

The cult of personality: King Zog I and Enver Hoxha

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Received 03.01.2016; Accepted 23.01. 2016

Abstract

King Zog I (1895-1961), and the communist leader Enver Hoxha (1908-1985) were without doubt the most charismatic figures of the Albanian politics in the twentieth century, whose personal rule dominated the country and kept it under strict control. However, the cult of personality of the two leaders had of course their own features. They derived mainly from the specific historical periods where they lived and ruled, from the political system they represented and from the very character of the personage.

Keywords: *cult of personality, communist leader, nationalism, communism*

1. Introduction

Ahmet Zogu, the real name of the later King Zog I, was the undisputable master of the country from 1924 to 1939 when the Italian occupation put an end to the Albanian independence proclaimed in 1912. In 1925 Ahmet Zogu was elected President of Albania after a period of internal instability that continuously scourged the country since the end of the First World War in 1918. In 1928 he was self-proclaimed King Zog I with the consent of the Italians that wanted to secure through his rule their dominion in the country. During his rule Albania made important achievements such as the attainment of the internal political stability and the building up of a state administration. In the words of Bernd Fischer :

“Zog’s most important contribution was the creation of an environment ideal for the growth of an Albanian national consciousness. Before the advent of the King, local pride was the only form of nationalism existent in most of the country. When Zog left in 1939 the process towards creating a rudimentary form of modern state nationalism had begun... Zog’s contribution, then, was of considerable importance. Those who succeeded him as rulers and completed the construction of a modern national state had their task made somewhat simpler as a result of the foundation of nationalism for which Zog was responsible” (Fischer, 1984, pp. 305-306).

Zog's foreign policy was a continuous attempt to have the support of a great European power, to save the political independence of the country and, last but not least, to secure the survival of his personal rule. He found his "protector" in the fascist Italy, but the relations of the Albanian King with Rome were more of the nature of a political bargain. Italians tried to dominate the country, but the Albanian King, although gained personal benefits from the Italian "assistance", made always efforts to keep them at bay as much as possible. The end of this uneven game was the occupation of Albania by Italian troops in April 1939. King Zog left the country and started a long exile in Great Britain, Egypt and France where he died in 1961.

After the Second World War Albania became part of the communist camp and was ruled with an iron hand by the communist leader Enver Hoxha. His dictatorship dominated the country from 1944 until his death in 1985. He was elected head of the Albanian Communist Party in 1941, and during the war Hoxha was also General Commander of the communist led Albanian National-Liberation Army. Hoxha retained during all his life the position of the Secretary General of the Albanian Party of Labour.¹ In the first post-war years he occupied also the position of prime minister and minister of foreign affairs.

Like King Zog, his predecessor in power, Hoxha felt the necessity to attach his country to a stronger ally to face the vicissitudes of the international situation after the Second World War that would compromise the viability of his state. This was done also on behalf of ideological principles that made Albania a member of the communist Eastern Europe.

Until 1948 Albania was under strong Yugoslav influence. The Yugoslav influence of the first post-war years got quickly into heavy pressure to have Albania included in the Yugoslav federation. Hoxha benefited from Soviet-Yugoslav strife in 1948 to break with Belgrade. This move was also due to Hoxha's fear to be eliminated by the pro-Yugoslav faction within the Albanian Communist Party. The rupture of relations with the Yugoslavs was followed by a 'honey moon period' with the Soviet Union which lasted until 1960, when Hoxha rejected de-stalinization process initiated by Khrushchev in the 1950-s. He saw that process as a direct threat to his dominion over the party. To secure another support for his regime Hoxha saw in the communist China a potential "benefactor" that could help the fragile Albanian economy and would serve as a political shield for a small country in an Europe divided in between NATO and Warsaw Treaty camps. The Chinese period ended in 1978, when the Albanian leadership decided to break down with Beijing after clear signs that China was gradually opening up to the "Western capitalism". A rigid communist ideology combined with power interests were again in the roots of the following deep isolation of Albania from late 1970-s till 1990.

2. Cultivation of modern nationalism

Despite the differences between the two historical periods dominated by King Zog (1924-1939) and Enver Hoxha (1944-1985) it would be interesting to explore the persistent elements of the cult of personality that can be found in both figures. By doing so it could be easier to note the further evolution of the cult of personality during the communist era. According to my opinion, it can be done after indicating that both rulers had some common objectives to fulfil.

Although the Albanian historiography of the socialist period had always insisted on a sharp division between the two historical periods, i.e. the period of monarchy (1928-1939) and that of communism (1944-1990), a less ideological and more accurate study of them would unveil a certain line of continuity.

¹ The name of the Albanian Communist Party was changed in Albanian Party of Labor in 1948 after its first congress.

Both King Zog and Enver Hoxha tried to cultivate modern nationalism through the creation of a viable nation-state in Albania (Fischer& Sugar, 1995, pg. 53). The politics they followed aimed at the achievement of homogenisation of society and its cultural and social cohesion. The historical periods of the existence of the Albanian state had in common the efforts to inculcate into Albanian society the values of nationalism. That would be done through the extension of the state control over society, through power centralization, public administration, national army and an educational system in a more and more standardized national language (Misha, 1999, pg. 30). During communism this task was pursued also by the use of strong national-communist propaganda, which were propagated mostly by ubiquitous party structures.

Both leaders used historical past to legitimize their power in the eyes of the people. King Zog tried to represent his rule as the rebirth of the tradition of the Albanian national hero of the fifteenth century Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg (1403-1468), who fought against the Ottoman armies for almost 25 years. The communist regime of Hoxha saw in Skanderbeg the symbol of resistance to the external threat and the connection with the past grew in importance as Albania's political isolation increased (Lubonja, 1999, pg. 147).

The attitude towards religion provides another example of how both regimes tried to recover breaches in the bosom of Albanian society and reach national compactness. King Zog and Hoxha saw religion as a divisive factor in the Albanian society as the population belonged to different religious communities, Moslem, Orthodox and Catholic. King Zog tried to solve the problem by nationalizing the religious communities putting them under state control, while Hoxha went much further. In 1967 he banned all religious institutions and declared Albania as the only atheistic state in the world. Nationalism has been a strong driving force behind Hoxha's policies although the Albanian historiography of the communist period has always discarded this version. Everything was explained and justified on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the patriotic mission to defend the country from foreign encroachments. But in his task to build the socialist Albania Enver Hoxha widely used nationalist policies as King Zog did the same in his struggle to build a viable Albanian nation-state during the interwar period (Fischer&Sugar, 1995, pg. 44). As Arshi Pipa has written:

“Hoxha was decisive in producing a cultural atmosphere totally dominated by a doctrinaire propaganda exalting nationalism. Linguistics, literature, history, geography, folklore, and ethnology have been cultivated, not only to the people a sense of heir own past, but also to spread and inculcate xenophobia, slavophobia, isolationism, ethnic compactness, and linguistic uniformity” (Pipa&Fischer, 1995).

3. An apologetic representation of both figures by Dako and Alia

I think that a direct result of that was a strong paternalistic image of both rulers. King Zog and Enver Hoxha were often presented as fathers of their nation and state builders. King Zog “made a nation out of tribes and a state out of a nation” (Dako, 1937, pg. 142). On his turn Enver was “the most beloved teacher and leader of the whole Albanian people” (History of the Party, 1982, pg. 122).

In comparing the cult of personality of both personages and for a matter of convenience I will mainly use here the texts of two books, one for each personage. The first book is an adulatory biography of the King Zog written in 1937 by Kristo Dako, an Albanian professor of history in a lycee of Tirana. The book is entitled “Ahmet Zogu, the king of the Albanians” [Ahmet Zogu, mbreti i shqiptarëve] (Dako, 1937). The second one is a book on Enver Hoxha written in 1988 by his successor in power Ramiz Alia (1985-1991) with the title “Our Enver” [Enveri ynë] (Alia, 1988).

Both books were written with the idea to make an apologetic representation of their personages and to conclude that they were unique historical figures in the history of the country. Nevertheless, the authors of the books have followed different ways to portray them. The main difference lies in the fact that Kristo Dako tries to raise the cult of King Zog personality, while Ramiz Alia has summarized with pathos the already solidified cultic vision of Enver Hoxha.

The biographer of the King intended to make a book on the life and the state career of Ahmet Zogu. It covers the years of his childhood, his youth and then focusing upon his great role as the founder of the Albanian state and as its reformer. Unlike Dako, Ramiz Alia had a different approach due to his official position and ideological formation. His book had to convey the message that the policy of the Albanian communist leadership after the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985 would continue on the same path as that of the Leader. Alia’s book is more a book on the revolutionary life of Enver Hoxha, on the great inspiration the communists have drawn from that and on its guiding role for the future of the socialist Albania.

The first and the common aspect of the cult of King Zog and Enver Hoxha is their uniqueness. They were both elected by history to perform a special mission for the country as they were endowed with unique virtues. Dako discerned special qualities in Ahmet Zogu since he was a child. He was particularly brave and very soon his entourage in his native place understood that he would become their future leader. When the young Zogu went to attend his secondary studies in Istanbul his professors, according to Dako, “foresaw a bright future for him” (Dako, 1937, pp. 19-20). Besides the very special character of Zogu, which was a real precondition for his future career, Dako mentioned also his noble origin. Zogu family was the heir of one of the oldest and most important families of Mati region (North of Albania), who was distinguished for its patriotism. The role of his father, the master of the region and of his mother, described as a Grand Lady, would exert their role in preparing him as a future leader. Family background here was a necessary element for the author to confirm the noble roots of the Albanian monarch.

The revolutionary Enver Hoxha was unique too, but the story of his glorious life is due primarily to his political vocation and deep belief in the cause of communism. The element of destiny is present here as well, but it was associated with the influence that important national events and international ones had in shaping him up as a communist militant.

“As a communist and revolutionary he was born and grown up in the century of the struggles of the Albanian people for freedom, he was brought up by the class battles of the world proletariat for justice and social progress. Communism and Marxist-Leninist science found at him the prepared

man, endowed with the necessary qualities and virtues to propagate them, to defend them and to apply them with consequence in the Albanian reality” (Alia, 1988, pg. 25).

Both King Zog and Enver Hoxha are described in the respective texts as sons of their people, underlining a natural symbiosis between the leader and their people. After considering King Zog as the best son, the best brother, the best citizen and the best thinker of the country, Dako writes that:

“his career like commander and statesman, and above all his direct contacts with his people, helped him very much to know the country and the deepness of the Albanian spirit” (Dako, 1937, pg. 152).

In his turn Hoxha was seen by his successor as the incarnation of the best virtues of the Albanian people. Ramiz Alia writes that:

“As an acute psychologist Enver penetrated the social mentality of different social groups, he studied them and managed to understand not only their feelings and their aspirations, but also their moods. He was a profound connoisseur of the national psychology of the Albanians” (Alia, 1988, pg. 29).

King Zog was able to know the Albanian spirit. But, Hoxha’s capacity to know even the mood of his subjects gave the latter a kind of supra-natural power. The cult of Hoxha was connected also with his aptitude to foresee and to find out which was the best thing to do at a given moment. This made him an infallible leader. When Alia speaks about the first years of the alliance with the communist China (1960-1978), he writes that:

“It sufficed only a short time, less than a year, that he got fully convinced that the Chinese line was not constant due to wrong ideological concepts, and that their tactics were not only opportunistic, but also very dangerous to the international communist movement and for the future of socialism in the world” (Alia, 1988, pg. 271).

Hoxha’s cult, unlike that of the King Zog, had both a national and an international dimension. The biography of King Zog is a story of “his struggle for the safeguard and internal stability of Albania”. King Zog is described first as a chieftain with a good deal of followers coming mainly from his native place. With the passing of the years Zog became a more important political figure and its influence was gradually extended to the whole country. So, we have here the example of a brave, patriotic and cunning politician, with a regional background, but becoming a national leader due to his personal skills and the needs of the country to have a man of his stature (Dako, 1937, pg. 78). This is to some extent also the reflection of the situation on the ground at the very beginning of the rule of Ahmet Zogu in the early 1920-s. Albania at that time was lacking a national administration and regional differences were much more distinctive. The transformation of the figure of Ahmet Zogu from regional to national leader symbolizes also the transformation Albania went through during the period of monarchy. From a country lacking internal cohesion and torn apart by regional differences to a relatively stable national state at the end of 1930-s.

In the case of Hoxha the local background is almost lacking. In fact Alia mentions in the book the last visit Enver made to his native place Gjirokastra (town in southern Albania) in March 1978 (Alia, 1988, pg. 35). But, the event was not used to indicate any special importance the town of origin had on the leader. It was used to confirm a prior statement of Alia, that Hoxha was a very social man. He knew very well how to behave with all kind of people, with the crowd and with the intellectuals (Alia, 1988, pg. 33). And Alia uses the meeting in Gjirokastra, organized to welcome the leader, to show the special quality of the leader.

In Alia's book, Enver Hoxha is always considered to be a national figure, belonging to all Albanian people. This reflects the monolithic vision that communist leadership had on the Albanian population. This was done on behalf of the steel-like union of the Albanian people around the Party, the latter taken as the embodiment of the aspirations and hopes of the whole community. On the other hand, the totalitarian regimes have "an abstract and uniform notion of their people, which come to be used as a pedestal holding the regime and the symbol of the dictator" (Lubonja, 1999, pg. 59). The regional differences of the Albanian didn't count much for the communist state. Only the class division was important and even that was seen on national terms. In this sense Enver Hoxha was the leader of all Albanians. He was the sum of the best qualities of the Albanian people without regional distinction. Lastly, the Albanians during the socialist period were much more members of an Albanian community than their predecessors of the 1920-s.

During the close collaboration with communist China, from late 1960-s till 1978, the regime entered another phase of radicalization of its policies. As Albania became an isolated country in Europe, Hoxha got more sensitive to preserving his personal rule and grew more and more suspicious to the slightest signs of dissent into the country. In fact what we may call dissent in those years it was nothing but Hoxha's manoeuvres to fabricate "enemies", to punish and eliminate them, in order to deter any timid attempt to contradict the policies of his regime. The main consequence was a state of fear and insecurity reigning all over the country. This period witnessed a series of cyclical purges that eliminated or severely punished former members of communist leadership as they were deemed to be a threat to Hoxha's rule. Under the influence also of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Hoxha undertook further tough measures to tighten his grip of the situation in the country. The most important of them were the ban of all religious practices in 1967 and the closing down of all religious institutions. Albania officially declared to be the only atheistic country in the world. A "Museum of Atheism" was built up in Shkodra (northern Albania) to show the important change in the life of the Albanian people. The period of revolutionary reforms continued with severe attacks on "intelligentsia" and calling for major control over its inclination to yield to the foreign and decadent influences. Hundreds of specialists were removed from the capital to be sent to the campaigns and small towns to be educated with the revolutionary spirit of the working class and cooperativist peasantry. The school was another target of these radical changes and the reforms here were done under the name of "the revolutionarization of the school", which meant a further increase of ideology into the curricula of the education institutions. The Albanian economy was rapidly going towards the final phase of the collectivization. Its small private sector disappeared in the early 1970-s.

4. Isolation of Albania & international promotion of Hoxha' cult

It is paradoxical that just the period of Albania's political and economical isolation coincided with the efforts of regime to promote the international dimension of the Enver Hoxha's cult. The period of isolationism was instrumental in forging the cult of Enver Hoxha as a deity inside the country, but also giving to him a certain international dimension as the only true Marxist leader in the world. After that Hoxha broke with his former allies he was seen in the country as the banner of the flag of the true communist movement in the world. All the former allies of Albania were considered to be revisionists and ideological traitors of Marxist-Leninist theory. Only Albania remained loyal to his ideological principles.² This aspect of his cult started to appear when Albania broke with Moscow in 1960 and was consolidated further more after the split with China in 1978. However, it should be mentioned that the cult of the international leader was always associated with that of a great patriot. Every decision to break with his former communist allies was justified also on grounds of safeguarding the sovereignty of the country from external threats. In Alia's book, Hoxha is considered to be the defender of Marxism from the revisionist deviations of Soviet Union, China, etc. He is a figure of international importance.

"Enver Hoxha is a renowned figure of international communism. He was as much a patriot as he was an internationalist. The victory of revolution and the construction of socialism in our country was seen by him as international task towards the world proletariat. While the growth of the Marxist movement, the victories of the people in the world against the capital were considered as a strong external support for the socialism in Albania" (Alia, 1988, pg. 295).

Although it is not clearly stated it is an implied assumption that he deserved the place of the fifth classic of Marxism. Enver was praised to have enriched the theory of Marxism adapting it to the Albanian conditions and to have proved that Marxism is a vital ideological force still in the end of twentieth century. He comes to be seen as the only loyal heir of the fathers of Marxism when all the "so-called communists" in Western and Eastern Europe, and elsewhere, betrayed their theories. This lent him an air of austerity as the guardian of original Marxism from latter revisionist deviations, of loneliness as he was alone carrying out this noble mission, but also of moral superiority as he never changed his principles.

During the isolation period, Albania became the centre of the so-called Marxist-Leninist parties, which were minor militant groups advocating radical ways to combat the capitalist regimes. These groups, financially supported by the Albanian Party of Labour, were often charged with the mission to propagate the cult of Hoxha through distributing his translated works.

This aspect of his cult as a great international Marxist was closely connected with another one, that of being a great theoretician and intellectual. This is another difference between his cult and that of the King Zog. The latter was a statesman, he was a strategist and extraordinary commander, but Enver was a man of action and thought. In fact Hoxha himself made a great deal to cultivate this

² In late 1970-s and 1980-s Albania became the centre of the so-called "Marxist-Leninist communist parties", small radical ideological parties, financed by Albanian Party of Labour, which "professed the true communist ideas" along with a propaganda that tried to promote the image of Albania as the only socialist country in the world.

aspect of his personality. While King Zog's photos show him mostly as a military leader, Hoxha is very often seen in his studio reading and writing, or even in moments of thinking. On the other side by the end of 1970-s and in early 1980-s, when he reached 70 years old, he discovered that he could write theoretical books and could contribute to the treasury of Marxist-Leninist theory. In that period Hoxha wrote "Imperialism and Revolution", as an echo to Lenin's book "State and Revolution", or "The Euro-communism is anti-communism", as a response to the book of Spanish communist leader Santiago Carrillo "The Euro-communism and the State".

5. Hoxha and his political mentor, Stalin

The ideological puritanism of Hoxha is linked also to the importance the Stalin cult had until the end of the communist rule in Albania. The state atheism and the survival of Stalin's cult made Albania a particular case in the East Europe socialist camp. In his last years, Enver Hoxha wrote two books, which were the confirmation of the author's lifetime veneration to Stalin. The first book was called "With Stalin, memoirs" and the second "The Khrushchovians".³ Here Hoxha used a tough language on the revisionists, as he called Khrushchev and other Russian leaders after Stalin, and pledged that Albania would never deviate from Stalin's teachings. Although we may note less ruthlessness in Ramis Alia's narrative, and that Stalin's name is more rarely mentioned than during Enver Hoxha's time, the cult of Stalin remained a static ideological model throughout the existence of the communist regime. Unlike King Zog, Enver Hoxha had his ideological model and point of reference. His model was the Soviet Union and his point of reference was Stalin. The cult of Stalin was that of the direct heir of the fathers of the Marxism-Leninism. Marx, Engels were the theoretical genius of the Marxist thought, Lenin and Stalin were those who enriched the Marxist theory and applied it when they built the socialist Soviet state.

For Enver the cult of Stalin was kept alive as it had to perform two functions: a) propagandistic and b) pragmatic.

The cult of Stalin was one of the greatest ideological investments of Hoxha. Through Stalin's cult Hoxha tried to show up as the communist leader who remained stuck to the pure Marxist principles and to detach himself from all deviations. He wanted to be distinctive from the other communist leaders in Europe and in the whole world. His perseverance in protecting the Stalin's cult was made on behalf of "the need to preserve the national sovereignty of the country". The propaganda constructed the image of Enver Hoxha as a person that through protecting ideological principles was serving the independence of the country from external enemies. In fact the Albanian-Yugoslav break was officially justified on both grounds, ideological and national. Tito betrayed the real Marxist theory and became a threat to the small Albania. So, Hoxha while denouncing the Yugoslav ideological deviation saved his country from becoming engulfed into the Yugoslav federation. The same happened with Khrushchev in late 1950. In Hoxha's propaganda Khrushchev was depicted as a traitor of the Marxist thought and was labelled as "revisionist". According to this propaganda the

³ "Me Stalinin, kujtime"[With Stalin, memoirs], Enver Hoxha, Shtëpia Botuese "8 nëntori", Tirana, 1979; "Hrushovianët", Enver Hoxha, Shtëpia Botuese "8 nëntori", Tirana, 1980. The strength of the cult of Stalin in Albania was shown also by the fact that Albania was the only country in the Eastern Europe to have a town called "Qyteti Stalin" (Stalin's Town). It was changed into its old name "Kuçova" in 1990 with the fall of the regime.

Soviet Union under his rule was turned from the state of proletariat into a fearful colonialist power, which aimed to put Albania under its dominion. It goes without saying that the break with China was explained more or less in the same vein. The isolation that followed the decades of “ideological friendships” was presented by Enver Hoxha, but also by Ramiz Alia in his book, as an imposed solution to Albania, which preferred to be independent rather than betraying Marxism and fall into the foreign dominion.

But, one important aspect of the ideological puritanism of Enver Hoxha was his unshaken will to preserve his power and position on the top of the party. During his career he proved to have a shrewd sense of smell for protecting his power. The process of de-stalinisation was seen by Hoxha as a direct threat to his position. Therefore he strangled at birth some timid attempts of young Party members in late 1950-s to start following the path of changes as in USSR and other countries of the socialist camp. The preserving of Stalin’s cult served him as an ideological tool for carrying out the purges and strengthening further more his personal rule over the party and the whole country.

6. Hoxha’s cult as the creator of the New Albania

The other aspect of the cult of Hoxha was that of creator. This element of the cult is present also in the cult of King Zog, but it is mainly connected with the fact that he built the Albanian state. Hoxha’s cult of creator is richer in its components.

“The magnificent program of socialist industrialization, our original way towards the collectivization of agriculture and its modernization, the ideological and cultural revolutions are all historic victories of an extraordinary importance. Such deep transformations like the creation of the working class and the growth of its leading role, the establishment of social justice, the emancipation of the women and the democratization of the life of the country, the creation of a new way of living, the cultivation of socialist moral values, all these are due to the wisdom of the Party and to our unforgettable leader comrade Enver Hoxha” (Alia, 1988, pg. 307).

The underlying idea of this series of achievement is that of progress. The communist regime of Hoxha wanted to present itself as the builder of the New Albania. Everything started from scratches as earlier historical periods left behind backwardness and a general misery. Therefore the communist era ought to be presented as an exceptional event and as a great luck in the life of the Albanian people. It was a gigantic jump from the semi-feudal period of the monarchy to the modern state of Hoxha with its developed industry and agriculture that made Albania self-sustainable. The idea of progress is present also in the biography of King Zog. During his time the country was developing too. In the chapter “Ahmet Zogu, the reformer”, Dako draws a list of reforms undertaken by the King to modernize the country. They go from the agrarian reform to the emancipation of the women, from the organization of the police and the army to the building of bridges and roads, from eradicating the blood feud to the introduction of a regular tax system (Dako, 1937, pp. 152-157) .

However, the difference between Enver and King Zog with regard to the cult of creator and bearers of progress lies in the fact that Enver was described as the absolute good. Zogu was the best leader, but Enver was a kind of secular deity. The period of Enver is seen as something that can not be

repeated. Enver's achievements were not comparable with anything else. Ramiz Alia writes in his book:

“With the Party at his head Albania will go relentlessly ahead, the economy and culture will go to higher levels. The future victories will be for sure bigger than the present ones. This is in the dialectic of the socialist development. But, what the Party has done for Albania during the time of Enver Hoxha and under his guidance is unrepeatable and will be remembered with great respect by the future generations” (Alia, 1988, pg. 16).

The cult of Hoxha was competed only by that of the Party. But, this remained only in theoretical levels. He himself used to say that he was obeying to the Party orders, but that was done on behalf of a certain care not to present himself as an absolutistic leader, nor as a saint, but as a mortal that obeyed to a higher authority. Nevertheless, the leader had the advantage to be a person. Photos of him were found everywhere and made him to be omnipresent in the life of the community. In the end he was who decided on behalf of the party reducing the party only to an abstract imagery.

Ramiz Alia ends his book writing that:

“The epochs give birth to leaders such as Enver Hoxha and they have epoch-making dimensions. Just as historical epochs are never forgotten, so their heroes survive, are honoured and respected for ever... With his majestic work Enver Hoxha will always be present in the joys and worries of our society. The present and future generations will be guided by his teachings. Facing any major problem, facing any difficulty or obstacle, they will seek the advice of Enver. And Enver will help them. He will give them answers through his work” (Alia, 1988, pg. 473).

The party structures, the so-called “base-organisations” were used to keep this cult alive and present in the everyday life of the Albanians. The “party base-organizations” were the structures of the regime which controlled the society throughout the country. They were part of a huge mechanism of indoctrination and control. The “base-organizations” instilled both ideological dogmas and fear. They were responsible for securing the party in the centre, and in particular to its leader Enver Hoxha, their supremacy and “prestige” among the society. They were present in the agricultural farms, in the factories, in schools, universities and hospitals. They were responsible for organizing festivities, parades, conferences, or all kinds of massive expressions that hailed the role of Enver and the Party in the history of the country. From the point of view of the state control Hoxha succeeded to have under his own direct check any corner of the country as nobody else in the past. In this task the party structures played an instrumental role. They continued their role after the death of Hoxha in April 1985, and among others they invented the so-called “Enver's days”. They were festivities, conferences, or massive participation in public works organized on a precise day called “Enver's day”, which coincided either with his birthday or with a visit to a certain region, with an important conference, etc. Anyway, these celebrations started to lose their importance and faded away especially during 1990, when Ramiz Alia was forced to make the first and timid changes in the Party and the system due to a growing internal and external pressure after the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

The cult of Enver was that of an absolute ruler constructed with the help of a quasi-religious ideology, which celebrated his central role in the socialist Albania for almost half a century. It was the reflection of the type of regime Enver installed in the country. His regime was a totalitarian regime, which borrowed prefabricated elements from other similar ones in Eastern communist Europe. It was further more consolidated by his 45-years long highly personalized rule over the country and by the deep isolationism of Albania. The patriarchal and “clannish”⁴ character of the Albanian society has exerted its influence too. Although, many changes occurred in the country after the Second World War, certain rites and habits of the past were not totally eradicated. It inherited from the past the eulogy for the strongest and “the first of the first”, and the hatred for the perceived adversary group. Unlike in other countries of the Eastern Europe, repressive measures were not confined to the accused person. They were extended to the whole family and relatives. The individual was hardly conceived to exist outside of his family net. Collective culpability was an indication of a patriarchal mentality that couldn’t detach individuals from their kinship background. It was also a mechanism of control, which intended to dissuade people from the slightest forms of “subversive” action or thought. Otherwise the consequences would be heavier and the strike’s range far wider. With some differences Hoxha’s cult can be compared with the cult of the long-standing communist leaders like Stalin, Mao, Caushesku. Enver was venerated as an all- powerful figure and as a supreme authority in all the fields of human activity.

Conclusions

The cult of the King Zog was mainly that of the state builder, and of a national leader. It lacked the variegated and pervasive character of the cult of the communist dictator Enver Hoxha. The cult of King Zog and Enver Hoxha symbolizes also different stages of Albanian nationalism. Zogu was the founder of Albanian state nationalism. Through his isolationist policies Hoxha pushed Albanian nationalism to another level. His was a state-of-siege nationalism, which intensified the xenophobic feelings of Albanians, but on the other hand homogenized further more the Albanian community within the state borders.

The cult of Enver Hoxha came out as a unique phenomenon in the country through a process of relativization and negation. All historical figures or events of the past were confronted directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, with his glorious personality and legendary epoch. E.g the Albanian National Movement of the XIX century was of course an important period in Albania’s history but , according to communist propaganda, “it was only during the Enver’s era that the Albanian people became the real master of their own destiny”. Every important figure or historical period was lacking something if compared with Enver or the period of socialism. The figure of

⁴ We use the word “clan” here not to denote solely blood family ties, which were characteristic for the Albanian society of XIX and early XX centuries. In referring to nowadays situation, foreign historiography, and mostly foreign journalists, has often erroneously described the Albanian society as “clannish”. This assumption implies a sort of inherent social resiliency and takes the living pattern of some areas of the country as a national characteristic. This approach does not take into consideration the changes during the period of monarchy and in particular during the socialist period. The sense of the word “clannish” here indicates a group bound by power and economical interests, social status, which becomes more solid if coinciding with the same regional provenience and kinship ties. During socialism the most important aspect of the “clan” was that of power interest and social status, combined with regional and kinship ties. In the post-communist period there are mostly business and political interests, sometimes intertwined with kinship and regional ties, which come to the fore.

King Zog became the antipode of Enver. King Zog became the enemy of the Albanian people as he was identified with an obscurantist and oppressive regime. The former was the symbol of the dark past and the latter of the bright future. This manichean way of dealing with the past, or with a perceived ideological and political adversary, is one of the most resilient feature of Enver's legacy still present in Albanian public life.

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