

**MICHAŁ PRZEPERSKI**

## **Albanian adventure of comrade Mijal**

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Transcription, Editing and Markup: Paul Saba and Sam Richards

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When Radio Free Europe and Radio Luxemburg were breaking records in the mid-1960s, broadcasts of Polish Maoists appeared on the airwaves. The activity of the grotesque Radio Tirana is still shrouded in mystery.

In the second half of the 1950s, divisions and rivalry between the communists of the USSR and the PRC increased, which also resulted in tensions in Moscow's satellite countries. On December 10, 1961, the Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations with Albania, which sided with China. In April 1965, a coup in Bulgaria was thwarted at the last minute to bring Beijing supporters to power.

In Poland, the environment centred on the role played Kazimierz Mijal of the pro-China group. This former member of the PPR leadership and a close associate of Bolesław Bierut was one of the influential politicians of the Polish People's Republic in Stalinist times. In the breakthrough months of 1956 he gained the opinion of an extreme dogmatist. After October, Mijal lost his position as a member of the Central Committee and found himself on the political margins. In December 1965 he founded the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Poland. After unsuccessful attempts to expand his activities in February 1966, he fled to Tirana using a passport issued in the name of an Albanian diplomat. In the Albanian capital, he was given the antenna of the Polish service of Radio Tirana. Soon the name Mijal became synonymous with this station.

**KPP calls for a fight**

The arrival of Mijal to Albania clearly dynamised the work of the Polish radio service. As early as 1967, broadcasts in foreign languages were targeted at geographically closer countries, primarily to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Hungary. However, as early as July 1968, the program was broadcast in Polish for four hours a day on short and medium waves. It was not enough. At the same time, the Polish BBC section averaged just over three hours a day.

**What programs appeared on the waves of Radio Tirana?**

The program enunciations of the Mijal-led KPP played a key role. In April 1967, the appeal was read "To fight in defence of socialism against the revisionist agent of imperialism." Brochures distributed

in the country were also reported, e.g. "KPP is fighting and calling for battle!" or "I lost the compass of Marxism, or Polish paths to socialism." The latter was so extensive that in May 1968 it was read daily for 10 consecutive days. The students were also acquainted with the ideological declaration of the Communist Association of Polish Youth. All in all, they were ideological statements about the differences between heretical Soviet communism and law-abiding Chinese.

There were also current political comments. On the events at the University of Warsaw of March 8, 1968, Tirana said: "Students' speeches in Warsaw cannot be detached from the general political situation in the country, which is difficult, nor can they be called hooligan, because these accidents are deeply social ( ...) not the youth, and the party is responsible for this tragic spectacle. " At first glance, it might seem that the KPP supported the victimized students. Nothing could be more wrong, because it was further stated: "Who are the students defending? Student manifestations (...) are organized from the outside in order to maintain the largest group of Jewish nationalists and their supporters in leadership. "

This was all the more surprising because a few months earlier, in October 1967, Radio Tirana talked about the agent's role of "Zionist elements exercising power in Poland together with Gomułka." Thus, the Jews were simultaneously with Gomułka and against Gomułka, and always against vital national interests. This confusing rhetoric brought the KPP closer to the anti-Semitic faction of the so-called partisans within the PZPR. The latter, however, have never allowed themselves to openly question Gomułka's leadership.

And this was the comment on the entry of Warsaw Pact troops into Czechoslovakia in August 1968: "An armed assault carried out at night on CSR bears barbaric fascist aggression." But this time, in no way meant any support for the ideals of the Prague Spring, whose leaders were described as "Dubcek's counterrevolutionary clique." According to the KPP, the only solution was to save the dictatorship of the proletariat from the counterrevolution by the Czechoslovak working class. These spells were, in fact, a wishful thinking that Beijing's management would accept the reins of the leadership in Prague.

The listeners write

Arch Puddington, a well-known American researcher of Radio Free Europe, described this station as thoroughly political. A special example of Radio Tirana's saturation with political content were programs presenting letters from listeners from the country. They were important for every medium broadcasting from abroad, because they presented evidence that the station was listened to in the country.

All correspondence presented on the waves of the Albanian radio station had political significance. For example, a letter from "a certain comrade from Lodz", read in December 1967 in the broadcast described the story of Zygmunt Kępa, "a pensioner and old revolutionary", sentenced to three years in prison for distributing KPP brochures and appeals. The author pointed out not only a positive hero, but also villains. Judgment was issued by judge Halina Michalak and jury members Jan Minister and Leon Kamiński, and the prosecutor was prosecutor Kazimierz Masłowski, with whom he cooperated with SB provocateur Władysław Karbowski.

Were these letters real?

Some of them contained a lot of details that made them credible. On the other hand, letters signed by "communists and honest Polish workers", using exactly the same phraseology as the editors from Tirana, raised considerable suspicion. Common sense suggests that at least some were written by

the editors themselves. However, it cannot be excluded that in Poland there were some desperate supporters of Albanian communism who actually sent these letters.

In the 1960s, in the opinion of many Poles, Radio Free Europe deserved the name "Fourth Warsaw", a kind of Polish Radio Fourth Program. This meant that RWE was treated as a Polish radio station, representing national interests and well-oriented in national events. Radio Tirana has never gained such trust of listeners, although Poles also performed on its air. In letters to the editors, which due to inability to verify at least partly be authentic, the phrase "Dear Albanian comrades!" Often appeared. This indicates that the editors of Tirana's Polish programs were seen as fraternal comrades from a foreign country, but not as their own, not as Poles.

The language used by the editors of Tirana did not combine transmitting and receiving into one community, but rather built a wall between them. Virtually all broadcasts were readings of texts, in the form of long elaborations, bristling with rhetoric known from propaganda of Stalinist times.

The views presented by Radio Tirana were not only radical, but also expressed in a subtle way. They had the character of intrusive persuasion, in which they sought to control the leadership of the PZPR centred on Władysław Gomułka. It was said about him: "Gomułka was not and is not a communist, he was and remained an opportunist right-wing capitalist servant in the Polish workers movement."

However, it was not the attacks on Wiesław that were the most important task of the station. The most important goal was to maintain the fiction of the broad front of the Chinese communist parties. This is confirmed by the titles of comments: "Yugoslav road to capitalism" or "Comprehensive counter-revolutionary Soviet-American cooperation reached a new level in 1967". These topics were not important from the point of view of Polish listeners, they were rather a kind of communication to the international communist movement, as well as to the Albanians.

In one of the letters "from listeners" from the country one could read: "Proudly flutters the communist banner in Albania. Albanians stand up for us like Bolsheviks. "At other times, the fact that "the Great Chinese Revolution had made an iron break in the world capitalist system" was emphasized. These examples indicate that the primary task of the Tirana radio station was to participate in the Maoist liturgy.

How effective were Radio Tirana's activities?

One of the most effective measures of the impact of such radio stations on society was counteracting by the authorities. The regime's steps with respect to Radio Tirana were modest. These mainly included propaganda attempts to discredit Mijal himself. In February 1967, 'Życie Warszawy' mocked the escape of 'Mechmetka Napkins', deliberately twisting the name of the Albanian diplomat, Napet Mechmetka, whose passport was used by Mijal. In a similarly lenient tone about the revelations of the missals, he wrote, among others London's Dziennik Polski. Only the sympathizers of communism in the Chinese edition, such as publishers of the *La Voix du Peuple* communist Belgian communist authority, treated the Mijalists with full seriousness.

Against this background, the message presented by an anonymous informant of Radio Free Europe looks intriguing. At one of the party meetings on the Coast in 1967, the speaker was to draw comrades' attention to the criminal activities of Radio Tirana, at the same time pointing out that the party knows that Polish broadcasts of this station are being listened to on ships. "Of two evil, if you absolutely want to listen to enemy radio stations, then it is better to listen to Radio Free Europe than to the idiotic sweats of Mijal from Tirana" - summed up the speaker with resignation.

Among Poles, Radio Tirana's activities mainly caused a smile of pity. In 1979, the first band of Kazik Staszewski, Poland, recorded the song "Radio Tirana". The young singer sang: "Tu Radio Tirana from evening to morning / Tu Radio Tirana the truth flows like a river (...) / We Radio Tirana know you like a bad shell / You know nothing and wait for the end of the world." A compass of Marxism sent comrade Mijal in comos.

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