

ENVER HOXHA AS WORLD STATESMAN
(Talk by Bill Bland to an Albanian Society meeting in 1985)

I feel that the title of my address – “Enver Hoxha as World Statesmen” – must have caused some raised eyebrows. Whether they like their policies or not, most people would accept Ronald Regan and Mikhail Gorbachov as world statesmen. But Enver Hoxha was the leader of a small country, the size of Wales with a population of less than three millions. Can the leader of a small country ever really be a statesman, or stateswoman, of world stature?

But it is only a few years ago that tens of thousands of people were marching through the streets of cities all over the world shouting with approval the name of Ho Chi Minh. Ho’s politics were not the same as those of Enver Hoxha, but he was the leader of a small country which inflicted on the powerful United States of America the first military defeat in its history.

Albania too has successfully resisted attempts at absorption, invasion, dismemberment and destabilisation from Greece, from Yugoslavia, from the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin, from China, from Britain and from the United States. It has constructed a planned socialist economy which is, at present, unique in the world.

How has it come about that Albania has followed, in the last forty years, such a different course of development from that of other countries of south-eastern Europe?

The cause cannot be found in any geographical or historical peculiarities of Albania. It lies in the specific character of the leadership of the political party which has been the leading force in Albanian society during these forty years. And pre-eminent in that leadership over these four decades was Enver Hoxha, who died in April at the age of 76.

Some people have expressed surprised that Hoxha’s death should have been reported with such virulent hostility by almost all our press, radio and television. But they should not be surprised.

The successful construction of a planned socialist society in Albania – a society without profit, without millionaires, without unemployment, without inflation, without taxes and with constantly rising living standards – is a threat to everything which “The Sunday Times” and the BBC hold up as “Western civilisation”.

Enver Hoxha would not have been surprised at his obituaries in the British media. When the British press praises someone who call himself a “socialist”, it is time to question the genuineness of his “socialism”. And, of course, this hostile propaganda does not have entirely the results it aims at. In the week in which these obituaries were published, the Albanian society received more applications for membership than in any month in the past twenty-five years. One miner from South Wales wrote to me:

“Having read the newspaper reports on the death of Enver Hoxha, my experience of the press over the twelve months of the miners’ strike leads me to want to know more about Albania”.

On the other hand, some people were naturally misled by this propaganda. I received several letters which said, in effect:

“I do not understand why, in your letter of protest to the BBC, you denied that Enver Hoxha was a ‘dictator’. Surely, the Albanian Constitution defines the Albanian state as a ‘dictatorship’”.

Indeed, it does.

But it defines the Albanian state as “the dictatorship of the working class”, not that of an individual. This simply means that the political power in Albania is in the hands of the working class, that the working class rules. Albanians do not present “the dictatorship of the working class” as the opposite of democracy. On the contrary, using the term “democracy” with its classical Greek meaning of “the rule of the common people”, they maintain that working class power is the only genuine democracy.

The Party of Labour of Albania regards Britain as a dictatorship – as a state in which political power is in reality in the hands of Big Business. But they do not imply by that term that Margaret Thatcher is a personal dictator. Nevertheless, the leader of the ruling party in Britain has somewhat more constitutional power than the leader of the ruling party in Albania: he or she is automatically Prime Minister and has the right to appoint and dismiss Ministers.

The leadership of the Party of Labour of Albania, which forms the core of the Albanian society, has always been a collective one, although Enver Hoxha was pre-eminent in that leadership. But this position of pre-eminence was the result of Hoxha’s outstanding abilities and devoted service to the working people, and the respect and love which flowed from these qualities.

Let us look more closely at the causes of Albania’s unique course of social development.

Today, the social system in Greece is very different from that in neighboring Albania. Yet in 1944 the situation in the two countries was closely similar. Both were under German occupation; both had national liberation movements led by their respective communist parties; both had right-wing spurious “nationalist” movements, supported by British gold and weapons, which fought the national liberation movements in collaboration with the Nazi forces; in both countries British troops landed, ostensibly to “help” in liberation.

It was the different reaction of the two communist parties which gave rise to the different outcome in the two countries.

The leaders of the so-called “Communist Party of Greece” signed a truce with the right-wing collaborators, placed their forces under the command of the right-wing

government-in-exile and of the British Commander-in-Chief, welcomed the British troops.

The leaders of the Communist Party of Albania – today the Party of Labour – destroyed the collaborationist forces; they thanked the British troops for their “offer of help” but insisted that they withdraw from Albanian soil. They did so.

Let us look at another facet of Albania’s unique course of development.

In 1945 the countries of Eastern Europe (except for Greece) were following the model of the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin in constructing planned socialist societies based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

Today only Albania continues to adhere to those principles.

Admittedly, this is not the impression one gets from the pages of “Pravda”. But like our “popular” press, this is now a newspaper which aims not at the truth, but at misleading the masses.

If one studies the specialised Soviet economic journals a very different picture emerges. The so-called “economic reforms” instituted after the death of Stalin have abandoned central economic planning; the profitability of each enterprise has become once more the motive and regulator of production.

True, these profits – as in orthodox “profit-sharing” schemes in the “West” – are shared among the whole staff of the enterprise. But they are distributed according to what is termed “responsibility in profit-making”, which means that the lion’s share goes to management. The latest statistics show that 51% of the profits go to workers (who form 96% of the personnel), while 49% go to management (who form 4% of the personnel).

The restoration of the profit motive in the Soviet Union has meant reliance on market forces, on the laws of “supply and demand”. This means, as elsewhere, that it is often more profitable to produce luxury items for the wealthy than necessities of life for the working people.

Enver Hoxha described contemporary Soviet society as essentially a capitalist society, in which the working people were exploited by a new ruling class, a new capitalist class – the enterprise directors. He noted that all the negative phenomena which are associated with capitalism have begun to reappear – crises of “over-production”, inflation, redundancy, etc.

True, the Soviet economic journals do not speak of “unemployment”, only of “surplus labour”. To solve this problem a “youth employment scheme” has been established, and an official campaign that “a woman’s place is in the home”! Letters are published calling – not, of course, for “unemployment benefit”, but for “stipends” for workers who are “between jobs”.

Such development has proceeded – sometimes faster, sometimes slower – in all the formerly socialist countries of eastern Europe, except for Albania.

Whereas the Albanian constitution prohibits foreign aid and credits, the other countries are obliged not only to the Soviet Union, but to Western financial institutions. The hard currency indebtedness of Bulgaria stands at \$9 billion, of Hungary at \$10 billion, of Yugoslavia at \$19 billion and of Poland at \$26 billion (on which it cannot pay even the interest due).

Official figures show that in Poland the real wages of the workers fell between 1981 and 1984 by more than 30%.

Inflation in Poland is running at 38% a year, in Yugoslavia at 57%.

Unemployment in Yugoslavia stands at 13% of the work force (30% in the Albanian province of Kosova).

There were, of course, prominent Albanians who sought to lead Albania along this same road of, in Hoxha's words, "capitalist degeneration".

It was, above all, Hoxha who led the ideological struggle against the views of these individuals. These struggles are usually portrayed in our press as "personal power struggles". There were nothing of the sort. There were in each case struggles around principle – with Hoxha standing successfully for the maintenance of independence and socialism for his country.

Whether one is a socialist or not, the question of socialism – how to attain it and how to maintain it – is a question of international importance.

Marxism-Leninism has always held that the state in capitalist countries is always – no matter what its parliamentary trappings – in reality the dictatorship of Big Business. It has always held, therefore, that this state apparatus of force will be used against any attempt to establish a socialist society, so that the working people must be prepared for revolutionary struggle. It has always held that the belief that a fundamental change in society can be attained through the ballot box alone is a dangerous illusion. This does not necessarily mean a bloody and protracted civil war – the number of people who died in the October Revolution in Russia was far less than the number killed on the roads of Manchester on a typical summer Sunday. Hoxha's famous dictum was:

"The more the working people are prepared for revolutionary struggle, the greater the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism".

Most of the old communist parties, however, have rejected these fundamental tenets of Marxism-Leninism in favor of the concept of "parliamentary transition to socialism". In Hoxha's words, they have become "revisionists", they have "revised" Marxism-Leninism by repudiating its fundamental core.

The leading role in the struggle against this "modern revisionism" was undoubtedly played by Enver Hoxha, who adhered all his adult life firmly to Marxist-Leninist principles. And, as I said, whether one is a socialist or not, these are questions of

world importance. Hoxha's leading role in these questions makes him, in this respect too, a world figure.

Furthermore, he was the author of a whole series of books, not only upon Albania, but on Yugoslavia, on the Soviet Union, on China, on the Middle East, and so on, which are essential reading for any serious student of world affairs.

But it is as the principal architect of Socialist Albania that Enver Hoxha's qualities of leadership shine most clearly and obviously.

In forty years Albania has been transformed from the most backward country in Europe to an advanced industrialised state.

Where else in the world can one find no unemployment, with the right to work enshrined in the Constitution?

Where else can one find dwelling rents at 3% of income?

Where else can one find no rates, taxes or social service contributions combined with a free health service?

Where else can one find non-contributory pensions at 70% of pay, payable as young as 55 in certain occupations?

A visitor goes from Britain – with its barren industrial waste lands, with its four million unemployed, with its declining social services – to Albania to find a country which is one huge construction site, to a country whose people have well-founded confidence that each year their living standards will improve as production rises.

Some visiting newspaper reporters claim to find Albania "dull".

They find no Soho "strip-tease" shows, no Mayfair gambling casinos, no pornographic magazines, no heroin pushers, no "pop" music. Enver Hoxha once said:

"Our young people have no need of drugs to escape from reality".

Perhaps these reporters find Albanian sporting events dull because one can go to a football match there and cheer for the away team without the risk of getting a knife in one's back!

Where but in Albania one could go to the cinema for the equivalent of 15 pence?

What other country in the world with a population of less than three millions has 7 symphony orchestras and produces some 15 feature films a year?

Perhaps those who find Albania "dull" have had their cultural values corrupted!

One has only to look at pictures of Albania prior to 1939 – pictures which show its utter backwardness, its poor and illiterate working people, to understand the respect and affection which the overwhelming majority of the Albanian people held for the

principal architect of their social progress – Enver Hoxha, to understand the genuine and spontaneous grief which was exhibited at his funeral.

Several monuments to Enver Hoxha are to be erected in Albania.

But the ordinary Albanian may well say – in the words of the inscription to our own Christopher Wren in St. Paul’s Cathedral –

“If you seek a monument, look around!”

I want to conclude by reading to you the translation of a poem, written the day after Enver Hoxha’s death . . . It expresses eloquently, I feel, the feelings of most Albanians.

Talk by Bill Bond to Albanian Society 1985

www.marxists.org

I feel that the title of my address - "Enver Hoxha as World Statesman" - must have caused some raised eyebrows. Whether they like their policies or not, most people would accept Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachov as world statesmen. But Enver Hoxha was the leader of a small country, the size of Wales, with a population of less than three millions. Can the leader of a small country ever really be a statesman, or stateswoman, of world stature?

But it is only a few years ago that tens of thousands of people were marching through the streets of cities all over the world shouting with approval the name of Ho Chi Minh. Ho's politics were not the same as those of Enver Hoxha, but he was the leader of a small country which inflicted on the powerful United States of America the first military defeat in its history.

Albania too has successfully resisted attempts at absorption, invasion, dismemberment and destabilisation from Greece, from Yugoslavia, from the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin, from China, from Britain and from the United States. It has constructed a planned socialist economy which is, at present, unique in the world.

How has it come about that Albania has followed, in the last forty years, such a different course of development from that of other countries of south-eastern Europe?

The cause cannot be found in any geographical or historical peculiarities of Albania. It lies in the specific character of the leadership of the political party which has been the leading force in Albanian society during these forty years. And pre-eminent in that leadership over these four decades was Enver Hoxha, who died in April at the age of 76.

Some people have expressed surprise that Hoxha's death should have been reported with such virulent hostility by almost all our press, radio and television. But they should not be surprised.

The successful construction of a planned socialist society in Albania - a society without profit, without millionaires, without unemployment, without inflation, without taxes and with constantly rising living standards - is a threat to everything which "The Sunday Times" and the BBC hold up as "Western civilisation".

Enver Hoxha would not have been surprised at his obituaries in the British media. When the British press praises someone who calls himself a "socialist", it is time to question the genuineness of his "socialism". And, of course, this hostile propaganda does not have entirely the results it aims at. In the week in which these obituaries were published, the Albanian Society received more applications for membership than in any month in the past twenty-five years. One miner from South Wales wrote to me:

"Having read the newspaper reports on the death of Enver Hoxha, my experience of the press over the twelve months of the miners' strike leads me to want to know more about Albania".

On the other hand, some people were naturally misled by this propaganda. I received several letters which said, in effect:

"I do not understand why, in your letter of protest to the BBC, you denied that Enver Hoxha was a 'dictator'. Surely, the Albanian Constitution defines the Albanian state as a 'dictatorship'".

Indeed it does.

But it defines the Albanian state as "the dictatorship of the working class", not that of an individual. This simply means that political power in Albania is in the hands of the working class, that the working class rules. Albanians do not present "the dictatorship of the working class" as the opposite of democracy. On the contrary, using the term "democracy" with its classical Greek meaning of "the rule of the common people", they maintain that working class power is the only genuine democracy.

The Party of Labour of Albania regards Britain as a dictatorship - as a state in which political power is in reality in the hands of Big Business. But they do not imply by that term that Margaret Thatcher is a personal dictator. Nevertheless, the leader of the ruling party in Britain has somewhat more constitutional power than the leader of the ruling party in Albania: he or she is automatically Prime Minister and has the right to appoint and dismiss Ministers.

The leadership of the Party of Labour of Albania, which forms the core of Albanian society, has always been a collective one, although Enver Hoxha was pre-eminent in that leadership. But this position of pre-eminence was the result of Hoxha's outstanding abilities and devoted service to the working people, and the respect and love which flowed from these qualities.

Let us look more closely at the causes of Albania's unique course of social development.

Today, the social system in Greece is very different from that in neighbouring Albania. Yet in 1944 the situation in the two countries was closely similar. Both were under German occupation; both had national liberation movements led by their respective communist parties; both had right-wing spurious "nationalist" movements, supported by British gold and weapons, which fought the national liberation movements in collaboration with the Nazi forces; in both countries British troops landed, ostensibly to "help" in liberation.

It was the different reaction of the two communist parties which gave rise to the different outcome in the two countries.

The leaders of the so-called "Communist Party of Greece" signed a truce with the right-wing collaborators, placed their forces under the command of the right-wing government-in-exile and of the British Commander-in-Chief, welcomed the British troops.

The leaders of the Communist Party of Albania - today the Party of Labour - destroyed the collaborationist forces; they thanked the British troops for their "offer of help" but insisted that they withdraw from Albanian soil. They did so.

Let us look at another facet of Albania's unique course of development.

In 1945 the countries of Eastern Europe (except for Greece) were following the model of the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin in constructing planned socialist societies based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

Today only Albania continues to adhere to those principles.

Admittedly, this is not the impression one gets from the pages of "Pravda". But like our "popular" press, this is now a newspaper which aims not at the truth, but at misleading the masses.

If one studies the specialised Soviet economic journals a very different picture emerges. The so-called "economic reforms" instituted after the death of Stalin have abandoned central economic planning; the profitability of each enterprise has become once more the motive and regulator of production,

True, these profits - as in orthodox "profit-sharing" schemes in the "West" - are shared among the whole staff of the enterprise. But they are distributed according to what is termed "responsibility in profit-making", which means that the lion's share goes to management. The latest statistics show that 51% of the profits go to workers (who form 96% of the personnel), while 49% go to management (who form 4% of the personnel).

The restoration of the profit motive in the Soviet Union has meant reliance on market forces, on the laws of "supply and demand". This means, as elsewhere, that it is often more profitable to produce luxury items for the wealthy than necessities of life for the working people.

Enver Hoxha described contemporary Soviet society as essentially a capitalist society, in which the working people were exploited by a new ruling class, a new capitalist class - the enterprise directors. He noted that all the negative phenomena which are associated with capitalism have begun to reappear - crises of "over-production", inflation, redundancy, etc.

True, the Soviet economic journals do not speak of "unemployment", only of "surplus labour". To solve this problem a "youth employment scheme" has been established, and an official campaign that "a woman's place is in the home". Letters are published calling - not, of course, for "unemployment benefit", but for "stipends" for workers who are "between jobs".

Such development has proceeded - sometimes faster, sometimes slower - in all the formerly socialist countries of Eastern Europe, except for Albania.

Whereas the Albanian Constitution prohibits foreign aid and credits, the other countries are obligated not only to the Soviet Union, but to western financial institutions. The hard currency indebtedness of Bulgaria stands at

£9 billion, of Hungary at £10 billion, of Yugoslavia at £19 billion and of Poland at £26 billion (on which it cannot pay even the interest due).

Official figures show that in Poland the real wages of the workers fell between 1981 and 1984 by more than 30%.

Inflation in Poland is running at 38% a year, in Yugoslavia at 57%. Unemployment in Yugoslavia stands at 13% of the work force (30% in the Albanian province of Kosova).

There were, of course, prominent Albanians who sought to lead Albania along this same road of, in Hoxha's words, "capitalist degeneration".

It was, above all, Hoxha who led the ideological struggle against the views of these individuals. These struggles are usually portrayed in our press as "personal power struggles". They were nothing of the sort. They were in each case struggles around principle - with Hoxha standing successfully for the maintenance of independence and socialism for his country.

Whether one is a socialist or not, the question of socialism - how to attain it and how to maintain it - is a question of international importance.

Marxism-Leninism has always held that the state in capitalist countries is always - no matter what its parliamentary trappings - in reality the dictatorship of Big Business. It has always held, therefore, that this state apparatus of force will be used against any attempt to establish a socialist society, so that the working people must be prepared for revolutionary struggle. It has always held that the belief that a fundamental change in society can be attained through the ballot box alone is a dangerous illusion. This does not necessarily mean a bloody and protracted civil war - the number of people who died in the October Revolution in Russia was far less than the number killed on the roads of Manchester on a typical summer Sunday. Hoxha's famous dictum was:

"The more the working people are prepared for revolutionary struggle, the greater the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism".

Most of the old communist parties, however, have rejected these fundamental tenets of Marxism-Leninism in favour of the concept of "parliamentary transition to socialism". In Hoxha's words, they have become "revisionists", they have "revised" Marxism-Leninism by repudiating its fundamental core.

The leading role in the struggle against this "modern revisionism" was undoubtedly played by Enver Hoxha, who adhered all his adult life firmly to Marxist-Leninist principles. And, as I said, whether one is a socialist or not, these are questions of world importance. Hoxha's leading role in these questions makes him, in this respect too, a world figure.

Furthermore, he was the author of a whole series of books, not only upon Albania, but on Yugoslavia, on the Soviet Union, on China, on the Middle East, and so on, which are essential reading for any serious student of world affairs.

But it is as the principal architect of Socialist Albania that Enver Hoxha's qualities of leadership shine most clearly and obviously.

In forty years Albania has been transformed from the most backward country in Europe to an advanced industrialised state.

Where else in the world can one find no unemployment, with the right to work enshrined in the Constitution?

Where else can one find dwelling rents at 3% of income?

Where else can one find no rates, taxes or social service contributions combined with a free health service?

Where else can one find non-contributory pensions at 70% of pay, payable as young as 55 in certain occupations?

A visitor goes from Britain - with its barren industrial waste lands, with its four million unemployed, with its declining social services - to Albania to find a country which is one huge construction site, to a country whose people have well-founded confidence that each year their living standards will improve as production rises.

Some visiting newspaper reporters claim to find Albania "dull".

They find no Soho "strip-tease" shows, no Mayfair gambling casinos, no pornographic magazines, no heroin pushers, no "pop" music. Enver Hoxha once said:

"Our young people have no need of drugs to escape from reality".

Perhaps these reporters find Albanian sporting events dull because one can go to a football match there and cheer for the away team without the risk of getting a knife in one's back!

~~I always find it supremely exciting to visit Albania.~~

Where but in Albania could one go to the cinema, as I did last year, for the equivalent of 15 pence?

What other country in the world with a population of less than three millions has 7 symphony orchestras and produces some 15 feature films a year?

Perhaps those who find Albania "dull" have had their cultural values corrupted!

One has only to look at pictures of Albania prior to 1939 - pictures which show its utter backwardness, its poor and illiterate working people, to understand the respect and affection which the overwhelming majority of the Albanian people held for the principal architect of their social progress - Enver Hoxha, to understand the genuine and spontaneous grief which was exhibited at his funeral.

Several monuments to Enver Hoxha are to be erected in Albania.

But the ordinary Albanian may well say - in the words of the inscription to our own Christopher Wren in St. Paul's Cathedral -

"If you seek a monument, look around!"

I want to conclude by reading to you the translation of a poem, written the day after Enver Hoxha's death by one of Albania's leading writers. It expresses eloquently, I feel, the feelings of most Albanians.

ELEGY FOR ENVER HOXHA,
by Dritëro Agolli.

1.

Hard was this year's winter,
and with the spring came pain;
it came amid torrential rain
within a sea of sorrow.

Forgive me, Enver, that my verse is sad;
forgive me, Enver, that my voice is hoarse.
Albania's heart is pierced;
Albania is shedding tears.

Our country has not seen
your eyes closed in sleep;
they have always shone like stars
uncovered by the clouds. . .

Forgive me, Enver, that my verse
is occupied with death;
I know your view that poetry
ought to be filled with life.

2.

The mountains are silent, lowering their heads;
guards stand by your coffin;
the pines frown in the forests,
and every rock is heard to moan.

A ribbon of black cloth
hangs from my arm like lead;
and yet Albania thinks not of you as dead
despite her rivers of sorrow.

Forgive me, Enver, for the pain I feel;
forgive me, Enver, for my weakness;
there are moments when a man feels lost,
loses his self-restraint.

3.

Forgive me, Enver, that I have made mistakes
seeking to fly like a bird;
perhaps I have ^{DISAPPOINTED} ~~disappointed~~ you,
have helped, perhaps, to grey your hair.

You sat with us and made us men,
inspiring every youth and each old man;
you marched over the mountains
holding the torch of communism.

Hand in hand with you we seized the stars
and set them over Albania;
with you we never bent our heads
through half a century.

4.

No doubt we shall learn to live
without you in our midst -
when the snow falls in the mountains,
and the sun breaks through the clouds;

when the grass grows in the valleys,
and the fields are clothed in gold;
when the turbines of Koman begin to hum
and its great reservoir is full;

when Gjirokastra wakens early
and opens its doors to the street;
when the kerchiefs of red-lipped brides
cover their hair like lilies;

when the children play in the squares
like daisies in a meadow;
when carnations glow like fire,
and love burns in our hearts;

when hands applaud the First of May,
so filled with flowers and with joy;
when doves coo in the gardens
and beat their wings upon the roof;

when Tirana, aglow with light,
sails through the night like a ship;
when the house of our dreams
is ready for us to enter;

when the Congresses of the Party come
with the step of triumphant communism,
and the brow of Albania glows
with your flag raised on high. . .

5.

Forgive me, Enver, that I could not give you
the breath of life from my breast;
I would have plucked out my heart
and given it to you with joy.

Yet Enver did not die and is not dead;
he lives among the living;
he stands on the iron-crested mountains
and leads us still.

He says to us: Defend the Party,
founded by us in 'forty-one;
I am among you and the generations still to come
in mind, in spirit and in voice.