

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



**ALBANIAN
CATHOLIC
BULLETIN**

1944 — 1984

**BULETINI
KATHOLIK
SHQIPTAR**

ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

Volume V

No. 1 & 2

1984

Our 1984 edition of the *Bulletin* has been dedicated to the fortieth anniversary of continuous religious persecution in Albania. This issue is particularly international in character, with authors from a number of different countries and continents, symbolizing the universality and solidarity Christians have for their persecuted brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Unfortunately, the printing of this year's *Bulletin* has been delayed due to a serious lack of funds. Contributions collected in 1984 were also shared to meet the cost of the commemoration ceremonies on April 13, 1985 in San Francisco to remember the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania.

The plight of Albanians and other lesser-known peoples has been eclipsed by the more popular causes which receive much media attention, such as human rights violations in Central America. Catholics, in particular, in view of the universal character of the Church, must remember *all* of their persecuted brethren.

It is for this reason that we appeal to our readers for assistance, as we are unable to draw on wider support and our efforts are still little-known or recognized. We remind Albanians in particular of their serious duty to help those left behind who live in terrible fear as they strive to keep the faith alive in their families.

Our 1985 *Bulletin* will be entirely dedicated to the planned commemoration to be held in St. Ignatius Church at the University of San Francisco, observing the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania. We hope to print this edition immediately following the Commemoration.

BULETINI KATHOLIK SHQIPTAR

Vjetri V

Nr. 1-2

1984

*Albanian Catholic
Information Center Board:*
Leo Gabriel Neal, Ofm. Conv.
Pjeter Pal Vani
Jak Gardin, S.J.
Zef V. Nekaj
Barbara Kay
Palok Plaku
Ndoc Kelmendi, S.J.
Gjon Sinishta
Julio Fernandez
Raymond Frost
Lulash Dajçi
Donald Banas
Sharon Mollerus

Editor:
Gjon Sinishta

Contributing Editors:
Sharon Mollerus
Zef V. Nekaj
Barbara Kay

Art:
Barbara Kay
Michael Mollerus
St. Henry Joseph

Typesetting:
Mollerus Business Services
P.O. Box 590186, S.F., CA 94159

Printing:
The Franciscan Press
445 Willow St., San Jose, CA 95110

Material from this journal may be reproduced or translated, although proper acknowledgement of the source is requested.

News articles and photos of general interest, 100-1200 words in length, on religious, cultural, historical and political topics about Albania and its people, may be submitted for consideration. No payments are made for the published material. Please enclose a self-addressed envelope for return.

Letters and inquiries should be directed to:
ALBANIAN CATHOLIC
INFORMATION CENTER
P.O. BOX 1217
SANTA CLARA, CA 95053 (U.S.A.)



Table of Contents

Editorial	3
The Catholic Church in Albania	4
Albanian News and Events	26
From the Albanian Press	33
The Development of Atheistic Education in Albania	35
Mission of the Arbëresh Church	44
Being Catholic in Albania: A Mark of Distinction	46
Weep For . . . Hope For	48
Great Inhumanity Pays Lip Service to Liberal Values	49
Atheism and the Moral Force of Religion	51
Albania and the Denial of Religious Freedom	52
Remember Them that Are in Bonds	54
The Martyrs of Albania	55
Albania — The Walls Are Crumbling	56
Religious Revival in Eastern Europe	57
Mother Teresa	58
Despite Persecution the Faith Lives in Albania	59
Albania: Impressions of a Traveller	61
Greek Inspired Hearing on Human Rights in Albania	63
Struggle for Ethnic Rights in Kosova Continues	67
Yugoslavia's Imprisonment of Adem Demaçi	72
Albanians in America Reach the Century Mark	73
Vatra Celebrates Dielli's 75th Anniversary	76
Book Reviews	79
In Memoriam	88

Albanian Religious Holocaust to be Commemorated

On November 27, 1984 staff and friends of our Center gathered in Santa Clara to prepare for the forthcoming Commemoration of the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania. The commemoration ceremonies (Civil Program, Ecumenical Religious Service and Solemn Mass of Peace) are scheduled to take place on Saturday and Sunday, April 13 and 14 of 1985 in Saint Ignatius Church at the University of San Francisco. There was a briefing on the progress of plans undertaken and the proposed program was reviewed. Those present expressed their elation over Archbishop John R. Quinn's tentative acceptance to be the principal celebrant for the Solemn Mass of Peace. It was also announced that the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Elliott Abrams, planned to attend and give an address. The announcement was also made that invitations had been sent to local and state dignitaries and religious leaders, and that representatives from the Albanian Moslem and Orthodox communities, as well as representatives from all Albanian groups in exile had been invited.

Following the meeting a Mass of Thanksgiving was offered in the Mission Church of Santa Clara commemorating the 72nd anniversary of Albania's independence. A potluck dinner was then enjoyed by all. Afterwards, Professor Zef V. Nekaj of the Presidio-Monterey Language Institute spoke on Albania's Independence and read a proclamation from Governor Deukmejian for this occasion which we are pleased to print.



Editorial

This special issue of our *Bulletin* is dedicated to the anniversary of forty years of the most brutal and systematic religious persecution known in the history of man. Enver Hoxha has ruled Albania like a shiek, severing himself from all outside influence. Even the Soviet Union and Mainland China were too lenient for him towards religion, and they did not represent the pure Leninist ideal of the godless state. He has attempted to create the world's first completely atheistic country, subjecting all people to the Communist state for their spiritual as well as physical needs.

Despite the tortures and martyrdoms, religious belief and practice have not been extinguished as the Albanian government would have one believe. There is evidence that families still quietly instruct their children; there are secret and hurried baptisms, hidden prayed rosaries, marriage and funeral rites administered. The Church, indeed, continues to live and suffer in silence. This silence can be broken only by the sister churches of Albania, that is, all the churches throughout the world who profess Jesus Christ. As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy."

The tragic anniversary, which we are commemorating, moves us to ask religious and civic leaders to include in their concerns not only the plight of the oppressed masses in Central America but also the plight of believers in the Soviet Union, Viet Nam, North Korea, Czechoslovakia, etc. as well, where practicing Christians are denied employment and educational opportunities. Greater still is the need for public concern and action on behalf of the suffering believers in Albania, generally neglected and ignored by the media and civil rights activists.

During the Nazi regime, Dietrich Bonhoeffer started a Christian community called "The Confessing Church." This group of believers searched their souls and confessed that they had actually assisted the Nazis by not opposing them. At the same time, this Confessing Church began an underground scheme for smuggling out Jews to safe havens.

Let our churches be like the Confessing Church. Throughout the world, let communities of believers make an examination of conscience. Are they supporting their Albanian brothers and sisters in every way who profess their faith with hardship and death? There is much to be done. People must be educated about religious persecution. Pressure must be brought against Albania through the United Nations in an effort to stop the savage persecution of believers and restore religious tolerance. Indeed, that is the main purpose of this journal.

Authors

Eleuterio F. Fortino is a Vatican dignitary in the Secretariat for Christian Unity.

Abdi Bayram is a retired American educator of Albanian descent now living in California with his family.

John Cardino, an Arbëresh, teaches English in New Jersey and is a human rights activist.

Anton Logoreci is an author and political commentator for the BBC in London.

Xhevat Kallaixhi is a veteran Albanian journalist and the editor of the Albanian newspaper, *Dielli*.

James V. Schall, S.J. is a professor in the government department of Georgetown University and author of several books.

Hans Kristian Neerskov is a pastor of Dansk Europamission of Denmark.

Karl G. Schmude is a freelance writer for Catholic weeklies in Australia.

Reona Peterson Jolly is an author and Christian youth educator from New Zealand.

Rexhep Krasniqi, a former Secretary of Education, is now the president of the Free Albania Committee in New York.

Janice A. Broun is a freelance religious writer from Scotland.

Stephan Lipsius is a German student now studying Albanian.

Peter R. Prifti, author and journalist, is presently teaching at the University of California at San Diego.

Melhem Mobarak is a noted collector of books, lithographs and engravings on Albania.

Paul McDonnell, author of many devotional poems, lives in San Francisco and is associated with our Center.

Mario F. Brasacchio, an Arbëresh priest, poet and educator is a frequent contributor to our *Bulletin*.

Tomor S. Zavalani, author of a sign language book *Jet Era Glyphs* also writes poetry in English and Albanian.

Acknowledgements and Notes

We wish to acknowledge and thank Bill Morlock, James Torrens, S.J., Stella Pilgrim, Anne Farrelly, Tennant C. Wright, S.J., Erasmo Leiva, Dave Previale, Kevin Garvin, Charles Fischer, Peter J. Fleming, S.J., Michael McNaughton, and Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J., for their assistance in preparing this special issue.

The editor and staff of the *Bulletin* are very grateful for the many letters received following our 1983 issue. These letters of appreciation and encouragement move us to continue in this apostolate, until religious freedom is won for Albania.

Unfortunately, due to limited space, we are unable to print the letters in this special issue. We are grateful for them, however, and we look forward to the continued support from our friends and readers.

Expenses for the commemoration and the publication of this special issue observing the fortieth anniversary of religious persecution in Albania have been a great financial burden for our Center. Some of our friends have graciously responded to our appeal of December 12, 1983 and, at this time, we wish to acknowledge their generosity.

Sponsors: Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, Otto Knösel-Prem, Rina Krevzell, Zef V. Nekaj, Mary McDonald.

Co-sponsors: Abdi Bayram, Donald Banas, Zef Shllaku.

Benefactors: (Rev.) Primus Ndrevashty, Oswald Deva, Arthur and Agnes Righter, Olivo and Ida Milanese, Ismet and Maria Lesko, (Rev.) John Neiman, Ibrahim Kulla, Patricia Newton, (Fr.) William J. Perkins, S.J., Kolë N. Bajraktari, (Rev.) Rene A. Constant, Prenk Gruda, John Cardino, Dudley Perkins Foundation, Tomë Dodaj, Logie Dennis, Akil Derani, Flouray Hylie, Rexhep Krasniqi, Sophis Kallos, Joseph Mëhilli, Catherine Murphy.

We are also grateful to those who have contributed in any way. May our good Lord reward all.



attack.

Professor Gabrani, also known until 1933 as "Shemsedin Talip Diler," prior to his conversion to Catholicism, was born in 1903 in Libohova, Southern Albania. His father, a physician, tended the people of Bitlis in Anatolia (Turkey) during an epidemic of typhoid where he subsequently contracted during an epidemic of typhoid where he subsequently contracted the disease and died, leaving behind a young widow of 29 and three sons.

Despite the loss of his father and the hardships that resulted, Gabrani undertook his higher education after obtaining a scholarship from the Albanian government to attend the Law School of the University of Rome. Here he achieved scholarly excellence and was asked to teach at the same University.

He later accepted a position as a lecturer in Roman Law at the University of Constantinople, where his family was living. Following a successful tenure and publication of the law journal, "Capitolium", Professor Gabrani entered private practice as a lawyer where he became highly esteemed and sought after as a legal advisor to western European communities, particularly the French, Italian, and Belgian communities. In recognition for his work on behalf of these communities, the respective governments awarded him with highest awards of merit.

It was during this time that Professor Gabrani met the Apostolic Nuncio to Turkey, Archbishop Angelo G. Roncalli (later to become Pope John XXIII). Through his friendship with him Gabrani was later to convert to the Catholic faith.

Professor Gabrani looked with special pride upon two formative experiences in his life: his birth in Albania and his contacts with Pope John XXIII. After a highly successful career as an academic, a diplomat, and an attorney Gabrani retained an undiminished affection for his

homeland (Albania) and for the Catholic Church.

At the age of 74 he retired and went to live in England with his daughter and family. Gabrani had always admired the English — and now came to love them. The English too loved him and admired his humanity and wisdom. But his greatest friends were always children. His sense of humor and compassion attracted children of all ages. He was affectionately called "Baba" ("daddy" in Albanian).

During his long life, Professor Gabrani has helped and touched many people of different nationalities and religions, one of whom was Mary Velma Smith O'Neil of the Bay Area. In a letter to her, shortly before his death, an indication of his greatness and intimation of his inner spirit is conveyed:

In our life the beautiful moments are much more rare than the bad, the Spring is shorter than the other seasons of the year... but Chinese wisdom counsels us to know how to support the ten months of cold and shadow to be able to appreciate the two months of life.

At the end of my long life God has wished to recompense me. If during my long life I had the occasion to perform some good action, if I tried to assist some stray soul, Jesus came to my aid. An old Albanian proverb says, 'Do good and throw it in the sea, if the fish don't see it, God will.' Nothing is lost in life, neither good nor evil. When you arrive at my age you will remember this. That is why, if you have made doing good the fundamental principle of your life, you will always receive it. You are not capable of doing the contrary. I do not cease to pray for you all.

Professor Pjeter Gabrani is buried in the churchyard of Coiswald Village of Kempston, England, where he had lived with his daughter and her family, much loved and much missed by many.

Our Center extends its deepest sympathy to his family and friends in England and elsewhere.

Kolë Çuni (Chuni) (1915-1984)

We were grieved to learn of the sudden death of our friend and supporter, Kolë Çuni, who died in New York on December 18, 1984.

Çuni was a native of Shkodra where he completed his studies at the esteemed Franciscan College, *Antonionum*, in the mid thirties. He pursued his military education at the Officers

School of Tirana and served as Albanian military attache in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Following World War II, Çuni escaped to Italy where he volunteered as a parachutist joining the freedom fighters in Albania. Çuni was a member of that remarkable group of people who were dropped in Albania to reinforce and organize the anti-communist resistance movement. Through the treachery and betrayal of Kim Philby, a British intelligence officer for the Russians, the operation failed and most of the parachutists were captured, sent to prison camps or executed. Kolë Çuni was one of the few who managed to avoid capture and for two years he and his group of fifty freedom fighters evaded military and police pursuit. In 1951, Çuni and his group escaped to Yugoslavia where they were interned for three years. After being permitted to go to Italy, Çuni and many of his friends emigrated to the United States in 1956.

Settling in New York, Çuni was engaged in numerous activities with the large Albanian community in that city all the while working hard to make his own living.

He distinguished himself as an editor of the Albanian Catholic Life Magazine, which was founded in 1969 by Msgr. Joseph J. Oroshi, spiritual leader of the Albanian Catholics in the United States.

His brother, Gac Çuni, whose songs and poetry were revered in Albania despite governmental prohibition, died in the infamous prison of Burrel in 1956.

Kolë Çuni will be missed by all who knew him and especially by his close friends who enjoyed his cheerful and poignant timely humor. To his family and relatives in Albania, our Center expresses its deepest sympathy.

Gjon Mili (1904-1984)

Gjon Mili, world famous photographer and pioneer of the high-speed electronic flash, was born in Albania in 1904. He immigrated to the United States in 1923 where he often proudly proclaimed his Albanian heritage. Mili's works were published in *Life* magazine and in several books. The Paris daily *France Soir*, hailed him as "... one of the world's greatest photographers, if not the greatest." He died this past year of pneumonia at age 79.

Dr. Viktor Koliqi (1926-1984)

Dr. Koliqi came from a well-known Albanian family of Shkodra. His brothers, Ernest and Michael, contributed greatly to the Albanian cultural and religious revival. Ernest was a prolific writer, poet, and distinguished educator at the University of Rome; while Fr. Michael was a

In Memoriam

Josyp Cardinal Slipyi (1892-1984)

Cardinal Josyp Slipyi was Archbishop of Lvov, in the Ukraine, for the Ukrainian-Rite Catholics. After the Second World War he became a target of the Stalinist campaign to eliminate Ukrainian-Rite Catholics by forcefully incorporating them into the Russian Orthodox Church. Because he would not conform to such Soviet pressure, Slipyi was imprisoned and sent to Siberia from 1945 to 1963. Through the efforts of Pope John XXIII he was released into the custody of the Vatican.

Like Cardinals Wysinski of Poland, Mindzenti of Hungary, Beran of Czechoslovakia and Stepinac of Croatia, Slipyi was a towering figure of Catholic resistance to religious oppression in the Eastern bloc countries.

During his long residence in Rome, Cardinal Slipyi frequented the Italo-Albanian (Arberesh) communities and proved himself a friend to the suffering Church in Albania.

Papas (Father) Sotir Furxhi (1926-1984)



Following a brief and incurable illness, our friend and supporter Father Sotir Furxhi, died in Rome on November 8, 1984.

Father was born in the beautiful city of Korçë, Southern Albania, on April 24, 1926, where he

began his primary education. In 1939, he entered the Seminary of Benedict XV in Grottaferrata, near Rome. He continued his studies at the Gregorian University and was ordained on December 12, 1952.

Father Furxhi was then sent to serve in Piana degli Albanesi, Sicily, first as associate and later as pastor of St. Anthony's Church there. He served his flock faithfully for 32 years in this Church.

Although far from his roots and his family and friends, he felt at home with the Arbëresh — like being among his own people.

Father was revered for his golden heart full of compassion for the poor, particularly for the post-war Albanian refugees who were seeking assistance in Italy, at that time.

In longing for his homeland, Father always prayed for Albania and its people, confident that human freedom would one day be restored.

Father is missed not only by his flock but by all the Arbëresh and Albanians who knew and loved him, especially by those of us at the Center who welcomed his encouragement and prayers.

Msgr. Emile Dejardin (1911-1983)

On December 14, 1983 Msgr. Emile Dejardin, a dedicated friend of Albanians, died in Bruxelles, Belgium. Following World War II, Monsignor became aware of the plight of the suffering Albanians, particularly those scattered throughout refugee camps in Europe. In 1956, he initiated a massive program for the resettlement of these refugees in Belgium. Besides providing housing, Monsignor Dejardin helped thousands of Albanians secure employment, education, and other necessities of life in their new country.

both Christian and Muslim Albanians held him in great esteem and shared a deep appreciation for the pastoral care and dedication he showed them.

Monsignor Dejardin was not only a caring father for the material well-being of Albanians but an advocate of national, cultural and religious identity. Among his many efforts in this regard was the organizing of Albanians to erect a monument to their national hero, George Kastrioti-Skanderbeg. This monument was offi-

cially dedicated in September 1969, in Bruxelles.

Albanians both in Belgium and throughout the world, will miss Msgr. Emile Dejardin and remember him with fondness in their hearts.

Prof. Giuseppe Schiro (1905-1984)

With sorrow we have learned of the death of Professor Giuseppe Schiro, an outstanding Arbëresh scholar and author of numerous literary works.

Born in 1905 in Contessa Entellina, near Palermo, Professor Schiro pursued his education at the prestigious Corsini College of San Demetrio Corone (Cosenza). This college, founded by Pope Clement XII in 1732 for the Albanians of Calabria, recently celebrated its 250th anniversary.

Giuseppe Schiro taught at the Universities of Padua and Rome, where he authored several books on Albanian literature, language and Byzantine studies. In recognition for his scientific achievements and his love for the people of Greece, Schiro was named a member of the Athen's Academy of Science in 1975 and, four years later, was awarded an honorary degree from the University of Athens.

In addition to his literary and scientific undertakings, Schiro found time to write articles for Albanian publication, especially the well-known journal *Shekulli* (Le Pleiadi), directed and owned by his colleague, Professor Ernest Koliqi.

Professor Schiro was also very active in the work of Christian Unity. In 1964, he was named a member of the Catholic delegation under Cardinal Agostino Bea (President of the Secretariat for Christian Unity), which returned the relic of St. Andrew the Apostle to the Orthodox Church.

With the passing of Giuseppe Schiro — the Arbëresh and, indeed, all Albanians have lost a devoted chronicler of their cultural history.

Professor Pjeter Gabrani (1903-1984)

Professor Pjeter Gabrani, a contributor and supporter of our journal, died suddenly in England, on September 6, 1984, following a heart

through mysticism.

In the view of the Church Fathers, however, Montanism was much too individualistic. As such, it threatened to destroy discipline among believers and especially, to abolish belief in the hierarchical Church as the true representative of apostolic succession. The bishops' authority, in spite of occasional abuse or tepidity, derived from Christ's institution. To evade the threat to these beliefs, the Church declared Montanism a heresy in the 2nd Century, A.D.

Arianism — The most serious doctrinal challenge to the early Christian Church came from the movement known as Arianism in the 4th Century A.D. The movement is named after Arius, a Greek theologian of the Church (d. 336 A.D.) and presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt. Desiring to establish firmly the unity and simplicity of God — in effect, arguing for unitarianism — Arius rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and denied that Christ was one with God from the beginning.

The fierce controversy, which also involved believers and Bishops in Illyria, was resolved by the famous Council of Nicaea (now a part of Asia Minor), which was held in 325 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great. The historic synod of the Bishops of the Church affirmed the identity of nature or oneness of Christ with God the Father, and condemned Arius as an heretic. The decision of the bishops was embodied in the famous Nicene Creed, which expresses the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, and is recited to this day by millions of Christians everywhere as a part of the church ritual.

Fotini heresy — A less serious doctrinal challenge in the 4th Century A.D. came from Fotini, a bishop of Sirmium, then a town in Illyria. In 343 A.D. Bishop Fotini propagated the doctrine that Christ was only a man, but that he was nevertheless endowed with special qualities that united him with God. The teaching of Fotini was condemned two years later by a Synod of Bishops that convened in Milan, Italy.

Pelagianism — The movement of Pelagianism takes its name from Pelagius, a British theologian (circa 360-420 A.D.). Pelagianism questioned what would later be known as the Augustinian doctrine of total human depravity, which makes men wholly dependent on Divine Grace for their salvation. It argued that human beings are not devoid of power, and that they retain the initiative in the process that leads to their salvation. The movement further maintained that men are not born sinful, that the human race was not condemned because of Adam's fall, and that its redemption was not guaranteed by Christ's resurrection.

These teachings amounted to an affirmation of the freedom of the will and denial of the doctrine of "original sin." Pelagianism had an air of "modernism" and "humanism" that ran counter to the main current of theological thought in the Church, namely the "Augustinian" doctrine of predestination and salvation by grace. Consequently, the movement was pronounced a heresy to be shunned by true Christians.

For four hundred years the Church, operating as one single body, battled successfully against these rival religions and heretical movements. Nevertheless, ever since the Church emerged in history as a religious organization, it developed under a welter of conflicting influences emanating from Rome and Byzantium (later Constantinople). These differences were political, cultural, ritualistic and personal in nature — to mention some of the more prominent ones — and in time split the Church into an Eastern and a Western jurisdiction. This happened in 395 A.D., when the Roman Empire divided into East (Constantinople) and West (Rome).

From 395 A.D. until the Great Schism in the Christian Church in 1054 — a period of nearly seven hundred years — Albania's religious dependency fluctuated between East and West. In part because of its sensitive geographical position, situated as it is midway between Rome and Constantinople, the Albanian Church suffered considerably from the consequences of the antagonism between those two centers of Christianity. After the schism of 1054, the northern part of Albania came under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church, while the southern part of the country recognized the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, and came to be known as the Orthodox (or Eastern Rite) Church of Albania. Subsequently, the Christian Church of Albania served as a bridge between the two cultures of East and West, centered in Byzantium and Rome.

Conversions to Islam in Albania

After Scanderbeg's heroic 25-year-long struggle against the Ottoman invaders ended in 1468, Turkish power and influence began to affect Albanian society in a variety of ways. At first slowly, then at a more rapid pace, the Turks affected also the religious life of the Albanian people, causing many to become Moslems.

Albanians who converted to Islam did so not for religious reasons; in other words, not because of a religious preference for Islam, but for pragmatic reasons, in view of the new situation created by the Ottoman conquest. They converted chiefly for political, economic, and personal reasons, most often to avoid persecution, including the payment of very heavy taxes, or to gain employment and advancement in the Ottoman administration. According to the *Sharia* — the Islamic law which governed civic life during the Ottoman reign — Christians had hardly any rights, and as a consequence were reduced to second-class subjects or *rayas*. The term connoted a menial condition that amounted to serfdom. Apart from other hardships, the Christians were obliged to pay crushing taxes to the Turkish authorities and to the Sultan. Such a policy toward Christian subjects amounted to economic violence and oppression. On the other hand, the Turks offered enticing careers in politics and the military to Christians who would accept the Islamic faith. Some of the leading families in Albania took advantage of the offer and turned apostate.

The spread of Islam in Albania was aided also by factors of a religious characters, peculiar to the church at the time. In general, the clergy were not educated enough to perform well their priestly duties. Indeed, some of them were illiterate, and consequently ill-equipped to counteract the pressure of Islam among the ranks of the faithful. Furthermore, a number of bishops of the catholic Church were foreigners who did not know Albanian, and could not communicate effectively with the faithful in their jurisdictions. This, too, proved to be a handicap in resisting the process of conversion to Islam.

In brief, heavy taxation of the Christian peasantry, the apostasy of leading families, the weaknesses within the Church itself, and not least the waves of persecution of Christians by the Turks, combined to cause most of the Albanian population to turn Moslem by the end of the 19th Century.

At first, however, conversion in Albania proceeded slowly. During the first two centuries of Ottoman rule — from 1388, when the Turks first appeared in Albania, until 1600 — only a small percentage of Albanians had become Moslems. Skendi notes that in 1610 "the Catholic population exceeded the Moslem by a ratio of ten to one," and that in 1688 Shkodër "had only eleven mosques as compared with twenty-six at the beginning of the twentieth century".

The propagation of the Islamic faith ran into opposition among Catholic Albanians. For example, when war broke out between Turkey and Venice in 1645, the metropolitans of Shkodër and Durrës supported a plan for a popular uprising against the Ottomans. The plan was detected by the Turks, who reacted by punishing the Catholics and their leaders, and destroying many of their churches and monasteries. Again in 1649, "the Catholic Archbishop of

Durrës, Mark Skura, led a force of 7,000 armed men in an attack against the Turks in Shkodër.¹⁸ These are but two of the many instances of Catholic resistance to Turkish occupation.

Because of such resistance and the ties of the Albanian Catholic Church to the Vatican and other Catholic powers in the West, the Ottomans viewed Catholicism as an enemy. An Albanian historian has suggested that the attitude of the Turks towards the Catholics began to harden about the middle of the 15th Century, as a consequence of Scanderbeg's struggle against their rule, in alliance with Papacy and Italian states sympathetic to the Albanian cause. Ottoman distrust and enmity towards Catholicism increased in the following century when the Turks lost the naval battle at Lepanto (1571) against the Catholic powers of Spain, Venice, and the Papacy.¹⁹ Apparently it was not a coincidence that waves of conversion to Islam in the Catholic part of Albania occurred when Catholic powers in the West, such as Venice and Austria, were at war with the Turks. At such times, the Turkish occupiers stepped up the pressure on the Catholic population to convert or suffer oppression. For a long time the Turks denied religious freedom to the Catholics in Albania. It was only in 1609 that a Catholic prelate, Archbishop Marinus of Shkodër, obtained a *firman* or decree from the Sultan granting limited religious freedom to the Catholics.²⁰

The fierce pressure to convert to Islam, especially from the 17th to the 19th Century, created a novel situation among Albanian Christians. Dire circumstances forced a portion of them to become "Crypto-Christians." This is a term applied to those who led double religious lives. They professed to be Moslems and outwardly practiced the Moslem faith, whereas in private they adhered to their Christian faith. It was a stratagem to avoid persecution by the Turks who looked upon Christians as "infidels," and at the same time remain true to their faith.

Within the Catholic community such believers were called Crypto-Catholics, or *laramani* in Albanian. Groups of Crypto-Catholics inhabited the regions of Prizren, Pejë, the plain of Kosovë in what is now Yugoslavia, and Lura in Albania proper.

An incident involving a community of Crypto-Catholic Albanians in Kosovë tells much about their precarious life. It happened almost a century and a half ago. In 1846, when the Turks moderated somewhat their policy on Christians, 25 Crypto-Catholic families of the parish of Stubla near the town of Ferizaj, Kosovë, declared their intention to profess openly their Christian faith. In response, the Turkish authorities promptly exiled 187 of the males of Stubla to Anatolia (now Asia Minor). Forced to walk to their destined place of exile, they made the long and mournful journey bound in chains, beaten and harassed along the way. At the intervention of the French government, however, the Sultan ordered their release. But 57 of them never made it back to Stubla. They had perished in the two-year ordeal from 1846 to 1848.

Later, the official who was responsible for their exile, a Maliq bey of the town of Gjiçan in Kosovë, argued that had he not taken such action, all of Kosovë would have turned Catholic. It's a revealing comment, as it indicates how tenuous and fragile the hold of Islam was on Albanians in Kosovë as recently as the last century. In November of 1981, Dr. Gjergj Gjergji-Gashi, a priest of the diocese of Prizren, completed a doctoral dissertation on the Crypto-Catholics of Stubla. It is entitled, *Albanian Martyrs of the Diocese Skopje-Prizren in Kosova, 1846-1848*. The study is expected to be published in book form.

Councils of Albanian Bishops-An Albanian Pope (Clement XI)

There have been only five councils of Albanian bishops to date. The documentary sources indicate where some of them were convened. But here, for reasons of simplification and clarity, we have listed them numerically. These councils are generally recognized as milestones in the history of the Catholic Church in Albania. At these convocations, the highest prelates of the Church took decisions that had important consequences not only for the Catholic faithful, but for the whole Albanian nation.

First Council of Albanian Bishops — The first all-Albanian council of bishops in the history of the Albanian Catholic Church was the Council of Dioclea (later Podgorica and now Titograd in Montenegro). It was held in 1199 A.D. In the meantime, the Slavic provinces of Serbia and Montenegro had transferred their religious allegiance from Rome to the Patriarch of Constantinople. This division of church loyalties between northern Albanians and their Slavic neighbors set the stage for the friction that developed between the two ethnic groups during "the next seven hundred years".²¹ As a consequence of the split, Albanian Catholics were exposed to the hostility and sometimes open persecution by the Orthodox Slavs, thus marring relations between them for centuries.

Second Council of Albanian Bishops — This council was held in St. John's Church in the village of Mercinjë, near Lezhë, Albania. The year was 1703. It was presided over by the Primate of the Albanian Catholic Church, Vincent (Visko) Zmajević, Archbishop of Antivari (later Tivar, now Bar in Montenegro). A prelate of Croatian origin, Archbishop Zmajević was also the Apostolic Delegate to the council, which is to say, the official representative of the Vatican. The Second Council concerned itself with key problems of Christian life; among them the problem of conversions to Islam. The council took a number of decisions intended to discourage apostasy and to reward those who came back to the faith, after converting to Islam, by admitting them to the sacraments of the Church.

The Second Council took place under the vicarage, and indeed on the initiative of Pope Clement XI, who was Albanian (Arbëresh). The council has come to be known in history as the *Concilium Albanicum* or "Council of the Albanians." Mindful of his Albanian origin, and also of the plight of Albanian Catholics in his time, Pope Clement called the council with a view to alleviating the afflictions besetting his fellow-countrymen and the land of his origin, then groaning under heavy Ottoman pressure. This is apparent from a letter of Archbishop Zmajević to the Pope concerning a pastoral visit he had made to Albania just before the convocation of the council. He says: "In obedience to your order, I traveled to all parts of the land, and witnessed its suffering. I saw aliens who had invaded the house of God, the desecrated shrines, the profaned altars. There was hardly a place where (Christian) people could gather to pray. I saw old men in pain, priest-servants of the Lord moaning, and shepherds of the flock slain and their sheep scattered about. . . ."²²

The work of the council went well. So well, in fact, that its proceedings — upon being examined by a special commission of the Vatican — were considered important enough to be published as a book, in both Latin and Albanian.

The Council of the Albanians was significant, first of all, because it was held at a time when to be or not to be a Christian, owing to extreme Turkish pressure, was the burning question of the day. Second, the Christian faithful of the time came to realize more clearly — upon seeing an Albanian Pope on the throne of St. Peter — that even small nations enjoyed full rights within the Church. Finally, the very book that was published on the proceedings of the Council was "a valuable monument" to the Albanian language, in the sense that Albanian showed itself to be rich enough to express theological, sacramental and spiritual concepts and ideas of a rather high order of abstraction.

The sense of elation and ethnic pride among Albanian bishops taking part in the Second Council is evident in the letter which Archbishop Zmajević addressed to Pope Clement at the conclusion of the Council. He writes: "Holiness, under your patronage and protection, our country is filled with joy, because after so many years it has begun to breathe and to open its eyes. Through an Albanian Pope, our country has become illustrious and our common

motherland is proud of your name and glory. In the meantime, I, myself, with the whole Albanian people pray God that He may preserve you, our Albanian Pope, for a long time, for the good of the universal church and our people."¹²

The Albanian nation had cause to rejoice in its illustrious son. Gjon Francesk (Giovanni Francesco) was born in Urbino, Italy in 1649; he died in 1721 at the age of 72. Already as a young man and student he showed signs of unusually high intelligence. The reputation of his brilliance prompted Queen Christina of Sweden to invite him, when he was but twenty, to take part in the internationally famous Swedish Academy. Gjon Francesk studied in Rome at the *Collegio Romano*, became a Cardinal at the young age of 41, and was elected Pope in 1700 by unanimous vote — a rare occurrence in the history of papal succession. He reigned as Pope for 21 years, from 1700 to 1721.

By encouraging the propagation of religious literature in Albanian, Pope Clement XI aided the development of Albanian education in early 18th Century. Furthermore, in 1711, at his initiative, a chair for the study of Albanian was inaugurated at the Institute of Montorio in Rome.¹⁴

In sum, the Albanian Pope left behind him a fine record of service in several respects. He made important contributions to the Church. He furthered the advancement of the Albanian language and education. And he helped the cause of the arts. During his reign he enriched the Vatican Library with valuable works of art and world literature, stimulated the study of archeology, founded an Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Rome, and restored and embellished numerous churches in Rome and elsewhere in the papal state of that time. Aware of his interest and support of the arts, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* has called him "a generous patron of arts and letters."¹⁵

We shall conclude this discussion of the Albanian Pope by citing some excerpts from the "Universal Prayer," whose authorship has been attributed to him:

*Lord, I believe in You; increase my faith.
I trust You; strengthen my trust.*

*Guide me by your wisdom,
Correct me with your justice
Comfort me with your mercy,
Protect me with your power.*

*I offer You, Lord, my thoughts; to be fixed on You;
My words: to have You for their theme;
My actions: to reflect my love for You;
My sufferings: to be endured for your greater glory.*

*I want to do what You ask of me,
In the way You ask,
For as long as You Ask,
Because You ask it.*

*Lord, enlighten my understanding,
Strengthen my will,
Purify my heart,
And make me holy.*

*Let me love You, my Lord and my God,
And see myself as I really am:
A pilgrim in this world,*

*A Christian called to respect and love
All whose lives I touch.*

*Help me to conquer anger with gentleness,
Greed by generosity,
Apathy by fervor.
Help me to forget myself
And reach out towards others.*

*Make me prudent in planning,
Courageous in taking risks,
Make me patient in suffering,
Unassuming in prosperity.*

*Keep me, Lord, attentive at prayer,
Temperate in food and drink,
Diligent in my work,
Firm in my good intentions.*

*Let my conscience be clear,
My conduct without fault,
My speech blameless,
My life well-ordered.*

Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.¹⁶

Third Council of Albanian Bishops — Nearly 170 years after the second council, a Third Council of Albanian Bishops took place in the year 1871 (presumably in Tiavar). The presiding prelate was Karl Pooten, Archbishop of Tivar and Shkodër. He was the Apostolic Delegate to the council and Primate of the Albanian Catholic Church. Unlike the previous council, this one was preoccupied above all with questions of Church ritual, and ways and means to strengthen the faith, including religious instruction for children. The council also took decisions regarding the duties of priests and bishops, and the scope of activities for missionaries of the Church.¹⁷

Fourth Council of Albanian Bishops — This council was held in the Cathedral of Shkodër in 1895, during the reign of Pope Leo XIII. The presiding prelate and Apostolic Delegate to the council was the Archbishop of Shkodër, Pashk Guerini. By this time, the fortunes of the Church had changed for the better. Many new churches were built, Catholic schools were opened, and the first steps had been taken in the teaching of the Albanian language. The council took strict positions on certain matters of faith. It prohibited the giving of non-Christian names to infants at baptism, and it declared that the Church would no longer tolerate Crypto-Catholicism. Instead, the bishops called on all the faithful to profess and practice openly their Christian faith, regardless of the risks.

The Fourth Council of Albanian Bishops is remembered today, among other things, as the council that proclaimed the Madonna of Shkodër (or the Mother of Good Council), as "Protectress of Albania," and declared April 25 as a Feast Day for all Albanian dioceses.¹⁸

Fifth Council of Albanian Bishops — A Conference of Albanian Bishops was held secretly in Shkodër shortly after the end of World War II, in September, 1945. Considered as the Fifth Council of Albanian Bishops, it was convened to respond to the new situation created in Albania following the takeover of power by the Communists. More specifically, the council took up the question of the persecution of the Church by the new government. Bishop Fran Gjini, Abbot of Mirlita, was elected Regent (in lieu of the Apostolic Delegate) at the council and, as such, became the spokesman for all Albanian bishops. He was empowered by the council to enter into negotiations with the government, with a view to resolving the conflict between the

Church and the regime. Toward that end, Bishop Gjini wrote a letter to Enver Hoxha, head of the Albanian government, advising him of the Church's desire to cooperate with the government in order to overcome the strife between them. His initiative was curtly rejected by Hoxha, the persecution of the Church continued and intensified, and Gjini himself, along with many other prelates and clergy, perished as a result.¹⁶

In sum, the five Councils of Albanian Bishops played a significant role in charting the course of the Church and shaping its destiny at critical moments in its history.

Austria and Albanian Catholics

During the greater part of its long history, the Albanian Catholic Church developed relations mostly with the Catholic states in Italy. In more recent centuries, however, the Church began to forge links with Austria. A powerful basis for these links, apparently, was their joint opposition to Ottoman and Slavic powers. The connection between the two began to take shape toward the end of the 16th Century. At that time, working together with a Franciscan from Croatia, Francesco Bertucci, a number of Albanian Highland chiefs and personages in Shkodër, Durrës, and Prizren "began to orient themselves toward the emperor of Austria."¹⁷ Their motive was to enlist Austria's help in the struggle against the Ottoman Turks.

As a result of the Treaty of Vienna (1616), and in particular after the defeat of Turkey in the war of 1698 by Austria, Russia, Venice, and Poland, Austria won the right from Turkey to act as the protector of Catholic populations in the Balkans, including the Catholics in northern Albania. The arrangement with Turkey is known by the term *Kultusprotektorat*, a German word meaning "religious protectorate".

For over a century Austria's *Kultusprotektorat* remained largely dormant, as far as its application to Catholic Albania was concerned. About the middle of the 19th Century, however, Austria began to activate its policy of aiding Albanian Catholics. Vienna now sent missions to Albania to help open Catholic schools and build or repair Catholic churches. Taking advantage of Turkey's defeat in the Crimean War by Russia (1853), Vienna pressured Istanbul to lift a ban it had imposed on the Jesuit order in Albania in 1842. By supporting Catholic-run schools, Austria aimed at developing Albanian national consciousness and unity as a counterpoise to the Slavic states. At the same time, through the protection and aid it gave to Albanian Catholics, Austria gained for itself political influence in Shkodër and the northern Highlands, and a privileged position among the great powers of Europe that were competing for influence in Albania.

Among the beneficiaries of Austrian protection and aid to Albanian Catholics were also some of the religious orders within the Church. This by virtue of the fact that the orders, in general, were very active in the fields of education and culture, whose cultivation was a primary goal of Austrian policy in Albania.

The Albanian Catholic Church counts in its ranks a variety of religious orders of men and women. For our purposes here, however, we will confine ourselves to the religious orders of men, since the religious orders of women did not appear in Albania until the end of the last century. Accordingly, we shall consider here such orders as the Basilians, Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, Lazarists, Salesians and perhaps one or two others. We shall describe or discuss them briefly in the passages that follow, since they are a vital part of the history of the Church, and important elements in its structure and operations.

Basilians — The Basilians are monks who follow the monastic rules established by St. Basil the Great in the 4th Century A.D. St. Basil was a leading opponent of Arianism, of which we spoke earlier. The guiding rules of the order have traditionally been hard work, deeds of charity and attention to the common life of the people. The order of St. Basil was widely diffused in the Balkans and among the Arbëresh in southern Italy. It is said that the Basilians "carried on the evangelization of all of Albania" until the 6th and 7th Centuries, when the Benedictines came into the country.

Benedictines and Dominicans — The term "Benedictines" refers to members of the Catholic clergy who adhere to the order of St. Benedict, which was founded about 529 A.D. by the Italian monk, Benedict of Nursia. The Dominicans are friars belonging to the order that was established in 1215 by St. Dominic. It behooves us to assert the great merits of the Benedictine order in pre-Islamic Albania. The Benedictines are credited with having prevented Albania from becoming a prey or victim of the Schism that had occurred in the Church (although, as mentioned earlier, the Church in Albania suffered much as a result of the Schism). This was no small accomplishment, inasmuch as the country was subjected to great pressure from the Patriarch of Serbia, on the one hand, and the Patriarch of Constantinople, on the other, both of whom used every means of propaganda to cause Albania to submit to their jurisdiction and control. The work of the Benedictine Fathers was continued by the Dominican Fathers, who followed them. We might add that to this day there exist many ruins of old churches and monasteries in Albania, especially in the north, belonging to the Benedictine and Dominican orders.

The Sons of Divine Providence — This order was established in Italy in 1872, by Fr. Louis Orione, OFM, recently proclaimed Blessed. Priests and brothers of the order came to Albania in the 1930's, and were well liked by people of all creeds for their work with the poor, the sick, and the orphaned. They operated orphanages in Shkodër, Koryë, and Vlora.

Lazarists — This is the popular name of monks belonging to the order of the "Congregation of Priests of the Mission" in the Roman Catholic Church. The order originated in France in the 17th Century (1632). Among the chief objectives of the order are: religious instruction of the lower classes, the training of the clergy, and missionary work in foreign lands. Though relatively few in number in Albania, the Lazarists have done much useful work there, in keeping with the tradition of their order.

Salesians — They are members of the Society of St. Francis de Sales, a Roman Catholic congregation founded in Turin in 1845, and dedicated chiefly to education and missionary work. They, too, have been active to some extent in Albania.

Franciscans (O.F.M. — Order of Friars Minor) — It is the Franciscans and the Jesuit orders, however, which have been the most active and most prominent among the orders of the Catholic Church in Albania. The Franciscan order is the older of the two, going back to St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the order in the 13th Century. Franciscans began work early in Albania, some time in 1283. Already in the 14th Century they established their own province in Durrës, known as *Custodia Durracensis*.

One of their most laudable services is the work they did to prevent the Albanian population from converting to Islam. Indeed, they are said to have "saved Catholicism from ruin during the difficult seventeenth century".²¹ Even in very trying times, *Vëllezërit e Vegjël* (the Little Brothers) did not forsake the people, but stayed close to them, sharing the good and the ill with them. Like good and true shepherds they took care to keep the faith alive among their flock. With living words and by example they inclined the people constantly towards the ideals of the Christian life. As an instance of their steadfast faith and courage we cite here a 1677 report to Pope Innocent XI by Cardinal Urbano Cërri. The Cardinal said of Albanian Franciscans that they "did not lose courage because of dangers and difficulties facing them, but instead increased their zeal, and continued the work of their Mission."²²

The services and contributions to Albania of Franciscan friars — both Albanian and foreign — are many, cover a wide span in time, and not a few of them left an imprint in the cultural history of the country. The first printing press in Albania, which was set up in Shkodër in 1593, is said to have been the

work of Franciscan fathers. They have been active in the field of education since the 17th Century. The school in Pđhanë (1638) was opened by a Franciscan — Pater Hijacinti, an Italian. In 1698, another Franciscan, Father Filipi, opened a private school in Shkodër, his native city. The list of Franciscan writers is long, beginning with chroniclers and scholars in the 17th Century, such as Fr. Zef Iccaron who compiled an Italian-Albanian dictionary (1644), Fr. Didacus a Desio who left a manuscript for an Albanian grammar (1722), and Francesk Anton Santori, who wrote poems in Albanian and *E Mira* ("The Good One", 1887), the first drama in Albanian, as far as is known.²³ Many more Franciscans joined the ranks of those earlier writers in the succeeding decades.

The Franciscans' more recent work in the field of education dates from 1855. In that year they established "the first school in which the Albanian language was taught."²⁴ Called at first the Franciscan School, then *Illyricum*, the school evolved into a college specializing in the humanities. Instruction in Albanian was also given at the Franciscan Seminary that was founded in 1861. Much of the activity of Franciscan friars — whether in the religious, educational, cultural, patriotic, and social fields — centered in Shkodër, where a large number of them resided. They had their own novitiate and school of Philosophy and Theology there. The Franciscans also directed associations and clubs for "Catholic Action," and operated a printing press for books and periodicals. *Hylli i Dritës* (the Star of Light), a literary-cultural magazine, and *Zani i Shën Ndout* (The Voice of St. Anthony), a religious magazine, were two popular and influential publications of the Franciscan friars.

Franciscan Conventuals (Black Franciscans) — These came to Albania in the 1930's. They were predominantly Arbëresh, and were engaged in hospital, social and ecumenical work, with the intent of effecting a union between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. They were active primarily in central and southern Albania.

Jesuits — Compared to the Franciscans, the Jesuits appeared late in Albania, in 1841. In that year three missionaries of the Society of Jesus — the formal name of the Jesuit order — came from Sicily to work in Albania. They came in consequence of a request by Bishop Gulielm of Shkodër to the Vatican's *Collegium de Propaganda Fide* (the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, founded in 1620), to establish a Jesuit Mission in Albania. More precisely, the bishop envisioned the building of a seminary in Shkodër. Working together with the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in Rome, the Vatican in 1856 sent a Jesuit Father, Claudio S. Neri, from Rome to Albania to further the goal of establishing a mission there. Fr. Neri founded a mission in Durrës, then moved to Shkodër to supervise the construction of the seminary there.

The construction of that institution has a rather interesting history, one that illustrates once again the adverse conditions under which the Church has had to operate from time to time. Begun in 1841 by the three Jesuit missionaries from Italy mentioned above, the building was twice razed to the ground by enemies of the Church, a coalition of Turkish authorities and local fanatics. Their violent conduct forced Father Neri to flee Shkodër. The incident attracted international attention and provoked Austria to dispatch a squadron of warships to the mouth of the Buna river, just below Shkodër. Feeling threatened, the Turkish government apologized for the incident, agreed to pay for damages incurred, and allowed work on the construction of the building to resume. Finally, the third attempt at construction succeeded, and the seminary was opened in 1859 with three seminarians. The seminary was called *Kolegja Papnore Shqiptare* (The Albanian Papal College).²⁵

Two of the original seminarians later became well-known Catholic leaders: Msgr. Pjetër Prek Doçi, Abbot of Mirdita, and Dom Ndue Bytyçi, who served as priest, poet and teacher in Kosovë. By 1866 the first five Albanian bishops, part of whose education was acquired at the Papal College (also called the Pontifical Seminary), were consecrated in Shkodër.

By the first decade of our century, the Pontifical Seminary directed by the Jesuits in Shkodër could be favorably compared with seminaries outside of Albania, in terms of the quality of the training offered to students. The program of studies included a rich roster of theological studies (moral theology, dogmatic theology, Sacred Scripture, canon law of the Church, Church history, sacred history), plus languages (Latin, Albanian-Italian, and Greek), history and geography, philosophy, arithmetic and algebra, agronomy, botany, and zoology.

In 1877 the Jesuits founded another institute of higher learning in Shkodër, which later became an influential center of education in the country. This was the St. Francis Xavier (Saverianum) College. Some of the most prominent national figures of modern Albania obtained their education at that college. As was the case at the papal College, so also at the St. Xavier College, the program of instruction included the teaching of Albanian language.

Another Jesuit educational institution was the Apostolic School in Shkodër for the training of high school applicants for their order, which numbered over 40 students. The Jesuits also had a Missionary Center, popularly called "Misioni Stenitës Shqiptar" (Visiting Albanian Mission) which was established in 1886. The main purpose of the Center's apostolate was to bring peace and harmony through pastoral work to the various clans who had alienated themselves from one another by bloody vendettas and other acts of fratricide.

Each year the Jesuit Missionaries crossed Northern Albania (including Kosova) on foot and horseback, preaching the Gospel and instructing children, youth and the elderly in Christian love and forgiveness. Many missionaries of this Center later became famous in Albanian letters, history, botany, etc. Worthy of mention here are Fathers Ded (Dominic) Pasi, Anton Zano, Fulvio Cordignano, Mark Harapi, Daniel Dajani, Gjon Karma and Brother Gjon Pantalija.

In addition to those institutions, the Jesuits operated a variety of associations designed to meet particular needs of students, workers, and Catholic men and women.

Like the Franciscans, the Jesuits had their own printing press in Shkodër. Installed in 1870, the press was soon put in operation, and in 1876 printed its first book in Albanian entitled *Christian Doctrine* (in English translation). It was followed four years later by Father Jak Jungg's *Regole grammaticali sulla lingua albanese* (Rules of Grammar in the Albanian Language), a book intended for teaching courses in Albanian.²⁶ The Jesuits also published periodicals. Two well-known ones were *Lajmtari i Zemërës së Krishit* (The Messenger of the Sacred Heart), a popular religious magazine, and *Leku*, a literary and cultural magazine of high standing that dealt with past and contemporary Albanian affairs.

Albanian Catholic Church in Kosovë

As mentioned earlier, an estimated 100,000 Catholics live in Albanian-populated regions in Yugoslavia, known collectively as Kosovë. Administratively, the term Kosovë at present refers to the Province of Kosovë within the Republic of Serbia. To Albanians, however, Kosovë includes the Albanians in the Province of Kosovë, as well as Albanians living in Macedonia and Montenegro. In speaking, therefore, of the Albanian Catholic Church in Kosovë, we are referring to the diocese of Shkup-Prizren (which is actually comprised of two dioceses: that of Prizren in the Kosovë Province, and that of Shkup or Skopje in Macedonia; however, they are administered jointly as one diocese), and to the ancient archdiocese of Tivar (Bar) in Montenegro.

The Church has old roots in Kosovë and a past with an impressive record of service under stress to the faithful. The archives of the Church show that the Illyrian Catholic Church encountered great difficulties in the course of barbarian invasions and the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans. We learn that in 1319 the Papacy called the Serbian King a "schismatic" and a persecutor of the Catholic Church. Indeed, those terms were applied to all the Serbian rulers of that period. In contrast, the Popes in their correspondence addressed the heads of leading Albanian feudal families, such as the Muzakas and the Arianitis, in such phrases as *dilecti filii* (dear sons), and *Viri catholici* (Brave Catholic men). More indicative still of the Vatican's esteem of Albanian leaders are the titles "Knight of Christ," "Defender of the Faith" and "Champion of Christendom" which they bestowed upon Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu (Scanderbeg). But despite the difficulties encountered with the Serbian rulers, it can be affirmed that the Church did not lose its continuity as an institution in what is now Kosovë.

This is abundantly attested by the history of the Church in that region. A vivid confirmation is provided by the numerous reports (or "relations," to use the technical Catholic term) of pastoral visits among Albanian Catholics in Kosovë that go back four centuries. Thus, a report dated 1584, which was prepared by Papal emissaries Aleksander Komulovic and Toma Raggio, tells of Albanian Catholic parishes in many places in Kosovë: Karadak, Janjevë, Novo Berdë, Trepçë, Prishtinë, Krusheve and other communities. Often the report gives the number of Catholics in the various parishes — 400 in Trepçë, 1500 in Krusheve and so on. Other reports followed: one in 1610 by Marin Bizzi, Archbishop of Tivar; another in 1623 by Pjeter Mazrreku, a native of Prizren; still others in the years 1637-1641 by Gjergj Bardhi who, like Bizzi, was the Archbishop of Tivar. Each succeeding report reinforces the evidence for the widespread presence of Albanian Catholics in the area, as well as other Albanians. (For example, the report of Mazrreku notes that there were some 12,000 Albanian Moslems in the town of Prizren.)²¹ These pastoral reports serve as valuable historical sources concerning the presence and activity of the Church in Kosovë, despite enormous difficulties.

Biographical accounts about the prelates of the Albanian Catholic Church in Kosovë offer further data along the same lines. We learn that the first archbishop to be appointed to the Diocese of Shkup (1656) was Ndre Bogdani, an Albanian. He was followed to that post in 1677 by his nephew, the illustrious Pjetër Bogdani, author of the classic work in Albanian literature, *Cuneus prophetarum* (of which more later on, under the section, "The Catholic Clergy and Albanian Literature"). One of the archbishops of the Shkup Diocese was Mëhill Summa, an Albanian Franciscan from the town of Sapë in northern Albania. He assumed the duties of his elevated post in 1729. An interesting fact about him is that, during the Austro-Turkish war of 1737-1739, he — as well as the Serbian Patriarch, Arsen Jovanović IV — supported the struggle against the Turks. But as the Turks won the war, Archbishop Summa was obliged to leave Kosovë "with a great number of Albanian Catholics," in order to avoid reprisals by the Turks.²² (Many Orthodox Serbs also are reported to have left Kosovë at the time, for the same reason). We should like to note, too, that we owe the discovery of the first Albanian book on record, Gjón Buzuku's *Meshari* (The Missal), to the Church in Kosovë. For it was an Albanian archbishop of the Diocese of Shkup, Gjón Pagëzuesi Nikolavic Kazazi from Gjakovë, who discovered the book in 1740, nearly two centuries after its publication in 1555.²³

The Archdiocese of Tivar was established in 1034 by Pope Benedict IX, when the Christian Church was still a unified institution. It is estimated that over 20,000 Albanian Catholics are administered to by this archdiocese, which came under Montenegro's rule in the aftermath of the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The Church is reported to be strong in this archdiocese. Its leading prelate, Archbishop Pjeter Perkoliqi, is Albanian. Moreover, Albanian Franciscan friars have a monastery in the town of Tuzi, close to the Albanian border, where they administer to the Highlanders, and publish *St. Anthony's Messenger* in Albanian.²⁴

In sum, the Archdiocese of Tivar, and the Diocese of Shkup-Prizren testify to a venerable religious legacy, in the life of the Albanian Catholic Church in Kosovë. (Formerly an archdiocese, the Shkup-Prizren jurisdiction became a diocese in 1914.)

When speaking of the Church of Kosovë, it is to be understood that we are referring to its activities not merely in the towns of Tivar, Shkup and Prizren, but in many other towns and areas encompassed by the Archdiocese of Tivar and the Shkup-Prizren Diocese. Many societies or orders of nuns and friars practiced and continue to practice their vocations (calling) not only in those towns, but in Pejë, Prishtinë, Gjakovë, Ferizaj, and Manastir (now Bitol, Macedonia). Among the orders that have been active in those communities are: The Albanian Mothers of Mercy, the Daughters of the Loving God, the Sisters of the Holy Cross, the Little Sisters of Jesus, as well as friars of the Franciscan order, Salesians, and Lazarists.

At present, Prizren is generally pictured by the media as a typical Moslem city, with its many minarets, bazaars, Turkish coffee houses and other oriental features of life. But Prizren — site of the historical Albanian League in 1878, which sparked the Albanian movement for national independence — has also been an active center of Catholic life for a long time. In 1870 a Catholic Cathedral was built there, sisters of the Lazarist order cared for the sick without regard to denomination or nationality, and the Albanian language was taught in schools run by the societies such as the Society of Sts. Peter and Paul, the Society of St. John, the Corpus Christi Society, and the Society of Mother Mary testified to the vigorous religious and cultural life among Catholic Albanians in that historic city.

In more recent times, and specifically in the decade of the 1970's there has occurred a general Albanian cultural resurgence in Kosovë. This resurgence was reflected also in the life of the Church, including the field of publications. A variety of religious books, among them a number of translated works, were published in Prizren, Pejë, Gjakovë, and Ferizaj, at times in collaboration with publishers in Zagreb, capital of Croatia. A distinguished publication of this period is *Drita* (The Light), a monthly religious-cultural magazine of the Shkup-Prizren diocese. Founded in March, 1970, *Drita* is published in Ferizaj. The magazine began to attract attention soon after its appearance, and by the end of the seventies had become a respected and influential Catholic publication, as well as a valuable source material for students and scholars interested in the past and present of the Albanian Catholic Church. Since 1981 however — the year of massive Albanian demonstrations in Kosovë — the magazine reportedly has been having difficulties because of pressure by the Yugoslav government, although no specific charges against the publication were reported.²⁵

Of special interest is the publication lately of *The History of the Church* in ten volumes. Printed originally in Italian in the city of Milan, the series tells the history of the Catholic Church from the time of its founding down to the present. The series was subsequently published in several languages, including Albanian and English. The Albanian version, under the title of *Kisha dhe historia e saj* (The Church And Its History), appeared in 1981-1982. It was printed in Yugoslavia with the collaboration of the *Drita* magazine in Ferizaj and a publishing firm in Zagreb.²⁶ The publication of the series may well be called epochal in Albanian ecclesiastical historiography, since nothing like it, as far as we know, has been published before. The multi-volume work is a treasure house of information on Catholicism in Albania, presented from a unified perspective. Yet, the series is not narrowly Catholic or sectarian. Considerable space has been devoted also to the history of the Albanian Orthodox Church and the Church of the Arbëresh in Italy. Moreover, the story is told in the context of Albanian national, educational and cultural developments, giving the reader a fairly broad view of the general history of Albania.

We shall conclude this account of the Albanian Catholic Church in Kosovë by noting that Mother Teresa - of whom we will say more later on - was born and reared in this diocese. So we can say that it was in this diocese that her heroic vocation was nurtured.

The Arbëresh Church in Italy

The Church of the Arbëresh in southern Italy and Sicily traces its beginnings to the middle of the 15th Century. It is generally called the Eastern Rite Catholic Church of the Arbëresh. It has preserved the Byzantine liturgy; that is, the rites of the Eastern Orthodox Church, yet recognizes the Pope in Rome as its spiritual head. And since the liturgy was in the Greek language, the Church of the Albanians in Italy has traditionally been referred to as the Italo-Albanian Eastern Rite Catholic Church of the Arbëresh.

The Church began with the arrival of the first Albanian immigrants to Italy in 1448. Between 1448 and 1532 several waves of Albanian immigrants settled in the Puglia region, in Calabria, and in Sicily. The last wave of immigration — to Abruzzi in southern Italy — is reported to have occurred in 1774. These Albanians, numbering in the tens of thousands, crossed the Adriatic and Ionian seas to evade persecution by the Turkish invaders of their homeland.

In Italy they organized their religious life under two dioceses: the Diocese of Lungro or Ungër in Calabria, and the Diocese of Hora e Arbëreshëve (Piana degli Albanesi) in Sicily. At first, the Arbëresh suffered greatly in their new environment, mainly on account of their non-Latin rite, as well as their Albanian language, which were not viewed with favor by officials of the Latin Roman Catholic Church, some of whose bishops considered the Arbëresh as "schismatics."¹²

The Vatican however showed understanding of the situation of the Arbëresh, and this sympathetic attitude led to the opening in the latter part of the 16th Century of the first college for the training and ordination of the clergy to meet the needs of the Arbëresh churches, and also to raise the general cultural and intellectual level of the Arbëresh population, which at the time was very low. To improve their condition, in 1577 Pope Gregory XIII founded in Rome the *Collegio Greco* (Greek College), also known as the College of St. Atanasius. This was the first in a series of institutions of higher education that were built during the next two centuries for the benefit of the Arbëresh. It was in the Greek College that Lekë Matranga of the Hora e Arbëreshëve received his higher education. The learned Arbëresh later won a place of honor in Albanian letters with the publication in 1592 of the first catechism in the Albanian language. Other institutions of note established after the Greek College were: the Illyrian College in Loreto, the College of St. Peter and Paul in Fermo, the Basilian Monastery and the seminary, Benedict XV at Grottaferrata in Rome.

An institution for the education of clergy and laymen alike was the College of St. Adrian, also known as *Collegio Corsini*, in the town of St. Demeter Corona in Cosenza (Calabria). This college subsequently became an important center in the movement for Albanian independence from the Turks. The renowned poet, Jeronim De Rada, was one of the Arbëresh patriots who studied at the College of St. Adrian. Another influential institution was the Greek-Arbëresh Seminary of Palermo, which was founded in 1734 by Gjergj Guzzetta. The list of Albanian patriot-luminaries who graduated from this seminary includes such names as Nikollë Keta (1742-1803), Jul Variboba (1724-1788), and Konstatin Bellucci (1796-1867).¹⁴

All of these institutions, which later evolved into centers for the development of national consciousness and the preservation of Albanian traditions and culture, owed their origin to the Catholic Church of the Arbëresh.

Madonna of Shkodër — The Arbëresh have always remained strongly attached to the history of their motherland. An indication of this is the touching story and significant holy legend of the Madonna of Shkodër (Mother of Good Counsel). This is the Madonna we referred to earlier in our discussion of the fourth Council of Albanian Bishops (1895). That council, it will be recalled, proclaimed the Madonna of Shkodër as the "Protectress of Albania". The following is a brief account of the story of the Madonna, as told by Prof. Karl Gurakuqi.

According to Gurakuqi, the Madonna was originally in a little church in Shkodër. The Catholic faithful venerated her there in the form or image of a beautiful oil painting. One day in the year 1467, the painting miraculously moved from its position and left the church. That was the year when the Ottoman troops had laid siege to Shkodër and threatened to desecrate and destroy the church. The image of the Madonna rose high up in the air and began moving over the countryside in a westerly direction. It was leaving Albania and heading toward Italy. As it moved, two Albanian pilgrims followed it over the land, across the Adriatic Sea, all the way to Italy. They followed the image until it finally came to rest in Genazzano, a town near Rome. Soon a church was built there in her honor. It was called the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel. Her image is on the main altar of that church in Genazzano to this day.

That is how the Madonna of Shkodër acquired its name and its legendary reputation. The Madonna, says Professor Gurakuqi, helped the Albanians to maintain their religious faith and their hope for freedom, while languishing under the yoke of the Ottomans. He says further that the Madonna's protective presence over Albania is as real in our day as it has been in the past.¹⁵

The Arbëresh of Sicily have expressed their devotion to the Madona of Shkodër for hundreds of years in their prayers and in the many songs they sing to her. Here is one of the more popular of those songs, entitled, "To Our Lady of Good Counsel":

*You who stood guard over our Ancestors —
Who would not abandon the holy faith.
Protect the Arbëresh
Wherever they may be.*

*Stand by us,
As you stood by the Arbëresh
On that day when, like a beacon light,
You lead them to an alien land.*

*Look after us, wretched folk,
Who are like birds without a nest;
Look after those others of us, too,
Who are afflicted by the enemy.*

*We beseech you, oh blessed one,
Pray to your Son in our behalf,
See how we suffer,
See how we live without joy.*

*Yet, the Faith we inherited
From those brave warriors of Arbëria (Albania)
And the Flag they handed to us,
We shall keep for our offspring.*

*Today as always
Our hearts have but one desire;
That we may always remain
Arbëresh and Christian folk.¹⁶*

Devotion to the Madonna of Good Counsel, whose history connects directly with the Albanian people, is also strong among the Arbëresh in Calabria. The inhabitants of San Benedetto Ullano venerate the same Madonna. Veneration of her spread from Genazzano to Calabria in 1700, through the efforts of Stefano Rodota, an Arbëresh clergyman and writer. This devotion expresses the deep sentiments of the Arbëresh who were guided by the faith of their forefathers.

The ethnic and cultural identity of the Arbëresh with the rest of the Albanian world was also manifested not long ago by an ecclesiastical act of great importance. In 1968 the Eastern Rite Catholic Church of the Arbëresh made a historic decision, when it adopted Albanian as the language of its liturgy, in place of Greek. The Church of the Arbëresh at present is a vigorous religious institution, drawing strength constantly from a rich religious and patriotic tradition. This is true not only of the Arbëresh in Sicily and Calabria, but also wherever the Arbëresh are scattered in various Italian cities, such as Rome, Bari, Turin and Milan.

A few years ago, a cultural center named *Besa-Fede*, opened in Rome at Via dei Greci 46. Directed by the well-known Arbëresh prelate, Msgr. Lefter (Eleuterio) Fortino, the center has become a focal gathering site for the Arbëresh in the area. They are attracted by a variety of religious and cultural activities organized by the center, including discussions on Albania by Arbëresh and foreign scholars.

The Roman Pontiffs have interacted continuously with the Arbëresh, since their arrival in Italy five centuries ago. A notable instance in our time was the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the death of Scanderbeg in 1968, when Arbëresh prelates celebrated mass in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. On that occasion, the Vatican released a letter by Pope Paul VI entitled, *Quinto Revolutio Saeculo*, which among other things commended Scanderbeg and the Albanian people for their historic struggle against the Ottoman invaders.³⁷ The Arbëresh people remain tied at all times to the fortunes of the country of their origin. Pope John Paul II, himself, stressed this fact during a recent visit to Calabria (October 5-7, 1984). Speaking to the Arbëresh, he said, "Mindful of your native tie with Albania, your mother country, so rich in cultural and religious traditions, so near just across the Adriatic strait, I pray that your presence here in beloved Italy may be a light to Christians of that noble nation (Albania), and for those professing their faith in God, a light pointing the way to a better future, when religious freedom will gladden the hearts of all believers."³⁸ The Pontiff's visit followed a similar pastoral visit he made among the Arbëresh in Sicily two years earlier, on November 20-21, 1982. After being welcomed by Iracli Lupinacci, the Bishop of Piana degli Albanesi, the Pope delivered a message saying that he was aware of the ancient history of the Arbëresh, and "of the ecumenical role that Providence and circumstances . . . have called you to fulfill between West and East."³⁹

Ecumenical Movement — The Pope's remark on ecumenism was neither casual nor fortuitous. It expressed rather the Church's continuing interest in the movement that aims toward the reunification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

As for the Albanian Catholic Church, it has supported the ecumenical movement for several decades. Its interest in it dates back at least to 1924, when Bishop Fan Stylian Noli was Premier of Albania. Among those involved with the movement at the time were Franciscans Fr. Shtjefën Gjeçov, Fr. Vengenc Prenushi, and Fr. Pal Dodaj, Fr. Gjeçov, for example, discussed the matter with Premier Noli, and quotes him as saying, " . . . with my heart and mind I am for unity with the Catholic Church."⁴⁰ He added however that as Premier of Albania he could not involve himself with ecumenism.

Nevertheless, Bishop Noli's concern with ecumenism apparently continued to the end of his life. This is indicated by an account given recently by Msgr. Zef Oroshi, pastor of the Albanian Catholic Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, in the Bronx, N. Y. He notes that in March of 1962 he attended a meeting in Boston between Bishop Noli and Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston to discuss the question of bringing the Catholic and Orthodox Churches together. The meeting was held at the Cardinal's residence. Both prelates, according to Msgr. Oroshi, declared themselves in favor of reuniting the two churches, and both pledged to work toward that end. However, no future discussions between the two followed that meeting. Their effort to further ecumenism came to an abrupt end when the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi — an "extreme conservative" — did not support Cardinal Cushing's initiative.⁴¹

The meeting between Cardinal Cushing and Bishop Noli took place in the context of the ecumenical movement which was gathering momentum at the time, and had support at the highest levels of the Vatican and of Constantinople (Istanbul). It will be recalled that two years later (1964), Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras — who was of Albanian nationality — met in Jerusalem in what was described as an historic meeting, without precedent in the history of the two oldest Churches of Christianity. On that occasion, the Pope and the Patriarch revoked the anathema under which they and their predecessors had labored for nearly a thousand years, ever since 1054, when the heads of the two Churches excommunicated each other.

The Arbëresh of Calabria and Sicily have good relations with the Orthodox, especially with the Orthodox of Constantinople, Greece, and Crete. Delegations from their respective churches have exchanged visits frequently with the Arbëresh. The Metropolitan Archbishop of Corinth, His Excellency Panteleimon — who is himself an Arbëresh from Greece — spoke recently in Arbëresh at a ceremony in Piana delgi Albanesi. He also donated the icons for a new Arbëresh church in Cosenza, and had inscribed in Arbëresh on the icon of Christ: "The Metropolitan Panteleimon to his brothers in Calabria."

These data are perhaps sufficient to indicate the deep roots and rich traditions of the Arbëresh Church in Italy, as well as its continuing vitality in our day.

Albanian Catholic Activity in America

While there is no formal Albanian Catholic Church or hierarchy in the United States, there is considerable activity among Albanian Catholics in the country. Albanian Catholicism here, in an organized or institutional form, began in the early sixties. Thus, in 1962 the first Albanian Catholic Church in America, Our Lady of Good Counsel, was founded in the Bronx, N. Y., under the leadership of Msgr. Zef Oroshi. This church serves several thousand Albanian Catholics in metropolitan New York. For a period of twelve years (1966-1978), the church also sponsored the publication of *Albanian Catholic Life*, a quarterly magazine.

In 1977, another Albanian Catholic Church, Our Lady of the Albanians, opened in Detroit, with Rev. Prenk Ndrevashaj as the officiating priest. The church serves the spiritual needs of a growing community of Albanian Catholics, estimated at 15,000, the overwhelming majority of whom — like Albanian Catholics in New York — are postwar emigrés from Albania and Yugoslavia. More recently, another church, St. Paul's Albanian Catholic Church, was inaugurated in Detroit.

Albanian Catholic activity in America expanded in 1972, with the establishment of the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara, California. The roots of the Center can be traced back to 1965, when Cardinal John Dearden, Archbishop of Detroit supported efforts to organize The American Albanian Catholic Charity organization, for the purpose of assisting priests and nuns in Albania, as well as Albanian refugees in the Detroit area. The organization helped to sponsor and settle some 500 refugees. Recognition of the work of the organization at the highest level of the Church

hierarchy came in 1968, when a delegation of the American Albanian Catholic Charity was received at the Vatican. Following the outlawing of religion in Albania in 1967, the focus of the organization changed, with greater attention given to publicizing religious persecution in Albania. In 1972, the organization was restructured, taking the name of the Albanian Catholic Information Center.

The Center was founded for the purpose of keeping "the public abreast of the religious situation in Albania." For the first eight years of its existence, the Center performed its function through newsletters and press releases. In 1980, it began to publish the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, a magazine that has been growing with each new issue. The magazine carries not only religious articles and news items, but also a variety of materials related to the Albanian nation, including developments in Kosovë.

We have mentioned here the leading institutions of the Albanian Catholics in America, of which we are aware. But there exist also many communities of Arbëresh in the United States, who are estimated to equal, if not exceed, the number of Albanian-Americans from Albania (and Yugoslavia). The Arbëresh cultivate their religion very much in the manner of their Albanian ancestors in Italy. They have their own religious societies, clubs and publications, all of them designed to preserve and promote their Albano-Italian-Byzantine-Catholic heritage in America.

* * *

Returning now to the Catholic Church in Albania, we shall discuss in some detail the role of the Church in Albanian society, in such areas as language and literature, nationalism, education and social work. A dispassionate look at the record shows we think, that the Church has done good work in all of these areas. Yet, this does not mean that the Church and its clergy have been without blemish and beyond criticism, at least not in the view of some people. Here and there a dissenting or negative voice has been heard from some quarter or individual—sometimes from within the Church—concerning the policies of the Church or the activities of a particular member of the clergy or group of clerics. It is to be assumed, we suppose, that when such criticism emanated from within the ranks of the Church, it was motivated by goodwill, offered in a spirit of Christian fellowship for the greater good of the Church and the Albanian nation, and therefore deserved a respectful hearing.

Criticism of the Church—One subject of controversy has been the presence of foreign clergy in the Church, which on occasion led to conflict between them and Albanian Catholic clerics. The record shows that "... in general, during the first part of the 19th Century, the foreign clergy held the commanding positions in the Church, and they did not treat the native clergy well."⁴² A case in point is Rev. Pjetër Zarishi (1806-1866) of Zadrimë, known in Albanian letters as a religious poet and also as one of the first to enrich Albanian poetry with new artistic tools. Rev. Zarishi worked at first as secretary to the Italian Bishop of Sapa, in the Archdiocese of Shkodër. Owing however to a disagreement that developed between him and the Bishop, he was transferred by his superior to the remote region of Orosh to serve there as a priest.⁴³

The Jesuit Father Ndre Mjeda (1866-1937), known also as a poet and scholar of distinction, is another example. A learned priest with a doctoral degree in theology and philosophy, Fr. Mjeda resigned or was expelled—the record is not clear on this point—from the Jesuit order in 1898. According to one source, he came into conflict with his superiors because of his avid embrace of the ideals and aspirations of the Albanian national movement, and that reportedly led or contributed to his rupture with the Jesuit order.⁴⁴

Criticism of the Church has also come at times from influential Catholic laymen. One of those was Zef Jubani (1818-1880), pioneer Albanian folklorist and cultivator of the Albanian language. A native of Shkodër, Jubani was an early activist in the labor movement in Albania, an involvement for which he was admonished by the Catholic Church. Jubani also had disagreements with Catholic prelates on the question of foreign Catholic clergy in Albania who, he felt, had "monopolized education and culture" in northern Albania to the detriment of the country.⁴⁵

Questions have been raised also with regard to the role of the Catholic clergy in Albanian literature and cultural life. According to the *Drita* review: "The literary and cultural creativity of the Albanian Catholic clergy has often been denied in the past, and in our day as well. It is unjustly said that the Albanian clerics who have made a valuable contribution to Albanian literature and culture are few in number."⁴⁶ As a consequence, the review continues, the work of the clergy in this area ran the risk of being forgotten or ignored.

In Defense of the Church—Perhaps the best answer to such criticism is an examination of the work of the Church and the clergy in Albanian literature and culture, patriotic activity and other aspects of Albanian society. An enlightening source of information in this respect is the series of articles by Shpend Shpata under the title, "The Catholic Clergy and Literature," which was published in the *Drita* review in 1979. He writes:

"The foundations of our national culture were laid by the Catholic clergy. From the earliest times they have endeavored to develop a sound national language and literature. This is evident in the old authors and the later ones, particularly in the time of our national rebirth. Therefore, it can be freely affirmed that two things characterize the Catholic clergy: 1) religious zeal, and 2) sincere patriotic sentiments."⁴⁷

The Catholic priests were responsible for the creation of a rich literary and cultural treasury for the Albanian nation. It is to them that we owe a "noteworthy flowering of the language and literature" of the country. Albanian author Anton Logoreci says in this connection that "the Roman Catholic Church, though weak and under constant Ottoman pressure . . . became the custodian of the Albanian language and cultural heritage."⁴⁸ Another source notes that by supporting the activities of the Catholic clergy in the intellectual and cultural field, the Catholic Church "made indisputable contributions to the preservation of Albanian culture, identity and integrity."⁴⁹

There is a considerable body of evidence to substantiate these claims, but as an aside we might add that the Catholic Church made contributions in other fields as well, such as science and architecture. The astronomer Gjin Gazulli, a contemporary of Scanderbeg—for whom, incidentally, he undertook diplomatic missions—was a Dominican friar. In architecture, two outstanding examples were the Cathedral of Shas and the Church of Shëngj, both of them built in the Gothic style in the 13th and 14th Centuries. The latter edifice, situated south of Shkodër, is thought to have been "the most beautiful church in all of Albania."⁵⁰ It was eventually destroyed by the Buna river.

Returning to the subject of literature, our knowledge of the earliest use of written Albanian, dating back to the 13th Century, comes from the Catholic clergy. The source is a report in 1332 which a French Dominican friar, Fr. Brochart (Brocardus) submitted to Philippe de Valois, King of France. The report, written in Latin, is attributed to the Dominican Guillelmus Adae, Archbishop of Antivar (later Tivar)—the site, it will be recalled, of the Third Council of Albanian bishops. It says:

Licet Albanenses aliam omnino linguam (quam) latinam habeant et diversam, tamen litteram latinam habent in usu et in omnibus suis libris.
 ("Although the Albanians have a language quite different from that of the Latins, they use Latin letters in all their books.")⁵¹

The earliest document in Albanian we have, namely the baptismal formula of 1462, is the work of Pal Ēngjëlli (Paul Angelo, Paulus Angelus), Catholic Archbishop of Durrës and "a close collaborator and advisor of Scanderbeg." The formula, written in the Latin alphabet, is in the northern Albanian dialect. It is found in a letter that was composed for the benefit of a Synod held in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Mat, on November 8, 1462. The text of the formula follows:

Unte paghesont premenit Atit et birit et speritit senit. or, in the current Albanian orthography, "Un tē pagēzonj pr'emēnit Atit e t'birit e t'shpertit shenji" ("I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit")⁵²

The letter containing the baptismal formula is preserved in the Laurenziana Library in Florence, Italy. It was discovered there by the Rumanian historian Nicolae Jorga, and published for the first time in Bucharest in 1915. The baptismal formula is a testimony to the determination of our ancestors to defend the faith in the bleak days of Ottoman conquest. It is equally a testimony to the tenacity and power of the Albanian language and culture to confront and overcome tremendous obstacles.

The most renowned biographer of Scanderbeg, Marin Barleti (Marinus Barletius) (ca. 1450-1512) was a Catholic priest and historian. A native of Shkodër, Barleti was in the city when the Turks occupied it in 1478. We are told that:

"He left the town of his birth and his country with tears in his eyes. But he could never forget them. He remembered them with longing and great love. That is why he set himself the task of immortalizing the bravery of his fellow townsmen and countrymen in the heroic struggle for the defense of their liberty, as well as that of the Balkans and Europe."⁵³

The title of his *magnum opus*, which was published in Rome about 1508, is: *Historia de Vita et Gestis Scanderbegi Epirotarum Principis* (History of the Life and Deeds of Scanderbeg Prince of the Epirotes), the term "Epirotes" in this context being synonymous with the Albanians. Ever since, his name had been inextricably linked with that of Scanderbeg. Steeped in the values and ideals of European Renaissance, imbued with a fiery sense of patriotism and great love of freedom, Barleti made Albania's National Hero known to the learned European public. It has been rightly said that "Without (his) talented pen, the name of Scanderbeg would not have enjoyed the fame it enjoyed outside the borders of Albania," and that Barleti's work "gave birth to an entire historiography and artistic literature (on Scanderbeg)."⁵⁴

Bishop Noli has remarked that with his "elegant Latin and discrete style," Barleti won readers all over the world, and immortalized the memory of Scanderbeg in Europe. Noli further tells us that another biography of Scanderbeg, a short one, is attributed to Barleti's treasurer, Demetrio Franco, who also was a Roman Catholic priest.

The Catholic Clergy and Albanian Literature

There follows a long and impressive list of Catholic clerical writers, starting with the 16th Century and down to our times. During the 16th and 17th Centuries — the period of the classic writers — we find the names of Gjon Buzuku, Pjetër Budi, Fran (Frang) Bardhi, and Pjetër Bogdani. In the 19th Century with the dawning and development of the movement for national independence, we come across writers like Pjetër Zariishi, Leonard Martini, Pjetër Prenk Doçi, Ndue Bytyqi, and Ndoc Zanoçi. And more recently, in our own century, there come into view the figures of Ndre Mjeda, Gjergj Fishta, Shtjefën Gjeçov, Vinqenc Prenushi and others.

Writers of the Classical Period (16th and 17th Centuries) — The first notable author in Albanian literature in the classical period is Gjon Buzuku. In 1555 Buzuku wrote *Meshari* (The Missal), the first Albanian book on record. We are told by the author in a postscript to his volume that he wrote the book out of love of the people, because "there were no religious books in the Albanian language." Only one copy of this slender work of 220 pages is known to exist: First discovered in 1740, Buzuku's pioneer work disappeared for almost two centuries, until 1910, when it was rediscovered by the Arbëresh Bishop Pal Skiroi. It is now housed in the Vatican Library.

Meshari is significant not only as the "great monument of written Albanian," but also because it was written at a time when the dialectal differences between Geg and Tosk were not as pronounced as in our century. It is in this sense a valuable mirror of the Albanian language in the 16th Century.

The next important figure in this period is Pjetër Budi (1566-1623), a Bishop of the Church from the Mat region in central Albania, and author of several devotional books in Albanian. The best known of those is his *Doktrina e Kërshenë* (Christian Doctrine), a catechism published in 1618. Budi represents the first original prose writer, as well as the first poet of Albanian literature. His writings enlighten many aspects of Albanian social life in his time, and show him to be a sensitive observer who is greatly moved by the sight of people suffering and languishing in misery and ignorance. In brief, Budi's work is marked by love of the Albanian language, love of the Albanian people, pride in his country and hatred of evil.

Another distinguished figure of Albanian literature and culture of the classical period is Frano Bardhi (Franciscus Blancus) (1606-1643), from the Zadrina region, who later became Bishop of Sapa. Bardhi is the author of the first work of lexicography in Albanian, the *Dictionarium latino-epiroticum* (Latin-Albanian Dictionary), which was published in Rome in 1635. With his dictionary, which has about 5,000 words, Bardhi can be said to have initiated the tradition of Albanian lexicography. Nevertheless, he is more conscious of the "failings" than the merits of this work, as is evident from his humble words in the foreword to his dictionary. He says: "... forgive me for not doing a better job of translation (from the Latin), since ... for many years there was no one with whom I could talk in our language; and because I had forgotten many names and words in Albanian."⁵⁵

The last notable author among the early Catholic priest-writers is Pjetër Bogdani (ca. 1625-1689). A native of Prizren, Bogdani studied in Rome, where he obtained a doctorate in theology and philosophy. Later he served as Bishop of Shkodër, administrator of the Archdiocese of Tivar, and Archbishop of Shkup. As an author, he won a lasting place in the history of Albanian literature with his book, *Çeta e Profetëve (Cuneus Prophetarum)*, which he published in Padova (Padua), Italy in 1685.

In his work Bogdani discusses the Godhead, creation, the seven deadly sins, the lives of the prophets and their prophecies, plus the life of Christ, the

Virgin Mary, the vision of the Last Judgement and paradise. But much of the matter in the book is non-theological in nature, and deals with such subjects as astronomy, geography, the "four elements" and life under the Turks — the "ills, sufferings, and martyrdoms that are besetting the poor Christian Church of the Kingdom of Albania." "Bogdani's literary work has many merits, including a style that is pure and simple, and it is not surprising that he is regarded as the 'first prose writer of literary quality in Albanian literature'"⁵⁷

The work of the pioneer Catholic clerical writers has been well summarized in *The history of Albanian Literature, Vol. I*, where we read:

"With their literary and pedagogic activity, Albanian priests such as Buzuku, Budi, Bardhi, Bogdani and others became pioneers of Albanian literature and education. Despite the religious and didactic content of their works, those works are of special importance to the Albanian language. The object of their works, in the words of the authors, was not merely to strengthen religious sentiment, but to prevent... the extinction of the Albanian language." (p.377).

Writers of the Period of National Awakening (19th Century) — The first, in chronological order, among the Catholic clergy who attained distinction as a writer during this period is Pjetër Zarishi (1806-1866), whom we mentioned earlier in another context. Fr. Zarishi, who later was appointed Abbot of the Abbey of Orosh, wrote in the tradition of the classic authors, Pjetër Budi and Pjetër Bogdani. But he also wrote poems on secular themes: the beauty and natural wealth of the Albanian land, the dress styles and customs of northern Albanians, and the houses they lived in. Zarishi was a pioneer in the development of Albanian metrics.

Leonard Martini (Leonardo de Martino) (1830-1923), was an Arbëresh missionary from the region of Apulia who worked in the Shkodër area. He had connections, we are told, with Dora d'Istria and Jeronim De Rada — noted Albanian writers and nationalists — and like them nourished a deep love of the Albanian language. Fr. Martini spent 40 years in Albania, and while there studied Albanian closely, and wrote poetry in the local dialect of Zadrima. Like Zarishi, he contributed to the development of Albanian poetry.

Msgr. Pjetër Prenk Doçi (1846-1917) was from the Lezhë region. He began his career as a priest in Mirdita, later rose to the rank of abbot, and for many years was a leading prelate of the Church. A poet and ideologist of the Albanian national movement, Msgr. Doçi was active in the literary, cultural, and patriotic fields. In the decade of the 1870s he composed powerful patriotic writings of the period. It has been said that, "with the power of his pen, he stirred the hearts of Albanians yearning for liberty."⁵⁸

Fr. Ndue Bytyçi (1847-1917) was born in Shkup and educated in Shkodër, where he acquired a broad knowledge of philosophy, theology, and literature. Like his friend Fr. Leonard Martini, Bytyçi showed much talent for poetry, and has been called "the first Kosovar poet," as well as the "Nightingale of Kosovë". He was an enthusiastic advocate of the cultivation of the Albanian language and literature, which he regarded as priceless treasures and liberating forces that could save the country from the ills that come from ignorance.

The last writer in this period to whom we are calling attention is Ndoc Zanoni (Anton Xanoni) (1863-1915). Fr. Zanoni was a native of Durrës, attended the Papal College in Shkodër, and became a Jesuit at the age of 16. He acquired a doctorate in theology and philosophy (in Poland), had a wide knowledge of foreign languages, including Latin and Greek, and for many years taught at the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodër. As a writer he was interested in a variety of genres: linguistic, pedagogical, and fiction. He is the author of an Albanian grammar, a reader for primary schools, and many stories that appeared in current periodicals. The best of his versified fables and tales with a moral message are considered to be among the best of their kind in the Albanian literature of the time.

As a group these Catholic clerics made a contribution to the advancement of Albanian literature in the 19th Century. They were the ground-breakers of a new artistic literary tradition in northern Albania. Though clerics, their interests as writers extended beyond their profession. Much of their work is imbued with ideas of the national awakening. They showed aptitude for poetry, and strove to enrich that field of literature with verses, meters, stanzas and styles of poetry that they took over from Italian literature, but which they adapted with skill to the Albanian language. They wrote with care and discretion in a "language that was sometimes pure," a language that "was raised to the level of art". These clerics cleared the way for the broad literary movement that surfaced in Shkodër toward the end of the 19th Century. It is they "who created what has come to be known as the literary current of the Catholic clergy of northern Albania".⁵⁹

Writers of the Contemporary Period (20th Century) — In this period we shall consider briefly representative Catholic clerical writers such as Fr. Ndre Mjeda, Fr. Gjergj Fishta, Fr. Shtjefën Gjeçov, and Fr. Vinçenc Prenushi.

Ndre Mjeda (1866-1937), whom we mentioned earlier, was a Jesuit from Shkodër with a broad classical and modern education. Fr. Mjeda's major work is *Juvenilia*, a collection of poems whose dominant themes are Albania, nature and the Godhead. Another of his books, *Historia e Shenjtë* (Sacred History), is a work in prose that tells the story of the rise of Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church. He was a pioneer writer of literature for children, and a contributor to *Hylli i Driës*, the Franciscan magazine in Shkodër. At present, Mjeda ranks very high in Albania among the poets of the contemporary period. The reason is that he is considered to be "a patriotic writer of sound democratic ideals."⁶⁰

Unlike Mjeda, who was his brother-in-Christ and literary colleague, Fr. Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940) is not in the good graces of the current leadership of Albania — for political reasons.⁶¹ Indeed, his writings are banned in the land. But his merits as a writer are such that even in socialist Albania they could not be ignored or refused the courtesy of an acknowledgement and evaluation.

Fr. Fishta, a Franciscan father, led an active life as a cleric, writer, educator, linguist, and politician. As a creative writer, he achieved pre-eminence in Albanian letters. He is generally regarded as Albania's National Poet. Arshi Pipa, a leading Albanian literary critic in the United States and himself a poet, has called Fishta the "Albanian poet laureate".⁶² Even Albanian critics have conceded that he was one of the "most distinguished Albanian writers," and "a strong literary personality" who played "an important role in the history of (Albanian) literature" during the 20th Century, along with Faik Konitza, Çajupi, Asdren, and Bishop Noli. Referring to Fishta's masterpiece, the epic poem, *Lahuta e Malcës* (The Lute of the Mountains), these critics grant that this is a work of "rare epic-heroic power."⁶³ The standard work on contemporary Albanian history, while it attacks Fishta's politics, is obliged to write that he created "important works of great artistic value."⁶⁴ Stavro Skendi calls *Lahuta e Malcës* the "masterpiece of Albanian literature," and adds that the work "extols in pure and forceful language the fight of the Albanians against the Montenegrins," at the time of the Congress of Berlin (1878) and later.⁶⁵ Fr. Fishta was a prolific writer of poetry and prose, including a large output of blunt and biting satire, aimed at destroying salient social ills in Albanian society, such as apathy and ignorance. But it is as the author of his epic poem that he is best remembered and most admired.

Another great name among Albanian Franciscan friars is that of Shtjefën K. (Konstantin) Gjeçov (1874-1929). Fr. Gjeçov is remembered today as

much for his contributions as a writer and scholar as for his human qualities. He was born in Kosovë, studied in Austria at the university level and later, upon joining the Franciscan order, served as a parish priest in villages in northern Albania. His interest in the origins of the Albanian people led him to do research in archaeology, collect objects of archeological value, and write a study on his findings in this area entitled, *Thracian-Illyrian Legacies*. Gjeçov was an ardent disciple of Albanian nationalism. The study, however, for which he won renown is his codification of the hitherto unwritten laws devised by the feudal Albanian Prince, Lek Dukagjin, for governing tribal life in northern Albania. He published the study serially in *Hylli i Dritës* between 1913 and 1924, under the title *Kanuni i Lek Dukagjinit* (The Canon of Lek Dukagjin). In recognition of his achievement, he was later awarded an Honorary Degree by the Leipzig University in Germany.

Father Gjeçov stands out as one who walked in the footsteps of Christ. Faik Kinitza, who knew him personally, has said of him that he was "a scholarly Franciscan of noble character," whose stature would grow steadily with the passage of time. The *Drifta* review has written of him:

Fr. Shtjefën entered deeply into the hearts of the people . . . he was as close to them as flesh is to bone. In this manner he was able to "read" in their faces their inner spiritual qualities: the sincerity, the loyalty, the wisdom, the kindness, etc. He was one of those priests who with zeal, live and care draw close to the simple people.¹⁴⁵

It is all the more tragic, therefore, that such a man as Fr. Shtjefën Gjeçov should die at the hand of an assassin, a "victim of Great-Serbian chauvinism". He was slain in 1929 in an ambush at Has, near Zym where he had his parish. A bust in honor of his memory was unveiled in Prizren (Kosovë) in 1979, on the 50th anniversary of his death.

Still another Franciscan of literary talent was Fr. Vincenc Prenushi (1885-1949). He was born in Shkodër, spent many years serving the people with devotion as a simple parish priest, later was consecrated bishop and still later was appointed Archbishop of Durrës. Fr. Prenushi was an inspiring speaker as a young friar, a gift he showed also in his career as a writer of poetry and prose. His literary output was considerable, and encompassed collections of northern Albanian folklore and contributions to literary magazines in Shkodër, among them *Hylli i Dritës*. One of his most moving stories, titled *Grueja Shqiptare* (The Albanian Woman), is an allegorical tale of a girl who, with patience and fiery patriotism, embroiders a lovely Albanian flag. Fr. Prenushi translated or adapted into Albanian a number of noted works of European literature, including *Quo Vadis*, the famous Polish novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz. His major work, *Gjeth e Lule* (Leaves and Flowers), is a book of poems which he published in 1925, whose dominant themes are nationalism, patriotism, and self-sacrifice.

Like Fr. Gjeçov before him, Archbishop Prenushi died a tragic death, a victim of the Communist rulers in Albania. He died in 1949 in a prison in Albania, after serving two years of a twenty-year sentence at hard labor.¹⁴⁶

This has been a brief account of the literary activity of the Catholic clergy in Albania, but long enough perhaps to indicate the scope and variety and value of their contribution to the fund of Albanian letters.

The Catholic Clergy and Albanian Nationalism

As previously mentioned, the Catholic clergy's devotion to country is inscribed in the very motto of the Church: Religion and Fatherland. This devotion is apparent, first of all, in their literary creativity which is pervaded in good part by patriotic themes and subjects. They have expressed this love of Albania — its land and people, its language, customs and traditions — with fiery zeal and artistic skill. It's a thread that runs through their work from the classical period, through the National Awakening and down to our time.

We noticed this in the work of Buzuku who wrote his book, *Meshari*, because with the Ottoman occupation, "there were no religious books in the Albanian language". It is apparent in the work of Budi and Bardhi and Bogdani. Their writings collectively show an eagerness to preserve the Albanian language and relieve the sufferings of the Albanian people, by calling attention to and denouncing their oppression by the Turks.

Coming closer to our time, we find that P. Zarishi's work reflects a yearning to rid Albania of the Turkish yoke, and that L. de Martino, the Arbëresh, was active in publicizing the cause of Albania's independence. Activity in behalf of Albanian independence and the well-being of the Albanian people marks also the life and work of clergy like Mjeda, Gjeçov, Prenushi and others.

Many of these clerics demonstrated their patriotism not only with the pen, but by taking part in the affairs of the nation and becoming involved in politics, sometimes at the risk of their lives. In a report he issued in 1621, Pjetër Budi noted that some 30,000 Albanians were ready to take up arms against the Turks the moment a European military expedition would land on Albanian shores. Accordingly, he worked tirelessly to secure political and military aid, including men and munitions, from Western powers, such as Spain and dukes in Italy and France for an anti-Turk uprising. Budi is believed to have been drowned by his enemies in the Drin river.¹⁴⁷ Pjetër Bogdani, we are told, also lived a difficult life, mostly "to evade persecution by Turkish officials". His life was in constant danger because of his political activities aimed at the expulsion of the Turks. Indeed, for a time "he had to live in hiding in a cave".¹⁴⁸

On occasion Catholic prelates did take part in rebellions against the Ottoman occupiers. We have already cited two instances of armed resistance to the Turks by Catholics and their prelates in the section, "Conversions to Islam in Albania": the first in 1645, and the second in 1649. There were others. Thus, Albanian Catholics of Kelmendi in northern Albania, led by Archbishop Mihal Suma, rose up against the Turks during the Russo-Turkish war of 1737-1739. In 1862, Msgr. Gaspar Krasnqi, Abbot of Mirdita, was the chief leader of an uprising that was organized by a group of intellectuals in Shkodër. Other participants in the uprising were Bishop Pal Dodmasej, and writers Zef Jubani and Pashko Vasa. The uprising drew support mainly from Catholic elements in the Highlands and testified to the emergence of a new phase in the Albanian national movement in the 19th Century. In 1877, Msgr. Pjetër (Prenc) Doçi took part in an uprising which erupted in the Catholic region of Mirdita. He was arrested by the Turks and exiled to Istanbul, but returned to Albania in 1888. The heavy yoke of the Turks drove even the kind and gentle Fr. Gjeçov to take part in the armed struggle for the freedom of Albania. He took that step on the eve of Albania's independence, when he joined the uprisings of the Highlanders, alongside rebellion-leader Dedë Gjo Luli and others.

One of the most active figures in Albanian politics among the Catholic clergy was Bishop Luigi Bumçi. In 1919, Bishop Bumçi headed the Albanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. We learn that prior to going to Paris, he asked Pope Benedict XV to use the Vatican's influence among nations to prevent the further partitioning of Albania. He reports that the Pope replied saying: "Tomorrow I shall meet with ambassadors of several states and . . . I will do whatever I can to save the two endangered provinces (of Korçë and Gjirokastër)."¹⁴⁹ This is, of course, reminiscent of Bishop Noli's appeal to

President Wilson in 1918 to support the cause of Albania in Paris. We may assume that the Pope's intervention with the ambassadors was of help to Albania at the Paris Conference.

It is possible, no doubt, to point to lapses on the issue of patriotism in the lives and works of certain Catholic clerics here and there. Indeed, contemporary critics of the Church, ignoring all else, have not failed to do so.¹⁰ It is not the proper function of this study to either condemn or condone such lapses. But we might suggest, as an aid to a better understanding of those lapses, that they be seen in the context of the times, and more importantly perhaps, measured against the life-long activity of the clerics in question, and the whole body of their writings. When this is done, there can be no question, we believe, of the patriotism of those clerics and their service to the Albanian nation. When this is done, their lapses or failings assume their proper proportion, and dwindle in importance.

An objective reading of the record demonstrates beyond dispute the patriotism of the Albanian Catholic clergy. It is a record that elicits respect, and not infrequently admiration as well. For centuries, and in the most trying circumstances, they have collectively served God and their fellow-countrymen with exemplary devotion. The benefits to the Albanian nation of their pastoral service, their courage in adversity, and the brilliance of their literary work are countless in number. They cannot be lightly ignored or refuted. And this is not merely the view of Catholic believers or Albanians who are sympathetic to the Catholic Church. It is a view that is shared to a considerable extent by the main body of scholars in Communist Albania. The positive references to the Catholic clergy in the standard Albanian texts on history and literature — some of which are cited in this study — are ample evidence of this.

We turn now to the work of the Catholic clergy in education and social life.

The Catholic Clergy and Education

The story of the Catholic Church and its role in Albanian education and culture goes back to the early centuries of Christianity, when Latin was the dominant language in the Christian Church of Illyria. The culture of the early Christian era flourished mainly in the churches. In the 13th and 14th centuries, education in Albania was dependent on the Catholic and Orthodox churches, which used Latin and Greek as modes of instruction. The subject matter of instruction was chiefly religious.

In the 16th and 17th Centuries, the Catholic clergy — as we have seen — took the initiative in publishing books in Albanian. But their efforts to teach the Albanian language met with Turkish resistance. To evade such interference by the Turks, the "priest-educators were obliged to offer instruction secretly in their own homes or on the homes of their bishops."¹¹ These priest-educators prepared the teaching materials themselves, whether they were religious works or other texts, such as a dictionary or grammar. This was true of those pioneering figures in the history of Albanian literature as Buzuku, Budi, Bardhi, and Bodgani, as well as others. As the encyclopedic work *Kisha dhe historia e saj* notes, it was the Church that supported the publication of works by the Albanian Catholic clergy which, in the darkness that descended over the Albanian nation during the Ottoman period, served as a light that testified to the nation's strength, identity and will to survive.

Early in our century, the Albanian scholar, Sami Frashëri, observed that the Albanian language "cannot exist without its own alphabet and schools"; Frashëri expressed well what the Catholic clergy in Albania had known and practiced centuries earlier. The beginnings of Albanian education go back to the time when Albanian clerics went to Italy to study at colleges in Rome and the College in Loreto (founded in 1580). This was an initiative that had both religious and patriotic significance, since it aimed, on the one hand, at saving Christianity from Ottoman efforts to Islamicize the Albanian population and, on the other hand, prevent the population from being assimilated into the Ottoman culture.¹²

The efforts of the clergy in the field of education bore fruit in the year 1632, when the first elementary school in the country was opened in the Krujë region for students preparing for the priesthood. It was followed two years later with the opening of another elementary school in the village of Pđhanë, near the Mat river. A year later, in 1639, Franciscan friars opened a Gymnasium in the village of Blinisht, in the Zadrimë region, where the language of instruction — apparently for the first time — was in the *lingua vernacula* ("the native tongue").¹³ There followed a long gap in the development of Albanian education, until the middle of the last century, when the fervor of nationalism began to sweep the country. This time also, as we have seen, it was the Catholic clergy, the Franciscans and Jesuits, who opened (in Shkodër) the first schools in which Albanian was taught. These institutions, which included an elementary school (1855), and schools of advanced studies — the Papal College (1859), the Franciscan College *Illyricum* and Seminary (1861), and the St. Francis Xavier College (1877) — were established under the aegis of the Austro-Hungarian *Kultusprotektorat*. A singular virtue of those schools, which is another indication of their patriotic character, is that they were open to Albanians of other religious denominations, as well.

Many of the Catholic clerical writers — whose work we have examined in preceding passages — were active also in the field of education. Thus, Fr. Ndue Bytyçi served in Kosovë not only as a priest, but also as a teacher of Albanian in Gjakovë and Pejë. The Arbëresh missionary, Leonardo de Martino, played a role in organizing Catholic religious education in northern Albania, and moreover taught at the Troshan Seminary. Father Shijefën Gjeçov, who had great affection for the Albanian language, taught it underground to pupils in the parish house of the village of Zym, where he lived.

Two of the foremost writers among the Catholic clergy, Fr. Gjergj Fishta and Fr. Ndre Mjeda, took an active interest in education and the Albanian language and alphabet. Mjeda was a keen student of Albanian, studied local northern dialects in the parishes where he served, and had contacts with foreign linguists, among them Gustav Meyer, the noted German Albanologist. He was an active member of the Shkodër (Scutari) Literary Commission that was founded by the High Command of the International (Austrian) Corps in 1916. Concerned about the critical question of the Albanian alphabet at the turn of the century, Mjeda founded in 1901 (along with his brother, Lazër Mjeda, Archbishop of Shkodër) the *Agimi* (The Dawn) Literary Society. The society created its own alphabet for Albanian, based on the principle of one letter for one sound. Later, Mjeda attended the proceedings of the Congress of Manastir (now Bitol), as the representative of the *Agimi* Society.

Father Fishta was a co-founder, with Msgr. Pjetër Prenk Doçi, the Abbot of Mirdita, of the *Bashkimi* (Unity) Literary Society in Shkodër (1899). The society played an important role at the Congress of Manastir in 1908, where the modern Albanian alphabet was adopted. Fishta became an active educator in 1902, when he took over the administration of the Franciscan school that was opened in Shkodër in 1855. In 1913, he founded the distinguished review, *Hylli i Dritës* (The Star of Light), and edited it intermittently for a long time.

Both Fishta and Mjeda participated in the Manastir Congress as rival representatives of their respective literary societies. Each one argued for the adoption of the particular alphabet that the two societies had invented independently for the Albanian language. In the end the alphabet presented by the *Bashkimi* society won out over that of the *Agimi* society. But the real winners, of course, were the Albanian language and the Albanian people and culture.

The Catholic Church made valuable contributions to the development of Albanian education and culture through the literary work of its clergy, through a network of education institutions, as well as through a variety of periodicals. Two of those periodicals, *Leka*, organ of the Jesuits, and *Hylli i*

Driftës, organ of the Franciscans, were most esteemed for their democratic and patriotic orientation. Indeed, one historian has called them the "most notable publications in the 1930s" in Albania.⁷⁴ They were popular and influential well beyond the limits of the Catholic community in Albania, in large part because they dealt with issues of vital concern to all Albanians.

The Church was active in still another field — social and humanitarian work. True, some critics deny the contributions of the Church in this area, claiming rather that it is a conservative or even feudal institution that obstructs social progress. The Catholic Church, they have argued, like the other denominations in Albania, served to perpetuate backward social customs and traditions. But if we look into the history of the Church, we find that it used its authority and influence to promote beneficent social action, improve the general welfare, and raise the general level of Albanian society.

As a group, the members of the Albanian Catholic hierarchy, including priests, nuns, and seminarians, were intensely involved in the social life of their parishes and communities. This was especially true of the larger parishes, as those in Shkodër and Tiranë. In Shkodër, the *Schola Cantorum* gained a reputation for the excellence of the education it provided to its students. In addition, the school had social clubs for young men and women, and published a weekly cultural and religious periodical, *Kumbona e së Dielës* (The Sunday Bell). Catholic sisters, belonging to such orders as Salesians, Servites, Franciscans, and White Charity, were actively engaged in humanitarian pursuits, doing missionary work in various hospitals, kindergartens and vocational schools in the country. Their work in the educational and cultural fields, at a time when Albanian women were generally confined to the home, helped to advance the cause of women's emancipation in Albanian society.

Moreover, the Church did useful work toward the eradication of the *vendetta* tradition, which for centuries was a blight on the country. Working among the Highlanders, Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries made an impact in this area with their message of fraternal love, Christian charity, reconciliation and harmony. Edith Durham, the British novelist, took note of this while traveling in Albania at the turn of the century, as she indicates in her book, *High Albania*.⁷⁵

The Catholic schools were "embryos of cultural emancipation," as well as "hearts of patriotic movements for the liberation of Albania from the Turkish yoke."⁷⁶ Not a few Albanian patriots, poets and other writers of stature were educated in those schools. In sum, the record of the Albanian Catholic clergy on education and social work is positive and praiseworthy — one of the brightest features in the history of the Catholic Church of Albania.

Mother Teresa and Enver Hoxha

It is one of the great ironies of Albanian history that the two best-known Albanians in the world at present stand diametrically opposed on the issue of religion. On the one hand, there is Mother Teresa, symbol of piety and devotion to God, and the most celebrated religious figure in our day. On the other hand, there is Enver Hoxha, leader of Albania, opponent of God and religion, and the foremost atheistic figure in our day. It is rather curious that twentieth century Albania is the land that gave birth to two such radically different personalities. They represent two different visions of life, two different streams of thought, two different directions and goals for the Albanian nation. This is not the place, of course, to engage in a scholarly analysis in order to "explain" the paradoxical phenomenon of Mother Teresa and Enver Hoxha. Let it be said merely that the paradox says something not only about the nature of Albanian society, but about the conditions of our time, the state of the world we live in.

At the same time, it is not quite correct to make a comparison between Mother Teresa and Hoxha. The former is a world figure, "a household word," a name more famous than the heads of the biggest nations on earth, while Hoxha is but a state figure of relatively little influence and stature. Agnes Bojaxhiu — her Albanian or Christening name is Gonxhë ("rosebud") Bojaxhiu — is the founder and Mother Superior of the Missionaries of Charity, headquartered in India. The "Living Saint" of Calcutta, as some call her, is the recipient of more prizes and honors and awards of the highest order than probably any other human being on earth today. We shall mention here merely two: the Pope John XXIII Peace Prize (1971) and the Nobel Peace Prize (1979).

We are not aware of any comparable prizes awarded to Hoxha in recognition of his services to mankind or the cause of atheism. The world community has generally ignored his message concerning the virtues and goods of atheism. Like Mother Teresa and Christians in general, Hoxha has his own views on religion, especially in relation to Albania. And rather than comment on those views here, we shall let him speak for himself, and let the readers themselves interpret or evaluate his words:

All religious sects among us were brought to Albania by foreign invaders, and served them and the ruling exploiting classes in the country. Under the robe of religion there lay hidden the fierce law of the foreign invaders and their servants within the country.

In the old order of the bourgeois and the landed gentry, the standard of life in the villages was very low. In the general layout of the old villages, the first thing that came to sight were the churches and the minarets . . . while the peasant masses lived in huts and one-floor dwellings, where sickness and epidemics wreaked havoc, taking the lives of thousands of people.

The canons of Islam and the (Christian) Church, in unison with the laws of the bourgeoisie, had reduced woman to a piece of merchandise, an object that was bought and sold by the male, and exploited without mercy. She did not dare open her mouth to express a thought or utter a word.⁷⁷

Such are the alleged faults against the religion that — along with other ideas and factors — caused Enver Hoxha to reject God and embrace atheism. This is essentially an economic and sociological outlook on religion. It is startlingly different from the teachings of Mother Teresa. To make that difference fully obvious, we present below a few excerpts from her teachings:

True Holiness consists in doing God's will with a smile: . . . Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your warm greeting. In the slums we are the light of God's kindness to the poor.

Let us not be satisfied with just giving money; money is not enough, for money one can get. The poor need our hands to serve them, they need our hearts to love them. . . . Being unwanted is the greatest disease of all.

It is how much love we put in the doing that makes our offering Something Beautiful for God.

We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature — trees, flowers, grass — grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence.

Joy is prayer — Joy is strength — Joy is love — Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls. God loves a cheerful giver. The best way to show our gratitude to God and the people is to accept everything with joy. A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love."⁷⁴

It is evident that though Hoxha and Mother Teresa share the same language, ethnic stock, and national heritage, they live in two different worlds. The practical result of their contrasting belief-systems is seen in their words. Mother Teresa, like the Catholic Church in Albania, has served people in need without regard to their class background or ideology or any other distinction, seeing them all as children of God and therefore worthy of her care and affection and devotion.

Not so for Enver Hoxha, the disciple of Marx and Lenin and Stalin. We must assume, to be sure, that Hoxha, too, in his actions has been motivated by good intentions, according to the lights of his Communist ideology. But consider the fruits of his belief-system; at least in connection with religion, and in particular the Catholic Church in Albania. Under his leadership, the Albanian government has looked upon the Catholic Church as an enemy, with whom no compromise or reconciliation can be reached. This attitude toward the Church is reminiscent, it will be recalled, of the Ottomans in former times.

Proceeding from this attitude, the government adopted from the start, it appears, a policy aimed at the elimination of the Church, and indeed of the religious establishment as a social institution in Albania. The regime then went on, step by step, to enfeeble the Church by reducing its sources of income, property holdings, and the scope of its activities. At the same time it emasculated its hierarchy through a series of arrests, imprisonment and execution of Catholic clerics on charges of espionage, sabotage and various anti-state activities. The culmination of the drive against religion came in 1967, when all houses of public worship in the country — a total of 2,169, of which 327 were Catholic — were shut down. Religion was thus abolished in Albania, and the country was declared to be "the first atheist state in the world." The abolition of religion was sanctioned in 1976 by the new state Constitution which says: "The state recognizes no religion whatever and supports atheist propaganda for the purpose of inculcating the scientific materialist world outlook in people."⁷⁵

The anti-religion campaign took a particularly heavy toll among Catholic clerics. According to figures released by the Vatican in 1983, a total of 137 Catholic clergy perished in Albania between 1945 and 1981, as a result of "persecution by the Communist government in Albania." The figure includes 8 bishops, 64 diocesan priests, 33 Franciscans, 14 Jesuits, 10 seminarians, and 8 nuns.⁸⁰

Yet religion has not perished in Albania. Reports indicate that it continues to live in conditions of illegality. This much is affirmed even by the official press in Albania, which notes from time to time that believers practice their religion in secret, in the privacy of their homes and in other situations. In other words, religion continues to be a living force in Albanian society.

The Catholic Church was numerically the smallest of the religious denominations in Albania. Owing, however, to its organization and its educated clergy — to mention but two factors — it has exerted an influence in Albanian society far out of proportion to its size. And it has a good influence on the Albanian nation. In the words of Sinishtia:

The Catholic clergy in all phases of Albanian history has openly shown its patriotic feelings and national conscience; it has taught the people not only about faith and God, but also Albanian letters and love of the fatherland. It today there exists an independent territory, internationally recognized as Albania, a great deal of merit goes to the Catholic Church of Albania and its clergy."⁸¹

The story of the Church itself, as we have tried to show in this study, supports that conclusion, and at the same time serves as evidence of its vitality, resilience, strength and endurance.

Notes

⁷⁴Faik Konitza (edited by G.M. Panarity), *Albania: The Rock Garden of Southeastern Europe*, Boston, 1960, pp. 140-41.

⁷⁵Gjon Sinishtia, "Grave Violations of Religious Rights in Albania," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Easton, Pa., Vol. III, No. 5 (1983), p. 2.

⁷⁶Gjon Sinishtia, *The Fulfilled Promise, A Documentary Account of Religious Persecution in Albania*, H & F Composing Service, Santa Clara, Ca., 1976, p. 1, 38 (hereafter cited as *Fulfilled Promise*).

⁷⁷As contrasted to "conventual" or "monastic" clergy; that is, priests who did not live in a convent or monastery.

⁷⁸*Drita* (The Light), Catholic monthly, Prizren, Kosovë (Yugoslavia), no. 1-2 (1983), p. 10.

⁷⁹Fan S. Noli (Bishop), *George Castriot Scanderbeg*, International Universities Press, New York, N.Y., 1947, p. 8.

⁸⁰S. Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1967, pp. 7-8, 9.

⁸¹Stefanai Pollo, Aleks Buda et al. (eds.), *Historia e Shqipërisë, I* (History of Albania, vol. I), Tiranë, 1959, p. 370.

⁸²Anton Logoreci, *The Albanians: Europe's Forgotten Survivors*, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., London, 1977, p. 31.

⁸³Sinishtia, *Fulfilled Promise*, p. 33.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸⁵Dr. Gasper Gjini, "The Albanian Council 1703-1983", *Drita*, no. 11-12 (1983), p. 7.

⁸⁶Sinishtia, *Fulfilled Promise*, pp. 34-35.

⁸⁷Pollo and Buda, *Historia e Shqipërisë, I*, p. 377.

⁸⁸See the 1954 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 5, p. 795.

⁸⁹*Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Santa Clara, Ca., Vol. III (1982), p. 45.

⁹⁰*Kisha dhe historia e saj* (The Church and Its History), Ferizaj-Zagreb, 1981-1982, Vol. 7, Section 60.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, Vol. 7 Section 60; Sinishtia, *Fulfilled Promise*, p. 35.

- ¹A. Guidetti, *Padre Fausti*, Milan, 1976, pp. 96-97; see also, Jak Gardin, S.J., *Report on the Albanian Catholic Church*, Trieste, 1956.
- ²Pollo and Buda, *Historia e Shqipërisë*, I, p. 356.
- ³Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, p. 8.
- ⁴See article, "Vëllezërit e Vegjël," *Drita*, no. 9-10 (1982), p. 7.
- ⁵*Ibid.*, No. 1-2 (1983), pp. 25-26.
- ⁶Sinishta, *Fulfilled Promise*, p. 39.
- ⁷*Drita*, No. 11-12 (1983), pp. 8-9.
- ⁸Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, p. 130.
- ⁹Dr. Gasper Gjini, "Dikur nëpër Kosovë," *Drita*, No. 9-10 (1984), p. 2.
- ¹⁰See the series of articles by Don Mark Sopi on "The Archbishops of Shkup," in *Drita*, Nos. 5, 8-9, 10, 11 (1980), esp. No. 8-9, p. 20 for the preceding citation.
- ¹¹*Drita*, No. 8-9 (1980), p. 20.
- ¹²A large number of Albanian Catholics from Montenegro have emigrated to the United States in the postwar period, settling mostly in the Detroit area, where they have built two Catholic churches. See section headed, "Albanian Catholic Activity In America," *infra*.
- ¹³*Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. IV (1983), p. 4.
- ¹⁴*Drita*, No. 1-2 (1983), p. 8-9. For more information on recent Church activity in Kosovë, see issues of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. IV (1983), p. 8, Vol. III (1982), p. 7, and Vol. II (1981), p. 17.
- ¹⁵*Kisha dhe historia e saj*, Vol. 7, Sec. 60.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, Vol. 7, Sec. 60.
- ¹⁷Sinishta, *Fulfilled Promise*, pp. 206-209.
- ¹⁸From Giuseppe Schiro, *Canti Sacri delle Colonie Albanesi di Sicilia* (Sacred Songs of the Albanian Colony of Sicily), Naples, 1907. As given in *Kisha dhe historia e saj*, Vol. 6, Sec. 60.
- ¹⁹*Dielli* (The Sun), Boston, Massachusetts, Feb. 7, 1968, p. 1.
- ²⁰Personal communication from Msgr. Eleuterio F. Fortino, Nov., 1984.
- ²¹*Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. IV (1983), p. 5.
- ²²*Drita*, Vol. X, No. 6 (1979), p. 6.
- ²³Msgr. Zef Oroshi, "How I Met Fan Noli," in Eduard Ligo (ed.), *Flamurtari i Kombit F.S. Noli* (Standard Bearer of the Nation F.S. Noli), Worcester, Massachusetts, 1984, pp. 39-41.
- ²⁴*Drita*, No. 1 (1980), p. 12.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ²⁶Dhimitër S. Shuteriqi et al. (eds.), *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, II* (The History of Albanian Literature, Vol. II), Tiranë, 1959, p. 394; see also, *Drita*, No. 3 (1980), p. 12.
- ²⁷Shuteriqi, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, II*, pp. 109, 236-237.
- ²⁸*Drita*, No. 6 (1979), p. 8.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, No. 2 (1979), p. 7.
- ³⁰Logoreci, *The Albanians*, p. 38.
- ³¹*Kisha dhe historia e saj*, Vol. 7, Sec. 60.
- ³²Pollo and Buda, *Historia e Shqipërisë*, I, p. 235.
- ³³*Drita*, No. 1 (1979), p. 7.
- ³⁴Shuteriqi, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, I*, p. 148-149.
- ³⁵*Drita*, No. 4 (1979), p. 8.
- ³⁶Shuteriqi, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, I*, p. 177.
- ³⁷Qemal Xhomo, Dhori Qirjazi (eds.), *Antologjia e letërsisë shqipe* (Anthology of Albanian Literature), Tiranë, 1972, p. 7.
- ³⁸Stuart E. Mann, *Albanian Literature*, London, 1955, p. 6.
- ³⁹Shuteriqi, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, I*, p. 238.
- ⁴⁰*Drita*, No. 2 (1980), p. 12.
- ⁴¹Shuteriqi, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, II*, p. 230.
- ⁴²Fr. Fishta is attacked for acquiescing to the Italian Fascist occupation of Albania, as well as for his social philosophy, which is labeled conservative and patriarchal. See, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, II*, p. 257; Stuart E. Mann, *Albanian Literature*, p. 72; and Arshi Pipa, *Trilogjia Albanike, Vol. III: Albanian Literature: Social Perspectives*, R. Trofenik, München (1978), p. 168, n. 7.
- ⁴³Sinishta, *Fulfilled Promise*, p. 196.
- ⁴⁴Shuteriqi, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, II*, pp. 25-26, 35, 36, 256, 350.
- ⁴⁵Pollo and Buda, *Historia e Shqipërisë, II*, p. 633.
- ⁴⁶Skendi (ed.), *Albania*, Praeger, N.Y., 1956, p. 307.
- ⁴⁷*Drita*, No. 12 (1979), p. 10.
- ⁴⁸The story of his death is vividly told by Arshi Pipa in Gjoni Sinishta's book, *The fulfilled Promise*, pp. 79-87.
- ⁴⁹Pollo and Buda, *Historia e Shqipërisë, I*, pp. 365-66.
- ⁵⁰Shuteriqi, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, I*, p. 228.
- ⁵¹*Kisha dhe historia e saj*, Vol. 10, Sec. 60.
- ⁵²Three chief targets of their attack have been Fr. Fishta, Fr. Anton Harapi (writer, educator, orator), and Fr. Lazër Shantoja (poet and translator). All three are reviled for collaborating with Italian and German Fascist occupiers in Albania during World War II: Fishta, in part because of his membership in the Academy of Italy; Harapi, for his participation in the four-man High Council of Regency set up by the Germans in 1943 to govern Albania; and

Shantoja for his sympathetic attitude toward the Italian occupation. See, respectively, A. Pipa, *Trilogia Albanica*, III, p. 168, n. 7; S. Skendi, *Albania*, p. 97; Gjon Sinishta, *Fulfilled Promise*, p. 196.

⁷¹Pollo and Buda, *Historia e Shqipërisë*, I, p. 376.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 375.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 376.

⁷⁴Skendi, *Albania*, p. 126.

⁷⁵E. Durham, *High Albania*, London, 1909, pp. 84-90.

⁷⁶Sinishta, *Fulfilled Promise*, p. 35.

⁷⁷Hulusi Hako, *Akuzojmë fenë* (We Accuse Religion), Tiranë, 1968, pp. 23, 59, 94.

⁷⁸*A Gift For God*, a collection of the teachings of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Harper & Row, N.Y. (1975), pp. 39, 47, 54, 67, 76, 77, 86.

⁷⁹*Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania*, Tiranë, 1977, p. 20.

⁸⁰For the fullest account to date of the Catholic Church in Communist Albania, see Gjon Sinishta, *The Fulfilled Promise* (1976). See also, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Santa Clara, Ca., vols. I (1980), II (1981), III (1982), IV (1983); and Bernard Tönnies, "Religious Persecution in Albania," in *Religion In Communist Lands*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Winter, 1982), pp. 242-255.

⁸¹Sinishta, *Fulfilled Promise*, p. 37.



Albanian mountain leaders of the 1911 insurrection with their pastors and bishops. First row, left to right: Gjeto Gjeka, bajraktari i Selcës; A. Bona Gjeçaj, famullitar i Grudës; Dom Ernest Cozzi, famullitar i Rrjollit; Dedë Coku; A. Sebastjan Hila, famullitar i Rapshtë; Shuk Serreggi; A. Lorenc Mitrovic, famullitar i Bajzës; Pjeter Gjokë Doda; A. Karlo Prenushi, famullitar i Vuksan-Lekaj; A. Luigj Bushati, famullitar i Traboinit. Second row, left to right: Gjekë Mali; A. Mati Prenushi famullitar i Kastratit; Dedë Gjo' Luli; Imzot Jak Serreggi, Argjip i Shkodres; Imzot Luigj Bumçi. Third row, left to right: Kolë Palë; Zef Shuk Serreggi; Gjeto Daka.



Jesuit fathers at the Papal College, Shkodër, 1914.



Delegates of the Albanian Franciscan Province met in 1942 in Shkodra. Sitting, left to right: Frs. Pal Çiurçija, Nikoll Dajçi, Anton Harapi, Cyril Cani, Serafin Koda. Standing, left to right: Bernard Serreqi, Leonard Shajakaj, Marian Prelaj, Klement Miraj, Zef Gici, Geg Lumaj, Simon Mikeli, Anton Kiri. Second row: Egjid Gilaj, Silvester Hila, Angel Vjerdha, Antonin Fishta, Frano Kiri, David Pepa, Alfonse Çuni, Karl Serreqi, Konstantin Pistulli. Third row: Dyonis Makaj, Rrok Gurashi, Gasper Suma, Rrok Vataj, Leonard Tagaj, Sebastian Deda, David Pici. Most of them to die by execution, torture or in labor camps.



George Castrioti-Skanderbeg (1405-1468). The leader of national unity and hero of Albania who may have saved Europe in the XV century. The original painting, by Peter R. Freeman, hangs at the International Center for Albanian Studies in Palermo, Italy.



Pope Clement XI (Pontificate 1700-1720), descendant of fifteenth century Albanian refugees in Italy.



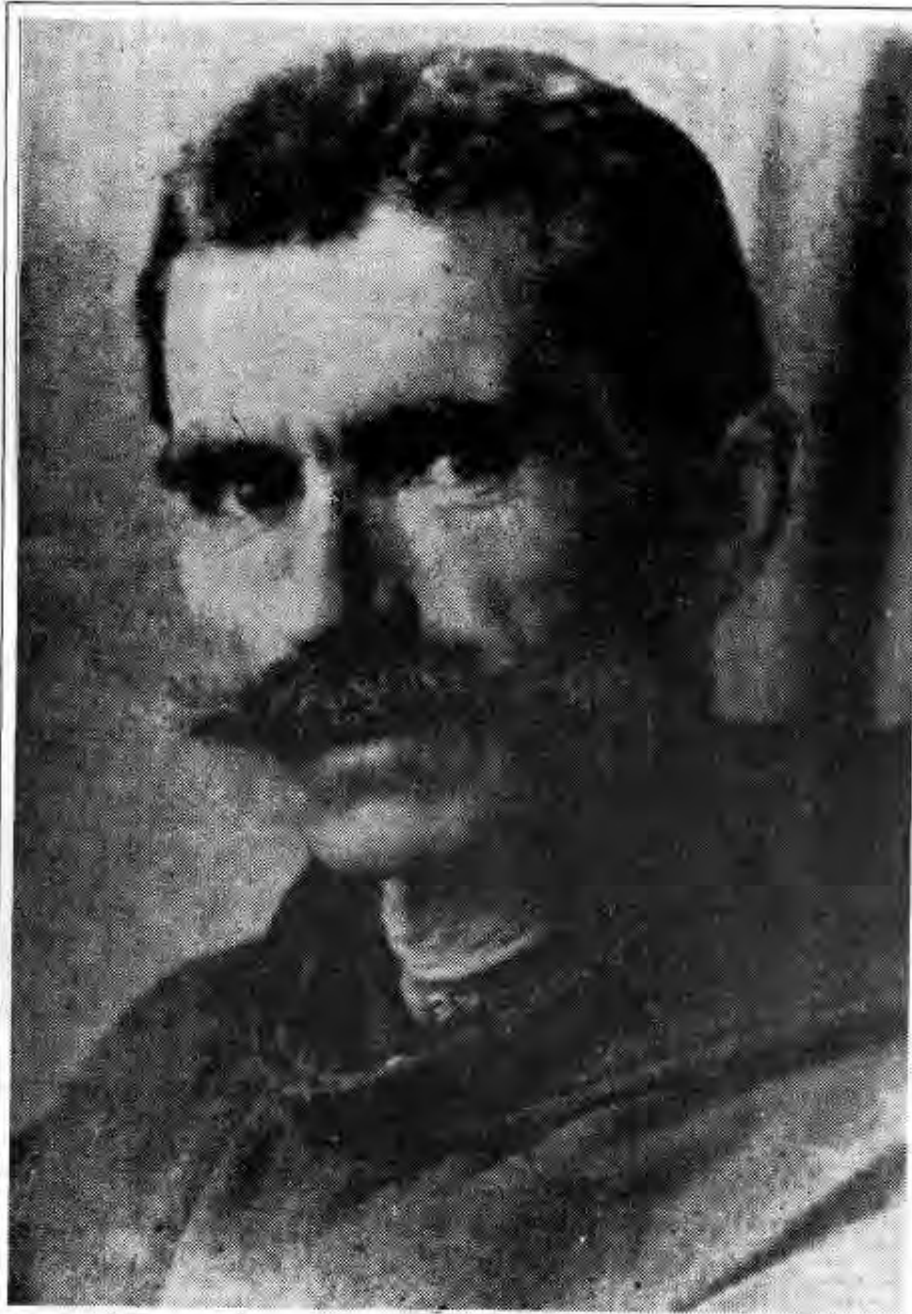
Fourth Council of Albanian Bishops, Shkodër, 1895.



Fr. Gjergj Fishta, O.F.M. (1871-1940).



Fr. Shtjefën Kurti before his second arrest.



Shtjefën Gjeçovi (1874-1929).



Albanian Bishops with the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Della Pietra, after Thanksgiving services on the occasion of Albanian Flag Day in 1932. From right to left: Bishops Gjini, Gjura, Prendushi, Della Pietra, Thaci, and Bumci.

Albanian News and Events

France Welcomes An Albanian Museum

The Albanian Royal Foundation was honored to receive this year the priceless collection of the famed Albanian diplomat, Paul Adamidi Bey Frasheri, now living in Switzerland. The collection comprises paintings, literature, costumes, weaponry and historical documents.

Count and Countess Jean d'Ogny, long-standing friends of Albania, have graciously housed the museum in their castle, Chateau de la Chapelle d'Angillon, Cher.

During the summer, preparations were initiated for the solemn opening of the museum, personally headed by their majesties King Leka I and Queen Geraldine. While in Paris, they were interviewed by Professor Paul Lendvai of Austrian television and Mr. Adam Curtis of the BBC.

On Saturday, December 8, in the presence of her majesty, Queen Geraldine, Count and Countess Jean d'Ogny, Countess G. Alvensleben-Schonborn, His Excellency Paul Adamidi Bey Frasheri and his sister, L. Frasheri, Mrs. Jacqueline Zogu, Mrs. Jacqueline Callaku, Miss Virginia Zogu, Mr. Tati de Kossova (nephew of King Zog I), Raphael de Ureft and three hundred international guests, the *Paul Adamidi Frasheri Museum* was officially dedicated. Heading protocol were Mr. Philippe Duchet of France and Mr. Skender Zogu of Albania. Also present at the dedication was a large delegation of Albanians (100) headed by Mr. Abedin Mulosmanaj, Minister of the Court, Ibrahim Kulla and Hulle Spahija (King Zog's representatives in France and Canada).

A message from King Leka was read opening the solemn ceremony. This greeting was followed by an address from Count Jean d'Ogny, who warmly welcomed the assembled guests. He praised freedom-loving Albanians for their staunch resistance to the evils of perilous times. Particularly, he praised religious groups in Albania for encouraging their people to uphold



Mr. Adamidi B. Frasheri (center), Queen of Albanians Geraldine (right) and Mr. Skender Zogu (far left), press attaché of the Albanian Royal Court.

their moral, spiritual and national values. Count d'Ogny expressed his joy and pleasure to have in La Chapelle d'Angillon a museum displaying a part of Albanian history.

On behalf of the Albanian royal family, Mr. Skender Zogu, press attaché, thanked Count d'Ogny for this gracious gesture.

The dedication ceremony was addressed also by the following: Father Ambrose Martini, O.F.M., Reverend Imam Latif Huseyni, Dr. Idris Basha and Romanian journalist, Doro Novacovici, representing the Organization of the European Captive Nations. The addresses concluded with the Albanian flag being raised, followed by a minute of silence for all Albanians who have suffered and died for their freedom. Albanians, especially in exile, are deeply grateful to Count and Countess Jean d'Ogny as well as to their countryman, Paul Adamidi Bey Frasheri.

The French local and national press gave wide coverage to this extraordinary event which was attended by many international dignitaries.

Silver Anniversary of Albanian Journal

Mr. Isa Elez Ndreu, publisher, and Mr. Lec Shllaku, editor, of the renowned Albanian Quarterly, KOHA E JONË, published in Paris, are preparing for the journal's Silver Anniversary in 1986.

KOHA E JONË known in French, also, as "Notre Temps" (Our Times) tackles serious topics of the Albanian diaspora. It also examines closely contemporary life and development in Albania. The journal's contents are regularly covered in Italian, French, English and German, as well.

For twenty-five years Mr. Ndreu and Mr. Shllaku have devoted their wealth, talents and time to preserve and encourage Albania's rich national and cultural heritage in this quarterly. We applaud and congratulate our friends on this happy anniversary.

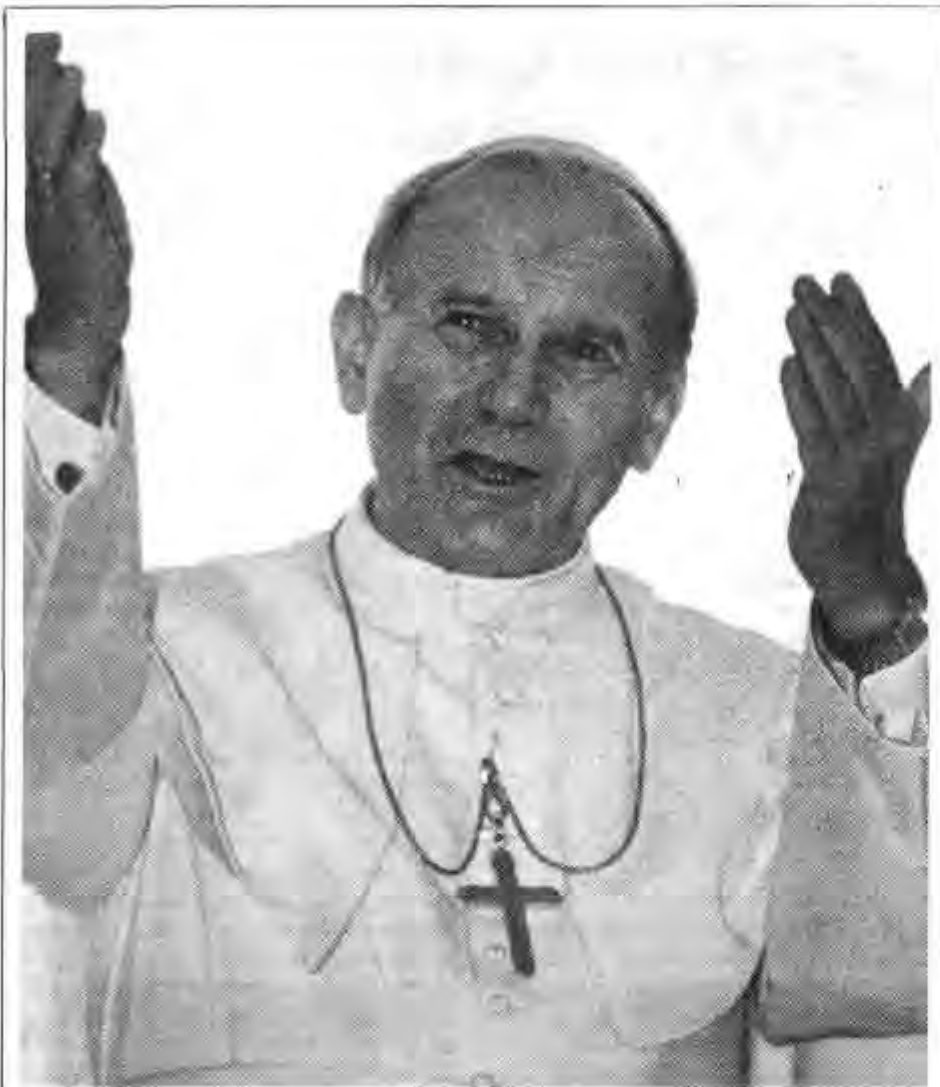
Pope John Paul Calls for Religious Freedom in Albania

Our Holy Father's love for his suffering Albanian flock has been evident on many different occasions. If not for his continued interest and concern for the suffering Church and believers of Albania, little attention — if any — would be paid by the world to this small nation. For this reason we are impelled to offer him our deepest gratitude.

One of his last strong public statements was made in Bari, Italy, on February 26, 1984. Here he asked the large numbers gathered to hear him to pray for Christians and all believers of Albania, which is located directly across the Adriatic Strait of Otranto from Bari. In his message Pope John Paul II said:

My thought goes from this city also to our brothers and sisters of Albania, who cannot demonstrate externally their religious faith, a fundamental right of the human person. While I recommend them to your prayers in common, I want to assure these brothers who are so tried that they are particularly present in my heart and that I entrust them to the protection of our Lady.

Church sources noted that Bari, which the Pope described as a "bridge projected beyond the Mediterranean Sea," is so close to Albania that people there can pick up radio broadcasts from the Italian city loud and clear.



Pope John Paul II

Byzantine Publication For Scattered Arbëresh

There have been many attempts on the part of individuals such as Ann Selafani-Meridier, John Cardino and Maria Chieta to preserve the religious and cultural heritage of the Arbëresh people in America. This effort has been assisted over the last four years by the newsletter published by Our Lady of Grace Byzantine Rite Catholic Society.

This bi-monthly publication, the *Società Cattolica Maria S. Sma. delle Grazie Bizantino* newsletter, reaches communities in New York, Detroit, New Orleans, and other places in the U.S. and Canada where the Arbëresh live. They give news of its members and reprint articles on the situation in Albania.

For more information write: Our Lady of Grace, Italian Byzantine Rite, Catholic Society, John F. DeMeis, Secretary, 51 Redgrave Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10306.



Count Jean d'Ogny (left), Queen Geraldine (center) with their entourage.

Atheistic Mullahs Attack the Pope

The Albanian people, at home and in exile, Christians and Moslems alike, were heartened by the noble words of Pope John Paul II in Bari. Our Center has learned that many exiled Albanian communities of Europe, Australia and North America sent messages of gratitude to the Holy Father. We feel certain that Albanians at home — if they were free to express themselves — would undoubtedly appreciate even more the encouraging statements of Pope John Paul II. However, the "atheist mullahs" of Albania and their news media immediately attacked the Pontiff accusing him of "participation in a campaign of intimidation" against Albania.

The main organ of the Albanian Party and government, *Zeri i Popullit*, in an editorial of March 2, 1984, lashed out at the Pope for his statement made in Bari labelling his call for religious freedom in Albania as "fascist."

Below is the translation of the article from *Zeri i Popullit* distributed to the news media by the Albanian Mission at the United Nations in New York. It strikes the de-emphasis of God written with a small letter. We ask our readers to make their own judgement of the facts of religious freedom in Albania.

"... The Pope of Rome has (also) been engaged in the campaign against our country, recently. It seems that Pope Voytila has been charged with a special mission to slander Albania and to denigrate the Albanian people, a mission, which must be admitted, he is carrying out overzealously.

"Twice within three years, something unusual in the thousand year long history of the Rome popes, he has appeared on the shores of Puglia, in front of us, to curse the 'irreligious Albanians.'

"No matter whether it was his own wish or the order of others, the fact is that his speech on the steps of the basilica of Saint-Nicola in Bari is the second voice in the anti-Albanian liturgy sung by the reactionary despots in the squares and churches of Athens. It is also a fact that just like the Greek reactionaries who with their actions aim at hindering and putting an end to the further normalization of the relations of good neighbourliness between Greece and Albania, Pope Voytila, too, is worried by that predisposition and wish of the Italian people, and in particular of that of Puglia and of the other southern regions for the creation and preservation of a friendly atmosphere between the two countries, something which is welcomed and saluted in Albania, too.

"As for the 'concern' of the Pope over the situation of religion in Albania, it must be said that none has ever been persecuted in new Albania because of his religious sentiments. Our people's power has considered the problem of religious faith as an individual problem, as a problem of one's own consciousness. With their own free will and without imposition, our people themselves decided what stand they must adopt towards religion and the religious institutions.

"Therefore, nobody has the right to ask and more so to urge our people to believe in god or to practice the religious rites. On our part we do not ask from the others not to believe in god and to follow our example. We Albanians do not base our respect and consideration for other peoples on whether they believe or not, but on their freedom-loving democratic and progressive values. Our atheism has not hindered and does not hinder us to have good relations with those who believe as well as with those who do not believe.

"Finally, we would like to say that there are atheists not only in Albania, but in France, Sweden and in all countries too. But we have not seen Pope Voytila be preoccupied for them as for the Albanians. It seems that his inspirations come not from god but from anticommunism. For him, you may believe in the devil if you like, but don't accept socialism. Therefore, the Pope does not mind borrowing the ideas and words of Mussolini. In his speech in Bari, the Pope said: 'My thoughts go to the brothers and sisters in Albania...' I would like to assure them that they occupy a special place in my heart.' Duce, too, used to say that 'Albania is my heart.' But Albania is not Poland, and the Albanians limit the present Pope, just as they have done in their times with Duce and the other popes, who blessed fascism and collaborated with it to attack the peoples and grab their freedom from them."

Albanian Sisters Swim to Freedom

In August of this year two brave Albanian women swam to freedom. Isabelle (30) and Zamira (26) Islami secretly left the Albanian coast on August 1. They and their brother Klement (who unfortunately drowned in the escape) had been sent to a collective farm for refusing to join and support the Communist Party at the University of Tiranë.

At the farm they worked twelve hours a day, were not paid, and received harsh "disciplinary" beatings. Having planned their escape for over a year, they were able to leave the farm

under the pretext of visiting their grandmother. They managed to carefully evade being followed and arrived at the coast, plunging into the icy waters to begin the 13-hour swim at night. They reached the Isle of Corfu, Greece the next morning and sought political asylum.

"Leaving family behind was difficult," the sisters recounted, "but the choice was either attempting freedom or death. We realized very quickly that it was God's hand that carried us to safety as we prayed fervently while battling the large waves," they recounted.



Happy sisters Islami now in the United States.

Otto Knösel-Prem: Austrian Friend of the Albanian People

In the past Albania and its people have had many esteemed friends throughout the world. Without a doubt, one of them who is Albanian at heart, if not by birth, is Austrian businessman Otto Knösel-Prem.

Before the Second World War, Mr. Knösel-Prem became interested in Albania and its rich heritage. During the war he had the opportunity to meet and assist such leading Albanian figures as Fr. Anton Harapi O.F.M., writer and educator, Fr. Lazer Shantoja (writer-poet), Archbishop Leone De Nigris (Apostolic Delegate), Dr. Nush Bushati (former Albanian Secretary of Education), and many others. Otto also enjoyed the friendship of esteemed Albanian Franciscan scholar, Dr. Paulin Margjokaj, of Vienna.

While in war-torn Albania Mr. Knösel-Prem gave much assistance to the Franciscans in Tirane, helping them to establish a house with a chapel; he was also a protector of the religious institutions during those most turbulent days.

In the 1950's he began to collect various articles to include in his exposition of Albania's cultural and religious heritage. By means of this



Otto Knösel-Prem — friend of Albania

display, which was presented briefly to our readers in the last issue, Otto seeks to heighten public awareness of Albania and its present-day situation. Mr. Knösel-Prem's display has often been featured in the local and national Austrian press.

Our Center (and, indeed, all Albanians) are indebted to Otto Knösel-Prem for his sincere efforts to support and publicize our national, cultural, and religious heritage. We remain grateful for his continuing friendship and labors on our behalf.

Arbëresh Named To High Post in Vatican

The Vatican daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*, announced on June 30, 1984 the appointment of Msgr. Eleuterio F. Fortino (Arbëresh from the Diocese of Lungro, Calabria) as Delegate for the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Secretariat for Christian Unity.

This Secretariat, founded in 1960 by Pope John XXIII, is dedicated to the promotion of unity and reconciliation among Christians. It consists of two branches; one working with Christians of the West (e.g. Protestant denominations) and the other committed to those of the East (the Orthodox churches). It is this latter branch that has been placed into his care, Msgr. Fortino has been a high official in the Secretariat since 1965. The Secretariat as a whole is presided over by Holland's Johannes Cardinal Willebrands.

Our Center has sent a letter of appreciation to His Holiness John Paul II, thanking him for the confidence he has shown in appointing Msgr. Fortino to this important Vatican position. We all wish our Arbëresh brother a fruitful apostolate in the work for the reunion of Christians. We assure him of our prayers and, at the same time, we wish to publicly express our appreciation for his support to our Center. His article: "Mission of the Arbëresh Church" is found in this Special Issue.

75th Anniversary of Albanian Orthodox Church in America

The Albanian Orthodox Church (in America) was established seventy-five years ago (in 1908) under the leadership of Bishop Fan S. Noli. Since its inception this body has grown and continues to serve the religious needs of Albanian Orthodox believers in the United States.

This Diamond Jubilee of our Orthodox brothers was celebrated with great solemnity in Boston on October 29, 1983. The divine liturgy was held at the Albanian Cathedral of Saint George, in Boston. A dinner followed at the Marriot Hotel in the same city. Present at both of these events were many Albanians and their friends. The chancellor of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese, Very Reverend Arthur E. Liolin presided.

We, of the Albanian Catholic Information Center, extend to our brothers our congratulations and assure them of our support.



Albanian Orthodox Cathedral
St. George in Boston

Albanians Join Dedication of Our Lady's Shrine

On October 7, 1983, the Shrine to Our Lady of Peace (Santa Clara, California) was solemnly dedicated by His Excellency, Pierre Dumaine, Bishop of San Jose. Among the large group attending the opening Liturgy were a group of Albanians, who added their voices in the prayers for peace.

On behalf of the group from our Center, Che and Jacob Peters carried proudly the Albanian national flag in the solemn procession. Their aunt, Sister Carmela, recently joined Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.



Che and Jacob Peters displaying the Albanian flag at the entrance of the shrine.

World Press Calls Attention to Religious Oppression in Albania

During the past year many newspapers and magazines as well as radio and television around the world have turned our attention to religious persecution in Albania. As we reported in our last issue, the Holy Father designated November of 1983 as a month of prayer for religious freedom in Albania. In response Vatican Radio, the Italian State Broadcasting Company (RAI), and a great number of Italian Catholic and secular publications broadcast and published lengthy reports with photographs and extensive documentation on the ongoing religious persecution in that hermitically sealed country. Some of the publications included the Catholic daily newspaper *Avvenire*, *St. Anthony's Messenger* of Padua (English Language Edition), Milan's monthly *Popoli e Missioni* and the renowned journal *Civiltà Cattolica* which is published monthly by the Italian Jesuits in Rome.

At the same time these were joined by world publications and news services which carried reports on the past and present religious situation in Albania: Religious News Service, Keston College News Service, the Paris monthly *Catacombes*, the Sydney (Australia) *Catholic Weekly*, the London *Tabler*, the American weeklies: *National Catholic Register*, *Wanderer*, *Our Sunday Visitor*, the San Francisco *Monitor*, Canada's monthly *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* and the French language daily of Ottawa *Le Droit* and others.

Due to the limited space available in this special issue we are unable to reprint the reports

and articles from the above-mentioned news media in their entirety or even in excerpt. However, two articles which appeared at almost the same time in Paris merit special attention. The first is from the Russian language daily *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Thought), December 12, 1983, written by the Russian Orthodox priest Father Mikhail Aksyenov-Meerson. It is the first time that a major Russian newspaper has treated at such length the on-going religious persecution in Albania. Father Aksyenov-Meerson has approached the problem of religious freedom in Albania from an international point of view urging the faithful and religious bodies around

the world to raise their voices and show solidarity with persecuted Albanian believers.

The other article is from the Paris Catholic daily *La Croix*, January 12 & 13, 1984. The article is lengthy and treats the general situation in Albania. A good portion of the article is devoted to religious oppression in this country and the opening of the "Museum of Medieval Art" in Albania in 1981. The Government, recognizing the historical and cultural value of Church art, has assembled here many religious and liturgical articles which had been confiscated during the "cultural revolution" of 1967.

Day of Prayer for Religious Freedom in Albania

Echoing Pope John Paul II's request to pray during the month of November 1983 for religious freedom in Albania, the German Bishops' Conference designated May 27, 1984 as a Day of Prayer for this intention, in all the dioceses of Germany. A detailed, documented report concerning the violation of religious rights in Albania was issued by the Bishops' Conference to the news media. In addition, a booklet outlining a program for the Day of Prayer was distributed to pastors and the faithful throughout the dioceses of Germany. The booklet's first section included suggested readings for the Liturgy of

the Word and special intercessory prayers for the suffering Church and believers in Albania. The second section presented a brief history of the Church in this country with documentation on the current religious struggle there.

The Albanian Catholic Information Center and, indeed, all Albanian believers, are deeply moved by the loving concern and action taken by the German Bishops' Conference. Our Center is particularly grateful to this Conference and its president, Cardinal Joseph Höfner, for their continued prayerful support throughout the years.

private tours. Trying not to be noticed, we investigated the churches and their environs. The cathedral's towers have been demolished; it is now a movie theater with an ugly concrete entrance. There is no evidence of religious life since 1967, when all churches and mosques were closed or destroyed.

Nevertheless churches and mosques seem not to have lost their attraction for many Albanians. For instance, we saw in Durrës an old woman with a scarf on her head lying in knee-high grass in front of an abandoned chapel. It was Easter Sunday, and she was apparently performing her Easter service in silence before the closed church. It's interesting to note that Albanians at the present time have developed an amazing perception of the cultural value of religious edifices and objects. The period of ruthless destruction of everything religious seems to have passed. Demolished or forgotten religious objects like icons are currently being renovated. On one of our excursions we visited the Medieval Museum in Korce. Most of its exhibits are of a religious nature, including an almost completely restored iconostasis from an Orthodox church.

A few churches (Orthodox) and mosques have been restored, however, while most continue to be used for other purposes, e.g., as museums or gyms. The Xhamija e Plumbit (Lead Mosque) in Shkodër has been completely restored and serves as an architectural museum. The famous Bectashi (Moslem) shrine below Rozafa Castle near Shkodër has apparently been totally forgotten. After we had climbed up to the venerable old castle we could observe the shrine in its abandoned and decrepit state. We were told it's used as a shelter for cows.

Our stay in Shkodër was unfortunately very short. As in Tiranë, the Catholic cathedral is closed; it's used as a sport arena. I found the atmosphere in this city extremely depressing. The town seemed depopulated. With an uneasy feeling I searched for former religious buildings. I was told that the episcopal residence had been transformed into a hotel for visiting athletes under the name Hotel Sporti. I'm not sure I found this edifice; at any rate the structure I thought was the bishop's residence didn't resemble a hotel.

Shkodër, which was predominantly Catholic, has a Museum of Atheism. While most tourist groups are expected to visit this "unique" institution, we were able to avoid this experience — it had allegedly been closed "for renovation" for over a year. A policeman was standing in front of the museum, which was located in an old one-story house. When I tried to peer into the building he pointed in the direction of our hotel.

We also visited Lezhë, where Skanderbeg is buried in the ruins of a church with a roof supported by colonnades. From there it isn't far to Krujë, where a new Skanderbeg museum has recently been built and opened on the side of the old fortress.

Our visits to Gjirokastër, Sarandë, and Butrint were also impressive. All three towns have their own unforgettable characteristics.

In closing, I can only hope that Albania and its people will be able to progress in peace and harmony, void of intolerance and fear from within or without.

Right: One of the preserved mosques in the city of Gjirokaster as an object of historical value.

Below: The Orthodox church in the ancient city of Pojan preserved as an object of historical and artistic value.



Religious Broadcasts Reach People of Albania

Radio Vatican and Radio Rome have been broadcasting programs in Albanian for decades. While the Vatican program addresses mainly religious news and scriptural readings, Radio Rome covers a wide range of news, including political, cultural and religious commentaries not only on this country but on Albanians living abroad, particularly on the Arberesh (Italo-Albanians in Southern Italy), Albanians in Kosova (Yugoslavia) and North America. Many in Albania listen to these broadcasts with much interest and eagerness as it is their principal source for religious instruction and world-wide news happenings. Listening to these broadcasts as well as other Western broadcasts, i.e. Voice of America and Monte Carlo (OPEN DOORS, weekly religious program in Albanian) is done at the risk of harassment and often imprisonment.

Radio Rome's Albanian programming is headed by Drs. Albert Aleshia and Petro Vucani, both veteran journalists and linguists. This broadcast can be heard by short wave in North America.

Radio Vatican for over 30 years has been broadcasting in Albanian religious news and passages from Holy Scripture, as well as occasional commentaries on culture and education. The program is directed by Msgr. Zef Shestani, in collaboration with Sister Lucia Lazza, Andrea Shuli, and Gjon Gjormarkaj. Vatican Radio's monthly schedule for February 1985, in commemorating the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania, devotes a full page to Albanian programs and their announcers.

Vatican Daily Features Cultural and Religious Heritage of Arbëresh

During the past few years (particularly since the election of John Paul II) the Vatican daily *L'Osservatore Romano*, has featured articles on the cultural and religious life of the Arbëresh people in Italy. There exists in that country a community of about 200,000 Catholics of the Arbëresh (Italo-Albanian) Rite.

The most recent issue featured a full-page study by Italo E. Fortino (brother of Msgr. Eleuterio Fortino, the newly appointed Delegate in the Vatican for the Eastern Orthodox Church,

As in the past, our Center renews its request to the directors of Vatican Radio to broadcast monthly or, at the least, Christmas and Easter — the Mass in Albanian. Many of our readers have urged that this be done, taking into consideration the particular need of Albania's persecuted believers.

Albanians Saved Jewish Families During WWII

The deep respect which Albanians cherish for hospitality and human freedom saved hundreds of Jewish families during World War II in Albania, according to research done by Mrs. Angela Moka of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania (USA). Although suffering persecutions themselves, Albanians gave underground assistance to save 350 Jewish families from deportation and extermination.

Documentation of these facts can be found in a secret State report sent by Francesco Jacomoni Di San Sovino (lieutenant of King Vittorio Emanuele III in Albania) to the government of Mussolini. This report published in "La Politica dell'Italia in Albania", reveals the concern and determination of the Albanian Council of Ministers (under Italian occupation) to save Jewish refugees in their country. The courageous actions of Albanian officials in 1941 enabled these families to leave Albania under changed names and migrate to free countries.

and professor at the University of Calabria) on contemporary Arbëresh poetry.

The ethnic-religious roots of the Molise Albanians, the religious tradition and ecumenical mission of the Arbëresh Rite, and other notable contributions have been topics of previous articles.

Such a presentation of our national, cultural, and religious heritage clearly indicates the great contribution Albanians have given to the worldwide Christian family.

Stalin Henchman Baptized

Georgi Malenkov, a much-feared aide to Stalin and later head of the Soviet Government following Stalin's death, was recently baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church. According to the Spanish daily, ABC, the 82 year old Malenkov "discovered religious faith in the final stage of his life." It is known that Malenkov lost a power struggle with Nikita Khrushchev in 1955.

Following his fall from power, Malenkov was deported to Siberia where he worked as a simple factory *aparatchik*. Only recently was he allowed to return to Moscow, where he began to attend church services.

Albanian Franciscan Dies in Labor Camp

Fr. Filip Mazrreku, O.F.M., died recently in the labor camp of Ballsh, according to news we have received from newly-arrived Albanian refugees.

Fr. Mazrreku was a longtime teacher and composer in the *Antoniamum*, the Franciscan College in Shkodra. Scores of contemporary Albanian musicians, singers, and composers owe their artistic expertise to the diligent and encouraging efforts of this humble Franciscan.

Father was arrested in the early 1950's and spent time in various Albanian prisons for allegedly being an "enemy of the people, reactionary clergyman, and fascist sympathizer." In spite of his ill treatment and tremendous suffering, Fr. Mazrreku retained the caring and jovial attitude which endeared him to the hearts of fellow prisoners.

With the death of Fr. Filip Mazrreku another shining star has been added to the glorious company of Albanian martyrs. We, who had the privilege to know and love him, honor him with a prayer for the return of religious liberty in our fatherland.

Continually we have brought to our readers translations of various articles from the Albanian press which are directed against our Holy Father, the Vatican, and against Catholicism in general. In this special issue, we are following that pattern by printing a selection of such articles. As we reiterated in the past issue the contents and style of the articles from the Albanian press may be offensive and disgusting to our readers. However, we have decided to make them available in English so that it can be seen just how deep is the paranoia of Albanian leaders against everything that is Catholic.

The Pope "Bewails" the Fate of Mankind

Karol Wojtyla has begun to express his "concern" for the fate of man on earth by means of lamentations, as well. The pope is shedding tears, really. The poor pope is lamenting because of the "reign of evil" in the world. He is ardently for the "rule of goodness and justice" which, unhappily for mankind, is on the decline.

Lately the pope expressed this concern especially at his mass of lament, which marked the opening of the Upper Assembly of Bishops, scheduled to continue for a month. The tone of his sermons with regard to the threats that confront mankind on account of "the practice of evil" was so dramatic that some people might actually think that the pope is lamenting in earnest.

But the fact is that fewer and fewer people in the world are paying attention to the preachings of the prelates of the catholic church. They do not give credence even to the high forums of the clergy, such as the Assembly of Bishops now in progress. Thus, there is open criticism even of the papal lamentation, which has been characterized as hypocritical and sickly, since the entire scenario, prepared in the hidden corners of the Vatican, has nothing to do with the fate of mankind. The pope laments the crisis in the Church, the dropping out of the faithful, and the corruption of the religious rites — something that even the Vatican can no longer hide.

This is the problem that is being tackled by the 221 bishops assembled in Rome from all parts of the world where the church has such representatives. It is true that the "Holy Father" spoke on the opening day of the Assembly about "the struggle against evil". It is even truer that the central theme of this convocation relates to the crisis of religious rites performed by the wolf pack that is composed of bishops and priests of the christian world. In this context, one can see that the tears of the pope are clearly shed for religious interests.

"For a long time," it is said in the Document on Labor prepared by the Secretariat of the Assembly of Bishops, "many of the faithful have not been attending church to partake of the basic rite of christian faithful, such as confessing to a priest. The performance of the act of christian repentance has declined from the viewpoint

Religion in the Service of Capitalists

In both the bourgeois capitalist and revisionist countries, the maintenance of power has become a point of vital concern. The exploitation and oppression of the people is receiving new impetus through various regimes' use of coercion and religious ideology ("the hangman and the priest", in Lenin's words). Through a new campaign of religious propaganda these countries seek to deceive and mold the minds of their citizens, especially the youth.

This is true in the United States of America where, during the recent presidential campaign, Mr. Reagan opted for close association and cooperation between religion and the American school system. He has declared support for the American religious bodies, saying: "... the ties between religion and the schools are vital for the life of American society; the teaching of religion (in schools) is indispensable."

This rebirth of religion, supported and encouraged by the government, can be witnessed in revisionist countries as well. The Soviet Union, for example, seems to be doing all it can to resurrect religion in all of its forms. Greater power or more freedom have been given to both the churches and their clergy. This is no little thing when one realizes that there are now more than 20,000 church-communities representing about forty denominations. With government assistance, old churches and mosques are being renovated while new ones are constructed. In the past seven years alone, there have been 30 Orthodox, 70 Lutheran, 22 Catholic, and 50 Muslim houses of worship opened in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, and in order to attract youth to the "niceties" of religion, the divine services are externally beautified with music, while artistic groups are founded adjacent to the church buildings.

But the Soviet Union is not alone in this "flowering of faith" among its people. Czechoslovakia has followed suit. In Prague alone there are 18 denominations, 195 church buildings, and close to 5,000 clergymen. Even more, these believers are permitted to poison the minds of youth through the publication of some 30 periodicals, and to manage 6 seminaries which graduate hundreds of students.

This proliferation and exploitation of religion is more so prevalent in Poland. The churches there can count thousands of "servants of God", with hundreds more being allowed to study in foreign seminaries.

Translated from the Albanian, *Mësuesi* (The Teacher), organ of the Dept. of Education and Culture of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, Sept. 9, 1984.)

of quantity as well as quality." The document even provides statistics on the number of those who do not go to confession. Wedding ceremonies, too, are not being performed in church as in times past. The prelates of the Vatican also made many efforts to reform a canon of the year 1215, according to which "the faithful of the christian world are obliged to confess once a year". But the reforms did not eliminate the crisis. The faithful were not brought back even by the New Code, which called for "confession only for mortal sins". Efforts were made, indeed measures were taken, to discipline those priests who did not abide by the requirements of this rite. But in spite of all that, the formula: "I forgive you your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." and of the devil himself, is being heard less and less in the "house of the lord" on earth. It is for that reason that the pope ordered a month-long convocation of the bishops. It is important that the "rites be revitalized, that the church be not abandoned and that the faithful follow in Jesus'

path."

It so happens, however, that to believe or not to believe is a matter of conscience and not an institutional matter, nor a matter that depends on the wish and will of the pope of Rome. Of course the pope does not like this. As he has done in the past, so also in the future, he will organize meetings and convocations with representatives of the church, and profess ardently that "repentance and confession help man to walk on the path of righteousness". Finally, he may wish to deceive and defraud as many people as possible. But that will remain only a wish, since what many people want is to forsake the psalms and empty preachings of religions. Those who see reality in the face, and are somewhat familiar with the history of the so-called Holy See, do not believe the lamentations of the pope and the other prelates of the Vatican and the Catholic Church.

(Translated from the Albanian, *Zeri i Popullit*, October 23, 1983.)

The Triumph of Atheist Thought

As the classics of Marxism-Leninism have emphasized, under the socialist order, society passes from the reign of necessity into that of freedom. This also includes the freedom of the human consciousness, the freedom to organize society's entire activity in compliance with the objective laws of development. Comrade Enver has said that "the ideal of socialism is not only to liberate workers socially and economically, but to liberate them from the spiritual enslavement of foreign ideologies. Socialism is the only order which creates all the conditions for the realization of the people's all-round emancipation."

throughout our country's history religions and cults have not only been the loaded weapon used by social reaction, but also a weapon of the occupying enemies. Our people have never confused faith with nation, religion with the homeland. The slogan of the (19th century Albanian national liberation movement) the Renaissance: "The religion of the Albanian is albanianism", is a synthesis of this evaluation in the consciousness of the Albanian people.

Having seen that religion's obedient clergy were servants of every occupier and every enemy, and having seen that they changed their flag according to the foreigner's emblem, experience convinced our people that churches and mosques were the nest of anti-Albanianism and of the highest treason against the homeland.

This experience was made even more clearly evident by the national liberation struggle when, very openly, the Catholic clergy and that of other faiths, welcomed Fascism and Nazism and followed them in all their activities in opposition to the people's aspirations and patriotic spirit. The people could not forgive even the clergy who held themselves to be 'holy' for this betrayal.

The great socio-economic transformations in these four decades of socialism have also been a convincing experience that everything in society

is created solely through the people's toil, without any 'heavenly' aid, but by relying totally on our own strength. The implementation of the principle of relying upon our internal strength and the achievements of socialism in compliance with that principle have shown that nothing falls from the sky. (If we exclude the rain!)

The socialist ideology, as our country's ruling ideology, has created the subjective conditions under which the people's minds can be enlightened by scientific truth. Due to its proletarian class nature, socialist ideology cannot coexist with the opium of religion, with deception and demagoguery.

Other people's bitter experience has also convinced our people that religion is inextricably tied to reaction of all hues. The re-establishment of capitalism in the Soviet Union also brought about the revitalization and flourishing of religion, because it is the best instrument with which to pacify the workers' consciousness. Today the Soviet revisionists praise themselves because they have "created the possibility for the Tadzhikistan women to go to the mosque". The U.S. Congress has included in the text of its oath these words: "This people under God. . . ."

The propaganda of the Vatican and U.S. diplomats who say that "Albania has persecuted religious leaders", and that "there is terrorism against believers", is part of their hostile activity against socialist Albania, the people, and the revolution. Socialism does not act against the clergy and the believers with persecution and reprisals, as Bismark did against the Catholic Church in Germany under the pretext of the so-called "Kulturkampf". Our Party's struggle against religious faith has always been a struggle to raise human dignity. It argues and opposes every kind of faith, but respects its bearers who have become believers under particular historical conditions and who, thus, cannot be im-

mediately liberated from this.

Liberating our people's consciousness from unfounded religious belief has been a gradual process of conviction. The separation of the state and schools from the Church, the daily education of society's members with socialist ideals, the unmasking of the clergy's hostile activity, and the revolutionary movement against religion and backward customs have been some of the steps through which this struggle has passed. Throughout this movement we have always respected Comrade Enver's saying:

to believe or not to believe is each person's right. It is a matter of conscience and not a matter of institutions, or the desires of the mullahs, despots or the Pope of Rome.

In our country, religion was not fought with laws and state decrees, or with constrictions and force. This was also expressed by a mother of the Greek minority when she answered a foreign journalist who asked her "Where is your church and your priest?"

She answered that "neither the church nor the priest saved me from the landlords. When they ruled, they neither gave me bread to eat, nor water to drink, nor electricity, nor did they educate my sons and daughters. . . . That is why I love the Party and not the priest. . . ."

Whole generations are being raised in Albania without any religious feelings. They look at the preserved religious buildings and see in them only their artistic beauty. Our society continues even today to cleanse the consciousness from the remnants of religion and faith which cannot be rooted out in one day or several years, but with a continual revolutionary struggle.

Translated from the Albanian, *Zeri i Popullit*
October 26, 1983



The Development of Atheistic Education in Albania

In a series of propaganda offensives the Albanian Party and government are persistently attempting to present to the world a false image of the current situation in Albania. The question of religion is only one of many topics on which the government is attempting to misinform and influence both the people within Albania and, even more so, the world outside. While insisting that religious faith is a private "individual" matter the Constitution itself condemns and imprisons anyone expressing his religious faith either publicly or privately. Indeed, many who have chosen to profess their faith are imprisoned, even executed. Our past issues of The Bulletin have cited several such examples.

As in previous issues, we are offering our readers another contribution on the development of (atheistic) education in contemporary Albania. This issue carries a translation from the Albanian of an article by Hamir BEQJA and Faimir RAMA, entitled, "Rrugë të zhvillimit të shkollës socialiste ateiste shqiptare" (The Paths of Development Taken by the Albanian Atheist Socialist Education), which appeared in the quarterly review, Studime Historike, Tiranë, No. 3, 1983, pp. 37-54. (Sub-headings have been added by the translator.)

The most revealing fact in this article is the evidence that Moslem institutions and clergy like Catholics also have suffered harassment and persecution. This revelation by two authors flagrantly contradicts the accounts of Enver Hoxha, in his book, With Stalin. Hoxha tells his master, Stalin, that with Albanian Moslems he has had no trouble at all and that one of them was even admitted to the Party (our emphasis). However, Hoxha deliberately omits who this is and the name of his sect, which respectively are: Baba FAJA MARTANESHI of the Bektashi Moslem sect. Here again Hoxha fails to confess to Stalin that he himself arranged the assassination of Baba DEDE of his hometown, Gjirokastra. While at the same time Hoxha's security forces immediately executed the killer of both men. That is how the dictator washed his and the Communist Party's hands of responsibility for the elimination of the Bektashi leaders who had supported the Communist cause during the war. Apparently, Hoxha could not act as openly and as cruelly with the Moslem majority as he did with the Catholic clergy and the religious minority of Catholics.

Other falsifications and distortions regarding private (Catholic) religious schools in the article will be obvious to anyone with knowledge of the Catholic school system in Albania. The tremendous impact that those schools has had in the development of Albania is undeniable. We suggest that our readers refer to the study in this issue on The Catholic Church in Albania for an in-depth presentation of the subject.

Atheistic Education in Albania

List of Abbreviations:

CAP — Central Archives of the Party

CC — Central Committee

CSA — Central State Archives

F.M.E. — Fund of the Ministry of Education

PLA — Party of Labor of Albania

P.R.A. — People's Republic of Albania (1946-1976)

P.S.R.A. — People's Socialist Republic of Albania (since December 28, 1976)

The Albanian people have waged a long and heroic struggle for the creation and development of a national secular education. Guided by the motto, "The Religion of Albanians is Albanianism," especially during the period of the National Rebirth, they created powerful illuminist, progressive, democratic and revolutionary traditions. Relying on those traditions and exploiting and cultivating them further, our popular socialist education has made an unprecedented qualitative leap forward, and solved problems of a socialist character that are qualitatively new.

With regard to the secular nature of our education, we could not stop merely because we had fulfilled certain obligations of a democratic character, and done so in a radical way. These involved the separation of the school from the church, the prohibition of religious instruction, and the establishment of instruction and education on a non-religious foundation. Side by side with the fulfillment of these radical tasks, it was necessary to begin work on the creation of an authentic atheistic education. In these circumstances, the secular national tradition shaped by the patriots of the National Rebirth and their successors was of great help. But it had to be carried forward much farther, and given a qualitatively new form and content, on the basis of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. Moreover, we could not in any way confine ourselves to the narrow traditional bourgeois understanding of the secular character of education, especially in our time. "The secular and anti-religious direction of our education," comrade Enver Hoxha has said, "is opposed to the pseudo-secularization of bourgeois education. The secular and anti-religious character of our education is not inspired by Greek and Latin antiquity and its intermingling with mystical and religious idealism, both in theory and practice, as the bourgeoisie has done, but rather by the life-giving revolutionary and anti-religious ideas of the peoples, by the scientific materialist philosophy of Marxism-Leninism."

Such a consistent secular and anti-religious Marxist-Leninist direction to our education could be secured only in the course of its all-round transformation in a socialist and revolutionary manner, on the basis of the well-known Marxist-Leninist educational policy worked out by our Party. This process can be divided into several periods.

Three Phases of Development

The first period covers the years 1945-1946, during which there occurred a radical and consistent secularization of instruction and education, within the framework of the completion of radical democratic transformations and the beginnings of transformations of a socialist kind.

The second period covers the years 1947-1965, when a consistent atheistic education was put into practice step by step, in our schools, and our education took on an atheistic physiognomy.

The third period extends from 1966 to the present. Under the new and very favorable conditions of this period, an intensification occurred of the process of consolidation of an authentic and militant atheistic education.

The first foundation stones of this new orientation were laid down as far back as the National-Liberation War. In this spirit, instruction in the schools that were opened in the war zones had a decidedly secular character. No mention at all was made at the time about religious education. The teaching of religion was never included in the subject matter that was recommended for elementary education. These efforts came to fruition at the First Anti-Fascist Congress of Albanian Educators, held in Korçë on November 27, 1944, which demanded, among other things, that the new Albanian education be secular.²

The consistent implementation of this demand, which was presented in the form of a very general outline, tied in with efforts to put into practice the whole program that was mapped out by the Party for the completion of democratic transformations and the beginning of transformations of a socialist kind. It was in this context that one heard the demand, "Albanian educators must mould new men". The demand aimed also at the liberation of men from the burden of old ideology and preconceptions, and the burden of religion and vain beliefs. Objectively, this called attention to the need for an atheistic education, which could be attained by establishing a consistent secular system of education that would be not only non-religious but anti-religious.

However, in the circumstances of the time, this goal could not be achieved at once, nor without a struggle that aimed at overcoming numerous difficulties. This is also the reason why the years 1945-1946 have their own peculiarities, characteristic of the time. Certain manifestations of a distinctly transient character, that were often complex and even contradictory at times, occurred in 1945. In contrast, during 1946 the transformations were much more profound and radical.

In 1945, immediately following Liberation, there began the great drives for the establishment of popular education and a new educational system. Although no radical upheavals took place in teaching plans and programs, and although new texts could not be compiled right away, the spirit of the National-Liberation War had begun to penetrate rapidly the educational process. These circumstances brought to the fore the issue of state and secular education and all its basic components, such as the continuation or termination of private schools, including religious schools, and whether or not to provide religious instruction in the schools, etc. These were all problems that needed to be solved.

In 1945 the basic legislation that would determine the new relationship between the state and religious institutions, as well as the relationship between the latter and education, on the basis of which these problems might be resolved, had not been fully promulgated. Even so, the legal aspects were less influential in the solution of those problems than such factors as the novel objective conditions that had been created in the country, the triumph of the National-Liberation War and of the popular revolution, and the entry of the country on the path of building a socialist society.

Although during the National-Liberation War there was no mention of any kind of religious instruction, after the Liberation the clergy of various religious establishments, believing that "normal" life was resuming once again and wanting to preserve their positions, sprung into action in order to preserve their privileges in the field of education. This objective of theirs, therefore, had a bearing on the manner in which the above problems would be resolved.

First, what was going to be done with the private schools? There were in Albania a few private foreign schools, as well as private schools run by the Catholic clergy, especially in Shkodër. Practically speaking, when the country was liberated, all foreign schools were inactive. Immediately after the Liberation, the Franciscans and Jesuits who wanted to continue their previous work, and who moreover aimed at opposing by every means the new popular sovereignty and social order that was being created, reopened their schools. This problem, therefore, remained unresolved.

Second, what was going to be done with religious instruction? Was it going to be given in the schools? And if so, in what manner, and to what extent?

In 1945 the struggle for secular education was carried out with a view to the solution of these problems. The struggle evolved in complex conditions. On the one hand, the spirit of the popular revolution and the vigorous revolutionary pressure of the popular masses and of the organs of the people's power and education at the base (i.e., at the local level - Translator's Note), tended toward a radical solution of these problems. On the other hand, the pressure of the clergy, the need for a prudent policy toward them — as long as they had not yet unmasked themselves openly in the new conditions making for an independent, democratic and popular Albania — the care needed not to impinge prematurely on the feelings of believers; and additionally the lack of clarity still current in certain educational and pedagogical milieus concerning the paths of development of the new democratic and socialist education in general, and the extent of its secularization in particular, above all the opportunistic and capitulationist policy, along with unprincipled concessions, of Sejfulla Malëshova (at the time Minister of Culture and Propaganda — Translator's Note), which he revealed openly — these were the complex and contradictory factors that determined the course of this struggle.

Spurred by the victories of the popular revolution, the local organs of the people's power (i.e., government) were able to suspend immediately the operation of private schools, in areas where such schools existed. This was true especially of Shkodër, where the Catholic clergy had its own private schools.

The Ministry of Education also made known its own position on this issue. In a letter dated December 27, 1944 and addressed to the Office of Education of the Prefecture of Shkodër, the Ministry advised: "The private schools which you suspended temporarily are to remain closed pending the review of this matter here at the central office. In the event, however, that you have taken steps to open them, let them remain open. . . ."

But as far as the private elementary schools were concerned, the problem was solved relatively early. At its meeting of April 12, 1945, the Council of Ministers decreed that "All elementary schools in Albania are state schools."³ However, the problem of the middle schools, namely the gymnasia which were operated by the Franciscan and Jesuit clergy, remained unresolved.

Sharp Struggle Fought

The issue of religious instruction in the schools occasioned an even sharper struggle. The factors accounting for this were many: the pressure of the clergy; the differing desires and economic means of the parents; the revolutionary pressure of Party organs and organizations, the local organs of

government and education, as well as the pressure exerted by the teachers and students themselves; plus the rather inconsistent position of the Ministry of Education.

In these circumstances and conjunctions, the Ministry of Education included in its lesson plan the teaching of religion as an optional subject. At the time the lesson plan was in a transitional phase and often underwent changes in accordance with operational guidelines. A special circular of the Ministry on this question made the following points: 1) Religious instruction for students is permitted on an optional basis (which is to say, it is left to the wishes of their parents). 2) Teachers of religion would be paid by the executive committee of the local organs of government. 3) Instruction in religion is to be given not more than once a week.⁹ A little later, the Ministry of Education approved the use of relevant texts for religious instruction.¹⁰

On the basis of these guidelines, the local organs of education took steps to put them into practice, though not without opposition at times in the form of revolutionary pressure exerted by elements from below. Thus, in its report for May 1945, the office of education in Tiranë notified the Ministry of Education that "... this month, apart from previous classes, the teaching of religion was increased to one hour for each class, previous classes excepted. The teaching of personnel for religion consists of seven persons, five for the teaching of the Moslem religion, one for the Catholics, and one for the Orthodox faithful. All of them are paid on an hourly basis. ..."

Starting out from a rather inconsistent position, the Ministry of Education did not commit itself to include instructors of religion in its normal faculty roster. On the other hand, it advised the organs of education that teachers were to maintain a neutral attitude toward religion, though when necessary they were to oppose the protestations of religious bodies which alleged that the teaching of religion in the schools was being obstructed.

In a special circular dated June 21, 1945, the Ministry of Education, in line with previous guidelines, provided criteria regarding compensation for teachers of religion, stressing however that they were not regular members of the faculty, but employed rather by the local organs of education.¹¹ The Ministry of Education was consistent in its position on teaching appointments. True, the Ministry itself appointed the teaching cadre on the national level. But apart from that, the Ministry emphasized — as is apparent from its reply to the Board of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania — that proposals for the teaching of religion should be addressed to the office of education of the prefecture concerned rather than to the Ministry.¹²

The organs of education at the local level also found it often difficult to resolve these problems, and confronted by a variety of pressures, referred them to the Ministry of Education. Thus, the office of education of Peshkopia twice turned to the Ministry for its approval concerning the employment of certain persons to teach religion in the elementary schools. The request was accompanied by the notation that "the clergy here is addressing us with increasing frequency regarding this matter."¹³

In line with its previously stated positions, the Ministry of Education sent a special letter to the office of education in Tiranë, advising that teachers must not make propaganda among the children either for or against religion, since the subject was optional. The letter pointed out that although the recipients were aware of this for some time, they were nevertheless advised once again.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the clergy, seeing that their former positions were becoming shaky, started to employ pressure tactics of their own. The clergy had noticed that the people had begun to grow cool toward them. An example of this was the low attendance of classes for religious instruction on the part of students. This came about as a result of strong pressure on them by teachers and the entire revolutionary opinion at the local level to turn them away from classes in religion. At the time, this was particularly true of the Moslem Community which took up these issues with the Ministry of Justice, with which it maintained official ties. In a communication to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education requested that it "... notify the Moslem Community that the Ministry (of Education) is persuaded that teachers in general respect the orders given them, and do not seek to obstruct religious instruction in the schools. If any of them should act in opposition to the regulations in force, appropriate measures would be taken."¹⁵ Further on the communication states: "Discussions with school directors revealed that the information you received from the Moslem Community is not true. On the contrary, it is the teachers of religion who, at the close of the third hour, block the doors of the classrooms and do not allow the students to step out during the class break. They try instead to teach them religion by force. ... The Moslem Community ought to make clear to the teachers of religion that the subject of religion is optional, rather than obligatory. Therefore attendance of such classes must be left to the wishes of the children and their parents."¹⁶

It is evident that in 1945 the struggle for the secularization of education was taking place under complex circumstances. But this matter ought not to be looked at in isolation. Rather it should be seen in the light of the efforts made at the time to develop our new educational system. On a still more general level, it should be seen in the light of the intensity of the democratic and socialist transformations that were taking place in all walks of life, including the obstacles that this process was encountering. This is evident also from the discussions about the new educational system and its paths of development. Alongside the democratic and revolutionary spirit of the time, one finds in these discussions a variety of influences stemming from the "liberal" Western pedagogy of the first half of our century, including that which advocated a non-religious education.

In the context of these developments, the question of a secular education did not exceed the traditional democratic-bourgeois boundaries of a non-religious education, nor did it put forth the demand for a consistent secular education of an anti-religious character, which would have laid down as a task the establishment of an atheistic educational system.

But all of these complex and at times contradictory developments cannot be understood apart from the influence exerted by the opportunistic and liberal bourgeois policy of Sejfulla Malëshova on the development of the democratic and socialist revolution in every field, above all in education and culture. This was true also of his attitude toward the clergy in general, and toward the Catholic clergy in particular.

Nevertheless, the correct line of the Party, the revolutionary drive of the masses, of school youth themselves, and of the majority of the teachers, created an entirely new climate in education. This new revolutionary drive was so powerful that it affected even the "citadels" of the Catholic clergy, namely the Franciscan and Jesuit colleges in Shkodër which had been recently reopened and carried on their own activity.

It was precisely in those circumstances that the activity of non-secular schools in Shkodër began to weaken. Likewise, religious instruction in the elementary schools on an optional basis did not extend far. This whole situation was a favorable pre-condition for taking, at the beginning of 1946, more advanced steps toward a consistent secular and subsequently atheistic education.

At the threshold of such steps toward the secularization of education we find attitudes that reflect a generally democratic spirit. Thus, the article, "Draft Statutes Assure the Establishment of a Secular Education," which was published in the magazine, *The New School*, in February 1946, analyzed from materialistic and class positions the reactionary role of the church in education, and underlined the fact that in Albania secular education was a national necessity dictated by the struggle against foreign occupiers, as well as the reactionary clergy who were in their service. To the question, "What Is Secular Education?", the magazine replied in this manner: "Education is secular when it stays clear of religious instruction and breaks all ties with the

church. Such a school is neutral toward all faiths. It admits pupils of all faiths as well as pupils who do not adhere to any faith. No representative of a religion may wield any authority in such a school. The priest's place is in the church, while that of the teacher is in the school. All teachers, whether male or female, are lay people. The school is off limits to religious missionaries. They can give religious instruction only outside the school. In place of religious instruction there is instruction in morality based on life as it is in reality, rather than on metaphysics. Moral instruction enables the child to distinguish good from evil and to understand his rights and obligations toward the collective society. In secular schools children obtain general knowledge about the phenomena of nature, learn scientific truths, have access to all the facts and arguments, and on the basis of such knowledge and their own judgments, find the solutions to problems by themselves. It is in this manner that worthy elements of society are educated, and freedom of thought is respected. No one has the right to impose the dogmas of faith or to enslave the conscience of a child in the name of a given faith. The secular school offers this kind of education without having to rely on, or be opposed to any faith."¹⁴

It is evident that the issue of a secular education was conceptualized in a rather radical fashion for that time. Nevertheless, the manner in which the matter was presented did not completely and decisively go beyond the democratic conception of the secular character of education; it did not go as far as to emphasize the necessity for giving it an atheistic character.

Significance of the Fifth Party Plenum

The most important event that cleared the way to the new developments was the 5th Plenum of the CC of PLA (Central Committee of the Party of Labor of Albania), held in February of 1946. The historic decisions taken by that plenum strengthened the Party's correct course for carrying out socialist transformations in all walks of life. Moreover, the Plenum smashed the opportunistic and capitulationist deviationism of Sejfulla Malëshova, whose negative influence was felt also in the area of education. The Plenum formulated guidelines for the Educational Reform, especially with regard to drafting new teaching programs and compiling new school texts in the spirit of the ideology of the Party.¹⁵

The radical solution to all the problems of the democratic and socialist revolution in the field of education, and the consistent secularization of education now found support in the new socialist legislation. This had to do with defining clearly the relations between the state and religious institutions, as well as the relations between the latter and education.

In connection with the first point, the 16th article of the Statute of PRA (People's Republic of Albania), said: "Freedom of conscience and belief is guaranteed to all the citizens."

"The church is separate from the state." While on the second point, article 28 said: "The schools are dependent on the state. Private schools may not be opened except by law. Their activity is under the control of the state. *The school is separate from the church.*"¹⁶

It was on the basis of this fundamental legislation that the law on the Reform of Education in the PRA was drafted and approved by the Popular Assembly. Among other things, article 6 of this law pointed out that: "The Ministry of Education is entrusted with the preparation of the new texts in conformity with the reform of education, which shall bring to the realm of ideology the changes that have occurred in our life." This task related directly to the question about changing the content of education, not only in terms of the program but in terms of the texts as well. We are talking here about changes on the basis of the socialist ideology of Marxism-Leninism, which presupposed atheistic education.

On the basis of this new and fundamental legislation, rapid measures were taken to close definitively the private clerical schools, and to abolish religious education in the schools. On March 6, 1946, the Council of Ministers took the decision to nationalize clerical schools (the reference is to the Franciscan and Jesuit gymnasia in Shkodër).

The closing of the Franciscan and Jesuit colleges in Shkodër marked the end of every kind of public, private, and religious school in Albania. This was another great and decisive victory for our people on the road to secularization, complete unification and the nationalization of all educational institutions.

The closing of religious schools was followed by the abolition of religious instruction in the schools. In a special telegram the Ministry of Education advised all executive committees in the prefectures that "In conformity with the Statute of the Republic, the teaching of religion is abolished. It must not be taught any longer in the schools of the state."¹⁷

The consistent and clear-cut Marxist-Leninist position of the Party toward the church and clerical schools, and in general toward the true secularization of education in 1945-1946, was aided greatly by the open reactionary activity against the people's power and its reforms that was mounted by the clergy, especially the Catholic clergy, who were better organized and had secured for themselves well-known privileges in education. Accordingly, they fought to preserve those privileges.

The all-round reaction of the Catholic clergy was closely tied to the actions, manœuvres, and wiles to which they resorted in order to maintain their privileges and the influence they had on education, and to continue to imbue the new generation and the people with the religious spirit. Another factor in this connection was the struggle they waged against the rapid spread of education, and in particular against the sending of girls to school. Speaking on this question, comrade Enver Hoxha has emphasized: "In the new Albania all the youth must attend school. The question of sending the girls to school must be viewed as a serious and important one. Many clerics, above all in the North (of Albania), and certain backward people, try to hinder the sending of girls to school. There is no need to explain their purpose. But we are telling those people that an act of that sort constitutes a serious crime against the progress of the people, and that those who dare to continue this propaganda are going to repent quickly."¹⁸

It was precisely in these circumstances that the process of the total secularization of education in 1946 occurred, highlighted by the decisive closing of every kind of religious school and the prohibition of religious instruction in the schools. Of special importance in these developments was the closing of the Franciscan and Jesuit gymnasia in Shkodër. The official register of education notes that as a consequence of this step, in 1945-1946 there enrolled in the State Gymnasium of Shkodër 236 students who were formerly at the Franciscan and Jesuit gymnasia. The majority of them had been members of cultural and sport clubs established by the clergy. Workers in the field of education followed the orientations of the Party regarding the true secularization of education in 1946, or even later. In their work, however, they continued to encounter the pressure and manœuvres of the clergy. Indeed, there were instances of inconsistency even at the level of the Ministry of Education. For example, even though the Ministry had ordered, as we noted above, the cessation of religious instruction in any form, it addressed a special communication to the Ministry of Justice (which maintained contact with the religious communities concerning this issue) in which it advised: "Since we are nearing the end of the school year and the students will be dismissed for the summer recess, religious instruction for Moslem children should start the following academic year. The lessons should be given once a week for one hour in the *xhami* (djamee, Moslem prayer house)."¹⁹ We see then that after prohibiting this sort of instruction in the schools, the Ministry allowed it in the prayer house.

Further Directives of Ministry of Education

However, following the passage of the Educational Reform, the Ministry overcame these inconsistencies and pointed out that the teaching of religion in any form was totally opposed to the aim of the reform measure, which was to establish an educational system on correct scientific foundations. Addressing the Executive Committee of the Prefecture of Shkodër, the Ministry of Education noted that "... it does not favor the teaching of religion, because such teaching is contrary to the Educational Reform, which aims at weaning the children from all preconceptions, superstitions and religious fanaticism. The teaching of religion would cancel a portion of the work being done in the schools; hence it would be a big gain if no pupil were to have such instruction. It is the duty, therefore, of the Office of Education, teachers and all organs of education and government to act accordingly. If the clergy want to teach religion privately in Moslem or Christian houses of worship, perhaps we cannot stop them. But as you have been notified previously, they must not be permitted to teach the children more than one hour a week. ..."

"The Office of Education should see to it that the teaching of religion does not hinder the children in doing their homework or participating actively in the organization of the pioneers. ..."

"The question of religious instruction will continue to be a delicate issue, particularly in your prefecture. For this reason, the Executive Committee must pay close attention to it, and when necessary act energetically."¹⁹

Keeping in mind however not to go to extremes and injure the feelings of believers, the Ministry advised that in working with students and their parents the main approach should be that of tactful persuasion — employing toward that end both reason and argument — that "the teaching of religion not only was not going to benefit the children, but on the contrary it would hinder their correct, scientific education."²⁰

In another circular, the Ministry of Education, after making reference to the principles of the statute of the Republic, noted that "The fine goal pursued by the government with respect to the education of the younger generation is bound to encounter opposition from those who do not wish to see our people walk on the correct path, and from those who seek to profit from the ignorance and fanaticism of a segment of our population. This applies above all to the reactionary clergy. ..."

"Considering that the teaching of religion is an obstacle to the education of the children and contrary to the Educational Reform, you are advised not to permit in any way the establishment in your district of the *mejtepe* (elementary schools which, in addition to other subjects, taught religion to Moslem children — translator's note); neither must you permit the teaching of religion — since religious instruction in any form is contrary to the educational reform."²¹

But all of this could not be achieved without struggle. In the new circumstances which did not allow for the teaching of religion in the schools, the clergy tried to carry on propaganda within families, especially among the elderly, who would then influence the children. Efforts were made to have religion taught by supposedly "lay" people, and reopen the *mejtepe* type schools. To put a stop immediately to such occurrences, however isolated they were, was precisely the intention of the circular issued by the Ministry of Education in February of 1947 which demanded categorically the prohibition of religious instruction by clerics or "lay" people, and labeled such instruction damaging to the education of the younger generation along the correct path designated by science."²²

Likewise, as early as the Summer of 1946, the Ministry of Education advised the local organs of government to shut down any *mejtepe* that had been opened in some villages in the Shkodër or Kavajë regions.²³

All of these facts testify that the implementation of the Educational Reform ran into the resistance of the clergy who exploited above all the religious fanaticism of believers. However, such resistance was combated in a consistent manner, especially during the academic year of 1947-1948, and as a result instances of organized religious instruction to children in any form were by now a thing of the past.

For two decades in succession, encompassing the years 1947-1966, our socialist education created effective means for work of an ever broader scope, aimed at the consolidation of its true secular character, which by now had a more accentuated anti-religious bent. In an educational process pervaded by the communist spirit, our schools strived to realize a consistent atheistic education.

It was during this phase that the principle of the separation of religious communities and institutions from the state was carried out in a consistent manner. That principle found a more concrete expression in the legislation entitled, "On Religious Communities," no. 743, dated November 26, 1949. Furthermore, our socialist state did not allow Albanian religious communities to be dependent on foreign religious centers of corresponding denominations. This was another great victory in the struggle against the influence of such centers in the life of our country, above all against interference by the Vatican in the internal affairs of the country.

After the definitive closing of all public schools run by the clergy, and the prohibition of religious instruction in the schools or in any other form, the Educational Reform of 1946 and the changes that it brought about in the educational system, especially in methods of teaching atheistic education, registered a further advance. This process was taking place in the context of a broad atheistic-scientific propaganda among all the working masses. It was a process that the Party and all of its levers began to expand and intensify. On the basis of all these new and favorable pre-conditions, there now began an organized and systematic effort to implement atheistic education throughout the educational establishment.

After the passage of the Educational Reform of 1946 these problems were discussed at length, with the aim of finding a practical solution to them. Particular attention was paid to them at the Second Meeting of the General Educational Council, which focused on the complex new problems of communist education in the schools. The proceedings of the Council emphasized that "the separation of the school from the church must not be viewed in a formal manner. Our education is secular ... that is why we should increase our efforts to divest it of all the vestiges of the past."²⁴ The Meeting confirmed that the entire pedagogical opinion in the country had made great advances in understanding, from revolutionary Marxist-Leninist positions, the tasks confronting the new educational system.

Right after the Educational Reform of 1946, the definitive dropping of religious instruction and of the classical languages opened the way for expanding and strengthening the teaching of the natural and social sciences. In the lesson plan of the middle schools there was introduced the teaching of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and thus of the foundations of dialectical and historical materialism, which made it possible for the first time to wage a solid struggle against all idealistic and anti-scientific viewpoints, including religious ones. In this spirit a radical reform was carried out also in courses in psychology and logic, which at the time were taught widely.

With a view to strengthening the materialistic-scientific spirit of atheism in the teaching of the natural sciences at all levels of education, an important step was the introduction in the lesson plan for the middle schools of courses in general biology (which at that time was called "Darwinism") and astronomy. The teaching of these subjects created very effective means for fighting the idealistic, religious and anti-scientific viewpoints on the origin

and laws of development of the world, life and human society. This allowed for a purposeful and true atheistic education with regard to those questions.

The programs and texts for the teaching of social subjects, especially history, underwent radical changes. For the first time students began to learn concretely about the birth of religion, its historical roots, the reasons for the transition from polytheism to monotheism, and the reactionary role played by religion, religious institutions and the clergy at every stage of the evolution of human society. Alongside the course on general history, this spirit began step by step to pervade also the teaching of the History of Albania.

The teaching of literature as well was put in the service of atheistic education, both by showing the progressive tendencies of the literature of all times, and by explaining in a materialistic-dialectic manner how the religious ideology influenced various authors and literary works because of unavoidable historical conditions. This viewpoint proved to be important especially in discussing the earliest Albanian authors who, as is known, wrote or translated mainly religious works, but did so because they were prompted by the patriotic motive to cultivate and diffuse the native tongue. The same is true of the writers of the National Rebirth.

Afterward this manner of work was carried even further in the field of the History of Albania and Albanian Literature. This came about as a result of studies in these fields along Marxist-Leninist lines which led to the compilation for the first time of solid texts on the History of Albania and the History of Albanian Literature.

With the establishment of higher education, there began the serious study of Marxism-Leninism, its philosophy, dialectical and historical materialism, Marxist-Leninist political economy, scientific socialism, etc. The teaching of these subjects which, in a zigzag fashion, began in the middle schools, went a long way toward the materialistic-scientific education of youth who were completing studies in higher education. Conditions were thus created for educating them as full-fledged atheists.

The work done in the schools was accompanied by a broad system of atheistic-scientific propaganda among the working masses and the younger generation. This job was done by the Party and, under its guidance, by all social organizations and cultural and propaganda institutions.

Particularly in the middle of the decade of the fifties, favorable new conditions were created to carry forward the atheistic education of the masses and the youth, as well as school activities in this field. The smashing of the combined plots of the internal and external enemies of our country led to the unmasking of the criminal activity of the reactionary clergy, especially that of the Catholic clergy. At the same time the Party made greater efforts to develop a broader and more effective atheistic propaganda among the masses. This problem was discussed especially at the Plenum of the CC of PLA held in April of 1955, which noted that: "A work of broad dimensions must be undertaken to inculcate the scientific-materialistic world view among our working people, above all the youth. Toward this end, a broad atheistic propaganda must be developed, resting on scientific bases, and taking care always that it does not offend those who believe. The best path to follow in this respect is the dissemination, on as broad and scientific a manner as possible, of scientific knowledge among the popular masses about the various phenomena of nature and society, and at the same time raising the cultural level of the masses and mobilizing them for the construction of socialism."²³

Much work was done at this time to strengthen the Marxist-Leninist ideology in the area of education, including its atheistic component, and to relate this to the intensified struggle being carried out by the Party against all foreign ideological influences.

Meanwhile the Third Congress of the Party of Labor of Albania in May of 1956 made forceful references to the need "concerning the inculcation of the Marxist-Leninist world view among students."²⁴ The fruits of this teaching became evident also in the consolidation of atheistic education in all subjects and in the entire educational process.

Special attention was devoted to the realization of these new tasks by the Central Committee of PLA in its decision of July 1958 titled, "Concerning the Improvement of Education." The decision was accompanied by a series of practical steps, especially with regard to the improvement of school programs and texts in all of the aforementioned categories.

Obstacles to Secularization in the Sixties

At the beginning of the sixties, the Central Committee of PLA and the Council of Ministers of PRA issued the theses, "For a Close Tie Between Education and Life and the Further Development of the System of Popular Education." With these theses, our education made significant strides toward resolving these problems through the consolidation of its ideological, socialist, and Marxist-Leninist content.

At the beginning of the sixties, when the Khrushchevian revisionists began their open attacks against our Party and our country, the reactionary clergy revived once again their lost hopes and intensified their hostile activity against the Party, the people's power and socialism. At the same time, by taking advantage of the remnants of the past, old preconceptions and vain beliefs, fanaticism and backward customs, and patriarchal attitudes toward women and youth, particularly in the countryside, the clergy strove to keep the masses weighed down by this heavy load of the old world, in order to hinder their all-round emancipation, and stifle the impetuous eruption of their revolutionary energies. And the work of it was that the struggle against such manifestations was not of sufficient vigor and on a broad enough front, nor was it as assertive and competent as it should have been.

To be sure, in this struggle education stood on much more advanced positions. But it, too, suffered from defects and weaknesses. The atheistic line and the militant atheistic tendency were not evident at the level and degree of strength called for, either in the teaching of the natural sciences or in the teaching of the social sciences. Furthermore, as a result of certain alien influences in the sciences that had not yet been overcome, such as a kind of bourgeois objectivism and remnants of clerical concepts, it happened that in the teaching of the History of Albania and even more in the teaching of the History of Albanian Literature, the traditions of the past were uncritically "glorified," while the "contributions" of the clergy, especially the Catholic clergy, in the development of our national culture, were inflated.

Worse still, the necessary unity between teaching and learning, especially outside the classroom, did not exist. That is why it happened that here and there students in school, insofar as form was concerned, replied to questions like atheists, whereas at home they observed religious rites and ceremonies, attended church, had the influence of fanaticism, many girls quit the eight-year school before graduating, submitted to the custom of engagement from the time of the cradle or childhood, and even were obliged to marry very young — indeed, some of them even before they had reached the age of 16, which was the minimum marriage age fixed by law. Furthermore, not all the teachers were sufficiently mobilized and active at all times in the struggle against those ugly manifestations. Such weaknesses hindered the consistent atheistic education of students.

In the middle of the decade of the sixties there began a new period in the consolidation of the Albanian socialist education as an authentic atheistic education. It began in conditions of a new and unprecedented qualitative leap forward in the struggle against religion. Instrumental in that struggle was a great ideological drive against not only the ideological bases of religion, but against its institutions as well, which practically resulted in their closure or

abolition. The drive was carried out with success at a time when efforts for the further and all-round revolutionization of life in the country were intensified. Simultaneously, in order to press ceaselessly forward the socialist revolution in all fields, the frontal class struggle was stepped up against all foreign ideological influences and blemishes, whether old or new, internal or external. The struggle was waged on two fronts: against conservatism and against liberalism.

During this period a new and powerful blow was dealt to foreign ideological sores and vestiges that had come down from past centuries. Speaking about this struggle, comrade Enver Hoxha said at the Sixth Congress of the Party in November of 1971: "A drive never before seen is being carried out against the oldest forms of the ideology of the exploiting classes; patriarchy and conservatism, religion and backward customs which, owing, as we all know, to the grave backwardness we inherited from the past, still have roots and have not been destroyed definitively."²⁷

Initiative of Naim Frashëri School in Durrës

In these circumstances, the great ideological drive against religion began as a powerful drive from below, as an expression of the free will of the masses and on their own initiative. Appropriately, the first signal in this drive was given by the school youth. We are referring here to the well known historical initiative of the students of the general middle school "Naim Frashëri" in the city of Durrës. Commenting on the significance of this initiative, comrade Enver Hoxha has said that "... the spark struck by the revolutionary students of the 'Naim Frashëri' school in Durrës, inspired as they were by the teachings of the Party, was all that was needed to ignite the great fire that wiped the hearts of religious obscurantism off the face of the earth."²⁸

The contents of this revolutionary movement are well known by now. They included: intensive ideological preparation of the students and teachers; the dissemination by them of voluminous propagandistic and agitative materials both inside and outside the schools, such as slogans, wall papers, etc.; meetings of the youth and teachers characterized by sharp questions and fiery debates; criticism of public opinion and various administrative organs regarding concessions to religion and to the clergy (such as burying the dead in separate lots according to the religion of the deceased, designating one's religion in one's passport, using religious greetings, ignoring the parasitism of the clergy, etc.); discussions about the scanty literary, cultural and artistic publications and repertoires with an atheistic content; the action taken in Shënavlash in support of the youth of the village who demanded the conversion of their church and monastery into a social and cultural institution, etc.

The repercussions of this movement were immense throughout the country. They penetrated the spiritual life of the entire society, as well as the whole educational process. There were demands for a closer and more active commitment on the part of teachers in this area. But in fact those demands leaped over their confines and touched on the revolutionization of relations between students and teachers and, in general, of the methods of teaching and learning. All of these things created very favorable pre-conditions to enable young people to expand their influence in the entire educational process and in all facets of life.

The questions raised by the youth concerning these issues were not confined simply to the schools. They took publishing and cultural institutions to the task because of insufficient and unsatisfactory publications and repertoires on questions of education of an atheistic and scientific character. In particular, they rebuked parents and public opinion, organizations of the masses and state organs for entertaining indifferent, tolerant and liberal attitudes toward religious preconceptions, backward customs and other blemishes, as well as toward foreign ideological influences and manifestations of every sort.

We can now see more clearly the great ideological, as well as pedagogical and social values of the drive against religion undertaken by the youth of the "Naim Frashëri" middle school in Durrës, which involved all of the school youth and all of the younger generation, and which in record time was transformed into a general and powerful popular movement all over the country.

It is essential to point out here the connection between the ideological drive against religion and the drive for the further revolutionization of education.

The issue of the further, all-round revolutionization of our education was also discussed by comrade Enver Hoxha at the 5th Party Congress. His observations served as a signal for intensifying the criticism of defects and weaknesses in the operations of the educational system, especially the content of education, including school programs and texts and indeed the entire teaching and learning process. Attention was called to viewpoints contained in primers and texts of literature relative to old preconceptions and backward customs, attitudes toward women, etc., which were non-militant and at times tolerant and distorted. All of these things tied in with the burden of religious preconceptions, and backward customs that had religious pigmentations. Critical comments were made also about defects and the absence of militant attitudes in texts on the natural sciences. Comrade Enver Hoxha's speech of March 7, 1968 entitled, "Concerning the Further Revolutionization of Our Education," expanded greatly the Marxist-Leninist framework for the understanding of these problems and the necessity for a radical solution to them.

That speech stated with great force that the cardinal issue that needed to be dealt with was the consistent implementation of the Marxist-Leninist ideological axis in all educational activities. In this context, the question of intensifying atheistic education in a consistent and militant manner came automatically to the forefront.

But it should not be thought that what was needed was merely an understanding of this problem. Comrade Enver Hoxha addressed this point directly when, among other things, he said that "The incisive understanding of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, of the dialectical and historical materialism by students, teachers and pedagogues is a matter that should preoccupy us, and toward that end we should review the texts, forms and methods of work. ... We must not view our new socialist education as something where all manner of texts could be utilized, and where the idealistic bourgeois world view could coexist with the Marxist-Leninist world view. We must not make any concession to the bourgeois idealistic philosophy, much less to theology."²⁹

He emphasized that in all work involving the different natural and social sciences, we must be genuine materialists so that, as Lenin says, we may be on the offensive and draw revolutionary philosophical conclusions.

While appraising highly our figures of the National Rebirth, he pointed out: "We must now, however, forget for a moment that they had their negative side and must be subjected to our Marxist-Leninist criticism. Those weaknesses have to do with their philosophical world views which are idealistic. This heavy load was a consequence of the philosophy of their time, which is contrary to, and in conflict with our ideology."

"Shall we keep silent about this antagonism, this merciless life-and-death struggle that we Marxists are waging against the idealistic philosophy, and against religion and religious beliefs? Shall we regard them as inviolable, taboo, solely by virtue of the fact that they are figures of our National Rebirth? Can we go on while, on the one hand, we wage a sharp struggle against theology, religion, the churches and Moslem houses of worship, priests and *haxhas* (Hodjas, Moslem clergymen), and, on the other hand, we exalt those parts of the world of Naim (Frashëri) in which he expresses his Bektashian philosophy; or the work of (Ndre) Mjedu in which he speaks of the Christian theology; or that of (Andon Zako) Çajupi where he says, for example, that Bab Tomorri was the 'throne of god' etc., and serve all of this as ideological nourishment to our people simply because these are the figures of the

National Rebirth; they are the great men who laid the foundations of our language and helped to cultivate it, and because the lines of their poetry are beautiful and they created pleasant metaphors."

"No, as Marxists and in the interest of our people and socialism, we must fight these negative sides. Where ideology is concerned, we cannot make any concessions to poetry or language."³⁰

On the basis of those orientations, a broad, frontal drive was launched with a view to eliminating all idealistic and religious imprints and influences from programs, texts, and the educational process itself. It cannot be said however that the job was finished, since there is work to be done even in our day.

The discussions brought out that our educational system could not disclaim responsibility for keeping alive ugly, embedded expressions of religious preconceptions and rituals, and backward customs with religious undertones. They bespoke of weaknesses and defects in education, and in particular of insufficient commitment on the part of the schools to a militant and concrete atheistic education that was closely tied to the acute problems of life. Precisely for this reason, this whole ideological class struggle against the mildew of the old world was deeply felt at all levels of education, including the middle schools and higher institutions of learning, as well as the eight-year schools.

All of these things were connected with the unprecedented frontal attack undertaken by our people, under the guidance of the Party, against the religious ideology in that drive never before seen in the history of humanity, which resulted in a heretofore unique development characteristic of socialist Albania, namely the closure of religious institutions and the divestment of clerics of all churchly functions.

Articles of Constitution on Education

The profound revolutionary transformations that came in the wake of great ideological drives against religion, and for the further revolutionization of education, were subsequently sanctioned by the Constitution of the PSRA. In article 3 therein it is said: "In the People's Socialist Republic of Albania the ruling ideology is Marxism-Leninism,"³¹ while article 32 notes: "The state is particularly attentive to the development and all-round education of the younger generation in the spirit of socialism and communism."³² Article 33 characterizes our education as a system that is "organized and directed by the state,"³³ and that one of its fundamental features is the fact that it is "being constructed on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist world view."³⁴ Article 33 also affirms that our educational system "follows the best traditions of the Albanian national and secular education."³⁵

Regarding the stand toward religion, the Constitution states forthrightly in article 37: "The state does not recognize any religion and supports and develops atheistic propaganda in order to implant in the people the materialistic-and-scientific world view."³⁶ While in Article 55 it is affirmed that "The creation of any organization of a fascist, anti-democratic, religious or anti-socialist character is prohibited. Likewise it is prohibited to carry on activity and propaganda of a fascist, anti-democratic, religious, war-mongering, or anti-socialist nature. . . ."³⁷ In comparison with the corresponding formulations in the Constitution of 1946, which mirrored the level of development for that period and correct Marxist-Leninist positions as of that time, the formulations of the New Constitution mirror and affirm a true and unprecedented leap forward in this field.

All of these affirmations create very favorable pre-conditions for the consolidation of Albanian education as an authentic atheistic education. In a country where religious organizations and religious activity and propaganda are forbidden, education as an institution that is guided by a Marxist-Leninist Party and is in the hands of a socialist country, acquires heretofore unknown means for the consolidation of its authentic socialist character.

But this problem is not resolved automatically, of its own accord. To obtain a full understanding of this condition one must have knowledge of the new developments ushered in by the great drive against religion, and of the new issues and tasks that have surfaced in this area in the whole spiritual life of our society in general, and in the educational system in particular.

In the superficial judgment of a good many people, and sometimes even in our propaganda there is confusion between the abolition of the material and organizational bases of religion along with the legal prohibition of religious activity and propaganda, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the eradication of the religious world view, mentality and practice. The former refers to the fact that at present the most favorable and the most advanced preconditions are in place for turning Albania into an atheistic country. But to be an atheistic country in the true sense of the word does not mean that you no longer have to contend with the religious world view and mentality. The attainment of this goal is a complex process that demands an effort of long duration, in order to bring about further all-round revolutionary transformations of an incisive, socialist character, especially with regard to educational work with the people. The favorable and very advanced pre-conditions that have been created, about which we spoke above, are a powerful support for the attainment of this goal.

But as the Party and comrade Enver Hoxha have elucidated continuously, religious viewpoints and preconceptions still exist, because there are certain factors that keep them alive and from time to time reactivate them. These factors are numerous and complex, internal and external, objective and subjective, material and spiritual. For this reason the struggle on this front will be long and difficult.

It is obvious that the tasks confronting education on this front are substantial. Toward this end, the educational establishment must utilize more rationally the entire educational process and disciplines. This is a large order of obligations which shall confront our socialist education for a long time to come. Only by implementing them in a consistent manner shall education demonstrate in practice its authentic atheistic character and consolidate it through to the end.

Footnotes

- ¹Enver Hoxha, *Reports and Speeches 1969-1970*, Tiranë, 1970, p. 93.
- ²*Central Archives of the Party* (hereafter to be cited as CAP), Fund of the General National-Liberation Council, file of the Anti-Fascist Congress of Albanian Educators.
- ³CAP, Fund 66, file 10, no. 3.
- ⁴*Central State Archives of P.S.R.A.* (hereafter cited as CSA), Fund 890, file no. 251.
- ⁵CSA, Fund of the Ministry of Education (hereafter cited as F.M.E.), 1945, file 24. (The circular is dated April 14, 1945, Prot. no. 37).
- ⁶*Ibid.*, script no. 438/XI, June 19, 1945.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, 1945, Document no. 34/9.
- ⁸CSA, F.M.E., 1945 (Circular no. 27/16, June 31 (sic), 1945).
- ⁹*Ibid.*, 1945 (Doc. with Prot. no. 438/27).
- ¹⁰*Ibid.*, 1945 (Scripts no. Prot. 23. Rez. Oct. 19, 1945 and Prot. no. 4/24, Dec. 5, 1945).
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, 1945, file no. 24 (Doc. no. 211, Dec. 10, 1945).
- ¹²*Ibid.*, (Doc. no. 24/64, Nov. 22, 1945).
- ¹³*Ibid.*.
- ¹⁴*The New School*, Tiranë, Feb. 1946, No. 3, p. 97-98.
- ¹⁵PLA, *Main Documents*, vol. II, p. 274.
- ¹⁶C.S.A., F.M.E., 1946, Doc. no. 20311 Rez.
- ¹⁷Enver Hoxha, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 467.
- ¹⁸CSA, F.M.E., 1946, doc. no. 200/20, May 16, 1946.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, doc. no. 491/1, Rez. Oct. 15, 1946.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, Circular no. 490/2, Sept. 19, 1946.
- ²¹*Ibid.*, Doc. me., Nov. 12, 1946.
- ²²*Ibid.*, file 16, Circular no. 143, Feb. 7, 1947.
- ²³*Ibid.*, Doc. no. 490, Res. July 26, 1946.
- ²⁴CSA, F.M.E., file 17, doc. Aug. 15, 1947 (Meeting of the General Educational Council, 1947).
- ²⁵PLA, *Main Documents*, vol. II, p. 507.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 646.
- ²⁷Enver Hoxha, *Report to the VI Congress of PLA*, Tiranë, 1971, p. 131.
- ²⁸Enver Hoxha, *Reports and Speeches, 1967-1968*, Tiranë, 1969, p. 206.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 358.
- ³⁰(The source to this footnote is missing in the text - Translator's Note.)
- ³¹*The Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania*, "8 Nëntori" Publishing House, Tiranë, 1977, p. 10.
- ³²*Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ³³*Ibid.*.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 23.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 24.
- ³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 30.

How You Can Help Promote Religious Freedom in Albania

There are many things one person can do for those whose rights of worship are denied by force and legislation. Below we list some of them.

1. Become informed yourself.
2. Share with others your knowledge.
3. Pray every day, alone or in a group, for the religious freedom in Albania.
4. Write letters to editors of newspapers and periodicals.
5. Call in on radio talk shows.
6. Urge church and political leaders to take action on behalf of the oppressed Albanians.
7. Form a group to pray and to work together to help spread knowledge of the religious persecution now occurring in Albania.
8. Write courteous letters to Albanian leaders (Enver Hoxha, General Secretary PLA, Tirana, Albania; and Adil Çarçani, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the PSRA, Tirana, Albania), protesting the antireligious laws of the Albanian government.

Mission of the Arbëresh Church

by Eleuterio F. Fortino

On three different occasions Pope John Paul II has spoken to the three bodies of the Byzantine Rite in Italy: the Abbey of Grottaferrata near Rome (1979); in Palermo, the Eparchy of Piana degli Albanesi (1983); in Cozenza, the Eparchy of Lungro (1984).

From these three talks there clearly emerged the characteristics of the mission of the Arbëresh Church in four areas: its internal affairs, its relationship with the Italian Catholic Church, its relationship with Orthodoxy, and its special relationship with Albania, the country from which the Arbëresh Church has its origin.

Byzantine Renaissance

The first business of a local church is to cling ever more closely to the Gospel and to be ever more obedient to the Word of God, and ever more a part of the actual cultural context in which it lives. The Gospel must indeed become incarnate in the culture of every people so that it may be more easily understood, lived, and transmitted to others.

In his talk to the Albanians of Sicily, the Pope recalled that the Second Vatican Council explicitly declares that "the ecclesial and spiritual heritage of the Oriental churches deserves dutiful appreciation and just praise." This thought points to the fact that each people's own religious tradition corresponds better to its spiritual needs. If this thought is true, it raises with urgency for the Albanians of Italy the problem of recovering the proper authenticity of their religious tradition, purified from alien influences and made aware of its own theological, liturgical and disciplinary sources.

In this area it is in no way taken for granted that everything is of equal importance nor that everything that is good in itself is suited for everyone or for all circumstances. In the concrete such a recovery of culture should keep two realities in mind: the Byzantine tradition, and also Albanian culture, which in the people is more profound since they care nothing for hasty or lazy considerations or convenience. The Second Vatican Council has observed that a people's own particular disciplines are "more in tune with the customs of the faithful themselves and more suitable to contribute to the good of their souls." And it has affirmed that "all these things should be observed with the greatest fidelity by the Orientals themselves, who should acquire ever deeper knowledge and ever more perfect practice of them; and if perhaps, by the circumstances of certain periods or persons, this heritage should regrettably have been impoverished, they must strive to return to the ancestral traditions." And the Council has also provided the possibility of changes "for reasons of proper organic progress" (*Decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches*, n. 6).

A Coexistence of Witness with the Latins

It is important that the Arbëresh Church give a witness to common life with the Italian Catholic Church, since it is in this context that the Arbëresh Church lives. And this must take place as consistent with the full communion between the two Churches that is expressed in their faith and with the goal of making the name of Christ better known. Such an instruction comes from the short talk which the Pope addressed to the Arbëresh of Calabria.

"With your neighboring sister churches, you should have fraternal relations and you should become organically grouped with them especially in the context of the episcopal conference. With mutual respect you should enrich one another with each other's treasures, to the end that in all of Calabria the name of Christ should be always better known, and His message may become more fully understood and lived." These relations of ecclesial fraternity are more than just "normal." Throughout its multiple expressions, the Church constitutes a mysterious communion that derives from its one faith in its one Lord and Savior.

It follows that in such a context there can be no question of reciprocal oppositions or hostile confrontations. In a healthy Christian situation, the minority should have no complexes nor should the majority make any show of arrogance.

"With mutual respect, you should enrich one another in turn with each other's own treasures." This advice of the Pope shows that in this area real progress could be made for a better coexistence among diverse traditions. A small "remnant" such as the Arbëresh Church perhaps has the feeling of being overwhelmed when it encounters indifference, if not indeed reticence, in its dealings with the Italian majority. Such a reality and such a feeling do not facilitate communion among the Churches: they do not make the faith to be a transparent thing and they do not promote the spreading of the name of Christ.

For this reason the admonition of the Pope has been received by both sides in all its implications, since it springs forth from a real exigency, one which is still unfortunately all too critical.

Reconciliation with the Orthodox

"You have been invested with a particular ecumenical mission." With these words from the speech he gave to the Albanians of Sicily, John Paul II called the attention of the whole Arbëresh Church to the ecumenical problem.

"The Church expects from you," said the Pope, "and from the equally venerated and deserving Albanian communities of the Eparchy of Lungro and of the eparchic monastery of Grottaferrata, that collaboration in dialogue which may succeed in kindling and renewing the flame of the long-awaited unity between East and West. Your endeavor should be characterized as an element of ever greater understanding and peace, and a cause of continuity and unity within the whole pilgrim church." This task demands that concrete initiatives be taken, modest ones certainly, but adequate to the limited but real possibilities of a small church. Nevertheless precisely for this, these initiatives should be characterized by continuity and perseverance in order to achieve a gradual progress of growing communion.

Attitude towards Albania

The relationship with Albania derives from the community's ethnic identity itself. A close relationship on the cultural level is to be extended to the religious level. This should be an object of particular consideration. Addressing the Arbresh of Calabria the Pope spoke of Albania with endearment, making references to its rich traditions and proposing the presence of Albanians in Italy as a "light" to illuminate better days.

"I want to recall your native bond with Albania, your fatherland and a country so rich in cultural and religious traditions and so close to us, just beyond the shores of the Adriatic. By so doing I am expressing my hope that your presence here in our beloved and hospitable Italy may be for the Christians of that noble nation, and also for all those there who profess a faith in God (with this expression, the Pope is surely referring to Albanian Moslems) like a light to symbolize hope in a better future, when religious liberty will gladden the hearts of all believers."

This mission flows from two sources: from an ethnic identity which is always solidary with one's own fatherland, and from a faith which is always intrinsically missionary.

Spiritual Awakening

These four areas of action pointed out by the Pope to the Albanians of Italy are such that they demand a true spiritual awakening on the part of the Arbëresh Church, an awakening that would encompass the full recovery of the Byzantine tradition together with a new catechesis, a more profound cultural and religious formation, a renewed disposition for dialogue, and a new missionary thrust.

Even within the modest and natural limits of a minority community, it is possible to acquire a new vitality proper to it.

If such considerations as these, and indeed others which would be even more demanding, are retained by the Arbëresh so as to be realized on a new cultural and pastoral level, the words of the Pope would not have been in vain. His words were, in fact, an expression of appreciation for the past of the Arbëresh. To the Albanians of Calabria the Pope had said, for instance: "I am well aware of your historical vicissitudes and I appreciate your gifts of fortitude, pride and kindness." And at the same time his words constitute a cause of encouragement for the future.

The new contemporary conditions in which the Arbëresh Church lives demand the progressive creation of a "new little history" which would enhance its native Christian traditions in view of the new times.

Spiritual Centers of the Arbëresh Church

Upper Right: Eparchy of Lungro. Lower Right: Abbey of Grottaferrata. Lower Left: Cathedral in Piana degli Albanesi.



Being Catholic in Albania: A Mark of Distinction

by Abdi Byram

"Praised be Thou, O Lord God, Ruler of the Universe, who has not made me a slave!" (A Jewish Prayer)

Forty years ago, in November 1944, a revolutionary change took place in Albania: the Albanian Communist Party became the absolute ruler of the country. It was not a common change of government, as we are used to witness with relative frequency in the Free World, but a violent shake-up of the very foundations of the Albanian state. A new regime which claimed to be the quintessence of popular will and of the people's interests requested from that same people the total abdication of their rights and freedoms. The new government was seriously set to change Albanian society in order to fit the image of a future one, conceived to be a Communist new order. The leaders were of Albanian stock.

If their Albanian origin was a certain guarantee of the leaders' attachment to Albania, their minds were shaped by a revolutionary doctrine, conceived and developed far away, and tested under conditions very different from those characterizing life in Albania. From the beginning, it became evident that the discrepancy between the new theory and its application ground was generating a stubborn resistance which had to be eliminated. The new ideology was aggressive, coupled with a vengeful determination to achieve the building of the new order, at any cost. Paradoxically, the leaders sincerely hoped that the new Communism would bring peace, bread, and liberty....!

As it turned out, a new order of famine, struggle and oppression covered the entire country. The fanaticism of the young crusaders was channelled to serve the interests of successive major powers, which from far away were deciding on the destiny of the Albanian people. A new and powerful virus, until then unknown in Albania, was poisoning the body of the nation, as the soul itself was dying out slowly. Inexorably lost in a sordid world, Albania was forgotten.

It is at this crucial moment, and dangerously close to a sure moral death, that the tenacity of the Albanian character reappeared, initially modest but of an astounding moral strength: people, individually and in groups, young and old, illiterate peasantry and accomplished scholars, began to stand up and, either openly or secretly, oppose the new regime.

The price was high, much too high for a small nation of one million. Fear was pervasive, suffering widespread, and oppression settled in every corner of every town and village of Albania. It was a genuine national tragedy that followed, instead of a much heralded era of liberation!

It is an undeniable fact that the Catholic population in Albania has been singled out as the major target for persecution by the Communist government. Through the press reports and eyewitness accounts, I began to realize the magnitude and the intensity of that persecution. It is no secret. From the beginning of the new Communist regime, a major frontal attack against religion in general had already entered the stage of Albanian politics. It is now clear that anything that happened in the country (with greater frequency in the mountainous regions of Northern and Central Albania) was intended to be used as an excuse to justify first the selective, and later the massive, arrests of the Catholic clergy, charged with harboring and instructing "the enemies of the people." The severity of the sentences pronounced against the clergy, including a series of capital punishments was an indication of things to come. Curiously enough, the voices of protest were few and weak. Those who dared, such as the young Moslem lawyer Muzafer Pipa, paid with their lives. In the euphoria for the new, and because they were psychologically conditioned by the memories of the cruelties of the war that had just ended, many initially lost their sensitiveness to cruelty and injustice.

Then, the ax fell, heavily and repeatedly. The generalized charges against religion, common to all the three denominations of Albania, became more specific and were directed especially against the Catholic clergy and faithful. The most incredible lies were forged by the government's propaganda machine to discredit the Catholic clergy, which for centuries had become a fundamental institution in the lives of both the Catholic and non-Catholic population of Albania. A carefully orchestrated press campaign, and a pervasive network of party organizations conducted a relentless anti-clerical indoctrination. The "traitorous activities" of the bishops, priests, and auxiliary personnel were suddenly "discovered" and condemned by physically eliminating "the actors," "the agents of Vatican and American imperialism," "the stooges of Fascism," "the collaborators," "the exploiters of the masses," and so on. Catholic clergy was invariably portrayed as the source of evil, and the cause of Albania's backwardness and poverty. Convents were ransacked, desecrated, closed. Schools were banned. Libraries confiscated, and later burned. As it turned out, from the burning of the book to the burning of the author was only one step: Priests, Franciscans and Jesuits were executed alone, in groups, or killed by torture. And finally, in 1967, four of them were torched alive in a Franciscan convent in Shkodër.

Of the three religious groups in Albania, Catholics are smaller in number than both Moslems and Eastern Orthodox. As a member of the large Moslem population, I never knew what being a member of "the smallest" meant: The need to always look for ways to provide the feeling of security for oneself and for fellow members of a group with limited powers. The necessity for a kind of entrenchment (most likely reinforced by the five-century long Turkish occupation of Albania with persecution of the Christians) was inherited and accepted by most Catholics in Albania. For them, it became important to establish themselves in a position of relative power from where their persecution, or forced displacement, could be prevented. This precarious position generated the need for support, and whenever this support was not forthcoming from inside the country, the threatened Catholics of Albania were compelled to turn their eyes towards Christian Europe. The most eloquent expression of this fear and of the resulting assurances could be the *Kultusprotektorat*, a system conceived and activated by the foreign policy of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy.

The uneasy relationship was oftentimes either genuinely misunderstood, or purposely misconstrued, although past experience shows that the Albanian Catholics' main drive has been directed towards domestic efforts and participation, rather than outside guarantees. An independent and free Albania became the first solution for the Catholics in that country. This is why, for five centuries, since the glorious days of George Castrioti-Skenderbeu, Catholics have been in the forefront of every revolt against invaders and in every liberation movement in the Catholic regions. As a consequence, they

have been the main targets of ensuing repressive measures. In the cultural field, they were the first and often the only ones to be engaged in the protection and consolidation of the Albanian national identity against assimilation.

Christianity and Christians in Albania, as was the case in the entire Western World, became both the inspiration and the vehicle in initiating, propagating, and maintaining moral ideals and standards, as they stressed our world as a total and indivisible wholeness — obeying the will of a merciful Creator — and not limited to the narrow frontiers of an isolated town, region, or country. Christianity in Albania taught and worked for an understanding of the place of the individual in a world where faith and love could shape a decent life in freedom and dignity.

First and foremost, Catholicism taught respect for life, for human life that is, as a gift of God, to be honored and respected. This was much more the case in a country where for centuries the rule of law was cruelly applied, and where the value of human life was still at a low ebb. The teaching of Christianity raised conscience, not without great difficulties and resistance, to the level where at least the deleterious action was questioned as a violation of the laws of God. The religious concept of good (and bad) and the worthiness of morality was introduced into a society of near-lawlessness and vengeance. Motives were explained. Advice was given on the ways of achieving virtue. It was a slow, uphill, relentless and noble task performed for many centuries by the Albanian Catholic clergy, for both the Christian and non-Christian population of Albania.

Faith and love for the fatherland (*Fë e Atdhë*) became so tied together that the preservation of the one, or the liberation of the other, could not be seen separately. In the Albanian Catholic clergy, a learned clergy, one saw religion and political leadership at the same time.

Ironically, the happy combination that brought so much to Albania's national awakening and contributed generously to the movement for the independence of Albania, was submitted to a new scrutiny once the anti-clerical Western attitudes of post W.W.I were imported into Albania. Anti-clericalism grew as the Western world was sliding downhill either into a world of complacency, drugged by material goods, or engulfed by the ways of the new totalitarian regimes that led their countries to disaster. In Albania, where poverty and ignorance were rampant and shamefully widespread, cliché slogans and cheap propaganda sowed confusion. Many were looking for scapegoats to blame for a situation they couldn't escape, or change. The "humanistic" philosophies, asking for changes *here and now*, directed their attacks against all those who believed that living by bread alone was not enough. Religion was bound to become the object of ridicule, and organized religion and its servants, the concrete objects of hate. The Albanian Catholic Church and its clergy, being well organized, having ties with the Vatican — an outside international center — and being served by the most educated clergy of all the three religious denominations in Albania, bore the brunt of the frontal attacks. The coming to power of the atheistic Communist government was a classical case of the consumption of hatred in a country where the background had already been prepared by a small but vociferous class of semi-educated people, most of whom had a record of academic failure. The rest is history!

Today, we confront rulers to whom nothing is sacred. Today, we live in times when the great threat does not come from simple-minded idolatry, but from deliberate and well-organized atheism which obliterates the notion of God altogether, and this by acts of law. The danger is not to transform churches into mosques, or vice versa, imposing new variants of worshipping God. Today, the danger is as grave as death itself, since one fears the extinction of religion as we know it. Overwhelmed by the very danger, one cannot help thinking of the logic, or the lack of it, in this catastrophe, and agree with the thoughtful conclusion of Robert Aron, a philosopher of the post-holocaust era:

Storms, floods, earthquakes, no matter how infrequent, haunt the conscience of primitive people. They come to the conclusion that God is not a tutelary spirit, peacefully sharing with man the benefits of his heaven. He is kindly, to be sure, but He knows how to lighten and thunder; He does not calm the storm, or stop war or even prevent accidents. He has taken on, as in our days, the aspect of an indulgent protector of those who chose to believe in him. Inserting Himself into history, at His creature's side making no attempt to prevent the rumble of the thunder, the inundation of fields and cities, the destruction brought by plague, war or death, He seems to suggest that all these accidents belong to a divine plan and have to do with salvation. (*Jesus of Nazareth: The Hidden Years*, p. 27.)

As I speak to the few who succeeded in their attempt to join the free world, and as I read the very few lines written by foreign visitors who have only a superficial sight of life in Albania, I am filled with hope. Silently, I turn my heart towards the land of my fathers. Something deep and mysterious tells me that religion, as a belief in a supernatural being, is still alive there, where people make the sign of the cross secretly and at great risk, or tearfully touch the crumbling walls of a desecrated mosque. As a Moslem believer, I feel that religion in Albania, to use a famous metaphor, remains a stone which will survive the disappearance of the mason who carved it. One day that solid and permanent stone will again, mysteriously and powerfully, inspire hearts and souls with everlasting hope, faith, and indispensable divine charity. This is the uncompromising message the silent people of Albania bring to the troubled peoples of our world today.

Finally, when the dust is settled, there will be a long process of healing for Albania, and an arduous task of moral rehabilitation for all of us. Not only the directly responsible ones, but all those who are tangentially guilty, and that is the large masses guilty of silence, will have to go through a reevaluation of their present ethical attitudes towards the less numerous and more persecuted Catholics of Albania. Independently of the path that each of us will take in reassessing ourselves as decent human beings, the present status of Catholics in Communist Albania will stand before us, as a unique case of victims of ruthlessness and relentless persecution in a blind, deaf, and mute world. We must cleanse ourselves of that blindness, deafness, and muteness which cost the lives of so many innocent people. As we try to purge our souls and our hearts, we must come out with a commitment to ourselves and to the others, namely, that the present tragedy will never repeat itself. Anything less would be the sanctioning of our moral decay.

Weep For . . . Hope For . . .

by John Cardino

1944. What should have been the liberation of Albania from Axis forces in 1944 has turned out to be forty years of oppression, previously unknown to Albanians over their 3,000-year history. Labor camps, secret police, murders, political prisoners, destroyed churches and mosques, torture. Not even a month had passed before the monstrous crimes against fellow Albanians began. Some who had fought the communists were executed, others fled, and the persecution of the Church began with the slitting of Fr. Lek Luli's throat. The violence against the people has increased over the years. The Communist Party has waged a ruthless battle against religion. At first, the object of their hatred was especially the Catholic Church and her adherents. Act by act, murder by murder, the government and its stooges in the Sigurimi (security police) continued the campaign against the Church and eliminated members of the clergy and religious orders. Nuns were marched in makeshift clothing through the streets, priests, seminarians and lay people were falsely accused of crimes and tried on trumped-up charges in courts which paid no heed to their rights as Albanians or as humans. The Jesuit Order was outlawed, the Franciscan monasteries and schools were closed, and the torturing and mock trials continued.

In 1967, all pretense of religious liberty was eliminated with the burning of churches and mosques throughout the country. The shrine of Our Lady of Shkodra, to which Albanians — Catholics and Moslems alike — formerly went on pilgrimage, was destroyed, while other churches and mosques were turned into sports arenas, warehouses, museums or movie theaters. All religious rites and symbols were prohibited. Albania was then declared to be the world's first totally atheistic nation. This was in violation of the Constitution of 1946 which guaranteed freedom of religion, as well as the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amazingly, this declaration of atheism went almost unnoticed throughout the world; unbelievably, even the Catholic Church in the U.S. remained silent. In 1972, when Pope Paul VI protested the execution of a priest for baptizing a child in a labor camp, non-Albanians finally began to raise their voices in protest. The Albanian government's reaction to this was to continue the persecution, to condemn other communist governments for being anti-revolutionary and, in 1976, to adopt a new constitution which proclaimed in Articles 37 and 55 that no religion was recognized, and that all religious practices and organizations were forbidden. Albania thus became the only nation in the world to have a policy of religious suppression and of atheism constitutionally mandated. Executions and jail sentences — twelve years for possessing Bibles at home, eight years for having children baptized — were unabated; the persecution continued.

Once again, Humberto Cardinal Medeiros of Boston and Bishop Mark Lipa of the Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America spoke out against those acts and called for the respect for human rights and religious freedom in Albania. Amnesty International has raised its voice in protest, requesting the release from prison of clergy and lay people who were confined because of religious beliefs, but the government in Albania remained deaf and indifferent. Pope John Paul II has asked all Christians to be spiritually close to those suffering violence in Albania because of their faith, and he has called on all people to pray for the persecutors, repeating Christ's words on the Cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Others have spoken out against religious oppression in Albania — the Foreign Ministry of Denmark, the German Catholic Bishops Conference, and the United Churches of Christ-USA — but, shockingly, the Catholic Church in the U.S., with the exception of a few individuals, has remained silent.

In Albania, in spite of all the inhuman treatment and executions, religion is still alive. Enver Hoxha himself has spoken out against the observance of major feast days, against the wearing of "disguised" religious symbols. And refugees fleeing their homeland have told how the practice of religion — baptisms, marriages, prayer services — is continued in secret without benefit of clergy. Crucifixes, rosaries, Bibles, prayer books, religious medals are kept hidden at home because of the threat of raids by the security police.

Forty years of oppression have not erased from the people of Albania their belief in God. Still, they need to know they are not alone in their struggle; they need to know the rest of the world is praying for them, speaking out on their behalf. The Catholic bishops, other Christian churches, non-Christians, government officials, all should raise their voices in protest.

And to the Albanian government itself, the question is raised: Why? Why have you brought such pain and suffering to your own people? Why have you murdered, tortured, mutilated your brothers and sisters? Pse? In the 3,000 years of Albanian history, no foreign force, not even the Ottoman Turks, has committed such crimes as you have. Why? The time will come when all men must meet their God. What will you do, what will you say, when He asks, "Pse?"?

It is time to recognize the mistakes of the past, to recognize the fact that you cannot destroy a belief, that you cannot destroy what is in a people's heart and mind and soul, that all your crimes against innocent men, women, and children will only increase their resolve to keep their faith alive. Certainly, as Albanians, you are aware of the determination and will power of Albanians to be independent, to be Albanians. Occupations by Roman forces and Ottoman Turks did not turn the people from their heritage. Albanians in Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy — those separated from the Fatherland for five centuries — have not forgotten their past. Certainly you know this. Why do you disregard it? And, what will history say of you and your vicious acts?

Albania must be free and must be strong to maintain its independence. All people of Albanian descent know this, want this. But, the people in Albania must also be free to practice their beliefs; otherwise, Albania is not free! If there is danger to the country, then it is coming from the East, not the West. Build ties with the West. Share its technology. Open the borders, let the fresh air of freedom in, and Albania will prosper and remain independent. It is time to be a government, a leadership that all Albanians can look to with pride.

Great Inhumanity Pays Lip Service to Liberal Values

by Anton Logoreci

1.

The Albanian communist regime was in a state of great euphoria when it decreed in 1967 the closure of all churches and other places of worship, and the banning of religious practices. The country was proclaimed, with a good deal of naive official glee, "the world's first atheist state." However, the leadership soon discovered that the euphoria engendered by such a barbaric measure was misplaced. It consequently began issuing warnings that personal religious beliefs could not be simply wiped out by a mere government decision declaring them illegal. What appears to have come as a sudden blinding revelation to communist politicians and officials is the simple lesson of history that campaigns of persecution, far from destroying religious beliefs, often tend to stimulate and reinforce them by driving them underground.

Seventeen years after it was supposed to have disappeared, the religious issue is again to the fore. Reacting to the Pope's appeal to Catholics the world over to pray for religious freedom in Albania during November 1983, the Albanian press published in the following months several articles on the survival of religious beliefs and practices. According to one party newspaper, some communist officials in Kruja, Lezhe and Shkodër (all in northern Albania) behaved as if they were unaware of the fact that people continued to hold on to their religious beliefs and practices and even prayed in former places of worship. (*Rruga e Partisë*, No. 3, March 1984). The same paper criticized party and social organizations for failing to wage a systematic struggle against what it called "religion and other backward customs," thereby encouraging believers to celebrate religious holidays, visit old places of worship and prevent marriages between individuals of different religious backgrounds. "Such practices occur in all districts, particularly in rural areas." (*Rruga e Partisë*, No. 4, April 1984).

There have been several similar attempts to tell the plain truth about the situation. Clearly this is not done for the sake of truth itself (for which totalitarian governments have no time at all) but because the regime seems to be genuinely worried about the complacency of some of its officials in dealing with the stubborn survival of religion. Official sources have at the same time been involved in a far more sinister exercise. Its purpose is nothing less than the rewriting of the whole tragic history of religious persecution since the end of the Second World War.

Such an attempt at rewriting is plainly evident in a recent official *History of Albania from its origins to the present day* (London, 1981). The section dealing with religion contains several bogus historical judgments which lie at the heart of communist anti-religious propaganda. Two examples of such pronouncements: "Religion had never taken root in the consciousness of the Albanians"; "Religion was a political tool of the foreign powers which introduced it to the country." One need hardly waste any time in refuting such puerile arguments.

The book does admit that after the last war, the government removed all religious influence from schools; deprived religious bodies of all land and other property; and stopped all religious publications. But despite these measures, it goes on to say, the state respected religious freedom. There is not the slightest hint of the appalling persecution that preceded the banning of religion in 1967: the murder and imprisonment of a very large number of clerics of all denominations; the persistent victimization and harassment of lay believers. The work maintains that contradictions between socialism and religion intensified during the 1960s, although it does not explain why this was so. These contradictions are alleged to have given rise in turn to a spontaneous movement among young people in favor of making religion illegal. In the end, the government had no other choice, the book maintains, but to comply with the people's wishes by banning religion altogether.

What one is being asked here is to believe in political fairy-tales: that it is possible, in communist Albania, to organize a truly free and spontaneous popular movement, with no party manipulation or coercion.

Such falsification of recent history has also been the subject of several official statements and press articles. A statement issued by the Albanian news agency ATA on January 4, 1984, ascribed to Enver Hoxha (the party leader) the startling proposition that everyone in Albania is perfectly free to believe or not to believe, it being a matter of individual conscience, not of religious institutions. The statement went on to claim that in Albania religion was fought neither by force nor violence, neither by state laws nor government decrees.

Speaking in Bari (southern Italy) towards the end of February 1984, Pope John Paul II said: "I am thinking of our brothers and sisters of Albania who cannot openly express their religious faith." A few days later the Albanian party paper responded to this by claiming that "no one was persecuted in communist Albania because of his religious sentiments. Our government regarded the question of religious faith as a personal problem, as a problem of conscience. Our people decided of their own free will, with no outside interference, their attitude towards religion and religious institutions." (*Zëri i Popullit*, 1.3.1984).

A French seventeenth century writer has said that hypocrisy is a kind of homage that vice pays to virtue. The hypocrisy underlying the blatant rewriting of recent Albanian history is the homage, or lip service, that great inhumanity pays to humane and liberal values. The homage is probably partly motivated by the desire to whitewash the regime's well-deserved horrible reputation abroad. But as far as the Albanian people themselves are concerned, they are being robbed of their history, just as they have been robbed of freedom and basic human rights.

2.

The barbarous persecution of religion is of course part of the much wider context involving the violation of human rights in general. Two important international documents provide the general standards by which the behavior of all governments towards their people is judged; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the United Nations in 1948); the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (signed on

1.8.1975). Although Albania is a member of the United Nations, its government has not signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Albania is also the only European country which refused to take part in the European Security and Cooperation Conference, and hence was not a signatory of the Helsinki Final Act. These two facts alone illustrate better than anything else the Albanian regime's real attitude to the important issue of human rights.

The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind. . . ." This certainly applies to some of the policies pursued by the Albanian regime since the Second World War. If the conscience of mankind has not been sufficiently outraged by these policies, this is because the outside world has been poorly informed, or not informed at all, about them.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; "this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

By its behavior since 1945, communist Albania has shown that it regards the rights and freedoms embodied in Article 18 as nonsensical. It has also no use whatsoever for the right to freedom of opinion and expression (including the freedom to seek and impart information and ideas regardless of frontiers) laid down in Article 19.

Human rights could hardly be said to exist at all in countries where there is little or no respect for the rule of law. Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law." According to Article 10, "Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal. . . ." Article 11 states: "Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense."

It can be said that in the light of such criteria, the rule of law has hardly ever operated in Albania since the end of the last war. The last *public* trial — a political show trial — took place there in May 1961. Since then many hundreds, perhaps many thousands, of people have been sent to prisons and labor camps or have been executed after secret trials, or even without being tried at all in the proper sense of the word. The government provides no real information about such cases, apart from dropping occasional mysterious hints that certain party leaders and officials have been punished for vague offenses. In fact, in such matters it behaves rather like a very heavy-handed foreign army of occupation which cannot be bothered to explain its own actions to the people for whom it has nothing but contempt.

The philosophy behind the administration of justice in Albania is clearly stated in the Code of Criminal Procedure. Article 3 says that criminal procedure legislation is guided by the policy of the communist party, which is based on Marxism-Leninism, the ideology of the working class. Such legislation, according to Article 4 of the Code, adheres to the principle of class struggle against criminal offenses. In other words, the administration of justice is controlled by the party. And as the party has been controlled by Enver Hoxha for nearly forty years, the legal system, justice itself, has been his political instrument throughout this period.

A few examples of current laws and decrees show how such absolute personal power is exercised in practice. Article 55 of the Criminal Code lists the following offenses as punishable with three to ten years' imprisonment: fascist, anti-democratic, religious, war-mongering and anti-socialist agitation and propaganda; the dissemination of literature designed to undermine the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The mildest complaint about the government or any innocent expression of religious faith could, in short, land one in prison or labor camp for as long as ten years.

A far more serious offense in the eyes of Albanian law is flight abroad. People who leave the country illegally or officials who fail to return from service abroad are liable to a minimum of ten years or the death penalty, according to Article 47K of the Criminal Code. The main danger facing those brave people who try to escape is being shot while crossing the frontier or being captured by frontier guards. In 1983, Amnesty International reported that two Albanians had been given ten and eighteen years for having tried to leave the country without permission. Until a few years ago Albanian citizens who fled to Yugoslavia were forcibly returned to Albania by the Yugoslav authorities. Severe punishment awaited those unfortunate people when they got back.

Yet despite the enormous risks involved, Albanians do still try to escape. In August 1984 two sisters (Isabella and Zamira Islami) swam at night to Corfu together with their brother Klement, who unfortunately did not manage to reach the Greek island. One of the reasons that they decided to escape was because the whole family was interned in 1975 for five years, after Klement had been accused of spreading anti-government propaganda (*The Times*, London, 14.8.84).

One form of punishment that has been in force in the country for many years is internment or banishment. Decrees regulating it were passed in 1954, 1960 and 1966. All these were replaced by a Decree on Internment and Expulsion as Administrative Measures, issued in June 1979. This lays down that Albanian citizens, foreigners and stateless persons over the age of 14 who "present a danger to the social system" of the country can be interned or expelled by the decision of a special government committee. The families of the defectors can also be interned or expelled. Members of the family are the spouse, children, parents, brothers and sisters and other dependents who lived with the defendant at the time of his flight. The special committee has full powers to extend the period of internment or expulsion when it thinks necessary, or to cancel the punishment when internees are no longer regarded as a "social danger."

What this brutal decree means in effect is that people can be interned for several years without any trial; this can be done merely on the vague suspicion of being some kind of threat to the government. No hard evidence is required to find one guilty, and no defense of the accused is allowed. Furthermore, the committee reaches its decisions behind closed doors. The decree also means that innocent people who happen to be related to the defector (including children over 14) are treated as hostages and punished accordingly.

This type of punishment is a true symbol of Hoxha's great attachment to Stalinism. The Albanian Decree on Internment happens to be more or less a copy of a Soviet decree issued in June 1935, later incorporated in the Soviet Criminal Code. This provided for the death penalty for flight abroad by both civilian and military employees. In the case of military defectors, those members of the family aware of the intended offense were liable to up to ten years' imprisonment. Whereas those members who knew nothing about it were liable to five years' exile. The hostage system was introduced in Russia by Stalin when he was deeply involved in the Great Purges of the thirties. The system remains in operation in Albania almost forty years after its own communist revolution. It is the only communist country in the world where such an evil system is known to exist. Some record!

Atheism and the Moral Force of Religion

by Xhevat Kallajxhi

One day in September, 1982, I was traveling by train from Washington to New York. Sitting across from me, there was an American woman of about 60. We started talking and, upon learning that I was Albanian, the woman — prompted above all by curiosity — began to ask me all kinds of questions about Albania and the Albanian people. I enlightened her as best I could, according to my understanding, and I believe she was satisfied. Finally she asked me:

"What kinds of religious faiths are there in Albania?"

"None," I answered without hesitation.

My reply surprised her, and with a certain nervousness she asked: "But how is it possible for a people to live without religion and without God?" Then added: "Even the most primitive people, people who live in isolation in the Amazon jungles, find it necessary to believe in something."

She did not know what had happened in Albania, and her reaction was understandable and proper.

I then said to her: "You must understand, dear lady, that Albanians also believe in one God, and before the Communists seized power, there were in Albania the Moslem faith, the Eastern Rite Orthodox faith, and the Catholic faith. These religious faiths, however, had been under attack by the Communists ever since they took power in November of 1944. They came to an end in 1967. At that time, the regime in Tirane issued an official decree outlawing religion, and Albania was declared an atheist state (the first and only such state in the world to date). The churches and other places of worship were then either destroyed or used for other purposes."

My discussion with the American lady ended at this point, since the train had arrived at the Philadelphia station, and the lady got off there. She bid me goodbye courteously, thanking me for the explanations I gave her and wishing good luck to Albania and the Albanian people.

* * *

The persecution of religious establishments, clerics and believers began shortly after the Communists came into power in Albania. This year marks the fortieth anniversary since the start of religious persecutions in the country. The unprecedented campaign against religion cost the lives of many bishops, priests, and believers. Thousands of others were condemned to prison and hard labor camps. The hardest hit among the clerics were the Catholic clergy, including nuns as well. Many of them were tortured. The story of those persecutions has been documented in books and articles in magazines and newspapers.

In this connection, words of recognition and praise are due the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara, Ca. for its decision to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of religious persecution in Albania with a special issue of its organ, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, and the celebration of an ecumenical mass for peace on Saturday, April 13, 1985. The religious services will be held in St. Ignatius Church, on the campus of the University of San Francisco.

The clerics of the different faiths who were executed or who perished in prison and concentration camps of Albania, are heroes in a tragic drama, and martyrs to God and country. They gave their lives serving them, secure in their faith, ever obedient and ever devoted.

Marx said that religion is the opium of the people, and Communists, following the teachings of their "prophet" — many of whose predictions have failed to come true — have fought and still continue to fight religion. But the more they fight it, the stronger it becomes in the Communist countries, including the Soviet Union, where the struggle against religion has been going on for 67 years. Nevertheless, no Communist regime, not even that of Stalin, went as far as to declare the country where it holds power an atheist state, as did the Tirane regime in Albania.

The decision of the Tirane regime to declare Albania an atheist state was both tragical and comical. Tragical because many people, both men and women, were sent to prison or concentration camps for daring to express their religious sentiments. Comical because the Tirane regime presented the outlawing of religion as something that the people themselves wanted! The tactic used was to have people in different parts of Albania send telegrams to Enver Hoxha imploring him to save them from the tyranny of religion! But who can believe such a fable?

Religious beliefs cannot be eliminated by decrees. One can prohibit the practice of religion, but one cannot uproot religious beliefs from the soul of the people. There have been other attempts in the past to eliminate religion, but the results were negative. An example is Alfred Rosenberg and the war he waged against belief in God. Rosenberg was the "prophet" of the monstrous heresy known as the Nazi "creed." He also wrote a book titled, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, in which he says that "Catholicism and other faiths must disappear in a face to face confrontation with the overpowering Nazi movement; they must be forgotten just as the night lamp is forgotten as soon as the light of the sun shines in the morning." Rosenberg considered religion as a mere "episode," in comparison with the eternal force of Nazism! But he was mistaken. Instead of God being overthrown, it was he and the Nazi ideology that was overthrown.

The Lord is omnipotent and eternal. He cannot be fought against, nor subdued. On the contrary, it is those who rise against the Lord who are brought down. Furthermore, belief in God, that is, religion, is man's greatest moral and spiritual force. And men, as the American lady said, need to believe in something. That is why the great French savant, Voltaire, said that *even if God did not exist, men would have to create Him*.

Albania and the Denial of Religious Freedom

by James V. Schall, S.J.

The Czech writer Milan Kundera has written that "Central Europe as a family of small nations has its own vision of the world, a vision based on a deep distrust of history. . . . The people of Central Europe are not conquerors. They cannot be separated from European history; they cannot exist outside it; but they represent the wrong side of history; they are its victims and outsiders." Kundera went on to suggest that the West, in forgetting Central Europe, is in danger of forgetting what it is itself, a place where freedom and truth can exist. The political form of conquest under which these nations are forced to live since at least the end of World War II does not constitute the expression of what they are culturally in their beliefs and traditions. The political system is not a chosen one, so it is a great injustice to these peoples to neglect their origins.

Among these Central European countries, perhaps the least well-known, except perhaps in Italy which is adjacent (and in fact was its conqueror during World War II) is Albania. As a result of the early expansion of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, Albania is today about three-quarters Muslim. It is one of the few countries in the world where both Islam and Christianity are under attack from a hostile, anti-religious government. The more ancient religious tradition is Catholic and Orthodox Christian. Albania is no doubt the most isolated, closed Marxist society in the world with very little communication even with other communist states.

The Roman Catholic population of Albania is about 13%. No doubt, one of the most revealing things about Roman Catholicism in Europe and the United States, Canada, and Latin America, has been its inability to visualize or do anything about the religious status of their fellow Catholics in such places as Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, or Albania. In one sense, Catholicism in particular prides itself as an international or universal religion. Yet, in its local roots, there is often a spirit of "live and let live" with regard to other local churches in other countries or localities. This particularly affects the case of Catholics under totalitarian systems who acutely feel this neglect of their plight, whatever the external political conditions. Numerous Catholic representatives in recent years have argued that the reason for their neglect of Catholics in totalitarian systems is because nothing can be done about the latter. Interestingly, Jews, Baptists, Jehovah Witnesses, and others have not taken this position.

On the other hand, John Paul II, the first Pope from Eastern Europe, has had a tremendous impact on this area. He has insisted that the first obligation of religious people is religion. He has also held that religious right is the first right of freedom, which, when ignored or suppressed, all other rights become problematic. To date, interestingly, the German Bishops' Conference is the only one that has officially recognized the particularly stressing nature of the Albanian problem. They had an official Day of Prayer (May 27, 1984) and published a booklet on the Condition of the Church in Albania, a nation officially atheist in its legal structure. Albania has taken steps to eliminate all religious buildings, practices, and representatives.

The Albanian writer and exile Nika Stajka has described the situation in this way:

Even today . . . Albania remains secluded in mystery. Nobody knows anything about what was happening there. . . . For those who do not know what Communism is, it is very easy to say that "Albania is a Communist Country," not knowing what Albania had to endure when the Communists took over power. Most of the so-called "Communists" became such not because of their Marxist ideas but because of hate against somebody whom they could not see; against an ever-hated enemy called "Catholic." Thus, the harshest punishment had to fall upon the clergy. Sooner or later, the clergy had to be finished; its members knew that they had to die. When the clergy died, the Communists thought that everything was finished; but they soon realized that Catholics continued being such; that is why they brought about the "cultural revolution," thus striking the last blow upon the church.¹

An official Albanian writer reported that after the closure of religious communities in 1967, the following results were recorded:

As a result of these initiatives, within the short span of a few months, the first blow was dealt to the hearths of the religious ideology. With the exception of a few churches or mosques of architectural or historical value, all churches, mosques, teques, mausoleums, religious land holdings, etc., were shut down throughout the country.²

Very little if any of this was reported widely in the religious or free press.

Albanian Communism is itself, in many ways, an aberration in that it has succeeded in carrying Marxist doctrine to its logical conclusion within a small country. By establishing Enver Hoxha's atheistic theories as official state doctrine, which controls the state apparatus, including the police, there is combined a zeal and a power to attack religion directly so that there is none of even that limited religious toleration that is found in other Marxist countries. Hoxha's model was apparently Stalin himself. This is from a conversation Hoxha records in a book that he had with Stalin:

During the talk with Roosevelt, Churchill, and others on the problem of the anti-Hitlerite war, they had said: "We must no longer fight the Pope in Rome. What have you against him that you attack him?"

"I have nothing against him," Stalin had replied.

"Then, let us make the Pope our ally," they had said, "let us admit him to the coalition of the great allies."

"All right," Stalin had said, "but the anti-fascist alliance is an alliance to wipe out fascism and nazism. As you know, gentlemen, this war is waged with soldiers, artillery, machine-guns, tanks, aircraft. If the Pope or you can tell us what armies, artillery, machine-guns, tanks and

other weapons of war he possesses, let him become our ally. We don't need an ally for talk and incense." After that, they made no further mention of the Pope or the Vatican.

"Were there catholic priests in Albania who betrayed the people?" Comrade Stalin asked me then.

"Yes," I told him. "Indeed, the heads of the catholic church made common cause with the nazi-fascist foreign invaders right from the start, placed themselves completely in their service, and did everything in their power to disrupt our National Liberation War and perpetuate the foreign domination."

"What did you do with them?"

"After the victory," I told him, "we arrested them and put them on trial and they received the punishment they deserved."

"You have done well," he said.³

This sort of absolutist policy has governed Albania since the end of World War II.

In a very favorable review in Tirana's daily *Voice of the People* of Hulusi Hako's book *Scientific Atheism*, a glimpse of the all-embracing claims of this government is made clear:

This book is a powerful and well-founded indictment of the religious dogmas of idealism — the most serious, most cynical and most inhuman underhanded deception known to history. World reaction has felt keenly the overthrow of religion in Albania. That is why it churns up a campaign of lies against Marxism-Leninism and socialism, saying they are fighting religion and denying to the people the freedom to believe. *Scientific Atheism* shows us that the struggle against the opium of religion began centuries ago, and that the spirit and force of this struggle has been growing with the development of the class struggle and revolutionary practice. . . . This struggle has accompanied the entire process of world civilization and culture. It found unprecedented expression also during our National Renaissance in the great idea that "The religion of Albanians is Albanianism."

The merit and strength of a true socialist society lies in the fact that it makes the most cherished dreams, aspirations and ideals of humanity a reality. It does not quit the struggle against religion in the middle of the road.⁴

The Albanian theorists, at least, are clear about what they think of their opposition and its main source.

It is, of course, quite difficult for people, particularly religious people, who live under free governments to visualize the meaning of such astonishing claims that the Albanian theorists and leaders use. Few can comprehend that such a system claims "scientific" status and intends world power. The Albanian version, for all its confinement to a small corner of the globe, is instructive because it demonstrates the extremes to which this complex of ideas can lead without adequate response from free and religious peoples.

One of the most basic human dignities is that of free religious expression, of the idea that politics does not exhaust the human spirit. In Albania, it is against the law to have religious houses, to baptize, have any religious objects. The Constitution establishes and the police and courts enforce the law. Gjon Sinishta has written:

Albania's government adopted in 1976, a new Constitution whose Articles 37 and 55 boastfully proclaim that the State recognizes no religion whatsoever, and forbids all religious activities and organizations, while encouraging atheism. . . . With these articles Albania became the only country in the world where the suppression of religion and the propagation of atheism have become a constitutionally mandated state policy.⁵

What is surprising about such a system is not so much that it exists — it is the product in some sense of certain strands of modern thought — but that it exists with so little attention from liberal and religious bodies who would be the first to fall under suppression were it to gain power in their lands. This indifference or inattention gives the Albanian system a certain legitimacy or toleration to continue with its program.

Small countries, indeed, often represent a side of history or politics we do not want to see. Albania is certainly a graphic example of this. Christians have been taught to respect martyrs, of which there have been a good number in Albania in recent years. On the other hand, this should not be construed as if we were permitted to approve a system that caused them. The clarification of religious freedom in one country involves its condition in others. The first attention needs to be to religious freedom, since that is the essential one that reminds us that no state can claim full truth and power. Beyond that, however, those who do suffer unjustly in such regimes are reserves of clarity and truth about what is important and what not in human life. In this sense, an increased attention of religious people to the condition of Catholics and other religions in Albania is an essential element in our understanding of the chief alternative to religion in the modern world, a state that claims complete control of man's mind and body in the name of a truth which is not permitted to be questioned by the law or constitution. The failure of religious peoples in free societies to note this problem with any force or consistency is itself a failure of religion to understand what it is about. Albania in this sense is symbolic not only of itself and Central Europe, but of the world itself which seeks to present a political alternative to religion. If anyone wants to see what this alternative might ultimately look like, the example of Albania will be a good place to start.

Footnotes

¹Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *New York Review of Books*, April 26, 1984, p. 36.

²Nika Stajka, *The Last Days of Freedom*, New York, Vantage, 1980, p. 83.

³Dilaver Sadikaj, "The Revolutionary Movement Against Religion in the Sixties," *Studime Historike*, University of Tirana, in *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. IV, N. 1, 1983, translation, p. 23.

⁴Enver Hoxha, *With Stalin*, reprinted essay in *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

⁵Gjon Sinishta, "Grave Violation of Religious Rights in Albania," *Albanian Catholic Information Center*, 1984, Unpublished Manuscript, p. 14.

“Remember Them that Are in Bonds. . .”

by Hans Kristian Neerskov

On March 7, 1983, in the United Nations Commission for Human Rights, a delegation from Denmark protested the violation of religious freedom in Albania.

The question was raised at the 39th meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Commission on agenda item 25: Implementation of the Declaration of the Elimination of all forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief. A representative from the Danish delegation made the following statement:

The principles of religious freedom are expressed in the constitution of almost every sovereign state. There are, however, examples of constitutions which not only lack provisions safeguarding the principles of religious freedom, but directly prohibit all religious practice. Pursuant to art. 55 of the Albanian constitution religion is thus prohibited.

The initiative taken by Danish European Mission and Mission Possible, USA, resulted in Denmark raising the question of constitutional violation of the freedom of religion in Albania. As far as we know, it is the first time the question of religious oppression in Albania has been raised in the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

What has happened after 1983? It is very difficult to say. On July 20, 1984, a member of the Danish Parliament, Mr. Lars P. Gammelgaard, spokesman for the Conservatives (the largest of the four parties in the Danish Coalition government) wrote an article in *Bertingske Tidende* (one of Denmark's major newspapers) on the violation of religious freedom in Albania.

In a statement he wrote: “We shall have to go far back in the history of Europe to find similar barbarism.” After mentioning the Danish protest in the Human Rights Commission, he continued: “We find ourselves in a situation where we have to consider if we should take further action in this matter.”

The Danish protest in the Human Rights Commission in 1983 against the violation of religious freedom in Albania was a small step on the way to forming a stronger public opinion against the violations of the human rights in that country. “Danish European Missions also finds it positive that politicians in the Danish Government have become more aware of the situation in Albania and we shall continue to follow the developments very closely, in order that at a later time we may ask the Danish Government to pursue the matter.”

This is still a very good reason indeed for paying close attention to the developments in Albania. The reason for this is that the constitution of Albania states that the people are to be deprived of their religious freedom as well as other fundamental human rights. This is contained in article 37 in the constitution: “The State does not recognize any religion and supports atheistic propaganda in order to ingrain the scientific materialistic philosophy of the world in the people.” In Article 55: “Forbidden is the formation of any organization with fascist, antidemocratic, religious, war-producing or antisocialist activity or propaganda, as well as encouragement of racial hate.”

The fact that religious persecution is actually provided for in its constitution makes Albania a special case. It means that Albania, being a member of the United Nations since 1955, maintains a constitution directly inconsistent with central and vital parts of the United Nations' treaty and the United Nations Human Rights Declaration, which are morally binding on all members of the United Nations.

In all other countries, even in Communist states where religious persecution is often practiced, government officials still proclaim that their constitutions guarantee freedom of religion. This is used as a defense when they are accused of violating religious rights. In Albania, however, it is clearly stipulated that the people of Albania, neither formally nor in reality, have the right of religious freedom.

This fact makes it more difficult to understand how Albania can still be a member of the United Nations, even more, why the United Nations for so long has made such little effort to point out the oppression of religion and of other fundamental human rights in Albania. Indeed, the United Nations has exerted little pressure on the Albanian government to force them guarantee these human rights to the Albanian people.

The passivity in the United Nations seems very strange in comparison to how other countries have been accused and condemned in strong terms by the United Nations for violation and oppression of human rights.

Now, as we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the persecution of the Church in Albania, we must continue to call upon the leaders of the world nations to urge the government of the People's Republic of Albania to guarantee its citizens the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms widely recognized by the human community, including the free exercise of religion. We also believe that the most precious and effective support we can give to the suffering Church in Albania today is our wholehearted prayers. Let us not forget the martyrs of our times. Let us not behave as if they did not exist. The Bible says: “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in body.”

We who live in freedom can with the help of God assist those who live under oppression in Albania. Let us be united in remembering them, regardless of what our background is, regardless of our beliefs, and let us do what we can to help the suffering Church in Albania.

The Martyrs of Albania

by Karl G. Schmude

"How many divisions has the Pope?" was the famous question put disparagingly by Stalin at the Potsdam Conference in 1945. He could scarcely have foreseen the dramatic answer which would be given to the world, several decades later, in the person of a Polish Pope.

One of the most publicized developments associated with John Paul II's papacy was the religious revival now gathering force in Eastern Europe. This resurgence was not simply due to the Pope, for even in his native country, the Church remained unified and strong from the beginning of Communist rule, under the leadership of the late Cardinal Wyszyński.

But the presence of John Paul II gave new inspiration and focus to the movements of nascent faith.

Across the lands of Eastern Europe, the "Pope's divisions" are beginning to spread — to the manifest apprehension of the Communist authorities, which recognize from events in Poland the profound challenge to their own power represented by a vital religious faith.

As the London Economist reported, the authorities were nervous at the prospect of religious fervor generated by events like the Eucharistic Congress at Marija Bistrica, Croatia's national shrine, and the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the death of St. Casimir, the patron saint of Lithuania.

At the same time, there is an extraordinary and painful feature of the "Pope's divisions" — many of the recruits are prisoners or martyrs.

The Reverend Michael Bourdeaux, an expert on Christianity in Communist countries and an occasional visitor to Australia in recent years, noted that, in the Soviet Union, prison camps provide one of the most remarkable growing points for the Christian faith.

In such a setting, people confined for criminal activities typically encounter hosts of men and women who have been arrested on account of their Christian witness.

On numberless occasions, that witness has proved to be of an ultimate kind: it has led to martyrdom.

The current revival of Christianity in Eastern Europe is a poignant reminder of Tertullian's dictum that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.

I myself was made powerfully aware of the tribulations of Christians in the Soviet bloc when, on a visit to San Francisco a few years ago, I became acquainted with some members of the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara. This group of committed people, who have unceasingly worked (for the last 18 years) for the restoration of religious rights in their homeland, Albania, deeply moved me with the tragic facts of the ongoing persecution of the Church and believers there.

When the Communists seized power near the end of World War II, they sought immediately to eliminate religion, particularly Catholicism, from the national life by force and legislation.

This process passed through a number of phases, alternately moderate and bitter, but it reached a major level of violence in 1967 when Albania was officially proclaimed an atheist State.

Churches were vandalized and priests killed or imprisoned. All religious rights became illegal and grave penalties were imposed on violators.

The Fulfilled Promise by Gjon Sinishta, a former Jesuit seminarian and prisoner, provides a documentary record of this religious oppression.

Undoubtedly the most moving, and for a Catholic in the West, the most chastening, part of the book is given over to biographical accounts of the many "martyrs of Albania."

We read of the torture and death of a young Moslem lawyer, Musafer Pipa, who showed exemplary skill and courage defending Albanian Catholic priests during political trials in the 1940s; of the betrayal of a saintly priest who was shot in the back after being lured to a village on the pretext of ministering to a dying man; of the sacrifice of various national authors — and with it the extinction of much Christian literature in Albania.

Among the Communist nations of Eastern Europe, Albania has been particularly severe in its opposition to religion.

Most other countries, deep in economic difficulty and social unrest, no longer tend to persecute the Church openly, although the new stirrings of religious faith may provoke new measures of coercion.

Albania, however, has consistently headed the "league table" maintained by Michael Bourdeaux, which ranks Communist nations in terms of religious oppression. It is regarded as even harsher than the Soviet Union which holds second place.

Since the publication of *The Fulfilled Promise* in 1976, Sinishta and his associates have continued to assemble evidence on the conditions governing human rights in Albania. This is done through their Center which publishes an annual journal, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*.

The most recent issue (1983), for example, contains many important documents, including a report by Amnesty International and an analysis of methods by which school children are indoctrinated in Marxism. It also contains articles on the world's most famous Albanian Catholic, Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

For my part, the plight of fellow-Catholics in Albania, of which I became deeply aware during my visit with the Albanian Center, has given me additional meaning and urgency to a favorite prayer, composed by Sir Arnold Lunn shortly before he died in 1974 and sent to me by his widow:

As I await the gift of sleep, dear Lord, let me not take for granted the roof above and the pillow below my head. Arouse my sluggish compassion for the homeless and the destitute and for all Christians suffering for their faith.

Albania — The Walls Are Crumbling

by Reona Peterson Jolly

*But this is a people robbed and plundered;
They are all trapped in holes and hidden in prisons;
they have become a prey with none to rescue,
A spoil with none to say "Restore!"*

The prophet Isaiah penned these words many centuries ago referring to the nation of Israel — but after my eight-day visit to Albania in 1973, I found they described eloquently my feelings regarding this land and its people.

Isaiah goes on and asks a searching question —

*Who among you will give ear to this?
Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?"*

I am deeply grateful that God made me aware of the conditions prevailing in Albania in 1970, when I was studying in Europe. When the land opened its borders to summer tour groups in 1973, a friend and myself signed up for an eight-day tour.

We were aware of the boast of its leader, Enver Hoxha, that Albania had become "the world's first atheistic state." We had studied the tragic history of this second smallest country in Europe conquered in turn by Rome then Byzantium, invaded by the Barbarians, forced to pay tribute to the Turks, constantly harassed and impoverished until it became the most backward nation of Europe. In the Twentieth century as the Ottoman Empire crumbled and World War I ended, Albania's independence was recognized internationally. But in 1939 the Fascist Army of Italy invaded and conquered the land. In 1941 the Communist Party of Albania was formed. In September, 1943, Italy was defeated and the Nazis occupied the land. In November, 1944, Albania was freed by its own People's Army and in January, 1946, the People's Republic of Albania was proclaimed.

Until 1960 there was close collaboration with Russia — then a divorce took place and a close relationship with China was formed.

This was the background of the land that we had studied but we were more concerned with "His Story." We were committed Christians aware of the persecution that Christians in Albania had endured.

The story of our entry into the land, the subsequent arrest, interrogation and threat to put us to death, which was first altered to life imprisonment, then again altered by expelling us from the country, has been told in my book, *Tomorrow You Die*.

But eleven years have passed since that memorable summer — is the situation unchanged? Is there still no freedom to believe in God and therefore worship Him? Are there Christians alive in the land?

Radio Tirana admitted recently during a broadcast, "There are still men and women who confess the Christian faith. They meet together late in the evenings to pray."

More than any other Communist government in Eastern Europe, Albania's leadership has waged a savage and prolonged war against religion and because religious expression is illegal, it has been driven underground. Therefore in 1979, a law was introduced which allows the authorities to imprison, without trial, anyone involved in underground religious activity.

But the foundations for Christian belief were brought to the land by none other than the Apostle Paul. He stated in Romans 15:19, "I have fully proclaimed the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way round to Illyricum. . . ." part of present day Albania. And in spite of the intense persecution, there are good reasons for believing that Christians are alive in Albania today and that there is a real hunger to know about Jesus Christ.

Hoxha is an ailing 75 year old. His death cannot be very far off. It is an historical fact that after a harsh ruler has died, the suffering people have experienced relief and relaxation. The passing of Hoxha could well bring about the opening of the land to the Gospel.

All over the world committed Christians are faithfully praying for Albania — that the crumbling walls of atheism will come crashing down and the glorious light of Jesus Christ will shine into hungry Albanian hearts.

Those of you who read this publication: will you join the ranks of us who pray, and whose protest emerges from our constant prayer?

The famous statement remains true — More things are wrought through prayer than this world dreams of.



Religious Revival in Eastern Europe

by Rexhep Krasniqi

In spite of the existing vigorous repression, religion in Eastern Europe is currently undergoing a revival, particularly among the youth. Many people are turning toward God and renewing their faith in the Catholic Church and in other Christian churches. According to reliable sources the communist regimes, in these countries, are stunned by the spontaneous surfacing of religious fervor and activity among the youth, who, for more than four decades, have been reared and educated in a one-sided ideological-political system. One of the reasons for this upsurge of religious fervor among the younger generation is that atheistic teaching, in its crudest, most militant and combative forms, has remained an artificial and unattractive creation of these regimes. Poland, of course, is a special case in Eastern Europe. Thanks to the powerful backing of the Polish Catholic leadership, the Church there is the sole religious institution in Eastern Europe which is independent of the State.

The imposing rise of *Solidarity* — Poland's Free Workers' Union Movement of 1980 — and the subsequent social-political convulsion constituted an acute crisis for Communism in Eastern Europe. This turning point was perceived by the Kremlin as a mortal danger to its global domination in this part of the world. The collapse of Marxist rule in Poland, with the establishing of the *Solidarity* Movement, was primarily due to the strong religious faith of Poland's people. Encouraged and sustained by the first Polish Pope in history, John Paul II, the Christian problem became suddenly serious enough to warrant a concerted repression of religion in the Soviet Union, as well as throughout Eastern Europe.

Hardest hit by this concerted persecution which followed in 1983-84, were the Polish *Solidarity* civil rights groups, the Lithuanian Catholic faithful, the Latvian and Estonian Christian movements, and individual Christian writers and intellectuals in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The harsh repression in Lithuania prompted the Catholic bishops to send a protest to the communist rulers of that country, while Pope John Paul II praised the Lithuanian Catholics for their perseverance and, just recently, elevated the Archbishop of Latvia to the cardinalate. The most conspicuous examples of the clampdown in Lithuania are the stiff prison terms of two priests — Sigistas Tamkevicius and Alfonsas Svarinkas — who were accused of "anti-Soviet activities." It was the first time, in more than a decade, that Catholic clergymen had been brought to trial. More than 50,000 Lithuanians signed a petition protesting the long prison sentences of the priests and their additional internal exile.

Throughout Eastern Europe atheistic governments have found it increasingly difficult to muffle religious dissent in the Baltic states, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. In the latter there exists open underground activity, manifested by illegal publications, especially in Eastern Slovakia where the Catholic Church has long been identified with local nationalist feelings such as exist in Poland. According to witnesses, on Sundays and holy days the churches are usually filled with old and young alike. Indeed, clandestine church activity in Czechoslovakia has existed for years. In a 1978 proclamation Pope John Paul II praised the Church and the faithful of this country for their fidelity and again, in 1980, he encouraged Cardinal Tomasek, the Catholic Primate of Czechoslovakia, to bring about dialogue with the government while, at the same time, he ordered priests not to take part in political organizations. It is a known fact that in some countries of Eastern Europe there are government-sponsored groups of priests called "Pacem in Terris", who defy the Church's authority. The papal proclamation of 1980 helped Cardinal Tomasek reduce the number of these groups of priests.

Besides outright persecution, the governments in these countries use subtle methods of repression against citizens brave enough to practice their faith and to stand firm for their human rights. With twisted logic, the Marxist-Leninist authorities employ all forms of "legal" orders to commit religious leaders, the simple faithful, and many intellectuals to mental hospitals for "treatment". In other instances, the victims are sent to prisons and hard labor camps, following the usual mock trial. Even more frightening is the "law" concerning deprivation of parental rights. Soviet courts in the Baltic states can take children from their parents and send them to another Soviet republic for neglecting their duty to educate them in accordance with the Party's doctrine of atheism.

In Poland, the long-vexed struggle between Church and State have never been completely settled, nor is it, at present. However, Pope John Paul II's first trip to his homeland, in 1979, set in motion the national democratic tradition of the Polish nation, which produced the independent Workers' Union Movement, *Solidarity*. At the same time, the Catholic Church was strengthened immensely, not only in Poland, but in other Eastern European countries.

The religious revival in all these countries received another tremendous boost when the Pope made a second trip to Poland in 1983. In spite of the seeming setback of *Solidarity* by the imposition of martial law in December 1983, the imprisonment of its leaders and members, and the crisis of the crucifixes in state schools, Catholic Poland and its Free Workers Union Movement of *Solidarity* remains a strong magnet of inspiration and hope for nations and their workers throughout all of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union.

These changes concerning religion in Eastern Europe have had no effect on Albania whatsoever. The government there has, in fact, intensified the repression of religion. Systematic destruction of religious life in Albania, which began in the mid-forties, reached its final phase in November 1967. Then, the Stalinist regime declared Albania "the first atheistic state in the world." It broke all legal State-Church relations with the Catholic and Orthodox churches and the Muslim faith in its Decree No. 4337, published in the *Official Gazette* of November 22, 1967.

Since then some 3,000 churches, mosques and other religious buildings have been destroyed or put to other use as museums, recreation facilities, etc. This brutal act makes any form of public or private religious services impossible or extremely dangerous. Most clergy in the three religious denominations mentioned above were imprisoned and sent to Gulag-like labor camps where many perished. The execution, in 1972, of Father Stephen Kurti, a Catholic priest who secretly baptized a child, is noteworthy.

Such incredible actions passed almost unnoticed and aroused little attention and protest from responsible religious institutions in the West. Only the Vatican's *L'Osservatore Romano* reported the anti-religious violence in Albania. On the other hand, it was the Free Albania Committee — a regular

member of the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN) — that published the first documented study on "Religious Persecution in Albania" in its *Digest of Shqiptari i Lire*, June 1960. This article was republished in the March-April 1967 issue of the ACEN NEWS and, subsequently, was reprinted by ethnic and religious periodicals in the United States and England.

In addition, the Free Albania Committee, speaking on behalf of the silenced Albanian people, addressed repeatedly strong appeals to the United Nations Secretary General, to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, and to the major U.N. Missions of the Western and Islamic States. These appeals urged their immediate intervention to stop the cruel religious persecution in Albania. Regrettably, all these appeals were largely ignored.

The Communists in Eastern Europe, particularly in Albania, have been convinced that people who believe in God are unlikely to accept the Marxist ideology. For this and other reasons, religion has invariably been one of the prime targets of Communist onslaught. Nevertheless, religious faith has emerged strong and, indeed, triumphant. We believe, then, that the present religious revival in Eastern Europe indicates that in Albania, too, a positive change will soon ensue.

We offer the following poem written by the well-known Albanian poet and educator, Jakup Ceraja. Ceraja, an Albanian Moslem from the region of Kosova, was profoundly touched by the life of our sister and wrote this poem for the Albanian Catholic Monthly, *Drita*, published by the Diocese of Skopje-Prizren (Yugoslavia).

Mother Teresa
by Jakup Ceraja

*It is a new Albanian song
that is encompassed in one great word
and that song is called MOTHER written in capital letters,
it is an old Albanian word
that is encompassed in one great song
and that word is MOTHER written in letters of gold.
Mother Teresa, oh daughter of this land of martyrs,
can one measure the distance between me and you
from here to India
in kilometers and miles
when it is the love of your heart
that writes my new verse
and with the grace of your face
my verse becomes indeed poetry
for man and not in name only
who believes the truth
and he who believes in the truth
believes in the immutable Light
believes in the eternal future,
that is why these verses for you flowed with ease,
that is why this song for you is free of pain.
Great mother, bearing palms in your hands,
it is true that you have no police or military power,
nor banks nor chests filled with gold,
but what you have in the blood of your veins,
in your peaceful tongue and consoling eyes
no nation of the modern world has
though they have armies and police and technology
because the source of your power is God
and it is for those who lack even bread,
Mother Teresa, oh Rosebud of this ancient people,
sister of my departed mother,
whenever suffered from fanaticism
because she understood a long time ago the tragic divisions among men,
she had more love than milk in her breasts
and with milk and love she raised me
and I became a man before I became a poet.
— it is well,
You gave wings to her love today —
You who entered devoutly into every home!*

Nënë Tereza
Jakup Ceraja

*Eshte një këngë e re shqiptare
që peshohet në një fjalë të madhe
e kënga quhet NËNË me germa të mëdha,
është një fjalë e vjetër shqiptare
që peshohet vetëm me këngë të madhe
e fjala quhet NËNË me germa t'arta.
Nënë Terezë, o bijë e këtij tralli dëshmorësh,
a matet largësia mes meje e Teje
nga këtu e në Indi
me kilometra e mile
kur me dashurinë e zemrës sato
thairt vargu im i ri
e me hirësinë e asaj fytyrë
vargun vërtet e bëj poezi
për njeriun jo vetëm me emër
që beson në të vërtetën
e kush beson në të vërtetën
beson në Dritë të patjetërsuashme
beson në ardhmëri të amshuashme,
ndja dhe vargu për ty rrodhi vetë,
ndaj dhe kënga për ty s'mban ofshamë.
Ti, nëna jonë e madhe me dafinë në dorë,
vërtet s'ke pushtet me policë e ushtri,
s'ke as banka me dollarë as arka me ar,
por atë që ke Ti në të gjokut damarë,
në gjuhën paqetore e në sytë ngushëllues
nuk e ka asnjë pushtet i borës moderne
me ushtri e polici e teknologji
se forca jote ushqehet prej Hyut
dhe i shërben njeriut që edhe buka i mungon.
Nënë Terezë, o Gonxhe e këtij populli të lashtë,
Ti motër me nënën time të ndjerë,
e cila kurrë nuk vuajti nga fanatizmi
pse e kuptoi me kohë ndasinë tragjike të njerëzve,
lashtë dashuri më shumë se qumësht në gjinj
dhe me qumësht e dashuri më rriti mua
e u bëra njeri më parë se poet,
— sa mirë,
dashuri se sa sot i dhe krah Ti —
Ti që hyre e devotshme në çdo shtëpi!
(më 18 gusht 1984)*

Despite Persecution the Faith Lives in Albania

by Janice A. Broun

In 1967 Enver Hoxha proudly declared Albania "the world's first atheist state." Between 1949 and 1967 all of the 2,169 churches and mosques were closed, religion became illegal and relations with the outside world were severed. Recent information indicates that 68% of Albanians had been Muslim, 19% Orthodox and 13% Roman Catholic. Believers became isolated and largely forgotten.

In 1972, a seventy-four year old Father Shijefen Kurti was shot for baptizing the baby of a fellow prisoner. This action aroused protests from Pope Paul VI. The Catholic Church, numbering approximately 300,000 people, saw the martyrdom of over 120 of its priests and religious following the Communist takeover in 1944. Pope Paul saddened by this tragedy stated: "With the shepherds stricken and the flock dispersed, we cannot see what human hope remains. The Church seems relegated not only to the peace of silent suffering but to the peace of death." Enthusiastic claims from Albanian leaders, depressing negative reports from the few foreign tourists, at that time, and an almost complete lack of news from believers in Albania, all of these factors seemed to bear out Pope Paul's words.

There have been further martyrdoms, including that of Bishop Ernest Coka in 1979, and Father Ndoc Luli, S.J., in 1980. Father Luli's sister-in-law was sentenced to eight years for baptizing her twin sons. Father Mark Gjoni was given twelve years, in 1977, for storing religious literature. (It is known that in recent years Christian Missions among the Protestant churches have smuggled religious materials into Albania and elsewhere.) The aged Orthodox primate, Damien Konesski and Catholic Bishop Antonin Fishta both died in prison around 1973. Of the four Catholic bishops consecrated since 1952, only Bishop Nikoll Troshani is presumed to be alive. According to current reports from Albanian refugee sources, Bishop Troshani, along with twenty Catholic priests and religious are in labor camps and in view of their advanced age, are serving virtually life sentences. Also in the camps are Orthodox clergy and Muslim Mullahs. It is not known how many lay people have been arrested for such offenses as being discovered or reported by agents to be worshipping in secret, keeping icons, possessign crucifixes, trying to collect religious literature, or instructing others in religion. People can be sent to re-education (labor) camps for as long as six months for making the sign of the cross or participating in any religious service. Since June 1979, anyone over fourteen even suspected of "representing a danger to the State" can be sent to labor camps.

Despite early confident assertions that religion was becoming extinct in Albania, there is now, fifteen years later, considerable evidence that Hoxha's policy of stamping out religion has failed. Before examining the evidence, however, we must keep in mind the complexity of Albania's religious past. Beneath Christian and, subsequently, Muslim beliefs, some Albanians, particularly in remote areas, still cling to pagan superstitions and to the ancient law of Lek Dukagjini.

It is a known fact that most Albanians, since 1944, have never been permitted religious instruction and have been exposed from the age of three to intense atheistic propaganda. Fear is so pervasive that in some families parents do not communicate freely with their children, lest they be betrayed and exposed at school. There are refugees from Catholic families who have never seen a priest. Nevertheless, the grateful response, in the last few years, from Albanians who were fortunate enough to receive a smuggled book of the Scriptures has been encouraging, positive and reassuring. In requesting additional literature believers have written: "The Church of Jesus Christ is alive and growing in Albania" and "We pray not only for ourselves but for those who are suffering too, like us, everywhere. What we have suffered has purified our faith!"

This glowing testimony to the resilience of Christianity confirms the scanty information picked up from the Albanian press, or from observant tourists, or from the few Albanians who manage to escape. All this suggests considerable resistance to Hoxha's policy. The draconic nature of the sentences meted out to activists indicate the deep concern they cause the authorities. Since 1979 even tougher measures have been taken against those who disobey anti-religious laws. However, there presumably are still priests at large, secretly ordained, who under mortal peril risk administering the Sacraments.

It is reported that lay people are preparing for a time when they can worship freely again! Refugee Mark Ndocaj, a former seminarian, is one who has emphasized the key role of the family in preserving the faith. Before the closure of churches some far-sighted Catholic priests began instructing the faithful to pray together in their homes. Many people still possess prayer books and recite liturgical prayer. In the absence of a priest, parents and older relatives baptize infants, bless married couples and recite funeral prayers. In the Orthodox South prayers are recited on the third, ninth, and fortieth days after death. Although a decree, issued in 1975, forbade Albanians to give their children names with religious connotations, in 1980, the press complained that many children from religious backgrounds use a "secular" name at school but happily revert to a saint's name at home!

Certain practices show the hold that religion still exerts. Muslims fast during Ramadhan, Catholics during Lent and Orthodox abstain from all animal products at this time and on other fast days. In Orthodox areas, many people simply refuse to work at Easter or during the Easter season. Tourists have seen people furtively making the sign of the cross, or saying the rosary. One observed a group of women who appeared to be gossiping but who in fact were reciting the rosary, the prayer which has been undoubtedly the simplest and most effective way of maintaining the Catholic faith.

Where do people worship? Some make secret chapels in their homes — the old traditional Albanian home is quite spacious. They also use gardens, caves, forests, mountains, and abandoned churches. One abandoned Orthodox church was actually seen ablaze with candles! Of particular concern to the authorities have been disguised pilgrimages made to derelict churches, especially to certain shrines where miraculous healings are said to have taken place.

To add to these facts is some more amazing evidence. Generally, Albania's four main religious groups have had amicable relations with one another, but even though this is the case, inter-marriage among the four groups had been minimal and, since 1944, has declined still more. In 1980, a government study reported that over a ten year period 96% of the young people had chosen partners from their own religious background. It is unlikely that in any other European country today religion still has such a strong influence on marriage as in the "first atheist state in the world!" Obviously, draconic

measures and continued atheist propaganda have had the opposite effect on what was intended. These measures along with the propaganda have driven the different communities to segregate and insulate themselves from outside influence in order to maintain their purity. The defeat of Hoxha's policy could hardly be more complete!

How much support have believers had from the outside world? Never once has this unprecedented act of spiritual genocide been referred to or condemned by the World Council of Churches. As far as the W.C.C. is concerned, Albania might just as well not exist. Russian Orthodox priest, Father Gleb Yakunin presently serving a ten year sentence in his native Russia, specifically mentioned Albania in an historic document he sent to the Nairobi meeting of the W.C.C. in 1975. In this document he pleaded that the delegates turn their attention to persecuted Christians in Albania. On a 1980 visit to the Italian town of Otranto, which is directly across from the straits of Albania, Pope John Paul II asked for prayers for all persecuted believers, whether Christian or Muslim, and declared November 1983 as a special month of prayer for Albania. There is no doubt that Catholics around the world should be doing far more that they are for their suffering brethren in Albania.

It is encouraging to note the growing and deep concern for fellow Albanian Catholics in Kosova, Yugoslavia. The Church there is rapidly expanding. There is a boom in vocations, especially among women entering religious orders. The clergy make full use of modern communication methods and, in 1980, produced an excellent Albanian version of the New Testament. A new translation of the whole Bible is due to be published soon. "We must print more Bibles than we need," said one priest. "Muslims are also reading the Bible and Albania won't always be militantly atheistic."

It is this writer's observation that no religious group in Europe is more neglected than the Albanian Orthodox Church. Some in the West have asserted that the recent interest of the Greek bishops in the plight of the Orthodox faithful in Albania has been openly chauvinistic. But the Albanian Orthodox do not want to be identified with the Greeks. Their church proclaimed independence from Constantinople in 1922 eventually winning autocephaly from there in 1937.

However, it is the Evangelical Protestant Missions who have maintained a live interest in Albania where, incidentally, there were never more than a few hundred Protestants. Some Evangelicals like Reona Peterson, author of the book *Tomorrow You Die* have even risked their lives to get Bibles into Albania. Popular broadcasts from Monte Carlo, which include attractive music and Bible passages read at dictation speed, have provided a life-line for Albanian believers. Protestants have also pioneered regular Ecumenical prayer groups for Albania. In the last resort, prayer is the only sure means of crossing man-made barriers. This is an area in which *all* Christian readers can be united!

THE FULFILLED PROMISE



**A Documentary Account
of Religious Persecution in Albania**

Copies of *The Fulfilled Promise* — a documentary account of religious persecution in Albania (new printing with additional photographs), are still available from our Center. A donation to defray printing and mailing costs is requested. (\$10 in the USA and Canada, \$15 in all other countries).

Please send requests along with donations payable to:

Albanian Catholic Information Center
Post Office Box 1217
Santa Clara, CA 95053 USA

Albania: Impressions of a Traveller

by Stephan Lipsius

Opportunities to visit Albania have improved in recent years for West Europeans. It has become increasingly easy to visit that country, especially West Germans. Until 1983, travelers to Albania had to conform to unusual directives for clothing and hairstyles. Full beards and long hair were not approved for men, while fashionable clothing was unacceptable for women. Our group was one of the first for whom these requirements were no longer enforced.

Travel agencies must cope with the difficulty of entering Albania because of lack of roads and other forms of physical contact with the outside world. Tourists from the Federal Republic of Germany fly mostly to Belgrade and then to Titograd (the capital of Montenegro in Yugoslavia, formerly known as Podgorica); this was our original itinerary. From Titograd we were supposed to travel by bus past Lake Shkoder to the border-crossing point at Han-i-Hotit. After negotiating with the Yugoslav airline JAT, however, we decided to take the weekly JAT flight from Belgrade direct to Tiranë (Rinas Airport). There are weekly flights from Rome, Athens, Budapest, and Bucharest to Tiranë; a flight from East Berlin arrives every two weeks. Six airlines maintain connections with Tiranë. Albania has as yet no airline of its own. For a long time flights of foreign airlines to Tiranë/Rinas had few passengers; during the last few years increasing tourism and growing commercial contacts have begun to fill the airplanes.

We saw evidence of strained relations between Yugoslavia and Albania as we awaited the flight from Belgrade to Tiranë. Our little Douglas DC-9 took off and flew to the Adriatic coast, which it followed south. We could see the rectangular cultivated fields along the fertile coast of Albania until the airplane passed the range of hills west of Tiranë. As the aircraft prepared to land we noticed defense fortifications in the hills. This range of hills has been Albania's first line of defense ever since the Italian army invaded Albania from the west in 1939. Just before landing we got a good view of the small landing field, which, with the exception of some Albanian aircraft lined up along the runway, was an airport without airplanes.

Our passports were collected as we left the airplane and we proceeded along a palm-lined path to the airport building. Before entering, tourists were separated from commercial travelers. We were led to the waiting room, which is also a cafeteria. After one of our Albanian guides offered to lend us some leks (Albanian currency), we all ordered coffee while our customs declarations were being completed.

A modern Fiat tourist bus with air conditioning awaited us in front of the airport building. In addition to our German tour guide we received two Albanian guides. The young woman (A) was a 21-year-old student who spoke excellent German; the other (E) was a man of about 35 who knew only English. Since we were almost the same age, A and I got along very well right from the start. In the course of the trip we discussed many topics. She welcomed my help with her German.

Before the trip I had studied Albania intensively for several years. My expectations and conceptions were somewhat different from what we were to see and experience. It's the fate of this little country to be either forgotten, occupied, or misunderstood. Although the present regime is undoubtedly controversial, it has achieved much in many fields since 1944. As we saw with our own eyes, the living standard is quite low, but material goods are distributed in a remarkably egalitarian fashion. At the very start of our tour, on the way from the airport to the city, we were impressed by the large amount of construction we observed. We saw a lot of people in the fields: this is a picture one no longer sees in Germany because of the high degree of mechanization of agriculture. Every plot of land is cultivated. The government claims that farm production has been increased with the collectivization of all private property. Since 1976 Albania no longer needs to import grain.

As we entered Tiranë we observed many pedestrians but few cars. The bus brought us to the Dajti Hotel, one of the two reserved for foreigners in the capital (the other is Hotel Tiranë on Skanderbeg Square). That evening I strolled through the lively streets of the city. Evidently Albanians like to meet in the evening at Skanderbeg Square, where they sit and stand around; almost all who gathered there were men. The next day we went by foot from the hotel to a nearby hall to see the exhibition "Albania Today," which was supposed to demonstrate progress in all areas of life. Achievements and products in light industry, heavy industry, agriculture, and publishing were on display. There was no guided tour; visitors could look at what interested them.

As we moved about the city I got into conversations with (A) about her background, occupation, and other matters. She responded readily. At home in Germany I had prepared queries about religion, human rights, permission to leave the country, and other subjects of concern. Partially because of fear, the guide would not respond readily to these questions, but also because in Albania many people like her have an opinion about the word "human rights" different from the one we have in Europe and in the West. It was, though, a source of wonder for me that socialist Albania is going its own way without economic problems that I could recognize. The economic problems of all East European countries are considerable, but apparently not so with regard to Albania.

During our two-week stay in the country we saw some lines in front of stores, but people with whom we conversed (rarely, because of language difficulties) seemed content as far as we could judge. Although they might feel oppressed by one or the other specific measure of the government, the people seem resigned to their fate. There is a certain reluctance to come in contact with foreigners, especially in regions seldom visited by them. In Tiranë and Durrës foreigners are no longer a sensation. We saw only a few policemen except in the vicinity of government buildings, embassies, and consulates. This district is located near the University and the Qemal Stafa Stadium. In some places soldiers prevent access to streets; other streets can be entered only after inspection by sentries and police. In this area there are few people on the streets.

On one of our private tours we went to the railroad station at the other end of Stalin Boulevard. Unlike in Durrës, where an impressive train station has been erected, the station in Tiranë consists of a roof over the tracks and a stone edifice where tickets are sold. In front of this "station" is a sign containing handwritten schedules of all the passenger trains in Albania. The Albanian News Agency (ATA) is located on Stalin Boulevard on the way back from the railroad station. The former Catholic cathedral is situated to the right beyond Skanderbeg Square. Former churches and mosques were another goal of our

National Eucharistic Congress Prays for Albanian Believers

During the Croatian National Eucharistic Congress, September 8-9, 1984, held in Maria Bistrica (Croatian National Shrine of our Lady) in the presence of over 400,000 pilgrims, a prayer for religious freedom was offered in the Albanian language by His Excellency, Pieter Perkoliq, Archbishop of the ancient see of Tivar (present day Bar). This archdiocese was part of Albania; even today most of its faithful are of Albanian descent.

Archbishop Perkoliq greeted the pilgrims and clergy in Albanian. The following is a translation of his greetings:

I wish to greet this magnificent gathering of the Church in Croatia with the language of an ancient people whose Christian roots date back to the apostolic times. I greet all of you assembled here at this National Eucharistic Congress on behalf of the Albanian Catholic faithful from my Archdiocese and from the diocese of Skopje-Prizren. I greet you on my own behalf and on that of Bishop Niko Prela, the only Albanian Bishop of the Latin Rite, outside of Albania.

We congratulate the Croatian Catholics, both at home and throughout the world, on their 13 century old fidelity to God and to the Church. We pray and wish that through this solemn assembly, which allows us Albanians to fully participate, we may be brought closer together in strength and fidelity and that we may be a witness to the Gospel of Christ in the world. We also pray that our Albanian people may regain their religious freedom and that their tribulations will soon end.

The Cardinal of Vienna, Franz Koenig, was the Holy Father's personal envoy who delivered a message from Pope John Paul II to the pilgrims. Mother Teresa, unable to attend personally, sent her touching message to the Congress entitled, "Be Mothers."

The Holy Eucharist was celebrated by 1100 priests, 35 bishops, and 8 cardinals from various regions of Yugoslavia and other European countries.

International Association Appeals for Religious Liberty in Albania

Under the auspices of the United Nations, a seminar was held December 3-14, 1984, in Geneva, on the "Encouragement of Understanding, Tolerance, and Respect for the Freedom of Religion and Belief."

Dr. Gianfranco Rossi, Secretary-General of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty took active part and addressed the seminar four times. In one of his interventions Dr. Rossi spoke exclusively on the unique existing situation in Albania, where, by the Constitution, the right to practice religion is denied. He, along with other members of this Association, distributed to the participants and observers of the seminar a documented report entitled: "Albania Needs International Help for the Elimination of Total Religious Intolerance."

The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty, which is based in Berne, Switzerland, has recently approached the UN Commission on Human Rights pleading for a real interest in the obvious and systematic infringement of religious liberty in Albania.

Czech Poet Wins Nobel Prize

Jaroslav Seifert, 83, courageous poet and opponent of the 1968 Soviet invasion of his country, Czechoslovakia, became the first Czech to win the Nobel Prize for literature. His only book in English *The Casting of Bells*, has been published by *The Spirit That Moves Us Press* (Iowa City, Iowa).

Below we are printing one of his poems which was secretly circulated in Czechoslovakia in 1979. Translation was done by Ewald Osers and it was originally published in the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Whenever I gaze out on Prague
— and I do so constantly and always
with hated breath
because I love her —
I turn my mind to God
wherever he may be,
beyond the starry mists or just be-
hind that moth-eaten screen,
to thank him
for granting that magnificent setting
for me to live in.
To me and to my joys and carefree
loves,
to me and to my tears without

weeping
when the loves departed—
and to my more-than-bitter grief
when even my verses could not
weep.
I love her fire-charred walls
to which we clung during the war
so as to hold out.
I would not change them for any-
thing in the world.
Not even for others.
Not even if the Eiffel tower rose
between them
and the Seine flowed sadly past,
not even for all the gardens of
paradise
full of flowers.
When I shall die — and this will be
quite soon —
I shall still carry on my heart this
city's destiny.
And mercilessly, just as Marsyas,
let anyone be flayed alive
who lays hands on this city,
no matter who he is.
No matter how sweetly he plays
on his flute.

Greek-Inspired Hearing on Human Rights in Albania Held in Washington, D.C.

On January 25, 1984 a hearing on violations of human rights in Albania was held in Washington, D.C. by the Sub-Committee on Human Rights of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Sub-Committee, a unit of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, was chaired by Congressman Gus Yatron, Democratic Representative from the state of Pennsylvania. The hearing was organized by Greek and pro-Greek forces with a long-standing interest in Albania, or to speak more properly, Southern Albania, which they prefer to call "Northern Epirus".

Testifying at the hearing were: The Honorable Chris Spirou of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, and Chairman of Americans for Justice in Northern Epirus; Elias Betzios, President of the Pan-Epirotic Federation of America and Canada; His Grace Sevastianos Economides, who identified himself as Bishop of Northern Greece and Southern Albania; Dr. Nikolaos A. Stavrou, Professor of Political Science at Howard University; Elias Fani, Thomas Karathanos, and Elias Lekas, all members of the Greek minority in Albania who had fled the country.

A *pro forma* effort was made by those connected with the hearing to expand the roster of witnesses, and thus forestall violation of normal democratic practice. Accordingly, a week before the start of the hearing, the sub-committee sent an invitation to Nicholas Pano, Professor of History and Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the Western Illinois University, to present testimony at the hearing. In the meantime, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in New York sent a telegram to the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara, California, informing it of the scheduled hearing. Presumably other Albanian individuals and groups or institutions in America were sent similar notices shortly before the hearing began.

The Albanian Catholic Center replied to the Greek Church by sending along a package of materials that could be "helpful to the Committee in documenting the violation of human and religious rights of Albanian citizens". At the same time, the Center advised the Greek Church to "stop calling 400,000 Albanian Orthodox faithful Greeks". Prof. Pano was unable to testify at the hearing, owing, as he said, to the "lateness of the invitation" which left him no time to rearrange his schedule and go to Washington. Later, however, he issued an extensive statement expressing his views on the hearing and its findings.

The two main points made by the Congressional Hearing on Human Rights in Albania were: One, that there are 400,000 Orthodox Greeks in Albania. Two, that the Greek minority in Albania is a special target of persecution by the present government of Albania.

Department of State on Human Rights in Albania

The Greek-inspired hearing in Washington was held only a few weeks before the U.S. Department of State issued its annual *Country Reports on Human Rights*. It was apparent that the Department's *Country Reports for 1983* on the human rights situation in Albania had been directly influenced by the Congressional Hearing of January 25, 1984. The State Department document said: "Among the ethnic minority groups in Albania, the largest is Greek (estimates vary from less than 100,000 to over 400,000)" (p. 919). Further on there were references to the "persecution, harassment, and discrimination against minorities" in Albania, with the emphasis again placed on the Greek minority. The document told also of reports of displacement of the Greek population in Albania. It was clear that the organizers of the hearing had achieved a major goal, which was to draw the attention of American officials in Washington to their cherished cause — "Northern Epirus".

But the Greek claim that there are 400,000 Greeks in Albania, and the Department of State's virtual endorsement of that claim, did not go unchallenged. The claim aroused immediate criticism on the part of the Albanian community in America. Individuals and groups protested to Secretary of State George Shultz, and other governmental officials or agencies in Washington. Three such protests or dissenting views came from the Albanian Catholic Information Center, Prof. Sami Repishti in New York, and Prof. Nicholas Pano in Macomb, Illinois.

In a letter to the Honorable George Shultz, the Catholic Center said:

We are outraged by the recent U.S. State Department *Country Reports on Human Rights for 1983* in which the figure of the ethnic Greek minority in Albania was grossly distorted. The stated figure shown in the 1983 Report is simply untrue and the pure fantasy of its authors. The actual number of the Greek minority in Albania has never been more than 35,000 to 45,000 according to all reliable sources and scholarly research since 1913. The U.S. *Area Book on Albania* itself records the number of this minority at about 40,000.

"The inconsistency of the Report pertaining to the Greek minority in Albania is very disturbing. . . . It seems to us that the authors (of the Report) are not so much concerned with accuracy or truth, but rather are biased and being manipulated by the powerful Greek lobby in the United States."

The letter of the Albanian Catholic Center went on to "request that the State Department reexamine its complete section on Albania in the Report and take the necessary steps to correct the misinformation". The letter was signed, among others, by Father Leo G. Neal, OFM Conv., Center's Director, Gjon Sinishtia and Barbara Kay of the University of San Francisco; Prof. Zef Nekaj of the Foreign Language Institute at Monterey, California, and Dr. Palok Plaku.

Additional Challenges to Greek Claim

Prof. S. Repishti made known his assessment of the State Department's *Country Reports* in a lengthy commentary entitled, "Blueprint for a Non-U.S. Policy Towards Albania". He granted that it is not easy, under present circumstances, for the U.S. Government to gather reliable information on the

human rights situation in Albania. Even so, had the authors of *Country Reports* concentrated their attention on "the alleged violations of human rights in Albania," such as arbitrary arrest, denial of a fair public trial, cruel or degrading treatment, violations of privacy, denial of freedom of speech and press and worship, restrictions of travel within and without the country, and so forth, then the State Department document would have made a contribution to the cause of human rights in Albania and the rest of the world. Unfortunately, the document took a different path, "trespassing sensitive areas" and "politicizing issues" that, in the case of the Balkans, have the potential to burst quickly into violence because of the centuries-old suspicions and antagonisms.

Prof. Repishti contested, of course, the exaggerated figure on the Greek minority in Albania, as given in the *Country Reports*, and warned of the potentially harmful effects the document could have on Greek-Albanian relations. He said that such misleading information serves to incite the passions and ambitions of the most vociferous "right-wing . . . and nationalist groups in Greece which contend that Southern Albania belongs to Greece". Indeed, the *New York Times* of February 25, 1984, only a month after the Congressional Hearing on Albania, carried a report from Athens which told of renewed activity by the most aggressive anti-Albanian coalition in Greece, known as the Committee for the Northern Epirus Struggle.

Repishti did not deny the right of those who speak in defense of the Greek minority in Albania. What he objected to, he said, is the persistent Greek practice of singling out the Greek minority in their campaign on violations of human rights in Albania, and implying that it is discriminated against and oppressed, as compared with the rest of the Albanian population. This is not true, he said. In support of his contention he pointed out that members of the Greek minority have advanced in all fields of Albanian society. "It is an undeniable fact," he said, "that one meets professors, engineers, doctors, lawyers and other educated people of Greek extraction in Albania. Even in the political field, one finds officers . . . generals of the army, congressmen, members of the central committee of the Albanian Party of Labor . . . who are of Greek extraction, and who openly say so."

As to the charge of displacement of the Greek population in Albania, Prof. Repishti said that such a charge could only be made by people who are ignorant of the modernization efforts of the Albanian government. "Whoever knows the 'revolutionary' character of the present Albanian regime cannot take this (accusation) seriously," he said. "Movements from South to North and vice-versa, and from village to town and vice-versa, are part of an incessant transfer of labor reserves in the industrialization process of the country."

He then turned around and addressed some hard questions to the Greeks in connection with their treatment of the Albanian minority in Greece, particularly in the region adjacent to Albania known as Chameria. Visit any one of the "more than three hundred villages" inhabited by Albanians in Greece, and you will not find "a single school, textbook, or teacher of Albanian," Repishti said. He implied that the opposite is true of the Greek minority in Albania.

Much effort and money was needed to organize the January 25, 1984 Congressional Hearing on human rights in Albania. Who was behind it? Prof. Repishti pointed the finger at the Pan-Epirotic Federation of America and Canada, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. "It is this irreverent organization," he said, "that planned, together with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in New York, and paid for the January 25, 1984 hearings. . . ."

There is another interesting and, indeed, ominous aspect to the Human Rights hearing on Albania. Yugoslavia has seen fit to comment on and give support to the wild Greek claims regarding the Greek minority in Albania. Considering their present state of frenzy over Kosovo, it is not an accident, Repishti said, that the Yugoslavs are making common cause with Greek rightist elements. He noted in this respect the recent visit to Belgrade of the Greek Archbishop Serafim, and an article published in Yugoslavia (January 10, 1984) on the "Position of the Minorities in Albania," which said that there are 400,000 Greeks in Albania. Prof. Repishti affirmed that the Greek minority numbers about 50,000, in other words about eight times fewer than the figure given by the Greeks.

Repishti ended his illuminating commentary with the following words, addressed to officials of the U.S. Department of State: "We sincerely hope that the writers of the next issue of the *Country Reports* will restrain from the unnecessary and harmful politicization of their work. Sensationalism and unilateral pro-Greek positions will, in the long run, hurt the cause of human rights the *Country Reports* purportedly intends to defend."

Criticism Leveled at House Hearing

As mentioned earlier, Prof. Nicholas Pano issued a lengthy statement on the January 25, 1984 hearing on Human Rights in Albania. He analyzed the testimony presented at the hearing, and found it wanting in several respects. Indeed, he began by questioning the procedure adopted by the House Sub-Committee for the hearing. He said:

"If the subcommittee was genuinely concerned with determining the state of human rights in Albania, it should have invited a broad spectrum of individuals who have either professional expertise or knowledge regarding conditions in Albania, including political refugees from the country who were not of the Greek minority. It would seem from an examination of the testimony, that a major purpose of the hearing was to raise dead issues such as the Northern Epirus question, to present misinformation about the size of the Greek minority in Albania, and, perhaps, to produce strains in Greek-Albanian relations."

Pano also suspected a possible connection between the hearing and the question of Kosovo. He said that by "raising at this time the issue of the Albanian regime's treatment of its Greek minority, those who initiated this hearing may also be seeking to discredit the position of the Albanian government and of Albanian organizations in both Europe and the United States concerning the status of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo." As a matter of fact, Bishop Sevastianos did make reference in his testimony to the position of the Hoxha regime on the Kosovo issue.

Prof. Pano then went on to deal with "a number of factual errors in the testimony" given at the hearing. First, he refuted the claim of witnesses that the Greek population in Albania is approximately 400,000. "This is a gross error," Prof. Pano said. He pointed out that in 1981, the U.S. Department of State itself estimated that the number of ethnic Greeks in Albania was "about 50,000". To expand on this point somewhat, we will mention here the letter of Alyn Paul Drischler, then Acting Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, to U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato. Dated April 20, 1981, the letter said, *inter alia*:

"In writing the (1980 Country Human Rights) report on Albania, we attempted to present the most accurate information which was available to us. . . . After hearing from a number of Albanian-Americans . . . we reviewed the figure (of 300,000) we had used for the Greek

community in Albania and found that it overstated the size of that ethnic group. A more accurate but still imprecise estimate of the number of ethnic Greeks in Albania would be about 50,000."

On another point, Pano disputed Bishop Sevastianos' testimony that Southern Albania is Greek territory and ought, by implication, to be annexed to Greece. He said that "... insofar as the overwhelming majority of impartial scholars of Balkan affairs are concerned, the Northern Epirus question is a dead issue. . . . The raising of this issue at this hearing serves no constructive purpose."

This view received the strongest possible corroboration in late February, 1984 from the head of the Greek government itself, Premier Andreas Papandreou. Speaking at a luncheon in the town of Ioannina (Janina), near the Albanian border, the Greek Prime Minister said on February 22 that Greece had no territorial claims on Albania. The "borders in the Balkan Peninsula are a given fact and this is confirmed by the Final Act of Helsinki," Papandreou said. At a press conference in Ioannina the following day, he repeated that "This matter (of Northern Epirus) ended a long time ago and the boundaries of our country are an accomplished fact". At the same time he said that Greek nationals in Albania were "enduring hardships" and that Greece "will not tolerate violation of human rights of the Greeks residing in Albania". Observers attributed the above statement to pressure on Papandreou by Greek militants on the question of Northern Epirus.

Prof. Pano also criticized witnesses at the House Sub-Committee hearing for creating the impression that all Orthodox Albanian Christians are "members of the Autocephalous Church of Greece", in other words, that they are Greeks. The witnesses, we might add on our part, used the hearing as a forum to perpetuate a noxious Greek habit, which is to confuse religion with nationality, and in spite of all evidence to the contrary, to perceive Orthodox Albanians as Greeks. It's a pure example of flouting reality, and with such persistence, we regret to say, as to suggest a pathological disorder.

Pano then made a rebuttal to allegations at the hearing of Albanian genocide against Greek ethnics. He said: "All the witnesses either stated or strongly implied that the Albanian government was engaged in a program of genocide against the Greek minority in the country. Yet no persuasive evidence was presented to support this charge."

Prof. Pano concluded his critique of the hearing with brief comments on the status of the Greek language in Albania. He said:

"Similarly, an attempt was made to convince the subcommittee that the Albanian regime was engaged in a concerted effort to eradicate the use of the Greek language in Albania. Yet the witnesses failed to mention that a Greek-language newspaper is published in the country and that one can hear this language freely spoken in predominantly Greek villages and in large cities such as Gjirokaster. It is also interesting to note that the witnesses sought to minimize the importance of the Greek language instruction that is provided in the schools in the Greek villages, and of the fact that Greek language teachers for these schools are being trained at the Gjirokaster Pedagogical Institute."

Albania's Reaction to Greek Allegations

Albania also took notice of the Greek campaign to arouse American and world public opinion on the question of human rights within its borders. It reacted with a two-pronged defense-offensive strategy which included, on the one hand, a vigorous denunciation of the Greek charges and, on the other, a passionate defense of its policy on the Greek population inhabiting Albanian territory.

Albania's initial reaction appeared in a long editorial entitled, "The Fabrications and Attacks of Enemies Will Not Frighten the Albanian People Nor Cause Them to Waver," in the Party organ, *Zëri i Popullit*, dated March 1, 1984.

The editorial in the Party paper said that Greek reaction was trying to bring to life a problem that no longer exists, namely that of the "so-called Northern Epirus". Greek reactionaries, it said, are trying to foster an anti-Albanian atmosphere, going as far as to hold provocative demonstrations before the Albanian embassy in Athens. Continuing, the editorial said:

"The anti-Albanian demonstrations against our embassy in Athens began precisely after the return from the United States of America of the ill-famed priest, Sevastianos, and two Albanian escapees. These people had meetings and discussions with various American officials who specialize on Balkan affairs, and had obtained aid and support for their base anti-Albanian activities."

The editorial then made an impassioned defense of Albanian policy regarding Greek ethnics. "The Greek minority in Albania," it said, "has no need of protection either from Athens or from Washington," since minorities in Albania enjoy exactly the same rights as the rest of the population. In support of its argument, the editorial cited the remarks of Greek Minister Akrithidis in the Greek parliament on March 1, 1982, following his trip to Albania, including the regions inhabited by Greeks. "Today Albania provides constitutional guarantees for the protection of the rights of minorities. . . . The Greek minority publishes its own newspapers in the Greek language, there are four and eight-grade Greek schools, and also teacher-training schools for elementary education." That is why, the editorial said, the remarks of Premier Papandreou in Ioannina that the situation of the Greeks in Albania is difficult is "as amazing as it is unfounded".

View of the Issue by an Italian Ambassador

In February of 1982, Renzo Falaschi, Italian Ambassador and husband of the well-known (Albanian) author, Nermin Viora Falaschi, made some pertinent observations on Greek charges and claims with regard to the Greek minority in Albania. His comments were prompted by the Resolution of the Greek Church on October 7, 1981 which said that 400,000 Greeks in Albania were deprived of their ethnic and religious rights.

Falaschi noted that as "a matter of historical fact" churches have often "acted as instruments to promote the political interests of the state," and that this has been "particularly true of the Orthodox Churches". Referring to the Greek Orthodox Church, he said that it has a long nationalistic tradition, as well as a "record of intolerance". Witness, for example, "the massacre of Catholics in (the island of) Chios in 1933, and of Albanian Moslems during the Balkan Wars" of 1912-13.

According to Ambassador Falaschi's analysis, Greece "has always tried to extend her frontiers along the Adriatic shores" of Albania, often under the guise of seeking to "protect the Orthodox faithful" in Albania, whom Athens describes as Greek-speaking. Greek rule over Southern Albania, Falaschi continued in his analysis entitled, "Greek Claims in Albania" (first published in Italian in *Koha e Jone*, Paris, Jan.-March, 1982), would "offer Greece

access to the Adriatic, thus extending over this sea the same predominant position she presently maintains over the Ionian Sea". However, two obstacles have stood in the way of this Greek dream: The first and most important has been heroic resistance by the Albanians. The second has been Italy's opposition to expansionist aims by Greece, since such aims are perceived as a threat to Italian security interests. It is in Italy's interest, the Ambassador said, to see a strong and independent Albania across the Adriatic.

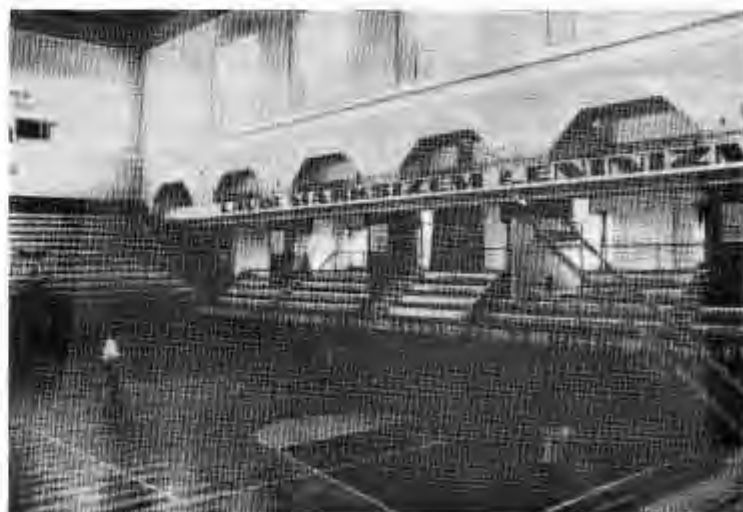
Returning to the Resolution of the Church of Greece, Ambassador Falaschi said that, although clothed in religious phraseology, it was "harmful, for in mixing demands for freedom of worship with territorial claims, it gives the Government in Tirane an excuse for its own hostile policies toward religion".

Summing up the Greek-inspired House Hearing on Human Rights in Albania, the consensus of Albanian observers is uniformly negative. Not, however, because of disagreement with the stated purpose of the hearing (Albania's viewpoint excepted), which was to address the problems in the area of human rights violations in Albania, but because of the unfortunate distortion of that purpose. The hearing was arbitrarily selective in concentrating on the Greek minority. Yet, even on this count, the hearing left itself open to criticism: first, because of the patently false figure on the size of the Greek minority, and second, because the hearing was, at bottom, motivated not by human and religious rights but by politics, or more exactly, by Greek nationalist designs against Albania's territorial integrity. Whatever merits the hearing had were largely nullified by these errors and weaknesses.



Kisha Kathedrale permrëndë Shkodra

Interior of Shkodër Cathedral in 1933.



Interior of Shkodër Cathedral today as a sports arena.

Struggle for Ethnic Rights In Kosova Continues

by Peter R. Prifti

Events in Kosova over the past year kept up the momentum of the last three years. There was no progress toward granting of ethnic and human rights to the Albanians in Yugoslavia. On the contrary, developments pointed toward a worsening of the situation. One did not have to turn to Yugoslav dissidents or political exiles to learn this. The best evidence for it was the media within Yugoslavia itself, especially the Albanian-language Communist Party daily, *Rilindja* (Rebirth), in Prishtina, capital city of the largely Albanian-populated (about 80%) province of Kosova.

Belgrade's policy of no negotiations with the Kosovars and no concessions to them, was reaffirmed at the session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), held in December of 1983. The session dealt expressly with Kosova. Once again the Party meeting claimed that the Spring 1981 demonstrations in Kosova were "counter-revolutionary," that they were orchestrated by Albanian nationalists and irredentists, and that their aim was the destruction of the "integrity and self-management system of Yugoslavia." In other words, the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation. The meeting noted that beside Albanian nationalism, "all other nationalisms have been gaining strength" in Kosova and throughout Yugoslavia — an admission that the national question in the country has gotten worse instead of better. While concentrating its attack on Albanian nationalism, the Party meeting also voiced a warning to Serb nationalists to stop their campaign to spread anti-Albanian feeling in the Federation. Could it be that Yugoslav leaders were not aware that their hard line policies on Kosova fed and inflamed the anti-Albanian feelings of Serb nationalists?

The LCY meeting dismissed the main demand of the Kosovars for a Republic of Kosova as a dangerous slogan of Albanian irredentists, whose ultimate aim is the "annexation" of Kosova to Albania. Judging from pronouncements by Yugoslav leaders, this fear lies at the heart of their opposition to Kosovar demands for national equality, justice, respect, and equal opportunity. Rather than reconsider its position on Kosova, the leadership called for tougher measures to deal with "the enemy." One such measure was the subsequent appointment of a new Party Secretary for Kosova. He is Svetislav Dolasevic, a former officer of UDBA (the notorious Yugoslav secret police agency). Previously he served as Attorney General for the province of Kosova. It's reported, meanwhile, that Mahmud Bakalli, the Party Secretary in Kosova during the 1981 upheavals, has been sentenced to twelve years in prison.

The *Rilindja* paper echoed the conclusions of the December 1983 LCY session throughout 1984. Numerous reports said that nationalism had become a very dangerous ideology. One article (May 20, 1984) called it "an opium" that was afflicting all of Yugoslavia. It was a problem that was preoccupying the whole country to "an extraordinary degree." Curiously, however, the media, like the Yugoslav leadership, failed to see a connection between the repression of Albanians in Kosova — and other ethnic groups as well, like the Croats — and the rampant and potentially lethal spread of nationalism in the country.

In the meantime, the arrest, trial and imprisonment of Albanian ethnics continued without letup. There were trials in Prishtinë, Pejë, Gjiçan, Prizren, Manastir (Bitola), and numerous smaller towns. The toll of Kosovar political prisoners kept mounting with every passing month. The accused were given harsh sentences, even for offenses that in the civilized world are considered minor, or not deserving of punishment at all. A Kosovar from the Ferizaj district was sentenced to three years in prison for calling aloud "Kosova — Republic," and for taping programs broadcast by Radio Tirana. Two students from the district of Pejë, one of them in his teens, were sentenced to six months in prison because, upon returning from a trip to Albania, they had brought with them "a few photographs of Enver Hoxha." Similar sentences were handed out to a farmer and an agronomist from the Rahovec district for possessing tapes that praised Hoxha and the Albanian Party of Labor.

If these cases seem extreme, consider the following: a family man in the Deçan district — the father of six children and the "only breadwinner in the family" — was sent to prison for eight months because he had attended certain meetings of "a hostile character," and carried a matchbook with the inscription "Kosova Republic" (*Rilindja*, Feb. 29, 1984). In Prishtinë, a minor was sentenced to three and a half years and another minor to two years, for belonging to an "illegal organization" called the New Kosova. An item in the *Rilindja* of January 6, 1984 said that the secret police in Gjiçan hurriedly confiscated all copies of a 1984 calendar, because the dates April 1 and 2 on it — the days of the massive Kosovar demonstrations in 1981 — were marked in red ink. The reader of the Yugoslav press these days may be excused if he or she concludes that the country of Tito is showing symptoms of paranoia, at least where Albanians are concerned.

Albanians were punished not only for "offenses" in Yugoslavia, but for actions abroad, especially for demonstrating in support of the rights of Kosovars. A Kosovar migrant worker who returned from Switzerland was sentenced to fifteen months in prison in May of 1984, because he had taken part in "hostile, anti-Yugoslav demonstrations" in Geneva and Berne back in 1981. As in the times of Ottoman oppression, the Kosovars these days are punished merely for reading or possessing literature that the Yugoslav censors have labeled "dangerous." As a result, there has come into being an "index of forbidden literature." The long list includes magazines such as *Zëri i Kosovës* (The Voice of the Kosovars) and *Liria* (Liberty), political tracts, books with titles like *Freedom Songs* and *Hasan Pristina and the Patriotic Movement in Kosova*, and even a volume of memoirs by Ismail Kemal Vlora, the hero of Albanian independence in 1912. The witch hunt was especially hard on the intellectual community, headed by the professors and students at the University of Prishtinë. New names of victims were added to the long list of purged professors and students. The drive was called "ideological and political differentiation," a euphemism for persecution of anyone accused of Albanian nationalism.

Threat of Guerrilla Warfare

Since the Yugoslav government would not permit freedom of expression and assembly for its citizens, Kosovar activists have been forced to operate underground. They began to form so-called illegal organizations in the struggle to win rights and freedoms to which all Yugoslav citizens are entitled by

law, under the provisions of the Federal Constitution. The most prominent organizations of this kind were: The "Movement for the Albanian Socialist Republic in Yugoslavia," the "Marxist-Leninist Group of Kosovo," "Albanikos," and the "New Kosovo." An article in *Rilindja* (March 11, 1984), said that since 1981, a total of 72 illegal Kosovar organizations and groups had been discovered, with a combined membership of 1,000. In the same period, the article continued, 658 irredentists had been sentenced, and about 2,000 others were prosecuted on other charges.

Lately there were ominous signs of increasing radicalization of the population of Kosovo. An editorial in *Rilindja* (June 18, 1984) told of Kosovars who had organized an "attack brigade" for waging guerrilla warfare. A June 19, 1984 article in the same paper reported a Kosovar as saying that if Kosovo is not proclaimed a Republic through negotiations, then this must be done through armed revolutionary action. Other reports told of the formation of "underground cells" and a "National-Liberation Front" in the province. These developments seem to signal the start of a new and prolonged phase of violence in Kosovo, which could rock the whole Federation.

The migration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo continued to be a major issue, but nearly all press reports in the province contradicted Serb charges that the emigration was due to Albanian pressure. For example, *Rilindja* (July 6, 1984) wrote that "... people leave for reasons of employment, family matters, marriage, or because they want to join other members of the family" living elsewhere in Yugoslavia, etc. Another report in the same paper said that of 24 applications for migration in one district (Serbie) early in 1984, none mentioned pressure from the Kosovars as the reason for wanting to leave the province. The reasons given were mainly marriage, education, employment and the like. Nonetheless, the Yugoslav press in general was calling for stricter laws to halt the migration of non-Albanians, and even to induce those who have left to return to their former homes.

One big reason for leaving Kosovo — and this was true of Albanians as well, a fact ignored by the Belgrade press — was the ailing economy in the province. According to statistics in mid-1984, unemployment in Kosovo was two and a half times higher than the average for Yugoslavia. Only one in nine in Kosovo had a job, compared to one in four in Yugoslavia as a whole. And for every job opening in Kosovo, there were 42 applicants, as compared to 12 for the country as a whole. There were villages that did not have a single general store to supply the needs of the people, and villages with stores that were short of basic food items and other merchandise. School facilities were lacking in parts of the province. Pupils in a village in the district of Deçan had to walk 12 km. each way to school every day. Government authorities conceded that the critical state of the economy in Kosovo was a big stumbling block to efforts to achieve political stability in the region.

There were reports that Serb extremists were pushing a drive to "spread distrust of the Albanian population," not excepting even those who "made a great contribution to the revolution" in Yugoslavia during World War II. A theory was being propagated that the Communist revolution in Yugoslavia was the work solely of the Slavic people, that is, the Serbs, the Montenegrins, etc., with no help from ethnic groups like the Albanians and others. Indeed, such groups were stigmatized as "Fifth Columns," thus implying that they posed a threat to the security of Yugoslavia (*Rilindja*, July 18, 1984). These same extremist voices viewed those groups as "guests" in Yugoslavia, insinuating that they are not entitled to rights pertaining to the "indigenous" Slav people in that country. There is no need to comment on the grave implications of such ideas for the future of the Yugoslav Federation.

Yugoslavia and the Neighboring States

Belgrade had problems not only with the Kosovars, but also with the neighboring states of Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece. As before, Albania's support of the Kosovar demands was interpreted in Belgrade as gross interference in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia. But recently a new accusation was hurled at Tirana. Albania, said Yugoslav sources, is dreaming of becoming "an empire" (*Rilindja*, July 15, 1984). And the first step, presumably, toward realizing that dream is union with Kosovo. Belgrade also charged that Albania has a problem with its Slav (Macedonian) minority, which numbers no less than "100,000" (*Rilindja*, Aug. 4, 1984). Albania scoffed at the charge, and pointed to the 1979 census which showed a total of 4,163 persons of Slavic nationality in the country (*Zeri i Popullit*, Oct. 13, 1984).

Friction continued with Bulgaria over statements by Bulgarian officials which the Yugoslavs interpreted as designs to annex the Macedonian part of Yugoslavia to Bulgaria. A high Macedonian authority, Angel Cernerski, attacked those who deny the reality of Macedonia, and called on Bulgaria, Albania and Greece to "restore" or "ensure" the rights of the Macedonian minorities in those countries (*Yugoslav Information Bulletin*, NO. 5, 1982, p. 20).

Uneasy about its shaky position in Kosovo, Yugoslavia reacted sharply to demonstrations in Western Europe and the U.S. in support of the struggle of the Kosovars. The reaction was especially bitter against Albanian demonstrations in Geneva, Switzerland on March 2, 1984, and again in Berné on July 14 ("Bastille Day") in front of the Yugoslav Embassy in that country. The Yugoslav press labeled the demonstrations "circus shows," and warned that such protests were "against the vital interests of the Albanians in Yugoslavia," meaning, apparently, that there would be reprisals against the families of the demonstrators in Kosovo. But the Yugoslavs didn't stop there. Forgetting that Switzerland, unlike Yugoslavia, is a Western democratic country, Belgrade protested officially to the Swiss government for allowing the demonstrations to take place, and demanded that it should stop such "provocations" against Yugoslavia in the future. It was evident that Belgrade was becoming increasingly worried about the fortunes of its propaganda war abroad over Kosovo. In this connection, a July 15, 1984 dispatch from Belgrade noted a step-up in a "campaign against Yugoslavia by certain newspapers in Western Europe and elsewhere," which coincided, it said, with Albanian calls for a Republic of Kosovo.

In the meantime, Albania continued to attack Yugoslavia's arrests and imprisonment of Albanian nationals. The Albanian press denounced the unending arrests and trials as a "campaign of terror." An editorial in the Albanian daily, *Zeri i Popullit* (The Voice of the People), dated July 11, 1984 asked: Just what do the Serbs expect to accomplish with their terror and violence in Kosovo? The editorial said that the Kosovars were being punished not because they were committing crimes, but solely because they were Albanians. Belgrade, it charged, was pursuing a "racist, colonial, and denationalizing policy" toward the Albanians in Yugoslavia. The editorial warned that the policy of persecution currently in force against the Albanians was also an attack on other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia. What is happening in Kosovo today, it said, is but a preview of what will happen in other regions of the Federation, if the Serb extremists are allowed to have their way in Kosovo.

Much of Albania's criticism was directed against Belgrade's policy on the cultural life of the Kosovars. According to Albania, the policy has had a crippling effect on education, above all on the teaching programs and enrollment at the University of Prishtinë. Since 1981, the number of Albanian students at the university has been cut down by 17,000, a large number of Albanian professors have been dismissed, and courses in Albanian studies have been steadily reduced in size, while some of them have been eliminated altogether.

The new Yugoslav policy on Albanian education and culture in general prompted severe criticisms at the Third Congress of Albanian Writers and Artists, held in Tirane in late April of 1984. In a speech to the Congress, Prof. Dhimiter S. Shuteriqi of the University of Tirane said that the "Serbian

fury" against Albanian culture aimed at extinguishing awareness of Albanian history, literature and art from the consciousness of the Kosovars. Is this, he asked, what Yugoslavia means by its much-trumpeted motto of "Unity — and — Brotherhood"? He suggested that the remarkable flowering of Albanian culture in Kosova over the past 10-15 years, prior to 1981, surprised and terrified the Great-Serbia chauvinists, who had heretofore looked down on Albanians as an inferior race, lacking in culture. Hence their feverish efforts to contain and stifle Albanian culture. He said that the Serbs were bound to fail in their short-sighted drive to suppress the age-old Albanian cultural heritage. A better alternative, he said, was for Yugoslavia to begin talks with Albania to resume cultural exchanges between the two countries (*Zeri i Popullit*, Apr. 27, 1984). Such exchanges were halted three years ago when Belgrade, in reaction to the Spring 1981 demonstrations, lowered a cultural Iron Curtain between Kosova and Albania.

Last June however, after much polemics over this issue, Yugoslavia and Albania initiated talks in Belgrade in an effort to conclude a cultural agreement. One of the proposals of the Yugoslav negotiators was that Albania agree to have cultural relations not only with Kosova, but also with the six republics of the Federation. The Albanian negotiators accepted the proposal. In October, 1984 the two sides met again in Belgrade and held talks for three days, from October 3 to 6. Unfortunately, the talks ended in failure. Both sides then blamed the other for the failure. Albania charged that the Yugoslavs had insisted that there should be no mention of Kosova in the agreement. The Albanian side objected, on grounds that the Yugoslavs were being unreasonable. But the issue, apparently, that finally wrecked the talks was a Yugoslav demand that Albania pledge to "preserve the cultural identity" of the Slavs in Albania. The Albanian negotiators rejected the demand outright, and with indignation, claiming that there is not, and never has been a minority problem with the half dozen villages of Slav nationals in the country. It was obvious, the Albanians charged, that Yugoslavia was attempting to create the impression, mainly for public consumption abroad, that Albania has a minority problem with the Slavs, just as Yugoslavia has a problem with the Albanians. Albania called Belgrade's attempt to draw a parallel between the two ethnic groups ridiculous, and said that the scheme was not going to fool anybody (*Zeri i Popullit*, Oct. 9, 1984).

An editorial in *Zeri i Popullit* a few days later (Oct. 13, 1984) elaborated on the failure of the cultural talks, and on the state of Albanian-Yugoslav relations in general. The editorial said that the Yugoslavs had not entered the talks with sincere motives, but rather with the intent to exploit them for propaganda purposes. "Their purpose," it said, "is to isolate Kosova from cultural contacts with Albania, cut off the Kosovars from the historical sources of their culture, and extinguish the national character of the culture of the Albanian population of Kosova." This amounts to "a policy of cultural genocide in Kosova," the editorial said. The same fate, the paper said, awaits the other peoples of Yugoslavia, if the Serb chauvinists are not stopped now. The editorial concluded with an appeal to Belgrade to "abandon its short-sighted anti-Albanian policy," both in Kosova and toward Albania, and seek instead a genuine dialogue that will benefit Albanians and Yugoslavs alike.

Albanians Abroad Support Kosovar Claims

As in the past, Albanians abroad in Western Europe, the United States, Canada and elsewhere continued to publicize the cause of the Kosovars, and to build up support for them. In May of 1983, the Union of the Kosovars presented a memorandum to the Congress of the Federal Union of European Nationalities, held in Brussels, Belgium, which contained a long list of Kosovar political prisoners, including college professors, journalists, students, factory workers, technicians, farmers, housewives, secretaries, waiters, and elementary school pupils. Among school pupils were two children aged 8 and 10. They were sentenced to two years in prison each. In Rome, the newspaper *Flamuri* (The Flag), published much valuable material on Kosova in Albanian, English, and French. Among the articles in the October 30, 1983 issue was one by Abas Ermenji — a leader of the *Balli Kombëtar* (The National Front) organization — entitled, "La verité sur les Albanais de Yougoslavie" (The Truth About the Albanians of Yugoslavia), which said that the Kosovars are not separatists, as Yugoslavia would have the world believe. They have no wish to separate from the Federation, but seek only "equal rights with other nationals in the Yugoslav Federation, which is to say, they want their own autonomous republic". Ermenji said that Albanians will not longer endure to live as "citizens of the lowest class" in Yugoslavia.

The Albanian quarterly in Paris, *Koha e Jonë* (Our Time), also continued to give strong support to Kosova. Commenting on Yugoslavia's drive to emasculate Albanian literature and culture in Kosova, Hqmet Ndreu said in an article that the Yugoslavs "hope to assimilate a race whose tradition does not allow for assimilation". The Albanians of Yugoslavia, he said, "will defend their culture by every means, because it is their national treasure, the spiritual nourishment which has played the chief role in the awakening of their national consciousness" (*Koha e Jonë*, Jan.-Feb. Mar., 1984, pp. 35, 36). Three other Albanian publications in Europe championing the struggle for justice in Kosova were *Qindresa Shqiptare* (Albanian Resistance), *Republika e Kosovës*, and *Zeri i Kosovës* (The Voice of Kosova), organ of the Movement for a Socialist Albanian Republic in Yugoslavia. Based in Switzerland, *Zeri i Kosovës* is published by Kosovar activists in exile who are in the forefront of the struggle for ethnic and human rights in Kosova. Their magazine is by far the most militant Kosovar publication, in or out of Yugoslavia, at present. It is also the publication Yugoslav authorities fear most, in connection with Kosova. Its name came up constantly in Yugoslav press reports of arrests and trials of Albanian opponents to Yugoslav policy in the province.

In the United States, too, Albanian organizations pressed the fight to help the Kosovars secure the rights due them. In January 1984, the group known as the Movement for the Albanian Republic in Yugoslavia, presented a Memorandum to the Secretary General of the United Nations in New York, detailing "the persecution of the Albanian population in Yugoslavia," from 1913 to the present. The Memorandum concluded with a 7-point program for ameliorating the situation of Albanian nationals. Heading the list was a recommendation that the "territories inhabited by Albanians in Yugoslavia be constituted into an Albanian republic, within the framework of the SFR of Yugoslavia". Two other points called for the promotion of Albanian education, language, culture and art, and the application of the democratic principles in the conduct of the political life of the region.

On January 16, 1984 Albanians from all parts of the country demonstrated in New York, in front of the United Nations, to commemorate the second anniversary of the assassination by Yugoslav UDBA agents of three leading Kosovar activists in West Germany, the brothers Jusuf and Bardhosh Gervalla, and Kadri Zeka. An ad for the planned demonstration appeared in the *New York Times* on January 12, 1984. It was placed by the Committee for the Kosova Republic in Yugoslavia. Stung by the unfavorable publicity, a Yugoslav radio broadcast from Prishtine (Jan. 17, 1984) attacked the demonstrators as "enemies and traitors", and blamed "U.S. reactionary circles" for allowing the demonstration to take place.

As usual, the well known Albanian Kosovar Youth in the Free World continued its publicity campaign on Kosova. It sent out periodic reports to the United Nations, U.S. Government officials in Washington, and other influential people and groups, and appealed to them to use their influence to persuade Yugoslav authorities to change course on Kosova.

Albanian publications in America did their part to enlighten the American public on the true state of affairs in Kosova. Among the publications engaged in this work were *Dielli* (The Sun) and *Liria* (Liberty) in Boston, *Shqiptari i Lirë* (The Free Albanian) in New York, and the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* in

Santa Clara, California. A strong editorial on Kosova appeared in the *Dielli* issue of May 16, 1984. The editorial took Yugoslavia to task for "violating the human rights of Albanians," and thus "trampling on the Helsinki accords which it signed with solemnity" and vowed to uphold. The Yugoslav diplomats are laboring in vain, *Dielli* said, in trying to conceal the truth about Kosova and justify "with empty words something that cannot be justified". The editorial appealed to Belgrade to "examine the question of Kosova in a realistic light, and try to resolve it by peaceful means, with justice, in harmony, and with goodwill".

A part of the pressure on Belgrade to rethink its position on Kosova came from the Albanian intellectual community in America. One powerful weapon in this regard was the publication of the book, *Studies on Kosova* (1984) (see the review of the book in this issue of the *Bulletin*). In June of 1984, Dr. Sami Repishti gave a talk on Kosova at a seminar in Boston College that was sponsored by Vatra to commemorate the 75th anniversary of *Dielli*. Entitled "For Peace and Stability in Kosova," Dr. Repishti's presentation offered a number of thought-provoking ideas for a peaceful solution of the complex problem. Another Albanian intellectual submitted a proposal to the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, for promoting democracy in Yugoslavia. The paper said in part:

Kosova represents the most extreme case of the abuse of political authority in Yugoslavia today. Precisely for this reason, it is there, in Kosova, where the need to promote democracy in Yugoslavia is greatest. Failing this, the indications are that Kosova's population will become progressively radicalized, and turn to armed struggle as the only viable alternative for attaining self-affirmation and democratic rule. Such an eventuality is fraught with dangerous consequences for Yugoslavia, and for peace and stability in the Balkans.

In addition, more Albanians in America became involved lately in organizing fund drives to help their needy co-nationals in Yugoslavia. This is likely to become an important new phase in efforts to help the Kosovars to attain their God-given rights.

World Press Publicizes Kosova Issue

Contrary to the wishes of Yugoslav officials, the world press refused to ignore the national question in Kosova. Many newspapers and magazines wrote sympathetically about the demands of the Kosovars. Among such publications were the Swedish newspapers *Ekspressen*, the *Dagen Nyheter*, and the *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*. In an article last Spring, the latter paper wrote that the Albanians in Yugoslavia were asking for "bread, work, and their own Republic". The Danish paper *Information* wrote that about two million Albanians in Yugoslavia were fighting for their political, economic, social, and cultural rights. In an article in the influential West German daily, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Apr. 4, 1984), Viktor Meier said that the Yugoslav regime was pursuing an "unjust" and "unrealistic" policy toward Albanian nationals. The Italian magazine, *Europeo*, noted in its April 14, 1984 issue that Yugoslavia's cut-off of cultural ties between Kosova and Albania served only to "increase the anger of (Kosovar) intellectuals". Two Arab magazines, the *Crescent International* and *Arabia*, reported regularly on the jailings and harsh punishment of Kosovar dissidents. In its March 16-31, 1984 issue, *Crescent International* said that since 1981 over 1,000 Kosovars had been jailed, with sentences ranging from a few years to as many as 15 years.

In the Western Hemisphere, press reports on Kosova appeared in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. In an article headed, "The Kosovar People Are Demanding Their Rights," the Mexican paper *El Nacion* (Apr. 21, 1984) wrote that "only a solution acceptable to the Kosovars" can end the turmoil in that part of Yugoslavia. In Canada, the *Toronto Sun* continued its factual and responsible coverage on Yugoslavia, which have earned for it the respect and gratitude of the Albanian people.

In our country, Americans read about conditions in Kosova in the *New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Waterbury Republican*, the *Post-Journal* in Jamestown, New York, the *Detroit News*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times* and other publications. Most of the coverage was objective and sympathetic to the Kosovars. After a three-day tour of Kosova, Dan Fisher wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* (Mar. 13, 1984) that the "entire province seems to be on edge". Writing in the *New York Times* (Dec. 25, 1983), David Binder quoted "a distinguished archeologist" at Belgrade University, Milutin Garasanin, as saying, "Kosova is finished as Serb territory". A more recent article in the *New York Times* (Oct. 5, 1984), headlined "Yugoslavia's Albanians: Poor, Proud and Prolific," said that "Already Albanians represent more than 80 percent" of the people who live in Kosova. But the *New York Times* article which must have sent shock waves through the Belgrade officialdom was the one that appeared on July 16, 1984. Entitled "Yugoslav Repression," the article said that Yugoslavia is silencing political discussion, and that "the situation has taken a serious turn toward repression". The Albanians, of course, have known this for a long time, but now, as a result of the *Times* exposure, the whole world has become aware of it. Henceforth, it should be easier for the American public and government officials to accept the Albanian side of the story on Kosova.

In the meantime, a number of scholarly studies were published over the past year or so that dealt directly or indirectly with Kosova. Writing on post-Tito Yugoslavia, an American scholar of Croatian origin, Mathew M. Mestrovic, noted that the Albanians are the third largest ethnic group in Yugoslavia (after the Serbs and the Croats), that they, like the Croats, are denied basic national and human rights, and that the State Department in Washington should speak out on this issue without further delay (*The New Renaissance*, V, 1983). An article by Gabrielle Rebecchi titled, "La Posizione Albanese Rispetto Alla Questione Del Kosovo" (The Albanian Position with Respect to the Kosova Question), appeared in *Oriente Moderno*, II (1983). Dr. Patrick F. R. Artisen of Bradford University in England offered some interesting ideas in "A Note On Kosova and the Future of Yugoslav-Albanian Relations" (*Soviet Studies*, Apr. 1984). Commenting on the issue of migration of the Slavs from Kosova, he said that "the majority of Serbian and Montenegrin emigrants are the offspring of, or are themselves post-1912 settlers (in Kosova)," following its annexation by Serbia. They are identified, he said, with Serbia's colonisation policy in that region. The East European affairs expert, J. F. Brown, had some noteworthy comments on Kosova, Yugoslavia, and Albania in an incisive study on the Balkans (*The World Today*, June, 1984). Also, the Albanian-American scholar, Elez Biberaj, published a new study on Kosova, this time in the authoritative British quarterly on international affairs, *Survey* (Autumn, 1984 issue). Titled "The Conflict in Kosovo," Biberaj's study made a strong case for change in the *status quo* there. Following are some excerpts from the study:

Demands for the establishment of an Albanian republic within the Yugoslav federation represent a just and viable solution to the problem of Kosovo after more than 70 years of Serbian occupation, repression, domination and exploitation. . . . Yugoslav rule in Kosovo is based on fear, and popular aspirations have been suppressed by sheer force. . . . The cost of keeping Kosovo under Serbia's tutelage will rise. The

continuation of the current policy could prove more detrimental to Yugoslavia's interests in the long run than granting the Albanians a republic. (pp. 52, 56).

Biberaj concluded with a warning that "until a just solution is found to the Albanian problem, the threat of a larger ethnic confrontation, with potential international complications, will persist".

Croatians and American Republican Group Support Kosovars

As in the past, Croatians in America and abroad made common cause with the Albanians against Serbian domination. Croatian publications carried much valuable material on Kosova. One useful source of information in America was the *CNC Report*, monthly publication of the Croatian National Congress, headquartered in New York, New York. In Hamburg, West Germany, the Croatian magazine, *Hrvatska Domovina*, published a monthly English-language supplement called *That's Yugoslavia*, devoted mainly to the issue of human rights in Yugoslavia. The plight and the struggle of the Kosovars featured prominently in the pages of the supplement. This publication offers a view of Yugoslavia — the grim view of the oppressed, the destitute, the forlorn and forgotten — that is rarely, if ever seen in the American press or other media channels. Support for the Albanians also came from an *émigré* Yugoslav group in Great Britain, known as the Liberation ("Oslobodjenje"). In November, 1983, this group, which has been described as "a prestigious Yugoslav organization," issued a Statement recognizing the right of the Kosovars to have their own Republic in Yugoslavia.

A significant development in American politics relative to Kosova took place in Washington, D.C. in May of 1984, when the National Republican Heritage Groups Council passed a Resolution condemning Yugoslav repression of ethnic Albanians. The Council is an auxiliary of the Republican Party National Committee, hence the importance of the Resolution. We understand that the Resolution — the first of its kind to date, as far as we know, on the American political scene — was introduced by a delegation of the Albanian-American Republican Clubs. After enumerating in clear and forceful language Yugoslavia's "brutal repression" of its Albanian population, the Resolution said that the National Republican Heritage Groups Council:

Convinced that the continuation of the current Yugoslav repressive policy represents a serious danger to stability and peace in the Balkans;
Condemns the flagrant and systematic violation of the fundamental human and national rights of ethnic Albanians. . . ;
Calls upon the Yugoslav government to implement the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. . . ;
Appeals to the United States government to urge Yugoslavia to take immediate measures to allow ethnic Albanians to exercise their basic individual rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular: a) grant ethnic Albanians the right to their own republic. . . ; b) immediately release all Albanian political prisoners; and c) take measures to improve the economic situation in the Albanian-inhabited territories.

This well-drafted document could mark the beginning of the long-awaited turnabout in official American policy on Kosova. The Resolution was a major political victory for the Kosovars. We may assume also that it added to the pressure on Yugoslavia (or more exactly Serbia) to abandon its tragic policy toward the Albanian population.

In sum, the situation in Kosova as of this writing is grim and volatile. There are, to be sure, a few signs that offer hope for the future, as we have shown in this account. But whether genuine, essential change will take place, in order to avert further tragedy and even general disaster, depends almost entirely on Yugoslavia, at this point.

A Knight of the Road

by Paul McDonnell

*Who is this fellow men call a tramp
The sky is his foot the stars his lamp
Face tanned like leather from the sun's rays
Clothes faded and tattered worn from days
Looking upon with scorn as if a beast
Each day he thanks God for life his feast
A rebel who fights for the poor's cause
Who knows feels injustice of man's laws
Beneath these rags beats a heart like mine
Look in his piercing clear eyes see love's sign
At a passing glance one of life's hobos
Christ was a tramp could men see his love shows.*

Yugoslavia's Imprisonment of Adem Demaçi — A Case of Callous Injustice



Adem Demaçi with son and daughter.

Of the thousands of Albanian political prisoners in Yugoslavia at present, the most notorious and revolting is the case of Adem Demaçi, a talented writer and intellectual from the district of Prishtinë, the capital city of the province of Kosovë. Now in his late forties, Demaçi has been languishing in Yugoslavia's prisons for nearly a quarter of a century. That means that he has spent most of his life in prison.

Demaçi was first arrested in 1958, and rearrested twice since then, not for any crime he had committed, but for political reasons, because his beliefs were seen as a threat to the Yugoslav Federation. He is one of numerous Albanian political prisoners currently languishing in the penal institutions of Yugoslavia on charges of "nationalism," "chauvinism," "agitation against the state" and similar vague, unsubstantiated accusations.

He has been tortured for his alleged crimes to such an extent that he is now reported to be very feeble and nearly blind. Yet, the Yugoslav authorities, oblivious to his suffering, continue to keep him behind bars.

But despite all effort by his inquisitors to force or bribe him to plead guilty, Demaçi has stood his ground. He has remained scrupulously faithful to his beliefs and his conscience. His steadfast endurance of the worst of pressures designed to break his will, has made a deep impression among the Kosovars. It has strengthened their unity and heightened their courage. He has become a hero in their eyes and, indeed, in the eyes of Albanians everywhere.

Adem Demaçi has waged a long and painful struggle for justice in Kosovë. He has become a symbol of Albanian yearnings for ethnic and human rights in Yugoslavia. He is a symbol, too, of Kosovar resistance to state injustice and violence in the Federation of Yugoslavia. His suffering has raised the national consciousness among the more than two million Albanians in Yugoslavia, and at the same time shocked the conscience of many in the world community who had been led to believe that Yugoslavia is a democratic country.

The cruel punishment inflicted upon Demaçi has aroused Albanians everywhere, and prompted them to rally to his defense. There is hardly an Albanian today who does not speak with sympathy, respect or admiration for him. Many of them have written directly to leaders of Yugoslavia asking for his release from prison. Two leading Albanian intellectuals in America who had worked to secure his release are Dr. Sami Repishti in Baldwin, N. Y., and Prof. Arshi Pipa in Minneapolis, Minn. Both of them have known long prison sentences (in Albania) for political reasons, and appreciate fully the terrible plight of Demaçi. But the Yugoslav authorities have callously ignored all pleas to set Demaçi free.

In the United States, Demaçi's case has been publicized in the Albanian press in *Dielli* (The Sun) in Boston, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* in Santa Clara, and other publications. In Switzerland, the Albanian magazine *Zëri i Kosovës* (The Voice of Kosovë) has written at length about him.

But concern about Demaçi is not limited to the Albanian press, groups, or individuals. Human rights groups have been outraged by Yugoslavia's persecution of him, and pledged to support him. In a pamphlet on Yugoslavia (1982), the U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee documented the cases of some two dozen leading dissenters in Yugoslavia, including two Albanians, Adem Demaçi and economist Skënder Kastrati, whose rights have been violated by the state. Both Demaçi and Kastrati have been adopted by Amnesty International as "prisoners of conscience." Both organizations have called for the release of the two men. Yet, Yugoslavia which parades itself before the world as a staunch defender of human rights, has paid no attention to their appeals.

But efforts to end Belgrade's barbarous treatment of Demaçi continue. Lately, a group of well-known Albanian intellectuals in America, all of them with university affiliations, drafted a petition calling for the release of Demaçi. The petition says among other things:

We, the undersigned, all members of the Albanian community in America, call upon the Government of Yugoslavia to release Adem Demaçi from prison. We further call upon the intellectual community and the information media in the United States of America to support our effort to uphold the rights and dignity of an innocent man, Adem Demaçi, and bring to an end his suffering by obtaining his release from prison.

The petition is expected to be circulated among associations of students and professors in America, as well as among leading media agencies, including newspapers and magazines and possibly radio and television stations, with a view to enlisting their support in this initiative.

It seems evident that the longer the Yugoslav officials persist in their senseless persecution of Demaçi, the greater will be the anger and opposition of the Kosovars, and the greater as well the loss of Yugoslavia's standing in the eyes of the world.

Albanians in America Reach the Century Mark

by Peter R. Prifti

It's not official, or a documented fact. But many Albanian ethnics in this country believe that 1984 marked the 100th year since the first Albanian settled in America. Those who dispute this give 1986 as an alternate date. In any case, both sides agree that the first Albanian to make his home in the new world across the sea was Kole Kristofor, who later became a priest of the Orthodox Church, and is better known as the Rev. Nicholas Christopher. He settled in Boston, Massachusetts.

Rev. Christopher came from the village of Katundi in the district of Korche in southeastern Albania. Indeed, the first group of immigrants came from those two communities: Katundi and Korsche. Nothing surprising about that. As word about America spread to the quiet region of Korsche, one man after another followed in the footsteps of Rev. Christopher, and boarded the boat for Ellis Island in the New York harbor. The new immigrants were deeply impressed by America, a land so very different from the one they left behind. Nothing expresses better their feelings of gratitude to the new country than the following four verses, which became part of the common folklore of the times:

*Kush hapi Ameriqnë,
T'i ndrijë shpiri, t'i ndrijë,
Korçari me Katundllinë,
T'u ndrijë shpiri, t'u ndrijë!*

Freely translated, the verses say: Men from Korsche and Katundi,
It was they, who led the way,
To America's friendly shore.
Bless their name, bless their name,
Now and forevermore!

In broad outline, the story of Albanian ethnics is the same as that of any other ethnic group in America. The similarities are many and striking and familiar. Although grateful for the chance to start a new life here, with opportunities for a decent life in freedom, the beginnings were hard for the early settlers. They were poor, and with rare exceptions uneducated and untrained for any job, except farming which they ignored, in large part because they had come from impoverished farming areas. This was the common road traveled by millions of other immigrants: the Irish, the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Greeks, etc.

In two important ways, however, the Albanians differed from most of the other immigrant groups. Albania at the turn of the century was not yet an independent country or state. Secondly, the early Albanian immigrants, the great majority of whom were Orthodox Christians, did not have a Church of their own. Consequently, they began life in America without an independent native country, and without an independent Church in which to worship God in their own tongue, Albanian. The Orthodox churches back home had long ago come under the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church, and all services were conducted in Greek.

These were the harsh realities that shaped the lives of the first wave of Albanian immigrants. To be sure, they wanted to make money in the new land, but almost solely for the purpose of providing for their families and relatives back home. Their capacity for self-denial is difficult for us to understand today. Even more, however, they wanted to see their native country independent from the Ottoman Turks; and since the churches in Albania were then under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (nominally autonomous, but actually an instrument of the Greek Government and the Greek Church), they yearned for an independent, national Albanian Orthodox Church, free of foreign control.

Pioneer Albanian Immigrant Leaders

These were major issues that called for bold action and dedicated leadership. Happily, the leaders came forth: Petro Sevasti and Parashkevi Kyrias, Faik Konitza, Koste Chkrezi, Kristo Floki and others. These pioneer figures were intellectuals, idealists, dreamers — people with little resources, but large visions and strong faith. Above all, they were patriots, fiery nationalists who spared no effort, no time, and no money (of which they had very little, anyway, and at times none), to carve out a place in the sun for their beloved Albania and the long-suffering Albanian people. It was in that long and bitter up-hill struggle that they found their place and their reward in the new country of America.

They made Albania's cause their own. They shared the lot of their fellow immigrants. They set the tone and foundation of the national, religious, and cultural life of the Albanians of America. And they caused the name of Albania and the Albanian people to be heard in Washington, in college campuses, in church congregations and social groups throughout America.

The Albanians have been, and still are, one of the smaller ethnic minorities in America, numbering no more than a few tens of thousands. The usual estimate is about 100,000 not counting the Arberesh, or Albanians from Italy whose number is believed to be roughly the same. Yet, despite their small number, ethnic Albanians in this country have labored well and reaped a good harvest over the past century. Their achievements have rarely been dramatic or spectacular, measured by American standards; but they have been solid and respectable, in terms of the goals they set out to attain. Foremost among their achievements were the founding of the Autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church in America in Boston in 1908, and the vital contribution

they made to the cause of Albanian independence, which bore fruit in 1912 with the proclamation of the country as a sovereign state. In a word, they succeeded against great odds in realizing their dream of independence for their native country, and a Church of their own in America. These are rightly considered milestones in the history of Albanian immigrants in America.

But gaining independence was only half the struggle for Albanian nationhood. After the First World War, Albania was in great danger of dismemberment by its neighbors Greece, Italy, and Yugoslavia. The Albanians of America responded to the threat in several ways. Through their newspapers and magazines they mounted a vigorous publicity campaign to inform the American public about their native country, its venerable history and its age-long struggle for survival. They organized a nationwide fund drive to send delegates abroad to argue Albania's case in European capitals and international conferences. And they appealed to American Government leaders to oppose plans for the partition of Albania by its neighbors. They won a historic victory in 1918 when Fan S. Noli obtained a pledge from President Woodrow Wilson to support Albania at the Versailles Peace Conference. Wilson's support assured the restoration of Albania's independence and sovereignty, as defined by the London Conference of Ambassadors in 1913.

Religious Institutions Founded

To Albanian ethnics in this country, the struggle for religious autonomy and the building of national religious institutions was inseparable from the cause of Albanian nationalism. In fact, nationalist feelings played a decisive part in Fan S. Noli's decision in 1908 to accept ordination as a priest from the hands of Platon, the Russian Orthodox Archbishop in New York. As he himself says in his autobiography, he took that historic step because that would give him the "opportunity to work for the cause of Albania". Faik Konitza expressed the general feelings of Albanian immigrants when he wrote: "The day on which he (Noli) conducted his first Albanian Liturgy is a turning point in the history of the Albanian Renaissance." (*Archbishop Fan S. Noli, Second Apostle of the Albanians*, Boston, 1974).

That day was March 22, 1908. The place where the service took place was the Knights of Honor Hall in Boston. We have still among us a living witness to that event, Nini (Constantine) Demo of south Boston, now in his mid-nineties. He has said that when Fan Noli celebrated the first mass in the Albanian language, after five centuries of oppression of the Albanian people, "our eyes were filled with tears".

The faith and power of religion became a living force in the broad movement of the national awakening and the rebirth of Albania. The Church of St. George in Boston (now the St. George Cathedral), became the nucleus of the first Albanian religious institution in America, now known as the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America. At present, the Archdiocese comprises over one dozen churches in New England, the eastern seaboard and the Midwest. It is a Church with a rich tradition, with church literature in the Albanian language — a labor of love by the late Metropolitan Archbishop Noli, with educated priests and choirs trained by professionals, with Sunday School classes, and an active network of auxiliary women's and men's organizations. The Church has been more than a home for religious worship. For decades, it has been a center of communal life, serving as a base for numerous social, cultural, and patriotic activities. Noli's Church, moreover, was influential in the revival of the Orthodox Church in Albania, following World War I, and lately has contributed to the strengthening of the church of the Arbëresh in Italy. It is for these reasons that many people regard the Albanian Orthodox Church as the most significant institution in the history of Albanian ethnics in the United States of America.

A notable fact about the history of the Albanian Orthodox Church in this country is that it has had the support, from the beginning, of both Christian and Moslem Albanian immigrants. It's a fact that speaks of religious tolerance among the Albanian people, and cooperation for achieving common goals.

Albanian Moslem religious activity in America goes back to 1915, when the National Mohammedan Religious Society was founded in Biddeford, Maine. It was not until after the Second World War, however, that a Moslem religious movement began to spread and flourish among Albanian ethnics. The initiative for this movement was taken by the Rev. (Imam) Vehbi Ismail who, in 1949, organized the Albanian-American Moslem Society in Detroit. Subsequently, several Albanian Moslem centers and mosques were founded in other American communities, such as Chicago, Waterbury, Philadelphia, and New York. A milestone in the history of Moslem Albanians in America was the founding of the Albanian Bektashi Tekke (*teqe* — monastery) in Detroit (1954), on the initiative of Baba (Rev.) Rexhep.

As with the Orthodox Church, the Albanian Moslem religious institutions in America have been vigilant in fighting off attempts to encroach on Albania's political and territorial integrity. They have been active as well in preserving the Albanian heritage in this country. This has been a major goal of their periodicals: *Jeta Muslimane Shqiptare* (Albanian Moslem Life) and *Përpjekja e Jonë* (Our Effort) in New York, and *Zëri i Bektashizmit* (The Voice of Bektashism) in Detroit. They have made great efforts to teach the younger generations of Albanian Moslems about the history of the country of their origin, prominent nationalist figures, the Albanian language, literature and folklore. Lately, a book on the history and tenets of Bektashism, written originally in Albanian, was published in English in large part for the benefit of Albanian Moslem youth in this country.

The community of Albanian ethnics was further enriched with the rise of Albanian Catholicism in the sixties. This phase in the evolution of the Albanians of America came into being as Catholics from northern Albania and Kosove in Yugoslavia began to settle in America following World War II. It took definite form with the founding of the first Albanian Catholic Church in America in 1962 in the Bronx, N. Y., an event for which Msgr. Zef Oroshi was chiefly responsible. Two other Catholic parishes were opened later in Detroit which, like the Bronx, became a magnet for tens of thousands of Albanian Catholic immigrants. Catholic activity among Albanian ethnics took another step forward in 1965, with the founding of The American Albanian Catholic Charity organization, which subsequently evolved into the Albanian Catholic Information Center, with headquarters in Santa Clara, California.

The story of Albanian Catholicism in America is told in some detail in the issues of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, and other publications by Albanians in America. As with the Orthodox and Moslem groups, concern for Albania's national interests and the rights of Albanians everywhere has been a major component of organized Albanian Catholic life in America.

The worship of God, maintaining the link with their country of origin, and working to preserve the culture they inherited from their ancestors — these have been part of a package for Orthodox, Catholic, and Moslem Albanians alike in this country. America offered them a fertile soil in which to nourish and fulfill their religious needs and aspirations. Their religious life here progressed and prospered because, as Noli put it, "there is freedom of worship in the United States". Without that freedom and the opportunities this country offered them to better their lives, their religious institutions would not be where they are today — strong, relatively prosperous and confident of the future.

Cultural, Professional and Social Life

Religion has obviously been a major element in the lives of Albanian ethnics in their first hundred years in America. But they have been active in other areas as well. Beginning in 1905, they formed numerous patriotic, philanthropic, cultural, and social organizations and clubs, the most durable and influential of which have been the Pan-Albanian Federation of America — Vatra (since 1912), the Free Albania Organization (since 1941), and the Albanian American National Organization (AANO) (since 1946). They have published several dozen newspapers and magazines, the majority of them with a strong nationalist orientation. The most famous of these periodicals is *Dielli* (The Sun), organ of the Vatra federation, which at seventy-five (in 1984) is older than the modern Albanian state.

Small though in number, Albanians have published books on history, biography, language and general literature, thus enriching America's classrooms, libraries and the intellectual life of the country as a whole. Besides Fan Noli, there have been books on the history of Albania by Kristo Dako, Koste Chekrezi, Stavro Skendi, Ago Agaj, Nicholas Pano, Peter Prifti and others. Nexhmie Zaimi published a charming autobiography in 1937, called *Daughter of the Eagle*. Denis Karabury, Chekrezi, Nelo Drizari, Gaspar Kici and Hysni Aliko, and Fehime Pipa have authored works on the Albanian language. Arshi Pipa is the author of a major work, *Trilogia Albanica*, plus several volumes of poetry and biography. Books of poetry have also been published by Xhevat Kallajxhiu and Bardhyl Pogoni, books of biography by Kallajxhiu and Eduard Licho, and a volume on religion by Gjon Sinishtia. Peter Kolonia, Sr., formerly a journalist and teacher of Albanian, has been active in publishing books relating to Albanian affairs. Skendi, Pipa, and John Kolshi have done work on Albanian folklore.

Particularly in past decades, Albanians of America enlivened the theater stage with frequent productions in their communities of plays by leading Albanian playwrights, such as Fokion Postoli, Sami Frasheri, Kristo Floki, Mihal Grameno, and Vasil Alarupi; and other works by contemporary writers such as Kevo Papinghi in Philadelphia, dealing with their life in America. They have contributed as well to musical life in America and the general fund of musical literature. Two names, among others, that deserve mention in this respect, are Professor Thomas Nassi, organizer of several musical ensembles, including the Vatra Band (1916); and Nick Kreshpani, baritone opera singer who has sung leading parts in opera productions in Springfield, Massachusetts, where he lives. Others who have done creative work in music are Gloria Lambert and Van Christo.

Albanian social and cultural life has featured Albanian-language radio programs in half a dozen cities, beginning with "The Voice of Albania" in Boston, founded by the late Nuchi Cojo in 1938. There have been countless annual picnics, plus dinner-dance functions, the latter usually held to commemorate important events in the history of Albania or Albanian ethnics in this country. Knowledge of the Albanian cuisine, long a mystery to the American public, was made accessible in recent years, as a result of the publication of a couple of Albanian cookbooks, the most comprehensive of which is that of the Women's Guild of the Albanian Orthodox Church of St. Mary in Worcester, Massachusetts. It's a welcome development, especially for Americans eager to try out a few Albanian recipes in their kitchen.

Unlike the Irish and Italians, the Albanians in America, perhaps because of their minute numbers, have not so far become much involved in American politics. Still, we might mention that one of their co-nationals, Stephen Peters, attained a high post in the diplomatic service of the United States Government, retiring with the rank of Consul from foreign service in Italy.

In the world of commerce and finance, not a few Albanians in this country have risen high, amassed millions, and made a reputation in their chosen field. On occasion they have attracted national attention. Apparently the most successful to date has been Anthony Athanas, proprietor of five first-rate restaurants in the Boston area and Cape Cod, including the famous Pier IV Restaurant in the Boston Harbor. Other notable restaurateurs are the Bitici brothers in New York, Ekrem Bardha in Detroit, Zef Shillaku and Mustafa Bushati in San Francisco. No doubt, the list could be expanded.

Numerous other Albanian ethnics in America at present hold positions of authority and prestige in real estate, sports, education, advertising, the legal and medical professions, communications such as journalism and radio, and various government agencies. A number of very wealthy Albanians are practically unknown, as they are not involved in the affairs of the Albanian community, preferring instead to live "private lives."

In other areas the late Gjon Mile achieved distinction nation-wide as photographer for *Life* magazine. Zois A. Shuttie has done fine work as a painter, and Arthur Lika has shown great talent as a commercial artist. In the world of entertainment, all of America now knows that the late talented comedian, John Belushi, was Albanian. But few people seem to know that two other great names in the world of entertainment, popular singer Connie Frances, and film director Frank Capra, are Albanian (Arberesh from Italy).

In short, as they close their first century in America, Albanian ethnics have reason to take pride in themselves for their contributions to Albania, for their personal achievements, and for enriching American life. Truly, they have come a long way from the simple and rough beginnings of the first Albanian immigrants in this country. Materially, professionally, and socially, third and fourth generations of Albanian ethnics now stand side by side with the citizens of mainstream America.

At this point, a question occurs to the mind of the observer. They have climbed far up the ladder of success, and most of them are living comfortable lives. But are they in danger now of climbing away and out of sight of their "Albanian roots?" This is certainly possible, if their pride and affection for their past, for the "Albanian way of life" which their fathers and forefathers brought over to this country, weakens and wanes with the passing of the years. Nevertheless, we do not think they will let that happen. Such a thing is contrary to the Albanian character, as the story of the Arberesh in Italy shows. Indeed, it is contrary to the whole history of Albanian culture and ethnicity. We tend therefore to see a bright future for Albanian ethnics, as they begin the Second Century of their life in the free and bountiful land of America.

The story of the Albanians in America has been documented in a few publications. An interesting account of the "first arrivals" is the short memoir by Constantine A. Demo, *The Albanians in America*, published in Boston in 1960. A brief but compact update, which takes the story up to the year 1980, is contained in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, MA, 1980). It was authored by Arshi Pipa and Peter Prifti. The most detailed history of the Albanians' first half-century in this country is to be found in *The Albanian Struggle in the Old World And New* (Boston, 1939). Of special interest is the illustrated volume, *International Seminar of Pan-Albanian Federation "VATRA" (1969)*, edited by Dr. Hamdi H. Oruchi, which documents the historic visit of a delegation of Arberesh (from Italy) to America, on the occasion of *Dielli's* Sixtieth Anniversary.

Vatra Celebrates Dielli's 75th Anniversary In High Style

by Melhelm Mobarak

Like a venerable *grand dame*, the Vatra organization has celebrated many an anniversary in its 72-year-old history. Vatra, which is short for Pan-Albanian Federation of America, came to life in 1912 in Boston, traditionally called the "capital" of the Albanian world in America. It is thus contemporaneous with modern Albania.

Vatra's longer name resulted from the merger of four small, independent, local Albanian societies in America. This happened in Boston on April 28, 1912, exactly seven months before Albania proclaimed its independence from the Turks. The members of the "Federation Committee," in other words, its founders were the then Rev. Fan Noli, Falk Konitza, Kristo Floqi, and Paskal Aleksi. It was a momentous event in the history of Albanian immigrants to America.

Curiously, its now famous organ, *Dielli* (*The Sun*), preceded the Federation by three years. The paper was founded in February of 1909, and was conveniently "adopted" by the newly-formed Federation to serve as its organ. This decision apparently was only a provisional one, for the minutes of the founding meeting say: "For the present the National Newspaper DIELLI will keep its name and program until the Regular Committee of the Federation is chosen."

Three score and twelve years later, Vatra's organ continues to be published under its original name, *Dielli*, the name given to it in 1909. Last June, Vatra and the Albanians of America and their friends commemorated the paper's Diamond Anniversary with a seminar and other activities. It was a celebration that will be long remembered by all participants.

The seminar was held on Saturday, June 16, 1984 in Gasson Hall, on the campus of Boston College. For about a decade now, Boston College has been perhaps the leading academic institution in the area to interact frequently and fruitfully with the Albanian community.

The meeting was officially opened with an address by Harry Stoja, President of Vatra. Mr. Stoja has had a life-long interest in Vatra, and has for many years published articles in *Dielli* on a variety of subjects.

The first speaker at the seminar was Radu Florescu, Professor of History at Boston College, Director of the East European Research Center there, and author of the very popular book, *Dracula* (1972). Prof. Florescu focused on Albanian-Rumanian relations, noting that they go back as far as the Thracians, and that they reached their climax during the Albanian Renaissance towards the last quarter of the 19th century.

Gregory Pano, a graduate of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University, and a prominent activist in the Albanian community in Boston, drew the attention of those present to the need to preserve the Albanian-American experience and heritage. He is presently working on what might be called an archival or data-base center on the Albanian community in the United States. The project involves tracing and filing or compiling of relevant documentary materials in archives, whether photographic, audiovisual, written or otherwise. His task seems as arduous as it is fascinating.

Dr. Nicholas Pano, well-known Albanian scholar in America, presented some very interesting perspectives on the "Northern Epirus" question. In view of the remarks of Greek Premier Papandreu in February of 1984, it looks as if this problem has been relegated to the past. Nevertheless, Albanians have to stay alert in case of a sudden revival of Greek irredentist sentiment with regard to Albanian territories.

Dr. Sami Repishti of New York, who is closely identified with efforts to resolve the issue of Kosova, spoke at length on "The problem of Kosova and the role of *Dielli* today." This eminent specialist on Kosova suggested what seems like a realistic approach to the problem. It's a peaceful approach based on diplomacy rather than military action.

Following the conclusions of the morning portion of the seminar, those in attendance sat down to a luncheon just off the college grounds. The luncheon was prepared by Miss Florescu, and from remarks heard all around, it was evidence that her culinary talents were greatly appreciated.

Miss Fehime Pipa, author of a text of Albanian grammar, was one of the people present at the seminar. She represented the Albanian section of the Voice of America in Washington, D.C.

The afternoon session of the seminar opened with a brilliant discourse by Nermin Falaschi on the origin of the Albanian language. Mrs. Falaschi, great-granddaughter of Ismail Kemal Bey Vlora, is the author of several books and a frequent speaker on Albanian cultural topics. On this occasion, she drew a fascinating parallel between the Etruscans and Albanians, based on her own findings in Italy. She illustrated her discourse with slides.

Prof. Albert B. Lord of Harvard, noted expert on Albanian epic folklore, was also scheduled to speak. His topic was, "The Albanian Epic and Song."

Melhelm Mobarak, a resident of Montreal, friend of the Albanian people and noted collector of Albaniana, was the concluding speaker on the afternoon panel. Mr. Mobarak presented an historical outlook on Albanian bibliography. He remarked that the publication of books relating to Albania and Albanians started in the 15th century and reached a zenith twice: first, in the 16th century with countless publications on Skanderbeg, and again in the 19th century with the advent to power of Ali Pasha of Tepelenë. The Albanian Renaissance also kindled a profusion of books on Albania. The trend continued with travel books during King Zog's period, and war books by various heads or members of British military missions to Albania in the course of World War II. Mr. Mobarak said that since 1945 more than sixty outstanding books have been published worldwide on Albania.

The topic of the day, however — and not surprisingly — was Mr. Mobarak's exhibition of books, lithographs and engravings on Albania that served as an accompaniment to the seminar. The exhibition was an American "première," and therefore a unique treat to all who saw it, since nothing of the sort has been previously shown to Albanian audiences in America before. The collection included books on Skanderbeg dated 1584, and 18th and 19th century books on Ali Pasha and Albania by such authors as Holland, Hobhouse, Leake, and Lear, all of them in their original, beautifully-bound editions.

Among the lithographs in exhibit were 18th century sketches of Albanians by Fauvel, French Consul in Athens, and "Ali Pasha on the Lake of Butrinto" by Dupré. One memorabilia item was an original handwritten postcard by Geronimo De Rada to a friend in Paris, in which he expresses his

hopes for an independent Albania. There was also an item carrying a dedication by Prince Karageorgevitch of Yugoslavia which clearly betrayed his irridentist aspirations towards the land of Albania.

The following day, June 17th, seminar speakers and auditors gathered at Anthony's Pier 4 Restaurant where its owner and Honorary President of Vatra, Mr. Athanas, paid vibrant homage to all the speakers, and only regretted that the attendance was not as large as it should have been since, according to him, this was the most interesting seminar on Albania he had ever attended.

In brief, the commemoration of *Dielli's* 75th anniversary was an extraordinary event, a celebration in high style, satisfying to the intellect and a visual treat, as well. It was an event that excited the imagination, warmed the feelings and aroused pride in the Albanian nation and heritage. And *Dielli*, the oldest and best known Albanian newspaper in America, surely deserved it.

The organizing committee for *Dielli's* anniversary consisted of: Louise Anastas, Dr. Andrew D. Elia, Bessie Konary, William Kosmo, Pauline Loukas, and Florence Pano.



Metropolitan Archbishop Fan S. Noli
1882 — 1982

Amnesty International Report on Albania — Fair Trials Denied

Albanians accused of criticizing their political system or practicing religion are serving long sentences in harsh labor camps after having "confessions" forced out of them by beatings, Amnesty International reported, Wednesday, December 12, 1984. Courts routinely deny political suspects the right to defense lawyers for their swift, one-day trials, the worldwide human rights movement said in a new report, *Albania: Political Imprisonment and the Law*.

The report was pieced together from official and unofficial information, including eyewitness accounts by former inmates of the camps. Amnesty International emphasized that its information was incomplete, due to the secrecy tightly enforced by the Albanian authorities and the severe restrictions on travel into or out of the country.

The movement said it had the names of nearly 400 political prisoners serving sentences in recent years, but that these were only a fraction of the total. Many of the political prisoners were convicted of attempting to flee Albania. Whole families are known to have been moved far from their native areas and interned in harsh conditions because a relative succeeded in fleeing.

Under Albanian law, "sabotage" is simply "an action or lack of action" intended to weaken the state, the Communist Party or the society. Sentences range up to 25 years imprisonment or death.

Some ex-prisoners say they were convicted after security agents entrapped them into criticizing the authorities in private conversations. Other say they signed confessions after repeated beatings with rubber hoses filled with gravel. The majority of ex-prisoners interviewed by Amnesty said they were beaten during interrogation. Priests have been imprisoned for possessing bibles or baptizing children, and Islamic clergy are among those imprisoned since Albania's total crackdown on religion in 1967. "Trials have generally been concluded within a day, and Amnesty International knows of no political trials in which the defendant was acquitted," the report says.

The evidence on which one prisoner was convicted was reported to include the charge that he watched a soccer match on Yugoslav television. Others are reported to have been convicted as a result of contacts with foreign tourists or possessing books or pictures disapproved by the authorities.

The report gives rare details on the little-known labor camps and prisons where Albanian political prisoners are held. In Spac labor camp, prisoners are forced to work in copper mines within the camp boundaries, which are ringed with barbed wire and patrolled by armed guards with dogs. They live in unheated concrete barracks, sleeping on straw mattresses, are issued work uniforms once a year, and usually suffer severe weight loss on a diet containing inadequate protein, fresh vegetables and fruit, according to former prisoners.

The harsh conditions and treatment at Spac have provoked prisoner strikes and violent protests at least twice — in 1973 and 1978. On both occasions, the leaders were executed after the protests were ruthlessly suppressed.

Ballsh labor camps is divided into three sections, for political prisoners, ordinary criminals and foreigners. In the early 1970s, political prisoners at Ballsh were used for construction of a Chinese-aided oil refinery, but the camp is now reported to house primarily the elderly and those unfit for work.

Burrel Prison, the most infamous in Albania according to the report, was where many political prisoners died in the period from the 1940s to the 1960s. Now, disgraced former party officials are said to be among long-term political prisoners kept there. Beatings and solitary confinement are reported to be common.

Amnesty International said it was impossible to estimate the number of political prisoners in the country, because of censorship and secrecy. In 1982, ex-prisoners estimated there were some 1,200 at Ballsh and a similar number at Spac. An amnesty in that year receded the numbers, but since then there have been reports that a purge of officials and their supporters has increased the total again. In addition, the total would have to include inmates of Burrel Prison, reported to number some 300, and those at Tarovic, Kosovë, Tiranë and other prisons awaiting transfer, the report says.



Book Reviews

The Last Days of Freedom

by Nika Stajka

This book written by Nika Stajka is certainly one of the most interesting books written on post-war Albania since 1956.

It is a vivid account of a then young seminary student who was conscripted into the Albanian army and from there on jailed and forced into labor camps.

As far as I know it is one of the very few books depicting a personal experience inside Albania during the years 1944-1956 (exception made of Franco Benanti's *La guerra più lunga* and, of course, Gjon Sinishta's *Fulfilled Promise*).

The style which is sometimes poor if not trivial is more than compensated by the warmth and the human sensitivity that perspires throughout the book.

One is amazed to see how Communism has spread a two way fear system from the top to the bottom but also vice-versa. Soldiers and even prisoners know when to take full advantage of their Communist privileges, and officers back out very prudently awaiting, however, to take their revenge in some other sly way.

Stajka tells us of many interesting experiences: how in prison #5 and as early as 1950 he met Reverend Shtjefen Kurti, who in 1972 was taken to the firing squad because he had christened a child in a concentration camp.

He describes to us the horrible but very courageous death of Skenderi, who was refused proper treatment in the labor camp because he was the son of Fiqri Dine. He also depicts to us German P.O.W.s singing *Silent Night* in 1949 "with their professional orchestra, made up of a horn, an accordion and a gasoline can" and how others, "from the commandant to the last southern soldier could not imagine what the Germans were singing."

He mentions "localism," another euphemism to describe the antagonism between North and South at all levels whether they be prisoners or officers.

One of the most incredible stories is the quarrel that takes place at the Ura Vojsurore Kocora, when a soccer match turned into a political fight between "Zogist" and "Ballist" prisoners. How the Ballists had long ago "organized" their government inside the camp and how its "head" Hysni Lepenica's brother "was even protected when he went to the toilet by six bodyguards whom the 'party' had appointed to perform that duty."

The author also adds that "it was easier to talk in person with Enver Hoxha than with this illusory head of government."

We have lingered on all these stories to point out how this book is a mine of information on the "pulse" of Albania at the time. It also depicts vividly the brutality, sadism and cynicism inside these prisons and labor camps. The book ends with a description of the author's daring escape to Yugoslavia.

In conclusion, this book must be read by anyone interested in Albania's political and religious affairs.

Copies of *The Last Days of Freedom* are still available at the author's address: Nika Stajka, P.O. Box 3734, Hyattsville, MD 20787, USA. In the U.S.A. and Canada — \$15.00 U.S. per copy; in all other countries — \$20 U.S. per copy.

Marcia Di Un Albanese Verso La Libertà

(An Albanian's Journey Toward Liberty)

published by La Nuova Base, Udine, Italy (1982)

by Zef Margjinaj

This book is actually an autobiography written in Italian by an Albanian freedom fighter of the forties and fifties. It is in fact, a loud cry against the grave violations of basic human rights and, at the same time, a strong denunciation of the Communist regimes in Albania and Yugoslavia. Margjinaj is not a writer, historian or intellectual by profession. But this book is something more profound. Margjinaj and other political exiles like him from every country suffering under a dictatorship are the real stuff of history. They are the victims of such dictatorships, who by their very simplicity of style and narration, resist being turned into empty statistics of time.

An Albanian's Journey Toward Liberty is divided into three parts. Part I, which covers 89 pages, powerfully leads the reader through different stages of the author's life from childhood through manhood. Here he treats of death, sorrow, hunger, cold, persecution, and prison and labor camps in Albania and Yugoslavia. Part II deals with Margjinaj's successful escape to Greece and ultimately to freedom. In this section he passionately describes his many painstaking years of struggle to survive in the free world while preserving his national and political identity. The third and shortest part of the book describes the author's slow but successful fight to gain citizenship of his adopted country, Italy, by marriage and long residence.

The book is free from rancor toward those who caused his suffering and for this reason it is helpful reading for all interested in contemporary Albania. Zef Margjinaj's autobiography acquires a rare power with its story of ordinary and simple people striving to preserve and deepen their faith while caught up in events over which they have no control.

The book is available only in Italian and may be obtained by writing to the publishing house: La Nuova Base, Udine, Italy.

Albania: Political Imprisonment and Law

by Amnesty International

Amnesty International, a leading world-voice in the campaign for human rights, recently published a 58 page report on Albanian political imprisonment entitled, *Albania: Political Imprisonment and Law*. The appearance of this booklet coincides with the 40th anniversary of the Communist takeover of Albania and the commencement of its organized attacks on religion.

After a brief outline on the history of Albania, the authors of the booklet report and comment on the various laws and actions affecting human rights. Violation of religious rights are discussed at length, and many cases of imprisonment and execution are brought to light.

The booklet illustrates its findings with diagrams and personal case histories of torture and execution in various Albanian prisons or labor camps.

The booklet may be obtained by writing to: Amnesty International Publications, 1 Easton Street, London, WC1X 8DJ, England.

Simultaneously, the International Society for Human Rights published a documentary report on the violation of human rights in Albania.

For the past several years this society has pursued the investigation of rights violations of Albanian citizens, both in Albania and Yugoslavia. It is generally known there are over two million Albanians who live in Yugoslavia. For decades the Yugoslav government not only has denied the rights of these Albanians, but has viciously persecuted them.

The International Society for Human Rights, especially the German branch, has to be commended for its uncompromising stand and effort to bring to light the grave violation of human rights now occurring in Albania and Yugoslavia. Free Albanians share a great esteem for both of these humanitarian organizations.

The report on Albania may be obtained by writing to: International Society for Human Rights, Kaiserstr. 72, 6000 Frankfurt 1, West Germany.

Studies on Kosova

An East European Monograph (No. 155)

distributed by Columbia University Press, New York (1984)

by Arshi Pipa and Sami Repishiti (Eds.)

A scholarly book on Kosova for the English-speaking public has been long overdue. This largely Albanian-populated region in Yugoslavia has become much too important to ignore, belittle, or dismiss lightly. Kosova is the home of some two million Albanian ethnics in Yugoslavia, now the third largest ethnic group after the Serbians and Croats. Since the end of World War II, Kosova has been a yardstick of the nationality question in Yugoslavia, and a weather vane of relations between Yugoslavia and Albania. The region is underdeveloped and unstable, constantly threatening to erupt into violence.

In fact, turmoil and bloodshed, along with a measure of progress, have been characteristic of postwar Kosova. Its history since 1944 has been scarred by three major uprisings: the first in 1945, the second in 1968, and the third in the Spring of 1981. Although no accurate figures on the casualties are available, estimates of the dead and wounded run into the tens of thousands.

These events have attracted some attention in the West among political observers, scholars, and segments of the media. As a result, a number of fine studies on Kosova (some of them unpublished) have appeared in recent years, especially since the riots of 1981. But as a rule, they have been limited in their approach and aims. In general, they concentrated on the politics and economics of the region. There was a need for a broader, more inclusive study of Kosova's society, both present and past.

Studies on Kosova is a book designed to fulfill just such a need. The volume is the offspring of the International Conference on Kosova that was held in New York in November of 1982. That conference, it might be recalled, was prompted specifically by the events in Kosova in the Spring of 1981. The idea for the conference came from Dr. Safete Juka, of Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. A total of twenty scholars from the Albanian and non-Albanian community in the United States and abroad — including Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, and Australia — prepared papers for the day-long conference in the auditorium of the City University of New York.

The contents of this book represent the papers given at the International Conference on Kosova. But this book is not identical with the proceedings of that conference. As finally edited, the book reflects changes in the number of contributors to the volume, and in the weight given to the materials that went into it. The book features the work of fourteen scholars, six less than the number represented in New York. The conference in New York attempted to analyze major aspects of Kosovan society: history, geography, culture, economy, folklore, language, politics, and education. Nevertheless, the focus of the conference was on contemporary developments in Kosova, with the prominence given to national, political, and constitutional questions. This was understandable under the circumstances, since the conference, after all, was prompted by a political crisis in the region, namely the 1981 riots. The focus on contemporary issues reflected the interests of the majority of the people attending the conference who wanted to be informed about Kosova and about possible solutions to its many problems.

The book, however, seeks to redress the imbalance between the present and the past. It gives equal weight to Kosova's history and contemporary scene. At the same time, the editors tried to achieve a balance among the various topics or disciplines treated in the book. The subject matter of the book is organized in two parts: Part I includes discussions of history, language, and ethnology, while part II deals mainly with Kosova's economy and politics.

Part I features two studies on history, one by the French scholar Alain Ducellier, on the Albanian state in the Middle Ages; the other by the German Albanologist, Peter Bartl, on Kosova's past as seen through ecclesiastical reports. Another German scholar, Gerhard Grimm, has a chapter on maps of the Kosova region from 1730 to 1913. There follow two linguistic studies by Martin Camaj, of the University of Munich, who discusses the dialects of Kosova; and Eric P. Hamp, of the University of Chicago, who offers a brief etymological study of a common Albanian term. Albanian (including Kosova) and Serbian and Croatian oral epic folklore is analyzed by Albert Lord of Harvard University and Arshi Pipa of the University of Minnesota. The concluding essay in Part I is by Hartmut Alberg, German author and scholar of Albanian lexicography. The essay is a personal account of recent trips to Kosova (1979) and Albania (1980), with some revealing data on the way Albanians in Albania and Albanians in Yugoslavia see themselves. The contributions of Hamp and Albert were expressly solicited for the book; they did not present papers at the Kosova conference in New York.

The materials in the first part of this volume serve to illumine areas of Kosova that are hardly known by the general public, or possibly even by most scholars. As such, they provide the reader with valuable background knowledge for an understanding of the Kosovan society in its wider dimensions.

Part II of the book, dealing with contemporary aspects of Kosovan society, opens up with a detailed study of the economy of the province by Peter Prifti

of San Diego. The next chapter as well is an economic study, this one by the Australian scholar Adi Schnytzer, who draws comparisons between Kosova's and Albania's economies. The subject of Albanian and Serbian nationalisms in Kosova is explored by the London-based Albanian author, Anton Logoreci. The next two chapters deal with constitutional questions as they relate to the Kosova problem. These studies by Sami Repishti of Adelphi University in New York, and Paul Shoup of the University of Virginia, offer the reader a perspective on the problem that tends to be ignored by the media. But though constitutional questions are rather abstract and less dramatic than other facets of Kosova, it is evident from these two studies that they are influential in shaping Kosovan society, and have to be taken into consideration in the search for a long-term solution to the crisis in Kosova. Jens Reuter, German researcher on Southeastern Europe in Munich, has contributed a short but perceptive study on education in Kosova.

In a concluding essay, Arshi Pipa sums up the contents of the book and speculates on ways for resolving the problem of Kosova in a peaceful manner that would be mutually beneficial to all the parties concerned. The book has a useful bibliography of a dozen pages for readers who may be interested in further study of the subject.

Studies on Kosova is a valuable, if not indispensable, work for all those who wish to gain understanding of this sensitive region and its implications for peace and stability in the Balkans. Nevertheless, some readers are likely to miss the eight papers given at the Kosova Conference in New York that have not been included in the book. We understand, however, that a few of the missing papers have been published elsewhere. Dr. Patrick F. R. Artisien, of the University of Bradford in England, published his paper in a British journal. And the basic views on Kosova, as given by Elez Biberaj at the New York conference, were published in an article in the *East European Quarterly* (January 1983), and reprinted in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. IV (1983).

Studies on Kosova is a hard-cover book (280 pp.), printed in an attractive format. It sells for \$27 a copy, and may be ordered from Columbia University Press, 562 West 113th Street, New York, NY 10025, USA.

P.R.P.

**Gjarpijt e gjakut dhe novela tjera
(Bloodthirsty Vipers and Other Stories)**

by Adem Demaçi
edited by Idriz Lamaj

"The brave are not those who pull the trigger to commit a crime, but those who extend the hand of reconciliation."

Such is the citation on the title page of this reprint of Demaçi's longest and best-known work, *Gjarpijt e gjakut* (Bloodthirsty Vipers).

This is a powerful novel about the blood feud tradition among the Albanians in Kosovë, Yugoslavia. The novel takes its title from a gripping tale of three giant snakes — one yellow, one black, one red — slithering in a cavern, which coil themselves around three men who are lodging there for the night, one of whom is an Albanian. The snake that is the color of blood is coiled around the hand of the Albanian, and is sucking on his finger. The keeper of the cavern explains the meaning of all this to the Albanian.

"You will slay your own brother, and your brother will slay you, and this will go on forever! God has ordained that you will drink blood, and vomit blood. . .," he says.

A "providential curse" then, a terrible burden from which there could be no appeal. The scene symbolizes the basic conflict among the leading protagonists in the novel: the old, conservative, patriarchal, tradition-bound head of a Kosovar family who believes staunchly in the *vendetta* tradition, and one of his sons, who has rebelled against the destructive age-old tradition, and is determined to stop it. The young man represents the new generation of Kosovars who are beginning to examine critically inherited social customs, including the blood feud tradition, and to question them. But despite his intentions, the rebellious son fails to stop the carnage. In the end, he turns to a still younger generation, the generation of his children, and makes an impassioned, tearful plea to them to put an end to the dreadful social vice, to "crush the heads of the vipers," as he puts it.

As an artist, however, Demaçi is careful to keep well into the background, and refrain from openly taking a position on the issue. He states the position of the older generation with clarity, sympathy and vigor — he has a gift for describing the psychological and emotional states of his characters, facial expressions and bodily gestures. Yet, it is obvious that the itchy finger for the trigger is not for Demaçi. He is for calling a truce to bloodshed — a permanent truce. The reader can easily see that this work is a condemnation of the *vendetta* tradition. That is the way the people in Kosova saw it, when the work was first published in 1958. The book came as a revelation to them and, as the editor of this edition says, their "hearts were moved by it."

It will come as a surprise to many to learn that literary creativity is a recent occurrence in Kosovë. The opportunities for developing literary and other artistic talents did not exist for the Kosovars until recently. As a consequence, Kosovar writers and artists were rare, indeed, a neglected or forgotten species. Demaçi was the first writer to attract widespread attention and to make literary history in that part of the Albanian world.

Gjarpijt e gjakut, however, is more than a book on blood feuds. It has wider implications. From the viewpoint of social psychology, it is a comment on the tenacious hold of the *vendetta* tradition on those who practice it. In terms of the history of Kosovë, the story of the feuds illustrates the flawed, the stained and anachronistic side of that history, despite the virtues claimed for the feuds by its defenders. Moreover, in the opinion of certain critics, there is a definite political undercurrent in the novel. Both the editor of the book, I. Lamaj, and Ali Gjidia, professor of Albanian language and literature in Kosovë, view the novel as a subtle attack on the Slavic domination of the Albanians in Kosovë. Prof. Gjidia, who wrote an introduction to this edition entitled, "The Literary Work of Adem Demaçi," notes that by writing of the pride, tragedy and poverty of the Kosovars, Demaçi has "exposed to the limit the Slav occupation" of Kosovë. For his part, Lamaj remarks that Demaçi's novel is a subtle but powerful "denunciation of all the intrigues" used by the Yugoslav government to control and oppress the Kosovars. Apparently, Yugoslav authorities also thought that there was a political "message" in Demaçi's literary work which was not favorable to Belgrade, because in 1958 he was arrested on account of his political views. He is still in prison.

Gjarpijt e gjakut (translated in this edition as *Snakes of Blood* which, in our opinion, is not quite adequate, as it does not convey the full emotional impact and foreboding suggested by the Albanian title) is commonly recognized as Demaçi's masterpiece. He discovered his talent as a writer in the early 1950s, while he was still in high school in Prishtinë, the capital city of Kosovë. The editor of the *Bulletin*, Gjon Sinishta, was in Prishtinë at the time, and met Demaçi in 1954. Sinishta was then working as editor of the Literary Section of *Rilindja*, the Prishtinë daily. He recalls that Demaçi's work came to his attention during the paper's annual contest for the best story. Demaçi's short story "Lustraxhu" (The Shoe Shiner) won first prize, and was subsequently published in the pages of *Rilindja*. For a time Sinishta and Demaçi worked closely together on the staff of the paper. The collaboration ended in 1956, when Sinishta was arrested and imprisoned, but three years later he was joined in prison by Demaçi. They shared prison life together until 1962, when

they were released. Sinishta remarks that although he and Demaçi differed in their politics — Demaçi was a Marxist Communist, he an anti-Communist — they were friends, supported each other in their daily hardships in prison, and were committed to the “common goal of freedom and democracy for all Albanians.”

Apart from “The Shoe Shiner,” Demaçi is the author of a number of short stories. His stories appeared in the periodical, *Zëri i rinisë* (The Voice of Youth), and the literary magazine, *Jeta e re* (The New Life), both published in Prishtinë. Demaçi wrote realistically about the everyday problems in the lives of people around him. The realistic and timely nature of his writings, presented to the reader with artistic skill, attracted the attention of noted critics and publishers like Dr. Esad Mekuli, editor of *Jeta e re*, and the late Ernest Koliqi, publisher of *Shejzat* (The Pleiades), an influential literary and cultural Albanian review in exile (Italy). Following his arrest in 1958, Demaçi became a patriotic figure as well, which enhanced his literary image and spread his fame as a writer to every corner of the Albanian world.

As the title of the book being reviewed here indicates, this edition includes his major work, *Gjarpit e gjaku*, plus a collection of his short stories, eleven in all. Nearly all of the stories treat of social themes, especially the grinding poverty and despair of the masses of Kosovars. In this respect, Demaçi reminds one of Maxim Gorki or, better yet, the Albanian Migjeni. He is acutely sensitive to the suffering of helpless folk and to social inequality. He is critical of wealthy men who are arrogant and indifferent to the poor, and of the religious establishment whose leaders do nothing substantial to help the downtrodden poor. Such seems to be the thrust of the stories: “The Loom Worker,” “The Eve of the Bajram Feast,” and “When God Forgets.” One of the stories is about the love and engagement of an outlaw and his childhood sweetheart (“Congratulations”), another (“Eh, Twin”) is a humorous piece about a husband pretending to beat his wife to appease his offended mother, one is a tale of intense village pride, hurt, and self-destruction (“In Flames”), while the story entitled “Bravery” tells of two men involved in a blood feud who come to realize that friendship is better than vengeance, put their guns aside and embrace “like old friends who had not seen each other for a long time.”

This reprinting of Demaçi's work is evidence of the continued and growing interest in the author, both as an artist and as a patriot and martyr. The soft-cover volume of 140 pages is illustrated by the talented Albanian artist, Zoi Shyti. Its publication at this time was intended as a commemoration of the 25th anniversary since Demaçi was first imprisoned by the Yugoslav government. Printing costs were covered by the president and members of the “Alia Pashë Gusija” branch of the “League of Prizren In Exile” organization.

This is a timely and significant book. A special merit of the work is the English article in back of the book which has much useful data on Demaçi's life, including his long ordeal in prison.

But the publishers err when they claim that the volume includes the “entire literary output” of Demaçi (even if by this is meant his published works), since it does not include “The Shoe Shiner,” and at least two other short stories: “The Sun Knows Its Own Course,” and “The Return.” We might add that a number of stories by Demaçi are in manuscript form, waiting to be published.

Gjarpit e gjaku carries no price label. But donations in any amount are accepted by the publisher. The book may be obtained to writing to: P.O. Box 276, Bronx, NY 10465, USA.

P.R.P.

Flamurtar i Kombit, F. S. Noli, 1882-1982
(Standard Bearer of the Nation, F. S. Noli, 1882-1982)
 Saltus Press, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1984
 Eduard Liço (Ed.)

1982 was a year of moment for the Albanians of America, and the Albanian world in general. It marked the Centennial of the birth of Theofan Stylian Noli, the most distinguished Albanian figure in America and, in the opinion of many, in the entire contemporary Albanian world. The special occasion was commemorated in many parts of the Albanian world with seminars on his life and work, religious services and festive gatherings.

The Albanians of America had more reason, perhaps, than anybody to celebrate the Centennial of Noli, since he spent most of his life and did most of his work here in the United States. To mention but two of his outstanding achievements, it was here that he founded the Albanian Orthodox Church in America (1908), and (along with other Albanian nationalists) the Vatra organization (1912). Appropriately, therefore, in May of 1982, the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and the Society for Albanian Studies in the United States held a day-long Symposium on Noli at Harvard University. It was followed the next day with the celebration of a special liturgy at the St. George Cathedral in South Boston, and a banquet at Anthony's Pier IV Restaurant on the Boston harbor.

Vatra, for its part, took steps in two directions to honor its outstanding pioneer leader. Its organ, *Dielli*, whose first editor back in 1909 was Rev. Fan S. Noli, published a special edition of 12 pages in its June 1, 1982 issue devoted entirely to Noli. It is a valuable edition with articles in English and Albanian, illustrated matter, a selection of Noli's writings and a full-page chronological biography of him. In addition, Vatra sponsored a Seminar of Studies on Noli in New York on September 4, 1982. The organizing committee for the seminar was Dr. Eduard Liço, and included Tonin Mirakaj, Hajdar Tomuzi, Gjekë Gjonlekaj, and Essad Bilali. The book under review is the product of that initiative.

Flamurtar i Kombit (Standard Bearer of the Nation) is a proper title for this commemorative volume. It suggests the fiery patriotism, the exemplary devotion to country, the figure of an intrepid commander marching into battle, and a certain determination and militancy of spirit that were characteristic of Fan S. Noli. All of this and more, we believe, comes across to the reader of this volume.

The contents of the book are both in Albanian and English, with the Albanian predominating. However, not all the materials in the book — numbering some two dozen articles or items — are speeches given at the seminar in New York. Some are contributions by people who did not participate in the seminar.

There is a wide range in the length of the materials. The shortest — those by Imam Isa Hoxha, Falk Komitza, Hasan Dosti, and Ernest Koliqi — are only a page each. All of them pay homage to Noli, thus showing the impact he made in the ranks of the intelligentsia, even among those who differed strongly with him on certain issues. The two longest essays — that of Namik Ressuli entitled, “Fan S. Noli Sot” (Fan S. Noli Today), and an unsigned one, “Nga Qyteza në Fort Lauderdale” (From Qyteza to Fort Lauderdale) — attempt to analyze and evaluate Noli from many angles, in order to give a rounded portrait of the man. Ressuli's essay is in essence a critique of Noli's literary career, which is to say, his work as an historian, translator, critic, orator and poet. The unsigned essay, a capsule biography of Fan Noli, is the product of an informed and judicious mind that recognizes the great merits of Noli, yet

does not shrink from raising questions about some of his activities, choices, or beliefs. These are learned essays that offer some novel glimpses of Noli, but Prof. Ressuli's critique would have been more effective, we think, if he had resisted the temptation to polemicize with fellow literary critics of the Bishop.

Half a dozen of the articles are by Albanian clerics — Orthodox, Catholic and Moslem — three of them by Arbëresh prelates of the Eastern Rite Catholic Church. In the article, "Reflections on Metropolitan Noli," the Very Rev. Arthur E. Liolin, gives what might be described as a spiritual and psychological portrait of Noli: the depth, the complexity, the mystery of the man. There is a short tribute to Noli by Imam Isa Hoxha. Interesting new information on Noli is given by Msgr. Zef Oroshi in his article, "Si e njofta Fan Nolin" (How I Met Noli), where he tells of a meeting between the Bishop and Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston and their talks on ecumenism and other matters. The contributions of the Arbëresh Bishops Stamati, Lupinacci, and Msgr. Fortino reveal their high esteem of Noli as a patriot-clergyman, and their appreciation of his liturgical works which proved to be practically indispensable in the hands of Arbëresh translators of Orthodox Church literature. A revealing view of the strengths, but also some weaknesses in Noli's work in this area, is given by Msgr. Fortino in his scholarly article on the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

Albanians in Italy, both Arbëresh and emigrés from Albania, are strongly represented in this volume, with six contributions in all. One of these is an essay by the Arbëresh, Vincenz Golletti Baffa, on Noli and the "Great Moral Albania." This is an original, well-written piece (in Albanian) on Noli's philosophy of non-violence or pacifism that rings with the voice of authenticity.

About half a dozen of the articles are in the form of personal reminiscences of Fan Noli. These include the contributions of Rev. Liolin, Msgr. Oroshi, Anthony Athanas, Nexhat Peshkëpia, and Peter R. Prifti. They are largely human interest pieces — a couple with elements of humor — that add to our knowledge of the versatile figure of Noli.

Other articles provide further analysis of Noli's nationalism, literary creativity, and character. There is an informative study on "The Ottoman-Albanian Connection" and Noli's place in it, by Prof. Carl Max Kortepeter of New York University. Prof. Martin Camaj offers a literary critique of Noli's youthful work, the drama "Israelitë e Filistinë," while Anton Logoreci tells of Noli's "encounters with Shakespeare" in two fine pieces by Noli himself on how he came to learn about Shakespeare and what he thought of him. And speaking of Shakespeare, Prof. Janet Byron of Cleveland State University has an illuminating critique entitled, "Fan Noli's Translation of Shakespearean Rhythm and Figurative Language." This is a study of a passage from *Othello* that reveals fully, among other things, Byron's remarkable mastery of the Albanian language. It is a brilliant commentary.

A most perceptive look into Noli's character and politics is given in the unsigned article, "Kontradiktat e Nolit," and in the section "Fan Noli Revolucionar?" Both are keen analytical studies that show the bright as well as the dim sides of that creative, inspiring, but also quizzical personality, Fan S. Noli.

The book contains a couple of excerpts from Noli's speeches, one of them given in Boston in 1962, in which he said that "Without Vatra's support there might not have been an Albania today." The editor of this volume also wisely included a selection of Noli's writings, both original and translated works. Among these are passages from *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, Mark Anthony's funeral oration from *Julius Caesar*, Poe's "Korbi," and Noli's own "Jepni për Nënë," and "Krenari." This last one, a political, religious, and philosophical poem, is accompanied by a commentary by Reshat Agaj that offers a thoughtful and stimulating view of the history and character of the Albanian people, written in beautiful Albanian.

Indeed, one of the virtues of this book are the contributions and passages written in fine Albanian. There are several of them, and they are a pleasure to read.

On the other hand, the volume suffers from certain defects. There are a number of errors of fact — some of them possibly misprints — particularly of dates. There are also some inconsistencies of style or terminology. The term "arkipeshk" seems out of place in reference to prelates of the Orthodox Church (including, of course, Noli), where customary practice counsels the use of the terms "peshkop" or "kryepeshkop" (see, for example, the articles by the Arbëresh bishops). There is inconsistency in the use of "Anglishte" and "Inglishte" (p. 162, 163), in the same article. The use of localisms such as "ndjevi" (Korçare) (p. 165), is another defect.

There are minor faults. They do not affect the overall quality of the book. *Flamurtari i Kombit* adds to our knowledge and appreciation of Theofan Noli as a nationalist, statesman, theologian, scholar, writer, orator, etc. Beyond this, the book offers the most detailed composite portrait that we have to date of Noli "The Man" — Noli in informal settings, at the dinner table, in his humble apartment on Blagden Street, Noli making casual remarks or chatting with great enthusiasm. In short, this volume is a definite contribution to the bibliography on Noli.

The book has a list of the people who contributed funds for its publication, a bibliography of about two dozen titles, and a list of books currently in the Vatra Library, including over a dozen titles by Noli in Albanian and English.

This is a soft-cover book of 178 pages, published by the Saltus Press, 24 Jolma Road, Worcester, MA 01604, USA. It sells for \$10 per copy.

Peter R. Prifti

The Mysticism of Islam and Bektashism (Misticizma Islame dhe Bektashizma)

Printed in Naples, Italy, 1984

by Baha Rexheb

translated by Bardhyl Pogoni

Numerous people in the United States know little or nothing about the religion of the Albanian people. When some knowledge, however, of their religion seeped out to the West, the view began to circulate that Albania was a Moslem country — the only one in Europe. The view gained currently apparently because the majority of the population is Moslem (about 70%). It's a notion that greatly irritated the late Faik Konitza, distinguished Albanian intellectual and prominent Albanian-American leader who was himself a Moslem. "Albania is not a Moslem country," he says emphatically in his book, *Albania: The Rock Garden of Southeastern Europe* (p. 132).

Unfortunately, Konitza then went on to make an error of his own, for he says that Albania is "a country of three religions," namely, Moslem, Orthodox, and Catholic. This is the popular view even today. A more accurate statement would be that Albania is a country of two major religious groupings: Moslem and Christian. A still more accurate rendering would be to say that Albanians are divided in four religious groups: Sunni and Bektashi Moslems, and Orthodox and Catholic Christians. The book being reviewed here, *The Mysticism of Islam and Bektashism*, tells the story of the Bektashi Moslems,

who belong to the smaller of the two Moslem denominations or sects in Albania. This book, however, is not about Bektashism in Albania, but rather about Bektashism in general, Bektashism as one of the great sects of Islam.

Few people in America know that Islam has a greater number of sects than Christianity. Its main divisions, however are the Sunni, the major group, whose adherents follow the tradition of the Orthodox Moslem law, known as the Sunnah, and the Shiah, which represents the mystical tradition of Islam, and whose followers are known as Shiites. A more popular name for the Shiah group is Sufism, a term usually associated in the West with "whirling dervishes." This conception of Sufism has had unfortunate consequences for an understanding of the Moslem faith. As Dr. Pogoni notes: "The spectacle of 'whirling dervishes' caught the imagination of travelers and Christian missionaries, and since then it is rare to find in popular Western literature objective accounts of Sufi orders," which, he adds, number in the hundreds.

Bektashism is a continuation of the tradition of Sufism, which is to say, the mystical strain in Islam, known as *tasawwuf*. It is one of the Sufi orders, founded in 1282 by Pir Hajji Bektash, hence the name Bektashism.

This volume is a translation of the Albanian text, *Misticizma Islame dhe Bektashizma*, published by Baba Rexheb in 1970. Baba Rexheb is the spiritual head of the Bektashi monastery or house of worship in Detroit, Michigan, known as *teqe* (tekke). The tekke was founded in 1954.

Pogoni's motive for translating the book was essentially the same as that of the author of the original work — to enable readers to gain a wider knowledge of Bektashism. The translation responds, in particular, to the interest of the younger generations of Albanians in America who would like to know more about Bektashism, but who do not know Albanian well enough to read the original.

The volume under review is not a complete translation of the original text. Enough of the Albanian text, however, has been translated to give the reader a fairly rounded picture of the sect of Bektashism, including its origins in Islamic mysticism, its tenets and rituals, and a detailed historical account of the sect since its beginnings in Turkestan in the Middle Ages.

The book contains twelve chapters, organized into two parts: the first part dealing with the Mysticism of Islam, and the second part concentrating solely on Bektashism. In Part One there are illuminating discussions of the origins of Islamic mysticism, biographical data on the Prophet Muhammad, the nature and characteristics of a variety of religious currents, such as Zahidism and Fakirism, the beginnings of the mystic orders, the teachings of noted Moslem thinkers like Al Ghazal, and the relationship of mysticism to theology, philosophy, and science. In Part Two there are accounts of mystic orders such as Kaadriism, Riffaism, Halwatism, Saadism, and Shazalim, which preceded or set the stage, as it were, for the rise of the Bektashi order. There follow materials on the basic principles of Bektashism, with much attention given to questions of moral and ethical conduct — the virtues and vices that affect the daily lives of men and women. The concluding chapter is devoted to citations from the teachings of the founder of Bektashism, as recorded in the scriptures of the order.

The book features a short biographical sketch of Baba Rexheb, the foreword to the original Albanian text (translated by Mrs. Francis Haddad), a foreword to the translation by Bardhyl Pogoni, and an introduction by Peter R. Prifti.

Toward the end of the book there is an Appendix with much information on the building of the Bektashi Tekke in Detroit — the first such tekke in the United States, and the history and importance of the Bektashi religion in the life of the Albanian nation and people. The book contains a glossary of some ten pages — practically indispensable for a work of this kind, considering the great number of Turkish and Arabic terms which intersperse the text. The author of the translation has provided a bibliography of several dozen titles, among them a good number of Sufi sources, plus an index.

This work is a valuable contribution to the English literature on Bektashism, and a useful addition to the bibliography on religion in general.

The volume, a paperback of 174 pages, was printed in Naples, Italy. It can be obtained, we presume, by contacting Dr. Pogoni at 402 South Highland, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, USA.

Magia Miti e Credenze Popolari — Ricerca etnografica tra gli Albanesi d'Italia
(Magic, Myth and Popular Beliefs — Ethnographic Research on the Albanians of Italy)
Cosenza, Italy (1983)
by Antonio Bellusci

Reading this book by Prof. Bellusci took this reviewer back to the village in southeastern Albania where he grew up as a child. It brought back to mind tales the villagers told of myth and magic that inspired wonder and fear and many unanswered questions. There were tales about the "Evil Eye," especially in connection with a new-born baby. And tales of old people on the brink of death who were unable to give up the ghost because someone had cast a spell on them. Other tales told of spirits appearing in the guise of animals, in order to convey some occult message to human beings, or to tempt them to their destruction.

Tales of this sort are very widespread among peasant, pastoral, and primitive societies. They are found also among the Albanians in southern Italy, known as the Arbëresh. That is the theme of this book by the Arbëresh scholar, Papas Antonio Bellusci. His work is a pioneering documentary on the Arbëresh folklore of myth and magic and a variety of other popular beliefs, that have been handed down orally from generation to generation.

The book is the result of a carefully-planned field research study among four Arbëresh villages. The materials are given in the original, spoken Arbëresh of the villagers — most of them old people over seventy — who were interviewed by the author in the course of his research. All of the texts were accompanied by translations in Italian. A further aid to understanding of the texts is provided by the detailed notes and a section of scholarly analysis of the ideas and terms found in the texts.

There are tales here of the workings of Fate in the lives of people, formulas used in rituals for working magic cures in people and animals, customs and beliefs connected with death, and tales of wandering spirits of dead people. Other tales tell of dead persons returning to life in the form of an animal, and of evil spirits such as the Devil taking on the appearance of a snake. Here, for example, is the Arbëresh text of a formula for a "magic cure."

"C'je bën atë n'mest udhes?"

"Jam e rri kry se kam misht e kputur."

"Mirr val ulliri f'bardh e bën krij me doren e manxhim. E kshitu misht e kputur (ken)." (p. 31)

"What are you doing there in the middle of the road?"

"I'm sitting here because I have a torn ligament."

"Take some clear olive oil and cross yourself with the left hand. And you will be cured of your torn ligament."

The original texts in Arbëresh in *Magia Miti e Credenze Popolari* will be of interest not only to students of folklore, but to scholars of Albanian, as well, since the orthography of these texts differs greatly from that of the standard literary Albanian. There is matter for study here also for etymologists and semanticists. These are some of the things that make this work a valuable ethnological study of an Albanian culture in the West that has long been a source of pride and admiration for the rest of the Albanian world. The book is likely to be especially appreciated by those who have good knowledge of Arbëresh and Italian. The author has, however, thoughtfully provided a short, two-page summary of the book's contents in English for the benefit of English speakers.

Prof. Bellusci tells us that this is a study about an inward magical world that "everyone has always been afraid to investigate." It's a world of "impersonal, occult, supernatural forces," and "tales of events (whether they) really happened or not, which are well-known by everybody in the community" (p. 128). To quote the author again, these are "Mythical tales that represent a link between the living and the dead, the present and the past. There are also some links with the life to come, animism, metempsychosis. . . , the mysticism of numbers and various types of magic arts" (pp. 128-129). It is clear from this study that for the Arbëresh myth and magic were not idle pastimes, but a vital part of their world outlook. They were, moreover, practical tools for facing and solving real, everyday problems of life.

This book enhances further the reputation of Papas Bellusci as an eminent Arbëresh scholar. The work follows two previous anthropological studies by him, one a collection of traditional Arbëresh songs (1971), the other a study of the art and folklore of weaving among the Arbëresh (1977). The latter book received extensive and very favorable notices in the Albanian and foreign press. Bellusci has also published a large number of articles on various aspects of Arbëresh society, plus other topics relevant to the Albanian world in general. The section on bibliography in the current volume contains an up-to-date listing of his writings.

With this book, Prof. Antonko Bellusci has illuminated new sides of Arbëresh society, thus bringing the Albanians of Italy closer to Albanians everywhere, and in the process enriching the Albanian cultural heritage.

The book is a paperback of 138 pages, and sells for \$15 a copy. It can be ordered directly from the author as follows: Prof. Antonio Bellusci, Via S. Lucia 20, 87100 Cosenza, Italy.

P.R.P.

Basic Albanian Etymologies

Slavica Publishers, Inc., Columbus, Ohio (1984)

by Martin E. Huld

In May, 1984 the Albanian Friendship Society of Southern California organized an "Albanian Day" at the University of California at Los Angeles. One of the speakers at the function was a lanky and alert young man, Dr. Martin E. Huld, professor at the California State University in Los Angeles. Dr. Huld spoke on the relationship between the Albanians and the Illyrians, a subject of perennial interest to philologists and other people. His talk generated great interest and was well received by the audience.

That was the first time this reviewer met Dr. Huld. Impressed by his erudition and delivery, a friend of mine and I later invited him for dinner, at which time we talked at length about the Albanian language. Our guest made no mention, however, of a book he had written on the subject, so we were pleasantly surprised when we learned a couple of months later of the publication of his book, *Basic Albanian Etymologies*.

For as long as we can remember, the "average American" has had a natural curiosity about the Albanian language. Talk to Albanians in this country, and they are likely to say that upon meeting non-Albanians, almost invariably the first question they ask is, "What's Albanian like?"

The world of Academia, too, has long been fascinated by the Albanian language, particularly in the last 150 years or so, when scholars began to wonder to which family of languages Albanian belonged. It was not until 1854 that Franz Bopp, a German scholar, "provided the definitive evidence" that Albanian belonged to the Indo-European family of languages. He proved his thesis in his now renowned treatise, *Über das Albanesische in seinen verwandtschaftlichen Beziehungen*. Before him, in the first decade of the 18th century, another German savant, the philosopher Leibniz, made a comparative study of 102 Albanian words with other European languages, but was unable to arrive at a proper classification of Albanian. Dr. Huld discusses these and other points in a most interesting chapter on the "Historical and Ethnographic Background" of Albanian.

The bulk of his book is devoted to a learned analysis of 250 Albanian words, said to be the core of basic words in the language. The author examines the etymology or roots of each one of these common, everyday words. In each instance he summarizes the "chief etymological literature since (Gustav) Meyer," whose book, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der albanesischen Sprache* (1891), is recognized as a landmark etymological study of Albanian. He cites the work of many Albanologists, but pays particular attention to Meyer (German), Holger Pedersen (Danish), Norbert Jokl (Austrian), Carlo Tagliavini (Italian), the late Eqrem Çabej, internationally known linguist, and Prof. Eric P. Hamp of the University of Chicago. There are references also to the work on the Albanian language of Martin Camaj, Janet Byron, and Bardhyl Pogoni.

To this layman, this book is an impressive study. Its author appears to be well acquainted with the already vast literature on the subject — the book has a 30 page bibliography — he has gained mastery of his subject, and he shows independence of judgement throughout the study. While acknowledging the merits and contributions of leading scholars of Albanian, both past and present, he nevertheless has sufficient confidence in his judgement and understanding of Albanian to question, on occasion, their views on a particular point, even the views of people like Çabej and Hamp. In this regard, we were rather surprised to note that Prof. Huld does not have a high regard for Stuart E. Mann, author of several works in the field of Albanian language studies, including a couple of dictionaries; nor for Zacharia Mayani, author of *Etruscans Begin To Speak* (1962). He remarks that Mann's studies "are of little value" (p. 13), while of Mayani he says forthrightly that he "combines bad Etruscology with worse Albanology" (p. 172).

Concerning Çabej, Huld says that the "most important recent contributions" to Albanian etymological studies is the series of articles which Çabej published between 1962 and 1968. He notes that besides providing an up-to-date bibliography, Çabej gave "valuable dialect information" not available

outside of Albania. It is reported that Çabej's studies will be published in eight to ten volumes under the title, *Etymological Studies in the Area of Albanian*.

Prof. Huld has some interesting things to say on the origin of Geg and Tosk dialects, the relationship between Albanian and ancient Balkan languages such as Illyrian, Thracian, and Dacian, and the place of Albanian in relation to other Indo-European languages. On the two main Albanian dialects, he writes that the differentiation or divergence within Albanian that crystallized in Geg and Tosk occurred some time between the 4th and 10th centuries A.D. He does not believe that we can say for certain, at this stage of our awareness, what the relationship is between Albanian and Illyrian, and the same holds for the relation of Albanian to other Indo-European languages, although there appears to be a fairly substantial link between it and two other language groups, one in Southeastern Europe and the other in Northwestern Europe. This view differs, we might add, from that held by scholars on Albania, who see Illyrians as the direct ancestors of the Albanian people.

It is possible that on some questions Dr. Huld is too cautious, or perhaps too skeptical. In any case, we do not doubt that this book signals the arrival of a new and serious scholar of Albanian, from whom important work can be expected.

Basic Albanian Etymologies is a paperback volume of 214 pages. It contains maps of Albanian dialects (six more or less distinct ones), tables of eight Albanian alphabets from the past to the present, and tables that show the distinguishing characteristics of over a dozen dialects within and without Albania proper. There is also an index of the Albanian words analyzed in the text.

The book may be purchased for \$17.16 per copy (including shipping charges) from Slavica Publishers, P.O. Box 14388, Columbus, OH 43214, USA.

Albanian Grammar

published by Otto Harrassowitz
Wiesbaden, West Germany (1984)
by Martin Camaj
translated by Leonard Fox

There has been a scarcity of Albanian language materials for English-speaking people interested in Albanian. Since C. A. Chekrezi published his small, but pioneering *English-Albanian Dictionary* sixty-one years ago (1923), there have been only three other dictionaries on the language published in America: Nelo Drizari's dictionary (quite inadequate), G. Kici and H. Aliko's *English-Albanian Dictionary*, and G. Kici's *Albanian-English Dictionary*, both of them valuable works. Albanian grammars, too, have been in short supply. In 1947, there appeared Drizari's *Spoken and Written Albanian*, which, despite its shortcomings, met an obvious need. Some years later, Fehime Pipa published her *Elementary Albanian* — a work considerably more sophisticated than Drizari's — and more recently L. Newmark, P. Hubbard, and P. Prifti published the scholarly *Standard Albanian. A Reference Grammar*. To these should be added the other work by Newmark and associates, *Spoken Albanian*, designed as a practical tool for learning conversational Albanian.

Now a new work in the field of grammar is available for the English-speaking world, Professor Martin Camaj's *Albanian Grammar*. Camaj is a well-known name in the area of Albanian language and folklore. He is the author moreover of seven books of poetry and prose in Albanian, which he published in Prishtinë (Kosovë), Rome, and Munich. Over the past three decades, he has established his credentials as one of the most creative Albanian scholar-authors in the West.

His latest work, as might be expected, shows the wealth of his background as a scholar of the Albanian language, literature, folklore, and history. He knows his subject matter and is at home with the sophisticated terminology of linguistics. He brings to his subject his vast theoretical knowledge of Albanian grammar, plus a wealth of practical knowledge resulting from years of teaching Albanian in Munich.

Camaj tells us that the aim of his book is to "present a complete picture of the (Albanian) language in its three most important variants: Geg, Tosk and Arbëresh." In this sense, his work differs significantly from other Albanian grammars. It is a novel approach which enlarges the dimensions of the work, and at the same time makes it more challenging to the student, even if the text may be somewhat confusing at first.

The author has aimed, through this approach, to reveal the "basic features of the language," which he terms Common Albanian. That structure consists of words whose roots have remained unchanged in all the dialectal variants of the language. To demonstrate this, Camaj goes back into the past, using illustrations from the writings of early authors of Albanian, including Buzuku, Bogdani, Da Lecce, Vilard, De Rada. The text is strewn with illuminating historical notes, which make for interesting comparative analyses of the language, as it evolved through the centuries.

The book is divided into three main sections: phonology, morphology, and syntax, with the focus, as is customary with texts of grammar, on the morphology. Each of the nineteen chapters in the section on the morphology concludes with a number of exercises and reading selections. A key to these materials is available in back of the book. However, unlike the usual exercises in texts of grammar, these materials do not test the students' knowledge of specific elements of grammar, such as gender, number, verb endings, declensions of nouns, etc. This may be seen as a deficiency by some.

One novel feature of Camaj's *Albanian Grammar* is the Chrestomathy, a section of some two dozen pages with selections from classic authors of Albanian, among them Gjon Buzuku — there are passages from *Mëshari* (The Missal), first Albanian book on record (1555) — L. Matranga, J. Variboba, P. Budi, and more contemporary authors like Fishta, Noli, Migjeni, J. Xoxa, and Adem Gajtani, a Kosovar writer. The selections are accompanied by copious vocabulary and grammatical notes. The Chrestomathy is a welcome feature of the work, above all for linguistic historians.

The introduction to the grammar has a compact account of the history of literary Albanian, and of the efforts made since the Congress of Manastir (1908) to develop a unified national literary language. These efforts culminated in 1972 (after intense research work that began in 1952), with the language reform that is currently recognized as the unified or standard literary Albanian. This was a momentous event in the history of the Albanian language and nation. The Albanians in Kosovë, who number over two million and who speak the Geg dialect, recognized the importance of the movement for language reform going on at the time in Albania, and in 1968 adopted the unified language as their own, despite the fact that unified Albanian is based mostly on the Tosk dialect.

Camaj tells us that the results of the language reform are incorporated in his grammar, "without regard to the personal opinions of the author respecting certain aspects of the 'unified language.'" This was an appropriate decision. Yet one may question whether he went far enough in this direction. One notes that in the analyses and vocabulary lists in this grammar, Geg words and phrases are given first place, while the Tosk variants are given in parentheses. To be sure, Camaj cautions that this should not be taken as a slighting of the Tosk in favor of the Geg dialect. Nevertheless, some readers

may well get the impression that this grammar, irrespective of its many merits, is an attempt to revive or perpetuate literary Geg in defiance of the standard national language. If that impression takes hold, it would diminish greatly the value and usefulness of the work.

This work contains many useful tables on nouns, verbs and other parts of speech. There are incisive analyses of word derivations and formations in the sections on nouns, verbs, adverbs and so on. The translation of the work in English is, in general, good, especially in the handling of technical linguistic terms: yet, there are lapses here and there. The plural of *lugat* (ghost) is not *luget* but *lugetër* (p. 25), and that of *malësi* (mountains) is not *malësi* but *malësitë* (p. 22), according to the *Dictionary of the Present Albanian Language* (Tiranë, 1980). Some translations of phrases, as well, are rather awkward or not entirely accurate. Thus, *të kihet parasysh* is translated as "may one have in mind!", whereas a more accurate rendering would be, "let it be kept in mind!" (p. 135). Again, the phrase, *po ha bukë*, is translated as "I am eating bread," which is correct as a literal translation, but more properly one would say simply "I'm eating," since *bukë* in this context means "having a meal," rather than refer to the specific object "bread."

Despite these reservations, there is no doubt in our view that Prof. Camaj's *Albanian Grammar* is a contribution to the scholarship on Albanian language studies in English. Its treatment of the three main variants or dialects of Albanian is illuminating — indeed, unique, as far as we are aware — while the historical notes on past usages of Albanian provide very useful source material for students and teachers of Albanian.

The book is in hard-cover, the printing is quality work, and it comes in a handsome cover. The book may be obtained from the publisher for \$28.



Sanctuary of the Madonna of Shkodër (Albania), demolished in 1967 by Albanian Red Guards.



Interior of Franciscan church in Shkodër before religion was outlawed.

(270-275 A.D.), Probus (276-282 A.D.), Diocletian (284-305 A.D.), Constantine the Great (306-337 A.D.). To these may be added the name of Justinian (reign, 527-565 A.D.), Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, who was a native of Tauresium in Illyricum. Constantine and Justinian are known, of course, for the historic roles they played in the shaping and consolidation of the early Christian Church. Because of their great interest in the temporal and the sacred, or "affairs of state" and the Christian faith, they may perhaps be regarded as early representatives of what later became the two distinctive and closely related features of Catholicism in Albania: religion and country. It's a relationship that is best expressed by the motto of the Albanian Catholic Church, *Fe e Atdhe* (Faith and Fatherland).

We shall pick up the thread of the story of Christianity in Albania later on, but will pause briefly for a look at some basic data on the Albanian Catholic Church and its organization in our time.

Nearly three-fourths of the population of modern Albania is composed of Sunni and Bektashi Moslems, the combined percentage of the two sects varying from 68 to 71, depending on the author or source. Christians of the Eastern Rite (Orthodox) and Catholics make up the rest of the population. The Orthodox account for about 20 percent, while the figure given for the Catholic population varies from 10.2 percent (Stavro Skendi) to 13 percent (Gjon Sinishtra). Most of the Catholic Albanians live in the northern part of the country, with Shkodër as the focal point and traditionally the stronghold of Catholicism in Albania. In actual figures, the Catholics at present number about 300,000.¹ This figure does not include another 100,000 Albanian Catholics who inhabit areas in Yugoslavia close to the Albanian border, but who are subject to the Catholic Church in that country.

Prior to the abolition of the religious establishment in Albania in 1967, the Catholic Church was organized as follows: It had two archdioceses, one in Shkodër, the other in Durrës; three dioceses in Pult, Sapa, and Lezhë; one abbey (*Abbay Nullius*), known as the abbey of St. Alexander in Orosh, Mirdita; and one Apostolic Administration for central Albania, which was under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Durrës and numbered about 4,000 Catholic faithful.

At that time, the Church had a total of 123 parishes, served by 90 secular priests and over 30 Franciscans. Shkodër was the site of the Papal College, which had an enrollment of about 60 seminarians who were training to become priests.

In the past, however, the Albanian Catholic Church was differently organized and considerably larger. Its jurisdiction spread over a much wider area, and included not only the two archdioceses of Shkodër and Durrës, but also the Archdiocese of Tivari (now Bar, in Montenegro), and the Archdioceses of Shkup (Skopje) with its see in Prizren (now in Macedonia and Kosovo respectively). The Archdiocese of Tivar, and the Archdiocese of Shkup, presently the Shkup-Prizren Diocese are now a part of the Albanian Catholic Church in Yugoslavia. The bishops of these dioceses are under the jurisdiction of the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of the peoples. Their dioceses are likewise under the jurisdiction of the same Congregation.

Early Church History

During the first centuries of its existence, the Christian Church faced numerous challenges, both from within and without its ranks. The challenges from without came from rival religious movements like Mithraism, Manichaeism, and Gnosticism. Those from within came from a series of sects, each one professing to be the correct interpreter of the faith, and by virtue of that knowledge claiming the loyalty of all Christian faithful. Prominent among such sects — all of which were subsequently declared heresies — were Montanism, Arianism, and Pelagianism. The impact of several of the rival religions and sects was felt in the lands of Illyria, as well. Some of those challenges posed a serious threat to the Church, and it took several centuries before the tenets of the faith and Church ritual assumed a standard form, universally accepted by all Christian believers. We shall discuss these challenges briefly, in part to indicate the nature of the controversies, but also to show that problems and difficulties encountered by Christianity today, and in particular the Catholic Church of Albania, are nothing new. They have been an inseparable part of the history of Christianity from the time of the Roman Empire, through the Middle Ages and the Ottoman threat, down to our day. Each time, however, the Church emerged triumphant.

Mithraism — Perhaps the greatest of the early challenges to Christianity was Mithraism, a mystery religion originating from Persia (Iran). The name comes from Mithras, a god associated with the Sun, and hence with light and power. Mithraism was similar in many respects to Christianity, but its central figure was mythical rather than a historical personage, like Christ. Furthermore, as a mystery cult, it emphasized secret rites of initiation and ceremonies of purification which promised to lead the believer, by degrees, to a state of blessedness.

Mithraism became very popular with the Roman military. For a time, its influence was felt also in Albania. For four centuries after the resurrection of Christ it competed with Christianity for influence among the subjects of the Roman Empire, but withered away in the 5th Century of our era.

Gnosticism — The term "Gnosticism" is derived from *gnosis*, which is defined by some as a higher type of knowledge, by others as revelation. But whether as knowledge or revelation, it was attainable not by ordinary intellectual processes, but through mystical experience. Mysticism brought spiritual enlightenment to man and delivered the soul from the bondage of matter. It was in this manner that man gained redemption, and not through "release from sin" — as the "established" Christian Church taught.

Gnosticism divided men into three categories, depending on the degree of their spiritual evolution. This division allowed for a minority to attain redemption, while the majority of people were destined for only a shadowy existence after death. The implications of these teachings — in contradiction to the authorized teachings of the Church — were that: the world was not created as good, men were not all equal before God, and salvation was not open to all. Because of such teachings, Gnosticism was declared a heresy by the Church Fathers in the 2nd Century A.D.

Manichaeism — Named after Mani, a Babylonian of the 3rd Century A. D., Manichaeism became a rival of Christianity in its drive for adherents in the Middle East, North Africa and other regions. As a theological system, the new religion rested on a fundamental dualism. It postulated an eternal division and conflict between light and darkness. Unlike Christianity, Manichaeism taught that religious enlightenment necessitated knowledge of Nature and her elements, and that redemption was attained by freeing the element of light from the power of darkness — the realm of Satan.

St. Augustine himself, while a young man, came under the spell of Manichaeism, and remained under its influence for nine years. Later, when he found true peace through acceptance of Christianity, he fought the movement with tenacity.

The teachings of Mani found much support in Rome and elsewhere in the 4th and 5th Centuries. But as it was opposed vigorously by Christian theologians, as well as Roman emperors, Manichaeism weakened progressively, though it did not disappear until the 13th Century.

Montanism — This movement had its origin in a mystery cult in Phrygia (now Asia Minor), whose followers worshipped Cybele, goddess of nature. Believing that the organized christian religion had become formal and cold, Montanism — a highly emotional cult — sought to restore the prophetic element in Christianity, so that God might again speak to all men, instead of only to a chosen few, namely the members of the clerical hierarchy. Montanism exalted thus the laymen, teaching them to rely on themselves for their spiritual salvation, which, it claimed, was available to all people.

The Catholic Church in Albania: From the Time of the Apostles to the Present

(Note on Pronunciation) There are two Albanian letters, namely *ë* and *ç*, that occur frequently in this study, as in *Shkodër*, *Durrës*, *Arbëresh*, and *Gjeçov*. *Doçi*, *Bystçi*. In the first set of words, the *ë* is pronounced approximately as in the *e* in "father" and "mother." In the second set, the *ç* has the same sound as the English "ch" in "churning" and "child." Thus, *Doçi* is pronounced *Dochi*, and so on.

The story of the Catholic Church in Albania is an old one, practically contemporaneous with the history of Christianity. As such, it is a mirror, on a small scale, of the evolution of the Christian faith through the centuries in that part of the world, namely the Balkans. And since this evolution did not occur in a vacuum, but as a part of the history of the Albanian nation, so also the story of the Catholic Church in Albania is closely connected with other facets of Albanian life or ethos: Nationalism, language and literature, education, culture and social life.

According to the late Albanian scholar, Faik Konitza, Christianity in Albania dates from the First Century of our era. He makes reference to the statement of the Apostle St. Paul (in Romans XV, 19 of the New Testament), that he had preached the gospel of Christ "From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum," . . . "or Illyria, the land inhabited by the Illyrians, generally acknowledged to be the ancestors of the Albanian people. Konitza says further: "As early as the year 58, the existence of an important Christian community at Durazzo (or Durrachium, now Durrës) is on record."¹ Besides St. Paul, it is believed that the Apostle St. Andrew preached in Epirus, the ancient name of what is now southern Albania. Also, St. Jerome, who lived in the 4th Century A.D. and is known as the translator of the Vulgate version of the Bible, was of Illyrian origin. This inspired Christian can therefore be claimed as an ancestor of the Albanians, and one of the Fathers of the Albanian Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was then synonymous with the Christian Church, inasmuch as the Church was a unified institution or body of believers.

Roman persecution of Christians in Illyria began early. The first Illyrian Christian martyrs, Florin and Laurin of Ulpiana (near Prishtinë, Yugoslavia), were put to death during the reign of Roman Emperor Hadrian (76-138 A.D.). The persecution of the Christian Church of Illyria was continued by the Roman Emperor Diocletian (245-313 A.D.).

Scodra (Shkodër) — the ancient capital of Illyrian kings — has been an important center of Albanian Catholicism since the early period of Christianity. The episcopal see of Scodra is traced back to the year 385 A.D. Indeed, bishoprics such as those of Scodra, Durrachium (Durrës), Aulon (Vlorë), Nikopolis (Prevezë, now in Greece), are said to be among the oldest in the history of Christianity. Their antiquity is additional evidence of the early emergence of Christianity in Albania and the beginnings of the Albanian Catholic Church.

We might mention in passing here that many Illyrians attained prominent positions in the government and the armed forces of the Roman Empire subsequent to the Roman conquest of Illyria in 167 B.C. A number of them served the empire as emperors: Claudius (from 268 to 270 A.D.), Aurelianus



Symbols: + Bishoprics ⦿ Metropolitan Sees

composer of Sacred Music and Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Shkodra. (Fr. Michael is still languishing in an Albanian camp though Ernest died in Rome in 1975).

Viktor was both a lawyer and published author of short stories. Having joined the staff of the Berlitz School in Germany in 1964, he continued teaching Italian up until his death this year.

Dr. Koliqi was buried in the family tomb in Rome. We were privileged to have known him and have been encouraged by his continual support.

Our condolences go to his wife, son, sister (Teresa), brother (Guljelm) and his brother (Lec) as well as to his sister-in-law (Ruth). May his soul rest in peace.

**Ndoc (Tony) Shllaku, M.D.
(1921-1984)**

Dr. Ndoc Shllaku, known affectionately as "Tony", died on November 28 (Albanian Independence Day) of a sudden heart attack while jogging.

Tony was born in Shkoder to a family of professional educators. He graduated from the Medical School of Perugia (Italy), and in 1950 came to the United States. He first practiced medicine in Chicago, then moved to Toledo, where he had practiced for the past twenty years.

Dr. Shllaku was known and loved among the Albanian communities of Chicago, Cleveland, Toledo, and Detroit for his generous service. Very often he offered his services gratis to low-income needy, as well as to the clergy and religious communities of Toledo.

Tony was an active supporter of the various Albanian communities' efforts to preserve their national and religious identity. The crowds who attended his funeral were evidence of the deep appreciation and affection held for this humble and generous servant of Albanians.

We wish to extend our condolences to his family in both the United States and Albania.

**Shefki Miraku
(1911-1984)**

Shefki Miraku was born in Elbasan, Central Albania, in 1911. He graduated from the well-known and highly esteemed teacher's college, Skolla Normale, in Elbasan. His higher educa-

tion at the University of Pavia (Italy) was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II.

In 1951, Shefki immigrated to the United States where he distinguished himself as an author of many articles and studies on Albania.

Shefki Miraku died in New York on March 12, 1984. Many Albanian and American friends attended his funeral. Our heartfelt condolences go to his wife (Adele), his brother (Faik) and other family members.

**Loro Boriçi
(1917-1982)**

Loro Boriçi, born in 1917, was a famous Albanian soccer-player and later coach of the Albanian National Soccer Team. He graduated from the Jesuit College of St. Francis Xavier (Shkodra) and continued his higher studies at the University of Rome. There he earned fame as the center for Lazio, the well-known soccer team of Rome.

With the outbreak of World War II, Loro returned to Shkodra, his home town, which was still dear to his heart. For almost forty years he coached soccer and taught physical education in Albania. His strict discipline was tempered with friendliness and understanding. Under his direction Albania's soccer team came to equal those of Europe, even surpassing some of them in many instances.

**Mahmoud Tsungu
(1913-1983)**

Mr. Mahmoud Tsungu was born on May 23, 1913 in the Central Albanian town of Elbasan, known for its educational merits. In 1932, he graduated from the (American) Technical School in Tirane, then directed by Harry T. Fultz (who later became the post-war American representative to Albania.)

Tsungu attended the (American) Robert College in Istanbul, where in 1940 he graduated with a degree in civil engineering. After World War II he came to the United States where he was employed by the government.

Mr. Tsungu distinguished himself recently with the publication of the book, *Frasheri's Song of Albania*, reviewed in our previous issues.

Tsungu was respected and loved by the large Albanian community of New York. Funeral services were presided over by two prominent Albanian Muslim leaders (Venerable Bab Rexhepi and Reverend Vehbi Ismaili). It was attended by a large gathering of Albanian and American friends.

Our deepest condolences are extended to his wife (Hatixhe), sons (Lumnö, Arbenor, and Ilir) and their families, as well as to his brother (Professor Ali) in Albania.

**Emilio Tavolaro
(1899-1984)**

Emilio Tavolaro, well-known among the Arbëresh for his educational work, was an enthusiastic supporter of the renewal of Albanian religious and cultural heritage in Italy. He was an educator and a literary contributor to many Albanian and Arbëresh periodicals. A devout member of the Italo-Albanian Rite (Arbëresh), Tavolaro worked tirelessly to transmit the richness of this Rite to the new generations under his care.

Tavolaro participated in other Albanian activities in Italy. He was particularly involved with the journal, *Shejzat* (Le Pleiadi) owned and directed by the late Prof. Ernest Koliqi. His affection went to all Albanians regardless of their religious affiliation, and we have all been inspired by his paternal and ecumenical spirit.

Our sympathies go to his family as well as to his Arbëresh community.

**Dario Detti
(1910-1984)**

The name of Dario Detti is honored among both the Italian cultural circles and those of all Europe. We Albanians are particularly grateful for his affectionate interest in Albania and its people.

His editorial skills were unsurpassed and sought out by many publishing houses. He printed (Koliqi's) journal *Le Pleiadi* and other Albanian books.

A multitude of friends, Italian and Albanian, attended his funeral services. To his son (Ugo) and other family members we extend our heartfelt condolences.





The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Tirane before religion was banned. . .



. . . and as it looks today as a movie theatre.

Essay

by Tomor S. Zavalani

I THINK therefore I AM! — Descartes

TO BE or NOT TO BE, that is the Q U E S T I O N — Shakespeare
What a catastrophe
That so many of the destitute
Have to ask themselves
Such an awesome question.

Look: Trillions of marvelous THINGS
Were created,
In, on, around and above our planet.
For us to ENJOY and for us to SHARE. . . .
Yet, throughout the ages,
Time and again,
So many God-fearing unfortunates
Wish they were dead.

By God,
This is a shame and SOMEHOW hard to explain.

Could it possibly be that
SOME of our ancestors, SOMETIME in the past,
did SOMETHING wrong,
SOMEWHERE on this earth?

SOMEHOW we must try
To find
SOME KIND of a solution
So that SOME DAY, SOME FUTURE TIME
SOME of us
Will never have to ask
The SAME question again.

Will SOMEBODY knock on wood please!

Thanks, thanks a million. . . .
A what???
Wait. . . . I THINK I got it. . . .

Forget IT, forget the whole THING:
THINKING OUT LOUD does you NO GOOD!

As If Dreaming

by Mario B. Ferraro

translated by James Torrens, S.J.

On wings of thought
to those hills I fly,
to the open sky,
which give such peace and charm
to Pallagorio.

From the mountaintop
I gaze on the wide roads,
I hear Albanian spoken
and turn child again,
seeking dear faces gone.

I hear age-old bells ringing.
Their mighty echo,
over the mountains, over the sea,
will reach the brothers of Albania,
will sing assuringly.

Deep in our blood we bear,
we the Albanians,
some immortal essence
that speaks with our fathers' tongue,
makes and keeps us brothers,
though scattered through the world.

For you, Albania, our love throbs,
love that the old ones brought to Italy,
love fostered in remembering sons;
it does not fear the mountain heights,
it knows the ways of the sea;
to you it stretches on the wind's wing,
coming down with the dawn from heaven. . . .

Have I dreamed this? seen it? heard?
A favoring future will make clear. . . .

BOOKS AND PERIODICALS RECEIVED

Books

- Gjergji, Lush, *Roli i Femrës Shqiptare në Familje dhe në Shoqëri* (Rruga Lenjingradi 48, YU-38230 Ferizaj (Urosevac), Kosova, Yugoslavia), 1977.
- Tocci, Rita, *Terenzio Tocci Mio Padre (Ricordi e pensieri)* (Arti Grafiche Ioniche — Corigliano Calabro (CS), Italy), 1977.
- Como, Damiano Papas, *L'Eparchia di Piana degli Albanesi* (Oriente Cristiano, Piazza Bellini 3, 90133, Palermo, Italy), 1981.
- Stajka, Nika, *The Last Days of Freedom*, Vantage Press, New York, New York, USA, 1980.
- Rexhep, Baba Ven., *The Mysticism of Islam and Bektashism* (402 South Highland, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, USA), Italy, 1970.
- Hajdini, Qamil, *Kaini dhe Stalini* (B.P. 443 Bruxelles 1, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium), 1983-84.
- Liço, Eduard (Ed.), *Flamurtari i Kombit, F.S. Noli, 1882-1982* (Saltus Press, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA), 1984.
- Sulca, Nijazi, *Drejt Republikës* (Ankara, Turkey), 1984.
- Kolici, Ernest, *Hija e Maleve* (Shoqëria Botuese Letrare, 29559 Lamar Lane, Livonia, Michigan 48152, USA), 1984.
- Kokolari, Musine, *Siç më thotë nënua plakë* (Shoqëria Botuese Letrare, 29559 Lamar Lane, Livonia, Michigan 48152, USA), 1984.
- Risilia, Enver, *Derdet e Mergimit* (Albanian Moslem Society, 84 Paxton Street, Sth. Kingsville 3015, Melbourne, Australia), 1984.
- Canaj, Martin, *Albanian Grammar* (Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, West Germany), 1984.

Periodicals

- The Samizdat Bulletin*, in English (P.O. Box 6359, San Jose, California 95150, USA).
- Youth*, historical and cultural magazine, in Albanian and English (P.O. Box 145, 301 33 Holm, Sweden).
- The League of Prizren*, special edition (P.O. Box 227, Port Chester, New York 10573, USA).
- Baltic News* (1506 Edith Street, Berkeley, California 94703, USA).
- The Herald of the Emigrant*, in Albanian and English (Carlton Tower Apartments No. 20K, 285 Ayerig Avenue, Passaic, New Jersey 07055, USA).
- Atdheu*, in Albanian and English (P.O. Box 4583, L.I.C., New York, New York 11104, USA).
- Civiltà Cattolica*, bi-weekly in Italian (Via di Porta Pinciana 1, 00187 Rome, Italy).
- Ndergjegjia*, an occasional periodical in Albanian (4 Bartlett St., Peabody, Massachusetts 01960, USA).
- Dielli*, bi-weekly in Albanian and English (517 E. Broadway, South Boston, Massachusetts 02127, USA).
- The Free Albanian*, annually (150 Fifth Avenue, Rm. 1103, New York, New York 10011, USA).
- Stinët e Jetës*, Albanian monthly cultural journal (Bygatan 4, S-421 77 Västra Frölunda, Sweden).
- The Wing of the Eagle*, Albanian and English periodical (P.O. Box 2493, Chicago, Illinois 60690, USA).
- Koha e Jonë*, quarterly in Albanian, French, Italian and English (84 Rue La Fontaine, 75016 Paris, France).
- Lidhja*, Italo-Arberesh-Greek periodical (Via S. Lucia 20, Cosenza 87100, Italy).
- Oriente Cristiano*, an excellent religious and cultural quarterly in Italian (Piazza Bellini 3, 90133 Palermo, Italy).
- Kaundi Ynë*, Albanian (Arbëresh) and Italian quarterly (87010 Civita (CS), Italy).
- Zëri i Arbëreshvet*, Albanian (Arbëresh) and Italian periodical (c.c.p. 21/7155 Ejanina (CS), Italy).
- Zëri i Kosovës (Voice of Kosova)*, a monthly periodical of the movement for the Kosova Republic in Yugoslavia (Buchhandlung, Badhausstr. 35, 2503 Biel-Bienne, Switzerland).
- Zjarri*, Albanian (Arbëresh) and Italian periodical (87069 S. Demetrio Corone (CS), Italy).
- Drita*, monthly in Albanian (Rruga Lenjingradi 48, YU-38230 Ferizaj (Urosevac), Kosova, Yugoslavia).
- Elta — Press*, Lithuanian monthly press service (Via Casalmonteferrato 33, 00182 Rome, Italy).
- Info*, quarterly of the Aid to the Church in Need (Postfach 1209, D-6240 Kenigstein 1, West Germany).
- Catacombs*, monthly Messenger of the Church of Silence (B.P. 98-92405 Courbevoie Cedex, C.C.P. 1206 29 Z Paris, France).
- Open Doors With Brother Andrew*, monthly (P.O. Box 6, Standlake, Witney, Oxon OX8 7SP, England).
- Voice of the Martyrs*, monthly (P.O. Box 2947, Torrance, California 90509, USA).
- Nova Hrvatska*, Croatian political monthly (30 Fleet Street, London EC4V 1AJ, England).
- Hrvatska Drzava*, Croatian political periodical (Postfach 712, D-8192 Gerestried 2, West Germany).
- Hrvatska Buducnost*, Croatian political monthly (P.O. Box 338, Canoga Park, California 91395, USA).
- Republika Hrvatska*, Croatian political monthly (Casilla de correo 2595, 1000 Buenos Aires, Argentina).
- That's 'Yugoslavia'*, monthly information digest about Yugoslavia in English and Croatian (Ost-Dienst, Hudtwalckerstraße 26, D-2000 Hamburg 60, West Germany).
- Otpor*, Croatian political bi-monthly (P.O. Box 23, Skokie, Illinois 60077-0023, USA).



On the Way to. . .



. . . And at the Execution of Innocent Victims in Postwar Albania.

(Reconstruction of the event by a witness)