for country's independence. Ismail Qemali and Luigj Gurakuqi visited Bucharest and Vienna where they met with the Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, the British and Italian Ambassadors as well as with other diplomats to seek support and defend the national rights of the Albanian people. In these meetings, Albanian diplomats found the support of Vienna, Rome and other great powers.

On November 28, 1912, the National Assembly held in Vlorë proclaimed the Independence of the country. The national flag was raised and the first National Cabinet was formed with Ismail Qemali as Prime Minister. The declaration of Independence constitutes a monumental event in the history of the Albanian people. It was the outcome of centuries-long attempts and battles against the foreign yoke in defence of the territorial integrity of the country and the formation of the Albanian State without denying, at the same time, the

help of the international factor. With the declaration of Independence, the Albanian nation won the indisputable right to be free and sovereign alongside the other nations of Europe.

ISMAIL QEMALI (1844-1919) Ismail Qemali has gone down in history as a distinguished leader of the Albanian National Movement and as the first Prime Minister of Albania as an Independent country. Born in Vlorë into a landowner's family, he received elementary education in Vlorë, and followed his further studies in the 'Zosimea' secondary school in Ioannina. In 1859 his family moved to Istanbul where he took an active part in the creation of a joint alphabet of the Albanian language and in setting up an Albanian cultural society.

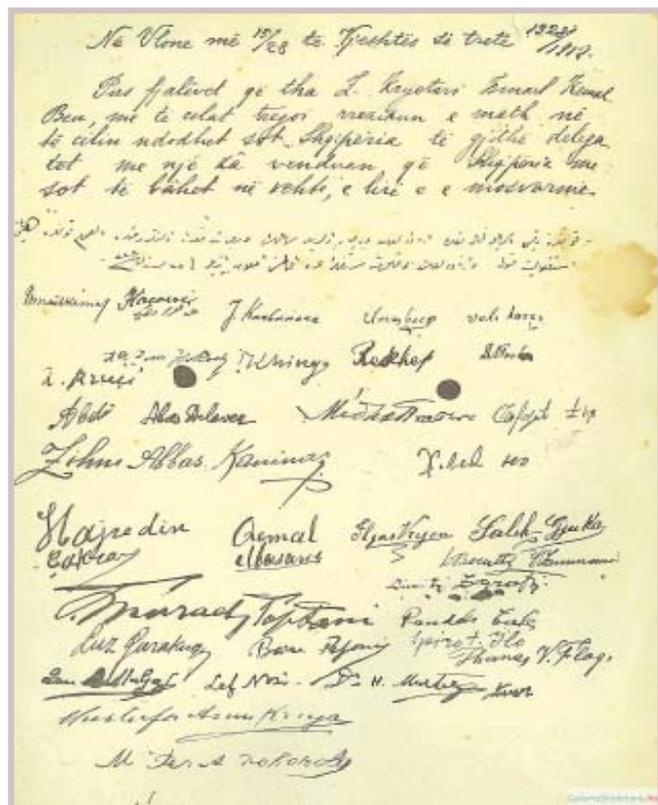
Ismail Qemali held high positions in the Ottoman administration, and stood out as an advocate of the oppressed nations and an opponent of ignorance. He spent seven years in internment because of his liberal ideas. He joined the Young Turks' Movement and belonged to the progressive wing of the Movement together with representatives of other oppressed nations. Qemali fled to Albania to escape the persecution by the Sultan, and devoted himself to the Albanian National Movement where he was involved in intensive political activity to have Albania recognized by the major European powers. He was in favour of autonomy for fear that Albania, as a newly fledged country, might fall a victim to the aims of the neighbouring monarchies. When the Young Turks came to power, Qemali denounced them for failing to keep their promises of "liberty" and "equality" towards the oppressed nations. Nonetheless, he was elected a deputy to the Turkish parliament where he defended the rights of the Albanian people.

Qemali was one of the organizers of the anti-Ottoman revolts of 1910 to 1912, being at the same time one of the framers of the Greek memorandum submitted to the Sultan on behalf of the Albanians (1911). He took the initiative for the organization of a general uprising in 1912. On behalf of the Albanian people he presented the Sultan with the demand for the autonomy of Albania. With the outbreak of the First Balkan War, he realized that they should fight for the independence of the country rather than its autonomy. Along with other Albanian patriots, he went to Bucharest to seek the support of the Albanians in Romania, for the independence of the country.

After securing the consent of many European governments, Qemali called an assembly for the declaration of independence in Vlorë. He presided over the National Assembly and was charged with heading the provisional government. Though under very difficult circumstances, his government took a series of important measures in the economic and cultural fields. He made frequent visits to the capitals of the major European states to secure their support and assistance. He spent his last years exiled in Italy, all the while supporting the Albanian cause to the very last moments of his life.



Ismail Qemali, by when?



Original document of Independence of Albania

1.6. Albania from 1913-1939

On December 4, 1912, the National Assembly formed the provisional government, whereby the foundations of the new Albanian State were laid. During the next 14 months, the government took a series of measures: it created the armed forces, the gendarmerie and the militia; it made the Albanian language compulsory in the administration; it opened schools, trained teachers; and founded the National Bank. Measures were also taken against feudal vestiges. Along with achieving the national unity, the Vlorë government asked to be recognized and succeeded in finding the support of Austria-Hungary and Italy.

The Albanian issue was discussed in the Ambassadors' Conference of London in July 1913. On July 29, the Conference declared Albania an autonomous principality, sovereign and hereditary, under the control of the Great Powers. Two weeks later, the boundaries of Albania were defined. While only half of the Albanian territories and population (28,000 km², 740,000 inhabitants) were incorporated within the 'new' Albania, the other half was broken off from the motherland.

An International Committee would exercise its control over both the civil administration and finances for ten years. A foreign prince appointed by the Great Powers would rule Albania. On his arrival in 1914, Prince Wilhelm Wied formed a new government and as a result the Vlorë government resigned. Wied's government drew up and implemented the Organic Statute of Albania, the first fundamental law of the Albanian State, similar to a constitution. The Great Powers guaranteed the territorial integrity of the new Albanian State.

With the outbreak of World War I, Albania was turned into a battlefield. On April 26, 1915, the Secret London Treaty was signed between the Entente Powers and Italy, by which Italy would annex Vlorë, Sazani Island and the region of Vlorë to Himara in the south, and up to the Vjosa River in the north and northeast. In Central Al-

bania a truncated State would be formed under Italy's protectorate, while the northern and southern regions of Albania were to be divided among Serbia, Montenegro and Greece. With this reward, Italy joined the war along with the Entente. During this time, Italian, Greek, French and Austria-Hungarian armies with a total of about 250,000 soldiers occupied Albania. The country sustained considerable damages and



Albanian territories defined at the London Conference, July, 1913.

destruction and heavy casualties, its economy was ruined and villages were burned to the ground. After the war, the country was beset with major political problems. A national congress was held in Durrës in 1918 that drew up a political programme which aimed at preserving the independence and the territorial integrity of the country as well as reviewing the boundaries defined in 1913 by the Great Powers. The congress named a delegation for the Peace Conference of Paris. Thanks to the resistance of the Albanian people and the support of U.S. President Wilson, the sinister plots of some European powers ended up in the dustbin.

Faced with the threat of a further partition of the country, another congress was held in the town of Lushnje in 1920. *The Congress of Lushnje* pronounced on the full independence of the country and the protection of its territorial integrity. In the protests directed to the Vienna Conference, the emphasis was that the Albanian people would rather die than allow to be driven from one hand to another like a flock of sheep, or become an easy prey for those who managed Europe's diplomacy.

The Congress chose a new government, headed by Sulejman Delvina, transferred the capital from Lushnje to Tirana and approved the statute of Lushnje, which constituted the legal basis of the Albanian State. The statute endorsed the monarchy as a provisional form of government until the adoption of the constitution. The National Council, or the Senate, represented a one-chamber parliament. Thus the monarchy assumed a formal character because the country was a parliamentary republic. The government of Tirana took wise actions to unite all the Albanian territories around it. Thousands of Albanian volunteers gathered in Vlorë and forced the occupying Italian troops to withdraw in 1920. This victory blocked any plans of a further partition of Albania.

On December 17, 1920, Albania was admitted to the League of Nations, meaning that Great Britain, France, Italy and the other member states recognized Albania as a legitimate State and government. During the period of 1920 to 1924, the Albanian State took important steps towards its organization on legal parliamentary basis. The first parliament met on April 21, 1921. Pluralistic life began in the Albanian parliament with the major political groups and with the endorsement of the extended Statute of Lushnje, the fundamental law of the State, and the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens were addressed for the first time. The organization of the State went through a severe political struggle. Twelve government cabinets were formed between 1920 to 1924. By the end of 1922, the first signs of Ahmet Zogu's heavy-handedness appeared, first as Internal Minister and later as Prime Minister, while on the other hand there was a strong parliamentary opposition headed by Fan S. Noli. The assassination of Avni Rustemi sparked *the June Revolution*, in which Zogu fled the country, resulting in Noli leading a new government in 1924.

The successful democratic movement of 1921 to 1924 was affirmed with the coming to power of the Democratic Government headed by Fan Noli on June 10, 1924. The “20 points” programme



Group with MPs of first Albanian Parliament with A. Zogu and F.Noli

stipulated the eradication of feudalism by implementing the land reform, establishing democracy, democratizing the state administration, changing the fiscal system, assuring the independence of the judiciary, balancing the state budget and promoting education and a health-care system. The democratic government was unable to carry the revolution through and Noli’s govern-

ment was quickly brought down, with Zogu back in power by Christmas of the same year (1924). International factors, particularly from Yugoslavia supported Ahmet Zogu seize power. Though the ‘June Democratic Revolution’ failed to form a solid government, it succeeded in that it was the first attempt to root out the feudal remnants and establish democracy in Albania.

In January 1925, Albania was declared a Republic, with Ahmet Zogu as President for a 7 year term. The declaration of the republic was a significant event in that it fulfilled a long-cherished aspiration of a Republican state, welcomed by the people who contributed to the strengthening of the State. Zogu, however, was not a supporter of Republicanism, hence many Democrats who considered his move as a temporary demagogic manoeuvre viewed his policies with scepticism.



“King Zog” photo by Marubi.

The new Statute stipulated that Albania was a Parliamentary Republic, with the President invested with excessive powers. The two-chamber parliament had limited powers, because the President had the right to veto without appeal. Ahmet Zogu established his power in the whole country through an authoritative regime, and although he concentrated both legislative and executive powers in his hands, he established an effective administration.

AHMET ZOGU (1895-1961)

Born in Burgajet village in the region of Mat, Ahmet Zogu followed his studies in a military secondary school in Istanbul. In 1912 he returned to Albania and began to participate in the country’s political scene. He participated in the National Assem-

bly of Vlorë and supported the appointment of Prince Wied to Albania. In March 1916, he took the initiative for calling a convention in Elbasan which would discuss and resolve the problems troubling Albania. The following year, he was detained outside of the country, unable to return until after the end of World War I. Upon his return, Zogu took active part in the National Movement and the Congress of Lushnje (1920). In the government of Sulejman Delvina, Zogu was given the post of the Internal Minister. He made his contribution to the establishment of the new state administration and the armed forces. He belonged to the conservative right wing.

In the years from 1922 to 1924 Ahmet Zogu was Prime Minister of the country. After the Democratic victory of the June Revolution, Zogu fled to the Serbian-Croatian-Slovene Kingdom, returning to Albania in December of the same year and overthrowing Fan Noli's government. He ruled Albania until 1939 both as Prime Minister and Monarch.

His relying on Fascist Italy alienated many of the associates that brought him to power. With the Italian Fascist aggression on April 7, 1939, Zogu did not organize the national resistance as he had promised. Instead, he fled the country and settled in London. There, he claimed to be the representative of the Albanian people supported even by Fan Noli, a claim however that did not work. After the end of World War II, Zogu settled in Egypt and later in France where he spent the last years of his life.

The Albanian foreign policy was built and conducted under conditions of the traditional Italian-Yugoslav rivalry, which disposed Zogu to maintain a balanced policy towards both of them and gain profits from both sides by leaning more upon Italy. This preference was materialized in the political and military agreements and economic concessions Zogu had made to Fascist Italy. He signed two pacts with Italy: the Pact of Friendship and Security in 1926, and the pact of a Defensive Alliance in 1927. The pacts secured Italy's control over Albania and limited the independence of Albanian policy.

The activity of opposition culminated in the *Revolt of Dukagjin* of 1926 and the trade-unionist movement. Political exiles, who had fled the country after the defeat of the June Revolution, formed democratic, anti-Zogite organizations, like the "KONARE" in Vienna (1925) and the "National Unity" in Bari (1925).

The Albanian Republic was more like a transition period from republic to monarchy, because Zogu did not feel secure as president. On September 1st, 1928, Albania was declared a Monarchy with Zogu as the King of Albania. Under the fundamental Statute, Albania was declared a democratic monarchy, parliamentary and hereditary, with a one-chamber parliament. The statute stipulated the division of three powers. The Chapter on Citizens' Rights and Duties prescribed the freedom of expression, press, assembly,



"King Zog crowned as King of Albania"

and setting up societies, the right to ownership and education, etc, which gave the monarchy a modern shape. The government and other state institutions were built on the basis of European models but the the King still kept a strong political and executive power.

Apart from the establishment of this modern monarchy, Zogu undertook a legal reform. From 1928 to 1932, he introduced the Penal Code, the Civil Code and the Trade Code. A number of gender equality rights were recognized and the civil marriage was the only recognized matrimony. European parameters were introduced in trade. With the completion of the legal framework, important steps were taken to build a State after Western models. Education was national and secular, and literature, arts and publications were also given a greater freedom and focus. He led himself several major urban works (like main boulevard of Tirana) and paved the way to foreign investments in Albania by fostering economic stability. King Zog called for all Albanians all over the world (even his enemy Fan Noli) to contribute to build a new, modern and prosper Albania and his achievements for such a short time made him enter in the history of Albania as the most eminent political figure of 20 century.

The government of the king Zog was the only one in the world that worked successfully together with High Commissariat of Refugees and British government to organise rescue of Jews in Albania. By 1938 Albania was the only safe country for Jews, becoming so a vivid and a champion example of human and international solidarity (see chapter Solidarity)

On the other hand, by the end of 1920's, the Communist movement began to take shape in Albania. Communist ideas reached Albania from the Western world, notably from France. At the same time separate underground groupings and organizations in opposition to the regime were created, such as the Secret Organization of Vlorë (1931).

1.7. The Albanian Anti-fascist War (1939-1944)

On April 7, 1939, about 35,000 to 40,000 Italian forces launched their onslaught on Albania. Though King Zogu did not recognize the occupation, instead of putting up resistance, he chose to flee Albania together with his cabinet. Albanian patriots fought in Durrës, Sazan, Vlorë and Shkodër. Of particular mention and visibility were the clashes led by Mujo Ulqinaku and Abaz Kupi. After 5 days, the "Personal Unification of Albania with Italy" was proclaimed. Albanian people put up resistance to the occupiers, and their resistance began to grow and become more organized by exercising both peaceful and legal forms of protest, as well as through armed struggle. Guerrilla units were undertaking various military actions, and a number of renowned

nationalists such as Myslim Peza, Haxhi Lleshi, Mustafa Xhani, and Abaz Kupa set up the first armed units.

In October of 1940, Fascist Italy undertook an aggression against Greece. Albanian people condemned the aggression and supported the Greek people in their just struggle. Albanian soldiers of “Tomori” and “Taraboshi” battalions, forcefully sent by the Fascists to the Greek border, refused to fight and deserted in great numbers.

The communists were among the most organized forces and in November 1941 they founded the Communist Party of Albania (CPA). Its programme, which was in fact neither Marxist nor Communist, but nationalistic and democratic, had two tasks laid down: to unite all Albanians without discrimination on grounds of religion, region and opinions; and to organize an armed struggle as the only means of regaining national independence and establishing a democratic regime in the country. With the creation of the CPA, the struggle of Albanian people became better organized.

To organize all anti-fascist forces in one single front, the pluralist Conference of Pezë was called (September 16, 1942), which decided on the creation of the Anti-fascist National Liberation Front, wherein all Albanians would be united regardless of religion, location or politics wing, to wage war against the occupier. The National Liberation Councils would act as bodies of the people’s union. The General National Liberation Council was made up of eight members, of whom only three were Communists, with the rest being nationalists of different political wings.

The Front’s Programme laid down the task of fighting for a free, independent and democratic Albania. The decisions of this Conference gave a further impetus to the armed struggle against Fascism.

In November 1942, the “Balli Kombëtar” political organization was created, with Mit’hat Frashëri at its head, a well-known democratic intellectual. This organization was for an overall inclusion of nationalists, provided they were anti-Communists. Its programme, too, prescribed the armed struggle for the protection of Albanian citizens’ rights. It was also for an ethnic and democratic Albania, and for an armed struggle against the occupier. Indeed, it created armed units, but engaged in few small actions, as for some time the “Balli” leadership followed the policy of “watch and wait” the course the events in the international arena.

The growth and development of the Albanian’s struggle drew the attention of the Allied Powers. In December 1942, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the U.S.A. recognized their struggle and were favourably inclined to it. They declared they would not recognize any claims on the part of the occupier towards Albania, and as to the future of the political system in Albania, it was an issue to be solved by Albanian people themselves.

The extension of the armed struggle brought about the need of creating a single military centre. On July 10, 1943, the General Staff of the National Liberation Army was founded, its commander being Spiro Moisiu and its commissar Enver Hoxha. For extending the social basis of the struggle, the National Liberation General Council invited the “Balli” to hold talks about uniting the anti-fascist forces. The two delegations met in Mukje village and decided on the creation of a Salvation Committee of Albania as a body with equal representation, which would lead the war and organize free elections in the country.

As regards Kosovo, it was decided that its issue would be resolved after the end of the war on the basis of free self-determination, as provided for by the Atlantic Charter. Both the Central Committee of CPA and the National Liberation Council did not accept the Mukje agreement on the grounds that it was a means for “Balli Kombëtar” to gain rights that did not belong to that organization, since until that time it had not been seriously engaged in fightings, and that the National Liberation Front had acted beyond its powers. The invalidation of the Mukje agreement showed that both the Communist Party and the Front did not wish to divide either the leadership of the war, or the political power with any other political force.

In the summer of 1943, partisan forces defeated Italian military operations, liberating parts of Albania, and on September 8 of the same year, Fascist Italy capitulated. Albania was soon occupied by German troops. The Nazis declared that they would respect the independence of Albania and Kosovo within the borders defined by Hitler in April 1941, and that they would not interfere in Albania’s internal affairs. These decrees did not hinder the German army from forcefully occupying towns and villages controlled by partisan forces across the mountains.

On November 20, 1943, King Zogu’s followers headed by Abaz Kupa founded the “Legaliteti” Party which aimed at re-establishing the Zogite Monarchy after the war.

With the goal of destroying the National Liberation Army of Albanian people, German forces undertook two operations. The first was in winter of 1943-1944, followed again with another attack in the summer of 1944, but on both occasions they failed. The National Liberation war gained a new impetus. By mid-1943 some Allied missions came to Albania, which were placed with the General Staff, “Balli Kombëtar” and “Legaliteti”. Not only did these missions report to their superiors about the situation in Albania, but they also encouraged anti-fascist forces in their struggle against the enemy.

Shortly before the end of war, the Communists called the Congress of Përmet, which resolved the dispute over political power. This Congress elected The National Liberation Anti-fascist Council as the highest legislative body. Also, it formed a committee with the attributes of a provisional government. Afterwards the committee was changed into a government, which on November 22, moved to Tirana.

Albanian people made a great contribution to the armed struggle. About 70,000 people were incorporated in 24 brigades, 8 divisions, and 3 corps. They pinned down 15 Italian and German divisions and inflicted upon about 70,000 enemy forces - either killed, wounded or



Albanian National Assembly on 1944 led by Lef Nosi.

taken as prisoners - along with heavy enemy material losses. Albanians suffered great damages too, and 28,000 martyrs laid down their lives for the country in the struggle. Nearly every family suffered heavy losses in human lives and materials. Proportionately to its population, Albania is among the countries that sustained the heaviest losses in lives, as well as in tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The Albanian Anti-fascist War was a liberation one, which aimed to expel foreign occupiers, liberate the motherland, re-establish national independence and construct a new and democratic Albania. It was an integral part of the World Anti-fascist War and quite naturally Albania aligned itself with the victors along the Great Allies and other participatory countries in the Anti-fascist Coalition, proud of its contribution to the common cause of people for the abolishment of Fascism.

Tirana, the capital of Albania was liberated on 17 November 1944, while main political parties are still (by 2010) fighting for the the official Liberation Day of Albania: either November 29 or 28, 1944. All of the Albanian anti-fascist forces, regardless of their ideological viewpoints and orientations, were part of the National Front. Outside it only the organizations of Balli Kombëtar and Legaliteti remained. The war that lasted for more than 6 years, was organized and led by the National Liberation Front in which the Communist Party of Albania (CPA) led by Enver Hoxha (EH) had the most important weight. However black shadows lies over many activities of CPA and EH regarding the political elimination and/or execution of many Albanian democrats

such as the slaughter organised during the period of liberation of Tirana (from 28 October to 16 November 1944) when 37 well known non-communist democrats were executed. That was a clear sign that CPA and EH were committed to govern the country at any cost.

1.8. Albania after WORLD WAR II

In December 1945, the first political elections were held, which were won by the National Liberation Front. Western countries proposed to oversee the electoral process, but their request was met with refusal by the government that had emerged from the war. On January 11, 1946, the Constituent Assembly, chosen through elections, proclaimed Albania a People's Republic, thus resolving the issue of what form the Albanian State would have. On March 14, 1946, the Assembly approved the first Constitution of Albanian State. From this moment the Assembly was converted into the People's Assembly. The Constitution sanctioned the fundamental principles on which the new social order would be established and function as well as the basic freedoms and rights of the citizens. The Constitution seem not to be a socialist one, but democratic, as it was the State itself at this stage of social development. It allowed and protected private ownership and private entrepreneurship, the freedom of speech, organization, religious worship, the right to employment, to elect and to be elected, to housing and so forth.

The first relief to heal the scars of war was undertaken by the international organization 'UNRRA', however Albania refused this aid, along with the refusal to allow foreign observers to monitor the first elections held in the country. This led to the hesitation of certain Western governments to recognize the Communist government, including the American and British governments, whose interests were infringed by Albania's decisions to disclaim their economic concessions of the monarchic period. This in turn caused the relations between Albania and the West to exacerbate to the extent of withdrawing their missions from Albania.

The *Corfu Channel Incident* of 1946, during which British warships were destroyed by floating mines placed within Albanian waters added to the exacerbation of the relations with the War Allies. The Albanian government accepted its being represented at the Hague International Tribunal, but never recognized the decision, according to which, Albania being the cause of the incident was to take the responsibility of paying damages. 64 years later, on 2010, it was revealed by British archives that Albania was not to blame.

During this time, some efforts were made to create a political opposition in the country. This opposition was divided from the Communist Party by its orientation towards Western democracy. A group

of MP's formed a division within the Parliament (People's Assembly) in opposition to the government's policy which was increasingly being directed towards the establishment of the Communist system in the country. The government gave a shattering blow (through death executions, killings, imprisonments and exiles) to this endeavour by clearly showing that it would never tolerate any opposition whatsoever in the country. The true democratic leaders and thinkers were either killed or imprisoned and their families were exiled. The new era of Communist Dictatorship has started.

The most important political problem addressed by newly elected Communist government was to defend Albania's anti-fascist stand in the Peace Conference of Paris (1946). The Albanian delegation succeeded in convincing the Conference to recognize Albania as "a companion power" along the British-Soviet-American Anti-fascist Alliance, silencing the endeavours of Greece in accusing Albania for having made common cause with Axis Powers.

The period up to 1960 in Albanian historiography is known as the period of the country's *reconstruction*. Shortly after the war, under the slogan "the land belongs to who works it", a two-phased agrarian reform was carried out. It was a radical reform, and excluded any reimbursement or compensation to the landowners along with restricting to a minimum the wealth distributed to them. It is considered as one of the biggest economic steps of this phase. This reform marks the final effort in overpowering feudalism, one of the heaviest legacies of the past. In the meantime, Communist authorities launched the nationalization of the main means of domestic and foreign wealth production, carried out the policy of imposing extraordinary taxes to traders, and confiscated the wealth of war criminals who had fled abroad. Such measures economically affected domestic and foreign capitalism by the expropriation of private estates and properties (nationalization) to be declared as State property. This was the policy of fighting against private property and private initiative what reduced drastically the democracy and reduced major economic resources in the rural areas.

With the slogan, "let's build a new world over the ruins", the Communist government organized the first concerted actions of voluntary work by a broad participation of workers, particularly youth with participation of women for the first time in Albanian history. Through such so called "volunteer" actions, roads and bridges destroyed by the war were built, new roads were opened, marshes and swamps were drained, lands were reclaimed and the first slow speed railways were built.

In the period of its first years of its existence, the new Albanian government was orientated chiefly towards friendship and close cooperation with Yugoslavia. A series of political and economic agreements signed between the two countries led to the dependence of some vital sectors in country's life. Under these circumstances, also

taking advantage of the presence of a powerful pro-Yugoslav lobby within the leadership of the Communist Party of Albania (CPA), Belgrade persisted in having Albania, as a first goal, economically united with Yugoslavia by proposing to lift customs duties, equalize the currency and unify the markets. Later, Belgrade took some more decided steps towards completely abolishing Albania's independence by insisting in the deployment of Yugoslav military divisions to its inner territory "in the name of defending the borders from the hostility and threat by southern neighbours".

In 1948, the Informative Bureau of Communist Parties decided to expel the Tito Communist Party of Yugoslavia from its membership for deviations from the common line and course of the World Communist Movement. The Communist Party of Albania took advantage of the circumstances created to review all the agreements signed with Yugoslavia. In the political and ideological warfare waged against Yugoslavia and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the leadership of CPA and the Albanian government reconfirmed the independence of the country and drew the attention of international public opinion. The signing of treaties of friendship and reciprocal cooperation with the majority of the Eastern-European countries (Bulgaria, Romania, etc.) occurred during this time what consolidated Albanian position in the Eastern Communist Block led by USSR.

In the mid-1950s, Albania was admitted to the United Nations Organization. This was an important achievement of Albanian government. The international recognition of Albania and its representatives by the largest international political organization resolved a problem that in principle had been resolved at the Peace Conference (1946).

During this time, the Communist government undertook some important actions for promoting the field of education and health care. Measures were taken to eradicate illiteracy, schools were opened across the country and compulsory education was established. Within a short time, the secularization of academic curricula was achieved, a process that had begun since before the war. In this period, the main institutions of education, culture and science were established: the Opera and Ballet House, the Philharmonic, the Popular Theatre, the Public Variety and the Tirana State University. Studying in Soviet Union schools and other Communist countries, and later within Albania, a new class of graduates were able to take over the direction of these institutions.

For the economy, the main developments in the 1950's included nationalization and resuming operations in the current mines, the establishment of new industries supported by Soviet aid and the agrarian collectivization across the whole area of lowlands and hills. One of the most important successes of the economic policy of the Communist government in this stage was the removal of the ration-card (bono) system. Although the living standards were very low it was declared officially that "the reconstruction stage of the country is over".

With Stalin's death, a wind of liberalism began to blow in the countries of the Communist camp. "The fight against the cult of the person" and a series of liberalizing measures created a more progressive climate but not for Albania. The high leadership stuck intransigently to continuing the typical Stalin harsh line. Thus in 1960, at the *Moscow Conference of 81 Communist and Worker's Parties*, a conflict erupted that resulted in the breaking of diplomatic relations between Albania and the Soviet Union, what put an end to the Albanian-Soviet friendship. Moscow ordered the interruption of cooperation in all areas, including the military one what resulted in "sending home" a whole Russian submarine fleet from Vlora-Albania military base in the Adriatic-Ionian seas.

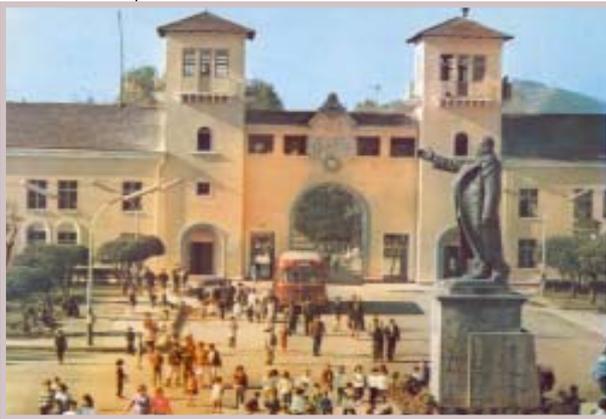


Albanian youth at Tirana Boulevard going (on action) to construct railways or terraces. Photo by Jani Ristani, when?

Communist authorities strengthened their ties and relations with the distant China, which remained "true communists", with a view to secure considerable economic and financial aid from Peking. In the mid-1960s, the collectivization of agriculture was fully completed including the mountain areas. This agrarian reform, judged by how it was carried out, meant nothing less than the impoverishment of the rural areas by destroying the natural resources, mainly those of livestock (numerous sheep, cows and few goats) which has been the main Albanian food resources of survival for centuries. Agricultural modern farms near urban centres mitigated a little this effect of the reform by increasing the number of cows of high milk production and the surface of planted grain and mais targetting to "produce the bread for Albania"

During the same period a wide network of mines and ore-processing plants and factories (chromium, iron-nickel, petroleum, copper, coal) was created, which orientated the Albanian economy into a non feasible direction by creating a series of big non-profitable enterprises.

This whole period (1960's to 1970's) was attended by the governance of a severe totalitarian Communist dictatorship which found expression in the opening of forced labour prisons (such as the famous Spac, Qafe Bari prisons of underground copper mines) for the opponents of the regime, and /or those of Enver Hoxha. The regime included also mass exiles (in special remote villages) of individuals and their families, and a complete lack of freedom of expression and press combined with a total international self-isolation, particularly with the neighbouring countries.



Monument of Stalin at entrance of Textile Kombinat in Tirana standing until 1990

In 1967, when youth in the West launched strong protests for a broader concept of freedom of speech and human rights, the Communist government in Albania mobilized the energies of the younger generation in another direction. A countrywide, powerful anarchic movement against the religion and cult institutions broke out, a consequence of which was the destruction of the religious institutions along with the cultural values they bore. Albania became the world's first atheist state.

The 1960s saw the start of the movement “for an overall revolutionarization of the life in the country” waged after the concept of CPA leadership and accompanied by such slogans as “To intensify the line of masses” “To bring politics to the forefront” and “To fight against bureaucracy”. Within the State administration such measures were introduced as the compulsory participation of employees in voluntary works, the “circulation” of cadres down to the nation’s manufacturing base, that is, the expert’s transferal to production enterprises, their military training, etc. In the military, service ranks were abolished, etc..

The denunciation of the Warsaw Pact (1968), a one-sided exit from the political-military alliance of the Communist camp, placed Albania in an extrabloc political position, and was an act welcomed by the West, constituting one of the most important events at international level in the 1960s.

In 1970, the full electrification of the country was completed and the unified power system was established. A series of factories of military industry began production.

The most important progressive cultural event early in that decade was the holding of the *Congress of Orthography* and the unification of the Albanian language, held in 1972, and was accepted in all of the lands where Albanian is spoken. At the same time, the foundations of the Academy of Sciences of Albania were laid.

The whole period of the 1970’s has been characterized by a severe ideological struggle accompanied by settling old scores among the establishment and intensifying the class struggle within the party and people, culminating with Plenum Nr.4 of 1974 of Party of Labour of Albania (PLA). This struggle began with the punishment of a group of intellectuals who demanded liberalization in the areas of intellectual creativeness and access to communications with the rest of the world. Some time later, the high leadership came to trace down hostile groups in economy, military and then politics.

In 1975, when the founding meeting of the New Charter of Hu-

man Rights was held in Helsinki, Albanian authorities refused to participate.

The new Constitution of 1976 changed the name of the State by adding "Socialist" to the title of People's Republic of Albania. This Constitution is characterized by an absolute ideological restriction. Under its dispositions, the exercise of religious rites and the functioning of clerical institutions were officially banned, and the religious propaganda was condemned. It openly proclaimed the hegemony of the Communist (named Party of Labour of Albania -PLA) party's power in the country. In 1976 it was declared that the stage of the socialist construction of the country was over and, as a transitory stage, the period of the complete construction of Socialism had begun.



Enver Hoxha, the communist dictator who ruled Albania for 40 years

Under the 1976 Constitution, Albania legally pledged to cut whatever relationships it had with the superpowers (USA and URSS). It is in this framework that several decisions were taken dealing with such issues as the military fortification of the country and the training of the whole people as soldiers so as to be prepared to be able to face the onslaught of the enemy or "coalition of enemies". Within a ten year period, 700,000 blockhouse bunkers, of a value approx of building a flat for a family, were built in Albania, an extremely heavy burden for the country's economy.

It should be noted that the dictatorship regime of Enver Hoxha and PLA achieved to ensure generally an overall growth of economy and living standards. Education and health care have really achieved significant progress to include rural and remote areas in spite of total lack of human rights. Traditional culture and "socialist realism" art were pumped with funds to establish culture and propaganda centres all over Albania. Every school book from first elementary to university lectures was filled with socialist propaganda. This actions combined with massive migration of people from rural areas to the main cities to employ the new factories and institutions created huge support for Enver Hoxha and PLA rule. Because of total isolation and lack of information of what happening in Europe, to most of the Albanians, it was created an image of Albania as the best country in the world.



Line of bunkers

The non feasible and un-effective big and heavy industries caused a drastic decline in the standard of living. Decisions such as giving priority to heavy industry and means of production over the light industry and consumer commodities - particularly following the cut off of foreign economic aid - and the constitutional



Fragments of urban way of life of survival in Albanian families during communist regime.(composed by G.Xhengo)

ban on receiving loans from capitalist countries contributed to the decline of economy. Political, economic and cultural isolation of the country reached its highest peak on 1978 when Albania broke alliance with China because of new multicolor Chinese Policy paved by the Nixon visit in China on 1972 .

Early in the 1980s, an initiative of the German ex-Chancellor Strauss implied that West's concern for Albania had not faded. During a visit in Albania, Strauss offered ways for improving Albanian economy by offering possibilities of Albanian labor export to Germany or in the form of loans. Albania's political leadership accepted neither option. The Constitution banned receiving foreign aid, while the principle of status as "a developing country" would contradict an entire establishment of propaganda about Albania as a country with the most advanced political

system in the world.

In 1985, Enver Hoxha, the Communist leader of Albania, was dead. For nearly half a century he founded and put into operation for sure the most brutal dictatorship in Europe of this time by depriving Albanians of democracy and the basic human rights.

Enver Hoxha is the founder of Communist Party of Albania on 8 November 1941 and was the head Anti-fascist war in Albania. At the Congress of Përmeti (May 1944), he was charged as Head of the Provisional Government to remain absolute leader of Albanian state until 1985 when he died.

In 1960, at the Meeting of 81 Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow, Hoxha denounced the Soviets' efforts to restrict the political independence of Albania. From this moment on, he remained a powerful personality in Albanian politics. In 1973 he began to liquidate, one after another, some "hostile groups" including many of the people most loyal to him such as the Prime Minister (Mehmet Shehu) and the Internal Minister (Kadri Hazbiu).

Enver Hoxha was, very similar to Stalin, dictator-politician, who waged a harsh class struggle, isolated Albania from the rest of the world and left it outside the contemporary mainstream. He controlled the intellectual life of the country and reduced to "0" the freedom of speech and totally abolished private property. He created the cult of himself by spreading his innumerable busts to the most remote villages of Albania, to schools, factories and kindergardens and by standing as a preface to every book, paper or creation.

With Hoxha's death, hopes dawned for Albania's opening to the rest of the world. The succeeding leadership headed by Ramiz Alia made some controlled efforts for the liberalization and opening of the country. Such efforts, however, were nothing less than halfway measures. In this period the government supported quality in literature, culture and science by urging the fight against mediocrity. Some minor steps were taken to incite the growth in consumer based, light industry and to allow farmers to keep some livestock. These efforts

were hampered by the current poor living standards and ration-lists system of limited main food supply to people (i.e. up to 100 grams of coffee per month per family; or one kg of meat per week. 10 eggs per week, etc) etc. Ramiz Alia and PLA were seeking to make economical reforms in the frame of socialist economical system: small shops were allowed to open (bakers) and enterprises were asked to have their own food production economy (i.e. a factory in Tirana was asked to establish a pig farm!).

In the meantime the bell of democracy was ringing in Eastern block and the pressure was increasing in Albania. Italian TV (RAI UNO, RAI Due etc) was well attended by all main urban cities of Albania and many Albanians were looking European changes waiting their time.

1.9. Democracy in Albania

Spontaneous revolts were organized in Shkodër and Kavajë, in which changes were demanded and busts of Stalin were brought down. Distinguished intellectuals started to speak and write. Ylli Popa's article, "In Search of the Lost Time" in April of 1990 marked the first long-awaited writing by Albanians who were eager for change. The events in East European countries and vivid reports of Italian Television about the democratic revolution in Romania deeply influenced Albanian public opinion. That was like a signal for Albanian and by July 1990 a considerable number of citizens, especially young people, entered the Western countries' embassies demanding asilum. It happened that about 4000 people were transported in busses from foreign embassies to airport and port and were send in European countries. The government allowed this to happen but burst into hard propaganda and threat. In August of the same year, the PLA Communist leadership requested intellectuals to pronounce on the need of political pluralism.

By December 8, a strike by university students led by students Azem Hajdari, Shenasi Rama, etc., broke out, first putting forward economic demands. After the government's silence and link of their movement with different personalities and lecturers, they struck out with political demands, namely, that political pluralism be recognized. Under the pressure of increased political manifestations by youth, supported by hundreds of petitions of many enterprises in Tirana with the motto, "*We want Albania to be like Europe*". The Communist leadership decided to allow the creation of political parties. One day after this decision, the foundation of the Democratic Party (DP) of Albania was proclaimed in December 1990. The new parliamentary elections, which had been scheduled to be held the following month, were postponed to allow DP and opposition to organize. However the democratic movement continued and students entered in a hunger strike in early February 1991 to change the name of University from "University Enver Hoxha" to "University of Tirana". The



Fall of Enver Hoxha
Dictatorship by 20
February 1991, 14.00 HRS
Albanian time

government delayed in responding positively what caused the popular revolts to gather about 100 000 people in Tirana and overthrow the monument of Enver Hoxha in the middle of Scanderbeg Square on 20 February 1991 what marked the fall of Communist Dictatorship.

In the first free multiparty elections (March 1991), the opposition won only a third of the votes by winning the majority in the main cities like Tiranë and Shkodër.

The result of the first elections gave rise to a popular movement led by the Democratic Party because people demanded radical changes by all means. The Right and liberal press, by now quite free and with a great number of newspapers and magazines, were calling intensively for changes. Anti-government manifestations began at once. The miners' strikes at Valias coal mine (15 km from Tiranë) compelled the government to accept the compromise. This situation led to the creation of the Stability Government with a mandate for one-year, in the closing of which new elections were to be held. A Technical Government, formed after it, was charged with the preparation of new elections, which were held in March 1992. This time the Democratic Party came into power.

The Democratic government was headed by Aleksandër Meksi, but practically directed by President Sali Berisha. In 1992, they launched a radical reform in the State administration and military one in the framework of Albania's integration into European and international institutions by totally opening towards the U.S.A. and Western Europe in particular. Tens of foreign advisers and experts were introduced into State administration, or placed within the framework of international missions in Albania. Economically, the policy of a radical reform and privatization of almost all production activities was adopted, and supported by the World Bank and European Community projects. Hundreds of uneconomic businesses were closed, bringing about un-employment and social problems, but also putting in order macroeconomic indicators as dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and others. Several contracts were signed with the World Bank, European Community and the National governments of Italy, Germany, U.S.A., Austria, etc., for investments in infrastructure, irrigation, agriculture, training, education and so on.

In 1994, the Right wing government tried to adopt, by a popular referendum, a draft-constitution. The referendum rejected this draft by a majority vote because the leftist Socialist Party presented this

constitution as if it was an act that absolutizes the powers of President Berisha, and so succeeded in convincing the voters.

The naive efforts to create a “popular capitalism” by means of setting up financial unproductive associations so-called “pyramid schemes”, or money-borrowing companies, or people’s foundations (VEFA, Gjallica, POPULLI, etc.), which were not opposed by the Socialists, led to a quick degradation of fundamental capitalist concepts, because private businessmen made less money in comparison to the interest profits they would make if they deposited their money in the above-mentioned pyramid schemes. In October 1995, the IMF warned of the danger of pyramid schemes, but the government made up of the Democratic Party majority, did not take any measures.



Stability pact meeting, June 1999

The general elections of May 1996 have been considered dubious as to the authenticity of free vote. The Socialist Left boycotted them for irregularities, alerted all its members at the election commissions to desert the polls and to not recognize these elections. At the end of 1996 and the beginning of 1997, the bankruptcy of the pyramid schemes triggered the explosion of a popular revolt, beginning in the towns of Vlorë and Lushnje and spreading quickly, rendering the country ungovernable by the Democratic Party. The political situation went beyond control, with people looting nearly one million fire arms and a state of emergency was proclaimed.

In March 1997, the Right government resigned and political forces became subject to the arbitration of the international envoy, the former Austrian president Mr. Vranicki, who assisted the preparation of early elections. To this end he managed to form a National Reconciliation Government headed by Bashkim Fino, then Mayor of Gjirokastër. In June 1997 political elections were won by the Left, who formed a new government headed by former Prime Minister and Chairman of the Socialist Party, Fatos Nano. Coming directly from prison, Nano set up a broadly-based cabinet by including a number of political parties in a grouping called the Alliance for the State.

In September 1998, prompted by the killing of Azem Hajdari, a Democratic Party Member of Parliament and the leader of December 1990 student movement, the revolting crowds headed by DP threatened the main official institutions of the country. Western governments urgently reminded that they would never recognize whatever government resulted from the street violence. The country, however, entered into a government crisis and another government of the Alliance for the State was chosen, headed by 31-year old Pandeli Majko, who distinguished himself by his negotiatory skills with the opposition. During the Left’s government of this time, a draft constitution was made with the advice of European institutions, and was passed by a majority of vote through a referendum.

The year 1999 came in the form of a challenge. Over 600,000 Albanians from Kosova were forced by Serbian dictatorship Millosevic to abandon their houses and properties. Massive refugees headed toward bordering Albania with a flux of about 20,000 refugees daily. Prime Minister Majko declared that the Albanian people and government were capable of accepting and sheltering more than one million refugees. This destroyed Milosevic's hopes for destabilizing Albania. The reception that was given to the refugees from Kosovo and Albania's co-operation with NATO forces for a quick restoration of peace contributed greatly to the raising of Albania's international prestige and image. Albanian people and government showed another time the tremendous capacity of solidarity and international cooperation. The Serbian forces were defeated soon and peace was restored on June 10, 1999. At this same day that Kosova was liberated by NATO Army, the caravans of Kosova people started to get back home in Kosova. That was really a biblical exodus both ways and at all aspects.

With the support of NATO troops, Kosovo was liberated from Serbian dictator Milosevic and was governed by UNMIK (United Nation Mission in Kosova) with the challenge of restoring human rights and proper governance based on UN resolution 1224.

During 1999, Albania was visited by various international political personalities in numbers the country had not seen in years.

Hundreds of foreign NGO's witnessed first-hand, and billions of people around the globe watched through TV how Albanians generously received the refugees. Such solidarity impressed and moved the world over. Surprised by Albanians and their government during the refugee crisis and after it, the international community undertook immediate rehabilitation programmes in gratitude to Albania under the significant heading, "Thank YOU Albania".



Kosovar children in a truck travelling to Albania, March 1999

The Socialists managed to secure a second term in office despite a power struggle between their veteran chairman Fatos Nano and Ilir Meta, who was designated the new Prime Minister. Albania did not manage to hold elections that were considered free and fair by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the summer 2001, mainly because excessive use of tactical voting in the area of

Dushk, near Lushnje in southern Albania, to favour their smaller allies in the government coalition. The opposition Democratic Party of former President Sali Berisha, held protests in the streets, provoking even skirmishes and light attacks on government buildings.

The government of Ilir Meta was credited with starting a road-building programme, improving the collection of customs duties and improving ties with neighbours, namely Serbia under the late



pro-Western reformer Zoran Djindjic. However, Meta's continued power struggle with Nano, culminating in public exchange of accusations of corruption, and the opposition's low-key but persistent and incandescent protests, hamstrung progress and hurt the economy.

Kosova NEWBORN
state founded on
17 February 2008

Meta was soon forced to resign and was replaced again by Pandeli Majko, who focused his attention on the project of building a highway that would connect the main port of Durres on the Adriatic to Kosova namely the "road of nation". Tourists from Kosovo flooded Albania's beaches on the Adriatic and Ionian, with most seeing it as a patriotic duty to spend money in their brothers' home rather than elsewhere.

Halfway through their second four-year term, the Socialists gave Nano a mandate to become premier with the intention of launching new initiatives for bringing Albania closer to the European Union, and he halted work on the Kosovo road project that Majko had begun.

The victory in Tirana of former Minister of Culture Edi Rama, gave the Socialists control of the Municipality for the first time ever, and much of their initiatives focused on changing the face of the capital. A former painter, Rama organized painting of the grey communist-era building in bright colours, destroyed the kiosks that had spread all around the capital and began upgrading the streets, pavements, lighting etc...

In January 31, 2003, the European Commission gave Albania the green light to start talks on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, which is considered as the ante-chamber into the European Union. Romano Prodi, the European Commission President who knew Albanian affairs quite well as Italy's premier during the anarchy and chaos of 1997, signed the agreement in Tirana.

Meanwhile, just like many other Eastern European democracies thankful to the U.S. for its support in toppling communism, Nano had joined the U.S.-led "Coalition of the Willing" to contribute troops to the intervention of the United States in Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein's regime. Sending peacekeepers abroad was a way of convincing the West that Albania was no longer a crisis-prone country that needed foreign troops to stabilize its internal security. It sent the message that Albania was now capable of contributing to the security of others and was militarily able to meet the criteria for being a member of NATO.



Albania in NATO
celebrations, 2009

By lowering taxes and thus increasing the taxpayers' base, the government improved revenue collection and approved three mid-year budgets, although critics said the money also came from the Albanian administration's chronic inability to invest all its resources on time. Most of the budget spending went to finance building of the road to Kosovo increasing from the initial 420 million euros to around one billion euros at the end of 2009. Albania's relatively small integration in the Western financial markets defended the economy from the fallout of the global financial crisis and the main banks continued to be profitable although most of them were foreign owned.

In January 2009, neighbouring Greece was the last European Union country to ratify the SAA with Albania, paving the way for Tirana to apply for candidate status during the Czech presidency of the European Union. In April of 2009, Albania became a fully-fledged member of NATO and in the same month applied for candidate status to the European Union.

The Gross Domestic Product had been growing steadily at about five to six percent each year and inflation had been stable at around three percent, but there was growing popular discontent with what was perceived as a corrupted government. The power crisis still caused blackouts and hurt the economy. Europe felt uneasy with the slow pace of Albanian efforts to reform the economy and the judiciary.

Vowing to uproot corruption and rule with clean hands, Sali Berisha's Democratic Party won elections on July 3, 2005, gaining a comfortable majority in parliament. The OSCE said the election had

again failed to meet international standards but all the same there was an orderly and peaceful transfer of power.

A year later, the EU and Albania signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in Brussels on June 10-12, 2006, and Tirana began focusing attention on meeting both the political and military conditions to receive an invitation to join NATO. The invitation came two years later in Bucharest in early April, 2008 at a NATO summit.

Berisha launched an ambitious programme of tax cuts and started the building of the highway “road of nation” to Kosovo one of the priorities of his government, contracting almost directly the well known U.S.-Turkish joint venture of Bechtel and Enka to build it. In addition to reviving the poor Northern Albania, it would offer Kosovo access to the sea and integrate the agriculture of both countries. To show government commitment to combat illegal traffic, premier Berisha also banned the use of whatever speedboats, eliminating the trafficking to Italy across the Adriatic.

In July, 2007, Bamir Topi, the deputy chairman of the ruling Democratic Party, was elected president, avoiding the prospect of snap elections.

Plagued with a bout of dry weather in 2007, Albania suffered one of its worst power crisis that led the government to think seriously about ending the country’s dependence on rainfall for electricity. Prime Minister Berisha began first by relying on imports, but soon started inviting both foreign and domestic investors to apply for power projects, considering even nuclear energy in addition to coal or gas-fired thermal plants, hydroelectric schemes and wind power. A series of projects by Italian companies have been seen as a way of courting Italy’s political backing for its future steps into the European Union what have provoked the anger of ecologists that see them as a source of pollution for Albania and clean energy for Italy.

Albania now has the opportunity to become a full member along with its fellow Balkan countries in a few years time given the EU’s preference for welcoming a number of countries together when it enlarges its borders. On 16 December 2009 Ambassador Helmuth Lohan, handed over to Prime Minister Sali Berisha the questionnaire



Premiers of Albania and Kosovo (Berisha and Thaci) walking in the tunnel of the “Road of nation” May 2009

necessary to prepare an assessment of the country's readiness to fulfil EU membership obligations. The responses provided by the Albanian authorities will serve as a basis for the Commission to prepare an Opinion on the application for EU membership presented by Albania in April 2009.

"Today's handing over of the questionnaire marks an important milestone on Albania's European path. Replying to the questionnaire is a demanding task which requires strong commitment from the entire public administration", Mr Helmuth Lohan said on behalf of Commissioner Rehn.

The questionnaire consists of 2,280 questions on 384 pages. The questions relate to all segments of the European legal framework and the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership. The questionnaire attaches particular importance to the political criteria. Good governance, the rule of law, judiciary reform, the fight against corruption, media freedom – these are all key issues which will form the core of our assessment.

Authors: *Muzafer Korkuti, Petrika Thengjilli, Shaban Sinani, Genc Myftiu, Benet Koleka*

Bibliography

Buda, A. - *History, vol II-I, Tiranë, 1986.*

Frashëri, K. - *Albanian Prizren League, Tiranë. 1997.*

Gibert, F. - *Les pays d'Albania et leur Histoire, Paris, 1914.*

Puto, S., A. - *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines a nos Jours*

Yasques, E. - *Albanians vol I (from antiquity to 1912) Istanbul, 1996.*

FUSIM FOTO TJTERr

1.10. Chronological outline of the political system in Albania

1. "The National Government" of Ismail Qemali, internationally known as "the Kingdom of Albania", or "the First Monarchy", 1912-1913.

2. The International Administration of Prince Wied, internationally known as "A Hereditary Principality", a monarchy with restricted functions that can also be described as "The First Monarchical Protectorate", 1913-1914.

3. The Esadist Government, emerged from a pashalik, an alternative of the national government, headed by a regency, internationally known (at the Peace Conference - 1918) as "the first regency" - (1914-1920).

4. "The National Government" emerged from the Congress of Lushnje, headed by a "council of elders" that replaced the "regency"; characterized by a successful development of parliamentarism and conspicuous elements of republicanism, but without reaching the extent of being proclaimed as a form of government (formally "the council of elders" corresponded to "regency") - 1920-1924.

5. Fan Noli's "Rebellious Government", established after the victory of the June Democratic Revolution (1924), with projects to deepen republicanism and parliamentarism, but being short-lived due to the restoration of the personal powers of Ahmet Zogu.

6. The "First Republic" of Zog, proclaimed shortly after the return to power of the former head of government, characterized by a conspicuous poorness of parliamentary life because of the ostracist policy followed by political opponents, who were banished from the country - 1925-1928.

7. "The Albanian Monarchy", described as "parliamentary", but in essence was absolutist because it was hereditary, the first King being Zog I (Ahmet Zogu). This is the period of the transformation of the country into an extra-Balkan territory (as seen by the neighbours' eyes) both because of the treaties the King signed with Italy and the acts approved by the League of Nations to the detriment of the equality of Albania with other countries as a subject of the international Law, by explicitly recognizing "Italy's right for the protection of its interests in Albania" - 1928-1939.

8. "The Second Monarchic Protectorate", embodied in the unification of Albania with Italy under the Crown of the King Victor Emmanuel III and with one vice-regent, similar to Wied's princely vice-regency of 1914. This is the period of the country's occupation by Italian Fascist troops, 1939-1943. The Royal Crown was donated to the King of Savoy in exchange of the promise for the creation of an Albanian State according to its historic borders.

9. "The Second Regency", formally proclaimed with the arrival of Nazi troops and the establishment of their power - 1943-1944.

10. The Communist "Democratic Government", (initially an Anti-Fascist Committee), declared of its anti-monarchic stand, emerged from the Congress of representatives of partisan brigades and their victorious supporters, held on May 24th in Përmet.

11. "The People's Republic" of Albania, "the Second Republic", proclaimed after the call of a constituent assembly in 1945 with the participation of both Communist forces and a modest opposition: 1946-1976; The "People's Socialist Republic" of Albania, a continuation of the "second republic", formally headed by a "presidium", analogous to "the council of elders". The "Number 1" of the Communist Party (Party of Labour), Enver Hoxha, was internationally known and recognized as the head of State - 1976-1991.

12. "The Third Republic" of Albania, proclaimed after the first multiparty elections, formally sanctioned as a "parliamentary republic", with the President as its representative institution - 1991-1992. With some additional amendments made to President's powers after 1992, the republican form of governance was preserved only de jure, as in fact its character changed from a parliamentary republic to a presidential republic.

1.11. Fundamental Legal Acts of Albania

1. The Statute of the National Government of Vlora (1912).
2. The National Statute of the Congress of Lushnje (1920).
3. The Statute of the first Republic (1925).
4. The Statute of the first Monarchy (1928).
5. The Constitution of the People's Republic (1946).
6. The Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic (1976).
7. The Constitution of the Republic (drafted in 1991 and rejected by the Parliament).
8. The main constitutional dispositions (of the parliamentary republic) 1991-1992.
9. The amended dispositions (with attributes of a presidential republic) 1992-1998.
10. The Constitution as drafted by a constitutional commission, submitted to the last referendum of 1998 and winning by a majority vote.

Author : Shaban Sinani