

INTENTOS DE PROYECCIÓN INTERNACIONAL DEL PARTIDO DEL TRABAJO DE ALBANIA: APOYO A PARTIDOS Y GRUPOS MARXISTA-LENINISTAS DURANTE LA GUERRA FRÍA

ATTEMPTS FOR INTERNATIONAL REACH OF PARTY OF LABOUR OF ALBANIA: SUPPORT FOR MARXIST-LENINIST PARTIES AND GROUPS DURING THE COLD WAR

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RESUMEN: Este artículo examina la relación entre la Albania socialista y los partidos y grupos marxista-leninistas después de que el país rompiera relaciones con la Unión Soviética en 1961. El análisis se centra en los esfuerzos de Albania por establecer una red de partidos afines y proporcionar entrenamiento político-militar a sus cuadros. Aunque Albania recibió apoyo financiero de China con el objetivo de aprovechar estas conexiones para obtener influencia diplomática e ideológica, la evidencia sugiere que, para la década de 1970, la dirigencia albanesa utilizó principalmente estas asociaciones para consolidar su legitimidad política interna y moldear la opinión internacional durante un período de aislamiento diplomático.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Albania socialista, Partidos Marxista-Leninistas, Entrenamiento político, Aislamiento diplomático, Influencia ideológica.

ABSTRACT: *This article examines the relationship between socialist Albania and various Marxist-Leninist parties and groups following the country's rupture with the Soviet Union in 1961. It focuses on Albania's efforts to construct a network of ideologically aligned organizations and to offer training to their cadres. Although Albania received financial support from China and initially sought to leverage these connections for diplomatic and ideological influence, evidence indicates that by the 1970s, the Albanian leadership increasingly utilized these organizations to reinforce domestic political legitimacy and shape international perceptions during a period of diplomatic isolation.*

KEYWORDS: *Socialist Albania, Marxist-Leninist Parties, Political Training, Diplomatic Isolation, Ideological Influence.*

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LABURPENA: Artikulu honek aztertzen du nolako harremanak izan ziren Albania sozialistaren eta alderdi eta talde marxista-leninisten artean herrialdeak 1961ean Sobietar Batasunarekiko harremanak eten ondoren. Albaniak berarekin ideologikoki lerrokatuta zeuden alderdi politikoen sare bat eraikitzeke eta horietako buruzagiei trebakuntza politiko-militarra emateko egin zituen ahaleginak ditu ardatz azterketak. Nahiz eta Albaniak Txinaren laguntza finantzarioa jaso zuen loturon bidez eragin diplomatiko eta ideologikoa lortzeko asmotan, ebidentziak dio 1970eko hamarkadarako Albaniako buruzagiek beren barne-zilegitasun politikoa sendotzeko erabili zituztela, nagusiki, harreman horiek, baita isolamendu diplomatikoko garai batean nazioarteko iritzia moldatzeko ere.

GAKO-HITZAK: Albania sozialista, Alderdi marxista-leninistak, Trebakuntza politikoak, Isolamendu diplomatikoa, Eragin ideologikoa.

Introduction

This article examines the relationships that socialist Albania developed with Marxist-Leninist parties and groups in capitalist countries following its break with the Soviet Union in 1961. It focuses on the Party of Labour of Albania's (PLA) efforts to build a network of like-minded organizations and to offer political training to their members. While Albania received financial assistance from China and initially aimed to use these connections to expand its ideological and diplomatic influence, the article argues that, by the 1970s, the Albanian leadership primarily relied on these relationships to bolster its domestic political legitimacy and to shape international perceptions during a period of growing diplomatic isolation.

The article further explores how the PLA presented these ties as part of a broader revolutionary project, promoting the formation of «professional revolutionaries» committed to Marxist-Leninist principles. However, archival sources suggest that the regime's underlying aim was to ensure Albania's visibility abroad through the propaganda activities of these parties and groups. This is reflected in internal documents showing that greater financial and logistical support was given to those organizations that publicly endorsed Albania and actively promoted its political line.¹ At the same time, during a period marked by limited international engagement, the Albanian leadership increasingly used its ties with foreign Marxist-Leninist groups for domestic purposes, portraying the Party of Labour of Albania as enjoying broad international support. This served to reinforce the regime's internal legitimacy by suggesting that Albania remained influential on the global revolutionary stage despite its diplomatic isolation.

Albania's active support for these parties and organizations was initially encouraged by the People's Republic of China. In the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split, China identified Albania as a valuable ally, one

¹ CSA, F.14/PARP, Fl.27, pp.7-9, (On the successful completion of the political-military training of trainees from friendly Marxist-Leninist parties and groups, 1967); CSA, F.14/PASF, Fl.65, pp.1-5, (On the distribution of the Solidarity Fund to Marxist-Leninist parties and groups and its use by them, 1971); CSA, F.14/PARP, Fl.27, p.7, (On the political-military training of trainees from the Marxist-Leninist parties in our country, 1967). [CSA-Central State Archive, PA-Party's Archive, RP-Relations with Parties, F-Fonds, Fl-File, SF-Solidarity Fund] [All translations from Albanian are mine]

that not only provided a counterweight to Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, but also functioned as a channel for the dissemination of Maoist propaganda, particularly in Western Europe and Latin America.² This is evident in the fact that most of the parties supported by Albania emerged as splinter factions from existing Communist and Workers' Parties in Europe and beyond. While the leadership of the established parties generally aligned with Moscow, these dissident elements broke away and formed new organizations that identified as Marxist-Leninist. At the same time, the so-called Solidarity Fund, established by the Party of Labour of Albania to provide financial assistance to these groups, was largely sustained through funding provided by the People's Republic of China, mirroring the broader dependence of the Albanian economy on Chinese support during this period.³

Nevertheless, this article argues that, despite China being the primary financial contributor to the support of Marxist-Leninist parties and groups, Albania exercised a significant degree of autonomy in determining which organizations would receive assistance and to what extent. The Albanian leadership based these decisions on the extent to which particular parties actively promoted Albania's political line. This approach reflects the broader pattern of autonomy that Albania sought to preserve in both domestic and foreign policy, even in relation to its main international backers, the Soviet Union (particularly after Stalin's death) and, after 1961, the People's Republic of China.⁴ One of the central causes for the rupture with the Soviet Union was the Kremlin's attempts to exert direct influence over Albanian internal and external affairs. In contrast, China was initially seen as a more suitable partner due to its geographical distance, which limited the potential for interference in Albania's daily politics.⁵ However, the Albanian leadership also resisted full ideological alignment with Maoism, particularly after 1972, when Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing prompted Enver Hoxha to view the Chinese leadership as veering toward revisionism.⁶

This article draws primarily on archival sources, particularly documents of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania.

² Marku, 2020, p. 827; Marku, 2021, p.140.

³ Boriçi, 2016, pp.210-227.

⁴ Mëhilli, 2017, pp.187-225; Lalaj, 2010, pp.252-257.

⁵ Marku, 2020, pp. 814-815.

⁶ Boriçi, 2016, pp. 46-57,179-90.

The primary method is analytical, involving the critical examination and interpretation of these materials to reconstruct the nature and objectives of Albania's international engagement with Marxist-Leninist groups. In addition to archival sources, the analysis incorporates testimonies from public interviews of individuals who had direct contact with these parties and their members, providing further insight into the dynamics of these relationships. To situate the topic within its broader historical context, including the coming to power of the communists in Albania and the evolution of its relations with other socialist states, the Soviet Union, and China, the article also engages with relevant literature.

Historical background

After November 1944, the Communist Party of Albania came to power, having led a broad-based liberation movement against first the Fascist, and later the Nazi, occupation forces. The party's leadership garnered significant public support and secured both domestic legitimacy and international recognition from the Allied powers. In the immediate post-war period, the Communist-led Democratic Front, functioning as a political cover for the party, won the national elections, laying the foundation for the establishment of a «people's democracy.» During this early phase, Albania was heavily influenced by Yugoslavia, which acted as an intermediary with the Soviet Union, given the limited direct contact between Tirana and Moscow.⁷ Albania's alignment with Yugoslavia continued in the immediate post-war years until the 1948 rupture between Stalin and Tito. In response to this split, Albania, under the leadership of Enver Hoxha, decisively sided with Stalin, severed its ties with Yugoslavia, and moved to strengthen its relations with the Soviet Union. This shift was formalized at the First Congress of the Party, where, among other resolutions, the party adopted a new name, the Party of Labour of Albania, to emphasize the country's predominantly agrarian economy and limited level of industrial development.⁸

⁷ Lalaj, 2009, p.114.

⁸ Lalaj, 2005, p.127.

Relations with the Soviet Union began to deteriorate after 1956, driven by two key factors. Firstly, Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization placed the Albanian leadership in a difficult position, as the widespread cult of personality surrounding Enver Hoxha was central to the country's political structure. Secondly, the Soviet Union's attempts to reconcile with Yugoslavia posed a significant challenge for Albania, which had been a staunch critic of Titoism. The Albanian leadership resisted Soviet pressure, framing its reluctance to improve relations with Yugoslavia as an ideological stance, rather than acknowledging the internal and interstate tensions that underpinned the conflict.⁹ As the Hungarian Revolution unfolded and riots broke out in Poland, Albania, positioned itself as a steadfast defender of Marxist-Leninism. The Albanian Party publicly accused Yugoslavia of inciting unrest and implicitly connected the disturbances within the socialist camp to Khrushchev's process of de-Stalinization. In response to these events, the Party of Labour called for a return to the «pure» Marxist-Leninist line as a means of resolving the upheavals.¹⁰

The rupture between Albania and the Soviet Union, which ultimately led to Albania's alignment with China during the Sino-Soviet conflict, can be traced back to tensions that emerged as early as 1956. According to the Soviet leadership, these tensions arose from what was perceived as dogmatism on the part of the Albanians, especially Enver Hoxha, notably regarding Albania's stance on Yugoslavia and its economic policy.¹¹ Soviet pressure for Hoxha's resignation and relocation to Moscow grew during this period. Despite these mounting contradictions, the Albanian leadership managed to keep the issues confined to the Political Bureau, avoiding public discussion or even disclosure at the Plenum of the Central Committee.

Recognising the necessity of breaking from Moscow's influence, Hoxha and his inner circle sought a powerful ally. China emerged as this ally, despite limited relations between the two countries during the 1950s. The strengthening of Albanian-Chinese relations notably occurred in the years 1959-1960.¹²

⁹ Lalaj, 2010, p.256.

¹⁰ Mëhilli, 2011.

¹¹ Lalaj, 2010, pp.252-3.

¹² Marku, 2020, pp.818-20.

Khrushchev's post-Stalin economic policy, which prioritised agriculture and light industry over Albania's commitment to comprehensive industrialization, further deepened the discord between the two nations. This conflict of visions extended beyond economic development to encompass ideological considerations, as the Albanian leadership argued that a socialist country must possess both a strong industrial base and a proletariat, asserting its political independence even from the Soviet Union. In contrast, China demonstrated a willingness to provide loans for Albania's industrialization efforts as early as 1954.¹³ During visits to China in 1960, Albanian delegations were reassured that China would support Albania not only politically but also financially, in its quest for industrialization.¹⁴

Another source of tension was Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinisation and his efforts at reconciling with Yugoslavia, which posed a direct threat to the staunchly Stalinist Albanian leadership. While Khrushchev pressed the Albanians during his 1959 visit, the Chinese leadership aligned more closely with Albania, denouncing revisionism and supporting Albania's stance against Yugoslavia.¹⁵ The formal break between Albania and the Soviet Union occurred during the 81st Communist and Labour Parties Meeting in Moscow in November 1960. The conflict deepened as Albania denounced the Soviet leadership as revisionist.¹⁶

Exploiting ideological and political conflicts, Enver Hoxha sought China as a replacement ally, which could offer essential ideological, political, and economic support. Albania viewed China as a partner that would not interfere in its internal affairs, thus ensuring the desired political independence. From China's perspective, aligning with Albania served to counter Soviet hegemony and strengthen its position in the Sino-Soviet conflict. Albania could function as a conduit for China's influence within Western Europe's Marxist-Leninist movement and foster dissent within communist parties across Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁷

¹³ Boriçi, 2019.

¹⁴ Marku, 2020, p.824.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.825.

¹⁶ Lalaj, 2010, pp.253-6.

¹⁷ Marku, 2020, p.140.

Albania's Revolutionary Diplomacy: Propaganda, Solidarity, and the International Marxist-Leninist Network

Following the Sino-Albanian-Soviet break, both Albania and China sought to garner support from disillusioned communist and workers' parties globally, particularly those dissatisfied with the Soviet Union's direction after 1956. While some Asian parties aligned with the Sino-Albanian position, the majority of Central and Eastern European parties remained loyal to Moscow. This trend also extended to Western European countries, although internal factions within parties began to express sympathy for the Sino-Albanian stance. In response, China endeavoured to establish new Marxist-Leninist parties across Western Europe and beyond, aiming to align them with its socialist ideology. However, China faced significant challenges in exerting influence in Western Europe due to geographical distance and the lack of formal diplomatic recognition, which hindered its efforts to promote Maoist communist parties.

Utilising Albania's diplomatic relations in Europe, China leveraged the country as a conduit for the global dissemination of propaganda. China funded a powerful radio station in Albania that broadcasted in multiple languages, reaching audiences across Europe, Africa, and South America. Additionally, China supported a publishing house for ideological and political literature in foreign languages.¹⁸

While China aspired to use Albania as a gateway for spreading Maoism and its policies in Western Europe and beyond, Albania resisted being a mere vessel for Chinese political ideology. Instead, it sought to bolster its own influence within the global communist movement, utilising the funds provided by China to strengthen its own position.

That the smaller states within the two main blocs sought to advance their own national interests by exerting greater influence in armed conflicts or in what was commonly referred to as the Third World

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; In an interview, Nexhmije Hoxha, the wife of Albanian leader Enver Hoxha, highlighted China's significant support to Albania during the socialist period, which included the establishment of a powerful radio station in Tirana. This radio station played a crucial role in disseminating Tirana's propaganda on a global scale, see: Hoxha, 2012. The «8 Nëntori» Publishing House was the principal publisher of political books and documents in Albania. It included editorial sections dedicated to the works of Marxist-Leninist classics, Party documents, and the writings of Enver Hoxha. A specialised section focused on publishing these works in foreign languages. Akademia, 1985c.

was not something new or unique to Albania. This was clear since the time of the Korean War, especially in the support provided to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the war. While the primary assistance came from the Soviet Union and China, both of which had direct interests in the Korean Peninsula, other socialist countries, such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, and even impoverished Albania, also demonstrated solidarity by sending both material and human aid to Korea. Although one might assume that this support was a mere directive from the USSR, Albania's contribution to Korea suggests that it was more a matter of solidarity than simply compliance with Soviet orders.¹⁹

The Cuban revolution of 1959, and the regime established by Fidel Castro, presents another significant example of how smaller states could become crucial points of contention between the superpowers. Cuba's position became even more complicated when it turned into a «flashpoint» for competition between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. This particularly played out over Czechoslovakia's involvement in providing aid to Cuba, including its support in establishing Cuba's intelligence services. While the Cuban leadership preferred to accept help from the Czechoslovakians, who were willing to assist, the Soviet Union intervened to prevent this, reflecting the Soviet desire to maintain control over its allies. This episode highlights the Czechoslovak leadership's aspirations for greater autonomy in foreign policy, particularly in supporting a socialist country independently of Soviet influence.²⁰

Similarly, the Vietnam War became an arena for competition within the socialist camp. While the primary ideological contest was between the Soviet Union and China over their respective influence on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, other socialist nations, also sought to exert their influence in Vietnam. These cases, alongside others where socialist countries pursued autonomous policies in support of revolutionary and anti-colonialist movements in Africa, the Middle East, or Latin America, underscore the broader role these nations played in the development of the Cold War.²¹ Although their approaches varied, countries such as the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Romania actively sought a presence in the so-

¹⁹ Mëhilli, 2015.

²⁰ Koura and Waters, 2021.

²¹ Muehlenbeck and Telepneva, 2018.

called Third World, whereas Poland adopted a more cautious stance, prioritizing economic benefits in its engagement.²²

Another factor was that following the rupture with the Soviet Union, Albania found itself in a state of relative isolation on the international stage. Despite maintaining formal diplomatic relations with other countries within the Socialist Camp, its relationships with them deteriorated considerably. Tensions, particularly with Yugoslavia and Greece, marked its interactions with neighbouring countries.²³ Even Western countries, with the exception of France and, to some extent, Italy, maintained strained relations with socialist Albania.²⁴ In response, by supporting specific groups, movements, and parties worldwide, the Albanian leadership sought to partially compensate for its diminished external legitimacy and to redefine its position on the international stage.

During this period, Albania officially asserted that Communist and Workers' Parties in capitalist countries were revisionist due to their connections with Moscow, labelling them collaborators with the bourgeoisie and betrayers of the working class's interests. Despite this, Albania maintained that the situation in these countries remained revolutionary. It contended that, despite the challenges posed by revisionism, the international scenario was still ready for revolution, with the working class poised to seize power, needing only the guidance of an avant-garde party to lead the transformation. In response, the Party of Labour of Albania considered it a duty to assist parties and Marxist-Leninist groups in the West, aiming to establish their hegemony within the working class of the respective countries and facilitate revolutionary change.²⁵ Consequently, the Party of Labour of Albania extended financial support and training to these groups, factions, and occasionally individuals, with the goal of enhancing their leadership capabilities.

To fulfil this duty, the «Solidarity Fund» was established to provide financial and material support to these parties and groups. The Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania created the Solidarity Fund with an allocation of 300,000 to 500,000 US dollars. While the fund was established with a decision of the Central Committee of the

²² Gasztold and Këllici, 2023.

²³ Kaba, 2010, p.170.

²⁴ Kaba, p. 140.

²⁵ Hoxha, 1961.

Party of Labour of Albania, the financial backing for this initiative originated from China, a significant contributor to various sectors of the Albanian economy.²⁶ In an interview, Agim Popa, former Head of the Foreign Sector at the Central Committee of the PLA and the individual responsible for relations with these parties and groups, revealed that the Chinese ambassador in Tirana personally delivered approximately 300,000 US dollars annually, to his office. These money were then channeled to representatives of the respective parties through financial networks.²⁷

However, since January 1960, without any coordination with China, the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA) began to support certain Marxist-Leninist individuals in France and Italy who were closely aligned with the Albanian Party's position. The selection of these individuals was entrusted to the political sections of Albanian embassies in the respective countries.²⁸ These individuals were expected to provide regular reports on key developments in their countries, with particular emphasis on workers' struggles that might hold relevance for Albania. They were also tasked with disseminating pro-Albanian propaganda within their networks.²⁹

Apparently, as the contradictions with the Soviets deepened, leading towards an irreversible split by the end of the year, the Albanian leadership endeavored to identify individuals or groups within the Communist Parties of Western European countries who had expressed dissatisfaction with the Soviet leadership due to the denunciation of the Stalin's personality cult and the de-Stalinization course undertaken by Khrushchev. Financially supporting them and providing propaganda materials, Albania hoped to garner some support from these individuals in the event of a definitive break from Moscow. Moreover, they sought, through the pro-Albanian propaganda that these individuals would spread within their respective party circles in the West, to cultivate pro-Albanian factions within these Western parties.

²⁶ Boriçi, 2016, pp.210-227.

²⁷ Popa, 2009

²⁸ CSA, F. 14/PAGB, Fl. 29, pp.190-191, (Report on allocation of funds to support movements in favour of our Party, 1960).

²⁹ CSA, F.14/PASF, Fl. 29, p.171, (On the distribution of funds by our diplomatic representations to individuals maintaining a favourable disposition towards Albania, 1960). [SF-Solidarity Fund]

The Solidarity Fund provided support to various parties and groups through multiple channels. A portion of the fund was allocated for the conduct of activities within their respective countries, addressing organisational needs, publishing press materials, and covering expenses such as travel and other costs related to visits to Albania. While the inaugural budget specifically designated for these parties was planned for the year 1964, assistance had already been extended to select individuals between 1960 and 1963. For instance, Jacques Grippa of the Communist Party of Belgium received \$3,500, and two Greek individuals who had aligned with Albania during its conflict with Moscow were also granted financial aid.³⁰

Jacques Grippa played a prominent role within the Communist Party of Belgium, emerging as a staunch advocate of both China and Albania during the Sino-Albanian–Soviet split. Due to his promotion of Maoist ideas within the party, Grippa was eventually expelled. He subsequently founded a new organisation, the Communist Party of Belgium (Marxist-Leninist).

Grippa's case illustrates that Albania did not coordinate the distribution of funds with China, although it refrained from supporting individuals who openly opposed the Chinese political and ideological line. In discussions with Albanian representatives, Grippa disclosed that he had also received financial support from China. Nevertheless, the Albanian authorities chose to continue funding him, as he actively promoted pro-Albanian propaganda within his political circle.³¹

According to the proposed budget for 1964 prepared by the Foreign Sector of the Central Committee, allocations were specified for various Marxist-Leninist parties and groups. The Communist Party of Belgium (Marxist-Leninist), founded by Jacques Grippa, was scheduled to receive \$14,000, while the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) of Australia was to be granted \$2,700. The Communist Party of Ceylon was allocated \$2,000, and \$5,000 was designated for Brazil. Groups in Italy were assigned \$10,000, likely divided between the Milan and Turin factions. French Marxist-Leninist groups were similarly allocated \$10,000, to be shared among the Paris and Marseille circles. The Austrian group was to receive \$4,000, while a British group was assigned \$3,000. The budget specified key areas of expenditure, focusing primarily on the

³⁰ CSA, F.14/PARP, Fl. 29, p.168, (Support for Comrade Jacques Grippa and two Greek communists 1960). [RP-Relations with Parties]

³¹ Marku, 2021, p.141.

publication of newspapers and other propaganda materials such as tracts and billboards.³²

In the above-mentioned interview, Agim Popa noted that these funds primarily sustained the organisational work of the parties in their respective countries, particularly in the domain of press and propaganda. For a brief period, financial support also extended to renting residences or meeting spaces. While the Albanian authorities allowed a degree of flexibility in how these funds were spent, their principal concern remained the dissemination of propaganda.³³

The Albanian side, comprising deputy secretaries in embassies, press attachés, and members of the secret services responsible for maintaining contacts with these groups or parties, exerted considerable effort to reconcile the various so-called Marxist-Leninist factions that supported Albania but were at odds with one another. This endeavour was officially justified through slogans promoting the «unity of the revolutionary movement» and the potential for a stronger, unified front, an objective that held a degree of practical merit. However, a further underlying motive was the desire to reduce the financial cost Albania faced in supporting these fragmented factions. As part of this strategy, efforts were made to unite the Paris and Marseille groups in France, as well as the Milan and Turin groups in Italy. Representatives from these factions were even invited to Albania, where, among other engagements, they would meet with Ramiz Alia, Secretary of the Central Committee for Ideology and Propaganda. These meetings aimed to facilitate discussions on their mutual disagreements and to seek resolutions that might pave the way for the formation of unified parties.³⁴

Promoting the Albanian Model: Political Tourism and Ideological Training in the 1960s

Building on its growing engagement on the international stage, the Party of Labour of Albania began to adopt a more strategic approach

³² CSA, F.14/PASF, Fl. 26, pp. 1-19, (Proposals for the allocation of financial assistance to Marxist-Leninist Parties and groups in capitalist countries, 1963).

³³ Popa, 2009.

³⁴ CSA, F. 14/PARP, Fl. 26, pp. 32-33, (Report on the meetings held by the Secretary of the Albanian Embassy in France with the Marxist-Leninist Groups active in the country, 1964).

to influencing foreign Marxist-Leninist actors. By presenting itself as a «shining beacon» of ideological purity and its global defense, the Party undertook concrete initiatives aimed at supporting and cultivating, both ideologically and politically, individuals and organizations that shared its anti-revisionist stance. This section will examine how, beginning in 1963, foreign communists began arriving in Albania to receive training and preparation for political activity in their countries, thereby transforming Albania into an active hub of revolutionary support.

During the years 1962–1963, the Party of Labour of Albania undertook proactive measures to engage with individuals and groups who had either severed ties with their respective parties or were contemplating such a step due to their opposition to the Moscow line. In 1963, as part of this strategy, these individuals and groups were invited to visit Albania for leisure purposes, with all expenses covered by a special fund established by the Central Committee of the Party.³⁵ The leadership issued explicit instructions to ensure that their reception was of a high standard, with optimal conditions provided for both work and relaxation. This approach aimed to leave a favourable impression of Albania. The directive highlighted that the initiative was intended not only to present a positive image of the country but also to allow visitors to observe first-hand the developmental prospects of a state committed to Marxism-Leninism. The broader objective was to inspire them to disseminate and potentially emulate the Albanian model in their own national contexts.³⁶

This practice persisted in subsequent years with Marxist-Leninist parties, groups, and individuals, though 1963 marked the commencement of this approach. Reports indicate that the Albanian leadership sought to persuade these individuals to align with Albania's model, with the aim of utilizing them as agents for organising revolutionary movements in their respective countries. In 1963, approximately 30 individuals were invited to Albania for this purpose, with the number increasing significantly in later years, around 120 in 1964 and approximately 200 in 1965. These individuals were either personally invited or sent by their parties and groups.³⁷

³⁵ CSA, F.14/PARP, Fl. 16, p. 77-82, (Invitations extended to members of Marxist-Leninist Parties and groups to visit Albania, 1963).

³⁶ CSA, F.14/PARP, Fl. 16, p.113-114, (On the reception of Marxist-Leninist comrades visiting Albania, 1963).

³⁷ CSA, F.14/PAGB, Fl. 15, pp.1-25, (Report on the reception of guests invited by the Central Committee and masses' organizations, 1965).

While in Albania, the visitors primarily came to observe the country as an example of how a socialist state, founded on pure Marxist-Leninist ideology, could be constructed. During their visits, they toured successful factories, farms, cooperatives, as well as historical and cultural sites in Albania. Although they arrived as tourists or visitors, a short-term political education programme was also implemented. This programme generally covered topics such as Marxism-Leninism, the history of revolutionary movements, and the Party of Labour of Albania.³⁸

Documents, particularly notes from the Secretaries of the Central Committee and occasionally from Enver Hoxha himself, reveal that the Albanian leadership was concerned with ensuring the best possible reception for these visitors and emphasising the most favourable aspects of Albanian socialism. Consequently, their visits were carefully organised to include tours of the country's factories, farms, and most advanced industries. This was not merely to ensure that they left with a positive impression of Albania, but more importantly to demonstrate how Albania, adhering steadfastly to Marxist-Leninist principles, had achieved significant progress.

As the number of foreign visitors sent by Marxist-Leninist parties and groups grew, Enver Hoxha issued specific instructions regarding their reception and the conditions of their stay. For example, a hotel in Durrës, the largest coastal city in Albania, was reserved exclusively for their use, and similar facilities were arranged in other tourist cities across Albania. Although these individuals were ostensibly invited for vacations, with stays typically lasting one or two months, their schedules invariably included lectures and training sessions on Marxist-Leninist ideology, as well as the theory and practice of revolution.³⁹

To facilitate this, the Albanian side designated preliminary lecturers to teach the visitors and provided appropriate halls and literature in their respective languages. The topics for the sessions were directly approved by the Central Committee, and instructors were meticulously chosen for their proficiency in the necessary languages and their capacity to assess the intellectual abilities of the guests.

³⁸ CSA, F.14/PARP, Fl. 26, p.89, (The program developed with Marxist-Leninist comrades and guests in our country, 1964).

³⁹ CSA, F.14/PARP, Fl.15, pp. 59-62, (On the Party's international friends who visited Albania in 1964 and proposals for engagement in 1965, 1965).

In his instructions to the Foreign Sector of the Central Committee, Enver Hoxha emphasized that the primary goal of these visits was not simply tourism, rather, the visits, lectures, discussions, and interactions were designed to identify individuals with the strongest intellectual and organizational capabilities. These individuals would be considered for more extensive training and offered financial support to continue their studies, with the intention of enhancing their contributions to their respective parties or movements.⁴⁰

From these directives, it is clear that the arrival and stay of these foreign visitors in Albania served as a trial period. It was intended to assess the most committed individuals who adhered to the ideological principles of the Party of Labour of Albania. Those selected, along with the organizations that sent them, would receive further support to advance their activities in the respective countries. Additionally, some of these individuals would be chosen for long-term political education within Albania.

In accordance with a decision of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania, issued in November 1965, it was resolved that cadres from foreign Marxist-Leninist parties and groups aligned with the PLA would be admitted as full-time students at the «Vladimir Ilyich Lenin» Party School in Tirana. These cadres would undergo comprehensive ideological and organizational training in Albania, with the objective of preparing them to serve as effective leaders in future revolutionary movements in their countries. The program was structured to span three calendar years.⁴¹

During this period, students would attain proficiency in the Albanian language, which was designated as the primary language of instruction. Interpreters would be provided during the early stages of the coursework to facilitate comprehension. The curriculum was divided into two main components: theoretical and practical training.

The theoretical component included core subjects of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and revolutionary theory, such as Political Economy, Dialectical and Historical Materialism, the History of the Communist and Labour Movement, Philosophy, and a course titled «On the Theory and Practice of Revolution.» The practical component encompassed applied areas

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.60.

⁴¹ CSA, F.14/PAGB, Fl. 15, p.18, (Regulations concerning the continued studies of comrades from Marxist-Leninist parties at the V.I. Lenin Party School, 1965).

such as Party Building and Organization, State Structure and Governance, and the Organization of Labour. In addition, students were required to undertake courses specific to the Albanian context, including the History of Albania, the History of the Party of Labour of Albania, and «The Political-Revolutionary Thought of Comrade Enver Hoxha.»⁴²

The inaugural cohort, arriving in 1966, consisted of twenty students. They were accommodated in a dedicated residential facility at the Party School and received full board, clothing, and a stipend.⁴³

The content and structure of these courses clearly indicate that, much like the short-term cadre training programs, Albania's objective extended beyond the mere formation of professional revolutionaries tasked with organizing Marxist-Leninist movements in their home countries. A central aim was also to promote Albania as a viable model for economic, social, and state development. As previously noted, through the training of foreign cadres and the cultivation of connections with Marxist-Leninist parties abroad, Albania sought to build a transnational network of individuals who would function not only as leaders within their respective organizations but also as active propagators of the Albanian model.

This intent is particularly evident in the curriculum of the Party School, which, in addition to classical Marxist theory, emphasized the study of the history of the Party of Labour of Albania and the ideological positions of Enver Hoxha. Placed within the broader historical context, especially the post-1965 period, this initiative coincided with Hoxha's ambition to position Albania as a global centre for revolutionary Marxist-Leninist theory.⁴⁴

Hoxha's writings during this time extended beyond national concerns, addressing global political dynamics, particularly in capitalist and so-called «revisionist» states. His internationalist aspirations were reflected in the systematic translation, publication, and distribution of his works by Albanian embassies. Parallel to these efforts, the training and education of foreign individuals in Albania served as a strategic means of spreading Hoxha's ideas. These trainees were expected to return to their countries

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 19-20.

⁴³ CSA, F.14/PASF, Fl. 29, pp.10-11, (Decision regarding the allocation of scholarships and material provisions for trainees sent by Marxist-Leninist parties and movements, 1966).

⁴⁴ Akademia, 1985a.

as emissaries of Albanian socialism, disseminating Hoxha's ideas within their parties, organizations, and intellectual circles.⁴⁵

Being a relatively poor country, Albania exercised considerable prudence in the distribution of financial aid to these parties and groups. The state apparatus, including its diplomatic missions, maintained close oversight of the recipients' activities to evaluate both the extent of their political engagement and the effective use of allocated resources. Cases of misuse, whether by individuals or by organizational structures, prompted increased scrutiny. Albanian authorities were determined to ensure that financial assistance was dispensed responsibly and that the activities of recipient organizations were systematically monitored to align with Albania's broader ideological and strategic objectives.⁴⁶ It was also stipulated that financial assistance extended to Marxist-Leninist parties and groups should take into account the costs incurred by their delegates during their stay in Albania.⁴⁷

Between Principle and Pragmatism: Albania's Foreign Marxist-Leninist Connections

The Party of Labour of Albania framed its support for groups and parties aligned with its ideological line as an ideological commitment, portraying itself as the vanguard of global anti-revisionism. However, this support also served pragmatic functions. In a period of diplomatic isolation, relations with these groups allowed Albania to maintain even a minimal presence on the international stage. Thus, beneath the surface of revolutionary solidarity laid a calculated effort to project legitimacy, sustain visibility abroad, and reaffirm the regime's narrative of global relevance, even as it operated from the periphery of both the socialist bloc and the non-aligned movement. This section, through an analysis of archival documents and notes of Albanian leaders on them, explores how, under the guise of ideological solidarity, Albanian leadership in fact prioritized

⁴⁵ Akademia, 1985b.

⁴⁶ CSA, F.14/PASF, Fl.65, pp.1-5, (Decision on the allocation of the Solidarity Fund to Marxist-Leninist parties and groups and its utilization by them, 1971).

⁴⁷ CSA, F.14/PASF, Fl.29, pp.10-11, (Decision on the allocation of scholarships and provisions for trainees sent by Marxist-Leninist parties for political-military training, 1967.)

support for those parties and organizations that, in their view, conducted the most effective pro-Albanian propaganda in their respective countries.

An examination of documents from the Archive of the Party of Labour of Albania concerning the support extended to Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary parties and groups worldwide reveals that the majority of this assistance was directed toward organizations based in European countries, such as Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, and Poland, as well as in a lesser extent South American ones, including Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, and Peru. This prioritization is later reflected in the higher financial and material aid allocated to these parties and groups.

Several factors contributed to this pattern. Among them was Albania's geographical location in Europe and its existing diplomatic ties with several European countries, which facilitated more efficient communication and coordination with the relevant individuals and groups. This strategic position was also a key factor in China's interest in positioning Albania as a conduit for disseminating Maoist ideology across Europe and South America. Moreover, although the Albanian leadership publicly declared its intention to serve as an «shining beacon» for the global Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary movement, it mainly aimed to displace Soviet influence within European communist parties.

In the case of South America, the Albanian leadership identified a geopolitical opportunity arising from the complex political dynamics in the region and the close ties between many of its governments and the United States. Albania sought to exert influence across various segments of these countries, particularly among the diverse leftist currents, some of which were more ideologically close with Tirana's anti-revisionist line.

Albania used these parties and groups as a network to secure a degree of external legitimacy, and further incentivized those that actively promoted its ideological line. This is clearly documented in the records and financial reports of the Solidarity Fund. For instance, in the 1967 budget proposal submitted to Enver Hoxha for approval, he annotated: «The fund planned for our Belgian comrades can be reduced and increased for the Spanish ones, who are in severe illegality, and write more about Albania. Similarly, it can be increased for our Austrian comrades, who are more active in pro-our activities.»⁴⁸ Likewise, in a

⁴⁸ CSA, F.14/PAGB, Fl.20, pp.7-8, (Decision concerning the utilization of the Solidarity Fund available to the Central Committee, 1967).

report concerning the use of the Fund for 1970 and recommendations for 1971, the Foreign Sector proposed increasing funding to the Marxist-Leninist parties of Belgium, Germany, and a group in Argentina, citing their expanded propaganda efforts and, most importantly, the fact that «they write a lot about our party and country.»⁴⁹

The Party of Labour of Albania maintained an inherent contradiction in its official stance regarding support for revolutionary movements abroad. While it consistently declared that revolution could not be exported, a position developed in response to Yugoslav claims that they had established the Communist Party of Albania and significantly influenced the National Liberation War, Albania simultaneously provided support to Marxist-Leninist parties and groups seeking to foment revolution in their own countries. This paradox stemmed from the party's assertion that capitalist societies were already in a state of latent revolutionary situation, thereby justifying the training and support of individuals who could emerge as professional revolutionaries.⁵⁰

Although these declarations were intended for international and domestic audiences, internal records and testimonies reveal that Enver Hoxha and other Albanian leaders were fully aware that most of the foreign parties and organizations they supported held negligible influence in their respective national contexts and were unlikely to catalyze revolutionary change. Agim Popa later contended that, while Hoxha may have initially entertained hopes of revolutionary upheaval in Western countries, in early 1970s, he had abandoned such expectations. Instead, these relationships served a symbolic function within Albania, fostering the illusion of international solidarity and countering perceptions of diplomatic and ideological isolation.⁵¹

Former Minister of Trade under the socialist regime, Kiço Ngjela, also voiced strong skepticism about the real significance of these parties, pointing to their limited activity and minimal membership in the countries they purported to represent.⁵² Consequently, the highest echelons of the Albanian leadership recognized that their material and ideological support was unlikely to lead to tangible revolutionary progress abroad.

⁴⁹ CSA, F.14/PAGB, Fl.65, pp.3-5, (Report on the utilization of the Solidarity Fund for the year 1970 and proposals for its allocation in 1971, 1971).

⁵⁰ Hoxha, 1979.

⁵¹ Popa, 2009.

⁵² Ngjela. 2011, p.270.

Nevertheless, the alliance with these parties was symbiotic for the Party of Labour of Albania. Primarily, it served a domestic function by demonstrating to the Albanian population that the country was not entirely isolated from the outside world. Secondly, on the international stage, during a period of diplomatic isolation, these organizations enabled Albania to maintain a degree of presence, however limited, in the respective countries. For the funded parties and organizations, the benefits were equally significant: firstly, they gained ideological legitimacy by being recognized as genuine Marxist-Leninist parties by a social state and its ruling party, namely the Party of Labour of Albania; secondly, they received financial support which, although modest, allowed them to sustain a minimal level of political activity within their own local contexts.

Conclusions

This article has provided an overview and critical analysis of the relationship between socialist Albania and Marxist-Leninist parties and groups in Europe, Central America, and South America. Following its rupture with the Soviet Union in 1961, Albania, in coordination with the People's Republic of China, undertook a series of initiatives aimed at fostering a network of Marxist-Leninist parties and movements within capitalist states. These initiatives included financial assistance, but more significantly, the provision of political and military training for party cadres. Initially conceived as short-term programs lasting between three to six months, these trainings evolved after 1967 into more comprehensive two-year programs. While originally a Chinese strategy designed to use Albania's existing diplomatic connections as a conduit for spreading Maoist influence in Europe and Latin America, Albania quickly asserted its own ideological and strategic priorities.

Rejecting the notion of serving merely as a proxy for Chinese interests, the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha, pursued its independent ambitions in the international Marxist-Leninist movement. From the mid-1960s onward, Hoxha sought to establish himself as a theoretician of Marxism-Leninism, positioning Albania as a model of ideological purity, faithful to the legacies of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. While the initial impetus and funding for these efforts stemmed from Beijing, Albania repurposed these transnational connections to enhance its

ideological influence and present its developmental trajectory as an exemplar of «authentic» Marxist-Leninist practice. The training programs offered in Albania not only included instruction in political economy, Marxist philosophy, and party organization, but also emphasized the history of the Party of Labour of Albania, the Albanian model of socialist development, and the ideological writings of Enver Hoxha.

Documents from the period reveal that financial support from the Solidarity Fund was at times allocated based on the extent to which foreign parties engaged in propaganda favourable to Albania. Officially, this support was framed as an effort to cultivate a cadre of professional revolutionaries capable of instigating revolutionary change in their respective countries. However, by the 1970s, it became evident that the Albanian leadership no longer held serious expectations of revolutionary upheaval abroad. Rather, these relationships served internal political functions: they projected an image of Albania as internationally engaged and ideologically influential, countering the perception of diplomatic isolation. At the same time, they enabled Albania to exercise a minimal but symbolically important presence in foreign political landscapes.

Ultimately, the relationship between Albania and these Marxist-Leninist parties was symbiotic. For Albania, these alliances alleviated its diplomatic isolation and bolstered both domestic and international legitimacy. For the parties involved, recognition by the Party of Labour of Albania conferred ideological validation as genuine Marxist-Leninist organizations. In addition, the financial assistance they received, albeit modest, allowed them to sustain political activities that would otherwise have been unsustainable.

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