The contribution of the Albanian people to the great victory over fascism

In fighting for more than five and a half years against the occupiers, the Albanian people paid a heavy tribute in blood and sacrifices to bring about the brilliant victory of the peoples against the nazi-fascist aggressors. By fighting for their own national and social liberation, they also fought and shed their blood for the common victory of the peoples against the fascist plague.

The partisan war waged by the Albanian people was, on a world scale, a war in the rear of the enemy. Although its objective was the liberation of the country, the National Liberation War of the Albanian people was a support for the anti-fascist war of the peoples. Right from the beginning, the Communist Party linked the war of the Albanian people against Italian fascism and German nazism with the great anti-fascist alliance. As a result of this correct policy, in the course of the Second World War, the Albanian people aligned themselves with the forces of the world anti-fascist coalition. They fought with unexampled heroism and won a place of honour in the war for the defeat of Italian fascism and German nazism.

The National Liberation War saw the participation of 70,000 fighters incorporated in three army corps, eight divisions and twenty-five brigades. Besides, a great number of people fought in the ranks of self-defence units operating almost in all the villages of Albania. In bloody battles the enemy suffered heavy losses, the Albanian soil became the grave for 26,000 nazi-fascist invaders, another 21,245 were wounded and 20,800 captured. In other words, the Albanian partisan forces put out of action nearly 70,000 men in active service of the common enemy.

The nazi-fascist occupiers suffered heavy material losses as well. The Albanian partisans destroyed 2,100 enemy tanks, armoured cars or military vehicles, captured or destroyed 4,000 cannon and mortars, blew up 216 military depots, destroyed telephone lines, repair shops and other installations of the enemy.

The Albanian people, relative to their numbers, carried a very heavy burden on their shoulders. During the Second
World war, their territory of a little more than 28,000 square
kilometres was occupied by about 700,000 fascist soldiers
who caused incredible damage and great devastation. With
its population of 1,200,000 Albania ranked among the coun-
tries which suffered the heaviest losses during the Second
World War. It gave the common cause 28,000 martyrs, that
is 2.48 per cent of its population, coming up third among
the nations of the anti-fascist bloc. Albania’s percentage of
killed in relation to its population is 3.1 times greater than
that of Britain, and 17.59 times that of the United States.
The percentage of the wounded is 11 per 1,000 inhabitants,
that is five times more than the average of the wounded in
the countries of the anti-fascist bloc, the Soviet Union excepted,
and 34,500 people, or 3.96 per cent of the population, were
imprisoned or deported.

The material destructions suffered by Albania were
colossal: 36.14 per cent of dwelling-houses, 850 towns and
villages out of 2,500 Albania had at that time, were partially
or totally destroyed; entire regions such as Mallakastra,
Kurvelesh, Peza and Skrapar were turned to ashes, many
towns, such as Leskovik, Pogradec, Saranda, Ërmet, were
burnt down by the occupiers; all routes of communication,
port facilities, mining equipment and electric installations
were destroyed; grain stores and livestock were plundered,
and the national economy was ruined. Total material damage
is estimated at more than 1,603 million dollars, that is 1,410
dollars per head of population. But these figures fail to
illustrate the sacrifices the brave partisan fighters and
the whole Albanian people had to make. Ill-clad, barefooted,
poorly armed, often going without bread, in the snow and
storm, they gave the enemy no respite until they liberated
the whole of the Albanian territory with their own forces.

Fighting side by side with the other peoples, the Alba-
nian partisans discharged their internationalist duty honour-
ably and to the end. When the Italian fascists attacked Greece,
the Albanian people, through bold combat actions, gave the
Greek people important assistance. In the regions of Durrës,
Tirana, and Gjirokastra, the Albanian partisans attacked
Italian columns heading for Greece. The fascist chiefs, as
well as the Western press, were forced to admit this. In
a letter addressed to Hitler on November 22, 1940, Mussolini
wrote that the losses of the Italian army on the Italian-
Greek front were the result of the «treason of the Albanians».

General Badoglio, who replaced Mussolini in 1943 at the head of the Italian government, wrote in his memories: «The Greek troops are putting up stiff resistance on the Kalamas River of the Epirus, while the Albanian troops incorporated in our divisions have either betrayed by contacting the Greeks or have defected to their side.»

On December 22, 1940, the press agencies informed: «The Albanian soldiers press-ganged into the Italian army have mutinied yesterday in several sectors of the Italian rear, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy before being captured. Part of them managed to take to the mountains, where they are carrying on their resistance». On January 4, 1941 they informed that «in the military circles it is said that the Albanians are giving the Greeks important assistance in their war against the Italians.»

The Albanian people watched the development of the war and co-ordinated their actions against the enemy with those of the forces of the anti-fascist coalition. The victories of Stalin’s Red Army in the environs of Moscow, in Stalingrad, Kursk and elsewhere enthused our partisans who threw themselves into battle without sparing their lives.

At the moment when the Anglo-American forces landed in France and opened the second front there, four picked nazi divisions were nailed down in the mountains of Albania, engaged in the bloody battles of their June operation against the Albanian National Liberation Army. With their war the Albanian partisans also did their duty towards the anti-fascist coalition.

On October 5, 1944, at the request of the High Command of the Yugoslav National Liberation Army two brigades (the 3rd and the 5th) of the National Liberation Army crossed the state border and carried their war against the nazis on to the region of Kosova. Moreover, immediately after the liberation of the country, two divisions (the 5th and the 6th) of the Albanian National Liberation Army continued the pursuit of the Hitlerite invaders into the Yugoslav territory. The Albanian and Yugoslav partisans, fighting side by side against the nazi hordes in December 1944 and in January-February 1945, liberated Montenegro, Sandjak and the southern part of Bosnia. In the battles for the liberation of the peoples of Yugoslavia, hundreds of fighters of
the Albanian National Liberation Army laid down their lives. The struggle of the Albanian people met with great response and was considered an active contribution to the great anti-fascist war. It created the first international premises for the restoration of Albania's independence. It frustrated the plans of the occupiers who tried to rally Albania to the fascist bloc, and aligned our country with the anti-fascist coalition. In December 1942, acknowledging the War of the Albanian people, Molotov, Eden and Hull, ministers of foreign affairs of the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States respectively, took their stand towards the Albanian question in official declarations.

Among others, Molotov affirmed: «The Soviet Union, which follows with great sympathy the valiant war of the Albanian patriots against the Italian occupiers for the liberation of their country, recognizes no claim of Italian imperialism on Albanian territory and wants to see Albania free from the yoke of fascist occupation and its independence restored.»

For his part, Eden declared: «The British Government wants Albania to be liberated from the Italian yoke and its independence restored. The form of the state and government that will be established in Albania is up to the Albanian people themselves to decide and this question will be resolved at the end of the war.»

These declarations could not fail to cause great satisfaction and a feeling of legitimate pride among the Albanian people. The official declarations of the three main powers of the anti-fascist coalition, which recognized the independence and the liberation war of the Albanian people, confirmed that from now on Albania was recognized not only de jure but also de facto as an active member of the coalition. The Albanian people had won this place with their own heroic struggle, showing the entire world that the true Albania was not the one which a handful of traitors had proclaimed — «the ally of the Axis», but the one which the insurgent people had proclaimed — the ally of the nations and countries members of the great anti-fascist coalition. These declarations also showed that the hopes of the Albanian communists and patriots to see their just struggle win the support of the anti-fascist forces of the whole world, and of the Soviet Union in the first place, had already become a reality.

The three main powers of the anti-fascist coalition — the
Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain, sent military missions to the General Staff of the National Liberation Army.

Eminent Western personalities, who have never distinguished themselves for their sympathy for Albania, were forced to recognize the heroic struggle of the Albanian people. Winston Churchill, answering an interpellation in the House of Commons, declared on November 4, 1943: «Thousands of Albanians are fighting in their mountains for the freedom and independence of their country, and, from the reports of the British military mission in Albania, are carrying out brilliant actions.»

American Secretary of State Cordell Hull wrote on November 28, 1943: «The government and people of the United States are attentively following the struggle of the Albanians in defence of the integrity and independence of their country. We have witnessed with admiration their resistance against fascist Italy as well as their patriotic determination to preserve their national sovereignty. Today these valiant fighters are carrying on their struggle against the nazi enemy...» His successor Edward Stettinius, in a message addressed to Comrade Enver Hoxha on May 22, 1945, wrote, «I am well informed of the relentless struggle the Albanian people have waged against aggression and I highly appreciate the sacrifices they have made to carry out the liberation of their country and contribute to the final victory over the common enemy...»

The commander-in-chief of the allied forces in the Mediterranean, Maitland Wilson, wrote in a letter addressed to Comrade Enver Hoxha on October 12, 1944: «I have followed with admiration how your National Liberation Army has discharged itself of its tasks in its brilliant actions against the common enemy for the attainment of our common goal.»