

RiMe

**Rivista dell'Istituto
di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea**

ISBN 9788897317876

ISSN 2035-794X

numero 14/V n.s., giugno 2024

**Society in turmoil: The first economic reforms of a
communist nature and the social consequences in
Albanian society 1945-1948**

Metin Venxha - Orjon Ago

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7410/1706>

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Il presente volume è stato pubblicato online il 30 giugno 2024 in:

This volume has been published online on 30 June 2024 at:

<http://rime.cnr.it>

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Special Issue

**Face Up. Faces from the past. The fight
for freedom and democracy in Albania
during the regime of Enver Hoxha**

A cura di / Edited by

Michele Rabà - Gaetano Sabatini

RiMe 14/V n.s. (June 2024)

Special Issue

Face Up. Faces from the past.
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Society in turmoil: The first economic reforms of a communist nature and the social consequences in Albanian society (1945-1948)

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Date of receipt: 15/04/ 2024

Date of acceptance: 06/06/2024

Abstract

By the end of the WWII, Albania followed a centralized and planned economic policy and the Soviet model was undertaken. The economy was the reflection of the political alliances that Albania created within the socialist world. Like King Zog, his political opponent, Hoxha also followed a policy of alliances to help the economic reconstruction of the country. Relations with Yugoslavia were strengthened in 1944-1948 with a series of economic treaties signed to bring the country out of the post-war emergency phase.

Keywords

Economy; Nationalization; Centralized economy; Industrialization.

Riassunto

L'Albania, dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, seguì una politica economica centralizzata secondo il modello sovietico. L'economia era il riflesso delle alleanze che l'Albania aveva creato all'interno del mondo socialista. Come il re Zog, anche il suo avversario Hoxha seguì una politica di alleanze per favorire la ricostruzione economica del paese. I rapporti con la Jugoslavia furono rafforzati tra il 1944-1948 con una serie di trattati siglati per far uscire il Paese dall'emergenza del dopoguerra.

Parole chiave

Economica; Nazionalizzazione; Economia centralizzata; Industrializzazione.

1. Introduction to Albanian economic history: ideological readings and historiographical review. - 2. Albania towards political and economic isolation, Yugoslav influence. - 3. Albanian-Yugoslav political and economic relations (1944-1948). - 4. The new institutional framework of the Albanian economy. - 5. The state monopoly in the monetary and financial sector. The birth of the Albanian State Bank. - 6. Conclusion. - 7. References. - 8. Curriculum vitae.

1. Introduction to Albanian economic history: ideological readings and historiographical review

The period between the two world wars has been treated by Albanian historiography in a very ideological manner. Furthermore, it must be taken into account that economic history has had greater space only in the last two decades. Albanian historians of real socialism had commonly concentrated their works on political history, the history of international relations and military history. During totalitarianism (1945-1990) political publications occupied the most important place in Albanian publishing and recorded the largest circulation. In particular, 'ideological' works had to be purchased compulsorily by all intellectuals, advised by the Albanian Communist Party itself. In the period between 1965 and 1980 the overall circulation of political-social literature was 6,000,000 copies, with an average of 50,000 copies per work. Titles particularly relevant to communist ideology reached an average of 100,000-300,000 copies (Hidri, 2013, p. 60).

During the 20th century, in Albania, economic history was not considered an academic discipline. Even today, in the five public universities in the country where degree courses in History are held, there is a lack of disciplines relating to economic history¹. The years between the two world wars are interpreted as years in which the Albanian people were governed inadequately, the rulers exploited the people for personal reasons and are often accused of having opened the doors to Italian influence on the national economy. All the texts that have dealt with economic issues have used political ideology as historical research tools and have almost always seen those years as endless suffering for the Albanian people. The monograph by Ilaz Fishta and Veniamin Toci, *Gjëndja ekonomike e Shqipërisë në vitet 1912-1944, prapambetja e saj, shkaqet dhe pasojat* (The economic situation of Albania in the years 1912-1944, backwardness, causes and consequences), published in 1983, can be taken as a model to understand how communist historiography worked; in the introduction Fishta and Toci state their guidelines:

To write this book we based ourselves on the Marxist-Leninist theory on the role of the economy and various factors in the development of society. We were helped by the conclusions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on the factors of the development of capitalism, its characteristic before and after the First World War (Fishta - Toci, 1983, p. 5).

¹ Economic history courses are held only in the Faculty of Economics.

To understand how this historiography represented the studies of Western historians in those years, we could quote the introduction of the book again:

Italian, French, English, American, German, Austrian, Yugoslavian etc. historians have also written about the Albanian economy. In general these analyzed the situation from the bourgeois point of view, to help the penetration of foreign monopoly capital into Albania (Fishta - Toci, 1983, p. 7).

As we have seen, the few works of economic history that developed during the years of communism are unable to be free from the ideology of the regime. Furthermore, in the current historical-economic literature, the two periods are portrayed in a totally positive and negative way. In the period 1945-1990 the economic policy of the regime is interpreted by Albanian historians as the only way to bring Albania out of the economic Middle Ages, and when the periods prior to 1945 are studied (both the twenty years Zog and the five centuries of Ottoman rule), they are treated as negative. Even today there are no works of Albanian economic history for the Ottoman period, where the history of agriculture, trade, family, currency and production is analyzed, thus responding to many misunderstandings about that historical era. Regarding the period of the Albanian monarchy, the historiographical problem changes due to the scarcity of works and interest on that era, furthermore all the works are analyzed using criteria that are not very scientific and very ideological. In one of his numerous works on the economic situation of Albania, the historian Iliaz Fishta, involuntarily, makes us aware of the gravity of the historiographical problem, in his introduction to the book *Ndërrhyrja e kapitalit të huaj dhe pasajat e saj skllavëruese për Shqipëri 1931-1936* (The intervention of foreign capital and its heavy consequences on Albania 1931-1936). In fact, from the guidelines of his work we read:

Enver Hoxha's analyses, conclusions and works serve as a compass of orientation for our Marxist-Leninist historiography, for the study of the history of the country, and for the study of intervention of foreign capital in our country, especially during the Zog years (Fishta, 1989, p. 5).

An important role in the attempt to describe the economic and social past of the country was that of two economic magazines, published between the years 1954-

1990: *Popular Economy*, published in the years 1954-1972, and *Economic Problems*, published between 1973 and 1990. The two magazines hosted a large number of interventions by Albanian historians, with the aim of creating the first serious attempt at creating a national economic historiography.

Instead, the interests of European studies, in Italian, French and English, are much broader than those published in Albanian. According to Paolo Tachella, reference must be made to a bibliography of approximately 250 titles, including monographs and articles, regarding the Italian, French and English linguistic areas².

2. Albania towards political and economic isolation, Yugoslav influence

Italian troops landed in Albania on 7 April 1939. They defeated weak resistance led by a few nationalists and forced King Zog into exile. The Albanian crown united with the Italian one. The crown was offered to Vittorio Emanuele III by Albanian notables assembled by the Italians. The Italian King accepted it. This marked the initial steps of a fast process ending independent Albania (Borgogni, 2007, p. 376). The Albanian region was important for Italians to extend their influence in the Balkans. The region's geographical position contributed to this significance.

Albania is the Bohemia of the Balkans, whoever has Albania in his hands has the Balkan region in his hands. Albania is a geographical constant of Italy. He assures us of control of the Adriatic (...) no one enters the Adriatic anymore (...) we have widened the bars of the Mediterranean prison³.

The Italian administration took two approaches. First, it focused on strengthening Albania politically and economically through various agreements. These agreements covered areas such as customs union, armed forces, and diplomatic representation. Second, it aimed at a complete assimilation into the political-administrative system. In this fragile political situation, the first armed

² Tachella, Paolo (2006) 'Temi e questioni di storia economica dell'Albania dalla dominazione ottomana al crollo del comunismo. Una rassegna bibliografica,' *Storia Economica*, Anno IX, n. 1, pp. 139-177, <www.osservatoriobalcani.org/.../Storia%20economica%20albanese.pdf>.

³ Benito Mussolini, meeting of the Grand Council of Fascism on 13 April 1939.

groups opposing the Italian occupation began to form. The most significant event was the formation of the Albanian Communist Party in November 1941. This led to partisan resistance, which collaborated with Tito's Yugoslav Communist Party⁴.

With the formation of the Albanian Communist Party, the history of Albania begins within the field of real socialism. Historians have discussed the Yugoslav contribution to the PCA⁵. After 1939, Albania's relations with the Slavic state began warming up⁶. This shift occurred due to the new reality following the occupation

⁴ The Albanian Communist Party (Partia Komuniste e Shqipërisë) was founded in 1941. In 1948, it changed its name into the Party of Labour of Albania (Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë). The PPSH was a Marxist-Leninist party. It embraced the most orthodox communist vision. He seized power in Albania in 1946. He established a highly repressive dictatorship in the Soviet bloc: (1985) *Historia e Punës së Shqipërisë*. Tirana: State Edition.

⁵ Between 1944 and 1948, Albania and Yugoslavia collaborated closely. The leaders and historians highlighted the Yugoslav envoys' role in creating the PCA. After the 1948 rift, communist historiography criticized Yugoslavia as imperialist and a traitor to communist ideals. From that moment on, Yugoslavia's role in the creation of the PCA disappeared from the history books. After the fall of the communist regime in 1992, Albanian historians took a more professional approach to forming the Communist Party. The first communist groups in Albania were created at the end of the 1920s with people who had made contact with communist ideas abroad. The first communist groups were: The Korca Group created in 1929, in which a significant number of young employees and artisans participated. From Korca's group came the first high leaders of the post-war Albanian Communist Party such as the Minister of the Interior Koci Xoxe, Koco Tashko, Ali Klemendi etc; the Communist Group of Scutari created in 1934; the communist group of "Youth"; the "Fire" Group and the Trotskyist Group of Tirana. In this regard, see the extensive literature including K. Frasheri, *Historia e levizjes së majte në Shqipëri 1878-1941*, ASH, Tirane 2006; *Historia e Partisë së Punës të Shqipërisë (Second Edition) "8 Nëntori"* Tiranë 1981, U. Butka, *Lufta Civile në Shqipëri 1943-1945* Drier, Tirane 2006. H. Neuwirth, *Qëndresë dhe bashkëpunim në Shqipëri*.

⁶ During the years between the two World Wars, difficult political relations were not a valid reason to stop economic relations between the two states. Trade between the two countries was important, as demonstrated by the data from 1930 when Albania exported 444,659 gold fr to Yugoslavia and imported 2,554,100 gold fr. Bakalli, E. (1997) *Marredhëniet Ekonomike Shqipëri-Jugosllavi 1929-1930*, Koha, Prishtine, pp. 81-83. On the relations between the two countries in the first decades of the 20th century, I also refer to the Albanian historian Milo, Pascal (1992) *Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918-1927*, 8 Nentori, Tirane.

of the Balkans by Nazi-fascist troops. This change positively affected Albanian-Yugoslav relations. The history of these relations involves Kosovo. Great Serbia aimed to expand Yugoslav borders into Albanian territories in the 19th century. These two problems were initially ignored for months. The risk to the nations outweighed historical differences⁷. Belgrade led the Albanian resistance against Nazi-fascist troops. Two emissaries, Miladin Popovic and Dushan Mugosha, were involved. Stavro Skendi, an Albanian historian, stated that: "Popovic and Mugosha founded the Albanian Communist Party. They chose the Central Committee delegates. In truth, they were the real PCA leaders" (Duka, 2007, p. 215).

The Yugoslav influence was sanctioned in the Permet Congress (24-28 May 1944). It continued until 1948 in the Albanian government. The Congress was organized based on the Yugoslav model 1943 in Bosnia. The congress supported creating a Balkan Confederation based on Yugoslavian indications. The Declaration of the Permet Congress states:

Our people's war is strongly connected to the anti-fascist bloc's war this war shows our people's solidarity with others seeking freedom, especially in the Balkans. This will produce the conditions for the creation of the Balkan Confederation, where all people will have the opportunity to develop and move forward in all fields. This creates conditions for a federation impacting European policy development⁸.

Albanian-Yugoslav relations developed in three main phases:

1. Preparation of the legal and economic framework for cooperation includes economic, monetary, financial, and customs areas.
2. A common policy on regional and international problems.
3. The end of the relationship between Albania and Yugoslavia in 1948.

The first phase started after Albania's liberation in November 1944. The countries established diplomatic relations⁹. The Albanian government, elected on 2

⁷ During the first half of the 20th century, Albanian-Yugoslav relations followed highs and lows depending on the foreign policy objectives of the Yugoslav state. In 1922 diplomatic relations were reactivated but they were cold and without active collaboration. Furthermore, these relations were marked by the Italian-Yugoslav rivalry on the Eastern Question, where Albania was at the center of both diplomacies.

⁸ AQSH, *Relacion mbi Kongresin e Permetit*, f. 12, years 1944, p. 39.

⁹ The Albanian ambassadors to Yugoslavia for the years 1944-1948 were: Tuk Jakova for the years 1945-1946, Hysni Kapo for the years 1946-1947, Ramadan Citaku for the years

December 1945, led by Enver Hoxha, will be recognized on 1 May 1945¹⁰. On 17 December 1945 the General Assembly met to decide on two important points: the form of the regime and the Constitutional Charter. The Assembly's work started on 10 January 1946. The People's Republic of Albania was declared a day later. On 14 March 1946, the Constitutional Assembly, now the People's Assembly, ratified the Statute. The Statute established the Republic's political, social, and economic structure (*The History of the Albanian People*, vol. IV, 1982, p. 175). On 18 March 1946, the People's Assembly assigned the leader of the Albanian Communist Party to form Albania's first post-war government. The Albanian state's history during real socialism starts with the first Hoxha government.

The relations between the two states were now consolidated in an important way. This fact was confirmed by the visit of the leader Hoxha in Belgrade with a significant number of ministers from 23 June to 2 July 1946¹¹. The Albanian newspaper, the Union (*Bashkimi*):

reported that Hoxha received all required honors in Belgrade. The atmosphere in the streets of Belgrade was described as celebratory as General Hoxha was greeted by

1947-1948. All three ambassadors spent most of their lives in prison after the break in relations with the Yugoslavs. The first ambassador of Albania to Belgrade was sentenced in 1958 to twenty years in prison, he died in 1959. Hysni Kapo managed to survive the Hoxha purges, from 1940 to 1954 he was deputy prime minister and minister of agriculture. He died in a clinic of Paris in 1979. Ramadan Citaku was condemned several times by the regime. In this regard, see the extensive literature including Kastriot Dervishi, *Historia e Shtetit Shqiptar 1912-2005* cit. A. Musta, M. Kokalari, *Kush ishte Enver Hoxha?* Apollonia, Tirane 1996; M. Costa, *Una fortezza ideologica: Enver Hoxha e il comunismo Albanese*, Anteo, 2013.

¹⁰ Regarding the elections of 2 December 1945, see the extensive literature including F. Fejto, *Storia delle democrazie popolari*, Bompiani, Florence 1953; E. Frabetti, *La particolarità del comunismo del Hoxha*, Futurubili no 2-3, 1996; Amik Kasoruh, *Un incubo di mezzo secolo: l'Albania di Enver Hoxha*, Besa, Lecce 1998.

¹¹ Exactly the Albanian delegation was composed of the Vice President of the People's Assembly Myslym Peza, General Bedri Spahiu, the Minister of Justice Manol Konomi, the Minister of Economy Nako Spiro, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Nesti Kerenxhi, the Colonel Vasil Konomi, by the Director of the Navy Department Frederik Hada and by the Director of the Military Sector *Sadik Bektashi*, AMPJ, fund 94, file 167, year 1946 *Relacion mbi marrëdhëniet midis dy vEndeve* (Report on relations between the two countries).

Marshal Tito and acclaimed by the people. Since the evening of June 22, the capital of Yugoslavia was prepared to await the visit of the Albanian leader General Colonel Enver Hoxha and other guests who came here for a friendly visit¹².

The article continues: “in the streets and main squares of the city there are large banners that speak of the brotherhood of our peoples (...). Everyone talks and comments on the visit of the leader of the Albanian people, and anxiously awaits the day when he will be among them”¹³.

Understanding the collaboration degree between two states was crucial. They had moved past the Kosovo issue, believing in peaceful future under communist principles. Both countries aimed for mutual development. The Treaty of Friendship and Reciprocity of 9 July 1946 laid the foundation for the economic-political fusion of the two countries¹⁴. The signing of the Treaty caused outrage among nationalist Albanians for betraying Kosovo and drew criticism from the foreign press supporting the new path taken by the Balkan states¹⁵. The Treaty of

¹² *Gazeta Bashkimi* (Union Newspaper), 25 June 1946. The article is titled *General Colonel Enver Hoxha is received by Marshal Tito, and exclaimed by the people of Belgrade*.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ On the occasion of the signing of the treaty Hoxha confirmed that: “The Treaty with Yugoslavia is the most important act that our government carries out in the international field. The signing of this treaty is not a spontaneous event for our peoples, this has deep roots and is based in the history of the development of our peoples, in the war for freedom especially in the common anti-fascist efforts. This act makes the friendship between our peoples and above all guarantees the independence and sovereignty of Albania. This is not just a guarantee; this will serve as the basis for economic and cultural collaboration between the two countries”. See AMPJ, *Report on relations between the two countries*, 1946, d 167, p. 26.

¹⁵ The concerns of an Albanian abandonment of the Kosovo issue were well founded. In an extraordinary meeting of the CC of the PCA after his return from Belgrade, Hoxha was convinced that the issue of Kosovo should no longer be discussed nor even within the ranks of the PCA, «if a member of the Party is clear to him the path of the party, then the issue of Kosovo should also be clear... Is it in our interest to reclaim Kosovo? This is not progressive. When we come to socialism, which means there (in Yugoslavia) and here, and the remnants of capitalism are eliminated, then, in such a situation, Kosovo will be united with the Socialist Republic of Albania. This is the path that Marxism teaches us. We have a duty to fight those who do not understand this. When we make an agreement, we merge customs; this is a step towards socialism and towards establishing relations with Kosovo. The people of Kosovo have all freedoms. He took the land, he has

Friendship and Reciprocity of 9 July 1946 had five main chapters. Each chapter covered collaboration in foreign policy, economic policy, and common defense¹⁶. The Treaty was valid for twenty years, with the possibility of revision every 5 years, until one of the two states decided to denounce it.

When the Marshall Plan was presented in Europe, Yugoslavia promised Albania a two-billion-dinar loan. The agreement was signed on 12 June 1947¹⁷. This was the Slavic state's response to American aid for the peoples who had been destroyed by the Second World War. It is no coincidence that the two states chose the same day to publicly refuse aid from the Marshall Plan. Albania decided not to participate in the Paris Conference on 10 July 1947. The conference scheduled for 12 July 1947 would discuss economic aid from the United States to Europe. The official note of protest was delivered to the British ambassador in Belgrade. Hoxha rejected Albania's historical possibility of accepting American loans. He now chose the Yugoslav road as a point of reference in the political-economic field. In a visit to the south of the country in the city of Vlore on 2 October 1947, the Albanian prime minister declared that he was sure of complete national reconstruction thanks to the economic help of Yugoslavia¹⁸. A choice that can only be explained by the personal ties of the Albanian leader supported for years by the Yugoslavs in Albania who would guarantee his personal power. Hoxha wrote *Titisti* in 1982. His thoughts had changed completely. The history between the PCA and the PCJ from the summer 1943 to the end of 1948 showed a struggle. This struggle involved attempts to subjugate and enslave the Party by the CPY and the Yugoslav State. Our new State and leadership heroically resisted. They avoided submission and faced betrayal without hesitation (Hoxha, 1982, p. 34).

3. Albanian-Yugoslav political and economic relations (1944-1948)

After the end of the Second World War, the economic situation in Albania was very difficult. The economic life of the country was totally paralyzed not only due to the damage of the war but above all by the new economic policy undertaken by

the schools. We are the best friends of the Yugoslavs», N. Plasari, L. Malltezi, *Mardheniet Shqiptaro-Jugosllave 1945-1948*, GJ. Fishta, Tirane 1996, p. 73-74.

¹⁶ Stalin also welcomed the signing of the treaty as Radio Moscow also welcomed this act in its Albanian language broadcast on 12 July 1946. "This treaty represents a new contribution to security and peace in the Balkans and around the world": Dedijer, V. (2005) *Mardheniet shqiptaro-jugosllave*. Tirane: Medaur, p. 141.

¹⁷ *Gazeta Bashkimi* (Union Newspaper), 17 luglio 1947.

¹⁸ *Ibi*, 3 ottobre 1947.

Albania after 28 November 1944. The two pillars of economic growth of Albania before the war were the Albanian capital and the foreigner who, invested according to a capitalist logic during the twenty years of Zog, had led to a general modernization of the country. With the political elections of 2 December 1945, won by the Albanian Communist Party with Yugoslav support, it was immediately understood that the country's economic development model would be oriented towards planning and centralization. From this perspective, private capital no longer found the necessary space to integrate into the new economic reality that was created in Albania after 1945. Furthermore, it was the sector that was most affected by the first phase of the post-war Red Terror.

In this situation, Albania needed the support of a more developed country for its economic rebirth¹⁹. During Hoxha's visit to Belgrade, the two countries signed an economic collaboration agreement. It is known as the Economic Convention for the Coordination of Plans, Customs Union, and Equality of Currencies.

Intense economic relations in Albania reveal the complex political structure. Albanian-Yugoslav relations show mutual interest. The Albanian communist party allied with Yugoslavia to consolidate power. The latter was ready to help a country it had tried to occupy in the 19th century. Now, under the mask of socialist brotherhood, the Slavic state was smoothly assimilating Albania. b) the vital need of the Albanian economy for capital and foreign investments, both private and state.

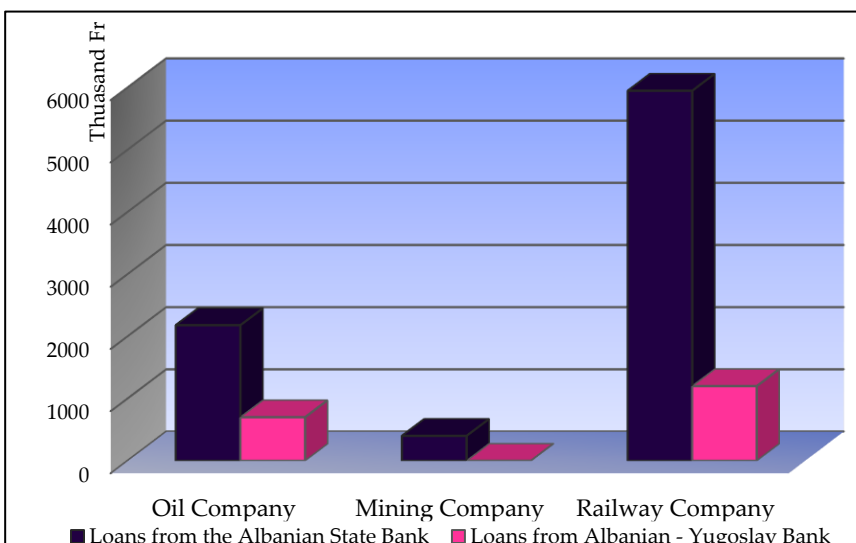
One of the first provisions of the Economic Convention was the parity between the Albanian and Yugoslav currencies. The disagreements between the two parties grew stronger. The Albanian currency had more purchasing power than the Yugoslavian dinar after the war. In September 1947 the cost of living for a family of four in Tirana was 408.44 Albanian francs while in Belgrade it was 5,140.50 dinars (Fishta -Toci, 1984, p. 382). In accordance with these data the real ratio between the Albanian franc and the Yugoslav dinar would be 1 to 12,586 dinars. The Yugoslavs did not accept this rate and proposed the exchange rate of 1 to 8 Yugoslav dinars. In July 1947, the Albanian franc was replaced by the Lek at a ratio of 1 franc.

¹⁹ In truth, since March 1945, Albania had signed a commercial treaty with Yugoslavia according to which all the reserves in the warehouses of oil, wool and other agricultural products were exported to Yugoslavia which sold cereals and military vehicles as compensation. Bashkurit, Lisen (2003) *Diplomacia shqiptare në fillimet e luftës së ftohtë*. Tirane: Geer, p. 133.

Albanians would have been equal to 9 leks, or 9 dinars. The equation of the two currencies with these figures did not reflect the real value of the coins in the market. The Albanian currency was stronger than the Yugoslavian one. This was due to larger reserves of products used as collateral. The strength was also supported by the post-war industrial and agricultural growth.

Furthermore, the agreement for the construction of joint ventures with mixed capital in Albania was signed in July 1946. The agreement involves several companies: the Railway Construction and Operation Company, the Electrical Energy Production and Operation Company, the Mineral Exploitation Company, the Oil Extraction and Exploitation Company, the Maritime Navigation Company, the Import-Export Trading Company and the Albanian-Yugoslav Bank. In these mixed companies the Albanian capital would have been composed of the territory and the structures. The Slavic state financed the technological construction by providing machinery. In accordance with this agreement the companies operated under the Albanian legal framework and the agreement would be valid for thirty years. These agreements were an important step towards the consolidation of political relations between the two states and above all towards the full integration of the Albanian economy into the Yugoslav reality. The Yugoslav capital invested in joint ventures in Albania was considerable. In 1947 alone, the Yugoslav side had to invest 600 million lek in machinery. In reality in the two-year period 1946-1948 the Slavic state was unable to respect its economic commit.

Graph 1. Bank loans to joint ventures. **Source:** Fishta - Toci, 1984, p. 405.



4. *The new institutional framework of the Albanian economy*

With the inclusion of Albania in the Eastern Bloc it was clear to everyone that the institutional structure of the country had changed. The nationalization of the National Bank, agrarian reform, and seizing properties of Albanian capitalists established the new republic's socialist direction. The National Bank was nationalized, agrarian reform was implemented, and properties of Albanian capitalists were seized to set the new republic's socialist direction. The communist leaders did not judge the radical change positively. They viewed the experience accumulated between the two World Wars as a degenerate form of liberalism. This had led Albania towards bankruptcy. A failure that was organized by internal political interests with the collaboration of the international factor. Already during the war, the communists had propagated the idea that the Second World War was the last act of Western liberalism in the world. Albania needed a political and economic revolution like Lenin's Russian example for social peace. To transition from private capitalism to centralized planning, state institutions needed restructuring. They would have had the task of organizing all the technical issues of the socialist economy. On 13 January 1945 the Presidency of the Anti-Fascist Council issued three important decisions for the planning of the state economy. With this decision three important bodies were created such as the Economic Council²⁰, the Planning Commission²¹ and the Directorate of Statistics²².

The Economic Council had the main task of drawing up economic plans according to government directives. The Council was composed of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, the Minister of Public Works, the Minister of Social Assistance and the Minister of Finance. The Council, a research body, advised ministries on economic development plans. It submitted these plans to the Council of Ministers for approval²³.

²⁰ *Official Gazette*, no. 3, 23 January 1945, *The decision to create the Economic Council*, no. 93, 13 January 1945.

²¹ *Official Gazette*, no. 3, 23 January 1945, *The Decision to create the Plan Commission*, no. 34, 13 January 1945.

²² *Official Gazette*, no. 3, 23 January 1945, *The Decision for the creation of the Statistics Directorate at the Council of Ministers*, no. 35, 13 January 1945.

²³ Article 1 The law on the Creation of the Economic Council expressed the main objective for the creation of the Council: "Due to the strong need for a general economic plan, the Presidency of the Anti-Fascist Council decides to create the Economic Council, from

The Plan Commission was the technical body of the Economic Council. This body included specialists from all those ministries that participated in the Economic Council. The Plan Commission constructed projects for each minister. The Economic Council could accept or change them before sending to the Council of Ministers. The skills and functioning of this body were complex, given the volume of work that passed through its hands. In this way the Plan Commission changed in size in August 1946, obtaining not only planning but also executive skills.

The Economic Council and the Plan Commission created the Directorate of Statistics at the Council of Ministers. This directorate had the task of organizing the statistical information service in Albania. The main task was the processing of data that came from the party's Central Committee, the Council of Ministers and other state institutions in Albania. In this way the foundations were laid for a national statistical service that would help the country's economy.

The Plan Commission was reformed in July 1945 along with the Economic Council. It became the Economic Reconstruction Commission (CRE). The CRE was made up of twenty-five specialists appointed by the Economic Council. The CRE had a complex organizational structure. Different sectors managed various aspects of socialist economy projects. The decisions of January and July 1945 in their complexity played an important role in the organizational preparation of the Albanian state towards a socialist economy. Both bodies were established in November 1944 after the country's liberation. The economic and political situation was critical. During the economic crisis, the two bodies prioritized infrastructure, the economy and social issues. This focus led to positive results. Communist power grew in the country. Government had high expectations. The two bodies had to respect the executive's requested pace. The State directs the economy per the Statute of Albania.

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where the economic plan of the country for a certain time". *Official Gazette*, no. 3, 23 January 1945, *The decision to create the Economic Council*, no. 93, 13 January 1945, article 1.

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On 19 August 1946, the law on the general plan in economics and planning bodies was decreed²⁵. With this law a decisive step was taken towards a general plan to respond to the economic needs of the moment. The law 283, article 1, emphasized the importance of the provision is described,

for the restoration of the national economy, and for the full development of all its branches, to improve the life and expectations of the population, for the right exploitation of state enterprises and underground resources, to ensure the correct use of all material resources and economic powers of the country, the state conceives the general economic plan, so that the national economy is directed on the basis of a state plan only²⁶.

The state creates a general economic plan to guide the national economy. The plan aims to restore the economy, develop all sectors, and improve people's lives. It also ensures proper use of state enterprises, resources, and economic powers.

At the same time, the legal power of general plans in economics was clearly defined. The article 4 of the law stated that plans with a long-term perspective and in implementation had the force of law. These plans had to be applied throughout the territory of the People's Republic of Albania by all state bodies and collectives. State bodies implemented economic measures and controlled the private economy

²⁴ Statuti i Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë, "Bashkimi", Tiranë: 1946, Article 1, p. 1.

²⁵ *Official Gazette*, no. 86, 11 September 1946, Law no. 283, 19 August 1946, *The decision to create the Economic Council*.

²⁶ *Ibi*, article 1.

based on the general economic plan²⁷. The main tasks of the Plan Commission according to the law of August 1946 were:

I. The national economic development had to align with the Plan for rational growth in all economic sectors. This growth should be based on national priorities.

II. To propose to the Council of Ministers the quantity of goods that had to be preserved as state reserves.

III. To organize all scientific research and for socialist economic development.

IV. Prepare and present the long-term economic plan, annual plans, financial and economic plans for all state industry branches. This included agricultural companies and institutions relying on central bodies.

V. To control all services for the implementation of the Plan throughout the territory of the Republic, to control the entire implementation procedure.

Furthermore, with the 1946 law, the planning bodies of ministries and other central institutions were created. Planning also expanded near the executive committees of the people's councils²⁸. The Directorate of Statistics was under the Council of Ministers. Now, it fell under the State Plan Commission²⁹. The examination and approval of the Plan, as well as the state direction of economic planning, were directed from the center to the periphery according to the directives of the Central Committee of the Party. The People's Assembly as the main legislative and executive body approved the economic master plan of the state. The People's Councils approved the state's perspective plans. The Council of Ministers analyzed and ratified annual plans. State ministries, institutions, and companies developed plans based on their responsibilities and the state's economic plan. The same procedure was also followed by the executive committees of the people's councils who designed their own development plans for the local economy³⁰.

The Planning Commission's functioning and competence aside, planning measures were increasingly urgent in the country's economic activity. Prices and worker categories were planned, with a financial reward for each worker. Planning bodies, state economic companies, and regulated prices laid legal and technical groundwork for a long-term economic plan.

²⁷ *Ibi*, article 4.

²⁸ *Ibi*, article 1.

²⁹ *Ibi*, article 7.

³⁰ *Ibi*, article 20.

5. The state monopoly in the monetary and financial sector. The birth of the Albanian State Bank

The new Albanian government, elected in 1945, started a clear economic policy after WWII. The government's actions left no doubt about its post-war direction. Marxist-Leninist theory states the government should control production and distribution. The policy and agrarian reform are the foundation of a centralized economy. The government controls them. The State gained total control after 1945. Albanian society's economic class found this change dramatic. They were used to economic freedom from Ottoman rule to World War II. During the years between the two World Wars, the Albanian bourgeoisie connected with the international market. They gained experience in free market systems and helped foreign capital to create industrial centers in Albania.

The Council of Ministers' decree on 15 December 1944 imposed state control over Albanian capitalist companies, as well as those in transport and commerce³¹. State control was very strict and followed a complex procedure. A Commissioner appointed by the State was in control. Workers shared responsibility through professional organizations. In this way we had dual control both from the outside, with the Commissioner, and from the inside with the workers. The current accounts of Albanian companies were frozen. Owners could not use them freely. Banks could not make payments without approval. This rigid control by the state of capitalist companies had a double function.

1- The communists reduced the weight of these companies in the economy and society. Capitalist companies built between the two World Wars were owned by the Albanian bourgeoisie who shared political and economic freedom principles. Most of them were sympathizers of the nationalistic factions, antagonists of the Albanian communists during the war and not willing to accept the new political course of the Tirane regime after 1945. These actions were accompanied by strong propaganda and strong retaliation. The law of 15 December 1944 declared company owners who did not cooperate with communists as saboteurs and system enemies.

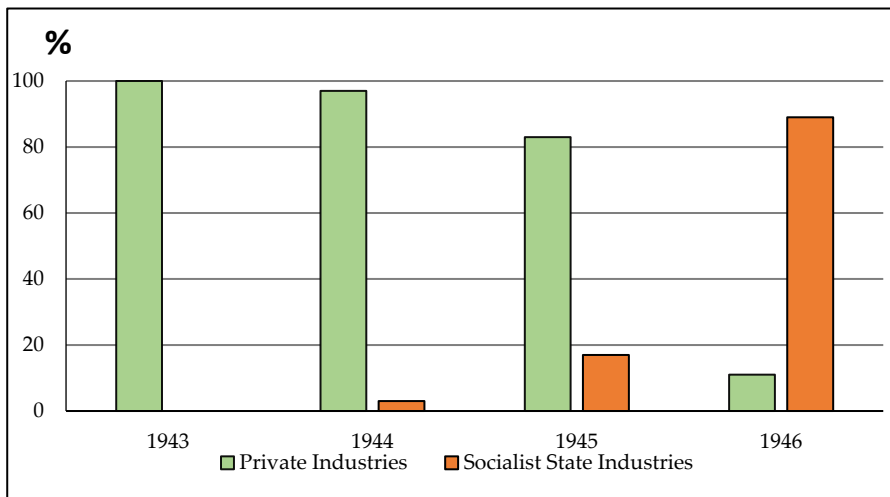
2- The new administration had state control of capitalist companies. It had the general picture of their real weight in the country's economy. The control aided economic planning. It also signaled sectors for nationalization acceleration or

³¹ *Official Gazette*, no. 2, 1944, Law no. 21, 15/12/1944.

retention of old methods. These data accelerated the nationalization process which affected 89% of the industrial sector in less than two years.

Graph 2. The process of nationalization of capitalist industries (1944-1946)

Source: Hoxha, 1952, p. 29.



On 13 January 1945, the law on the confiscation of Italian and German capital found in Albania was issued³². A government commission was created. It included Manol Konomi, Minister of Justice, Ramadan Citaku, Minister of Finance, and Gaqo Tashko, Minister of Agriculture. The Commission's task was to address technical issues with confiscation and coordinate bodies to speed up procurement of Italian and German capital. This was based on guidelines from the First Anti-Fascist Congress on 24 May 1944 in Permet. The Commission made decisions on 27 January 1945 to confiscate AGIP's assets, transferring oil reserves and other assets to state administration³³. On 10 February 1945, the decision was taken to confiscate EIAA and ITALBA's assets³⁴. In May 1945, the Albanian Electrical Company (SESA) had its assets confiscated. This decision placed all the company's power plants in key urban centers like Tirana, Scutari and Vlora under state control. Berat, Fier, Gjirokaster and Kavaje³⁵. The Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party started a new phase of nationalization and confiscation. By February 1946, around 90 Italian capitalist companies in Albania got nationalized³⁶.

| Name | Number of companies |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Industry | 11 |
| Construction | 25 |
| Transport | 15 |
| Commerce | 15 |
| Insurance | 9 |
| Others | 16 |
| Total | 90 |

Table 1. The companies were nationalized until January 1946.

Source: 'Decisions on the confiscation of movable and immovable assets of Italian companies operating in Albania', 26.01.1946, *Official Gazette*, no. 14, 1946.

³² *Official Gazette*, no. 3, 1945, Law no. 36, 13 January 1945.

³³ *Official Gazette*, no. 6, 1945, *Decision of the Presidency of the Anti-Fascist Council*, no. 49, 27.01.1945.

³⁴ *Official Gazette*, no. 16, 1945, 10.02.1945.

³⁵ *Official Gazette*, no. 11, 1945, *Confiscation Decision*, 12.5.1945.

³⁶ The other nationalized Italian companies were Eaga, Sidokom, Italstrada, Tudini, Talenti, Aurelio Aureli, Celpa, Simoncini, Ferrobeton, Beloti, Elio Federici, Cisa, Fratelli Gondrand, Paskuale Truki, etc.

Some liberal economic ideas circulated within the PCA. Many PCA leaders opposed nationalizing the economy. The most important exponent of this thought was Sejfulla Maleshova, who was in favor of the existence of private capital and the creation of joint companies³⁷. In an article dated 20 February 1945 in the newspaper *Bashkimi*, Maleshova expressed her thoughts on Albania's foreign policy:

the foreign policy of popular democracy is based on friendly relations with allies and in cooperation with all democratic states, especially with great allies such as the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain³⁸.

Furthermore, the professor was against the policy of repression against traders and industrialists. The Albanian Joint Stock Company for imports and exports and the Exhortation were created with 49% private capital shares. The company was created on 10 September 1945 with a capital of 5,000,000 francs. The company's statute allowed interests in other industrial, agricultural, and transport companies. The company earned 332,106 francs in three months. This shows the private sector's role in post-war economic revival. This fact is also reported in the Statute of the People's Republic of Albania, in the second chapter of the Statute. This way of development was in accordance with the 1946 Statute of Albania. The article 6 accepted the existence of the private sector only if it was strictly controlled by the state: "To defend the vital interests of the people, raise the standard of living and to exploit all economic possibilities and potential, the State directs economic

³⁷ Sejfulla Maleshova was one of the most important Albanian intellectuals of the 20th century. Having graduated from the Faculty of Medicine in Rome in 1926, he started a new faculty of Philosophy at the Lomonosov University in Moscow, where he became a professor, and from 1933 President of the Faculty. He came into contact with communist ideas. He spoke eight foreign languages and was also one of the important writers of the first half of the 20th century. Sejfulla Maleshova's political career began as a Secretary General of Fan Noli's Government until arriving in 1945 as a Minister of Education in Enver Hoxha's government. In the first year of collaboration with Hoxha he had strong differences with the communist leader, especially on economic reforms, and in foreign policy he was against Albania's pro-Yugoslav policy. In 1946 he was expelled from the Albanian communist party and deported to the district of Fier, where he was forced to do heavy labor to survive. In 1971, Maleshova died forgotten by the regime.

³⁸ *Gazette Bashkimi* (Union Newspaper), 20 February 1945.

development according to a general economic plan. Based on the state economic sector and the cooperative sector, the state exercises overall control over the private sector of the economy" (article 6)³⁹.

The Permet Congress set economic goals. Government intervention in banking and credit was necessary. The National Bank of Albania played a key role in the country's economic development, providing monetary stability and supporting the Albanian bourgeois class in industrial investments. For this reason, the National Bank of Albania was considered by the new communist system as the financial center of the Albanian bourgeoisie, in open antagonism with the communist system. The communist regime aimed to nationalize the Bank. Various technical projects were carried out to take control of the Albanian Bank.

The first nationalization project was formalized even before the liberation of Albania. The project was radical. It envisioned expropriating the bank for public utility and offering rewards to the bank's shareholders. The initial capital of about 3,800,000 Albanian francs had to be reimbursed to the Italian shareholders. The Albanian state had to buy the shares. Then, they had to implement technical regulations for the new Albanian bank. The project involved negotiations with Italian capital on two technical issues. The first was the currency type due to Italian capital being in Fr. gold and not in fr. The Albanians were as expected by the project. They had trouble reaching a compromise with Italian investors to protest a 50-year concession. The project aimed to nationalize the Bank gradually. It included returning capital to Albanian and Italian owners. The Albanian Communist Party did not accept the liberal line of thought. This rejection caused the project to fail. On 13 January 1945, the Presidency of the Anti-Fascist Council canceled the Albanian National Bank convention and its shareholders. The State did not recognize the former Albanian National Bank's obligations to third parties for gold and foreign currency deposits. The agreement between the Zog Government and the Italian financial group in March 1925 was also cancelled. The organic law for creating the Albanian State Bank was issued on the same day. It had 7 chapters and 26 articles. Dr. Omer Nishani and Secretary Koco Tashko⁴⁰ signed it for the Presidency of the Anti-Fascist Council. Shortly after the creation of

³⁹ The Constitutional Assembly (1946) *The Statute of the People's Republic of Albania*. Tirane: Bashkimi, p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Official Gazette*, no. 4, 1 February 1945, *The law on the mooning of the Convention of the National Bank of Albania and its shareholders*.

the Albanian State Bank, two important decisions were taken to completely liquidate foreign capital in the banking sector. On 13 August 1945 National Labor Bank⁴¹ was liquidated while in November of the same year Napoli Bank was also liquidated⁴². State intervention was necessary in other banks operating in Albania with the Albanian National Bank. This was due to their financial importance and branch expansion on national territory, especially during the war.

With these two measures, the activity of these two banks in Albania was interrupted, the accounts of the two institutions, of Italian state companies and companies and of former Italian officials in Albania were confiscated. Furthermore, all movable and immovable assets of these two banks in Albanian territory were confiscated.

6. Conclusion

“What do you know about Albania?” “Nothing”. Probably in the early 1990s, when the global ideological barrier was falling, this would have been the most common response to such a question of rebellion in any Western country. Western countries had little information about Albania: the forty-five years of communist regime had left their mark not only on Albanian society, but also on the perception that Westerners had of the small Republic of Eagles. This was due to the absolute destruction to which Albania was subjected for decades by one of the most ferocious dictators of history: Enver Hoxha. Yet his was the longest dictatorship in European history: four decades led by his personally, with a regime he resisted for 46 years; Albania's was the last communist-style totalitarianism to fall in Europe, when the Berlin Wall collapsed, Eastern Europe freed itself from the Soviet Union, the USSR dissolved and the last great dictator, Ceausescu in Romania, had already been shot.

⁴¹ On 22 January 1945 the activity of the Albanian State Bank began. The main functions were established by the organic law. The Administration of the Bank was controlled by the Control Commission which was appointed by the Minister of Finance. The Bank had the annual budget, which was approved by the Board of Directors, controlled by the Control Commission and sent to the Ministry of Finance. The State guaranteed all the activities of the Bank, according to its organic law. *Official Gazette*, no. 4, 1 February 1945, *The Organic Law of the Albanian State Bank*.

⁴² *Official Gazette*, no. 30, 1945, *Ordinance no. 15 of the Ministry of Finance*, 13.08.1945.

The 'new man' designed by Hoxha had to sacrifice his material interests to the sentiment of belonging to a communist society and a glorious nation. Everything was collectivized. In 1987, the rate of infant mortality, the classic indicator of the socio-economic development of a people, placed Albania clearly in the bottom of all the ranking of the European States, with 44% of deaths in minors, according to the Western font, and 28.2%, according to the Albanian font. In the average of the two Western countries closest to Albania, Greece and Italy, the rate is 13% and 9%, respectively. But perhaps worse was the exclusion of three generations from the historical events of the second half of the twentieth century. The regime has succeeded in completely obscuring the rest of the world in Albania and Albania had become invisible to the rest of the world, describable as an unidentifiable area, located between Yugoslavia and Greece where one could not go, from which no one (or very few) could leave and about which it was possible to know nothing or almost nothing.

But not everything was wrong: several of the regime's policies had a positive impact on society. Education had a strong boost, until the end of the 1980s, about 90% of the population could read and write and all had access to a health service. The electricity came to the most remote in the country, the public building policy was an objective success, and the construction of thousands of apartments took place as a result of the fight against the extended family, favoring the nuclearization of the family. However, these were results that failed to positively change the daily life of the Albanian population. A life which for Ismail Kadare, in an interview with the newspaper *La Stampa*, explains the period of totalitarian religion (Stalinian, Chinese, autarchic) thus:

It was extremely sad. The first sign is repression, then boredom. This sadness is never talked about, yet it was an everyday thing that worried people like repression, violence and dull, dull, poor life went hand in hand. The regime creates an artificial life for itself, a cardboard scenario, because a normal life cannot exist in a dictatorship, the first aim of the tyranny is to deform life, totally disjoin it.

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8. Curriculum vitae

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Periodico semestrale pubblicato dal CNR

Iscrizione nel Registro della Stampa del Tribunale di Roma n° 183 del 14/12/2017