

Tito's attempt to integrate Albania into Yugoslavia, 1945-1948

Tito'nun Arnavutluk'u Yugoslavya'ya İlhak Girişimi (1945-1948)

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Abstract

Albanian-Yugoslav relations after the end of World War Two characterize with significant Yugoslav impact on Albanian internal and external politics; from then on the Yugoslav communists planned to integrate Albania into the Yugoslav Federation. Albanian government, led by Enver Hoxha, in 1945 faced two very important challenges: consolidation of the government and international recognition of this government. Therefore, an alliance with Yugoslavia was more than necessary for Albanian government. In this situation, Tito was keen to annex Albania as soon as possible before Western Powers or Russia would interfere this plan. Hoxha and most of the ACP (Albanian Communist Party) leadership were ready to give up Albania's sovereignty and to integrate the country into Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav political elites were convinced that the question of Kosova could be resolved only with the integration of Albania into Yugoslavia. According to its plans, immediately after the integration Kosova would be united with the Albanian Republic within Yugoslavia.

Keywords: *Yugoslavia – Albania - Enver Hoxha – Tito.*

Özet

II. Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra Arnavutluk-Yugoslavya ilişkileri, Yugoslavya'nın Arnavutluk'un dahili ve harici siyasetine tesiri çerçevesindedir. Sonra, Yugoslav komünistleri, Arnavutluk'u Yugoslavya Federasyonu'na katmayı planlamışlardır. Arnavutluk Hükümeti, Enver Hoca liderliğinde, 1945'te, iki önemli sorunla karşı karşıya kalmışlardır: hükümetin tahkimi ve hükümetin uluslar arası arenada tanınması. Bundan dolayı, Yugoslavya ile birleşmek zorunluluktan öte bir durumdur. Bu durumda, Tito, Batılı devletler veya Rusya konuya müdahale etmeden Arnavutluk'u mümkün olan en kısa sürede kendisine bağlama eğilimindeydi. Hoca ve diğer Arnavutluk Komünist Partisi üyeleri Arnavutluk'un bağımsızlığını feda etmeye ve Yugoslavya'ya tabi olmaya hazırды. Yugoslavya'nın siyasi önderleri Kosova meselesinin ancak Arnavutluk'un Yugoslavya'ya bağlanmasının gerçekleşmesi ile çözülebileceği kanısındaydılar. Bu plana göre, Kosova'nın egemenlik altına alınmasından sonra Arnavutluk Cumhuriyeti ile Yugoslavya birleşebilecekti.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yugoslavya – Arnavutluk – Enver Hoca – Tito.*

Although the relations between Albania and Yugoslavia have traditionally been hostile, common interests during the World War II influenced mutual relations that would increase between these two governments after the war. Yugoslavia was the first place to recognize the government of Enver Hoxha. This Yugoslav support towards Albania continued

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also in United Nations and Paris Peace Conference. Edward Kardelj expressed this attitude in January 1945, in the General Assembly in London when he declared: "The delegation of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia wishes to give to the request of the People's Republic of Albania its heartiest support. Addressing myself through you, to the Security Council, we demand that Security Council recommend to the General Assembly that the People's Republic of Albania be admitted to the United Nations. I also avail myself of the opportunity to draw the attention of the

Security Council to the fact that Albania was one of the first victims of fascist aggression in Europe, that the Albanian people, through its National Liberation Army, fought with self-abnegation in the war on the side of the United Nations and that proportionally to its forces it contributed to the victory over the aggressors as a faithful ally of democratic countries".²

Immediately after the end of the World War II the question of the creation of the Balkans Federation, which would include Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece was reconsidered. These issues had been considered from the 70-ies of the 18th century. However, seeing the appetites of Yugoslavia to this Federation and the reaction of Great Britain and USA towards this project, Stalin, though a former supporter, began to disapprove it, but the issue of Albania's integration into Yugoslavia, as its seventh Republic remained wide opened.³

Stalin ordered the representative of Yugoslav government to stop the negotiations that were being held with Bulgaria regarding the federation since the Great Powers would not approve any such agreement. Despite this, he told Milovan Djilas that Yugoslavia could create a federation with Albania.⁴

The minutes of a conversation between Stalin and Tito, on 27th May 1946, published by a Russian scholar, Gibianski, also confirmed these aspirations. Stalin asked Tito if Enver Hoxha agrees with the integration of Albania into Yugoslavia. After the positive reply of Tito, Stalin advised him to treat the issue of mutual and friendship aid, to find a formula for this treaty and to bring Albania and Yugoslavia together as close as possible.⁵

In another occasion, in January 1948, Stalin, during the conversation with a Yugoslav delegation, emphasized that Russian government does not have any aspiration to Albania therefore "Yugoslavia can swallow it whenever it wants".⁶ Consequently, Tito, through the actions he undertook, showed that he had a vision for the creation of a Great Yugoslavia, rather than a Balkans Federation.⁷

Yugoslavia planned to achieve a political domination, respectively the political unification with Albania, through its economical and diplomatic support.

² James S. O'Donnell, *A coming of age Albania under Enver Hoxha*, New York, 1999, p.17.

³ Misha Glenny, *Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*, Tiranë 2007, f. 535; Ana Lalaj, "Çdo gjë për jugosllavizimin e shqiptarëve", *Zëri* (29. XII. 2007), p. 30; Aleksandar Životić, "Jugoslavija i jačanje Sovjetskog uticaja u Albaniji (1947-1948)", *Tokovi Istorije*, Beograd 2009/3, pp. 95, 114-115.

⁴ Dr. Milan Skakun, *Balkan i Velike Sile*, Beograd, 1982, p. 85

⁵ Ana Lalaj, op.cit. p.30

⁶ Dr. Milan Skakun, op.cit, p. 95

⁷ Richard F. Staar, *The Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, USA*, 1971, p. 22

This project was to be realized as soon as possible, because Tito feared that Great Powers or Russia would interfere.⁸

The first action toward the realization of his plan for unification with Albania, respectively the annexation of Albania, Tito took when he signed a Treaty that formally has a date of 20th February 1945, before the meeting of Yalta. According to this treaty, signed by Myslym Peza,⁹ Bedri Spahiu,¹⁰ Medar Shtylla,¹¹ and Omer Nishani,¹² representatives of Albanian delegation, and Josif Broz Tito,¹³ Josif Smodlaka,¹⁴ from Yugoslav delegation, pairs “took the responsibility to assist each other for the preservation and protection of independence and sovereignty against any violation or attack by other states”.¹⁵

In the post-war period in Albania the Soviet Union impact was present. In September 1945 Albania and the Soviet Union signed an agreement according to which the Soviet Union would supply Albania with grain and technical expertise in the oil and mineral extraction industries, while Albania would provide for them tobacco, copper ore, preserved fruits and oil. But this pro-sovietism did not mean initially anti-westernism. However, the plenum of February, 1946 changed this situation, since it called for a policy of close alliance between Albania and Yugoslavia.¹⁶

Albania soon realized that the assistance of a neighboring country was necessary. It should be emphasized that all the published documents regarding the period we are discussing, reveal that relations between Albania and Yugoslavia were characterized by the policy for unification of Albania with Yugoslavia. Unfortunately this policy was strongly supported by ACP itself though after the break of the relations with Yugoslavia, Enver Hoxha tried to garble the facts in every possible way, even by falsifying the documents so that he could prove that it was only a “Yugoslav hostile interference in the Albania’s internal affairs”.¹⁷

The policy for unification was confirmed in the Special Plenum of Central Committee of ACP, held in December 1946, where decisions were taken for economic cooperation between Albania and Yugoslavia through the coordination economic plans, creation of common companies, revaluation of *lek* in terms of *dinar*, customs unification the unification of defense armies and political unification of Albania with Yugoslavia on federative basis.¹⁸

In this plenum the issue of Kosova was raised. Enver Hoxha asked: “Is it in our interest to ask for Kosova? This is not progressist [...] Democratic Yugoslavia is more progressive than us [...] It is in our interest that Yugoslavia is strong, because with a strong

⁸ Lon Giaffo, *Albania; Eye of the Balkan Vortex*, USA, 2000, pp.384-385

⁹ Nënkyetar i Qeverisë Demokratike të Përkohshme të Shqipërisë

¹⁰ Ministër i Asistencës Sociale i Qeverisë Demokratike të Përkohshme të Shqipërisë

¹¹ Ministër i Ekonomisë Qeverisë Demokratike të Përkohshme të Shqipërisë

¹² Ministër i Jashtëm i Qeverisë Demokratike të Përkohshme të Shqipërisë

¹³ Në atë periudhë ishte president i Komitetit Nacional të Çlirimit të Jugosllavisë

¹⁴ Ministër i Jashtëm i Komitetit Nacional të Çlirimit të Jugosllavisë

¹⁵ Ana Lalaj, “Mjegulla për federatën dhe pavarësia e rrezikuar”, *Pavarësia e Shqipërisë dhe sfidat e shtetit shqiptar gjatë shekullit XX*, Tiranë 2007, pp.367-368.

¹⁶ R.J. Crampton, *The Balkans since the Second World War*, Great Britain, 2002, pp. 46-47

¹⁷ *Marrëdhënjet shqiptaro-jugosllave, 1945-1948, Dokumente*, eds. Ndreçi Plasari - Luan Malltezi, Tiranë 1996, p.

¹⁸ *Marrëdhënjet shqiptaro-jugosllave, 1945-1948*, pp. 68-69

democracy there, the democracy will prevail in Balkans [...]. We shall do everything possible to associate Albanians with Yugoslavs “.¹⁹

This plenum confirmed the decision that had been taken in two former treaties signed by Albanian and Yugoslav delegations: *Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Aid between Albania and Yugoslavia*, signed on 9th July 1946²⁰ and the *Treaty of Coordination of Economic Plans, Customs Unification and Currency Equalization* signed on 27th November 1946. The essence of the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Aid, signed by Enver Hoxha, representative of the Republic of Albania and Stanoje Simić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, is the strengthening of relations between two places which had been created during the common war against the fascism. The parties agreed to enhance the relations through a general cooperation, to undertake measures for securing the independence and integration of both places, to assist military and in other aspects each-other if they would be attacked by any other power. Economic, cultural cooperation etc. would be specified in particular treaties.²¹

Treaty of Coordination of Economic Plans, Customs Unification and Currency Equalization was signed by Nako Spiro, Minister of Economy of Republic of Albania and Boris Kidrić, Minister of Industry of Yugoslavia. The essence of this Treaty reveals the aspiration of Yugoslavia for annexation of Albania. In the first article the plans coordination of both places were emphasized on a common basis. The second article contained the detailed plan for revaluation of Albanian lek in terms of Yugoslav dinar. Monetary circulation in Albania would be in proportion with the monetary circulation in Yugoslavia taking into consideration the number of population and economic power. The third article illustrated the path of Albania toward unification since it was decided for a total removal of customs.²² In this context, the Plenum of Central Committee of ACP, held in December 1946 promoted the removal of customs with this conclusion: “Economic convention is a great assistance that Yugoslav population is offering to Albania”. However, this issue has been well-noticed by international diplomacy and public opinion. Therefore, from the visit of Enver Hoxha to Belgrade, in Western diplomacy and press was discussed for a secret agreement signed by Belgrade and Tirana for surrendering Kosova to Albania as a guarantee for the integration of Albania to Yugoslav Federation, as its seventh republic and later its integration in the Balkans’ Federation. London government considered the customs unification agreement between Albania and Yugoslavia as a first step towards the formation of these states’ federation.²³

During 1947 a considerable increase of Yugoslav impact occurred in Albania. Consequently, several common Albanian-Yugoslav enterprises were established in the field of banking, electricity, minerals, railways etc. In addition, Yugoslavia provided a financial subsidy which was worth about 10 per cent of all Albanian government revenue and allocated ten thousand tons of grain to Albania although it was provided with cereals by western states.

¹⁹ *Marrëdhënjet shqiptaro-jugosllave, 1945-1948*, p. 73

²⁰ *Izvori za Istoriju Jugoslavije, Politbiro Centralnog Komiteta Komunističke Partije Jugoslavije 1945-1948, Tom II, knj. I*. Ed. Branko Petranović, Beograd 1995, pp. 509-514.

²¹ *Marrëdhënjet shqiptaro-jugosllave, 1945-1948*, pp. 44-46.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 62-64

²³ Đorđe Borozan, “Yugoslavia and Albania”, *The Balkans after Second World War*, ISI, Beograd 1996, p. 296; Branko Petranović, “Kosovo u jugoslovensko-albanskim odnosima i projekat balkanske federacije 1945-1948”, *Srbi i Albanci u 20. veku*, Beograd 1991, p.387; Nikola Žutić, Josip Broz, “Englezi i pitanje predaje Kosmeta Albaniji”, *Istorija 20. veka*, Beograd 2004/2, pp. 175-178.

However, in order to increase the dependence of Albania on Yugoslavia, it refused to assist Albanian manufacture industry.²⁴

Enver Hoxha, after having realized this intention, declared: “We were expected to produce for the Yugoslavs all the raw material they needed. These raw materials were to be exported to the metropolis Yugoslavia to be processed there in Yugoslav factories [...]. The aim of Yugoslavs was, therefore, to prevent our country from developing either its industry or its working class, and to make it forever dependent on Yugoslavia”.²⁵ Albania was so dominated that it was not even invited in the establishing meeting of Cominform in Poland, in September 1947.²⁶

In November 1947 Yugoslavs accused Nako Spiro for sabotaging the economic Albanian-Yugoslav cooperation. He committed suicide while pro-Yugoslavs, as Koçi Xoxe, Pandi Kristo, Kristo Themelko etc. remained as heads of Albanian leadership.²⁷

In the beginning of 1948, Tito, having seen that the issue of unification had been dragged on, planned to achieve his goal through the army. He notified Enver Hoxha through a letter he wrote to him, that he was sending a general lieutenant and a group of officers for the coordination of both armies, with an excuse for securing the Southern boarder in case of any provocation. He warned Hoxha to be discrete since people would react if they found out.²⁸

In order to achieve as soon as possible their goal for unification, Yugoslavs gave a mission to Koçi Xoxe to have an impact inside the Albanian government. In February 1948 he called the meeting of Central Committee. The plenum of February also sacked Mahmet Shehu from his position, whereas Koçi Xoxe continued the persecutions of all suspected ones for being against Albanian-Yugoslav relations. In April he presented a formal proposal for the integration of Albania into Yugoslavia. Enver Hoxha seeing the Moscow-Belgrade relations, which were deteriorating, refused the unification. In June, the end of relations between Stalin and Tito saved Albania from its integration in Yugoslavia.²⁹

On 1st July 1948 the Central Committee of ACP makes a decision that: “Central Committee condemns severely the betrayal of YCP which has betrayed Marxism-Leninism, Socialism and is situated in a shameful war against the party of Lenin-Stalin.[...] Central Committee of ACP has always been in war with the Central Committee of YCP which continually imposed to our country its betraying policy [...]. YCP insisted with its anti-Marxist policy to violate the independence of our country and our party.”³⁰

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of National Republic of Albania communicated to the delegation of Republic of Yugoslavia the decision of Albanian government for ending all the agreements with National Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.

²⁴ R.J. Crampton, op.cit, pp.47-48

²⁵ James S. O'Donnell, op.cit. p. 20

²⁶ R.J. Crampton, op.cit. p. 48

²⁷ Ibid. P. 48

²⁸ *Marrëdhënjet Shqiptaro-Jugosllave, 1945-1948*, pp. 207-208

²⁹ R.J. Crampton, op.cit. p. 49

³⁰ Vladimir Dedjer, *Dokumenti 1948*, knj. I, Beograd, 1980, p. 326

It was emphasized that Yugoslav government unfortunately used these agreements on capitalist, exploiting and anti-Albanian basis. "Our population and Yugoslav one fought against Germans for a better future, for liberating our countries. Treaty on Friendship and Mutual Aid, signed on 9th July 1946 was an act which confirmed your aspirations", was written in the letter.³¹

In their reply, the Yugoslav Ministry for Foreign Affairs noted that such accusations are a product of an organized propaganda against Yugoslavia³². Therefore, Tito and Yugoslav leadership had to consider the general Albanian-Yugoslav relations as a mistake of the Yugoslav government. On the other side, after the end of these relations, Albania would fall, from the Yugoslav protectorate under the Russian protectorate. In this situation, Enver Hoxha provided himself the position of the Albania's leader whereas all those who were condemned before for anti-Yugoslav policy, were declared heroes who saved Albania from Yugoslav annexation.³³

³¹ Ibid. pp. 334-336

³² Ibid. p.341.

³³ *Marrëdhënjet shqiptaro-jugosllave 1945-1948*, p.16