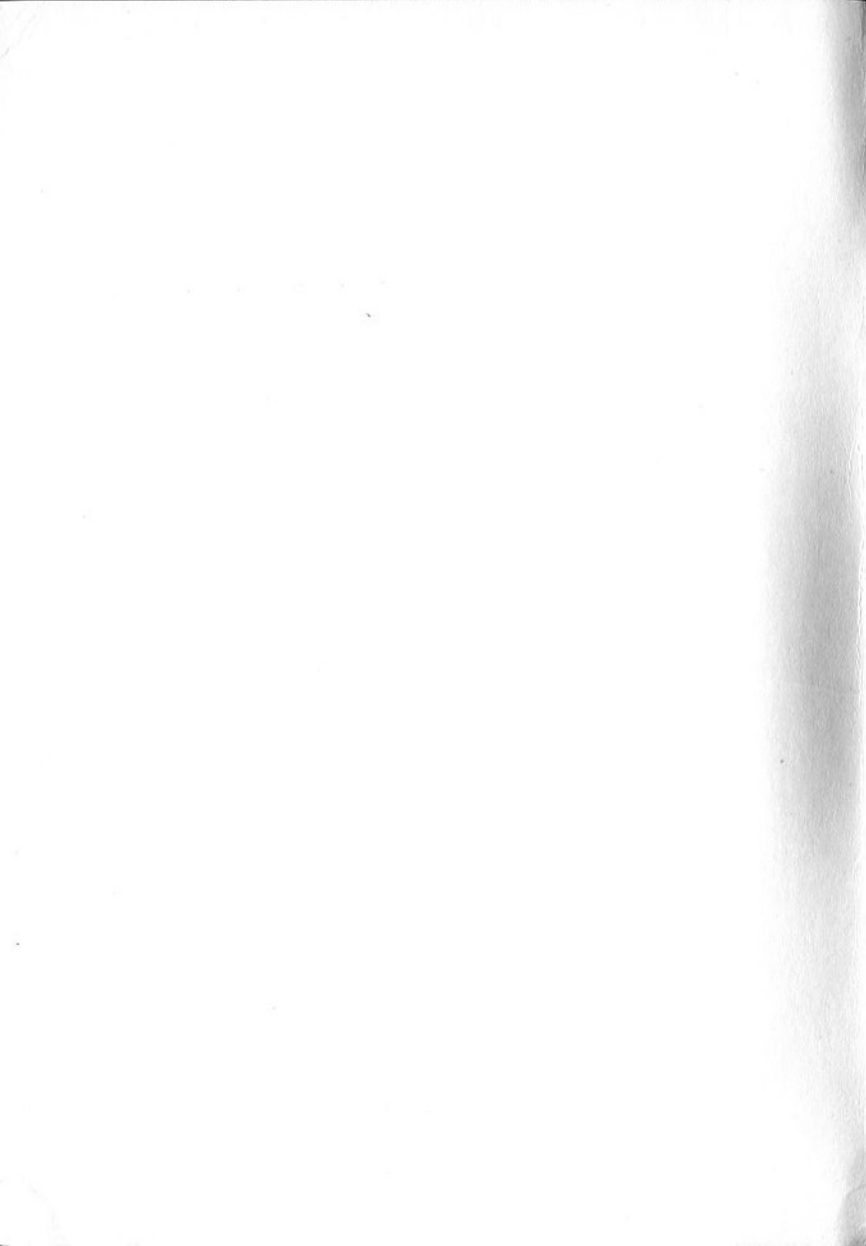


RAMIZ ALIA

**THE ALBANIAN LEAGUE
OF PRIZREN — A BRILLIANT PAGE
OF OUR HISTORY WRITTEN
IN BLOOD**



RAMIZ ALIA

**Member of the Political Bureau and Secretary
of the CC of the PLA, Vice-Chairman of the General Council
of the Democratic Front of Albania**

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*Speech on the centenary of the
Albanian League of Prizren
(Tirana, June 10, 1978)*

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Dear comrades,

Today, 100 years are complete since the Albanian League was founded in Prizren, it represents one of the most outstanding events in our glorious history. It was formed in very complicated and critical situations when the defence of the legitimate rights of the Albanian nation, which had been trampled underfoot and were being savagely violated by the Ottoman rulers, was raised as an urgent question, when the big imperialist powers of Europe and the chauvinist monarchies of the Balkans were hatching up ominous plans for the seizure of Albanian territories.

Today, with feelings of profound respect and gratitude we recall the heroic struggles and efforts of the Albanian League of Prizren for the freedom of the Homeland and its unity as a national state, highly appreciating the historic role and consequences of these efforts for the creation of an independent Albania. As Comrade Enver Hoxha has put it, the road and struggle of the Albanian patriots «was not an easy road, not the road of trickery and bending the knee, of fear of and submission to the stronger, but the road of clashes with ferocious internal and external enemies, both open and disguised, a road forced open by the people with keen political sightedness and maturity, with the pen and the rifle in hand, with bloodshed

and innumerable sacrifices.» (E. Hoxha, Works, Vol. 24, p. 7),

Today, in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the League of Prizren, this brilliant page of our history written in blood, we recall with profound respect and honour, the heroism and sacrifices of all those who gave their all for the national cause and who, in very difficult and complicated situations, fought with rare valour, with rifle and pen and with everything possible for their Mother Albania. We honour with gratitude the memory of the outstanding leaders who emerged from the bosom of our people small in numbers but great in courage, bravery and wisdom. The patriotism, courage and wisdom of Abdyl Frashëri and Sulejman Vokshi, Iliaz Dibra and Shuaip Spahiu, Ymer Prizreni and Mustafa Tetova, Daut Boriçi, Filip Çeka, Selim Çoba, Mihal Harito, Petro Meksi, Dhimitër Kolea, Thimi Mitko, Mehmet Ali Vrioni, Haxhi Zeka, Odhise Kasneci and other men of those times originary from all the regions of Albania, who defended the Homeland in those critical circumstances, will remain a great example of patriotism and devotion to the Homeland and people generation after generation. The heroism of people's outstanding fighters like Mic Sokoli and Ali Ibra, Isuf Sokoli and Mehmet Beci, Mehmet Gjyli, Jakup Ferri, Ramadan Zaskoci and many others who put their chests to the muzzles of enemy guns, will always recall to the present and future generations that nobody donated our people their freedom which was won only with their own blood and struggle.

Our people are commemorating the centenary

of the Albanian League of Prizren in freedom and independence, in unbreakable unity and linked like muscle to bone with the Party of Labour. They are commemorating this great historic event in their revived Homeland, masters of the country and their own fate, when, guided by their own Marxist-Leninist Party with Comrade Enver Hoxha at the head, they are building their new life and making the Homeland bloom, when socialist Albania is honoured and respected throughout the world. They are commemorating this date amidst the drive at work and great revolutionary enthusiasm to implement the decisions of the 7th Congress of the Party in all fields, to advance our industry and socialist agriculture, education and culture, and to strengthen the defence of the Homeland.

At this outstanding centenary of our national history, when we recall with pride the heroic struggle which the generations of the past have waged for national liberation and unity, the struggle which showed the world the vitality and courage of the Albanian people, their determination to live free and independent, we send our greetings to all patriotic Albanians wherever they may be, our brothers of Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro, who, as an inseparable part of the Albanian nation, are part of its history through the centuries.

* * *

In the history of our national movement, the Albanian League of Prizren takes a most outstanding place and represents an important stage of

this movement. The League of Prizren was the first political organization of all Albania, set up within Albania, and which included the whole country, an organization which had not only a national ideological platform and a clearly defined political program but also a state organization on a national scale, its own army, and its own propaganda and cultural apparatus. It acted as the sole representative of the whole people, not only within the country but also in relation with the outside world, foreign governments and international organizations. If the other states did not accept it formally, it compelled them to recognize it on the battlefield and in diplomatic clashes. It is important that the League of Prizren presented the question of the freedom and independence of Albania as an urgent question demanding immediate solution, a problem which now, no one could ignore. It challenged imperialist Europe and demonstrated to it that no oppression, no violence, no plot or intrigue could turn the Albanian people from the road on which they had set out.

At the time when a great peril threatened Albania, the partitioning of its territories and the perpetuation of foreign enslavement, the Albanian League of Prizren placed itself at the head of the whole people and began a heroic struggle for the defence of the people's rights. Its program expressed the fundamental demands of the Albanian national movement: recognition of the Albanian nation as an indivisible whole and respect for the principle of nationality, the preservation of the inviolability and integrity of the national lands

and the unification of the territories of Albania in a single national state.

The struggle of the League to carry out this program when Albania not only had no allies, but had many enemies, was truly a heroic undertaking. Only their fiery patriotism, their clarity of mind, their unflinching confidence in their forces, their spirit of revolt and their high sense of national pride could rouse, as it did, the Albanians to fight against «the Seven Kings».

As any important event in history, the League of Prizren was no chance outburst, nor was it the result of political junctures or the offspring of foreign diplomacy, as some shallow or anti-Albanian historians claim it to be. It was the natural result of the internal political, economic and social development of Albania and had its roots deep in the centuries-long struggle of our people for freedom and independence. It did not grow on barren soil, it was the continuation of the heroic resistance of the Albanian people against the tremendous storms of history, it was the consequence of the active efforts of a fully-formed nation which was fighting for the defence of its vital interests.

When the Albanian League of Prizren was formed, Albania had entered the fifth century of its Turkish bondage, which had brought innumerable misfortunes and sufferings upon the Albanian people. National oppression, brutal feudal exploitation, the ignorance the foreign occupier kept our people in, the devastating wars of the Ottoman Empire, insecurity and anarchy had become unendurable. The shaking-off of the foreign yoke was

the most pressing question for our people. The innumerable uprisings, which had never ceased since Scanderbeg's times, although they had been defeated or put down through savage suppression, had always left in their wake an ever deeper hatred for the foreign rulers, an ever more ardent love of freedom, an ever greater determination to win. This love of freedom and this hatred for the enemies which went on increasing from one generation to another, would one day burst out like a volcano to open the road to the liberation of the Albanian people and the creation of their independent state. In struggle for national existence and liberation, Marx wrote, is also expressed the national consciousness aiming at the formation of national states...

The 19th century, as in the other countries of Europe, had brought about radical changes in the Albanian territories. The emergence of new capitalist relations, the connections of the various regions among themselves, merging of local markets into a common national market had created one economic community which, along with the community of language and territory, had led to the formation of the Albanian nation. As a consequence, now every action of a political, economic or cultural character assumed nationwide dimensions and clearly expressed national features.

This is also observed in the great people's uprisings of the years 30-70 of the 19th century, which were directed against the destructive consequences of the Turkish reforms of the Tanzimat, and in particular against the corrupt bureaucratic administra-

tion which the Sublime Porte was trying to impose on Albania. These uprisings clearly reflected the radical change which had taken place in the historical process of the Albanian people. Many of them transcended the regional boundaries of the former uprisings, established inter-regional links, and they were not led by the big feudals, but by the petty local chiefs who were more closely linked with the peasant masses. These uprisings embodied an extremely important idea, that of distinguishing the Albanian nation from the other nations, and raised the question of a special treatment of Albania, as a particular province of the Empire which should be administered not by Turkish officials but by local people. All this proved that a nation and a developed national consciousness already existed in Albania. This reality was very clearly expressed by one of the outstanding representatives of our National Renaissance, Pashko Vasa, in October 1878, when he wrote: «The consciousness of the Albanian nation revolts against the very idea of submission... The present Albanian League originates precisely from this feeling. The idea (of its creation) was inspired by nobody, it was born in the consciousness of all at the same time, and nothing could dampen its vigour... the representatives (who have come) to Prizren... take their mandate as leaders precisely from this national consciousness, and they obey precisely this national consciousness in their action as soldiers» («Acts of the Albanian National Renaissance 1878-1912», Tirana, 1978. The Memorandum of October 22nd, 1878, document No. 32, p. 67).

The League of Prizren, was formed at a time when the echo of the French revolution and the re-

volutions of 1848 etc., which had shaken Europe, had reverberated strongly throughout Albania. Many of the leaders of the Albanian uprisings and especially the ideologists of the national movement had been inspired by the progressive ideas of the time, and had drawn lessons from these revolutions. There were also countless Albanians who had taken part in the anti-Turkish uprisings which had led to the winning of independence by the peoples of the Balkans. Now they were all conscious that such a thing had to be done in Albania, too. The progressive ideas of the time found a favourable terrain in the great centuries-old traditions of the Albanian people, in their struggle for freedom, independence and social progress.

A long time prior to the League of Prizren, Naum Veqilharxhi, Kostandin Kristoforidhi, Zef Jubani, Jeronim De Rada, and other ideologists of the National Renaissance had expressed in their writings the initial demands of a national character for the unity of the Albanians without distinction of region or religion, for the spread of education and culture in Albanian, for economic and social reforms which would set the country on the road of progress.

Thus, all the conditions had been created for the Albanian National Movement to be raised to a higher stage and to undertake the greatest and most essential tasks that had to be solved. Now the need arose for an organization on the scale of the whole country, and above all, for a program which would unite the fighting energies of the people around a single aim.

These requirements were realized by the Albanian League of Prizren which took in hand the lead-

ership of the whole movement and extended organizationally over the whole of the Albanian territories, uniting the activity of the masses of the people with the national ideas.

The Albanian League of Prizren was formed at the time of the Eastern Crisis of the years 1875-1881. This crisis served to spark off the outburst of the great people's hatred accumulated through the centuries for the foreign occupiers as a danger signal which brought the masses of the people to their feet to defend their country, their nation and their life from the plots which the Great Powers were hatching up.

Objectively, the possibilities existed for cooperation between the peoples of the Balkans against their common enemies. But this did not take place, and not through any fault of the Albanians. Although Montenegro and Serbia declared war on Turkey for the sake of the liberation of their oppressed compatriots and their national unity, they also aimed to annex the greater part of the Albanian territories. Thus, the solution to the Eastern Crisis, which had begun with the people's anti-Ottoman uprisings in the Balkans, suffered its first distortion through the chauvinism of the neighbouring countries. Meanwhile, the intervention of the imperialist Great Powers of that time gave this Crisis another direction to the detriment of the Albanian people and in the interests of the expansionist aims of these powers. This began with the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin and ended with the further bargainings at the expense of the Albanian people which led to the partitioning of Albania in 1913.

Under the Treaty of San Stefano, whole Albanian regions were handed to the Balkan Slavonic states. The Greater Bulgaria which was created at this time included Kumanova, Kaçanik, Tetova, Kërçova, Gostivar, Dibra, Struga, Peshkopia, Pogradec and Korça. Serbia received part of the Sandjak of Prishtina down to the outskirts of Mitrovitsa, while Gucia, Plava, Vermosh, Kelmend, Hot, Gruda, Tivar and Ulqin were handed to Montenegro. As can be seen, here we are not dealing with some restricted and disputed peripheral zone, but with the seizure of a large part of the Albanian territory.

The consequences of the imperialist policy of the Great Powers and especially of the chauvinist policies of Russia, Serbia and Montenegro were very grave to Albania. The forcible expulsion of tens of thousands of Albanians from the northern regions of Kosova by the Serbian armies showed the Albanian people what fate awaited them with the implementation of the San Stefano Treaty and the decisions of the Congress of Berlin. Precisely in these years, the governments of Serbia and Montenegro initiated that policy of the violent mass expulsion of the Albanians from their lands, a policy which had as its objective the denationalization of the Albanian provinces. Even after 1913, when, by decision of the imperialist powers, half of the Albanian territories were given to Serbia and Montenegro, this policy was never changed. Indeed, it was further elaborated and perfected, assuming monstrous forms such as those which were put forward in the ultra-chauvinist program of the Serbian politician V. Chubrillovich who advocated

the forcible deportation to Turkey and the physical elimination of all Albanians who were left under the Yugoslav monarchy.

These were the dramatic concrete circumstances of those years which gravely affected the feelings of our people and led to the outburst of the irresistible popular revolt and a general movement for self-defence.

The Albanian League which was founded in Prizren on the 10th of June, 1878, a 100 years ago today, was created to cope with this situation, when the Albanians, as the folk song says, took the oath, «either victory or death». The participation in it of representatives from all the different regions of the country, and the powerful support given to it by all social strata, the peasants, the highlanders, the ordinary people of the towns, showed that with the forming of the League of Prizren, a very important historic event had occurred in Albania. At the head of it was the ardent patriot, Abdyl Frashëri, the outstanding ideologist of the Albanian national movement and an indomitable fighter for the rights of Albania, who was known both in the South and the North and enjoyed the great trust of the people as a champion of the supreme interests of the nation.

* * *

In the difficult conditions when Albania was alone and encircled by enemies who threatened it from all sides, the League was faced with very important and complicated tasks, which required

courage and boldness just as much as they needed wisdom and diplomacy. It had to fight on many fronts simultaneously under the pressure of the time which could not wait, and of events which demanded an immediate reaction.

The Albanian League of Prizren has the great merit that it defended the Albanian nation when the enemies were seeking to deny its existence. Right from the start and during its whole existence, the League waged a great struggle to make clear not only to the Great Powers which had gathered in Berlin, but to the whole of European public opinion, that the Albanians constituted a completely formed nation in itself, which had an ancient history, its own language and culture, which had made its own contribution to European civilization, which had resisted every aggressor and which had never surrendered to foreign occupiers.

Whole volumes can be compiled with the memoranda, letters and protests sent from all over Albania to the Congress of Berlin, with newspaper articles and other documents which acquaint world public opinion with the Albanian question. «The Albanians,» Abdyl Frashëri declared, «have preserved their Homeland, their nationality, their language and customs by repelling the attacks of Rome, Byzantium and Venice in the barbarian times. How is it possible to allow a nation so valiant and so closely linked with its soil to be sacrificed in this century of knowledge and civilization...?» («Acts of the Albanian National Renaissance, 1878-1912». Memorandum of the Albanian League to the Powers

Signatories to the Treaty of Berlin, document 43, p. 83).

in a memorandum signed by 500 people, which was sent from the city of Shkodra to the Congress of Berlin on 13th of June, 1878, it is said: «Whether Catholic, Orthodox or Moslem, the Albanian hates the Turkish rule as much as he hates any other foreign rule... We are not and do not want to be Turks, so we oppose with all our forces anybody who would endeavour to make us Slavs, Austrians, or Greeks. We do not want to be anything but Albanians («Acts of the Albanian National Renaissance, 1878-1912», Tirana 1978 pp. 21, 23).

This struggle for the Albanian nation at that time had very great principled and practical importance. The imperialist Great Powers and their clients in the Balkans, with the objective of using the Albanian territories as a token to be bartered in their negotiations, denied the existence of the Albanian nation, its culture and history, denied the existence of the national consciousness of the Albanian people and presented their struggle as a struggle of a number of divided tribes. There were those who said that an Albanian people did not exist at all, that Albania was just a geographical expression. But the emperors of Europe, the Sultan of Turkey, and the Kings of the Balkans soon realized the significance of this geographical expression. They were compelled to send in even their fleets and troops against it and to suppress the armed resistance of the Albanian people who did not submit to their decisions.

The echo of these reactionary views can still be heard even today, from certain foreign historians

and publicists, who in order to deprecate and disparage the efforts of the Albanian people for their rights, even now, a 100 years later, present the struggle of the League of Prizren as the struggle of a number of divided Albanian tribes. Their insistence on historical injustices and distortions is intended to underrate the importance of the struggle of the Albanian nation which has never fought to occupy the territories or to violate the rights of others, but which, throughout its whole existence, has been in struggle to defend its own home and rights which the others denied and have seized.

The struggles of the Albanians for the recognition of their nationality, to stay on the land where their forefathers were born, for the Albanian language and culture, for the preservation of their national traditions and individuality, have never harmed anybody and have never violated the rights of any other nation or people, and the evoking of these struggles and efforts, which fills the hearts of all Albanians with justifiable pride over the patriotic tasks of our people, does not harm anybody apart from those who have still not freed themselves from anti-Albanian chauvinism and from defending the injustices which have been inflicted on Albania.

We remember and make a high estimation of the great and all-sided struggle of the Albanian League of Prizren for recognition of the Albanian nation and for the implementation of the principle of nationality in the solution of the Albanian question, not only as the descendants of those who, in those critical years raised their voices and took up arms to defend the sacred and inviolable rights

of the Albanian nation, but also as militant Marxist-Leninists to whom the struggle for freedom, independence and national sovereignty is inseparable from the struggle for socialism.

The Albanian League of Prizren saw the recognition and affirmation of the Albanian nation as closely linked with the question of the state political organization, of a national, political administrative organization which would ensure the self-government of Albania. The League expressed this progressive political thought, which reflected the historical development of the Albanian nation, in its demand for the formation of a single Albanian national and autonomous state within the framework of the Ottoman Empire as a first step to go over to complete separation as soon as favourable conditions were created.

The demand for the autonomy of Albania, which would unite all the Albanian lands in a single unit, was put forward in the first acts of the League and was developed and elaborated in a consistent manner assuming a broader and more profound meaning in the heat of the war against the chauvinist neighbours and the Ottoman rulers. Through its General Council convened at Prizren in November 1878, the League brought to the attention of the Sublime Porte and the European Powers the common will of the nation for the creation of a single vilayet out of four vilayets, in which the Albanians made up the largest and most compact part of the population, with a single centre in the middle of Albania, with Albanian administration and with a general assembly which would implement reforms useful for the country.

In the Assembly of Gjirokastra, which met in July, 1880, with representatives of all the Albanian regions, a further step was taken with the putting forward of the demand for the formation of an Albanian Government and the separation, in fact, of Albania from the Turkish Empire. The program drafted in Gjirokastra testifies to the fact that the demands of the League for the simultaneous solution of the problems of the preservation of territorial integrity, the union and unification of Albanian territories and an autonomous national government of the country, responded in full to the desires and aspirations of the Albanian people, to the ideal of the Albanian national movement.

The League of Prizren fought for such a single, undivided, autonomous Albanian state. It rejected and condemned as anti-Albanian activity all the projects of the Great Powers for the so-called settlement of the Albanian question through the formation of separate autonomous units based on provincial or religious divisions, behind which were hidden the interests of European and Balkan foreign powers to keep the whole of Albania under their domination.

It is the historic merit of the League and an expression of its courage that, relying on the voluntary military forces which had been raised on its initiative and which had the support of the population, without awaiting the Sultan's approval, it implemented autonomy in practice, gradually replaced the Turkish civil and military administration, exercising its own complete power in the northern and eastern regions of Albania and especially in the vilayet of Kosova. In the other regions, the Ottoman administration remained formally, but in practice it

was paralysed. The League was not afraid to undertake the historical responsibilities which the time imposed, and it demonstrated this very well, when, at the end of 1880, in Prizren, in agreement with Abdyl Frashëri and other representatives of Southern Albania, the Central Committee of the League proclaimed itself the Albanian «Provisional Government», with Ymer Prizreni at the head.

Echoing these events, the great ideologist of the National Renaissance, Sami Frashëri, wrote to Jeronim De Rada that «the League of Prizren saw the necessity of uniting Albania and making it one autonomous, and eventually, even completely independent country, according to the situation. Thus, the League assumed the name of Provisional Government and expelled the Turkish governors from all the vilayet of Kosova and from Prizren, Gjakova, Tetova, Dibra and other regions».

Although it existed for only a short time, the creation of the Provisional Government had great importance. It was a proof of the abilities of the Albanian people to govern the country themselves, to organize an independent state, the existence of which all the enemy propaganda tried to deny. On the other hand, with the constitution of the Central Committee of the League as a Provisional Government, the Albanian people demonstrated that they were smashing not only the will of the Sultan but also the international norms and rules which the Great Powers established in their chancelleries.

The radical representatives of the League and of the Albanian National Renaissance did not, in general, regard the formation of an autonomous na-

tional state and its break-away from the Ottoman Empire as a mere administrative and formal act, but as a turn which would open the road to the independent economic, social and cultural progress of the country. In the views and activity of the leaders of the League patriotism and democratism were undivided.

Independent Albania, in the view of the outstanding ideologist of the National Renaissance, Sami Frashëri, who also represented the progressive Albanian opinion of the time, would not need either kings or princes, who would suck the blood of the people. Albania, Sami wrote in the beginning of 1881, would be governed by a sort of democracy, whose form it would not hire from the other countries, but would find in the Albanian people themselves, in their own traditions. These ideas on the future organization of the Albanian state were further developed in his famous work, «Albania, her past, her present and her future», which later became the complete platform for the entire national movement.

* * *

The struggle for the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Homeland, is one of the most brilliant aspects of the Albanian League of Prizren. In the face of the grave danger threatening Albania, at a time when the Sublime Porte had capitulated to the Great Powers and was bringing pressure to bear on the Albanians to have them surrender their regions to the neighbouring states, the League took in hand the defence of the country, in opposition to and against all. With arms and through diplomatic

channels the League opposed the unjust decisions of the Congress of Berlin, denounced these decisions as a «historical and moral crime» and expressed its determination «to refuse to release an inch of ground of the mother soil», and to fight to the last drop of blood to defend it. «Any alteration of the border made without our knowledge... would be invalid, and without the participation of the leaders of Albania we shall not accept the release of even an inch of our territory», the League declared. But when the Great Powers of Europe took no notice of this solemn warning, Abdyl Frashëri addressed them with the words which remain historical, «Your work with the Treaty of Berlin is over, our work as Albanians begins from this day».

The Albanian people, led by the League, wrote glorious pages of heroism in the fight in defence of Plava and Gucia, Hot, Gruda and Ulqin, those Albanian regions with which the Great Powers sought to placate the greed of King Nicholas of Montenegro. This was a war which was waged in defence of the interests of the whole Albanian nation and the integrity of its territory, a war which showed the world that the Albanians would never surrender to the expansionist aims of anybody.

As Comrade Enver Hoxha has said, «Unforgettable will remain the legendary battles of the Albanians who for three years on end bravely defended Plava and Gucia, Hot, Gruda and Ulqin, thereby, unprecedentedly challenging the Western Powers which had decided to separate them from Albania» (E. Hoxha, Works, vol. 24, p. 11).

The struggle for Plava, Gucia, Hot, Gruda and

Ulqin aroused the whole of Albania. An entire people stood behind the highlanders of the North and the thousands of volunteers from the other regions who rushed to their help. A special contribution to this struggle was made by the people of Kosova, who, at the first call, under the leadership of the League, rushed to the trenches to defend the borders of the North. The united strength of the Albanian people smashed and defeated the repeated attacks of Montenegro and forced the Great Powers to amend their unjust decisions several times.

To defend the territorial integrity of the Homeland, the Albanian people had to fight single-handed also to face the united fleet of the Great Powers of Europe which sealed off the Albanian coast and undertook to impose the plundering decisions of the Congress of Berlin by means of violence. The Albanian people had to fight the Ottoman armies of Dervish Pasha, the forces of Montenegro and the continuous political and military pressures of the Serbian and Greek monarchies. Through their armed struggle and at the cost of their own blood, the Albanian people prevented the tearing away of Plava, Gucia, Hot, Gruda and Çamëria, but they lost a part of the north-eastern regions of Kosova which remained under Serbian rule and the cities of Tivar and Ulqin which were annexed by Montenegro.

The volunteer army led by the indomitable fighter Sulejman Vokshi put up unprecedented resistance and displayed rare valour in the fight against the many armies which Turkey sent to Albania to destroy the League. The League replied to the violence of the Sublime Porte which sought to force the

Albanians to give up their armed resistance in defence of the integrity of the Homeland and to secure its autonomy with the armed uprising.

The people's struggle against the innumerable forces of the Turkish Marshal, Dervish Pasha, which took place most fiercely in Kosova, Dibra etc., where the main cities were liberated one after the other, testified to the unbent will of the Albanian people to defend their rights to existence as a nation, and their immense love of freedom and independence.

The bloody battles fought by our Kosova brothers in Spring 1881 further raised the glory of the Albanian nation. The 40 Turkish battalions were faced by 7,000 Albanian insurgents led by the outstanding interpid fighters Sulejman Vokshi, Ali Ibra, Mic Sokoli, Bajram Rama, Sefë Kosharja, Smail Hyseni, and others. The volunteers fought innumerable battles against the Ottoman hordes, such as the battles of Slivova, Shtimja, Caraleva, Dule, Suhareka, Plava, Gucia, and so on. The blood of the Albanian people was shed in torrents to defend the land of their forefathers, the freedom and honour of the Homeland.

The enormous Turkish armies suppressed the Albanian uprising, destroyed the League, devastated and drowned the country in blood. However, they proved unable to suppress the insurgent spirit and love of freedom of the Albanian people. This determination and confidence in the future is beautifully expressed in those hard times for Kosova by a folk song which runs: «Surprised, Dervish Pasha asks: /My God, where have the people gone?/ – There they are, in the mountains which clouds touch, Be sure, you will meet them again».

The creation of the Albanian League of Prizren and its fight for autonomy and for the defence of the territorial integrity of the Homeland against the biggest coalition of enemies which could be created at that time, once again brought out the great truth that the Albanian people have made their own history. Facing our small people stood great forces, the Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers of Europe and the neighbouring chauvinist monarchies. The alternatives were either Albania would be crushed under the «heavy ruins» of Turkey or be cut up by the chauvinist neighbours, or the people must rise to their feet and fight with confidence in their own strength to save themselves from the enemies and the great dangers which were threatening them. «Albania's salvation or perdition depends on the Albanians,» Sami Frashëri wrote at that time (Sami Frashëri, «Albania, her past, her present and her future», Tirana, 1962, p.65). And the Albanians chose the road of honour and glory. The people rose to their feet and fought for their rights through to the end.

The League of Prizren and its leaders had firm confidence in the vitality of the people, in their ardent love for the Homeland and freedom, in their resolve to resist the storms of history. The experience of the struggles for freedom convinced them that the only road to the autonomy and territorial integrity of the country was their reliance on the forces of the people.

The League of Prizren and the events unfolding

in the 1878-1881 period enabled the people to grow better aware of the dangers threatening our country and lay bare the anti-Albanian policy of the big European powers and the chauvinist states of the Balkans. The bitter results brought about by the political, diplomatic and military combinations of these powers did away with illusions and vacillations and proved that freedom and independence could be achieved by the Albanian people themselves.

The Albanian League of Prizren represents one of the highest peaks of our Renaissance which Comrade Enver Hoxha has described as «a revolutionary democratic epoch of great importance» (E. Hoxha, Reports and Speeches, 1967-1968, p. 368). It gave the struggle for territorial integrity and autonomy an advanced, patriotic and democratic content. The very demand for the elimination of the Turkish yoke and the formation of an independent national state was an important democratic measure because, as V. I. Lenin points out, in any national struggle of «an oppressed nation, there is a general democratic content aimed against oppression» (V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.20, p.471).

The masses of the people and their representatives in the committees of the League, constituted the most resolute force which impelled the League and its most consistent leaders to undertake radical political and military actions for the defence of the integrity of the Homeland and the autonomy of Albania, to paralyse the vacillations and treachery of the feudal land-owning and clerical elements who supported the Turks.

From the very beginning, as early as its first Assembly, the League was composed of many

rank-and-file elements of the people, about whom Pashko Vasa wrote: «These representatives were neither chiefs nor influential people. They spoke on behalf of the Albanian people because they themselves were the people,... they returned into the fold of the people from which they had emerged and try as you would to find them today, you will not find them, for you cannot see or catch hold of them» («Acts of the Albanian National Renaissance, 1878-1912.» The October 22nd memorandum. Document 32, p. 67).

The political, ideological and military activity of the League awakened and tempered the political consciousness of thousands upon thousands of Albanian peasants, highlanders and people of the cities who, for three years on end, waged a courageous and determined struggle against many powerful enemies.

But along with this, and this is more important, the League achieved the unity of the Albanian people on a national scale and disclosed the vitality of this unity. It waged a resolute struggle to overcome religious divisions; tribal and regional peculiarities and made great efforts to unite all the masses around the national ideal. From its very beginning it treated the question of national unity as the sole fundamental basis for the realization of its program and as a condition for the defence of the Homeland and victory over the enemies. It is because the idea of unity complied with the loftiest interests of the Homeland and represented the aspirations of the broadest masses of the people, it is because it represented the most powerful and most reliable weapon which the Albanian people could oppose to their

enemies, that many acts of solidarity and mass heroism without precedent in Albania up to that day, burst out.

This national unity displayed its vitality in the most difficult moments during the years 1878-1881 in the struggle in defence of the borders in the North and the South when, from the centres of both Northern and Southern Albania simultaneous protests were dispatched to the Great Powers, when aid was raised and volunteers gathered in Central and Southern Albania to be sent to the North, when the population of Kosova and Shkodra displayed their readiness to send in volunteer forces to defend the borders of the South.

The sound organization of the League itself which united in its ranks Gëgs and Tosks, Moslems and Christians, served to strengthen national unity. Through a dense network of committees and branches, the Central Committee of Prizren maintained ties with all the regions and directly led the masses of the people who had risen to their feet in the face of the danger of the partitioning of the Homeland. Powerful hotbeds and among the main centres of the League were those regions which had become the objectives of the expansionist plans of the chauvinist Balkan monarchies, Kosova, Dibra, Shkodra and the northern highlands, Gjirokastra etc. Thus, the League created a broad front of the patriotic forces of the nation, a unity which left its indelible mark on the political thinking and practical activity of the national movement right throughout the later period.

The patriotic and democratic spirit of the Albanian National Movement in the period of the League of Prizren made itself felt with special force in the artistic-propaganda literature of the time which received a new impulse from the fire of the fight for freedom. The founding of the Society of Letters in Constantinople in 1879, the creation of the alphabet of the Albanian language and the publication of Albanian school-books imparted a great impulse to the spread of the study of Albanian language and helped «the activity of the League, . . . its work for the strengthening of the brotherhood of the Albanians and the union and revival of Albania,» as Sami Frashëri said.

The literary and journalistic creativeness of the outstanding men of letters, of the great patriots Sami Frashëri, Pashko Vasa, Naim Frashëri, Jani Vreto, Thimi Mitko, Jeronim De Rada, Koto Hoxhi etc., had the same importance and value as the armed struggle. Through their immortal work in the service of the Homeland they have deserved the high appreciation the Party and Comrade Enver Hoxha have made of them as «eminent men of progressive ideas, courageous revolutionary illuminists who had a great and ardent love of country» (E. Hoxha, Reports and Speeches, 1967-1968, p. 369).

The League of Prizren marked a new stage in the development of the national democratic culture. It had a direct influence on the solution of a series of pressing questions which had to do with the development of this culture, such as the defining of a unified alphabet, the development of the national school, the extension of various literary, publicistic, political

and educational literature. The upsurge in this period of Albanian writing, artistic and political literature, journalism and translation shows the very great importance which the cultural factor had parallel with the political, diplomatic and military factors.

The League gave a fresh impulse to the development of national literature and socio-political thinking, and laid solid foundations for the future, too. As early as the days when the League was fighting its military battles, the problem of the Albanian language was raised and considered as the pivot of the national movement, as the factor which cemented the unity of the spiritual life of the nation, as the expression of the originality of national culture and a weapon in the struggle for freedom and independence.

Increased interest in the magnificent values of people's culture, folklore, in particular, better acquaintance with the ancient traditions and the history of the people, flourishing artistic literature and the vigorous outburst of oral creativeness, inspired by the ideals of patriotism and freedom, testify to the great influence exerted by the ideas and activity of the League for the progress of national culture.

The ideologists of the League and of the Renaissance considered the struggle for the national and democratic character of culture as an important factor to win freedom and independence, to preserve and consolidate the individuality of Albanian national life, to enhance and strengthen the national consciousness of the people.

A great merit of the League of Prizren and all

the leaders of our National Renaissance was the way in which they faced up to and solved the problems arising from religion in Albania in favour of the national cause. Experience proved the great damage which religious fanaticism and divisions, which were exploited by the foreigners to hinder the development of the movement for national liberation, had inflicted and were inflicting on the country. Unlike any other Balkan country, in Albania none of the religions, or the three of them together could serve the cause of liberation and be transformed into a banner of liberation.

Rising above religion, above religious fanaticism and divisions, a thing which was by no means easy in the time of which we are speaking, the ideologists of the League and the Renaissance launched the militant slogan that Albanian's religion is Albania. This very correct and progressive stand strengthened the unity of the Albanians, regardless of their religious attachments, in the struggle for freedom and independence.

The ideology and the political thinking of our Renaissance, backed up also by the experience of the military, political and diplomatic battles waged by the League, illuminated the perspective and the objectives of our movement for national liberation up till the victory of independence.

Although the Albanian League founded at Prizren had a short existence, the great epic which it wrote gave a new further impulse to the national movement of our people. Its importance is not measured by the time it lived, but by the major influence it exerted on the subsequent battles for

freedom. At the key moments, when the Albanian people again came up against the hostile attitude of the Great Powers and the chauvinistic neighbouring circles, they relied on the patriotic ideas of the Albanian League, on its political, organizational and military experience.

Its platform worked out in the fire of the liberation struggle, which envisaged the preservation of territorial integrity and the formation of the independent Albanian state, remained the basis of the program of the Albanian National Movement during the whole period up to the 28th of November, 1912.

With the proclamation of independence and the formation of the independent state on the 28th of November, 1912, to which the League of Prizren made a great contribution, the National Assembly of Vlora, headed by the great patriot Ismail Qemali, met one of the fundamental demands of the League. But in the extremely complicated international conditions when the Balkan War had broken out and the Albanian territories had once again fallen prey to the rapacious ambitions and acts of occupation of the neighbouring monarchies, the other fundamental task of the League, the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Homeland which had been seriously dismembered, remained unsolved.

Time has raised the League of Prizren to the pedestal of the glorious history of the Albanian people. Its lofty patriotic spirit, hatred for oppression, boundless love of freedom, its unyielding stand against any foreign pressure or interference, its desire for knowledge and progress and unshaka-

ble confidence in its own forces, which were displayed so majestically in the years of the activity of the League of Prizren, were embodied in and became an inseparable part of the character of our people. These outstanding features were enriched in content and raised to a higher level in the heroic epoch of the National Liberation War and the construction of socialism, when our country, under the leadership of the Party with Comrade Enver Hoxha at the head, became truly free and independent, when our socialist Homeland became strong and prosperous.

Comrades,

The heroic past of our people and its struggles for freedom and independence are a great source of inspiration to this day for the construction of socialism and the defence of the Homeland.

Great tasks lie ahead of our people, the realization of which will strengthen the country and make it flourish further, will enrich the material and spiritual life of our people even more. The Party calls on all, workers, cooperativists and intellectuals, to work with all their forces and in a lofty patriotic and revolutionary spirit in order to constantly increase industrial and agricultural production, to carry forward the technical-scientific revolution, to develop the socialist culture further, to increase the vigilance and strengthen the defence of the Homeland.

Our country is working and living in a world where savage forces are trying by all means to hinder its further advance. In such conditions, ever

deeper understanding and implementation of the great revolutionary principle of self-reliance is a guarantee to face up to all threats and promote the socialist construction in Albania.

Relying on their own forces, our ancestors stood up to many and various difficulties and enemies. The material and spiritual forces of the Albanian people in the past bear no comparison with those of the present. Now they are masters of their own fate, they are led by a heroic Marxist-Leninist Party, tested and tempered in the great class battles against internal and external enemies, they possess a developed socialist economy, an invincible national defence. There is no storm which can shake this bastion of socialism, which has become dear to all Albanian patriots, anywhere they live in the world, and which enjoys the support and sympathy of the peoples and revolutionaries of all countries.

The unity of our people to realize their ideals has played a decisive role in the long and difficult struggle of our people for national freedom and the creation of an independent state. The spirit of unity and patriotism, which our people have always kept alive, assumed a new content and rose to a higher degree during the years of the National Liberation War, and especially in the period of socialist construction. It has been one of the fundamental factors in the victories our people have scored in the defence of the Homeland and the construction of the new life, in coping with successive blockades and blackmail of the enemies against our country.

In the conditions of the imperialist-revisionist encirclement and under various pressures brought to bear by old and new enemies upon socialist Albania, the consolidation of the compactness and unity of our people around the Party is an extremely important task of every citizen and patriot. The steel-like unity is a guarantee for the defence of the Homeland and the victories of the revolution, for marching always ahead, with sure steps and head high on the correct Marxist-Leninist road, on which our Party is leading us.

In celebrating the centenary of the Albanian League of Prizren, in honouring the heroic efforts of our forefathers and their great contribution to the struggles for the freedom and independence of the Homeland, we realize even more clearly the dangers which stem today from the aggressive and chauvinist policies of the superpowers, from the dangerous plots and manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie and reaction.

The international situation today is complicated and troubled. It is fraught with dangers and surprises. Hotbeds of tension have been created in many regions of the world and new conflicts have been stirred up. These fires have been kindled and fanned up by the US imperialists and Soviet social-imperialists, who do not hesitate to commit any crime to satisfy their selfish expansionist interests. The two superpowers, in contest with each other, are interfering brutally in the Middle East to divide the Arab peoples and to sabotage their liberation struggle, to strangle the just cause of the Palestinian people, and to perpetuate the Israeli occupa-

tion of Arab territory, in order to put this rich and strategically important region under their imperialist domination.

US imperialism, Soviet social-imperialism and their neo-colonialist allies have hurled themselves with unprecedented fury upon Africa in order to extend their plundering grip. It is the policy and activity of these insatiable wolves which is causing the bloodshed of the peoples of this long-suffering continent in the Horn of Africa, Angola, Zaire and the Sahara. It is this policy which is encouraging the racists of Southern Africa to oppress and massacre the peoples of Azania, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

A result of the policy of the imperialist superpowers, their plots and intrigues is the fratricidal conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia, are the reactionary coups d'état which are occurring one after another in many countries of Latin America, Asia, or Africa, the increase of military bases in foreign countries, the headlong armaments race, and so on.

There is no end to the crimes of the superpowers. Their interference in the internal affairs of the peoples is carried out openly, with unheard of arrogance, their efforts to exercise their dictate in world affairs and to limit the state sovereignty of nations have assumed monstrous proportions. The clouds which are hanging over international life today are heavy with the danger of war, which the US imperialists, the Soviet social-imperialists, the international bourgeoisie and all reactionaries unit-

ed with them want, are preparing for, and are inciting.

That is why the Party teaches us that we must always be vigilant. The enemies of the peoples and socialism are ferocious and perfidious, be they US imperialists, Soviet social-imperialists, or various bourgeois or revisionist reactionaries.

In order to deceive and confuse the peoples, to open the way to imperialist expansion, efforts are being made in many directions to present black as white, to present enemies as friends. The demagoguery of the US imperialists and the Soviet social-imperialists to present their aggressive actions and brutal interference in the lives of the peoples as concern for the peace and security of nations, is notorious.

But now the peoples are running up against another propaganda, as demagogic as it is unrestrained, they are encountering counter-revolutionary theories and theses which play the role of opium to anaesthetize the revolutionary spirit of the people. One of them is the so-called theory of «three worlds». This theory wants to replace Marxism-Leninism with opportunism. It advocates that the proletariat and the peoples should unite with the bourgeoisie and imperialism, should unite with classical reaction and known fascists, should even unite with the devil himself allegedly to defend national independence. Hiding behind the threat of the hegemonism of Soviet social-imperialism, which is a savage and continuous threat, the theory of «three worlds» demands of the peoples that they must not make any move, that they must not struggle against US domination, and

the oppression and exploitation of old colonialists, but must maintain the status quo, the dreadful existing situation. The preservation of the status quo is in the interests of various imperialists and to the detriment of the revolution and the liberation struggles of the peoples.

The theory of «three worlds», which even claims to be the strategy of the revolution, in fact, is an anti-Marxist counter-revolutionary theory. It preaches to the workers, the proletariat of various countries and the working masses that they must give up the revolution because, it alleges, the time has not yet come for the revolution. It denies the hegemonic role of the proletariat in the revolution. Contrary to the Marxist-Leninist class criteria, it considers the forces of the blackest right-wing reaction as its allies, and even calls it a victory when the representatives of the Right, even the most extreme Right, come to power in different countries.

The theory of «three worlds» is an anti-people theory. Contrary to the vital interests of the peoples, contrary to Lenin, who described the incitement to war as a crime, because the peoples pay for war at the cost of their own blood, instead of making efforts to defeat the imperialist plans for war, the pseudo-theory of «three worlds» is encouraging world war, fanning up the arms race between the two superpowers even further, as though this race, the production of neutron bombs and the increase in the war budgets of the military blocs will be the salvation of the world.

The theory of «three worlds» advises the peo-

ples to rely on US imperialism, the views of which it proclaims as «in common with, or the same as», its own preachings. What the views of US imperialism are, the peoples know very well. The US imperialists are rabid anti-communists, defenders of the capitalist and neo-colonialist system, gendarmes in the pay of international reaction. They have always fought and are fighting now with everything they have to destroy socialism, to strangle the revolution, and enslave the peoples. The ordinary people, everywhere in the world, cannot fail to ask: Is the theory of «three worlds» united with these views and this strategy of US imperialism?

This theory poses as a champion of the defence of the national independence and sovereignty of the peoples, but in practice it unites with their enemies. The theory of «three worlds» does not regard the struggle for freedom, national independence and sovereignty of the peoples of the so-called «third world» as a constituent and indivisible part of the revolution, but as a field which can be exploited for temporary, pragmatic aims. This stand is not in favour of the people's sovereignty and liberation struggle, it serves the preservation of all the imperialist injustices which are a burden on the peoples. With this opportunist and anti-Marxist preaching of unity with US imperialism, the international big bourgeoisie and reactionary cliques, allegedly for the sake of the creation of a united front, which is as absurd as it is unrealizable, the theory of «three worlds» not only undermines the revolution which it negates, but also the cause of the peoples' inde-

pendence which it claims to defend. When it is recommended that the Pentagon and NATO, Wallstreet and the oil sheikhs, the generals of the Wehrmacht and the Japanese militarists, Strauss and Mobutu should take part in this front, the peoples have no difficulty in seeing it as the anti-communist and colonialist front against which whole generations of revolutionaries and patriots of all countries have been fighting and pouring out their blood for scores of years.

In its stand towards reactionary cliques and the forces of the Right, the theory of «three worlds», which poses as anti-revisionist, is on the same line as Carrillo, who speaking in the Spanish Parliament about the new Constitution, demands that the monarchy must be defended, and rejects demands for the establishment of the Republic. It is on the same line as the Italian revisionists of Berlinguer who are the most ardent defenders of the bourgeois order and its apparatus of police oppression. The pseudo-theory of «three worlds» is at peace with these revisionists.

Following this course, some day it may be reconciled with Soviet revisionism. This theory has proved that whoever follows a pragmatic, anti-Marxist policy, adapted to passing circumstances, before long will be describing as his friends those who he cursed as enemies up till yesterday, just as Nikita Khrushchev did.

Our Party has fought and will continue to fight to unmask both the aggressive policy and demagogy about peace of the US imperialists and Soviet so-

cial-imperialists, and the false theories which undermine the cause of the revolution and the peoples' liberation, such as the theory of «three worlds». In regard to theories about the «non-aligned world», they are nothing but lies and deception, which are not worthy of any special attention, because the events which are occurring day by day in the world are refuting them.

Freedom and independence, socialism and the revolution can be successfully defended and carried forward only by fighting courageously and with determination against all enemies of the proletariat and the peoples, against imperialists, whether US or Soviet, whether old or new imperialists, against revisionists of all shades and reactionaries of all countries, against all those who are deceivers of the peoples and proletariat.

As Comrade Enver Hoxha strongly stressed at the 7th Congress of the Party, our Party is solid for, and gives its sincere and unreserved support to the struggle which the different peoples are waging today to defend their freedom and independence from the aggressive aims of US imperialism, Soviet social-imperialism and other imperialisms, to all those who are fighting against racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and other forms of national enslavement. The Albanian people strongly condemn any foreign interference in the internal life of the peoples, any attempt of the imperialist, revisionist and reactionary forces to restrict the sovereignty and hinder the emancipation of nations.

The policy of our Party and socialist State is

for normal relations and friendship with all those countries and states which respect the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of others. In particular, we always desire to have good neighbourly relations, friendship and exchanges in the fields of trade and culture with the neighbouring countries, without violating one another's sovereign rights.

A hundred years ago our forefathers, through the Albanian League of Prizren, challenged the united enemies of the Albanian nation. This challenge was an expression of the determination, valour and courage of the Albanian people to fight in any circumstance, if necessary, against all enemies, for their rights, for freedom, for independence and for national unity. Today, free and independent Albania which is led by a heroic, far-sighted, Marxist-Leninist Party, headed by the beloved son of the whole Albanian people, Comrade Enver Hoxha, is marching confidently on the road of socialism and stands proud and unflinching, facing the enemies of our country, of the revolution and Marxism-Leninism. It can stand this way because it is inspired by boundless confidence in its own strength and the strength of the people, in the strength of triumphant Marxism-Leninism, in the triumph of the revolution and the future of socialism. The Albanian people and the Party of Labour have never threatened anybody, they have never been afraid of anybody either. There is no force in the world, no threat, no blackmail, no blockade or pressure which can turn our people

and Party from the road which they have chosen,
from the struggle for the great cause of communism.

Long live the centenary of the Albanian League
of Prizren!

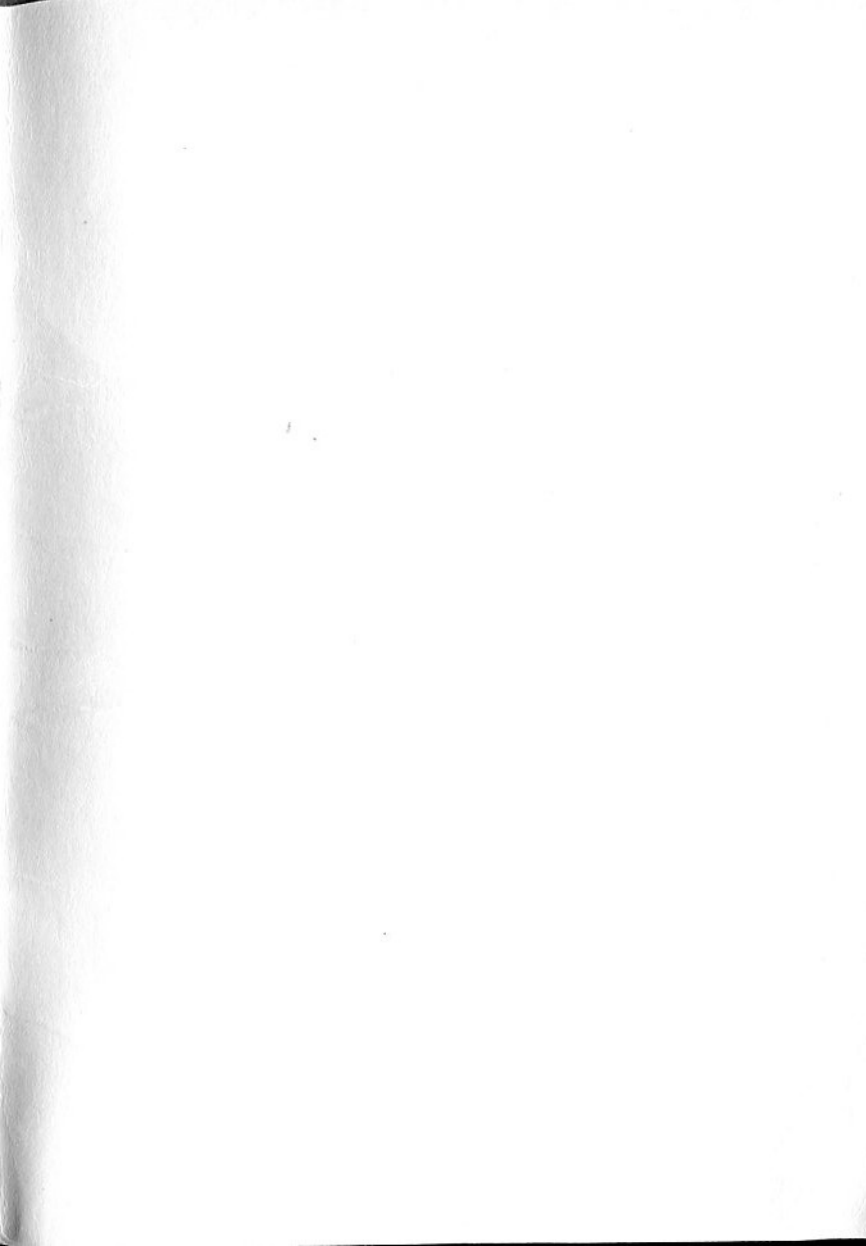
Long live the freedom-loving, brave and pa-
triotic Albanian people!

Long live the Party of Labour of Albania with
Comrade Enver Hoxha at its head!

Glory to Marxism-Leninism!







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