
"BALKAN HEADQUARTER" IN THE OPTIC OF ALBANIAN COMMUNISTS IN THE 1939-1944 YEARS

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Abstract: This paper aims to present the features of the Balkan cooperation of the left political forces during the years of World War II, respectively the project of the Balkan Headquarters, in the view of the Albanian communists. The idea of Balkan co-operation spread to all communist movements in the Balkan countries, the most active was the Yugoslav Communist Party, which aimed to create a "Balkan Headquarter" under the conditions of war and a "Balkan Federation" after its end. At the end of 1942, the Yugoslav Communist leadership established contacts with the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, Greece and Albania to coordinate actions in the fight against Nazi fascist forces. Taking in consideration that the Albanian communists had the orientation compass in those years the Yugoslavs, under their influence, tried to achieve the objectives of this project as far as possible. Thus within the anti-fascist alliance but also under the Yugoslav directives, especially during the German occupation, the links and cooperation between the Albanian national liberation movement and the liberation movements of Yugoslavia and Greece intensified, especially in the border areas. With the EAM and the National Liberation Army of Greece (ELAS), an important area of cooperation was the Konispol region and generally Cameria. Pursuant to the agreement reached between the General Council of the Albanian National Liberation Army and the Greek National Liberation Front, they were sent to these representative areas on both sides to propagate the common war goals in the population and to mobilize them in the mutual partisan formations. But it should be noted that the Albanian National Liberation Army combative co-operation with ELAS was limited. Within the framework of cooperation with the Yugoslav National Liberation Army, several joint operations have been undertaken, especially in border areas. The fact that Kosovo Albanians are engaged in the national liberation movement, which has contributed to the increase of cooperation in these areas, should be considered. Cooperation between the two liberation movements has been more visible in Macedonia's area.

As would be seen from the subsequent actions of the Yugoslav leadership, during the Nazi-occupation period it prepared the ground for the post-war devastation of Albania within the Yugoslav Federal Republics, despite their failure to achieve this objective. During the research work of this case study, the qualitative method was generally applied by conducting a research: collecting, descriptive and explanatory, based mostly on historical facts and literature analysis.

Keywords: Balkan Headquarter, Communist Party, cooperation, World War II

World War II in Balkan, brought attention to the cooperation between states in the framework of worldwide antifascism. In these years, the banner of co-operation was maintained by the communist forces, which not only were empowered and were hitting Nazi fascism, but were also fighting to gain power after the war. Thus, the communist forces tried to re-establish at the political tables the idea of creating a Balkan Headquarter, which would precede the Balkan Federation or the Balkan Confederation.

According to the researchers, this idea has the embryo since the early XX century, when the Ottoman Empire was decomposing and the new states in Balkan displayed claims for territorial expansion at the expense of each other. In 1909, at the first Conference of the Balkan Social Democratic Parties, representatives of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia had the idea of alliance and unification between Balkan nations. At this conference, these parties, in their programs set a special point for the Balkan Federation. They thought that through this road the problems of Macedonia and Kosovo would be solved once and for all. On the other hand, a project was created for the creation of a federation, where all Slavic Balkan population would join, based on an old idea: the union of all the Slavs (Vukaj, Sh. 2007).

In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a conceptual clash between Western Europeans and the Comintern for the Balkan. With the start of World War II, the British government supported the Balkan Federation project on the basis of a Greco-Yugoslav axis. For this, it urged the Greek and Yugoslav governments to emigrate in January 1942, to sign an open bilateral agreement, where other Balkan countries would join in the future. But official Moscow strongly opposed this British project, after its interests in the Balkan territory were expelled (Milo, P. 2014).

However, the idea of the Balkan Federation was spreaded to all the communist movements of the Balkan countries, where the most active was the Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP). Based on the historical tradition, she intended to have the role of the center, both in organizing resistance movements in these countries, as well as in post-war states

(Vukaj, Sh. 2007). Thus, the YCP, resigned from the slogan of self-determination of the population until disconnection, to replace it with the project of creating Balkan Headquarter in the war conditions and the Balkan Federation after its end (Milo, P. 2014).

At the end of 1942, Tito charged Svetozar Vukmanovic Tempo, as a delegate of the Central Committee (CC) of Macedonia Communist Party, to organize the armed uprising there, and to establish contacts with the CC of the Communist Party of Bulgaria, Greece and Albania for coordinating actions in the fight against the nazifascism forces.

After contacts with the leaders of the Communist Party of Bulgaria and Greece, at the end of March 1943, Tempo came to Albania, to meet the leadership of the Albania Communist Party (ACP), in Labinot. He presented the idea of creating the Balkan Headquarters, where according to him, he was satisfied with the overall support he had found. On the other hand, in his memories Enver Hoxha expresses the opposite by ironizing the project of creation of this headquarters (Hoxha, E. 1982). But the fact that this idea continued to be discussed in the months that followed, shows that it had already received the approval of Balkan communists.

Early May, Ymer Dishica, Koci Xoxe, Tempo and Miladin Popovic, went to Lenge, Thessaly, in Greece to talk to representatives of the Greek Communist Party for the Balkan Headquarter (Milo, P. 2014).

On June 20, 1943, a meeting was held in Kucake, a village in Moglice, Korca, between Tempo, E.Hoxha and a representative of the Greek Communist Party, who was unauthorized for decision-making. According to Tempos memories, there was agreed to draft a document in the form of project- resolutions, that would be distributed to the communist parties of the four countries and after discussion in their leaderships, would be approved at a common conference. The document was signed by Tempo and E.Hoxha, after the Greek representative had no authorization. It was sent to the Bulgarian Communist Party, which had not yet pronounced the establishment of this headquarter.

The project-resolutions required urgent deployment of the bilateral co-operation between the liberation fronts, the creation of the Balkan Headquarters, which after the war would open the way for the creation of the Balkan Confederation. The appointment of four commanders and four political commissioners was nominated by the Heads of State and Communist Parties of each country. It was decided that the Kosovo Headquarters would pass directly under the command of the General Headquarters of the National Liberation Army of Albania. Common actions of the national liberation forces against invaders in border areas were also considered as necessary (Milo, P. 2014).

But in his memories, E. Hoxha does not accept such a thing, nor has he signed any document nor has he concluded in any final decision (Hoxha, E. 1982). However, the archival documents, letters of E. Hoxha and K. Xoxes, addressed to the Circular Committees of ACP, of Korca and Gjirokastra, prove these decisions (Milo, P. 2014).

Time paid great attention to the convincing work of the Greek and Bulgarian Communist Parties to accept the establishment of the Balkan Headquarter.

But in early July 1943, Greek Liberation Movement (EAM) signed an agreement with the British Command in the Middle East, Cairo, where, according to her, the Greek National Liberation Army was placed under the order of this command and could not carry out combat operations without its consent. Thus, the establishment of the Balkan Headquarters was not accepted, but the agreement on the cooperation in the border regions remained in force. On the other hand, the Bulgarian Labor Party, from the beginning, was reluctant to this project, as it required to lead itself the anti-fascist resistance in Vardar Macedonia, which contradicted Tito's intentions.

On the other hand, Tito requested to avoid London's reactions, which had expressed the desire for a non-communist Balkan Confederation. He should not have given the British the opportunity to use the concept of the Balkan Headquarter as an argument to defend their plan of the Balkan Federation, which had been strongly opposed by Stalin.

So on September 21, Tempo was acquainted with Tito's order to withdraw from the project for the creation of the Balkan Headquarter (Milo, P. 2014). It was also announced to the Circular Committees of ACP, that this project was canceled as a politically unfair idea. In this case, Tito instructed the Albanian leadership that the cooperation between the two states had to be consolidated, and there had to be a greater connection between the military units of the two countries (Lalaj, A. 2014).

Although Tito apparently resigned his project, in essence he continued to aim at controlling the liberation movements of the Balkan countries. The fact that Yugoslav influence was too great in the leadership of the ACP, it is clear that any initiative would be approved and implemented by the Albanian side.

At this time, in the framework of the anti-fascist alliance and also in the Tito's directives, especially in the period of German invasion, intensified the connections and cooperations between the Albanian National Liberation movement and the liberation movements of Yugoslavia and Greece, particularly in the border areas.

With the EAM and the National Liberation Army of Greece (ELAS), an important area of cooperation was the Konispol region and generally Cameria. Pursuant to the agreement reached between the General Council of the

Albanian National Liberation Army and the Greek National Liberation Front, they were sent to these representative areas on both sides to propagate the common war goals in the population and to mobilize them in the mutual partisan formations (Leka, Sh. 1998). E. Hoxha himself instructed two delegates of the ACP to go to Cameria, to create a favorable ground for the political and military cooperation of Albanian elements with the Greeks and that would be closely related to the Greek Communist Party (GCP). On the other hand, two Greek delegates from the GCP would come to the Greek minority zone in Albania to carry out the same tasks (Milo, P. 2014). In November 1943 the First Minority Partisan Battalion "Thanas Ziko" was created, later the battalion "Lefter Talo" and "Pandeli Bocari".

Among the joint actions with the Greek side are the fighting conducted by the forces of Group IV of the First Operative Zone with those of Regiment XV in April 1944, to face the German army operation in the direction of the Konispol-Vurg-Dropull line and the fightings done in June 1944 in the triangle Kakavije-Elea-Ura e Peratit. Also, there was also no lack of efforts to create a mixed Albanian battalion from Cameria and Greek minority from Albania (Lico, F. 2009). But it should be noted that the Albanian National Liberation Army combative co-operation with ELAS was limited (Gjecovi, Xh. 2004).

Within the framework of cooperation with the Yugoslav National Liberation Army, several joint operations have been undertaken, especially in border areas. The fact that Kosovo Albanians are engaged in the national liberation movement, which has contributed to the increase of cooperation in these areas, should be considered. In the area of Tropoja and Dukagjini plain some partisan formations were created and the partisan group "Bajram Curri". During 1943 these formations developed successful actions in Tropoja, Gjakova, in the province of Bytyci and Plava, on the Ferizaj-Prizren-Kukes road and on the Prizren-Gjakova road (Gjecovi, Xh. Milo, P. Meta, B. Sadikaj, D. 2008).

Cooperation between the two liberation movements has been more visible in Macedonia's area. With the joint actions of Albanian and Macedonian units in the autumn of 1943, Italian forces in Diber, Gozivar, Kercove and Radostush were hit and they controlled the roads of Diber-Gostivar and Diber-Struga (Gjecovi, Xh. 2004). Following the capitulation of Italy on September 8, 1943, the partisan forces of Dibra, led by Haxhi Lleshi, disarmed the Italian forces, entered the town of Dibra and established there the National Liberation Council, with composition where the majority was Albanian, and the minority was Macedonian. Immediately Tempo met H.Lleshi, asking him to give to the partisan Macedonian forces a portion of the armaments, that were taken by the Italians and that all Albanian partisans from that area should be made available to the Macedonian headquarters by stopping the connections with The National Liberation Council of Dibra. H.Lleshi refused to obey. Tempos's intervention, however, forced the Albanian leadership to accept Tito's "arbitration" over the issue of Dibra (Milo, P. 2014).

Thus, problems and controversies with the Yugoslav side affected the lack of coordination in some joint actions. During the German winter operation 1943-1944, despite the efforts of the partisan group of Dibra, no interaction was achieved with the units of the Macedonian-Kosovar brigade. But then, under the leadership of a joint operational headquarters, led by Mehmet Shehu, the Albanian, Macedonian and Kosovar forces set in the fighting for the liberation of Dibra at the end of July 1944 (Leka, Sh. 1998).

At the end of November 1944, when Albania was on the verge of liberation, the UNCSH General Command asked the General Headquarters of the UNCSH to send to the territory of Yugoslavia in pursuit of Nazi offensive forces Division V and VI. Division V took over the direction of Kosovo and Sanxhak, while Division VI moved to Montenegro and southern Bosnia.

From the announcements coming from these combat zones, it was found that Yugoslav commands were not ready for service for the supply of Albanian partisan forces with food, clothing and ammunition. However, the Albanian national liberation army units completed their duties, convinced that this way they fulfilled the obligations arising from the joint alliance and the participation of our countries in the antifascist coalition (Gjecovi, Xh. 2004).

The Albanian communist leadership tended to accomplish the goals dictated by the Yugoslavs to develop Balkan cooperation along their lines.

As will be seen from subsequent actions, the leadership of the YCP during the Nazi-fascist invasion period, prepared the ground for the full swallowing of Albania within the Federal Yugoslav Republics framework. But the historical flow and the change of internal and external factors prevented this thing. The disaster occurred with Kosovo, which, despite the waving of the anti-fascism flag, fell under the Yugoslav rule.

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