Friendship and Solidarity with Socialist Albania

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Part One: the Albanian Society of Britain JUNE 7, 2018

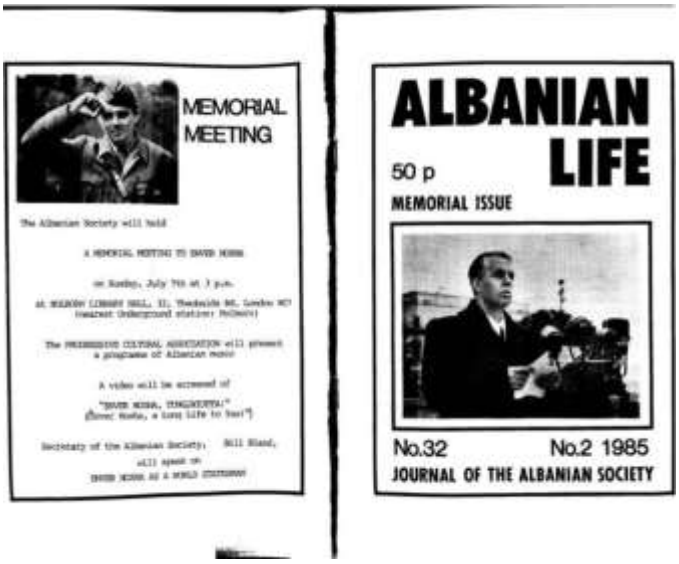
Little is known of the Albania Society set up by the Communist Party of Great Britain in the1940's. It ceased to be active once the Albanians began to criticise Soviet revisionism. That is an area of unexplored archives. From the memoirs of one prominent activist, Bill Bland had been consistent in the defence of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania over more than three decades and the building of friendship, we can sketch out later friendship and solidarity with that beacon of socialism.*

Bill Bland (1916-2001), then a Communist Party member, played a key role in re-establishing the Albanian Society of Britain which had the aim of disseminating information about the history, culture, language of that country in Britain. In 1957 he managed to get hold of the old secretary who supplied a list of members, there were only two members left in it one of whom was Ivor Kenna, another character from the UK's anti-revisionist fringe. Three years later he become secretary of the society, a post which he held almost continuously for 30 years until July 1990 when he resigned because of the restoration of capitalism in Albania. This society which gradually prospered over the years and grew to several hundred members, published a journal, *'Albanian Life'*. Bland edited the Society's quarterly journal from his home in Ilford, Essex.

The most prominent friendship was that between Albania and their Chinese allies.



Sino-Albanian Friendship Poster, 1969



Albanian Life, #32 (1985, #2), 52 pages**. Memorial issue f**ollowing the death of Enver Hoxha.

When the Albanian party had come out fairly early against Soviet revisionism, Bland recalls that **"I wrote to them congratulating the Party on the correction of its line on Soviet revisionism, and it's from there the Central Committee invited me to visit Albania for the first time, in 1960.**" On his first of many visits, Bland did the filming for the film *'The Land of Eagles'* shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival.

Bill learnt the Albanian language which facilitated the translation of varying kinds of literary work which would otherwise have been unknown to the English reading world **"When I first became the secretary of the Albania Society back in the early sixties. My knowledge of languages is basically a visual one. I can translate the written stuff but if someone speaks to me I can't understand what they are saying."**

He spoke and wrote in defence of the developments in that Balkan nation out of an ideological alignment to the Marxist-Leninist regime. Bland was, in addition, instrumental in the foundation of the MLOB which in 1975 was renamed the Communist League. An example of his political defense can be found **here two articles by Bill Bland**

Among the work Bill Bland wrote were an introduction to the country, *Albania:* World Bibliographical Series, Oxford 1988 and co-authored the self-published exploration, ***A Tangled Web***: A History of Anglo-American Relations with Albania 1912-1955, Ilford 1986

Bill recalls the turmoil of the mid 1960s when he was in the leadership of the Marxist Leninist Organisation of Britain published a report which was anti-Mao Tse Tung.

"all the Maoists in the [Albania] Society who had previously been active and supportive began to demand that Bland go on the grounds that my organisation, to which I belonged, had published a report which was anti-Mao Tse Tung and therefore anti-Albanian, and therefore I shouldn't any longer be allowed to be secretary of the Albanian Society. Instead they organised a faction within the society to get rid of Bland, and at the next AGM they organised a miniature cultural revolution in the society.
The chairman at that time was a Maoist called Berger, she wrote articles on wine, her husband was a leading member of the friendship society with China. They organised this sort of cultural revolution at the AGM whereby a lot of people who had never been members of the society before appeared and demanded the right to vote, and Berger as chairman ruled that they had the right to vote because we were a democratic society and therefore anyone who walked in off the street to vote should be allowed to vote. This was the masses speaking you see. Unfortunately they hadn't got quite enough people to outvote the other members, and our members didn't agree with this particular line that it

was reasonable grounds for sacking me, and so they lost the vote and I got re-elected as secretary and the Maoists walked out.
They then formed another New Albanian Society which rapidly split into four or five other groups all of which rapidly disappeared"

In 1968 the Albanians recognised the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) run by Reg Birch, and the associated New Albania Society. The policy of the Party of Labour of Albania was for sole recognition so relations with the Bland-led Albanian Society were ended by the Albanians. **"We carried on exactly as we had done, sending our literature to them regularly over the next six or seven years, until 1978, the Albanian Party changed its line and came out attacking Mao Tse Tung as being revisionist"**

"Albania is a socialist country, we accept that, we don't agree with their line on this particular point, but none the less we stand for solidarity and support for the Albanian Party of Labour and the Albanian regime, therefore we would continue to support Albania, whatever their attitude to us might be."

Shortly after publishing the pamphlet ***Albania: The Most Successful Country in Europe*** New Albania Society (Dec. 1976), Birch broke off relations with Albania, dissolved the New Albania Society without even consulting its membership. **"There were just notices in the post saying 'as from today the society is dissolved', full stop."**

Bland's contact was re-established after ten years with the Albanians through the expert on folk music, Bert Loyd who made regular trips to Albania to record folk music, not in his capacity as president of the Albania Society but in a personal capacity. He raised the point that **"it was rather ridiculous to have no Albania friendship society because there was no one except for ourselves"**

Bland was invited to Paris to speak to the ambassador there, which led eventually to the invitation for a delegation from the Society to go to Albania. There was no mention of what had happened over the previous ten years, no self-criticism although as Bland explained, this was a **"matter for the Albanians and not for us really" .**

The Bland-led organisation retained the friendship franchise even though the political recognition went to the Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist) transformed into the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) when it denounced its Maoist past and **embraced Albanian criticism** of Mao and China as its own in the late 1970s .

* Quotes taken from **an interview by JP** and the obituary that appeared in **William B. Bland – Obituary – Revolutionary Democracy** and the **1976 MEMORANDUM** of the Communist League – Following the Expulsion of Mike Baker & the split in the then Marxist-Leninist Organisation Britain.

The CPB (ML) & the New Albania Society

For most of the Seventies the Communist Party of Britain (ML) held the stewardship for friendship and solidarity with the People's Socialist Republic of Albania. There were many strands to the relationship.

There were the set piece visits to Albania as guests at trade union and Party congresses, and the calendar of activity reflected important celebrations in Albanian revolutionary history as the CPB (ML) held public meetings and carried reports on Albania in the pages of *The Worker* that, typically were one-sided celebratory view of the Albanian experience.

There were three visits to Albania in 1969: Jim Farrell and another CPB (ML) industrial comrade were guest of the Albanian trade unions in the May; Ted Roycraft, CPB (ML) Secretariat member, led a six member delegation (that included Danny Ryan of Bristol CPB (ML) in the October; and in November, Chairman Birch was in Tirana for the 25th Anniversary celebrations of the founding of Socialist Albania.

During that visit, during a conversation with Enver Hoxha, the Albanian party leader was quoted as praising *The Worker* as providing "thoughtful and helpful analysis and commentary on the struggle of the working class in Britain."
Such visits were taken as physical demonstrations of fraternal links, they provided the opportunity for exchange of views and first hand observations of a socialist country.

"A tour of Albania is in many ways a miniature of China. Everywhere there are Chinese machinery, equipment and technical experts. This is real international Marxist-Leninist cooperation and solidarity. Mao's name is greatly revered by all. His pictures and quotations are found in every factory along with pictures of Enver Hoxha and other giants of history." *The Worker* June 1969 quoted
in **https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/uk.hightide/high-tide.pdf**

The Worker October 1969 | CPB(ML) DELEGATION TO ALBANIA

SIX MEMBERS of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) are at present in Albania at the invitation of the Central Committee of the Albanian Party of Labour.

All members of the delegation are workers and they will also be meeting representatives of the Albanian Trade Unions.



THE CPB (ML) delegate to the 7th Congress of Albania Trade Unions is greeted by Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the Albanian Party of Labour. There will be a public meeting on this Congress and its relevance to our struggles in Britain on Friday, June 30th, 7.30 p.m. at the Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortess Road, NW5.

Their visit coincides with preparations all over the country for the celebration of the 25thAnniversary of the liberation of Albania from fascist occupation. The Albanian Working people are not only successfully fulfilling plan targets but have undertaken special pledges of endeavour in all fields to meet with a balance sheet of great socialist achievements the nation-wide celebrations of this Anniversary on November 29th.

Not only on the industrial front have workers surpassed the estimated level of production in the metallurgical and chemical enterprises and the supply of building materials but they have also achieved great success & in the food industries and have nearly completed the electrification of the countryside a whole year ahead of schedule.

DELEGATION REPORT
https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/worker-uk/11-69.pdf

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The Worker December 1970 | GREETINGS TO ALBANIA
Greetings on the 26th anniversary *of* the founding of the People's Republic of Albania.
The Secretariat of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist- Leninist) sends its warmest fraternal greetings to the Party of Labour of Albania in celebration or 26 years of socialist advance.
We hail the steadfast and determined struggle of the Albanian Party under the brilliant leadership of Comrade Enver Hoxha which has kept the banner or socialism flying high despite every kind or provocation by imperialism and Soviet revisionism. Surrounded by US and Russian imperialist bases, threatened by nuclear missiles, the people and Party have refused to be intimidated, refused to compromise, refused to deviate from the hard revolutionary road.

Today on the eve of the 26th anniversary of the founding of the socialist state the Albanian workers and peasants, under the banner of Marxism-Leninism, have scored tremendous victories in industry and agriculture.

Not material incentives but socialist emulation, not dependence on experts but the initiative and self-reliance or thousands or workers have led to the transformation of a backward, semi-colonial economy into a modern balanced socialist economy. All branches or industry and agriculture are booming and targets of the 4th Plan have already been fulfilled and over-fulfilled.

Most important or all have been the tremendous strides taken in the formation of the new socialist man and woman. We who live in the midst *of* capitalism's decadence

salute the creation *of* a new society and a new morality not based on the exploitation of workers but on their liberation. Every socialist victory in Albania encourages us as we start on the long and arduous road to smash British imperialism.
Long live the People's Republic or Albania! Long live the revolutionary friendship of the Albanian and British working class!

January 1970 CPB (ML) Delegation Report of visit to Albania **https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/uk.secondwave/cpb-albania.pdf**

WORKERS' CONGRESS

The CPBML was privileged to send a delegate to the 7th Congress of the Trade Unions of Albania in May. He writes:

This was a congress of workers, but quite unlike a Trade Union congress in any capitalist country. The difference is fundamental, because in Albania, the workers are not engaged in economic struggle against employers and a capitalist ruling class. They settled that issue long ago. They drove out the Fascist and Nazi invaders and proceeded to take all power into their own hands, once gaining that power never relinquishing it to class enemies at home or abroad, but proceeding to build socialism.

Down to earth

An outstanding feature of the speeches was the down-to-earth content, no punches pulled, no covering up, everything out in the open, no hushing up. Examples of bureaucratic behaviour were exposed to the light of day, not in an atmosphere of point scoring so familiar at the British TUC, but because the theme of working class control so prominent at the congress cannot go along with dictate from above. Again and again it was stressed that nothing handed down to the workers at factory level or from the state organs must be received without question, that the imprint of control by the workers must be on all decisions.

Whilst always critical the congress simply have accepted great tasks for the advancement of socialism following the fulfillment of all the objectives of the last 5-year plan in 4 years and 7 months. Describing these achievements Rita Marko, Chairman of the congress said: 'The increase of production accounts for a further uplift of the material and cultural well-being of the people. The extension and revolutionisation of the school system, the exemption of workers from any kind of taxation, the electrification of all the rural areas of the country, the establishment of pensions for all rural workers.

To walk in the streets in town or village and mingle with the people is to see the living evidence of socialist achievments in a healthy people well fed, well dressed and cultured. It is difficult to understand howall this has been achieved against the fact that before the revolution Albania was 87% agricultural and industry was virtually non-existent. Not only was this so but the agriculture was the most backward, some of the flattest land was swamp and marshland, a breeding ground for malaria which afflicted nearly half the population. This land, drained and in cultivation, is now a huge asset instead of a liability. This is typical of how adversity has been transformed to advantage. Only under Marxist-Leninist leadership could this be achieved and developed in the certainty that with the working class firmly in control there could be no turning away and going back. In the words again of Rita Marko, 'Approving in full the Marxist-Leninist line pursued by our Party, and thinking highly of the results achieved, the working class and its militant organisations of the Trade Unions of Albania, holding the red banner of the Party higher and higher, are determined to march always in the forefront of work and struggle.'



Rita Marko, Chairman of the Central Council of Albanian Trade Unions addresses the Congress

The Worker, mid-June 1972

The Worker November 1971 | CPB (ML) DELEGATION TO ALBANIA

The Worker, in what was to become an annual feature, carried a report that:
At the Invitation of the Albanian Party of Labour Reg Birch, Chairman of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) and another member of the Central Committee have gone lo Tirana to take part in the celebration of the Party of Labour's 30th Anniversary and the convening of the Sixth Party Con**gress.** They take with them the comradely greetings of the CPB (ML) and the fraternal good wishes of British workers.
See: 6TH CONGRESS OF THE PARTY LABOUR OF ALBANIA **https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/worker-uk/12-71.pdf**

The Worker No.21 November 1st 1973 | A VISIT TO ALBANIA



A visit to Albania

Comrade Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania honoured the Communist Party of Britain (ML) by inviting its Chairman Reg Birch to Albania for talks.

Comrade Enver Hoxha spoke frankly of the plans and successes of the Albanian people led by the Party of Labour and of the tasks still to be accomplished. He also spoke warmly and with detailed knowledge of the struggles of the British working class. His sympathetic understanding of the difficulties of Marxist Leninists living under capitalism will give fresh courage to all militant workers.

Reg Birch in his short visit was able to meet many old friends, to see the achievements in technology and the ever rising standard of living of the people. He visited a new mill making the finest steel from crude ore. When complete it will employ 19,000 workers, men and women. It was explained that Albanian agriculture, of a very high standard already, will be further modernised to release more workers for industry.

Enver Hoxha and Reg Birch exchanging fraternal greetings.

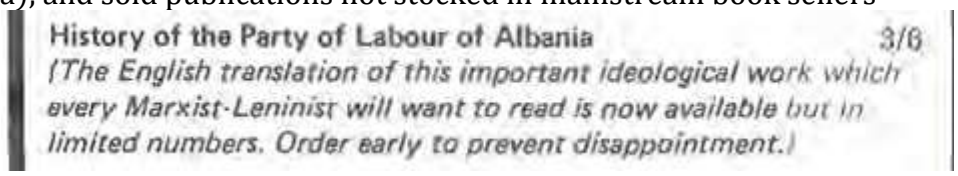
CELEBRATE ALBANIA'S NATIONAL DAY

SPEAKER: REG BIRCH
(Chairman of the Communist Party of Britain (ML) Reporting on recent talks held with Enver Hoxha (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania)

FRI NOV 23 HOLBORN ASSEMBLY ROOMS, St. John's Mews, HOLBORN
ALBANIA SOCIETY

He visited Saranda, a beautiful semi-tropical seaside resort where the Albanian people have shown that a town can have many more people, visitors as well as residents, without destroying the environment. He also visited the new railway being built by University students to a standard that Brunel would have approved. A pleasant visit was made to a citrus farm created from virgin land, where cadres from all trades and professions are proving that communists understand the dignity of labour. Reg Birch said that there was only one thing wrong with his visit — it was too short!

Bellman Books, the public face of the CPB (ML) , organisational hub and meeting venue, provided an important outlet for English-language material *from* Albania.
The bookshop were subscription agents for Albanian English-Language magazine e.g. ***New Albania*** ('beautifully illustrated bi-monthly magazine of socialist developments In Albania), and sold publications not stocked in mainstream book sellers



History of the Party of Labour of Albania 3/6
(The English translation of this important ideological work which every Marxist-Leninist will want to read is now available but in limited numbers. Order early to prevent disappointment.)

e.g. " **HISTORY OF THE PARTY OF LABOUR OF Albania** . One volume edition in hard covers obtained nowhere else 70P (postage extra)", and political propaganda such as the "Report on the Activity of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania, submitted to the Vlth Congress by Enver Hoxha", along with material on the culture and social developments in the small Balkan nation.

Radio Tirana's English language broadcasts were advertised in The Worker as a…..RADIO STATION FOR WORKERS IN BRITAIN <u>The Worker SEPTEMBER 1969</u>

NEW ALBANIAN SOCIETY

NEW ALBANIA SOCIETY

Chairman: Professor Cyril Offord, F.R.S. (London University.)
Secretary: Joanna Seymour.

AIMS: "To encourage friendship between the Albanian and British people."
"To disseminate knowledge about the country, its history, people and socialist development."
"To encourage personal scientific and cultural contacts."
"To study the political, economic and cultural policy of Albania."

We have formed the NEW ALBANIA SOCIETY to ensure that knowledge of and news from Albania should be available to those who wish to know about its development.

ALBANIA, a country the size of Wales, has a population of about two million. This country, enslaved for centuries, liberated itself in 1945 by guerilla warfare against the Italian and German fascists.

Once they had cleared the fascists from their country they set about rebuilding and developing it under the leadership of the Albanian Party of Labour led by ENVER HOXHA who had been a great guerilla leader.

This country colonially dominated and underdeveloped is well on the way to becoming entirely self supporting, agriculturally and in industrial development.

There is much to learn from their self reliance and development of their own socialist construction. We can help ourselves by studying their successes.

Our problems may be very different from those of the Albanian people, but we have one thing in common, our desire to apply it to find solutions of some of our pressing problems and to end imperialism for all time and achieve peace.

Anyone wishing to become a member of the New Albania Society (annual subscription 10/-), should write to the Secretary, Miss Joanna Seymour, 217 Westbourne Grove, London. W.11.

In March 1969, the newspaper of the CPB ML carried this article announcing the NEW ALBANIA SOCIETY, the officially recognised friendship and solidarity organisation in Britain, and advertised two meetings with talks from "recent visitors" to Albania. That contact with the country had a rarity as the country was regarded as one of the most "backward" under-

RADIO TIRANA, the radio station of the Albanian people and the Albanian Party of Labour, in its English broadcasts provides a service which is useful to Marxist-Leninists in their work of building a revolutionary movement in Britain. They particularly request listeners to write to Radio Tirana in Albania sending comments on broadcasts, making suggestions about material they would like included and offering helpful criticisms.

The Albanian people under the leadership of their Party and their great leader, Enver Hoxha, have achieved tremendous victories in building socialism in the twenty-five years since the heroic liberation of their country from the Italian and German fascist invaders. They have not only stood firm against thre threats of US and British imperialism but they have also exposed and resisted Titoite and Khrushchevite revisionism which collaborates with imperialism. Surrounded by enemies these courageous people have defended their homeland from attacks while firmly establishing socialist relations of production and scoring magnificent economic successes.

We have much to learn from their experiences which with true proletarian internationalism they wish to share with us. But with real socialist modesty they insist that they want to learn from us too and take a lively interest in the problems of British workers.

The times of the half-hour English broadcasts are given in the Radio section of THE WORKER. The medium wave transmission at 5.30 p.m. on the 215 meter band can also be heard in this country. (Radio Tirana would be glad to receive reports on the clarity of their signal.)

Each bulletin includes news, commentary and reports on Albanian home affairs. There are also special regular features as follows:

Monday: The marxist-Leninist Movement throughout the World is Growing in Scope and Strength.

Wednesday: Review of Socialist Developments in Albania, with Special Reference to the 25th Anniversary

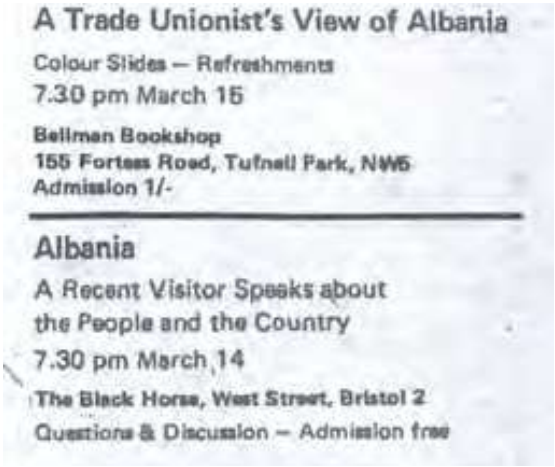
Thursday: On the Liberation Struggle Front around the world and Developments in the European Workers' Movement.

Saturday: Revolutionary Art and Socialist Realism in Albania and Comparison with Bourgeois and Revisionist Art.

Sundays: (from time to time) Episodes in Albania's National Liberation Struggle and Examples of Socialist Heroism today.

developed countries of Europe, diplomatically isolated and closed off, inaccessible, a secretive, culturally different society regard like North Korea is presented in the popular media today.

'*The Worker'* April 1969 reported the first public meeting of the New Albanian Society on March 15 1969. Dorothy Birch, a teacher who visited Albania in the summer of 1968, "gave an interesting account of the country and its socialist development" accompanied by "interesting slides of many aspects of the country." Chairman of the society was Professor Cyril Offord, F.R.S. (London University), its secretary Joanna Seymour of Westbourne Grove, London W 11.

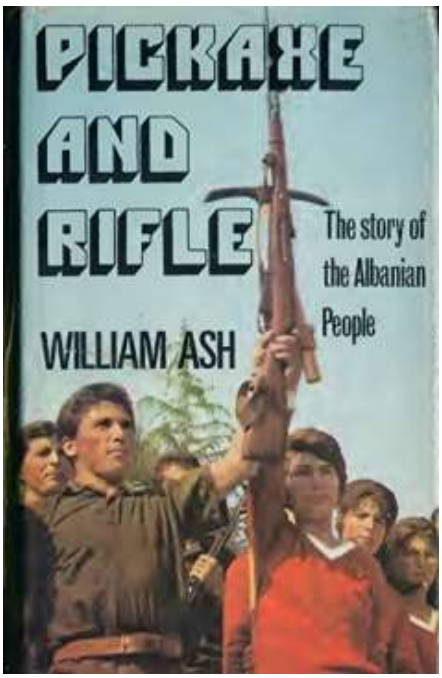

A Trade Unionist's View of Albania
Colour Slides — Refreshments
7.30 pm March 15
Bellman Bookshop
155 Fortess Road, Tufnell Park, NW5
Admission 1/-

Albania
A Recent Visitor Speaks about
the People and the Country
7.30 pm March 14
The Black Horse, West Street, Bristol 2
Questions & Discussion — Admission free

Programmes of events were drawn up: typically as on June 13 1969: an illustrated talk on Albanian folk music at 155 Fortess Road. The British premiere of the film, 'Triumph over Death' was shown at Conway Hall on Friday October 31st 1969. The Society was to be a regular feature of Party life until the late 1970s. Regular meetings and talks at Bellman Bookshop, showing films under the auspices of the friendship organisation, New Albania Society e.g. JAN. 21st 1972 MEETING ON Albania AND Film SHOW

FIRST SHOWING IN BRITAIN

The premiere of the Albanian feature film: "TRIUMPH OVER DEATH"
Based on a true incident in the heroic liberation struggle of the Albanian people against Fascism. Conway Hall, Rod Lion Square. WC1. 7.00 p.m; Friday October, 31st. 1969

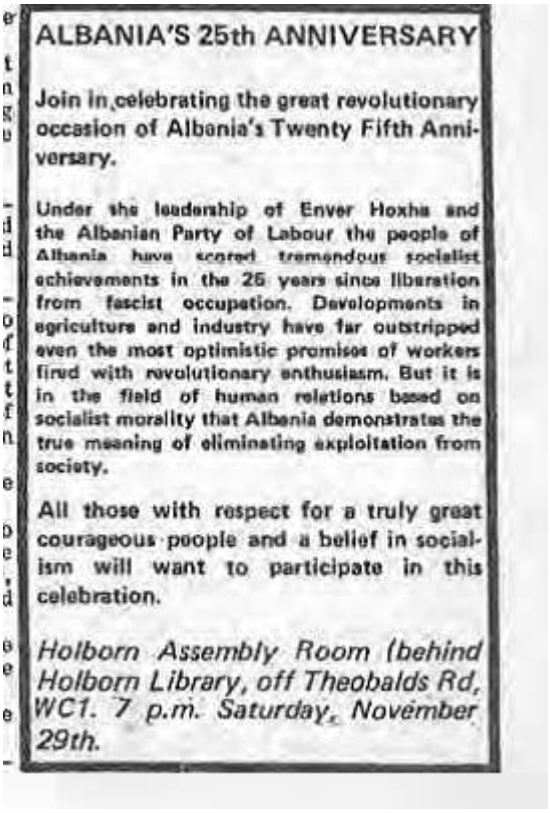


A visitor to the country and leading CPB (ML) member, William Ash published ***Pickaxe and Rifle:*** *The Story of the Albanian People* in 1974.

William Ash, author of MARXISM AND MORAL CONCEPTS, was invited to Albania in 1969 to tour the country extensively and to collect material for this book. Again, in 1971, the author had an opportunity of visiting Albania at the time of the Sixth Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania, and of checking the draft typescript of his work with historians, with State and Party leaders and, most important of all, with the people in the factories and on the collective farms.

The result is a most compelling account of real socialism in action.

Reports on the economic and social developments in Albania accentuated the positive and masked the low base from which the country was developing. The reportage was strong on solidarity and friendship, less so as an accurate portrayal of the country's state



ALBANIA'S 25th ANNIVERSARY

Join in celebrating the great revolutionary occasion of Albania's Twenty Fifth Anniversary.

Under the leadership of Enver Hoxha and the Albanian Party of Labour the people of Albania have scored tremendous socialist achievements in the 25 years since liberation from fascist occupation. Developments in agriculture and industry have far outstripped even the most optimistic promises of workers fired with revolutionary enthusiasm. But it is in the field of human relations based on socialist morality that Albania demonstrates the true meaning of eliminating exploitation from society.

All those with respect for a truly great courageous people and a belief in socialism will want to participate in this celebration.

Holborn Assembly Room (behind Holborn Library, off Theobalds Rd, WC1. 7 p.m. Saturday, November 29th.

e.g. *ALBANIA: where people's needs have priority* (The Worker No.2 January 25th 1973) so when they state that rent for homes is only 3 per cent of an average worker's wage, there are no statistical facts to indicate what level that income is, and how it might compare to other European countries.
One of the features of Albania today that seldom received a mention: the ubiquitous concrete mushrooms that populate modern Albania, built as part of a defensive strategy that saw huge investment in construction to defend the country against invasion. The UK legacy of WW2 pillboxes pales into insignificance.

The extent to which the political promotion of Albania distorted the actual reality of a developing nation was most evident in the 1976 pamphlet published by the CPB (ML) dominated New Albania Society entitled, ***Albania: The Most Successful Country in Europe*** .

The Worker September 1970 | Albanian Handicrafts on Display

There will be an Albanian stand, displaying examples of their handicrafts, at the 18th International Handicraft Exhibition which opens on August 28th and continues till September 12th. These products of Peoples' Albania which all the friends of Albania will want to see will be shown on stand 030.

FILMS – PHOTOGRAPHS – MUSIC From PEOPLES ALBANIA

The only Socialist country in Europe, which has just celebrated 25 years of tremendous achievements in industry, agriculture, the arts and, most important of all, social relations in a true workers' democracy.

Albania is our window onto the exciting world of socialism, where workers under the leadership of the Party of Labour, inspired by the great Marxist-Leninist, Enver Hoxha, are blazing the trail British workers will want to take.

From the 14th September till the first week in October
Every evening from 6 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m.
Feature Film – *"Triumph Over Death"*
Tues. 15th Sept., Fri. 25th Sept., 7.30 p.m. 3/6.

I*55* Fortess Road, Tufnell Park Tube Station, London NW5.
All welcome. Organised by the Bellman Bookshop.

ALBANIA



The slogan of the Albanian Party of Labour "to build Socialism with a pick axe in one hand and a rifle in the other" is taken to heart by the Albanian people who will never allow any imperialist or revisionist powers to interfere in their affairs.

At the end of 1970 the fourth five-year plan of Albania's socialist advance in industry and agriculture was brought to a successful conclusion and at present the mass organisations of workers in town and countryside are working out detailed proposals for the fifth five-year plan (1971-1975).

At a meeting of the People's Assembly Abdyl Kellezi Chairman of the State Planning Commission, announced that all the targets of the fourth plan had been fulfilled or over-fulfilled. Particularly in the important industries of petroleum, copper, electric power, machine building and light manufacturing did achievement outstrip planned increases. The over-all increase in industrial production over 1965 was 83 per cent as against the 54 per cent envisaged in the plan.

In agriculture not only did the production of such staples as grain, cotton and sugar beet exceed expectations but also the amount of new land brought under cultivation and the increase of irrigation went beyond the planned levels.

Transportation and housing construction also recorded great advances.

In 1970 all taxes on individuals were abolished altogether.

Albania has continued to demonstrate not only the superiority of the socialist system over any system based on exploitation but also the possibility for any country no matter how small to develop its own resources in self-reliance without sacrificing its independence for external 'aid'.

MAY DAY GREETINGS FROM THE NEW ALBANIA SOCIETY

MEETINGS TO BE HELD AT THE BELLMAN BOOKSHOP, 155 Fortess Road, London N.W.5.

Saturday, May 15th, at 7.30 p.m.
"INTRODUCING ALBANIA"
A talk illustrated by slides. — Refreshments

Saturday, June 12th, at 7.30 p.m.
"INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ALBANIA"
Refreshments.

Publications from Albania available from the Bellman Bookshop. Membership to Albanian Society is 50p per year which includes six free New Albania magazines.

Applications for membership should be sent to Secretary, New Albania Society, 155 Fortess Road, London N.W.5.

The Worker, July 1970

ALBANIA ABOLISHES INCOME TAX

From November 8th this year the Peoples Republic of Albania has decided to abolish the system of taxation, including insurance.

There will be no deductions from any workers' pay packet!

Any British wage or salary earner who looks angrily at the difference between the figure at the beginning of his pay slip and the much smaller figure at the end, will be envious.

The Albanians are able to do this because of the steady increase in the national income, and the success of the workers in surpassing the targets of the fourth 5 year plan. This is an example of socialist planning in a country led by a Marxist Leninist party.

<<< The Worker May 1971

ALBANIAN MEETING

When the British Imperialists tried to cash in on the liberation of Albania at the end of the Second World War they were given a frosty reception by the local fighters. Their offers of "aid" were firmly declined and no British troops were allowed on Albanian soil.

When a young delegate of the C.P.B. (M.L.) attended the recent May Day celebrations in Tirana, the Albanian capital, he was welcomed with open arms. And when he shook hands with Enver Hoxha, he was meeting the very man who had led the demolition of the British attempts to interfere in the land of "pick axe and rifle".

That Albania should have no truck with the meddling British Imperialists while at the same time extending the hand of friendship to the British working class is no surprise. Albania is run by the workers.

A little of the spirit of the Albanian people and the achievements they have made under Socialism was imparted to a lively audience at the Bellman Bookshop when our delegate recently reported his visit.



A printer's error in the last issue of THE WORKER led to the reproduction of the wrong picture in connection with Albania's May Day celebrations. The picture shown was of a meeting on the Paris Commune organised by the editorial board of l'Humanité Rouge to which the CPB (ML) sent a delegate.

The above picture shows Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania (far right), greeting trade union delegates from many countries to the May Day celebrations in Tirana. The delegate from the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) is in the centre of the photo-

The Worker, Nov 16th. 1972 (No17) | ONE BIG CONSTRUCTION SITE
(Written by a young worker who spent his holiday in the People's Republic of Albania)



To know about a socialist country from books and pictures is one thing, but actually to see socialism first hand is quite another experience.

Especially when that country, twenty–eight years ago, was the most backward in Europe, ruined economically by the war and retarded by age-old religious and superstitious beliefs .Today however, this tiny country, The People's Republic of Albania, is forging ahead in the construction of socialism and rapidly rising the welfare of its people.

The tone of the country is set when you reach the border, having left Yugoslavia; the cultivated trees, the flower beds, and the new customs house being built. For it is the amount *of* building being done that strikes the visitor most. Factories, irrigation, canals, houses, railways and, something most important for the future of Albanian industry, a

huge metallurgical works. These are some of the projects well under way. In 1969 the volume of construction work had increased seventy-nine times over that of 1938. Agriculture is making speedy Progress also, with many new crops being cultivated. Even in the rugged mountains, areas are being cleared and olive and fruit trees planted. A most impressive sight is the formerly barren hillsides now terraced and ready for planting.

But to admire only the economic and technological progress is to see only half of the Albanian picture. With a socialist base, they have created a platform from which it is possible to fight against many of the ills that beset capitalist society, such as pollution, delinquency, alcohol and drug addiction, and crime. (Many crimes, from petty theft to murder, are virtually unknown,)

Albania is above all a healthy country, a country of the future, and most important of all a country for the workers. There are no wealthy business men living in big villas, rich property speculators or corrupt bureaucrats tying the system up in knots with red tape. With a Marxist-Leninist party as its vanguard, the working class is taking the lead and forging for itself a new type of society.

ALBANIA'S NATIONAL DAY Meeting Friday November 24th 1972
7.30 pm Central College Theatre, 16,Gordon St . W.C.1 *off Euston Square.*



CPBM-L delegate to Albanian Youth Conference addresses a meeting of the New Albania Society celebrating Albania's national day

Changing Friends

The shift in international allegiance of Britain's most prominent Maoists, the CPB (ML), occurred over a very short period of time. In 1976, the pending changes were signalled in Birch's speech to the 7th Congress of the Party of Albania, he concluded,

"The test of a revolutionary working class in Europe today is in its understanding of the greatness and historic contribution to Marxism-Leninism to revolution and socialism of the Albanian people. Just as in October 1917 and for all the years of the Bolshevik Revolution, the test of class understanding of Marxism was the attitude to the Bolshevik Revolution now the test is the attitude to Albania. Albania is not alone, nor are the workers of Europe ever without a champion and friend while there is Albania."
New Albania Society, Albania, the most successful country in Europe (1976)

That Reg Birch had singled out the attitude towards Albania as the litmus test of marxist understanding was a clear sign of agreement with the PLA analysis of the international situation. *The Worker* of November 29th 1976 devoted half of its space to coverage of the PLA Congress, reproducing excerpts from Enver Hoxha's criticism of the concept of' three worlds' . In an allusion to the foreign policy analysis of China, the 1976 Congress document says: "For our party there is but one world. The divisive force is class. The division in Britain: working class – capitalist class, the expropriated and the expropriator, the exploited and the exploiter." This attacked the three-world line before it was profitable or popular to do so. That support was made even more explicit with the front page Worker article. *"A Single World Divided By Class*" with its opening line: All over the world the two class forces, the capitalist class and the working class, confront each other with their radically different: ways of life and thought: profits, exploitation and war on the one hand, production geared to people's needs, freedom and peace on the other. Source: The Worker Jan.24th 1977

The CPB (ML) was not simply tailing behind the Albanian position, the 1976 Congress of the organisation had contained criticism that matched that of the Albanian party, and that agreement cemented the CPB (ML) alignment to Albania in her strained relations with China.

The **'76 Congress document** observed:
"The division of the world into 1, 2, 3 is artificial and mechanistic, and there are special dangers inherent within the so-called developing countries and within the liberation struggles today; no true liberation can be achieved within this one world without the strongest development of marxist forces."

Initial solidarity with Albania in its criticism of the "Three Worlds Theory" led to a re-assessment of China's general political orientation, with The Worker describing "China's Capitalist Chaos" by February 1979.

Throughout 1978, The CPB (ML) organised public meetings in support of Albania. At a meeting in Conway Hall (London) in October, Enver Hoxha was praised for leading the attack "against the anti-communist theory of three worlds." *The Worker* No.35 October 12th 1978 p20.

The meeting, "Albania – beacon of Marxism-Leninism", promoted the view that, "the Albanians had been able to foresee, expose and survive the treachery of former allies in the struggle for socialism – first of all Yugoslavia at the end of the war, then Russia in the 1960s and now China." *The Worker* No.36 October 19th 1978 p4

The CPB (ML) stated at **'Congress 1979'** had argued
"The line of 'three worlds' which never warranted the title of a theory, stands naked for what always was, a weak apology for China's bid to attain the status of a world imperialist power."…."Our Party was the first in the world to oppose it."

However the relationship with Tirana waned. Reg Birch stated explicitly the deeply held belief within the CPB (ML) leadership in his 1978 May Day address at Conway Hall, London:

"You will not solve the problems of Britain by theories extracted from Peking or anywhere else. They will be solved solely by the will, the power of the British working class, its clarity and the guidance it receives from this party." *The Worker* May 11th 1978

The pride in, what Reg always referred to as the oldest working class in the world, degenerated into a very chauvinist stance that was impervious to learning from other organisation.

Throughout 1979 another shift had taken place in the perception of the party. The identification with , and its relationship with Albania cooled as there were noticeably less frequent reports about Albania in contrast to 1978 and there was no special reference to Albania in that year's May Day edition of *The Worker*. The principal reason, expressed in fellow Party member, Will Podmore's sympathetic biography of Reg Birch, was the conflicting attitude to organising in the working class in Britain.

Podmore notes that the 1979 Congress document "depicted the development in Britain of the two contending classes and the way that the working class had developed trade unions in order to survive. It appraised the organisational strengths and political weaknesses of our trade unions. It also upheld the class's right, and duty, to work in our trade unions, and opposed suggestions from, sadly, the Party of Labor of Albania, that workers should walk away from their own organisations and form Red unions." Podmore, Will (2004) *Reg Birch*: engineer, trade unionist, communist. London: Bellman Books:166

Even though Reg Birch retired from the General Council of the TUC that year, neither him nor the CPB (ML) were going to idly accept such "slanders" directed against British trade unionists. The dominant line that had informed the CPB (ML)'s international allegiance reasserted itself:

"We can't turn to a united international communist movement for aid, which is no great handicap really. We have to rely on our own resources in any case." *The Worker* December 21st 1978

The CPB (ML) reaffirmed its self-reliance and its sturdy independence baulked at being little more than a political section of the Albanian friendship society; there were others who did accept the guidance from Tirana.

The CPB ML's initial pro-Albanian turn was echoed by the Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist), once the most zealous proponents of "Mao Tse-Tung Thought", the organisation sought to prove it was critical of Maoism and the most vociferous opponent of Chinese "social imperialism". Praise was now heaped upon Enver Hoxha and the Party of Labour of Albania, as "the foremost Party in the International Marxist-Leninist Communist Movement." It joined in the condemnation of the "anti-Marxist" Mao in support of the Albanian positions. The adoption of Tirana's perspective led the Internationalists in Canada, Ireland and Britain to conclude that:

Mao Tsetung, whilst being a revolutionary democrat who led the Chinese people in tremendous advances in their struggle against imperialism and feudalism, was never a Marxist-Leninist…"Mao Tsetung Thought" was a profoundly anti-Marxist and revisionist trend" which denied the hegemonic; role of the proletariat in the revolutionary struggle, which substituted eclectics for dialectics, which promoted conciliation of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie and denied the basic character of our epoch. *Workers Weekly March 17, 1979*

The CPE (ML) re-launched as the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) in 1979, relationship with the Party of Labor of Albania followed in the wake of the conversion of Hardial Bains, leader of the CPC (ML). The cooperation and unity of the two parties was strengthened with the visit in May 1980, a delegation of the RCPB (ML) at the invitation of the Party of Labor of Albania. *Workers Weekly* March 21,1981

The relevant adjustments had been made: the previous April, The Marxist-Leninist Journal carried an issue length article, 'Mao Zedong Thought: a profoundly anti-Marxist theory'. *The Marxist-Leninist Journal* Vol. 1 No.3 April 1980

A month earlier, the RCPB (ML) had taken part in the Internationalist Rally held in Montreal on March 30th which celebrated the Tenth Anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist Leninist). May 1981 saw another delegation visit Albania; the previous month, on April 26th 1981 saw the founding of the Trade Union Revolutionary Opposition. The RCPB (ML) follow the "Albanian line" and set up organisations (consisting of a few party members) that purported to be revolutionary trade union opposition, whereas Reg and the Party he founded and shaped "held to the line of working in the trade unions, despite pressure from the Albanian leadership." Podmore, Will (2004) *Reg Birch*: engineer, trade unionist, communist. London: Bellman Books :167

Even though the political recognition went to the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) when it denounced its Maoist past and embraced Albanian

criticism of Mao and China as its own, it was the Bland-led organisation that retained the friendship franchise.

New Suitors

"After the open break of the PLA with China, the Communist League approached the CPB (ML) suggesting discussions aimed at a unitary party as the CPB (ML) had denounced China and aligned themselves with Albania. In this letter to Reg Birch & the CC, the offer was made to dissolve the Communist League & enter the CPBML as individuals if they wanted to ensure there was 'no factionalism'. The CPB (ML) did arrange meetings for a period to 'assess 'but after a very brief period denied admission. No reason was offered."

Again, when the RCPB (ML) supported Albania in the late 1970s, it replaced the CPBML as Tirana's recognised party:

"The Communist League also approached the RCPB (ML) but consistent with the general attitude of the Bains organisations - an olympian indifference and rude silence greeted the approach. They did however then do something remarkable. They approached the Albanian Society and tried to 'take it over". This was unsuccessful as the open and non-sectarian approach of the Albanian Society had been its feature and strength. The membership enjoyed the poetry and the discussion on art, and resisted the attempts to label these as 'distracting bourgeois diversions'." Account by Hari Kumar for Alliance ML cited in *High Tide* **Click to access high-tide.pdf**

Archive pdf copies of *The Worker*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Britain (M-L), can be found at **https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/worker-uk/index.html**



Every volume of the works of comrade Enver Hoxha is welcomed with great interest by the entire Albanian people. Young people are among the first ones to fill the book-shops in this case. The first day of the sale of the 20th volume in one of the book-shops of the Capital

Friendship & Solidarity
with Socialist Albania

PART 3 October 25, 2025

Albanian Life #49 1991 reported the resignation of the two most active Officers of the Albanian Society: Bill Bland and Norbeto Steinmayr. The AGM, the previous December in London had seen:

In response to a request from members, Bill Bland explained his reasons for resigning as Secretary, which he said was due to the refusal of the committee to publish his analysis of events in Albania, comparing quotes from Enver Hoxha and Ramiz Alia,and an interview Kadare had with Voice of the Youth. Norberto Steinmayr also explained his reasons for resigning, saying that whilst he agreed with the committee decisions, after his visit to Albania and in view of recent policy changes he felt unwilling to devote the necessary time involved in being Secretary or an active committee member. Other committee members defended the refusal to publish Mr Bland's article on the basis that it was not factual and was taken out of historical context. On the Kadare interview committee members had offered to publish it as a compromise to prevent the resignation.



*Figure 1 B**ill Bland 1916-2001 . Bland was one of the founders of the Albanian Society, and three years after its foundation he became its secretary, a post which he held almost continuously for 30 years until the fall of the communist regime in Albania.***

In an address at the AGM , Professor Martin Smith, President of the society, said

The Albanian Society was established in 1957. Three years later, in 1960, Bill Bland became its secretary – a post which he occupied almost without interruption for thirty years. In July this year he submitted his resignation both as Secretary and as a member of the Committee. Since he made it clear that he was not going to be persuaded to change his mind, his resignation had to be accepted, though with the greatest regret, and since July we have had two Acting Secretaries – first Norberto Steinmayr, then Steve Day, who both deserve our gratitude.

I conclude this address with a tribute to Bill Bland. The service which he has given to the Society as Secretary has been quite extraordinary. Few people in the English-speaking world know as much about Albania as he does, and he has unstintingly and unselfishly put this knowledge at the disposal not only of members of the Society, but also of hundreds of other individual and institutional inquirers at home and abroad. He has worked tirelessly for the Society and for the cause of British-Albanian understanding. He has of course written thousands of letters and made thousands of telephone calls on behalf of the Society; he has also translated countless Albanian articles, reviews, poems, and even books; written numerous pieces of his own; edited our journal Albanian Life, and not only edited it, but also typed it, collated it, distributed it; given lectures at and participated in meetings up and down the country from the south of England to Orkney; given interviews on radio and television and to the press; represented the Society on delegations to Albania; and travelled often to our local Albanian embassy in Paris to collect visas and other items. I have reason to believe that he has often been generous with his purse as well as with his time and effort.

It is an indication of Bill's prominent work for the Society and for the cause of good relations between Britain and Albania that a few years ago the local newspaper in Ilford, where he lives, published a photograph of his house, which it presented, not in complete seriousness, one imagines, as the Albanian Embassy in Britain."

A political chronology of 1990 contained in the same issue of *Albanian Life* illustrated the turmoil that had occurred and changes in Albania that informed Bill Bland's decision to remove himself from active leadership of a solidarity organisation when the socialist orientation of the regime under Ramiz Ali was reforming it out of existence. The ideological basis of friendship and solidarity with Socialist Albania was eroded as Ali said, "Let us leave Enver Hoxha to the historians, and let them deal with history without passion." With the removal of the political commitment the abdication by the ruling political leadership followed the disintegration evident in the rest of Eastern Europe. That direction of travel ended the existence of what had been regarded as a "beacon of socialism" for many foreign friends of Albania.

Friendship and Solidarity with Socialist Albania had been organised, demonstrated and campaigned for most strongly by those drawn to the anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist stance. There were political ties of fraternal sister parties that had developed since the Sixties and intensified in the late 1970s following the Sino-Albanian break. That close orientation with the Albanian party deepened as a constellation of Marxist-Leninist groups and parties aligned themselves with the political criticism emulating from Tirana directed at the former Chinese allies.**[i]**

The friendship societies that sprang up wherever the anti-revisionists organised sought to break the cultural blockade and ideological blinkers that isolated and undermine an understanding of (and coincidentally explain or justify) Albanian developments.

Relationships took on a familiar format of embassy contacts, exchange of publications, mutual recognition and promotion, delegation visits and public meetings. There were other intense strains with prominent friends – Nils Andersson, Patrick Kessels – and resident communities of exiled militants working in Albania. A different level of solidarity – that of proletarian internationalism – could be seen in the sanctuary and aid given (most obviously to the Polish communist Kazimierz Mijal), the financial assistance given and for some others, political and military training.**[ii]**

The international spread of such activity was acknowledged in the Albanian media with regular reports on state radio broadcasts**[iii]**, in domestic newspaper coverage of visiting delegations and in the foreign language publications designed for an overseas audience.**[iv]**

These were all aspects of a wider diplomatic approach that saw Albania and its supporters build people-to-people, cultural exchanges and advancing bilateral relations. Peppered throughout the world were these non-governmental organisation, the larger ones mainly independent of a dominate domestic political control, striving to informing people about the Peoples' Socialist Republic of Albania, the life of the Albanian people, and the realities of their economic and social system. Even if identifiable with a political tendency, like the CPB(ML)'s New Albanian Society in the UK or *Socialist Albania,* a quarterly publication of the New Albania Study Group in the USA, their aim was to increase the understanding and friendship with the Albanian people and state. These societies sought for the two sides to engage with each other with equality, respect, and mutual benefit. An uncritical political appreciation of the development of Socialist Albania was an evident factor in these activities. **[v]** The hope was that the two sides would strengthen communication, eliminate misunderstandings, and for commercial reasons promote their respective development and prosperity. They did facilitate study tours, often the only avenue for travel and tourism during the Cold War, which attracted the curious and the committed.

Participation in these "political tourists" drew the attention of others; members of the Norwegian friendship association and people who travelled on their trips to Albania were on the Norwegian Police Security Service watch list, and monitoring of those traveling to Albania by Swiss Federal Police were noted: approximately one trip to Albania each year by Swiss Maoists in the period of 1964-1970 and 1974-77. These contacts aroused the curiosity of the police and led to a lot of speculation about possible subversion and guerrilla and espionage training camps.**[vi]**

A selection of the actual activities undertaken by friendship associations in the 1970 has been collated with the attached pdf:
Activities in friendship and solidarity with Socialist Albania in the 1970s Download

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A by-product of working within these friendship societies was that it provided an audience for the political activists and transmission belt for strengthening the ML ecosystem and possible political engagement/recruitment. Hence, some societies, proved to be an arena of struggle between contending political tendencies during part of their existence. Some groups like the CPB (ML) circumvented this issue by established a party-led and party controlled friendship society to undermine the existing *Albanian Society* influenced by the Communist League (former MLOB) leader Bill Bland but possessing a wider based membership.

In the more overtly political friendship association the suspicion of a domestic political loyalty – demonstrated by the abrupt dissolution of the CPB (ML) created *New Albania Society* when political relations were broken – were difficult to shake off. Elsewhere the Spain–Albania Friendship Association (*Asociación de Amistad España-Albania*) was linked to the Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist), not unsurprising given the presence of exiled Spanish militants working in Albania.

Albania had supported the formation of friendship societies in Western Europe, these included the Portugal-Albania Friendship Association, the Italy-Albania Friendship Association published a quarterly illustrated "Socialist Albania", Austria-Albania Friendship Association, Danish-Albania Association, in France and a late comer, the Japan-Albania Friendship Association, formed in1977.

*In Germany, the *Gesellschaft der Freunde Albaniens* (GFA), established in 1971 and headquartered in Munich but had sections in several West German cities, was rumoured to be a front organization of the KPD/ML, who were active in Albanian solidarity work. After investigation, a leftist political opponent judged, the GFA as an autonomous organization**. [vii]** Thus maoist Communist League of West Germany (Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland) activists were active and did locally organize within different branches of the GFA, they remained largely unsuccessful in challenging themselves vis-à-vis the KPD/ML. For example, in 1974 a number of members of the KBW organized an independent trip to Albania through an Austrian travel agency.

For the Communist League of West Germany, Albania lost significance after the Sino-Albanian split in 1978. As far as establishing a closer relationship with the Labour of Party of Albania goes, there is no evidence that the KBW ever succeeded. The files at the Albanian National Archives contain no evidence of a relationship akin to that between the KPD/ML and the Albanian party. **[viii]**

The Albanian Committee on Cultural and Friendly Relations, made their preference clear that friendship societies must be open to some people that do not agree with the ideology of the state.

"Naturally members of such a society cannot be fascists, provocateurs, or cadres of a revisionist party," but emphasized that instead of limiting the membership of the

friendship societies, the societies should include people of different political persuasions such that the communist party could then win the masses within the organization. The friendship societies were supposed to be open to all people sympathetic to Albania, the official made clear that the society should not be a site for political struggle among its members. "
"In Germany, there was a friendship society and that was the GFA. The Albanians saw no sense in founding new and competing organizations and instead encouraged the centralization of the GFA and the organization of its local groups under one national society. All friends of Albania had to be united in this one society." **[ix]**

* The Norway–Albania Friendship Association (Vennskapssambandet Norge–Albania) or VNA, formed in the 1960s was initially dominated by the Socialist Youth League, supporting political and cultural relations with the People's Socialist Republic of Albania. VNA arranged seminars and popular study trips[iv] from Norway to Albania from the 1960s until the early 1980s. One consequence of the Sino-Albanian split was that the VNA also divided, as activists took sides in the dispute.

*The Swedish–Albanian Association (*Svensk-albanska föreningen*) members made several visits to Albania during the 1970s and 1980s, meeting with Albanian party officials and touring the country. One of the main activities of the association was the organizing of travels in Albania for Swedish, and even Danish and Finnish tourists. The *Swedish-Albanian Association's Bulletin* and *Albania and Us* were two regular publications. Among other activities, translated and published the works of Enver Hoxha — among them *Imperialismen och revolutionen* (1979) on the subject of the Sino-Albanian split — as well as books on Albanian culture and tourist guide books.

An analogous study of the *Associations suisses d'amitié avec la Chine* in Switzerland **[xi]**

Politicised friendship as expressed in friendship associations saw the creation of pro-regime groupings throughout Europe, often energised by maoist activists but not always controlled by them. Cyril Cordoba and Liu Kaixuan**[xii]**, discusses the implication of Chinese influence in the functioning of the friendship associations, especially the role of the Chinese Embassy in Switzerland. This was never crudely directive rather a more self-correcting mechanism by members seeking "friendship with China".

The *Associations suisses d'amitié avec la Chine* in Switzerland which spread "friendship with China", were unofficial regarded as part of the global Chinese "foreign affairs [waishi]" system that has attracted academic interest in recent years. The friendship associations throughout the world received material from the Chinese export company Guozi Shudian for distribution at generous discounts, if not free and they could use the benefits of the sales and magazines subscriptions as an important source of income. The role of such associations were part of the people-to-people tier of Chinese foreign diplomacy and while reflecting Chinese foreign policy priorities, they were not lobbying or influencers on their local state although occasional strayed into the realm of foreign diplomacy.

An uncritical allegiance to whatever was coming out of China was a characteristic of most of the friendship organisations that reflected the orthodoxy of supportive analysis

whether it was from Maoist activists, young radical academics or old cultural friends of China. While active and having membership of the wider association, overall their political importance was peripheral – perhaps offering an introduction to the radical left party, and with the debate over three world theory, an audience and outlet for analysis and a substitute for a more overtly political commitment, they were never simply controlled or run by the Maoist organisations.

The Swiss friendship association took on a different character, suffering a severe reduction in membership after the death of Mao due essentially to political disillusionment. Cordoba and Liu (2018) looking at the cooperation and contradictions between local Maoist parties, friendship associations and Chinese authorities conclude that they finally began to depoliticise – although supporting the post-Mao regime – and professionalise themselves from the 1980s , establishing a travel agency in 1983 and engaging in twinning agreements between Swiss and Chinese cities. The association failed to survive the negative influence of the 1989 Tiananmen Square repressions, and officially dissolved in 1992.

ENDNOTES

[i] See: Powerful Solidarity with the unshakeable Marxist-Leninist stand of the PLA and the Albanian people' *Albania Today* No.5 (42) 1978, and the four part series **https://woodsmokeblog.wordpress.com/2016/03/20/tirana-builds-an-internationale-1/**

Parties aligned with the **Party of Labour of Albania** (Wikepedia)
Communist Party of Denmark/Marxist–Leninists **Workers' Communist Party of France** Communist Party of Germany/Marxists–Leninists **Communist Party of Britain (Marxist–Leninist)** **Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist–Leninist)** **Communist Movement M-L** Iceland **Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist–Leninist)** **Communist Party of Italy (Marxist–Leninist)** **Portuguese Communist Party (Reconstructed)** **Communist Party of Spain (Marxist–Leninist) (historical)** **Communist Party Marxists-Leninists (revolutionaries)** Sweden **Voltaic Revolutionary Communist Party** **Union for People's Democracy** Senegal **Communist Party of Canada (Marxist–Leninist)** **Marxist–Leninist Popular Action Movement** Nicaragua **Communist Party of Trinidad and Tobago** **Communist Party of Brazil** **Peruvian Communist Party (Marxist–Leninist)** **Revolutionary Vanguard (Communist Proletarian)** Peru **Communist Party of Suriname**

Communist Party of New Zealand
Communist Party of Benin
Marxist–Leninist League of Tigray

[ii] Klejd Këlliçi, The PLO and Communist Albania. Journal of Palestine Studies **Vol. 50, No. 4 (2021)**, pp. 53-66 & woodsmokeblog positing, ***Al-Fatah military training in Albania (1971)***; **Research Note ~ Albania's African contribution Apr 16, 2021**.

[iii] https://woodsmokeblog.wordpress.com/2016/02/06/sounds-from-the-ether/
A group closely associated with the KPD/ML in Kiel published and circulated publications with transcripts of Radio Tirana's international coverage. "The third issue of Ausgewählte Sendungen von Radio Tirana [Select broadcasts of Radio Tirana] contained a report on the sixth congress of the Party of Labour alongside stories from Angola, Brazil, West Germany, among others. See Ausgewählte Sendungen von Radio Tirana (January 15, 1972). Previously available (now use Wayback) at **https://www.mao-projekt.de/BRD/ORG/GRM/KPDML_TKBML_Radio_Tirana.shtml**]

There was some listener criticism that the Albanian broadcaster's coverage of German politics was too narrowly determined by the KPD/ML party's perspective. As some complained that the reports about the Marxist-Leninist movement in West Germany invariably equated Marxism-Leninism with the KPD/ML.

There were multitudes of conflicting relations between ML groups, domestic rivals illustrated in July 1975 when Austrian MLs related to the MLPO Marxist-Leninist Party of Austria, raise public criticism of the KPD / ML regarding the distribution in West Germany of "Selected Programs of Radio Tirana" a booklet published by the MLSK-Vienna" .It was available in West Berlin at "practically at all 'left' book stores, except the 'Roter Morgen bookstore' because the KPD / ML leadership "openly boycott the publication despite a shared allegiance to Albania but part of a wider dispute between the groups.

[iv] Reports carried by Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA) (the main source of information for the Party's propaganda, the Albanian press, radio and television, as well as a centre for processing materials from the press and foreign agencies) , the bi-monthly magazines *Albania Today* or *New Albania* were recognitions appreciated by activists.

[v] Somethings have not changed eg **https://theferret.scot/north-korea-friends-western/**

[vi] Cyril Cordoba and **Liu Kaixuan**, *Unconditional Followers of the PRC? Friendship Associations with China in France and Switzerland, 1950s–1980s* in: Europe and China in the Cold War Exchanges beyond the Bloc Logic and the Sino-Soviet Split. Brill 2018 Series: New Perspectives on the Cold War, Volume: 6 p101

[vii] Information from case study in David Spreen (2019) Dear Comrade Mugabe: Decolonization and Radical Protest in Divided Germany, 1960-1980. Dissertation University of Michigan.

[viii] https://woodsmokeblog.wordpress.com/2023/05/24/research-note-aspects-of-the-kpd-ml/ & https://woodsmokeblog.wordpress.com/2025/08/22/distributing-the-line-2-mutual-support/

[ix] Information from case study in David Spreen (2019) Dear Comrade Mugabe: Decolonization and Radical Protest in Divided Germany, 1960-1980. Dissentation University of Michigan.

[x] Subject of the 2017 nonfiction book *Turist i Utopia – reiser i ideologi og albansk landskap* (Tourist in Utopia – Travels in Ideology and Albanian Landscapes) by Rune Ottosen. Even in 1975 six trips were organised that summer. Ancedotes, informative and humourous, from Tron Ogrim , one-time AKPml International Secretary were regularly posted in internet forums.

[xi] Taken from https://woodsmokeblog.wordpress.com/2021/05/31/considering-intrigue-a-cold-war-tale/

[xii] Building upon dissertation work entitled "*Beyond the Bamboo Curtain*: Sino-Swiss cultural relations and political friendships (1949-1989)".



Socialist Albania marches onwards