Education and Employment in Communist Albania

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Rezumat

Educaţia şi profesiile în Albania comunistă

Istoria Albaniei este o luptă continuă pentru independenţă care, deşi a fost obţinută în 1912, a fost păstrată pentru puţin timp. Cele două războaie mondiale, care au afectat întreaga lume, au impus Albaniei un regim de ocupaţie italiană, apoi nazistă; cel care a condus lupta de eliberare, carismaticul lider Enver Hoxha, este totodată cel care a deschis calea regimului comunist în Albania, preluând toate funcţiile-cheie pe linie politică.

În încercarea de a crea un echilibru între istoriografia comunistă, care glorifică regimul, şi cea postcomunistă, care îl denigrează, lucrarea de faţă îşi propune să evidenţieze două aspecte sociale - educaţia şi profesiile, considerate prioritare de către liderii comunişti.

La preluarea puterii de către comunişti, sistemul educaţional era foarte deficitar; 8% dintre bărbaţi şi 92% dintre femei nu aveau deloc pregătire şcolară. Astfel, guvernul şi-a propus eradicarea totală a acestui fenomen al analfabetismului; măsurile adoptate prin reforma din 1946, după model sovietic, au afectat toate nivelele de învăţământ: au fost stabilite cele patru nivele fundamentale de şcolarizare - învăţământul preşcolar, şcoala generală, liceul şi universitatea, ultimele două având specializări diverse, în funcţie de necesităţile statului; a sporit numărul profesorilor, cu studii de specialitate; s-a pus accent pe educarea adulţilor, prin constituirea aşa-numitelor „şcoli de noapte;" au fost fondate principalele instituţii de învăţământ superior; s-a îngăduit studiul limbilor străine, rusa şi engleza etc.

Profesiile erau, la rândul lor, sub controlul statului şi în strânsă legătură cu studiile absolvite. Principiul după care se conduceau liderii comunişti era acela de a oferi o slujbă tuturor celor capabili să muncească. O importanţă deosebită s-a acordat şi femeilor, încurajate să renunţe la mediul casnic, în favoarea unei slujbe plătite de stat. Treptat, Albania trece de la statutul de ţară agricolă, la cel de ţară industrializată; s-au construit numeroase fabrici, uzine, sporind numărul angajaţilor; s-a dezvoltat sectorul comercial, schimburile de produse; s-a acordat atenţie sectorului medical.

În concluzie, se poate spune că regimul comunist în Albania a avut atât aspecte pozitive, cât şi negative - s-a eradicat analfabetismul, dar copiii comuniştilor au fost favorizaţi; toţi albanezii au un loc de muncă, dar cei cu un trecut necorespunzător standardelor comuniste, nu au posibilitate de avansare etc.

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Introduction

„Albania is a country as old as the Balkans themself, inhabiting the Balkans before the Greek world, the Roman occupation and the Slavic invasion, which survived slavery and which inhaled to be alive, in every part where Albanians struggled for independence."[1] One of the characteristics of Albanian history is the relation to its endless wars for independence, an independence, which would be gained on November 28, 1912. This independence would last for a few months due to the Balkan Wars, which would separate it definitely from some of its territories, such as Kosova, Çamëria, part of Macedonia and part of Montenegro as well, as a result of the Conference of Ambassadors in London, in 1913.

This would not be the last hardship for Albania, as it experienced other war disasters, such as World War I and World War II. The end of the latter had a strong impact on countries in Central and Southeastern Europe. Nevertheless, Albania was involved in World War II due to its invasion and then occupation by Fascist Italy, in 1939; later on, Albania was occupied by Nazi Germany, experiencing thus two totalitarian regimes. The fight against the Germans led to the creation of the Albanian National Liberation Army, followed by the foundation of the Albanian Labor Party (PPSH), in 1941. The leader of these forces was Enver Hoxha, a figure who distinguished himself during the war of liberation. Finally, the Albanian army succeeded in liberating Albania on November 29, 1944.

The National Liberation War was the beginning of the charismatic leadership of Enver Hoxha, who later on would be regarded by Albanians as the savior of the country with the partisan forces. All this would lead to the communist take-over and the creation of the new government headed by Enver Hoxha, in which the new leadership would embark on an assiduous campaign of reconstructing and transforming Albania. This campaign was directed by the leader of the country, who appointed himself to various posts in the new government, such as head of the

[1] Sheradin Berisha, ***Kryengritja Shqiptare e Vjeshtës së Vitit 1913*** [The Albanian Appraisal of Autumn 1913], in http://www.agimi.com, 2004, (last visited February 2007).

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Central Committee of the Albanian Labor Party (PPSH), Prime Minister from 1944-1954, simultaneously holding the ministry of foreign affairs, from 1946 to 1953, and President of Albania. As first secretary of the Party's Central Committee and President of Albania as well, he retained effective control of the government until his death.

The communist regimes in various regions of the world have been subject to intense academic interest, and the Albanian case is not an exception. To date, scholarly research has nevertheless focused mostly on political aspect, pointing out the lack of civil rights and liberties under communist totalitarian systems. The same case is valid for the study of communism in Albania, as well. A majority of the works on the history of the communist regime in Albania either glorify the regime if they are products of that period, or blame it for its obvious negative sides, if these works have been written after the regime's collapse.

In an effort to overcome this dichotomy, the current paper focuses on social history; especially on the education and employment aspect. I argue that they were the priority of the government and that all the active Albanians could enjoy this facility.

In this paper, I will concentrate on the means of the government to develop education and employment during communism. Another focus of this paper will be the employment procedure during this period. I have made good use of oral history with people who lived and worked during communist Albania, as well the written books and articles.

Education during Communism in Albania.

The new government embarked on assiduous campaigns to transform the country and transformation included all the spheres of life, education incorporated. Considering the fact that the illiteracy rate in Albania at the beginning of the communist takeover was 8 per cent of the entire population, whereas the female illiteracy was 92 per cent,[2] the main task of the government turned out to be its eradication. One of the ex-leaders who occupied the position of Minister of Education in 1955-1958, Mr. Ramiz Alia, confirms that the communist government decided that till 1959 they would obliterate illiteracy. This would lead to the spread of literacy and to the high rate of employment. As previously mentioned, the communist government aimed at the obliteration of illiteracy involving all the generations in the education process, shape the education

[2] http:www.demographc-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/11.

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system in accordance to the Soviet Model and develop foreign language education in consistency with the Soviet ideology.

Primarily, the Albanian communist government decided the eighth form school be mandatory, open up new schools and supply these schools even in the most remote areas of Albania with teachers, despite the small number of kids. Even if there were just four kids, they appointed a teacher to that school. The first teachers were not really qualified. They were just young boys and girls who had attended the high school or the eighth form school. All this led to the fact that, as Mr. Alia states in his interview, *„there were 160.000 young boys and girls had attended the university by 1985. As such our youth was educated and 60 per cent of it had attended the high school. We never regarded any expanses to education as worthless. We never restricted education as today it occurs*."[3] In fact, they fulfilled this aim and the Albanian youth was attending all the grades of education.

The educational system was organized according to a four general categories' system: pre-school, general eight year program, secondary and higher education. Previously the compulsory eight form school was just seven years, but with the reform it changed into 8 years. *„The eight year program was designed to provide pupils with elements of ideological, political, moral, aesthetical, physical and military education.*"[4] This means that the pupils had to be aware of all the actual issues Albania and the State Party were undergoing. One of the teachers under the communist regimes states today that there was a common rule that they should mention the state party in the lesson plan very often and the pupils had to know all the names of the members of the Political Bureau.[5] Secondary education began with grade nine and ended with grade twelve. The secondary education schools were divided in two categories, the general one and the professional one. The profiles of the secondary professional schools involved the industrial, agricultural, electrician, pedagogic, trade, arts, health tracks as well. At the end of the four year secondary vocational profile, the pupils were supplied with a diploma, including the categories

[3] Ramiz Alia, ex-President of Albania, interview by the author, April 27, 2007, tape recording, Tiranë.

[4] http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-189.html, data of April 1992.

[5] A teacher who taught during communism in Albania.

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in some professions, whereas the pupils of the general secondary school were supplied with acknowledgement of maturity. The higher education, or university, lasted from 3-5 years and tuition was free.[6] This system had its advantages and disadvantages. The students were appointed the study direction in accordance to their GPA and the biography. The children of the communist were prioritized.

The youth was not the only section of the population to study, as the adults were obliged to some extent to attend schools which in Albania were called *„night schools*." Most of the Albanians who worked were obliged to work during the day and then study at the evenings. Adult education was provided in the same sequence as fulltime schooling for younger students, with two exceptions. First, the eight-year general education segment was noncompulsory, and was compressed into a six-year program that allowed the completion of the first four grades in two years. Second, those who wanted to proceed to higher institutes after completing secondary school had to devote one year to preparatory study instead of engaging in production work, as full-time students did.[7]

The next characteristic of the communist Albanian education aspect is its shape in line with the Soviet Models. The consistency to the Soviet Models is visible since in the content of the school texts. The 1946 Education Reform Law provided specifically that the Marxist-Leninist principles would penetrate all school texts. Another aspect of the Soviet orientation became official in 1950 in terms of communist ideological propaganda and central government control. The secondary technical schools complied with the same line. This would be followed by the foundation of three institutes of higher learning in 1951: the Higher Pedagogic Institute, the Higher Polytechnic Institute and the Higher Agricultural Institute, which were patterned in accordance to the Soviet Models. The majority of the scientific books, especially the technical matter ones were just translations from the Soviet ones. Courses for teachers were taught by Soviet instructions and Soviet methods of

[6] http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-189.html, data of April 1992.

[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Albania#Education_Under_Communist_Rule.

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pedagogy and psychology were implemented. The curricula as well was shaped and controlled by Soviet educators.[8]

The common knowledge about the communist regimes would lead to the reasoning that the Albanian communist leader had isolated Albania from other countries; the foreign language education was prohibited. On the contrary, this was not applicable for the Albanian case. The Albanian government had decided to allow foreign language education. They made mandatory one foreign language in the eight form school and two foreign languages in secondary school. The two foreign languages allowed in the Albanian schools during communism were Russian and English.[9] The foreign language education was continued in the university as well, where teachers of English and Russian were prepared for the young generations, as it was claimed by the communist government.

Employment during Communist Albania

The state party had a very essential role in controlling people's life and taking decisions instead of them. Employment as well was managed by the government. I will demonstrate that though the state party had a final decision in employment, still, this had a positive impact in people's life as the government provided a job to everyone capable to work. The state party had established a plan on the employment for its people. Which was the employment process, how were people appointed the job position and which was the impact of the communist ideology will be the focus of this section.

The communist embarked on the development of Albania and special attention was paid to employment. According to people who lived and worked during communism, one of the principles in employment was related to education. Thus, all the pupils who did not attend the high school could be employed and simultaneously attend „*night schools*," as they called them, without interrupting the job. They were engaged in farms and some state enterprises. The same happened with the secondary school students who could not attend the university for any reasons, including here personal or professional.[10]

The vocational high school students were prioritized as they could work within their field of qualification. Thus, they were appointed a job in a factory in accordance to the diploma they had or the category they obtained. Students who completed vocational high schools were

[8] ***Ibidem***.

[9] Oral history, A teacher during communist regime in Albania.

[10] Oral History, People who studied and worked during communism.

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appointed a job and they could keep it forever.[11] This meant for the Albanian government employment for the entire working force.

The next prioritized stratum was women. The 1965 would mark for the Albanians the launch of Cultural and Ideological Revolution.[12] During this period, women were encouraged to work outside home attempting to overcome conservatism. „*Hoxha himself proclaimed that anyone who trampled on the party's edict on women's rights should be 'hurled into the fire'*."[13] This period as it is stated from women of different generations marked the emancipation of women as they were given posts similar to men and paid equally.[14] It became important for enterprises, as well as for institutions, to have as many women in their personnel as possible.

A special help for the employment of the Albanians was the development of Albania, which for the communist regime was equalized to industrialization. The development of industry was achieved in Albania through the five year plans. The third five-year plan denotes the beginning of heavy industry. The special credentials given to heavy industry led to the construction of the heavy industry plants during this period. The construction plans for this period grew 16 per cent compared to the first five-year plan, the yield increased 44 per cent, the cost decreased of 16 per cent.[15] Elbasan, a city situated in the center of Albania, is one clear example of employment due to the heavy industry, due to the construction of the Metallurgical Plant. This plant would employ people from other regions as well who were deported to Elbasan, as it was claimed by the communist government „*their motherland needed them*."[16] Consequently, the number of people deported by the government to be employed in this plant in 1974 was 859.[17] The entire plant was composed of various yards. In 1966-1967, the following yards had the respective number of workers:

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[11] ***Ibidem***.

[12] http://www.knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Communist_and _post-Communist_Albania/

[13] ***Ibidem***.

[14] Oral History, Women who worked during communism in various professions.

[15] Anthim Konomi, Irfan Veteriku, Egon Gjadri, Stavri Naço, Dhori Guri, Agim Shehu, Riza Minarolli, Kosta Goga, ***Ndërtimet në Shqipërinë Socialiste***, [Construction in Socialist Albania], Tiranë, 8 Nëntori, 1980, 27.

[16] Enver Hoxha, ***Raport në Kongresin e VI të PPSH***, [Report in the Sixth Congress of PPSH], Tiranë, 8 Nëntori, 67.

[17] Documents in the Municipality of Elbasan about Metallurgical Plant, 1974.

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Yard	Number of Workers
Construction Yard No. 1	1113
Construction Yard No. 2	3202
Cement Factory	1617
External Yard	701
Black Metallurgy Yard	723

Table 1: *Number of Workers in the Metallurgical Plant in 1966-1967*[18]

As seen from the table, this plant employed a big part of the population of Elbasan as well as from other cities. Whereas according to Mr. Biba, who worked in the Metallurgical Plant from 1970, there were 12.000 people working in this plant.[19] This meant that the communist government aimed at expanding the range of enterprises built and the employers' number was increasing. The next factory in Elbasan, which employed a really considerable number of people, was the Cement Factory. It was the product of the fourth five-year plan. In 1979, the Cement Factory in Elbasan started functioning in full capacity.[20] As the other factories of the time its number of workers was growing and just in 1966 there were 1617 workers.[21] The workers were of both genders demonstrating the aims of the government to emancipate women as well.

Summarized, the employment of people in the entire Albania in accordance to the sectors would be as demonstrated in the following chart in percentages. As the table demonstrates, the highest percentage of employment is falls under the category of agriculture, due to the profile of the country and moreover due to the fact that people with an adequate profession could work in the farm of the country. This sector as well included the young ages as well, especially the one who did not attend the secondary school. Not just this but the next category of people employed in this sector was also the declassed ones, people had problems with their

[18] Documents in the Metallurgical Plant in the Municipality of Elbasan, 1966-1967.

[19] Kozma Biba, Director of the Metallurgical Plant, for the correspondent of BBC, May 19, 2005.

[20] Anthim Konomi, Irfan Veteriku, Egon Gjadri, Stavri Naço, Dhori Guri, Agim Shehu, Riza Minarolli, Kosta Goga, ***Ndërtimet në Shqipërinë Socialiste***, [Construction in Socialist Albania], Tiranë, 8 Nëntori, 1980, 45.

[21] Documents in the Cement Factory, Essential Register of Workers, 1966.

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biography provenience. With the development of the country, it switched from an agricultural one to an industrialized one and subsequently the number of the employees lowered in this category and commenced to increase in the industrial sector. The progress in industry led to the necessity to have more qualified people to be employed in this sector. The government again took care of this leading to the growth of this area. The beginnings of 1960 marked the construction of the most important plants and enterprises as such the number of employees was bigger, but later on, the number of constructions was lower and respectively the number of employees decreased. Trade is a sector which was doomed to lose terrain with the passing of the years. The break with Soviet Union, China and Yugoslavia led to the isolation of Albania remaining in stagnation, not being able to export and import goods from other countries. Due to this, the number of people employed in trade sector lowered. As mentioned previously, the education level of the Albanians was lower, but aiming at its improvement initiated the increase of the educated people who would be employed in the education sector later on.

Health was another focus of the Albanian communist government and the number of the employees in this sector would increase until 1980, whereas the period afterwards will mark regression in this field, as it coincides with the isolationist period and the beginnings of the collapse of the regime in terms of economic view.

Sector	**1960**	**1970**	**1980**	**1985**	**1987**
Agriculture	55.6	52.2	51.4	51.3	52.0
Industry	15.1	19.2	21.8	22.3	22.9
Construction	11.4	9.9	9.1	8.0	7.1
Transportation and communications	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.9	2.9
Trade	5.9	5.9	4.8	4.8	4.6
Education and culture	3.4	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.4
Health	2.7	2.6	3.0	2.8	2.9
Other	3.9	3.2	2.8	3.4	3.2
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2. *Structure of Work Force by Sector, Selected Years, 1960-1987*[22]

[22] ***Vjetari Statistiskor i R.P.S. Të Shqipërisë 1988*** [Statistical Yearbook of the Peoples Socialist Republic of Albania, 1988], Tiranë, 1988, 69.

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The government had calculated everything and appointed the job positions to people in accordance to the necessities of the country, as it was always commented by the government. The Albanians used to accept any job offered, no matter where they had to work, in terms of geography or in terms of enterprises. It was common that Albanians from central Albania went to work in the most remote villages of Northern Albania and the government provided residence for them in the zone they would work. These people were of different professions and of different backgrounds. None of the strata of population were prioritized. The better paid professions during communism were doctors, teachers and drivers, then the other professions.

The employment of all the people appointed by the government had a positive and negative impact as well. The positive impact was related to the merit of getting a work place. No matter who you were, in case there was a vacancy the government would immediately employ the person. The negative impact was related to people who had a defect in provenience. One of the drawbacks of the communist regime in Albania were the purges and the conviction of the entire kin due to the fault of one person. If one had a defect in biography, he was regarded as declassed and had no rights to occupy the same position as the others. Despite being graduated and having a very nice position, one if being part of a kinship who was persecuted by the communist government, it was enough to be sent to work in a farm or in the most remote areas of Albania.[23]

The government was the one to decide on the employment in accordance to the principles of the regime. Although the doctrines of the regime could be interpreted as the children of the communist leaders were prioritized, but there was a good position even for the simple people. It was important just to follow the ideology line and act in accordance to it.

Conclusions

Despite the negative impact the communist regime had in people's life, it had its crimes as well, which cannot be denied at all. The latter has been the focus of many articles displaying just one side of the coin. The Albanian communist regime's history is being filled with such prejudiced writings. I do believe that history of a country needs to be written accordingly and the political system should not intervene in history writing. Both sides of the coin, meaning the communist regime, need to be displayed. Thus, as all the regimes, it had its negative and positive impact as well.

[23] Oral history, A veteran of the communist regime.

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In terms of education and employment, the communist regime acted mainly on bases of merits and fulfilled its aims the government had pre-stated. Thus, they started with the most immediate issue, illiteracy eradication, and then switched to making mandatory the eighth-form school. Subsequently, they concentrated on the qualification of the staff. The negative impact was that the children of the communists were prioritized. The Soviet example was glorified and the education system was shaped accordingly. This accordance was revealed not just in the content of books, the division of classes, but as well in the ideology that filled the courses and moreover that led people's life. This ideology was the blame for many families, whose children were not accepted to a higher education.

Lastly, the employment aspect as well had its advantages and drawbacks. The advantages were related to the merit bases and the unfinished opportunities of achievement. What needs to be accepted is the fact that all the working potential of Albania were supplied with a job and that the youth was not vagabondizing in the streets of the city due to the lack of employment. The drawbacks of this aspect again were related to the biography of the kinship. It was enough one person in a kinship that would convict all the kinship. The job appointment by the government in various zones was another drawback as one was obliged to go for it, no matter where it was; on the contrary one was labeled an enemy of the regime and the country.

The communist legacy still hunts Albania and the process of transformation proved to be long and arduous, consequently it is visible a slight nostalgia of people for communism, although they never want it back as a regime. This nostalgia is related mostly to the benefits of the Albanians during communism meaning social life. As far as the transformation is completed, the Albanians who did not suffer from any negative sides of communism will keep on glorifying it.

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