

COMMEMORATION ISSUE



**ALBANIAN
CATHOLIC
BULLETIN**

1985

Saint Ignatius Church
University of San Francisco

**BULETINI
KATOLIK
SHQIPTAR**

ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

Volume VI

1985

Despite our intention to publish this Issue immediately following the Commemoration ceremonies we regret that we were unable to do so. Donations proved insufficient to cover the financial costs incurred by the Commemoration observance. Now thanks to the kindness of Franciscan Press* which extended credit to us, we are able to print this Issue.

The Albanian Catholic Information Center has been laboring for almost two decades without any form of sponsorship or financial assistance from the Catholic Church or any other organization. The Center has relied solely upon the generosity and interest of concerned Catholics and others for its activities.

We are now at a turning point regarding the further publication of *The Bulletin*. Printing and mailing costs have risen to the point that we must appeal for financial assistance (especially from those of you who are able to do so without hardship). If you wish to join this effort to continue *The Bulletin*, you may become a sponsor (for \$1,000 or more), a co-sponsor (for \$500 or more), or a benefactor (for \$100 or more). Donations of any sum, of course, will be welcomed and acknowledged.

At this time we wish to express our gratitude to all of you who have continued to support us through the years with your prayers and donations. May we continue to work together for the restoration of religious freedom in Albania.

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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.

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BULETINI KATOLIK SHQIPTAR



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Photo Acknowledgements

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(Left to right) Andrew Nargay, O.F.M., Jak Gardin, S.J., Bishop Daniel F. Walsh, V.G., William J. Wood, S.J., and Christopher Cartwright, S.J.

Back Cover

Lee Boone

Inside

Robert Pilgrim, Catherine Murphy, Peter Furlotte, Nikollë Veshtaj, John Cardino and Ndue Mëhilli

Acknowledgements and Notes

The organizing committee for the Commemoration wishes to gratefully acknowledge and especially thank the following individuals for their generous cooperation, concern, and assistance: Rev. John Lo Schiavo, S.J., President, University of San Francisco; Rev. Paul J. Bernadine, S.J., Rector, USF Jesuit Community; Rev. Donald C. Foree, S.J., Prefect, St. Ignatius Church; Jesuit Community and the Campus Ministry Staff of the University of San Francisco; Santa Clara Mission Church and the Campus Ministry Staff Santa Clara University; Matthew Walsh and St. Ignatius Church Choir; Mollerus Typesetting Services; The Franciscan Press; Carmelite Monastery of Christo Rey, San Francisco; The Sister Disciples of the Divine Master, San Jose; Patrick Steacy and Instructional Media Crew, University of San Francisco; Joseph M. Costello and USF Public Safety Department; William C. Brockett and USF Mailroom Staff; Paul Rogers and Cathedral High School students; Dennis and Margaret Walden; Harold and Kathleen Duronslet; Daveen Spencer; Stella Pilgrim; Anne Farrelly; Carol Runge; Gerald E. Timmins; Guy Wingfield. To these, and to all who assisted us in any way we offer our sincere thanks.

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The editor and staff of the *Bulletin* gratefully acknowledges the receipt of many encouraging letters. There has also been some criticism of our coverage of the Kosovo issue. It is necessary to reiterate

From the Editor

Forty years of religious persecution in Albania has achieved the elimination of all vestiges of organized religion. The entire civilized world has been silent in the face of this ongoing religious genocide. Albania has remained unchallenged by other members of the United Nations for its repeated violation of international laws and agreements regarding religious freedom.

Our Center felt a serious moral and religious obligation to organize a solemn observance of this tragic anniversary to draw public attention and to urge the international community to act in behalf of Albania's persecuted believers. Ironically, perhaps symbolically, the death of Enver Hoxha occurred on the eve of our observance.

We were pleased that the San Francisco ceremonies of April 13-14, 1985 were blessed with the attendance of Albanians and so many of their friends from other religious denominations and national backgrounds. The messages of solidarity and letters of support from Basil Cardinal Hume of England, President Ronald Reagan, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Governor George Deukmejian of California, Baba Rexhepi, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the International Society for Human Rights, the International Association for Defense of Religious Liberty and others were encouraging and a hope-filled sign of growing national and religious concern.

The addresses printed in this Issue indicate that the Commemoration focused on the themes of peace and reconciliation. We believe, along with the participants, that it was a definite manifestation of the spirit of true Christian forgiveness and the healing of national wounds.

again that our work binds us also to our oppressed brothers and sisters in Kosovo who are struggling for justice and human dignity. We regret that we are unable to print the letters to the editor because of space limitation. However, we wish our readers to know that we appreciate their letters and encourage them to continue writing to us.

Despite the few donations received for our 1984 *Special Anniversary Issue* we are able to publish this Commemoration Issue thanks to the generosity of the Franciscan Press which has extended our credit. The following sponsors and benefactors have made possible this issue, as well.

Sponsors: Aid to the Church in Need (West Germany), Rina Krevzell.

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Indeed, we are also indebted to many others who have sent along their donations. May our Lord reward all.

A Guest Editorial

by James Torrens, S.J.

Enver Hoxha was buried on the very weekend of an international tribute to the Albanians whose influence and memory, for forty years, he himself tried to bury. That cannot be without significant meaning. We do not talk of coincidence but of significance in those two events that came together on April 13-14, 1985. There is no question of nursing resentments, holding the enemy up to be reviled. "That is not the Spirit you have received," Jesus once said to his disciples who were ready to call down fire and brimstone upon a resistant town. Hoxha elicited from many of his countrymen the resolute witness we refer to as "martyrdom." This was far from his intentions; still he was the occasion of their heroic charity, and must now be commended to God's mercy.

But the two days of memorial at St. Ignatius Church on the campus of the University of San Francisco, did make it clear how cruel and disastrous was Hoxha's error in trying to equalize people by tyranny. Those who did not quite fit his picture of the country he tore out from it, in the bloody method familiar to us from Communist countries, but from quite a few others as well. The whole opening toward God, the expansion of personal and national horizons to include the divine, threatened his plan. He wanted all efforts to be concentrated on material progress in Albania. Religion he saw as an obstacle, weakening the effort; the practice of it is a liberty, he decided, that had to be suppressed.

The services at St. Ignatius Church, with a Mass at their center, aimed first of all at recalling exactly how the religious groups of Albania — Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic — had been made to pass through the jaws of death or exile by the Party. A Catholic ceremony begins with an act of penitence. In the spirit of this ritual, considering Hoxha's question "What good has religion been?", the various groups can answer, "We have not been as good as we should." Christians in particular are ready enough, or should be, to admit their failings of faith and charity, those two essentials which are summed up in the First Epistle of St. John: "If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him;" and "As long as we love one another God lives in us" (1 John 4, 15 and 12).

The Communist leadership under Hoxha failed entirely to appreciate this second feature of Christianity, that it fosters a commitment to the common good, a dedication to all people, therefore a love of one's country and a full participation in its public life. The Communists, ideological and hard-line, convinced utterly that religion is bound to cater to the wealthy who are in power and hinder the rise of the workers, could not conceive of a role for the Church, or indeed for Islam, in the country they were managing. They were completely wrong, but also, by a sort of paradox, they were partly right. How so?

If the Party wants a national Church, that will not really do. The religious body and its spokesman has to have an independent role; sometimes inevitably it will be critical, speaking out, being in a sense prophetic, about public wrongs. Special protection or privilege is not what the Church today asks; this has been as harmful to the proclaiming of the gospel as regimes of opposition have. It took many centuries to realize that. But the squashing of religion, out of fear that it will exercise its proper role — this is disastrous for a country, as the case of Albania has shown.

The memorial service in San Francisco, drawing spokesmen from a number of countries, praised those whom "love of life did not deter from death" (Revelations 12, 11), when the good news of Our Lord Jesus Christ was at stake — the bishops and priests and sisters but also the many unknowns and unlisted victims of every religious group. Not much of an international voice was raised on their behalf. They were not much included in that outcry on behalf of self-determination and social justice for oppressed people. Theirs was a lonely trial. How important to them must have been Our Lord's own assurance: "I will not leave you nor abandon you" (Hebrews 13, 16).

Travelers who return these days from Russia report that many of the old people still cherish their religious practice openly in churches. But what of the middle-aged and the young? What happens when they are forced to live with a dimension missing? Some of the fiction and films coming back from Czechoslovakia and Russia suggest the emptiness of their lives. They are now the ones, it seems, whom we ourselves should not forget or abandon. The virtue of hope, that third essential disposition of Christians, demands that we do all possible, in prayer and work, to keep the gospel alive before them.



Program: Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania

Climaxing a year of intense preparation, the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania was solemnly observed in Saint Ignatius Church at the University of San Francisco on April 13-14, 1985. Our Center's efforts to make the Commemoration effective and international in character included a thirty page study documenting this tragic period in Albania's history. This study was disseminated to the news media in the United States and abroad. We were heartened that some newspapers, magazines and news agencies such as the Jesuit weekly *America*, *The Church Times* of London, *Catacombs* of Paris, *Civiltà Cattolica* of Rome, the Vatican quarterly *Christ to the World*, the International News Agency's *Fides*, *Open Doors* with Brother Andrew, and *Kathpress* of Austria, etc. used this material in reporting the anniversary. Invitations to this event were sent to various religious and civil leaders, as well as human rights groups, and the attendance of many of them was very encouraging. The arranging of speakers, national symbols, songs and hymns, reception and documentary films were some of the numerous details our Center had to address. The printed program below is the result of these efforts.

CIVIL PROGRAM

Dr. John Cardino, Chairman

Solemn Entrance of Flag Bearers Representing: The United States, Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia,
Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, Ukraine

Honored Guests

National Anthems of the United States and Albania

Greeting: Gjon Sinishta, Commemoration Coordinator
Dr. John Cardino, Civil Program Chairman
James Torrens, S.J. — "Desperate Prayer" by Ernest Kolliqi

Welcome: Rev. Donald C. Foree, S.J., Prefect, St. Ignatius Church
Rev. Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv., Director, Albanian Catholic
Information Center, Santa Clara, California
Rev. Andrew Nargay, OFM (Albanian)

Addresses: Message of the President of the United States
Jacob Margosian, Personal Representative of
Governor George Deukmejian of California
The Honorable Milton Marks, California State Senator
Anne Meridier, The Arbëresh (Italo-Albanian) People in America
Prof. Dr. George J. Lerski, Assembly of European Captive Nations
and the Polish National Congress
George Morton, National Director, Aid to the Church in Need,
New York

Messages of Congratulations and Solidarity, Prof. Zef V. Nekaj

ECUMENICAL RELIGIOUS SERVICE
DONALD BANAS, Chairman

Entrance Hymn: *All People That On Earth Do Dwell*

Brief Accounts of the Martyrdom of:
Anton Harapi, OFM — Zef V. Nekaj
Myzafer Pipa — Paul Rogers

GREETINGS AND PRAYERS

Rev. Imam Vehbi Ismail, U.S. Albanian Moslem Community
Rev. Michael Ukrainiec, U.S. Albanian Orthodox Community (read message)
Rev. Primus Ndrevashtaj, U.S. Albanian Catholic Community
Brother Andrew, Founder and President, Christian Mission "Open Doors" (Holland)
Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, Founder and President, Christian Mission "Jesus to the Communist World" (USA)

Messages of Congratulations and Solidarity, Rev. Peter Marinkovich, OFM, Conv.

SOLEMN MASS OF PEACE
on the occasion
of
the Fortieth Anniversary of
Religious Persecution in
Albania

PROCESSION

Candlelight: Religious Sisters

Mother Augusta
Sister Adella
Sister Adele
Sister Antonietta
Sister Connie
Sister Cornelia

Sister Domitila
Sister Marietta
Sister Anne
Sister Angela
Sister Marie
Sister Agnes

Thurifers

Father Boniface Luykx

Father Michael Ukrainiec

Cross Bearer

Robin Forbes

Acolytes

Richard Allegra

Stanley Potrude

Saint Ignatius Choir

Matthew Walsh, Director and Organist

Lectors

William J. Perkins, S.J.

Christopher Cartwright, S.J.

Masters of Ceremony

Donald C. Foree, S.J.

Daniel V. Germann, S.J.

Concelebrants

Jak Gardin, S.J. (Homilist)
Peter Marinkovich, OFM, Conv
Representing Their Respective Superior Generals

Andrew Nargay, OFM

Primus Ndrevashty
Representing the U.S. Albanian Catholic Community

William J. Wood, S.J.
Representing the California Conference of Catholic Bishops

Rev. Joseph J. Milani, Chancellor
Representing the Diocese of San Jose

Paul J. Bernadicon, S.J.
Christopher Cartwright, S.J.
Charles W. Dullea, S.J.
Joseph F. Eagan, S.J.
Donald C. Foree, S.J.
John J. Lo Schiavo, S.J.
John B. Leira, S.J.
Peter J. Fleming, S.J.
David J. Walsh, S.J.
Jesuit Community, University of San Francisco

Albert Huerta, S.J.
John B. McGloin, S.J.
William J. Monihan, S.J.
Peter G. Neeley, S.J.
Thomas A. Reed, S.J.
Robert A. Sunderland, S.J.
Theodore T. Taheny, S.J.
George Twigg-Porter, S.J.

Thomas J. Carroll, S.J.
Daniel V. Germann, S.J.
Paul J. Goda, S.J.
James W. Reites, S.J.
Jesuit Community, University of Santa Clara

Francis R. Smith, S.J.
James S. Torrens, S.J.
Edward V. Warren, S.J.
Tennant C. Wright, S.J.

William J. Perkins, S.J.
Jesuit Community, Loyola-Marymount University, Los Angeles

Joseph M. Geary, S.J.
Jesuit Community, Bellarmine College Preparatory, San Jose,
Rev. Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv.
St. Anthony of Padua Church, Rockford, Illinois

John C. Geary, S.J. *

Rev. John Keane, S.A.
Archdiocesan Director of Ecumenical Affairs, Archdiocese of San Francisco

Rev. John J. Sweeney, S.J.
Our Lady of Peace Church, Santa Clara

Rev. Msgr. John T. Foudy
St. Anne's Church, San Francisco

Rev. Francis P. Filice

Rev. John B. Mihovilovich
Church of Nativity (Slovenian/Croatian), San Francisco

Rev. Joseph Mikulich, OFM
Franciscan Croatian Mission, San Jose

Rev. Anthony Mastroeni
St. Monica's Church, San Francisco

Rev. Stanislaw Drzal
Polish Pastoral Mission, San Francisco

Rev. Karl Patzelt, S.J.
Our Lady of Fatima Church (Eastern Rite), San Francisco

Rev. Boniface Luykz
Mount Tabor Monastery of Transfiguration (Eastern Rite), Redwood Valley, California

Rev. Michael Ukrainiec

Principal Celebrant
Most Reverent Daniel E. Walsh, D.D.
Auxiliary Bishop of San Francisco
Representing the United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C.

ENTRANCE HYMN
Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

GREETING AND PENITENTIAL RITE

Gloria W. Mathias

Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (4:13-21)
William J. Perkins, S.J.

Responsorial Psalm

Gospel Acclamation

The Gospel
Christopher Cartwright, S.J.

Homily
Jak Gardin, S.J.
(English Translation — William J. Wood, S.J.)

General Intercessions
Tennant C. Wright, S.J.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Our God, Father of all Nations, we are your people and these are our prayers. Please hear us.

For all peoples and nations throughout the world, suffering from any kind of oppression, *We pray to the Lord.*

For the people of Albania, wherever they be, whose government denies them the right to practice their religious beliefs, *We pray to the Lord.*

For all the members of the Albanian clergy, Moslem, Orthodox, and Catholic, and all the lay people, who have been executed these last forty years, that they continue to inspire and intercede for us, *We pray to the Lord.*

For the Albanian Communist leaders, especially today for Enver Hoxha, who have caused such pain, that the Lord may touch their minds and hearts, *We pray to the Lord.*

For Pope John Paul II and our Archbishop, John Quinn, that they continue to guide us wisely, *We pray to the Lord.*

For our religious leaders, present here today, that we become of one heart and mind in the Lord, our common God, *We pray to the Lord.*

For all gathered here today commemorating this painful anniversary, that we may be inspired by the example of the Albanian martyrs and become people of true faith and peace, *We pray to the Lord.*

God our Father, we offer you these prayers as you have asked us, in the name of Jesus Christ, your son and our Lord and Brother, gathered here in faith by your Spirit and trusting in you, our good Father, now and forever. Amen.

LITRUGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Introductory Remarks

Daniel Germann, S.J.

Presentation of the Gifts

O Moj Bir, Hymn of the Albanian Catholic Youth

Soloists: Maureen Grabill, Micheline Stacey, Gregory Marks, James Starkey

Prayer over the Gifts

THE PREFACE

Eucharistic Prayer of Reconciliation II

Sanctus

COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer (Pater Noster), Chant

Sign of Peace

Lamb of God, W. Mathias

Communion Song, *Zojës së Këshillit të Mirë*

Hymn to Our Lady of Albanians

Soloist: Maureen Grabill

After Communion Reading

Brief Account of the Martyrdom of Father Ded Maçaj

Peter J. Fleming, S.J.

Meditation Song, *Christ Hath a Garden*, Gerald Near

CONCLUDING RITE

Greetings

Message from Basil Cardinal Hume

President, Council of European Bishops Conferences

Read by Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv.

Closing Remarks

Donald C. Force, S.J., Prefect, St. Ignatius Church

Final Blessing

RECESSIONAL HYMN

Immaculate Mary

Postlude, *Finale, First Symphony*, Louis Viérne



The late Bishop Ernest Çoba of Shkodra with seminarian Hilë Gjergj Gjoni are shown here in Vlora on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Albania's independence in 1962. Three years later Gjoni was ordained to the priesthood by the bishop. He is the last known priest to be publicly ordained.

In 1979 Bishop Ernest Çoba suffered a violent death at the hands of Albanian police. Father Gjoni was sent to a labor camp in 1969 for opposing anti-religious laws. To date, Father's fate remains unknown.

Remarks on the Solemn Observance of the Anniversary: A Manifestation of International Solidarity Honoring the Martyrs of Albania

by Albert Minisci

Saturday, April 13, 1985 the magnificent Catholic Church of St. Ignatius, on the campus of the University of San Francisco, became the site of an unprecedented event — the Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania. For a few hours on that day, the "University Basilica" witnessed a beautiful ceremony that brought together Albanian clergy and lay people of many communities along with non-Albanian clergy and friends, representing a variety of faiths and institutions but united in one common idea, the free and joyful worship of Almighty God.

The following is an account of the Commemoration but the printed word can hardly convey the solemnity, color, and emotional impact of the event. Only those present could appreciate fully its grace and import.

The program of the day began exactly at noon with the procession of flag bearers representing the United States, Albania, and ten other captive nations in Eastern Europe, where religious freedom and other human rights are denied or curtailed. The guests of honor made their entrance into the church in procession with the flag bearers.

Following the national anthems of the United States and Albania, Gjon Sinishta, coordinator of the Commemoration, welcomed the attendees and invited all present to a moment of silent prayer for the victims of religious persecution. The names of martyred Albanian clerics — Catholic, Orthodox, and Moslem — were printed in the pages of the Commemoration program. It was a long list with 165 names in all, the majority of them Catholics (130).

Mr. Sinishta was followed by Dr. John Cardino, distinguished Arberesh figure from New Jersey, who served as Chairman of the Civil part of the program. He made a strong attack on the atheist leadership in Albania for its relentless persecution of religion. He also sharply criticized the United States Catholic Conference for not speaking out against religious oppression in Albania. Dr. Cardino then introduced Father James Torrens, S.J. of the University of Santa Clara — a longtime associate of the Albanian Catholic Information Center — who has been active as a translator of Albanian literature. Father Torrens recited the translation of the late Ernest Koliqi's wrenching poem, "Desperate Prayer", composed in 1967, the year of the abolition of religion in Albania. The text of the poem was printed in the Commemorative program.

There followed welcoming addresses by Rev. Donald C. Forée, S.J., Prefect of St. Ignatius Church, Rev. Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv., Director of the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara, California, and Rev. Andrew Nargay, OFM, representing the Franciscan Minister General (Rev. John Vaughn, OFM). Fr. Forée told the gathering that although clergy and believers have been imprisoned and persecuted in Albania, there can be "no lasting imprisonment of the word of God". Father Neal praised Gjon Sinishta for his tireless efforts during the year-long preparation of this commemorative event, which he described as a work of love and dedication to the ideal of religious liberty for Albania. Speaking in Albanian with deep emotion, Father Nargay said that this was a day both of sadness and joy; sadness for tragedy that has befallen believers and religion in Albania, but also joy and cheer because we bear witness to the power and peace of religion, whose ideals we cherish and celebrate at this Commemoration.

Messages from President Reagan and Governor Deukmejian

The next segment of the program began with the reading of a Message from the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan. The President expressed his solidarity with the purpose and aims of the Commemoration, and conveyed his assurances to all participants that Albania shall see the restoration of her lost liberties. Jacob Margosian delivered a sympathetic and encouraging message on behalf of the Governor of California, George Deukmejian. The Honorable Milton Marks, Senator of the State of California, sent a warm message of support for the audience gathered in St. Ignatius Church. He was unable to be present due to illness.

A hush came over the audience when Anne Meridier, speaking in the name of the Arberesh people in America (that is, Albanians from Italy), recited the opening lines of the famous Arberesh folk song, "Motherland, Place of Beauty". Her voice trembled with emotion as she spoke the words:

Motherland, place of beauty,
I have left, never again to see you,
Over there I have left my father,
Over there I have left my mother,
Over there I have left my brother . . .
I have left, not to see you again.

The folksong tells of the Arberesh people's deep devotion to God and love of Albania, which they left five centuries ago to escape slaughter and oppression by the conquering Ottoman Turks. Hence, Meridier's pointed reference to the Arberesh as the "boat people of the fifteenth century."

The next two speakers were Prof. Dr. George J. Lerski, who represented the Assembly of Captive European Nations and the Polish-American National Congress, and George Morton, national director of an activist-religious group in New York known as *Aid to the Church in Need*. Lerski made an impassioned speech that showed both his wide knowledge of Albania and his deep concern for her present state of affairs in the area of human freedom. He noted that the freedom of Albania is important to all other European captive nations, and that no nation is too small to be deserving of honor and respect. Dr. Morton made the question of care and concern about nations suffering from religious oppression the theme of his talk. He was troubled, he said, by the widespread indifference of Americans to the sufferings of people where the worship of God is scorned or considered a crime by the state.

The program of the day also featured messages of congratulations and expressions of solidarity read by Prof. Zef V. Nekaj of Monterey, California.

The civil part of the Commemoration concluded at this point. There followed an ecumenical religious service, at which Donald Banas officiated as Chairman. The service began with the singing of the hymn, "All People That On Earth Do Dwell".

Because of the time restraints, Zef V. Nekaj and Paul Rogers were unable to give their brief accounts of Father Anton Harapi, OFM and Myzafer Pipa. Father Harapi, a towering Albanian religious figure, was executed in 1946. Myzafer Pipa, a young Moslem lawyer, voluntarily sacrificed his life by defending innocent Catholic clergy.

The service continued with presentations, greetings, and prayers by Rev. Imam Vehbi Ismail of the U.S. Albanian Moslem Community, Rev. Michael Ukrainiec, who read a message on behalf of the U.S. Albanian Orthodox Community, Rev. Primus Ndrevashtaj of the U.S. Albanian Catholic Community, and Brother Andrew, founder and president of the Christian mission "Open Doors" of Holland. Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, founder and president of the Christian Mission "Jesus to the Communist World" (U.S.A.) was, unfortunately, unable to be present. The congregation also heard messages of congratulations and solidarity read by Rev. Peter Marinkovich, OFM, Conv., representing the Minister General of the Franciscan Conventuals, Rev. Lanfranco M. Serrini, OFM, Conv.

Solemn Mass of Peace

The highlight of the commemorative program was the Solemn Mass of Peace, which climaxed the day's events. The Mass was expressly offered to commemorate the Fortieth Anniversary of religious persecution in Albania. The celebration began with an impressive procession that included in its ranks religious sisters bearing lighted candles, thurifers, a cross bearer, acolytes, the Saint Ignatius Choir led by Matthew Walsh (choir director and organist), lectors, masters of ceremony Donald C. Force, S.J. and Daniel V. Germann, S.J., and large number of concelebrants headed by the Most Reverend Daniel F. Walsh, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of San Francisco who represented the United States Catholic Conference.

As the procession entered the church, the congregation of more than 500 Albanians, Eastern Europeans and American friends joined in singing the hymn, "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name". They sang with fervor and joy as they acknowledged the glory of God and his "infinite domain and everlasting reign". Clergy and lay people, young and old united their voices, their hearts, and their hopes for peace and reconciliation in Albania — home of the great Skanderbeg, champion of Christendom, and our saintly sister, Mother Teresa.

Following the entrance hymn, the Most Reverend Daniel F. Walsh briefly addressed the congregation on the suffering Church in Albania and led the Opening Prayer of the solemn liturgy. Father William J. Perkins, S.J. then read a passage from the Acts of the Apostles. The Liturgy of the Word continued with the reading of the holy Gospel by Father Christopher Cartwright, S.J.

Moving Sermon in Albanian

After the reading of the Gospel the congregation heard a ringing sermon in Albanian by Father Jak Gardin, S.J., who represented the Jesuit Superior General, Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. Father Gardin told of his personal ordeal during ten years of imprisonment in Albania, as well as of the suffering and death of fellow prisoners. But despite his ordeal, he made a moving plea to his audience to go forth not with anger or hatred for the persecutors of religion in Albania, but with Christian charity in their hearts and a spirit of reconciliation. This spirit of forgiveness was the dominant theme not only during the celebration of the Mass of Peace, but throughout the entire Commemoration. Father Gardin's sermon was also given in English for the benefit of those who did not understand Albanian (this was eloquently done by William J. Wood, S.J., representing the California Conference of Catholic Bishops). Father Tennant C. Wright, S.J., of the University of Santa Clara, led the congregation in the General Intercessory prayers, which included a prayer for the late Enver Hoxha and other Albanian Communist leaders.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist began with a few introductory remarks by Father Daniel Germann, S.J., Director of Campus Ministry at the University of Santa Clara. Prefacing the procession of the gifts, he indicated the gift bearers: Rev. Imam Vehbi Ismail with a scroll wrapped in Albania's national colors, red and black, bearing the names of the martyrs, Rev. Primus Ndrevashtaj with cross and prayerbook from Albania, Rosina Derani and Angela Lazzari with bouquets of red roses, Tony Cecchini with a picture of Our Lady of Shkodra, and Herminia Garcia and Jackie Flynn with the hosts and wine. It was a touching, symbolic offering, memorializing and in a sense sanctifying the martyrs and their works in the service of God and His Albanian people, irrespective of denominations or any other

distinctions among them. Likewise significant was the hymn of the Albanian Catholic Youth, *O Maj Bir* (Oh, My Son), which was sung at this time by the St. Ignatius Quartet: Maureen Grabill, Micheline Stacey, Gregory Marks and James Starkey.

The Mass of Peace continued with the intoning of the Sanctus, the Eucharistic Prayer of Reconciliation II, and the chanting of the Lord's Prayer (*Pater Noster*). This was followed by a "communion song" — so called because it pertains to the Rite of Communion — which was dedicated to Our Lady of Albanians. It was sung in Albanian by soloist Maureen Grabill.

Father Peter J. Fleming, S.J., of the University of San Francisco, then presented a brief account of the death of a young Catholic priest in Albania, Fr. Ded Maçaj, who was executed at the age of 27. Although innocent the martyred priest harbored no hatred for his tormentors. He was the victim, he said in his last moments, of unleashed hatred against the Catholic Church by the atheist leaders of the country. This brief account, read so ardently, stunned the entire congregation. There followed an inspirational meditation song, "Christ Hath a Garden," sung by the St. Ignatius choir.

The Solemn Mass of Peace and the Commemoration was drawing to a close some four hours after it began. An attentive audience of believers, including Albanians and non-Albanians, had participated in a commemorative program that was well-planned and beautifully offered. It was, indeed, a manifestation of international solidarity for Albanian believers and the greatest tribute to Albania's martyrs.

In the time that remained, Father Neal read a message of greeting from Basil Cardinal Hume of England, president of the Council of European Bishops Conferences. The closing remarks were made by Father Foree and His Excellency Bishop Daniel Walsh. Father Foree reiterated his opening remarks and told the Albanians and those attending from Eastern European nations that "this Church is always open to you." Bishop Walsh thanked Father Gardin for his inspiring sermon and wished him many more years in the service of God. The congregation spontaneously applauded. He also praised the organizers of the Commemoration and prayed that the blood of the commemorated Albanian martyrs would be a continued heroic example to all.

After the final blessing, the audience began to disperse in an atmosphere of harmony and peace, heightened and ennobled by the sacred music of the recessional hymn, "Immaculate Mary". A reception immediately followed in the University Center, where a documentary film on Albania by Dr. Paul Lendvai of the Austrian Broadcasting Service — "From Skanderbeg to Hoxha" — was shown. Honored participants were later hosted at a dinner in the University Faculty Lounge, which was enjoyed in a spirit of friendship and elation.

The solemn observance of this Anniversary was, in truth, forty years in the making. It was an event that, in the eyes of its organizers, had to happen.

On Saturday, April 13, 1985, it finally did. It is now a part of the story of religion of Albania in our time, and of times to come.

Sunday, April 14, 1985

The second day of commemorating the 40th Anniversary of religious persecution in Albania followed on Sunday, April 14. More than one hundred Albanians and Arberesh assembled at 11:00 a.m. in Xavier Hall chapel at the University of San Francisco to attend a Mass offered in Albanian. An ecumenical spirit was evidenced also at this celebration with the attendance of Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Moslem people, among whom was Rev. Imam Vehbi Ismail and Mrs. Ismail. His presence was particularly appreciated. Rev. Primus Ndrevashtaj, pastor of Our Lady of Albanians Church in Detroit, was the principal celebrant. He represented the U.S. Albanian Catholic community at the Commemoration Services in St. Ignatius Church the previous day. Concelebrating with him were Fathers Jak Gardin, S.J., Andrew Nargaj, OFM and Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv. The attendees, some of them for the first time, participated in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, celebrated in their native tongue. Father Ndrevashtaj gave the homily and exhorted Albanians to follow the example of their martyrs in forgiving their enemies and being reconciled among themselves. He also praised the Commemoration organizers and suggested that all present be united in working for charity and peace.

At the end of the Mass, Father Ndrevashtaj introduced Fathers Gardin, Nargaj and Neal, inviting them to say a few words. Father Gardin expressed his joy at being among Albanians again, recalling that the last time he was with such a number was during the sad days of his imprisonment. He was elated with the tribute given to Albania's martyrs and emphasized the need for continued prayer and efforts of reconciliation to restore religious freedom to Albania. Father Nargaj urged Albanians to stay together and to cherish their religious, cultural, and national customs and traditions, not forgetting their rich heritage. Father Neal briefly mentioned the work of the Albanian Catholic Information Center which labors for religious freedom in Albania by informing and educating English speaking people about the riches of Albania's history.

Following the Catholic tradition of inviting someone to come forward from the congregation to address them, Father Ndrevashtaj asked for a volunteer. Mr. Prent Gruda of Detroit spoke of his impressions from the two-day gathering, stating that for him the Commemoration had been the most important religious celebration he had ever experienced. Referring to the need for solidarity among Albanians, he cited the last two days as an excellent example of such.

A light lunch followed the Mass in the Accolti Room. Some Albanian specialties were prepared by Mrs. Lule Bushati and Roza Derani. They were enjoyed by all. Group pictures were then taken and the saying of good-byes became difficult for those who had formed and found new friendships.

The Commemoration was covered by the local and national Catholic press. Among the reporters attending were: Dan Wooding, Director of Missionary News Agency (from London), Olga Stacevich, Editor of the Russian-English Quarterly, *Samizdat*, D'Arcy Fallon of the *San Francisco Examiner*, Terry Worndran of the *National Catholic Register*, Edward S. McFadden of the *San Francisco Foghorn*, Gjekë Gjolekaj of *Voice of America*, Zef Pashko Deda, editor of *Atdheu* (Fatherland) from New York, and Julian Qefa and Kolec Pikolini of the Albanian Radio Hour (in Detroit).

It is believed that the Commemoration established a close unity of brotherhood among Albanians and their friends, seldom experienced and witnessed in the same enthusiastic way on other such occasions. May it live and flourish in the years to come.

DESPERATE PRAYER

by Ernest Koliqi

read by James Torrens, S.J., University of Santa Clara

In the silence of the Albanian night no man's voice is heard,
No mother moistens bread with tears beside the cold hearth,
But each sits with dry eyes full of sparks of hatred
During this prelude to a furious time of vengeance.

No cry but sigh after sigh echoes from the forest.
The harsh rumbling of the river resembles a choked alarm.
An evil fate is darkening the souls, blackening the faces,
of those who foresee death:
It is drying the nation's most hidden veins.

O God, we accepted the land that you bestowed upon us,
We lived in it for three thousand years,
We dwelt in these sterile plots, in these dry poor hills,
Besieged, far from other folk, guarding the land
from the mountains.

We barely sheltered our bodies from the rain and hail and frost
In huts and shacks, vulnerable to storms,
We lived without knowing the subtle pleasure, or what's good,
Without knowing the nice customs of the lucky nations.

And still, we were nurtured in these canyons with cornbread,
Which we dipped in the spring's water.
We asked for nothing more.
As our condiment we had a peerless, simple freedom,
Which with its grace gave our senses joy.

Our mothers with their pure milk engendered
in our souls the desire

To fly like eagles in the honored Albanian sky,
And thrive around the flame of customs and the fire
of the proud yule-log,
Which cast out the horror of isolation from the hearth.

O God, for centuries our lips grew pale from hunger:
Often we left untouched our dinner, so as to save it
For our growing children, so that, if any guest should come,
We might share with him that bread, for having honored us.

Why do You burden our lives with disgrace and hardship?
Freedom and a little pride of bearing, we had nothing else;
These two precious things made our poverty shine.
So why did You, the Blessed One of Heaven,
seize from us these gifts?

The bones of our martyrs tremble in solitude
among many ruins,
And they don't know the grave's silence even after death.
However, during their lives they exalted You,
God of the Universe,
And in this world they always followed Your road!

In this day of sorrow, why don't You cut our nation's chains?
As for the hearts and faces of our women, mourning,
Why don't You make them shine with rays of freedom?
Why don't You bless our martyrs with a
silent sleep in Graves?

The "Desperate Prayer" was written in 1967. This was a difficult time for Koliqi and the people of Albania. The government had banned all religious practice. Numerous churches and mosques had been destroyed or altered for other uses, while priests and clergymen who resisted these measures were either killed or sent to prisons and labor camps. Koliqi's own brother, Rev. Mikel

Koliqi, had been kept in prison since December of 1944.

The "Desperate Prayer" expresses the author's pain in seeing his country, at a distance, subject to bitter suffering, and the struggle to avoid despairing of its future. The poem is both a sharp, piercing cry and a prayer.

The Martyrdom of Muzafer Pipa

When Fascist Italy occupied Albania in 1939, among the many students sent to concentration camps in Italy was Muzafer Pipa. After two years he was released and was able to pursue studies and graduate from the famous Law School of Padua, Italy.

In 1944, Muzafer was again arrested by the Nazis and sent to the Concentration Camp of Prishtine, in Kosove, now under Yugoslavia. By the end of 1944, when the Communists took power in Albania, Muzafer was freed and went to work as a lawyer in Tirane, the capital of Albania. There, he had ample opportunity to advance with the new government but declined to do so, seeing the government's brutal disregard for the rights of Albanian citizens.

In 1945, Pipa defended the first innocent victims at the special military court of Tirana. General Koci Xoxe (Head of the country's Security Police and a simple metal worker with no formal education) presided over the military court, where he boldly declared: "Our new peoples' power is opposed to any show of mercy . . . It is blood, we want!" At this shameful trial Muzafer proved with lucid juridical arguments the ineptness of the presiding judge and clearly demonstrated the mockery of justice and the harm done to the Albanian people.

A year later, the military court of Shkodra was the scene where Muzafer Pipa showed again his true bravery and altruism in his defense of the Catholic clergy. As a Muslim, Pipa did not have any connections with the Jesuits, Franciscans or other Catholic clergy—yet, drawn by their bravery, honesty and heroism he rose to their defense. Pipa was not paid for his services and, moreover, realized that his courageous defense was suicidal. But his conscience would not allow him to remain silent in the face of such injustice. He passionately demonstrated the falsity of alleged allegations against the Albanian priests in question, thereby giving the last summation of his heroic life. Shortly thereafter, the Communist authorities arrested him, disregarding his rights as a lawyer and citizen. He was tortured with vengeance for his courage in defending the Catholic clergy.

During the cold winter nights, the guards would tie the naked Pipa to an apricot tree in the courtyard of the old prison of Shkodra, and there they would beat him. On one such occasion, when he was more dead than alive, Elez Mesi, a police officer known for his brutality, killed Muzafer Pipa with a blow to the back of the head.

Muzafer died with dignity, having given his life for the cause of justice and human rights. We who survived or escaped such torment, especially we Albanian Catholics, humbly honor today on this solemn occasion his memory. We pray to the Almighty that this martyr's pure blood has not been shed in vain and that his heroic example and unselfishness may inspire new generations of Albanians.



The Martyrdom of Anton Harapi

The Catholic clergy has played a significant role in Albanian history. Members of the Franciscan Order were especially loved and respected by the Albanian people of every religious creed.

Franciscan Father Anton Harapi dedicated his whole life to serving the spiritual needs of the Albanian people, especially the education of youth. Father Anton was born in the fishing village of Shiroka on the banks of Lake Shkodra on January 5, 1888. He received his elementary and secondary education at the Franciscan school in Shkodra and later graduated from the Tyrol School of Theology in Austria.

Father returned to Albania in 1910 and began teaching in the Franciscan College. During the six month siege of Shkodra by the Montenegrin forces (October 1912-April 1913), Harapi and his confreres gained the love, respect and admiration of the people. They fed the hungry, cared for the sick and wounded, and buried the dead without any religious or social distinction.

During the spring of 1916, the region of Dukagjin (northern Albania) was afflicted by an outbreak of cholera. People died by the hundreds without knowing what had hit them. Father Harapi immediately rushed to the area. He visited the sick, buried the dead, and educated the highlanders in how to fight the cholera epidemic. Through his courageous and humanitarian efforts many were saved from death.

Harapi worked in the mountainous Gruda district of northern Albania during 1918 (today this area is under Yugoslav jurisdiction). Harapi wrote *Andrra E Pretashit* (Pretashi's Dream) during this period in his ministry. It offered an accurate description of life among the northern highlanders of Albania. The Albanian priest character in the story was created from Harapi's experiences. He was dedicated to his religion and to the fatherland. As a philosopher, the priest was deeply involved in the national and regional problems as well as the personal troubles of his flock.

In June, 1924 Harapi and many other Franciscans supported the efforts of Fan S. Noli's democratic government to transform Albania from a corrupt feudal system into a progressive European democracy.

Harapi's activity as priest, educator, lecturer, writer and orator of great power went on undiminished. His efforts to educate the younger generations aimed to promote unity among all Albanians. His former students and those people who heard his sermons from the pulpit, as well as those who heard him speak in the city squares, knew that his aims were to elevate the Albanians, to spur them to greater deeds and to pursue wider avenues of progress.

Towards the end of World War II, at the height of the civil war, chaos and anarchy took over in Albania. Harapi tried to stop the fratricidal war. Unfortunately, his efforts failed. Communist forces under Enver Hoxha, with Yugoslav backing, took power and initiated an unprecedented campaign of terror against those who refused to submit to totalitarianism. Father was one of the first victims of the terrorist campaign.

In 1945, Harapi was arrested and given a mock trial. He was sentenced to death along with other prominent Albanians. His last words to the tribunal addressed every Albanian generation. Harapi stated that:

If to obey the laws of God and fatherland, if to educate the youth and the people and spur them toward the high ideals of truth and good, if to suffer for the people and with the people and fight for the Faith and fatherland are considered weakness and treason, then, not only myself but all the Albanian Franciscans deserve the honor of being shot.

On the night of February 14, 1946, Harapi was taken from his prison cell and shot. His life and deeds, in the best tradition of Albanian Franciscans, will remain as an example of unselfish service to his fellow men and to his fatherland.

We, who knew and loved him, remember him today with a hope-filled prayer that his ideals of justice and truth may return again to our land. Then all Albanians will live and prosper without fear and enjoy the fruits of freedom in a land of happiness, just as Father Harapi envisioned.



Fr. Anton Harapi, O.F.M.

The Martyrdom of Dedë Maçaj

Father Ded Maçaj was ordained in 1944 in Rome and returned to Albania in 1945 when persecution was escalating. After serving for a while at the Cathedral of Shkodra, he was called into military service as a driver of a medical vehicle.

The following account of his martyrdom has been written by his military and prison companion, Alexander Nokaj. At the outset of his military service Father Maçaj was considered a Vatican spy and was continually kept under surveillance with the intent of finding some pretext on which to arrest and try him. The opportunity came when Father returned late to his military post because of an automobile accident. He was arrested immediately and accused of sabotage.

After fifteen days of torture, which made Father Maçaj unrecognizable, he was brought bound in chains to the front of his regiment. There occurred the public repetition of accusations that he was sent by the Vatican and Western powers to spy. At the end of an unsubstantiated and defaming discourse by the regiment's political commissar, a formal question was put to the soldiers: "What does this dangerous Vatican spy deserve?" A hellish shout arose from the Communist soldiers, "Plumbin ballit . . . Plumbin ballit!" ("A bullet to the head . . . Bullet to the head!") The prisoner was brought to the place of execution which was situated on one side of the military camp. A platoon of eight soldiers with machine guns formed the firing line in front of Fr. Maçaj. The victim knelt and began his final prayers in a deeply moving voice. The commissar, in sharp contrast to his usual overbearing character, stepped back in silence and allowed the priest to pray undisturbed.

Then Father Maçaj shouted with a voice so vibrant that all the regiment could clearly hear him:



Reverend Ded Maçaj

"I declare in front of God, in whose presence I will soon appear, and in front of you dear soldiers, that I am being murdered only because of the hate of the Catholic Faith. I say this without bitterness or hatred for those who will shoot me. Long live Christ the King! Long live the Pope! Long live Albania."

Then he raised his eyes to heaven, walked a few steps toward the platoon almost to show his executioners that he was not afraid of death. His face was glowing with a supernatural beauty.

The first round of bullets from the platoon's machine guns did not hurt him, and God seemed to be giving testimony of Father's innocence. To the amazement of all onlookers, Father Maçaj rose, then slowly resumed his kneeling position.

Some voices cried out from the ranks, "He is innocent. Spare his life!" But immediately this cry for pardon was suffocated by the howling of the Communist soldiers, "Plumbin ballit! . . . Plumbin ballit!" A new round of bullets from the execution platoon knocked Father down in a well of his own blood.

He was twenty-seven years old.

Addresses and Sermons

Dr. John Cardino
Chairman, Civil Program

Esteemed guests, friends, vllazet e motra (brothers and sisters)! Nineteen hundred and forty-four, a year that was supposed to be heralded for the liberation of Albania from Axis forces, has become for Albanians a year now acknowledged as the start of forty years of relentless oppression, unequalled in their three thousand year old history.

Since 1944, the destruction of churches and mosques, the construction of forced labor camps, the emergence of the "secret police", the murders and torturings of political reformers and religious advocates have all been witnessed on Albanian soil under the leadership of the late Enver Hoxha and his communist regime.

Ironically his funeral is being prepared for today. Hoxha's war against religion has been well fought, especially against the Catholic Church. We all know now that priests, nuns, seminarians and lay people were being falsely accused of crimes. Religious orders were outlawed, schools were destroyed and more and more priests and laymen fell martyrs to their faith.

Today the Albanian government makes no secret of its oppression. In 1967, Albania declared itself to be the world's first totally atheistic nation, later adopting this into its constitution. Amazingly this declaration of atheism has gone almost unnoticed throughout the world. Just as surprising is the fact that the Catholic Church in the United States with its National Conference of Bishops has remained silent.

With the exception of Albanian Americans, not until Pope Paul VI protested the execution of a priest for baptising a child in a labor camp, did non-Albanians begin to raise their voices in protest. The Albanian response was clear: articles 37 and 55 were adopted into their constitution, while executions and jail sentences — twelve years for possessing Bibles at home, eight years for having children baptised — were unabated. The persecution continued; world silence continued.

Of those who have since spoken out against religious oppression in Albania, we can list His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, Amnesty International, the Foreign Ministry of Denmark, the German Catholic Bishops' Conference, the United Churches of Christ, USA, the International Society for Human Rights, Dansk Europe Mission, the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty, but shockingly, the outspoken Catholic Church in the United States has, with the exception of few individuals, remained silent. The Catholic Press in the U.S. has been equally indifferent to the plight of those who suffer religious persecution in Albania.

Is it because of ignorance? Is it because of indifference? On this solemn occasion, then, we are moved to ask these questions and to invite the U.S. Bishops Conference to address them.

Thank you. Faleminderit!

Rev. Donald C. Forcee, S.J.
Prefect of Saint Ignatius Church

Brothers and sisters, on behalf of the Saint Ignatius Church's Worshipping Community and the Jesuit Community at the University of San Francisco, I welcome you to this Church today with the fullness of God's love. In this country of ours, we enjoy the gift of religious freedom, and because we recognize how precious that gift is and how your fellow Albanians, our brothers and sisters, have in the past and still today are not permitted to assemble as we do, our minds and hearts and spirits are with them at this very moment in history.

We also firmly believe, with you, that there is no lasting imprisonment of the word of God. It is that solidarity and faith which binds all of us together, and makes us one with all believers.

Welcome to Saint Ignatius Church.

Rev. Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv.
Director of the Albanian Catholic Information Center

Tungjatë Jeta! Words of welcome to all of you. Personally, as the spokesman today for the Albanian Catholic Information Center, I extend a warm, beautiful and wonderful welcome to all of you who have come, really from all parts of the world, to commemorate a day that's close to our hearts. Today in our love we touch Albania.

The Albanian Catholic Information Center, no doubt inspired by the Lord, is the creation — I use the word advisedly, "create" means to make something of nothing, where there was nothing there is something now — of Gjon Sinishta. This gentle, determined, persistent man created the Albanian Catholic Information Center to be a quiet light, to light the path of truth about Albania and things Albanian, to really brighten up the dark side of the moon. He fulfilled a promise in the book that he has written, *A Documentary Account of Religious Persecution in Albania*. And now, since that book, four issues of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* — Catholic in a beautiful sense, it's used

as Catholic meaning religious, but also catholic in the sense of universal, of the Moslems, the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholics, all things that touch Albania.

He and a small group of people have kept alive the culture, the history, bringing before the world their fight for freedom-to-be really in spirit and truth, sons and daughters of the eagle Shqiptarë! To be unfettered and fly free and independent, to be unshackled as regards to their faith, their country and its progress.

Today's program is the fruit of love for religious freedom in Albania, the dignity of every Albanian. This day is truly a day that the Lord has made. Let us be glad and rejoice, that we together are here to commemorate Albania and its fight for religious freedom. The loss of many of your family, your friends and others, today we remember all of them, and as Ernest Koliqi once said, "Some day, perhaps, now at last, encircled (meaning Albania) with a flaming veil of free dawns. Let it be; let it be." Rnoftë populli shqiptar! Long live the Albanian people!

Ann Meridier

The Arberesh (Italo-Albanian) People in America

Honored guests, ladies and gentlemen

I'm here today, a second generation American Arbëresh, representing the Arbëresh people of America. Arbëria is the ancient name of Albania. So if you were an Arbëresh you were a citizen of ancient Albania.

After the death of Skanderbeg, in late sixteen hundreds, the Albanians fled as the Turkish invasion came in. They had to choose between remaining Christian or becoming Moslem, and they went seeking religious freedom to which ever country would welcome them. Italy was, of course, one of them. They were the boat people of the fifteenth century, much as the Vietnamese are today. I think we can all relate to that experience. They took their religion, their language, their priests — Orthodox and Catholic — their traditions to any strange land, but longed to be home in Albania.

This book place, now, five hundred years ago; we are part of what is known as "gjaku i shprishur" which means "the scattered blood." Today the language is still spoken. Many of the American Arbëresh are descendents of people from Piana degli Albanesi, from Contessa Entelina and many villages on the Adriatic coast of Italy and in central Italy. The records show the beginning of an immigration from Contessa Entelina in 1870. The ship would leave Palermo and go directly to New Orleans, so the state of Louisiana was blessed with many Arbëresh. The Arbëresh Contessa Entelina Society was organized a hundred years ago in New Orleans, and still is active. The Virgin Mother is honored, as always in the parade.

Today, as with every generation of children, they'll ask their parents, "We're Italians, but how come the Italians don't understand us?" Well, this great interest in today's youth has again sparked an interest that wants them to know more about their heritage, more about their people, more about their language. Arbëresh groups meet in Los Angeles, San Jose, Sacramento and other cities in informal groups to speak and learn more about their language and their history.

The Arbëresh clergy was very helpful in recording and teaching of prayers, of songs and of the traditions of their people. One beloved prayer of Piana degli Albanesi:

Peraendi, i larti yn'Zot,
Bashk me ne tae jesh ti sot,
Te ku rrim e te ku vemi;
Se po tyj paer ndihmae kemi,

Lord Almighty be with us today,
Where we live and where we go,
you are the only one
We have to help us.

I will close my remarks with a saying which my grandmother taught me, as she was taught. It will have special meaning for the new refugees of the twentieth century, Gjon being one of them. After Mass, they would leave the Church and turn to the East and they would sing:

O e bukura Maedhe
Si tae lash e mae ng'ae t'pash!
Atje kam u Zotin tatae
Atje kam u zonjaen maemae;
Atje kam edhe t'im v'lla.
O e bukura Maedhe,
Si tae lash e mae ngae t'pash!

Motherland, place of beauty,
I have left, never again to see you,
Over there I have left my father,
Over there I have left my mother,
Over there I have left my brother. . .
I have left, not to see you again.

Thank you.

Prof. Dr. George J. Lerski

Assembly of European Captive Nations and the Polish National Congress

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Reverend Fathers, Friends.

Captive European Nations, forgotten, betrayed by the big powers. *Terra Incognita* for American Scholarship. They are starting from the north: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania.

About a hundred-fifty million of people with more than one thousand years of written history, proud people who are denied their freedom first by the treacherous acts signed by Ribentrop and Molotov for Hitler and Stalin on August 23, 1939, and then sold down the river at Teheran and Yalta. We hear so much about symmetry, about the importance of relations between the two largest powers of the world, but we believers in the natural law claim that the God Almighty created also the smaller nations who have the right to survive, to contribute to general good of the world's civilization.

I consider this particular ceremony symbolic. There are three million Albanians, in a country the size of the state of Maryland, just over eleven thousand square miles. But to survive between the two mill stones of the expansionist, imperialist and often Godless Germany and Russia, you have to be tough like a diamond. The greatness from the historical point of view of the nations is not counted by the number of heads; it is counted by the contributions to the world culture, and I'm not going to give you a lecture on history, but look, who were the last Noble Prize winners for attempts for peace? Albanian Sister Teresa of Calcutta and the Polish worker-electrician Lech Walesa of Solidarity of Gdansk.

Who leads now the Roman Catholic Church? A humble son of a poor family of Wadowice in Poland. I was asked at this University by the editors of our student paper, the *Foghorn*, when Karol Wojtyla was elected to be the pope, what would be his main stress in his papacy, and they all expected me to answer the struggle against communism. No! It is not the struggle against communism. It is the love of the downtrodden, for the Indians of Latin America, for the starving people of Africa. And therefore, I am very proud to be among you because the freedom of Albania means also freedom for the Croates, for the Slovaks, for Bulgars, Poles, Romanians, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, etc.

Nowadays, we are forgotten again, we are in the last, if ever, pages of the American newspapers. But Albanians, Afghans of Asia, show us another example. Ever since the fifteenth century hero of Albania, Skanderbeg, up to now, with Sister Teresa, you have produced the living spirits. And after all, all our three monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — were not born among the powerful of this world, but among the powerless. Saint Ignatius Church, so named after the founder of the Jesuit Society. Where were the missionaries going? Francis Xavier and others? To small countries, to every corner of the world. No human being and no small nation is unimportant. It is definitely against the precepts of all these three religions I've mentioned to claim that only the most powerful, best armed and the richest have a right as citizens to survive.

I'm proud that some Albanians were trained in my former country of Poland, Father Andrea Mjeda, one of the greatest poets of Albania. That at the last, and only Congress of Solidarity in 1981, there was a resolution proclaiming solidarity with the persecuted religiously and politically Albanian people. And the Holy Father, more than once, often paid attention to the plight of the Albanian people.

Speaking, thus, for the Polish American Congress and Captive European Nations, to you brothers and sisters, I want to assure you that when you pray for freedom, be it for Poland or for Hungary, we pray for your freedom as well. Because as one of the great American presidents told us, "Freedom is indivisible."

George Morton

National Director, Aid to the Church in Need, New York

Father Abbot, Friends, especially friends of the suffering Church. Aid to the Church in Need is a papal work, a public association directly under the Holy See. We are mandated to aid the Church as much as possible where she is persecuted, threatened and seeking refuge. That means that we must beg for spiritual and material support for the Church in communist and developing countries. We have to see both sides of the coin. The Albanians who organized this day of prayer and call to action must be praised for opening their hearts to all lands of the suffering Church. The flags here, on this side and the flags on that side that you see before you represent some of the nations dominated by terrorists. They are afraid because people pray. And they do something about it. The domain of religious persecution

includes the frozen slave camps of Siberia, the starving deserts of Ethiopia, the re-education camps of Vietnam. Probably no one here knows that fourteen priests, at least, have been murdered since we left Vietnam.

And what about the re-education camps of Nicaragua. What is being prepared there — another flag to be brought here. Another flag for the suffering Church. For each of us here, Albanian, Pole, Slovak, Dutch, Lithuanian, Croat, Ukrainian, Slav, American (some of us who are American Indian or part), whatever nation we are from, whatever brave and loving national heritage we have, the martyrs of Albania are calling us to faith, hope and charity, in spite of brutal, ruthless torture and death.

These martyrs and all other martyrs on earth today or those that will be tomorrow afternoon, pray for us in the West. We cowards, who all too often do not have faith enough to tell other people about religious persecution, may wonder who cares about Albania? Perhaps we in the West love politics and the world too much. Faith, Hope and Charity — that is the message of Albania, Poland, Croatia, Latvia, Estonia and the others. Look around at this beautiful church, and I ask you to just take a look around at this church, you will see the stations of the cross depicting our Lord's steps before his death for our sins.

I fear the stations of the cross have little meaning for selfish Americans. I fear that the cross behind me has little meaning for many students here, the teachers here, the public at large here and sadly, even religious — religious who have forgotten the painfulness, the torture it must have been when they hammered nails in our Lord's hands when it went through his skin and hit his bones. This is what we are talking about when we're talking about the persecuted Church — the Church that is in Albania, and I say is in Albania, no matter what you may read, it still is there.

The Jesus who died for our sins — what Jesus said to me and says to you, be not afraid, I know I'm scared, but he says be not afraid. The martyrs of the entire silent Church say the same thing — be not afraid. And that is our objective — be not afraid. And the people in the media — don't be afraid.

The following is a short note from Father Werenfried van Straaten, the founder of our work. And he is still the spiritual director of it. This letter was written a couple of years ago:

Dear Friends,

Listening in the refugee camps in the attics of eastern Europe or in the slums of the Third World to the heart-rending reports of God's oppressed children, seeing the marks of torture and privation on their bodies, reading in their eyes the terror they have been through or which still holds them in its grip, I am afraid of man, who has become a wolf to his neighbour and I am horrified at the debased image of God who from Cain to Hitler, from Nero to Stalin and from Attila to the tyrants of our own day never ceases to hate, to kill and to destroy.

Thank God that beside the hate there is always love, bending over the dying, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and freeing the prisoners — love silently at work on all battlefields, wherever destruction rages, in all concentration camps, in all distress and on every road that leads from Jerusalem to Jerico.

The good Samaritan saw the victim who had fallen among thieves, had pity, went up to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them, put him on his own ass, took him to an inn, cared for him and gave money to the innkeeper, asking him to look after him. This Samaritan was held up to us as an example by Christ.

Father Werenfried has known Mother Teresa for many years, and we were blessed to be able to be the first organization to help her. For me, and for everyone here, it is a personal privilege to be witness to her faith, and especially to the faith of people who are unknown. Thank you.

Imam Vehbi Ismaili
U.S. Albanian Moslem Community

Mr. Chairman, honored guests, brothers, and sisters: Es-salamu-aleikum!

I am very pleased, indeed, to be here today where Christians and Moslems are together commemorating the fortieth year of an era characterized by systematic religious persecutions in our motherland, Albania, and I am very grateful to the sponsor for this meaningful event for the invitation extended and the opportunity given me to share these painful moments of remembrance and meditation.

I thought it most appropriate that I prepare a few pertinent words for this audience. One day, as I was working on this presentation, I began to share my thoughts with a very good American friend of mine who seemed somewhat puzzled that I, a Moslem clergyman, was going to attend, and even speak, at an event organized by a Roman Catholic organization.

I was not surprised, however, at his bewilderment. We are living today in a dangerous world — a world in which the dark forces of fanaticism — political, religious, and racial — have unleashed a frontal attack on the spiritual and moral values which our human experiences and primarily our religious heritage have bestowed upon us. Fierce and savage fighting is competing with disease and famine for first place in a race which threatens the very foundations of our lives and our society. The struggle between good and evil has reached ominous proportions. For us religious leaders, this struggle has also acquired a unique dimension. It is not the struggle of one religion against another that we are witnessing today. It is, rather, religion itself as we know it which is threatened with the disappearance from the face of the earth. Never before have all the religions been cornered together and made the main target of the blind forces of evil and destruction.

And so, I told my friend, we all find ourselves in the same defensive camp, a camp of Christians, Jews, and Moslems, along with millions of others who believe in God in their own ways, and with millions who feel the need to seek, search, and find the existence of God by themselves, as well as with those many millions who strive toward a decent and meaningful life, which is also a religious experience in itself.

Two main reasons make my presence here an obligation. The first one is holy — revealed to us by the Divine Commandment, the Commandment which obligates each Moslem to recognize “the Books and the people of the Books” such as the Torah and the New Testament, for, according to Islamic tradition, these Books are thought of as a succession of God’s Word revealed to man through God’s Prophets — a divine message which, for us Moslems, culminates with the Holy Qur’an. The Holy Qur’an reads: “Say we believe in God, and in that which has revealed to Abraham, Ismail, and Isaac, and Jacob and the tribes, and which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.” (Chapter 3, verse 83).

As a result of these words, we are obligated to recognize, honor and respect “the messengers of God”, the elected few who have brought us the Word of God. Believing in the Books and the Prophets are two cardinal articles of faith for every Moslem. Not to believe in them means not to be a Moslem.

Furthermore, Islam’s genuine attitude toward the monotheists is well-known, a position which, most unfortunately, has been distorted for centuries by ignorance and political ambitions, or both. As the Encyclical Letter on Non-Christians of Pope Paul VI points out, the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, has a prominent place; Chapter 19 of the Holy Qur’an is named after her. Muslims believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. We read in the Holy Qur’an: “When the Angel said (to Mary): ‘Surely God gives you good tidings with a word from Him of one whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and the Hereafter, and of those who are drawn near to God,’ she said: ‘My Lord, how can I conceive a son, and no man has touched me?’ He answered: ‘Even so, God creates what pleases Him. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it: “Let it be!” and it is!’ ” (3:44-46).

The second reason for my presence here is a human one and has a universal human value. We are all, without exception of any sort, God’s creatures, a large and unique family in which the individual parts consciously make the sum total of our humanity. That consciousness is the privilege of man *only* in the entire universe. That is the honor and the glory of being man. Therefore, there can be no peace or peace of mind if some of us do not enjoy the fruits of freedom, justice and equality — if some of us are slaves and the rest masters — if some of us play God and others hide their faces to cry in secret over the death of their loved ones or over their own doom. As a Moslem, I feel a part of that humanity, one and indivisible, where all human beings — those who have seen the light and those who have not — are brothers and sisters, members of the all-embracing human race. A Christian priest or a Moslem imam killed in Albania or in China, an Albanian prisoner in Yugoslavia or a Jewish activist tortured in the Soviet Union, a black worker in South Africa, or a starving farmer in Ethiopia, a freedom fighter cut to pieces in Afghanistan or an innocent Lebanese mother refusing to leave the fresh graves of her little children killed by war, all of them are irreparable wounds afflicted upon our human dignity, for they diminish our human dimensions, and must, therefore, be opposed at all cost. Even the frailty of our human nature has its own limits. Blindness, deafness and silence have killed millions already. We must see, we must listen, we must speak out and prevent future holocausts against mankind. Anything less would be tantamount to betraying our own humanity!

* * *

News reaching us from Albania indicate that Government authorities continue to practice widespread anti-religious policies on behalf of “scientific thought.” It seems that persecution of all religious people is now commonplace there. For too long, a frightening silence reigns all over our beloved Albania, a silence that should have signaled the death of religion in that country. Everything indicates that with the killing and jailing of the clergy, the closings of more than 2,000 churches and mosques should have reverted the Albanian people to pagan days. Yet, we refuse to accept defeat. The infidels may hope to win the war in the towns and villages of Albania. That, however, is an illusion. To lean on brute force alone, to exclude the exercise of justice and wise statesmanship means to fall into the trap, a trap into which all dictatorships, past and present, have fallen. It means to deliberately invoke madness as a panacea for the solution to admittedly domestic problems. “Fear”, said an American peacemaker, “does not produce peace, as peace cannot evolve in the atmosphere of fear.” There will be no real peace in Albania for as long as the Albanian people, Moslems and Christians alike, are not free to think, to speak, and to worship free from the fear of persecution, for as long as their clergy are not free to speak, and to serve their flock as shepherds of Almighty God. There will be no peace in Albania for as long as the churches do not joyously ring their bells, the muezzin does not call the faithful from the minarets, and the flocks do not fill the Houses of God praying in silence or singing in chorus the glory of the Creator.

One more note that rings dear to my ear.

Perhaps the best example of cooperation and tolerance among the different religions can be found here in these blessed United States and among the Albanian faithful. Seventy-seven years ago, when the Albanian Orthodox took the initiative to build their churches in America, Albanian Moslems contributed generously toward the building. Thirty-five years ago, when Moslems began construction of their first Mosque in Detroit, the Albanian Orthodox likewise contributed generously. And more recently, when our Catholic brothers and sisters in New York and Detroit began their fund-raising for their churches, contributions were collected in our mosques. This is America. This is Albania in freedom. This is man’s consciousness in the highest!

Forty years have passed since the era of religious persecution was launched in Albania. Since 1967, religion has been outlawed. Mr. Gjon Sinishta has done an admirable job in his book, *The Fulfilled Promise*, documenting the persecution of the Roman Catholic clergy of

Albania. I hope and pray that one day the same documentation will be done for the Moslems and the Orthodox of Albania. We should not let them die through forgetfulness. In Edmund Burke's words: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

For those who have given their lives for the glory of God, the Holy Qur'an says: "And speak not of those who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of God as dead. They are alive, but you see them not." (Chapter 5, verse 82).

Let us pray:

Our Lord, pardon us, grant us protection. Have mercy on us. Impose not on us the afflictions which we have no strength to bear.

Our Lord, make us those who are ready to sacrifice for the sake of truth, and unite us in a common endeavor to assure freedom of worship.

Our Lord, Master of the universe, free our beloved Albania from the terror that has wrapped her today, and bring the day when every Albanian can worship and pray Thee openly, in his own way, without fear of persecution.

Our Lord, the Merciful, the Compassionate, shower Thy blessings upon the souls of those who have suffered and sacrificed for Thy sake, for the sake of Truth and Justice, and give the entire world peace, and good will to all men.

Amen!

Brother Andrew

Founder and President, Christian Mission "Open Doors" (Holland)

It is rather painful for me as a Dutchman to stand here as we anticipate at home the fortieth anniversary of our liberation to speak, while this occasion commemorates your fortieth year of loss of liberty. And yet, I've accepted this invitation with great joy, and I count it a privilege to have known Gjon Sinishta for a number of years ever since we have been working in this country.

You know we cannot be really free until we taken upon our heart, through love, and upon our shoulders, through responsibility, the lot of those who do not as yet have this liberty and who are still not free. I want to speak to those who are from Albania.

Thinking back to the years of the Nazi occupation which I went through very consciously in Holland (it lasted only five years), I remember the fact which gave us the courage to hold out and to actively participate in our liberation. It was the fact that we knew that the allied powers were planning for, and working for, our liberation.

Therefore, as Albanian dissidents, if we do not have love for our countrymen to let them know that we're doing something to help them, they will lose heart. Therefore, much depends on us and our responsibility too is great toward our nation, the nation of Albania. And you heard me say, our nation. Maybe you have noticed that when we were singing the two national anthems, I did not sing the American anthem, because I do not know it. I did sing the Albanian one, because it was printed. Today, I am an Albanian with you!

We people who believe, live in a time when so much is spoken about human rights; and I do believe in human rights. But the first right every human being has is the right to know God, to believe in Him and to have enough liberty to worship and serve Him. If any individual or nation or minority is denied that liberty, then there is no liberty, since this is the basic liberty of all.

Therefore, we as believers, particularly those of us who are Christians, must go together to Him who has installed in every human being the desire to be free. One reason for the exceptional success of Communism is its very aggressive approach, its way of teaching, and "the faith" that its man-made religion can and will, indeed, conquer the world. We people of the Book have a message and a faith, and we must prove in our daily lives that we believe what the Book says. The apostle Paul, the great pioneer, preached wherever he went that there was another King, and that King demands the allegiance of every human being, every man and woman, every boy and girl to the exclusion of anything and everyone else. That same apostle Paul, also preached in your country, as it says in Romans 15, verse 19, he preached to the Illyricum, at that time under Roman rule for over 200 years.

But Roman rule, like all powers come and go. Systems fail; societies may crumble, but the only way out which we offer from the Word of God and as a Mission, is the message that comes to every human being — that God who can change people — can change society. I said that the desire for freedom is alive in every human spirit. But in the last forty years, it is sad to say — and you have already heard of the many countries mentioned behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains — it is the enemies of freedom that had it their way.

Many of the organizations of which we are one, do much and have done much to alleviate the suffering of people, but they can only help the victims of tyranny; they cannot deal with tyranny itself. Only God, the ultimate authority, can effectively deal with tyranny itself. That is our message, and with an enemy, an evil power, that seeks to take over the world, we have that message that only God can keep people out of slavery and liberate them from slavery. He has called us to work with Him and to make followers of Him, Jesus Christ, in every nation. The question is how can we do it? First, by agreeing with God. As the Book says, God Almighty introduces Himself to that great servant of His, Moses. He says, "I, God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keep steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgressions and sin."

Because the prophet Jonah knew that aspect of God he refused to preach God's tidings to Ninevah, letting a whole nation be lost because he disagreed with the political, cultural and religious system. Our fear today is paralyzing us Christians in the West — a fear of totalitarian regimes — not agreeing enough with God that He does want us to establish His Kingdom in these nations by giving them liberty to worship Him and follow Him. We must go even to God-hating societies and proclaim His message. Our mission, the *Open Doors Mission*, is dedicated to doing just that.

Secondly, that a great emphasis be put on prayer to move the arm of God. Also, we can be of help by distributing the Bible to all nations restricted in that respect, thereby bringing personal encouragement to lonely believers. Only last night, a group of *Open Doors* workers returned from the country of Albania. They have a most exciting story; I just had them on the telephone a few hours ago. They had a meeting in the ancient-ruined city of Butrint, formerly near Via Apia — a place of historical value. With permission, a Church service with singing, prayer, preaching and Benediction was held in that city. This was, perhaps, the first service ever held openly in the country of Albania for a long time.

God's work is going on in Albania by people who believe that through preaching and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, liberty can be restored to individuals and also to nations. Why not? It is only as we give up, God forbid, because if we give up hope for our nation, if we fail to let them know that we are doing something now to help them in the future, they will lose heart.

Let me close with a beautiful bit of borrowed prose, prose from a situation of a country that seems to be deserted, that seems to go through a deep valley:

I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose literature is unread, whose music is unheard, and whose prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy Albania. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Destroy their culture. Send their dissidents into exile. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a new Albania.

I wish to close with that thought. A new Albania, as we need, indeed, a new Holland, a new America, a new world, and it cannot happen without Him who has the creative power to make new people out of the old, a new world out of the old world, and to establish His Kingdom based on the righteousness, justice and peace through Jesus Christ, our Lord. May He be your portion and ours forever. Amen.

Rev. Jak Gardin, S.J.

Representing Jesuit Superior General, Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.

I ask your pardon for speaking in a language unknown to many of you. Since I do not speak *English*, I feel a little embarrassed; nevertheless, on such an occasion, when we gather together to celebrate both glorious and tragic happenings in the noble Nation and Church of Albania, it might be providential to be forced to use the *Albanian* language. In this way, language too will take part in the symphony which today tries to exalt an heroic Country, with its sacred epic traditions of both family and religion. Regretfully, the restrictions of time force me to paint only a few strokes of such a vast canvas.

Today the Society of Jesus is invited to join the company of Clergy and the heroic Franciscan Fathers who for centuries have labored and poured out their blood in Albania. Since about 1842 the Society of Jesus has also labored intensely in that part of the Lord's vineyard, and in 1945, when the storm broke out that ravished the country, the Society also suffered the destruction of its works, the dispersion of its sons, and the blood-bath which, by a mysterious coincidence with the Paschal Mystery, is necessary so that a land may become fertile in Christ.

This is why the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. would have been present at this commemoration, should it have been possible. It is he who should be here, not I. It's true that I was numbered among the generous sons of the Society who were engulfed by the furious persecution; but afterwards, like "poor Jonah", I was spewed out onto the beaches of freedom, while my persecuted fellows — priests, religious and laypeople — gathered in their hands the palm of martyrdom! This was the role that Providence assigned to me! Maybe I was not ripe for martyrdom. Or maybe God wanted me to be His witness here today, in order to bring you a living testimony of how much people have suffered there, in that small land of Albania; a testimony of how much labor in hardship and bloodshed I witnessed during the ten years I was there; a testimony of how high a price must still be paid today, in order to bring to its glorious conclusion the destiny of that Land which is so sacred to you but also to me — if I may claim it as my own without presumption.

With this in mind, I make bold to extend a warning to all of us: that it would be ironical and illusory if here, and in the rest of the world, where all the Albanian people are scattered, it was thought that a Nation can be raised up again and reconstructed solely on the basis of programs of permissivism and consumerism, by relying on human ideologies which lack the binding force of a willingness to dialogue, to collaborate humbly with others and to be guided by the sure road which is the fear of the Lord.

Your organizers informed me that it was I who was to deliver the commemorative speech of our celebration, and during the Eucharistic Liturgy. Moreover, I was to speak on the vicissitudes of my own years in prison. To be honest, my only qualification is that I was an eyewitness to the events that we are commemorating today, and I do not find it very "liturgical" to combine this with the celebration of the Eucharistic action. And I will tell you why.

Today we celebrate, first of all, the sacred drama which involves an admittedly small portion of Christ's Church — Albania — so as to bring to light its painful Calvary which has already lasted forty years. And with full right we want to include this Calvary within the Eucharistic mystery, which is the sign and the reality of the sacrifice with which Christ redeemed the world. The least I can say is that I would find it incorrect that my insignificant person should be the protagonist of such a solemn and magnificent drama.

Would it be just to speak only about myself, forgetting others who, with me and more than me, suffered chains and insults, thirst and hunger, nakedness and humiliations, beatings and degradations of all kinds? With the same or even greater dignity than I, others have borne such sufferings: I would here name both the simple peasant and the old and venerable father of many children; the mountaineer who has always ill-endured any offense to his honor and the simple worker from the city; both the professional, the man of letters, and the poorly educated man; both the priest and the bishop!

Would it be just to remember only that I was sent to the labor and extermination camps of Vlocishë, Maliq, Beden and Lushnje, where I was burdened with an inhuman amount of work, and that at the end I was dispatched to prison now turned into an unrecognizable skeleton? Should I have said these things and other admonitions to myself, forgetting how the corpses of so many of my fellow prisoners, worn to the bones through exhaustion and undernourishment, through degradation and illness, were just tossed into communal graves?

Would I have done well in saying that certain unhealthy beaches of the Albanian coast lands, well known as hotbeds of malaria, were transformed into dry and fertile land, and that I labored in this task, but without declaring at the same time that those lands became arable and healthy as a result of blood sucked from the veins of countless prisoners? How could I speak only of myself, whom you can see before you today, healthy at eighty years of age, and not speak at the same time of so many who, after indescribable tortures, were thrown like carcasses into pits without a hint of religious ceremony? And among the many, I want to remember at this moment the Bishops Prendushi, Gjini and Volaj; the Priests Shantoja and Zadeja, Tracki and Sirdani, Pizzi, Gazulli and many more; the Franciscan Fathers Ciprian Nika, Anton Harapi, Mati Prendushi, and the Jesuit Fathers Fausti, Dajani, Gjon Karma, Gjon Pantalija, Anton Luli and Florian Berisha. Many Albanian Orthodox and Muslim clergy perished in the same manner.

This, this is the true story, this is the drama which we commemorate today: a drama and a history of a past now lasting forty years, but continually being recorded even now in the annals of the life of Albania. And this is why I thought it unfair to speak only of myself!

Within a few minutes, we will continue our liturgical celebration. Today, as in former times, in the catacombs, we celebrate the sacred mysteries on an Altar which contains the martyrs' relics. This sign is very meaningful: Christ's Sacrifice, once and for all accomplished on the Cross, for the salvation of mankind, becomes actualized here on this stone of the relics, where Christ's Blood mingles with the blood of martyrs. Both sacrifices have become one and the same offering presented to God for the salvation of mankind. The price of being a Christian was and is very high: it has to be paid with our own blood.

I finish now by turning my eyes to the *Book of Revelation*. I imagine in my mind that the Altar stone of this Church grows and grows and takes the shape of the Albanian land. And from under the Altar I hear with my inner ears the voices of those slain for the sake of the Lord, calling out: "When, when O Lord, you who are just and holy, when will you vindicate our blood?" And I can also hear a voice answering: "Be patient a little longer, until the number of your brethren is completed." Have you too heard it?

My brothers and sisters, this voice means *us*, who have gathered here today before God to commemorate not only those who have left us to be with the Lord, but also those who still live immersed in suffering. It is a voice which calls us not to hate, not to take revenge, but to forgiveness, to reconciliation, to constructive dialogue, to trust in God. For it is in peace and brotherhood that we will labor to build a better future for our beloved Country of Albania and for this whole world of ours which, even though it has been washed in the Blood of Christ, appears at a time to be bent on entering the work of perdition rather than the work of salvation. Amen.





Fr. Jak Gardin, S.J. at a labor camp in Albania, 1952.



Fr. Jak Gardin, S.J. at the time of his release in 1956.



Fr. Jak Gardin, S.J. (right) with his mentor, the renown poet and scholar, Rev. Ndre Mjeda in Shkodër, 1930.



Fr. Jak Gardin, S.J. (kneeling left foreground), family and friends in audience with Pope Pius XII following his release.

Messages and Letters to the Commemoration Committee

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ

1 February 1985

Dear Mr. Sinishta,



Basil Cardinal Hume

I would like you to express to all those who will gather in San Francisco in April the profound unity in prayer and faith that exists between yourselves and the bishops and faithful of Europe. The sufferings of Catholics and other believers in Albania are in the forefront of our minds as we commemorate with you 40 years of religious oppression in your country. We are united with you in prayer and in the bonds of faith. We pray for the restoration of religious freedom. We commemorate all who have died because of their beliefs and those who still struggle to maintain their faith and religious practice.

Yours devotedly,

Basil Hume

President, Council of European Bishops' Conferences.

15th March, 1985

Albanian Catholic Information
Centre
P O Box 1217, Santa Clara
CA 95053 - USA

Dear Friends

I am most grateful for your kind invitation to attend the Solemn Mass of Peace which will be celebrated on April 13, 1985 in St Ignatius Church, San Francisco.

I am sorry I will not be able to come - but I will pray for you all that it may all be for the glory of God and the good of the people you wish to serve.

Let us pray.

*God bless you
Mr. Teresio*

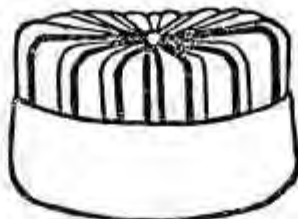


First Albanian Teke Bektashiane in America

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287-3646

December 10, 1984

Rev. Father Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv.
P.O. Box 1217
Santa Clara, CA 95053

Dear Reverend Father Leo G. Neal,



I have received your invitation to participate in the ceremonies marking the observance of the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania, scheduled to take place in San Francisco on April 13-14, 1985. I would very much love to be there for this occasion. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend due to poor health and advanced age. I will be with you all in spirit and prayer.

The commemoration of the martyrs of Faith and Fatherland whose goal was to serve humanity, is not only a moral duty but, indeed, a noble act. For these reasons, the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara and its staff merit our congratulations and praise for their correct and excellent initiative in observing this tragic anniversary.

I wish to acknowledge on this occasion the Albanian Catholic clergy, for whom I have the greatest respect and admiration. They endured the main brunt of the Communists' persecution because of their strong resistance. Many prelates, priests, sisters and lay Catholics lost their lives through execution or torture, or else died slow deaths in the prisons and labor camps. Among them were notable patriots, writers and poets who made a precious contribution to the renaissance and to the development of Albania's culture.

Albanian Orthodox and Moslem clergy were not spared from the persecution either, especially members of the Moslem Bektashi sect. The Bektashi clergy were harshly persecuted along with the Catholics. Dozens were executed and many others died from torture and suffering in the prisons and labor camps. The Bektashi clerics played an important role during the Albanian renaissance. Their prayer houses became centers for disseminating Albanian literature. Most of the publications were printed in Bucharest or Sophia and brought to Albania illegally. These prayer houses also served as refuge and supply centers for Albania's freedom fighters during the struggle for independence.

I am convinced that the memory of Albania's martyrs for Faith and Fatherland is strong and alive in the minds and hearts of the people they served. It is with this conviction that I wish you a successful conclusion to the Commemoration and to your praiseworthy efforts on behalf of our martyrs.

Very sincerely yours,

Baba Rexhebi
(Baba Rexhebi)

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

1312 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

June 1, 1984

Dear Mr. Sinishta:

I am writing at the direction of Bishop James Malone, President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, to acknowledge receipt of your letter of May 24, 1984.

Bishop Malone is aware of the plans for the commemoration celebration scheduled to take place in Saint Ignatius Church of the University of San Francisco on April 13, 1985. At the present time the Conference is considering how it might appropriately be involved in the event.*

Sincerely yours,

Daniel F. Hoyer

Reverend Msgr. Daniel F. Hoyer
General Secretary

Mr. Gjon Sinishta
Albanian Catholic Information Center
P.O. Box 1217
Santa Clara, California 95053, U.S.A.

* Editor's Note: The National Conference of Catholic Bishops was represented by Most Reverend Daniel F. Walsh, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of San Francisco, California.

Metropolitan Theodosius, Primate
Orthodox Church in America



Very Reverend Arthur E. Liolin
Chancellor

April 13, 1985

Professor Gjon Sinishta
Commemoration Coordinator
University of San Francisco
San Francisco, CA 94117



Dear Professor Sinishta:

On behalf of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, we express our heartfelt fellowship with you on the occasion of your Commemoration.

Freedom of religion and communal prayer is one of the most basic rights afforded to the human creature, guaranteed by all civilized societies and international agencies throughout the world. Your inspired work in this regard is well known and commendable.

Furthermore, we recall with humility the significant role of Albanian religious institutions in the national awakening of our people following centuries of adversity. At the same time, let us place all triumphalism in perspective and be also mindful of our own shortcomings, of historical realities, and ideological causes which brought about the lamentable state of divine worship in our homeland. Indeed, in this Paschal season, let us find the way to love the adversary as we appeal for justice for our brothers and sisters across the sea.

We join with Albanian Moslems, Roman Catholics, Albanian Orthodox, and even non-believers in recalling the unique fellowship of tolerance and mutual respect that our people have enjoyed with one another from time immemorial. May our Merciful God help us all to find the way to Him.

With Love and Hope in Our Risen Lord,

V. Rev. Arthur E. Liolin

Very Rev. Arthur E. Liolin
Chancellor

AEL/dst

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 27, 1985



I appreciate this opportunity to join all those gathered for the Solemn Day of Prayer and Solidarity for Albanian believers on the 40th Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania.

For forty years your ancestral homeland has been under the rule of those who would control freedom of belief. A critical measure of a country's liberty is the ability of its people to practice the religions of their choice. But religious faith is preserved in the hearts of the Albanian people, even if they are not free to practice it as they should be. The human spirit cannot be broken by even the most ruthless of governments.

As you pray for the deliverance of your friends and relatives from these circumstances, you can take heart that it is certain that all tyrannies eventually fall and that Albania will one day have its precious liberties restored. God bless you.

Ronald Reagan



GEORGE DEUKMEJIAN
GOVERNOR

State of California

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
SACRAMENTO 95814

TELEPHONE
(916) 445-2841

April 10, 1985



I am honored to convey my warm regards as you observe the 40th anniversary since religious freedom was available in Albania.

The freedom to worship the god of our choice in the manner we choose is highly prized and dearly protected in America. We value our religious freedom and strive to ensure that future generations will also enjoy this freedom.

For this reason we are disheartened by the suffering and anguish that has occurred in Albania during the past 40 years when clergy and laymen practice their religion. Their personal sacrifice for faith, liberty and justice is to be revered and remembered. I join with people throughout the state in honoring these Albanians and their devout faith.

Please accept my best wishes for a most memorable ceremony.

Most cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Deukmejian".

George Deukmejian



ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

March 7, 1985

Mr. Gjon Sinishta
Commemoration Coordinator
University of San Francisco
Xavier Hall
San Francisco, California 94117



Dear Mr. Sinishta:

I regret to inform you that I am now scheduled to be in Europe in mid-April and will therefore be unable to attend the Commemoration.

Your concern about religious persecution in Albania is important and well-understood by this Bureau. The issue of religious freedom is one of our most fundamental human rights concerns. The situation in Albania, the only country in the world where the practice of religion is actually banned by law, is a travesty of all civilized norms.

Please accept my apologies for not being able to participate in your program. My best wishes for a successful ceremony.

EA:cl

Sincerely,

Elliott Abrams
Assistant Secretary
for Human Rights and
Humanitarian Affairs

We are pleased to offer the following extracts from other letters received.

Danks Europamission, Denmark

"... We want you to know that we will be present with you on this day, in prayer, and send you our heartiest greetings. We wish God's blessings upon this day and may He also, in every way, lead you in your work for the suffering Church in Albania."

International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Berne, Switzerland

"... Unable to be with you we send our greetings and wish a full success to the gathering to commemorate the forty years of religious persecution in Albania. Our Association presented a text of intervention at the 41st session of the UN Human Rights Commission on March 7, 1985, denouncing the glaring case of religious oppression in Albania. We will continue this action at the sessions of the Sub-Commission on Human Rights, in August."

Free Albania Committee in New York

"... The real message of the Commemoration, we hope, will largely contribute to impress and inform free men about the grim fate of those who have fallen under the Godless totalitarian regime in Albania.

Our Committee, speaking on behalf of the silenced people in Albania, has appealed consistently to the UN Secretary General, the UN Commission on Human Rights, and to the major UN Missions of the Western World and Islamic States, but all these appeals have been largely ignored."

International Society for Human Rights, Frankfurt am Main, West Germany

"Unable to attend your gathering we send you our warmest greetings and best wishes for a successful event.

Please be informed, too, that our Society has presented the matter of religious persecution in Albania to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, to the European Parliament in Strassbourg and to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn. We are hopeful that these actions will result in further pressure by other countries to campaign against the Albanian Government's violation of religious rights."

Queen Geraldine of Albania (in exile)

"... I will be with you in prayer and thoughts during those two days of your Commemoration, ... My profound wishes are that it will be followed by a renewal of Faith and valour in the hearts, especially of the youth, not only in America, but all over the world."

In addition, the Committee received letters and greetings from the following:

Monsignor Joseph J. Oroshi, Spiritual Leader of Albanian Catholics in the United States

Bishop Iaceli (Ercoli) Lupinacci of Piana degli Albanesi, Sicily

Monsignor Eleuterio Fortino, Vatican Delegate for the Eastern Orthodox Churches

Episcopal Conference of Scandinavia

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Australian Episcopal Conference

Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

German Bishops' Conference

Archbishop Pio Laghi, Apostolic Delegate to the United States

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago

Timothy Cardinal Manning of Los Angeles

John Cardinal O'Connor of New York

Bernard Cardinal Law of Boston

Archbishop Philip Hannan of New Orleans

Archbishop James A. Hickey of Washington, D.C.

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany

Bishop Basil H. Losten of Stamford

Bishop Joseph B. Brunini of Jackson

Bishop Ernest L. Unterkoefler of Charleston

Bishop William G. Connare of Greensburg

Bishop Pierre DuMaine of San Jose

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit

Bishop Francis Quinn of Sacramento

Bishop Joseph Madera of Fresno

Bishop Roger Mahony of Stockton

Bishop Mark Hurley of Santa Rosa
Bishop John Cummins of Oakland
Bishop Leo Maher of San Diego
Bishop Paul Baltakis of Lithuanian Diocese in Exile
Rev. Lazër Sheldija of New York
Rev. Giordano Emanuele of Ejanina (Cozenza), Italy
Rev. Peter Nicholas Kurguz, O.P. of Mexico City
Rev. Robert E. Hayes of San Jose
Rev. Casimir Pugevicius of New York
Rev. Mario Springhetti, S.J., of Italy
Rev. Luciano Caldirolì, S.J., of Italy
Rev. Armando Guidetti, S.J., of Italy
Rev. Ivan Skenderovic of New York
Sr. Luçije Lazza of Rome
Mr. John F. DeMeis, Our Lady of Grace (Arbëresh) Society of New York
U.S. Senator Jesse Helms
U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy
Alexander Solzhenitsyn
Paul Lendvai, Austrian Broadcasting Company, Vienna
Pierre de Villemarest, Foundation for Europe, Paris
Sergiu Grossu, Catacombs, Paris
Paddy Brew, Calvary Road, Inc., Ghana
Durak Duraku, Albanian Cultural Society, *Illiria*, Bruxelles
King Leka I of Albanians (in exile)
Skender Zogu, Press attache Albanian Royal House, Paris
Mathew Mestrovich, Croatian National Congress, New York
Rexhep Krasniqi, Free Albania Committee, New York
Harry Stoia, Pan-Albanian Federation of America, *VATRA*, Boston
Xhevat Kallajxhi, *Dielli* (oldest Albanian newspaper in the United States), Boston
Professor Martin Camaj
Professor Arshi Pipa
Veteran journalists and authors: Anton Logoreci, Adem Hodo, Lec Shllaku, Petro Vuçani
Isa Ndreu, Albanian Democratic Union, Florence (Italy)
Abedin Mulosmanaj
Kolë N. Bajraktari
Ibrahim Kulla
Walter and Sophia Limbach
Ismet Lesko
Tonin Mirakaj, (Albanian) National Independent Party, New York
Pjeter Kadeli
Ton Koka
Lin Delia
Franz Suma
Francheska Kurti
Albert Akshija
Ramiz Basha
Ndue P. Gjemarkaj
Ismail Dema
Nika Stajka
Kolë Mëhilli
Rexhep Kumbazçe
Anthony J. John
Patricia Newton
Olivo and Ida Milanese

We have tried to acknowledge here all those who sent letters or telegrams. If we, inadvertently, overlooked anyone it is not intentional. To all of you our thanks and appreciation for this expression of international solidarity.



Msgr. Zef Shestani

Golden Jubilee of Msgr. Zef Shestani

Monsignor Zef Shestani, editor of the Vatican Radio's Albanian Program celebrated the golden jubilee of his priesthood in December 1985. Shestani was educated at the Jesuit Papal College in Shkodra. His theological studies were completed in Rome and he returned to Albania in 1935 where he was ordained by Archbishop Gaspar Thaçi of Shkodra, the primate of the Catholic Church in Albania. During the early years of his priesthood he served as an associate pastor, and later pastor, of Markolaj parish, near Shkodra. He endeared himself to his parishioners for his musical talents and his concern for the aged and poor. Shestani vehemently protested against the Italian occupation of Albania on Good Friday, April 7, 1939. He aligned himself with the anti-fascist movement from its inception. Throughout his priesthood he has worked with Catholic Action youth groups. As a musician who organized parish programs, he authored and composed a number of devotional and patriotic songs that are still in use today.

Following the war, Shestani escaped to Italy where he shepherded many Albanians—Muslim and Christian alike—in the refugee camps.

Since 1951 Msgr. Zef Shestani has directed the Albanian Program for Vatican Radio. We warmly congratulate Monsignor on his sacerdotal jubilee and wish him many more fruitful years in the Lord's service to His Albanian people.

Albanian Center Celebrates 40 Years

On March 25-26, 1985 at the University of Palermo the 40th anniversary celebration of the International Center of Albanian Studies was solemnly observed with much joy and enthusiasm. The event opened with a Liturgy of Thanksgiving, celebrated by Bishop Irali (Ercle) Lupinacci of Piana degli Albanesi. He was assisted by the Arberesh clergy and choir. Also present at the liturgy were civil representatives and a large number of scholars from the academic community associated with the Center. A seminar followed highlighting the programs and studies of the Center's past 40 years. The Seminar included papers on the labors and works of Professors Rozolin Petrotta, Zef Valentini, S.J., Ernest Koliqi and Karl Gurakuqi, who founded the Center.

Tri-Centennial of *Cuneus Prophetarum*

1985 marked the tricentennial of the publication of Pjeter Bogdani's book, "*Cuneus Prophetarum de Christo Salvatore Mundi*" (Company of the Prophets of Christ, Savior of the World). The volume was originally published in Padova (Padua), Italy in 1685.

The work is recognized as a pioneer study in the field of Albanian literary history. Bogdani authored the book while serving as the Archbishop of Shkup (Skopje). He was a true Kosovar patriot who devoted his life to the service of God and the Albanian people.

In our last year's *Bulletin*, the article on the history of the Catholic Church in Albania (p. 14-19) gave extensive coverage to Bogdani and other Albanian clergymen writers.

New Catechism for Albanian Catholics

Two recent volumes of a new catechism for Albanian Catholics in Yugoslavia have been published by Drita this past Fall. Dr. Lush Gjergji, the distinguished priest-author of the diocese of Skopje, has been working on the grade-level catechism since 1978. The new volumes: *Toward the Promised Land* and *God Cares for His*

People are written for fifth and sixth grades.

In undertaking this work, Dr. Gjergji was inspired by an authentic concern to impart the faith to new generations and prepare them to live it based on firm religious truths. The catechism also includes a wide-range of poetry by well known Alba-

nian writers and is richly illustrated by contemporary Albanian artists.

Although written for Albanian Catholics in Yugoslavia, the catechism can greatly serve the needs of the growing Albanian communities in North American and Europe.

prohibition of religion in public and private in the revised constitution of 1976. Only five years ago, in May, 1980, Fr. Ndoc Luli was sentenced to life imprisonment for baptizing his twin nephews.

The purpose of this Saturday's ceremony is not only to commemorate the martyrdoms of such men as George Volaj, Frano Gjini and Cyprian Nika, but also to remind the American public of the sorrows and tragedies now befalling Albanians and other Eastern Europeans under the yoke of avowed anti-religious regimes.

And with the reported death of Enver Hoxha late this week, it can only be hoped during this anniversary commemoration that the grip about the neck of the Albanian people has begun to loosen.

Albanian Martyrs Remembered

By Edward S. McFadden

San Francisco Foghorn, University of San Francisco, April 12, 1985

For 40 years, the people of Albania have not been allowed to publicly practice their religious faith. Since 1967, the country has outlawed religion and according to their constitution, it is an atheistic state.

In remembrance of the people who are suffering this oppression, the Albanian Catholic Information Center of Santa Clara, in conjunction with St. Ignatius Church, will sponsor a Day of Solemn Prayer and Solidarity.

The program will be held on Saturday, April 13, beginning at 11:45. The day will be highlighted by the homily of an Albanian Jesuit who was imprisoned in that country for 10 years.

Ronald Reagan and California Governor George Deukmejian have both sent personal letters to the event. It is also expected that Deukmejian will proclaim that Saturday as a day of remembrance for the Albanian oppression.

"Not many Americans know about the oppression that exists in Albania," says Gjon Sinishta, one of the organizers. "It is important that they become aware."

In 1967, all nuns and priests were publicly disrobed by the government of Albania and all churches destroyed or turned into alternative places of business.

Those priests and nuns who went against the state were put in "reeducation" centers or Albanian gulags. Many have been murdered. There is no reason to suspect that the killings have ended. And it is still against the law to possess any type of religious article or reading material.

At 3:30, a film and slide presentation on Albania and its oppression will be shown.

It is interesting to note that this past year, the Council of European Bishops Conference had dedicated itself to the Albanian crisis.

The drive for education and protest of the people came to a climax when British Bishop, Basil Cardinal Hume and 31 other European Bishops concelebrated a Mass for the people of Albania.

"We are in solidarity with the oppressed of Albania. We recognize our responsibility to do what we can by prayer and by our activities to be part of the commemorative activities at USF."

Campus Ministry's affiliated organization, Peace and Social Justice, however, is not affiliated with the commemorative meeting.

The conference is free to the public. It offers all to become educated and involved in an issue that does not only effect the people of Albania, but all people who care about freedom of religious expression. The atrocities in Albania should not go unnoticed.

Expatriate Albanians Commemorate Loss of Religious Freedom

By D'Arcy Fallon, Examiner Staff Writer

San Francisco Examiner, April 15, 1985

The irony was unmistakable: On a weekend when hundreds of Bay Area Albanians were commemorating the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in their homeland, the man who outlawed religion among Albanians was being buried.

Albanian communist leader Enver Hoxha, who died Thursday at the age of 76, helped found the party in 1941 and, after he came to power in 1944, launched a campaign against the Catholic Church and other religious groups. The persecution began with the execution of a Catholic priest and continued with the deaths of dozens of other priests, culminating in 1967 with the Hoxha government's formal abolition of all religious groups.

The time of the two events — Hoxha's death in Albania and a Catholic Mass at the University of San Francisco marking the anniversary of a regime of persecution — was not lost on those who came to Xavier Hall Chapel yesterday.

The day before, more than 550 people had taken part in a day of prayer and solidarity for Albanians. The event was co-sponsored by the university's St. Ignatius Church and the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara.

"The man who was responsible for our suffering is being buried at the same time we're gathering," said Gjon Sinishta, a deacon with the center.

"To all of us, it was a message from God that a new era is just around the corner," said Sinishta, who is also editor of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin, a journal that monitors the religious situation in Albania.

Under Ramiz Alia, who on Saturday was elected Albania's new Communist Party chairman, there will be an eventual restoration of religious rights, Sinishta predicted.

"Although he's a staunch Marxist-Stalinist type, he sees reality differently than old Hoxha did. I believe he's going to eventually

change the course of a few things in Albania. In time, he'll allow the practice of religion."

During yesterday's Mass, the Rev. Leo Neal, the director of the Albanian Catholic Information Center, told the group, "Mysteriously, I know God has allowed you to go out and be Albanians — wherever you live."

That matter of being Albanian at heart, whether one was living in Sacramento, San Jose or San Francisco, was evident yesterday when more than 50 people gathered after Mass for coffee and baklava, a traditional regional pastry.

Amid the Albanian food and words, there was a palpable yearning for some to go home to that small mountainous country north of Greece. Others who had never seen Albania expressed a fierce desire to see the country.

Ann Meridier of San Jose described the refugees who left Albania for Italy as the "Arberesh" or "the boat people of the 15th century" who fled Albania and the conquering Turks. In 1912, Albania gained its independence.

"After 500 years, we still speak Albanian," said Meridier. "The remarkable thing is our language is still used today."

There are Arberesh communities in pockets of the United States, including Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Jose, New Orleans, Wisconsin and Illinois.

Vito Parisi, from Sacramento, explained to a visitor that although he is an American citizen, within his family circle he is Albanian. His parents, originally from Albania, came to America 60 years ago from Italy.

"This is the first time I've met a real Albanian other than Arberesh," he said.

One young man, who asked not to be identified because he escaped from Albania in 1979 and didn't want his family in Albania harmed, described life in his homeland as "hell."

He said he left Shkodra, Albania, because of religious persecution and escaped by swimming across a lake for three hours until he reached Yugoslavia. Sponsored by an Albanian in San Francisco, he now runs a cafe here.

"When you don't have freedom, you don't have religion," he said earnestly. "You can't travel from city to city."

His mother and three of his brothers are in a concentration camp, he said. "For me, I can say anything I want but I'm scared for my family."

Another Albanian who lives in San Francisco but doesn't want his name used for the same reasons, described Albanians as "very attached to the land."

"Maybe it's because we've suffered so much, and have had too many invasions," he said.

"When I think of my grandfather's home, I suffer, I cry."

Commentary

By Rev. William J. Wood, S.J.

California Catholic Conference, May 1985

A Forgotten Country. Everyone knows Mother Teresa of Calcutta, but few are familiar with the tortured nation of her birth, Albania. Once legendary as the Macedon of Philip and Alexander the Great, pupil of Aristotle, Albania is tucked between Yugoslavia and Greece, facing the tip of the boot of Sicily 40 miles across the Adriatic.

As one might guess, the people of Albania are deeply and firmly religious. 68% of them are Moslems, the rest Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians. But religion is illegal in Albania, its profession and its practice severely punished. And, since 1976, atheism has been written into its constitution, a sort of Anti-Bill of Rights.

So isolated has Albania been for so many years that few Americans paid much attention when the nation's leader and chief of its Communist Party for more than 40 years died last month. Enver Hoxha's death put Albania on the front pages of some newspapers the next day, and even provided a special feature for the April 14 edition of "60 Minutes." And then this tiny Balkan Country slipped once again into oblivion, as if it had existed only in the some story book of horrors no longer in print.

Martyrdom in Albania. Ironically and coincidentally, on the day of Hoxha's burial, several hundred people gathered in San Francisco's St. Ignatius Church to bear witness that Albania does indeed exist in real life, the poorest country in Europe and the scene of the most unrelenting violations of basic human rights. The Albanians and their friends came to commemorate the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in their beloved homeland and to pray for the martyrs of Albania.

Because of its ties with the Vatican, the Catholic Church has been the particular target of Albania's xenophobic, Stalinist, government. The last forty years have seen the imprisonment, torture and execution of two archbishops, five bishops, an abbot, sixty-four diocesan priests, thirty-three Franciscans, fourteen Jesuits, ten seminarians and eight nuns. The few remaining priests and one elderly bishop linger in prison, while tens of thousands of the faithful have suffered harassment, imprisonment and death for their religious beliefs.

The organizers of this commemorative event remind us that, "Albania is a member of the United Nations, yet for years its policies and practices have mocked the sacred principles of this international body."

"We no longer can remain silent about the fate of our Albanian brothers and sisters who are potential victims of this religious genocide. The present conflict between believers and the atheistic government in Albania should not be regarded as an 'internal affair,' but an affront to all who cherish human rights and dignity. Albanian believers who persevere in their faith look to the rest of the world for sympathy and help."

Grave Violations of Religious Rights in Albania

by Palok Plaku

Repression has been a fact of life for years in Albania. The Communist government, which has been in power for 40 years, has a shocking record against human rights. Since its inception in 1944, this government has constantly abused the most elementary rights and freedoms of Albanian citizens, openly violating international laws and agreements to which it has solemnly agreed to adhere.

The illegal acts of the Albanian government against its citizens are many. We, however, will present here only an aspect which has lately received some attention, the abolition of religious beliefs and practices. Prior to 1967, the Communist government, which in theory constitutionally upheld religious freedom, did in fact ruthlessly interfere with those exercising their right to practice and profess their religion. This charade ended in 1967 when the government, by outlawing religious practice, in effect "legalized" religious persecution.

In order to better understand this situation, it is necessary to present a short background about the country and people. Albania is a small, mountainous country on the eastern shores of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, between Yugoslavia and Greece. Only forty miles of the Adriatic Sea separate Albania from Italy. In area, the country is about 11,100 square miles. Albanians are descendants of the ancient Illyrian tribes, generally regarded as the oldest inhabitants of the Balkans. They call themselves in their native language "sons of the eagle," and their land "eagle's country." St. Paul himself introduced Christianity to Albania at the time of his missionary journeys. Bishoprics such as Durrachium (Durrës), Aulon (Vlorë), Scodra (Shkodër), and Nikopolis (Preveza) are among the most ancient in the world. However, during the long rule of the Ottoman Empire, which lasted from the fourteenth century until 1912, a great number of Albanians, particularly in the lowlands, were converted to Islam. Today Albania is the only European country with a Muslim majority of 68%; the remainder are 19% Orthodox Christian and 13% Catholic.

The total population of Albania today is about three million. However, there are more than three million Albanians living outside the country. About two million reside in Yugoslavia; there are 200,000 in the U.S. and Canada, including the Italo-Albanians called Arberesh; in Italy 300,000; and the rest in Greece, Turkey, Romania and other countries.

After gaining independence in 1912 from Ottoman rule, Albania became a battlefield during World War I and was conquered by Italy and Germany during World War II. Having regained independence in 1944, Albania wound up in the hands of ruthless Communist rulers headed by Enver Hoxha (Hoja), who initiated a process of the destruction of religious freedom, a process which has not diminished with the passage of time, but has, in fact, intensified. This deliberate political process of fomenting hatred toward religion clearly confirms the Albanian government's and the Communist Party's determination to eliminate religion—with particular emphasis against Catholicism—from national life by both force and legislation.

Religion as Target

Between the World Wars, both Christians and Muslims were free to practice their religion in a spirit of mutual trust and ecumenical relations. With the advent of Communism at the end of 1944, this liberty and harmonious relationship among believers began to be deliberately attacked. The new government, as soon as it consolidated its power, initiated a twofold anti-religious program. First, in their quest to dominate all religious denominations, the Communist authorities began to reduce the entire religious structure of the land to spiritual and functional ineffectiveness, exploiting whatever formal power the Churches had in support of the aims of international Communism. Second, as a concurrent measure, the regime implemented continuous public agitation against religion.

In carrying out this over-all program, the regime pursued three separate but interrelated strategies.

1. Toleration, within limits, of Islam. Generally, with a few exceptions of high clergy, the Muslim religion was not a great obstacle to the new regime. By applying cunning leniency, the government wished to use it as a propaganda tool toward the Muslim world.
2. Although the regime considered Eastern Orthodoxy in general an enemy, they nevertheless attempted to use the Orthodox Church, because of her traditional patriotism, as an instrument for mobilizing Albania's Orthodox population behind its policies.
3. Complete elimination of Catholicism because of its strong spiritual, cultural and organizational power. For centuries the clergy and adherents of this Church were the front runners of Albania's national, cultural and religious renewal. The vast majority of Catholics were unsympathetic towards the new (Communist) regime.

To pursue this program the government and its Communist Party apparatus devised various methods of depriving the Churches of their basic income, curbing their influence and outlawing public religious instruction by expropriation of the property and monasteries and religious orders, of all the various schools, including seminaries, libraries, etc. At the same time the propaganda organs were engaged in a massive slander campaign against all religious leaders, particularly the most intransigent, with the aim of discrediting their spiritual leadership and moral character.

The new laws and specially promulgated decrees which soon followed forbade the election or appointment of Church officials without government approval. All pastoral letters, messages, speeches and memoranda to be printed or made public in any form were to be sent prior to publication to the Council of Ministers. The new laws further ordered the education of youth to be conducted only by the State. It also forbade religious communities to operate hospitals, orphanages, welfare institutions, printing presses, and to own real estate.

The Muslim Religion

Enver Hoxha, leader of Albanian Communists and himself a Muslim, has repeatedly declared, "The Muslim religion, its adherents and its clergy were not a serious obstacle. Even before the occupation of the country, but more so afterwards, the hierarchy of the Muslim faith was weak, without the least experience to give us trouble . . ." (Enver Hoxha, *Documents Albania Today*, No. 1, 1978, p. 46). Thus, in a short period, without direct confrontation, the regime achieved total control over this religion by attacking separately, one after the other, the many Muslim sects in Albania in order to weaken systematically the whole complex of this religious body. In the beginning the regime favored the powerful sect of Bektashis, and two of their leaders, Baba Faja and Baba Fejzo were "elected" deputies to the Peoples Assembly in 1945. When later both were assassinated, this alliance came to a sudden end. Thereafter the regime used the familiar tactics of imprisonment, torture and execution of the entire leadership of Muslim clergy.

It is worth noting that the government used the Muslim religion for a considerable period of time to fulfill a specific purpose in relation to Muslim countries by demonstrating to them the "harmonious compatibility" of the Muslim community with Communism. Under the cover of religious and cultural purposes, numerous Albanian Muslim delegations were very active in the Middle East and North Africa to propagandize Moscow's line and peace initiatives. At the same time, delegations from these countries were invited to visit Albania and see for themselves the "progressive" Muslim life there. However, by 1967 when the frontal attack was launched by Enver Hoxha against all religions, the activity had been terminated. The reaction of the Muslim world to this anticonstitutional and antihuman measure of the Albanian government against its people was astonishingly cool. *Al-Arabi*, Islamic cultural periodical of Kuwait with the largest circulation in the Arab world, flatly stated in an article about Albania: "Albania has never been a Muslim state in the constitutional sense of the word and the 1967 decree (abolition of all religions) is a natural process of the development of the religious question in Albania."

The Orthodox Church

Albanian Orthodox and their Church have not always had an easy time professing their faith and national identity. Declared as Greeks because of their adherence to Orthodoxy by the Greek clergy and politicians, they have struggled vigorously to identify themselves with the Albanian nation. Because of the traditional nationalistic character of the Orthodox Church, the government's plan was to use it in the first place as an instrument for mobilizing the Orthodox population behind its policies. At the same time, steps were undertaken to eliminate elements within the Church which were considered "unreliable." To succeed in this plan, all churches and monasteries were infiltrated by Communist agents and sympathizers. Soon after this was implemented, the regime brought the entire Church under its control. Their only seminary was closed, while some church buildings and monasteries, such as those of Ardenica, Narta, Vlorë and Voskopojë, were confiscated.

The elimination of the leaders of the Orthodox Church was carried out in the same way as it was against the Muslim and Catholic clergy — by murder, execution, imprisonment and torture. Thus, during a period of less than five years, the regime killed or put into prison and labor camps the majority of the hierarchy and many other simple priests and deacons. The highly cultured Archbishop Kristofor Kisi, head of the Albanian Orthodox Church, was deposed and sent to prison where he died after much humiliation. He was replaced by the government with Pais Vodica, an archimandrite and Communist agitator.

As in the case of the Muslim religion, the government also used the Orthodox Church for its foreign policy purposes. During the Soviet tutelage of Albania, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania was forced to closely cooperate with the Moscow Patriarchate and Pais Vodica participated on behalf of the Albanian Orthodox Church in all peace conferences organized by the Soviet Union. However, after Albania broke with Moscow in 1961, the ties between the two churches were abruptly cut.

The Catholic Church

Although the government directed its anti-religious campaign against all three religious groups, Catholics felt the main brunt of the assaults. Despite being a minority, Albanian Catholics and particularly their clergy, were admired and loved by Orthodox and Muslims for their traditionally strong patriotic and cultural dedication. Jealous of the strength of influential Catholic clergy and afraid of the unity among their believers, the government employed all kinds of legal and illegal means to erode and destroy the foundation of the Catholic Church. For centuries, the Catholic clergy had taught and worked with all the people without religious distinction. Many visitors to Albania noted how they cared for and served people selflessly, sharing daily joys and sorrows. It was this religious tradition the new government sought to shatter. By the end of 1946, almost half of the Catholic clergy were imprisoned, all foreign clergy expelled and 20 priests and religious put to death. At the same time, Enver Hoxha, at that time General Secretary of the party and Head of the government, directed all his efforts toward fomenting resentment against the Catholic church leaders. The church, however, stood firm and united in opposition to the government's plan to establish a new church organization, severed from Rome, which would serve the purposes of Communist indoctrination throughout the land.

The actions of the Albanian government and Party to wipe out Catholicism from public and private life can be divided into three main periods: 1944-1948, 1949-1967 and 1967-1984.

1944-1948

Hoxha's plan to establish a Catholic Church severed from Rome began to take shape in May 1945 when he expelled the Apostolic Delegate to Albania, Archbishop Leone G. B. Nigris. Then, hastily summoning the Metropolitan Archbishop of Shkodra, Primate of the Church, Gasper Thachi, and the Archbishop of Durres, Vincent Prendushi, a nationally famed poet and writer, he demanded that they separate from Rome, establish a new national church and give their allegiance to his new regime. In exchange he offered the government's "conciliatory attitude" and material help in maintaining the Church's institutions. Both prelates bravely refused, and paid for this stand with their lives. Thachi died in 1946 while under house arrest. Prendushi was sentenced to twenty years at hard labor and died in prison in 1949 after enduring horrible tortures.

The government's onslaught now turned against the priests. On June 21, 1945, two Jesuit teachers, Frs. Jak Gardin and Gjergj Vata were arrested and, after a trial filled with illegal proceedings and marked by the withdrawal of their defenders from the court in protest of the proceedings were sentenced to many years in prison. Immediately after the first elections, on December 31, 1945, in which no opposition party was allowed to participate, the police arrested Frs. Gjon Fausti, Vice-Provincial of the Jesuits and Daniel Dajani, Rector of the Pontifical Seminary of Shkodra. A month later the government ordered the immediate expulsion of all non-Albanian members of religious orders. The number expelled exceeded two hundred. During a mock trial on January 30, 1946, Jesuit Fathers Fausti and Dajani, Franciscan Father Gjon Shllaku, and seminarians Mark Cuni and Gjergj Bici were sentenced to death along with 13 laymen. The execution took place on March 4, 1946, outside the Catholic cemetery in Shkodra and their bodies were thrown into a common grave. Their last words were of pardon for their persecutors and of praise to God and Albania as they shouted "Long live Christ. Long live Albania." Exactly one month later all Jesuit institutions were closed and the Order outlawed.

As soon as the shock of the executions had had its effect, Enver Hoxha summoned Bishop Fran Gjini in Tirana to order him, as he had done the year before with Bishops Thachi and Prendushi, to cut his ties to Rome and to sway the clergy and Catholic population over the government's side. Gjini had become the Substitute Apostolic Delegate and the leader prelate after the death of Thachi. Hoxha threatened him with a similar fate to that of his predecessor unless he capitulated; Bishop Gjini refused, saying "I will never separate myself and my flock from the Holy See." Nevertheless, fearing great reprisals against those under his care if a compromise could not be reached, Gjini attempted to bring about a reconciliation between the government and the Catholic Church in Albania. He courageously wrote an open letter to Hoxha, in which Gjini offered the Church's cooperation in "reconstructing the nation, binding the wounds and surmounting the existing difficulties." He expressed "hope for the realization of not only material advantages, but also spiritual benefits for all Albanians." Hoxha ignored the message and ordered the arrest of Gjini on the charge of spreading anti-Communist propaganda. After a year of torture and much humiliation, Bishop Gjini was executed on March 8, 1948, along with a group of eighteen clergy and lay people.

Just a month earlier, another Bishop, Gjergj Volaj, had been executed along with other priests and lay people on the charge of being "enemies of the people." By now the persecution had reached its peak. Besides the Jesuits, the Franciscans had also been disbanded, along with all the orders of religious sisters. Their property, even their personal belongings, were confiscated. The hierarchy had been completely decimated, with only one bishop still alive.

1949-1967

In 1949 external and internal pressures prompted the Albanian government to slow its drive against the Catholic Church and religion in general. The expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform at Stalin's orders, in June, 1948, had created an unexpected danger for the Albanian leader and his Party. Groups of pro-Tito sympathizers and Albanian escapees to Yugoslavia were being organized by Yugoslavia to overthrow the Hoxha regime. In order to meet the challenge, Hoxha took the offensive against Yugoslavia, publicly blaming Albania's neighbor for all of the misfortunes of Albania since the "liberation." As a tactic designed to forestall Catholics from joining forces against him, Hoxha delegated his Minister of the Interior, Tuk Jakova, to meet with Jakova's former schoolmate, the Franciscan priest Marin Sirdani, in the swamps near Elbasan (central Albania) where Fr. Sirdani was serving a long sentence of forced labor. Jakova blamed and condemned Yugoslavia for the policies of brutality against Catholics and their clergy during past years, and assured Fr. Sirdani of the government's desire for rapprochement with the Church. Stunned by Jakova's statements, Fr. Sirdani nevertheless rejoiced and promptly accepted his invitation to mediate between the government and the Catholic hierarchy, which was now reduced to one elderly Bishop, the Venerable Bernardin Shllaku, Ordinary of the Diocese of Pulti.

Fr. Sirdani informed the Bishop of the government's approach and both the Bishop and the government agreed to begin negotiations. Several organizational charters governing the Catholic Church were prepared between 1949 and 1951. Bishop Shllaku and his aides tried their best to accommodate the government's demands and conditions, while at the same time taking into account the articles of Canon Law. Satisfied with the goodwill of the Church leaders, the government pressed for complete separation of the Church from the Vatican. In order to force compliance, new arrests of intransigent priests were made. Stubbornly, Catholics refused to give in despite the fact that the government charters for the Muslim and Orthodox faiths had already been worked out and approved by the government a few years earlier. Finally, after lengthy and painful discussions, a compromise was reached in which the government allowed the Church to keep its spiritual sovereignty and its links with the Holy See.

However, the official Communist press falsified the original text of the Charter and announced that all ties between the Albanian Catholic Church and the Vatican had been broken. The Catholic clergy were angered and saddened by this betrayal. They denounced the lies and misinterpretations regarding the Charter and emphasized their strong allegiance to the Holy Father.

In signing the Charter the government promised to allow churches and seminaries to reopen and to provide a subsidy for their

maintenance. The government had also agreed to allow parents to bring their children into the Church for religious instruction. When these promises were not kept, the Church tried to accommodate itself to the government's wishes in order to perform its religious duties toward Albanian Catholics. The Catholic faithful, who understood the Communists' hatred of them and religion in general, suffered greatly. They witnessed helplessly the destruction of Catholic institutions and the imprisonment and execution of their priests. In the midst of this turmoil, and despite the oppression and pillage directed against the Catholic minority, Catholics filled the churches for regular services. It was an open and eloquent testimony of their dedication to the Church and its clergy.

The leaders of the Church and faithful were certainly aware that the government's attempt to nationalize the churches was only a temporary measure to prevent the growth of discontent. Adamantly, they refused to subordinate themselves to this kind of constitutional pressure and blocked all compromises concerning the fundamental teaching of the Catholic Church. As a consequence, a new wave of persecution washed over the Church. Between 1955 and 1965 more than a dozen priests and religious were shot. Many others were either imprisoned or sent to forced labor camps. Among the executed priests were Fathers Ded Malaj, Zef Bici, and Franciscan Konrad Gjollaj. Diocesan offices and parishes were constantly harassed, and religious services impeded by agents of the government. Titular Bishops and vicars were forced to clean streets and public bathrooms wearing clown outfits with paper signs across their chests reading "I have sinned against the people." The entire Catholic Church was slowly being martyred.

1967-1984

This period is the final intensified attempt of the Albanian Communist Party and the Albanian government to wipe out the Church and all religious activity. Enver Hoxha again set the stage for action with his infamous speech of February 6, 1967, urging the Albanian youth to fight "religious superstitions." A ruthless campaign against all religion followed. Everywhere churches were burned or turned into sports arenas, dance halls, movie theaters, apartments, etc. Priests and Bishops were publicly beaten. The Franciscan church of Arramadhe in Shkodra, together with the Friary, was set afire one evening and four elderly Franciscans were burned to death.

During 1967, according to the journal of Albanian writers, *Nendori* (November), about 2200 mosques, churches, chapels, monasteries and other religious buildings were vandalized and closed. Of that number 327 were Roman Catholic. On November 22, 1967, the government published Decree No. 4337 ordering the annulment of the religious charters and of all laws pertaining to state-church relationships. All religious rites were prohibited and grave penalties were imposed on violators. The remaining priests were sent to forced-labor camps for "re-education." The Albanian Party and government boasted that it had become the first totally atheistic state in the world. Their actions had broken Article 18 of the country's 1946 Constitution which states that all citizens are guaranteed freedom of conscience and faith, and that religious communities are free in the exercise of their beliefs and practices. Their decree also violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (U.N.) which guarantees religious freedom.

The abolition of religion in Albania passed almost without notice abroad and aroused little protest, with the exception of the Vatican's daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*, which published reports on anti-religious violence. The Free Albania Committee, located in New York, made a strong protest in the name of the silenced Albanian people, to the United Nations General Secretary, and urged that immediate steps be taken "to stop the savage religious persecution" in Albania. The Albanian Catholic Center in New York, under the leadership of Msgr. Joseph J. Orshì, denounced the abolition of religion by the Albanian government and pleaded to American Catholics for their concern and support. The American-Albanian Charity Organization of Detroit, in turn, distributed an informational brochure (in three languages) documenting accounts of the ongoing religious persecution there, since 1944. Unfortunately, other than these steps, the plea for support went unheeded by religious and civic leaders until 1972 when Pope Paul VI strongly protested the execution of Father Shtjefen Kurti for baptizing a child in a labor camp. Since that time, the late Cardinal Humberto Medeiros of Boston, the late Bishop Mark Lipa of the Albanian Orthodox diocese of America, Pope John Paul II, the German Catholic Bishops' Conference and the United Churches of Christ - USA have defended the right of Albania's citizens to practice freely their religion.

However, Albanian leaders remain deaf to these international pleas and continue to attack religion. Moreover, they proudly defend the destruction of churches, monasteries and mosques; the killing of hundreds of priests and religious; the inhuman persecution of believers. They even attack with vehemence the Soviet Union, China, Poland, Yugoslavia and other European countries for their "anti-revolutionary" stand toward religion. Needless to say, all these Communist governments which Albania criticizes persecute religion. Nevertheless, they at least formally guarantee religious freedom in their constitutions and allow, with restrictions, some private and public exercise of religion.

To show their disapproval of such "lenience" toward religion, Albania's government adopted in 1976 a new Constitution whose Articles 37 and 55 boastfully proclaimed that the State recognizes no religion whatsoever, and forbids all religious activities and organizations, while encouraging atheism.

Article 37. The State does not recognize any religion at all and supports and develops atheistic propaganda in order to implant in people the scientific-materialistic world view.

Article 55. The formation of any organization of a fascist, anti-democratic, religious or anti-socialist nature is forbidden. Fascist, religious, warmongerish, anti-socialist activity and propaganda are forbidden, as is the incitement to hatred between peoples and races.

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. In June, 1977, a new Albanian penal code was issued, clause 55 of which lays down the penalties to be exacted for religious activity. It states that "religious propaganda, and also the production, distribution or storage of literature of this kind" will be punished with imprisonment for between three years and ten years. In time of war or if the offenses are deemed to be serious, imprisonment is not for less than ten years and the death penalty can be imposed.

Prior to the actual enactment of such official acts, the government manifested the same kind of suppression of religion. Fr. Stephen Kurti was executed in 1972 for baptizing a child in a labor camp at the parents' request. In 1974 the government also sentenced the three remaining Catholic Bishops to detention camps for conducting religious services in private. Following the constitutional outlawing of religion, in 1977 Fran Mark Gjoni of Shkodra was brought to trial for the possession of Bibles. Gjoni admitted, when presented with Bibles taken from his home, that he had found them in parks and at the seashore where they had been left by tourists or floated in by sea. For his "crime" Gjoni was sentenced to 12 years in prison. In spite of a total blackout in regard to the case by the government-controlled news media monopoly, everyone in Albania was aware of the trial and took great interest in it. The trial ironically helped to testify to the continued existence of religious faith in Albania, as well as highlighting the outrageous reactions made by the Albanian government to even the most mild expression of that faith! For religious criminals such as Gjoni, according to reports from recent refugees, the government has at least six prisons, nine concentration camps and 14 areas of internal exile.

An even more terrible example of the continuing anti-religious campaign of the Albanian government is that of Catholic Bishop Ernest Coba (Choba), Apostolic administrator of Shkodra. Bishop Coba, confined since 1974 to the labor camp of Paperr near the city of Elbasan in central Albania, celebrated a secret Easter service in 1979 at the request of his fellow prisoners. Unfortunately, the police were informed and at the beginning of the service prison guards entered the barracks and some began assaulting the Bishop, tearing off his vestments and breaking the cross, while others began beating the prisoners who had gathered for the celebration. The old, nearly blind, venerable prelate was seriously injured in the melee and died the following morning. His body was immediately removed and buried by the police in an undisclosed site.

Another recent victim of the Albanian government's war against religion is Fr. Ndoc Luli, S.J. Father Luli, after much hesitation, in May of 1980, baptized, at the request of his nephew's wife, her newborn twins at the Agricultural Cooperative, Mali Jusht, near Shkodra, where he was confined. The event leaked out somehow, first to the secretary of the Communist cell, then to the police. Father Luli was arrested immediately, along with his niece, and both were interrogated and treated harshly. At the public trial, which took place in the recreation room of the cooperative, Fr. Luli's niece was sentenced to eight years in prison at hard labor, while he received the sentence ambiguously termed "life until death." His fate is unknown and many believe that Fr. Luli died at the bottom of some mine, a victim of the dreaded Sigurimi (Albanian Secret Police).

With the death of Bishop Coba, the only remaining Catholic Bishop in Albania is the 70-year old Nikoll (Nicholas) Troshani, titular Bishop of Cisamo and Apostolic Administrator of Lezha and Durres. He is confined in the labor camp of Tepelana near the seaport of Vlora. The third of the surviving Bishops who were detained in 1974, Antonin Fishta, died several years ago while still in confinement. The few priests and religious still alive remain in prison and forced labor camps. Among these is Mark Hasi who, for the second time, is serving a long prison sentence for "conducting religious services." Confined to labor camps are also Fathers Injac Gjoka, Rrok Gjuraq, Ndoc Sahatcia, Zef Nikolla, Ndoc Gega, Jesuit Gjergj Vata, Simon Juhani, and Simon's older brother, Lazer, Fran Illia, Federik Mazi, and two Franciscans.

Amnesty International has been interceding in vain for the release of Bishop Troshani and the other priests and lay religious believers who are kept in prison solely for their beliefs. In 1977, Cardinal Humberto Medeiros of Boston, together with Albanian Orthodox Bishop Mark Lipa, issued a "Joint Appeal for Religious Freedom" which condemned the anti-religious laws of Albania. Again on November 28, 1981, Medeiros and Lipa issued a "Declaration for Religious Freedom" on the sixty-ninth anniversary of the establishment of an independent Albanian state. In the declaration the religious leaders called for "respect for human rights, and especially for religious freedom in Albania." They asked the Albanian government that the churches, mosques and religious institutions be allowed to reopen. They also stated their conviction that Church life and faith in God "promotes good social order." On October 5, 1980, Pope John Paul II, referring to many martyrs of modern day Albania, asked all the faithful to pray for Christians and other believers who are persecuted for their faith. He reminded his listeners that "to be spiritually close to all those in Albania, who are suffering violence because of their faith, is a special duty of all Christians, according to the tradition inherited from the first centuries." In addition, he exhorted all "to pray also for those who persecute them, repeating Christ's invocation on the Cross, addressed to His father: 'Forgive them; for they know not what they do.'" The Pope also defended the martyrs from the charges that they were guilty of political crimes by drawing attention to Christ's having been condemned on the political charge of having claimed he was a king.

In 1981, the Bishops of Greece also denounced religious persecution in Albania, particularly stressing the fate of the Orthodox believers. However, their appeal had chauvinistic overtones, claiming that 400,000 Albanian Orthodox were Greek nationals. Unfortunately, their distortion, instead of helping, hurt the Orthodox believers in Albania by giving Hoxha the pretext to continue his drive against religion.

Another positive indication that world opinion is becoming interested in the plight of Albanian believers, came from Eastern Europe. On October 7, 1982, in Bucharest, Romania, an international, inter-faith colloquium was held under the auspices of the Conference of European Churches of the World Council of Churches. The Ecumenical Press Services of the World Council of Churches published a part

of the document from this colloquium which deals with the religious situation in Albania. The document reports the radical suppression of any organized religious activity in Albania. While denouncing the present religious oppression, it suggests that Christians outside of Albania utilize this period in order to prepare the way for an eventual future dialogue with the Albanian government regarding the fate of Albanian believers.

In March of 1983, the representative of the Foreign Ministry of Denmark presented the issue of religious oppression in Albania at the 39th meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva. He urged the Commission to take formal steps to protest the attitude of the Albanian government toward its citizens wishing to practice their faith. Two months later another strong voice on behalf of Albanian believers was heard from the United Churches of Christ - USA. At their annual meeting on May 13, 1983 in San Francisco, they adopted a resolution vigorously condemning religious oppression in Albania.

Religious Activity in Albania Today

Religion continues secretly to influence the life of Albanians of all faiths despite the brutality of anti-religious campaigns. Evidence of this is given by official news media agencies, including the government leaders. At various times the Albanian press has repeatedly stated that "religion has still not been uprooted in our country," "religion is still alive among our working class;" "enemies of the people who believe in God do not sleep, they continue to look with sympathy and hope to the Vatican; these kinds of enemies are inside our Party lines and active in our organizations." These statements verify the reports which have come from Albania that some religious practices are alive there, such as the observance of major feast days, the wearing of "disguised" religious symbols, and even participation in religious pilgrimages.

Several young Albanian refugees reaching the United States within the last two years have given details of how the people have continued to practice their Catholic faith in the secrecy of their homes. It is almost certain that the remaining Catholic priests still alive are in prison. The people now rely on lay leadership for their religious services. The eldest family member is chosen to lead prayer service and to perform the rites of baptism and marriage. Religious medals, crucifixes, pictures and rosaries are kept hidden by families due to the threat of raids by the Albanian security police. Decree 5339 of 1975 has discouraged the giving of religious names to the newborn by threatening parents who do so. In 1980 the government complained that the children were being called by their saint's name at home. Such all-pervasive repressive measures against religion are greatly resented as being foreign to Albania's heritage.

A further indication of the continuing influence of religious beliefs in Albania is the recent survey conducted in 1980 by an Albanian government sociologist. The survey showed that there is an extremely low incidence (less than 4%) of marriages in Albania between people of different religious background. According to this study, Albanians prefer to marry within their own religious group. This mixed-marriage rate is very low in comparison to other European countries and is also much lower than it had been prior to Communist rule. This means that the anti-religious oppression, far from removing religion as an influential factor in the life of Albania, has instead brought about a greater incidence of the preservation of religious unity within one's faith, by the overwhelming majority of Albanians.

How We Can Help Religious Freedom in Albania

The total war on religion being waged by the Albanian government has lasted for 40 years. Tremendous suffering continues to be inflicted upon Albanians for the mere fact that they choose to believe in God. It is to the credit of Albania's people that there are many signs that religion is still alive in Albania, as martyrs, religious prisoners and even Communist leaders testify. But there are many unknown casualties in this war against religion. For instance, there are those who are prevented from even hearing the message of the gospel because of rampant persecution of priests and other leaders of religious communities. Or there are those, like a young refugee from Albania, who are tempted to become embittered and unbelieving because of the seeming lack of concern on the part of believers outside Albania regarding the nation's plight.

Religious freedom in Albania is a matter of justice to which both civil and religious leaders should turn their attention. Until now, the leaders of nations have continued to overlook, disregard, ignore and remain silent in the face of actions of the Albanian government against its citizens who wish to practice their religion. In doing so, world leaders call into question their commitment to the United Nations Charter, which makes the choice of one's religion so fundamental a right that no government has the authority to discriminate against it, let alone totally deny it.

Religious leaders and all believers have an obligation to give assistance to those suffering persecution and to speak out in their defense. To fail to do so shows a lack of charity toward those in need. Our silence in regard to Albanian religious persecution signifies that our belief in religious freedom only touches our own immediate environment and that we do not place a high value on the religious freedom of others. Certainly our generous and courageous commitment to religious freedom in Albania will help to bring about an increase in freedom and justice throughout the world and preserve the values of religion for future generations, values without which we are less than human.

Religious leaders, organizations and individual believers should urge their elected officials to speak out against religious persecution in Albania and for the right to Albanians to freely practice their religion. Protests against the Albanian government should be registered at the United Nations and human rights organizations, drawing particular attention to those sections of Albania's Constitution and Penal Code dealing with the abolition of religion which are in violation of Chapter IX, Article 55, of the United Nations Charter. Religious organizations, which have a good record of showing concern for human rights, should bring this issue into the public forum and turn the attention of their own members toward concerted action on behalf of Albanian religious believers.

Albania's Beloved Martyrs: Beacons of the Faith



Bishop Fran Gjini



Bishop Gjergj Volaj



Archbishop Vincenc
Prendushi



Archbishop Gaspër Thaçi



Father Bernardin Palaj, O.F.M.



Father Gjon Fausti, S.J.



Father Gjon Shllaku, O.F.M.



Father Daniel Dajani, S.J.



Rev. Shtjefën Kurti



Rev. Alexander Sirdani



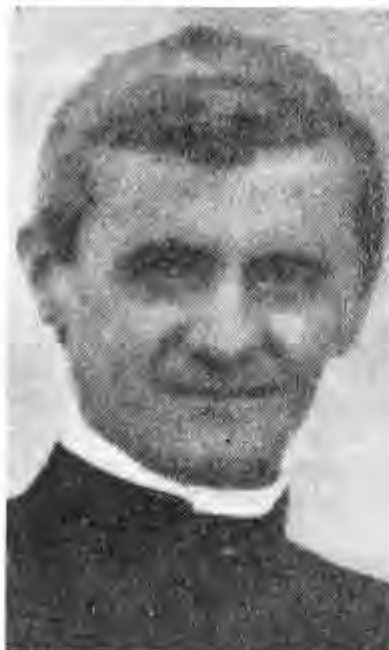
Rev. Ndoc Nikaj



Rev. Pjetër Çuni



Rev. Anton Muza



Rev. Ndrë Zadëja



Father Ciprian Nika, O.F.M.



Father Lekë Luli, O.F.M.



Msgr. Nikollë Deda

... And Still Suffering in Prison

Father Gjergj Vata, S.J. (left) and Reverend Mark Hasi (center) with Father Luciano Caldirolì, S.J. (right) in a rare photo predating the Communist takeover. Since 1948 Fathers Vata and Hasi have been serving "long-term" prison sentences in various prisons and labor camps throughout Albania. Presently they are confined at the infamous prison of Burrel, in northern Albania. Father Caldirolì, S.J. is currently stationed in Rome.



Fallen for Faith, Justice and Liberty

The exact number of Albanian clergy who perished during the past forty years' "war against religion" may never be known. The names of the Catholic martyrs were recorded by our Center in the 1976 publication of *The Fulfilled Promise*. Unfortunately, the names of many Moslem and Orthodox Church clergy who perished were never recorded in one place. The Albanian government's longterm efforts to wipe the names of these many religious martyrs from the memory of the people they served have been in vain. In fact, these brave martyrs "shine today as the stars on a dark night" not only for Albanians but for all oppressed peoples. The memorial observance of the martyrs during our Commemoration should signal Albania's political leaders that religious freedom can never be crushed by force and terror nor deadened by legislation.

In remembering the sacrifice of our martyrs, we renew our own commitment to the holy ideals for which they suffered and died. The Commemoration committee is proud to publish the listing of those religious men and women who suffered and died for their faith, for justice and for liberty in Albania. Remember them always and pray that one day in the near future we may honor them all on a common feast day as we honor the martyrs of other centuries.

Moslem Religion

His Grace Mustafa Varoshi (1945)
Very Rev. Baba Zylfo (1943)
Very Rev. Sheh Qerimi (1945)
Very Rev. Baba Kamber Prishtia (1946)
Very Rev. Dede Abazi (1947)
Very Rev. Sheh Ibrahim Karabunara (1947)
Very Rev. Sheh Mislim Luma (1953)
Reverend Baba Murati (1943)
Reverend Baba Fehimi (1944)
Reverend Baba Muço (1945)
Reverend Halil Hoxha (1945)
Reverend Hoxhe Dusha (1945)
Reverend Imam Ahmet Hyseni (1945)
Reverend Sheh Hamit Berzhdani (1945)

Reverend Imam Liman Shabani (1945)
Reverend Baba Qamil Gllava (1945)
Reverend Baba Myrteza Kruja (1946)
Reverend Baba Qazimi (1946)
Reverend Imam Met Troci (1947)
Reverend Baba Mehmeti (1947)
Reverend Baba Shefqet Koshtani (1947)
Reverend Baba Ali Tomori (1947)
Reverend Dervish Mehmeti (1947)
Reverend Baba Shete (1947)
Reverend Baba Muharrem Kreshova (1947)
Reverend Imam Gjoni (1950)
Reverend Nebih Novosela (1954)
Reverend Zenel Hoxha (1954)

Orthodox Church

Archbishop Kristofor Kisi (1949)
Archbishop Visarion Xhuvani (1951)
Bishop Irine of Pojan (1956)
Bishop Agathangjel Çançe (1958)

Bishop Irine of Korça & Gjirokastra (1953)
Bishop Damien Konessi (1973)
Father Josif Papamihaili (1946)

Catholic Church

Archbishops

Prendushi, Vincenc (1949)
Thaçi, Gaspër, Primate of the Church (1946)

Bishops

Bumçi, Luigi (1945)
Çoba, Ernest (1979)
Dema, Pjetër (1955)
Fishta, Antonin (1973)
Gjini, Fran, Abbot and Substitute Apostolic Delegate (1948)

Shllaku, Bernardin (1973)

Volaj, Gjergj (1948)

Monsignors

Bonati, Jul (1951)
Deda, Nikoll (1948)
Haberi, Gjergj (1950)
Tusha, Nikoll (1951)

Diocesan Priests

Arta, Marian (1961)
 Bicaj, Mark (1949)
 Bici, Zef (1968)
 Çuni, Mëshill (1951)
 Çuni, Pjetër (1946)
 Deda, Ejëll (1947)
 Dedaj, Martin (1963)
 Dragusha, Nikoll (1957)
 Dredhaj, Alexander (1959)
 Frisku, Rrok (1947)
 Gaci, Marian (1968)
 Gazulli, Nikoll (1946)
 Gega, Ejëll (1964)
 Gjani, Mark (1945)
 Gjinaj, Nikoll (1954)
 Gjini, Pal (1961)
 Gruda, Pjetër (1967)
 Kovaçi, Ejëll (1957)
 Kovaçi, Gjon (1964)
 Kurti, Shtjefën (1972)
 Laca, Tomë (1956)
 Laska, Nikoll (1948)
 Lufi, Ndrë (1954)
 Lufi, Pjetër (1963)
 Maçaj, Dedë (1946)
 Makaj, Anton (1969)
 Malaj, Dedë (1959)
 Malaj, Nikoll (1948)
 Marku, Tomë (1963)
 Marksen, Zef (1946)
 Mazrreku, Luigj (1962)
 Mazrreku, Nikoll (1957)
 Muçaj, Dedë (1964)
 Muzaj, Anton (1948)
 Muzej, Pashko (1973)
 Muzhani, Pashko (1973)
 Nikaj, Ndoc (1946)
 Nodej, Lorenc (1959)
 Pici, Luigj (1946)
 Prendushi, Luigj (1947)
 Prendushi, Nikoll (1950)

Qafalija, Prenk (1960)
 Shantoja, Lazër (1945)
 Shelqeti, Nikoll (1948)
 Shllaku, Nikoll (1961)
 Shllaku, Zef (1946)
 Shtufi, Zef (1946)
 Sirdani, Alexander (1948)
 Suma, Anton (1962)
 Tracki, Alphonse (1946)
 Tusha, Pjetër (1959)
 Zadeja, Ndrë (1945)
 Zogaj, Anton (1947)

Franciscans

Ashiku, Augustin (1946)
 Bardhi, Pashko (1948)
 Cani, Syril (1953)
 Dema, Benedikt (1960)
 Dodaj, Pal (1951)
 Gjeçaj, Bone (1960)
 Gjolej, Konrad (1961)
 Gurashi, Rrok (1962)
 Harapi, Anton (1946)
 Hila, Silvester (1959)
 Koda, Serafim (1947)
 Kurti, Donat (1969)
 Llupi, Bernard (1946)
 Luli, Lekë (1944)
 Makaj, Dhionis (1963)
 Mazrreku, Filip (1984)
 Miraj, Klement (1970)
 Mitrovqi, Lorenc (1943)
 Nika, Cyprian (1948)
 Palaj, Bernardin (1947)
 Pici, David (1969)
 Prela, Pashko (1969)
 Prendushi, Mati (1947)
 Prendushi, Vinçenc (1949)
 Serreqi, Karl (1946)
 Shajakaj, Leonard (1964)
 Shllaku, Bernardin (1973)
 Shllaku, Gjon (1946)

Sirdani, Marin (1962)
 Suma, Gaspër (1949)
 Tagaj, Leonard (1946)

Jesuits

Berisha, Florian (1970)
 Dajani, Daniel (1946)
 Dodaj, Mark (1956)
 Fausti, Gjon (1946)
 Giardri, Pashko (1954)
 Gjekaj, Gjekë (1975)
 Harapi, Mark (1973)
 Karma, Gjon (1975)
 Ljarja, Edelbert (1965)
 Luli, Anton (1980)
 Markoviqi, Pal (1966)
 Pantalija, Gjon (1947)
 Saraçi, Anton (1947)
 Saraçi, Zef (1954)

Seminarians

Bici, Gjergj (1962)
 Bici, Ndoc (1957)
 Çuni, Lekë (1956)
 Çuni, Mark (1946)
 Gaci, Ndoc (1945)
 Gjoni, Augustin (1954)
 Gjekaj, Fran (1946)
 Lesej, Prenk (1965)
 Tusha, Gjon (1959)
 Zadrina, Mark (1958)

Sisters

Bardhanjulli, Luigja (1950)
 Daiçi, Ester (1956)
 Daragjati, Josefina (1958)
 Hila, Alberta (1950)
 Leka, Pierina (1954)
 Liarja, Domenica (1949)
 Vulaj, Margarita (1947)
 Zojzi, Imelda (1952)



United Nations Commission on Human Rights Adopts Resolution against Albania

The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty of Berne, Switzerland has labored for sometime to place the matter of the violation of religious rights in Albania on the agenda of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. In our previous issue we reported on the work of this association. We are now pleased to publish the Association's intervention and draft resolution submitted to the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection on Minorities. The draft resolution was submitted on August 27, 1985. It is printed below in its entirety along with the Association's intervention.

Association Internationale
Pour la Défense de la Liberté Religieuse
Schosshaldenstrasse 17, 3006 Berne, Switzerland
(Association non gouvernementale accréditée auprès des Nations Unies)

SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES Thirty-Eighth Session

Agenda item 6: The violations of human rights

August 1985

The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty is dedicated to the recognition and the respect of all human rights and particularly of those pertaining to the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.

Therefore, as point 6 is being discussed, our Association cannot keep silent in regard to constant and systematic violations of this basic freedom.

The Association would like to turn the Sub-Commission's kind attention to the very peculiar and unique situation existing in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania where the right to freedom of conscience and religion is totally violated. As a matter of fact, this government forbids, may it be in its legislation or in practice, the exercise of this right, when it behoves it to have it respected.

Article 37 of the Constitution of Albania, dated 1976, reads: "The State does not recognize any religion whatever; it supports and promotes atheistic propaganda for the purpose of inculcating the scientific materialistic philosophy of the world on man."

Article 55 of the same Constitution states among other things that "The creation of any type of organization having a religious character ... is prohibited, as is also prohibited any kind of religious activities."

In 1967 and according to the Albanian literary magazine *Nendori*, 2169 mosques, church buildings and convents have already been confiscated and secularized.

Today, there is not a single Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant church building nor a Moslem mosque which is still open for public religious worship. Every effort is put forth to eradicate religion by applying laws that have been promulgated against it.

Nevertheless, as one of the countries holding membership in the United Nations Organization, the People's Socialist Republic of Albania has pledged to respect effectively and universally, in a close co-operation with the others, the rights and fundamental liberties, according to the Declaration on Human Rights. No one dares question that freedom of conscience and religion is a fundamental right which all the State members, without any exception, ought to honour and should contribute to have it respected.

To deprive anyone by law from enjoying religious freedom is a most serious offense to the dignity of man; it is an obvious and systematic violation of human rights, as well as a denial of principles of the UN Charter. Furthermore, it constitutes a serious obstacle to friendly and peaceful intercourse with other nations.

Naturally, the Albanian government claims to hold legitimately the authority to deny its citizens the right to freedom of conscience and religion.

But no power in the world can rightfully pretend to set aside such an inalienable human right, a right so intimately attached to the dignity of man, an infeasible right.

If the Marxist-Leninist Albanians are willing to disseminate their scientific materialist conception of the world, they have the full right

to do so, but they don't have the right to propose or adopt laws prohibiting the free exercise of religion.

Lenin himself declared: "Each one should be perfectly free to profess any religion or to recognize none of them, it is to say to be an atheist. . . ."

A great number of Albanians, Moslems and Christians are suffering from lack of religious liberty in their own countries.

The international community cannot remain indifferent with regard to this total and so glaring violation of a basic human right.

The International Association for the Defense of Religious is confident that the Sub-Commission will be sensitive to this problem and will do everything in its power to help the Albanian government to adopt a satisfactory solution that will contribute also to break the isolation in which it is shut up at the present time.

United Nations
Economic and Social Council
Commission on Human Rights
Sub-Commission on Prevention
of Discrimination and
Protection of Minorities
Thirty-eighth session
Agenda item 6

E/CN.4/Sub.1/1985/L.39
27 August 1985

Original: English

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII).

*Draft resolution submitted by Mr. Bossuyt, Mr. Currey, Mr. Cepeda Ulloa,
Mr. Deschênes, Mr. Mubanga-Chipoya and Mr. Whitaker*

The Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities,

Guided by the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,

Considering that all Member States have an obligation to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to fulfill the obligations they have undertaken under the various international instruments in this field,

Deeply disturbed by the constitutional and legal measures adopted by the People's Socialist Republic of Albania to forbid the exercise of the right to freedom of conscience and religion to all individuals within its territory,

Believing that these measures constitute an affront to human dignity, a flagrant and systematic violation of human rights, a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations,

Bearing in mind Commission on Human Rights resolution 1985/51 of 14 March 1985 in which the Commission urged States, in accordance with their respective constitutional systems, to provide, where they have not already done so, adequate constitutional and legal guarantees for freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief,

1. *Requests* the Commission on Human Rights to urge the Government of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania to provide adequate constitutional and legal measures consistent with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief with a view to ensuring that freedom of religion or belief is assured in a concrete manner, that discrimination on ground of religion or belief is proscribed, and that adequate safeguards and remedies are provided against such discrimination;

2. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to inform the Sub-Commission, at its thirty-ninth session, of the deliberations of the Commission on Human Rights on this matter, as well as of any consideration which may be given to it by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council.

Editor's Note: Our Center received a communication from Geneva, Switzerland in September, 1985. We were pleased to learn that the Draft Resolution was approved by an 11 to 4 vote. There were 3 abstentions and Cuba voted "no". The Soviet representative did not participate in the voting.



View of the City of San Francisco, the site of the 1985 Commemoration Event. In the foreground is the University of San Francisco with its majestic St. Ignatius Church. The Golden Gate Bridge can be seen in the background. The University of San Francisco is the oldest institution of higher learning in San Francisco. It was founded by the Jesuit Fathers in 1855.

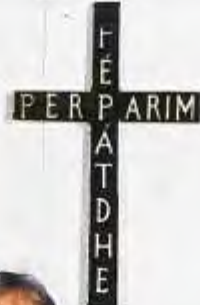


Interior of St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco, during a Christmas Concert.

Opening Scenes of the Commemoration



Moments During the Civil Program
and Ecumenical Service



This day is truly a day that
the Lord has made. Let us
be glad and rejoice, that we
together are here to

Dr. Lerski

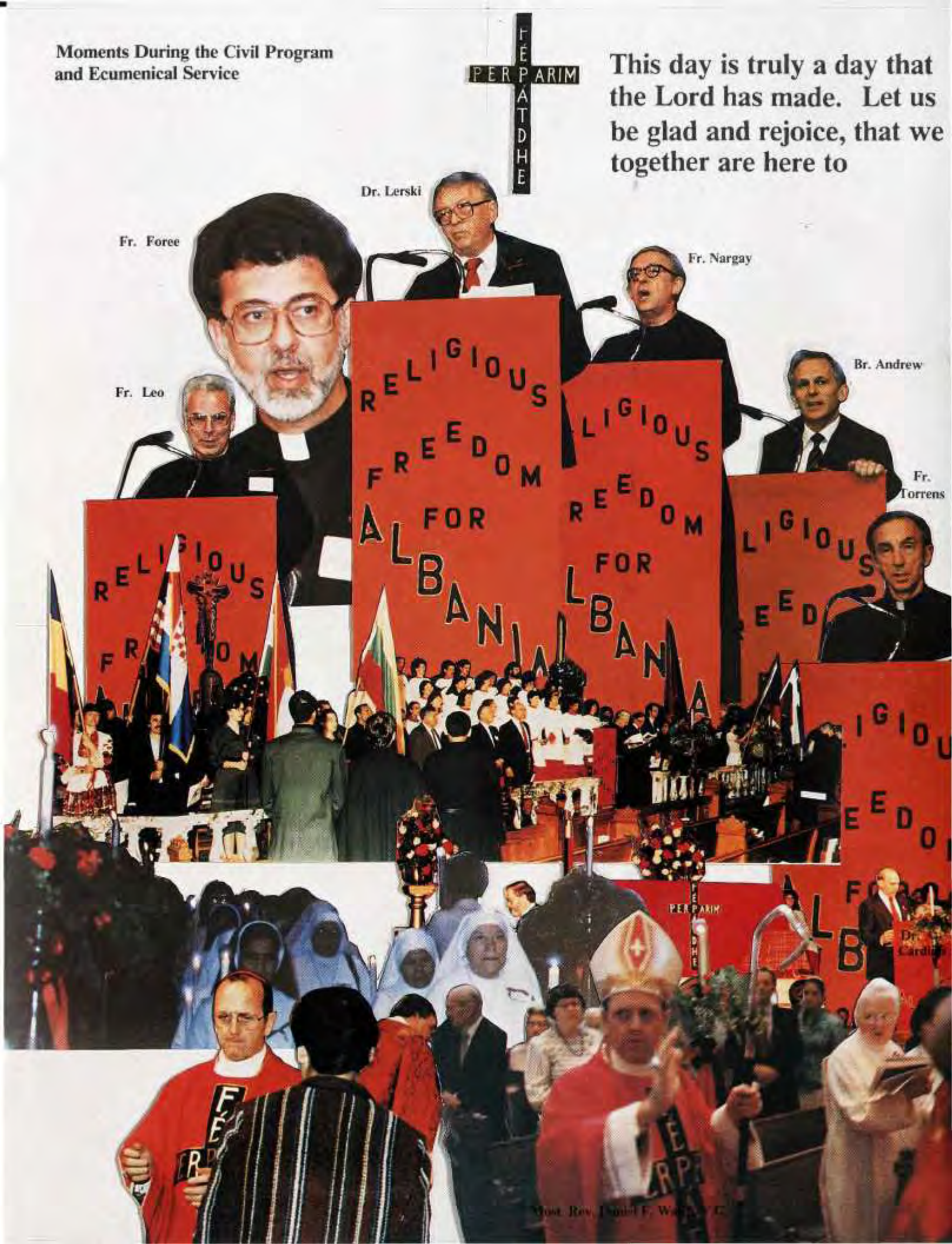
Fr. Foree

Fr. Nargay

Br. Andrew

Fr. Leo

Fr.
Torrens



Most Rev. Daniel F. W...

commemorate Albania
and its fight
for religious freedom.

Scenes from the Solemn Mass of Peace

Fr. Perkins

Fr. Fleming

Fr. Gardin

Fr. Bernadicou, Rector
and Concelebrants



Happy moments from the second day of the Commemoration following the Mass in Albanian





Abbot Boniface Luykz with Brother Andrew



Fr. Wright: General Intercessions of the Mass



Honored participants during the National Anthems
Governor's Representative Jacob Margosian (second from left).



Rev. Ismail and Br. Andrew



Fr. Andrew Nargay, OFM and Br. Andrew



Albanian Religious Leaders: left to right, Frs. Nargay,
Ndrevaschay, Gardin and Rev. Ismail

Foreign Press Reports on Religious Persecution in Albania

In 1984-85 both the national and international press expanded its coverage of the Albanian situation. It is significant that the greatest emphasis was on the religious situation there. We were pleased that our Center's documented study, prepared on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania, was disseminated and used as primary source material in this coverage. Among the many publications that drew attention to the subject was an article entitled "Traveller in Albania" by Paul Lendvai. It was published in the May 1985 issue of London's Encounter. We are happy to offer our readers the following extract from this article, with the kind permission of Encounter's editors.

Since the Communist takeover many of the inmates of prisons and camps have been priests. In 1967, Albania "abolished God" and became "the First Atheist State in the World": 2,169 mosques, Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches and places of worship were closed down. (At that time, about 70% of the Albanians were Moslems; 20% Greek Orthodox; and 10% Roman Catholic). Since then it has been a criminal offence to practise any religion. I was told repeatedly that the Albanians have "never" been a religious people. Lord Byron's observation was often quoted: elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire a man would declare himself either a Moslem or a Christian — but the Albanian would say, "I am an Albanian."

"Yes," I tried to insist, "but what happened to the thousands of Orthodox and Catholic priests, and the Moslem dignitaries, and their families?"

"Those who were inveterate, stubborn enemies of the People's Power, clinging to the bad old habits and poisoning the minds of the people, were appropriately punished. But most of them adapted to the new situation, and found their place as technicians, shoemakers, farm or industrial workers." So replied Myslim Hotova, the 45-year-old mild-mannered Curator of Monuments at Berat. He speaks fluent French, reads English, is learning German, but has never been abroad.

In Berat the first Orthodox churches were erected in the 12th century; before religion was abolished, there were some seven mosques and five churches for the 35,000 inhabitants. With special effort Myslim Hotova managed to get permission to show us inside two mosques — 16th and 18th century "monuments." One houses a photo exhibition, consisting of Hoxha slogans on red transparencies; the other a permanent handicraft show. On my previous visit, Myslim had promised to find me at least one former churchman who had been "re-educated", and I reminded him. "What a pity!" he sighed, "My friend has just had a heart attack." And naturally time was too short to find someone else. During my whole visit it proved impossible to find a single "former priest". . . .

Even the search for "monuments" was an exercise in futility. The main Catholic church in Tirana has been converted into a cinema, and the Orthodox cathedral into a sports hall. The great Haxhi Ethem Bey mosque, the landmark of Skanderbeg Square, has been closed even to foreign visitors for well over a decade. I was repeatedly assured that the atheist State goes out of its way to spend large sums of money on restoration, yet my escorts were never able to provide a key to the doors of any "restored" place of worship. Occasionally I managed to get close enough to peer into a building, and noted in the coastal town of Saranda that the local mosque was being used as a warehouse for building materials. In Vanistra, a nearby village inhabited by the Greek minority, the obviously attractive church was now a granary. At the ancient port city of Durrës (Durazzo) the local officials (including the Director of the Archaeological Museum) reacted with embarrassed silence when I asked where I could find a mosque or two. I discovered eventually that one now housed the Communist Youth Federation, while the other Fatimah mosque was in truth "being restored", but clearly was still in such desolate shape that once again no one could find a key to any door.

In many places, like the cities of Lezha and Burreli, churches and mosques had been razed to the ground during "revolutionary actions" by outraged militant youths. Shkoder, the stronghold of Roman Catholicism near the border with Yugoslavia, had the largest cathedral in the country, built in 1858; it is now a multi-purpose sports palace. Most touching of all was my sad visit to the 14th-century Byzantine Holy Mary church and monastery complex in Appollonia, the ancient 6th-century settlement. There the priceless frescoes are cracked and mouldering; the church is in a state of advanced decay. The campaign against religion has caused irreparable damage to what, elsewhere, is still deemed "the cultural heritage" of a small nation proud of its identity and traditional capacity for survival. I found it a taboo subject still; nobody was willing to concede mistakes, although I could see that most were clearly embarrassed about the entire issue.

A perhaps characteristic response came from 24-year-old Gazmend Kila, a waiter from a Moslem family, recently admitted to the Party. He lives in the city of Elbasan, described in pre-war (any war) travelogues as "a most delightful oriental place, full of mosques and picturesque houses. . . ." He served us (as always) in the VIP room of the hotel restaurant, and I questioned him about the strength of religious feeling in his native city of famous mosques and great traditions. "I don't care for religion. It was a weapon of obscurantism.

What do we need it for? We have our Party. Why then should we need religion?" (He was an alert young Communist, countering quickly with orthodox answers.)

Nevertheless, in parks or on the streets, I saw quite a few old men running Moslem prayer-beads through their fingers. It is generally conceded that some religious feelings still linger on among "the older generations" — but then only 7% of the population is over 60, and 37% are under 15.

"We are indeed something of a paradox. The Albanians are among the oldest inhabitants of the Balkans and even Europe, yet we're one of the youngest nations. Do you know that the average age of our population is a mere 26? We speak with a certain pride about our young Albania, with its ancient cultural roots." This came from Professor Aleks Buda, an historian and President of the Academy of Science. The 73-year-old scholar, who spent most of the inter-War period in Salzburg and Vienna, ridiculed Western reports about religious persecution, and repeated the 19th-century poet Vaso Pasha's famous line: "the religion of Albanian is Albanianism."

In this spirit of intense, simplistic, tautologous nationalism the younger generation is educated. No wonder that, along with "modern revisionists" and "imperialists", the Pope (who twice within a year publicly referred to the plight of the Albanian Catholics) is a target of vituperative attack. At dinner one night in Gjirokaster, one of my escorts (Illi Pepo, the 30-year-old Deputy Director of Albanian TV) suddenly burst out: "I profoundly despise the Pope!" "But why?" "He must know that there is no God! It's all pretence! He's an actor and nothing more."

Others at the table, evidently ill at ease, moved swiftly to safer ground. A young journalist, Besnik Kaltani, related that though his parents were of the Bektashi Moslem sect, he had married a girl from an Orthodox family. In contrast, my interpreter Sokol Mici, of Orthodox origins, chose a wife with a Moslem background. "My father was a Communist official, so it didn't matter to my parents. . . . But my grandmother was rather upset. But, of course, the relics of religion are no longer an issue. . . ."

And what about ethnicity? Does it matter any longer whether someone is a Gheg or a Tosk? The historic people, the Ghegs — primarily highlanders living in the mountains north of the Skumbin River which cuts through Central Albania — spoke a distinct dialect, and were proud of their warrior tradition. They were mainly Moslem, although some tribes remained Catholic, and Moslem Ghegs form the great majority of the 1.9 million Albanians across the border in Yugoslavia. The plainsmen of the south, who spoke the Tosk dialect were traditionally more open to foreign, mainly Greek and Italian, influences. They constituted in the past the bulk of landless and subsistence-level peasants; they lived in villages rather than in isolated homesteads as in the north, and were economically and socially ruled by the Moslem beys under the old Ottoman feudal system. The great Gheg chieftains from Skanderbeg to Ahmed Zogu led the movements for independence and statehood, but Enver Hoxha and most (if not all) of the Communist leaders came from the south. And it is the Tosk dialect which was chosen as the basis for the single literary language under Communism.

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 (Ramiz Alia, General Secretary PLA, Tirana, Albania; and Adil Carcani, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the PSRA, Tirana, Albania), protesting the antireligious laws of the Albanian government.

The Legacy of a Dyed-in-the-Wool Stalinist

by Anton Logoreci

When Enver Hoxha, the Albanian communist leader, died on April 11, 1985 at the age of 76, he had been seriously ill for several years. The rumors about his poor health which had been rife for quite a long time were finally confirmed by the medical bulletin, signed by eight doctors, issued immediately after his death. This said that he had suffered from diabetes since 1948. The illness had gradually damaged his blood vessels, heart, kidneys, and other organs. He had also been gravely ill in 1972 and 1973, with complications affecting his circulation, heart, and brain.

It's therefore not unreasonable to conclude that there might have been some correlation between his deteriorating health and his obsessive vindictiveness towards many of his former friends and associates within the communist party, as well as many more people outside its ranks, from about 1972 right up to his death. A large number of cabinet ministers, government and party officials, army officers and many others were executed or given prison sentences, with no regard whatever for the rule of law or the most elementary justice. Hoxha's acute vindictiveness became particularly evident when he came to deal with the death, in 1981, of Mehmet Shehu, his closest associate since the Second World War. The official explanation he put out was that the Prime Minister had committed suicide. But Hoxha's subsequent determination not only to get rid of Shehu's relations, friends and allies but to destroy his reputation root and branch as well, made the suicide story highly suspect, to say the very least.

Within a short time several ministers and officials were either shot or imprisoned. But things did not end there. Hoxha proceeded to accuse Shehu, the wartime guerilla leader who had been Prime Minister for nearly thirty years, of having been throughout most of his career a spy for not one but of three different countries: the United States, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Among his many alleged crimes, he was said to have tried to murder Hoxha himself. These highly bizarre allegations were very reminiscent of the strange case of the nine Russian doctors serving the Kremlin who were accused by Stalin, shortly before his death in 1953, of having been paid agents of the American and British secret services. Stalin's Albanian disciple thus showed his utter loyalty and devotion to his Soviet master by closely imitating even the paranoia of the last months of Stalin's life.

What were the political, social and ideological factors that shaped Hoxha's personality, making him comparable to Stalin as regards cruelty, inhumanity and vindictiveness? Clearly, his wartime experience as communist guerilla leader played a very important part in making him the man he was. Two powerful strands in his experience were his involvement with the Yugoslav communist movement and the civil war in Albania. Without Yugoslav help probably there would have been no Albanian communist party and no communist regime after the war. At the beginning, Hoxha was grateful for Yugoslav help. But he soon came to resent the growing Yugoslav influence over the Albanian partisan movement. When this influence was converted to domination and ultimately to a policy of annexing Albania to Yugoslavia, he opposed it in silent frustration. But when Yugoslavia was expelled from the Soviet bloc in 1948, Hoxha's accumulated venom against Tito's regime burst into the open with a vengeance. However, his ill-fated alliance with Yugoslavia was to dog Hoxha throughout most of his career. His hostility to Tito and the Yugoslav communist party became personal and nationalistic, and colored his domestic and external policies. Yugoslavia was one of the factors that caused the break-up of Albania's two great alliances: with Russia in 1960 and with China in 1978. The first break was the result of Khrushchev's reconciliation with Tito. The break with China came after Hoxha rejected its advice that he should come to terms with Yugoslavia in the face of a possible Soviet threat. Not only did the quarrel with Tito make the Albanian leader more than ever suspicious of the outside world, it also made him increasingly extremist and intolerant at home, ever ready to eliminate real, potential or purely imaginary opponents.

Another episode that helped to increase his hostility to the West was the British-American attempt between 1949 and 1951 to subvert the Albanian regime. Although the attempt failed, partly because the operation was betrayed to the Russians by the British double agent Kim Philby, Hoxha's hostility to the United States and Britain never abated. An indication of this is the title he gave to his book dealing with his regime's relations with the two countries published a few years before his death: *The Anglo-American Threat to Albania*.

One of the ugliest features of his domestic policy is the complete disregard for the rule of law and basic natural justice. Amnesty International in London has for many years recorded the Albanian regime's gross violations of human rights. This is what one of its special reports published in 1984 (*Albania: Political Imprisonment and the Law*) had to say about the question of political prisoners:

In view of the extreme secrecy surrounding political imprisonment and the lack of any published official figures, Amnesty International cannot accurately assess how many political prisoners are detained in Albania. It has in recent years received the names of almost 400 political prisoners who were serving sentences in the 1970s and early 1980s, and the limited details indicate that many were prisoners of conscience. However, this figure represents only a fraction of all political prisoners. Former political

prisoners who have served sentences in the past ten years have put the number of Albanian political prisoners in Balls labour camp before November 1982 at approximately 1,200 (plus a small number of foreign prisoners). Similar figures have been given for Spac labour camp, although it appears that in the latter half of the 1960s there were fewer prisoners (around 500) and that subsequently the numbers arose at times to 1,700. The population of both camps was reduced after the 1982 amnesty but Amnesty International has received allegations that since then there have been further arrests of people considered to have supported senior government officials disgraced and arrested in 1982.

Any accurate figure for the number of political prisoners would have to take into account not only those in Spac and Balls but others in Burrel prison (allegedly some 300 inmates), in Tarovic and Kosovë, as well as prisoners held for investigation, others temporarily detained in Tiranë prison pending transfer, those serving supplementary sentences for internment, and individuals and family administratively interned for political reasons.

Two policies that distinguish the Albanian regime from other communist regimes is its complete collectivization of agriculture and its law forbidding religious beliefs and practices altogether. These and other totalitarian policies are always claimed to be based on Marxist-Leninist ideology. But as this ideology was used to justify every personal whim, every twist and turn in the attitudes of the party leader, it had become a mere lump of putty in his hands, ready to be shaped and moulded by him at will.

Does the Albanian regime have any achievements to its credit? Yes, it has some. One of these is the spread of education and the practical elimination of illiteracy. Another is the great development of hydro-electric power. But for these and other successes the people have had to pay a totally unnecessary high price. The bureaucratic system of totalitarian control which was exacted this high price is Hoxha's terrible legacy to his country. The system is now under the control of a small group of people who are the real beneficiaries of Hoxha's numerous purges. It is manned by a large number of bureaucrats who have a strong vested interest in its survival intact. The process of changing the system is therefore likely to be a long and difficult one.



Commemoration Videotapes

The videotapes of the Commemoration ceremonies observing the Fortieth Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania are now available through our Center.

Tape 1 covers the Civil Program and Ecumenical Religious Service, and Tape 2 captures the Solemn Mass of Peace. The length of both tapes is 3.5 hours on VHS system and may be obtained for a donation of (U.S.) \$60 (postpaid).

Also available are colored postcards of Albania's national hero, George Castrioti-Skanderbeg. The postcard, made from the original oil painting by Peter R. Freeman, a Canadian artist of Albanian descent, was presented to Pope Paul VI in 1968 on the occasion of the Fifth Centenary of Skanderbeg's death. At the request of the Vatican, the painting now hangs at the International Center of Albanian Studies in Palermo, Italy. A minimum order of 100 is \$20, which includes postage.

Please send your donation cheque to: Albanian Catholic Information Center, P.O. Box 1217, (University) Santa Clara, CA 95053 U.S.A.

Mother Teresa Awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom

THE PRESIDENT: This great house receives many great visitors, but none more special or more revered than our beloved guest today. A month ago, we awarded the Medal of Freedom to thirteen heroes who have done their country proud. Only one of the recipients could not attend because she had work to do — not special work, not unusual work for her, but everyday work which is both special and urgent in its own right. Mother Teresa was busy, as usual, saving the world. And I mean that quite literally. And so we rather appreciated her priorities and we're very happy, indeed, that she could come to America this week.

Now, a moment ago, I said we'd awarded the Medal of Freedom to heroes who've done our country proud. And I believe Mother Teresa might point out here that she is most certainly not an American (but a daughter of Albania) and she has not spend her adult life in this country but in India. However, it simply occurred to us when we wanted to honor her that the goodness in some hearts transcends all borders and all narrow nationalistic considerations.

Some people, some very few people are, in the truest sense, citizens of the world. Mother Teresa is. And we love her so much we asked her to accept our tribute and she graciously accepted. And I will now read the citation.

Most of us talk about kindness and compassion, but Mother Teresa, the saint of the gutters, lives it. As a teenager, she went to India to teach young girls. In time, Mother Teresa began to work among the poor and the dying of Calcutta. Her order of the Missionaries of Charity has spread throughout the world, serving the poorest of the poor.

Mother Teresa is a heroine of our times. And to the many honors she has received, including the Nobel Peace Prize, we add, with deep affection and endless respect, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

(Medal is awarded.) (Applause.)

May I say that this is the first time I've given the Medal of Freedom with the intuition that the recipient might take it home, melt it down and turn it into something that can be sold to help the poor. (Laughter.)

And I want to thank you for something, Mother Teresa. Your great work and your life have inspired so many Americans to become personally involved themselves in helping the poor. So many men and women in every area of life, in government and the private sector, have been led by the light of your love. And they have given greatly of themselves. And we thank you for your radiant example.

MOTHER TERESA: I am most unworthy of this generous gift of our President, Mr. Reagan, and his wife, and you people of the United States. But I accept it for the greater glory of God and in the name of the millions of poor people that this gift, in spirit and in love, will penetrate the hearts of the people. For in giving it to me, you are giving it to them, to my hands, with your great love and concern.

I've never realized that you loved the people so tenderly. I had the experience. I was last time here a sister from Ethiopia found me and said, "Our people are dying. Our children are dying. Mother, do something." And the only person that came in my mind while she was talking, it was the President. And immediately I wrote to him and I said, "I don't know, but this is what happened to me." And next day it was that immediately he arranged to bring food to our people. And I can tell you the gift that has come from your people, from your country has brought life, new life to our suffering people in Ethiopia.

I also want to thank the families here in United States for their continual and delicate love that they have given. And they have shown by leaving their children to become sisters and to serve the poor throughout the world. We are now over the world and trying to bring the tenderness and the love of Jesus.

And you, you cannot go where we go. You cannot do what we do. But together, we are doing something beautiful for God. And my gratitude to you, President, and your family, and to your people. It's my prayer for you that you may grow in holiness to this tender love for the poorest of the poor. But this love begins at home, in your family. And it begins by praying together. Prayer gives a clean heart. And a clean heart can see God. And if you see God in each other, you will have love, peace, joy together. And works of love are works of peace. And love begins at home.

So, my sisters, brothers and fathers, you are going — and all our poor people, thousands and thousands and thousands of people that we deal with, I bring their gratitude to you. And keep the joy of loving. Love them, and begin in your own family first. And that love will penetrate right through the furthest place that anyone has ever been — there is that tenderness and love of Christ.

And remember that whatever you do to the least, you do it to Him, Jesus said. You did it to Him. What a wonderful opportunity for each one of us to be twenty-four hours with Jesus. And in doing what we are doing, as he said, if you receive a little child in my name, you receive me. If you give a glass of water in my name, you give it to me. What a wonderful and beautiful tenderness and love of Christ for each one of us.

So once more, I want to thank you for this beautiful gift, which I am sure will bring great joy to our people by sharing it with them. God bless you and keep you in his heart. (Applause.)



On Thursday, June 20, 1985, Mother Teresa was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in a Rose Garden Ceremony. Mother Teresa received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in recognition for her contributions in the field of humanitarianism. The Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor given in the United States, is awarded to persons who have made especially meritorious contributions to (1) the security or national interests of the United States, or (2) world peace, or (3) cultural or other significant public or private endeavors.

Ëdëu Oslo, 10/12/79
Unë gjithmonë e kam në
këmbër popullin tuë Shqiptarë
M. Teresa Bojaxhiu

"MY ALBANIAN PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS IN MY HEART . . ."

— M. Teresa Bojaxhiu

Gonxha Bojaxhiu — Saintly Daughter of Albania

by Richard Siebert

This year marks the 75th birthday of our sister, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. To honor her on this occasion we are pleased to present to our readers the following article, written by a friend of our Center.

Albania's most illustrious daughter, Gonxha Bojaxhiu, is universally known and revered as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India. This is ironic when we consider Albania's long history of oppression and neglect. Many of her people are in exile while their brothers and sisters in the homeland remain enslaved by an evil and ruthless state. Albanian patriots long for a champion. While Mother Teresa is no patriotic leader in the sense of Skanderbeg, the very fact of her celebrity status keeps the name of her homeland alive throughout the world. Her ministry to Christ among the abandoned and rejected of the world is a source of hope for the Albanian people.

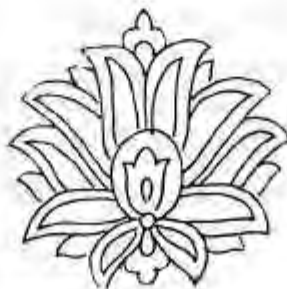
From her childhood in Shkup, Gonxha Bojaxhiu was devoted to her mother. She emulated her piety and her devotion to the world-wide mission of the Catholic Church. Her fervor "in the love of Christ" carried her away from Albania to India as a member of the Loreto Sisters. She served in that Order for many years as teacher and then principal of the girls' college in Calcutta. In 1946 she realized her true call was to serve Christ in his "distressing guise" among the "poorest of the poor" of Calcutta. Her new congregation, the Missionaries of Charity, was approved and instituted by the Vatican in 1950. Since then the Order has flourished. Mother Teresa has devoted herself to the service of the poor and outcast in Calcutta and across the world. Her Missionaries are today at work in sixty countries. Of late she has taken up the cause not only of the dying but also the unborn, the hungry of the South Bronx, the homeless of San Francisco and the victims of AIDS in New York.

At the same time Mother Teresa was organizing her Missionaries of Charity in India, Enver Hoxha was instituting state atheism in Albania. He was successful in cutting off Albania from the rest of the world. Since then the world seems to have written off Albania as a "lost cause." While Mother Teresa brought the world's attention to the plight of many of humanity's most wretched, the silent suffering of her own people has been largely ignored. While Mother Teresa has enkindled the love of Christ in the hearts of men and women all over the world, the Albanian state has sought to snuff out the divine spark of faith among the people in its grip. Although Albanian patriots may want Mother Teresa to take up their cause more aggressively, her struggle for justice for the Albanian people is more subtle and, Christ willing, more effective.

President Reagan calls Mother Teresa a "heroine of our times." Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi says Mother Teresa "belongs not just to India, but to the entire world." We may well substitute Albania for India, for the Nobel Peace Prize winner is indeed a "citizen of the world." More importantly, Mother Teresa sees herself not so much as a citizen of any particular state but as a daughter of the Church who serves Christ as he manifests himself to us in all of suffering humanity.

Where she can Mother Teresa alleviates pain in individuals and she seeks to restore each one's dignity as a child of God. She reminds us however that suffering must be viewed in the context of Easter. We may not remain indifferent to the suffering of our brothers and sisters nor may we despair when they seem beyond our reach, for "in Christ" all suffering is redeemed and transformed by love.

It is our hope that Mother Teresa, who was recently hailed by Harvard University as a person who set an "example of compassionate generosity that awakened the conscience of the world" will inspire the world to come to the aid of her long forgotten brothers and sisters in Albania. We pray that her love of Christ in all of suffering humanity will inspire the Albanian people to persevere in faith and hope during this dark night.





Mother Teresa shown visiting the Albanian Catholic community of New York. An Albanian girl greets Mother Teresa during her visit to the Albanian parish in the Bronx.



Visiting the "poorest of the poor": Pope John Paul II in Calcutta with Mother Teresa.



Mother Teresa and Brazil's Dom Helder Camara: two lives committed to serving Christ in the poorest of the poor.

Impressions of a High Greek Official about Albania

Readers will recall that in January of 1984, a hearing on violations of human rights in Albania was held in Washington, D.C. by a Sub-Committee of Congress. The hearing was inspired by Greek elements, and was chaired by Congressman Gus Yatron (PA-D) (for a detailed report, see the article on the hearing in the previous issue of the *Bulletin*).

Since then, a number of significant developments have taken place in Albanian-Greek relations. As a consequence, the two neighboring countries have drawn closer to each other. High up on the list of those developments was the visit to Albania in late 1984 of Karolos Papoulias, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece. Upon returning to Greece, Mr. Papoulias gave an interview to the Greek monthly, *Panepirotiki*, concerning his visit, which was published in the periodical's December, 1984 issue. The interview was subsequently reprinted in the Albanian daily, *Zeri i Popullit*, on January 29, 1985.

Realizing the importance of the interview, the well-known Albanian-American intellectual and activist, Prof. Sami Repishti, translated it into English, and submitted copies of the text to Congressman Yatron and to the nine other members of the House Sub-Committee on Human Rights. In a covering letter to the Hon. Gus Yatron, Prof. Repishti pointed out that the interview "dispels many of the allegations" made by elements intent on clouding the "noble cause of human rights for transient political gains." Following are some of the highlights of the interview given by K. Papoulias, the first Greek Foreign Minister to visit Tirane since 1945.

The high-ranking Greek official commented on a number of vital issues, including governmental, commercial, and cultural relations between Greece and Albania, the status of the Greek minority, religious freedom, and the "state of war" between the two countries.

In his opening remarks, Papoulias noted that "a new chapter is now being written in the area of Greek-Albanian relations... serving our mutual interests." Accords signed lately by Greece and Albania on telecommunications, postal services, ground transportation, and cultural exchanges testify to the expanded relations between them, he said.

On the issue of religious rights and freedom in Albania, the Greek Alternate Minister said: "Many people ask me whether I visited a Greek church. This is a devious question, since we all know that the Constitution of Albania is the only atheist constitution in the world. If those who ask such a question show me that mosques or Catholic and Protestant churches are open (in Albania), whereas Greek Orthodox churches are not, then I'd say: you are right to raise the question. But I should like to ask these gentlemen: Who has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another state, change its constitutional order, or impose upon that state his or her wish?"

His statement intimated that the Papandreou government did not intend to make an issue of the religious situation in Albania, as long as the Orthodox believers are not treated differently than members of other denominations. The position taken by Minister Papoulias is a direct rebuff to Greek pressure groups and militants who have used the issue of religious freedom to cloak aggressive territorial designs on southern Albania.

Asked to comment on the situation of the Greek minority in Albania, Mr. Papoulias replied: "The Albanian Government has not taken steps to de-Hellenize the minority, as many people have claimed, but on the contrary it has strengthened its characteristic features." He went on to say that "We must be just and present our views with objectivity. No person who claims to be objective can deny the fact that the Greek language is presently cultivated with the support of the Albanian Government."

He said that he had visited many villages of the Greek minority and met many people in "leading positions" in that region. Continuing, he said: "It was a great joy for me to visit the Pedagogical Institute in Gjirokaster. There I saw classes where instruction is given in the Greek language and where members of the Greek minority prepare to become teachers, later to be assigned to schools of the (Greek) minority." He added that he was "an eyewitness to the fact that in Albania the cultivation of the Greek language continues with satisfactory results." On this point, too, the Greek Minister parted ways with those who charge that the Greek language is being suppressed in Albania. Not only Greek schools, but Greek-language publications abound in Albania, including the newspaper *Laika Vema* and many books and other literature.

Asked about a bill that was introduced in the Greek Parliament in 1980 to annul the "state of war" that (from the Greek point of view) has existed between Greece and Albania since 1940 — following Italy's invasion of Greece from Albanian territories — Mr. Papoulias replied that this problem has not yet been resolved in a formal, legal manner. Moreover, he could not say when such a bill might be voted upon. But in the favorable climate of Greek-Albanian relations at present, it is reasonable to expect that this anachronistic obstacle to further cooperation between the two countries will soon be consigned to the dustbin of history.

In the meantime, we trust that the Hon. Gus Yatron and his fellow Congressmen understand, in the light of Minister Papoulias' interview, that the truth on the question of the Greek minority in Albania is decidedly on the side of Albania.

Albanian News and Events



Joannes Paulus PP. II

Dear Mr. Sinishta,

His Holiness Pope John Paul II has directed me to acknowledge the kind letter and the enclosed Bulletin which you sent to him.

His Holiness appreciates the sentiments which prompted this devoted gesture and wishes me to assure you that he is praying for your intentions.

I also have the honor to convey the Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of strength and peace in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world.

Sincerely yours,
+E. Martinez
Substitute

Date Set to Honor Albanian Catholic Martyrs

On Saturday, November 30, 1985 at our Center in Santa Clara a meeting was held to reflect upon and evaluate the April observance of the fortieth anniversary of religious persecution in Albania. It was agreed that the organizing committee had worked long and hard in putting together a fine program which was an inspiration and blessing to many.

The Special Issue of *The Bulletin*, devoted to this anniversary, and the videotape production of the celebration were praised for their valuable historical content. The main thrust of the meeting centered on establishing a date to annually honor the Albanian martyrs and to ask their intercession for the restoration of religious liberty in Albania. At the suggestion (written) of Father Jak Gardin, S.J. and the presentation of Father Leo G. Neal, OFM, (Conv.) it was unanimously decided that March 8 be set aside for a special annual mass to remember the martyrs of Albania.

Another point of discussion was the continuance of *The Bulletin* in its present form. After serious review the Center's staff concluded that our limited financial resources did not allow for further publications of the same quality. It was recommended, that a simpler publication format, not requiring typesetting, be considered following the publication of the 1985 Commemoration Issue.

The meeting concluded with a Mass of Thanksgiving in the Mission Church of Santa Clara University, commemorating the 73rd anniversary of Albania's independence. A private get-together followed the Mass.



Ann Sclafani Meridier

Ann Sclafani Meridier of San Jose

A nation's cultural heritage is preserved and perpetuated not by abstract forces, but by dedicated living human beings. Ann Sclafani Meridier, a proud Arberesh woman in the San Francisco Bay Area, is one of those individuals who helps perpetuate the Albanian name and heritage in America.

She lives in San Jose, California in one of the most vigorous Arberesh communities in the nation. (For years she has been at the center of Arberesh life in the San Jose Area). Though born and raised in America, she speaks fluent Arberesh and has an inti-

mate knowledge of her ancestral roots in Sicily.

As a member of Sclafani family, Ann is part of a large group of Arberesh now scattered all over the country. In May 1985, the Sclafani family held its first reunion in New Orleans, Louisiana. Ann was the guest speaker for the occasion. She discussed the very interesting saga of the Sclafani family.

Ann also took active part at the Arberesh 15th Annual Picnic in Sacramento, and at the reunion of the *Giorgio Kastrioti* Club in Los Angeles.

Joy and Elation on the Ordination of Rev. Peter Popaj

On November 16, 1985, in the beautiful and majestic St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, John Cardinal O'Connor ordained Peter Popaj. Father Popaj is the first priest to be ordained from the vast Albanian Catholic community in the state of New York. The Mass and ordination was attended by over 200 Albanians who worshipped together with many Albanian clergymen. They praised and thanked God for the gift of the priesthood to a native son.

Father Peter Popaj was born on June 10, 1958 in the Albanian village Shen Gjergj (Yugoslavia). The youngest of nine children he came to the United States in 1973 with his family. Despite the difficult task of adjusting to a new country, Father Popaj followed the call of God to the seminary. There, he successfully completed his studies and was ordained a Deacon on May 19, 1985.

Father Popaj celebrated his first Mass on November 24 at Our Lady of Good Counsel Albanian Church in the Bronx. His former pastor, Father Simon Filipaj, gave the homily at the Mass. In his remarks Filipaj noted the early indications of God's call to Father Popaj from his childhood. He referred to Father's ordination as a great blessing for his family and all Albanians.

Following the Mass and first blessing a dinner was held at the Imperial Manor in Paramus, New Jersey. More than 1,000 well-wishers attended. This was an event long to be remembered in the Albanian community. At the dinner Mr. John Nikas, representing Governor Mario Cuomo of New York, read a citation from the governor congratulating Father Popaj on his ordination.

Our Center warmly joins the Albanian community in rejoicing with Father Popaj, his family, and friends on his ordination, and assures him of our prayers.



Rev. Peter Popaj

Woman Elected Head of Albanian-American Organization

The Pan-Albanian Federation of America—VATRA (Hearth) at its October convention in Boston elected Pauline Loukas as new President. She is the first woman president in the Federation's 76 year history.

Mrs. Loukas has been active in Albanian affairs for many years, particularly with the Albanian Orthodox Church in America and

the VATRA Federation. Among her many activities she serves as the Managing Editor of *Dielli* in Boston.

We are confident that under Loukas' careful and dynamic leadership VATRA will continue its traditional patriotic labors in behalf of the Albanian people. Our congratulations and prayerful support to her and VATRA.



Mayor Jacques Chirac of Paris warmly greets Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa to Open House in Paris

Paris' Mayor Jacques Chirac recently received a visit from Mother Teresa at City Hall. During their cordial meeting Mr. Chirac expressed his esteem for her work. Mother Teresa had flown to the French capital to meet with Chirac and ask his assistance in establishing a Center for the Poor of Paris. The mayor promised and

assured Mother that a suitable building would be found and given to her Center.

We might add that Mr. Chirac is a devoted friend to Albanians. It was through his personal intervention that the city of Paris dedicated Skanderbeg Square in 1980 to honor the fifteenth century Albanian national hero.

Course Offered in Albanian Language And Culture

The well-known Albanian scholar Professor Arshi Pipa is again offering a course in Albanian language and culture at the University of Minnesota. This course is given through the department of French and Italian Languages at the University for students interested in Albanian studies. It is language oriented, or culture oriented, or both, according to the interest of the students.

New Center for Albanian Catholics Opens in Europe

It is estimated that 100,000 Albanians from Yugoslavia are part of the immigrant work force in Western Europe. While other ethnic groups organized themselves to care for their pastoral needs, the Albanians did not do so until recently.

Thanks to the initiative of lay minister-theologian, Mr. Pjeter Mjeda, an Albanian pastoral Center was opened on February 12, 1984 in Stuttgart, West Germany. The establishment of the Center was largely due to the support of Franjo Cardinal Kuharich of Zagreb and Bishop George Moser of Stuttgart. The church officials recognized the need of the Albanian Catholic community for such a Center. Father Hilë Kabashi, former editor of *Drita*, was sent from Kosovë to take charge of the Center. Pjeter Mjeda has assisted him, especially in connection with legal and social affairs. The Center serves the needs not only of Albanian Catholics but also of Albanian Moslems from Kosovë.

The Center publishes a monthly informational bulletin called *Zëri i Misionit* (Voice of the Mission). This is a handy and interesting publication of approximately twenty pages. The address of the Center and Bulletin offices is: *Albanische Katholische Mission*, Fangelbachstrasse 11, D-7000 Stuttgart 1, West Germany.

Albanian Honored in Canada

Duro Çini is a distinguished Albanian immigrant living in Toronto, Canada. An escapee from Albania in 1948, he was imprisoned in Yugoslavia for speaking out for freedom, before finally settling in Canada in 1960.

Ever since he has continued his life-long commitment to help people in need, regardless of their race, religion, nationality or social background. Çini has demonstrated a rare ability in vocation, and has won increasing recognition for his ac-

complishments. He is respected and honored by leaders in the Toronto community, and by the numerous people he has assisted over the years with food, shelter, and employment.

In September 1982 a testimonial dinner in his honor was held at the Albany Club in Toronto. In August 1985, the Ethnic Press of Canada presented Çini with an Award of Merit and made him an honorary Member.

In 1985, he was nominated for the pre-

stigious Ontario Medal of Good Citizenship. In support of his nomination he received scores of enthusiastic letters from friends and acquaintances.

Duro Çini is known, too, as an Albanian activist. But mostly he is known and appreciated as a friend, a kind and warm human being, a wise teacher, a skillful communicator, and an energetic worker. He honors the Albanian nation and his adopted country of Canada.



Duro Çini in suit, third row, right with the Toronto Albanian Cultural Club. Elizabeth Frascino, center, 84 years, also active in the Albanian community.

The Vineyard (Vreshta)

The Vineyard is an official publication of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America. Over many years it has formed a strong bond among church members and has represented the Archdiocese to the general American public. It is a source of information on all aspects of church life current developments. *The Vineyard* occasionally studies past events and personalities in Archdiocesan history. Some articles are of significance to the entire Albanian nation, e.g. the "Northern Epirus" and Kosove issues.

In 1982 the newspaper covered the centennial celebration of the birth of Archbishop Noli. Important articles have appeared on saints of the Orthodox Church. Each issue contains interviews with clergy

and lay officials of the Archdiocese. *Archdiocesan Notes* are a rich mine of news about people and events throughout the Archdiocese. Of added interest are the excellent illustrations that accompany the textual matter. *The Vineyard* is edited by the Reverend Stephen N. Siniari. His address is: 126 Morris Street, Southbridge, Massachusetts 01550, USA.

A smaller but more frequent publication is the *Archdiocesan Council Update*. This two-page news sheet originates from the church's Boston headquarters. For more information, readers may write to: *Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese In America*, 523 East Broadway, South Boston, Massachusetts 02127, USA.

Remembering the Archbishop of Tivar

A concelebrated Memorial Mass was offered in Tivar (Bar) during November 1985 for the late Archbishop Nikola Dobrecic (Nilolle Dobrecti). The occasion was the thirtieth anniversary of the Archbishop's death. The main celebrant was the current Archbishop of Tivar, Pjetër Perkoliqi.

Attending the Mass was a large number of the faithful, along with sisters of various religious orders working in the archdiocese. It was through the efforts of the late Archbishop that the sisters first came to the region in the 1920s. In defiance of Yugoslav government orders, Archbishop Dobrecic sent young seminarians to be educated at the Papal College in Shkoder, Albania, rather than in seminaries in Yugoslavia. One of these seminarians is today Archbishop Perkoliqi.

Archbishop Dobrecic's concern for his

flock was not limited merely to their religious needs. He sought to secure better living conditions for his people. With this end in view, he tried to convince his friend Henry Ford, to open up an automobile manufacturing plant in the archdiocese. Unfortunately, the plan failed, due to the interference of high governmental authorities.

Arberesh Seminary's 250th Anniversary

From November 27 through December 1, 1985 an International Convention was held in Palermo and Piana degli Albanesi celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Arberesh Seminary in Palermo. At this convention papers were presented by the following scholars and religious: Father Emmanuele Larne (Belgium), Professor Domenico Morelli (Rome), Professor D.

Albanian Scholar on Post-Hoxha Era

Dr. Elez Biberaj, Senior Writer and Editor for the United States Information Agency, spoke recently at the European Institute's East European Program in Washington, D.C. Biberaj discussed the post-Hoxha era in Albania. He predicted that Hoxha's successor, Ramiz Alia, will continue his predecessor's policies but that in the long run Hoxhaism will eventually disintegrate.



Ramiz Alia

Dr. Biberaj observed that Alia's discreet departure from Hoxha's foreign policy was very positive. He suggested that the West should encourage these evolutionary changes toward greater freedom and a more moderate Albanian foreign policy.

Rapanos (Athens), Archbishop P. Voutsaras (Athens), Professor D. Mogavaro (Palermo), Professor Tommaso Federici (Rome), Professor A. Panotis (Athens) and others.

The four-day convention concluded with a concelebrated liturgy led by Bishop Iracle Lupinnaci.

Italian Ambassador Falaschi Speaks at the Arberesh Center in Rome

The Arberesh Cultural Center in Rome, *Besa Fede*, directed by Monsignor Eleuterio Fortino, annually increases its manifold activities on Albania's history, culture and religion.

This year, on the occasion of Albania's 73rd Independence Anniversary celebration, the Center was honored by the presence of Italian Ambassador Renzo Falaschi and his wife, Nermin Vlora Falaschi. The Ambassador made a presentation on the life and deeds of Ismail Qemal Vlora, the father of Albania's independence. Falaschi's earlier published study analyzed the thought and activity of Qemali from

Italian documents. The study is 415 pages in length with 234 documents (many previously unpublished) from various Italian archives and the Italian Foreign Ministry collection.

Monsignor Fortino introduced Ambassador Falaschi and noted his untiring labors on behalf of the Albanian people. He underlined the value of the Ambassador's study which reveals new dimensions of Ismail Qemali's thought and work.

We might add that the wife of Ambassador Falaschi, Nermin Vlora, is the niece of Ismail Qemali and an acclaimed poet and writer, both in Albanian and Italian.

Albanian Patriot Luigj Gurakuqi Remembered

The *Bulletin* of the Arberesh Cultural Center in Rome (*Besa Fede*) reports that the memory of Albanian patriot and statesman Luigj Gurakuqi was honored at the University of Bari in November 1985. Luigj Gurakuqi was assassinated sixty years ago.

Four papers and eight studies were presented at the convocation by Arberesh and Albanian scholars. Among those participating was Mr. Dino Bashkimi, the Albanian ambassador to Rome.

Albanian Family Takes Refuge in Italian Embassy

On December 12, 1985 six members of the Albanian family of Mois Popa entered the Italian Embassy in Tirane, Albania, seeking political asylum. For ten days the governments of both Albania and Italy kept this news secret. On December 22, ATA, Albania's News Agency, reported that the government had requested the unconditional return of the six refugees. Meanwhile, the Italian press gave widespread coverage of the enflamed situation between the two countries resulting from the incident. Italian Prime Minister, Bettino Craxi, held a news conference on December 22

stating the steps that his government was taking to resolve the matter. He appealed to the public and to the opposition leaders for a calm and peaceful resolution.

Arberesh cultural and religious leaders as well as organizations in Italy requested that their government honor United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and grant the Popa family political asylum. Albanian exiles in the United States also pleaded with the Italian government for the Popa family. To date, the situation is still unresolved with the family remaining in the Embassy.



Luigj Gurakuqi

Press Reports on Commemoration Observance

We share the following two editorials and press reports with our readers.

Religious Genocide in Albania America, February 2, 1985

Few voices reach us from Albania, and those that do seem to come from a distant world even more brutal than our own. Yet Albania is not on another planet. Greece and Yugoslavia are its next-door neighbors, and Italy is only 40 miles away across the Adriatic. For centuries, however, this small country has been physically isolated because it is largely hemmed in by mountains and culturally isolated because it is the poorest nation in Europe and the only one with a Muslim majority. Of its three million people, 68 percent are Muslim, 19 percent Orthodox and 13 percent Catholic.

When Gen. Enver Hoxha and a Communist regime gained control in November 1944, Albania's cultural isolation from the rest of the world was intensified. Diplomatic relations with the United States were severed in 1946 and with the Soviet Union in 1961. For a time, Albania's rulers were friendly with China, but that ended after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. From his post as First Secretary of the Albanian Party of Labor, Enver Hoxha continues in power and has fastened a grim distinction upon his country. The Socialist People's Republic of Albania is the only nation on earth that officially claims to be atheistic.

For 40 years the Communist Government has been trying to enforce that claim by obliterating religion in Albania. This campaign has not spared the Muslim segment of the population to which Hoxha himself belongs. When all religious observances were outlawed in 1967, some 2,200 mosques, churches and other religious buildings were closed. Muslim and Orthodox leaders have been executed or imprisoned. The fiercest persecution, however, has been directed against Catholics. Since 1945, two archbishops, five bishops, an abbot, 65 diocesan priests, 33 Franciscans, 14 Jesuits, 10 seminarians and 8 nuns have died in prison. Seventy-year-old Bishop Nikoll Troshani, the only Catholic prelate in Albania today, is detained in a labor camp, and the few priests still alive are also in forced-labor camps or prisons.

Because it is closed off, the Albanian Government can maintain its indifference to world opinion. It has a representative at the United Nations but ignores that organization's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is, in any case, unenforceable. The oppressed people of Albania are not forgotten, however, for there are two million ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia and another million, including Mother Teresa of Calcutta, living elsewhere around the world. The Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara, Calif., recently issued a paper chronicling the history of what it calls the religious genocide in Albania and pointed out that General Hoxha himself admits: "Religion is still alive among our working class." To draw attention to those four decades of persecution and to mobilize support for those embattled believers, the center will sponsor an ecumenical religious service in the University of San Francisco's campus church on April 13. That observance will be one way of underscoring the words of Pope John Paul II: "To be spiritually close to all those in Albania, who are suffering violence because of their faith, is a special duty of all Christians."

Editorial

San Francisco Foghorn, University of San Francisco, April 12, 1985

For all too long the American people have been subjected to the howls of "omniscient" Americans about the "horrors of American intervention in Central America" and the beauty of the "glorious revolution in Nicaragua." Forgotten in this dialogue to "reconcile Marx and Jesus" are the many unknown martyrs of Eastern Europe.

This Saturday, April 13, in Saint Ignatius Church, the fortieth anniversary of the martyrdom of Catholic, Orthodox and Moslem clergy in Albania is being remembered in an ecumenical service. Albania is a small nation sandwiched between Greece and Yugoslavia on the Adriatic Sea. Her population is 68% Moslem, 19% Orthodox and 13% Catholic.

Having defeated the German occupational army in 1944 (in alliance with Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia), the hardline Stalinist leader of the Albanian partisans, Enver Hoxha, instituted a rigid communist state based on Stalin's model in the Soviet Union.

Despising Khrushchev as a revisionist and despairing of Maoist China later, Hoxha isolated Albania from the rest of the world, believing that he was the last authentic disciple of Marx and Lenin.

Driven by his desire to create a true communist state, Hoxha picked out religious groups, especially the Catholic minority, to use as exemplars of anti-socialist behavior. His policies included internal banishment, annexation of property, murder and finally the complete

Adem Demaçi — Longest Held Political Prisoner in Yugoslavia

Albanians living in Yugoslavia have been discriminated against and oppressed for many years. They have been called "second-class" citizens, and are referred to as "the Niggers of Yugoslavia". Since 1981, when tens of thousands of Albanians demonstrated for their rights in the towns in Kosovë, they have been cruelly persecuted and unfairly pressured politically, economically, culturally and religiously.

Currently, the Yugoslav government is carrying out an ethnicidal policy against Albanians nationals. Unlike the dissidents in some other dictatorships, Albanian-nationals are denied even the right to demonstrate or voice their grievances openly. Yugoslav authorities have been particularly ruthless in arresting and sentencing any Albanian protester.

The case of Adem Demaçi that is presented in the following petition, is a clear and shocking example of this oppressive policy. The petition was first issued in 1984.

Adem Demaçi (Ah-DEM Deh-MAH-chee) is a member of the Albanian ethnic group in Yugoslavia known as Kosovars (from the region of Kosova where over two million Albanians in Yugoslavia are concentrated). An intellectual and talented writer, Demaçi is languishing in a Yugoslav prison. He is one of thousands of Albanian political prisoners in Yugoslavia who have been arrested on spurious charges of "nationalism," of "anti-state activities," and similar vague accusations of "verbal offenses" and sentenced up to 15 years.

Born in 1936, Demaçi has spent most of his life in Yugoslav prisons, including the infamous Goli Otok, Stara Gradiska and Sremska Mitrovica prisons. He has become a symbol of Albanian yearnings for ethnic and human rights in Yugoslavia, as well as a symbol of Kosovar resistance to state injustices and violence in the Federation of Yugoslavia.

Demaçi was first arrested in October of 1958 merely for voicing the ethnic aspirations of the Kosovars. He had never used, nor advocated the use of violence against the established social order in Yugoslavia. Except for brief intervals of freedom in the early sixties and mid-seventies, he has been imprisoned for nearly a quarter of a century. Rearrested and sentenced (in 1964 and 1976) he is now serving a 15-year sentence in prison.

Demaçi has been horribly tortured while in prison. As a direct result of the cruel punishment inflicted upon him, he is reported to be very weak and nearly blind. Amnesty International has adopted him as a "prisoner of conscience" and has called for his release.

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.

Please address petitions, letters, and telegrams to:

Vidoje Zarkovic
Chairman, Presidency of the Communist League of Yugoslavia
Belgrade, SFR of Yugoslavia

Radovan Vlakovic
President
SFR of Yugoslavia
Belgrade, SFR of Yugoslavia

Milka Planinc
Prime Minister
SFR of Yugoslavia
Belgrade, SFR of Yugoslavia



Adem Demaçi

Mico Rakic
Ambassador
SFR of Yugoslavia
2410 California St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

We thank you.

Elez Biberaj, Columbia University, New York, NY
George Nasse, California State University, Fresno, CA
Zef V. Nekaj, Defence Language Institute, Monterey, CA
Arshi Pipa, University of Minnesota at Minneapolis, MN
Peter R. Prifti, University of California at San Diego, CA
Sami Repishti, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY
Gjon Sinishta, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA



An Exposition in Twenty-One Questions and Answers

(Note—The following exposition is in the nature of a commentary on the book, *The Saga of Kosovo—Focus on Serbian-Albanian Relations*, which was published in 1984 in New York. Its authors are Alex N. Dragnich, a professor at Vanderbilt University; and Slavko Todorovich, a former employee of the *Voice of America*. We shall leave it to the reader to decide how objective they are. But we can say without hesitation that the book has at least the merit, as the Chinese say, of teaching by “negative example”. Those who cannot understand the Serbian refusal to consider Albanian demands on Kosovo, will find many of the answers in this book. For within the covers of the book the reader can peer into the mind of the Serb, and understand better what motivates, frightens or inspires him. That, at any rate, is our hope and expectation.)

Question No. 1—What was the nationality of Gjon Kastrioti?

Every Albanian school boy or girl knows that Gjon Kastrioti—the authors of this book spell it “John Castriota”—was an Albanian feudal lord and the father of Albania’s National Hero, George Scanderbeg (Gjergj Skenderbeu). Correction, say Dragnich and Todorovich. John Castriota was “of Serbian origin” (p. 21). In saying this, however, they are not original. The Greeks have said it before them. Back in 1968 a Greek “scholar” by the name of John Demus said that Scanderbeg’s “father was Greek—Ioannis Kastriotis”. It’s obvious from his Greek name, he leads the reader to believe, (see, *Balkan studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1968, p. 493.) As if it were not enough that Serbs (and Greeks) appropriated Albanian lands, now they want to appropriate Gjon Kastrioti, as well.

Q. No. 2—When did the Turks overrun the Balkan peninsula?

According to Dragnich and Todorovich, this came about with the demise of the Serbian Despotate in 1459 and the Kingdom of Bosnia in 1463 (p. 45). Now, this would certainly be news to an Albanian pupil reading his first book on the history of Albania. For there he learns that Skanderbeg waged one of his greatest battles against a vast Turkish army led by Sultan Mehmed II himself (The Conqueror of Constantinople) in 1466. Reading on, he learns also that the Turks subdued Albania only in 1479, with the fall of Shkoder; in other words, sixteen years later than the date the authors of this book say all resistance to the Turks ceased in the Balkans.

How account for this not-so-insignificant discrepancy? Might we suppose that Dragnich and Todorovich were ignorant of these data? Hardly. It’s rather that the authors see Serbia as the center of the Balkans, and therefore all Balkan history naturally revolves about Serbia. Seeing history in that light, they are persuaded that the 25-year-long struggle of Scanderbeg against the Turks (1443-1468) was of no consequence. They seem to think that the title “Champion of Christendom” bestowed upon Scanderbeg by Pope Nicholas V was undeserved—the result, shall we say, of an error of judgement on the part of the Vatican.

Q. No. 3—Were Albanians friends and allies of the Turks?

No doubt about it, say the authors of *The Saga of Kosovo*. The Albanians in the era of Ottoman dominion in the Balkans received “special treatment from the Turks” and thus “enjoyed a special status” (pp. 55, 56). Unlike the Serbs who looked upon Istanbul as “the center of Serbian oppression,” the Albanians regarded it as “the capital of their state” (p. 72).

But as we read on, we find that the Turks had some nasty epithets for the Albanians. According to the authors, they called them “criminals,” “brigands,” and “murderers” (p. 78). At this point the reader might ask: If the Albanians were friends of the Turks, why did the Turks call them such awful names? After all, people don’t talk that way about their friends. The reader’s doubts about the Albanians’ friendship with the Turks are likely to be strengthened a few pages later, when he learns that in 1830 the Turkish commander, Reshid Pasha, massacred 500 Albanian leaders in Manastir (now Bitolj), to punish them for rebelling against the Sultan (p. 87). We think it will be granted us that this was a very strange friendship. It’s bad enough to be called names by your friend, but when you have to pay for that friendship with your life . . . that’s carrying friendship too far.

Q. No. 4—On whose side were the Albanians in the Greek war of Independence (1821)?

On the side of the Turks, say Dragnich and Todorovich (p. 87). We wager that this will be news not only to Albanians, but also to the Greeks. For generations they have been told by their parents at home and their teachers in school, that Albanians distinguished themselves in the Greek Revolution. Just last year, the leading daily in Albania wrote: “In the (Greek) revolt of 1821, there took part many Albanians who fought heroically side by side Greek freedom fighters; and that is why the Greek people have honored, respected, and immortalized

them in their history, their songs, etc.” (Zëri i Popullit, March 24, 1985). Who were these Albanians? The list is long, but the more renowned among them are Bochari, Xhavela, Bubulina, Miauli and Kondurioti.

Again, are we to suppose that the authors of *The Saga of Kosovo* are ignorant of Greek history and the facts cited above? Not likely. A more likely hypothesis is that those facts are filtered into the mind of the Serbs or Serbophiles in such a way that they are distorted or dismissed altogether in favor of some trivial data that are derogatory to the Albanians, and that may serve also to create a split between them and their Greek neighbors. It's a habit of mind that seems ingrained in the mental mechanism of the Serb.

Q. No 5—Why did so many Albanians convert to Islam?

The authors of this book have the answer to this question at their fingertips. It's because, unlike the Serbs, “the Albanians did not have an autocephalous church” (p. 48); and also because the Albanians lacked the individualism that is so characteristic of the Serbian people (p. 49).

True, the Albanians did not have an autocephalous church. But need we remind Dragnich and his colleague that the Bosnians, too, converted to Islam in large numbers? Are we to conclude then that they did so for the same reason as the Albanians? We doubt that any serious historian would agree. As for individualism, we have the impression that this is a character trait all Balkan peoples have in abundance. I was reading a book recently, titled *The Greeks*, by Stephanos Zotos, which says that the Greeks are “individualists *par excellence*”. In fact, the book has an entire chapter on the subject of Greek individualism. The late Albanian scholar and diplomat, Faik Konitza, has said the same thing about his compatriots, only more strongly. He writes that individualism is “the most conspicuous characteristic of the Albanians, and one without the knowledge of which their history remains a mystery” (*Albania: The Rock Garden of Southeastern Europe*, p. 55).

So, it appears that our authors are wrong on both counts on this question. Untroubled by such suspicions, they press their case and go on to say that the phenomenon of Islamization was “the main cause of the estrangement” between the Slavs and the Albanians (p. 52). Well, let us grant, for the moment, that this was the cause of the unfortunate enmity between the Orthodox Serbs and Moslem Albanians. But how explain the even greater enmity of the Serbs (and Montenegrins) toward Catholic Albanians? The authors did not venture to discuss this point.

Q. No. 6—Who dug out the eyes of Queen Simonis?

Queen Simonis was the wife of Serbian King Milutin (1281-1321). A lovely image of her was painted in a fresco in the church of Gracanitsa, a masterpiece of Serbian religious architecture in Kosovo. Tragically, however, someone scratched her eyes out, and the Serbs blame the Albanians for the vandalism. Dragnich and Todorovich quote a Serbian poet, Rakich, who cries out: “Oh, pretty image, an Albanian has dug out your eyes” (p. 39).

A very serious charge, indeed, which has contributed not a little to Serb resentment and hatred of Albanians. But was it really an Albanian who committed the crime? Might not the perpetrator have, just as well, been a Kosovan Turk, or Serb-hating Macedonian, or even a crazed Serb? As a matter of fact, there are respected scholars who reject Rakich's accusation, among them Milorad Jankovic, Kosovan writer Mark Krasniqi, and historian S.S. Juka in the United States. Juka says firmly: “... there is irrefutable proof that this act was not committed by any Albanian” (see her book, *Kosova*, pp. 45-46). Krasniqi, for his part, is convinced that Rakich had ulterior motives when he penned those unkind words. He says that the Serbian poet set out purposely to depict Albanians as vandals.

Q. No. 7—Is the sword the religion of the Albanian people?

It seems that one of the favorite pastimes of the Serbs is to portray Albanians as a martial, gun-happy race. Hence, we are not surprised to read in *The Saga of Kosovo* that the Albanians have a “famous saying”: *Ku është shpata është feja* (“Your faith is where your sword is”) (p. 49).

We are to infer from this, apparently, that people who are “fascinated by guns”—to use the authors' phrase—and who make a religion of arms, can easily turn to violence and vandalism, since they have no higher code of conduct to hold their hand, or guide them along a more humane path.

We wish, however, to point out to Dragnich and Todorovich that the Albanians, like the Serbs and the Greeks and others, have numerous other sayings that tell all sorts of things about their beliefs and practices, even some sayings that contradict the one they chose to offer to the reader. For example: *Më mirë të dish se të kesh* (knowledge is better than money; literally, “Better to know than to have”); *Më mirë të të dalë syri, se namë i keq* (“Better to lose an eye than your good name”); *Tek është dashuria, është vetë Perëndia* (“God is where love is”). We ask: Are these sayings any less significant or characteristic of Albanians than the one they chose to publicize? Many foreigners who know the Albanian people would answer “No”.

Q. No. 8—Was there an Albanian national uprising against the Turks?

In the book under review we are told that there was no such uprising in Albanian history (p. 86). Such an affirmation, it seems to us, is not history but fiction. It is a vain attempt to perpetuate, in our day, the Serbian myth that the Albanians, being in league with the Turks, did not fight to throw off Turkish dominion. But anyone who is familiar with Albanian history, and reads that history objectively, knows

that this is not so. For the benefit of Dragnich and Todorovich, we present below a list of Albanian uprisings against the Turks that took place between the death of Scanderbeg (1468), and the founding of the League of Prizren (1878), which marks the beginning of the final phase of resistance against the Turks prior to Albania's independence in 1912.

- 1495—Rebellion bursts out in central Albania.
- 1509—Uprising in the Highlands of northern Albania.
- 1537—Rebellion of the Himariots in southern Albania.
- 1701-1704—Rebellion throughout Albania.
- 1708—Beginning of a three-year rebellion in central Albania.
- 1787-1796—Rebellion of northern Albanians led by Kara Mahmud.
- 1811—Uprising of northern Albanians led by Mustafa Pashë Bushatliu.
- 1822—Rebellion in southern Albania led by Zylyftar Podaj.
- 1834—Rebellion in central Albania for the liberation of Berat.
- 1835—Rebellion in the north under the leadership of Hamza Kazazi.
- 1843-1845—Uprising in Kosovë, Shkup, Tetovë and Dibër.
- 1847—Rebellion in Kurvelesh engulfs all of southern Albania.
- 1854—Rebellion erupts in Shkodër, northern Albania.
- 1863-1865—Struggles against Turkish expeditionary forces sent to crush rebels in Shkodër, Kosovë, and Dibër.
- 1867-1868—Struggles against Turkish expeditionary forces sent to crush rebels in Lumë and Gjakovë in the north.
- 1873—Struggle against Turkish expeditionary force sent to crush rebels in the Highlands.
- 1876-1877—Rebellion in the Mirditë region in northern Albania.

We end our list here, but in the next three decades there were another dozen uprisings, culminating in the general uprising in the summer of 1912 that ended in a decisive victory for the Albanians.

Q. No. 9—Was there an Albanian nation in the 19th Century?

Not according to our authors. Let us refer to their book. In the 19th Century, they say, the "Albanian nation . . . was yet to be formed" (p. 86). Why do they think so? Because, unlike the Slavs and the Greeks, "With three religions, two strikingly different mentalities (Tosk and Gegh), and no common alphabet . . . or written culture of their own," the Albanians were not in a position "to articulate (their) national identity" (p. 83).

This is another myth the Serbians have energetically diffused abroad, to persuade an unwary world that the Albanians had no clear idea of their nationality, and lacked a common national ideology and goal. It's a myth Europe accepted a century ago—witness the remark of Bismarck at the Congress of Berlin (1878) that "There is no Albanian nation". But the world is much wiser today, and is not likely to accept as genuine coin the anachronistic thesis of Dragnich and Todorovich. It is a pity that they saw fit to revive the ghost of the "Iron Chancellor," instead of letting it rest in peace.

We should like to inform them that religiously, the Albanians have a fine record of tolerance and respect for each other's creeds, that northern and southern Albanians (i.e., Tosks and Ghegs) are quite close in their thinking, and although Albanians did not have a common alphabet in the last century, they did have a literary tradition, and an old one at that, reaching as far back as the Middle Ages. The first extant book published in Albanian, *Mesdari* (The Missal), bears the date 1555. In the centuries that followed other books in Albanian were published by such authors as Pjeter Budi, Frano Bardhi, Pjeter Bogdani, Jul Variboba and others.

We might also add that the Albanian nation is coextensive with the areas populated wholly or largely by Albanians who speak the same language and share a common national and cultural heritage. The authors of *The Saga of Kosovo* confuse the concept of nation with the concept of culture, and a narrow concept at that, as if culture consists merely of the literary heritage of a people.

Q. No. 10—Were the Albanians ready for independence in the 19th Century?

No doubt by now the reader knows what answer to expect from our authors. Still, in the interest of precision, we should like to give their answer in their own words. They say: "With no . . . centuries-long resistance (to the Turks) to feed their fortitude, Albanians (were) . . . totally unprepared" for the struggle toward independence (p. 48). Elsewhere they say the Albanians "were not culturally ready" for independence, and furthermore "they had no cadres to do the necessary work" that would lead to independence (p. 83).

As for the charge that the Albanians had an unsatisfactory record on the subject of resistance to the Turks, we believe we have already clarified that point under Question Number 8. And under 9 we feel we have established that Albanians were, and are a people with a culture of their own, which they cherish no less than the Serbs cherish theirs.

The argument about the lack of cadres is just as flimsy. It's an argument that has a familiar ring to it. We heard it often enough, after the Second World War, from those in the West who opposed granting independence to peoples in Africa, on the grounds that they lacked educated and trained personnel and wouldn't know how to govern themselves. History has already delivered its verdict on the newly-independent African peoples, and in the case of Albanians it did so much earlier, in the second decade of our century. But

apparently Dragnich and Todorovich refuse to accept the verdict, and prefer instead to debate the point, almost as if they thought they could reverse history's verdict.

Q. No. 11—Were the leaders of the movement for Albanian independence genuine nationalists?

Certainly not, answer Dragnich and Todorovich. They never tire of making comparisons between Serbian nationalist leaders and their Albanian counterparts, comparisons that show the Albanians in a very poor light, indeed. They belittle and scorn Albanian patriots as counterfeit nationalists who were alienated from the Albanian masses. We are told that "... they were so remote" from the people, they "could have been Scandinavians" (p. 97). They roamed all over Europe, for the "fragrance of European cities was overpowering for the sheep-herding Albanians" (p. 97).

This is not only bad history, it is gratuitous sarcasm. Besides, what is so disgraceful about the sheep-herding profession? We are of the opinion that Albanian shepherds, like their Serbian counterparts—of whom there were quite a number in the last century—were decent people and honorable patriots.

So enamoured are the authors of Serbia that they present the Serbian national movement as the model which should have guided Albanians, as well, on their road to independence. They seem incensed that the stubborn-headed Albanians chose a different path to independence.

Elsewhere in their book, Dragnich and Todorovich write: "Most of the protagonists of Albanian national awakening lived separated from their homeland . . . Albanians made history in Constantinople and not in Tirana" (pp. 84-85).

True enough, Albanian nationalist leaders lived abroad, but by necessity, not choice, since their homeland was under Turkish occupation and agitators for independence were severely punished. Albanians made history not only in Constantinople, but in Sofia, Bucharest, Cairo, Italy and the United States—wherever it was possible for them to work for their country. Precisely because they labored abroad under trying circumstances, all the more credit is due them for their fortitude, their discipline, their whole-hearted dedication to the cause of Albania.

Q. No. 12—Was Kosovë liberated or occupied in 1912-13?

In the introduction to their book, the authors say that they propose to tell the reader "how Serbia . . . liberated Kosovo in the Balkan wars (1912)" (p. 3). And they achieve this a hundred pages later, when they relate how Turkey was defeated by the Balkan allies and "Kosovo was free!" (p. 101). In another passage in the book we are told that a candle was lit in the Serbian Monastery of Dechan in Kosovë to mark the liberation of the region.

What the Serbs call liberation is what the Albanians call occupation and annexation of Kosovë by Serbia. This annexation amounted to about one-half of the territories that comprised the Albanian nation. Dragnich and Todorovich object, saying that Skoplje (Shkup), Prishtinë, Tetovë and other towns were not "on Albanian territory proper" (p. 87). But if we look at the map of the Balkans at the time, we find that Albania comprised four vilayets: Janina, Manastir, Shkodër, and Shkup, and the latter vilayet included the towns of Shkup, Prishtinë, and Tetovë.

From the Albanian perspective, therefore, the candle in the Monastery of Dechan signified a memorial light over the grave of Kosovë, and not its liberation.

Q. No. 13—What is the meaning of Kosovë for the Serbs?

Our authors tell us that all Serbs "have (Kosovë) in their blood. They are born with it . . . it is a transcendental phenomenon" (p. 4).

From the Serbian viewpoint, Kosovë is not simply a geographical entity, but a matter of the blood, a phenomenon that defies reason and logic. We need hardly point out that this is not the sort of language one normally finds in the discourse of historians. This is rather the language of irrationalism and mysticism that serves not to enlighten but to confuse and confound the reader. The citation does, however, serve a purpose. It offers insight into the intransigent mentality of the Serbs on the question of Kosovë.

Q. No. 14—Did Yugoslavia attempt to displace Albanians from Kosovë?

In *The Saga of Kosovo* we read that, between World War I and II, "the official policy of the Belgrade government was to encourage . . . Albanians to leave (Kosovë)," and some 40,000 of them did leave (p. 121).

In the quotation above we find a glimmer of objectivity on the part of the authors, which we welcome. But the term "encourage" is hardly the right word to use in speaking of Yugoslavia's policy on Albanian ethnics. For that policy consisted of pressures of the worst sort—intimidation, terror, violence—in order to drive the Albanians out of Kosovë. The record shows that in June, 1938 Yugoslavia signed an agreement with Turkey to send over there a quarter of a million Albanians from Kosovë (official Yugoslav propaganda organs said the actual number to be expelled was 400,000), and it was only the intervention of World War II that prevented Yugoslavia from carrying out this plan. (See Thomas A. Roth, *Yugoslav (Socialist) Rule in Practice: A Survey of Developments in the Kosovo Region*, M.A. Thesis, Institute of International Studies, University of Oregon, 1970, pp. 23-24.)

Q. No. 15—Is Dibër a Yugoslav or Albanian city?

There is an interesting story in this book about Dibër (Debar in Yugoslavian). It appears that during WWII (1941), one of Tito's top aides, Svetozar-Tempo Vukmanovich was in Dibër. Reporting on his visit there, he wrote: "... all over the place Albanian flags. One would think that he is somewhere in Albania, not Yugoslavia" (p. 141).

Precisely. Vukmanovich was indeed on Albanian territory, in a town peopled overwhelmingly by Albanians. And what he said about Dibër he could have also said about Kërçovë, Prilep, Prizren, Pejë, Gjakovë, Ulqin—in short, nearly all the towns in Kosovë (which, in the Albanian view, includes a large part of Macedonia and Montenegro). It is unfortunate that Vukmanovich and the Tito leadership did not acknowledge this fact when they seized power in Yugoslavia, and allow the Albanians the right of self-determination which, incidentally, they had promised them more than once in the past. Had they done so, the history of postwar Kosovë would have been different. Very likely there would be no Kosovë problem to worry about today, and the list of international flash-points would have been reduced by one item.

Q. No. 16—What caused the 1981 riots in Kosovë

According to the authors, they were caused by "a wild bunch of youth" in the cafeteria of the University of Prishtinë, who "began demolishing everything they could get their hands on" and creating a disturbance, which later took on a political character (p. 165). Earlier in the book the demonstrators are referred to as "people who look upon themselves as Albanians" (p. 1).

We must say that we were not impressed by this explanation. On the contrary, we are astonished that two historians who profess to be objective could offer such an explanation to their readers. This is not a scholarly analysis of the root causes of the bloody riots, but a superficial and unhistorical approach that falls short even of published accounts of the riots by respected journalists.

And what do the authors mean when they refer to the demonstrators as "people who look upon themselves as Albanians"? Do they mean to cast doubt in the mind of the readers about the demonstrators' political loyalties? The whole world knows that they were Albanians, so it is nothing strange that they see themselves as Albanians. Do not the Croats and the Macedonians and Montenegrins and other ethnics in Yugoslavia do likewise—see themselves as they are, which is to say acknowledge their nationality?

Q. No. 17—Have the Serbians or the federal authorities in Yugoslavia intervened in the affairs of Kosovë?

Dragnich and Todorovich would have us believe that the answer is "No". Neither the Serbian nor the federal authorities have intervened in Kosovë's affairs, they write, "aside from establishing a military presence" there (p. 176).

But is it not intervention when a peaceful demonstration by the Kosovars is violently suppressed by armed Yugoslav forces using tanks and helicopters? When Albanians, including teenagers, are arrested, tried and given long prison sentences simply for asking for republican status for Kosovë? When numerous books on Albanian history and literature are banned from circulation? When it is considered a crime for Albanians to pay homage to their national figures? The proper term to describe such actions by Serbian and federal authorities is not just "intervention" but persecution and oppression.

Q. No. 18—Who is responsible for vandalism to Serbian religious shrines in Kosovë?

According to *The Saga of Kosovo*, the culprits are the Albanians. The book's authors dwell at length on this issue that has generated intense emotional feelings—one might even say near-hysteria—on the part of the Serbian public, and great hostility toward the Albanians. At one point they give a two-page-long list of acts of aggression and vandalism that were committed, they claim, by Moslem Albanians against Serbian churches and clerics in Kosovë over a 13-year period (1969-1982) (pp. 170-171).

Albanians have consistently denied these allegations. Far from damaging or destroying Serbian churches or properties, Moslem Albanians have been the guardians of those churches for centuries. It's a matter of historical record, they claim.

The interesting thing is that Dragnich and Todorovich themselves agree with this, when discussing Serbian holy places in another part of the book. They talk about "respect among Albanians for the Serbian holy places" through the centuries (p. 52), and about Albanians paying visits to Christian homes on Christian holidays and attending Christian weddings and baptismal ceremonies. They note, too, that Albanians provided "guard services to the (Serbian) Patriarchate in Pech and the Dechani Monastery" (p. 52).

One is prompted to ask: Aren't they contradicting themselves here? How do they reconcile this view with their accusation of Albanians as church vandals and muggers of Serbian nuns and priests? Their answer—as implied in the pages of their book—is that Albanians were respectful of Serbian holy places in the past, but that lately they have changed and resorted to violence against those places. This is not a convincing argument. Unless the Serbs are able to document their charges with more credible evidence, we have to assume that those charges are spurious or so minor as to be insignificant, and as such deserve to be thrown out of court. We have to believe that the evidence of the centuries is more weighty than the allegations of Albanian vandalism over a dozen years.

Q. No. 19—Are the Albanians in Kosovë living in the past?

Dragnich and his colleague claim that they are. And they grieve that "many Albanian children (are) growing up in an ethnic prison," because of their misguided teachers, as well as the incompetence of Albanian leaders in Kosovë (pp. 177-178).

It is ironic to hear this from historians who are steeped psychologically and emotionally in Serbian Medievalism, and who seek through

this book to keep alive every vestige of that world—which they affectionately call “Old Serbia”—in the hearts and minds of the Serbs. Overall, it is the Serbs and not the Albanians, it seems to us, who are “living in the past”. Do not the authors say that Serbians “have Kosovo in their blood”?

As for Albanian children in Kosovë, we fail to see that teaching them about Albanian history and Albanian national figures and literature and folklore is tantamount to putting them in an “ethnic prison”. We ask: Why is it all right for Serbian children to learn about the grandeur of Medieval Serbia, but wrong and chauvinistic for Albanian children to learn about their national and cultural heritage? Some Albanian children are, indeed, in prison in Kosovë—not however in an ethnic prison, but in grim prisons of stone and steel, put there by Yugoslav authorities because they shouted a slogan or scribbled words on a wall that the government condemns as manifestations of Albanian nationalism.

Q. No. 20—Will the Serbs “invade” Kosovë?

In the last chapter of their book, titled *The Future*, Dragnich and Todorovich write: “Some ask, can Serbia and Montenegro abandon their nationals to the mercy of the Kosovo Albanians? And, is it possible that one day, Serbia and Montenegro may feel bound to join forces and invade Kosovo, as they did against the Turks in 1912?” (p. 179).

How is the reader to interpret this passage? Well, from the Albanian point of view, the first question in the passage has to be turned the other way around, in order to make sense. For it is not the Serbs (with some possible exceptions), but the Kosovars who are the victims in Kosovë. It is they who are at the mercy of the Serbs inasmuch as the Serbs have held the reins of power in region for the better part of a century.

As to the second question, are not the authors guilty, at least, of committing an error in logic here? How, we ask, can a country invade itself? We have been taught that it is an improper use of English to speak in this fashion. Yet, the mere fact that the authors use such language in the passage above, shows the poverty of their thought as far as offering any plausible solutions to the problem of Kosovë. It’s an indication also of the murderous measures the Serb mind is apparently contemplating as a way of “pacifying” Albanian nationals and “solving” the Kosovë problem. Furthermore, what need does Serbia have to invade Kosovë? The region is already occupied territory, with some 30,000 Yugoslav army troops stationed there since 1981, ready to open fire on the defenceless population at any given moment.

Q. No. 21—What has been the role of the Slavs in the Balkans

In the far past, that role has been very dubious and open to criticism. We have this on the authority of Dragnich and Todorovich themselves. Writing about the era of Byzantium, they say: “Byzantium had very little reason to cherish the Slavs in the Balkan areas... because they proved to be a nuisance from the time of their arrival” (p. 6). Why were they a nuisance? Because the “Slavs exploited the troubles (of Byzantium) to expand and solidify their positions” (p. 7).

We hasten to commend the authors for their integrity on this point, and only wish they had shown the same integrity on questions dealing with Kosovë in our time. Had they done so, they would have to admit, we think, that the policy of expansion pursued by the Slavs in the days of Byzantium did not cease with the demise of the Byzantine Empire. It was very much alive in the last century, as it has been in our century as well, and the Albanian nation and people have been among the leading victims of that policy. Is it not time for the Serbs (who have been the chief offenders in this regard) to re-think their role in the Balkans, and revise their policy toward Albanians, particularly those in Kosovë?

In summing up, Dragnich and Todorovich had an opportunity to offer a fresh and potentially useful scenario for dealing with the issues in Kosovë. Unfortunately they missed that opportunity. Their book is actually a step backward, for it is hardly more than a eulogy of Serbia and a strident justification of Serbian control and dominion in Kosovë. The book suffers from corrosive bias and contradictions, and is embittered by sarcasm and contempt for Albanians. Such a work is certain to be welcomed in Belgrade, where anti-Albanian feelings these days are running rampant. But scholars and impartial readers cannot but turn thumbs down on it. A book pervaded by hostility toward an ethnic group, as is *The saga of Kosovo*, runs counter to the time-honored American tradition of respect and justice for all ethnic groups, and counter also to norms of civilized behavior cherished by all humane beings throughout our planet.



Kosovë Stalemate Deepens — An Updated Report

by Peter R. Prifti

Recent developments in Kosovë showed no signs of progress toward a solution of the many problems the province is facing. Instead, the situation continued to deteriorate, as the problems worsened. The Yugoslav authorities talked much about "stabilizing" the province, but the means they chose to bring about such a result proved counter-productive. Instead of recognizing the demands of the Kosovars as reasonable and legitimate, they responded by taking still harsher measures against them.

A new campaign of repression began in May, 1985 when the Workers Socialist League of Yugoslavia held a conference in Belgrade. Delegates to the conference demanded that new steps be taken to curb the ethnic rights of the Albanian population. The Kosovar youth became a special target for attacks, on the grounds that they are "indoctrinated" with Albanian national sentiments.

Similar strident voices, bordering on hysteria, were heard the same month at a meeting of the Presidency of the Republic of Serbia. There, a member of the Presidency, described by a Yugoslav publication (NIN) as "highly agitated," called (in indirect language) for all-out war on the Albanian population of Kosovë, just as Tito's armed forces did in 1945. Bitter anti-Albanian feelings erupted also in the wake of the latest congress of the League Writers of Yugoslavia, held in 1985. A like atmosphere of anger and resentment of Albanians prevailed at a meeting of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia in October of 1985.

Such meetings and the reports they gave rise to in the Yugoslav media intensified and worsened inter-ethnic tensions in Kosovë. The Serbian press, in particular, seized on anti-Albanian reports like a desert traveler thirsting for a drop of water. The inevitable result was more hostility toward Albanians, more arrests of Albanian nationals, more trials and more imprisonments.

According to official Yugoslav sources (NIN, June 2, 1985), a total of 3,344 Albanians in Yugoslavia had been sentenced on charges of "counter-revolutionary" activity, from the time of the Spring 1981 demonstrations to the end of 1984. The London *Sunday Times*, however, reported on June 9, 1985 that "35,000 Albanians have been brought before the courts for 'counter-revolutionary activities' since 1981" in Yugoslavia. Those activities included membership in illegal Albanian nationalist organizations, contact with exiled Albanian groups abroad and listening to Radio Tirana. The repression of Albanians by Belgrade caused even an official of the Socialist League of Kosovë, Ismail Mikulovci, to admit that "Serbian nationalism is creating an anti-Albanian disposition" in Kosovë and throughout Yugoslavia (*Zëri i Popullit*, May 30, 1985). Actually, such a "disposition" has been a bitter fact of life in Kosovë for generations.

Victims of Yugoslav Repression

An example of repression of Kosovars is that of Miss Aishe Gjonbalaj, an Albanian elementary teacher from the district of Plavë and Gusinjë in Montenegro. In 1973 Miss Gjonbalaj took a trip to Albania. Upon her return home, she was dismissed from her job on charges that she had engaged in political activity while in Albania. What was the nature of this activity? Well, she had shouted "Long Live Albania!" in Tiranë. Confronted with this "charge," Miss Gjonbalaj did not deny that she wished Albania a long life, but failed to see that she had committed a crime in voicing such a sentiment. But that was not the end of the matter, nor the worst part of it. In March of 1984 she was arrested because she had helped families that had been victimized by the repression that followed the Kosovar demonstrations in 1981. For seven long months she was subjected to cruel interrogations, then sentenced to 13 years in prison. According to the Albanian Kosovar Youth in the Free World, this was the heaviest jail sentence given to an Albanian woman in postwar Yugoslavia.

But as in 1973, so also this time, Miss Gjonbalaj stood her ground and held her head high. She said she was proud and happy to have helped families in need, despite her meager salary.

The campaign of repression against the Kosovars is no respecter of age. Witness the case of an old woman, Hanefia Avdagic, 71. She was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison for blaming Yugoslavia's economic problems on the country's Self-Management system, and for "justifying the demands by Albanian nationalists in Kosovë". Her case was reported in Amnesty International's *1984 Report* (p. 321). The organization adopted her as a "prisoner of conscience".

In Slovenia, Macedonia and other parts of Yugoslavia, the working people use the language of the local population at work, be it a factory, mine, shop or government office. But in the town of Mitrovicë, Kosovë, a court sentenced an Albanian engineer, Nazmi Peci, to five years in prison merely because he asked that the Albanian language be used as the medium of communication at a mine where the majority of the workers were Albanian (*Zëri i Popullit*, July 25, 1985).

In early December, 1985 TANJUG (Yugoslav Telegraphic Agency) reported the arrest of fifty Albanians in Kosovë, Macedonia and Montenegro. In the same month, just a few days before the New Year, 94 more Albanians, most of them intellectuals and students, were arrested. Sources in Belgrade said they were placed under arrest because they "wanted to change the constitutional order of

Yugoslavia"—the government's jargon for the Albanian demand for a "Republic of Kosovë". The massive arrests offered fresh evidence of the continuing persecution of Albanian nationals.

Rather than permit Albanians to express freely their national and cultural heritage, Yugoslav authorities took new steps to curb such expression. An example of this trend is a letter by an Albanian that was published in the local press in Prishtinë, capital of Kosovë. The letter complained that Yugoslav authorities in Macedonia were forcing Albanian ethnics to Slavicize their names. Thus, the writer of the letter, Jetullah Jashari, was obliged to change his last name to Jasharovski. Numerous other Albanians in Macedonia, he said, have had to tag on to their family name the Slavic suffix "ski" or "ov" because of government pressure (*Rilindja*, May 27, 1985).

Reporting on this trend, the Albanian press in Tiranë said that the Academy of Sciences in Macedonia had recommended that henceforth place names in that republic be written according to the spelling rules of Slavic. Already "tens of place names have been changed, including cities, villages, neighborhoods and historic centers," merely because those names had reference to the ethnic origins of the Albanian people. The report added that a movement was underway to change the names of leading Albanian towns in Macedonia such as Dibër, Tetovë, Kërçovë, Shkup, and Kumanovë (*Zëri i Popullit*, Nov. 19, 1985).

Reaction in Albania to Latest Events

The Albanian press and intellectuals reacted with concern and indignation over the latest Yugoslav measures against the Kosovars. The leading Albanian author, Ismail Kadare, deplored the anti-Albanian temper of the 1985 Congress of the League of Writers of Yugoslavia. In an article published in the literary weekly *Drita* (The Light), he defended the Kosovar writers Rexhep Qosja, Hasan Mekuli, and Ibrahim Rugova who had spoken out at the congress against measures that belittle, abuse or restrict Albanian literature and culture in Yugoslavia. He likened Yugoslav attacks on Albanian literature to the ideology and practice of the Inquisition and lamented that it is especially shameful when chauvinism "affects the men of culture in a country, above all its writers whose duty is to cool the vile passions, and rise above them in the interest of civilization, humanism, and friendship among peoples".

In an editorial entitled, "The Truth Cannot Be Hidden By Bluffs and Demogogy," the leading daily in Albania chided Yugoslav leaders for claiming that Albanian nationals enjoy equality with other peoples in Yugoslavia. "What kind of equality is that," it asked, "when voices call for stopping the teaching of Albanian history at the University of Kosovë" because it is supposedly harmful to "coexistence in Yugoslavia". The paper charged that an "anti-Albanian psychosis is being fostered in Yugoslavia that is akin to racism," and reminiscent of the Nazi meetings in Munich in the 1930s. In support of this charge the editorial noted that stores owned by Albanians in Belgrade, Nish and other cities in Serbia are being assaulted and burned down, and in public gatherings the Yugoslav people are told not to patronize Albanian bakeries nor eat in Albanian restaurants (*Zëri i Popullit*, July 25, 1985).

Another article in the same paper (dated Nov. 19, 1985) denounced the "chauvinist drive" in Macedonia against Albanian nationals. The article said that Macedonian leaders are bent on de-nationalizing the Albanian element. The "Albanian language, including the unified literary language, Scanderbeg, the League of Prizren . . . and the national identity of Albanians" have all become targets in the de-nationalizing drive, it said. Written by Kristaq Prifti and Xhevat Lloshi, the former a historian and the latter a linguist, this is one of the most eloquent critiques of Yugoslav policy in Kosovë to appear in Albania in recent times.

Still another article, under the signature of Albanian historian Selami Pulaha, contested the Yugoslav thesis that Albanians are late comers in Kosovë. The thesis has been used by the Serbs in the past to justify the expulsion of the Kosovars from their homes and land. Pulaha argues that there was a strong Albanian presence in Kosovë long before the alleged invasion of the province by Albanians toward the end of the 17th Century. The fact that there are Medieval Serbian churches and monasteries in Kosovë is no proof that the population of Kosovë has been historically Serbian, just as we cannot say that the presence of mosques in Kosovë means that the population of the province was Turkish during the era of Ottoman rule. Pulaha calls the Serbian theses on this issue dogmas that cannot stand up against the latest findings of scientific inquiry (*Zëri i Popullit*, July 2, 1985).

Albanians Abroad Stand By the Kosovars

As in the past, Albanians abroad were steadfast in their support of the demands of the Kosovars. Whether as individuals or through their organizations, they kept up the pressure to break the dangerous impasse in Kosovë and initiate action that would eventually bring about a satisfactory settlement in that province.

In the Spring of 1985, representatives of the 35 nations that signed the 1975 Helsinki Act met in Ottawa, Canada to review how the Helsinki provisions were being implemented. Taking advantage of the occasion, the New York-based Albanian Kosovar Youth in the Free World, addressed a Memorandum to the assembly of representatives. The Memorandum described the plight of Albanians in Yugoslavia, and urged the representatives to advise the Yugoslav government to respect the rights of its ethnic groups and guarantee them equal treatment under the law. Following are excerpts from the Memorandum:

"To their great disappointment two million ethnic Albanians in the S.F.R. of Yugoslavia continue to be specific targets for political persecution, economic neglect, and educational and social discrimination by the Government of Yugoslavia . . . Today, political killings, massive arrests, torture, unfair trials and heavy jail sentences are part of the daily life of Albanians . . . Unemployment is very high. Poverty is now a vicious circle strangling the lives of both the young and the old . . ."¹

The Memorandum warned that the situation in Kosovë is a "classic set-up for an explosion which could threaten the stability and peace of the S.F.R. of Yugoslavia, and not of that country alone!" In September, 1985 the Kosovar Youth organization drafted another Memorandum, this time for the benefit of the United Nations on the occasion of its fortieth anniversary. Signed by Maliq Arifaj, the organization's Executive Secretary, the Memo was presented to UN's Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar. The Memo summarized in vivid language the sad history of Kosovë since the founding of the UN, and presented data that illustrate the continuing ordeal of Albanians in Yugoslavia. Among other things, it called attention to the conference of the Association of War Veterans of Yugoslavia where appeals were made to the Federal Government to "intervene militarily in Kosovë" and intensify government control of the province.

Far from heeding such pleas, protests and warnings to change policy on Kosovë, the Yugoslav leaders sought to make Albania a scape-goat for the problems in that province. An example is the interview the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Milka Planinc, gave to the *New York Times* correspondent in Belgrade (May 22, 1985), prior to her departure for Washington, D.C. on a state visit. She said: "Albania is creating problems (in Kosovë) because she wants a part of Yugoslavia for herself."

Planinc's visit to Washington and subsequent meeting with President Reagan did not go unnoticed by the Albanians of America. Many of them sent telegrams to Reagan urging him to intervene in behalf of the Kosovars in his talks with Planinc. Following is the telegram sent by Dr. Sami Repishti of New York, which said:

"The persecution (of Albanians) by the Yugoslav government is a blatant violation of their national and human rights. We urge you to raise the question of the two million ethnic Albanians with the Yugoslav Prime Minister as a matter of your commitment to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms wherever they are denied . . ."

The President also received a telegram from the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara, California. The Center's forthright message expressed concern for the Albanians in Yugoslavia who are "oppressed and subjected to national, religious and economic discrimination". The message condemned Yugoslav military and police violence against the Albanian population as "a flagrant violation of the Yugoslav Constitution and of international agreements signed by Yugoslavia". Finally, the message appealed to Reagan to "help our persecuted brothers and sisters in Yugoslavia" who look to the United States for moral support.

In the meantime, Albanian periodicals such as *Dielli* and *Liria* in the United States and *Koha e Jonë* in Paris, continued to publicize the issue of Kosovë through reports, articles, commentaries and editorials. In Switzerland Kosovar exiles continued to publish their magazine, *Zëri i Kosovës* (The Voice of Kosovë), which has become the scourge of UDB (the Yugoslav secret police) and Serbian extremists. The magazine represents the militant wing of the Kosovar movement, and is a natural magnet for Albanians who are tired of Yugoslav intransigence on Kosovë and are seeking militant solutions to the problem.

Round-Table Discussion on Kosovë in New York

Kosovë remained an issue of vital interest to scholars and observers of Southeastern Europe. An example is the round-table discussion on Kosovë that was held in New York City on October 12, 1985. The setting for the event was the Halloran Hotel. The sponsoring organization was the Kosova Relief Fund, USA, Inc., which is headquartered in Baldwin, New York. Principal organizer for the gathering was Dr. Sami Repishti. He was ably assisted by Sejdi Birici, Tonin Miragaj and others. The round-table discussion was convened in order to throw light on the situation in Kosovë which "has been continuously deteriorating" since the Spring of 1981 and has become a "potentially explosive problem".

The panelists at the discussions were: Jens Reuter and Dionisio Ghermany, both of them scholars at the Südost Institute in the University of Munich; and Dr. Sami Repishti, an associate of the faculty of Adelphi University in New York.

In his introductory remarks Dr. Repishti said that the problem of Kosovë is "neither new nor recent," since its roots can be traced back to the "expansionist policies of the old Serbian bourgeoisie and their dreams of a Great Serbia—a modern version of the medieval Serbian empire". The problem, moreover, is neither insignificant nor dormant, he said. It is actually "an active volcano" fueled by a complex set of forces, including political, economic, social and cultural, all of which need to be elucidated.

Jens Reuter said that a wide gulf separates the views of the two opposing sides in Kosovë: the Serbs and the Albanians. Prishtinë is full of policemen and militia men. One has the impression that the city is "under martial law". In spite of what Belgrade authorities say publicly, Reuter said that the Yugoslav government is not inclined to resolve the Kosovë question. As a result of the impasse, "new unrest is in the making" there. Reuter doubted that Albanians will ever feel part of a country that calls itself South Slavs.

Dionisio Ghermany discussed the topic in the context of the broader inter-ethnic problems in the Balkan region. He said that for reasons of state, the nations of Southeastern Europe do not feel disposed to involve themselves with the problems of the Kosovars. They have their own nationality problems to contend with. He referred to Rumania as a case in point, a country which is friendly to Albania, yet whose press makes no mention of the problems in Kosovë. Like Reuter, Ghermany was pessimistic about the prospects for resolving the Kosovë imbroglio.

Despite its generally pessimistic tone, the round-table discussion was a positive development. It kept the Kosovë issue before the public; it enlarged our understanding of the complex issue; and it alerted statesmen and concerned citizens to the seriousness of the problem and the need for action to prevent a new explosion in that troubled region of the Balkans.

Press Coverage in America and Abroad

"Yugoslavia Clamps the Lid on Troublesome Kosovo"—that was the heading of an article carried by the *Wall Street Journal* (April 30, 1985). Its author was the Albanian scholar, Elez Biberaj, a recent winner of a doctorate in political science from Columbia University. As usual, Biberaj's contribution was an illuminating account of the situation in Kosovë. The article was a heavy indictment of the Yugoslav authorities for discriminating against the Kosovars.

Biberaj noted that while Serbian dissidents at a recent trial were sentenced up to two years in prison, on similar charges Kosovars were sentenced to as much as 12 years. He denounced the arbitrary arrests and detention of Albanians, and the "witch hunt that has been initiated against the Albanian elite and intelligentsia". Several prominent professors at the University of Prishtinë have been jailed, Biberaj said, and some 40 other distinguished intellectuals have been persecuted in one form or another. He said that enrollment at the university has been cut back severely over a four-year period since 1980-81, dropping down to 23,000 regular students from a previous high of 35,000. Biberaj summed up his article in these words:

The danger to Yugoslavia does not come from the establishment of a Kosovo republic but from the free rein given to Serbian nationalism and the official toleration and encouragement of anti-Albanian sentiment. But continued Serbian colonial subjugation of Kosovo is undermining Yugoslavia's stability, radicalizing ethnic Albanians and making it more difficult to manage or contain the conflict . . . No solution short of granting Kosovo the status of a republic is likely to pacify the Albanians."

A short but informative article on Kosovë appeared in the London *Sunday Times* (June 9, 1985). The influential British paper wrote: "Many prominent Yugoslavs believe that the 'Kosovo problem' is the most serious long-term difficulty facing them, and one which could split the country." The paper said that Albanians make up 80% of Kosovë's population, and are now "the third largest of Yugoslavia's seven 'nations,' " or ethnic groups. The *Times* article—pointedly headed "Kosovo: the powder keg of Yugoslavia"—had a reference also to the University of Prishtinë, which "has been purged of many of its best professors" and where "the study of Albanian history, literature and culture has been curtailed".

An item in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, under the signature of Gati Azemi, a dissident Albanian poet, told of the practice of torture in Yugoslavia. The item said that a disproportionate number of those arrested in Yugoslavia since 1980 are Albanians.

Perhaps the most news-worthy article on Yugoslavia to appear in the American press was that of Michael Dobbs, headlined "Without Tito, Yugoslavia Is Falling Apart" (*Washington Post*, Aug. 25, 1985). Dobbs said, "There is a widespread mood of disillusionment and frustration (in Yugoslavia), as if the country is sinking slowly downward". The "collective leadership" left behind by Tito, Dobbs said, is not functioning; it is "almost a recipe for perpetual political stalemate". The people "are losing hope," he said.

Turning to the nationality question, the article noted that the economic difficulties in Yugoslavia have coincided with a "marked resurgence of nationalism" in several parts of the country. Here he touched on the issue of Kosovë and the riots in the province, which have "caused a backlash of nationalist feeling among the Serbs". Dobbs then related the bizarre story of a Serb in Kosovë named Gjorgje Martinović, who apparently injured himself severely in May of 1985 and blamed two Kosovar youth for the injury. The incident became the favorite topic of conversation throughout the summer in the "street cafes and restaurants of Belgrade". The incident is an eloquent indicator of the frenzy that has gripped Serbia, and the inability of the Serbs to think rationally and calmly about developments in Kosovë.

Another Washington-based publication, *Spotlight*, published an interview (December 24, 1984), by a leading Albanian activist that was strongly critical of the leadership in Belgrade. The interview was given by Ismet Berisha, executive director of the League of Prizren in Exile. Berisha said that "3 million Albanians in Yugoslavia are living as third-class citizens," that they resent being partitioned among three different republics in Yugoslavia — namely, Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro — and that they want republican status for Kosovë. This is "a categorical imperative of the moment," he said, and "a cause worth fighting for." He added that unless the Yugoslav government sacrifices the demand of the Kosovars for a Republic of their own, there will be more unrest and demonstrations in the region.

Scholarly Studies Examine Kosovë Questions

The repressive policy of Yugoslavia in Kosovë attracted attention also in some scholarly quarters. Early in 1985 a study appeared under the title, "Ethnopolitical Conflict in Yugoslavia: Elites in Kosovo, 1912-1982". Its author, Leonard Cohen, is a professor of political science at the Simon Fraser University in Canada. Cohen analyzes in depth the history of Kosovë, shows that the grievances of the Kosovars have deep roots, and maintains that Albanians in Yugoslavia have been victims of "internal colonialism". The Serbs and Montenegrins, he argues, have held the most influential positions in Kosovë and dominated the province's political and economic life. They represent in fact a "Communist colonial elite". With that as a background, Prof. Cohen believes that Yugoslavia will continue to face grave problems in Kosovë. Any solution that does not take into account the vital interests of ethnic Albanians "is not likely to have much success," he writes. We would like to think that his prognosis for Kosovë will give the Yugoslav leaders pause for reflection.

Prof. Cohen's study appeared in *Elite Studies and Communist Politics: Essays in Memory of Carl Beck*, Ronald H. Linden and Bert A. Rockman (eds.). The book was published in January, 1985 by the Center for International Studies at the University of Pittsburgh.

Reference to Kosovë appeared also in a study by Patrick F. R. Artisien titled, "Albania in the post-Hoxha era," which was published in *The World Today* (June, 1985), a London-based magazine. Commenting on the succession in Albania, Artisien remarks that the

appointment of Alia as successor to Hoxha "is certain to appeal to the Kosovo Albanians . . . Alia's parents were forced to emigrate to Albania to escape from repressive Yugoslav rule in Kosovo before the Second World War, an experience with which many Kosovars can readily identify."

Croatian Input on Kosovë

As in the past, Croatians in general supported the Albanians in Yugoslavia. A distinguished contribution to their cause is being made by the Croatian National Congress (CNC), through its publication, the *CNC Report*. The August, 1985 issue by the Report devoted its leading article to Kosovë. Written by Dr. Matheo Mestrovic, President of the Croatian National Congress, this article is a valuable document, rich with data and keen observations.

Mestrovic says that developments in Kosovë "have created an enormous psychological crisis among the Serbs. They are bewildered, frustrated, angry." And they have reacted with traditional "Balkan brutality and cruelty" toward the Kosovars, because that is "the 'only' policy Yugoslavia is capable of". But military repression and other forms of violence have not broken the spirit of the Kosovars. According to Dr. Mestrovic, the Serbs "cannot muster sufficient repressive force in Kosovo, because others — Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Vojvodina — keep slamming the brakes on the Serbian Steamroller." And they do so mainly because they fear that if the Serbs succeed in crushing the Albanians, they would then move to impose hegemonic rule over the rest of Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia is faced with a dilemma, Dr. Mestrovic remarks, because "It is a national conglomerate opposed by many of the peoples incorporated into it without their free consent." The federation is having problems not only with the Albanians, but other ethnic groups as well. This explains the undercurrent of sympathy and implicit, and sometimes even explicit support by them of the Kosovar cause. Thus we read in the *CNC Report* that "the Croat press has frequently expressed understanding and sympathy for Albanian demands and complaints." Slovenia has been even more open in its stand on Kosovë. Its leaders have refused to back "excessive repression" there. A development worth noting is the publication in Slovenia of an anthology on Kosovë, written by Albanian scholars who advocate republic status for their region. It is reported that this has caused "anger and consternation in Belgrade" (p. 4).

The article on Kosovë says that although the Serbs eliminated the Albanian Communist leaders in power at the time of the Spring 1981 outbreaks, the Albanians who have replaced them apparently are not as submissive as the Serbian authorities had expected. At a recent conference in Prishtinë, Kolë Siroka (Kolë Shiroka), President of the League of Communists in Kosovë, "bluntly blamed decades of Serbian repression and persecution of Yugoslavia's Albanians for their current opposition and resistance". (We might add that Shiroka was educated at the Catholic Diocesan Seminary in Prizren prior to WWII, and is related to Mother Teresa. Indeed, his brother, Gjon Shiroka, was the Yugoslav Ambassador to Sweden in 1979, the year when Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize).

In another *CNC Report* (December, 1985), the President of CNC makes an interesting comment about the character of the Serbian people. He says:

The Serbs are an extraordinary people moved at times by a collective death wish. They are the only people who celebrate as their national day their utter destruction at the hands of the Turks at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. Their history is filled with bloody and sometimes irrational, even self-destructive violence.

This observation helps to explain, in part, the attitude and actions of the Serbs in connection with Kosovë.

Human Rights Organizations' Report on Kosovë

Criticisms of Yugoslavia's political, legal, and penal practices came from many groups, among them Amnesty International, winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace. In its *1984 Report*, it reported that during 1981 and 1982, the number of ethnic Albanians "sentenced for political crimes and minor offenses of a political character in Kosovo had reached the 2503 figure". The organization noted also that some ethnic Albanians, convicted of political offenses, had complained of ill-treatment and torture during investigation proceedings.

A more forceful attack on Yugoslavia's violation of the human rights of Albanians came from the New York-based U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee. In a *Special Report on Yugoslavia*, released in September, 1984, the Committee said that it had received reports from Kosovë that told of "many violations of human rights," especially in conditions of martial law that prevailed in 1981. "Thousands of Kosovë citizens have been sentenced in summary court trials. Albanian dress, books and songs have been outlawed as 'nationalist provocation'. Each year, hundreds of young people in Kosovë are convicted of political crimes" because of membership in so-called irredentist organizations, or engaging in "nationalistic" activities, the Report said.

The Helsinki Watch Committee voiced support for the Kosovar demands for "an autonomous republic within the federal state, economic improvements, equality with other ethnic groups, freedom of the press, and the release of all political prisoners". The Committee called on the Reagan Administration to urge Yugoslavia to abide by the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and other human rights agreements to which it is a signatory.

Further corroboration of the wrongs suffered by Albanians in Yugoslavia came in February, 1985 when the U.S. Department of State issued its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1984*. The section on Yugoslavia pointed out that Kosovë "continues to be troubled by ethnic tension" stemming from "deep-rooted ethnic Serb-Albanian antagonism" (p. 1148). "Arrests on charges relating to 'nationalism' have been especially numerous among ethnic Albanians," the report said. Arrests "on hostile propaganda charges have

included citations for participating in demonstrations at which speakers advocated full republic status for Kosovo, passing out leaflets, singing 'nationalist' songs, and writing 'nationalist' slogans in public places" (p. 1149).

The State Department survey found that some professors in Kosovë "who were suspected of propagating Albanian 'nationalism' were dismissed from their positions" (p. 1147), and furthermore the "authorities continue to apply pressure on professors at the Kosovo's Prishtina University," including those who are accused of "failing to oppose" Albanian nationalism (p. 1152). The survey also told of discrimination in Yugoslav courts, "particularly against ethnic Albanians and gypsies" (p. 1157).

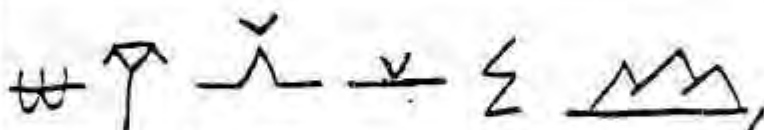
We are pleased to see that our government is taking a more objective stand on Yugoslavia and, in keeping with our democratic traditions and professed concern for human rights, is indirectly criticizing the unjust and ultimately self-defeating policy of Belgrade toward ethnic Albanians. We trust that the policy-makers in Belgrade, who have so far ignored the cries of the Kosovars for justice, will heed the State Department's publication which, when read between the lines, implies American dissatisfaction with Yugoslavia's record on human rights.

Instances of oppression and, in many cases, torture of Albanians in Yugoslavia have been documented for a long time in the Albanian press. Now, influential human rights bodies are also expressing concern about this practice by a country that calls itself civilized and democratic. The reports of such bodies perform a useful service in educating world public opinion about the true nature of the Yugoslav state.

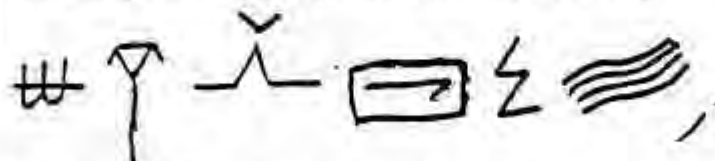
We conclude this section with a reference to the International Society for Human Rights, Inc., headquartered in Frankfurt-am-Main, West Germany. The U.S. section of the Society, centered in New Jersey, has taken an interest in the case of Adem Demaçi — the Kosovar activist languishing in a Yugoslav prison — and is making efforts to obtain his release. The Society was alerted to Demaçi's plight by the Albanian Catholic Information Center in California. Demaçi, we might add, has been incarcerated on spurious charges for 25 years.

Recent Books on Kosovë

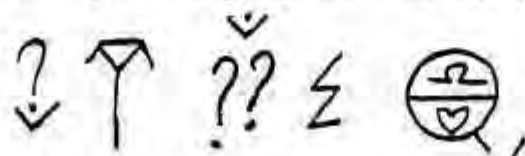
Two new books on Kosovë were published in the recent past in the United States. Their appearance underscores the lively interest on this subject in certain quarters in the country. The two titles are: *Kosova*, by the Albanian scholar S.S. Juka, and *The Saga of Kosovo*, by A. Dragnich and S. Todorovich. They offer sharply opposing views and interpretations on Kosovë. However, we shall not discuss them here, as both of them are reviewed or commented upon at length in the current issue of the *Bulletin*.



When you'll pray on the mountain,



When you'll pray at the sea,



Will you ask the Creator,



To love you and me?

Extract from *Jet Era Glyphs* by Tomor S. Zavalani.

Book Reviews

The Great Betrayal: The Untold Story of Kim Philby's Biggest Coup

published by Hodder and Stoughton, London (1984)

by Nicholas Bethell

Albania today remains an isolated, tyrannical enclave of deviant Marxism, whose ruthless, self-proclaimed leader, Enver Hoxha, died in 1985, neither by internal dissension or external overthrow, but by natural causes. The public fate of the founder of the only truly "atheist" state in the modern world, according to his own analysis, allows us to draw few metaphysical or religious conclusions, but it does provide an occasion to reflect on the one attempt, or series of attempts, by British and American intelligence to enlist Albanian exiles to overthrow this same Hoxha, efforts that failed and served, in his own mind, to justify his rule and his system.

Thus, like all political things, modern Albania might have been otherwise were the efforts of the Yugoslavs, Italians, British, Greeks, and Americans different in their handling of Albanian realities. Most of us do not even realize that some effort was made to overthrow Hoxha from 1948 to 1953. The story is a grim one and includes conflicting policy goals, conflicts of national interest, half-hearted organization, serious under-estimation of the power of a Marxist state, and finally the capacity of a citizen of a free country in high places to betray his own peoples and others. This makes this a fascinating, yet sad, poignant book about a people who deserve more attention not merely because of what they have suffered, but because of the lesson their plight can teach other societies.

Aristotle had noted that "two reasons (exist) for which (men) attack tyrants above all, hatred and contempt." But, in spite of the contempt and hatred shown for Hoxha, Aristotle probably would not have been surprised that modern tyrants can often survive both hatred and contempt and keep their peoples under absolute control. One of the assumptions of allied planners in operations against Hoxha's regime was that a modern Marxist tyranny was just like others, so that it could be easily infiltrated and some counterforces could be established with a little outside help. Jean-Jacques Revel has argued that this failure to understand the real nature of modern tyrannical power and its ideological supports is one of the main reasons why "democracies fail". The case of Albania, carefully, patiently, even sadly recorded by Lord Bethell, no doubt conforms this thesis.

In their recent essay, "The New Freedom Fighters," Maggie Gallagher and Charles Bork concluded:

Just as the U.S. pullout from Vietnam encouraged Communist insurgents throughout the world, so would the overthrow of a Moscow-backed Marxist regime exacerbate the tensions rending the Soviet empire. For many nations and former nations resentful of domination by the Kremlin, the myth of Soviet invincibility will have been shattered.

Hundreds of thousands of ill-fed, badly-clothed men are fighting and dying for freedom around the globe. They are not asking Americans to spill blood for their causes, but only to spend money—and relatively paltry sums at that. An American failure to assist them would be not just a moral failure, but criminal negligence of our own interests and our own identity. (*Commentary*, September, 1985, p. 61)

Nicholas Bethell, a Conservative Member of the British House of Lords, has recounted here, however, how dangerous and lethal it can be for imprisoned peoples under the Marxist system to rely on British or American aid, when it comes down to practice.

In *The Great Betrayal*, several main themes emerge. The first is simply, based on the results of the effort to overthrow the Albanian ruler in the late 40's and early 50's, the disastrous consequences of having a Soviet-sponsored agent at work in the very heart of the planning for such an attempt to destabilize a Marxist regime. Kim Philby, who later defected to the Soviet Union in 1963, was the key British diplomat involved in the early stages of this operation and was responsible for the remarkably easy effort of the Albanians to capture and try and mostly execute the Albanians who were brave enough to make the attempt in the first place. The second lesson has to do with strategy. Albania was not considered an important country. It had been used as a Soviet base for attempting to overthrow the Greek government. It also, before its own break with the Soviets and China, was intimately connected with the relation of Tito to the Soviet system. The result was that British and American planners did not know exactly what they wanted to do. There was sentiment for a success to counterbalance Soviet gains in Czechoslovakia, China, and other Eastern European countries. On the other hand, the official line of both governments was not to appear to be doing anything in case things went wrong. This left the Albanians, themselves often divided in differing political factions, realizing that this was only a half-hearted operation.

Lord Bethell accounted in detail for the organizing efforts of the British, Americans, and even Polish intelligence corps to handle this

affair. It was done but on a small scale, very carefully and secretly. The story is itself interesting and dramatic. The recruitment of American and British instructors and political guides, of Albanians in exile, to carry out the proposed infiltration, its chances for success, its results are all narrated here with clarity and forthrightness. Lord Bethell is right to see that this is a story interesting in itself and one laden with lessons about the nature of what we are up against, of the consequences of lack of unified policy. The Albanians who survived the experiment recognized that they had in some sense been used in a kind of diplomatic side-show. On the other hand, it seemed worth some effort to try to carry it out quietly at the time. No doubt, the results of the early failures of incursions into Albania should have alerted the Americans and British to the fact that something drastic was going wrong, even after Philby came under suspicion.

One Albanian survivor put the matter this way:

Abas Ermenji speaks with particular bitterness: "Our 'allies' wanted to make use of Albania as a guinea-pig, without caring about the human losses, for an absurd enterprise that was condemned to failure. This failure was roughly the same as that suffered by the Cuban exiles in the Bay of Pigs episode a few years later," (p. 194)

This is the theme, of course, of Lord Bethell's book, that if a society or country is not able to understand the forces and powers aligned against it, it ought not to play at revolutions at the cost of lives and causes. The cause of a free Albania is a noble one, no doubt, but the capture and public trial of the Albanians taken in these missions, a trial broadcast throughout the world, made this particular operation seem hopeless. Bethell acknowledged that for the Albanian emigré community, the consolation was that it was the only one "who actually took up arms and fought against one of the governments of Stalin's empire." (p. 201)

While it remains true that this book on the surface concerns the consequences of a "spy" in the midst of a military operation—this gives the book dramatic potentialities—the larger lesson or problem which Lord Bethell touches on is that of the nature of modern tyranny—here in an extreme, even itself isolated form from its Marxist origins—and the difficulty of confronting it from the means assumed by democratic peoples. The result is simply to let the tyranny play itself out. On the other hand, the larger geo-political issues remain—Yugoslavia, the desire of the Soviet fleet for an opening on the Adriatic, the power of even a small government to control its society, Lord Bethell's forceful book does not leave us with a sense of encouragement, but it does recount vividly what did happen when we underestimated the nature of a modern Marxist power, even a small one.

James V. Schall, S.J.
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

Kosova — the Albanians in Yugoslavia in Light of Historical Documents

An essay by S.S. Juka

(The terms "Kosova," "Kosovë," and "Kosovo" are interchangeable; all three refer to the same region in Yugoslavia—Reviewer's Note)

The 1981 demonstrations by Albanians in Kosovë have inspired much publicity on that region in Yugoslavia, in the form of scholarly conferences, articles in newspapers and magazines, petitions, and books. Underlying all of this activity is the desire, presumably, to throw light on the subject, influence government officials and public opinion, and point the way to a solution of the Kosovë question.

This book, *Kosova*, subtitled, "The Albanians in Yugoslavia in Light of Historical Documents" (1984), by Professor S.S. Juka, is one of the more serious studies to be published recently on Kosovë, an area where Albanians make up 77.5 percent of the population (*Rilindja*, March 4, 1982), although unofficial sources place the figure at over 80 percent. Juka's work is an expanded version of a paper she presented at the "International Conference on Kosova" that was held on November 6, 1982 at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The additional material makes the work more substantial as well as more profitable to read and study.

The book is divided in three parts, the first of which discusses the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and "the struggle of the Albanians to defend their territory". Part II is mostly a historical survey of Kosovë beginning with antiquity and extending to our century. Data drawn from linguistics and archaeology add considerably to the value of this section of the essay. Part III is a discourse on Kosovë from World War One to the present. Here the author examines Yugoslav politics, and ethnic attitudes and values of Albanians that helped to shape developments in that area during our century. The argument throughout the essay relies on documentary evidence and reason, and is marked by restraint and a tone of civility. Although the question of Kosovë has inflamed the passions of the Serbs, the discussion in this book is markedly free of emotionalism or any sign of hostility toward the Slavs.

I

In Part I Juka notes the injustice of the Congress of Berlin, which forced the Albanians to cede lands to the Serbs and the Montenegrins (as well as to the Greeks). According to the author, this came about because the Albanians were seen in the West as Moslem fanatics and allies of Turkey, while the Orthodox Slavs were seen as representatives of Christian values and as allies of the Great Powers. Even the

British Prime Minister, Gladstone, shared this view, for he "favored the Christians," while he "regarded Moslems as inferior" (p. 39). Yet, the Albanians were not allies of Turkey. It's an "undeniable historical fact" that they waged "numerous fights against the Turks" (p. 35). In support of this argument, the author cites especially the epic struggle of Skanderbeg against the Turks in the 15th Century.

Serbian propaganda fed this inimical view of Albanians, most of whom had converted to Islam. But, as Juka points out, the Serbs and Montenegrins were not less hostile toward Catholic Albanians. The South Slavs published many books and articles in order to show the alleged "ferocity of the Albanians, their backwardness, their despicable behavior, their lack of discipline, etc." (p. 15). Unfortunately, this hostile propaganda influenced the attitudes and actions of European diplomats, with detrimental consequences for Albanian national interests. Even in our time, Serb Propaganda is hard at work depicting the Albanians as "vandals who damage Serbian churches" and monasteries. (p. 45). But the fact remains, the book argues, that Moslem Albanians have been the guardians of those churches for centuries, and many of them lost their lives defending them from attackers.

The Albanians, as is known, took up arms to foil the decisions of the Congress of Berlin concerning their country. Their cause attracted a measure of sympathy and support abroad. Juka points out that back in 1880, Lord Goschen, at the time British Ambassador in Istanbul, voiced support for Albanians in resisting the takeover of their territory by the Slavs. Another contemporary of Goschen, British diplomat Lord Fitzmaurice, maintained that the Albanians had a right to resist, inasmuch as "the vilayet of Kosovë with the exception of (one) Serb district . . . may be said to be Albanian". (p. 14)

Some of the saddest passages in the essay are those that tell of Serbian and Montenegrin cruelty toward the Albanian population in the territories ceded to the Slavs by the Great Powers of Europe in 1878 and again in 1913. The author documents those passages with citations from the writings of foreign diplomats, eyewitnesses and scholars, among them Gould, who served as British Consul to Belgrade in 1878, British author Mary E. Durham, and the Serbian socialist, Dimitrije Tucovic (pp. 9-10, 16-17).

II

In Part II, where Juka discusses "myths and historical facts," we are told that the Serbs are known as creators of myths, but that those myths do not accord with historical facts. The Serbs' penchant for myth-making is especially evident in their version of the emigration of Serbs from Kosovë in 1690 under the leadership of Patriarch Arsenius III, and their designation of Kosovë as "Old Serbia". The essay rejects the Serb position on both counts as misleading and fallacious.

Regarding the term "Old Serbia," Juka notes that it has been used by the Serbs at different times to designate different regions in the Balkans that Serbia coveted and hoped to annex. What the Serbs call "Old Serbia" these days, namely Kosovë, is "in reality a region inhabited *ab antiquo* by Albanians," and that the region was under Serb rule "only for a period of time" (p. 42). According to the author of *Kosova*, the Serb claim that Albanians are recent arrivals in Kosovë is nothing more than a myth. The strength and merit of Juka's essay are best seen in the discussion of this issue. There is considerable material in these pages, based on historical sources, to support the thesis that Albanians are indigenous to the region of Kosovë. They are indigenous by virtue of their descent from the Illyrians, the ancient inhabitants of Kosovë, known in antiquity as Dardania. The link with the Illyrians has been expounded and defended by many authorities, a number of whom are cited in this work: J. E. Thunmann, Ami Boué, J. G. von Hahn, the Kosovan scholar Zef Mirdita, and the noted Albanian linguist Eqrem Çabej. Moreover, Turkish registers for Kosovë in the 15th Century note that Albanians were "everywhere present" in the region (pp. 40-41). There is also a reference in the essay to the 17th Century Turkish chronicler, Evlija Celebi, who says that the Albanian population was overwhelmingly present in Kosovë in his time, which is to say before the alleged influx of Albanians in the region, as the Serbs would have the world believe.

III

Part III of the work recounts briefly the lamentable story of Albanians in Yugoslavia since World War I. We are told how Yugoslavia sought to eradicate Albanian ethnicities by suppressing all features of their national life, colonizing their land and expelling them to Turkey. Nothing exemplifies that policy better than the notorious 1937 memorandum of Dr. Vaso Cubrilovic to the Royal Government of Yugoslavia (pp. 47-48). This chilling document—which offered a step by step program for the eradication of Albanians in Kosovë—is a stark revelation of the magnitude and intensity of Serbian enmity toward Albanians.

Prof. Juka remarks that during World War II the Kosovars formed guerrilla bands and fought on the side of the Yugoslav communists against the Nazi occupiers. After the war, despite promises to the Kosovars by Yugoslav Communist leaders that they would be free to exercise the right of self-determination, including the right of secession, Kosovë was attached to Serbia without the consent of the Albanians (p. 50).

At present, anti-Albanian feelings run high in Yugoslavia. Juka notes that books published in Yugoslavia in recent years bring to mind books published by the Serbs at the turn of the century. They are filled with "disgraceful epithets" that are aimed at humiliating Albanians (p. 53). The author concludes her scholarly essay with the words: *Under the SFRY (Socialist Federation of the Republic of Yugoslavia) government, the Kosovars have been treated as harshly as they were under the government of the Kingdoms of Serbia and Yugoslavia* (p. 54).

This is a short but valuable essay on the history of the Albanians in Yugoslavia. A useful feature of the essay are the extensive notes in back of the work. They contain much informative material.

The author of the essay, S.S. Juka, has a fine record as a scholar. She was educated in Austria and France, and holds a doctorate in

philosophy (aesthetics) from the Sorbonne. She has taught French literature and civilization at various American universities, and published many articles and essays in a number of magazines and academic journals, among them *Realités*, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, and *The French Review*.

Konova is a hard cover book of 72 pp., and may be purchased for \$20 a copy. The address of the publishing house is: Walden Press, Inc., 216 West 18th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.

P.R.P.

High Albania

published by Virago Press, London (1909, reprinted 1985)

by Edith Durham

The London based feminist publishing firm Virago has done a signal service for students of Albanian culture by reprinting *High Albania*. This important travelogue by the "Queen of the Highlanders" (as Durham was called by the Albanians) was first published in 1909 but has been out of print for many years and generally unavailable to researchers. The reprint fills a serious void in Albanian studies.

The author Edith Durham, first went to the Balkans in 1900 for health reasons. She immediately fell in love with the region and the people. On subsequent trips, Durham was able to travel into areas where no Westerner, let alone an Englishwoman had ever been. She observed and participated in Balkan affairs at a very critical juncture in history. This volume relates her keen observations of that turbulent period.

Durham lived among the mountain people in northern Albania during their desperate wars for independence against the Turks. She also witnessed their struggle against the Serbs and Montenegrins. The terrible suffering brought on by these wars caused her to become an unofficial spokesperson for the Albanians. Government officials in Great Britain soon became "annoyed" with her persistent appeals for aid and assistance to the Albanian "freedom fighters." The volume also offers an excellent portrait of social customs among the most inaccessible mountain tribes in the area northeast of Scutari (Shkodër). There are descriptions of clans "in blood" with one another as a result of the law of Lekë Dukagjini (Dukajini). This male code of honor resulted in almost constant bloodshed within the clan and the larger community. Durham records how the Catholic priests who ministered in the region tried to curb this practice of senseless blood-letting.

The squalor, the backwardness of the region and the miserable lot of the womanfolk are graphically described. Durham noted the high female mortality rate resulted from "ceaseless child bearing." She attributed the exceptionally high infant mortality rate to the fact that "babies were so swaddled, and seldom washed and cleaned, that few survived." Modern feminists will take note of the means by which mountain woman could avoid marriage yet enjoy high status and respect among males of the community. The practice of single women claiming "virgin for life" status allowed them unrestricted movement and social contacts within a male dominated society. She noted the patriarchal clan system prohibited endogamous marriages yet permitted and encouraged marriages between maternal cousin. The basic concepts of Christianity and Islam were completely alien to some of the more remote clans. Durham also noted traces of paganism among some of the isolated groups.

High Albania provides invaluable evidence of the dedication and integrity of scores of isolated priests who labored among these mountain peoples. The author records their efforts to reconcile those in "blood," to enforce the Church's marriage laws on their wayward flocks, and to teach the basic principles of Christianity to the people. This book provides data which contradicts Enver Hoxha's accusations against the Catholic Church.

Although *High Albania* is essentially a travelogue it provides a multi-disciplinary study of this little known region that is indispensable for understanding the course of Albanian affairs in this century. Virago Press should be highly commended for making this volume available to the academic community.

Janice Broun

Poesie (Poems)

published by Ediprint S.R.L., Siracusa, Italy (1985)

by Martin Camaj

translated by Francesco Solano

introduction by Antonino Guzzetta

The poems of Martin Camaj, the distinguished Albanian writer and scholar-in-exile, are now available in Italian translation. Camaj's poetry is printed in its original Albanian with a remarkable Italian translation by Francesco Solano which "almost equals the original Albanian."

In the introduction Professor Antonino Guzzetta, Director of the International Center of Albanian Studies at the University of Palermo, gives a profound analysis of the author's lyrical work. This volume of *Poesie* is exquisitely printed and illustrated with details and color by the renowned Albanian art professor, Maestro Ibrahim Kodra.

Poesie has only recently been in circulation, yet Camaj's lyrics have aroused much interest among the Italian academic community.

The highly respected Italian literary critic Natale Tedesco remarked that Camaj's poems are of the "quality of modern European lyrics in their fervour and sensibility." His view is shared by many other literati of the Calabrian and Sicilian regions.

This fine translation not only honors its author but is winning recognition for modern Albanian literary achievement. The volume may be obtained for \$20 through *Ediprint*, Via Maestranza 54, Siracusa, Italy.

Ditari I Nji Zemrës Së Lendueme — 1937-1975
(Diary of a Wounded Heart — 1937-1975)

Detroit (1985)

by *Prentk Gruda*

The very first entry in the *Diary of a Wounded Heart* has a reference to ethnic Albania, namely the unification of Kosovë and Çamëria — the "captive one-half of the nation," now under Yugoslavia and Greece — with the state of Albania. The cause of ethnic Albania is the central and sacred issue for Gruda, and runs through this book like the *leitmotif* of a great epic. The dismemberment of Albania and the fate of the country in general cause the author great suffering; hence the title of the book. His heart is pained, he says, "for Albania and her sons (i.e., people) in captivity" (p. 9). Being from Gruda, an Albanian district in Kosovë, the loss of that region to Yugoslavia is both a national and personal matter to the author, and therefore all the more real and tormenting.

This voluminous diary is the saga of a fervent Albanian nationalist, covering nearly forty years of his life. It begins in Albania where Gruda spent four years as a student at the Pedagogical Institute (*The Normale*) in Elbasan (1937-1941). Certified to teach in 1941, he went back to his beloved birthplace, Gruda, and opened up the first school ever there, as well as taught. In 1945, after Kosovë reverted to Yugoslavia, he went back to Albania and worked there as a teacher. Dissatisfied with the regime of Hoxha, he fled in 1951 to Yugoslavia. After two very difficult years in exile in Yugoslavia, he crossed over to Austria. He spent the next three years (1953-1956) in Austria and Italy. In 1956 he immigrated to the United States, settling in Detroit, Michigan.

Gruda's diary is an eloquent account of the injustice and suffering inflicted on the Albanian people and nation by foreigners, chiefly Slavs, but rulers of Albania in our time also come under attack by the author. He is unsparing in his criticism of the pre-war regims of King Zog and that of the Communists since the war.

Part I

The heaviest blows, however, are directed against the Montenegrins, with whom the author is most familiar, and the Serbs. Gruda offers numerous examples of Slav cruelty and arrogance toward the Albanians. His diary bristles with harrowing tales of Yugoslav terror among Albanians under their domination. An entry dated May 3, 1941 tells of Montenegrins who forced Albanians to dig their own graves and "buried alive" many of them (p. 193-94). On March 17, 1945, Gruda records that a classmate of his, Haki Taha, had assassinated Miladin Popović, the Tito emissary who collaborated with Albanian Partisans, and that in retaliation the Serbs massacred 7,000-8,000 Kosovar youth in Tivar (now Bar) (p. 445). In June of that year, the Montenegrins celebrated the re-conquest of Kosovë by dancing in the town square of Titograd and singing a song which said:

*From one end of Kosovë to the other,
 one no longer hears the Albanian greeting,
 "A long life to you!" because all Albanian
 women, from Shkup to Mitrovicë, have
 been widowed. (p. 456)*

It is that kind of Montenegrin enmity toward Albanians that impelled the Albanian poet, Fr. Gjergj Fishta, to write:

*Mu mirë dekë nën dhe m'u kju
 Se për t'lightë në më na Shqij!
 Se për t'gjallë me ndëjë nën Shkju! (p. 377)*

The lines say that it is better to die than to live in disgrace under the Slavs. Gruda writes with admiration for Fishta for articulating, in masterful epic poetry, the virtues and patriotic ideals of the Albanian Highlanders, and their heroic resistance to aggression by the Montenegrins. He quotes Fishta frequently, and reproduces as well many of the martial songs that are a vital part of the life of the Highlanders, owing to the very nature of their history.

The author's attitude toward the Yugoslavs is shaped by his own bitter experiences with them, and even more by the long and tragic history of Gruda under the Slavs. He has an intimate knowledge of the history of Kosovë, its patriots and people and their way of life whose origins, he notes, transcend both Islam and Christianity, going back to their ancient ancestors, the Illyrians. Much of this history he heard from the mouths of old men in Gruda who had fought in numerous battles against the Slavs and Turks. Their stories are recorded in vivid detail, and preserve the freshness, immediacy and urgency peculiar to skillful diary keeping. It is a human drama of poverty, toil,

anguish, tears, and despair, as well as fortitude, bravery and heroism — a drama set against a background of perpetual Albanian-Slav confrontations.

Part 2

Diary entries of life under King Zog are a harsh indictment of the former Albanian monarch. Gruda attacks his government as a feudal and Oriental regime, whose base of power was a caste of cunning and valious beys who ruled Albania like a *çiflik* (their own landed estate). This is a "regime of darkness and blood," he notes in his diary, "which is forsaking the people to Oriental wretchedness" (p. 10). It is a corrupt regime of arrogant administrators and servile officials who oppose development and progress and culture and learning. Gruda calls Zog "a tyrant" whose "degenerate clique" put a red label on every progressive idea of movement in the country (p. 19, 56, 65). He holds Zog responsible for the murder of progressive and admired patriots like Luigj Gurakuqi, Bajram Curri, Avni Rustemi and Hasan Prishtina (p. 10).

The diary comes down heavily on the caste of the beys in Zog's Albania. Gruda bewails the lot of the peasants who are nothing more than "serfs of the beys" (p. 59). The latter, he says, attained positions of distinction over the sweat and blood of the people, and "served foreigners in opposition to the interests of the nation" (p. 51). He calls the beys "enemies of the fatherland". Because of the Oriental mentality of the beys and the "miserable conditions of Albanians" in the 1930s, Gruda charges that Albania was still under Turkey's shadow during Zog's reign.

The author documents the case against the Zog regime in more than a hundred pages in the diary. He writes about rampant unemployment, a muzzled press, women in bondage to backward customs, an educational system in shackles, and witch hunts for Communists and forbidden books. He paints a bleak picture of the life of students in the *Normale* of Elbasan: freezing dorms in winter, poor food, unsanitary conditions. Gruda writes about these things with great feeling, and a sense of frustration at being powerless to affect the *status quo*.

The diary denounces the Zog regime also for its foreign policy, above all its attitude toward Yugoslavia and its dealings with Fascist Italy. Gruda senses a growing menace to Albania in Zog's rapprochement with Mussolini. He is especially bitter over the failure of Zog's regime to concern itself with the plight of the Kosovars. In August, 1938 the author made an attempt to see Zog in person, in order to present the case for the Kosovars and gain official public support of them, but was turned away (p. 133). The "silence over Kosovo is the greatest treason and tragedy" of the Zog regime, he writes in his diary (p. 10). Incensed over Zog's domestic and foreign policies, he cries out: "May the curse of the nation fall on him and his wicked cohorts!" (p. 68).

Part 3

There is much interesting material here on Gruda's life in postwar Albania. He writes of the deprivations he experienced there, the pressure to conform, the suspicion he was under regarding his political loyalties, and the fear of arrest and torture by the secret police, which finally made him flee the country. The two years spent as an exile in Yugoslavia are very revealing about Yugoslavia's inhumane treatment of Albanian political exiles and its aggressive policy toward Albania. The author had many confrontations with UDBA (Yugoslav secret police), which sought to engage him in propaganda work against Albania. However, he resisted all pressure and threats to give in, resolved not to betray his country, even if it should cost him his life (p. 587-588). It would have been no small victory for the Yugoslav authorities to have won Gruda over, since he was one of the influential leaders in the Highlands.

The Yugoslavs also offered the author a teaching position in Montenegro and a chance to study at the University of Belgrade. He turned down the first offer and accepted the second, but was soon disillusioned. All such proposals, Gruda contends, had as their final goal the destruction of the Albanian nation. This is precisely the crux of the quarrel with the Montenegrins and the Serbs. The Albanians, he says, have demonstrated time and again that they want to live in peace and harmony with them, and have welcomed them into their homes, and in times of danger — as, for example, during the civil war in Yugoslavia — have given them refuge and saved the lives of many of them. Yet always they repaid Albanian friendship with enmity, and Albanian hospitality with treachery. That is why Gruda reiterates throughout the diary that they cannot be trusted.

But in spite of the wrongs to Albania and to him personally, he harbors no hatred for the Slavs. Indeed, he has good words for the Montenegrins for their courage and bravery. Albanians, he says, respect and treat them with civility as neighbors, and only ask that they in turn respect the rights of the Albanians to their homes and land, and cease their savage attacks on them, as well as relinquish once and for all their designs to conquer and vanquish them as a distinct people and nation (p. 194, 220).

Part 4

Several years of this diary are devoted to events in Gruda and the Highlands during the war. This is one of the greatest merits of the diary. We have rather full accounts of the war within Albania, as given by the victorious Communist Partisans and the defeated nationalists of *Balli Kombëtar* and the royalist party of *Legalliteti*. But no such account of the war in the Highlands has appeared to date, as far as we know, until the publication of this book. Gruda's diary, therefore, is a valuable historical document on that war, as perceived by a right-of-center witness.

The war and its aftermath was also an occasion for Gruda to express his views on the Allies versus the Axis powers. Although he disapproves of certain actions of the Nazis, he is sympathetic to the Germans, critical of the English, the French and the Americans, and

hostile toward the Russians. He approves of the Germans, it appears, not only because of their culture and character, which he esteems highly, but because the Germans "appreciate and like the Albanian people" and supported their struggle for an ethnic Albania (p. 385-86). He was convinced that the war of the Allies against Germany would only help Russia to further its policy of Pan-Slavic expansion, and he points to the spread of Communism to East Europe, including Albania, as a vindication of his view.

The three years Gruda spent among Albanian political exiles in Italy and Austria proved to be a disappointment, on the whole. He confesses that he was with the *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front) "at heart" (p. 401), and he became a member of the Free Albania National Committee in Rome, headquarters of a variety of Albanian anti-Communist political parties. But in essence he is a supra-party nationalist, since his fundamental commitment is to the Albanian nation, rather than to any particular political party. Indeed, he was distressed to learn that the parties in exile were more concerned about increasing their membership rolls than about the fate of Albania (p. 630, 673). And he was shocked to find in our day Albanian boys in the coffee houses of Rome talking nostalgically about Turkey and the grandeur of the Ottoman Empire (p. 660, 665). In view of this, Gruda does not hold out much hope for the exiles to defeat Communism in Albania.

Part 5

A lot more can be said about this book of nearly 800 pages (including some thirty pages of illustrations), and thousands of entries, ranging from a few lines to several pages in length. There is much absorbing material on Gruda, the person, and the large number of Albanian notables who crossed his path, all the way from Lef Nosi to Fran S. Noli. He knew Enver Hoxha, Mehmet Shehu, and the heads of all political parties in exile, religious figures like Pater Anton Harapi and Dom Lazër Shantoja, educators like Aleskander Xhuvani, Ernest Koliqi, Eqrem Çabej and Aleks Buda in Albania and Ali Hadri and Hasan Kaleshi in Kosovë and a host of others.

Some of the most interesting pages in the diary are the character sketches he gives of the people he has known, both great and little. Just as interesting, and educational as well, are the portraits he paints of cities in Albania (Korçe, Gjirokastër, Vlorë, Kavajë, Durrës, etc.), and their inhabitants. He does the same thing for the villages of his native district of Gruda and other Albanian-inhabited areas in Montenegro. Much of this information should prove useful to students of history, ethnology and sociology. The author of this diary has a gift for description of people and places, as well as the beauties of nature and the horrors of war.

But Gruda is more than a chronicler of events as they impacted on his life and the lives of his fellow countrymen. He is a moralist who yearns for a world of justice, compassion and peace, and an idealist with a philosophical turn of mind who reflects constantly on his experience. But seeing the unequal distribution of gifts and goods in the world, he is frequently plunged into profound pessimism, sometimes even to the point of questioning the goodness, if not the existence of God (p. 70). He is intrigued by the mystery of life, and devastated by the hate and wickedness in the world and the madness of war. Reflecting on these things, he is assaulted by moods of skepticism, cynicism, futility and even nihilism (p. 231-232, 258). This diary, therefore, is the story not only of a wounded heart, but also of a questioning mind and tormented soul, because he asks questions that seem to have no answers and refuses to accept men as they are and the world as he finds it. Is he perhaps ahead of his time, or a step or two behind?

On Christmas Day, 1951, when he was 39, Prenk Gruda wrote in his diary: "... here I am, thirty-nine years old ... and I have not performed any service to the nation or humanity; why then do I live?" (p. 581). But in reality he had not lived in vain, and had no valid reason to belittle himself and feel unworthy. For all the while he was recording history as it was being made from day to day. By the very act of keeping this diary he was performing a valuable service to his country, above all for the entries on Kosovë and the cause of ethnic Albania. Now, at 74, he has reason to take comfort and pride in his accomplishment, regardless of his personal reactions, whether right or wrong, to the events he recorded in his diary.

Diary of a Wounded Heart is history, literature and philosophical quest all in one; in sum, a document of extraordinary interest. It can be obtained for \$40 through the author at: 3325 Buckingham Trail, West Bloomfield, MI 48022 (USA).



Ten Years Later — Remembering Ernest Koliqi

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Ernest Koliqi's death. The well-known educator, poet, and writer visited the Bay Area in Summer, 1973. The University of Rome sponsored Koliqi's summer long study of the Arbëresh in America. Koliqi spoke at the University of San Francisco and at Santa Clara University. Our center was honored to host his visit to the Santa Clara Valley.

On this anniversary of his sudden death we wish to honor his memory with the following article.

Contemporary scholars find it both relevant and fascinating to study the work and the figure of Ernest Koliqi, the great Albanian thinker of the twentieth century. During his career Koliqi provided a lively stimulus to Albanian literature. He is a focal point for what has happened in Albanian culture over the last thirty years.

As the work and the activity of any artist becomes distant in time, scholars should seek to study their materials in the context in which they first unfolded. Currently, among the young Arbëresh and Kosovar generation there are many emerging scholars of Koliqi's literary excellence. They approach the study of this notable Albanian presence from many different foci.

After a decade the "Koliqi myth" is now distant enough for us to be able to intelligently test Koliqi's hypothesis that there exists a centrality within Pan-Albanian literature. This hypothesis embraced all the literary and cultural currents in Albania, in Kosovë (Yugoslavia) and in the Arbëresh (Italo-Albanian) community of Italy.

Koliqi's concept of a "widespread presence of the Albanian soul" has today been accepted even within literary and cultural circles in Albania. As a result Albanian literature is no longer considered simply *Shqipe* (i.e., written only in the Albanian language) but *Shqiptare* (i.e., belonging to all the Albanian world).

Koliqi promoted the Pan Albanian hypothesis for more than thirty years. He tested the validity of this hypothesis, not only in the pages of his sophisticated review, *Shejzat* ("the Pleiades") but also in his prestigious *Anthology of Albanian Poetry*. Koliqi translated and published this anthology in the Italian language during the early 1960's. For the first time ever, the poets of Albania, Kosovë, and the Albanian community in Italy were presented to the foreign public as "children of the same literary mother, the same creative race." The publication of Koliqi's anthology was a true literary event. Until now it remains the only anthology of its kind.

Koliqi was both an exceptional traditionalist as well as a pioneer of Albanian cultural development. He was the first author to understand and use an Albanian literary language which unites instead of divides the language.

During his life-time Koliqi's vision was considered by many to be "something quite odd," "apart from main currents," and "something marginal." Some scholars held that his ideas "existed in a smothered state." Nonetheless Koliqi's ideas were being formulated on the basis of reflection centered on real, new developments in the world.

At the beginning of this century Fan Noli joined with Albanian men of letters scattered throughout the world to create the Pan-Albanian Federation — VATRA ("The Heart") in Boston. All of their published works were written outside of Albania. This Federation sought to bring together Albanians around "one common spiritual and cultural hearth." The writings of the VATRA group have today become essential parts of anthologies in all the schools of Albania and Kosovë. The same holds true for the works of the Frashëri Brothers. They were originally published in the late nineteenth century by presses in Istanbul, Sofia, Cairo and Bucharest, where there were very active Albanian colonies.

The VATRA group and the Frashëri's inspired Koliqi's idea of linking together the whole Albanian world in specifically cultural terms. Because of his humanistic approach to the Albanian language, Koliqi well knew that his concept of "Pan-Albanianism" would eventually gain its current acceptance. With clairvoyant melancholy he remarked that: "For the time being let us continue along our road. Whoever follows us now will in the future be worthy of being considered a realist."

His impassioned "debut" in the world of the Arbëresh (Albanians of Italy) led him to search for stylistic rigor in his language, and to seek for a "unifying Albanian language" with national density. This goal was just achieved in his "Odes to the Renaissance" (*Këngjellat e Rilindjes*) (1959) and similar other poems which until now have remained the only example of Arbëresh poetry produced by a native born Albanian. Koliqi's effort too was his means of continuing the disaggregation currently existing in the Albanian dialectical ghettos, as a direct result of the absence of unifying culture.

This aspect of his creativity remains Koliqi's specific contribution to Pan-Albanian literature and the culture of Albanians in Albania, Kosovë, and Italy. Beyond this he achieved an extraordinary mastery of a linguistic medium in permanent evolution.

His figure as a writer becomes more complex and acquires a relief which is no longer merely literary. Literature as mere repetition of a tradition no longer held any interest for him. Instead he waged a battle for the renewal of literary culture in the Albanian archipelago by

means of his editorials, book reviews, forewords, and his monographs in the pages of the *Shejzat* journal.

To what extent has his labor borne fruit?

Koliqi seems to have instantaneously come into possession of the concept of Pan-Albanian culture. Yet he pursued it to his death. It was inevitable that he came to be "understood" by the cultural and literary circles in Albania and elsewhere. This acceptance of his ideas is perhaps the vindication of his long struggle, and at the same time it does honor to the contemporary Albanian literati.



Ernest Koliqi (right) enjoying the company of the faculty and staff of Santa Clara University at a 1973 reception in his honor.

Shejzat (Les Pleiades)

The associates and friends of the late Ernest Koliqi published the last issue of *Shejzat* (Les Pleiades) in 1978. The commemorative volume was devoted to the life and work of the professor. In about 400 well-illustrated pages, the issue included selections of Albanian literature and history in four languages. It can be obtained for \$30 (postpaid) through our Center or by writing: Dr. Petro Vuçani, Via Piave 80/Ins. 12, 00187 Rome, Italy.

In Memoriam

Rev. Gaspër Gjini, S.T.D. (1930-1985)

Following a brief illness Father Gasper Gjini died on March 7, 1985 in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. At the time of his death, Gjini was the pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Skopje, the birthplace of Mother Teresa.

Father Gjini was born on September 24, 1930 in the Albanian city of Ferizaj in the province of Kosova, presently under Yugoslav jurisdiction. After completing grammar school in his native town, he studied at the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodra, Albania. He then undertook theological studies in Dakovo, Croatia, and was ordained on February 2, 1955. Gjini was immediately named Secretary to Bishop Smiljan Cekada of Skopje. He was later sent to study Canon Law in Rome, where he received a doctoral degree in Canon Law in 1969 (*Summa Cum Laude*). His dissertation: "The Juridical and Historical Origins of the Diocese of Skopje through the Centuries" is soon to be published.

From 1969, Father Gjini had a number of responsible appointments, among which were: Chancellor of the Skopje Diocese, Consultor, President of the Diocesan Court, and member of the editorial staff of *Drita* (the only Albanian Catholic monthly in Yugoslavia). He also held a professorship at the newly established seminary in Skopje. His *Drita* column — "Kosova in the Past" — remains an enlightening source of information on this region's early Albanian origins.

Father Gjini's activities were not confined to his pastoral appointments but included, as well, the authoring of several devotional works — his most noted, *Shujta Shpirtnore* (*Spiritual Nourishment*). He took the gospel to heart, helping the needy and sick wherever he was. Father assisted



Fr. Gaspër Gjini (second left) in the company of his former teacher, the late Fr. Pjetër Palladini, S.J. (center) in Rome, 1968, with other Albanian seminarians.

Mother Teresa in the establishment of her order, the Daughters of Charity, in Skopje.

Father Gaspër Gjini devoted his entire life to Christ and the service of his Church. His love for the Albanian people was evidenced at his funeral with the attendance of two bishops, 40 priests, 120 religious and over 500 lay people (including Moslems).

We were privileged to have been close to Father since our seminary days of 1941 in Shkodra up to his untimely death. His passing is a great loss not only to his family and to us, personally, but to his diocese and many friends as well.

Rev. Lush Lazri (1955-1985)

With the death of Father Lush Lazri on May 4, 1985, the Albanian diocese of Skopje-Prizren in Kosovë suffered another loss of its much needed clergy.



Fr. Gaspër Gjini (left) in the company of our Center's director (center) and editor (right), Rome, 1968.

Father Lazri was born in the village of Zllokuqan in Kosovë in 1955. He was the third member of his family to study for the priesthood. He completed grade school studies in Zllokuqan and then entered the minor seminary in Subotica, near Belgrade. At the seminary, he was noted for his simplicity and singleness of heart. His theological studies were undertaken at the renowned School of Theology in Sarajevo.

Father Lazri was ordained in 1981 and shortly thereafter appointed chaplain in the parish of Bishtazhin, near the historical town of Prizren. Here, his pastoral concern and virtue endeared him to his parishioners and to all who came in contact with him.

The concelebrated Mass of Resurrection and funeral rights were led by Bishop Joakim Herbut and the homily given by Msgr. Nikollë Mini. Eleven concelebrants joined in his Mass of Resurrection, along with many religious and parishioners. It was a real manifestation of faith and love for the young Father Lazri, who had dedicated his brief life to God in the service of the Albanian people.

Father Lush Lazri is missed by all who knew him.

**Father Damiano Como
(1923-1985)**

Albanians in Italy and elsewhere were shocked by the sudden death of Father Damiano Como. He was an outstanding Arbëresh clergyman and editor of the journal, *Oriente Cristiano*. Father died on November 27, 1985.

Father Como was born in Mezzoiuso on December 3, 1923. He completed his studies at the Arbëresh seminary in Palermo, later entering the Angelicum in Rome. Here, he graduated with a degree in Philosophy and Theology. On March 20, 1949, Father Damiano was ordained in the Arbëresh church of St. Athanasius in Rome. He was soon named rector of the diocesan seminary in Piana degli Albanesi and subsequently was administrator of this diocese for several years.

Father Como's ministry expanded when he became secretary for the *Oriente Cristiano*, an organization promoting Christian unity. With skill and devotion, he directed the quarterly journal of this organization for twenty-five years. In addition, he authored



Prof. Resuli during a conference in New York, 1977

numerous articles, studies, liturgical manuals and devotional books.

Throughout his priesthood, Father enthusiastically supported and worked for ongoing relations with Orthodox churches. This is evidence in a telegram from John Cardinal Willebrands, the President of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity, to the Bishop of Piana degli Albanesi on the occasion of Father's death. The Cardinal mourned Father Como's death and expressed appreciation for his work for Christian unity.

Father Damiano Como will be greatly missed by the Arbëresh faithful in Italy and by Albanians everywhere.

**Professor Namik Resuli
(1910-1985)**

We were saddened to learn of the unexpected death of Professor Namik Resuli in

September, 1985, in Turin, Italy. Although he had retired from the University of Rome, he remained active in Albanian affairs.

Professor Resuli was born in 1910 in Berat where he completed his primary education. He continued his studies in Italy and, in 1935, graduated from the University of Turin in Linguistics. Returning to his homeland he served as a professor of Albanian Language and Literature in schools in Elbasan, Tiranë, and Shkodër. From 1939 to 1950, Professor Resuli taught at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Naples, where he remained until 1975.

Upon the death of Professor Ernest Koliqi in 1975, Resuli became Director of the Institute of Albanian Studies at the University of Rome. He remained in this position until his retirement in 1981. He was intensely involved in Albanian cultural activities.

Professor Resuli was an excellent teacher

who educated scores of Albanian scholars and published numerous literary and linguistic studies. In *The Collection of Literary Works — Letteratura Universale*, published in Rome, Resuli contributed the studies "History of Literature" and "Anthology of Albanian Literature". His last work was "Grammatica Albanese" (Albanian Grammar). Professor Resuli also wrote for distinguished Albanian journals and magazines, and for a time was editor/publisher of *Shpirti-Shqiptar* (Albanian Soul).

A close friend of the Jesuit Father Zef Valentini, Resuli converted to Catholicism taking the baptismal name of Michael.

The death of Professor Resuli leaves the number of Albanian scholars impoverished. His presence will be missed by the entire Albanian community. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife, Terezina, and to his many relatives and friends in Albania and in exile.

Ismail Verlaci
(1917-1985)

Following a long illness Dr. Ismail Verlaci died in Rome on March 22, 1985. Verlaci was born on the Isle of Corfu on June 15, 1917. His primary education was completed in Albania. Further studies and a degree in law followed at the University of Rome.

Verlaci was particularly active in Albanian Post World War II politics while in exile. He headed the (Albanian) National Independent Party from its beginnings in 1946 until his death.

His funeral in Rome was attended by many relatives and friends. Our condolences are extended to his wife, Odinea, and relatives.

Rrok Maloki
(1895-1985)

The distinguished public servant, Rrok Maloki, died in Brussels, Belgium on August 3, 1985. Maloki was born to a noble family in Prizren on May 9, 1895, when Kosova was still part of Albania. He received a degree in Business Administration from the University of Rome. In April, 1925 he married Tusha Brahimi in the city of Bari.



Rrok Maloki

For many years Maloki held the position of First Secretary of Albania's Foreign Ministry. He was highly esteemed for his competence and service. Following the war, he — along with thousands of others — fled Albania. After spending some time in Italy's refugee camps, Maloki moved to Paris before settling in Brussels. His wife and daughter managed to flee Albania in the 1950s.

During his exile Maloki was known for his untiring efforts to unite Albanians and to help those in need. Often he presided at various national gatherings, such as the dedication of the Skanderbeg Monument in Brussels in 1969 and the dedication of the Skanderbeg Square in Paris in 1980.

Rrok Maloki is missed by his family and all Albanians, especially those to whom he was both a "father and counsellor."

Col. Dayrell Oakley-Hill
(1898-1985)

Colonel Dayrell Oakley-Hill died in London in November, 1985. He was the last survivor of a remarkable group of British officers who organized the Albanian police force in the 1920s under the direction of General Percy.

During his long stay in Albania he became fluent in the national language. He served with dedication and pride. Impressed by Albania's spectacular scenery, Colonel Oakley-Hill initiated the first

tourist organization in the country.

Among Albanians in Kosovë, Oakley-Hill organized the resistance movement against the Nazi-Fascist occupiers. He was later captured by the Germans and held as a prisoner of war. Following the war he led the UNRRA mission in Tiranë to facilitate relief aid in devastated Albania. He was chosen chairman of the Anglo-Albanian Association which supports Albanian independence and territorial integrity.

The *Times of London* wrote that Colonel Oakley-Hill's "experience and the warmth of his temperament enabled him to give crucial help to exiles and refugees in their various problems of survival. . . . Those who regarded him with deep affection will mourn his passing."

Lin Shkreli
(1918-1985)

The death of Lin Shkreli on November 24, 1985 has saddened his family and many friends. Shkreli was born in Shkodër in August, 1918 to a pious Catholic family. He completed his primary education there and later studied medicine at the University of Rome. The outbreak of World War II prevented his return to Albania and he remained in Rome.

Shkreli was beloved by the Albanian colony in Rome for his kindness and simplicity. His funeral was held in Rome on November 26. The Mass of Resurrection offered by Albanian Father Injac Perolli, was attended by a large gathering of Albanians and Italian friends. In his homily Father Perolli referred to Shkreli's virtuous life as being a "fine example of a Christian man."

Lin Shkreli will be missed by many, including the staff of our Center. His consistent letters of encouragement through the years have been greatly appreciated by us. We extend our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Bardhyl Pogoni
(1926-1985)

Albanians of the diaspora lost another dedicated scholar with the untimely death of Professor Bardhyl Pogoni on October 24, 1985.

Pogoni was born in Tiranë on January 31,

1926. There he completed his primary education, then studied at schools in Austria, Italy and the United States. He earned a doctoral degree in Comparative Languages from the University of Indiana. For a while Pogoni taught languages at Western Kentucky University, and was later named Dean of the School of English Language and Literature at the University of Tripoli, Libya. In 1975, Pogoni became a professor of Albanian language and literature at the Institute of Oriental Studies in the University of Naples.

In addition to his reputation for multilingual scholarship Pogoni was also respected as a poet and writer. Although his first poems were published in Albania, he was more widely recognized for his translation of Albanian poetry into English. His English version of *Contemporary Albanian Poems* comprised the best selections of five distinguished Albanian poets. As a devout Moslem Bectashi, he translated the writing of Venerable Baba Rexhepi in *The Mysti-*

cism of Islam and Bectashism. (This work was reviewed in our last issue.)

Professor Bardhyl Pogoni is sorely missed by his family, friends and academic colleagues.

**Prof. Dr. Hans Joachim Kissling
(1902-1985)**

**Prof. Dr. George Stadmüller
(1901-1985)**

We were saddened by the death of these two esteemed German scholars, Hans Joachim Kissling and George Stadmüller of the University of Munich, in 1985. Both professors were highly respected for their contributions to and research on Albanian language and history.

They participated in numerous international seminars and symposia on Albanian studies. They were close collaborators and members of the editorial board of Ernest Koliqi's Roman journal *Shejzat* (Le Plejades).



Prof. George Stadmüller



TO THE CHURCH OF ALBANIA

*Your flag
Waves in the shade,
Church of Albania:
While your sons
Wander in exile!
Your Sanctuary resists the tempest,
As your Martyrs
Resist in the Faith.
Thus you grow
In the heart of the afflicted,
Who hope for heaven
In the shadow of the one Cross!
Worthily You are
The noble standard-bearer,
Mother of Heroes
Church of Albania,
Prisoner
Of the silence which inspires!*

L.A. Comendulli

Nji Manifestim Ndërkombtar për Kujtimin e Dëshmorve Fetarë Shqiptarë

**Përkujtimi I Dyzet-Vjetorit Të Persekutimit Fetar Në Shqipni
(1944-1984)**

**Kisha E Shën Injacit, Universiteti I San Franciskos, Kalifornia
13-14 Prill, 1985**

Në dhjetorin e vjetit 1983 Qendra Katolike Shqiptare e Informimit në Santa Klara të Kalifornisë, bashkëngjitur me revistën e saj (Buletini Katolik Shqiptar) t'atij vjetit, i pat dërgue çdo lexuesi edhe një fletë paralajmuese grishëse për të marrë pjesë, në frymën ekumenike, në përkujtimin e dëshmorve fetarë shqiptarë, të cilët deri në fitimin suprem të jetës së tyre u përpoqën me mprojtje të drejtat e tyre të ligjëshme që komunizmi ua mohoi qysh nga dita që mori fuqinë në dorë më 1984. Si dihet botënisht, komunistat erdhën tue e shtue sistematikisht shtypjen mbi të gjithë popullin shqiptar që s'e pëlqente iden e tyre, e veçanësisht mbi klerin, të cilin e zhdukën fizikisht, dhe ma në fund, me kushtetutën e re të vjetit 1976, e shpallën Shqipnin zyrtarisht të parin shtet atheist në botë.

Në këtë retrospekt gjenocidi fetar të pashembull në historinë e njerzimit, Qendra Katolike Shqiptare në Santa Klara e ndjeu si detyrë fetare, kombtare e humanitare t'i përvishet punës së pari me ftesën e përmendun ma nalt, dhe mandej t'u epte me mish e shpirt për realizimin e mbajtjes së premtimit: shërbimin e shtypjen e programit, ftesat e veçanta autoriteteve fetare e civile n'Europë, Amerikë e gjetiu; letërshtëmbimin e sqarimet e pambanume, thirrjet për ndihmë e solidaritet, thirrje për pjesëmarrje aktive në program, koordinimin ndërmjet dy instituteve universitare të Santa Klarës e San Franciskos, pregaditjen e korit universitar kishtar në hymnet kombtare e fetare në gjuhën shqipe, caktimin e detyrave të veçanta gjithë pjesëmarrësve aktivë, pregaditjen e robeve fetare për meshtarët koncelebrues me simbolet e motot tradicionale shqiptare, si dhe të flamujve shqiptarë e të kombeve të robnueme europiane, përkujdesjen e shpenzimeve t'udhtimit të klerikëve që erdhën nga larg, të bufes për të gjithë të pranishmit, të darkes së nderit etj.

Tue veshtrurë praninë e ma se 500 pjesëmarrësve, shumica e të cilve ishin të huej, manifestimi nuer përmbasa solidariteti ndërkombtar. Madje ky ishte qëllimi kryesuer i Përkujtimit: që t'i bahej botës së huej e dëjtun se çka ka ndodhë e po ndodh në Shqipnin tonë të vogël e t'izolueme qëllimisht në kuptimin e te drejtave gjithnjëzore, si edhe me gfarë fryme pajtuese kristjane po përpiqemi t'i sherojmë plagët e randa kombtare.

Manifestimi ishte nda më dysh: I. Programi Civil dhe Shërbesa Fetare Ekumenike dhe II. Mesha Solemne e Paqës dhe e Pajtitimit.

Qysh të premten n'orën 3 mbas dreke flamuri i Shteteve të Bashkueme t'Amerikës dhe ai i Shqipnis u valvitën mbi ndërtesën administrative "Campion Hall" t'Universitetit të San Franciskos.

Të shunden me 13 Prill, ditën e ceremonive kryesore, nga orët e para të mëngjezit, shqiptarët e arbëreshët e ardhun nga lindja, juga e veria i SHBA filluen me u grumbullue në kampin e Universitetit për t'u shmallue me njani tjetrin. Me ket rast një malsuer i Shqipnis së Veriut tha: "Pa dëjtë se si ka me shkue ceremonia, vetëm për ket takim e shmallim vllaznuer me njani tjetrin e me klerikë tanë ja ka vjeftë barra qiran me ardhë në San Francisco. E pranejna, sak, Zoti s'e ka thanë që feja ka marua në zemrën e shqiptarit, se Ai vetë ka ba qi t'mlidhna ktu!"

Programi Civil

Pikërisht n'orën 12, mbasi kongregacioni me programin e ilustruem në dorë zuni vendet e caktueme në kishën e madhnueshme të Shën Injacit, filloi procesjoni solemni i primë nga kortezhi i përfqasuesve që mbajshin flamujt e Shteteve të Bashkueme t'Amerikës, të Shqipnis, Bullgaris, Kroacis, Çekosllovakis, Estonis, Hungaris, Latvis, Lituanis, Polinis, Rumanis e t'Ukrainës. Mbas këtyne hynë dinjitarët pjesëmarrës, të cilët zunë vendet e nderit para lterit që ishte i stolisun me një cohë të kuqe për skajesh me tufa të prarueme. Në midis të cohës ishte shkruar me shkronja t'arta në formë kryqi motoja tradicionale e katolikëve shqiptarë "PER FE, ATDHE E PERPARIM", mu ashtu si e ban me gjelozi edhe syprina e Buletinit Katolik Shqiptar. Platforma e mikrofonit ishte po ashtu e stolisun me një cohë të kuqe, në të cilën ishin shkruar me germa të zeza fjalët: "LIRI FES N'SHIQIPNI".

Së pari u ekzekutuen Hymni kombtar i SHBA dhe ai i Shqipnis "Rreth Flamurit" nga Kori Universitar i Kishës së Shën Injacit, drejtue nga Z. Matthew Walsh. Veçanësisht ekzekutimi i hymnit shqiptar u ndezi zemrat bashkatdhetarve tonë që mbetën tepër të mallëngjyem.

Mbledhjen e hapi Koordinatori i Përkujtimit, Z. Gjoni Sinishtja i cili i ftoi të pranishmit të luteshin në heshtje për një moment në shej zije e përkujtimi për të gjithë ata që dhanë jetën për t'u ndejë besnik idealeve të shejta të fes, drejtesisë e liris. Ai mandej paraqiti drejtuesin e Programit Civil, Arbëreshin e mirënjohun, Dr. John Cardino. Ky e filloi fjalën e tij me mysterin providencjal të rastit tue thanë: "Ndërsa na ktu sot jemi mbledhë me përkujtue martyrët fetarë të popullit shqiptar në frymën ekumenike, po në këte moment qeverija e Shqipnis

asht tue u pregaditë për ceremonin e vorrimit të Sekretarit të Parë të Partisë Komuniste të Shqipërisë, Enver Hoxhës, i cili ka drejtue e urdhnuar eliminimin e këtyre klerikeve. Mandej ai bani sintezen e kalverit të popullit shqiptar nën komunizëm në përgjithësi e të klerit veçanësisht. Ndër tjera ai tha se qeveria shqiptare nuk e ka mbajtur sekret zhdukjen e fes e të klerit, mu përkundrazi e ka sanksionuar botësisht me kushtetutën e re shtetnore tue e shpallë Shqipërinë të parin shtet ateist në botë. Dr. Cardino e drejtoi Programin Civil me dinjitet dhe u pëlqye së tepërmi për dokumentimet, qartësinë e përpikërinë e tij.

Mandej ai paraqiti poetin e mirënjohun jesuit të Universitetit të Santa Klarës, At James Torrens-in, i cili recitoi anglisht e me mjeshtri të pashoqe "Lutjen e Dëshpërimeve" të Ernesti Koliqit tue lanë shtang kongregacionin.

Me rradhë mandej iu dha fjala të Perndritëshmit Donald C. Foree, S.J., Prefekt i Kishës së Shën Injacit, i cili i dha mirëseardhjen kongregacionit në emër të Universitetit të San Franciskos. Ai theksoi se e ka pasë për nderë që i është dhënë rasi të solidarizohet me kauzën e martirve klerikë të Shqipërisë dhe të marrë pjesë në mbarrështimin e programit me personelin e tij.

Për Qendrën Katolike Shqiptare të Informimit e dha mirëseardhjen drejtori i saj shpirtnuer, At Leo G. Neal, OFM.Conv., i Santa Klarës, i cili, gadi tash dy dekada i është kushtue me shpirt çastjes kombtare shqiptare. Tue përshkruar historikun e Qendrës që kryeson, At Leo theksoi me gjithë fuqinë e shqiptarit të tij se kjo shoqatë është krijuar nga ideja dhe puna e pakputun flijuese të Koordinatorit të këtij Përkujtimi, Gjon Sinishtës.

At Andrea Nargaj OFM, përfaqësues i emnuar nga Superiori i Përgjithëshëm i Urdhrit Françeskan Hirësisë e Tij John Vaughn, OFM prej Rome, foli shqip gjatë e gjatë e me mallëngjim mbi vujtjet e vllazënve klerikë të Shqipërisë, e posaçërisht të klerit katolik. Ai e mbylli fjalën e tij me një citim të rrënjëthshëm të At Gjergj Fishtës mbi martirët e kombit.

Dr. Cardino lexoi mandej mesazhin e Presidentit të Shteteve të Bashkueme të Amerikës, Ronald Regan-it, që u prit me kënaqësi të jashtëzakonshme për solidaritetin e shqiptarëve të tij. Në fund të mesazhit Presidenti amerikan shprehte bindjen e tij të thellë se forca fizike nuk ka mjetë kurrë me të thyjë iden e lirisë e të fesë.

Z. Jakob Margosian-i, përfaqësuesi personal i Shkelqesit të Tij George Deukmejian, Governor i Kalifornisë, lexoi mandej mesazhin e guvernorit. Z. Margosian-i foli edhe nga ana e tij tue theksue se si guvernori, ashtu edhe ai vetë kanë përjetue persekutime të ngjashme me ato të shqiptarëve, për të cilët kanë dhimsunë që po vucjnë tash 40 vjet. Ashtu për t'u shprehur se zakonisht në këso rasash zyrtarët e natës qeveritare largohen mbas leximit të mesazhit, por si duket këtij zotni bular i hyni shumë në zemër çastja shqiptare dhe qindroi jo vetëm gjatë gjithë ceremonisë kryesore të së shtundes, por pranoi të vinte edhe në pritje dhe ma në fund edhe në darkën e nderit. Kështu ai pat rast të bisedonte me shumë shqiptarë e të miqasohet me ta. Merret me mend se si mesazhi i guvernorit, ashtu edhe shprehjet pikëluese të Z. Margosian-it kanë përshlyer të fortë ndër shqiptarë.

Prijsja e Arbëreshëve të Kalifornisë, Zoja Ann Sclafani-Meridier, e prejardhun nga familja bujare e kohës së Skanderbegut, Muzakaj, foli me përballim e lot ndër sy mbi vujtjet dhe exodin e Arbëreshëve për në Itali dhe në Shtete të Bashkueme të Amerikës tue e krahasue fatin e tyre me atë të mërgimtarëve të tashëm të vllazënve shqiptarë.

Folësi kryesues i Programit Civil që Profesor Dr. George Lerski, përfaqësues i Asembles së Kombeve të Robnueme të Europës dhe të Kongresit Kombtar Polak-Amerikan. Fjala e tij çoi peshë zemrat e gjithë të pranishëmëve. Ai i vuni në thumb Aleatët Prendimorë për pranimin qorras të verdikteve të Teheranit e të Jaltës që i lanë kombet e vogla të Europës Lindore nën këthetrat gjithëherë të përgjakuna të bashkimit Sovjetik. Ai e shtjelloi imtas temën se edhe kombet e vogla kanë dhanë njerëz të mëdha, si p. sh. Shqipëria Skanderbegut dhe se në kohën e sotshme çmimin e paqes e ka marrë shqiptarja Nana Tereze dhe Leh Valenca i Polonisë, edhe ky nga kombet e vogla. Dr. Lerski përmendi edhe njani nga poetët ma të mirë të Shqipërisë, Dom Ndre Mjaden si student të Universitetit të Krakovës, ku ka studjue e dhanë mësim edhe Papa i sotshëm, Gjon Pali II.

Dr. George Morton-i, Drejtor i Përgjithëshëm i Organizatës "Kisha e Vucjtun" (Në SHBA) foli gjatë e me hollësi për Kishën e persekutimeve të Shqipërisë e martirët e saj.

Pjesë të mesazheve solidarizuese e urimtare nga Kryetari i Komitetit "Shqipëria e Lire" në New York Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi nga "Shoqata Nderkombtare për të Drejtat e Njeriut" prej Gjermanisë, nga Madhëria e Saj, Mbretëresha Geraldinëë, si dhe emnat e atyne që nuk muejtën me ardhë, por që dërguen telegrame e letra përurimi e inkurajimi, u lexuen nga Prof. Zef V. Nekaj simbas kësaj radhe: Ndihmës Sekretari i Shtetit, Elliot Abrams, Kongresistja Sala Burton, Senatorët Jesse Helms dhe Edward Kennedy, shkrimtari i famshëm rus në mërgim Aleksander Solzhenjicin, Ipeshkvi arbëresh nga Piana e Shqiptarëve në Siqili, Irakli Lupinacë, Msgr. Eleuterio Fortino, prelati arbëresh, zyrtar i natës në Vatikan, Z. Pierre de Villemarest, Sekretar i Përgjithëshëm i organizatës nderkombtare CIPRO me ndejë në Paris, Mbreti i shqiptarëve Leka i I; Z. Harry Stoja, Kryetar i Federatës Pan-Shqiptare të Amerikës, VATRA; Z. Xhevat Kallajxhiu, editor i *Diellit*; profesorat Martin Camaj e Arshi Pipa, gazetarë e autorë; Z. Anton Logoreci, Adem Hodo, Lec Shllaku, Petro Vuçani; Z. Skender Zogu, atashe i shtypit i Oborrit Mbretnuer nga Parisi, Z. Durak Duraku i Shoqatës Kulturore Shqiptare "Iliria" në Bruksel e shumë të tjerë.

Sherbesa Ekumenike Fetare

Zotni Donald Banasi, njani nga aktivistët e flakët të Qendrës Katolike Shqiptare në Santa Klara, drejtoi Sherbesën Ekumenike Fetare, e cila filloi me ekzekutimin e hymnit të njoftun fetar "Gjithë njerëzit që jetojnë mbi dhë" nga kori universitar. Ky hymn u përcuell nga i gjithë populli.

N'emër të Komunitetit Musliman në Shtetet e Bashkueme të Amerikës foli i Perndritëshmi Imam Vehbi Ismaili tue iu përmbajte me besnikë frymës ekumenike dhe tue citue nga Kurani pikat e përbashkta e të ngjajshme ndërmjet muslimanizmit e krishtenimit. Ai theksoi

se të gjitha fenat gjinden sot në kampin e improjtjes nga komunizmi. Persekutimin e hatashëm fetar në Shqipëri ai e vuri karshi solidaritetit ekumenik t' emigrantëve shqiptarë, sidomos këtu në SHBA, ku të trija fenat kanë ndihmë njana tjetrën në ndërtimin e faltoreve të tyre s' prej fillimit të këtij shekulli e kënde. Për dëshmorët tanë, tue citue librat e shejtë, ai tha se ata janë gjallë, por na nuk i shofim. Fjala e tij u duetrotkitë me entusjasëm të papëmbajtur nga kongregacioni, gja tepër e rrallë në kishat katolike.

Mbas Imam Vehbiut, At Michael Ukrainiec i ritit bizantin, edhe ky bashkepuntuer i ngushtë i Qendrës Katolike në Santa Klara, shpjegoi arsyen sepse përfaqësuesi i Komunitetit Orthodox Shqiptar nuk muji me ardhë. At Ukraineci lexoi mandej mesazhin që Kancelari i Kryediocëzës Orthodoxe Shqiptare n' Amerikë, I perndritëshmi At Arthur E. Liolin kishte dërgue me rastin e këtij Përkujtimi.

Në mungesë të Monsinior Zef Oroshit, themeluesit të kishës së parë katolike shqiptare në SHBA "Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë", të cilit iu desht të bante operacion synin (për çka e urojmë të gjithë që doli me sukses), të pranishmit i përshnderi shqip i Përndritëshmi Dom Prenk Ndrevasaj n' emen të Komunitetit Katolik Shqiptar në SHBA. Ky, si dëshmitar i gjallë i persekutimit fetar në Shqipëri, trajtoi me elokucencë të rullë e pa lehtë epizodin tragjik të martirve të fesë në vendin tonë të shumvuejtun. Fjalën e tij oratorike e mbylli me urimin që paqa, liria dhe feja të lejohen përsëri n' atdheun tonë të vuejtun pa urrejtje e hakmarrje.

Folësi i fundit i Sherbesës Ekumenike Fetare, që Themeluesi e Kryetari i Misjonit Kristjan "Open Doors" (Hapni Dyert) nga Hollanda, Brother Andrew. Ky, me imtësi psikologjiko fetare e burime të dorës së parë raportoi për mënyrën se si besimtarët shqiptarë e praktikojnë në heshnje besimin e tyre. Brother Andrew u përmallue aq tepër gjatë fjalës së tij sa mbërriti me thanë se mbas këndimit të hymnit të flamurit tonë, e ndieji vedin shqiptar. Si dihet Misjoni i tij shumë aktiv dëshron me zemër këthimin e të drejtave fetare në Shqipëri. Edhe Brother Andrew u duetrotkitë nxehtësisht.

Mandej At Peter Marinkovi-qi, përfaqësues i Superiorit të Përgjithëshem t' Urdhnit Francëskan Konventjonal nga Roma At Lanfranco M. Serrini, OFM.Conv., lexoi në fund pjesë të mesazheve e letrave t' urimit e solidarisis t' ayne që s' mujtën me ardhë, ndër të cilët Nana jonë Tereze, Hirërsija e Tij, Baba Rexhepi, Shoqata Ndërkombtare për Mprojtjen e të Drejtave Fetare nga Gjeneva, Misjoni Kristjan nga Danimarka si dhe nga një 20 kardinaj e ipeshkvij amerikanë.

Mesha Solemne e Paqës

Mbasi muetën fund këto dy programe, Koordinuesi i Përkujtimit njoftoi të pranishmit për fillimin e ceremonis kryesore — Meshës Solemne të Paqës e të Pajtitimit, Procesjoni Liturgjik, në shej solidariteti për murgeshat e persekutueme në Shqipëri, u pri nga 12 motra t' urdhnave të ndryshëm me qira të ndezun dhe u ndoq nga Abati i ritit bizantin, Boniface Luykx dhe ma tepër se 30 koncelebruesat tjerë.

Kryecelebruesi i Liturgjis Shejte që Shkelqësija e Tij, Ipeshkvi Daniel E. Walsh, D.D., Ndhimës i Argjipeshkvit të San Franciskos. Ipeshkvi Walsh përfaqësoi gjithashtu edhe Konferencën Katolike Ipeshkvnore të Shteteve të Bashkueme t' Amerikes nga Washingtoni.

Predikimin e Meshës e bëri i Përndritëshmi At Jak Gardini, S.J. i cili ka kalue 10 vjet nëpër burgjet e kampet e punës së detyrueshme të Shqipëris. At Gardini ishte emnue të përfaqësoi Gjeneralin e Jezuitve nga Roma At Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. Predikimi i tij e rrëqethi publikun me përshkrimin e martirizimit të viktimave që i hudhëshin andej e kënde nëpër gropat e hurdhës pa shej, pa dukë. At Gardini e paralajmëoi publikun shqiptar të cilit i foli me një shqipe të kulluet shkodrancë, se çdo qeveri e ardhëshme në Shqipëri nuk do dhe nuk duhet të bazohet në përdorimin e forcës e të dhunës, në qoftë se do paqë e vllaznim, mbasi mentaliteti i popullit atje ka ndryshue rrënjësisht, dhe se metodat e vjetra të qeverimit do të hudhen poshtë nga brezat e ri.

Predikimi i At Gardinit i përkthyeu anglisht u lexue me elokucencë nga i Përndritëshmi At William J. Wood, S.J., Sekretar i Përgjithëshem i Konferencës së Ipeshkviye të Kalifornis, të cilët i përfaqësoi edhe në ceremonit tjera të këtij Përkujtimi.

Mbas predikimit e lutjeve, At Daniel Germann, S.J., Drejtor i Departamentit Fetar t' Universitetit të Santa Klarës, mirëdashës e përkrabës i Qendrës Katolike Shqiptare, shpjegoi pjesët e ndryshme të meshës për jo katolikët dhe paraqiti pjesëmarrësit në procesjonin e dhuratave. Rëndimi i paraqitjes që një provë tjetër e gjallë ekumenizmi midis fenave tona, shqiptarëve e arbëreshëve.

Procesjonit i priu i Përndritëshmi Imam Vehbiu, i cili i dorëzoi Ipeshkvit Listen Përgamenë të Dëshmorëve klerikë shqiptarë, të mbështjellun në flamurin tonë kombtar.

Dom Prenk Ndrevasaj — Kryqin e Librin e Uratëve të nxjerrun nga Shqipëria prej refugjatëve shqiptarë:

Nji vajzë e nji zojë shqiptare — tuba drandofilleshe;

Nji arbëresh — fugurën e Zojës së Këshillit të Mirë;

Nji zojë nga Shqipëria e nji zojë arbëreshe — hostet e venën dhe

Z. Vashel Doda, i veshun me kostum kombtar — Programin e Përkujtimit t' ilustruem me shije artistike.

Mbas kungimit, At Peter Fleming-u, S.J., i Universitetit të San Franciskos lexoi me afsh përshkrimin e martirizimit të Dom Dedë Maçajt, pushkatue me 1946; kurse At Leo Neal lexoi pjesë të mesazhit të Kryetarit të Këshillit të Konferencave t' Ipeshkvijve Europian, Cardinalit Basil Hume nga Londra, edhe ky mirëdashës i liris së shqiptarve.

Liturgjia Shejte përfundoi me një fjalim të shkurtë t' Ipeshkvit Daniel Walsh, i cili, tue përmendë At Jak Gardinin si dëshmitar e naltsoi me forcën e fjalës së tij veçanish kontributin e klerit katolik shqiptar për lumnin e Kishës së Përgjithëshme Katolike në botë e sidomos këtu n' Amerikë. Keto fjalë t' Ipeshkvit Walsh, sidomos kur theksoi vuetjtet e At Gardinit u duetrotkitën frenetikisht.

Meshën Shejte e përcolli Korj Universitari i Kishës së Shën Injacit me këngë fetare shqipe të shkrueme e të kompozueme nga meshtarët e murenjoftun shqiptarë Dom Mikel Koliqi dhe Msgr. Zef Shestani.

Mbas celebrimit që zgjati ma se tri orë u ba prijja në Qendrën Universitare (University Center) me një bufe. Po aty u çfaqë filmi dokumentar "Prej Skanderbegut te Enver Hoxha" i shkruantarit të njoftun austriak. Professor Paul Lendvay, Drjtor i Programit për

Europën Qendrore të Radio Televizionit Austriak. Kjo që intervista e vetme që Enver Hoxha i ka ba një gazeterit të huej në shtatuer të 1984. Mandej u cfaqë po ashtu edhe filmi i studentit gjerman, Staphan Lipsius mbi Shqipërinë me rastin e vizitës së tij me 1983.

Në mbramje u shtrua darka për musafiret klerikë e laikë t'ardhun nga shtete tjera t' Amerikës në Klubin e Universitetit, e cila kaloi në një atmosferë tejet miqësore e vllaznore.

Dita e Dytë e Përkujtimit

Dytën e dytë të Përkujtimit, të dielën me 14 Prill ma se 100 shqiptarë e arbëreshë u mbledhën në Kapelën e Universitetit "Xavier Chapel" për të pa meshën në gjuhën shqipe që u tha nga të Përndritëshmit Dom Prenk Ndrevasaj, kryecelebrues, i ndihmuen nga françeskani At Andrea Nargaj dhe nga jesuiti i mirënjohun At Jak Gardini si dhe nga At Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv. Drejtorit shpirtnuer të Qendrës Katolike Shqiptare në Santa Klara. Predikimin kuptimplotë të rastit e mbajti Dom Ndrevasaj, i cili, në mes tjerash shprehi knaqësin e tij për vllaznimin që mbretnoi gjatë dy ditëve të përkujtimit pa kurfare dallimi fesh e idesh, dhe përsriti urimin që kjo frymë bashkimi e vllaznimit të lulzojë me kohë edhe në Shqipëri. Mbas meshës etnit Gardini, Nargaj dhe Leo Neal u folën të pranishemve për të njaftën frymë vllaznimit, paqe e lirije. Asht për t' u shënue me theksim të veçante se si gjatë ceremonis kryesore të së shtundes, ashtu edhe të së dielës asnjani nga folsit e predikuesit fetar jo vetëm që nuk banë thirrje për përdorimin e forcës e t' ahmarjes a t' urrejtjes, por as nuk aluduen n' at drejtim. Mu përkundrazi ata keshilluen për pajtim kristjan, e madje u lutën edhe për ata, nga drejtimi e duerët e të cilëve ranë dëshmorët që u përkujtuen.

Mbas mbaruen së foluri klerikët, Dom Ndrevasaj e ftoi publikun me thanë ndonji fjalë. Atëhere Z. Prenk Gruda u çue e foli shkurt mbi randësin e kuptimin e Përkujtimit që shprehet me moton "PER FE, ATDHË e PERPARIM". Ai preku edhe nevojen e solidaritetit ndërmjet shqiptarve tue pru si shembull të shkelqyeshem këto dy ditë përkujtimi.

Mbas meshës të gjithë u mbledhën në Sallën Accolti (Accolti Room) të kampit universitar për një drekë të lehtë. Zojat e nderueme Lule Bushati e Roza Derani kishin sjellë edhe gjellna shqiptare si byrek, laknor, bakllava e tjera që u pelqyen jashtzakonisht edhe nga arbëreshët dhe gazetarët e huej.

Mbasdreke u mucrën shum fotografi në grupe të ndryshme për me i pasë kujtim. Disave nuk u bahej të dabeshin nga njani tjetri, thuese nuk do të shifeshin ma. Pa pikë dyshimi ky Përkujtim krijoi një bashkim vllaznuer që përjetohet rrallë, qoftë n' atdhe, qoftë në mërgim.

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Mund të thuhet se jehona e këtij Përkujtimi u perhap si valët e ujit e të zanit. Shtypi lokal e Katholik amerikan si "National Catholic Register" që del në ma se 100.000, kopje botuen lajme e komente mbi kete manifestim të paharrueshëm solidariteti nderkombtar. Në ceremonit e dy ditëve erdhën raportues të gazetave të San Franciskos "Examiner" dhe "Foghorn", t' Oaklandit "The Catholic Voice", të Los Angeles-it "National Catholic Register", të San Jose-s "The Valley Catholic", të përkohëshmes ruse në gjuhën anglishte "Samizdat"; kurse Z. Dan Wooding nga Anglija, Drejtor i Agjensis Misjonare të lajmeve "Open Doors" mori n' intervistë të gjithë klerikët shqiptarë. Prej shqiptarve që: Editori i gazetës "Atdheu", Z. Zef Pashko Deda, nga New York-u; Z. Gjokë Gjolekaj i "Zani t' Amerikës" nga Washingtoni; Zz. Julian Qefa e Kolec Pikolini nga Emisjonet shqiptare të radiove të Detroitit.

Jemi të bindun se Përkujtimi la përshtypje të thellë mallëngjimi të papërshtueshëm. Dinjiteti i martirve fetarë imponoi një atmosferë paqeje, qetesije, nderimi e mendimi të thelluem ke të gjithë, e ceremonit u zhvilluen me përpikëni lakmuese. Duhet shtue këtu se ceremonit kanë qenë të hapuna për mbarë publikun vendas, prej të cilit shpeshherë dalin grenza; por këso here shqiptarët perkujtuesë patën fat, Me të gjithë ata që biseduem shprehen fjalë miratimi, urimi e perlavdimi, sidomos për koordinuesin, Z. Gjon Sinishtën.

Këtu poshtë po shenojmë disa përgjegje nga përshtypjet e pjesëmarrësëve në Përkujtim:

Ndihmës-Argjipeskvi i San Franciskos, Daniel Walsh: "Kemi nxanë shum nga ju shqiptarët."

At Nargaj: "Manifestim ma kuptimplotë se kete s ka pasë ndër emigrantat shqiptarë."

Z. Vito Parizi, arbëresh nga Sacramento: "Asht e para herë që kam pa se si rroth shqiptarëve mund të bashkohen kombet e hueja."

Një gazetar nga San Francisco: "S'bahet ma mirë!"

Një profesor matematike nga Shkodra si me mahi: "Me kenë që martirët zbrësin sa me na pa, kur të këthehen do ti marrin organizuesit e këtij përkujtimi përkrahësh e për kambësh e drejt e në Paris pa Pritë ditën e gjyqit. . . ."

Një emigrant hamirës: "Do zoti ti shofim prift e Hoxhë krah për krah në kishë e xhamij e në rrugë edhe në Shqipëri si këto dy ditë këtu në San Francisco."

Me Rastin E 40 Vjetorit Të Martirizimit Të Klerit Shqiptar

At Andrea Nargaj, O.F.M.

Jemi mbledhun sot, këtu në qytetin e Shën Françeskut për të përkujtue dishmorët e Klerit Shqiptar, që 40 vjetë ma parë, dhanë jetën për t' u ndejtë besnikë idealeve të nalta të Fës, të Liris e t' Atdhedashtnis.

Asht e përshtatshme që të mbledhemi në ket qytet që mban emnin e Shejtit të Dashtnis e të faljes, shejtit të mirsis e të paqës, që ka zbutë deri bishët e egra, si thotë gojdhana.

Na jemi mbledhë këtu në një shpirt dashtnuiet, vllaznimit e falje.

Shpresojmë se anmiqët tonë kanë me na lejuë me kja mbi vorret e herojve tonë, pa salue të dashtunit tonë në Shqypni.

Ky përkujtim i Dishmorve të Fës asht njikohsisht një rasë vajtimi e gëzimi për mbarë Popullin Shqiptar.

Na qajmë për bjerrjen e pazavendsueshme të bijve ma të mirë të Shqypnis, por në të njëjtën kohë e ndiejmë vedin kryenaltë tue mendue se dishmorët që perkujtomjē sot, janë vllaznit e motrat tona, të një gjaku e të një atdheu, që me një heroizëm të pakufi dhanë jetën për t'u ndejtë besnikë ligjeve të Fës e të Kombit, të Drejtis e të Liris, të Besës e të Burmis Shqyptare, të Nderës e të Dinjitetit njerzuer.

Nji popull që asht i zotë me dhanë heroj të tillë ka të drejtë me qenë kryenaltë dhe kurr mos me e humbë shpresën për një ardhmen ma të lumtun. Prandej gzohehi që jemi të hijt e herojve; vllaznit e motrat e tyne.

Por njëkohsisht trishtohemi kur mendojmë se si i njëjtë popull ka prodhuë një grup të vogël fanatikësh, që ka shkelë traditat e besës e të burmis shqyptare, si dhe ndjenjat ma të shejta njerzore, dhe me pushkë, shpatë e konop ka zhdukë hijt ma të mirë të Shqypnis.

Na sot, të mbledhun në dashni e vllaznim, nuk duem me ushqye hujt të vjetra e me shtue të reja: por n'anë tjetër, dielli me shoshë nuk mbulohe. Të tana ujnāt e botës nuk mund t'i lajnë duert e pergjakuna me gjakun e pafaj të djelmive ma të mirë të Shqypnis. Prandej, na nga këtu u bajmë një thirrje kundershhtarve tonë, n'emën të ndjenjave e të drejtave njerzore, të nderës e burmis Shqyptare, që të ndalojnë salvimet fetare e politike, që t'i lirojnë të gjithë ata që janë tue vuejte ndër burgje, vetëm pse kanë dashtë me u ndejtë besnikë idealeve të nalta të Fës e të Liris.

Le t'i çilin kishat e xhamit e të lejojnë lirin e ndërgjegjes e të besimit, të drejta themelore të mjerit, të njoftuna prej mbare botës së qytetnueme e të nenshkrueme në ket qytet.

Mbledhja jonë sot këtu në Shën Françisko asht një dishmi se si idealet e vllaznimit njerzuer dhe të besimit në Perendin mund të bashkojnë njerzit rrymash të ndryshme fetare e politike. E po të mujshin me na folë sot herojt e Fës e t'Atdheut, pa dyshim do të na kshillojshin me harrue të fyemët, me pasë besim në njani tjetrin, me zhdukë egoizmin verbues e me u flijue për njani tjetrin.

Çka kje ata që i bani kta njerz, mishit e gjakut tonë, me u naltue në një līvel aq të ndritun të virtytit e heroizmit? Kje besimi ndaj Perendis, kje dashnija për njerzim e Atdhe, për drejtsi e liri.

Vllazën të dashtun!

Historija e salvimeve fetare asht historija e shpresave të kota të njerzve fanatikë e të kufizuem dhe të qorruem mendsisht. Asht kerkesa absurde me ba shin me ra përpjetë e me ndërtue një konop me ranë. Ata që salvojnë fën, bjerrin nderimin e vedit, të njerzimit e të natyres. Kush salvon Fën ka trathtue njerzimin e vetvedin, sepse natyra njerzore, nuk mund të shndrrohet nga themelet e veta. Si thotë poeti Latin Horaci: "Natyra edhe po kje se qitet jashta deret, hyn për dritsorjet". Njerzimi ringjallet e përtrihet: arsyeja edhe pse e tretun, rishtas e gjen rrugën. E mira, heret o vonë, triumfon mbi të keqën. E si thotë Shën Augustini: "Të gjitha të kqijat nuk vijnë me damtue". Kurse populli ynë i rryem arsyeton kështu me durim e besini të ngulun: "Sa ma zi e ban rob, aq e ma mirë e ban Zoti". Nuk duhet të harrojmë edhe se ne çdo fitim të padrejtë mshefet një bjerrje e ardhme, dhe se kush pshtyn hyjt, pshtyn vedin.

Vllazën të dashtun!

Historija e Fës na difton se Herodat, Pilatat, Neronat do të kalojnë si kalon duhija, shtergata, zjarmi, lufta, mordja; por e mira, e drejta, pafajnija, paqa e linja triumfojnë mbi botë. Do të harrohen tiranat e veprat e tyne, por Shqyptarët e mbarë njerzimi do t'i kujtojnë herojt tonë deri në mbarim të shekujve. Me vdekjen e tyne ata kanë shkapercye kufijt e kombit e të gjakut e janë ba pronë e mbarë njerzimit. Prandej mund të thomi se anmiqët e martirve tonë janë ba anmiqët e vertetë të Shqypnis, të popullit e të mbarë njerzimit. Ata shndrisin mbi kët botë si hyjt në një natë të terrshme dhe i diftojnë njerzimit rrugën e pshtimit.

Kujtimi i tyne do të frymzojë breznit e reja kah veprat e mira e të mbara.

Mbi vorret e tyne ende nuk naltohen përmendore të ruadndueshme mermeri, por mbarë bota asht monumenti i tyne, dhe emnat e tyne janë të shkruem ndër zemrat e gjith Shqyphtarve të mirë. Qiella vetë asht arku triumfal i tyne. Kujtimi i tyne shkapercen kufijt e atdheut e mbririn deri në Amerikën bujare, nanën e të salvuemve fetarë e politike. prapina jonë këtu në qytetin e Shën Françeskut e forcon kët dishmi.

Vllazën të dashtun!

Le të bahemi të dejë për gjakun e dishmorve, të derdhun në fushën e nderës për të na sigurue lirin e ardheshme për Fë e Atdhe, si dhe një ardhmen ma të mirë për mbarë kombin Shqyphtar.

Le ta ndigjojmë zanin e tyne që prej vorreve të tretuna ndër katër anët e Shqypnis na thret:

"Na kemi vdekë për ju, e ju çka jeni tue ba për ne?"

Le të përulemi me nderim përpara kujtimit të tyne e t'i ndjekim ndër vepra të mira e heroike.

O toke e Shqypnis, mos rando mbi ta, sepse sa ata qenë gjallë nuk randuen mbi ty.

*... "O ata të lumt, qī dhane jetën
O ata të lumt, qī shkrine vetën,
Qī për Fë e vend të parve
Qī për erz e nderë të shqiptarve
Derdhne gjakun tuej luftue
Por si të part u pa'n punue!
Lët u kjoft mbi vorr ledina
Būt u kjošin moti e stina
Aklll e bora e serotina,
E der të kndojë në mal ndoj zanë
E der të kët në dēt uj e ranë
Dersa të shndrisin diell e hanë*

*Ata kurr mos u harrojshin
Në kangë e në valle por u këndojshin."*

At Gjergj Fishta

Dom Prenk Ndrevašhaj

I Perndritshmi Dom Prenk Ndrevašhaj, Përfaqësues i Katolikëve Shqiptarë në Amerikë, i përshndeti të pranishmit me këto fjalë:

Të ndritshmit Fetarë, Të nderueshmit vllazën e motra të gjithë sa jeni në shërbim të Zotit!

Une jam një ndër dishmitarët e martyrëve që derdhen gjakun e pafajshëm në vendin tonë në Shqipëri, por un nuk jam i vetmi dishmitar, sepse bash këtu në këtë komunitet ka edhe shumë tjerë si un, e shumica tjetër janë të shpërndamë an' e kand nepër botë. Në lidhje me martyrët po më bjen ndër mend fjala e një shkrimtari e historiani të famshëm, Tartuliani, i cili thotë: "Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum" (Gjaku i martyrëve asht fara e Krishtenimit). Të njajtën gja na mundemi me e thanë për të gjitha fenat. Gjaku i martyrëve asht fara e liris, fara e fës e lulzimi i fës.

Nji tjetër shkrimtar i famshëm, Manzoni, të cilit ndoshta ia kanë ndie zanin shumë vetë prej këtij kongregacioni, thotë: "Zoti kurr nuk ua turbullon gazmendin bijve të vet, veçse për t'u dhanë nji tjetër gazmend ma të dobishëm e ma të përhershëm." Prandëj na kemi gjithmonë nji uzdaqë që Zoti nuk do të na lëshojë dorë pse na të gjithë sa jemi, jemi të bjtë Tenzot, kemi nji Zot të vetëm e të gjithë jemi vllazën.

Jezu Krishti, Zotuesi ynë, thotë: "Kudo që të jenë të lidhun n'emën tem dy vetë e përpjetë, un kam për të kenë ta". E na sot këtu në këtë kongregacion jemi shumë ma tepër të lidhun n'emën të Tij e n'emën të Zotit, që asht Baba i të gjithëve, t'Atit të gjithpushtetshëm, me e lutë Zotin për ata që nuk kanë paqë as liri, me e lutë Zotin për në tjerët që jemi rrugash tash sa e sa vjet në mërgim, me e lutë Zotin për ata, të cilëve u renkon zemra gjithherë për atdheun e tyne e për njerzit që vuenë n'atdhe.

Prandëj thirrja eme sot asht kjo: N'emën të Zotit tonë, dmth, t'Atit të gjithpushtetshëm, Atij i drejtohem i të gjithë, e n'emën të Jezu Krishtit për të gjithë ata besimtarë në përgjithësi, n'emën të tanë birnimit që kemi në Tenzonë, të lusim Zotin për Shqipëri që atje të jetë paqa, të jetë liria dhe të jetë drejtësia, që edhe njiterë t'i epet fuqi fës për të lulzue e për t'i pri popullit tonë kah rruga e Tenzot, kah shtiqet e liris dhe kah drejtësia e përhershme. Kjo asht lutja eme, e po u thom edhe të gjithëve (se për ne Katolikët tash asht koha e Pashkëve), atyne që janë n'atdhe e vuenë, e ju që jeni present, si dhe gjithë Shqiptarëve kudo që janë: *Pax Vobis!* Paqa kjoftë me ju!

**Predku i At Jak Gardin, S.J., në Kishen e Shen Injacit
Universiteti i San Franciskos
E Shtunde, 13 Prill, 1985**

Vllazën e motra,

Po lypj të falun në se jam i detyruem me u shprehë me nji gjuhë, të cilën vetëm nji pakicë ndër ju ndoshta e sundon krejtësisht. Koritem sak tue çfaqë para jush padijenin teme të gjuhës anglishte, që sot bota mbarë, të thuesh, e zotnon.

Sidoqoftë, me nji rasë si kjo e tashmja, që thret e bashkon Shqiptarë prej gjith anësh me përkujtue ndodhjet e lumtueshme dhe tragjike të vendit të vet fisnik e të Kishës së tij amtare, nuk më duket e pa vend ta perdoroj gjuhën shqype e ta shtërngoj me hi mbrenda nji symfonije që don me i dhanë lumni e nderim popullit shqiptar e zakoneve të tija epike. Sa do të dëshirojshem me u hapë anë e m'anë në zhvillimin e këtij horizonti! Por nuk e len as koha as liturgjia fetare.

Vetë e dini se ndër shekuj të kaluëm, kleri diocezan shqiptar e fretënit françeskanë, krah për krah, shumë mundë kanë derdhë e gjak për me e mbajtë të gjallë fën e trashigueme prej të parëve. Dini edhe se prej vjetit 1841, edhe Shoqnia e Jezuitve kje pranë me veprimtarin e vet në tokën shqiptare dhe vazhdoi deri në vjetin 1945, kur shperthet e furishme stuhija e salvimit fetar e shkatërroi vepra, shperndau persona e nisi me u derdhë gjaku e me u kuqë prej si toka shqiptare.

Për këtë pjesëmarrje të Shoqnis së Jezuitve në fatin e Shqipëris, për djersë e gjak që derdhen edhe Jezuitët në tokën shqiptare, sot, në këtë Kuvend, si përfaqësues i veçantë i tyne, do t' ishte pranë At Gjenerali i Jezuitve Peter Hans Kolvenbach. Pranija e fjala e tij do t'i epte sak randësi e lulzim këtij Përkujtimi. Në vend të tij, përkundra, qe se po gjindem vetë! Kjeg, po, edhe unë, në rradhën e atyne që kanë ra fl i për Fë e Atdhe; veçse, unë ma në fund, si profeta Gjona, fukaraja, kjeçë vjedhë në bregun e liris, mësa shokët e mij meshtarë, rregulltarë e civila shuinë në dorë kunorën e martyrizimit.

Ky, në të vërtetë kje fati që më caktoi Perendija! Me gjasë nuk ishem i gatëshem, nuk ishem i dëj, ndoshta, me derdhë edhe unë gjakun tem për të njajtat ideale. Si duket, ishte kenë shkru me mbetë gjallë për me u gjerë këtu, sot, në mes jush, dishmi e prekëshme që kallxon, bile bertet në kupë të qiellës, mundimet që hoq popullit shqiptar në këto katërdhetë vjetë të kalueme, mundime që gjithënji vazhdon me hjekë.

Pranija e fjala e jeme këtu, prandëj, tregon kjahtë se sa shumë iu desht bashkatdhetarve me pague për t'u vu në gjendje me ecë drejt rrugës që çon atmen kah kulmi i përparimit të vërtetë.

Nuk më perket mue me dhanë këshilla e porosina; veç kishte me kenë gabim trashanik, bile ironi, e ma në fund iluzion, në kjoftë se Shqiptarvet, kudo të jenë të shpërndamë nepër botë, t'iu mbushte mendja se kombi mund të çohet prap në kambë e të ndërtohet, tue vu në themel regjime a mentalitete egoistike, liberale, defrimtare, totalitare, që perdorojnë gënjeshtren si vegël të zakonëshme të sundimit, që

s' duen marreveshje e bashkupim e, ma në fund, nuk duen me u kapë për pënin e besimit fetar që e merr njerin për doret e nuk e len me u tretë.

Organizuesat e këtij Përkujtimi me kohë më patën lajmruar se më tokote mue me përgatitë tjalimin e rastit për tu mbajtë mbrenda kësaj liturgjie. Për ma tepër, me kërkuen që përmbajtja e tij t'ishin kujtimet e burgimit tem! Kanë dashtë, sigurisht, me vu në dukje personin tim si dëshmitar autentik të fakteve. Edhë për këtë lau di për nderë. Mirpo, nuk e shof me vend me përzitë fakte personale me liturgjin shejte.

E njimend, na këtu, ma parë, përkujtojmë një dramë fetare, në të cilën rrolin e parë e lot një pjesë e vogël, në daçi, e Kishës së Krishtit, në Shqipni. E përmendim kalvarin e saj plot vajë e plot gjak; kalvar që vazhdon qysh prej katërdhetë vjetësh e më; kalvar që, me qellim e plot të drejtë kujtohet e përtrihet këtu, tash, në këtë Meshë shejte, bashkë me mysterin eukaristik, që asht shëj e realitet i flijës që Krishti i kushtoi Perendis për me e pajtue me njerzimin.

Tashti, mue më duket e pahijshme që në një kontekst kaq të madhnueshëm të spikas personat jeme e vogël e parandësi. Athue asht e bukur që unë të flas tue naltue vedin e mos t'i përmendi ata që, me mue e ma tepër se unë, hoqën mundime e hekra, ù e et, që duruen të shame e mizorina dhe i bajtën me burri e dinitel të naltë, të thuesh, me kreni: katundari e malcori, puntori i fjeshtë e profesionisti, njeri me dituni e njeri pa shkollë, prifti e ipeshkvi!

Pa tjetër do t'ishite kenë një padrejtësi po të kishëm folë vetëm për veti se kje; në kampet e punës e të çfrosjes të Vloqishtit, të Maliqit, të Bedemit e njëti, se atje na ngarkojshin me një barrë pune pa të mëshire, e se kah fundi i nandorit na këthejshin ndër burgje të mbaruem fare prej unit e mundit. Po më duhet, pra, me vu në dukje se brigjet e kënetat e Shqipnis, të famstume për malarje, kjenë tha e ha tokë e pjellëshme me mundin e të burgosunve.

Ju po më shifni shndosh e mirë para jush! Po a s' do të kishte kenë marre për mue po ti kishem harrue shokët, që n'ato fusha mbaruen jetën, e shokë tjerë, që mbas pushtkatimit i rrokullisën, si stërvina, në gropa, njerin mbi tjetrin, pa asnjë shej fetar, pa asnjë lule sa me dijë ku me shkue me u lutë e me vajtue për ta? Kështu mbaruen ipeshkvijt Vinçenz Prendushi, Frano Gjini, Gjergj Volaj, po kështu edhe meshtarët diocezan Shantoja e Zadeja, Tracki e Sirdani, Gazulli e Çuni; po kështu françeskanët Nikaj e Harapi, e Mati Prendushi, po kështu Jezuitët Fausti e Dajani, Pantalija e Lufi, Karma e Berisha! Në të njëjtën mënyrë mbaruen edhe pjestarët e Kishës Orthodokse e të Komunitetit Musliman.

Qe, njëkjoh asht histori e vertetë! Ngjarjet e mija humbin e zhdukën karshi dramit të këtyne katërdhetë vjetve, dramit që nuk u mbyll endë, por shkon tue shtue faqe të reja pa kurfarë ngushllimi.

Edhe pak e Liturgjia shejte rishtas merr zhvillimin e vet eukaristik. Si sot, ashtu ndër kohnat e kalueme, e sidomos të katakombeve mysteret e fës u kryheshin mbi rrasat e vorreve që ruejshin eshtnat e të vramëve per të. Zakon i bukur e plot veshtrim. E njimend, flijimi që kreu Krishti në Kryqe për rilindjen e njerzimit u përtrite aty mbi ato rrasa, aty u përzinte me gjakun e martyrëve, të thuesh, për të pohue se shëlbimi vjen prej të dy palëve, e se vuetjet e Krishtit plotsohen me mundimet e ndjeksave të tij.

Në të njëjtën kohë, atyne që merrshin pjesë n'at akt fetar iu epte me kuptue se i krishteni e tregon identitetin e vet jo vetëm me fjalë e për sy e faqe, por tue flijue vetvedin për të mirën e vllazënve, e, po t'ishite nevoja, tue derdhë edhe gjakun.

Fjala eme po i afrohet fundit. Kujtimi i përmatlshëm i fakteve të Shqipnis ma ka mbush shpirtin e më bahet edhe mue, si Shen Gjonit në Apokalips, se po shof rrasën e lterit të kesaj kishë tue u zgjanue e tue marrë trajtat e tokës shqiptare; më bahet se po shof nën rrasë ftyrat e atyne që i kam njoftë e që mandej kanë dhanë jetën për fën e vet e po i ndiej kah bërtasin: "Deri kur, o Zot, që ji i drejtë e i shejtë, po vonon pa e marrë hakun e gjakut tonë?" E një zâ kah u pergjegj: "Sabër e durim, edhe pak sa të mbushet, ma parë numri i vllazënve tuej!" A keni ndie? Sabër... m'u mësue me pritë! E deri kur? deri sa të bjerë sahati i Perendis. Ai i ka në dorë ndodhjet e kohës që tjetrin historin e kombeve...

Të kemi duresë! Ta shtijmë në mend këte porosi, ta ruejmë këte përgjegje! Asht zâ që nuk u siellet gjithaq atyne që tashma janë në lumni, por në, ma parë, që jemi të gjallë, në njëherë që jemi sot këtu, të bashkuem me përkujtue, me trishtim po, por edhe me kreni, para Zotit, viktimat e salyimit. Në, që me sa sjellim nepër mend e me shpirt faktet që e kane çue Shqipnin në këte hall, ndiejmë, ndoshta, se po na vlon gjaku në trup e androjmë urretje, gjak, hakmarrje! Jo kështu, na bertasin martyrët e na këshillojnë mendime t'urta, falje, kuvend ndertues, uzdajë, sidomos në ndihmen e Perendis. Do t'i vëhemi punës, por në paqë e vllaznim. Kështu do të ndertohet e ardhmja e vendit tonë, madje e botës nbarë.

Shekulli jonë, ndonse i lamë me gjakun e Krishtit, mjerisht prirret me kapë shtigjet e dhunimit, të gjakut, të rrenimit, ma tepër se sa rrugën e bashkupimit e të paqës; por rrehet, të jemi të bindun se rrehet!

E dhashtë Zoti, e martyrët, që po përkujtojmë, të na ndihmojnë prej qiellit që ta kuptojmë mësimin që po na vjen prej së nalti e të ndahemi prej këtij takimi burra vullnet-mirë, burra paqe.



Kosova E Robnueme

Urre! Djelmni! Për Atdhé për liri!
Ç'janë njato fusha andej kufinit,
Tanë veshe në blerim për bukuri?
Ajo është *Kosova* e bregu i Ulqinit
Me Pejë e Shkup, Dibër, Prizren, Plavë e Gusi.

Atje s'bjën dielli, as erret nata,
Ke buk e gjak po han Shqiptari i ngratë:
Pse në votër të tij Shkjau ruen me spata,
E shqip as Zotit nuk e len me ia thanë një uratë.
Atje në Hot për të paren herë
Nji Ded'Gjo'Lul' mbëkambi Malsin,
I nxuer Shqipnis autonomin,
Tue i lanë Atdheut ma të madhen nderë.

Atje fshajnë po Hot e Grudë:
Fiset ma të para në tanë Shqipni,
Qe ball për ball me Shkja tue u ngri
Atdheut të vet mburojë i kjenë në luftë.
Tane njato troje i shklet Serbjani,
Ku qyqet kandojnë vorr në vorr një kangë për mnerë,
Shqiptarë, ju të gjallët s'keni shka e bani,
O të gjithë te lirë, o të gjithë të mbluem në një vorr për 'i herë!

A Bernardin Palaj, O.F.M.

Shenim i Editorit: At Palaj, si shumë Françeskanë tjerë shqiptarë, humbi tragjikisht jetën mbas Luftës së Dytë Botnore, viktimë e persekutimit komunist.

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- Le Christ Au Monde*, Revue Internationale D'experiences Apostoliques (Via di Propaganda 1c, 00187 Rome, Italy).
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- The Vineyard (Vreshta)*, organ of the Albanian Archdiocese, Orthodox Church in America (529 East Broadway, South Boston, Massachusetts 02127, U.S.A.).
- CNC Report*, monthly in English (Croatian National Congress, P.O. Box 3025, Arcadia, California 91006, U.S.A.).
- The Samizdat Bulletin*, in English (P.O. Box 6359, San Jose, California 95150, U.S.A.).
- Youth*, historical and cultural magazine, in Albanian and English (P.O. Box 145, 301 33 Holm, Sweden).
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- The Herald of the Emigrant*, in Albanian and English (Carlton Tower Apartments No. 20K, 285 Aycrigg Avenue, Passaic, New Jersey 07055, U.S.A.).
- Audieu*, in Albanian and English (P.O. Box 4583, L.I.C., New York, New York 11104, U.S.A.).
- Njergjegja*, quarterly in Albanian (4 Bartlett St., Peabody, Massachusetts 01960, U.S.A.).
- Dielli*, bi-weekly in Albanian and English (517 E. Broadway, South Boston, Massachusetts 02127, U.S.A.).
- The Free Albanian*, annually (150 Fifth Avenue, Rm. 832, New York, New York 10011, U.S.A.).
- 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).
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- 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, U.S.A.).
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- Hrvatska Drzava*, Croatian political periodical (Gustav-Adolfstr. 15, Postfach 711, D-8192 Geretsried 2, West Germany).
- Republika Hrvatska*, Croatian political monthly (Casilla de correo 2595, 1000 Buenos Aires, Argentina).
- Tha's "Yugoslavia"*, monthly information digest about Yugoslavia in English and Croatian (Ost-Dienst, Hudtwalckerstrasse 26, D-2000 Hamburg 60, West Germany).
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The flags of the United States and Albania flying side by side atop Camplon Hall, University of San Francisco during the 1985 anniversary observance of the martyrs of Albania. May this be a sign of hope for the beginning of a new era in relations between our countries.