

KRISTO FRASHERI

THE HISTORY  
OF ALBANIA

(A BRIEF SURVEY)

TIRANA 1964

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## PREHISTORIC ALBANIA

The remotest traces of man, discovered up to now in the territory of Albania, appertain to the end of the middle paleolithic age. They were found in 1939 in the vicinity of the Xarra village, near the lake of Vivari, eight kilometres from Butrint, in the southern extremity of Albania. They are primitive tools of flint and jasper-coarsely worked blades and scratchers; beside them there are found chips, produced during the shaping of these tools, too.

In Xarra objects belonging to the late paleolithic age, too, have been found — typical scrapers with "snouts" and some blades cut out with chisel technique. The existence of man during the late paleolithic age is attested especially by the objects discovered in the Shën Marina Cave, likewise situated in the vicinity of Butrint. A flint worked out with the purpose of giving it the shape of a scraper and a blade of jasper with notches in its sharp side as a result of use, have been found within the cave beside a great number of fossilized bones, among which the teeth and tibiae of a wild goat (*capra ibex*) can be identified. Fragments of blades of bone and of tools made of stone, incidentally found during the construction of a road at the foot of the Dajti mountain near Tirana, belong to the same prehistoric epoch.

The materials of the neolithic age, too, are scarce and have been discovered by mere chance. They are mainly stone clubs and axes found in different parts of the country — at Gruemira (Shkodër), Dushmani (Dukagjin), Nepravishta (Gjirokastër), Finiqi (Delvina), Butrint and elsewhere — belonging, all of them, to the late neolithic period, and some of them even to the neolithic period.

Prior to the Second World War, all our knowledge on the neolithic human society in Albania based on the materials

discovered in Velsha of the Vlora district, was poor and uncertain. Fragments of ceramics discovered at this neolithic station are divided into two groups — the *pictured ceramics*, with geometrical motives of straight lines and usually in red, grey, brown and black colours, and the *incised achromatic ceramics*, the decorations of which generally consist of arched lines, especially spirals. Today, however, the human society of that prehistoric period is better known, thanks to the relatively rich materials discovered by the Albanian archaeologists these recent years at the station of Maliq (Korça) of Balkan interest.

In Maliq the first materials were discovered casually in 1948 while the works for irrigation of the zone and the drainage of the Maliqi lake were being carried on. In 1961, the Albanian archaeologists started in this region systematic excavations, which still continue. The large amount of materials found, which as yet have not been made public, are kept in the archaeological-ethnographical Museum of Tirana. According to preliminary information given by them, the excavations in Maliq, which have reached up to 4 m. in depth, have revealed in the lower part of the alluvial soil two cultural strata with features distinct from one another, belonging to the neolithic period (the third millennium B.C.), whereas on the upper part a dwelling place of the bronze age (the second millennium before our era).

In the lower strata, that appertain to the neolithic period, there were discovered working-tools of *stone* (hammers, axes, hatchets, mill-stones), of *flint* (knives, scrapers), of *horn* (hammers, hoes), of *bone* (awls and arrow-heads), of *clay* (spools for spinning and weights for fishing-nets) and of *copper* (chisels, axes and hooks). The greater part of the materials are earthen wares, in the major part without handles, whereas the others have vertical handles reaching up to the mouth of the jar. As in Velça, here also many of these wares are embellished with ornaments — for the most part pictured with lineary geometrical motives, others engraved with small holes, furrows or reliefs. In these strata, traces of pile dwellings and, beside them, traces of build-

ings with only ground floor are found. There were found, too, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastic figures, beads and children's toys; beside them, cereal seeds and bones of domestic animals.

The materials discovered in the lower strata of the Maliq station represent, in a more emphatic manner than at Velça, two different cultures of the neolithic period. One of them, chronologically older because it is found in the deeper stratum of the soil, is represented mainly by the pictured ceramics, the pile dwellings, the jars without handles and, probably, also by the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastic figures. The other, belonging to a later time, perhaps to the end of the neolithic period, is represented by the engraved ceramics, the ground-floor buildings and the pots with vertical handles.

From the ethnic-linguistic point of view, these two groups of cultures represent in themselves two groups of different populations, which is practically verified also by the results obtained through other means by a number of linguist-scientists.

The pictured ceramics of Maliq or Velça, diffused in this prehistoric period not only in the Balkans (especially in Thessaly, Macedonia, Bulgaria) but also in all the Mediterranean basin up to Ukraine (the Tripoli culture), may hint at the existence of a population of the *Mediterranean* ethnic-linguistic trunk in the Albanian territory at the beginning or the middle of the neolithic period. Perhaps it is by this population that ought to be sought the origin of linguistic elements of the Mediterranean group inherited by the Albanian language of the Indo-European group, such as the words: *mal* (mountain), *hardhi* (vine), *shëgë* (pomegranate), *shkabë* (eagle), *bisht* (tail), etc., the toponyms *Buna*, *Nish*, *Ishëm* (in antiquity: *Barbana*, *Naissus*, *Asimos*), the numbers *njëzet* (twenty), *dyzet* (forty) which are considered as remnants of the pre-Indo-European "vingtesimal" system of numbering, the suffixes — *assa*, *ua*, *anna*, *at*, etc.

On the contrary, the incised ceramics discovered both in Maliq and in Velça, which are alike in manifold respects



Site of Maliq, near Korça, in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages.  
View of excavations made in 1961-1963



Typical Illyrian pottery of the first millennium B.C.

with the incised ceramics discovered in Thessaly, Macedonia, Serbia and, in general, with the ceramic culture of the Danubian zone, lead us to presume the existence of a population of the Indo-European ethnic-linguistic trunk, which had no knowledge of the pictured ceramics and which, as it is believed, had migrated from central Europe or the northern Balkans, about the end of the neolithic period, mingling in their new home with the earlier Mediterranean population. Here, perhaps, we have got to do with that same population called by the scientists as *proto-Indo-European* or *pre-Hellenic Indo-European* and by some others even as *pre-Illyrian*, which, as it is supposed, had settled in the Balkans some centuries before the Greek migration. For altogether practical reasons, some scientists attribute to this population the name of *Pelasges*, about whom the ancient

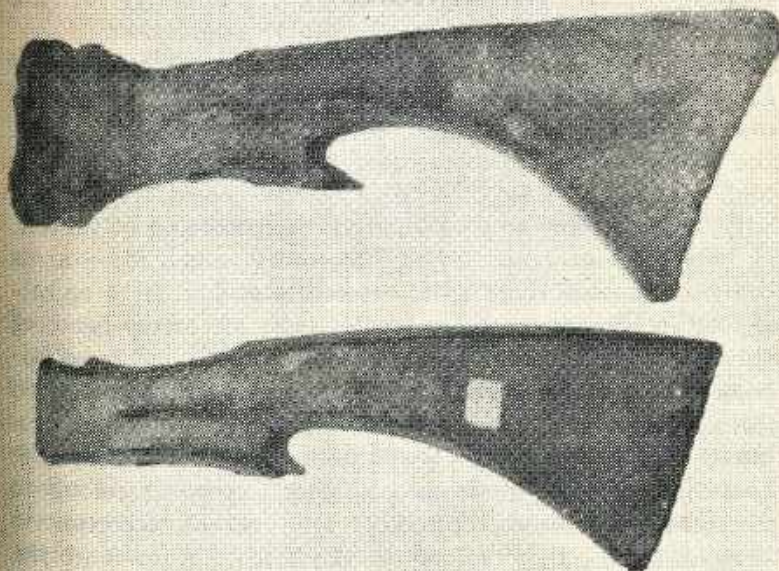
writers have transmitted to us a number of legends and confused and contradictory information. Among these writers, Herodotus informs us that he found the traces of the pre-Greek inhabitants — the Pellasg — also in Epirus (a name which, in ancient times, comprised also the regions of the southern Albania of today), who had come here from adjacent Thessaly; whereas Strabo, relying on Efor, Hesiod, Aeschylus and Euripides, says that the former home of the Pellasg was Arcadia and that they migrated from here to Epirus as well as to Thessaly, Crete, Lesbos and Troade. Elements of this *proto-Indo-European* language have been inherited, according to the opinion of many linguists, by the Albanian language also.

Nevertheless, the question whether the material cultures, documented especially in the field of ceramics in Maliq, Velça and other parts of the Albanian territory, have been products — the one of the "Mediterranean" population and the other of the "proto-Indo-European" (Pelasgic) population — is still a matter open for discussion.

Apart from the ethnicity problem of the neolithic station of Maliq, there may be drawn some conclusions of particular interest in connection with the stage of economic and social development of the inhabitants of this prehistoric period, until now almost entirely unknown. The objects found in great numbers in a limited surface indicate that in the third millennium B.C., at least in this zone, the population was relatively dense and settled. The inhabitants of this period practised hunting, but by the bones of domestic animals we assume that cattle-herding was known to them. Primitive diggers, horn hoes, clay sieves, mill-stones and the very cereal seeds testify that they had begun to practise agriculture. They also knew fishing with hooks and nets, which is to be attested by the hooks of horn (later of copper) as well as by the net-weights of clay discovered at this station. Bone needles, horn awls and the spinning-spools of clay indicate that they knew spinning and weaving. The pile houses lead us to believe that they knew sailing. The earthen ware with smoothed surface, worked with care and taste, witness for

a quite advanced stage of pottery. This is also proved by the ornaments, which in themselves represent the remotest traces of decorative art discovered up to now in Albania. The anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastic figures probably are signs of a polytheistic cult. Finally, the character of the tools and the uniformity of the ornaments and children's toys demonstrate that in the third millennium the human society of this or these cultures led a collective life and that within it there did not exist any differentiations between them.

Concerning the bronze age (the second millennium B.C.) our knowledge was likewise very limited. Before the Second World War the attention of the archaeologists and historians was attracted by two types of bronze axes, called by them the "*Dalmato-Albanian*" and the "*Scutarine*" axes, with typological characteristics different from the axes found in

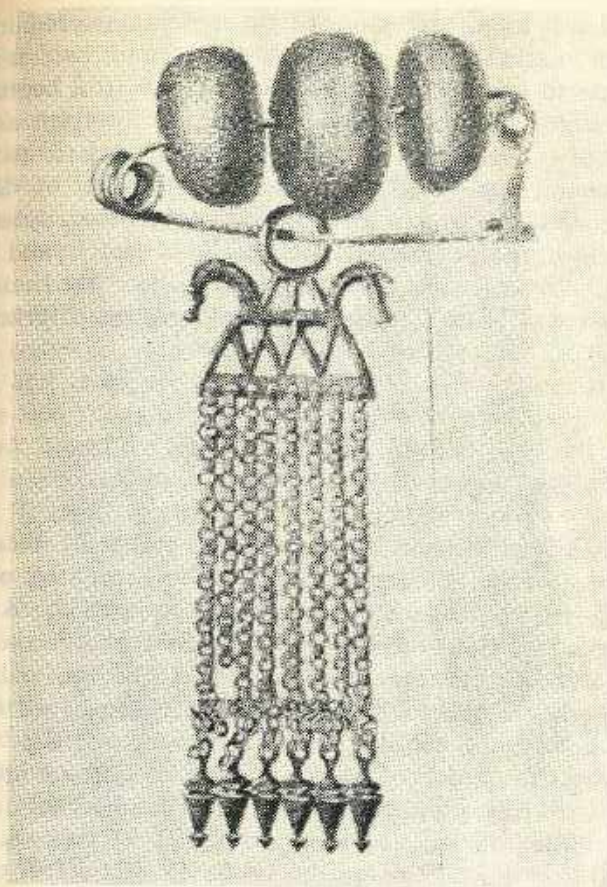


Bronze axe heads of the "Dalmato-Albanian" type

the adjacent regions and believed to have been produced within Albanian territory, which hypothesis is confirmed also by a badly cast axe found in the vicinity of Shkodër. On the contrary today our knowledge of this epoch has been enriched in a satisfactory manner by the excavations carried out in recent years by the Albanian archaeologists and by the material found especially in Maliq, Pazhoku (Elbasan) and Gajtani (Shkodër).

The materials of Maliq, which were found above the neolithic stratum, belong to the beginnings of the bronze age and are quite interesting as far as ceramics is concerned. Here the pictured ceramics with characteristic holes on the sides become gradually fewer until, in the upper stratum, they vanish altogether. Whereas, the engraved ceramics with vertical handles become more numerous, without swerving from the ceramic forms and decorative ornaments of the former neolithic stratum. On this stratum only traces of ground-floor buildings and house-hearths are to be found. These materials witness the continuity of the earlier proto-Indo-European (Pelagic) population.

In the Pazhoku plain, about 25 km. to the southwest of Elbasan, in 1960 the Albanian archaeologists proceeded to uncover more than 25 tumuli scattered between a marsh and the river Devolli, the same river which passes through the Maliqi lake. During these excavations characteristic data were obtained on the construction of graves and of tumuli, as well as on considerable inventory materials—arms (knives, daggers, swords, lance points) of bronze, a spiral-shaped ornament of gold for women, an arrow-head of flint and many earthen wares, some of which had been imported from the Aegean basin, some had been produced on the spot after the Creto-Mycenaean types, and some produced according to the traditions inherited from the neolithic period. These objects, which seem to belong to the same population, appertain to a period posterior to that of Maliq; they belong to the later centuries of the bronze age, some of them even to the middle of the second millennium B.C.



Ornamental brooch worn by women

The materials discovered during the excavations of the years 1961-1963 in the village of Gajtani, about 5 km. to the east of Shkodër, belong to a more recent period. The materials found in the lower strata belong to the end of the bronze age and to the beginning of the iron age; those of the upper stratum reach up to the time of the Roman occupation of this locality (3rd century B.C.). In Gajtani we find traces of a citadel, which— together with the citadels of Dorzi, Shkodër, Marshej, etc.— are the most ancient



fortified inhabited places of the Illyrians discovered in Albania up to now. In the fragments of ceramics, which seem to belong to the beginning of the iron age (the beginning of the first millennium B.C.) interesting similarities can be noticed — especially in the decorations (incised geometrical ornaments) — with the incised ceramics of Maliq, which constitutes ample evidence for an uninterrupted inheritance from the end of the neolithic period and consequently for the same population, too, which by the early Greek writers is no longer called Pelasgic but Illyrian.

## THE ILLYRIANS

According to the general prevailing opinion in historical sciences, during the bronze age and the beginning of the iron age, the Illyrians lived in central Europe. The Aunjetic, Lausic and Halstat cultures, discovered in Austria, represent, according to the archaeologists, the Illyrian cultures, respectively, of the middle of the bronze, the end of the bronze and the beginning of the iron ages. Again according to the opinion of the scientists, during the migration of the Indo-European populations, which occurred in the second millennium B.C. from the north to the south of Europe, after the Hellenes who settled in the south of the Balkans and after the Thracians who stretched themselves to the north of the Hellenes, at the end of the bronze and the beginning of the iron age, large masses of Illyrians migrated too. At the termination of these migrations, young Illyrian populations covered all the western Balkans, approximately the territories of Albania and Yugoslavia of nowadays, fusing with the former, very similar, "proto-Indo-European" or "Pelasgic" or "proto-Illyrian" populations. This circumstance can help to explain the similarity of the material culture of the new Illyrians settled in the Balkans — on one side with the cul-

tures of Maliq and Pazhoku, and on the other with the cultures of Lausic and Halstat. From the Balkans, some Illyrian tribes (the Mesaps, the Japygs, etc.) crossed the Adriatic, probably from the seacoast of Albania of today, and settled in southern Italy, where later they were assimilated by the Romans.

The most ancient Hellenic literary sources (Homer, Hesiod, Scyllaks, Herodotus, Hecateus, Thucydides, etc.) mention the Illyrians as divided into different tribes. The ancient Roman writers Pomponius Mela and Pliny the Elder point out a certain difference between the Illyrians of the north and those of the south; they call the latter "Illyrians in the real sense of the word" (*Illyri proprie dicti*). From ancient literature and from the inscriptions discovered in their homes we come to learn the names of many large and small Illyrian tribes. Such were, for example, in southern Illyria: the *Enkeleys*, the *Ardians*, the *Taulants*, the *Dardans*, the *Parthins*, the *Pirusts*, the *Labeats*, the *Kaons*, the *Thesprots*, the *Molosses*, whereas in northern Illyria, the *Liburns*, the *Japods*, the *Dalmats*, the *Desidiats*, the *Antariats*, etc. The Illyrians called themselves by the name of the tribe to which they belonged. They were called with the collective name of Illyrians and their country Illyria by foreigners — the Greeks, the Romans, etc. Only the territories to the south of the river Viosa up to the Ambracian Gulf, inhabited by a number of Illyrian tribes such as the Kaons, Thesprotes, Molossi and others, were called Epirus, after the Greek word which means continental land. They were called thus by the Greek inhabitants of the Ionian Islands to differentiate their insular land from the continental land facing them.

The Illyrians had a language of their own: Illyrian. Up to the present no Illyrian text has been discovered. From the Illyrian we know only a few words, which have been transmitted to us from authors of antiquity, a few chiselled inscriptions and considerableonyms, toponyms and hydronyms. This constituted a special branch of the Indo-European family and was closely related to the Thracian.

The similarity with it was so great that a number of scientists have come to the conclusion that the Illyrian and the Thracian were two dialects and not two separate languages.

Through the study of glossological material of the Illyrian language the linguists since long have arrived at the conclusion that present Albanian is derived directly from the Illyrian. Many Illyrian words and names can be explained accurately by means of the corresponding Albanian words, such as: "bile" — bile, bie (daughter); "brention" — brini (horn); "barka" — barku (belly); "bauria" — burri (man), etc., the name of the tribe "Delmat" by the Albanian "delme" or "dele" (sheep); that of the tribe "Dardan" by the Albanian "dardha" (pear); the toponym "Dimalum" by the Albanian "dy-male" (two mountains); the anonym "Bardus" by the Albanian "bardhë" (white); "Bardhylis" by the Albanian "bardhe ylli" (white star), etc. The genetic connection between the Illyrian and the Albanian is likewise demonstrated by other grammatical elements. This connection has been illustrated by scientists through different elements from the sphere of material and spiritual culture, too.

In the Illyrian ethnical sea there were to be met with Thracian isles, too, probably superseded from the period of migration of Thracian tribes which had been assimilated by the Illyrians in the course of time. Probably it is in these isles that have had their origin some Thracian words preserved in present Albanian which have induced a limited number of linguists to consider the Albanian as derived from the Thracian. Partially the origin of these words is to be explained by the proximity of the Illyrians with the Thracians, who in some of the bordering districts had created a symbiosis. An intermediary solution has been chosen by a number of other linguists, who maintain that the Albanian is a progeny of an Illyrian-Thracian symbiosis. But everyone knows that linguistic materials alone are not sufficient to conclude on the genesis of a people. Archaeological, ethnographic and historical materials convince us that the Albanian people constitute a continuation of the Illyrians.

When the Illyrians migrated, they brought into the Balkans the knowledge of the use of bronze. After the elapse of some time from the beginning of the first millennium, in their new home they started to make use of iron. The Illyrian tribes who came to the Balkans at a later period brought with them from their former abode their iron age culture. This is evidenced by the discoveries made in the city of Halstadt of Austria.

It is by the material discovered in a number of inhabited centres and in many tumuli dating from that period, that we come to know about the Illyrian society of the early centuries of their history in the Balkans up to the time when written sources appeared (approximately until the 7th-6th century B.C.). Our knowledge of the Illyrian society of that period has been enriched by the excavations undertaken in these recent years by the Albanian archaeologists. The iron pickaxes, axes, scythes, discovered in the different places of habitation of the Illyrians, lead to the presumption that agriculture was not in a low and backward state. They were cognizant of several agricultural cereals such as wheat, oats, millet; fruits such as apples and grapes; vegetables such as horse-beans, peas, etc. A great source of wealth of their economy was cattle-raising. Spades, axes, hammers, lances, shields, knives, chains, nails, etc. of bronze and iron, buckles, rings, bracelets, earrings, badges and other ornaments of gold and silver, that decorate the shelves of the Museum of Tirana, witness for the relatively advanced handicraft of the Illyrians. In pottery they made use of hand-lathes with which they produced wares in series. The Illyrians of the seacoast were bold sailors. Their crossing *en masse* to Italy demonstrates that since early periods they had ships big enough to traverse freely and unhindered the Adriatic. The fact that Liburnian sailors undertook in the 7th century voyages from northern Dalmatia to the island of Corfu leads to the supposition that they were well acquainted with speedy and light ships. The Illyrians had fortified hamlets. Such fortified strongholds, constructed with huge stones, have been dis-

covered in recent years by Albanian archaeologists within the territory of Albania. In those centuries the Illyrians had started to barter with foreign lands also. The discovered materials demonstrate that barter was carried on with different territories of the Mediterranean basin, primarily with the Phoenician, Hellenic and Italian cities.

To their Balkan homeland the Illyrians brought with them their system of primitive community. But documents lack that would throw light on their social organization in this period. Still, on the basis of their material culture, we can deduct it in general lines. The growth of productive forces, which followed as a result of the new implements and tools in bronze and in iron, brought about the dissolution of the primitive community. Within its frame the private property emerged which, on its part, gave rise to the process of social differentiation. From the surplus in the production some families derived great wealth for themselves; thus, tribal nobility was born which marked the end of the former equality of the members of the community. We perceive the social differentiation at the inventories of the tumuli. Some sepulchres have rich inventories and precious ornaments, others are entirely poor. At the end of this process, the primitive community was dissolved. The society with classes took its place. At the same time within the tribes the first state organisms also made their appearance. In order to defend themselves from the attacks of stronger tribes, as well as with the aim to assail wealthier tribes, some of the Illyrian tribes banded themselves in temporary alliances with each other. With the elapse of time these alliances were transformed into federations, each one known by the name of the most important tribe that took part in it. The most ancient federations that we know of are those which were created with the Enkeleys and Taulans as centre figures. Initially the chief of the federation elected by the common assembly, retained office for a certain period of time. But later, in some of the federations, the chief became a monarch. At the head of the federations of the Enkeleys and of the Taulans stood a king as early as the 7th century

B.C. In some cases, at the head of the federation stood also women, as it was the case with the Liburns, or else there stood two kings, as it was with the Molossi.

On the origin of these federations and their first monarchs, early Greek authors have transmitted to us many legends. Some of these legends treat, for example, the adventures of the early monarchs of Epirotic tribes during the Trojan War.

## THE GREEK COLONIES

From the point of view of social and political organization, the colonies of the Illyrian coast had the same development as the cities of Greece. Each one of them constituted an independent "polis". The language of the colonies was Greek. The customs and religion were the same as those of the place from which they had come. In these colonies from the earliest time relations expanded based on slave-ownership. As a result of their relations, in these colonies the same institutions were implanted that had been adopted in Greece, especially in Korkyra and Corinth.

At the beginning, the supreme organ of the colony was the assembly of the citizens, which met regularly at fixed periods, and chose the "Council of the Phylarches". At the head of the council stood an *archon* and a *prutan*. The council conducted the administration of the city-state. But with the economic prosperity and the spreading of the relations based on slave-ownership, there came also a change in the social structure of the colony. At the head stood the aristocracy, composed of proprietors of land and of slaves. The bulk of the population was constituted by the *demos*, which comprised artisans, merchants, sailors, etc. who were free by law and enjoyed the right to participate in the *helie*. Amidst them there were also quite wealthy craftsmen and merchants. At the bottom stood the slaves and persons deprived of all rights. In the Hellenic colonies there were

Illyrian residents, too. These, though they were not slaves, did not enjoy any of the citizens' rights.

By further growth of power, the landed aristocracy, who were at the same time slave-owners, usurped, almost in all the colonies, the magistracy of the city-state, by dwindling the traditional rights of the people's assembly. The oligarchic domination of the aristocracy gave rise in these colonies to a series of internal wars on the part of *demos*.

Of these wars the most important one was that which broke out in Dyrrachion in the year 496 B.C., led by the craftsmen and rich merchants who, taking advantage of the discontent of the *demos*, expelled the aristocrats from the city.

The banished aristocrats took shelter at the Illyrian neighbours', the Taulants, and solicited their aid, promising them that after the recapture of the city, they would grant to their leaders the citizenship within Dyrrachion. The Taulants accepted this offer and, together with the aristocrats, they started to assail the city by land and by sea.

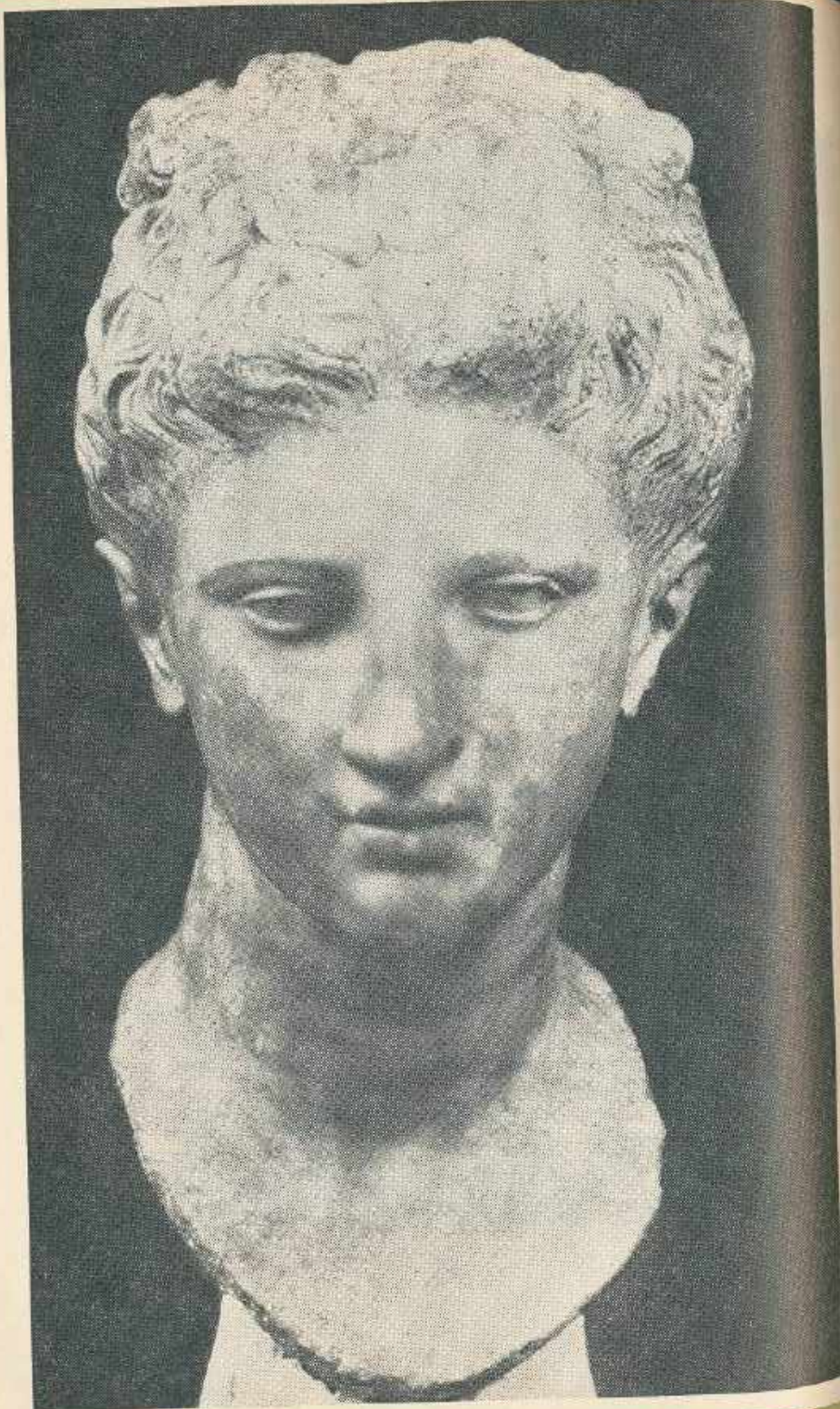
In the civil war of Dyrrachion other cities of Greece, too, took part. Corinth sided with the *demos*, while Korkyra helped the aristocrats. In this conflict, Athens too took part by intervening in favour of the aristocrats. The war lasted over a number of years. In 433 the fleets of Athens and of Korkyra defeated the Corinthian fleet. Afterwards, the aristocrats, with the help of the Taulants and of the Korkyrians, attacked and captured Dyrrachion, re-establishing the oligarchic rule. On account of the help they had given, the Taulant chiefs obtained the rights of citizenship and started living in Dyrrachion. The Civil War of Dyrrachion became, as is well known, the starting point of a war of nearly a quarter of a century that broke out some years later between the Greek cities and which is known under the name of "Peloponnesian War". During this war, Dyrrachion backed Athens.

Thanks to the profits extracted from the exploitation of the slaves and from the trade with the Illyrians, the colonies achieved a speedy cultural development. Ever since the



Site of the ancient city of Apollonia (founded 588 B.C.) with a 16th century Byzantine-style church in the background

early centuries of their foundation, in the colonies were erected beautiful buildings of marble, stone and brick. In the cities dwellings were built with courts, temples consecrated to the deities of the Greek mythology, amphitheatres, where dramas and comedies were staged, odeons for music and song, gymnasiums and palaestrae, where the youth acquired mental and physical culture. The traces of these buildings discovered by archaeologists can be seen even in our days, more especially in Apollonia, Bathrot and Foinike. The cities were surrounded by walls constructed with chiselled stones. In the centre of the city usually there was the *agora*, paved with marble slates, encircled by chiselled columns and adorned with statues of marble. The *agora* served as a square where the citizens met for commercial transactions, for the festive gatherings and different ceremonies. In some colonies ruins of stadiums too have been discovered.



The homes, the temples and the public buildings were embellished with paintings and mosaics and were adorned with sculptures. In the colonies, along with the chiselling of columns and of their capitals with decorations, the monumental sculpture, too, had most conspicuous development. The busts and the statues of gods, goddesses, leading personages, high officials, philosophers, writers and of aristocrats, discovered nowadays, demonstrate the level and the high artistic taste of these colonies. Especially valuable are, among others, the Goddess of Butrint (Apollonia), which is to be found in the Museum of Rome, the heads of Silenus, of Ares and of Demosthenes, discovered in Apollonia, which are kept in the Archaeological Museum of Pojani.

#### ILLYRIAN STATE FORMATIONS (5TH-2ND CENTURY B.C.)

The social differentiation that took place within the Illyrian tribes led also to the establishment of relations based on slave-ownership.

As elsewhere, with the Illyrians also the slavery had at the beginning a patriarchal character. But later on some of the tribes achieved the more advanced forms of slavery. Among the Ardians, for example, the Spartan type of slavery was spread. The Ardians had subjugated a whole population and had made of them mere "prospelates", by exacting from them, as the Spartans did with the Helots, part of their produce. On the contrary, the Dardans, after they had subdued a neighbouring land, had turned its inhabitants into slaves (dullos) and had shared them among themselves. Some chief Dardans had a thousand "dullos" each, and sometimes even more. The slaves of the Dardans in time of peace

← Apollonia, "Goddess of Butrint",  
discovered in Butrint (Buproton)

tilled the land for the benefit of the proprietor, whereas in time of war they had to serve as soldiers under his command. In the 5th to the 2nd century, there were deep in the inland of the country Illyrian tribes that knew nothing about slavery.

The development of the slave-owning relations had affected the whole economy of the country. The craftsmen's production increased still more; so did trade. This brought about the foundation, during the 5th to the 3rd centuries, of a number of towns with Illyrian inhabitants, such as Skodra (Shkodër), Amantia (Ploça, Vlora), Bylis (Hekali, Mallakastra), Foinike (Finiqi, Delvina) and many other smaller towns. From the beginning of the 4th century B.C., the Illyrian towns started the coinage of their own currency.

But the most important result of the diffusion of the slave-owning relations was the passage from the tribal federations to state formations. The most important of these formations were the realms of the Enkeleys, of the Taulants, of Epirus and of the Ardians.

In the 5th century B.C. the Enkeleys who dwelt in the Korça and Devolli plains, founded a strong kingdom, and by stretching towards the east they became neighbours of the Macedonian kingdom. There were long wars between these two kingdoms. For more than 60 years (420-360 B.C.) the Enkeleys had the supremacy. Their kingdom grew stronger, particularly when at the beginning of the 4th century Bardhylus, who distinguished himself as a political leader and as a military commander, ascended to the throne. Bardhylus wrested from Macedonia large tracts of land, he obliged its king to pay him a tribute, and often interfered in matters relating to the throne. Bardhylus was successful in his wars with other neighbours, too.

From the year 360, however, when Philip II ascended to the throne of Macedonia, there was a reverse in the relations between the two neighbouring kingdoms, to the detriment of the Enkeleys. Philip II did not approve of the conditions of submission which had been accepted by his predecessors. At the head of his phalanxes, he attacked several times one

after the other his western neighbours, who defended stubbornly their countries until in 344, taking advantage of the death of Bardhylus, he subjugated the Enkeleys.

After the death of Philip in 335 the Enkeleys, under the leadership of Klit, heir to Bardhylus, freed themselves from the dependence on Macedonia. With the aim to defend their freedom, Klit entered into an alliance with Glaucus, king of the Taulants. But the son of Philip II, Alexander of Macedonia, assailed that same year the Illyrian forces. The decisive battle was fought at Pelion (Vangonji Passage, near Korça), and was crowned, through an artifice of Alexander, with the victory of the Macedonians.

After the death of Alexander, when his big empire was split up, the Enkeleys regained once again their independence. But their realm, besides being small in size, continually got weaker, and could not play any important role.

In the 5th century B.C. the Taulants, too, who had occupied the territories along the coastline of Albania of today, established likewise an independent kingdom. About the middle of the 4th century, the Taulant kings captured Dyr-rachion, and later Apollonia also. But at the same time, they had to fight against the kings of Macedonia, who aimed to reach the Adriatic coast. In order to frustrate the Macedonian attempts, the most renowned king of the Taulants, Glaucus, entered into an alliance with Klit. As has been explained above, the armies of the two Illyrian allies, however, were beaten at Pelion by Alexander of Macedonia, who, though victorious, did not continue his push towards the coast.

The conflicts with Macedonia continued even after the death of Alexander. One of the reasons that aggravated the relations between Glaucus of the Taulants and Cassander of the Macedonians, was the struggles to secure supremacy in Epirus.

Towards the end of the 5th century B.C., the Epirotic tribes had united themselves with the Molossi and had created a federation, which was called by the ancient Greek authors as "Koinen of the Molossi" (League of the Molossis).

At the head of the league stood a hereditary monarch, whose power was limited by a council of notables and by the people's assembly. Sometimes at the head of the Molossi League there were two kings.

The Epirots too had to fight against the Macedonian kings. But in the year 345 the Molossi were defeated. Philip II placed on the Epirotic throne his brother-in-law Alexander Molossus, and later the son of the latter, Neoptolem II, thus affirming his influence and authority.

After the death of Alexander of Macedonia, the Molossi banished Neoptolem II and chose as king in his stead Ayakid of the ancient Epirotic dynasty, who conducted an independent policy. But in the year 317 Cassander of Macedonia invaded the country with his armies, chased away Ayakid and installed Neoptolem II as king. Cassander's rival, Glaucus of the Taulants, took under his protection into his court the son of Ayakid, the two-year-old Pyrrhus, whom he refused to surrender even after Cassander had menaced him with war. On the contrary, feeling himself strong enough, in 307 Glaucus invaded Epirus, upset the authority and the rule of the party friendly to the Macedonians, and put onto the throne his ally, the 12-year-old Pyrrhus. The unrest and the troubles continued in Epirus further on. In 302 Pyrrhus was chased out by his opponents who brought back Neoptolem to the throne. For a number of years Pyrrhus resided in various places, in Egypt, Syracuse, Macedonia, where he acquired culture and learned the art of war. In 296, the 23-year-old Pyrrhus returned once again to Epirus. For some time he reigned as king together with Neoptolem, and after Neoptolem was killed, he became the only ruler of the Molossi League. Pyrrhus consolidated the royal authority, put a limit to the prerogatives of the Council of the Notables, and made out of the Molossi League a powerful state. He conducted an independent policy in respect both of the Macedonians as well as of the Taulants, who had supported him. Pyrrhus extended the boundaries of Epirus: on the east deep into Macedonia up to the Vardar river, on the south in the territories of Greece up to the Peloponne-

sian Gulf, on the north, in the homeland of the Taulants up to the Shkumbin river.

After these successes, Pyrrhus, who dreamt of building an empire as vast as that of Alexander, cast his eyes on Italy. The opportunity was offered to him when Tarento solicited his support in order to defend itself against Rome. In 280 B.C., at the head of 3,000 men and 20 elephants, he crossed over to Italy, and that same year he obtained at Heraclea a brilliant victory over the Roman army. A year later, in 279, at Ausculum, the Epirotes had another clash with the Roman army, which this time comprised 70,000 men. The Epirotes were victorious, but their losses in men were so great that Pyrrhus said: "If I obtain another similar victory, there will remain no one to go back with me to Epirus!" In the third encounter that he had with the Roman army in 275, Pyrrhus was defeated and returned to Epirus. Here he undertook a series of campaigns against Macedonia, then he crossed over to Peloponnese in order to assail Macedonia's ally, Sparta. But in an encounter in the city of Argos, he was killed in 272.

Pyrrhus has been one of the most remarkable military leaders not only of the Illyrians, but of the whole of the ancient age. He distinguished himself as a statesman, too. With him Epirus reached the climax of its power. But after Pyrrhus' death, the Epirotic aristocracy, discontented with his ruler, rose against the monarchic regime. On account of these internal conflicts, the kingdom of Epirus was gradually weakened. The conquered lands broke off one after the other. In 230 the aristocracy at last upset the monarchic regime and re-established the former league called "Koinon of the Epirus", with its capital in Foinike. Instead of the king, at the head of the league was put a chief who was elected once every year. However, the "League of the Epirotes" too, was considerably weak.

During the 3rd century B.C., while the states of the Enkeleys, of the Taulants and of the Epirotes were weakening, another Illyrian state, that of the Ardians, which occupied the coast regions between Dalmatia and Montenegro and

had its capital in Rizon, was speedily acquiring strength and power.

During the reign of their king Agron (250-231 B.C.), the Ardians conquered the Hellenic colonies which were founded on the Dalmatian coast. After that they expanded southward up to Shkodër, which they made the new capital of their realm. From here they spread further to the south at the expense of the territories of the Taulant kingdom, which in these circumstances was dissolved entirely. During Agron's reign, the Ardian kingdom became a mighty sea power.

Agron died in the year 231, leaving as heir an under-age son, Pines. The management of state affairs was taken up by Teuta, Agron's second wife, who reigned as guardian of her step-son Pines. The queen, young and energetic, continued in the policy of conquests that had been initiated by Agron. With the army and the big fleet which she had prepared, she assailed the League of the Epirotes by land and by sea, conquered their capital Foinike, and inflicted on the Epirotes a number of defeats, but at the moment of the victory she had to conclude peace with the Epirotes and to withdraw her forces in order to protect her domains from the Dardans who attacked from the east.

Through a series of alliances she concluded with the rulers of Macedonia, Epirus and Akarnania, Teuta strengthened the positions of her state. However, the successes of Teuta did not last long. The strengthening of the Ardian kingdom and its equipment with a powerful fleet, which undertook courageously actions on the sea, annoyed Rome, which endeavoured to bring the Adriatic Sea under its control. For this purpose Rome decided to break down the supremacy of the Ardians at sea.

The pretext for war soon was found. As some Roman ships were assailed on open sea by Illyrian ships, the Roman senate sent to Shkodër two envoys, who demanded from Teuta indemnity for the losses sustained and threatened her seriously in case she neglected taking measures against the Ardian sailors. Teuta refused to satisfy this claim. On the

other hand, on the way back to Rome, one of the two envoys was murdered during the journey. Exploiting this murder as "casus belli", Rome declared war on the Ardian kingdom. The military operations began in the autumn of the year 229 B.C.

The war did not proceed in the favour of the Ardians. The commander of the Illyrian fleet, Dhimiter Fari, betrayed and surrendered to the enemy without fighting. Left without a fleet and without allies, Teuta was constrained after a year to sign an onerous peace treaty. The boundaries of the Ardian kingdom were dwindled down, and it assumed the obligation not to entertain any war fleet.

After some years Teuta died. Dhimiter Fari succeeded her, in the capacity of guardian to Pines, who was still under-age.

Dhimiter did not agree to the submission of the country to Rome, and accordingly he disengaged himself from it and allied his country with Macedonia. Within a short period of time, after he had restored an efficient army, he built a new fleet and extended the state up to its former boundaries. Rendered uneasy by these actions, especially by the alliance with its rival Macedonia, in 219 B.C. Rome declared war once more against the Illyrian state. The military operations extended, this time also, almost over a year. In this occurrence Rome bribed and made for itself the other renowned commander of the Ardians, Scerdilaides. In 218, after a reckless battle, which was fought on the island of Fari, Dhimiter was beaten and fled to Macedonia. With his departure, Rome at once concluded peace with Scerdilaides, because its position in the Italian peninsula was becoming precarious on account of the war preparations Hannibal of Carthage had undertaken. The peace terms of 218 were the same as those of the peace of 228.

Scerdilaides, who on behalf of Pines was placed at the head of the Ardians, observed fidelity to the alliance with Rome. He took part, on the side of Rome, in the prolonged war it waged against Macedonia. Further, he bore the main burden of the wars that were fought within the territory of



Albania against Philip V of Macedonia. The wars were carried on sometimes in favour of Scerdilaides, and sometimes in that of Philip V, and continued until Macedonia was defeated and was constrained to accept the terms of the peace treaty imposed by Rome.

Scerdilaides and after him his son Pleuriat pursued the policy of dependence on Rome. Whereas the son of Pleuriat, Genth, who acceded to the throne about the year 181, strove for a long while to break away from this dependence. With this aim in view he strengthened the ties with the neighbouring states, especially with Macedonia, whose ruler Perseus fostered the ambition to break the Roman power.

In the year 170 B.C., after the war had been rekindled between Rome and Macedonia, Genth decided to enter into the war on the side of Perseus. According to the military agreement concluded between them, the Ardiens would fight mainly with the fleet, the Macedonians with land troops. They were joined also by the Epirotic League.

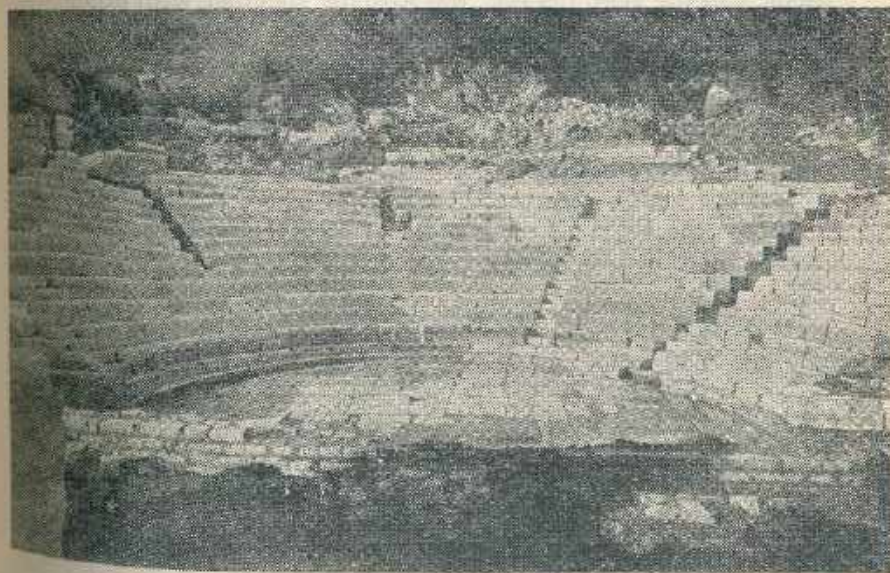
In compliance with the agreement, Genth began the war operations on sea. But in the year 168, the Romans landed many troops on the coasts of Illyria, and instead of directing them to Macedonia, assailed with great speed Shkodër, which they besieged. At the same time, through bribes in money which they distributed, they split the ranks of the chiefs of the various Illyrian tribes which were subdued by Genth. Because of the underestimation of the forces of the enemy Genth, instead of prolonging the fighting until the arrival of Macedonian troops, led his army out of the castle of Shkodër and attacked the Romans on open ground, where he suffered a complete defeat. Genth surrendered with his whole family and was sent to Rome as a prisoner-of-war.

After the victory of Shkodër, the Roman army were riveted on Perseus, who suffered a decisive defeat in Pydna. The following year, 167 B.C., after strenuous fighting, the Romans subdued Epirus too. During the operations in Epirus, the Romans destroyed 70 towns and sold into slavery 150 thousand persons.

Different from how it had acted previously, this time Rome proceeded to the definite conquest of the territories of southern Illyria. Thus in the years 168-167 B.C. the Illyrian states and the Macedonian state came to an end. From that date begins for the Illyrians the long period of Roman rule, which lasted more than five and a half centuries — up to the year 395 A.D.

## ILLYRIA UNDER THE ROMAN RULE

After it had annihilated the Ardiens state and the Epirotic League, Rome undertook in the following decades a series of campaigns with the aim of destroying the other Illyrian states and federations and of conquering their territories. Through great efforts it succeeded during the 2nd century to



Amphitheatre of Butrint (Bujroton) as it is today

break the resistance of the Illyrians and to conquer only the regions along the Adriatic coast. The Illyrians who lived in the inner regions of the Balkans preserved for a considerable time their freedom.

In the course of these campaigns the Romans caused great damage to the countries they had conquered. The slave-owning Rome established in the captured regions its iron rule. The Illyrians, who formerly had enjoyed the rights of freemen, became inhabitants without any rights at all. Whole tribes were removed from their homelands, were sold as slaves or were exterminated, as it was the case, for example, with the Ardians. Roman soldiers and peasants were installed in the most fertile tracts of land of the peasants.

The Illyrians frequently revolted against the system of oppression and exploitation of slave-owning Rome. In some cases the revolts took large proportions and were connected with the revolts which took place in other regions or that had broken out when Rome found itself in difficult situations. In the year 134 B.C. the Ardians, together with other tribes, seized arms in order to regain their freedom. Enormous damage was caused to the Romans by the revolt of the Dalmatians in the year 119 B.C., and in uncommon degree their other revolt which broke out in the year 78 B.C., for the suppression of which Rome had to fight for two whole years. During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, the Illyrians once again availed themselves of the opportunity to seize arms and won their freedom for some time.

However, the most noteworthy revolt of the Illyrians was the one that broke out during the reign of Augustus, in the year 9 A.D., which under the leadership of Bato lasted three years. The insurgents, approximately 200 thousand strong, set free the major part of Illyria and prepared to march into the Italic peninsula. The Roman rulers were so much alarmed by the impetus of the revolt, that they ordered general mobilization. Against the insurgents they sent the greater part of the imperial army. The Illyrians resisted

with heroism. In the fighting Illyrian women too took part. However, at the end, the Romans succeeded through treason in undermining the revolt and then in crushing it.

In the first centuries A.D., when Rome became a world empire, Illyria had an economic revival. This was partly due to the favourable geographic position of Illyria. It was through this territory among others that passed the principal road, known by the name of "Via Egnatia", which bound Rome with the eastern regions of the Empire.

In particular the towns came to enjoy in these centuries a certain prosperity. The most conspicuous among them was Dyrrachion. The Roman laws gave an impulse to the speedy development of the relations based on slave-ownership. Senators and high officials came over to Illyria and founded here vast estates. In the towns as well as in these large estates the number of Illyrian slaves rose continually.

Yet a part of the Illyrian population escaped from becoming slaves. This free population resided in the inner mountainous regions, and was organized in the majority of cases in shepherd or peasant communities. These communities preserved to a certain degree their tribal feature. Rome issued special laws for their administration. This population juridically was free. It stood between the Roman population who enjoyed the citizen's right and the mass of slaves who had no rights whatsoever. The geographer of the 2nd century A.D., Ptolomy from Alexandria of Egypt, gives us a list of these Illyrian tribes. He mentions among them a tribe with the name of "Albanoi" who dwelt in the mountainous regions between Durrës and Dibra, and their town Albanopolis.

From this mass of free peasants, who obtained the right of citizenship with the decree of Caracalla of the year 212 A.D., Rome tried to recruit soldiers for the defence of its frontiers, which barbarian tribes had started to assail. Their forces grew in manpower to that extent that Illyrian military chiefs began to play important roles in the political life of Rome, by succeeding to fill even the post of the

emperor. For nearly one hundred years (247-361 A.D.), emperors of Illyrian origin ruled one after the other.

The most renowned of these emperors was Diocletian from the Illyrian region of Diocle. One of the most important measures taken by him was the reorganization of the Empire administration. According to this reorganization, the territories of Albania were divided into three provinces: the province of Preval with its headquarters in Shkodër, which depended on the diocese of Dakia; the province of New Epirus (Epirus Nova) with its headquarters in Dyrrachion from the river Mati up to Vjosa; the province of former Epirus (Epirus Vetus) with its headquarters in Nikopojë, from the river Vjosa up to the gulf of Preveza. These two provinces depended on the diocese of Macedonia. The dioceses of Dakia and of Macedonia were comprised in the Prefecture of Illyricum, which included the whole of the Balkans.

Simultaneously with the big landlords, various Roman citizens, craftsmen, merchants, sailors, peasants, soldiers, officials, etc., had established themselves in Illyria. Their number continually increased. They brought with them not only the language, but also the customs, culture and religion of Rome. With their increase, Latin spread speedily in the towns of the country, not only as the official language, but also as the language of social intercourse. With the spread of Latin and through the adoption of Roman habits began the romanization of the Hellenes of the colonies and of the Illyrians of the towns. Outside the towns, particularly in the regions further inland, the process of romanization was frustrated. The Illyrians in major part preserved their language. Many Latin words, however, permeated into the Illyrian language. A number of these words are preserved even at present in the Albanian language. The Christian religion, which had appeared in the 1st century A.D. as the doctrine of the slaves and of the poor against the oppressive apparatus of slave-holding Rome, found supporters also in Illyria. Since the 2nd century mention is made of clandestine committees of Christians in Dyrrah and in Aulon (Vlorë). In this century two of the earliest

Illyrian proselytes of the new faith preached St. Ast in Dyrrah and St. Donat in Aulon, whom the Christian church has canonized.

With the lapse of time the Christian religion, from an ideology of the oppressed masses, became an ideology to delude these masses in the interest of the slave-owning state authorities, and as such was proclaimed in the year 373 by Emperor Constantine, who too was of Illyrian origin, as the official religion of the Roman Empire. The earliest episcopates of Albania mentioned in documentary sources appertain precisely to the 4th century. Up to the 8th century these episcopates were subordinated, through the archbishops of their respective provinces, to the Roman Catholic Church.

As in the year 395, Emperor Theodos divided the empire into two independent parts: the Roman Empire of the West, with Rome as its capital, and the Roman Empire of the East, with Constantinople as its capital. The territories of Albania were comprised in the Eastern, or, as it was called later, in the Byzantine Empire.

## THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BYZANTINE RULE

In the Byzantine Empire the crisis in the system of slave-ownership had not taken so extensive proportions as in the West. Here still were to be met masses of free peasants and of free craftsmen, interested in the increase of the production. The Byzantine Empire, to which a series of circumstances had been propitious, not only opposed strenuous resistance to the attacks of the barbarians, which brought the complete annihilation of the Roman Empire in the West in 476, but it succeeded in prolonging its life for another thousand years. Thus, as soon as it freed itself from the sway of Rome, Albania fell under the domination of the

powerful Byzantine state. This domination lasted several centuries. By entering under the Byzantine yoke in the territories of Albania no changes at all took place in its economic and social structure. The system of slave-ownership was preserved both in the cities and in the countryside. The administrative division, too, carried through during the reign of Diocletian, remained unchanged. For a considerable period of time Latin prevailed as the official language. Only the geographic position of the territories of Albania within the empire had changed. While formerly they were located almost at the centre of the Roman Empire, now they were at the boundary line of the Byzantine Empire.

Under the rule of the Byzantine Empire there was an increase in the number of the large estates and in that of the slaves and tenant-farmers. Yet in the 5th century and later, there still existed whole masses of free peasants, organized in communities of peasants and shepherds; and in the towns, along with the slaves who laboured in the workshops of craftsmen, there were still craftsmen and workers who were juridically free.

The existence of free citizens and of free peasants made it possible for the country to preserve further the economic vitality. This vitality was favoured also by the roads of communication which run across the territories of Albania, especially by Via Egnatia, which was travelled by various caravans that carried on the commerce between the East and the West. Because of this vitality some of the cities grew still more. Dyrrachion in this century reached the climax of its prosperity. It became the most important port of Byzantium in the West, there came ships from all parts of the Mediterranean Sea. With its numerous workshops, beautiful buildings, amusement places and its vitality, Dyrrachion attracted the admiration of all contemporary peoples and was called "the flower-garden of the Adriatic". According to the tradition, it had at this period 80 thousand inhabitants. While Apollonia lost its former importance, the city of Foinike grew still more. A legend of this time relates for this city that it was so huge that it had



Holy Mary Church in Byzantine style, in a monastery at Apollonia (now Poyan), built in the 14th century

9,000 women who were called "Maria". Along the Via Egnatia, some of the former halting-places for the caravans developed into towns. Such were, for example, Scampa near Elbasan, which name is preserved at present by the river Shkumbin, Deabolis, the site of which is not known for certain, but its name is preserved in our days by the river Devoll, etc.

But this prosperity was of short duration. The more the relations of slave-ownership extended, the more the inner crisis of this system grew in intensity. The slave-owners raised to such a degree the obligations of the tenants to them that the latter began to desert the farms. The Byzantine state issued special laws whereby the tenants were bound to the soil and they were no more free to leave the land. In the cities also the craftsmen were constrained to band themselves in guilds, thus losing also their freedom. In great need of money, the Byzantine state raised the rate of taxes and extended the labour without remuneration. Under

the burden of these measures, poor peasants and citizens began to be ruined, to abandon their business and to swarm to the big estates or to the workshops of wealthy proprietors. The economic situation of Illyria, in general, was shaken. But it received the decisive blow from the invasion of the barbarians.

Until the end of the 4th century, the territory of Albania was almost entirely spared from these attacks. But in the year 395 great hordes of Visigoths, led by Alaric, invaded it without encountering any opposition, and sacked and plundered Illyria, Macedonia, Epirus and Greece, where they remained up to the year 408. In 441 the Illyrian region of Dardania (at present Kosova) experienced the ravaging onrush of Attila's Huns, while in 461 the Ostrogoths invaded the territories of Albania, aiming prevalently at the cities. The terror felt from the former invasions was so great that the news in itself of the approach once again of the barbarians caused panic in the native population who deserted the cities and the castles and fled either to the mountainous regions or to the Dalmatian islands. Dyrrachion and Scampa were conquered by the Ostrogoths and thoroughly pillaged by them. In the year 479 the Ostrogoths invaded once again the territories of Albania, and remained there nine years. However, though the country had not as yet recovered from the damages it had suffered from these attacks, at the end of the 5th century other barbarian hordes, composed of Turanic-Bulgarian tribes, after crushing the resistance of the Byzantine army, overran the Balkans from east to west.

The barbarian invasions affected deeply Albania. The country in its major part was devastated, the population decreased, many villages were abandoned, a good number of the cities, excepting those that had fortifications, were pillaged.

The barbarian invasions shook to the root the Byzantine Empire. Everywhere a sense of insecurity prevailed, which produced calamitous effects on the economic life. The Byzantine Empire began to take measures for the protec-

tion of its boundaries and for the normalization of the internal situation. With this aim in view, three emperors who reigned from the year 492 to the year 565 — Anastas, Justin and Justinian, all three of Illyrian origin — constructed a series of fortifications in order to strengthen the defence of the boundaries and of the cities in the Balkans and in Illyria. Emperor Anastas ordered the construction of a system of defence for Dyrrachion, consisting of three rows of walls. Nevertheless vaster constructions were completed during the reign of Emperor Justinian. In the province of New Epirus alone 32 new fortresses were erected and 26 old ones were restored; in the Ancient Epirus a vast number of these were constructed, whereas in Dardania eight new fortresses were constructed and 61 old fortresses restored.

However, in spite of all these constructions, the Byzantine Empire, exhausted on account of the endless wars, was no longer able to protect its boundaries. In 450 the country was flooded once again by Huno-Bulgarian hordes, which captured and demolished 32 fortresses in New Epirus and in Prevalis. It was not able to stop even the Slav populations from crossing the river Samb and invading the different regions of the Balkans. In the year 548, Slavs appeared even before the gates of Dyrrachion.

Attached to agriculture much more than the other barbarians, the Slavs started to search fertile land to settle down. By taking advantage of the weakness of the empire, they spread themselves thoroughly in the Balkans. The Slavs began to settle down in the territories of Albania towards the end of the 6th century and colonized the tracts of land best fit for agriculture. But more extensive colonization took place during the 7th century.

As the country was ruined by the former invasions, the Slavs founded, wherever they settled, a vast number of villages. The names of Slav origin of certain villages, plains, hills, mountains and rivers of Albania, as is the case also with other sites throughout the Balkans, are derived partly from that time.

By settling down on arable lands, the Slavs ejected definitely the proprietors of big estates and constrained them either to take refuge in cities or to migrate from Albania, thus destroying the slave-ownership institutions. With their cancellation the slaves and tenants returned to be independent peasants. At the same time, the Illyrian tribes, who had been enslaved in the mountainous districts inland, were also liberated from the slave-owners' pressure. Thus, as a result of the barbarian invasions and particularly of the Slav colonization on the one hand, and of the revolts of the slaves and of the tenants on the other, the system of slave-ownership in the territories of Albania came to an end.

Though on the seashore districts there remained some institutions related to slave-ownership, these existed as remnants of the former system and did not play any important role. The dominant mass of the population who resided in the territory of Albania in the 7th century consisted of free peasants and mountaineers, organized in rural communities of peasants and shepherds. Ethnically this population was a mixed one; along with the Illyrian population, which constituted the majority, now there were strong Slav colonies, whereas on the coast there were Roman colonies or else romanized Illyrians.

### ALBANIA, 8TH-11TH CENTURY

The end of the Roman domination in 395 and of Roman institutions in the 6th-7th century brought to an end also the process of romanization in Illyria. However the settlement of new Slav populations created the danger of slavization. The life in common with them for a long period of time slavized entire Illyrian tribes. In the districts of present Slovenia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia, the Illyrian population was entirely assim-

lated. Whereas in the regions of southern Illyria, especially in the districts of Albania of today, of Kosova, of Dukagjini highland, of Dibra, the Illyrian populations preserved their ethnical character.

Still, this age-old population, by imbibing linguistic and cultural elements in ancient times from the Thracians and from the Romans, and now in the Middle Ages from the Slavs and the Byzantines, achieved its own evolution. This young population, which was wrought during the first millennium A.D., entered into the history of the Middle Ages with a new name — with the name of the Illyrian tribe Albanoi which dwelt in ancient times in the regions between Durrës and Dibra. Albanoi, Albanenses, Arban, are the designations usually employed by the strangers. The Albanians in the Middle Ages called themselves Arber or Arbereshe.

In the 8th century the overwhelming majority of the population which dwelt in the territory of Albania was organized in communities partly of peasants and partly of cattle raisers. Each community comprised a certain number of families, which in some of the cases had tribal relations between them, and in others only neighbourly relations. Initially the fields, pastures, woodlands, water-courses, gardens were all *kujri*, i.e. property of the whole community. The arable lands were allotted and re-allotted from time to time to each family. Each single family itself produced almost all the necessaries of life — agricultural, dairy and industrial products. They felt scarcely any need for bartering. In cases of necessity they exchanged between them through bartering — product for product. The circulation of money was extremely limited. They had practically no relations with the town.

Thus, by the disappearance of the slave-ownership system, Albania turned back to natural economy. On account of this, the towns that were ruined during the barbarian invasions could not recover. They remained either demolished or diminished in size. With the exception of Durrës, they possessed neither craftsmen, merchants or cultural institu-

tions. They had principally an agricultural feature, with a certain amount of importance as military and administrative centres.

In the time, during the 7th-10th century, a part of the grounds of the community, the fields, gardens and vineyards became private property of the family, while the *kujri* began to diminish.

With the strengthening of private proprietorship on land, the member of the community, when he got impoverished, began to sell his land and to remain without it. In order to secure the means to live, these impoverished peasants were constrained to labour on the fields of others, as leaseholders, paying the landlord one-tenth of the produce (*morte*). From the term used *morte* to designate what was due to be paid, these peasants came to be called *mortite*. After the emergence of the *mortites*, the community began to dissolve.

The lands of the impoverished peasants were acquired by the religious institutions, by military officers and by wealthy landlords, who constituted a special class, the class of *dinati*. The Byzantine emperors themselves bestowed on *dinats* vast tracts of land. On the other hand also the *dinats*, particularly clerical *dinats*, began to encroach on the lands of the peasants and, in some cases, on those of the entire communities.

After acquiring economic and political power, the *dinats* in due course extended over the *mortites* the feudal system. Thus during these centuries in Albania emerged feudal relations. These relations in the 8th-10th century were considerably limited. We find the first *mortites* turned into serfs (*parike*), juridically in bondage, mentioned in written documents only in the beginning of the 10th century.

The measures taken by the Byzantine Empire for the reinforcement of its military power and for the resistance against the attacks from outside the boundaries included also Albania. In the 9th century, with the aim of defending the provinces of Albania imperilled by the Bulgarians,

who had founded their state alongside the Danube some time before, and against the Arabs, who had landed in southern Italy, Byzantium created here two "themes". One of them comprised the former regions and provinces of Preval and of New Epirus, and was called after its chief town the Theme of Durazzo. The other comprised the territories from the river Vjosa up to the Gulf of Corinth, and was called, this too, after its chief town the "Theme of Nikopoja".

But these measures did not give any result. In 851 under the king Presian the Bulgarians captured Ohri (Ohrida) and Devol, under the king Boris (852-889) Berat and Mallakstra, reaching the seacoast to the north of Vlora; and under Czar Simeon (893-927) they conquered all the lands of the "Theme of Nikopoja" and 30 castles in the "Theme of Durrës", but they failed to capture the city of Durrës itself.

After the death of Czar Simeon, the Bulgarian kingdom declined for nearly half a century. But it maintained under its control the conquered territories of Albania. Towards the end of the 10th century, under the command of Samuil, the Bulgarian kingdom recovered itself, having now as its capital the city of Ohri. Samuil extended still further the boundaries of his realm. In 989 he captured also Durrës, the chief town of the "theme". However, these conquests did not last. The Byzantine emperor, Vasil II, by means of the steps he took, inflicted on Samuil a series of defeats. The last fighting between them took place in the territory of Albania, in the neighbourhood of Berat, and ended in the year 1018 with the victory of the Empire of Constantinople. Thus, after a century and a half, Byzantine rule was re-established in Albania.

Nevertheless, in the 11th century the Byzantine Empire was traversing a very serious economic, social and political crisis. In order to restore its military power, the Byzantine state raised the taxes, besides establishing a tax to be paid in money, which the peasants with their system of economy of exchange in kind were unable to pay. The state taxes

and the arbitrariness of the officials in the exaction of the taxes along with the exploitation and the extortions by the *dinats* as everywhere else in Albania also gave grounds for revolts.

Of these, the most momentous was the uprising of the years 1040-1041, which had been started in the districts of Macedonia by the Slav population under the leadership of Peter Deliani and later spread in the "themes" of Durrës, where the insurgents had as leader an impoverished *stratiot* by the name of Timomir.

Within a short period the two revolts were blended into a single mighty uprising under the command of Delian. The rebels were almost 40 thousand in number, and achieved important successes. They even liberated Durrës. However the Byzantines with their numerous armies crushed the revolt of the year 1041.

The discontent of the peasants was exploited also by the dukes of the "theme" of Durrës in concord with the local *dinats*, who after they were strong enough, aimed at usurping the imperial power. In 1044 the Duke of Durrës, Gjergj (Georges) Maniakes, by securing the support of the population of the "themes" through promises, revolted and proclaimed himself emperor and marched on Constantinople, but on his way was routed by the imperial armies. The Byzantine chronicler Mihal Ataliades says that amid the rebels there were Arbreshes, too. Similar revolts broke out also later in 1077, led by Duke Nikifor Brienis and in 1080, led by his successor Duke Vasilakios of Paflagonia. But this rising failed too.

The energetic Pope of Rome, Gregory VII tried to take advantage of the deep political crisis, into which the Byzantine Empire had sunk, by extending on the Balkan territories the authority of the Western Church at the expense of the Oriental Church, the two churches being separated from one another definitely in the year 1054. With the aid of the Prince of Zeta, he founded at Tivar in 1077 a Catholic Archbishopric, to which were attached bishoprics of northern Albania, thus paving the way to the spreading of

Catholicism in these districts. Almost at the same time, he incited against the Byzantine Empire the Normans, who had settled down in Italy some time previously.

Under the command of Robert Guiscard, 30 thousand rapacious Norman warriors greedy for plunder, landed in May of the year 1081 on the Albanian coast. After capturing the districts on the coast, they marched on Durrës, which they besieged. The Venetian allies of the Byzantines assailed with their fleet the Norman fleet north of Durrës near "Bishti i Pallës" and annihilated it. In October, the Byzantine Emperor Alex Comneni came to Albania with his armies, but at the encounter he had with Guiscard south of Durrës near "Shkemb i Kavajës" (Kavaja Rock), the Byzantines suffered an ignominious defeat. For several months besieged Durrës remained in the hands of the Albanian functionary who held the Byzantine title of "Comes Cortis". In February of the year 1082 through the treason of Venetian residents of Durrës, the Normans captured the city. Later they extended their domination over other districts of Albania and pillaged the country. However, the Normans did not hold these regions long. Constrained by an insurrection that broke out in southern Italy, Robert Guiscard in 1083 withdrew his armies from Albania.

In 1096, some of the first groups of Crusaders passed through Albanian territory, among whom were the Normans with their king, Boemund, the son of Robert Guiscard. The passage of the famished Crusader throngs caused great damage to the country.

In 1107 Boemund organized the second Norman expedition against Byzantium. Norman armies in great strength landed at Vlora and thence they marched once again on Durrës. In spite of the vast military means he made use of during this expedition, Boemund did not succeed in capturing the town. Fighting took place between the Normans and the Byzantines in a number of localities of Albania. In 1108 the Normans were beaten; Boemund made peace and then together with his armies he left for Italy.



Albania suffered great despoliations from the Norman attacks. It suffered losses also from the two attacks made by the Normans in the 12th century — in 1149 when they looted and demolished a number of towns on the coast, and in 1185 when they marched once again against Byzantium without achieving any success.

## THE PRINCIPALITY OF ALBANIA

During the 12th century feudal relations penetrated into the inner mountainous regions of Albania. Here, too, feudal nobility was created. In these districts the nobility in general was of Arbresh origin. In the process of its growth it had clashes with the power of Byzantine and Slav feudals. In order to open a way for itself for further development and reinforcement, it strove to break away from the foreign domination and to create an independent state. The opportunity for the creation of this state presented itself in the latter part of the 12th century, when in the Byzantine Empire germinated again a deep political crisis, which brought in its train the decline of the empire. The Albanian nobles freed themselves from the Byzantine control and founded in 1190 their independent principality, which is the first Albanian feudal state known as yet. The territories of this principality extended over the present-day districts of central Albania. Its capital was at Kruja.

The first ruler of the Principality of Arbëria was Archon Progon (1190-1198) about whose life and doings we know nothing in detail. After Progon, his son Gjini (1199-1206) was proclaimed as ruler, during whose reign the Byzantine Empire was crushed altogether by the Crusaders of the fourth expedition. By this dissolution, the Arbresh Principality got rid of the Byzantine oppression. On the other hand, it fell under the pressure of neighbouring feudal states, such as the Despotate of Epirus in the south, the

Zetan state on the north, and the duchy of Durrës on the west, this latter created by the Republic of Venice. In order to cope with the Republic of St. Mark, which aimed at including within the boundaries of the duchy of Durrës the territories of independent Arbëria too, Dhimiter (1206-1216), who had succeeded his brother Gjini, solicited the support of the Pope by promising him that he would be converted to Catholicism and established bonds of friendship with the ruler of the Serbian state of Rasha by marrying his daughter, Comneni, who was the niece of the Byzantine emperor. And at the same time he drew closer to the Despotate of Epirus and to the Republic of Ragusa. The friendship with the Pope was of short duration and soon turned into ill-feeling. In spite of it, by the steps he had undertaken, Dhimiter succeeded to face the pressure on the part of the Venetian Republic, as well as that of its ally, the Zetan state, and the interference of Rome.

Concerning the short life of this principality, we actually have the deed of the commercial accord signed between it and the Republic of Ragusa. On behalf of the principality, Dhimiter and fourteen other Arbresh nobles affixed their signatures pledging to respect the agreement, which provided peace with Ragusa and assured the Ragusian citizens of free passage through the territory of Arbëria without having to pay any toll and without being molested. Dhimiter signs himself as the "great Archon", which means feudal overlord. The titles of Dhimiter and of his nobles demonstrate that the Arbresh state was organized on the basis of the feudal hierarchy.

Nevertheless the Principality of Arbëria was unable to keep its independence for a long period. After the death of Dhimiter in 1216, a native noble by the name of Grigor Kamona was elected as ruler of Arbëria. This latter could not withstand the pressure of the neighbour on the south, the Despotate of Epirus which, expanding towards the north, brought under its control the Arbresh Principality also.

After extending his authority over the Principality of Arbëria, the Despot of Epirus, Theodor Angelos Komnenas (1216-1230) undertook a series of campaigns for restoring the Byzantine Empire, which was overthrown. However his plans met with opposition from the Tsar of the Bulgarians, Ivan Asen. In the war between them in 1230, Theodor was overwhelmingly beaten. The Macedonian and the Albanian territories fell under the sway of the Bulgarians.

Some years later, the successor of Theodor, Mihal II (1230-1266), restarted the campaigns. This time the Despotate of Epirus clashed with the emperor of the Byzantine Empire of Nicaea, who had crossed over from Asia Minor to the Balkans. Between them endless wars took place, which terminated in the defeat of Mihal II. In 1253, the emperor of Nicaea, by promising to the Arbreshes self-government, extended his authority over Albania too.

But the emperor of Nicaea did not keep his promise; therefore the Albanians revolted in the year 1257 and chased from their country the Nicaean armies. The Arbreshes defended their freedom for nearly a year. Only in 1258, after the emperor of Nicaea had brought over numerous Nicaean armies, was the insurrection crushed.

The Arbresh insurrection gave the possibility to Mihal II of Epirus to start afresh the struggle against the Nicaean emperor. At the same time he concluded an alliance with the king of Sicily, Manfred Hohenstaufen, to whom he granted the hand of his daughter Helena in marriage, and gave as dowry a number of cities, such as Corfu, Vlora, Kanina, Berat and others. In spite of the aid of Manfred, Mihal II met with failure. In 1261 the emperor of Nicaea conquered Constantinople, restored the Byzantine Empire and not long after subdued the Despotate of Epirus.

Manfred Hohenstaufen together with his German and Arab vassals maintained his possessions in Albania only for a short while. In the clash he had in 1266 with Charles d'Anjou he was defeated and killed. Charles d'Anjou, who became king of Sicily, seized also the possessions of Manu-

fred in Albania, Vlora, Kanina, Berat, and later extended these possessions by capturing in 1272 also Durrës, the principal city of mediaeval Albania.

In the hope to win the good-will and the favour of the native population, Charles proclaimed at Naples on February 21, 1272, the creation of the "Kingdom of Arbëria" and declared himself king of Arbëria. To the Albanian nobles he granted fiefs and large estates and bestowed upon them nobility titles in conformity with the feudal hierarchy of the West. To the citizens he promised that he would acknowledge the rights enjoyed by them in the past and would reduce a number of existent taxes.

However Charles kept for a very short time the promises he had given. French and Italian feudals who came to Albania filled all the offices of the "Kingdom of Arbëria" and usurped the largest fiefs of the country, which caused the discontent of the Arbresh nobles. The ruthless exploitation on the part of French adventurer feudals engendered likewise the discontent of the peasants and citizens. In order to break the resistance of the Albanian feudals, Charles arrested a great number of them and kept them as hostages in the prisons of Italy. In spite of it, when fighting began between the Byzantines and the Anjous, the Arbresh population rose up in revolt against the Anjous. Taking advantage of this opposition of the Arbresh population, the Byzantines at last obliged the Anjous to evacuate Albania in the year 1286.

In 1304 the Anjous under the lead of Philip, prince of Taranto, came back to Albania. Unlike his grandfather Charles, Philip did his best to genuinely win the support of the Arbresh nobles, with the aim of thus securing allies not only against the Byzantines, but also against the Serbians, who likewise attempted to expand in Albania. The Arbresh nobles too, scared by the growth of the Serbian state, had great interest in hindering the advance of this latter state with the help of the Anjous, especially now that the Byzantine Empire was thoroughly weakened. These common interests induced Philip to divide the power

in Albania with the Arbresh nobles. One of these, Gulielm Blinishti, was appointed marshal of the Anjouine armies in Albania; Tanush Topia received the title of count and was recognized as the feudal lord of the lands between the rivers Mat and Shkumbin, and Andrea Muzaka was given the title of Despot of Arbëria, and the lands between the rivers Shkumbin and Seman.

The Anjouine-Albanian alliance, however, did not hinder the Serbian Kingdom from expanding in Albania. Under the reign of Stephan Dushani (1331-1355), through conquests, it became a Balkan empire. In the years 1343-1347 Tsar Stephan Dushan captured the territories of Albania also, with the exception of Durrës, which remained under the Anjouine rule.

But the Serbian Empire did not last long. As soon as Stephan Dushan had died (1355), feudal quarrels broke out, which led to its dissolution. The feudals of the oppressed nations broke loose one after the other from this enfeebled empire and founded independent principalities. Such principalities were created in Albania also.

## FEUDAL RELATIONS IN ALBANIA

During the 12th-14th century, conspicuous progress was achieved in the economic life of Albania. In agriculture the area of arable lands was extended, better implements for husbandry were introduced, and along with the cereals, flourished the cultivation of orchards including olive groves, vineyards, and of silk. At that period Albania was the home of big herds. The agricultural and dairy products increased to such an extent that a part of them were exported.

The development of the economy was manifested also in the extension and the prosperity of the cities. A number of cities from antiquity such as Durrës (Dyrrachion),

Shkodër (Skodra), Vlora (Aulon), Berat (Antipatria) were restored, alongside them new cities were built such as Kruja, Kanina, Drishti (Drivash), Deha (Dagno), Shurdhahu (Sarda), etc. In the 14th century the cities of Albania reached their climax of prosperity during the Middle Ages. The first place was always occupied by Durrës, which had approximately 25 thousand inhabitants. The principal economic basis of the cities was artisan production, and in connection with it, the barter between the city and the village, the barter between various cities of the country as well as the trade with foreign countries. The artisans plied various metals, such as iron, copper, bronze and lead, manufactured agricultural implements, weapons, household furniture, etc. They made ornaments and various articles of gold and silver. A number of craftsmen produced articles of vestment—woollen cloth and mantles, silk and linen tissues, leather shoes and sandals, etc. In the cities there were tailors, fur-traders, saddlers, embroiderers and next to them bakers, butchers, potters, carpenters, candle manufacturers, painters and, further, masons and mechanics who constructed houses and ships, artists who chiselled the stone, carved the wood and adorned with them the temples, the public buildings and the houses of the wealthy citizens.

But the development of feudal relations in Albania was not at the same level in all parts of the country. These relations held sway overwhelmingly only in the low coastland and in the valleys of the inland of Albania. Here the greater part of the land was changed into feudal fiefs. The fiefs that had the widest extension in Albania in the 14th century were the *proies*, the *bashtinas* and the *metohes*. The *proie* was the fief granted by the overlord, was charged with military duties, and as such could not be inherited nor alienated. The *bashtina*, on the contrary, was a fief that could be inherited and alienated. The *metoh* was the fief of religious institutions.

The peasant-farmers, settled in a *proie*, *bashtina* or *metoh*, were bound to the soil and were dependent on the feudal lord. They had to pay their lord the feudal rent

and could not depart in any case from the fief. They were serfs. In Albania these were called *parikd*, serfs or *merops*.

In some of the fiefs, the rent in periodic forced labour constituted the major part of what the serfs were due to render. In these cases, the feudal landlord divided his lands into two parts; in the lands called *paraspör*, which he kept for himself, and the lands of the peasants, which he gave to the farmers, split in tracts. Each farmer had to labour a number of days each week for the benefit of the landlord in a definite parcel of the *paraspör*, to till, to sow, to reap and to harvest the grain and to transport it to the storehouse of the landlord. Besides this forced labour, the serf had to fulfil a number of other obligations both in kind and in money.

In other fiefs the landlord exacted the major part of the rent in obligations in kind. In these fiefs there existed no *paraspörs*. The serf received a more extensive parcel, and from the yield he had to give a portion to the pronial or *bashtinal* or ecclesiastical landlord. However, even in this case the serf had to pay to the land-owner sums of money as *sök*, *brok*, *travnina*, etc., and to render service through statute-labour (the big and the small statute-labour).

The further development of the feudal relations increased the economic and political power of a number of Albanian feudal lords who, in some cases with the consent and in others against the will of the foreign sovereigns who ruled in Albania, not only extended their fiefs but with the lapse of time brought under their dependence also neighbouring feudal lords. Whereas this class of great feudal lords constituted the Albanian feudal nobility, the territory over which they extended their authority was changed into an autonomous or semi-autonomous feudal domain. The feudal domain of Tanush Thopia, for example, included in the thirties of the 14th century the territories between the rivers of Mat and of Shkumbin, while the feudal domain of Andrea Muzaka included at that same time the territories between the rivers of Shkumbin and of Seman. In various feudal domains, for example in that of the nobles of Dukagjin, alongside small fiefs, there existed entire villages, and even whole districts,

with entirely free peasants. The great nobles lived in the dwellings within their castles, such as the Thopias in Kruja, the Muzakas in Berat, the Dukagjinas in Lezhe. The more powerful nobles started to keep in their dwellings a court with officials. Various nobles such as the Balshas, the Gropas, coined also money of their own with their emblems. They had their banners, too: the Thopias a crowned lion, the Muzakas a two-headed eagle with a star between them, the Dukagjinas a white eagle with one head, and the Kastriots in the 15th century a two-headed black eagle on red background, which became the national flag of the Albanians.

In the 14th century, in the mountainous regions of Albania also the greater portion of the population was composed of free peasants, small proprietors attached to cattle raising rather than to agriculture, who still preserved the former community ties. However, these highlanders, who were altogether free in their mountainous abodes, during the part of the year when they were obliged to wander with their herds of cattle to the winter pastures, entered into relations with the feudals who were the owners of these grazing grounds, paying them the *travnina* (rental of the pasture) besides other taxes in kind and in money. In some of the cases one or more powerful nobles had succeeded in including within their feudal domains a part of these mountainous regions also. But the relations between the feudal lord and the highlanders were confined only to the payment of the tax for the "smoke".

In the mountainous regions there were also masses of highlanders who paid no taxes at all to anyone whatsoever — neither to the state, nor to the nobles, nor to their chieftains. Though entirely free, these highlanders, squeezed as they were in their districts where the population grew in number and got denser, were extremely poor. The need to insure their livelihood induced these poor highlanders to descend to lower districts. Too often, the wanderings of famished highlanders took the aspect of migrations and of assaults on cities and feudal estates. When the Byzantine governor of the district of Berat, Nikola Hanza, strove to

hinder these wanderings, the highlanders of central Albania resorted to open insurrection. In 1330 the highlanders laid siege to the Byzantine governor in the castle of Berat, but on account of lack of weapons they were constrained to withdraw. In 1336 a still greater rebellion burst afresh, which spread over southern Albania also. This time the Byzantine army with Emperor Andronik III at its head came to Albania, together with Turkish mercenaries, who chased the Albanians up to the higher mountains and treated them most barbarously. The captives were killed and the women and the children were sold into slavery. The Byzantine army seized their big herds of cattle. The Byzantine historian F. Kantakuzen, who was an eyewitness of this war narrates that the Byzantine army seized from the Albanians 1,200,000 sheep and hundreds of thousands of oxen and horses.

The migrations of the Albanian mountaineers, however, were not interrupted. Together with their cattle, many Albanians continued to wander north up to the gates of Ragusa and to the River Danube, and south down to Epirus and Thessaly. A vast stream of wanderings took place especially during the conquest of Albania by the Serbian Empire. Through the instigation of the Serbian governors, vast masses of Albanians, both highlanders and peasants, from almost all the districts of the country undertook wanderings towards the south, migrating into Thessaly, Attica, the Peloponnese, crossing over even to various islands of the Aegean Sea, such as Eubos, Hidra, Speza, Paros. The major part of them settled in the depopulated lands of the Greek and French feudal lords, whereas the other part entered into their armies. The Albanian populations thus occupied the devastated Greek territories, founded a series of Albanian villages, and by plying their vocation of agricultural labourers, helped to improve the wretched economic conditions of mediaeval Greece. Their descendants, who succeeded to escape the long and pressing process of hellenization, live to this day in those same districts of Greece.

In the cities the artisans were organized in guilds and associations. The guild defended the interests of its members by monopolizing the produce of their respective craft. It decided upon the amount each artisan should produce, and the price of each product. The guild regulated the social and economic relations of its members within the workshop.

The increase in the exchange of wares gave birth in the cities to a special class of population which occupied itself exclusively with trading. With particularly great speed developed the commerce between the districts in the Albanian lowland and the prosperous centres of the Adriatic, in the first place with Venice and Ragusa. The growth of these relations brought with it the foundation not far from the ancient ports of Durrës, Ulqin, Vlora, Lezha, of a number of new commercial ports along the coast such as Spinarica at the mouth of the river Shkumbin, Pingu at the mouth of the river Seman, Bashtova at the mouth of the river Shkumbin, Medua at the mouth of the river Drin, Shingjin at the mouth of the river Buna, etc. The thriving trade furnished the occasion for holding fairs.

Since their foundation the cities enjoyed a special regime, which was distinct from that of the feudal lords. On the basis of the privileges granted them previously by the Byzantine emperors and confirmed by the other later foreign rulers, the citizens were not slaves; on the contrary they enjoyed to a certain degree political and social rights, especially the right to take part in the assembly of the citizens, which continued to exist as a tradition from the antique tribes. The entire population of a city created a community of citizens, which enjoyed the right of self-administration. Each city thus constituted a citizens' commune with local autonomy.

For the administration of the affairs of the city, the assembly of the people elected a council of eight to ten citizens and a number of magistrates. The city council was the organ designed to assist the governor who was appointed by the sovereign who had Albania under his authority. The city had numerous other officials, among whom the captain,

the militia commander, the commander of the castle, the admiral, the camerarius, etc.

With the economic development of the cities deepened the social differentiation between their inhabitants. In the cities there were three distinct classes: the class of the nobles, which comprised the wealthy citizens, the class of the citizens which comprised the mass of artisans, traders, sailors, who possessed little property, the class of the poorer population, which comprised the lowest set of the citizens, apprentices, day-labourers, porters, and all those who had no property at all. After it had grown stronger, the higher class of nobles usurped the authority and the government of the city, thus diminishing the importance of the people's assembly. And therefore the citizen communes were changed into aristocratic communes.

#### ALBANIAN FEUDAL PRINCIPALITIES OF THE 14TH CENTURY

On account of the development of the feudal relations, the economic and political position of the Albanian nobles got so strong that they attempted to become independent rulers in their respective fiefs. Favourable opportunity for the realization of these ambitions presented themselves after the first half of the 14th century when, after the death of Stephan Dushan (1355), the Serbian empire that had conquered Albania rapidly got weaker and fell into decay. Taking advantage of the enfeeblement of the Serbian empire, the Albanian nobles chased out of the country or subjugated the Serbian governors, regained their former fiefs and became independent rulers. The cities too benefited by these circumstances. Various important cities such as Durrës, Shkodër, Ulqin, Drishti, etc., won the right of independent administration and were turned into autonomous communes.

After having regained their former lands, the Albanian nobles started fighting each other with the aim of expanding their possessions, and at the same time fought against the cities for subjugating these important centres. Consequently, in the second half of the 14th century, Albania was plunged into a deep feudal chaos. From these fights the stronger nobles, who subdued the weaker nobles, derived benefit, stretched their authority over the cities and thus created large feudal fiefs, three of which succeeded in becoming principalities.

One of these principalities was founded in central Albania. In these regions, after the dissolution of the Serbian empire, Karl Thopia, son of Tanush, in 1358 became independent ruler. At the beginning, his authority extended over the territory around the fortress of Petrela, but later he expanded the boundaries of his estate by subjugating his feudal neighbours. In 1362 he laid siege, by land, to Durrës, city of political and economic importance. However, as he had no fleet, he could not capture the city. After constraining the inhabitants to pay a yearly tribute, he withdrew his forces from Durrës, and at the same time he built a shipyard on the shore for the construction of the indispensable fleet.

The construction of the shipyard on the Adriatic coast brought Karl Thopia in conflict with the Republic of Venice, as this later foresaw that the creation of an Albanian fleet would constitute a hindrance to its trade and imperil its own fleet in the Adriatic Sea. His assault on Durrës disclosed the discord of long standing with the Anjous, who once again aimed at bringing the "Kingdom of Arbëria" under their sway. In 1364 while the Venetian fleet started operations at sea, the ally of the Republic of St. Mark, Gjergj (Georges) Balsha, attacked with his troops on the north. However Karl proved to be an energetic ruler. In the Mati valley he defeated Gjergj Balsha and seized him as a captive. In 1368 with the fleet he had constructed, Karl assailed and captured Durrës. In 1372, after another victory he had won, he routed a military expedition instigated by the Anjous, which had landed and captured Durrës for a short period.

In this manner Karl Thopia, by endless wars he waged, after he had subdued the feudal lords of central Albania and after he had offered resistance to foreign armies, extended the boundaries of the north up to the river Mat, on the south up to the Shkumbin. Acting as an independent ruler, he turned his estate into an independent principality. The capital of the principality was Durrës. Various foreign powers acknowledged him as the Prince of Albania.

At almost the same period, in the struggles between rival feudal lords, which took place in the districts of northern Albania after the dissolution of the Serbian empire, a new feudal family emerged as victorious — the family of Balshas, from the village Balez, situated on the east of the lake of Shkodër. The elder Balsha who had served as *zhupan* of Stephan Dushan, after the death of the latter, subdued one after the other, Albanian and Serbian feudal lords of north Albania and of Montenegro, and established an extensive domain with its centre in Shkodër. After the death of the aged Balsha (1362) his three sons Strazimir (1361-1372), Gjergj (1372-1378) and Balsha II (1378-1385) extended the boundaries of the domain — on the north beyond Montenegro, on the east up to Prizren, and on the south up to the river Mat, beyond which started the principality of Durrës.

During the reign of Balsha II, the principality of Shkodër reached the climax of its power. By marrying Komita, the only daughter of the ruler of Vlora, who died without leaving other heirs, he received as dowry Vlora, Kanina and Berat. Thence he stretched his rule over the domain of Muzakas and of Matrangas up to the river Shkumbin, thus becoming neighbours with the principality of Durrës also on the south. Balsha II dreamed of becoming king of Albania and of conquering the whole country. But the obstacle on his way was the principality of Durrës. The ruler of Shkodër was far more incited against the ruler of Durrës by the enemies of Karl Thopia: the Republic of Venice and along with it the Pope of Rome, who in view of establishing the influence of his church, was interested that Balshas who were converted to Catholicism in 1369 should rule over Al-

bania, instead of Kari, who had remained faithful to the East Byzantine Church.

The war between the two principalities began in 1382. Balsha II seized the territories of Karl Thopia, and that same year captured Durrës. Karl, who had no allies at hand, called on the Turkish armies, which had reached up to Macedonia, and in 1385 with their help defeated Balsha, who was also killed in the battle of Savra to the south of Lushnja, and took possession once again of the lost lands and of Durrës. The Turks, on their part, after they had thoroughly pillaged the land, withdrew from Albania.

The arrival and presence of the Turks, though it had been only for a while, persuaded Venice as well as the Pope to end their quarrels with Karl Thopia, who also, on his part, had drawn a lesson from the rapacity of the Turks. However, after these events Karl Thopia did not live long. He died in 1388 and was buried in the Monastery of Shen Gjon Vladimir, near Elbasan, which had been founded by him. Even at present are to be seen on the walls of the church of this monastery three inscriptions written in Latin, Greek and Slavic. In these inscriptions he is given the title Prince of Albania.

The dissolution of the Serbian empire induced and encouraged the Greek, Albanian and Vallahian feudal lords of Epirus, too, to revolt and to attempt to create independent principalities.

The first who rose in rebellion against the Serbian ruler Stephan Uroshi, the brother of Stephan Dushan, were the Greek nobles, "Archons". The aim of the Greek feudal lords to restore the "despotism" of the past of Epirus and to recover their former fiefs lost during the Serbian conquest, alarmed particularly the Albanian peasants, who were settled in various parts of these districts. Relying on the peasants of their own nationality, the Albanian feudal lords took arms against the Greek archons and in the momentous struggle which took place at the river Aheloo (1358) inflicted on them ignominious defeat.

After the danger on the part of Greek archons had been averted, a long conflict started between the Albanian feudal lords, led by Gjin Bue Shpata (1360-1400) and the Serbian feudal lords led by the ruler Stephan Uroshi and later by his son-in-law Thoma Preljubovich. By withstanding the assaults of the Serbian rulers, who in some cases solicited the aid of the Turks, Gjin Bue Shpata extended the boundaries of his domain and founded an independent principality with Arta as its centre, which is known under the name of the Despotate of Arta. The boundaries of this realm extended on the north up to Gjirokastra, and on the south up to the Corinthian Gulf.

However, the further development of the feudal chaos which would have led to the fusion of all the principalities and detached domains into one single state formation — into the national state of the Albanians — was interrupted by the conquest of Albania by the Ottoman Turks.

## THE TURKISH CONQUEST OF ALBANIA

The Ottoman Turks who, taking advantage of the decay of the Byzantine empire, had created in Asia Minor, in the first half of the 14th century, a military feudal state, crossed in the year 1354 the Dardanelle Straits without molesting Constantinople and without encountering any serious resistance on account of the feudal anarchy and turmoil into which the Balkan states had fallen. Often aided personally by the native princes, they spread themselves within a couple of decades over the greater part of the peninsula.

From none of the Turkish campaigns was Albania saved. After the first incursion they undertook in the year 1358 as the allies of Karl Thopia, the Ottoman Turks reappeared in Albania in the year 1388. In the year 1389 numerous Serbian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Roumanian and Hungarian feudal rulers united under the leadership of the Serbian King Lazar

in a coalition against the Turkish plunderers. From the Albanian nobles, Gjergj II Balsha of Shkodër and Theodor Korona Muzaka of Berat took part in this coalition. But in the bloody encounter that took place that year in the plain of Kossovo, the armies of the Balkan coalition suffered a grave defeat.

During the reign of Sultan Bayazid, surnamed "Yilderim" (Thunderbolt) who succeeded Sultan Murat I, killed in the battle of Kossovo, the furious onrush of the Turks by no means could be restrained.

The critical situation that was created for the Albanian nobles by the Ottoman invasion, was exploited for its own interest by the Republic of Venice, which planned to get hold of the prosperous cities along the coast of Albania, before they passed into the hands of the Turks. In order to convince the nobles to surrender these cities, the senate of Venice promised them rewards and material support. As these gave no result, then the senate made use of various means of pressure, created troubles within the feudal domains, organized attempts to kill them, instigated rival nobles to fight against them, and in some of the cases incited against them even the Turks by means of substantial bribes. Under the double Turkish and Venetian pressure, the Albanian principalities began to vacillate. The young ruler of the principality of Durrës, Gjergj Thopia, the son of Karl, who succeeded his father who had died in 1388, young, ill and inefficient as ruler, capitulated in face of the Venetian pressure. In 1392 Gjergj made his testament in which he bequeathed, after his death, Durrës to Venice as heritage. Some months after the testament had been drawn, he died suddenly. Thus Durrës passed into the hands of the Republic of St. Mark, whereas the other lands of the principality were divided among a great number of small feudal domains. Almost the same thing happened with the principality of Shkodër. After the death of Balsha II, his widow Komita separated from the Balshas, and the southern domains were separated from Shkodër. As ruler of the northern portion was elected his nephew Gjergj II Balsha (1385-1403). But



this latter was not capable to keep even the former boundaries. He was constrained to fight against the Turks, who in the year 1388 began to penetrate into the territories of Albania. In 1389 Gjergj II, as has been mentioned above, took part with the Balkan coalition in the bloody battle of Kossovo, which terminated with the victory of the Turks. A great number of vassal nobles — the Dukagjins, the Zaharias, the Jonims, the Spans and others, profiting from the enfeeblement of Gjergj II, began to break loose from the principality and to create independent domains. In later years the Turks seized temporarily the districts on the coast of the principality also. Under these conditions Gjergj II yielded, as Gjergj Thopia had done before him, to the pressure of the Venetians, and surrendered to them the principal cities that he still retained — Shkodër, Drishti, Danja and Shasi. Under the pressure of the Turks and on account of the internal feuds, the Despotate of Artá, too, began to disintegrate. After the death of Gjin Bue Shpata (1400), the Despotate was divided into two parts: the northern part became an independent domain with Gjirokastra as its chief town under the rule of his son-in-law Gjin Zenebishi, whereas the southern part, with its chief town further on at Artá, was inherited by Gjin Shpata's brother, Maurik Bua. Some years later, these two domains were divided up into still smaller domains. In this manner within the last decade of the 14th century the Republic of St. Mark extended its domination over the most important cities of Albania one by one. In this same time, a vast number of Albanian nobles were appointed vassals of Venice.

In the conquered cities, the Republic established its own administration, enforced its own laws and appointed Venetian officials. In the surrounding country, too, it established Venetian "pronjars". With these measures it violated the autonomy of the city-communes. The cities were saddled with onerous taxes and forced labour. The Venetian tradesmen who settled down in these cities, monopolized the commerce and speculated wildly at the expense of the citizens and of the peasants. Consequently in the year 1399 broke

out in north Albania an insurrection of vast dimension against the Venetian rule. The rebels freed Shkodër and Drishti. But this insurrection was crushed by the military forces sent by Venice.

Some of the feudal overlords preferred rather to come to an understanding with the Turks. It became possible to come to a settlement for the reason that Sultan Bayazid did not deem himself strong enough to enforce, in all the vast territories he had conquered, the Turkish military feudal administration. In Albania and in the other recently conquered territories, the Turks left the native nobles in possession of their domains, but they reduced them to vassalage, obliged them to acknowledge and to accept the Sultan as overlord, to pay a yearly tribute and to take part with their armies in the campaigns of Turkey whenever the overlord called on them.

The defeat the Turks suffered at Ankara in 1402 and then the struggle for the throne, that broke out between the three sons of Bayazid, furnished the occasion to the Albanian nobles to free themselves from Turkish bondage. The Albanian nobles once again seized the opportunity to recommence unhindered their campaigns for the expansion of their feudal domains. These campaigns were not directed only against each other, but against the Republic of Venice also with the object of recapturing the lost cities. The most violent and the longest war against the Republic was waged by Balsha III (1403-1421), the son of Gjergj II, who nursed the desire to restore the former principality of Shkodër. But the Venetian diplomacy, by inciting one noble against the other, succeeded in extricating itself from the difficult situation that was created for the Republic.

On account of these wars, Albania was plunged once again into anarchy. The country was split into a still greater number of feudal domains, the boundaries of which were diminished or extended from year to year, and even, often enough, from month to month.

In 1413 the Turks practically overcame the political crisis. Sultan Mehmet I by profiting from the feudal anarchy

into which Albania had sunk, re-established in the years 1415-1419 without any difficulty the previous Turkish authority. This time the Turks acknowledged as vassals in their respective estates only the nobles of north and central Albania. In south Albania they chased away the native grand nobles, suppressed their domains, and in these estates they settled their feudal military regime of the *timars* and of the *zemets*. Sultan Murat II, who ascended the throne in the year 1421, for a certain time brought no changes in this situation.

In the meantime the map of the feudal domains had thoroughly changed. The three great principalities of the 14th century had completely decayed. As a result of the feudal struggles, by now three other great domains were created. One of them was that of the Dukagjin nobles which stretched on the present districts of Lezha, Mirdita, Dukagjin and Puka. The other was that of the Aranit nobles, which stretched over the regions of Shpat, Çermenika and Mokra. Between the two lay the large domain of Kastriots, which in later years played an important role.

The Kastriots, as a noble family, did not have an origin of long standing. They were Albanians from the village of Kastrat of the district of Has which lies in the highlands of Tropoja. In the second half of the 14th century Pal Kastrioti, a feudal lord of little importance, did not reside in Has, but in the district of Dibra, where he had in his possession only two villages. The son of Pal, Gjon Kastrioti, started his activity at the time when the Turks invaded the territories of Albania. In the beginning he became vassal of the Sultan, but after the battle of Ankara, Gjon broke loose from this bondage. By means of continuous fighting, he extended his rule over the district of Dibra, then over that of Mat, until he reached the sea. To counterbalance the pressure of the Turks, Gjon entered into friendly relations with Venice. But as he realized that Venice did not have in mind to wage war against the Turks, Gjon accepted again in 1410 the status of vassal to the Sultan and sent

him as a pawn of fidelity a son who, as it appears, was his eldest son Stanish.

In later years Stanish was released. Gjon Kastrioti continued to manage in an independent manner a policy which had for its object to strengthen and to extend his authority. In 1420 the boundaries of the Kastrioti domain stretched from the seashore on the west to near Prizren on the east. It seems that this independent policy awakened the suspicion of the Turks, because in 1423 Sultan Murat II constrained Gjon, the lord of Mat and of Dibra, to send as pawn to the capital of the Turks at Edrene (Adrianopolis), as warrant for his fidelity, three of his four sons, Stanish, Konstantin and Gjergj (the fourth, Reposh, had entered a monastery as a monk).

While the war between Turkey and Venice was being waged for the possession of Selanik (Salonica) (1428-1430), Gjon Kastrioti, as it appears in agreement with the Republic of St. Mark, rejected the status of vassal to the Sultan and declared war on Turkey. But the insurrection did not have good result. In 1430 the Republic of St. Mark, after it had yielded Selanik to the Turks, concluded a peace treaty with the Sultan, thus abandoning its ally. That same year the victorious Sultan sent his armies against the districts of Morea and of Albania which had revolted. Gjon Kastrioti was defeated. His castles were either razed to the ground or seized by the Turkish garrisons. The Principality of Kastriotis was divided up, the major part of it passing under Turkish administration. Only a small part of it, principally a mountainous zone, remained under the rule of the defeated Gjon.

After they had crushed the insurrection of Gjon Kastrioti, the Turks started to enforce in central Albania too their regime of *timars*.

The enforcement of this regime began with the feudal administrative organization of the country. The previous feudal estates were suppressed. Districts of central Albania together with those of south Albania, from the river Mat on the north up to Çamuria on the south, were united in the

year 1431 into one single *sandjak*, which was called the *sandjak* of Albania (*sandjak* of Arnavid with its chief town at Gjirokastra, with a *sandjakbey* at its head, who was subordinated to *beylerbey* of the *eyalet* of Rumeli (European Turkey).

The *sandjak* of Albania was divided, in turn, into smaller districts, 10 *vilayets* or *kazas* (the *vilayet* of Gjirokastra, of Kanina, of Berat, of Kruja, etc.) at the head of which was placed a *subash*, who fulfilled the feudal military functions, and was subordinated to the *sandjakbey*. In each *kaza*, besides the *subash* there was also a *kadi* who was the chief magistrate of the civil, religious and judicial administration, and was dependent directly on the Sultan.

The northern districts of Albania remained outside the boundaries of the *sandjak*. Here the previous conditions prevailed.

As everywhere else in the Balkans, so in Albania the Turks proclaimed all the arable and non-arable lands of the *sandjak* as *miri* property (state land property). Only a limited portion of the lands were considered *mulk* property (private real estate) and *vakuf* property (real estate owned by religious institutions—consecrated real estate).

That same year 1431, Turkish *emins* began the registration of the landholding peasant and citizen families, of the fruit orchards, vineyards, olive groves, of the cattle, bee-hives, and of other property which they held, thus calculating the income each peasant and citizen family derived. On the basis of this census of the income were decided and registered the duties that each peasant-farmer and citizen had to pay. The census terminated in the middle of the year 1432.

The Sultan divided the lands of the *sandjak* of Albania into 335 fiefs (*timars*, *zeamets* and *hases*) and these he distributed to 335 feudal lords (vassals). Each fief included one, two or more villages, and in some cases tens of villages near or far from each other. Each feudal lord had the right to collect from the peasants or citizens of his fief the registered duties. The fiefs were divided according to the general amount of the registered revenues collected by the feudal

lord into *timars* (when they were less than 20 thousand *akches* yearly), into *zeamets* (when they were from 20 thousand to 100 thousand *akches* yearly) and into *hases* (when they were more than 100 thousand *akches* in a year).

Most of the fiefs were *timars*. *Zeamets* were endowed habitually on *subashes* of the *vilayets* and any other distinguished feudal lord. The *has* was bestowed on the *sandjakbey*.

In compensation for the revenues they collected from their fiefs, the feudal lords were obliged to serve in war as armed cavalry (the *spahi* with a certain number of soldiers in proportion to the revenues collected) at once and as often as the Sultan asked them to. In case the *spahi* did not respond to the call, he was deprived of the *timar*, *zeamet* or *has*, and this was given to another *spahi*. During the war operations, the *timarlies* together with their soldiers under the lead of the *subashi* of the *vilayet* to which they appertained, marched under the banner of the *sandjakbey*.

The *timarlies*, the *subashes* and the *sandjakbeys*, laden with military duties, constituted the class of the feudal lords of the sword. But besides them there were feudal lords as for example the *kadi*, the *imam*, the *emin*, etc., who were endowed with *timars*, and in compensation for the revenues they collected, were laden, not with military obligations but with various duties in the civil administration of the *sandjak*. These latter formed the feudal class of officials. The preponderous mass of the feudal lords of the *sandjak* of Albania (about 90 per cent) constituted the feudal lords of the sword. (Among them were Turks, Albanians, Mohammedans and Christians.)

The lands of the *timar*, of the *zeamet* and of the *has* were *miri* property. The overlord was the Turkish state, represented by the Sultan. By bestowing the fief to the *spahi*, the Turkish state did not renounce the right of full proprietorship, but ceded only the right of feudal tenure. For this reason the *spahi* did not have the right either to sell or to bestow the lands of the *timar*, *zeamet* or *has*. He merely enjoyed the right to exact from the peasant of his fief a

series of fixed duties. On the other hand, the peasant enjoyed on the land that he cultivated and that was situated within the limits of the *timar*, *zeamet* or *has*, only the right to make use of it, in other words the right to till and to exploit it with the condition to hand over to the feudal lord the fixed duties.

The peasant that lived within a *timar*, *zeamet* or *has* was called *raya*. His obligations to the *spahi* were manifold. In the first place the *raya* could enjoy the right of making use of the land only in case he paid to the *spahi*, as feudal landlord, the tax of the property title. He was obliged to tender one-tenth of all his agricultural produce (*urush*) and of his dairy products (*ispendje*), which were the contribution of the serfdom, the *tapi* which was the tax for enjoying the possession of the land, the *mijab*, which was the fine for the damages and various trespasses of the peasants. The *raya* enjoyed limited rights.

Besides the obligations to the *spahi*, the *raya* peasant had obligations to the Sultan and to the Turkish state also. Of these obligations the most onerous was the tribute of the *djiza* which was paid each year by every Christian male inhabitant that had attained the age of 14.

The census of the lands and the heavy burden of duties, the reduction into *rayas* not only of the previous serfs but also of a great number of peasant freeholders, the settlement of rapacious *spahis* in their villages and their constant interference in the daily life of the villagers, increased to a still greater degree the resentment and wrath of the Albanians. This resentment could be observed even at the time of the introduction of the *timar* regime. Numerous villages opposed the registration. In some cases the villagers killed the Turkish *emins* and did not allow the *spahis* to settle in their villages.

Discontented also were the Albanian nobles, who through the census and registration of the lands had lost their domains, partially as in the case of the Arianits and Kastriots, or totally as in the case of Thopias, Muzakas, Strazimirs, Balshas, etc. In the hope of recovering their former do-

main; these nobles spurred by the readiness of the peasant masses, headed the rebellions that broke out as soon as the registration of the lands had terminated.

Of these insurrections the greatest was that which burst out in the domain of the Arianits in the summer of 1432. Under the command of Gjergj Arianit, the peasants seized arms, killed or chased away the *spahis*, and within a short period liberated their districts. The Turks that same year sent armies, but in the encounter with Gjergj Arianit they were beaten. Some months later, in the middle of winter, Sultan Murat II sent other armies against Arianit. However, this time also, in the bloody clash that took place in the Shkumbin valley, the Albanians reaped a brilliant victory. In the year 1433 Gjergj Arianit won in Laberia a third victory against fresh Turkish armies.

The victories resounded with great clamour. Arianit received messages of congratulations and of excitement from various European courts. Within the boundaries of Albania they kindled the fire of revolts in other districts of the country also. Large proportions took the rebellion especially in the district of Gjirokastra under the leadership of Depe Zenebishi. Alarmed by the succeeding waves of insurrections, the Sultan sent to Albania in the year 1434 large armies, which after crushing the revolt of Gjirokastra, marched against Gjergj Arianit. The fighting lasted more than a year. At the end of these wars the Albanian insurrection was crushed in the year 1435 and Gjergj Arianit was constrained to withdraw into the mountainous regions. In 1437 another revolt broke out in the district of Berat, led by Theodor Korona Muzaka. However, this revolt, too, was mercilessly crushed by the Turks.

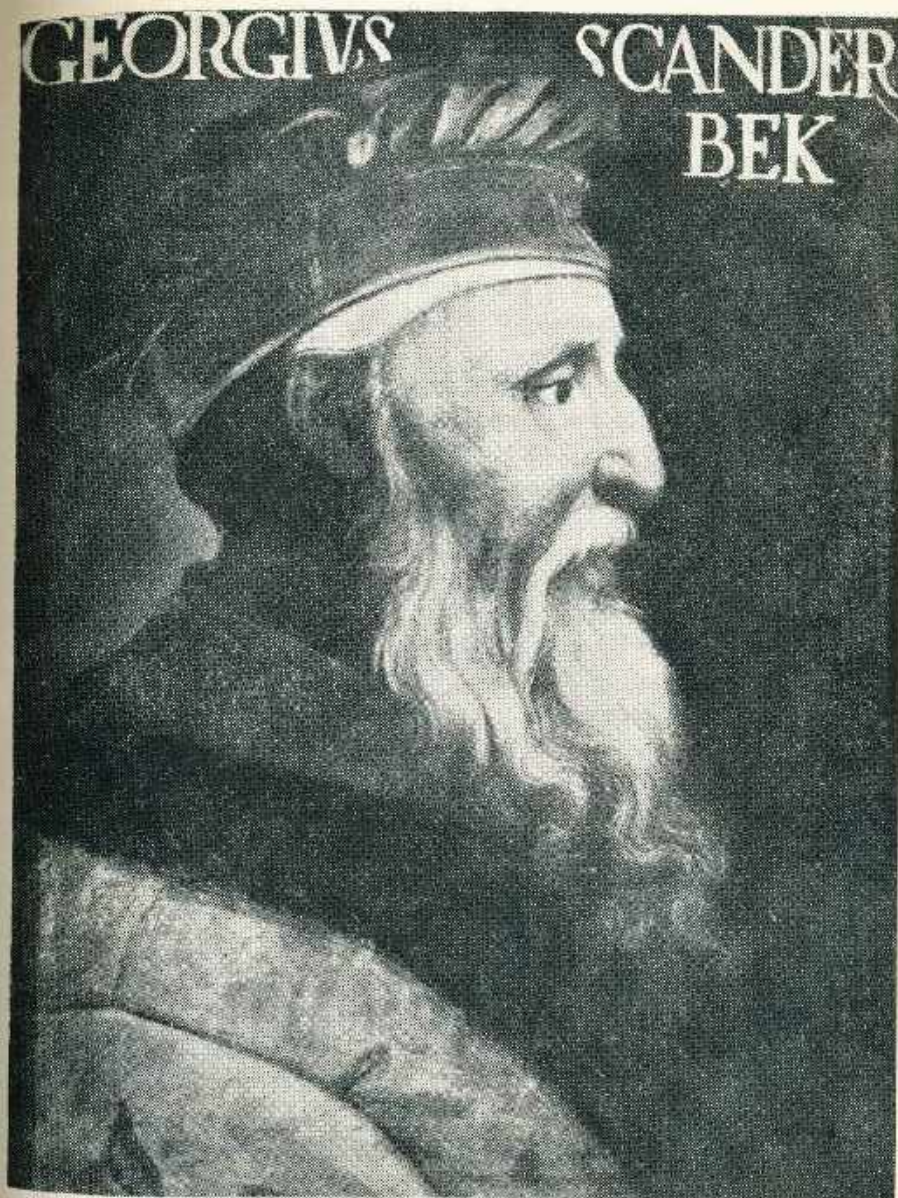
In spite of the active participation of the masses of people, the Albanian revolts were crushed, because they were poorly organized and lacked a plan for common action. On the other hand they were led by separatist nobles, who in their struggles against the Turks endeavoured to defend only their personal feudal interests. Against the Turks greatly superior in number and much better organized, the war might

have been crowned with success only if all the reserves in manpower, economic resources and financial means of the country could have been united under one single command for the liberation of Albania. These conditions were achieved only some years later, under the leadership of Gjergj Kastriot Scanderbeg.

### THE GENERAL REVOLT OF THE YEAR 1443

Gjergj Kastrioti, the younger son of Gjon Kastrioti, was born, as it is surmised, about the year 1405. He passed his childhood with his family in Albania. Still as a youngster he was handed over as a pawn together with his brothers to the Turks. The humanist from Shkodër Marin Barletius, in his monumental work in Latin on Scanderbeg, which was published between the years 1508-1510, says that Gjergj was surrendered as pawn to Sultan Murat II when he was nine years old. A series of other documents dating from the 15th century admit likewise that he was given as pawn to Sultan Murat II when he was still a boy (puer). However, Murat II ascended to the throne in the year 1421 and the surrender as pawn, as it is believed, took place in the year 1423 when the Turkish Sultan had completed the subjugation of the Albanian nobles. At that period Gjergj Kastrioti was approximately 18, and not nine years old, as is claimed by Barletius.

Sturdy, dexterous, comely and intelligent, as the Turkish chroniclers describe him, he made an impression on the court of Edrene. As the son of a vassal ruler, the Sultan had him sent to the military school of "ich-ogllans", which was near the palace. According to custom, he was converted to Mohammedanism, and was given the name of Skender. His biographers affirm that he finished military school with brilliant results. In 1426 we find Gjergj once again in Albania, but after that, for many years consecutively, we lose



Gjergj Kastriot Scanderbeg, from a 16th century painting

sight of him in the documents. Undoubtedly, he was still kept as pawn in the imperial court of the Sultan. As soldier and as the son of a vassal, Gjergj, with the name of Skender, was obliged to take part in the usual expeditions of the Turks. During these campaigns he distinguished himself as a soldier and won the title of "beg" which at that time was a military grade. He was thus called Scanderbeg. By taking part in those expeditions he at the same time won the confidence of the Sultan. In 1438 Murat II appointed Scanderbeg *subash* of the *vilayet* of Kruja, one of the most important *vilayets* of the *sandjak* of Albania.

Though he served for many years in the Turkish army, Scanderbeg did not forget his motherland, which was suffering under the Turkish yoke. He preserved his love for the freedom of his country and of his compatriots. As soon as he arrived at Kruja as *subash*, he began secretly to prepare the organization of the revolt for liberation. But he realized that in order not to meet with failure as in the previous revolts, the present insurrection should have a long and careful preparation. After ascertaining the acquiescence of the popular masses, Scanderbeg sought to insure also international support. By means of his aged father, he entered into a secret understanding with the Republic of Venice as well as with that of Ragusa, and these two pledged him their friendship.

In 1440 Scanderbeg left Kruja and it is presumed that he went to the *sandjakey* of the *sandjak* of Dibra. Here he continued his preparations and, always with the same object in view, he came in touch with other states, too, especially with Naples and with Hungary. But despite the readiness of the popular masses and of the instigations on the part of the states with which he had come in touch, Scanderbeg delayed the revolt until the autumn of the year 1443, when favourable conditions were created.

Since the year 1442 under the leadership of their talented captain Janosh Hunyadi, the Hungarians had passed from the defensive war they had waged up to then, to a stubborn offensive war with the aim to drive the Ottoman invaders

as far away as they could, and also to chase them from the Balkans if possible.

After initial successes, Hunyadi planned to organize in the following year a still greater offensive. For this purpose he tried to enter into alliance with the Balkan peoples, which were to operate behind the lines of the Turks. Hungary's ally, the Pope, exercised continuous pressure on the Balkan and Albanian nobles to induce them to seize arms against the Turks as soon as the Hungarians would move toward the south. Such a recommendation was given to Scanderbeg also. In spite of that, Scanderbeg obeyed the command of the Sultan, and together with the armies of his *sandjak* marched in the direction of the Danube.

On November 3, 1443 the Hungarian armies most courageously crossed the Danube and started their offensive in the direction of the city of Nish, thus creating panic in the rank and file of the Turkish armies. Scanderbeg thought that the appropriate hour had struck. In the midst of the turmoil and confusion of the retreat, together with his nephew Hamza Kastrioti and with 300 Albanian horsemen, he abandoned the front, and after some days arrived at Dibra, where he was received with acclamation by the population of the city.

At Dibra, Scanderbeg took urgent measures to clear the land of the Turkish garrisons. In the whole system of these garrisons, a key position was held by the Castle of Kruja, with its strong strategic situation that rendered it extremely difficult to be seized by fighting. By means of a false imperial writ of the Sultan, stating that he was re-appointed as *subash* of Kruja, he took possession of the city and of the castle. During the night he introduced into the city his soldiers who lay hidden in a nearby forest and, together with numerous loyal citizens, assailed and annihilated the Turkish garrison of the castle.

With this assault began, under the leadership of Gjergj Kastriot Scanderbeg, the general revolt of the Albanians against the Turkish conquerors. In the following days, Scanderbeg himself spread the sparks of the revolt in the

remaining districts of the Kastriotis' domain by chasing away the *spahis* and the Turkish garrisons. On November 28, 1443, he proclaimed the restoration of the independent Albanian principality by hoisting above the white castle of Kruja the banner of Kastriotis — the black two-headed eagle on red background.

The uprising of Scanderbeg offered the opportunity to other Albanian nobles to liberate, too, their respective feudal domains. During the month of December 1443, the whole of central Albania was cleared of the Turkish forces.

After the victory of the uprisings in these districts, before Scanderbeg and the other Albanian leaders lay the task of unification of all the forces in manpower and in materials of the country, not only for the defence of their freedom, but also in order to offer resistance to the expeditions which the Sultan would undoubtedly send as soon as he had nullified the pressure of the Hungarian offensive, but also with the object of liberating the other districts of Albania. To achieve this task, a general assembly met at Lezhe on March 2, 1444 on the initiative of Scanderbeg, which was attended by practically all the Albanian nobles, among whom also were those who had led the previous insurrections against the Turks — Gjergj Arianit, Andrea Thopia, Nikolla Dukagjini, Theodor Muzaka and others. The chieftains of free Albanians also took part in the assembly.

Inced by the interest to protect the feudal domains, the Albanian nobles, notwithstanding the divergences they had with each other, took the decision to unite in the common war against the Turks. This decision led to the creation of an alliance, which is known also as the "Albanian League" with Scanderbeg as its president. For the same purpose the assembly decided to create an Albanian army, which was to be constituted by the troops that all the members of the League were to send within the limits of their possibilities. The commander-in-chief was Scanderbeg. In order to provide for the war expenses, the assembly decided to create a common case. Its funds were to be delivered by the members in the form of contributions. Each noble pledged be-

fore the assembly the number of soldiers and the amount of money that he would give to the "Albanian League". The greatest number of military troops were promised by Scanderbeg.

The Albanian League of Lezha was a sort of political and military alliance of the nobles, created for the sole purpose of fighting against the Turks. Each noble guarded his domain, and at the same time his autonomous authority over the domain. Scanderbeg too kept his domain. As president of the League he was merely *primus inter pares*. He had no right to interfere with the affairs of the domains of other nobles. But in spite of these shortcomings, the creation of the "Albanian League" marked one step ahead, because with it a common front was created in the war against the Turkish foes.

As soon as the Lezhe Assembly had terminated its work, Scanderbeg, as supreme head of the League, undertook the speedy organization of the Albanian army and the adoption of other measures for defence purposes. Thorough connoisseur of the merits and of the weak points of the Turkish army, he had in view to create not an army as that of the nobles, constituted by disorganized mercenary bands and peasant troops, but in lieu of that a new, disciplined, well drilled army interested in fighting without compromise against the enemy.

Within a short period Scanderbeg created a new army of about 8,000 soldiers. A portion of it, about 3,000 soldiers, constituted the "pretorian guard", which stood always near Scanderbeg. This was made up of infantry and of light cavalry, and not of heavily armoured mounted troops which had proved inefficient to fight against the Turkish *jenichers* and *spahis*. One other part, this too composed of about 3,000 soldiers, was allotted to Moisi Golemi's command for the protection of the eastern boundary, whence the Turkish armies had easy access. These were permanent standing armies, and were recruited within the Kastriotis domains. The other part of the army was made up of troops sent by the allied nobles. Besides them Scanderbeg created troops

of voluntary peasants, who were to help the standing army only when the alarm was given. Through this organization Scanderbeg could raise, in case of necessity, an army of 15,000-18,000 soldiers.

## THE FIRST VICTORIES OF SCANDERBEG

The occasion for the clash with the Turks presented itself soon enough. In spring, as soon as Hunyadi had withdrawn into Hungary, the Sultan decided to crush the successful uprising of the Albanians. In June of the year 1444, a Turkish army composed of 25 thousand soldiers under the command of Ali Pasha entered Albania from the Dibra district. The Albanian army marched to meet it and took up positions facing them in the plain of Domosdova. Ali Pasha initiated the assault on June 29, 1444. Scanderbeg manoeuvred with dexterity, feigning to accept the battle, and retreated as if he were defeated until he enticed the Turkish army into the narrow Torviolli plain, surrounded by mountains and forests. While the Turks thought they had caught the Albanians in a trap, they found that they were encircled by hidden forces of Scanderbeg, who assailed them from all quarters until they annihilated them completely.

The Sultan sent against the Albanians two other expeditions — one in 1445 and the other in 1446. But these expeditions also were crushed by the Albanian army.

In 1447 the Turks did not molest Albania. But that year the Albanians had troubles with the Republic of Venice.

The victories won against the Turks strengthened the independence of the Albanian feudal domains, and in a special manner that of the principality of Scanderbeg. There was no doubt that the Albanian nobles, getting all the while stronger, would attempt to recapture the prosperous cities on the coast which were now under the authority of Venice. For this reason the Republic of St. Mark, alarmed by the

strengthening of their positions, began to interfere by means of provocations with the object of splitting the Albanian League, and particularly of undermining the independent government of Scanderbeg, which was, as K. Marx puts it, "a thorn in its side".

This hostile attitude brought about in its train the declaration of war between the Albanian League and the Republic of Venice in the autumn of the year 1447. The problem of the city of Dania served as a pretext for the outbreak of hostilities. Lek Zakaria, lord of Dania and member of the League, had died without leaving heirs. According to the convention, the city as well as the important castle of Dania were to pass under the authority of the League. However, Venice through artifice got hold of the castle before the arrival of the Albanian forces. Then on behalf of the League, Scanderbeg attacked Dania and the other castles of the coast, which were still under Venice's sway, but, as he had no artillery, he did not succeed in his attempt. The fighting continued throughout the following year, too. Venice's endeavours to cause discord among the allies of Scanderbeg met with little success. The Republic announced that it would give a princely reward to whoever would kill the Albanian leader. But this step, too, met with failure.

In the spring of the year 1448, while the wars with Venice still continued, the conditions of the Albanians suddenly deteriorated. From the east a huge Turkish army with Sultan Murat II in person at its head, arrived in June at the gates of the neighbouring castle of Sfetigrad, which they besieged, and then passed by, continuing their march on Kruja.

The arrival of the Turks placed the Albanians between two fires. In order to put out the fire on one side, Scanderbeg undertook a series of speedy actions against the Venetians in the region of Shkodër. With the aid of native farmers, who revolted, he beat the Venetian army in the battle of Drin, on July 23, 1448, and won a brilliant victory. After leaving there under the command of his nephew Hamza Kastrioti only an outpost to keep guard, with



the rest of his troops he left for Sfetigrad, which was besieged by the Turks.

In Sfetigrad the Sultan had to face incredible resistance. The besieged Albanian garrison defended the castle heroically. In order to assuage the condition of the besieged, Scanderbeg as soon as he had arrived at Sfetigrad, began to storm the Turks from the rear. The resistance of Sfetigrad lasted until the autumn. At the end, the Turks discovered the conduit that furnished the castle with water, and obliged the garrison constrained by thirst, to surrender. Though Sfetigrad had capitulated, the Sultan did not continue his march on Kruja. The news that Hunyadi was getting ready for a new campaign obliged Murat II to return to Edrene to make his preparations against the Hungarians.

This news convinced Scanderbeg also of the necessity to bring speedily to an end the war with the Venetians, and to have, in this manner, his hands free in order to take part in the Hungarian campaign, as it had been agreed between him and Hunyadi. But the preliminary parleys dragged on, and the peace treaty was signed on October 4, 1448, only after Scanderbeg had agreed to abandon Dania. In compensation, the Republic promised to pay to Scanderbeg 1,400 golden ducats each year. However Scanderbeg was still *en route* when the Hungarians came to a clash with the Turks on October 18, 1448 and were badly beaten.

In the year 1450 Sultan Murat II resolved to give a decisive blow to the resistance of the Albanians. After gathering all the Turkish armies, about 100 thousand strong, at the beginning of May 1450 he set out at their head, once more toward Albania, this time with the aim of capturing Kruja.

In order to face that formidable army, Scanderbeg gave the alarm for general mobilization. To his call responded all the men of the principality fit for fighting. Within a couple of days an army of nearly 18,000 men was raised. Scanderbeg divided this army into three parts. He quartered about 1,500 men in the castle under the command of Count Uran, a valiant warrior of long-standing repute. He

personally, with 8,000 soldiers, withdrew outside the castle, with his quarters in the Gumenishti mountains to the north of Kruja. The rest of the forces was organized in small and mobile bands.

As soon as they penetrated into Albania, the Turkish armies all along the Shkumbin valley met with the ambushes of Albanian peasants, and were obliged to fight with heavy losses and to pursue the mobile bands into the depth of the country, and often they succumbed at their ambushes. After heavy losses, the Sultan with the bulk of his army, appeared on May 14, 1450, before Kruja.

After the endeavours of the Sultan to get hold of the citadel without fighting, through threats and bribes, had failed, the Turks began to bombard with heavy artillery which threw shells of about 400 pounds, and which were being used for the first time in Albania. The bombardment was followed by a general assault of the Turks. But all the endeavours were frustrated. The garrison defended the citadel heroically. Scanderbeg from outside attacked the Turkish army once from one flank, then from the other, causing them great anxiety and damage. On the other hand, the peasant bands assailed the caravans that furnished the Turkish army with provisions from Macedonia and Venice.

During the summer, the Turks tried several other times to capture Kruya by assault, but the war waged by the Albanians on all the fronts frustrated their efforts completely. After an unsuccessful siege of four and a half months, with the approach of winter, Sultan Murat II withdrew his camp on October 26, 1450, and returned to Edrene together with his defeated army, which had left in Albania about 20,000 killed.

The defence of Kruya was a great victory for the Albanians in general, and for Scanderbeg in particular. The victory had a resounding echo within as well as outside the boundaries of the country. European courts, through the delegations and messages they sent to Kruya, congratulated Scanderbeg for this brilliant achievement.

## THE CREATION OF THE INDEPENDENT ALBANIAN STATE; THE WARS AGAINST THE TREASON OF THE FEUDAL LORDS

The victories of the Albanians drew since the first years the attention of European states, which were interested in the war against Turkey. They began to see in the Albanians an important force for the expulsion of the Turks from the Balkans. It was clear for Scanderbeg too that the war against the mighty Sultans, with so untrustworthy neighbours as the Venetians, could not be carried on with any success for a long time without the material and political support of other powers. This common interest brought the establishment of diplomatic relations between Scanderbeg and a number of foreign states with Hungary, Ragusa, Rome, Naples and others.

Scanderbeg's need for allies in the forthcoming encounters with the Ottomans became still greater after the siege of Kruya. Six years of war had ruined the country. Especially during the campaign of the year 1450, the Turks had burned down great numbers of homes and the crops in the fields of the peasantry. In the winter 1450-1451 the country was threatened by famine. There was great need for food for the population and for the army, weapons and means and material for the reparation of the damaged fortresses. In order to satisfy these needs Scanderbeg addressed himself to those foreign states which followed an anti-Turkish policy. But it was only the Kingdom of Naples which manifested its readiness to give the required help. Between Alphonse IV of Naples, who dreamt of founding a vast empire in the Mediterranean Sea, and Scanderbeg, lord of Albania, as he began to be called at that juncture, a treaty was signed at Gaeta, Italy, on March 26, 1451. Alphonse undertook to help the lord of Albania with military and financial means for the continuation of the war against the Turks. Whereas Scanderbeg, in need of assistance and with the

hope of enticing the Kingdom of Naples into the war against the Ottomans, pledged to commend himself as vassal of Alphonse for all the lands that would be liberated with the participation of Neapolitan forces.

The support given him by Alphonse was, however, meagre. There came to Albania only 100 Catalan soldiers who did not take part in the fighting at all. Consequently Scanderbeg did not proffer the oath of fidelity. In like manner, in the following years too, the Albanians had to fight once again all alone, against numerous ferocious Turkish expeditions. At their head now stood Mehmed II, the Fatih (the Conqueror), who after capturing Constantinople in the year 1453, carried on with more impetus his military campaigns with the aim of stretching the boundaries of Turkey still farther into Europe.

The Albanian League founded at Lezhe in 1444, in which the nobles preserved the autonomy of their domains, for some time had begun not to respond to the conditions created by the extension and the intensification of the war of liberation. With their selfish attitude, the nobles hindered the mobilization of the resources in manpower and in materials of the land, which was required by the uneven war with the Ottomans. Furthermore, their vacillating attitude, especially at critical moments of the war, constituted a danger behind the back of Scanderbeg — the more so as this attitude was exploited, and even instigated, by hostile powers — the Turks and the Venetians.

The necessities of the war for self-protection induced Scanderbeg to do away with the particularism of the nobles. Relying on the masses of the population and, in a higher degree, on the army, which by now were attached to him politically, Scanderbeg began, whenever the interests of the war demanded it, to ignore the social standing of the nobles as autonomous rulers. During the war operations, he violated the boundaries of the domains of allied nobles, quartered in their castles loyal military garrisons and took other steps of security, which constituted an infringement of their rights. Later on, when he felt himself still stronger, Scanderbeg

even took coercive measures against unreliable, shaky feudal lords, dismissed from their offices inefficient or suspected aristocratic officers, took away from them the *pronies* or feudal estates, and gave them to military nobles or to peasants who had distinguished themselves at war. Thus with the constant growth of the authority of Scanderbeg, the former boundaries of feudal domains began to disappear and the domains in their turn to fuse in a united single state. This process led to the creation of one united Albanian state under the rule of Gjergj Kastriot Scanderbeg. The creation of this independent state marked one step forward in comparison with the previous conditions of feudal chaos.

But this process caused the discontent of the nobles, who sought to safeguard their individual authority. Powerless to check this process which was directed by the strong hand of Scanderbeg, the major nobles began to break away from the Albanian League. In 1450 two powerful aristocratic families, Arianits and Dukagjins, left the League. Their exit caused great damage to the country, because it weakened the war front at a time when the Turks were in a rage against Albania. Scanderbeg tried to keep them near him. But his efforts failed. The Dukagjins not only did not accede, but on the contrary concluded peace with the Sultan and began to plot against Scanderbeg. With Gjergj Arianit it seemed that Scanderbeg had some success. In order to strengthen their friendship, in the month of April of the year 1451 he married Donika, the daughter of Arianit. However after some time Arianit again broke off.

Later on when the authority of Scanderbeg grew still more, various nobles, among whom were even some of his intimate collaborators, committed open treason and entered into the service of the Turks against their own country. The feudal treachery reached its culmination in the years 1456-1457.

With the aim to open a way to the liberation of south Albania, Scanderbeg decided in 1455 to storm the citadel of Berat which had fallen anew into the hands of the Turks during the siege of Kruja. This time, together with the

Albanian army, two thousand Neapolitan infantrymen too, who were ultimately sent to Albania by Alphonse, took part in the action. At the start, the war operations were successful. The citadel was besieged and the Turkish garrison, finding itself in difficulty, asked for a respite of 15 days to surrender. But before the delay had terminated, a large Turkish army of 40,000 men, in secret understanding with Moisi Golemi, the commander of the frontier forces, came without being detected and attacked unexpectedly the Albanians and the Neapolitans at Berat, inflicting on them a great defeat. After his treachery, Moisi Golemi bound himself to the Turks.

In 1456, 15,000 Turkish cavalrymen, and with them the traitor Moisi Golemi, assailed Albania. But at the bloody encounter that took place in the district of Dibra, the Turks were annihilated completely, and Moisi repented and rendered himself to Scanderbeg, who pardoned him and admitted him back into the Albanian army. Before long, another commander, Gjergj Stres Balsha, treacherously yielded to the Turks the frontier fortress of Modritza. After a couple of weeks, the nephew and the most closely related collaborator of Scanderbeg, Hamza Kastrioti, who as a descendant of the Kastriotis had the pretension to inherit a part of the domains of his grandfather, betrayed likewise and went over to the Turks.

Towards the end of spring of the year 1457, in almost hopeless circumstances for the Albanians, a large Turkish army of nearly 80 thousand men, under the command of the well experienced general Isak bey Evrenos was despatched against Albania. The Turkish army was accompanied by Hamza Kastrioti, appointed by the Sultan as governor of Kruja.

The Albanians, this time too, were not downcast. They remained loyal to Scanderbeg. With the unlimited support of the popular masses, which he enjoyed, Scanderbeg contrived to tire out the hostile army from the end of May up to the beginning of September, without giving battle. On the contrary he effaced his traces in such a manner that he

misled the Turkish commandant and his own nephew to believe that he was "routed", that his soldiers and his officers had "abandoned" him and that he himself had "taken refuge" in high mountains to save his head. However, when on September 7, 1457 the Turks, sure of the victory, were celebrating the end of the Albanian resistance light-heartedly in the plain of Albulene near Kruja, Scanderbeg with his army attacked the enemy unexpectedly and annihilated them completely, capturing, among thousands of war prisoners, the traitor Hamza Kastrioti.

At Albulene the Albanians with Scanderbeg won not only a brilliant military victory over the manifold superior Turks, but at the same time they achieved also an important political victory over the vacillating and treacherous nobles, and dissipated as well the doubts that had risen as to the forthcoming fate of Scanderbeg's authority. With this victory Scanderbeg triumphed over the separatist tendencies of the allied nobles, by centralizing further in his own hands the authority of the Albanian principality.

The victory of Albulene brought Albania and its chief more than ever into the international arena. To congratulate Scanderbeg for the victory he had achieved, the European courts sent him messages full of praise. Pope Calist III together with praises and titles of glorification invited Scanderbeg to take part in the great Crusade he was trying to organize against the Turks.

Pope Pius II, who succeeded Calist, proved more active in the preparation of the Crusade, and the hopes for its success he made to depend on the participation of Scanderbeg, who after the death of Hunyadi in 1456 had become the most popular personality in Europe in the anti-Turkish war of liberation. At the congress of Mantova, which was convened in 1459 to take a decision on the European Crusade, the name of the illustrious chief of the Albanians was extolled by a great number of participants. In the plans of war drawn on this occasion, to Scanderbeg was allotted the important task of attacking the Turks on the central front.

But the preparations for the Crusade dragged on account of the feudal contradictions that existed between the participants. In the meanwhile the Turks sent other expeditions to Albania. In expectation of the preparations for the Crusade, which were likely to take time, and with the aim to give the country a certain respite to rest and to restore as much as possible the economic prosperity which was ruined on account of the continual wars, Scanderbeg in 1460 accepted the offer of the Sultan and signed with him an armistice for three years.

Scanderbeg took advantage of the armistice with the Turks for hastening to go to the succour of his ally the King of Naples. Alphonse V, who had died in 1458, had been succeeded by his son Ferdinand. Against the young sovereign had revolted the native inhabitants, who wanted to bring to the throne of Naples an Anjouine king. Scanderbeg was concerned that in this civil war should win the son of his former ally, hoping that he, in return, would give him an aid in his war against the Ottomans. It is for this reason that he acceded to the request of Ferdinand to go to his assistance. One of the rebellious nobles, the Prince of Taranto, Johannes Antonius de Ursinis, in a letter he sent to Scanderbeg on October 10, 1460, tried to persuade him to give up the expedition to Italy, warning him that the lightly armoured Albanian army could not rescue Ferdinand from the certain overthrow and that it would suffer an ignominious defeat at the hands of the heavy Italian cavalry. In the answer he dispatched on October 31, 1460, Scanderbeg wrote to the Prince of Taranto that he was "a friend of virtue and not of fate", and that he could not abandon his ally. Scanderbeg reminded the rebellious prince that after the successful war which had been waged by the Albanians, it was in the interest not only of Albania but also of Italy that the House of Aragon, which had assisted in the war against the Sultan, should be supported, and not the House of Anjou, which had made no contribution whatsoever against the Turkish foes.

In 1461 Scanderbeg left for Italy with a part of his light cavalry, and arrived there at the most critical moment for Ferdinand. In Italy Scanderbeg reaped two military victories, one at Barletta and the other at Trani. With his victories he helped Ferdinand to suppress the insurrection and to consolidate his tottering authority.

### THE BRILLIANT VICTORIES OF THE ALBANIANS AGAINST SULTAN FATIH

In 1462 the situation in Albania had again deteriorated. On one side the Republic of Venice, uneasy on account of the reinforcement of the alliance of Albania with Naples, its rival, began again with the provocations by instigating the separatist nobles against Scanderbeg. On the other side, Sultan Mehmed II, believing that Scanderbeg's situation was impaired and in order not to allow the Albanians to take part in the Crusade, broke the armistice and dispatched, one after the other, three expeditions against Albania.

Scanderbeg, informed in time, quickly returned from Naples to Kruya and again faced the aggravated situation. Within a month he made an end of the three Turkish expeditions.

After these expeditions had failed, in the spring of the year 1463 Sultan Fatih proposed to Scanderbeg to sign this time no more an armistice, but a treaty of ten years' peace. Scanderbeg accepted the proposal and the peace was signed at Shkup, in April of the year 1463.

The organizers of the Crusade, with Pope Pius II at its head, were distressed by the peace accord, and applied their pressure on Scanderbeg in order to oblige him to begin once more the wars with the Turks. At the start Scanderbeg refused to comply. But in the following months it appeared that the Crusade was ready to commence. In the summer

Venice started a war against Turkey. The Republic, which was anxious to have the Albanians fight, renounced its previous hostile attitude and even banded itself with Scanderbeg in a treaty of alliance against the Turks. The separatist nobles, among them Lek Dukagjini, approached Scanderbeg and put themselves under his command. In November, Pius II proclaimed the commencement of the Crusade. These events persuaded Scanderbeg, and therefore at the end of November 1463 he restarted the war against the Turks.

But the Crusaders, on account of their conflicts with each other, did not move against the Turks. With the death of Pius II in August 1464, the Crusade ended definitely. With its elimination the Albanians found themselves once more face to face with the enraged Sultan.

The Albanians were obliged to face the fury of Fatih in extremely difficult circumstances. From the 20 years' war, the country was dilapidated, the national economy was destroyed, the land was denuded of its population, partly through slaughters, partly on account of emigration. The fields were desolate, men fit to bear arms had diminished. The hopes to receive succour from abroad were scarce. The European states in general did not manifest any concern for the Balkans, although their fate was being played there. Ferdinand of Naples was not in a condition to help his ally. The new Pope, Paul II, a great miser, complained that the Vatican coffers were empty, and gave no hope of giving any help to Scanderbeg. The new allies, the Venetians, were not entirely reliable because from one moment to the other they might come to peace terms with the Sultan, besides they too had proved very parsimonious in their military and financial grants.

In this state of affairs, in 1465 the Sultan sent against the Albanians five expeditions, one after the other, under the command of Ballaban Pasha, with the task to demolish the country entirely, to tire out Scanderbeg's army and to demoralize the Albanian population, in order to give at last the finishing stroke to the persistent resistance of Al-

bania. However, as each time before, this year too the five expeditions were crushed.

The Turkish expeditions were launched at harvest time. The damages were so immense that the Albanians entered into the winter under the threat of famine, and with the greatest difficulty survived until the spring of the year 1466. Yet in June, at the threshold of the new harvesting, at a time when the grain stores were entirely empty, Sultan Fatih together with Ballaban Pasha, at the head of the entire imperial army of 150,000 men, started their march on Albania.

All this immense mass of soldiers pushed onwards burning everything and killing everyone they found on their way. This time too the events of the year 1450 repeated themselves. The peasants withdrew their families from unprotected places and laid ambush all along the road against Fatih's soldiers. As the chroniclers themselves admit, the Ottoman armies had to fight tooth and nail all along the road and to pursue the Albanian bands far into the highlands in front of unimaginable acts of heroism. At last Fatih with the major part of his army arrived before Kruya and laid siege to the citadel.

Scanderbeg this time also had left in the fortress a small garrison under the command of Tanush Thopia, while he himself with the other part of the army remained outside the ramparts. As 15 years before, the besieged Kruya heroically stood fast against the Turkish assaults. After two months' struggle without success, the Sultan with a portion of his army departed from Kruia and left there Ballaban Pasha to continue the siege with the hope that the garrison would surrender because of hunger.

In order to assure the rear of the Turkish army, Fatih built in the valley of Shkumbin near the ruins of the ancient city of Skampa, a strong fortress, to which he gave the name "Ibasan" (Elbasan), an Arabic word which means "dominating place". Then in the autumn of 1466 the Sultan left Albania.

Ballaban Pasha held Kruja besieged, thus aggravating to the extreme point the conditions of the Albanian garrison. Scanderbeg undertook from the outside a series of assaults against the Turkish army, but did not succeed in hewing a breach in the lines of the besiegers. The lack of arms and of provisions became alarming. Venice promised aid all the while but put unacceptable conditions. The need for weapons and for provisions constrained Scanderbeg in December of 1466 to go to Rome and in January 1467, to Naples, to persuade the Pope and Ferdinand to give Albania immediate help. In Rome, the masses of the population gave Scanderbeg, dressed as a modest knight, a reception worthy of a glorious captain. The speech he delivered in the Roman Consistory left a deep impression. However the help Paul as well as Ferdinand gave Scanderbeg was altogether insignificant.

In spite of all, the Albanians with Scanderbeg did not lose heart. After Scanderbeg had returned to Albania, the Albanians won a brilliant victory. In April they routed the Turkish army which had encircled Kruya, liberating their capital from the prolonged siege. In this encounter was slain Ballaban Pasha also.

Yet in July 1467 the whole Turkish army with Sultan Mehmet at its head again assaulted Albania. At Buzurshek near Elbasan a bloody battle was fought out. Through the victory he had achieved, Fatih thought he had brought to an end the Albanian resistance. But at Kruya he met anew with unbelievable resistance. The besieged Kruya for a second time heaped shame on the Conqueror of Constantinople. After three weeks the Sultan departed and Scanderbeg once again liberated the glorious capital.

In order to gather force and new equipment, Scanderbeg decided to appeal once more to the country, particularly to the nobles who had kept themselves aloof. With this aim in view he proposed to restore, as in 1444, the Albanian League, and invited the nobles to assemble in January of the year 1468 in a pan-Albanian Convention at Lezhe. At the convention Scanderbeg urged the nobles to give military

and financial aid to carry on the war against the common enemy.

In the meanwhile another Turkish army was directed in the midst of winter against Albania from the north of Shkodër. As always Scanderbeg prepared to march at the head of his army against the foe. But seized by fever, his exhausted body could not resist the illness. After a few days, while the Albanian armies were gaining another brilliant victory in the neighbourhood of Shkodër, Gjergj Kastriot Scanderbeg, covered in everlasting glory, died at Lezhe on January 17, 1468.

The unexpected death of Scanderbeg caused a general affliction throughout the country. In him the Albanians lost their immortal hero, the gifted organizer of the revolt which brought freedom to the land, the ingenious strategist who for a quarter of a century scored inconceivable victories over enemies many times superior; they lost their brilliant political leader who created the independent Albanian state.

### THE CONTINUATION OF THE ALBANIAN RESISTANCE

After the death of Scanderbeg, it became apparent that in Albania there remained no leader capable to lead the resistance of the Albanians against the Turks. The son of Scanderbeg, Gjon Kastriot, was too young, only about 14 years old, to take the place of his father. Together with his mother he even left the country and settled down at Naples. Numerous feudal chiefs lost every hope of victory and one by one they either forsook the land or else went over to the enemy. In order to escape from the Turkish yoke, whole masses of peasants and citizens likewise migrated from the homeland.

Yet the part of the population that remained carried on the war against the Turks who had in mind, after doing

away with the resistance of the Albanians, to capture from the Venetians the cities of the coast of Albania, in order to make a reality of their dream of long standing — to cross over to Italy. For this purpose, in the year 1474 a large Turkish army laid siege to Shkodër and bombarded it throughout a whole month with artillery, but the citadel resisted. In 1476 another large Turkish army laid siege for the fourth time to Kruya with the aim to keep the siege until the citadel would surrender out of hunger. The siege lasted until the year 1478. In the spring of the year 1478 Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror came in person to Albania with the entire imperial army. The defenders of Krucia, constrained by hunger and by the lack of arms, at last on June 1478 surrendered the citadel. After that, the Turkish armies with the Sultan at their head, laid siege to Shkodër, bombarded it for several weeks with heavy guns and assailed it furiously several times but they did not succeed in capturing the citadel of Rozafat which protected the city. In September the Sultan departed, but the siege continued. Shkodër held out until January 25, 1479, when at last a Turco-Venetian peace treaty was signed, according to which Shkodër, Lezhe and Drishti were assigned to Turkey, whereas Venice retained Durrës, Ulqin and Tivar.

Now in Albania outside of the Turkish control remained only the mountainous regions.

After they had crushed the organized Albanian resistance and after they had concluded the peace treaty with the Venetians, about 10 thousand Turkish soldiers started from Vlora and landed in Italy, where they captured the citadel of Otranto, within the lands of the Kingdom of Naples.

The entry of Naples into a war against Turkey resuscitated the hopes of the Albanians for the liberation of the country. In Albania armed revolts began against the Turks, and in the year 1481, at the call of the chieftains of the revolt, the son of Scanderbeg, Gjon Kastriot, returned to Albania. With his arrival, the revolt took such big proportions that the Turks were obliged to keep in Albania a part of the forces which were destined for Italy. The ac-

tions of the Albanians rendered less onerous the task of the Christian armies in Italy, which in September of the year 1481 chased the Turks from Otranto.

After they had withdrawn from Italy, the Turks undertook vast operations against the Albanians, which lasted over several years till the revolt was subdued, and Gjon Kastriot was constrained to flee the country.

However, the resistance against the feudal military Turkish regime was not interrupted. One of the districts which continued to be in revolt was Himara. The Himariots had not accepted any *spahi* or governor from Istanbul. They had to withstand armed assaults, especially in the summer of the year 1492, when Sultan Bayazid II with his armies came into Albania with the object of landing in Italy. The disembarkation in Italy did not take place, but Bayazid, before returning to Istanbul, took the decision to crush the Himariots. In July the Turks penetrated deep into the mountains, through treason captured a part of the Himariots, whom they either killed or kept as captives. But they could not overcome their resistance. As the autumn approached the Sultan decided to depart, and for that reason he came to an agreement with the Himariots. According to the terms of the agreement, the Sultan agreed that the Himara district be governed as before on the basis of traditional "canons" (*venoms*). The Himariots were to retain their arms without restriction. In compensation, they agreed not to rebel and to pay a royal tribute for each house in sign of obedience. The Himariots preserved these *venoms* during the whole period of the Turkish domination.

In the following years also the Albanians continued their struggle to expel the Turks from their homeland. For this purpose, they seized all the favourable circumstances. Each time any European power declared war on Turkey, the Albanians nourished the hope that the day of their liberation had approached; and for this reason they took up arms against the Turks.

This happened in the year 1494 when the monarch of France, Charles VIII, with his armies proceeded to Italy in

order to continue his march against Istanbul through Albanian territory. This happened in the year 1499 also, when Venice was waging war against Turkey. This time too the Albanians took up arms. However, these revolts brought no result. In August 1501 Turkey captured Durrës from the Venetians. In order to save Ulqin and Tivar, the Republic of Venice concluded peace with Turkey in 1502. The Albanians were once again alone. The uprising, which continued for some years, was crushed in 1506. With its liquidation the great Albano-Turkish War also, that had lasted over 60 years, came to an end.

### THE STRENGTHENING OF THE TURKISH REGIME OF *TIMARS* IN ALBANIA

The prolonged war that had been waged between the Albanians and the Turks had ruinous effects on Albania. The country lost its freedom and was brought under the yoke of the Ottoman feudal empire, which lasted several centuries. Its economic life was strangled.

The cities in general were demolished, and were almost deserted by their previous inhabitants. A number of the ancient cities, such as Drishti, Danja, Shirgji, did not recover. The large and prosperous cities such as Durrës, Shkodër, Berat, Kruja, etc. were reduced to mere villages. In the cities there were very few artisans and trade was almost completely paralyzed. On account of the Turkish domination, the former contacts of the Albanian coast with the Adriatic cities were interrupted. The important artery, Via Egnatia, was no longer used by foreign tradesmen as a means of communication. The rural economy also was in utter decay. In the low coastal districts of Albania hundreds of villages were abandoned or nearly so by the villagers, who had migrated outside the country or had taken refuge in the mountainous regions. Large expanses of land



lay fallow. The population diminished considerably not only because of the extermination at the hands of the Turks, but also on account of the immigration *en masse* outside the country. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children left the homeland. The major part of them settled in southern Italy, in the domains of the Kingdom of Naples, especially in Calabria and Sicily, where they founded nearly a hundred villages with Arbresh population, whose descendants, at least those of them who had escaped being assimilated, even today speak the Albanian language. Having no towns with an artisan economy and isolated from the outside world, the villages of the lowlands and of the mountainous regions, were plunged into the natural economy. The consolidation of this system brought Albania, in comparison with its previous conditions, into a much more backward state.

Albania remained for a long period of time a backward country. The reason for that was the strengthening and the expansion throughout the land of the regime of *timars*, which offered no stimulus to the development of the economic life of the land; on the contrary it spoliated the subjugated land in a most unproductive manner, because the greater part of their revenues the *spahis* extorted by taking part in the military campaigns of Turkey, and because through these campaigns they could amass great wealth and at the same time advance in their military career.

After they had subdued Albania, in the year 1506 the Turkish governors once again undertook the registration of the lands, which they repeated doing several times later on. The registered lands were considered, as had been done previously, as *miri* lands, and were divided, according to their revenues, into *timars*, *zeamets*, and *hases*. According to the registration of the year 1520, in the territory of Albania there were approximately three times more *timars*, *zeamets* and *hases* than at the registration of the year 1432.

Along with the increase in the number of *timars*, during the 16th century we meet also the strengthening of the



Onur ri Neokastra, "David the Prophet", from a fresco in the Church of St. Nicholas in Shekan near Shpat (16th century)

position of the *spahi* in his relations with the *raya* peasant (the serf). While in the 15th century the *spahi* was the lord of the land only, in the 16th century he began to become lord of the *raya* (serf) also. Now the peasant could not leave the *timar* or the *zeamet* where he was registered without the consent of the *spahi*. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the duties also, which the *spahi* exacted from the *raya*, grew in amount.

With the administrative reorganization, which was carried through in the Ottoman empire in the 16th century, the territories of Albania were divided into seven *sandjaks*: Delvina, Vlora, Elbasan, Ohri, Shkodër, Prizren and Dukagjin (with its chief town Peja). Within one *sandjak* were comprised not only Albanian populations, but also populations of other nationalities — Montenegrins in the *sandjak* of Shkodër, Serbians in that of Prizren, Macedonians in that of Ohri, and Greeks in that of Delvina. All these *sandjaks* constituted the *vilayet* (province) of Rumelia.

In spite of their efforts, the Turks did not succeed in establishing in all the districts of the country their feudal military regime. In a vast number of mountainous districts the regime of *timars* was not enforced at all, or else was introduced merely in a formal manner. This occurred, for example, in the highlands of Himara, of Dukagjini, of Upper-Shkodër, of Dibra, etc. In these districts the highlanders never became *rayas*. They remained peasant freeholders.

As they could not subdue them, the Turkish governors felt constrained, as had been the case with the Himariots in 1492, to recognize these highlanders' *venoms*, that is to say, their right to self-administration according to the ancient local "canons" (laws). Through this privilege they were exempt from the *timar* regime and from the duties which the peasant *rayas* gave. They had to pay only the yearly tribute.

In these districts lived highlander families principally on the basis of a cattle raising economy. With them the relations of tribal community had not died out completely. By

remaining outside the frame of the state administration, they stood aloof and separated from the rest of the country and kept to themselves. The necessity to protect themselves against the Turkish expeditions determined the highlander families to band closer together. In these circumstances, the tribal communities, or tribes, as they are called by the highlanders, were conserved.

Though they had recognized the traditional *venoms*, the Turks strove, from time to time, to subjugate these districts. However, each time they undertook military expeditions against them, the *sandjakbeys* and the *spahis* met with the resistance of the highlanders.

On the other hand, whenever Turkey was engaged in war with European states, to the highlanders beamed the hope for their liberation from the foreign yoke. Thus they took up arms and assailed the Turkish cohorts most violently and half-free mountainous districts became the principal bases of Albanian resistance against the Turkish rulers during the 16th and 17th century.

This took place especially in the year 1537, when Sultan Sulejman Kanuni, together with huge land and sea forces, came to Albania and took quarters on the Vlora and Himara coastland, with the intention of disembarking in Italy. As soon as the Sultan had arrived, the Himariots again took up their arms. This time also the Turkish expedition did not take place, and the whole weight of the Turkish armies was thrown on the Himariots. But the Himariots courageously withstood the assaults of the foe. The fighting lasted over the summer without any success for the Turks.

In the year 1571, when the Ottoman empire was waging war against a coalition of European states, among which was Venice, the Albanians rose again in revolt and liberated a considerable part of the country. However, in August, the condition of the insurgents grew worse. By sea and by land the Turkish fleet and army encircled Ulqin, which was in the Venetians' possession, and compelled the garrison to surrender. After a couple of days the Turks captured Tivar also. After she had lost these cities, Venice showed no

further concern for the Albanian movement. In October the fleet of the coalition destroyed the Turkish fleet at Lepant. But the European states missed out on the fruits of the Lepanto victory, and the rivalry and the conflict of interests existing between them brought about the dissolution of the coalition. Thus, this time too the Albanians remained alone to face Turkey.

The hopes of the Albanians were revived in 1593 when an anti-Turkish European coalition was created once more, and when in 1594 one of the promoters of this coalition, the Roman Pope, came into touch with the chieftains of the highlanders. The Albanians hastened to draw up plans for an armed uprising. For this purpose in June of the year 1594 a general convention met in the Monastery of St. Maria at Mat, in which the chiefs of a vast number of districts and of tribes of Albania assisted. The convention took the decision to appeal to the Pope for aid in arms. But the Republic of Venice, which at this juncture feared more the European Coalition than Turkey, did not desire any insurrection in Albania, and put various obstacles in the way of all the Albanians' preparations.

Relying on the promises of the Papacy and of Spain, the Albanians began the insurrection. Approximately 10,000 men, armed with arrows and *yatagans*, attacked the Turkish army. Only Spain sent hardly any aid, but this too was confiscated on its way by the Venetians. However, in 1596, the Turks, who by now were equipped with firearms, crushed the revolt.

In 1601 another general convention met at the village of Dukagjin of Mat. Its agenda was prolonged into the year 1602. Delegates of 14 districts of Albania took part in it. The convention decided to send once again a delegation to the Great Powers to ask for arms. However, this time also, there was no response to their demand.

The Albanians carried on, without any result, their struggle in the following years also. Annoyed by these endeavours, the Turks organized a series of expeditions against the Albanian highlanders, of which that of the year 1610

met with certain success, while those of the years 1612-1613 failed completely.

The defeats of the Turks encouraged not only the Albanians, but also the Balkan peoples. In order to organize a revolt on a grand scale, an extraordinary convention was held in 1614 at Kuç of the *Malësia e Madhe*, in which Albanian, Montenegrin, Serbian and Macedonian populations took part. Inter-Balkan conventions were held in the following years also. But the plans drawn at these conventions for a general insurrection were not put into execution on account of the lack of arms.

With the aspiration to frustrate the impetus of the continual revolts of the Albanians, who retaining their faith as Christians, came continually in touch with European states, the rulers of Istanbul undertook, towards the end of the 16th century, the systematic campaign of islamizing *en masse* the Albanian population. At the same time they had in view to create in Albania a considerable mass of Moslem inhabitants ideologically bound to the fates of the Ottoman Empire.

In order to oblige them to accept the religion of Mohammed, the Turks applied to the Albanians the most accentuated policy of religious discrimination, in their social life, and especially in the domain of fiscal revenues. The *Djizia*, which was the poll tax on the Christians, was raised to the extent of being impossible to pay — from the 45 *akche* annually, that it had been in the 16th century, to 305 *akche* at the beginning of the 17th century; while in the middle of the 17th century, for a certain category of inhabitants, it reached 780 *akche* a year. In order to avert this discrimination, with no other way of saving themselves, from year to year a part of the native population was converted to the Islamic religion.

But the conversion of the major part of the Albanians to Mohammedanism did not decrease the force of the uprisings in Albania. In a report that the Albanian Bishop and writer Peter Budi sent in 1621 to Cardinal Gocadino, he informed this latter that in Albania tens of thousands not only

of Christians, but also of Mohammedans, were ready to take up arms as soon as the required aid would be given. Yet in the 17th century, just as in the 16th, the principal promoters of the numerous uprisings were the Albanian highlanders who retained their Christian religion and, through their inflexible resistance, had guarded their traditional rights. These uprisings took vast proportions, especially in the years when European powers were at war with the Ottoman Empire.

### ALBANIA, 17TH CENTURY

In the 17th century the growth and expansion of the Ottoman Empire came to an end. The defeat that the Turks had suffered in 1683 at the gates of Vienna was the prelude to the downfall of their empire. As it is clear, this decline was the outcome of the changes that took place in the international arena (the creation of great centralized states at its northern frontier), as well as in its interior condition (the decay of the primitive economy on which depended the regime of the *timars*, and consequently the decay of this regime itself). The *spahis* began to pay much more attention to their income, which they extorted from the *timars* and from commercial transactions, than to their wars, which at this juncture were not only being fought at very distant frontier points, but also did not always terminate to the advantage of Turkey. The *spahis* began to disobey the commands of the Sultan, weakening still more the military force of the empire and decreasing its victories. The decrease of victorious wars brought in its train a continuous financial crisis in Turkey. As the state itself, so the *spahis* together with the big feudal lords began to satisfy their needs by exploiting ruthlessly the peasant *raya*. As a result, entire masses of peasants were ruined and had to sell their lands, becoming landless farm labourers.

These lands fell in the most part into the hands of the feudal lords. From the rank of the feudal military aristocracy, a landowning aristocracy began to rise and to get stronger. The strengthening of this landowning aristocracy was favoured by the fact that the dispossessed peasant masses had settled partially in the estates of the big landlords. The income from the products of the farm labourers established in the estate after the reduction of the *ushur* that appertained to the *spahi* was divided, according to the case, in half when the seed and oxen belonged to the landlord, or else by one-third, when the seed and the plough oxen belonged to the farm labourer (one-third to the landowner and two-thirds to the labourer).

The decomposition of the primitive rural economy was manifested by the restoration of the cities, which had fallen into ruins in the 15th century and afterwards by their speedy development and by their change into important economic, artisan and commercial centres, which process was achieved especially through the 17th century. Of these cities, the largest one was Berat, the centre of the *sandjak* of Vlora. Immediately behind it stood Elbasan, Shkodër and Gjirokastra, with approximately 2,000 houses each. Through the 18th century, new cities also grew, among them Voskopoja.

At the beginning, most artisans plied their trade in manufacturing weapons and military equipment. But starting with the 17th century a vast number of crafts thrived, the products of which were closely connected with the necessities of the peasants and of the citizens. Gaining fame at this time were the silversmiths of Shkodër, Prizren and Elbasan, who produced golden and silver trinkets for women. They adorned the weapons of the men and decorated with various ornaments the household wares and furniture and vessels used in churches.

Through the development of the barter system, a special class of inhabitants was created in cities, who were given exclusively to trading within and outside the country. In the 18th century great merchants established their agencies

in various cities of the country, even outside Albania, especially at Venice and at Trieste. The merchants sold in foreign lands agricultural, handicraft and dairy products, and brought thence the products of European industry. The development of commerce brought in its train the growth of the Albanian mercantile fleet. The city with the greatest fleet was Ulqin (Dulcigno) whose inhabitants distinguished themselves as bold sailors.

The economic importance which some of the cities such as Shkodër, Berat, Elbasan, Prizren, Peja and others acquired in the 18th century made of them market places not only for the adjacent rural country, but also for a vast number of neighbouring districts.

With the growth and development of artisan vocation the mediaeval organization of craft guilds also was revived, now to be called *esnafs* or *rufets*. At the head of *esnaf* stood the *qahya* and at his side, the *muteveli* (the administrator), who was elected by the members of the *esnaf* for a certain fixed period.

On account of the great number of artisan members and of their thorough organization, the *esnafs* began to play an important political role also. Within these guilds, groups or *tarafs* with opposing economic and political interests were created. In some of the cities, as in Shkodër, a group of *esnafs* banded together with the *tabaks* (leather workers), the other part with the *terzis* (tailors), thus creating two big *tarafs* — the “*taraf of tabaks*” (the group of leather workers) and the “*taraf of terzis*” (the group of tailors).

The principal cities became at the same time centres of a cultural movement. But this movement did not have the same development throughout the country. On it not only the feudal partition of Albania left its traces, but also the division of the population into three distinct religions. The Albanian Mohammedan, Orthodox and Catholic school children were allowed to frequent, according to their respective faiths, only Turkish, Greek or Italian schools. Consequently the Christian school children received Greek

Orthodox or else Catholic culture. And even in the cases where authors wrote texts in Albanian, for writing in their mother tongue they made use of Turkish, Greek or Latin alphabet.

In the 17th-18th century, a number of secondary schools, *medreses*, also were founded in Albania for the preparation of functionaries of Moslem faith. But of great importance was the secondary school, the New Academy which was founded at Voskopoya in the environment of Orthodox population.

With the profits they gained from artisan production and from commercial activity, Voskopoya achieved in the 18th century a cultural prosperity. The city was endowed with a great number of churches which were adorned by frescos and icons of a high artistic level. In 1740 Voskopoya had also a printing press, in which a considerable number of books were printed, some written by Voskopoyan authors. In 1744 a group of Voskopoyan intellectuals founded in their city the “New Academy” under the direction of a dean. The dean of the Academy was Theodor Kavalioti, a distinguished scholar of the 18th century. Most of the pedagogues were laureates of different European universities. A great number of students of the Academy received higher education outside of Albania, and were distinguished as scholars in the domains of education, culture and the sciences.

## THE FORMATION OF ALBANIAN PASHALLEKS

Through the exploitation of governmental offices, the feudal lords began to acquire a great number of big estates (*chifliks*), which they retained under their possession also after they were dismissed from office. Personally they themselves, or else through intermediaries, leased the col-

lection of a number of state taxes, and strove to extort through oppression and violence as much revenue as they could, of which only a mere part they sent to Istanbul. At the same time they interfered in the affairs of the merchants, and under threats of reprisals, obliged them to surrender a substantial part of their gains. Through these means quite a number of Albanian feudal lords became economically and politically powerful in a short space of time.

Feeling themselves stronger, the great feudal lords began not to take into account the central authority, which was getting weaker and weaker. Often enough they did not obey the *fermans* (edicts) of the Sultan and appropriated all the revenues that were due the imperial treasury. Whenever they had the chance, the Sultans took repressive measures against them by dismissing them or by transferring them, but when they were engaged in war with other powers, they tried not to aggravate their relations with these powerful feudal lords in order to avert their sedition. In this manner the contradictions between the great Albanian feudal lords and the central Ottoman government arose and intensified during the 18th century.

Through their further acquisition of power, the great feudal rulers began to govern as *mutesarrifs* (prefects) in *sandjaks* (provinces) or as *muteselims* in *kazas* (sub-prefectures), relying more on their economic, political and military power than on the Ottoman central authority. Gradually they ceased to be functionaries of Istanbul and became semi-autonomous rulers within the *sandjaks* or *kazas*, or within territories that did not correspond at all to the Turkish administrative division. These domains were called *pashalleks*.

The rulers of these *pashalleks* continued to govern formally in the name of the Sultan and to carry the title of *mutesarraf* or *multesim*. They regularly enacted the orders of the central government, when they did not feel strong to disobey, or when these orders did not touch their proper personal interests. Whenever their interests were damaged, the rulers of the *pashalleks*, under various pre-

texts, did not enforce them. Powerful feudal rulers succeeded in making their offices hereditary.

For the purpose of increasing their incomes and of strengthening their authority, the feudal rulers did their best to expand the boundaries of their *pashallek*, by subduing adjacent districts, which were under the rule of other feudal rulers. They were mostly concerned to get hold of the thriving cities of the land, which were a great source for amassing wealth.

These inclinations caused the feudal rulers to wage war against each other. The *esnafs* took part in these wars, as well as the peasant masses also, who usually stood by the side of the rulers, who had been more clement than the others. The circumstances created by these wars were exploited by quite a number of minor feudal rulers, more especially by the *spahis* who had lost their *timars* or *zeamets*. For the purpose to regain the lost fiefs, to create great estates of *chifliks*, and afterwards to establish an independent *pashallek*, a part of them organized armed bands and started ravaging attacks against the villages and cities, thus sowing everywhere panic and insecurity.

The governors of Istanbul were not in condition to check these attacks. On the contrary, because they were weak, they tried to break the power of a strong feudal ruler by instigating against him those who were less dangerous for Istanbul.

These wars and conflicts plunged Albania into a deep feudal chaos. The anarchy was spread all over the land. Prolonged and violent fighting took place particularly at Shkodër between the aristocratic families of Begollays, Chaoushollays and Bushatlys. In central Albania no less violent fighting took place between the feudal rulers of Tirana, Kavaja, Kruya and Elbasan. In the south the fighting, or the wars for supremacy, continued for many years between the feudal rulers of Vlora, Berat, Delvina, Chamouria and so on.

From these feudal wars for supremacy the country suffered great damage. Through menace and reprisals many

villagers were deprived of their lands and fields and became tenant-farmers. The feudal rulers caused damage to the cities too. Through three blundering attacks on Voskopoya in the years 1769, 1772 and 1789, the city was demolished and never recovered. Together with the city the "New Academy" also was destroyed. On account of attacks and pillages of the bands of feudal rulers on the caravans of merchants and on the *pazars* (market places) of the cities, the economic life of the country also began to be paralyzed.

However, by subduing the weaker feudal lords, the powerful ones created vast *pashalleks* and became semi-autonomous rulers. From a vast number of small *pashalleks* that existed up to the middle of the 18th century, within a couple of decades they were fused into two large *pashalleks* that were created, the one in north Albania with its chief town at Shkodër under the rule of Bushatlys, the other in south Albania with its chief town at Janina under the rule of Ali Pasha Tepelena. With the creation of these two vast *pashalleks*, the Albanian feudal class created an independent power, separate from that of the Turkish feudal class. The creation of this separate authority, of this state within a state, brought the conflict between the Albanian feudal class and the Ottoman central power. The further intensification of this conflict, which paved the way for the creation of an independent Albanian feudal state, was the most important outcome of the feudal anarchy into which Albania was plunged in the 18th century.

## THE GREAT PASHALLEK OF SHKODËR — THE BUSHATLIES

Through the first half of the 18th century, the *sandjak* of Shkodër, one of the most important *sandjaks* of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, from the administrative point of view, fell into complete decay. From the authority

of the *mutesarraf* broke loose one by one the rulers of Lezhe, Podgoritza and Ulqin, each creating an independent *pashallek* depending on Shkodër merely in form.

The weakening of the authority of Istanbul furnished the opportunity for feudal fighting to break out even within the city of Shkodër. The two great aristocratic families, the Chaoushlies and the Begollies, with the assistance of the "tailors' guild" and of the "tanners' guild" (the "*taraf* of *terzis*" and that of *tabaks*) and of highlander forces, fought against one another for more than 20 years, each family overthrowing the other from time to time. The Sultan at Istanbul did nothing but acknowledge as *mutesarraf* of Shkodër, either the Chaoushly or Begolly family as it came to power.

These struggles tired out Shkodër. Of this state of affairs another aristocratic family, the Bushatlies, took advantage. Mehmet bey Bushatly, after he had insured the help of a vast number of Shkodran feudal rulers, and after he had put himself at the head of the powerful *taraf* of the *tabaks* (leather workers' guild), annihilated and banished from Shkodër the Begollies as well as the Chaoushlies, and in 1757 became ruler of Shkodër. The Sultan, together with the *ferman* (edict) of his nomination as *mutesarraf*, sent to Mehmet Bushatly the title of *Pasha*.

Mehmet Pasha Bushatly or, as he is otherwise known, Mehmet Pasha the Ancient, ruled for 16 years. Through the steps he took, he established peace and order within the city, which won him the sympathy of the citizens. After he had insured the aid also of the highlanders, he undertook a number of campaigns, extending his authority over all the districts of the *sandjak* of Shkodër.

These operations were in line with the duties of his office as *mutesarraf*; therefore they were not opposed by Istanbul. But when Mehmet Pasha the Ancient through war-making began to expand his authority outside the boundaries of his proper *sandjak* and then stopped sending the state revenues to Istanbul, the relations with the Sultan deteriorated. Bushatly was not intimidated by the threats

of the Sultan, but reigned as a semi-independent ruler in his *pashallek*. In order to get rid of this powerful ruler, the Sublime Porte in 1775 succeeded to poison secretly the old Bushatly, and in his stead appointed Mehmet Pasha Kustendil as *mutesarraf* at Shkodër.

The new *mutesarraf* did not contrive to remain in Shkodër for a long time. With the assistance of the Shkodrans and of the highlanders, Mustafa Bushatly, the eldest son of Mehmet Pasha the Ancient, got hold of the power by force. The powerless Sultan then appointed as *mutesarraf* in Shkodër the brother of Mustafa, Mahmud Pasha Bushatly, known by the name of Kara Mahmud Pasha, in the hope that this would instigate a war between the sons of Bushatly the Ancient. But between them there arose no conflict. Mustafa Pasha, that same year, passed on his office to Kara Mahmud Pasha.

The Sultan tried to overthrow the Bushatlies in the year 1779. That year, while the agents of Istanbul poisoned Mustafa Pasha when he was in Morea, once again at the incitement of Istanbul, the feudal rivals of the Bushatlies in Shkodër started sedition. However Kara Mahmud crushed the revolt and remained in power.

After this victory, without taking any account of the Sublime Porte, Kara Mahmud undertook a series of campaigns, expanding his *pashallek* in the direction of central Albania. But in 1785, as he was advancing in south Albania, the Sultan, alarmed by the growing power of Bushatly and on account of his seditious activities, dismissed him from office as *mutesarraf* and gave the order to the armies of the two Balkan *vilayets* (provinces) of Rumelia and of Bosnia, to march on Shkodër. However, Kara Mahmud through his rapid movements, encountered the Rumelian army before it had time to join with that of Bosnia, and in the clash he had with it at the Kossovo plain, routed it entirely. The defeat of the Rumelian armies persuaded the *vali* (governor general) of Bosnia to retreat without coming to any clash whatsoever with Bushatly.

The victory of Kossovo raised the prestige of Kara Mahmud in the international arena also. Austria and Russia, which were getting ready to enter into war against Turkey, came in touch with him and gave him heart to carry on his wars against Istanbul. Vienna promised to recognize him as autonomous ruler. Of this concern on the part of European powers Kara Mahmud drew advantage for his own purpose: in the summer of the year 1787, as soon as the Russo-Turkish War had started, he marched into Kossovo and brought it under his control.

The Sultan was so annoyed by Bushatly's actions that he withdrew from the front a good part of the Turkish armies, approximately 30,000 soldiers, and, under the command of Mahmud Pasha Aydos, sent it to Shkodër. Kara Mahmud again advanced to encounter them in Kossovo, but this time the onrush of the commander-in-chief was so impetuous that Kara Mahmud was forced to turn back at once to Shkodër without his army, and here he found himself encircled by inimical armies. This obliged him to shut himself up with 200 men in the fortress of Rozafat.

The Albanian troops undertook a number of assaults from outside the fortress, but met with no success. Rozafat, though surrounded on all sides, held out under the shells of the Turkish artillery for 80 days. However, on November 25, 1787, at the instigation of Kara Mahmud, an assault of his armies from outside and a general revolt of the citizens from within started simultaneously. Between two fires, the Turkish armies were badly routed and departed from Shkodër.

After the victory of Shkodër and later in the year 1788, after Austria had entered into war against Turkey, the aspirations of Bushatly to become independent ruler were revived. In order to achieve his aim he further strengthened his ties with Austria. But the fact that he broke loose from the Sultan-Caliph and entered into closer relations with Vienna alarmed the fanatical Mohammedan circles and the feudal rulers of Shkodër. As it appears, this reactionary opposition constrained Kara Mahmud to put



an end to his relations with Austria and to seek amical terms with the Sultan.

The good relations with the Sultan lasted only three years, till the Austro-Turkish hostilities were brought to an end. As soon as a peace treaty was signed between them at Sistovo (August 14, 1791) Kara Mahmud turned back to his previous independent policy, further extending the boundaries of his *pashallek*. These actions obliged the Sublime Porte to send for the third time a great punitive expedition against him.

This time also the reactionary circles that dreaded the breaking off from Turkey rebelled against Bushatly. At its head stood the younger brother of Kara Mahmud — Ibrahim Pasha Bushatly, who on the eve of the Turkish expedition ran away and went to Istanbul.

In the summer of the year 1793 a huge Turkish army under the command of Ebubekir Pasha, having at his side Ibrahim Pasha Bushatly, who was appointed *mutesarriif* of Shkodër, started on its way to Albania. Kara Mahmud was not able to impede its onrush. As six years before, he shut himself in the fortress of Rozafat. The siege of Shkodër by the hostile armies lasted from August 20 until November 28, 1793. This time, too, the events of the year 1787 repeated themselves. After a general attack, Kara Mahmud routed the Turkish army and liberated Shkodër from the siege.

After this third defeat, the Sultan endeavoured to draw Bushatly closer to him in order to make use of him against the other feudal lords. Kara Mahmud accepted this policy of "rapprochement", reconciled himself with his brother, who returned to Shkodër, but he did not interrupt his struggles to strengthen and expand his *pashallek*. In 1795 he captured Prizren and Dibra, and in 1796 set out for Montenegro. But in Montenegro he met, as in the past, with the heroic resistance of the Montenegrins, who were fighting in defence of the freedom they had won long since. After approximately 100 days of fighting without any result, he himself was killed on September 22, 1796.

With his death came an end also to the autonomy of the *pashallek* of Shkodër. In his stead the Sultan at once appointed as *mutesarriif* in Shkodër, Ibrahim Pasha Bushatly, who had shown himself for a long time an opponent of the policy of Kara Mahmud. The new ruler pursued the policy of complete submission to Istanbul. He took part with his armies in all the expeditions ordered by the Sultan within the boundaries of Albania, as well as in other parts of the Balkans. Until his death in 1810, he ruled not as a lord of a *pashallek*, but as a *mutesarriif* of the Sultan. During his rule, Shkodër lost the political victories won by Kara Mahmud.

### THE GREAT PASHALLEK OF JANINA —ALI PASHA TEPELENA

Almost at the same time, in south Albania there came to be created one other great *pashallek* with Janina as its chief town, the history of which is closely connected with the name of Ali Pasha Tepelena.

Son of Veli Bey, the ruler of Janina, Ali was orphaned at the age of nine, when in 1753 his father was killed by his rival, usurper of the power in Tepelena. Educated by his mother Hanko, an ambitious, courageous and severe woman, Ali, when he had grown up, put himself at the head of a band of robbers which for almost 20 years attacked and plundered his rivals and the peasants, both in Albania and in Thessaly. He astutely interfered in the conflicts of the feudal lords with each other, and in these conflicts backed the cause of the Sultan, until he attracted the attention of Istanbul, and in the year 1785, when he was 41 years old, he was bestowed the title of Pasha and at the same time the office of *mutesarriif* of Delvina. A year later, in 1786, the Sultan appointed him *mutesarriif* of the important *sandjak* of Terhalla to establish order and peace in the re-

gion of Thessaly. With full knowledge of their dens and hiding places, Ali endeavoured to carry out this task, and with notable success. In reward the Sultan designated him the following year, 1787, to the office of *dervenpasha* of Toskeria and of Thessaly.

After he had attained these offices, Ali Pasha Tepelena directed his eye on Janina, which at that time was one of the biggest and wealthiest Turkish cities in the Balkans. With its numerous artisans and merchants, Janina had become at the same time also the principal economic centre, with which were bound not only the districts of Epirus, but also those of Toskeria. At Janina were gathered many Albanian feudal rulers, who were split in *tarafs* or groups and were fighting with each other in order to insure their domination over the city.

Ali skilfully drew profit out of these conflicts, and in the year 1788 captured the city without any difficulty. Through gifts and presents he sent to Istanbul, he insured also the *ferman* (decree) of the Sultan. Again through presents he insured the other imperial *ferman*, appointing his second son Veli Pasha *mutesarraf* of Terhalla.

In Janina also Ali established order within a short period. But at the same time, he took urgent measures for creating a large army with the aim to extend his authority in neighbouring districts. Profiting from the fact that Turkey was engaged with Russia and Austria, and by taking advantage of his office as *dervenpasha*, under the pretext he would re-establish the order that was upset, he undertook in the years 1789-1791 a series of campaigns in Toskeria and in Epirus. Through these campaigns Ali brought under his sway a great number of districts of Toskeria, such as Konitza, Përmeti, Klissura, Libohova and Tepelena, whereas in Epirus he captured Arta, thus reaching the Ionian seashore.

In 1792, after he had freed himself from the war with Austria and Russia, Sultan Selim III began to take steps in order to strengthen the interior condition of the empire. In order to avert the counteraction of Istanbul, in contra-

diction with how Kara Mahmud Bushatly had acted, Ali Pasha Tepelena suspended his campaigns and endeavoured to observe the relations of submission to the Sultan. For this reason he took part, even though merely in a formal manner, in the Turkish expedition against Shkodër in the year 1793.

However, at the end of the 18th century, when Turkey had fallen into utter decay on account of the campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte, Ali Pasha restarted his operations for the expansion of the boundaries of the *pashallek* of Janina. In 1797 France seized the Ionian Islands, Corfu, etc., and thus became neighbour of the *pashallek* of Janina. Napoleon, who was preparing to conquer Egypt from the Turks and had interest to create trouble for Istanbul in the Balkans, instigated Ali too, to start a revolt against the Sultan. Ali Pasha took advantage of the opportunity thus offered, and obtained from France arms, munitions and military instructors. But he did not break off relations with the Sultan. On the contrary, when in the year 1798 Turkey conjointly with England and Russia declared war on France, Ali began his military operations against the French, and captured some of the cities on the Ionian seashore, such as Preveza, Gumenitza, etc.

At the beginning of the year 1799, the Ionian Islands passed into the hands of Russia. In spite of all his endeavours, Ali did not succeed to enter on friendly terms with the Russians. In its policy towards the Ottoman Empire, Russia relied only on the Christian populations of the Balkans, and did not trust the Mohammedan *pashas*. On account of the unfriendly relations with the new neighbours, Ali had considerable trouble, as the Russians incited against the ruler of Janina all his antagonists — the ruling *beys* of Berat, Delvina and Chamouria and, in a special manner, the Christian Suliots, a warrior highlander free Albanian tribe, which had taken refuge here from the highlands of Himara since long ago, and had settled in the rugged mountainous regions of Suli, in southern Epirus.

However, Ali Pasha Tepelena overcame all these difficulties, displayed not only military dexterity, but also diplomatic ability. In order to have his hands free to eliminate his antagonists who were instigated by the Russians at Corfu, Ali did not break his relations with Istanbul. After he had wrought a breach in the bloc of his feudal opponents, in the year 1799 he undertook a military expedition against the Suliots.

Ali had tried once before to subdue Suli, but had had no success. Therefore, this time he took the decision to lay siege to Suli and to keep the Suliots blocked till they had to surrender out of hunger. But to this blockade the Suliots, led by the Captain Foto Djavella, offered resistance for four years. Only at the end of the year 1803, when the siege was intensified and their condition had got worse than ever before, for lack of provisions, the Suliots were obliged to capitulate with the condition that they would be allowed to leave the country. However, after they had capitulated, Ali did not permit the Suliots to go to Corfu to the Russians. Then, the wars between them broke out again. A part of the Suliots with Foto Djavella did succeed to cross to Corfu. The rest of them were captured on their way to the sea. A group of Suliot women, lest they should fall into the hands of Ali, threw themselves, together with their children, from the rocks of Zallong into the chasm.

After he had subjugated the Suliots, in the following years Ali sought support in the international arena, for the purpose of fulfilling his ambition to become an independent ruler. For this reason, in the year 1803 he made an agreement with England, and in the year 1806 once again with France. But these gave him no support. Accordingly, in order not to aggravate his relations with the Sultan, Ali suspended his campaigns. Still Ali drew profits from the agreements with France and England, by taking from them modern armaments through which he further strengthened his army.

In the years 1808-1812, when Turkey was at war with Russia, Ali restarted his campaigns for the extension of

the *pashallek*, and achieved, one after the other, a series of successes. In 1809 he subjugated Berat, where he set up as governor his eldest son Miftar Pasha, and Chamouria, the rulers of which he took captive and imprisoned. In 1810, in spite of the threats of Napoleon, Ali assailed and captured Vlora, caught and interned its ruler, who was on friendly terms with the French. In 1811 he stormed Delvina and Gjirokastra, which he conquered after an intense artillery bombardment. In 1812 he attacked resolutely the citadel of Kardhiqi, where his feudal rivals were assembled, and forced them to yield. Through these conquests the whole of Toskeria, Thessaly and Epirus, with the exception of Parga on the Epiroean coast, fell into the hands of Ali and were included in his vast *pashallek*. The Pashallek of Janina attained thus the culmination of its power.

Like all the other *pashalleks* that were created in Albania and in other territories of the Ottoman Empire, the Pashallek of Janina, too, had a feudal character. But here the process of the growth of the big feudal landed estates at the expense of the feudal military property, took greater proportions than in other places. The *timars* and the *zeamets* here disappeared entirely. Ali Pasha Tepelena himself, from the proprietor of only two estates that he had inherited from his father, towards the end of his life had become the proprietor of estates comprising 934 villages, scattered in Toskeria, Epirus, Thessaly and elsewhere.

Ali Pasha had for a long time nourished the ambition to become an independent ruler and therefore felt constrained to achieve as wide an autonomy as possible, without breaking loose from the Ottoman Empire, and furthermore to keep formally the relations of submission to the Sultan. Especially during the periods in which Turkey was engaged in war, in the home policy as well as in that of foreign relations, the Pashallek of Janina tended to assume the characteristics of an autonomous state.

The Pashallek of Janina comprised within its boundaries Albanian and Greek populations. Still for his rule Ali

Pasha depended on the Albanian population. The ruling class and the armed forces were constituted entirely of the Albanians.

The growth of the power of Ali Pasha caused an uneasiness in Istanbul. Therefore in 1812, as soon as he had concluded a peace treaty with Russia, Sultan Mahmud II took measures against Ali and discharged him from office and ordered him to withdraw to Tepelena. Ali complied with the order only in form, but a couple of months later he came back to Janina, and after he had strengthened his ties with the British, he took no account of the authority of Istanbul.

The Sultan was not in a condition to take military steps, because shortly after, an uprising in Serbia broke out. In order not to deteriorate still more his relations with Janina, the Sultan gave in and sent to Ali the necessary *fermans* appointing him again to his previous offices. Thus since 1812 Ali governed over the Pashallek of Janina, almost as an independent ruler.

After the death of Ibrahim Pasha Bushatly (1810), in Shkodër the feudal conflicts broke out again. In these conflicts Ali Pasha Tepelena too intervened, but had no success. In 1811, the wars were brought to an end by the victory of Mustafa Pasha Bushatly, who in a short period of time restored the former Pashallek of Shkodër. In 1812 the whole territory of Albania was under the rule of two great feudal lords.

However, of these two the more powerful ruler was the Pasha of Janina, who began to extend his authority northward. In this direction he met with considerable success. The rulers of central Albania who formerly depended on Shkodër, now bound themselves to Janina. In the year 1812 Ali organized a plot also against Mustafa Pasha, but this attempt failed. These machinations determined Mustafa Pasha to enter into much closer relations with Istanbul. On his part, the Sultan gave the ruler of Shkodër all his support, in order to incite him to fight, in case of need,

against Ali Pasha Tepelena. However, the two Albanian rulers avoided, for a certain time, an open conflict between them.

### THE DEFEAT OF THE GREAT PASHALLEKS AND THE END OF THE REGIME OF TIMARS IN ALBANIA

In the years 1814-1815 important international events took place, which upset the balance of forces in Europe. After the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Congress of Vienna dictated to France the conditions of peace and drew the new map of Europe. The Holy Alliance which was created in October of the year 1815 put to itself the task not to support any revolutionary movement and not to allow any modification of the political map of Europe. This assured Turkey certain security from the danger from outside the frontiers. Therefore Sultan Mahmud II had the way open to crush internal revolutionary and separatist movements. In these circumstances Ali Pasha Tepelena was obliged either to surrender unconditionally to the Sultan or else to break away from him completely, which would lead inevitably to an open war with Istanbul.

Ali chose the second alternative. He believed that Russia, though it was one of the partners of the Holy Alliance, had not renounced its traditional policy to destroy Turkey. In this occurrence he saw the support the Russian Czar gave the Greek revolutionary patriots, who under the guidance of their organization *Filiqi Eteria* (Society of Friends) were active in preparing the Greek uprising for liberation. For this reason Ali attempted to approach Russia and by pledging its friendship tried to secure its support. At the same time he came in touch with the Greek *eterists* and with the aim of making of them his allies in his war against Istanbul, he gave them substantial political and material help.

However Ali Pasha's estimation of the international situation was erroneous. This became apparent at the beginning of the year 1820 when Sultan Mahmud II took the decision to crush the Pashallek of Janina; Ali Pasha found himself altogether alone. Russia was not prepared to trample the principles of the Holy Alliance and therefore advised Ali to wait until the Russo-Turkish war should be declared, of which there were no signs as yet. England too, to which Ali likewise addressed himself, advised him to make peace with the Sultan. Only the Greek *eterists* promised him that as soon as he would start the war with Istanbul they would start their revolt for liberation. However, through these promises the Greeks had in mind to pin down in Albania the forces of Ali with those of the Sultan, with the aim to facilitate the success of the revolt in Greece. Still Ali Pasha had great hope that, as soon as the Greek insurrection should break out, the Sultan would leave alone the ruler of Janina, and would direct his armies against Greece.

At the beginning of the year 1820, the Sultan Mahmud II issued the decree discharging Ali Pasha Tepelena from his official functions, and the Sheikh-ul-Islam invited him to present himself at Istanbul in order to render account of his deeds. Ali did not obey, and in May the Sultan issued the second *ferman* by which Ali was sentenced to death. After one month, in June, a large Turkish army with its commander-in-chief Ismail Pasho Bey, who was to succeed Ali in office, started on its way to the Pashallek of Janina. At the same time started the Turkish fleet also. Mustafa Pasha Bushatly, too, received the order to take part in this expedition.

At the beginning the Turkish army reaped speedy success. The Albanian forces, which were put in charge of the protection of the boundaries and of the cities of the *pashallek*, retreated without offering any serious resistance, and then they yielded together with their commanders, some of whom were the sons and grandsons of Ali, and who considered, as it appears, the result of the resistance as of no

consequence. In August 1820, the Turkish armies arrived at Janina and laid siege to the city, where Ali with a small part of his armies had taken shelter.

Ali Pasha did not yield but tried through parlies to prolong the resistance as much as possible until the Greek insurrection should start. But, when in the year 1821 the Greek revolt for liberation did burst out, the Turks did not withdraw any of their forces from Janina, on the contrary they sent in new reinforcements. Under the command of Hurshid Pasha, who had succeeded the inefficient Ismail Pasho Bey, the Turkish armies increased the pressure on Janina. But Ali Pasha resisted till the end. At night on January 25, 1822, after a siege of 17 months, after Ali had been assassinated treacherously by Hurshid Pasha, the resistance of Janina came to an end. The head of Ali Pasha was sent to Istanbul as a precious trophy.

Although the *pashallek* of Ali Pasha Tepelena ceased to exist, it left its traces in Albania as well as in the international arena. Not only did it sweep away the vestiges of the military feudalism in south Albania, but Ali Pasha's aspiration to create an independent Albanian principality and furthermore his resolute war against Istanbul influenced later events. On the other hand, with the aid he had given to the *eretists* and with the prolonged resistance of Janina, Ali made a substantial contribution to the triumph of the uprising for liberation and of the Greek national independence.

After destroying the Pashallek of Janina, the Sublime Porte sent to Greece all its armies, including those of the Albanian feudal rulers. Among those who went to Greece with the aim to crush the insurrection was Mustafa Pasha Bushatly.

Up to that time Bushatly and the Sultan had guarded friendly relations with each other. But these relations did not continue for long. After the defeat of the Pashallek of Janina, there was no reason for the Sultan to support Bushatly to get stronger. Mustafa Pasha on his part was alarmed by the objectives that became apparent on the part

of the Turkish governors to centralize the imperial authority at the expense of the separatist power of the feudal rulers.

The relations between them started to deteriorate in 1824 when Bushatly returned from Greece to Shkodër without the permission of the Sultan. But the Sublime Porte, fully occupied with the Greek question, the problem of the *janissarys*, the situation of Bosnia and afterwards with the Russo-Turkish war, which began in the year 1828, postponed its intervention in the Shkodran problems. These circumstances induced Mustafa Pasha to enter into a secret agreement with the Russians. These promised him that they would recognize him as independent ruler in Albania in case he did not take part in the war against them. And indeed, when the Sultan bade him to come to the front with his numerous armies, Bushatly delayed his start and then marched so slowly that when he arrived at the appointed place the Turkish armies were dispersed. But the Russians did not keep their promise. Mustafa Pasha returned to Shkodër with broken relations with the Sultan and with the Russians, and with no friends and supporters in the international arena.

After the Russo-Turkish war had come to an end, the Sultan decided to subjugate Albania for good. This task was undertaken personally by the Turkish prime minister, Mehmet Reshid Pasha. In 1838, at the head of a modern army, he marched into Toskeria, where the feudal lords had become once again independent rulers. When Mehmet Reshid Pasha arrived at Manastir, he invited all the feudal lords of Toskeria to award them pardon and rewards, and on August 26, 1830 massacred treacherously more than 500 of them. Afterwards, through fire and sword, he scourged south Albania.

In 1831 Mehmet Reshid Pasha marched on Gegëria. Mustafa Pasha with his armies started off to encounter him, but at Babune of Macedonia he was routed. The disaster obliged Bushatly to retreat to Shkodër and to shut himself up in the Rozafat fortress, where the Turkish armies besieged him. After six months' siege and after he was

assured that the Sultan would spare his life, Mustafa Pasha surrendered. With his surrender the Pashallek of Shkodër also came to an end.

The Sublime Porte, after it had broken the power of the separatist feudal lords, did not re-establish the previous system of *timars* which was in total decay throughout the Ottoman Empire. Even so, a year later, in 1832, it abolished this system through an act of law. Thus came to an end also officially the regime of military feudalism, introduced into Albania four centuries ago.

Instead of the military feudal administration, Istanbul began to establish in Albania the regular state administration. However, the new administration roused the opposition of the Albanian feudal rulers who had escaped from the exterminating campaigns of Mehmed Reshid Pasha and who saw in it the end of their independent rule. On the other hand, the new functionaries who filled the important offices in the administration began to abuse their offices and to carry on unlimited speculation, which caused the discontent of the masses of the population. Thus shortly after the Turkish state administration had been introduced, a series of armed revolts of the peasant masses burst in Albania, which were led by feudal chieftains such as Zylyftar Poda, Tafil Buzi, Zenel Gjoleka, or else of the masses of citizens, at whose head stood feudalized leaders of the *esnafs*, such as Hamza Kazazi, Haxhi Idrizi, etc. But all of these revolts were crushed.

## THE FIRST STEPS OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT: THE REVOLTS AGAINST THE *TANZIMAT*

The Turkish governors, in sequence to the steps they had taken in the 20's and 30's of the 19th century, prepared the way for the application of the reforms of *Tanzimat*,

which aimed at strengthening the central authority, weakened by the separatist tendency of the provincial feudal rulers, by the peasant revolts, and by the revolts of the oppressed nationalities which erupted from time to time in various parts of the Empire.

The basic principles of these reforms, which were made public by Sultan Abdul Medjid in November of the year 1839 through his decree "Hat-Sherif of Gulhane" in essence provided the establishment of a centralized state administration after the model of European states, which was going to replace the separatist authority of regional feudal rulers, the establishment of a financial state apparatus that was to replace the corrupted system of *Iltizam*, the dispersion of former troops of the feudal rulers, and the organization of a regular army of the state on the basis of the obligatory, unpaid, universal military service. However, neither the principles of Gulhane nor the supplementary by-laws infringe the decayed social-economic basis of the feudal Ottoman Empire. In the hands of the depraved Turkish governmental officials, these reforms paved the way for speculations on a greater scale at the expense of the population.

In Albania the reforms of the *Tanzimat* were welcomed only by the landlords, because with the elimination of the feudal military landholding system, the latter had the possibility to extend unhindered and even under the guarantee of the state, their large estates. For this reason they supported the Sublime Porte in the enforcement of these reforms.

Whereas the feudal lords of long standing, who realized that Istanbul was constantly pursuing its plan of centralizing power, received the Gulhane decree with protests. The same attitude was adopted by the highland *bayraktars* (chieftains) and by the discontented leaders of the *esnafs*. Although they were prepared to oppose by means of arms the enforcement of these reforms, still they did not demand any new systemization of the manner of governing the

country. They merely demanded the re-establishment of the previous system — the ancient feudal rulers to regain the lost *pashalleks* and their revenues (*timars*), the *bayraktars* (mountain chieftains) to guard the traditional autonomy, and the leaders of the *esnafs* to continue enjoying their former privileges, which were being eliminated by the establishment of state administration.

A hostile attitude towards the reforms of *Tanzimat* was taken by the masses of the peasantry. The establishment of the state administration with depraved officials did not ameliorate their deplorable conditions. More especially became heinous for the masses of the peasantry the new system of the collection of taxes, particularly the *djelep* (tax on cattle), and the regular military service (*nizam*) which was to be rendered without any pay and was to last 7-10 years. Relentless opponents of the reforms were, in a particular manner, the highlanders, because in the centralizing measures of Istanbul they saw the end of their traditional privileges.

By foreseeing that the enforcement of the new reforms would arouse the armed opposition of the Albanians, and in order to avoid the general insurrection, the Sublime Porte began to adopt them in Albania not simultaneously in all the regions of the country, but at various periods — in 1843, in the regions of Kossovo, in 1844 in the regions of Gegëria, and in 1845 in those of Toskëria.

Everywhere the peasants and the highlanders opposed these reforms by armed revolts. The Sublime Porte sent against them numerous armies, and at some localities arrived to exact by force the taxes and the *nizam*. In the mountainous regions it did not meet with any success and was obliged to renounce for the time being, the enforcement of the reforms.

But the revolts of the peasantry and of the highlanders also were animated by restrained demands: they were aimed against the new reforms, and more concretely against the taxes and the *nizam* (the military service), without

assuring any advanced order of government. These demands served to back the feudal lords and the *bayraktars*.

At the same time that a series of armed revolts burst out against the *Tanzimat*, various personalities emerged who started to believe that the Albanians could not be saved by re-establishing in Albania the former backward condition, but by entering on a new road, the road of civilization, after the example of the advanced European states. They considered the extension of education and of culture among the vast masses of the population as the means to achieve this aim. At the beginning, only a very restrained circle of Albanians realized this historic necessity. Better and clearer than by anyone else, this imperative need was expressed by Naum Veqilharxhi.

Naum Veqilharxhi, born in 1797 at Vithkuq, had migrated when he was still a young man to Roumania and there, in



Naum Veqilharxhi, pioneer of the 19th century Albanian National Liberation Movement

the year 1821, together with hundreds of other Albanians, had taken part in the Roumanian revolt of liberation against the Turkish oppressors. Although in exile, Naum directed his attention to his distressed homeland, which was suffering from ignorance and a state of backwardness from the Turkish yoke. He soon arrived to the conclusion that Albania could save itself from this backwardness and slavery only if the masses of the population shook off the ignorance and that this could be easily achieved not by spreading education in foreign languages (Turkish and Greek), as it was done in Albania, but by education in the Albanian language. Naum thought that education in a foreign language not only was difficult, but destroyed the love of the Albanians for their own country, whereas education in the mother tongue could be mastered easier even by the poorest, and besides it imbued his countrymen with love of their country.

Starting from the axiom that "a nation without culture and education resembles a throng of slaves" and that "culture and education can be acquired only through the mother tongue", Naum Veqilharxhi began the writing of school books in Albanian, making use of an absolutely particular alphabet which he had created himself. After the edict on the reforms of the *Tanzimat* had been published, he addressed to his Christian countrymen a circular letter in which he wrote: "The time has arrived that we should rouse ourselves and think with more maturity, and courageously change our route and hence take as example the advanced peoples of the world". In 1844 he published in Roumania a small Albanian primer entitled *Evetor*, which was distributed in south Albania. The publication of *Evetor* caused among progressive Albanians a wide movement for the support and the diffusion of education in Albanian. In Korça the higher class of the citizens started a campaign of aid for the education in Albanian. A year later Naum published a new *Evetor*, more complete than the one before.



The movement in favour of the Albanian alphabet and the Albanian school, which had as its aim the liberation and the progress of the country, was proof of the revival and development of the national consciousness of the Albanians. This marked, on its part, the beginning of a new period in the history of Albania, which has been called since long ago the period of the Albanian national revival, or shortly, the "Albanian Revival".

The peasants' and the highlanders' revolts continued in the following years, too. Of these the greatest was the revolt of the year 1847.

The revolt started in Laberia, and in July of the year 1847 in Kurvelesh the collectors of taxes on cattle made their appearance. Some 500 *labs*, with Zenel Gjoleka, a former *spahi*, at their head, took up arms, chased away the officials in charge of tax-collection, descended from the highlands of Laberia, stormed and liberated Delvina, and afterwards marched on the chief city of the *sandjak*, Gjirokastra, to which they laid siege.

From Laberia the insurrection spread over the other districts of south Albania. But it took major proportions in the district of Mallakastra, which was included in the *sandjak* of Berat. The *mutesarraf* of this *sandjak* was the great landlord Hussein Pasha Vrioni, who had terrorized the peasants through ruthless oppression. For this reason the rancour of the insurgents was directed chiefly against Vrioni feudal rulers, who had the support of the Sublime Porte. Under the leadership of the audacious peasant Rapo Hekali, the insurgents, after liberating the whole of Mallakastra and of Muzekeya, in the village of Greshitza defeated the Turkish forces who had marched against them, took captive and executed two brothers of Hussein Vrioni, who commanded the government forces, and then marched against the central city of the *sandjak*, Berat, to which they laid siege.

After these successes, the insurgents banded themselves together and created a common committee, composed mainly of the *beys* who were opposed to the reforms.

The insurgents achieved still other successes. They liberated the city of Berat and compelled the Turkish garrison to shut itself up in the citadel. Almost simultaneously, the *Lab* insurgents defeated a Turkish army, which was moving to the succour of the besieged Gjirokastra. Without giving up the siege of Gjirokastra, a part of the insurgents from Laberia and from Chamouria started an attack on Janina, which was the chief city of the *vilayet*, and on August 28, 1847, in the village of Dholane, not far from Janina, they smashed a Turkish army of 5,000 regular soldiers, which was advancing towards Gjirokastra.

But the insurrection did not last long. The Sublime Porte sent to Albania a strong army, which stormed Berat and after having defeated the forces of Rapo Hekali, terrorized the native population and marched on Gjirokastra. In the encounter which took place in the village of Palavlia (Delvina), the forces of Gjoleka too, which had interrupted their march on Janina, were routed. After other punitive operations, at last the insurrection was crushed.

Although it was crushed, the revolt of the year 1847 was of great importance. As far as the demands are concerned, it surpassed by far the previous revolts. The peasant masses fought not only against the *nizam* and the taxes levied by the state, but also against the big feudal landholders, which was manifested more clearly by the villages of Mallakastra and of Muzekeya. Furthermore, in this revolt, though dimly, the preliminary claims of the Albanian national movement can be detected. For this reason the revolt of the year 1847 had vast reverberation throughout Albania. Its repercussion continued throughout the following decades.

The violence used by Istanbul in crushing the Albanian *pashalleks* and the insurrections against the *nizam* did not achieve anything but the accentuation of the discontent of the popular masses of Albania.

The Albanians all the while were beginning to see in Turkey their hateful enemy. They paid the taxes only at the threat of the gendarmes. The few *nizams* (soldiers) that were recruited, in the majority of cases, deserted. The

authority of the Sultan was practically ignored. In the years 1853-1856, when Turkey was again at war with Russia (the Crimean War), the Sultan succeeded in recruiting in Albania only a limited number of soldiers. After the Crimean War, the Sublime Porte tried again to re-establish its authority in the mountainous regions. But this time also it had to face the armed opposition of the Moslem and Christian Albanians.

All these factors placed the Albanians in the international arena as an important force which had to be taken into consideration whenever the question was raised of the fate of Turkey and the events in the Balkans. The Great Powers as well as the Balkan states began to pay attention to the further development of the incidents in Albania.

But the concern of the foreign states brought great harm to the Albanians. Before, as well as after the Crimean War, the Great Powers had no interest to destroy the Ottoman Empire: England and France did not desire the fall of this Empire because they wanted to use it as an obstacle to hinder Russia from reaching the Straits of the Dardanelles; Austria, because it did not want to have trouble at its rear, while its attention was concentrated on the happenings in Germany; and Russia itself, because it was weakened by the defeat it had suffered in Crimea. For the fall of the Ottoman Empire were interested and actively busy, only the three new Balkan states—Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, which would be able to achieve their national union only through this means. It would have seemed that the Balkan states would have been the natural allies of the Albanians, who were likewise interested in the expulsion of the enemy who had swayed and oppressed them throughout centuries. But the governments of Athens, Belgrade and Cetinje were in the hands of bourgeois circles, which began to manifest tendencies of chauvinism. They aspired to include within the boundaries of their respective states the Albanian territories also. For this reason they did not welcome the idea of the creation of an independent Albanian state. On the contrary, in the course of secret

discussions that took place in 1861 between Serbia and Greece, the governments of these two countries adopted the plan of dividing Albania between them after the expulsion of the Turks. This is why the Albanians began to regard their neighbours too with suspicion. The anti-Islamic and pan-Slavic or pan-Hellenic clamours of chauvinist Serbian and Greek propagandists went so far as to awaken anxiety in the hearts of the Albanians, and in the first line among the Mohammedan Albanians, who constituted approximately three-fourths of the population of the country. Thus, on account of the chauvinistic attitude of the bourgeois governments of Belgrade and of Athens, the cooperation between the Albanians and the neighbouring populations in the struggle against Turkey was rendered extremely difficult.

Uneasy circumstances were created in Albania also by the policy that Istanbul followed in the cultural domain. Although with the *Tanzimat* reforms the Turkish governors had proclaimed that they would concede to the various populations of the Empire the right to freely carry on the education according to the nationalities, they further continued to identify the nationality with the religion. Consequently they went on to consider the Mohammedan Albanians as belonging to the Ottoman nationality, the Greek Orthodox Albanians as belonging to the Greek nationality, and the Roman Catholic Albanians as belonging to the Latin nationality, and on the basis of this discrimination, the Albanians, split into three different religions, were not recognized as belonging to one and the same nationality, and accordingly were deprived of the right to follow their education in their mother tongue. This had harmful effects, and with time became a handicap in the struggle for the unity of the Albanians, because in the Turkish schools, conducted by the Sublime Porte, endeavours were made to inculcate in the Albanian scholars the feeling of the Islamic Ottoman nationality; in the Greek schools, which were put under the supervision and the spiritual guidance of the Patriarchate of Istanbul, it was aimed to cultivate in the hearts of the Orthodox the pan-

Hellenic sentiment which served the chauvinistic aspirations of Athens; whereas the supervision for the education of the Catholic population, which was carried on in the Italian language, was in the hands of the Papacy and of Austria.

The increase in the number of foreign schools after the reforms of the *Tanzimat* and the political objectives hidden behind their educational activities, engendered the danger of the breach and the assimilation of the Albanians according to the religions which they belonged to. To forestall this danger, the Albanian patriots adopted and divulged the platform of the priority of nationality before religion, and in this direction, by leaving in the second line the religious factor, they concentrated their efforts in diffusing among the Albanians national consciousness by means of education in Albanian and the teaching of Albanian literature.

In 1864 endeavours were made to found an Albanian cultural society in Istanbul, and with the permission of the Sublime Porte the initiative was taken by a young patriot, Konstandin Kristoforidhi, who had completed his higher studies some years before in England. The aim of this cultural society was to open Albanian schools and to publish the necessary school texts in an alphabet more practicable and easier to be used than the difficult alphabet of *Veqil-hardji*. But their endeavours brought no result on account of the hostile attitude of the Sublime Porte, which refused to recognize the Albanians as a nation in itself.

In 1867, 1870 and 1871 in Istanbul once again attempts were made for the foundation of an Albanian cultural society. But these attempts, too, were fruitless. This time the Sublime Porte as well as the Patriarchate of Istanbul interfered by means of threats in order to compel the members of the committee to give up all efforts.

On account of these obstacles the national movement had very slow growth. The ranks of the Albanian patriots had few adherents. They had no organization, neither political, nor cultural. The masses of the Albanian population were



**Konstantin Kristoforidhi (1830-1895), gifted linguist and pioneer in the Albanian National Liberation Movement**

still under the influence of the feudal chieftains, who were hostile to the Sublime Porte. It is in these circumstances that Albania had to face the years of the Balkan crisis.

## THE LEAGUE OF PRIZREN (1878)

The Balkan crisis had its starting point, as is well known, in the revolts for liberation that broke out in 1875 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in 1876 in Bulgaria. Russia gave its support to the claims of the insurgents for autonomy. In 1876, on Russia's incitement, Serbia and Montenegro, too, declared war on Turkey. Istanbul crushed mercilessly the revolts, compelled Serbia to sue for an armistice and refused Russia's demand to grant autonomy to the Slav populations of the Balkans. After that, Russia precipitated its prepara-

tions for declaring war on Turkey. With the initiative of England, which wanted to save the Ottoman Empire from the calamity of a war with Russia, an international conference was held in Istanbul and, at the proposal of the conference, the Great Powers signed a protocol in London in March of the year 1877, compelling Turkey to create one autonomous province in Bosnia, Herzegovina and two autonomous *vilayets* in Bulgaria. Within the boundaries of the western Bulgarian *vilayet* were to be included districts inhabited by the Albanian population, such as that of Dibra, of Gostivar, of Tetova, of Kachanik and others.

The conference of Istanbul as well as the Protocol of London did not take into account the existence of the Albanian nationality, and refused to acknowledge to the Albanians the right of autonomous administration; and along with these various districts inhabited by them were comprised within the Bulgarian *vilayet*. For this reason a great number of renowned leaders of south Albania, among them Abdul Frashëri, held a meeting in Janina, and there composed a memorandum addressed to the Turkish Government demanding that the various Albanian districts, allotted to different *vilayets*, be united in a single Albanian *vilayet*. In this *vilayet* the administration was to be composed exclusively of Albanian officials, in the schools and courts of justice the Albania language was to be used, the recruits were to do their military service within the boundaries of the *vilayet*. In the memorandum were presented for the first time the demands for the administrative autonomy for the whole of Albania.

However, neither the Protocol of London was put into execution, nor was the memorandum of Janina taken into consideration for the reason that Russia, after it had signed a secret treaty with Austria-Hungary in January of the year 1877 in Budapest, on April 24, 1877 declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Together with Russia, Serbia and Montenegro began once again war operations against Turkey.

Decayed from within, Turkey was defeated and, on March 3, 1877, was compelled to sign a treaty of peace at

St. Stephanon with the onerous conditions dictated by Russia. The Treaty of St. Stephanon made no mention of the Albanian problem at all. Albania was not only to remain, as up to then, under Turkish rule, without any rights whatsoever, but considerable parts of its territories were to be detached from it and annexed by foreign states. Montenegro was to receive, among others, Ulqin (Dulcigno), Hot, Plava, Gucina, etc. Serbia was going to annex above all the *sandjak* of Prishtina. Bulgaria was going to include within its boundaries the districts of Korça, Pogradec, Dibra, Gostivar, Tetova and others.

The publication of the Treaty of St. Stephanon utterly exasperated the Albanians. Throughout the country a wide movement broke out against the chauvinistic aims of Albania's neighbours. In a vast number of districts local committees were created spontaneously for their self-defence, against the new danger. A further incitement to this Albanian movement was given by the decision of the Great Powers to have the terms of the Treaty of St. Stephanon revised by a Congress of the Great Powers, which Russia was compelled to accept, and which was to meet in Berlin in June of the year 1878.

The Sublime Porte welcomed the indignation of the Albanians and tried to exploit the protest movement in Albania with the aim of modifying in its favour the terms of the Treaty of St. Stephanon. For this reason Istanbul gave permission for the creation of the self-defence committees, but at the same time tried to persuade the Mohammedan Albanians to declare themselves, in their protests, as Turks who had no desire to separate themselves from Turkey and from the Sultan.

For the Albanian patriots it was clear that in these difficult circumstances the Albanians ought to take their fate into their own hands. The task to create an Albanian united and general movement was assumed by the secret committee founded in Istanbul in the spring of the year 1878, which had as president Abdul Frashëri, and as members Pashko Vasa, Sami Frashëri, Jani Vreto and others.

The Istanbul Committee tried by every possible means to bring the Albanian question before the Chancelleries of the Great Powers prior to the meeting at the Berlin Congress. The members of the Committee came in touch with the leaders of the self-defence committees. At the conclusion of these contacts, towards the end of May 1878, it was decided to call an extraordinary convention at Prizren to which delegates from all the districts of Albania were invited. The assembly was to meet on June 10, 1878, three days before the date fixed for the Berlin Congress.

The extraordinary convention held its inaugural meeting on June 10, 1878. Delegates from a vast number of districts took part in it. On account of the very short notice and of the difficulties of travel, not all the delegates from districts of south Albania were able to attend it.

The convention began its work with a fiery speech by Abdul Frashëri. He appealed to the delegates to unite themselves into a single body in order to forestall the danger of the partition of the country. The Assembly at once decided to create a general organization with its central executive committee which the branches that were to be created in all the districts of the country had to obey. With its creation, all the self-defence committees were to change into its branches. The organization thus created was called "the League" and is known under the name of "The League of Prizren". The Convention decided likewise to create without any loss of time an efficient army in order to protect the districts that were in danger of being annexed by foreign states. The Convention addressed a note of protest to the Congress of Berlin with which it formulated its opposition against the partition of the Albanian territories. After that, the Convention occupied itself for several days in succession with the drafting of the statute of the League.

While the statute was being discussed, two trends diametrically opposed to each other made their appearance in the League. A great number of reactionary *pashas*, of *bey*s and of clergymen, actively behind whom was the Sublime

Porte, attempted to give the League the character of a Mohammedan organization, which was to include also the non-Albanian Mohammedan populations of the Balkan Peninsula (Bosnians, Bulgarians, Turks, etc.). For this reason they had called to attend the Convention non-Albanian Mohammedan delegates from Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, etc. The objective of the Sublime Porte was, on the one hand, to eclipse the national movement, and on the other, to induce the Albanians to fight in defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Austria-Hungary was preparing to seize. The other current was represented by Albanian patriots with Abdul Frashëri at their head, who demanded that the League should assume the character of an Albanian organization and that all the Albanians, irrespective of their religion, should take part in it. They had in view that the League should fight not only to save the country from partition, but also in order to attain the autonomy of Albania.

At the Convention the elements attached to the Sublime Porte had the supremacy. Under their sway, on July 18, 1878, the statute, called the *Kararnamè* (the register of resolutions) was adopted in which the fidelity to Turkey was asserted, and to the League was attributed the character of an Organization of the Mohammedans of the Balkans. However, the reactionary *pashas* succeeded in securing the majority only in the Convention. In a great number of the branches the platform of the patriots had the upper hand. For this reason, the Albanian patriots, though they did not approve the principles of the *kararnamè*, did not forsake the League, but endeavoured to bring it onto the right road.

After the work of the Convention was completed, Abdul Frashëri left for south Albania in order to extend the League also over the districts that had not had the possibility to be represented at the meetings of Prizren. With the delegates of these districts, a special meeting was held in Frashëri. In south Albania the influence of the reactionary *pashas* was a mere trifle. That is why at the meeting at Frashëri the platform of the patriots triumphed. Here the

principle was adopted that the branches of the League should assume an open Albanian character.

At the Congress of Berlin, which met for the first time on June 13, 1878, the thesis triumphed to decrease the influence of Russia in the Balkans. At the expense of Turkey, a new partition of the territories took place. However at this partition too no mention was made of the principle of nationality. The area of Bulgaria fixed at St. Stephanon was reduced considerably. Serbia did not receive the *sandjak* of Prishtina but obtained the districts of Piro, Treni and Vrania. To Montenegro were allotted, among others, Tivari, Podgorica, Plava and Gucia; whereas Ulqin was retained by Turkey. To Greece, although it had not taken part in the war against Turkey, the Congress granted Thessaly and Epirus, but under the condition that the boundary was to be drawn by a common Greco-Turkish Commission.

The Congress took no notice of the protests of the Albanians. None of the Great Powers raised its voice in favour of their demands. The Congress treated the Albanians according to their respective religions: the Mohammedans were considered as Turks and the Greek Orthodox as Greeks. The chancellor of Germany, Prince Bismarck, who was the chairman of the Congress, went so far as to declare that there existed no Albanian nation. Thus Albania was doomed to remain without any rights whatsoever under Turkish rule, and on the other hand a number of its territories were torn away and partitioned out among foreign states.

The decisions of the Congress of Berlin inflamed still more the indignation of the Albanians. The fury of the Albanians was directed against the Great Powers, which had paid no attention to their demands, as well as against the Sublime Porte, that had proved itself incompetent to defend their territories. In all the regions of the country, and in the first place in the territories along the boundaries, hasty preparations were made in order to oppose with arms

in hand the annexation of Albanian territories. In the cities and villages began the registration of volunteers. The masses of the population gave considerable help in money, grain and cattle. Thus, within a couple of weeks the League of Prizren created an Albanian army of several tens of thousands of soldiers.

The Sublime Porte officially announced that it was going to put into execution the decisions of the Congress of Berlin. But on the other hand it tried to frustrate the occupation by Austria-Hungary of Bosnia and Herzegovina by means of irregular forces. Of these irregular forces the most important were those of the League of Prizren. However, the Albanian patriots, as in August the Austrian armies seized Bosnia and Herzegovina, by means of strenuous agitation, in spite of all the strong pressure exercised by the Sublime Porte, convinced the League of Prizren to stand aloof and not to get involved in the adventure of a war with Austria, but first to take care of the Albanian interests. On account of this attitude of the Albanians, the principal plan of Istanbul met with failure. The Sublime Porte began to look upon the League with suspicion.

A few days later the Sublime Porte was compelled by the Great Powers to surrender to Montenegro the regions which, according to the decisions of the Berlin Congress, appertained to Cetinie. In order to hand over these districts and to persuade the Albanians to renounce their armed opposition, the Sultan sent to Albania the Turkish marshal Mehmed Ali Pasha, its former delegate at the Congress of Berlin. In Prizren the Turkish marshal won to his side only the reactionary *pashas*. But the authority of these *pashas* over the League had considerably decreased by that time. Most of the leaders of the League did not comply with the orders of the Sultan.

On his way to the Montenegrin frontier, Mehmed Ali Pasha arrived at Jakova on September 1, 1878. In Jakova the committee set up by the League was in the hands of patriotic elements such as Sulejman Vokshi and Ahmed

Koronitza, who, with the exception of the chairman of the committee Abdullah Pasha Dreni, were among the most progressive active members of the entire League of Prizren. The committee intimated the Turkish marshal to turn back to Istanbul. Mehmed Ali Pasha, protected by six Turkish battalions, did not yield. Then the committee assembled the volunteer forces and laid siege to the palace of Abdullah Pasha Dreni, where the Turkish marshal had chosen his quarters. On September 4, 1878 fierce fighting began around the walls of the palace which lasted until September 6, 1878, and came to an end with the surrender of the Turkish battalions and the massacre of Mehmed Ali Pasha and Abdullah Pasha Dreni.

After the death of the Turkish marshal, the League of Prizren made great strides ahead. The relations with Istanbul were broken. Now the League even expected punitive expeditions on the part of the Turkish Government. Through these actions the authority and the influence of the reactionary *pashas* was declining, whereas that of the patriot elements was growing from day to day. Thus were created for the patriotic leaders the conditions for replacing the programme evolved in the *kararname* with a new programme which was to embody the principal demands of the Albanian national movement: the autonomy for Albania.

The initiative was again taken by the Istanbul Committee. The Committee drafted a projected programme, which was published on September 27, 1878 in Turkish in the newspaper *Terdjuman-i Shark* (The Interpreter of the East) which was published in Istanbul with Sami Frashëri as its editor. After animated discussions that took place throughout the country on the draft statute, the assembly of the League of Prizren in November sanctioned the new programme. In the programme was demanded: the unification of all the Albanian districts in a single *vilayet*, the creation of a general assembly as the highest organ of the *vilayet*; the cognizance of the Albanian language by the officials of the *vilayet*; the introduction of the tuition in Albanian lan-

guage in the schools of the country; and the allotment of a part of the budget of the *vilayet* for the diffusion of education and for public construction. The assembly elected a delegation of seven members to deliver to the Istanbul government the demands incorporated in the programme.

With this platform, the League of Prizren thus became a patriotic organization — the first organization of its kind in the history of Albania.

The memorandum was delivered to the Sublime Porte at the end of January 1879. The Turkish government neither rejected nor accepted it. In order to gain time until it had settled the boundary problems with Greece and Montenegro, it promised to appoint a commission to investigate the matter.

A couple of months later, as it became apparent that the Sublime Porte was dragging with the response, in Albania started a popular movement against the Turkish administration. The movement took vast proportions in Kossovo. In various meetings, the citizens and the peasants demanded initially the suppression of the state courts of justice and their replacement by Albanian courts. Afterwards the popular masses began to oppose the conscription of soldiers and levy of taxes. This movement gave to the highlanders the opportunity to restart their earlier revolts against the reforms of the *tanzimat* and for the safeguarding of their traditional privileges. The movements took such vast proportions that the Sultan was compelled to delay the collection of taxes and the recruiting of soldiers, and to allow, especially in the Kossovo regions, the creation of Albanian courts of justice.

However, in spite of its growth, the popular movement for an autonomous administration did not make great advance, because the League had to face the imminent danger of annexation of Albanian districts by Greece and Montenegro. This danger temporarily distracted the attention of the Albanians from the problem of autonomy.

## THE STRUGGLE OF THE LEAGUE OF PRIZREN AGAINST THE PARTITION OF ALBANIA

In February of the year 1879, the Turco-Greek Commission of boundaries started its work in Preveza. Greece claimed to include within its boundaries, besides Greek territories, the southern Albanian territories also. The Albanians now had no faith that Turkey would be able to save these territories from annexation by Greece. Consequently, as soon as the Turco-Greek discussions had been started, hundreds of influential personalities of south Albania who had adhered to the League of Prizren, assembled in Preveza, and at a meeting they held, announced that they were going to oppose by means of arms the transition of Albanian districts into the hands of Greece, and that they would seize arms against Turkey, too, in case it would sanction the annexation of these districts by Greece.

Turkey dreaded the troubles that would be created by the Albanians. Therefore, with various pretexts it prolonged and then interrupted the discussions. The Greek press then began a violent campaign against the Mohammedan Albanians. In order to clarify international public opinion and to expose to the Great Powers the character of the movement in Albania and the just claims of the Albanians, Abdul Frashëri accompanied by Mehmed Ali Pasha Vrioni visited several states of western Europe and handed to the cabinets of the Great Powers a memorandum in which they urged that the latter should renounce the policy of the partitioning of their country and that Albania should receive the benefit of autonomous administration.

In February of the year 1879, Turkey was compelled through the pressure exerted by the Great Powers to surrender to Montenegro the districts allotted to it by the Congress of Berlin, and therefore it withdrew its armies from these districts. The Montenegrin armies occupied Podgoritzza, Shpuza and Jabiak, but when they entered the districts

of Plava and of Gucia, they found there the armies of the League of Prizren which had preceded them.

Montenegro applied to the Great Powers urging them to compel Turkey to eject the Albanian armies from Plava and Gucia, and then to hand them over to Cetinie. In spite of the pressure of the Great Powers, Turkey was reluctant to exert any coercion against the enraged Albanians. It is then that Knias (Prince) Nicola of Montenegro decided to seize by the force of arms these two districts, where the armies of volunteers of the League under the command of Ali Pasha Gucia were massed. On account of the valiant defence of the Albanians, the Montenegrin armies suffered two ignominious defeats, one at Velike and the other at Pepich.

As it did not succeed in conquering Plava and Gucia, Montenegro once again pleaded for the intervention of the Great Powers to have the Treaty of Berlin put into execution. However the Great Powers now regarded as cumbersome the surrendering of these two districts without war, which would have rendered still worse the condition of Turkey. That is why, after long debating, on April 2, 1880, they decided to give to Montenegro two other Albanian districts instead of Plava and Gucia. This solution was accepted also by the Sultan. The new territories were to be yielded within twenty days.

This decision too caused a new wave of indignation in Albania. In all the regions of the country a great number of telegrams were addressed to the Great Powers, protesting against this unjust decision also. At the same time speedy steps were taken for defence. Groups of Albanian volunteers were concentrated in Hot and in Gruda.

The indignation of the Albanians, however, was directed against the Sublime Porte too, which had given its acquiescence. This indignation passed into armed actions against the Turkish military garrisons, which in order to protect themselves from these assaults, had taken refuge in the citadels of the cities. In these circumstances the movement



for achieving Albania's autonomy made a great step ahead. In Shkodër, in an extraordinary assembly of the mountainous regions, a memorandum addressed to the Sultan was adopted, in which it was demanded in categorical terms the unification of all the Albanian districts into an autonomous principality under the suzerainty of the Sultan, with a prince at its head, to be elected by the Albanians themselves. The text of the memorandum was announced publicly on April 17, 1880 at a popular meeting, by the chairman of the assemblage Hodo Sokoli, a colonel of the Turkish army who, together with 150 other Albanian officers, in order to demonstrate that they had broken their relations with the Sultan, removed before the assembly their insignia and their decorations.

In order not to arouse further the anger of the Albanians, the Sublime Porte withheld all repressive measures against them. But, on the other hand, complying with the decisions of the Great Powers, on April 22, it withdrew the Turkish armies from Hot and Gruda, and the armies of the League at once occupied these regions. The Montenegrin armies attempted once more to conquer them by force. However, in the bloody encounter that took place between them at *Ura e Rzhanicës*, the Montenegrin armies were routed and obliged to retreat, and forced to rely again on the Great Powers for the realization of their hopes.

As it became evident that the Albanians would not relinquish Hot and Gruda without fighting, after long negotiations that were carried on between them, the Great Powers took the decision to urge Turkey to deliver to Montenegro, instead of Hot and Gruda, the city of Ulqin (Dulcigno) together with its hinterland, which too had a population composed exclusively of Albanians.

A couple of days later, the committee of the League of Prizren, at its meeting held on June 30, 1880, resolved to resist by force of arms the surrender of Ulqin also. At the war-call of the League, within a few days the army of Albanian volunteers once more was mobilized.

This time the Great Powers threatened Turkey with the occupation of the port of Smyrna in Asia Minor, in case it would not hand over Ulqin to Montenegro. Caught in a difficult position, the Sublime Porte tried its best to persuade the Albanians to give up the resistance, but its efforts met with failure. On September 27, as soon as the Turkish army evacuated Ulqin, the Albanian volunteer forces took possession of the city and announced that they were going to defend it by every means.

On September 20, 1880 an international fleet composed of 17 men-of-war made its appearance before Ulqin. The commander of the fleet sent an ultimatum to the Albanian volunteers to deliver up the city within three days, but the defenders did not waver. After that the Great Powers decided to keep the city under blockade by the sea, and at the same time kept on exerting pressure on Turkey in order to constrain it to crush the Albanian resistance.

On September 25, 1880 the Sublime Porte started drastic measures to break the resistance of Ulqin and to dissolve the League of Prizren. For two consecutive months in Shkodër and the surrounding regions arrests and persecutions were enacted and at the same time strong pressure was exerted by means of distribution of rewards, ranks and decorations, in face of which a number of the League leaders began to vacillate. After the arrival of reinforcements, the Turkish marshal Dervish Pasha at the head of 20 battalions on November 20, 1880 began his march from Shkodër on Ulqin which was being defended by 3,000 Albanian volunteers, and blockaded it by sea and land. Thanks to his military superiority, Dervish Pasha at last, on November 23, 1880, broke the resistance of the Albanians and three days later, on November 26, 1880, in the presence of the international fleet, handed over Ulqin to the Montenegrins.

The defence of Ulqin left a deep impression not only in Albania, but also in the international arena. It discredited loudly the diplomacy of the Great Powers, which sacrificed without any hesitation the vital rights of small nations for their interests of world capitalistic hegemony.

## THE STRUGGLE OF THE LEAGUE OF PRIZREN AGAINST THE SUBLIME PORTE FOR THE AUTONOMY OF ALBANIA

After it had dragged for a year and a half the response to the demands of the League of Prizren, the Sublime Porte in June of the year 1880 began to interfere openly with the purpose of crushing the autonomist trends which were continuously growing. The Albanian patriots, however, took the resolution to bring forward once again, with still greater vigour, the problem of the autonomy of Albania. With this purpose in view, through their initiative on July 23, 1880 a special assemblage met in Gjirokastra, which was attended by the progressive elements of the various branches of the League of Prizren.

At the assemblage Abdul Frashëri gave a detailed report in which he argued the absolute necessity of the creation of an autonomous Albania as the only means to save the Albanian nation from the danger of annihilation which menaced it from all sides. He presented at the same time a projected statute on the internal organization that the autonomous Albanian state should adopt.

The necessity of the creation of the autonomous Albanian state was recognized by all the participants of the Assembly. But as to the time and the manner of achieving this autonomy, various points of view were expressed. In those days the problem of Ulqin was clarified. For this reason, the assembly decided that the action to secure autonomy should be postponed for a later period.

In October 1880, as the anger of the Albanians against the Sublime Porte that had resolved to break the resistance of Ulqin by every possible means had reached its climax, the Albanian patriots deemed that the time had come to put into execution the resolutions of Gjirokastra. With the hope to persuade also a part of the feudal lords of the country into the movement for autonomy, they demanded

that the general assembly of the League of Prizren be convoked.

The assembly met in Dibra on October 20, 1880 with Iliaz Pasha Dibra, president of the League of Prizren, as chairman. It was attended by three hundred delegates including a great number of *pashas*, *beys* and *bayraktars*, accompanied by their personal bodyguards. At the assembly the Albanian patriots presented the programme adopted in Gjirokastra and demanded that Ulqin be defended by every means, even by fighting against the Turkish armies. The programme of the progressive wing, however, at the assembly, was met by the opposition of the reactionary and philo-Turkish feudal lords and clergymen who, now that the Sublime Porte was resolved to hand over Ulqin and to crush the League of Prizren without granting to the Albanians the required autonomy, did not desire to get embroiled with the Sultan. At the assembly, the discord between the two parties was so deep and the discussions so heated that they came to armed clashes. As a result of these divergences, there were two resolutions passed by the assembly, which were dispatched to Istanbul with special delegations.

This time, too, the Sublime Porte did not take into consideration the demand for the autonomy of Albania. It did not even pay any attention to the resolution of the feudal lords petitioning the Sultan for some minor superficial administrative reforms. On the contrary, the Turkish government took measures to crush the Albanian resistance and to disperse by force the League of Prizren.

But the steps Istanbul had started to take increased even more the anger of the Albanians. The general discontent with Turkey which had prevailed in Albania created for the Albanian patriots favourable conditions to achieve by themselves the autonomy of Albania without further having to wait for the goodwill of the Sultan. By assuming the leadership of the popular movements which spontaneously had sprung against the Turkish administration, the patriotic elements got hold of a number of the districts in Kossovo and brought improvements in the organization of the League

of Prizren. Through a resolute struggle they expelled from its directing organs all the reactionary *pashas* and clergymen. As president of the League was elected Sheh Umer Prizreni and, by his side, into the central committee entered the most decided elements of the autonomist movement, Abdul Frashëri, Sulejman Vokshi, Shuaip Spahiu and others.

The new League of Prizren declared itself the provisional government of Albania. In Prizren and in Jakova it replaced without any difficulty the Turkish administration by an Albanian administration. Within a short time it organized a new army under the command of Sulejman Vokshi, which during January 1881 stretched the authority of the provisional government through strenuous fighting against the feudal chieftains over entire Kossovo, and even further, over Shkup (Skoplje), Tetova, Gostivar, Dibra etc. Thus the League of Prizren, by revolutionary methods, was achieving the autonomy, and perhaps, as Sami Frashëri wrote in those days, the full independence of Albania.

The Turkish government delayed its military operations against the League on account of the fact that the conflict with Greece on the boundary question in those months was getting continually more serious, and the Sublime Porte did not desire to wage war at a time when Greece could strike it at its rear. In the course of three months, it tried to weaken the authority of the League by means of the Albanian feudal chieftains. During February and March 1881, at the instigation of Istanbul, the reaction within the country was revived. The feudal chieftains began to assail the League openly. In Dibra they organized an attempt against the life of Abdul Frashëri. Abdul escaped murder but two of his attendants were wounded. The League, however, stood its ground against the reaction. A great number of feudal chieftains were arrested and others either hid themselves or fled to Istanbul. In March, the League of Prizren began to get ready for the extension of its authority in Gegëria and Toskëria. However, the preparations were interrupted because in the meantime the Turco-Greek accord

concerning the question of the boundaries was signed, and the Sublime Porte dispatched to Albania a strong military expedition, composed of 24 battalions under the command of Dervish Pasha.

On March 24, 1881 the first contingents of the Turkish army arrived at the gates of Shkup, and through the treachery of the *pashas* captured the city without a fight, seizing by surprise the members of the committee of the League, too, who bound by chains were thrust into jail. In order to terrorize the masses of the population, the Turkish army made in Shkup mass arrests and plundered rapaciously. After the entire Turkish forces of 12,000 men had arrived, Dervish Pasha started operations in the direction of Prizren.

As soon as the Turkish expedition had started, the Central Committee of the League of Prizren let the war-call resound, and at the same time sent to the Great Powers a memorandum soliciting their intervention in order to bring to a standstill the Turkish expedition and to compel Turkey to grant to the Albanians the autonomy they longed for. However, at this critical moment for the fate of Albania, those feudal lords, too, who had remained in the League up to that date, deserted it. Their desertion and the general attack started by the feudal reaction against the League from all sides, considerably weakened the military power of the latter. The central committee succeeded in raising only a small army. The major part of it, comprising about 6,000 men, was sent to defend Prizren. Of these, 2,000 men under the command of Suleyman Vokshi, took up positions at Slivove, whereas the remainder, consisting of 4,000 men under the command of Mic Sokolli, was sent to Shtimeke. These were the two passages that could be used by the Turkish army to march on Prizren.

The first encounter of the Turkish armies with the Albanian armies took place on April 16, 1881. For four days consecutively the Albanians repelled the Turkish attacks. But on April 20, the main Turkish forces made a violent attack on Slivova, accompanied by a dense artillery fire. The Albanian army resisted heroically for several hours;

the vehement artillery fire, however, constrained them to retreat to Shtimeke, where the second and decisive clash took place. The fighting lasted five hours, with heavy losses on both sides, — the Albanians had 800 men killed and the Turks 1,800 men. Here too the Albanians were obliged to retreat. After they had frustrated also two other Albanian ambushes, the Turkish armies with Dervish Pasha accompanied by seven generals at their head, entered Prizren, where they proclaimed martial law and made innumerable arrests.

After the capture of Prizren, the leaders of the League took refuge in Gjakova. Here they raised fresh Albanian forces, which offered resistance for many days to the Turkish armies. However, at last in May, Dervish Pasha captured Gjakova; afterwards he continued his march until he had conquered the whole of Kossovo and re-established the former Turkish administration. At the same time the Turks succeeded in putting down the autonomist movement in south Albania, too.

Even after they had broken the armed resistance, the Turkish armies continued to spread their terror in every part of the country. Everywhere military courts were set up which condemned mercilessly the partisans of the autonomist movement. Some 7,000 persons were judged by them, of whom 4,000 were sentenced to varying penal servitude: imprisonment, or banishment to Asia Minor or the Aegean Islands.

Dervish Pasha tried hard to seize the principal leaders of the resistance. Of these, Sheh Umer Prizreni fled Turkey and, in spite of the pardon, rewards and high offices that the Sultan offered him, did not agree to return. Suleyman Vokshi remained a fugitive in the mountainous regions of Jakova for a long period. Shuaip Spahia, who was captured and sentenced by the military tribunal, died after some time in prison. Abdul Frashëri for a certain period was a fugitive. Dervish Pasha publicly announced a large sum as reward for his capture. After having successfully eluded his pursuers for several weeks, he at last was arrested while

crossing the river Shkumbini on his way to south Albania, and was escorted to Prizren. The military tribunal passed the sentence of death against Abdul Frashëri, the principal leader of the autonomist movement and of the armed resistance. The verdict of death was mitigated by the Sublime Porte into life penal servitude. In 1885, with the general amnesty, he was released from prison. But utterly shattered through sufferings, Abdul lived a sick and isolated man until his death in 1892.

After the armed resistance was crushed, the League of Prizren declined and fell into decay on account of the persecutions, confinements and imprisonments. But though it was crushed and destroyed, it had left a deep impression within and outside the country.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR A NATIONAL SCHOOL AND ALBANIAN LITERATURE

Relying on the international temporary stability, which came as a result of the mitigation of the Eastern crisis and on the military success it had achieved against the Albanian armed movement, the Sublime Porte established in Albania, after the collapse of the League of Prizren, a regime of police terror, by means of which it aimed at exterminating the autonomist aspiration that henceforth was spread over all Albania. This regime, connected with the name of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, lasted for several decades and marks for Albania one of the periods of the fiercest Turkish reaction.

In these years the internal and external conditions for the Albanian armed movement of liberation became not only difficult, but also unfavourable. They were difficult, because, after the military operations of Dervish Pasha, after the mass arrest of the active patriots and under the systematic persecution of Ottoman police, there had

survived in Albania not even one of the numerous regional organizations of the League of Prizren. They were unfavourable, because the Great Powers, in spite of their conflicts of interest, adopted at this period the policy of keeping intact the *status quo* in southeastern Europe, and therefore were not disposed to foster the idea of the autonomy of Albania. On the contrary, they were prepared to help Turkey to put down any armed movement that should upset the political map of the Balkan Peninsula.

As a result of these circumstances, the armed movements that broke out in Albania after the suppression of the League of Prizren were spontaneous and unorganized and had a limited character both regarding the political claims and territorial expansion. In the course of these years of Turkish reaction and in the expectation of more favourable international circumstances for armed revolt for liberation, the Albanian patriots devoted their main concern to the political education of vast strata of the population by instilling in them national consciousness. As the best means of realizing this aim, the Renaissance adepts continued to regard, as in the past, the national Albanian school and literature. As the Sublime Porte as well as its ally, the Patriarchate of Phanar, kept on fighting with still greater fierceness all Albanian cultural manifestation, including the Albanian script, the former among the Albanian Mohammedan population, and the latter among the Albanian Orthodox population. The struggle for the national school, severed from religion, for the common school for all Albanians of any faith and along with it, the struggle for Albanian publications on political theory and enlightening subjects, remained in this period also as the main content of the Albanian national movement.

The only patriotic organization of those founded during the years of the existence of the League of Prizren that escaped being hit by the Turkish reaction only for the reason that it had assumed a secret character, was the "Society for Printing in Albanian Language", founded in Istanbul in October of the year 1879. On account of the



**Sami Frashëri (1850-1904), eminent ideologist and leader in the movement for Albanian national liberation from the Ottoman yoke**

wise and untiring activity of its leaders, the Istanbul society became in these years of political reaction the main directing centre of the Albanian national movement, which issued its instructions to various patriots inside and outside Albania. Its president, Sami Frashëri (1850-1903), after the imprisonment of his brother Abdul, became one of the most illustrious personages of the Albanian patriotic movement.<sup>1</sup> In 1882, besides Sami Frashëri, Jani Vreto and Pandeli Soti-

<sup>1</sup> Through the literary and other works he had published and was still publishing signed with the double name of Shemsedin Sami, he had started to acquire renown at the same time as a pioneer of the Turkish progressive culture. He became particularly renowned within and outside the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire above all through his monumental works in Turkish as "Kamusu-alam" (Encyclopedia of history and geography) in 6 volumes, "Kamusu-turki" (Turkish dictionary), a etymological dictionary, and through numerous other Eastern scientific works.



Naim Frashëri (1846-1900), an Albanian national poet of the period of the national liberation struggle against Turkish invasion

ri, there came into office as a member of the committee of the "Society for Printing in Albanian Language" in Istanbul, Naim Frashëri (1846-1900) who, through his great literary and political activity became, like his two brothers Abdul and Sami, in those turbulent years of reaction, one of the most honoured leaders of the Albanian national movement.

After hard endeavours, the leaders of the cultural society of Istanbul succeeded to snatch from the Sublime Porte the permission to edit an Albanian periodical with an exclusively cultural programme. In August of the year 1884 appeared in Istanbul the first number of this monthly organ under the name of *Drita* (Light) which, beginning with the third number, was given the title *Dituria* (Knowl-

edge). The pages of this periodical were filled with material prepared by the leaders of the Society themselves. The publication of this first review entirely in Albanian was a great success for the Albanian national movement. Its contents, although mainly of educational-didactic character, served in a conscious manner the political aims of the adepts of the Renaissance, because it kindled in the hearts of its readers the consciousness for struggle for the liberation of the homeland. This review, however, was short-lived.

In 1885, while in Bucharest (Roumania), where there was a strong colony of Albanians, through the aid of the Society of Istanbul, a cultural-patriotic organization was founded under the name "Society of *Drita*" (Light), in Albania, particularly in Kossovo, armed revolts broke out against the police regime and the burden of heavy taxes. The Albanian patriots succeeded in taking the lead in these spontaneous revolts. Through their incitement, the insurgents demanded not only the reduction of taxes, but also the release of their compatriots that in very great numbers were kept imprisoned or else confined since the time of the suppression of the League of Prizren. Annoyed by the speedy extension of the fire of revolt, in autumn of the year 1885 the Sublime Porte was constrained to make some concessions: it released from prison and internment the Albanians that had been arrested, it once more postponed the enforcement of the centralizing reforms in the mountainous regions and pledged that it would allow the use of the Albanian language in the schools of Albania.

The announcement of Istanbul made it clear that the Sublime Porte would allow the introduction of tuition in Albanian language in the school programmes only in case it would be demanded by the local population. For this purpose, some weeks later, towards the end of the year 1885, while in Korça a secret national committee under the leadership of Jovan Cico Kosturi, Orhan Çerçiz Pojani and Thimi Marko was founded to take up the direction of the movement in favour of the Albanian instruction, the leaders

**Anton Zako Chajupi**  
(1866-1930), poet, patriot  
and democrat of the  
period of the National  
Liberation Movement  
against Turkish aggression



of the two patriotic societies in exile — that of the Society of Istanbul and that of Bucharest — undertook, the former to prepare Albanian school texts, and the latter to print them in the printing house that was bought with the contributions of patriots and was established in the capital of Roumania. Within a couple of months, the inhabitants of Korça handed to the local authorities a petition bearing hundreds of signatures, with which they demanded the use of Albanian in the schools of their province. At the same time, in the printing-shop of the society *Drita* in Bucharest, were issued the first Albanian school texts that were prepared by the leaders of the Society of Istanbul, Sami Frashëri, Naim Frashëri and Jani Vreto. The Turkish government, however, gave no answer to the demands of the Albanians. At the end of the year 1886, it made clear that it did not allow the Mohammedans to enjoy the right to receive instruction in the Albanian language, but that this

right was granted only to the Christian Albanians. The endeavours of the patriots to introduce the Albanian language into the Greek schools met with the violent opposition of the Phanariot Church, which had under its patronage the Orthodox population. After these attempts had failed, the leaders of the Society of Istanbul, at last, in the first month of the year 1887 succeeded in obtaining from the Turkish government the permission, issued to Pandeli Sotiri, to open a private Albanian school in Korça. In spite of all the threats and maledictions of the Metropolitan of Eparchia, of the calumnies and blackmail of the philo-Greek inhabitants of that city, on March 7, 1887, the first national Albanian school was opened in Korça, and was attended by both Christian and Mohammedan students.

The opening of the Albanian school was a victory for the nationalist movement. Under its impulse, the patriots of the other regions began to open Albanian schools in various cities and villages of the country, by further extending this movement, which seemed merely educational, but in essence had a political character. The patriots of the country, in order to win rights in the cultural domain, had to resort to fighting. To take the leadership of this movement, the secret national committee, with Jovan Cico Kosturi at its head, made a number of attempts to create a National Society inside Albania with its centre in Korça. But on account of the interference and persecutions of the Turkish administration and of the Phanariotic Church, the National Society could not be founded and the Albanian schools, with the exception of that of Korça, were shut one after the other. Consequently, for still several other years, as directing centres of the nationalistic movement remained the patriotic societies that were organized outside of Albania, in those places where there were more or less strong colonies of Albanians and where the Albanian patriots enjoyed a certain degree of freedom of action in regard to the Albanian cultural movement. In Roumania, the society *Drita* was reorganized in 1887 as a new society with the name *Dituria*, which embraced hundreds of workers, peasants

and intellectual patriots. In 1892 the Albanians in exile in Bulgaria founded a patriotic society by the name of *Dëshira* (Desire), whereas in 1894 the Albanians in Egypt likewise created their society under the name of *Vëllazëria e Shqiptarëve* (Brotherhood of Albanians). Only the Society of Istanbul, changed towards the end of the century into an "Albanian Committee", still under the leadership of Sami Frashëri, continued to carry on its activity clandestinely. These societies of exiles kept close connections with each other. Their more or less similar statutes were permeated by democratic principles. Through the Albanian exiles who returned from time to time to the homeland, they strove for the diffusion of Albanian culture, of patriotic feelings and of struggle for the liberation of their enslaved country, among the popular masses of Albania. Their leaders, incited by the teachings of the enlightened Sami and Naim Frashëri, tried to make the Albanian nationalist movement depend only on the interior forces of the country and that no foreign state should be allowed to interfere.

In the course of these years, in spite of the unfavourable conditions, the Albanian cultural movement took an unprecedented upward leap. With the contributions of the patriots, a great number of school books and literary works, written by renowned men of the Renaissance, were printed. Among them, the principal place was occupied by the works of Naim Frashëri, the most talented champion of the Albanian cultural movement. Besides school texts, he gave to the Albanian literature works of artistic value, with a new spirit in their contents and a new ring to the language, such as the romantic poem *Bagëti e Bujqësia*, or else as the collection of lyric poems *Lulet e verës* (Summer Flowers) or as the epic poem *Historia e Skenderbeut* (History of Scanderbeg), which became very popular in Albania. In his magnificent works, Naim sang with ardour to his country, to its natural beauties, to the life and labour of farmers and of shepherds, and at the same time to its glorious past, to the splendour of the struggles of the Albanians against the Otto-

man oppression, to the immortal valour of Scanderbeg, and further he underlined more than once his great faith in the imminent liberation of Albania and his belief in the brilliant future that was reserved to his motherland. Naim praised the mother tongue and the Albanian school, knowledge and progress, and left no occasion pass without appealing to his compatriots for unity and fraternity. With great care he cleared the Albanian literary language of unnecessary foreign words, and enriched it with words and phraseology which he took from the treasure of the popular language. Naim has ranked since his own time as the national poet of the Albanian Renaissance.

### RESUMPTION OF THE ALBANIAN ARMED MOVEMENTS

The period of ebb in the Albanian armed movement did not last long. The so-called "Macedonian question"—the problem of the adoption of autonomist reforms in neighbouring Macedonia, in which for their imperialistic and chauvinistic interests the Great Powers as well as the Balkan states began to interfere—put into motion the entire Albanian population. At the beginning in Albania the movement was launched with the aim to oppose the inclusion of Albanian districts within the zones where the reforms for Bulgarian Macedonia were going to be enforced, because the inclusion of those districts within the boundaries of Macedonia meant their separation from the trunk of the motherland. There was, however, no delay, and in the whole country a parallel movement started demanding from the Sublime Porte the execution of special reforms for Albania as formulated from the time of the League of Prizren, in other words, the union of all Albanian districts into one autonomous *vilayet*. The movement for the auton-



omous administration of Albania was thus put once again on the agenda.

The various political circles of the country did not have the same point of view in regard to the type of the autonomy. The ultra-reactionary circles, politically and ideologically bound with Turkey, sought to direct the movement only to oppose the inclusion of Albanian districts within the boundaries of autonomous Macedonia and did not desire to have the question of the reforms for Albania to be raised at all. On the contrary, some powerful feudal circles, who regarded the introduction of administrative reforms as convenient to their proper interests, drew up in Monastir, in October of the year 1896, a petition for the union of five *vilayets* (the *vilayets* of Shkodër, Kossovo, Monastir, Janina and Salonica) into a single *vilayet* and the teaching of the Albanian language in the schools of the *vilayet* alongside the Turkish, which was to remain as the official language. The Albanian democratic patriotic circles did not agree to these superficial demands, which were moreover permeated, as it became evident especially by the claim on the *vilayet* of Salonica, by a chauvinistic trend, and they expressed their demands officially in a separate petition drawn up in Bucharest in February of the year 1897. This petition demanded the union not of five but of four *vilayets* into a single *vilayet*, the recognition not of Turkish but of Albanian as the official language.

The silence of the Sublime Porte in regard to the petitions on one hand, and the further aggravation of the Macedonian problem on the other, gave an impetus to the revolutionary movement in Albania. In a vast number of districts of the country the Albanians undertook armed operations against the Turkish military garrisons, which in a considerable number of cases were obliged to remain on the defensive. The endeavours of Istanbul during the year 1897 to crush the armed movement and, in general, the whole of the Albanian movement, met with no success. In the heat of the spontaneous autonomist movement, the Albanian patriots tried their best to create an organization

similar to that of the League of Prizren, which was to unify all the strata of the country in war to wrest from the Sublime Porte the Albanian autonomy. A preliminary meeting was held for this purpose in Peja in November of the year 1897, which was attended by nearly 500 delegates. As for the programme of the Albanian movement, at the meeting, two political lines at once came to the fore — that of the patriots, which comprised as principal personality Haxhi Mulla Zeka from Peja, and that of the feudal rulers, who asked for a number of superficial reforms and were opposed to armed action against Istanbul, at the head of which stood the powerful feudal chieftain of Gjakova, Riza bej Kryeziu. On account of the vacillating attitude of the feudal forces and of the interference of the Sublime Porte, the meetings of Peja gave no result. However, in January of the year 1899, as the tension in the Balkans regarding the "Macedonian question" was aggravated still more, another Albanian assembly was held in Peja. It was attended by about 450 delegates from all the districts of the *vilayet* of Kossovo. After several days of discussion and with violent discord between the two principal platforms, a covenant, or as it was called at that time, a *Besa-Besë* (Word of honour) was drawn up. Haxhi Mulla Zeka, one of the renowned leaders of the League of Prizren, was elected its president. As far as its programme was concerned, the platform of the patriots received minority support.

The Albanian patriots tried their best to divert *Besa-Besë* to the struggle for the autonomy of Albania. For this purpose Sami Frashëri wrote and published during that period the political treatise "The Past, Present and Future of Albania", in which, after analysing the contemporary political situation, he laid down and argued, in connection with the nationalist movement, the following basic theses: that the Albanians could save their country from the danger of partition, not by fighting against the chauvinistic neighbours under Istanbul, but by demanding above everything else from the Sublime Porte the autonomy of Albania; that

Turkey would not concede this autonomy voluntarily; that for this reason the Albanians ought to wrest autonomy from Turkey by force of arms; that in the international arena the conditions were favourable for obtaining a still greater degree of autonomy, as the Great Powers, in order to avoid any disturbance of the *status quo* that might arise on account of the Albanian insurrection, would intervene with the aim to compel Istanbul to palliate the Albanians by granting special reforms for Albania, too; that after acquiring autonomy the regime best suited to Albania would be a democratic-republican regime, etc.

The Albanian patriots, however, did not succeed in upsetting the balance of internal forces; the influence exerted within the country by the powerful feudal lords was still considerable. Their endeavours were not favoured either by the international situation. The Great Powers not only failed to compel Turkey to introduce the reforms it had promised, but they instigated and helped it to smash the movement for liberation. With the support of reactionary feudalists, in spring of the year 1900, the Sublime Porte dissolved the League of Peja. Consequently the autonomist movement in Albania temporarily came to an end. Under these circumstances, the patriotic leaders regarded, for the time being, the armed revolts as of no avail, because they would induce the Great Powers to intervene not in favour but to the detriment of Albania.

Some weeks later, after the League of Peja had been dissolved, in the last days of April 1900, one of the Albanian patriots, Ismail Qemal who had held up to that day important functions in the Ottoman administration and had acquired great repute throughout the empire as an enemy of absolutism and a supporter of the constitution, fled Turkey openly. In exile, he published in the foreign press a declaration for the international foreign opinion and in the Albanian press a summons addressed to his compatriots, in which he expressed his point of view concerning the programme of the nationalist movement. These opinions of

his were appropriated by the major part of the Albanian patriotic organizations.

Close observer of the international situation, Ismail Qemal was convinced that the Great Powers which had followed the policy of keeping the *status quo*, for the time being would not allow the partition or the diminution of Turkey, and on that account would intervene against the Albanian insurgents. Besides, these uprisings would offer the Balkan powers the opportunity to enter into war against the Ottoman Empire in order to annex its territories in the Balkans, including Albania. On the other hand, he was convinced that the Great Powers were getting ready to upset in the near future the *status quo*, and to parcel Turkey out among themselves. Austria-Hungary and czarist Russia particularly had cast greedy eyes on Albania, the former to bring Albania under its claws, and the latter to divide it between its Balkan allies, Serbia and Montenegro. It was therefore in the interest of the Albanians, few in number, who were deprived of a central national organization, deprived of special state institutions, deprived of an army of their own, and without any strong ally in the international arena, that the policy of safeguarding the *status quo* should be carried on at least for some time to come, until they could organize themselves to forestall the danger from foreign countries. This policy should be maintained, but on the condition that in the meantime the Albanians should acquire territorial autonomy within the framework of the Ottoman Empire—an autonomy that would undoubtedly be provisional, but that would bring with it the right to self-determination sufficient to allow Albania to better its deplorable economic, political and cultural conditions and to enable it to defend itself in case its hostile neighbours raised their hand against it. Besides, he thought that the Albanians could not free themselves from the Turkish despotic servitude if at the same time other nationalities oppressed by that same empire could not be liberated also, and furthermore if at the same time the Turkish nation itself was not liberated. According to him, what would unite

these active forces in this battle without having to enlist the doubtful support of the foreign powers and without giving ground for their ominous intervention, was the constitution—the movement for the overthrow of the feudal anachronistic absolutism and the establishment of a constitutional bourgeois regime founded on the principle of the decentralization of the imperial authority, for the benefit of the provincial autonomy on the basis of nationality.

Since the end of the 19th century, Albania's place in world affairs had become involved, ever more, in the international diplomatic sphere. The Ottoman Empire continued to refuse to the Albanians the most elementary nationality rights, even the right to write in the mother tongue, and in 1902 the Turkish authorities took the extreme measure of closing the school of Korça, the only national school in Albania, arrested a great number of patriots, among them the Albanian teachers, and executed without trial Haxhi Mulla Zeka in the streets of Peja. The adjoining Balkan governments persevered in their feverish activity for the realization of their old chauvinistic plans, aimed among other things at the division of Albania between them, as soon as this country would be liberated from the Ottoman Empire. In those days, when the general imperialistic trends were fast developing, the Great Powers made use of the Albanian problem as a pawn on the chess board, being ready to sacrifice Albania in order to secure advantages in other sectors. Austria-Hungary and czarist Russia, two of the Great Powers directly interested in the fate of the Balkans, had agreed in the accord they had reached in 1897 that the eastern part of the peninsula would be considered as a Russian sphere of influence, whereas the western part, which included Albania, as an Austrian sphere of influence. Almost at the same time, Russia and its ally France agreed in principle that, in order to prevent Austria-Hungary from reaching Salonica, they should, in case the *status quo* was upset, yield to Serbia all the Albanian territories north of the river Shkumbini or at least up to Durrës, which was to

become a Serbian port, whereas Shkodër, the largest Albanian city of that time, was to become the capital of Montenegro. The third Great Power interested in the fate of the Balkans, Italy, after suffering defeat of its African colonial expansionist policy at Adua, had started an unrestrained competition with its ally Austria-Hungary in order to secure and to strengthen an economic and political position in Albania.

In spite of the stubborn hostile attitude of the Sublime Porte, of the disorientating activity of the Balkan neighbours and of the daily intrusions of the Great Powers, which largely exploited any capitulation, the Albanian nationalist movement continued to grow and deepen. The Albanian patriots acquired new revolutionary methods and their activity assumed a frankly anti-feudal and anti-imperialistic character.

After the insurrection of Ilinden which broke out in Macedonia in August of the year 1903, Russia and Austria, through the agreement they had signed in October 1903, and which Italy later also signed, with a two-fold purpose in view—on the one hand to extinguish the flame of revolt, and on the other, to seek for the opportunity to interfere more concretely in the internal affairs of declining Turkey—proposed to Istanbul a programme of reforms which should be put into execution in Macedonia under their supervision, and demanded that it should carry out an administrative division, according to which in each commune (*nahiye*) the population of only one nationality should be included. Such interference incited to the breaking point the Balkan chauvinistic passions. Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek nationalist bands began to terrorize the population of the country in order to compel them to disavow their nationality and to accept the chauvinistic claims of the bands. This terror spread also to the Albanian population. In February 1905 a band of Greek *andarts* massacred the patriotic writer "Papa" Kristo Negovani together with a number of his countrymen.

The Albanians were roused again to action. This time the influence of the patriots on the political life of the Albanians had grown, whereas that of reactionary *beys*, in the greater part of the country, had decreased. In the course of these years, a great number of new patriotic societies had been founded in exile and numerous periodicals in Albanian had started to be published. In spite of the conditions of the police regime of Sultan Abdul Hamid, in Albania a new generation had risen, imbued with revolutionary patriotic feelings. Through their bitter experience gained in previous movements, these Albanian patriots put to themselves the task to unite the country around the platform of a national-liberation struggle, avoiding alliance with reactionary *beys*. For this purpose a group of young patriots with bourgeois-revolutionary tendencies, in November 1905, founded in Monastir under Professor Bajo Topulli a secret committee by the name of "Committee for the Freedom of Albania" after the model of Balkan revolutionary committees. Within a short period, the Committee of Monastir created secret local committees in numerous cities of Albania.

In close connection with the more advanced patriotic societies in exile, such as those of Bucharest and of Sofia, the committee of Monastir together with the committees dependant on it, by means of clandestine agitation carried on intense activity for the popularization, in every corner of the country, of the banner of the revolutionary struggle for the liberation of the motherland. With the purpose to carry on an open patriotic activity, in January 1906, Bajo Topulli took refuge in the mountains in the district of Korça, thus creating the first armed band of the committee. Some months later, in south Albania other armed bands too were created. While they were thus engaged in their activity in the field of agitation, they had several encounters with Turkish detachments of soldiers. In order to curb the Greek *andarts* acts of terror, the Albanian bands killed in September 1906 the Greek metropolitan of Korça, Foti, one of the heads of the pro-Greek reaction in Albania and one

of the persons responsible for the massacre of "Papa" Negovani.

In spite of the persecutions of the Ottoman Gendarmery, the warriors of the patriotic bands, with the revolutionary slogan "Liberty or death!" on their caps, during the year 1907 carried on their revolutionary activity with still greater intensity. As reprisal for the arrest by the Turkish authorities of a great number of patriots, the band commanded by



Left, Ceric Topulli (1880-1915), commander of a detachment of patriots that distinguished themselves in armed struggle against Turkish invasion, 1906-1908

Captain Çerçiz Topulli and by the writer Mihal Grameno, at the beginning of March 1908, killed the commandant of the gendarmery of Gjirokastra inside the city. A few days later, on March 18, 1908, Turkish detachments besieged the band of Çerçiz and of Mihal at the Plane-tree of Mashkullore in the vicinity of Gjirokastra. The band defended itself heroically and after many hours of hard fighting against large Turkish forces, succeeded in breaking through the siege. The battle of Mashkullore resounded throughout Albania, as a war-call for a general strike for freedom.

The further development of the Albanian revolt, however, was interwoven with the bourgeois revolutionary movement of the Young Turks (Jeunes-Turcs), which was conducted by the committee of *Ittihad ve Terekii* (Union and Progress). The war-call of the Young Turks to overthrow the feudal despotic regime of Sultan Abdul Hamid II and to establish a constitutional bourgeois regime, their pledges that they would grant democratic liberties and that they would yield to the oppressed nationalities provincial autonomy, had for a long time attracted the attention of the Albanians. Though at the end of the 19th century Sami Frashëri, and later Ismail Qemal in the early years of the 20th century had warned that with their constitution the Young Turks would do nothing more than substitute the feudal despotism with an Ottoman dictatorship, and that their promises for liberty and autonomy were a sheer fraud, the Committee "Union and Progress" through its organized activity secured the sympathy of a great number of Albanians, especially of officers who loathed the feudal and absolutist regime. In the face of the same enemy — despotic oppression by the Sultan — the Albanian national-liberation movement and the bourgeois-revolutionary movement of the Young Turks proceeded along two similar lines. In July 1908 both of these movements assumed extremely vast proportions. But the Young Turk agitators, more efficient and better organized and relying on the sympathy with which the Albanians had welcomed their constitutional programme, succeeded in gaining positions at

the head of 20,000 armed Albanians assembled at Ferizoviq, and in their name demanded from the Sultan by ultimatum, agreement to grant the constitution. As is known, the danger lest the insurrection that had started in the *vilayet* of Monastir under the leadership of the Albanian officer Niazi Resna should become a general insurrection compelled Sultan Abdul Hamid II to publish the constitution on July 23, 1908. Thus with the active participation of the Albanians, the bourgeois revolution triumphed in Turkey.

## THE GREAT REVOLTS OF 1910 AND 1911

The Albanians greeted the announcement of the constitution as a historic victory that marked the end of the century long autocracy of the Sultans and the beginning of an epoch of liberty, equality and of civilization. In every city of the country occurred spontaneous manifestations in favour of the revolution. The warriors of the patriotic bands came down from the mountains and within a few weeks in all of the cities of Albania, Albanian patriotic clubs were created. On their own initiative, Albanian newspapers began for the first time to publish freely in Albania, and the teaching of the Albanian mother tongue proceeded without fear. While acclaiming the revolution, the entire country expected that the Young Turks would grant to the Albanians the nationality rights that they had promised — first and foremost that the courses in the Albanian schools should be taught in the Albanian language, and after that territorial autonomy for the whole of a united Albania.

However, nationalist, chauvinistic and bourgeois as they were, the Young Turks had no sooner consolidated their authority than they began to take steps to limit and then to crush the movement for Albanian autonomy, claiming that the Albanians were Ottoman subjects, and as such were obliged to observe the laws of the Empire.

Thus before the elapse of a couple of weeks, a breach was wrought between the Albanian nationalist movement and the Young Turks' central authority. What Ismail Qemal had foreseen turned out to be true. His return to Vlora after an absence of eight years was marked by extraordinary grandeur. His words at a meeting of his fellow-citizens that the Albanian people had to fight a still greater battle in order to attain their rights, resounded as a clear call for mobilization.

The majority of the patriotic clubs passed at once into opposition against the central authority of the Young Turks. The club of *Bashkimi* (Union) of Monastir, which took the place of the clandestine committee of *Për lirinë e Shqipërisë* (For the Freedom of Albania) under the leadership of Halid Bërzeshta, became their directing headquarters. The rest of the clubs, less in number, were in the hands of several personalities who had entirely succumbed to the influence of the dogmatic programme of the committee of "Union and Progress". Their apprehension lest the strengthening of the opposition should awaken the reaction and bring about the overthrow of the constitution induced them to content themselves with the limited rights granted and join the central authority of the Young Turks.

Taking advantage of their limited rights, the patriotic clubs, which were constrained to declare that they would dedicate themselves exclusively to cultural and not political activity, hastily convoked a congress to decide on a standard Albanian alphabet, for the reason that various alphabets were still being used for writing Albanian. The congress met in Monastir from the 14th to the 21st of November 1908, and was attended by delegates of Albanian clubs and societies within and outside Albania. The Congress approved the alphabet which is in use by the Albanians at present. The meeting of Monastir gave the Albanian patriots the opportunity to examine in several secret gatherings, the task that lay before the Albanian national movement. At the termination of these meetings a programme was drawn up, which in substance contained the demand

for the administrative and cultural autonomy of Albania. How it was deemed for outworn reasons that the demand for full independence was still unseasonable.

While the congress of Monastir was still in progress, in Albania as well as throughout the entire Ottoman Empire, the campaign for the election of deputies to the Turkish parliament was going on. Many Albanian patriots announced their candidature for deputy. Though through terror, corruption, fraud and propaganda, the Young Turks' administration continued that its candidates should be solely elected as deputies, actually the Young Turks, who succeeded in securing the majority of deputies' seats for the empire, gained a minority in Albania, where 26 deputies were elected. In the ranks of the Albanian deputies opposed to the Young Turks, only a part including Ismail Qemal, Hasan Prishtina, Shahin Kolonja, Nexhip Draga etc. constituted in the parliament the Albanian nationalist group. In the Ottoman parliament many Albanian deputies waged open war against the policy of the Young Turks on diverse points. One of these deputies, Ismail Qemal of Berat, with the aim of gathering the adversaries of the Young Turks in one common front, founded the *Ahrar* party with liberal tendencies and contradictory programmatic points of view, which demanded, among other things, the decentralization of the administration and the autonomy of the provinces of the empire on the basis of nationality. On account of these items in the programme, deputies of various nationalities: Turkish, Arabic, Albanian, Armenian, Greek and others, joined Ismail Qemal's party.

But the voice of the opposition, and still less that of the Albanian deputies, was not raised. As soon as they had secured the majority in parliament the Young Turks took a series of steps in order to strengthen, especially in Albania, the centralized authority and began to stamp out, by means of police force, the demands for the nationality rights. At the same time, without considering the poverty of the country, they increased taxes, trod on nationality rights, began to establish their centralized administration and to conscript

recruits in the mountainous regions. These steps gave rise to armed insurrections breaking out once again in those regions in the spring of the year 1909.

At that time, the Albanian patriotic leaders were opposed to armed movements for the reason that the Young Turks were still strong, whereas the Albanians were disorganized; furthermore, for the reason that such revolts might bring about the intervention of Austria-Hungary, which a couple of months before had annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina without any serious opposition on the part of the Great Powers. Neither did they join in the *coup* of the reactionary heads of the Empire, who in April 1909 overthrew the Young Turks from power and re-established the old regime.

On the contrary, interested in guarding the constitution, they gave their support to the Young Turks, who after two weeks returned to power.

The Young Turks carried on their policy of negation of the nationality rights to the Albanians even after the shock they had experienced in April. With the pretext of disarming the counter-revolutionary forces, the Turkish armies under the command of General Djavid Pasha undertook a series of operations against the Albanian highlanders. These operations infused new ardour into the insurgents; who were crushed, however, after violent fighting. Alongside these military operations, in July 1909 the Young Turks organized a congress in Dibra, in which their emissaries demanded that the Mohammedan Albanians should declare themselves as Ottomans, accept the Arabic alphabet and pledge that they would fight against the foes of the Empire and Caliphate. The few patriots who were able to attend the congress openly protested against these provocations. As a matter of fact, the decisions of the congress of Dibra came to nothing. Two months later, in September 1909, at the call of a number of patriots, the congress of Elbasan met to discuss the question of education and culture — the only question the Ottoman government allowed to be discussed. The congress confirmed the decision for the adoption of the Latin alphabet for Albanian script, which decision meant

the breaking away of the Albanians from the Ottomans in this respect also. The congress likewise took the decision to found within the year and with the funds of the patriotic clubs a school to train teachers in Elbasan. This school, with Luigj Gurakuqi as principal, the first Albanian school of its kind, was inaugurated on December 1, 1909.

The discontent of the Albanians had grown to the extent that in the spring of 1910, as the Young Turks' government levied new taxes from the population of the *vilayet* of Kossovo, an armed revolt broke out in Prishtina, spread over Peja and then over the entire *vilayet*. After the first efforts had failed, Istanbul charged the general of the Prussian school Shefqet Turgut Pasha with the special army corps of Rumelia to carry out large-scale operations, smash the liberation revolts, disarm the population and recruit new soldiers by force. At the end of April 1910, at Kaçanik pass, a bloody battle was fought out between several thousands of Albanian insurgents led by Idriz Seferi and the Turkish divisions, which terminated in the retreat of the Albanians, fewer in number and very poorly armed. The revolt, however, had taken such vast proportions that the Turkish Minister of War, Marshal Mahmud Shefqet Pasha



Highlanders of Kossovo with their leader Idriz Seferi (centre), participants in the anti-Turkish liberation revolt of 1910

had to come personally with fresh forces to the aid of the army corps of Shefqet Turgut Pasha. Only after fierce fighting that lasted over three months were the Albanian warriors, without a leader among them, without sufficient arms and ammunition, at last routed.

In July 1910 the army corps of Rumelia went to the *vilayet* of Shkodër in order to carry out, there too, the disarmament of the population and the recruitment of soldiers. Some of the highlanders prepared to resist, whereas a part of them fled and crossed the frontier into Montenegro, which left a deep impression on the European public. The apprehension lest in the highlands of the *vilayet* of Shkodër the events of Kossovo might repeat themselves, compelled the Turkish government to temporarily suspend military operations in those regions that were difficult to subjugate, and to direct its attention to central Albania, especially to the unarmed cities. Wherever the army corps trod, martial law was enforced and military tribunals were created. The nationalist clubs, private schools and Albanian newspapers were suspended. Hundreds of patriots were arrested and humiliatingly beaten in the streets and squares of the cities. Military tribunals sentenced them to harsh penal servitude or internment. After this campaign of terror, the special army corps left Albania.

The patriotic leaders, taking into account the stubbornness of the Young Turk governors to crush the Albanian movement at any cost, decided to seize the initiative before it was too late, to pass from defensive to offensive in order to give to the revolts the right direction towards the principal claim of the nationalist movement — the autonomy of Albania. The date for the start of the armed liberation movement was fixed for the spring of 1911.

During the winter the preliminary preparations were completed — arms and ammunition were bought with the funds provided by patriotic clubs and societies, posts of liaison were created within and outside the country. However, in an unexpected manner, King Nicola of Cetinie,

who desired to have the revolt begin at once, compelled the unfortunate highlanders who had sought refuge in Montenegro to return to their country. The highlanders did not surrender to Turkey but returned to Albania, and at the call of Ded Gjo Luli, who on April 6, 1911 had hoisted the Albanian flag on the summit of Mt. Dechich, the armed revolt started. Within a few days the revolt had engulfed the whole of Malesia e Madhe, and the number of insurgents had reached nearly 8,000 men. However, the premature outburst of the revolt upset the plans of the revolt committees. The patriotic leaders tried their best to hasten the preparations for the revolt in the other regions of Albania. But these preparations had not been completed as yet (the problem of arms, the question of the certainty that Serbia, and especially Greece, would not interfere by assailing them from the rear), when in the middle of April the special army corps with its commander, Shefqet Durgut Pasha, arrived in Shkodër and immediately started operations against the highlanders. Between the Turkish armies and the Albanian highlanders long and bloody wars took place throughout Malesia e Madhe. Through their heroism, the highlanders aroused a wave of enthusiasm throughout Albania and drew the attention of the entire European public. In various regions of the country a great number of bands were created, which began to fight with arms in hand; from the colonies in exile volunteers left for Malesia e Madhe.

After the failure of their military operations and under the pressure of the Great Powers, especially of Austria-Hungary and of Russia, which desired that trouble in the Balkans should be avoided for the reason that they were not as yet prepared to have the *status quo* upset, the Young Turk government endeavoured to put a stop to the armed revolt of the Albanians by peaceful means. For this purpose in June 1911 Mehmet Reshad V went personally to Kossovo, and with the hope of appeasing the Kossovo people and thus avoiding their participation in the revolt, he announced on June 16 an amnesty for all the insurgents of



the past year. On June 17 Shefqet Durgut Pasha likewise announced in Shkodër an amnesty for all the insurgents that would give themselves up within 10 days and promised them to reconstruct the houses burnt down in the course of military operations at the expenses of the state.

The Albanian patriots responded to the Turkish government with a memorandum approved on June 23, 1911 by an assemblage of the Albanian leaders that met in Gerçe of Montenegro on the initiative of Ismail Qemal and Luigj Gurakuqi. In the memorandum addressed to Istanbul and to the Great Powers, the territorial-administrative autonomy was demanded for all the regions inhabited by Albanian populations, as condition to end the revolt. In the memorandum it was added that in case Istanbul accepted these demands, they had to be enacted under the guarantee of the Great Powers.

The Ottoman government declared that it was prepared to accept only some of the conditions contained in the memorandum, and that only for the *vilayet* of Shkodër. To this manoeuvre of the Sublime Porte the bands of warriors of south Albania answered with an armed gathering held on July 21, 1911 in the Monastery of Cepo (Gjirokastra), at which it was decided to demand categorically that all concessions granted by Istanbul to north Albania should be extended compulsorily over south Albania, as well.

However, the rebellious highlanders, economically ruined by the destruction and the prolongation of the revolt on the one hand, and by the hard pressure Montenegro had placed on them to expel their families from Montenegrin territory on the other, accepted the proposals of Istanbul to return to their homes on condition that the Sublime Porte should decree a general amnesty, reduce taxes, appoint a number of native officials to the administration of the *vilayet*, allow arms to be carried etc. The agreement was signed in Podgorica at the beginning of August 1911. The Sublime Porte granted more or less similar concessions to the other regions of Albania.

## THE GENERAL UPRISING OF 1912; THE DECLARATION OF ALBANIAN NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

The concessions granted by the Sublime Porte were of no great issue, but the fact that Istanbul had been obliged to enter into negotiations with the Albanians and had had to yield to the detriment of the imperial prestige and of the centralized authority, had very great importance. The age-old stubbornness of Turkey had been cracked. The far-sighted leaders were optimistic. One of these leaders, Hil Mosi, who, together with the insurgent highlanders, had fought with arms in hand, wrote a few weeks after the agreement of Podgorica:

And though this year was not propitious for us,  
Let no one believe Albania has died,  
Spring will come again, and again to the mountains  
we'll hie!

The main problem of the liberation war tactics was to keep the initiative permanently in the hands of the Albanians under the control of one single centre. To this problem the most enlightened leaders of the Albanian nationalist movement of these crucial years turned their main attention.

In autumn 1911, the political situation in the Balkans became extremely complex. At the end of September, Italy had declared war on the Ottoman Empire for the conquest of Tripoli. Turkey had proved to be militarily weak. The Balkan monarchies planned to realize their territorial objectives at the expense also of the Albanians in case the Ottoman Empire was defeated. In December, the group of Albanian deputies under Ismail Qemal started a violent argument in the Turkish parliament to compel Istanbul to acknowledge the Albanian nationality rights, and in the first place those in the domain of culture and administration. Their aim was to have the political boundaries of

Albania sanctioned through obtaining administrative autonomy. Together with this petition, a memorandum too was delivered to the Sublime Porte. At the meeting of the parliament on January 11, 1912, during the discussions on a governmental project for the amendment of Article 35 of the Ottoman Constitution, the Albanian deputy Hasan Prishtina warned that through their reactionary policy the Young Turks were creating the conditions for a revolution in Albania.

In face of strong opposition, the Young Turks dissolved the parliament on January 18, 1912 with the intention of excluding from the parliament the deputies adverse to them, at the next elections, which were to be held in April of that year, and then openly establishing their Ottoman dictatorship. The Albanian patriots, with Ismail Qemal and Hasan Prishtina at their head, in consideration of the criticalness of the historic moment, decided to organize and start the general liberation revolt the following spring.

The electoral campaign offered to the Albanian agitators the opportunity, along with the propaganda in favour of the patriotic candidates, of great activity for the armed revolt. The best propaganda material was furnished by the Young Turks themselves through the brutality of the police forces and the anti-Albanian fanaticism which they manifested during the electoral campaign, and further through open interference by the gendarmery on the day of elections against the voters who supported the patriotic candidates, especially Ismail Qemal and Hasan Prishtina, who enjoyed great popularity in Albania. The falsified results of the elections hastened the break out of the armed uprising in the Jakova highlands at the end of April 1912. In May the uprising had spread all over Kossovo; in June it had extended over south, central and north Albania; officers and soldiers began to desert from the Turkish regiments.

In June the armed revolt in Albania received a still greater impetus because other forces hostile to the Young Turks rose against Istanbul—the adherents of the Itilaf

party and military officers of opposition, who endeavoured to exploit the Albanian movement in order to overthrow the Young Turks' party from power. The Albanian patriots, in the interest of the extension of the revolt, collaborated with their new companions-in-arms, and in July the uprising assumed a general character. The Albanians took the offensive and liberated a number of regions. Isa Buletini in Vuçitern and Bajram Curri at Qafa e Prushit scored remarkable successes against the Turkish armies. By inflicting on the Ottoman armies defeat after defeat, the insurgents began to liberate the cities. The bands of Themistokli Germenji in Korça, of Salih Butka in Kolonjë, of Elmas Xhaferi in Vlora, of Aqif Biçaku in Elbasan, of Abdi Toptani in Tirana, of Ded Gjo'Luli in Shkodër, won the admiration of the masses of people. By the middle of July the whole of Albania had risen to its feet with arms in hand. The state administration was entirely paralysed.

In face of the unexpected spread of the uprising, on July 17, 1912, while the Albanian forces were beginning their assault on Prishtina, the Young Turk government in Istanbul was compelled to resign. On July 22, 1912, as the Albanian insurgents were marching victoriously into Prishtina, in Istanbul the opponents of the Young Turks, among them the partisans of Itilaf, formed a new government presided over by Ahmed Miftar *pasha*.

One of the most pressing jobs of the new government was to extinguish the fire of revolt in Albania, and for this reason it requested the leaders of the revolt to stop fighting and start negotiating at once with the government delegation, which it sent to Prishtina a few days later. The demand to start negotiations only with the heads of the uprising in Kossovo had a diabolical intention—it aimed at splitting the Albanian forces by means of separate negotiations for each *vilayet*, also to make use of the participation of Itilaf party supporters of Kossovo in the revolt against the Young Turks to soften the demands of the leaders of the Kossovo patriots.

Since the creation of the new situation, the Albanian patriots, in the north as well as in the south, had agreed on a common attitude: to demand from the government of Istanbul the approval of the conditions contained in the memorandum of Gerça drawn up in June 1911 — in other words, the administrative autonomy of Albania. This included in substance the demands that Hasan Prishtina delivered on behalf of the Albanian party to the Turkish government delegation as soon as the negotiations had started in Prishtina on August 3, 1912. But to this demand the reactionary heads did not adhere, as they considered the objective of the revolt, the fall of the Young Turks from power, already attained. They only formulated the demand for the dissolution of the parliament and holding of new elections. With the aim of widening the breach still further, the government of Istanbul decreed on August 5, 1912 the dissolution of the Turkish parliament. The leaders of the Itilaf Party were satisfied and deemed the revolt terminated.

However in those critical days for the Albanian nationalist movement, most of the Kossovo insurgents united themselves with the patriotic leaders, with Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri, Bajram Deklani and others, who interrupted the negotiations that were taking place in Prishtina, re-started the armed operations and marched on Shkup (Skoplije). On August 12, 1912, Shkup, one of the largest cities of Rumelia, fell into the hands of the Albanian insurgents. Some days later, the insurgents of other regions freed Peshkopia, Fier, Përmeti, etc.

The fall of Shkup was a hard blow to the Ottoman Empire. It marked the acme of the Albanian uprising for the year 1912. It demonstrated the inaptitude of Turkey to put down this movement of liberation, which on account of the extraordinary proportions it was assuming, was leading to the recognition of the autonomy of Albania. The successes of the Albanians on their side disquieted the Balkan bourgeois chauvinistic governments. The recognition of the autonomy of Albania to a certain degree put in danger the possibility of the realization of the aspirations which

these countries had fostered for a long time for the division of this land between them. On this account the Balkan states hastened their political and military preparations in order to declare war on Turkey, weak and still further enfeebled by its conflict with Italy which dragged on for nearly a year, and by the Albanian uprisings. The Great Powers, on their part, deemed that a Balkan war might give rise to the outbreak of a world war, and declared that they would not acknowledge any change in the political map of the Balkans. This was to say that they would refuse to recognize not only the partition of Turkey by the Balkan states, but also the detachment of Albania from the Ottoman Empire, though under the form of autonomy. In order to avoid still more serious complications, as early as August 18, 1912 Istanbul had announced that it would accept with some modifications the Albanian demands. The leaders of the revolt, seeing the approach of the danger from the Balkan neighbouring states, agreed on their part to the accord of Shkup with Istanbul, according to which the Albanians were to receive a series of economic, political, administrative and cultural rights, though their formulation officially as rights appertaining to the autonomy of Albania was avoided.

In spite of the opposition of the Great Powers, in October 1912 the Balkan states declared war on Turkey in order to divide between them the territories which Turkey still retained in the Balkans. Albania was one of the important countries here. According to the agreement reached between the Balkan allies, after the expulsion of Turkey, the Albanian territories were to be parcelled out among Greece, Serbia and Montenegro. In their plans the creation of an Albania was not provided for.

The beginning of the Balkan war in October 1912 and the speedy breakdown of the Turkish armies created a critical situation for the Albanians, because the place of the long time foreign ruler was going to be taken by new invaders, who were full of ambitious plans of aggrandizement; and because Albania, up to then enslaved but territorially undi-

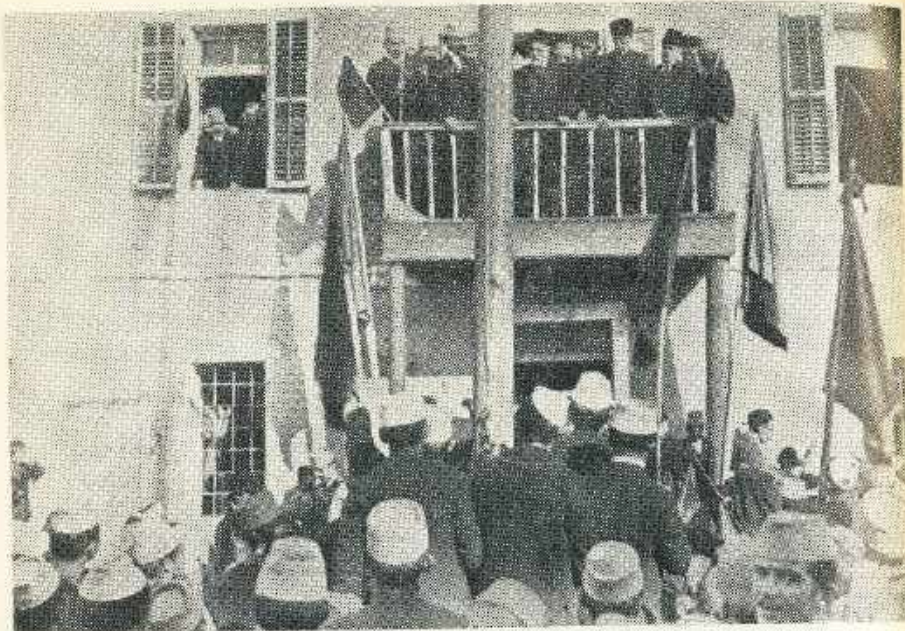
vided, was going to remain enslaved, but was faced with partitioning without any hope of redress. In connection with the line that ought to be followed in these new circumstances, it soon became clear that the alignment of the Albanians on the side of the Balkan states was as suicidal as their fusion with the Ottoman army, because in the first case, the Albanians would facilitate the advance of the Balkan allies without any guarantee that these would acknowledge their nationality rights; in the second case, they would identify themselves with the foreign ruler, and consequently they would bind the fate of Albania with that of the Ottoman Empire.

Far-sighted patriots, inside and outside the country, decided to consider the Balkan war as of no concern to Albania, and to call for a national convention, comprising delegates elected by all the Albanian territories; and this convention was to decide on the attitude the Albanian people should maintain in the interest of their motherland in this new complex situation.

Towards the end of October, while the Balkan armies in the pursuit of routed Turkish armies were marching into the Albanian territories, the aged patriot Ismail Qemal left Istanbul for neutral Roumania, and after he had obtained on November 5, 1912 the approval of the most ancient and the greatest patriotic society in exile to convoke a national convention, he started for Vienna, accompanied by Luigj Gurakuqi, Pandeli Cale and by other personalities, in order to sound out in the Austrian capital the attitude of the Great Powers on the Albanian problem. From the encounter in Vienna with the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister and with the ambassadors of some of the Great Powers, Ismail Qemal, a wise diplomat with an acute sense of orientation in politics, realized that after the elapse of a month from the beginning of the war the international political conditions had changed, that the former political map of the Balkans could not be kept, that among the Great Powers contradictions existed as to how the new political map of the peninsula should be drawn, and that these conditions



Ismail Qemal (1844-1919), chairman of the Vlorë National Congress which proclaimed the national independence of Albania, and head of the first government of independent Albania



Proclaiming the national independence of Albania in Vlora on Nov. 28, 1912. Ismail Qemal with delegates of the National Congress on the balcony

offered the Albanians the possibility to realize their age-long aspiration—not merely the autonomy, but the independence of Albania.

While the Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek armies were marching in the Albanian territory without encountering any resistance on the part of the defeated Turkish armies, the Albanian cities, before falling into the hands of the Balkan armies, proclaimed the national independence of Albania, and with great haste elected their delegates who, without losing a single moment, left in order to attend the national convention that should assemble as soon as possible in a free town near the seashore for easier communication with the outer world—in Durrës or in Vlora. When Ismail Qemal and his companions arrived, Durrës was still in the hands of the Turkish administration, which tried, though

in vain, to capture the great leader. It was then that it was decided to convoke the convention in Vlora, which had been liberated by the Albanian patriots. With the Balkan armies almost on their heels, the majority of the delegates arrived in Vlora on November 26 and November 27, 1912. On the following day, November 28, 1912, in exceptional circumstances, the national assembly was convened, with Ismail Qemal as chairman. While the Serbian armies captured Tirana and were preparing to enter Elbasan and Durrës, while the Montenegrin armies were pressing hard in their siege of Shkodër and the Greek armies were moving from Himara in the direction of Vlora, the national convention, after hearing the masterly and noble speech of the great leader, unanimously proclaimed Albania a free, sovereign and independent state. At the same time the national convention entrusted Ismail Qemal with the formation of the first Albanian government. After the great, historic decision, the noble old man, from the balcony of the palace of the convention, before an enthusiastic popular meeting, hoisted with his own hands onto a mast the Albanian national flag—the flag of Gjergj Kastriot Scanderbeg.

## THE FIRST YEARS OF INDEPENDENT ALBANIA

The proclamation of national independence marked a great turning point in the history of Albania. With this came to an end the five-centuries-long period of foreign rule, which had brought great damage to Albania; came to an end the Ottoman feudal servitude, which had kept the land in an utterly backward state. The lost freedom was restored to the motherland, and the foundations of the independent Albanian state were laid. For the first time Albania now had a national government. The gates to progress and civilization were opened to the country.

However the enthusiasm that seized the Albanian patriots as they saw the flag of Scanderbeg unfurl freely, did not last long. After the acclamations and enthusiastic ovations came prosaic reality. The Albanian patriots, and particularly the national government, had to face a number of tasks, on the accomplishment of which depended the very existence of the young state. In the first place stood the political problems, as: the acknowledgment of Albania's independence in the international arena. This had been refused up to then by all the Great Powers; setting the boundaries of the Albanian state, which task met with insistent territorial claims by the neighbouring Balkan states which did not lack in powerful supporters in the international arena; to bring to a halt the Balkan armies which had been advancing in the territory of Albania, and afterwards to drive out of the country these foreign armies, which hindered the new government from extending its own authority over the entire land. After that came the problem of the building up of the state—the creation of the Albanian administration, formation of the national army, securing financial means—in a word, the management of state affairs in a manner that was to demonstrate the earnestness of the resolutions of the convention of Vlora and contribute to the raising of prestige of the new-born state. Finally, there were the economic and social problems, which imposed themselves on account of the backward condition of the country. Albania had been almost entirely rural: the peasant still tilled the soil with a primitive plough drawn by oxen; the produce of agriculture was extremely meagre; the fertile plains of low-lying Albania were marshy; in the uplands, where arable land was scanty, the highlanders were in utter and continual misery; about one-half of the arable land was the property of landlord families, some of whom, e.g. the Vrionis, Toptanis, Verlakis and Vloras, each owned more than ten thousand hectares. The cities had no modern industry; the masses of the population in the cities were composed of small artisans, whose produce had at its basis principally hand tools; only here and there in the cities were

a few private enterprises with machinery which processed agricultural raw materials, but the amount of their production was insignificant in comparison with the produce of the craftsmen. The condition of the network of roads was likewise execrable; the transportation of persons and of goods was generally done by horses and carts. Still more lamentable was the cultural level of the country; more than 90 per cent of the population was illiterate; the schools inherited from the Ottoman administration were almost entirely foreign schools. The sanitary condition of the population was wretched, hygienic and sanitary facilities being virtually non-existent.

The new Albanian government had to face these hard and complex tasks under most difficult internal and external political conditions.

On November 28, 1912, a few hours after the proclamation of independence, the president of the government, Ismail Qemal, informed by wire the chancelleries of the six Great Powers, as well as the ministries for foreign affairs of the Balkan states of the historic event. He requested their acknowledgment of the independence of Albania and that they consider the creation of the Albanian state as a factor for peace and equilibrium in the Balkans. At the same time he announced the neutrality of independent Albania regarding the Balkan conflict. But while the Great Powers kept silence for a number of weeks about these requests, the armies of the Balkan allies continued to advance into the Albanian territories. As they met with no resistance, the Serbian armies continued to advance towards southern Albania and to conquer the territories to the north of the river Shkumbin, which lands Belgrade aspired to annex. The Greek armies, after laying siege to Janina, began to infiltrate into Albania, menacing the city of Vlora itself, in order to link up with the Serbian armies along the river Shkumbini, which, according to the agreement between them, was to serve as the new Greco-Serbian boundary. Likewise, Montenegro was pressing hard on Shkodër through the siege it had laid to the city, in order

to capture and annex it with its hinterland. The situation did not become better even after the armistice that was signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan powers. Besides, the routed Turkish armies that were retreating and gathering in Berat and in Fier, were ready momentarily to march in the direction of Vlora as soon as they received orders from Istanbul, in order to dissolve the national convention and to upset the government of Ismail Qemal, that had dared to sever Albania from the Ottoman Empire.

In those crucial days, the only weapon with which the Albanian patriots were equipped was their enthusiasm. The far-sighted leaders likewise took into account the contradictions that existed among the Great Powers regarding their respective interests in the Balkan sector.

As they had decided, the six Great Powers took into their hands the re-drawing of the map of the Balkans. On June 17, 1912 the "Conference of Ambassadors" presided over by British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey, met in London for this purpose. As the most important item of the adjustment in the Balkans was the Albanian question, the Conference deliberated on this matter at its first sitting. Here, on the basis of preliminary negotiations conducted through the regular diplomatic channels, the Conference of Ambassadors decided that Albania should become not an independent state, as it had been proclaimed by the Assembly of Vlora, but *an autonomous state under the sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan and under the guarantee and control of the six Great Powers*. The Conference likewise decided, in principle, that Albania should have as neighbouring states Montenegro, Serbia and Greece, and that the boundaries were to be set later, after negotiations that would be conducted within the Conference by the representatives of the Great Powers.

The decision to keep in Albania the sovereignty of the Sultan, and to put it under the control of the Great Powers was a flagrant violation of the aspirations of the Albanian patriots, who longed to see their motherland altogether in-

dependent as it had been decided by the Assembly of Vlora. Besides, the national rights of the Albanians were infringed by the Great Powers still more outrageously when the political boundaries of the Albanian state were set.

While deciding on the boundary question, the Great Powers did not take into consideration the ethnical principle and the will of the population. They had in view only their own imperialist interests. A special interest for these boundaries showed Russia, Austria-Hungary and Italy. Russia supported the claims of Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, which after they had failed to thwart the creation of the Albanian state, now demanded that the boundaries of Albania be as restrained as possible. Austria-Hungary, on the contrary, did not desire the growth of Serbia, which was a satellite of Russia and which obstructed the penetration of Vienna into the Balkans — and for this reason it supported the claims of the Albanians. Italy sided with Vienna, particularly in regard to the southern boundaries of Albania, because it wanted to remove Greece as far as possible from Vlora and from the Corfu Channel.

After long discussions and negotiations, during the year 1913 the imperialist Great Powers set the boundaries of the Albanian state. Within these boundaries were included one half of the Albanian territories — approximately 28,000 square kilometres with a population of nearly 800,000. More than half of the Albanian population remained outside the boundaries of Albania, mostly under Serbian yoke. There had remained outside Albania, Kossovo, with its fertile territories, that had fought so much for the freedom of the motherland, there had remained important Albanian cities as Prizren, Jakova, Peja, Prishtina, Dibra, Tetova, Gostivar etc.

In spite of the armistice that was concluded in the first days of December 1912, the Montenegrin armies continued their assaults against the besieged city of Shkodër, in order to compel the garrison to surrender. They hoped that in case they could get hold of the city they would secure its annexation. The garrison under the command of the

Turkish general Hasan Riza Pasha did not yield but continued to resist for many months consecutively, to which action the government of Vlora gave its encouragement. In the defence of Shkodër an important role was played by the division composed of Albanian reservists levied by Istanbul in central Albania at the beginning of the Balkan war and by the population of the city itself, which preferred to suffer starvation and the discomforts of the siege rather than to surrender to the Montenegrin armies. The resistance of Shkodër drew the attention of world public opinion. While the garrison continued resisting, at the end of January 1913, General Esad *pasha* Toptani, commander of the Albanian reserve forces, killed Hasan Riza Pasha, and with the help of Young Turk officers took the command of the garrison himself and carried the resistance further, though still under the Turkish banner.

On March 20, 1913, when the Great Powers decided that Shkodër was to remain to Albania, King Nicola of Montenegro increased his efforts to capture the city at any cost. He attained his aim not by fighting, but through Esad Pasha Toptani, who convinced by them, as it appears, that the fate of Shkodër no longer depended on the resistance but on the decision of the Great Powers, preferred to surrender the city after he was assured by Montenegro of the right to withdraw the whole of the garrison army together with its armaments, and after he had received the promise that Cetinie and its allies Serbia and particularly Russia would support him to take power in Albania. Thus after seven months of siege and of heroic resistance, Shkodër fell on April 22, 1913, into the hands of the Montenegrin armies.

Montenegro held Shkodër for only three weeks. Constrained by the Great Powers and especially by Austria-Hungary, on May 14, 1913, it withdrew its armies from the city. However Shkodër, instead of being handed over to the Albanian government, was put under international military control. The armies of the Great Powers, under the command of the British Admiral Cecil Burney, established international administration in the city.

After he had signed the act of surrender of Shkodër, Esad Pasha Toptani, at the head of two divisions (one composed of Turkish soldiers, the other of Albanian reserve forces), arrived in central Albania, at Durrës and Tirana, which were under Serbian occupation, and without taking any notice of the government of Vlora, he established there a separate administration. Besides, there arose the danger that the ambitious Pasha might make use of the Turkish army on behalf of the Sultan, who, with the resolution of December 17, 1912, was considered by the Great Powers sovereign of the Ottoman state, and in secret understanding with Serbia and Montenegro, try to overthrow the government of Vlora. Annoyed by these actions, the government of Ismail Qemal brought before the Conference of Ambassadors the claim for the acknowledgment of the full independence of Albania and the withdrawal from the country as soon as possible of the foreign armies, including the Turkish armies. Similar demands were made by the states of the central block—Austria-Hungary and Italy—which now desired to cancel the sovereignty of the Sultan in order to have the way paved for the economic and political subjugation of Albania. The Central bloc powers exerted pressure and compelled the Sultan on May 30, 1913, to leave to the Great Powers the question of the settlement of Albania. In June 1913, the Turkish and Serbian armies withdrew from Albania; only the Greek government, under diverse pretexts, put off to a later time the withdrawal of its armies from the districts of south Albania.

After many heated debates between Austria-Hungary demanding the annulment of the sovereignty of the Sultan, and Russia, demanding that the decision of December 17, 1912 should remain in force, the Conference of Ambassadors at last, on July 29, 1913, approved the project on the organization of the Albanian state. According to this decision, *Albania was recognized as an independent state, but under the control and guarantee of the six Great Powers.* Albania was to be neutral. At the head of the state was to be a prince, who was to be elected by the Great Pow-



ers. The control by the Great Powers was to last 10 years and was to be exerted by an international commission composed of 7 delegates (6 delegates of the 6 Great Powers and one delegate of Albania). The international Control Commission was to manage the entire civil administration and the entire state budget. The Great Powers likewise decided that the Albanian gendarmery was to be organized by Swedish officers. As Sweden did not accede, Dutch officers were called on.

The decision of July 29, 1913 also recognized Albania as independent. The relations with the Sultan ceased altogether. Still, the control of the Great Powers put a limit to its independence. Through the International Control Commission, the Great Powers were enabled to interfere and to instigate trouble for Albania.

#### THE PLOTS OF FOREIGN POWERS TO HARM ALBANIA—PRINCE WIED'S REGIME

After the questions of the independence and of the boundaries of Albania were solved, the national government of Ismail Qemal turned its attention to internal problems. It made great efforts to extend the state administration over all the districts of the country, to increase the number of Albanian national schools and to enact new laws to replace the Turkish laws still in force.

The steps undertaken by Ismail Qemal's government were to change the feudal landowner regime inherited from Turkey into a capitalist bourgeois regime, after the pattern of the states of Western Europe. These steps aroused the discontent of landowning *beys*. During September 1913, the reactionary *beys* deserted one after the other the government of Ismail Qemal and united themselves with Esad Toptani. With the support of these reactionary circles, Esad Pasha Toptani in October set up an independent gov-

ernment in Durazzo whose main objective was to overthrow the government of Vlora, which all the democratic patriots supported.

The difficulties created for the government of Ismail Qemal by the reaction of the feudal forces were further aggravated by the intervention of the Great Powers and by the plots of the neighbouring chauvinist states.

Austria-Hungary and Italy exerted continual pressure in their attempts to bind the government of Ismail Qemal to their own policy and to snatch from it important economic concessions and certain political privileges.

Russia and France took a still more hostile attitude towards the government of Ismail Qemal, which did not give up protesting against the injustice that was committed on Albania in connection with the drawing up of the boundaries. That is why they secretly helped Esad Toptani, who displayed his readiness to side without reserve with the Entente powers.

From among the Balkan states only Bulgaria and Roumania respected the independence of Albania and took steps to enter into friendly relations with it, whereas Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, though they formally recognized the creation of the Albanian state, organized plots against its independence and territorial integrity. Serbia gave full support to Esad Toptani in order to overthrow the government of Vlora, in the hope of realizing through him its aspiration to reach the seaport of Shengjin. At the same time, the Greek government began to organize in the districts occupied by it in southern Albania or "Northern Epirus" (Vorio-Epir), as it called them, armed so-called "volunteer" bands, composed mostly of Greek *andarts* brought over from Greece, which were to fight against the Albanian administration of the government of Vlora when the regular Greek armies retreated from southern Albania.

The government of Istanbul did not at first acknowledge the separation of Albania from the Ottoman Empire, but later on, as it did not succeed in reversing the situation created on the Adriatic coast, started to conduct a policy

of rapprochement with the Albanians. In the relation of forces recently created in the Balkans after two Balkan wars, Turkey was interested to have a strong Albania as an ally in order to forestall the expansion of Serbia and of Greece. For this reason, the rulers of Istanbul and particularly the committee of the Young Turk party *Ittihad ve Terekii* circulated the idea of installing a Turkish Mohammedan prince at the head of the Albanian state, by indicating for this post the former Turkish minister of war Izet Pasha, of Albanian origin. In order to popularize his candidature as against the German Prince Wilhelm of Wied, elected by the Great Powers in line with the decision of July 29, 1913, a squad of Turkish emissaries of Albanian origin and members of the *Ittihad ve Tereki* party went from Turkey to Albania.

Istanbul manifested special solicitude for the Albanians in the autumn of 1913, when Turkey together with Bulgaria began to get ready for a war of revenge against Greece and Serbia. The solicitude of Istanbul found a warm reception on the part of the masses of the Albanian population. The hope that from this alliance Albania might attain its territorial unification or at least acquire the means to withstand the annoying pressure of Serbia and Greece, drew the attention also of the head of the Albanian government, Ismail Qemal, and of the Kossovo immigrants in Albania. For this reason Ismail Qemal agreed to enter into secret negotiations with Turkey and Bulgaria. As Albania had been compelled by the Great Powers under all circumstances to maintain neutrality, the Turks and the Bulgarians asked the Vlora government at least to allow the secret passage through the Albanian territory, of bands organized in Turkey and Bulgaria, in order to assail the Serbians and the Greeks from behind and to use their prestige to influence the Albanians of Kossovo to seize arms against the Serbian state. In return they promised the head of the Albanian government that at the end of the war they would help Albania to recover Kossovo. Ismail Qemal accepted this secret agreement.

The agreement did not remain secret for long. It was made public as soon as the steamship arrived at the coast of Vlora, bringing over, under the command of Major Beqir Grebene, Turkish soldiers dressed as Albanians, ready to land and march into Macedonia. Beqir Grebene was arrested by the International Control Commission, and from a document that was found, the ties that he had with Ismail Qemal were disclosed. Neither Beqir Grebene nor Ismail Qemal admitted before the examining judge the existence of the secret agreement. This furnished the adversaries of Ismail Qemal with the opportunity to start a campaign of calumnies against him, pretending that the aged patriot had called in Turkish forces for a *coup d'état* in order to bring Albania back into the framework of the Ottoman Empire. By taking as argument "the question of Beqir Grebene" and by using as pretext the arrival of Prince Wied in Albania, the International Control Commission on January 22, 1914 compelled Ismail Qemal to resign. The government of Vlora and the National Council were entirely eliminated. The administration of the country passed into the hands of the International Control Commission. Esad Pasha Toptani, who likewise was asked by the I.C.C. to hand in his resignation, on February 12, 1914 complied with this demand and was granted the privilege of heading the Albanian delegation that was going to offer Wied the crown of Albania.

Greece also was constrained to obey the order of the Great Powers to evacuate the southern districts of Albania before the arrival of Prince Wied. However, according to plans prepared a long time ahead, as soon as the Greek armies were withdrawn at the end of February, the so-called *Epirotic* bands, by committing acts of terror on the patriotic native population, took power into their hands. On March 2, 1914, Greek agents assembled in a "congress" in Gjirokastra, proclaimed the "autonomy of Vorio-Epirus" and formed a "provisional government" under the presidency of Jorgji K. Zografo. The government of "Vorio-Epirus" took possession of the entire province of Gjiro-

kastra. The efforts exerted by the Greek agents to seize Korça were unsuccessful. Korça together with its districts passed without any difficulty into the hands of the Albanian patriots.

On March 7, 1914 Prince Wilhelm of Wied arrived in Durrës, designated as capital of Albania. The Albanian patriots welcomed the arrival of the prince, for they hoped that under his guidance the liberation and unification of the Albanian territories would be achieved, that the long suffering of the unfortunate people would come to an end, that peace and order, which had been disrupted by foreign provocations, would be established — that Albania would start an existence of civilization and of prosperity.

Wied, however, dashed the hopes of the democratic patriots. He felt obliged to the Great Powers for electing him sovereign of Albania. After due consideration of their suggestions he constituted a government composed of feudal elements, with Turhan Pasha Përmeti, former minister of the Ottoman Empire, as prime minister. The most important posts in the government — the ministry of the interior and of war — were taken by Esad Pasha Toptani, the greatest feudalist of Tirana. Wied likewise placed his hopes on the International Control Commission, which was a declared agency of the imperialist powers, the members of which acted on behalf of the states they represented to the disadvantage of the independence of Albania and of the prince's authority itself. By relying on the internal reactionary forces and on the great imperialist powers, Prince Wied, personally an incompetent head of state, became a tool in their hands.

One of the most urgent tasks for the government of Wied was to organize the Albanian army and to liberate the districts of south Albania from the Greek bands. But even in this vital matter for the country that he was going to rule and for his throne itself, the prince proved to be absolutely incapable. Under his very eyes, the organization of the army was undermined in person by the minister of war, Esad Pasha Toptani, who had entered into secret under-

standing with Serbia and with Greece. He hesitated to take energetic measures that were proposed by the democratic patriots against the "government of Vorio-Epirus", which legally was considered a rebellious government. On the contrary, under the pressure of the Great Powers, Wied was obliged to start negotiations with J. Zografos in order to settle through "peaceful" means the question of the "autonomy of Vorio-Epirus". These negotiations, which took place on the Greek island of Corfu, were an affront to Albania.

By agreeing to begin negotiations, the Albanian party betrayed its weak position. This encouraged the Greek agents to whip up provocations and menaces in order to constrain the Dutch Colonel Thomson, representative of Wied, to admit the autonomy of "Vorio-Epirus". Wied was undecided, and it is only under the pressure of the protestations of the Albanian patriots that he rejected the proposals of the "Vorio-Epirots". But later, urged by the Great Powers, Wied authorized the International Control Commission to represent the Albanian party.

After a week's deliberation, a protocol was signed in Corfu on May 17, 1914 with the delegates of the "Vorio-Epirotic government". On the basis of the Corfu Protocol, the districts of southern Albania were to enjoy semi-autonomous administration, with local government and gendarmerie, using Greek and Albanian as official languages — Albanian, however, to be taught only in the first three classes of elementary schools. The higher officials, who were to be native Albanians, as well as all the other officials, were to be appointed by the Albanian government only after approval by the International Control Commission.

The protocol of Corfu seriously violated the Albanian sovereignty that had been acknowledged by the Great Powers with the decision of July 29, 1913. Another odious aspect of this protocol was its stipulation that the population that lived in the southern districts and that could speak only Albanian, although it was to live within the boundaries of the independent Albania, would be compelled to

attend the primary schools beyond the first three classes and then the secondary schools where the teaching was only in the Greek language. Besides, with the protocol of Corfu, an argument was furnished to Greece to demand later on the annexation of all the districts of southern Albania. For this reason, the government of Durrës, under the very strong pressure of the Albanian patriots of these districts, refused to ratify the protocol of Corfu, hoping that a more favourable situation might arise later on.

The political situation of the Wied government, however, steadily worsened on account of the further extension of the rebellion that had broken out in central Albania. Together with the supporters of Esad Toptani, Young Turk agents, too, took part in the uprising and were active in Albania from the autumn of 1912. The Young Turks proved to be diligent propagandists.

By criticizing Prince Wied as a supporter of landowning *beys* and as an instrument in the hands of the Christian Great Powers, which aimed at suppressing the Mohammedan populations, the Young Turks succeeded in getting a considerable number of peasants of central Albania to seize arms in order to overturn the authority of Durrës and to install on the throne an Ottoman prince bound to the Turkish Sultan, who at the same time was also the Caliph, the Chief and Protector of all Mohammedans over the entire world. Esad Pasha Toptani on his part, while he pretended that he was prepared to accept an Ottoman prince as head of Albania, soon came to an agreement with the Young Turk adherents — with Musa Qazim, the Mufti of Tirana, and Qamil Haxhi Feza from Elbasan. Thus in the middle of May 1914, in the districts around Shijak and Tirana, the armed uprising started against Prince Wied and his reactionary government, in which whole masses of peasants took part, incited by social and religious motives, but led by chiefs who aimed at replacing Wied by a prince bound to Turkey. In this movement fanatical pro-Turkish elements did not fail to participate, the most conspicuous

representative of whom was the Mufti of Tirana, Musa Qazim.

In the capital, the Albanian patriots were anxious especially on account of the religious aspect of the uprising, as they were unable to realize its real character. Their anxiety grew still more as on May 18 the insurgents appeared in the vicinity of Durrës. Hoping that with the elimination of Esad Toptani the uprising would lose force, a group of patriots, with the support of the gendarmery of the capital, by night on the eve of May 19, 1914 surrounded Esad Pasha inside his home in Durrës and arrested him; however, in face of the pressure, Wied handed over Esad Pasha to the Italian Minister, Baron Aliotti, and granted him freedom to travel to Italy.

Although Esad Pasha had been banished, the uprising spread still further. Within a few weeks, while Durrës remained besieged, the insurgents extended their authority over practically every district of central Albania. In the occupied districts a new administration was established under the General Council, which was elected in Shijak in June 1914 by an assembly attended by the insurgents. Mustafa Ndroqi was elected president of the General Council, and Qamil Haxhi Feza, commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

The great danger that was created for Durrës by the armed uprising was exploited by the Great Powers in order to oblige the government of Wied to ratify the protocol of Corfu. Finding itself in a difficult position, the Albanian government at last accepted, and on June 23, 1914 ratified this protocol, with the hope the "Vorio-Epirots" would cease their attacks in the south.

The "Vorio-Epirots", however, instead of interrupting the fighting, as it had been stipulated in the protocol, during the month of July, as the insurgents were pressing their siege of Durrës and were pushing toward Berat and Pogradec, started a general assault in the districts of Kolonjë, Korça and Berat, still under the control of the government of Durrës. The Albanian forces, caught between two fires,

were obliged to retreat. This offered to the Greek bands the possibility of conquering the southern districts without any difficulty and to create common boundaries with the rebels from Pogradec up to Berat.

During the conquest of the southern districts, the Greek bands furious with the native population for not agreeing to follow the Vorio-Epirotic movement, treated them with the greatest cruelty. As in the past spring during the retreat, now too during the recapture of these districts, the Greek bands set fire to more than 160 villages, arrested hundreds of patriots and massacred hundreds of peasants, guilty only of the "crime" of considering themselves Albanian. In order to escape being massacred, tens of thousands of persons abandoned their hearths and gathered as refugees in the olive groves near Vlora, the only city besides Durrës that remained under the administration of the government of Wied. With no means and no succour, this mass of more than 60,000 men, women and children had sunk into utter misery due to famine and epidemics.

By this offensive, the Vorio-Epirotic leaders violated the Protocol of Corfu, which forbade armed action against the Albanian state. Consequently the Protocol of Corfu was null and void.

## ALBANIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The outbreak of the World War in early August 1914 created an extremely critical situation for Albania and the Albanians. Now that arms had been resorted to, the imperialist Great Powers and chauvinistic neighbouring states seized the opportunity to realize their objectives at the expense of Albania — mainly because the World War had found Albania in a lamentable condition.

The authority of the government of Wied was confined only to Durrës and to Vlora. Central Albania was under the control of the insurgents hostile to Wied. South Albania lived under the terror of Greek bands. In the east, the Dibra region was under Serbian occupation and the mountainous regions were under the rule of local chieftains.

By taking advantage of the circumstances that were created by the war, the forces hostile to Wied continued more tenaciously their assaults against the government of Durrës. After the fall of Vlora into their hands, on September 1, 1914 the situation of Wied was extremely aggravated. Deprived of all support, as Austria-Hungary too, who had backed it, had now abandoned it, the prince was compelled to leave Albania on September 3, 1914, together with his government. Thus, after six months, the regime of Wied came to an end. On September 5, the insurgent forces entered Durrës.

Austria-Hungary cast aside Wied as of no further use and tried to win to her side the leaders of the anti-Wied movement, for the purpose of making use of their armed forces against her foe, Serbia. With the Young Turk emissaries, who had infiltrated deep into the ranks of the insurgents and who received their instructions from Turkey, ally of Austria-Hungary, Vienna reached agreement without any difficulty. But with the native chieftains and still less with the peasant masses, who had fought against Wied, it had no success. In October 1914 the situation in Albania became very complicated. After the departure of Wied, with the help of the armed forces subsidized by the government of Belgrade, Esad Toptani came from his exile back to Durrës, and here on October 2, 1914 proclaimed himself head of the provisional government and commander-in-chief of the army. His return produced no other result than to inflame once again the former fury of the anti-feudal uprising. Alongside the peasants, who this time, too, became the main striking force of the uprising, Young Turk emissaries also took part, and, especially in November, as Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers,

tried their best to direct the armed movement not only against Esad Toptani, who backed the Entente, but also against Serbia. However, the peasant masses again paid no attention to the appeal of the Young Turk leaders.

From the anarchy that developed once again in Albania, profited two other powers which at that time maintained neutrality in the War — Italy, which at the end of October 1914, with the approval of the Great Powers occupied Vloza and the island of Sazan, and Greece, which at that time occupied with regular armies the districts of southern Albania that were under the control of the "Vorio-Epirotic" bands. By these military occupations, Rome as well as Athens hoped to assure the annexation of these regions.

In the fighting against Esad Toptani the peasant insurgent forces of central Albania speedily achieved success. Within a few weeks all the regions of central Albania fell into their hands, and the authority of Esad Toptani was confined only to Durrës.

The pressure of Young Turk emissaries to direct the insurgent forces against Serbia continued, but without any success. In January 1915, in a note addressed to the Great Powers, which was repeated in February and in March, the native leaders of the revolutionary peasants announced their neutral attitude in the world conflict and emphasized their objective as merely anti-Esadist. In this month the uprising, directed against Esad Toptani and his landowning supporters, took an open anti-feudal character. Under the lead of Haxhi Kamil of the Sharri district of Tirana, who had been elected by the insurgents as commander-in-chief, the armed peasants set fire to the homes of *beys*, confiscated the estates of land-holders, gave aid and support to the poor, the orphans, the infirm, and at the same time multiplied their attacks against Esad Pasha Toptani, who was besieged in Durrës. Some of the peasant insurgents, who were not entirely relieved as yet of the old ideological domination and prompted also by the wrong idea that the Albanian flag was the banner of *beys* and atheists, kept on making use of the Turkish flag in their rank and file. The fact that Haxhi

Kamil and his collaborators did not comply with the instructions of Turkey and of Austria-Hungary to assail Serbia from the rear, demonstrates that irrespective of the Ottoman flag they made use of, politically they were independent of the Turkish government.

In the meanwhile Italy took the decision to bring to an end its neutrality that it had announced at the beginning of the World War by entering into war against its former allies, the Central Powers, on the side of the Triple Entente powers, which it deemed had more chance of victory at the end of the war, and which gave assurances for more territorial gains than those promised by its former allies. For this purpose on April 26, 1915 Italy signed with the three Great Powers of the Entente — England, France and Russia — the secret Treaty of London.

This treaty of London marked the culmination of the shameful policy the Great Powers had adopted towards small Albania. England, France, Russia and Italy, that is to say four of the Great Powers which two years ago, on July 29, 1913, had acknowledged *the independence of Albania under their control and guarantee*, with this treaty were treading upon the commitment they had previously made, and were preparing the extinction of the independence and, further, the partition of this unfortunate land. By Article 6, Italy was acknowledged to have the right to annex the city of Vloza with a considerable hinterland together with the island of Sazan. In Article 5, it was stipulated that the port of Shengjin was to be annexed by Montenegro, whereas in Article 7 the possibility was foreseen for Serbia and Greece to annex respectively the northern and the southern regions of Albania. What was to remain, in other words, central Albania, was to constitute, according to Article 7, *a small, autonomous, neutral state*, with its capital in Durrës, which was to be represented by Italy in its relations with foreign countries.

The Treaty of London was kept secret even after Italy entered the war in May 1915. However, Serbia, which learned the contents of the Treaty, was dissatisfied that its

great allies had not granted to it Durrës. Under the pretext that it desired to secure its rear from the peasant insurgents, who were unjustly accused of having been incited and organized by Austria-Hungary, the Serbian government swiftly amassed its army on the Albanian border in order to march across central Albania and capture Durrës, where its ally, Esad Toptani, was besieged. On this occasion, Belgrade wanted to make of the annexation of Durrës an accomplished fact. The leaders of the peasant insurgents protested by means of notes to persuade the Serbian commander to renounce the military march across the country. However, on June 2, 1915, as the Serbian armies crossed the boundaries, the armed peasants went to meet them and at Qukës, under Haxhi Kamil, put up furious resistance. Without arms, without organization and in face of the numerical superiority of the Serbians, the peasants turned back and the uprising was crushed. In face of the pressure exerted by the great Allies, which did not want to cause any annoyance to Italy, the Serbian armies did not enter Durrës at all. But in the meantime, the Serbian forces banded themselves with Esadist detachments, which were relieved from the blockade of Durrës, and wreaked terror on the peasants. Haxhi Kamil was hanged together with 40 peasants. Only after the position of Esad Pasha Toptani was stabilized, within a few weeks, did the Serbian armies withdraw from Albania.

In June 1913 Montenegro, too, with the aim of assuring the annexation of Shkodër, captured this city. Like the Serbians and the Greeks, so the Montenegrins arrested and interned great numbers of Albanian patriots. The Montenegrins killed in Shkodër, without trial, two renowned patriots, Çerçiz Topulli and Mustafa Qulli.

A few months later, the Serbian armies of approximately 200,000 men, routed and pursued by the Austro-Hungarian armies, retreated across the territories of Albania. In January 1916, together with the Serbian armies, also their ally Esad Pasha Toptani, left Albania by sea, together with his "government", who at first settled in France, then



**Themistokli Gërmenji**  
(1867-1917)

later went with the headquarters of the Anglo-French Army corps of the Orient, which landed at Salonica.

In January 1916 Austro-Hungarian armies marched into Albania from the north. Within a few weeks they captured the whole of north and central Albania. In the autumn of that same year, the Italian armies spread out from Vlora over the whole of south Albania, while the French armies coming from Salonica, occupied the Korça region and created a common border with the Italian armies at Kolonje.

In Korça, the French military authorities handed over the administration of the city to their allies, the Greek partisans of Venizelos, who had formed a separate government in Salonica and had declared war against the Central Powers.

The Albanian patriots of these regions protested against this act that displayed that France was acknowledging the right of Greece to occupy Korça. Armed bands led by Themistokli Gërmenji and Salih Butka started action against Greek agents, and then let it be understood that they would strike against the French armies also, in case the Greeks

would not be expelled and the administration of Korça would not be handed over to the Albanian patriots.

The French military authorities, realizing that the Greeks had no support whatsoever in the Korça region, and that they were not in any condition to assure the peace and order they so badly needed, chased away the Venizelists and came to an understanding with Themistokli Gërmenji and other patriots, signing together with them, on December 10, 1916, a protocol according to which the regions of Korça, Bilisht, Kolonjë and Pogradec were to enjoy an administrative "autonomy" under the rule of Albanian authorities.

According to the protocol of December 10, 1916, an administrative council was placed at the head of the "autonomous district of Korça", composed of 14 persons; the gendarmery was organized and put under its orders; in the administration Albanian officials were appointed; Albanian was adopted as the official language; Greek schools were replaced with Albanian schools; the flag of the "autonomous district" was the national flag of Albania with the French tri-colour attached at the top. The administration of the "Autonomous District of Korça" was placed, in conformity with the protocol, under the protection of the French military authorities. Themistokli Gërmenji became the most renowned personality of the autonomous district or of the "Republic of Korça" as it was called by the Albanians.

The concession of this "autonomy" was an important victory achieved by the Albanian patriots in the circumstances created by the First World War, because it obliged France itself to reject the claims of their allies the Greeks, on Korça. Besides, it replaced the foreign military administration by a local civil administration which to a certain degree was an alleviation for the population of the district. It was a stimulus for the patriots of other regions to fight, in order to secure an identical autonomy. Under the pressure of these demands, in order to appease the Albanians, in January 1917 the Austro-Hungarian military authorities, and in June 1917 the Italian military authorities were obliged likewise to make concessions in the domain of the

administration of the land and to promise that they would acknowledge to Albania the "autonomy" and the territorial integrity, as soon as the War was terminated.

The proclamation of the "Autonomous District of Korça" and its transfer into the hands of Albanian authorities was received by Greek chauvinistic circles with violent protests. Under the continual pressure of these circles and of the Greek Prime Minister Venizelos himself, and in conformity with the instructions of the government of Paris, since June 1917, when Greece entered the war on the side of the Entente, the French military authorities began to violate the Protocol of December 10, 1916. After six months' existence, the district of Korça began to lose the Albanian administrative autonomy. In Korça Greek schools were opened again. The French authorities arrested the leader of the Albanian patriots of Korça, Themistokli Gërmenji, who, on the basis of false evidence, was sentenced to death by the French military tribunal of Salonica and executed there on November 9, 1917. Some months later, the French abrogated the Protocol of December 10, 1916. However, for fear of the extension of the armed resistance of the Albanians, they did not dare to deliver to the Greek authorities the administration of Korça. The whole district passed under the direct administration of the French military authorities.

The occupation of Albania by Austro-Hungarian, Italian and French armies lasted till the end of the war. With these occupations, Albania became a battlefield of the armies of the belligerent powers. For a long period in the Fier district fierce fighting took place between the Austro-Hungarian and the Italian armies, and in the Pogradec district, between the Austro-Hungarian and the French armies. These occupations and wars brought great human and material loss to the country. Nearly 70,000 persons died in Albania during the First World War due to fighting, epidemics and famine. The economy, which had been poor in the past, declined still further.



## THE CONGRESS OF LUSHNJE AND THE WAR OF VLORA

The termination of the First World War in November 1918, instead of marking the end of the sufferings of the Albanian people and of the anxiety of the democratic patriots for the fate of their homeland, brought, on the contrary, a still greater deterioration in the Albanian political situation.

The war was won by western powers — England, France, Italy and the United States of America, of which the first three had affixed their signatures to the Treaty of London of April 1915 and in principle were always agreed to enact, particularly, the articles envisaging the partition of Albania. Among the smaller allies were two neighbour states of Albania, Serbia and Greece, that demanded the more energetic exploitation of the right of the conqueror in order to secure the annexation of Albanian territories, which they had been able to do in 1913.

Of the signatories of the Treaty of London, only one state, Russia, opposed the execution of that ill-famed document. The reason was that in Russia, before the year was out, the October Socialist Revolution had broken out and triumphed, and had overthrown the oppressive regime of the Russian capitalists and land-holders and instituted the rule of the labouring class and of the oppressed masses of the village. On the very next day of the triumph of the Revolution, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin had put an end to the participation of Russia in the First World War and had proposed to the belligerent powers the conclusion between them of a just, democratic peace renouncing annexations. These acts left a deep impression on Albania. Some weeks after the triumph of the Revolution, the Russian Bolsheviks made public the contents of the secret treaties concluded between the Great Powers up to then, including the Treaty of London.

After learning the contents of this treaty, the Albanian political leaders became fully aware of the seriousness of the situation created after the general war for the fate of Albania. That is why, as soon as the war was brought to an end, the Albanian leaders, who for many years in succession had remained in exile or in concentration camps, or else had lain hidden inside Albania, were active forming a national government, elected by a congress, which was to take into its hands the fate of the motherland and to defend the independence and the territorial integrity of Albania before the peace conference that was to convene in Paris in January 1919, and where the Great Powers would demand the enforcement of the Treaty of London. But it was difficult to have a national congress meet freely, because Albania was entirely occupied by alien troops — by Italian armies which had captured the regions occupied by Austro-Hungarian armies with the exception of Korça and of Shkodër, which remained under French military occupation.

The Italian government gave permission to call the congress in Durrës on condition that it should not appoint a national government but only a "national council" to represent Albania, with the exception of the district of Vlora; that it should have the prerogatives of governmental authority, and that it should have the right only to express the "desires" of the Albanians before the peace conference, naturally in conformity with the Italian interests. By means of pressure, that the military authorities in Albania were going to exercise, the government of Rome intended that its adherents and agents should be sent to the congress and to the council.

The Congress of Durrës opened on December 28, 1918. It was attended by more than 50 delegates. In order to avoid giving any ground to the Italian troops that were within the city, to disperse the congress, the patriotic delegates in their discussions did not openly criticize the policy of Rome towards Albania. However, through their votes, the Congress of Durrës passed resolutions that were

in opposition to the policy of the Italian government. The Congress elected not a "council", but a "national government" with President Turhan Pasha, ex-prime minister of the Wied regime, who was empowered to exercise the executive power alongside a national senate that was elected to wield the legislative power. Besides that, the Congress entrusted an Albanian government delegation, under the prime minister, to defend before the peace conference the national independence and the territorial integrity of the country, by which resolution not only the claims of Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, but also those of Italy set forth in the Treaty of London, were rejected.

Although discontented with the Congress of Durrës, the Italian military authorities did not interfere with the national government, in order to avoid arousing, in those unseasonable moments, the anger of the Albanians. But on the other hand, for a long period of time, they did not allow the government of Durrës to exercise the executive power or the national senate to assemble in order to exercise the legislative power. Italian emissaries tried to persuade the government of Durrës that, for the support Rome would give to spare Albania from the territorial claims of Serbia and of Greece, Albania should demand from the peace conference the inclusion of Albania under the mandate or protection of Italy.

On January 18, 1919 as the peace conference opened at Versailles, the neighbor states of Albania—Italy, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro—as had been expected, presented their territorial claims at the expense of Albania, although this was not a defeated country. Italy demanded the annexation of the district of Vlora together with the island of Sazan which had been promised to it by the Treaty of London, and apart from that, it aspired to have the rest of Albania brought under its protectorate without sharing it with Greece and Serbia. Greece put forth once again its chauvinistic claims and demanded the annexation of the districts of Gjirokastra and Korça. Serbia, which did not approve Italy's settling in Vlora, demanded the "independ-

ence" and the "territorial integrity" of Albania, but in case the independence and the integrity should not be accepted, it demanded that Albania should be partitioned, whereby Serbia should receive the northern districts. Montenegro demanded, again, Shkodër.

Besides the delegation of the government of Durrës, delegations of all the Albanian colonies in exile—the colonies in Roumania, Bulgaria, Egypt, Turkey and in the United States—went to Paris in order to forestall the bargaining at the expense of Albania. The Great Powers, however, did not allow Albania to be represented at the Peace Conference, and treated it as a land without master. In spite of that, the Albanian government delegation, supported by the delegations of the Albanians in exile, opposed all the claims of the neighbouring states, protested against the Treaty of London, demanded recognition of the independence and of the territorial integrity of the motherland, and even demanded that the Albanian regions of Kossovo and of Çamëria also, which had been unjustly left outside its boundaries, should be ceded to Albania.

In face of the difficulties with which the Albanian problem was beset, a part of the Albanian government delegation of Durrës, together with its head Turhan Pasha, under the pressure of the emissaries of Rome, began to oscillate and to demand the mandate of Italy over the whole of Albania, on condition that the boundaries set in 1913 should be maintained. Against these machinations, the Albanian patriots rose to their feet. With their intervention, in June 1919, Turhan Pasha resigned from the presidency of the government delegation, and in his stead Bishop Luigj Bumçi was appointed.

In the summer months the Italian question was aggravated still more. Italy, realizing that the Great Powers were adverse to its efforts for the inclusion under its mandate of the whole of Albania, came to an understanding with Greece to support each other in connection with their respective claims in Albania. In July 20, 1919 Rome and Athens signed a secret accord "The Tittoni-Venizelos Ac-

cord", in accordance with which Italy recognized Greece's right to annex Korça and Gjirokastra, whereas Greece recognized Italy's right to annex Vlora and the mandate over the remaining districts of Albania. After it had signed the secret accord for the partitioning of Albania, on August 20, 1919 Rome granted to the government of Durrës the right of administration under the supervision of Italian civil authorities rather than under Italian military control.

As some months later, in October 1919, the contents of the Tittoni-Venizelos accord were divulged, a series of vehement protests broke out in Albania. Yet, not all of the Albanian personalities made the same estimation of the political situation. The major part of the ministers of the government of Durrës overestimated in an alarming manner the danger of the partitioning of the motherland. Hoping that they would be able to preserve intact the territorial integrity of Albania, they capitulated before the pressure of Rome and began to ask that Albania be placed under Italian protection, or else that a prince of the royal house of Italy be brought to the throne of Albania. These demands compromised the Albanian question and the government of Durrës itself, which by this time had fallen entirely into the hands of such agents of Italy as Mufid Libohova, Mustafa Kruja and Fejzi Alizoti. Under their guidance the government of Durrës entered onto the road of treason.

After more than ten months' bargaining, three major imperialist powers, which directed in fact the work of the peace conference — England, France and the United States of America — reached a mutual understanding, and on December 9, 1919 drafted a memorandum for the settlement of the claims of Italy, Serbia and Greece in the Adriatic and in Albania.

According to the memorandum of December 9, 1919, Italy was to annex the district of Vlora together with the island of Sazan and was to have under its mandate Albania, split and partitioned. The district of Gjirokastra was to be ceded to Greece, whereas the fate of Korça was to be decided

later on. The northern boundaries of Albania were to remain intact; but on the other hand, to the Serbo-Croato-Slovene Kingdom, which was now called Yugoslavia, the right was conceded to construct a railway line across Albania in order to communicate with the Adriatic sea.

The memorandum of December 9, 1919, by which Albania was being partitioned and put under the colonial regime of Italy, aroused the whole country to action. The Albanian patriots had entirely lost faith in the government of Durrës taking steps to save the motherland from the twofold danger. Although the country found itself occupied by Italian armies, the Albanian patriots, with Aqif Biçaku at their head, in early 1920, courageously appealed to the Albanian people to elect their delegates for a new national congress, which was to decide on the measures that should be taken to save the motherland. It was decided to hold the congress in Lushnje on January 21, 1920.

As most of the delegates could not arrive in Lushnje by January 21, the congress opened a week later, on January 28, and terminated after four days of deliberations, on January 31, 1920. In it fifty delegates took part.

The Congress of Lushnje passed resolutions of unusually great importance for the fate of the country. Although under the menace of the Italian bayonets, the delegates resolved to oppose all the plans and the bargainings of the Great Powers at the expense of Albania. The congress informed the peace conference that the Albanians were determined to fight against all alien powers in order to defend without any concession the national independence and the territorial integrity of the country.

The congress then looked into the activities of the government of Durrës. After pointing out that it had taken the way of treason, it announced its dismissal and in its stead appointed a new national government with Sulejman Delvina as prime minister. The congress likewise appointed a new Albanian delegation to the peace conference, composed of Dr. Mihal Turtulli, Bishop Luigj Bumçi and Mehmed Konitza.

The third problem that lay before the congress for deliberation was the drafting and the approval of a provisional statute, on the basis of which the Albanian state was to be administered until a regular constituent assembly should meet without alien armies in Albania. In connection with this item, the assembly took the decision that, until the Assembly met, Albania should not be proclaimed a monarchy, as it had been decided at the conference of peace in 1913, neither a republic, as was desired by the majority of the delegates. For the time being, at the head of the Albanian state was to stand a Supreme Council, composed of four members. The congress elected as members of the Supreme Council Aqif Biçakçiu, Mihal Turtulli, Luigj Bumçi and Abdi Toptani. In the statute approved by the congress it was defined that alongside the national government, which was to exercise the executive power, a national council (parliament) of 37 deputies was to be created, which was to exercise the legislative power. The statute contained other dispositions relating to various administrative institutions of the new Albanian state, their prerogatives and their duties.

The Congress of Lushnje, by opposing resolutely the bargaining of the imperialist Great Powers and by deposing the government of Durrës that was ready to capitulate, changed to a course of events no longer detrimental, but on the contrary, favourable to Albania. By sanctioning a new statute, it rejected the statute dictated by the conference of peace in 1913, which placed Albania under the humiliating control of the imperialist Great Powers. The Congress of Lushnje resolved that the Albanian people themselves should decide the fate of Albania by means of the constituent assembly.

The government of Durrës attempted to disperse the Congress of Lushnje without success but, left without any support, it ceased to exist only a few days later.

On the contrary, the government of Sulejman Delvina, with the support of vast masses of the population, since the first weeks scored successes of considerable importance.

On February 11, 1920, the high state organs — the Supreme Council, the council of ministers and the National Council — left the small town of Lushnje and established themselves in Tirana, which at that time was a town of 15 thousand inhabitants, and which was chosen as the provisional capital of Albania. From here the new government demanded that the Italian and French military authorities should withdraw together with their armies from the districts of the country. In consideration of the great support that was given to the new government and in order to avoid conflicts with the masses, the Italian and French armies began to evacuate Albania little by little. In the liberated districts the Albanian administration was installed, to which the local population gave an enthusiastic reception.

The government of Rome, however, instead of withdrawing to Italy its armies scattered throughout Albania, massed them in the district of Vlora, manifesting in this manner not only that it did not intend to evacuate this district, but that on the contrary it was going to defend it by military force. At the same time, with the aim of paralysing the government of Tirana, it instigated against it the Esadist rebel movement in the neighbourhood of Tirana. On March 27, 1920, as the National Council, the first Albanian parliament, opened its sessions, within the framework of the defence of the national cause at the peace conference in Paris, before the government of Tirana two problems of vital importance for the fate of the country awaited solution: the liberation of the district of Vlora and the breaking down of the Esadist rebellion. Hoping to solve these two problems by peaceful means, and at the same time in order to gain time to accomplish its military and political preparations, the government of Sulejman Delvina, with the approval of the National Council, entered into negotiations with the government of Rome and with the chiefs of the Esadist rebellion.

The Albanian patriot leaders had it clearly in mind that the link that would bring about the solution of the critical situation in which the Albanian problem found itself was

the armed struggle for the expulsion of the Italian armies from Vlora. They were confident that under the pressure of Albanian arms and the protests that would be raised over the whole world in favour of the struggle for liberation of this small nation, Italy would find itself at last constrained to withdraw its troops from the district of Vlora also. The patriot leaders were likewise confident that neither Greece nor Yugoslavia desired to see Italy remain in Vlora, and moreover, if Italy were chased from Vlora, neither Athens nor Belgrade would have the possibility of annexing at the expense of Albania the districts they had aspired to bring under their rule. That is why, while the peace conference continued its deliberations on the memorandum of December 9, 1919 and consequently no definite decision had been taken as yet to the detriment of Albania, the patriot leaders took the decision to organize the uprising for liberation against the Italian armies of occupation.

The task of leading to an end the uprising for liberation was taken over by the "Committee of National Defence" that was formed secretly inside Vlora by the patriots of the districts occupied by Italian troops. In secret understanding with the government of Tirana, the "Committee of National Defence" on May 20, 1920 issued the war-call for the armed uprising, to which thousands of peasants responded. On June 3, 1920, from Mt. Beun near Smokthina in the occupied zone, the Committee addressed to the commander of the Italian armies of occupation an ultimatum, demanding a reply within 24 hours whether it would consent to handing over the administration of Vlora, of Tepelena and of Himara to the national government of Tirana. As the Italian command gave no response, on June 5, 1920 an uprising for liberation broke out in the entire occupied districts.

Thousands of peasants in the occupied districts, organized in armed bands, assailed simultaneously, about midnight, all the Italian garrisons and post commands outside the city of Vlora and won great success. The peasants heroically



**Bajram Curri (1862-1925), one of the leaders of Albania's liberation revolts against Turkish invasion in 1911-12 and of the Democratic Bourgeois Revolution of June 1924**

assailed and demolished within a couple of hours the fortified garrisons of Kote, Gjormë, Llogora and Drashovica, taking hundreds of prisoners-of-war and liberating the entire occupied territory. About 3,000 brave peasants, on the eve of June 11, 1920, undertook an intrepid attack on the city of Vlora, which was defended by two army divisions, by fortifications erected beforehand and by a great number of warships. Towards dawn, the peasants penetrated the outer quarters of the city, but did not carry further their attack and at the order of the commander of the uprising, they withdrew to the hills of Vlora in order to avoid damaging the population of the city.

In the meantime the military forces of the government of Tirana, under the command of Bajram Curri, had undertaken a vast operation against the Esadist rebel movement.



Avni Rustem  
(1897-1924)

These operations were terminated successfully within a few days. On June 13, 1920, the revolutionary Albanian student Avni Rustem made an attempt on the life of the traitor Esad Pasha Toptani, killing him in Paris. With his murder the Esadist rebel movement came to an end.

With the speedy aid that arrived from Italy, the command of the occupation forces later on undertook two expeditions to crush the uprising for liberation, but in both cases its efforts met with failure. For weeks in succession the Albanian warriors kept Vlora besieged.

The war for the liberation of Vlora aroused great enthusiasm throughout Albania. From all the districts of the country hundreds of volunteers left for Vlora, and supplies of money and food were collected for the valorous warriors. At the same time it drew the sympathy of all the world. In those critical days for Albania, the Italian working class rose to help the Albanian people, launching numerous pro-

tests, demonstrations and strikes against the brutal war of the Roman imperialists in Albania.

Exactly as had been foreseen by the patriots, the unrelenting resistance of the Albanian people, the pressure of international public opinion and the actions of the Italian working class compelled the government of Rome to start negotiations with the government of Tirana to bring the fighting to an end. After long discussions that took place in the capital of Albania and after other defeats the Italian troops suffered in Vlora, the government of Rome was obliged at last to accept the conditions set by the Albanians. On August 2, 1920, the preliminary protocol of Tirana was signed, according to which Italy was constrained to withdraw its troops from Albania by September 2, 1920, with the exception of Sazan, and to renounce all its claims to annex Vlora, and undertook to respect the independence and the territorial integrity of Albania. On September 3, 1920, the heroic Albanian fighters triumphantly marched into Vlora, liberated it and united it with the independent motherland.

## THE POLITICAL LIFE IN ALBANIA IN 1920-1923

The victory which the Albanians achieved in Vlora was of great importance for Albania. It solved, so to say, automatically the "Albanian question", the question of the partitioning of Albania that for more than a year had been the target of imperialist and chauvinist passions at the peace conference. Italy, by signing the preliminary protocol of Tirana and by withdrawing its troops from Albania, acknowledged — as was stated in the second paragraph of the protocol — "Albanian sovereignty" and the "territorial integrity of Albania". Thus it gave up the right to demand before the tribunal of Paris the annexation of Vlora and the Italian mandate over the crippled Albanian state. And

in fact Rome, discredited by the Albanian uprising and by the defeats it had suffered in Vlora, was no longer in condition to demand its "rights" in Albania as promised in the Treaty of London. Consequently the peace conference, too, which in March had shelved *sine die* discussion of the "Albanian question", postponing its re-examination till after the Italo-Yugoslav bipartite negotiations on their divergences in the Adriatic had been terminated, did not take up for a second time the discussion of this question, even after the negotiations between Rome and Belgrade had come to an end. As the promises that had been given to Greece, Serbia and Montenegro on the Treaty of London were conditioned by the benefit that was to go to Italy, their claims could neither find fulfilment. Thus the government of Tirana was no longer constrained to address itself to the peace conference in order to defend the sovereign rights of Albania, denied up to then by the Great Powers. On the contrary, a few weeks later it applied to the League of Nations and to its general assembly for the admission of independent, sovereign Albania, with its boundaries as fixed in 1913, as a member state. The general assembly on December 17, 1920 took the resolution to admit Albania as a member of the League of Nations. This resolution marked the international recognition of Albania as an independent state, thereby marking the triumph of the policy adopted by the Congress of Lushnje and officially, though not openly, burying the odious Treaty of London, which had worried the Albanians so.

Now that the danger of enslavement and of partition of the country appeared to have passed, the main attention of the Albanian political leaders was riveted upon the internal problems of the country. Of these, the most concrete problem was the construction of the state apparatus, the problem of the political regime. Albania needed above all else a complete fundamental statute to replace the provisory and rudimentary regulations that had been approved by the Congress of Lushnje. She was in need of new laws appropriate to a sovereign and independent state and to

supersede the Ottoman laws which continued in force. Of equal seriousness were the economic problems. Albania, a rural country with almost no industry whatsoever, was in urgent need of radical measures to improve its backward agriculture. It was evident that the import of grain and other articles of consumption, amounting to six or seven times the total of Albania's exports, would dry up within a few years the monetary fund that she had inherited. Albania had for the first time to make a regular state budget and to start investing in the domains of economy and of culture.

In the face of these complex problems which emerged with the times, the Albanian political forces, which had been united at the time of the Congress of Lushnje in order to forestall the danger from abroad, were now split up into factions. The Cabinet of Sulejman Delvina, deeming that the mandate it had received from the Congress of Lushnje had come to an end, and in view of the breach in the ranks of the political forces that had been up to then its main support, resigned from office on November 14, 1920. The National Council (the parliament) created in Lushnje, also handed in its resignation. Thus started for Albania a new period of internal political strife, which was characterized on the one hand by the efforts of conservative and land-owning classes to preserve their estates and their former privileges, and on the other hand, by the struggle of new progressive forces aiming at the democratization of the Albanian state.

This internal political strife was accompanied by serious external troubles. The two neighbouring states of Albania, Yugoslavia and Greece, the former especially, did not give up their old cupidity. At this conjuncture of "stability" created by the League of Nations they of course changed their tactics. Yugoslavia, heir to the Serbian and Montenegrin chauvinistic greed of old times, and alongside it Greece with its megalomaniacal rulers, began to demand, no mere annexation of Albanian soil, but the definite settling of the boundaries of Albania, insinuating by these claims

the "rectification" of the boundaries of Albania to their advantage. At the same time, Belgrade, by means of armed bands, attempted to undermine the Albanian state apparatus, in order to set up in Tirana a government friendly to Yugoslavia. Athens, on the other side, in order to achieve its aims, began again to activate, though in a moderate form, the discredited *Vorio-Epirotic* movement. The Great Powers, on their part, including Italy, started to exercise pressure on the Albanian government and to menace it, in order to snatch economic concessions and privileges, particularly in the domain of the exploitation of mines and trade with foreign countries. The new cabinet that was formed under the presidency of Ilias Vrioni on November 19, 1920 tried in a formal manner to guard the unity of Albanian political forces. The new prime minister was a partisan of the political platform of the Congress of Lushnje, but at the same time he was a son of a great landowner of Albania, and this fact was not without telling influence on his governing activity. The main task of the new cabinet was to give to the country its parliament. On December 5, 1920 the law on elections was published, drafted in such a manner as to facilitate the election of the landlords' candidates and their supporters.

During the election campaign two main political currents polarized themselves, and after the elections on April 5, 1921, crystallized into two parties, in reality, into two parliamentary political groups—the progressive party which represented the interests of the landlords, the conservative bourgeoisie, the high clergy and the supporters of "social traditions"; and the popular party, constituted of democratic elements together with some liberal *bey*s, who demanded that a democratic constitution, based on bourgeois principles of Western Europe, be introduced in Albania.

The political life of the Albanian state, however, was again disturbed by the Yugoslav and Greek provocations. In May 1921, the government of Ilias Vrioni, which received a vote of confidence in the new parliament, insistently demanded from the League of Nations that Yugoslavia and

Greece should be compelled to withdraw their troops from the Albanian districts and thus to respect, according to the resolution of the League of Nations itself, the boundaries of Albania set in 1913. The League of Nations, on the other hand, at the proposal of France in support of the Yugoslav policy, referred for examination the question of the boundaries of Albania to the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris, composed of representatives from Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. This resolution whetted the appetite of Albania's two neighbours. While in the south the government of Athens endeavoured, without success, to revive the abortive *Vorio-Epirotic* movement, in the north the ultra-reactionary arch-*bayraktar* Gjon Marka Gjon, through the political, financial and military aid of Belgrade, passed into open rebellion, and in June proclaimed the so-called "Republic of Mirdita".

The turmoil continued throughout the summer. Through the steps it took, the government of Ilias Vrioni, at the start, achieved various successes: in the south it re-established its prestige without any difficulty; in the north, by means of military operations, it put down the rebellion of Gjon Marka Gjon. At the beginning of autumn, however, the situation deteriorated in an alarming manner, because Belgrade sent into Albania new bands of mercenaries accompanied by detachments of the regular Yugoslav army, thus committing open intrusion. In face of these serious difficulties, the government of Ilias Vrioni began to vacillate and to hesitate in taking energetic steps. In order to forestall the danger, the members of the Popular Party, together with a number of the Progressive Party members, partisans of strong action, formed a temporary alliance called "Sacred Union", which succeeded in bringing about on October 11, 1921 in the parliament the fall of the cabinet of Ilias Vrioni and the formation on October 16, 1921 of a new cabinet headed by Pandeli Evangjeli.

A few weeks later, on November 9, 1921, the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris passed the resolution that had been demanded by the League of Nations. Not one of Greece's



claims was acknowledged, and in south Albania the boundaries set in 1913 were reconfirmed. Consequently Athens was compelled to withdraw its armies from the Albanian villages in the district of Bilisht, which it had occupied since May 1920. In the north, however, the Conference of Ambassadors made changes in the boundaries to the disadvantage of Albania, by ceding to Yugoslavia the district of Gora, part of the district of Luma and several villages of Golloborda with a population of tens of thousands of souls. By another decision that the Conference of Ambassadors took on that same day, a special position in Albania was granted to Italy, to whom a number of rights were also conceded, violating the sovereignty of the Albanian state. According to this resolution, any violation of the boundaries of Albania, of its political and economic independence by any other power would be considered as a threat to the strategic security of Italy; and therefore, similarly, the three Great Powers, Great Britain, France and Japan, should recommend to the League of Nations that it entrust Italy with the task of restoring the territorial integrity and the political and economic independence of Albania.

The resolutions of the Conference of Ambassadors were approved by the League of Nations. The Albanian government was recognized by the Great Powers. Tirana issued the order to the military commanders of the frontiers to suspend military operations. Belgrade, however, not only did not stop its provocations, but it increased them still more. That is why, on November 20, 1921, the Cabinet of Pandeli Evangjeli signed the order to start the general operations under the command of Colonel Bajram Curri against the Yugoslav bands concentrated in the Puka region, and under the command of Colonel Achmed Zogu against the rebellion of Mirdita, which had not been entirely crushed as yet. Through the aid of the local population, the operations were successful. The international commission that arrived a few weeks later to define the Albanian-Yugoslav boundaries, ascertained the authority and the prestige the government of Tirana enjoyed even among

the unfortunate Albanian population of these frontier zones.

The relative stability that was achieved by these decisions and the operations at the frontiers of Albania furnished the opportunity for internal political struggles to erupt with unprecedented impetus within as well as outside the parliament. The "Sacred Union" created to resist the danger from abroad, was dissolved. With its dissolution the cabinet of Pandeli Evangjeli lost its support in the parliament. In order to avoid a government crisis, the Supreme Council of the Albanian State, at the proposal of the prime minister, decreed the suspension of the parliament until January 1922, thus affording to the government the privilege of carrying on without having to give account to anyone during that period of time. These acts gave great anxiety to the democratic forces of the country, because behind the prime minister Pandeli Evangjeli, they perceived the hand of a Buonapartist, as was said at this juncture, whose personal ambition for despotic domination began to be detected in every political circle of the country.

This was Ahmed *bey* Zogolli, or, as he had started to call himself, Achmed Zogu, native of Mat, the grandson of the powerful tribal chieftain Xhelal *pasha* Zogolli, who had aspired in his time, in the 1860's, with the help of the Serbians and the Russians, to become prince of an Albania, one-fourth the size of the Albania of today. Clever, but inordinately ambitious and an unscrupulous intriguer, Achmed Zogu had entered the political life of Albania when he was still very young, attracting the attention of the personalities of the time by his "devotion" towards the country, by the "inclination" he manifested for the advanced political ideas, and still more, by the considerable mercenary forces he had secured by the inherited right of chieftainship in Mat. He was about 24 years old when, accompanied by hundreds of mercenaries he went with great pomp to the Congress of Lushnje as delegate of Mat. By taking advantage of the crucial moment in which the historic Congress met, the cunning and astute chieftain of

Mat secured for himself the post of Minister of Home Affairs in the cabinet of Sulejman Delvina. Afterwards, by insinuating his mercenary forces in the ranks of the state gendarmery, Achmed Zogu secured a privileged position in the Council of Ministers and easily succeeded in imposing his will on his colleagues. In the grouping of the political forces that took place after the fall of the Delvina cabinet, Zogu, who had failed to be re-elected as minister, adhered to the Popular Party, keeping at the same time clandestine relations with the leaders of the opposition landlords' party. Acknowledging his rank of colonel, which the Austro-Hungarians had given him during the First World War as *honoris causa*, the prime minister appointed Achmed Zogu, who at the same time was deputy of Mat, commander of military operations against the Mirdita rebellion. Zogu utilized these operations to strengthen his personal military power.

The close collaboration of the prime minister with the powerful and ambitious Zogu, their pulling for a change in the policy of Albania in the direction of "rapprochement" with Yugoslavia and, along with this, their attempts to reform the cabinet by bringing in partisans of Zogu while the parliament was not in session, alarmed the democratic elements. On the strong urging of these elements, the Supreme Council, on December 6, 1921, decreed the dismissal of the Evangjeli cabinet and approved the formation of an anti-Zogist cabinet with Qazim Koculi as prime minister. From its first hours, however, it was evident that Zogu had secured in his hands the most important posts of the state administration; therefore the new cabinet, unable to withstand the actions of the adherents of Zogu, resigned after holding office only 20 hours. The new anti-Zogist cabinet under the presidency of Hasan Prishtina, formed on December 7, 1920, was likewise compelled to hand in its resignation after four days in order to avoid the break out of civil war, with which Zogu threatened the country. On December 10, 1921 the management of state affairs until the parliament assembled was taken over by

a cabinet of "technicians" headed by I. Kosturi. This political crisis was exploited with dexterity by Achmed Zogu. After he had suspended the military operations, he entered Tirana on December 14, 1921 at the head of his troops, proclaimed martial law, convoked immediately the parliament, and forced the Supreme Council and the Kosturi cabinet to resign. The new Supreme Council that was elected through his interference on December 24, 1921, entrusted Xhafer Ypi, an obedient instrument of Zogu, with the formation of the government. Zogu personally kept the portfolio of the ministry of interior. The Zogist clique thus came into power.

As minister of interior Zogu afterwards took a series of measures in order to strengthen his personal power. On the pretext of establishing order and internal tranquillity, he began to disarm the population, directing his zeal against the population hostile to him, without hesitating to persecute personalities of the opposition, including anti-Zogist ministers and deputies. Against the Zogist clique a strong opposition was formed inside and outside the parliament, which, with the aim of curtailing the *Buonapartist* aspirations of Achmed Zogu, demanded the convocation of the constituent assembly without delay. Deeming that the parliamentary battle, although directed with remarkable eloquence by Fan Noli, Stavro Vinjau and Luigj Gurakuqi, would not bring the desired results, a number of opponents of Zogu such as Bajram Curri, Elez Isufi, Aqif Biçakçiu, Zia Dibra and others decided to overthrow by force the Zogist clique. In March 1922, these forces of the opposition, joined by some adventurous elements that had entered into secret relations with certain foreign powers, passed to armed uprising with the slogan "For the convocation of the Constituent Assembly". On March 22, a part of these forces succeeded in entering the capital. But the movement, ill-organized, met with failure. Unreliable insurgent forces were swayed by the pressure of the British minister Ayres and departed from the capital. The uprising of March failed and then was crushed.

The repression of the uprising was followed by a ruthless terror on the part of the government against the forces of the opposition. The administration and the army were purged of anti-Zogist elements. Hundreds of persons were imprisoned. Zogu went so far as to subject to hard labour the peasant population of the district of Shijak that had supported the movement of March. Then he suspended the sessions of the parliament until the autumn of 1922. In order to deceive the public, in May the government promised that it would soon call a meeting of the constituent assembly, which continued to be the current main demand. In September the government placed before the parliament for its approval a provisional statute more complete than the one approved by the Congress of Lushnje, in which democratic liberties were formally confirmed. After this measure, on December 24, 1922 a new cabinet was formed with Achmed Zogu himself holding the posts of prime minister and minister of interior.

In spite of the police measures he took, Zogu did not succeed in breaking the opposition. The number of his adversaries increased steadily outside the parliament, and for the further reason that by abandoning the principles of the Popular Party, he divulged his underhanded connections with landlords and the assistance he gave to the feudal *beys*. More and more the political strife against the dictatorial aims of Zogu was fusing with the social strife against the stubborn reactionary sway of the feudalists. In this direction there was a reorganization of the forces of the opposition. The more advanced members of the Popular Party, under the head of Fan Noli, Stavro Vinjau, Luigj Gurakuqi and Sulejman Delvina, formed in the parliament a new opposition front, which was directed not only against the person of Zogu, but also at the overthrow of the authority of *beys* in general; in other words for the overthrow of the remnants of feudalism in Albania and for the establishment of a democratic power. Outside the parliament, too, after October 1922, a political organization was formed by the name of *Bashkimi* under the presidency of Avni Rustem,

a young teacher with democratic revolutionary tendencies. This organization was scoring speedy successes in the rank and file of the progressive youth of the country. The growth of the opposition was apparent in the great number of newspapers and periodicals, defending democratic principles, in the increase in social, cultural, anti-feudal societies and clubs, and most conspicuously, in the popular protestations, meetings and strikes directed against the policy of the Zogu government.

### THE DEMOCRATIC BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION OF JUNE 1924

Under the pressure of the democratic movement, the cabinet of Zogu was compelled to lay before the parliament in August 1923 the bill on the elections to the Constituent Assembly. The bill that provided indirect elections in two grades with schedules and lists, met with the vigorous resistance of the opposition and of democratic circles throughout the country. The opposition fought in the parliament in order to bring about important modifications of the bill, so that the voting should be direct and not in two steps, that in consideration of the high percentage of illiteracy, the votes should be cast by ballots and not by schedules, that the elections should develop according to the one-name principle and not by means of lists, that women should be given the right to vote, that on the day of elections both the army and the police force should be confined to their garrisons, and that political amnesty should be decreed for the participants of the March 1922 movement, in the first place for Bajram Curri, who had remained a fugitive in the mountains of north Albania. After prolonged and animated debates, the governmental majority in the parliament on September 28, 1923, passed the bill without taking into consideration the proposed amendments of the opposition.

After that, the parliament was dissolved, and in the whole country the electoral campaign began in an atmosphere of aggravated political strife.

In the course of the electoral campaign, the country was split into two great political camps: on one side rallied all the organizations friendly to the government, in fact organizations that were financed by land-holders of the country and by Zogu himself, who on this occasion was subsidized from abroad, by Italy and Yugoslavia; on the other side stood the numerous organizations of the opposition, which were, however, rent into factions and badly organized, and which came forward with an open, anti-feudal, anti-imperialist and anti-dictatorial programme, for a democratic regime, for a republican Albania. Never before had the Albanians taken part so enthusiastically and so totally in the political life of the country. The popular upsurge soon posed a threat to the landlord Zogist clique. In order to bring it to a halt, the government organs resorted to intimidation and terror. They did not hesitate to murder through ambush the courageous delegate electors who were resolved to cast their votes for the opposition. An important role in the campaign of threat on the part of the government was played especially by the police force through its open interference.

In an inflamed political atmosphere the elections were terminated on December 27, 1923. In spite of the falsifications, threats and direct interferences, the government bloc secured in the parliament only 40 of the 95 deputies that were elected to the Constituent Assembly. The opposition led by Fan Noli secured 35 seats. In the ranks of the opposition in the Assembly stood Avni Rustem, the president of the society *Bashkimi* (Union) elected by the votes of sympathizers of Bajram Curri. The remaining 20 seats represented the so-called "independents", who, after the elections, were united with the government bloc.

The results of the elections aroused indignation throughout the country. Consequently, the democratic, anti-feudal and anti-Zogist movement was not only not cowed by

the terror, but on the contrary it grew still stronger. From all quarters of the country, energetic protests were sent to the government against its falsifications and repressions during the elections. Political tension over the country rose to a still higher pitch after the opening of the Constituent Assembly (February 2, 1924), as the Prime Minister A. Zogu, in violation of the democratic rules, failed to hand in his resignation.

He was compelled to resign only after an abortive attempt on his life by a student on February 23, at the entrance of the parliament building, incitement to his act being attributed by the government to the opposition. After violent debates in the parliament, the government crisis was solved in favour of the land-holder clique. The new cabinet that was formed on March 3, 1924, had as Prime Minister Shefqet Verlaci, father-in-law of A. Zogu and at the same time one of the greatest feudal landowners of Albania. Zogu, who, in order to appease the opposition and to give satisfaction to the "independents" did not place himself in the cabinet, began behind the scenes to prepare to seize power by force. At the beginning of April, his agents laid ambush and murdered at Mamuras two American tourists who were travelling from Tirana to Shkodër. Exploiting this hideous assassination, which had deep repercussions within the country and abroad, he proclaimed martial law with the authorization of the government, and thus blockaded the capital with troops.

Under these circumstances the opposition was convinced that by constitutional means it was impossible to hinder the further strengthening of the Zogist and landlord dictatorship and to give to Albania a democratic regime. The argument gained increasing strength that the iron hand of the intriguer Zogu and of the landlord clique could be broken only by energetic action. The attack by the agents of Zogu in Tirana on April 20, 1924, on Avni Rustem, who died on the 22nd of the wounds he had received, filled the cup to the brim.

The assassination of Avni Rustem, renowned for the role he had played in the patriotic movement, for his democratic revolutionary ideas and for the signal service he had rendered to the country through the attempt on the life of the traitor Esad Pasha Toptani which he had made in Paris on June 13, 1920, aroused a wave of anger throughout Albania. In various parts of the country meetings of indignation and of protest were held. His assassination was considered by advanced circles as prelude to a terrorist offensive by the Zogist landholder clique against the democratic, anti-feudal movement. The opposition resolved to go into action.

The body of Avni Rustem was buried in Vlora on May 1, 1924, with the assistance of almost 10,000 peasants and citizens who had rallied from different regions of the country. After the funeral, the opposition members of the Assembly directed from Vlora an ultimatum to the Supreme Council in Tirana, in which they demanded punishment of the murderers of citizens and of foreign visitors, thus alluding openly to A. Zogu. As the government gave no reply, the 43 members of the Assembly gathered in Vlora, after having secured the vote of all the democratic circles and the support of the military commands of the country, decided to start the armed uprising. To direct it, a revolutionary administrative commission was formed with Fan Noli at its head.

The first signal of the armed uprising was given by Bajram Curri on May 25, 1924, who within a few days scored great successes in the districts of Kukës and Dibra. The resignation of the Verlaci cabinet on May 27, 1924, and the formation on that same day, of a new cabinet with Ilias Vrioni as prime minister, had no influence on the development of events. On May 31, the important garrisons of Shkodër and of Permet joined the uprising, accompanied by whole peasant masses. On June 2, most of the districts and cities of northern and southern Albania fell into the hands of the insurgents. The government and Zogist mercenary forces that were sent against the insurgents were shattered.

On June 10, the revolutionary forces entered the capital while the leaders of the Zogist landholding reaction fled abroad: Achmed Zogu and Ceno Kryeziu to Yugoslavia, Mufit Libohova and Koço Kota to Greece, and Shefqet Verlaci and Ilias Vrioni to Italy.

A democratic authority was established in Albania for the first time, bourgeois in nature but with revolutionary impulse, a shift of authority that triumphed with relative facility, thanks to the sympathy its democratic, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist programme had aroused among the popular masses.

On June 16, 1924, the democratic government was formed with Fan Noli as prime minister, and Sulejman Delvina, Luigj Gurakuqi, Stavro Vinjau, Kasem Qafzezi, Kasem Shalla, Qazim Koculi etc. as members of the cabinet. After three days the prime minister announced the programme of the government, in which the highest aspirations of the bourgeois-democratic revolution were formulated in a condensed manner: eradication of feudal system, definite establishment of democracy in Albania, liberation of the population, economic emancipation of the peasants, establishment of the enforcement of the law, real independence of the courts of justice, radical reform of obsolete legislation, change in the system of taxation, simplification of the state bureaucracy, re-organization of the budget, of administration, of education and so on. The government proclaimed the elections of December 27, 1923 null and void, and promised that new elections for the Constituent Assembly should be held, based on secret and direct voting, as soon as order and tranquillity should be established.

The Noli government started its activity with a series of encouraging measures. It decreed at once democratic liberties, warranting to the citizens and peasants freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and of organization; at its prosecution, the tribunal passed *in absentia* the sentence of death and the confiscation of their property on the most notorious leaders of the reaction who had fled the country; the Ministry of Agriculture started studying the

enactment of agrarian reforms in favour of the peasants. The government took steps for the normalization of relations with the neighbour states of Albania; it began to re-examine the commercial treaties unfavourable to Albania, signed by the government of Zogu, etc. etc.

However, in this revolutionary activity, the cabinet of Noli since its first days was encumbered by serious internal and external difficulties. After the triumph of the 10th of June, the forces that took part in the revolution ran into divergences and split into forces for and against social and political reforms. This was due to the fact that in the June movement, bourgeois and landlord forces had also taken part, which were concerned only in the overthrow of the personal, dictatorial power of Achmed Zogu. More specifically, military high officers, supported by conservative elements and with the approval, in part reticent and in part openly declared, of some of the members of the government, began to exert pressure on the government as a whole and on the prime minister, to postpone or cancel the execution of radical social, economic and political reforms. On the international scene, in 1925, there did not exist favourable conditions for a revolutionary movement, there did not exist any inducement for the Great Powers to give their support to this government that refused to grant concessions and privileges to foreign capitals, and that caused damage more especially to the interests of the Italian fascist government and of its rival, the Yugoslav reactionary government. For propaganda purposes nothing was speculated upon by these powers more than the initiative taken by the government of Noli to establish normal diplomatic relations between Albania and the Soviet Union. None of the Great Powers recognized *de jure* the government of Noli. Indisputably this was a great drawback for the Noli cabinet, and an encouraging factor for the malcontents within the country and the fugitives abroad.

Under the pressure of these factors, the leaders of the revolution began to temporize with the enforcement of the programme proclaimed in June, in order to avoid arousing

armed counteraction to the internal reaction, and in order to avoid the aggravation of the unfriendly relations with the Great Powers. The provocative accusation of "Bolshevik" tendencies influenced the members of the government to lag with the solution of one of the main problems of the revolution, agrarian reform, and to ask the Soviet minister plenipotentiary, who had arrived in Tirana to present his credentials, to leave Albania within 24 hours. The political opportunism which had seized the majority of the members of the government weakened to a considerable degree its revolutionary impetus.

This weakness was exploited by Zogist landlord reaction. Still, this reaction would have been unable to upset the situation without the help of foreign reactionary forces. Achmed Zogu carried on negotiations with the Yugoslav government for the organization of military intervention into Albania. Belgrade gave him effective political, military and financial aid. Within the territory of Yugoslavia he raised an army composed of mercenaries, which he strengthened by Russian whiteguard troops put at his disposal by Belgrade—a force of approximately 10,000 men, armed and equipped. Similar activity was carried on by his collaborators in Greece, where Mufit Libohova and Koço Kota recruited other military forces.

In face of the rapid counter-revolutionary preparation, the government of Noli did not take any military steps. While its attention was concentrated on the electoral campaign for the Constituent Assembly, on December 10, 1924 the internationalist forces commanded by Achmed Zogu crossed the Yugoslav-Albanian frontier in order to break the revolutionary authority of June before the elections had been terminated. On December 14 the mercenary forces of Mufid Libohova and Koço Kota; too, crossed the Greco-Albanian frontier.

Not meeting with any serious resistance, the interventionist forces of A. Zogu penetrated with facility into the depth of the Albanian territory. After two weeks of fighting, on account of the superiority in numbers, and taking

advantage of the lethargy that had enveloped the governmental apparatus of Noli, the counter-revolutionary forces entered Tirana on December 24. Fan Noli, together with the other members of the government and accompanied by hundreds of democratic and revolutionary elements, left Albania for foreign lands.

Some days after the fall of the capital, the Zogist landlord reaction, with the aid of imperialist powers, re-established its anti-popular authority throughout Albania.

## THE YEARS OF THE ZOGIST REPUBLIC

On December 24, 1924, with the entrance of interventionist forces into Tirana, the government of the great landholder Iljas Vrioni, which had been overthrown by the bourgeois-democratic revolution, formally came back to power. In reality full power was held by Achmed Zogu, the principal organizer of the counter-revolution, who officially held the office of commander of the armed forces. By means of the gesture, the dictator endeavoured to demonstrate that he respected the constitutional rules. A few days later, the cabinet of Vrioni resigned. On January 6, 1925 the new cabinet was formed under the presidency of Achmed Zogu, who continued to hold at the same time the office of commander of the armed forces. In his government, besides Zogu who held also the post of minister for home affairs, were only two other ministers, the other two leaders of the counter-revolution, Mufid Libohova, who held three ministries, and Koço Kota, an emissary of the dictator, a person without personality.

By concentrating almost the entire power in his own hands, Zogu continued the military operations in order to extirpate everywhere the democratic spirit and to show the teeth of his dictatorial authority. He divided Albania into several military zones, putting at the head of each, as

omnipotent commanders, tribal chieftains (*bayraktars*) devoid of all principles of civilized life. Their mercenary bands proclaimed martial law. Under the pretext of disarming the population that had helped the revolution, the martial law continued for a long time. The punitive operations lasted several months consecutively. Hundreds of persons were imprisoned or interned. Court-martials sentenced to death a considerable number of peasants who had taken part in the June revolution. In villages and cities bands of mercenaries ransacked and looted the homes of those who had nothing to do with the events. One of the particular concerns of the mercenary commandants was the depredation of the population by means of fines and bribes.

Zogu not only annulled the democratic liberties that had been won by the revolution of June, but he suppressed the former limited liberties, too. Political organizations and cultural and art clubs that had existed formerly, were closed down. It was likewise forbidden to create new political organizations. Police censorship was placed not only on the Albanian press and foreign publications that entered into Albania but also on private correspondence.

After he had grasped firmly in his own hands the political power, Zogu turned his attention to the form of the regime, and, in connection with this, to the drafting of the constitution that had remained unsettled. At this occurrence, he preferred, for convenience, the republican regime. At his dictate, the remnants of the Constituent Assembly elected at the end of 1923, were called to meet in Tirana. This crippled Assembly, on January 21, 1925, proclaimed the Albanian Republic, and ten days later, on January 31, 1925, Achmed Zogu as its president. The constitution was approved definitively on March 2, 1925.

Full of democratic phraseology, the constitution proclaimed Albania a parliamentary republic, responsible to the will of the people. But behind the democratic phraseology the dictatorial rule of Zogu and the power of the landholding *beys*, of the reactionary tribal chieftains and of con-

servative bourgeoisie lay hidden. According to the constitution, the president of the Republic, that is to say Zogu, was to be at the same time president of the Council of Ministers and commander-in-chief of the army. The legislative power was to be exercised by the parliament composed of two chambers, the senate and the chamber of deputies. The constitution conferred on the president of the Republic unlimited power, among them the right to appoint and to dismiss arbitrarily ministers, higher functionaries, officers, etc. In case the parliament modified the bills presented by Zogu as president of the Council of Ministers, Zogu as President of the Republic had the right to veto the acts passed by the parliament.

Even after he had been proclaimed President of the Republic, Zogu concentrated in the hands of the leaders of the reaction, such as Mufid *bey* Libohova, Ceno *bek* Kryeziu, Koço Kota, the government which he reformed on February 1, 1925. He continued to strengthen the gendarmery, the organizing of which he entrusted in September to a group of British instructing officers, led by General Sir Jocelyn Percy. At the same time he endeavoured more and more to draw around him the reactionary chieftains of the highlands, to whom, at a "congress" convoked by him in June, he promised special political privileges, and through military grades he conferred on them, he assured monthly subsidies in the form of wages. In the framework of the policy of terror against democratic elements, his agents assassinated on March 2, 1925 in the streets of Bari in Italy Luigj Gurakuqi, one of the most illustrious leaders of the Albanian nationalist-democratic movement. Four weeks later, on March 29, 1925 the gendarmery forces of Zogu killed in an encounter in Dragobi one of the most popular leaders of the progressive movement of liberation, Bajram Curri, who fought heroically till the end of his life. Of the multifarious acts of terror which Zogu committed, the assassination of these two highly honoured personalities in Albanian political life left the ugliest impression. Zogu's anti-democratic policy in home affairs was matched by his

capitulating attitude towards the Great Powers. This was undoubtedly the consequence of the obligations he had assumed to the imperialist powers for their help during the counter-revolution in December 1924. The policy he adopted in his dealings with them was that of the "open door" in economic as well as political spheres. As a result of this policy, it can be asserted that the years 1925-1928 represent in the history of Albania the years of assault and of capture, on the part of international imperialist capital, of the most important levers of the economy of this backward country. The preferred domain of concessions demanded by foreign capitalist companies was the exploitation of mines. Two powerful British companies took in concession 220,000 hectares of land for prospecting purposes; one of the biggest capitalist companies of the U.S.A., the Standard Oil Company of New York, took in concession 80,000 hectares of land for prospecting for petroleum and various minerals such as iron, mercury, copper and sulfur. The Italian capitalist corporations AIPA, SIMSA, SIEMA received likewise the right to prospect and to exploit the underground riches of Albania, her petroleum, asphalt, coal, etc. One Yugoslav company received in concession the exploitation of copper in the zone of Puka. Through agreements reached between these foreign capitalist companies and the Zogist Albanian government, foreign capitalists took in concession 23 per cent of the territory of Albania. The extent of the land that Albanian capitalists took over for prospecting and exploitation during that same period was equal to 0.03 per cent of the territory of Albania, one-745th the land area taken in concession by foreign companies.

Along with the concessions for the exploitation of mines, the foreign capitalists likewise grabbed concessions in agriculture and industry. All these concessions, with special privileges, were granted to foreign corporations. In general the Albanian state did not exercise any control over the economic and administrative management of these corporations. For the military and financial aid he had received from Belgrade, Zogu handed to Yugoslavia a slice of Al-



banian territory, which injured the political boundaries of Albania won through the Albanian patriots' numerous and strenuous struggles. The Conference of Ambassadors in Paris on the League of Nations' instruction in 1921, as it has been stated, had set, though to the disfavour of Albania, the final Albano-Yugoslav boundary. At that time, Belgrade had protested against this solution, demanding the inclusion, within the confines of Yugoslavia, of Vermosh and of St. Naum, which had been allotted to Albania. In spite of the reiterated Yugoslav demands, the Conference of Ambassadors, relying on the report of the special commission entrusted by it for investigations on the spot, by the decision it took in September 1923, confirmed its former decision. After further persistent demands by Belgrade, in May 1924, the Conference of Ambassadors passed the resolution to reject the Yugoslav claims on Vermosh, which it re-allotted to Albania, whereas the question of St. Naum was shelved by it for later reconsideration. This question was brought before the League of Nations for discussion in September of that year. Considering the defence of the inviolability of the frontiers as the supreme duty of each citizen, the prime minister Fan Noli, accompanied by Bajram Curri and Luigj Gurakuqi, in spite of the not altogether propitious internal conditions of the revolutionary government of June, went to Geneva, and there by a brilliant speech in defence of the Albanian question, contributed in the positive resolution which the League of Nations took leaving St. Naum within the boundaries of Albania.

Immediately after he had retaken power, A. Zogu granted St. Naum to Yugoslavia. This cession of territory aroused a general indignation in Albania. Achmed Zogu was guilty in the eyes of the Albanian people of high treason against Albania.

The strong connections of Zogu with Belgrade which led to the submission of Albania to Yugoslavia did not leave indifferent fascist Italy, which had started to develop an active policy in the Mediterranean. Behind Yugoslavia stood France, which Mussolini at that time considered the

greatest rival of imperialist Italy. The fascist dictator could not tolerate France's stretching its tentacles into Albania under the very nose of Rome. For Great Britain this was an excellent chance to exercise its policy of balance of powers in the zone of southeast Europe by encouraging Italy to extend its influence in Albania at the expense of Yugoslav interest, and indirectly at the expense of the French. Great Britain had vast opportunities in this direction, because Zogu preferred the advice of London to that of all other Great Powers. From January 30, 1923, Zogu tried to appease Mussolini, informing him that he deemed it convenient to strengthen the friendly relations between Albania and Italy. In circumstances Zogu was discouraged from cultivating further close relations with Belgrade, for the reason, too, that these relations had discredited him as a tool of Yugoslavia, odious in the Albanian mind, because this tool oppressed the million Albanians of Kossovo with ruthless tyranny, and also because it continued to foster, as always, chauvinist aspirations at the expense of Albania. Italy promised the dictator of Tirana more substantial financial and political aid than Yugoslavia. Mussolini promised, among other things, that he would suspend the support Rome gave to Albanian political exiles, unreconcilable rivals of Zogu, on condition that he would detach himself from Belgrade.

The separation took place without fanfare in the spring of 1925. The intermediary for the approach was Great Britain. The first act of the rapprochement was the concession for the creation of the National Bank of Albania (Banca Nazionale d'Albania).

Albania did not possess as yet a national coinage, unified monetary system and no regular system of credit. From 1912, and particularly from 1920, numerous demands had been presented to the Albanian government by groups of wealthy Albanians and by foreign financial groups for the creation of a bank of emission and of credit in Albania. These demands had not been taken into consideration, although they had contained favourable conditions. Zogu,

on the contrary, authorized the minister of finance Mufid *bey* Libohova to sign on March 25, 1925 with a group of Italian financiers representing the biggest Italian banks, a convention by which the financiers' group received a concession to found the National Bank of Albania as a bank of emission and credit with much more onerous conditions than the former offers. According to the agreement, the Albanian citizens could subscribe not more than 49 per cent of the shares, while foreign citizens must subscribe not less than 51 per cent. Besides, by a secret agreement concluded between the minister of finance Mufid *bey* Libohova and the representative of the Italian group of financiers, Mario Alberti, for the subscription of the Albanian shares a very short term was fixed, which was never published anyway. After this term had elapsed, the shares that pertained to Albania were to be subscribed by Italian citizens. At the expiration of the term, it turned out that three landowner *beys* had alone subscribed 25 per cent of the shares, which after a few years likewise were acquired by the great banks of Italy. A limited part of the shares were bought by Swiss, Belgian, and Yugoslav capitalist corporations.

The incorporation of the bank and the manner in which it was executed caused a political scandal in Albania. The government was blamed of corruption and of new treason. In order to evade being compromised by this scandal, A. Zogu could find no other way than to lay the whole burden of the responsibility on the minister of finance, Mufid *bey* Libohova. The special commission that was entrusted by the parliament to investigate and conduct a hearing against the minister of finance suspended activity as soon as it became apparent that the threads of corruption led into the presidential palace. Mufid *bey* Libohova, thoroughly discredited, was obliged to retire from the government and from political life. In this connection it is true that Zogu did not succeed in appeasing the agitated public opinion, but he achieved another success: he eliminated one of his closest but most pretentious collaborators, with whom he was no

longer obliged to share the power that had been won by them conjointly. As for the convention, this remained unimpaired. After it had been ratified by the parliament, the so-called National Bank of Albania was constituted in Rome on September 2, 1925.

At the same time the Zogist government signed a contract with another group of financiers for a loan of 70.5 million gold francs payable in yearly instalments with reimbursement term of forty years at a yearly interest of 7½ per cent. The loan, destined for the economic development of Albania, was given in concession, by a convention, to an Italian concern, especially created for this purpose by the Italian group of financiers, under the name of SVEA "Società per lo Sviluppo Economico dell'Albania" (The Company for Economic Development of Albania). As was stated in the contract, as security for this loan the government of Tirana pawned to this company (SVEA) the revenues from customs duties and the Albanian state monopolies up to the sum of 8.5 million gold francs a year, and promised not to introduce for forty years any changes in the customs tariffs without previous understanding with the alien company.

These two conventions marked the beginning of the unrestrained penetration of Italian capital into Albania and led to the speedy economic and political submission of the Albanian state to the Italian fascist state. The loan earmarked for the economic development of Albania was invested in unproductive projects — for the construction of prisons and government palaces, including Zogu's palace, for the construction of strategic roads that were to serve later on for the military needs of Italy. For the improvements in the backward agriculture, instead of 31.2 million gold francs provided for in the convention, only 2.5 million gold francs were spent. Apart from that, scarcely before two years had elapsed, playing on the financial difficulties in which the Albanian state found itself at the time of the payment of the first instalment, Mussolini interfered financially and succeeded in exchanging the loan contracted by

Albania with the Italian group of financiers into a loan from the fascist imperial state.

The policy of submission to fascist Italy aroused among the Albanian people as much resentment as submission to chauvinist Yugoslavia. But the blow given by Zogu during the counter-revolution had so utterly paralysed all the democratic organizations, and his police regime was so much tightened, that it had become difficult, if not impossible, to raise any open protest. Only the patriotic and democratic Albanians who were in exile raised their voice of protest, voice that at that period of political stability and of revolutionary ebb throughout Europe, was lost in the wilderness. Still, within Albania as well as abroad, attempts were made to organize an active resistance. Inside Albania these efforts met with no success. In exile, however, certain relative results were obtained. After Mussolini had rendered the residence in Italy difficult and even impossible, the Albanian refugees who had left Albania in December 1924 crossed over to Austria. The conference held by them in Vienna on March 25, 1925 founded the National Revolutionary Committee, shortened KONARE, under the head of Fan Noli, which was to conduct the popular resistance against the domination of Zogu for the liberation of Albania from the yoke of feudal *bey*s and of imperialist states, for the establishment of a truly republican regime and for the introduction of agrarian reforms. The KONARE publicly condemned the cession of St. Naum to Yugoslavia, as well as the enslaving conventions of March in favour of Italy. But before long, right-wing elements, Q. Koculi, A. Këlcyra, R. Mitrovica, etc., who did not agree with the accentuated democratic revolutionary character of KONARE but wanted the resistance limited to the overthrow of Zogu, forsook it and formed a separate organization with the name of "Bashkimi Kombëtar" (National Union). Differently from KONARE which continued to guard its political independence and its revolutionary spirit, the "Bashkimi Kombëtar" began to incline towards Yugoslavia, whose re-

lations with Zogu deteriorated apace, and towards France whose relations with Italy became steadily worse.

In 1926 Zogu undertook further steps of rapprochement with Italy. In June of that year, as the parliament of Belgrade refused to ratify the Nettune Convention concluded between Italy and Yugoslavia, which guaranteed the cultural rights of Slavs in Italy and those of Italians in Yugoslavia, Mussolini reacted by demanding that Zogu should sign a political and military pact between Italy and Albania. While the negotiations between Rome and Tirana were being carried on, Belgrade attempted to overthrow the Albanian president by means of an internal insurrection. Due to the activity undertaken by the political emigrants, who, as Zogu in 1924, had found asylum in Yugoslavia and exploited the discontent of the popular masses, on November 20, 1926, an armed insurrection erupted in the district of Dukagjini, northern Albania. Zogu suppressed the insurrection. The anxiety caused to Zogu by the insurrection was so great that he renounced the reservations he had maintained towards Mussolini up to then and, on November 27, 1926, signed for a period of five years "The Italo-Albanian Pact of Friendship and Security", or, as it is otherwise called, "The First Pact of Tirana", according to which Italy undertook to protect the political, juridical, and territorial *status quo* of Albania.

It was evident that the Pact of Tirana was directed against Belgrade, as it made clear to Yugoslavia that any attempt to cause a change in the political condition inside Albania would bring it face to face with Italy. This pact was a victory for Mussolini, because it shut the door to Yugoslavia for any interference in Albania, and attached Zogu to Rome as a hanged man is attached to the noose. "Independent" Albania in this manner entered under the protectorate of Italy. "The Albanian national question" was brought once again onto the agenda. The Albanian democratic revolutionaries undertook the task of fighting hence not only for the popular revolution, but also for the national liberation of the country from the foreign protec-

torate sanctioned by Zogu. This programme was adopted by KONARE in the spring of 1927, which on this occasion was reorganized under the name of "The Committee of National Liberation" with its seat in Geneva.

The Pact of Tirana, which marked the failure of the Yugoslav policy towards Albania, on December 8, 1926 caused a government crisis in Belgrade. The new Yugoslav government that came to power adopted a strong policy against Albania and Italy, getting closer, all the while, to France. In June 1927 the further aggravation of the relations led to the rupture for one month of diplomatic relations between Albania and Yugoslavia.

The reason for the rupture was the arrest by the police authorities of Tirana of an employee of Albanian citizenship in the service of the Yugoslav Legation, accused of espionage activity. In response to the efforts of Yugoslavia to organize acts of subversion in Albania, Zogu counteracted by assassinating, in Prague, in October, his brother-in-law *Ceno bek Kryeziu*, Minister of Albania to Czechoslovakia, and one of the leaders of the counter-revolution who was in clandestine contact with the Yugoslav government. In the meanwhile the Italo-Yugoslav and Italo-French relations deteriorated to the extent that France and Yugoslavia, in order to forestall the menace of Mussolini's policy, on November 11, 1927, signed a treaty of friendship which in other words was a pact of alliance directed against Rome. Mussolini responded by signing with Zogu on November 22, 1927 the Second Pact of Tirana, called the Pact of Defensive Alliance, for a period of twenty years. According to the clauses of the pact the two parties undertook to protect each other from any threat or assault from abroad, putting at each other's disposal their resources.

In the circumstances when the most important levers of the economy of Albania had fallen into the hands of Italian capitalist concerns, when the expenses for the armaments and military equipment of Albania were defrayed by the government of Rome, when at the head of the Albanian army Italian fascist instructor-officers were placed, when

the important naval base of Vlora was open to the Italian navy — the two pacts of Tirana did nothing other than complete the political submission of Zogist Albania to fascist Italy.

## ALBANIA — ZOGIST MONARCHY

These extremely close relations with Italy and the important economic and political concessions that had been accorded to Mussolini gave Achmed Zogu the opportunity to realize one of the most audacious ambitions that could be fostered in the 20th century, the ambition to become king.

By becoming monarch Zogu aimed at securing his absolute power for an indefinite time, at removing from the minds of his partners and of the masses of the population all illusions that with the termination of the presidential term, he would be replaced by another president of the republic, and at feeling himself under no obligation to give account to anyone on his political activity. Mussolini gave his support without any hesitation for the realization of this aspiration, because he was interested in consolidating the power of Zogu, in whom he perceived the warrant for the exploitation without any hindrance the concessions and the privileges that he had secured and that he hoped to secure in the future in accordance with his Caesar-like ambition. Great Britain, to which Zogu addressed himself, as always, for consultations, fostered the aspiration of this ambitious tribal chieftain, who dreamed of becoming cousin of the "pure blood" monarchs of Europe and the world.

Zogu paved in time and with great care the way that was to lead him to his coronation as king, in order to eliminate the obstructions that were to be expected not only from the masses of the population imbued with republican ideas, but also from his closest collaborators with

whom he had divided up to then in a certain measure the political power, and who, as he believed, would not stand aloof without counteracting in face of the realization of his unrestrained absolutism. After he had banished from political life by parliamentary impeachment the powerful feudal Mufid bey Libohova, whom through his private physician he later succeeded in secretly poisoning; and after he had assassinated his brother-in-law, the equally powerful feudalist Ceno bek Kryeziu, Zogu organized in Tirana itself an attempt to assassinate his ex-father-in-law, the still more powerful Shefqet bey Verlaci (which attempt however failed) and forced him to depart from Albania temporarily and to withdraw from political life. Whereas he obliged Eshref Frashëri, the president of the parliament, through probe into his presumed abuses, to abandon political life.

In June 1928 Zogu, as President of the Republic, sanctioned the resolution of the parliament for a general revision of the constitution and proclaimed the dissolution of the two legislative chambers and the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. The elections of the members of the Assembly took place on August 17, 1928 under the open control of the police force. Only after the elections had terminated was the public informed indirectly of the change in the form of the regime. Thus several days after the Constituent Assembly had been declared open, on September 1, 1928, was Albania proclaimed a monarchy and Achmed Zogu King of the Albanians, and not of Albania, under the name of Zogu I. On September 5, 1928, the first cabinet of monarchical Albania was formed with Koço Kota as prime minister.

After he had achieved his highest ambition, Zogu could not escape taking into consideration the increasing resentment of the masses of the population for all the anti-national and anti-popular policy pursued by him up to then to the exclusive benefit of his personal autocratic authority, the resentment of the remnants of feudal landowners and of the fascist Italian imperialists. He could not escape

taking into consideration the fact that the extensive landed estates, which he had protected, were one of the sources of the misfortune of the masses of the peasantry, that the class of landlords, entirely parasitic *beys*, on which he had relied, had discredited his regime, that his economic policy in favour of foreign capital had engendered a suffocating atmosphere for the new Albanian bourgeoisie, the discontent of which fused with that of the popular masses, and especially with that of the peasantry, might put in danger his royal crown. At the advice of his friends within and outside the country, in the message he addressed on December 5, 1928 to the first parliament of the monarchy, Zogu inaugurated a new course in his home policy, the policy of the so-called "modern and occidental reforms". He pledged to give to the land a new system of laws after the model of the civilized states of Europe, and that he would enforce for the benefit of the peasantry the agrarian reform.

It was a demagogical game, sufficiently attractive, that aimed at creating an illusion among the dissatisfied strata of the population of the country. His courtiers proclaimed Zogu the "reformer king". Before long competent committees, too, were created for the elaboration of the projects of the reforms. On April 1, 1929 the new civil code came in force, based on the principle of the bourgeois laws, that supplanted the Ottoman *mexhele*. In the year 1930 a new penal law was introduced and in 1931 the commercial law drafted after the codes of laws of capitalist states of Europe. Meanwhile changes were introduced in the financial legislation and in the customs duties, which had the welfare of the bourgeoisie of the country in view. Thus the regime of Zogu was proceeding on the way of making of Albania a fully bourgeois state. The reforms, however, did not go any further. The committee of agrarian reforms began its work; from Italy a specialist on the matter was called in for investigations in the country; the bill elaborated by the government received the approval of the parliament, and on May 3, 1930 the law on agrarian reform was decreed by Zogu. But the law, trumpeted with as much clamour by

the official press as one of the most radical reforms of the Zogist regime, that was to inter once and for all the remnants of feudalism in Albania, besides being superficial and defective, found no application whatsoever as far as the great landholders were concerned. Postponed from year to year, at last the law on agrarian reforms fell into oblivion. The agrarian reform was applied only on a limited area — altogether 4,698 hectares or about 11,600 acres of the lands belonging to the state, and 3,411 hectares or about 8,500 acres of the estates of private landholders, which were insignificant compared to the 60,640 hectares or about 130,000 acres which were state property, and to over 103,000 or about 255,000 acres which were private property. Soon it was realized that in this great demagogic manoeuvre, too, Zogu aimed at using the agrarian reform as a means of pressure on various landowner *beys*, who were his opponents.

As far as the policy of the "open door" to foreign capital was concerned, Zogu did not introduce any substantial change in this field. The only change that can be pointed out is the fact that after the proclamation of the monarchy the concessions decreed by Zogu's government were allotted exclusively to the Italian imperialist capital.

All the clamour about the so-called reforms did not create illusions of long duration in Albania. As long as powerful landlords continued to exert their domination unhampered and with traditional harshness, the masses of the peasantry could not help raising their voice of protest against the regime that continued to protect the feudal oppression. Particularly resounding was the notorious conflict of the peasants of Goritza with the rapacious *bey* Maliq Frashëri, who through the help of the local government authorities and exactly a few months after the law on agrarian reform had been promulgated, arbitrarily appropriated their lands and goods. Nor could the masses of workmen help charging the Zogu regime with the responsibility for the colonial exploitation at the hands of Italian capitalist companies, for the low wages they were receiving, for the intolerable dis-

crimination which they suffered in their home, in Albania, from alien patrons. The submission of "independent" Albania to Mussolini's Italy was so apparent that patriotic and democratic elements clearly foresaw the catastrophe to which the dictatorial sovereign was driving their country.

As a consequence of social and political aversion, the first attempts were undertaken during these years for an active resistance against the Zogu regime. It is exactly at this period that in Albania the first Communist-organized nuclei were created. In Korça, in 1930, the first Communist group was formed, which adopted, though in a not altogether crystallized form, the programme of the Third Communist International, and which endeavoured to penetrate, not without success, into the workers' professional organizations. Before a year had elapsed, nuclei of communist revolutionary organizations were created in other cities, too, in Tirana, Vlora, Elbasan and elsewhere. In 1931 the communist group in Korça made publicly known its underground existence, by affixing on the walls of the city placards with the slogans "Down with capitalism!", "Long live communism!"

The bourgeois anti-Zogist elements, too, endeavoured to reorganize themselves for the overthrow of the Zogist regime. Their organization created in the year 1930 had, however, more or less a plotters' character. Its leaders, in conjunction with the *Bashkimi Kombëtar* (National Union) which in exile did not have confidence in the internal revolutionary forces, but relied for any hope of success on foreign support, particularly on Yugoslavia. After the failure of the attempt on Zogu's life, that had been organized by the *Bashkimi Kombëtar* in 1931 during his stay in Vienna where he had gone for medical treatment, the leaders of the organization of Vlora solicited the effective aid of Yugoslavia in order to start an armed surprise action. The plan of the revolt, however, was frustrated, because in the summer of 1932, Zogu tracked down the organization of Vlora and by means of a great number of arrests, smothered it completely.

In the years that followed, the social and economic condition of Albania continually deteriorated. The general economic crisis, which had laid hold of the whole world since 1929, did not leave unharassed this small, backward, agrarian country. Moreover, here the crisis had even more devastating effects than in other small countries. The crisis reached its culmination in Albania not in 1932, as in other countries, but in 1934. As everywhere else, here too the economic crisis manifested itself in the catastrophic fall in purchasing power, which in turn was expressed in the extraordinary fall in prices. In comparison to 1928 (=100 per cent), the prices of articles of consumption in 1930 were approximately 80 per cent; in 1932 they sank to 69 per cent; whereas in 1934 they went down to 38 per cent. The slump in prices led to still greater depression in the worth of exported goods. As against 1928, their worth sank in 1930 to 83 per cent, in 1932 to 30 per cent, whereas in 1934 to even less than 29 per cent. As had been the case in the past, the value of export goods was always several times below that of imported merchandise. In 1928 exports represented 46.4 per cent of the value of imports; in 1930 — 37.2 per cent, in 1932 — 19.7 per cent, in 1934 — 35 per cent of the import value. This chronic unfavourable trade balance was naturally also reflected in the balance of payments. From 1920 to 1934, the total value of imported goods reached 255.9 million gold francs, whereas that of exports was 104.3 millions, consequently there was a trade deficit of 151.6 million gold francs. The sums of money sent by the Albanian exiles reduced only in limited measure the outgo of foreign currencies in gold and silver, with which Albania was obliged to cover its trade deficit. This deficit helped to no other end but to drain off wholesale the monetary wealth of Albania, and to exhaust the purchasing power of the population. In the first years of the world economic crisis the credits the Albanian state obtained from Italy covered to a certain degree the deficit of the balance of payments. After the SVEA loan, which created for a number of years in the field of constructions the prospect of

labour for several thousands of manual labourers, and before this loan had been entirely spent, Zogu signed in Rome in 1931 an agreement for a loan of 100 million gold francs, which was to be paid in instalments of 10 million gold francs each year. However, while the monarchy hoped that this considerable loan would deliver it for at least 10 years from the anxieties caused by the chronic deficit of the state budget and of the balance of payments, fascist Mussolini used this agreement as a means of pressure and of blackmail on the Albanian state in general and on Zogu in particular. A year later, in 1932, exploiting the fact that Zogu was again unable to repay the first instalment of the SVEA loan, Mussolini imposed as a condition for a new delay of the term of payment that a customs union between Albania and Italy should be established.

Zogu found himself thus unexpectedly between the devil and the deep sea. The customs union would mean the unhampered penetration into Albania of Italian industrial goods, consequently the certain ruin of the Albanian small producers, harassed by the economic crisis, the incurable impoverishment of the popular economy of the country and the ultimate conjunction of this backward economy with the Italian economy. It would mean, on the other hand, the disappearance from the Albanian state budget of the important revenues from the Italo-Albanian customs, consequently the further deterioration of the financial situation of the Zogu government, and therefore its full dependence on the financial help in the form of credits from the Italian fascist government. The refusal of the demands of Mussolini would bring likewise a situation devoid of any positive perspectives. It would bring about the counteraction of the fascist dictator, who had hitched by this time the Albanian monarch to his economic and political chariot, and consequently great difficulties would be created for Albania, and might even cause troubles to the royal regime.

Zogu tried to resist by hinting to Mussolini that in case Rome sought to drive its dagger deeper into the flesh of Albania, he would be obliged to reconsider his foreign pol-

icy. As a warning of this radical step, in autumn, four Italian vocational schools opened by Rome in Albania were nationalized. Mussolini responded by suspending on April 1, 1933, at the beginning of the Albanian financial year, the credit of 100 million which he had granted to Albania. Zogu attempted to resist further. He suspended the private schools, which step was a blow at the schools that were administered by Albanian Catholic clergy with subsidies from Rome, and refused to modify the agreement with Italy for the Italian military instructors, not few in number, headed by the fascist general Alberto Pariani, to remain any longer in Albania for the instruction of the Albanian army.

The measures undertaken by Zogu — the nationalization of foreign schools and the expulsion of the Italian military mission, which hinted at a return of his capitulating policy up to then, were received favourably by the Albanian public. But soon it became evident that by his policy of submission to Mussolini, which he had practised since the year 1925, Zogu had surrendered all arms of resistance. The suspension of the loan created for the Albanian government an extremely difficult financial situation. All the investments were interrupted. Its immediate effect was the threatening increase in the number of unemployed labourers. The state treasury was depleted to such an extent that the government was unable to defray even the payment of the wages of the administrative personnel. State officials and teachers in the provinces did not receive their wages for from 7 to 10 months, those in the capital up to 4 months. For the purpose of aggravating still more the economic and financial uneasiness that had befallen Albania, the National Bank, in the hands of Italian managers, kept on restricting the paper currency, thus creating for the country an artificial monetary deflation at a time when there were reserves in gold, and when other countries, in order to alleviate the effects of the economic crisis, had even passed to inflation. Consequently, Albania was stricken by a poverty unseen up to that time. The lack of money in circulation led to a

catastrophic fall in the prices of agricultural products, and to the economic ruin of the peasantry.

The masses of the population faced with self-sacrifice this situation of extreme privation. However, Zogu, who did not consider or desire to aggravate and still less to break off the relations with Italy, undertook steps over and over again to re-establish the former relations with Rome. Mussolini, in an undoubtedly stronger position, increased his claims. Through a note couched in categorical terms he delivered to Zogu a series of new and onerous demands, such as denunciation by Albania of all the trade treaties concluded with other states, the preliminary approval by Rome for all the trade treaties that Tirana signed in the future with other states, departure from Albania of all British officers that served in the Albanian gendarmery as inspectors and their substitution by Italian officers, introduction of Italian as required language in all the schools of the country, appointment to the state administration only of officials who had been graduated in Italy, and so on.

Zogu, who rejected these demands, in the hope that he could exert pressure on Mussolini, undertook steps in order to get closer to France, Italy's rival, demanding the conclusion of a friendly alliance and above all the granting of a state loan in order to forestall the difficult financial situation. In May 1934, Paris responded by presenting, as condition for an eventual rapprochement, a series of demands as enslaving as those of Rome. To these steps, however, Mussolini retorted by setting his navy in action. On June 22, 1934, twenty-two Italian warships approached the port of Durrës without any previous notice, and without asking for permission dropped anchor in the port. In face of this open threat, Zogu, at the advice of the British government, capitulated, demanding as a satisfaction that the negotiations for a reapprach should begin only after the departure of the Italian war fleet from the Albanian shores. Realizing the delicate situation in which Zogu found himself faced with the home public opinion, Mussolini renounced some of his exaggerated demands such as the



customs union and the denunciation of trade treaties concluded between Albania and other countries. The other conditions were accepted by Zogu, and thus the two states came once again closer to each other without great difficulty. This rapprochement marked the complete submission of Albania to fascist Italy.

The rapprochement brought no amelioration in the deplorable economic condition of the country. The labourer and peasant masses could not avoid falling into poverty and misery. The state continued to remain short of money. As the Italian "aid" now came in a dribble, the budgetary situation remained in accentuated deficit. In 1935 the general economic situation was as lamentable as in 1934. In face of the general misery which was aggravated by the calamity of famine caused by an extraordinary drought, the Zogu government took no serious measures. In the financial year 1934-1935, too, the state budget continued to maintain its previous anti-popular character. No change was introduced in the fiscal system for the alleviation of the burden of the peasantry. As far as the expenditure is concerned, 41.37 per cent of it was allotted to the armed forces, and 18.7 per cent to the Ministry of Finance, which included the expenses of the royal court. While the royal court that year spent 3.7 per cent of the budget, the expenditure of the Ministry of National Economy, which was responsible for the management of the agricultural as well as the industrial economy, hardly attained 2.4 per cent of the budget.

The general misery and above all the capitulation of the Zogu government to Italy, gave still greater impetus to the popular opposition, which seemed to have attended with vigilance during the years of tension in the Italo-Albanian relations. The year 1935 marked a rapid growth in the labour and communist movement. However this movement continued to develop secretly and under the persecution of political police. In anti-Zogist circles the problem of an armed revolt was once again placed on the agenda for the overthrow of the autocratic monarch, who through his policy of capitulation achieved nothing other than to pave



Ali Kelmendi (1897-1939),  
an early Albanian revolutionary Communist

the way for the not distant conquest of Albania by fascist Italy. The "secret organization" created by military men and civilians with bourgeois-democratic tendencies who had participated in the June insurrection, undertook the task of organizing the armed revolt without recourse to foreigners and on a more extensive basis than the movement of 1932. The Albanian Communists came to be informed of these preparations; without engaging themselves as an organization, they decided to support individually the anti-Zogist movement, although they held considerable reservations as to the plotting character of the "secret organization" and to its inadequate preparations in connection with the launching of the armed revolt. The ideologically better prepared Albanian Communists Ali Kelmendi, Riza Cerova and some others considered as difficult the success of the armed revolt if the masses of the peasantry were not at-

tracted into its orbit, and if these masses were not politically enlightened, which considerations were incompatible with the plotting character of the "secret organization". Still, the Communists did a great deal of work in support of the insurrection and proved themselves to be its most untiring and most intrepid militants. On the other hand, the leaders of the "secret organization", in the interest of the expansion of the insurrectional front, accepted easily the collaboration of anti-Zogist landholding *beys*, whose participation weakened, not strengthened, the democratic character of the movement.

It was decided that the armed revolt should break out in various points of the country simultaneously on August 15, 1935, in order to bewilder the Zogist gendarmery and to facilitate the rapid expansion of the revolt. However, one day prior to the fixed date, on August 14, 1935, the leaders of the local "secret organization" of Fier, doubting that they had been detected by the police, started the armed revolt as soon as they had seen the Zogist general of Austrian origin, De Gilard, arrive in their city. As a matter of fact he was travelling on some other mission. The general was killed and the insurgents, after seizing without difficulty the administration of the city, started on their way to assail Lushnje and to proceed on Tirana. The Zogist forces in Lushnje, however, offered resistance long enough to enable Tirana to send considerable government forces, which smashed the insurrectional forces. On the following day, the "secret organizations" of other centres, discouraged by the extinction of the movement of Fier, did not dare to revolt. Only the Communists of Berat, led by Riza Cerova, stood fast by the word of honour they had given, and entered the armed insurrection. But, as they remained isolated, they became object of relentless pursuits at the hands of the gendarmery till they were broken and till their leader Riza Cerova was killed during an encounter on August 22.

The movement of August, the so-called "movement of Fieri" was crushed, but not without leaving its echo in

Albania. The arrest of more than 2,000 persons could not appease the Zogist clique, which, within ten years, found itself for the third time face to face with armed revolt. Unable to attribute the fault of the opposition movement on this occasion to alien instigations, Zogu began to make some concessions to Albanian public opinion. On October 15, 1935, he compelled the cabinet headed by Pandeli Evangjeli to resign, and on October 21, 1935 he installed into office a new cabinet with Mehdi Frashëri, known as a liberal-democrat, as prime minister, and with bourgeois young intellectuals as ministers. There were two cardinal points on the programme of the so-called liberal government: to carry on the enforcement of progressive reforms announced in its time by the king, but hampered by conservative, reactionary governments, and to guarantee the freedom of thought, of speech and of the press, proclaimed in the constitution of the monarchy, excluding criticisms of the person of the king, of the monarchic regime and of the foreign policy.

Although limited, the promised freedoms gave a fillip to the development of the political and social life of the country. A new press, fostered by new literary and propagandist pens, appeared not only in the capital, but also in the provinces. With the greatest harshness they criticized the social plagues of the time: capitalist and landlord exploitation at the expense of labourers and peasants, the alarming unemployment, the exorbitant usury, the lack of legislation for the protection of labour and of the life of the labourer, for the protection of the Albanian capital from the preponderance of foreign capital, the financial bankruptcy of the state, the passiveness of the government in respect to the enforcement of agrarian reform, in respect to the general impoverishment of the population, and so on and so forth. Using Aesopian language, they criticized even the foreign policy and the parasitic character of the Zogu regime. This animation of the political life gave ground to the growth and organization of the labour movement. After the creation in Korça, in

1934, of the professional association of workmen under the name of *Puna* (Labour), the workers of Kuçova, great mining centre, also created their professional association under the same name *Puna*, for the protection of their economic interests and of their national dignity in face of the ruthless exploitation and colonial discrimination practised on them by the Italian capitalist concern AIPA, which had a concession to the petroleum basin of Kuçova. After their example, labourers of various mining centres of the country, too, demanded from the government permission to form professional associations.

The demagoguery of the government was soon evident. While the promised reforms remained on paper, the so-called "liberal" government of Mehdi Frashëri with the greatest ease passed to repressive measures. It backed AIPA against two thousand Albanian labourers in their demand for better living conditions. And when on February 11, 1936, the petroleum workers, as a protest for the dismissal by the AIPA concern of various leaders of their professional association *Puna*, announced a general strike, the government crushed the strike by employing the gendarmery to arrest a great number of militant labourers.

Some days later, on February 19, 1936, the shoemakers of Korça closed their shops in protest against the authorization granted by the government for the opening of a modern shoe factory in their city. Their demand, animated by the danger of economic ruin and, on the other hand, influenced by the petty-bourgeois illusions that the process of industrialization could be hindered in the interest of small artisan production, was not supported by the other masses of the population. Through the intervention of the communist vanguard, amendments were introduced in the formulation of the demand of the shoemakers. On February 21, 1936, together with the shoemakers, all the workers of Korça organized a peaceful demonstration, protesting against unemployment, against the distress. To the cries of the workers for "bread!" and for "work!" the government authorities responded by calling out the gendarm-



Gendarmes of Achmed Zogu (King Zog) breaking up a workers' demonstration against unemployment and hunger in Korça, Feb. 21, 1936

ery, which came to a clash with the labourers and made arrests in their ranks. A few hours later, together with the labourers, students of the city, too, burst in a second demonstration against the violence of the government and against the arrest of innocent labourers. By the force of the gendarmery, the "liberal" government crushed also the strikes and the meetings that were held during the weeks that followed in other cities of the country.

In the foreign policy likewise the cabinet of Mehdi Frashëri followed the Zogist way of complete capitulation to fascist Italy. In March 1936, Tirana and Rome signed a series of economic agreements for new credits from Italy and for further concessions from Albania. At the same time, secret agreements of political and military character

tuals of the country. In 1938 the two principal communist groups issued their secret periodicals too, of which that of Korça under the name of *Përpara* (Forward), theoretically more advanced, presented the platform for the constitution of a united National-Liberation Front including all the patriotic and democratic forces of the country. Through this publicly announced programme, the Albanian Communists became inheritors of the Albanian national "renaissance", and carriers, under new conditions, of the ideals of renowned adepts of that renaissance.

### THE CONQUEST OF ALBANIA BY FASCIST ITALY

The economic and political agreements concluded between Rome and Tirana in March 1936 cannot be divorced from the general political situation of that time, created by the expansionist tendencies of the three great aggressive fascist countries, Germany, Italy and Japan. Italy at that period was waging aggressive war against Ethiopia without encountering any serious resistance on the part of other Great Powers, excepting the farce of the sanctions by the League of Nations. Exactly at that time, on March 7, 1936, nazi Germany reconquered, likewise without meeting with any resistance, the Rhineland, thus definitely stamping on the treaty of Versailles. Still later on, in July 1936 in republican Spain, the fascist insurrection broke out, aided openly by Hitler and Mussolini. Encouraged all the while by the inertia of the western powers, Germany and Italy constituted the fascist-military bloc, or as it was called at that time, the "Rome-Berlin Axis" for the establishment of the "new order" in Europe, whereas a month later Germany and Japan signed the "Anti-Comintern Pact", which Italy joined later on.

When things seemed to be looking up for the fascist imperialist states there was no reason why Albania should feel herself immune to aggression by Mussolini's Italy. In the chancelleries of the western powers, the possibility of Albania's one day coming under the military power of Rome had become altogether plausible. Zogu did not have any alliance of friendship with other states that would have engaged themselves to protect Albania from an eventual invasion by Italy. The League of Nations, which was obligated by its covenant to protect small countries from foreign aggression, did not possess, as it had never possessed, power to stop the hand of any aggressor whatsoever, and still less that of powerful and self-sufficient aggressors such as Germany and Italy. The appointment of Galeazzo Ciano on June 9, 1936, to the post of minister for foreign affairs of Italy pointed out to a more dynamic course in the foreign policy of Rome. Little more than a month later, on July 11, 1936, the ambassador of Great Britain Drummond informed Ciano that with the withdrawal of the sanctions decided by the League of Nations against Italy at the beginning of the Italian aggression against Ethiopia, his government was withdrawing the home fleet from the Mediterranean; he added, however, that the unilateral engagements of Great Britain for the protection of Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey from aggression were to remain all the while in force. The fact that Albania was not mentioned was an open, encouraging allusion. On the other hand, Hitler assured Mussolini through the German minister of justice, Hans Frank, during a meeting in Rome on September 23, 1936 with the chief of Italian fascism, that Germany considered the Mediterranean as an "Italian sea", and consequently acknowledged the right of Italy to control the Mediterranean countries. The appointment in October of that year of Francesco Jacomoni, cunning fox who directed Albanian affairs in Palazzo Chigi, as minister plenipotentiary to Tirana, was very significant in the course of the Italian policy towards Albania.

However, Italy had still one other obstacle in its way to the military occupation of Albania, and of which Zogu and his advisors were well aware. It was its rival in the Balkans — Yugoslavia. Mussolini did not desire under any condition that Albania, which he had under his control also as it was, should serve as a pretext for the aggravation of Italo-Yugoslav relations at a time when it was becoming apparent that Yugoslavia was breaking off from France and getting closer to the German-Italian fascist bloc. The attraction of Belgrade to the influence of the "Rome-Berlin Axis" was a much more precious pearl than the military conquest of Albania. This pearl did not in the final analysis exclude the conquest of Albania, by now subjugated, but only postponed it. If there was anything new in the line of policy of Italy towards Albania after the installation of Mussolini's son-in-law in the ministry of foreign affairs in Rome, this nuance should be sought in the endeavours of Mussolini to accomplish the military conquest of Albania with the acquiescence of Yugoslavia — even if mere partnership with it.

Zogu realized that his royal crown depended on the development of Italo-Yugoslav relations, and to a certain extent on the Italo-Greek relations. But the prognosis was not soothing for him even on this side. The accession to power of Stoyadinovich in Yugoslavia and of Metaxas in Greece, completed, after Bulgaria and Roumania, the almost full political and governmental fascistization of the Balkans. Zogu made some childish endeavours in Belgrade and in Athens, for the conclusion of Albano-Yugoslav and Albano-Greek alliances of friendship but no attention was paid to them. At the encounter they had in Belgrade on March 26, 1937, Stoyadinovich told Ciano among other things that Albania had great importance for Yugoslavia at the time when European diplomacy, by which he hinted at the British and French diplomacy, had succeeded in inciting animosity between Italy and Yugoslavia. Whereas today, claimed the Serbian minister, in the new climate of the

Italo-Yugoslav relations, the Albanian problem represented merely a local problem of no consequence.

The concrete plan for the conquest of Albania by Italy was elaborated by Count Ciano in May 1938 after his return from the visit he made to Tirana on the occasion of the marriage of King Zogu. The exclusion of Albania from the League of Nations with the aim of depriving other powers of the possibility of interfering in the question of Albania at the moment of the outbreak of the crisis provoked by Rome; the continual enfeeblement of the Albanian army due to undermining by Italian officers in Albania in order to render ineffective any armed resistance; the strengthening and extension of the economic concessions in Albania in favour of Italian capitalist companies; the development, by means of subsidies, of what had begun to be called "the fifth column"; the enticement by means of promises and bribes to the upper strata in the political network of Rome; the introduction and spread in Albania of fascist and pro-fascist institutions, not so much of political character as with social and cultural functions in order to enlist the sympathy of the masses of the population; and finally, the approbation of Yugoslavia, obtained beforehand. These were the principal points of the programme of Ciano, approved by Mussolini also, in order to prepare the ground for the military occupation of Albania and the proclamation of "personal union" as a means of concealing the annexation.

The programme of Ciano did not in fact contain anything new; it was the continuation at a faster rate of the previous programme. This stepping up did not remain undetected by the erstwhile diffident Albanian public, and did not remain without causing great anxiety to the people of this country, who had got too near the fangs of the wolf. Zogu, however, left a free hand for the realization of the feverish plans of Rome. In the very spring of 1938, the government of Tirana granted to various Italian concerns a series of further important concessions for the exploitation of copper, of chromium, fishing rights, etc. Through a special convention, Italy secured a monopoly of the entire foreign

trade. In May that year the parliament approved the new educational system elaborated by the Italian adviser S. Montanelli. Italian fascist, clever and capable agitators and organizers came to Albania to uphold the work of previous propagandists in the field of the creation of fascist and pro-fascist organizations. The fact that they did not succeed in creating such organizations is due not to the resistance on the part of the government, but to the popular opposition and to the danger that this opposition might erupt into open conflict.

On June 18, 1938, Count Ciano had a second meeting with Stoyadinovich in Venice and received the assurance that Yugoslavia would hold a disinterested attitude in the question of peaceful penetration of Italy in Albania, but not as yet in the military occupation of this country. However, six months later, during the meeting that took place between them in Belgrade from January 18 to 23, 1939, the minister Ciano at last succeeded in securing the acquiescence of the Yugoslav government to the military conquest of Albania by Italy, by proposing to Stoyadinovich the rectification of the boundaries of Albania in favour of Yugoslavia, the conclusion of an Italo-Yugoslav military alliance, the support of Rome for the eventual conquest of Salonika by Yugoslavia, etc. But to the astonishment of the Italian foreign minister, the prince regent of Yugoslavia, Paul, manifested much less interest than Stoyadinovich for the territorial gains that would accrue to Yugoslavia at the expense of Albania. According to the report that the Italian foreign minister drew up for Mussolini on this encounter, Prince Paul told Ciano: "We already have so many Albanians within our boundaries, and these are giving us so much trouble, that I have no desire to increase their number." The ice was thus broken. The Italian fascist government took the decision to make the necessary preparations for the military conquest of Albania.

The fascist agents in Albania precipitated their preparations to deprive the Albanians of all possibility of armed resistance and particularly to attract to the preparations

of Rome the so-called "upper crust" of the country; that is to say the ministers, the deputies, the prefects, the staff officers, with the twofold aim of isolating Zogu and achieving through them, by "constitutional" means, the union of Italy to Albania under the crown of Victor Emmanuel III. The royal palace in Tirana was seized by panic. However, Zogu with prime minister Koço Kota and minister of the interior Musa Juka, instead of taking measures against the Italian fascist agents that acted unhindered against them, continued the police harassment of the Albanian Communists, who in those days of tension more than ever before sought the creation of a common liberation front with all the patriotic forces of the country, if it were possible with even Zogu himself, in case the latter with his government would be willing to oppose the Italian fascist aggression. During that January, the police of Musa Juka, following the track of underground Marxist organizations, arrested a great number of Communists. On February 4, 1939, 73 of them appeared before the political tribunal of Tirana. On 56 of them exemplary punishments were inflicted for the only reason that they were sympathizers of Marxist-Leninist ideas.

In March 1939 the international situation more than ever was favourable for fascist Italy. In Spain, the civil war was ending in favour of the fascist forces of Franco, which saved Mussolini from a preoccupation that lasted since three years. On March 15 Hitlerite Germany conquered Czechoslovakia without meeting with any resistance on the part of western powers. In Yugoslavia, with the resignation from office of Stoyadinovich at the beginning of February, an entirely capitulating government had come to power, which upheld the point of view of Prince Paul in respect to Albania. Under these circumstances, Mussolini massed his war forces in the ports of southern Italy facing Albania and on March 25, 1939, delivered to the government of Tirana in the form of an ultimatum a projected treaty including these demands: that Italian troops should land in the principal ports of Albania, that these troops

should control strategic roads, aerodromes and strategic points along the boundary; that Italian farmers should be settled in Albania, to enjoy the rights of Albanian citizens; that the customs union was to be carried on; that Italian citizens residing in Albania should be entitled to the most important state offices; that the general secretaries of the ministries should be Italian citizens; that the Italian minister in Tirana and reciprocally the Albanian minister in Rome should be members of the council of ministers of the country where they were accredited. After a couple of days, Rome dispatched to Zogu an ultimatum demanding an answer to the terms of March 25, before midnight of April 6, 1939.

Zogu and his government kept secret the projected treaty as well as the ultimatum of Mussolini. The public, however, soon got to know of the intentions of Rome. The great number of troops gathered at the ports of southern Italy caused anxiety throughout the country. In Tirana, on the eve of April 3, 1939, the youth of the capital led by the Communists demonstrated, expressing their readiness to protect their country from the Italian aggression. On April 4, the masses of people started a forceful demonstration in the streets of the capital, demanding to know the truth of the Italian intentions, and arms in order to fight against the fascist foe. Similar demonstrations burst forth in other cities of the country too—in Shkodër, Elbasan, Durrës, Korça, Vlora. Zogu tried to appease the public by issuing an official communication denying the news that had been spread about the aggravation of the Italo-Albanian relations. At the same time, on April 5, the prime minister Koço Kota answered the Italian ultimatum, presenting the counter-proposals of the Albanian government and demanding the prolongation of the term set in the ultimatum. The counter-proposals provided: the definition by means of a military convention of the cases in which Italian troops should be sent to Albania; the enjoyment of the right of Albanian citizenship should be reserved only to those Italians who had lived in Albania for more than five years;



**Patriotic demonstrations in early April, 1939,  
against the menace of fascist aggression**

not customs union, but the reduction of customs tariffs up to two per cent on Italo-Albanian trade; the admission into the Albanian state administration of Italian organizers only, not of regular officials.

The government communication did not appease the country. On April 5 and 6, mass demonstrations broke out in entire Albania. As in the past the Zogist government kept absolute silence in face of the popular demands to enlist as volunteers for the defence of the motherland.

The Italian government paid no attention whatsoever to the counter-proposals of the government of Tirana. Only a delay of 12 hours was granted in reference to the ultimatum. With no answer at hand, in face of the critical situation he himself had created with his policy of capitulation, Zogu decided to abandon the country without resist-

ing. On the following day, in the early hours of April 7, 1939, Good Friday, approximately 40,000 Italian troops, on a fleet of troop transports, escorted by hundreds of fighter-planes, under the supreme command of Guzzoni, approached the four principal ports of Albania — Durrës, Vlora, Saranda and Shengjin. In order to gain time until he could prepare his escape and that of the Queen, who had recently given birth to a child, Zogu attempted to enter into negotiations with General Guzzoni without however achieving any success. During the morning of April 7, Italian troops began to land on the coasts of Albania, convinced that on account of the undermining activity of Italian agents and of the passive attitude of Zogu, they would meet with no resistance. As a matter of fact, the undermining work done by the fascist agents and by the Zogist officials had been quite extensive. The ammunition for the guns had vanished, the few artillery pieces had been rendered ineffective and the army was confused and disorganized. In spite of that, quite a number of volunteers and of soldiers succeeded in securing some ammunition, and with that in hand, offered resistance to the Italian army of occupation, which, especially in Durrës, they obliged to board their ships. Then, the fire of artillery from the enemy warships was poured on Durrës, but this did not give the expected result. Three times did the Italian troops attempt to seize Durrës by assault, three times they were compelled to withdraw to their warships. These successes were achieved at a time when the royal family, together with Zogu, the man responsible for this tragedy, started on its exile from Albania.

The speedy breakdown of the Albanian resistance was determined not so much by the superiority of the enemy as by the lack of arms and of ammunition. The symbol of this spontaneous and unorganized resistance became the sailor Mujo Ulqinaku, who fell heroically in the streets of Durrës on April 7, 1939. That same day Durrës fell, as did the other ports, into the hands of the Italian troops. The fascist armies were able to enter Tirana on April 8, Shkodër and Gjirokastra on April 9. The next day, on April 10,

almost the entire country was conquered by fascist Italy without evoking any protest on the part of the western powers or of the Balkan states. Only the Soviet Union did not recognize this disgraceful occupation. Of course all the Albanian patriots who happened to be in exile, with the exception of the adherents of the "Bashkimi Kombëtar" group, protested by means of meetings against this conquest that buried the independence of the motherland, won through so much fighting and sacrifices. In their protests, the Albanians in exile had the support of all democratic, progressive forces of the whole world and, in the first place, of the internationalist Communists.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE ANTI-FASCIST NATIONAL-LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Mussolini, in the official documents, did not treat the military occupation of April 7, 1939 as an annexation of Albania by Italy, but as an act accomplished with the aim of bringing to an end the anti-Italian "manoeuvre" of Zogu and insuring the "independence" of Albania, menaced by other powers, through "personal union" — the union of the kingdom of Albania with the kingdom of Italy under the crown of the king-emperor Victor Emmanuel III.

In this demagogic endeavour Mussolini had the aid of the collaborators of Zogu, who, with the exception of some of the ministers — Koço Kota, Musa Juka, etc. — remained in Albania and were the first to congratulate the chief of fascism for the event of April 7. On April 12, 1939, a so-called "constituent assembly" composed of personalities who prior to the occupation had entered into secret relations with the Italian Legation in Tirana, proclaimed the "union" of Albania with Italy under the crown of king-emperor Victor Emmanuel III. On that same day the Albanian renegade government was constituted under the



presidency of the great landlord *Shefqet bey Verlaci*, and signed on April 20, 1939 with Francesco Jacomoni, who had been elevated to the rank of ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, a series of political and economic conventions. According to these conventions, Albania would constitute with Italy one single land, the customs union was to be enforced, the Albanian franc was to be tied to the Italian "lira"; in the relations of Albania with foreign countries the general tariffs of the Italian kingdom were to be applied, Italian citizens in Albania were to enjoy all the rights that Albanian citizens enjoyed, and *vice versa*. On June 3 further steps were undertaken towards the virtual enslavement of the country. The "Statute of the Albanian Kingdom", which was proclaimed at that same day, reserved the executive as well as the legislative power to the "King of Italy and of Albania and Emperor of Ethiopia", who on his part appointed as his "lieutenant" (*luogotenente*), in Albania, Francesco Jacomoni. Albania was no longer to have any parliament. Italy and Albania were no longer to have mutual diplomatic representations. On the basis of an agreement concluded on that same day, the unification of international relations of Italy and Albania was accomplished, and these were concentrated in the ministry of foreign affairs of Rome. Albania was no longer to have diplomatic representatives in foreign countries, and foreign powers would not have diplomatic representatives accredited in Tirana. The Albanian army was suppressed as an independent armed force, to be considered part and parcel of the Italian army.

All these documents legalized by the force of arms the Italian military occupation of Albania, and together with it all the consequences that sprang from this occupation. With great speed emissaries who had come from Rome formed the Albanian Fascist Party and all the organizations depending on it—the organization of "fascist" youth, of "fascist" children, of "fascist" women, and one called "After-work" (*Dopolavoro*), none of which found support in Albania. By means of political pressure em-

ployees and labourers were coerced into enrolling themselves together with their wives and children in the respective "fascist" organizations and to submit themselves to indoctrination with fascist political and cultural ideology. Swarms of new Italian capitalist companies invaded Albania and took it upon themselves to exploit at a greater speed the economic riches of the country, first of all the mineral riches in order to provide the needs of the war economy of Italy. Alongside them, Italian construction enterprises arrived in droves to carry on the work of arranging and adding military strategic roads to connect the coast with the regions on the Albano-Greek and Albano-Serbian boundaries. Two powerful Italian banks "Banco di Napoli" and "Banca del Lavoro", together with the "National Bank of Albania", which now relied almost entirely on Italian capital, covered the country with an extensive financial net which exerted great activity. The "National Bank of Albania", which up to the eve of the occupation on April 7, had followed the unjustifiable policy of deflating the paper currency, immediately after the event of April, though it had retained the same general manager and the same board of directors, changed over to the policy of monetary "abundance", not stopping even when faced with "inflation". From the 10,653,000 francs that were in circulation at the end of 1936, the 11,131,000 francs at the end of 1937, the 10,526,000 francs at the end of 1938 and the 11,939,000 francs on March 31, 1939, that is to say on the eve of the occupation, within a month—in other words on April 30, 1939, it had swelled to 17,262,000 francs, at the end of 1939 to 26,316,000 francs, at the end of 1940 to 80,178,000 francs, at the end of 1941 to 108,417,000 francs, and at the end of 1942 to 141,897,000 francs. In agriculture the projects for "Mussolini's reforms" were initiated, which provided the drainage of the lands of lower Albania on the coast, the settlement of Italian "farmers" in these lands, and the transfer of the Albanian peasantry from these lands to the inner highlands. The "farmers" who were to settle around the cities, the overwhelming number of labourers who emigrated from

Italy, more in 1940 than Albanian labourers, the imposing of the Italian language and culture in the school programmes of Albania and in the administration of the country, were to serve as catalysts for the policy of Italianization of Albania, which the bigger fascist leaders, especially Mussolini, so much desired.

Consequently, the general resentment aroused by the aggression of April 7 continued to develop and to expand during the months that followed, not only against the Italian fascist aggressors, but also against the Albanian collaborators who acquiesced in the policy of making Albania a dismembered colony and of her ethnical assimilation. This resentment found expression in the continuation of the anti-fascist resistance—an altogether spontaneous resistance. At workshops and work centres, small employees and labourers, in spite of the pressure of the management, refused to accept membership in fascist parties; at schools, the students stood aloof from fascist youth organizations; at Italian capitalist enterprises, a series of workers' strikes broke out against extortions by the bosses and against colonial discrimination. The peasantry of Muzeqe protested against the measurement of their lands. Their resistance was of local character, however, and too often gave no result. More than ever the need was felt in Albania for a revolutionary patriotic organization to take up the direction of this resistance, which was in continual ferment. As the former collaborators of Zogu who had remained in Albania, as well as erstwhile opposition leaders to Zogu, exiles in the *Bashkimi Kombëtar* organization who returned to their country after the 7th of April, preferred to remain in the ranks of the collaborators, therefore the task of organizing the patriotic resistance fell on the Albanian Communists, who prior to, as well as after the fascist occupation had proved themselves men of principle in the question of the independence of the country were just as revolutionary in the methods of the war of liberation. As such, in the spontaneous resistance of labourers, of peasants, of employees and of students, they had invariably

given proof of their solidarity with them, and in most cases they had even been their organizers and their leaders.

However, the Albanian Communists, too, had their weak points. In Albania there did not as yet exist a single revolutionary Marxist party. The Communists continued to be split into two separate groups in conflict with each other as to the ideology and the manner of organization.

This movement did not weaken, not even during the period of the great victories of Hitlerite Germany after the outbreak of the Second World War on September 3, 1939, which victories created a desperate situation in Europe. On November 28, 1939, on the anniversary of the proclamation of the national independence of Albania, in Tirana a popular patriotic demonstration broke out against the alien fascist occupation. During the first half of the year 1940, the anti-fascist resistance led as always by the Albanian Communists, took more militant and more active forms, passing over to actions of sabotage of Italy's military installations. After the entry of Italy, in June 1940, into the World War on the side of nazi Germany, this resistance came to know difficult moments of political and police reaction. While the continental prisons and insular camps of Italy were filled with Albanian patriots, Italian fascists together with Albanian collaborators undertook a widespread propaganda campaign to palm off the war that Rome was waging in the Balkans as an opportunity for Albania as an independent state to realize its ethnical unification, to include within its boundaries the Albanian territories of Kossovo and Çamëria, unjustly annexed by Yugoslavia and Greece through the decisions of the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and of the Conference of Ambassadors in 1913. This was too slim a pretence since the Albanians could never forget the injustice done them by the imperialist diplomacy, which had left outside the boundaries of their country almost half of their compatriots. The collaborators exploited to the extreme this political factor in order to induce the Albanians to fight against the neighbour countries. What's wrong—asked the collaborators, specially their prin-

cial spokesman Mustafa Kruja — if Italy rectifies the errors committed by the plutocratic diplomacy and crippled Albania achieves national unification through this action? A number of personalities who had protested against the aggression of April 7th chimed in this chorus. One of them, Faik Konitza, former minister plenipotentiary of Zogist Albania in the U.S.A., who had remained in exile, in a declaration he handed to the American press on August 22, 1940, said: "Now that Italy is prepared to intervene in order to rectify the injustices that have been inflicted on the Albanian nation and to re-establish the natural and historic boundaries of Albania . . . is it reasonable for a genuine Albanian to be dissatisfied with the intervention?" And further: "In case Çamëria is Albanian can it be conceivable that this reality should automatically cease to be such because it is defended by the Italians?"

The Albanian people, however, had their own logic. They did not desire to become cannon fodder for the imperialist aims of Rome. This became clear after October 28 when Italy, by making use of the territory of Albania conquered by force, assailed Greece, and when with this typically fascist aggression the quisling government of Shefqet Verlaci, too, expressed its solidarity. It was very soon found out that the fascist and the pro-fascist propaganda had taken no root whatsoever. Two battalions of Albanian recruits sent by force to the front refused to fight; after desertions from the very first, the two battalions were withdrawn from the front and confined in the Shijak concentration camp in central Albania. On the front and in the rear, sappers were active. It was exactly at this time that in the mountainous regions of Albania the first armed bands of the Albanian National-Liberation Movement were formed by soldiers who had deserted the army.

As is known, in this theatre of war, the Italian Army of Mussolini suffered ignominious defeat, which Mussolini personally, in a letter to Hitler on November 22, 1940, attributed to insufficient military preparations and to unforeseen "treason" of the Albanians. In pursuit of the foe, the

Greek armies penetrated into the territory of Albania, and on November 22, captured Korça and, at the beginning of December, Gjirokastra. The Albanians considered the Greek victory as a victory over fascism and the Greek army as their ally in the war against the common enemy. Thousands of volunteers from the occupied regions asked for permission from the Hellenic commander to fight under the Albanian banner side by side with the Greek army against the Italian fascist army. The Hellenic commander, however, rejected this demand and announced that he would admit only such volunteers as would fight under the Greek banner. Further, he took measures, such as the prohibition of the Albanian flag, the establishment of Greek civil administration, the arrest and interment of Albanian patriots though hostile to Italian fascists, demonstrating that Athens had not renounced its old chauvinist claims on Albania. Consequently Albano-Greek relations remained strained and unfriendly even at this historic moment when the two countries were at war against a common enemy.

In the spring of 1941 the situation in the Balkans was abruptly upset. On April 6 German armies attacked Yugoslavia and Greece by surprise simultaneously, and within a few days had shattered their resistance, thus enabling the Italian armies, which had remained on the defensive throughout the winter, to expel the Greek armies from Albania. With the capitulation of the Yugoslav armies on April 17 and of the Greek armies on April 21, 1940, Germany and Italy, represented by the ministers of foreign affairs Ribbentrop and Ciano, delineated in Vienna the new political map of the Balkans. The map drawn in Vienna was based on the principal division of the zones of influence in the Balkans between Germany and Italy. Discredited by the defeat it had suffered at the hands of Greece, a fraction the size of Italy, Rome sought to extend its zone of influence in the Balkans by hiding behind the territorial ethnical demands of the quisling government of Tirana. With some modifications, the Albanian demands were accepted by the two "arbitrator" powers, and thus

the Albanian regions of Kossovo annexed in 1913 together with several like Albanian districts at one time annexed by Montenegro, were returned to Albania. In the south, Albania got back the Albanian region of Çamëria, which Greece had annexed in 1913.

Through these annexations the territory and the population of Albania almost doubled. As the annexed regions of Kossovo were more productive, the chronic deficit in agricultural produce was solved at once; Albania changed from a grain importing country into a grain exporting country. Italian fascists and Albanian collaborators widely exploited these facts in their propaganda campaigns in order to persuade Albanian public opinion that the existence of "greater" Albania as they called it, depended on the victory of the Rome-Berlin Axis, and that with the victory of the western powers, whose allies were Yugoslavia and Greece, the very existence of "lesser" Albania would be put in question. This campaign was fervently supported by anti-Zogist personalities who had returned from exile: Mustafa Kruja, Rexhep Mitrovica, Ali Këlcyra, Kol Tromara, etc. Public opinion, however, in general remained prudent towards this propaganda barrage. As an unexpected answer to Rome resounded the attempt on the life of King-Emperor Victor Emmanuel III during his visit in Albania by the Albanian worker Vasil Laçi in Tirana in May.

The Albanian Communists opposed the fascists' political stratagem of pressing the Albanians into their gendarmery in the Balkans or employing them at their various war fronts. The resistance of the Communists, however, was weak, because they were still divided, even more so than before, because two other communist groups that were created alongside the former two groups—the group of Korça and that of Shkodër—of less importance than these last named in number of members as well as the influence they exerted on public opinion in the country. One of them was the so-called "Youth" group with pro-Trotsky leadership, and the other was called "Fire" with anarchist tendencies. Between these two groups there existed a series of

divergencies in connection with ideological and tactical questions and problems regarding the organization of the communist movement, and although all of them worked underground, they were in conflict with each other. Object of the most violent attacks was the group of Korça, the largest, most revolutionary and most closely adherent to principles. There were also in the ranks of these groups revolutionary communist elements who regretted the unjustifiable split and demanded fusion without delay to form a single Marxist-Leninist party. However, the attempts undertaken in this direction up to the summer of 1940 had yielded no result.

During the summer of 1941, after the aggression launched by the German Nazis against the Soviet Union on June 22, the national-liberation movement in Albania had a new impulse. With the entrance of the Soviet Union into the war, the anti-fascist war front was widened, and this increased the prospect of the annihilation of the German-Italian bloc and raised Albania's hopes for early liberation. Through the entry of the Soviet Union in the ranks of the anti-fascist coalition, the Albanians were convinced that at the end of the war the chauvinist tendencies of the Yugoslav and particularly of the Greek anti-fascist governments in exile in London and considered as allied anti-fascist governments enjoying the support of Great Britain, would be curtailed. The Albanian Communists and anti-fascist patriots deemed that the further strengthening of the alliance of Albania with the Soviet Union was the only way of securing the independence of the country.

The speedy advance of German fascist armies deep in Soviet territory during the first month of the war did not diminish at all these hopes. During the summer and autumn months, the Albanian Communists were active for the expansion of the armed struggle. In cities, secret tracts drawn up by the Communists of the Korça group were distributed, in which appeals were made for the initiation, on a large scale, of the armed war of liberation. In mountainous regions, the Communists made attempts, with good

results, to organize, into regular warrior bands, fugitive anti-fascist patriots who found themselves isolated. Widespread measures were taken to secure the necessary arms and ammunition for guerrilla units of cities, which had just started to organize. At the same time, endeavours were continually made to eliminate the differences of the communist groups and to fuse all these groups in a single revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party.

These endeavours brought substantial results. In spite of the resistance on the part of the leaders of some of the groups, especially of those of the groups of "Youth" and "Fire", internationalist revolutionary Communists succeeded in subduing the intolerable tendency to split into groups, and secretly and under police persecution, paved the way for the convocation in Tirana of an extraordinary convention of the Albanian communist groups. In the ranks of the internationalist Communists who strove to lay the foundations for an Albanian Communist Party, the figure of Enver Hoxha, then only 31 years old but with rich revolutionary Marxist experience, began to come forward in a most noteworthy manner. He was born in Gjirokastra on October 16, 1908. After he had finished secondary school in Korça, where he came to know the Communists of that city, Enver Hoxha resided for some years as student and as employee (1930-1936) in France and Belgium, where he had worked together with French and Belgian Communists. In 1936 he returned to Albania and, after being unemployed for some time, at last was appointed as a teacher at the state lyceum in Tirana, and in the years 1937-1939 at the state lyceum of Korça. As one of the oldest members of the communist group of Korça and, at the same time, one of its most active leaders, Enver Hoxha, dismissed from office after April 7, 1939 by the fascist collaborationist administration, settled in Tirana, where he dedicated himself exclusively to Marxist revolutionary activity and at the same time to the creation of a common anti-fascist war front of all the patriotic forces of the country. By standing above the split and the struggle of the communist groups, Enver



Comrade Enver Hoxha, leader of the national-liberation struggle of the Albanian people against Italian fascist and German Nazi occupation

Hoxha gradually became the central figure of the revolutionary forces of the country which demanded that the deplorable breach in the Albanian communist movement should speedily be brought to an end. He demanded, not the union of the groups as was demanded by the fractionist leaders, but their fusion into one party, with the traces of their previous features by no means remaining apparent. His basic point of view that the union of Albanian Communists into a single revolutionary party would be achieved not only by the renunciation of the distorted points of view of the groups, not only by the acceptance by the members of groups of a sound Marxist-Leninist programme, but also by common revolutionary action against the fascist enemy, which would do much more towards leading to the fraternization of the Communists than discussions on theories, met with the support of the more revolutionary members of the groups. For this reason Enver Hoxha himself headed the great patriotic demonstration, which on the initiative of the revolutionary Communists took place in Tirana before the quisling prime minister's office on October 28, 1941, the anniversary of the fascist march on Rome, a few days prior to the convoked assemblage of the groups. The demonstration, during which the Communists were constrained to fight without paying any attention to group divergences in order to defend each other against the interference of Italian police forces, proved, though rudimentarily, the indisputable value of the revolutionary actions not only in the fusion of Communists into a single party, but also in the attraction of the popular masses into the great patriotic war against the fascist invaders and native collaborators.

An extraordinary convention of communist groups met in Tirana in the first week of November 1941, with the participation of the delegates of the three communist groups — "Fire" refused to assist and stood aloof for a year, when it disappeared altogether. After some days' discussions, and after fractionist-liquidator tendencies of some pretentious leaders had been overcome, on November 8, 1941 the de-



The house in Tirana where the Albanian Communist Party was founded secretly on Nov. 8, 1941

cision was taken to disperse the groups and to form the Albanian Communist Party as a Marxist-Leninist party, with a new programme approved in the form of a resolution. The convention likewise elected the provisional Central Committee of the new Party, at the head of which Enver Hoxha was chosen.

Briefly the resolution set out as the political programme of the Albanian Communist Party the mobilization of the popular masses of Albania in the armed struggle against the fascist invaders and native collaborators for the national independence of Albania, in cooperation with all the nationalist, patriotic forces of the country, in militant friendship with the peoples of the Balkans, particularly with the peoples of Yugoslavia and of Greece, and in alliance with the great anti-fascist coalition, in the first place with the

Soviet Union, which was to be popularized in Albania also as a socialist country; alongside the national-liberation movement, the resolution set out the mobilization of the masses, foremost of labourers and peasants, with the aim that after the liberation of the country the bourgeois-landlord rule should be uprooted, and a popular democratic rule should be established in Albania.

### THE PATRIOTIC ARMED STRUGGLE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POPULAR REVOLUTION IN ALBANIA

A few days later, still in November 1941, a manifesto bearing the signature of the Central Committee and distributed secretly was addressed to the country, which after analysing the internal and external political situation, demanded from the masses of the population that the general war against the fascist invader for the definite liberation of the country should start. The people should not pay taxes, not deliver corn, not give even a glass of water to the enemy; further, they should take part, with arms in hand, in the ranks of the fighters for freedom. Addressing the Albanian Communists, the first manifesto of the Albanian Communist Party asked them to display in all circumstances an example of revolutionary resoluteness, of sacrifice, of initiative, or organization; to stand always in the forefront of the national-liberation struggle, to occupy always the advanced posts in fighting, where the danger was the greatest, and to give without hesitation even their life for the national liberation of the country. During that same month the leaders of the Albanian Communist Party entered into relations with the armed bands, which obeyed their order to abandon secret activity and to operate more freely in the villages by doing political propaganda work among the peasants and by taking armed actions against the fascist invaders. In the principal cities of the country



Comrade Myslim Peza with his detachment of Albanian partisans

likewise, guerrilla detachments were organized on new bases, ready to carry out undermining actions and attempts against the enemy. On November 23, 1941, under the direction of the Albanian Communist Party, the underground organization of Albanian Communist Youth was created in Tirana, with Qemal Stafa as the political secretary of its Central Committee. Likewise within the month of November the first shot of the armed anti-fascist war had resounded. While a partisan detachment had undertaken an assault on a fascist command post inside Tirana on the eve of November 28, 1941, the anniversary of the national independence, the chief of a squad of collaborationist political police was killed by a guerrilla unit.

This change within the Albanian resistance naturally drew the attention of the fascist authorities. The distribution of the first tract in every city, and even in a great



**Qemal Stafa, hero of the war for national liberation, who gave his life in battle on May 5, 1942**



**Misto Mame, martyred in the fighting against the enemy in Tirana on Aug. 16, 1942**

number of villages, while the police were powerless to lay hands on even one single anti-fascist militant, the demonstrations that took place in Tirana on October 28, and in Korça on November 8, 1941, followed by a hand-to-hand encounter with the police, the presence of the first armed bands even in the vicinity of the capital and other similar actions, evidenced the resoluteness of the communist organization and the gravity of the internal political situation. To this new situation, the highest fascist officials responded by, as they called it, a "change of the guard". The quisling government of Shefqet Verlaci was dismissed under the censure that it had proved itself unable to put down the anti-fascist resistance since its inception. At the beginning of December 1941 a "mailed fist" government came to power, headed by Mustafa Merlika Kruja.

The Italian fascist leaders could not find a man more to their liking to face the situation than Mustafa Kruja, an experienced fox in Albanian political life who, as an agent of Rome since 1914, enjoyed their trust. Mustafa Kruja focused the fire of his political artillery not against the entire anti-fascist resistance, but narrowed it down against the Albanian communist movement, with the aim of bring-



**Patriotic anti-fascist demonstration against Italian invaders, led by Comrade Enver Hoxha on Oct. 28, 1941, in Tirana**

ing about a breach in the resistance front, detaching the patriotic non-communist forces from the common national-liberation front, which was on the way of being created in conjunction with the Albanian Communists. In the execution of this tactics, Mustafa Kruja started even to introduce various concessions: he slowed down the pressure exerted till then for obligatory enrolment in the Albanian fascist party and in other fascist organizations; he undertook to receive in his offices any anti-fascist citizen and to discuss with him any political question without resorting to reprisals; he promised that he would not persist in the mistakes of the previous government and in conclusion let it be understood that the Italian military occupation was a provisional occupation imposed by the circumstances of the World War and that with the termination of the war Al-



bania would gain true independence without the need for bloodshed.

The demagogic character of the promises of Mustafa Kruja soon became evident. His policy of "no peace with Communists" and the repressive police measures he took proved futile. Although it was engaged at that time in internal conflict with the old fractionists, who refused to accept Party discipline, the Albanian Communist Party continued to step up the anti-fascist war. Through the selfless work and unparalleled heroism of its members, unbelievable successes were achieved during 1942. Partisan bands covered almost the whole of Albania. The attacks of these bands against the Italian fascist motor-lorry columns and troops were carried out in coordination with guerrilla operations inside the cities and attempts to wipe out fascist criminals. During the night of July 24, 1942 guerrilla units in all Albania cut down telephone posts and wires, interrupting inter-urban communications throughout the country. On the following days guerrilla units in Tirana set fire and burned down the telephone office, seized the archives of the ministry of the interior, blew up the warehouse of the military engineering department and with amazing intrepidity assailed the airfield, destroying military installations. In Korça fire was set to the headquarters of the fascist party, in Shkodër the political prison was stormed and opened, in Vlora the Italian military stores were blown up, at a time that partisan bands were clearing the inland regions of the country of fascist authorities and the government gendarmery. The Communists who, in the spirit of fulfilling their Party task, preferred to die rather than to fall into the hands of Italian fascist police or of the militia of Mustafa Kruja, won the admiration of the whole country with their heroic, unyielding resistance. The fighting of several hours that took place from one quarter to the other within the capital between a whole company of enemy militia and a single man, Qemal Stafa, who fell heroically, the prolonged clash that took place in July in a house in Shkodër between three students, Perlat Rexhepi, Branko Kadia and



**Perlat Rexhepi, who fell in the struggle for the liberation of the motherland on July 22, 1942**



**Vojo Kushi, who died heroically on Oct. 10, 1942**

Jordan Misja (who in the end fell as heroes), and government police detachments, as well as the valorous stand of Midhi Kostani and Kiço Greço in Korça, in August, in face of inhuman tortures and the gallows, the unprecedented heroism of the commander of guerrilla units Vojo Kushi who was killed in Tirana by hurling himself on an enemy tank after five hours' resistance, and hundreds of similar cases, raised the prestige of the Communists among the masses and disparaged all the hideous campaigns of Italian fascists and their Albanian collaborators.

The Albanian Communist Party kept the public informed of all the successes achieved by partisan bands or by guerrilla units by means of regular secret tracts and bulletins, in which at the same time it clearly explained its political line of action which was the formation of a national-liberation front. Together with these the first issue of the mimeographed organ of the Albanian Communist Party, *Zëri i Popullit* (The Voice of the People) was put in secret circulation, and this became the most authoritative organ on theory and on the conduct of war of the Albanian political national-liberation movement. Somewhat later the first number of the organ of the Union of Communist Youth

under the title *Kushtrimi i Lirisë* (The War Call of Freedom) was issued.

The successes won by Albanian Communists during the few months of the existence of the Albanian Communist Party against a very strong and very astute enemy as fascist Italy, on the one hand, and Mustafa Kruja, on the other, were greater than had been anticipated. The anti-communist demagoguery of collaboration with the enemy and of extra-governmental pseudo-nationalists was seriously shaken. The platform of the formation of a common national-liberation front had won considerable prestige among the masses and among the intellectual nationalist circles that had been standing aloof. Judging that the conditions were by now mature to carry out further the programme of the National-Liberation Movement, through the initiative of the Albanian Communist Party, a national-liberation conference was convened at Peza, liberated by partisan forces, 18 kilometres from the capital. A large number of personalities renowned as anti-fascist patriots, together with Communists, were asked to attend this conference. Attending were also several irresolute "nationalists" and well-known anti-communists.

The Conference of Peza, which met on September 16, 1942, held discussions for several days, then on the basis of the proposals of Enver Hoxha made on behalf of the Albanian Communist Party, took a series of decisions, three of which had particular importance: a) the creation of a common *National-Liberation Front*, in which all the patriotic forces of the country, regardless of differences of ideas, of regions and of religions, should join in a war against the fascist invaders and Albanian collaborators, under the head of a *General National-Liberation Council*, to which communist leaders, nationalist-democrats, Zogist adherents, representatives of anti-fascist youth, of anti-fascist women, etc. should be elected; b) the extension and intensification on all the fronts of the armed liberation war against the foreign invaders and Albanian collaborators, with no compromise with the enemy; c) the creation

throughout the country, legally in the liberated zones or else underground in districts still under enemy occupation, in villages, regions, districts and cities, of local and regional national-liberation councils elected by the local populations; these councils should possess a double function — to act as mobilizing organs of the armed revolution and, at the same time, as organs of local authority, because they were to replace the fascist authority when it was overthrown in order to eliminate in this manner the re-establishment of the former bourgeois-landlords' authority; the national-liberation councils consequently would be the basic organs of the new democratic popular authority until, after the liberation of the whole country, conditions would be created for the convocation and the holding of a constituent assembly.

These decisions marked the incontestable victory of the political line that had been elaborated by the Albanian Communist Party. The creation of the National-Liberation Front sanctioned the failure of the attempts of the Mustafa Kruja government to detach the nationalists from the Communists. The decision for the intensification of the anti-fascist national-liberation war, on the other hand, marked the triumph over the view of the nationalist-bourgeoisie who, with their slogan "It's too early to start fighting the invader", sought to dampen public opinion until certain western powers landed, as they hoped, in the Balkans and without any difficulty seized power after the war. The third decision, that on the creation of national-liberation councils, marked the triumph of the democratic-revolutionary method on the question of taking possession of the political authority over the traditional practice employed up to that time by the "higher" social, conservative and reactionary classes.

The Conference of Peza thus decided to merge, in time and in space, the two historic processes in a common revolution: the national-liberation struggle to secure the independence of the country, and the popular revolution for the establishment of true democracy in Albania.

Disturbed by these "monstrous decisions", as Mustafa Kruja called them, the Italian fascist authorities with the *Luogotenente* F. Jacomoni at their head, as well as native collaborators, took a series of new military and police measures. A military punitive expedition was speedily sent against Peza, and this was followed by still greater expeditions that were sent against other partisan bands. At the same time, in the cities a campaign of unrestrained terror broke out against the Communists and their sympathizers. The fascists, after finding out that they were unable to exterminate the partisan bands, massacred innocent peasants and travellers, began to set fire at random to houses and to entire villages; in the cities martial law was proclaimed for an unlimited period; thousands of citizens were arrested, thus increasing the number of prisoners and concentration camps in Italy. But not one of these measures gave any result. From week to week the partisan bands increased in number and size; through their increase and through the war they waged, liberated zones were created in the inner regions of the country. In Peza, Skrapar, Kurvelesh, Çermenika, Martanesh, Opar, Mallakastrá and elsewhere, the authority of National-Liberation Councils began to operate normally and freely. All these raised the prestige of the National-Liberation Front within the country. Encouraging news soon arrived from abroad, too. On December 17, 1942, the British foreign minister A. Eden read in the House of Commons a British government declaration acknowledging the freedom and the independence of Albania and leaving it up to the Albanian people to decide at the end of the war what régime and form of government they would have in this country, adding at the conclusion that the question of Albania's post-war boundaries would be discussed at the Peace Conference. On the following day, December 18, the Soviet government, through its Minister of Foreign Affairs, V. Molotov, after expressing the very lively sympathy with which it envisaged the liberation war of the Albanian patriots, and after declaring that it would



Albanian partisans on the march

not acknowledge any claims of fascist Italy on Albania, announced its desire to see Albania free and independent, and recognized the right of the Albanian people to choose the form of government it desired. Further on, the Soviet government made it understood that on account of their struggle, the Albanian patriots would be considered as allies in the great anti-fascist coalition. The Secretary of the State Department of the United States of America,



Mallakastra detachment of partisans and its commander,  
Comrade Mehmet Shehu

C. Hull, too, expressing his admiration for the war of the Albanian partisan units and reconfirming the right of Albania to be a free and independent state, declared likewise that the question of the form of government after the war depended on the people of the country themselves.

These successes of the National-Liberation Front in general, and in particular those of the Albanian Communist Party, which was its backbone, did not leave undisturbed the bourgeois "nationalist" circles that had remained in suspense. Various persons in these circles — mainly intellectuals and anti-Zogist bourgeoisie — towards the end of 1942 formed an underground organization under the name of *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front). At the head of this organization which had declared itself nationalist and anti-Zogist, stood as a precious capital Midhat Frashëri, alias

Lumo Skendo as he was known, a man of culture, renowned as anti-Zogist and anti-fascist. Along with him, however, the Central Committee of the *Balli Kombëtar* included also personalities with no political prestige such as the former collaborationist minister of justice in the Mustafa Kruja Cabinet, Hasan Dosti, or else high officials of the collaborationist administration, such as Ali Këlcyra, Kol Tromara, Koço Muka, or else ambitious landlords such as Nuredin bey Vlora, etc.

The programme of the *Balli Kombëtar*, published in terse phrases in the form of a decalogue, did not make a secret of the anti-communist sentiments which pre-occupied its nationalist-bourgeois leaders. The anti-fascist struggle for the independence of Albania was not expressed in the programme of the first plan. This had its proper reasons, which soon became clearly apparent. The leaders of the *Balli Kombëtar* had no mind to aggravate their relations with the fascist invader, and still less with the collaborationist government; on the contrary they wanted to take advantage of the unfavourable situation of the discredited government authorities in order to consolidate their organization freely. And truly, in simulated secret positions in front of the collaborationist administration, the *Balli Kombëtar* rapidly extended its network of organizations in a multitude of districts of the country, and without meeting with any obstacle created a number of armed detachments that remained in the wait. Subsequently, after only a short time, using as a pretext the internationalist cooperation that existed between the Albanian partisans and the Yugoslav and Greek partisans in the war against the common enemy, the *Balli Kombëtar* launched an all-out propaganda campaign slandering the Albanian Communist Party as an agent of the Yugoslav and Greek Communist Parties driving Albania into submission to Yugoslavia and Greece. Therefore, the nationalist-bourgeois leaders concluded, the Albanian forces should be spared from the exterminating war with fascist Italy

in order to employ them against the foes of tomorrow — Yugoslavia and Greece.

At the beginning, as the "National Front" (*Balli Kombëtar*) found quite a number of supporters, the country was threatened by a new split which was bound to bring in its train the danger of the outbreak of a civil war to the benefit of the fascist invaders. The fascist invaders, too, in the early months of 1943, took a series of political measures, through which they aimed at leading astray Albanian public opinion and at isolating the National-Liberation Front. On January 10, 1943 they overthrew the discredited and politically cabinet of Mustafa Kruja. After the short duration of the government of Eqrem Libohova, on February 22, 1943 they brought to power a government of compromise headed by Maliq bey Bushati, which in secret relations with the "National Front" became the executor of the new policy of Rome — of the so-called "concessions" to the Albanians. While it was being promised that the Italo-Albanian customs and monetary conventions of April 20, 1939 as well as the convention of June 3, 1939 on the unification of international relations of Italy and of Albania would be taken in reconsideration, after a few days had elapsed, the decision was taken for the substitution of the Albanian Fascist Party by a new organization under the name of the "Guard of Great Albania", and still another decision on the creation of the Albanian army and gendarmery, as independent self-relying forces, which according to the statute of June 3, 1939, were treated as attached parts of the Italian armed and police forces. In March 1943, Mussolini decreed the discharge from his office as *Luogotenente* of the king-emperor, Francesco Jacomoni, detested by the Albanians and of no further use to Rome, who was replaced by General Alberto Pariani, former chief of the Italian military mission in Albania and former Italian under-secretary of state for war.

It was not the demagogic steps of Rome so much, as the propaganda campaign of the "National Front" combined

with them, that placed the Albanian Communist Party, for the second time after the demagogic and police offensive that had been undertaken a year ago by Mustafa Kruja, to a hard test. Yet the partisan bands continued uninterruptedly the attacks and acts of sabotage against the military forces of the enemy, and won encouraging successes, such as the liberation by assault of Voskopoja on January 14, 1943, the engagement in the proximity of Gramshi, where the partisans captured 200 fascist soldiers and officers on January 31, 1943, the attack on the asphalt mines of Salonica on February 23, 1943. Meanwhile the communist leaders called the first meeting of the national conference of their Party, in order to analyse, along with the internal problems of the Party in respect to organization, its activity up to that date, and, what was of particular importance, in order to delineate the political line that was to be followed in the future in the new situation created within the country by the combined political offensive of the invaders, of the collaborators and of the bourgeois nationalists of the "National Front", and on the other hand by the turn that had begun on the Soviet-German war front following the historic victories won at Stalingrad on February 2, 1943.

The conference which assembled in Labinot in the neighbourhood of Elbasan from March 17-22, 1943, had no reservations whatsoever in formulating its approval of the political line followed by the Albanian Communist Party up to that date, and found absolutely no reason to modify this line in the future. The analysis made at the Conference of Labinot and the arguments brought forth there by the delegates of all the regions confirmed indisputably the report of the Provisional Central Committee which was delivered by Enver Hoxha. During the 16 months of its existence, the Albanian Communist Party had grown and gained strength, its political line had triumphed with the rapidity of a thunderbolt in all directions, the partisan war had been intensified, inflicting serious damage on the enemy, the National-Liberation Front had been created and

was extended throughout the country, whole zones had been liberated, where organs of the new power were functioning, the echo of the national-liberation war had crossed the boundaries of the country, inciting the encouraging statements of December by the three principal powers of the great anti-fascist coalition. The ranks of the foreign enemy and of native collaborators were seized by bewilderment and uncertainty, prompting their policy of concessions, etc., etc. After pointing out the origin of these successes, the conference deemed them of great value for the future also, in other words the National-Liberation War should be continued without any compromise with the enemy; the alliance of the Albanians with the great anti-fascist coalition, and particularly with the Soviet Union, should be strengthened; the National-Liberation Front should continuously be extended, by addressing itself directly to the workers and peasants, and not through the intermediary of influential and unreliable "chiefs"; into the National-Liberation Front honest patriotic intellectuals should be attracted; from minor partisan bands and units, bigger military formations should be created, in the first place, partisan battalions, with the object of laying the foundation for the formation of a regular National-Liberation Army, etc. The conference likewise took the decision that the Albanian Communist Party should maintain a prudent and patient attitude towards nationalist organizations that had been created or that were to be created, and although they were convinced that Albanian bourgeois nationalists had the tendency to betray by uniting themselves with the enemy, continuous attempts should be made in order to draw them into the orbit of the anti-fascist patriotic war, to enlist them in the National-Liberation Front; by all possible means it should be tried to avoid the outbreak of the civil war, which would be to the advantage of the enemy, and only in case all these efforts failed, should it proceed to the unmasking of bourgeois-nationalist organizations as collaborationist and treacherous organizations. Against military formations of these organizations arms should be used only in self-

defence from provocatory attacks that they would undertake.

After the Conference of Labinot, the Albanian Communist Party reiterated to the "National Front" the previous proposals for its entry in the National-Liberation Front, or at least for the execution in common of war actions against the fascist invaders and Albanian collaborators. The leaders of the "National Front" rejected these proposals on the excuse that the time had not come as yet for an open uprising, and that it was necessary to wait still further, by which they let it be understood that they were awaiting "the second front" which England and the United States of America had engaged themselves to open, and which they hoped was going to be opened in Albania. However, soon enough the leaders of the Albanian Communist Party became aware of certain secret documents which indicated that behind these excuses, the leaders of the "National Front" were organizing a conspiracy on a grand scale against the National-Liberation Movement in general, in order to eliminate its moving force, the Albanian Communist Party, in particular. Two members of the Central Committee of the "National Front", Ali Këlcyra and Nuredin Vlora, had signed on March 15, 1943 with the commander-in-chief of the Italian armies of occupation in Albania, General Renzo Dalmazzo, a secret agreement which has come to be known as the "*Dalmazzo-Këlcyra Protocol*", according to which the "National Front" agreed not to start any armed revolt in south Albania, while the Italian command of occupation on its part promised that it would not undertake any operation of pursuit against Albanian armed bands that would respect this protocol. The significance of the protocol was evident: the "National Front" was to be free to organize armed detachments in order to direct them at the opportune moment not against the foreign invader, but against the partisans. On the other hand, the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party became aware of sufficient indications which demonstrated that officers of the British military mission

sent over by the Inter-Allied Mediterranean Command to Albanian National-Liberation partisan forces, were in secret contact with the leaders of the "National Front", who continued to remain in feigned secrecy, that they were likewise in secret contact with the most prominent chief of the Zogists, Abaz Kupi, who through their instigation was forsaking the National-Liberation Front, to which he had adhered since its creation in Peza in September 1942, as well as with other reactionary leaders and chieftains with pronounced collaborationist tendencies who still enjoyed a certain influence in the mountainous backwoods of the country—with the aim of forming a common nationalist anti-communist front.

But the weakest side of all these efforts was the dread of the armed anti-fascist war, the tendency to create with the disguised aid of fascist invaders and of collaborators, the nationalist anti-communist front, and their readiness to sacrifice even the anti-fascist National-Liberation War for the sake of seeing the Albanian Communist Party extirpated.

The Albanian Communist Party responded to this conspiracy by continuous proposals for cooperation in the patriotic war, and by an unprecedented increase in the armed actions of the partisan bands against the armies of the Italian invaders and local collaborators. To the call of the Albanian Communist Party for the intensification of the war of liberation, thousands of young men and young women responded enthusiastically. In May 1943 volunteer partisan battalions with military commanders and political commissars were formed. By the end of May 1943 the number of partisans had doubled what it was four months before, whereas by the end of June 1943 there were four times as many partisans. During the month of June, fierce fighting took place throughout the country. In some cases it was the partisan troops that assailed the Italian army in cities and in lorry-columns, in other cases it was the Italian army that undertook frontal operations against partisan troops, in the attempt to break the national-liberation resist-



Asim Zeneli, heroic commander who fell gloriously at the head of his forces on July 2, 1943



Zoja Curre, one of the many Albanian heroines who died fighting for the liberation of her country

ance and re-subjugate the liberated zones. In either case the partisan battalions and bands scored remarkable successes. After the ignominious defeats that the Italian troops had suffered in the course of a three-day battle that they had undertaken against the partisans and peasants in the area of Peza, from June 14 to June 17, where they left more than 300 of their men and officers killed, and after the equally ignominious defeat of the Italian troops and mercenaries during the four-day operation that took place in the Mallakstra region, where they left hundreds of bodies, the partisan battalions assaulted on July 1, 1943 the garrison of thousands of Italian soldiers of Përmeti, inflicting on them severe losses and liberating the city after strenuous fighting on the 5th of July. On the following day, July 6, 1943, in the proximity of Barmash of Kolonja, the Albanian partisans clashed for the first time with troops of the German Hitlerite army, which had penetrated into Albania from Macedonia, in the belief that here they would find a safe way to reach the Greek city of Janina. For the serious losses they had sustained in their first encounter with Albanian partisans, the Hitlerite Germans knew no other way of revenge than by devastating by fire the vil-

lage of Borova and exterminating every man, woman and child, who had not been able to escape. A hundred and seven souls perished.

While in every nook and cranny of the country uninterrupted fighting was raging, the General Council of the National-Liberation Front assembled in Labinot and, judging that by now a regular volunteer army had already been created (in those days approximately 10 thousand men strong), on July 10, 1943 decided on the formation of the *General-Staff of the National-Liberation Army*, under the command of Spiro Moissiu, then a major, and as political commissar, Enver Hoxha. The formation of the General-Staff foretold a further intensification of the armed National-Liberation Movement in Albania.

On the day that the General-Staff was formed, Anglo-American allied armies landed in Sicily. These two events alarmed the fascist government circles. With the aim of securing the rear in face of an eventual disembarkment of the allied powers on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, the Italian army of occupation in Albania undertook a series of large-scale military operations with the aim of destroying the National-Liberation Army. Four Italian divisions equipped with artillery, tanks and aircraft, started a new operation in the Mallakstra zone on the 14th of July, setting fire to 80 nearby villages and killing hundreds of peasants, without succeeding in annihilating the partisan battalions of not more than 2,000 fighters. On the contrary, by their resistance and counter-attacks, in which they were supported by the masses of the peasantry, the partisan battalions during four days of fighting inflicted hundreds of casualties on the enemy. Nor did the other Italian expeditions fare any better. Complying with the order of the General-Staff not to give the enemy a moment's peace, all the partisan detachments at every point throughout the country launched assaults against the Italian garrisons and columns of military vehicles.

The "National Front" too, deeming the landing of the allied powers in the Balkans as possible and as quite at

hand, started, though still not altogether openly, to strike at the partisan formations by means of its bands. The logic of the events inevitably brought about the cooperation of nationalist forces of the "National Front" with the forces of the Italian invaders, which the leaders of the "National Front" endeavoured to dissemble and then to deny. Various facts, however, were sufficiently clear to the public. The case of Kolonja, when with the support of the Italians a band of the "National Front" attacked partisan forces, and still more the case of Mallakstra, when Frontist forces assailed in the rear partisan battalions engaged in the unequal war against Italian divisions — were clamorous indices, forewarnings that the bourgeois-nationalist leaders together with Midhat Frashëri, too, who, blinded by his fanatical anti-communist hatred sanctioned these actions, were gradually drifting to open treason.

After the overthrow of Mussolini on July 27, 1943 and after Marshal Badoglio's government had come to power, the National-Liberation War in Albania did not slacken. On the contrary, the General-Staff of the National-Liberation Army issued the order that the fighting should be carried on with still greater intensity, until the unconditional surrender of Italy and Germany, as had been announced by the big Allied Powers. At the same time the National-Liberation General Council for the last time addressed an invitation to the "National Front" to renounce the disguised cooperation with the occupation forces and to unite with the National-Liberation Front in the war against them. The "National Front" leaders agreed in the end to enter into negotiations. In the village of Mukje of the district of Kruja on August 1, and 2, 1943, a meeting of the delegates of both parties took place.

In order to reach the cooperation, the leaders of the "National Front" placed onerous conditions: they demanded the formation of a "Committee for the Rescue of Albania" that should replace the National-Liberation General Council which had up to then directed the patriotic, anti-fascist war; they demanded that the "Committee for the Rescue of Al-



bania" should be composed of 12 members, half to be chosen by the "National Front" and the other half by the "National-Liberation Front"; they demanded the dissolution of the National-Liberation Councils set up in the villages, cities and districts and the formation of new organs, where the proportional participation of the members of the "National Front" should be respected.

It was evident that by the partition into halves of the seats in the central as well as in the local organs, the "National Front" would in effect secure a majority, because it took into account the seats in these organs, too, that would go to non-Communist members of the National-Liberation General Council, some of whom, as for example Abaz Kupi, had started to adopt an openly adverse attitude towards the Albanian Communist Party. Consequently, the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party, as well as the National-Liberation General Council, rejected these conditions that would render easier the seizure of the authority after the war by the bourgeois-nationalists who were ready to pass over, with the aid of their friends abroad, to anti-Communist terror.

After the interruption of the fruitless negotiations of Mukje, the divergences between the two political alignments became aggravated to the extreme. The "National Front" continued to follow its former line of action, increasing its endeavours, always in conformity with the Dalmazzo-Këlcyra Protocol, to augment its armed forces, which from time to time, whenever they felt themselves fit, provoked and hit the partisan forces. On the contrary, the National-Liberation General Council and the partisan detachments continued to win all the while more successes in their almost daily assaults against the Italian forces of occupation. The month of August marked a further growth of the partisan forces, which from battalions grew into partisan brigades. By a decision of the General-Staff of the National-Liberation Army, the First Shock Brigade was formed, and on August 15, 1943 it was inaugurated in Vithkuq of Korça, under the command of Mehmet Shehu, former volunteer



Members of the First Shock Brigade of the Albanian National-Liberation Army on the day of its founding in Vithkuq (Korça) on Aug. 15, 1943

in the Civil War of Spain and commander of the valorous partisan forces in Mallakstra. In the days that followed, the First Brigade and 30 different partisan battalions undertook armed struggle in every quarter of the country, proceeding to the liberation of cities.

On September 4, 1943, once again in Labinot, the second National-Liberation Conference was convened in order to review the political situation. This Conference took a series of decisions on the new problems that had emerged after the first conference which had been held in Peza nearly a year before. After it had reconfirmed the political line followed up to then and the attitude adopted by the General Council in the negotiations of Mukje, taking into consideration the provocative and collaborationist attitude of the leaders of the "National Front", and at the very end,

after conviction was expressed that it was not possible to attract these leaders by mere discussions into the anti-fascist patriotic war line, the Conference of Labinot decided to answer the "National Front" by completely unmasking it before the public, and by destroying it as an organization, thus creating the opportunity for its ordinary members to adhere without any obstacle to the National-Liberation Front. The Conference reconfirmed the functions of the local National-Liberation Councils, provided for the formation of such councils in all districts, cities and villages of the country, sanctioned their statutes and rules. In anticipation of the imminent capitulation of Italy and the occupation of Albania by German armies, the Conference decided on the continuation of the National-Liberation War with still greater vigour against the Hitlerite aggressors as well.

The capitulation of Italy on September 8, 1943, while the work of the Conference of Labinot was being completed, created a new, original situation for the Albanian partisans. On the instruction of the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party and of the General-Staff, the partisan troops interrupted the armed struggle wherever they were and proposed to the Italian troops, their enemies until that day, to bring to an end their hostilities and to unite with them in order to carry on the war against the common enemies of Albania and of Italy, the German-Hitlerite armies, which, coming from Macedonia and Greece, were invading the territory of Albania. The commander of the Italian forces of occupation, General R. Dalmazzo, refused; the major part of the Italian troops obeyed his orders and surrendered themselves to the Germans; others, which did not accept either cooperation with the allies of Mussolini or to fight against them on the side of the partisans, were disbanded; thousands of soldiers deserted their barracks and sought refuge and friendly reception by Albanian peasants. Only some hundred Italian soldiers accepted enlistment as volunteers in the ranks of the partisans, forming at first one battalion and later a separate brigade under the name

of "Antonio Gramsci". During these days, the overwhelming part of the country, with the exception of the principal cities, passed into the hands of the National-Liberation Army.

## THE CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL-LIBERATION WAR AGAINST THE HITLERITE INVADERS; THE LIBERATION OF ALBANIA AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE POPULAR REVOLUTION

The partisan troops offered stiff resistance to the German armies, which invaded Albania immediately after the capitulation of Italy. In some cases armed clashes continued for several days. Of all these, the most violent encounter took place near Vlora—in Drashovica and Mavrova—at the termination of which the partisans freed nearly 7,000 Italian soldiers and officers, and prisoners-of-war, from the camp of Drashovica, and obliged the Hitlerites to retreat after sustaining heavy losses. In the weeks that followed, however, thanks to reinforcements that had arrived from different parts of the Balkans, the German armies, vastly superior, after hard fighting captured the cities of the country and the key points of the communications system. For the martyred Albania, a new chapter of the National-Liberation War was beginning.

The Hitlerite occupational command soon found a common language with the forces of internal reaction, with the collaborators of yesterday and particularly with bourgeois-nationalist forces, which, at the capitulation of Italy, had been terrified by the impressive political and military force of the National-Liberation General Council. The bourgeois-nationalists were unable to perceive that the source of their weakness lay in their opportunist and capitulating attitude

before the invader and at the reactionary position they had adopted in face of social-political problems, which were of great concern to the masses of the country. They found no better way of saving themselves from ruin than cooperation with the new German-Hitlerite invader.

This cooperation was founded on absurd, contradictory principles. For the Hitlerite Germans, Albania was an occupied territory to be used as a military base for defending the Balkan Peninsula against any allied disembarkation and at the same time to fight from here against the allies of the great anti-Hitlerite coalition, the National-Liberation Movements of the Balkan peoples. By the bourgeois-nationalists on the contrary, Albania was considered as an "independent" state which had the duty of strengthening itself by waging war against the Albanian National-Liberation Movement, and later, against Yugoslavia and Greece. The absurdity reached its climax when it was imagined that "independent" Albania would be "neutral", while it was permitted that its territory could be used as a military base for Nazi Germany in its war against the Allied Powers and while Albanian forces would be used in fighting against the Balkan allies of the anti-Hitlerite coalition. It was clear that on these premises this sort of cooperation was an unparalleled political success for the Hitlerites, as they were thus assured that by means of Albanian collaborationists' forces they would fight the Albanian National-Liberation Movement and afterwards the National-Liberation Movement of Yugoslavia and of Greece, which were proclaimed and acknowledged as allies of the great anti-fascist coalition.

The German Nazis openly, as well as secretly, gave all possible aid to Albanian "nationalists" in order to assure their security and to reorganize themselves round a game of political intrigue unprecedented in Europe. On September 11, 1943, the "independence of the motherland" was proclaimed in Tirana, and a "Provisory Executive Committee" was created under the presidency of Ibrahim Biçakçiu until the "constituent assembly" should be called.

Feverish efforts were made for the restoration of the Albanian army under the command of General Aqif Permeti, and of the Albanian gendarmery under the command of Colonel Hysni Dema, both of whom were former Zogists and collaborators of the Italian occupation. Within and outside the capital city, guarding closely its disguised clandestine existence, the "National Front" carried on its attempts to strengthen its armed forces and improve its organization. Along with it, with the support of a dozen chieftains who had been in the pay of Zogu and later of Jacomoni, in the neighbourhood of Tirana the formation of a Zogist party under the name "Legality" was announced, to be headed by Abaz Kupi who continued as member of the Presidency of the National-Liberation General Council. In Shkodër, efforts were undertaken for the formation of an ultra-reactionary Catholic fascist organization under the head of the chief-*bayraktar* Gjon Markagjoni, a former member of the Italian fascist senate, behind whom Catholic prelates, former collaborators of Mussolini, stood concealed. A speedy and ferocious reaction was thus being organized against the National-Liberation Movement, which would turn out, as in the past, to the benefit of the foreign invader.

The Albanian Communist Party and the National-Liberation General Council did not retreat from the attitude adopted by them but, on the contrary, continued their efforts in order to face the unequal war with the experienced Hitlerite army of occupation and, at the same time, the civil war that was being forced upon the country. During the autumn of 1943, the situation was very favourable for them. To the provocations and to the assaults on the part of the government military forces and of the "National Front", the partisans stood firm, scoring victories that brought the enemy chaos. Outside of the cities, the National-Liberation Councils freely exercised authority. Even the cities were kept under the close watch of partisan forces. The capital city, too, was virtually besieged. The partisan forces were so close to the capital that on October 18, 1943,

as the so-called "constituent assembly" was opened, the artillery of the Third Brigade made a direct hit with gunfire on the palace, causing panic in the ranks of the members of the assembly, immediate suspension of the sessions going on in that majestic building and their continuation in another, inconspicuous, hall. More than 50 appeals and tracts, besides the bulletin of news, were issued by the higher organs of the Albanian Communist Party during autumn, in the usual underground way, in order to enlighten the public on the machinations devised in Tirana and in the districts by the most reactionary circles of the country against the patriotic, anti-fascist movement.

These machinations took concrete form on October 20, 1943 with the creation, by the "Constituent Assembly", of the Council of Regents, composed of four members, and, on November 4, 1943, with the formation of the Albanian quisling government. Just as the Council of Regents, so the council of ministers represented a coalition of multiple colours on the basis of the anti-Communist war — of the "National Front", the "Legality" party, of the Catholic Concentration, of the "independent nationalists" together with the agents of the Hitlerite Gestapo. Mehdi Frashëri, former prime minister of Zogu who had not been compromised during the fascist occupation, was brought over by the Germans by special plane from Italy, where he had been in luxurious confinement, and had a seat allotted to him in the Council of Regents together with Fuad Dibra, member of the National Front, Anton Arapi, a Franciscan friar belonging to the Catholic Concentration, and Lef Nosi, an "independent nationalist". The same compromise was reflected also in the composition of the government headed by Rexhep Mitrovica, a collaborator of the Italian fascists, with the difference that here the strong hand was the minister of the interior, Xhafer Deva, an agent of Hitler's Gestapo. The daily political enlightenment, based on numerous secret documents, which openly demonstrated the cooperation of the heads of the "National Front" and of the "Legality" party with the German forces against the parti-

sans, had their effect. Politically, the National-Liberation General Council emerged triumphant.

The "National Front" and "Legality", which continued as wolves in sheep's clothing, were denounced by the National-Liberation General Council as treacherous collaborationist parties. On December 7, 1943, Abas Kupa was expelled from the Presidency of the National-Liberation General Council.

The military defeats that the armed forces of the quisling government and of the pseudo-clandestine underground organizations had suffered in their encounters with partisan brigades and battalions, and furthermore, the continuous losses these brigades and battalions on the German troops inflicted by their assaults urged the Hitlerite occupational command to undertake a large-scale operation to destroy the Albanian armed resistance. This operation was prolonged during the whole winter of 1943-1944 and constituted one of the culminating events of the armed Albanian National-Liberation War.

The "winter operation", as it is called now in Albania, started in November with a series of preliminary blows dealt by the German army, aided by quisling and National Front troops, from November 5-10 against the partisan Third Brigade that operated in the Peza zone near the capital; from November 16-21 against the partisan forces of the Dibra zone, capturing the city together with the district; on November 19 against Berat, liberated by the partisans, which they occupied; a few days later against the First Brigade, which defended liberated Mallakstra; on December 10 against the partisans of the Vlora district. On December 19, 1943 a German division trained in operations in mountainous terrain, accompanied by quisling forces, undertook a lightning operation in the hilly regions of Tirana, of Martanesh and of Çermenika, then covered by snow, where the General-Staff of the National-Liberation Army was located and where the Second and Third Brigades had been concentrated. The partisan forces, who were unable to halt the German offensive, with great

difficulty, and after heroic resistance, succeeded in escaping from the trap and retreating into other districts.

After these preliminary actions, during which both sides suffered serious losses, the combined offensive of the German armies began against south Albania, where the greater part of partisan troops had been gathered, in the bitter weather of January 1944. The National-Liberation Army was put before an extraordinarily hard test. The ground was snow covered, the winter severe, while the partisans had poor clothing and footwear, or often enough none. On account of the previous operations of Italian armies and of the collaborators, hundreds of villages had been ravaged and great masses of peasant families had no shelter and were menaced by starvation. Not only provisions and clothing were scarce, but ammunition, too. The German army, on the contrary, outfitted with all it needed, was composed mainly of divisions that had taken part in the fighting on the Soviet front, trained in winter operations and experienced in partisan warfare.

On January 7, 1944, three German divisions escorted as always by armed quisling and National Front bands — as there was no Zogist organization or band in south Albania — starting from Korça, Elbasan and Berat, grouped in semi-circular form, began the operations in the southern fastnesses of the country, with the aim of destroying the partisan troops and their bases, the villages. The interior regions were trampled, whole districts were turned to ashes, hundreds of peasants were killed according to the Hitlerite method. A number of armed encounters took place between the German troops and the Albanian forces of the First and Fourth Brigades and other partisan battalions, which operated in these zones and, unable to withstand the iron blows of the Wehrmacht; either retreated farther south in order to take up new positions, or else pierced the front line and attacked the enemy from the rear. On January 21, 1944, at Tenda-e-Qypit, the bloodiest battle of this operation was fought. On January 26, 1944, yet another German division started

marching from the territory of Greece, which assailed the partisan forces from the rear, with the aim of completing the encirclement. Through heaps of snow and swollen rivers, with extreme privations and insufficient ammunition, the First Brigade and the recently formed Fourth Brigade and other partisan troops, sustained by masses of peasants, resisted valiantly and self-sacrificingly, the fierce, dexterous, and numerically superior and better equipped Hitlerites, that continued on the offensive. In the belief that they had annihilated the partisan forces, the German armies directed their steps to the districts of Vlora and Kurveleshi, where they encountered the local partisan forces and the Fifth Brigade, which was likewise formed only recently, and which likewise succeeded in manoeuvring in order to escape annihilation. After nearly three months the German winter operation came to an end.

During the period that the operations of the Wehrmacht troops and of the quisling and National Front bands continued, the cities too came to know the unprecedented terror of Hitler. Thousands of honourable communist and non-communist patriots, sick partisans who had come to the cities for medical treatment, but ordinary persons, too, who were suspected of sympathy towards the National-Liberation Movement or else mistrusted for the only reason that they had not agreed to join collaborators' organizations, were apprehended, some to be imprisoned and others to be thrown into the camps of extermination at Prishtina, Belgrade, Buchenwald, Matthauesen and elsewhere. The "National Front" organizations, in which by now many criminals had been gathered, became the most active spies of Hitler's Gestapo and the quisling police. The terror reached its climax in February 1944. On February 4, under the direction of the German Hitlerite captain Langer, the German-quisling police, with the participation of "National Front" members, who had joined the ranks of the collaborative police, carried out a still more heinous crime — the butchering of 84 peaceful citizens of Tirana in front of their very homes without

the least formality. Similar massacres, which were carried on later, too, took place in other districts of the country.

During those weeks in Tirana, the collaborative circles and those friendly to them, held the opinion that the German winter operation and the Nazi "National Front" terror had, if not completely destroyed the National-Liberation military forces, at least seriously injured and crippled them and had incapacitated them beyond recovery. Nevertheless only a few weeks had elapsed since the termination of the German offensive when alarming news began to reach Tirana. As the legendary Phoenix that rose out of its own ashes, so the National-Liberation Army recovered with amazing rapidity through the heroism of its martyrs. While the partisan brigades were re-establishing the authority of National-Liberation Councils throughout all south Albania, the First Brigade under the command of Mehmet Shehu, through a historic march that it undertook in the last days of February across snow-clad mountainous regions in the direction of central Albania, in order to deliver the General-Staff from the German-quisling blockade, towards the middle of March appeared in the neighbourhood of Tirana, causing a serious dilemma in the ranks of its enemies. After that, during April 1944, encouraged by the momentous victories of the Soviet army which had already penetrated into the territories of Czechoslovakia and of Roumania occupied by the Nazis and, reinforced by thousands of young volunteers who had seized arms that early spring, the National-Liberation Army took the offensive, winning resounding victories throughout the land—not only in the southern and central regions, but also in the north of Albania, where the reaction headed by the clergymen and chieftains was stronger than anywhere else.

These successes enabled the National-Liberation General Council to call a meeting of the *Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Congress*, which delegates were to attend as far as circumstances allowed, both from the liberated zones,

which had been expanded, and also from the districts that were still under the German-quisling yoke.

The *Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Congress* met in the liberated city of Permeti on May 24, 1944, with the participation of nearly 200 delegates who represented the mass of the Albanian population that had adhered to the National-Liberation Movement—revolutionary Communists and honest nationalists, labourers, peasants and intellectuals, men, women, youth, partisan fighters, political agitators behind the lines. After listening to the main report delivered on behalf of the National-Liberation General Council and the General-Staff of the National-Liberation Army by Enver Hoxha, on the internal and external situation, on the National-Liberation War and on the popular democratic revolution, on the victories achieved against fascist-Nazi enemies and on the immense sacrifice made by the whole population, on the treacherous conduct of out-and-out collaborationist organizations such as the National Guard, the Guard of Justice, the Catholic Concentration, as well as masked collaborationist organizations such as the National Front, the "Legality" party, the so-called Social-Democratic Party, which shared responsibility with the Hitlerites for nationalist oppression, for Nazi terror, for the vast number of arbitrary crimes, for the burning of hundreds of villages, the Congress took a series of important resolutions in connection with the further development of the National-Liberation War and of the popular democratic revolution in Albania. The Congress of Permeti chose the *Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council*, composed of 78 members with the old democratic patriot Dr. Omer Nishani as president, as the highest legislative and executive organ of people's sovereignty. The Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council, on its part, appointed the *Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Committee*, with the attributes of a provisional democratic government, comprising ten ministries, headed by Enver Hoxha, who was elected at the same time Commander-in-Chief of the Albanian National-Liberation Army. The Congress likewise

decided that the question of the regime of Albania should be solved immediately after the victory of the anti-fascist war, by the Albanian people itself—precisely as had been announced by the great Allied Powers in December 1942. In connection with this, it was decided to bar Achmet Zogu from returning to Albania in order to avoid a repetition of the events of 1924, and so that no other Albanian government that might be formed within or outside the country should gain recognition so long as there existed the Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council elected in the heat of the patriotic war by the popular forces participating in the National-Liberation War, which had already been carried on for a number of years. The Congress likewise decided that all political and economic agreements concluded by former Albanian governments should be revised, especially those by Zogist governments, and that at the termination of this revision, all anti-national agreements that violated people's sovereignty or the economic interests of the country should be repealed. The Congress of Permeti decided finally that the patriotic war against the foreign aggressor should be intensified, that hostilities should be carried on until the complete destruction of both overt and covert collaborationist organizations, that Local National-Liberation Councils should be reinforced and expanded throughout the whole country as the basic organs of the new democratic popular authority. In order to strengthen still further the alliance with the Great Anti-Fascist Coalition, the Congress decided to request the governments of the USSR and the USA to send military missions to the General-Staff, which missions did in fact arrive in the ensuing months. The Congress adjourned after addressing a fervent greeting to each of the heads of government of the three Great Powers of the anti-fascist coalition—J. Stalin, W. Churchill and F. Roosevelt. The message addressed to J. Stalin, drawn up with particular warmth, expressed the boundless sympathy of the Albanian fighters for the land of the Soviets, not only for their monumental victories in the war against Hitlerite



Officers of the Soviet Military Mission to Albania in 1944 attached to the Albanian partisan forces

Germany, not only for the historic successes won in the gigantic battle of the construction of socialism in the USSR, but more particularly for the faith the Albanians had in the Soviet policy based on principle, in which they saw the guarantee for the victory of the national independence of Albania and of democratic popular authority, the defender of these victories against international intrigues.

On May 28, 1944, the day on which the Congress of Permeti terminated its work, the German occupation command undertook a second operation against the National-Liberation Army in June in south Albania. More than four Hitlerite divisions comprising altogether about 33,000 men with nearly 15,000 armed men placed at their disposal by the quisling government, by the "National Front" and by "Legality", attacked from all quarters (massacring, setting fire and plundering the people as always), the

National-Liberation Army, which by then numbered almost 35,000 men and women partisans incorporated into one assault division, nine assault brigades and into tens of regional battalions. Albania became once again a battle field. The German armies everywhere met with stubborn resistance by the partisan military units, which valiantly and ingeniously succeeded in combining counter-attack with ambush and retreat, inflicting greater losses on the enemy and sustaining less themselves. This time, too, the National-Liberation Army escaped annihilation, the main objective of its external and internal enemies. During this operation of about two weeks, the partisan forces suffered about 500 casualties, besides almost 1,000 peasant men and women massacred, whereas nearly 3,000 German and collaborationist men and officers were killed. The National-Liberation Army, however, replaced its losses within a few days by thousands of new volunteers who swelled its ranks, and this at a time when its enemies were seized by fright due to defeat after defeat. In order to remain on the defensive and put into execution the decision of the Congress of Permeti, on order of the commander-in-chief of the First Assault Division, on June 26, 1944, started its march northward, in order to liberate the regions still under occupation and to destroy the bases of internal reaction. The advance of the partisan First Assault Division and the enthusiasm with which it was welcomed by the people of the country caused real panic in the ranks of the collaborators. While in Tirana the solution of the crisis that had burst within the quisling government since June 16 was still pending, the partisans of the First Assault Division together with local battalions were liberating one after another the regions of central Albania, and then entered, without meeting any resistance, the so-called "Zogist" and "National Front" districts of Mat and of Dibra. Faced with death, the "Zogist" and "National Front" leaders renounced feigned secrecy and gathered around the new government that was formed in the middle of July under the presidency of the chieftain Fiqri Dine,

member of the "Legality" party. A desperate attempt was made by the united government and government-friendly forces in the district of Dibra. Nevertheless the strenuous and bloody fighting that lasted for nearly two weeks came to an end with their disastrous defeat. The new as well as the former attempt undertaken by the combined German and mercenary forces during the second half of August 1944, terminated in their total destruction. In the city and in the district of Dibra the authority of National-Liberation Councils was definitely established.

While the battles were being waged in Dibra, a new division of the National-Liberation Army, the Second Assault Division, which had just been formed at the beginning of August, likewise undertook a march northward. In mid-August, the Second Assault Division appeared in the suburbs of the capital, paralysing the communications between Tirana and the provinces. In the days that followed, the two divisions, incorporated in one still greater military unit, the First Army Corps of the National-Liberation Army, undertook the triumphal march in the direction of the last den of internal reaction, the patriarchal regions of northern Albania. The entry of the partisans into mountainous Mirdita, which had been left for centuries in darkness and ignorance by past regimes, gave a tremendous shock to the collaborationist circles. Orosh, the centre of Mirdita, which had resisted Turkish occupation for hundreds of years on end, fell easily into the hands of the brave partisans, who succeeded in winning at once the hearts of the proud mountaineers. The only edifice the partisans set fire to was the palace of Gjon Marka Gjoni, the die-hard ultra-reactionary chieftain of Mirdita in Orosh, and this was done to indicate the end of the epoch of semi-feudal patriarchy and the overthrow of familial rule, which assumed the proportions almost of dynastic rule, and which ever since the proclamation of the independence of Albania had opposed pugnaciously all progressive steps and had entered into the service of foreign imperialist and chauvinist powers.



By the end of August 1944 the partisan forces had liberated most of the country. In the hands of German armies and of the entirely discredited and dispersed collaborators, only the main cities and a few isolated region remained.

In September 1944, the National-Liberation Army entered the last stage of the patriotic war, the assault for the final liberation of the cities and of the whole country. This task expressed in a special order which bore the signature of Enver Hoxha, was favoured by the enthusiastic atmosphere created by the very rapid advance of Soviet armies in Eastern Europe, by the second front that was at last opened by Anglo-American armies in Western Europe, by the unarrestable growth in manpower of the National-Liberation Army, which by now was an army of nearly 50,000 men and women fighters, and at the very end by the precipitated dissolution of the collaborationist government forces and treacherous organizations. Their dissolution manifested itself in the desertion *en masse* of gendarmes, of mercenaries, and of "National Front" and Zogist "volunteers"—particularly after the final admonition of the Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council and Committee on September 22, 1944. Even the Hitlerite army itself, which apparently had now ceased activity inside the country, had narrowed down its operations to holding the principal cities and the most important lines of communication for the withdrawal of its divisions from Greece in the event of an allied landing—which did take place in October 1944.

The partisans pounded continuously the enemy lines of communication, inflicting great damage on German motorized columns; their brigades assailed the cities, too, and began to liberate them one after another. On September 12 Berat was liberated, on September 18 Gjirokastra, while the German garrison at Tirana was being worn down by the almost nightly attacks of partisan detachments of the First Division, who had taken up positions all around the capital. On October 10, 1944, the partisans pierced to the heart of the Hitlerite garrison of Tirana, reaching the centre

of the city. Six days later, on November 16, the seacoast city of Vlora was liberated, while Korça, the last occupied city of southern Albania, was liberated, likewise by assault, on October 24, 1944.

In the circumstances created by these great military and political successes, on October 20, 1944 the second meeting of the Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council appointed at the Congress of Permeti took place in liberated Berat. As asserted in its documents, considering that the war against Nazi Germany had entered the final phase and that Albania was on the eve of complete liberation, that in more than three-fourths of the country the authority of National-Liberation Councils was being exercised, that before the country lay not only political and military tasks for carrying on till the end of the National-Liberation War, but also political, economic, social and cultural tasks of a free and independent state, on October 22, 1944, the Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council decided to transform the *Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Committee*, chosen in Permeti, into a *Democratic Government of Albania* with Lieutenant-General Enver Hoxha as Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence. There were to be eleven government departments, among which the economic and cultural departments were of particular importance, especially the Ministry of Reconstruction, which was in charge of the direction of the colossal work of reconstructing and restoring the country, gutted during the war. The Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council then sanctioned, on the 23rd of October, laws governing elections of National-Liberation Councils, that were to take place after the country was liberated, the law on the rights and duties of National-Liberation Councils, which were henceforth to exercise only the functions of state authority organs, whereas the political functions, which they had exercised up to then on the basis of the decisions of the Peza Conference were to pass to the National-Liberation Front, which became an independent mass organization. On that same day the conference approved unanimously the "Declaration on the Rights of

Citizens". Again on October 23, 1944, in the name of the Democratic Government of Albania, the prime minister, Lieutenant-General Enver Hoxha declared in clear terms before the Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council that his government would respect scrupulously the decisions of the Congress of Permeti, that it would carry on the war for the speedy liberation of Albania and the defence of its national independence, that it would further strengthen the authority of the National-Liberation Councils, that after the liberation of the entire country, it would proceed to hold elections to the Constituent Assembly, which was to sanction the Fundamental Statute of the Albanian State, that it would revise all political, military and economic agreements concluded with foreign states by Zogist governments, annulling anti-national agreements, that it would assure and protect the citizens' civil rights, that it would endeavour to strengthen still more the cooperation of Albania with the great Allied Powers — Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States of America — as well as with the other members of the Anti-fascist Coalition, and that, last of all, it would demand from the great Allied Powers and the other members of the Anti-fascist Coalition, its recognition as the only Government of Albania.

Immediately after the meeting of Berat, the National-Liberation Army, which now numbered approximately 70,000 armed fighters of whom nearly 6,000 were women, intensified its assaults and inflicted heavy losses on German divisions retreating from Greece across the territory of Albania. The Army caused panic in the Hitlerite garrisons shut up in one or two cities still in enemy hands. On October 25, 1944, the German High Command shifted its headquarters from Tirana to Shkodër, leaving in the capital a whittled down division with the order to hold the city until the last military units were withdrawn from Greece. Hoping to slow down the partisan assaults, which had sealed up the capital and the path of retreat northwards, the German Command forced the highest quisling organs (the Council of Regents and the Council of Ministers) to an-

nounce publicly their resignation and the interruption of all state activities on their part. However neither this step, nor the habitual terror of the Hitlerites (who on October 23 massacred in the camp of Prishtina 103 interned Albanians, and a few days later butchered on their own door-steps hundreds of citizens and set fire to an entire suburb of Tirana) dampen the vigour of the War of Liberation. On October 29, 1944, on the order of the General-Staff, the partisan First Assault Division, commanded by Major-General Mehmet Shehu, began to storm Tirana for its complete liberation.

The battle of Tirana marked the culminating point of the National-Liberation War. That night almost half of the city fell into the hands of the partisan battalions which, aided by the population of the city, fought heroically against the tanks, armoured cars and bunkers of the enemy. On October 30, 1944 the fighting reached the centre of the city. The Staff of the partisan First Division established itself inside the city that day. The battle for the liberation of Tirana proceeded from street to street, from barricade to barricade and often enough from house to house. Heavy fighting took place in the vicinity of the Mosque of Sulejman Bargjini, where today a monument has been erected to the heroic partisans. Fierce fighting took place at various spots of the city, in government palaces and military barracks. On November 5, bloody attacks and counter-attacks occurred. Heavy fighting was carried on also outside the city, between partisan forces and German military units which tried to relieve their besieged garrison. Especially bloody for the Hitlerites was the clash that occurred close to the village of Mushqeta of Krraba on November 13, and 14. On November 15, detachments of partisan brigades launched the decisive assault, at the termination of which, after 19 days of fighting, on the morning of November 17, 1944, Tirana, heroic city, which had never flagged in the patriotic resistance during the 2,150 days under the Fascist-Nazi yoke, was liberated.

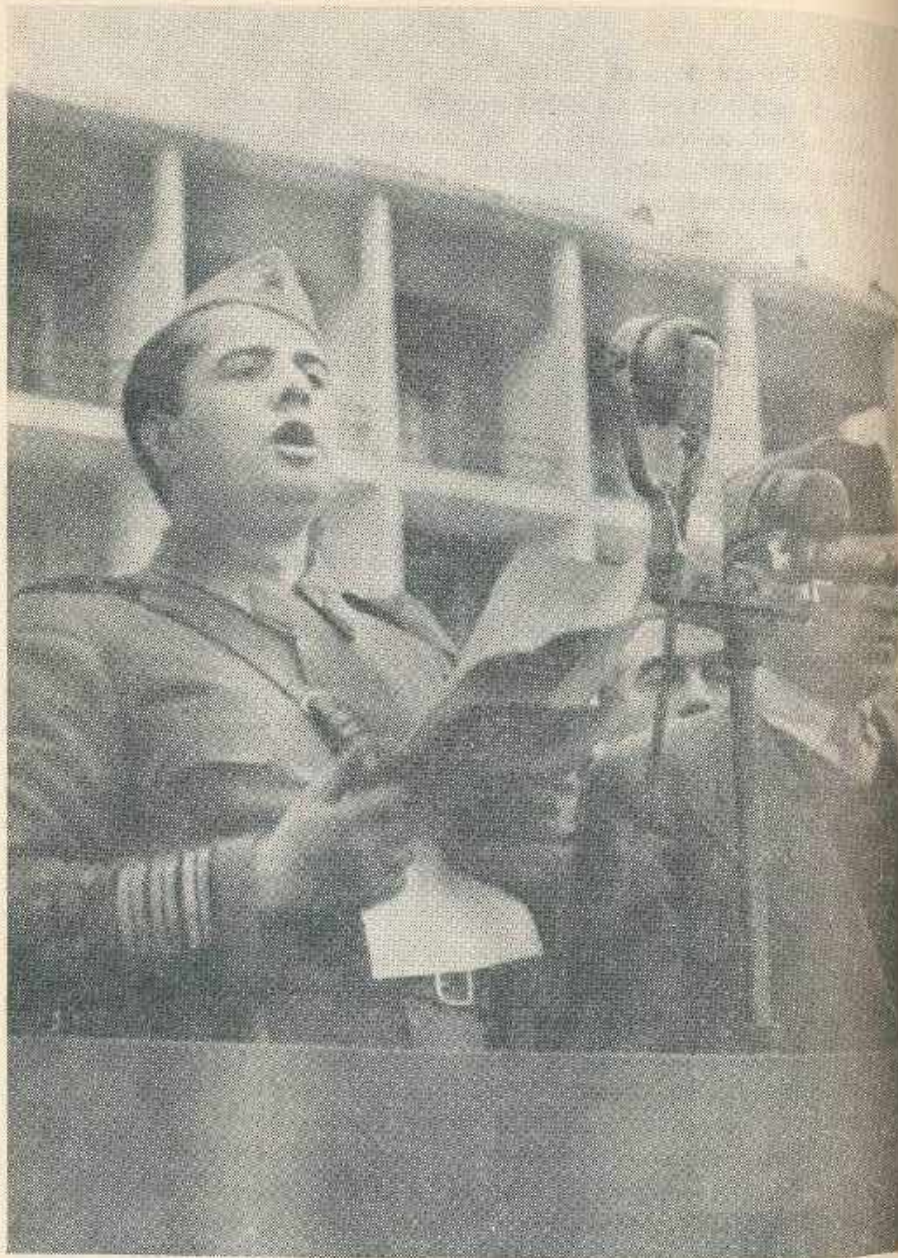


Scenes from the  
battle for the  
liberation of Tirana

In the 19 days of fighting for Tirana, the German garrison had more than 2,000 men and officers killed, three identified as colonels, not to count the wounded; more than 300 were taken prisoner. Booty included 25 cannons in good condition, more than 1,000 machine-guns, 200 vehicles, etc. The partisans suffered 417 casualties in killed and wounded, while hundreds of civilians were barbarously massacred by the Hitlerites.

The liberation of Tirana indicated the imminent liberation of the Motherland. The brave partisans continued to assail and pursue the enemy, which retreated north, destroying bridges and slaughtering as they fled. While on November 28, 1944 the 32nd anniversary of the proclamation of national independence of the year 1912, the presidium of the Anti-Fascist National-Liberation Council and the Democratic Government of Albania entered the liberated capital, greeted by the stormy acclamation of the enthusiastic people, the untiring partisans were preparing to assail Shkodër, the last pocket of resistance of the Hitlerite hordes and native collaborator remnants. The enemy, however, seemingly desired to spare themselves further, useless losses and, after blasting the bigger bridges of the city, decamped during the night, crossing the Albanian border, with packs of collaborators who sought to escape having to account for their treason at their heels. At dawn of November 29, 1944, the partisan brigades entered Shkodër without fighting.

With Shkodër, the whole of Albania was liberated, but the war had not come to an end as yet. The Albanian Democratic Government, considering itself allied to the Great Anti-Fascist Coalition, took it on itself to continue the anti-fascist war till the total defeat of Hitlerite Germany. Two divisions of the National-Liberation Army, the Fifth and the Sixth Divisions, received the order to pursue the German army and to fight against it beyond the borders of Albania—in the territory of allied Yugoslavia. The Albanian partisans in cooperation with Yugoslav National-Liberation Army units were engaged in relentless fighting



Comrade Enver Hoxha addressing the people of liberated Tirana on Nov. 28, 1944



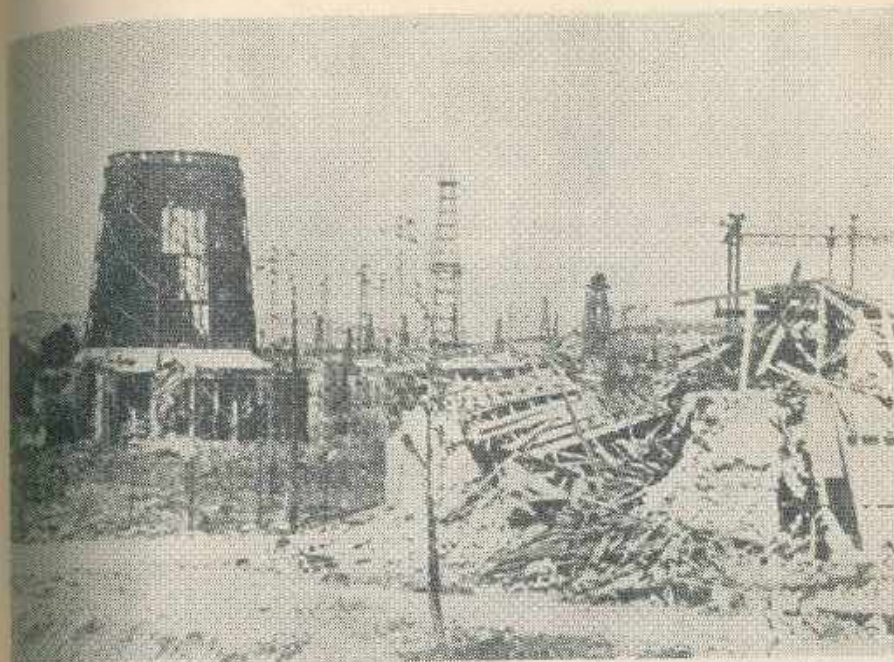
The first days of liberation. A bridge has been left destroyed by the German Nazis, who fled before the victorious Albanian partisans

against the German enemy and pursued it up to Bosnia, in central Yugoslavia. Of these encounters, the bloodiest took place near the city of Vishegrad, which was liberated by Albanian partisans on February 14, 1945. The surrender of Nazi Germany and the victory of the anti-fascist war on May 9, 1945, marked the triumph of the National-Liberation War also for Albania, ally of the Great Anti-Fascist Coalition.

In this historic victory of the people over, Nazi-fascist aggressors, small Albania made her modest contribution, beyond what was in her manpower and material potential. Through their patriotic war, the Albanians kept pinned down in Albania nearly 70,000 Italian, and quite as many German, soldiers. The Albanian National-Liberation Army inflicted on these two occupying powers 26,594 killed and 21,245 wounded; it took captive nearly 20,000 men and officers, putting out of action more than 68,600 Italian and



Partisans pursuing Hitler's troops through Yugoslav territory



Great industrial centre of Albania—in the oil region of Kucovë (now the city of Stalin), destroyed by Hitler's army in its retreat from Albania

German troops. The Albanian National-Liberation Army captured from the enemy or destroyed, more than 2,100 motor vehicles, tanks and armoured cars, more than 4,000 mortars, cannons and machine-guns, and set fire to 216 depots with military matériel.

On the other hand, the war caused great loss in human life and property. With a population of about 1,125,000 inhabitants, the country suffered 28,800 persons killed, or 2.48 per cent of the population. On a percentage basis, of persons killed, Albania comes fifth of the countries in the anti-fascist bloc. Albania sustained 11,600 wounded, eleven per 1,000 inhabitants, which is 4 to 5 times the average for the anti-fascist bloc. The invaders imprisoned and confined 44,500 Albanians, 3.96 per cent of the population. Thus 86,000 persons, or 7.3 per cent of the population,

were killed, crippled or disabled. The material damages sustained by the country through arson and pillage on the part of the invaders and mercenaries amounted to more than 1,603 million dollars. More than a third of the habitations of the country were burned or otherwise demolished — about 61,000 buildings, equal to 36.66 per cent. More than a third of the livestock were exterminated or stolen; more than a third, or 34.2 per cent, of the fruit trees and 33.65 per cent of vineyards were destroyed. Almost all of the mines, ports, roads and especially bridges were ruined. Industrial plants were likewise heavily damaged.

### ALBANIA, A PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

With the victory of the National-Liberation War, before the Albanian people in general and before its revolutionary leaders in particular, great historic tasks were laid that demanded speedy solution. The independence of the country, won through so many sacrifices, should be strengthened and protected from foreign imperialist and chauvinist claims, which even the Second World War had been unable to put an end to. The country thoroughly devastated by the war had to be reconstructed within the shortest time possible in order to restore the entirely paralysed national economy, to overcome the danger of famine which threatened particularly the war-ravaged regions, and to secure shelter for tens of thousands of peasant and urban families whom the approaching winter found homeless. The democratic-popular revolution already started in the course of the war, should be carried further, with the aim of striking at the social-economic basis, on which the old reactionary regimes had relied, and to build a new social-economic basis for a new, democratic, anti-imperialist authority, capable of changing Albania from a backward, oppressed and famished country into a free, advanced and prosperous one.



Comrade Enver Hoxha addressing the Peace Conference in Paris

To the solution of these great and complex problems, the Albanian Democratic Government led by Enver Hoxha consecrated all its efforts from the first weeks of existence of free and independent Albania. Obliterating every trace of the old state administration, which had been overthrown by the war, a new state apparatus was erected, beginning with the ministries and central directorates, down to the courts of justice and people's police. Elections were held throughout the country in January 1945 for popular councils of villages, of cities and of districts, and these became the political organs of the new rule, in cities and towns and in the provinces. Relying on the material gathered by the commission for the detection of criminals of war, the Government brought to trial in the first months of 1945, collaborationist high officials and punished them according to

their anti-national activities and their responsibility in the massacres, imprisonments, arson and pillage committed jointly with the invaders.

While the Albanian divisions continued to fight against the German enemy in the territory of Yugoslavia, in Albania, at the call of the democratic government, the people mobilized themselves to heal the wounds left by the war. They undertook the heroic task of reconstructing their country. With great speed, the demolished bridges and impaired roads were rebuilt; the devastated mining and industrial plants were brought to life; in villages and in cities the buildings that had been destroyed and burnt down were erected again, large-scale social assistance was given to the families that had been impoverished by the war, etc.

At the same time the democratic government took important anti-imperialist measures. All economic and political agreements concluded by former Albanian governments with foreign powers were annulled. The property of Italian and German nationals in Albania was confiscated; all property of foreign capitalists was also confiscated, and a special law nationalized the three banks that had been founded in Albania with foreign capital, including the National Bank of Albania, which was superseded by the Bank of the Albanian State. Foreign trade was placed under state control.

Likewise, measures of a democratic character were taken. Industrial enterprises and commercial companies of Albanian citizens were placed under state control to facilitate planned production and distribution; articles needed for the reconstruction of the country and for the building up of the army were requisitioned; in order to halt speculation, the state took into its own hands the buying and selling of grain, setting wholesale and retail market prices; the means of transport together with terminals were taken over and paid for; in order to fight the black market, the first consumers' cooperatives were founded with the aid of the state; on the enormous profits made in the course of the war by Albanian and foreign capitalists and merchants, extraordinary pro-

gressive taxation was levied, which assured substantial revenues to the Albanian state for the years 1945 and 1946, making it possible for the government to meet the extraordinary expenditure for the reconstruction of the country without appealing to foreign powers for aid. Along with these, important steps were taken also for the villages and the peasantry. All peasants' debts to the landlords were cancelled; all the debts incurred prior to the liberation of the country were written off the books, private waterways used for irrigation were confiscated without compensation and allotted to the peasants as collective property. In August 1945 began the agrarian reform, which affected deeply, though not completely, large estates in Albania. Important steps were taken in the social field, too. In the first place, legislation on labour for the benefit of the workers was passed. For the first time in Albania the 8-hour work day was introduced, with 7-hour shifts at night. The weekly day of rest and the yearly leave of 15 days were guaranteed. Successful attempts were made to secure work for those who were in need, and within a short period unemployment was reduced to nil. At the beginning of 1945 workers' trade unions were created, and in October of that year their first congress was held.

In autumn of 1945 the electoral campaign for the Constituent Assembly began, which was to solve the most important question of the popular revolution — the form of government new Albania was to have. The electoral campaign was characterized by a strenuous political fight between the Democratic Front, which represented the new, revolutionary authority, and its internal adversaries, representing the upper classes — bourgeoisie, landlords, clan chieftains and clergymen, who sought to prolong the old economic and social order. During the electoral campaign, difficulties were created for the Democratic Front in the international arena, too. While the government of the U.S.S.R., after Yugoslavia and Poland, followed by Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and France, recognized the government led by Enver Hoxha, the United States of America and Great Britain,

exasperated that the Albanian revolutionary reforms had finally affected their interests in Albania, put as a condition for their recognition that the elections should take place under the supervision of foreign observers—an outrage against Tirana. Washington added as a condition the acknowledgement also, of the agreements concluded between Tirana and foreign powers prior to April 7, 1939, which had recently been abrogated by the Albanian government. Further, members of American and British missions in Tirana had not scrupled against inciting the opponents of the Democratic Front to attempt the upsetting of the political situation in Albania.

In the elections that took place on December 2, 1945, 90 per cent of the citizens having the right to vote, took part, of whom 93 per cent voted for the candidates of the Democratic Front. The Constituent Assembly that met in Tirana on January 11, 1946 proclaimed Albania a People's Republic. After a widespread popular discussion, on March 14,



Tirana, Jan. 11, 1946. People awaiting the proclamation of Albania as a People's Republic before the meeting place of the Constituent Assembly



The National Emblem of the People's Republic of Albania

1946, the Constitution of the People's Republic of Albania was promulgated, which defended the victories of the National-Liberation War and sanctioned the reliance of the new authority on the people's councils of villages, cities and districts, elected periodically by free, direct, general, equal and secret ballot by all citizens, men and women, who had attained the age of eighteen.

All measures taken in the course of the first 15 months after liberation were for bringing the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution to completion. All these measures and reforms enter not into the framework of a socialist proletarian revolution, but into that of a democratic-bourgeois revolution, based, not on the bourgeoisie, but on the working class and on the peasantry, and led, not by bourgeois parties, but by the Communist Party.

After the achievement of these great, historic tasks, which were sanctioned by the Constitution of the People's Republic of Albania, before the leaders of new Albania lay the problem of the further development of the revolution, the question of the historic highway that the country ought



to follow in the future. The Albanian Communist Party, after duly considering the internal and external favourable circumstances, decided, in conformity with its ultimate programme, to direct Albania onto the path of the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to build on the coasts of the Adriatic Sea the socialist society as the transitional stage on the way to Communism. This new, historic orientation was given by the Albanian Communist Party as early as February 1946, at its fifth plenary meeting.

On the basis of the decisions taken at this plenary meeting and after the ratification of the Constitution, a series of measures were taken by the state for the socialist transformation of the country, and these were carried on during the whole of the year 1946 and during the first half of 1947. By special laws all industries and mines of the country, all factories and building enterprises, agricultural machines and various implements of production, were nationalized; production by private industrial concerns had ceased altogether by the end of 1947. At the same time, foreign trade as well as domestic wholesale trade passed into the hands of the state. In April 1946, merchants were asked to renounce claim to their merchandise. All principal construction materials and most important articles of consumption were frozen and requisitioned against compensation. The commercial companies created in 1945 were suppressed; the stocking of grain and transport services passed into the hands of the state. State and cooperative commercial enterprises began to be created for the retail trade, which through the support of the state began to replace the reduced private trade. In that same year, pharmacies, chemical laboratories, hotels, hot springs and bathing establishments were nationalized. At the same time, from the agrarian reform applied in the year 1945, which had not suppressed private ownership of village land, radical agrarian reform of socialist character was begun. In April 1946 a law was passed forbidding the alienation of land under any title, while by an additional law promulgated in May that



Comrade Enver Hoxha congratulating peasants who are receiving grants of land at the agrarian reform (Nov. 17, 1947)

same year, big estates were broken up and the economic position of the bourgeoisie of the village, of the *kulaks*, was seriously affected. In the village, the socialist principle of the land to the tiller was applied. On the basis of an amendment, arable land, vineyards and orchards, together with the buildings and equipment of proprietors who did not work on their land were expropriated without compensation. Exception was made in the case of labourers, artisans and employees, but these too should not possess more than 0.5 hectare of orchard or 0.2 hectare of vineyard or 30 olive trees, while the religious institutions were allowed to have not more than 10 hectares of land. By the agrarian reform of the years 1945-1946, 172,000 hectares out of 221,500 hectares of arable land, 474,000 olive trees and 6,000 oxen became people's property. Of the land fund accumulated

by the expropriations, 155,159 hectares were distributed among 70,221 peasant families, who had little or no land; likewise 238,700 olive trees and all of the expropriated oxen were distributed among the peasants. Through the agrarian reform the large landed property was taken over; the big landlord class disappeared; the poor peasant class too almost disappeared, having become, thanks to the reform, landed peasants; all chances for the rural bourgeoisie to thrive were gone, and the middle class peasant became the central figure in the village. The agrarian reform was completed on November 17, 1947.

Nevertheless, even the agrarian reform was not the ideal solution for a prosperous existence of the peasantry. Starting from the premise that within the framework of small property the possibilities for the development of agriculture and of the welfare of the peasants are limited, the Albanian Communist Party at that time promoted the idea of the co-operative system in agriculture. The first agricultural co-operative, and which was to serve as a model for the building of socialism in the villages, was set up in the autumn of 1946 at Krutje, formerly a large estate in Muzekeja.

These revolutionary changes were carried out not without the vehement opposition of the overthrown classes, of big landholders, of capitalists and of great merchants, who could not reconcile themselves to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nor could the Western powers, particularly the U.S.A. and Great Britain reconcile themselves either to the socialist reforms or to the political, economic and ideological orientation of Albania towards the U.S.S.R. The hostile forces made several attempts to organize counter-revolutionary movements. Such attempts were made in 1946 in Tirana by the subversive "monarchist", "social-democratic", "democratic" organizations, and in Shkodër by the former "Catholic Concentration" organization of the German occupation period, instigated as in the past by the clergy, all of whom were hand in glove with the Western powers. All these attempts had no success whatsoever. After they had been detected by the police organs and after the ring-

leaders had been referred to people's courts of justice, these clandestine organizations, which had few hangers-on in any case, were wiped out from the political and organizational scene. It was only in September 1946 that the reactionary circles of the country, incited by the functionaries of American and British missions, which had promised their military intervention from abroad, undertook an armed attack on the city of Shkodër, their attempt collapsing after a couple of hours' combat. This was the last armed attempt against Albania by counter-revolutionary forces. Further attacks became impossible on account of the thorough sympathy the new rule enjoyed on the part of the popular masses. Consequently, the reactionary circles passed over to the well-known methods of political and economic undermining activities, which should create difficulties for the new state, discredit her and her programme in the eyes of the masses and thus create the condition for an anti-communist counter-revolution. Vital undermining, subversive activities were undertaken in the principal economic centres of the country, as in the great project of draining Maliqi Lake in 1946, in the oil fields of Kuçova, in the copper mines of Rubik, etc. But neither did these methods get them anywhere. Nor did the plot of the "group of deputies" have any success — the "group" so called for the reason that alongside reactionary elements of the old, liquidated parties, a number of deputies of the people's assembly, too, took part, these elements being either unable to detach themselves from the old political bourgeois thought or else had capitulated before the pressures of American and British emissaries.

Along with the internal difficulties, serious difficulties were created for the People's Republic of Albania on the international arena also by external hostile forces. The United States and Great Britain not only refused to recognize the government of the People's Republic of Albania, but they tried to obstruct it from representing Albania at the Peace Conference which had begun its deliberations in Paris in July 1946. Through the insistence of the Soviet

Union, the Albanian delegation headed by Enver Hoxha was admitted to the Conference of Peace as the representative of an allied country. Still the Albanian delegation in Paris was forced to respond to the attacks directed against Albania by the Greek government delegation, which raised territorial claims on Albania, at the back of which was obviously the inciting hand of the foreign ministers of the U.S.A. and Britain. Relations with the Western powers became momentarily aggravated in November 1946 when two British warships, navigating the Corfu Channel, sank after hitting mines left from the war. London charged Tirana with having placed these mines. Since these disputes the relations between Albania on the one side and the United States of America and Great Britain on the other have remained at odds up to the present day.

In its great efforts for the creation and development of the socialist economy, the Albanian government had to face other serious difficulties caused by the interference of the Communist Party and its Federative government in Yugoslavia. Proceeding from the principle of fraternal internationalist relations that should characterize two countries led by their Communist Parties, the Albanian revolutionary leaders placed too much faith in the internationalist assertions of the Yugoslav leaders. This confidence was exploited by Marshal Tito and his following by interfering, by means of "advice" in the economic and political life of Albania. These interferences had begun during the war, and more precisely in November 1944, while in liberated Berat the Second Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party was meeting, the Titoite agents, who had succeeded in winning to their side the second secretary of the Albanian Communist Party, Kogji Xoxe, endeavoured by means of this latter to direct Albania towards economic and political capitulation to Yugoslavia. During the years 1945-1947, the Yugoslav pressure, exerted under the slogan of "strengthening friendly relations", all the while increased to intolerable proportions. The economic and political conventions concluded

during the years 1945-1947 by Albania and Yugoslavia were exploited by the Yugoslav government with the view to reducing Albania to the status of dependency on Belgrade.

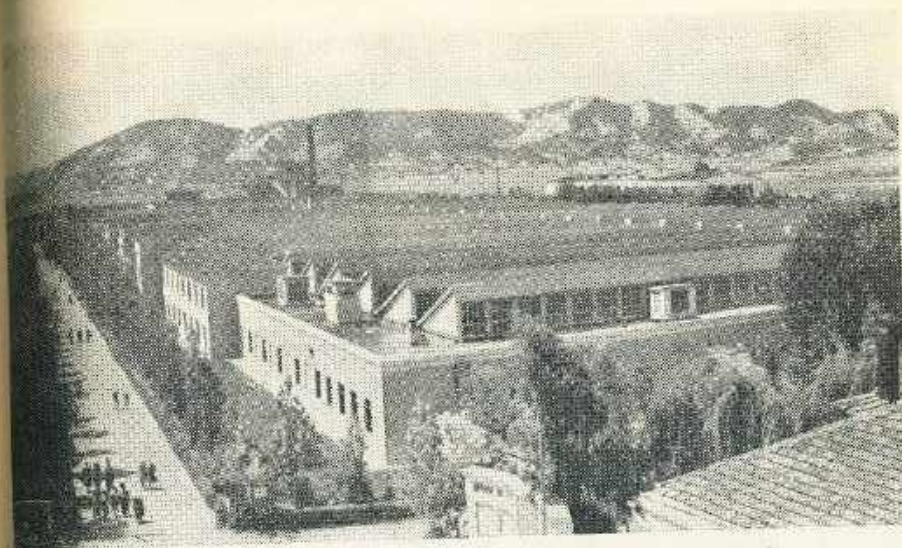
In the summer of 1948, when Belgrade's pressure was stronger than ever before, the decision of the Information Bureau of the Communist Parties, taken in Bucharest, condemning the Yugoslav leaders for gross mistakes in political and ideological fields, made it possible for Albania to find its way out of the intricate situation. The Albanian Communist Party immediately broke with the Yugoslav Communist Party, and resolutely and quickly corrected all the mistakes which had been committed in Albania as a result of Titoite emissaries' interference. The Albanian Communist Party, which up to then had remained in semi-secrecy, came out into the open. In November of that year the First Congress of the Party assembled and reviewed its entire activity since its founding. The Congress censured the mistakes that had been committed, as well as the persons principally responsible for these mistakes; examined and sanctioned the statute of the Party; gave a new orientation to the country in political and economic fields with the aim of strengthening the independence and the economic and cultural development of the country so as to build a socialist base in Albania, in alliance with all the countries of the socialist camp and particularly with the Soviet Union.

After the turning point of the year 1948, the popular masses under the leadership of the Party of Labour of Albania, the new name of the Albanian Communist Party taken at the First Congress, went all out with renewed vigour in all fields of economic, social and cultural activity. This activity was exercised according to periodic plans directed by the Party of Labour, drawn up by the Council of Ministers and sanctioned by the People's Assembly. For the years 1949 and 1950 a biennial plan was drawn up, the directives of which were approved by the First Congress of the Party. For the years 1951-1955 the First Five-Year Plan was drawn up, the tasks of which were approved in

outline by the Second Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania in March-April of 1952; for the years 1956-1960 the Second Five-Year Plan was drawn up and approved by the Third Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania which met in May-June of 1956; whereas for the years 1961-1965 the Third Five-Year Plan was drawn up, which was approved by the Fourth Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania, convened in February of 1961.

The principles on which the five-year plans were drawn up can be summarized in this manner: the elevation of Albania from the backward technical, economic, cultural situation by means of socialist industrialization, agricultural collectivization, electrification of the country; the cultural and ideological revolution within the shortest time possible, by attracting into this battle all the people and by employing all available material and financial resources of the country, without neglecting the role of the credits and the assistance afforded by socialist countries. Considerable aid and credits were received by Albania particularly from the U.S.S.R., other socialist countries also helped.

The First Five-Year Plan set as the principal economic task the continuation at accelerated speed of the effort for the construction of the economic basis of socialism, in order to transform Albania at the end of the five-year period from a backward agricultural country into an agricultural-industrial country. During these years, combines and factories such as the Stalin Textile Complex in Tirana, the November 8th Sugar Complex in Maliq, the "Nako Spiro" Complex in Elbasan, the cotton ginning mill in Fier, the tobacco processing factory in Shkodër, the cement factory in Vlora, the Lenin hydro-electric station in Tirana and many other factories, which by the end of 1955 raised the industrial production to 10.5 times that of 1938. Successes were achieved in agriculture also. Compared with 1938, the area of arable land approximately doubled; the grain producing area expanded from 55,100 hectares in 1938 to 114,845 hectares in 1955, while productivity increased from 7 *quintals*



One of Albania's many new industrial projects, the Stalin Textile Complex in the suburbs of Tirana

per hectare to 10.3 *quintals* per hectare; the number of tractors calculated at 15 HP each increased from 30 in 1938 to 344 in 1950, 1,259 in 1955; combines increased from none to 114 and threshing machines from none to 335, while reapers increased from none to 283. As a result agricultural production increased, the value in terms of money rising from 12,826,000 *leks* in 1938 to 20,950,000 *leks* in 1955.

For the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-1960) the main tasks set were the further development of industry, especially mining industry with raw materials extracted in the country, the rapid development of agriculture, principally on the basis of the reorganization of agricultural production through collectivization and the extension of arable lands by means of draining swamps. During this period, too, the successes were remarkable. In 1960, about 90 per cent of the national revenue was realized from the socialist sector of the economy. The labouring population grew from a few tens of thousands in 1938 to 22.5 per cent, numbering about



Application of machinery in Albanian agriculture

336,000 persons at present. The volume of industrial production during the Second Five-Year Plan period increased approximately 16.9 per cent annually, and in 1960 was double that of 1955, while comparing with 1938, it increased 21 times. Mineral production occupies a conspicuous place in the growth of production in Albania. Alongside the production of naphtha, chromium, and coal, the exploitation of new mines of nickel and iron, of copper, and of chromium was started; oil wells were sunk. The place of small electricity plants was taken by hydro-electric and thermo-electric stations fitted out with new machinery. Of these, the Karl Marx Hydro-Electric Station on the Mat river stands out. During the Second Five-Year Plan period the construction of 250 important economic and social-cultural projects was completed and these put into immediate use — oil refineries in Qyteti Stalin and in Cerrik, a coal mine in Allarup, a copper mine in Kurbnesh, the nickel and iron mines in Pishkash and in Cervenak, the chromium mines in Tropoje and in Martanesh, the foodstuff combine in Tirana, the fish combine in Vlora, the brick-kilns, velvet, glass, and canned food factories, wineries, tobacco factories and so on. The machine industry in 1960 provided 40 per cent of the spare parts needed in the economy — eight times more than in 1955. In the field of agriculture likewise great successes were achieved. During the past years the collectivization of the countryside was completed. In 1960 the socialist sector in agriculture — agricultural cooperatives and state farms — embraced 86.3 per cent of the arable land, while the rest remained in the hands of peasants living in hilly regions where the conditions for the collectivization of agriculture did not exist. In agriculture, great sums were invested for the extension of arable land; a number of marshes were drained, such as Terbufi, Thumana, Vurgu, Roskoveci, etc., at the completion of which agriculture gained 17,000 hectares of new land and 43,000 hectares of improved land. In 1960 the number of tractors increased so

that for every 1,000 hectares of land under cultivation there were 10 tractors of 15 HP each.

The Third Five-Year Plan (1961-1965) is still in operation. It aims at bringing Albania to a new stage, to the stage of full construction of the socialist society, to the stage of transition of Albania from an agricultural-industrial country to an industrial-agricultural country. Great industrial projects and great agricultural achievements are planned and being realized, and these will change the face of Albania from day to day.

Great, incomparable successes have been achieved during these five-year periods also in the field of education and culture. While in 1938 almost 80 per cent of the population was illiterate, in 1956, at the close of a great literacy campaign, everyone in the country under the age of 40 could read and write. In Albania in 1947, the Two-Year Pedagogical Institute, and in 1951 four institutes of higher education were founded. In 1957 the State University of Tirana was founded with six faculties and attended by 4,000 men and women students. In 1960 the Institute of Arts was founded. In Albania in 1960 there were more than 3,000 educational institutes with 33,000 students and 11,000 teachers and professors. One in five inhabitants attends a primary or middle school, or takes university courses. In 1960 within the country and abroad 48 students in each 10,000 inhabitants studied at a university (in France this figure was 37 and in West Germany it was 27).

During the recent years a number of scientific institutes were likewise established, which carry on studies in the various domains of science. Today almost all of the main cities have their museums and theatres. In Tirana, cultural institutions have long since been founded, such as the moving-picture studio "New Albania", the Opera and Ballet Theatre, the State Philharmonic Orchestra, and a great number of theatres of the drama in the cities of the country. Albania within these recent years has experienced an



Performance at the Albanian Opera and Ballet Theatre

unprecedented impulse in the field of book publishing. Within the years 1945-1960 more than 3,000 titles have been published in 29 million copies.

These successes were achieved not without struggle against the internal and external enemies. The striking force of internal reactionary circles, however, has diminished apace in face of the uninterrupted strengthening of the people's rule. The hostile attitude which the U.S.A. and Great Britain have fostered has not prevented Albania from following in its chosen path. Their attempts, too, to obstruct the entry of Albania into the United Nations Organization in the end met with failure. In 1956 Albania took its legitimate seat in the UNO. Albania was given some trouble by the provocations of the Greek and Yugoslav governments, but these provocations too fizzled out. The position of the People's Republic of Albania became increasingly stronger. It has commercial relations with more than 30

countries. Precisely as the leaders of the People's Republic of Albania have continually expressed, this small country on the shores of the Adriatic Sea has oriented its foreign policy towards the defence of peace and of independence, and the liberation of oppressed colonial and semi-colonial countries.