

**SUGARLAND  
SOCIALISM AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ALBANIAN COUNTRYSIDE**

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This dissertation explores how the Communist government that came to power in Albania in 1945 implemented one of the country's most ambitious rural development projects by turning the age-old swampland of Maliq into a site of sugar production. The new regime not only drained the swamp and opened arable land for the cultivation of sugar beets but also built a large sugar factory. Based on interdisciplinary research, which combines environmental, economic, social and cultural history, this dissertation traces the common features that the scheme of Maliq shared with other contemporary models of development, including those implemented by liberal democracies. It also analyzes the implementation and ramifications of a program that aimed at engineering society and nature. Maliq thus serves as a lens for shedding light on the far-reaching and sometimes surprising international entanglements during the Cold War.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

An early Monday morning, in mid-September of 2017, I headed from Tirana to Korça, the largest city of southeast Albania, traveling in a cherry-colored Ford Transit passenger van. The van passed the ring of mountains that surround the capital from the east and took us eastward through the beautiful and meandering valley of the Shkumbini river. Once we reached the pass of Thana, close to the state borders with the Republic of North Macedonia, the van turned southward and we passed the breathtaking scenery of the lake of Ohrid. Three hours after we had left Tirana, the minibus entered into the northern part of the furrow of Korça, called the Plain of Maliq. At that moment, I recalled the first time that I heard of Maliq. It was in the late 1980s, when as a little child I heard my grandmother saying that the sugar we consumed was refined in Maliq. In fact, the plain was Albania's center of sugar production for forty years, from 1951 to 1991. In the mid-1990s, not long after communism's demise, Maliq's sugar industry collapsed.

That early morning, the plain's captivating landscape was covered by the glimmering smile of the rising sun. I could see the perfect rows of poplars, which like silent ghosts aligned along the plain's ditches and canals. To the west stood the brownish and bare hills and mountains of the regions of Gora, on the east rose up the giant dark silhouette of the Dry Mountain, while the pulsating electrical lights of the villages scattered across the plain signaled that beginning a new day. At that moment, the beauty of a scenery loaded with contrasts between the field's flatness and the crown of mountains that surrounded it fully unfolded between the shredded cloak of a retreating night and the dim veil of dawn's gleam.

The graben of Korça was formed during the Pliocene, sometime between 5 to 2.5 million years ago, by powerful tectonic activities in the northern end of the Pindus mountains. Surrounded by a ring of mountains and hills, the basin looks like a giant lopsided cauldron. In the north, the hills of Çërrava separate it from the basin of Ochrid. In the east and southeast, the tall wall of Dry Mountain (Mali i Thatë), 2028 meters, and Morava mountain, 1800 meters, cut the plain off the grabens of Prespa and Devoll. The eastern wall breaks into two halves in the valley of Cangonj. Here, the Dry Mountain ends abruptly with a stark rupture, while Morava elevates gradually and softly toward the sky. In this narrow valley, river Devoll flows through the plain of Korça. In the

south, the hills of Qarr close off the plain and link Morava to the western wall, which consists of the highlands and Voskopoja, Opar, and Gora. These mountain chains that elevate in a series of peaks up to 2400 meters close off the ring around the basin. There are no ruptures in the western wall, except the narrow gorge close to the small hilly village of Maliq. It is here that river Devoll, after traversing the plain, pursues westward its journey to the Adriatic.

The plateau of Korça occupies an area of 300 square kilometers. With an average altitude of 820 meters above the sea level, it is 35 kilometers long. Its width ranges from 1 to 16 kilometers in a south-north direction. The furrow reaches its maximum extension between the pass of Cangonj and the gorge of Maliq, which is also called the plain of Maliq, where, as a result of subsiding tectonic activity, the altitude drops to 812 meters above the sea level—the lowest point of the entire plateau. Here is the center of gravity of the entire hydraulic system of the basin of Korça and its surrounding mountains. In this natural sink, the River Devoll is joined by a multitude of creeks, which created in the late Glacial era, between 13,000 and 10,000 years ago, the swamp of Maliq. Another important factor that helped the formation of the large pond was the uneven distribution of rainfalls. The region's Mediterranean subcontinental climate is distinguished by dry summers and heavy rains in fall and spring. A huge mass of waters from the melting snow and rainfalls pours down to the plain of Maliq in a very short time. Before WWII, the narrow gorge jammed the draining of this vast body of water, which remained blocked in the plain. Stretching for roughly 14 kilometers in length and around 6 kilometers in width, the swamp area varied throughout history between 40 and 80 square kilometers, although during summers and dry years its water cover shrunk even further.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the geological and climatological history of the basin of Korça see: Eric Fouache et al., "Palaeogeographical reconstructions of Lake Maliq (Korça Basin, Albania) between 14,000BP and 2000 BP," *Journal of Archeological Science*, 37 (2010): 525-535; Eric Fouache et al., "Man and environment around lake Maliq (southern Albania) during the Late Holocene," *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*, 10 (2001): 79-86; Michelle Denèfle et al., "A 12,000-Year Pollen Record from Lake Maliq, Albania," *Quaternary Research*, 54 (2000): 423-432; Jean-Jacques Dufare et al., "Tectonics and geomorphological evolution: the example of the Korçë basin (Albania)," *Géomorphologie: relief, processus, environment* 5, 2 (1999): 111-128; Amandine Bordon et al., "Pollen-inferred Late-Glacial and Holocene climate in southern Balkans (Lake Maliq)," *Quaternary International* 200, 1-2 (2009): 19-30; Soumaya Belmecheri et al., "Climate controlled ostracod preservation in Lake Ohrid (Albania, Macedonia)," *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 277 (2009): 236-245; A-M Lezine et al., "Lake Ohrid, Albania, provides an exceptional multi-proxy record of environmental changes during the last glacial-interglacial cycle," *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 287 (2010): 116-127; Bernd Wagner et al., "A 40,000-year record of environmental change from ancient Lake Ohrid (Albania and Macedonia)," *J Paleolimnol*, 41 (2009): 407-430; Gaqo

Maliq has a long history of human presence. The climatic transformations that occurred during the Mesolithic transformed it into an ideal place for the thriving of human life. Since the Early Neolithic, many communities settled around the swamp, which became the epicenter of their life. They practiced hunting, fishing, and agriculture. The lake did not only provide abundant sources of food but also building materials and protection. The prehistoric settlers used the mud and reeds to build large huts with two rooms and, by the Late Neolithic, many of them lived in stilt villages—the oldest in Europe.<sup>2</sup> In the historical times, the area has been under the control of many states: the Illyrian and the Macedonian kingdoms, the Roman, Byzantine, Bulgarian and Ottoman empires ruled for centuries. During these millennia, the old polytheistic religions faded away and the universalist monotheistic faiths took the stage. Pagan gods retreated under the expansion of Eastern rite of Christianity. With the arrival of Ottomans, it was the turn of Orthodoxy to go into defensive mode under the pressure of Islam's expansion. Mosques replaced many churches, and the muezzins' songs began to compete with the bells' sounds.

In the meantime, the lake was always there, indifferent to all the societal transformations. Many things changed in the lives of the people that lived by its shores, but many others remained the same. The peasants tilled the land with wooden plows and used the swamp to collect reeds for

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Opingari, "Aspekte të hidrografisë së rrethit të Korçës: Karakteristikat e përgjithshme të hidrografisë," in *Korça. Almanak – 2* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1977), 127-132; Ermira Jashiku, *Vlerësimi dhe menaxhimi i risqeve natyrore dhe antropogjene në rethin e Korçës dhe të Devollit*, dissertation for the defense of the title of Doctor of Sciences, Department of Geography, University of Tirana, 2016; Rezarta Hoxhallari, *Trashëgimia natyrore e qarkut të Korçës dhe menaxhimi turistik i saj*, dissertation for the defense of the title of Doctor of Sciences, Department of Geography, University of Tirana, 2016; Edlira Menkshi, *Trashëgimia kulturore në funksion të zhvillimit social-ekonomik të qarkut Korçë*, dissertation for the defense of the title of Doctor of Sciences, Department of Geography, University of Tirana, 2014; Arben Belba, *Gjeografia e sektorit terciar në rajonin e Korçës*, dissertation for the title of Doctor of Sciences defended in the Department of Geography, University of Tirana, 2013. On the Dessarete lacustrine system and lake Maliq as part of it see Christian Albert et. al., "Sediment core fossils in ancient Lake Ohrid: testing for faunal change since the Last Interglacial," *Biogeosciences*, 7 (2010): 3435-3443; Christian Albert & Thomas Wilke, "Ancient Lake Ohrid: biodiversity and evolution," *Hydrobiologia*, 615 (2008): 103-140.

<sup>2</sup> On Maliq's prehistory, Frano Prendi, "La civilization prehistorique de Maliq," *Studia Albanica*, 1 (1966): 255-280; Frano Prendi, "The Prehistory of Albania," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 3, Part I, ed. by John Boardman et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 187-237; Muzafer Korkuti, *Parailirët, ilirët, arbërit* (Tirana: Toena, 2003), 12-25; Neritan Ceka, *Ilirët* (Tirana: Ilar, 2001), 27-38; Neritan Ceka & Muzafer Korkuti, *Arkeologjia: Greqia – Roma – Iliria* (Tirana: ShBLU, 1998), 32-83; Zhaneta Andrea, *Kultura ilire a tumave në pellgun e Korçës* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RPSH, 1985); Zhaneta Andrea, "Kultura e tumave të pellgut të Korçës dhe vendi i saj në Ballkanin juglindor," in *Kuvendi I i Studimeve Ilire*, vol. I (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RPSSH, 1974), 163-174; Gjerak Karaiskaj & Petrika Lera, "Fortifikimet e periudhës së pare të hekurit në pellgun e Korçës," *Ibid*, 263-273; Petrika Lera, "Vendbanimi Prehistorik i Podgories," *Korça. Almanak – 2*, 143-153.

building houses and producing mats—as an archeologist observed in the 1960s, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century dwellings built with reeds and straw were similar to those of the Eneolithic era.<sup>3</sup> Until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, the marsh, with its murky mantel of canebrakes and islands of thick groves of alders, beeches, and poplars that coated three-quarters of its area were still critical to the sixteen villages that lived around it. Besides the very rich fauna of fishes, eels, ducks, geese, and many other birds, across the swamp roamed herds of wild horses. The peasants caught these powerful sprinters in late Spring, used the sheer force of their muscles for threshing in summer, and let them free into the wild in Autumn. Parts of the picture were also the huge water buffalos that rested in swamp's mud and the flocks of cattle that pastured peacefully by the edge of its waters. A full portrait of Maliq, could not miss the shallow boats with fishermen making their way through the dense curtain of reeds, or the hunters looking for wild hogs, woodcocks, and wildfowls. To the rich and colorful tableau of everyday life, one should add the ox carts, moving slowly on the dusty roads along the shores of the swamp, as they were carrying, like Atlas, the burden of eternity.

Inseparable components of the panorama were the peasants' plots that surrounded the swamp with a mosaic of irregular shapes. In the spring, the oxen dragged plows guided by men dressed in large dark pants, woolen jerkins, and the white Albanian hats—*qeleshe*. In the majority of the cases, these peasants owned their land and did not pay rents to any lord, although sharecroppers were not uncommon. Behind these men with strong hands, walked the women: when young they wore clothes with vivid colors and when old garbed in black. They sowed the seeds of grain and corn in the deep and long wounds that the plows opened in the dark sandy-clay soil of Maliq. Landlords, rich peasants, state bureaucrats, and urbanites in European attires appeared regularly in the plain and added new elements to the cultural layers deposited across centuries in this locality of southeastern Albania. The mountaineers of Gora and Mokra further enriched the human landscape. On Saturdays, they descended from their hamlets to exchange in the market of Korça those few things they produced. Their long mustache, white skirts, called fustanella, black waistcoats, white shirts with wide sleeves, and grey or black heavy cloaks hanging on their shoulders showed the face of Albania's highlands.

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<sup>3</sup> Frano Prendi, "Përfundoi punimet ekspedita arkeologjike e Maliqit," *Zëri i Rinisë*, October 6, 1962, 4.

The bucolic blend of nature, animals, and humans were neither idyllic nor heroic. The daily existence was filled with hardships and scarcity, burdened with obligations, and lived with blood and sweat. With few exceptions, the peasants in the villages of the plain used as construction material mud and reeds and their houses had no pavements. Here and there popped up tall buildings with thick walls of stones: They were the landlords' houses, who marked their power with size and strength. The inventory of the peasants' houses consisted of a few wares and stools, no beds, a table only on rare occasions, small windows, and a hearth. Beginning from late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the massive emigration to the United States marginally improved the economic situation of the peasants and intensified their connections with the cash economy. However, their economic condition hung on a fine thread and responsible for that was the swamp, which while being a source of livelihood, it also tormented the rural communities around it. Quite often, a mist of gases emitted from its decomposed vegetation causing serious damages to agriculture. Moreover, the floods during the rainy seasons caused immense suffering to the local population. They destroyed crops, drowned animals, and inundated houses. The armies of Anopheles mosquitos that dominated Maliq were the cherry on the cake.<sup>4</sup> By the 1940s, Maliq had become in the eyes of many Albanian young modernizers synonymous with fever and malaria. Among them, the most committed were the communists.

Everything changed after WWII when the Albanian Communist Party came to power. Like all the revolutionary and authoritarian modernizers, the Albanian communist leadership had a Manichean conceptualization of time, opposing past and future. Considering the past as dark, they were committed to wipe it away and transform the country into a tabula rasa, where they could inscribe the script of a bright future. The vision of modernization and its concomitant temporal

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<sup>4</sup> I depicted this portrait based on, Andromaqi Gjergji, *Mënyra e jetesës në shekujt XIII-XX* (Self-published, Tirana, 2002), 70-89, 129-155, 184-196, 197-240; Ligor Mile, *Zejtaria fshatare shqiptare gjaë Rilindjes Kombëtare* (Tirana: Marin Barleti, 2001), 9-29 & 64-99; Ligor Mile, *Çështje të historië agrare shqiptare: fundi i shek. XVIII – vitet 70 të shek. XIX* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH, 1984), 319-407; Nathalie Clayer, *Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar: Lindja e një kombi me shumicë myslimane në Europë*, translated from French to Albanian, Artan Puto (Tirana: Përpjekja, 2012), 106-116; Fatmira Musaj, *Gruaja në Shqipëri (1912-1939)* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RSh, 2002); Gazmend Shpuza, *Kryengritja Fshatare e Shqipërisë së Mesme, 1914-1915* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të RPS të Shqipërisë, 1986), 46-76; Spiro Shkurti, "Sprovë për klasifikimin e parmendave shqiptare," *Etnografia Shqiptare*, 13 (1983): 101-139; Thimi Mitko, "Topografi e Korçës," in Thimi Mitko, *Vepra* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH, 1981), 569-572; Anton Ashta, *Malarja në Shqipëri* (Tirana: Mihal Duri, 1961), 8-9; Melville Charter, "Albania, Europe's Newest Kingdom," *The National Geographic* 59, 2 (1931): 131-182.

dichotomies defined the horizon of the Albanian communists' political goals and informed the way they understood the Soviet model and their embrace of it. Indeed, for the ACP's elite, socialism meant among other things, modernizing the country and overcoming what it perceived as the trap of backwardness Albania inherited from the past. The communists considered their takeover as the beginning of a new chapter in history and a rupture with the past.

What would have better represented this historical cesura than the swamp's reclamation? According to the Albanian communists' modernist worldview, the swamp represented the most prominent symptom of bad government, of social, economic, and cultural backwardness, stagnation, and of the lack of a positive transformation. The swamp of Maliq, with its malaria and continuous floods was one of the most emblematic quagmires that symbolized the legacy of the past, which the ACP wanted to change and erase. For the communists, Maliq stood for the country's misery and lag and materialized what history stood for. Was there any better way to inaugurate the program of the wholesale transformation of the country and give substance to the claim of the new than the draining of Maliq's swamp? At least, the communists believed so. Only a year and a half after taking over the reins of power, they started the reclamation of the bog. It was the first large-scale infrastructural project of the communist era.

Maliq's project was in its essence an enterprise of internal colonization. The communist power apparatus considered the plain of Maliq as empty and unutilized space. They did not recognize the use that the peasants of the area had made of the swamp; they saw no rational and productive exploitation. The ACP's structure had its own concepts about what use of land meant and for it, reclamation did not mean only the expansion of the arable land but also the beginning of the implementation of the modernization program. Besides a space for economic use, it also became a site for the transformation of the people of the area, who the communists equated with the metaphor of the swamp: they were backward and lived in darkness. The fertile clay-sandy soil and sub-continental climate of the plain were ideal for the cultivation of sugar beet. Soon after completing the reclamation of the swamp, the communist authorities, with the financial and technological support of the Soviet Union, transformed the plain into the center of sugar production of Albania. Close to the gorge of Maliq, the regime built a sugar refinery, which gradually expanded into an integrated industrial complex that, besides refining sugar, specialized in the production of alcohol, molasses, starch, refreshing beverages, etc. Next to the refinery, the regime built a small town for its workers and specialists, while in the plain it built a series of villages

inhabited by people coming from the uplands. They supplied the necessary workforce for the cultivation of the labor-intensive sugar beet.

From a swampland, Maliq became Albania's land of sugar. Such a transition implied a total metamorphosis of the landscape and people's everyday lives, which reflected the new forms of economic organization and the specialization of the plain in the sugar production. The state's continuous investments for the building of irrigation and drainage systems drastically transformed the outlook of the plain. Gradually, tractors and combines replaced the oxen, although the latter were still used well into the 1970s. New types of houses, built in bricks and richly furnished, supplanted those with adobe. In addition, primary care, and especially houses of culture and centers of communist committees appeared in almost all the villages of the plain, while the churches and mosques disappeared under the relentless atheist policies of the regime. The attire changed, too. Now both men and women dressed in modern garbs. The peasants of the plain continued to work in agriculture, which was organized in kolkhozes. Many of them worked in the sugar refinery as well. Soon, Maliq became a coveted destination for all the rural population of the district of Korça and a demonstration of the communists' modernizing project. However, in the 1990s, soon after the collapse of communism, the sugar industry closed down. It did not survive the global competition. And while the temple of socialist modernity, the factory, has been reduced to a heap of ruins, thanks to globalization, Christian and Muslim shrines have reemerged again in the villages of the plain.

Since the late 1940s, the plain of Maliq has been undergoing immense transformations, always called transitions, consistently heading toward different destinations, and still failing to reach any of them. What exactly did these broad visions of transformation consist of? How have these visions shaped Maliq? How have Maliq and its people shaped these visions? Generally speaking, historians still think of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a period where Europe was divided into fundamentally opposing systems. In addition, the academic literature tends to reproduce the narrative constructed by the Soviet-type regimes, which still treats the communist period as an abrupt historical rupture. Is it possible to trace in Maliq larger European or global historical processes? Can we unearth from Maliq's history shared historical processes and patterns of transformation common to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Are the visions and horizons of expectations that informed the transformation of Maliq local expressions of a broader discourses that go beyond any real or imagined East-West and past-present divide? Can we learn anything

important from the experiences and lives of those that in places like Maliq dedicated their energies to the pursuing of the dream of development and modernization? Do their stories allow us to understand communism, but also to assess and grasp the historical processes that followed its demise? That September morning of 2017, I was traveling to Korça to answer these questions. My goal was to situate Maliq's story within a global context and see in a specific site how broad historical processes, which otherwise remain abstract concepts, play out on the ground. By zooming in a single place, we can better understand large patterns of transformations by analyzing how they impact and are impacted by local circumstances.

This work is the result of a full year of fieldwork and archival research. I have collected reports, correspondences, speeches, minutes of meetings, projects, studies produced by the local and central state apparatus, maps, photos, including aerial and satellite images, and the geological activity. I have also used statistics on the use of TVs and radios, marriage patterns and migration, data on education, consumption, and incomes. My fieldwork also included wanderings in Korça and its surroundings, many visits to Maliq and its villages, and countless discussions with locals, always accompanied with coffees and cigarettes. The long conversation with peasants, agricultural specialists, engineers, tractor and bulldozer drivers, actors, doctors, and people of all types of professions combined with my explorations, allowed me to establish an intimate relationship with Maliq and its history – a region I did not know before. In this informal ethnography, I did hear how the people that had lived and worked in Maliq made sense of the communist period and what followed it, and how they situated their lives within broader national and global narratives. My goal was to go beneath the surface of the documents' written words and contextualize them within Maliq's world. It was a priceless experience and their opinions have shaped much of this work. To me, this locality, became an access point and a litmus to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century history, especially of the communist period.

Rather than pursuing the path of multi-sited research as a form of making connections across space and explore global trends, I preferred zooming in on a locality and subsequently understand the wider world from there. Focusing on one single place allowed me to gain an intimate connection to Maliq's microworld and history, to access its horizon, that only context-based research can give to a scholar. The historical layers of one place record over their skin transformations that are simultaneously local and global. By peeling them off, it is possible to both understand the specific and the general and how local circumstances have been participating in

translating to local contexts worldwide trends and processes. This study's goal is to understand how exactly these links and the exposure to worldwide processes affected Maliq's history and how the specific circumstances, human and ecological, changed, in their turn, large dynamics and patterns.

Placing my lens in this corner of the Balkans has permitted me to explore broad historical processes from the vantage point of a periphery. Studying the infrastructural, economic, social, and cultural transformations in Maliq created an opportunity to build up knowledge of the whole from the parts. This approach avoids hierarchical spatial dichotomies that juxtapose center to the periphery. Thinking in terms of wholeness and parts provides a flexible and dynamic conceptualization of interactions across space that avoids the creation of maps that divide the space between hubs, which create models, and marginal areas that import and consume them. Instead of the spatial hierarchies, the analysis of the relations between the global, or the whole, and the parts, i.e. the local, avoids the binaries and highlights the interdependence of the mosaic's pieces.

Studying circumscribed localities provides a strategy permitting a closer examination of the dynamics of transformations in a specific place and how they are connected to broader historical patterns. I use Maliq's transformation during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a magnifying glass for exploring broad historical processes. Pursuing this methodological approach does not mean that the locality under study is a replica of some broader abstract model. Nor does this project seek, as some microhistorians do, exclusively to highlight the particular and different, what is exceptional from the norm, so to unravel the grand narratives that prioritize generalization.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the local and the global are interdependent. As the British geographer, Doreen Massey has stated, the uniqueness of a place is relational. It is constructed and by the links with the broader world, by the relations of its history to that of other places.<sup>6</sup> Focusing the lens of analysis on a single place, it is possible to trace both the interconnections with the wider world and how broad

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<sup>5</sup> On the use of microhistory either to seek the monad of the world or as an instrument to question the macro-histories' generalization, see John-Paul A. Ghobrial, "Introduction: Seeing the World Like a Microhistorian," *Past and Present* 242, Supplement 14 (2019): 13-14; Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on History Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 94-95; Carlo Ginzburg & Carlo Poni, "The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace," in *Microhistory and the Lost People of Europe*, ed. by Edward Muir & Guido Ruggiero (Translated from Italian, Eren Branch) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 1-10.

<sup>6</sup> Doreen Massey, "Questions of Locality," *Geography* 78, 2 (1993): 145 & 148.

historical processes have been adopted and adapted to specific non-replicable local circumstances. The close examination of the intersection between local conditions and worldwide trends, of the connections and what is connected, may raise new questions, pose new problems, and propose a rereading of the generalizations that take place among historians.<sup>7</sup>

To explore how Maliq was connected to the world and look beyond the East-West divide, which dates back to the Cold War era, I use the concept of entangled history that explores the networks and border crossings. As a *modus operandi*, it identifies the threads weaved in the tapestry of an interconnected world.<sup>8</sup> Entangled history serves as a polyvalent lens, able to grasp the larger picture without losing the attention to details. Under its zooming, Maliq does not come out as a project shaped by forces that originated somewhere else, as a mimicking. Instead, it is produced and reproduced from the interplay of local factors, contemporary patterns of thinking and understanding, and political goals of the communist top-elite. Rather than repositories, passive receivers, or the ending point of a continuum, Maliq and Albania emerge as part of global circuits of knowledge, ideas, and technologies that were in perpetual movement and adaptation. To use Charles Tilly's view of the world as a composition of not well-bounded vast and small networks, Maliq was a crossroad of different, nested networks, enmeshed at different levels at the local, national, and global level.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, investigating the dynamics of Maliq's infrastructural, economic, social, and cultural transformations provides a series of important clues. First, this work questions the assertion of an

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<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Levi, "Frail Frontiers?" *Past and Present* 242, Supplement 14 (2019): 45.

<sup>8</sup> Michael David-Fox, "Introduction: Entangled Histories in the Age of Extremes," in *Fascination and Enmity: Russia and Germany as Entangled Histories, 1914-1945*, ed. by Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, & Alexander M. Martin (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 1-12; Hartmut Kaelble, "Between Comparison and Transfers – and What Now? A French-German Debate," in *Comparative and Transnational History*, 33-38; Philipp Ther, "Comparison, Cultural Transfers, and the Study of Networks: Toward a Transnational History of Europe," *Ibid*, 204-225; Michael Werner & Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45, 1 (2006): 30-50; Liliane Hilaire-Pérez & Catherine Verna, "Dissemination of Technical Knowledge in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era: New Approaches and Methodological Issues," *Technology and Culture* 47, 3 (2006): 536-540; Constantin Iordachi, "'Entangled Histories:' Re-thinking the History of Central and Southeastern Europe from a Relational Perspective," *Regio – Minorities, Politics, Society*, English edition, 1 (2004): 113-147; Deborah Cohen & Maura O'Connor, "Introduction: Comparative History, Cross-National History, Transnational History—Definitions," in *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective*, ed. by Deborah Cohen & Maura O'Connor (New York-London: Routledge, 2004), ix-xxiv.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), 147.

alleged passive periphery to models generated in the center. It rather opts for a model that looks at Maliq as part of a larger conjuncture that is not centered in any specific geographical location but is disseminated and produced simultaneously in many different locations, regardless of their socio-economic systems. Approaching the whole from the parts helps us avoid the trap of ethnocentrism and spatial hierarchies. Besides, such take identifies similarities and points of contact between Maliq and many other places across Europe, which raises serious question marks over the alleged irreconcilability of the models implemented on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In this way, this study destabilizes longstanding and taken-for-granted paradigms that consider the socialist and capitalist blocs as essentially and diametrically different from each other.

This work, which builds its argument based on economic, social, environmental, demographic, transnational technology transfer, and cultural analyses, approaches Albanian history from a new perspective. Generally speaking, Albania has attracted the attention of scholars as an idiosyncratic case that stands out of the norm, especially when it comes to the communist regime and Enver Hoxha's leadership. The harshness, the professed loyalty to Stalin, and the relative isolation of the country from Europe, after the break with the Soviet Union, in 1960, have puzzled many observers. A good illustration of what many Cold War-era specialists thought of communist Albania is an article published in May of 1975, in *The New York Times*. It compared it to Cambodia, a communist country isolated even from the communist world, which was depicted as a closed safe deposit.<sup>10</sup> The image of the strongbox represents better than anything else the collective imagining of Albanian history during communism. Different scholars have considered the country during the Hoxha's years as the epitome of isolationism, xenophobia, mysterious self-seclusion, and ruthless authoritarianism, all these symptoms of psychological aberration or tribal xenophobia.<sup>11</sup> The country's post-socialist rocky road to liberal democracy has reinforced these

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Steele, "Xenophobic Albania is Not Likely to Change," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1975, E3.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Shqiptarët: Një histori midis Lindjes dhe Perëndimit*, translated from German to Albanian Ardian Klosi (Tiranë: T & K, 2012), 182-197; Paolo Rago, *Tradizione, nazionalismo e comunismo nell'Albania contemporanea* (Rome: Nuova Cultura, 2011); James O'Donnell, *A Coming of Age: Albania Under Enver Hoxha* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1999); Jon Halliday, *The Artful Albanian: the Memoirs of Enver Hoxha* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986). Bernd J. Fischer, who has studied the history of interwar Albania looks at Zog's authoritarianism as an outcome of the alleged tribal structure of the Albanian society. In reality, to repeat the historians' emblematic answer, the situation in Albania was more complex than this explanation. For more, Bernd J. Fischer, *King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

stereotypes, which are, many times, brushed over with Orientalist colors. Of course, such conclusions stem from simplistic historical analyses that seek the roots of historical phenomena and reduce their subject, in this case, the communist era, to a mere reflection of a deeper collective and cultural essence.

Such essentialization regarding authoritarianism, indeed, has been widely used for all the countries of southeastern Europe. Maria Todorova has already argued that over the last three centuries, travelers, diplomats, and scholars from western Europe constructed the image of the Balkans as the alter ego of an imagined civilized Europe. While part of Europe, the Balkans have represented a space that stood also outside of the old continent, exposed to Asian influences and hence polluted: a hybrid, not fully European.<sup>12</sup> The region was considered for the entire 20<sup>th</sup>-century as the powder keg of Europe, and historians' attention has been mainly focused on finding the root of the region's virulent nationalism and accompanying wars and ethnic cleansings. The works that have emphasized authoritarianism and violence as the essential denominators of the Balkans' history consider them as part of the region's traditions—proof of the shallowness of its Europeanness.<sup>13</sup>

The dominant paradigm in the western European and North American scholarship has explained southeastern Europe's 20<sup>th</sup>-century history as an outcome of the interaction of modernity and local traditions. While the ideas and institutions imported from western Europe were positive, this paradigm holds, the indigenous cultures stood in opposition to them, which meant they were negative. The seeds of modernity were planted in unsuitable soil and the fruits that came from differed substantially from those that bloomed in their place of origins. The region's tradition and history shaped the new imports and the result has been a century filled with wars, bloodshed, mass violence, ruthless dictators, weak civil society, and corrupted institutions. It is important to note

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<sup>12</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Among the most representative works of this group are: *Balkan Strongmen: Dictators and Authoritarian Rulers of South Eastern Europe*, ed. Bernd J. Fischer (West Lafayette, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007); Joseph S. Roucek, *Balkan Politics: International Relations in No Man's Land* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1948); *The Balkans in Transition: Essays on the Development of the Balkan Life and Politics Since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963). In the latter work, there is a more nuanced approach to the problem. However, the paradigm has remained untouched. See also *Ottomans into Europeans: State and Institution Building in South-East Europe*, ed. by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi & Wim Van Meurs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

here that similar arguments, rearticulated within the explanatory framework of multiple modernities, have also been made for the history of the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> In both cases, the Balkans and Russia are imagined as transition spaces between Europe and Asia, and as a result, spaces of liminality that distort the western European imports. Needless to say, these narratives have done nothing but reinforced the exceptionality of the western Europe, vis-à-vis the rest of the world, including vis-à-vis regions that are geographically part of Europe.

Much of the scholarship on the modern history of the Balkans has critically engaged with these claims. Already in the 1980s, the Greek sociologist Nicos Mouzelis argued that authoritarianism and violent politics in the Balkans were not related merely to indigenous factors but also to global economic structures. By using the world-system analysis and comparing the Balkans to the southern cone of South America, Mouzelis concluded that economic dependence and the legacy of imperial domination created a fertile soil for anti-democratic regimes in these two regions.<sup>15</sup> However, his work fell soon into oblivion. The wars in ex-Yugoslavia demonstrated the importance of culture and nationalism and showed the limits of Mouzelis' analysis. By the late 1990s, historians Mark Mazower and John R. Lampe pursued another path to integrate the modern history of the Balkans into the wider European context. Rather than identifying the root of the region's troubled history in any alleged tradition of the Balkan societies, these authors find it in the very nature of modernity. They point the finger, especially, at nationalist programs and their monolithic conceptualization of nation. According to these historians, nation-states' efforts to impose cultural, linguistic, and religious homogenization disrupted the century-old fabric of the Ottoman diversity with catastrophic consequences. It was becoming more European, they claim, that made the history of the Balkans' countries more violent.<sup>16</sup> While avoiding the traps of Orientalism and of essentializing of the region, both these authors risk reducing modernity and nationalism into an assemblage of ideologies, institutions, and practices that generate only

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<sup>14</sup> Michael David-Fox, "Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, Bd. 54, H. 4 (2006): 535-555; Terry Martin, "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism," in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. by Sheila Fitzpatrick (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 348-367.

<sup>15</sup> Nicos P. Mouzelis, *Politics in Semi-periphery: Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialization in the Balkans and Latin America* (London: Macmillan, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe, 1914-2014: A Century of Transitions* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002).

violence. The bulk of academic works on the region explores the building of the national identities and the institutional framework and the myths that have fed, sustained, and reproduced nationalism. This has been the case with the history of Albania, too.<sup>17</sup> As far as the latter is concerned, the only exception is the recent study of the American-based historian Elidor Mëhilli, who avoids the trap of nationalism and narrates the history of communist Albania as part of a larger communist ideological oikumene.<sup>18</sup>

By investigating the transformation of the Albanian countryside during the communist era and contextualizing it into a broader European and global historical landscape, my work departs from existing scholarship on the Balkans. While my study analyzes the issue of authoritarian modernization, it does not focus on the debates on state and ethnic violence, as well as those that explore the construction of national identity. The violence tied to nation-building and the engineering of homogenous societies has been present in the bulk of world during the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. Not accidentally, Eric Hobsbawm called the period between 1914 and 1991 as the age of extremes.<sup>19</sup> Rather than an exception, the Balkans are part of the rule. Regardless of the prominence of large-scale and organized violence, we cannot reduce this century only to one identifier. As a consequence, this study will not seek to identify the root of what has generally been characterized as negative aspects of the history of the countries of the Balkan peninsula. Finding the first cause is counterproductive because it pushes scholars into presentism or teleology. According to both sides involved in this debate, the implementation of the western European model

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<sup>17</sup> The list is too long, but I will limit to cite here some of the most important works on national identity in the Balkans. For more see, Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands: Nationality and Emigration Among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900-1949* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011); *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*, ed. by Maria Todorova (New York: New York University Press, 2004); John R. Lampe & Mark Mazower, *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 2004); Mary Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Vejkoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery, *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale Center for International Area Studies, 1995); Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991). On Albania see, *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, ed. by Stephanie Schwander-Sievers & Bernd J. Fischer (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002); Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, *Nazione e religione in Albania* (Lecce: Besa, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Elidor Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao: Albania and the Socialist World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

in the Balkans either destroyed the alleged Ottoman harmony, or its merging with local traditions created explosive cocktails. The competing narratives that attempt to define who is the victim and who is the perpetrator have placed the Balkans' societies at the end of the trail. Either active or passive, the latter are always receivers. Historians of the Balkans Maria Todorova and Theodora Dragostinova have already criticized this approach that denies the synchronicity of historical processes in the societies of southeastern Europe.<sup>20</sup> In this study, I will demonstrate how the projects of the local and central elites, either in Korça or Tirana, belonged to broader European and global visions and programs. Investigating the circulation of ideas, technologies, people, goods in a small locality like Maliq, we discover a complex historical landscape that defies the simplified models of the narratives focused on authoritarianism and extreme nationalism.

Mary Neuburger already started to walk in this path. In her latest book, she used Bulgaria's tobacco industry as a lens to study the country's 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century history from a transnational and global perspective.<sup>21</sup> In her study, Neuburger demonstrates not only the role of tobacco in the Bulgarian economy but also how the Bulgarians were important players in the powerful global networks of this industry, including the Cold War era. I found her book useful because my study uses sugar industry as a point of connection between Albania and the world. In contrast to Neuburger, though, my work focuses in a single place and investigates not only the global connections woven around a single industry, but also how its development transformed the locality, its social fabric, and its landscape. In this respect, I have found especially useful Kate Brown's work which moves from Chernobyl in Ukraine and Karaganda in Kazakhstan to Braddock in Pennsylvania, Eglin in Illinois, and Seattle. By zooming in and out the lens of her research in different places in the ex-USSR and the USA, she continuously transgresses the ideological borders between the Cold War-era rivals and points out the similarities between them.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism," *Slavic Review* 64, 1 (2005): 140-164; Theodora Dragostinova, "Studying Balkan State Building: From the "Advantages of Backwardness" to the European Framework," *European History Quarterly* 48, 4 (2018): 708-713.

<sup>21</sup> Mary C. Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA-London: Harvard University Press, 2004); Kate Brown, *Dispatches from Dystopia: Histories of Places Not Yet Forgotten* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2015).

However, Brown's analysis constantly oscillates between different sites located in the two superpowers during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. The question is how to study a single place and use it as a litmus of the broader trends of the age. In his now well-known book on Salonica, Mark Mazower gives an example of how to trace in one single site broad historical processes. By investigating how the city became an extremely diverse hub under the Ottomans and then ethnically homogenous after its inclusion within Greece, he traces the transition from an imperial context to a national setting. Mazower uses Salonica as a lens for exploring the making of a multiethnic and multireligious society and how modernity, under the guise of nation-state, established cultural uniformity. From a micro-scale expression of the Ottoman empire, Thessaloniki became a local projection of Greece.<sup>23</sup> Mazower's book on Salonica prompted me to think about potential parallels with Maliq, especially with regard to the efforts of the new national states to erase the imperial past. Was the draining of Maliq's swamp and the making of Salonica into a Greek city part of the same efforts that tried to undo the past? Can we consider Maliq's and Salonica's transformation expression of the same efforts to discipline what to state authorities seemed to be diverse, chaotic, and uncontrollable? Are these stories different nuances of the same processes that sought the revamping of both landscape, society, and economy? Were the Albanian communists following policies that were not merely Marxist-Leninist but part of a larger story of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

To answer the above questions and grasp the dramatic changes in post-WWII Europe, I headed to Poland. Gregor Thum's book on the metamorphosis of the German city of Breslau into the Polish Wrocław offers a great example of how the interaction between global trends and local factors configured the physical and social landscape of a specific place. Centering his attention in one place, Thum writes simultaneously the history of the city, of central Europe, and of the mass displacement in one of the most violent moments of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century history.<sup>24</sup> His multilevel analysis and dexterous movement across different geographic and temporal scales provide a very good example of how I could use Maliq's transformation as a litmus test to trace broad historical

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<sup>23</sup> Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław During the Century of Expulsion*, translated from German Tom Lampert and Allison Brown (Wrocław: Via Nova, 2011).

processes. More importantly, hiding below the blanket of disparateness, there are important common elements that undergird the stories of postwar story of Wrocław and Maliq.

The Polish and Albanian authorities, respectively, approached Wrocław and Maliq from the same perspective: the Soviet-type regimes of Warsaw and Tirana considered both of these sites as battlefields where they could wage war against history, erase the past, and materialize their visions of the future by building the latter from scratch. Whether reclaiming the alleged Polishness of Wrocław or reclaiming Maliq from the swamp, both projects sought to break cleanly with the past. In essence, the metamorphosis of Wrocław and of the plain of Maliq belonged to the post-WWII endeavors to build new societies. The driving vision that informed the communist projects of social engineering in both Poland and Albania constructed a sharp temporal opposition between the past and the present. Building socialism meant breaking every link with the immediate past by obliterating any marker of historical continuity. As I will explain later, although to an incomparably smaller degree than in Wrocław, in Maliq the erasure of the past and the building of the future were pregnant with violence. However, the making of the land of sugar and the broad historical processes it was part of should not be reduced to violence. Maliq's story stores for us many other valuable gems, which rather than reinforcing existing stereotypes, explain better the past and present of Albania and the Balkans.

Part of the large transformative enterprises that sought to revamp society were also the developmental projects of the years that followed the end of Second World War, when the entire eastern Europe became a construction site of socialism-building and modernization. While Moscow was seriously engaged in the Sovietization of its European allies it also continued the efforts to radically transform its Asian peripheries and make them showcases of development. In a recent book, Artemy Kalinovksy has explored the scheme of the dam of Nurek on the Vhaksh river in Tajikistan and the city of Nurek next to it. Kalinovsky argues that the project was inspired by the goal of using it as an instrument of civilizing mission. The hydro power plant was not merely an economic asset that would generate Tajikistan's economic take-off, but symbolically it would also enlighten the Soviet republic.<sup>25</sup> Maliq's scheme was not different.

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<sup>25</sup> Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2018).

The Albanian communist authorities did not conceive the establishment of the sugar industry only from a utilitarian perspective, although its building was not devoid of economic calculations. However, it also was an instrument for transforming the periphery, engineering the society, modernizing it: creating a conveyor belt for transmitting the center's power to the plain of Maliq and the district of Korça. Stephen Kotkin's book on the steel town of Magnitogorsk built from scratch during the first stage of Stalin's reign, suggests that this model had already taken shape in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. More importantly, he argues that Stalin's efforts to modernize the economy and remake the social fabric were part of a much broader phenomenon that transgressed ideological boundaries. While Kotkin considers Magnitogorsk as an expression of Stalinism's distinct cultural, economic, social organization, he also locates it squarely within the global conjuncture of the interwar era. During these years, the production of scale and mass consumption, known as Americanism, set the tone of the era.<sup>26</sup> The transformation of Maliq, too, is not merely an enterprise tied to the Albanian communist regime but part of a larger global history that transcends the rigid ontology of regional, ideological, and periodization boundaries. Its history belongs to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century's modernizing programs that sought to build utopias, forge new societies, usher in nation-building, reshape landscapes and imbue them with new meanings—just as was the case with Magnitogorsk, Salonica and Wrocław as well.

Another important study that has informed my work with precious insights is that of Sándor Horváth on the Hungarian steel city of Sztalinvaros. Horváth explores the delineation of the spatial inequalities within the new city. Instead of showcasing a socialist town, a reflection of the egalitarian working community, Sztalinvaros became a city of stark inequalities based on profession, class, and ethnicity.<sup>27</sup> Horváth's study made me more attentive to the spatial disparities that the sugar industry generated in Maliq. The inequalities were not limited only to the urban centers and did not follow the city/countryside divide: spatial hierarchies also existed within rural areas. The Soviet-type regimes did not eliminate the social and geographic disparities of capitalism

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995). See also, Stephen Kotkin, "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Era Conjuncture," *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, 1 (2001): 111-164.

<sup>27</sup> Sándor Horváth, *Stalinism Reloaded: Everyday Life in Stalin-City, Hungary*, translated from Hungarian, Thomas Cooper (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017).

or of the socio-economic systems they replaced in the countries of eastern Europe. On the contrary, the communist regimes reinforced and exacerbated them.

As the above bibliographical discussion clearly shows, all the important works that inspired my study belong to the genre of urban history. The bulk of the works that explore new communist industrial cities focus on steel towns and heavy industry, the epitome of Soviet power and social engineering.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, my dissertation contributes to the field of communist and eastern European studies by exploring the development of light industry and its impact in a predominantly rural locality. For their part, the bulk of the historical works that study the countryside during the communist era concentrate on collectivization. These studies explore the ideological and power rationales that drove the communist elites' program to collectivize agriculture and the strategies and stages they pursued to attain this goal. The latter is widely considered a disciplining instrument and a political tool to extend the reach of the state. The communist authorities used collectivization to fundamentally alter the property relationship in the countryside and, through it, to increase their ability to control the rural population. By expropriating the peasants, communist regimes consolidated their ability to extract all the surplus they wanted from the agriculture and transformed the rural population into a rustic proletariat that depended on the state's distribution of resources.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Other works on communist steel towns are those of, Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-1956* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2013); Katherine Lebow, "Revising the Political Landscape: Nowa Huta, 1949-1957," *City and Society* 11, 1-2 (1999): 165-184; Mark Pittaway, "Creating and Domesticating Hungary's Socialist Landscape: From Dunapentele to Sztálinváros, 1950-1958," *Historical Archeology* 39, 3 (2005): 75-93; Ulf Brunnbauer, "'The Town of the Youth': Dimitrovgrad and Bulgarian Socialism," *Ethnologica Balcanica*, 9 (2005): 91-114; Mark Laszlo-Herbert, "The Construction and Transformation of Socialist Space in the Planned Cities of Stalinstadt and Sztálinváros," Dissertation defended at the University of Toronto, 2016; Timothy C. Dowling, "Stalinstadt/Eisenhüttenstadt: A Model for (Socialist) Life in the German Democratic Republic, 1950-1968," Dissertation defended at Tulane University, 1999. On cities during communism, including steel towns, see the essays in *Mastery and Lost Illusions: Space and Time in the Modernization of Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. by Włodzimierz Borodziej, Stanislav Holubec, & Joachim von Puttkamer (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 51-180.

<sup>29</sup> *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe: Comparison and Entanglements*, ed. by Constantin Iordachi & Arnd Bauerkämper (Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 2014); Gail Kligman & Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011); *Transforming Peasants, Propriety and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949-1962*, ed. by Constantin Iordachi & Dorin Dobrinu (Budapest & New York: CEU Press, 2009); Gregory R. Witowski, "On the Campaign Trail: State Planning and Eigen-Sinn in a Communist Campaign to Transform the East German Countryside," *Central European History* 37, 3 (2004): 400-422; Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University

Collectivization has sparked the interest of scholars of eastern Europe mainly for two reasons. First, it has been an important device for the Sovietization of the socialist bloc. Exploring the whole process of decision-making provided a window for understanding the relationship between Moscow and the eastern European communist elites and how the latter conceived the socialist transformation of their respective countries. And second, collectivization provides historians with a lens for investigating the operation of communist power in the countryside. This is especially true for eastern Europe, where the communist regimes were less harsh than the Soviet authorities, and besides the stick, they widely used the carrot as well. Although there is no study yet to investigate thoroughly collectivization in Albania, the process followed patterns similar to those of the other countries of the Balkans and the communist state negotiated its power rather than merely imposed it.<sup>30</sup> Collectivization, though, was not the only instrument that the Soviet-type regimes used to include the countryside within the socialist system.

My study traces how the infrastructural investments and the industrialization of the countryside included the rural population within the national economy, thus extending the state's ability to control it. The reclamation of the swamp, the building of the refinery in Maliq, and the specialization of the plain's agriculture in the cultivation of sugar beet linked the communities of the locality to the other regions of Albania. In other words, the creation of the land of sugar played a powerful role in the process of nation-building. As explained above, studies of the Balkans' 20<sup>th</sup>-century history have primarily focused on the cultural policies and identity building that the national governments and intellectual elites pursued to forge homogenous societies. As is known, this process, which was based on the exclusion of the "Other" and the crushing of any form of regional particularism, has been quite often extremely violent. In contrast to previous scholarship, my study explores the use of the economy as a mechanism of nation-building and complicates the

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Press, 1996); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); David A. Kideckel, *The Solitude of Collectivism: Romanian Villagers to the Revolution and Beyond* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Collectivization* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>30</sup> Örjan Sjöberg, "'Any Other Road Leads Only to the Restoration of Capitalism in the Countryside: Land Collectivization in Albania,'" in *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe*, 369-397; Nigel Swain, "Eastern European Collectivization Campaigns Compared, 1945-1962," *Ibid.*, 497-534; Örjan Sjöberg, *Rural Change and Development in Albania* (Boulder-San Francisco-Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), 86-96.

whole dynamic of this process. I show how the Albanian governments, during both the interwar and communist eras, sought the establishment of a cohesive national unit by stimulating the regionalization of production. In the vision of the Albanian political elites, the regional specialization would undermine local self-sufficiency and increase the interdependencies between different districts. The cultural policies' effectiveness and the increase of the state's role and the success of its social engineering depended, among other things, on the economic integration of the new nation.

In addition, this work also departs from the Albanian historiography. My study diverges from the dichotomies, nationalist narrowness, focus on political events, and historical victimization of the unjust divorce from Europe that dominates the scholarly approach to the communist period in Albania. While both state and nation remain important variables of my study, I point at the synchronic and diachronic connections that reject the ontology of oppositions between an imagined East and West, their axiology, and respective temporal orders. In Albania, as in the other Balkan countries, the largest part of the historical literature spins around the idea of national history. Besides, the discipline of history is heavily influenced by the Soviet-type narrative of the communist-era binary that juxtaposes the dark pre-communist past and the bright communist future.

Albanian communist historians easily adopted the Soviet Manichean scheme, because the conceptualization of the past as dark, identified with the Ottoman era, had been used by the nationalist movement since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Like its Balkan siblings, Albanian nationalism considered the Ottoman Empire as its "Other" and the communist historiography continued in this path. It defined the Ottoman centuries as an age of feudal oppression and immense popular resistance, especially in the countryside.<sup>31</sup> The same emphasis on resistance against oppression continued even during the interwar era, when, in the formulation of the communist historiography, an alliance of the feudal elite and bourgeoisie clique replaced the Ottoman rule. The real liberation

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<sup>31</sup> *Historia e Shqipërisë, vëll. 3: Shqipëria nën sundimin feudalo ushtarak otoman (1506-1839)* (Tirana: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1961); Selami Pulaha, *Prona feudale në tokat shqiptare: shek. XV-XVI* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH, 1988); *Historia e Shqipërisë, vëll. 2: (vitet 30 të shek. XIX-1912)* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të RPS të Shqipërisë, 1984); Shpuza, *Kryengritja Fshatare e Shqipërisë së Mesme, 1914-1915*; Kristaq Prifti, *Lidhja shqiptare e Pejës: Lëvizja Kombëtare, 1896-1900* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të RPS të Shqipërisë, 1984).

of the Albanian people would take place with the end of WWII, which the communist regime considered as a war of liberation against the Fascist armies and a socio-political revolution led by the communists. As far as the scholarship that focused on the communist era is concerned, it merely glorified the achievement of the peoples' republic.<sup>32</sup>

After the collapse of communism, the communist historiographical model turned upside down. While the Albanian post-communist historians threw Marxism away, they preserved the temporal dichotomy of the communist historiography. Since the 1990s, the historical literature identifies darkness with the communist period and rehabilitates and even glorifies the interwar era years. At the center of attention has been especially the most important personalities of the Albanian political life and their either positive or negative role in the country's path toward Europe. Meanwhile, nationalism have remained a fixed axis and, as a consequence, the Ottoman centuries are still considered as a dark age, because they detached Albania from the European family where it belongs.<sup>33</sup> Many historians quite often use Orientalist and racist language and categories for defining the communist period. For them, communism represents a return to Ottoman times as they consider the Soviet system to have been an oppressive Slavic import, which linked Albania to Asia and separated the country from Europe. Being centered on the nation-state, the Albanian historiography both during and after communism has not produced transnational studies and the scholarship is limited only to the diplomatic history that explores the relationship between governments.

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<sup>32</sup> The narrative of the oppressive past and resistance has been articulated in the third volume of the *History of Albania* published by the Academy of Sciences of the communist Albania, *Historia e Shqipërisë. vëll. 3: (1912-1944)* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të RPS të Shqipërisë, 1984). The history of the communist era has been elaborated in the fourth volume of the *History of Albania* published by the Academy of Sciences and the *History of the Albanian Labor Party* published by the Institute of the Marxist-Leninist Studies, based in Tirana. For more, *Historia e Shqipërisë, vëll. 4: (1944-1975)* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të RPS të Shqipërisë, 1983); *Historia e Partisë së Punës të Shqipërisë* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1981).

<sup>33</sup> On the Orientalist discourse of Albanian nationalism and the designation of the Ottoman Empire as its "Other," see Dritan Egro, *Historia dhe ideologjia: një qasje kritike studimeve osmane në historiografinë modern shqiptare (nga gjysma e dytë e shekullit XIX deri sot)* (Tirana: Maluka, 2007); Enis Sulstarova, *Arratisje nga lindja: orientalizmi shqiptar nga Naimi te Kadareja* (Tirana: Dudaj, 2006). On the nationalist narrative of the Ottoman centuries, *Historia e popullit shqiptar, vëll. 1: ilirët, Mesjeta, Shqipëria nën Perandorinë Osmane* (Tirana: Toena, 2002); *Historia e popullit shqiptar, vëll. 2: Rilindja Kombëtare: vitet 30 te shek. XIX-1912* (Tirana: Toena, 2002); Petrika Thëngjilli, *Historia e popullit shqiptar, 395-1831* (Tirana: Toena, 2004).

Either before and after the fall of communism, the academic studies that have reduced the scale of analysis have mainly been local histories, reflecting the archival epistemology of the nation-state and the production of state knowledge. The studies have been mainly a form of descriptive empiricism that reproduces the national history and scale them down at the district level. As far as the plain of Maliq is concerned, the only work is that of the ethnographer Andromaqi Gjergji, who, during the 1960s and 1970s wrote a series of articles and a monograph on the transformation of the plain during the 20<sup>th</sup>-century.<sup>34</sup> Obviously, there was no way for her to challenge the blueprint and her work cloned the temporal binaries that displayed the achievements of the communist regime and the positive transformations that rural life had undergone after 1945. And yet, Gjergji's work is rich with useful information that has been very important to my work.

To conclude, my study gives a series of contributions to the historical debate on communist eastern Europe. First, my research questions the East-West divide of the Cold War era. Rather than separate and hermetic boxes, we see wide, cross-European interactions and circuits that make Europe seem to be less divided than we have been thinking up to now. Even Albania, the least "open" country of the socialist bloc, was connected in many invisible ways to broader trends that were taking place simultaneously on both sides of the ideological divide. Second, I argue against the idea of the historical break between the communist period and the interwar era. Despite the substantial transformations that did take place, there were also important continuities, especially the commitment to modernization. Indeed, as the case of Maliq shows, the communist authorities took over projects that had been conceived during the interwar era, and even in the late Ottoman period and implemented them. Third, my study highlights the spatial synchronicity and decentralization of the production of the models of modernization. Although a peripheral country, Albania was not a mere consumer of models produced in core areas. Instead, the country fully participated in fashioning templates of modernization. Fourth, up to this point, the bulk of scholars use cities as lenses for exploring physical, social, economic, and cultural transformations during the communist era. In contrast, my work investigates these historical dynamics in the countryside. Fifth, dissimilarly to the bulk of works on the history of the Balkans, which focus on extreme

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<sup>34</sup> Gjergji, *Mënyra e jetesës në shekujt XIII-XX*.

nationalism, ethnic and religious violence, and authoritarianism, this study focuses on global patterns of modernization of the countryside and the industrialization of agriculture. Thus, this study expands the horizon of the historical investigation of southeastern Europe. And lastly, I contribute to the historiography of Albania by providing a new model of historical writing, which overcomes the nation-centered approaches and the pervasive binaries that dominate it.

This work is organized in five chapters. In the first chapter I question the narrative of the establishment of the communist regimes as a historical break. Did the communists really totally break with the past, or did they just continue with other means projects conceived before their takeover? What can we learn from the Maliq scheme and what it shows about the processes of continuity and change? Should we think of the communist regimes in eastern Europe as faithful implementers of the Soviet blueprint, or as autonomous actors whose goals were informed by the very past they claimed to erase? This chapter aims at reconstructing the diachronic extension of the Maliq scheme and through it to gauge the influence that modernizing ideologies that preceded the establishment of Albania exerted over the policy visions of Albanian communist leaders. Indeed, Maliq's project was part of larger trends that begun in the late decades of the 1800s. The communists had the commitment and ruthlessness to use all the means at their disposal to implement it.

In the second chapter, I explore the importance that Maliq's project had for the communist regime. What was the function of the land of sugar within the larger modernizing project of the Albanian communists? Was the sugar scheme merely an economic enterprise, or had it also symbolic functions? How did local circumstances interplay with the Albanian communist leadership's goals? Was there anything specifically Soviet in Maliq's project? Did the Albanian Soviet-type regime leave its signature in Maliq and project the inequalities and privileges in Maliq? In the third chapter I will delve more extensively into the sugar scheme and the regional uneven development. Communist regimes sought to solve the urban/rural conflict and the region's unequal development, so typical of the capitalist economies. The industrialization of the countryside and the equal distribution of investments regardless of economic profitability were solutions that the Soviet systems sought to use to fix spatial inequalities. Did the Albanian communist authorities succeed in this undertaking? Did the establishment of a sugar industry improve the standard of living in the villages of Maliq? Did the transformation of Maliq level the inequalities between the city of Korça and the plain's rural communities? And what about the surrounding uplands? Did

the huge infrastructural investments and resources poured into the area that produced sugar generate inequalities within the countryside?

And as to why the regime invested continuously capital in Maliq, the answer would be: autarchy. Driven by a mentality of war, the Albanian communist elites insisted in achieving full economic self-sufficiency, especially in basic goods. Sugar was one of them. Did they achieve it? How did the regime cope while facing a constant increase of consumption and demographic boom? Did Enver Hoxha's regime really have the luxury to seal itself off from the continent? Could the communist power apparatus afford to isolate itself from Europe while it depended on the importation of technologies from the countries located on both sides of the Iron Curtain? What hid behind the declarations of autarchy and the declarations for loyalty to Stalinism? Was Albania really as isolated as we have been made to believe? What can we learn in Maliq about the cultural and scientific orientations of Albania before and after the break with Moscow in 1961? To put it differently, did the sugar industry of Maliq connect the country to western and eastern Europe?

And lastly, what was the role of the sugar industry in the regional economy? Answering this question is important to understand the impact that the closing of the refinery, which took place after the demise of the communist regime, had on the communities of Maliq. Why did the industrial complex of Maliq not survive communism? What can the fate of Maliq's sugar industry teach us about the transition from planned to market economies? Does the collapse of the sugar scheme reflect broader contemporary historical processes? Can the post-communist history of Maliq teach us anything for this new century? What are the ways in which globalization, national policies, and local circumstances interplayed in this corner of Albania? I will answer these questions in the fifth chapter.

This study starts with the project of the reclamation of Maliq's swamp and ends with the images of its dilapidated sugar refinery. The history of Albania's sugarland, of its creation and ruin, is the historical trajectory of the communist utopia. Maliq's transformation started with great expectations. Reclaiming the swamp, which represented the past, meant transforming the plain into a land of promise, into a land that did not produce merely sugar, but also hopes for a bright future. The abandoned refinery is what remains of those sweet dreams. This is also the history of communist Albania, and of many other countries around the world that have struggled to attain the utopia of a developed countryside. Those ruins, like many others across the world, show the ephemerality of the dream of development and modernization.

## 2.0 THE MAKING OF THE SUGAR SCHEME: TRANSITIONING FROM EMPIRE TO NATION

### 2.1 The Plain of Korça in Ottoman Times

When the Ottomans took control of the plain of Korça in the 1430s, it had no urban center. Korça was a small fortified settlement at the foot of Mt. Morava, having little more than a market and thirty houses. The village next to it, Peshkëpi (meaning Bishop's residence) had about seventy houses and a handful of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine churches. The Ottomans merged the two villages, and preferred the name Korça, making it the administrative center of the Kaza (district). Korça, though, would not grow into a city until the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century.<sup>1</sup> The bulk the plateau's villages were concentrated in its northern part, around the swamp of Sovjan, as the locals called before the Ottomans' arrival. After the inclusion of the area under the jurisdiction of the Sublime Porte, the villages became *timars*, feuds granted in exchange for services to Ottoman state, and distributed to *sipahis*, who were fief-holders. The overwhelming majority of the servicemen were Islamized Albanians, but there were Orthodox Christians until at least the 16<sup>th</sup>-century. By the seventeenth century, with the gradual erosion of the Sultan's power, the feudal lords that controlled the plain asserted themselves against the central authority and transformed their *timars* into private property, which they inherited regardless of their services to the Ottoman state. A group of powerful feudal families owned the villages of the plain. The peasants, who all had the status of *reaya*, the flock of taxable subjects paid to the beys—feudal lords—one third or half of the production and dues in labor. The obligations also included the working of the personal plots of the timariots and their harvesting. In addition to these dues, the villages around the swamp supplied their masters also with fish and eels.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pirro Thomo, *Korça: urbanistika dhe arkitektura* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë, 2002), 28-31.

<sup>2</sup> AIH, A.III.323, *Defteri i Përmetit dhe i Korçës* (The Ottoman register of Përmet and Korça of the years 1431-1432), translated from the Ottoman to Albanian, Vexhi Buharaja, fl. 48. In his memories, written in the early 1510, the Albanian feudal Gjon Muzaka explains that the peasant of the area fished very good eels in the lake of plain. See, Gjon Muzaka, *Memorje*, translated from Medieval Italian to Albanian, Dhori Qiriazi (Tirana: Toena, 1996), 28.

By the 17<sup>th</sup>-century, due to the tax and legal discrimination of the Christian population, poverty, opportunities for upward mobility in the Ottoman bureaucratic system, and migration from the uplands, Islam expanded in the majority of plain's villages. The conversion, though, did not improve the status of the rural population vis-à-vis the nobles and did not alleviate the tax burden. With the Islamization, new Muslim toponymy also made its way in the plain. For centuries the swamp had been called with the non-Islamic name of "lake of Sovjan," after the village with the same name. But gradually, the locals started calling the bog after the village of Maliq—from the Arabic and Quranic name Malik—built in the slopes of the hills, right over the gorge where the Devoll river starts its journey into the highlands of Gora.

During the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, local beys exploited the inability of Istanbul to control its western peripheries in the wake of continuous military defeats of the Ottoman armies, the local beys consolidated their power base. Commanding small armies of hundreds of highlanders, they ruled over the plain as sovereigns. By entering into tangles of competing alliances centered around important feudal families, these beys challenged undisturbed the power of the Sublime Porte and its local administration, which was under the total control of these warlords.<sup>3</sup> Centralizing reforms that started in the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century under Sultan Selim III were finalized in the later decades under Mahmood II, and brought to an end the immense power of these local nobles. Istanbul waged a rabid war against the bulk of the southern Albanian beys, who had been defying the Sultans' power for more than a century. In the plain of Korça, the Ottoman authorities, through the use of military force, disbanded the personal armies of the local feudal lords and destroyed the power base of these warlords. The nineteenth century Ottoman reforms, known as *Tanzimat*, abolished the peasant's dependency on land, recognized private property, and the legal equality of all the subjects regardless of their religious affiliation.<sup>4</sup>

The region's geographic location and the accompanying administrative gravity of the district of Korça influenced the impact of the broad legislative and political transformations of the

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<sup>3</sup> On the Albanian notables and the broader Balkan pattern of center-periphery relations, see Fikret Adanir, "Semi-autonomous Provincial forces in the Balkans and Anatolia," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, vol. III, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 157-185.

<sup>4</sup> On a concise description and analysis of *Tanzimat*, see Carter Vaughn Findley, "The *Tanzimat*," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Turkey in the Modern World*, vol. IV, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11-37.

19th-century significantly, especially in the area of the plain. Since the beginning of their rule, the Ottomans integrated the region of Korça administratively and religiously within the vilayet of Monastir—today's Bitola in the south of the Republic of North Macedonia. Both the Orthodox episcopate and the Muslim institutions depended on their respective centers located in Monastir. For the length of the Ottoman rule, the area was economically linked with the multiethnic territories within the vilayet of Monastir, inhabited by Slavic-speakers, Greeks, Vlachs, and Jews. The main maritime gate that connected the region of Korça to the world was the city Salonika, today's Thessaloniki, one of the most important ports of the eastern Mediterranean. The bulk of the regional trade took place mainly in the direction of east and south, along the most important routes of communication of the European regions of the Ottoman Empire, that connected the northern Balkans and central Europe to Istanbul. On the other hand, the links with the administrative units on the west and in the north, densely inhabited by Albanian speakers were not as intensive, and sometimes, very thin.<sup>5</sup>

With the implementation of *Tanzimat* and the greater protection it gave to the Christian Orthodox groups, the peasants of the region of Korça started to emigrate from the empire in the late 1800s, especially to the United States. Being in geographic proximity and having close contacts with both the Slavic-speakers and the Greeks of their vilayet, the Orthodox Christian peasants of the region of Korça integrated themselves into the extensive migrative networks of these groups. They successfully used the newly gained right to leave their villages and especially the monetarization of the economy that took a boost in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century to migrate and work for wage labor. The Muslims of the region, especially those of the villages of the plain of Korça, followed suit. Exploiting the continuous erosion of the power of beys and their intense involvement in the market economy, the peasants used the cash accumulated from emigration to buy their land. By the early 1900s the majority of them owned their land, though there were still many sharecroppers until the end of WWII.

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<sup>5</sup> The territories inhabited by Albanians from the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century to the Balkan Wars were divided into four vilayets, the name of the Ottoman administrative units. More explicitly these were: the vilayet of Scutari (or Shkodra) in northwest Albania; the vilayet of Skopje that included the territories of today's eastern Albania and Kosovo, as well as a good part of today's Republic of North Macedonia; the vilayet of Bitola that included the region of Korça, the south of today's Republic of North Macedonia, and parts of modern north Greece; and the vilayet of Ioannina, which was composed of the territories of today's northwestern Greece and southwestern Albania.

Though Tanzimat crippled the power of the local beys, those in the coastal plains of the Adriatic fiercely resisted Istanbul's centralizing policies, and preserved their grasp over land. Unlike in the plain of Korça, these regions were geographically far from the principal routes of communications that crossed in the hinterland of the Balkans through contemporary Kosovo and North Macedonia. In addition, the coastal areas of the Albanian vilayets had no major port city and urban life was marginal. As a result, the market economy and the concomitant transregional communications were poorly developed. In the western lowlands, there were fewer free peasants that owned their land with a majority Christian Orthodox and Muslims peasants working the beys' farms as sharecroppers until the interwar era. The geographic location of the western plains, with the tall mountains in the east and the deep blue sea on the west, kept the peasants relatively isolated from the broader transethnic networks of emigration and trade. The market economy advanced slower, and the majority of peasants remained loosely connected with the market economy.<sup>6</sup>

The geographic position that facilitated integration into broader imperial circuits boosted Korça's growth. In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the city became one of the most important trading centers of the vilayet of Monastir. The breaking of local nobles' power and the intensification of trade during the Tanzimat era, boosted the rapid growth of Korça's population. The majority of the newcomers were Christian Orthodox. Following an Ottoman pattern of the religious division of labor, the local trade fell into the hands of the Christian Orthodox, while the Muslims controlled the state bureaucracy and army. Korça's merchants not only controlled a large share of their vilayet market, but they also integrated successfully into the formidable circuits of Ottoman Christian Orthodox merchants, who, since the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century, controlled the bulk of the Ottoman trade. The demographic growth was not limited only in the city of Korça. Indeed, the number and size of the villages of the plain grew as well.<sup>7</sup> After the establishment of the Albanian state, in 1912, the furrow of Korça was one of the most densely populated areas of the country.

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<sup>6</sup> Nathalie Clayer, *Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar: Lindja e një kombi me shumicë myslimane në Europë*, translated from French to Albanian, Artan Puto (Tirana: Përpjekja, 2012), 106-116; Ligor Mile, *Zejtaria fshatare shqiptare gjatë Rilindjes Kombëtare* (Tirana: Marin Barleti, 2001), 9-29 & 64-99; Ligor Mile, *Çështje të historië agrare shqiptare: fundi i shek. XVIII – vitet 70 të shek. XIX* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, 1984), 319-407; Gazmend Shpuza, *Kryengritja Fshatare e Shqipërisë së Mesme, 1914-1915* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, 1986), 46-76;

<sup>7</sup> On the role the Christian Orthodox merchants in the Ottoman trade, see Bruce Masters, "Christians in a Changing World," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. III, 186-206. On the growth of the population in the plain of Korça

## 2.2 Conceiving the Reclamation of Maliq's Swamp

The demographic growth, especially in Korça, increased pressure on the environment and disrupted ecological balance. Housing and heating augmented the need for timber, while a swelling population ballooned the herds of goats in the area as the need for protein increased. This combination of excessive logging and goat pasturing deforested the mountains around the plain and increased the soil erosion through the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> During the rainy seasons, the creeks and Devoll river deposited vast amounts of inert matter, blocking the gorge of Maliq. The level of the waters increased, and the swamp expanded and transformed large tracts of surrounding groves and land into a permanent fen. In the winters, it covered the whole plain and flooded every year the villages around it, causing massive damages. The local Ottoman authorities cleared the gorge of the detritus when necessary, but they did not make comprehensive interventions for solving the problem permanently. The marsh's destruction of harvests caused local bread crisis in the late 1870s. The intense rainfalls and the swamp's water level destroyed the crops forcing the merchants to import grain from Egypt. The problem persisted in the later years as the destructions kept repeating periodically. As a consequence, in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the peasants of the villages around the swamp and the local elites started discussing its reclamation.<sup>9</sup>

However, it was the Ottoman state, which started the project of reclamation. During these same decades, the Sublime Porte embarked in an ambitious modernizing program for revitalizing the empire that included a series of reclamations, which had as a goal the expansion of agricultural land and the eradication of malaria. These efforts were not simple responses to political agitations or the floods that the swamp caused but also reflected a broader trend that appeared in the Mediterranean in the second half of the 1800s and continued through the 1960s. The new nation-

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during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Andromaqi Gjergji, "Fshati si territor banimi dhe si bashkësi shoqërore (Në fushën e Korçës)," in *Mënyra e jetesës në shekujt XIII-XX* (Tirana: Author, 2002), 129-155; Andromaqi Gjergji, "Jetesa në një fshat të fushës së Korçës (shek. XIX-XX)," *Ibid*, 197-240.

<sup>8</sup> Gjon Fierza, "Pyjet, kullotat dhe Shërbimi Pyjor i Shqipërisë në vështrimin historik," in *Pyjet dhe Shërbimi Pyjor Shqiptar në vite*, ed. Gjon Fierza, Kolë Malaj, and Janaq Mele (Tirana: Graphic Line-01, 2013), 25-26.

<sup>9</sup> AIH, A.IV.275, *Korça: kqyrje historike*, fl. 2; AIH, A.IV.305, Charallamb Karmitsets, *Gjeografia e Korçës dhe e rrethit*, year of publication 1888, translated from Greek to Albanian, Niko Çane, fl. 20-21; Nuçi Naçi, *Korça edhe katundet e qarkut* (Korça: Dhori Koti, 1923), 55-56; Gjergji, "Jetesa në një fshat të fushës së Korçës," 207-208.

states of Southern Europe, and an Ottoman state that was struggling to regenerate its crumbling imperial structure, were all committed to mimic the industrial and agricultural revolution in Germany and Northwestern Europe.<sup>10</sup> They started a series of infrastructure projects, where the reclamation of swamps and waterworks occupied a prominent place. These initiatives were not limited to the southern fringe of Europe. Around the same time, England and France started reclamations and other hydrological projects in their empires, as it was the case with Egypt and Vietnam.<sup>11</sup> State authorities and private actors were all taken away by the fever of the expansion of the internal frontier and started reclaiming many swamps that infested the coasts or the inland plains.<sup>12</sup>

By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the modernist approach toward nature that had emerged since the 18<sup>th</sup>-century in northern Europe made inroads in southern Europe. By the late 1800s, the emerging groups and the social segments that held power embraced the vision of nature as feminine, wild, uncivilized, untamed, and chaotic. It had to be conquered, disciplined, civilized, tamed, and ordered.<sup>13</sup> In an age that juxtaposed civilization to barbarity, the promoters of the modern centralized state considered the alleged wilderness of nature as unacceptable and its taming as a duty to civilization.<sup>14</sup> This attitude toward nature was anthropocentrism *in extremis* that

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<sup>10</sup> On Germany see David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> On Egypt and Italy, John R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2000), 166-177. On Greece, Maria Kaika, "Dams as Symbol of Modernization: The Urbanization of Nature Between Geographical Imagination and Materiality," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, 2 (2006): 283; Maria Kaika, *City of Flows: Modernity, Nature, and the City* (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), 112. On Spain, Erik Swyngedouw, "Modernity and Hybridity: Nature, *Regeneracionismo*, and the Production of the Spanish Waterscape," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, 3 (1999): 443-465. On Vietnam, David A. Biggs, *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2010), 23-52.

<sup>12</sup> Many of these marshlands of the Mediterranean were created from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the same way, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century trend to reclaim them also was pan-Mediterranean in scale, when all the states of the areal started similar hydraulic projects. For more see Faruk Tabak, "Economic and Ecological Change in the Eastern Mediterranean, c. 1550-1850," in *Cities of the Mediterranean: From the Ottomans to the Present Day*, ed. Biray Kolluoglu & Meltem Toksöz (London & New York: I. B. Taurus, 2010), 23-37.

<sup>13</sup> For more on this subject see Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Athens, GA: Georgia University Press, 1990), 10-48.

<sup>14</sup> Stefania Barca argues that in Italy, until the 1860s, the approach to nature was not defined by these dichotomies. She argues that the Italian elites considered nature as a source that supported improvement and wellbeing. The situation changed the last three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century when the dichotomies between nature and progress were equated to the binary between civilization and barbarity. Stefania Barca, "A 'Natural' Capitalism: Water and the

regarded everything as an object of transformation and manipulation. Disciplining nature meant organizing it according to a superior human-made order. What is most important, the utilitarian outlook considered nature a function to man's ambition did not limit itself within liberal democracies. The Promethean vision of the liberated man from the fetters of nature's tyranny and who mastered the universe was central to the Communist and Fascist regimes as well.<sup>15</sup>

The reclamation of Maliq was part of these broader trends that penetrated the Ottoman Empire in the last phases of its existence. For the entire 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the technocratic elites of the Sublime Porte tried to reform the empire following the model of the modern west European territorial states. Although the Ottoman modernizers failed to transform the "sick man of Europe" into a healthy first-rate power, they also attained considerable successes. However, the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq was part of those many unsuccessful enterprises. Lack of funds and corruption of the local authorities inhibited any significant step in preventing the floods, indicating the limits of the Ottoman modernizers' ability to successfully meet their lofty goals.<sup>16</sup>

The local imperial apparatus' procrastination to reclaim the swamp prompted some entrepreneurs from Korça to independently continue the projects. Some wealthy merchants of the city saw an excellent opportunity to invest their capital in the reclamation and lobbied in Istanbul to secure the Sultan's authorization.<sup>17</sup> In March 1912, the Ottoman Imperial Ministry of Public Works granted the concession to a group of local entrepreneurs, who were well connected to influential political circles in Istanbul.<sup>18</sup> It was too late, though, and the works never started. In

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Making of the Italian Industrial Landscape," *Nature and History in Modern Italian History*, ed. Marco Armiero & Marcus Hall (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 215

<sup>15</sup> On Fascism, Federico Caprotti & Maria Kaika, "Producing the Ideal Fascist Landscape: Nature, Materiality, and the Cinematic Representation of Land Reclamation in the Pontine Marshes," *Social and Cultural Geography* 9, 6 (2008): 617-618. On Stalin's Soviet Union, John McCannon, "Tabula Rasa in the North: The Soviet Arctic and Myth Landscapes in Stalinist Popular Culture," in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, ed. Evgeny Dobrenko & Eric Naiman (Seattle & London: Washington University Press, 2003), 241-260.

<sup>16</sup> On the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman history, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). On the failure of the Ottoman authorities to reclaim the swamp, AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1920, d. III-66, fl. 1. Letter of appeal of the peasants of the villages of the plain of Maliq sent to the Prime Ministry for reclaiming the swamp of Maliq; Naçi, *Korça edhe katundet*, 55-56; Gjergji, "Jetesa në një fshat," 207-208.

<sup>17</sup> AQSh, F. 51, Sami Frashëri, no year, d. 14, fl. 1-4. Draft of Sami Frashëri on the reclamation of the lake of Maliq.

<sup>18</sup> AQSh, F. 143, Koleksion dokumentesh, 1912, d. 1274, fl. 1-5. Act of concession and Sultan Mehmed Reshad's decree of the approval for the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq.

October 1912 the First Balkan War began. The military alliance between Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia, forged with the blessing of Russia, brought an end of the Sublime Porte's control over the Balkans.

With the support of Austro-Hungary, the archenemy of Russia and its Balkan allies, Serbia and Montenegro, a group of Albanian nationalists proclaimed the independence of Albania on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1912. At the 1912 Conference of Ambassadors in London, the highest international forum of the era decided the peace in the Balkans and drew new state borders between belligerent parties. After continuous threats from a German backed Austria to invade Serbia, the conference decided to recognize the establishment of an independent Albania. Italy supported the Habsburg's policy on Albania not out of loyalty, but because of Rome to not allow any country to control the Albanian coast. Lying across the Strait of Otranto, the Italians considered control of the Albanian coast of vital interest. On July 29, 1913, the Conference of Ambassadors, in London, recognized the existence of an independent Albania, with the same state borders it has today. The European Concert proclaimed Albania a neutral state and guaranteed its sovereignty collectively. These guarantees were aimed at preventing the country from slipping under the influence of one of the powers and disrupt geostrategic balances of the region.<sup>19</sup>

After the two Balkan wars and the Conference of the Ambassadors, the *vilayet* of Monastir was split between four different countries, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia. The latter annexed the city of Monastir, which changed its name to Bitola (which in Slavic means monastery) and a good part of the northern regions of the ex-Ottoman vilayet. Greece conquered all the southern coastal districts, including the port city of Salonika, and changed its Medieval name to the more and ancient and Greek name of Thessaloniki. The northeastern regions went to Bulgaria, while Korça, much coveted by Greece, became part of Albania. Although both Greece and Bulgaria claimed to take all the vilayet for themselves and had been contending for it since the late

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<sup>19</sup> On the complicated issue of the Albanian independence and the encroaching of the interests of the Great Powers, see Arben Puto, *Pavarësia e Shqipërisë dhe Diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha (1912-1914)* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1976); Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 53-76; Bernd J. Fischer, "Albanian Nationalism in the Twentieth Century," in *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter F. Sugar (Washington DC: American University Press, 1995), 25-34; Barbara & Chares Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle & London: Washington University Press, 1977), 222-234. On the Balkan Wars, see Egidio Ivetic, *Le Guerre Balcaniche* (Milano: Mulino, 2007);

19<sup>th</sup>-century, its territories, that had constituted an economically integrated melting pot, dissolved. The new state borders broke the old unity of regional markets and social networks built over the centuries of Ottoman control. While the region of Korça, because of its affluence and participation in the larger circuits of the flow of people, goods, capital, and ideas, was one of the most important centers of Albanian nationalism, its integration in the Albanian state was economically, extremely different.

As it was with other Balkan states, the European Great Powers chose a German prince for the newly born state and assigned as its sovereign Wilhelm von Wied. The beginning of the hostilities of WWI marked the end of the European Concert, the main guarantor of the existence of Albania as a newly established state. Wied's career as the prince of Albania, who arrived in Albania in March 1914, did not last more than sixth months. Facing immense domestic difficulties, including a rebellion induced by Serbian and Greek gold, and its neighbor's commitment to undermining the newly established state, Wied lacked the much-promised international support. After the beginning of the hostilities, regardless of Vienna's pressure to fight against Serbia and Montenegro, Wied did reiterate Albania's neutrality. Left without support and with empty coffers, he headed to Germany and joined the Prussian army, as a private citizen, without however abdicating the Albanian throne.<sup>20</sup>

Albania became a battlefield of opposing armies. Italy, whose interests conflicted with Austria over the Italian-speaking minorities within the Habsburg's realm and the dominance over the Adriatic, clashed with Vienna over control of the Albanian coast. After the hostilities of WWI began, Rome did not renew its alliance with the Axis powers and sided with the Entente Cordiale. The latter saw the establishment of Albania as a launching pad of the Austrian and German interests. To lure Italy to their alliance, France, United Kingdom, and Russia agreed to concede to Rome full control over central Albania and its Adriatic coast to it. In London, where two years prior the European Concert had decided the establishment of an Albania state, the Entente signed with Italy on April 26, 1915 the obliteration of the newly founded state from the map. The Secret

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<sup>20</sup> On Wied's reign, Ferdinando Salleo, *Albania. Un regno per sei mesi* (Palermo: Sellerio Editore, 2000); Joseph Swire, *Albania: The Rise of a Kingdom* (New York: Abe Book, 1971).

Treaty of London, besides fulfilling Italy's requests, divided north Albania between Serbia and Montenegro, while giving the south, including the region of Korça, to Greece.<sup>21</sup>

However, events did not proceed smoothly for the Entente's new southern allies. While Italy took control of southwestern Albania, strategically closing off the Habsburg fleet from the Adriatic, Greece nearly slipped into civil war between pro-German and pro-Entente supporters. The internal turmoil did not allow the Greeks to consolidate rule over the regions it received in the Treaty of London. The pro-Entente party, led by the Hellenic Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, established its headquarters in Thessaloniki and asked the support of its great allies. Soon, the French Armée d'Orient disembarked in the port-city. By 1916, the Habsburg divisions, after crushing the tenacious Serbian and Montenegrin resistance, crashed through the northern and central Albania to stop their advance in the southern districts, where they faced the Entente's troops. The Austro-Hungarian military units halted their advance after encountering the Italian army--which had been controlling the southwestern regions of Albania since late 1914—and the detachments of the Armée d'Orient that had captured the district of Korça.

The Gallic armies, based in Thessaloniki, occupied the southeastern regions of Albania to prevent the Austrian-Hungarian divisions from both threatening their positions in the Aegean port-city and joining their forces with the pro-German Greek King, Constantine, based in Athens. After the detachments Armée d'Orient moved in Korça in October 1916, they immediately started, in real colonial style, their *mission civilatrice* in this corner of the Balkans. Besides the guns, cannons, and soldiers, the French armies also brought administrators and scientists. They played concerts and movies for the servicemen, built roads with mobilized labor—mainly war prisoners—collected taxes, and explored the region's resources. Entertaining their soldiers was important for the French commanders, but the roads and taxes were even more critical for their military operations. During the three and a half years of its administration, French command tried to limit the swamp's floods, which not only devastated the population but also hampered the movement of the troops. In

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<sup>21</sup> On the Secret Treaty of London and Albania, as well as on broader issues of the diplomacy of the great powers toward Albania during WWI, see Arben Puto, *Historia diplomatike e çështjes shqiptare, 1878-1926* (Tirana: Albin, 2003); Arben Puto, *Çështja shqiptare në aktet ndërkombëtare të periudhës së imperializmit: përmbledhje dokumentesh me një vështrim historik*, vol. II (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1984); Muin Çami, *Shqipëria në marrëdhëniet ndërkombëtare (1914-1918)* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, 1987).

addition, one of the principal goals was to limit malaria's effects on military units—similar to other French efforts in Thessaloniki. For that reason, the French used the war prisoners to clear the gorge of Maliq of the detritus and partially drain the high water of the swamp.<sup>22</sup>

Following the blueprint that Armée d'Orient's headquarters applied in Thessaloniki, its branch in Korça did not limit itself exclusively to military matters. Thinking of themselves as an outpost of France in the Balkans' heartland (which to them meant outside of Europe), the French command in Korça exploited the opportunity to project their country's power. Opening a Lycée in the city, where Enver Hoxha would teach French in the 1930s, was not enough to convey the benefits of the French civilization, though. Looking at the area of Korça through the same Orientalist lenses they had seen Macedonia, the French militaries and scientists located in the region considered it a space abundant of unused potentials because of the passivity and mismanagement. During their time in Korça, a group of French scientists studied the ecology, geography, fauna, and geology of the region. Although they did not study the swamp, the French discovered that the sandy-clay soil of the plain was optimal for the cultivation of sugar beet and the development of the sugar industry.<sup>23</sup>

At the end of the Great War, the winners gathered in Paris to decide the post-WWI European order. With the Entente's triumph, the implementation of the Treaty of London became a real opportunity, and the independence of Albania hanged on a very thin thread. After witnessing the annexation of half of the Albanian-speaking population by the neighboring countries, Albanian nationalists were not willing to concede any other territory. In 1920, they organized their

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<sup>22</sup> On issue of the French military intervention in Greece and the diplomatic chess between Quai d'Orsey, their Greek supporters, and Albanians, see Nicola Guy, *The Birth of Albania: Ethnic Nationalism, The Great Power of World War I and the Emergence of Independent Albania* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 125-151; Muin Çami, "Veçori të Lëvizjes Kombëtare në krahinën e Korçës (gjatë Lufës së Parë Botërore)," in *Shqipëria në rrjedhat e historisë, 1912-1924* (Tirana: Onufri, 2007), 76-88; Muin Çami, "Ushtarakët francezë në Korçë mbështetës të aspiratave të popullit shqiptar," *Ibid*, 127-150; Muin Çami, *Shqiptarët dhe francezët në Korçë: 1916-1920* (Tirana: Dituria, 1999); On the activity of the French army in the region of Korça, AIH, A-IV-149, Mediha Jasa, *Republika e Korçës 1916-1918*, unpublished study in the Archive of the Institute of History, Tirana. On the French engineering works, AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve të Botore, 1920, d. 10, fl. 5. Report of the engineer of public works of the prefecture of Korça concerning the problem of the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. July 29, 1920.

<sup>23</sup> AIH, A-IV-149, Jasa, *Republika e Korçës 1916-1918*; Jacques Bourcart, *Shqipëria dhe shqiptarët*. translated from French to Albanian, Asti Papa (Tirana: Dituria, 2004), 117-127. On the French *Mission Civiliatrice* in Thessaloniki during WWI, see Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1450-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 295-298.

government in Tirana. a city located safely within the 1913 borders. What the nationalists considered as a temporary, indeed became the country's permanent capital. The new government did not recognize the Treaty of London and proclaimed it adhered to the decision of the now defunct European Concert and started preparing to defend its borders.

Soon after the war was over, the allies become enemies as they fought for the spoils of WWI. Yugoslavia replaced Austria-Hungary as Italy's principal competitor in the Adriatic, and none of them were willing to split Albania and border with each other in the south. To both of them, a weak Albania seemed to be a better option. Greece embarked on its Turkish adventure, and its crushing defeat in Anatolia drained all the country's resources and energies to start another war with the very determined Albanian nationalists. What saved Albania, though, was the energetic intervention of Woodrow Wilson. The American President went to Paris with the slogan of new diplomacy and crusading against secret treaties, including that signed in London in April of 1915. It was the active lobbying of the Albanian nationalists -and especially Wilson's strong support of Yugoslavian policy- during this time that played an essential role in his decision. He also received positive reports from the American envoys in Albania, who favored the existence of the country. Following the clause of self-determination, one of the most important points of his program, Wilson flatly rejected the implementation of the Treaty of London and the ensuing disintegration of Albania in February 1920, making him a hero of Albanian nationalists. In May of the same year, the Conference of Versailles recognized the existence of an independent Albanian state with borders established by the European Concert back in 1913.<sup>24</sup> Soon after the recognition of Albania's independence, and Korça as part of it, the French troops left the region. Their discovery of the sugar beet, though, remained.

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<sup>24</sup> On the Paris Conference of 1919, the discussion of the Albanian question and Wilson's intervention in favor of Albania's independence, see Haris Silajdzic, *Shqipëria dhe ShBA në arkivat e Uashingtonit*, translated from Bosnian to Albanian, Xhelal Fejza (Tirana: Dituria, 1999); Puto, *Historia diplomatike e çështjes shqiptare, 1878-1926*; Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), 357-164.

### 2.3 Maliq's Project and the Quest for Nation-Building and Self-Sufficiency

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the refashioning of the political borders of the Balkans dissolved the old imperial administrative structure and absorbed their fragments into new political frameworks. Territories, that until that point had had few contacts and exchanges, now coexisted under the umbrella of the nation-state. Centuries-old links unraveled, and new ones, oriented toward national centers, emerged. The new demarcation lines between the states of southeastern Europe erected walls of customs barriers and protectionist policies that crippled the flow of people, goods, and capital along the old trade routes. Amid the reframing of the political map of the Balkans, Korça's traders and merchants lost a good part of their old markets, trade connections, and access to Thessaloniki. The most pressing problem that the region faced was the dependence on imported foodstuffs, especially cereals, a pattern that had persisted since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. With the closing of the old trade routes, the price of grain spiked. Now supplies arrived from the coastal areas of the Adriatic, but the poor road network affected the price of grain, which in Korça was three times higher compared to the western lowlands. Lack of food also meant social trouble, as in 1921 bread demonstrations erupted from Korça's poor.<sup>25</sup>

Heavy rains in the early 1920s caused increased flooding and damaged the local peasants' holdings, forcing them to ask the government's immediate intervention to clear the gorge of Maliq.<sup>26</sup> The government had the will to take immediate action, but lacked the financial resources to do so.<sup>27</sup> The wealthy merchants and urban landlords of Korça saw in the bread crisis and the

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<sup>25</sup> "Mbi shtrentësirën e kësushme," *Posta e Korçës*, August 30t, 1921, 1; "Çështja e ditës," *Zëri i Popullit*, March 17, 1923, 2.

<sup>26</sup> AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1920, d. III-66, fl. 1. Letter of appeal of the peasants of the villages of the plain of Maliq sent to the Prime Ministry for reclaiming the swamp of Maliq; AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve të Botore, 1920, d. 10, fl. 5. Report of the engineer of public works of the prefecture of Korça concerning the problem of the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. July 29, 1920; "Liqeni i Sovjanit," *Posta e Korçës*, October 25, 1921, 1.

<sup>27</sup> AQSh, F. 152, Ministria e Punëve të Brendshme, 1922, d. 390, fl. 1-16. The order of the Ministry of the Interior to release a credit for the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq and the respective correspondence. January 1, 1921-October 29, 1922; AQSh, F. 152, Ministria e Punëve të Brendshme, 1922, d. 713, fl. 1-4. Correspondence of the Ministry of Interior and the Prefecture of Korça regarding the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. December 7-12, 1922; AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1922, d. 71, fl. 1-83. Correspondence between the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Finances concerning the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq and the destructions caused by Devoll's floods. January-September 1922.

devastations of the swamp as business opportunities, and took over the challenge of reclamation. By the early 1920s, local elites were adjusting themselves to the new national context and were looking for opportunities to revitalize their capital. They planned a series of ambitious projects, which also included the building of a hydropower station on the Devoll river, that aimed at both exploiting the region's resources and connecting it to the western lowlands. It was a vision of the future that tried to integrate regional ambitions and aspirations within broader modernizing plans of the national state. The entrepreneurs of Korça used hydrological projects as platforms for social and economic transformation, similar to the development schemes of the 1930s and the post-WWII era.

The reclamation of Maliq's swamp was going to be the first of these projects because its implementation depended on the draining of the marshland and controlling the Devoll's flow. According to the plans of the entrepreneurs, they would cultivate the reclaimed land with wheat to meet the local demand. The returns from this investment would support the other subsequent projects.<sup>28</sup> So big was the enthusiasm in Korça for the reclamation of Maliq that, the future French Minister of Health Justin Godart, while visiting Korça in 1921, recorded in his diary that everybody in the city was speaking about it.<sup>29</sup> Such an undertaking needed time and it was only finalized in 1924 with the establishment of the company Maliqi LLC. The government, which expressed support for the project since its conception, granted the company a five-year concession of the swamp of Maliq in 1925.<sup>30</sup> However, by the mid-1920s, improvements to road and transportation

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<sup>28</sup> AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1924, d. 165, fl. 4-5. Report of Friedrich Rudolph, specialist in the Ministry of Public Works, on the company "Maliqi." February 25, 1924; *Ibid*, fl. 6-8. Report of Friedrich Rudolph on the participation of the state in the project of the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. March 26, 1924; *Ibid*, letter of the Commission of Initiators of company Maliqi sent to the prefecture of Korça regarding the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. April 4, 1924; "Kapitali i vendit dhe liqeni i Maliqit," *Zëri i Popullit*, August 18, 1923, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Justin Godart, *Ditarët shqiptarë: shënimet e udhëtimeve nga marsi 1921 deri në dhjetor 1951*, translated from French to Albanian, Asti Papa (Tirana: Dituria, 2008), 77 & 91.

<sup>30</sup> On the need to establish a company with joint capital for the reclamation of the swamp, "Kapitali i vendit dhe liqeni i Maliqit," *Zëri i Popullit*, August 18, 1923, 2. On the establishment of company Maliqi, "Shoqëria Anonime "Maliq," *Gazeta e Korçës*, April 19, 1924, 3; On the government's support and granting of the concession, AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1924, d. 165, fl. 1-19. Correspondence between the Ministry of Public Works and the Prefecture of Korça concerning the requests of the company Maliqi and its project to reclaim the swamp of Maliq. February 25-April 19, 1924; AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1925, d. 106, fl. 56-59. Decree of the Ministry of the Public Works for the right of the private company Maliqi to reclaim the swamp of Maliq. February 4, 1925; AQSh, F. 317, Prefektura e Korçës, 1925, d. 99, fl. 1-11. Correspondence between the Prime Ministry, Ministry of Interior, and the Prefecture of Korça regarding the concession to the company Maliqi for reclaiming the swamp of Maliq. April 30, 1925-January 2, 1926; AQSh, F. 146, Parlamenti, 1925, d. 58, fl. 1-24. Approval from the Parliament

systems lowered grain prices from the western lowlands. Reclaiming the swamp to cultivate it with wheat was not profitable anymore, but the owners of Maliqi LLC did not give up on the project and looked for other profitable undertakings, and they already had one left behind by the French military expedition during WWI. The company brought specialists from France, who confirmed that the soil of the area around the swamp was still suitable for the cultivation of sugar beet.<sup>31</sup>

In the meantime, the increase in sugar consumption during the interwar era made such an enterprise very profitable. From 4 kg per person a year in 1921, the annual per capita consumption of sugar reached the figure of 6 kg by the mid-1920s. In 1926 Albania imported 5000 tons of sugars—loaves, half processed, molasses, and granulated—and reached its peak in 1930 with 5500 tons. The Albanian Government realized the growing importance of sugar and in the late 1920s considered it, together with rice, flour, coffee, and kerosene, one of the most important commodities that the country imported. As an Albanian newspaper noted in 1930, sugar, salt, and kerosene were the basic stuff of any shop in Albania. Two Italian sugar specialists working for the Albanian government shared the same opinion. In a report they wrote in 1933, they observed that “Albania is a strong consumer of sugar for the extensive use of coffee, tea, and Turkish delights.” Under the weight of the Great Depression in the 1930s, Albania decreased its imports of sugar. But according to Italian estimations, by the end of the decade, sugar consumption per capita was 5.2 kg. The economic crisis did not impact peoples’ desires.<sup>32</sup>

The shareholders of Maliqi LLC were eager to put their hands on the 2 million golden francs—approximately \$500,000—of sugar imports. After confirmation by the French researchers that the soil of the plain of Maliq was suitable for the cultivation of sugar beet, the company’s shareholders realized the potentials of the sugar industry. It would not take long for

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of the government’s concession to the company Maliqi for the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. November 11-December 15, 1925.

<sup>31</sup> “Shoqëria ‘Maliq’,” *Koha*, no. 249, December 5, 1925, 2.

<sup>32</sup> On the Albanian authorities considering sugar as one of the most important commodities the country imported, AMPJ, 1928, d. 167, fl. 14. Explanatory list of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the imports of Albania. On the press considering sugar as one of the most important imports of the country, “Monopolet dhe konçesionet – monopoli i sheqerit,” *Shqipëria e Re*, no. 446, November 21, 1930, 1. On the Italians’ observations on the consumption of sugar in Albania, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonimisë (Drejtoria e Bujqësisë), 1933, d. 833, fl. 4. Report of Giovanni Lorenzoni and Pier-Francesco Nistri on the establishment of the sugar industry in the region of Korça. On the Italian estimations on sugar consumption in the 1930s, AQSh, F. 161, Mëkëmbësia e Përgjithshme, 1939, d. 1060, fl. 1. Report on the project of construction of two factories of sugar, one in Korça and one in the plain of Myzeqe.

them to give the project a new direction and cultivate the reclaimed land with sugar beet and build in Korça sugar refinery.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in the mid-1920s, the swamp's reclamation and the development of the sugar industry merged into one single project. By the 1930s, Maliqi LLC started negotiations with a Hungarian firm to build a refinery with shared Albanian and Hungarian capital. Besides producing sugar for the domestic market, the entrepreneurs of Maliqi LLC planned to expand their business and produce chocolates and bonbons, of which, demand was continually increasing in Albania.<sup>34</sup>

The shareholders of Maliqi LLC were eager to fill the lacunae of domestic production and exploit to the maximum of their advantage the national market, started planning to transform the plain of Maliq into Albania's land of sugar. These entrepreneurs saw opportunity in the national project opportunities and readily exploited it as a platform to redefine regional economic life by supplying the domestic market with specialized products. The regional specialization of Korça in the production of sugar and sweets was taking place within the context of the nation-state.

Other critical factors that made the plain of Maliq a designated place for the development of the sugar industry. Besides the suitable climate and soil composition, the swamp solved the problem of land, which was the major challenge for the cultivation of sugar beet. Its reclamation guaranteed the necessary contiguous arable land, large enough to allow large-scale farming and the application of at least a three-years rotation agriculture, so to preserve its fertility. Sugar beet is a labor-intensive crop, and its cultivation needs the use of modern mechanized means for deep

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<sup>33</sup> M. Frashëri, "Një shpjegim për çështjen e liqenit të Maliqit," *Gazeta e Korçës*, no. 181, May 2, 1925, 4; "Shoqëria 'Maliq'," *Koha*, no. 249, December 5, 1925, 2.

<sup>34</sup> On the focus on sugar production in the 1920s, see "Tharja e liqenit të Maliqit," *Koha*, nr. 220, May 9, 1925, 2; "Inaugurimi i tharjes së liqenit Maliq," *Zëri i Korçës*, no. 206, July 12, 1927, 4; "Industria e tanishme në barabitje me industrinë q'i duhet Shqipërisë," *Shqipëri' e re*, no. 325, June 3, 1928, 2. On the project of the building of a refinery with shared Albanian and Hungarian capital, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë (Drejtoria e Tregtisë dhe Industrisë), 1934, d. 676, fl. 3. Report on the proposal of the Hungarian engineer Tibor Kevesh, representative of Hungarian companies, for the selling of machinery for the processing of beet sugar. December 31, 1934; "Projekte për ndërtimin e disa fabrikave," *Gazeta e Korçës*, no. 2132, January 2, 1935, 1. The statistics of the Ministry of Finances demonstrate huge increase of imported cocoa and chocolates during the interwar era, an indicator of the increase of consumption in Albania of the goods of this category. For more see the statistics released by the Albanian government on the foreign trade during the 1920s and 1930s: *Statistika Importatjon – Exportatjone vjetës 1921 e Shtetit Shqypëtar* (Shkodra: Ministria e Financavet, 1922), 4; *Statistika Tregtare e Importacion – Eksportacion-it prej 1 Kallnuerit deri më 31 Dhetuer 1926* (Tirana: Ministria e Financavet, 1927), 11; *Statistikë e Tregtis së Jashtëme: Viti 1927* (Tirana: Ministria e Financavet, 1928), 51; *Statistikë e Tregtis së Jashtëme: Viti 1928* (Tirana: Ministria e Financavet, 1929), 49-50; *Statistikë e Tregtis së Jashtëme: Viti 1935* (Tirana: Ministria e Financavet, 1936), 23-24.

plowing, so to produce yields high enough to respond to the sugar refinery's needs. According to the Albanian government, for the production of 6000 tons of sugar for the domestic market were necessary 10,000 hectares.<sup>35</sup>

In the early 1920s, Albania did not have enough arable land—a problem that persists today. It is a mountainous country, and of the few plains it had, they were covered by swamps and bogs. The structure of property in the areas under cultivation did not help large-scale agriculture. The land was divided among many small farmers. The tillers were not fully integrated into the market economy and worked the scattered small plots with primitive tools. The swamp of Maliq, with its 4500 hectares covered by water and other 4500 by groves, seemed to offer a solution to these obstacles. Indeed, the marshland provided the sugar industries with the vast area of arable and fertile land that was mainly not owned privately, to implement large-scale mechanized agriculture.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the plain became specialized in the production of sugar. Its function, within the body of the nation, was to supply Albania with sugar.

Hence, sugar production became a means that fostered the integration of the region of Korça within the national body. The spatial division of labor enabled the construction of a coherent and cohesive national economic system, where different districts, or provinces, complement each other's needs. The nation is not merely an imagined community built through the construction of a symbolic order. The latter conveyed through schools, books, propaganda, civic celebrations, maps, and censuses it is but only a part of the nation-building process.<sup>37</sup> The symbolic representation of the nation, or its imagined forms, should correspond to an empirical reality, which underpins the former. The creation of a cohesive national economic system fills the national map with new and powerful meaning and transforms it into a tapestry of thickly interwoven threads that knit a distinct entity of links, conceptually separable from other countries. In the nationalists'

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<sup>35</sup> AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1934, d. 676, fl. 3-4. Report on the proposal of the Hungarian engineer Tibor Kevesh, representative of Hungarian companies, for the selling of machinery for the processing of beet sugar. December 31, 1934; AMPJ, 1935, d. 205, fl. 1. Letter of the Royal Legation of Albania in Trieste in relation to the project of building sugar factories in Shkodra and Korça. January 22, 1935; AQSh, F. 179, Banka Kombëtare, 1937, d. 47, fl. 8. Correspondence between the Directory of the National Bank and its branch in Korça concerning the possibility of the building of a sugar refinery. September 16, 1937.

<sup>36</sup> AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë (Drejtoria e Tregtisë dhe Industrisë), 1940, d. 251, fl. 2-3. Letter of SASA to the Ministry of Economy in relation to the construction of a sugar factory in the area of Korça. February 27, 1940.

<sup>37</sup> I am referring here to the concept of "nations as imagined communities" coined by Benedict Anderson, in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 2006).

thinking, the connections within the national borders have to surpass by far those outside of them. Thus, the map of the nation does not become only a symbolic projection of the territory inhabited by a given group, but it also emerges as a space of intense interactions and interdependencies. To build the nation and make it more tangible, the national elites added a bedrock of economic interests to the constructed shared identities.

Analyzing the role of the economy in nation-building, the economic historian Andreas Etges has recently stated that the political economy is just like the nation, an imagined economic community, created by the artificial drawing up of the borders. The thin lines of the international borders create national markets out of different pieces, which, before being put together, were not necessarily close to each other. On the contrary, argues Etges, the borders can cut regions off from other closer regions with which they have constituted a more “organic” or “natural” economic, social, or cultural unit. “The economic borders, he concludes,” do not follow a market logic which nationalizes economic interests and economic policy.”<sup>38</sup> This is also the case with the efforts to integrate the region of Korça through economic linkages to the other districts of the country and the use of the spatial division of labor to create a solid unified national mosaic.

Regional specialization was not an act imposed from above, or one that came exclusively from the state apparatus. As the case of Maliq’s sugar industry shows, it was not solely a state-driven process. The initiatives came from the local level, as well. The regional specialization of production was not part of a grand strategy defined by an interventionist state. It instead came into light as a local response in a new context created after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Albanian national state. The process of integration through differentiation was a two-way process, where groups of interests participated in the project of nation-building through market integration. In this way, Maliq LLC was drawing the map of Albania by imbuing the furrow of Korça with a new economic meaning and function, which simultaneously acted as a symbol of local identity in the spatial imagination of the country.

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<sup>38</sup> Andreas Etges, “Theoretical and Historical Reflections on Economic Nationalism in Germany and the United States in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Nationalism and the Economy: Explorations into a Neglected Relationship*, ed. Stefan Berger and Thomas Fetzer (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2019), 89.

The non-state actors elaborated on the issue of autarky as well, including the self-sufficiency of sugar production. Many Albanian public figures, who were not necessarily all politicians, considered the increase of sugar imports as a grave financial problem. For Albania, the annual outflow of 2 million golden francs was not a negligible matter. In the early 1920s, the primary beneficiary was Italy. By the end of the decade, Czechoslovakia, which by this time had become the major sugar supplier in the Balkans, displaced the Italians as the principal importer of sugar. But to the influential circles in Albania, it did not make much difference who was the recipient of the hard cash. Even the considerable decrease in the sugar price in the 1930s did not dilute Albanian nationalists' anxieties.<sup>39</sup>

The Albanian modernizers, for whom the nation was the fundamental category of analysis, understood that country's development meant, among other things, growing dependence on other international actors, which could have a high economic and political price. The socio-economic modernization was expensive not only for building roads, bridges, and schools but also because of the population's consumption. As Albanians consumed more goods than the country produced, it became harder for the national economy to afford to buy them. The more the country modernized, more it entangled in the web of international trade, and more it depended on foreign economies for goods and services that Albania did not produce. Likewise, Albania depended on other economically more advanced states, more its independence was threatened in the hostile and competitive international environment of the interwar era. There was a conflict between political imperatives of sovereignty, on the one hand, and consumption and new needs the population on the other. The solution was producing most important commodities the Albanians consumed domestically.

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<sup>39</sup> On Czechoslovak sugar trade in the Balkans, Frantisek Dudek, "The Crisis of Beet Sugar Industry in Czechoslovakia," in *The World Sugar Economy in War and Depression 1914-1940*, ed. Bill Albert & Adrian Graves (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), 37 & 41. For the data on sugar imports see *Statistika Importatjon – Exportatjone vjetës 1921 e Shtetit Shqyptar*, 7; *Statistika Tregtare e Importatjon – Eksportatjon-it prej 1 Kallnuerit deri më 31 Dhetuer 1926*, 12-13; *Statistikë e Tregtis së Jashtëme: Viti 1927*, 42-43; *Statistikë e Tregtis së Jashtëme: Viti 1928*, 50-51; *Statistikë e Tregtis së Jashtëme: Viti 1935*, XX-XXI & 24; *Relacion i Bilançit më 31 Dhetuer 1936 paraqitun Mbledhjes së Përgjithëshme të Aksionistavet më 7 Maj 1937* (Tirana: Banka Kombëtare e Shqipnis, 1937), 27; *Relacion i Bilançit më 31 Dhetuer 1936 paraqitun Mbledhjes së Përgjithëshme të Aksionistavet më 7 Maj 1937* (Tirana: Banka Kombëtare e Shqipnis, 1937), 27; *Relacion i Bilançit më 31 Dhetuer 1938 paraqitun Mbledhjes së Përgjithëshme të Aksionistavet më 10 Qershor 1939* (Tirana: Banka Kombëtare e Shqipnis, 1939), 33; *Albania (Geographical Hand Book Series)* (London: Naval Intelligence Office, 1945), 256.

Part of this broader goal was the establishment of the domestic sugar industry. In the spirit of interwar neo-mercantilism, the stated goal from within the state apparatus and the press was to produce domestically all the sugar the country consumed. A noted journalist of the period stated:

“When talking about the question of sugar, we mean: it is one of the most important factors for the improvement of the economy of any state and the preservation of its independence from the foreign markets... Thus sugar must be produced domestically.” Embracing the age’s tendency of state interventionism, the journalist continued: “...we must say that the production of sugar in the country is an excellent trade, needs huge capitals of at least 3-4 million golden Francs and without the encouragement and support of the Government no one can undertake such an enterprise. Therefore, it is a fundamental maxim of the civilized and advanced world that the state should always encourage any capitalistic private institution that has as a goal the production or manufacturing of a thing, which has for the first time being made within the state; giving its backup with the issuance of concessions, protections, insurances, subventions...”<sup>40</sup>

According to the author of this article, it was the national government’s duty, with its paternalistic policies, to lead and guarantee autarky. Politicians and other influential personalities in interwar Albania were not seeking to cut the country off the world but to preserve its independence. In the widely shared opinion of the time, Albania would be able to maintain its political sovereignty by achieving self-sufficiency in its most important commodity. According to public opinion, the domestic production was necessary for keeping in the country precious capital, foster domestic economy, and diminish alleged harmful dependency. This opinion did not consider the openness to the Europe market, the reference model of the Albanian interwar elites, and autarky as exclusive to each other. On the contrary, economic self-sufficiency was a means for Albania to join the group of privileged and civilized nations of Europe.

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<sup>40</sup> Nebil Çika, “Çështja e sheqerit: Pjesa I,” *Rilindja e Arbënisë*, no. 50, November 16, 1930, 1.

The beliefs of the Albanian modernizers were grounded in and shaped by contemporary European ideas. Not by accident, the new states of eastern Europe championed autarky. Their weakness vis-à-vis aggressive and revanchist powers that squeezed them from West and East created the perceived need to prepare the nation for war and, as a consequence, for autarky.<sup>41</sup> As the Czechoslovak Consul in Tirana argued to some members of the Albanian government the need to produce their sugar because WWI demonstrated how critical it was for a country to produce domestically all primary commodities, among which he also listed sugar. The Bohemian diplomat did not have to convince his Albanian counterpart, who shared the same apprehensions.<sup>42</sup>

The Albanians' approach to partial self-sufficiency falls squarely within the models that all its Balkan neighbors had embraced by that time. The post-Ottoman states of southeastern Europe, which were points of reference for Tirana, pursued autarkic policies since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, the enormous political, economic, and cultural influence of Fascist Italy over the small Balkan country during the interwar years had a long-lasting impact on the strategies of development the Albanians pursued. Fascists' endless diatribes about autarky, which was the economic doctrine of Rome, reinforced the worldview of many Albanians, including on sugar production.

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<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Jowitt, "The Sociocultural Basis of National Dependency in Peasant Countries," in *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, ed. Kenneth Jowitt (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 3; István Deák, "How to Construct a Productive, Disciplined, Monoethnic Society: The Dilemma of East Central European Governments, 1914-1956," in *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, ed. Amir Weiner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 213.

<sup>42</sup> AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1925, d. 161, fl. 48. Letter of the Consul of Czechoslovakia sent to the Albanian Government regarding the proposal of a Czechoslovak firm to develop the sugar industry in Albania. October 25, 1925; *Ibid*, fl. 12. Response of the Ministry of Public Works to an inquiry of the Prime Ministry regarding a Czechoslovak offer to build a sugar refinery in Albania. December 10, 1925; AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1926, d. III-896, fl. 5. Correspondence between the Ministry of Public Works, The Prime Ministry, and the Ministry of Justice regarding the offer of a Czechoslovak firm to establish sugar industry in Albania. December 16, 1925.

<sup>43</sup> John R. Lampe & Marvin Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950: From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 13.

## 2.4 Albania's American Frontier

In October 1922, Pompeo Amadei, an Italian engineer who worked in the Albanian Ministry of Public Works, wrote an article on the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq for a newspaper in Korca. To the local audiences, he said: "Fundamentally should be known that you have an America in your house, but it is necessary to be exploited with wisdom."<sup>44</sup> America did symbolize not only the land of the fresh beginning of a new page in history but also the space of expansion. It was the example of the power of civilization that tamed nature, of the order, created out of wilderness' chaos. While the swamp represented the untamed, uncivilized nature, the wisdom Amadei called about, represented the rationality of civilization. By exploiting the reclaimed land with wisdom, the Albanians would show that they had embraced the values of the modern civilization. Like the American West, Maliq became a borderland, a space of expansion. By civilizing it, the Albanians would show they deserved their independence and membership in the family of European nations.

The only difference was that this frontier did not lie outside of the country's borders, but within it. Maliq's was an internal frontier, and civilizing it was as much a marker of triumph as was the conquest of the Americas by the Europeans. Taking the land away from the waters and using it, thrusting the plow in it, shaping and ordering it was an act as virile and civilizational as it was the conquest of the Americas. As a new nation, the Albanians had to show the efficiency and ability to conquer new lands. To become part of the civilized world, they had to tame the wilderness. In the 19th-century's spirit, still strong after the WWI, the Albanians had to find their America to expand and demonstrate to the European powers that they were a nation of civilizers.

The way the reclamation of Maliq's swamp served as an advertisement for the Albanian politicians and nationalists to debunk the many stereotypes that many political circles in west Europe had for the country and its people. Meaningful is an anecdote that Mehdi Frashëri, the future Prime Minister of Albania and its representative in the League of Nations during the 1920s, told the crowds gathered to celebrate the beginning of the reclamation on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1927. Frashëri,

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<sup>44</sup> Pompeo Amadei, "Për tharjen e gjolit të Maliqit," *Posta e Korçës*, October 24, 1922, 2.

who had represented Albania in the Conference of Versailles, in 1920, recounted that during the meetings that took place in Paris in 1919, many Albanians went personally to France's capital to ask the Entente's powers to recognize the existence of Albania. Among them, he continued, there was also an old man, to whom a western diplomat told that if the Albanians were allowed to have an independent country, they would make it a slaughterhouse. "I wish I had an airplane and bring the diplomat here in Maliq," concluded Frashëri, "so he—the western diplomat—could see himself the slaughterhouse and how the land is calling for its reclamation and the progress of Albania."<sup>45</sup>

Mehdi Frashëri's story may be apocryphal, but what is important is that Albanian politicians integrated the reclamation of Maliq within its broader discourse of progress. The significance of this undertaking was not restricted to the state-building, but also of representing Albania to the world. It was the first enterprise undertaken by an Albanian company with Albanian capital. The project bore the name of the nation; it carried the name of Albania on it and constructed the image of the newly established state according to the norms of progress established in western Europe. The speech of Albanian politicians, rather than expressing frustration with the criteria western diplomats used to stereotyping the Albanians, revealed the eagerness to prove the western European political circles wrong that on the ground that the Albanians could progress. Rather than making their country a slaughterhouse, they were able to keep their house in order and make Albania prosper. In other words, the reclamation of Maliq demonstrated that the Albanians deserved their independent political life.

Unlike the nationalist politicians in Tirana, to whom Maliq was an instrument of nation-building and an advertisement for international consumption, for many people in Korça, the reclamation of the swamp had more practical and economic importance. The establishment of the state borders and the fixing of the external frontier shrunk the hinterland of Korça. The founders of the Maliqi LLC considered the swamp's reclamation as an internal frontier, whose expansion was going to compensate for the losses from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The opening of new virgin land would provide resources, increase the profits of the local capital, and solve the demographic pressure that exacerbated after the US restricted the immigration quota in 1917 and

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<sup>45</sup> "Inaugurimi i tharjes së Liqenit Maliqi," *Zëri i Korçës*, July 12, 1927, 4.

1924.<sup>46</sup> Maliq's swamp was the alternative to America, and the America in the house that Pompeo Amadei was talking about. The reclaimed land of Maliq could become the space within Korça's plain, to be tamed and colonized. The Korça's elites stepped up to give an example to the entire country on how to expand the internal frontier and increase Albania's size without pushing further the state borders and clashing with their more powerful neighbors. In the context of the nation-state, the reclamation of the swamp was 'America in the house', the source of future wealth that would help them pressing forward other projects of regional modernization.

However, there were serious challenges to make Maliq 'an America in the house'. Until the end of WWII, the swamp remained an uncharted site. The French were mainly interested in minerals and military activities and did not produce much knowledge of the swamp. There was no detailed map of it and hardly any geological studies of the composition of the soil. Neither was there any in-depth geobotanic, ecological, topographic, and hydrological knowledge on the swamp.<sup>47</sup> Until the end of WWII, Albania had no specialists to generate the necessary scientific knowledge about for the reclamation and exploitation of the plain of Maliq. Neither the Albanian state nor the local entrepreneurs had the instruments that would generate control, power, and order.

But most importantly, in real colonial style, the company considered the plain as a half "empty" space, devoid of inhabitants—like the natives of America. While the company called its enterprise an example of enlightened self-interests the 7500 inhabitants of the sixteen villages around it were visible to its gaze only for the dues, but not when it came to their rights. The land around the swamp was not free of ownership. It either belonged to the villages, as a communitarian property, or to individual peasants and larger landowners. The borders of the holdings were very intricate, and as a rule, the families owned a series of scattered plots. Moreover, the cycle of the seasons and rainfalls determined the boundaries and use of the communitarian land. The peasants

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<sup>46</sup> On the external and internal frontier, see Archibald Lewis, "The Closing of the Medieval Frontier, 1250-1350," *Speculum: A Journal of the Medieval Studies* 33, 4 (1958): 475-483; On the use of the reclamation as a form for compensating the shrinking of the hinterland of Koça and as a solution to the emigration in the US, AQSh, F. 991, Kompania Anonime Maliq, 1943, d. 13, fl. 1. Discussion of the Deputy Chair of the Anonymous Company "Maliq" regarding the activity of the company and its conflicts with other subjects. March 14, 1943.

<sup>47</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1950, d. 1637, fl. 3. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the Prime Ministry and State Plan Commission regarding the conditions and problems of the new state farms. June 14, 1950; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1950, d. 1637, fl. 16. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the State Plan Commission concerning some problems that have emerged for the reclamation of the plain of Maliq. July 24, 1950.

used part of the pastures and arable land only during the summers when the swamp was at its lowest level.<sup>48</sup>

Maliqi LLC hired a Greek engineer, K. Vlamos, in 1924 who worked in the Office of Irrigation Projects in Egypt.<sup>49</sup> His project, instead of following the twisted and complicated lines of existing proprieties, which were the result of centuries of social interactions and human intercourse with nature, pursued rectilinear lines. As a result, the concession that the government approved, included -besides the area that was permanently underwater- swaths of land owned by the villages. Moreover, the concession determined that the peasants had to pay the company for improving their arable land.<sup>50</sup> The population of the sixteen rural communities also had to pay for fishing, hunting, and foraging rights. Besides violating the property borders, the project disturbed the whole base of the local rural economy because it excluded the peasants from the natural resources that they had always used.

After the project became known to the local population, petitions against the “injustices of the Maliqi company at the detriment of the pauper people” flooded the government. They asked for protection from the “predatory and ruthless tendencies of the capitalists organized around the Anonymous Company.” According to the petitions' authors, the company was robbing the “pastures we have owned without any contestation for hundreds of years,” thus endangering their “ownership and miserable bread.” The Turkish regime, they recalled, did not strip them off their land when it started to partially drain the swamp. The petitions appropriated the language of nationalism of the era and its antiurban language to their advantage. They defined their interests and rights as Albanians, vis-à-vis the “Other,” who they identified as urban capitalists, exploiters not rooted in the land, that chased only their gain. Thus, one of the telegrams labeled the company

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<sup>48</sup> On the claim of the company's and state's enlightened self-interest, “Inaugurimi i tharjes së liqenit Maliq,” *Zëri i Korçës*, 12 July 1927 (208): 1–2. On the number of the inhabitants of the plain of Maliq, see Teki Selenica, *Shqipëria më 1923* (Tirana: Ministria e P. Mbrodshme, 1923), 98–99.

<sup>49</sup> “Lajmë enetersante e Liqenit,” *Gazeta e Korçës*, August 26, 1924, 2.

<sup>50</sup> According to the concession, the peasant had to pay to the company with 6 Napoleons (Albanian currency of the era) for dynym (measuring unit equal to 1000 square meters). AQSh, F. 155, Ministria e Drejtësisë, 1926, d. II-854, fl. 6. The exchange course of the Napoleon to Dollar for that period was approximatively 1 Napoleon to 4 dollars [“Kursi i Monedhave në Korçë,” *Zëri i Korçës*, 6 February 1926 (59): 4]. It means that the price for 1000 m<sup>2</sup> square was equal to \$24, which converted in today's currency would be equal to \$325. In the meantime, the average of the land owned by the families in the plain was above 20 dynyms. It meant at least \$6500. For populations loosely connected to the market and with a very low standard of living, such an amount was stratospheric.

as an agglomerate of ruthless capitalists, whose only goal was to earn millions.<sup>51</sup> By pointing out that the company was behaving worse than the Turks against the Albanians, they were appealing to the Albanian state to defend them against groups who petitioners considered them as alien capitalists.

The telegrams used the idiom of the moral economy. They insinuated a relationship built upon mutual liabilities and benefits that defined a horizon of expectations from both sides involved in it. By emphasizing the peasants' rights to subsistence and the state's obligation to guarantee it, the petitions' authors tried to determine what was just, and so, legitimize their requests. In speaking on behalf of the rural communities and their customary rights, and state's responsibility to defend them, these petitions aimed at making the peasants visible to the state's gaze and pointed out the latter's obligation to protect them. In this way, the appeals constructed a discourse that undermined the company's claim, which legitimized its project with the ideology of progress and national modernization. To maximize their gain, the petitioners made full use of moral dichotomies centered around the subsistence ethos, which defined the just from the predatory.<sup>52</sup>

While considering the company as the "evil" force, they cajoled the government as the only salvation of the people, which they hoped would not sell out thousands of Albanians to the capitalists.<sup>53</sup> The petitions defined the state as a distant and benign force, a pastoral power, conceived as a shepherd, whose goal was not only to milk the cattle but also defend them from the wolves--in this case, the capitalists. By victimizing themselves and portraying their position as powerless subjects without agency, totally dependent on the grace of the center, the petitioners

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<sup>51</sup> On the petitions to the government to defend the peasants against the company, AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1926, d. III-4054, fl. 1-5. Telegram of complain of Adem Vila and his associates on behalf of the sixteen villages located around the swamp of Maliq, May 25, 1926; On the telegram that considered the government the only salvation of the peasants, AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1926, d. III-898, fl. 35-37. Telegram of complain of Adem Vila and his associates on behalf of the sixteen villages located around the swamp of Maliq. October 14, 1926; AQSh, F. 155, Ministria e Drejtësisë, 1926, d. IV-182, fl. 4. Request of the peasants of the villages around the swamp of Maliq regarding the redefinition of the boundaries of their properties. May 22, 1926.

<sup>52</sup> On the moral economy of the peasants, James G. Carrier, "Moral Economy: What's in a Name?" *Anthropological Theory* 18, 1 (2018): 18-35; James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Heaven & London: Yale University Press, 1976). See also, Edward P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the British Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 50, 1 (1971): 76-136; Jaime Palomera & Theodora Vetta, "Moral Economy: Rethinking a Radical Concept," *Anthropological Theory* 16, 4 (2016): 413-432.

<sup>53</sup> AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1926, d. III-898, fl. 35-37. Telegram of complain of Adem Vila and his associates on behalf of the sixteen villages located around the swamp of Maliq. October 14, 1926.

tried to manipulate the government and dictate the latter's stance toward the conflicting parties.<sup>54</sup> And more importantly, the telegrams attempted to define the state's action. The company had very powerful shareholders, including Pandeli Evangjeli and Kostandin Kotta, two wealthy merchants from Korça, who served as Albania's Prime Ministers during the 1930s. The telegrams tried to prevent the state structures from being used as an instrument of the company's vested interests. By outlining how the state had to handle the conflict, the petitions strove to prompt the authorities to act in their favor.

The petitions hit the target, and the Ministry of Interior started an investigation, which confirmed that the peasants were telling the truth. Vlamos' project, wrote the Prefect of Korça to his superiors in Tirana, had illegally included hundreds of already-owned hectares within the territory to be placed under company control. However, it was evident that the government and the parliament had approved this concession, through the active lobbying of the influential Korça's politicians. The peasants, on the other hand, had started since 1924 a series of small-scale irrigations to change the situation in their favor. The Prefect urged the Ministry of Interior to negotiate the conflict to the interest of all parties involved. In 1926, the President of the country, Ahmet Zogu, the strongman that dominated Albania's political life during the interwar era and who on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1928 proclaimed himself King, approved the proposal of Korça's Prefect. He and the Council of Ministers created a committee and ordered it to revise the concession and bring the conflict to an end.<sup>55</sup>

The peasants were overwhelming illiterate. They signed the petitions with their fingerprints, and sometimes in Arabic letters. So, who wrote the telegrams? Among the names of the peasants the names of Adem Vila, Emin Pojani, Sadik Qyteza, and others stand out as rich landowners of the region, and they had actually penned the telegrams. They all owned lands around

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<sup>54</sup> On the use of petitions to manipulate the state authorities see Golfo Alexopoulous, "The Ritual Lament: A Narrative of the Appeal in the 1920s and 1930s," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 24, 1-2 (1999): 117-129; Katherine Verdery and Gail Kligman, *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of the Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 264-266.

<sup>55</sup> On the irrigations of the peasants, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1931, d. IV-144, fl. 6. Letter of the company "Maliqi" sent to the Ministry of National Economy regarding the issue of the conflicts over the property boundaries with the peasants of Maliq. April 2, 1931; On the proposal of the Prefect, AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1926, d. III-898, fl. 20-21. On the decision of the President and the Council of Ministers to create a committee, *Ibid*, fl. 26-27. Correspondence between the President of the Republic and the Ministry of Interior regarding the petitions of the peasants of the plain of Maliq. August 26, 1926.

the swamp and were losing properties in its reclamation. Rather than being used as means of communication between peasants and state elites, the petitions, which utilized the conceptual arsenal of moral economy, were deployed by local elites to gain the state's support. Traditionally involved in politics, they had intimate knowledge of political conjecture, knew very well how the state machinery worked, and how to use the language of peoples' sovereignty to pressure their demands in the government.

However, the vocabulary the authors used in their petitions to couch their requests also had new nuances. The landlords did not construct a dichotomy that juxtaposed modernity to tradition, as they located their discourse squarely within a new national context and attempted to use it to their advantage. Thus, they conflated their interests with those of the rural communities that lived around the swamp. They did not appeal only to the traditional moral order, or economy, to highlight their rights vis-à-vis the state or other "alien actors," which they wanted to keep at arms distance from their communities. Writing on behalf of the people there was a trope that did not reject nation and nationalism but redefined it. Maliqi LLC tried to legitimize its claims by speaking on behalf of the nation and its progress. The big landowners contested this discourse and brought the peasants into the stage, so to negotiate their place within the national context and make their voice heard. By juxtaposing the general wellbeing of the community to the egoistic greed of the capitalists, they were formulating the ideology of the nation by opposing the people connected to the land to the rootless capitalist urbanites—not unlike from the radical nationalist discourse that was taking place in contemporary Europe.

The government was slow to act, and the committee did not meet. But, in 1930 the five-year concession expired, and the company asked for its renewal. A storm brewed in Maliq and an avalanche of telegrams from Maliq, similar to those of 1926, flooded Tirana. The petitions asked Zogu and the government to revise the concession and cancel it until the enforcement of property lines. They portrayed the company as an entity driven by greed that was illegally looting the pauper peasants. Simultaneously, the telegrams called the King the father of his people who had always cared about the peasants.<sup>56</sup> Besides the petitions, groups of peasants urged by the landowners,

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<sup>56</sup> On the petitions, AQSh, F. 317, Prefektura e Korçë, 1931, d. 72, fl. 5–6. Letter of the landowners and the councils of the villages around the swamp of Maliq sent to the Prefect of Prefect of Korça regarding the conflict with the

started destroying the border signs marked the company's property. Especially prominent was Maliq Frashëri, one of the largest landowners in the region who encouraged the peasants to attack and occupy by force the company's land, and his henchmen attacked settlers that the company had brought in the reclaimed areas.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike the beginning of the reclamation, when the company disregarded the rural population around the swamp, its shareholders now took into full consideration the peasants' interests. After realizing that the requests sent on behalf of the peasants held weight and could not be considered invisible, the company changed course. It leased land from its possession to groups of peasants from the villages around the swamp, in exchange for services. "Maliqi's" shareholders used peasants' petitions to legitimize their interests and delegitimize those of their opponents. Peasants from the village of Pirc sent a telegram to the government, where they admitted that they were pushed by other people to petition to the government against the company. And others from the villages of Zvirinë, Pertush, and Leshnicë sent telegrams to the Prime Minister's office where they thanked the company for the humanitarian work it had done improving their lives, and a petition from the village of Libonik urged the government to renew the company's concession.<sup>58</sup>

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company "Maliqi"; AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1931, d. IV-144, fl. 16-20, fl. 41-48, fl. 95-96, & 132-133. Complains against Company Maliqi of the representatives of the sixteen villages located around the swamp of Maliq sent to the Ministry of Economy. On the destruction of the pyramids, AQSh, F. 319/12, Komuna e Maliqit, 1930, d. 13, fl. 1-2; Letter of the Board of Directors of the company "Maliqi" sent to the Prefecture of Korça concerning the need it had for the intervention of the state to defend its interests against the attack against its property. April 11, 1930; AQSh, F. 319/12, Komuna e Maliqit, 1931, d. 23, fl. 1; AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1932, d. IV-159, fl. 35. Report of the Prefecture of Korça sent to the Ministry of Interior, concerning the conflict between the sixteen village around the swamp and the company "Maliqi." May 30, 1932.

<sup>57</sup> On the reports from Korça, pointing at the role of Maliq Frashëri's role for the violent acts of the peasants, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1931, d. IV-144, fl. 8. Letter of the Prefecture of Korça sent to the Ministry of Economy in relation to the conflict between company "Maliqi" and the landowners and peasants of the villages located around the swamp of Maliq. April 4, 1931; *Ibid*, fl. 13 Telegram of complaint of the chair of the company "Maliqi," Kristaq Pilika, against the abuses of Maliq Frashëri. April 24, 1931; AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1932, d. IV-159, fl. 15. Complaint of the company "Maliqi" against Maliq Frashëri sent to King Zog. May 14, 1932; AQSh, F. 152, Ministria e Brendshme, 1932, d. 404, fl. 37. On Maliq Frashëri's men attacking the settlers of the company, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1931, d. IV-144, fl. 9. Letter of complaint of the company "Maliqi," sent to the Prefecture of Korça, in relation to the interventions that hamper the working and exploitation of the swamp of Maliq. April 2, 1931.

<sup>58</sup> The telegram from Pirc, AQSh, Collection: Ministry of Economy, number 171, year 1932, file IV-159, sheet 33-34; The telegram from Zvirinë, Petrush, and Zvirinë, *Ibid*, sheet 39-40; The telegram from Libonik, *Ibid*, sheet 37. Maliq Frashëri tried to debunk these petitions and wrote to the Prefekt of Korça that the telegrams sent by the peasants of these villages were all fabricated by the company. *Ibid*, sheet 67.

The peasants were neither a homogenous group, nor puppets of the local elites, but actors in their rights. The peasants became visible to the company, which started to entice them to break their ranks and undermine the support they were giving to the big landowners. The big local players needed the help of the peasants to legitimate their claims, and the latter made full use of the conflict to see who offered more. The dispute gave many peasants leverage, which they used at their advantage. In the village of Sovjan, some peasants participated in the actions against the company, while others supported the company because it gave land to them.<sup>59</sup> The rural population was not a monolithic group and even single rural communities were divided with each family had its own interests.

After some hesitations, Zogu, who was aware of the role of the big landowners, decided to act and ordered the government to bring to a conclusions the conflicts and the violent confrontations.<sup>60</sup> At the end, when the commission succeeded to reach an agreement, it was the company that lost most. The state sided with the peasants and granted to the villagers and landowners the right to own 1000 hectares from those, which according to the concession based on Vlamos' project, were under the company's management. The central authorities, as they admitted, sided with the peasants and did not protect the company's interests.<sup>61</sup> The deal of 1932 was not the end however, as once the agreement was reached, landowners and peasants turned against each other. In the village of Rëmbec, for example, the big landowners confiscated the land of some peasants. Moreover, the agreement appeased only a part of the landowning class.

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<sup>59</sup> On Sovjan, AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1936, d. III-3047, fl. 11–12. Petition of peasants from the village of Sovjan against the company “Maliqi”. On the peasants supporting the company against the big landowners, AQSh, F. 152, Ministria e Brendshme, 1936, d. 828, fl. 20-21. Appeal of peasants of the village of Sovjan sent to the Ministry of Interior in support of the company “Maliq.” June 6, 1936.

<sup>60</sup> On Zog first dismissing the petitions, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1931, d. IV-144, fl. 23. Letter of the Prime Ministry sent to the Office of Agriculture of the district of Korça, concerning the complains of the landowners against the company “Maliqi.” May 7, 1931. On Zog ordering the Prime Minister to intervene to solve the conflict, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1931, d. IV-144, fl. 73. Order of Zog sent to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Economy, in relation to the injustices that company “Maliq” was doing against those who owned lands around the swamp of Maliq. June 23, 1931.

<sup>61</sup> On the gain of the peasants and big landowners from the arrangement of 1932, AQSh, F. 991, Kompania Anonime Maliqi, 1943, d. 13, fl. 2. Discussion of the Deputy Chair of the Anonymous Company “Maliqi” regarding the activity of the company and its conflicts with other subjects. March 14, 1943. On the state authorities siding with the peasants, AQSh, F. 152, Ministria e Brendshme, 1936, d. 828, fl. 13. Report of the Prefecture of Korça sent to the Ministry of Interior in relation to the unjust complains of some peasants of the village Rëmbec and Maliq bey Frashëri. April 25, 1936.

In 1936 the conflict exploded again, and the disgruntled landowners refused to recognize the 1932 agreement because, according to them, the company had failed to drain the lake. The root of the conflict lay in the decision of the company to bring agricultural settlers. In the face of the threat of the colonization of their land, old landlords and peasants found common language again. They petitioned the state authorities and sought to force the company to give that land to them and not to allow newcomers to settle. Again, both landowners and peasants started again to occupy the company's property and attacked the settlers that worked for the company.<sup>62</sup> The government did not, however, concede this time and stuck to the 1932 agreement. The peasants challenged the company's property rights and used the swamp's resources and grazed their cattle in the areas under its control. Also, they resorted to violence and drove the company's peasants off their settlements.<sup>63</sup>

During his reign, Ahmet Zogu consistently promoted himself as the protector of the people to legitimize his power. This was especially true with the peasantry, which composed 85% of the country's population. In Maliq, both, the wealthy landowners and the company, aware of Zog's rationale, used the peasants to increase their leverage in Tirana. The King's support for the peasants, though, does not reflect any ideological identification of the political structure with the peasant classes. It only discloses that he and his collaborators attempted to negotiate the process of transformation. Rather than a partisan of folk nationalism, indeed, Zog was a committed

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<sup>62</sup> On the peasants' request that the company to give them the land AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1936, d. III-3047, fl. 6–7. Telegram of the village of Sovjan sent to the Prime Ministry when they ask the state to intervene to the company "Maliqi" to give to them to work its land. April 5, 1936. On the peasants asking the government to not allow the company to bring new settlers, AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1936, d. 189, fl. 2–5. Appeal of the villages around the swamp of Maliq sent to the Prime Ministry against the injustices of company "Maliq." March 19, 1936; On petitioning to the government, AQSh, F. 152, Ministria e Brendshme, 1936, d. 828, fl. 14. Report of the Prefecture of Korça sent to the Ministry of Interior in relation to the unjust complains of some peasants of the village Rëmbec and Maliq bey Frashëri. April 25, 1936.

<sup>63</sup> On the occupation of company's land, AQSh, F. 152, Ministria e Brendshme, 1936, d. 828, fl. 46–48. Petition of the company "Maliq" sent to the Prime Ministry and the Ministry of Interior for help against the occupation of its land from the peasants. May 14, 1936; On the attack against the settlers, AQSh, F. 152, Ministria e Brendshme, 1936, d. 828, fl. 52. Petition of company "Maliqi" against the attack of the peasants of the village Pojan. April 11, 1936. On the grazing of the cattle in the company's land, the collection of reeds, and fishing without paying the dues, AQSh, F. 150, Oborri Mbretëror, 1937, d. III-1084, fl. 21. Report of the Chief Superintendent of the Royal Court sent to King Zog on the results of the investigation of the conflict between some big landowners and company "Maliqi." November 12, 1937. On the attack against the settler by the armed henchmen of a landlord, AQSh, F. 317, Prefektura e Korçës, 1937, d. 53, fl. 54. Petition of the company "Maliqi" sent to the Prefecture of Korça regarding the violence that the landowners had exerted against the settlers the company had installed in the reclaimed lands. November 10, 1937.

modernizer, who preferred a gradualist transformation of the country and its society. It was this approach to change that guided his attitude toward Maliq's conflict. The strongman, rather than being manipulated by the disputing parties, tried to negotiate the process.

It was within this context that the central authorities ordered the revision of the Vlamos' project, which the government identified as the source of the conflicts that were taking place in Maliq. To support the company's reclamation while not alienating the peasants, the Albanian state hired in 1937 the Italian engineer, Angelo Omodeo, one of the most prominent hydraulic engineers of his era, to outline a new plan for the reclamation of the swamp.<sup>64</sup> He arrived in Albania early that year and drew a new project. Omodeo abandoned the full reclamation and anticipated the preservation of a lake of 800 hectares at the lowest point of Maliq, where the Devoll river and its other tributaries were going to drain. He argued that the land's depression and the narrowness of the Maliq gorge, made full reclamation too expensive for the finances of the company and the Albanian state.<sup>65</sup> The project was ready in 1938, but the invasion of Albania by Italy in April 1939 and the turmoil of war did not allow the company to restart the reclamation. Omodeo's project remained on paper only.

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<sup>64</sup> On the flaws of Vlamos' project, AQSh, F. 149, Kryeministria, 1931, d. III-2062, fl. 3. Request of the company Maliqi sent to the Ministry of National Economy on the extension of the deadline for the completion of the reclamation of Maliq. June 1, 1931; AQSh, F. 150, Oborri Mbretëror, 1935, d. III-776, fl. 9-21. Report of the Italian engineer Luigi Zanuccoli submitted to the Royal Court regarding the problem of the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. September 13, 1935; AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1935, d. 187, fl. 1-10. Memo of the Ministry of Public Constructions regarding the progress made in the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. September 13, 1935. On the hiring of Angelo Omodeo, AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1937, d. 138, fl. 1-18. Decision of the Council of Ministers for the release of a special fund for the payment of Angelo Omodeo for the preparation of the project for the reclamation of Maliq. July 22-December 9, 1937. On Omodeo's life see *Angelo Omodeo. Vita, progetti, opere per la modernizzazione. Una raccolta di scritti*, ed. Andrea Filippo Saba (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2005), 3-64.

<sup>65</sup> AQSh, F. 177, Ministria e Punëve Botore. 1938, d. 172, fl. 1-54. Reports and estimations of the hydraulic systemization of the lake of Maliq. June-August, 1939.

## 2.5 Maliq's Scheme and Fascism's Grand Colonial Project

After Germany's successful annexations of Austria and the Sudetenland, Mussolini was afraid of Berlin's plans in the Balkans to recreate the defunct Habsburg Empire, decided to invade Albania. For the Italians, it was both a matter of pride and consolidating their power in the Balkans, which they considered their sphere of influence. The failure of Great Britain and France in protecting the European order they had created in Versailles in 1919 made the Italians bolder. On the other side of the Adriatic, Ahmet Zogu was resistant to becoming a puppet of the Italians and make Albania an Italian protectorate. What worried Mussolini and his Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, most was Zogu and his flirtations with the Germans. In December of 1938, the Italians attempted to poison the Albanian King, but Zog discovered the plot. In early April of 1939, Mussolini sent Ahmet Zogu an ultimatum that asked the full loss of Albania's independence to Italian control. After Zogu's refusal, Italy invaded the country on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1939. The same day, Albania's King left the country with his Hungarian American wife and their just-born son.<sup>66</sup> He never returned. He first fled to Egypt, and afterward to England, where he remained for the duration of WWII. When the war was over, the communists came to power and they banned Zogu from returning return to Albania. In the early 1950s, he moved to France, where he died in 1961.

In the meantime, the Italian Fascist authorities had grand plans for Albania. For them, the invasion of the small Balkan country did not represent merely an actioned of geostrategic importance for the control of the Adriatic and the future expansion in southeastern Europe. Rome's leadership also considered Albania as a space for colonization. The Italian Fascists had already started similar enterprises in their African colonies, which had attracted the admiration of the Nazi authorities. The latter monitored their southern allies for their projects for the colonization of the eastern frontiers.<sup>67</sup> Although not much discussed in the academic literature, Albania represented a

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<sup>66</sup> Bernd J. Fischer, *Albania at War* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1999), 8-25.

<sup>67</sup> On the influence that the Italian colonization of Africa exerted on Nazi Germany's project of colonization of its eastern frontier, see Patrick Bernhard, "Hitler's Africa in the East: Italian Colonialism as a Model for German Planning in Eastern Europe," *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, 1 (2016): 61-90; Patrick Bernhard, "Borrowing from Mussolini: Nazi Germany's Colonial Aspirations in the Shadow of Italian Expansionism," *The Journal of Imperial and Contemporary History* 41, 4 (2013): 617-63.

frontier for the Italians in the southeastern Adriatic, which Rome's authorities planned to colonize with Italian settlers. Unlike Libya, though, the Fascists did neither apply nor anticipate implementing racist laws to keep the two groups separated from each other. The Italian authorities planned to merge the two ethnic groups rather than keeping them apart because their goal was not only to colonize Albania but to assimilate the Albanians and transform them into Italic subjects.

The Albanians were neither a Semitic race, as it was the case with the Libyans, nor black Africans, as it was the case with the Ethiopians. In both these Italian colonies, Fascist authorities consistently discouraged interbreeding between the Italians and the indigenous populations. Nor were the Albanians Slavic, a technically white but, according to the Fascist racial categories, still an inferior race. In Albania, the Fascists encouraged mixed marriages because they considered the Albanians to have similar racial attributes to those of the Italians. Mussolini's regime invented also legend about the fraternity between Aeneas, the founders of Rome, and the Albanians' ancestors. The construction of this mythic narrative is not significant merely for demonstrating how the Fascists used history for legitimating their rule in the eyes of the Albanians. Its real importance lies in the fact that they used the past as a link, a precedent for merging the two populations rather than, as it was the norm with the Fascist regimes, keeping them at a safe distance.

The grand project of cultural and ethnic transformation of the country also implied huge infrastructural and economic investments. The Italians borrowed Maliq's scheme from their predecessors and used it in the function of their project of the Fascist imperialist project of the Italianization of Albania. In May 1939, roughly a month after the Italian invasion, the Ministry of Economy of the Albanian puppet government received new petitions against Maliqi LLC and its concessions. One of them wrote: "Today...with enthusiasm, we will enjoy from Your Excellency, inspired by the valuable principles of Fascism, the justice through the fair application of the law for everybody." To the frustration of its authors, the flattering words moved neither the Italian nor their Albanian collaborators. The Ministry of Agriculture rejected their pleas and recognized the concession of 1925.<sup>68</sup> The new Fascist authorities had other plans for Maliq.

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<sup>68</sup> The telegram sent to the Fascist authorities, AQSh, F. 171, Ministry of Ekonomisë, year 1939, d. VIII-18, fl. 16-17. Petition of the representatives of the sixteen villages located around the swamp of Maliq sent to the Ministry of Economy, against the company "Maliqi." May 17, 1939. The rejection of the petitions, AQSh, F. 172, Ministria e

Six and a half months after the Fascist troops marched victoriously in the streets of Tirana, a group of Italian sugar companies pooled their capital and established “La Societa Anonima Saccarifera Albanese” (The Albanian Anonym Company of Sugar—from now on SASA) on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1939. In compliance with their project of establishing an autarkic economy in Albania, the Italians considered the construction of the sugar refinery as a critical issue.<sup>69</sup> Rome planned to create a self-sufficient Albania, an organ that could stand alone on its feet within the Italian Empire. The Fascist authorities sincerely believed that they would increase the standard of living of the Albanians, which implied the growth of sugar consumption. Besides, as part of Rome’s goal to bring to Albania Italian colonists, the fascist authorities estimated that their arrival would increase the general sugar consumption also because they used more sugar than the Albanians.<sup>70</sup> Rome could not convince its subjects to colonize Albania if their life quality would decrease.

With capital and the support of the Italian Vicegerent in Albania, SASA started immediately to prepare the construction of the refinery in Korça. The Fascist authorities had designated as the region for the production of sugar in Albania.<sup>71</sup> An expedition of two Italian specialists, Giovanni Lorenzoni and Pierfrancesco Nistri confirmed the suitability of the plain of Korça, especially the area of Maliq, for the cultivation of sugar beet—something that the French and the Albanians had already discovered. In addition, after a general survey in the country, they concluded that this was the only region in Albania suitable for the cultivation of sugar beet. According to them, the plain of Korça combined soil quality, climate, and potential sources for irrigation that would enable the cultivation of sugar beet in both quality and yields comparable to

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Bujqësisë dhe Pyjeve, 1943, d. V-152, fl. 7. Response of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests to the petitioners from the villages located around the swamp of Maliq. July 13, 1937.

<sup>69</sup> On the establishment of SASA, AQSh, F. 161, Mëkëmbësia e Përgjithshme, 1939, d. 404, fl. 1. Letter of notification of SASA, sent to the Vicegerent of the Italian Emperor in Albania for the establishment of the company. September 21, 1939. On the Italian autarkic project and the building of the sugar refinery as part of it, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonomisë (Drejtoria e Tregtisë dhe Industrisë), 1940, d. 251, fl. 1. On the request of the Albanian Anonym Sugar Company for the obtaining of 35 hectares of land 2 km from the city of Korça, for the building of a sugar refinery. February 20, 1940. On the economic activity of the Italian Fascist authorities in Albania during the years of the Fascist occupation, see Gian Paolo Caselli & Grid Thoma, “The Albanian Economy during World War II and the First Attempt at Planning,” *Journal of European Economic History* 34, 1 (2005): 93-119.

<sup>70</sup> AQSh, F. 161, Mëkëmbësia e Përgjithshme, 1939, d. 1060, fl. 1. Report on the project of construction of two factories of sugar, one in Korça and one in the plain of Myzeqe.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

those of northern Italy. The swamp of Maliq, they stated, would provide an area large enough to produce the right amount of sugar beet for Albania's demands.<sup>72</sup>

The administration of SASA complied with these conclusions. In the plots it possessed along the Dunavec river, the company yielded 600 quintals per hectare, twice that of Italy. With the reclamation of the lake of Maliq, SASA was going to use mechanized technology and overcome the problem of the small lands and primitive tools of the local rural population. The company tried to buy land from the peasants, who agreed to sell it only for stratospheric prices. According to SASA's director, the amount the peasants of plain of Korça for asked for exceeded even that of prime lands with excellent infrastructure in north Italy. The reclamation of the swamp was a blessing for the SASA because it would relieve the company from dealing with the Albanian peasants and pay a much lower price for the land.<sup>73</sup>

However, to start the production, the company would have to wait for the draining of the marsh. On the other hand, the company needed the peasants. The plain of Korça was one of the most densely populated regions in the country and had the necessary workforce for a labor-intensive crop like sugar beet. The factory was close to human resources and raw material. The combination of ecological and demographic factors made the plain of Korça the sugar capital of the Italian controlled Albania.<sup>74</sup> SASA planned to start the production of sugar by summer 1941. In 1940 the construction of its factory began a few kilometers north of the city of Korça. Its proximity to the city facilitated the commuting of the workers and specialists, which it planned to

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<sup>72</sup> AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonimisë (Drejtoria e Bujqësisë), 1933, d. 833, fl. 1-23. Report of Giovanni Lorenzoni and Francesco Nistri on the establishment of the sugar industry in the region of Korça; AQSh, F. 161, Mëkëmbësia e Përgjithshme, 1939, d. 404, fl. 1. Study of Giovanni Lorenzoni and Pierfrancesco Nistri "On the Establishment of a Sugar Refinery in Korça."

<sup>73</sup> On the high yields of sugar beet of SASA, AQSh, F. 161, Mëkëmbësia e Përgjithshme, 1942, d. 536, fl. 6. Letter of SASA sent to the Vicegerent of the King of Italy in Albania on the question of the sugar refinery in Korça. October 26, 1942; *Ibid*, fl. 11. Letter of SASA sent to the Provincial Office on the question of the sugar refinery in Korça. September 22, 1942. On the high prices of the Albanian peasants for selling the land, AQSh, F. 479, Shoqëria Shqiptare e Sheqerit, Pa vit, d. 2, fl. 3-5. Criteria for the definition of the price for the terrains expropriated in Korça from SASA; On the need to reclaim the swamp to start massive cultivation, AQSh, F. 479, Shoqëria Shqiptare e Sheqerit, 1940, d. 2, fl. 16. Memo of SASA sent to the Ministry of Economy in Tirana. February 27, 1940.

<sup>74</sup> On the designation of the plain of Korça as the area for the cultivation of sugar, AQSh, F. 171, Ministria e Ekonimisë (Drejtoria e Tregtisë dhe Industrisë), 1940, d. 251, fl. 2-3. Memo of SASA to the Ministry of Economy in relation to the construction of a sugar factory in the area of Korça. February 27, 1940; AQSh, F. 161, Mëkëmbësia e Përgjithshme, 1942, d. 536, fl. 11. Letter of SASA sent to the Provincial Office on the question of the sugar refinery in Korça. September 22, 1942.

bring from Italy. The company contracted many peasants in the villages of the plain to start cultivating sugar beet. According to Italian specialists who followed the cultivation of sugar beet among the Albanian peasants, the prospects were excellent.<sup>75</sup>

World War II, though, did not allow the completion of the project. The Greek-Italian war started on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1940, and the front was not far from Korça, interrupting the building of the refinery.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the machinery SASA bought from the Czech-based company Škoda—that time under German sovereignty and ownership—remained in the port of Trieste, because the assemblers in Italy and Bohemia were mobilized for military production. Even the specialist that would operate the refinery could not come to Albania.<sup>77</sup> When the war ended, the swamp still covered the plain of Maliq and flooded the villages around it, while in the outskirts of Korça, the newly built structure of the refinery remained empty. A new stage would start after the war, this time with the communists in charge.

During the interwar era, Albanian private and state capital failed to complete the project. Maliq's scheme unfolded how the property structure and lack of capital and specialists undermined the success of the project. The Italians borrowed the idea sugar industry from their predecessors and furthered the project of territorial integration of Albania through regional economic interdependencies. When the war ended, the country fell under the control of the Albanian Labor Party.<sup>78</sup> The communist leadership inaugurated its project of building socialist Albania with the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. The ALP did not borrow all the ideas from the Soviet Union.

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<sup>75</sup> On building the factory next to the city of Korça and the bringing of specialists from Italy, AQSh, F. 479, Shoqëria Shqiptare e Sheqerit, 1940, d. 10, fl. 1-2. Report of the Directory of SASA to the Ministry of Economy on the location of the sugar factory of Korça. February 19, 1940; AQSh, F. 479, Shoqëria Shqiptare e Sheqerit, Pa vit, d. 5, fl. 1. Report of the Directory of SASA to the Ministry of Economy on the location of the sugar factory of Korça. On the excellent results of the cultivation of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 479, Shoqëria Shqiptare e Sheqerit, 1940, d. 12, fl. 2-5. Report of the Albanian directory of SASA submitted to the company's directory in Rome, regarding the progress of the sowings of the sugar beet from the Albanian peasants. June 23, 1940.

<sup>76</sup> AQSh, F. 479, Shoqëria Shqiptare e Sheqerit, 1941, d. 4, fl. 1. Letter of the construction company of Anastas Pilika sent to the directory of SASA regarding the delay of completion of the refinery of Korça. August 25, 1941; AQSh, F. 161, Mëkëmbësia e Përgjithshme, 1942, d. 536, fl. 9. Letter of SASA sent to the Provincial Office on the question of the sugar refinery in Korça. September 22, 1942.

<sup>77</sup> On the AQSh, F. 161, Mëkëmbësia e Përgjithshme, 1942, d. 536, fl. 6-8. Letter of SASA sent to the Vicegerent of the King of Italy in Albania on the question of the sugar refinery in Korça. October 26, 1942; *Ibid*, fl. 10-11. Letter of SASA sent to the Provincial Office on the question of the sugar refinery in Korça. September 22, 1942.

<sup>78</sup> The Albanian Communist Party, which was established in 1941, changed its name to Albanian Labor Party in 1948. I will use throughout this work the acronym ALP in order to avoid any potential confusion.

Indeed, it continued the state-building process and the spatial integration of the country that had started since the interwar era through projects conceived years before they took over the power. The constitution of a cohesive interregional space also meant the reshaping of the local landscape. The communists implemented this double process in Maliq. Although the ALP narrated the story of post-WWII Albania as a historical caesura, in reality, there were substantial continuities with the past, and in Maliq, these links stretched back as far as the late Ottoman era.

### **3.0 THE MAKING OF MALIQ'S LANDSCAPE MODERN AND SOCIALIST**

#### **3.1 Maliq's Landscape Between "Good" and "Bad" Government**

The walls of the "Room of Peace" in Siena's "Palazzo Pubblico" are covered by the frescoes of the "Allegory of Good and Bad Government," painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the late 1330s. Half of this outstanding work depicts the good government. People look happy, they sing, dance, and work. The joyous yellowish of the wheat covers the fields outside of the city's walls and regular plots are well kept. Lorenzetti dedicated the other half of the painting to the bad government. The dark colors dominate the scene filled with phantasmagoric creatures, starving people, omnipresent plague, and above all, barren fields. This fresco is the first representation in the European art of the political landscape. Since then, the binary it elaborated has remained a cornerstone in defining the relationship between the landscape and the type and quality of government. The Albanian communists too operated within this dichotomy and used the outlook of landscape as an ideological tool to legitimate and consolidate their power.

The transformation of Maliq's landscape occupied an important place in the Albanian Labor Party's iconography and narrative, which located the bad and good governments respectively in the past and present. The water and the thick blanket of reeds and groves, the floods, and above malaria symbolized the barren land and the weak and sick society of the past era. Erasing it became a marker of achievement and progress, and this what the communists did as soon as they took power. In 1951, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the ALP, the regime published an album of photos from the new socialist Albania. By juxtaposing images from before and after the land reclamation project, it used Maliq's landscape to deliver the same message as Lorenzetti. the swamp represented the bad government of the past and the country's backwardness. Next to it stood the sugar factory that the regime built in Maliq in 1951.

The refinery supplanted the bog as the center of economic activity in the Maliq plains. The new industrial landscape represented socialism, the modern, and the fulfillment of utopian of development. Other albums later published by the regime's organs would use images from the plain of Maliq. The clean, geometric, well-regulated parcels, and their lively colors served as

proofs of the ALP's good government. The reclamation of Maliq showcased the triumph of the Apollonian over the Dionysian, of order over chaos. Considering a political act, the transformation of the landscape became, in the eyes of the Albanian communist leadership, as a critical part of the revolutionary transformations of the political order and society. As a result, the landscape's representation is a lens for exploring the political power that conceives and shapes it, its economy, and ideology, and Maliq is the embodiment of this.

During the forty-five years of the ALP, the plain of Maliq underwent a thorough metamorphosis. The draining of the swamp, the plowing of the reclaimed land with tractors, sowing it with precision machines, and harvesting with combines transfigured the plateau's face. The transformed face of Maliq's plain, with its large rectangular parcels was similar not only to those of the socialist countries, but also to those in Western Germany, Netherlands, or the American Midwest. Despite being shaped on the Eastern or Western side of the Iron Curtain, in capitalist or socialist camp, the agricultural landscapes shared the same architectural patterns and principles of organization of space. The plain of Maliq was one of several sites reclaimed from a swamp and transformed ex-nihilo into arable land in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. Some of the most famous cases are Agro Pontino and Torviscosa in Fascist Italy, or the Zuiderzee scheme and Jura Water Correction in the respectively liberal Netherlands and Switzerland.<sup>1</sup>

The similarities of these hydrological and agricultural reclamation projects clearly transgressed the ideological boundaries that divided Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Regardless of their differences, the states that have implemented these projects have also shared common goals. They conceived these undertakings as answers to demographic pressure on land, and solutions for the regional and national development. Their landscapes, crisscrossed by straight roads separating rectangular parcels surrounded by dense irrigation and drainage ditches, look very similar. Liberal democracies have prided themselves of these large and complex schemes, without overloading the engineered landscape with ideological significance, trying to preserve, at least on surface, the

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<sup>1</sup> On Zuiderzee, see Robert J. Hoeksema, "Three Stages in the History of Land Reclamation in the Netherlands," *Irrigation and Drainage* 56, S1 (2007): 113-126. On the Pontine Marshes, see Antonio Linoli, "Twenty-six Centuries of Reclamation and Agricultural Improvement on the Pontine Marshes," in *Integrated Land and Water Resources Management in History*, ed. by Christoph Ohlig (Siegburg: DWHG, 2005), 27-55. On Jura Water Correction, see "150 years of water correction in Jura: a pioneering enterprise," <https://www.bafu.admin.ch/bafu/de/home/themen/naturgefahren/dossiers/juragewaesserkorrektio.html>. Last access, October 13, 2018.

neutrality of nature. This was not the case with the communists, who identified the transforming of nature with socialism. What was, then, socialist about Maliq?

In the 1970s, Henri Lefebvre explored the similarities between the construction of space under capitalism and socialism,<sup>2</sup> but it was only in the 1990s, when the triumphalism that followed the collapse of socialism ebbed that scholars started to focus on the similarities rather than the differences between the two competing systems. To transcend the supposed divide between liberal democracy and communism of the 1945-1990 years, they did not focus their analysis as much on institutions. In the past, such an approach juxtaposed liberal democracy of the west to the peoples' democracies of the east, and the market economy to central planning, highlighting the irreconcilable exclusionary dichotomy of the Cold War era. Their venue became the microphysics of power, everyday life, and the model of development and social organization. In this way, they continuously navigated between small case studies and broader global perspectives. Among the first authors who investigated the point of contacts was Stephen Kotkin. In his now famous *Magnetic Mountain*, a case study of the city of Magnitogorsk, Kotkin demonstrates the influence of the models the contemporary American industrial cities provided to the Soviet Union during the interwar era. One of his main points is that despite the fundamental differences between the USSR and the USA, Stalin's developmental projects shared significant similarities with those pursued by the Americans.<sup>3</sup>

However, Kotkin's analysis does not go beyond the major imperial centers of power, and the question that arises is how similar trends applied to peripheral and semi-peripheral states. It was James Scott who included case studies from the peripheries. In his book *Seeing Like a State*, Scott speaks about the modern state in singular, regardless of the political-economic system. He did not find the similarities in the economic realm or the institutional organization of politics, but in the models and the techniques, modern power is exercised: the organization of the world in a way to enhance the expansion of the central bureaucratic power at the expense of the local actors and population. Scott calls the spatial transparency to power's gaze legibility, and this is what,

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<sup>2</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. by Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

according to him, the modern states struggle for, regardless of their ideology. His analysis includes many case studies; moving from the countryside to the cities, from the natural environment to populations, from the forests to urban planning, from Germany to the Soviet Union, from Africa to Latin America. Under the lenses of his investigation are the most significant projects of improvement in the age of progress. Legibility is not the only denominator of the modern era, though, as the failure of top-down projects undertaken by the state because of the grass-roots resistance is the other.<sup>4</sup>

In her comparison between the city of Billings in Montana and Karaganda in Kazakhstan, Kate Brown concludes that the similar urban planning of these two cities was shaped by analogous systemic forces, which despite being capitalist corporations or state party plans, were molding a new world in the peripheries of these two superpowers in the making.<sup>5</sup> Brown's analysis is very useful for imperial settings with abundant financial, labor, and natural resources. Nevertheless, it does not say much for the small nation states that emerged from the ashes of the collapsing empires after the WWI, like it was the case with the new nations of eastern Europe.

The study of the shaping of the landscape has been in vogue for a while now, but the scholarly work on eastern Europe has mainly focused on the urban settings, especially the new industrial towns built after the example of Magnitogorsk.<sup>6</sup> Some works have focused on the symbolic representation of the landscape, while its physical organization has been left out of scholarly attention.<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, I will argue that the drive to emulate the industrial organization

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<sup>4</sup> James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998), 242-243.

<sup>5</sup> Kate Brown, "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana Are Nearly the Same Place," *The American Historical Review* 106, 1 (2001): 17-48. See also her other comparative article, "Returning Home to Rustalgia," in Kate Brown, *Dispatches from Dystopia: Histories of Places Not Yet Forgotten* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015), 134-150.

<sup>6</sup> Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-1956* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2013); Katherine Lebow, "Revising the Political Landscape: Nowa Huta, 1949-1957," *City and Society* 11, 1-2 (1999): 165-184; Mark Pittaway, "Creating and Domesticating Hungary's Socialist Landscape: From Dunapentele to Sztálinváros, 1950-1958," *Historical Archeology* 39, 3 (2005): 75-93; Ulf Brunnbauer, "'The Town of the Youth': Dimitrovgrad and Bulgarian Socialism," *Ethnologica Balcanica*, 9 (2005): 91-114; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; S. Frederick Starr, "Visionary Town Planning During the Cultural Revolution," in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*, ed. by Sheila Fitzpatrick (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1978), 207-240.

<sup>7</sup> See for example the volume *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of the Soviet Space*, ed. by Evgeny Dobrenko & Eric Naiman (Seattle & London: Washington University Press, 2003); Mark Bassin, "'I object to Rain That is Cheerless': Landscape Art and the Stalinist Aesthetic Imagination," *Ecumene* 7, 3 (2000): 313-336.

of production in agriculture, which implied efficiency, mechanization, large-scale economies, and mass production, shaped the physical landscape of the plain of Maliq.<sup>8</sup> This drive was limited neither to Albania nor to the communist bloc but, indeed, was part of a wider trend that predominated throughout the 20<sup>th</sup>-century and reached its apex in the three decades that followed WWII. How did it come about that Maliq ended up sharing a similar outlook to other plains reclaimed by Fascist or Liberal regimes? In what ways local and national circumstances shaped Maliq? And, after all, was there any marker that made it a socialist landscape?

### 3.2 Uncompleted Reclamation

In April 1945, after a winter of intense rainfalls, the marsh of Maliq flooded the villages around it. The communist-led government sent a team of specialists to Korça evaluate the situation. Upon returning to Tirana, they submitted a report, asking for an immediate and integral reclamation of “the wounded land” of Maliq.<sup>9</sup> The new authorities ordered the beginning of the works. The reclamation took a political character. The new authorities used this project to showcase the achievements of the new political order, very much like Mussolini tried to prove the superiority of Fascism over liberal democracy by reclaiming the Pontine Marshes. Was there a better way to demonstrate the vitality of a new revolutionary regime than to succeed where the previous political elites had failed? Was there a better christening for the Albanian communist

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<sup>8</sup> There are two articles that investigate the physical transformations of the landscape in Albania, but none of them engages with Maliq. One of them [Dean Rugg, “Communist Legacies in the Albanian Landscape,” *Geographical Review* 84, 1 (1994), 59-73] is too general and gives to the English-speaking reader an overview for an otherwise mysterious country. Besides being overly simplistic, its author conflates rural and urban landscapes into one single concept. The other article [Daniel Müller & Darla K. Munroe, “Changing Rural Landscapes in Albania: Cropland Abandonment and Forest Clearing in the Postsocialist Transition,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, 4 (2008): 855-876] analyzes how the interactions between domestic political actors and global economic forces have shaped the rural landscape after the collapse of the socialism.

<sup>9</sup> AQSh, F. 494, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1945, d. 910, fl. 2-3. Report prepared from Remzi Baçi and Vasil Noçka submitted to the Ministries Economy and Ministry of Public Works on the damages caused in the plain of Korça from the rivers of Devolls and Dunavec, and their systemization. April 26, 1945; AQSh, F. 494, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1945, d. 439, fl. 43-45. Report prepared from Remzi Baçi and Vasil Noçka on the damages caused in the plain of Korça from the rivers of Devolls and Dunavec, and their systemization. April 26, 1945.

modernizers than by taming nature, expanding the internal frontier, thrusting the plow into a wasteland and making it fertile?

Regardless of Tirana's new leadership agenda, the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq was part of a broader dynamic of intensified modernization that took place in Europe after WWII. The post-WWII European governments continued with increased determination and vigor to intensify the large-scale campaigns for reclaiming marshes that had started in the interwar period. Besides the Zuiderzee and Jura schemes in Italy, the liberal post-Fascist governments completed the reclamation of marshlands of Mezzogiorno, which Mussolini's regime had left untouched. The same process occurred in Greece, where the reclamations that started in the Greek Macedonia in 1920 finished only in 1970. In Spain, Franco after consolidating his power re-initiated the projects "national regeneration" and dedicated special attention to the disciplining of waters, especially after the pouring of the American dollars in the early 1950s.<sup>10</sup>

As was the case with post-Ottoman states in the Balkans and post-colonial states elsewhere, communist regimes borrowed many projects from the pre-communist era and weaved their implementation with socialist meaning. Even in the Soviet Union, Bolsheviks initiated projects that were planned since in Tsarist period, like the mammoth White Sea–Baltic canal, the Moscow Canal, and the forestation of southern Russia.<sup>11</sup> In eastern Europe, some of the most prominent examples are those of the steel cities of Nowa Huta, in Poland, Ostrava-Poruba in Czechoslovakia, Eisenhüttenstadt in GDR, and Sztálinváros in Hungary. The communist leaderships of Warsaw, Prague, East Berlin, and Budapest borrowed the idea of the mega steel cities from plans from their

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<sup>10</sup> On Italy, Graeme Baker & Peter Taylor, "Feudalism and the 'Southern Question' (AD 1500 to the Present)," in *A Mediterranean Valley: Landscape, Archeology, and Annales History in the Biferno Valley*, ed. by Graeme Baker (London & New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 298-301. On Greece, Richard C. Smardon, *Sustaining the World's Wetlands: Setting Policy and Resolving Conflicts* (New York: Springer, 2009), 67-69; Neil Roberts & Jane Reed, "Lakes, Wetlands, and Holocene Environmental Change," in *The Physical Geography of the Mediterranean*, 276. On Spain, Erik Swyngedouw, "Technonatural Revolutions: The Scalar Politics of Franco's Hydro-Social Dream for Spain, 1939-1975," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32, 1 (2007): 9-28; Erik Swyngedouw, "Modernity and Hybridity: Nature, *Regeneracionismo*, and the Production of the Spanish Waterscape," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, 3 (1999): 443-465.

<sup>11</sup> Cynthia Ruder, *Building Stalinism: The Moscow Canal and the Creation of the Soviet Space* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 4; Mikhail Morukov, "The White Sea-Baltic Canal," in *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag*, ed. Paul R. Gregory & Valery Lazarev (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2003), 152-153; On the Stalin's project for the forestation of southern Russia see the chapter "Transformation: The Great Stalin's Plan to Transform Nature" in Stephen Brain, *Song of the Forest: Russian Forestry and Stalinist Environmentalism, 1905-1953* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 140-167.

anti-communist predecessors.<sup>12</sup> Even in Africa, the socialist post-colonial regimes continued projects of their colonial predecessors, as it is the case with Cahora Bassa dam in Mozambique. The Italian Fascists and German Nazis, too, implemented in the early stages of their rule projects conceived and planned by their predecessors.<sup>13</sup> Despite the communist regimes' narratives of historical cesura, they all preserved many links with the past. ALP's leadership is not an exception to the rule. The reclamation of Maliq is but another example that proves that the socialist countries of eastern Europe did not borrow their ideas and projects only from the Soviet Union. Indeed, they were fertile sites of cross breeding of old and new ideas.

Maliq's reclamation started it in May 1946, and it took to the regime six years to complete the project. The communist authorities faced the same challenges as their predecessors: lack of financial resources, machinery, skilled workers, technical staff, and knowledge about the swamp and how to reclaim it. However, they had the will to overcome all these obstacles. As it was the case with the building of Nowa Huta in communist Poland, the Albanian Communist Party compensated the lack of machinery with human muscles, shovels, pickaxes, and wheelbarrows.<sup>14</sup> Food became a luxury in the worksite of Maliq, and the living conditions were terrible. The workers lived in deplorable sanitary conditions, packed in small shelters or wooden sheds. Many workers slept outside, offering an easy meal to the hungry armies of mosquitos.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, "Nowa Huta, Eisenhüttenstadt and Ostrava-Poruba in Early State Socialism: The Proletarianization and Ruralization of New Cities," in *Mastery and Lost Illusions: Space and Time in the Modernization of Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. by Włodzimierz Borodziej, Stanislav Holubec, & Joachim von Puttkamer (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 123-125; Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 20-21; Sándor Horváth, *Stalinism Reloaded: Everyday Life in Stalin-City, Hungary*, translated from Hungarian, Thomas Cooper (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> On Mozambique, Allen F. Isaacman & Barbara S. Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement, and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965-2007* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013), 4. On the Fascists and Nazis borrowing projects from their predecessors, Harald Bodenschatz, "Urbanism and Dictatorship: Expanding Spaces of Thought," in *Urbanism and Dictatorship: European Perspectives*, ed. by Harald Bodenschatz, Piero Sassi, and Max Welch Guerra (Gütersloh, Berlin-Basel: Bauverlag & Birkhäuser, 2013), 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 37-38;

<sup>15</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1946, d. 7/1, fl. 9. Telegram of the ALP's Committee of Maliq sent to the Ministry of Interior on some urgent needs of the construction site of Maliq. May 11, 1946; *Ibid*, fl. 19 & 23. Telegrams of the ALP's Committee of Maliq sent to the Ministry of Interior on the situation in the construction site of Maliq. May 11 and June 2, 1946; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1946, d. 159, fl. 10-11. Report of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the situation on the construction site of Maliq. No date; *Ibid*, fl. 47. Report of the Party Committee of Maliq sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the progress of the works in the work site of Maliq from May to September 1946. September 24, 1946; AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1946, d. 552, fl. 51. Report of the hospital of Korça on the control its doctors had performed in the construction site of Maliq. November 23, 1946;

One of the major problems was that of the supply with the workforce. There were not enough engineers, technicians, and geometers able to lead a project of such magnitude. In addition, there was a serious shortage of skilled workers like excavator operators, stonecutters, masons, and miners.<sup>16</sup> Unskilled workers became a rare commodity as well. According to the initial estimations, the successful completion of the project required the mobilization of a large workforce, at least 4000 per day, to compensate for the lack of machinery.<sup>17</sup> In reality, the workforce almost doubled to 7500.<sup>18</sup> Because the region of Korça could not supply all this workforce, the regime was forced to mobilize from other parts of the country, and the work site of Maliq became a colorful site of many accents and costumes from all around Albania unified by the shared experience of sweat and sufferings.

The lack of organization and experience increased the costs of the project substantially. When it started, the government estimated that the whole enterprise would cost 100 million lekë; in the end, the state treasury paid 331 million.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding all the difficulties, setbacks, delays, and costs of the project, the communist regime managed to complete the reclamation by 1953. The marshland had disappeared and what remained of it was a small lake of about 800 hectares, where the Devoll, Dunvec, and a multitude of creeks drained. But, nature was not as

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AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1947, d. 3, fl. 95. Bulletin of the ALP's Central Committee for the month of June. June 1947; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1947, d. 323, fl. 13. Telegram of Mihallaq Gjiniqasi, Chair of the ALP's Committee of Korça to the ALP's Central Committee concerning the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. July 20, 1947; *Ibid*, fl. 20. Report on the progress of the works in Maliq. August 4, 1947. AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1947, d. 43, fl. 5. Report of the Executive Committee of Korça sent to the Ministry of Public Works on the situation in the construction site of Maliq. May 23, 1947.

<sup>16</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1946, d. 7/1, fl. 44-47 & fl. 49-51. Requests of the administration of the construction site of Maliq to the Party Committees in different district of the country for skilled work force. June 8-9, 1946; *Ibid*, fl. 44-47 & fl. 49-51. Requests of the Ministry of Interior sent to the Party Committees in different district of the country for skilled work force. June 8-9, 1946; AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Punëve Botore, 1947, d. 431, fl. 58. Report of the technical office of the construction site of Maliq sent to the Ministry of Construction. September 26, 1946; AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1946, d. 547, fl. 1. Info of the State Enterprise of Construction of the district of Korça on the situation of the work force in the construction site of Maliq. July 19, 1946; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1947, d. 2, fl. 27. Report of the ALP's Central Committee on the situation in the construction site of Maliq. August 22, 1947.

<sup>17</sup> AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë dhe Pyjeve, 1945, d. 26, fl. 2-5. Minutes of the meeting of the engineers of the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Economy regarding the necessary preparations for the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. May 14, 1945.

<sup>18</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1946, d. 159, fl. 35. Report of the ALP's Committee of Maliq sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the situation in the construction site of Maliq. September 13, 1946

<sup>19</sup> AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë dhe Pyjeve, 1951, d. 95, fl. 6. The list of the objects built by the Ministry of Construction and their cost. November 12, 1951.

malleable as both politicians and engineers thought. Not long after the communists had pulled up the iron gates that divided the swamp from the drainage canal, they discovered that the reclamation was not over.

In an area of 5900 hectares, underneath the one-meter thick sandy-clay coat that covered the plain, hid a vast deposit of peat, which thickness reached up to ten meters.<sup>20</sup> Peat is an organic matter of plant origins that is deposited mainly in wetlands as a result of the continuous accumulation of organic matter. When peat enters in contact with oxygen, it is subjected to oxidation, which causes its shrinking. This is exactly what happened in Maliq and many other reclaimed areas within the temperate and tropical climatic zones. The cultivation of peatlands and the draining of the groundwater for agricultural purposes accelerated the oxidation of peat and caused land subsidence. This phenomenon has been a significant ecological, economic, and social problem for areas of the world, from the US to Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, and Asia.<sup>21</sup>

Everybody knew about the peat, but nobody, including the author of the reclamation's project, Angelo Omodeo, anticipated how it would react once the water of the swamp did not cover the plain of Maliq anymore. After the reclamation, it started to decompose, and between 1953 and 1957, the plain subsided by one meter severely damaging the seepage canals. The draining of the lake expanded from 800 hectares, as Omodeo had anticipated, to 2000 hectares, and a series of other small swamps appeared across the plain. The floods returned, and they left behind a layer of thick mud that inhibited the use of machines in agriculture.<sup>22</sup> Maliq was meant to showcase the

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<sup>20</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1958, d. 314, fl. 21. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture on the full reclamation of the lake of Maliq and the irrigation of the plain of Korça. August 2, 1958; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1982, d. 39, fl. 8. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture on the draft-project for the complementary works for the reclamation of the plain of Maliq, improvement of the drainage system in 5300 hectares, irrigation of 2700 hectares, and the increase of irrigation capacity in 2600 hectares in the district of Korça.

<sup>21</sup> Henk van Hardeveld et al., "Supporting collaborative policy process with a multi-criteria discussion of costs and benefits: The case of soil subsidence in Dutch peatlands," *Land Use Policy*, 77 (2018): 425-436; Antoni Grzywna, "The degree of peatland subsidence resulting from drainage of land," *Environment Earth Sciences* 76, 16 (2017): 559; Jens Leifeld et al., "Peatland subsidence and carbon loss from drained temperate fens," *Soil Use and Management* 27, 2 (2011): 170-176; Aljosja Hooijer et al., "Subsidence and carbon loss in drained tropical peatlands," *Biogeosciences* 9, 3 (2012): 1053-1071; Francesca Zanillo et al., "Long term peatland subsidence: Experience study and modelling scenarios in the Venice coastland," *Journal of Geophysical Studies* 116, F4 (2011): 1-14; Stephan Gebhardt et al., "Shrinkage processes of a drained riparian peatland with subsidence morphology," *J Soils Sediments*, 10 (2010): 484-493.

<sup>22</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1957, Lista 8, d. 19, fl. 29-32. Reports on the drainage of the marshlands in the agricultural cooperative of Plasa and Melçan-Lumalas, and their transformation into arable land;

mechanized agriculture, but the harvesters, which the Albanian regime had imported from the Soviet Union, got stuck in the peat's mud. This time, the inundations did not cause much harm to the private economies of the peasants or their houses, but to the agricultural cooperatives and, especially, the state farm "Maliqi." The floods and the expansion of the drainage lake occurred within the territory of the farm, which could then only use 1300 out of its 5000 hectares.<sup>23</sup>

In 1958 the Ministry of Agriculture assigned to a mixed group of Albanian and Soviet engineers to study the full reclamation of the plain of Maliq. In February 1959, the team, led by the Soviet engineer G. A. Zhukov, submitted the project.<sup>24</sup> The works started in 1960 and finished in 1965. The costs of this new stage of the reclamation reached 400 million lekë, thus exceeding the initial cost of 1946-1953.<sup>25</sup> This time, though, the regime did not resort to mass mobilization of the workforce. There were delays and muddling, but the state authorities kept them within limits that did not affect the outcome of the project. By the 1960s the regime had more dredgers, more tractors, and a plethora of other necessary machinery and equipment. Meanwhile, an entire cohort of engineers, geologists, agronomists, and other technicians that had studied in the Soviet Union and the other countries of eastern Europe. This generation established the University of Tirana and filled all the state institutions with the necessary specialists. During this period, thousands of Soviet and other eastern European specialists arrived in Albania. They gave an important contribution to the preparation of the Albanian specialists. The countries of COMECON helped Albania with financial aid and machinery.<sup>26</sup> Since the communist came in power the Albanian engineers,

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AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1958, d. 314, fl. 21-22. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture on the full reclamation of the lake of Maliq and the irrigation of the plain of Korça. August 2, 1958.

<sup>23</sup> On the harvesters that stuck in the peat, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1954, Lista 5, d. 56, fl. 12. Report on the campaign for harvesting, cleaning, and transportation of sugar beet. September 9, 1954. On the expansion of the drainage lake and the limited use of the reclaimed land, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1959, d. 457, fl. 4. Memo on the full reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. October 21, 1959.

<sup>24</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1959, d. 819, fl. 3. Correspondence of the Prime Ministry with the Ministry of Agriculture concerning the full reclamation of the swamp of Maliq. May 2, 1959.

<sup>25</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1972, d. 246, fl. 2. Report of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the ALP's Central Committee on some problems of the state farm of Maliq in the district of Korça and "November 29<sup>th</sup>" in the district of Lushnje.

<sup>26</sup> For a good overview of the aid the countries of the socialist bloc gave to Albania see Elidor Mëhilli, "Socialist Encounters: Albania and the Transnational Eastern Bloc in the 1950s," in *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange Across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s-1960s*, ed. by Patryk Babiracki & Kenyon Zimmer (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 107-133; Elidor Mëhilli, "Defying De-Stalinization: Albania's 1956," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, 4 (2011): 4-56.

technicians did not have only more equipment and knowledge but also had accumulated a significant experience in leading large infrastructural projects. The regime was more efficient.

The peat mineralization did not stop, though, and as it challenged Omodeo in the 1950s, it also challenged Zhukov's project in the late 1960s into the 1970s. During this period, the level of the plain of Maliq kept depressing. Around that 3000 hectares had subsided at the level of Devolli's riverbed or below it kept being flooded.<sup>27</sup> The hydrotechnical specialists concluded that the plain would keep depressing at least 1-2 meters in the next decade. A new phase for the land improvement was necessary. In 1982, the heads of the of ALP's Committee and Executive Committee of Korça expressed personally to Enver Hoxha their concern about the floods and the need to for another round of reclamations. In the meantime, the Ministry of Agriculture had started its new reclamation project. It anticipated deepening the Devolli's riverbed by 2.5 meters and widening it 10 meters. According to the estimates, in cases of uninterrupted rainfall, 1000 hectares would be flooded in a matter of hours. The Ministry of Agriculture estimated the completion of the reclamations in 1987. But by that year, the Ministry of Construction had completed less than half of the works.<sup>28</sup> Budget constrictions hampered the completion of the reclamation, and the regime did not choose to compensate for the lack of capital with mass mobilization and forced labor as it was the case in 1946. In a few years, the regime collapsed, and with it, the reclamation came to a halt.

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<sup>27</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1982, d. 39, fl. 8. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture on the draft-project for the complementary works for the reclamation of the plain of Maliq, improvement of the drainage in 5300 hectares and irrigation 2700 hectares, and the increase of irrigation capacity in 2600 hectares in the district of Korça.

<sup>28</sup> On the continuous depression of the plain, Marko Kamenica, "Ulja vertikale e tokave torfike të bonifikuara të Maliqit" (Tirana: Ministria e Arsimit dhe Shkencës), 3-9. On the concern about the floods, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1982, d. 55, fl. 10. Minutes of the meeting of the Secretaries of the ALP's Central Committee. March 17, 1982. On the beginning of the new reclamation, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1982, d. 39, fl. 2-3. Concise memo prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and submitted to the Council of Ministers regarding the draft idea of the reclamation of the plain of Maliq in Korça. March 15, 1982; *Ibid*, fl. 10-15. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture on the draft-project for the complementary works for the reclamation of the plain of Maliq, improvement of the drainage in 5300 hectares and irrigation 2700 hectares, and the increase of irrigation capacity in 2600 hectares in the district of Korça. On the estimation of the completion of reclamation in 1987, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1982, d. 543, fl. 5. Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers concerning the draft-project of the complementary works for the reclamation of the plain of Maliq in Korça. April 12, 1982. On the slow progress of reclamation, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1987, d. 59, fl. 1-3. Info of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the Council of Ministers on the need to import equipment for the reclamation of Maliq. May 29, 1987.

Besides reclaiming the swamp, the regime also built the vascular system of the plain: a dense network of irrigation and drainage canals and ditches that crisscross each other like grid lines on a map. Building this grid was a long and very expensive process. One of the main problems for the cultivation of the Maliq plains remained water. The project of reclamation anticipated the construction of a system of draining canals two meters deep and 200-250 meters from each other. Soon, the engineers and agronomists figured out that the plain had vast amounts of groundwater, with a level of moisture that destroyed crops. They altered the project and constructed in the points with a higher level of waters a denser network of canals: one every 100 meters and deep up to 2.5 meters.<sup>29</sup> The works for the construction of the system continued throughout the 1960s. The magnitude of the entire project and the continuous depression of the ground level complicated the whole enterprise but did not keep the regime from utilizing the plain.

Ironically, the plain of Maliq was rich in groundwaters but poor annual rainfalls. The uneven annual distribution, with 60% of them falling between October and February, made the problem of irrigation a thorn for the agriculture of the area.<sup>30</sup> Considering that sugar beet is one of the most irrigation intensive crops—it needs 1000 meter cubic of water per hectare—irrigation of the plain became an essential element of the whole project of Maliq.<sup>31</sup> In 1954, the regime started a series of works for the irrigation, and in 1959, the Soviet team led by G. A. Zhukov prepared a comprehensive project that included, besides the full reclamation of the swamp and the full irrigation of the plain.<sup>32</sup> Following this and other projects of Albanian specialists, the local

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<sup>29</sup> On the construction of draining system, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1963, d. 57, fl. 23. Tasks regarding the project of the irrigation of the plain of Korça; AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1967, Lista 23, d. 64, fl. 13. Report of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the systematization of the arable land in the district. On the groundwaters, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1953, d. 880, fl. 1. Memo of the Ministry of Construction submitted to the Council of Ministers concerning the establishment of a commission for the study of the area of the plain of Maliq that will be cultivated with sugar beet. June 10, 1953; AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1961, d. 110, fl. 36. Memo of the team of control of the ALP's Central Committee concerning the intensification of agriculture in the district of Korça. September 10, 1961. On the denser draining grid in the areas with high levels of groundwaters, AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1964, d. 209, fl. 1-2. Memo concerning the necessary deviations from the project of the reclamation of Maliq because of the instability of the canals constructed in peat land. September 12, 1965.

<sup>30</sup> AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1959, d. 45, fl. 1. Minutes of the meeting of the Technical Committee of Giprovod'khoz of the Ministry of Agriculture of the URSS. June 11, 1959.

<sup>31</sup> AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1963, d. 57, fl. 23. Tasks regarding the project of the irrigation of the plain of Korça.

<sup>32</sup> AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1959, d. 45, fl. 1. Minutes of the meeting of the Technical Committee of Giprovod'khoz of the Ministry of Agriculture of the URSS. June 11, 1959; AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1959,

authorities and the central government built in the hills around the plain a series of reservoirs and a canal that used the water of the lake Prespa Minor.<sup>33</sup> Besides the large plots and ditches of drainage and irrigation, the regime slowly built a network of 60 kilometers of roads that traversed the plain.<sup>34</sup> During the harvesting seasons, these roads buzzed with the roar of Czechoslovak Škoda trucks, combines, and tractors, and also buses and vans filled with people. These roads connected the villages of the plain to the region and the country. They were not exclusively used for agricultural purposes, but also for the circulation of people, goods, and ideas. The lines of the roads intersected with those of the plots and canals, furthering the molding and fashioning of the physical landscape. They represented other markers of the modern quest for the mastery of the territory.

While the communists did not fully control the plain, they never stopped struggling to tame it, and not without success. The central authorities made sure to have as many specialists as possible working in Maliq. The know-how they generated allowed the political power and its whole decision-making structure to have a far better understanding of the plain compared to their predecessors. The communists could see beyond the visible surface of the reclaimed land. The underground waters, irrigation and drainage canals, the thickness of peat, land composition, geology, meteorology, were constantly studied by the specialists and scientists that worked for the state research institutions. The decisions of the state to intervene, and their implementations were all based on this knowledge that made the plain more transparent to the regime's eyes.

The mapping of the Maliq expresses very well this new and more in-depth form of knowledge and its crescendo over time. But by the 1950s the plain stopped being an uncharted

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d. 153, fl. 4. Memo on the measures for the realization of the production and industrialization of the sugar beet for the year 1959. March 9, 1959.

<sup>33</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1958, d. 314, fl. 21. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture on the full reclamation of the swamp of Maliq and the irrigation of the plain of Korça. August 2, 1958; AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1966, d. 75, fl. 43-45. Decision of the Council of Ministers on the draft project for the irrigation and drainage of the plain of Korça. May 3, 1966; AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1987, d. 89, fl. 5. Study of the Executive Committee of Korça on the irrigation of the state farm of Maliq, presented to the State Plan Commission. August 6, 1987; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1989, d. 316, fl. 2. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the Council of Ministers concerning the draft-idea for the irrigation of the peat land of the plain of Maliq with water sprinklers supplied with electricity. January 13, 1989.

<sup>34</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1957, Lista 8, d. 23, fl. 5 Report on the completion of the overhaul of the sugar cocombine of Maliq; *Ibid*, fl. 14, Program of the Politburo of the ALP's Committee of the district of Korça for the harvesting, collection, and industrialization of sugar beet; AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1977, d. 149, fl. 96. Info on the plucking, collection, and processing of the sugar beet. October 20, 1977.

space like Dino Buzzati's *The Tatar Steppe*. The plain did not appear in the maps merely as part of a larger symbolic projection of space that included the regions of Korça, or a component of a more extended spatial formation filled with general visual descriptions. The communist regime produced maps exclusively on the plain, which, armed with a rich set of tools that depicted canals, ditches, roads, coordinates, topography, distribution of peatlands, soil composition, plots, reservoirs, conveying to the beholder detailed knowledge about it. These maps demonstrate how the plain changed over time, and how its transformation was a result of the growing knowledge the communist regime accumulated about it. They reflect order, discipline, but more than everything else, its economic utility.<sup>35</sup>

The reclamation of the swamp and its agricultural systematization transformed the plain of Maliq into a modernist landscape. For Tirana's leadership, it became one of the most emblematic agricultural landscape of socialist Albania that demonstrated the regime's vitality. The regime's iconography represented the plain to the domestic audiences as a showcase of socialism in the countryside, of socialist modernization, its efficiency, and progress. Men and women working in the plain, driving combines and precision sowing machines, surrounded by a yellowish sea of grain or the greenish of the sugar beets' leaf.<sup>36</sup>

To quote Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, Maliq was a "techno-natural landscape," a space inhabited by humans and machines.<sup>37</sup> It was a nexus where nature, technology, and social forces enmeshed. Here, cadres, peasants, agronomists, engineers, doctors, economists, veterinary, geologists, victims, perpetrators, machinery, tractors, combines, iron plows and wooden plows, horses, oxen, water buffalo, sugar, sugar beet, peat, water, rainfalls, floods, and detritus blended into one complex whole. All these actors interacted in a space that was simultaneously specifically local but also global. The continuous efforts to reclaim the swamp, the different projects and struggles with peat, subsidence, groundwater, and floods represented the local dynamics of a much

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<sup>35</sup> Map 1: AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1950, d. 299, fl. 36; Map 2: AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1959, d. 457, fl. 10; Map 3: F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave. 1982, d. 543; Map 4: AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1987, d. 89, fl. 15.

<sup>36</sup> The images are taken from the album: *Bujqësia* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1982).

<sup>37</sup> Suzanne Stewart-Stainberg, "Grounds for Reclamation: Fascism and Postfascism in the Pontine Marshes," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 27, 1 (2016): 103 & 109; Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Translated from French, Catherine Porter) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

larger global historical pattern that Maliq is part of. It is the story of accumulation of knowledge and transition from the poor charted territory of the pre-WWII era, to the communist regime with detailed maps and accurate information.

The reclamation of the swamp represented an effort to erase what was specific about the plain of Maliq and make it not too different from the other plains either in Albania or industrialized countries of Europe. However, the conditions the disciplining the plain were local. As this section demonstrated, behind the larger shared patterns that do not differentiate Maliq from other contemporary agricultural landscapes, we can see the resilience of the specific conditions and their role in the transformation of the plain. Although the communist regime tried to obliterate the swamp, its specter constantly hunted it. In his study on the post-WWII transformation of the German city of Breslau into the Polish town of Wrocław, Gregor Thum provides an example of the complexity of the historical dynamics, which defy those political that aim to obliterate the old. Thum argues that despite the efforts of the Polish authorities to treat the city as a palimpsest and erase the old German presence and supplant it ex novo by a newly gained Polishness, they could not obliterate the old town. Breslau has always remained hiddenly present inside Wrocław.<sup>38</sup>

What was true for a social space like Wrocław, was also true for an agricultural space like Maliq. Besides a field of social activity and interactions, the latter also was a site where Nature was a critical agent. While the Polish communist authorities fought against the ever-present German past, Albanian communist authorities fought the natural factors and tectonic forces that created the swamp, and the ditches and canals were an answer to the swamp's looming threat of return. The struggle to tame nature were part of a global history that took place in the peculiar circumstances of the plain. We can see the intercourse between global trends and local particularities also in the specific role that Maliq played in the process of nation building—through its sugar scheme.

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<sup>38</sup> Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław During the Century of Expulsion* (Translated from German Tom Lampert and Allison Brown) (Wrocław: Via Nova, 2011), 7 and passim.

### 3.3 “For the Factory and Your Country”: Maliq and the Nation

Besides the hydrological project, the communist regime borrowed from their predecessors also the sugar scheme. In 1949, when the reclamation of the swamp was close to completion, Tirana’s authorities started building a refinery in Maliq, and immediately pushed forward the project of transforming the plain into Albania’s land of sugar.<sup>39</sup> Concomitantly, the government elaborated the plan for the regional specialization of economy and agriculture, which designated specific regions, in accordance to ecological and geological conditions, to the cultivation and processing of one or two industrial crops. In the summer of 1950, after being authorized by the government, a team of the Ministry of Agriculture devised a general plan. The latter reconfirmed the interwar era projects of regionalization and designated the plain of Maliq for the cultivation of sugar beet. It estimated that the whole plain, with a total of 14,300 hectares, could produce the necessary quantity of sugar beet for a refinery to work.<sup>40</sup>

The regionalization of agriculture is similar to what Peter Vandergeest and Nancy Peluso have called internal territorialization. Expanding Foucault’s argument that the focus of the modern state has been the governing of the masses and their distribution over a territory, Vanderegeest and Peluso call internal territorialization the establishing of state control over natural resources and

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<sup>39</sup> The plan of the State Planning Committee to build a sugar factory, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1947, d. 330/10, fl. 11-12. Report of the State Planning Commission sent to the ALP’s CC regarding the First Five-Year Economic Plan. April 16, 1946; On the establishment of the light industries that Albania could produce the required raw materials, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1947, d. 12, fl. 10. Discussions in the ALP’s Politburo of the plan of the economic investments. March 24, 1947; AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1947, d. 21, fl. 4. Minutes of the meeting of the ALP’s Politburo regarding the principal orientations of the First Five-Year Plan. July 5, 1947; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1947, d. 330/14, fl. 2. Study on the economic situation of Albania during the period of Ahmet Zog’s rule.

<sup>40</sup> On the regional specialization, *Ekonomia politike (socializmi)* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë, 1981), 54. On the authorization of the Ministry of Agriculture to draw a project on agricultural regionalization, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë dhe Pyjeve, 1950, d. 15, fl. 7. Comments on the draft-decision of the Ministry of the Agriculture sent to the Council of the Ministers regarding the study on regionalization of agriculture. February 2, 1950. On the drawing of the plan of regionalization, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1950, d. 474, fl. 2. Draft-decision on the regionalization of agriculture. August 24, 1950; On the localization of areas subject to regional specialization, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë dhe Pyjeve, 1950, d. 15, fl. 9. Draft-decision of the Ministry of the Agriculture on the regionalization of agriculture sent to the Council of the Ministers for approval. February 11, 1950. On the designation of the plain of Maliq for the cultivation of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1950, d. 474, fl. 2. Draft-decision on the regionalization of agriculture. August 24, 1950. On the capacities of the furrow of Korça to produce sugar beet to supply the refinery, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë dhe Pyjeve, 1950, d. 15, fl. 25-26. An outline on the regionalization of cotton, rice, sugar beet, and other industrial plants. July 5, 1950.

people who use them. They argue that “all modern states divide their territory into complex and overlapping political and economic zones, rearrange people and resources within these units, and create regulations delineating how and by whom these areas can be used.”<sup>41</sup> These principles, of territorialized power over people and natural resources, guided the regionalization of agriculture.

After the building of the sugar factory, the first problem that emerged for the planners was that of supply with sugar beet. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, collectivization was still at its beginning, and the most significant challenge the planners of agriculture faced were the thousands of private farmers, which the state contracted to cultivate industrial crops, including sugar beets. Since 1948, Spiro Koleka, at that time Minister of Industry, expressed his frustration with the poor performance of the peasants in the cultivation of industrial crops. In 1948 they fulfilled only 50-60% of the state’s quota. The situation with the sugar beet was not different. Since the first year of its cultivation, in 1948, the results were not good.<sup>42</sup>

The regime answered to the peasants’ actions with a legal apparatus that forced the small private farmers to obey the state’s central planning. It passed a law for the implementation of regionalization, which sanctioned the peasants who resisted the state’s plan to severe punishments, ranging from expropriation to jail. Although the local authorities did at times use the iron fist, the regime, notwithstanding its threats, used more carrot than stick. Enver Hoxha and the Secretary for the Cadres in the Central Committee, Tuk Jakova, publicly appealed the peasants of the plain of Maliq, Korça, and Bilisht to work harder and supply the refinery with the required amount of sugar beet. The two leaders highlighted that the fulfillment of this goal was a great responsibility

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<sup>41</sup> According to Foucault governmentality is a form of knowledge (political economy), institutional architecture (the modern state), and technologies of power (police). For more see Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, & Peter Miller (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 87–104; Peter Vandergeest & Nancy Lee Peluso, “Territorialization and State Power in Thailand,” *Theory and Society* 24, 3 (1995): 387. On Governmentality see, Tania Murray Lee, “Governmentality,” *Anthropologica* 49, 2 (2007): 275-281; Lorna Weir, Pat O’Malley & Shearing Clifford, “Governmentality, Criticism, Politics,” *Economy and Society* 26, 4 (2006): 501-517; Nikolas Rose, Pat O’Malley & Mariana Valeverde, “Governmentality, “Governmentality,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 2 (2006): 83-104; Pat O’Malley, “Indigenous Governance,” *Economy and Society* 25, 3 (1996): 310-326.

<sup>42</sup> On the distribution of cultivation among small-holding peasants, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1949, d. 2, fl. 1. Report of Spiro Koleka held in the III Plenum of the ALP’s CC regarding the fulfillment of the economic state’s plan for the period between January-September 1949. October 11-13, 1949. On the contracting of private peasants to cultivate sugar beet, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1948, d. 46, fl. 31. The monthly report of February 1948, of the ALP’s Committee of Maliq sent to the ALP’s CC. February 29, 1948. On the lack of fulfillment of the quota, “Në rrethin e Korçës të bëhen më shumë përpjekje për mbjelljen e shpejtë të panxharit,” *Përpara*, May 15, 1948, 4.

for all the rural economies of the plains. They instructed the local authorities to assign the best lands to the cultivation of the sugar beet and reminded them to use the Soviet experience for best results.<sup>43</sup>

Petitioning the peasants and the magic bullet of Soviet experience were not enough to dilute the effect of state's policies toward the rural population. Since 1945, the ALP's authorities imposed compulsory procurements on the countryside, which forced the peasants to deliver surplus production to the state to supply the cities and sold them with fixed prices.<sup>44</sup> This system openly favored urban and industrial centers over the countryside, and immediately backfired. The Minister of Agriculture, Hysni Kapo, pointed out that the peasants were not going to meet the state plan without first providing the necessary food for themselves. They regularly hid their surpluses instead of delivering them to the authorities, and sold them to the urban market at exorbitant price.<sup>45</sup> In the plain of Maliq, the peasants neglected the cultivation of the sugar beet because, according to them, they would otherwise starve. Many of them did not cultivate sugar beet in their land, but stick to cereals and legumes, which the peasants used to feed themselves and sell in the market. To the irritation of the Secretary of the ALP's Committee of Maliq, a number of peasants contracted to cultivate sugar beet in the state-owned reclaimed land, instead planted corn, which they sold. In 1949 the private farmers met only 40% of the sugar beet quotas. According to the ALP's Committee of Maliq, the farmers were more committed to the production of grain, which was far more vital to them, than to sugar beet. As all this was not enough, the peasants did not even pay attention to the plucking and conservation of sugar, which are very delicate processes.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> On the measures against those who would resist to regionalization, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1950, d. 474, fl. 10. Memo on the regionalization of cotton, sugar beet, rice, and other industrial plants; AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1950, d. 53, fl. 31. Draft-decree of the law on the mandatory cultivation of cotton, sugar beet, tobacco, hemp, flax, sunflower, castor bean, and soya in the regionalized lands. On the plea of Enver Hoxha and Tuk Jakova, "Thirrje e Këshillit të Ministrave dhe e Komitetit Qendror të P.P.Sh. për realizimin e planit të mbjelljeve dhe të arritjes së rendimenteve të larta të panxhar sheqerit," (Call of the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee of the ALP for the Realization of the Plan of Sowings and the Achieving of a High Yielding of Sugar Beet), *Zëri i Popullit*, February 21, 1951, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Deko Rusi, *Transformimi socialist i Bujqësisë së RPSH* (Tirana: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1962), 93.

<sup>45</sup> On Kapo's statement regarding peasants' deliveries, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 2, fl. 8–10. Report on the measures for the improvement and development of the agriculture. March 2–3, 1953. On the peasants selling of foodstuff in the cities with high prices, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1949, d. 1, fl. 23. Report of Enver Hoxha held in the II Plenum of the ALP's CC. April 28-30, 1949.

<sup>46</sup> On the complaints of the peasants, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1948, d. 46, fl. 45. Informative report on the first trimester of 1948 of the ALP's Committee of Maliq sent to the ALP's CC. April 2, 1948. On the peasants cultivating

Peti Shambli, the head of the ALP Committee of Korça, insisted that the state had to increase the material stimuli for the peasants that cultivated sugar beet. After a study, the State Planning Commission reconfirmed the same conclusion and pointed out that the peasants cultivated their best lands with potato and cereals because these crops were more rewarding. Even the newly created collective farms did not consider the cultivation of sugar beet worthwhile. The refinery bought the crop with a low price that did not justify the intensive work and the high expenses the plant required. As a response, the state increased the premiums for the peasants.<sup>47</sup>

However, Tirana was not consistent in its use of incentivization, and at times the local branches of government preferred the use of force. Part of the deal between the state and the peasants was that the former would give to the latter, in exchange for the cultivation of sugar beet, consumption goods necessary to them, like salt, kerosene, maize, threads, etc. By 1952, the state had removed some of these items from the list. Sometimes the local state organs did not even pay the peasants for the sugar beet. As far as the state was not compensating them with the necessary goods they needed, the peasants kept cultivating cereals and neglecting sugar beet. The outcome was devastating for the operation of the refinery. Thus, of 4876 economic units the state contracted, 309 of the did not deliver their quota at all, 1399 had an efficiency of 50 quintal per hectare, and 55% of the private sector delivered up to 80 quintal per hectare, while the State Plan Commission's quota was 220 quintals per hectare.<sup>48</sup>

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corn instead of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1948, d. 46, fl. 62. The monthly report of April 1948, of the ALP's Committee of Maliq sent to the ALP's CC. May 2, 1948. On the importance grain had for the peasants of Maliq compared to sugar beet, AShV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1949, Lista 5, d. 11, fl. 11. The monthly report of February 1949, of the ALP's Committee of Maliq sent to the ALP's CC. March 6, 1949. On the lack of attention for the plucking and conservation of sugar beet, "Në rrethin e Korçës vjelja e panxharit shkon mirë ndërsa grumbullimi i tij është prapa," *Përpara*, November 17, 1949, 2.

<sup>47</sup> On Peti Shambli's proposal, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 5, fl. 168. Minutes of the meeting of the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953. On the State Planning Commission's study, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1955, d. 37, fl. 1. Memo "On the study of sugar beet and some other cultures". On the complains of the collective farms concerning the cultivation of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1959, d. 32, fl. 93. Memo on the measures for the production and industrialization of the sugar beet. March 23, 1959. On the application of material incentive, Avni Kolaneci, "Punojmë për 380 kv. panxhar sheqeri për hektarë," *Për bujqësinë socialiste*, 7(1956): 34- 35.

<sup>48</sup> On the peasants neglecting the cultivation of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 518, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1953, d. 107, fl. 1-14. Memo of the Ministry of the Agriculture to the Council of Ministers "On the increase of the material interests of the peasants for the cultivation of the industrial crops (cotton, tobacco, and sugar beet)." On the discrepancy between the State Plan and the yielding, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 5, fl. 226-227. Minutes of the meeting of the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953.

In the village of Rëmbec the peasants became particularly vocal and protested against the cultivation of sugar beet. According to the local ALP Committee, they wanted to cultivate for the urban market, which was more convenient than to sell sugar beet, barley, tobacco, or cotton to the industrial enterprises under fixed prices. Even the cadres sometimes did not respond to the ALP's orders. In two villages in the plain of Maliq, Sovjan and Novoselë, the communists did not allow their families to mobilize for the season of plucking sugar beet, while others refused to cultivate it. Clearly, the peasants, either ALP's members or not, found potato and cereals as more profitable to sugar beet.<sup>49</sup> And again, the regime was forced to step back. In 1953, Hysni Kapo proposed to the Prime Ministry the reintroducing of the removed items and the increase the compensation with both consumption goods and cash for the industrial crops. However, the peasants still preferred to cultivate potato and cereals. Even the collective farms found the cultivation of sugar beet was not profitable because the price of 305 lekë per quintal that the combine paid, did not justify the intensive work and the high expenses the crop required.<sup>50</sup>

The lack of competent specialists regarding sugar production exacerbated further the situation. As Enver Hoxha confessed, the State Planning Commission came up with unrealistic quota, without knowing how to achieve them. And the government realized how difficult was to meet the plan only after facing the constant failures. Peti Shambli explained to the Central Committee that the average quota for the sugar beet state organs imposed on the peasants totally

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<sup>49</sup> On the convenience of the peasants to cultivate for the local urban market than for the industrial enterprises, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1956, Lista 12, d. 25, fl. 23. Report on the condition of the ALP's Grassroot Organization in the collective farm of the village of Rëmbec; On the communists that did not join their forces and did not allow their families to mobilize for the plucking of sugar beet, AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1954, Lista 5, d. 237, document with no page number. Minutes of the meeting of the Politburo of ALP's Committee of Maliq: "On the analysis of the activity of the party cells in villages of Sovjan and Novoselë. August 19-20, 1954; For the communists who refused to cultivate sugar beet, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1955, d. 70, fl. 28. Report of the Conference of the ALP's Committee of Maliq. May 15-16, 1955; On the profitability of cultivating potato and cereals, AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1955, Lista 6, d. 8, fl. 18. Memo on the study of the sugar beet and other crops.

<sup>50</sup> On the peasants preferring to cultivate potato and sugar beet, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1955, d. 37, fl. 1. Memo "On the study of sugar beet and some other cultures." On the introduction of material incentives, AQSh, F. 518, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1953, d. 107, fl. 1-14. Memo of the Ministry of the Agriculture to the Council of Ministers "On the increase of the material interests of the peasants for the cultivation of the industrial crops (cotton, tobacco, and sugar beet)." On the peasants' reluctance to cultivate sugar beet even after the increase of incentives, AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1955, Lista 6, d. 8, fl. 18. Memo on the study of the sugar beet and other crops. On the collective farms that did not find profitable the cultivation of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1959, d. 32, fl. 93. Memo on the measures for the production and industrialization of the sugar beet. March 23, 1959.

neglecting the complexity of the plain and the variety of the fertility of soil. This practice, he continued, undermined the peasants' interests who, regardless of the quality of their land were forced to plant sugar beet. This compromised the factory's operation and the peasants' wellbeing because many of them were impoverished from cultivating sugar beet. Yet, the state sector still fared better than the private farmers.<sup>51</sup>

The specialists of the Ministry of Agriculture were quick to react to these remarks and admitted that the implementation of regionalization had had flaws because it included plots that were not suitable for the production of sugar beet. In 1954, the Ministry of Agriculture, revised regionalization and instead of assigning in bloc the whole plain to the cultivation of sugar beet, selected more carefully the plots designated for it. In a second round, that took place in 1959, the teams of geometers and agronomists redefined the areas of regionalization of sugar beet. The new regionalization became more flexible and recognized the lack of pedological uniformity. So, the team introduced a new form of classification that divided the land into different categories, depending on its suitability for the cultivation of the sugar beet.<sup>52</sup>

Gradually, the results improved. With advance of collectivization, land consolidation, the amelioration of services and mechanization the yields increased. The collective farm's system integrated the peasants into the socialist market, and their livelihood did not depend anymore on their private plots, but on the monetary rewards they had from the performance of their farms. Still, the problems between central planners and the producers in Maliq persisted. Tirana's authorities stuck to autarky, and in the 1970s and 1980s dealt with demographic ballooning and increased sugar consumption. For this reason, the State Planning Commission kept increasing the sugar beet

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<sup>51</sup> On Hoxha's confession, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 2, fl. 126. Closing remarks of comrade Commandant in the VI Plenum of the Central Committee. March 2-3, 1953. On Peti Shambli complain about the application of sugar beet's quota, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 5, fl. 165. Minutes of the meeting of the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953.

<sup>52</sup> On the specialists of the State Planning Committee's admission of the flaws of regionalization, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1958, d. 127, fl. 25. Memo concerning the areas cultivated with sugar beet and the danger of nematodes; On the new regionalization, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1960, d. 90/1, fl. 48. Report on the development of the agriculture in the PR of Albania. General characteristics; On the redefinition of the areas of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1960, d. 146, fl. 1. Information on the implementation of the decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee for the production and industrialization of the sugar beet. February 2, 1960; On the new classification of the regionalized land, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 31, fl. 5-6. Memo on the regionalization of the sugar beet.

quota. In the end, their stubbornness became counter-productive. The need to meet the state quota forced the agricultural enterprises of Korça to cultivate sugar beet in sandy soils, resulting in low yields. While the farms struggled to meet the state plan, the sugar content of the beets provided decreased alarmingly. When this became apparent in 1975 to the specialists of the combine, who were against ever increasing yields as markers of efficiency, sounded the alarm. They wrote to the government and made it clear that rather than seeking continuous increase of the total output of sugar beet, the central authorities would do better to point to the increment of the crop's sugar content.<sup>53</sup>

These continuous tensions between Tirana and Maliq not only show flaws of central planning and the idea of autarky, but also demonstrate how the sugar industry was a technology of power that connected the plain with the capital and the wider country. The factory was the representative of this whole web of production, which beside refining sugar also generated the communist power in this part of the country. Very telling is the opinion of a member of a delegation of Soviet kolkhozes that visited the collective farms in the plain of Maliq, to teach the Albanian farmers how to cultivate sugar beet and increase its yield. When the delegation, during its missionary tour, visited the cooperative “Shkëndija” (the Spark) of the village of Rëmbec, one of the Soviet farmers saw toward the factory's smokestacks and said to his Albanian freshmen colleagues: “If you work with advanced farming technics, I am convinced that you will never be ashamed in front of the new factory and your country.”<sup>54</sup>

As this statement points out, the sugar refinery was a sanctuary of the socialist cult of labor and productivity, which pervaded all the discourse of all the Soviet-type regimes. In Albania,

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<sup>53</sup> On the cultivation of sugar beet in sandy lands and the low yielding, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1981, d.146, fl. 2. Info regarding the implementation of the instructions of the ALP's VIII congress for the agriculture in the district of Korça. July 16, 1981. On the failure of the cooperatives to meet the state plan, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1981, d. 140, fl. 16-21. Memo of the State Plan Commission on the increase of cultivation of the industrial crops for meeting the needs of the country in fats, sugar, rise, and cotton for the seventh five-year plan. October 8, 1980. On the decrease of the sugar content of the beet, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1981, d. 140, fl. 18. Memo of the State Plan Commission on the increase of cultivation of the industrial crops for meeting the needs of the country in fats, sugar, rise, and cotton for the seventh five-year plan. October 8, 1980. On the letter of the specialists of the sugar combine, ASHV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1980, d. 19, fl. 4-9. Some opinions of the specialists of the sugar combine “November 8<sup>th</sup>” sent to the Ministry of Light and Food Industry regarding the constructions of a new establishment for the processing of sugar beet. August 15, 1980.

<sup>54</sup> “Në fushën e panxharit,” *Shqipëri-BRSS*, 10-11(1951): 26.

likewise in the other communist countries, working was the fetish of secular religion of progress, which the socialist states transformed into the central tenet of their identity—*labor omnia vincit!* Working was foremost a political act and the socialist regimes invested it with ideological meaning. The chimneys, with their long necks that scratched the sky, replaced the belfry and minaret of churches and mosques, and displayed the coming of a new age and gods. The tall structures with their red bricks established new hierarchies of power and values and reinforced the secular order. The icons, saints, or teachings of prophets lost their appeal. New images of heroes of progress and labor, of the brave world of industry and development replaced the old idols. The smokestacks and the CO<sub>2</sub> they exhaled in the atmosphere, stood for the socio-economic system and the political power, ALP, that created the new Pantheon.

It became obvious from the advice of the Soviet farmer, that besides manufacturing the state and its power in the peripheries, as Catherine Alexander has put it, the sugar refinery also manufactured the nation.<sup>55</sup> The factory became the driving force that structured the daily life of those who worked and lived in Maliq. The combine conveyed the state's power, to expand and made, in invisible ways, more present. And by doing this, the sugar industry increased both peoples' participation within the power structure and their dependence on the state. Together with roads, schools, and standard language, and even more effectively than them, the production of sugar, mediated the relationships of the local communities with the wider social body. In coordination with the central planning, the territorial division of labor became part of the invisible, but still, not less tangible and powerful, forms of indirect relationship that spurred social integration.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the factory and the collective farms that supplied it, were among other things, means of communication. While the roads and infrastructure were veins and arteries, Maliq and other similar places, pumped blood in them and gave meaning to the communication. It was the

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<sup>55</sup> Catherine Alexander, "The Factory: Fabricating the State," *Journal of Material Culture* 5, 2 (2000): 177-195.

<sup>56</sup> On indirect relationships and the role of infrastructure in promoting it, see Craig Calhoun, "The Infrastructure of Modernity: Indirect Social Relationship, Information, Technology, and Social Integration," in *Social Change and Modernity*, ed. by Hans Haferkamp & Neil Smelser (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 205-236; Craig Calhoun, "Indirect Relationships and Imagined Communities: Large-Scale Integration and the Transformation of Everyday Life," in *Social Theory for a Changing Society*, ed. by Pierre Bourdieu & James Coleman (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991): 95-212.

performing of such a role, which tied the people of the locality to the national market by supplying it with sugar and made them dependent on state. At this point, the power of the communist apparatus expanded, disseminated, and reproduced at the grass root level, not by finding ways to permeate and manipulate peoples' conscience, but by making them part of the system. The latter was not an abstract thing to those who worked in the sugarland, but part of their daily life existence, that structured their experience and space of action, that allowed them to make a living.

The specialization of the plain of Maliq in the production of sugar connected the area not only to the center, but also to the other parts of Albania. Indeed, the regional specialization of agriculture was a critical instrument of nation building because it simultaneously avoided competition between regions and sought to establish a spatial organic cohesion of the national territory. The cultivation of sugar beet was a means of integrating the peasants of the locality inside the national life. The refinery, like the magic touch of thaumaturgy, narrowed down the gulf between ALP's leadership projects and those who cultivated and processed sugar beet. It is here that lies one of the most important political functions of the factory and regional specialization. The refining of sugar established a symbiosis between industry and nature that did produce, besides sweetness, also the nation at that corner of Albania.

The process, which, as seen in the previous chapter had started since the interwar era. The communist leadership borrowed from their predecessors the project of spatial division of labor as a means for achieving the nation building. The ALP became the political force to complete this process and not derail it. Rather than representing a break with the interwar era's political regimes, the communists faithfully continued the nation-building project. They did not borrow from the past only the projects of the reclamation of the swamp of Maliq, the building of sugar factory, and the specialization of the plain in the production of sugar. The communist leadership also appropriated from the interwar era the larger strategy these projects were part of, namely their use as elements of national building. For them, socialism provided a new and alternative framework for achieving the same goal rather than an internationalist ideological platform that neglected nation. Indeed, the Albanian communists, as it was the case with their other Cold War-era eastern European analogues, always denied being merely rootless internationalists. While never denying their internationalist commitment, they relentlessly portrayed themselves as true defenders of national interests rooted in their respective native lands.

Jennifer Sowerwine rightly points out, that no form of space-organization can obliterate nature from its calculations.<sup>57</sup> The Albanian communist regime, too, used nature for its political goals. The communist revolution meant pushing forward the national spatial amalgamation. The ecological conditions of the different regions and the composition of their soil would serve to the development of industry and the inclusion of the different regions within a unified national economic system. The regional specialization of agriculture helped to construct the image of a unified nation based on new markers of difference. The regime used climatic and pedological variations to map the nation in a new way, which would foster the fusion and strengthening of social and economic links across space.

The economic organization of space placed the ALP at the center and allowed it to control, direct, and try to coalesce the peripheries into the larger coherent, but not a uniform unit. In the ALP's worldview, this was a progressive leap from anachronistic to modern forms of division of labor and social organization. Regionalization organized the country following the model machine, which Katerina Clark has called the master metaphor of the organization of Soviet society.<sup>58</sup> Each region was a cog. Their differences made them simultaneously necessary to each other and enabled the machine of the nation-state to work. Regions would specialize and complement each other, building a centralized economic system that integrated geographical and ecological differences into a coherent whole. As Henri Lefebvre contended, the planning of the modern economy also includes spatial planning. Fragmentation, he argues, helps centralization. Thus, regional specialization would construct the spatial organization of the nation based on the example of the machines, where the system was meant to subordinate each part to the central command.<sup>59</sup>

The communists continued the policy of the functionalist spatialization of the country, which I have explained in the first chapter. By mapping the territory into sections, they envisioned Albania as a body where each region played the role of an organ with it. The spatial division of

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<sup>57</sup> Jennifer C. Sowerwine, "Territorialization and the Politics of Highland Landscapes in Vietnam: Negotiating Property Relations in Policy, Meaning and Practice," *Conservation and Society* 2, 1 (2004): 99.

<sup>58</sup> Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 245.

<sup>59</sup> Henri Lefebvre, "Space: Social Product and Use Value" (Translated from French, J. W. Freiberg), in Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. by Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 183-195.

labor was meant to overcome localisms by exploding the closed circuit of regional economic connections and placing them in a new national setting. Specializing one region, in the case the area of Maliq, meant unraveling the older links and reshuffling them again, this time knitted in the fabric of nation. It also meant the establishment of a wider network of regional interdependencies. The specialized regions, which complemented each other, created a framework of integration of the fragments into the whole conforming the postulate of the French revolution ‘divide to unify.’ It implied a new gaze of the state over the territory, a new form of understanding, imagining, and ordering it. Territorialization, besides the building of an appropriate institutional framework that enables the state to execute its new visions, also implies the delimitation and the classification of resources and the people who make use of them.<sup>60</sup> Maliq was identified not only with sugar beet and sugar production but also through its position and utility within the whole.

By establishing a region for sugar, another for cotton, another for steel, another for oil, and so on, the regime constructed fragments that complemented each other and replaced the mostly economically self-contained regions linked with the center and each other only via the administrative structure. The regionalization of the agriculture, tied to light industry, created a geographical division of labor that engendered new identities based on technology, economic function, and production, while destabilized the old regional identities. Now the peasants did not use the land to fulfill their needs, but those of the nation. The need to feed the factory’s machinery with sugar beet was one of the principal causes for breaking down the self-sufficiency of the rural households. Regionalization linked rural economies of the Albanian lowlands with the broader national system not only through a domestic market and via production for supplying it.

Regional specialization displayed the way the central authorities imagined the geography of Albania and its economic development. This geographical epistemology of spatial distribution of economy and power helped ALP’s leadership to expand its clout over the peripheries and pursue the building of a national economic system. The economic, pedological, hydrological, geological, and biota maps that gave detailed scientific categories for the distribution of the resources and regional division of labor within the country expressed better than anything how the relationship

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<sup>60</sup> Phuc Xuan To, “State Territorialization and Illegal Logging: The Dynamic Relationships between Practices and Images of the State in Vietnam,” *Critical Asian Studies* 47, 2 (2015): 230.

between people and natural resources were an element of central concern for the communist leadership and the construction of its power. Besides the spatial dimension, regional specialization, at which center was the sugar combine, also had a temporal integrative dimension. Besides displaying in full-force the ALP's power over the countryside, the refinery also marked the extension of the industrial time-discipline and organization over in the field of agriculture. From now on, it was not only the tyranny of seasons that dictated the rhythm of agriculture but also by the ticking of combine's clock. The peasants of the plain of Maliq could keep up with the time of the factory only by using modern farming techniques.

While from the spatial perspective regionalization of agriculture aimed at establishing unity through division, from the temporal point of view its goal was to unite by synchronizing the time of Tirana with that of the peripheries. In his "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin elaborated his concept of "homogeneous empty time," which, according to him, was marked by the temporal coincidence and measured by clock and calendar.<sup>61</sup> The simultaneity of time has been a critical device for building modern nations because they connected centers and peripheries into one single temporal dimension. Benedict Anderson dedicated special attention to the platforms that helped in creating the simultaneity of time. Among them, he highlighted especially the role newspapers and novels have played in this process.<sup>62</sup> Besides the whole repertoire of written texts, which were also instruments of ideological propaganda, in communist Albania, state economic plans served as powerful frameworks for establishing the simultaneity of time between the center and peripheries.

The industrial crops and factories, in Maliq's case with the sugar beet, the regime provided a means of connection. The Albanians were now experiencing time in a way newspapers, gossip, and state institutions had never done before. The state plan treated time differently and the Albanians had to work and live with those goals. Through the sugar factory, regionalization connected the rural population of the plain of Maliq and the small town of sugar with the entire country. Speaking about Maliq of the communist era, one of its inhabitants defines it as a buzzing

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<sup>61</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of history," Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (Translated from German, Harry Zohn) (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 261-262.

<sup>62</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 2006), 22-36.

town. During the season of work, tens of trucks unloaded sugar beet and coal, or transported sugar across the country.<sup>63</sup> The production of sugar linked Maliq's to the nation in real time, and its inhabitants experienced nation not only in the form of symbols but in the form of action too.

Temporal simultaneity was tangible in quintals per hectare and tons of sugar. Through the sugar factory, regionalization, centralized planning, and mechanization, the communist regime defined the rhythm of everyday life in a part of its southeastern periphery and synchronized it with the time of center and other parts of the country. Gradually, the regime began building one single temporal grid, which stood together despite the local differences and specializations. The techniques of territorialization acted as extraordinary instruments for the expansion of the Albanian communist regime's power into the peripheries, precisely by allowing ALP's leadership to integrate the provinces into Tirana's time and pace. Anthony Giddens argued that time is an essential resource in structures of domination. Like Marx, he focused mainly on the correlation between time and labor for studying class exploitation.<sup>64</sup> The case of Maliq shows that time is significant not only for the vertical forms of dominations but also for those relations that stretch horizontally, across space. Time is critical in the integration of the peripheries not merely within the orbit of the center, but within a broader political and economic structure, which is constructed by the interdependence of the different fragments. This is a crucial component of nation building, the territorial control that national states exert, and governmentality.

### **3.4 Inscribing the Tabula Rasa: Gridding the Socialist Landscape**

The continuous hydrological works, necessary to not allow the return of the swamp, and the transformation of the plain into the center of Albania's sugar industry integrated the area into the larger body of the nation. In fact, what Henri Lefebvre considered a characteristic of the capitalist mode of production, which according to him, integrates while destroying, applies to the

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<sup>63</sup> Çelnik Jaupi, informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, July 30, 2017.

<sup>64</sup> Anthony Giddens, "Time, Space, and Social Change," in Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1979), 198–233.

Soviet-type regimes as well.<sup>65</sup> By obliterating the marshland, the Tirana's state structure absorbed it within their control. After reclaiming the swamp, through a series of interventions, the regime engraved the plain of Maliq with its inscription. The chiseling of the landscape, though, was not the outcome of a single blueprint created in the center, but the result of a complex process, strongly related to the production of sugar. As Lefebvre rightly argued, the production of space is related to that of things.<sup>66</sup> Maliq's dense grid of canals and its large rectangular plots were inextricably intertwined with the role the plain played in the supply of the sugar refinery.

In 1948, the state contracted the local peasants to supply the refinery with sugar beet. However, the small, scattered, and irregular plots of the private farmers could hardly meet the state plan and the direction of production of thousands of peasant households created constant headaches to the authorities in Tirana. The ALP's leadership concluded that the peasants' low productivity undermined the growth of the light industry.<sup>67</sup> Mehmet Shehu, the number two of the regime, stated that there was a tension between the small and fragmented private properties of the peasants, who tilled the land with primitive tools, and the state-owned modern industries.<sup>68</sup>

The Albanian communist regime faced the same challenges that the Italian entrepreneurs who wanted to develop the sugar industry in the plain of Korça experienced before them. The building of the establishments of the light industry confronted the new authorities in Tirana with a series of issues they were not prepared to deal with. Hoxha admitted himself that he and his collaborators decided to build the new industrial establishments without pondering how to supply them.<sup>69</sup> The introduction of new technologies changed the entire equation of the agricultural policies of the regime and created circumstances, which it did not anticipate. By 1950, the ALP's

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<sup>65</sup> Henri Lefebvre, "Space and the State" (Translated from French, Alexandra Kowalski et al.), in Lefebvre, *State, Space, World*, 241.

<sup>66</sup> Henri Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space," *Ibid*, 171.

<sup>67</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1949, d. 2, fl. 1 & 11. Report of the Politburo concerning the realization of the state plan for the period January-September 1949. September 11-13, 1949; AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1950, d. 16, fl. 11. Report of the Vice Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu held in the ALP's Central Committee on the realization of the state plan for the first semester of the year 1950. August 11, 1950.

<sup>68</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1950, d. 16, fl. 11. Report of Mehmet Shehu held in the Plenum of ALP's CC. August 11, 1950; AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1951, d. 3, fl. 5-6. Report of Mehmet Shehu in the X Plenum of the ALP's CC, regarding the ALP's tasks for the further development of the agriculture in Albania. April 9, 1951.

<sup>69</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 2, fl. 126. Closing remarks of comrade Commandant in the VI Plenum of the Central Committee. March 2-3, 1953.

leadership came up with a similar solution to that of their Romanian analogues, who in the same year started land consolidation. This was a solution to the fragmented plots of the peasants, which was a problem for all the eastern European communist governments and aimed to establish large contiguous parcels that would allow the use of mechanized farming.<sup>70</sup>

In Albania, land consolidation targeted the areas designated for the cultivation of the industrial crops. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950, the government and the ALP's CC issued a joint decree where they stated that: "The peasants are recommended to aggregate the individual plots designed for industrial plants in such a way as to form blocks as large as possible. In this way, it will be easier and more advantageous the use of mechanical means, of water for irrigation, and the support and technical control." It also stated that: "The individual (peasant) economies, to fulfill their work faster, better, and cheaper than with their oxen, need to contract mechanized means. So much so that to take advantage of the discounts, they must design their plots into blocks and to down the fences between them."<sup>71</sup>

Downing the fences and creating large parcels allowed the state to concentrate the fixed capital, to use mechanized technology, and apply industrial organization of work in agriculture. The increase of agricultural production through new technologies and forms of organization was the response to the light industry's needs. The machinery of light industry asked the use of machines in agriculture. The tractors and harvesting combines, the symbols of progress in the countryside, dictated the massive proportions of the parcels. What mattered for the Albanian authorities, was the amassing of the patches and the creation of vast plots, where the tractors could thrust their steel plows and combines harvest with speed. As a result, the communist leadership did not limit land consolidation only to the private non-collectivized land. In November 1950, the ALP's Central Committee ordered all the collective farms to unite the small plots into larger lots.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> On the land consolidation in Romania, see Katherine Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Values in Postsocialist Transylvania* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 63-64; Kligman & Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 128-129. On the problem that small property represented for the governments of Eastern Europe, see the case on GDR in, Gregory R. Witowski, "On the Campaign Trail: State Planning and Eigen-Sinn in a Communist Campaign to Transform the East German Countryside," *Central European History* 37, 3 (2004): 406.

<sup>71</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1950, d. 53, fl. 24-25. Decision of the Government of the PR of Albania and the ALP's CC on "The Sowing Plan for the Autumn of 1950 and Spring of 1951." September 2, 1950.

<sup>72</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i Partisë i Nënprefekturës Korçë, 1950, Lista 6, d. 145, fl. 4. Decision number 141, of the ALP's Central Committee "On the Situation and Development of the Collective Farms." November 15, 1950.

However, the creation of large plots underwent a complicated process of readjustments that saw the constant interaction between peasants, top echelons of the ALP, and technocrats. Maliq was in the same time a site and medium of negotiation between the scientific and local knowledge and political agendas. Thus, in the beginning, the area of the plots varied between 20-30 to 60-80 hectares. However, the technicians realized that their size hampered both the drainage and irrigation of the lots.<sup>73</sup> They were too large to preserve the so-called back-fish shape, where the parcel was slightly elevated at the center, which allowed the drainage of the water toward the edges. The agronomists borrowed this practice and its name from the peasants of Maliq, who had traditionally given to their small plots this shape. However, after the merging of the patches, the extensive use of tractors destroyed their contours, with grave consequences for the cultivation of the sugar beet, which rotted from lack of drainage. The peasants were able to preserve the shape because they used oxen, but the unexperienced tractor-drivers did not pay attention, and with their iron horses and plows of steel destroyed the vaulted configuration of the parcels.<sup>74</sup> Only in the 1960s, the agronomists concluded that for them to preserve the hunchback contours, the plots had to be fifteen hectares.<sup>75</sup> From then on, this became the standard size of the parcels in Maliq.

In Maliq, the specialists also used in other occasions the peasants' knowledge to increase the output, as for example the variances of the soil for designing the areas for cultivation of sugar beet, with very good results. Even high members of Politburo, like Tuk Jakova, remarked on the usefulness of the century-old traditions of the peasants and pressed the state planners to take it into account. Enver Hoxha, too, reiterated the same point. In those cases when the technicians and cadres considered this long experience, the ALP's leader concluded, the results had been better. Hoxha raised the problem of the lack of grassroots planning, touching the fundamental problem of the centralized economies, namely the gulf between reality in the periphery and planners in the

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<sup>73</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1965, Lista 21, d. 175, fl. 3-4. Tasks and concrete measures for a better systematization of the plain of Korça.

<sup>74</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1967, Lista 23, d. 64, fl. 15-16. Report of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the systematization of the arable land in the district; AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1965, Lista 21, d. 175, fl. 7. Tasks and concrete measures for a better systematization of the plain of Korça; AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1972, d. 15, fl. 127. Minutes of the meeting of the ALP's Central Committee. April 24, 1972.

<sup>75</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1967, Lista 23, d. 64, fl. 15-16. Report of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the systematization of the arable land in the district.

capital. How was the state plan to be successful in the villages, asked the ALP's boss, when those who made plans did not go out of their office and did not know the reality? None of them has ever gone out there, he continued, and obviously, there was no connection between the plan and the grassroots level.<sup>76</sup>

Communist "high modernism" did imply neither erasure of local knowledge, nor its neglect from the technocrats and politicians, but rather its redeployment in interaction with the new scientific disciplines. Contrary to what James Scott has argued in his book *Seeing Like a State*, modern states, including the Soviet types, should neither be considered as rigid structures in antithetic relation with tradition nor as fanatically sticking to its conceptualization of the world. As the case of Maliq shows for the ALP's regime, the relations between new and old were complex and nuanced, and the technocrats were not a group incapable of reflection and adjustment to local circumstances as Scott has stated.<sup>77</sup> The attitude of the planners and modernizers toward alternative popular forms of knowledge was not uniform and across the hierarchy of the power structure, there were people who both used or neglected it. Rather than monolithic structure, states are corporations riddled with tensions and conflicting views. Hence, it is not accurate to say "seeing like a state" in the singular, as James Scott has done, because there is no single way how states see.<sup>78</sup>

The gridded landscape of Maliq is part of a broader 20<sup>th</sup>-century European phenomenon that defied the Iron Curtain; it was part of the era of disciplining, legibility, mass production, and efficiency. The fields filled with rectangular patches express the drive for economic efficiency, which was one of the main denominators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Cold War in Europe never became hot because the economic performance was the major battlefield between the two opposing systems. The fact that socialism lost to capitalism does not mean that efficiency was not its priority.

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<sup>76</sup> On the good results of the cooperation between specialists and peasants, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 5, fl. 58. Report "On the measures for the further raising of the standard of living of the working masses," held by Enver Hoxha in the meeting of the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953. On Tuk Jakova's suggestions on the use of the peasants' knowledge, *Ibid*, fl. 173-175. Minutes of the meeting of the IX Plenum of the ALP's CC of the II Congress of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953. On Hoxha's critique of the armchair planning, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 2, fl. 127. Closing remarks of comrade Commandant (Enver Hoxha—A.H.) in the VI Plenum of the Central Committee. March 2-3, 1953.

<sup>77</sup> In his critique to Scott, Michael Herzfeld argues that state cannot function without the use of practical knowledge. See, Michael Herzfeld, "The Political Optics and the Occlusion of Intimate Knowledge," *American Anthropologist* 107, 3 (2005): 369-376.

<sup>78</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

It merely means that it was less efficient than capitalism. Moreover, in the post-WWII era, in the liberal democracies, under the banner of Keynesianism, the state increasingly intervened in agriculture to increase the efficiency of the rural sector.

For example, in the Netherlands, the state reshaped the countryside's landscape since 1924 when the Parliament issued the "Law on Re-allotment," which tried to put an end to the fragmentation of land and the subsequent shapes of plots that resulted from it. The state ordered the pooling of small patches into larger allotments so to help the mechanization of the agricultural processes and increase the efficiency of the rural sector of the economy. Because of the inseparable assumption that connected efficiency with size, the re-allotment process, the size of the farms in the Netherlands by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century doubled. The justification for this law was based on the need for rationalization of the allotments so to facilitate the development of agriculture.<sup>79</sup> The vocabulary and concepts of the Dutch lawmakers in the 1920s were not too dissimilar to that of the communist rivals some decades later, whose keywords were: rational, scientific, and growth. The process of re-allotments continued in the Netherlands well into the 1970s under the banner of "agricultural functionalism." The Netherlands were not alone. France, Germany, and Spain, to mention some other notable cases, also pushed forward land consolidation through the 1950s-1960s under the same drive of modernization and increase of efficiency. The goal of land consolidation was to restructure and update "outdated and unsatisfactory" land ownership pattern in "new physical and legally-recognizable shapes." A similar process was taking place, under the auspices of the state, in the Socialist bloc, including here Albania, and Maliq. In any case, the keyword was the establishment of farms adequate size for motorized agriculture.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> On the Netherlands, Kees Doevendans, "From Modernist Landscape to New Nature: Planning of the Rural Utopias in the Netherlands," *Landscape Research* 32, issue 3 (2007): 338-342.

<sup>80</sup> On the definition of land consolidation and its function see Robert Dixon-Gough, "The Role of Land Consolidation and Land Readjustment in Modern Society," in *The Role of State and Individual in Sustainable Land Management*, ed. by Robert W. Dixon-Gough & Peter C. Bloch (Aldershot & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 159; J Rognes & Per Kare Sky, "Mediation in the Norwegian Land Consolidation Courts," Working Paper 14, North America Series, Land Tenure Centre (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998). On land consolidation in France and Germany see Terry van Dijk, "Complications for Traditional Land Consolidation in Central Europe," *Geoforum* 38, 3 (2007): 505. On land consolidation in Spain see Daniel Lanero & Lourenzo Fernandez-Prieto, "Technology Policies in Dictatorial Contexts: Spain and Portugal," in *Agriculture in Capitalist Europe, 1945-1960: From Food Shortages to Food Surpluses*, ed. by Carin Martiin et al. (London & New York: Routledge, 2016), 165-184.

Similar process occurred in Estonia, which started land consolidation since 1919, long before the Soviet annexation and the concomitant collectivization. And even in the neighboring Greece, with a property structure in the countryside similar to other Balkan states, including Albania, the state started to consolidate the fragmented small parcels immediately after the end of World War 2. As a result, the number of parcels diminished across the years and their size increased, although the pace was too slow. The peasants, too, supported land consolidation in order to increment production, but the continuous conflicts within the rural communities on how to proceed with the process hampered its quick progression. Not too differently from the Albanian engineer that considered Fascism's iron-fisted management of the society as the path for the modernization of the country, the Greek peasants considered the authoritarian compulsion as the only way for completing land consolidation.<sup>81</sup> In the era of productivism, efficiency in agriculture was strongly related to mechanization, which needed large farms and concentration of land. Industry and its mass production became a model for agriculture as well. The orthogonal grid was not merely the visual materialization of a vision that preferred the geometrical and ordered forms of the man-made landscape to the irregular and chaotic lines of nature. It was not merely the spatialization of modern power either in the guise of capitalist corporations or the Bolshevik Party. The rectangular patches that filled the plains of Europe on both sides of the Iron Curtain, with their routinized linearity were also an outcome of the industrialization of agriculture. The governments of Europe were all intervening and organizing the economies of their countries. They also geared the agricultural sector toward mass production, the concentration of the arable land, and mechanization.

With the end of WWII, the utilitarian ideology of efficiency and productivity triumphed across Europe. It also informed the activity of the governmental bodies in charge of the management of the rural landscape. As Gertruda Andela argues about the Dutch agricultural engineers of the post-WWII era, in the beginning, they were not pursuing any aesthetic principle, but their approach to designing the landscape was guided only by economic and utilitarian

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<sup>81</sup> On Estonia, Evelin Jürgenson, "Land Reform, Land Fragmentation and Perspectives for Future Land Consolidation in Estonia," *Land Use Policy*, 57 (2016): 34-43. On Greece, Murray E. Keeler & Dimitrios G. Suras, "Land Fragmentation and Consolidation Policies in Greek Agriculture," *Geography* 75, 1 (1990): 73-76; Samuel Popkin, "The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Peasant Society," *Theory and Societ* 9, 3 (1980): 444.

principles. Only later they pushed their project to the creation of utopian villages and landscapes.<sup>82</sup> In the beginning, it was the ideology of tractor, the symbol of the triumph of modernity in the countryside, which not accidentally, was one of the iconic emblems of Soviet modernization. The land consolidation throughout Europe went full steam ahead in the 1950s, precisely at the moment that Paul Bairoch has defined as the Third Agricultural Revolution. It was the historical moment when the Europeans started the extensive use of tractors, and a series of countries of the Old Continent had for the first time in history more iron horses than real horses.<sup>83</sup>

Albania had a similar break, although not with the same proportions. Oxen and horses were a normal part of the countryside's landscape even in the 1980s. However, the discontinuity with the past was incredible. In 1938 in the whole country there were only 38 tractors owned by some reach landowners and a few Italian firms. In 1958, communist Albania had 2,683 tractors, and ten years later, in 1968 it had 10,000 tractors.<sup>84</sup> In 1968, only the district of Korça, had 670 tractors, 81 combines, and 64 threshing machines. The augmentation of the agricultural vehicles increased also the area under mechanization. In Maliq, after the adjustment of the large rectangular plots that shaped the architecture of Maliq's landscape and the mechanization of agriculture gradually increased. Thus, while in the mid-1950s, in the plain of Maliq 65% of the land was tilled with oxen, in 1960, the area shrunk to 26%. Albania and Maliq had entered into the age of the tractor.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Gertruda M. Andela, *Kneedbaar landschap, kneedbaar volk. De heroïsche jaren van de ruilverkavelingen in Nederland* (Bossuim: THOTH, 2000), 240-242.

<sup>83</sup> For more on the huge agricultural transformation in the first 15 years of the Cold War era, see Juri Auderset & Peter Moser, "Mechanization and Motorization: Natural Resources, Knowledge, Politics and Technology in the 19<sup>th</sup>-and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Agriculture," *Agriculture in Capitalist Europe, 1945-1960*, 145-164; Laurent Herment, "Tractorization: France, 1945-1955," *Ibid*, 185-205; Paul Bairoch, "Le Trois Révolutions Agricoles du M<sup>o</sup>nde Développé: Rendements at Productivité de 1800 a 1985," *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 44, 2 (1989): 317-353.

<sup>84</sup> On the number of tractors in 1938, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1960, d. 90/1, fl. 67. The development of the agricultural technique in the Peoples' Republic of Albania. On the number of tractors in 1958 and 1968, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 153, fl. 5. Report on the situation and perspectives of the countryside; AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1969, d. 5, fl. 22. Report of the Ministry of Agriculture "Intensification – the min path for the development of our socialist agriculture."

<sup>85</sup> On the number of tractors and threshing machines in the region of Korça, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 88, fl. 19. Memo of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the Directory of Agriculture of the Central Committee of the ALP concerning the condition and readiness of the tractors in the district. March 9, 1961; AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1968, d. 90/4, fl. 44. Study on the perspective development of the agricultural sector in the district of Korça for the years 1970-1980. July 1968. On the increase of the ration of mechanization, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1960, d. 56, fl. 7. Report on the progression of the agrarian system and propriety in the years 1955-1960.

The large orthogonal plots explicitly were the shop floor of the industrialized agriculture. Full reclamation meant to subordinate the land to the tractor. The regular plots were the alter ego of the swamp in the same way tractors were the antithesis of oxen. Beyond the symbolism they carried, it was productivity that underpinned the mechanization of agriculture and the rectangular plots that marked Maliq's landscape. The full impact became obvious by the mid-1960s, when the production of the state farm increased sensibly, and its returns too. In 1974, Enver Hoxha asked the chair of the State Planning Commission, Abdyl Këllëzi, on whether or not the revenues of the state farm "Maliqi" had covered the investments for the reclamation of the plain. The ALP's boss found out that the profits of the farm alone had covered different times over the capital the state had spent during the two stages of the reclamation.<sup>86</sup>

The collective farms of the plain increased their productivity significantly, too. By the mid-1970s, 70% of the agricultural enterprises of the plain yielded above the 40 tons of sugar beet per hectare, and in some sectors, they reached 50 to 70 t/ha. To compare these figures with some other countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain, in France, in the early 1970s, the average of sugar beet yielding was 44 t/ha, in Poland 32 t/ha, and Yugoslavia 35 t/ha. Although the average yielding in the furrow of Korça dwindled around the 30t/ha, the figures from the plain of Maliq fostered enthusiasm among the ALP's elite because they seemed to materialize its quest for catching up Europe.<sup>87</sup> The agricultural economies of the plain increased their output in cereals as well. The cooperatives of Pojan and Plasa, located on the eastern fringe of the plain of Maliq yielded above

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<sup>86</sup> Regarding the costs of reclamation, the total investment of the state was 79 million lekë, while the profit until 1973, was 230 million lekë. AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1974, d. 846, fl. 1. Note of Abdyl Këllëzi sent to Enver Hoxha. March 25, 1973.

<sup>87</sup> On the increase of productivity of sugar beet by the mid-1970s, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1976, d. 73, fl. 2. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Light and Food Industry on the price of sugar beet. January 3, 1976. On the yielding above 50 t/ha of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1974, d. 934, fl. 9-10. Index of sugar beet harvesting during September 1974. AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1976, d. 537, fl. 8. Info concerning the collection of sugar beet up to December 31, 1975. February 6, 1976; AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1979, d. 133, fl. 2-4. Analysis of the State Plan Commission sent to the Council of Ministers concerning the results of the production of sugar beet for the year 1979. January 31, 1980. On the yielding of sugar beet in Maliq and the average yielding of sugar beet in France, Poland, and Yugoslavia, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1973, d. 33, fl. 4-5. Report on some problems related to the seed and cultivation of sugar beet in Yugoslavia, Poland, and France. April 1973. On the importance of the high yielding of sugar beet in the plain of Maliq as indicators of the modernization of Albania and catching up Europe, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1978, d. 145, fl. 4-5. Memo on the results of the cultivation of sugar beet in the district of Korça for the year 1978. On the average yielding sugar beet in the furrow of Korça, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1974, d. 17, fl. 217. Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the ALP's Central Committee. February 23, 1974.

5 tons of grain per hectare. This was a record for Albania, where before the communists came to power the harvests did not exceed the 1.8 tons per hectare.<sup>88</sup> By the 1970s, the systematization of the plain, the mechanization of the agricultural processes, the selected strains, and the extensive use of fertilizers gave impressive results. Thirty years since the first engagement, and continuous adjustments, the plain of Maliq, the Albanian communist regime, succeeded to transform the land once covered by a swamp, into a granary. The Albanian communist regime did not have a simplified approach to local contexts. Rather than a one-size-fit all approach, the communist authorities demonstrated a high degree of flexibility and adaptability to specific circumstances. And last but not least, the high modernist landscape of orthogonal plots was not as inefficient as Scott's argues. Indeed, the small private farms with their small scattered plots of the pre-socialist era were far less efficient than those established by the communist regime. After all, the large parcels were an answer to the necessities that the machinery of the refinery imposed on agriculture.

However, a question rises. Was there anything socialist about the plain of Maliq? Did the communist regime leave its original mark on the plain? The transformation of nature is always a political statement. After exploring the similarities between the socialist and non-socialist agricultural landscapes and the forces that produced these elective affinities, what, then, was the signature of the Albanian Soviet-type socialism in Maliq? When discussing the Moscow Canal, Cynthia Ruder argues that what made it different compared to Hoover Dam, Panama Canal, and other giant hydrological projects completed in the West, was the use brute force and forced labor.<sup>89</sup> Ruder's conclusion might very well apply to Maliq, too. The use of iron fist, forced labor, and violence were commonplace phenomena during its first reclamation. However, Ruder focuses only in the moment of construction. What makes a landscape political though, it is not only the moment of its christening, of transformation, but also the presence of elements that sustain and reproduce the power relations.

What made Maliq's landscape Soviet-type was not merely the violence and coercive power for infrastructural transformation. It was not the act of construction, as much it was what remained

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<sup>88</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1976, d. 96, fl. 20. Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the ALP's Central Committee. September 21, 1976.

<sup>89</sup> Ruder, *Building Stalinism*, 56-57 & 261.

in the plain for the entire length of the regime that distinguished and made it different. What made it socialist was the Grove of the Pheasants. While the regime erased all the hedges that separated the properties of the peasants, it erected fences around this artificial grove guarded by soldiers. It was a reserve that the communist leadership used for its virile sport of hunting. Nobody could go there except the leadership. The Grove was a heterotopia, a non-legible space, connected but also different to the surrounding environment, “a system of opening and closing that isolates them and make them penetrable at the same time.”<sup>90</sup>

The establishment of such places of exclusion was not an Albanian exclusivity but a widespread phenomenon of the socialist bloc. The communist elites of eastern Europe had a penchant for hunting in special reserves overstocked with animals, where, they, as the lords of the Middle Ages, could sharpen their martial skills and shape their sense of manhood. And in a similar fashion to the knights’ groves of the feudal era, these hunting grounds were a monopoly of the political elite, and as a result, markers of privilege and distinction vis-à-vis the society. The small artificial woodland in the plain of Maliq demonstrated the success of the new regime to exclude the peasants of the area from accessing all the resources their environment provided. It explained in a simple and comprehensible language to everybody living in the plain of Maliq, the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion in a system where the state-controlled the access to resources and benefits. It projected in space, with realism, the political order, the power hierarchies, and the differentiation that the ALP’s regime had engendered. While dark, foggy, impenetrable, the grove was also for public consumption.

Places like the Grove of Pheasants were sites of retreatment where the top echelons of the Politburo stood outside of society’s gaze, and hence, out of its reach. To borrow Erving Goffman’s definition, these places were back regions, places “where suppressed facts made an appearance.”<sup>91</sup> Contrary to the assumption based on the modern state’s panopticon, those on the top are always more exposed to the gaze of their subjects than the other way around.<sup>92</sup> This was also true for the

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<sup>90</sup> Michel Foucault, “Different Spaces,” in *Essential Works of Foucault. Vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. by James D. Faubion (translated by Robert Hurley) (New York: The New York Press, 1998), 183.

<sup>91</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1956), 69.

<sup>92</sup> On this matter, see Anthony Giddens, “Time and Social Organization,” in Anthony Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 162-163.

communist regimes. The communist leadership used sites like the Grove of the Pheasants as backstage, a niche where it could perform in concealment patterns of behavior that were not approved in the frontstage. It was in such extra-institutional emplacements that the communist leadership gathered and took important decisions, making them important locations of power exercise in the socialist systems. Indeed, in the latter, rule was not wielded only through the opening but also through closing, not only through transparency but also especially through opaqueness.

The Grove of the Pheasants was a text carved in space of the political order, a display in full force of the new social hierarchies inscribed in space and of the inequalities that the Albanian communist regimes engendered. The small hunting ground was a local projection of “Blloku,” the enclosed bloc of villas of the ALP’s leadership located at the center of Tirana and fenced and guarded without interruption by the army and secret police. Although without walls, Blloku was, like the castells of the Middle Ages, a fortress of the communist lords, which separated them from the society they led. The leadership lived isolated in this small neighborhood of large villas. This tiny place represented the cerebral center of power. It was here, away from the eyes of the society where Hoxha and his associates made their decisions about the country and commanded Albania for decades. While within the city, Blloku was outside of the city and the norm. It represented a statement of the exclusion of the people from the decision-making and the uneven spatial distribution of power in a communist state. The Grove of the Pheasants was a clone of Blloku in the plain of Maliq.

As Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter explain, heterotopias are spaces that enact the contradictions that societies produce and cannot solve.<sup>93</sup> The Grove of the Pheasants reflected the contradictions between ideology and praxis. While at the discursive level socialism promised an egalitarian society and pointed toward the utopia of communism, in practice it undermined these extravagant claims, and, hence, the legitimacy of the regime. The grove demonstrated that Albania was far from the ideal of Peoples’ Democracy. For this reason, the power apparatus erased and

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<sup>93</sup> Michiel Dehaene & Livien De Cauter’s editorial note 15 in Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” translated Michiel Dehaene & Livien De Cauter, *Heterotopia and the City*” *Public Space in a Postcivil Society* (London: Routledge, 2008), 25.

suppressed any form of text or public discussion on the hunting ground. Everybody in the area knew of the artificial woodland, but nobody ever left a sign of the grove, no piece of paper ever carried any inscription to speak about the grove's existence. Like the island of Vilm in the Baltic Sea, which served as a residence of the top echelons of the GDR, no map ever displayed the small artificial woodland.<sup>94</sup>

The muteness surrounded its existence made this grove a sinister symbol of the Albanian communist regime, a symbol consumed in silence. In fact, the silence that surrounded the grove made it a locale of power. For this reason, it shows how the regime, through the spatial language and visible signs, emanated distinctions and hierarchies of power, reproduced and maintained them through the silent participation of all. It was a silent acceptance of the center's rule over the periphery. It is precisely this grove and what it represented, which singled out the plain of Maliq as a Soviet-type socialist space. And more importantly, this tiny place covered by bushes and stocked with pheasants disguised the inequalities that hid behind the orthogonal plots, canals, tractors, and high yields. To return to Lorenzetti's frescoes, the small forest debunked any claim that linked the radical transformation of the plain's outlook to the good government. However, the well-regulated fields covered with lively greenish and yellowish colors did not veil only inequalities between center and periphery, or between those on the top and bottom of the social pyramid. The modernist landscape of Maliq also concealed other forms of intraregional socio-economic disparities that betrayed the egalitarian pretensions of socialism and did not make communism necessarily a virtuous political system. Next chapter will explore this subject further.

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<sup>94</sup> I want to thank Philipp Kröger for bringing the case of the island of Vilm to my attention. For more see, "Vilm – die verbotene Insel vor Rügen," [https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/sendungen/die\\_reportage/Die-Reportage-Vilm-Die-verbotene-Insel-vor-Ruegen,sendung941140.html](https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/sendungen/die_reportage/Die-Reportage-Vilm-Die-verbotene-Insel-vor-Ruegen,sendung941140.html). Accessed on October 3, 2019.

## 4.0 SUGAR AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNIST SPATIAL INEQUALITIES IN MALIQ

### 4.1 Sugar Production and the Communist Project of Social Transformations

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1948, the Albanian Communist Party's Central Committee (from now on ACP's CC) sent a communique to its local branches regarding the cultivation of industrial crops. In this document, the highest forum of the communist regime emphasized: "The increase of area that will be cultivated with industrial crops... is a revolutionary step...The importance of such a step...rests on the fact that we are detaching the peasant from the old oriental mentality of working the land, according to which he was used of thinking only for the individual economy, to plant only maize...we are connecting him with the new advanced forms of plantation, i.e., with the cultivation of the industrial plants, connecting the agricultural production with the industry, which will reinforce the links between countryside and city."<sup>1</sup>

Profoundly influenced by the Orientalism of the Balkans' modernizers, the above prognosis expressed the ALP leadership's project of a "civilizing mission" in the countryside.<sup>2</sup> Such a political and cultural undertaking of the communist upper echelons had both economic and technological dimensions and linked and subordinated agriculture to industry. The Albanian communist elite considered the connection between the primary and secondary sector as a means for pulling the peasants out of their alleged isolationism and Asian backwardness. Simultaneously, as explained in the previous chapter, it would also integrate the rural population within the modern

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<sup>1</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1948, d. 245, fl. 1. Communique of the ACP's Central Committee sent to all the ACP's local committees regarding the new orientation of agriculture. February 8, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> On Orientalism in Albania, Enis Sulstarova, *Arratisje nga lindja: orientalizmi shqiptar nga Naimi te Kadareja* (Tirana: Dudaj, 2006). On Orientalism in the Balkans, see John R. Lampe, *Balkans Into Southeastern Europe, 1994-2004: A Century of War and Transition* (London-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); *Ottomans into Europeans: State and Institutional Building in South-East Europe*, ed. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Wim Van Meurs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism," *Slavic Review* 64, 1 (2005): 140-164; Mary C. Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); *The Balkans in Transition" Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Hamden: Conn: Archon Books, 1963).

national economic system. Maliq would showcase the success of this strategy. In addition to its function to the regime's autarkic policies, the refinery meant broader social and cultural transformations. In the hands of the ALP, the production of sugar would become a political technology for social engineering and a medium for bridging the rural/urban divide. Thus, Maliq's scheme also was a civilizational enterprise

The success of this strategy was dubious and covered by many shades, though. The socialist regime had declared it wanted to erase all the social vertical and horizontal inequalities. But in practice, its policies deepened and multiplied the disparities. In Maliq, too, the sugar industry, rather than obliterating, indeed exacerbated the spatial inequalities. As we will see in this chapter, the sugar scheme determined the direction and uneven success of communist leadership in transforming everyday life in the countryside. The degree and range of social and cultural transformations depended on whether people worked in industry or agriculture, in the state or collective farms, whether living in the city or countryside, in the lowlands or uplands.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1986, in a visit to the sugar combine of Maliq, the Vice Prime Minister of Albania, Manush Myftiu, reflected on the results of the use of the industrial establishment as an instrument of social engineering. Among other things, he said: "In every place, the construction of an industrial establishment brings progress; for example, new streets are opened, the grid of electrical power and pipe water extend, etc. But it also happens the opposite. With the opening of a well, my village has been left without water."<sup>3</sup> Myftiu was pointing out, the Janus-faced impact of Maliq scheme, which exacerbated, or even created, spatial inequalities. The investments that the sugar industry soaked created imbalances in the distribution of the capitals discriminating certain areas and favoring others. Although the regime invested resources for transforming the lifestyle of the peasants and workers, as the case of Maliq shows, they did not produce everywhere the same results. The ALP not only failed to erase the inequalities between urban centers and countryside or highland lowlands, but instead, its policies pronounced them further.

In the previous chapter, I showed how in Maliq and socialist Albania undertook a process of spatial integration through regional specialization and functional differentiation, similar to

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<sup>3</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1986, d. 246, fl. 2. Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers for analyzing the draft-decision for the installation of a turbine in the thermal power station of Maliq. October 6, 1986.

capitalism. In Maliq, a parallel process took place: the creation of spatial hierarchies between different locales integrated in a manner that favors the unequal distribution and allocation of resources. While the socialist regimes claimed to have implemented a balanced geographic development, they indeed generated similar spatial disparities to capitalism.

Until now scholars have focused their attention on the spatial inequalities that capitalism has engendered. Authors like Edward Soja, Neil Smith, and Henri Lefebvre, among many others, have written on the hierarchies that the capitalist system divides up space, thus projecting its social stratification at a spatial level.<sup>4</sup> According to them, capital is one of the most powerful forces that construct and shape the synchronic relationships that produce an uneven distribution of power and wealth across space, dividing the latter in core and peripheries, in rich and poor places. This approach has been central to the world history's macro-analysis of Immanuel Wallerstein, Andre Guder Frank, and others.<sup>5</sup> While all the scholarly attention has been on capitalism, the uneven development and spatial inequalities under socialism have received scant consideration.

Historians have mainly scrutinized the emergence of class differentiation in socialism, as to prove that it betrayed its egalitarian promise. Vera Dunham and Sheila Fitzpatrick have argued since the 1970s and 1980s on the Stalinist turn toward the bourgeoisie's values and social distinctions in the 1930s. According to them, the turn toward high Stalinism reiterated older social hierarchies and established a tripartite division of the society, on top of which stood the intelligentsia, which projected its values over the other segments of the Soviet society.<sup>6</sup> The campaigns for *kul'turnost*, or "cultured life," expressed intelligentsia's hegemony in the Soviet

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<sup>4</sup> Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Space, and the Production of Space*, third edition (Athens, VA – London: The University of Georgia Press, 2008); Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated from French, Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK – Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991); Edward Soja, "The Spatiality of Social Life: Toward a Transformative Rethorization," in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, ed. Derek Gregory & John Urry (London: Macmillan, 1985), 90-127.

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004); Andre Guder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (London & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 19-38; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Middle Class Values" and Soviet Life in the 1930s," in *Soviet Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Vera S. Dunham*, ed. Terry L. Thompson & Richard Sheldon (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 20-38; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Becoming Cultured: Socialist Realism and the Representation of Privilege and Taste," in *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 216-238.

society of the era.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, few have explored the spatial inequalities generated by socialism. Sándor Horváth is one of the few historians that has been exploring how class differences constructed space in a socialist context. However, his work focuses on the urban milieu of the new industrial city of Sztalinvaros.<sup>8</sup>

I intend to explore the construction of spatial inequalities in the countryside, and “class” is not going to be a central category of my analysis. Although in socialist systems class was one of the most important markers of social difference, other measuring rods, too, defined privilege and distinction. We need to include in the equation the variable of spatial inequalities for understanding the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from the access to resources and opportunities. I will focus on how technology and investments based on economic profit, which determined the allocation of resources, defined the different scales of the social and cultural transformations in Maliq and its surrounding areas. Shedding light on the uneven metamorphosis of the countryside during socialism will help us to grasp better the nature of challenges that the post-socialist societies have faced since the collapse of the communist regimes—and especially the rocky road of Albania.

## 4.2 Building and Peopling Where Once Only the Fishermen Could Go

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1946, when the regime had just started the reclamation of the swamp, *Bashkimi*, the press organ of the Democratic Front, published an article where it articulated the communist narrative of progress. Among others, it boasted: “In these very fertile lands, can be

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<sup>7</sup> On the ideologeme of *kul'turnost'* in Soviet Union, see Vadim Volkov, “The Concept of *Kul'turnost'*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 210-230; Catriona Kelly & Vadim Volkov, “Directed Desires: *Kul'turnost'* and Consumption,” in *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1881-1940*, ed. Catriona Kelly & David Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 291-313; David L. Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 15-56; Julie Hessler, “Cultured Trade: The Stalinist Turn Towards Consumerism,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, 182-209; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 79-89.

<sup>8</sup> Sándor Horváth, *Stalinism Reloaded: Everyday Life in Stalin-City, Hungary*, translated from Hungarian, Thomas Cooper (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017).

installed up to 2000 families of farmers, who with their work and the healthy climate, will become the happiest farmers of the new Albania.”<sup>9</sup> This propagandistic article, part of the regime’s narrative of transforming the country in an earthly heaven carries essential information, not so much for what it invents, but for what it omits. The focus of this article lies on the future farmers that the regime would install in the reclaimed land, whose author privileges over the old inhabitants of the sixteen villages around the swamp that remained invisible to him.

The omission of the older communities and the concentration of the attention only on the perspective farmers did express the future-oriented character and preferences of communist elites. It carries the modernizing ideology of the interwar era and its symbolism of internal colonialism within the notion of “rebirth,” which, as we have already seen in the first chapter, the Fascist influence reinforced even further.<sup>10</sup> Reclaiming the swamp of Maliq would provide the space for the emergence of a new type of men, this time forged under socialism, in a healthy climate, starting afresh in a blank slate that was not contaminated by the past. It implied that the oppressive regimes of the past, the unhealthy swamp, and malaria had incapacitated the population of the old villages of the plain, which did not have new men. The ALP openly preferred the new over the old.

After draining the marshland, the state built the sugar factory in the small town of Maliq next to it. Additionally, in the 4500 hectares of newly gained land, the regime established the state farm “Maliqi.” The new agricultural enterprise specialized in the cultivation of sugar beet and became the leading supplier of the refinery with raw material.<sup>11</sup> The cooperatives instituted in the older villages would play a minor role compared to the agricultural state sector represented by the new farm. In the latter, the communist authorities built in the early 1950s three villages, which inhabitants worked in the state farm. The population of these new industrial and agricultural settlements migrated from many different parts of the country, especially from the surrounding highlands.

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<sup>9</sup> “Rëndësia e madhe e Maliqit për ekonominë e vendit t’onë,” *Bashkimi*, June 11, 1946, 3. See also, “Në Maliq, si kudo në Shqipëri po farkëtohet puntoria e re,” *Bashkimi*, June 7, 1946, 1.

<sup>10</sup> On Fascism and its colonial enterprise as a rebirth, see Patrick Bernhard, “Borrowing from Mussolini: Nazi Germany’s Colonial Aspirations in the Shadow of Italian Expansionism,” *The Journal of Imperial and Contemporary History* 41, 4 (2013): 622.

<sup>11</sup> On the specialization of the state farm in the cultivation of sugar beet. AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1951, d. 41, fl. 13. On the decision of the Council of Ministers for the establishment of the state farm of Maliq, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1950, d. 49, fl. 3.

These newcomers benefited most from the sugar industry and socialism were all employed in the state sector and paid with workers' salaries that were considerably higher compared to the members of the collective farms. The refinery and state farm represented a core economic unit, and together they formed a center of gravity for the surrounding areas. As a consequence, the new settlements, which occupied strategic and privileged positions within the regional economic structure, enjoyed some of the highest standards of living in the district of Korça. However, technical contingencies rather than plans for conceiving utopian communities, as it was the case with many projects of the interwar era and the post-WWII years, prompted the Albanian communist authorities to build the new town and villages.<sup>12</sup>

After building the refinery, the regime had to find workers. The main problem, though, was the lack of labor force. The ALP's leadership decided to swell the ranks of the working class through the mobilization of the allegedly unused rural labor force in the countryside.<sup>13</sup> This strategy was based on the Soviet model of industrialization elaborated by the Russian economist Yvgeni Preobrazhensky, who assumed that the countryside had a large number of unoccupied human bodies. According to this blueprint, the state had to utilize the untapped "disguised labor" hiding in rural regions and use it for the construction of the industrial complexes and their operation.<sup>14</sup>

While the USSR had a much larger population, and during the First Five-year Plan, the Soviet leadership succeeded to displace a vast mass of peasants to the urban industrial centers, this was not the case with Albania. As the case of Maliq shows, the Albanian rural population had not a sizeable excessive workforce for the communist regime to use in its numerous projects. Before 1945, the whole country had 21,500 landless families. Of them, 13,900 were sharecroppers, and

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<sup>12</sup> On the utopian projects of the interwar and post-WWII era, Robert H. Kagon & Arthur P. Molella, *Invented Edens: Techno-Cities of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA. & London: 2008); Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany, 1933-1939*, translated from German, Jefferson Chase (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 104-183; Mia Fuller, "Tradition as a Means to the End of Tradition: Farmers' Houses in Italy's Fascist-Era New Towns," in *The End of Tradition?*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 171-186; Henry A. Millon, "Some New Towns in Italy in the 1930s," in *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics*, ed. Henry A. Millon & Linda Nochlin (Cambridge, MA. & London: MIT Press, 1978), 326-341.

<sup>13</sup> Demir Durmishi, *Punëtorët në Shqipëri (1944-1960)* (Tetovo: Album, 2001), 83.

<sup>14</sup> Robert C. Allen, *From Farm to Factory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 109-110.

7,600 had no property whatsoever. From these latter families came the pool of 20,000 peasants that sold their labor for money for the entire year, or during specific seasons.<sup>15</sup> The Agrarian Reform of 1946 further exacerbated the labor shortage, because it supplied with arable plots the landless peasants.

The authorities targeted the most impoverished families in the uplands as the pool for expanding the ranks of the working class. The ALP's leadership thought that the lack of available and fertile land made the mountaineers more susceptible to leave their hamlets for the new industrial centers. The regime started an intensive work of propaganda to convince the uplanders to undertake such a leap.<sup>16</sup> Hoxha himself invited them to leave the rocks of the mountains and exploit the opportunities that the state had opened for them in the lowlands.<sup>17</sup> Convincing the peasants to leave their villages and relatives in the upland was not an easy task. The deplorable living conditions in Maliq, which were similar to those of comparable cities like Magnitogorsk, Nowa Huta, and Sztálinváros in the early years of their existence, did not facilitate the work of the regime to recruit workers. The case of these socialist towns conforms with what Antonio Pennacchi, discussing on the industrial cities built in Fascist Italy of the 1930s, has called *post eventum* cities.<sup>18</sup> First came the factory, and later on developed the city with its roads, apartment buildings, and services.

For those who migrated in these industrial centers when urban life was still embryonical, life was very hard. The administration of the refinery of Maliq did not pay the workers regularly, and the sheltering and food were horrible.<sup>19</sup> Although the factory's directory had its share of the

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<sup>15</sup> Guxho, *Zhvillime në strukturën socialklasore në fshat* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1985), 10-13.

<sup>16</sup> On targeting the peasants of the uplands, Demir Dymishi, "Fshatarësia si burim për shtimin e radhëve të klasës punëtore," *Studime historike* 25, 2 (1988): 47-48. On the propaganda among the mountaineers, *Ibid*, 54-55.

<sup>17</sup> Enver Hoxha, "Fjala e mbajtur në Kongresin e Parë të Kooperativave Bujqësore," in *Vepra*, vol. 6 (Tirana: Naim Frashëri, 1971), 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Los Angeles & Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), 136-141; Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-1956* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 55; Horváth, *Stalinism Reloaded*, 63-74; Antonio Pennacchi, *Fascio e Martello: Viaggio Per Le Città Del Duce* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2008), 189.

<sup>19</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1954, Lista 5, d. 107, fl. 6. Report on the Politburo of the ALP's Committee of Maliq on the work of the organs of justice. February 11, 1954; ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1954, Lista 5, d. 113, fl. 5-8. Report of the Office of Prosecution of the district of Korça on the violation of the rights of workers and other irregularities in Maliq. March 1, 1954. On the irregular payment of workers, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Rrethi Korçë, 1953, Lista 9, d. 148, fl. 4. Report on the analysis of the work in the Party organization in the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" Maliq.

blame, the miserable working and living conditions were not exclusively created by it. The low performance of agriculture in the late 1940s and early 1950s shared part of the blame for the food scarcity. During those years, the peasants did not deliver their quota to the state and sold the products in the urban markets with high prices. As a result, the government could not supply with provisions the urban and working centers. The administration of the refinery wrote to the government asking the immediate intervention to fix the problem of food. The lack of such action, it argued, would leave the workers without sustenance. The combine's directory did not wait for the center to fix the problem. It established its supporting agricultural economies and gave to its workers 80 square meters of arable land per family member, so to allow them to provide for themselves and not to depend on the market or state supplies.<sup>20</sup>

The minimal budget that the directory of the refinery had for housing aggravated further the situation. The pace of building remained slow, and the problem of dwelling persisted for years. Even the cadres with important positions had to struggle for shelter—in 1956, the staff of the Executive Committee slept in their offices because they had no apartments. The administration of the factory patched up a series of sheds into houses for bachelors and families, who lived in extremely unhygienic conditions. In each of these makeshifts lived ten families, and in many cases, entire families, sometimes with many children, lived in one single room. Aggravating these conditions further, these improvised shelters had no kitchens and sewage.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> On the supply with food the urban and industrial centers, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 5, fl. 63-64. Report "On the measures for the further raising of the standard of living of the working masses," held by Enver Hoxha in the meeting of the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953. On the request of the refinery to the government regarding the issue of food, ASHV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Maliqit, 1952, d. 2, fl. 11. Letter of the director of combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" to the Minister of Industry Adil Çarçani. On the establishment of supporting agricultural economies, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1952, Lista 8, d. 64, fl. 3. Report from the control of Party Committee in the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" Maliq. October 7, 1952. On distributing 80 square meters of land per person to the workers' families, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Maliq, 1954, Lista 7, d. 17, fl. 16. A report in the enforcement of legality in the economic enterprises of the district of Maliq.

<sup>21</sup> On the limited budget of the refinery for housing, ASHV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit Maliq, 1962, d. 2, fl. 13. Report of the directory of the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" on the fulfillment of the collective contracts during the year 1961. January 6, 1962. On the staff of the Executive Committee sleeping in their offices, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1956, Lista 9, d. 10, fl. 20. Memo on the composition of the staff of the ALP's Committee of Maliq for the year 1956. January 1, 1956. On the transformation of sheds and the hygienic conditions, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1957, d. 349, fl. 2-3. Memo on the conditions of housing in the sugar combine and the city of Maliq. March 3, 1957. On the poor hygienic conditions, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1952, Lista 8, d. 190, fl. 3. Report on the activity of the section of Industry and Communication during the first trimester of 1952. April 8, 1952. On big families living in one room, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1956, Lista 9, d. 24, fl. 15. Memo on the issue of housing in the city of Maliq. September 15, 1956

The first years, marked by a shortage of shelters, bad pay and little food, long working hours, and administration's authoritarian behavior, did not make Maliq a very alluring place to settle in. The lack of water supply worsened the already dangerous situation created by the crowded places with lack of hygiene, and in 1957 appeared cases of typhus. The extended hours of work deteriorated the workers' health. In shared spaces that packed so many people together, the conflicts over the use of water, electricity, or hygiene, which degenerated into violent confrontations, became common. The poor quality of buildings, something that Enver Hoxha himself admitted, worsened the situation further. The roofs leaked, the walls had mold, and there were even cases when the restrooms' windows were connected on the wall of bedrooms.<sup>22</sup> However, by the 1960s, the situation improved rapidly. More and more families started living in single apartments, and the local authorities fixed the problem of the running water and sewage. Gradually, Maliq, which by the mid-1970s reached a population of 3500 and in the late 1980s exceeded the 4000, started to take the shape of a small urban center.

The town of Maliq was an extension of the refinery, and its urban plan replicated the industrial organization of work. The life of its inhabitants orbited around the factory, the administrative and cultural center, and the neighborhoods with houses and apartment buildings, all placed along a single linear continuum.<sup>23</sup> Like in an assembly line, the inhabitants of the new town

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<sup>22</sup> On the lack of running water, AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1957, Lista 8, d. 134, fl. 16. Minutes of the meeting of the Plenum of the ALP's Committee of Maliq. December 18, 1957. On the cases of typhus, AShV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1957, Lista 10, d. 31, fl. 10. Report on the activity of the health institutions in the district of Maliq. On the diseases among workers and prolonged work hours, AShV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Maliq, 1954, Lista 7, d. 17, fl. 19. Duties on the implementation of legality in favor of the workers. On the issue of conflicts, AQSh, F. 515, Ministria e Drejtësisë, 1959, d. 18, fl. 8. Memo on the criminality and legality during the year 1958. March 19, 1959. On the lack of latrines, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Rrethi Korçë, 1953, Lista 9, d. 148, fl. 4. Report on the analysis of the work in the Party organization in the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" Maliq. On Hoxha admitting the poor quality of buildings, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 5, fl. 70-71. Report "On the measures for the further raising of the standard of living of the working masses," held by Enver Hoxha in the meeting of the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953. On the leaking roofs and walls' humidity, AShV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1956, Lista 9, d. 24, fl. 22-23. Minutes of the meeting of the Politburo of the ALP's Committee of Maliq. September 15, 1956. On the restrooms windows, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 5, fl. 196. Minutes of the meeting of the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953.

<sup>23</sup> On people living in the barracks, AShV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1971, d. 4, fl. 1. Report of Maliq's Executive Committee on the state of housing and the construction of dwellings with voluntary work. On the solution of the problems of food and housing, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit Maliq, 1962, d. 2, fl. 13. Report of the directory of the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" on the fulfillment of the collective contracts during the year 1961. January 6, 1962. On the running water and sewages, AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi

moved back and forth this straight line for work, leisure, or retreat in their houses. In the same way, as in a factory where labor and space are divided according to specific roles and functions, the new town's spatial organization tended to segment space and the activities performed in it according to the principle of work, social activity, and family life. To each of these activities belonged specific spaces along this axis.

The urban planning of Maliq, a city centered around an industrial enterprise abided to the logic of factory. The industrial area was the workspace, located at the extreme north of the settlement. Next to it was bloc 3, the administrative, cultural, educational, and leisure section of the city. As in all dictatorships, education, culture, and leisure were under the stern guard of the political authorities. This principle determined the location of all these institutions in the central part of the town. The ALP and the Executive Committee, the house of culture, with its 300 seats a theater, the 8-year school and gymnasium, the kindergartens, nurseries, and the ambulance all stood next to each other around a small central square. Bloc 1 and 2, located on the two sides of the main street of the town, were filled with shared private houses. And finally, bloc 4, located on the west of the central axis and built later as the city expanded, having both state-owned apartment buildings and private houses.<sup>24</sup>

As for the villages, the government tried unsuccessfully in the summer of 1945 to bring in the plain families from the uplands. The mountaineers did not respond to the call because of the fear of malaria, and only a few families agreed to settle.<sup>25</sup> Apparently, after this short-lived effort, the communists abandoned the idea. After the founding of the state farm, its administration opted for seasonal workers from the surrounding villages. But as it came out, it was impossible to find the necessary 1000 workers that the farm needed each season. The adverse living conditions in the

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Korçë, 1970, Lista 26, d. 31, fl. 63. Memo concerning the urban development of the cities of Korça, Maliq, and Bilisht. On the population of Maliq in 1975, ASHV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1975, d. 4, fl. 18-19. The history of the sugar's combine of Maliq; On the population of Maliq in 1989, ASHV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1989, Not cataloged files without number, Kutia 3397. Info on the problem of the unemployed work force in the city of Maliq.

<sup>24</sup> On the organization of the town, ASHV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1987, Not cataloged documents in files without number, Kutia 3398. Info on the regulatory plan of the town of Maliq, June 28, 1987. On the restaurants, shops, and bars, ASHV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1975, d. 4, fl. 18-19. The history of the sugar's combine of Maliq.

<sup>25</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1 PPSH Qarku Korçë, Lista 1, 1945, d. 14, fl. 59. Monthly Report of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the ALP's Central Committee. August 28, 1945.

dormitories of the farm, the lousy food, and low payment did not stimulate the peasants to work there during the high season. The turnovers were so high that the organization of labor became impossible for the administration of the farm. One seasonal worker explained that the director of the farm forced him to work even on Sundays while he did not have a room to sleep. In years of affluent harvesting, the peasants declined to work in the farm, and those few who dared to go did not meet the norms.<sup>26</sup>

The state farm's inability to supply the refinery became an object of grave concern for the ALP's Politburo. Regardless of the personal commitment that its director, Ilia Prifti, made to Enver Hoxha, the agricultural enterprise failed to attract seasonal workers and did not meet the state plan. The vast area of arable land combined with sugar beet's labor-intensive cultivation required the concentration of a large workforce. And the administration of the farm had a tough time to find a seasonal surplus labor force willing to pluck sugar beet.<sup>27</sup> The solution to this puzzle came in 1953. In a consultation with the Minister of Agriculture, Hysni Kapo, a team of Soviet academics concluded that the only solution to labor scarcity was the establishment of permanent settlements and mechanization.<sup>28</sup> Kapo proposed to the Council of Ministers the permanent settlement of 405 families on the farm, of which construction began the same year. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1953, the

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<sup>26</sup> On the solution to use seasonal workers, their refusal to work during affluent harvestings, the harsh living conditions in the state farm, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 36, fl. 34-39. Minutes of the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee. Discussion "On the solution of the problem of the harvesting of the farm of Maliq." October 21, 1953; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1953, d. 183, fl. 1-4. Minutes and decisions of the Council of Ministers on the favorable treatment of the seasonal workers of the State Agricultural Farm of Maliq. October 27, 1953. On the harsh living conditions and low payment, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/4, Rrethi Maliq, 1953, Lista 5, d. 39, fl. 1. Memorandum "On the problem of the Agricultural State Farm of Maliq." December 25, 1953. On the bad living conditions, AQSh, F. 518, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1953, d. 150, fl. 17. Memo of the Minister of Agriculture, Hysni Kapo, on the workforce in the farm of Maliq. On the issue of bad food, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1953, d. 10, fl. 4. Memo on the farm of Maliq. May 6, 1953. On the turnovers, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1954, d. 97, fl. 1. Memo on the situation in the Agricultural State Farm of Maliq and the measures that should be taken. March 24, 1954. On the complaints of the workers, AQSh, F. 515, Ministria e Drejtësisë, 1954, d. 4, fl. 2. Generalizations on the crimes of the violation of work discipline during the first semester of the year 1954. December 14, 1954.

<sup>27</sup> On the failure to attract the seasonal workers, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1954, Lista 5, d. 56, fl. 11-15. Report on the campaign for harvesting, weeding, and transportation of sugar beet. September 9, 1954. On the failure to convince the peasants to work in the state farm, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 5, fl. 168. Minutes of the meeting of the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the ALP. December 24-25, 1953. On the need for concentrating a large work force in the state farm, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1953, d. 107, fl. 8. Memo on the situation in the farm of Maliq.

<sup>28</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1953, d. 107, fl. 1. Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers held on September 30, 1953.

Ministry of Construction introduced a plan and a timeline for the development of three rural settlements, each with 1500 hectares of arable land. In the mid-1960s, the state called respectively Drithas (the village of the cereal), Sheqeras (the village of sugar), and Vreshtaz (the village of vineyards). The real challenge, though, was not only to build new houses and villages but also to find people willing to settle.<sup>29</sup>

To entice peasants, the director of the state farm proposed to give to each family of new settlers at least 2000 square meters for personal use, the installation of running water, telephonic lines, and electricity. The government agreed with this practical scheme that intended to use material advantages as bait to attract the mountaineers to leave their hamlets and move to the lowlands and participate in the building of socialism. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1954, the Council of Ministers approved Prifti's plan and gave to the families that moved in, financial rewards and mortgages to buy cattle—although in some cases the administration of the farm did not give them to the newcomers.<sup>30</sup> The new inhabitants, mainly from the uplands of Korça, were from impoverished families. When the settlers arrived on the farm, they had almost nothing, and the administration supplied them with the most necessary items, like sheets, blankets, beds, clothes, etc.<sup>31</sup> The incentives produced results. In 1957, around 1100 people were working and living on the farm. Each of them had a house, a private garden, a cow or five sheep, and poultry.

Maliq also hosted victims of ethnic cleansing from Greece, which makes this part of its story part of the traumas that afflicted the societies between the Aegean and Baltic Seas during the

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<sup>29</sup> The proposal of Hysni Kapo, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1953, d. 107, fl. 9. Memo on the situation in the farm of Maliq. On the approval of the Council of Ministers for the permanent settlement of agricultural workers in the farm of Maliq, *Ibid*, fl. 13-14. Decision: "Some measures for the improvement of the conditions in the State Agricultural Enterprise of Maliq. September 30, 1953. On the three sectors of the farm, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1953, d. 152, fl. 1. Memo of the Ministry of Construction "On the preliminary study for the construction of 95 buildings with 380 apartments in the farm of Maliq." October 15, 1953; AQSh, F. 518, Ministria e Industrisë dhe Ndërtimit, 1953, d. 209, fl. 2. On the constructions in the farm of Maliq. December 21, 1953.

<sup>30</sup> The proposal of Ilia Prifti, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/4, Rrethi Maliq, 1953, Lista 5, d. 39, fl. 1-3. Memorandum "On the problem of the Agricultural State Farm of Maliq." December 25, 1953. The approval of the measures for the construction of houses, electrification, installation of telephonic lines, running water, etc. in the state farm of Maliq, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1954, d. 97, fl. 11. Some measures for the State Agricultural Farm of Maliq. April 2, 1954. On the financial facilitations and mortgages to the peasants that moved in the farm of Maliq, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1954, Lista 5, d. 113, fl. 57. On the violation of laws and other irregularities in the State Agricultural Farm of Maliq. October 20, 1954.

<sup>31</sup> On the provision of the families of the settlers with furniture, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Maliq, 1957, Lista 10, d. 26, fl. 8. Report on the improvement of the material conditions of the workers of the State Agricultural Farm of Maliq.

twentieth century. Like in Breslau, where the Polish state installed Poles expelled from Ukraine, in Maliq, the Tirana's authorities settled Albanian migrants that the Greek army forcefully evicted from their homes in 1949.<sup>32</sup> These migrants came from the eastern façade of mountain Gramoz, on the Greek side of the Albanian-Hellenic, where until the World War II, there were fifty to sixty hamlets inhabited by Albanians, of both Muslims and Orthodox Christians. This area became the very center of the Greek communist resistance. When the Hellenic army crushed the Communists in 1949, it also expelled all the Albanian Muslims that inhabited the area. The Albanian speaking Christians did not experience the same fate, because the Hellenic state conflated nationality with religion and considered them Greeks.<sup>33</sup>

These uprooted Albanian speakers joined the ranks of many other millions of victims of the numerous displacements that occurred in post-World War 2 Europe. After being expelled they wandered for some years across Albania, until hearing of the sugar refinery, and settled in Maliq.<sup>34</sup> Even today, after seven decades, some markers display their presence in Maliq. One of them is the coffee shop "Masllavica," the name of one of the hamlets destroyed in 1949. The coffee shop, located in the main boulevard of Maliq, is probably one of the last forms of the collective memory of a forgotten ethnic cleansing. It also shows how a drama perpetrated by anti-communists supplied with labor force an industrial enterprise of a communist regime.

After the difficulties of the first years, the initiative to move on the farm paid off. In the same year, in 1957, the state increased the minimum of the minimum daily payment of the from 80 to 100, while the maximum from 130 to 136 lekë per day. When the agricultural workers surpassed the norms, their incomes were equal to those of workers and state bureaucrats. The personal gardens further boosted the affluence. Gradually the villages took shape based on the plan drawn by the studio "Projekti," founded in 1952 by a nucleus of Soviet and young Albanian architects who had studied in the Soviet Union. Like in all socialist, the religious objects were

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<sup>32</sup> On Wrocław, see Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław During the Century of Expulsion*, translated from German, Tom Lampert and Allison Brown (Wrocław: Via Nova, 2011), 93-95.

<sup>33</sup> On the difficult relations between Albania and Greece during the early stages of the Cold War era, Beqir Meta, *Tensioni shqiptaro-grek: 1939-1949* (Tirana: Globus R, 2007); Beqir Meta, *Shqipëria dhe Greqia, 1949-1990: pagja e vështirë* (Tirana: Globus R, 2007). On the human drama of the Greek Civil War, see the first-person account of William H. McNeill, *Greece: American Aid in Action, 1947-1956* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1957).

<sup>34</sup> Çelnik Jaupi, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, September 30, 2017.

absent. At the center of Maliq's new compact orthogonal settlements that occupied an area of approximately twenty-three hectares each, dominated the administrative and socio-cultural buildings.<sup>35</sup>

In 1959, a periodical boasted with distinct pride that the ALP built new villages, where once only the fishermen with their boats could go. The fertile land once covered by a swamp now buzzed from the tractors and combines, it filled the granaries with cereals and supplied the refinery with sugar beet.<sup>36</sup> This was the example *par excellence* of the narrative: it showcased socialism's success in taming nature, spreading civilization and happiness exactly where once there was wilderness. As explained above, though, contrary to the mythology of the communist power apparatus, the construction of the refinery, new town, and villages were outcomes of unanticipated circumstances.

The state authorities tried unsuccessfully in the immediate post-WWII years to bring to the plain people from the highlands. However, they gave up the plan as soon as understood that few mountaineers were willing to move. In the end, it was the building of the sugar factory next to the gorge of Maliq, fifteen km away from Korça, that forced the state authorities to build a new small town next to it. The need to supply the refinery with sugar beet, in return, forced it to build the villages and fill them with the necessary workforce. What started as a contingency, the propaganda apparatus used in retrospective as another success story of the Albanian socialist modernity. By the late 1950s, the inhabitants of the state's farm earned and consumed more than any other peasant of the district—thanks to the sugar industry.

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<sup>35</sup> On the improvement of the quality of life and the high salaries, AShV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Maliq, 1957, Lista 10, d. 26, fl. 8-9. Report on the improvement of the material conditions of the workers of the State Agricultural Farm of Maliq. The salaries increased in this way: the daily payment of the workers of the first category increased from 80 to 100 lekë per day; the second category increased from 93 to 110 lekë; the third category from 109 to 122 lekë; and the fourth category increased 130 to 136. On the studio "Projekti," AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1956, d. 421, fl. 17-18. Memo of the Ministry of Construction on some urgent issues of urban planning in Albania.

<sup>36</sup> "Atje ku më parë ishte kënetë," *Për bujqësinë socialiste*, 8 (1959): 4-5.

### 4.3 Building Socialism, Spatializing Inequalities

Similar to its Soviet and eastern European analogues, the Albanian socialist regime established professional hierarchies that defined a new social structure, the bottom of which held members of the cooperatives. Thus, in 1958, the income in the collective farms was 19,720 lekë, while that of the workers 35,567 lekë. The uneven allocation of financial rewards and access to consumption becomes visible also in the annual growth of the peasants and workers. Thus, during 1958, the workers' revenues increased by 11.1%—from 32,015 to 35,567 lekë—while those of the peasants by only 0.9%—from 19,528 to 19,720 lekë. Although the state rewarded the members of the agricultural cooperatives with industrial goods, still their revenues were lower than those of the workers. As a result, in the late 1950s, the urban population, that gauged 316,000, purchased more than 936,000 people that lived in the countryside.<sup>37</sup> The stipend of the cooperatives' members was the sum of a basic monthly salary—much lower compared to workers and state bureaucracy—and the distribution of the cooperative farm's annual incomes. The economic performance of the collective farms, so critical for their members' earnings, depended on the type of crops that the State Planning Commission assigned to them to cultivate, quality of soil, climate, and other factors outside the peasants' control. Thus, the central planning, in combination with topography, pedology, climate, seeds, etc., produced inequalities among agricultural cooperatives.

How all these factors did interplay in Maliq? In what ways did they shape the spatial inequalities? Discussing on the Soviet Union and Hungary, Neil Melvin and Ivan Szelenyi have already argued on the complexity of social stratification of the socialist countryside and questioned the validity of the concept of “peasant class” in Soviet-type regimes.<sup>38</sup> Despite conforming their interpretations to the regime's tripartite division of the society into peasants, workers, and technocrats, the Albanian communist statisticians, too, recognized how such division did not correspond to the mixed professional composition of the rural population. Since the late 1950s,

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<sup>37</sup> AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1959, d. 134, fl. 21-22, 93, 116-117. Memo on the revenues per person of the peasantry. On the urban and rural population of Albania in the late 1950s and its purchasing power.

<sup>38</sup> Neil J. Melvin, *Soviet Power and the Countryside: Policy Innovation and Institutional Decay* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 133; Ivan Szelenyi, *Socialist Entrepreneurs: Embourgeoisement in Rural Hungary* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

they realized that many families in the countryside had members that fell simultaneously into the category of workers, clerks, employed in cooperatives, and private peasants. Socialist industrialization, rather than simplifying the spatial distribution of professions and classes, intermingled them further and complicated the social landscape.

In Maliq, the sugar industry intricated further the socio-economic structure. Compared to the pre-WWII, when almost all the inhabitants of the plain were peasants, after the building of the refinery in 1951, there were hundreds of workers, technicians, specialists, and vendors that interacted closely with the peasants.<sup>39</sup> As a result, by the 1950s, agriculture was not the only type of employment, and many families in the plain had a mixed professional composition. In addition, the intensification of connection of the population of the plain with other economic sectors other than agriculture augmented the cash inflow into the finances of individual rural families and thickened the threads that tied them to the market.

The nested spatial hierarchies of communist modernization became pronounced deeply in the fractures that divided Maliq's plain from the uplands of Korça. The cooperatives in the highlands harvested an average of fifteen quintals of cereal per hectare, among the lowest in the country, while in the plain yielded between forty-five to fifty quintal per hectare, among the highest in the country. As a consequence, the differences in incomes between the peasants in the highland and the plain Maliq widened. For example, in 1970, the monthly average revenues per person in the countryside of the district of Korça was 3265 lekë, while the average in the uplands was 2380 lekë.<sup>40</sup> It meant that the salaries in the lowland's farms were way above the average and much higher than in the highlands. Simultaneously the work in the latter was more time-consuming and backbreaking. In the meantime, in 1957, many agricultural workers in the state farm Maliqi earned

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<sup>39</sup> On the mixed professional composition of the rural families, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1959, d. 134, fl. 125. Memo on the realization of the salaries for the workers and clerks, and the revenues for the year 1959 and the anticipation for the year 1960.

<sup>40</sup> On the yielding in the cooperatives of the uplands, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1976, d. 96, fl. 22. Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the ALP's Central Committee. September 21, 1976. On the yieldings of the agricultural enterprises in the plain of Maliq, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1976, d. 96, fl. 20. Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the ALP's Central Committee. September 21, 1976; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1982, d. 530, fl. 4. Speech of the Prime Minister, Adil Çarçani, in a meeting at the cooperative of Plasa, in Korça. September 18, 1982. On the differences in revenues between lowlands and uplands, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1970, Lista 26, d. 53, fl. 2. Memo of the ALP's Committee of Korça on the increase of the revenues of the collective farms in the uplands. March 20, 1970.

record wages of 6000 lekë a month, comparable with those of the intelligentsia. If we count the increase of revenues Korça's countryside by 76% from 1960 to 1979, then the gap between the wages in the state farm and the collective farms, especially in the uplands, widen even further.<sup>41</sup>

In tandem with the increase in incomes took place also the electrification in the villages of the plain. In the late 1950s, the district of Korça had sixty-five electrified villages, a record for the entire country, and the bulk of them located in the plateau.<sup>42</sup> By the early 1960s, all the villages of the plain had electricity, and radios too. In 1957, the countryside of Korça had 325 radios, and in 1959, their number doubled to 655; the bulk of them owned by members of the agricultural enterprises of the plain, who besides electricity had higher incomes. Two decades later, all the families of the villages of the plain had radios, while in the state farm, where the houses had amenities similar to those of the urban dwellers, a good part of the families owned TV sets.<sup>43</sup> The villages of the uplands, however, could not easily access these commodities and technologies.

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<sup>41</sup> On the uplanders working more and earning little, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1968, d. 90/4, fl. 44-46. Study on the perspective development of the agricultural sector in the district of Korça for the years 1970-1980. July 1968. On the wages of the agricultural workers of Maliq, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Maliq, 1957, Lista 10, d. 26, fl. 8-9. Report on the improvement of the material conditions of the workers of the State Agricultural Farm of Maliq. On the growth of incomes of the rural population of Korça see Guxho, *Zhvillime në strukturën socialklasore në fshat*, 130-134.

<sup>42</sup> On the number of the electrified villages in the district of Korça, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1957, Lista 8, d. 25, fl. 26. Report on the artistic and cultural work in the district. On Korça holding the record of the electrified villages, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 153, fl. 5. Report on the situation and perspectives of the countryside. On the concentration of the majority of the electrified villages in the plain of Korça, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 103, fl. 58-60. Table of the electrification of the villages in the district of Korça.

<sup>43</sup> On the electrification of the villages of the plain of Maliq, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 103, fl. 58-60. Table of the electrification of the villages in the district of Korça. On the peasants of the plain possessing radios and TVs, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1974, Lista 30, d. 69, fl. 31. Report of the State Farm Maliq on the moral and political attitude of the workers of this enterprise; AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1955, d. 55/6, fl. 110. Report on the situation of the collective farms in the district of Korça held in the meeting of the Presidency of Union of the Collective Farms of Albania. February 2, 1955. On the number of radios in the countryside of Korça in 1957, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1957, Lista 8, d. 25, fl. 26. Report on the artistic and cultural work in the district. On the number of the radios in the countryside of Korça in 1959, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 107, fl. 8. Letter of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the problems of the cultural life in the countryside of the district. June 27, 1959. On the ownership of radios and TVs in the first half of the 1970s, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1974, Lista 30, d. 69, fl. 31. Report of the State Farm Maliq on the moral and political attitude of the workers of this enterprise. On the furnishing of the houses in the state farm, ASHV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1964, fl. 7. Report of the Presidency of the Union of Albanian Woman's branch of Korça on the measures for the implementation of the ALP's Central Committee instructions for the improvement of the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the countryside. February 18, 1964.

The spatial organization of the villages of the plain was another critical factor that helped their electrification. Before WWII, none of the rural settlements in the plain of Maliq was a clustered settlement, but rather communities of households scattered across a vast area. The scattered plots and lack of roads forced many peasants to build their houses close to their land. On the other hand, the houses far from each other hampered the electrification, the construction of sewages, the supply with running water, the building of schools, sanitary services, and a functional trade network of stores and other amenities.<sup>44</sup>

The communist regime was committed to use as much arable land as possible and mechanize the agriculture decided to discipline the peasants' constructions. In the early 1960s, the state imposed its monopoly on the management of the territory, and it prohibited the peasants from building anything without prior permission of the local authorities. And because the topography of the plains favored the formation of packed rural centers, the government decided to transform the villages in the lowlands into clustered settlements.<sup>45</sup> In line with this project for the revamping of the countryside, Tirana ordered the spatial organization of the villages around Hippodamian principles, with straight roads and orthogonal angles. In Korça, the local authorities, under the banner of maximization of exploitation of arable land, entered into action since the late 1950s and forbade the peasants of Maliq to build without authorization. Concurrently, many specialists from Tirana, among them also students of the faculty of engineering, drew layouts for the villages of the plain. Soon, old settlements, like Orman Pojan, Rëmbec, and Pojan, emerged as compact abodes ordered by the rectangular grid.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> On the scattered villages of the plain of Maliq, Vasilika Cicko, "Tipare të reja të vendbanimeve fshatare," in *Konferenca Kombëtare e Studimeve Etnografike* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RPSSH, 1977), 444. On the scattered villages and the difficulties of their modernization, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1960, d. 145, fl. 8-9. Report on the construction of dwellings in Albania since 1945.

<sup>45</sup> Enver Faja and Isuf Sukaj, *Urbanistika dhe ndërtimet në fshat* (Tirana: Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, 1990), 78; Cicko, "Tipare të reja të vendbanimeve fshatare," 445.

<sup>46</sup> On the commitment of the local authorities of Korça to maximize the use of arable land, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 2, fl. 12-13. Report on the collective farms in the district of Korça for the year 1960 and the tasks for their development. March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1961. On the engineers and students that drew the urban planning of the villages of the plain of Maliq, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1960, Lista 16, d. 110, fl. 5. Memo on the cultural work in the district. May 14, 1960; AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1960, Lista 16, d. 104, fl. 1. Letter of the ALP's Central Committee sent to the ALP's local committees concerning the dispatching of the cultural brigades with the intellectuals of the capital in support of the countryside. June 8, 1960.

Not accidentally, the new plans targeted the villages where collectivization of agriculture had advanced the furthest. In Albania, as was the case in the other eastern European countries, collectivization was in full swing. As a result, the collectivized area jumped from 14.5% of the arable land in 1955, to 85% in 1960.<sup>47</sup> Tirana's authorities, beside coercion, also used soft strategies to convince the peasants to join the cooperatives by showing the alleged superiority of socialism and the benefits derived from collectivization. The regime built 7-year schools, kindergartens, nurseries, health centers, and bakeries in the collectivized villages. The reconstruction of Rëmbec and Pojan, for example, had the clear purpose of alluring the peasants of Maliq to join the cooperatives. The sizable investments that the regime carried out in the model villages would showcase what socialism meant and how advantageous it was to integrate into the socialist sector of the economy.<sup>48</sup>

Besides their use for propaganda, the building of educational, health, and trade network services played crucial functions in the policy of Tirana's leadership to fragment the unity of the rural household's multifunctionality and autonomy. In the house, the peasants had eaten, slept, reproduced, given birth, reared their children, worked, and died. With the maternities, nurseries, kindergartens, schools, collective farms, bakeries, stores, etc., the Tirana's communist authorities broke this unity and, through many threads, connected the peasants to the outer world that lay outside the house's wall, especially with the state institutions. Besides the political mission, this network of state-controlled services played a prominent economic role.

First, they were critical of women working in the cooperatives. The regime, eager to double its labor force in agriculture, had to pull the women out of the patriarchal household economy and the reproductive functions it played there. Attaining this goal, also meant to break up the closed economy of the household and connect the peasants with the socialist market. If the women worked as wage labor, it meant that they could neither raise their children nor prepare the bulk of food and attires themselves. For them to work in the socialist sector, the state would need to assist the women in the roles they had always played within the rural patriarchal household.

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<sup>47</sup> Guxho, *Zhvillime në strukturën socialklasore në fshat*, 20-21.

<sup>48</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1960, Lista 16, d. 110, fl. 5. Memo on the cultural work in the district. May 14, 1960; Cicko, "Tipare të reja të vendbanimeve fshatare," 444-447.

The building in the countryside of the state network of trade and education was not merely an expression of the modern state's drive to interfere in the private sphere, regulate it, and monopolize the rearing of future generations. It is true that this web of state-led services, meant to integrate women within the socialist system, also underpinned the extension of the communist regime's power in the realm of the familial and intimate sphere. However, the dotting of the countryside by the reticle of preschool and trade establishments had essential economic functions. These services became especially crucial for the inclusion of women in the collective farms.

Cheap female labor was critical to the regime's finances and agenda of investments because it allowed the state to save resources and allocate them in industry. Such a mechanism perpetrated the simultaneous subordination of agriculture and peasant women to the secondary sector of the economy. The central authorities were especially interested in using the women's labor in the most productive cooperatives. And when it came to the distribution of the pre-school institutions and trade networks, the state organs openly favored the collective farms that had high economic importance and where the female workforce was more needed. By 1961, in the collective farms of Korça, there were 13 nurseries 39 kindergartens, and 42 bakeries, the majority of them distributed in the plain.<sup>49</sup>

Pursuing Tirana's orders, the ALP's Committee of Korça ordered in December of 1961 the opening within the upcoming year of nurseries and bakeries in all the large cooperatives of the district. Peasant women that worked in the socialist economy would buy the bread now instead of doing and baking it themselves at home.<sup>50</sup> The introduction and expansion of stores and childcare institutions were part of the ALP's leadership goal to transform the peasant families from economic units mainly oriented toward production into consumption-oriented social molecules.<sup>51</sup> In line with this goal, the regime struggled, not without success, to interrupt the domestic output

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<sup>49</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 25, fl. 115. Memo on the work with the masses of the women in the countryside. August 16, 1961.

<sup>50</sup> On the order for the peasant women to buy the bread in bakeries, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 8, fl. 55-56. Report of the ALP's Committee of Korça on the work for the implementation of the decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the ALP concerning the measures for the schooling and technical-professional education of women, and her rise in responsibility. December 21, 1961.

<sup>51</sup> On the policy of the communist regime to transform the household from a production to a consumption unit, AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1981, fl. 9. Some conclusions from the study of family psychology in the district of Korça and the problems that emerge. January 20, 1980.

of furnishings, clothes, foodstuff, etc., and stimulated consumption over accumulation. It did not only consider the handicrafts a reflection of the mentality of private property but also responsible for detaching the rural families from the market.

The establishment of the network of trade and childcare institutions, the introduction of new ways of feeding and dressing belonged to Tirana's social engineering in the countryside. Besides the ideological component that drove the "was against backward customs and superstitions," as the Albanian communist leadership used to call its civilizing mission in the countryside, there was also an essential economic element underpinning its cultural policy. According to the ALP's structures, raising the cultural level of the peasantry meant also teaching them to manage their financial resources and use their savings for expanding the inventory of appliances, furniture, dresses, and other goods that made life cultured. In this way, the rural population would support domestic manufacturing. Korça's Democratic Front taught the peasant couples to govern their incomes to buy blankets and sheets, clothes for work, free time, and bedtime, dishes, wares, forks, chairs, and tables. It was in this context that the regime's organs started a wholesale attack against the home-made peasants' felt dresses that they used for both work and their free time. The state's local branches considered felt unhygienic and urged the peasants to buy duffle, flannel, and cotton clothes produced in the textile combine "Stalin," in Tirana. Contrary to felt, the propaganda apparatus stated, the industrial clothes were hygienic and healthy.<sup>52</sup>

Becoming cultured meant becoming good consumers, who would support the development of the national industry. In 1957, to connect the peasants tightly to the market and orient them toward consumption despite their low incomes, in 1957, the government decreased the prices of many market goods. In the meantime, the state authorities intensified the campaigns against the domestic productions of clothes in the countryside.<sup>53</sup> The regime also ordered the shrinking of the

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<sup>52</sup> AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1961, fl. 4-6. Lecture of the Democratic Front of Korça on the improvement of lifestyle in the countryside.

<sup>53</sup> On the decrease of prices, AShV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1957, Lista 10, d. 1, fl. 20. Report of the First Secretary of the ALP's Committee of Mali, Ilo Xega, in the Fourth ALP's Conference in the district of Maliq. March 31, 1957. On the fight against the domestic production of clothes, AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1961, fl. 4. Lecture of the Democratic Front of Korça on the improvement of lifestyle in the countryside.

peasants' gardens from 500-700 square meters, as had been the norm to only 300. By reducing the peasants' ability to produce their food, the communist state sought to erode the economic base of the peasant household, increase the market dependency of the rural population, separate production from consumption, and thus, expand the domestic market.<sup>54</sup>

The effect of these efforts that aimed at breaking any form of self-sufficiency of the rural families that separated from the market was immense. Thus, the demand for items like buckram, drapery, threads, pasta, shoes, towels, and soap, some of the most important goods related to cultured life, grew exponentially. For example, the number of finished goods purchased in the countryside between 1950 and 1958, more than doubled. The rural population bought in the market woolens, calico, flannels, velvets, sweaters, threads, socks, sweatshirts, sandals, or shoes. Before the establishment of socialism, the items were either unknown, unused, or home-made. Although at a lower level compared to the urbanites, the peasants also increased the scale of foodstuff from the state market, like rice, sugar, oil, marmalades, macaroni, canned fish, and flour.<sup>55</sup>

But in the district of Korça, the effects of these policies that sought the creation of modern rural consumers were far from uniform. Indeed, they deepen the topographic inequalities. The farmers of the plain of Maliq compensated for the reduction of personal gardens with their salaries. By the mid-1960, the rural population of the plain was already using different dresses for work and others for domestic use or leisure time. Urban fashion penetrated and dominated the rural dressing-style, and the peasants of Maliq begun to buy their clothes in Korça. Shoes and rubber boots for winter replaced the traditional leather opinga, and velvet and cotton clothes displaced

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<sup>54</sup> Cicko, "Tipare të reja të vendbanimeve fshatare," 444-447.

<sup>55</sup> On the growth of incomes of the rural population in the district of Korça and the increase of its purchasing power, Guxho, *Zhvillime në strukturën socialklasore në fshat*, 130-134. On the decrease of prices of industrial goods, Astrit Kallfa, *Arritje dhe probleme të ngushtimit të dallimeve thelbësore ndërmjet qytetit dhe fshatit* (Tirana: Universiteti i Tiranës, 1984), 147. On the growth of demand for goods of light industry in the countryside of the region of Korça, AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1957, Lista 8, d. 138, fl. 4. Report of the ALP's Committee of Maliq on the situation of trade in the district and the measures for its increase. September 9, 1957; AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1959, d. 134, fl. 21-22. Statistics of the sales of goods to the working masses in the city, countryside, and other categories of the population. On the increase of the number of confections bought in the countryside, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 65, fl. 17. Report on the role of the consumption cooperatives for the raise of culture in the countryside. On the foodstuff items bought in the countryside, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1959, d. 134, fl. 21-22. Statistics of the sales of goods to the working masses in the city, countryside, and other categories of the population.

felt. Both men and women uncovered their heads, and caps and scarfs stopped being part of the peasants' attire, while the young girls started keeping their hair short, like their urban peers.<sup>56</sup>

The agricultural cooperatives of the plain, which had high revenue and competed to become model collective farms, also played an important role in the regime's internal civilizing mission. For a collective farm to become model meant that its members kept their houses clean, paint them with lime, furnished with new furniture, especially beds and tables, use individual dishes, the building of lavatories, and the sealing of their septic holes.<sup>57</sup> Cooperatives of the plain, like that of Libonik, spent 700,000 lekë for buying cupboards, dishes, glasses of water, blankets, sheets, etc., for its members.<sup>58</sup> However, this was not the case with the inefficient agricultural enterprises in the uplands. The latter's members, whose incomes were very low, had no alternative to counterbalance the shrinking of their private plots.

It was the economic inequality that hampered the ability of the uplanders to meet the regime's standard of "cultured life," rather than any form of alleged resistance to it. The local ALP's organs, though, rather than reflecting on the structures that generated the slow pace of social and cultural transformations in the uplands, elaborated a narrative that made the highlands the "Other" of the lowlands, where people resist to change and do not embrace the socialist culture. The inequality and the marginalized position vis-à-vis the administrative and regional economic centers soon unfolded also at the discursive level too. Korça's communist structures in charge of the cultural policies juxtaposed the positive model of the plain of Maliq with the negative example of the uplands.

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<sup>56</sup> On the use of different type of dresses, ASHV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1964, fl. 18. Report of the Presidency of the Union of Albanian Woman's branch of Korça on the measures for the implementation of the ALP's Central Committee instructions for the improvement of the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the countryside. February 18, 1964. On the introduction of new attires and tastes, ASHV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1961, fl. 4. Lecture of the Democratic Front of Korça on the improvement of lifestyle in the countryside; ASHV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1964, fl. 18-19. Report of the Presidency of the Union of Albanian Woman's branch of Korça on the measures for the implementation of the ALP's Central Committee instructions for the improvement of the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the countryside. February 18, 1964; Andromaqi Gjergji, "Provë për një studim etnografik në kooperativën bujqësore "Shkëndia" (rrethi i Korçës)," *Etnografia shqiptare*, 2 (1963): 96-98.

<sup>57</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1957, Lista 8, d. 190, fl. 2. Letter of the ALP's Central Committee to all the local ALP's Committees: "On a more cultured life in the countryside." October 14, 1957.

<sup>58</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1957, Lista 10, d. 5, fl. 4. Report on the sanitary propaganda in the countryside. December 18, 1957.

According to local ALP organs, in the plains people used beds, while in the highlands, the people still slept on the ground and used the same rugs to cover themselves during the entire winter without washing them once.<sup>59</sup> When it came to eating, the rural population of the plain of Maliq ate in a cultured way, they ate in tables, sat in chairs, used glasses, personal dishes, forks, and spoons. And again, the uplands were the counterexample, where cultured eating was not making headways. Even in the 1960s, as this narrative goes, the uplanders rejected the new ways of life and kept eating like their grandfathers.<sup>60</sup>

None of the local propagandists concluded that the uneven distribution of the state trade and services network, meant to alleviate women's work in the collective farms, amplified the intraregional inequalities. Despite the regime's goal to cover all the countryside with preschool institutions and stores and use them for social engineering, the decision of December 1961 favored the most productive and largest collective farms, all located in the plateau. The nonprofitable cooperatives in the mountainous areas of the country remained for a long time marginal to the investments. The uneven allocation of these services increased the sensibly the workload of women in the highland, especially in the 1960s, when collectivization reached the remotest areas. While patriarchy in the highlands was hard to die as they negligible state support to back them up, women found themselves to fulfill obligations simultaneously in the collective farms and their houses.

However, within agriculture, there is also another set of nested inequalities that directly impacted the position and status of women between state farms and cooperatives. Thus, in 1959, in Korça's state farms, where the biggest one was that of Maliq, four women hold the position of brigadier, and thirty-two others worked in the administration of these economic units. It might seem a negligible number, but by the late 1950s, only 190, or 5% of the total 3312 agricultural workers of the state farms were female, while they represented 19,7% of the farms' administration.

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<sup>59</sup> AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1961, fl. 2. Lecture of the Democratic Front of Korça on the improvement of lifestyle in the countryside.

<sup>60</sup> AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1961, fl. 6. Lecture of the Democratic Front of Korça on the improvement of lifestyle in the countryside; On drinking from the same glass in the uplands, AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1964, fl. 8 & 17. Report of the Presidency of the Union of Albanian Woman's branch of Korça on the measures for the implementation of the ALP's Central Committee instructions for the improvement of the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the countryside. February 18, 1964; AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, No year, fl. 3. Report of Korça's Women Organization for a more cultured life in the countryside.

The picture was different in the collective farms. In the same year, 42.2% of the cooperatives' workforce, 11,533 out of 27,221, was composed of females. Regardless of the considerable number of women working in the collective farms, there was only one brigadier, and only seven worked as accountants. The regime intervened to adjust the gendered lopsidedness of distribution of power in the collective farms. In 1960, the ALP's leadership issued a decision that enforced the opening up of the opportunities for women's social mobility and their participation in the commanding positions of the collective farms. Within the same year, four women got promoted as head or vicechair of collective farms, while the number of accountants moved up slightly, from seven to eleven.<sup>61</sup>

Education became a powerful tool for women to exploit the structure of opportunities of the socialist system and ascend the bureaucratic and power apparatus. Raising within the ranks of administration, occupying important positions in either industrial or agricultural sector required a minimum of professional education. The regime's efforts started giving results by the early 1960s. Thus, in 1961, in the entire district of Korça, there were 2423 women with 7-year school, 567 with high school, and 78 women hold a university degree. The same year, in the district's elementary schools, studied 7197 girls, 2971 in high schools, and 309 in university. A generation of women accessed education and the opportunities that it opened for social mobility within the socialist context. And still, behind the optimistic figures of the ALP's statistics hide broader spatial and social inequalities that determined women's careers.<sup>62</sup>

First, there was a sharp geographic unevenness in the quality of education. The best teachers worked in urban schools. And while the 7-year school of Maliq, famous in all the district for its electrical watch, running water, centralized heating, and fifteen very qualified teachers -

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<sup>61</sup> On the number of women working in the administration and leading positions in the state farms and cooperatives, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 65, fl. 26-27. Memo on the work of the ALP's organization in the district of Korça for the rise of women in responsibility. September 9, 1959. On the ALP's order to promote women, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 13, fl. 27. Memo of the ALP's Committee of Korça concerning the implementation of the decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the ALP on the schooling and technical-professional education of the women and their promotion in duties with responsibility. January 24, 1961.

<sup>62</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 8, fl. 42. Report of the ALP's Committee of Korça on the work for the implementation of the decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the ALP concerning the measures for the schooling and technical-professional education, and her rise in responsibility. December 21, 1961.

two-thirds of the pedagogical staff of the area did not have the proper qualification.<sup>63</sup> The distribution of the competent and unqualified teachers in the area of Maliq that included villages from both lowlands and uplands followed topographic lines. Some of the best 7-year schools in Korça's countryside were in the plain of Maliq, as it was the case with those of the villages of Vashtëmi and Pirg.<sup>64</sup> No school from the uplands never made its way to the top rankings.

The quality of education was strongly correlated to the uneven distribution of the skilled workforce. The bulk of the technocrats of the region of Korça worked and lived in Maliq. By the second half of the 1970s, only the state farm had, out of its 5100 employees, 255 specialists with vocational school education and 74 with a university degree. Moreover, thanks to the continuous courses and part-time schools, the agricultural enterprises of the plain of Maliq had some of the most educated and qualified farmers in the entire country. In the town of Maliq worked 15 out of 25 engineers of the whole district, and in the collective farms of the plain worked 24 of the 64 agronomists and veterinarians of the entire region. If we include doctors and teachers, then the number of those with a university degree increased considerably. Besides, 900 peasants from the villages of the plain worked for half of the year in the combine.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> On the 7-year school of Maliq, Nesti Furrxhi, "Më e mira në rrethin e Korçës," *Bashkimi*, July 1, 1959, 157 (4338): 3. On the underqualification of two thirds of the pedagogical staff of the area of Maliq, AShV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1957, Lista 10, d. 62, fl. 3. Memo on the working of the protocol of the regional ALP's Committee on the scientific and ideologic content of the teachings in the elementary and 7-year schools.

<sup>64</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/4, Komiteti i PPSH Maliq, 1957, Lista 10, d. 30, fl. 7. Information on the situation of the state education of the district of Maliq.

<sup>65</sup> On the number of engineers, agronomists, veterinarians, and agricultural technicians working in Maliq, AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1958, Lista 9, d. 1, fl. 4. Memo concerning the propaganda with lecture in the region. January 15, 1958; AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1960, Lista 16, d. 115, fl. 8-13. The list of the staff of the specialists with a university degree in the agricultural sector in the district of Korça. December 17, 1960. On the number of people with university education in the state farm of Maliq, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1978, d. 415, fl. 104. Report of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the ALP's Central Committee on some problems for the development of the state farm of Maliq and "November 29<sup>th</sup>" in Lushnje. November 30, 1978. On the number of specialists with vocational school in the state farm of Maliq, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1975, d. 814, fl. 36. Report on the work of the ALP's organization of state farm of Maliq for increasing the role of the communists and mobilizing the forces for the meeting of the state plan. On the courses held in the state farm Maliq for the qualification of the agricultural workers, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1973, d. 546, fl. 5. Information on the implementation of the instructions of the Secretariat of the Central Committee concerning the education of the workers in the state farms of Maliq and "November 29<sup>th</sup>." On the level of education of the peasants of the plain of Maliq, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1976, d. 99, fl. 2. Minutes of the meeting of the Secretaries of the ALP's Central Committee. October 1, 1976. On the engineers and laboratory technicians, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1977, d. 149, fl. 29. Study on the improvement of the processes of cultivation, transportation, and processing of sugar beet and for the strengthening of the cooperation between those who produce and those who process it. On the number of doctors, nurses, teachers, and specialized workers, AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1958, Lista 9, d. 8, fl.

For all these specialists with university degrees or vocational schools, besides the good biographies and party membership or loyalty, education had been key to their promotion. The ALP's leadership, which knew that loyalty without skills was not enough, ordered all its members, who were those who also held key administrative and economic positions within the power apparatus, to attend different levels of professional education. The preparation of this class of rulers required their skilling to lead, understand, implement the orders, and perform the necessary functions within the structures of the socialist managerial socialist state.<sup>66</sup> As a result, the groups that composed the backbone of the power structure, who also lived in the urban and industrial centers, were those more tightly connected to education. In Bourdieu's terms, they developed a habitus, that represented a set of dispositions constructed by the new white-collar group under socialism, where knowledge and education had a central role for their status and social standing.<sup>67</sup> As a consequence, the members of this professional group that emerged at the beginning of the regime's life started reproducing their privileged position within the society, creating a class gradually.

Ironically, education, which was meant as an instrument of emancipation, in practice provided one of the primary means for the preservation of access to power structure and reproduction of social inequalities. Thus, the bulk of the peasants and workers did not support their children to go to the gymnasium or in other professional schools but treated them as labor force agriculture. As the ALP structures realized in 1980, in Maliq, those who invested more for the education of their children were the clerks and technocrats.<sup>68</sup> This was reprehensible for an allegedly socialist state and society. After reaching its maturity, many members of the power

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14. Evidence on the staff of specialists in the locality of Maliq. On the number of peasants employed part-time in the combine, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1952, Lista 8, d. 64, fl. 3. Report from the control of Party Committee in the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" Maliq. October 7, 1952.

<sup>66</sup> On the education of clerks and cadres, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 4, fl. 9. Report on the work of the ALP's Committee with the local councils of the district; AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1958, Lista 9, d. 8, fl. 11-12. Evidences on the distribution of the education and level of state and ideological education of the communists in the locality of Maliq; AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Maliq, 1958, Lista 11, d. 2, fl. 31. Memo concerning the communist cadres in the locality of Maliq for the year 1957.

<sup>67</sup> On Bourdieu's formulation of habitus see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, translated from French by Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52-65.

<sup>68</sup> AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1981, fl. 34-36. Some conclusions from the study of the family psychology in the district of Korça, and the problems that emerge. January 20, 1980.

structure realized that rather than blurring and eliminating class divisions, socialism indeed produced and reinforced them. Ironically, a political and economic system that claimed to represent the alliance of workers and peasants and rule on their behalf ended up creating a bureaucratic class ruling them.

The girls that went to study at the university and move upward in leading positions came overwhelmingly from parents that worked as specialists and technocrats. They were from urban centers and the villages of the plain. Thus, their success, which on the surface appeared to demonstrate the regime's alleged success to flatten gender inequalities, did express the fractures of multiple disparities that the regime's industrialization produced. It exposed the differentiation of economically and administratively more privileged areas in the plain of Maliq from the uplands. The sugar industry and the important role it had in the regional and national economy was one of the primary structural factors that augmented the number and importance of the group of specialists and technocrats. It gave them power and enhanced the opportunities for many of the girls from the plateau of Korça to pursue university studies. The social and spatial hierarchies mutually constituted, reinforced, and consolidated each other.

#### **4.4 Love for the Plain**

The industrialization of the plateau of Korça, where the sugar industry occupied a central role, created a regional economic system that constructed spatial inequalities. The plain, the city of Maliq and Korça, represented a core area. The uplands became peripheral areas that spun around the regional center located in the plain. Besides raw materials, the highlands supplied the industrial centers with the workforce. In the second half of the 1940s and early 1950s, the communist regime had a hard time to retrieve a surplus workforce from the highland. Thus, from 1945 to 1950, the urban population of the district of Korça grew meagerly from 24,602 to 27,447. However, by the end of the decade, the situation radically changed. From 1945 to 1961, the total population of the district grew from 103,531 people in 1945 to 139,465 in 1960. The most dramatic increase was that of the urban population, which, by 1960, jumped to 45,828, while the rural population grew

from 78,929 to 93,637. It was not the natural growth that almost doubled the urban population but the rural migration, which explains the moderate rate of demographic increase in the countryside.<sup>69</sup>

By the late 1950s, agriculture in Albania lost its status as a profession, a process that, as Sheila Fitzpatrick has argued, did take place in the Soviet Union during the 1930s.<sup>70</sup> In Korça, too, the state organs identified with grave concern the widespread tendency, especially among many young men from the upland, to seek a job outside of agriculture and to move to towns.<sup>71</sup> Anna Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa observed in the 1980s that the scientific and technical changes had diluted the attachment of peasants to land and agriculture.<sup>72</sup> According to her, the youth's disinterest in following their family tradition and working in the fields was especially strong in the villages close to the industrial centers, where the young people preferred to pursue other modes of life. While this statement holds some truth to it, it also needs some adjustments and further elaboration for Maliq's context. The mechanization of agriculture indeed created surplus labor, while the industry soaked it and introduced youth to the more glaring of urban life. However, working in factories and living in shacks for long periods of time was not very exciting either.

The technological changes alone do not explain everything, especially in socialist systems, where the political decisions had critical importance for understanding the steep increase of rural-urban migration. State's strategy to subordinate agriculture to industry, the allocation of the bulk of the resources to the secondary sector, and the concentration of the investments in the lowlands explain the estrangement of many Albanian peasants, especially uplanders, from agriculture. The regime's efforts to recover the farming's lost prestige among the youth by explaining to them the

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<sup>69</sup> On the population growth in the district of Korça, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 103, fl. 64. The growth of the population in the district of Korça. On rural migrations as the major source of urban growth in the district of Korça, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 33, fl. 69-72. Report for the solution of the requests for residence (pasaportizim) for the years 1960-1961 and the measures that should be taken for the year 1962. December 9, 1961.

<sup>70</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 92-95 & 148-151.

<sup>71</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1960, Lista 16, d. 63, fl. 4. Draft-report on the work of the ALP with the youth.

<sup>72</sup> Anna Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, "The Influence of the History of Peasantry on the Model of the Traditional Peasant Culture and the Mechanisms of its Transformations," in *The Peasant and the City in Eastern Europe: Interpreting Structures*, ed. Irene Portis Winner & Thomas G. Winner (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1984), 94.

alleged outstanding potential and perspectives that lied in the countryside resulted unsuccessful.<sup>73</sup> Instead, the only way to refrain the growing desire to move outside of agriculture would be the fixing of the structural imbalances between workers' and peasants' incomes. The regime neither levelled the differences in incomes between farmers of cooperatives and state employees, nor improved rural infrastructure, then many youngsters from the uplands aimed at the core national or regional economic centers. Indeed, the uneven development was more convenient for the ALP's regime. Raising the wages to more than 60% of the national workforce, which was employed in the collective farms would be way too expensive for the poor finances of Tirana's authorities.

The flocking of many youngsters from rural areas and highlands to the urban and industrial centers in the lowlands panicked many communist cadres, who ironically were themselves of peasant background. When the communists came to power, Albania had roughly 26,000 workers. The industrialization of the country swelled the latter's ranks. Thus, in 1960, there were 145,000 workers, and in 1982, their number leaped to 550,000.<sup>74</sup> As explained above, the countryside was the pool where the communist regime extracted the industrial workforce. In the region of Korça, for example, in 1972, half of the workers were of peasant background. However, the large share of peasants among the ranks of the socialist working class was a source of concern of the local ALP's Committee, which sounded the alarm.

In 1972, only 28% of the workers met the norm. According to the top cadres of Korça, the reason for the low performance lay in their origins. These newly made workers brought with them the backward mentality of the countryside, put their personal interests above that of the collectivity, and kept the pace of work low. Besides, the bulk of them lacked any sense of self-improvement, and only a few of the workers of peasant background pursued professional qualifications. Such an attitude, concluded the ALP Committee of Korça, demonstrated that their petty-bourgeois mentality conflicted with the socialist ethos of work.<sup>75</sup> The prejudices on

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<sup>73</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1960, Lista 16, d. 63, fl. 4. Draft-report on the work of the ALP with the youth.

<sup>74</sup> On the increase of the number of workers in 1945 and 1960, Durmishi, *Punëtorët në Shqipëri (1945-1960)*, 81-119; On the number of workers in 1982, Harilla Papajorgji, *Struktura socialklasore a klasës sonë punëtore* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1985), 68.

<sup>75</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1972, Lista 28, d. 43, fl. 3-4. Report of the ALP's Committee of Korça regarding the fight it waged against the handicraftsmen concept of work. February 26, 1972; ASHV Korçë,

peasants were by no means limited to the district of Korça alone. The officials of the Ministry of Justice, too, explained the alarming rate of turnovers in the industry with the workers' rural background. Being freshly recruited, they argued, these workers lacked the work-consciousness.<sup>76</sup> Nobody mentioned, though, the terrible living conditions and the arbitrary attitude of the administration of the industrial enterprises.

In all the cases, party and state bureaucrats were doing nothing else but reiterating Enver Hoxha. Since April 1949, the ALP's leader, calling in his support Lenin, accused the peasants as petty-bourgeois, who were against state control, in both capitalism and socialism. Two years later, in 1951, Mehmet Shehu reiterated the same conclusion and even stated that the peasants were hampering the emergence of the light industry.<sup>77</sup> All these statements expose the shallowness of the Leninist slogan of the ALP's regime of representing the alliance between the working class and the peasantry. Contrary to their public declarations, the ALP's cadres, also similarly to Lenin, distrusted the peasants and firmly believed that peasants stood in opposition to socialism.

In the eyes of the urban-based power holders, the peasants were corrupting socialism by ruralizing the working class. Keeping the peasants at bay from the workers' centers was necessary for the socialist project. Thus, ALP's power apparatus justified ideologically rural retention as desirable for the preservation of the working class' purity. Reinstating clear cut boundaries between workers and peasants became, in the belief of the top Albanian communists, necessary. It simultaneously meant reinforcing the spatial inequalities by limiting access to the privileged areas and economic sectors. Indeed, the disparities between city and countryside under communism expressed the spatial distribution of social hierarchies that were inherent to the model of the workers' state. Considering a threat to socialism, the Albanian communist leadership constructed a scale of importance that subordinated the peasants to the workers. And despite its claims for obliterating the vertical and horizontal spatial inequalities, in practice, Tirana's regime policies

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F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1970, Lista 26, d. 6, fl. 3-4. Study of the ALP's Committee of Korça on the condition of the working class, the perspectives of recruitment and on its increasing leading role. January 13, 1970.

<sup>76</sup> On the conclusions for the lack of the peasants' work conscience, AQSh, F. 515, Ministria e Drejtësisë, 1952, d. 5, fl. 16. Memo on the crimes of 1952 in comparison to 1951.

<sup>77</sup> On Hoxha's report, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1949, d. 1, fl. 22-29. Report of Enver Hoxha held in the II Plenum of the ALP's CC. April 28-30, 1949. On Mehmet Shehu's statement, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1950, d. 16, fl. 11. Report of Mehmet Shehu held in the Plenum of ALP's CC. August 11, 1950.

both generated and preserved them. In addition to the ideological anxieties related to the construction of socialism, there were also other important factors of economic nature that concerned the leadership of the Albanian communist leadership on the growing rural migration. First of all, the country's industry could not absorb all the rural migrants. In 1961, in the district of Korça, the unemployment in the urban centers reached the figure of 4257 people, which alarmed the ALP's local organs. Besides, the state authorities could not afford to build new apartments for them.<sup>78</sup> At this point, the central authorities decided to bring uncontrolled migration to a halt. To stop it, they devised a system of legal and administrative restrictions, intended to fix the people to their place of inhabitation and work, known *pashaportizimi*.<sup>79</sup>

Besides enforcing administrative barriers, the regime also started propaganda campaigns to convince the peasants not to leave their villages. In the region of Korça, the migration tendency was stronger among uplanders, who targeted the regional urban centers or the plain of Maliq. The local organs of the regime organized campaigns to inculcate among the highlanders the love for their villages. Alas, despite the efforts of the ALP regional structures, the will of the peasants from the mountain villages to migrate to lowlands and cities only grew stronger. Despite the state's measures, the living conditions in the uplanders remained much lower compared to the lowlands.

The constant increase in productivity and revenues of the collective farms contrasted with the poor performance of the cooperatives in the upland. The vertical disparities between the plain of Maliq and the surrounding hills and mountains kept growing.<sup>80</sup> The uplanders, in their turn, to bypass the legal barriers pursued strategies that destabilized both the administrative restrictions and the puritan moral tenets of the regime. Although the state banned the buying of houses without

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<sup>78</sup> On the increase of unemployment, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 107, fl. 1. Memo of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the Central Committee regarding the problem of unemployment and the measures to fix this problem. November 24, 1961. On the lack of financial resources for housing, ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 33, fl. 69-72. Report for the solution of the requests for residence for the years 1960-1961 and the measures that should be taken for the year 1962. December 9, 1961.

<sup>79</sup> On rural retention in Albania, Derek R. Hall, *Albania and the Albanians* (London & New York: Pinter References, 1994), 67-68; Örjan Sjöberg, "Rural Retention in Albania: Administration Restrictions on Urban-Bound Migration," *East European Quarterly* 7, 2 (1994): 205-234; Georges Frélastre, "Retention of the Rural Population in Eastern Europe," in *Staying On: Retention and Migration in Peasant Societies*, ed. José Havet (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1988), 197-199.

<sup>80</sup> ASHV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1983, fl. 17-18. Report of the Democratic Fron of Korça on its activity to reinforce the unity between the Party and people. July 11, 1983.

prior permission, tens of families settled without permission. The efforts of the ALP's local committees, notwithstanding, many families bought their homes from previous proprietaries without the prior approval of the state organs and settled in. After making an accomplished fact asked for the residence permit.<sup>81</sup> However, people, especially youth, pursued other more efficient strategies that exploited the legal loopholes at their advantage.

The right that partners had to transfer their wives or husbands transformed marriage into a privileged mechanism of migration, especially among young women of the uplands. Many adult girls refused the advances of their hamlets' young men and sought to marry in the villages of the plain of Maliq. There were cases when young women, that were members of the ALP's organizations, married men from the town with an anti-party past only to move out of the village. On one occasion, a twenty-three years old girl from a hamlet of Gora married a fifty-two years old man from Maliq. The local ALP Council considered this arrangement unacceptable and did not allow them to marry. According to the communist authorities, this was a relationship rather than love was based on "material interests." Even the ALP's members of Gora, Opar, and Gramsh did not show much love for their highlands' villages. Instead, they sought to marry their daughters in Maliq, Korça, or in the villages of the plain, which enraged the local communist leadership. As a result, by the late 1960s, many hamlets in the highlands had a considerable surplus of unmarried men. Facing the discrepancy between the grooms' surpluses and brides' shortages, many young men resorted to the old and glorious Albanian highlands' custom of wife abduction.<sup>82</sup>

Young men, too, did not shy away from using marriage as a strategy to move to town. As a report of the ALP's Committee of Maliq prepared in 1988 pointed out with pronounced nostalgia

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<sup>81</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 17, d. 33, fl. 69-72. Report for the solution of the requests for residence (pasaportizim) for the years 1960-1961 and the measures that should be taken for the year 1962. December 9, 1961; AShV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1988, Not cataloged files without number (19), fl. 10, Kutia 3397. Conclusions regarding the mechanical increase of population of Maliq. April 1, 1988.

<sup>82</sup> On the marriage with age difference and the bad example of the communists of Gora and Opar, AShV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1988, Not cataloged files without number, Kutia 3397. Conclusions regarding the mechanical increase of population of Maliq. April 1, 1988. On the surplus of unmarried men, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1974, Lista 30, d. 71, fl. 6-7. Opinions on the marriages and divorces in the district of Korça. May 16, 1974; AShV Korçë, Bundle of not cataloged documents without a collection number, 1981, fl. 39. Conclusions from the study of the family psychology in the district of Korça. January 20, 1980. On the abduction of wives, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1974, Lista 30, d. 69, fl. 74. Info on the moral and political attitude in the collective farms of the area of Gora-Moglica. November 14, 1974.

about the past: “It is an undeniable fact that it has been an Albanian custom that the bride goes to her husband’s house after the wedding. Unfortunately, this beautiful tradition has begun to spoil.”<sup>83</sup> The gender hierarchies and norms related to the patriarchal house were under attack. The ALP attacked for decades the patriarchalism of the past. However, when it came to controlling peoples’ movement, the communist cadres rediscovered the usefulness of some of the customs they had assaulted for years. And when the communist structures realized that patriarchalism established a rigid pattern of gender mobility, they considered parts of this tradition as beautiful. It is important to note that such an attitude does not only demonstrate the communists’ selective use of patriarchy. Instead, as already stated in the previous sections, and as these cases show, the ALP’s power apparatus did never entirely reject the patriarchal gender hierarchies, and in practice, always tried to reinforce them.

The Executive Committee of Korça took measures to enforce the ladder of gender relations. In 1984, it ordered the halting of all the transfers of male partners to their wives’ residence, and the local organs approved the movement of residence only for the female partners. According to this rule, only women had to go to their husbands and not vice versa.<sup>84</sup> Notwithstanding state’s orders, young men from the highlands kept searching for potential marriages that would allow them to move in the lowlands. Even the prevalent taboos did not refrain them from marrying older women, or divorced and with children, with physical anomalies, or “bad morals.” One of the most notorious cases was that of a young man from a village, who married a woman eight years older than himself, divorced, and with three children. According to the party functionaries, this “scandalous” case demonstrated that behind this choice was not love but cold calculations to “gain the city.” Many of these men, once received the residence, divorced and married other women, mainly from their native village. To bring such a phenomenon to an end, the authorities in Maliq threatened all the newcomers that they would lose their residence if they separated their wives.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1988, Not cataloged files without number (19), fl. 5, Kutia 3397. Conclusions regarding the mechanical increase of population of Maliq. April 1, 1988.

<sup>84</sup> On the order of the Executive Committee of Korça, AShV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1988, Not cataloged files without number (19), fl. 8, Kutia 3397. Conclusions regarding the mechanical increase of population of Maliq. April 1, 1988.

<sup>85</sup> On the “scandalous” marriage and other strategies to move to the state farm, AShV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1988, Not cataloged files without number (19), fl. 8, Kutia 3397. Conclusions regarding the mechanical increase of population of Maliq. April 1, 1988; Maliq Zambak Shënollari, Informal interview with

The opportunities had a topography, a location, and profile: they were in the lowlands and the employment to the state enterprises, which were the better paid than the collective farms. In Maliq, it was the sugar combine that created these opportunities. The refinery was at the center of a regional economic system that paid off those who lived in the plain. It meant high salaries for workers and for hundreds of peasants that worked part-time there, and relatively good remunerations in the state farm and the other collective farms that supplied it with sugar beet. The people of Maliq had more resources and better access to the increasing range of market goods that were entering into peoples' lives. The failure to impose uniformity in the material life, though, had a considerable impact. It laid bare the marginalization of large swaths of the population, especially the uplands. In communist systems, the exclusion did not take place only along class but also spatial lines. The closer one was to the state, the greater access he or she had to the benefits the power structure controlled and distributed. Not only social hierarchies but also the distance from the state created identities in communist Albania. *Nolens volens*, the regime, with its bureaucratic allocation of the resources, produced a series of spatial hierarchies, which placed the uplands at the end of the queue of payoffs. As the peasants of Gora kept saying, "if you want to marry your son, you need to find him employment in the state."<sup>86</sup>

The plain of Maliq was closer to the state power. The sugar combine and the state farm were among the most prominent enterprises that represented the presence of the state in the regional economy. And with it, also privileges it pertained. As the Manush Myftiu's story of the well, the sugar industry in the plain of Maliq sucked a large share of the capital that central authorities allocated to the region. Those who were closer to this gravitational point benefited most from a system based on the unequal distribution of resources that prioritized the state employees. And those were mainly the inhabitants of the city of Maliq and the villages of the state farm. They were all newcomers and lived better than the older communities of the plain and much better compared to the villages in the upland they left behind when migrated. They still take pride today

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Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, January 21, 2018; Perit Kume, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, January 21, 2018. On the threat of the local authorities to repel the residence to the newcomers that divorced their wives, AShV Korçë, F. 42, Komiteti Ekzekuti i Komitetit të PPSH Maliq, 1988, Not cataloged files without number, Kutia 3397. Conclusions regarding the mechanical increase of population of Maliq. April 1, 1988.

<sup>86</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1974, Lista 30, d. 69, fl. 73-74. Info on the moral and political attitude in the collective farms of the area of Gora-Moglica. November 14, 1974.

when compare their life during communism to the other surrounding rural communities, where not all the people are nostalgic about the past system. As we will see in the fifth chapter, in Maliq too, people recollect the communist era with strong doses of sentimentalism. Besides having a history, memory of communism has a geographical economy, too, and it is shaped, among others, by the spatial inequalities it fostered.

## 5.0 MALIQ AND THE WORLD

### 5.1 A Tapestry of Transnational Exchanges

Things, objects, commodities, says Igor Kopytoff, have biographies, careers, and social life in the same way people do. They have a history, which should be conceived as a diagram of motions, of people handing them to one other, and making different use of them. In other words, societies construct objects as they construct people.<sup>1</sup> Sugar's history is made of constant movements that connect the people who cultivate the sugar cane and beet, process, and trade with those who pour it into their cups of coffee and tea. Looking at a grain of sugar, the observer sees the vast global socioeconomic forces that shape the lives of those who produce it and the tastes of those who consume it. The links that connect the hard labor in the fields to the pleasures of the sweetness of those who consume it contain transnational connections that tie the world into one single unit. To understand the links that sugar weaves, it is necessary to investigate all levels of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption.<sup>2</sup>

If a single grain of sugar contains that, what of its site of production? What do we discover if we see the development and history of such a site? What broader history do we read in the

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<sup>1</sup> Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-90.

<sup>2</sup> This component of my analysis is based on the article of Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things*, 3-63. Another important work that stresses the relation between production, consumption, and larger social transformation is that of Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York & London: Penguin Books, 1985); Sidney W. Mintz, "Notes Toward a Cultural Construction of Modern Foods," *Social Anthropology* 17, 2 (2009): 209-216; Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle & London: Washington University Press, 1985). On the interplay between production, consumption, and transnational connections during socialism see Mary C. Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2013); *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, ed. Paulina Bren & Mary C. Neuburger (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. David Crowley & Susan E. Reid (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2010); *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, ed. Susan E. Reid & David Crowley (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

biography of a place like Maliq? These questions came to my mind one morning in the summer of 2016 when I was visiting Maliq. That morning, I sat with some locals in the porch of a coffee shop, along the promenade “Bonifikimi” (Reclamation), under tall pine trees, next to the theater, an edifice of the Soviet-style neoclassical building of the 1950s. The fresh morning air, the scent of dew, the coffee accompanied by a cigarette, and the thin column of grey smoke going up in the air facilitated our conversation. We touched many topics about Maliq’s past, something all my interlocutors did with great pleasure. They enjoyed recollecting their lives and merging them with the bigger story of Albania’s land of sugar.

It is also a story of the many transnational connections, encounters, and exchanges that cross Albania’s borders. In Maliq of the 1950s, families lived with teams of Soviet engineers and technicians, who helped the Albanians build the refinery. Those I spoke to explained the impact these foreign specialists had on town life. Maliq, one told me while inhaling his cigarette, was built from scratch and his inhabitants were illiterate or half-literate upland peasants. The Soviets, in his words, were “our window to the world,” they, he continued, “introduced the just-urbanized villagers to a new lifestyle and culture.”<sup>3</sup> My interlocutors recalled the parties the Soviets organized every weekend. Of how they taught the Albanians to dance the foxtrot, and even to make vodka. There, in the atmosphere created around the sugar factory, a new world was in the making, a world created by contacts, connections, exchanges, and lived experiences.

Besides the project of the sugar refinery, the Soviets also sent the blueprint of the new industrial town. The legacy of the communist Albania’s romance with the USSR during the 1950s remains durable and is recorded in its buildings. Maliq’s face is not too dissimilar from many other small towns built after WWII in the Soviet sphere; they are texts written in bricks and mortar that show how the town belonged to a much wider transnational cultural socialist space. The walls, the urban planning, the architectonic models are not, however, the only tokens of the expansion of the Soviet influence to the shores of the Mediterranean. Although now the sugar factory is long gone, the architectonic legacy of the town and its identity remain largely intact. Unlike the large cities

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<sup>3</sup> Festim Tomori, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, July 20, 2016; Fredi Vangjeli, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Maliq, July 20, 2016; Pandeli Prifti, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Maliq, July 20, 2016; Piro Lazi, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Tirana, November 11, 2017.

of post-Socialist Albania, Maliq has not experienced a construction boom after the fall of communism and its face has remained largely unchanged. There are only a few new buildings; an always empty mosque, an Orthodox church surrounded by willows, some villas, and a series of coffee shops.

The land of sugar of communist Albania connected the people who lived here to the world, and not only to the socialist world. In Maliq, Bulgarian, Romanian, Yugoslav, Italian, and Polish specialists worked in the combine to refine red sugar coming from Cuba. The farms of the plain cultivated selected seeds of sugar beet imported from the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany, France, and the Netherlands. The combine had technology of Soviet, Bulgarian, Polish, Romanian, Yugoslav, West German, Italian, Belgian, and even Japanese provenance. Maliq emerges as a site where intersected pluri-directional influences, weave a texture with many threads coming from different places. What this fabric of connections tells us about the most isolated and least developed socialist country of Europe?

Maliq's story is similar to that of the North Korean city of Hamhŭng and its vinalon factory. Pyongyang's xenophobic and isolationist regime has constructed a narrative about the development of the major chemical industry that supports the myth of self-reliance. Official North Korean propaganda claims that the idea of the establishment of the vinalon industry in Hamhŭng originated after the communist takeover and that the country developed this industry and rebuilt the city with its "own forces." However, as it has been proved, the entire project started in the era of Japanese rule and developed with substantial foreign aid, especially from East Germany.<sup>4</sup> In 1953, at the height of the friendship between Tirana and Moscow, Enver Hoxha claimed that there were the Soviets who decided to build the sugar combine.<sup>5</sup> Like the case of the vinalon city, the transformation of Maliq into the center of sugar production of Albania started in the interwar era. The Italians pushed the project further after invading Albania in 1939. Unlike Hamhŭng, though, Maliq became an intersection of technologies and knowledge generated on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

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<sup>4</sup> Cheehyung Harrison Kim, "North Korea's Vinalon City: Industrialism as Socialist Everyday Life," *Positions* 22, 4 (2014): 809-836.

<sup>5</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 2, fl. 126. Report on the measures for the improvement and development of the agriculture. March 2-3, 1953.

In 1945, Albania had no tradition and no expertise in sugar production. Until the end of the communist period, it did not build the industrial infrastructure necessary to produce all the machinery and equipment for Maliq domestically. Building the whole sugar complex meant accumulating knowledge from outside of the country and implementing it *ex novo*. During the forty years of operation, the sugar refinery of Maliq became a site where the communist regime used both technology and expertise borrowed from both the Soviet bloc and the West. In many ways, the Albania's dependency on capital, technology, knowledge, and expertise from more developed countries was similar to the experience of the new post-colonial states of the global South. Countries like Kenya, Algeria, Syria, and Indonesia. were locales of fierce competition between the two superpowers and their respective allies, who each promoted their specific path to modernity.

Even the Soviets considered Albania to be a country that shared many similarities to the Third World. Khrushchev, who did not divide the world only in East and West, but also in the undeveloped South and developed North, applied the civilizational gradient to his tiny allies when he considered them as hotheaded and irrational southerners. Although small, Albania had disproportionate influence in the plans of the USSR's post-Stalinist elite in its quest for global supremacy. For the Soviet leadership, Albania, with its Muslim majority population, represented a showcase for the Third World and the Muslim countries. A role the Kremlin had until then had reserved for its Caucasian and Central Asian republics. Through the most southern member of the Soviet bloc, Moscow, wanted to provide the new post-colonial states with a living proof that socialism was the right developmental alternative for them.<sup>6</sup> However, the ALP's leadership did not support these plans and dodged Soviet demands to play this role in Kremlin diplomacy in the Middle East.

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<sup>6</sup> Elidor Mëhilli, "Globalized Socialism, Nationalized Time: Soviet Films, Albanian Subjects, and Chinese Audiences Across the Sino-Soviet Split," *Slavic Review* 77, 3 (2018): 624; Elidor Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao: Albania and the Socialist World* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2017), 191-192; Elidor Mëhilli, "Defying De-Stalinization: Albania's 1956," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, 4 (2011): 12-13. On the role of Central Asia and Caucasus in the Soviet diplomatic strategy of development, see Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 19 & 201; Masha Kirasirova, "'Sons of Muslims' in Moscow: Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955-1962," *Ab Imperio*, 4 (2011): 106-132.

What the Soviets -and the Americans- did not understand about Albania and the countries of the Third World was that their similar recent history shaped their political and economic agendas. The political elites of all these late-comers were committed to fast-track modernization and economic self-sufficiency. To rephrase the eloquent formulation of David Engerman: if for the superpowers, the programs of development were weapons of Cold War, for elites in developing countries, the Cold War was a weapon for achieving modernization.<sup>7</sup> The latter exploited the Cold War to extract expertise from competing blocs, technology, and funding for their transformative projects, without, to the frustration of their sponsors, fulfilling the political demands tied to the aid.<sup>8</sup> However, for the leaders of the Third World, development and autarky were not ends, but instruments for the preservation of the political independence. Soviet leadership soon had to learn that the new elites of the de-colonized world were unreliable, capricious, and ideologically unorthodox.<sup>9</sup> Hoxha had the same commitment to political independence and self-sufficiency as Ben Bella in Algeria, or Syria's Ba'ath Party, and non-socialist leaders like Nasser, Nehru, Sukarno, Nkrumah, who sought to modernize their countries using both American and Soviet financial and technological aid.<sup>10</sup>

Albania's historical experience was similar other post-colonial Middle East nation-states: a state established from the ashes of the Ottoman empire, economically not developed, and politically weak. Its more powerful neighbors, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy had constantly threatened the country's independence. As was the case of Italy during WWII or Tito's Yugoslavia after the war, Albania was a space for expansion and control. In both cases the political influence started with economic subordination. For the Albanian communist leadership, the result was that economic development remained one of the most important constants of its policy. To attain this goal, even under the yoke of the uncompromising Stalinism, the Tirana's regime engaged with

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<sup>7</sup> David C. Engerman, "Development Politics and the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 41, 1 (2017): 18.

<sup>8</sup> Corinna Unger, "Histories of Development and Modernization: Findings, Reflections, Future Research," *H-Soz-Kult*, 09.12.2010, <[www.hsozkult.de/literaturereview/id/forschungsberichte-1130](http://www.hsozkult.de/literaturereview/id/forschungsberichte-1130)>, pp. 15-17.

<sup>9</sup> See the contributions in the special issue of *Diplomatic History* 33, 3 (2009), which contextualize modernization of the Third World within the framework of the Cold War. See also Alessandro Iandolo, "The Rise and Fall of the 'Soviet Model of Development' in West Africa, 1957-64," *Cold War History* 12, 4 (2012): 683-704.

<sup>10</sup> On the flirting of the Third World with both superpowers during the Cold War era, see Nathan J. Citino, "Modernization and Development," in *The Routledge Handbook of Cold War*, ed. Artemy M. Kalinovsky & Craig Daigle (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 118-130.

both Western and Eastern partners. After breaking with the Moscow, the ALP's leadership had more room to track its own course without being liable to any center power except themselves.

For Albania, as for the other countries of eastern Europe and the Third World, modernization was a global enterprise. It was not defined exclusively by one ideology. Modernization for them went beyond the academic debates on whether modernity was a Western liberal ideal or advanced technology under authoritarian indigenous institutions. Rather than by ideological orthodoxies and scruples, Hoxha and his associates framed this goal in a process of mundane calculations of *realpolitik*. In this sense, the ALP's leadership attitude toward modernization was similar to that of many leaders of the post-Colonial states, who did not have many dilemmas on what modern meant, but rather what alternative suited them better.<sup>11</sup> Stalin, himself, did not see any contradiction when he identified socialism as a compound of American efficiency and Lenin's thought, The multiple exchanges that took place in Maliq also proves how problematic the East-West divide is, when it is dissociated to the North-South watershed. The boundaries between these spatial and conceptual categories are blurred and the circulation, dissemination, and exchanges of knowledge, technologies, people, capital, and models across space during Cold War era was multilateral and pluri-directional.

Maliq's project, as part of the ALP's development program, was part of this global trend of development that started before the ALP came to power. The latter simply took the baton and intensified the process. Development and socialism could not be identified simply with steel mills and dams. Beyond the heroic images of heavy industry, metallurgists working among the sparks of melted iron, or welders hanging on top of smokestacks, socialism is made from more ordinary, less heroic images. After all, life under socialism was not that extraordinary. What is more important, is that Maliq became a focal point of transnational transactions that saw the

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<sup>11</sup> On the debate on modernity and the Soviet experiment see, Michael David-Fox, "Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54, 4 (2006): 535-555; Terry Martin, "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism," in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 348-367; Yanni Kotsonis, "Introduction: A Modern Paradox – Subject and Citizen in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Russia," in *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, ed. David L. Hoffmann & Yanni Kotsonis (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 1-16; David L. Hoffmann, "European Modernity and Soviet Socialism," *Ibid*, 245-260; See also the articles of Shmuel Eisenstadt, Björn Wittrock, and Johann P. Aranson in the special issue of *Dedalus* dedicated to the topic of multiple modernities, where these authors have engaged with the problem of the modernity of the Soviet model and its experiment. For more see *Dedalus* 129, 1 (2000).

dissemination in the country of new technologies, goods, ideas, forms of work organization, and lifestyle. What these exchanges, links, and breaks that occurred in Maliq tell about Albania, eastern Europe, the Cold War, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century? What hides beneath the story of the dissemination of knowledge and technologies across East-West and North-South divide?

The transnational historiographic trend of the last decades has effectively decentralized nations, nation-states, and/or the superpowers from the focus of the historical inquiry. Engaging in the human, cultural, and technological exchanges across the East-West and North-South divides, this scholarship has undermined the notion of the borders' rigidity and questioned validity of the metaphor of "Iron Curtain." The complicated web and of interactions across the ideological divide has raised doubts over the bipolar division of the world during the years of the Cold War and the alleged interruption of globalization in its first two decades.<sup>12</sup> In this context, some authors have

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<sup>12</sup> See the forum "Beyond Iron Curtain: Eastern Europe and the Global Cold War," *Slavic Studies* 77, 3 (2018): 684; *Beyond the Divide: Entangles Histories of Cold War Europe*, ed. Simon Mikkonen & Pia Koivunen (New York & London: Berghahn, 2015); Hyung-Gu Lynn, "Globalization and the Cold War," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 584-601; *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange Across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s-1960s*, ed. Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2014); *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cold War in East and West*, ed. Peter Romijn, Giles Scott-Smith, & Joes Segal (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012); *Across the Blocs: Cold War Cultural and Social History*, ed. Rana Mitter & Patrick Major (London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004). On the Soviet Union see Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 192-1941* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Michael David-Fox, *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015). See the special issue in the *Diplomatic History* 33, 3 (2009) dedicated to Soviet bloc's efforts to influence and shape the modernization of the global South. On the role of the perceptions created from exchanges, mobility, and information flows across the East-West divide see *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. György Péteri (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010); Stephen Lovell, *The Shadow of War: Russia and the USSR, 1941 to the Present* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 287-313. For the technology transfer and circulation of scientific knowledge across the East-West divide see Besnik Pulaj, *Globalization Under and After Socialism: The Evolution of Transnational Capital in Central and Eastern Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 65-107; Sampsa Kaataja, "Expert Groups Closing the Divide: Estonian-Finnish Computing Cooperation Since 1960s," in *Beyond the Divide*, 101-120; Anssi Halmesvirta, "Hungary Opens Toward the West: Political Preconditions for the Finish-Hungarian Cooperation in Research and Development in the 1960s and 1970s," *Ibid*, 150; Austin Jersild, "The Soviet State as Imperial Scavenger: "Catch Up and Surpass" in the Transnational Socialist Bloc, 1950-1960," *American Historical Review* 116, 1 (2011), 109-132. On the attempts of the countries of the Soviet bloc in the 1970s, to modernize their economies with technology and capital borrowed from western Europe see Jan Winiecki, "Soviet-type Economies' Strategy for Catching-up Through Technology Import—an Anatomy of Failure," *Technovation* 6, 2 (1987): 115-145; Morris Bornstein, *East-West Technology Transfer: The Transfer of Western Technology to the USSR* (Paris: OECD, 1985); Friedrich Levcik & Jiri Skolka, *East-West Technology Transfer: Study of Czechoslovakia* (Paris: OECD, 1984); Philip Hanson, *Trade and Technology Transfer in Soviet-Western Relations* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981); Angela Stent Yergin, *East-West Technology Transfer: European Perspectives* (Beverly Hills-London: SAGE Publications, 1980); Eugene Zaleski & Helgard Wienert, *Technology Transfer Between East and West* (Paris: OECD, 1980).

called the fence that cut Europe in half as a “nylon curtain” or a “semipermeable membrane.”<sup>13</sup> This study on Maliq, will contribute to this thriving literature by focusing simultaneously to the intra and inter-bloc movements of people, and exchanges, interconnections, and disseminations of technology, knowledge, and ideas. My goal is to trace the multifaceted relations between the wider political orientation of Albania and their reflection to the direction of East-West exchanges. This chapter will explore the links weaved around Maliq that connected it with both competing blocs during the Cold War. While I do not deny the importance of the ideological framework and political expediency, my analysis broadens its range by bringing into equation other variables. I will argue that broader social dynamics were critical factors that, interplaying with ideology and political factors, determined the exchanges and contacts of Hoxha’s regime with countries within and outside the Socialist bloc. The tapestry that weaved in Maliq include both continuities and the contingent dynamics of flows in West-East and North-South directions.

## 5.2 Maliq and Its East-West Economy of Knowledge

The Albanian communists did borrow from the past in their project of the sugar refinery and the whole idea of autarky behind it. Since the early years of their rule, the ALP’s leadership emphasized its commitment to achieving economic autonomy. In 1945, the Ministry of Economy sketched a series of main points for industrial development in Albania, which argued that the building of an industrial complex would guarantee country’s independence from the caprices of the international market. In a similar vocabulary to that of the interwar era, the program stated that domestic manufacturing eliminated the need for imports that drained domestic capital for the profit of foreign manufacturing and workers.<sup>14</sup> The industry was not the only sector. The Albanian communist leader, reverberating slogans and policies similar to those of Mussolini’s “battaglia del

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<sup>13</sup> On the definition of “nylon curtain,” see György Péteri, “Nylon Curtain – Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East Central Europe,” *Slavonica* 10, 2 (2004): 113-123; On the Iron Curtain as semi-permeable membrane,” see Michael David-Fox, “The Iron Curtain as Semipermeable Membrane: Origins and Demise of the Stalinist Superiority Complex,” in *Cold War Crossings*, 14-39.

<sup>14</sup> AQSh, F. 494, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1945, d. 131, fl. 42-43. Memo on the Albanian Industry.

grano” (battle for grain), stated that one of the principal goals of the party he led was self-sufficiency in cereals and other crucial foodstuffs—Lenin too, use a similar slogan when he stated that the struggle for bread is a struggle for socialism.<sup>15</sup>

This was not limited to Albania alone. John Lampe and Marvin Jackson have questioned since the early 1980s the dichotomy between the interwar era and socialist period. These authors argue that, despite the apparent differences, there are also significant continuities between these two periods. They list the commitment of the pre-WWII and post-WWII of the political elites of Europe to economic self-sufficiency, state-owned enterprises, and restrictions in the foreign capital. Such tendencies made their way into the socialist regimes in the Balkans during the Cold War era. On the other hand, the Balkans were not the odd man out of the post-WWII era, because the drive for autarky survived for many years in Spain, Portugal, and Ireland.<sup>16</sup>

One of the goals of the ALP’s ruling cupola was to produce domestically the entire sugar the Albanians consumed. They stated this goal since 1945, and the State Planning Commission argued in different instances that Albania had suitable geographical position and climatic conditions for the establishment of beet-sugar industry and had decided to build sugar factories that would guarantee Albania’s self-sufficiency in sugar. The communists did not need to spend energy on where to establish their sugar industry. The Italians had left the blueprints and some of the buildings were nearly completed. The new Albanian authorities started to think about resuming the project in the plain of Korça since early 1946 when the reclamation of the swamp had not yet begun. By 1947 they had started seeking help to complete it.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> On the ALP’s plan for economic autarchy, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1947, d. 8, fl. 9. Minutes of the meeting ALP’s Politburo concerning the draft of the Five-Year economic plan. March 6, 1947. On grain self-sufficiency see the declaration of the Head of State Planning, Nako Spiru. AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1947, d. 21, fl. 4. Minutes of the discussions of the meeting of the ALP’s Politburo on the directives of the First Five-Year Plan. July 5, 1947; For self-sufficiency in grain, sugar, sugar-beet, sunflower, cotton, and flax, etc. see AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1948, d. 11, fl. 90. Report of the economic plan of the ALP’s Politburo member, Gogo Nushi, presented to the First Congress of the ALP. November 13-14, 1948. On the use of Lenin’s slogan, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1953, d. 2, fl. 8–10. Report of the Minister of Agriculture, Hysni Kapo, on the measures for the improvement and development of the agriculture. March 2–3, 1953.

<sup>16</sup> On the Balkans, Lampe & Jackson, *Balkan Economic History*, 13; On Europe, Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London-New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 296-300.

<sup>17</sup> On the establishment of the sugar industry, AQSh, F. 494, Ministria e Ekonomisë, 1945, d. 131, fl. 48. Memoranda on the Albanian industry. On the goal of State Planning Commission AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1947, d. 330/10, fl. 30. Memo of the State Planning Commission sent to the Central Committee on the perspective plan for the development of the light industry; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1947, d. 330/14, fl. 2. The Albanian industry during Zog’s era and the

The problem was finding the machinery and prepare the technical staff to use them. The ALP leadership asked Yugoslavia for help. In late 1947, the communist authorities in Belgrade pledged to supply to its southern neighbor with the necessary technical assistance to establish its sugar refinery with a capacity of 2000 tons of sugar a year. Yugoslav generosity, though, had limits. The machinery Belgrade sent to Korça, belonged to an old refinery of 1923, which had been out of order since 1933. When it started to work in 1949, its capacity hardly reached 1500 tons a year.<sup>18</sup> The assembling of the machinery was riddled with problems and inefficiencies. When the Yugoslav left in the summer of 1948 in the throes of the break between Tirana and Belgrade, after the Tito-Stalin split, the refinery was not yet operational.<sup>19</sup> A group left, and another one, from another country, supplanted them. The assembly restarted only after the arrival of the Soviet specialists in late Autumn of 1948 and the factory started processing sugar in January of 1949.<sup>20</sup>

At this point, the sugar industry became a site of communications and caesuras, a mirror that reflected the shift of alliances but also a symbol for the narratives of the heroic resistance of Hoxha's regime against the foreign encroachments. As it had already become an established

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goals of the economy after the liberation of the country. On the use of the Italian project see AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë dhe Pyjeve, 1945, d. 12, fl. 2-4. Memo on the ex-Albanian Anonym Company of Sugar (Korça). January 1, 1946; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1947, d. 330/10, fl. 11-12. Memo of the State Planning Commission on the economic five-year sent to the Economic Section of the ALP's Central Committee. On the cultivation with sugar beet "Rëndësia e madhe e Maliqit për ekonominë e vendit t'onë," *Bashkimi*, June 11, 1946, 3.

<sup>18</sup> On the Yugoslav pledge for the building of the sugar refinery see "Raport informativ i Nako Spirut në plenum," in *Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-jugosllave: 1945-1948: dokumente*, ed. Ndreçi Plasari & Luan Malltezi (Tiranë: DPA, 1996), 76. On the content of the deal and its flaws see AQSh, F. 517, Ministria e Industrisë, 1948, d. 48, fl. 14. Report of the Ministry of Industry concerning the fulfillment by the Yugoslav government of its pledges to support the Albanian industry; "Si e kanë sabotuar trockistat Jugosllavë ndërtimin e së parës fabrikë sheqeri," *Puna*, April 6, 1949 (221): 1; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1951, d. 451, fl. 2. Report of the Directory of Industry of the ALP's CC on the Sugar Enterprise "Ali Kelmendi." October 15, 1951.

<sup>19</sup> On July 1, 1948, only two days after COMINFORM's excommunication of Tito, Hoxha asked to all the Yugoslav specialists to leave the country. James O'Donnell, *A Coming of Age: Albania Under Enver Hoxha* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1999), 27. On the Soviet-Yugoslav split and the role of Albania in it, see Mark Kramer, "Stalin, the Split with Yugoslavia, and the Soviet-East European Effort to Reassert Control, 1948-1953," in *The Balkans in the Cold War*, ed. Svetozar Rajak et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 29-64; Leonid Ia. Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Split and the Soviet Bloc," in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1945-1953*, ed. Francesca Gori & Silvio Pons (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 222-245.

<sup>20</sup> On the progression of works of the refinery under the leadership of the Yugoslavs, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1948, d. 225/1, fl. 1-3. Comments of the Council of Ministers on the sugar refinery brought from Yugoslavia and the work for its assemblage; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1951, d. 451, fl. 2. Report of the Directory of Industry of the ALP's CC on the Sugar Enterprise "Ali Kelmendi." October 15, 1951. On the arrival of the Soviet specialists, AMPJ, 1948, d. 23, fl. 22-23. Letter of the Ministry of Industry sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the urgent needs of the sugar refinery in Korça.

custom, stories of alleged economic sabotage followed the rupture of the political alliance. Tirana claimed that the Yugoslav technicians that went to Albania to build the industry had consciously sabotaged them with the intention of inhibiting the construction of Albanian industry, including that of sugar.<sup>21</sup> Hoxha and his closest associates used the sugar enterprise as a handloom to weave narratives that located Albania within a transnational context of alliances and betrayals, of ruptured threads and new connections.

Moreover, the refinery was too small and did not produce enough sugar to meet the domestic market. For this reason, when Hoxha went to Moscow in the summer of 1947, he asked Vyacheslav Molotov to help his government to build another sugar processing factory in the region of Korça. The Soviet Foreign Minister agreed to supply Albania with necessary financial, technological, and logistical support.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the first refinery, Tirana built the new one from scratch. New machinery, new project, and not close to Korça, but at the foot of hills where the village of Maliq sat near the Devoll gorge. Except for building materials, all the other equipment came from Soviet Union. When Hoxha visited Moscow in March 1949, he asked Stalin to send specialists for construction of the sugar refinery. The Soviet leader accepted,<sup>23</sup> and they arrived in late Autumn. Beside the Soviets, in the construction of the refinery of Maliq also worked Romanian technicians. There were also Italian engineers and technicians, who had come to Albania since the war and not left the country yet. Before the construction of the refinery of Maliq, many of them had worked in the reclamation of the swamp, and others in the processing factory of Korça.<sup>24</sup> Hence, Maliq became a crucible of encounters among representatives of opposite poles, of builders of socialism, ex-builders of Fascism, all gathered in one site.

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<sup>21</sup> Dali Ndreu, "Si e kanë penguar dhe sa e kanë damtuar trockistat jugosllavë industrinë t'onë," *Bashkimi*, January 7, 1949, 2. Ironically, the author of this article, a high member of the ALP's Politburo and a prominent commander of the communist led resistance during WWII, would be executed in 1956 for an alleged cooperation with the Yugoslav secret services for toppling Hoxha from power.

<sup>22</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1947, d. 1, fl. 109. Protocol of the meeting of the ALP's Politburo. Discussion of Enver Hoxha regarding his visit to Moscow. August 30, 1947; AMPJ, 1948, d. 23, fl. 24; AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1947, d. 23, fl. 6. Minutes of the meeting of the ALP's Politburo. Report on the visit of the Albanian delegation to Moscow. July 27, 1947.

<sup>23</sup> *Shqipëria në dokumentet e arkivave ruse*, ed. Islam Lauka & Eshref Ymeri (Tiranë: Toena, 2006), doc. 3 (16), 216.

<sup>24</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1951, d. 451, fl. 4. Report of the Directory of Industry of the ALP's CC on the Sugar Enterprise "Ali Kelmendi." October 15, 1951; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1949, d. 669, fl. 21-22. Reports of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the ALP's CC regarding the progress of work in the sugar factory of Maliq. September 19 & 23, 1949.

During the two years of construction of the refinery, 92 Soviet specialists worked in Maliq in groups of 30. The Soviet fitters astonished the Albanians with their work rhythm at such a degree that there are still people in Maliq that recollect with awe the Russians and their work ethic. The innovations they brought in work methods accelerated the pace of construction and compensated the lack of the necessary local labor force, which had previously hindered the project.<sup>25</sup> The results were spectacular. The construction site of Maliq received the order of “The Flag of the Council of Ministers,” and the Albanian director was so confident in his workers newly-learned skills that he planned to challenge in a competition other two major construction sites in the country.<sup>26</sup>

The Soviets did not only help to build the sugar factory but also took care of filling it with workers. The construction site became a school where the Soviets engineers taught courses for the use of machinery and prepared an entire generation of sugar specialists in the country.<sup>27</sup> The designing bureau in Moscow also drew the project of the small workers’ town next to the refinery, and the specialists that came to build the industrial establishment took also care to supervise its building. The Soviet chief engineer, Alexey Mikhailovich Goloborodko, took care personally of the decoration of the city and the planting of the flowers and trees in its parks—those pines under which shade I had coffees and talked about the Soviet expedition and the history of Maliq. As a journalist put it, Maliq was an offspring of the Albanian-Soviet relationship.<sup>28</sup>

Like all the “civilizing missions,” the relationship between the Soviet teachers and Albanian pupils was also marked by difference. The former enjoyed the same privileges the urban

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<sup>25</sup> On the Soviet team, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1951, d. 490, fl. 3 Memo of the Minister of Construction, Rapo Dervishi, sent to the ALP’s CC, concerning the construction of sugar refinery of Maliq. October 26, 1951; AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1951, d. 160, fl. 29. On the impression of the Soviet fitters on the locals, Fredi Vangjeli, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, July 20, 2016. On the scarcity of labor at the regional and national level and the failure for its total mobilization, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1949, d. 80, fl. 16. Protocol of the meeting of the Politburo of the ALP’s Committee of Korça. December 27, 1949; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1950, d. 54, fl. 68-69. Minutes of the meeting of the Bureau of the ALP’s Committee of Korça. February 28, 1950.

<sup>26</sup> On the decoration see AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1951, d. 25, fl. 8 Report of the director of the sugar refinery on the progression of works in Maliq, held in the meeting of the ALP’s Politburo. On the competition with other enterprises see *Ibid*, f. 44-45. Report of the analysis of the of the group of the instructors of the ALP’s Committee of Korça on the situation in Maliq. August 4-7, 1951.

<sup>27</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1951, Lista 7, d. 212, fl. 2 Memo of the ALP’s Committee of Korçë sent to the ALP’s CC concerning the preparation of the cadres for the industrial sector. August 2, 1951; AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1951, d. 225/1, fl. 24 Correspondence between the Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of Industry on the construction of the sugar refinery of Maliq. October 3, 1951.

<sup>28</sup> Jorgji Mihali, “Qyteti industrial, pjellë e miqësisë shqiptaro-sovjetike,” *Bashkimi* 137 (4338), July 1, 1959, 3.

elites had in the USSR since the 1930s. In this corner of the Balkans, the differences did not display along class lines but national identities. The Soviet specialists, whether engineers or technicians, had a differentiated treatment not only compared to the Albanian workers and peasants but also to that of specialists. Reproducing patterns of colonial rule, Soviets had separate living quarters, a special refectory, supplied by the shops of Korça, where the Albanians were not allowed to eat. The security measures heightened the wall between technicians and toilers. The safety of the Soviets was a top priority, and the staff that served to them in the refectory were all people with a good political background, while the Ministry of Interior guarded their residence.<sup>29</sup>

According to the deal with Moscow, Tirana's authorities, besides the salaries, also had to pay to the Soviet technical team tickets for travel and provide them with furnished apartments, heat, electrical light, food, and other industrial goods for personal use. The Albanian authorities generally fulfilled these commitments and supplied the Soviet technical staff also with radios, different games, and put at their disposal cars to travel to Korça or the lake of Ochrid. Moreover, the Soviet chief engineer had at his disposal a GAZ car, a privilege that only the ALP's leading functionaries enjoyed.<sup>30</sup> He also had access to the army's shop, which, during the hard postwar years, had the best goods. For the Albanians, all these wonders were a forbidden apple, but the Soviet specialists kept complaining about their work and living conditions. They considered their experience in Maliq tough and constantly whined, sometimes rightly, about the lack of regular supply with vodka and the material deprivations they had to endure. They were not satisfied with the food and their supplies but also for the lack of workers, transportations, and technicians.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> On class distinctions and benefits in the USSR in the 1930s, Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Bolshevik Invention of Class: Marxist Theory and the Making of 'Class Consciousness' in Soviet Policy," in *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia," *The Journal of Modern History* 65, 4 (1993): 745-770. On the supply of the Soviet team, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1951, d. 25, fl. 46. Minutes of the meeting of the Politburo of the ALP's CC. April 27, 1951; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1952, d. 1052, fl. 3. Information on the situation in the sugar combine of Maliq from the control on April 17, 1952. The Ministry of Interior guarding their residence, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1951, d. 25, fl. 14. Some issues discussed in the meeting of the Politburo of the ALP's CC, regarding the sugar combine of Maliq. April 27, 1951.

<sup>30</sup> AQSh, F. 517, Ministria e Industrisë, 1950, d. 31, fl. 1-2. Agreement between the Albanian and Soviet governments on the payment of the Soviet technicians that will provide their technical expertise in Albania. September 21, 1950; AQSh, F. 499, Ministria e Ndërtimit, 1951, d. 225, fl. 35. Memo of the Ministry of Construction concerning the fulfillment of the decisions of the Council of Ministers regarding the building of industrial establishments.

<sup>31</sup> On the supply of the Soviet chief engineer in the Army shop, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1951, d. 25, fl. 46. Minutes of the meeting of the Politburo of the ALP's CC. April 27, 1951. On irregular supply with vodka, AQSh, F. 499, Ministria

The first expedition left after completing the building of the refinery, and a new one came to teach the Albanians how to use it. The new team of specialists changed its approach toward the Albanians. They were not there for short periods and had to live and closely work with the locals. There were no linguistic barriers between Soviets and Albanians anymore. A good part of the refinery's local personnel, recruited from the ranks of the workers that participated in the construction of the refinery, knew Russians because they had been trained in the Soviet Union from 1949 to 1951.<sup>32</sup> Their status vis-à-vis the Soviet technicians had changed. They were no longer simple toilers, but specialists educated in the USSR. Moreover, the Soviets came with their families and the interactions between them and locals were not limited only during the work time and space, but also outside of it. Their children socialized with Albanian children—one interviewee recalls playing with Volodya (Vladimir), the son of the Soviet chief engineer in the refinery.<sup>33</sup> It is them, who the people from Maliq still remember with nostalgia. They were not delivering any more models of work, but also lifestyles.

In the 1950s, Maliq became an access point for experiencing first-hand the Soviet Union. Besides the workers of the refinery, others went to the Soviet Union throughout the decade to learn new crafts, from driving tractors to welding with oxygen.<sup>34</sup> These exchanges with the Soviets impressed the Albanians to the point that many of them really believed in the superiority of the Soviet science and technology. Almost all the communist cadres considered the Soviet Union as the savior of Albania and the world. The West, in the minds of many Albanians, had lost its primacy in science and the locus of civilization had moved to the East, this time in the Third Rome. This belief took root especially among local cadres and specialists, on whose shoulders weighted the burden of Tirana's plans fulfillment. Soviet technologies gave them the devices to meet as much as possible the state plan and overcome the endemic delays and inefficiencies.

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e Ndërtimit, 1951, d. 160, fl. 14; On the material deprivations, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Rrethi Korçë, 1952, Lista 8, d. 187, fl. 1. The ALP's Central Committee to the local Party Committees. On the Soviet expeditions for geological studies. August 7, 1952. On the complain of the Soviets, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1951, d. 25, fl. 46. Minutes of the meeting of the Politburo of the ALP's CC. April 27, 1951. On lack of workers, transportation and technicians, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Rrethi Korçë, 1952, Lista 8, d. 187, fl. 1. The ALP's Central Committee to the local Party Committees. On the Soviet expeditions for geological studies. August 7, 1952.

<sup>32</sup> "Kombinati i sheqerit '8 Nëntori'", *Shqipëri-BRSS*, 10-11 (1951): 22.

<sup>33</sup> Miçurin Hasko, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Korça, December 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Stavri Kamenica, "E ndejmë vehten të lumtur," *Bashkimi* 137 (4338), July 1, 1959, 3.

This Stalinist superiority complex intoxicated the communist cadres of Maliq too, who fully embraced Soviet hegemony.<sup>35</sup> Here. Likewise everywhere else in the country, the Albanian cadres worshiped the Soviets in the same way the latter adored everything American during the interwar era. Now it was the turn of the Soviets to be in the position of superior beings that had the clue to everything.<sup>36</sup> In their endless reports and correspondence, the cadres of Maliq never stopped praising the Soviet science, which they raised to the status of myth. Hekuran Arapi, a fitter that worked in Maliq, said to Enver Hoxha that the Party, with the help of the Soviet Union, had sweetened like the sugar of Maliq the future of the country.<sup>37</sup> Thoma Samara, the first director of the sugar factory, stated that Soviet technology was the most advanced in the world.<sup>38</sup> The construction of the superiority of everything Soviet was not merely a myth engineered for propagandist goals. It actually was a wide-shared belief that captivated the minds of all the layers of the communist hierarchy from the top leadership all the way down to the cadres that stained their hands with grease. Almost on a daily basis, the press praised the Soviet technology as the best in the world. When talking about Maliq, the press considered its machinery as the pride of the world technology.<sup>39</sup> Translations of Soviet methods were widely used in Albania, like the Kulikov construction method and chain plastering, or the efficient use of the machines and overhauling like Cursinov, Levchenko-Mukhanov, and Zhandarova-Agafanova methods appeared everywhere.<sup>40</sup>

Operating the factory was just one part of the whole process. Agriculture and the cultivation of sugar beet were also crucial to the refining of sugar. The Soviets and their scientific

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<sup>35</sup> I have borrowed the term “Stalinist complex of superiority” from Michael David-Fox, “Rise of the Stalinist Superiority Complex,” in David-Fox, in *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 285-311.

<sup>36</sup> On the American idolatry in the Soviet Union of the interwar era, Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Visions and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 145-164.

<sup>37</sup> “Bisedimi i shokut Enver Hoxha me delegacionin e punëtorëve të fabrikës së sheqerit 8 Nëntori,” *Bashkimi*, November 2, 1951, 3.

<sup>38</sup> “Fjala e drejtorit të fabrikës, Thoma Samara,” *Zëri i Popullit*, November 3, 1948, 2.

<sup>39</sup> “Kombinati i sheqerit ‘8 Nëntori’,” *Shqipëri-BRSS*, 10-11 (1951): 22.

<sup>40</sup> V. Ziu, “Kadro të ardhëshme për industrinë tone,” *Bashkimi*, June 4, 1953, 3; Nikolla Kallfa, “Pregatitemi për prodhimin e ri,” *Zëri i Popullit* 202 (1528), August 22, 1953; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1953, d. 113, fl. 4-6. Information on the application on the use of the Soviet methods in the industrial sector of Korça; AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1953, d. 135, Lista 9, fl. 1 & 4. Reports of the ALP’s Committee of Korça sent to the ALP’s CC concerning the personal example of the communist cadres in the building of socialism for the first half of the year 1953. July 21, 1953; AShV Korçë, F. 3/1, Komiteti i PPSH Qarku Korçë, 1954, Lista 5, d. 56, fl. 8. Information on the readiness of the sugar factory for the beginning of the season 1953-154.

achievements made their presence felt even here. When the agronomist of the district of Korça talked about the declining yield of sugar beets, they referred to the practices applied in the Soviet Union as the example to follow. The proposal for a given method was supported by examples of its successful application in the Soviet Union. They also referred to the Soviet literature to learn more about the process of growth of the sugar beet. Agricultural periodicals, such as *Socialist Agriculture*, translated pedagogical articles that provided examples of how the Soviet farms cultivated sugar beet. The Albanian cadres considered what they called “the Soviet experience” as a model to mimic and a stick yard to compare everything else.<sup>41</sup>

Although Maliq was predominantly a point of exchanges between Albania and the Soviet Union, it also weaved threads of connections with other socialist countries, which helped the development of the sugar industry in Albania. In the context of the aid that the countries of COMECON gave to Albania, Bulgaria had agreed to supply its Balkan ally with the machinery for an alcohol factory in Maliq. And in 1959, a team of Bulgarian specialists came and worked in Maliq to help their Albanian comrades to expand their light industry. Czechoslovak and East German specialists also worked there, who were sent by their respective governments to help Albania to develop its sugar industry. These specialists experimented with sugar beet and taught the Albanian technicians how to cultivate it. In Maliq did also come members of the Soviet kolkhozes. Their visits were part of a broader plan of exchanges, which Moscow implemented with the goal of popularizing the USSR in the states of the socialist bloc. The Soviet farmers visited the plain of sugar and taught the peasants of the plain of Maliq, who had just joined the collective farms how to cultivate better sugar beet.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> On the Soviet examples Nesti Çekani, “Shërbimet kulturele në panxhar-sheqerin,” *Bashkimi*, May 14, 1954. On the provision with Soviet examples see “Kombajni i vjeljes së panxhar sheqerit,” *Bujqësia socialiste*, 7 (1956): 29. On referring to Soviet literature see Nesti Çekani, “Ta vjelim në kohë panxhar-sheqerin,” *Për bujqësinë socialiste*, 8 (1955): 7-8. Translated Soviet articles, see N. Rozhnaçuk, “Nga eksperiencia e kolkozianëve sovjetikë. Prodhonjësit e panxharit të sheqerit i plotësuan zotimet e tyre,” *Bujqësia socialiste*, 3 (1955): 17-18. On the praises to the Soviet experiences V. Stralla, “Shërbimet kulturele dhe përdorimi i mjeteve të mekanizuara në bimën e panxhar-sheqerit,” *Bashkimi*, May 13, 1956, 3; Llukan Tase, “Të hedhim bazat për rendimente të larta në panxhar sheqeri,” *Bujqësia socialiste*, 3 (1956): 15.

<sup>42</sup> On the alcohol factory, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 160, fl. 6. Memo on the progression of the works for the construction of the sugar factory of alcohol in Maliq. August 8, 1959. For the courses of the Czechoslovak agronomist, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1952, d. 1052, fl. 9. Memo on the situation of the ministry of Industry directed to the Prime Ministry on the condition of the sugar factory “November 8<sup>th</sup>.” February 22, 1952; on the experiment of the researcher from the DDR, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë,

Maliq did not become only a destination of Soviet farmers and specialist but also of the USSR's leadership. In 1959, when Nikita Khrushchev visited Albania, he stopped to the state farm of Maliq, established in the reclaimed land, and had lunch with its director, Ilia Prifti. Tirana's regime did not show Maliq only to its distinguished friend and benefactor. Its sugar factory was a demonstration of the transformation of the countryside during the ALP's era. In 1960, Tirana's authorities decided to use Maliq as a showcase of the socialist transformation of the countryside and the refinery, the state farm, and the cooperatives of the plain as destinations for foreign visitors.<sup>43</sup> However, there are no data on whether or not Maliq ever played the role the communist regime assigned to it in the political tourism and cultural diplomacy.

Exchanges were not limited to people alone. They included, besides the machinery, also sugar beet hybrids as Albania was not able to produce its hybrids until well into the 1980s.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, the regime was forced to import prized seeds. The Albanians imported the first beet varieties from the Soviet Union, but during the 1950s they started also importing from Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Poland, and Hungary. The last years of the decades the seeds imported from these countries started replacing the Soviet seeds. Maliq became a laboratory where the Albanians experimented the different seeds produced by the socialist countries and tested the scientific achievements of the bloc. The opportunity gradually undermined the ubiquitous sense of the Soviet scientific supremacy. Soon, the Albanian specialists realized that the varieties of the Central European countries contained more sugar than the Soviet types. They started to openly argue for the superiority of the Czechoslovak, East German, and Hungarian hybrids and advocated their import.<sup>45</sup> By the end of the 1950s, the euphoria and enthusiasm of the Soviet superiority had

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1960, d. 79, fl. 3. Documentation concerning the development of the culture of sugar beet in the Peoples' Republic of Albania. On the visit of the members of the Soviet kolkhoz in Maliq, "Në fushën e panxharit," *Shqipëri-BRSS*, 10-11(1951): 26. On the practice of exchanges of farmers between the USSR and the socialist countries, see Patryk Babiracki, "The Taste of Red Watermelon: Polish Peasants Visit Soviet Collective Farms, 1949-1952," *Cold War Crossings*, 40-77.

<sup>43</sup> On the visit of Khrushchev, S. Arrëza, "Korça pret miqt e dashur," *Miqësia*, 1959 (6); On the transformation of Maliq into a touristic destination, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1960, Lista 16, d. 147, fl. 5 & 9. The centers that will be visited from tourists during the year 1960.

<sup>44</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1987, d. 357, fl. 1-9. Correspondence between the Prime Ministry, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of the Foreign Affairs regarding the allocations of funds for importing 100 tons of seed of sugar beet. April 3-October 12, 1987.

<sup>45</sup> AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1958, d. 62/5, fl. 3. Memo on the activity of the activity of the Albanian delegation of the Commission for the Economic and Technical-Scientific Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture and

been quelled among the specialists of the agriculture in Maliq and they started de-constructing the myth of the Soviet scientific superiority that they had helped to construct. After the split with Moscow in 1961, Tirana imported all the elite seeds from the peoples' democracies of Central Europe.<sup>46</sup>

However, by the late 1960s a shift in the imports of the hybrid seeds of sugar beet became especially obvious by the early 1970s. During these years, Albania began to importing seeds of sugar beet from countries outside of the Soviet bloc, like Italy, West Germany, and the Netherlands.<sup>47</sup> By this time, the Albanian specialists started arguing that the Czechoslovak hybrids were outdated and that they needed to move toward the polyploid seeds used in the West to increase the yields.<sup>48</sup> The need to import more productive seeds pushed the communist regime to intensify the exchanges with the countries of Western Europe, and in the 1970s, Albania imported polyploid seeds from France and in the 1980s, from Denmark.<sup>49</sup> The import of the seeds reflected a much broader shift in the orientation of the Albanian trade from the early 1970s. Currency can serve as a compass that demonstrates the direction of the magnetic fields of influences and interactions. Even after the break with Moscow, throughout the 1960s and early years of the 1970s, the Albanians kept using the Soviet Ruble as the basic currency for their international transactions and for estimating the foreign trade. In the course of the 1970s, the Ruble lost ground to the US dollar—although the Ruble remained the staple currency for the transactions of Tirana with the countries of the socialist bloc. By the 1980s, with the growing exchanges with the West, the US Dollar had become the basic currency for estimating the costs of imports.

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Food Industry during the year 1958. December 1958; Thoma Lolo, "Rezultatet e llojeve të panxhar sheqerit në konditat e vëndit tonë," *Buletini i Shekencave Bujqësore*, 1 (1962): 58-66.

<sup>46</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1961, d. 184, fl. 3. Report on the cultivation and industrialization of the sugar beet for the year 1960. February 2, 1961.

<sup>47</sup> AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1972, d. 38, fl. 7. Info of the State Plan Commission on the cultivation of sugar beet. September 25, 1972.

<sup>48</sup> AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1979, d. 83, fl. 41. Info of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the cultivation and processing of sugar beet. November 13, 1979.

<sup>49</sup> On the import of seeds from France AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1977, d. 160, fl. 10. Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers regarding the issue of the expansion of the processing capacity of the sugar factory of Maliq from 1100 to 2200 tons/24 hours. November 23, 1977. On the import of seeds from Denmark, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1987, d. 85, fl. 1-3. Report of the sugar combine of Maliq, sent to the Ministry of Light and Food Industry regarding the progress of the cultivation of sugar beet. March 5, 1987.

This shift is also traceable at the level of international trade. In the 1950s, Albania did more than 93% of its international trade with countries of the Soviet bloc and almost 97% with socialist countries.<sup>50</sup> In 1980, only 38.7% of the country's exports went to members of the Warsaw Pact, and approximately 58% with socialist countries. When it came to imports, where machinery and mechanical equipment were among the most important categories, in 1980, the share of the socialist countries was less than 55% of the total. The remaining part took place with capitalist countries, mainly from Western Europe. During the 1980s, the weight of the trade with Italy and West Germany increased sensibly.<sup>51</sup> By this time, in the context of the *Ostpolitik* and its concomitant *Osthandel*, inaugurated in 1969 by Willy Brandt, the FGR had become the main trading partner with socialist countries among the NATO members.<sup>52</sup> Such a shift was also reflected in the increasing level of trade and exchanges with communist Albania. With the passing of the years, Tirana's regime entangled itself more and more in the Western-centered web of trade while it never cut itself off the exchanges with the Soviet bloc. The socialist countries remained the main trade partners of Albania, not so much of any preference for their products, but because they accepted barter trade.

The magnitude of the shift of orientation was even more prominent in the realm of the scientific and technological exchanges. The sugar industry was a case in point. In the 1960s, the Albanian technocrats, who shared the wider belief in scientific revolution that had caught all the spirits of the university-trained specialists started looking in new directions.<sup>53</sup> This fever, though, was not isolated only among the ranks of specialists but found fervent supporters in the top echelons of the regime. Under the surface of isolationism, the focus of the Albanian power apparatus shifted from the scientific knowledge generated in the socialist countries to that produced in the western side of the fence. By the end of this decade, the complex of the socialist technological inferiority replaced the complex of the socialist technological superiority of the 1950s. The Albanian communists did not imagine East and West as categories with a fixed

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<sup>50</sup> *Anuari statistikor i Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë 1960* (Tirana: Drejtoria e Statistikës, 1960), 240-241.

<sup>51</sup> *Vjetari statistikor i vitit 1989* (Tirana: Drejtoria e Statistikës, 1989), 172-175.

<sup>52</sup> Yergin, *East-West Technology Transfer*, 15-50.

<sup>53</sup> On the wider belief in scientific revolution in eastern Europe in the 1960s, Ivan Szelenyi, *Socialists Entrepreneurs: Embourgeoisement in Rural Hungary* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 152-153.

hierarchical relationship with each other. The replacement of the East by West, as the center of technological progress also generated a form of Orientalization of eastern Europe and the Balkans. For Albanians, this feeling did not take place only among researchers and scientists, but also among the highest echelons of the ALP.

Hysni Kapo, one of the most powerful leaders of the ALP, set the quota of sugar beet yields in direct competition with Greece and Yugoslavia, which he and his colleagues saw as direct competitors. While they accepted that an industrialized country like Italy would have higher yields sense, Kapo set as a realistic goal to surpass the productivity of Albania's two Balkan neighbors. The constant comparison with Yugoslavia and Greece was a yardstick for ALP's work. As a specialist of the Ministry of Agriculture pointed out, when compared with the achievements of the neighbors, it showed how much road Albania had still to travel.<sup>54</sup> Even the specialists in Maliq made similar comparisons. Considering the efficiency of sugar processing in the countries of Western Europe unattainable for the time being, they were ambitious enough to want to reach at least the level of productivity of the countries of eastern Europe.<sup>55</sup> While accepting their inferiority compared to the West, they could not accept that compared to the East.

As David Crowley argues, any evocation of the West, necessarily constituted a comment about the East.<sup>56</sup> By competing with the West, the socialist countries transformed the US and the capitalist bloc as the yardstick to measure their achievements. However, this was not so much the case with Albania. Propaganda and the public rhetoric aside, for the ALP's leaders, the real other that served as the necessary counter-image to shape their self-perceptions were the countries the socialist bloc and its Balkan neighbors, regardless of their socio-economic system. In the form of a nested orientalism, the carriers of a very violent anti-Western and anti-imperialist discourse were ironically reproducing the hegemonic force of the West.<sup>57</sup> They were trying to identify themselves

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<sup>54</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1977, d. 361, fl. 35. Report of the Ministry of Agriculture on the increase of production of sugar beet through the simultaneous increase of yielding and area under cultivation. April 29, 1977.

<sup>55</sup> ASHV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1980, d. 19, fl. 6. Some opinions of the specialists of the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" sent to the Ministry of Light and Food Industry regarding the construction of a new establishment for the processing of sugar beet. August 15, 1980.

<sup>56</sup> David Crowley, "Paris or Moscow? Warsaw Architects and the Image of the Modern City in the 1950s," *Imagining the West*, 110; See also James Carrier, "Introduction," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, ed. James Carrier (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1-32.

<sup>57</sup> I have borrowed this term from the article of Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Yugoslavia," *Slavic Studies* 54, 4 (1995): 917-931.

as developed not by surpassing the West—something the ALP’s leadership knew was an impossible feat—but by outdoing the other socialist countries. For the Albanian modernizers it was necessary to find their Other in eastern and southeastern Europe. The hierarchies they constructed, which placed the country above the socialist and Balkan states, would give meaning to their efforts to leapfrog Albania into the status of a modern European state.

In their mental map of the late 1960s, divided by imaginary lines, filled with fluid meanings and hierarchies, the Albanians dethroned the East as the place of light and threw it again into the realm of backwardness. Such an axiological shift expressed the resentment they had vis-à-vis the peoples’ democracies of eastern Europe. Albania was the least industrialized country of the bloc, and its socialist allies considered it as backward, primitive, and deeply Oriental, something which continuously frustrated Tirana’s leadership.<sup>58</sup> After Tirana’s regime broke with the Soviet alliance, it had the freedom to draw a new map that loaded space with a different scale of values. The Albanian modernizers subverted the hierarchy they constructed in the 1950s. This new map of geographical identities shows that although Albania broke with its eastern European allies, they and its Balkan neighbors, remained the yardstick with which the ALP regime measured itself. Rather than West, the ALP wanted to catch up and take over the East.

György Péteri has argued that the Occident remained part of the socialist self because the peoples’ democracies built their identity as its antithesis. The West was the necessary other for the Soviet experiment and hence critical component of the socialist self-perception.<sup>59</sup> The Albanian case is more complicated. After the break with the Soviet bloc, Tirana’s regime did not construct its identity only in competition with the capitalist West, as it was the case with the other socialist states. The Albanian communists forged their understanding of self also from competition with eastern Europe. It was very hard for them to escape from the specter of the Orient, which kept hunting them even under the umbrella of socialist internationalist brotherhood. The efforts to

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<sup>58</sup> More on the attitudes and reactions of specialists and technicians from East Central Europe who worked in Albania see Elidor Mëhilli, “Socialist Encounters: Albania and the Transnational Eastern Bloc in the 1950s,” *Cold War Crossings*, 107-133.

<sup>59</sup> György Péteri, “The Occident Within—or the Drive for Exceptionalism and Modernity,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, 4 (2008): 929-937. On the importance the West had for the self-understanding of the socialist regimes see Michael David-Fox, “Conclusions: Transnational History of the East-West Divide,” *Imaging the West*, 258-267.

escape from it only reinforced the Orient further, which displayed as a projection onto others. With the new turn toward Western Europe, the saviors for Albanian modernizers were not the technology and scientific achievements of the Soviet Union, but those of the liberal democracies. Although tightly controlled and diminished, the flux of people crossing the state borders with their point of departure or destination Maliq never interrupted. The Ministry of Light and Food Industry sent the sugar refinery a Danish specialist to discuss issues regarding the technology of the sugar combine. The Dane promised to his Albanian colleagues to send them the blueprints of some necessary equipment so that the Albanians could produce them in the country.<sup>60</sup> In the late 1980s, after the improving the relations with the southern neighbor, a group of Greek specialists visited the combine of Maliq. The Albanians were especially eager to learn from Greece's experience because the two countries had a similar climate and the Hellenic sugar industry had great results.<sup>61</sup>

During the winter of 1979-1980, a small group of eleven Polish specialists and a German technician lived in Maliq. They were there to help the Albanians reconstruct the combine and assemble the machinery.<sup>62</sup> In the late 1970s, the Albanian government granted to the Polish company Polimex-Cekop, which had built sugar refineries in Greece—a token of the pluri-directional circulation of technological exchanges across the East-West divide—the right to reconstruct the sugar combine of Maliq and double its processing capacities. The authorities in Tirana did not choose the Polish company for any ideological or technological preference. On the contrary; Italian, West German, and Danish firms took part in the competition and the Albanian government openly preferred their offer because it considered the Western technology far superior to that of the Poles. The Albanian specialists were well aware that the technological level in the

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<sup>60</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1982, d. 8, fl. 11-12. Memo of the sugar combine of Maliq sent to the Ministry of light and Food Industry regarding the conversations with the Danish specialist, E. J. B. Giese, on the problems of the processing of the sugar beet. October 28, 1982.

<sup>61</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1988, d. 3, fl. 1-2. Info of the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" sent to the Ministry of Food Industry regarding the visit of the Greek specialist to Maliq. December 12, 1988.

<sup>62</sup> On the Polish specialists AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1977, d. 209, fl. 1. Letter of the Ministry of Light Industry and Food sent to the Ministry of Commerce concerning the Polish specialists that will work in the expansion of the processing capacity of the sugar factory of Maliq. April 9, 1977; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1980, d. 52, fl. 1. Letter of the Ministry of Light and Food Industry sent to the sugar combine of Maliq concerning the liquidation of the financial obligations of the foreign specialists. December 22, 1980. On the German specialist *Ibid*, fl. 7. Letter of the directory of sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" Maliq sent to the Ministry of Light and Food Industry concerning the liquidation of the bills of the Polish specialists September 16, 1980.

West was far more advanced than that in the Soviet bloc, including the technology for the processing of sugar beet.<sup>63</sup>

Since 1971, the Albanians used technology imported by the world renowned Western German company BMA to build the starch factory in the combine of Maliq. But the Western companies wanted hard currency, something the Albanians did not have. Tirana wanted to buy the technology through barter trading, and because the Poles were willing to operate in these terms, forced the government of Tirana to choose Polimex.<sup>64</sup> However, the technology used for the reconstruction was not entirely Polish. The Albanians and the Polish company bought for the reconstruction of the combine machinery from countries in both ideological camps: UK, Japan, Greece, Italy, Belgium, West Germany, Austria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and China.<sup>65</sup> In 1987-1988, the Yugoslavs also returned to the region of Koça after exactly 40 years later. This time, they did not come to bring an old rusty refinery, but to assemble two turbines for the power plant of Maliq.<sup>66</sup>

The foreign specialists that came to Albania after 1961 did not integrate into the local population's daily life as was the case in the 1950s. The regime took care to restrict any uncontrolled contact with foreigners. The Albanians were careful in their relations with the foreign

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<sup>63</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1980, d. 19, fl. 6. Some opinions of the specialists of the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" sent to the Ministry of Light and Food Industry regarding the construction of a new establishment for the processing of sugar beet. August 15, 1980.

<sup>64</sup> On the construction of the starch factory with German technology, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Pa vit, Kutia 680, viti 1994, d. 13, fl. pa numër. Study on the existing condition of the sugar combine of Maliq. December 9, 1994. On the Albanian preference for Western technology and the term of the Western firms to trade with hard currency AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1977, d. 148, fl. 97-98. Info concerning the steps should be taken for the conclusion of the works on the expansion of the processing capacities of the sugar factory "November 8<sup>th</sup>" Maliq; On the Polish firm establishing refineries in Greece AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1988, d. 3, fl. 1-2. Info of the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" sent to the Ministry of Food Industry regarding the visit of the Greek specialist to Maliq. December 12, 1988.

<sup>65</sup> On British equipment AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1979, d. 400, fl. 14. Info on the construction, assemblage, and expansion of the sugar combine in Maliq. On the machinery from the other countries AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1979, d. 400, fl. 30. Info on the implementation of the tasks related the expansion of the sugar combine in Maliq; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1979, d. 400, fl. 43. Info on the materials of the sugar combine of Maliq; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1979, d. 400, fl. 64. Letter of the ALP's Committee of Korça sent to the Council of Minister on the supply of the sugar combine of Maliq with machinery. March 3, 1979; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1979, d. 400, fl. 73-71. Info on the condition of the machinery and equipment for the sugar combine of Maliq. June 22, 1979.

<sup>66</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1986, d. 246, fl. 33. Proposal of the draft-idea for the installation of a turbine with a capacity of 35 tons/hour in the thermal power station of Maliq.

specialists who came to reconstruct the sugar factory and avoided socializing with them after work. As an engineer recalls, when a Polish colleague asked him to have a beer together, an offer he accepted only after asking for the permission of the refinery's party secretary.<sup>67</sup> It was the height of the regime's xenophobic rhetoric. However, while considering all the foreigners coming to the country as potential agents and took care to keep them as much as possible away from the Albanians, the regime did not interrupt the movement of people. Actually, by the end of the 1970s, there was an increase in such exchanges.

The most intense forms of exchanges were the visits of the Albanian specialists outside the country. The technocrats were a driving force behind the new course of technological exchanges and orientations. They were crucial actors in constructing the new complex of Western technological superiority that pervaded Albania in the 1970s and 1980s. While the regime tried to keep in quarantine the populace, the technocrats remained a group that negotiated change and innovation, as well as mediated connections with the world, although under the strict supervision of the ALP. It is true that the mobility and exchanges during the two last decades of the communist era were far from those of the 1950s. However, the Albanian specialists preserved a degree of mobility with the world that lied beyond the state borders. In the early 1970s, they visited the hated and disengaged Yugoslavia, the revisionist and Catholic Poland, and marginal NATO-member France, where they witnessed the cultivation of sugar beet and the seed selection in these countries and bought some back to experiment in Maliq. Later that decade, the Ministry of Agriculture sent specialists of sugar beet in Italy to learn from the experience of the Apennine peninsula.<sup>68</sup>

In the late 1970s, the specialists of the sugar combine of Maliq insisted that the government had to send specialists to West Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Austria, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. There the Albanians could learn the technological schemes of the machinery so to produce them in the country. In 1980, a group of specialists of the Ministry of Agriculture

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<sup>67</sup> On the impact of Poles, Piro Lazi, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Tirana, November 11, 2017; On the socialization with Polish colleagues, Miçurin Hasko, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Korça, December 2017.

<sup>68</sup> On the visit in France, Poland, and Yugoslavia AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1973, d. 33, fl. 4-9. Report on some problems related to the seed and cultivation of sugar beet in Yugoslavia, Poland, and France. April 1973. On the need to replace the Czechoslovak hybrids with polyploid seeds, *Ibid*, fl. 18. Information on some problems related to the seed used for the cultivation of sugar beet of sugar beet. June 11, 1973. On the visit in Italy, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1979, d. 83, fl. 41. Info of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the cultivation and processing of sugar beet. November 13, 1979.

prepared a report where it corroborated the same idea: they needed to follow from close distance the experience and achievements of countries with similar ecological conditions to Albania, like Greece, Italy, France, but also in countries which had not similar climatic conditions like Belgium and Denmark. They proposed to send specialists in these countries for familiarization with specific components of sugar beet cultivation.<sup>69</sup> None of these countries was a member of the socialist camp. Part of these initiatives was the visit of a delegation of the combine of Maliq to Ankara in Turkey in an international seminar on the processing of sugar. During this visit, the Turkish colleagues gave them a full scheme of the Western German technology they used for the production of the refined sugar and white crystalline sugar. The chief engineer of the sugar combine, Llazar Plasa, who was part of the delegation, was very happy to know the ways “Europe” dealt with specific processes of sugar production. “Europe” here stands for Western Europe and German technology rather than for Turkey.<sup>70</sup>

When they returned to Albania, the specialists were happy. Armed with new European knowledge, but also because, to their satisfaction, everybody they met in Turkey, from the policemen in the airport to the workers of the sugar factories knew Enver Hoxha. The Turks identified Albania with her leader, some of them compared Hoxha to Ataturk, or, to the delight of the Albanians, some others said that the ALP’s leader was the heir of Mustafa Kemal.<sup>71</sup> The delegation brought back titles of books and journals that talked about sugar processing and asked the National Library to buy them. The visit was so successful that the regime sent other specialists in the annual exchanges in Turkey in 1982, 1985, and 1987.<sup>72</sup> The specialists of sugar industry in

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<sup>69</sup> AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1979, d. 401, fl. 10-11. Report of a group of specialists of the sugar combine “November 8<sup>th</sup>” Maliq regarding the possibility of building a sugar factory with processing capacity of 5000 tons per year. November 23, 1979; AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1980, d. 54, fl. 29-30. Report of the Ministry of Agriculture regarding the necessary measures for increasing the yielding of sugar beet. October 10, 1980.

<sup>70</sup> AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1981, d. 557, fl. 22-23. Information of the Albanian delegation that took part in the training for the perfection of sugar processing held in the Institute of Sugar in Ankara, Turkey. February 8, 1982.

<sup>71</sup> On the copying of the German technology in Turkey AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1981, d. 557, fl. 23-24. Information of the Albanian delegation that took part in the training for the perfection of sugar processing held in the Institute of Sugar in Ankara, Turkey. February 8, 1982. On Enver Hoxha, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1982, d. 8, fl. 5. Report of the director of the sugar combine of Maliq, Llazar Plasa sent to the Ministry of Light and Food Industry regarding the application of the experience the Albanian delegation had brought from their visit in Turkey. March 6, 1982.

<sup>72</sup> On ordering scientific books, see AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1981, d. 557, fl. 23-24. Information of the Albanian delegation that took part in the training for the perfection of sugar processing held in the

Maliq and Korça were not isolated from broader scientific debate of the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. For example, the directory of the sugar combine supported its arguments, in its reports to the Ministry of Light and Food Industry, by referring to the contemporary scientific literature and the experience in the world. In a meeting that the agronomist of the refinery had with the Minister of Light and Food Industry, he used again the example of the practices used in the “world” to make his point and defend his work.<sup>73</sup> Using the concept of the “world” served as a formula of technological legitimation. The “world” (bota) was of course not the entire world. It was a metonym for the developed countries of western Europe. Using “West” was ideologically inexcusable and could cost dearly. However, linguistic devices like “the world” could serve very well their purpose by not stepping over the ideological orthodoxy.

The use of the “world” (bota) as a synonym for the West entered in the Albanians’ everyday vocabulary as well and is still today used in the same way today. Expressions like “to do the things like the whole world” or “to become like the world” are widely used in reference of the constant goal of making Albania “European” and reflect the frustration of this always moving target. Flattening the world to western Europe and expanding the latter to the whole world demonstrates how the Albanian reinforced and reproduced even during the Cold War and under Socialism the Eurocentric conceptualization of the world. Indeed, the concept of Europe and its project for a united continent as a model for the world was not simply created by the members of the European Community. Rather than emerging exclusively from the centers of the industrial countries located in the west of the ideological fence, the construction of Europe has been a decentralized process where participated also countries located in its fringes—including Albania, the less opened

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Institute of Sugar in Ankara, Turkey. February 8, 1982. On sending delegations in Turkey, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1982, d. 27, fl. 1-5. Correspondence between the Ministry of Light and Food Industry and sugar combine of Maliq for the candidates that the state was going to send outside of the country for specialization. Mat 5-6, 1982; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1985, d. 44, fl. 2. Correspondence between the Ministry of Light and Food Industry and the sugar combine of Maliq regarding the candidates that would be sent for training in Turkey. April 24-25, 1985; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1987, d. 14, fl. 1-4. Correspondence between the Ministry of Light and Food Industry and sugar combine of Maliq regarding the candidates that would participate in the course organized by UNIDO in Turkey. July 3-September 15, 1987.

<sup>73</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1984, d. 1, fl. 22. Memo of the sugar combine of Maliq regarding the losses of sugar content of the beet during its yielding, transportation, conservation, and processing. December 12, 1984; AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, 1985, d. 7, fl. 17. Minutes of the meeting of the College of the ministry of Light and Food Industry on the problem of the losses of the sugar combine of Maliq. June 29, 1985.

socialist state of the continent. The Albanian communist power structure reinforced the notion of Europe as a destination that would replace the past and emancipate the country from the Ottoman past. The efforts of becoming part of Europe is still an ongoing process and it powerfully shapes the self-image of the Albanians. In fact, in Albania the word *bota* is also used for the public opinion, the gaze of the society and community that forces individuals to conform to the widely accepted norms. Sayings like “what the world will say,” “the world is watching,” are related to the notions of honor, shame, and respectability, that mirror the disciplining of the individuals to the norms of the society and define their place in it. In this sense, Western Europe also represents the gaze of the powerful, the source of standards and respect. However, besides the EU’s soft power and affluence, this is a discourse that circulates without interruption among Albanians since the nationalist movement in the late 1800s. The communists reinforced the set of expectations, images, beliefs, and feelings upon which rests the concept of Europe.

Many of the specialists of sugar beet in Maliq, who read foreign journals and imported the debates in the micro-cosmos of communist Albania’s sugar land sought radical changes in the agricultural practices. In the debates with their more conservative colleagues, the innovators used as their slogan “we cannot stay behind, the *world* (italics mine) is moving forward...”<sup>74</sup> In the 1970s, the Institute of the Industrial Studies proposed to the State Plan Commission and the Ministry of the Light Industry to apply in Maliq the technologies introduced in the West since 1961. The countries of Central Europe, the report said, have borrowed this technology since 1967 and proposed to implement the same achievements of the “world” in Albania as well.<sup>75</sup> The competition with the Soviet bloc and the technological borrowings across the fence served as an argument for the Albanian specialist to ask for Albania the same. Without borrowing the Western technology, the gap between the country and its socialist “others” would widen.

There was even more to it. In a masterful use of language, the deployment of concept “world” collapsed any division of Europe into ideological camps that offered different and

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<sup>74</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1973, Lista 29, d. 66, fl. 37. On some fundamental organizational and economic problems of the agricultural economies. February 27, 1973.

<sup>75</sup> AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1974, d. 20, fl. 1-4. Memo of the Institute of the Industrial Studies sent to the State Plan Commission and the Ministry of Light Industry, concerning the reconstruction of the sugar combine of Maliq and the increase of the nutrition value of the dry pulp of sugar beet. February 9, 1974.

alternative forms of modernity. In fact, “world” devalued the socialist alternative, rejected the exclusivist rhetoric of the regime and its self-exclusionary discourse, resisted to and subverted it by using against its rhetoric one of the basic concepts of the modernizing ideology: the idea of progress, which the experts equated and essentialized with the West. “World” divested the discourse of development of the ALP from any Cold War era ideological valence and integrated it into the ideology of a single worldwide path to progress. In other ways, the Albanian technocrats had embraced the American theory of modernization, by curiously reproducing under socialism the Western-centric set of hierarchies that this theory inspired. The West was the center of the world, and it offered the unique viable path to modernity, while others had to converge to it. Progress legitimized the use of the “world’s” experience; it allowed the preservation not merely of the connections, but also the emulation of the European/Western model/s. By now, the Soviet myth had been squarely replaced by that of the West/Europe. The discourse of the technocrats about progress did not seek to borrow only the technology, but also the ideology that produced it.

As part of the orientation toward Western generated knowledge and its growing circulation in the country, the researchers of the Agricultural Institute of Korça, used the latest American scientific literature for the drainage of the plain of Maliq.<sup>76</sup> Although Hoxha considered the United States the generator of all the evils of the world and the main enemy of socialist Albania, under the surface, the Albanian specialists, even in peripheries like Maliq, devoured American publications on the production of sugar. Of course, the ties with Soviet literature were not abruptly cut off, especially in the face of the linguistic skills of the specialists of the sugar combine. The bulk were trained in the USSR or by the Soviet specialists who worked in Maliq during the 1950s.

Moreover, regardless of the continuous upgrading that the refinery went through, a substantial part of its technology was Soviet, and the instructions for the use of machinery were in Russian. It was not easy for the specialists of Maliq to cut their ties with Soviet literature and science. Even in 1985, the specialists of the sugar combine kept using both old and recent literature that ranged from 1945 to 1984.<sup>77</sup> The Albanians kept accumulating research literature of different

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<sup>76</sup> AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1980, d. 97, fl. 6-16. Report on the use of mathematical methods for the drainage of the plain of Korça.

<sup>77</sup> On in the instructions in Russian for the use of machinery, Mira Carkanji, Informal interview by Artan Hoxha, Tirana, June 2016; AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, 1985, d. 7, fl. 3. Memo prepared by

provenience and used it to their ends. In the 1970s and 1980s, Maliq became an intersection of technologies, influences, languages coming from both blocs. In this way, for these decades of extreme isolationism of the communist regime, Maliq was still a replica of what the Albanian territory had historically been, i.e. a crossroad of the monotheistic religions and their civilizations.

Growing contacts with both sides of the ideological divide also meant more linguistic skills, as the contemporary modern technology was not exclusively Western. Nevertheless, by this time there was a growing emphasis on the scientific contacts and achievements of the West, and especially, with the English-speaking world. By the 1980s that English started replacing Russian as a major tool for contacts with the world. Now, that the regime was sending its specialists for training in the West or countries related to the West, English became a must. Such a shift created serious problems because in the sugar refinery as only one chemist knew the language of Shakespeare. The others knew the Russian of Lenin or the French of Balzac. In Maliq, the specialists started reacting to the linguist barriers that hampered the growing contact with English-written scientific forums and literature and begun to adjust to the new situation. Many of them began to learn English and in the 1980s the combine subscribed to the very important British periodical *International Sugar Journal*.<sup>78</sup> It becomes evident that during the first years of the communist rule, the specialists were more isolated because their experience was limited to that of the Soviet bloc. In the 1970s, with the growing orientation toward the West, the horizons of technocrats widened, while the country was considered more isolated than ever. In the 1980s the need to renovate the technology of the industrial establishments became critical, and Enver Hoxha gave instructions to upgrade the technology. The specialists embraced these directions with great zeal, including those of Maliq, where the technocrats, always quoting Hoxha, proposed a series of

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the specialists of the sugar combine of Maliq regarding the losses in weight and sugar content of the sugar beet in the collection, conservation, transportation, and processing and the respective measures that should be taken. June 3, 1985.

<sup>78</sup> On the growing importance of English and the knowledge of French and Russian, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1982, d. 27, fl. 1-2. Correspondence between the Ministry of Light and Food Industry and the sugar combine of Maliq on the candidates for a training on the processing of sugar beet outside the country. April 24-May 6, 1982; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1985, d. 44, fl. 2. Correspondence between the Ministry of Light and Food Industry and the sugar combine of Maliq regarding the candidates that would be sent for training in Turkey. April 24-25, 1985. On the subscription on the British journal, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1987, d. 77, fl. 1. Correspondence between the directory of sugar combine of Maliq and the branch of export-import of the Enterprise for the Distribution of Book regarding some the continuation of subscription of the combine in the periodical "International Sugar Journal." July 1-9, 1987.

initiatives to renovate the combine and increase its productivity and efficiency. The renovation of technology meant above all, increase contact and exchanges of technology with the economically advanced countries of the West. Even for producing other consumer goods, related to sugar, as it was the case with jam and marmalade, the Albanians consulted West German literature.<sup>79</sup>

These shifts reflected generational transformations in Maliq. The Western-oriented specialists were products of the Albanian higher education, graduated in the 1970s and 1980s, and, at least in the case of Maliq, were in their late twenties or thirties. In the last decade of its existence, the regime started promoting a new generation of researchers and managers. By the mid-1980s, when Hoxha was at the end of its life, the central authorities stated clearly their goal to upgrade the technological infrastructure of its industry and rejuvenate the rank and file of the technocratic intelligentsia. Tirana's authorities sent many young specialists for training in Western Europe to update them with the latest technologies. In 1985, the Ministry of Light Industry and Food asked the sugar combine to send the names of specialists that would go for professional qualification in Turkey, specifying that they had to be between 25 and 35 years old.<sup>80</sup> In the same way as it did in the first stage of its power, the regime deployed in the latest years of its life the master metaphor of the "old man," this time, though, against itself. It paved the way for its use in the post-socialist era. Those who came to power after the collapse of communism simply recirculated a concept that had taken a new life in the 1980s.

While knowledge and technology, circulated, in invisible but still consistent ways, the commodities they produced and, with them, patterns of consumption. Producing goods and foods based on Western European literature also meant the import of habits and tastes related to those goods created in the social, political, cultural, and economic context that created them. Technology is not free of ideology; it responds to the specific social, economic, and cultural context where it

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<sup>79</sup> On the proposal of Hoxha, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1982, d. 6, fl. 2. Memo for the expansion of processing capacity of the sugar combine to 3000 tons of sugar beet per day. September 17, 1982. On the use of the German literature for marmalade, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, d. 15, fl. 8. Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers regarding the implementations of some measures for a better management of sugar and its byproducts. December 7, 1984.

<sup>80</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1985, d. 44, fl. 2. Request of the Ministry of Light and Food Industry sent to the sugar combine of Maliq regarding the candidates that would be sent for training in Turkey. April 19, 1985; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1987, d. 14, fl. 1. Request of the Ministry of Light and Food Industry sent to the sugar combine of Maliq regarding the candidates that would participate in the course organized by UNIDO in Turkey. July 3, 1987.

is invented;<sup>81</sup> it is an answer to existing needs or, it creates them within an ideological framework or a specific Weltanschauung. It is not outside or despite them. When technology circulates, with it also moves the ideology of the context that has created it. Of course, its implementation in another place does not have the same outcome as in the country of the origin, but it still triggers transformations and creates points of contacts between different social contexts. As Yves Cohen Argues, in the process of circulation it occurs a double transformation: of the disseminated item and of its receiver.<sup>82</sup> It is true that the Albanian communist regime tried to domesticate the imported technology to its own needs and integrate it within the larger fabric of its socialism. Yet, it could not totally alter the ideology that underpinned the technology it imported from Western Europe and the latter became a link between the ordinary Albanians and the world.

When the Albanian agronomists, engineers, and specialists of Maliq brought to Albania Western German technological schemes or when the regime imported new polyploid or mono-germ seeds, they were either responding to similar needs to the context that had created those technologies or, by borrowing them, they were introducing similar needs. With the end of the Stalinist complex of superiority, with the diluting of the belief of the Soviet technological supremacy, with the rise of the Western superiority complex, the Albanian communist regime and its technocrats were looking toward the West. However, with the machinery and other technologies the Albanians were also importing the ideology of the West, or at least, components of it related to consumption. In the meantime, the Albanian communist regime started emphasizing the myth of self-reliance and quarantined the country because it was aware of the ideological power of the commodities of the West. What lies behind this paradox? Why, in first place, the ALP and the technocrats needed so desperately to import technology? Tirana's communist regime was forced to seek technological solutions in the West because it had to solve challenges of social and cultural nature. What challenges were Western technology was supposed to fix?

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<sup>81</sup> Bruno Latour, "Technology is society made durable," *The Sociological Review* 38, S1 (1990): 110.

<sup>82</sup> Yves Cohen, "Circulatory Localities: The Example of Stalinism in the 1930s," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11, 1 (2010): 12-13.

### 5.3 Sugar Consumption, Maliq, and the Cross-Border Exchanges

In 1954, an article published in the newspaper of the Albanian Democratic Front for the fifth anniversary of the sugar combine of Maliq boasted the rise of life quality in Albania during the ten years of communist governance. This was especially true, the article continued, for the countryside. The journalist used sugar consumption as a litmus for his argument. Before WWII, Albanian peasants used sugar to make sweets only for important celebrations and daily access were only for wealthy speculators that did not work. After the establishment of communism, the consumption of sugar increased thanks to the care of the ALP to improve the living standard of the working masses and supply them with consumer goods.<sup>83</sup> Peeling off the argument from the ideological vocabulary and regime's rhetoric, what remains true is that sugar consumption increased during communism. The trend had started since the interwar era, but the ALP's policies accelerated the process.

Sugar consumption took off in the 1950s. From 3900 tons of sugar sold in the market at the beginning of the decade, it jumped to 15,000 tons by 1959, with a per capita consumption of 10 kg. In 1959, Maliq produced the bulk of sugar—12,000 tons—and the country imported only 3000 tons. If the regime's leaders had any illusion that the country was headed toward self-sufficiency, they would very soon prove themselves wrong. The proofs were there. The increase in consumption did not correspond to the population growth, which increased within the span of these ten years from 1.2 to 1.5 million. After the decrease caused by war and the post-WII years, sugar consumption per capita more than doubled from 4.5 kg in 1950 to 10 kg per person in 1959. By 1964, 1.8 million Albanians consumed 25,000 tons of sugar for an average of 13,9 kg per capita. Out of the whole amount of sugar, Maliq processed only 14,000 tons, while the regime imported the remaining 11,000 tons from Cuba and Poland.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Jorgji Mihali, "Industria e jonë e sheqerit," *Bashkimi*, 269 (2091), November 11, 1954, 3.

<sup>84</sup> *Anuari statistikor i Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë 1960* (Tirana: Drejtoria e Statistikës, 1960): On population pp. 53; on domestic production of sugar pp. 115; on sugar distribution in the market pp. 229; on sugar imports pp. 268-269. On per capita sugar consumption in 1950-1959, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1959, d. 32, fl. 38. Study of the State Plan Commission on the standard of living of the population and the development of industry, agriculture, and culture in Albania. *Vjetari statistikor i Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë 1965* (Tirana: Drejtoria e

The demand for sugar kept increasing. In the mid-1970s the pace of increase slowed down and reached 14.2 kg/person while the total quantity of sugar consumed from the population and industry reached 33,000 tons. In 1980 the amount of sugar consumed in the country increased again to 42,700 tons and, and again in 1984 it leapfrogged to almost 50,000 tons. Although the regime tried to keep the consumption per person below the 14 kilograms per year, it could not control it. The diagram of consumption per head, according to a report of the Prime Ministry kept moving up, from 15.9 kg/person in 1980 to 16.4 kg/person in 1984. In 1989, at the brink of the collapse of communism, when the population had exceeded the 3,1 million the consumption increased to 19.4 kg per person.<sup>85</sup>

Albania had the lowest per capita consumption of sugar in Europe. Thus, in the mid-1970s, the annual per capita consumption of Yugoslavia was 29 kg, Bulgaria 33 kg, Hungary 38 kg, and Poland 44 kg; while Greece's annual consumption per capita was 20 kg, Italy's 29 kg, West Germany's 37, and Great Britain 48 kg. Nevertheless, the increase of its use in Albania was impressive if compared to that of the pre-WWII era, or with that of the beginning of the century. The country experienced a simultaneous increase of population and consumption, and both processes were indeed interconnected. In the post-World War II era, Albania had the highest rate of demographic growth in Europe. The country had a number of births two to five times higher to

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Statistikës, 1965): On population pp. 64; On domestic production of sugar pp. 152-153; On consumption of sugar pp. 302; on imports pp. 339.

<sup>85</sup> On the increase of sugar consumption, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1972, d. 38, fl. 7. Info of the State Plan Commission on the cultivation of sugar beet. September 25, 1972; On the total and per capita consumption in the mid-1970s; AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1974, d. 20, fl. 17/1-18. Memo on the increase of the domestic production of sugar and the reduction of imports. October 8, 1974; AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1975, d. 36, fl. 16. Memo concerning the meeting of the needs with sugar for the years 1975-1977. On total consumption of sugar in 1980 and 1984; AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1981, d. 140, fl. 19-20. Memo of the State Plan Commission on the increase of cultivation of the industrial crops for meeting the needs of the country in fats, sugar, rice, and cotton for the seventh five-year plan. October 8, 1980. On the consumption per head in 1980 and 1984; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1984, d. 511, fl. 14. Study of the State Planning Commission sent to the Council of Ministers on the needs of the country's population for fats, sugar, and cotton and for the potentials to meet them through the increase of intensification of agriculture. March 20, 1984. On the consumption per head in 1990, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1990, d. 314, fl. 14. Study of State Planning Commission sent the Prime Ministry concerning the fulfillment of the country's needs with fats, sugar, rice, cotton and the increase of tobacco's production and its quality so to balance the value of exports with imports. September 13, 1989. On the sugar imports for 1989-1990, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1990, d. 314, fl. 14. Study of State Planning Commission sent the Prime Ministry concerning the satisfaction of the country's needs with fats, sugar, rice, cotton and the increase of tobacco's production and its quality so to balance the value of exports with imports. September 13, 1989. On population, *Vjetari statistikor i vitit 1989* (Tirana: Drejtoria e Statistikës, 1989), 17.

that of the continent, while experiencing a sharp decrease of natural deaths. These processes were an outcome of the improvement of sanitary services and growth of the calorific intakes per capita, that leapfrogged from 2500 calories a day in 1965, to 3160 in 1980. There occurred an expansion in the consumption of meat, dairy, fats (especially oil, either olive or industrial, and butter), and sugar. The State Planning Commission rightly anticipated that the demand for these goods would increase while observing the decrease of consumption of wheat and bread, the traditional staple of the Albanians' diet.<sup>86</sup>

Beyond the triumphalist declarations for the successes of the ALP, the demographic growth and expansion of consumption stirred anxieties among the communist planners. Now the regime, which had at the core of its project the improving the living standards of the population, faced the daunting challenge of feeding a growing population that was progressively consuming more. Maliq failed to produce enough sugar so to keep up with the exploding combination of population boom and steep growth of per capita consumption. The combine refined 67 thousand tons of sugar between 1966 to 1970, and ten years later, between 1976-1980 it refined 83 thousand tons. The growing deficit forced the regime to increase the annual imports from 14,600 tons in 1975 to 40,000 tons of sugar per year in 1988.<sup>87</sup> The increase in imports meant precious hard currency flowing outside of the country. The issue of raising imports became even more acute with the stratospheric rise of sugar price in the international markets in the early 1970s, which of course

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<sup>86</sup> On the population growth, calorific intakes, and increase of the consumption of sugar, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1978, d. 51, fl. 4-7. Prognosis on the increase of population and per capita consumption in the future five-year plan up to the year 2000. February 4, 1978. On sugar consumption in the other countries of Europe, *Ibid*, fl. 40. Index of the State Plan Commission on the consumption of the principal consuming goods in some European countries; On the increase of life expectancy and population growth see Arjan Gjonça, *Communism, Health and Lifestyle: The Paradox of Mortality Transition in Albania, 1950-1990* (Westport, Conn. & London: Greenwood Press, 2001), 59-107.

<sup>87</sup> On the problem of supplying with sugar the growing population, AQSh, F. 498, Ministria e Bujqësisë, 1968, d. 90/4, fl. 4. Study of the Ministry of Agriculture regarding the perspective development of the agriculture in the district of Korça for the years 1970-1980. July 1968. On the quantity of sugar that the refinery of Maliq processed, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1981, d. 140, fl. 20-21. Memo of the State Plan Commission on the increase of cultivation of the industrial crops for meeting the needs of the country in fats, sugar, rise, and cotton for the seventh five-year plan. October 8, 1980. On the sugar imports for 1974, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1983, d. 3, fl. 31. Study of a group of specialists of the sugar combine of Maliq sent to the Executive Committee of Korça regarding the meeting of the needs of the country with sugar through the increase of the processing capacity of the combine and building of a new sugar factory in Korça. November 30, 1983. On sugar imports in 1988, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1988, d. 600, fl. 8. Study on the expansion of the domestic capacities of sugar processing and the decrease of imports. March 22, 1988.

affected the capacity of the Albanian state to import either not processed or refined sugar. By this time, the communist authorities, which kept insisting on autarky, considered the issue of sugar a matter of national interests. The depression of the mid-1970s and the rise of prices further stiffened as Tirana's leadership resolve to produce domestically all the sugar the population consumed.<sup>88</sup>

The answer of the regime to the asymmetry between the slow increase of sugar production and a faster increase of consumption were multiple and not at all unique. First of all, the government tightened the belt and made sure to decrease the sugar consumption in the country. It decided to stop the production of alcohol from the molasses of sugar beet and used for this purpose molasses of maize; the government decreased markedly the production of pastries for both the domestic market and export. The continuous increase of sugar price in the international market worried the government and the State Plan Commission circulated different times the idea of limiting the general use of sugar, and if necessary, its controlled retail.<sup>89</sup> All these measures of the government, which aimed at keeping the annual consumption per person below the 14 kilograms, failed to give results and the figure kept growing. The power of the ALP met its limits, and its top echelons faced pressures from below, which they could not tame.

Decreasing consumption failed to give results. Eliminating the imports meant above all the increasing of the processing capacities of the country's sugar industry, sugar beet yields, and of the sucrose it contained. In other words, that meant an increase of efficiency. The problem became even more pressing due also to the limited arable land that the country had. These exigencies forced Tirana's regime to intensify the technological and know-how borrowings from the Western countries. Although Maliq never processed enough sugar to satisfy the domestic demand, the efforts of the communist state to respond to the increase of consumption shaped its history. What

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<sup>88</sup> On the increase of prices in the international markets, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1974, d. 871, fl. 14-15. Info on the current world conjuncture of the prices of some main goods. November 25, 1974. On Tirana's resolves to autarky, AQSh, F. 14/AP (OU), 1976, d. 96, fl. 23-24. Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the ALP's Central Committee. September 21, 1976; AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1977, d. 345, fl. 95. Memo with technical and economic argumentations for the expansion of the sugar factory "November 8<sup>th</sup>."

<sup>89</sup> AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1974, d. 20, fl. 17/1-18. Memo on the increase of the domestic production of sugar and the reduction of imports. October 8, 1974; AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1981, d. 140, fl. 19-20. Memo of the State Plan Commission on the increase of cultivation of the industrial crops for meeting the needs of the country in fats, sugar, rise, and cotton for the seventh five-year plan. October 8, 1980.

do the many links recorded onto Maliq skin show about the broader history of socialist Albania? In what ways consumption, production, and connections with the world intertwined?

Industrialization and urbanization explain only partially the increase of sugar consumption. The urban population quadrupled from 238,000 in 1945 to 1.1 million in 1988. But it only represented 35% of the total population until the collapse of the regime. There were apparent inequalities in sugar consumption between the urban and rural areas. In the 1960s, out of twenty-seven districts of the country, eight with the major urban centers consumed almost 60% of the sugar in the country. For the entire decade of the 1950s, the urban population consumed more sugar compared to the countryside.<sup>90</sup> The urban areas alone, however, cannot explain the steep increase in sugar consumption in the country. The rural population increased sensibly the consumption of sugar. Thus, in 1961 the countryside consumed 132% more sugar compared to 1956.<sup>91</sup>

The country experienced a substantial increase of per capita income both in city and countryside. Thus, in 1975 the individual incomes of the Albanians compared to 1938, increase by almost five times—although workers had better salaries than members of the collective farms. In the meantime, the regime decreased the prices several times.<sup>92</sup> The rise of incomes and prices' decrease is very important for understanding the growth of consumption for it has to do with the buying force of the population and its ability to engage in financial transactions. However, it does not necessarily follow that the increase of earnings translates into an expansion of consumption. The latter depended on a host of factors that include the connection with and dependence from the market, tastes, and patterns of consumption. The increase in sugar consumption reflected a broader

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<sup>90</sup> On the urban population in 1945, *Vjetari statistikor i Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë 1964* (Tirana: Drejtoria e Statistikës, 1964), 61; On consumption of sugar, *Vjetari statistikor i Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë 1963* (Tirana: Drejtoria e Statistikës, 1963), 260; *Vjetari statistikor i Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë 1964* (Tirana: Drejtoria e Statistikës, 1964), 304; *Vjetari statistikor i Republikës Popullore të Shqipërisë 1965* (Tirana: Drejtoria e Statistikës, 1965), 305. On sugar consumption in urban and rural areas, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1959, d. 134, fl. 21. Index of the State Plan Commission on retail of commodities in towns and villages.

<sup>91</sup> Dervish Gjiriti, "Probleme të shpërndarjes së prodhimit dhe të nivelit të jetesës në fshat," *Ekonomia popullore* 10, 6 (1963): 57

<sup>92</sup> On the increase of consumption and decrease of prices see, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1959, d. 32, fl. 36-38. Study of the State Plan Commission on the standard of living of the population and the development of industry, agriculture, and culture in Albania; On the increase of incomes, Aristotel Pano, *Probleme të toerisë, të metodologjisë dhe të analizës së të ardhurave kombëtare të RPSSH* (Tirana: Universiteti i Tiranës, 1982), 123-124.

trend of the continuously growing demand of population for fats, meat, fish, rice, apparels, furniture, etc. While the urban population had a higher purchase-power compared to the rural population, the latter, especially in the lowlands, strongly integrated in the state market since the 1950s, which introduced in the countryside new tastes and needs.

By the end of the 1950s, there was a dramatic increase of the confections and clothes sold in the villages' market stores. Traditional costumes, with exception of the old generation in the uplands disappeared. In state stores, the peasants increasingly bought new furniture: radios, gramophones, sewing machines, beds, cupboards, sofas, and a record number of cooking wares that were becoming integral parts of rural households. The peasants increasingly bought in the state stores sugar, macaroni, marmalade, oil, tomato sauce, rice, and army beefs. At a national level, the upbeat trend was especially conspicuous for sugar-based goods like marmalade and jams, which consumption, together with that of sugar, exceeded state plans. The continuous increase put the ALP's leadership in a very difficult spot position vis-à-vis the population because the regime could not afford the expansion of the demand for the main consuming commodities. As the Ministry of Agriculture pointed out in the late 1980s, the imports of foodstuff had almost tripled, creating a stress that the Albanian economy could not withstand.<sup>93</sup> The new patterns of consumption were largely an outcome of the ALP's policies. The regime was a driving force that fostered economic, social, and cultural transformations that accelerated the expansion of consumption in Albania during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. Its relentless and stubborn insistence in nationalizing the agriculture and eradicating private property in the countryside broke the shell of the household loosely connected to the market. The rural population stopped being self-employed, and, ended up employed with salary. The so-called processes of flocking (tufëzimi) and full collectivization, eliminated all the animals and the private plots, forcing the peasants to

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<sup>93</sup> On the growth of consumption in the countryside during the 1950s, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 65, fl. 1-22. Report on the role of the consumption cooperatives for rise of culture in the countryside. On the exceeding of the consumption of sugar, jam, and marmalade, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1966, d. 122, fl. 1-2. Info on the fulfillment of the plan of the sales in the socialist retail sector. March 14, 1967. On the statement of Qirjako Mihali, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1990, d. 314, fl. 29. Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers regarding the satisfaction of the country's needs with fats, sugar, rice, cotton and the increase of tobacco's production and its quality so to balance the value of exports with imports. March 9, 1990.

buy everything they needed in the state markets.<sup>94</sup> The communist state expropriated the peasants transforming them into a free labor force. Detached from the means of production and they did not consume what they produced.

To quote Joseph Schumpeter, what capitalism's "Creative Destruction" had done in Western Europe since the late 18<sup>th</sup>, the ALP did with an accelerated pace in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century under the banner of real socialism.<sup>95</sup> Like capitalism, the socialist regimes destroyed the old social structures and reconfigured them anew by pulling the whole society into the gravity force of the market, with the difference that the latter was controlled by state. The Soviet alternative, though, was not the only political project that relied on the state intervention for the purpose of including isolated social pockets within the market. With the New Deal, the American government intervened through different forms of infrastructural investments to include in the market the poor rural South where the largely self-sufficient households still prevailed well into the 1930s. In Western Europe, especially through the welfare state, the coalition between state and private sector and the constant interventionist policies of the governments expanded the markets that brought to the European economic miracles.<sup>96</sup>

The Soviet model, which conceived the state as the single economic actor entitled to lead radical social transformations, represents the most extreme form of this 20<sup>th</sup>-century global trend.<sup>97</sup> For the Marxist-Leninist leaders, state was a *deus ex machina* for achieving in a short time what capitalism had achieved in more than 150 years. For them, socialism was simultaneously a shortcut and gas pedal for going through the same of the affluent capitalist countries at a higher speed. György Péteri has argued that the socialist regimes suffered from the tension between their modernizing drive and the need they felt to avoid the blurring of distinctions with capitalist systems

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<sup>94</sup> On the Albanian agriculture during socialism, Örjan Sjöberg, "Any Other Road Leads to the Restoration of Capitalism in the Countryside: Land Collectivization in Albania," in *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe*, ed. Constantin Iordachi & Arndt Bauerkämper (Budapest & New York: CEU Press, 2014), 369-397; Derek Hall, *Albania and the Albanians* (London & New York: Pinter Reference, 1994), 119-121. On the process of flocking, Skënder Gjoleka, Marko Vangjeli, Ago Nezha, *Për tufëzimin e bagëtive të oborreve kooperativiste* (Tirana: Shtëpia e Propagandës Bujqësore, 1982).

<sup>95</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 81-86.

<sup>96</sup> Brent Cebul, "Creative Competition: Georgia Power, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Creation of a Rural Consumer Economy, 1934-1955," *The Journal of American History* 105, 1 (2018): 45-70.

<sup>97</sup> On the economic impact of Social Democracy in Western Europe, Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 360-389.

and create a genuine alternative to the latter. In the end, they did not solve this tension and West's patterns and standards shaped them.<sup>98</sup>

Hoxha's regime was another case that carried this contradiction. Sticking to the Marxist scheme of historical progress into stages, driven by the modernizers' heterochronic approach to time, whose goal was to intensify the pace of history and compensate the "lost time," the socialist regimes reproduced many of the patterns of the capitalist societies. Tirana's authorities did nothing else than create a proletariat that was detached from the means of production. The difference was that the employer was the state. Like capitalism, the policies of the Soviet systems created consumers. The original contribution of the Hoxha's regime was that it transformed the peasants into salaried workers without moving them from the countryside. The rural population now largely depended on the market and the processed goods produced by the food industry and supplied by the state-controlled market. This process accelerated especially in the late 1960s, with the Cultural Revolution, which coincides with the steep increase of sugar consumption.<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, the regime's insistence on pulling women out of the familial economy and fully employ them either in the collectivist or state sector had an immense impact in transforming the patterns of food consumption. Mothers were not at home anymore and had less time to prepare food for their children. The new forms of employment and the triumph of monetary forms of exchanges in the countryside hugely impacted the consumption patterns of the rural population, which converged to those of the cities—although never being identical. Employment outside of the household of both parents imposed a specific rhythm and direction of the time flow of everyday life. Now, it was the state bureaucracy that determined its rhythms and introduced its own conception and organization of time, something also reflected in the booming of the personal watches bought in the countryside since the 1950s.<sup>100</sup> Working outside of the household forced the

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<sup>98</sup> György Péteri, "Introduction: The Oblique Coordinate Systems of Modern Society," in *Imagining the West*, 1-12. See especially pp. 8 & 12; Péteri, "Nylon Curtain," 113-123.

<sup>99</sup> On the Cultural Revolution in Albania see Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 193-201; *Historia e Partisë së Punës të Shqipërisë* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1981), 387-159; Peter Prifti, "Albania," in *The Communist States in Disarray 1965-1971*, ed. Adam Bromke & Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), 198-220; Nicholas C. Pano, "Albania in the Sixties," in *The Changing Face of Communism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Peter A. Toma (Tucson, AZ: The Arizona University Press, 1970), 245-280.

<sup>100</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1959, Lista 15, d. 65, fl. 17. Report on the role of the consumption cooperatives for rise of culture in the countryside.

peasants to buy the bulk of the commodities in the market, something that transformed their diet. Sugar became a standard staple of everyday feeding. It was not merely used for coffee and sweets but became a critical component for feeding adults and especially children. Kids with a slice of bread overspread with butter and sugar, or sugar and olive oil in hand became one of the most familiar images of socialist Albania, both in urban areas and countryside.

The Albanian communist regime created the context for the penetration of new tastes and patterns of consumption because it reshaped the social fabric of the country. It gave death blows to the old rural communities and forced them to depend on the market. Through the iron fist, Hoxha shattered the closed circle of the producers that consumed their own product. It was not possible anymore for the peasants to control the whole alimentary chain from production to consumption. The communists were the architects of these multilayered and profound transformations, which increased consumption to the point that undermined any effort of the regime to establish the economic self-sufficiency in the principal commodities of everyday use. Sugar gained importance since the 1920s, but the communists made it extremely important for the whole society and not for some specific groups of it.

The extensive use of sugar forced the regime, which did not give up from its autarkic dreams, to look for technological solutions, only to see itself caught more and more in the web of international trade and transnational exchanges. The tension between the growing demand for sugar and the regime's drive to autarky transformed Maliq into an intersection of transnational exchanges of ideas, people, and technologies since the interwar era all the way to the collapse of communism. It was the growing pressure from below for sugar and the need to supply the population without giving up from the goal of self-sufficiency that made Maliq an access point to the world. The communist state established a higher degree of social cohesion within the country, created modern consumers, only to see itself obliged to pursue not its agenda but that of the people. When the communist regime did not meet the growing consumption demand of the population, the ALP lost its legitimacy.

This chapter shows that in socialist systems the dynamics of the transnational exchanges were not determined exclusively in and by the state. The dissemination of know-how and technology entangled with the complexity of the domestic social, economic, and cultural transformations that were taking place in Albania. The communist regime accelerated the creation of the modern consumer in Albania, and in turn, the latter forced the state to keep its connection

to the world and importing technologies that produced commodities that responded to the tastes of this new subject. The final result was an energizing process that continuously reinforced itself and put Tirana's authorities in a fragile position vis-à-vis the subjects itself helped to create.

Once created them, the regime could not respond to the needs of these groups that detached from any property depended on the market. Any effort to meet their needs deepened Tirana's dependence from the technologically more advanced North, either on the West or the East of the ideological divide. When we talk about isolationism, we should not look only for people that move across boundaries. Neither should we look merely for the connection of the country with the international railroad system or the bunkers and siege mentality they represented; on whether or not the shops had the same outlook from decades and other impressionistic depictions that constructed the image of stagnation and isolation.<sup>101</sup>

Rather than relying exclusively on the visible signs, the analysis should investigate what takes place behind the façade. We should be careful not to conflate without much investigation the rhetoric, which many times is for public consumption, with the practices that take place behind the scenes. This was especially true for political systems that lacked transparency, like those based on the Soviet model. Thinking in terms of binaries like openness vs. closeness deprives the argument from the grey areas and the nuances of the complexities of social interactions and realities. For this reason, it is better if we approach Tirana's regime policing of the Albanian society and its efforts to reduce unmediated communication with the world at large as an effort to tame and negotiate the transformation of the country. On the other hand, a multitude of unintended consequences created by the many paradoxes that riddled socialist regimes. I think this is not only true for Hoxha's regime, but for all the Soviet bloc as a whole.

During the Cold War era, Albania was the least open European country. However, it was not as isolated as it has generally been thinking. For a country that wanted to modernize, isolation was not an option. Albania was exposed in many invisible ways to influences from the world. The history of Maliq was framed by the constant multilevel and pluri-directional interactions of power relations, social forces, transnational cultural influences and technological exchanges it had to negotiate and domesticate during its forty years of life. This flux of exchanges and cross-border

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<sup>101</sup> Elidor Mëhilli, "States of Insecurity," *The International History Review* 37, 5 (2015): 1051.

movements blurred the boundaries between the national and international, the foreign and domestic; they also differentiate the political rhetoric from practice, while unveil a network of people connected through multiple sinews from the local, to national, and international webs of circulation of knowledge and technology. Maliq's history was shaped by one of the major contradictions of Hoxha's regime: the more it struggled to attain self-sufficiency, the more it was caught into the web of transnational exchanges and interactions.

Maliq was part of the different networks that connected multiple spatial levels, temporal units, ideological actors. It was one of those connecting points between communist Albania and the world, which paradoxically, at the height of Albania's reduction of contacts with the world, it intensified the interactions and exchanges with it. Maliq was a contact point, a border site, a corridor of communication, an intersection between Albania and the world; it also co-produced different myths and taxonomies; became a laboratory of different orders of knowledge, and testing ground for the nationalist and modernizing project of self-sufficiency. In Maliq interconnected many actors, and many other spaces across the ideological specter of a divided Europe. It is a history of variable geometries. It tells us not only the story of Albania, but also that of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, of communism, of the Cold War, of the trans-European and global interactions, and how they affected a corner of the Balkans.

## 6.0 AFTER COMMUNISM: FROM SUGAR TO RUINS

### 6.1 Ruins and the Angel of History

Maliq, communist Albania's capital of sugar, hides behind a screen of vegetation on the west of the highway that links Korça to Tirana. The first thing any visitor sees when they enter the town is what remains of the sugar refinery. In the north of the inhabited areas, on the right side of the street, fenced by a wall are roofless buildings, walls of red bricks, plastered and painted in yellow, vast rounded storage tanks that held molasses, and a large concrete smokestack. These are the relics of the only sugar refinery Albania has ever had. The ruins, which look like the bare bones of a carcass, lie motionless. The tall chimney does not emit smoke anymore. Surrounded by yellow dust and the desolated brownish landscape of barren hills, it is quiet and lifeless. Like a grave stele, it reminds the stranger passing by that there, in that place, used to be an industrial complex.

There is no more noise in the empty streets of the combine, just debris of the post-socialist juggernaut. It looks like Klee's *Angelus Novus*, the angel of history that flies with its back toward the future, has fluttered over the sugar refinery of Maliq.<sup>1</sup> Detritus of construction materials—and even fragments of inscriptions—accompany the visitor across the streets of the combine. There is no more activity, no people, and no more sugar, nothing but half-destroyed buildings, the baking sun, and the ceaseless scratching song of the cicadas. In the meantime, the Devoll river keeps flowing indifferent by the side of the industrial ruins, impassive to time and history. The small town, which the communist regime built as an appendix of the refinery, suffers the consequences. With the factory lying in rubbles, Maliq's inhabitants have not many opportunities to make a living. The collapse of socialism meant for them also the end of their old securities, and the future remains uncertain. Adapting to a new world is hard.

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<sup>1</sup> See Walter Benjamin's interpretation of Klee's painting in Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, translated from German, Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 253-264. More specifically pp. 257-258.

A child of socialism, Maliq has been re-marginalized in the age of 21<sup>st</sup>-century global capitalism. Shielded by the wall of trees, the town remains a pocket outside the stream of movements of people and capital that relentlessly buzzes along the highway. The fate of Maliq and its refinery is not unique. Albania has plenty of similar towns that the communist regime of Tirana built from scratch. Kukës, Poliçan, Patos, Selenicë, Memaliaj, Milot, Rubik, Gramsh, Ballsh, Cërrik, Laç, and Rrëshen, to mention some. These towns, built around now closed single-industries, fill the space of today's Albania like a dense constellation of despair, pessimism, acute social problems, poverty, and mass emigration.

Post-socialist Albania has attracted more attention for its bunkers that shunned it from the world, than for its factories and industries that connected it to the broader world. At the center of attention are the differences rather than the commonalities. Maliq's fate, on the other hand, replicates that of tens of the hundreds of industrial establishments and towns across the socialist world. The space from Kamchatka to Adriatic is not unified only by the socialist past, as reflected in the standard urban designs, five-stories apartment buildings, and the materials of constructions.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of the local specificities, the countries of this immense space share also many historical similarities in the post-socialist era. The ruins of abandoned factories and mills that fill the entire area once dominated for half a century by socialist systems compose one of the most conspicuous features of the post-socialist landscape.

Akarmara, Pyramiden, Kadykchan, Ugolny Ruchei, Alykel, Norilsk, Vorkuta, and Anadyr are only some of the hundreds of dying industrial towns scattered across Russia. Empty factories and crippled industrial centers, from Elsterberg in East Germany to Pernik and Vidin, in Bulgaria, or Anina Noua, Brad, and Petrlia in Romania, are shadows of what they used to be 30 years ago, fill the map of east and central Europe.<sup>3</sup> Once symbols of socialist industrialization, now these

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<sup>2</sup> See the argument of Stephen Kotkin on the unity of material culture the Soviet phenomenon established across the Eurasian space in Stephen Kotkin, "Mongol Commonwealth? Exchange and Governance Across the Post-Mongol Space," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8, 3 (2007): 487-531, especially pp. 520-526.

<sup>3</sup> On East Germany, Fabienne Hurst, "Rust in Peace: East Germany's Forgotten Factories," in <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/industrial-ruins-forgotten-factories-of-former-east-germany-a894061.html>, accessed on April 12, 2013. On Bulgaria, see "Industrial Ruins" of Johann Brandstätter, in <https://johannbrandstatter.wordpress.com/category/industrial-ruins-in-bulgaria/>, accessed on January 10, 2019; "Urban Exploration: Inside the Ruins of Soviet-Era Glass Factory," in <http://www.thebohemianblog.com/2012/05/urban-exploration-soviet-glass-factory-bulgaria.html>, accessed May 25, 2012; Nicole Crowder, "The Steep decline of Bulgaria's Population in its Post-Socialist Era," in <https://www.washington-post.com/news/in-sight/wp/2014/11/10/the-steepdecline-of-bulgariaspo->

towns are going through the gradual death that followed the collapse of communism or the radical shrinking of their industries. The communities, which activity spun around these factories, have paid a heavy toll. The litter and rust mark the decline of the industrial areas in the aftermath of socialism's collapse in many of the countries of eastern Europe. While it is true that there are post-socialist success stories in this region, with thriving industries, the truth is that a good part of the industrial establishments closed down. The dystopian images of the urban, industrial, environmental, and social ruin represent the end of an era and the tectonic shift that accompanied the crossing of the threshold into another age.<sup>4</sup>

The images of ruin of Maliq the sugar refinery do not characterize the ex-socialist countries alone, but they dot western Europe and North America, too. The social devastation is similar, as well. Christopher Barzak, in his short story on Youngstown, Ohio, expresses very well the tension between past, future, and present that has caught all the ex-industrial communities. It encapsulates

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[pulation-in-the post-soviet-era/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.5ce4f6753b66](https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2015/09/relics-romania-communist-industrial150914135305469.html), accessed November 10, 2014. On Romania see Ioana Moldovan, "Relics of Romania's Communist Industrial Past," in <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2015/09/relics-romania-communist-industrial150914135305469.html>, accessed on September 20, 2015; Bianca-Olivia Nita, "Photos Look at Romania's Communist-Built Industrial Communities," in <https://www.featureshoot.com/2015/02/photos-look-at-romania-communist-built-industrial-communities/>, accessed February 2, 2015; Sam Goff, Ioana Cirling, & Marin Raica, "Closed for Business: Images from the Graveyard of Romanian Industry," in <https://www.calvertjournal.com/features/show/5051/Closed-for-business-graveyard-Romanian-industry-monotown-cirilig-raica>, accessed on January 10, 2019. On Russia see the BBC's reportage "Akarmara, Abkhazia: Forgotten Soviet-era ghost town," in <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-45825630/akarmara-abkhazia-forgotten-soviet-era-ghost-town>, accessed October 30, 2018; The National Geographic's documentary on Pyramiden, "Take a Tour of a Soviet-Era Ghost Town at the Edge of the World," in <https://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/short-film-showcase/00000159-74e5-dd10-a5db-f6f54ca80000>, accessed January 10, 2019; The CNN's reportage, "Abandoned for 20 years, this Russian ghost town now hosts a unique performance," in <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/svalbard-russian-ghost-town/index.html>, accessed November 13, 2018. On Kadykchan, Jenny Norton, "The Town that Disappeared," [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idsht/the\\_town\\_that\\_disappeared](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idsht/the_town_that_disappeared), accessed on December 18, 2017; The BBC's documentary "Russia's Ghost Towns," in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8seCgriOE>, accessed on April 16, 2018. On Norilsk, Andrew Higgins, "The Lure of a Better Life, Amid Cold and Darkness," in <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/03/world/europe/norilsk-arctic.html>, accessed, December 3, 2017. On Vorkuta see the short documentary of Radio Free Europe "Russia's Shrinking Arctic City," <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-vorkuta-mines/29187329.html>, accessed August 23, 2018; "The Last Town in Sovietland—in Pictures," in <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2018/apr/18/the-last-town-in-soviet-land-vorkuta-russia-tomeu-coll-in-pictures>, accessed on January 10, 2019; Alan Taylor, "Photos of Abandoned Russia," <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/08/photos-of-abandoned-russia/566984/>, accessed, August 7, 2018; The reportage of NBC "A Look at One of Russia's Thousands of 'Ghost Villages'," in <https://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/video/a-look-at-one-of-russia-s-thousands-of-ghost-villages965087299704>, accessed, June 11, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> On the definition of the de-industrialized areas of eastern Europe as dystopian see Eagle Glassheim, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment, and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016).

the disruption that the closing of the mills has caused to the fabric of their social life. Similarly to Klee's *Angelus Novus*, Barzak states in his short story that he moves through time with his back to the future, and the wind of the motion blows his hair toward the past.<sup>5</sup> While these communities move blindly toward the unknown future, they know for sure what they used to be in the past. The latter is the only stable reference point, against the uncertain present and future.

Since 1911, Georg Simmel used ruins as lenses for an understanding of history. Based on the Hegelian dialectic of history as the spirit of the world, which struggled with Nature, its antithesis, Simmel saw in ruins the synthesis. According to him, the rubble is the point where nature and human civilization entered into symbiosis.<sup>6</sup> In other words, ruins were the markers of what history's progress left behind. During the interwar era, Walter Benjamin paid due attention to the rubble, which he considered as symbols of historical decadence.<sup>7</sup> The European and global economic crises of the interwar period convinced the German philosopher that the ruins were indeed an outcome of capitalism's cyclical destructions, which debunked its supporters' claims of linear progress. Capitalism's destructive need for innovation left behind heaps of wreckage, thus making the yesterday look ancient. Benjamin's analysis has been central to the study of deindustrialization and its social impact.<sup>8</sup>

So far, many scholars have used the ruins as a lens for exploring the link between capitalism's "creative destruction" and the way it has affected the industrial communities. Students have focused mainly on the American and British Rust Belts, two of the areas that have been hit hardest by the outsourcing and closing of their industries.<sup>9</sup> However, this has not been the case in

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Barzak, "The B&O, Crossroads of Time and Space," *Muse*, 1 (2011): 6.

<sup>6</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Ruin," translated from German, David Kettler, *Hudson Review* 11, 3 (1958): 379-385.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Ruin," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, translated from German, Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA & London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 179-186.

<sup>8</sup> Caitlin DeSlivey & Tim Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," *Progress in Human Geography* 37, 4 (2013): 468.

<sup>9</sup> The literature on the deindustrialization is vast. I would single out *Industrial Heritage and Regional Identities*, ed. Christian Wicke, Stefan Berger, & Joana Golmbek (London & New York: Routledge, 2018); *Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, ed. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, & Andrew Perchard (Vancouver-Toronto: UBC Press, 2017); See the forum "Crumbling Cultures," *International Labor and Working-Class*, 84 (2013): 1-153; Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Spaces, Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2005); Tim Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23, 6 (2005): 829-849; Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Spaces, Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2005); *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization*, ed. Jefferson Cowie & Joseph Heathcott (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2003).

the study of contemporary Europe, including its ex-socialist eastern regions.<sup>10</sup> The industrial ruins of the socialist era have attracted the attention of some historians, but the amount of work produced is still thin.<sup>11</sup> Many local scholars, who identify socialism as a “non-European” violent rupture of the “natural European” course of the history of their countries, have mainly focused on the interwar era and its modernist legacies, which they consider as European.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, they have not found the industrial ruins of the socialist era as part of the broader global modernist legacy of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century.

But it is legitimate to ask what these industrial wastes tell us about the post-socialist transition from planned to market economies? Is there any connection between the abandonment of old industrial complexes across the western and eastern European countries? The cultural theorist, Svetlana Boym, has suggested that the derelicts are remnants and reminders.<sup>13</sup> While the historian Peter Fritzsche has argued that although dilapidated, ruins are not obsolescent. He considered them as texts for constructing alternative historical trajectories.<sup>14</sup> What exactly the industrial ruins and devastated communities across Eurasia are remains and reminders of? How they help us to understand better and write an alternative history of post-socialist societies? In this chapter, I will try to answer these questions by looking at the wrecks of Maliq’s factory as part of a broader history of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century that transcends the ontological capitalist-socialist divide. The rubble of the sugar refinery shows that the economic organization and the function it played, are

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<sup>10</sup> Stefan Berger & Christian Wicke, “Deindustrialization, Heritage, and Representations of Identity,” *The Public Historian* 39, 4 (2017): 10.

<sup>11</sup> Györgyi Németh, “Contested Heritage and Regional Identity in the Borsod Industrial Area in Hungary,” *Industrial Heritage and Regional Identities*, 95-118; David Kideckel, “Identity and Mining Heritage in Romania’s Jiu Valley Coal Region: Commodification, Alienation, Renaissance,” *Ibid*, 119-135; David Kideckel, “Coal Power: Class, Fetishism, Memory and Disjuncture in Romania’s Jiu Valley and Appalachian West Virginia,” *Rivista dell’Associazione Nazionale Universitaria Antropologi Culturali* 7, 1 (2018): 67-88; Ilinca Paun Constantinescu, Dragos Dascalu, & Cristina Sucala, “An Activist Perspective on Industrial Heritage in Petritia, a Romanian Mining City,” *The Public Historian* 39, 4 (2017): 114-141; Anca Pusca, “Industrial and Human Ruins of Postcommunist Europe,” *Space and Culture* 13, 3 (2010): 239-255; See also the forum “Ruins and Russian Culture,” in *Slavic Review* 65, 4 (2006). Of especial importance are the articles of Andreas Schönle, “Ruins and History: Observations on Russian Approaches to Destruction and Decay,” *Ibid*, 649-669; and Thomas Lahusen, “Decay or Endurance? The Ruins of Socialism,” *Ibid*, 736-746.

<sup>12</sup> See for example the analysis on Romania of Oana Tiganea, “Modern Industrial Heritage in Romania: Extending the Boundaries to Protect the Past,” *Docomomo* 49, 2 (2013): 82-85

<sup>13</sup> Svetlana Boym, “Ruinophilia,” in *The Off-Modern* (New York-London: Bloomsberry, 2017), 43-48.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Fritzsche, “The Ruins of Modernity,” in *Breaking Up Time: Negotiating the borders Between Present, Past and Future*, ed. Chris Lorenz & Berber Beverange (Göttingen & Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 64.

not in place anymore. The networks it was part of, have now shifted, and national borders and fixed capital have lost the importance they used to have until the end of the last century.

## 6.2 Building a Regional Economic Web

To understand the social impact of the closing of the sugar factory, first, it is essential to analyze its importance for the communities of Maliq. As explained in the second and fourth chapters, the refinery was part of a broader national and transnational networks of exchange that linked the region of Korça to Albania and Europe. The combine also was at the center of a regional web of economic units that ranged from coal mines to agriculture farms, and other light industry plants, especially those for the processing of fruits.<sup>15</sup> All these enterprises both supplied the refinery or were furnished by it. Because of its regional and national importance from its establishment in 1951 to the moment of its collapse, the communist regime transformed the refinery into the largest integrated industrial complex in the country. The combine's expansion fostered the consequent modernization and improvement of the other supporting economies, and its efficiency allowed the smooth operation of the sugar processing. As a result, Maliq and all the economic enterprises linked to sugar production remained sites where the communist state continuously invested fixed capital.

During the five months of its operation starting in October, 1951, it processed 600 tons of sugar beet a day. A small factory attached to the refinery processed the pulp of sugar between and produced 32 tons of fodder per day. The industrial establishment also had a thermal power plant (TPP) capable of generating 3000 kW per hour, and a machine shop for the annual maintenance of the refinery. With the constant increase of per capita consumption of the demographic growth, by the end of the decade, the regime decided to expand both the refinery's output and the range of items that it processed. In 1959, the refinery underwent a general reconstruction, which augmented

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<sup>15</sup> Astrit Kallfa, *Arritje dhe probleme të ngushtimit të dallimeve thelbësore ndërmjet qytetit dhe fshatit* (Tirana: Universiteti i Tiranës, 1984), 52-53.

the power of the TPP to 7000 kW/h, the processing volume of the refinery to 900 tons of sugar beet per day, and that of dry pulp to 64 tons per 24 hours. It also added to the inventory of the “November 8<sup>th</sup>” two other workshops: one for the production of leaven, which supplied the bakeries of the major cities of the country, and another for the production of carbonic gas, used for refreshing drinks.<sup>16</sup> The original project of the refinery also included an alcohol factory, which initially remained on paper because of the lack of the necessary funds. The growing demand for drinks and the lucrative profits it could generate pushed the administration of the refinery to press the government to start its construction as soon as possible. Although the directory of “November 8<sup>th</sup>” asked the beginning of works by 1958, the factory’s building, which capacity was 100 hectoliters/day, started in 1959-1960. In 1971, the combine added to its list of production centers, also a starch factory with a processing capacity of 10 tons in 24 hours.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1970s, the combine connected with the plain of Maliq through another important project—the Bovine Breeding Enterprise. The Ministry of Agriculture decided to establish in Maliq a specialized farm, with a capacity of 5000 cows, which would help the government to fix the meat deficit it was facing due to the population growth. The State Plan Commission argued that the construction in proximity to the sugar combine was necessary because 70% of bovines’ food was composed of the dry pulps of the sugar beet. This type of fodder lost its nutrition values during transportation. So, the solution was to construct a bovine complex close to the combine. The collective farms would supply the bovine farm with the remaining 30% of fodder.

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<sup>16</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1981, d. 41, fl. 13-15. Lecture on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the sugar combine “November 8<sup>th</sup>.” October 26, 1981; AQSh, F. 496, Ministria e Industrisë dhe Minierave, 1972, d. 447, fl. 2. A study of the sugar combine “November 8<sup>th</sup>” February 16, 1972.

<sup>17</sup> On the maximum yielding, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1957, d. 857, fl. 9. Memo on the condition of the productions of the sugar combine of Maliq; On the average yielding of the farms located in the plain of Maliq, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1977, d. 711, fl. 36. Report of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the ALP’s Central Committee on the concentration and intensification of the cultivation of sugar beet in the district of Korça. April 6, 1977. The average of yielding of sugar beet in the plain of Koça was 36.5 tons per hectare, but it was lowered by the yielding from other areas of the district that had less fertile and adequate soil for sugar beet. For more, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1977, d. 361, fl. 39. Memo of the Council of Ministers on the increase of production of sugar beet through the simultaneous increase of yielding and area under cultivation. June 4, 1977. On the building of the alcohol factory in 1959-1960, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1981, d. 41, fl. 13-15. Lecture on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the sugar combine “November 8<sup>th</sup>.” October 26, 1981. Regarding the building of the leaven factory, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1983, d. 14, fl. 10. Study of a group of specialists of the sugar combine of Maliq regarding the necessity of building a new sugar factory for procuring the needs of the country for the years 1986-1990. August 1983. On the inventory of the combine in 1970s, AShV Korçë, F. 3/2, Komiteti i PPSH Rrethi Korçë, 1961, Lista 27, d. 23, fl. 79. Memo on the perspectives of the sugar combine of Maliq.

In turn, the farms of the area Maliq were going to use cattle's organic fertilizer to increase the productivity of the arable land of the plain.<sup>18</sup> As it came out later, the study had many flaws, and the combine could supply only 30% of the needs of the farm, which sought fodder in other regions, thus increasing the costs of production considerably. To fix the shortcomings of supply, in the late 1970s, the government further expanded the production capacity of the factory of dry pulp. Updating the industrial unit with new technology to enrich the fodder with urea, so to increase its nutrition values by 40%. By this time, the authorities also started building a mechanical transporter for the fodder, which connected the combine to the bovine farm.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1970s, the increasing yields of the farms of the plain of Maliq created bottlenecks in the combine. The use of extra fertilizers and the allocation of more tractors and water sprinklers than anticipated to the farms of the plain of Maliq gave extraordinary results.<sup>20</sup> In the late 1970s, the farms of the plain yielded between 50 and 70 tons of sugar beet per hectare, far exceeding the processing capacities of the combine. As a result, the combine stored the sugar beet for longer than optimal periods, and during this time the beets lost considerable amounts of their sucrose content. The lack of capacities of the refinery pressed the farms not to pluck the beets, which lost their proprieties from the freezing temperatures or rainfalls. The directorate of the refinery asked the government for a new round of reconstructions and expansion of capacities. To support its demands, it estimated that the state lost every year 4500 tons of sugar because of the combine's

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<sup>18</sup> AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1974, d. 28, fl. 7-10. Memo concerning the construction of the establishment for the breeding of bovine next to the sugar combine of Maliq; AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1974, d. 817, fl. 45-48. Memo concerning the construction of the establishment for the breeding of bovine next to the sugar combine of Maliq.

<sup>19</sup> On the enriching of the dry pulp with urea, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1979, d. 180, fl. 1-9. Correspondence between the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Food and Light Industry, Ministry of Construction, State Plan Commission, etc. for the construction of a new line of production of sugar beet's dry pulp enriched with urea. March-July 1979. On the mechanical transporter between the dry pulp factory and the bovine farm, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1979, d. 181, fl. 1-7. Correspondence between the Ministry of Light and Food Industry, Ministry of Industry and Mines and the executive committees of Vlora and Korça regarding the production of the necessary mechanisms for the building of the mechanic transporter of the dry pulps that will connect the sugar combine with the cattle farm of Maliq. April-June 1979.

<sup>20</sup> On the assignment of 3000 tons of extra fertilizers, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1977, d. 711, fl. 37-38. Report of the Ministry of Agriculture sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the concentration and intensification of the cultivation of sugar beet in the district of Korça. April 6, 1977. On the allocation of 80 extra tractors, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1977, d. 74, fl. 27. Decision of the Council of Ministers on the expansion of the sugar factory and the thermal power station of Maliq. April 8, 1977; On the assignment of 85 extra sprinklers, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1978, d. 9, fl. 14. Info on the work and measures taken in the districts of Korça and Pogradec for the fulfillment of the state plan for the cultivation and collection of the sugar beet. April 6, 1978.

limited processing capabilities.<sup>21</sup> According to the memo prepared from the sugar combine of Maliq on April 28, 1976, the doubling of the processing capacity of the industrial complex would limit the losses to only 3% of the total output, or 460 tons. The government wanted to build a new refinery in the plain of Thumanë located north of Tirana. Until the end of WWII, a large bog covered this plain. After reclaiming it, the communist regime was trying to make it economically useful, and the development in this reclaimed plain of sugar industry had many supporters in Tirana. A new industrial complex would have been more efficient than rehauling the older refinery. However, financial constraints, in addition to the soil quality of the plain of Thumanë, which was not very suitable for the cultivation of sugar beet, forced the government to approve Maliq's proposal.<sup>22</sup>

The regime's empty coffers, the growing price of sugar in the international market, and the increasing domestic consumption induced Tirana to hear Maliq's voice. Actually, after discussions that involved even specialists and workers of the combine, the directorate of the "November 8<sup>th</sup>" came up with concrete proposals to deal with a situation that had a national impact. Maliq answered to concerns of the central authorities and provided them with solutions. It argued that the combine had the necessary space, the existing infrastructure, water, coal supply, and the specialized workforce. The reconstruction expanded not only the production volume of the refinery alone, but also that of the factories of the carbonic gas, starch, and alcohol.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> On the yielding of the farms of the plain of Maliq, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1979, d. 133, fl. 2-3. Analysis of the State Plan Commission sent to the Council of Ministers concerning the results of the production of sugar beet for the year 1979. January 31, 1980. On the extended periods that the refinery conserved sugar beet, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1976, d. 73, fl. 3-4. Memo of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Light and Food Industry on the price of sugar beet. January 3, 1976. On the yearly sugar losses, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1975, d. 2, fl. 2-3. Memo on the reconstruction of the sugar factory of Maliq. March 29, 1975.

<sup>22</sup> The argument concerning the diminishing of losses from the expansion of the combine, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1976, d. 198, fl. 28-34. General consideration on the main technical and economic indicators of the sugar combine of Maliq. On the financial constrain of the regime and the decision to expand Maliq's combine, AQSh, F. 495, Komisioni i Planit të Shtetit, 1974, d. 20, fl. 31. Memo on the increase of the domestic production of sugar.

<sup>23</sup> On the involvement of workers and specialists of the Maliq's combine in the discussion about the potential expansion of "November 8<sup>th</sup>," AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1975, d. 2, fl. 7-8. Memo on the reconstruction of the sugar factory of Maliq. December 27, 1975. On the arguments of the directory of "November 8<sup>th</sup>" regarding the expansion of the combine, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1973, d. 150, fl. 3-7. Memo of the Directory of the sugar combine "November 8<sup>th</sup>" of Maliq, sent to the Ministry of Light Industry regarding the expansion of the processing capacities of the sugar combine from 1100 tons to 1500 tons of sugar beet per day. September 10, 1973. On the reconstruction of the factories of the combine, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e

However, the combine's expansion in 1978 did not fix the problem of losses, though, which were not limited to sugar alone but to all the range of goods the combine processed. The combination of inadequate conservation and spillages during the processing caused an everyday loss of 370 tons of sugar a day, for a total of 5000 tons a year. A debate over the causes of the losses ensued. According to the inspectors of the Ministry of Light and Food Industry, the main reason was the low calorific power of the coal that the refinery's TPP (thermal power plant) used for its turbines. The thermal power plant used the coal extracted from different mines of the region of Korça, some of them located only a few kilometers away from Maliq. The problem was that their coal was not of a good quality, which was a matter of grave concern, because its low calorific power undermined the whole process of sugar extraction and generated losses. For the factory to work, required fuel with a calorific power of 8000 kc/kg, while the coal of the mine of Mborje-Drenova, one of the principal suppliers of the refinery, emitted only 6600 kc/kg. The low quality asked more coal, which created then, the problem with supply. The lack of suitable fuel, which would produce enough heat to process sugar effectively, also paralyzed the production of animal fodder from sugar beet, causing losses to the agricultural economies.<sup>24</sup>

Another problem was also the primitive working conditions in the coal mines of the district of Korça. Many times, the fuel arrived to the combine containing moisture, decreasing further its calorific power, and lowered the quality of sugar. Since the 1950s, the directory of the refinery asked the government to take the necessary measures to improve the working conditions of these

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Industriisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1979, d. 164, fl. 5. Salute of the Minister of the Light and Food Industry, Kristaq Dollaku, in the occasion of the completion of the reconstruction of the sugar combine of Maliq. November 5, 1979.

<sup>24</sup> On the continuation of the losses after the expansion of the combine, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1984, d. 20, fl. 20. Memo of the directory of sugar combine of Maliq regarding the fulfillment of the tasks of the first semester of the year 1984. June 22, 1984. On the losses 5000 tons of sugar a year, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1984, d. 511, fl. 20. Study of the State Planning Commission sent to the Council of Ministers on the needs of the country's population for fats, sugar, and cotton and for the potentials to meet them through the increase of intensification of agriculture. March 20, 1984. On the low calorific power of the coal, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industriisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, 1983, d. 132, fl. 3 & 15. Info on the conclusion of the collection and processing season of sugar beet for the year 1982-1983. May 7, 1983. On the losses that caused the low calorific power of coal, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1953, d. 468, fl. 22-23. Memo on the situation of coal in the sugar factory Maliq-Korça. August 11, 1953. On the calorific power of the coal of the region of Korça and the problems the need for increasing supply caused, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industriisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, 1983, d. 132, fl. 15. Info on the conclusion of the collection and processing season of sugar beet for the year 1982-1983. On the problems that the low quality of coal caused to the processing of fodder, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit Maliq, 1954, d. 4, fl. 3. Memo on the financial condition of the sugar combine of Maliq.

mines, modernize them, and increase their extractive capacities to fulfill the needs of Albania's only sugar factory. Factory's management asked the Prime Ministry to equip the mines with more wagons and the construction of elevators. The directory of Maliq asked the replacement of the human muscles used for dragging the wagons with horses. It was not the love of its workers, but the need for higher results that pressed them to make such requests. It was also for the sake of productivity that the administration of the sugar combine asked the government to accelerate work's pace and leap from two to three shifts. It did not take long before the Prime Ministry ordered the fulfillment of these requests.<sup>25</sup>

The expansion of the combine in the 1960s and 1970s increased the need for coal. Besides, the low quality of fuel of the district of Korça further increased the demand for more fuel. As a consequence, many mines of the region entered into the orbit of the refinery of Maliq. Still, the problem of coal's low calorific power remained the Achilles heel of the refinery. To fix it, the government ordered the supply of the factory with coal from mines outside the region, but it created enormous problems for the transportation and supply. In such circumstances, the government decided in the late 1980s to build in Maliq a factory for enriching the local coal.<sup>26</sup>

The investments in communist Albania's sugarland did not end with the expansion of the combine's TPP and the enriching of the fossil fuels it used. Since the early 1980s, it occurred a shift in the regime's economic priorities. In the last decade of the communist era, Tirana siphoned the bulk of its resources in the light industry and agriculture.<sup>27</sup> It is not an accident that this U-turn

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<sup>25</sup> On the coal with humidity, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit Maliqit, 1953, d. 6, fl. 2. Memo on the extra-accountable costs of sugar for December and the year; On the lobbying of the directory of the sugar combine to modernize and accelerate the pace of work in the mines that supplied it with fuel, AQSh, F. 14/AP (STR), 1953, d. 468, fl. 22-23. Memo on the situation of coal in the sugar factory Maliq-Korça. August 11, 1953. On the decision of the government to fulfill the sugar combine's requests, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1953, d. 686, fl. 1-2. Order of the Council of Ministers "On the measures to assuring the realization of the of coal plan from the mine of Mbroje-Drenova and the supply of the sugar factory of Maliq with coal." July 23, 1953.

<sup>26</sup> On the supply of the combine of Maliq from new mines, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1976, d. 197, fl. 23-24. Memo regarding the expansion of the TPP of the sugar combine of Maliq after its reconstruction. June 11, 1976; on the low quality of coal, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë Ushqimore, 1976, d. 198, fl. 34. General consideration on the main technical and economic indicators of the sugar combine of Maliq; On the supply from mines located outside of the region of Korça, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, 1983, d. 132, fl. 4. Info on the collection and processing of sugar beet up to October 24, 1983; On the decision to build a factory for enriching coal, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1988, d. 400, fl. 4. Memo of the ministry of Energy sent to the Council of Ministers on the site of dumping of the ashes of the TPP of Maliq.

<sup>27</sup> For more on this shift that took place in the 1980s, Raymond Hutchings, "Albanian Industrialization: Widening Divergence from Stalinism," in *Industrialisierung und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Südosteuropa*, ed Roland

took place after the break with China in 1978. Once Albania lost Beijing's financial support, Tirana's communist regime focused more on the intensification and increasing productivity of those economic sectors that would fix the food and fiber problems that the country was facing. This explains why in its toughest financial years, the regime kept investing in Maliq.

It was within this context that in 1982, the directory of the combine raised the bar and asked for another round of reconstruction, which would expand its processing capacities from 2000 to 3000 tons of sugar beet/24 hours. The director of the sugar combine, Llazar Plasa, argued to the Executive Committee of Korça that such volume of production would reduce the time of the processing of the sugar beets to only 100 days. Such a step, according to the combine's director, would save much of the wasted sugar from the long conservation of sugar beet, or its precocious plucking.<sup>28</sup> The specialists of the combine couched the proposal they addressed the government, in the language of regionalization. They argued that the region would specialize in the production of sugar by concentrating there the whole process, from planting to processing and preparation for the market. Such an alternative aligned with the directives of the Central Committee for concentration and specialization of agriculture and industry. This proposal found strong support even in the Ministry of Light Industry and Food, where the specialists considered the increasing capacities of the refinery as the only solution to the losses. By 1984 the Ministry decided to expand the processing capacities of the combine, designating 1987 as the year to start the project.<sup>29</sup> The lack of capital and the final demise of the regime left the project on paper.

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Schönfeld (München: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1989), 109-124. On the allocation of the resources on heavy industry from the 1950s to 1970s, see Adi Schnytzer, *Stalinist Economic Strategy in Practice: The Case of Albania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>28</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1982, d. 6, fl. 1-3. Memo for the expansion of processing capacity of the sugar combin to 3000 tons of sugar beet per day. September 17, 1982; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1983, d. 3, fl. 34-35. Study of a group of specialists of the sugar combine of Maliq sent to the Executive Committee of Korça regarding the meeting of the needs of the country with sugar through the increase of the processing capacity of the combine and building of a new sugar factory in Korça. November 30, 1983.

<sup>29</sup> On the letter sent to the government, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, 1983, d. 3, fl. 38-43. Study of a group of specialists of the sugar combine of Maliq sent to the Executive Committee of Korça regarding the meeting of the needs of the country with sugar through the increase of the processing capacity of the combine and building of a new sugar factory in Korça. November 30, 1983. On the support that the letter found in the Ministry of light Industry, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, 1983, d. 133, fl. 31. Report of Shaqir Prizreni regarding the situation and measures for increasing the radius of sugar from beets; AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, 1985, d. 7, fl. 17. Minutes of the meeting of the College of the ministry of Light and Food Industry on the problem of the losses of the sugar combine of Maliq. June 29, 1985. On the decision to begin the works in

There were also other projects, which aimed at increasing the efficiency of the sugar industry and other sectors related to it. It is important to note that in its final years, the regime was very active in taking measures and initiatives to deal with the challenges communist Albania was going through. It was not a passive or apathetic gerontocratic state, deprived of responses, energy, or imagination. In the last decade of its existence, the ALP's regime had not lost belief in the future. On the contrary, the 1980s were a decade of uncommon debates, ideas, and projects, with unusual involvement of specialists into conversation with the political power to provide viable alternatives. There was still hope and belief that socialism was a feasible alternative. And indeed, despite the deep economic crises and the apparent paralysis, the regime and the whole apparatus of specialists and technocrats were generating numerous projects to rejuvenate the economy and make it more productive and efficient. The regime kept believing in the future and planning for it. The last decade of the communist era was less heroic than the first years of socialist construction; there was no mud and water to reclaim, there were no mass mobilizations, and no red tapes to cut. Nevertheless, there was no lack of dynamism. There was no shortage of ideas or flexibility in the allocation of resources.

The government started to study the construction of decauville rail system across the plain of Korça and the Devoll, which would allow the smooth supply of the combine with fuel and raw material. The central and local authorities had been toying with this plan since the late 1970s when the increased yields and lack of trucks exposed the problem of transportation of sugar beet from the collecting centers to the combine. In the 1980s, the project re-emerged again with new vigor. It was divided into four stages and anticipated the building of multiple lines for a total length of 120 kilometers. This dense network would crisscross the entire plain and connect Maliq with the local mines and the damping field of Goçë, some kilometers on the west of Maliq, in the highland of Gora. The project of infrastructural improvement also included lines for the mechanical transportation of the dry pulp between the bovine farm and factory, as well as the mechanized loaders for the sugar beet in the collection centers.<sup>30</sup>

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1987, AQSh, F. 497, Ministria e Industrisë së Lehtë dhe Ushqimore, 1984, d. 15, fl. 3. Memo of the Ministry of Light and Food Industry in relation to some measures for a better management of sugar and its byproducts.

<sup>30</sup> On the building of a decauville, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1987, d. 670, fl. 23-29. Study of the specialist of the Prime Ministry regarding the profitability of the use of decauvilles in the state farms of Maliq, “November 29<sup>th</sup>”

Maliq's case of continuous renovation and investment in fixed capitals fit into the pattern that Robert Allen explained occurred in the industrial investments in the Soviet Union during the two last decades of its existence. In his analyses, Allen argues that Moscow's allocation of resources to the reconstruction of old plants proved to be disastrous for its economy because it wasted capital for little gain. It was precisely what the large US corporations, with the federal government's consent, did not do with the Rust Belt. The USSR's rival shut down the old plants in the American industrial heartland and focused on new high-profit investments.<sup>31</sup> Allen, though, does not count the simple fact that the socialist countries did not have the financial resources of the western European market economies. For the USSR and its allies, it was more comfortable trying to improve what the industries they had rather than investing in new directions.

Allen, like most of the economists, leaves out of his analysis the social impact of these huge shifts. Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott have rightly criticized the neutral or optimistic terms the economists use, like "downsizing," "restructuring," or "creative destruction." They suggest that these metaphors neglect the toll the abandonment of the old industries has had on many communities.<sup>32</sup> This reorientation of the flows of capital in the United States marked deep transformations in the networks of investments, production, and consumption, which gave many American firms the flexibility to extract profits in increasingly competitive markets. The adaptation of the businesses to the new evolving circumstances came with a price, though.

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in Lushnja, and Thumana. June 29, 1987. On the designation of an area close to the village of Goçë as the site of dumping for the ashes of the TPP of Maliq and Korça, see: AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1988, d. 400, fl. 2-14. Correspondence, memos of the Ministry of Energy and Council of Ministers for the designation of an area of 10.7 hectares in the village of Goçë as a dumping for the ashes of the TPP of Maliq and Korça. October 10-November 16, 1988. On the problem of transportation of sugar beet, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1977, d. 352, fl. 20-21. Info sent to the ALP's Central Committee on the situation of yielding of sugar beet in the district of Korça. February 3, 1977. On the project of the 1970s for the building of a local network of railroads, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1977, d. 345, fl. 138. Memo on the estimation of the external facilities that are going to be built in the sugar factory of Maliq. On the emergence of the project of railroads in the 1980s, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1987, d. 670, fl. 34-39. Memo on the study of the specialist of the Prime Ministry regarding the construction of railway for decauvilles in the plain of Korça and Devoll. On the mechanical loading and unloading of sugar beet in the collection centers, AQSh, F. 490, Këshilli i Ministrave, 1978, d. 379, fl. 141. Info on the implementation of the decision of the ALP's Central Committee regarding the measures for the fulfillment and exceeding of the quota of the state plan for the cultivation of sugar beet and cotton. August 19, 1978.

<sup>31</sup> On Allen's argument of the reconstruction of the old plants, Robert C. Allen, *Farm to Factory: A Reinterpretation of the Soviet Industrial Revolution* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 189-211.

<sup>32</sup> Jefferson Cowie & Joseph Heathcott, "Introduction: The Meanings of Deindustrialization," in *Beyond the Ruins*, 1.

Foremost, it signaled the end of the New Deal's arrangements between labor and investments in fixed capital, bringing to an end the illusion of capitalism's permanent stability.

The Soviet-type socio-economic systems tried to fix capitalism's "creative destruction," and its drive to melt everything solid in the air, as Marx put it. The communist regimes subordinated the economic logic to the political and ideological dictates—another factor that Allen's analysis does not take into account. However, the economic policies of the peoples' democracies were not an isolated phenomenon that did take place only in the socialist oikumene. Instead, they were part of the broader interwar era critique of capitalism's constant mutability and the acute social tensions and inequalities it engendered. The New Deal, the welfare states, the economic policies of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, all aimed at taming the free market and establish the necessary stability to preserve the social cohesion needed for the nations not to fall apart. The socialist regimes represented the most extreme version of a broader global anti-free market tide that had risen since the interwar era and refused to change approach to economic stagnation. Ideological dogmatism came with the price of lack of adaptability to new, unanticipated junctures. By the 1970s and 1980s, many industries in the socialist countries had entered into a permanent crisis of inefficiency. From the economic point of view, from assets, they became liabilities. However, because the political imperatives overshadowed the financial ones, the socialist regimes got stuck into a spiral that ended with their final demise.

The same did take place in Maliq. For the Albanian political elites, during both the communist and interwar era, the sugar factory served as an instrument of nation-building. The ALP's leadership kept investing in Maliq to make it efficient and give to its political objectives, economic sustainability. This efficiency, though, depended very much on the state's support and elimination of international competition. Once the post-socialist governments raised the shield of protectionism, the refinery of Maliq remained exposed to the rationality of the free markets, and their principle of efficiency based on profit. With the state retreating from economic intervention, and the nation-state not anymore as the primary platform of development, the combine lost any political function. Once the country opened the gates to the global market forces, all the regional and national economic circuits the sugar combine belonged to collapsed. This process was not limited to Maliq or Albania alone but belonged to a larger story that saw the reshuffling of the economic networks created after the end of WWII, on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The next section will explain with more detail this process and its impact on Maliq.

### 6.3 The Fall of Communism and the Unravelling of the Web

The sugar refinery of Maliq did not long outlive the collapse of communism, and in 1996 it closed forever. Unlike today's EU countries where consumers use mainly beet sugar produced in the European Union, Albanians sweeten their coffees and prepare their pastries with cane sugar imported from Brazil, Columbia, and Panama. The fall of communism in Albania marked the end of the consumption of beet sugar. In the other ex-socialist countries of eastern Europe, though, the sugar refineries survived for another decade. The protectionist policies of the post-socialist governments, and especially the EU shield of hefty subsidies for all the sugar producers and the opening of its market for the candidate countries, helped many the sugar producers in eastern Europe. However, this comfortable position did not last long.

In 2006, under pressure for more efficiency, especially after opening its markets to foreign producers and increasing competition, the European Union started the process of restructuring the sugar industries. The EU diminished its subsidies and fixed prices and funneled them only for the principal producers, mainly located in the colder areas of the Baltic and the North Sea areas. The regional specialization of sugar production implemented by the EU—similar to what the ALP did in the context of nation-state—has favored, among the countries of eastern Europe, only Poland. With the latter's exception, which is one of the leading producers of beet sugar in Europe—third behind Germany and France—the restructuring of the EU's sugar industry hit very hard the ex-socialist countries. As soon as exposed to the free market rationality and lack of state protection, many sugar refineries in eastern Europe shut down. Bulgaria and Latvia lost their national sugar industries, and since 2006 they have become net importers, while the bulk of the factories in Hungary, Slovakia, and Lithuania have closed. But the massive closing of sugar factories has also been the case for old members of the EU, like Italy, Portugal, Spain, Denmark, etc.<sup>33</sup>

In Albania, this process started earlier. With the collapse of communism, unraveled the whole economic system it had built for forty-five years. The state ceased to be the driving

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<sup>33</sup> On the EU's sugar industry, "Report of the European Commission's High-Level Group on Sugar," drafted on July 5, 2019. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/plants\\_and\\_plant\\_products/documents/final-report-high-level-group-meeting-sugar.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/plants_and_plant_products/documents/final-report-high-level-group-meeting-sugar.pdf). Last accessed, December 18, 2019.

economic force, and the conceptualization of the nation as a cohesive and organic unit ended abruptly. State-led development fell under the hail of the aggressive critique of the ultra-modernists of market fundamentalism. The borders, which up to that moment were real demarcation lines that carved in space state's sovereignty and the application of national policies, stopped playing that role. With the post-socialist structural and institutional transformations, also collapsed the regional specialization, and unraveled the entire web of local connections that supported spatial differentiation in the realm of production. The breaking of the regional net had another outcome: the dissipation of the agricultural and industrial enterprises.

All post-socialist governments in eastern Europe pursued a market liberalization agenda, which entered the political vocabulary under the name of Shock Therapy. Based on the growing popularity (if not effectiveness) of the policies developed to tackle the hyper-inflation crises in Latin America during the 1980s, Shock Therapy sought the elimination of the socialist past. Not too dissimilarly from the communists in the post-WWII years, who declared war against history and tried to erase it, the architects of post-communist transformations aimed at undoing the weight of the past. Obliterating every undesired trace of past, either ethnic, cultural, material, institutional, or economic, has been a constant of the revolutionary changes perpetuated during the 20<sup>th</sup>-century in the countries that populate the area between the Baltic and the Adriatic Sea.

Part of the historical legacy that the post-socialist governments had to wipe out was the state's role in the economy. It was the high tide of the New Right economic policies and their popularity in the United States and Great Britain. The liberal market economies of these two countries provided the hegemonic examples to follow for the westernization of the countries of eastern Europe. Through Shock Therapy, they offered a template of fast track modernization that replaced the Soviet alternative by rejecting any form of state intervention in the economy.<sup>34</sup> As Tessilo Herschel has put it, the American model "became the only show in town."<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, the cooperative market economies, also known as Rhenish capitalism and best represented

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<sup>34</sup> On the neoliberal recipes of Shock Therapy and its implementations see Jacek Kochanowicz, "A Moving Target or a Lost Illusion? East Central Europe in Pursuit of the West in Two Globalization Phases," in *Mastery and Lost Illusions: Space and Time in the Modernization of Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Stanislav Holubec, & Joachim von Puttkamer (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 41-45.

<sup>35</sup> Tassilo Herrschel, *Global Geographies of Post-Socialist Transition: Geographies, Societies, Policies* (London-New York: Routledge, 2007), 59.

by the German model, which highlighted the state's role in coordinating economy, did not appeal much in the first years of the post-socialist era. The goal of Shock Therapy's key ingredients—privatization, liberalization, and the opening of the domestic markets—was to increase economic efficiency.<sup>36</sup> For the post-socialist governments, this recipe meant relinquishing any protectionism or financial support to the commercial and industrial enterprises. Besides, one of the essential components of the transition's treatment was the international trade, which, the architects of the post-socialist economic transformation, considered as one of the primary means that would underpin the radical rejuvenation of the eastern European economies.<sup>37</sup> The restructuring of state policies regarding production and trade exposed the enterprises of the ex-socialist countries to the global market forces without any backing. It was very hard for the groups within the state apparatuses that wanted a more gradualist transformation to make their voice heard, only at the peril of being called communist—something that in the early 1990s, almost everybody tried to avoid. In the aftermath of communism's collapse, the neoliberalism's supporters considered any form of the statist economy as a return to the socialist past.<sup>38</sup> Only in the course of the 1990s, after the bitter experiences of recession, deindustrialization, skyrocketing unemployment, and deterioration of the economic conditions, several post-socialist governments rolled back the state under the banner “modernizing the state.”<sup>39</sup>

As a result, not all the countries of eastern Europe implemented the principles of Shock Therapy faithfully—something also reflected in the policies toward the sugar industry.<sup>40</sup> The Albanian post-socialist governments pursued one of the most robust liberalizing economic courses in eastern Europe.<sup>41</sup> Interestingly enough, the country switched from the most representative hardliner of ideological orthodoxy to the most committed follower of the neoliberal principles of the free market. The zeal that the post-socialist elites professed toward the newly embraced credo,

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<sup>36</sup> On the key ingredients of the neoliberal policies, Herrschel, *Global Geographies of Post-Socialist Transition*, 47.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 63-64.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> On the different paths of economic transformations in eastern Europe after the collapse of communism, see Philipp Ther, *Europe Since 1989: A History*, translated from German Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmüller (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 79-94.

<sup>41</sup> On Shock Therapy in Albania, see Clarissa De Waal, *Albania Today: A Portrait of Post-Communist Turbulence* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Elez Biberaj, *Albania in Transition: The Rocky Road to Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

a characteristic of all the recently converted from one dogma to another, was not without a rationale. Tirana's new leadership, eager to distance themselves from Enver Hoxha's legacy and model, ended up implementing Shock Therapy with great enthusiasm but without much reflection. In a short time, the myth of the miracle of the logic market replaced that of socialism central planning's rationality. The Albanian self-proclaimed anti-communist reformers fully committed themselves to erase everything "socialist."

As it was the case in all the countries of eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet-type regimes, the Albanian post-socialist political elites held the firm belief that only the integration in the western-centered global economy guaranteed development.<sup>42</sup> Ironically, Albania was the less prepared country among the members of the ex-socialist club for a dogmatic implementation of the neoliberal recipes. As already mentioned above, Shock Therapy promoted a set of policies devised for the capitalist states of Latin America, which were already fully integrated into the western-centered global economic system. As the practice demonstrated, the same prescriptions for radical and immediate transformations faced severe limitations when applied to the countries of eastern Europe, which come out of the socialist experience. As Craig Young has argued, regardless of the desire to make the ex-Soviet bloc a tabula rasa, both western advisors and post-socialist politicians, could not write off the socialist experience.<sup>43</sup>

The political scientist, Besnik Pulaj, has argued recently that the success of the transition to market economy depended in no small degree to the linkages that each of the eastern European countries had established with the western-centered capitalist system during the socialist era. By the 1970s, many of the countries of the Soviet bloc borrowed capital and technology from the western European countries and engaged in an intense trade relationship with them. The goal of the communist elites of eastern Europe was to improve their industrial base and liquidate the loans by exporting their finished goods to the West. In the end, these exchanges increased the socialist countries' dependence on market democracies. According to Pulaj, the intense economic contacts with the liberal democracies established networks that proved to be useful for the countries of

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<sup>42</sup> On the widely shared belief that only the only the integration in the capitalist global system guaranteed development, see Craig Young, "Marketisation, Democratisation and Inequality in Central Eastern Europe," in *Global Geographies of Post-Socialist Transition*, 79.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

eastern Europe after the fall of communism, when they were able to attract massive Western foreign direct investments.<sup>44</sup> Although Albania increased its exchanges with the western European countries, the ALP kept itself at arms distance from any similar economic entanglement as that of its eastern European analogues. If we follow Pulaj's line of argument, it means that when the communist regime collapsed, the country did not attract many Western investors because the ALP's leadership had not integrated Albania's economy into the global capitalist system. Of course, there are other critical geostrategic factors, too. The wars in ex-Yugoslavia kept many investors away from the country. And, the ailing economies of neighboring Greece and southern Italy did not help very much either. However, it is essential to note that the fact that Albania had not established with the West links similar to those of Visegrad countries, or Yugoslavia, did not make the immediate transition into the free market a sage decision. The repercussions are apparent across the country, including Maliq.

The opening of the borders would prove to be catastrophic for the sugar refinery. Indeed, the factory of Maliq came into being precisely against international trade. As already analyzed in the first chapter, since the interwar era, the principal argument for building a sugar factory in Albania was to preserve the much-needed hard currency from flowing outside of the country. For the Albanian political elite to have a domestic sugar industry meant diminishing the economic dependency for primary consuming goods and reinforcing the country's fragile political independence. Since the interwar era, the sugar scheme was an industrial undertaking that had precise political functions.

The Albanian interwar era elites conceived of Maliq's sugar scheme as being within the paradigm of the development of import-substituting-industries that conflated industrialization with political independence. According to this paradigm, the creation of a national industrial base that produced the majority of goods consumed by the population was the only solution to preserve the economic and political independence. The communists inherited the same worldview of their predecessors and continued with a higher pace and more determination the project of industrialization and assertion of the national sovereignty. As it was the case with their interwar

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<sup>44</sup> Besnik Pulaj, *Globalization Under and After Socialism: The Evolution of Transnational Capital in Central Eastern Europe* (Stanford CA.: Stanford University Press, 2018).

era forerunners, the communist elite considered the nation-state as the central platform of social and economic modernization. Thus, the ALP's takeover did not mark a significant break with the interwar regarding the link between economic development and political independence. In reality, the real historical caesura did happen with the collapse of the communist regime, when the nation-state lost its primacy as the primary vehicle of social and economic development. By this time, the new paradigm of development stopped considering industrialization and dependence as contradictory.<sup>45</sup>

The implementation of the Shock Therapy and the opening of the domestic market to international trade exposed how vulnerable an economic unit built on political premises, like Maliq's sugar industry, was to the rationality of the free market. However, the radical policies of Tirana's post-socialist governments in the early 1990s crippled even further the ability of the refinery to adapt to the new circumstances and be competitive. The first blow came with the Agrarian Reform implemented between June 1991 and October 1992. The neo-liberal post-modern fragmentation of the arable land that started in the 1980s in western Europe with the downsizing of the plots and agricultural economies arrived in eastern Europe in the 1990s under the banner of post-socialist restructuring.<sup>46</sup>

Under pressure from the Western governments, the majority of the eastern European post-socialist governments implemented agrarian reforms. The goal was to scale down the size of the agricultural units to give them more flexibility, increase the productivity of the rural sector, and enhance their market-oriented activity. Soon the architects of the economic transformations discovered that they had replaced efficient large agricultural enterprises with small farmers that could not compete in the global markets. For many countries of eastern Europe, these reforms marked a return to the pre-socialist period, where farmers had small and scattered plots. After realizing that the socialist regimes collective farms were indeed productive and that the new private

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<sup>45</sup> László Bruszt & Béla Greskovits, "Transnationalization, Social Integration, and Capitalist Diversity in the East and the South," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 44, 4 (2009): 414-415.

<sup>46</sup> On these processes in the Netherlands, see Joks Janssen & Luuk Knippenberg, "The Heritage of the Productive Landscape: Landscape Design for Rural Areas in the Netherlands, 1954-1985," *Landscape Research* 33, 1 (2008): 21-22.

farmers were economically inefficient, the eastern European government started programs of land consolidation.<sup>47</sup> This was not the case with Albania, though.

Compared to their eastern European analogues, the Albanian post-socialist reformers had a more radical and less flexible approach to the restructuring of the primary sector. They held the firm belief that the large agricultural cooperatives were cancer to efficiency.<sup>48</sup> Under the banner of “restructuring,” they dismantled the whole economic structure inherited from the past without any regard for the social and economic repercussions. The agrarian reform that started in July of 1991 divided the arable land between 490,000 private farms, with an average size of 1 ha, and fragmented it in more than 1.9 million scattered plots. The Albanian government took the pride of implementing the most radical distribution of land to private owners in entire eastern Europe. In Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, the post-socialist governments did not disband the collective farms, which controlled half of the arable land until well into the 2000s; while in the ex-Soviet Republics, except Russia, the agricultural farms controlled 84% of the arable land.<sup>49</sup> Ironically, the restructuring of agriculture did undermine the commercialization and efficiency. After the dissolution of the cooperatives, the majority of the peasants ended up to subsistence farming. The small plots, mainly long strips of arable land, replaced the large parcels of the communist era. Simultaneously, the Albanian post-socialist governments liberalized the domestic markets and opened the borders to international trade.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Antoine Roger, ““Romanian Peasants” Into “European Farmers”? Using Statistics to Standardize Agriculture,” *Development and Change* 45, 4 (2014): 732-752; Jaroslav Janus & Iwona Markuszewska, “Land Consolidation – A Great Need to Improve Effectiveness. A Case Study from Poland,” *Land Use Policy*, 65 (2017): 143-153; Van Dijk, “Complications for Traditional Land Consolidation in Central Europe,” 505-511; see also the essays on Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary presented in the symposium organized by the FAO office for Europe and Asia “Land Fragmentation and Land Consolidation In CEEC: A Gate Towards Sustainable Rural Development in the New Millennium,” held in Munich, February 25-28, 2002. <http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/285102/>

<sup>48</sup> On the firm belief of dismantling the agricultural cooperatives as inefficient unit see, Gramoz Pashko, “The Albanian Economy at the Beginning of the 1990s,” in *Economic Change in the Balkan States: Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia*, ed. Örjan Sjöberg & Michael L. Wyzan (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), 136;

<sup>49</sup> Zvi Lerman, “Policies and Institutions for Commercialization of Subsistence Farms in Transition Countries,” *Journal of Asian Economics*, 15 (2004): 462.

<sup>50</sup> On the post-socialist agrarian reform and the opening of the international borders to trade and movement of capital, see Azeta Cungu & Johan F. M. Swinnen, “Albania’s Radical Land Reform,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 47, 3 (1999): 605-619; Daniel Müller & Thomas Sikor, “Effects of Postsocialist Reforms on Land Cover and Land Use in South-Eastern Albania,” *Applied Geography*, 26 (2006): 176.

The situation, which reminds Hegel's famous quote that history repeats itself twice, returned where it used to be before the collectivization. With the dissolution of the cooperatives and the return of agriculture to self-consumption, the peasants reduced *in extremis* the cultivation of industrial cash crops. The lack of liquid capital of the peasants thinned to the minimum the investments in farm assets, while the state, loyal to the "hands-off" approach did not intervene to help the newly made private farmers to overcome the crisis.<sup>51</sup> The government did not even stimulate the peasants to join their plots and cooperate as private individuals to produce for mass markets, allowing them to be extremely vulnerable to international competition. As a farmer from a village in the plain of Maliq told me, his storages were full of unsold crops and vegetables because those imported were cheaper and outcompeted them.<sup>52</sup> Rather than helping the Albanian farmers to be more efficient, the free market favored those who were stronger and crippled those in a disadvantageous position. Since 1991, the governments of all the political forces, respecting the principle of non-interventionism, have not conceived programs of regional specialization, which would connect the peasants to broad markets and motivate them to establish voluntary cooperatives.

As it was the case in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the peasants of Maliq in the 1990s were not interested in cultivating a labor-intensive crop like sugar beet and, even less, to sell it with fixed prices. The state, on the other hand, did not provide any subsidy for the private farmers to prompt them the continues cultivating sugar beet. In 1992, while the Albanian post-socialist governments stuck with dogmatic determination to the principle of non-interventionism, the European Community did not give up from supporting the sugar beet farmers financially. Although

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<sup>51</sup> On the transformation of property relations in the Albanian post-socialist countryside, Johannes Stahl, *Rent from the Land: A Political Ecology of Postsocialist Rural Transformation* (London-New York: Anthem Press, 2010). On the fragmentation of arable land, Thomas Sikor, Daniel Müller, & Johannes Stahl, "Land Fragmentation and Cropland Abandonment in Albania: Implications for the Roles of State and Community in Post-Socialist Land Consolidation," *World Development* 37, 8 (2009): 1411-1423; Daniel Müller & Darla Munroe, "Changing Rural Landscapes in Albania: Cropland Abandonment and Forest Clearing in the Postsocialist Transition," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, 4 (2008): 855-876; Harold Lemel & Albert Dubali, "Land Fragmentation," in *Rural Property and Economy in Post-Socialist Albania*, ed. Harold Lemel (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 109-125. On the orientation of agriculture toward self-consumption and reduction of cultivation of cash crops, *Theory and Practice of Rural Development: Experiences in Albania*, ed. Vittorio Gallerani et al. (Roskilde, Denmark: Federico Caffé Center Publisher, 2004), 29. On the low investments in farm equipment, Severin Kodderitzsch, *Reforms in Albanian Agriculture: Assessing a Sector in Transition* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 1999), 6.

<sup>52</sup> Qetsor Agolli, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Vashhtëmi, Albania, December 17, 2017.

the EC reduced the support price system for sugar, which had been functioning since 1968, it compensated it by introducing direct payments to farmers—the EU would end this form of support only in 2017. After the agrarian reform, Maliq’s refinery had to deal with many individual farmers, who sold the sugar beet to market prices, increasing the costs of sugar substantially in a moment when the factory had to compete in a liberalized market.<sup>53</sup>

Besides the raw material, the integrated industrial complex of Maliq also had to struggle for energy. By the early 1990s, local mines lost state financial support, shrunk their operations and even closed. Of course, the low quality of their coal did not help them survive. Many miners lost their jobs. Stavri Prifti, whom I met almost every day during my research in Korça, used to work in one of these mines. Born in one of the villages of the plain of Maliq, after finishing his military service, he became a worker and moved to the city. After the closing of the mines, he found himself jobless with a family to feed. The employee of the archive, almost all women, paid him to do menial and heavy works they could not do, like moving up and down the stairs, heavy boxes packed with documents. The archivists gave him “something” in exchange, which means a couple of dollars. Every day he wandered around the city in search of similar works. The face of this short, bold, and toothless man, poorly dressed, stinking of alcohol and tobacco, transmitted to me an unambiguous message. Sometimes smiling and sometimes with eyes filled with tears, Stavri represented in flesh and bones the human rubble that testimony with their presence the transitions between different historical ages. This ruined man expressed with all his being a drama that started for him as upward mobility and ended up in downfall and poverty.

The closing of the mines crippled the regular supply of the TPP with coal, hampering the refinery to process the entire amount of sugar beet that it bought with dear prices from the peasants. The difficulties with the furnishing of the sugar factory with energy and raw material put it at a

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<sup>53</sup> On the reconstruction of land property and the effects of the Agrarian Reform on the activity of the sugar refinery, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 677, viti 1992, dosje pa numër, fletë pa numër. Memo of the director of the sugar combine, Petraq Stratobërdha, sent to the Ministry of Economy and Finances and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, concerning the perturbing problems for the cultivation of sugar beet. for the year 1993. February 22, 1993; *Ibid*, fletë pa numër. Memo of the director of the sugar combine, Petraq Stratobërdha, sent to the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Economy and Finances, concerning the perturbing problems for the cultivation of sugar beet and the Sugar Combine of Maliq, January 16, 1993. On the EC/EU financial mechanisms for supporting the sugar beet farmers, “The end of EU sugar production quotas,” [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/plants\\_and\\_plant\\_products/documents/factsheet-end-sugar-quota\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/plants_and_plant_products/documents/factsheet-end-sugar-quota_en.pdf). Last access, December 17, 2019.

distinct disadvantage with the international competition. There were the climate and soil conditions that determined the location of the sugar factory. On the other hand, though, the plain of Maliq was not well connected with the coastal areas and ports. Transporting sugar beet and coal to the region of Korça was extremely expensive and not profitable. However, the primary concern of the Albanian authorities when they built the refinery was not the connection with the world, but the supply of the domestic market.

Although the political goals drove the whole sugar scheme of Maliq, it does not mean that the ALP's apparatus was blind to efficiency. As I have already explained in chapter 2, and in the previous section, the communist regime invested continuously to increase the productivity of both the combine and the agricultural farms. But the refinery's successful operation depended heavily on state protection and monopoly over the domestic market. It was the shield of either national government or EU that saved the majority of the sugar refineries in eastern Europe for more than a decade. Once Brussels decided to cut the subsidies and lift the tariffs, the bulk of the sugar factories closed because they could not compete in an international market. Due to the zeal of the Albanian political class to faithfully pursue the blueprint of shock therapy, Maliq's refinery underwent this process earlier and closed down before them.

With the opening of the borders, the emerging class of post-socialist merchants started importing cheap foreign sugar that outcompeted Maliq's in the domestic market. Equally to the interwar era's calls for mercantilism, the string of directors that lead the combine until 1996 appealed to the government to raise the customs barriers and fend Maliq off international competition.<sup>54</sup> The combine's administration even deployed even Orientalist categories, pointing

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<sup>54</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 680, viti 1994, d. 13, fletë pa numër. Letter of complain of the director of the sugar combine, Ismail Venxha, sent to the President of the Republic, on the problems that have emerged from the operation of the Sugar Combine of Maliq. November 24, 1994; *Ibid*, fletë pa numër. Study of the Sugar Combine of Maliq sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, concerning the existing situation of the combine and its future. December 12, 1994; *Ibid*, fletë pa numër. Complain of the factory of alcohol regarding the lack of supply with steam. June 15, 1994; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 677, viti 1992, dosje pa numër, fletë pa numër. Memo of the director of the sugar combine, Petraq Stratobërdha, sent to the Ministry of Economy and Finances and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, concerning the perturbing problems for the cultivation of sugar beet. for the year 1993. February 22, 1993; *Ibid*, fletë pa numër. Memo of the director of the sugar combine, Petraq Stratobërdha, sent to the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Economy and Finances, concerning the perturbing problems for the cultivation of sugar beet. for the year 1993. February 22, 1993; *Ibid*, fletë pa numër, Minutes of the meeting between the directory of the sugar combine and the Inspectorate of State Control. November 10, 1992.

out to the fact that the private merchants bought their sugar in the East, and that the quality of the merchandise was suspicious.<sup>55</sup> East and bad quality fell into the same box. The directors used the axiological ontologies of the East-West geographies to point out the need for state protectionism against international competition. Writing from Maliq, they saw the new economic policies with different lenses. For them, opening the borders was not necessarily a good thing. Dividing the world into geographic hierarchies, where the West stood on top, they openly preferred the linking of the country only with the latter. The superior technologies and high quality came only from the West. The opening of the doors to international trade and the lifting of the tariffs, though, did not mean exchanges unilaterally only with the West. Because of Albania's low purchase power, the local merchants traded with countries, which the directors identified with the East, that sold cheap and goods of low quality. According to the different administrations of Maliq's refinery, they produced sugar of better quality. But quality is expensive, and they called the government to return to the protectionist policies to fend both the Albanian consumer and the national sugar industry.

Maliq's refinery administration reminded its superiors in Tirana on the critical economic and social repercussions that the closing of the combine would have for both the country and the district. In a letter sent to the government, one of the directors said that the sugar industry is the "heavy industry of light industry," and its protection was critical to the national economy. Even after the collapse of communism, the heavy industry still preserved the prestige and kept serving as a metaphor for marking top importance. The factory's directors argued that the entire town of Maliq depended on the sugar industry and that the operation of the refinery had not merely economic but also social importance.

The administration of the sugar refinery counter responded to the dominant paradigm of pure market efficiency with that of the social responsibility toward workers, especially in the single-industry towns. According to this latter view, it was the state's duty to take care of the industrial community of Maliq. To ensure the state's protection, the directors of the sugar factory

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<sup>55</sup> On the use of the East, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 680, viti 1994, d. 13, fletë pa numër. Memo of the directory of sugar combine sent to the ministry of Agriculture and Food with some data on the operation of the establishment during the last five years and the prospects about the future. November 18, 1994; *Ibid*, fletë pa numër. Letter of complain of the director of the sugar combine, Ismail Venxha, sent to the President of the Republic, on problems that have emerged from the operation of the Sugar Combine of Maliq. November 24, 1994.

highlighted its importance to the local economy, by pointing out the centrality of the refinery to the regional web of economic enterprises. They mentioned how the operation of the combine would also give work to the coal mines that supplied it. The social and economic impact of the sugar industry was significant because its tentacles stretched across all of Korça.<sup>56</sup>

It was in vain, though. All these appeals did not affect Tirana's policies, which authorities stuck to the full liberalization guidebook. In the 1990s, protectionism was not an option. The collapse of communism also meant the end of the big patriarchal state that intervened in the economy, so to keep the society under its warm breast and fend it from the frostbite of international competition and market fluctuations. The sugar combine was now on its own. And with it, also the community that depended on the processing of sugar. Despite the efforts, the administration of the refinery failed to attain loans from World Bank and FAO. The refinery had not much prospect of success in the global market. The prospects to start cooperation with Greek firms did not materialize, too.<sup>57</sup> In the new economic structure, the combine had no role in either national or international division of labor. To phrase it differently, Maliq's refinery decapitalized. And its locality distanced from the capital relations.<sup>58</sup>

After the combine stopped working, just to prove Hugo's dictum right that "time is a devourer, man, more so," groups close to the country's top political circles got their hands on the machinery and sold them for scrap. This phenomenon, which Tim Edensor calls it "the stage of

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<sup>56</sup> AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 677, viti 1992, dosje pa numër, fletë pa numër. Memo of the director of the sugar combine, Petraç Stratobërdha, sent to the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Economy and Finances, concerning the perturbing problems for the cultivation of sugar beet and the Sugar Combine of Maliq. January 16, 1993; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 680, viti 1994, d. 13, fletë pa numër, Decision of the directory of the Sugar Combine of Maliq, sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, concerning the existence of the establishment. May 12, 1994; *Ibid*, fletë pa numër. Study of the Sugar Combine of Maliq sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, concerning the existing situation of the combine and its future. December 12, 1994.

<sup>57</sup> On the loans from FAO and World Bank, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 680, Pa vit, dosje pa numër, fletë pa numër. Programs of meetings and reports on the negotiations with representatives of FAO and World Bank on potential loans for the modernization of the Sugar Combine of Maliq. July 13, 1992; On the negotiations with Greek firms, AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 680, viti 1994, dosje13, fletë pa numër. Reports regarding the negotiations with representatives of Greek sugar companies for cooperation with the Sugar Combine of Maliq. July 1994; AShV Korçë, F. 67, Kombinati i Sheqerit, Kutia 677, viti 1992, dosje pa numër, fletë pa numër. Request of the directory of the Sugar Combine of Maliq to the President of Albania, Sali Berisha, to lobby to FAO for the procurement of loans from this branch of the UN. June 24, 1992.

<sup>58</sup> On this concept, see John Urry, "Social Relations, Space and Time," *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, ed. Derek Gregory & John Urry (London: Macmillan, 1985), 26.

plundering, is now very pronounced in the ex-socialist countries.<sup>59</sup> Ironically, the refinery became useful to the national or international economy through its destruction, not by producing but as a dead carcass. What the partisans of Shock Therapy proclaimed to be short-term painful, but necessary reforms for long-term prosperity did not come into fruition, at least not in Maliq. The belief in the wonders of markets as regulatory of all the social ills came soon against the harsh reality, where no one-size-fits-all policy works. As Frederick Cooper has wisely stated, the idea of development emerged in late colonial thinking because markets could not alone produce growth and welfare for everybody.<sup>60</sup> And Maliq, to use the metaphor of Ralph Dahrendorf on the post-socialist restructuring, has not come out of the “valley of tears,” not yet.<sup>61</sup>

#### 6.4 Maliq Today: Ruins, Marginalization, and Memory

“Decay sits among fallen places”—wrote Nathaniel Hawthorn one hundred and eighty-five years ago.<sup>62</sup> Going to Maliq, one understands that his assertion still holds its truthfulness. Behind a large iron door closed with heavy chains, the industrial complex lies in ruin, deserted, emptied, like De Chirico’s dreamlike paintings of desolated squares and urban landscapes frozen in time. In the meantime, the floods from the Devoll annually take over the plain of Maliq. At times the water invades for months the lowest point of the plain, causing the peasants huge material damages and great hardship. It looks as time has reversed the course of time, as some force has rotated back the hands of the watch to the pre-1945 era, or as a journalist put it in a modernist language, Maliq has gone “from nothing to nothing.”<sup>63</sup> “Something” is related to production. The swamp and the

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<sup>59</sup> Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, 23-24. On the scrap fever in the ex-socialist countries, see for example on Russia, Anne White, *Small-Town Russia: Postcommunist Livelihoods and Identities. A portrait of the Intelligentsia in Achit, Bednodemyanovks and Zubstov, 1999-2000* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 113. Another case is that of Romania. For more, Kideckel, “Identity and Mining,” 121; Kideckel, “Coal Power,” 73-74.

<sup>60</sup> Frederick Cooper, “Writing the History of Development,” *Journal of Modern European History* 8, 1 (2008): 20.

<sup>61</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, “Europe’s Vale of Tears,” *Marxism Today*, May 1990, 18-23; Jeffrey D. Sachs, “Crossing the Valley of Tears in East European Reform,” *Challenge* 34, 5 (1991): 26-31.

<sup>62</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Canal Boat,” *New-England Magazine*, 9 (December 1835): 403.

<sup>63</sup> Ben Andoni, “Maliqi, nga hiçi në hiç,” *Mapo* 216, February 13, 2011, 18-19. On the continuous floods of the plain, see the TV reportage, “Kënetë,” (Second Part) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XY7ti3Kh4nA&t=189s> (Third

ruins are “nothing” to this author. As Tim Edensor has observed, for those, who have embraced the vision that space must have an evident function as productive or property, consider ruins as places where there is nothing. What predicates the usefulness or uselessness of space, he continues, are the investments and disinvestments.<sup>64</sup> In the eyes of all those who bear the utilitarian vision, Maliq was a swamp, which they consider as “nothing,” and transitioned to ruins with no economic function. It has returned to “nothing.” All it is reduced to the market usefulness, while the communities disappear, or, at their best, they are an appendix. Their history, their past, and present are invisible to those who do not live in Maliq. But not to its inhabitants. To them, the present has not offered much in compensation, and the town of sugar has stuck in the times it used to have a specific economic role, identity, and its own communitarian culture strongly related to the industry. The past is still alive, though. The ruins remind Maliq's people of the loss of the place's function, of what they had, which they have not been able to replace it yet. The deserted industrial complex symbolizes the new post-socialist spatial inequalities, which the post-socialist transformations have created.

The collapse of communism in eastern Europe and the transition to market economies has not made visible only uneven pattern of developments between the countries of the ex-socialist bloc that mirror the socialist legacies. The different degrees of integration in the global economy and its networks production and investments have generated acute regional disparities within the eastern European nation-states. Maliq's re-marginalization reflects the new spatial hierarchies linked to the new circuits of the flow of capital and labor. Since the interwar era, the Albanian authorities constructed Maliq as a space with a specific function in the national economy. After the collapse of communism, the sugarland lost its privileged position and now is marginalized again. The locked doors demonstrate Maliq's abandonment both symbolically and literally.

Stepping in the administration building, the only structure of the industrial establishment left intact from the devastation of the 1990s, one meets Vera Begolli, the director of the ghost-combine. She sits at her table and shows the samples of sugar and molasses that the combine used

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Part) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkoqOvtx-sA>, and (Fourth Part) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBi5gznDPqA&t=145s>.

<sup>64</sup> Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, 8.

to produce. Those samples are all is left from what Maliq's industry used to process. Everything is gone, including the establishment itself. With a real sense of trauma, Vera mourns the bygone days when the sugar industry operated. They were sweeter times. She laments the lost community built around the sugar industry, the old gone routine, and relationships. Vera is not alone. Everybody I have met in Maliq has a deep sense of loss. The magnetic field the combine once created now is gone, and with it also their north pole. Now the town has lost its *raison d'être*, the function for which it came into being. With communism, ended its spatial division of labor. The wires of regional interdependencies, which gave birth to the town, unraveled. And Maliq disconnected. The town of sugar has no function now that nation-building is not a priority of the political agenda of the Albanian state.

Vera's lament is not nostalgia, that feeling of longing for a past that has never existed, that people construct by juxtaposing with the present. The historian of deindustrialization, Steven High, criticizes the use of nostalgia for explaining how the ex-industrialized communities recollect their past. According to him, nostalgia depoliticizes the past. And most importantly, he argues, when the middle-class academics, carrying the brunt of their class, consider the memories of the past just as nostalgia, they belittle the attachment of the workers to their cultural worlds. We should not assume, he advises, that the ex-industrial communities imagine a world that has never existed.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the present's ruins cause Vera's wail for the bygone the past; it is the mourning of a community that the restructuring of the global economy has marginalized. It is also true that many times she and others in Maliq look back at the past with tinted glasses. However, it does not mean that the world it has disappeared has never existed, that it is a simple construction.

In the daily and academic jargon of today's Germany, it has entered the term *Ostalgie*, which defines the lament about the past in the eastern districts that used to be part of GDR. Not very accurately, *Ostalgie* reduces the recollection of the past as a mere craving for the communist past, the East. Because this feeling of loss is dominant in the most peripheral areas of the ex-GDR that have found themselves in a disadvantaged position in the new economic transformations, it

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<sup>65</sup> Steven High & David W. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca & London: ILR Press, 2007), 94.

does not mean that this is a phenomenon limited to the ex-socialist countries.<sup>66</sup> As different studies have shown, the ex-industrial communities in western Europe and, especially in the US, are dens where the past and its sense of stability still define peoples' identities and political outlook.<sup>67</sup> And above all, the past vis-à-vis the presents highlights the feeling of abandonment. When talking about the abandoned Austrian textile industry, Andrea Komlosy states that to their workers, the ruined buildings “evoke memories of an industry that has moved to other places in the world.”<sup>68</sup>

Vera still hopes that someday the combine will start working again. She talks about Poles, who want to rebuild the refinery and reuse the plain of Maliq for cultivating sugar beet. But the sugar is gone, forever. The production of sugar belongs to the past. It is part of history, and her hopes will not materialize, especially after the restructuring of the EU's sugar industry. What to do with Maliq and its plain? How to use it? These are questions and puzzles that central and local authorities try to answer. There have been plans about a new TPP that will supply the region with energy by using the peat of the plain as fuel.<sup>69</sup>

Local politicians, too, are trying to find other ways to integrate the plain of Maliq in the global division of labor, as a space with specific economic functions. Some of them are advocating the return of the swamp. Using the environmentalist vocabulary and expressing the green sensibilities of the Western middle classes, local political and non-political actors complain about the reclamation and the destructions it has caused to the regional ecology and biodiversity.<sup>70</sup> Those who make these claims dress their narratives in the imposing attire of German science. Many people I met, mainly state bureaucrats, claimed that during the WWII, German scientists had

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<sup>66</sup> On *Ostalgie* in the peripheral areas of ex-GDR, Herrschel, *Global Geographies of Post-Socialist Transition*, 62.

<sup>67</sup> On memory and nostalgia in the industrial communities in western Europe and North America see, Linde Egberts, *Chosen Legacies: Heritage in Regional Identity* (London-New York: Routledge, 2017), 138-201; Tim Strangleman, “Smoke-stack Nostalgia,” “Ruin Porn” or Working-Class Obituary: The Role and Meaning of Deindustrial Representation,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 84 (2013): 28; Sherry Lee Linkon & John Russo, *Steeltown USA: Work and Memory in Youngstown* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas Press University, 2002).

<sup>68</sup> Andrea Komlosy, “Austria and Czechoslovakia: the Habsburg Monarchy and Its Successor States,” in *The Ashgate Companion to the History of Textile Workers, 1650-2000*, ed. Lex Heerma van Voss et al. (New York: Ashgate Publisher, 2010), 72-73.

<sup>69</sup> On the offer of the Poles, Vera Begolli, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, July 20, 2017. On the plans to build a TPP in Maliq and the reactions against it, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofliKkpI1ms>, accessed, July 30, 2019, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAXBSfFleK0>, last access, January 30, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Ardit Konomi, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Korça, Albania, September 28, 2017; Ilia V. Ballauri, “Ngjalat e Korçës dhe nami i tyre shumëshekullor,” <http://korcapedica.com/korca-encyclopedia/korca-encyclopedia-nr9/201-bkn-ngjalat-e-korces-dhe-nami-i-tyre-shumeshekullor.html>. Last accessed, December 20, 2019.

explored in the swamp of Maliq and concluded that it was a primary station for all the birds that migrated from Russia to Africa. According to them, the Germans estimated that more than 5000 birds stopped every day in Maliq before continuing their route to the south. When asked whether or not they had seen the document, the answer was always no. When asked again who had told them about this study, the answer was either a dry “I have heard” or the juicier: “I have heard it is in the archives.” Regardless of my insistence, I failed to find in the archives any trace of this study.

Beneath the environmentalist discourse, rather than the will to reclaim the lost biodiversity, hides the logic of profits. The return of the swamp would help the local political circles to commodify the plain by transforming a part of it into a hunting ground. Their main targets are the foreign hunters from the rich western countries. The legend of the German study serves to legitimate the return of the swamp—maybe with the hope to make Maliq a station for the migrating birds and, as a result, a profitable hunting ground. This initiative is just a demonstration of the efforts of the local authorities to integrate Maliq into the broader international economic system and global circuits of capital. Not by processing sugar, but by providing entertainment, not for the members of the Politburo, as it was the case during the communist era, but for foreign tourists who would bring precious hard currency.

This project is part of the ongoing conversation on the region’s future, which remains disconcertingly unknown, uncomfortably dark, and anxiously poor. In the meantime, the people in Maliq try to survive. Their strategies, not dissimilar from those of other ex-socialist countries, range from emigration to opening some small stores or businesses.<sup>71</sup> In the villages, the scattered and small plots are of little use to the farmers of the plain of Maliq, who find themselves outcompeted in today’s market. The fate of those who live in the town is not brighter. According to the law, its population is urban, and, as a consequence, has no right to own land. What to do in a settlement that does not produce anything? Like all the poor areas, Maliq has a redundant workforce that supplies with workforce the labor-hungry wealthier centers. Reproducing an already established pattern in post-socialist Albania, many have migrated to other cities of the

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<sup>71</sup> White, *Small-Town Russia*; Dimitra Kofti, “Moral Economy of Flexible Production: Fabricating Precarity Between the Conveyor Belt and the Household,” *Anthropological Theory* 16, 4 (2016): 433-453; Michael Burawoy, Pavel Kritiv, & Tatyana Lytkina, “Involution and Destitution in Capitalist Russia,” *Ethnography* 1, 1 (2000): 43-65.

country, or in Western Europe, and North America. Some for good, while others returned to open a hotel or a small business. Vera, the last employee of the ghost combine, co-owns a cafeteria, “Grill 824,” where 824 stands for Maliq’s altitude above the sea level.<sup>72</sup>

Behind Vera’s rarely open office, lies the bare skeleton of an industrial dinosaur that did not survive the seismic shift of systemic collapse. Like the mega-creatures that millions of years ago dominated our planet, only to disappear at the stroke of a meteor, so the sugar industrial complex of Maliq did not survive the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. Of all its funnels, only the large, round, white stack of the TPP still stays intact. It is silent, does not spew smoke out of its wide throat. The others are destroyed, and the shattered bricks spread across the ruins of the combine. Those smokestacks, the powerful symbols of the sanctuaries that forged modernity, which according to Bruce Springsteen, reached “like the arms of God into a beautiful sky of soot and clay,” have crumbled.

Other tall structures have appeared, or better reappeared. Now, newly built belfries and minarets dot the plain, even where once was the swamp. Ironically, communism opened new paths for the religious resurgence of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century. They do not reach god with black smoke that paints the sky with dark colors, but with surahs from the Quran and bell reverberations. The old gods are back, but in a new age. The mosques are markers of the global era, built with the oil money of the Arab countries that now are using the new wave of globalization to spread Mohammed’s universal vision. Many of the Christian Orthodox churches are built with the funds of the Greek government, which tirelessly insists on patronizing Orthodoxy for political leverage in Albania. The shrines draw new cartography of Maliq and fill it with new meanings compared to the communist era. While the ALP’s regime used the combine to establish a homogeneous identity and claim its sovereignty over the national space, the global age is re-multiplying the identities; and Maliq is a site of competing and multifaceted loyalties.

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<sup>72</sup> On the emigration pattern, Karl Kaser, “The History of the Family in Albania in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: A First Profile,” *Ethnologia Balkanica*, 4 (2000): 55. On the agrarian post-socialist reform in Korça, Yllson Manoku, *Historia e bujqësisë dhe agropërpunimit në rajonin e Korçës* (Korça: Universiteti Fan Noli, 2009), 196-238. On the inefficiency of the scattered plots in the plain of Maliq, Zambak Shënollari, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, January 21, 2018; Petrit Kupe, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, January 21, 2018; Qetsor Agolli, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Vashtëmi, Albania, December 17, 2017; On the post-socialist strategies of survival in Maliq, Vera Begolli, Informal interview with Artan Hoxha, Maliq, Albania, July 20, 2017.

In the meantime, Korça's district occupies the bottom of the ladder of poverty in Albania, and the new shrines do not alleviate it.<sup>73</sup> The periodic return of the swamp and religious pluralism, do not merely mean a return of the past. The combine represented what the 20<sup>th</sup>-century stood for: integrated industrial complexes, enforced borders, territoriality, efforts to build cohesive social entities with members that professed unambiguous loyalty and identity. Maliq's ruins represent the fading away of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century and territoriality and document Albania's leap into a new age that Ulrich Beck has coined as "risk society."<sup>74</sup> This transition has affected both the old western market democracies and the ex-socialist countries of eastern Europe. What the political scientists have called post-socialist transition or transformation, has, indeed, been a departure from the model of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century and convergence with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century's "risk society."

One of the major flaws of the theories of post-socialist transition has been the imagining of both planned and market economies as fixed antithetic ideal types. As a result, many scholars and politicians have imagined the 'Europeanization' of the eastern European countries as a movement between two unmovable points. Not only are there various forms of capitalism and socialism, but what is more important, the old liberal democracies have been going through economic transitions themselves, since at least the 1970s. The erosion of the industrial base in some Western countries, especially in the USA and UK, and the shift of the networks of investments and production, has created seismic social and economic transformations, which are similar to those taking place in many ex-socialist countries of eastern Europe. What we see are similar transitional dynamics that have been taking place in both liberal and ex-socialist camps.

The effects of the wave of neoliberal transformations have been uneven across space. Compared to the market economies, in the ex-socialist bloc of eastern Europe, the range of structural changes has been way more profound because it is related to the collapse of the political system and the type of economic management. However, there are significant overlapping, as well.

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<sup>73</sup> Ëngjëll Pere & Will Bartlett, "On the Way to Europe: Economic and Social Development in Albania," in *Western Balkan Economies in Transition: Recent Economic and Social Developments*, ed. Reiner Osbild & Will Bartlett (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 84. For a socio-economic analysis of the district of Korça, see Dhimitër Doka, *Zhvillime socio-ekonomike dhe rajonale të Shqipërisë pas vitit 1990* (Potsdam: Universität Potsdam, 2005), 147-199.

<sup>74</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the period of the rise and fall of territoriality, see Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *The American Historical Review* 105, 3 (2000): 807-831. On risk society, Ulrich Beck, "Varieties of Second Modernity and the Cosmopolitan Vision," *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, 7-8 (2016): 257-270.

For this reason, rather than speaking exclusively of a post-socialist transition, we can very well talk about a major transition taking place from Russia to the US that is related to the deep economic structural transformations related to the new wave of globalization. Deindustrialization has been its major characteristic. This process has hit particularly hard those old industrial economies that had opened wide their state borders to the flows of capital, goods, and people. Countries that have not had a dogmatic approach to free trade have suffered fewer losses in their industrial base and have had less traumatic effects of this transition.

But other factors have played important roles as well. In eastern Europe, the countries of the Catholic bloc of the northern tier have not de-industrialized. Thanks to the geographic proximity, their highly professional and cheaper labor force, as well as a higher integration into the global capitalist system since the 1970s, they attracted western European direct investments. Because their economic development still depends on these investments and are hunted by the prospect of the western-based companies moving their industrial establishments to the east.<sup>75</sup> The countries of the southern tier of eastern Europe, those which belong to the Byzantine and Ottoman legacy, and the Orthodox states bordering with Russia, have fared less well. Albania's post-socialist history has been defined, among others, also by *longue durée* influences, geostrategic contexts, where many divergent interests intersect, and broader regional dynamics that transcend state borders. But aside from regional historical particularism, global processes, too, have shaped the history of this spot of the Balkans, and that of Maliq's refinery. The end of the sugar scheme it is not merely a post-socialist drama, but it is also the story of the collapse of the developmental strategy based on the nation-states as the primary platform of modernization. With the demise of the ALP regime, Albania entered into the western-centered global economy. With such a leap, the sugar industry lost the role it had been playing for decades.

With the passing of communism, both simple people acting spontaneously or action or the new post-socialist authorities overthrew the monuments of Enver Hoxha and Stalin that filled the main squares of the Albanian cities. Shortly after closed the majority of the industrial plants. Albania now is full of pedestals without monuments and lifeless concrete skeletons. A world came

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<sup>75</sup> Andreas Nölke & Arjan Vliegthart, "Enlarging the Varieties of Capitalism: The Emergence of Dependent Market Economies in East Central Europe," *World Politics* 61, 4 (2009): 695.

to an end, and with it also the symbols that glorified it, monuments and factories. But while the downing of Stalin's and Hoxha's busts signaled the end of socialism, the ruins of Maliq mark also the conclusion of the dreams of making Albania an industrial country with a self-sufficient economy. Somewhere Bruce Springsteen has stated that one place “can embody the hopes and failures of the nation. It could be any place...”<sup>76</sup> In Albania, it could be very well Maliq. But Maliq can embody the hopes and failures of its age, too, the sacrifices the era of progress has asked for and tragedies it has caused. The ruins and their contentious memories represent burying of the past's hopes under the rubbles of history's continuous earthquakes. Like Stavri Prifti's life.

The recollection of the past takes higher importance against the disillusion with what replaced socialism. Rather than a hard object, memory is a soft subject, like the watches in Dali's “La persistencia de la memoria.” It is malleable and shaped, among others, by the reality of the present. In Albania's ex-land of sugar, many people do not applaud the end of sugar-era. On the contrary, a good part of them longs for it. This is not some irrational feeling or a demonstration of the power of the communist discourse internalized by people who dislike Liberalism's Pantheon of values. What we see in Maliq is not too different from the craving of the American blue-collar workers for the 1950s-1960s. The outsourcing of industries or their closing, especially in the small and medium-sized single-industry towns, has affected many people equally, in the American Rust Belt and North England, in the Carpathian and Ural Mountains, and the Russian Far East. Maliq is one of these places. Just one dot, in a map punctuated by hundreds of other similar sites.

However, the landscape of ruin is not merely an outcome of the capitalist's storm, of its creative destruction that lives in its trail heaps of rubble, as Benjamin and many scholars with left-wing leanings are prone to suggest. The ruins are not only an outcome of impersonal forces outside of human control. After all, capitalism is a set of social relationships, and human actors are not powerless. The ruins are also a result of political decisions based on paradigm shifts and ideological factors. The European industrial core, called the Blue Banana, which covers north-east Italy, Germany, the Low Countries, and north-east France, has not de-industrialized. It is indeed the economic engine of EU. Brussels' policies to defend their entrepreneurs and workers are an example of political agency that contest any conclusion that points the finger to abstract systems.

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<sup>76</sup> “The Boss Pays a Call to a Princeton Classroom,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 12, 2001, 37.

The countries of eastern Europe that reverted the recipes of Shock Therapy and took a less dogmatic approach had much smoother and less traumatic social and economic transformations. Today Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Slovenia are economically sound, outperform countries older EU members like Greece and Portugal, or Italy's southern regions. The success stories of these group of ex-socialist countries, though, are also related to the integration into the European Union. The latter process process has been critical for these countries to redefine the nation-state and the strategies of development in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century.<sup>77</sup> With its shield of subsidies, protectionism, and flow of investments, the EU has provided its eastern members with a powerful developmental platform that has successfully replaced the nation-states. While the post-socialist transformation has been painful, the gains from the market economy, on the other hand, have overshadowed by far the losses and healed the scars.

In the early 1980s, Foucault contended that the system of the social-democratic welfare state in western Europe and North America, which was at the core of the post-WWII Western European order gave people more security, but in the same time made them more dependent on the system.<sup>78</sup> Instead of an impersonal system exerting its power and controlling peoples' lives, as Foucault claims, the welfare state was indeed a response to pressures coming from the below. In face of the rising tide of democratization of the Western societies and the emergence of mass politics in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, the government did not have the luxury, as it was in the preceding century, to endure market fluctuations.<sup>79</sup> The political pressures from unemployment, decreased wages, and rising prices forced many Western governments to step up and take measures to save the economic and political orders. The capitalist system created the preconditions for its own demise and only the reforms that established the alliance between labor and capital saved it.

When in the 1970s, the drive for efficiency, or, to quote Henri Lefebvre, the flows of capital triumphed over the fixities, the alliance broke.<sup>80</sup> The factories outsourced away from those places

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<sup>77</sup> Young, "Marketisation, Democratisation and Inequality in Central Eastern Europe," 76.

<sup>78</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Risks of Security," in *Michel Foucault, Essential Works of Foucault. Vol. 3: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 2001), 368; Ivan T. Berend, "Foucault and the Welfare State," *European Review* 13, 4 (2005): 551-556.

<sup>79</sup> Eric Helleiner, "Economic Nationalism s a Challenge to Economic Liberalism? Lessons from the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century," *International Studies Quarterly* 46, 3 (2002): 317.

<sup>80</sup> Henri Lefebvre, "The Worldwide and the Planetary," in *State, Space, World*, 202.

where labor organizations raised the costs of production and constrained efficiency. Thus, it was not the modern state's choice and intention that made people dependent on it. It was the latter's vulnerability to the market fluctuations and their mass participation in politics that forced the European governments to provide to the people security. Thus, the state softened peoples' dependence on the market by taking some responsibilities and making them partially dependent on its services. The now-closed factories once symbolized the security of livelihood. From sites of social conflicts, they became sites of social order. With their disappearance, the conflicts resurfaced again. The social and economic destitution in the deindustrialized towns have made them dens of discontent and political revolt. The people living there contemplate the end of the age that created them and realize that their future is taking a direction they cannot control.

Socialism represented the most radical solutions to the conflicts that were reigning between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>- early 20<sup>th</sup>-century. Rather than trying to bridge the conflict the socialist regimes decided to solve it unilaterally at the expenses of private capital. However, as it also was the case with Albania, the countries of eastern Europe had a very thin industrial base, which the communists, in pursuit of development decided to build. In the eyes of many eastern European communists, the Soviet model was an alternative of development without the social conflicts allegedly inherent to capitalism. With their imposing presence, the mills and factories marked the presence of the working class, and by default of their alleged political order and state. The industrialization and the creation of large working classes, though, proved to be detrimental to the communist regimes in the era of economic stagnations. The process of the formation of the working-class implied the detachment of many young peasants from their largely self-sufficient rural households and made them dependent on wage labor and market supply. It was precisely this dependence that made the workers in socialism a disruptive and anti-systemic force in the moment of economic stagnation of the late 1970s and 1980s. The fall of communism did not solve the problems of all workers of eastern Europe. The consequent deindustrialization transformed the urban centers affected by the closing of the industrial complexes into hubs of political radicalization—and criminality, too, which makes them not very different from their British and American kin.

The reactions to the end of the industries are different. Some vote with their feet, as in Maliq, and emigrate. Others, as it is the case in the UK and the US, vote for populist-nationalist political programs that promise the return of the alliance between capital and labor, of the

responsibility of the investors over the communities that depend on them. Oliver Kühschelm has recently rightly argued that the close connection between nationalism and industrialization, has shaped the meaning of deindustrialization. The lost industries have become an object of profound political importance also because outsourcing has created the feeling of hollowing out the nation.<sup>81</sup> It is not an accident why the ex-industrial communities and workers have been susceptible to nationalist discourses and economic protectionism, or, in other instances, to far-left populists that pledge for a socialist utopia. History, though, keeps moving toward the future, harvesting in its trail victims and sowing victors. Maliq's history narrates the story of an enterprise that the last century created, and the current one has thrown away. Its factory used to be an instrument of social and spatial inclusion. Now, its ruins represent exclusion. And Maliq, like a pocket screened by a fence of trees, remains off the highway that connects Tirana with Korça. Once a buzzing town, now it is a quiet place, loaded with memories recollected by the fading generation of sugar workers and chiseled in the combine's silent ruins.

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<sup>81</sup> Oliver Kühschelm, "Nationalizing Consumption, Products, Brands, and Nations," in *Nationalism and the Economy: Explorations into a Neglected Relationship*, ed. Stefan Berger and Thomas Fetzner (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2019), 179.

## 7.0 EPILOGUE

In the late 1980s, my grandmother, Aneta Naçi, an ALP member that had just retired, and her neighbor, Ana Mihali, a schoolteacher, met every afternoon for the most important ritual of the day. They watched in the Albanian-made TV brand “Iliria,” at the Italian TV stations, the American soap operas “Santa Barbara” and “The Bold and the Beautiful.” My hometown, Fier, which the Venetians used during the Middle Ages as a fair—from where derives its name—is situated only a few kilometers from the southeastern shores of the Adriatic Sea. With the heel of the Apennine boot slightly more than seventy nautical miles away, the broadcasting of the Italian televisions could be easily seen. Albeit communist authorities’ jamming, people always invented new antennas that received the signals coming from the other side of the Adriatic. To return to my grandmother, although she and her neighbor did not understand Italian, they knew all the names of all the characters of the two serials, from Eden and Cruz to Brook, Ridge, Erick, and Stephanie. I still remember the Hercules-like faces of Ron Moss and Adolfo Martinez, for whom both women nurtured a particular sympathy. They commented with passion all the scandals, love affairs, betrayals that took place in the bosom of Capwell and Forrester dynasties.

The same as with the Christian Church, which since Gregory the Great’s era used pictures to teach the Christian message to the illiterate masses, the serials’ iconography succeeded in conveying powerful messages without the need for any linguistic medium. In Albania and the other communist countries located along the Iron Curtain, TV became a new church, and the images coming from the capitalist side of Europe hit the communist regimes’ claims right to the heart. In my grandma’s living room emerged a nexus of synchronic and diachronic linkages, which collapsed Cold War polarities, the imagined imperialist or historical enemies, and ideological orthodoxies. The regime’s cynical propaganda and vapid phantasies about Albania as a socialist fortress under imperialist siege evaporated. At that moment, at that place, none of the women was thinking of irreconcilable differences with America or the systemic antagonism with capitalism.

An inseparable constituent of my grandma and her neighbor’s daily ritual was the sweetened Turkish coffee that both women sipped from China porcelain cups decorated with red roses and green leaves. The shortage of sugar and coffee troubled them very much because it

jeopardized their sacred daily custom of watching the soap operas. On the other hand, the soap operas highlighted their misery and failure of socialism to live up to its promises. The images coming from the Italian television stations made the 1980s scarcities even less bearable. After watching the daily series and the commercials that accompanied them, the two women discussed Albania's empty shops and rationed food, while comparing their poor standard of living with the fabulous affluence that they saw on the screen. They had no way to know whether the images coming from the US and western Europe were embellished or not. Entangled between the dreamworld of capitalism and the discredited regime's propaganda they could not help themselves but feel disappointed with their poverty. Their disillusionment was quite a leap for them. Both women belonged to the generation that embraced communism in the aftermath of WWII and participated in its construction. They believed in the ability of the system implemented in the Soviet Union to deliver the promise of prosperity. Forty years later, though, they, like many others, understood very well that this was not the case anymore. The projections coming from the western side of the Iron Curtain buried the communist regime's claims of building an earthly utopia. On the contrary, they seemed to suggest that the liberal democracies had already reached that terminus.

In 1951, the American sociologist David Riesman proposed in his famous satirical essay "The Nylon War," to bomb the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries with American appliances and commodities. According to Riesman, the gadgets and machines would show to the Soviet people the superiority of the American life and the peaceful purposes of the USA.<sup>1</sup> In Albania, the success of the western democracies' soft power would come to fruition only in the late 1970s and 1980s with the TV's revolution and the incessant bombing of its society with commercials and Hollywood's movies. The electromagnetic waves emitted from Italy indeed brought the wonders of capitalism to the houses of the Albanians, only to make them realize how shockingly poor they were and alienate from the communist regime.

The failure to meet the consumers' growing needs had fatal repercussions for the Albanian communist regime. Ironically, the economic stagnation in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with the mass introduction of televisions. Located in the border between the Eastern and Western blocs,

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<sup>1</sup> David Riesman, "The Nylon War," in *Abundance for What? And Other Essays* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1964), 67-75.

Albania was exposed to the broadcasting coming from the other side of the aisle, with tremendous political effects. Television allowed the Albanians to get in direct contact with the embellished images coming from the western side of Europe without the mediation of the regimes. Moving from one extreme that depicted capitalism as nightmarish and dystopian to another that came through movies and commercials that made everything seem as materialized utopia caused awe and shock. Discovering their relative poverty compared to the societies living in liberal democracies made the scarcities of the 1980s less bearable for my grandmother and her neighbor. And this was the case with many other Albanians. The latter did not crave so much for political freedom and multiparty system but rather more practical matters. The restrictions in consumption and the comparatively low standards of living alienated with the regime my grandmother, her neighbor, and hundreds and thousands of Albanians.

It was from the complaints I heard in my grandma's living room that I discovered that the sugar we consumed, which was confectioned in 1 kg packages of thick brown paper was refined in Maliq. Learning of Maliq's existence was intrinsically linked to the ambiguous balance sheet of the communist era. On one hand, the ALP's regime succeeded to transform the plain, once covered by a swamp, into an important part of the Albanians' daily lives. The sugar Maliq processed made its way in every hearth in the country. However, the anxiety and discomfort that filled my grandma's living room showed that the refinery's output could not meet the growing demand of the population, thus, leaving people without the necessary quantity of the sweet substance. The failure of the communist regimes to keep up consumption and deliver its promise of prosperity eroded the fundamentals of the communist regimes' power much more than the craving for political freedom and pluralism. It was the lack of goods, like sugar that stroke the ALP's legitimacy at its heart. Maliq's project was an important component of Tirana's Soviet-type program of building socialism and in its history, we can trace the fruitless efforts to make Albania both self-sufficient and a garden of felicity. Indeed, the entire sugar scheme was meant to establish the conditions for the country's prosperity without relying on international markets. Maliq's failure to produce enough sugar, though, demonstrated, likewise many other industrial enterprises around the country, that self-sufficiency and affluence were chimeras.

Should we consider the entire scheme of Maliq, which was part of the ALP's modernizing program, a failure? Is it fruitful to use rigid taxonomies that simplify complex historical processes that comprised wide-ranging social, economic, cultural, and environmental transformations? Do

the binaries of failure/success and its twin top-down imposition/bottom-up resistance help inquiring and fully grasping the importance of communist modernization, its broad ramifications, and long-lasting effects? Does it mean that defining the outcomes of the developmental programs of the Soviet-type regimes in absolute and exclusive terms we lose their nuances and impact over the eastern European societies? And more importantly, do we need to better define what failure and success mean in human history and to be more aware when and how using these definitions?

In his book *Seeing Like a State*, James C. Scott argues that the schemes of improvement driven by the ideology of progress and what he calls “authoritarian high modernist vision,” indeed, failed. Scott identifies these projects, which aimed at disciplining and molding social and natural life, as an expression of a technocratic anti-democratic rule. It is important to note that Scott used the singular rather than plural for the guiding vision of all these programs that sought to engineer both society and nature. He integrated under one single denominator the modernizing projects, regardless of the socio-economic systems and the ideological allegiance of the ruling elites that implemented them. Thus, Maliq’s transformation emerges as part of a large process that includes it within trends that do not spring exclusively out of the Soviet-type regimes. And he uses the notion of failure indiscriminately for all of the schemes. According to him, these projects failed due to the resistance from common people or nature, which did not obey to the technocrats’ blueprints and rationale. In other words, the tension between centralized bureaucratic management and grass-root democracy settled with the triumph of the latter.<sup>2</sup>

I agree with Scott as far as he transcends the Cold War East-West dichotomy and identifies shared precepts and concepts of how to organize and regulate the human and natural world. As seen in this study, the communists took Maliq’s project from their predecessors. The ALP’s leadership took the baton and implemented it by using a new institutional, political, and economic framework. At the same time, the communist transformation of Maliq was connected not only diachronically but also synchronically with other similar enterprises that were carried in Europe in the years that followed WWII. Regardless of the ruling ideology, all the European governments of the era started programs for building new societies. However, my work departs from Scott’s

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<sup>2</sup> James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998).

conclusion when it comes to his use of failure and resistance. The issue here should not be reduced exclusively onto whether or not the ALP's regime did have a blueprint or how local conditions modified it. While the Albanian communist regime did not meet all its targets and did not create an egalitarian utopia, it transformed Maliq forever. First of all, it is important to note that the houses built with adobe and roofs of hay disappeared. Malaria disappeared and a network of schools and ambulances covered all the villages. Although the floods cover sometimes the arable land, they do not threaten the villages and peasants' households. To the latter, the abovementioned transformations are much more important issue than any other argument regarding state arrogant intervention and the modification of landscape. Indeed, the peasants raise their voices for more state intervention. As they very well know, only the government's resources and expertise could guarantee the maintenance of the draining system.

Maliq's scheme did not pit the rural population against technocrats. Many peasants supported the transformation of the plain because they saw in it a chance to improve their lot. If the rural population resisted during the interwar era to the reclamation project, that was not because the villages' population resisted a plan that wanted to regulate and order their lives according to a logic that did not fit local circumstances. There were the efforts of the "Maliqi" company to use the draining of the swamp as a justification to appropriate peasants' property, which triggered the conflict. Additionally, if the reclamation never completed, it was for lack of funds and not because of any resistance. When the communists restarted the project in 1946, the peasants did not resist anymore. The use of the iron fist explains only partially why the rural population did not revolt. Less than fifteen years from the reclamation, the majority of the youngsters in the surrounding highlands wanted to move to the plain, closer to the state's authorities, where they saw greater opportunities for a better life than in their economically more peripheral mountain hamlets. The population of the area participated in the entire project that transformed the quagmire into Albania's center of sugar. Not only they did not resist, but they joined the forces with the technocrats and the communist bureaucratic apparatus in the modernization of the plain and the country. Indeed, the majority of technicians and specialists emerged from their ranks. Rather than tensions between antagonist groups with diverging agendas, in Maliq, I discovered cooperation and symbiosis among them.

A similar debate has taken place regarding the building of the Soviet system. Moshe Lewin, while exploring the rapid urbanization and industrialization of the Soviet Union during the 1930s

considered the mass of the “backward” peasant that flooded the Soviet cities and the modernizing Bolshevik bureaucracy as two clashing civilizations. According to Lewin, the Soviet system took shape out of this tension that juxtaposed Stalin and his supporters that wanted to modernize the country at a break-necking speed, and an unresponsive and even resisting peasantry.<sup>3</sup> In his book *Magnetic Mountain*, where he analyzed everyday life in the steel town of Magnitogorsk, Stephen Kotkin rejected Lewin’s claim and defined Stalinism as a civilization. By using the singular, Kotkin argued that Stalinism was not merely an imposition from above that generated conflict between the communist power apparatus, committed to modernizing the Soviet Union, and its backward-looking society. Instead, the Stalinist system was an outcome of both the working of the power apparatus and society. Inspired by Foucault’s discursive analysis, Kotkin analyzing the language people used in their daily life observed the emergence of a new subjectivity, which reproduced the regime’s discourse of power. Thus, normal people became autonomous agents of the Bolshevik power and enabled the Soviet regime to pervade all the spheres of social activity.<sup>4</sup> Hence, rather than a clear-cut distinction between state and society, he sees a continuum.

The works of Kotkin and Lewin, though, focus on the industrial towns, where they see the locus of the forging of the Soviet modernity. Conceiving the Soviet model in exclusively urban terms, they see the countryside as alien, not only with no contribution to the construction of the Soviet power but in conflict with it. The rural population is somehow an ocean of barbarity which civilizes only when it migrates to cities and gets involved in the industrialization process. Their stance does not differ much from the literature on collectivization that sees this process as a war between the communist states’ grandiose plans and the peasantry’s insistence to preserve its smallholdings. The reality, though, was more complex. The rural population did not always go into conflict with the regime and its program, but many times embraced and supported them, thus contributing massively to the building of the real socialist model. The countryside was an important site of system building, where the broad infrastructural, economic, cultural, and social transformations were not a violent imposition of the vision of an urban-based communist power.

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<sup>3</sup> Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 258-285.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

Maliq was not an exception. With a sugar refinery as the beating heart of a regional economic system, both Maliq's landscape and the social structure of the communities that lived in the plain underwent profound changes. It was not merely the emergence of a new subjectivity that allowed the ALP's power structure to disseminate and reinforce its power. Without trying to decrease the importance of the ideological reproduction at the everyday level, the Soviet-type regimes also had to back up their claims for a better future by giving tangible proofs. Likewise, they created real opportunities for people to move upward on the social ladder and improve their living standards. It is not an accident that the popular support for the communist regimes fell with the economic decline in the 1970s and 1980s. In Maliq, the sugar industry represented those new chances by creating space for many people to advance their position and status. Participating in the transformation of the plain into Albania's land of sugar was advantageous. Using the sugar industry as a platform to increase the revenues and increase the opportunities for oneself and family, the peasants of Maliq took part in the system-building. For this reason, it is important not only to celebrate how local actors and factors that transmute the centers' blueprints, how the simple people without a voice make history, but also to focus on those who embraced the projects of modernization and linked their fate to it. The latter have not been a small minority of highly educated technocrats. Instead, many simple peasants supported modernization. When communism imploded, neither the plain nor its population were the same anymore.

Thus, the Manichean and simplistic failure/success approach does not help to understand the implications and the impact of the broad and deep transformations that took place in Maliq during the communist era. However, the failure/success dichotomy has been the dominating modus operandi in the years that followed the collapse of the Soviet-type regimes. In the early 1990s, MTV echoed relentlessly the sounds of the British band *Pet Shop Boys*' superhit "Go West." Pointing at the Statue of Liberty, its video clip showed to the ex-communist subjects the path to the historical destiny of freedom and progress. Going West meant dismantling everything that would connect the ex-socialist countries to an allegedly bad East and failures, including Maliq's scheme. This process came to be known as "Shock Therapy" and some of its most important points were the immediate privatization of the state economic sector, the extreme minimization of state intervention to the economy, and the opening of borders to the global market. These were thought to be the remedies to the deficiencies of socialist inefficiencies, while not paying much attention to the social repercussions. However, on the ground in Albania's land of

sugar, people who invested their energies and lives to the sugar industry found themselves redundant and their work considered as useless, and even failure.

To understand the problem that the people in Maliq are facing today, first, we should comprehend the communist past, which shaped the area; not by evaluating it as a failure but looking at it as a major transformation that radically changed the local history, forever. This is not only the case for the ex-land of sugar. The latter's history belongs to larger projects of modernization intended for both the economic development and socio-cultural transformations, to civilizational enterprises. Whether or not the modernizing schemes met the elite's initial agenda is less important than grasping their social, economic, and cultural impact. We should not forget that behind these developmental projects there were not only people on the top, but also people at the bottom, who profusely poured talent, sweat, and hopes. We can understand the current world by studying what these people accomplished in their lives, because today, stands over their shoulders.

Many years after the fall of communism, every time I visited my other grandmother, Ferasete Hoxha—who used to be an ALP's member as well—she prepared me Turkish coffee, sweetened with imported Brazilian sugar. Afterward, she filled two small glasses of liquors, and, to complete the full range of the most important psychoactive substances that shaped the modern world, each of us lit up a cigarette and inhaled nicotine while chatting. Ferasete did not like to talk about the present. She continuously tried to come to terms with the age she happened to live and strove to give a meaning to her life. Looking at the dilapidated world she participated to construct, my grandmother grappled with the past and struggled to understand whether or not what she fought for was worth it. Ferasete stared at the past, without complaining. Now the scarcity was just a bitter memory. After the dividing curtain had been lifted, she had had the opportunity to know what realities hid behind the TV screens, the soap operas, and the commercials. Other things concerned her. In an age that everything moves away very fast, she used the ritual of the coffee not to contemplate a forbidden world of affluence, but to retell the past. She constantly rebuilt the latter's ruins and brought back a nuanced version of it, to show me that there were things of her era that one should be proud of and that her life could teach me something. She belonged to a generation that struggled to industrialize the country, learn professions that nobody knew before 1945, live better than their parents, and bring their children to university. And more importantly, those who took over the lead after the demise of communism had all been educated in that Albania, which,

for better or worse, her generation had built. When the communism fell, the country was not a tabula rasa.

My two grandmothers' stories, before and after the fall of communism came to my mind that early September morning of 2017 when headed to the archives of Korça, I was traveling in a cherry passenger van across the plain of Maliq. One reminded me about the disappointment with communism's promised land and the other with what came after it. At that moment I grasped the complexity of the ALP's legacy. The memory of the scarcities showed the expectations communism created only not to live up to them; the attempts to reevaluate the past and the insistence not to call it a failure appealed not to forget the work it has been done in chasing the vision of socialist utopia. I realized how much Maliq represents my grandmothers' lives and experiences. Today, the sugar capital of communist Albania is just the ghost of what it used to be. What once was considered America in the home, the land of hopes, the space of the materialization of the vision of development, today it is a beautiful and yet hapless place. Today Maliq is sugarless, silent, but its story shows how, in this part of Europe, development remains an elusive target that keeps slipping away, leaving behind amputated hopes and disillusion. In Maliq, we can explore the implementation by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century revolutionary elites of the utopian projects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the ruined dreams they left behind. I think it is worth telling sugarland's story because it shows how we are heading toward the future walking over the history's ruins. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is very different from its predecessor, and still, the present stands above the past's rubble. If neglected, the ruins may cause long term historical consequences, as surely, they already have.

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*Zëri i Popullit* (Not the press organ of the ALP)

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