

## The Albanian-American Relations under the American Optics during 1945

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### Abstract

The United States of America, which played a very important role during World War II, were seen from the European Nations as the lantern that would help into leading the continent towards democratic peace. Like all the other European states, Albania as well had such a hope. The communist regime which was implemented in Albania after 1945 was oriented from Yugoslavian communism in its first years.

The relations between these two countries seemed cold, but it was America which wanted to break the ice and was asking for the situation to change through the organization of free and democratic elections, whereas Albania was looking for recognition of its communist government. The presentation of a communist facade in front of the Americans and with the change of the equilibrium, where Great Britain together with the Soviet Union recognized the Albanian government, forced USA to withdraw their requests, with the most important request, which consisted of free democratic elections. However, the Albanian people suffered violence and oppression from a deformed Stalinist election system, which clearly broke the social, economic and spiritual equilibrium of the Albanians.

**Keywords:** USA, Albania, Enver Hoxha, Communism, Diplomacy.

### Introduction

The Albanian territory was set free by the end of November 1944 from the last German forces and was awoken under the communist government. The existing political groups during the war, the nationalist wing as well as the collaborationists were inexistent. The communists, who had contacts with the British, as well as the Americans during the war, were formed as a party and recognized from communist Yugoslavia. In front of the people they were presented as the only power by using heroic propaganda.

The Balkan area had significant importance for the The United States of America after WWII, and as a result they were also entering in postwar political relations with Albania. Since the beginning of January 1945, the State Department had started to set up the group that would deal with contacts in Albania. The purpose of this group was to overthrow the communist government discretely, since the US Government had recognized Hoxha's communist regime (FRUS, 1967, 1). Members of this group were Joseph E. Jacobs, who was a foreign affair official in the political committee of the United States. Harry Fultz was the economic consultant of the foreign affairs, as well as Alexander C. Kirk the American ambassador in Italy and political consultant of the Mediterranean powers in Italy. In a plan with seven points, Jacobs was given the competence to supervise the situation in the country with the purpose of setting diplomatic relations between these two countries in the future. Likewise, he had to

make sure that Albania would not be part of international relations until the complete recognition of its government, that the Albanian border would not be threatened from third powers and that the other Great Powers should not enter into contact with the Albanian state without asking first the two allied powers. (FRUS, 1945, 16). The last point was actually more related to the Soviet Union rather than Albania but because of the fact that Albania had a strong relation with this country through Yugoslavia, this was indirect to let them understand that they could not act and disrupt the post war political equilibrium.

However, in April 1945 in a report that Jacobs sent to the State Department, it is stated that when he transmitted their requests, the attitude of Enver Hoxha was arrogant and he was trying to impose on him when in fact that showed the feeling of inferiority from the absence of recognition of his government from the United States (FRUS, 1967, 20). This showed two important elements. First, the Americans had managed to study very well the psychology of Enver Hoxha since the beginning and his purposes. Secondly, they understood that Enver Hoxha was impossible to relinquish his political territory that he pretended to have, making it difficult to later being recognized. Furthermore, Enver Hoxha had limited the geographical movement of the American group by telling them that they couldn't move outside Tirana without asking permission from the Albanian state (FRUS 1967, 24). But this attitude had an impact on the American behavior as they really tried to be careful not only by not recognizing the Albanian communist government, but also in the official documents they addressed to it as a national liberation government that implemented the administration competences of the country (FRUS, 1967, 371). This expression was similar to colonial governments rather than for a government which was worth being taken into consideration in Europe. This maybe came as a result that they saw the government during the first half of 1945 as a government that came to power through violence rather than free elections.

An important document was also the early July report from Jacobs about the "regime" in Albania, which gives an overview of the life in the country. The state is led from communists who are hidden under the Popular Front (who was theoretically seen as having not only the communist forces but the entire democratic forces as well as social layers of the society). It was claimed to have been supported from the people, but mostly from the Muslim and Orthodox communities, as the Catholic one is almost inexistent (FRUS. 1967, 28). According to the Americans, the support came mostly from the new generation, who had big hopes in the communists for the construction of the country, whereas the opposite was from the old generation and manorial forces. This was actually explained in two main reasons: first the naivety of the youth, who thought that their dreams would come true from the communists' promises, whereas the opposite who had more political experience, knew the communist threat, but didn't attract people, because very often they were seen as part of the population who had left the country behind in terms of development.

The economic crises in the country, was the most visible one from the Americans, who stated that the population was having a crisis (FRUS, 1967, 32). The country was completely paralyzed because of the economic centralizing actions, whereas more than the half of the budget went for the military spending (FRUS, 1967, 35) even at

a time when Albania was completely ruined from war. Actually this was a clear fact that should have given the Americans the idea that there is no hope in Albania for democratic governance.

However, Enver Hoxha had required recognition from America since the beginning, because through this recognition he saw the delivery of aid in the country (Duka, 2007, 244). There has actually been no concrete plan from the allied powers for Albania as well as other countries because it was seen as an annex of Yugoslavia from these countries since the end of the War. (Jacques, 1995, 475). The closest Allies in the country were the British. The later often gave reports to the Americans about the conditions in the country through the British perspective and from what comes after, it is visible that they were more realistic and had an accurate prognosis. The British stated that there is no preference for Enver Hoxha's regime in the country, even though he has more weaponry than the groups of resistance and that's why he keeps the country under control. But the British declaration was harsh for the British but tragic for the Albanians by stating that no matter the development of the situation in the country they would not interfere but they would simply not recognize the Albanian government (FRUS, 1967, 27). This was a declaration that guarded the Balkan status quo but would destroy Albania. Moreover, the British had declared that, considering that in Yugoslavia a new communist dictatorship was established, the same thing could happen in Albania (FRUS, 1967, 45).

Jacobs had often declared that we want to make further investigations but we don't want to do anything behind your back (FRUS, 1967, 24), but freedom in the country for the Americans was never completely achieved. Enver Hoxha had concentrated everything under his control, not only for the people but also because of the requests of the Americans (FRUS, 1967, 25). He had a double personality towards the Americans as he called them friends and brothers when he needed something from them or diplomatic recognition (FRUS 1967,54), but on the other hand the UNRRA mission itself had to request permission to move (Oklay-Hill, 2006, 183). Not only this, but because of the fact that the permission for the representative of the American State Treasury, Gardner Paterson, was not signed by him, he ordered to deport him immediately. This happened when the director of the Albanian Bank had requested Paterson's intervention for help from the American Banks.

Hoxha comes to such a point that he declares that we tried to make the Americans believe that in our country democracy works (Myftaraj, 2009, 56). The Albanian communists showed not only with their attitudes, but also with their declarations, that they did not want the western politics and direction. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Omer Nishani had declared that the Albanians do not understand democracy and they are not educated to vote like the Americans (Fischer, 2004, 327). This clearly showed the level of evaluation that the Albanian Government gave its people, especially the Minister of Foreign affairs who was the representative of the people and the Albanian politics in the international arena.

## **Elections and the conditions in the country through the American perception and the Albanian reality**

One of the most important requests that was brought up during 1945 was the problematics of the elections that had to be held in Albania. By the end of January, it was declared that the Americans didn't expect to recognize any government which was originated from war and had come to power without elections but with the support of the army (FRUS 1967, 9). At the same time the USA decided that besides having the condition of the free elections, there should also be a General Assembly who would decide for the future form of regime. Likewise, it was demanded that all the people were to be present in the elections as well as in the political groups (FRUS 1967, 35). During October when the discussion about the recognition of the country had already started from the Americans as well as the British, both these countries demanded an evaluation of the elections before recognizing the country, based on high democratic standards (FRUS 1967, 314). But even after the softening of the British demand and the relinquish from the Soviets, who saw as unreasonable the relation between the recognition of Albania with the standards of the other countries, the Americans were the only ones who were not conceding. The Americans were sure that the Soviets would tolerate Hoxha's behavior because they were part of the same communist ideology.

But the situation changed completely after the recognition of the Albanian state before the elections from the Great Britain and the Soviet Union. As a result, this brought a change in the American attitude for the elections of the country as well. Since the end of October, the American ambassador in Great Britain, Mr. Winant, had declared that the elections could not be as democratic as in the US and Britain but they would be the most democratic elections ever held in the country (FRUS 1967, 45). This clearly showed that the American politicians didn't know the situation in Albania years ago, because such a situation could have never happened before. The communist style was unique and it was the first time that it was implemented in our country. In his declaration on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, nine days after the elections were held, the American representative, Jacobs, emphasized that the method used in the elections was discrete by using small balls which were thrown into the box. What was noticed was his stress in relation with the date of the elections. According to him, the situation was very calm, as there had been no pressure to vote the Popular Front (which was a cover for the communists). The opposition had had the possibility as well but they did not declare a candidate for the elections, a thing that they should have done in order to express their ideas (FRUS 1967, 60). The Americans also opposed the Greeks who said that in Albania there was no democracy in the elections day because the people were afraid. The Americans even accused the Greeks who like always were denigrating against the Albanians, because the elections were very satisfying for the Americans in a peaceful climate (FRUS 1967, 322). In fact, despite the purpose that the Greeks had, which was to show that they themselves had been under threat and could not vote for the parties that they wanted, this time they were saying an undeniable truth. However, during the elections there had also been some accidents, and it hadn't been completely calm as the Americans declared. In some cities, there were manipulations

of the election balls, or intrigues against the opponents (Dervishi, 2006, 139). These elections were considered a victory for the Yugoslavian communism, the Americans considered it as a hit against the imperialist powers (Dedjer, 2005, 139). Meanwhile, there had been supervisors in the country during the elections and they were mostly the American journalists (Oklay-Hill, 2006, 201) and Jacobs himself had been one of them. This makes it very strange the fact that the Americans couldn't notice an infringement, but we could certainly say that the communists had directed them to the model voting centers in the country, in order to maintain their façade in the eyes of the Americans.

However, the reality was completely different especially for the opposite wing. Jacobs himself admits that neither the opposite groups nor the resistance had influential personalities, who had an impact in the population. They even asked the Americans to help them to postpone the election day (FRUS, 1967, 56). This showed that the opposition was shrunk into an insignificant group, considering as the fact that they asked a foreign representative to help them postpone the date, without having the power, not even the courage probably, to have an impact in organizing a democratic race.

The Popular Council Groups, spread into cities, were already known as communist groups (Nogaj, 1996, 126), who were putting pressure or spying the civils. In Shkoder, the city that was known for its strong Catholicism, F. Xhovani Fausti and F. Daniel Dajani were executed during December (Simoni, 1998, 87) the month of the elections and celebrations of victory. One of the groups that was taken as being part of the opposition was the one called "National Unity". But this organization with its headquarters in Shkoder, was sentenced and executed on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1945 (Peters, 2010, 161), by paralyzing this way the entire opposition wing in the northern city, and considering it as a casus belli that the communists used to eliminate a big part of the catholic publishing clergymen (Jacques, 1995, 494).

What is easily noticeable is the fact that in Albania during the elections of 1945 there was no law on the political parties as it was passed a year later (Myftaraj, 2009, 61). This implied that during the elections period the communists didn't see as beneficial the passing of a law which was absolutely necessary for the elections. Whereas, when it was passed, practice showed the best example to stop the creation of these political parties. These were elements that the opposition could not create. Likewise, the victory around 92% for the Popular Front, which was the cover for the communist power, was a percentage that was mainly shown to communist countries. The fact was that with all the terror during the year and the dissatisfaction that was caused from the economic collapse, there was no reason to justify the fact that the entire country voted for the Popular Front.

However, the biggest manipulation was directly in the voting boxes, where the ball that was thrown inside the box, made a sound if it was casted for the "opposition" candidate, so people who voted against the Popular Front were immediately identified, so they could take measures against them, in a later time (Dervishi, 2006, 557). This showed that there were no democratic measures taken like the Americans wanted for these elections, but mainly a Stalinist measure, prognosing the way the country was going under the communist regime.

The situation had not been satisfying the entire year in Albania. Hoxha himself had shown insecurity in relations with the Americans. He was always complaining about why there should be military personnel in the civil missions that were brought into Albania (FRUS, 1967, 24). This showed the fear that Enver Hoxha had in case military personnel was brought and they would understand the logistics risking this way losing power. Such a psychosis accompanied Enver Hoxha his entire life. The Americans often defined the communists as a naïve group who had no idea of what politics was. A group that presented itself as such in front of the Americans, but in front of the people it had another face.

Since the beginning of the year, the Catholic church suffered the biggest strike where seven priests were killed or died from communist tortures (Nogaj, 1999, 128), where one of the was Father Luigj Bumçi, who died on 1<sup>st</sup> March (Peters, 2010, 153) or the catholic orphanage which was run from two Muslim partisan girls. This showed that there were attempts to start a religious conflict in Shkoder. Hoxha himself had declared that the catholic clergymen had structures which they will destroy as soon as they find proof of. This clergy tried to move abroad through the British mission which ensured the permissions and it became an issue in the British parliament (Stokes, 1967, 1). However, this was never shown in any of the American delegations reports. Hoxha also tried to use his communist Catholics to strike the catholic clergy, especially people like Tuk Jakova or Gjin Marku who were often sent to the catholic churches for routine checks (Pepa, 2007, 293). This was for the purpose of creating fratricide within the catholic group and to break it easily later on.

The start of the special trial in Spring 1945, was later seen as a copy of the French Revolution, for the territory and devastation that it caused in the people especially in the political figures who could have been a decent opposition that was absent in the elections. This may have been the reason that the representatives of the opposition were unknown when presented as such like it was expressed in the American mission reports. Such cleansing of political figures was done as soon as they came into power or even before the American mission, but the British had been aware of it. It is thought that within November 1944 about 100 people were killed and left to decompose (Musta, 2001, 54).

One of the problems that bothered Hoxha, was the attitude of the western countries, and especially USA, towards the ones that he called War Criminals. The Albanian government, since the first meeting with the representative of the American mission in Albania, Jacobs, was expressed that the War Criminals should be brought to the Albanian government (FRUS, 1967, 24). Since the beginning of June, Hoxha sent a letter to Truman demanding the return of the elements including Mit'hat Frasheri (FRUS, 1967, 25) who had written against Hoxha's regime, by reminding them as well as the Conference of Moscow that all the war criminals were to be sentenced in the place where they committed the crimes. However, within the month the Americans responded that this was impossible to happen because the diplomatic relations between the two countries had not started yet (FRUS, 1967, 29). In reality, the Americans and other western countries noticing that a new threat was emerging in the world, communism, did not always surrender the ones that the communists called war criminals. This mainly because of the fact that they were often used for

mission against communism. Actually, Hoxha feared this as well by considering these political immigrants as a direct threat to his power. His letter of attempt to get them back was sent to the International Commission for Crime and War Criminals Discovery with its headquarters in London on 15 December 1944, composed of a list with 42 names, but he never got back any of them. This was a request that the US never fulfilled. Besides this, as a result of this denial, Hoxha gave harsher sentences to personalities in the country through the Special Trial (Fischer 2004, 325).

## Conclusions

The situation in the country during 1945 would be the most decisive one in the entire history of the second half of the XX century for Albania as well as for the entire world. The relations between Albania and USA are those kinds of relations that are cold without having started yet. Enver Hoxha showed that he never had a long term relation with the USA. He was trying to build a façade on the purpose of serving as economically profitable, as it was known that this was the only country that would ensure economic help for the country.

On the other hand, the USA who started with a perseverance on establishing its objectives in Albania continued by relinquishing on the way. Firstly because of strategic purposes, because Albania was a country with communist doctrines and had the Soviet Union as its idol and secondly considering that Great Britain was leaning towards the Soviet Union in recognizing the Albanian government was forced to retreat its primary condition for the recognition of the Albanian state that was free democratic elections. This made Enver Hoxha think that the Anglo-American attitude was softer on the verge of the elections compared to the first fazes of the relations.

Actually this was a disaster for the election system, which just like in the other communist countries, was under the Stalinist slogan saying that elections could be held any time they wanted, as long as it was the communists counting them. But in our country it had a more tragic role as it destroyed the opposition before it happened in all the other communist countries.

Despite these elements the recognition from the Anglo-Americans was a case not to be lost if the Albanian communisms had real patriotic elements like it was shown in front of the Americans. But the situation that was created during 1946 made that the opportunity that the Americans gave us, would be missed, killing also the dreams of the Albanians for relations with the west for almost half a century.

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