

ALBANIA IN THE WARSAW TREATY

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Abstract

This article concentrates over the creation on the Warsaw Pact in 1955 and its main structure and program for all the member countries that founded it. Albania was a founding country of the Treaty, but until the end it became the “black sheep” of it. I represented Albania’s position in the Warsaw Pact, mainly by their point of view, and how did the Albanian government and its leader’s behavior towards what happened in its country during their membership years. Albania was a small country, the poorest one and without a special interest for the world, but its strategic geographic position it meant a lot for the Soviet Union and its intentions over the Mediterranean sea.

Keywords: Warsaw Pact, Political Consultative Committee, Soviet Union, Albania

THE WARSAW PACT

Looking backwards in history and analyzing it in a chronologically way, we will see that *The Warsaw Pact* was a response to the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, founded initially by 12 members. NATO was established in 1949, including in 1955 West Germany. In 1950, the Soviet Union and China signed the Treaty of friendship, Alliance, and mutual Assistance in Moscow. As a result, in May 14, 1955 eight soviet bloc states signed *The Warsaw Treaty*: Albania, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union.

The Warsaw Pact alliance of the East European socialist states is the nominal counterweight to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the European continent. Unlike NATO, founded in 1949, however, the Warsaw Pact does not have an independent organizational structure but functions as part of the Soviet Ministry of Defense. In fact, throughout the more than thirty years since it was founded, *The Warsaw Pact* has served as one of the Soviet Union's primary mechanisms for keeping its East European allies under its political and military control.

“The Soviet Union has used The Warsaw Pact to erect a facade of collective decision making and action around the reality of its political domination and military intervention in the internal affairs of its allies. At the same time, the Soviet Union also has used The Warsaw Pact to develop East European socialist armies and harness them to its military strategy (Glenn E. Curtis, 1992)

The military content of the alliance concluded by the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania in Warsaw, with high-ranking Chinese, North Korean, and North Vietnamese representatives in attendance as interested observers, was rudimentary.

“The document on the establishment of a unified command, not published in its entirety, specified the size of the forces each of the signatories pledged to contribute, except for East Germany, whose contribution was left to be decided later” (MASTNY V., BYRNE M., 2005, p.3)

The Warsaw Pact, known as *The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance* between the Soviet Union and the East European soviet bloc states, affirmed that their main purpose in these relationships was based in equality, independence, mutual noninterference in the internal affairs of each member, and respect for national sovereignty.

According to article 5:

“The Contracting Parties have agreed to establish a Joint Command of the armed forces that by agreement among the Parties shall be assigned to the Command, which shall function on the basis of jointly established principles. They shall likewise adopt other agreed measures necessary to strengthen their defensive power, in order to protect the peaceful labours of their peoples, guarantee the inviolability of their frontiers and territories, and provide defense against possible aggression” (The Warsaw Security Pact: May 14, 1955, article 5).

As a result, if one of the member states faced external aggression, it was the pact’s duty to come on defense and protect each other.

According to article 6 of *The Warsaw Pact*:

“For the purpose of the consultations among the Parties envisaged in the present Treaty, and also for the purpose of examining questions which may arise in the operation of the Treaty, a Political Consultative Committee shall be set up, in which each of the Parties to the Treaty shall be represented by a member of its Government or by another specifically appointed representative” (The Warsaw Security Pact: May 14, 1955, article 6).

Thus, the Political Consultative Committee (PCC) was established as the highest alliance organ.

Like NATO, the Warsaw Pact focused on the objective of creating a coordinated defense among its member nations in order to deter an enemy attack. There was also an internal security component to the agreement that proved useful to the USSR. The alliance provided a mechanism for the Soviets to exercise even tighter control over the other Communist states in Eastern Europe and deter pact members from seeking greater autonomy. When Soviet leaders found it necessary to use military force to put down revolts in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia

in 1968, for example, they presented the action as being carried out by the Warsaw Pact rather than by the USSR alone.

THE SOVIET – ALBANIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Albania became part of the Warsaw Pact since the beginning of its composition. Although the political and military circumstances were quite different at that time, communist Albania acceded to the Warsaw Pact, from which she left de facto in 1961, because of the breaking of the good relationships existing between Albania and the Soviet Union by the time. But, how was welcomed Albanian's entry in the Warsaw Pact and how was it seen by the official Tirana at the time speaking? Which were the benefits and the loses that suffered Albania by signing membership in this military pact, in which were part most of the communist countries of the east, and how did the relationship between Albania and the Warsaw Pact develop?

At that time, namely in 1955, when communist Albania was preparing to join the Warsaw Pact, official Tirana concentrated all of it's attention to this problem. Must be said, that this event was very special for Albania, and preparations had began since the signing moment in establishing the military pact all over the Albanian institutions. But it must be said that Albanian's entry in the pact wasn't questionable at all, and did not constitute a major problem for the country, because it was well known by all that Albania was considered a satellite country and a very convinced follower of the Soviet Union.

Also, Albanian army, was part, or better said a supplement of the Red Army of the Soviet Union. By the time all this became real and Albania officially signed its accession in the Warsaw Pact, all over the country it had a big echo. Also, in that period there were many improvements, such as modernization of the army, the unification of several services, new weapons were introduced, and there were many qualified Albanian cadres in the Soviet Union.

Among all the used slogans, the most popular was the one who said that, *"People's Republic of Albania is now protected, and nothing can happen to us"*. But, despite all these, it must be said, that Albania's membership in the Warsaw Pact, beside the fact that it was in the country's interest, it was mainly a requirement of the Soviet Union and its military pact.

Why such a big interest in a small country like Albania, with an area of about 28.000 km square, and who still remained the poorest country of Europe. Well, this was all about its strategic geographic position, whose border to Italy and Greece was the sea, which at the time and still in the present, are both members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Based on this fact, was quite necessary for the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet people, who were deeply interested in an outlet in the sea to supervise and have a constant control throughout the Mediterranean sea.

Despite this decoration, must be said however that the Warsaw Pact was the first international organization in which was participating the communist Albania, and the Albanian leadership took fool advantage of the situation at the

moment and used it to reform its authority. In this context, we can see the temptation that felt *Enver Hoxha*¹, when in September 1956, on the eve of what the researchers have called as the second breaking of the Soviet-Yugoslav relation, Khrushchev proposed to Hoxha the creation of a military base in Vlora², which would be the only soviet base and later on would become the Warsaw Pact's base in the Mediterranean. Hoxha was ready for this with no hesitation, even enthusiastic. One year later in Albania came Zhukov, and they discussed in detail the construction of the base.

According to the Albanian leadership, Vlora Base meant, among other things, that the sea borders of the socialist camp would move from the Black Sea to Gibraltar, that the American Fleet IV would be controlled in the Mediterranean, and a possible attack of the NATO forces against the People's Republic of Albania would be impossible from the sea. In the Cold War's circumstances such a logic was understandable. But, for a country like Albania, a step like this also carried risks. It can be said, that with this initiative undertaken by its political leaders, Albania was transformed in a "hot bed" for the Cold War.

ALBANIA LEAVES THE WARSAW PACT

The clash arose in 1960 from incidents that took place at the Vlore naval base in the Adriatic, The Warsaw Pact's only such base in the Mediterranean basin. It is not entirely clear who started the quarrel but it was more likely the style than the substance of the Soviets overbearing behavior, mirrored in the Albanian defense minister's almost insolent tone in his letter to Soviet Marshal Grechko, that provoked Tirana to seize several Soviet vessels, including submarines.

During the overloaded discussions with mutual accusations, the burning problem was the one concerning the naval base in Vlora. The result of the talks was a complete failure for both sides. However, for both sides, it was known that the problem would be addressed to the higher organisms of the Warsaw Pact. Meanwhile, on the Vlora base began incidents between the Albanian and Soviet troops, which although small at first sight, they warned to be dangerous as both sides had armed troops fighting. In this tense situation, in February 1961, in Tirana was held the IV Congress of the People's Republic of Albania, but there where no open statements against the Soviet leadership. Their counter position, was presumed in the critique of the thesis of international modern revisionism, discussed among the representatives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

It is in the nature of the communist systems that the ideological clashes between parties to determine the political relationships among states. That happened in the relationships between Albania and the Soviet Union and the other countries, and as well and with the Warsaw Pact itself. Given that the disputes of

¹ *Enver Hoxha* was the Communist leader of Albania from 1944 until his death in 1985, as the First Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania.

² *Vlora* is a city situated in the south-east of Albania.

the People's Republic of Albania happened between the party and the leader of the socialist camp, it was already known the alignment and the "solidarity" of the other countries to enforce collective punishment. The Bucharest meeting caused Albania the termination of the military aid from the Warsaw Pact, in October 1960. While the Moscow meeting in November 1960, brought as result one year later the interruption of the economic relationships, the statal and diplomatic ones, so far as neither Stalin had achieved with Yugoslavia.

The year 1961, concerning Albania's relations with the rest of the soviet bloc's countries, contains a worsening political situation. At the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow on 28-29 March of the same year, even though it was a first secretaries level meeting, Enver Hoxha did not participate. As he mentions in his diary, he did this "for security reasons".

Both sides, Soviet Union and Albania, affirmed that the Vlora base situation was paralyzed and out of military response. But, when they talked about the reasons, they started to blame each other.

On 26 May 1961, eight submarines and a pontoon boat, led by a Soviet crew, soldiers and officers who destroyed and grabbed everything they could, left the Vlora Base. At the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact held on August 3-4, 1961, Ramiz Alia, secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Republic of Albania, who led the Albanian delegation, was not allowed to participate, on the grounds that the meeting was one of a high level with the first secretaries. In October 1961, was held the XXII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, from the tribute of which, Khrushchev openly called for the overthrow of the Albanian leadership. One day later, the Albanian government to end all soviet transmissions in Albania. After that, the accusations thrown to each other were so heavy and frequent, that it was impossible to believe that Albania and the Soviet Union were friends once. On December 3, 1961, the Soviet Union, for the third time, communicated a verbal note to the Albanian government to withdraw all of its staff in the Albanian embassy in Moscow. In the early 1962 the Warsaw Pact withdrew all of its representatives from Tirana. Meanwhile, Albanian representatives were no more called at the PCC and the Joint Command meetings of the Warsaw Pact. There was an invitation from the Polish government, for a meeting of the PCC, in 19 January 1965, which was publicly refused by the Albanian government. Khrushchev and other Soviet leader accused Albanian leader that they led themselves out of the Warsaw Pact. But, a year later, in a letter addressed to the PCC of the Warsaw Pact, the Albanian government complained about not being notified for the meeting that was held in Bucharest on June 4-6 in 1966. This situation, de jure in the Warsaw Pact and de facto outside of it, continued until September 1968, when Czechoslovakia was attacked by Warsaw Pact's troops, and making the Albanian government to denounce publicly the Warsaw Pact. On September 5, 1968, on the V Plenum of the Central Committee of the People's Republic of Albania, Enver Hoxha would draw this conclusion, about being or not being part of the Warsaw Pact anymore:

“The existence of the Warsaw Pact did not play a positive role for our country’s defense, in contrary it was a risk that will remain even after we revoke the treaty...When we will revoke the Warsaw Pact, the NATO countries will no more be able to put forward the explanation that “we attack Albania because it is a Warsaw Pact member country, but we will attack because it is not anymore a member”. The Warsaw Pact, as political structure had its own role, as in front of the Adriatic alliance, and as well in its duties and commitments with the participating states. In today's sighting this has generally been a regressive role and is used more as an instrument intruders whenever governments did not consolidate the Soviet political leadership” (Forumi Shquiptar).

Or, more incriminating and useful for Albania, as a senior member of the Albanian Party of Laborm Hysni Kapo, said as referring to the populations of Albania and China combined:

“If someone were to ask us how many people do we have, our answer is 701 million... The long term effect of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia upon Albanian-Chinese relations was that it forced both sides to reevaluate their positions in the alliance” (O’Donnell James, 1999, p. 70).

CONCLUSIONS

The Warsaw Pact was created to concentrate the East European socialist countries together, so the Soviet Union would be able to accentuate its power deeper in Europe. Albania was a founding country of this treaty. By entering in this big coalition of the time, Albania gained, but also lost a lot of things.

By its member status, in Albania was created a naval base, which was the first and the only one that had the Warsaw Pact in the Mediterranean. But, after the breaking of the good relationships between Albania and the Soviet Union, it turned back to what it was, a small, poor country with a large outlet in the Adriatic and in risk of any possible attack from the outside, whether it is from NATO, or from the Soviet Union.

But, after this breaking, Albania claimed that she interrupted her relations with the Soviet Union because she feared a Russian attack, and so she isolated its external policy, after she allied with the Chinese, and broke that relationship too.

Albania since then has had its ups and downs in the political life and even in the economic one. Its future is still affected by the communist leadership and she is still a small country which tries to show its potential among the other European countries.

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