

**Hotel Turizmi:
Geopolitics, Tourism, and Modern Architecture in Socialist Albania**

Andi Laska

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School of Architecture

University of Virginia
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Shiqiao Li, PhD
Sheila Crane, PhD
Nana Last, PhD

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ABSTRACT

The study of tourism and tourist infrastructure in socialist Albania remains unexplored within the Cold War scholarship. During the Cold War, Albania managed to reap enormous economical benefits by progressing up the ladder of geopolitical relevance in the Socialist bloc by first being mentored by Yugoslavian ambitions from 1944 to 1948, to becoming a Soviet protectorate and satellite from 1948 to 1960, and finally reaching an alliance with the Chinese from 1960 to 1978. Geopolitical negotiations with the Yugoslavs allowed for a quick start to rebuilding of the country after the devastation of World War II, while the shift to the Soviet Union industrialized and modernized the country to new heights. Last, the alliance with China completely transformed all facets of the economy and standards of life. This thesis addresses gaps in Cold War scholarship by focusing on Albania's socialist-era tourism development. It will explore the intersection of architecture, geopolitics and ideology. By highlighting Albania's positioning in the broader political-architectural context of the Cold War, this thesis will investigate architecture as manifestation of geopolitical negotiations.

Key Words: Albania, Cold-War, Tourism, Socialist, Hotel, Architecture, Albturist, Turizmi

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INTRODUCTION

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

– Winston Churchill, March 5, 1946

The Free World vs The Socialist Bloc

President Harry S. Truman was sitting right behind Winston Churchill as the latter ushered his now famous Sinews of Peace speech in Fulton Missouri, transcending the term “Iron Curtain” into a popular household name. Speaking in front of Westminster College, wearing a gown over his suit and bowtie with Corbusier-like spectacles, Churchill’s chilling words would frame the geopolitical landscape of the world for the next 45 years to come. As the geopolitical lines of influence were drawn between the West and East, the Iron Curtain acted as an imagined spatial construct which would both signify the divide between the cultures and ideologies of both camps while also becoming the nexus of rivalry where they would at times collide and compete with one another. To the West of the Iron curtain - the Free World - the countries of Western Europe and the United States prescribed to the ideals of a free trade world built on the backbone of capitalism, while to the East of the Iron Curtain - the Socialist Bloc - the countries of Eastern Europe under the influence of the Soviet Union followed more state centralized and controlled economies resting on the foundations of socialism.

With the United States as the leader of the Free World and the Soviet Union in charge of the Socialist Bloc, the superpowers propelled into a fierce competition of socio-political ideology and cultural influence by defining boundaries and competing for the undecided countries¹. Historian David Engerman has referred to this conflict of ideologies as a tension between determinism and messianism.² On one side, the foreign policy of the United States relied heavily on ideals of liberalism influenced by the work of English philosopher John Locke.³ Lock placed great emphasis on individual liberty defined by laws and grounded in property rights and his main theory was that liberty could be measured by allowing the free exchange of goods, i.e. market economies.⁴ On the other side, the ideological claims of the Soviet Union were rooted in Marxism-Leninism encouraging a communist society based on Karl Marx's critique of capitalism and the viewing of history as a "predetermined process ending in human liberation".⁵ According to Karl Marx, capitalism exploited the masses, as its main goal was to maximize profits on the shoulders of the lowly paid working class.⁶ Both camps prided themselves on their progressive forms of modernity. Both were determined that history was on their side while firmly believing their conceptions of society applied to all nations and peoples.⁷ To this point, Engerman concludes with this remark:

Both nations, subscribed to progressive ideologies; they portrayed history as an irreversible march to improvement, which they defined as the spread of their own influence. Each side feared the advance of the other as a step backward. Americans understood Soviet expansion as a direct blow to the gradual spread of freedom, while Soviet observers saw American expansion as proof that the final crisis of capitalism was near.⁸

The ideological war between the Free World and Socialist Bloc also manifested in the ways these societies planned and designed their cities and architecture, as each system proudly displayed

¹ Engerman, *Ideology and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917–1962*, 33

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

their achievements over the other. The capitalist cities and planning practices of the Free World were suddenly countered with the emergence of a new urban form in the Socialist Bloc known as the “socialist city”⁹. In a collection of works published in 1979, RA French and Ian Hamilton cite the following when self-posing the question “Is there a Socialist City?”:

The cities of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union exist within societies which are organized on Marxist, not capitalist, premises, which aspire to socialist goals, which apply socialist theory in their actions and mechanisms. All these societies, excepting only Yugoslavia today, operate a planned economy where, whatever the degree of centralization in decision-taking, the ultimate decisions on priorities, on capital investment, on targets for sectoral and spatial patterns of growth and change, and on means for achieving these targets, are taken by State organizations, primarily by the central organs of government and party.¹⁰

Stephen Kotkin has long argued that socialist planners, politicians, and designers, in the Soviet Union and the postwar Eastern Bloc, imagined the socialist city as a rational entity based on the science of planning and proceeded in their work accordingly.¹¹ Due to this high degree of power that is vested in the State, socialist cities could better determine the speed of development from the Western cities.¹² According to Kimberly Zarecor, “designs for socialist cities assumed that the regime's institutions and functionaries could determine and regulate all variables including legal control over land use”¹³. As a result the socialist city has the merit of being able to achieve higher degrees of planning and city size optimization. To give an example of this higher degree of planning, Zarecor mentions how entire neighborhoods of housing, shops, schools and public services, as well public transportation routes, would be featured in master plans a lot earlier than having the budget and resources to make way for construction.¹⁴

⁹ French and Hamilton first discussed the idea in 1979 in their book *The Socialist City*.

¹⁰ French and Hamilton, *The Socialist City*, 3-4

¹¹ Zarecor, *What Was So Socialist About the Socialist City*, 11

¹² French and Hamilton, *The Socialist City*, 4

¹³ Zarecor, *What Was So Socialist About the Socialist City*, 10

¹⁴ Ibid. 11

In the capitalist context, such efforts were slowed by the onset of bureaucracy and the greed for capital gains. Planning operated “within limits imposed by private ownership of land and buildings, private control of investment, and the greater freedom of choice and action possessed by the individual, even when such action may not be in the best public interest”¹⁵. The capitalist planner had less freedom to practice clearly prescribed long-term objectives due to the constraints established by businesses, the dynamics of the market or by public planning institutions.¹⁶ Meanwhile designers working for state run agencies were tasked with creating decade long urban plans, unlike much shorter plans used in capitalist development projects.¹⁷

An additional factor which set the socialist city apart was also the attention placed to the infrastructure of expanding or newly developed cities – what Kim Zarecor calls high levels of infrastructural thinking or making decisions based on necessary requirements and scale of urban infrastructure¹⁸. This too was in direct correlation with the Soviet and Socialist Bloc ideology of the Marxist commune. She further explains through the following passage:

Infrastructural thinking thrived in state socialist economies specifically because the people in charge—up and down the institutional hierarchies—were technocrats who embraced the fundamental idea and incremental pace of multi-year planning. The classic Soviet 'five-year plan' became the model unit for the Eastern Bloc satellites, although others were also used at times. The basis of their work was a belief in the power of quantitative measuring and scientific methodologies to solve long-term social and economic problems. Critical of capitalism, the technocrats argued that its unpredictability had created societies with imbalances in supply and demand, unequal distributions of wealth and political power, and ugly, chaotic cities. They echoed Frederick Engels from his 1872 text, *The Housing question*, where he argued that only reducing the square meters of a bourgeois apartment would not solve the housing crisis on a massive scale, instead the complete reorganization of everyday life toward communal living was needed. The new socialist cities and the life that would flourish within them would be efficient, clean, and joyful. As sites of production in the hierarchy of the single entity, each city would serve the country's, and therefore the people's, greater goals.¹⁹

¹⁵ French and Hamilton., *The Socialist City*, 19

¹⁶ Zarecor, *What Was So Socialist About the Socialist City*, 5-6

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. 7

¹⁹ Ibid. 18

This is not to say that infrastructural integration into the urban fabric was strictly a characteristic of the socialist city. Many of the first urban and infrastructural thinkers and their creations – as Zarecor notes – such as Le Corbusier and others, stemmed from the capitalist context.²⁰ However, their urban interventions were not conceived at the same scale as those seen in the socialist setting and also not conceived within a “state project of total societal transformation that instrumentalized the city as a critical element in these efforts”²¹. As a result, industrial construction such as factories were always accompanied with housing and local amenities, residential areas prioritized living conditions highlighting a socialist mindset through communal spaces²². To quote Zarecor on such planning practices, “the integrated functioning of the city as a node in the single entity organized according to the logic of infrastructure planning defined the specific experience of living in socialist cities”²³.

Geopolitics and Tourism

One important aspect of developing the urban fabric of the city through infrastructural thinking is the expansion of the tourism sector – a feat which took place on both sides of the Iron Curtain. As other historians have noted, tourism, or leisurely travel as we know it now, is a fairly modern concept. “With industrialisation and the rise of the middle classes, tourism spread across social boundaries and geographical borders.”²⁴ Like much of the Cold War, this sector too proved to be a fertile ground for taunting ideological superiority as it too was operationalized by both worlds as a tool of influence through the architecture and infrastructure it produced. Though often overlooked by architectural historians, “tourism became a battleground and proved too important to

²⁰ Zarecor, *What Was So Socialist About the Socialist City*, 7

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. 19

²³ Ibid. 24

²⁴ Pedersen and Noack, *Tourism and Travel During the Cold War*, 2

leave to the private sector alone, on either side of the East–West divide”²⁵. In fact, the Cold War was “awash with connections and exchanges...and the Iron Curtain was perforated with loopholes”²⁶.

“Western interest in visiting Eastern Europe gave the socialist regimes an opportunity to showcase their societies [while also presenting] the risk of espionage, and could be a negative influence on local populations by exposing them to foreign fashions and ideas”.²⁷ Thus tourism for both sides of the Iron Curtain was “a field of competing cultural, economic, ideological, and security concerns”²⁸.

Pedersen and Noack best summarizes the atmosphere by saying the following:

Rather than an impenetrable Iron Curtain, the Eastern bloc erected a “semipermeable membrane,” which permitted select goods, people, and information to pass through. In fact, the barriers that each East European state erected were permeable in ways that often changed several times in the period. Innocuous goods could usually pass in both directions, and the ease with which Westerners could cross the Iron Curtain generally increased over the years. East European citizens were allowed to travel to the West as tourists, too, although in much smaller numbers.²⁹

Both the Free World and Socialist Bloc encouraged their citizens in travel and leisure as both competing forces understood that tourism plays a huge role in the “spatial and cultural authentication of modern nations and states by [the] visiting of “shrines” – landscapes and [architectural] sights framed as being enduringly significant for a national community.”³⁰ By this account then, tourism must also become subject to the forces of geopolitical activity. But how can this be? Traditionally speaking, geopolitics has been defined as the struggle for political dominance of space which for many years, “was seen primarily in terms of global and international space whereby state actors sought to contest for control of territory”³¹. In terms of the Cold War, the Free World and Socialist Bloc squared up for a “cold” war of influence avoiding the direct and imminent

²⁵ Pedersen and Noack, *Tourism and Travel During the Cold War*, 1

²⁶ Ibid. 3

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. 2

³¹ C. M. Hall, *Tourism and Geopolitics*, 44

attack on each other's territories, thus "such geopolitical contestation also came to be understood as an area for substate and even private actors"³² to come into play. Michael Hall explains this evolving understanding of geopolitics in the following manner,

This broadening of the notion of geopolitics resonates well with recent scholarship that suggests that geopolitics not only is concerned with the control or occupation of space and territory by state and other political actors but also is about the political consequences of the different modes of knowledge and ways of representing the world including our understanding of the everyday.³³

Hall goes on to say it is nearly always about attempts to make, organize, dominate and control particular spaces, before going on to note that "this is not just an act of explicit diplomacy or war, but is also now related to the spaces of the global neoliberal economy".³⁴ Specifically speaking, international tourism can be conceptualized and utilized as a geopolitical weapon, as according to Hall, "the spatial consequences of international relations at supranational and national levels can impact substantially on activity at subnational levels, both at tourism destinations and at international borders"³⁵.

Tourism is also deeply embedded in politics at a national level. It embraces both nation branding through propaganda and nation building through place-making.³⁶ Nation branding can be understood as "that mix of political and aspirational activities through which institutions and interest groups variously collaborate and contend to solidify particular visions of their supposed culture, heritage, and nature for not only distant/external others but for their own proximal/internal selves"³⁷. Through the use of propaganda, "its symbols and artifacts gather meaning and implication, its stakeholders – tourists, tourism employees, destination residents and host environments –

³² C. M. Hall, *Tourism and Geopolitics*, 44

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. 33

³⁶ Ibid. 35

³⁷ Ibid.

become (often unwitting) actors in the game of image projection”³⁸. More explicitly, propaganda through tourism can be employed to “present an outwardly positive face to the world of a destination country or region that might in other respects be less acceptable, but then can capitalize on certain aspects of that enhanced, perhaps falsified destination image”³⁹.

In relation to tourism, Karen Nichols considers "placemaking" as an exchange between host and guest in which the host conveys a highly tailored image of place.⁴⁰ By a tailored image, Nichols refers to a “deliberate selection of imagery and rhetoric that will represent and synopsise the history, culture, and environment of a location...designed to create an unambiguous image of life in the host region”⁴¹. More often than not though, this assumes that the tourism sector is already well developed within the host region. It assumes a pre-existing national identity. But what about a recently created nation, a state without the tourism infrastructure in place? In this case, I argue placemaking – architecturally speaking – could convey the literal process of the making of a place or architectural work for the development of a non-existent tourism sector and thus helping literally in the building of a national identity. Thus placemaking could also emphasize the building of national identity not just as a host to the outsiders but also to the region’s own population.

For the Free World, however, tourism was well established. It was already folded into the Cold War rhetoric and the post-war modern way of living. The act of traveling, mobility, exploration, represented values of freedom and democracy.⁴² The economical and technological developments enjoyed from the United States and other countries further fueled and encouraged the rise of tourism. “The greater prosperity of the population at large, paid holidays for many European [and US] workers, a new use of excess airplanes after the war, technical improvements in aircraft

³⁸ C. M. Hall, *Tourism and Geopolitics*, 36

³⁹ Ibid. 37

⁴⁰ Nichols, *Tourism as a nation-building tool*, 1

⁴¹ Ibid. 2

⁴² Zeskin and Yolal, *Golden Age of Mass Tourism*, 75

production, a greater sense of democracy and equality, better education, better packaging of the opportunities by tour operators, [and the] spread of television, bringing images of the rest of the world to almost every household”⁴³, afforded the essential ingredients of modernity which would help democratize tourism and transform traveling it into a mass phenomenon.

The Soviet Union too saw tourism – “travel in pursuit of pleasure”⁴⁴ – as an important part of modern life. The right to rest, leisure, and annual paid holidays was already a feature of the Soviet Constitution since 1936.⁴⁵ Socialist Bloc citizens were also encouraged to engage in leisure travel. In direct opposition to the Free World, however, the Soviet Union aimed on practicing a different type of tourism as it “denounced the allegedly idle emptiness of bourgeois tourist practices [of the West], and strove to juxtapose an alternative model of purposeful tourism within the boundless Soviet [influenced] territory.”⁴⁶ The Soviets insisted that proletarian tourism or tourism under socialism, “should serve to mobilize everyday life for the purposes of the state”⁴⁷. This form of tourism would not “replicate its bourgeois predecessors and appeal to romantic adventurers or the pursuit of idle pleasure”⁴⁸, but would rather be “simultaneously autonomous and collective, self-improving and socially constructive”⁴⁹. To practice proletarian tourism, one had to recognize and understand well the faults of the bourgeois. First, the most dangerous threats to proletarian tourism were the combination of poor planning and the practices of “tramping (*brodiazhnichestvo*), also translated as ‘vagrancy’”⁵⁰. Second, culturalism or “tourism with the politics left out”⁵¹ and last, localism or tourism which does not offer opportunities to learn about the grand vastness of the USSR⁵². Even as

⁴³ Zeskin and Yolal, *Golden Age of Mass Tourism*, 75

⁴⁴ Pedersen and Noack, *Tourism and Travel*, 1

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 2

⁴⁷ Konker, *The Proletarian Tourist in the 1930s*, 120

⁴⁸ Ibid. 119

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 125

⁵¹ Ibid. 126

⁵² Ibid.

far as 1927, the Komsomol Secretariat warned “tourism should not become purposeless tramping”⁵³, or simply put, “purposeless travel that valued only how many kilometers could be traversed”⁵⁴ and thus denouncing such practices as “petty-bourgeois”⁵⁵.

In response to these faults, careful methods were devised in teaching the Soviet culture the proper way to travel. To combat tramping, high levels of planning were needed to fight spontaneity (*samoteke*).⁵⁶ To avoid culturalism, “every tourist itinerary [was] designed to educate, to instruct tourists in political realities”⁵⁷ and to reverse localism, “the proletarian tourist was challenged to learn about the multinational USSR, to discover the variety and richness of the Soviet land-not out of casual curiosity, which would be the bourgeois form of tourism, but in order to produce knowledge”⁵⁸. As Diane Konker elaborates in *Turizm*, “Intention was everything [and] proletarian tourism had a purpose”⁵⁹. This sense of purpose began internally within the individual which in turn was meant to not only cultivate it for personal purposes, but to also lead others in sharing such purposes. To further explain this point Konker writes,

Proletarian tourists would also help to bring knowledge and culture to others. As ambassadors of socialism, they were encouraged to conduct cultural work among the inhabitants of the villages they passed through and to invite them to participate in their evenings of skits, music, and performances. Members of the proletarian tourist society should go out on their tours armed with gifts of cultural significance-notebooks, pencils, pens, and primers in the local languages.⁶⁰

Just like revolutions were the locomotives of history for Marx, so should the proletarian tourist be a “person who locomoted through nature [with] the nation under his or her own power”⁶¹. Equipped

⁵³ Konker, *The Proletarian Tourist*, 125

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 126

⁵⁷ Ibid. 127

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid. 129

with such expressive doctrine in direct opposition to bourgeois Western thought, the Soviet Union worked out the norms and customs of proper socialist tourism. Naturally, the next step was to export their model of tourism into Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans during the process of “Sovietisation”⁶² of these regions from 1948-1956.

From the three geographical regions mentioned above, much of Cold War scholarship has mainly engaged the former two, often neglecting the countries of the Balkan peninsula – “an amalgamation of small nations with diverse cultures and religions, with only a modest proportion of the world’s population, [which] geostrategic position and complex politics led it to play a large part in the formative years of the Cold War”⁶³. With the exception of Yugoslavia flirting somewhere between the East-West divide, the rest of the Balkan states – Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia – all fell under the full geopolitical influence of the Soviet Union and thus subscribed to the Socialist Bloc ideology. According to Svetozar Rajak, Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science, “there is no evidence suggesting that Iosif Stalin possessed a blueprint for the establishment of a Soviet sphere of influence in the Balkans. Its origins lay in the distribution of the ‘spoils of war’ among the ideologically opposed victorious superpowers. Moscow used ‘people’s’ or ‘popular front’ governments as tools to establish its political influence, while slowly securing the deferential obeisance of the new regimes through ideological affinity.”⁶⁴ Rajak and other Cold War historians have referred to the establishment of Soviet influence over this region as the process of “Sovietisation”⁶⁵. Rajak elaborates on how Soviet Union was able to achieve dominance over these states:

As part of the Sovietisation process, USSR intelligence agents penetrated the political, economic, and security institutions of the satellite countries. Army officers attending military

⁶² Rajak, *The Cold War 1945–1956*, 214

⁶³ Ibid. 220

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 214

schools in the USSR were recruited by Soviet intelligence agencies. Members of the local police and security apparatuses were supervised by Moscow's intelligence officers, erasing distinctions between Soviet and local security services. Soviet technical advisers, attached to government ministries and commercial enterprises, acted as recruiters for the KGB. Most of those targeted did not dare protest, fearing loss of employment or arrest. Others, especially old Communists who were previously affiliated with the Comintern and who were now in prominent positions, believed working for Soviet intelligence was their 'internationalist duty to the first country of socialism'. Without such widespread infiltration, the Sovietisation of the Balkans would have been much harder, if not impossible.⁶⁶

Bulgaria and Romania, Axis Coalition members during World War II, both already had Soviet military occupation from the war. As a result, it was easy to "install 'popular front' governments"⁶⁷ as their "communist leaders arrived with the Red Army"⁶⁸. The new leaders of Yugoslavia and Albania, however, were heroes of national liberation fronts against Nazi occupation during the war.⁶⁹ In 1945, the communists and their leader Tito – "commander of the fourth-largest army in Europe"⁷⁰ – took control of Yugoslavia through general elections and quickly nationalized the industry.⁷¹ In December of the same year, a general election in Albania gave Communists full control with Enver Hoxha as the head of government. "Three months later, the new constitution, emulating the Soviet Constitution of 1936, declared Albania a people's republic, [and] almost all of its industry and resources nationalized by the end of that year"⁷². With the Balkans falling into the Soviet sphere of geopolitical influence, the process of Sovietisation had well begun taking form, penetrating deep into all parts of society and government institutions, including the development of the tourism sector.

⁶⁶ Rajak, *The Cold War, 1945–1956*, 214

⁶⁷ Ibid. 199

⁶⁸ Ibid. 200

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 201

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

A Perforated Iron-Curtain

Perhaps the biggest misconception on tourism and travel during the Cold War is that the exchange between the East and West was mainly a one way street, meaning from East to West. The recent collection of works by Sune Bechmann Pedersen and Christian Noack titled *Tourism and Travel During the Cold War: Negotiating Tourist Experiences Across The Iron Curtain* effectively debunks this misconception as they lay out their main thesis on a very “porous” Iron Curtain perforated with loop holes.⁷³ Surprisingly, this metaphor also applied to what was considered the most closed off socialist country in the Socialist bloc, Albania. Perhaps due to this closure, which really only materialized in the later years of the Cold War, or the small size of Albania and its ranking in the pecking order of geopolitical importance, for many years “most analyses of the Cold War have ignored Albania”⁷⁴. This is unfortunate as Albania presents a unique Cold War case study where geopolitical negotiations chartered by the country not only helped to accentuate its position in the Socialist bloc, but also afforded possibilities of fully taking advantage of a perforated and fluid curtain.

In chartering such negotiations, Albania displayed what Elez Biberaj has called a maverick behavior.⁷⁵ For during the Cold War, Albania managed to reap enormous economical benefits by progressing up the ladder of geopolitical relevance in the Socialist Bloc by first starting with being a mentee of Yugoslavian ambitions from 1944 to 1948, to a Soviet protectorate and satellite from 1948 to 1960, and finally reaching an alliance with the Chinese from 1960 to 1978. Geopolitical negotiations with the Yugoslavs allowed for a quick start to rebuilding of the country after the devastation of World War II, while the shift to the Soviet Union industrialized and modernized the

⁷³ Pedersen and Noack, *Tourism and Travel During the Cold War*, 3

⁷⁴ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 6

⁷⁵ Biberaj, *Albania, A Socialist Maverick*, 85

country to new heights. Last, the alliance with China completely transformed all facets of the economy and standards of life.

During the years spent as a Soviet Union satellite, Albania grafted its very own state run tourism enterprise named *Albturist*, a direct copy of Soviet Union's *Intourist*, which through state directives began operating and monitoring tourism developments ranging from visitor logs to construction sites. The unique path of geopolitical fluidity Albania chose to pursue, made it possible for the country to take advantage of the perforations in the “curtain” by catering to tourists, connections, and exchanges from the Socialist bloc, as well as from the Free World – mainly through friendship societies funded by China. Albania's unique shifting of negotiations and proximity to a perforated Iron Curtain created just the right conditions for funds, investments, equipment, and people to penetrate into Albania when needed.

Hotel Turizmi

Scholarship on tourism, tourist infrastructure and architecture of socialist Albania is scarce. A recent dissertation published in 2021 and titled *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism - The Case of Albania*⁷⁶ shows a promising title and does a good job of outlining a general categorization of hotel typologies, but is too focused on the effects of current tourism trends. It also falls flat in the shallow treatment of history and geopolitics. The more promising texts, however, have emerged from neighboring countries' treatment of similar themes. Two that come to mind are *Holidays after the Fall: Seaside Architecture and Urbanism in Bulgaria and Croatia*⁷⁷ – a typological approach that focuses mainly on the esthetics of socialist architecture to that of the International Style, and *Enchanting Views: Romanian Black Sea Tourism Planning and Architecture of the 1960s and 70s*⁷⁸, where the

⁷⁶ See Istrefaj, *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism*, Polis Univ. 2021

⁷⁷ See Beyer and Hagemann and Zinganel, *Holidays after the Fall*, Jovis Publishing. 2013

⁷⁸ See Serban, *Enchanting Views*, Asociata Publishing. 2015

main focus is placed on the relationships between architects and the state while over-aggressively masking architecture as a vessel of escaping the socialist system.

To this end, this thesis will mainly focus on the development of tourism and tourist architecture and infrastructures that materialized in Albania during its socialist era. Utilizing first hand archival research, it will explore the intersection of architecture, geopolitics and ideology. By highlighting Albania's positioning in the broader political-architectural context of the Cold War, this thesis will investigate architecture as manifestation of geopolitical negotiations. But what is the architecture and infrastructures at hand? During the years of Yugoslav and Soviet influence, industrial urbanization and infrastructure sites together with public projects which were meant to unify the socialist masses (i.e. Palace of Cultures), became the go to markers of a “purposeful” tourism. At the end of Soviet relations era and throughout the Chinese negotiations, a considerable amount of investments came in the form of accommodation structures, specifically modern hotels shouldered almost entirely on Chinese funding. This series of hotels known to locals as *Hotel Turizmi* appeared in the urban fabric of almost all the main cities in Albania taking on the responsibility of displaying a unique national identity. As a final inquiry, this thesis will interrogate the construction of these infrastructures as an expression of political ideology and economic systems, questioning the roles of geopolitics on tourism and the forging of a national identity in a small country with a stubborn pride of charting its own socialist identity.

As early as 1963, on a direct request to the cabinet or party ministers, Assistant Albturist director Qemal Bylyku provided a list of requests to be fulfilled or approved by the ministers.⁷⁹ “In order for the development of foreign tourism to be a complete economic and political success”⁸⁰, he begins, “and for tourists to leave Albania with the best impressions in all aspects, we think that these

⁷⁹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Mbi Zhvillimin e Metejsbem te Turizmit*, f.770, v. 1963, dos.10, fl. 7

⁸⁰ Ibid.

should also be taken care of”⁸¹. He then outlines ten requests, two of which are directed at the construction hotels and propaganda:

To have the construction of [new] tourist hotels in the cities of Shkoder, Pogradec, Sarande, Vlore and Elbasan with heating systems, after all the current buildings are old and unsuitable for the prospective needs of tourism.

To make a wide spread of propaganda in some countries, like Austria, Sweden, France, Turkey, Germany through brochures, films, newspaper announcements and reports, radio-television, photo exhibition etc.⁸²

The hotels that were built each contained the word “turizmi” or tourism in their name – either officially or unofficially provided by the locals – which at the time announced their exclusivity to foreign tourism as well as their grandiose superiority. These hotels offered qualitative spaces of accommodations visually elevated to a higher status while transforming the skylines of cities. They differed from *Kampe Pushimi* or vacation camps which were dedicated for the use of the Albanian population, while also differing from mountainous establishments and curative settlements which were dedicated to health tourism.⁸³ Turizmi hotels were modern in their design and from an architect standpoint “taking part in a design [project] for [these] hotels, was considered a unique possibility to design in height”⁸⁴. Through an architectural analysis of select Hotel Turizmi structures, this thesis will illustrate how tourism became a vessel for asserting and shaping Albania’s national identity in the midst of shifting geopolitical alliances.

Having said this, a few questions come to mind. First, why architecture? Second, why hotels? As part of the cultural cold war, “leisure infrastructure indeed became a vehicle to promote socio-political beliefs and also to express ideological superiority over the rival bloc”⁸⁵. Architecture in

⁸¹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Mbi Zhvillimin e Metejshe te Turizmit, f.770, v. 1963, dos.10, fl. 7

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Istrefaj, *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism*, 158

⁸⁴ Ibid. 156

⁸⁵ Gosseye and Heynen, *Architecture for Leisure*, 626

this reading, became the “weapon” of choice. According to Gosseye and Heynen, “the use of contemporary ideas in architecture and urban design for the construction of leisure infrastructure accordingly became a means to communicate a nation’s modernity to the outside world”⁸⁶. They further elaborate by saying the following:

The development of leisure and tourist infrastructure for the masses thus fulfilled several goals. It not only ensured domestic stability, by enabling all strata of the population to enjoy vacation and leisurely activities at an affordable price, which kept them ‘content’ and away from the picket line, but also allowed (predominantly socialist) countries to showcase the success of their governing systems.⁸⁷

For Albania, its modernity became socialism itself. The building of it, strictly tied to party ideology and the development of a national identity.

In terms of the second question, where hotels have previously been overlooked, a select number of scholars are starting to now probe into the geopolitical charge which hotels embody. Fregonese and Ramadan – in recognizing that “cities are ‘strategic sites’ of contemporary global politics” – also deduce that in turn “hotels are [also] often strategic urban sites occupying prominent positions within cities, where wider geopolitical processes are played out and where complex connections between geopolitics and everyday life become tangible”.⁸⁸ Such was the argument put forth by Annabelle Wharton in her article *Economy, Architecture and Politics: Colonialist and Cold War Hotels*⁸⁹ which later evolved into a book documenting the role of Hilton Hotels as important agents of projecting Western values and influence in areas like Athens, Istanbul and Cairo⁹⁰.

In turn, the Socialist Bloc also attempted to do the same. To recap the scholarship mentioned earlier, in *Holidays after the Fall: Seaside Architecture and Urbanism in Bulgaria and Croatia* by Michael Zinganel, Elke Beyer and Anke Hagemann – though mainly concerned with questions of

⁸⁶ Gosseye and Heynen, *Architecture for Leisure*, 626

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Fregonese and Ramadan, *Hotel Geopolitics*, 797-798

⁸⁹ See Wharton, *Economy, Architecture and Politics*, Duke Press. 1999

⁹⁰ Ibid.

form, style and representation – provide a great study of hotel architecture in Bulgaria and Croatia (part of Yugoslavia during the Cold War)⁹¹. In a similar matter, Serban’s *Enchanting Views: Romanian Black Sea Tourism Planning and Architecture of the 1960s and '70s*, outlined a look into tourist architectural developments on the Black Sea Coast as agencies of extending ideology and party propaganda, while also offering spaces of experiencing “the other” given the flux of encounters between travelers from the East and West.⁹² In a way, this thesis orients itself somewhere between Wharton and the latter two publishings.

Each chapter of the thesis is thematically titled as a traveling guide “From [name of city] to [name of city]”, encapsulating within it the histories that took place in the timeframe developed from the shifting of influence from one city or country to the other. The first chapter, **From Constantinople to Rome: Empires and Imported Tourism**, surveys the historiography of Albanian tourism and tourist structures from Ottoman trade based hospitality (inns) to the modern conception of tourism and hospitality (hotels) as it was brought into place through colonizing means as a result of Albania’s annexation from Mussolini and Fascist Italy. It defines tourism as an imported phenomenon due to the lack of Albanian hegemony in the hands of various empires and histories associated with them.

The second chapter, **From Belgrade to Moscow: Geopolitical Negotiations and Purposeful Tourism**, outlines the geopolitical negotiations that took place through Albania’s alignment with Yugoslavia and later the Soviet Union. Various tourist infrastructures and markers are investigated as a result of the negotiations at hand. This chapter also sheds light on the development of a self-sufficient tourism industry modeled upon the ideology of “purposeful tourism” prescribed by all states in the Socialist bloc. It defines tourism as a socialist ideology while

⁹¹ See Beyer and Hagemann and Zinganel, *Holidays after the Fall*, Jovis Publishing. 2013

⁹² See Serban, *Enchanting Views*, Asociata Publishing. 2015

showcasing Albania's own unique take or purpose on purposeful tourism. For perspective, a small section is dedicated to the type of architectural style that manifested in Albania at this time as a result of alignment with the Eastern camp.

And finally, the third chapter, **From Moscow to Beijing: Geopolitical Negotiations and Tourism as National Identity**, focuses entirely on Albania's unique yet "unequal alliance"⁹³ with China. Considering China funded all but one of the major hotels in Albania, select Hotel Turizmi structures are investigated as direct products of the negotiations among the two countries. In this chapter, a section is dedicated towards the morphing of purposeful tourism under Chinese influence to weave in the importance of national identity, and the role which the Hotel Turizmi structures played in this regard. In the closing section, this chapter will make the case that unlike the previous alignment, China not only did not enforce a type of "Chinese" architectural style, but rather provided the freedom for Albania to make its own choices in this regard and in the process allow the country to invent a unique modernism style of its own – especially as manifested by the Turizmi Hotels.

⁹³ Term coined by Elez Biberaj in his book *Albania and China: A Study of an Unequal Alliance*.

CHAPTER ONE | From Constantinople to Rome: Empires and Imported Tourism

The Albanians are generally of the middle stature ,muscular and straight, but particularly slight round the waist . Their faces are oval, with prominent cheek bones; the eyes, blue and hazel, seldom black, are lively; the eye-brows arched; the nose high and straight. They wear no hair on the fore part of the head, but suffer it to flow in profusion from the crown. Their complexions are clear, but they have the habit, which Strabo remarks as the custom of the Illyrians, of tattooing their arms and legs. The women are tall and strong, but bear in their countenances the stamp of wretchedness and hard labor. The Albanian costume is extremely elegant, and may be made very costly . Those who can afford it wear three jackets of velvet or cloth, richly embroidered with gold and silver, white “fustanelles” or kilts, bound round the waist by a shawl and belt, which contains their pistols, embroidered garters and sandals, the bottom of which is of goat -skin, and the upper part of catgut. To this are added the small red cap, and the shaggy capote or cloak, which is worn by all classes, and forms their chief defence against the weather. The dress of the women is very fanciful; those of Cesarades are chiefly clothed in red cotton, and their heads covered with a shawl which looks like a helmet or crest. In other parts of Albania they wear white woollen, and the younger women a skull-cap, composed of pieces of silver coin, with their hair falling in long braids, also strung with money.

-John Murray's hand-book for travellers in the Ionian Islands, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, and Constantinople, London 1845

Navigating architectural developments as a product of tourism in Albania is no easy task. Specifically because through much of history, the country has been conquered or colonized by various external powers, thus lacking long and stable periods of hegemony. These powers have all exerted strong cultural influence on the territories and people of Albania which in turn also touched upon the urban fabric and architectural evolution. The effects of such influence has yielded to a collage of architectural intrusions and elements making up the “vernacular”, which depending on the historical and geopolitical lens of interrogation one applies, might reveal one or various influences from outside. The internal fabric also complicates things in the same manner and can also be “blamed” for the added complication.

Historically speaking, one has to agree with Adolph Stiller's (Austrian architect) observation when noting the lack of a national identity due to the absence of harmony between governing bodies and power hungry clans, but also due to the fact that “the north differed from the south not only

through a very divergent dialect, the coastal areas had always been a separate region and the many different religions constituted another hindrance”⁹⁴. All these circumstances, Stiller goes on to say, neglected [hegemonic] architectural developments until the early 1940s.⁹⁵ This negligence can also relate to the architecture and infrastructures associated with tourism – one of the reasons why this thesis focuses on the time period of the Cold War. However, the importance of tracing certain advancements in this field prior to the Cold War still remains crucial. Particularly because these moments helped frame the context in which Albania was operating from while becoming a backdrop of collages on which a new Albanian identity begins to take place. Therefore, one must start this journey of tracing prior to the start of the Cold War. To this end, this chapter will navigate through architectural developments of Ottoman origin, infusions of Austro-Hungarian and Italian disruptions, all of which were put to pause throughout the interwar periods.

The Ottoman Years

From 1385 to 1912 Albania was under Ottoman rule.⁹⁶ For five centuries, the state of tourism was governed strictly from the Ottoman empire, as Albania “served as [a] nucleus of the centralized Ottoman state, which also proclaimed a network of traveling combined with urban nodes, to articulate the power of this form of state, to meet the empire’s needs and develop the commercial trade”⁹⁷. The majority of the Balkan region was also under Ottoman rule during much of this time period – with Albania being the last to receive its independence. Turkish conquests in the Balkans spread from Bosnia to Thrace, and from Peloponnesia to Wallachia⁹⁸, giving rise to what

⁹⁴ Stiller, *Albania, Decades of Architecture in Political Context*, 26

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ US Department of State, *Background Note: Albania (2001)*, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/>

⁹⁷ Istrefaj, *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism*, 79

⁹⁸ Pinon, *The Ottoman Cities of the Balkans*, 147

urban scholars and historians have called the “Ottoman Balkan cities”⁹⁹. Though the Ottoman city of the Balkans is “more often than not simply an adaptation of the Byzantine city”¹⁰⁰, certain differences had to appear from one region to another for this adaptation to take place. With the approach of the 18th century, part of this adaptation meant the extension of the city beyond the Byzantine walls of city fortification.¹⁰¹ According to French architect and historian Pierre Pinon, as the Ottoman Balkan city was expanding beyond its fortress perimeter “markets were created close by the Byzantine walls...this configuration, consisting of a Byzantine fortress, a bazaar (or çarsi) and residential quarters, was developed in Bursa and was then reproduced in Edirne, Athens, Jannina, and Shkodër (Albania)”¹⁰². In regards to these markets, bazaars or *pazar* in Albanian, Pinon continues to say:

The market, surrounded by caravanserais (han), is omnipresent in Ottoman Balkan cities, from Sarajevo to Plodiv, from Skopje to Jannina, and exists under various names derived from “çarsi” (carsija in Bosnia or Macedonia) and from “bazaar” (pazar in Albania). Albania and Kosovo, for instance, still have numerous bazaars, in Gjirokastër, Elbasan, Pec, and Gjakove, perhaps including a bedesten (or bezistan, meaning an enclosed market), as in Shkodër, Berat, Skup, Prizren, or Pristina. This çarsi is generally composed of a regular and dense network of alleys lined with wooden shops. More rarely, as in Kruja, it is linear, constituting the backbone of the city.¹⁰³

In Albania, the *pazar* was many times adjacent to the citadel (hisar) as apparent in Shkodër,¹⁰⁴ constituting the center of a fan – “whereby a space is distributed from a central, or obligatory, point towards the urban margins, these matrices then being continued by roads”¹⁰⁵. Since *pazaret* (plural) occupied a part of the city dedicated entirely to trade, they were organized in zones which featured areas specifically for trade, production shops, and early structures specifically built for

⁹⁹ Pinon, *The Ottoman Cities of the Balkans*, 147

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 147

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 149

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 154

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

accommodation known as khans, *hane* (albanian plural), or inns¹⁰⁶, becoming the most common type of tourism infrastructure. In the 1845 printed edition of John Murray's hand-book for travelers in the Ionian Islands, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, and Constantinople, these structures were described as follows:

There are no inns of any description in Albania. The only places of accommodation are khans, which are buildings erected by the government for the accommodation of travelers, and are very plentiful on all the main roads. They are entirely unfurnished; in some there are a good many rooms, and the building itself is surrounded by a wall enclosing a courtyard, in which the horses are turned for the night.¹⁰⁷

According to a 2014 study from Epoka University, Albanian inns were developed in large quantities and “on the same functional basis and with similarities with inns of Turkey, but smaller in dimensions and modest in decorative treatment”¹⁰⁸. At its most common form, the inn was designed with two floors and featured an internal courtyard **[Figure 1.1]**.¹⁰⁹ “The first floor served partly for the animals and partly with facilities for the client...the upper floor was organized with rooms along a perimetral hallway facing the yard.”¹¹⁰ All inns were constructed with local materials i.e. stone, brick, and the occasional *qerpike* **[Figure 1.2]**.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Dervishi and Shota and Sulo, *A Comparative Study of Ottoman Inns*, 141-1

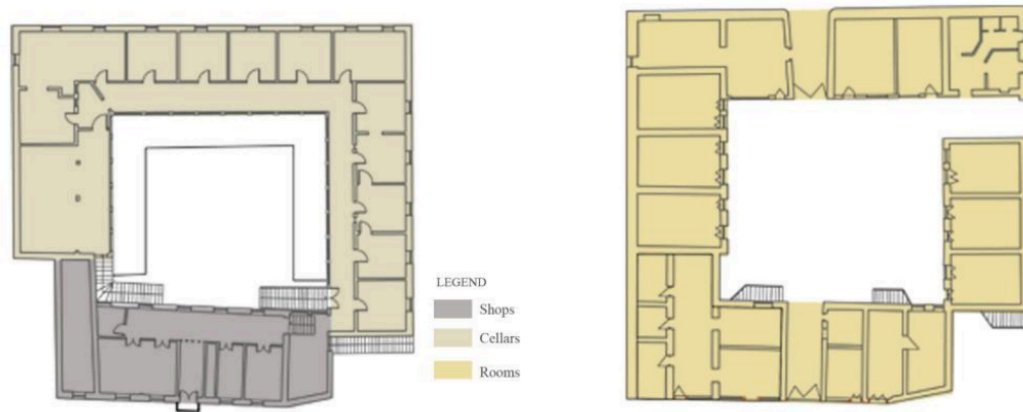
¹⁰⁷ Murray, *Hand-book for travelers*, 379

¹⁰⁸ Dervishi and Shota and Sulo, *A Comparative Study of Ottoman Inns*, 141-3

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 141-4



[Figure 1.1] Manastiri Inn in the pazar of Korca,
 (Ref: Dervishi and Shota and Sulo, *A Comparative Study of Ottoman Inns*)



[Figure 1.2] View of the main facade of Manastiri Inn
 (Ref: Dervishi and Shota and Sulo, *A Comparative Study of Ottoman Inns*)

The cities with a large amount of inns were Korca, Shkodra, Kavaja, Tirana, Kruja, Elbasan.¹¹² Initially inns offered services for travelers to stay during the day whereas later they evolved to offering overnight stay.¹¹³ The authors of the study stress that “the large number of inns demonstrates the clientele of the bazaar”¹¹⁴. I would argue that more than a reflection of the

¹¹² Dervishi and Shota and Sulo, *A Comparative Study of Ottoman Inns*, 141-3

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

clientele, the large number of inns demonstrate an active and healthy early tourism industry – of course fueled by trade rather than by modern conceptions of leisure. This in turn means that the Ottoman empire recognized the strategic and prominent location of Albania in Balkan peninsula, thus investing in “tourism” through these structures. Some historians have even hinted at a possible “special relation” which the Ottomans considered Albania to be a part of, which of course could have also attributed in the investments of inns throughout the country (alot of Albanian personalities held high ranks among Ottoman state institutions).¹¹⁵ As part of the urban fabric, these structures factor in the vernacular architecture of Albania even to this day – as some *pazare* and inns are still prevalent today. However, as hinted at the start of this chapter, the question that arises is: Can these inns be considered as modern vernacular Albanian architecture? Vernacular tourism structures?

A recent work of Skender Luarasi – Yale trained Albanian architect and scholar – attempts to make great progress with such a question. According to Luarasi, “the narratives of Balkan architectural heritage oscillate between two extremes: that of an autochthonous vernacular or so-called folk architecture and that of an Ottoman heritage”¹¹⁶. However, he notes that the answer to such questions lies in the “extra-morphological and extra-typological dimensions”¹¹⁷ architecture took form in the hands of the local population. While referencing the work of other historians, Luarasi places emphasis on residential structures, and observes the following:

...those [houses] of the second half of the century evince a greater emphasis on and sophistication of decoration. This aesthetic shift reflects the emergence of a bourgeois class and an economy that facilitated not only the circulation of goods, but also of styles from different regions of the empire. The Ottoman or Balkan morphological and typological facts did not disappear, but instead took on a different, modern role and significance with a new aesthetic intentionality, which often combined the vernacular and classical vernaculars.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Mita and Bajrami, *The Role of Albanian Personalities in the Ottoman Empire*, 194

¹¹⁶ Luarasi, *Survival through Architecture*, 45

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 47

Considering this, I argue that a similar frame can be applied in hypothesizing regarding the evolution of the inns, where the act of local adaptations through various morphological transformations embeds these *hane* as part of the modern vernacular touristic accommodation structures in Albania. One contemporary indication of this is the continuation of such morphological changes into the current day *bujtina* [Figure 1.3] adaptations which can provide a glimpse of old *hane* or inns. Similar to the inns, the two-floor standard is present while the courtyard remains an important factor.



[Figure 1.3] Bujtina Leon exterior & interior courtyard, Korce 2023,
(photos by author)

To establish such structures as part of the Albanian (modern) vernacular, Luarasi's final remarks are also helpful:

The argument here is not that this modernism emerged organically from an autochthonous vernacular, but instead the opposite, namely that such a vernacular assumed the structural function of tradition in relation to the new, modern style(s).¹¹⁹

Some cities in Albania still preserve traces of hans, now considered as part of the cultural heritage, and integrated in the concept of local, historical tourism.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Luarasi, *Survival through Architecture*, 42

¹²⁰ Istrefaj, *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism*, 83

The Austro-Hungarian Years

While the influence of the Ottoman empire was responsible for developing the typology of inns, the empire slowly began to collapse at the start of the 20th century. As a modern state, Albania entered the 20th century geopolitical arena after self proclaiming independence from the Ottoman empire in 1912, making its case at the Conference of Ambassadors representing the Great Powers, which took place in London in December of the same year¹²¹. With strong support from the Austrian-Hungarian empire, the conference proclaimed Albania to be “an autonomous principality sovereign and hereditary by order of primogeniture under the guaranty of the six powers”¹²².

At the heart of the problem was the question of whether the new Albania was to be oriented to the east or the west. The Turks argued that Albania could only survive as a vassal state of the Ottoman empire and therefore urged the acceptance of a member of the imperial Ottoman dynasty. But the powers ultimately entrusted Austria-Hungary and Italy with the selection of a prince.¹²³

After securing independence, the young country was poised with continuous instability in the upcoming few years. “State-building between 1912 and 1914 failed due to the destabilization policies of neighboring countries”¹²⁴, meanwhile Austro-Hungarian, Italian, and French occupation zones formed within the country during the first war.¹²⁵ Even before the war, Vienna, “overtly supported the strengthening of the Albanian national consciousness ...[since it] wished to lay down the foundations of an independent, anti-Italian, and anti-Serbian Albania in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire”¹²⁶.

After a series of political shifts through various provisional governments and internal struggles in legitimizing and maintaining order in the new state, Albania’s fate would fall in the hands

¹²¹ Fischer and Oliver, *Arnavutluk to Albania, 1912–1924*, 150

¹²² Ibid. 152

¹²³ Ibid. 154

¹²⁴ Csaplar-Degovics, *Albanian nation-building and Austria-Hungary*, 20

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 13

of Ahmet Zogu – a leader of the Northern tribes and interior minister to previous provisional governments – who would go on to use his political influence and rise to become the country's first and last monarch. "The 1928 monarchical constitution corrected what Zog saw as the flaws [to previous constitutions] and left all of the power, not just most of it, in the hands of the chief executive."¹²⁷ "During his eleven years as king, his principal concern was for the maintenance of his own power, while building a modern European Albania."¹²⁸ It was important for Zog to turn away from previous Ottoman (East) sphere of influence and shift the nation towards the West, going as far as abandoning "his Turkic name of Ahmet and [dropping] the 'u' from Zogu"¹²⁹. Many initiatives and reforms in areas of education, civil and criminal codes, and diminishing of religious power over government and law, took place in the name of building a modern European Albania.¹³⁰

As part of the continuous efforts to modernize the country, Zog maintained close ties with Western powers. Even post 1920 – at a time when the Austro-Hungarian monarchy had fallen – there was no disruption of Austrian and Hungarian help as Zog sent many of his ministers and close advisors to request aid and in turn received money and military advisors from Vienna and agricultural and medical experts from Budapest.¹³¹ The backing of the Austro-Hungarians penetrated through all facets of the new Albanian state. So much was the influence, that it even impacted the architecture and development of the built environment. From 1916 until 1935, "architects and engineers who had been trained in Austria were sent [to Albania] to construct buildings, roads, bridges or railways"¹³². These architects were not just from Austrian backgrounds. During Zog's reign many Albanian students received scholarships to study in Austria.¹³³ Over time, the Albanian

¹²⁷ Fischer. Oliver., *Interwar Albania, 1925–1939*, 207

¹²⁸ Ibid. 208

¹²⁹ Ibid. 207

¹³⁰ Ibid. 206

¹³¹ Csaplar-Degovics, *Albanian nation-building and Austria-Hungary*, 22

¹³² Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*, 17

¹³³ Csaplar-Degovics, *Albanian nation-building and Austria-Hungary*, 22

students returned home and integrated what they had learned in Vienna – even into the years of the communist regime.¹³⁴ One of such students was Luarasi's own grandfather (also named Kristo) who studied in "Graz in the late 1920s and early 1930s and [whos architectural character and principles] were consolidated in his early practice in Albania in the late 1930s and early 1940s, a period during which Luarasi designed and built more than forty buildings, most of them houses"¹³⁵.

As a result, of such exchanges, "in a short time, towns and villages were shaped by Austro-Hungarian influences"¹³⁶. One of the largest manifested examples of such shaping took place in the late 1920s when Wolfgang Köhler worked on the development of Tirana's (the capital) master plan [Figure 1.4, 1.5].



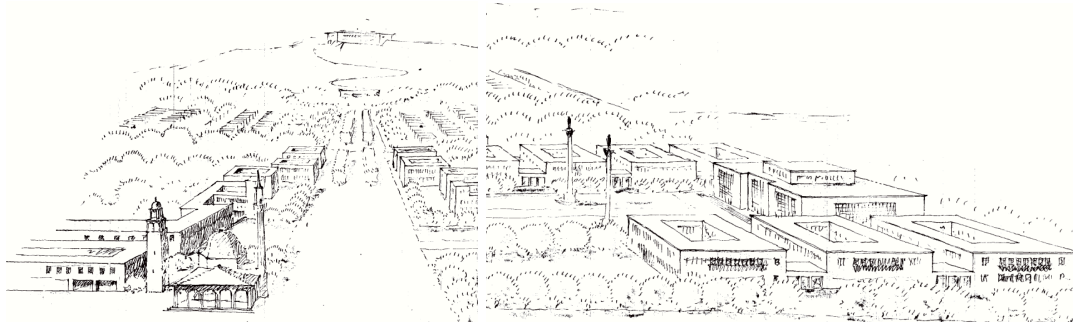
[Figure 1.4] Tirana Masterplan, 1929

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)

¹³⁴ Csaplar-Degovics, *Albanian nation-building and Austria-Hungary*, 22

¹³⁵ Luarasi, *Survival through Architecture*, 25

¹³⁶ Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*, 17



[Figure 1.5] Tirana Boulevard, Köhler, 1928
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)

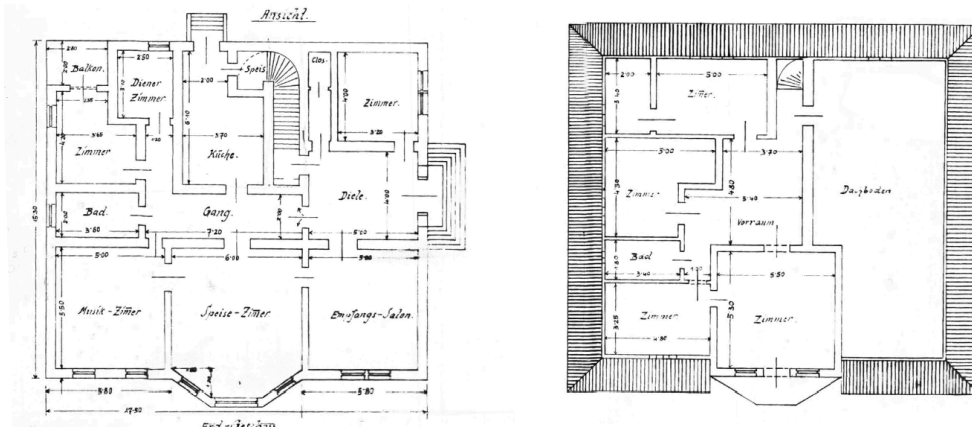
According to Nepravishta and Thomai, Köhler's plan "emphasizes the central axis of the boulevard from the Skanderbeg Square in the direction of the Royal Palace...[providing] green areas on both sides of the boulevard...[meanwhile the center] proposes a new concept of deployment of government buildings where the east-west axis is emphasized on the side of the bazaar"¹³⁷. The green areas of the "new" Tirana included plots which ranged from 1,000 to 1,500 m² and allowed spaces for gardens causing this part of the city to later be referred to as "Garden City".¹³⁸

In their detailed publication titled *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*, Nepravishta and Thomai outline Austrian influences and investments over various typologies categorized as dwellings, social buildings, and infrastructure. While under dwellings they provide examples of various one story two story houses, one interesting stand out is a separate section dedicated to the "Austrian House Model" designed again by Köhler who "attempted to bring the Austrian spirit to Albania" [Figure 1.6, 1.7].¹³⁹

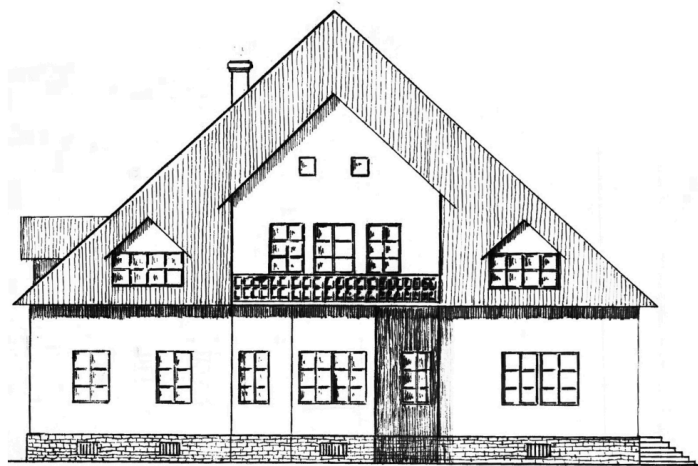
¹³⁷ Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*, 46

¹³⁸ Aliaj and Lulo and Myftiu, *Tirana*, 32

¹³⁹ Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*, 46



[Figure 1.6] Austrian House, Ground & Attic , Köhler 1930,
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)

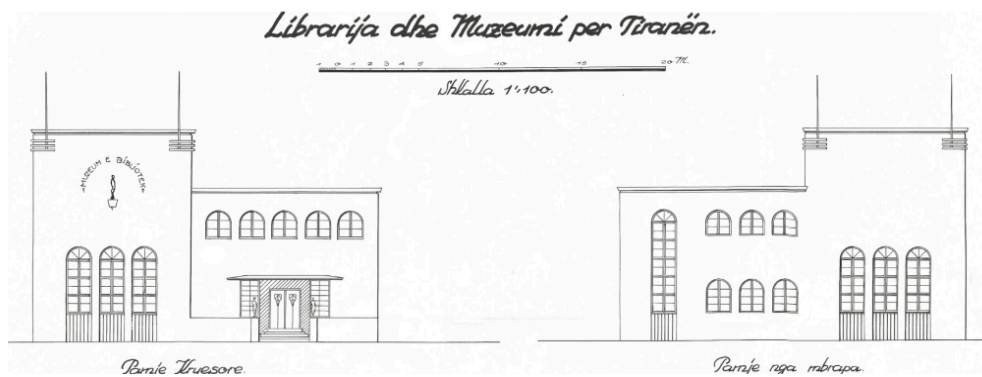


[Figure 1.7] Austrian House, Elevation , Köhler, 1930
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)

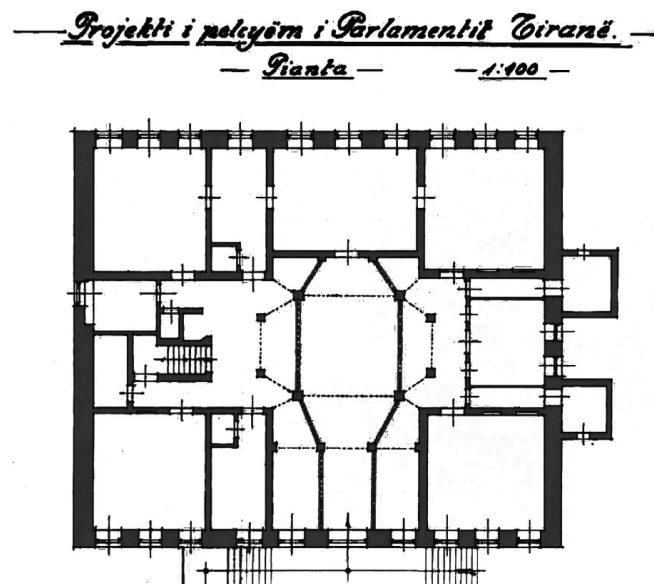
According to the authors, a square shape with an increased size of entrance, a steep slope of the roof and simple façades constitute elements of importation.¹⁴⁰ Other notable projects under social typologies feature designs for the Library and Museum of Tirana [Figure 1.8], Parliament of Tirana [Figure 1.9], Stadium of Tirana [Figure 1.10], Hospital of Tirana [Figure 1.11], American Technical School in Tirana [Figure 1.12], Border and Customs complex in Durres [Figure 1.13], Skanderbeg

¹⁴⁰ Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*, 78-79

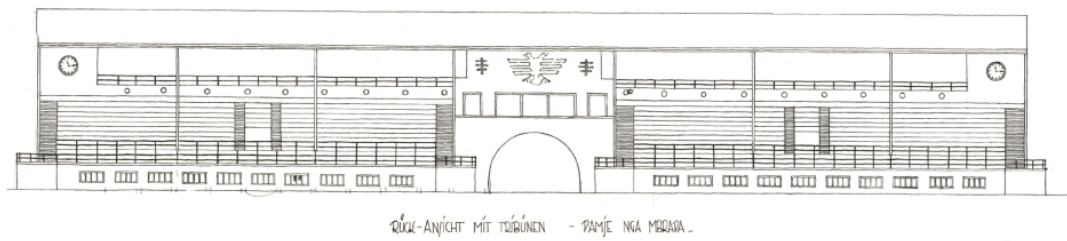
Barrack in Shkodra [Figure 1.14]. Meanwhile under infrastructure only bridges are shown as the dominant typology. With such landmarks and developments in place, it is clear that Albanian architecture was slowly morphing to a Westernized phase, infused into the Ottoman and vernacular fabric.



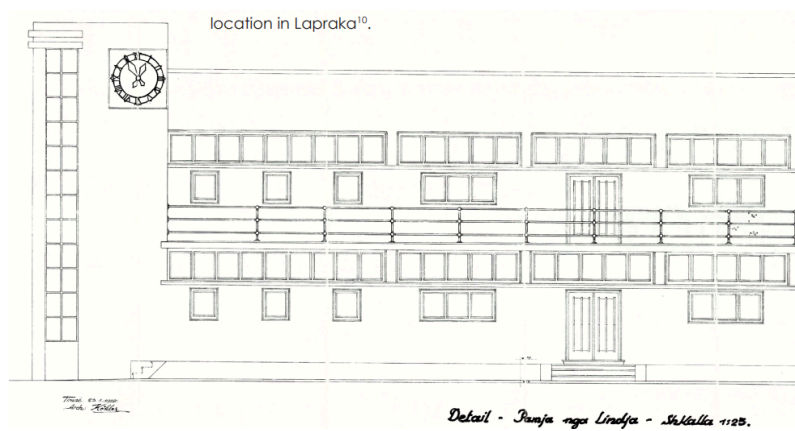
[Figure 1.8] Library and Museum of Tirana , 1928
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)



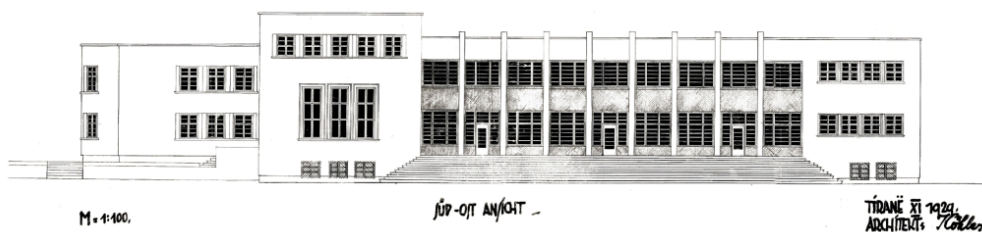
[Figure 1.9] Parliament of Tirana, 1925
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)



[Figure 1.10] Stadium of Tirana, 1931
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)



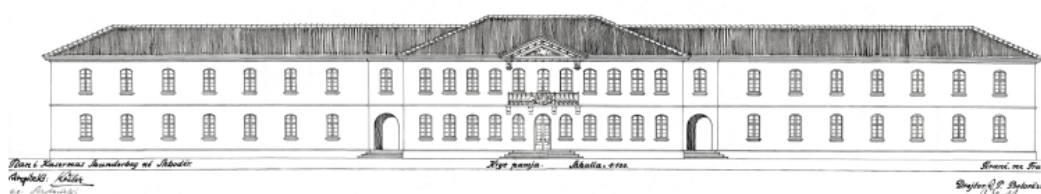
[Figure 1.11] Hospital of Tirana, 1929
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)



[Figure 1.12] American Technical School, 1929-33
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)



[Figure 1.13] Border and Customs complex in Durres, 1929
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)



[Figure 1.14] Skanderbeg Barrack in Shkodra, 1928
Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*

This westernization also bled into the tourism industry. As mentioned in the first chapter, the first traces of modern tourism industry and infrastructure could be attributed with the time of Zog's reign. The Automobile Club and National Tourist Entity internationalized tourism at an unprecedented rate, with much of the orientation aimed at capturing Western visitors.

In 1930, French Archeologist and traveler of Albanian territories, “edited the first French travel guide, titled *Guide de l’Albanie: avec un carte des voies d’accès, une carte routière et les plans de Scutari, Tirana et Kortcha*, in which the author states that ‘few countries offer tourists landscapes comparable to Albania’s’”.¹⁴¹ This travel guide also offers the first travel map of Tirana [Figure 1.15].

¹⁴¹ Porfido and Resta, *Journey to Albania*, 24



[Figure 1.15] Map of Tirana in Leon Rey's Travel Guide, 1930
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai, *Austro-Hungarian Presence in Albania*)

The guide also claims the following:

There are thirty-four hotels listed in this guide: three hotels in Shkoder (Grand Hotel, Pension Romano and Hotel Continental); one in Lezhe (Hotel International); ten in Tirana (International, Continental, Palace, Grand Hotel, Adriatik, Splendid, Stamboul, Ferrara, Roma, Pension Lewy); four in Durres (Splendid, Bristol, Isola Bella and Adriatik); two in Elbasan (Adriatik and Bristol); one in Berat (Hotel Tirana); one in Fier (Hotel Illyria); two in Vlora (Gambino and Adriatik); two in Pogradec (Tirana and Defrim); two in Korça (Palace and Monastir); two in Tepeleni (Europa and Adriatik); three in Gjirokaster (Royal, Constantinople and Lundjeria); and one in Saranda or Santi-Quaranta (Pirro Palace).¹⁴²

Zog also sought to improve Albania's rather primitive transportation and communications infrastructure with loans and help from the Italians.¹⁴³ As a result, the first traces of modern tourism industry and infrastructure could be attributed with the time of his reign. "With the orientation of King Zog towards Italian collaboration, especially after 1925, the organic structure of cities like Tirana and Durres, were gradually subject to mapping urban structures and developing urban

¹⁴² Porfido and Resta, *Journey to Albania*, 25-26

¹⁴³ Fischer and Oliver, *Interwar Albania, 1925-1939*, 200

plans”¹⁴⁴. Though through limited sources, Istrefaj – Albanian architect and faculty at POLIS university in Tirana – has summarized the following in her 2021 PhD publication:

It is recognized that it was not the quantity of touristic residencies that took the major attention, but mostly the requirements of the monarchy for sophisticated services and the first international promotions of the Touristic Albania. The typology of the “hotel” takes place during this period by positioning this typology in key parts of the cities in the same line with other important constructions. Overall, during the Monarchy’s existence, it is thought to have been 13 holiday centers and 27 hotels in 14 cities of Albania.¹⁴⁵

It is quite difficult to determine whether these hotels were new state built structures or whether they were adaptations to buildings from the Ottoman period. Many of the mentioned accommodation structures were destroyed due to war or have since deteriorated. Given the limited evidence and archival findings, it is also difficult to determine which structures – if new– received architectural influence and funding from Austria-Hungary, or in fact Italy which Zog also flirted with at this time. One thing remains certain, that many of the touristic structures of this time and their organization and operation were modeled on Western premises and imitations. Orientation towards the West was even prevalent in achieving the replacement of old Turkish power figures of khans (*bey, pasha*) with a new local municipality dominated by Catholic priests.¹⁴⁶ Through Austrian-Hungarian support intertwined at times with Italian supervision, Zog achieved “a reasonably stable, traditional, nonideological, authoritarian regime in which he even allowed limited political reform”¹⁴⁷. “While most other Balkan states that adopted a similar form of rule also included certain elements of fascism, Albania did not, primarily because fascism was associated with Italy and Italy [would later develop] into Albania’s greatest nemesis.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Istrefaj, *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism*, 84

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 86

¹⁴⁶ Porfido and Resta, *Journey to Albania*, 25

¹⁴⁷ Fischer and Oliver., *Interwar Albania, 1925–1939*, 208

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

The Italian Years

The flirtations and later aggravations with Italy would go on to define Zog's reign and also put an end to it. Mussolini's plans of a resurrected Roman empire included the absorption of Albania within the new fascist empire. His scheme of "anex[ing] Albania and create a colony without it appearing to be a colony"¹⁴⁹ came to fruition with the new 1939 constitution which "was typical of the new order that the European dictators imposed on conquered states"¹⁵⁰. From 1939 to 1944 Italy invaded Albania, sending Zog into exile.¹⁵¹ The invasion hardly came as a surprise since "the process had already started at the beginning of the century due to many economic and political interests, as proved by the release of books like *Albania. Guida militare* (Albania. Military guide)."¹⁵² "A miniature Fascist Italy grafted onto a Zogist frame was created. The result was a non-absolutist fascist military dictatorship in the guise of a constitutional monarchy"¹⁵³. To further Italian authority, the new regime needed to transport and establish its identity through new infrastructures which proposed "new urbanization and the creation of a group of buildings monumental, which not only brought together for the first time completely different European traces in the structure of [rather] oriental [towns], but at the same time there were also signals for the elements of a new way of life"¹⁵⁴.

As Musolini dreamed of reviving the Roman Empire, tourism in Albania – perhaps more than before – received a great amount of attention from the occupiers. The [Italian] regime, [understood] the promotion of the territory and the infrastructure investments as an expression of

¹⁴⁹ Fischer and Oliver. *The Second World War, 1939–1944*, 227

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 228

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Porfido and Resta, *Journey to Albania*, 26

¹⁵³ Fischer and Oliver, *The Second World War, 1939–1944*, 233

¹⁵⁴ Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, 13

authority which indicates the creation of “a touristic system”, Entity of Albanian Tourist Hotels accompanied by a clear vision for the tourism development for this land on the other side of Adriatic.¹⁵⁵ Just like Austro-Hungarian efforts under Zog, the Italians took on projects of developing cities at large urban scales, and also increased the the “constructions of hotels and tourist accommodations along roads, significant centres and major points of tourist interest”¹⁵⁶. Not only did they construct projects, but they also pushed high levels of touristic propaganda and pioneered archeological missions which amplified Albania’s popularity as a prime destination for tourism.¹⁵⁷ Just the discovery of Butrint ruins alone, was hailed in the same high regards as the archeological sites of Rome and Troy.¹⁵⁸

From their initial invasion of Albania, the Italians established a central planning office in Tirana called the *Ufficio Centrale per l’Edilizia e Urbanistica dell’ Albania* (UCEUA) and charged Florentine Architect Gherardo Bosio as the head of operations.¹⁵⁹ Mussolini’s regime saw Tirana as “the apex of fascist architecture in the Balkans; that city in which one could envision the coherent act of foundation of a new European capital”¹⁶⁰. According to Menghini and Resta, “fascism molded autocratic spaces by four main design tools: pure volumes, colours and materials, rhythms, and scales”¹⁶¹. Projects like Citta Universitaria, Foro Italico, E42 (for the 1942 World Fair) provided new “Roman Forums”, which served as modern Italian manifestos to be exported on all facets of the regime.¹⁶² In making the connection of such exportation to Albania, the authors maintain the following when discussing the urban plan of Tirana:

¹⁵⁵ Istrefaj, *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism*, 86-88

¹⁵⁶ Porfido and Resta, *Journey to Albania*, 26

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Menghini and Resta, *The grammar of Italian Modernism in Albania*, 429

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 430

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 427

¹⁶² Ibid. 429

Skanderbeg square became the knot between the old city and the New Tirana, a series of concentric circular roads connected different quarters and the North-South monumental boulevard, measuring one kilometre, provided the spine of the project: Gherardo Bosio designed the Viale dell'Impero [Figure 1.16] as a scene where to represent the power of the regime. At one end, he placed the administrative district, providing all the ministry buildings [Figure 1.17], at the other end recreational facilities such as the stadium [Figure 1.18], the Gioventu del Littorio Albanese [Figure 1.19], the Opera Dopolavoro Albanese [Figure 1.20] and the Casa del Fascio [Figure 1.21], in a dominant position standing out against the mountainous background [Figure 1.22, 1.23].¹⁶³

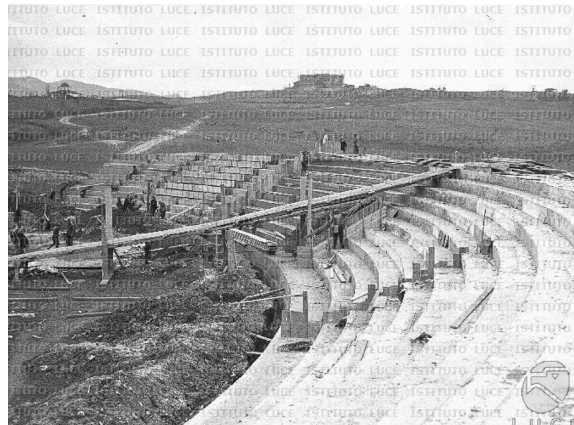


[Figure 1.16] Viale dell'Impero Tirana Main Boulevard, 1939 (Ref: Luce Institute Archives, <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL0000002630/17/prospettiva-viale-impero-sotto-neve-2.html>)



[Figure 1.17] Ministry building complex, 1940 (Ref: Luce Institute Archives, <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL0000003410/17/sfilata-reparti-giovani-albanesi-piazza-skanderbeg-occasione-del-saggio-ginnico-della-gioventu-albanese-del-littorio-2.html?startPage=540>)

¹⁶³ Menghini and Resta, *The grammar of Italian Modernism in Albania*, 430



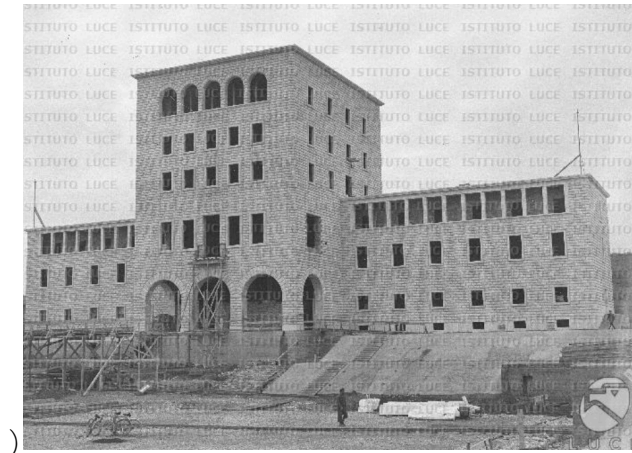
[Figure 1.18] Tirana Stadium, 1940 (Ref: Luce Institute Archives
<https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL0000001536/17/le-gradinate-dello-stadio-tirana-costruzione-2.html&jsonVal=>)



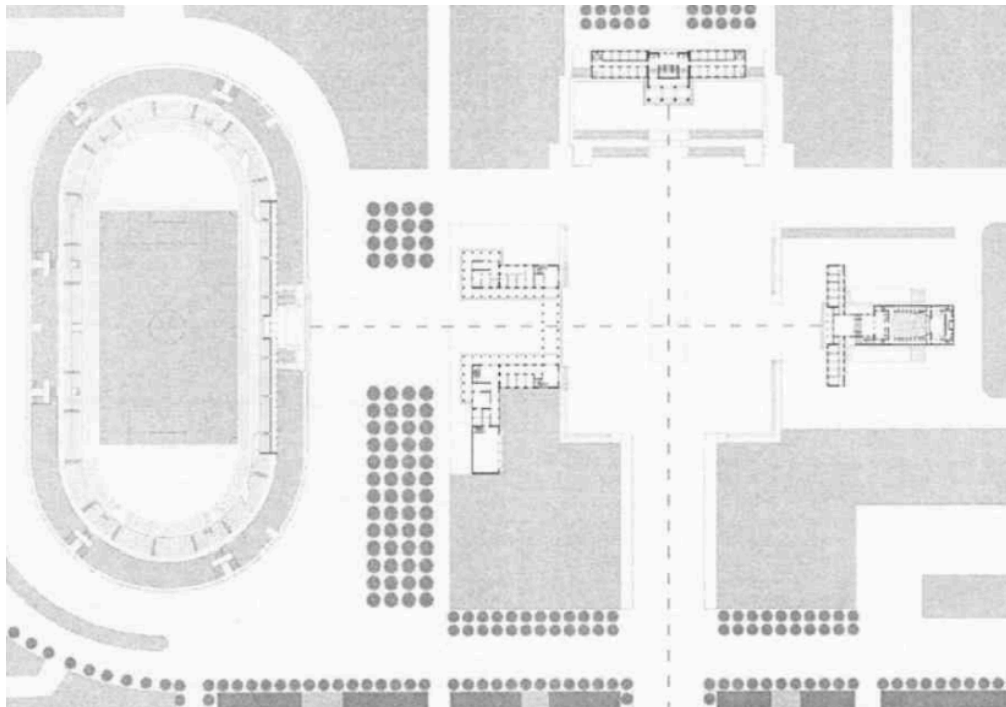
[Figure 1.19] Gioventù del Littorio Albanese
(Ref: Resta, Guiseppe. *The Italian Way: Urban Planning Heritage in Albania*)



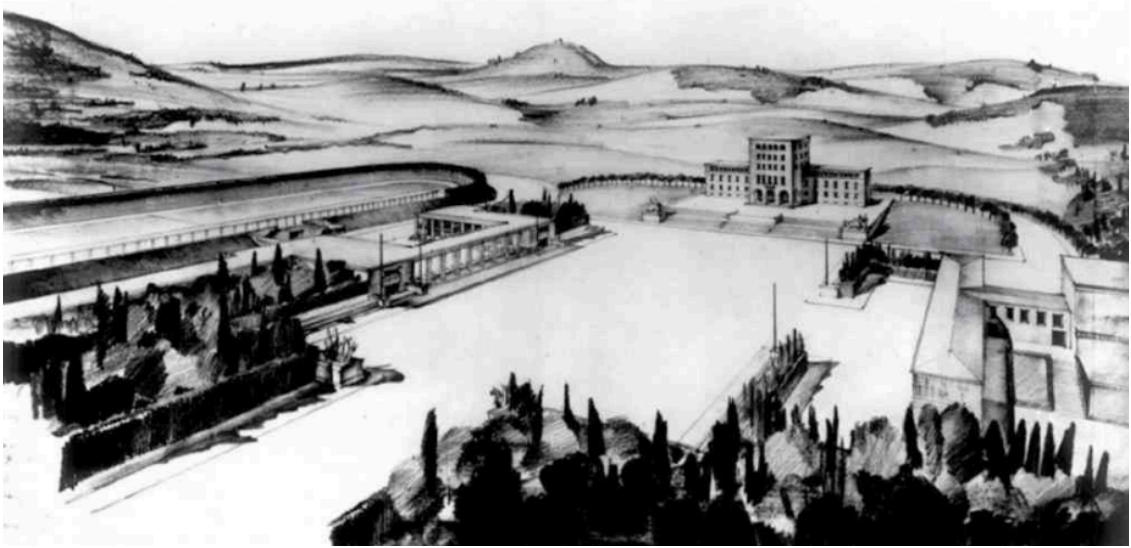
[Figure 1.20] Opera Dopolavoro Albanese, 1941 (Ref: Luce Institute Archives
<https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL0000006382/17/la-sede-opera-dopolavoro-albanese-costruzione-7.html?startPage=40>)



[Figure 1.21] Casa Del Fascio, 1940 (Ref: Luce Institute Archives
<https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL0000007370/17/la-facciata-del-palazzo-universita-2.html>)



[Figure 1.22] Plan of Piazza Littorio, 1940
 (Ref: Gkiosa, *Italian Imperialism in the City of Tirana*)



[Figure 1.23] Perspective Sketch of Piazza Littorio, 1940

(Ref: Gkiosa, *Italian Imperialism in the City of Tirana*)

Meanwhile, Durres was envisioned as “the main commercial hub of Tirana...[with]the most important ports of the Adriatic Sea”, Vlora and Saranda “consisted in the second and third maritime hubs of the nation”, Berat and Shkodra, “two towns that could count on a high landscape value, were planned with a close attention to the regional scale strategy, interpreting the ‘picturesque style’ of the place, avoiding rigid geometries and adapting the layout to the forms of the ground”¹⁶⁴.

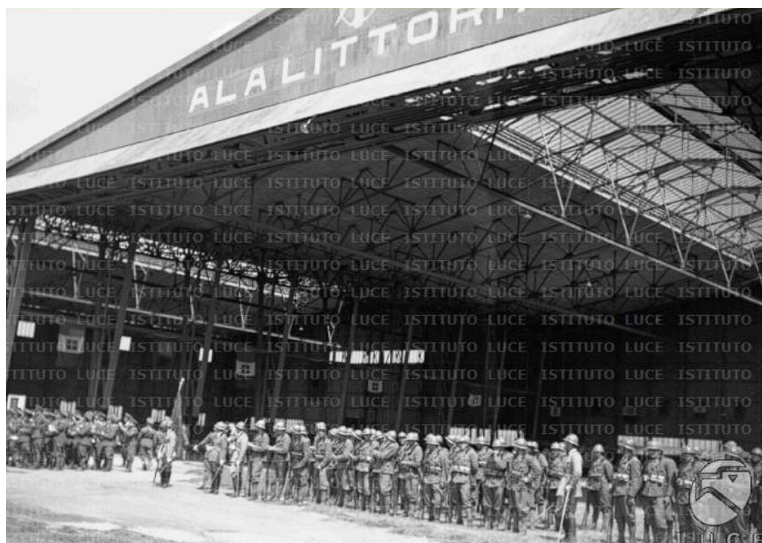
The transformation of Albanian cities provided the fascist regime boasting rights over the beauty of its regions, which at this point along with Albania also included “Libya and West Africa”¹⁶⁵. As Menghini and Resta argue, “the principle of a western city merged with an exotic one remained in all the versions of the urban plans, passing from a neat separation of the two to a better integration of new urban theories in the Ottoman built environment by the use of rings and planned urban voids.”¹⁶⁶ To further publicize the transformations of its colonies, the regime published its first

¹⁶⁴ Menghini and Resta, *The grammar of Italian Modernism in Albania*, 430-431

¹⁶⁵ Porfido and Resta, *Journey to Albania*, 27

¹⁶⁶ Menghini and Resta, *The grammar of Italian Modernism in Albania*, 430-431

travel guide in 1940 describing Albania as a “country of great geographic variety, with magnificent rivers, poetic lakes [...] plains and sleepy coastal lagoons, a land of strong contrasts [...] with animated and progressive cities, a highly suggestive country that always keeps the interest of every tourist”.¹⁶⁷ To help support the growing cause for tourism, archival images show that by 1937 the Italians had already constructed an airport in Tirana **[Figure 1.24]**, claimed to be the first airport in the country. In addition, the regime also put forth plans to design and construct the National Bank of Albania **[Figure 1.25]** as a means of extending their regime while also supporting international tourism through monetary exchange and investment.



[Figure 1.24] Albanian Airport Hangar, 1937 (Ref: Lucio Institute Archive
<https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000056072/12/reparti-del-regio-esercito-albanese-schierati-lungo-fronte-hangar-ala-littoria-all-aeroporto-tirana-occasione-arrivo-del-ministro.html>)

¹⁶⁷ Porfido and Resta., *Journey to Albania*, 27



[Figure 1.25] Albanian National Bank
 (Ref: Gkiosa, *Italian Imperialism in the City of Tirana*)

A year after, a monthly magazine of Albanian tourism titled DRINI began to circulate. Exotic picturesque covers of Albanian landscapes and landmarks were used to promote the country internationally **[Figure 1.26]**. “Each issue of the magazine contained articles that had as their theme Albanian history, popular arts, tourist places, above all various articles on the Albanian Alps, archaeology, local flora, legends and also on the Albanian colonies in Sicily, furthermore, in the magazine there was a section with the timetables of the public car lines that connected Tirana with Scutari (Shkodra), Durrës and other places in Albania.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Masciali, *The “Drini” magazine and cultural tourism in Albania*, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Albania/La-rivista-Drini-e-il-turismo-culturale-in-Albania-147827>



[Figure 1.26] Drini Magazine Covers (Ref: Masciali, <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Albania/La-rivista-Drini-e-il-turismo-culturale-in-Albania-147827>)

It is DRINI magazine, which in 1942 discloses the “creation of an institution which had the aim of carrying out a profound restructuring with the necessary, then modern, equipment in some Albanian hotels”. Aside from the renovation of existing structures, the institution would also “build or add hotels from scratch where necessity or particular conditions required it...[and] build in the capital of the Kingdom a large hotel which, due to its particular political function and national prestige, represented the best that modern hotel technology could offer”¹⁶⁹. Part of this promise was achieved with the construction of *Hotel Albergo dei Dogi* which was inaugurated in 1940¹⁷⁰, while the

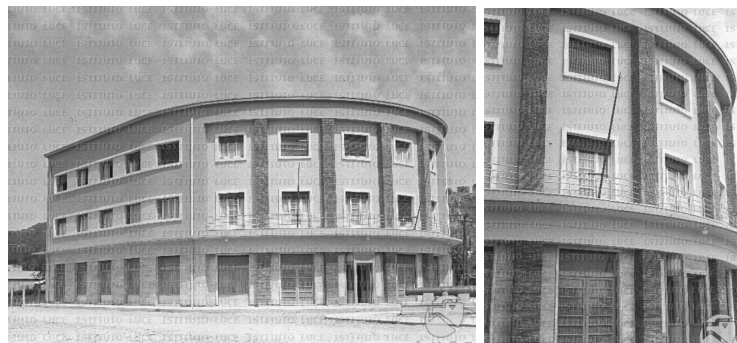
¹⁶⁹ Masciali, *The “Drini” magazine and cultural tourism in Albania*, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso, <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Albania/La-rivista-Drini-e-il-turismo-culturale-in-Albania-147827>

¹⁷⁰ Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*, 68

“large hotel” would come to fruition two years later and become the popular *Dajti Hotel*, “which can be considered the largest public work completed in Albania during the period of Italian presence”¹⁷¹.

Hotel *Albergo dei Dogi* alternated between a touristic structure of accommodation to a military hospital during the war [Figure 1.27].¹⁷² Sitting across from *Torra* [Figure 1.28] – a 5th century Venetian Tower which used to be a fortress of protection from the sea¹⁷³ – the hotel’s curved form is a reflection of *Torra*’s curvature while its two sides run parallel to *Torra* and the Adriatic coastline, thus making it “sensitive to its context [as it] intermediates between the historic architectural fabric and the geographic features of the site”¹⁷⁴. In regards to the fate of the hotel through the years, Giuliano Gresleri (in Siller’s edited compendium) recounts the following:

In 1944, it was known as "Majestic", and in 1949, during Albania's friendship with the Soviet Union, it was named Vollga. After the end of the close relationship with the Soviet Union, the hotel remained nameless until the early 1970s, and later was re-baptized “Iliria”. In 1999, it served as a shelter for Albanians fleeing the Kosovo war. The building is currently abandoned.¹⁷⁵



[Figure 1.27] Hotel Albergo dei Dogi, 1940 (Ref: Luce Institute Archives
<https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL0000003490/17/1-albergo-dogi-durazzo-2.html>)

¹⁷¹ Tagliarini, *La promozione turistica*, 6

¹⁷² Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*, 68

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.



[Figure 1.28] Torra Durrës with the abandoned hotel structure to the upper left corner of image
 (Ref: Ministry of Culture, Economics, and Innovation, <https://eu4culture.al/location/venetian-tower/>)

On the other hand, *Dajti Hotel* was designed by Bosio – as the integral architect – of the regime **[Figure 1.29]**. “He situated the hotel at the Viale dell' Impero boulevard's crossing with Lana River, where the most representative buildings stood”.¹⁷⁶ Keeping with the theme of deploying forms emulating the new Roman Forums, “the contrast of pure volumes on different scales: first, this contrast is created by the distribution of the main corps containing the main programs of the hotel, and on a smaller scale, by carving solids and voids such as balconies and loggias at the level of façades”¹⁷⁷. Built with a marble base and plastered upper body **[Figure 1.30, 1.31]**, *Dajti* included atriums, parks, courtyards, etc amounting to a total of 129,166 square feet development while it boasted “91 rooms and 125 beds, running water, bathrooms and all other amenities including a lift and dumbwaiters...[which made it] one of the largest hotels in the Balkans and among the most modern in Europe”.¹⁷⁸

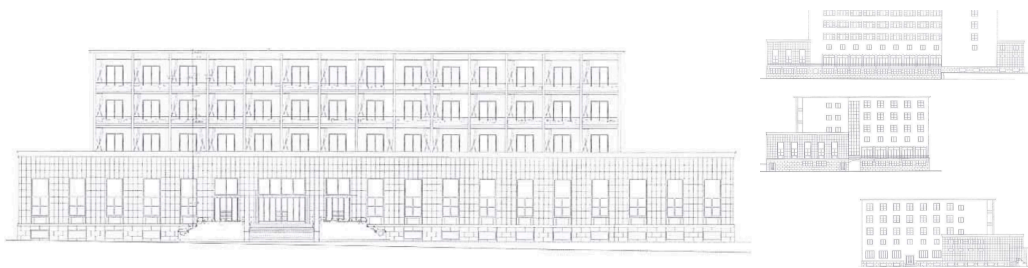
¹⁷⁶ Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*, 86

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 88

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 90



[Figure 1.29] Dajti Hotel,
(Ref. Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*)

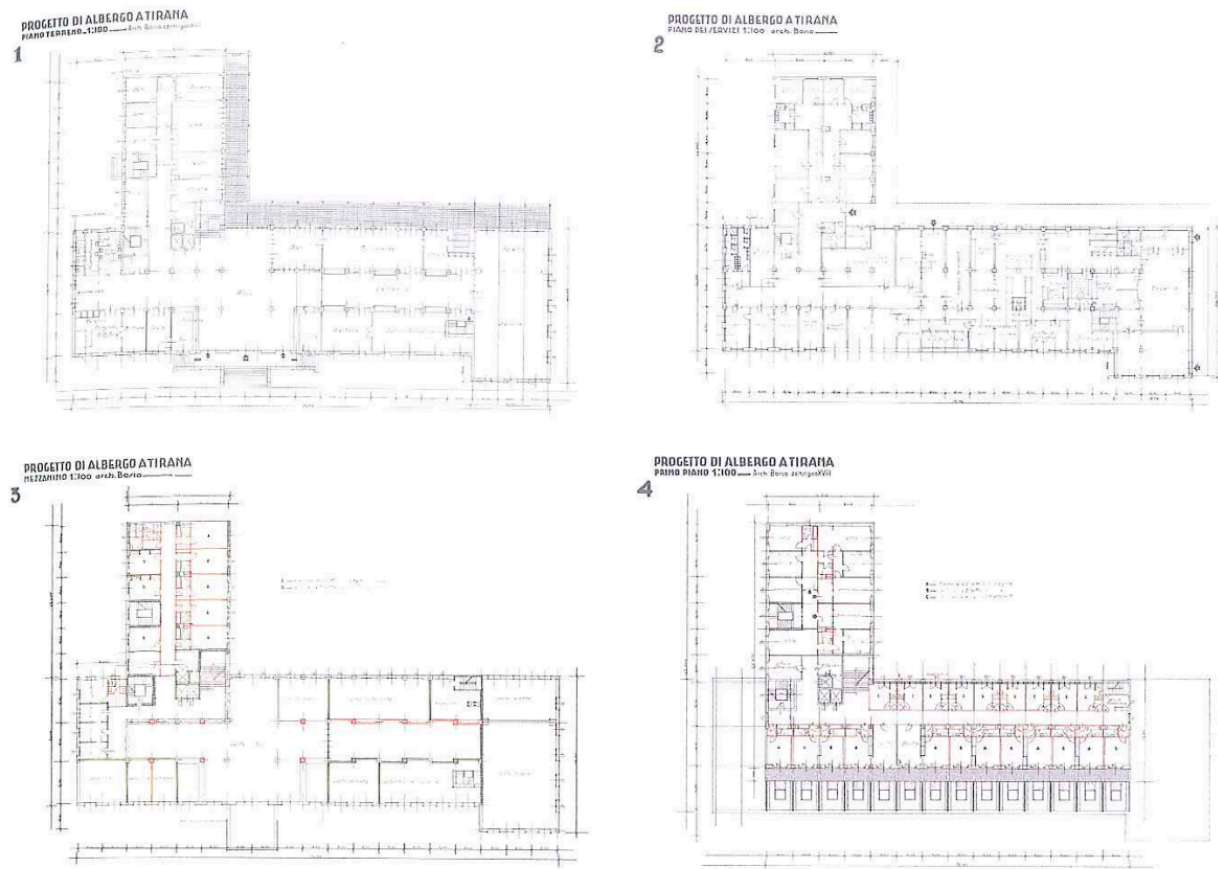


[Figure 1.30] Dajti Hotel, Elevation Drawings
(Ref. Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*)

Regarding the division and allocation of programmatic space London based architect Gkioska says the following:

The ground floor consisted mainly of a reception area, restaurants and all the typical collective activities of a hotel. The basement was mainly a services area. The administrative offices occupied the first floor while the top three floors were rooms, many of them with en-suite bathrooms. The entrance hall develops a double height with an effect of a generous and luminous space thanks to the large windows on the main facade. Across the great hall, in marble, there is access to the upper floors, where the rooms are located, and a mezzanine level, where the direction offices were.¹⁷⁹ **[Figure 1.31]**

¹⁷⁹ Gkioska, *Italian Imperialism in the city of Tirana*, 20



[Figure 1.31] Dajti Hotel Floor Plans
(Ref. Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*)

However, it is “the interior, especially its public areas, [which] reveal the complete modernity of the project and its elegance....characterized by rational organization of the spaces and clear legibility of the structures”¹⁸⁰. Due to this presence, *Dajti Hotel* is referred by many historians as “avant-garde”. The building enjoyed high popularity even during the communist regime, reserved many only for those of high importance.

While these two accommodation structures typically received the highest level of recognition during the fascist regime annexation of Albania, there were of course other structures for which the regime renovated or constructed at lesser significance. One of these accommodation structures

¹⁸⁰ Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*, 88

shows up in Italian photographic archives of *Istituto Luce* at the same time as Dajti was being constructed (1940) and is known as *Hotel Kastriot Pallas* bearing the name of the owner [Figure 1.32]. The photograph depicts Mussolini's son in law Gian Galeazzo Ciano holding a fascist rally from the balcony of the hotel structure. While more classical in form, *Hotel Kastriot Pallas* shows floors stacked under a wide and not too decorative pediment. Four narrow three panel windows are located at rhythm on the lower level, while the symmetry of such design is disturbed on the upper level as two similar windows flank the sides while the center is arranged with double doors leading to a small balcony. The hotel features a restaurant at the lower level and presumably rooms at the second floor.



[Figure 1.32] Gian Galeazzo Ciano at Hotel Kastriot Pallas, (Ref: Luce Institute <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL0000003207/17/galeazzo-ciano-saluta-folla-dal-balcone-hotel-kastriot-pallas-3.html?startPage=60>)

After World War II and the fall of Musolini, the Italian (and later German) invaders were chased out of the country by communist and allied coalitions, forever ending any further Italian

influence on Albanian urban fabric for decades to come. While Menghini and Resta argue that “under Italian activity, Albanian urban fabrics changed their dimension because of the introduction of new typologies of buildings (villa, palace, hospital, school, ministry building, bank, railway station, hotel and post office) as well as new urban spaces: the monumental boulevard, waterfront walkway and, above all, the Italian piazza”¹⁸¹, I would argue that a more correct statement would be that many of these typologies were introduced in conjunction with influences from Austrian-Hungarian developments, making it difficult to reduce them to strictly being new Italian infusions.

Certainly, as stated earlier, under Italian occupation Albanian tourism and investments in modernizing its infrastructure and architecture received the most amount of investment, publicity and propaganda. The introduction of the airport, various banks, and modern hotel structures such as Dajti and Albergo dei Dogi also increased the efficiency and efficacy of conducting tourism as leisure, rather than just for trade or economic transactions as done during the Ottoman period.

An Imported Tourism

The bigger impact in Austro-Hungarian and Italian influence is Albania’s orientation towards Western society, culture, and modern architecture. Catholic priests replaced Ottoman clergy, while “mosques, formerly built to be condenser of people’s activities, were freed from the dense residential neighborhood and isolated as monuments of the past...[as they now] served as ending scene of large streets, cutting the core of the city, abreast of a new sensibility for speed and movement introduced by car as amass means of transportation.”¹⁸². Italian and Austro-Hungarian urban methods of intervention revived and reshaped many cities, thus bringing them up to date with international standards of the time. However, what a lot of scholarly work fails to conclude or perhaps bluntly

¹⁸¹ Menghini and Resta, *The grammar of Italian Modernism in Albania*, 432

¹⁸² Ibid.

spell out is that all of the mentioned architectural typologies and urban transformations were done as a form of extending and maintaining influence over Albanian territories or to geopolitically control the region. To this end then, all tourism and accompanied infrastructures were strictly imported and enforced upon, without allowing a true Albanian tone to it. Italy saw Albania as territory belonging to the Roman Empire. All investment in tourism and architecture had only one goal which was full colonization of Albania. All tourism publicity – including DRINI magazine – posited Albanian landscapes and touristic sites as extensions of Italian history and achievements. Even the archeological findings of Butrint were promoted for Italian ambitions rather than to craft an Albanian identity of antiquity. This was evident in the 1930 fascist organization of a Virgilian Cruise or “a cultural trip retracing the mythological Aeneas’s trip, narrated by Virgil”¹⁸³ which would start with an Italian steamer approaching the Albanian coast from Brindisi and culminate with the guidance of Italian passengers throughout the places of Aeneas’s journey in Butrint by Ugolini himself.¹⁸⁴

On the other hand, the Austrian-Hungarian empire, though being the biggest supporter of Albania’s independence with no intentions of colonization, placed higher importance on geopolitical moves than the systematic development of an Albanian identity. Vienna’s efforts to strengthen the Albanian national consciousness was as a result of being “concerned that a Russian satellite state was about to be established in the Balkans and that Serbia might gain access to the Adriatic”.¹⁸⁵ Thus, “the interests of the Monarchy were not in conflict with Albanian nationalism. On the contrary, Vienna wished to lay down the foundations of an independent, anti-Italian, and anti-Serbian Albania in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire”¹⁸⁶. As a result, I argue that in both cases, neither

¹⁸³ Porfido and Resta, *Journey to Albania*, 26

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

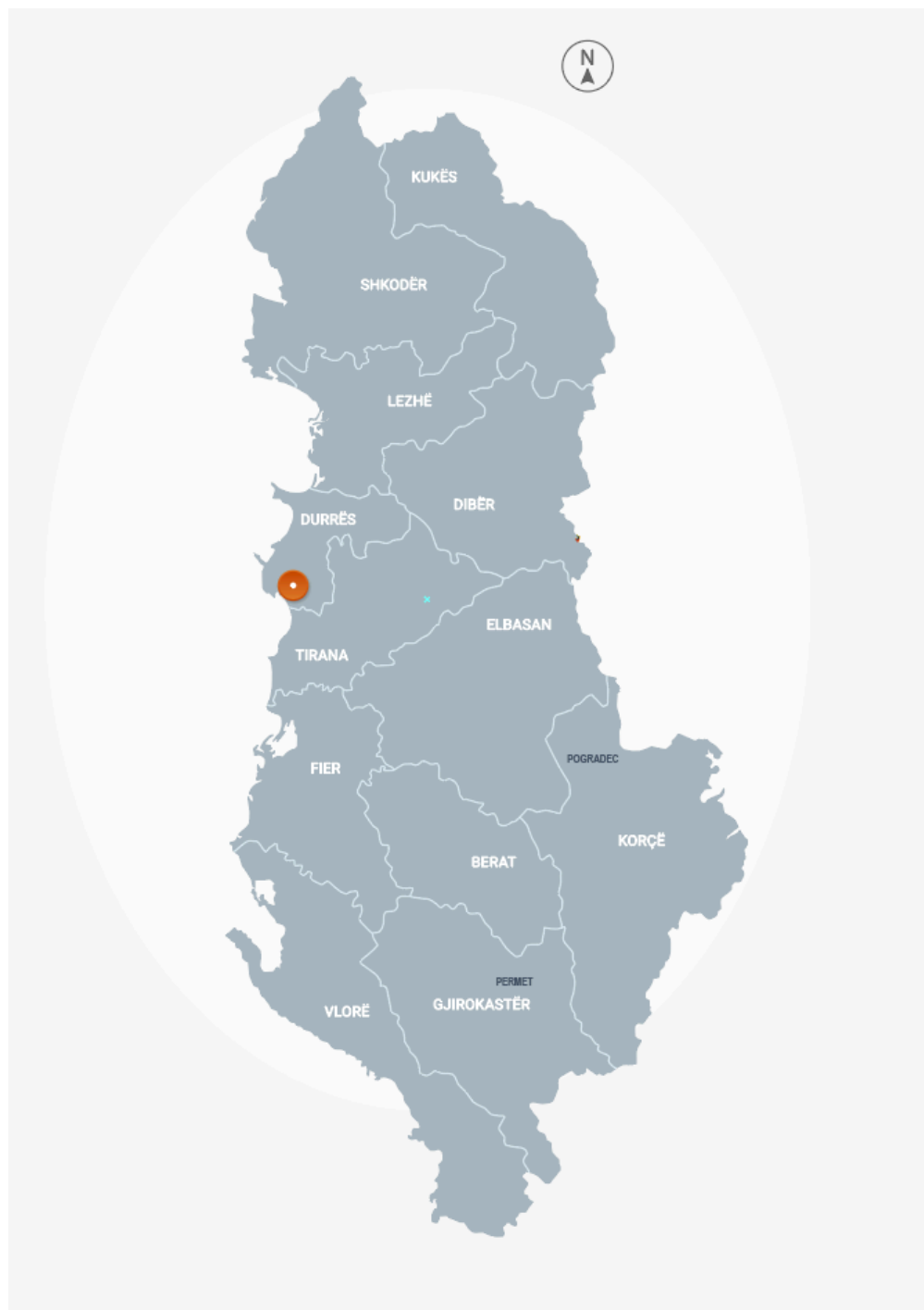
¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

dominating power allowed for the development of an Albanian national identity in architecture and tourism. The lack of hegemony fueled the lack of a national identity which was more than needed in the light of 400 years of Ottoman repression. Even to this day the structures mentioned above are seen as foreign agents, depicting a connection to the West and Europe (which was deprived during socialism), but nonetheless still seen as not Albanian. This lacking national identity and continuous void of hegemony which tourism displayed during this time, was prime to exercise and to be capitalized from the socialist regime. Though Mussolini dreamt of a long term occupation, “resistance in the form of non-cooperation and public acts of defiance grew”¹⁸⁷ among Albanians. In addition, “as early as April 1940, officers of the British Secret Intelligence Service (a section of which would become the Special Operation Executive, or SOE) became convinced that Albania was the ideal place to encourage guerrilla warfare in the Balkans”¹⁸⁸. The Italian collapse culminated in 1944 as a result of “a national resistance movement dominated by Albanian communists and aided and supplied by British officers”¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁷ Fischer and Oliver, *The Second World War, 1939–1944*, 240

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 241

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 244



*Hotel Turizmi structures built during geopolitical negotiations with the Soviet Union.
(Graphic by Author)*

CHAPTER TWO | From Belgrade to Moscow: Geopolitical Negotiations and Purposeful Tourism

So we see today, gentlemen, that the battle lines are clearly drawn in the great ideological struggle: revisionist against dogmatist, Yugoslavia against Albania, the Soviet Union against China. And thus it has happened by the strange and utterly unforeseeable operations of history, that two little Balkan states, Yugoslavia and Albania, hitherto of interest only by reason of their geopolitical importance, their exotic strangeness, and their past—that these two little Balkan states have taken on a vast symbolic meaning in the conflict raging at present within the Communist movement, and therefore the future of Yugoslavia and Albania is important, not only to the Balkan peninsula and to us, but to the entire world.

—John C. Adams, at the Naval War College on 16 November 1962

Definitions

CPA: Communist Party of Albania

CPY: Communist Party of Yugoslavia

CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union

CPC: Communist Party of China

PLA: People's Labour Party of Albania

PLSU: People's Labour Party of the Soviet Union

PRC: People's Republic of China

Though some historians have questioned British intentions, the hope that Albania would continue to evolve under western sphere of influence after WWII was quickly squandered with Hoxha's rise to power. Often portrayed in history books as an educated and “pleasant, good looking young man”¹⁹⁰ with leadership skills, he “quickly demonstrated a penchant for politics that allowed him to slowly dominate the collective leadership of the [communist party] committee”¹⁹¹ resulting in securing the role of General Secretary of the Central Committee in 1943. Together with other leaders of the national resistance movement, Hoxha spearheaded the Albanian Communist Party – later renamed People's Labour Party – while enforcing into the party ideals of “traditional Marxism–Leninism and democratic centrism, denouncing both social democracy and Trotskyism”¹⁹². “When

¹⁹⁰ Fischer and Oliver, *The Second World War, 1939–1944*, 247

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

the new assembly [of the party] met in early 1946, it formally abolished the monarchy, proclaimed Albania to be a People's Republic within its prewar frontiers and approved a new constitution along Stalinist lines, similar to the one in Yugoslavia."¹⁹³

After a short stint of close alliance with Yugoslavia, Hoxha – fearing an exploitation of Albania's economic resources – showed no intention of remaining a vessel of Tito, and shifted allegiance to the Soviet Union, which culminated with a trip to Moscow in 1947 where he would meet Stalin for the first time.¹⁹⁴ “While the process of building a new Albania began during the short Yugoslav period, the centralized planning and management, industrialization and collectivization that characterized Stalinism shifted into high gear during the Soviet period [of influence]...resulting in rapid development of industry and extensive exploitation of the country's natural resources, including oil, chrome, copper, iron, nickel-ore and hydropower.”¹⁹⁵

The Yugoslav Negotiations 1944-1948

Perhaps the most complicated geopolitical relationship Albania shared during the Cold War was that with Yugoslavia. Not only due to the complexities of the post-World War political landscape and the Yugoslav influence on the formation of socialist Albania, but also due to the way Yugoslavia and its leader, Tito, was portrayed to the Albanian people. Sometimes a friend and others a foe, and at all times blurring the lines as to which was actually the true statement. As the years indicated by the subtitle of this section suggest the starting of the Cold War, and thus the beginning of an Albanian state dominated by the socialist-communist system, it is worth noting that “during the inter-war period, Albania was the only Balkan state in which, no communist party was created”¹⁹⁶.

¹⁹³ Fischer and Oliver, *Albania's Stalinist Dictatorship, 1944–1989*, 283

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 292

¹⁹⁵ Marku, *Shifting Alliances*, 83-85

¹⁹⁶ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism in Europe*, 14

According to the Polish academic and historian Tadeusz Czekalski, “this happened despite visible signs of sympathy towards Russia, as well as towards the Bolshevik revolution, which could already be seen in the press in 1917...[since] Albanians wrote about the Maximalists, (as the Bolsheviks were described in Albania) with sympathy...”¹⁹⁷

To understand the inter relations of this short lived alliance, one must first start with the early idolization of Josip Tito from the Albanian leadership. The role-model qualities which Tito possessed in the eyes of the Albanian leader were no secret. For Hoxha, “Tito’s army was an inspiration for all Balkan populations”¹⁹⁸. This of course hinting at the well known fact of the Yugoslav army labeled by many as Europe’s most effective anti-Axis resistance movement during World War II through its partisan units. Without a doubt the Yugoslav model and help carried over to the Albanian partisan units who also fought against the fascists and nazi forces, as by 1944 Albania it self “had an exceptionally large army, formed on the basis of partisan units”¹⁹⁹. Through this connection, Tito was revered as “the greatest and most loyal friend of the Albanian people.”²⁰⁰ On one occasion Hoxha even commented on the hierarchy of power in the Balkans giving Tito the utmost respect and admiration:

This is the time lest we be mistaken, i.e. the general secretary is not me, but the marshal [Tito]. We are a party like the parties of other republics with its secretaries, with the same line as the others.²⁰¹

In 1944, images of Tito appeared chiseled on the building facade in Permet where a congressional meeting of the party took place²⁰², while at the CPA Central Committee Plenum held in Berat in the same year, Hoxha praised Tito for the Albanian party.²⁰³ “The Yugoslav delegate

¹⁹⁷ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism in Europe*, 14

¹⁹⁸ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 15

¹⁹⁹ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism in Europe*, 25

²⁰⁰ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 14

²⁰¹ Ibid. 15

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism in Europe*, 23

present at the Plenum unscrupulously dictated the most important decisions”.²⁰⁴ One Harvard International Review article from the 1980s credits Tito’s dominance due to his strong control of the armed forces sending his enemies in total disarray.²⁰⁵ Tito’s model of eliminating internal enemies also served as a blueprint for eliminating any of Hoxha’s opposition. To this end, the Albanian establishment followed suit, resulting in the elimination of all anti-communist resistance movements by the end of 1946²⁰⁶ and alienation against any member of the party “that expressed skepticism about the role of Yugoslavia in Albania and argued in favor of establishing connections with the West”²⁰⁷.

This form of idolization as well as various other means of CPY influence over the CPA forged a sort of patriarchal mentorship amongst the two countries; where Yugoslavia was seen as the role model. At the same time, as other scholars have stressed, Enver Hoxha's strategic aim to gain recognition in the geopolitical arena began to unfold under the umbrella of the Yugoslav guidance. As a result, in May 1945 Yugoslavia became the first country which recognised the new government of Albania with Hoxha as its leader.²⁰⁸ Poland, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia would soon follow in the Yugoslav footsteps.²⁰⁹ Yugoslavia also supported Albania’s claim for war reparations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 describing Albania as “an ally which deserves the admiration and gratitude of all democratic countries”²¹⁰. Speaking on behalf of the Albanian delegation which was in attendance as an advisory role through support from Moscow²¹¹, Enver Hoxha “mentioned the number of victims which Albania suffered during the war, as well as the losses inflicted on the

²⁰⁴ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism in Europe*, 23

²⁰⁵ Dubrovac, *Tito’s Uncertain Legacy*, HIR 1980

²⁰⁶ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 29

²⁰⁷ Hadalin, *A Cold War in the Neighbourhood*, 45

²⁰⁸ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 29

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid. 30

²¹¹ Ibid.

Italian and German occupants, estimating them at 53,639 soldiers killed, wounded or captured”²¹².

In the same year, Hoxha embarked on a visit to Belgrade. During a series of meetings between the establishments of the two countries, “Albania and Yugoslavia signed a *Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Aid* [followed by the *Treaty of Coordination of Economic Plans, Customs Unification and Currency Equalization*]...closely binding the political, military, and economic systems of the two countries”²¹³.

After being decorated as a “Hero of Yugoslavian Peoples”²¹⁴, Hoxha sent an enthusiastic telegram back home highlighting a strong admiration of the foreign relationship:

Yugoslavia has been the biggest and direct supporter in the national liberation war, it will continue to be one of the biggest helpers of our people and the government. We have to fight with flesh and soul the chauvinistic tendencies of those Albanians who seek to revive the old grudge against the peoples of Yugoslavia. This is the line of the Anglo-Americans, who inherited the politics of fascism and intend to separate our people from our friend Yugoslavia and tie us to the chariot of a fascist Italy or Greece. With Yugoslavia we should also establish concrete and sincere relations in each level of activity. The possibilities are very great, the war has made it very easy for us to head in this direction, we cannot let any opportunity slip away.²¹⁵

These opportunities were indeed a double edged sword. It is not far-fetched to compare Yugoslavia’s intentions in Albania similar to that of the USSR with its satellites. That is to say exerting dominance “in order to control them and use their natural resources”²¹⁶. On one hand, The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Aid – through the “coordination economic plans, creation of common companies, revaluation of [the Albanian currency] lek in terms of [Yugoslav] dinar, customs unification the unification of defense armies”²¹⁷ – ensured that Albania was on its way towards becoming a “Yugoslavian colonial garden”²¹⁸. On the other hand, economic backing and aid

²¹² Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 30

²¹³ Biberaj, *Albania: A Socialist Maverick*, 20

²¹⁴ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 17

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 31

²¹⁷ Dranqoli, *Tito's attempt to integrate Albania into Yugoslavia, 1945-1948*, 193

²¹⁸ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 19

from a foreign power was a much needed support for Albania, especially after denying relations with the West and rejecting the Marshall Aid Plan.

According to a CIA document only made public in 2018, the Yugoslav support came in the form of 2 billion dinars loan, of which 1.6 billion were accepted by the Albanian establishments in 1947.²¹⁹ The loan was to be spent on investments aimed at industrial construction, energy plants, railroad lines, and petroleum and bitumen industries.²²⁰ “During this time, 600 advisers from Yugoslavia traveled to Albania in order to supervise industrial development, while 1,500 Albanians studied in Yugoslav institutions of higher education.”²²¹ One tally of these from 1948 included “43 engineers, 2 geologists, 6 architects, 2 physicians, 67 technicians, 24 mathematicians, 8 geometricians, and a great many others”²²². Other forms of aid came in the form of “protecting Albanian rights to German reparations”²²³ as “Yugoslav teams in Germany supervised the dismantling and shipment of [factory] installations to Albania”²²⁴. On this specific aid, the same CIA document reads:

As of 1 November 1948 the Yugoslav Reparations Commission had visited 129 factories in as many German towns on Albania's behalf, had supervised dismantling in 81 factories, and had shipped 3,133 tons of material for Albania.²²⁵

In addition, Albania received 721 farm machines, 90 tons of farm tools, 30 trucks, 22 electric motors, 295 tons of steel, 1,700 tons of anthracite, 5,547 tons of motor oil, 717 tons of gasoline, 2,500,000 meters of cloth, and 1,500 tons of sugar.²²⁶

The monetary form of aid and investments coupled with the supply of technical specialists, greatly impacted the reconstruction of Albania’s urban fabric which was heavily destroyed during the

²¹⁹ CIA, *Yugoslav Aid to Albania* (Information from Foreign Documents or Radio Broadcasts 1949), 5

²²⁰ Ibid. 2

²²¹ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 32

²²² CIA, *Yugoslav Aid to Albania* (Information from Foreign Documents or Radio Broadcasts 1949), 6

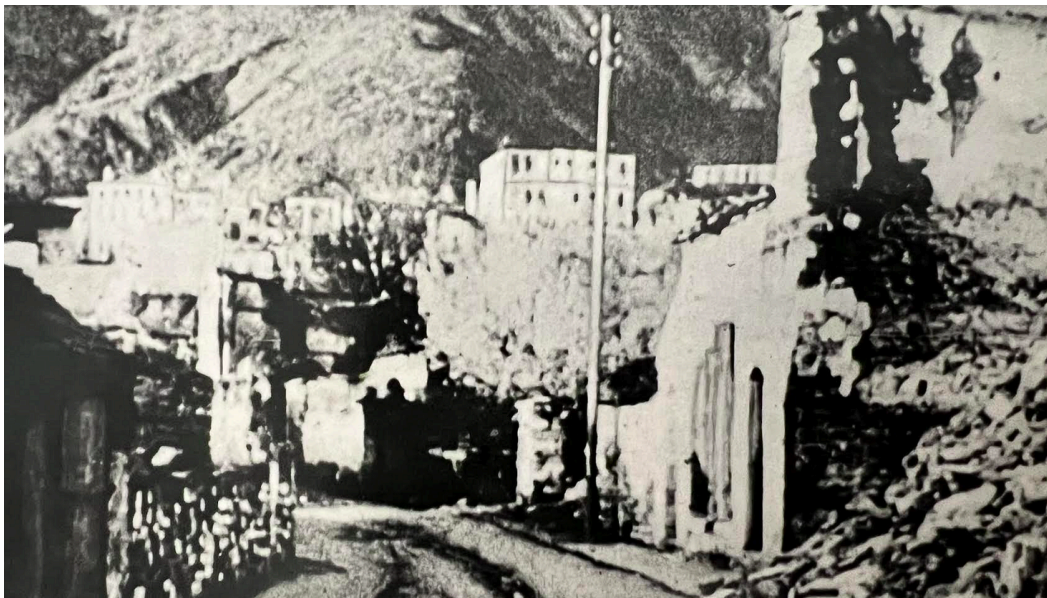
²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

second world war [Figure 2.1], while laying the foundation of infrastructures that would later serve as a backbone of tourism and Albanian brand of socialism. Especially important in this regard, was the construction of the first railroad line in Albania spanning 43 kilometers from the city of Durres to Peqin²²⁷ [Figure 2.2, 2.3]. This railroad connected the sea port city to Durres with the southern mainland (Peqin) with aims of a later extension to the city of Elbasan (119 kilometers total)²²⁸. It would be used by Yugoslav and later Soviet visitors into the country ranging from tourists to technical specialists. According to a 1962 document prepared for the Office of Technical Service in the U.S. Dept. of Commerce “the corporation which was building the rails was supplied from Yugoslavia with all the necessary construction machinery and tools as well as with means of transportation (140 trucks, 11 jeeps) and with all other material with the exception of ties and ordinary building material”²²⁹.



[Figure 2.1] The city of Permet burned 3 times during the War.
(Ref: 40 *Vjet Shqiperi Socialiste*, 8 Nentori Publishing House, Tirana, Albania, 1984)

²²⁷ CIA, *Yugoslav Aid to Albania*, (Information from Foreign Documents or Radio Broadcasts 1949), 3

²²⁸ CIA, *Balkan Railroad Construction 1950-1951*, 2

²²⁹ Dedijer, *Yugoslav-Albanian Relations (1939-1948)*, 145



[Figure 2.2] Peasants working on railroad line - year unknown.

(Ref: 40 *Vjet Shqiperi Socialiste*, 8 Nentori Publishing House, Tirana, Albania, 1984)



[Figure 2.3] Workers working on railroad line - year unknown.

(Ref: 40 *Vjet Shqiperi Socialiste*, 8 Nentori Publishing House, Tirana, Albania, 1984)

During construction of the railway, the Yugoslavs provided the construction companies and technical help ranging from personnel, engineers, technicians, foremen, skilled workers and all the necessary material mechanization, meanwhile unskilled labor was supplied by Albanian peasants and

youth.²³⁰ To finalize the project on time, the Yugoslav team took great measures in keeping their promise going as far as including 19 km of rail which was initially prepared for its own railway that was to connect Bihac to Krin and Kursumlija to Pristina.²³¹ In addition, to quickly come up with additional materials, extra rails were supplied by dismantling Yugoslav rails in the vicinity of Belgrade and Ljubljana while also ordering the iron works factory in Zenica to stop production for the railway Samao to Sarajevo and instead produced rails for the railroad Durres-Peqin.²³² In part with taking extraordinary measures, Zenica had to transform the iron rolling process “since the Albanian road needed rails of a lighter type (rails of type Ha)” and thus further stalling the completion of the Samao to Sarajevo rail road.²³³

The negotiations with the Yugoslavian side also yielded additional rapid urban change specific to areas of industry and agriculture. This was especially important given that at the end of the war Albania was left devastated by the fascist and nazi invaders with a weak economy, non-existent transportation routes, a lack of supplies and industry coupled by lack in skilled workforce. Along with railroad lines, in 1947 the Yugoslavs began the construction of a sugar factory in Korca.²³⁴ Though it is unsure whether they finished this factory or whether it was later finished by the Soviets, when completed, the sugar factory **[Figure 2.4]** had the capacity to cover at more than one-third of the Albanian demand for sugar.²³⁵

²³⁰ Dedijer, *Yugoslav -Albanian Relations (1939-1948)*, 137

²³¹ Ibid. 146

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid. 144

²³⁵ Ibid.



[Figure 2.4] Ruins of sugar factory in Korce / Maliq area - year unknown.

(Ref: Timea, WikiMap, https://wikimapia.org/14109200/Sugar-Factory#google_vignette)

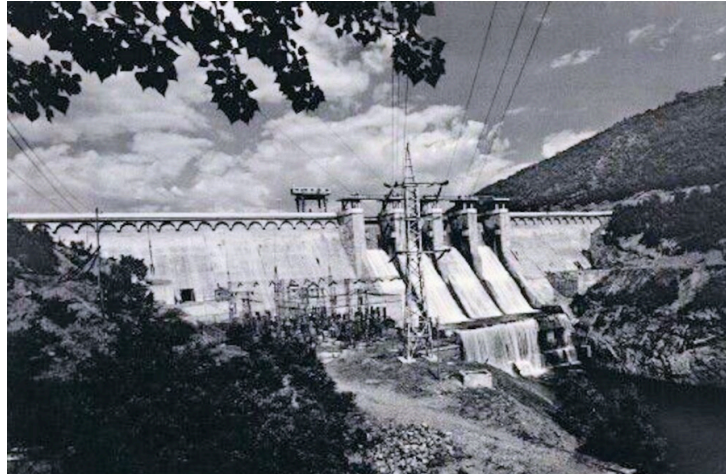
The Yugoslavs recognized that Albanian weather and land had favorable conditions for the production of cotton and thus the development of a textile industry. Leveraging their relations with the United States, Yugoslavia provided Albania a US purchased cotton spinning mill, “which according to its technical specifications was more modern than any similar device in Yugoslavia”.²³⁶ They also recognized favorable conditions for the production of industrial hemp, thus constructing a processing factory in the city of Rrogozhina.²³⁷ Taking advantage of the seaside, the Yugoslavs built a sardine factory – most likely in Vlore – while also supplying three fishing vessels and training programs for Albanian fishermen.²³⁸ Near Tirana, the Selita hydroelectric power plant was started by the Albanian-Yugoslav enterprise *Hidrogradnja* in order to “supply the industries of Tirana and

²³⁶ Dedijer, *Yugoslav -Albanian Relations (1939-1948)*, 145

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

Durres with the electrical energy”.²³⁹ This project would later be re-named Lenin Hydro-power Plant [Figure 2.5] as a result of Soviet help to finalize the project later in 1951.²⁴⁰



[Figure 2.5] Lenin Hydro-power Plant - year unknown.

(Ref: Albanian Tourist Places, <https://albaniatouristplaces.com/lenin-hydropower-plant/>)

At last, through Yugoslav aid, a modern printing press was established in Tirana with press machines sent from Yugoslavia as well as an automatic telephone station in Tirana and two sawmills which came with qualified personnel for the mounting and operation of these mills.

On the other side of the treaty, Yugoslavia benefited from selling their goods in the Albanian market while also becoming the only ones who could purchase from the same market. They were clever to exploit natural resources previously untouched or unexplored, and even gain access to sites which were previously available exclusively to other powers. In a move favoring the Yugoslav partners, “the Albanian government announced the replacement of the Albanian franc with the new lek, which was equivalent to the dinar. The rate of exchange, which previously had been 1:12.5, was

²³⁹ Dedijer, *Yugoslav -Albanian Relations (1939-1948)*, 147

²⁴⁰ Kaloci, *How were the big hydro-energy works built in Albania*, Memorie, <https://memorie.al/en/how-were-the-big-hydro-energy-works-built-in-albania-with-the-help-of-the-yugosla-vs-russians-and-chinese-who-exported-another-25-of-their-production/>

1:9”²⁴¹. This in combination with the abolition of customs barriers, meant that Yugoslavian goods like cotton, motor vehicles, fishing vessels, sheet metal, fertilizer, cement, glass, shoes, sugar, seeds, e.t.c would flood the Albanian market.²⁴² Various Yugoslav companies even signed contracts to “send their entire production for several months to Albania...[including] kitchen pottery and various luxury items such as biscuits, candies, marmalade, cosmetics, tooth paste, shoe laces, combs, and shoe polish”²⁴³.

Albanian natural resources slowly made their way to Yugoslavia. Upwards of “39,000 tons of crude petroleum, 2,494 tons of chrome ore, 5,623 tons of olives, and 2,117 tons of oil”²⁴⁴ were delivered in 1947. Meanwhile the oil wells in Patos and Kucove – previously leased to US founded Standard Oil²⁴⁵ – “which had been damaged during the war, were rebuilt, and production was begun and steadily increased”²⁴⁶. The total production of petroleum in Albania made possible a yield of over 200,000 tons in 1948.²⁴⁷ Copper also was exploited as the Yugoslav themselves sent engineers to introduce its production.²⁴⁸ One Albanian historian recounts the following observation:

“On the economic level, the Yugoslavs dismantled Hoxha quickly and without resistance. Their aim was total extortion. After the war, the Albanian economy was among the strongest in the Balkans. Albanian capital, if managed carefully, could have brought good economic stability to the country, as well as a good standard of living. In this direction, the communists made a mistake by turning Albania into a country that could be easily looted. They did this with joint societies, customs union and currency unification.”²⁴⁹

²⁴¹ CIA, *Yugoslav Aid to Albania*, (Information from Foreign Documents or Radio Broadcasts 1949), 4

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid. 5

²⁴⁴ Ibid. 6

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 7

²⁴⁶ Ibid. 3

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 17

Though this observation may be true to some extent, the reality of the situation was that “Yugoslavia provided Albania with financial support that it could barely afford”²⁵⁰, and many times the expectations of the return on investment proved to be short as a result of lacking deliverance from the Albanian side. The document released from the CIA recounts that “Yugoslavia had been scheduled to receive 10,000 tons of olives, 80,000 tons of crude petroleum, 22 tons of horn, and 7 tons of other material for making combs and buttons (of which only 2 tons of horn were received)”²⁵¹ but only received about half or less the amount of each item. Many other times the goods or materials imported from Albania lacked quality while costing much more to make than what the international market was offering.²⁵²

So why then continue this relationship? On one side the Albanians had “renounced some of its independence by joining a common economic area”²⁵³. Meanwhile, the financial support from the Yugoslav side was exhausting and at worst failed to satisfy all the Albanian wishes and needs.²⁵⁴ The answer to this would lie in Tito’s revised initiative of an old vision called the Balkan Federation. In this unification plan, Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria would act as a Federation with common economic systems and most importantly, a common military. Both Tito and his Bulgarian counterpart enjoyed federative views.²⁵⁵ The Albanian leader himself – given his idol’s influence – also shared similar views at one point having been quoted as saying,

What I said, I say again that all sectors should go that way, on a federal basis, with Tito being the general secretary. Thus the country will go to a federation.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁰ Hadalin, *A Cold War in the Neighbourhood*, 47

²⁵¹ CIA, *Yugoslav Aid to Albania* (Information from Foreign Documents or Radio Broadcasts 1949), 6

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Hadalin, *A Cold War in the Neighbourhood*, 47

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 16

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

To this end, Albania participated in many shared military initiatives. The Yugoslavs organized the Directorate of People's Defense in the years 1944-1946, as well as the Directorate of State Security in 1946 according to their models.²⁵⁷ In fact, these organs became their appendages, so much that "Tito gave orders like it (the Albanian army) was its own army"²⁵⁸. On this matter Dervishi further writes:

In a project that has been compiled "in the interest of strengthening the defense" of the two countries, at the proposal of Tito and Enver Hoxha, the unification of the two armies was decided, practically making the army of Albania, a division of the Yugoslavian army.²⁵⁹

From this point on, "the position of the Kremlin was of key importance for the future of Albanian-Yugoslav relations"²⁶⁰. In the first few post-war years, the Soviet leadership accepted the particularly close relations between Yugoslavia and Albania, sending economic aid through Belgrade.²⁶¹ However, starting in 1948, a rift between Moscow and Belgrade would slowly evolve especially due to the independent politics of Yugoslavia in the Balkans.²⁶² Albania became a key interest as Stalin "was concerned by the question of whether Yugoslavia, itself in need of support for its development, could offer similar aid to Albania"²⁶³. Some historians credit the placement of two Yugoslav divisions near the town of Korca (bordering Greece) as an extreme irritation of the Soviet leaders.²⁶⁴ As these developments would take place, Yugoslavia, in an effort to further increase Albanian dependency, refused to [truly] assist the Albanian manufacturing industry.²⁶⁵ The increasing Yugoslav dependency mounted huge pressure on Hoxha and others from the Albanian camp as

²⁵⁷ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 33

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 34

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 33

²⁶⁰ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 33

²⁶¹ Ibid. 34

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Dranqoli, *Tito's attempt to integrate Albania into Yugoslavia*, 195

“Belgrade’s politics towards Albania divided members of the CPA leadership...[given the rise in] skepticism towards the increasing proximity of Albania and Yugoslavia, and also towards the idea of radical change (referring to Federative initiatives) in Albania”²⁶⁶.

In a sort of genius move – and one that would finally propel him straight to the spotlight of geopolitics – Hoxha and his staff would head to Moscow in the summer of 1947 to meet with Stalin without the knowledge of Belgrade.²⁶⁷ On this matter, Czekalski writes:

The visit did not go unnoticed by the Yugoslav leadership. This created fear about the possibility of losing control over Tirana. Officially it was presented as a “friendly visit,” but the presence of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Minister of Justice, as well as high-ranking civil servants from the Defence and Foreign Affairs departments, caused suspicion in Belgrade as to the real aim of the visit.²⁶⁸

This move officially began the process of pivoting Albania away from Yugoslav influence and on to a close relationship with the USSR. Exactly one year later, in the summer of 1948, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was ousted from its Cominform membership due to its increase of hostility towards the USSR as well as “deviation of foreign policy and arrogant behavior towards other communist parties”²⁶⁹. Yugoslav foreign politics “had no choice but to gradually turn to the West...[as] the first Western aid started trickling into Yugoslavia discreetly at the end of 1949”²⁷⁰ The Stalin-Tito split, appalled Hoxha who had previously idolized Tito as the direct successor of Stalin for all socialist countries. Completely surrounded by an American-British-Italian-Yugoslav Greek coalition, the saving road of Marxism-Leninism pointed straight to the USSR.

With the new full backing of the USSR, Tirana’s newspaper *Bashikimi* (Unification) began circulating messages of the “treacherous, anti-Marxist and ant-Soviet activity of the CPY, accusing it

²⁶⁶ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 32

²⁶⁷ Ibid. 34

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid. 35

²⁷⁰ Hadalin, *A Cold War in the Neighbourhood*, 49

of attempting to deprive Albania of its independence, and trying to colonize it”²⁷¹. Writing in retrospect of Yugoslav-Albanian relations Hoxha notes,

We were expected to produce for the Yugoslavs all the raw material they needed. These raw materials were to be exported to the metropolis Yugoslavia to be processed there in Yugoslav factories [...]. The aim of Yugoslavs was, therefore, to prevent our country from developing either its industry or its working class, and to make it forever dependent on Yugoslavia.²⁷²

In early July of 1948, all treaties and agreements with Yugoslavia were annulled.²⁷³ “Accusing Belgrade of attempting to take control over Albania’s economy, the government in Tirana refused to return 500 million dinars, which is how much Yugoslavia estimated as the value of aid given”²⁷⁴. Any Yugoslav specialists and advisers remaining in Albania were deemed as unnecessary and undesired.²⁷⁵ To put the final blow to this short-lived alliance, all government offices were immediately ordered to place portraits of Stalin and Hoxha while discarding all images of Tito once and for all.²⁷⁶

While the events of Albania’s early allegiance to Yugoslavia have been recounted by many scholars, the lens of how negotiations with Yugoslavia impacted tourism remains a scarce topic. During this period, Albania still lacked a tourism enterprise which meant that there was no major development of accommodation structures or any other construction that would relate to tourism by modern standards - at least none that have been documented to date. As a result scholarly work has viewed the construction and urban developments of this time as a product of economic and or industrial development, excluded from direct ties with tourism. While this line of thinking is not wrong, it also neglects a look at the bigger picture of tourism development in Albania. Rather than a

²⁷¹ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 35

²⁷² Dranqoli, *Tito's attempt to integrate Albania into Yugoslavia*, 195

²⁷³ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 35

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 59

direct impact to tourism by today's standards, the impact of the Yugoslav negotiations manifested in laying the foundations for tourism to be built upon.

To demonstrate this, it is important to reiterate how damaged, destroyed and backward the country of Albania was due to centuries of being colonized combined with the destruction brought forth by the two world wars. The Yugoslav negotiations came when they were needed most and proved to be of decisive importance for the transition of the Albanian economy to a planned development.²⁷⁷ The urban developments mentioned in this section – albeit industrial in type – greatly increased the living standards of the Albanian masses which transitioned from what used to be feudal economy based only in scarce amounts of agriculture to an industrialized one with factories, mills, hydro-plants, etc. Not only were living standards increased– as people all of the sudden had secured jobs, pay, etc – but skilled labor and technical training was all of the sudden being passed down even to the common peasant.

The aid from Yugoslavia was of extreme significance in the importing and building of socialism. Not only did the economy grow in unprecedented rates, but the importance which was placed in the development of the production forces of the country for the fastest possible industrialization of Albania, and for the fastest possible transition of the Albania from its economic backwardness to a collective planned economy, propelled Albania years ahead and on par with other Socialist bloc nations.²⁷⁸ In terms of tourism, I argue, one has to view the urban developments that took place not as impacts on tourism by today's standards (i.e. leisure, travel and accommodation structures), but as infrastructures on which socialist cities could start to be developed. These infrastructures would later serve as display trophies of socialist state building which – perhaps more

²⁷⁷ Dedijer, *Yugoslav -Albanian Relations (1939-1948)*, 161

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

than in other Socialist bloc countries – became important sites of tourism in Albania as they were thought to display the achievements of the purest form of socialism.

The Soviet Negotiations (1948-1960)

The Tito-Stalin break certainly shocked the Albanian establishment. It's not difficult to assess the betrayal felt from Hoxha, who would forever harness a policy of paranoia against the Yugoslavs and their leader. Stalin's newfound love for Albania was seen as a second liberation²⁷⁹. One of Hoxha's top officials claimed that if it wasn't for the Soviet Union, "Albania would have been liquidated as a state"²⁸⁰. On this matter, Hoxha himself held the same view:

Our country owes her liberation to the Soviet Union [which] is the most reliable protector of small countries, their sovereignty and their independence... The Government will do all in its power to strengthen the economic, social, and political ties with the Soviet Union.²⁸¹

In order to completely orient with the savior that was the Soviet Union, two major things had to take place immediately; (1) a change of the party name to follow the norms of nomenclature in the Soviet Union and to also – I argue – symbolically portray a new and fresh start to history (2) a purge of all "Titoists" or party officials with strong ties or admiration to the Yugoslavs. To be fair, similar actions were starting to take place in other satellite nations causing a CIA analysis at the time to label such actions with the stamp of "made in Moscow".²⁸²

To kick start these changes, in the winter of 1948, the CPA held its very first congress, the biggest and most important event to that date.²⁸³ Starting with the approval of a name change, the

²⁷⁹ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 53

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Acar, *Small state playing the Asymmetric Game*, 75

²⁸² CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relationships*, 8

²⁸³ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 59

Communist Party of Albania would from then on be known as the People's Labour Party of Albania (PLA) – a necessary change “due to the social composition of the country and [the] Party which [was] based on Marxist-Leninist science”.²⁸⁴ Thus the leading ideology of the party was to be enforced by the teachings of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin, and to this effect, the newly named party would continue to carry on the “realization of socialism and communism in Albania”. This meant “building a society in which to liquidate the antagonistic classes, reconstruction of the country and the disappearance of contrast between the city and the countryside, industrialization and electrification, the development of the state cooperative economy for raising the economic, cultural and technical level of all people”²⁸⁵.

After outlining internal matters in front of Congress, Hoxha took the time to personally address the country's foreign policy moving forward in the footsteps of the Soviet Union. While attacking the United States and Great Britain, Hoxha declared that “in foreign policy he relied only on the Soviet Union and its satellite countries, [as] American imperialism helped the fascist regimes in Greece, Spain, Indonesia, China, etc., and sought to colonize the countries of Western Europe through the financial assistance of the Marshall plan”²⁸⁶. With Soviet-Yugoslav relations taking a decisive turn for the worst, in a most cunning matter, Hoxha seized the opportunity to strengthen his position of power by ensuring no Yugoslav influence remained within his ranks, and thus orchestrated a series of trials and defamations of party officials accused of being Titoists.

In a true Stalinist matter, this series of purges culminated in the death sentence of his second in command, becoming the “first East European high-ranking official to be put to death as a pro Yugoslav conspirator”²⁸⁷. With this gesture alone Albania became a typical Stalinist country. One

²⁸⁴ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 59

²⁸⁵ Ibid. 61

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 65-66

²⁸⁷ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 36

year after the meeting of the First Congress, the 70th anniversary of Stalin's birth was grandly celebrated, perhaps even more so than in the Soviet Union. According to a well-prepared program, celebrations "envisaged the raising of busts of the Soviet dictator in Korça, Durrës and Shkodër, exhibitions, albums, banners, putting his name on streets, squares, etc"²⁸⁸. As a symbol of the deep and strong connection with the Soviet Union, Hoxha decided to celebrate the month of September every year as "Albanian-Soviet friendship month".²⁸⁹

Things under the new overlords suddenly made Albania relevant on an international level going from "the epitome of insignificance," to the country swiftly turned into "the Stalinist avant-garde in the Balkans".²⁹⁰ Close relations quickly began to develop with the "communist parties of the East European countries that were called 'people's democracy' such as: GDR, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia".²⁹¹ Soon all of the bloc satellites "signed trade and cultural agreements and undertook to share in the Soviet program to underwrite the Albanian economy"²⁹². To put this in perspective with the years under Yugoslav influence, a CIA lead study notes the following:

Under Yugoslav hegemony, Albania had been almost totally excluded from bloc affairs. It had not been admitted to the Cominform when it was founded in 1947, and, exclusive of Yugoslavia, it had had military assistance and economic agreements only with Bulgaria. Except for a visit by Hoxha to Moscow and Sofia in 1947, there had been no personal contacts with other bloc leaders.²⁹³

In stark contrast to developments under the new hegemony, the final years of the 1940s secured Albania's admittance to the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance.²⁹⁴ By the start of the 1950s, "the USSR and the satellites were subsidizing one-third of the Albanian budget and providing the

²⁸⁸ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 65

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 35

²⁹¹ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 75

²⁹² CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 12

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

capital goods necessary to undertake the ambitious industrial projects which Albania began in 1949 under its 2-year plan.”²⁹⁵ And, to really make waves in the geopolitical arena, in 1955 Albania became one of the founding members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.²⁹⁶

Indeed, the 1950s in Albania, presented an odd mix of modernization efforts defined by a slow integration into the Bloc. The two major goals of the decade seemed to be collectivization and industrialization, the latter of which would require the expensive blending of equipment, technology, and expertise.²⁹⁷ As Yugoslav advisers and technicians were forced out of Albania in July 1948²⁹⁸, Soviet personnel quickly moved in the form of “specialists, advisers, planners, and apparatchiks whom Tirana eagerly demanded and put to use”²⁹⁹ With the Soviet Union fronting the finances, the building of heavy industries coincided with the cities “undergoing considerable transformations, [as] new Soviet-designed industrial towns were springing up out of nowhere”³⁰⁰. On many occasions, the Soviet specialist came in to finish what was started by the Yugoslavs. Such was the case for the regime’s biggest industrial showpiece known as *Kombinati* (combine), or the Stalin Textile Complex.

Located in the western outskirts of Tirana as a satellite city, *Kombinat* [Figure 2.6] embodied a full scale socialist city model, in that it featured both factories along with the development of housing [Figure 2.7, 2.8].³⁰¹ “It had a separate residential area with its own service infrastructure, its own electric power plant and was also connected to the Kashar industrial area by rail.”³⁰² The twenty-five hectare development would reach an astounding 4,500 number of socialist workers by 1955 with further expansions expected in the near future.³⁰³ Opening in 1951, its arched entrance

²⁹⁵ CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 12-13

²⁹⁶ Ibid. 14

²⁹⁷ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 10

²⁹⁸ CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 12

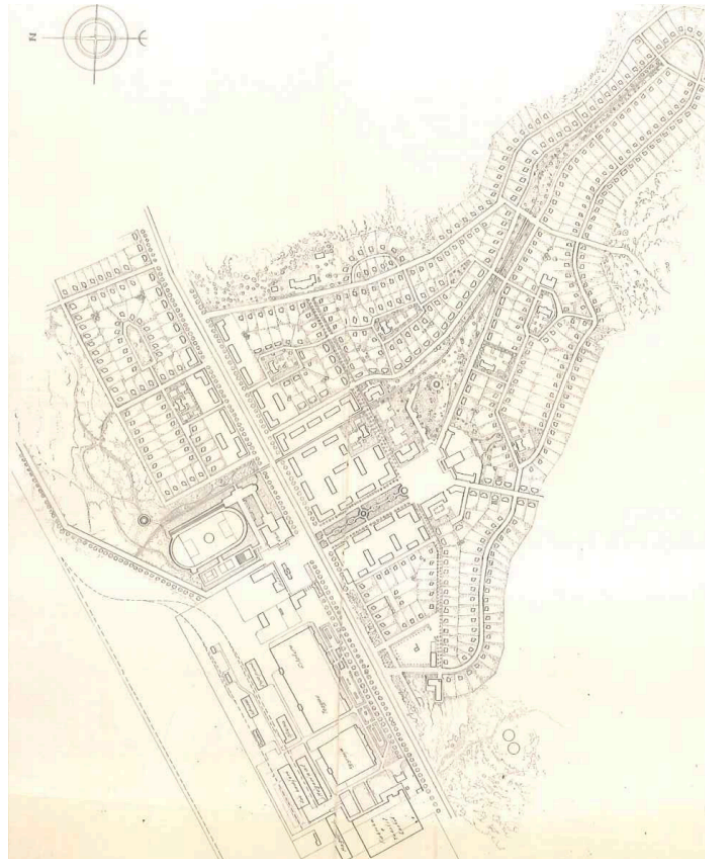
²⁹⁹ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 13

³⁰⁰ Ibid. 9

³⁰¹ Bushati, *Meaning and Symbolism of Industrial Architecture in Albania*, 212

³⁰² Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*, 14

³⁰³ Ibid. 120



[Figure 2.8] Kombinati i Textileve Stalini, master plan.

(Ref: Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*)

As Mehilli has noted “it was precisely this indistinct Sovietness that served to mark unknown Albania on the international map of Stalinism”³⁰⁷ For the regime, the project was bigger than what it produced. It stood for the “battle against long-standing backwardness, delivering precious Soviet machines where previously there had been only mud and misery”³⁰⁸. It also doubled as a generator of worthy human capital by “making conscious workers out of illiterate peasants”³⁰⁹ and by spreading *metoden Sovietike* or ‘the Soviet methods’ of production³¹⁰. “By putting the working class at

³⁰⁷ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 104

³⁰⁸ Ibid. 98

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

the forefront of the building process, the communist government hoped to promote a sense of ownership and pride in their country's progress."³¹¹ Such urban interventions were seen as an "effective tool for achieving social transformation and promoting the ideals of socialism"³¹².

Since the Albanian leaders kept obsessing over industries³¹³, city centers were also beginning to transform. To succeed in the display of socialism and to portray to future tourists the new identity of the state, also required the masking, hiding, and erasing of the past Ottoman and Fascist era urban fabric. Tirana, the capital, especially needed to embody radical transformations. For this, the Albanian leaders requested for a new Palace of Culture to be built **[Figure 2.9]**.³¹⁴ They argued that a new Soviet Palace of Culture Palace would "transform the center, [and also] make eternal the friendship of a new kind between our people and the people of the Soviet Union"³¹⁵.



[Figure 2.9] Construction of Palace of Culture
(Ref: Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*)

³¹¹ Bushati, *Meaning and Symbolism of Industrial Architecture in Albania*, 9

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 188

³¹⁴ Ibid. 187-188

³¹⁵ Ibid. 188

The potential for a new Palace of the Culture in the city center would also entertain the idea of “Skanderbeg Square, after expansion, [to become] the central focus of socialist parades and mass gatherings”³¹⁶ [Figure 2.10].



[Figure 2.10] Skanderbeg Square showing Palace of Culture.
(Ref: Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*)

As a typology, cultural palaces evolved in the Soviet Union as “centers of political agitation, public education, cultural enlightenment and entertainment”³¹⁷. These “were primarily called as Workers’ Clubs...with a criteria of offering “different social activities and organization of entertainment of the people of all ages; rational and economical use of the building area; minimum costs of the building supply and possibility of isolation of different activities from concert hall, which had resulted in provision of multiple accesses to the building”³¹⁸. In other words, Albania's Cultural Palace would truly serve as the country’s poster child of socialist unification. The boxy modern columns unapologetically do not follow any of the classical orders and are applied in rhythm

³¹⁶ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 188

³¹⁷ Yutsi and Dokaj, *Palaces of Culture*, 2

³¹⁸ Ibid. 3

along the North-South orientation of Skenderbeg square acting as measuring markers of history while grounding a new typology in place **[Figure 2.11]**. The limestone application in combination with glass define the building's locality while heightening its monolithic eastern facade **[Figure 2.12]**.



[Figure 2.11, 2.12] Palace of Culture Currently. (Ref: Tirana Municipality Gov, <https://tirana.al/en/points-of-interest/attractions-and-sights/palace-of-culture>)

Modernization of the Albanian army, “which was still at the level of a partisan army in terms of training and equipment”³¹⁹ was also fully supplied and trained by the Soviets. In September 1957, an Albanian-Soviet agreement to build the Pasha Liman naval base near Vlora was signed. The planned base was designed to strengthen the coastal defense system in Albania, and at the same time to constitute an important bridge-head for the USSR military in the Mediterranean Sea basin. PPSH leaders became increasingly deft at exploiting “socialist solidarity.” As Pasha Liman naval base agreements were taking place, more than a billion rubles in loans from socialist countries (more than half from the Soviet Union alone), excluding military aid, had trickled their way to Albania.³²⁰ The loans would cover electric turbines and hydroelectric stations, oil refineries, factories for

³¹⁹ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 38

³²⁰ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 12

impregnation, rice husking, tobacco, metal ,wool, etc.³²¹ Soviet geological teams began studies for oil, coal, chrome, and copper extraction.³²²

On the other hand, Albania – just as it did with Yugoslavia – would start to export its natural resources to the Soviet Union. One of the early year statistics would measure Albanian exports to be around “50 million rubles [with] nearly 60% of exports going to USSR and the rest to other communist countries, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria”³²³. Some of that statistics is broken down as follows: “43,265 tons of kerosene, 12,177 tons of bitumen fluxes, 5,600 natural bitumen, 15,000 tons of fuel oil, 350 tons of copper, 1,500 tons of chrome, 100 tons of parmesan cheese, 100 tons of salted olives, seedlings, leather, citrus fruits, nuts, figs, brandy, wines, etc.”³²⁴

Up until Stalin’s death, Hoxha and his followers did everything they could to “Stalinize” Albania to the fullest. By one Albanian historian’s account, “Hoxha worshiped Stalin and did everything he could to imitate him”³²⁵ However, “Stalin the Great” – as Hoxha referred to him – would fall ill in March of 1953.³²⁶ Upon hearing about Stalin’s declining health, Hoxha sent the following telegram to show solidarity to his counterparts in the USSR:

The sudden news of the serious illness of our dear friend, of our glorious teacher, J.V.Stalin, has deeply shocked and greatly saddened the entire Albanian people, the Labor Party of Albania and its Central Committee.³²⁷

One day after this telegram was sent, the Soviet Union declared the death of its leader Josef Stalin via radiowaves. This of course was a shock to most communists around the world, however nowhere else in the socialist Bloc was the news felt more than in Albania. Hoxha was devastated as if “his

³²¹ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 79

³²² Ibid. 90

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid. 96

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

own father had just died” calling the death “an extraordinary loss, a heavy blow”.³²⁸ In his 2020 article of Soviet-Albanian Relations, Russian historian Konstantin Khudoley rightfully highlighted that “Albania declared mourning which lasted even longer than that in the USSR”³²⁹.

The importance of this cannot be understated. Fire cannons were launched in Tirana, Shkodër, Durrës, Elbasan, Korçë and Gjirokastër as the country entered into a national mourning, suspending all work and school activity.³³⁰ Ushering similar observations, Dervishi writes the following;

On March 6, at 1:30 p.m., a funeral ceremony was held without a coffin in Skënderbej square. Hoxha forced everyone to kneel in front of the statue of Stalin... while placing a wreath of flowers in the name of the Political Bureau with the inscription: “To our teacher, our leader and our dear father J.V. Stalin”.³³¹

One has to understand that the deep level of mourning shown towards Stalin’s death was not simply a gesture of servility to the Soviet chiefs. On the contrary, as displayed earlier, Hoxha not only regarded the Soviet Union as the savior of Albania but Stalin himself as “the savior of all peoples”³³². Many times Hoxha referred to Stalin’s heroics against the Nazis while other times in specifically helping Albania from being annexed from the Yugoslavs. On top of this, “under Stalin, Hoxha’s wishes were almost always granted”³³³ strengthening his grip on power. Thus, it is quite natural to expect that Stalin’s death, and more importantly the political changes that the USSR underwent after his death, were met with suspicion in Tirana. Those political changes of course were none other than the policies of “De-Stalinization” which had implications for all the Soviet satellites. However, as the news of Stalin’s death was felt more so in Albania than anywhere else in the World, so were the implications of De-Stalinization felt more so in Albania than other socialist countries.

Hoxha and his entourage were absolutely shocked by the severity and scale of Khrushchev's

³²⁸ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 97

³²⁹ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 392

³³⁰ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 97

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid. 96

³³³ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 393

criticism of Stalin at the 20th Congress of CPSU.³³⁴ Thus taking credit for the first fissure in the Soviet-Albanian relations which is “often portrayed as an extension of the Soviet-Chinese one, yet, in fact, it followed its own logic and dynamics”³³⁵.

If we follow this logic, then by default “De-Stalinization” is a term which would surely induce an allergic reaction to Hoxha or anyone living in Albania in the 1950s. Not only did this new USSR policy publicly denounce the politics and even image of Stalin under the veil of attacking the “cult personality”, but it also came with worrisome moves of the shuffling of power positions and hierarchy of the PLSU – which would of course trickle to the rest of satellites. Thus in a mirroring move, “the Soviets also suggested that Hoxha abandon the double-jobbing of party and government posts”³³⁶, which – though being the last of the Soviet bloc leaders to do it³³⁷ – forced him to “relinquish his posts as minister of foreign affairs and minister of defense...[and on Nikita Khrushchev’s command] his seat as prime minister, which went to his wartime colleague Mehmet Shehu”³³⁸. This in turn, “raised suspicion that Moscow was going to curtail his power, or even replace him with someone else”³³⁹.

In a more worrying signal, a sudden change in the Kremlin’s politics towards Yugoslavia – known later as the Policy of Rapprochement – became the most detrimental move in future relations. To recount this important event, Mehilli historiographically lays out the following:

On May 26, 1955, a Soviet government delegation, with N. Khrushchev at its head, flew to Belgrade. At the airport in Belgrade, the Soviet leader made a speech in which he expressed regret about the previous events between the two countries. The Belgrade meeting ended with the signing of a declaration of closer cooperation

³³⁴ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 403

³³⁵ Ibid. 393

³³⁶ Ibid. 399

³³⁷ Ibid. 407

³³⁸ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 11

³³⁹ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 399

between the two countries.³⁴⁰

Khrushchev's visit also brought about the retraction of Yugoslavia's 1949 expulsion from the Cominform.³⁴¹ To this act, Hoxha responded by writing to Khrushchev in a reprimanding manner, "that the new Soviet course diverged considerably from...positions taken earlier".³⁴² Mehilli has attested to the fact that the leader of a country of fewer than 1.5 million would attempt to discipline the leader of the Soviet Union, would signify the deep anxieties over Yugoslavia which ran within the echelons of the Albanian party.³⁴³ I would argue that this act – unthinkable to pull off during Stalin – symbolizes the very start to Tirana's divergence from the Soviet sphere of influence, acting on behalf of its own strand of socialism, turning itself to a "Soviet Pawn" no more.

In response to Hoxha's plea, Soviet Union officials suggested that the Albanian party "should change its attitude to the Yugoslavia question, and also reassess its view of the [Titoist] K. Xoxe group"³⁴⁴. Similar suggestions were made to other bloc countries as one by one they all fell in step with moves to improve state relations with Yugoslavia.³⁴⁵ "In 1955 under Moscow's pressure, a normalization of Albanian-Yugoslav relations took place".³⁴⁶ On the Albanian part, Czekalski argues, "it was done out of purely formal character"³⁴⁷. While diplomatic relations were easy to hide as being normalized, the next Soviet request of reinstating the "Titoists" – or "the legendary list of political enemies whose elimination was the price for [associating] with Belgrade"³⁴⁸ – back to the party was a hard pill to swallow.

³⁴⁰ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 38

³⁴¹ Ibid. 37

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 40

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 13

³⁴⁶ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 40

³⁴⁷ Ibid. 39

³⁴⁸ Ibid. 40

Once again this request was not a simple concern of questioning PLA politics, but rather it was also “the questioning of Stalin’s internal politics, as well as the [similar] purges conducted during his governing”³⁴⁹. As someone who followed the political principles of Stalin, Soviet overtures toward Yugoslavia under Khrushchev perturbed Hoxha.³⁵⁰³⁵¹ “Stalinism is what lifted the country from international isolation. Rather than an opening, therefore, de-Stalinization was viewed as a major threat”³⁵².

By playing to Moscow’s rules, the Albanian establishment took advantage of “playing nice with the Yugoslavs” in return for continuous seeking of aid. While they also attempted to de-Stalinize in certain aspects, the slowing down of industrial advancement and construction was not on the list as unfinished work was being completed and new urban development was on the rise. To capture the atmosphere of the times, Mehilli elaborates:

The first post-war decade brought new institutions, revised social relations, and novel practices. Schools expanded, the number of publications swelled, and the government waged a ruthless war against illiteracy. An unprecedented mobilization of people took place, as the politically suspect were ejected from cities and the young were brought into the Working Youth Union.³⁵³

One of these institutions was the Albania-Soviet Friendship Association, which by 1955 had garnered a whopping 234,000 members, employing 136 individuals under its three main sectors; propaganda, organization, and the foreign branch.³⁵⁴ The influence of the association could possibly be credited for the development of another new institution – the tourist enterprise “Albturist”. While the next section of this chapter will cover more its inception, activities, and influence, what is important to note here is that Albturist was modeled on the Soviet version of a state run tourism

³⁴⁹ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 40

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 10

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Dervishi, *The Real History of the PLA*, 81

entity called Inturist. Such enterprise finally made possible for “tourists from the Soviet bloc [to start] trickling toward the country’s Mediterranean shores, [as] young Albanians were showing up for university classes in Prague, Warsaw, Moscow, and Leningrad”³⁵⁵.

Indeed, the founding of Albaturist proved to be extremely important in the growth of tourism and the lamenting of proletariat ideals. To advance in tourism meant to advance in the construction of socialism in all aspects of state building. Signs of Soviet modernity needed to extend throughout the country and culture at large. In the words of historian Elidor Mehilli, this required the “taming of the landscape—digging trenches, draining infested marshes, clearing the land...along with the construction of the country’s first railroad”³⁵⁶ and the clearing of the swamps to make room for new factories powered by Soviet machines.³⁵⁷ Up until this point, Moscow had also provided “a cement factory (in Vlorë), a sugar-processing factory (in Maliq), and an oil refinery (in Cërrik), among other projects”³⁵⁸. Prototypes of typical architectural typology interventions named *projekte tip* had sprawled throughout.³⁵⁹ Standard five story apartment blocks **[Figure 2.13]** quickly began erecting to reverse the fact that “almost 90 percent of all of the country’s dwellings had no more than two floors”³⁶⁰.

³⁵⁵ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 12

³⁵⁶ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 98

³⁵⁷ Ibid. 98-99

³⁵⁸ Ibid. 97

³⁵⁹ Ibid. 170

³⁶⁰ Ibid. 180



[Figure 2.13] Collective Housing Blocks 1950s-60s.
 (Ref: Siller, *Decades of architecture in political context*)

Technoscientific agreements with the Soviet Union and other Socialist Bloc countries yielded 565 technical documents, 10,269 new patents, 263 incoming foreign specialists, 392 local workers and specialists going abroad for training.³⁶¹ In one instance, the Technical Directorate of the Ministry of Construction proposed to Albturist the sending of three architects to the Congress of Architects in the USSR where aside from attending the congress, they would benefit “from experience of exploration in the Soviet Union”³⁶².

Around this time frame tourism received the biggest boost, materializing the very first major “turizmi” hotel in Durres, which would later influence a series of additional similar structures to be spread throughout the major cities. Completed in 1958, Hotel Turizmi of Durres – also known as Hotel Adriatik – was Albturist's first big project, the first grand hotel in Albania, forever changing the Albanian riviera. “Even Albania, which still makes it rather difficult for outsiders to get in is making a bid for the tourist trade” – wrote the American ‘Architectural Forum’ magazine while calling the new hotel on the Adriatic Coast, “a drab and sprawling Albanian version of holiday architecture”. Whether the West liked it or not, the Albanian establishment recognized tourism as

³⁶¹ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 141

³⁶² Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Leter nga Drejtoria Teknike*, f.770, v. 1958, dos.10, fl. 30

an important industry. In the following year, three additional smaller hotels were proposed again in Durres.³⁶³ Though one was initially planned for the city of Sarnada, the Director of Albaturist, explained the change of location due “instructions given to us by the [offices of the]Prime Minister”³⁶⁴.

Located away from the center of the old city (Dyrrhachium), the hotel was purposefully situated in an area which the locals refer to as “Durres Beach” where the beach and sand seem to stretch infinitely [Figure 2.14]. This was done on purpose in order to give visitors peace and relaxation away from busy life, but also as a means of “deserting” foreign nationals for easier control over their movements and what they saw or perceived from the country.



[Figure 2.14] Hotel Adriatik Site. (Graphic by Author)

Furthermore, by being away from the port, it also shields local visitors (if ever allowed to vacation on the premises) from being exposed to the port where presumably foreign ships would come and

³⁶³ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Mbi ndertimin e hoteleve te reja ne Durres*, f.499, v. 1958, dos.557, fl. 001

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

go, enticing emotions of escape. James Cameron – the renowned reporter for the Atlantic – during his travels to Albania in 1963, described the design of the Adriatik as “Soviet Black Sea taste – that is to say, the layout was of an elaboration and grandeur”³⁶⁵ [Figure 2.15, 2.16].



[Figure 2.15] Hotel Adriatik, year unknown.

(Ref: Hotel Website, <https://adriatikhotel.com/about-us/>)



[Figure 2.16] Hotel Adriatik, year 1980.

(Ref: Arkiva Digjitale, <https://adsh.al/s/adsh/item/25351#lg=1&slide=0>)

Designed in what Istrefaj has categorized as a “Type F / U-Block” massing³⁶⁶, the Adriatik stacks four floors while the longitudinal section aligns east-west thus maximizing southern sun exposure and eliminating a perpendicular orientation into the sand. Stylistically, the building appears

³⁶⁵ Cameron, *Albania: The Last Marxist Paradise*, The Atlantic, 1963

³⁶⁶ Istrefaj, *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism*, 171

grand but simplified and possesses both characteristics of socialist modern and left over realism detailing of a cornice which tops each volume. First floor restaurant area protrudes out the most towards the Adriatic thus creating a large terraced balcony for the second floor rooms, which repeats again at a lesser degree for the top floor rooms. The play of solid volumes with voids created by the second and third floor balconies creates a dynamic play of geometry in terms of light and shadow.

In further describing Hotel Adriatik's, Cameron elaborates:

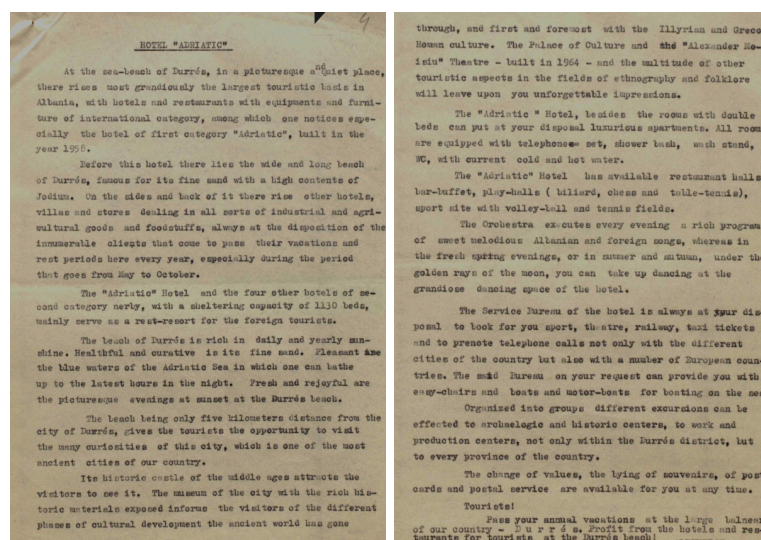
By the standards of beaches anywhere, the Durres strand was beautiful, stretching wide arms north and south along the tranquil Adriatic. It was the kind of beach made to be photographed in color for a holiday brochure, gay with umbrellas, littered with decorative girls in minimal costumes, alive with waiters gaily bearing trays of sparkling drinks.³⁶⁷

Albturist also recognized the prime location of its crown-jewel and capitalized on Adriatik's features. In a document retrieved from Albanian state archives (from the 1960s), Albturist pens a propagandistic advertisement for the hotel **[Figure 2.17]**. Ironically the entire advert is typed in English, clearly hoping to appeal to western visitors. The hotel is portrayed as ranking in the top “international category” with rooms that are all equipped “with telephone sets, shower bath, wash stand, WC, with current cold and hot water” and amenities such as “bar-buffet, play-halls (biliard, chess and [a] sport site with volley-ball and tennis fields”.³⁶⁸ Tones of health-tourism are immediately shown in statements such as “healthful and curative sand...with high levels of iodine”, “rich in daily and yearly sun-shine” and “pleasant blue waters of the Adriatic...fresh and rejoyful sunset[s]”.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Cameron, *Albania: The Last Marxist Paradise*, The Atlantic, 1963

³⁶⁸ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Hotel Adriatic*, f.770, v. 1958, dos. 28, fl. 005-006

³⁶⁹ Ibid.



[Figure 2.17] Hotel Adriatik Propaganda Ad, 1960.

(Ref: AQSH, *Hotel Adriatic*, f.770, v. 1958, dos. 28, fl. 005-006)

The hotel is placed in dialogue with other tourist sites and markers. The Illyrian-Greco-Roman history of Durrës is top on the list as well as excursions to other archaeological sites in all provinces of the country.³⁷⁰ However, a bigger emphasis is placed on socialist achieved constructions such as the Palace of Culture and Theatre of Durrës as well as “work and production” centers.³⁷¹

The relationship with the Soviet Union would forever be transformed with the arrival of the year 1956. This year would change the politics of Albania and also the entire Socialist bloc. Addressing the third Albanian Party Congress, Hoxha put on a show which seemed to display complete solidarity with the Soviet Union but in fact, “yielding just enough to meet the Soviet minimal requirements”³⁷². Paying tribute to the 20th CPSU Congress, Hoxha showed agreeance in areas of foreign policy – “disarmament and the decision of the Soviet government to reduce its armed forces, the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence, the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia”³⁷³. However, “proceeded to make clear that there would be no further destalinization in

³⁷⁰ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Hotel Adriatic*, f.770, v. 1958, dos. 28, fl. 005-006

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 22

³⁷³ Ibid.

Albania and no rehabilitation of Xoxe”³⁷⁴. Five months after Hoxha’s party address, the entire world tuned in as events were unfolding in Hungary during the Hungarian Revolution – an attempt to break free from the Soviet Union. The Albanian leaders also followed anxiously.³⁷⁵

The short-lived revolution was violently suppressed by the Soviet Military as they installed a new government. In Albania, “they were convinced that it was Yugoslavia that instigated the events in Hungary, and that Khrushchev was ceding too much ground to Tito”³⁷⁶. Drawing hasty conclusions, it was apparent in Tiriana’s view, that Khrushchev was willing to discard satellite leaders to make headway into bringing Tito back into the bloc.³⁷⁷ According to the CIA, “this clear evidence of the treachery of Khrushchev must have severely shaken the confidence of the Albanian leaders in their ties with Moscow”³⁷⁸ for “even as Soviet leaders continued to reprimand Hoxha in private talks, he continued to pursue a hard line at home”³⁷⁹. On November 8, 1956, official CPSU newspaper *Pravda* (Truth) published an article by Hoxha with a slash-ing attack at reform supporters – an obvious attack directed against Yugoslavia.³⁸⁰ A few days later, Tito responded by taking a stand against Stalinists and personally attacking Hoxha.³⁸¹ The bickering and problems with the Yugoslav problem never went away as the Albanian establishment used “every available opportunity to assail Belgrade’s ‘revisionism’”³⁸². To bring into a cochise perspective the Mehelli reflects the following regarding this year:

The Albanian dilemma in 1956 does not look all that different from the Soviet dilemma; namely, that “ideology (socialism) and geopolitics (Soviet security) had been made inseparable. If Tito rejected Soviet and Chinese overtures for the sake of

³⁷⁴ CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 22

³⁷⁵ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 41

³⁷⁶ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 407

³⁷⁷ CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 22

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 55

³⁸⁰ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 407

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 55

Yugoslav independence, Hoxha claimed to reject de-Stalinization for the sake of Albanian independence (from Belgrade).³⁸³

In 1957, in an attempt to “to correct mistakes in relations between the USSR and other socialist countries”³⁸⁴, the Soviet government held meetings with various leaders of the bloc. Hoxha was not on the list of priority as talks with Albania were held second to last, followed by Mongolia.³⁸⁵ However, in a final act to appease Albania, “a huge debt (about 422 million rubles) was written off and a new loan granted to Albania to purchase wheat and other foodstuffs”³⁸⁶. Though this was quiet the sweet dessert, what turned it sour was Khrushchev’s hammering on Albania’s economy to “give priority to agriculture, especially the production of vegetables and fruit” rather than to focus on industrialization, as Hoxha and the upper echelons envisioned.³⁸⁷

In parallel to this, the Albanian leadership began searching for new allies in attempts to “find their own path of development which was different from the Soviet one”³⁸⁸. A vis-a-vis visit with North Korea yielded in its leader Kim Il Sung praising the preservation of Stalinism in Tirana, meanwhile Hoxha’s visit to Pyongyang was greatly appreciated – given the CPSU’s recent dispute with North Korea.³⁸⁹ During the same time frame, Hoxha also established a personal relationship with the Chinese leadership as trade between the PRC and Albania would begin to expand significantly.³⁹⁰ This treading of new friendship grounds, is analyzed as follows by Konstandin Khudoley:

Hoxha took the first step to diversify relations within the communist bloc. This was the beginning of his gradual reorientation towards Beijing, although at the time the

³⁸³ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 55

³⁸⁴ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 407

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid. 402

³⁸⁹ Ibid. 406

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

development of relations with China was not seen as opposed to the development of relations with the USSR.³⁹¹

“Indeed, the leadership of PLA, while constantly ensuring Moscow of their loyalty, in fact, set off on a course to sabotage even the slightest attempt at de-Stalinization”³⁹² or to fall in line with any other Moscow directives. This in turn would forever constitute “Albania’s self-isolation from the USSR and the creation of its own distinct version of Socialism”³⁹³.

In 1959, Nikita Khrushchev decided to visit Albania, causing great commotion as “the first visit of such a high-ranking Soviet politician to Tirana”³⁹⁴. CIA documents place emphasis on the great length of his visit in comparison to other Bloc countries “in part to compensate for any feeling of neglect on the part of the Albanian leaders”.³⁹⁵ Playing to the usual tunes, however, his statements on cooperating more closely with Yugoslavia and adjusting the trajectory of economic development continued to cause great frustration to Hoxha and his entourage. Once again, Khrushchev “proposed the suspension of forced industrialization and to base Albania’s development on the farming-food industry sector. With this idea, Albania would become a great plantation of tropical plants, helped by its natural conditions.”³⁹⁶ “Interestingly, at the very same time as Khrushchev’s visit, a high-ranking military delegation from China arrived in Albania”³⁹⁷. The break of Soviet-Albanian relations was now more clear than ever.

What followed after was a series of events causing the last consequences of a domino effect which would inevitably end in a complete break up with the Soviet Union. A border conflict between the PRC and India in 1959 yielded a neutral position from Moscow and Tirana’s sympathy

³⁹¹ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 406

³⁹² Ibid. 407

³⁹³ Ibid. 404

³⁹⁴ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 41

³⁹⁵ CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 36

³⁹⁶ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 41

³⁹⁷ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 412

for China.³⁹⁸ In the same year, continuing against de-Stalinization efforts, “the celebrations of his (Stalin) 80th birthday took place in Albania on a much larger scale than in the Soviet Union”³⁹⁹. In 1960, the disagreements between the communist parties of the USSR and China were made public resulting in a Soviet invitation for a meeting of all Bloc leaders to Romania.⁴⁰⁰ “Initially, the Albanian delegation insisted on discussing organizational matters only, but as the discussion moved forward to substantive issues, they aligned themselves with the Chinese”⁴⁰¹. Focusing on this event, Khudoley stresses the following:

The Bucharest meeting became the turning point. Before it, Albanian leaders tried to search for their own non-Soviet way of development, but avoided open conflicts with the USSR. At the Bucharest meeting, for the first time, both parties took opposite sides - the conflict between them entered a new stage.⁴⁰²

Characterized as the nail in the coffin, in November of 1960, Hoxha traveled to Moscow one last time for a meeting of all labor and communist parties where he held nothing back as he vehemently expressed “Albania’s grievances against the Soviet leaders, particularly Khrushchev”⁴⁰³. According to the CIA analysis, “he (Hoxha) opened with a strong defense of China's position on foreign policy and ideological issues, and an accusation that Khrushchev confused and jumbled Lenin's theses”⁴⁰⁴ “Hoxha rejected the idea of detente and supported the Chinese position, describing it as the unavoidable war against imperialism.”⁴⁰⁵ As a result, “on 27 November, Mao and Zhou Enlai attended a reception at the Albanian embassy in Beijing in honor of Albanian liberation day, and the Chinese party dispatched greetings to the Albanian party which stated that the Chinese party was ‘proud to have such unyielding comrades-in- arms as the Labor Party of Albania. The

³⁹⁸ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 412

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. 413

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 57

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. 6

⁴⁰⁵ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 42

Chinese people deeply appreciate the enormous support rendered to them by the Albanian people.”⁴⁰⁶ A reorientation of Albanian interest had taken place. The Soviet Union was no longer the ideal model of socialism, rather China had emerged as the true carrier of pure socialism.

The new found alliance formed between the Soviet Union and Albania was an odd occurrence within the Soviet bloc. The USSR – the hegemonic state – and Albania – its smallest satellite, embarked on a special relationship which counterintuitively would further propel the smallest socialist bloc state into the top hierarchies and headlines of geopolitics. As Mehilli has hinted, the Soviet alliance, for many reasons signified the promise of modernity for an impoverished state which many times is referred to as “a backwards country” by much of the literature during this time. The geopolitical conditions of this time allowed for grand economic exploitations on the shoulders of a huge superpower like the Soviet Union. This in turn materialized in a fresh beginning for tourism as Albaturist was created. Thanks to Soviet backing, Albania saw the first major development of tourist accommodation structure with Hotel Turizmi in Durres (built in 1957), while other structures such as the Cultural Palace, and various textile factories would also play a supporting role in tourism, later acting as beacons of state accomplishments in the building of socialism.

While the benefits of this alliance certainly do not equate between the two countries, that is to say, Albania was definitely the major beneficiary of this twelve year marriage on all accounts, it would be unfair to assess – as some recent scholarship has – that on a military confrontation against the West, Albania’s usefulness to Soviet Union was rather limited. To this end, I would like to end this section with a reference as to why perhaps a great power such as the Soviet Union might even consider the backing of a small country outside of simple ideological influence in the tugging of the Cold War. Oddly enough, the best way to do this is by quoting Belgrade politician and historian Vladimir Dedijer from his 1951 Foreign Affairs article titled *Albania, Soviet Pawn*:

⁴⁰⁶ CIA, *Soviet-Albanian Relations, 1940-1960*, (Intelligence Staff Study 1962), 57

Albania, though small, is a country of considerable wealth. It also has always been, and still remains, a country of great strategic importance, for it dominates the approaches to the Adriatic. The well-protected natural harbor of Valona, with its important island fortress of Sazan jutting deeply into the Ionian Sea, is only 42 miles from Otranto, on the Italian side of the Adriatic. On the land side, too, Albania occupies a key position in the mountainous Balkan peninsula. The Romans, driving into the Balkans, struck through Albania. The Via Appia crossed Italy from Rome to Brindisi; and on the eastern side of the Adriatic, the great Via Egnatia, beginning at Durazzo, penetrated the Balkans, leading through the very heart of the peninsula towards Salonika and Constantinople. By this route, not only Thessaly, Thrace and Macedonia, but also the Danubian plains, lay open to the Roman legions. By the same route the Normans moved from southern Italy under Robert Guiscard in the eleventh century; and after the Fourth Crusade, Albania served Venice as a base for Balkan expansion.⁴⁰⁷

A Purposeful Tourism

From the time Albania was aligned with Belgrade to the end of its alignment with Moscow, tourism in Albania experienced – for the first time since the country's independence – efforts to establish a tourism sector (by today's standards) based on a unified ideology driven by self governed decisions. As it was stated earlier, the Yugoslavs helped establish the foundations of industrialization and a planned economy from which socialism and its infrastructures could be built from. The Soviets on the other hand, aside from sponsoring the continuation of industrialization and modernization of the economy so that socialism could flourish, also served as literal models of exporting their version of socialist tourism known as *Purposeful Tourism*, which by this time was well spread and practiced within all countries in the Socialist bloc and Soviet sphere of influence.

The beginning initiatives of developing a *purposeful* tourism are especially important in as they show how the soviets helped to import socialist tourism while also aiding Albania in forging a self branded governing enterprise specifically dedicated to tourism. Starting with 1955, first hand archives show the early beginnings of an institutionalized form of socialist tourism modeled on the

⁴⁰⁷ Dedijer, *Albania, Soviet Pawn*, 104-105

examples from the USSR. In November of that year, Minella Kapo – considered the father of Alpinism and Sports medicine in Albania – composed a nine page document titled “How we can organize and develop tourism and alpinism in R.P.Sh. (*Republika Popullore Shqiptare*) People's Republic of Albania” which was presented to Hoxha's cabinet.⁴⁰⁸ In this document, Kapo mentions the strong recommendation of various Soviet figures, such as Ivan Grigorevich Chudinov (advisor of physical culture in Albania 1947), Petelin (the delegate near General Union Syndicates), and other Soviet delegates in the urgent “spreading of tourism and alpinism in [the] country”.⁴⁰⁹ While drawing on his extensive experience in traveling the Soviet Union, Kapo writes:

Tourism is one of the best ways to organize active rest for the working masses and youth, it helps in strengthening their physical and health. Tourism gives great opportunities to make the working masses and the youth get to know their homeland, with the big buildings that are made for the transition to socialism, with the beauty and wealth of the country, with the rivers, seas, mountains, lakes and beautiful forests in the country. The serious preparation and very good organization of trips throughout the homeland, makes possible the physical development of the participants, expands the horizon of knowledge, strengthens the patriotic spirit, and at the same time helps in the development of moral qualities...Through tourism, we strengthen village-city ties, exchange ideas, leave cultural traces, and encourage better work. Tourism develops bravery, manhood, discipline, determination to forget the goal.⁴¹⁰

Building upon this initiative, exactly one month after, the archives show a document outlining an Executive Order of the Ministers “on the development of tourism”.⁴¹¹ Much like Kapo’s initiative, this executive order also starts by stressing the influence of the USSR stating “the tourist movement that has started to take a significant development...especially in the USSR and the countries of the People's Democracies”⁴¹². The ministers recognize “that there is an interest from

⁴⁰⁸ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Si mund t’ organizojme the te zhvillojme Turizmin*, f.490, v. 1955, dos.1121, fl. 001.0-001.8

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Mbi Zhvillimin e Turizmit*, f.770, v. 1955, dos.4, fl. 002-005

⁴¹² Ibid.

abroad to make contacts [with the] country”, thus making it necessary to “create tourist activity among us”⁴¹³. Similarly to Kapo, they cite nature and the qualities of the land as primary advantages to attract the attention of tourists. Geographical richness which offers alpinism and mountaineering, diverse biological fauna, a variety of rivers and lakes, and the seaside, all top the list. They go on to state that Albania could also be interesting to outsiders from a historical and ethnographic point of view, stating high qualities of the folkart, at least “140 different [national] costumes still in use” and going as far as saying “the whole of Albania can be called an archaeological field” as a result of the many archeological centers.⁴¹⁴ As an initial point of departure towards developing tourism, the ministers recommend the creation of a tourism sectorate within the government, while underlining the importance of focusing on both domestic and foreign tourism. To this point the ministers wrote the following:

We must proceed with the creation of a special body which deals only with this problem. This body should be an autonomous entity under the authority of the Prime Minister. As an initial body for the entity, we propose a limited number consisting of the Director, the Propaganda Section, with a department of cards and photos and another for printing and publications; the welcoming section consisting of two people, a total of 6 people. Our proposal for the creation of an autonomous entity is based on the fact that tourism is a completely new activity which in order to develop must have all the help of the apparatus and not just one Ministry. We think that the entity should develop the activity in two sectors: for the development of domestic tourism and foreign tourism. The development of domestic tourism is necessary, because without it tourism cannot be developed abroad.⁴¹⁵

The rest of the document defines responsibilities for both domestic and foreign tourism while outlining an immediate plan of action which the ministers recommended would be started as soon as possible. According to the ministers, the sector of the tourism entity focusing on internal tourism would be “wider than foreign tourism and can include organized excursions with the aim of

⁴¹³ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Mbi Zhvillimin e Turizmit*, f.770, v. 1955, dos.4, fl. 002-005

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

workers getting to know [the] country while enjoying leisure and entertainment”⁴¹⁶. In addition, this sector would in the future “organize Albanian tourist expeditions outside the country”⁴¹⁷. Meanwhile the sector focusing on foreign tourism, would “maintain contact with foreign tourist organizations, receive and transport foreign tourists, organize excursions and [would] provide all necessary assistance, giving every opportunity to tourists in an organized manner”⁴¹⁸.

The main obstacle for the reception of tourists as they saw was “the problem of accommodation and food and that for this purpose in all of Albania no hotel [was] suitable, except partially Hotel Dajti”⁴¹⁹. To this problem, they proposed the renovation of some existing structures for accommodation in the main city centers of Durres, Tirana, Shkoder, Elbasan, Pogradec, Korce, Vlore, Saranda, Lezh and Theth with the specific request that “some of them [would] be renovated according to the rites of the country”⁴²⁰ with ‘characteristic features of artisanal folk-art’. As the last two points of action, the ministers proposed for the state bank to include a special office to facilitate currency exchange as well as for the creation of two warehouses in Tirana and Durres which would supply various shops throughout the country for the sale of “artistic articles of Albanian handicrafts, postcards, sale of stamps and other small characteristic objects”⁴²¹.

The minister's executive order was taken into account and approved by the offices of the Prime Minister. Within the next year, under the suspected supervision of Inturist (the Soviet agency of tourism), the creation of Albturist – *Ndermarja Shteterore per Turizëm* (The State Enterprise for Tourism) – came to fruition. Bearing all red capital letters in what looks like modern day ‘Davis’ adobe font, the logo and letterhead of the newly created Albturist is proudly displayed in one of the

⁴¹⁶ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Mbi Zhvillimin e Turizmit*, f.770, v. 1955, dos.4, fl. 002-005

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

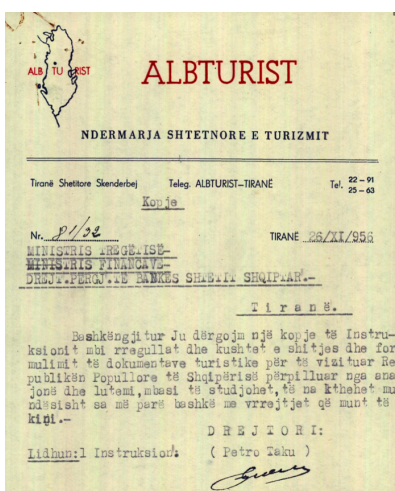
⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

earliest documents from this enterprise dated November 1956 [Figure 2.18].⁴²² Through this document – sent to the Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Finance and the General Director of the National Bank – Albaturist outlines for the very first time “instructions on the rules and conditions of sale and formulation of tourist documents to visit the People's Republic of Albania”⁴²³ laying out things like accommodations which the agency would provide, such as room and board and the necessary meals three times a day, bus and train services covering “up to 100 km route within the accommodation place and up to 400 km outside of it”⁴²⁴, and supplying translators for daily excursions.



[Figure 2.18] Cover page of Albaturist Document, 1956. Directorate of State Archives, Tirana, Albania.

As Diane Konker and Shawn Salmon have argued in regards to Inturist, questions of “commerce and politics” must have also played a role in the inception of Albuturist. According to them, “the question of profit was present and problematic even in early attempts to define

⁴²² Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Ndermarja Shtet. E Turizmit*, f.770, v. 1956, dos.14, fl. 001

⁴²³ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Instrukcion mbi rregullat*, f.770, v. 1956, dos.14, fl. 002-003

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

proletarian tourism”⁴²⁵. Though unlike in the Soviet Union, the archives in Albania do not seem to present a strong case for a debate of sides divided in ideological position over “those willing to cater to any social segment/‘market’ for the sake of income”⁴²⁶ versus “those for ‘proletarian purity’”⁴²⁷, or in other words not willing to exploit tourism for the sake of capital or income. From its inception, again in the 1956 ‘Instructions on the rules and conditions...’ document, Albaturist specifically outlines the responsibilities that foreign tour guide companies have in terms of securing visas for the tourists and making the necessary travel arrangement payments (10% upfront) while also citing the following:

Tariffs do not include traveling from the place of departure to the border of the People’s Republic of Albania or from the border of People’s Republic of Albania to the country from which [the tourist] came from. Additional tourist services for food in train restaurants and carrying luggage in all parts of the journey, tickets to theaters, concerts, cinemas, stadiums, telegrams and international telephone conversations, expenses for wine and alcoholic beverages, tobacco and cigarettes, laundry, etc. [are considered] personal services. All these are expenses paid by the tourist outside the payment of the tourist document. had been given the responsibility of fulfilling “economic” goals.⁴²⁸

Just like Inturist in the Soviet Union, “the dependency on international capital was critical to the construction of the new state”⁴²⁹.

The creation of Albaturist ensued for the first time ever the creation of a fully operational tourism enterprise under self rule, and the important pivoting of not just the tourism industry but the whole culture towards the proletarian framework in the constant search of a “purposeful” tourism. While it can be argued that a similar venture was attempted under Zog’s Kingdom – something that even the executive order of ministers recognized – I argue that during the period of Albania’s alignment “from Belgrade to Moscow”, the operational scale of Albaturist coupled with the

⁴²⁵ Salmon, *Marketing Socialism Inturist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s*, 188

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Instrukcion mbi rregullat*, f.770, v. 1956, dos.14, fl. 002-003

⁴²⁹ Salmon, *Marketing Socialism Inturist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s*, 189

growth of the tourism sector as a whole was unprecedented, going far beyond the 1934 landscape of “two [tourist] control centers in Durres and Tirana”⁴³⁰ and a small organization “for automobile movement of tourists”⁴³¹. To achieve such a turning point, the courtship and development of a good relationship with Moscow's Inturist was crucial. To this point, Albanian archives show a close collaboration between the counterparts of both countries. In 1957, a delegation group headed by Intourist president Vladimir Ankudinov visited Tirana.⁴³² In February 24, 1958, Albaturist informed the foreign relations department within the Ministry of Trade that “Inturist, the tourism company of the Soviet Union, through a letter dated February 7, 1958, invites a delegation from Albaturist, to travel to Moscow, where [among other things] to use the occasion to conclude the agreement on the arrival of Soviet tourists this year in our country”⁴³³. As a result of such visits, Albaturist agreed to increase the flux of Soviet tourists by 40%, going from around 200 Soviet tourists in 1957 to 280 in 1958.⁴³⁴

In 1959, the Soviet-Albanian sides “signed an agreement for the Palace of Culture”⁴³⁵ with construction starting later that year. According to Mehilli:

The Moscow-based design team went through several drafts, though it did not explain that this was due to constant pushing, from the Albanian side, for a bigger building. Officials in Tirana envisioned something monumental, and they were adamant about a tribune at the palace's base. It was not the Soviets who pushed for something grand and imposing—it was the Albanian side.⁴³⁶

In the same year, Albaturist managed to sign additional major tourist contracts with other Socialist Bloc countries. Aside from the usual renewal of agreements with Inturist, Albaturist director Stefanaq

⁴³⁰ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Instrukcion mbi rregullat*, f.770, v. 1956, dos.14, fl. 002-003

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Ministrise se Tregetise*, f.770, v. 1958, dos.10, fl. 040

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Protokoll Kontrate*, f.770, v. 1959, dos.4, fl. 029-30

⁴³⁵ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 188

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

Tollkuci was busy inking agreements with *Čedok*⁴³⁷, the Czechoslovakian tourist agency and KTR *Komitee für Touristik und Wandern*, from the German Democratic Republic⁴³⁸. As additional agreements came in, so did the number of tourists continue to rise year after year. By 1960, Albturist was projecting a total of 6,800 tourists to come into the country – a 2328.58% increase from the total amount of 280 tourists that came in 1956, the year of its inception.⁴³⁹ A projected report from 1960 broke down the following tourist numbers and nationalities:

Soviet Union: 600	France: 300
German Democratic Republic: 3080	Austria: 200
Czechoslovakia: 1600	England: 40
People's Republic of Poland: 1600	Finland: 100
People's Republic of China: 100	Belgium: 40
Finland: 100	West Germany: 200 ⁴⁴⁰
Sweden: 40	

With statistics like these, the People's Republic of Albania was well on its way to establishing itself as a tourist destination within the Socialist Bloc and beyond, thrusting itself as a prime contender of possessing its own unique form of purposeful tourism.

But what was purposeful about Albanian purposeful tourism? In many ways, the country followed the Soviet model of proletariat tourism while in other ways it tried desperately to distinguish from it, and from the rest of the states within the Socialist bloc region. As a reminder, the Soviet Union proclaimed that tourism under socialism, should be self-improving and socially constructive. This message was heavily enforced in tourism propaganda throughout the Cold War years in Albania. An example of this is found in Albturist archives from 1961 where a propaganda document titled “Albania, the place of tourism” appeals to the socialist working class – or workers of different production centers:

⁴³⁷ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Leter dhe Kontrate*, f.770, v. 1959, dos.4, fl. 068-078

⁴³⁸ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Protokoll*, f.770, v. 1959, dos.4, fl. 180-188

⁴³⁹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Relacion*, f.770, v. 1959, dos.4, fl. 010

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

Take advantage of the opportunities created by "Albtuist" to get to know the rare beauties of Albania: North, Middle and South. Get to know the important centers, archaeological and historical: Butrintin; Apollonin, Durres, museum cities; Gjirokaster, Kruje, Berat with the historical forts: Shkoder, Elbasan Kanines, Petreles and Krujes, with economic facilities of the first and the second five-year plans erected in the four corners of our country.

Through organized excursions, our employees get familiarized with the most panoramic places and climatic stations, with the historical and archeological places that the country has, with the excellent military traditions of the past and the national liberation war, the ethnographic and folkloristic traditions of the country and each district in particular.

Our employees become familiar with the economic past and present, they are familiar with the large economic facilities during these 17 years of liberation, with the selfless work of our people to build a happy future.

Workers of different job centers! Let's welcome the 20th anniversary foundation of our beloved Party with as much tourist knowledge as possible through the different excursions. Workers of different production centers! Organize and book in time excursions to know the different provinces of our country through "Albtourism".⁴⁴¹

In printouts like this, the regime was able to capture all the main ingredients of the perfect proletarian tourism; planned excursions – to combat tramping, utilizing excursions to be educate in political realities – to avoid culturalism, the discovery of the richness of the land at large – to reverse localism. In other similar aspects, it took any opportunity and possible arenas to boast party achievements. The same document writes on the significant accomplishments of socialism going “from a backward country, with 88% illiteracy, no industry and mechanized agriculture, [to] a cultural, industrial and agrarian place”⁴⁴², stressing that many “factories and *kombinat* were built, illiteracy disappeared, the first university in the country was established, [with] thousands of tractors plowing the fields, the electric lighting system [to] include the entire country [via] the commissioning of new hydropower plants under construction”⁴⁴³.

⁴⁴¹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Shqipëria vendi i turizmit*, f.770, v. 1961, dos.78, fl. 001-027

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

To differentiate Albanian tourism, the Albanian tourist enterprise relied on the country's unique geography constantly underlining the variety of landscapes and nature to be experienced in such a small state. One propaganda item from Albaturist documents highlights the geography and nature through the following passage:

In a surface of 28,749 km², 3 large lakes are included that of Shkodra, Ohrid and Prespe, the 5 mountain lakes of Lure and 2 the lakes of the Bilshti plateau. From east to west, the country is crossed by about 20 small and large rivers, calm and turbulent. The longest is the Drin river, 284 km. Albanian coasts kiss with sweetness the blue waters of the Ionian Sea and the Adriatic Sea, and while on the high peaks, at the top of which stands the mountain of Korabi at 2700 meters, there is eternal snow in summer and winter.

The land of tropical plants, of palm trees and bananas: of hundred-year-old oaks and the hunting ducks, geese and wild pigs; the place of oranges, limes and tangerines, walnuts and chestnuts; Albania is a place of wonderful contrasts, in climate and nature in fauna and flora.

The place of ghostly sunsets, over the valley of Valbone and the golden shores of the Himariot riviera, Albania is the country of amazing beauties for every visitor. The blueness of the seas, the pride of the mountains, the greenness of the pörearily hills - olive groves and the intoxicating aroma of colorful flowers.⁴⁴⁴

In another effort to establish a unique purposefulness of travel, through an ironic “counter-east” movement, the Albanian tourist enterprise repeatedly stressed the importance of the country's ancient yet Western culture roots via Illyrian-Greco-Roman archaeological sites. As seen in the more updated 47 page tourism propaganda document of 1963, Albaturist utilizes a lot of the document's real estate to focus on the archaeological sites of Butrint (Butrintium) and Apollonia while it refers to many of the other Albanian cities and provinces by their ancient Illyrian names; Vlora is “Aulona”, Himara is “Chimaera”, Mallakaster is “Bylis”, Pashalimani as “Orikum” etc.⁴⁴⁵ The writing for Butrint emphasizes that it was “founded by Virgil and the fled Trojans “after their city was burned” and that later “Kerkyra Greek colonies were established” following with the

⁴⁴⁴ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Propogande mbi turizmin* f.770, v. 1964, dos.26, fl. 027-058

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

“Roman invasion of Illyria making Butrint a conquest of Rome” and finally “a territory of the Byzantine Empire after the fall of Rome”.⁴⁴⁶

Similarly, Apollonia situated in modern day Pojan near the city of Fier, receives the same treatment of an elaborate historical account starting from its founding “in the year 588 from Hellenistic colonists”, to becoming a trade center under Roman rule and even making sure to mention that “Cicero, famous Roman orator, called Apollonia *Nagna urbs et gravis* which means ‘the big city with a heavy shadow’”, while “Octavian, before becoming emperor, studied at Apollonia”.⁴⁴⁷ Such documents were recycled and reprinted in many years to follow and translated in other languages such as German, French, English. In doing this, I argue the Albanian establishment made a conscious attempt to lure tourists away from visiting other Socialist bloc states by seducing them to experience a non-typical Soviet influenced territory – in other words by amplifying a non-slavic culture and history. At the same time, by utilizing a direct connection to Western civilization and antiquity, a conscious effort was made to cater to Western tourists coming from the Free World.

A Style of Socialist Modernism

After years of Italian and Austro-Hungarian influence, the political orientation of Albania would slowly turn to the East, severing ties with Western cultural ideals as well as theories and practice of architecture. After the liberation from the fascists, Enver Hoxha’s socialist regime was installed with the help of the Yugoslavs thus aligning the country with the Eastern Camp in the Cold War divide. According to Albanian architectural historians, in an effort to heal the wounds of war, “the building activity [under Yugoslavian support] dealt mostly with the reconstruction of damaged buildings and with few new constructions, mainly of utilitarian nature, without facing the question of

⁴⁴⁶ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Propogande mbi turizmin* f.770, v. 1964, dos.26, fl. 027-058

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

style”⁴⁴⁸. It wasn’t until the Tito-Stalin rift, that Albania made a conscious orientation towards style and architecture, via alignment with the Soviet Union – which had “abandoned Constructivism in the mid ’30s for adopting Socialist Realism as an official style in art and architecture”⁴⁴⁹. Through the process of Sovietization, this ideology quickly engulfed the Socialist Bloc and Albania as a satellite of the Soviet Union.

The doctrine of Social Realism claims that the city is seen as “an artistic entity where public space, public buildings and working environments are highlighted...[as a means] where masses manifest their power”⁴⁵⁰. Under Stalin, this style was meant to oppose and dominate Western theories of modernism in art and architecture by turning the focus towards tradition and developing a “national form” with “socialist content”.⁴⁵¹ Stylistically, Neoclassicism would embody the dominating architectural language of Socialist Realism.⁴⁵² The importation of a Stalinist socio-political system in Albania also meant the application of Socialist Realism style to architecture and art “which came in Tirana through the experience of Albanian students in Moscow”⁴⁵³. Through a speech given in 1948, Enver Hoxha asked professional engineers and architects to follow the popular style (Socialist Content) and to adapt characteristics of the country (National Form).⁴⁵⁴ One highlighting project bearing the style of Socialist Realism is the still standing construction of cinematographic studio *Shqipëria e Re* (New Albania) **[Figure 2.19]** inaugurated by Hoxha himself **[Figure 2.20]**.

⁴⁴⁸ Islami and Veizaj and Thomai, *From Socialist Classicism To Socialist Modernism*, 212

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid. 213

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Fagu and Nepravishta, *Application of Modernist Architecture in Albania*, 22

⁴⁵⁴ Islami and Veizaj and Thomai, *From Socialist Classicism To Socialist Modernism*, 213



[Figure 2.19] Cinematographic studio Shqiperia e Re (New Albania), year unknown.
 (Ref: Fagu., Nepravishta. *Application of Modernist Architecture in Albania*)



[Figure 2.20] Inauguration of cinematographic studio Shqiperia e Re (New Albania), year unknown.
 (Ref: *40 Vjet Shqiperi Socialiste*, 8 Nentori Publishing House, Tirana, Albania, 1984)

Petraq Kolevica – an architect of the regime (later expelled for modern tendencies) – recalled his distaste for the “decorative Soviet architecture” that was “creating ugly monstrous buildings” in his autobiographical recounting of times published in 1997⁴⁵⁵. As luck would have it, Stalin’s death would also bring an end to Socialist Realism. Through the policies of De-Stalinization, Krushchev would not only taint Stalin’s image but would also do away with his building and development

⁴⁵⁵ Kolevica, *Arkitektura dhe Diktatura*, 1-37

strategy and architectural style. Socialist Realism was no longer the style Moscow would prescribe to as “decorations were considered excessive and expensive while architecture had to be oriented towards advanced industrialization and standardization as the most efficient way to build.”⁴⁵⁶

Hoxha idolized Stalin and took pride in building the only other Stalinist regime in the Socialist Bloc. He was reluctant to follow most aspects of De-Stalinization, however, he did not shy from quickly disposing of the imposed Neoclassical aesthetics stemming from Stalin’s Socialist Realism. The first major project to display such departure certainly has to be the Palace of the Culture in Tirana. Stepping away from stylistic tendencies of the Socialist Realism, the Palace adapts a new post-deStalinization aesthetic language which historians refer to as “socialist modernism” [Figure 2.21]. Empty of the decorative galore, the palace sits on Skenderbeg plaza as simplified, and rationed U-shaped volume.



[Figure 2.21] Palace of Culture Stamp, year unknown. (Ref: Online Access https://colnect.com/fy/stamps/stamp/325919-Culture_House_Tirana-Buildings-Albani%C3%AB)

Some historians have rightfully stressed that the reason for the change of heart in regards to the construction ideology is mainly due to economics. “Being a poor country, implied a need for an

⁴⁵⁶ Islami and Veizaj and Thomai, *From Socialist Classicism To Socialist Modernism*, 213

economical, rational, simple and functional architecture...[in which] the new changes were welcomed and imported in a short time”⁴⁵⁷. I would also emphasize that perhaps a bigger reason – as mentioned in previous chapters – was that the Albanian establishment was very much obsessed with the modernization of Albania through industrialization of the economy. “According to Marxism-Leninism, the only way of developing a country was its industrialisation.”⁴⁵⁸ The wars and imperial tendencies of Albania’s neighbors had left the country “backward” in many aspects. Standardization, rationalization, and simplification of architecture allowed for a quicker path towards industrialization which again was at the nexus of building socialism.

According to Etleva Bushati, “after the state ownership of existing factories, intensive investment in industry led to the [substantial] urban growth of industrial facilities in Albania, initially during the 1950s and 1960s”⁴⁵⁹. Observing the rising needs that come with increased economic production she notes the following:

To meet the demand for labor force, the urban population increased, resulting in the expansion of housing areas, service zones, roads, and other infrastructure and buildings. This growth was primarily focused on the peripheral areas of cities, mainly the capital city, leading to the expansion of road infrastructure and creation of new industrial areas.⁴⁶⁰

With the “proletariat” workers at the center of building Albanian socialism, it was only right that residential development received great attention. Thanks to the large number of technoscientific agreements signed with the Soviet Union and all the Soviet technical experts present in Albania, standard and at times prefabricated four or five story social apartment blocks began to appear throughout areas previously dominated by two story houses **[Figure 2.22-2.25]**. In true socialist modern fashion, these urban developments are reminiscent of the international style. Simplified in

⁴⁵⁷ Islami and Veizaj and Thomai, *From Socialist Classicism To Socialist Modernism*, 213

⁴⁵⁸ Fagu and Nepravishta, *Application of Modernist Architecture in Albania*, 23

⁴⁵⁹ Bushati, *Meaning and Symbolism of Industrial Architecture in Albania*, 10

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

form and plastered in white, they offered solutions for the “development of rural areas...[and] the increase of urban population during 1945-60 [period]”⁴⁶¹.



[Figure 2.22] Collective Housing Blocks 1950s-60s.

(Ref: Arkiva Digjitale, <https://adsh.al/s/adsh/item/5111#lg=1&slide=0>)



[Figure 2.23] Collective Housing Blocks 1950s-60s.

(Ref: Arkiva Digjitale, <https://adsh.al/s/adsh/item/5091#lg=1&slide=0>)

⁴⁶¹ Aliaj, *Housing Models in Albania between 1945-1999*, 3



[Figure 2.24, 2.25] Typical social housing, Durrës

(Ref: Fagu and Nepravishta, *Application of Modernist Architecture in Albania*)

Socialist modern would go on to define most of the years of architectural developments under Soviet influence. Simplified and rational structures sprawled throughout the country. This was also fueled by the introduction of reinforced concrete. Reinforced concrete made bricks and mortar a thing of the past⁴⁶². Tall concrete block apartment blocks could be built faster and cheaper. “The built environment came to embody the possibilities of mass construction, as well as its shortcomings and shoddiness.”⁴⁶³ As Mehilli has pointed, “the politically divided socialist world was thus unified in the unmistakable expansion—across continents—of the concrete slab”⁴⁶⁴. This translated into new construction projects appearing mostly in Tirana throughout the 1950s or period of Soviet influence and negotiations.⁴⁶⁵ Residential construction remained the bulk of projects completed as volunteer teams were organized to build cheap and quick housing.⁴⁶⁶

Socialist modernism also filtered into tourism. With Hotel Turizmi in Durrës being the grand trophy at the time, one can see the grappling of ideas the designers in Moscow went through. Though the project opened its doors in 1958, it's safe to hypothesize its design was started much earlier than that, possibly even when Stalin was still alive. When completed, the hotel stood with a

⁴⁶² Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 183

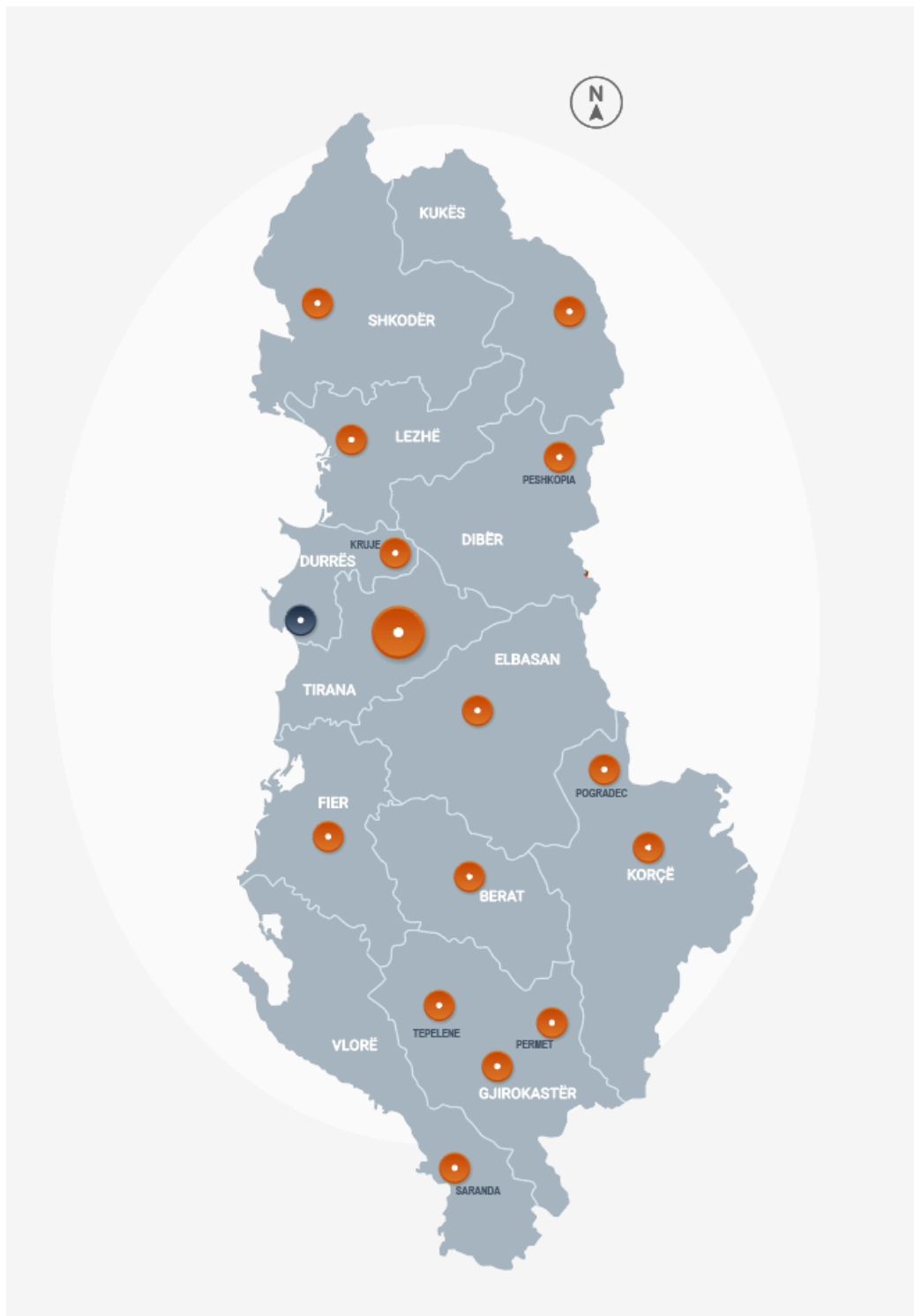
⁴⁶³ Ibid. 185

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid. 184

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

form that was mostly simplified (socialist modernism), and lacking true neoclassical components and ornaments (socialist realism). However, the grandness of the structure coupled with the leftover cornices on the roof parapets, as well as the repeated columns which might have been of the classical orders in previous versions, prompts the hypothesis that the design of the hotel most likely had undergone variations as the Soviet Union disassociated itself from socialist realism.



*Hotel Turizmi structures built during geopolitical negotiations with China.
(Graphic by Author)*

CHAPTER THREE | From Moscow to Beijing: Geopolitical Negotiations and Tourism as National Identity

Ideology... more than anything else makes alliances into social institutions. As a handmaid of action, ideology feeds on selective memory of the past and outlines a program for the future. A typical alliance ideology will define the basis and, by implication, the limits of alliance solidarity; it will be formulated so as to add incentive to joint action and to screen intra-alliance strains and splits.

- George Liska

Definitions

CPA: Communist Party of Albania

CPY: Communist Party of Yugoslavia

CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union

CPC: Communist Party of China

PLA: People's Labour Party of Albania

PLSU: People's Labour Party of the Soviet Union

PRC: People's Republic of China

The Chinese Negotiations (1960-1978)

The Chinese-Albanian relations started due to a bond over disagreements with the Soviet Union. Both countries accused Moscow of ignoring “revisionsim” which according to them “represented the main danger to the international communist movement”⁴⁶⁷. This common view held by both Hoxha and Mao, has caused Mehilli to refer to them as “Brothers in Revolution”⁴⁶⁸. As it was previously made clear to the Soviet Union “the issue of Yugoslav ‘revisionism’ [remained] of paramount importance to Tirane”.⁴⁶⁹ Hoxha maintained his strong polemics that the “Yugoslavs had betrayed Marxism-Leninism, and were working against the unity of the communist bloc and the

⁴⁶⁷ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 65

⁴⁶⁸ Mehilli, *Defying DeStalinization*, 8

⁴⁶⁹ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 66

international communist movement”⁴⁷⁰. His strict stance on the Yugoslavs was fully supported by the Chinese, as they themselves viewed “Yugoslavia's policy of nonalignment as running contrary to the interests of the international communist movement in the Third World”⁴⁷¹.

The lack of funding and the gap of experts left by the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, were both immediately filled in 1961, as “Beijing granted Tirane a loan of \$125 million for the Third Five Year Plan (1961-65) and sent experts to [substitute] Soviet bloc experts”⁴⁷². One year after, the Albanian establishment asked for a hefty request; “to increase the investments in heavy industry”⁴⁷³. According to Ylber Marku, Albanian historian at the School of History at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou,

Albania had three priorities: first, building a strong metallurgic sector; second, considering the existence of a large number of rivers, the construction of a network of powerful hydroelectric power plants; third, utilization of the oil fields. Another priority was the building of plants for the production of chemical fertilizers to help boost agricultural production.⁴⁷⁴

This request was initially met with doubt by the Chinese establishment, quoting similar concerns as the Soviet handlers. Zhou Enlai – Vice Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party – expressed criticisms in building “complex industrial projects while the agriculture was still backward”, was worried due to the lacking “manpower required for these industrial projects”, while also emphasizing the “difficulties posed for China in providing products that required advanced chemical processes, both for agriculture and industry”.⁴⁷⁵ Despite hardships at home, and above all despite their initial criticisms, the Chinese committed to Albanian requests, even going as far securing food for the small Balkan nation.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁰ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 66

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 135

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid. 136

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid. 135

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid. 136

In 1963, the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain, entered the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, causing the Chinese-Albanian alliance to accuse the Soviet Union of “having entered into an alliance with the United States to preserve their nuclear monopoly”⁴⁷⁷ while also charging that “capitalism had been restored in the USSR”⁴⁷⁸. It was against this backdrop that two important things happened to further intensify a strong bond between the Chinese and the Albanians. First, the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, caused a significant deterioration of Sino-Soviet relationships, and in this context “Beijing continued to appreciate the importance of Tirane's political support”⁴⁷⁹. Second, as a result of this appreciation, Albania continued to receive the much needed economic assistance from China, especially after losing aid from the Soviet Union and the rest of the Bloc.⁴⁸⁰ Given the quarreling powers of Socialism, Albanian geopolitical importance increased as it often served as “a proxy for Soviet attacks against Beijing”⁴⁸¹. According to Mehilli, “Hoxha quickly learned to exploit this position when seeking assistance from the Chinese”⁴⁸².

Where Hoxha had pleaded for years for an official Khrushchev visit⁴⁸³, Chinese premier Zhou took little time to visit Albania, showing up in Tirana in 1963/1964 – not too long after the fraternal alliance had begun. Speaking in the city of Shkoder, he reiterated the Chinese aid to Albania as he pledged the demise of aggressors (Belgrade and Moscow) if they dared to threaten Albania's sovereignty.⁴⁸⁴ Zhou concluded his trip with the following statement given at a rally in Albania's capital:

...no matter what may happen in the world, whatever perilous storms may arise on the revolutionary path along which we are marching together, we will forever

⁴⁷⁷ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 92

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. 91

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Mehilli, *Mao and the Albanians*, 172

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 92

steadfastly stand beside fraternal Albania and give her unqualified and unfaltering support in her just struggle.⁴⁸⁵

The effects of such a visit – or perhaps Hoxha’s cunning exploitations of the alliance – were felt immediately in the Albanian economy. According to Marku, “China accepted the requests for an additional loan of 30 million rubles (33 million USD), and moreover, agreed to provide the technology (tubes) for oil extraction...[totaling the] approved assistance of an additional 29 industrial projects for a total loan of 151.9 million rubles (168.609 million USD)”⁴⁸⁶ Zhou Enlai boasted of Chinese aid to more than 22 countries while stressing that Albania’s share was even larger than that of North Korea.⁴⁸⁷ This economic backing came with great fruition on the Albanian side.

Marku outlines the following achievements:

Among the many complex industrial projects Albania wanted to build was a chemical fertilizer plant, inclusive of a unit for the extraction of gas from oil... Albania also requested the necessary technical assistance from China to study, plan and eventually transform the Drini River, in the North, into a hydropower cascade. China conceded the investments for nearly all of the heavy industrial projects – neglecting, at Albania’s behest, agriculture and light industry.⁴⁸⁸

The effects of China conceding all heavy projects were also felt in the tourism industry. Zhou’s ensuring of economic backing meant that the construction of hotels for tourism could be picked up right where it was left by the Soviets with Hotel Adriatik in Durres. As it happened, the fertilizer plant that Marku outlines above was to be constructed in the city of Fieri. In Albturist brochures, the city of Fier is considered a new city in Albania (built in 1870).⁴⁸⁹ One brochure goes on to say that the city of Fier is “the main centre of the fruitful field of Myzeqe and day by day it gets more distinguished features of a modern industrial city”⁴⁹⁰. During the 1960s, the latter

⁴⁸⁵ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 92

⁴⁸⁶ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 137

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. 140

⁴⁸⁹ Albturist, *Hotel Apollonia, Fier*, Brochure, 8 Nentori Publishing, Year Unknown

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

statement stood true to its claims as Fieri became an Albanian industrial power house. Literally. As indeed it became home to “one of the largest production sites created in the sixties in Albania, that included a nitrate fertilizer plant and a thermal power station”⁴⁹¹. The power plant known as *Azotiku*, produced electricity for all the southern part of Albania, while providing employment to roughly 5,000 workers.⁴⁹² To this end, the regime needed to showcase Fieri’s achievements as a socialist creation.

Thus in 1962, the city of Fieri became the first city to receive a Hotel Turizmi funded by the Chinese [Figure 3.1, 3.2, 3.3]. Hotel Turizmi Fier, otherwise known as Hotel Apollonia was a direct product of the 33 million USD loan funding from the Chinese. One Alb turist brochure boasted it as – “a first-class hotel of Alb turist built recently, with comfortable rooms having WC and shower, restaurant and a bar. The hotel is modernly equipped and is located in the centre of the city. This hotel is visited by foreign tourists for transit stay during their visits in different cities of Albania”⁴⁹³.



[Figure 3.1] Hotel Apollonia, year unknown.
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*).

⁴⁹¹ Beccu et al., *Industrial Heritage in Albania*, 211-1

⁴⁹² Menghini and Quadrato, *Socialist industrial heritage in Albania*, 210

⁴⁹³ Alb turist, *Hotel Apollonia, Fier*, Brochure, 8 Nentori Publishing, Year Unknown



[Figure 3.2] Hotel Apollonia, year unknown.

(Ref: Arkiva Digjitale, <https://adsh.al/s/adsh/item/25377#lg=1&slide=0>)



[Figure 3.3] Hotel Apollonia, 2021.

(Photos by Author 08/2021).

Located at the center of the city, Hotel Apollonia is situated in the corner apex of the main network of roads that spread towards the north side **[Figure 3.4]**. This increases its visibility as all roads in and out of the center lead to the hotel.



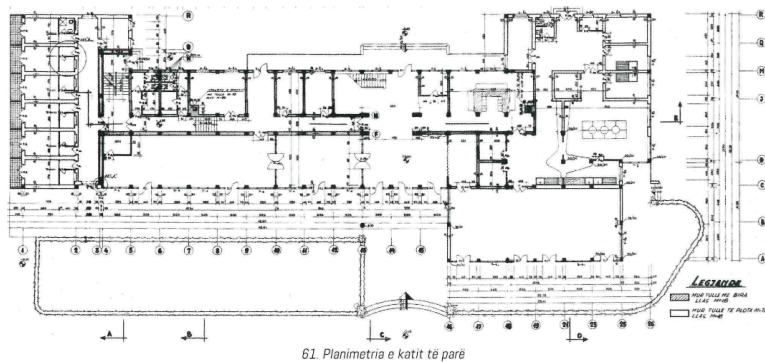
[Figure 3.4] Hotel Apollonia, Site.
(Graphic by Author)

Massed as a rectangular volume, the hotel's longer elevation faces the center of town, what used to be a plaza with walking pedonale. With an almost full scale homage to Hotel Dajti, Hotel Apollonia is a lot more simpler than the Adriatik, lacking any ornament. Categorized as a "Type E / Complex Block"⁴⁹⁴ Apollonia combines three volumes in its make-up. The restaurant and bar protrudes out at only one story high while the main volume of rooms is set back at four stories, with the third volume running parallel to the main but at only three stories high. Aside from the restaurant and bar, the first floor also hosts a courtyard with limited number of rooms [Figure 3.5]. Meanwhile the floors above take full advantage of providing rooms at an L shape [Figure 3.6]. The carving of balconies and loggias volumes creates a dynamic play of light and shadow [Figure 3.7]. "The construction material of the building is concrete construction realized with beam-column... [while] internal partitions are made with full brick and brick walls. Drainage of terrace water is done by

⁴⁹⁴ Istrefaj, *The Typology and Design of Hotels during Communism*, 171

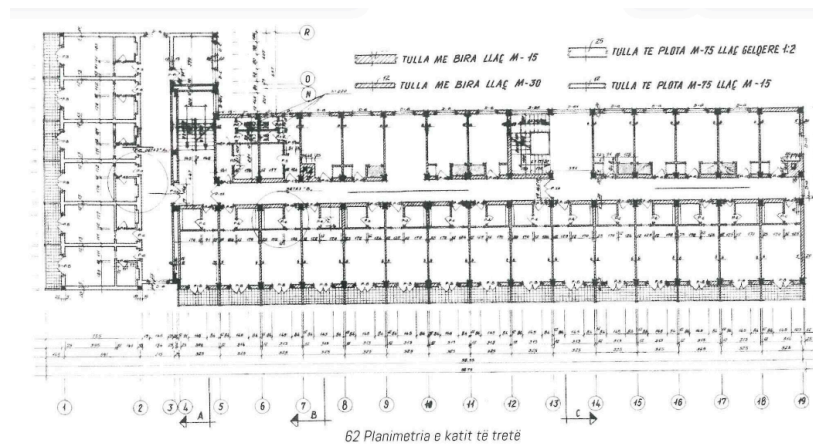
means of concrete pipes, which flow into the established sewerage networks in the back of the hotel”⁴⁹⁵. Placing the hotel in discussion with other touristic markers, the Albturist brochure reads:

Only 12 kilometers toward west in the road which reaches the seashore, lies the ancient Apollonia, a center of very important and interesting archeological research. Apollonia was built in 588 B.C. by hellenic colonists coming from Corinth and Kerkyra. Apollonia developed very quickly owing to the commercial relations with the Illyrians. Apollonia and Epidamnus (the to-day Durres) became the greatest commercial centers of east Adriatic.⁴⁹⁶



[Figure 3.5] Hotel Apollonia First Floor.

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2021).

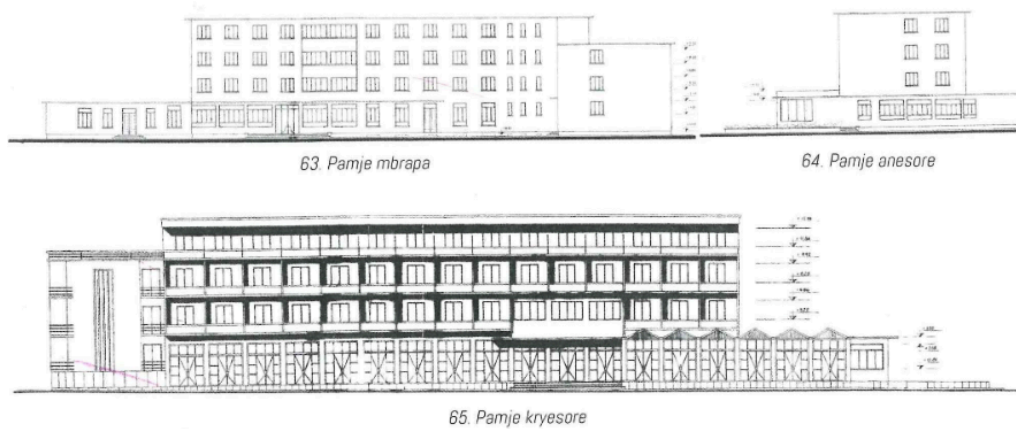


[Figure 3.6] Hotel Apollonia Third Floor.

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2021)

⁴⁹⁵ Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, 70

⁴⁹⁶ Albturist, *Hotel Apollonia*, Fier, Brochure, 8 Nentori Publishing, Year Unknown



[Figure 3.7] Hotel Apollonia Elevations. Nepravishta, *Hotelet para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2021.

In a sign of the perpetual reinforcement of the Chinese-Albanian friendship, Zhou would once again visit Albania in March of 1965.⁴⁹⁷ “Regarding the economy, Zhou Enlai reaffirmed repeatedly the Chinese commitment to assist Albania in order to for the latter better play its role on the international stage – the role for which China was providing support.”⁴⁹⁸ One month later, an Albanian delegation visited Beijing to negotiate the next five year plan. (1966-1970). Though the initial negotiations were met with some friction on China’s behalf (going as far as stating that “the living standards were higher in Albania than in China”⁴⁹⁹), still, “China, provided a total loan of 170 million rubles, 82 million of which went for 18 new industrial projects, for a total of 45 industrial projects....China also agreed to help Albania to build its first major hydroelectric power plant, with a dam 60 meters tall, in the city of Vau i Dejës.”⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 99

⁴⁹⁸ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 146

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid. 147

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid. 148

Perhaps no other year is seen as important in the Chinese-Albanian alliances as the year 1966. Long time director of Voice of America, Elez Biberaj has categorized 1966 as “the peak” in the relations of both countries.⁵⁰¹ The reason for this may be looked as a two fold: First the Albanian fear of a Sino-Soviet rebuilt of relationship came to an end with relations between the big powers completely collapsing in 1966⁵⁰², and second, the “spectacular” reception which a high level Albanian government delegation received on their April-May visit to China.⁵⁰³ “An account in the Peking Review described the reception given to [the Albanian establishment] as the biggest and most spectacular welcome ever given by Beijing to a foreign guest, and claimed that about one million people – more than half of Albania's total population at the time – had turned out to meet the Albanian delegation.”⁵⁰⁴ Hoxha’s second in command at the time – Mehmet Shehu – stressed the “common ideals and struggles of Marxism-Leninism which have bound Albania and China together” while praising the “proletariat internationalist friendship” of one small socialist country in the Adriatic and one big socialist country in the Pacific not affected by geographic environment, race, or hierarchy of party power.⁵⁰⁵ The meeting of delegations in Beijing yielded a “Joint Statement...which once again reaffirmed the close alliance between the two states”⁵⁰⁶. Biberaj further explains:

The statement was highly critical of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia, and expressed support for national liberation movements. The document portrayed the PSRA and the PRC as defenders of the purity of Marxism-Leninism and the standard bearers of the struggle against "imperialism" and "revisionism". Once again, China pledged to stand resolutely by Albania and to give it all possible support and assistance.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰¹ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 100

⁵⁰² Mehilli, *Mao and the Albanians*, 176

⁵⁰³ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 100

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid. 101

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

During this same time, the Cultural Revolution was starting to brew in China. The apparent aim of the Cultural Revolution – as explained to the Albanians by Kang Sheng, one of China’s high level officials – was “to wage a merciless battle against bourgeois and revisionist ideology and leftovers in the consciousness of people, to uproot any possibility for the eruption of revisionism and the restoration of capitalism, and to ensure the final victory of the socialist path and the general strengthening of the People’s Republic of China”⁵⁰⁸. While initially Hoxha did not seem to prescribe to what he saw as “China’s domestic struggles”, it would seem that in November of 1966 he would suddenly have a change of heart.⁵⁰⁹ As a result, “the two governing elites subscribed to the view that it was necessary to wage an ‘uninterrupted revolution’ in the cultural field to prevent the emergence of revisionism and the restoration of capitalism”⁵¹⁰. As China increased aid to Albania, Hoxha became “convinced that the Chinese Cultural Revolution was a step forward in the struggle against revisionism” thus justifying the launch of the Cultural Revolution in Albania.⁵¹¹ According to Biberaj, the main features of the Albanian revolution were:

Its main features were: a radical purge and reduction of the size and power of the huge party and government bureaucracy; a lowering of the salaries of party and state officials to reduce differences between mental and physical work; the abolition of military ranks and the reintroduction of political commissars within the Armed Forces; a program for the emancipation of women; an anti-religious campaign which climaxed with the proclamation of the world's "first atheist state" in 1967; and a reform of the educational system with the aim of eradicating any remaining Soviet influence.⁵¹²

Biberaj maintains that the revolution in Albania did not affect the country’s foreign policy, “nor did it leads to political turmoil, the weakening of party influence or economic disruptions”⁵¹³. He concludes with the following:

⁵⁰⁸ Mehilli, *Mao and the Albanians*, 176

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid. 174

⁵¹⁰ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 106

⁵¹¹ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 189

⁵¹² Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 108

⁵¹³ Ibid.

While the PRC's relations with the outside world, with the exception of Albania, Pakistan, and a few African countries, were seriously disrupted, there was no similar downturn in the PSRA's foreign relations. In fact, Albania maintained more diplomatic posts than China during 1967. Hoxha was in control of the "revolutionizing" process in Albania, which clearly was not the case with Mao in China.⁵¹⁴

Despite problems at home, the Chinese maintained the strong economic backing of Albania without interruption. "Albanian endorsement of the Cultural Revolution must have been of great symbolic value to the Chinese, and therefore an important bargaining chip for the Albanians."⁵¹⁵ This important bargaining power also came in handy in terms of Chinese military aid. When the Soviet military intervened in Czechoslovakia during what became known as the Prague Spring Revolution of 1968, "the Chinese sent a delegation headed by Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army Huang Yongsheng to Tirana – a remarkable display of support...[during] a time of great panic about a possible military confrontation"⁵¹⁶. Concerned of similar events taking place in Albania, Enver Hoxha initiated Albania's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact while he "denounced the [Prague] invasion as a 'fascist-type aggression,' and accused the Soviets of having transformed the Warsaw Pact into a mechanism for aggression against, and the enslavement of, Eastern Europe"⁵¹⁷. Parallel to adopting a defense policy which increased military budgets and total population mobilization into guerilla warfare strategies, the Albanians asked their Chinese counterparts for increased security aid.⁵¹⁸ By 1969, China committed to provide 90 percent of all Albanian Military armaments as well as a substantial amount of equipment.⁵¹⁹ The two governments

⁵¹⁴ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 108

⁵¹⁵ Ibid. 113

⁵¹⁶ Mehilli, *Mao and the Albanians*, 172

⁵¹⁷ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 119

⁵¹⁸ Ibid. 124

⁵¹⁹ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 210

also “signed an agreement to speed up the fortification process in Albania by sending a group of Chinese experts who had experience in constructing tunnels from their time in Vietnam”⁵²⁰.

Even with the backdrop of national security paranoia, the Albanian establishment did not stop from continuing the vacuuming of Chinese aid in other parts of the economy. As Marku has rightfully written, the later half of the 1960’s and the early 1970’s “shaped the entire national life of Albania”.⁵²¹ According to Marku, “the total amount of the loan China approved for Albania in November 1968 and then again in October 1970 reached almost 3 billion yuan, (697.8 million rubles)”⁵²² This materialized in “building of another large hydroelectric power plant in Fierza, and the completion of the metallurgic plant in Elbasan – a gigantic project for Albania which required the participation of around 15 thousand workers during its construction, and a permanent workforce of 10 thousand workers employed in the production line”⁵²³. Such industrial projects required the mobilization of the entire population. Six and a half thousand apartments were built from the ground up just in Elbasan where the new population reached 35k people.⁵²⁴ Additionally, new schools, theaters, libraries, and other social and cultural institutions were constructed to support the new residential areas resulting in “tiny villages becoming new-born cities overnight”.⁵²⁵ On such phenomenon, Marku writes the following:

The city of Laç that hosted the workers of the superphosphate plant was such a case. The same happened in the small city of Ballsh, where for the building of a large and complex plant for oil processing, it was necessary to employ more than three thousand people, and afterwards a permanent workforce of around two thousand people, plus another two thousand in smaller factories related directly to this plant. In all, an entire city of thousands of people was built around this factory, which still exists and is partially functional.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁰ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 211

⁵²¹ Ibid. 213

⁵²² Ibid. 212

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid. 213

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

What Marku fails to mention is that the three billion yuan Chinese aid would of course also trickle into the tourism industry and infrastructure. Thanks to the aid, two major Hotel Turizmi structures were on the way and appeared in the urban fabric of the Ionian seaside city of Saranda in 1968 and the antique city of Kruja in 1969.

Tourists from England, France, and Italy enjoyed their stay in Hotel Turizmi in Saranda, where for only 20-40 Lek they could take excursions to other local sites such as Butrint, Borsh, Gjirokaster.⁵²⁷ Otherwise known as *Hotel Butrinti*, the highrise Hotel Turizmi in Saranda was designed at the State Design Institute by Albanian architect Anton Lufi, who had studied his craft in Prague.⁵²⁸ Located right on the edge of Ionian sea [Figure 3.8], this hotel was one of the first to be built as a tower [Figure 3.9]. Politically, this was an important statement, considering that on the other side of the sea, the islands of Greece (capitalist system) competed for tourists, profits and ideology [Figure 3.10].



[Figure 3.8] Hotel Butrint Site location.
(Graphic by author)

⁵²⁷ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Deges Albturizmit Sarande*, f.770, v. 1974, dos. 12, fl. 043

⁵²⁸ Dhamo and Thomai and Aliaj, *Saranda: The Lost City*, 166



[Figure 3.9] Hotel Butrint Exterior, year unknown.

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/202.)



[Figure 3.10] Hotel Butrint and Greece location.

(Graphic by author).

If socialism was the dominating ideology, it should have dominating structures to go with it. To emphasize this point, Hotel Butrint was positioned high on a rocky ridge with a considerate slope.

This made the structure hard to miss from any point of approachment via the main road which hugged the coastline going north or south. Standing firm, Hotel Butrint offered 180 beds, with only 25% of the rooms not facing the teal water of the sea.⁵²⁹ The rest of the rooms were purposefully shielded away from the sea food those tourists interested in mountains present in the distant background of the backside sloped hill **[Figure 3.11]**.



[Figure 3.11] Hotel Butrint hill Side.

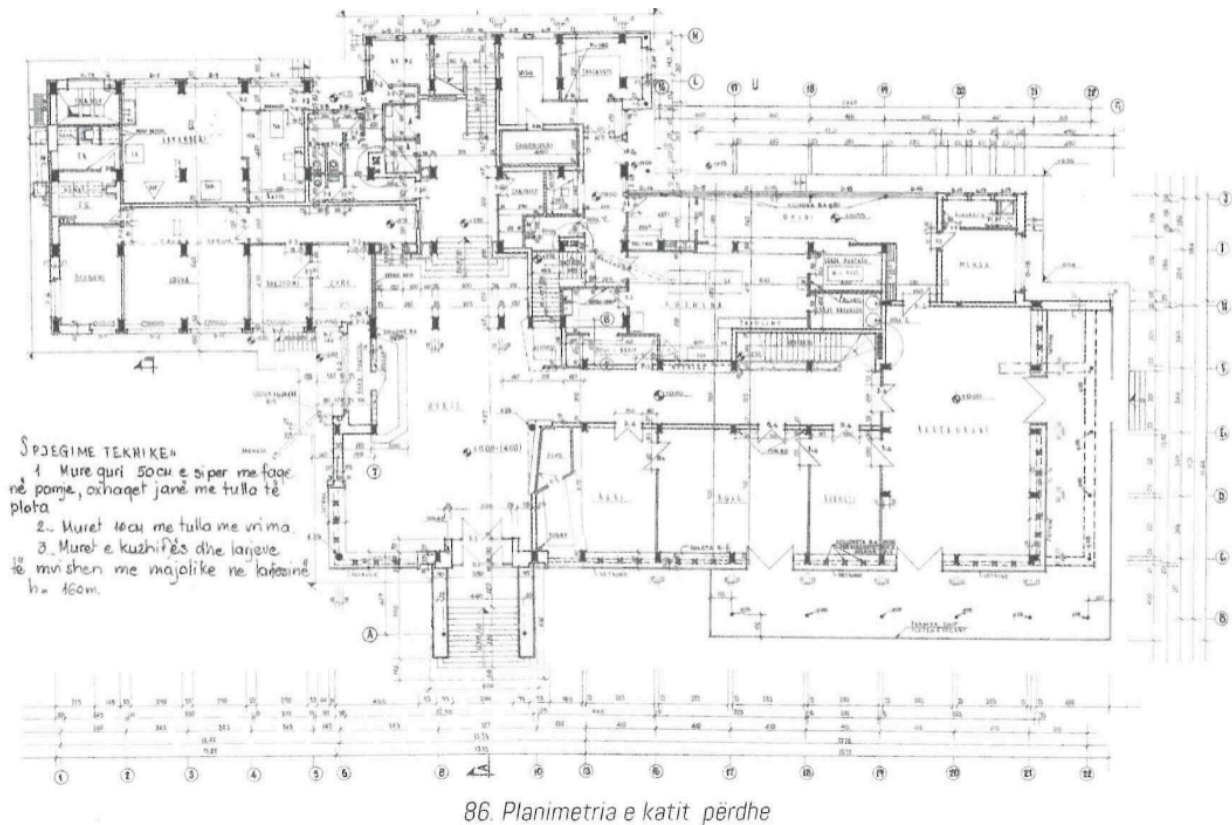
(Ref: Ylli Magazine #8, August 1973, Cover Page.)

On the ground floor, “the central hall, where the reception was located, integrated several functions and distributed them to the social premises of the hotel, such as the restaurant, bar, tavern, shops, etc. **[Figure 3.12]**”⁵³⁰. The open plan lobby was made possible by a reinforced concrete

⁵²⁹ Dharmo and Thomai and Aliaj, *Saranda: The Lost City*, 178-180

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

frame construction which still at times blocked off certain areas due to “the mentality of the time, especially the demands for hotel control and administration”⁵³¹. The six story tower above the ground floor would itself house all the sleeping rooms. The tower “consisted of longitudinal corridors on each floor that served the sleeping rooms on both sides. These corridors were connected to the main lobby through the vertical nucleus of stairs and the elevator located in the back part of the vertical volume [Figure 3.13]”⁵³².

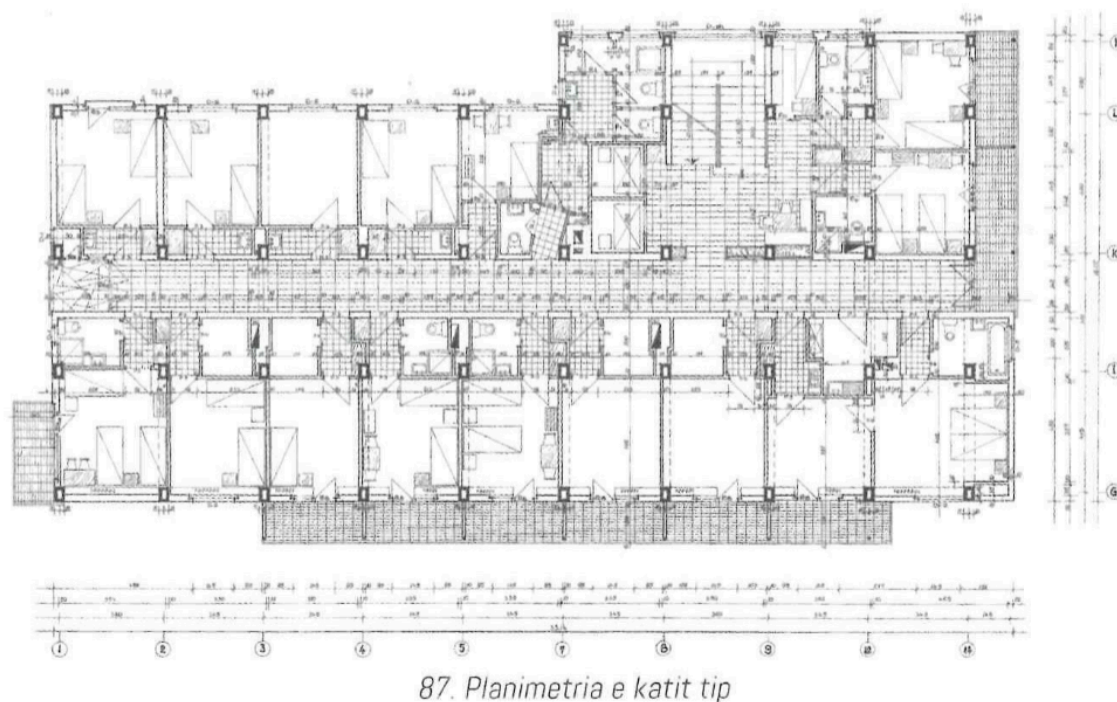


[Figure 3.12] Hotel Butrint ground floor.

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2021)

⁵³¹ Dharmo and Thoma and Aliaj, *Saranda: The Lost City*, 178-180

⁵³² Ibid.



[Figure 3.13] Hotel Butrint typ. tower floor

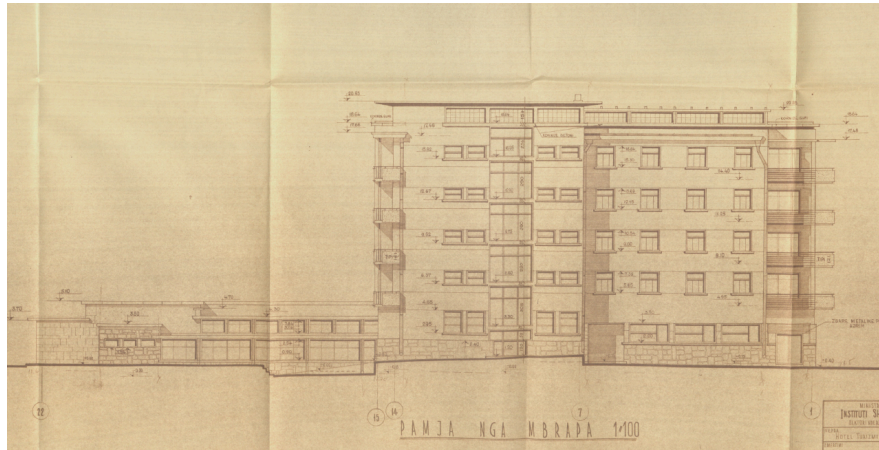
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2021)

In terms of finishes, current Albanian architects and scholars recount the following:

Refinishes were provided with colored "brushed granulated stone", in part with marble slabs from Gjirokastra and stones carved with chisels while frames with "struck granulated stone". Balconies with tiles and parapets prepared. The painting would be done with hydromats for outdoor use. The main entrance and the most important interior spaces would be paved with marble tiles and mosaics.⁵³³ **[Figure 3.14, 3.15]**

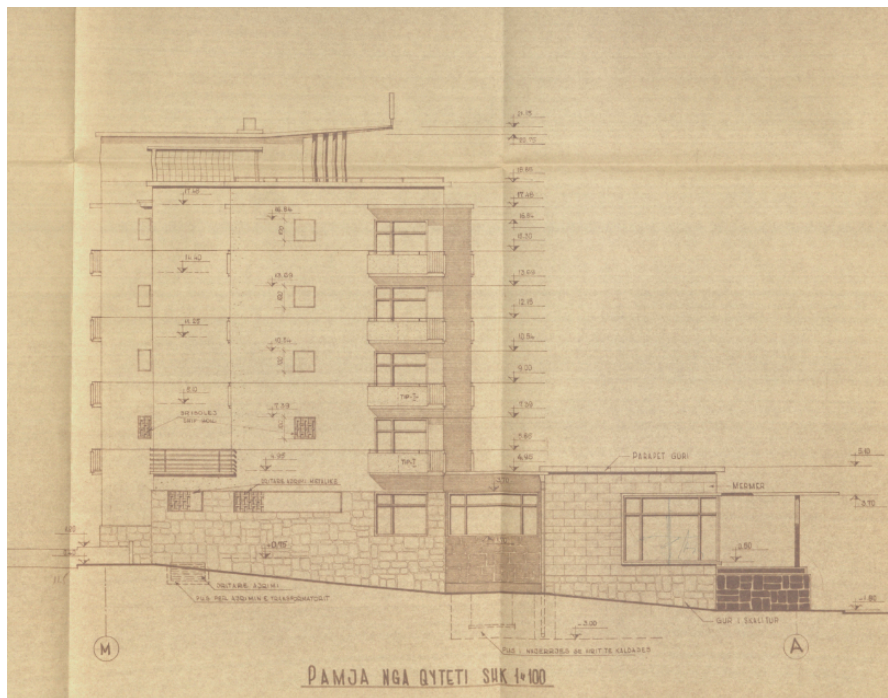
The use of stone at the base of what is a fairly modern design constitutes the regime's constant requests for inclusion of local and "vernacular" materials – sometimes at the displeasure of the architect.

⁵³³ Dhamo and Thoma and Aliaj, *Saranda: The Lost City*, 178-180



[Figure 3.14] Hotel Butrint Elevation.

(Ref: Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), f. 770, v. 1969, dos. 50, fl 024)



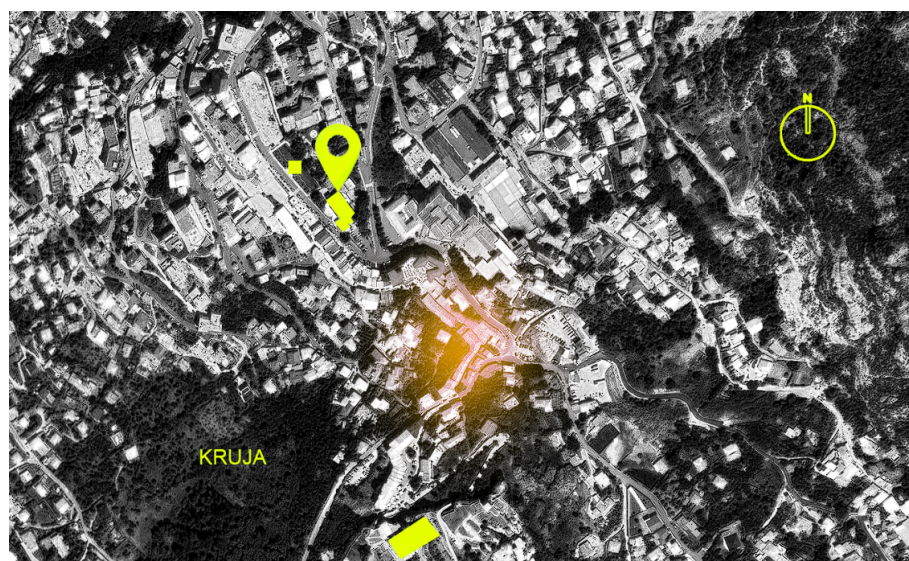
[Figure 3.15] Hotel Butrint Elevation.

(Ref: Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), f. 770, v. 1969, dos. 50, fl. 024)

On the other hand Hotel Turizmi Kruja, otherwise known as Hotel Skanderbeg, is a structure of much smaller scale compared to the Hotel Butrinti mentioned above. This scale was typically reserved for smaller cities. Due to its relationship with Kastriot Skenderbeg – resistance

leader during the Ottoman period – Kruja hailed as one of the top tourist destinations. The castle of Kruja and the old town bazaar dating back to the 15th century still make Kruja one of the most visited destinations in Albania. Given this, it's hard to determine why the urban planners at the State Design Institution allocated for a smaller scale hotel rather than the larger tower typology. One hypothesis could be the cost associated with building in Kruja's high sloped terrain. It is unknown who worked on the project or when it was completed as archival evidence is impossible to locate. One Albturnist propaganda document dated 1969 briefly mentions the accommodation structure as it urges visitors to “not leave this beautiful mountain town without having a coffee in the typical bar-café, with all the old characteristics: premises, services, etc”⁵³⁴.

Regardless, considering that Kruja was a top destination of foreign visitors, the importance of conveying a unique socialist identity through the architecture of tourism was still important. As it is visible in the site graphic, Hotel Skanderbeg is placed directly inline with Kruja's castle to its south leaving the bazaar in the middle of booth areas [Figure 3.16].



[Figure 3.16] Site of Hotel Skanderbeg with the Skanderbeg Monument next to it and city Castle positioned further south.
(Graphic by author).

⁵³⁴ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Propagande*, f.770, v. 1969, dos. 10, fl. 005

Kruja's castle is the highest peak of the city, however, the hotel was also elevated on a much higher platform from street level so that it did not lose any importance in respect to other touristic markers. Here we have the achievements of socialism placed on a pedestal and exerting dominance over all other structures around it. To the western side of the hotel, a statue of Skanderbeg is also elevated above street level [Figure 3.17]. The hotel – socialist identity – then sits at the same level of importance as the revered national hero and his castle, making a strong statement in how the regime saw the place of socialism in history.



[Figure 3.17] Hotel Kruja and Skanderbeg Statue,
(Ref: Timea, Wikimap, https://wikimapia.org/19492965/Turizmi-Hotel-Restaurant#google_vignette)



[Figure 3.18] Hotel Kruja Exterior,
(Ref: Timea, Wikimap ,https://wikimapia.org/19492965/Turizmi-Hotel-Restaurant#google_vignette)



[Figure 3.19] Hotel Kruja Current Exterior
(Photos by author)



[Figure 3.20, 3.21] The Restaurant and Hallways at Hotel Kruja
(Photos by author)



[Figure 3.22] Hotel Kruja Current Interior
(Photos by author)

While these were times that shaped many facets of Albanian life, in terms of geopolitics this was also a time of uncertainty. From the outside, the alliance was perceived to be a strong and everlasting friendship among the two countries. However, the 1970s would slowly begin to suggest otherwise. Surprisingly, the cracks that began to develop in the structure of the friendship were not all attributed to the nature of what Biberaj has called “an unequal alliance”⁵³⁵, but rather to the perfect combination of China's change of foreign policy and in turn Albania's lack of change in foreign policy. Like the ying and the yang working together, these two courses would slowly divide the two countries even further away than they already were geographically. As usual, history would repeat itself. The protectorate – China – would recalibrate its position in the international arena as geopolitical developments unfolded in the new decade, where as the proxy – Albania – would remain stubborn in its ways and its quest to remain a “maverick”⁵³⁶ or a “beacon”⁵³⁷ of socialism.

One of the first events to cause a strain in the alliance between China and Albania was the aftermath of a border dispute between China and the Soviet Union at the Ussuri River⁵³⁸. The world watched anxiously as the armed clashes between the two giants nearly led to a full on war which almost provoked the Soviets to engage their nuclear weapons.⁵³⁹ Per usual, Albania came to the “rescue” of its ally, immediately denouncing the Soviet Union as “the instigator of the disputes and the aggressor of China”⁵⁴⁰. To the surprise of the Albanians, things quickly turned around. “In order to defuse border tensions and neutralize the Soviet threat to China, Beijing agreed to open negotiations with Moscow, exchange ambassadors, and sign a new trade agreement.”⁵⁴¹ Moscow also seized this opportunity to direct similar neutralization efforts towards Albania which were rejected

⁵³⁵ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 113

⁵³⁶ Bioberaj's 1990 book is titled *Albania: A socialist Maverick*

⁵³⁷ Czekalski refers to Albania as a “Socialist Beacon” in his book *The Shining Beacon of Socialism in Europe*

⁵³⁸ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 234

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 136

on the basis that “Albania would not compromise with Soviet ‘revisionists’”⁵⁴². The negotiations of diffusing tensions apparently took place without the knowledge of China’s number one ally; the Albanians. Biberaj notes Albania’s displeasure with Beijing’s failure to provide media coverage to increased Sino-Soviet contacts and economic cooperation.⁵⁴³ However, more detrimental was Beijing’s conscious act of omitting to “consult or inform Tirane in advance about Sino-Soviet negotiations [which] aroused further mistrust in Albania”⁵⁴⁴.

The second and perhaps the biggest blow to Chinese-Albanian relations was actually worse (for the Albanians) than what the softening of China’s relations with the Soviet Union appeared to achieve. As it was specifically this initiative, which counterintuitively categorized the Soviet Union to an even higher degree of a threat for the Chinese. “Regardless of the meeting between Zhou Enlai and Kosygin (Soviet Statesman), China continued, from 1969 to the early months of 1970, to believe that the Soviet Union posed a nuclear threat.”⁵⁴⁵ To this end, “Beijing moved toward an accommodation with Washington, which throughout the 1960s was considered by both Beijing and Tirane as one of their principal enemies”⁵⁴⁶. The product of such a move materialized in 1971 with Zhou Enlai’s meeting with special American envoy, Henry Kissinger sparking warming of relations between the two countries.⁵⁴⁷ To make matters worse for the Albanians, “a message through Romania arrived from Zhou Enlai, affirming that President Nixon would [also] be welcomed in Beijing”⁵⁴⁸. “This was the most radical departure in Chinese foreign policy since the PRC’s foundation”⁵⁴⁹.

⁵⁴² Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 137

⁵⁴³ Ibid. 138

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid. 137

⁵⁴⁵ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 237

⁵⁴⁶ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 139

⁵⁴⁷ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 53

⁵⁴⁸ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 239

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid. 237

Warming US-Chinese relations came as a complete shock to Hoxha which took the news as if a “bombshell” had fallen on the Albanian people.⁵⁵⁰ Once again, “in its rapprochement with the United States, China took a unilateral action without consulting or informing Albania in advance”⁵⁵¹. To explain why China might even entertain such rapprochement, Biberaj argues the following:

Taking advantage of Mao's theory of differentiating among adversaries and cooperating with enemies of "secondary" importance against the principal enemy, the United States was downgraded to a secondary enemy with which China could align in order to check the rising Soviet menace.⁵⁵²

The Albanians though did not share a similar view. “While sharing Beijing's concern about the Soviet threat, Tirane did not believe there was a significant decrease in the American threat to warrant, as Beijing's policy pronouncement reflected, the transformation of Washington from a primary adversary to a lesser one.”⁵⁵³ To this effect, Hoxha strongly opposed China’s sharp u-turn approach to world affairs. According to Biberaj, “ideologically, [he] found it difficult to accept that China, until 1971 regarded as the showcase and center of Marxism-Leninism, could suddenly “betray” Marxism-Leninism, and the cause of proletarian revolution and national liberation struggle”⁵⁵⁴.

By initiating a rapprochement with the United States, the PRC, according to the Albanian view, betrayed Marxism-Leninism, embarked on a "revisionist" path, and abandoned "the genuine socialist countries, the Marxist-Leninist movement, the revolution and the national-liberation struggle.”⁵⁵⁵

Though Hoxha was perturbed of China’s sudden geopolitical orientation, he was careful not to do anything drastic at this time as he “continued portraying Albania still, as ‘China’s most faithful

⁵⁵⁰ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 140

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid. 146

⁵⁵³ Ibid. 140

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid. 143

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid. 146

ally”⁵⁵⁶. According to recent scholarship on Chinese-Albanian relations, “Hoxha understood that the Sino-American rapprochement was the beginning of China’s integration into the international system. Therefore, from this moment onward, he prioritized more the economic rather than the ideological aspects in Albania’s relations with China”⁵⁵⁷. And China continued its support. To show this, Marku writes the following regarding the 1971-1975 Five Year Plan:

The Albanian government predicted a GDP in 1975, around 55 percent higher than in 1970, in particular an industrial production that in five years would be, they said, 62-66 percent higher than in 1970, with particular emphasis on the increasing of the heavy industry while the light industry would increase only by around 40 percent.⁵⁵⁸

In 1973, Chinese backed construction was still ongoing while a speculation on the next Five Year Plan – with the hopes of continued Chinese support – would further “narrow the differences in living standards and income per capita between the cities and the countryside”, as Albania would “pass from an agricultural to an industrial country”.⁵⁵⁹ In 1974 the Chinese, even “provided specialized medical treatment to the aging Albanian dictator for his heart and diabetes problems”⁵⁶⁰.

By playing into the narrative of increasing living standards in the cities, tourism would of course be a beneficiary. Increased living standards meant huge accomplishment for the regime. Huge accomplishments translated into display markers for tourism. Choosing to prioritize economic relations, the Albanian establishment found this time to be the perfect window for increasing investments in tourism specific to the hotel structures. As if they could sense a black future with no Chinese aid coming their way, they made sure to squeeze as much support into constructing the most amount of hotel structures they could. And this they did. The result of the 1971-1975 Five Year plan provided the last push needed to finalize the design and later constructions of some of the

⁵⁵⁶ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 252

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid. 251

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid. 252

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid. 255-256

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid. 252

most extravagant Hotel Turizmi structures. In the cities of Shkodra, Elbasan and Kukes, high rise hotel structures were starting to be designed as early as in 1971. Similar structures of even more lavish designs were being studied for the city of Pogradec and in the capital of Tirana in 1973. All of these projects would be completed in the later half of the 70s with Hotel Turizmi Tirana being the latest to open its doors in 1979.

On Christmas day 1968, an important meeting was held in Tirana to discuss the project ideas for the new Hotel Turizm in Shkoder.⁵⁶¹ With maximum funds up to 4,000,000 Lek, which were going to be supplied by the “investor” Albaturist, the program of the new hotel called for a “capacity of 181 beds in the sleeping corps and 460 seats in the social corps”.⁵⁶² The investor had already determined the site of the construction “to be located on the almost flat corner of Stalin Boulevard, opposite the museum building”⁵⁶³. The meeting minutes found in Albaturist archives **[Figure 3.23]**, provide information on a discussion which took place regarding two variant design options for the hotel. The first variant, called for the organization of social spaces in just one floor:

The social corpus (amenities) contains all the facilities with character social which are connected to the main lobby. In addition to the main entrance that leads to the hotel lobby and restaurants, the hotel building has a second entrance that leads to the bar-buffet, brewery and pastry shop. The restaurant premises are supplied by the kitchen, while the large brewery supplied by the snack bar with the relevant annexes related to the kitchen.⁵⁶⁴

The second variant, called food the organization of social spaces in two floors:

Social facilities located partially on the ground floor and the main part on the first floor. On the ground floor there are: to the right of the lobby a bar-buffet with a separate entrance from the outside; on the left side the big brewery, this too with a separate entrance from the outside. The external connection of the two entrances located in the main facade is made through a passage that it goes along the entire

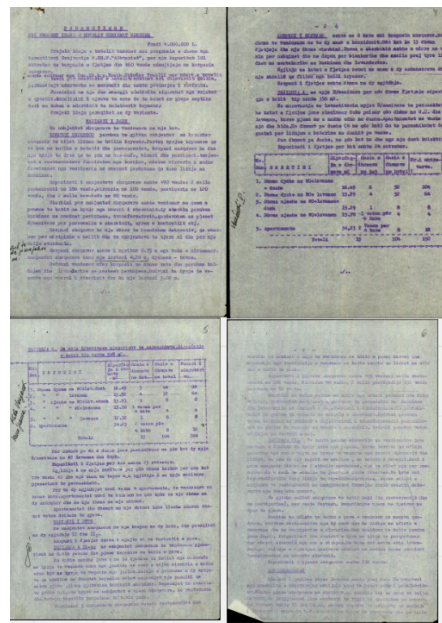
⁵⁶¹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Parashtrëse*, f.770, v. 1968, dos. 32, fl. 003-011

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

length of the social corpus. Through the stairs near the entrances, it opens to other social spaces, restaurants and small bar belonging to the first floor.⁵⁶⁵



[Figure 3.23] Meeting Notes

(Ref: Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), f.770, v. 1968, dos. 32, fl. 003-011)

In the end, the first option would prevail as the final design of Hotel Turizmi Shkoder, otherwise known as Hotel Rozafa, constructed in 1971 [Figure 3.24].

⁵⁶⁵ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Parashtrere*, f.770, v. 1968, dos. 32, fl. 003-011



[Figure 3.24] Hotel Rozafa

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2021)

Rozafa would go on to be located at the main city nucleus where Boulevard Stalini – presently Boulevard Skanderbeg – crossed the other major road of the city known presently as Qemal Dracini Road **[Figure 3.25]**. Stretching East-West, the tower of Hotel Rozafa faces the main parts of the city – to north the Great Russian Square, and south present day Parruce Square – and maximize sun exposure on the southern facade. As it was typical of Turizm Hotels, all major roads lead to Rozafa hotel while its tall structure could be visible from anywhere at the time of construction.



[Figure 3.25] Hotel Rozafa Site location
(Graphic by author)

While keeping all social functions on the ground floor, this hotel also introduces an interior courtyard which was not previously done in other designs **[Figure 3.26]**. The restaurant, pastry shop and brewery occupy the first floor with additional outdoor space **[Figure 3.27]**.

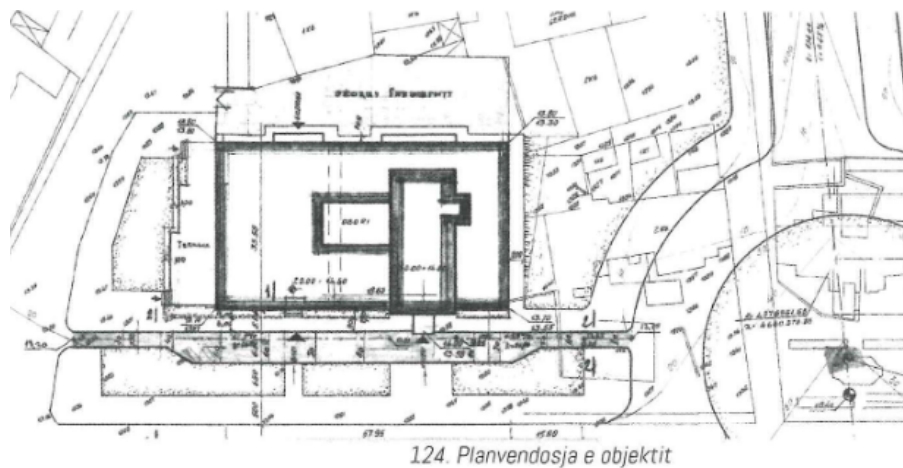
The upper seven floors (eight in total) of the sleeping rooms make up the entirety of the tower volume where a main aisle flanks the rooms on each side **[Figure 3.28]**.

According to an Albturist brochure Rozafa had 91 rooms with a total of 165 beds.⁵⁶⁶ “The majority of the rooms have a shower, a toilet, and a hot and cold running water...all rooms are equipped with a telephone and service call”⁵⁶⁷, reads the flier. The stairs and elevator are all located on the north end, and protrude out of what is mostly a regular volume. Scratched granite is called out throughout the elevation drawings as the main cladding of the tower

⁵⁶⁶ Albturist, *Hotel Rozafa, Shkoder*, Brochure, 8 Nentori Publishing, Year Unknown

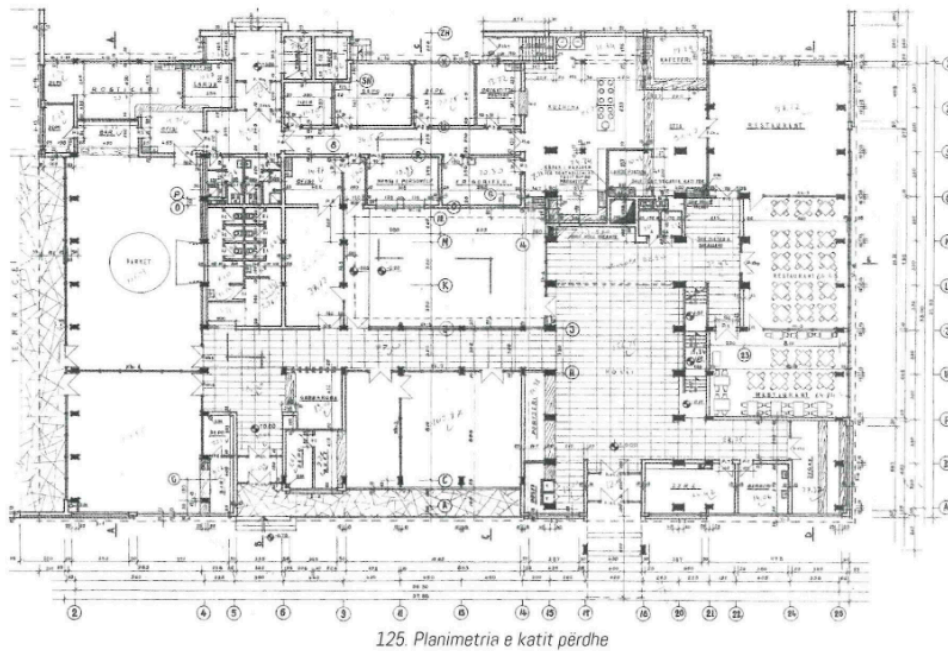
⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

element, while various configurations of stone appear in the ground floor where the public elements are located [Figure 3.29]. The restaurant still functions under private management and is one of the most visited sites in Shkoder due to its history. Much of the exterior remains untouched from the way it was constructed while the interior has undergone renovations. Still, existing elements such as the bringing of the stone material from the outside to be used in some of the walls of the lobby are still present today [Figure 3.30-3.35].

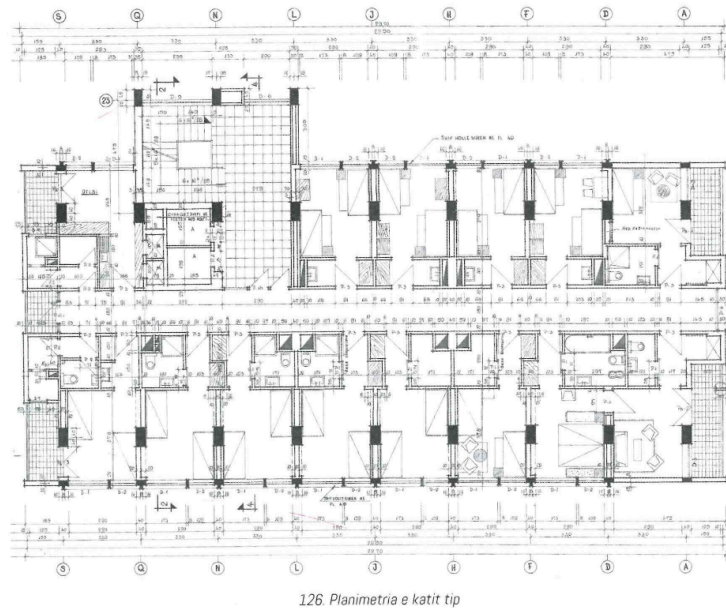


[Figure 3.26] Hotel Rozafa Site Plan,

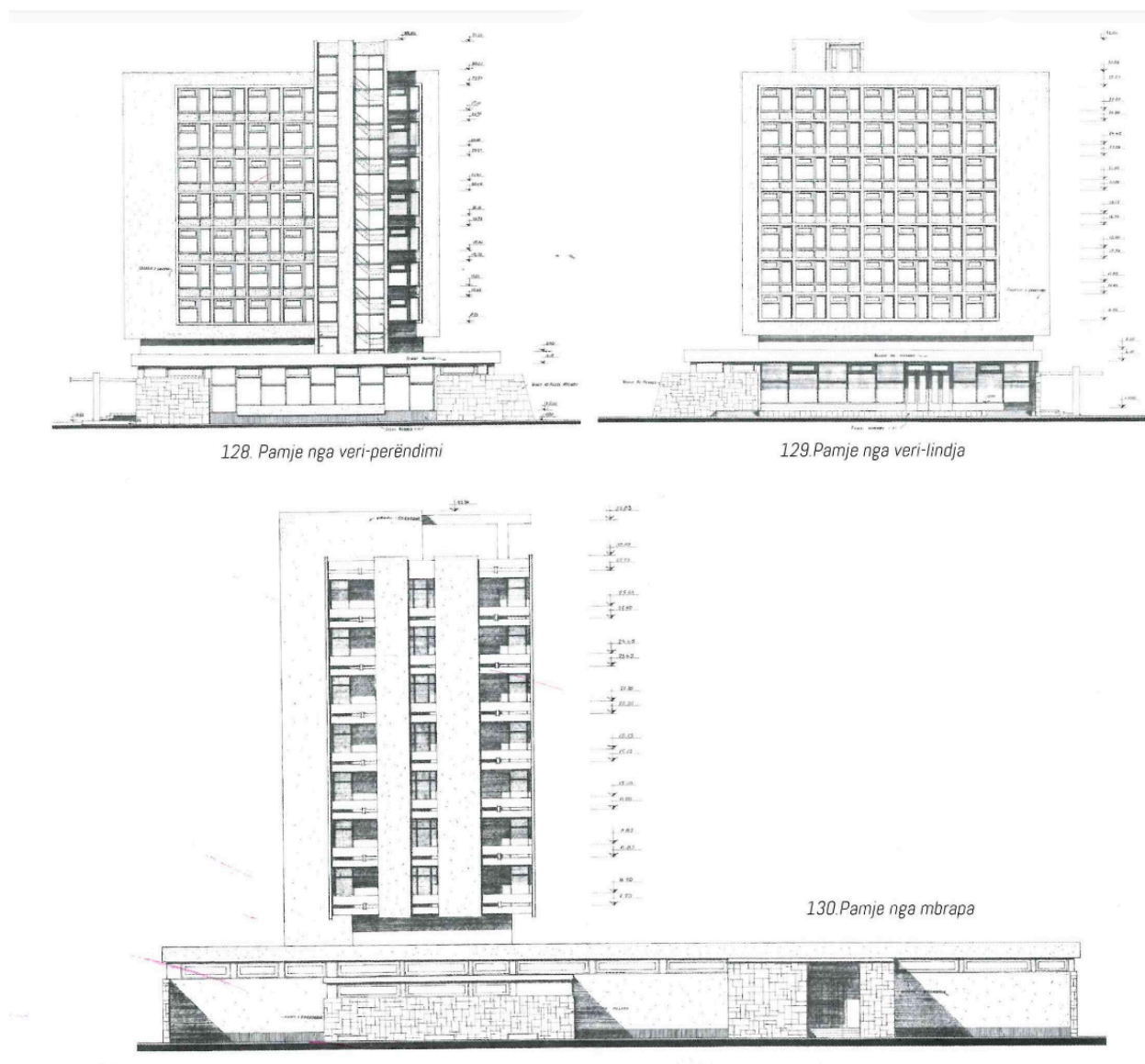
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)



[Figure 3.27] Hotel Rozafa ground plan,
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives
 (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)



[Figure 3.28] Hotel Rozafa typical tower plan,
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives
 (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)



[Figure 3.29] Hotel Rozafa elevations,
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)



[Figure 3.30, 3.31] Hotel Rozafa Current Exterior
(Photos by Author)

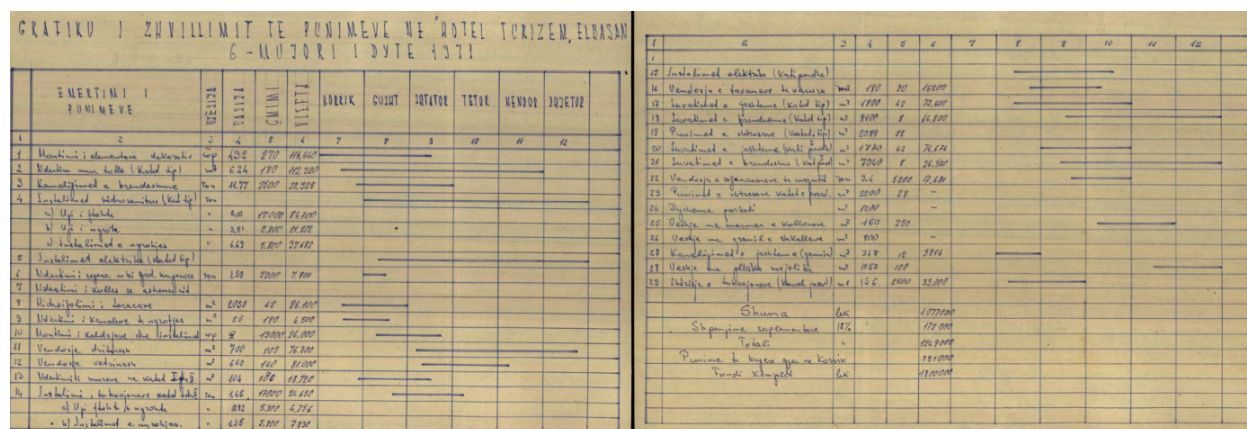


[Figure 3.32, 3.33] Hotel Rozafa Current Exterior
(Photos by Author)



[Figure 3.34, 3.35] Hotel Rozafa Current Interior
(Photos by Author)

About 140 kilometers from Shkodra, in the city of Elbasan, things on the construction side of a similar hotel structure were not going as smoothly as preferred. In July of 1971, Albaturist received a complaint letter from the State Construction Enterprise, claiming construction for the new Hotel Turizmi project in the city of Elbasan was behind schedule.⁵⁶⁸ In the letter, the director of construction asks for various lacking components which the investor (Albturist) should have provided. Things like drawings for the elevators, doors and windows, guard rails and ceiling plans are requested.⁵⁶⁹ In addition, lacking materials like brick, wood, HVAC equipment, as well as lacking technical personnel had all factored in stalling construction. Even in the “chart for progress of work” for the second half of the year, it seems that not all elements are finalized [Figure 3.36].⁵⁷⁰ Archives do not show exactly when Hotel Skampa completed, however its inauguration must have been a huge achievement. For the first time, the record drawings of a Hotel Turizmi project show the name of a female architect. Valentina Pistoli, the architect of Hotel Skampa, would go on to have a fruitful career working for the State Design Office.



[Figure 3.36] Chart for progress of work at Hotel Turizmi Elbasan, 1971

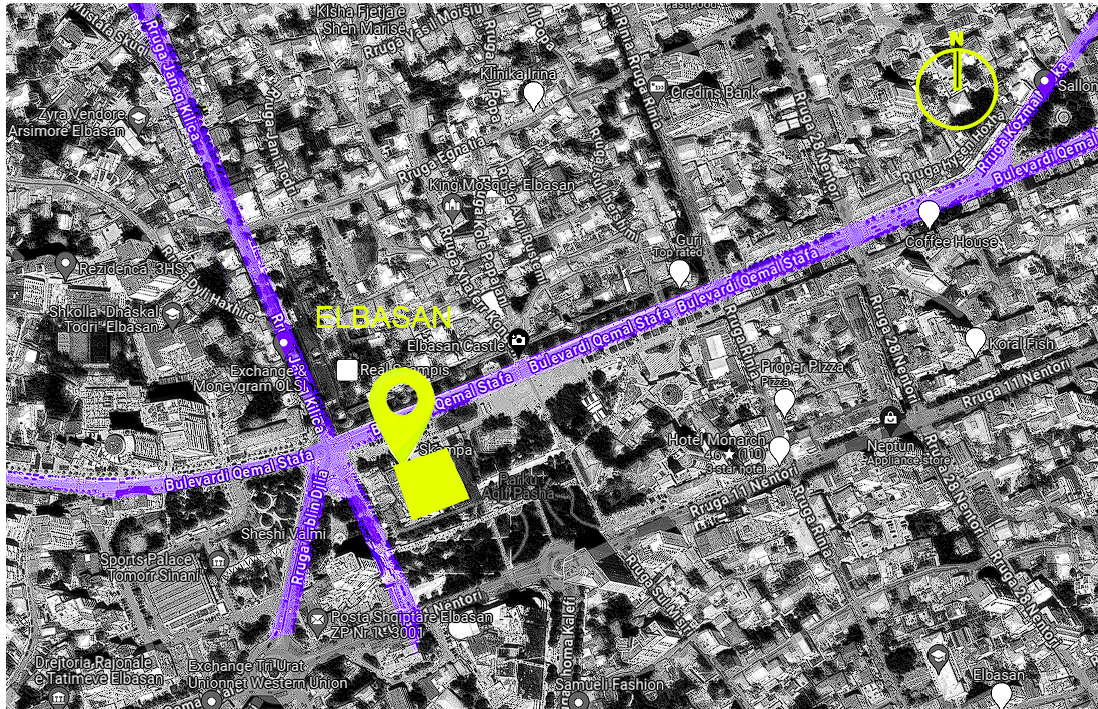
(Ref: Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), f.770, v. 1971, dos. 77, fl. 001-002)

⁵⁶⁸ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Letter to Albaturist*, f.770, v. 1971, dos. 77, fl. 001-002

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Grafiku i zhvillimit*, f.770, v. 1971, dos. 77, fl. 003-004

Like Hotel Rozafa in Shkodra, Skampa also sits at the nucleus of Elbasan's city center. The main boulevard of the city (Current Boulevard Qemal Stafa) runs parallel with the parcel of Skampa's location [Figure 3.37].



[Figure 3.37] Hotel Skampa Site location
(Graphic by author)

What the architect did not achieve in Hotel Rozafa – having two floors of public “social” spaces – Pistolli was able to achieve in Elbasan. Thus Hotel Skampa is made up of two volumes; one huge two story volume which runs parallel with the main boulevard, and second narrower volume rising vertically to host the sleeping rooms [Figure 3.38]. In an effort to capture the views of the elongated main boulevard, the tower of the hotel is oriented perpendicular to the boulevard so that the longer facades which frame most of the rooms, can view the boulevard both towards the east and west. The ground floor hosts most public spaces [Figure 3.39], while on the second floor one

can experience an atrium which rises from the ground level.⁵⁷¹ A balcony forms around the atrium and leads outside.⁵⁷²



[Figure 3.38] Hotel Skampa Exterior

(Ref: Architectuul, <https://architectuul.com/architecture/hotel-skampa>)

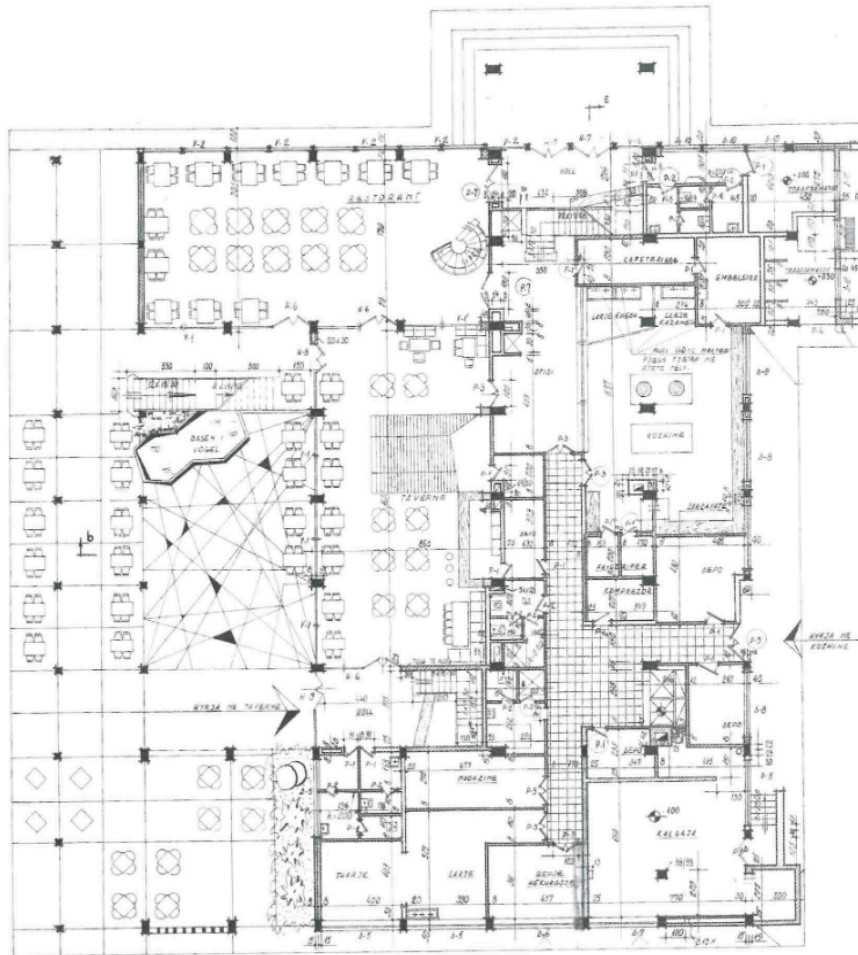
On the second floor “there are many premises such as: pastry shop, cafeteria, brewery and other service facilities, such as: office and barber. The premises of the tavern, located on the ground floor, can also be viewed from above, thanks to the space of the other atrium that is created in this part of the floors”⁵⁷³ **[Figure 3.40]**. On the upper floors of the tower the volume is divided by a hallway down the middle with the sleeping rooms on each side **[Figure 3.41]**. There are a total of fourteen rooms per each floor of the tower. Unlike Hotel Rozafa, in Hotel Skampa, the egress circulation is tucked at the corner, thus not protruding out from the tower volume. Perhaps the most striking design tactic of Hotel Skampa facade is the dynamic horizontal and vertical elements at each

⁵⁷¹ Nepravishita and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, 120

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

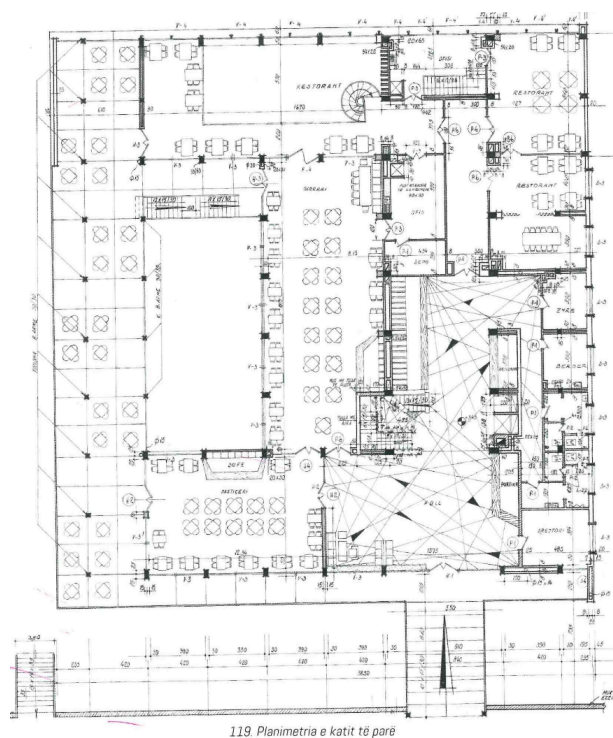
room balcony [Figure 3.42, 3.43]. This structure does not currently function as a hotel as the new owner is performing renovations, however, the restaurant and bar are still functioning.



118. Planimetria e katit përdhe

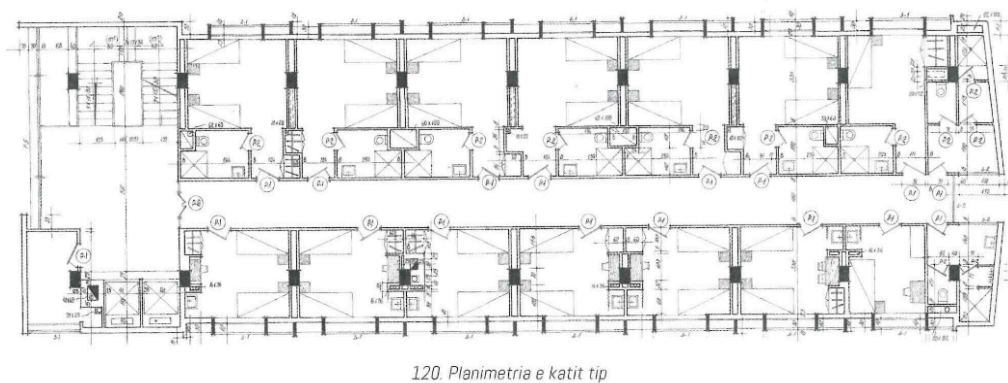
[Figure 3.39] Hotel Skampa Ground Floor Plan,

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 09/2021)



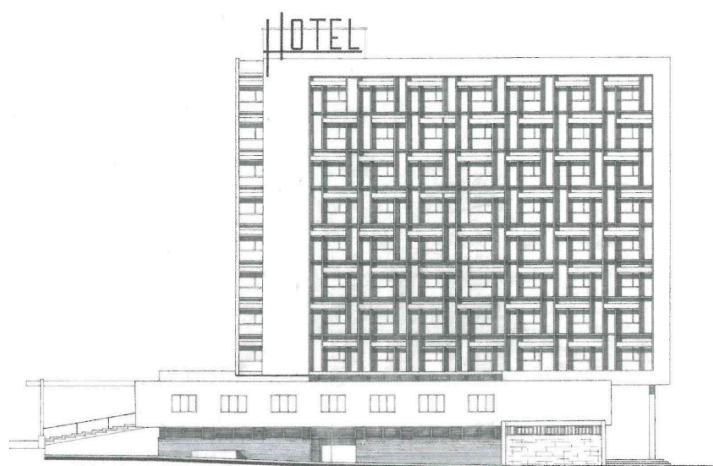
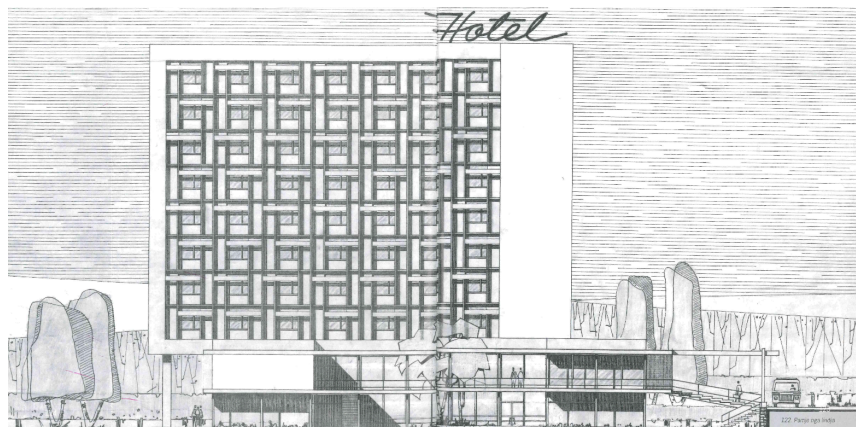
[Figure 3.40] Hotel Skampa Second Floor Plan,

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 09/2021)



[Figure 3.41] Hotel Skampa Typical Tower Plan,

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 09/2021)



121. Pamje nga perëndimi

[Figure 3.42, 3.43] Hotel Skampa Elevations,
 (Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 09/2021)



[Figure 3.44] Hotel Skampa Current Exterior
(photo by author)



[Figure 3.45] Hotel Skampa Current Exterior
(photo by author)



[Figure 3.46] Hotel Skampa Current Interior
(photo by author)

Pistolli's talent and brilliant execution in Elbasan, opened doors for further architectural explorations in Hotel Turizmi designs. Following Hotel Skampa, she would have the chance to reapply her craft on to the design for Hotel Turizmi in the city of Pogradec. Also known as Hotel Enkelana, this project would repeat previous design methods followed in Shkoder and Elbasan, while continuing to provide a different type of excitement in the design treatment of the facade – perhaps Pistolli's signature move. This hotel I argue is also charged with geopolitical motives as the city of Pogradec borders what used to be Yugoslavian territory, currently North Macedonia [Figure 3.47] The only visual division is Lake Ohrid which both countries share together. During the Cold War, one could technically see Yugoslavia – an escape towards the West – right from Pogradec. This meant that more than in any other context, the symbolism and identity of a thriving socialist system must be captured in the architecture of this hotel at all costs. Yugoslavian tourists coming in from Pogradec must not only see the achievements of Albanian socialism, they should learn from it and even envy it.



[Figure 3.47] Hotel Enkelana Site location
(Graphic by author)

Situated right on the edge of the lake, the strategic placement of the hotel makes it seem like the city grew out from under it. All roads feeding from the south towards north fall within its visual vicinity [Figure 3.48]. Like the anchor of the city, Hotel Enkelana – also made up of two volumes – extends the tower volume north-south so that the north end receives limited architectural exposure due to Pogradec's cold winter weather [Figure 3.49].



[Figure 3.48] Hotel Enkelana Site location (Graphic by author)

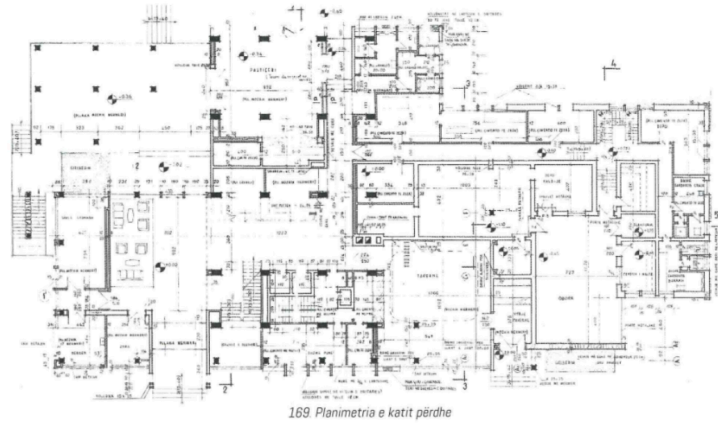


[Figure 3.49] Hotel Enkelana Exterior

(Ref: Bill Land, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bland/1987/x01/x01.htm>)

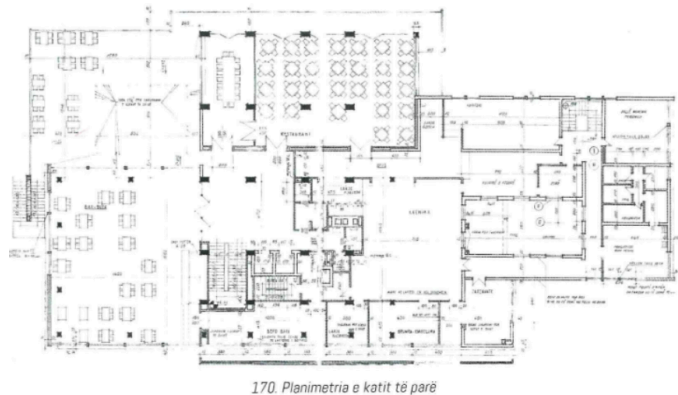
On the ground floor **[Figure 3.50]**, where the lobby is located, attention is placed on circulation, making sure to provide visitors quick access to the Ohrid Lake side. Upon entering from the streetside, one can decide to pull right into the main staircase or maneuver in a Z direction and shoot right out towards the lake. Many of the public and hangout areas located on the ground floor indeed do face the lake. “Corridors and floor galleries of the earth lead to different environments, such as: patisserie, cafe, courtyard, tavern, barber, game room etc., which have direct communication with the outside”.⁵⁷⁴ Meanwhile the second floor provides ample space for the restaurant and even an outdoor deck.

⁵⁷⁴ Nepravishtha and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, 166



[Figure 3.50] Hotel Enkelana Ground Floor Plan

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 09/2021)



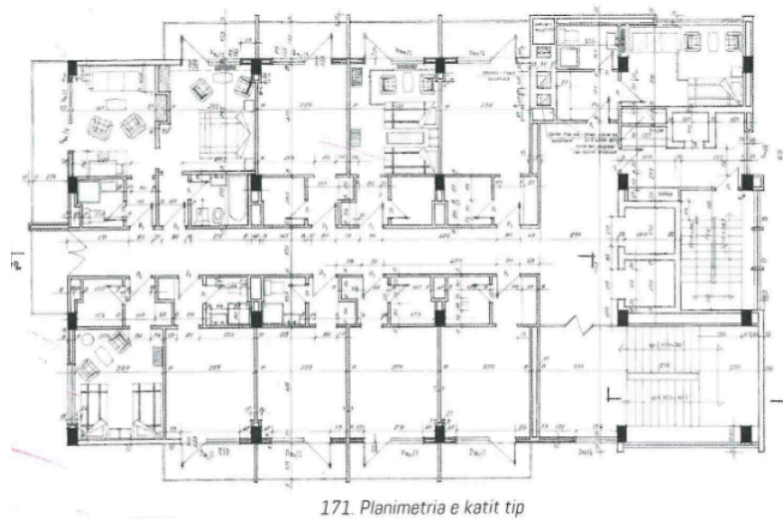
[Figure 3.51] Hotel Enkelana Second Floor Plan

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 09/2021)

On the floors where the sleeping rooms are located **[Figure 3.52]**, Pistolli introduces a T-shaped corridor which other than flanking the rooms to the sides, also makes way for the main stairs and suite to have perpendicular access to the main corridor. On the facade treatment, it seems like Pistolli was playing with symbolism of waves giving shape to the balcony walls⁵⁷⁵ – a new and the only such treatment applied in all of Hotel Turizmi structures **[Figure 3.53]**. Hotel Turizmi

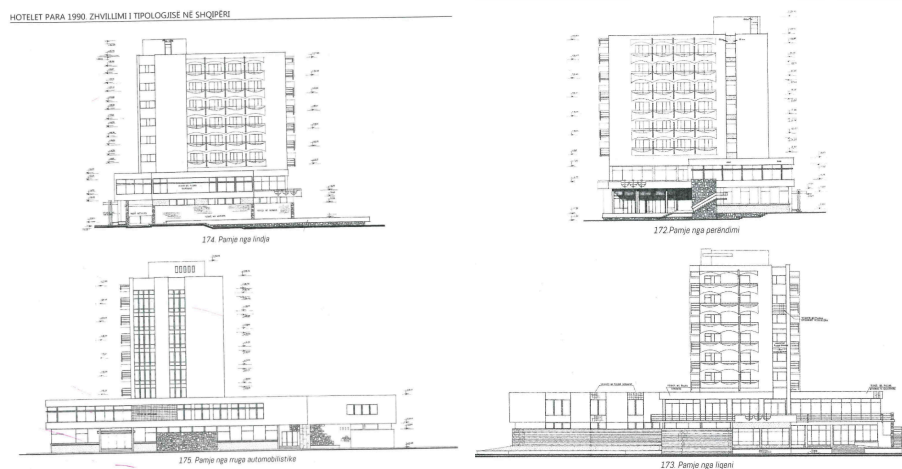
⁵⁷⁵ Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, 166

Pogrades, still continues to thrive as one of the most preferred accommodation structures. Since the 90s, expansions have taken place while respecting and even adopting Pistolli's design [Figure 3.54-3.59].



[Figure 3.52] Hotel Enkelana Typical Sleeping Floors

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 09/2021)



[Figure 3.53] Hotel Enkelana Elevations

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 09/2021)



[Figure 3.54, 3.55] Hotel Enkelana Current Exterior
(Photos by author)

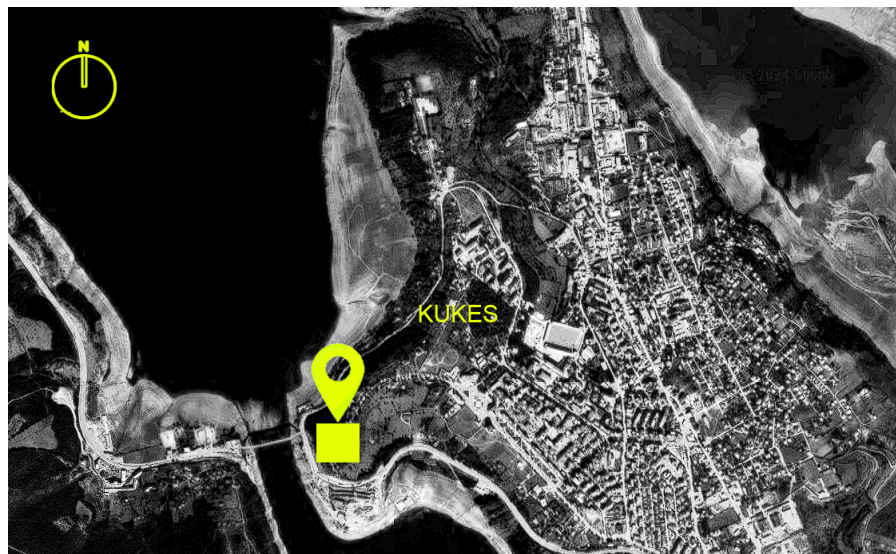


[Figure 3.56, 3.57, 3.58] Hotel Enkelana Current Lobby
(Photos by author)



[Figure 3.59] Hotel Enkelana Current Interior
(Photos by author)

About 188 kilometers North of Pogradec, the city of Kukes sits roughly 3.5 hours East of Shkodra. Similar to Pogradec bordering Yugoslavia, Kukes is also a city that borders Kosovo to its East, which previously fell under Yugoslavian territory. The construction of a hotel in this city also had to be carefully regarded in regards to the image that this hotel would portray to any Yugoslavian or Western tourists entering from the north. To achieve maximum exposure, Hotel Turizmi in Kukes was located high at the periphery of the city **[Figure 3.60]**. To achieve maximum success in design, this project was also directed by Valentina Pistolli. Given Pistolli's play on design, Hotel Turizmi Kukes is the only hotel which provides a form that is starkly different from the rest of the Hotel Turizmi series. The irregular volume is created by a rectangular base, followed by stacked floors which get smaller in footprint as they go higher. This allows for a diagonal roof to extend on the narrow side giving the hotel a boat or yacht like look **[Figure 3.61]**. Wide and heavy roof parapets are visible throughout acting like bands which wrap and unite the entire design. The bands of the parapets are also complimented by the balconies that extend and wrap around. The main facade shows windows in a rhythm which is carried on all the upper floors.



[Figure 3.60] Site location of Kukes
(Graphic by author)

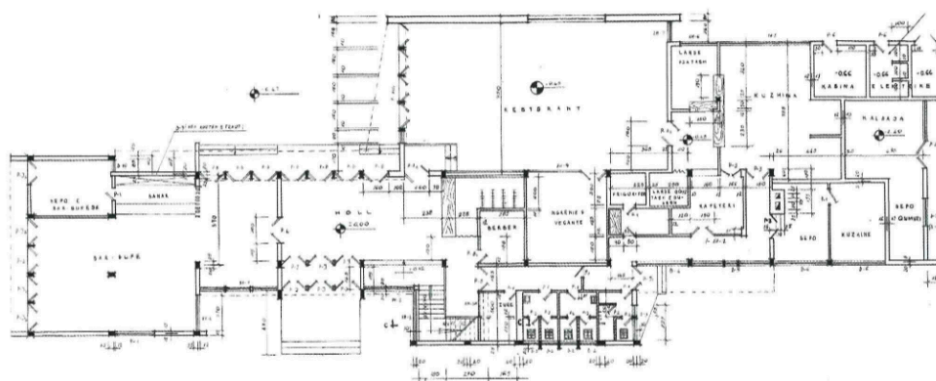


[Figure 3.61] Hotel Turizmi Kukes

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)

On the ground floor, “the restaurant, kitchen and their auxiliary premises are concentrated from one side of the ground floor...meanwhile the bar-buffet stands in it to the left of the entrance and there is communication with nature in the back part of the hotel”⁵⁷⁶. On the upper floor, the U-shape staircase leads to the main circulation aisle where the 15 typical rooms are located only on one side. Three additional larger rooms appear to hug the narrow side of the facade with a small sitting alcove to the left. Plaster and the occasional rock and stone treatment seem to be finishing materials of choice.

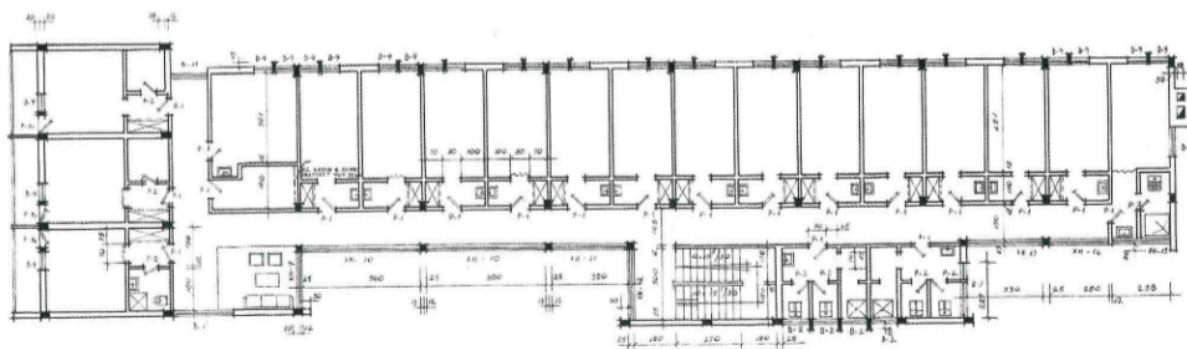
⁵⁷⁶ Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, 142



141. Planimetria e katit përdhe

[Figure 3.62] Hotel Turizmi Kukes Ground Floor Plan

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)



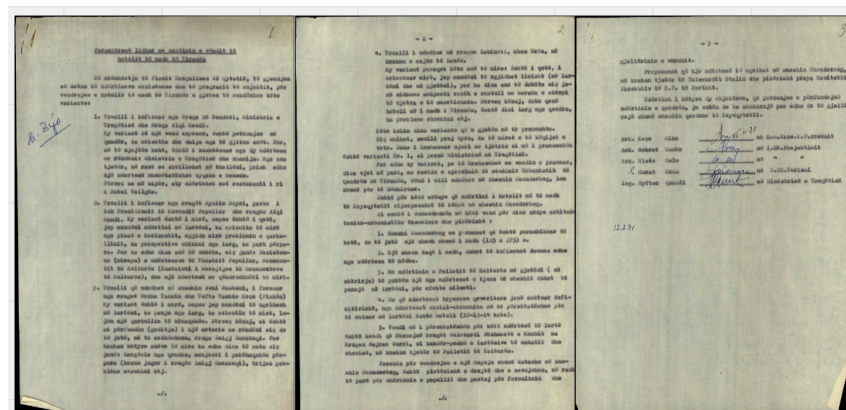
142. Planimetria e katit tip

[Figure 3.63] Hotel Kukes Typical Room Layout

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)

meeting minutes - found in Albturnist archives **[Figure 3.65]** – these individuals concluded this important meeting by selecting Skanderbeg Square as the site of the hotel for the following five reasons:

1. Skanderbeg Square in the dimensions that are foreseen here, it will be a very large square (125 x 275).
2. Such a large square must necessarily be accompanied by large buildings.
3. With the construction of the Palace of Culture (in horizontal extension) at least one of the other buildings of the square must be applied vertically, for silhouette effects.
4. Since the main government buildings have been definitively determined, from the socio-economic buildings most suitable for measured in height is the hotel (10-12-14 floors).
5. The most suitable place for this tall building is the corner where the National Martyrs street meets Bajram Curzi Street, as a counterweight to the heights of the clock and mosque, in the other wing of the Palace of Culture.⁵⁷⁸



[Figure 3.65] Hotel Tirana Site Selection Meeting Minutes

(Ref: Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), f.770, v. 1971, dos. 78, fl. 001-003)

They concluded that placing the hotel at “Skanderbeg square, is completely right and necessary, for serving the people all while giving from to and revitalizing the square”⁵⁷⁹.

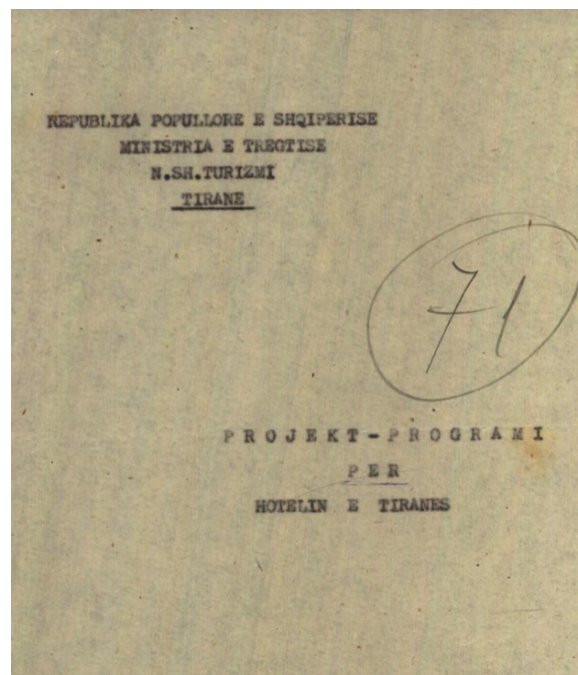
Just seven months prior to this meeting taking place, Albturnist had officially published an 8-page document titled “The Project-Plan for Hotel Tirana” **[Figure 3.66]**.⁵⁸⁰ This was to be the

⁵⁷⁸ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Parashitëse*, f.770, v. 1971, dos. 78, fl. 001-003

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Projekt-Program*, f.770, v. 1971, dos. 78, fl. 004-008

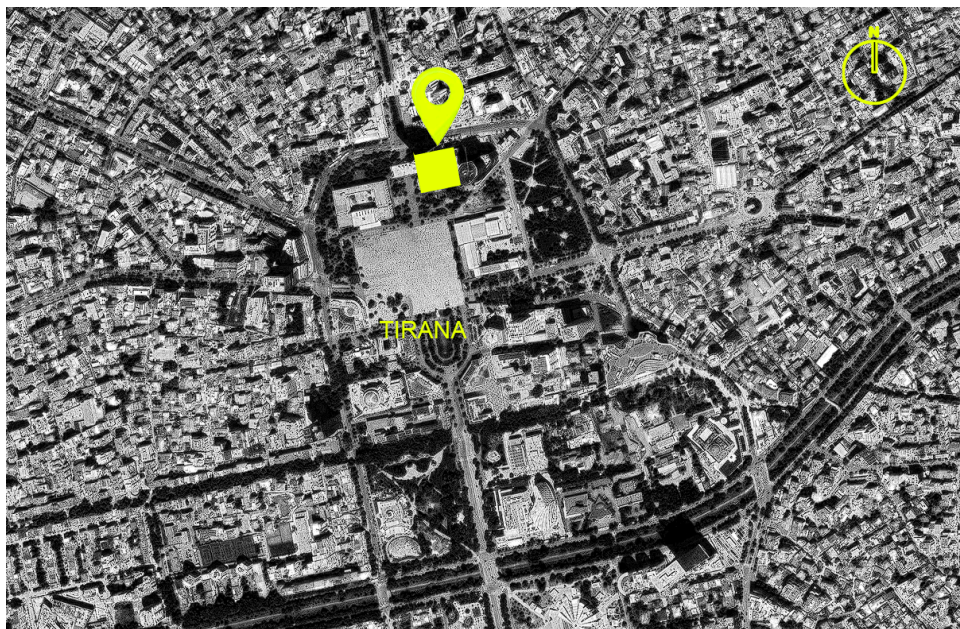
most ambitious project yet as it called for “a capacity of 300 people” and the use of high quality “parket” or wooden floors as well as other “synthetic materials which are used a lot outside of the country” and the latest technology in HVAC and elevator systems.⁵⁸¹ More than any previous Hotel Turizmi project, Hotel Tirana would become the face of the nation. The decision to place the building in the most important square of the nation single handedly charges Hotel Tirana as the embodiment of Albania's identity marker and defyer **[Figure 3.67]**. Sitting alongside the Palace of Culture, the National Museum, and various government buildings, the introduction of the hotel to the square was no longer just for tourism purposes – there are actually other hotels already in the vicinity **[Figure 3.68]**. By requiring that the structure be 12-14 stories high, Hotel Tirana would topple any of the said buildings in importance as it would dominate over the entire urban scape of not just Tirana, but the entire country.



[Figure 3.66] The Project-Plan for Hotel Tirana

(Ref: Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), f.770, v. 1971, dos. 78, fl. 004-008)

⁵⁸¹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Projekt-Program*, f.770, v. 1971, dos. 78, fl. 004-008



[Figure 3.67] Hotel Turizmi Tirana Location
(Graphic by author)



[Figure 3.68] Hotel Tirana Site
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)

Once again, Pistolli – along with architects Comi, Kolaneci, Pepa - was tasked with this utmost important project. A second female architect, Nina Theodhosiark, was also brought to the team of Hotel Turizmi experts. In massing, Hotel Tirana would follow its predecessors – a horizontal base in similar proportions of Skenderbeg square followed by the tallest tower to date **[Figure 3.69]**. The tower is oriented East-West in its longer axis, thus aligning more facade real estate to directly facing Skenderbeg square all while maximizing the facade area covered with southern sun exposure. The design of the base is accentuated with bands of glazing for the first two floors of the base which wrap around the entire block. The slender rectilinear tower is also wrapped with ample amount of windows which frame the rooms of the hotel without obstructing views.

Structurally, Hotel Tirana is erected using a reinforced concrete system. Concrete columns and beams give shape to the first two floors of the base, while the tower is also erected as a framework of concrete walls **[Figure 3.70]**. The facade treatment is the most simplified yet. Pistolli trades her usual play of dynamic geometries for an oversimplified and flat design which almost gives ode to the international style. Still the tower stands heavy and monolithic. This was still socialism and the big hotel did not need to offer the illusion of lightness, instead the firmness and grounding of both base and tower displayed symbolism for a strong nation standing firm on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. To this end, the tower had every right to be visible from everywhere, seeking attention while also always watching.

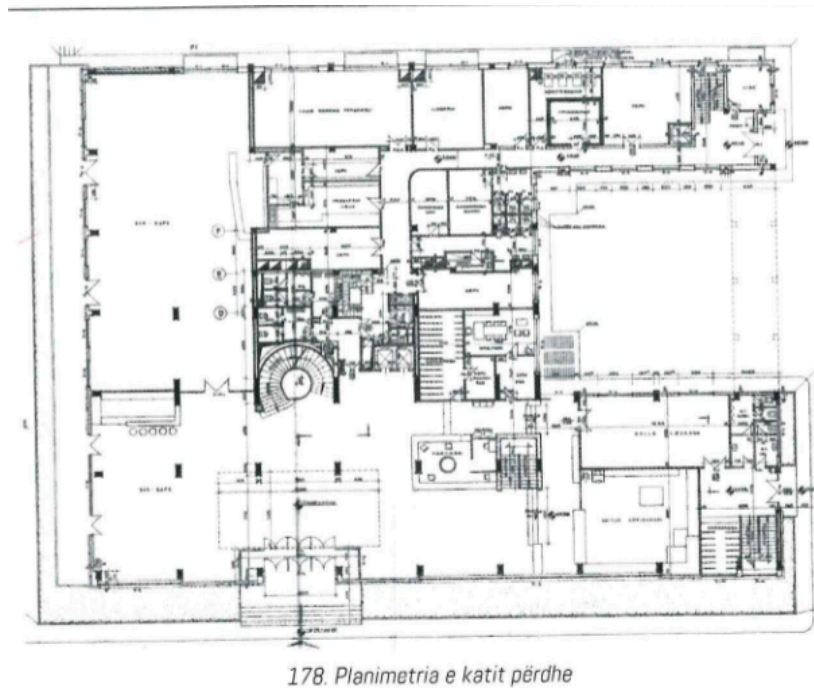


[Figure 3.69] Hotel Tirana in Skanderbeg Square
(Ref: Architectuul, <https://architectuul.com/architecture/hotel-tirana>)



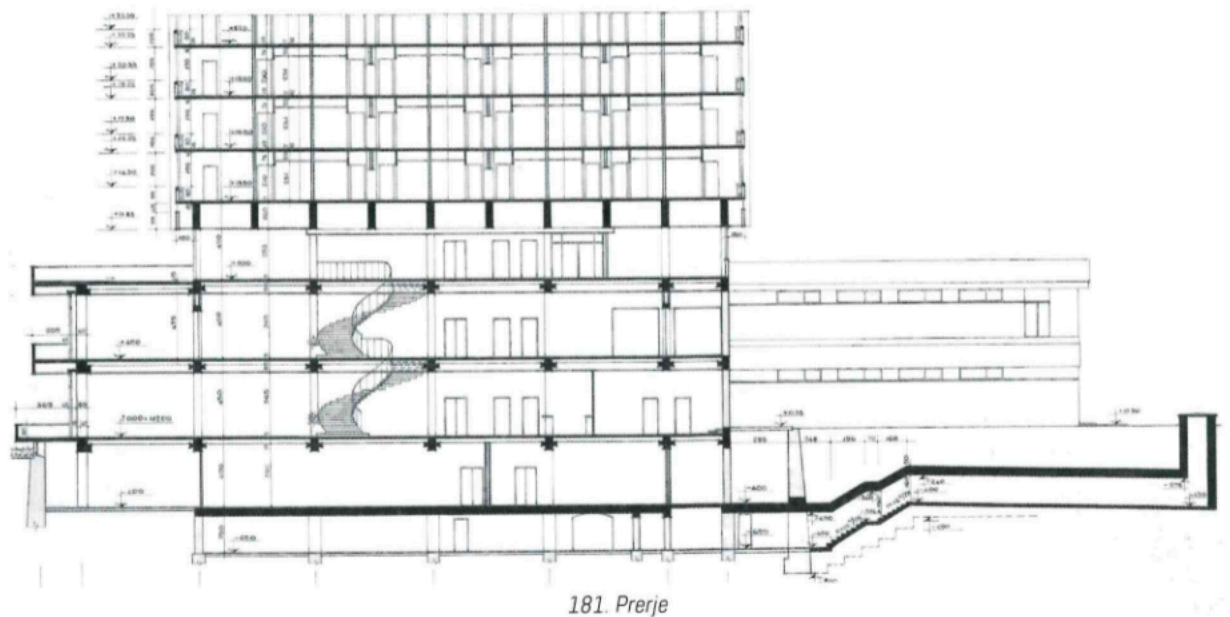
[Figure 3.70] Hotel Tirana Structure
(Shqipëria ne Vitet e Socializmit. “Ndertimi i hotel Tirana ne vitin 1975”. Facebook, August 26, 2022.
<https://www.facebook.com/1815233871857586/photos/a.1815516985162608/5309838192397119/?type=3>)

The ground level of Hotel Tirana receives a grand and open plan lobby [Figure 3.71]. Pistolli's newest touch of finesse would certainly be the design of a circular staircase which is visible to the visitors as soon as they enter through the main doors. This first of a kind for the Hotel Turizmi series of constructions would itself imitate similar modernist tendencies taking place in high end hotel designs in both the east and western camp. The spiral stair in Hotel Tirana penetrates through the second and third floors [Figure 3.72]. It is supported by a half circular wall which follows along the turning of the stair giving the illusion of stairs floating in space.



[Figure 3.71] Hotel Tirana Ground Floor Plan

(Ref: Nepravishita and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)

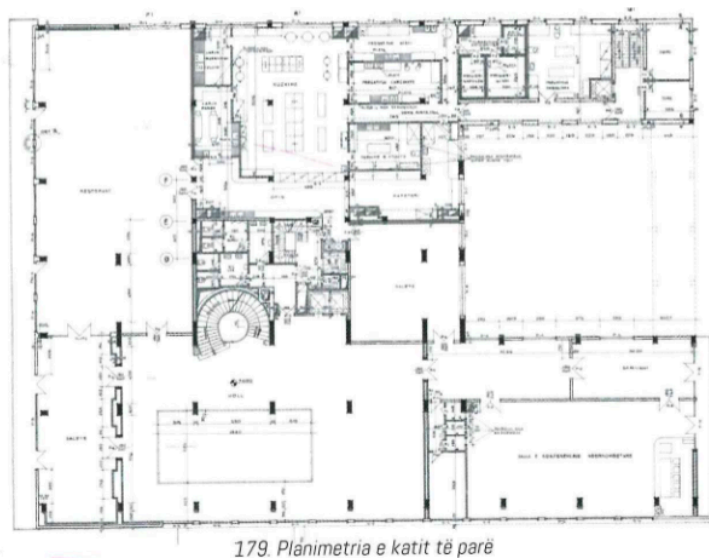


[Figure 3.72] Circular Staircase at Hotel Tirana

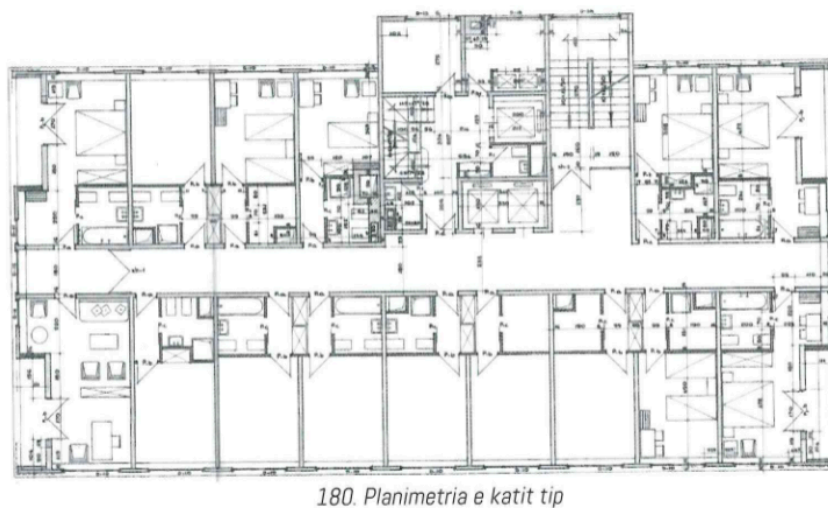
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)

The second floor provides spaces for eating and meeting, some of which lead out to the deck on the west side of the plan **[Figure 3.73]**. The typical floor plan for the floors of the tower where the sleeping rooms are located, shows a main aisle of circulation with the rooms placed on both of its sides **[Figure 3.74]**. Similar to Hotel Rozafa in Shkoder, the egress stairs puncture out from the otherwise regularity of the tower. The designs of the rooms show the restroom and service spaces positioned upon entering the rooms thus leaving space for the sleeping area to be located closer to the windows. Regarding materials chosen for the project, “the horizontal strips of the spaces, which are created by the windows, would be dressed with Tërbaçi area [south of Vlora] travertine stones or granite, and the other parts with stones from the Karaburun Peninsula”⁵⁸² **[Figure 3.75]**. Hotel Tirana still runs today at full capacity **[Figure 3.76-3.83]**.

⁵⁸² Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, 174-175



[Figure 3.73] **Hotel Tirana Second Floor Plan** (Nepravisht, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)



[Figure 3.74] **Hotel Tirana Typical Room Floor**
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)

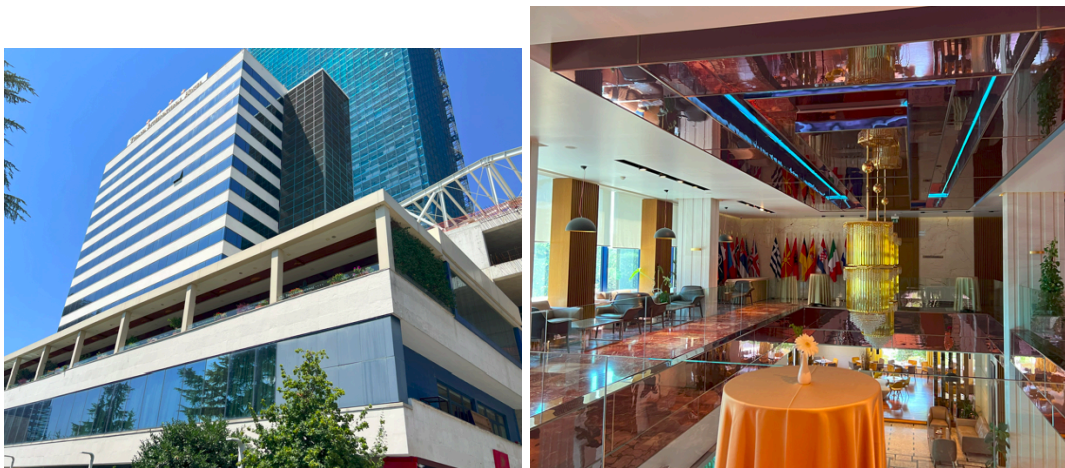


[Figure 3.75] Hotel Tirana Elevations

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)



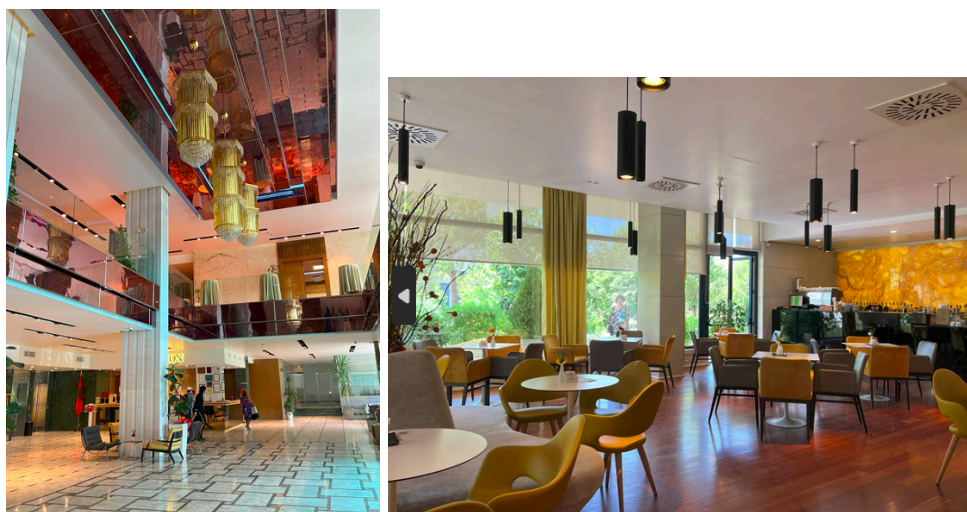
[Figure 3.76, 3.77] Hotel Tirana Current Exterior
(Photographs by Author)



[Figure 3.78, 3.79] Hotel Tirana Current Exterior (left) and Interior (right)
(Photographs by Author)



[Figure 3.80, 3.81] Hotel Tirana Current Spiral Staircase (left) and Bar (right)
(Photographs by Author)



[Figure 3.82, 3.83] Hotel Tirana Current Interior
(Photographs by Author)

For as long as Mao was in charge – and as the Tenth CCP Congress confirmed – China’s communist course would progress regardless of foreign policy deflections.⁵⁸³ This in turn made it easy to “trust in the continuity China’s assistance”⁵⁸⁴ regardless of cracks in relations and the occasional bad mouthing of Beijing’s politics. However, keeping up with Chinese internal and foreign policy developments, proved to be a harder task than thought at this time. In 1976, Albania commemorated the death of Mao Zedong with a 3-day period of mourning.⁵⁸⁵ “The new leader of the CPCh, Hua Guofeng, disappointed the Albanians in August 1977, when he announced at the XI CPCh Congress the Three Worlds Theory as an official doctrine of Chinese foreign policy.”⁵⁸⁶ According to this theory, “The USSR and the USA, assumed that those two countries created the first world, which fights both socialist and capitalist countries (the second world), and also third world countries (China, Romania, Asian countries, Africa and Latin America).”⁵⁸⁷ This in turn prompted the first public ideological fall out between the two countries as the Albanian state run newspaper *Zeri i Popullit* (Voice of the People) openly rejected China’s Theory of Three Worlds on the following counts:

The theory, according to the Albanian view, preached social peace and collaboration with the "bourgeoisie", covered up class contradictions, ignored the principal contradiction between capitalism and socialism, and was intended to curb the revolution and defend capitalism. The theory was criticized for failing to distinguish between the genuine anti-imperialist forces and the revolutionary forces in power in Third World countries. Moreover, the theory was said to be guided by the same "anti-Marxist" policy and ideology as the Yugoslav theory of "non-alignment."⁵⁸⁸

According to Biberaj “rejecting Beijing's ‘theory of three worlds,’ the editorial projected Albania as

⁵⁸³ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 251

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 53

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid. 54

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 228

the only remaining center of true socialism and revolution.”⁵⁸⁹ Biberaj also stresses the Chinese – though surprised by the attack – were still interested in preserving the alliance.⁵⁹⁰

In the spirit of preserving the alliance, the Chinese would once again show their generosity by not cutting their funds directed to Albania. Instead Chinese money continued to come in, and as a last effort so did support for the hotels. Around 1975, it was time for the city of Berat to receive a tourism marker. Though on a smaller scale of investment – similar to Hotel Turizmi in Kruja – Hotel Turizmi in Berat, also known as Hotel Tomorri, is also a mid-scale structure located at the main plaza of the ancient city. Situated on the edge of Osuni River, Hotel Tomorri acts as a modern anchor of the city, triangulated between two of the oldest neighborhoods which are currently UNESCO sites **[Figure 3.84]**. Its unique form creates a terraced volume with five floors. The modern style of this hotel is reminiscent of the Bauhaus building in Germany.



[Figure 3.84] Hotel Turizmi Berat Site (with two of the oldest neighborhoods highlighted).
(Graphic by Author)

⁵⁸⁹ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 227

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid. 230



[Figure 3.85] Hotel Tomorri

(Korb, Zach. “Communist-Era Hotel, Berat, Albania”, June 20, 2006.
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zkorb/171017973/>)

For the Albanians, however, the alliance was hanging on a thread. So much was the case that they were willing to risk all investments including future hotels. This last thread would eventually sever with Tito’s visit to China in 1977 giving birth to “a wide range of suspicions and fears as to the real reason for the meeting, which [again] had not been consulted with the APL leadership earlier”⁵⁹¹. In 1978 China finalized economic and military assistance to Albania, and withdrew many of its specialists from Albania.⁵⁹² Beijing outlined that “between 1954 and 1978 it had provided [Albania] with about five billion dollars, in economic and military assistance and had trained more than two thousand Albanian cadres...[as well as] built 142 projects, 91 of which had

⁵⁹¹ Czekalski, *The Shining Beacon of Socialism*, 54

⁵⁹² Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 244

been completed”⁵⁹³. An Albanian reply desperately tried to make the case that the cooperation between the countries was not one sided as it insisted the aid totaling to only three billion dollars while citing the delivery of “over 1.7 million tons of oil, over 1.3 million tons of bitumen, about 2.7 million tons of chromium concentrate, e.t.c” to China.⁵⁹⁴ And just like that, almost 18 years of alliance with China came to an end. To better understand the ending of this alliance in comparison to Albania’s previous negotiations, Biberaj provides the following final remarks:

The disintegration of the alliance did not result in a break of Tirane-Beijing diplomatic relations. Both countries maintained ambassadors in each other's capital, although the diplomatic personnel was sharply reduced. Tirane and Beijing evidently believed the preservation of formal diplomatic relations, however limited, served their long-term national interests. Despite the loss of its influence and displacement as Albania's patron, the PRC still enjoyed an advantage over both Washington and Moscow, whose offers of normalization of relations were rejected repeatedly by the Hoxha regime.⁵⁹⁵

A Tourism for National Identity

Albania’s rebellion against the Soviet Union, propelled the country to sudden international relevance. By the early 1960s, relations with the Soviet Union had started to deteriorate, though the rhetoric of purposeful tourism did not change. However, during the years of Chinese negotiations the narrative of purposeful tourism would be weaved in with national identity. Whether the importance of national identity stemmed from the lack of in Albania’s past due to the perils at the hands of empires, or whether the Chinese themselves projected and passed down the importance of such cultural value to the Albanians is hard to tell. Or whether it was the sudden relevance in the international political arena that Albania experienced on the back of China, one thing is for certain, nationalistic ideals and importance of national identity and ideology seeped into tourism. For Albania, tourism – just like everything else – was grounded on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism,

⁵⁹³ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 244

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid. 247

thus it did not matter if the dependency on one socialist superpower was replaced by another. It was perfectly fine to label Khrushchev as a “revisionist” and to deflect all allegiance to China. Business – in this case furthering the development of socialism – would continue as usual. And it did. From 1961 to 1978, China substituted the huge gap of stalled economic and infrastructural investment from the Soviet Union, while it also supplied new ventures of its own.

At first glance, nothing seemed different under Chinese backing. Alpinism was still highly advertised, just as Kapo and the order of ministers had done in the 50s. As a matter of fact, order number 265 from the council of ministers dating 1963 further pushes the spread and development of alpinism. Boasting a proud achievement, the order from the council writes the following remarks:

Tourism and mountaineering in the People’ Republic of Albania get a bigger boost, becoming a need for the working masses and for the youth. Within a period 2-3 years [we aim] to mobilize over 160,000 young men and women, and to utilize all the possible forms to develop [this] tourism such as walks of one hour or more per day, rides with bicycles, boats, etc., giving priority to foot walking in the difficult fields of our relief.⁵⁹⁶

In addition, the same order also called for further measures to be taken for their expansion of this field by charging the Directorate of Municipal Economy to “designate [additional] tourist areas to be used by associations, businesses, schools, etc. to set up temporary tourist camps with tents”⁵⁹⁷.

However the slight difference that is noticeable in this document is the nationalistic tone in which alpinism is seen as part of the Albanian identity as it calls for the masses and especially the youth of Albania, to become more aware of Alpinism and more attracted to mountaineering as if it should be intrinsically part of who they are. For this the request of a close cooperation of the Association of Tourism and Alpinism, Albaturist, and additional state organizations is needed to increase the organized work propaganda through different forms of agitation and propaganda⁵⁹⁸.

⁵⁹⁶ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Vendim Nr. 265*, f.770, v. 1963, dos. 10, fl. 001-002

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

An expression of national identity through purposeful tourism is also noticed in the propaganda projected during this time. To study the results of the tourism boost as a result of outreach and propaganda, one has to look back to 1959, the year when the Sino-Albanian Friendship Society was created.⁵⁹⁹ Shortly after the formation of this society, an initiative surprisingly from the Albanian side resulted in joint effort between the two countries in order to create a 700,000 US dollars “solidarity fund to assist Marxist-Leninist groups around the world”.⁶⁰⁰ As Elidor Mehilli has written, China funneled more than 70 percent of the money and the rest came from Albania.⁶⁰¹

It is clear to see that the burden of such initiative fell completely on China. The contribution from the Albanian side was a total joke. However, because of China’s backing, Albania was able to capitalize big in raising awareness of its relevance in the geopolitical arenas and fundamentally its national identity and even projecting it outside of its borders. Here we have the smallest country in the Socialist bloc attempt to “project itself as a source of revolutionary activism in the Third World and in Western Europe”⁶⁰² What was the impact of such an initiative? The money was disbursed to various groups or other friendship societies in Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, France, England and Austria.⁶⁰³ Even the “United States–based Hammer and Steel received modest contributions”.⁶⁰⁴ The outreach was phenomenal in levels never seen before. As a result, such societies from these countries and various others became key instruments in tourism incentives and propaganda.

One of the best documented efforts of such outreach with high success “return on investment rate” is linked with the Nordic region and the 1970 creation of the Swedish-Albanian

⁵⁹⁹ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 215

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid. 218

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

society – a subsidiary of the Swedish–Chinese Association – resulting in an increasing number of tourists coming from these countries to Albania.⁶⁰⁵ “The adverts targeted both leisure tourists and political pilgrims by focusing on the leisure opportunities and the political peculiarities of the Albanian regime.”⁶⁰⁶ As with other friendship societies, “the main tactic used by those two associations was to present themselves not as political movements, but as civil society organizations, open to whoever was interested in the language and culture of the ‘friendship country’”⁶⁰⁷. On the responsibilities of these associations, Francesco Zavatti writes,

The associations translated, published, and distributed texts prepared in the friendship country, from literature to political propaganda; they organised study circles and cultural exhibitions on the history, politics, and culture of the country: organised travel, when it started, supplemented these activities, and was ostensibly open to anyone interested.⁶⁰⁸

Through various brochures they promised “visits to factories, farms, schools, nurseries, news bureaus, publishing houses, other activities at a house of culture . . . genuine popular music shows or meeting someone who could speak on areas such as the economy, culture, education, and to whom [the tourists] can put questions.”⁶⁰⁹ In 1972, the first Albanian embassy in a Nordic country opened in Stockholm, and by that time the Swedish-Albanian association had grown to 625 members while it took on the responsibilities of coordinating “tourist travel for all the Albanian friendship associations in the Nordic countries”.⁶¹⁰ According to state archives, from 1969 to 1975 Albania had a total of 5,199 tourists coming from Sweden, 2,637 from Denmark and 807 tourists from Norway.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁵ Zavatti, *The Stalinist utopia of the Adriatic*, 141

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid. 140

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid. 142

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid. 142-143

⁶¹¹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Plani i ardhjes se grupeve te turisme*, f.770, v. 1969-1975, dos. varies, fl. varies

As new connections were being forged and more groups from various friendship societies made their way to Albania, the shoes for an exemplary tourism model – which once were filled by Inturist – now had new owners; the Chinese Directorate for Tourist Affairs. According to a detailed itinerary found in Albaturist documents, a delegation of tourism officials from Albania were welcomed in Beijing by their counterparts in October 1972.⁶¹² For almost a month the Albanian officials would spend touring the country, learning from the ways in which Beijing was conducting the tourist sector. Starting with a trip to Nanjing, they would visit “exhibition of artistic articles and curiosities...graves of martyrs...a chemical fertilizer plant, the plant for the production of cinematography apparatuses...Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum ...and other curiosities of the town”⁶¹³. In Suzhou they saw “the institute of artistic works, the silk thread extraction factory, soft drink factory etc...apart from the curiosities of various antiques, [and] Buddhist shrines and temples”⁶¹⁴. In Shanghai, they toured “the house where the first Congress of the C.P.P (Communist Party of China) was held, the exhibition of big products in Shanghai, the internationalist factory for the production of compressed cookies, workers' flats in an industrial area, the tunnel under the ‘Huan Khu’ river, etc”⁶¹⁵. In Hunan, “the center of the province where Director Mao was born”, they saw parks, mandarin fields, and the top pedagogical school of the region. At last, upon their return to Beijing, they would visit the metro of Beijing, the Polytechnic Institute, the factory of artistic products, and ending with a dinner where both countries held talks regarding “the organizational structure of tourism in both countries, on forms of organizing work, on the development of tourism, on work done for the education and preparation of the staff”, as well as reaching agreements on “the

⁶¹² Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Informacion*, f.770, v. 1972, dos. 18, fl. 002-009

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

exchange of delegations from both sides as well as the exchange of groups of hotel employees, to learn from each other”.⁶¹⁶

The same detailed itinerary also has an attached document right after it, titled “What did we gain from this trip?” outlining ten important points. While the first few points praise the immaculate services from accommodation to food which the Albanian delegation received, the last points are particularly important to note as they serve as future blueprints for organizing tourism in Albania.

These last few points state:

- The service of foreigners, whether they are tourists, friends or traders, is all done [uniquely] as responsibility of the organization from the Tourism Directorate.
- In the groups of tourists, they send 2 people, a translator and 1 companion, with the aim of keeping the groups under control.
- Marxist groups are sent to the house where the party was founded, where chairman Mao was born, in museums, then in works of industrial achievements, municipalities, etc.
- Each province has a Tourism Political Leader, who directs all the work of Tourism in the province, organizes visits, etc., and is directly dependent from the Directorate of Tourism, [which] it receives and implements instructions [to be] met. These also had their own governing apparatuses according to the province.⁶¹⁷

However, one begs the question: What else did the Albanian delegation learn from their visit to China? I think it is fair to make the assumption that whether consciously or subconsciously, the Albanians had to have noticed the strong sense of a national identity projected by the Chinese. The sites they visited – Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum, the graves of martyrs, the institute of artistic works, the silk thread extraction factory, the production of cinematography apparatuses, Buddhist shrines and temples Polytechnic University etc. – not only fulfilled requirements for purposeful tourism but they were also uniquely Chinese. They projected a strong Chinese identity which, similar to Albania had persevered through invasion attempts, had started as a poor country and built its own version of socialism from the ground up, rising as a top contender of the Socialist world.

⁶¹⁶ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Informacion*, f.770, v. 1972, dos. 18, fl. 002-009

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

Taking all mentioned lessons from their trip itinerary through China and examining the organizational structure of the Chinese Directorate of Tourist Affairs, the Albanian tourism establishment went to work, uniquely tailoring the tourist experiences in Albania just like the Chinese model. Two years after the visit to China, Albaturist released various itineraries guides through which careful attention was placed on the crafting of different experiences for groups labeled as “tourists”, “foreign delegations and friends of the party” and lastly “Marxist-Leninist Friendship Groups”. The itineraries show the following sites of interests displayed in the graphic below [Table 3.1] which could be devised as a kit of parts depending on tourism directives for that year:

[Table 3.1]⁶¹⁸

	Economic Structures	Agricultural Sites	Socio-Cultural Objects
Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Factories (Glass, Plastics, Rug, metal instruments) - <i>Kombinat</i> Textile 	Cooperative Farms (Fruit Cultures, Livestock, Vines Other)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Archeological sites (Butrint Amphitheatre Durres Amphitheatre) - Museums (Liberation War, Memorial, Historical, Archeological, Cultural) - Sports Palace - Palace of Culture - Workers Vacation Camps - Schools (kindergarten, first albanian language school) - Exhibits (Figurative Arts, Albania Today) - Party Leader's House
Delegations / Party	Factories (cigarette, wool and cotton, wine, wire, paper and	Cooperative Farms	Museums (War, People, Atheist, Industrial, National Heroes)

⁶¹⁸ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Programme ose itinerare turistash*, f.770, v. 1972, dos. 18, fl. 007-009, also in f.770, v. 1974, dos. 22, fl. 002-012, also in f.770, v. 1975, dos. 40, fl. 005-014

Friends	fiber) Hydro Plants	(Fruit Cultures, Livestock, Vines Other)	Hospitals (usually pediatrics) and Schools Theaters, Sports Complex
Friendship Groups	Naval Ports Factories (tractor parts, wire, cigarette, wool and cotton, wine, wire, paper and fiber) Hydro Plants <i>Kombinat</i> Textile	Cooperativ e Farms (Fruit Cultures, Livestock, Vines Other)	- Museums (People's, Atheist) - Pediatrics Hospital - Sports Complex - Exhibits (Figurative Arts, Albania Today) - Party Leader's House - Memorial Cemetery

Though the sites of interest a lot of times are similar between tourists and friendship groups, more often than not, sites which showcase the defending of Marxist Leninism such as military sites and memorial cemeteries portraying those who had fought for the country were emphasized more when handling friendship groups. In addition, for the tourists, a stronger emphasis is placed on those sites closely linked with national identity, i.e. Cultural Museums, Albanian Figurative Arts Exhibit, Archaeological sites etc.

In terms of Albturnist brochures and propaganda language, efforts from a 1969 Albturnist propaganda still push for a focus on geographical features such as the mountainous nature and the riviera, folk art, and the highlights of Illyrian ancestry, weaved with Greko-Roman histories, just like it did during the period of Soviet negotiations. "Today, these [Albanian] mountains are an inexhaustible source of minerals"⁶¹⁹, the print calls out as it goes on to say that "new students of nature go in for scientific research of endless flora and fauna...seen from above, Albania looks like

⁶¹⁹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Albturnist English Propaganda*, f.770, v. 1969, dos. 10, fl. 014-020,

an endless green park”⁶²⁰. In regards to the riviera cities like Durres, Vlore, Dhermi, Himare and Sarande are compared with the feelings of happy and gay holidays with a “love for life” highlighting the “endless beaches, sun, fresh air rich in iodine, [and the] golden sand – as tourist call it”.⁶²¹ For folk art can “be found everywhere in the construction of the town houses and the towers in the highlands, in their decorations, in carving of stone and wood, in weaving, in national costumes, in making carpets, filigree, musical instruments and weapons”⁶²². Those interested in history, could see “how our ancestors, the Illyrians, lived in, what they were going in for, and get so acquainted with their material culture”, while also exploring “monuments of the Greek and Roman culture”.⁶²³

However, what is now different from the propaganda of the Soviet era, is the addition of architectural or spatial elements – specifically the new Hotel Turizmi structures – folded into the traditional identity of Albanian hospitality. To this extent, the print writes:

The characteristic traditional Albanian hospitality (as an Albanian saying says "Just bread, salt and open heart!") is perfectly evident in the services offered by a large network of modern tourist hotels.⁶²⁴

Albania, a colorful treasure of fine traditions, awaits you with its folklore, its songs and dances, with its rich charming costumes, its handicrafts and its folk art. In the bosom of these traditions you will see how the new, the socialist art, the contemporary music and songs, and the modern architecture are interwoven and flourishing. Interesting contrasts that you surely meet for the first time will fascinate you.⁶²⁵

This interesting connection begins to weave the hotels into one of the most traditionally recognizable factions of the Albanian identity; hospitality. In doing so, the propaganda assures the tourists that none of it would be lost even through the introduction of socialist modern architecture.

⁶²⁰ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Albturist English Propaganda*, f.770, v. 1969, dos. 10, fl. 014-020

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

From these developments then, it is safe to assume from a macro level perspective, the tourism sector was continuing as it did during the Soviet era, advancing well inline with if not above expectations, especially for a small country with a “population 1,277,904 in 1953”⁶²⁶. One would also assume that economic profitability through tourism was yielding high return of investment – certainly as the country supplying the loans and helping fund all the infrastructure, China would surely hope so. However, this was not the case. When looking at archival documents of incoming tourist logs during the years of Albania’s alliance with China (Table 1.2 and 1.3) the following tourist numbers are present:

Tables 1.2 - 1.3⁶²⁷

	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1969
Socialist Bloc Tourists	6	79	35	102	426	187	0	0
Free World Tourists	602	249	640	496	744	1,154	1,328	612
Other	0	48	33	214	31	5,042	4,036	9,135
TOTAL	608	376	708	812	1,201	6,383	5,364	9,747

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Socialist Bloc Tourists	0	0	0	0	0	0			

⁶²⁶ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 4

⁶²⁷ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Plani i ardhjes se grupeve te turisteve*, f.770, v. 1961-1975, dos. varies, fl. varies

Free World Tourists	1,611	1,746	1,966	4,537	3,024	4,008			
Other	3,646	0	1,056	1,562	867	808			
TOTAL	5,257	1,746	3,022	6,099	3,891	4,816			

*Yugoslavia,

Greece, Turkey, Pakistan = “Other” as this number of tourists is lumped together.

*Scandinavian countries also included in “Other”

Perhaps with the exception of the year 1969, the rest of the years leave a lot to be desired for. Though new regions such as Scandinavia had received attention through the works of the friendship society, the rift with the Soviet Union equated to a gradual and detrimental decrease of tourists from Socialist Bloc countries which remained under the Soviet Union sphere of influence. Even the Chinese recognized this and urged the Albanians to do more on the side of advertisement in order to increase numbers. According to the Albanian delegation that visited China in 1972, “they [the Chinese] complained that we had printed very little propaganda , and they humbly asked us to send them the publications we have done and what we will do in the future, to have them as experience, as guides, tourist brochures, hotel brochures, postcards, hotel labels, etc”⁶²⁸. Records through the years show that Albtourist admins also understood the problem well. In a 1969 plan of work document, the director of Albtourist writes:

However, in terms of propaganda work, more remains to be done because we are far from what is required and there are opportunities to do more. A very preoccupying problem has been and remains the preparation, especially the production of propaganda materials. We did not suffer more from the preparation than from the publication of the materials, because to prepare it can be said that we prepared a lot, but to publish, we published little things like calendars, labels for hotels, two posters and three dictionaries in foreign languages, which are

⁶²⁸ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Informacion*, f.770, v. 1972, dos. 18, fl. 002-009

also very late. Four other prospectuses were printed and reprinted, but due to the poor quality of the press, we stopped their distribution.⁶²⁹

Again in another document dated 1972, similar echoes are made towards better efforts in order to “increase the fund of tourist materials with new publications inside and outside the country”⁶³⁰. Additionally, in both these and other related documents there is a tone of plea to government higher ups to seriously investigate the economical yields of tourism. In 1969 they recognized “the weakness of knowing little about the organizational forms of foreign tourism, especially in terms of the fees applied by each country”⁶³¹ as they call for the “sector of foreign relations [to] make more efforts in this direction, provide and study more materials, use all the possible cases that exist”⁶³². In 1972 a similar tone calls for “continuous efforts to strengthen ties with existing [travel] companies, which have stability and which present business interest; and to find cooperation with other serious firms with the aim of improving the composition of groups and increasing income in foreign currency”⁶³³.

The continuous Albaturist pleas to “think and work more not only for today but also for the future”⁶³⁴ seems to have fallen on deaf ears year after year. It did not seem that the higher ups, meaning party leaders with Hoxha in charge, were interested in this regard or cared much to mend the situation. So why then court Beijing for continuous aid in tourism and approve the building of the necessary infrastructure? Why invest in creating a network of accommodation structures such as the series of Hotel Turizmi? The answer lies in the shift that had developed within Party visions and

⁶²⁹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi aktivitetin e punes*, f.770, v. 1969, dos. 1, fl. 002-026. Also in f.770, v. 1969, dos. 8, fl. 001-003

⁶³⁰ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi aktivitetin e sezonit turistik*, f.770, v. 1972, dos. 1, fl. 001-019

⁶³¹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi aktivitetin e punes*, f.770, v. 1969, dos. 1, fl. 002-026. Also in f.770, v. 1969, dos. 8, fl. 001-003 9

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi aktivitetin e sezonit turistik*, f.770, v. 1972, dos. 1, fl. 001-019

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

rhetoric. As Mehilli has stated, the geopolitical rift between the Soviet Union and China, all of the sudden gave international fame to smaller actor states. Albania became a proxy in a battle of ideological ownership while it embraced and fully abused the opportunities that came with such a role. To this point, purposeful tourism for Albania took on a different purpose; a competitive and at times arrogant stance to showcase national identity and the distinct Albanian version of Marxist-Leninism – perhaps in the vision of the Albanian establishment the purest one of all – ending once and for all the “big battle over the proper ownership of Marxism-Leninism”⁶³⁵.

As a result the infrastructure of tourism was conceived and instrumentalized strictly for building a strong Marxist-Leninist national identity so that it could be projected beyond the country's border and so that it could teach even the grand powers of the Soviet Union, who was truly carrying the torch of ideology. To maintain power and relevance at home, it was important for the Party to showcase the transformational changes brought on by the success of socialism, be it through the changes of city skylines with Turizmi hotels, or through engineering feats of various industrial sites. To maintain international relevance it wasn't enough to passionately hold long plenum speeches about the dangers of American imperialism and Soviet revisionism – or deviation from true Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist ideals – but the display and flaunting of the material achievements of socialism had to be amplified. In the words of Mehilli, “[Albanian] socialism became associated with feats of imagination and engineering, central plans and centrally planned lies, exhausting labor campaigns but also mass literacy, longer lives, and a specific understanding of the world”⁶³⁶.

Responding to the Chinese officials probing about propaganda, the Albanian counterparts replied by saying, “tourism for us, it is completely political and not economic, and we [even] see the figure of the [tourism] service worker as a political person, starting from the [hotel] workers on the

⁶³⁵ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 191

⁶³⁶ Ibid. 4

floors to the waiters, who directly apply the line of Party politics to foreigners”⁶³⁷. While Albturnist admins saw and wrote about the economic and service flaws of tourism, they also agreed to be driven by “the directives of the party and the Government, by the decisions of the base organizations of the party and always putting proletarian politics in the foreground”⁶³⁸. In the same documents they strongly emphasized “seeing the development of tourism in [the] country more in the political prism than in the economic one”, while devoting special importance to “the propaganda work and revolutionary vigilance” in order to “propagate as much as possible to tourists the successes achieved in the socialist construction of the country”.⁶³⁹

As a result, it is no wonder special importance was given to working with Marxist-Leninist groups and friendship associations, as these were the *creme de la creme* audience already primed in similar ideological foundations and that could further help echo and popularize the party achievements through sharing of their experiences with others outside of Albania’s borders. In order to successfully achieve this, the entire tourism apparatus had to be mobilized, from constructing various hotel structures and other infrastructures aiding tourism, to specific itineraries for various controlled groups, and even organizing group lectures with political, ideological, economic, and cultural topics as content. To showcase how the entire tourism sector was instrumentalized for socialist achievements, Albturnist director proudly writes:

Even in terms of propaganda work with tourists, better results have been achieved than in the past. These results have been achieved through the individual and organized work done by associates and other employees of the [tourism] company, through the many materials that have been distributed, especially those with ideological content of our party, the screenings of documentary films, the voice center that was organized for the first time this year in Durres, through the visits and excursions they have made, others. The above measures make it possible for foreign tourists to get to know not only the natural beauty and

⁶³⁷ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi aktivitetin e sezonit turistik*, f.770, v. 1972, dos. 1, fl. 001-019

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi aktivitetin e punes*, f.770, v. 1969, dos. 1, fl. 002-026. Also in f.770, v. 1969, dos. 8, fl. 001-003

antiquities of our country, but also the excellent results achieved by our people in the socialist construction of the country, in line with the Marxist-Lenninst of our party and with its consequent struggle against [US] imperialism and modern revisionism with the Soviet one at the head.⁶⁴⁰

Under Chinese backing, Albania saw the biggest economic growth in all of its socialist history and . Construction of touristic structures flourished beyond imagination. As a small power, yet with elevated importance in the international arena, Albania used its position to exploit funding from the Chinese. Strong ideological and nationalistic views poured investments in the nation building of the country. Among many structures, the Chinese funded the entire series of Hotel Turizmi Hotels. This series featured the designs and constructions of Hotel Turizmi in Fier (1962), Hotel Turizmi in Sarande (1968), Hotel Turizmi in Elbasan (1971), Hotel Turizmi in Shkoder (1971), Hotel Turizmi in the capital city of Tirana (1973), Hotel Turizmi in Pogradec (1973), Hotel Turizmi Kruje and Hotel Turizmi Berat. Other factories, schools, housing complexes, cultural centers etc also came at the expense of the Chinese who many times claimed they did not even have such developments at home.

It was through this “bilateral unequal alliance”, which the right conditions were created for Albania to maintain strategies of exploitation in pursuing the securement of its national objectives.⁶⁴¹ In the end, perhaps antithetical to this strategy, Albania was always willing to give it all away regardless if it always leaned on the beneficiary side of the scales of the unequal alliances. This was always done in the name of maintaining the pure path of Marxism-Leninism which it defended with a fiery passion. Albania’s own strand of socialism became the most important thing, and no amount of economic backing could compromise that.

⁶⁴⁰ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi aktivitetin e sezonit turistik*, f.770, v. 1972, dos. 1, fl. 001-019

⁶⁴¹ Ibid. 3

This new purpose of Albania's purposeful tourism went on to define the rest of the country's tourism sector and policy for the remainder of its socialist years. Just as funding from the Soviet Union dried up over quarrels of ideological supremacy, so would the "eternal" friendship with China suffer the same consequences. "With Chinese admission to the United Nations in 1971, Albania, which until then had served as Beijing's mouthpiece, lost a significant element of its usefulness"⁶⁴². Then came US President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and new normalization of Chinese foreign policy opened China up to markets of the Free World.⁶⁴³ Alarmed by these developments the Albanian leadership denounced China's advances as "acts of betrayal to Marxism-Leninism"⁶⁴⁴. In his statement at the UN General Assembly in October 1979 Foreign Minister of Albania stressed "the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union for domination and hegemony in the world has been and remains the main source of tension and conflict between different countries, as well as local wars, and is the greatest danger to the peace and security of the peoples", however for the first time he launched an attack on China stating that "in the shadow of and in collaboration with the United States, social-imperialist China is seeking to create spheres of domination, to become the principal military power in that zone [the Far East], to establish its domination in Asia and throughout the Pacific"⁶⁴⁵.

Having previously made clear "Albania is not Cuba"⁶⁴⁶ to the Soviet Union, it seems a parallel message was directed at China as Albania cornered itself to isolationism having lost hope of ever finding a true and righteous Marxist-Leninist partner. "Although China did not break relations with Albania as the Soviet Union had in 1961, by 1978 China ended economic and military

⁶⁴² Fischer and Oliver, *Albania's Stalinist Dictatorship, 1944–1989*, 298

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Réti, *The Foreign Policy of Albania After the Break with China*, 189-199

⁶⁴⁶ Fischer and Oliver, *Albania's Stalinist Dictatorship*, 298

assistance programs to Albania.”⁶⁴⁷ From then on, the Albanians were on their own and maintained such status until the fall of the regime in 1991. The country desperately tried to increase self-reliance through its own resources, however, the lack of economic backing from a larger power equated to a significant fall of industrial growth in the early 1980s.⁶⁴⁸ By the late 1980s, Albania was in a state of economic crisis.⁶⁴⁹

Though one would expect a change of tourism policy and rhetoric for the purpose of economic gains, the same treatment of tourism continued to follow. In spite of some new directives opening towards additional western tourists, the numbers did not increase by a substantial amount, yet the quest for portraying ideological superiority continued to progress. One year after breaking ties with China, a total of 3,3294 entered Albania in 1979, 4014 tourists entered Albania in 1980, 12,397 in 1981 (though 5,425 of these were Albanian Kosovars probably returning from Yugoslavia to unite with families, rather than contributing to tourism) and 4,164 in 1982.⁶⁵⁰ Meanwhile Albaturist documents from these years, continue to praise the continuous and non tiring work of this enterprise to display “the construction of socialism in [the] country”⁶⁵¹, including the continuation of “specially designed programs with excursions and visits to industrial and social cultural sites”⁶⁵², as well as lectures with political agendas.⁶⁵³ In these documents, it is also worth noting that it is frequently claimed that Hoxha's written work – specifically “Writings on China” and “Imperialism and Revolution” – are many times requested by tourists and have now entered as articles of sale and souveniring.

⁶⁴⁷ Fischer and Oliver, *Albania's Stalinist Dictatorship*, 298

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid. 298-300

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Plani i ardhjes se grupeve te turisteve*, f.770, v. 1979-1982, dos. varies, fl. varies

⁶⁵¹ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi sezonin turistik 1981*, f.770, v. 1981, dos. 47, fl. 002-023. Also in f. 770, v. 1981, fl. 011-017. Also in f.770, v. 1981, fl. 001

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

Perhaps no one has said it better than coming from the voice of the leader of the Albturnist propaganda sector. In a 1980 document titled “Report on the Party’s propaganda work inside and outside the country”, the leader for Albturnist propaganda sector writes:

The reality of achievements in the socialist construction of Albania, the authority of the Party and our state has won the admiration of the people for its principled, honest and open policy against superpowers and reaction, in defense of the people, the struggle of the Labor Party Albania, against Yugoslav, Soviet, Chinese, Eurocommunist revisionism myth and opportunism, the protection and encouragement of just wars that do the oppressed peoples for freedom and national sovereignty, the support of the revolutionary struggles of the working class, led by the Marxist-Leninist party, have aroused special interest and sympathy for The Labor Party of Albania, for Comrade Enver Hoxha and for socialist Albania, which is the only one in the world to build socialism completely supported by its own forces without taking loans from outside.⁶⁵⁴

He later certifies that it is only due to “this position of high principle which [has been bestowed] on the Party...and given the basis of its powers” that him and his colleges find the drive and inspiration to continue, and to “achieve more and more work” so that “tourists can get to know [the country’s] achievements better and better”.⁶⁵⁵

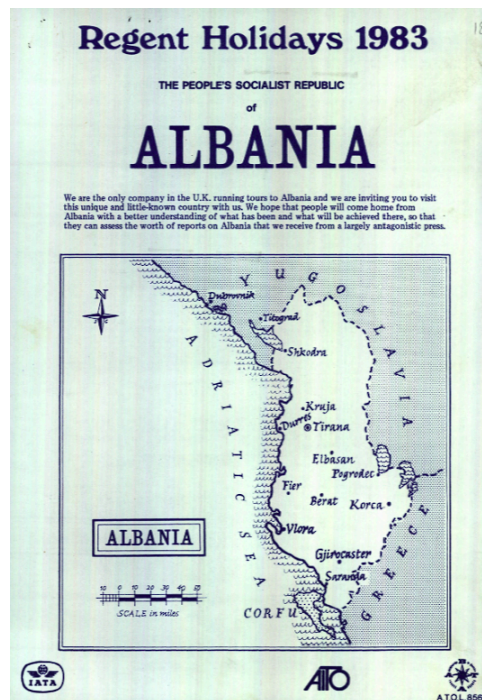
Though it is easy to see through the path of self destruction which Albania chose by isolating in the modern age, one must also value the courage of a small and relatively unheard of geopolitical actor, to rise to relevance in the theater of the Cold War, reaping the economic benefits from courting and breaking with multiple alliances, all while upholding an ideology which they embraced as being better than in those countries which it originated from. To better understand this, an interrogation of Albania’s foreign relations and policy is needed. By the end of the Cold War, especially in the West, Albania was portrayed as a modern day North Korea, even though the country did make small strides in opening up even to Western countries. To summarize this through the tourism legacy in the 80s, it is fitting to end this chapter on a note from a brochure of the Regent

⁶⁵⁴Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Raport mbi punen e propogandes se partise brenda dhe jashte shtetit*, f.770, v. 1980, dos. 43, fl. 001-007.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

Holidays travel company – the very first travel agency from the UK to ink contracts with Albaturist.

“We are the only company in the U.K. running tours to Albania and we are inviting you to visit this unique and little-known country with us. We hope that people will come home from Albania with a better understanding of what has been and what will be achieved there, so that they can assess the worth of reports on Albania that we receive from a largely antagonistic press”⁶⁵⁶.



[Figure. 3.86] Regent Holidays Brochure. Directorate of the Central State Archives

(AQSH)

Whereas the industrial centers unified the masses of workers and public projects boosted socialist unification, a stronger architectural agent was still necessary to fortify and project the image of national identity. For Albania, this was extremely important for two reasons; first the lack of hegemony prior to World War II had never allowed for an Albanian national identity, second, the geopolitical context of the Cold War had brought forth competing ideologies and identities – it was

⁶⁵⁶ Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), *Regent Holidays 1983*, f.770, v. 1983, dos. 232, fl. 018-020

imperative that the member states of the Socialist block displayed superior identities modeled on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. Since Albania had aligned with this camp, it was vital for Albania to quickly get over its lack of hegemony and also become an example of a pure socialist identity.

So much was the latter emphasized – especially during the years of Chinese backing – that Albania sought to triumph in this even within the socialist camp, consistently making the argument that it was the only country following the true line of Marxism-Leninism away from revisionism and imperialism. To achieve ideological superiority as well as develop a lasting national identity, Albania turned to tourism more than any other industry. Specifically, the infrastructure and architecture of tourism. With the founding of Albaturist and the model of a proletariat tourism industry and ideology, the establishment used the shifting alliances throughout the Cold War to capitalize on funding special architectural agents i.e. the Hotels whose main purpose was not tourism for the sake of monetary gain but rather to emit a strong image of national identity, claiming to be the only beacon of socialism.

Why do I refer to them as agents? Because to me, they concealed their true function. For this precise reason, much of scholarship has overlooked their real purpose. Manipulated by the lack of consistency in “sold out” rooms and therefore lack of constant usage, as well as questionable balancing sheets of profits, scholars have discarded the importance of these hotels outside of literal tourism intentions. Those that have seen them through a more critical lens, have only done so to either document and note their current status of operation or to use them as case studies in projecting current/future tourism trends. Even those that have hinted at the hotel's role in constructing a national identity, have done so by generalizing and grouping them together with other architectural achievements. While the projects mentioned above (and many others) also helped in the network of tourism markers towards the goal of building a national identity, my argument here is

that these hotels alone, more than any other type of architectural intervention, helped construct the severely lacking national identity. The series of Hotel Turizmi were not interested in the entire world, rather in the select few who the regime held at high regards and permitted to pass through the porous Iron Curtain. They were built for those that mattered.

A Style of Albanian Socialist Modernism

It was mentioned earlier that during the years of Soviet Negotiations, the Soviet Union not only exported “Sovietization” which led to the process of industrializing and modernizing the societies of the Socialist bloc, but also exported with it various ideologies that stemmed from inside the country. One of those ideologies manifested in architectural and urban developments as a style of architectural aesthetic known as “socialist realism” often associated with Stalin. This style of architecture also made its way to Albania only to be denounced later due to a more preferable style of “socialist modernism” brought forth by simplifications of construction methods, rapid mass production and the perfection of the concrete slab. This style was imposed upon all satellite nations of the Socialist bloc. Naturally, the Soviet imposition on denouncing anything that had to do with Stalin meant that Albania had to also abide by the same rules and adapt the same style. Thus the alignment with the Soviet Union created such conditions of absorbing ideologies in all facets of life.

During the shifting of alignment with China, however, one would expect some sort of similar impositions being placed from the power providing the investments and protection. However, the Chinese did no such thing. They did not interfere in such matters of architectural style and design. None of the buildings constructed at this time, be it industrial, housing, or the hotels, embody any sort of qualities of a “Chinese” style of architectural design or aesthetic. They did not enforce any elements from their rich body of vernacular architectural works, or impose anything new

composed from their contributions to socialist thought. The Chinese let the Albanians decide their own design aesthetic and simply supported the construction efforts through means of funding or by providing technical assistance, skilled labor, and raw materials. In return, a cohesive body of architectural work was produced which took the modern architecture prevailing at the time and began to infuse it with the use of local and vernacular Albanian materials.

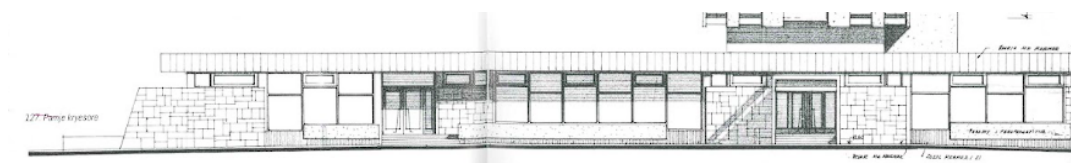
The Hotel Turizmi structures fully embodied this aesthetic language. Take for example Hotel Turizmi of Saranda **[Figure. 3.87]**. Though the overall design is a simplified modernist form, the ground floor shows distinct detailing of cladding made of carved stone. Meanwhile scratched granite appears on the tower of the facade.⁶⁵⁷ A similar treatment of carved stone appears on the base of Hotel Turizmi of Shkodra **[Figure 3.88]** while ceramic rocks and tile cover the base of Hotel Turizmi in Pogradec **[Figure 3.89]**. Thanks to no influence from the Chinese, it appears as if through this purpose, Albanian designers were attempting to define a distinct version of socialist modernism; one with an Albanian twist to it.



[Figure. 3.87] Hotel Turizmi Saranda stone facade.

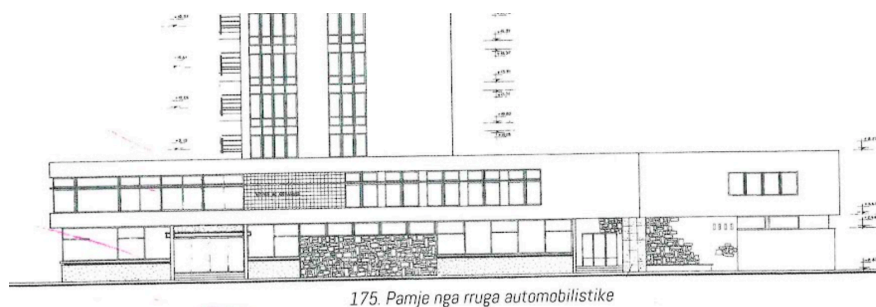
(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)

⁶⁵⁷ Nepravishta, *Hotelet Para 1990*, 94



[Figure. 3.88] Hotel Turizmi Saranda stone facade.

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)



[Figure. 3.89] Hotel Turizmi Saranda stone facade.

(Ref: Nepravishta and Thomai and Borici, *Hotelet Para 1990*, Directorate of the Central State Archives (AQSH), Accessed 08/2022)

CONCLUSION

The Cold War propelled the US and Soviet Union into a fierce competition of socio-political ideology and World influence over systems of capitalism and socialism. As the global lines of geopolitical influence were drawn between the Free World (West) prescribing to capitalism and the Socialist bloc (East) following socialism, the Iron Curtain acted as the divider where the rivalry of these two camps would at times collide. This rivalry also manifested in the ways these societies planned and designed their cities and architecture, as each system proudly displayed their achievements over the other. One sector that displayed this competitive showdown was that of tourism through the architecture and infrastructure it produced. While both competing sides encouraged their citizens in travel and leisure, the Soviet model of tourism “denounced the idle emptiness of bourgeois [Western] tourist practice, and strove to juxtapose an alternative model of purposeful tourism within the boundless Soviet territory.”⁶⁵⁸ On the other hand, Western tourists’ interest in Soviet influenced territories provided opportunities for monetary gains as well as the chance to show off the Party achievements.⁶⁵⁹

Caught between this contradiction was also the Socialist bloc country of Albania in Eastern Europe. Both “purposeful” tourism from the Socialist bloc as well as tourism from the West, had a direct impact on the planning and the architecture of Albania during the Cold War, as it too started organizing its own tourism sector. As a result of such efforts, urban transformations took place ranging from industrial sites and infrastructures, to public buildings and accommodation structures. To achieve this, Albania relied on charting a unique path of geopolitical negotiations with larger powers, while capitalizing on an Iron Curtain that was rather porous and “awash with connections

⁶⁵⁸ Pedersen and Noack, *Tourism and Travel During the Cold War*, 2

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

and exchanges across the East–West divide [...] which permitted select goods, people, and information to pass through.”⁶⁶⁰ The development of tourism in Albania gave the socialist regimes an opportunity to showcase their societies,⁶⁶¹ and thus their architecture.

By capitalizing on various rifts and quarrels within the Socialist Bloc, Albania progressed from being a backwards war destroyed country mentored into new beginnings under Yugoslav partnership, to a well functioning and marginally industrialized nation through USSR backing and Sovietization, and finally into a completely transformed socialist beacon⁶⁶² propelled into high relevance within the Socialist bloc by choosing to align with China during the Sino-Soviet split. This thesis traced side by side the unfolding of the geopolitical negotiations for each alliance period, as well as the impacts which these negotiations produced on the development of the tourism sector and its various kinds of infrastructures as well as the ideologies that were attached to tourism for each period of negotiations. At the same time, this thesis investigated various infrastructural and architectural interventions which along with being markers of tourism, while also acted as agents or scaffolding to erect socialism and project it for the World to see.

To recap the geopolitical negotiations, the Yugoslav partnership produced no concrete advancements in tourism as the establishment was more concerned with rebuilding the country and economy from the devastations of World War II. However, various urban interventions such as railroad networks and other industrial sites started to lay the foundation from which tourist infrastructure could further grow. When the country decided to sidestep its close partner and instead aligned itself with the Soviet Union during the Tito-Stalin split, not only did it create the first ever autonomous tourist enterprise Albaturist – albeit influenced from Soviet Union’s Inturist – but it also

⁶⁶⁰ Pedersen and Noack, *Tourism and Travel During the Cold War*, 3

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Czekalski refers to Albania as a “Socialist Beacon” in his book *The Shining Beacon of Socialism in Europe*

prescribed to Soviet Union's ideology of purposeful tourism. This thesis attempted to define this ideology which called for a tourism with purpose given by planned excursions, avoidance of localism, and being involved in the teachings and achievements of socialism, while most importantly also making the case for an Albanian version of purposeful tourism which relied on the country's unique geography, connection with Illyrian-Greco-Roman cultural roots and strong connection to Marxism-Leninism, all of which were a conscious attempt to lure tourists away from visiting other Socialist bloc states by seducing them to experience a non-typical (Slavic) Soviet influenced territory.

Capitalizing on its geopolitical negotiation with the Soviet Union, brought Albania a wide amount of investments which manifested in various construction sites. The first major tourist hotel – Hotel Turizmi Durres or Hotel Adriatik – was constructed in Durres. Hotel Adriatik materialized only through Soviet funding, and would otherwise cease to exist if it wasn't for capitalizing on the right geopolitical conditions. In other words, the biggest tourist structure to date, only materialized as a result of Albania's decision to side with Stalin in his rift with Tito. This hotel was a beacon of Albanian purposeful tourism as it lavishly tried to display the achievements of the state and thus socialism. In addition, the hotel strategically relied on the unique geography and context of its setting as it was constructed in the city of Durres i.e ancient Dyrrachium. Thus, it was not simply a mindless and utilitarian bourgeois structure strictly used for accommodation, but rather a purposeful one that would be in conversation with the geography and history of the place, the teachings of socialism, and in close proximity to planned excursions. For this, Albturist relied on the Adriatic sea conveniently bordering Durres as well as the Illyrian-Greco-Roman sites of Durres and other archaeological sites in nearby towns which would offer further excursions from the hotel and back.

After Khrushchev delivered his de-Stalinization speech in 1956, Albanian-Soviet relationship went sour, for it had been through Stalinist methods that Albania became industrialized and it was

the same methods that kept the establishment in power.⁶⁶³ A deviation from Stalinism, seen from the Albanian leadership as a softening of the Leninism-Marxism ideology, ignited the first sparks of a closer relationship to China while publicly denouncing alignment with the revisionist Soviet Union. While pledging allegiance to China, the rhetoric of purposeful tourism carried on. After all, purposeful tourism by this point was synonymous with all Socialist bloc countries. However, this thesis argued that in parallel to a Chinese alliance, tones of nationalism and emphasis on national identity were being weaved into the ideology of tourism. This was initially presented through various means of adjusting propaganda language in tourism marketing via Albturist, extending the reach of propaganda outside of Albania through friendship societies funded by China, touristic itineraries which showed more intrinsic national achievements, and at last the continual construction of Hotel Turizmi structures, which at this time became symbols or markers that projected the building of a national identity governed by a unique type of socialism.

With the exception of the hotel in Durrës, China funded all of the rest of Hotel Turizmi structures, making this period of geopolitical negotiations the most fruitful period in terms of investments in tourism infrastructure. However, this thesis showed that the number of tourists coming into the country lacked the desired results to satisfy the amount of investments, and the most damaging thing about such results was that the Albanian establishment cared little about the yield of economical return even at the dismay of their investors i.e the Chinese. The reason behind this was the fact that by late years of alliance with China, purposeful tourism for Albania took on a different purpose; an arrogant stance to showcase national identity and the distinct Albanian version of Marxist-Leninism so that it could win the “big battle over the proper ownership of Marxism-Leninism”⁶⁶⁴.

⁶⁶³ Skendi, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Conflict, Foreign Affairs VOL 40*, 471

⁶⁶⁴ Mehilli, *From Stalin to Mao*, 191

Thus on one hand, the period of geopolitical negotiations with China gave Albania international fame as it became a proxy in a Sino-Soviet battle of ideological ownership, but on the other hand, the means of the same negotiations allowed for Albania to fully abuse the opportunities that came with such a role. Rather than focusing on increasing visitor numbers, party directives shifted the focus towards carrying the torch of ideology through pompously defending a distinct Albanian version of Albanian socialism. That is to say a socialism that stayed true to the teachings of Marxist-Leninism and did not deviate towards revisionism, as Yugoslavia had by flirting with the West. A socialism that did not pursue imperialistic tendencies, as the Soviet Union had within its territories. And at last a socialism that did not make peace and collaborate with the "bourgeoisie", as China did with the United States.

During alignment with China, each set of funding that the Chinese presented to Albania materialized in the construction of a considerable amount of Hotel Turizmi. The first major Chinese backed hotel structure, Hotel Turizmi in Fieri was a direct beneficiary of the “33 million USD funding”⁶⁶⁵ that came as a result of Zhou's visit in Albania 1963 and thus materializing only due to the negotiations in place. Hotel Turizmi in Saranda as well as in Kruje both came to be only thanks to the “3 billion yuan Chinese loans”⁶⁶⁶ from 1968 and 1970. Meanwhile the string of Hotel Turizmi projects (i.e. in the cities of Shkoder, Elbasan, Pogradec, Kukes, Tirana), conceived between 1971 to 1974, were a direct product of the “1971-1975 Five Year Plan” which meant more money funneling in from China.⁶⁶⁷ At last, one of the final funded Hotel Turizmi structures in Berat, came to be designed as a result of last minute “saving of the alliance”⁶⁶⁸ in 1975. Even at the onset of a fall out, China was willing to supply any funding necessary to keep Albania and its projects afloat. None of

⁶⁶⁵ Marku, *Sino Albanian Relations*, 137

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid. 212

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid. 252

⁶⁶⁸ Biberaj, *Albania and China*, 227

the other geopolitical negotiations had the same grand of impact on Hotel Turizmi structures. It is safe to say that none of the previous arrangements could even provide the funding even if they wanted to. The Yugoslavs barely had funding to support themselves and constantly had their decisions overlooked by the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union just had too many other more important territories under its influence, made apparent by leaving Hoxha second to last in their lines of meetings.⁶⁶⁹

All of the hotels built from Chinese investments mentioned above continued to embody the ideals of purposeful tourism. They were all designed in or around the vicinity of great geographical significance which again could be used to place the hotels in dialogue or close connection with excursions and other sites of learning about socialism as prompted by the ideology of purposeful tourism. The hotels also fulfilled tourism's purposes of nation branding and nation building.⁶⁷⁰ They became markers of "placemaking" by being utilized to convey a highly tailored image of place – a framework defined in the instruction section in this thesis.⁶⁷¹ As such, the hotels were strictly used by foreign visitors, so that a highly tailored image could successfully be perceived by the outside. They also helped in nation branding as the hotels were places made to develop a non-existent tourism sector and thus helping literally in the building of a national brand and identity.

During the Chinese alignment years, the hotels – more than anything else – stood as the nation's projection of a national identity which aimed to display ideological superiority through the achievements of a distinct and pure version of Albanian socialism. Though tourism numbers weren't doing too well, the hotels continued to be built. They took on the role of architectural agents whose main purpose was not tourism for the sake of monetary gain but rather to emit a strong image of national identity. This was especially important as many of the hotels built during this time

⁶⁶⁹ Khudoley, *Soviet-Albanian Relations*, 407

⁶⁷⁰ C. M. Hall, *Tourism and Geopolitics*, 44

⁶⁷¹ Per Karen Nichol's concept of placemaking. See Nichol, *Tourism as a nation-building tool*, 1

converged in locations where they were close to the neighboring countries. Take for example the hotels in Pogradec and Kukes which bordered Yugoslavia, or the hotel in Saranda where Greece only sits on the opposite side of the Ionian Sea. They defined their urban setting as the tallest markers in the skyline proudly showcasing the construction of Albanian socialism.

To this end this thesis has demonstrated how architecture and infrastructures of tourism can act as an expression of political ideology and economic systems in place.

What is also astonishing, is that whereas the Soviet Union exported and or enforced its countries of influence to adopt socialist realism and later “socialist modernism”, the Chinese did nothing to enforce any sort of distinct “Chinese” style of Architecture. As a matter of fact, they let the Albanians decide their own design aesthetic and merely supported the construction efforts through means of funding or technical and material assistance. Though architects and specialists – out of worry of becoming too westernized – were barred from the establishment from truly having the freedom to design what they wanted, still a cohesive body of architectural work was produced which took the modern architecture prevailing at the time and combined it with the use of local and vernacular materials. This process perhaps gave way to a distinct and Albanian version of Socialist Modernism.

The impact that the series of Hotel Turizmi had on Albanian tourism, national identity, and the pure power of transforming the urban fabric cannot be understated. Their astounding impact can really be placed in perspective, when considering the immediate drop of hotel construction after Albania turned to isolationism and thus the lack of geopolitical negotiations. Without the geopolitical conditions generated by the Cold War, that is to say without the division of the world into two camps and the competition arising between the camps and even within the camps on territorial and cultural influence, I do not think that the same kind or amount of Hotels and other

structures would have been built in such a short amount of time. The legacy of the hotels remained intact well into the post-socialist years. Some of them still preserve their intended structure and still remain the urban center of the city which they occupy. To this end, this thesis has demonstrated how architecture is a direct product of geopolitical negotiations.

Conducting this research was no easy task. The sheer amount of times Albania had to endure foreign intrusions or chart negotiations in its history makes it difficult to have a complete or the right picture assimilated at all times as the information and narratives in play can become convoluted. Some minor limitations faced were the lack of additional archives for many of the other Hotel Turizmi structures, and the lack of information in regards to the architectural design methods, theories and historical accounts from those that worked on the projects which could help piece a more lively narrative inputting the experiences of those that designed these structures. Most importantly, this would help in better understanding the uniqueness of Albania's architecture and really dial down the amount of influence that it received in the design of its architecture from the countries it aligned with. A major limitation in this pursuance was also the lack of infusing and comparing the archival documents from the said countries which Albania chartered its political negotiations with.

Though this thesis attempts to contribute to the scholarship of Albanian socialist tourism and architecture, it is far from finished and or finalized. This thesis serves as a start to an ongoing project and passion to reverse the lack of Albanian Cold War scholarship. In doing so, this thesis has compiled a larger historiography which does not attempt to arrive at a definitive conclusion, or show a complete narrative. Rather it only begins to collage together the start of missing narratives of tourism, architecture and political negotiations as lenses of studying Albania's history pre and during the Cold War. The history covered in this thesis has made for a larger focus on an inward

perspective. That is, a focus on understanding the consequences of the geopolitical negotiations internally within Albania. This in turn leaves a lot of opportunities for future research to be conducted in terms of the broader significance of the negotiations externally, or on the outside systems of the Cold War.

The continuation of this project in the future will be defined by two major areas of research. First, it is imperative to focus on the broader significance of Albania's unique position as a multi-prong phenomenon of shifting negotiations and infiltrations. The porosity of the Iron Curtain will need to be further interrogated as a framework to better understand such broader significance. Was there really an authentic version of Albanian tourism or architecture? Or did the Cold War erect elusive systems of competition which only made it seem as if the World was divided. For this, Foucault's theoretical framework of "interconnectedness" can act as scaffolding in order to better understand Albania's contribution to the cultural exchange between the East and West. How did Albania challenge the Western-centric narratives of travel and tourism? How did it further provide an alternative model of tourism even amongst other countries of the Socialist bloc? These are all important questions which still need answers. Performing a concrete comparison analysis of Albania's approach to tourism with that of other socialist countries can begin to uncover answers to these questions. This would also require access to archives of those other countries.

Second, studying the impact of Albania's Cold War tourism on contemporary tourism, will be an important part of the future of this project. How does the legacy of the Cold War continue to influence tourism today? How has it shaped Albania's image on the global stage? How do the geopolitical negotiations from the Cold War affect political negotiations today? What type themes and frameworks continue to emerge? As of recent years, Albania has experienced a new and unprecedented wave of tourism. New tourist architecture and infrastructures have sprawled

everywhere especially in the riviera. How can the Hotel Turizmi structures be placed in dialogue with the new structures? What type of effect has the recent political establishment and policies have had on the new structures? Exploring this fascinating era of history can really help with understanding the complexities of tourism and architecture during the Cold War as well as Albania's unique position in this narrative.

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Chapter 1

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