

FROM THE LIFE OF THE COUNTRY

FRESH AIR, CLEAR WATER AND GREENERY EVERYWHERE

This year, the People's Republic of Albania celebrates the 30th anniversary of its founding. From an oppressed country, dependent on foreigners, a country of the wooden plow, small scale artisan production and thatched huts, a country of the pine torch and the oil lamp, of illiteracy and malaria, of poverty, exploitation and forced emigration, Albania has been transformed into a country with a most advanced socio-political order, where the ruling classes, the exploitation of man by man, and unemployment, have all been liquidated, industry is developing rapidly, the collectivized countryside is flourishing, and electric light illumines every home. There have been great successes in the field of education and health; 8-year education has become compulsory for the entire population, the health service is free of charge and nobody pays

any kind of taxes; the defence of the freedom and independence of the homeland has been strengthened as never before, and the people are masters of their own destinies.

In the year of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the free Albanian state, we may rightfully say that we have an advanced, diversified and modern industry. Plants and factories have been set up in all parts of the country. The extracting and processing industries have been developed, and the chemical, food and textile, timber and other industries have grown and strengthened.

This whole industry has certainly brought its blessings, but if not carefully handled, it may also bring pollution of the environment, and damage the people's health. It is true that ecological problems here have not become so disturbing and

alarming as in some countries with highly developed industry. But it is not a question of the present level of industrialization, or the amount of pollution in the environment; rather of the future development of the country and the attitude taken towards problems that arise.

Thus, in this case, it is important to look at how the state, and the society, deal with this problem, in order to prevent the present and future danger of polluting the environment, and to see how much they value people and their health.

In our socialist society, man is the most valuable capital, and every measure is taken to protect his health and life. As a result of this care, material and cultural wellbeing has grown, and the country's population has rapidly increased. Thus, for example, while births are at a high level, the death rate has been reduced more than 2.5 times over, in comparison with 1938. Before liberation, there was one death for every two births; today there are 5 births for every death, a natural increase which is the highest in Europe. Another example - Tirana is the only capital city in the world which uses the water of mountain springs as drinking water.

We gave these instances just as an example to show how well people are looked after in Albania; this context includes all the measures adopted at the recent meeting of the Council of Ministers, to ensure that Albania always has fresh air, clear water and greenery all over the country.

Along with the decree of the Presidium of the People's Assembly, forbidding the pollution of the country's territorial waters, measures have been taken which show how important this problem, primarily a social one, is thought to be.

The level of pollution in the waters of the world has become disturbing. The main pollution of this type in our country comes from the chemical and metallurgical industries. This occurred with the wastes from the big plant producing nitrate fertilizers in Fier; arsenic laden soot and water began to pollute the waters of two rivers into which they were discharged. But this did not last long. As a result of the measures taken, particularly the changeover in the plant from oil to gas, the discharge of more than 2,000 tons of soot annually into the river was avoided, and by setting up two installations, it became possible to separate the arsenic from the discharged water, and eliminate

it from the gas discharged by the plant. In order to increase the effect of the measures adopted still more, as well as to have a clean environment around the plant, the height of the chimney for the discharge of nitrous gases was doubled. In other chemical plants too, stringent measures have been taken in this direction. Thus, at the big phosphate fertilizer plant at Laç there is an installation to clean the polluted water; at the caustic soda plant in Vlora, the polluting wastes no longer goes into the sea, but is deposited in special basins which do not endanger the environment through pollution. Similar protective measures have also been taken at other chemical enterprises in other cities, and at the copper refining, chromium and coal enrichment plants, and others.

Albania is a country with a developed oil industry, for both extraction and processing. By special decision of the Government, attention has been drawn to pollution, and the concrete measures to be taken in order to avoid the pollution of the environment, particularly in cases occurring with the waste resulting from the cleaning of wells, have been laid down. As far as the oil processing plants are concerned, their waste, before being discharged into the environment, is forced through filtration blocks set up for this purpose. A similar measure has been adopted for the big intensive oil processing plant which is nearing completion at Ballsh. The plan for it included the construction of the proper filtration blocks equipped with oil separator, neutralizers, rapid filter, etc.

We could cite other measures that have been taken to avoid the pollution of the environment by the plants in operation, and by the new ones which are being built from year to year in our country. The metallurgical combine going up in Elbasan is a magnificent work, which will turn out the first Albanian made steel, with an advanced technology. This unit, too, will have its own «troubles» concerning waste, yet despite this, and all the difficulties in its construction, the necessary measures have been planned, right from the design stage, to clean the combine's waters so that their discharge into the Shkumbini river will not be harmful to people, agriculture, or animal life.

Besides these, we might mention dozens more measures that have been taken in our country to preserve the environment from pollution.

The western press reports everyday on flagrant cases of pollution of the environment, which is a result, in the first place, of insufficient care taken for the protection of man's health. There, the laws take care to defend the interests of the factory owners, who take no measures to preserve the environment because this would require expenditure on their part, and thus eat into their profits.

Such things do not happen in our country. This is why, in Albania, although industry is developing so rapidly, and although we have plants and factories which, in size and technological standards, compare well with those of advanced countries, we have fresh air, clear water and greenery in every acre of our homeland.

Likurg ROSHI