

YUGOSLAV-ALBANIAN RELATIONS AND THE ALBANIAN QUESTION DURING THE COLD WAR

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Abstract

The articles deal with the development of the Albanian problem in the relations between the two neighboring Balkan states Yugoslavia and Albania during the Cold War. It is quite obvious that the Communist regimes in Yugoslavia and Albania build up radically different socio-political and economic systems. It is also clear that, in the conditions of the Cold War and block opposition, with their foreign policy and their presence in international life, these two Balkan countries are "exceptions to the rule". It is interesting to explore the relationship between these two countries and how they fit into the overall situation in the region, Europe and the world. Insofar we have addressed the two main periods in relations between Yugoslavia and Albania: the time of closeness and the dominant Yugoslav influence under the wing of Moscow - which lasted only four years (1944–1948), followed by a period of hostility and confrontation lasting for decades. Indeed, at times the tone is softer and the opposition is more moderate, but altogether the differences run too deep to be overcome. One illustrative fact in the exasperation of relations with Moscow during the second half of the 1950s is Khrushchev's attempts to normalize and intensify ties with Yugoslavia. These are negatively welcomed in Tirana. Similar outcome was noticed in the early 1970s when there was a period of warming in Beijing-Belgrade relations. The Yugoslav factor is a constant irritant for Albania and is perceived by Enver Hoxha's regime as a threat. Profound ideological differences and political reasons are at the root of such a behavior. Another permanent issue in the opposition of Yugoslav-Albanian relations is the National problem - the significant number of Albanians living within the borders of Yugoslavia. It has been a major problem in the decades after the end of the Second World War.

Keywords: Albania, Yugoslavia, Enver Hoxha, Josip Broz Tito, The Cold War.

Introduction

The time after World War II, in a geopolitical sense, is undoubtedly characterized by the Cold War and block opposition. The confrontation, rooted in the radically opposing socio-political systems, ideology of foreign policies, and a continuous armament race, spreads globally but its outpouring is on the European continent. It is here that opposing military-political structures border each other directly and this seriously increases the risk of tension and even real conflicts.

Yugoslav-Albanian Relations after World War II

The Balkans are no exception to the overall picture, on the opposite - the war results of the Second World War and certain political arrangements (the Stalin-Churchill talks in Moscow in October 1944, the Yalta meeting, the Paris Peace Conference) clearly divide the countries of the region into two opposing camps. At the end of 1944 Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria entered the sphere of Soviet military-political influence and in practice became fully subordinate to Moscow. This division is clearly outlined years before the official formation of the two military-political blocs - NATO (1949) and the Warsaw Pact (1955).

With regards to the situation in the region, in particular, a very characteristic phenomenon is observed – it is here that the two distinct deviations from the unified behavior of the socialist camp find their beginnings. These are Yugoslavia and Albania. At certain points of time they come out of Moscow's custody and establish an independent foreign policy that is different from the one of the socialist camp. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the development of these two Balkan states and their presence in international relations differ substantially.

By 1948 there was also another unusual thing about the socialist bloc in Europe and the mechanisms of Moscow's dominance in it. Albania establishes itself as the only country in which the Soviet Union does not directly exercise its full presence and influence. It rather exercises it through Belgrade. In the first post-war years Stalin ruled the smallest Balkan country by the hand of Tito, who enjoyed full Soviet confidence at that time. In addition, active talks are being held on the Albania's entry into the Yugoslav Federation - progressing successfully towards implementation - unification of monetary systems and prices, customs union, appointment of Yugoslav advisers to all ministries, preparations for the merging of the armed forces, and even introducing a Yugoslav division in the area of Korca, near the Greek border in 1948 (AJ, CK SKJ,142).

Naturally, the question of what this strong Yugoslav influence is due arises. To begin with, the Albanian Communist Party was founded by two Yugoslavian instructors (Miladin Popovich and Dushan Mugosha) in November 1941. Yugoslav communists dictate their will in both party affairs and resistance until 1944. Another reason lies in the gradual establishment of dictatorship. It can be argued that in the first years after World War II, Albania and the gradually and successfully enforcing his absolute power Enver Hoxha, simply copied the actions of the Yugoslav Communist Party and its leader Tito. To give one example - the new Constitution of Albania, adopted in March 1946, practically copies the statutes of the first post-1944 Constitution of Yugoslavia, approved only a few months earlier. It is indicative that Albania's first treaty of friendship and cooperation with another socialist country was precisely signed with Yugoslavia. This does not change the fact that the country's ideal remains the establishment of a Soviet type of social and economic system. It is no coincidence that in March 1946 Party decisions explicitly stated that the objective of the country was to achieve the "Soviet model in the organization of power and productive forces". This is in no way in contradiction with the established close ties with Belgrade; moreover, both Yugoslavia and Albania are moving rapidly towards a transformation from a socio-political and economic system into one directly under Soviet

influence. The absolute appearance of the two Balkan states to the orbit of Moscow at this moment is out of doubt.

1948 is a dividing moment in history for both the presence of Yugoslavia in the Soviet bloc and for the relations between Belgrade and Tirana. Gradually accumulated mistrust and the Stalin-Tito conflict lead to the June Senate Resolution and to the actual exit of Yugoslavia from the composition of the European socialist countries grouped around Moscow (SIBAL, F.O. 371/72104). This creates a particularly complicated situation for Albania, as none of the other Soviet satellites are so strongly bound to the Tito regime. Decisions must be taken and executed in a very short time. From this moment on, Enver Hoxha, and the party and country led by him, became faithful allies of the Kremlin. From an older brother, Tito becomes an enemy, a revisionist and a threat to socialism (AJ, CK SKJ, 145).

All of the above events clearly divide the relationship between Yugoslavia and Albania in two major stages. The first one is much shorter, only four years. It is characterized not only by extreme proximity, but also by the dominance of Yugoslav influence in the smallest then Balkan country. The second one lasts for four decades, with opposition and hostility at the root of relations between these two countries. Depending on international context, at times there is a fall in the hostile rhetoric between these two and even timid attempts at rapprochement, however the general line remains its course of confrontation and opposition for years to come.

It is interesting to deep dive into the reasons for such a historical turn of events. These could be sought in the differences of several important internal and external factors.

During the Cold War, ideology was the predominantly crucial factor. Especially with regard to the Soviet bloc - it also defines domestic development and foreign policy. Until 1948, there was no discrepancy in the behavior of Yugoslavia or Albania - they were faithful satellites of Moscow, unconditionally perceived the ideological constructions in the Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin doctrine, and aimed to build socialism of the Soviet type. After the rift between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, however, things started to change. Belgrade believes, despite the presence of a Soviets' wing and its opposition in the early years, that a rather different society and party-political and economic systems must be established. The resulting Yugoslav type of socialism is therefore more liberal and, in many ways, differs from the Soviet orthodox path of development imposed in the other countries of the socialist bloc.

Albania remains at the other pole. It undergoes several serious bends in its foreign policy, which will be discussed further below and consistently moves towards building the toughest totalitarian communist regime known in Europe. The undefeated leader Enver Hoxha not only successfully eliminates his political opponents and competitors (AS, št. 61, 71), but is also deeply convinced that his party and state are not only consistently Marxist but gradually remain the only ones in Europe. In other words, after 1948, the ideological differences between Yugoslavia and Albania became visible both in theory and in practice.

The differences pursued in foreign policy and in the overall presence in international life after 1948 are also very serious. Remaining out of the socialist block and withdrawing from the custody of Moscow, Yugoslavia leads a truly independent international policy. It is in no way

involved in the block division that formed during the Cold War years and ended with the creation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Remaining beyond these military-political structures that symbolize the Cold War, official Belgrade however does not completely break ties in either direction. For example, Yugoslavia not only maintains contacts and engages in relations with the socialist states, but even experiences periods of improvement, including with the Soviet Union itself. At the same time, it maintains commercial and political contacts with the Western world (Boyadjieva, N. 2019, 253–258). Particularly interesting for the situation in the region is the Balkan Pact formed in the time period 1953–1954 between Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia. This alliance, although not actively working, is truly exceptional for the start-up phase of the Cold War in that it is composed of military clauses amongst others. Another differentiating trait is Belgrade's pursuit of neutrality (Boyadjieva, N. 2021, 356–375). It culminates in turning Yugoslavia into one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement. To put it briefly, throughout the Cold War period in the years after 1948, this Balkan country remained out of block opposition, maintaining relations in both directions and pursuing an independent policy. Officially Belgrade supports the development of the dilapidation process and signs the Helsinki Final Act.

Albania – “Chinese voice in Europe” (1961–1978)

Albania's foreign policy post 1948 is fundamentally different and strange. It goes through several major stages. Until 1961, the country was a member of the Soviet bloc and a faithful satellite of Moscow (DA MSPS, 1–10), participating in the two main internal structures of cooperation - the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (1949) and the Warsaw Pact (1955). Gradually, the relations between the Soviet Union and Albania begin to cool, triggered by the different assessment of Stalin's personality and as a direct consequence of Enver Hoxha's reluctance to carry out a process of destabilization and to make changes in political course altogether. In 1961, the break-up between Moscow and Tirana became a fact (AJ, KPR, 19).

Albania leaves the Soviet bloc and the common organizations - it ceases to be a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in 1962, freezes its membership in the Warsaw Pact, and officially leaves it later in 1968. From a military strategy point of view, this is a serious loss for the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc - the only naval bases in the Mediterranean are lost. The beginning of 1961 marks the rapprochement with China. It is based on ideological closeness and active economic and financial support from the Asian giant. Albania became popular by the nicknames “Chinese voice in the UN” and “Chinese voice in Europe”. This period of the country's presence in international life did not last long, and relations between Tirana and Beijing were soon interrupted - in 1978 (Austin R. C 2021, 344–355). Much like in the case with the Soviet Union in 1961 the same ideological argumentation was used. This time China is being accused of retreating from the principles of Marxism, in revisionism and dogmatism, and in socialist imperialism. From this point on, Albania remains largely isolated internationally, declaring Western imperialists, social-imperialists from the Soviet bloc and China, and neighboring Yugoslavia and Greece as enemies (DA MSPS, 26–47). Of course, such a doctrine of hostility to all cannot last long. Severe economic consequences lead to problems with the nutrition of the

population. After the death of the dictator Enver Hoxha, in 1985, there was no immediate change in ideological and internal politics, though first steps were taken to break out of international isolation. Economic and cultural contacts with some Western democracies (Italy, France, and Scandinavia) are renewed, official relations with the Federal Republic of Germany are established, the level of diplomatic missions of the revisionist allies of the Soviet Union - Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic is raised up a level. The change in behavior on regional level is visible - contacts with the two neighboring countries (Yugoslavia and Greece) (DA MSPS, 137–139) increase and in 1988 Albania take part in a meeting of foreign ministers of the Balkan countries - the first such forum to take place in half a century. Signs of defrosting and activation are quite obvious, however Albania has missed the process of warming up and remains the only European country that does not sign the Helsinki Final Act. This is perhaps the clearest proof of Albania's foreign-political isolation during the reign of Enver Hoxha.

It is quite obvious that the Communist regimes in Yugoslavia and Albania build up radically different socio-political and economic systems. It is also clear that, in the conditions of the Cold War and block opposition, with their foreign policy and their presence in international life, these two Balkan countries are “exceptions to the rule”. It is interesting to explore the relationship between these two countries and how they fit into the overall situation in the region, Europe and the world. Insofar we have addressed the two main periods in relations between Yugoslavia and Albania: the time of closeness and the dominant Yugoslav influence under the wing of Moscow - which lasted only four years (1944-1948), followed by a period of hostility and confrontation lasting for decades. Indeed, at times the tone is softer and the opposition is more moderate, but altogether the differences run too deep to be overcome. One illustrative fact in the exasperation of relations with Moscow during the second half of the 1950s is Khrushchev's attempts to normalize and intensify ties with Yugoslavia. These are negatively welcomed in Tirana. Similar outcome was noticed in the early 1970s when there was a period of warming in Beijing-Belgrade relations. The Yugoslav factor is a constant irritant for Albania and is perceived by Enver Hoxha's regime as a threat. Profound ideological differences and political reasons are at the root of such a behavior. Another permanent issue in the opposition of Yugoslav-Albanian relations is the National problem - the significant number of Albanians living within the borders of Yugoslavia. This becomes another complicating circumstance in the decades after the end of the Second World War.

The Albanian question between Albania and Yugoslavia

The Albanian national problem arises with the outline of the state's borders in 1913 and their re-affirmation after the First World War. More than 30% of the Albanian-populated areas including Kosovo, Western Macedonia and the southern regions of Serbia and Montenegro remain outside the country. The topic of the future of this population becomes present in the relations between Belgrade and Tirana in the interwar period (Bobev & Kacori. 1998, 224; Bobev 1992, 142–158; Bobev 2010, 56–77) and is subsequently inherited by the Yugoslav Federation and

Albania in the rule of the Communist regimes (Stamova 2005, 362; Stamova 2012, 168; Stamova 2014, 220; Stamova 2016, 310; Stamova 2017, 188).

In the period between 1944 and 1948 the political and ideological closeness, the dominant role of the Soviet Union and the perceptions of the national question, allowed for the problem to be bypassed and it did not cause complications. Moreover, Tito and Enver Hoxha agree on the mutual recognition of minorities within the territory of the two countries. The interruption of relations and the long period of hostility and opposition, however, radically changed the situation. Albanians live in several federal republics in Yugoslavia, but the issue of the Autonomous Community of Kosovo, where they are the most numerous, is always in the spotlight. The issue of the rights of this population within Yugoslavia is permanently present in relations between Belgrade and Tirana. Albania feels more offended and therefore behaves more proactively.

However, the small Balkan country does not have a proper political tool and uses a propaganda war to achieve results. In practice such efforts prove futile. Moreover, some of Tirana's arguments become invalidated by the fact that since the mid-1960s the behavior towards the Albanians in Yugoslavia becomes visibly altered, their rights extended with the 1974 Constitution. Kosovo gains almost equal status with the rest of the independent federations, despite preserving its autonomous nature. Certain anti-Yugoslav sentiments remain amongst the Albanian population - in times escalating to forms of resistance, including desire to reunite with the mother country - but these are independent actions that Albania has no direct relationship with, and has no means to influence or guide.

Conclusions

We have outlined the presence of the national question in the relations between Yugoslavia and Albania as another element that complements the overall picture of relations between the two. After 1948 opposition and hostility marked the Belgrade-Tirana axis, an essential element of the Balkan situation during the Cold War. These two countries actually represent deviations from the behavior of the socialist bloc, act independently and virtually do not belong to either of the two main camps. This concerns Yugoslavia for the entire period after 1948, and Albania for the period after 1961.

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