

## Москва–Ханой–Тирана: специфика отношений в контексте раскола «лагеря социализма»

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### Moscow–Hanoi–Tirana Relations in the Context of the Split in the “Socialist Camp”

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Declassified documents from Russian archives and official Vietnamese and Albanian materials and memoirs permit consideration of the under-studied topic of relations between the Soviet Union and the ruling Communist regimes in Albania and Vietnam and of Albanian–Vietnamese bilateral relations in the context of the two countries’ relations with the USSR and with the People’s Republic of China. The split in the international Communist movement from the late 1940s onward meant that, in the early 1960s, the Chinese Communist leadership set out to create a counterweight to Moscow composed of “the true Marxist-Leninist parties”. Hanoi and Tirana had to define their places in this Sino–Soviet confrontation. Hanoi maintained normal relations with both Moscow and Tirana until the end of the 1980s, despite the severing of all bilateral ties between the Soviet Union and Albania in the early 1960s.

**Keywords:** Vietnam, Albania, Soviet Union, socialist camp, Soviet–Vietnamese relations, Vietnamese–Albanian relations, small nations, the Soviet factor in international Communism, People’s Republic of China.

The history of relations between the countries that comprised the “socialist camp” after the end of the Second World War retains

academic and political interest. While some aspects of that history have received considerable attention, others have not yet received adequate treatment in the historiography. This research note concerns such a topic — the nature of the relations that developed among the Soviet Union and two “lesser” members of the socialist camp that took positions different from that of the Soviet Union on a number of questions relating to building socialism after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956.

The note draws on previously secret documents from Russian archives that have become available for study. It also draws on numerous Albanian sources, primarily thematic collections, the collected works of Enver Hoxha, and the writings of Albanian politicians that reflect their perceptions of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and of Communist Vietnam in the context of Albanian relations with the outside world. Not least, the materials published in the printed bulletins and on the official website of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington (History and Public Policy Program, Woodrow Wilson Center n.d.) are of considerable interest.

### Enver Hoxha and Hồ Chí Minh, Agents of the Stalin Line

The long-term leaders of the People’s Republic of Albania (PRA) and of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV),<sup>1</sup> Enver Hoxha and Hồ Chí Minh, belonged to the group of leaders of socialist countries fascinated during the last period of Josef Stalin’s life by the scale of his personality and by his political “wisdom”. These leaders began to build similar political systems of their own, which faced condemnation at the Twentieth and Twenty-Second Congresses of the CPSU in 1956 and 1961, respectively, and also in the official documents of the majority of Communist and workers’ parties.

Both Hoxha and Hồ Chí Minh came to power without the direct support of the Soviet Union, and external forces in the form of the modes of Communism in Yugoslavia and China, respectively, weighed on them. Tito and Mao Zedong saw these smaller countries

as “junior partners”, with possible negative consequences for their national sovereignty. But for various reasons the Soviet Union gave Hoxha and Hồ Chí Minh important political support in difficult times and thus earned their gratitude.

Stalin had no illusions about the prospects for raising the level of Albania’s and Vietnam’s development, and during private meetings and for reasons that are not entirely clear he asked the leaders of both countries to rename their ruling Communist parties as “workers” or “labour” parties.<sup>2</sup> Opposing this request made no sense, because Moscow was helping Tirana in its confrontation with the “Yugoslav Titoists” dreaming of the annexation of Albania or of making it a puppet state in pursuit of Tito’s cherished idea of a “Balkan Federation”.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, supporters of Hồ Chí Minh needed Soviet support in fighting both the French and former Vietnamese emperor Bảo Đại.<sup>4</sup> And, indeed, Hồ Chí Minh and some of his supporters had ideas similar to Tito’s, focused on the creation of an “Indochina Federation” under their control in the territories of French Indochina.<sup>5</sup> Further, the Albanian and Vietnamese leaders had to play by the rules established by Stalin, to fit into the concept of “people’s democracy” developed in Moscow for loyal regimes in Eastern Europe and Asia.<sup>6</sup> After receiving official recognition from the Soviet Union in January 1950, Hồ Chí Minh’s DRV government became — along with the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Mongolian People’s Republic — one of the countries of “people’s democracy” in Asia.

From March 1950, and following the decision of the Political Bureau of the CPSU, the newly formed PRC represented Soviet interests in the DRV.<sup>7</sup> This circumstance led to suspicions on the part of Hồ Chí Minh that in the long term Vietnam would be subordinated to its powerful northern neighbour. Hồ Chí Minh could not allow this prospect, but he had no desire to quarrel with Mao Zedong. So he began to manoeuvre. He sent his close ally Hoàng Văn Hoan as ambassador to Beijing and as representative to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and in the spring of

1952 the DRV opened an embassy in Moscow, largely financed by the Soviet side.<sup>8</sup> Also, in 1950–52 Hồ Chí Minh conducted personal correspondence directly with Stalin, rather than through China. This correspondence may be indirect evidence of his unwillingness to deal with the Soviet Union only through Beijing (Konoreva 2008*b*; Selivanov 2012).

During this period, no “special relationship” between Vietnam and Albania developed. The two countries were geographically remote from each other, and each was underdeveloped. Shortly after PRC and Soviet recognition of the DRV, however, their allies, including Albania,<sup>9</sup> also recognized it.

#### Albania and Vietnam in Moscow’s and Beijing’s Plans after the Death of Stalin

It is noteworthy that neither Enver Hoxha nor Hồ Chí Minh attended Stalin’s 9 March 1953 funeral, choosing rather to participate in ceremonies to mark his passing held at home. They expressed their desire to continue contact with the new Soviet leaders — at first with Georgiy Malenkov and then with Nikita Khrushchev. However, the two leaders had questions for Moscow.

The Soviet Union did not want to deepen its confrontation with the West over the DRV, as was manifested clearly in the decision of the Geneva Conference of 1954 to fix the division of Vietnam along the seventeenth parallel. Albanian leaders anxiously watched the gradual improvement of Soviet–Yugoslav relations, the culmination of which was a historic visit of Khrushchev to Belgrade as the head of a Soviet delegation. The Soviet Union nevertheless remained the main sponsor for the two countries, and thus their discontent did not go beyond veiled gestures. June 1955 saw the first official visit of Hồ Chí Minh to the Soviet Union, during which an agreement on increased Soviet aid to Vietnam was reached. Albania also received full support from Moscow that year, especially after the formation of the Warsaw Pact and Albania’s inclusion therein as a country occupying an important strategic position in the Mediterranean region.

Decisions on debunking the cult of Stalin, adopted by the government of the Soviet Union — without the consent of its allies — at the CPSU Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956, were followed in June of the next year with the exile of an “anti-Party group” headed by Molotov from the Soviet political Olympus. All this put Hoxha and Hồ Chí Minh, along with other communist leaders, in a difficult position. On the one hand, both men were in desperate need of large-scale Soviet assistance to implement their plans and national priorities. On the other, there was a potential threat to the political systems of the DRV and Albania, based on “revolutionary violence”.

Hanoi and Tirana still had hopes that the figures who had been close to Stalin, like Voroshilov and Molotov, would reverse the outcome of the Twentieth Party Congress, but June 1957 put paid to those illusions. The “anti-party group” was removed from power and Voroshilov became a merely decorative figure (Selivanov 2013 and 2014*a*). The remaining Stalinists in the leadership of socialist countries had somehow to live with this unfortunate situation and figure out how to proceed.

In August 1957, Hồ Chí Minh visited Tirana as part of his tour of large European socialist countries; he stayed for five days. The final communiqué emphasized that the PRA and Vietnam were part of a close-knit family of socialist countries led by the Soviet Union (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History [RGASPI], f. 495, op. 201, d. 1/1, l. 79).

In May 1959, Khrushchev made an official visit to Albania, during which he clearly revealed the previously carefully concealed differences between the USSR and the PRA concerning various problems in the building of socialism and issues in international politics. Some of his statements left the Albanian leaders with the negative impression that he was above all interested in their homeland as an agrarian appendage and source of raw materials inside the socialist system, a resort for workers from allied countries, or a place to site a naval base at the advantageously located Albanian port of Vlora. The trip coincided with the deterioration of Sino–Soviet

relations, and Hoxha and his associates became increasingly inclined towards gradual tactical rapprochement with Beijing, in a behind-the-scenes search for potential allies to counter Soviet hegemony.

The DRV's leadership had a similar response to the new conditions, but quarrelling with Moscow was not in its plans. Especially after the closed Plenum of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party in 1959, where it was decided to expand the armed struggle to the territory of the Republic of Vietnam, south of the seventeenth parallel. In 1960 came the decision on the establishment of the National Liberation Front for Southern Vietnam (NLF) to oppose the pro-American regime and to operate under the complete control of the DRV. This independent activity on Hanoi's part could only cause bewilderment in Moscow, as the Soviet Union had along with the United Kingdom been co-chair of the Geneva Conference and was responsible for a peaceful resolution of "the Vietnam problem".

Naturally, implementation of a drive towards unification of Vietnam under Communist rule by force of arms required significant Soviet support; for the PRC, weakened during the time of the Great Leap Forward, could not give Hanoi sufficient military and economic support. In February 1960, Hồ Chí Minh, who had learned to read the mood in the Kremlin and to use this skill to his own advantage, made a sharp attack on Belgrade in a conversation with the Soviet ambassador to Vietnam. He spoke in support of the Soviet line at a time when Moscow's illusions about the possibility of including Yugoslavia in the united socialist camp had been shattered. In particular, Hồ Chí Minh condemned the "special" Yugoslav approach to building socialism and Belgrade's attempt to enjoy the status of being between the socialist and capitalist blocs in international politics. Naturally, his view was immediately communicated to the Soviet leadership (Bukharkin 1998, p. 135). Tirana was also surely aware of Hanoi's position on the "Yugoslav question", which could but meet with approval in Albania.

China at that time stressed its sympathy with the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA) in the international Communist movement, especially after the failure of the Albanian delegation to criticize the Chinese

Communist Party (CCP) during the Congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party in March 1960. Vietnamese leaders refrained from making public assessments of what was happening in Bucharest, even though their sympathies were obviously on the side of China and Albania. This was especially apparent in the course of the Third Congress of the Vietnam Workers’ Party (VWP) in September 1960.

Under the leadership of Yuri Andropov, the CPSU Central Committee department for relations with the Communists and workers, created in 1957, had a particular role in building relations with the VWP and the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA). An example was Andropov’s behaviour as a member of the CPSU delegation to the Third Congress of the VWP. Andropov did not like the fact that Hồ Chí Minh said nothing about the decisions and the “historical significance” of the Twentieth Congress of the CPU or that he sidestepped a question about the Bucharest meeting. True to his diplomatic line, Hồ Chí Minh did not engage in polemics with the Soviet representative. He promised the guest from Moscow that he would make the necessary adjustments, but, as might be expected, did nothing (RGASPI, f. 495, op. 201, d. ½, ll. 104–5).

Soon Hoxha entered the arena again. Apparently coordinating his actions with Beijing, he spoke in Moscow at the November 1960 meeting of Communist and workers’ parties. In his memoirs, Khrushchev described the remarks of the Albanian leader as “anti-Soviet indictment” (Khrushchev 1999, p. 136). Hồ Chí Minh was clearly impressed by Hoxha’s words. But he is most likely to have known the risk that open support for Beijing and Tirana would pose to his country, especially after the Soviet Union pointedly withdrew its experts from China in the summer of 1960. In fact, in early 1961 it would cease all forms of assistance to Albania and remove its warships from the base in Vlora.

In mid-February 1961 the Fourth Congress of the PLA gave unanimous support to Hoxha’s line, but it did not openly condemn the CPSU, apparently in the hope that Khrushchev would soften his anti-Albanian actions. The Albanian congress was the last time that a CPSU delegation, in this instance including Andropov, was present.

And, if a party forum in Hanoi made no mention of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, Hoxha's report to the Tirana congress expressed his indirect condemnation of the Twentieth Congress in a hard-hitting way. Waiting for a break in the proceedings, Andropov told Hoxha in front of numerous witnesses that, in the name of "the Communist parties of the socialist countries", he strongly protested the report. Hoxha, who did not expect this, said, "We reject the dictatorship! We are not afraid of anyone!... We will not allow anyone to take command at our Congress!" In response, Andropov threatened that the Soviet delegation reserved the right to make all necessary decisions (Burlatskii 1989, pp. 134–36).

Simultaneously with the confrontation with the Soviet Union, Albania signed agreements with China to expand cooperation in various fields, which caused in the Albanian public opinion illusions similar to the times when the country was supported by the Soviet Union — replacing one strong patron with another. During this period, the split in the international Communist movement clearly did not fit the plans of the DRV, but it was also not able to influence unfolding events. Therefore, Hanoi had to resort to a tried method — manoeuvring between the parties to the confrontation, Moscow and Beijing.

Of course, Tirana with little economic and military potential could at best claim to be the closest ally of China, but it could not present itself as a centre of gravity for the "true" Communists. Surely Albania understood this,<sup>10</sup> and Hoxha had no other choice at the time. The result was a temporary tactical Albanian–Chinese alliance in which the ambitious Albanian leader was assigned the role of a junior partner.

Hoxha himself, to judge from his diary entries of the period,<sup>11</sup> could not imagine himself in this role. The Albanian leaders positioned themselves as the only "real" guardians of the ideological heritage of Stalin, able to defend their views in an open and uncompromising fight against any opponents. They announced that the CCP, the Korean Workers' Party and the VWP were their main allies. Among the Communist and workers' parties of non-socialist



countries, the Communist Parties of Japan and New Zealand also numbered as allies, with the prospect of further additions to the list of “true Marxist-Leninist parties” that were supposed to be split by pro-Moscow “revisionist” Communist parties. The split in the Communist movement promised to be much more serious than the events of 1948–53 associated with Yugoslavia.

### Meeting in Pitsunda

The culmination of the relations in the “Moscow–Hanoi–Tirana” triangle was a personal meeting between Khrushchev and Hồ Chí Minh. According to the claims of the latter, on his own initiative he took on in the summer of 1961 the role of mediator in the conflict, which posed a serious threat to the entire socialist camp. He appealed to the CPSU Central Committee for a personal meeting with Khrushchev. His request was discussed at a meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee on 7 August and earned a positive decision (*Vestnik Arhiva Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii* 1998, p. 76; RGASPI, f. 495, op. 201, d. 1/2, pp. 145–60).

Hồ Chí Minh met with the Soviet leader on 17 and 19 August 1961 in Pitsunda, where Khrushchev was then resting. During the first conversation, Khrushchev first informed his interlocutor about the current international situation, called the Albanian leaders “unintelligent people and big impudents”, and accused them of having sequestered submarines and Soviet property at Vlora. Khrushchev compared the actions of Albanian leaders to the policy of the Yugoslav leader Tito and promised not to continue helping Albania but instead to trade with it on the same terms as with Yugoslavia and the capitalist countries (RGASPI. f. 495, op. 201, d. ½, pp. 151, 157).

Hồ Chí Minh stated in response that he had no desire to defend the Albanian leaders. However, until recently, Albania had been a member of the “big socialist family”, and if it were to be publicly expelled from it, that “will fall on us as a black spot”. His country and the party, Hồ Chí Minh said, were small. In terms of geographical

location, Vietnam had much in common with Albania: there were a number of enemies nearby who were ready to devour the DRV. And if not for the Soviet Union, who knows what would have happened to his homeland. Undoubtedly, the Albanian leaders had made mistakes, but not the Albanian people.

Hồ Chí Minh's position, Khrushchev stated, making the atmosphere of the meeting even more tense, is very much like the Christian dogma of non-resistance to evil: when they beat you on one cheek, and you turn the other in response (*Vestnik Arhiva Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii* 1998, p. 82). A government that did not care about the interests of its people, Khrushchev continued in a didactic tone, could not exist for a long time. Hồ Chí Minh stoically withstood Khrushchev's tirade, obviously unpleasant for him, and then stated that he was far from being able to profess that Christian principle. Khrushchev then urged him to go to Tirana, to meet the Albanian leaders, and to listen to their arguments.

Two days later, the conversation between the two leaders resumed. Hồ Chí Minh made a proposal. He would convey through the Albanian chargé d'affaires in Moscow three preliminary conditions for the resolution of bilateral relations with the Soviet Union.

1. The Soviet Union demands the return of four submarines, illegally sequestered by Albanians at the naval base.
2. The Soviet Union does not seek to establish a naval base on Albanian territory, though the existence of such a base would contribute to the defence capability of the socialist camp.
3. The Soviet Union is prepared to host an Albanian delegation with appropriate authority to settle other issues in Soviet–Albanian relations.

According to Khrushchev, the Albanian leaders praised Stalin, but he observed “in strict confidence” that it was Stalin had who at one time made a proposal to Tito that that Albania became part of Yugoslavia as one of its constituent republics. The Albanian leaders still did not know this. Khrushchev added that Stalin had told the

Chinese leaders the same thing about the DPRK. He told Hồ Chí Minh that he needed to speak with Mao Zedong about the Albanian question, as the question of Soviet friendship with Albania was not decided in Tirana, but in Beijing (*ibid.*, pp. 86–87).<sup>12</sup>

The Soviet leader warned Hồ Chí Minh that he should not share with “the Chinese comrades” all that had been told to him in confidence, as it might contribute not to rapprochement of the CCP and the CPSU, but rather to the deepening of existing differences.

On 15 August 1961, Hoxha sent a message to Hồ Chí Minh through the Albanian mission in Moscow in which he gave an answer to Hồ Chí Minh’s request to visit Tirana. He specifically pointed out that the contradiction between the Albanian and the Soviet leaderships was much more serious and principled than it might appear from Hanoi and that it could not be resolved in a short time. However, he was ready to discuss the question with Hồ Chí Minh, just not before the second half of November 1961 (Hoxha 1961). A day later, in his “International Diary” Hoxha made a derogatory comment about the attempt of “Uncle Ho” to act as a mediator in the conflict between Tirana and Moscow, which was of a fundamentally ideological character. It was a struggle of the true communists with the revisionists, and not a conflict of personalities, as the Vietnamese leader erroneously represented it (Hoxha 1981–85, t. 2, f. 153).

On 21 August 1961 a conversation between PRC Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and PRA Minister of Foreign Affairs R. Malile addressed the results of Hồ Chí Minh’s trip to the Soviet Union. The Chinese premier expressed the opinion that the Soviet Union had made major mistakes with Albania. It withdrew its experts from the country, it closed the base in Vlora, and it did not allow the participation of the Albanian delegation at the Moscow meeting of the Communist and workers’ parties. Thus, Moscow had revealed disputes to enemies of socialism and weakened the socialist countries’ position in relation to those enemies. The Soviet Union was mobilizing the Eastern European states against Albania and had to accept primary responsibility for the conflict with that country.

Zhou Enlai also said that if Hồ Chí Minh went to Tirana he should not exert pressure on the Albanians. If, however, on the eve of the trip Khrushchev asked Hồ Chí Minh to extend to Hoxha an invitation to Moscow or to some third country for talks, the Vietnamese leader, in his opinion, should refuse to do so. Nor should Hồ Chí Minh have any illusions about the prospects for the settlement of the Soviet–Albanian conflict. He should, rather, worry about the preservation of his authority in the event of the failure of his mission in Tirana. Zhou Enlai predicted that the consequences of such a trip could be Hồ Chí Minh’s unhappiness with Khrushchev, or Khrushchev might turn the leadership of the VWP against Albania (Malile and Zhou 1961).<sup>13</sup> Hồ Chí Minh came to understand, or was convinced by Beijing, that his initiative to mediate a settlement of Soviet–Albanian conflict would fail.<sup>14</sup>

#### The “Albanian Issue” at the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU and After

Khrushchev raised the Albanian issue in his report on the first day of the congress, 17 October 1961. Speaking about the work of overcoming the consequences of the cult of Stalin, the Soviet leader stated that the leadership of the PRA had not met the efforts of the CPSU with “a proper understanding”. In fact, that leadership had led the fight against this work. Deliberately exaggerating the capabilities and influence of Hoxha and his supporters, he accused them of wanting to “pull our Party back to the order that they like, which will never be repeated in our country”. The final sentence in “the Albanian section” of Khrushchev’s report was very ambiguous. In accordance with its “international duty”, he said, the party would do all it could so that Albania “was in the same ranks with all the socialist countries”.

Hồ Chí Minh’s speech to the congress was one of the shortest given by the heads of the foreign delegations. He stated that through the efforts of VWP and all Vietnamese people, and with the “heart care” of the USSR, China and other fraternal countries, the DRV

had achieved “great success”, without specifying what success he meant. The DRV president clearly understood that Khrushchev did not reckon with his opinion and that he had arranged this anti-Albanian show as a warning to other such “intractable” figures as him.

In Khrushchev’s final words in the debate, the anti-Albanian component of which took almost five pages in the transcript (*ibid.*, pp. 577–91), emotion prevailed. Unverified facts were cited, to be disproved later, but Khrushchev needed to show by this example what would happen to any party or state that dared to go against the will of Moscow. This behaviour was very much like that of Stalin, who after 1948 had forced his supporters not only in the USSR but also in the whole world to denounce the “Tito clique”. It became clear to the DRV leadership why Hoxha intended to meet with Hồ Chí Minh at the end of 1961. Tirana waited for any decision on Albania to be taken at the highest Soviet party forum. It would shape its line of future conduct according to the results of that forum. Hồ Chí Minh never again made an official visit to the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> However, until the end of his life he never spoke critically about Moscow in public either. Lê Duẩn, who was elected First Secretary of the Central Committee of the VWP in 1960, was put in charge of relations with the CPSU. Khrushchev viewed the Albanian issue as the cause of all the difficulties that arose in Soviet–Vietnamese relations, as his memoirs illustrate.<sup>16</sup>

Tirana severely condemned the policy of the CPSU and expressed a desire to begin the process of delimitation of the international Communist movement with the support of the CCP, separating its “healthy forces” from the “Khrushchev revisionists”. Tirana also noted with satisfaction that in Hồ Chí Minh’s speech to the congress, despite the tone set for discussions on international issues with Khrushchev’s rabid anti-Albanian attacks, there was no criticism of the PRA (Hoxha 1981–85, t. 2, f. 182).

The final point in Soviet–Albanian confrontation came when Khrushchev took the decision on 5 December 1961 to withdraw the Soviet ambassador from Albania and to expel Albanians from

the Soviet capital. At a meeting that same day of the Politburo of the PLA, Hoxha called the Soviet leaders “black shirt elements” (Hoxha 1971–82, t. 22, f. 402).

Hanoi had to take into account the fact that, since the end of 1961, American military forces had begun to struggle with the NLF soldiers in the territory of the Republic of Vietnam. The PRC leadership was not interested in the unification of Vietnam, especially through direct military involvement. Mao Zedong told a VWP delegation, “Vietnamese unification can wait” (“Pravda o v’etnamo-kitajskih” 1979). For this reason, the VWP leadership sent a letter to Moscow to clarify some of the decisions of the CPSU congress. When this issue was discussed at the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee, Hanoi was mentioned as an example for Tirana. The VWP letter was treated as a form of communication that helped to establish “better understanding” (Prezidium 2004, v. 3, p. 260). Information coming to Moscow from the Soviet embassy in Hanoi said that in their private speeches to VWP activists, such leaders as Lê Duẩn and Xuân Thủy condemned criticism at the CPSU forum of the Albanian leadership’s policy. They also condemned the removal of Stalin’s body from its mausoleum and his burial, according to the words of Lê Duẩn, “somewhere near the Kremlin wall” (RGASPI, f. 495, op. 201, d. 1/2, ll. 135–37).<sup>17</sup> Hồ Chí Minh, true to his search for a compromise line, sought to balance such statements about the Soviet Union. For example, in a speech before manufacturing leaders on 4 May 1962, he stated that the DRV should learn about building socialism from the Soviet Union, China and “other fraternal countries” (ibid., d. 1/3, l. 106).

The June 1963 Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU addressed the question of Albania. CPSU Central Committee secretary Andropov pointed out in his speech that Soviet–Albanian relations up to 1960 could be described as “friendly” but that the PRA’s leaders had changed their attitude towards the CPSU. Andropov also noted that Albania repeated almost word-for-word what “the Chinese comrades” wrote and said (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History [RGANI], f. 2, op. 1, d. 640, l. 50).

Six months later, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the VWP adopted a resolution condemning the policy of “international revisionism”, which at that time could be interpreted as indirect condemnation of the Soviet leadership in its confrontation with China’s leaders. In February 1964, Lê Duẩn visited Moscow. A more direct and harsh politician than Hồ Chí Minh, during his visit he accused Moscow of backsliding on the ideals of Marxism-Leninism and of deliberate aggravation of relations with China. He criticized the leadership of the CPSU especially sharply for its ongoing policy of peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries, for injecting tension in its relations with the leadership of the CCP, and for ignoring the interests of the states in which national liberation movements were under way (Gaiduk 2010, pp. 8–9).<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, that was not enough for the Albanian leaders. After Hoxha received information on the content of the speeches at the April 1964 Plenum of the Central Committee of the VWP, he wrote in his foreign policy journal that they were opportunistic, lacked a revolutionary analysis, and made clear that the VWP aspired to play the role of mediator between revolutionary and revisionist forces (Hoxha 1981–85, t. 3, f. 82). The DRV leadership appeared in Albanian materials for internal use as “opportunistic centrists” or “centrist opportunists” (*ibid.*, f. 827), but this view was not made public. For example, in July 1964 Albanian leaders sent congratulatory telegrams to Hồ Chí Minh and Phạm Văn Đồng on the occasion of their re-election as president and prime minister (RGASPI, f. 495, op. 201, d. ¼, p. 328).

In October 1964, Khrushchev was dismissed, and it seemed to Hồ Chí Minh that the way was open to Soviet–Albanian and Sino–Soviet rapprochement. This possibility was important to him, since early August of that year had witnessed the infamous “Tonkin Gulf incident”, and the United States was preparing “retaliation” against the DRV. At the same time, his authority as president of the DRV had by then dramatically diminished in the eyes of his colleagues, some of whom began to hint at his advanced age and at the need to choose a successor.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the beginning of the American

bombing of the DRV's territory led to the unity of the political elite around the president and to that elite's occupying the middle ground in its relations with China and the Soviet Union, the main potential defenders of the country.

The Albanian leaders took the situation into account and acted accordingly. In one of his appeals to the leadership of the DRV, Hoxha wrote that he had been very much offended when a Vietnamese delegation did not visit Tirana at the end of November 1964 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the liberation of Albania, even as it took part in celebrations of the same event in Romania (Hoxha 1975–88, v. 3, pp. 694–95). Of course, for the leaders of the DRV, Hoxha was a bearer of “sacred Stalinism” who had shown “courage” and “principles” in his relations with Moscow and then with Beijing. Hồ Chí Minh and his followers could not behave this way. They found justification for the “centrist” position that they formally occupied in their desire to unite Vietnam, which would be virtually impossible without the support of the Soviet “revisionists” and Chinese “chauvinists”. Tirana, having suffered huge material losses due to its break with Moscow, did not have sympathy for this argument.

One can only imagine the negative consequences in which the actions proposed by Hoxha could have resulted at the international level if they had been put into practice. As subsequent events showed, Moscow understood this, and it made Albania and its leader “objects of silence”.<sup>20</sup> Beijing also understood; its “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” was a political event, very far from Hoxha's ideas about “true Marxism-Leninism”. For the rest of the Communist world, the “stubborn” expressions of the Albanian Stalinist dictator rather resembled extreme forms of “political autism” or “dogmatic sectarianism”.

In October 1964, Beijing, Hanoi and Pyongyang ignored the proposal made by the Albanian leadership to assemble a meeting to discuss the situation (Hoxha 1975–88, v. 3, p. 781). Soon, however, they received an invitation from Moscow to attend celebrations of the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Through



Zhou Enlai this invitation was passed to Albania, but Hoxha dismissed it in a rude manner (*ibid.*, pp. 833–34). This did not prevent the regimes friendly to Tirana from sending representatives to Moscow. In a meeting with the VWP delegation, Soviet Defence Minister Malinovskiy spoke very negatively about the PLA and its leaders. His words in turn provoked a negative reaction on the part of the Vietnamese, who complained to CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev.<sup>21</sup>

In the meantime, the Albanian leadership continued at every opportunity to emphasize the moral support for its Vietnamese brethren. In written comments addressed to participants in the international conference in solidarity with the DRV held in November 1964 in Hanoi, Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu expressed solidarity with the struggle of the people of southern Vietnam and condemned the U.S. presence in Indochina, which in his opinion grossly violated the agreements reached at the 1954 Geneva Conference (Hoxha 1975–88, v. 3, p. 833).

The relationship of the People’s Republic of Albania and the DRV significantly changed in February 1965, after the start of U.S. aerial operations in “retaliation” for the alleged Tonkin Gulf incident. Vietnam gradually became the main sphere of armed conflict against “U.S. imperialism” in Albanian propaganda. It proved a convenient excuse for the intensification of “anti-imperialist” propaganda both inside the country and abroad. The ideologically “pure” Hoxha paid little attention to the question of what means the DRV and the NLF would use to fight the United States and its allies if they chose to forgo Soviet military and economic aid and the services of military advisers sent from Moscow.

### Moscow, Tirana and Hanoi Early in the Second Indochina War

The visit of the Soviet Premier Aleksey Kosygin to Hanoi in February 1965 caused particular dissatisfaction in Tirana (Hoxha 1959–84, pp. 160–61). The recollections of the trip of a member of the Soviet delegation, Aleksandr Bovin, and of a representative of the Soviet

embassy in Hanoi, Evgeny Glazunov, allow us to conclude that the Soviet Union and the DRV leadership failed even in the face of U.S. military action to forget past differences and initiate fruitful cooperation (Bovin 2003; Glazunov 2010).

Hoxha stated that Kosygin visited Vietnam in pursuit of an “insidious, deceptive, demagogic, subversive and defeatist purpose” and that the military aid to Hanoi that Moscow proposed was “nothing but demagogy and a trap” (Hoxha 1975–88, v. 3, pp. 919–20). In fact, he argued that Soviet revisionists were nothing but allies of U.S. imperialism (Hoxha 1981–85, v. 3, f. 661). In May 1965, Hoxha wrote with irritation in his diary that the policy of Hồ Chí Minh and his followers, whom he described as “opportunists”, was not radical enough and did not contribute to world revolution (Hoxha 1981–85, v. 3, ff. 700–701).

In January 1966, a Soviet delegation led by one of the most influential figures of the time, Aleksandr Shelepin, visited Hanoi in an expression of solidarity with the struggle of the “heroic Vietnamese people”. During negotiations it became clear that the Vietnamese leadership would continue to manoeuvre between Moscow and Beijing, and that it was impossible for Moscow openly to condemn the DRV for this in the current situation. The same was true of Tirana, if only because of its reluctance to undermine the “united front” solidarity with the struggle of the Vietnamese people against “U.S. imperialism and its lackeys”. Speaking in the autumn of 1966 at the Fifth Congress of the PLA, Hoxha included Vietnam among the “revolutionary peoples” whose struggle “ever more clearly show[ed] the helplessness of imperialism in general and the U.S. in particular” and confirmed that in the end not modern weapons but rather the “revolutionary consciousness of the people” determined the result of war (Hoxha 1966, p. 10).<sup>22</sup>

The Vietnamese leadership, trying not to quarrel with Hoxha, supported this line. The Albanian party forum received a telegram from Hồ Chí Minh, in which, *inter alia*, he stated that

under the correct leadership of the PLA led by Comrade Enver Hoxha the Albanian people ... has made great strides in the

defense of socialism.... The revolutionary measures taken in Albania show the great prosperity of the revolution throughout the Albanian land.... The VWP and the entire Vietnamese people warmly rejoice at the brilliant victories of the PRA and the fraternal Albanian people.

But at the end of the telegram a fly spoiled the Vietnamese “ointment” for Hoxha and his followers, in the form of a phrase noting that China, the Soviet Union and other “fraternal countries” supported the Vietnamese people in their just struggle (RGASPI, f. 495, op. 201, d. 1/3, pp. 87–88).

According to the latest published works of Hoxha, intended never to be made public, the onset of the Cultural Revolution in China in the summer of 1966 caused the Albanian leadership confusion and anxiety. Being nominally the “main” ally of China in the international arena and among the socialist countries, Albania did not want to speak out about the means and methods by which the revolution was carried out. But, according to Hoxha, this phenomenon was a departure from “classical Marxism-Leninism” and therefore deserved careful and attentive study.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the Chinese leadership lost interest in Albania, as it was more concerned with domestic affairs. Hanoi quickly understood this and ceased to maintain its previous level of contact with Tirana. There was a further, “justifiable” reason for this shift: in the war with the United States, Vietnamese leaders were distracted by direct dialogue with the Albanian “guru”. In 1966, for example, the DRV leadership used the pretext of the war to turn down the proposed visit of an Albanian delegation headed by Shehu (RGASPI, f. 495, op. 201, d. 1/2, p. 58).

On 28 November 1966, the DRV leaders sent a message of congratulations into Tirana on the occasion of Albania’s national day, in which they noted that the Albanian people under the leadership of Hoxha had, in the spirit of “self-reliance”, overcome all difficulties and achieved “numerous brilliant successes” in building socialism. It emphasized that the “revolutionary measures” implemented in Albania strengthened the “dictatorship of the proletariat, as well

as solidarity and unanimity in the whole Party”, and generated the country’s “strong revolutionary spirit” (ibid., pp. 78–80). Of course, such statements could not meet with approval in Tirana.

The Soviet Union wanted to address Vietnam’s ambiguous position. In May 1967 its Hanoi embassy sent an analytical report to Moscow that noted with satisfaction that “Hồ Chí Minh’s activities in the fight for the unity of the fraternal parties has decreased significantly”, but it also pointed out that “in friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union”, Hồ Chí Minh focused above all on the DRV’s “narrow nationalistic plans and approach[ed] them in some cases from the mercantile point of view” (ibid., p. 40).

Hanoi, of course, understood that Moscow might have made such evaluations, and tried to find reasons to demonstrate more positive assessments of Soviet foreign policy. And such an occasion was soon found.

#### The Events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia: The Reactions of Tirana and Hanoi

In the context of emerging Albanian–Vietnamese differences in the assessments of the international situation, a typical example relates to the attitudes of Tirana and Hanoi to the Warsaw Pact forces’ invasion of Czechoslovakia to crush the “Prague Spring”. Albania most severely condemned this action. A letter to the Central Committee of the PLA, dated 22 August 1968 and published the next day in the *Zerri i popullit*, stated that the Soviet Union and its allies had used “purely fascist methods” and occupied the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The origin of the “Czechoslovak tragedy” was, it was stated, the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Even more absurd was the Albanian assertion that Moscow’s action in Czechoslovakia was “a product of the Soviet revisionists’ treacherous leadership of a global strategy of cooperation with American imperialism”. If this persists with regard to Albania, the drafters of the letter wrote further, the initiators will “meet certain death at the hands of the Albanian people”. In conclusion, the letter called on the people of

the Soviet Union to rise up against the “revisionist fascist clique”, to renew the Great October Socialist Revolution, to bury forever the sad memory of the Twentieth Congress, and to overthrow the “revisionist clique of Brezhnev-Kosygin”.

Hanoi adopted a very different course, in fact supporting the Soviet line on the Czechoslovakia events. After the election in March 1968 of General Ludvig Svoboda as president of Czechoslovakia, Hồ Chí Minh sent him a congratulatory telegram in which he expressed his desire for the

fraternal Czechoslovak people to achieve new victories in building socialism, to contribute to the strengthening of solidarity of the socialist camp on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, for the preservation of peace in Europe and throughout the world. (RGASPI, f. 495, op. 201, d. 1/5, l. 64)

The “correct” position of the DRV leadership was greeted with a positive response at the 12 September 1968 meeting of the Politburo of the CPSU, when it was decided that the Soviet ambassador to France should invite Lê Đức Thọ, the head of the Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks, for a conversation. The ambassador would report to Lê Đức Thọ that Moscow noted with great satisfaction the “clear internationalist position” that he, together with others in the leadership of the VWP, took in relation to the practical policies of the socialist countries for the protection of the gains of socialism in Czechoslovakia (“Prazhskaja vesna” 2008, p. 6).

Moreover, given the fact that the “voice of the struggling Vietnamese had authority for every Communist”, Lê Đức Thọ was invited to meet with the leaders of the Communist parties of France and Italy, which had expressed disapproval of Moscow’s invitation, and to convince them of the correctness of this step (*ibid.*, p. 7).

The Albanian reaction to the Warsaw Pact’s invasion of Czechoslovakia caused some illusions in the United States, the leaders of which in this period tried to establish official relations with the government of Albania. The intention was probably due to the fact that the American politicians based their expectations on the strong

dependence of the Albanian leadership on the Chinese leaders. At that time, those leaders included a group of “pragmatists” led by Zhou Enlai who sought rapprochement with the United States as a means of countering the Soviets. Hoxha, however, kept to his game and categorically rejected American proposals received through informal channels.<sup>24</sup>

While supporting Soviet actions in Czechoslovakia, the leaders of the DRV had not yet decided on a confrontation with the CCP. And, using a pretext, they refused to participate in an international meeting of Communist and workers’ parties in the summer of 1969 in Moscow, where the CPSU and allied parties heavily criticized the CCP line at home and on the international scene. A passage from Hồ Chí Minh’s testament, dated 10 May 1969, is indicative.

I hope that our Party will do its utmost to contribute effectively to the restoration of the unity of the fraternal parties on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism.... I firmly believe that the brotherly parties and fraternal countries certainly will rally again. (Hồ Chí Minh 1969)

Obviously, these words did not concern only the “unity” of the CPSU and the CCP. The testament clearly meant unity in a broader sense, certainly including the “Albanian” component. But Moscow’s unwillingness to compromise with Tirana was not the only issue, as Hoxha was just as consistent in his reluctance to take this step.

After the death of Hồ Chí Minh, the new de facto leader of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Lê Duẩn, had no illusions about the improvement of relations with Albania on an anti-Soviet basis. Moscow’s assistance to Hanoi in the final stages of the Second Indochina War was of much higher priority than “moral” support from Tirana.

### The Final Stages of the Second Indochina War

In assessing Tirana’s relations with representatives of Vietnam and the role of the “Soviet factor” in those relations, reports of meetings

between Albania’s leadership and the delegations from the NLF and from the DRV National Assembly that visited Tirana are of considerable interest. Detailed reports of these meetings have now been published in Albania.

The NLF delegation visited Albania to join celebrations to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the country. It was received by Hoxha on 30 November 1969. Even the name of the official report drawn up and published in Tirana was very significant: “Be ever vigilant against the Soviet revisionists”.

Repeating what Hồ Chí Minh had previously told Khrushchev in Pitsunda, Hoxha told the delegation that the Albanian and Vietnamese people were “small” and they therefore should strive together against stronger powers seeking to impose their will and in defence of their own sovereignty. They must be vigilant, because one cannot win freedom, or wrest power from the hands of the bourgeoisie, without a fight (Hoxha 1980, p. 279). Realizing that his guests might feel awkward, the Albanian leader asked them not to take what he said as “insulting”. He contrasted the Soviet Union of Lenin’s and Stalin’s time with the “revisionist traitors” who had come to power there after 1953. Albania did not intend to restore any relationship with the latter. It would continue to follow the path of the victorious building of socialism (*ibid.*, p. 282).

Hoxha further accused the Soviet Union of complicity with the United States in the Paris talks, and expressed confidence that Moscow’s machinations would fail. He added that in some matters he could make mistakes, but not on the issue of the Soviet revisionists, as Albania had previously experienced their machinations.

Seven months later, in late July of 1970, a DRV parliamentary delegation visited Tirana. The report of this meeting, in which both Hoxha and Shehu participated, had no less eloquent a title: “Soviet ‘aid’ is concealing the dangerous demagoguery of Khrushchev revisionists”. The leader of the PRA stated at this meeting that he knew that “Khrushchev revisionists” provided the DRV with “some kind of weapons”, but that even without them the heroic Vietnamese people would have defeated the “American imperialist aggressors”.

Surely such statements left the Vietnamese visitors and the DRV's leadership in a very difficult position.

The Albanian dictator rather quickly felt his isolation among the parties and states that he once considered "allied" to his country. However, Albanian propaganda tried to pretend that nothing much was happening. For example, it cheerfully reported to residents of the country on the successes of the fraternal Vietnamese people in their struggle against U.S. imperialist predators, and on the "noise" that "Soviet revisionists" made in this important arena of world revolution (Hoxha 1975–88, v. 4, p. 649). While inter-party communication between the VWP and PLA at that time almost stopped, Tirana could but rejoice that, on the eve of the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth, the DRV published "The History of the CPSU (b). Short Course". The book had been translated into Vietnamese from a Soviet publication with wording dating from 1950 (Arhiv vneshnej politiki Rossijskoj Federacii [AVP RF], f. 79, op. 25, d. 6, p. 36, l. 93).

In 1973, Phạm Văn Đồng visited Albania. His protocol meeting with the Albanian leadership seemed to have had no effect on the Vietnamese position on major international issues, including relations with the USSR.

In the spring of 1975, the Albanian leadership welcomed the liberation of southern Vietnam from the U.S.-backed regime and sent a message of congratulations to Hanoi. Congratulatory Chinese and Soviet telegrams were published on the front pages of Vietnamese newspapers,<sup>25</sup> but Albania was awarded no such honour. Tirana tried not to pay attention to this episode, but it left an unpleasant aftertaste with Hoxha and Shehu. Hanoi continued to attach more importance to friendship with Moscow and Beijing than to "good" relations with Tirana, and this to some extent manifested realities of foreign policy within the socialist camp in the mid-1970s.

#### After the Unification of Vietnam

After the official unification of Vietnam in the spring of 1976, the Albanian leadership continued to emphasize friendly relations with



this country. Speaking at the beginning of November 1976 in his report to the Seventh Congress of the PLA, Hoxha devoted particular attention to Tirana’s relations with Hanoi. He stressed that Albania welcomed the victory of the Vietnamese people in their armed struggle against “U.S. imperialism and its lackeys”. According to him, the unification of Vietnam marked the realization of the national aspirations of the Vietnamese people, and the Albanian people would continue to preserve and further strengthen the “fighting friendship linking our two brotherly countries” (Hoxha 1976, p. 218).

The return of Deng Xiaoping to a position of leadership in China in August 1977 dispelled the last illusions of the Albanian leaders about the nature of their future relationship with that ally. Almost at the same time Albania began to criticize Chinese policy in the international arena and to disclose information about the true nature of the two countries’ long-term “friendly” relations (“Pravda o v’etnamo-kitajskih” 1979; Hoxha 1979, v. 2).

At the regular session of the United Nations General Assembly in the autumn of 1977, the Albanian delegation voted in favour of admission of Vietnam to the organization. This support naturally brought thanks from Hanoi addressed to the Albanian leadership, but Tirana’s message of greeting on the same subject was never published in the Vietnamese press. All the same, the main political opponent for each country’s leadership was one that had until recently been its major political ally, the PRC. That state was now entering the “post–Mao Zedong era”.

In the summer of 1977 the Soviet embassy staff in Vietnam anxiously reported that on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the October Revolution, the Hanoi press did not feature the struggle of the CPSU for peace, publish information about the foreign policy of the USSR, or note the role of the Red Army in the liberation of the peoples of Asia from the yoke of the Japanese militarists. Soviet specialists informed the embassy that in remote areas in which they worked, local authorities prohibited residents to attend screenings of Soviet films (AVP RF, f. 79, op. 32. d. 47. p. 5. ll. 10–12). At the same time, on 6 June 1977 Hanoi signed an agreement on cultural and scientific cooperation between Vietnam and Albania, and a week

later a Vietnamese trade union delegation visited Tirana to attend a congress of Albanian trade unions (*ibid.*, d. 47. p. 4. ll. 130–32).

These developments notwithstanding, Hanoi clearly understood that conflict with China and the Democratic Kampuchea regime of Pol Pot was inevitable. And in the autumn of 1977 Lê Duẩn took a sharp turn towards Moscow, which meant a new distancing of Hanoi from Tirana. On 7 July 1977, *Zerri i popullit* ran an editorial on “The theory and practice of the revolution”, which contained the first public criticism of the PRC’s “three worlds” theory. Moscow perceived this editorial positively, and the presentation of its main contents in leading Soviet newspapers included no criticism of the Albanian leadership (*Pravda*, 8 July 1977). This was a first, after many years.

In Albania, this gesture of reconciliation was not appreciated. In a 29 November speech on the occasion of the sixty-fifth anniversary of the independence of Albania and the thirty-third anniversary of the liberation of the country, Shehu delivered a revealing speech in Vlora. The present-day Soviet Union, he stated, was no longer the Soviet Union of Lenin’s and Stalin’s times. It had been completely transformed by the efforts of the “revisionist gang of Khrushchev and Brezhnev” into a capitalist and social-imperialist country, hungry for economic and military expansion, which was the source of all evil in the international Communist and workers’ movement (Shehu 1977, pp. 14, 18–19).

In contrast, and true to its always pragmatic attitude towards the Soviet Union, Vietnam’s leadership was, in its concern over China, moving closer to Moscow. A clear indication of that movement was the transfer of the naval base previously used by the United States at Cam Ranh Bay to the Russians in 1978. The Albanian leadership could not be satisfied with Lê Duẩn’s clear reorientation towards the Soviet Union, but it did not dare to openly criticize its long-term “tactical” ally. A frustrated Hoxha wrote in his diary on the last day of 1978, “We state that the Soviet Union is trying to penetrate into Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan and possibly India. We also notice that its ties with Vietnam and Laos are stronger.”

According to him, this could be a preparation for a possible attack on the PRC (Hoxha 1959–84, p. 507).

Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in late December 1978 brought a surprisingly similar positive reaction in Moscow and in Tirana. Both endorsed this action, which saved the Cambodian people from the criminal regime of Pol Pot. Soon thereafter, Chinese action in “retaliation” — dubbed the “thirty-day war” — began, and Moscow and Tirana again strongly condemned China. In a 21 February 1979 article in *Zerri i popullit*, Hoxha compared the Chinese action against Vietnam with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and identified the Soviet Union and the PRC as “imperialist superpowers”. China, he stated, had attacked an innocent country and an heroic people who did not cause any harm to humanity. Deng Xiaoping’s visit to the United States, shortly before the attack, is described as an action of a “fascist type”; Hoxha stated that the attack had been approved in advance in Washington (Hoxha 1975–88, v. 5, pp. 786–93). In his “Imperialism and Revolution”, published in the same year, Hoxha stressed that the Chinese “social-imperialists” grossly interfered in the internal affairs of Vietnam, and asked whether China could be trusted (*ibid.*, p. 704).

Albania and Vietnam exchanged delegations at various levels, but the “revolutionary” enthusiasm of the past was missing. Rather, the two sides were brought together now by blanket criticism of the new leadership of China and attempts to identify the manifestations of the “great power” of Chinese chauvinism in the post-Mao era.

Hanoi was interested in militarily and economically strong allies, and Albania did not fit the description. But Vietnam enjoyed moral support from Albania, and the two were close in their positions on many ideological issues, even if the Hanoi leadership did not want to create problems for itself through a “demonstrative” friendship with Tirana.

Moscow understood this well. Thus, in March 1979 the Soviet foreign ministry noted with regard to Albania that “Vietnamese friends” had generally supportive relationships with other fraternal countries. While Vietnam sent congratulations to Tirana on particular

occasions, these messages did not constitute approval of the domestic and foreign policies of the Hoxha regime (AVP RF, f. 79, op. 34, d. 16, p. 52. l. 75).

On 13 August 1979, Hoxha wrote in his diary that the Vietnamese leadership had no consensus on foreign policy issues. There were pro-Soviet, pro-Chinese and pro-Western factions. The last was weakened, after one of its leaders fled to Beijing.<sup>26</sup> The Soviet Union, Hoxha wrote, was important to Vietnam, and because of its anti-Chinese position Vietnam was important to the Soviet Union. Albania, in turn, had to use the current situation in the interest of progressive revolutionary forces in the world (Hoxha 1981–85, t. 14, f. 319–21).

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan under the pretext of fulfilling its international duty did not cause a negative reaction in Hanoi, but Hoxha expressed a purely negative attitude, again noting parallels with the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Sino–Vietnamese War of March 1979. *Zerri i popullit* on 5 January 1980 published an article by Hoxha titled, “Aggressors, out of Afghanistan!” It bluntly stated, “The Soviet intervention is an open aggression not only against Afghanistan, but also against its neighboring countries, against all the peoples of the region of the Middle East, against peace and international security.” Hoxha was not concerned about the double standard in his assessment of similar events taking place in different parts of the world. Why, for example, did Albania welcome Vietnam’s action against Cambodia, while at the same time condemning China’s military action against Vietnam or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan? According to its logic, what “small” countries can do in respect of their neighbours can be strictly prohibited for the “big” countries.

The same trend was evident at the Eighth Congress of the PLA in 1981. Hoxha characterized relations with Vietnam, Laos and the DPRK as “developing in a friendly way”, while he viewed Chinese policy towards Albania as “hostile” (Hoxha 1981, pp. 223–24). In March 1982, a PRA delegation was present at the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), as the VWP was rechristened in 1976; its presence might indicate a gradual resumption of inter-party contacts. At the meeting of the UN General Assembly in October 1982, Albania voted in support of the Cambodian National

Reconciliation Council (NRC) on the draft resolution “On the situation in Kampuchea” and against giving a voice to the Pol Pot regime’s delegate. This decision was met with approval in Moscow (AVP RF, f. 569, op. 28, d. 16, p. 41, ll. 38, 39, 41). In 1984, Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng led a party and state delegation to Tirana, and the two countries agreed to expand cooperation in various fields.

In November of the same year a Vietnamese delegation attended the celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of Communist rule in Albania and of the establishment of the socialist regime there. In March of the following year Albania was visited by a delegation from the National Assembly of Vietnam led by its Chairman Nguyễn Hữu Thọ, who had during the Second Indochina War become head of the NLF and was thus for Albanians one of the symbols of the Vietnamese people in their struggle against “U.S. imperialism”.

In April 1985, Enver Hoxha died. The funeral telegram from Hanoi was published in the Albanian press, and telegrams of condolence from Moscow and Beijing were sent back. But these were the last convulsions of an Albanian regime already doomed to disappear from the political scene. We cannot exclude the fact that the Soviet leadership of the time might expect a “reconciliation” with Albania through Vietnamese mediation, as Hồ Chí Minh had attempted to do in the early 1960s. It might be for that reason that Moscow had not publicly condemned the friendly relations between Hanoi and Tirana.

After the death of Lê Duẩn in 1986, bilateral contacts between the two countries weakened again, although the Ninth Congress of the PLA in 1986 once again expressed a desire to develop friendly relations with Vietnam. The flexibility of the leaders who followed Lê Duẩn allowed them to restructure Vietnam into a market economy while maintaining the CPV’s monopoly on political power. The Albanian leadership was unable to achieve such a success.

## General Conclusions

“The split in the world ‘socialist camp’” that began in 1948 with the exit of Yugoslavia from that camp intensified in 1956, after the exposure of Stalin’s personality cult.

Until Stalin's death, the national interests of Albania and Vietnam were aligned with the ideology of the Soviet Union. Under pressure from Stalin, Hoxha and Hồ Chí Minh renamed their Communist parties as "labour" or "workers' parties", and officially declared commitment to the construction of regimes of "people's democracy" — a concept developed in Moscow for countries from the "socialist camp". After the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, Soviet–Vietnamese and Soviet–Albanian relations cooled somewhat, but at the same time there was a political rapprochement on a "pro-Stalin" basis between the authoritarian leaders of the DRV and the PRA, which had previously had little contact with each other. They both made their national interests a priority greater than the "upgraded" post-Stalin Soviet Communist ideology, as Moscow lost the "ideological purity" of the Stalin era in their eyes. From the beginning of the Sino–Soviet conflict, the leaders of Albania and the DRV opted for a temporary tactical alliance with Beijing, which supported Tirana's criticism of Moscow's policy. All the same, the "ideological purity" of Beijing also raised doubts in Hanoi and Tirana.

Unlike that of Albania, the leadership of the DRV had to manoeuvre between Moscow and Beijing, hoping for help in its effort to unify Vietnam under Communist rule. The attempts of Hồ Chí Minh on the eve of the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU to effect the reconciliation of the Soviet Union and Albania did not succeed, as the contradictions between them were much deeper than the Vietnamese leader had imagined. He had thought that the basis of those contradictions was not ideological, but rather a matter of personal differences between the leaderships of the two countries.

In its relations with Albania, Hanoi was primarily guided by pragmatic rather than ideological factors. It tried to distance itself from the most odious statements of Tirana's leaders, which resulted in the ill-concealed irritation of the latter. This was particularly clear in the DRV's and the PRA's different assessments of the Warsaw Pact's military invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

After the rapprochement of the PRC and the United States in the early 1970s, the Albanian leadership began openly to condemn the Chinese government for betraying the ideals of socialism. This view partially coincided with the position of the leadership of the DRV, which also began to distance itself from Beijing. Moscow welcomed these steps, but they had no effect in improving Soviet–Albanian relations.

The unification of Vietnam and then Vietnamese military operation against Pol Pot’s Cambodia met with approval in Tirana. Nevertheless, the simultaneous convergence of Hanoi and Moscow led to the weakening of Albanian–Vietnamese political contacts, rooted as those had been in shared antipathy towards the PRC. This trend continued after Hoxha’s death and indeed until the failure of Albanian socialism in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the disappearance of the Soviet Union from the political map of the world.

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### NOTES

1. In 1976 these countries became the People’s Socialist Republic of Albania and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. In 1992 the words “People’s” and “Socialist” were removed from the official name of Albania.
2. In 1948 the ruling Communist Party in Albania became officially known as the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA), and in 1951 the Indochinese Communist Party was transformed into the Vietnam Workers’ Party (VWP). The latter was renamed the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1976.

3. As shown by some sources, Stalin was not against such an idea until 1948. On the other hand, in 1946, Hoxha sought in conversations with Tito consideration of the idea of the reunification of Albania and Kosovo, the latter part of Yugoslavia.
4. Hồ Chí Minh opposed the renaming of his party, but Stalin forced him to see to it (Prezidium 2004, t. 1, p. 90).
5. This was reported by Trần Ngọc Danh in Moscow in early 1950. He was disgruntled by Hồ Chí Minh's conduct of policy (Selivanov 2014*b*). In the second half of the 1970s, this fact, unpleasant for Hanoi, was recalled in the "Black Book" of the Cambodian Communist leader Pol Pot (*Livre Noir* 1978) and it was very convincingly refuted (*Le Conflit* 1979).
6. However, while Albania at the Cominform meeting in 1947 was included in the number of countries under "people's democracy", the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was only "adjacent" to the "anti-imperialist camp" and fighting to throw off the colonial yoke (*Informacionnoe* 1948, pp. 15, 17, 23).
7. See Politburo decision (b), dated 17 March 1950 (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1080, l. 55; Konoreva and Selivanov 2016, p. 69).
8. See Politburo decision (b), dated 22 May 1952 (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1094. l. 753). For more information, see Konoreva (2008*a*). The Soviet embassy in Hanoi was opened in the autumn of 1954, when the French troops left the city and supreme bodies of state power of the DRV, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were relocated there.
9. The first official telegram from Hoxha, on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the establishment of the DRV, was sent to Hồ Chí Minh on 1 September 1951. The next day it was published in the main Albanian newspaper — *Zerri i popullit*. Later, in 1971, the text was included in a collection of Hoxha's works (Hoxha 1971–82, t. 8, f. 290–91).
10. The Albanian–Chinese alliance in the early 1960s was "unnatural", some Western analysts wrote (Griffith 1963).
11. One must however bear in mind the possibility of later changes to these diary entries, which were published in Albania only in the 1980s.
12. Apparently, Hồ Chí Minh hid the fact that before the trip to Pitsunda he had made a transit stop in Beijing, and that he had there discussed with Chinese leaders the Soviet–Albanian conflict.
13. In his "International Diary" for 24 August 1961, Hoxha made an entry in which he expressed the hope that, after a conversation with Zhou Enlai, Hồ Chí Minh understood everything correctly and would no longer return to this idea. See Hoxha 1981–85, t. 2, f. 155.
14. According to the observations of the staff of the USSR embassy in Vietnam,



- Hồ Chí Minh did not attempt to reconcile the Soviet Union and Albania after 1966–67.
15. In 1962 he was accompanied by a functionary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Igor Ognětov, on informal visits to several republics of the Soviet Union (Ognětov 2007).
  16. In the view of Khrushchev, Hồ Chí Minh was a “communist saint”, and Lê Duẩn an “anti-Soviet man” (Khrushchev 1999, pp. 113–15). Apparently, the Soviet leader read the report of the Soviet embassy in Vietnam for 1963, whose drafters carefully evaluated this latter Vietnamese politician, the second most important in the party and state hierarchies (RGASPI, f. 495, op. 201, d. 1/1).
  17. In addition, Moscow reported that Lê Duẩn stated, “We are on the side of Albania.... Of course, the Albanians have made some mistakes, but the Soviet side has made more mistakes.” Trường Chinh, who was at that time considered a “pro-Chinese” figure in Moscow, said approximately the same thing in his speech to the students of the Higher Party School of the Central Committee of the VWP.
  18. According to the Soviet interpreter at the meeting, Lê Duẩn presented a long list of complaints about the position of the leaders of the CPSU in the Sino–Soviet conflict (Kobelev 2014, p. 47). Information on this subject disseminated by the Russian side in the 1990s gave some researchers a basis to conclude that the relationship between Moscow and Hanoi in the first half of 1960 had been very difficult, and sometimes even “confrontational” in nature (Phạm Thị Ngọc Bích and Mosyakov 2005, pp. 51–52).
  19. Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs about Hồ Chí Minh’s having lost control over his colleagues in the early 1960s, and about the fact that he was even actually removed from making the most important decisions.
  20. The last major work about the country published in the Soviet Union appeared in 1965 as *A Brief History of Albania*. After that, almost all Soviet research on Albania was marked “for official use only” and circulated only to those on a special list of Soviet organizations that had relevance to foreign policy.
  21. Brezhnev joked that the minister of defense had been “tipsy”, and therefore had not been in full control of himself.
  22. This conclusion resulted in the construction of about 700,000 small concrete fortifications for the two million Albanians, along with today’s memory of the paranoia about attacks by the Soviet Union or the United States in alliance with Tito’s Yugoslavia that engulfed Albania.
  23. Hoxha later wrote about this in his books *Superpowers* and *Reflections*

- on *China*, although we cannot exclude the possibility the views expressed there had been formulated in hindsight, after the failure of the Cultural Revolution in China had become clear.
24. This is treated in the work of the Russian historian Harutyun Ulunyan (2015), which relies on a series of recent publications by Albanian historians.
  25. According to the memoirs of the then Soviet ambassador to Vietnam, because of its reluctance to create additional tension with the United States, Moscow did not want its telegram to appear in the Vietnamese press next to the Chinese telegram, but Lê Duẩn decided otherwise (Chaplin 2000, pp. 83–97).
  26. Obviously, this was the view of Hoàng Văn Hoan, who fled to Beijing in 1979 and received political asylum there.

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