

**ALBANIAN
CATHOLIC
BULLETIN**

**BULETINI
KATOLIK
SHQIPTAR**



1966 - 1986

**BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)**

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The 1986-1987 issue of our journal is primarily devoted to the 20th anniversary of the foundation of our Center. An article on the Center's activities since 1966 highlights its labors for the restoration of religious freedom in Albania. A summary of the Papal Mass and 1986 visit with Pope John Paul II by our Center's delegation is contained in this issue.

This year we also celebrate the 75th anniversary of Albania's independence, 1912-1987. In honor of this occasion we have printed the full text of Albania's independence proclamation with the facsimile signatures of the founding fathers. Included also are the verses of the Albanian national anthem *Hymn i Flamurit* (*Hymn to the Flag*). The back cover bears a map of modern Albania delineating the past and present ethnic-political boundaries.

This issue covers a broad spectrum of current religious, cultural, and political affairs on Albania and its people.

The Albanian Catholic Information Center staff sincerely thanks all of you who have assisted us with prayers, concern, and financial support during our twenty years of operation.

Ju Faleminderit e Zoti ju bekoftë! Thank you and God bless you!

**BULETINI KATOLIK
SHQIPTAR**

*Albanian Catholic
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Daveen Spencer

Editor:

Gjon Sinishta

Editorial Advisor:

Michael Kotlanger, S.J.

Contributing Editors:

Zef V. Nekaj

Barbara Kay

Daveen Spencer

Art:

Bill Christie

Printing:

The Franciscan Press

445 Willow St., San Jose, CA 95110

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

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

Letters and inquiries should be directed to:

**ALBANIAN CATHOLIC
INFORMATION CENTER**

Box 1217 University
Santa Clara, CA 95053, USA



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We are grateful for the many compliments and commendations received on the 1985 Commemorative Issue. The photo collage and contents were apparently pleasing to our readers.

The following benefactors have helped to make this joint 1986-1987 edition possible: AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED (West Germany), Otto Knösel, Brian Curdy, Edward Licho, Oswald Deva, Ton Koka, Fr. John Neiman, DUDLEY PERKINS FOUNDATION, Mary McDonald, Bishop Joseph Brunini (Jackson, Mississippi), Zef Shllaku, Bishop Basil H. Losten (Stamford, Connecticut), Gene Kortsha, Ismail Dema, Arthur and Agnes Richter, Zef V. Nekaj, Catherine Murphy, Prent Gruda, Donald Banas, Marco Koliqi, Rexhep Kumbarçe, John Cardino and Gjeko Gjonlekaj.

We are also indebted to many other individuals who sent their donations along with good wishes. May the good Lord reward all our benefactors and supporters.

* * * * *

We also wish to thank Erasmo Leiva, Sophie Cooney, RSCJ, Donald C. Foree, S.J., Carol Runge Gustafson, James Torrens, S.J., Christie Plant, Katherine Hall, Paul J. Bernadacou, S.J., and Jack Casserly for their valuable assistance in preparing this issue.

* * * * *

We apologize to our readers for several typographical mistakes and errata that appeared on pages 60 and 61 in Anton Logoreci's article: "The Legacy of a Dyed-in-the-Wool Stalinist" in our last issue. Line 7 of the last paragraph should read as follows: "The bureaucratic system of totalitarian control which has exacted this high price is Hoxha's terrible legacy to his country." We apologize for any confusion this has caused to our readers.

* * * * *



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Front Cover: Arthuro Mari

Back Cover: Bill Christie

Inside Color Photos: Arthuro Mari and Paolo Felici

AUTHORS

Xhevat Kallajxhi is a veteran Albanian journalist and former editor of the Boston-based DIELLI (The Sun). Pal Duka-Gjini is the pen name of an Albanian Franciscan priest, now residing in Rome.

Giorgio Silvestri was a medical doctor who worked in Albania. He witnessed several executions.

Mark Kolaj is an Albanian missionary priest in Brazil.

Zef Shestani is the editor of the Vatican Radio's Albanian language program.

Ernest Koliqi, the well known poet, writer and educator, contributed the testimony on Lazër Shantoja before his death in 1975.

David Storey is a reporter for Reuters News Agency.

James V. Schall, S.J., is a professor of Government at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. He is the author of several books and numerous essays on political, theological, and philosophical issues.

Eleuterio F. Fortino is a Vatican representative in the Secretariat for Christian unity and a founder of the Arbëresh Cultural Center (BESA) in Rome. He has often contributed articles to the OSSERVATORE ROMANO as well as to our BULLETIN.

Zois A. Shuttie is a contemporary Albanian artist residing in Washington, D.C. His work has been exhibited in both the United States and France. Shuttie's poem of Mother Teresa won first prize in the Albanian Catholic Monthly (DRITA) poetry contest of 1986.

Melhem M. Mobarak is a notable collector of books, lithographs and engravings on Albania. He has contributed many articles and essays to French newspapers and magazines in Lebanon, France and Canada.

Palok Plaku is an associate of our Center. The retired Albanian educator resides in Sacramento, California.

Dan Wooding is an award-winning British journalist, presently chief correspondent of the OPEN DOORS Christian Mission News Service. He is the author of 14 books and the former senior reporter of Sunday People and Sunday Mirror in England. He attended our 1985 Commemorative observance in San Francisco.

Gervase R. Beinfeld is a British educator interested in the field of Albanian history and culture.

Peter R. Priji, author and journalist, is a leading Albanian human-rights activist. He teaches at the University of California, San Diego.

John Solovik is a free-lance reporter for Norwegian newspapers. He covers eastern European affairs.

William Griffin is the book review editor of the Twin Circle Catholic American newspaper.

Brian Curdy is an American citizen residing in Switzerland. He is interested in the Albanian language and culture.

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1 the Editor

At the time of the establishment of the Albanian Catholic Information Center in 1966, not many Americans knew Albania. Even fewer clergy had any awareness of the enormous suffering and hardships that Albanian Catholics were enduring. For 20 years we have attempted to inform the public through our various activities and programs.

During this period we sponsored three Commemoration Weeks of important anniversaries. Two books and six issues of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* have been published. Scores of newsletters, press releases, articles and papers have been prepared and issued to the news media. Members and friends of the Center have participated in radio and television programs. Personal and written appeals have been sent to religious and civil leaders on behalf of those suffering from oppression in Albania.

It is gratifying to know that as a result of these efforts more and more people around the world know more about Albania and its religious crisis that they did two years ago. We are particularly pleased that our work has been carried out with an ecumenical spirit of brotherhood and understanding. A goodly number of international religious and human rights organizations have joined us in prayer and support. Despite the diversity of beliefs all our associates have united in the cause of Albanian believers. The Albanian Church has been pressured by these groups for its violation of religious rights of its citizens. This international pressure and petitioning to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva has caused that Commission to schedule hearings on Albania's violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Charter. In particular the UN Commission is concerned about the legal prohibition of the free exercise of religion. Recently two UN resolutions were passed against the government in Albania.

Twenty years the Albanian Catholic Information Center has been the only advocacy agency working full time on behalf of the persecuted Church and all those Albanians who hold to their religious beliefs. It is heartening to know that our brothers and sisters in Albania have been sustained and helped by our prayers and works to remain faithful to their faith.

Our awareness that much has been accomplished despite the odds to restore religious freedom in Albania, there is much more to be done.

We have never been funded for our work by any government organization or private agency. From our readers and friends have helped us carry out our apostolate. On this 20th anniversary of our Center, we invite you to join our apostolate by assisting in any way you

Guest Editorial

Fifth Anniversary of Kosova's "Spring of 1981"

April, 1986, marks the 5th anniversary since ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia held demonstrations in over a dozen major cities in the regions of Kosovë and Macedonia. The demonstrations, which attracted tens of thousands of students, intellectuals, workers, farmers, women and children (some 30,000 gathered on April 2, 1981 in Prishtinë alone), ended in tragedy when Yugoslavia intervened with police forces, armed troops, tanks and helicopter gunships, leaving uncounted demonstrators dead or wounded in the streets. The demonstrators had gathered peacefully to demand equal rights with other Yugoslav citizens for the more than two and a half million Albanian nationals in Kosovë, Macedonia and Montenegro.

Following the bloody suppression of the demonstrators, in the most violent political incident in postwar Yugoslavia, Belgrade authorities declared a state of emergency in the province of Kosovë, and instituted a brutal repressive policy against the Albanian population, which continues to this day! Hundreds upon hundreds of the demonstrators and their supporters and sympathizers were arrested, tried and sentenced from one to 15 years in prison.

According to Milovan Djilas, Yugoslavia has a greater number of political prisoners, in proportion to its population, than the Soviet Union. Even more shocking is the fact that 80 percent of Yugoslavia's political inmates are ethnic Albanians, although officially they make up about nine percent of the total population in the country. (See pamphlet, *That's Yugoslavia*, Hamburg, No. 12, 1986, p. 6). Since 1981, some 6,000 of them have been imprisoned for political reasons, on charges that they endangered state security and so forth. Imagine for a moment a town of 2.5 million, 6,000 of whom are incarcerated, simply because they exercised their constitutional right to express their grievances. What is the situation of the Kosovars in the Federation of Yugoslavia at present. Far different, apparently, is the situation in Hungary, Yugoslavia's communist neighbor to the north, which is reported to have no political prisoners in its jails.

Albanian nationals in Yugoslavia are treated as second class citizens. Not only are they denied full and equal rights, but they are economically hard pressed. Although their land is rich in agricultural and natural resources, their standard of living is the lowest in the Federation. They have the highest unemployment rate and the lowest per capita income of any region in Yugoslavia. Being under the thumb of Serbia, the Kosovars have never enjoyed their proper share of the province's natural wealth and the products of their own labor.

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Yugoslav officials accuse Albanians without reason, imprison them without cause, oppress them without mercy. They have tried as well to use religion as a wedge to divide them and cause friction among them. In Kosovë, Macedonia, and especially in Montenegro they have tried to turn Catholic Albanians against Moslem Albanians. Calling the latter "Turks," they say to the Catholics: "Why do you bother with the Turks of Kosovë who held you captive for over 400 years?" On the other hand, they exert pressure on Albanian Moslem women and children not to attend services in mosques, alleging that such gatherings are political in character. The organ of the Albanian Catholic Diocese in Kosovë, *Drita*, Albanian Catholic clergy, and the clergy of the Albanian Moslem community have also been targets of the Yugoslav propaganda and security agencies. Following the 1981 demonstrations, these agencies advised them to issue declarations condemning the demonstrations. The tactic did not succeed. The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* in the United States, which has watched developments in Kosovë closely and reported them regularly to the public, deserves to be commended for this service.

The rights belonging to ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia cannot be denied to them indefinitely, regardless of the measures taken against them. On the contrary, the harsher the

measures, the more resolutely they shall struggle for their cause. The leaders in Belgrade should realize that it is to Yugoslavia's interest to resolve the problem in Kosovë peacefully. Let them examine the problem in a realistic and pragmatic manner, and part ways with chauvinistic elements that are bent on holding Albanian nationals captive. Must we remind them that we are living in the Twentieth Century? It is time they recognize the right of Albanians to have their own Republic of Kosovë, and to live under its wing as a compact ethnic group, comprised of all the Albanians who are presently divided artificially among the three republics of Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Otherwise, Kosovë shall continue to be—as the English journalist Peter Goodwin said—the "powder keg" of Yugoslavia.

As we mark the 5th anniversary of the 1981 demonstrations in Kosovë, we are confident that Albanians the world over will remember with deep respect those who lost their lives in the demonstrations, as well as those who are at this moment suffering in the prisons of Yugoslavia, because of their involvement in the demonstrations. They are all heroes of a just cause which is bound to triumph, sooner or later.

Washington, D.C.

Xhevat Kallajxhi



A photo of a peaceful student and workers' 1981 demonstration in Prishtinë (capital of Kosovë), which was turned into a blood bath. Hundreds were killed and thousands were wounded by the machine guns of the Yugoslav police and army.

U.S. Congress Hears Representative DioGuardi's Resolution on Kosovë

A hearing on the situation of 2.5 million Albanians living in Yugoslavia took place before the U.S. House of Representatives on July 15, 1987. Congressman Joseph DioGuardi (New York) introduced a resolution: "Condemning the repression of ethnic Albanians by the Government of the Socialist Federated Republic of Yugoslavia." "House Concurrent Resolution 162," was co-sponsored by 56 other members of the House.

We are pleased to print the full text of Representative DioGuardi's resolution below.

* * *

Whereas there are more than two million ethnic Albanians living within the borders of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;

Whereas ethnic Albanians constitute one of the largest ethnic groups within Yugoslavia;

Whereas there are reports that several hundred ethnic Albanians have been killed in communal violence and the Government's effort to control it;

Whereas there is evidence that several thousand more have been arrested by the Yugoslav Government for expressing their views in a non-violent manner;

Whereas most political prisoners within Yugoslavia are ethnic Albanians;

Whereas many of those arrested have been sentenced to harsh terms of imprisonment ranging from one to fifteen years;

Whereas many ethnic Albanians have been denied access to full economic opportunities because of alleged "Albanian nationalist" activities;

Whereas Amnesty International, a respected international human rights organization, has published allegations of torture and assassination of ethnic Albanians in exile by the Yugoslav secret police;

Whereas the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a signatory to the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, known as the Helsinki Final Act;

Whereas one of the provisions of the Act states that "the participating States on whose territory national minorities exist will respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before the law, will afford them full

opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and will, in this manner, protect the legitimate interests in this sphere;" and

Whereas the Government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has failed to protect fully the rights of ethnic Albanians, in accordance with its obligation under the Act: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress —

(1) is deeply concerned over the political and economic conditions of ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia and over the failure of the Yugoslav Government to fully protect their political and economic rights;

(2) urges the Government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to act so as to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms as expressed in the Helsinki Final Act and the Concluding Document of the Madrid CSCE Follow-Up Meeting are respected in regard to persons from all national and ethnic groups in Yugoslavia;

(3) calls upon the Government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to review in a humanitarian spirit the cases of all ethnic Albanians currently imprisoned on political charges and to release all of those who have not used or advocated violence;

(4) requests the President of the United States to direct the Department of State to convey the contents of this resolution to the appropriate representatives of the Government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.



Yugoslavia with its present administrative composition.

Fortieth Anniversary of Martyrdom

Designated To Die

The Martyrdom of Father Gjon Shllaku, O.F.M.

I vividly remember the sad events that occurred in early 1946. They concluded the initial period in a campaign aimed at the complete annihilation of the Church in Albania. Every outward expression of Christian faith that empowered and inspired Albanians for centuries was to be buried. The Franciscan order could not avoid this ongoing tragedy. The campaign often resembled "the fiery oven of a new Nebuchadnezzar" (Dan. 3, 19), yet many times more severe than in past Ottoman occupation. For centuries the Franciscan fathers were pioneers of faith and culture. They served as teachers of letters and acted as faithful patriotic guardians of that hearth where the Albanian race drew the fire of life and flame of the gospel.

Catholic Albania from the 13th century has been identified with the Sons of Assisi. The well-known Albanian literary scholar, Father Zef Valentini, S.J., has rightfully remarked that: "The fate of the Albanian nation follows more or less in these dark centuries of our history the fate of the Franciscan fathers and vice versa."

In 1946, directives from Moscow and Belgrade ordered that the Franciscan portion of Albania's past was to be erased. The communists targeted the Franciscans because they were torch bearers of ancient traditions and the genuine representatives of the volcanic Albanian spirit.¹

The first alarming signal of this highly detailed campaign was the sentencing and execution of Father Anton Harapi, the revered promoter of the Franciscan order's spiritual legacy in Albania. The agents of Tito and Stalin planned to use the vengeful civil war fighters and the armed bands of Hoxha and Shehu to deal a final blow to all religious institutions. The tactic in their perfidious mission was to destroy the leaders of the Christian community first because the complete structure would then collapse of itself. After decimating the clergy, the government planned to close all support facilities and then outlaw any popular activity which did not conform to Marxist ideals. Thus, the Catholic schools and printing houses were closed, Catholic teachers were silenced in all places. Finally the government declared that traditional family and religious values were no longer relevant.

Pretexts were needed to achieve these goals. It did not matter whether the governments charges were true or fabricated to cloud the people's ability to distinguish the truth from lies or innocence from guilt.

The first victims in this diabolical, anti-religious initiative were, of course, the Jesuits. In their hands were a number of religious works, but most importantly the formation and training of the diocesan clergy of Albania. The majority of

Jesuits in Albania were Italian by birth, thus the enemies of the Church easily represented the Jesuits as fascist collaborators and Vatican agents to the Albanian Moslem majority. Since the Italian Fascist occupation (1939-1943) was still fresh in the minds of the people, such accusations inflamed the populace against the Jesuits.

Following revelations of a "reactionary," "terrorist" organization in the Jesuit-run Pontifical Seminary, the government arrested the Jesuit provincial, Gjon Fausti, and Seminary rector, Daniel Dajani, along with a number of seminarians. Jesuit schools were closed and the government confiscated the order's missions, cultural institutions, and other properties. Indeed, this *coup de grace* ended more than a century of Jesuit activity in Albania.

The anti-Catholic campaign soon targeted our Franciscan fathers, all of whom were Albanians by birth. Although our college, novitiate, and schools continued to operate, the government control over these institutions as well as our convents and parishes was so intense that we fully expected the immediate suppression of our order.

I recall the deep-rooted fear that overcame all of us. In particular the sense of impending doom of Father Gjon Shllaku was imprinted forever in my mind. He never ceased to say, "Now is my turn, but unfortunately I am not the first nor the last. Let us pray so that God will give us strength and courage to face the martyrdom."

Rumors of "a purge" had reached our community through some old friends who at that time were members of the communist party. They reported that Father Gjon Shllaku was first on a list of those who would be executed.

A relative of Enver Hoxha's interpreter was a former student at our college and a personal friend of Father Shllaku. He reported that when Hoxha received the Yugoslav ambassador shortly after the execution of Father Harapi, he remarked:

"See, we killed Father Anton Harapi, and with him surely we have gravely wounded the Catholic clergy."

The unimpressed ambassador retorted that:

"You still have Father Gjon Shllaku who counts for more than ten Franciscans like Father Harapi. You must eliminate Shllaku and completely destroy the nest of the Catholic clergy with the Franciscans at the head."

Although Father Gjon became fully aware of the situation, he remained strong.

Father Gjon Shllaku was an ordinary Franciscan priest with a great soul. He was rather medium in size, and humble in appearance. Shllaku wore glasses but they never hid the liveliness of his eyes which reflected his pure soul.



Fr. Gjon Shllaku, O.F.M.

intelligence, and strong will. A mere glance by Shllaku could penetrate into the subconscious of his interlocutor. Although sociable in every environment and with any rank of person, he always safeguarded the dignity of his priesthood. He knew by heart the modern philosophers and the works of renowned Italian, French and German authors of time. He could discuss any subject or literary work with the educated urbanite or the illiterate villager. Shllaku's very close friend, Dr. Filip Shiroka² was always amazed by the priest's erudition.

In April 1940 a delegation of scholars came from Italy³ to help establish the Academy of Albanian Studies. Since Father Gjergj Fishta, academician of Italy, was absent, Father Shllaku was assigned to host the delegation. The group visited the Franciscan museum and library and was very impressed. In recognition of the multiple Franciscan contributions to Albanian culture and education, the Italian delegation requested a list of books and works that the Franciscans would like to add to their library. Father Shllaku prepared the list and forwarded it to Rome. Italian officials were amazed to read the contents of the list. Regrettably they were unable to supply many of the titles. Father Shllaku has such a highly developed taste in literature that even Rome could not satisfy his cultural needs.

Gjon Shllaku was born in Shkodër on July 27, 1907. His parents, Loro and Maria Ashta, christened their child Nicholas. At a young age he was enrolled in the Franciscan primary school. Later in secondary school Shllaku distinguished himself by exemplary conduct and exceptional aptitude. On October 4, 1922, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, he entered the Franciscan order as a postulant in the novitiate of Troshan near Shkodër. After a year he pronounced his first vows, taking the name of John after St. John the Baptist. Five years later in 1928 Shllaku came to Shkodër where he took his final vows. Following studies in philosophy he was sent abroad for further education. Upon completion of theology studies in Holland, he was ordained in 1931. The same year he went to Louvain to finish his

studies in science, history and philosophy. In 1936 he received his doctoral degree in philosophy *summa cum laude* and immediately returned to the Shkodër college. Father soon distinguished himself as a competent professor. Besides philosophy he taught French and Literature courses. He was assigned to moderate the Anthonian Youth Organization of college students, alumni, and youth of Shkodër.

The fascist occupation in 1939 found him busy in his duties. The cream of Shkodër's youth around Father Shllaku were joined by professors, writers, actors, artists, employees and workers. Shkodra was transformed into an Athenian forum of culture, led by the young Franciscan from Louvain. Shllaku exerted a great influence on the youth not only in religious matters but also in pure cultural and patriotic ideas. He believed in the Albanian Catholic motto: *Fe e Atdhë* (Faith and Fatherland).⁴

When the Fascist troops occupied Albania in 1939 Father Shllaku, because of his political sentiments was forced to leave the country and seek shelter in Yugoslavia. After a year in exile he returned home to devote his time to the spiritual and cultural advancement of youth. Although he never accepted foreign occupation, injustice and exploitation, Shllaku strongly opposed the war and acts of vengeance and violence. Always coherent with Christian social principles, he worked quietly in defense of basic human rights. Throughout this troubled period his followers increased.

Shllaku stood firm defending Christian values when Marxist-Communist agitators spread materialistic ideas throughout the homeland. Through a series of talks and conferences held at the Franciscan church of Gjuhadoli, Shllaku discoursed on the mortal danger which materialistic propaganda efforts would render upon Albania. Shllaku had a very clear vision of the danger which threatened Albania. All the public conferences were followed by open-ended discussions. Although he gladly accepted criticism and objections, he never undervalued opposing opinions nor compromised the truth. He was not an orator in the traditional sense of that day, yet Shllaku regularly preached at the Masses and at St. Anthony's Tuesday devotions. He was always a powerful psychologist, a clear, outspoken theologian and sociologist. These qualities drew audiences that listened to and followed his admonitions.

Heir to the Franciscan Legacy

Father Shllaku distinguished himself as a man of letters. His few writings in learned journals and periodicals were masterpieces. It was as editor of the prestigious Franciscan journal, *Hyll i Dritës* (Morning Star) that Shllaku had his greatest impact. He gathered the best writers, poets and scholars from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Under his direction *Hyll i Dritës* acquired a level of excellence in treating the contemporary issues of everyday life in fascist controlled Albania. Until the end he remained

faithful to the journal's motto: "Ubi Spiritus Domini, Ibi Libertas"—Where it is the spirit of the Lord, there is freedom—(2 Cor. 3. 17).

Recognition of Shllaku's extremely fruitful work as editor and educator came when Father Gjergj Fishta, the poet laureate of Albania, summoned him to his deathbed in 1940 to charge him with safeguarding the Albanian Franciscan Province, the journal *Hylli i Dritës*, and the interests of the Albanian people during that turbulent period. Shllaku kept this covenant until his death.

The Martyr

Shllaku was arrested by the *Sigurimi* (Albanian Secret Police) in January 1946. From that moment on, Father's classrooms became tribunals of intrigue, investigation and torture.

When the faculty assembled that day in our conference room between class recesses, nothing else could be heard but the whisper, "Father Gjon is gone." All the teachers and students knew what was in store for Shllaku at the hands of the Secret Police. We were deeply saddened, terrified and speechless. Franciscans who lost the best leader of our Province felt impoverished, helpless, leaderless.

In jail Shllaku joined the Jesuit seminarians and lay persons accused of belonging to the imaginary anti-government organization *Bashkimi Shqiptar* (Albanian Union).

Despite the pretense of an investigation process, all these victims had been pre-sentenced by the Communist party. Cruel torture and inhumane treatment forced the detainees to admit what they never dreamed of. Of course, no one was allowed to visit or communicate with them.

A public trial soon took place before the People's Tribunal. The Communist controlled media tried to influence the public by presenting the accused as enemies of the people. Father Shllaku was charged as the ringleader of the Albanian Union. His alleged lieutenants were the Jesuit fathers Fausti and Dajani and the seminarian Mark Çuni was charged as secretary.

Private defense lawyers were permitted only as a gesture of formality to give the tribunal an appearance of legality for foreign propaganda purposes. Musafer Pipa was selected to defend Shllaku. The courageous lawyer was a graduate of the Franciscan college.⁵ Pipa treasured his association with his former professors. He greatly admired Shllaku's uncompromising stand during the fascist occupation and recognized the priest's valuable contribution to preserving Albania's freedom.

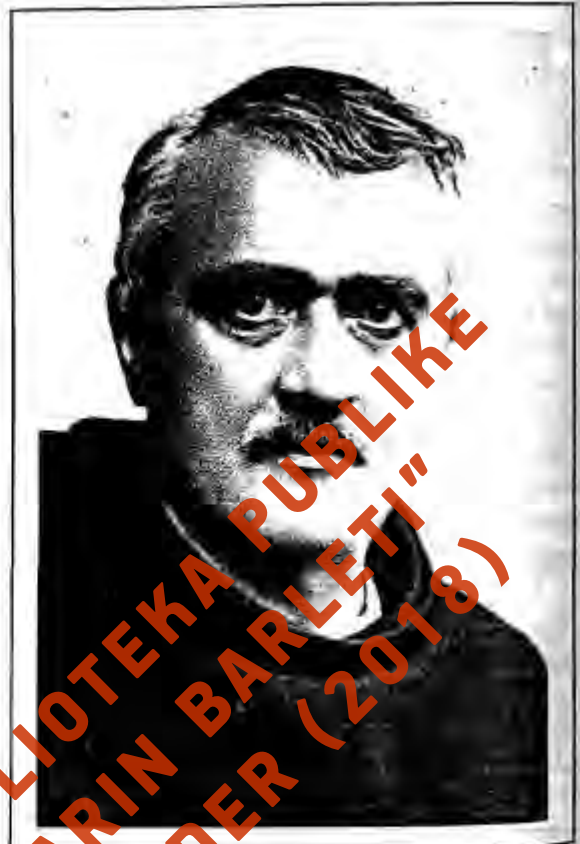
I visited Pipa's office and asked him to undertake our confrere's defense. He cautioned, "What can a lawyer do where there is no law or justice? How can I defend a man who is already sentenced in advance before his guilt is proven?" Knowing that this would eventually cost him his own life,

Pipa nevertheless accepted.

When the Court opened its sessions, we were able to see Shllaku at a distance. Day after day we watched the procession of the chained prisoners move slowly through the streets from the prison building to the Courtroom with Father Shllaku at the head. Beside the police guards the procession was usually escorted by organized groups of communist youth who shouted: *Plumb ballit! Vdekje klerit! Plumb ballit! Vdekje klerit!* (Bullet to the head! Death to the clergy!)

Shllaku's slow, unsure gait made it clear that he was very tired and had lost much strength. He appeared as if he was recovering from a long illness. I could see a fresh wound on his forehead. His glasses hardly hung on his nose. He hung his head low as if lost in thought, not caring what was happening around him.

Each day in the courtroom a selected audience composed mainly of Party members impatiently waited for the prisoners to appear. Once the prisoners entered the courtroom, the audience sang a satiric anti-clerical song. The commotion was planned to intimidate the prisoners and non-communist observers. Every court session began with rapid questioning directed at the prisoners to confuse them. They were allowed no time to respond to the accusations. Any disclaimer of the charges would bring new torture or unending interrogations.



Fr. Gjergj Fishta, O.F.M.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)



A group of Anthonian youth in Shkodra with Fr. Frano Kiri, O.F.M. (center), 1936



Anthonian youth orchestra with Fr. Ndoc Kiri, O.F.M. (center), 1937

Each charge was carefully planned in advance by high government officials. Shllaku was introduced as the ideologist, organizer and leader of the *Bashkimi Shqiptar*. They accused the priest of directing the *Dora e Zezë* (Black Conspiracy) plot throughout Albania. Allegedly, he was kept in constant contact with the Vatican through the efforts of Father Fausti. Supposedly Shllaku maintained communications with anti-communist guerrilla units and with the capitalist countries of England and the United States.

According to the prosecutor, these serious charges merited death not only because Shllaku was an opponent of the regime, but a criminal and dangerous person as well. When defense lawyer, Pipa⁶, took the floor to refute the charges which were heard for the first time in the court, the audience and judges shouted: "*Poshtë traithtarët e bashkpunëtorët e tyre!*" (Down with the traitors and their collaborators!)

The death sentence, as I mentioned above, was decided well in advance by officials in Tirane. All our efforts to save the life of our innocent confrere were in vain. Even testimonies of several members of the Parliament on behalf of Father Shllaku did not influence the judges to change their minds.⁷ Fathers Shllaku, Fausti, and Dajani, seminarians Çuni and Bici, and the lay persons Gjon Vata, Gjesh Luli, and Qerim Sadiku were sentenced to death when the "trial" ended on 22 February 1946.

The Execution

The communist authorities had established a pattern of executing their prisoners very early in the morning when people were still in bed. Usually after an execution the dead bodies would be left one on top of the other like sacks of fertilizer to terrorize the public. At dusk the bodies would be covered carefully to prevent recognition of the gravesite.

From their sentencing until the hour of execution on March 4 the prisoners prayed continuously. They shared with one another spiritually in preparation for their final witness of loyalty to the Gospel and to the Church. This fact was confirmed by Father Tome Laca, the secretary to the Archbishop of Shkodër. As pastor of the Cathedral he had the honor to accompany the prisoners to their execution site and give them the Eucharist. Later on he, too, would follow the same calvary. At the dawn of March 4, Laca was escorted into the dark room where the condemned awaited to make their final confessions. After learning that they had already confessed to one another and aware that they were living more for heaven than for earth, he gave each holy communion. The prisoners received the Eucharist with the same devotion of the first martyrs of Christianity. While they rode to the execution place at nearby Rëmaj, they prayed the psalms like pilgrims of the chosen people of Israel, heading toward the heavenly Jerusalem. Shllaku and his companions remained strong and dignified awaiting their martyrdom for

the Lord. They lined up one next to the other with Shllaku in the middle. All were tied hand to hand as if they were forming a wreath of priest and laymen together. One by one they kissed the cross of salvation, and then in unison proclaimed: "*Rrënoftë Krishti Mbret! Rrënoftë Kisha Katolike! Rrënoftë Shqipëria!*" (Long live Christ the King! Long live the Catholic Church! Long live Albania!) The first barrage ended their voices forever. They fell on the ground, moistening the land with their blood, as many had done before them.

Although it rained heavily, a large crowd came to view the martyrs of the Church of Albania. As friends and enemies passed the bodies, some shed tears and others bowed to honor the strong: "*Sic fortes ceciderunt*"—Thus have the strong fallen—(2 Kings 1, 19.) One passerby, without being seen by guards, moistened a white handkerchief with the blood of Father Gjon to save as a relic for the Church, which was by now underground. "*Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum*"—The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians—.

The following day I returned with a colleague to the execution place. To our bewilderment, there was no visible common grave. Later we learned that during the previous night a hole had been dug near the river bed where the corpses were dumped and then covered with water and gravel. The ground was carefully levelled and then covered with garbage cans so that all traces of their crime disappeared.

Although the new Neros believed the Kiri River would in time take the victims' bones and disperse them into the sea, they did not realize that the Albanian shore would be sanctified by the very relics of these martyrs.

Pal Duka-Gjini

1 The Albanian party and government were under Yugoslav-Soviet tutelage between 1944-1961.

2 Dr. Filip Shiroka, a graduate of the Medical School of Vienna, internationally famous surgeon in Central Europe.

3 Carlo Togliavini, Matteo Bartoli, Giuseppe Schiro, Jr., and Francesco Ercole.

4 The great Franciscans Pashko Dardhi, Shijef Gjesh, Anton Harapi, Gjergj Fiqita, Justin Rrota, Marjan Gjoka were Shllaku's mentors.

5 Pipa was a classmate of the undersigned.

6 To avenge the brave defense of the Catholic clergy, the Albanian *sigurimi* (Secret Police) arrested Musafer Pipa following the execution of Father Shllaku and his companions. Pipa was cruelly tortured and then shot in the prison yard.

7 Professor Koli Preza, a veteran communist and representative in the Albanian Parliament, intervened on behalf of Father Shllaku. His intervention was rejected. Preza was later discharged from his post, expelled from the Communist Party and accused as a reactionary associate of the Catholic clergy. He was finally arrested, sentenced and executed in Tirane in 1947.

Fr. Gjon Fausti, S.J.: Strength in Serenity

In Fall, 1943, I first met Fr. Gjon Fausti. I was a young doctor attached to the general hospital in Tirana. One afternoon some hospital sisters asked me to quickly find a priest to administer the last sacraments to a dying man. I hurried off to the Jesuit residence. By coincidence, Fr. Fausti was exiting the building when I requested a priest at the reception desk. As soon as I told him of my errand, he immediately climbed onto his bicycle and rushed away to the hospital.

When I arrived back at the hospital, the sisters asked me the name of the extraordinary priest who had preceded me. They praised him profusely. I told them that I knew him as the former rector of the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodra. He had moved into the Jesuit residence in Tirana only a few weeks earlier. The readiness with which Fr. Fausti responded to my summons and the deep concern he exhibited for the dying man, assured me that I was dealing with a man of exceptional qualities.

This was the beginning of my contacts with Fr. Fausti. From that day on, we became close friends. I even started to go to him regularly for confession. This in itself was a measure of the powerful influence of his serene strength. I was privileged to learn more and more about this man of such noble soul and simple, loving heart. These qualities came to the forefront in the sad events that followed.

The capitulation of the Fascists in 1943 resulted in the stranding of many Italian soldiers and immigrants in Albania. Most were left homeless. These refugees were persecuted and maltreated by the Nazis who then took over Albania. A number of these unfortunates were sick and undernourished and most had no possibility for repatriation. Father Fausti served as both a spiritual and a physical refuge for these unfortunates. He proved himself a true father, friend, counselor, advocate, and protector of the needy. Fr. Fausti offered moral support and material assistance to all those who cried out to him for help.

Father Fausti was an Italian by birth, so it was not unnatural that he should wish to help his fellow countrymen. Yet his heart was equally sensitive to the plight of the Albanians. He responded to all people in need as a priest and as a man.

Father Fausti left me and my companions with an indelible memory of encouraging words and actions for our hungry and naked countrymen. During the 1944 Albanian riots against the Nazis in Tirana, he was seriously wounded as he led a group of Albanians into the sanctuary of the Jesuit church. We never knew him to be anything but a quiet, determined, and yet serene man. Throughout his active and studious life, there was a childlike joy and simplicity that



Fr. Gjon Fausti, S.J.

characterized him even while playing cards or "bocca" with his confreres or with one of us.

Fr. Gjon Fausti was born on October 19, 1889 in Brozzo, Brescia. He joined the Jesuit order as a student and graduated *summa cum laude* with a doctorate in philosophy and theology from the Gregorian University in Rome.* Afterward he taught in Milan and Torino before coming to Albania. After ordination he became a professor and later the rector of the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodra. His energetic and edifying life, his broad cultural background, and his keen sensitivity to the sufferings and needs of others saved those who knew and befriended him. People were magnetized by his intelligence and simplicity. He maintained a clear mind, naked of any prejudice. Father Fausti had an ardent soul, attuned to the apostolic ideals of goodness and peace. His congregation in seeing him approach the altar with calm dignity was filled with warmth and peace.

In November, 1944, the Germans retreated from Albania. Into the political vacuum the Albanian Communists, with Anglo-American and Yugoslav support, installed their government. The communists soon began a campaign against the Catholic Church. In time, what had only been slander turned into open persecution. The Jesuits were the first to come under attack. Father Fausti was then serving as the Vice Provincial of the Albanian Jesuits. In December 1945, both he and Father Daniel Dajani, rector of the Pontifical Seminary and St. Xavier's College (Saverianum), were arrested. Both priests were accused of

A Legacy of Love and Peace

Many Albanians perished in the violence of World War II. Yet in the Communist takeover that followed, a level of bloodletting and betrayal was reached hitherto unknown in the long turbulent history of Albania. Any Albanian opposed to Communism - was swept into the national prisons. There, after enduring terrible and barbarous tortures, they died as patriots and martyrs of the faith. These victims pardoned their

Fr. Gjon Fausti, S.J.: Strength in Serenity Continued anti-communist activity. The accusations against the group, especially against Fausti, were aimed to convince the public that they were "conniving politicians," "traitors to the nation," "servants of foreigners," and "Fascist-Western Vatican spies." The goal of these propaganda attacks was to eliminate any obstacles to the complete communist domination of Albania.

Following a "mock" trial in January 1946 of several days, Father Fausti and his companions were sentenced to death by a firing squad. Father Fausti was cognizant of the gravity of his situation yet he remained strong and courageous because he was innocent of all charges. Although, he was beaten and humiliated, he never complained or resisted, and even responded to his sentence with words of pardon and his personal blessing. Father accepted his death sentence with the serenity of the strong and just, who in dying know that they will triumph over the wickedness of their oppressors.

Before dawn, on March 4, 1946, Father Fausti and his friends were transported in a truck to a place behind the Catholic cemetery in Shkodra. His last words were, "I am content to die while fulfilling my duty. Long live Christ the King." Together with his seven companions the condemned shouted in unison, "Long live Christ the King, long live Albania." Then the machine guns roared.

The skies of Shkodra moistened the air and the dew of the morning seemed to cry gently in grief and sorrow for the terrible spectacle. The blood of Father Fausti and his martyred companions flowed onto the muddy Albanian earth. A crowd rushed to their sides. Some knelt near the martyr while others tried to cut relics of cloth from his cassock. The soldiers' rifle butts quickly moved the group away. The corpses were pushed into a common grave. Today Albanians refer to the grounds behind the Catholic cemetery in Shkodra as "the Cemetery of the Martyrs."

Father Fausti's demeanor and courage throughout his ministry and during his incarceration demonstrated to Christians and Moslems in Albania that people who believe in God and in eternal life need not be attached to temporal things. They can even face death with courage and serenity.

Giorgio Silvestri

*Editor's note: He was a schoolmate of Pope Paul VI.

executioners and prayerfully interceded with God for their forgiveness. Those fortunate individuals who survived the ordeal now experience in modern Albania grave hardships and difficulties. They do not enjoy even basic human rights.

One of the takeover victims was Father Daniel Dajani, S.J., the rector of the Albanian Pontifical Seminary and president of Xavier College in Shkodra (Saverianum). Dajani was born in Blinishti, Zadrima on December 2, 1906. After completing primary education in the Shkodra schools, he entered the Pontifical Seminary at twelve years of age. He joined the Jesuit order eight years later, in 1926. Father graduated *summa cum laude* with literature, philosophy and theology degrees from the University of Torino. Shortly thereafter he was assigned to Rome to become acquainted with routine Jesuit missionary duties. Dajani returned to Shkodra in 1935 as a member of the Albanian Missionary Center.*

Father Dajani was simple, quiet, and innately gifted as a peacemaker. These virtues were developed over the long years of Jesuit training and schooling. Missionary work brought him into the mountain settlements and villages of northern Albania.

I was a Jesuit student in Shkodra when Dajani paid us a visit after completing his missionary journeys. His stories of vendettas and violence among the Catholic tribes of northern Albania were so astounding that we listened for hours in attentive silence. These visits became memorable experiences for us.

Upon the Communist takeover in 1944, the activities of the Albanian Jesuit Missionary Center were immediately suppressed. Dajani and the other missionaries were re-assigned to teach at the Shkodra seminary and college. Dajani taught Albanian language classes and literature as well as philosophy and theology. In September 1945 Dajani was installed as college president and rector of the Pontifical Seminary. I was privileged to study under his tutelage and serve under him as my superior. He left an indelible mark.



Fr. Daniel Dajani, S.J.

Dajani instructed his college students in the proper form of behavior in the new political climate. Following the arrests of Fathers Jak Gardin, S.J., and Gjergj Vata, S.J., and the seminarians Mark Çuni (Chuni), Gjon Shllaku, Gjergj Bici and others, Dajani encouraged us. His firmness, serenity and dauntless words made us feel we were under the protection of a kind father. His exemplary life, profound cultural attainments, and sensitivity to the suffering of others contributed to our fascination with this holy man. In confession, he acted as a high principled spiritual guide who based his direction on his own experiences. In those turbulent days, Dajani aimed solely at achieving the good. Intelligence, sanctity, experience, courage, and ability to confront any crisis made Dajani a symbol of Christian steadfastness.

Shortly after the first spate of arrests of Catholic clergy, I accompanied Dajani on a visit to a wealthy family that provided financial support to maintain the Jesuit institutions. At the time the Jesuit community, the seminary students, and the college pupils were suffering from malnutrition. The government was bringing pressure to bear in hopes that the Jesuits could first be coerced into silence and then give their support to the new regime. Dajani was faced with the problem of feeding a community of over 150 people. Despite scarce supplies, the generosity of the benefactors was great.

After our visit we walked out into the streets. Dajani was very happy with the donation that would provide food for his community. But his joy was short-lived. Some soldiers together with a group of demonstrators approached us. The demonstrators had been harassing the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Their actions closely resembled those of the Fascist Black Shirts who had marched through the streets of Shkodra during the occupation forcing people to raise their right hands in the Fascist salute and shout, "Viva Duce! ('Long live the Leader')."

I was afraid and asked Father Dajani what we should do. He smiled tranquilly and with perfect self-possession said, "Follow me and do as I do." We walked slowly down the sidewalk, not paying any attention to the demonstration. The mob surrounded us, screaming "reactionaries," "fascist servants," and "collaborators." Dajani looked neither right nor left, said nothing and kept walking forward. I followed him although I was inwardly torn by fear and hatred. Seeing that they could not provoke Dajani or involve him in an argument, the crowd finally left us after shouting some vulgar epithets. Once we were alone again, I felt relieved but also full of hatred. I noticed Dajani's eyes were disturbed. His thoughts were not present as I talked. Then unexpectedly he said, "Dear Mark, these came with guns but shall go with peace and love." When I asked him what he meant, he tried to explain but I did not understand the meaning of his words. As I continued to talk he calmly answered, "No, no, dear Mark, this is wrong: The Communist government is Albanian

at least. They are still our brothers. It is better to be under them although Communists, than to be occupied by the Greeks, Italians or Yugoslavs, who are our enemies." He must have seen the confused look on my face for he said, "One day you will see my answers are right." Today, 40 years later, I can understand his remarkable insight into the situation.

Fathers Daniel Dajani and Gjon Fausti were arrested on December 31, 1945. They had travelled to a village about 20 miles from Shkodra to celebrate a memorial Mass for Fran Gaci. The Jesuit student had died in his home after being tortured in prison. The village church was filled with parishioners and friends. Dajani's sermon left everyone in tears. During the Mass, the fathers remarked that anyone who followed in the valiant steps of Fran Gaci would have the privilege of dying for the Christian faith. Neither priest realized that they would start their own road to Calvary that very night.

Several weeks later we stood by tearfully and helplessly watching as both priests were led with other religious prisoners through a mob. They were chained two abreast and taken to the public tribunal. The military court believed it would be an easy task to prove them guilty of anti-government activity. Hearing the mob screaming "Hang the traitors," the judges were confident of success. However, when the questioning began, the situation abruptly changed.

The priests challenged the prosecutor, the judges and the mob with their direct answers and their immediate denial of the false and ridiculous accusations. Several declarations from Parliament representatives were offered in support of the defendants' claims of innocence. Despite having suffered terrible tortures, the prisoners remained calm and serene. They readily pardoned insults and impressed many in attendance with their innocence. Some plaintiffs had swollen faces with purplish marks around their eyes from the fierce beatings they had received. One seminarian could not stand to answer questions because of painful injuries received in preliminary interrogations.

Throughout the trial, the furious prosecution was met with calm resignation on the part of the defendants. They never ceased to deny the charges and through a subtle process became prosecutors themselves. They actually turned their accusers into defendants. None of them asked for mercy or pardon because they were innocent of all charges against them. Each plaintiff accused the Communists of attempting to destroy the Catholic Church through them. At the end of the trial one of the military judges asked Dajani if he really believed in God and Jesus Christ. Father answered that he had believed in God since his childhood and that he was ready to die to testify to his belief in Jesus Christ. The judge cynically remarked that Dajani would indeed see whether Jesus Christ would save their heads from the justice of the people's tribunal. Father Dajani calmly and in a soft voice

Brother Gjon Pantalija, S.J.: An Albanian Christian Martyr

Albanian Catholics loved and revered Brother Gjon Pantalija, S.J. The simple, honest, unselfish man was a true Christian and loyal Albanian. He was born in 1887 in Prizren, Kosovë to a devout Albanian Catholic and patriotic family.

I first met Brother Gjon as a grade school pupil at the Saverianum College. The Shkodra school was under the direction of the Jesuit Fathers then. Brother was the social and cultural activities director. I cannot recall precisely what courses he was teaching at that time, but he made a tremendous impression on all of us students.

A Legacy of Love and Peace Continued

responded that he and his companions would feel privileged to die for Jesus Christ because their sacrifice would be the seed of new martyrs for Christianity.

The prosecutor asked for the immediate execution of the eleven defendants. On March 4, 1946, the condemned were removed from the prison and brought to the backyard of the Shkodra Catholic cemetery. There, Father Angel Deda and an Italian doctor awaited them to witness the execution. The line of prisoners pardoned their persecutors and shouted the praises of God and Albania as the machine guns began firing. They fell, embracing each other in death.

Father Deda was allowed an unusual opportunity to give the executed men the last sacraments. As he did so, he dipped a large piece of cotton into the blood of each victim. Today this cotton relic is in the possession of one of the Christian families of Shkodra.

Ironically, within a year, Father Deda was executed at the same place. He died with another group of clergymen who had been sentenced as fascists and anti-government agitators.

All the living pupils of those martyrs proudly remember them as our personal friends. We will always carry the memory of their Christian testimony. I, too, became a missionary following the example of Father Dajani. Even while I live in the distant land of Brazil, I still can feel the protective spirit of Father Daniel Dajani and the other Albanian martyrs about me.

Mark Kolaj

*The Jesuit Missionary Center in Shkodra was founded in April 1886 for the primary purpose of establishing peace and harmony among the various northern clans in the Albanian Alps. These clans had been alienated for centuries. Bloody vendettas and other acts of fratricide marked daily life in the Alpine region. Fathers Gjon Karma, Mark Harapi, Pashko Giadri, Florian Berisha, Bone P. Pjetër Meshkalla, and Brothers Gjergj Gjekaj, Mark Dodaj, Gjon Pantalija, Gaspër Jubani, numbered among Dajani's companions who travelled on foot to bring the gospel message of peace and reconciliation to the people.

His superiors considered Brother Gjon a very dedicated and able teacher. Our parents esteemed and respected him for his humility and dedication to the students. He handed on his skills in psychology, German, Italian and the Slavic languages to his pupils, at the same time, he carved for himself a special niche in the field of Albanian literature. Brother Gjon was an astute scholar and linguist. His articles on various topics were carried in the well-known magazine, *Progress* (Përparimi), and other periodicals such as *The Sacred Heart Messenger* (Lajmtari), and *Leka*, (of which he was one of the founding editors)*.

Brother Gjon directed the college choirs and orchestras. In performance he displayed marvelous talent and "touching sentiment" in all his interpretations. His finesse astonished the best Albanian composers and musicians. He was also a capable theater director, and made the college dramatics department famous throughout Albania. Amazingly Brother Gjon was largely self-taught. He held no degrees in music or composition, but gained his skills by reading and studying a few operas and classic tragedies. He even enjoyed some success in composing occasional orchestra pieces, and authoring a few musical comedies.

The many successes never caused him to become vain. He remained self-effacing and concentrated the entirety of his energies on the education of his students. His efforts aimed to bring the student's achievements the recognition they so rightly deserved.

In Albania the feast days of saints were celebrated as birthdays. On the Feast of St. Gjon, Brother customarily received visitors all day long. People of every social class paid visits. Catholics, Orthodox, Muslims, merchants, students, professors, priests and bishops - came in a continuous stream lasting from early morning until late into the evening. All the visitors wished to congratulate Brother Gjon and express their admiration and respect for his work.

Mussolini's Italian armies attacked and occupied Albania on Good Friday 1939. The Fascist forces quickly crushed all resistance. Although the Albanian flag still flew, it was emblazoned with a Fascist insignia. On Albanian Independence Day, November 28, 1939, Shkodra was in a state of "silent agitation". I waited alone at the Cathedral square, site of a proposed anti-Fascist demonstration. A large group of Albanian Catholic youth was slated to participate in the demonstration.

Being one of the organizers of the protest, I was faced with the difficult choice between remaining with the youthful protestors and helping them as priest and guide, or hastening to the Cathedral where I was scheduled to lead the choir in a special Gregorian Mass. While engaged in this internal debate, I saw the figure of Brother Gjon emerging from the

Archbishop's House. Since we had been confidantes for sometime, I told him what was going to happen. An astute student of psychology, he immediately understood the reason for my spiritual torment. He said, "Don't worry about directing the choir at Mass...Tell your young men to conduct themselves with dignity and honor."

Brother Gjon was also instrumental in saving me from great peril during the war. After the Fascist police had identified me as a "rebel against the occupation," I was forced to flee into the mountains to join the Freedom Fighters. Occasionally we entered Shkodra to coordinate patriotic activities, to organize the underground press, or meet with other Albanian leaders to devise resistance plans.

One night I arrived in Shkodra disguised as a mountain villager. I was in constant danger of being recognized as the pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Rusi i Vogël. As I neared my destination I saw Brother Gjon standing in front of the "Bigliardino" cafe bar debating with a man. I hurried over to him and said "Mister Father, please, what time do you have?" He stopped, pretended to look at his watch, and said: "Follow me but keep a little distance behind." I followed him to the gate of the Italian military hospital. Brother Gjon entered the building and soon emerged walking arm-in-arm with an Italian military chaplain. Brother arranged for me to meet with my contact inside the hospital and then to spend the night in the hospital waiting room.

The following morning as the Angelus bells of St. Nicholas Church rang, I left Shkodra thanking God and Brother Gjon for my safety. I returned to the mountain village of Zagora, where my friends anxiously awaited me.

Years passed and the political situation in Albania worsened. The Fascist occupation of Albania ended but was soon followed by the Communist takeover. Then a persecution of the Roman Catholic Church began.

The clergy were among the first victims of the violence. The Jesuits were placed under surveillance by police spies. Brother Gjon fearlessly used all his native cunning to prevent the most antagonistic and militant alumnus of the Jesuit grammar schools from attacking their former teachers. Servants and school custodians were forced to testify that some Jesuits had joined the anti-Communist phalanx in Spain during the Civil War. For a short period Brother Gjon managed to keep peace largely due to the fact that some of the Communist leaders owed their lives to him. Ultimately, his efforts were in vain. Moscow pressured the Albanian Communist government to eliminate the Catholic clergy as obstacles to the new "Peoples' Power". Father Jak Gardin, S.J., accurately described the heroic figure of Brother Gjon Pantalija in this ordeal:

"As soon as the Communist forces took over in Shkodra, Brother Gjon was under strict and constant surveillance. He was aware of this surveillance but was



Brother Gjon Pantalija, S.J.

still able - thanks to his extraordinary intuition and friendliness - to diminish the intensity of the searches made in the Jesuit Center. Through his skill the large community of Jesuits, seminarians and clerics survived the ordeal of those dark days. In June 1945, Professor Gjergj Vata and I were arrested. During the interrogative period, Brother Gjon took excellent care of us and also found us some dependable lawyers. Besides that, you can imagine the worry and consternation he felt when he was attempting to move all the documents and objects of value from the Jesuit Center. But more than anything else he was preoccupied by the arrest of Father Gjon Fausti, Vice-Provincial of the Jesuits, Father Daniel Dajani, Rector of the Pontifical Seminary and later of the dispersion of the Jesuit Order and the government seizure of all Jesuit properties."

I remember that Brother Gjon was clandestinely arrested in the Fall of 1946. While under interrogation he was tortured, denied food and sleep, beaten with clubs, experimented with the application of electrodes to his body, and subjected to the insertion of wooden splinters under his toenails. The Communists desired to extract information from Brother Gjon concerning the Jesuits activities.

The Franciscan monastery of Gjuhadol was seized and converted into a prison. Brother Gjon was incarcerated there in a cell near the choir loft. Despite the effects of torture and his imprisonment, Brother Gjon attempted to escape by leaping from the choir loft into the church. He broke both legs. The guards brought him to the hospital. A witness there noted that he was a mere skeleton, yet he retained his serene smile."

I heard nothing more about him, except that he died in great pain during renewed police interrogations. In all likelihood he was buried outside the Catholic cemetery walls with other Jesuits, Franciscans, and secular priests who had been executed.

Lazër Shantoja: A Brilliant Stylist of Albanian Literature

Editors note: *This testimony was planned for the 1985 Commemorative issue of the BULLETIN, on the occasion of Father Shantoja's anniversary of martyrdom. It was left out, unfortunately, due to lack of space. We are happy to be able to publish Ernest Koliqi's testimony about the life and death of Father Lazër Shantoja in this edition.*

During the tragic period between 1945 and 1949, Archbishop Vigenz Prendushi of Durrës, Father Anton Harapi, the Franciscan Provincial, Ethem Haxhiademi of Elbasan, Father Bernardin Palaj, and Reverend Shantoja disappeared from the Albanian cultural scene. These men represented the leading intellectuals and seminal thinkers in the field of Albanian culture and literature. Their scholarly efforts and literary endeavors were suddenly ended by the Albanian Communist government.

I enjoyed the friendship of Reverend Lazër Shantoja for many years. I came to know of his great literary aspirations. At La Motte in Switzerland in the 1930s, Father Shantoja revealed his oft-delayed plans for a major literary work. He wished to preserve Albania's ancient culture and traditions which, after being sifted with western civilization, continued in a transparent modern form. Years earlier the great Albanian poet, Father Gjergj Fishta, O.F.M. (1871-1940), had sung of the heroic struggles of his people against all efforts by their enemies to break the ethnic solidarity of the nation. Shantoja wanted to develop Fishta's theme but in a much larger fresco. He firmly believed that a national domestic life

centered upon all-but-forgotten virtues could flourish but only if built around those hearths where the flames symbolized the cult of liberty based on belief in God. Only in that setting could the conviction be found that "honor is for life a more necessary nourishing light than the sun itself." Shantoja reluctantly spoke of this work for the plans were still in gestation. With a great deal of reticence, he revealed that he needed to renew contact with the soil, the people, and the atmosphere of his fatherland. In this regard, he always spoke in such playful and nostalgic phrases as: "I need to eat cornbread with goat cheese, that cheese which preserves the flavor of the foliage of our beech grooves upon which the goats feed."

With Shantoja, in the La Motte parish home near the Franco-Swiss border, lived the priest's elderly mother. She was a native of Shkodra. Although uneducated, she overflowed with rich human experiences. Not knowing a word of French, she was continually afflicted with an incurable homesickness. She immersed herself day and night in remembering the lost homeland, events of far away Shkodra, relatives and acquaintances and speaking of faded memories of the past. She spoke the native tongue of Shkodra perfectly. Her nuanced language sparkled with colorful phrases, and was always spoken with the distinctive intonations characteristic of Albanian women of every social class. The poet-son was greatly indebted to her for influencing his style of expression. Elements of his mother's talents for expression run throughout Shantoja's works. It was a priceless dowry from a mother to her son.

The Early Years

Lazër Shantoja was born in Shkodra in 1892. During his boyhood, he was steered toward a religious vocation by his priest uncle. In the Jesuit-run Pontifical Seminary at Shkodra, he received a solid cultural preparation and studied Greek, Latin and Italian languages. Shantoja distinguished himself in the language courses. In his early adolescence he came under the influence of the literary movement which appeared on the wake of the early Albanian cultural revival. His distinguished Albanian Jesuit teachers - Fathers Ndrim Mjeda, Anton Zano and Mark Bazdari - served as his role models. For Philosophy and Theology studies he was sent to Innsbruck, Austria. There he learned to read, write, and speak the German language fluently.

Following ordination in 1920, Shantoja was placed in charge of several mountain parishes near Sheldija. The prosperous and pleasant region was not too far distant from Shkodra. I often heard about the learned young pastor who had transported a piano by mule-back over the difficult mountain paths to Sheldija. Almost everyone in the region called him the "pastor with the piano."

Brother Gjon Pantalijs, S.J.: An Albanian Christian Martyr Continued

I knew Brother Gjon - the "Devil of Shkodra" - as a fine, pious extraordinarily intelligent man with a rare capacity for obedience. He possessed a cultural sophistication uncommon among men in his position. His cunning and daring spirit endeared him to the Albanian people. I hope that one day Brother Gjon will assume his rightful place among the heroes of the Albanian people.

We Albanian Catholics in exile must pray for the return of Albanian liberty and religious freedom in our beloved country. Our efforts are a small tribute to the martyrs like Brother Gjon Pantalijs, S.J. who lived and died for the faith and fatherland.

Zef Shkurti

* These journals remain a good source for information on Albania's cultural and religious history.

In 1924, Archbishop Lazër Mjeda, the brother of the Jesuit poet Father Ndrë Mjeda, came from Skopje to fill the vacant See of Shkodra. The new Archbishop was a strong-willed man of high moral stature and exceptional political foresight. Mjeda's energy was undaunted. He quickly undertook enlightened and efficient measures to raise the social status and civic power of the Catholic population. He gave his support to the political activity of Luigj Gurakuqi, the Catholic founder and leader of the Christian-Democrat party. A majority of the Moslem population soon allied itself with this party. Archbishop Mjeda promoted the cultural initiative of the citizenry by appointing Shantoja his personal secretary. The poet arrived in Shkodra with his books and his piano. Afterwards in the evenings, piano concert music was played in the Archbishop's palace. The musical notes from Schumann and Schubert's works would pour down from the upper windows over the esplanade of the Cathedral and drift into the main thoroughfare. Citizens gathered nightly for the impromptu concerts. Awed passers-by would often gaze in admiration towards the palace window.



Archbishop Lazër Mjeda

In 1923, an official Christian-Democrat party newspaper, *Ora e Maleve*, (Defence of the Mountains) began publication. Shortly afterwards, the Archbishop assigned Shantoja to "actively participate" in its compilation. The newspaper enjoyed immediate and extraordinary success. The widely circulated newspaper disseminated democratic ideas throughout an Albanian society that was still imprisoned by anachronistic, medieval concepts. Shantoja thrust himself into political competition with all the ardor of his capricious temperament. He demonstrated more of the spirit and style of an artist than the passion of a party member. It was precisely this artistic temperament that exploded in brilliant, polemic cues which struck the readers, enthused

friends, and irritated his foes. Filled with a joy of expression, he caught in his aim every target. Shantoja's newspaper work quickly gained him recognition as a writer. His short prose paragraphs and his scratching, corrosive, satiric verses were written in a piercing style and popular vein. They were received with avid interest by the readership. Producing these emotion-filled works amused him tremendously. His articles of social and political criticism revealed Shantoja's underlying intent to regenerate the spirit of his people. With the fervor of a true believer and with an unshakeable will, he set out to utilize his learning to fulfill his duty towards his country. Shantoja dedicated every line of his works to the spiritual elevation of the Albanian people.

Unfortunately, the Albanian people in the 1920s and 1930s had not yet reached a level of political maturity necessary either for understanding or sustaining the improvements suggested to them in the works of the innovators. Most Albanians failed to heed the call for better methods of government and the achievement of higher social levels.



Albanian statesman and prominent Catholic leader, Luigj Gurakuqi

The Exile Period

When the government of Bishop Fan Noli collapsed in 1924, hostile, anti-intellectuals filled the political vacuum with the help of foreign mercenaries. Shantoja joined hundreds of other literati and intellectuals in exile. He lived in Yugoslavia for a few years, then moved to Vienna before finally arriving in Berne, Switzerland. He obtained a position as a German speaking chaplain in a Berne Catholic church. Later he moved on to serve as the chaplain at La Motte where he gained fame for his sermons in French.

No impulse of hatred drove Shantoja to participate in political activities in Albania. His writings betrayed great depths of innate ingenuity. They contained fervent emotions and patriotic thoughts endowed with the freshness and idealism of everlasting adolescence. Shantoja's works, even those considered the most mendacious, provoked admiration from his foes because of the sincerity and loyalty with which they were inspired, and because the bitterness of Shantoja's irony was always lightened by the stirring elegance of his form.

Shantoja's rare artistic sensitivity was supported by his solid cultural background, his knowledge of the major European languages and the mastery of his own native tongue. The poet remained open to the most varied manifestations of life and always demonstrated a love for people, music, and sports. Shantoja frequently climbed mountains in Albania, Austria and Switzerland with only a knapsack on his shoulders and an alpenstock in hand. It seemed that he was destined to leave a "mega work" revealing his creative genius, but unfortunately he never did.

His memory is preserved only in some brief yet splendid prose, and in a few lofty lyric poems.

After spending 15 years in exile, Shantoja needed the inspiring breath of his homeland and renewed contact with his countrymen in order to create. While awaiting permission to return to Albania he translated the writings of Goethe, Schiller and various Italian poets. Meanwhile he wrote newspaper articles and poetry that appeared in the newspapers owned by fellow exiles. Throughout the final years of exile, there always remained stifled within him the desire to set about the work which would undoubtedly have affirmed his artistic genius and gained him world-wide recognition as a literary scholar.

Return to the Homeland

Finally, Shantoja was allowed to return to Albania in 1940. During this confused, troubled and anxious political period, events took him by storm. He settled down with his mother in a small house in Tiranë where he intended to work peacefully with his books and notes. However, in 1944 he was arrested, thrown into a terrible prison, and tortured. After his captors broke his forearm and leg bones, he "walked" by supporting himself on his elbows and knees. When his mother was allowed to visit him, she saw him reduced to such a state that she begged the jailers to "Kill him. Do him this charity! Don't let him suffer like this!"

Many people wonder why the communists harassed the priest poet in such an atrocious manner. After his return to Albania, he avoided political involvement. In fact, he conscientiously avoided all political currents agitating the country in 1941-1943.



Rev. Lazër Shantoja with the Associates of the Institute for Albanian Studies in Tirana, 1942. Clockwise: V. Koca, A. Xhuvani, A. Paluca, Fr. A. Harapi, X. Korça, M. Kruja, E. Koliqi, D. Berati, Z. Valentini, S.J., K. Gurakuqi, E. Vlora, N. Attoma, Rev. L. Shantoja.

Death of the Priest Poet

The only explanation for the barbarous treatment afforded Shantoja was that the Albanian communists were anti-western and anti-Christian. They hated the priest for upholding sane native traditions and for promoting the regenerative essence of "pure" western civilization, mixed with the truths of Christianity. The cultural enamel of western civilization, which sparkled in his prose and lyrics, irritated and frightened the communists. They saw him as an anti-communist instrument which could easily penetrate young hearts. Many youths enjoyed and adhered to Shantoja's style. It was nurtured in substance with ethnic juices, but expressed in a very modern key in which suffering and humor harmonized elegantly. He knew how to express in words the typically sarcastic vein of the Albanian race marked with western humor. His few but exemplary works placed him in

the mainstream of Albanian literature, next to the most refined Albanian stylist Faik Konitza (1875-1942).

The unspeakable cruelties endured by Shantoja reduced him to a state near death. Finally a communist woman soldier delivered the *coup de grace* by shooting him in the neck. His body was buried along with the octogenarian Moslem patrician Sulçio Bey Bushati in an unmarked tomb in an unknown place. Sulçio Bey Bushati had represented the whole of the noble Albanian traditions. He was a descendant of the house of princes that ruled northern Albania semi-independently of the "Sublime Porte" of Constantinople. In burying the pious priest and Moslem nobleman together, the Communist deniers of God and of the homeland deluded themselves into believing they had thrust into oblivion a root of Albanian traditions and its revitalized offshoot.

Ernest Koliqi

A Forbidden Song*

By Rev. Lazër Shantoja

Reverend Lazër Shantoja had pseudonomously written and published a chain of sonnets dedicated to a young woman from Shkodra. The author's identity was soon discovered and some pious Catholics were scandalized. Nevertheless, the moral character of Shantoja, a confessed Christian Martyr, remains beyond reproach.

Sensitive both to beauty and to those marvelous gifts lavished by God upon mortals, the poet could not remain indifferent towards the female presence nor to the painful

feelings endured by his beautiful admirer. These verses express the tumult of emotions that follow from the renouncement of romantic love for a woman. Shantoja poignantly affirmed that only in Heaven could he be free from his religious vows and be enabled to realize perfect emotional expression and fulfillment.

Reverend Shantoja's sonnets renounced any form of earthly love; yet they rank among the most beautiful of Albanian poems ever dedicated to a woman.

No, do not ask these verses of me.
Destiny forbids. Though you intoxicate
this poet, still his lips must close.
His heart's song changes to a lament.

The lyre with which I wished to gain you honor
I lay down. It cannot thrill with joy
if you may not be goal to my desires
but an abstract goddess only and a Muse.

Flower for others then. I, keeping my life from
love, will pass my days, unique among poets,
remembering the kiss you gave me.

In my exile the hymn of joy I raised
to Aphrodite will come down
out of the shadow of sad cypresses.

* Translated from E. Koliqi's *Antologia della Lirica Albanese*, Milano, 1963, by Prof. J. Torrens, S.J.

Pope John Paul II Meets the Albanian Community in Rome

"I Live the Martyrdom of Your People"

Albanians throughout the world were deeply touched by the statements of care, concern and solidarity expressed by Pope John Paul II during his April 1986 visit with the members of the Albanian community in Rome. Albanian groups in Europe, America, and Australia—both Christian and Moslem— have sent letters to the Holy Father thanking him for his continued support for the restoration of religious liberties in Albania.

The European news media and some American Catholic newspapers reported this first of its kind meeting of the pontiff with his Albanian flock.

The Vatican's daily newspaper OSSERVATORE ROMANO of May 2, 1986 carried on its front page the report of the meeting. We are pleased to reprint the English version of the OSSERVATORE ROMANO article for our readers.

During his visit to the Roman parish of San Gregorio VII on Sunday, 27 April, the Pope met with a large group of Albanian refugees who have found a point of reference for their human and spiritual needs in the parish. The Holy Father's discourse follows, preceded by a brief commentary on the meeting.

They hadn't donned their traditional festive garb: festive moments are no longer known to them. The Albanian refugees gathered in the parish of San Gregorio VII came before the Pope wearing their true expression: a countenance which still speaks of so much pain, of so much suffering, caused by what they do not hesitate to call the martyrdom of a people that wishes to live its own spirituality. From the time that Father Daniele Gjecaj, an Albanian Franciscan, came to San Gregorio VII, the parish has become the point of reference for all the Albanian refugees who, having fled their country, seek to rebuild their lives in Italy or in other countries. Behind them, they have left the ruins of their churches and of other demolished places of worship, and the tears and suffering of those who were unable to follow them, in their bitter exile to foreign lands.

"Today we are here," Father Daniele told the Pope, "in your exalted presence as simple representatives of the martyred land of the eagles, geographically so near, morally so far away."

"Mindful of our ancestors who, in the saddest moments of their and our Christian and national history, always turned confidently to the See of Peter, we wish to be the voice of our people, who have no voice, and, making our own the

acclamation of the Apostles frightened by the storm-tossed sea, we turn to Your Holiness with the same words: *Salva nos, perimus!* (Save us, we are perishing!)

"Most Holy Father,

"The solicitude of Your Holiness for all the Churches, but in a special way for the suffering Churches, assures us that tiny Albania will find a privileged place in your great heart.

"While with deep gratitude we thank you for having more than once deigned to bring to the world's attention the slow and ignored martyrdom of our people, we humbly implore your Apostolic Blessing for ourselves personally, for our families, near and far, and for our fellow countrymen, wherever they may be."

The Pope, having listened to the words of Father Daniele, looked into the eyes, by now inured to suffering, of those who awaited from him the certainty of a new hope. He desired immediately to reassure them of his very profound participation in the drama that they, and their brethren still in Albania, are experiencing. Likewise, he desired immediately to become their voice, in these words:

This meeting of ours, the first in Rome with an Albanian community, moves me deeply. It is not a matter of being moved only in this circumstance; it is a matter of being moved in what I would call a continuous way. Every day, especially during the eucharistic sacrifice, I seek to live the martyrdom of your people, of your believers, of our Albanian brothers and sisters, and I pray every day for your homeland, for all believers of the various religions, and for the Church in Albania, which has disappeared externally. But we well know that the Church cannot disappear from people's hearts, because she is built up by the Holy Spirit, by the Word of Christ, by the very person of Christ who lives in his faithful.

I believe profoundly, together with you, that Christ lives—as he lives in us here in Rome, in your Roman Albanian community—he likewise lives in our tormented brothers and sisters in your country. He lives, the Church lives. Christ cannot be killed! Yes, they killed him, they crucified him; he died on the Cross. But he rose. Christ cannot be killed! And in the same way the Church cannot be killed. Man cannot be killed in the strength of living faith, of faith in Christ. This is our hope. We find each other in this faith and in this hope.

Your fellow countryman, Father Daniele Gjecaj, referred to the Gospel passage that narrates the episode in which Christ, who found himself in Peter's boat while it was in the midst of the stormy sea, seemed to be sleeping. But we know well that at the decisive moment he got up and calmed the storm, he calmed the waves and everything became tranquil.

United Nations Human Rights Commission on Albania Religious Rights Leaders Urge Restoration of Religious Freedom

Albanian believers have been encouraged in their struggle for religious freedom by a number of international human and religious rights organizations. These groups have publicly voiced their solidarity and support with those Albanians who suffer for their religious beliefs.

The denial of religious rights to Albanian citizens has been a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter to which Albania is a signatory. The U.N. Human Rights Commission has been petitioned by human rights groups and the Foreign Ministry of Denmark. As a result, the 1984, 1985 and 1986 agendas of the U.N. Sub-Commission and Commission on Human Rights have reviewed documented evidence which incriminates the Albanian government in its program of religious genocide. The Albanian Catholic Information Center has worked closely with these groups and agencies to provide documented information.

We are especially grateful to two international associations who for several years have been in the forefront in defending the rights of Albanian believers. *The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty* (Berne, Switzerland) and *Pax Christi International* (Geneva, Switzerland), have been directly involved in presenting the case of religious oppression in Albania at sessions of the U.N. Human Rights Commission. As we reported in our 1985 BULLETIN, the United Nations Sub-Commission adopted a public resolution against Albania, in September 1985, for its violation of religious rights. Likewise, the 42 session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission adopted a similar resolution during a 'confidential session' on February 14, 1986. The resolution requested that the Albanian government uphold the provisions of the U.N. Charter and grant its citizens the freedom to practice the religion of their choice. Printed below are the texts of oral interventions presented by the two Switzerland based associations.

Pope John Paul II Meets the Albanian Community in Rome Continued

once again; peace returned to the environment that was so perilous before. We must cry out to Christ as the Apostles did. We must cry out together. I do it standing before the world, because the world must understand this suffering; it must understand this injustice.

There can be no greater injustice than that which kills man because of his faith in Christ! Man has rights, fundamental, inviolable rights. These rights are respected in the world. If they are not respected, then it means that the world is no longer human. It is an antihuman world. If God is destroyed in the life of man, man is destroyed. One cannot speak of a human world.

Mine are improvised words, but my emotion is much deeper, because I feel and proudly share this tremendous suffering of our Albanian brothers and sisters who cannot enjoy even a minimum of religious freedom, to which, in contrast, all international documents attest as a fundamental principle.

Let us unite in prayer for the faithful of your country, for believers of all the various religions, for Christian and Catholic believers. We wish to bring them comfort and consolation in spirit through our prayer. This consolation in spirit can penetrate everywhere, and no human force can ever destroy it!

International Association for Defense of Religious Liberty

U.N. Commission on Human Rights 42nd Session—Geneva, 1986

Item 19: Report of the Subcommission

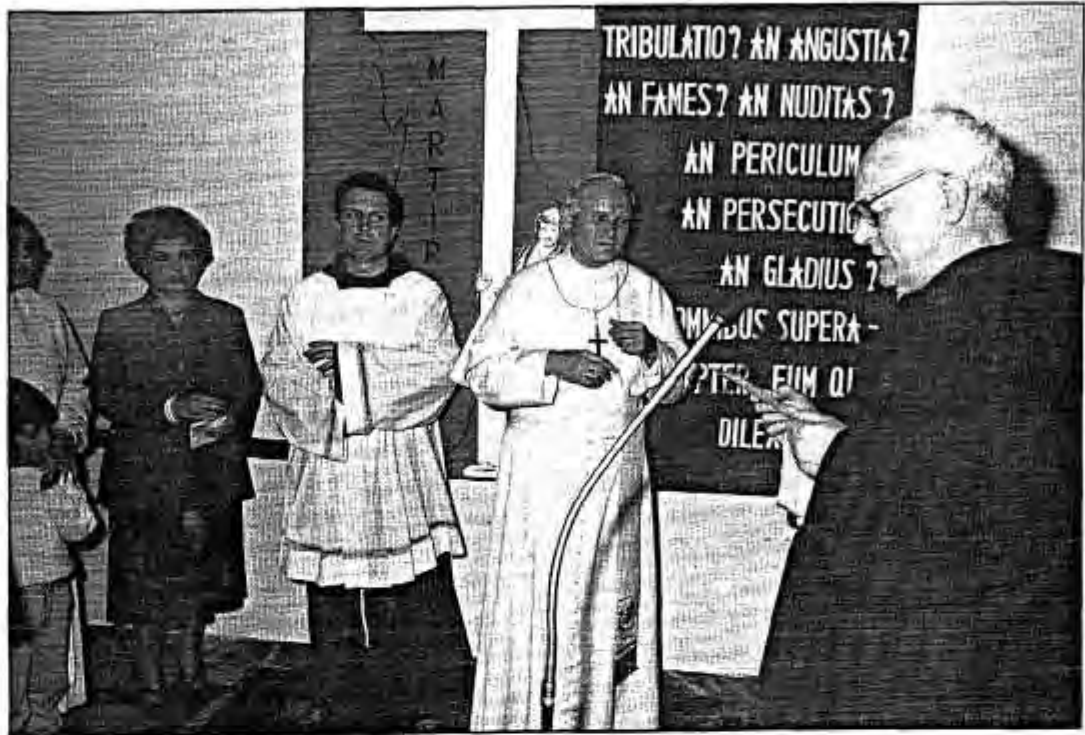
Mr. President,

The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty considers as essential the recognition and the respect of all human rights and fundamental liberties, and particularly the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and conviction.

For this reason we would like to express here our deep satisfaction and our most sincere thanks to the Sub-Commission, for having adopted resolution 1985/26 on massive and systematic violations of the right to freedom of conscience and religion in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania.

Through this resolution, the Sub-Commission requested the Commission on Human Rights to urge the Albanian government to take all necessary constitutional and legal measures with a view to insuring tangibly the right to freedom of religion and conviction in Albania. My organization fully supports this resolution.

Pope John Paul II Meets the



Fr. Daniel Gjeçaj O.F.M. greeting Pope John Paul II



His Holiness speaking with members of the Albanian community

Albanian Community in Rome



The Holy Father blessing two Albanian youngsters



Pope John Paul meets an Albanian postulant and group of religious sisters

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Our present position has been motivated by many incentives. As a matter of fact, the country of Albania has not only imposed a partial restriction of religious freedom upon its citizens, as did other countries, but also has *completely suppressed* all freedom of religious expression...a case that stands alone in the annals of history.

This unbelievable situation has lasted for nearly 20 years, i.e. since Decree No.4337 of November, 1967. The decree suppressed all religious rites, and all the laws and regulations which had governed religious life in Albania. Severe penalties were imposed upon those who ignored the prohibitions. The clergy of all faiths has either been eliminated or assigned to "productive labor."

According to the Albanian newspaper NËNDORI which is published under government supervision, some 2,169 churches, mosques and convents were taken over by the State in 1967. Thus Albania officially became the first atheistic state in the world.

The new Constitution of 1976 solemnly confirmed the will of the Albanian authorities to abolish the right to freedom of religion, even at the highest legal level.

As a matter of fact, article 37 of the Albanian Constitution states that

"The State does not acknowledge any religion: it supports and initiates atheistic publicity to inculcate upon men the materialistic and scientific concept of the world."

Article 55 of the same constitution stipulates, that

"The creation of any...religious...organization is prohibited. All activities and religious...publicity are prohibited."

In practice, there is neither one single church — whether catholic, orthodox or protestant — nor one single mosque which is opened for religious services today. Every attempt is being made to put a complete end to religion by empowering the laws and decrees.

It is unthinkable that in the 20th century, which has witnessed the United Nations proclamation of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, that one of its Member States should renege its pledge. Yet Albania after committing itself in articles 55 and 56 of the Charter to encourage "*universal and effective* respect of human rights and of basic liberties *for all*, without differentiating between race, sex, language or *religion*" has succeeded in denying, via its Constitution, these basic rights and liberties.

Mr. President, last year (1985) we commemorated the 300th anniversary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes through the Fontainebleau Edict. The French Huguenots were forbidden to practice their religion. Meetings, exhibitions, lectures, radio and television broadcasts, numerous publications, and several ceremonies marked this event related to a *partial denial* of religious freedom.

A solemn ceremony took place at the UNESCO

headquarters. Among the participants, was the President of the French Republic who commended freedom of conscience. Mr. Mitterrand declared that this freedom constitutes "the basis of all other freedoms."

However, Mr. President, in the case of Albania, we are not faced with a *partial violation* of conscience and religious freedom, but with its **complete violation**. This is not a matter three centuries old, but a reality of our present day.

In fact some Albanians have been imprisoned, tortured, and murdered because of their professed religious faith. The impossibility for Albanian citizens as well as foreign tourists, to exercise their religious beliefs is also an actual reality. What does the media say about this sad and painful situation? What do the international organizations charged to promote the respect of human rights actually do? Unfortunately, they keep silent. Mr. President, it is very difficult to justify such a silence.

For many years the Commission on Human Rights has spent long hours studying the problem of apartheid in South Africa and adopting concrete resolutions in this respect — and this is to be commended. The Commission handles the Palestinian situation in the same manner. Yet it would also be fitting if she would attend to the systematic and massive violations of human rights in Albania.

Although my intervention is necessarily a denunciation of these violations, it is not intended as a condemnation of the Albanian government. Rather it is a simple request to the United Nations that this organization use its competent and most representative services to encourage the Albanian government to restore religious liberty in its territory.

I recognize readily that the Albanian Labor Party (i.e. the Communist Party) guided the people in their victorious battle against Fascism, as well as in achieving outstanding performances in the social area. However, it went too far in its fight against religion.

The party is fully entitled to propagate its scientific and materialistic concept of an atheistic world, but it does not have any right to propose or to pass laws which forbid the free practice of religion.

In this area, the Albanian Marxist-Leninists did worse than the Fascists. At least, the Fascists never came to the point of completely forbidding the fundamental liberty of conscience and religion.

The legal prohibition of this right is a severe offense against human dignity. It is a glaring systematic violation of human rights. It is a denial of the very principles of the United Nations Charter. It will remain an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations.

I am sure that the Commission on Human Rights will not fail to adopt at this present session an appropriate resolution which will urge the Albanian government to solve this problem and thereby bring the country out of its present isolation.

I thank you Mr. President.

Pax Christi International

Implementation of the Declaration of the Elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on Religion or Belief

Mr. Chairman,

Pax Christi, as an International Catholic Peace Movement, celebrated the adoption of Resolution 1986/20 by the Commission on Human Rights. We took great interest in the report submitted by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Angelo Vidal d'Almeida Ribero, as well as all the information provided by the Secretary General in the reports E/CN.4/1987/34.

The Special Rapporteur is to be commended for his carefully, yet discreetly drafted report and the recommendations drawn therefrom. Indeed, we fully agree with his statement that non governmental organizations have to play an active role, at all levels, in assuring the fullest respect for tolerance, freedom of religion and belief. A fruitful dialogue should no doubt permit the improvement of the situation in well over 40 countries where the basic human right of religious freedom is not respected.

At the end of a long debate, **Pax Christi** limits itself to a few brief considerations on the country mentioned in paragraph 31 of the report by the Special Rapporteur. Our remarks concern the "first atheist State in the world." This title itself announces a gross violation of the concept of tolerance and religious freedom.

The People's Socialist Republic of Albania, though a Member of the United Nations since 1955, published Decree No. 4337 in November 1967. The decree ordered the annulment of religious charters and all laws pertaining to state-church relations. All religious rites were thus prohibited and grave penalties imposed on violators. Religious leaders were sent to labor camps for re-education programs. Over 2,000 mosques, churches, chapels, monasteries and religious

buildings were vandalized and closed.

Albania adopted its present Constitution in 1976. It includes the following anti-religious article:

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, war-mongerish, anti-socialist activity and propaganda are forbidden, as is the incitement to hatred between peoples and races.

In June 1977, a new Penal Code was adopted. Clause 55 of the new code lays down the penalties to be exacted for religious activity. It states that "religious propaganda, as well as the production, distribution or storage of literature of this kind will be punished with imprisonment for between three 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."

Those facts, Mr. Chairman, speak for themselves. **Pax Christi** therefore hopes that the Commission on Human Rights will again make an appeal to the Government of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, requesting that the above mentioned constitutional and legal measures, as well as the practices derived thereof, be abolished without delay, and that its citizens be allowed to fully enjoy the freedom to practice the religion of their choice.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.



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Toward the Creation of a Totally Atheistic Society

Our policy is to print the English translation of essays and articles from the Albanian press which deal with topics of religion. In this issue we offer our readers a lengthy article by Hulusi Hako, a staunch Stalinist-Marxist writer. The original document was a preparatory paper for participants at the Ninth Congress of the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA), held in November, 1986. The title of Hako's paper was: DREJT KRIJIMIT TË NJË SHOQËRIE PLOTËSISHT ATEISTE (TOWARD THE CREATION OF A TOTALLY ATHEISTIC SOCIETY). The author-propagandist has written several essays and books about religion in Albania. From his earliest writings it was clearly evident that he was a "protégé" of Hoxha. Hako's task was to pursue an "intellectual" and "legal" follow-up to the "natural death" of religion in Albania. This article was first published in the party's theoretical journal RRUGA E PARTISË (The Road of the Party), (XXXIII, March 1986) pp. 61-73.

Albanian officials, including the late Enver Hoxha, have repeatedly claimed that no "extremist" or "administrative" steps have been taken to eliminate religion. Now for the first time, a party author admits that "religion has been attacked with great force and destroyed" not only in its material basis, but also the "big pieces," meaning the hierarchy and lower clergy.

Even an uninformed reader will notice that the real concern troubling the author is the party's "unfinished job" regarding religion. After 40 years of armed struggle, the Albanian party has been unable to conquer the people's mind and soul. Their allegiance to religion, their

burning desire for freedom of expression and action as well as their centuries-old habits and customs hold firm. Hako takes great pains to acknowledge the fact that people do not always follow the party's orders forbidding religious names for newborn children. The author also decries the attitude of the youngsters (even party members) who continue to marry peers of their own faith instead of those of another religion. The party has urged this practice for years. Hako sees the influence of religion practically everywhere. It appears in simple greetings, messages of condolence, in birth customs and in marriages. The article indirectly confirms that religion is having a silent revival without benefit of clergy and religious institutions. Religion is fast becoming a frightening monster which threatens the "guiding" and "commanding" role of the party.

The author exhorted the party leadership to prevent this revival of religion by initiating programs to better educate the people. It especially urged the teachers to fight to the end against the dangerous remnants of "reactionary religion."

The continuation of family education in the tradition and spirit of Hoxha's regime is of course the special concern to the author. Ironically, Hako admitted that "the family to date has unfortunately remained the religious stronghold, which has yet to be conquered by the party's militant atheists."

We may conclude from Hako's article on creating a "totally atheistic society" that the "fierce fight against religion" has been an abject failure.

It is now 19 years since February 6, 1967, when comrade Enver Hoxha delivered his programmatic speech, "The Revolutionization of the Party and the Government," which gave a new impetus to the struggle of the Party and the broad masses for the further revolutionization of the entire life of the country. An important place in this speech was given to certain questions that concerned the intensification of the struggle on the ideological front. Almost 19 years have passed since the spring of that year when, on the initiative of the masses at the grassroot level there erupted all over the country the powerful revolutionary movement against religion and backward customs which, through massive voluntary action of the people, abolished the places of worship and the clergy, the organized cult of religion and a considerable number of savage customs. Through this revolutionary action, our society took a big qualitative step forward, the people were freed of a heavy material and spiritual burden, and entered a new phase of emancipation—

faster, full and universal.

In the course of the fierce ideological struggle of the last two decades, a radical and decisive re-examination of the "values" of the past was undertaken, and new concepts and practices were put into effect and consolidated. During this time our people scored new gains toward greater freedom from the religious ideology and the deepening of the materialistic, atheistic-scientific world outlook. The fact is, however, that even today we encounter in our life certain manifestations and remnants of religious preconceptions and practices and related superstitions and backward customs. The thrust and forms of these manifestations are much more limited than they were 20 or 25 years ago, and the number of people they affect is steadily smaller. But they are still sufficiently extensive and harmful and dangerous to merit the attention of the Party, which studies and guides social processes and manifestations along a correct scientific road. They merit also the attention of organizations that function as

levers of the Party. We must give our attention to this struggle all the way. We must fight not only against these remnants and the harm they cause, but also to insure the total triumph of the line of the Party, and to demonstrate the vitality, force and superiority of our materialistic outlook, our Marxist-Leninist philosophy and ideology, our socialist social order.

The imperialist bourgeoisie, the modern revisionists and the Vatican are very concerned about the fate of religion in Albania. They view the achievements of our people in the struggle against religion—one of the greatest achievements of our society—as a great loss and a blow to their positions, interests and aspirations. Furthermore, imperialist and revisionist circles, and the entire international reaction nourish hopes for the resurrection of religion among us, and are using every avenue and every means of ideological and cultural diversion and aggression for this purpose. In the meantime, our Party and people reject and unmask the diversionary campaign of reaction which alleges that "Atheism cannot triumph over religion," that "Religion cannot be uprooted," etc. This is in fact what reaction is saying in connection with the revival of religion in the Soviet Union and the other countries ruled by revisionists. The revival of religion in those countries is the result of the betrayal by their rulers of Marxism-Leninism, of restoration of capitalism in those countries, of the creation of social and political conditions that give birth to the religious ideology and seek an alliance with it. Whereas our people, who have suffered as no one else has from religious ideologies, and who are led by our Party and the guiding compass of Marxism-Leninism, are determined to press ahead and blaze new and unknown, untrodden paths, so as to create a totally atheistic society. In the task to cleanse the consciousness of our people of all religious remnants and backward customs, and create an atheistic society, we have at our disposal the inspiring and guiding Marxist-Leninist teachings of comrade Enver Hoxha, which unite us, strengthen us, and impel us into action for the further intensification of our ideological and cultural revolution, and the blossoming of our new socialist culture.

Where have we arrived in this struggle, what problems do we face, and how should we fight in order to resolve them? Following are some of our ideas on these questions.

Our society is in the period of the active separation from religious remnants, and the active embrace of the atheistic-scientific world outlook. This is a radical turning-point, deliberate and purposeful. Decades have passed since the disappearance, once and for all, of those times when religion and the clergy, along with places of worship and religious practices, were customary, massive and dominating, supported and encouraged politically and ideologically by governments of the ruling, exploiting and oppressive classes; while the anticlerical and atheistic viewpoints, even though

they were steadily on the rise, were restricted, for they were perceived as adversarial, and were hunted and persecuted by the ruling superstructure of society. Today, however we are in a period when the atheistic-scientific world outlook has become natural, normal, massive and dominant; while religious remnants find themselves in the opposing camp, and are becoming evermore occasional and almost extraordinary instances. In brief, today we are at a great turning-point in this field, without precedent in the centuries-old history of our people and of humanity, and all the conditions and preconditions for marching toward totally atheistic society are in place. Then, why does the Party stress that the struggle against religion and our work for atheistic-scientific education has been, and still is generally difficult; indeed, today is more difficult and complex than before.

Our new society has always utilized all the means and tools to wage this struggle and realize this kind of education. But whereas 15-20 years ago, anti-clerical sentiments operated with great force among our people, and as a result an offensive was mounted which toppled the larger, more prominent, concrete and flagrant features of religion, and dealt a heavy blow to the material basis of religious ideology and certain very obtrusive and flagrant backward customs, subsequently and currently the problems in this area have become more subtle, more profound, and have taken on a scholarly character at the social and spiritual plane. Furthermore, whereas at that time, owing to the educational foundation built by the Party and the convictions acquired by our working masses, great success was achieved in destroying clericalism and the material base of religion, as well as in the further unmasking of religious ideology and backward customs, at the present more and more weight is given to the creative and formative side of the matter, which is naturally more difficult. The Party reminds us that religion and backward customs still have roots and that they have not been decisively destroyed. Religion was interwoven with the happenings, customs and thoughts of Albanian society for centuries, and injected its poison in the joys and sorrows of life, from the birth all the way to death. It has left its imprints even in the human character, and infiltrated its roots not only in the lives of the faithful, but also in the lives of unbelievers who sometimes practice them without knowing or understanding them. That is why today we address ourselves not only to a minority of believers, but to the entire society, and work to instill and make manifest the atheistic values that define the meaning and content of our new life.

The atheistic-scientific education, being an acute social ideological and psychological problem, as well as a profound and delicate one, is primarily a problem of the Party and every Party organization and communist. But it is also the job of all the affiliates of the Party to engage in educational and persuasive work, even to the point of face-to-face work with the people. And in order to achieve this kind of education, it

Destroyed and Desecrated Catholic Churches in Albania



Interior of St. Anthony's Church in 1937 decorated for Christmas.



National Shrine of Our Lady of Shkodra. Erected during the 1920's; desecrated and demolished in 1967.



Main altar of the Jesuit Church in Shkodra during May devotions in 1934. Erected 1887; now a warehouse.



St. Anthony's Franciscan Church and Convent, Gjuhadi. Erected, 1816; transformed into a movie theater 1967.

Shkoder.



The Abbey Church at Orosh, Mirdita. Erected 1789; church bell tower destroyed 1967 and the building is now a warehouse.



A 1920's view of Shkodra Cathedral. Erected 1858; bell tower demolished 1967; today a Sports Arena.

is important first of all to have a correct understanding of the need to intensify our efforts in the current phase.

To help us achieve this education, we have as our foundation the orientations of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and of our Party, as well as a very rich fund of experience, not only with regard to the paths we have taken and the results we have achieved in atheistic education, but also with regard to the very clear and certain perspectives before us in this realm. K. Marx and F. Engels have said that, "Religion will disappear side by side with the development of socialism. Its extinction will come as a result of social development, and in this matter education plays an important role." Lenin, for his part, has emphasized that, "He who is not an atheist and struggles against religion is not a Marxist." And our socialist order has all the conditions, all the objective and subjective factors—such as the totality of productive and social relations, which are being perfected without pause—plus the material and cultural level of our people, which is constantly on the rise, etc., in order to carry the struggle on this front to the finish. Marx stressed that, "The abolition of religion as an **illusionary** happiness of the people is the search for the people's **true** happiness." Our socialist order has precisely all the conditions and real forces to liberate the working masses from the fear and insecurity, suffering and anxiety, and assure them true happiness. In the development of our new life, the demagogic and deceptive promises of religion, its false compassion, and the anti-human hypocrisy of the clergy, have been superseded by our concrete achievements, by the sincere relations among our people, by feeling of solidarity and the collective spirit, by our socialist humanism and a sound optimistic atmosphere. In place of illusory happiness, we are daily creating true happiness.

In the method and style of work used by the organizations of the Party and its affiliates, in order to carry further the atheistic education of the masses, we are guided by the advice of the Party to create a single front, engage in frontal all-round work, make use of the entire atheistic content of our reality, and put into practice all of the means and possibilities created by our socialist order. In the meantime, it is necessary to raise the scientific level of the work for atheistic education and to deepen its concrete and discriminating character. The Party has made it clear to us, and experience has proved that the struggle against religious ideology and psychology does not produce the desired results if one does not get the heart of concrete manifestations and the feeling of the actual people who harbor remnants of this ideology and psychology, and if this struggle is developed only in a gross manner.

Comrade Enver Hoxha teaches us not to be satisfied "simply with the general outward appearance and the massive tableaux of social phenomena, especially with regard

to the inner spiritual world of men." This teaching is fully applicable also to the study and handling of problems connected with the struggle against the remnants of religious ideology and psychology. And we have all the means at our disposal to fight this battle on those grounds. We have now not only at the national level, but also at the local level, tens of qualified cadres to fight religious remnants and backward customs and to instill and consolidate the materialist and atheistic-scientific world outlook. But there are occasions when not a few Party organizations and their affiliates fall into complacency and are caught off guard when they come up against certain negative manifestations and activities. This occurs when the problem is viewed from an empirical standpoint, which gives birth to a style of work that relies on spontaneity and organized work drives.

Party orientation work for creating a single front and doing frontal work against religious remnants and for the advancement of atheistic-scientific education, calls for the employment of all the means at the disposal of our society, as well as a head-on struggle against all foreign vestiges that stand in the way of our efforts to carry forward our ideological and cultural revolution. Various kinds of foreign vestiges exist and operate today in our life, connected one with the other and feeding and stimulating one another. In particular, "The micro-bourgeois ideology and psychology, which has deep roots among us," comrade Enver teaches us, "is a base of support both for the old patriarchal, feudal and religious ideologies, and for the contemporary bourgeois and revisionist ideologies; it is a bridge that connects conservatism and liberalism, and nourishes and stimulates them." The micro-bourgeois world outlook has a subjectivist and metaphysical character. It confines man to a micro-world and a narrow personal frame of reference. A world outlook of such features coincides completely with the spirit of religious dogmas.

Since the micro-bourgeois ideology and psychology does not interpret reality and the various factors of development correctly, it causes its adherents to create—from idealist and metaphysical positions—a distorted picture of life that is similar to the religious concept and construct. "Even now there are people who think metaphysically," comrade Enver emphasizes "and believe in certain 'forces' which in their view account for bureaucracy, administration, egoism, the sense of private property, ambition, position, etc. For them god has been transformed into world outlooks and guideposts that inspired idealism and the capitalist, mercantile, and money-lending bourgeoisie." These viewpoints impact on our life in various ways, and at times seem harmless and normal, because they hide behind a mentality that supposedly conforms to the laws, customs and new "patriotism" of our epoch. That is why the Party teaches that against these remnants of the bourgeois and micro-

bourgeois ideology and psychology, we shall be fighting all the way to the classless society.

Some people fall into the lap of religious remnants, superstitions and backward customs not only because of their relatively low level of education, culture, and world outlook, but also because of certain weaknesses in their character or in the character of other people they come across. Religions have always found shelter in the darkest corner of people's consciousness, and the weakest areas of their character. Weaknesses which in certain people manifest themselves as arrogance, bossiness, conceit, and vengefulness, while in some others they manifest themselves as servility, submission, inferiority and withdrawal, are the allies of religious ideology and psychology, and the terrain in which they operate. Religion seeks out people of weak character, and creates people of weak character. It will require much time and a big struggle for our society to eradicate the various blemishes in people's character, and clear the way for the creation and consolidation of sound revolutionary characters that will, at one and the same time, struggle against the remnants of religious ideology and psychology and be in harmony with our efforts to strengthen our materialist world outlook.

The Party has made it clear to us that in the current stage, priority must be given to the struggle against religious dogma and the idealistic philosophy of religion, and that this struggle must be based on scientific arguments. The fact is that for a long time many people, relying in part on their experience, arrived at, and still stand on anti-clerical positions. Today, however, our task is to see to it that all of our society embraces active atheism with conviction.

A big job has been done, and is being done, in putting into practice this recommendation of the Party. Popular discussions and convocations, as well as scientific studies and sessions have been held. In the field of propaganda, broad use has been made of lectures and conversations. These have been effective when they have been based on the study of concrete reality and our daily life in the present stage; and when, in addition, they have dealt with problems connected with this stage in a way that addresses the contemporary needs of the masses. Starting from Party positions, a correct evaluation has been made, and an active stand has been taken toward practical activities that relate to the most important events in the life of man, including joys and sorrows. This has had a powerful and positive influence, generating warm and optimistic social climates that spring from the nature of our social order, and have no trace of any religious remnants.

Naturally, to make this work more effective, chief attention must be given to its quality. For example, in verbal propaganda, in lectures, in face to face discussions with people, priority must be given to persuasive arguments of a scientific, theoretical and practical character. A lecture or

discussion which employs general terms and commanding language, for the most part, such as, "Let it be clearly understood by everyone that the struggle against religious remnants and backward customs cannot tolerate superficial effort or campaign-style work," etc. is totally useless and unconvincing. Lectures for the masses are the final step in the implementation of the Party's recommendations, and as such must grapple with concrete problems, and make use of persuasive arguments.

Among the many means that our society has at its disposal for carrying out atheistic-scientific education is the school, which occupies a very important place and plays a chief role in this education. The school is the most massive body, and above all the hearth best equipped to attain the goals of atheistic-scientific education on the most solid basis, systematically and in a complex manner, using the powerful tools of scientific knowledge and all the natural and social subjects and disciplines.

The creation of an authentic atheistic Albanian school system is one of the monumental deeds of the Party. Our school employs all its resources for the militant atheistic-scientific education of entire generations, to cleanse the consciousness of the people and immunize our society from the manifestation or resurrection of religious remnants. Such an active education both within and without the school, has been and remains a continuing responsibility of hers.

At war against every tendency to underestimate this problem, it behooves our school to show greater care and intensify still more its work in this direction. The question whether parents should speak to their children about religion, about manifestations of its remnants and the harm they cause, fearing that by talking they "might make them aware of these manifestations," are things that we itself has resolved. As long as children and young people come across manifestations of religious remnants, especially in certain environments within and without the family, there is no reason not to speak to them openly against those manifestations. Nor should we underestimate the fact that even educators need to be educated, in order to deepen their scientific understanding and attain a correct ideological interpretation of things, for there are some teachers, both male and female, who retain pre-conceptions about dreams, fate, fortune telling, etc. Yet, it is the determined atheistic educators who give the school its physiognomy and tone of militant atheism.

It is worth emphasizing, moreover, that this education is the domain not only of one or a number of pioneering schools—which 19 years ago unfurled the banner of open war against religion, clericalism and backward customs closely connected with religion—as, for example, the "Naim Frashëri" middle school in Durrës, and some other schools that keep alive the militant spirit of this struggle, update systematically the new contingents of students, organize from

time to time scientific sessions, etc. This education is an imperative duty of all schools, without exception. We realize that the family is the last fortress harboring religious remnants that has to be occupied. And no one can occupy it better and easier than the school and its pupils who, true enough, listen to their parents, but who give more weight in these matters to the lessons, ideas and example of the teacher. When the occasion arises and with the means available, we should explain to the children and youth in the 8-year school, as well as in the middle schools, the import and harm of religious rites, dogmas and practices, superstitions and backward customs. We must at all times make evident and purposely emphasize militant, driving atheistic education. Otherwise, we shall have children and youth who will not be in a position to counter the religious remnants they come across in life, with the scientific knowledge they obtain in school. Unless they are given a militant, driving atheistic education, the children, while acquiring knowledge in school, will view the religious influence at home as acceptable.

In some schools, in the context of Marxist-Leninist studies, a student is given an assignment now and then to prepare a talk on the struggle against religion, or on the anti-scientific character of religious preconceptions, etc. But this is not enough. The school must utilize all of its arsenal and the scientific capability at its disposal, indeed, its entire teaching apparatus, in order to deeply inculcate the pupils with a system of militant atheistic viewpoints, and thereby impact more strongly outside as well, in the family and society. That is why it is advisable that pedagogical councils in schools, in addition to regarding the militant atheistic education of the children and youth as an important component of their communist training—as defined by our socialist pedagogy and called for by the methodology of specific subjects—should from time to time analyze this problem, and take steps to improve the work in this area.

Alongside frontal work for the atheistic education and molding of all the working masses, the intensification of the struggle against religious remnants calls for different approaches in different places, and when dealing with different segments and types of people.

In this process of discrimination, we have singled out a special contingent which, although quite small, is an active carrier of idealistic religious outlooks and backward customs. This contingent includes ex-clerics, declassed elements who are dissatisfied with the people's government, as well as certain recent degenerates. Taking their departure from their former class positions and their plans to restore the "lost paradise," all of them set themselves knowingly against the Party and our new road. For them the practice of religion is not only a means of satisfying their nostalgia for the former ruling class ideology and a consolation for the lost hopes, but also a counter-weight and reaction to our reality. These elements encourage religious practices among gullible

people, and indulge in hostile slogans in defense of religion and against our atheistic social order. They are the social base, the wellspring and the transmitters of that actively hostile domestic ideological pressure, that works hand in hand with the hostile external imperialist and revisionist ideological and cultural pressure and aggression. That is why world reaction, which regards this contingent as its own, comes to its defense from time to time with fabrications and accusations that members of this contingent are allegedly persecuted by us on account of their religious convictions.

It is the dialectic and logic of our development that effects the separation and the total polarization of the new and the old, and inevitably causes certain religious fanatics to move from an ideological opposition to our social order, to political opposition to it, as well. As a part of the ruling superstructure of the old society, religion has not and cannot ever divorce itself from the politics of the exploiting classes and various invaders. That is why with these political and ideological ruffians, these cosmopolitans who are devoid of every patriotic sentiment, who have sold out to foreigners, these former agents of theirs who continue their hostile activity, we are in an antagonistic contradiction to this day. Toward them we sharpen our vigilance, and we punish them according to their guilt, from unmasking them in the social courts and all the way to handing out penal sentences. Experience has shown that the religious propaganda or religious rites that these elements have practiced, has been only a mask to conceal their hostile political intentions and goals. We have the right therefore to act as we have acted, with the necessary force and without any hesitation in dealing with them.

As everywhere else, so also with us here, all religious ideologies have had and still have a class character. They are threads that link the anti-national and counter-revolutionary politics of their active carriers, with the dreams of the former ruling classes, as well as with the former occupiers and foreign patrons who corrupted and debased them physically and spiritually. Hence, not only their political activity pure and simple, but every attempt by them to reactivate and resurrect among us the remnants of religion, conforms completely with the intentions and goals of imperialism, modern revisionism, the Vatican and the entire world reaction. As in the past, so also today, our national and class enemies have hopes of using religion as an ideological and political weapon, and this holds also for certain fanatics whose religious sentiments they cater and seek to stimulate and promote. Domestic and foreign enemies aim, through the use of this weapon, to debase our people, and weaken their interest, will and determination to defend the victories they have won with so much effort and sacrifice and to hinder them from carrying those victories forward. They hope to create a suitable terrain for a return to the past, and an Albania that is no longer socialist, an Albania where religion and the church may hold sway over souls, and contribute to

the degeneration that they call "modernism" and "liberalism".

Naturally, we have reacted to these internal and external enemies who have engaged in political activity through religion and in the name of religion, by unmasking all of these forces and by analyzing, clarifying and expounding the wellknown thesis of the Party that, "It is not possible to think correctly on the political plane, if one thinks and acts in a distorted manner ideologically. Religion causes one to commit grave political errors and restrains one from going forward." The exposition of this thesis in as full and convincing a manner as possible is one of the main themes in the struggle against religious ideology in the current stage.

The Titoists, too, use religion for distinct political aims. Utilizing the anti-Marxist concept that proclaims religion as "a natural right of man," they try to exploit the religious sentiments of the Albanians in Yugoslavia, in order to alienate them from Albania which maintains an active atheistic stand. We have a right and a duty to fight and unmask such attempts at exploitation, as well as the Titoist political persecutions being perpetrated by chauvinist Great-Serbia and Great-Slavia against our Albanian brothers in Kosovë, Montenegro and Macedonia. These persecutions are perpetrated also through the use of religious faiths and in their name in order to divide and denationalize them.

The Patriarchate and the Greek Church also are engaged in incessant chauvinist activity, with decidedly political goals in mind. The Greek minority is a bridge of friendship between us and the people of Greece. Yet, foreign reaction seeks to turn that minority into an apple of discord, using for

this purpose the religious issue. In connection with this matter, comrade Enver Hoxha has said that, "We must not forget that the question of religion among the minority has been connected with the Greek propaganda for Great-Greece and 'Vorio-Epirus'; that is why we must engage in a ceaseless political and ideological struggle.... And when the question of religion is mixed up with politics, then the struggle must be stepped up."

It is true that relations between Greece and our country have improved perceptibly. This pleases us. At the same time, we cannot nourish any illusions, nor fail to take into consideration the fact that anti-Albanian reaction is strong and active in Greece. "The priest Sebasianos," (presumably, Greek Bishop Sevastianos Economides—Translator's note), comrade Ramiz Alia said on August 30, 1985 in Kolonjë, "who comes right up to our border, accompanied by Vorio-Epirotes of the Great-Greece movement, are fierce enemies of the Albanian people." Of course, the attempts of Greek political chauvinism to exploit and play with the religious remnants in the consciousness of certain people, especially the elderly, and its accusations and fabrications, collide with the exemplary fraternity that has been created and tempered between the members of the minority and the Albanians. They collide with the happy and flourishing life that (members of the Greek) minority have built and are enjoying in socialist Albania. Relying on sound reason, experience and the line of the Party, the members of the minority have expressed themselves without any vacillation against clericalism and the shackles of religion. The meaningful reply given by the old woman of the Greek minority to foreign



St. Prokop's Orthodox Church in Albanian capital, Tirane, 1938. In 1967 the church bell tower was removed and is now a coffee house.

journalists is by now well-known. To the question, "What happened to your church and your priest," she answered: "Neither the church nor the priest saved me from the (landowning) agas and beys. When they were in power, they gave me neither bread to eat, nor water to drink, nor electric light, nor did they educate my sons and daughters. It was only the National-Liberation War and my Party of Labor that gave me all of these things. That is why I love the Party and not the priest."

The Greek minority is closely tied to the Albanian people by the war and the work for the construction of a new life. Moreover, the badge of identity between our minority and the Greek people is not the Orthodox faith, however much weight that carries in the social life of Greece. It is rather tradition and other precious values, which have been a source of learning and inspiration to numerous generations and peoples—traditions that comrade Enver Hoxha evaluates very positively in his book, *Two Peoples Bound In Friendship*.

In the head-on and all-round struggle against religion and in favor of the atheistic-scientific education of our people, and in the context of discriminating educational work with them, we discern also a contingent of people who harbor certain remnants of religion and backward customs. It's a contingent that, as a rule, is getting smaller. This contingent is generally made up of our own people who have a correct political attitude and are closely tied to the Party and government, but who appear to be dualists and eclectics on certain positions and activities. We are talking here about that element that was able to pass easily to anti-clerical positions, but has not been able to rise to positions of active atheism, which would enable it to understand and evaluate matters scientifically and liberate itself from every trace of religious belief and religious preconceptions and practices.

The Party has made it clear to us that with these people it is necessary to do discriminating educational work, so as to fight the disease in order to save the patient; fight the remnants of religious preconceptions and backward customs in order to liberate the carriers. Discriminating work must be done as well with different categories of persons within this contingent. Some of these people retain remnants of religious preconceptions, backward customs, and certain practices connected with them because of their low educational and cultural level. A number of others do so because they lack sufficient willpower to face various difficulties, illnesses and misfortunes. It is in this group that we find persons who are disposed to frequent the so-called "good places," in the belief that they will find there a cure, good fortune and prosperity. With all of these categories of people, it is necessary to do specialized work, even to the point of working with individuals, one by one. This kind of work can be very effective especially with women, provided they are clear, among other things, about the denigrating, contemptuous,

and hostile attitude of religious-ideologies toward women.

In order to do atheistic educational work in the most concrete and effective manner, it is necessary to pay special attention to the entire range of problems we have dealt with. At the present stage we should pay even more attention to these problems, particularly in relation to certain areas in our life where traces of religious remnants and backward customs are more conspicuous.

A prominent factor in the consciousness of a good number of people is that of death, burial and cemeteries. In this delicate area, significant changes and progress has occurred in our midst. In times of bereavement our society enfolds the family and relatives of the departed one with powerful feelings of solidarity and special consideration. The popular saying that, "The true friend is known in times of trouble and misfortune," finds full expression and embodiment in such times of misfortune, which all of us experience. The habitual use of a considerable number of new, rational and lay norms, customs and practices on such occasions, unburdened by the spirit of religious mysticism and superstitions, is at present a potent reality among us.

But we know also that religion has tried to monopolize death, by enveloping it with a heavy shroud and erecting—over the pain and sadness that it occasions—an entire system of "condolences and serenity" that is deceptive from top to bottom. On the other hand, the clergy has used death as an instrument of intimidation and threats. There are people who are not typical believers, and do not accept the dogma of "resurrection" or the dogma of "another life" but who, nonetheless, are not able to oppose actions of a religious character, on account of the vacuum created by the death of close ones.

We realize that certain problems that lie within the confines of the family, among them those that are connected with death, burial and cemeteries, comprise the last fortress of religious preconceptions and practices that remains to be captured. And in order to conquer this fortress completely, we must work conscientiously, and with persistence and tact for clear and attainable goals, in order to affirm and consolidate the new funeral practices that are now widespread—practices that are free of every religious influence.

Another theme of atheistic education has to do with understanding the importance of the use of national names for children. As we know, personal names retain the imprint of the times when they were in circulation, and the features of the historical road traveled by our people. Certain names reflect the imprint of faith and superstitions which religion clothed with a special miraculous and protective power linked with a "saint", etc.

Naturally, the radical material and spiritual changes that have taken place in our life have left their imprints on the

character of proper names, as well. For example, whereas during the 1945-1950 period religious names in Himarë made up 80 percent of all personal names, in the years 1970-1975 they decreased to 40 percent, and by 1984 to 30 percent. The fact that religious and foreign personal names are being used to a considerable extent even today, should make us look at the weakness of our work in this area with a critical eye.

Everyone chooses names for one's children according to one's wishes, names that are beautiful and have a musical sound, etc. But since we have such beautiful national names, we would not be justified to use foreign names, which express nostalgia for religion and a fascination with things foreign. The totality of proper names expresses the national features of a people. Therefore, it is legitimate to insist on the use of national names, so that they may take the place they deserve, and so that the names of people do not become an indicator of the religious affiliations and divisions of yesteryear in the eyes of future generations. The offices of civil affairs are equipped with lists of national names, and in addition a reference work entitled, *Dictionary of People's Names*, with over 3,000 national names, was published in 1982. Even so, it is necessary to intensify and improve the instruction of the people, in order to instill deep-rooted convictions about the importance of using national names.

Another on-going problem is that of marriage ties between young people of different ex-religious backgrounds. From an ideological and political standpoint, these marriages amount to a defiance of religion, and are a factor in further strengthening the moral, political and ideological unity of our people. It is known that our nation has, since long ago, proclaimed the lapidary idea that "The religion of Albanians is Albanianism," and this idea has passed the most serious tests in decisive moments of our nation's history, both old and more recent. On all fronts, when faced with serious difficulties, our people have paid no attention to religious differences. On the contrary, they have opposed and overcome them, acting as a single body. But when it comes to forming marriage ties, and uniting two people of different ex-religious backgrounds, it's not an easy matter even today. In certain cases a barricade is put up, and the most varied obstacles and "reasons" are fabricated by the parents, grandparents and close relatives.

There is no reason to overestimate this negative manifestation, but neither must we underestimate it. To be sure, marriages are not made-to-order. But social opinion, the organizations of the Youth, the Front, etc., ought to rise up and react in an organized manner whenever backward mentalities and religious motives become obstacles to the love of young people of different ex-religions. By doing careful work of quality, we shall attain notable results in this direction as well.

There is work to be done also in fully persuading our

people that religious remnants serve as terrain for diversionary and aggressive ideological, political and espionage activity by imperialists and revisionists. We know that world reaction puts great trust in its ideological and cultural diversion against us, and in this diversionary activity it makes broad use of religion and the church. Its aims are to resurrect and propagate religious remnants among our people, use the cult and tools of religion for political and espionage work, and seek to disinform and debase social opinion with common lies and accusations about Albanian reality, so as to diminish the sympathy and authority of socialist Albania among the working masses of the world. For these purposes, reaction makes broad use of the radio, television and the press, furtively casts religious writings and books upon the waters of the Ionian and the Adriatic seas and the rivers Drin and Viosa, or else dispatches them with "tourists" and "visitors," builds and decorates shrines in the proximity of our borders, etc. It is clear, then, that we are dealing here with an organized and coordinated effort of all the forces and instruments of world reaction.

To these campaigns, which ebb and flow, we have given, and shall give the answer they deserve. Nonetheless, as long as this imperialist-revisionist ideological pressure and aggression exists, we have no right to underestimate it. As comrade Ramiz Alia has said, our Party teaches us that, "Behind foreign remnants, behind religious beliefs and backward customs, behind every non-socialist concept that someone harbors, there is the danger of degeneration, there is source material for the class enemy, imperialism and revisionism."

The reality, example and path of our fatherland have challenged not only the anachronisms of the centuries. They pose a serious challenge also to the anachronisms of the contemporary capitalist world, where religion is supported and propagated, like mildew in decaying matter. They unmask as well the betrayal of the modern revisionists, their reconciliation and ideological and political alliance with religion, the church, and the Vatican. That is why the Party teaches us that at the present stage of development in our country, the struggle against religious ideology is closely linked with the struggle against imperialism and revisionism.

The stand toward religion and clericalism is one of the most important and meaningfull yardsticks that distinguish and separate the true Marxist-Leninist parties of the working class from the opportunistic and revisionist parties.

In the life of a society, the old does not disappear automatically, neither does the new establish itself automatically. It is the activity of the Party and its affiliates, their educational atheistic-scientific work with the people—work that is constantly improving in quality—which will result, without any doubt, in the creation of a totally atheistic society in our country.

Holusi Hako

Traces of Religious Customs in Atheistic Albania

In this issue we continue with our established custom of presenting our readers with current reports and articles from the world press on Albania and about religious matters there. The reprint of David Storey's article from Reuters News Agency gives a comprehensive and factual picture of contemporary life in Albania.

For many years the Albanian Catholic Information Center has been documenting the abuse of religious rights by the Albanian government, which Storey summarizes so well in this report.

* * *

Lines for eggs and sugar at Tirana's tumbledown central market always split into two lines — one of men and one of women.

The sexist split is just one of the many vestiges of religious customs still evident in this closeted Marxist state, where Moslem and Christian religious institutions were uncompromisingly abolished 20 years ago.

Since the death two years ago of Enver Hoxha, the wartime partisan leader who ruled for 40 years, outsiders have looked for a possible relaxation of the hardline atheist stand.

Discussions with officials in Tirana indicated that the state policy of working for strict atheism would go on, although, contrary to earlier dogmatic rejection, a certain tolerance was expressed for private religious practice.

Religious believers in this mountainous Balkan state, which had nearly five centuries of Ottoman rule, were divided into about 70 percent Moslems, 20 percent Albanian Orthodox and 10 percent Roman Catholic.

"Institutional religion does not now exist. Religious consciousness does exist. We cannot stop that, ever, through legal means," conceded Hamid Beqja, psychology professor at Tirana University.

"Every man in his own house may practice religious rites," he said in an interview, rejecting suggestions that the state security police would seek to prevent such private practices.

He repeated official Albanian denials of reports that circulated widely abroad that the suppression of religious institutions in the late 1960s involved physical destruction of mosques and churches as well as killing or humiliation of some priests and dispatch of others to labor camps.

"In Albania people never had more than a superficial religious feeling," he said. "The problem of religion here is more of a problem for foreigners than for the Albanian people."

The policy of the ruling Albanian Workers (communist) Party was reasserted in March 1986 in an article in the party monthly *Rruga e Partisë*, a theoretical journal.

It said that while progress had been made in the task of creating a "completely atheistic society," there were "remnants and manifestations" of religion that were "still considerable, harmful, dangerous."

It said the family remained the "last bastion of some religious remnants, which must be conquered," and called for continued suppression, including "penal persecution," of those opposing the official line.

Although people are reluctant to talk openly about religion, it is obvious that many customs, including rules governing eating or working during festivals, are still widely respected.

One policy hammered out in propaganda is the full emancipation of women, whose lower social status is a feature of Moslem societies, and officials admit that this is meeting resistance at the family level.

Residents say marriages between those of different religious backgrounds are still rare.

The iconology of religion has given way to that of Marxist-Leninism. The suffering image of Christ in a church has made way for the avuncular, idealized portrait of Hoxha covering half the side of a building.

In place of the strictures of the Koran is the self-satisfied, hectoring tone of the ubiquitous red-on-white slogans: "Long Live the Central Committee of the AWP," "The Emancipation of the Albanian Woman is a Great Work of the AWP," and "Long Live our Heroic Working Class."

While the mosque in one corner of Skendërbeg Square in the center of Tirana is well-preserved, residents say churches and mosques elsewhere are dilapidated, many converted to museums, sports halls or cinemas.

The barring of religion has also created anomalies which prompted awkward solutions. The official English-language guide, while telling of the historic roots of the Albanian people, has to avoid referring to dates B.C. (Before Christ), referring instead to the period "before our era."



Albanian News & Events

ANNUAL MASS AND MEETING OF OUR CENTER

The annual meeting of the Albanian Catholic Information Center took place at Santa Clara University on Monday evening, November 24, 1986.

The group heard a report from the Center's delegation that had traveled to Rome to meet with the Holy Father. Everyone was pleased to learn of the warm reception our delegation received and enjoyed viewing the photos of the papal visit. Medals and rosaries, personally blessed by the Pope, were distributed to each person at the meeting.

Business included a discussion of the publication of an English translation of Father Jak Gardin's *S.J. TEN YEARS OF IMPRISONMENT IN ALBANIA*. An agreement was reached to proceed with publication. Plans were also made for a special Mass to observe the 75th anniversary of Albania's independence. A Liturgy will occur at St. Ignatius Church in San Francisco on November 28, 1987.

The Fall meeting concluded with a Liturgy in honor of the 74th anniversary of Albania's independence. A social get-together followed the meeting and the general feeling was one of renewed interest and enthusiasm for the Center's apostolate.

JESUIT PRIEST ARRESTED AGAIN IN ALBANIA

Jesuit Father Pjetër Meshkalla, an outspoken critic of the Albanian government's anti-religious laws and practices has been arrested once again for conducting religious services. According to information from recent Albanian refugees, Meshkalla was seized during the celebration of Christmas Mass at a private home in Guri i Zi.

Meshkalla was born in Shkoder in 1901. He studied at the Jesuit College and seminary there. After further studies in Torino and Rome, he graduated from the Gregorian University. Upon ordination to the priesthood in 1932, Meshkalla was assigned to teach at the *Saverianum* College and Pontifical Seminary. He wrote and composed the College hymn which even today is recognized for its patriotic lyrics and melodious tunes.

With the advent of the communist regime in 1944, Meshkalla soon came under suspicion for his criticism of the government. He was arrested in 1946 and spent the next 25 years in prisons and labor camps. Meshkalla was arrested again in 1973 and sentenced to life in prison. Ten years later he was granted amnesty due to poor health.

We believe that following Meshkalla's arrest at Christmas 1985 he was sent to the labor camp in Balsh. He was previously incarcerated at this camp for elderly prisoners. Meshkalla has served a total of 35 years in various

Albanian camps. We appeal to our readers to petition the Albanian government for his release.

TIRANA BOASTS OF RELIGIOUS ABOLITION ANNIVERSARY

The 20th anniversary of Enver Hoxha's speech that announced the abolition of religion in Albania was observed in Tirane with meetings and speeches. Top Albanian officials, including Hoxha's successor Ramiz Alia, hailed the brutal policies which eliminated the practice of all religions.

It is significant to note that Nexhmije Hoxha, the wife of the deceased leader, headed the campaign to observe this anniversary. After reading the Albanian press reports, it could be speculated that Nexhmije Hoxha is concerned that the orthodox "revolutionary spirit" of the Albanian people may be subsiding.

REMAINS OF EXECUTED JESUIT PRIEST TO LEAVE ALBANIA?

The Italian Jesuit Giovanni (Gjon) Fausti spent more than 10 years in Albania on missionary and teaching assignments, prior to and during World War II. Father was arrested in January 1945 on charges of alleged anti-communist activity. He was executed after a mock trial in March, 1946.

At the time of his arrest, Fausti was vice-provincial of Albanian Jesuits. Earlier, in 1944, he was seriously injured while attempting to lead a group of Albanians into the safety of the Jesuit Cathedral church in Tirane.

Fausti initiated a Christian dialogue with the Albanian Islamic leaders. He thus became the precursor of Christian-Islamic ecumenism. Among those condemned with Fausti was Moslem clergyman Hafun Dëguti.

Since his execution in 1946, the town of Brozzo in Brescia province honors Fausti's memory with an annual ceremony and special Mass. The school in Brozzo has been named after its native son.

In 1986, Bishop Bruno Foresti of Brescia led the memorial services which marked the 40th anniversary of Fausti's execution. Fausti's Jesuit classmates Giacomo (Jak) Gardin, Arcisio Tamburini, Lino Tonon and Silvano Fausti (a nephew) celebrated mass with the bishop.

We have recently learned that the Fausti family has taken legal steps to bring his remains from Albania to Brozzo. According to general international practices, the Albanian government is bound to permit the transfer of his remains.

An eyewitness account of Father Gjon Fausti's martyrdom can be found on page 9 of this issue.

Marian Year:

Holy Father and Mother Teresa to Visit Our Lady of Shkodra Sanctuary in Genazzano, Italy?

On Pentecost Sunday, June 7, 1987, His Holiness Pope John Paul II solemnly began the 14-month-long Marian Year in a world-wide televised rosary program. The devotions to Mary, the Mother of God, will help Catholics to prepare for the third millenium of Christianity. This Marian Year is only the second that has been called in the Church's history. The previous one was held in 1954-55 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

Until August 15, 1988, the feast of Mary's Assumption into heaven, every diocese across the world will foster intense devotion to Mary. Activities include special para-liturgical services and pilgrimages to Marian shrines.



Two Albanian pilgrims following the miraculous painting of Our Lady of Shkodra

The Albanian community in Rome is shepherded by the Franciscan Father Daniel Gjeçaj of the Church of San Gregorio. Gjeçaj is hopeful that Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa will agree to lead a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Counsel, patroness of Albania. This Sanctuary is located in the town of Genazzano near Rome. It is widely known throughout Europe as the Sanctuary of Madonna di Scutari (Madonna of Shkodra).

According to holy legend, the miraculous painting of the Madonna dates back to the Ottoman occupation of Albania in 1467. When the small church beneath the Shkodra castle was threatened with desecration by the Turkish forces, the painting of the Madonna miraculously rose up, fled the chapel, and came to rest at Genazzano accompanied by two Albanian pilgrims. For centuries Albanians have sung hymns to the Madonna, pleading her to return to the homeland.

On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, His Holiness Pope John XXIII journeyed to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Shkodra in Genazzano.

The Albanian faithful in Rome and throughout the world pray that Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa will be able to lead them in pilgrimage and prayer for world peace and reconciliation in their homeland at the Sanctuary in Genazzano.

Refugees Tell of Persecution in Albania

Although Albania remains a "sealed" country, some refugees still manage to escape. In the past few years, there have been more than a hundred who have successfully eluded the border guards—some by swimming and some by making the difficult crossing of the Albanian Alps. These refugees have been the primary source of information on the harsh conditions prevailing in Albania.

Among those recently who fled to the West are two brothers from Shkodra, Gjovalin and Franc Vacaj, 27 and 23 years old. Upon their arrival in Trieste, the brothers Vacaj declared to Italian authorities that the continuous denial of their basic human rights had forced them to flee. Furthermore, they stated that religious persecution in Albania continues under the new leadership that succeeded Hoxha.

Arbëresh Prelate Heads Inter-Faith Dialogue Commission

Monsignor Eleuterio F. Fortino, the Eastern Orthodox Churches delegate to the Secretariat for Christian Unity, has recently been named Secretary of the International Commission for Theological Dialogue (ICTD) between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches.

The ICTD was created in 1979 on the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit to the Ecumenical Patriarch. Since its founding, the ICTD has met in Patmos-Rode, Greece (1980); in Munich, West Germany (1982); in Crete, Greece

(1984), and in Bari, Italy (1986). Monsignor Fortino also headed the 1978 Coordinating Committee of the Commission, which, in conjunction with an Orthodox delegation, drafted the preparatory document for this important effort at Catholic-Orthodox dialogue.

Although busy with his many responsibilities at the Vatican Monsignor Fortino takes time to lead and organize religious, cultural, and social events at Rome's BESA-FEDE

Center. He founded the Albanian-Arberesh Center some twenty years ago. Fortino has authored several important Byzantine liturgical manuals. In 1968 Fortino coordinated the 500th Anniversary celebration honoring Albania's national hero Skanderbeg. This 1968 celebration drew over 2,000 Albanians from abroad to the Vatican.

Our Center is privileged and proud to have worked closely with Monsignor Eleuterio Fortino. We congratulate our Arbëresh brother and pray for him in his new responsibilities.



Monsignor Eleuterio Fortino with His Holiness John Paul II

Weeping Madonna in Albanian Orthodox Church

In December 1986 it was reported that a painting of the Virgin Mary with Infant Jesus in St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church in Chicago, had been weeping. Thousands of visitors have swamped the small Orthodox Church to witness the reported miracle each day.

Our Center director, Father Leo G. Neal, OFM.Conv., visited the church and was warmly received by Fr. Pastor Philip Koufos. Koufos reported that the weeping icon first was noticed by parishioners on the eve of the feast of St. Nicholas, December 5, shortly before evening services.

Father Kuofos described the reaction of those people who have viewed the icon as "awe" and "soul searching." He estimated that more than 500,000 pilgrims have journeyed to the small 300-seat Orthodox church in Chicago.



St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church, Chicago

Vatican Honors Monsignor Zef Shestani

On Christmas Day 1986, the Vatican announced that Father Zef Shestani was named Monsignor - Custos of the Holy Father's Chamber. This esteemed title is given by the Holy See to only a few priests for great contributions as public servants.

The 1985 ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN highlighted Shestani's life on the golden jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood. As Radio Vatican's oldest employee, he has directed the Albanian language program for over 35 years. Long before his appointment, he was reverently and affectionately addressed as "Monsignor."

This honor is a public recognition of Shestani's faithful and untiring efforts to spread the Word of God to the persecuted in Albania.

All Albanians, including Catholics, Orthodox, Moslems who the Monsignor has served so often in the difficult times of fascist occupation, refugee camps and in exile rejoice with him on this special occasion. We salute him and wish him many more fruitful years in the Lord's service. Our Center staff warmly congratulates Zef Shestani and assures him of our prayers.

Famous Arberesh Choir To Tour Major U.S. Cities

The Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Piana degli Albanesi in Sicily has treasured its traditional Church hymns and songs of the Albanian-Italians. The Eparchy since 1937 has served as the center for religious activity and cultural revival for the Arbëresh faithful. In honor of its 50th anniversary, special programs will be held in Piana and elsewhere.

We have been informed that preparations are now under way for a North American tour by the famous Arbëresh choir of Piana degli Albanesi. The Choir will be accompanied by His Excellency Bishop Ercole (Iracli) Lupinacci of the eparchy together with a number of Arbëresh priests. Beyond its scheduled public concerts, the choir will also participate in liturgies tentatively planned in New York, Boston, Toronto and Sacramento.

The Arbëresh choir has performed in a number of important Albanian events of international character. They sang at the celebration of the Fifth Centenary of the death of Albania's national hero Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg in Rome in 1968. More recently the choir performed at the dedication ceremonies of Skanderberg Square in Paris in 1980.



Monsignor Zef Shestani (center) with Albanian Catholic Action group in Rome, 1948

"ALBANIANS PROVIDED A HAVEN FOR JEWS"

A letter in **DIELLI** (The Sun) of Boston reported that "Jews were first recorded in Albania in the 12th century. Their more recent history has its roots among Spanish Jews who arrived in Albania in the 1500s."

According to the writer, the "Jewish immigrants thrived mostly as traders in Valona and Durazzo, and the decline of these ports in the late 1800's was met with a significant corresponding emigration to the Macedonian seaport of Salonika, then more prosperous."

"The Albanian Jewish community was granted official government recognition in 1937. Before the outbreak of World War II, King Zog gave political asylum to more than 500 Jews fleeing persecution in Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia. They were granted Albanian citizenship and were allowed to remain or leave as they wished."

"Albania, a small Balkan nation, opened its arms and provided Jews a safe haven while other nations chose to close their eyes and their doors. The **AMERICAN EXAMINER-JEWISH WEEK** (October 1973) noted that 'Albanian Jews were unharmed following the mid-1943 German invasion, and many Serbian and Croatian Jews fled to Albanian lands, where they were well treated by the local population.' Albanians hid, aided and comforted their fellow human beings during a most difficult time in world history."

"The Jewish population in Albania today stands at approximately 300, with most living in Valona and Tirane. The **AMERICAN EXAMINER-JEWISH WEEK** stated that 'there is no active discrimination against or persecution of Jews apart from the religious prohibitions under which all believers suffer in Albania.' Among the noteworthy of the Jewish community were a leading Tirana doctor and lecturers at Tirana University."

Nderim Kupi, an Albanian activist living in New York, prepared the above statement in response to a **NEW YORK TIMES** story (August 30, 1986) about Samuel Matathia, an Albanian Jew who fled to Greece last year.

BOLD FILM STORY ON MOTHER TERESA

MOTHER TERESA, a documentary film on the 1979 Nobel Peace prize winning Albanian nun, was shown in North American theaters and in cinemas in over 60 other countries. Although the film was aired on national television the long lines of interested viewers set attendance records at city theaters.

The documentary of the foundress of the Missionaries of Charity was produced by the American-sister team of Jeanette and Ann Petrie. It premiered at the United Nations headquarters on October 26, 1985 to mark the organization's 40th anniversary and was later shown to members of the United States Senate and to World Synod of Bishops Meeting in Rome. According to Jeannette Petrie, television stations in at least 45 nations have contracted for broadcast

POLITICAL ASYLUM FOR ALBANIAN POPA FAMILY

Few people in the United States know about the plight of the Popa family. On December 12, 1985, the Popa's took refuge in the Italian embassy in Tirane. Ever since, the Albanian family has been seeking political asylum and permission to leave Albania. Italian government officials have been reluctant to grant them asylum for fear of disrupting the improved economic-cultural relations between the two countries. Albania, on the other hand, has accused the family of being "reactionary spies" and "traitors" and has repeatedly demanded that Italy hand them over. Furthermore, the Albanian authorities have employed every means of pressure to have the family removed from the embassy, even to refusing them food and medical supplies.

The cause of the Popa family has gained considerable support in Western Europe among religious and human rights groups as well as in parliamentary and governmental circles. In 1986, the Popa case was presented to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. President Pierre de Villemarest of the Foundation for Europe in Paris strongly urged support for the Popa family.

Forty-three members of the Italian parliament requested the government to grant political asylum to the family. Among the petitioners was Giancarlo Pajetta, a leader of the Italian Communist Party. It is hoped that the new Italian government which will emerge from the 1987 elections will feel bound to make a decision regarding the Popa family.

Our Center is confident that their decision will reflect Italy's long-standing reputation of upholding the United Nations' Charter and Declaration on Human Rights.



Mother Teresa, topic of film Jeanette (l.) and Ann Petrie (r.) rights to the film.

The film covers the international works of charity of Mother Teresa and her sisters. It gives a comprehensive and vivid view of its subject matter. It is also a remarkable testament to the devotion of the Petrie sisters and their production crew over the long months of filming. According to press reviews, the film **MOTHER TERESA** is "absorbing, sometimes plodding, but bold, surprising and provocative."

An Unexpected Encounter With Mother Teresa

On the afternoon of September 29, 1986, Father Leo G. Neal, O.F.M., Conv., the director of the Albanian Catholic Information Center, was waiting in an anteroom to be received by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Unexpectedly, the saintly Albanian sister, Mother Teresa Bojaxhiu, walked into the room. Father Neal immediately gave her the traditional Albanian Catholic greeting, "Kjoftë levdue Jezu Krishti" (Praise be the name of Jesus). A surprised Mother Teresa—thinking that Father Neal was a fellow Albanian—happily responded, "Gjithmonë e jetës" (Now and forever). She told Father Neal that for quite some time she had not heard Albanian spoken; so when greeted unexpectedly in her mother-tongue, she was pleased and moved.

During their conversation, Father Neal informed Mother Teresa that he had accompanied the Albanian Catholic Information Center delegation to Rome on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Center's foundation. He told her of his great joy at being able to concelebrate Mass with the Holy Father. He shared the details of the delegation's private reception with His Holiness. Mother Teresa seemed pleased to hear of the meeting with the pontiff and for the Center's activity for the restoration of religious freedom in Albania.

At the close of the conversation, she inquired if there was any change in Albania during the last two years. Father Neal informed her that there was none in the government's policy towards religion. He asked Mother Teresa to continue to pray that the Lord may touch the hearts of the Albanian leaders to allow religious freedom. She responded that she would pray for this intention and asked Father's prayers for her "poor-ones."



Fr. Rrok Mirdita



*Lutuni shumë për mua
dhe fukarat e jonë
Zoti kjoftë me ju
la Teresa me*

Translation of Mother Teresa's autograph: "Pray much for me and my poor ones. God be with you."

NEW PASTOR FOR ALBANIAN BRONX PARISH

Following the retirement of Monsignor Joseph Oroshi in June 1986, Reverend Rrok Mirdita was appointed administrator of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in the Bronx, New York. John Cardinal O'Connor named Mirdita to lead the Albanian parish community on July 1, 1986.

Father Mirdita came from the archdiocese of Tivar, Yugoslavia, to the United States in 1973 at the invitation of Oroshi. Soon after he was assigned by the New York Chancery Office to assist Oroshi in the care of this large Albanian parish. As assistant pastor, Mirdita labored long and hard for the spiritual well being of his Albanian flock as well as for their social and cultural needs.

Since 1985 Father has directed the New York radio program, "Voice of the Albanian Catholic." This program presents a variety of Scripture passage readings plus news and events of Albania and the New York Albanian community.

We wish Father Rrok Mirdita a grace-filled ministry as pastor and assure him of our continued prayers and support.

SILVER JUBILEE OF ALBANIAN PRIEST

Father Prenk (Primus) Ndrevasaj, pastor of Our Lady of Albanians Church in Birmingham, Michigan, celebrated the 25th Anniversary of his ordination on Sunday, May 4, 1986. A concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving was well attended by parishioners and Albanian Orthodox and Muslim guests.

Father Ndrevasaj was born in Albania on June 24, 1928. His primary and secondary studies were completed at the Jesuit seminary in Shkodër. After fleeing Albania in 1951, Ndrevasaj enrolled at Propaganda Fide College in Rome and was ordained in December 1961. He was incardinated into the diocese of Porto and Santa Rufina in Rome.



Fr. P. Ndrevasaj (second from left) with other Albanian clergy at 1985 Commemoration observance.

Ndrevasaj engaged in a variety of apostolic works among Albanian refugees in Europe. In 1967 he coordinated the celebration honoring the 5th centenary of Our Lady of Shkodra in Rome. At the anniversary celebration Pope Paul VI addressed the Albanian pilgrim congregation.

Father Ndrevasaj came to the United States in 1971 and was assigned to work with the Albanian community at Detroit's Resurrection parish. Later he moved to Detroit's Holy Rosary parish. Then in 1977, Father was named administrator of Our Lady of Albanians Church in Birmingham. He was finally incardinated into the Detroit Archdiocese by Archbishop Edmund Szoka in 1982.

Father Ndrevasaj represented the United States Albanian Catholic community at the solemn Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania held in San Francisco in 1985.

The Albanian Catholic Information Center congratulates Father Prenk Ndrevasaj on his 25 years of faithful service to the Albanian community in America and wishes him many more years of fruitful priestly ministry.

ALBANIAN LEADER CRUSADES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Zef Margjinaj, an Albanian freedom fighter of the 1940s and 1950s has recently been addressing associations and groups throughout Italy on the subject of human rights in Albania. Margjinaj is the author of *MARCH OF AN ALBANIAN TOWARDS LIBERTY*—a moving story of his ordeals as a guerilla fighter and prisoner. He is also an organization leader of the German-based ALBANIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

The Albanian crusader is characterized by his "simple sincerity, speaking from his heart and soul on suffering and the spirit of resistance." His conferences have attracted large audiences. ALLEANZA CATTOLICA sponsored speeches have received extensive coverage in the Italian press.

Our 1984 BULLETIN reviewed the Italian version of Zef Margjinaj's book (page 79). The work has now been translated into English and will be reviewed in our next issue.

COMMUNITY AWAITS PASTOR FOR DETROIT ALBANIAN PARISH

Since its inception in 1981, St. Paul's Albanian Catholic Church in Warren, Michigan, has been without a permanent pastor. Temporary administrators have ministered to the needs of the parishioners. Effective January 1987 Father John Schweder replaced Father Julian Chmura.

Although the Albanian Catholic community in this parish numbers close to 10,000 members, it remains sorely in need of an Albanian-speaking priest to care for the congregation. The majority of parishioners are refugees from the Tivar Diocese in Yugoslavia. For many years there have been pleas made to the Archbishop of Tivar as well as to the Detroit Chancery for an Albanian pastor for St. Paul's Church. To date no such appointment has been made. It is hoped that an Albanian-speaking priest soon will be assigned to shepherd the parishioners of St. Paul's.



Fr. John Schweder

Congressman William S. Broomfield Honored by Detroit Albanians

U.S. Rep. William S. Broomfield (Republican—Birmingham, MI), was honored at a testimonial banquet given by the Albanians in metropolitan Detroit on Saturday, May 9, 1987. The banquet, which was attended by 450 people, was held in the beautiful Westin Hotel at the City's Renaissance Center.

The Congressman, who is ranking GOP member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, was honored in recognition of his outstanding service in behalf of the two and a half million ethnic Albanians in Kosovë, Yugoslavia, victims of the oppressive policies of the Yugoslav government.

At the banquet, Rep. Broomfield announced plans for two significant initiatives to aid the Kosovars both in Yugoslavia and those presently residing in the United States who are savagely intimidated by Secret Agents of Yugoslavia. He said late this year he intends to present a proposal in Washington to open a U.S. Consulate in Prishtinë, capital city in Kosovë. In the meantime he will introduce legislation to put an end to the scandalous underhanded activity of UDBA (Yugoslav secret agency), so that Kosovar Americans may no longer live in fear of Yugoslav agents. His speech was enthusiastically applauded in a standing ovation by the banquet guests.

The dinner affair aroused widespread interest and attracted people from Chicago, Canada, Boston, Washington, D.C., and New York which was represented by a contingent of 70 persons. Apart from Albanian-Americans, the banquet was attended by guests representing Croats, Hungarians, Polish, Ukrainians and other ethnic groups in the U.S., many of whom have their own grievances against the Yugoslav government.

The banquet program was opened by Ekrem Bardha, noted Albanian activist and Chairman of the Albanian-American Republican Clubs of America. Bardha said, among other things, that at least 14 Albanian families had stayed away from the banquet because of threats by people working for the communist government of Yugoslavia.

The dinner guests also heard speeches by Fron Nazi, graduate student of Public Policy at the University of Albany, N.Y.; Zef Camaj, a graduate student of Albanian Studies at the University of Prishtine, former director of the *Pobieda* (Victory) newspaper in Titograd, Montenegro, and presently director of an Albanian Radio Program in New York City; and Pjetër Ivezaj who told of his harrowing experience at the hands of Yugoslav authorities in Montenegro last year. All of the speakers were warmly applauded.



Congressman William S. Broomfield with Albanian Human Rights activists in Washington, 1987

Gjon Luljguraj, vice-chairman of the banquet along with Mark Martini, introduced Rep. Broomfield to the guests and told them of his fine record during 30 years of service in the U.S. Congress. A commemorative plaque was presented to the Congressman at the banquet in appreciation of his energetic work to secure justice and equality for the Kosovars.

The Albanian Kosovar Youth In The Free World took note of the banquet by distributing a pamphlet which saluted Rep. Broomfield and hailed him as "an important figure in the struggle for human rights." The *Detroit News* reported the Broomfield banquet in an article headed, "Broomfield to probe Yugoslav threats." The article (dated May 1, 1987) quoted the Congressman as saying that "a regular pattern of harassment and intimidation" of Kosovars by Yugoslav agents exists in the Detroit area.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON ALBANIAN CULTURE

Since 1975 the University of Prishtinë, Kosovë, has organized annual Albanian studies seminars. The gathering, which brings together international scholars, has become a tradition of great cultural and scientific significance.

The August 15-29, 1986 Seminar was primarily devoted to the literary and linguistic works of the famed Jesuit scholar, Ndrë Mjedja. Presentations on his works were made by Professors Ruxhdi Ushaku, Zef Mirdita, Shetki Sejdiu and Xhavit Alakaj. Participants enjoyed the topics and particular attention was paid to Zef Mirdita's discourse on "Religious Elements in the Poetry of Ndrë Mjedja."

A Chair of Albanian Studies in a United States University?

There are approximately 300,000 individuals of Albanian origin, or descent, living in the United States in 1987. Included in that number are some 100,000 Arberesh-Americans (Italo-Albanian-American), among whom the ancient Albanian traditions remain a living daily phenomenon. This large Albanian community has for a long time desired a center in which young Albanian-Americans could cultivate a knowledge of their heritage based upon the highest possible standard of academic research. For the past 30 years, a number of American linguistic scholars including Professor Eric Hamp, of the University of Chicago faculty, have done a considerable amount of research on the Albanian language and culture. These efforts have sparked widespread interest in the field among the academic community at large.

No Chair of Albanian Studies has been established to date in the United States university system. It is unfortunate that the many students who desire to pursue their interests in various aspects of Albanian culture are obliged to travel overseas to study in Europe, primarily in Munich.

Two eminent Albanian Studies scholars Martin Camaj and Leonard Fox proposed in June 1986 to establish an endowment fund to finance a Chair in Albanian Studies. This proposal has aroused a genuine interest in some academic circles and sparked a lively discussion among the Albanian-American and Arbëresh communities in both the United States and Canada.

According to April 30, 1987 report in the Boston-based Albanian-English bi-weekly *DIELLI* (The Sun), New York University officials have agreed to establish a Chair in Albanian culture. The Chair will be funded with gifts totalling \$1.2 million. It will be dedicated to preserving Albanian culture in the United States by making instruction available in Albanian language, culture and history. Individuals or corporations who wish to make a gift or obtain further information about tax-deductible contributions to New York University for this most worthy undertaking, may contact Mrs. JANE F. KARLIN, Director of Development for the Faculty of Arts and Science, 25 West Fourth Street, New York, New York 10012. Checks should be made payable to New York University and should be designated for the ALBANIAN CHAIR.

We encourage all our readers and friends to support this campaign for a Chair in Albanian Studies in one of America's outstanding educational establishments.

ALBANIAN EDUCATOR VISITS SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

The well-known Albanian scholar and author Dr. Martin Camaj of the University of Munich faculty visited the Albanian-Arberesh communities in the United States during 1986. He was accompanied by his wife, Dr. Erica Camaj.

During meetings with Albanian-Arberesh cultural and business leaders in New York, Boston, Washington and Detroit, Dr. Camaj explored the possibilities of establishing a Chair of Albanian Studies in an American university.

Camaj also visited in San Francisco Bay Area April 22 to May 30, 1986. He met with members of the Albanian Catholic Information Center and faculty members of the University of San Francisco, Santa Clara University and Stanford University. Serious discussions took place regarding a summer seminar in Albanian Studies at one of these universities.

Dr. Camaj was honored at a dinner reception in the Faculty Club of Santa Clara University. A presentation of his works was offered during the reception. Rev. James Torrens, S.J., who had translated a number of Camaj's poems, expressed the need for English translations of Albanian literature to be made more available throughout the United States.

Our Center is hopeful that a seminar on Albanian culture may be held each summer in the near future at one of the Bay Area universities.



Dr. Martin and Erica Camaj and friends at a 1986 Santa Clara University reception

Golden Jubilee of Father Giacomo (Jak) Gardin, S.J.

A long-time missionary to Albania, Father Giacomo (Jak) Gardin, S.J., celebrated on September 8, 1986 in Parma, Italy the golden jubilee of his priesthood. Bishop Benito Cocchi of Parma was the principal celebrant and homilist at a concelebrated Mass. A gathering of family and friends attended the liturgical celebration and reception.

Father Gardin was born in Friuli in the province of Pordenone (northern Italy) on September 24, 1905. At the age of eighteen he entered the Society of Jesus. After his novitiate he studied philosophy at Chieri, Torino. A desire to serve in the order as a missionary to Albania was honored and in 1930 he was sent as a scholastic to Shkodra. Here he taught classes in religion, Italian and Latin. During this period he also began an intensive study of the Albanian language and culture. His mentor was the well known poet, Father Ndré (Andrew) Mjedja, S.J.

In 1933 Gardin returned to Torino to complete his studies in theology. He was ordained on July 19, 1936, by the Archbishop of Torino, Cardinal Maurilio Fossati. The following year he was sent to Paray-le-Monial in France for his last year of formation in the Society of Jesus.

Father returned to Albania in 1938 and was assigned to teach at St. Francis Xavier College (Saverianum) and to be a spiritual director at the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodra. For seven years he gave himself fully to teaching and counseling the Albanian seminarians preparing for the priesthood. Father's deep faith and strong example endeared him to his students and to those who were privileged to know him. It was at this time that he began to be fondly referred to as Father Jak (Albanian for Giacomo).



Fr. Jak Gardin, S.J. before his imprisonment in 1945

At the time of the Communist takeover of Albania in November, 1944, Father Gardin was also director of the Don Bosco Student Association. In this capacity and as a Jesuit priest his efforts to preserve and foster religious and



... and after his release, 1955, in a happy moment with confreres

moral integrity among Albanian youth attracted notice. His sermons at the Jesuit Church and at the Cathedral of Shkodra drew crowds of believers seeking the truth and encouragement to preserve in their faith. The new Communist authorities eyed with suspicion Gardin's religious activities, and on the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga he was hurriedly arrested at the end of a day of recollection for young people. For two months he was harshly interrogated and after a mock trial in August, 1945, he was sentenced to five years in prison. Having served the term, he was held captive for another five years because he was considered too dangerous to release. Following these ten trying years of deprivation and suffering, Father Gardin was finally freed in September, 1955.

Back home in Italy, Gardin was subsequently assigned as a superior to various Jesuit communities in the north. During a stay in Trieste (1964-1976), he assisted many Albanian refugees in their spiritual and social needs.

In 1985, Gardin represented the Jesuit Superior General, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., at the San Francisco observance of the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania.

Father Jak Gardin has been a friend, associate and counsellor to the Albanian Catholic Information Center since its inception in 1966. He accompanied the Center's delegation to Rome in September, 1986 for its private papal visit and Mass. For the occasion Father presented His Holiness with the first copy of his book: *Ten Years of Imprisonment in Albania*. Our prayers and best wishes are with him on this special anniversary.

35 YEARS OF VATICAN RADIO'S ALBANIAN PROGRAM

On October 31, 1951, Vatican Radio aired for the first time an Albanian language program. It was a most welcome religious and cultural event for Albanians of all faiths, who were undergoing a bloody persecution. For 35 years, the program has been the only public media source of spiritual encouragement for the Albanian people.

The Vatican Radio's program staff has labored to preserve the traditional religious values of Albanian Catholics. It has also addressed national and cultural topics of contemporary Albania.

We congratulate the staff of Vatican Radio for its 35 years of devoted service. We await with great expectation the program's airing of an Albanian language Mass.



Vatican Radio's Albanian Program staff, Vatican, 1986

LITHUANIANS TO CELEBRATE 600 YEARS OF CATHOLICISM

Lithuanians world-wide are preparing to celebrate the 600th anniversary of their conversion to Christianity in 1387.

Although the Lithuanians were the last Europeans to accept Christianity, they have remained faithful to Catholicism through the Reformation, through 150 years of czarist-imposed Russian Orthodoxy, and most recently for 40 years of Soviet-based atheism.

Lithuania is the only predominantly Catholic republic in the Soviet Union. It has rightfully been called "an outpost of Catholicism."

There are three million Lithuanians living in western Europe, the Americas, and Australia. Bishop Paul Baltakis, O.F.M., was consecrated in 1984 to take care of their spiritual needs.

Albanian Catholics rejoice with their persecuted Lithuanian brothers and sisters on this anniversary for their perseverance in the faith and pray for their deliverance.

ALBANIAN DEVOTIONAL SONGS ON CASSETTE

The Albanian Catholic Missionary Center in Stuttgart, West Germany, has been working ceaselessly to resettle Catholic and Moslem Albanians from Yugoslavia in their new country. The Center's purpose is to offer spiritual, social and legal assistance to new arrivals.

A cassette of Albanian devotional songs has been produced by the Center's directors, Father Hil Kabashi, O.F.M. and Pjetër Mjeda. A beautifully-bound Albanian language prayer book was published by the Center in 1986. Both the cassette and prayerbook are available from: MISIONI KATOLIK SHQIPTAR, Charlottenstrasse 4, D-7000, Stuttgart 1, West Germany.

"OPEN DOORS" MISSION IN ALBANIA

Since its formation in 1955, Brother Andrew's Christian Mission OPEN DOORS has worked to alleviate the pain and suffering of persecuted Christians in Communist countries. In 1985, the Holland-based Christian Mission celebrated its 30th anniversary of service. Its works have spread to 40 countries. The Mission workers distribute Bibles and religious literature and they prepare radio programming in the languages of these countries.

For some time, the organization has been working with Albanian believers. Through prayer groups, radio programs and religious publications, OPEN DOORS has given valuable support to persecuted Albanian believers.

Brother Andrew, the founder and president of OPEN DOORS participated in the 40th Anniversary Commemoration of Religious Persecution in Albania, held in San Francisco in 1985.

OPEN DOORS recently embarked on a courageous project entitled REBUILD. The goal of REBUILD is to restore religious liberty in Albania through the cooperation of concerned Christians.



Brother Andrew, founder and president of
OPEN DOORS Christian Mission

"Som en Drömmande . . ." (As if Dreaming)

The 1984 ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN contained a poem by the Arbëresh poet Mario Brasacchio entitled COME SOGNANDO (As If Dreaming). A Swedish reader and friend Alfred Berglund has translated it into the Swedish language.

Mr. Berglund has been interested for many years in Albanian culture. He has been studying the Albanian language for some time. Among his other Albanian to Swedish translations are THE DESPERATE PRAYER by the poet, Ernest Koliqi. Berglund is a freelance writer who often contributes articles on Albania to Swedish newspapers and magazines.

"SOM EN DRÖMMANDE . . ."

*På tankens vingar
Till dessa berg jag flyger
till öppen sky
Som ger sådan frid och charm,
till Pallagorio.
Från bergets topp
jag skådar på vida vägar,
Jag hör albanska talas
och blir barn igen,
Sökande kära hädangängnas ansikten.
Jag hör urgamla klockor
deras mäktiga eko,
över bergen, över havet
Skall nå till bröder i Albanien
Skall säkerligen sjunga.
Ojupt; vänt blod vibär,
Vi albaner,
något odödligt väsen,
Som talar med vår faders tunga
Som gör och håller oss bröder
Som är spridda i världen.
För dig, Albanien, var kärlek klappar
kärlek som de gamle bringade till Italien
Kärlek fosfrad i söners minnen,
den känner havets vägar,
den fruktar ej bergets höjd
till dig den stracker sig på vindens vingar
Kommande ned med himmelens dagg.
Har jag drömt det? Selt det? hört?
en gynnsam framtid skall göra klart . . .*

Translated by Alfred Berglund, Sweden

POLISH-HUNGARIAN UPRISING OF 1956 COMMEMORATED

Polish and Hungarian communities in northern California solemnly observed the 30th anniversary of the October Uprising against Soviet domination. The ceremonies were attended by a score of representatives from captive nations, including Afghanistan, Cambodia, Vietnam and Nicaragua. The celebrations honored the victims of the Polish "Freedom and Bread" revolt of June 1956 and the Hungarian revolution of October 1956.

The ceremonies of August 23 and October 19, 1986 in San Francisco were covered by television and local news media. Federal and State representatives as well as members of the U.S. Senate addressed the gatherings. Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco was the principal celebrant of a special memorial mass on September 21, 1986.

A Symposium on EAST CENTRAL EUROPE TODAY followed these anniversary observances in March, 1987. Six East European scholars chaired the Symposium which was moderated by Dr. George Lerski, professor emeritus of the University of San Francisco.

The organizing committee for these observances was chaired by two active leaders of the Polish-Hungarian communities in northern California, Wojciech Winkler and Katalin Persik-Lazar.

At the ceremonies, the Albanian Catholic Information Center was represented by Father Leo G. Neal, O.F.M., Conv.; Mary McDonald, Barbara Kay, Gjon Sinishta and Catherine Murphy.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON RELIGION IN COMMUNIST LANDS

The New York-based Research Center for Religion and Human Rights in Communist Dominated Areas held its annual conference at Marymount College in Arlington, Virginia, May 21-23, 1986. This was the third successive conference that the RCDA held at the Arlington college.

The topic this year was THE BALKANS (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia) AND THE SOVIET UNION: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

The conference brought together a number of scholars. It was well attended by those interested in the present-day conditions of these countries. Of particular interest to Albanians was the presentation by Harvard University Professor Nicholas Stancou on THE POLITICS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN ALBANIA.

Although invited to participate, the Albanian Catholic Information Center was unable to attend. We were pleased to learn that Dr. Elez Bibeni of Columbia University and Adem Kodo, editor of the Albanian Quarterly, NDËRSGJAGJA (Conscience), were present and participated in the discussions. It is hoped that the RCDA journal will carry in its forthcoming issue all the conference papers in their entirety or abridged.

The Origin and Purpose of the Albanian Catholic Information Center

The Albanian Catholic Information Center is presently located at Santa Clara University (Box 1217 University, Santa Clara, California, U.S.A., 95053). The Center celebrated its 20th Anniversary in September, 1986. Since its foundation the goal and very purpose of the Center has been to materially and intellectually assist the persecuted Church in Albania as well as to uphold the morale of its members. The Center staff has taken advantage of religious freedom in America in order to point to the lack of this same freedom in other countries. American citizens of Albanian origin naturally show special concern for this issue. Through their efforts, other individuals become aware of the dire conditions faced by members of all faiths in Albania. The history of the Center's relocation to its current California site traces the process by which international attention can be focused on the condition of religious freedom in many countries.

In September, 1966, John Cardinal Dearden of Detroit, Michigan (U.S.A.) officially recognized the AMERICAN ALBANIAN CATHOLIC CHARITY as an organization "to assist the Catholic clergy in Albania." In November of the same year, the CHARITY organized the First Commemoration of the Persecuted Albanian Church. A Mass of Peace and Reconciliation was celebrated at the University of Detroit. On this occasion, there was an exhibit of the documents recounting religious persecution in Albania that was not generally known in the rest of the world. For this first Commemoration, a booklet entitled *Sacrifice for Albania* was prepared in four languages by the CHARITY organization. The work offered the first detailed explanation

of the tragic religious situation in Albania.

During 1967, CHARITY sponsored and settled more than 500 Albanian refugees in Detroit, Cleveland and New York. In April, 1968, a delegation from CHARITY was received at the Vatican by Cardinals Carlo Confalonieri and Ildebrando Antoniutti. Before World War II, Cardinal Antoniutti served as the Apostolic Delegate to Albania. The CHARITY delegation reported on the religious situation in an official manner so that the Vatican would have some record of Church affairs in that country.

In November 1967 the Albanian Marxist Government officially abolished all religions. The Catholic, Orthodox and Moslem faiths were suppressed. At this point CHARITY shifted its efforts to informing the public of the terrible religious oppression in Albania. For this purpose the organization changed its official name when it relocated its main office from Detroit to Santa Clara University in California. With the approval of Archbishop Joseph McGucken of the San Francisco Archdiocese, the ALBANIAN CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER opened its Santa Clara office in 1971.

The Center sponsored the Second Commemoration Conference at Bellarmine College Preparatory in San Jose, California in April, 1972. The 25th Anniversary Mass was concelebrated by Jesuit and Franciscan fathers in recognition of their confreres work in Albania. On this occasion, representatives of several faiths and a number of journalists were present for the Mass and the subsequent documentary exposition.

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Archbishop Giovanni Tadei of the Congregation for Oriental Churches (center) with Center's director (right) and Bulletin editor (left). (Vatican, April 1968)



Cardinal Ildebrando Antoniutti, former Apostolic Delegate to Albania with Center's director (left) and Bulletin editor (right). (Vatican, April 1968)



Pope John Paul II to Albanians:

"I Pray Every Day for Albania and Its People . . ."

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara, California a delegation traveled to Rome. The group was invited to attend Pope John Paul II's morning Mass in his private chapel on Thursday, September 25, 1986. After Mass, the delegation was ushered into the Pius XII Hall to meet privately with the Holy Father. As His Holiness entered the hall Father Leo G. Neal, O.F.M., Conv., the Center's director, displayed the flag of Albania, which surprised the Holy Father. Attentively he listened to Father Neal's greeting:

"Blessed Father, this is the flag that has been displayed by our Center at Masses and various religious functions honoring Albania's martyrs over the last 20 years. We all humbly ask you to bless it."

His Holiness blessed the flag and then inquired about the activities of the Center.

The members of the delegation were presented to the pontiff. Father Neal said:

"Holy Father, this is Father Jak Gardin, S.J., a Jesuit missionary who spent 10 years in Albanian prisons and forced labor camps." Father Gardin then gave the Pope the first copy of his book: *TEN YEARS OF IMPRISONMENT IN ALBANIA* (1945-1955). He thanked John Paul II for his "continued prayers and concern for the martyred Church and its people in Albania." As His Holiness perused the volume Father Neal informed him that Father Gardin was "right now celebrating his 50th anniversary of his ordination." Pope John Paul II placed his hand on Father's head and said: "The good Lord will reward you for all your sacrifices and sufferings you have endured." When His Holiness learned that just the previous day Father Gardin turned 81 he placed both hands on the priest's head and prayed: "May you, dear Father, be blessed by our Lord for your missionary work among Albanians and for your life."

Father Neal next introduced Gjon Sinishta, editor of the *ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN*. Mr. Sinishta presented the Pope with a complete collection of the *BULLETIN* along with his works: *SACRIFICE FOR ALBANIA* and *THE FULFILLED PROMISE*.

He also gave His Holiness a Spiritual Bouquet. Mr. Sinishta addressed the Pope as follows:

"Holy Father, our Albanian Catholic Information Center has labored with intensity during these last 20 years for the restoration of religious freedom in Albania. In our work we have been inspired and encouraged by the Holy See and, in a special way, by you, Holy Father. At this memorable moment for all of us we wish to humbly thank you for the inspiration you have been to our apostolate and we ask your Apostolic Blessing on our future work."

The Holy Father responded:

"I pray every day for Albania and its people. Often I speak of the martyrdom of the Church in Albania and the sufferings of the Albanian people. May the good Lord bless your precious activity and help you in your efforts until religious freedom is restored to Albania." He then imparted his Apostolic Blessing.

The Holy Father spent a few moments examining the gifts. On seeing the title *THE FULFILLED PROMISE* he exclaimed: "I read this book. It is very precious to the Church in Albania." The Holy Father appeared touched by the Spiritual Bouquet. Then noticing Father Gardin's picture on the front cover of the Commemoration issue of the *BULLETIN* he said: "Isn't this Father Gardin?" pointing to his picture.

Towards the end of the private audience the Pope was introduced to sister Lucia Lazza, an Albanian religious living in Rome. Sister assists at the Rome Center. Sister Lucia asked the Pope to bless some rosaries and medals for the Center's members and supporters. The Holy Father graciously responded.

Although the audience lasted only 13 minutes, the delegation was profoundly moved by the experience. The memory of their Mass and meeting with the Holy Father left an indelible mark in their minds and hearts.

The interest and love shown by Pope John Paul II not only for his long suffering Albanian flock but for all Albanians encourages us to zealously continue our labors until the Lord permits the restoration of religious liberty in our homeland.





The Holy Father views the Albanian flag

His Holiness Receiving The Albanian Vatican City



Fr. Leo G. Neal, OFM, Conv. cordially greeting His Holiness



Pope John Paul II blessing an Albanian flag



Fr. Jak Gardin, S.J. being introduced to His Holiness,
Pope John Paul II



His Holiness receives first copy of Fr. Gardin's book:
Ten Years of Imprisonment in Albania

Pope John Paul II Center's Delegation September, 1986



Spiritual Bouquet being offered His Holiness on behalf of Center



Gjon Sinishta presenting Center's publications to
Pope John Paul II



The Holy Father closely examining the 1985 commemorative
Issue of *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*



Pope John Paul II talking with Delegation

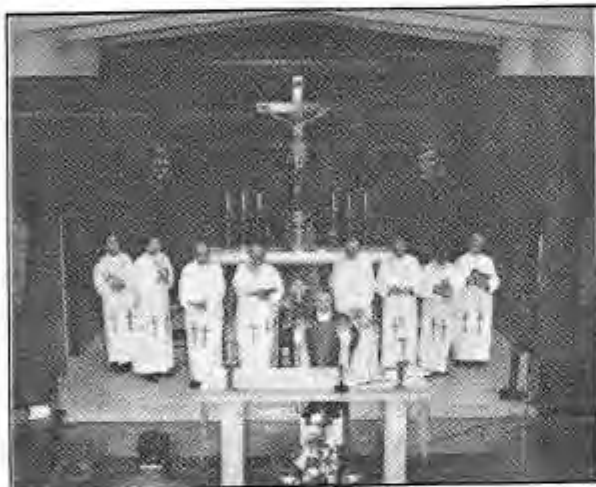


Pope John Paul blessing Center's Publications

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
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Scenes from 1966 Commemoration Observance, Detroit, Michigan



Scenes from 1972 Commemoration Observance, San Jose, California



In April, 1976, the CENTER produced and distributed its first book entitled *The Fulfilled Promise*. This volume remains the basic reference work on the topic of the persecution of the Catholic Church in Albania. It received positive reviews in the world press.

In 1980 the CENTER began publishing the annual *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*. It was believed that information about the religious situation in Albania merited continual monitoring. This journal studies the religious situation in Albania and reports on the life and culture of Albanian people at home and abroad. It seeks to discover and reprint essays and articles on Albania or about religion in Albania from the world press.

To mark the 40th Year of religious persecution in Albania, the ALBANIAN CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER sponsored its Third Commemorative Meeting in April, 1985. The ceremonies were held at St. Ignatius Church, at the University of San Francisco in California. This Commemoration event coincided, by chance, with the death of the Albanian Marxist leader Enver Hoxha. Ironically Hoxha's demise gave the Commemoration observance a special significance. Numerous journalists, representatives of the Moslem, Orthodox, Protestant and Jewish faiths, as well as representatives of non-religious and human rights organizations attended the Commemoration event.

In September 1986, the CENTER's delegation travelled to Rome for a papal audience and a series of talks and conferences concerning religion in Albania. On this occasion, John Paul II reassured the delegates of his deep interest in the spiritual well-being of all Albanians. He said movingly, "I pray every day for Albania and its people. Often I speak of the martyrdom of the Church in Albania and the sufferings of the Albanian people." The delegation then presented the

Holy Father with copies of the CENTER's books and journals.

Throughout the two decades of its operations, the CENTER has established strong contacts with a number of human and religious rights organizations worldwide. Among these contact groups are Amnesty International, the International Society for Human Rights (Germany), Europa Dansk Mission (Denmark), the International Association for Defense of Religious Liberty (Switzerland), United Churches of Christ (USA), Brother Andrew's organization OPEN DOORS (Holland) and Pax Christi International, Geneva. As a result of this cooperation the United Nations Human Rights Commission adopted resolutions in 1985 and 1986 which denounced the violation of religious rights of Albanian citizens. The resolutions called upon the Albanian government to comply with the UN Charter to which it was a signatory and allow all its citizens religious freedom.

THE ALBANIAN CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER has earned the enmity of Albanian government officials for its work. Albanian propaganda has disparaged and slandered the CENTER for its efforts to disseminate the truth about the tragic religious situation in Albania.

Today among human rights concerns, the struggle for religious freedom still stands in the forefront. THE ALBANIAN CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER has labored for twenty years against the brutal suppression of religion in Albania. The CENTER pledges to continue its efforts until religious freedom is won for all Albanians. The CENTER recognizes the importance of religious freedom and views the current situation of Catholic, Moslem and Orthodox believers in Albania with great concern. We know that all men and women of good will share this concern.

James V. Schall, S.J.

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 (Rama Alim, General Secretary PIA, 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 Centenary of Athenagoras—Man of Peace: 1886-1986

I first met the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Istanbul during the summer of 1966. The Patriarch received our Catholic tour group in the Church of St. George, in the Phanar. In his brief remarks he referred to Constantinople (Istanbul) as the new Rome and his title "the Patriarch of the Romans." He conveyed the feeling he was the "patriarch" of the visitors from the "Old Rome." Not only did he welcome us with paternal affection, but he identified this writer as "a compatriot of mine." He said in Albanian: "Mirëse erdhe" (Welcome). At the end of our audience we spoke briefly in Albanian. On all other occasions when we met, he never failed to speak at least a few words in Albanian to me.

In October 1967, Athenagoras was in Rome to visit Pope Paul VI. He was staying as a guest in Torre Giovanni XXIII in the Vatican Gardens. One evening after dinner, at the moment of seeing me off, he looked at the moonlit gardens and remarked: "Është shumë bukur këtu" (It is very beautiful here). On the warm October night the moon created a marvelous play of shadows inside the tree-filled garden. A certain joy radiated from the Patriarch's face. This came from his awareness that his meeting with the Pope of Rome constituted a historical beginning to reuniting Orthodox and Catholic Christians. On the previous day in St. Peter's Basilica before a largely Catholic congregation Athenagoras delivered an ardent speech full of the spirit of brotherhood and commitment to full reconciliation. The Patriarch's speech in St. Peter's had been well received. The enthusiastic applause was incredible.

"In this holy place and in this extraordinarily holy moment we hear the cry of the blood of the apostles Peter and Paul, we hear the voice of the Church of the catacombs and of the martyrs in the Coliseum who are inviting us to use all of the methods and all of the means possible to complete the holy work we have begun. This work is the full establishment of unity in the Church of Christ which is now divided, in order that the Lord's will may be fulfilled and in order also that the world may come to see the full brilliance of what, according to our profession of faith, is the first characteristic of the Church: namely unity"

Throughout his patriarchate, Athenagoras never passed up an occasion to express his desire for unity which he derived from reflecting on the meaning of Christian faith. "Pius unity" was a constant theme in his talks, in his official meetings and private conversations.

On the feast of St Andrew* in 1969 I participated for the first time in a meeting of the Catholic Delegation with the Ecumenical Patriarch. Cardinal Johannes Willebrands led our delegation.



Pope Paul VI embracing Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, Rome, 1967

While presiding at the liturgy the Patriarch declared that:

"We consider this visit of yours as a new proof and a new witness of the brotherhood existing between our two churches, a proof of the significant progress which thanks to God has already been accomplished toward the re-establishment of their communion. It is also a proof of their firm decision to work toward the day in which, perfected by the charity of Christ who will permit them to remove from their path all the obstacles that are still there, they will be able to consummate the mystery of the unity of the Church on earth in one common confession and one common witness of truth and faith. Blessed be God because already now, both in the East and in the West, we are living the great hour of return to Christian unity. Neither of us is calling the other to come over to his side. Rather, like Peter and Andrew, we are directing both ourselves and one another toward Jesus who is the sole and common Lord who makes us to be but one reality. We desire to abide with Jesus and to remain together in unity — to remain in this unity all the day long. I mean that day without ending which is to come at the end of time."

The Patriarch's burning desire for peace and unity remained evident in all our contacts. The sacred memory and spiritual legacy of Athenagoras urges us, on this special occasion of the centenary of his birth, to continue his work for peace and unity of all Christians.

Eleuterio F. Fortino

Andrew is patron of the Church of Constantinople and his brother St. Peter is patron of the Church of Rome.

Albania's 75th Anniversary (1912-1987)

This year Albania celebrates the 75th anniversary of her independence. The country proclaimed its independence on November 28, 1912. The long-awaited event came after more than five centuries of Ottoman occupation. (The Turks first set foot in Albania in 1388, then gradually extended their foothold until the full occupation of the country.) Apart from the Turks, the country had witnessed invasions and occupations by Venetians, Slavs, Normans, Byzantines and Romans. Independence came after centuries of toil, oppression, struggles and rebellions, death and destruction.

The question is asked: How did Albania manage to survive as a nation in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds, when other nations, even greater in size, perished? This is something of a mystery; nevertheless, we could point to a few things that shed light on the enigma.

One reason is the Albanian people's intense spirit of independence which made them unruly subjects, ever disposed to take up arms and rise in rebellion against their oppressors. Another is their celebrated courage and bravery in battle, even against far more numerous enemies. Lord Byron touches on this Albanian character trait in his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, when he says:

"Where is the foe that ever saw their back?"

.....
 "Oh! who is more brave than a dark Suliote,
 In his snowy camese and his shaggy capote?"

("Suliote" refers to the inhabitants of a region in southern Albania.) Other things that have helped them to survive and grow in strength and number are: their remarkable ability to endure pain and suffering and overcome misfortune; their passionate attachment, bordering on worship to the land; their lofty mountains which have provided them with secure refuge in times of crises and persecutions; and the stubborn belief that their country is under "providential protection"—because it is a *vakëf*, as they put it, meaning a shrine or holy ground which can bring only disaster in the end to foreign trespassers.

Independence came to Albania 75 years ago, but only about half of the Albanian nation was able to celebrate the joyful event. The other half was unjustly awarded by the Great Powers of Europe to Albania's neighbors: Greece, Montenegro and, above all Serbia. (Today, over two million Albanians live in Yugoslavia under deplorable conditions of poverty and persecution.) This is a historical blunder that Albanians want to see rectified.

Overall, Albanians at this juncture seem imbued with a spirit of optimism concerning the future of their nation. It is

as if time is on their side, as they strive to overcome existing obstacles and create a democratic society of abundance, wisdom, and refinement which could one day make Albania the "Switzerland of the Balkans."

To honor this 75th anniversary of the Albanian people, our back cover carries the map and the flag of Albania. At the request of many readers and friends we are also printing the national anthem. It was written by the Albanian poet, Asdren (an acronym for Aleksander Stavre Drenova), who was born in 1872 and died in 1947. The original title of the hymn was *Betimi Mi Flamur*, or *Pledge to the Flag*. The hymn was first published in *Liri e Shqipërisë* (*The Freedom of Albania*), an Albanian newspaper in Sofia, Bulgaria, in its issue of April 21, 1912. Later that year it appeared in a volume of collected poems by Asdren, under the title *Endra dhe Lotë* (*Dreams and Tears*). The volume was published in Bucharest.

Albanian National Anthem

The original text of Albania's anthem is in rhyme and meter. Following is an English translation in free verse.

United around the flag,
 With one will and one goal in mind,
 Let us pledge our word of honor
 To fight for our salvation.

Only he who is born a traitor
 Runs away from the battle.
 He who is brave is not daunted,
 But falls—a martyr to the cause.

With arms in hand we shall remain,
 To guard our country round about.
 Enemies have no future here,
 We shall defend what's rightly ours.

For the Lord Himself has said
 That Albania shall live on,
 While other nations vanish from the earth.
 Because we yes, we fight for her!

Dear flag, our sacred emblem,
 We hereby pledge our allegiance
 To Albania, our cherished fatherland,
 And to your honor and glory.

Brave and honored is he
 Who dies for his country;
 His sanctified memory
 Shall live on earth forever.

Hymn i Flamurit

Marziale

Rreth flamurit të përbashkuar me një dëshirë e një qëllim, të gjithë atij duk-

keju be-tuar të lidhim besën për shpëtimit. Se Zoti vetë e tha me

gojë që kom-bet shuhen përmbi dhe, Por Shqipëria do të rrojë,

Per' të, per' të luftojmë nël nël

Rreth flamurit të përbashkuar
Me një dëshirë e një qëllim,
Të gjithë atij duk' j'u betuar,
Të lidhim besën për shpëtimit.

Prej lufte veç ay largohet,
Që është lindur tradhëtor.
Kush është burrë nuk frikohet,
Po vdes, po vdes si një dëshmor!

Në dorë armët do t'i mbajmë,
Të mprojmë atdheun me çdo kënt.
Të drejtat tona ne s'i ndajmë,
Këtu armiqtë s'kanë vënt.

Se Zoti vetë e tha me gojë,
Që kombe shuhen përmbi dhe,
Po Shqipëria do të rrojë;
Per' te, per' te luftojmë në!

O flamur, flamur shenjë e shenjtë,
Te ty betonemi këtu,
Për Shqipërinë atdheun e shtrenjtë,
Për nder' të lavdimi e të

Trin burrë quhet dhe nderohet
Atdheut kush e ka therror;
Për jet' ay do të kujtohet
Mi dhet, mi dhet si një shenjtor!

DOKUMENTI I SHPALLJES SË PAMVARËSISË

Në Vlorë më 15/28 të Gjeshtës së tretë 1924/1912.

Pas falimit që tha L. Krystari Email Kemi
Ocu, me të cilat treori venduan e makt në
të cilin ndodhet sht. Shqipëria, të gjithë delja
të me një të venduan që Shqipëria
sot të bëhet në vete, e hiri e e mosvarme

[illegible]

Amatörkennig Alcazar
22. 11. 2 J. Karbanara Elmberg v. d. d. 22.

[illegible]

Abdi Hasilawa M'Khatirane Capt. Dg.

Likho Abbas Kanimaz 2. Oct 1880

Major die
Bakker
General
Elkaster
H. A. J. van der
Salik-Quada
B. A. J. van der
Dins. H. J. van der

Murad Topdam Ponds, Kuala
 Lur Gurakung, Borneo Refinery, Spirit. No.
 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911,

Mustafa Amin Kriza

М. Терис доктор

Yours

Mr. J. L. Lutz

Landkreis Rhein

Medhënë Ber Shyqin e Shu Shajitain



Deputetët e Abetit Shajitain
(deputetët du Parlament shqiptar)

Members of the Albanian Parliament photographed in Tirane, 1923, assisting the Albanian Red Cross.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Mother of Agony

She adds age to age,
and like the seasons she rejuvenates
alongside agony

pain
grief
misery and death.

Hers is the image projected
amid deep groans
to banish all woes of suffering mankind.

Then she turns back
to where anguish
in dark disarray of feelings
makes the weakest writhe
beaten by their long struggle
lying consumed
so wan and faded
unable through all drugging pain
to ever shut their eyes.

Then in a tiny voice
she murmurs,
"May the Almighty always be with you!"

She adds age to age,
and like the spring rejuvenates
amid such balmy feelings
so young and vivid
and so fresh
abundant in green buds
imparting nectar to parched lips
that quiver
froth

burn with a fever
forsaken by all joys of life;
and in a gentle murmur
she whispers:
"May the Almighty always be with you!"

When death
that vampire
imbedded its sharp teeth
amid the final cries
that terrified even eagles
her hands,
scored by deep wrinkles
from caressing all humankind,
without dropping
without tension
without a quiver
nursed their bleeding wounds
that dripped the last life-drops
til death lowered the black drapes
over their heart's lasting monologue
as in their ecstasy
pain vanished forever

beneath the nectar of her gentle murmur . . .

When souls depart
and corpses remain so vacant
and so stiff

this Lady
the ageless Mother of an age-old life
with moist
and gleaming eyes
thrusts death itself aside
berates her in a rage
for being such a beast,
a glutton
that throughout remembered time
devours continuously.

At peace she walks so silently
through dismal darkness
and measures the footprints of pain in hell
where human sufferings wail from a distance
for communion
a blessing
or a gentle word
to banish all despair and torment
as though they had been vapor
or ether.

And death
clothed in rag shreds over dry bone
wearing a shrewd-ferocious look
stares from afar
afflicted, as it seems.
While this ageless Mother of age-old life
walks slowly on the path of dust
of a far continent
towards the cries
which lessen in her presence
with her gentle smiles at the wounds of life
as if it were the soul's birthday . . .

O Mother of the village
of neighborhood
of the whole world
of all humanity,
Mother of Earth
where sorrow tuns
through frightened speech
before the morbid sight of that plague
hiding itself
getting lost
deep in human feelings
and among the terrified
trembling
and shrivelled
digs into bleeding wounds
with her death-stained claws

until the Mother of the agonizing nation
approaches with a gentle step
and smiling

she whispers a few words:
"Let the Great Lord be by your side!"

while from a distance
the she-wolf death
stays trampled.

The fragile hands of starved children
cling like bird claws
upon the withered breasts of their mothers
which hang so flat
on their frozen lifeless bodies

They too
at their sharp pain
shut their eyes
which in fright opened at the time of birth;
their whimpering faints and fades away . . .

Much further on
dry limbs, like wooden sticks
that form a stiff fence against death's sight
fall at the wind-drift of agony
while the ageless Mother of old suffering
approaches gently

with a caress in her eyes
bends alongside
and with her weathered hands
cuddles those lifeless arms
through tears
pouring from inner streams.
Where her tears drop
new buds bloom in abundance
as if from roots embedded in her heart.

While death herself
stands shamefaced alone
unable to compete with "Mother Gonxhe"
stands in disgrace and shame.

THE HANDS OF



MOTHER TERESA



How she still suffers
when cries from her country
reach her heart.

Death walks there with a bold air
dressed up and decorated for a holiday
and gulps its victims
who like a defenseless flock
bleat after their shepherd, in commotion
and end up in the brutal hands of butchers.

But the Mother of Agony, the ageless one
cannot get there

where lamentation to
speaks her old tongue
and where barbed wire resembles the sharp jaws of death.
She from a distance cries with pain
to soothe

with a balm of ointments
their human sufferings
where death itself leaves tracks
of its fateful coming
and she walks with head bowed
and prays through murmurs
that God Almighty may forgive
the terrors of the dying . . .

And still she adds age to age
and like the seasons she rejuvenates.

Zois A. Shuttie

Washington, D.C., June 23, 1986

*Gonxhe for her first name in Albanian, meaning Flower Bud

Prenk Doçi (Primus Docci) The First Albanian Resident in North America

For many years it has been widely accepted that Kolë Kristofor (Rev. Nicholas Christopher), was the first Albanian immigrant to the United States. He entered the U.S. in 1886. Yet the first Albanian resident on North American soil was Prenk Doçi (Primus Docci) who later became the Abbot of Oroschi. Docci was the private political counsellor to Prenk Bib Doda, Kapetan of the Mirdita tribe. He was also a major figure in the Albanian renaissance and the primary promoter of the modern Albanian alphabet.¹

Prenk Docci was sent to Newfoundland as a missionary in 1877. The Vatican's Cardinal Simeoni of Propaganda Fide assigned him to work on the west coast of Newfoundland at Bonne Bay, the Bay of Islands and the Codroy Valley. This territory is presently part of the Diocese of St. George's (see map illustration).

At the time, travel conditions were very hard. During summer Docci had to travel over the rugged and inhospitable coastlands of Newfoundland from mission to mission in an open boat, or schooner. In the winter months Docci moved by dog sled over trails, ponds and rivers. Msgr. Roderick T. White, the Diocesan Administrator of St. George's, judiciously remarked that Docci's travels were "rather incongruous for the latin scholar that he is reputed to have been." This may explain the rather stern impressions recorded by Father Michael Brosnan. In his *Pioneer History of St. George's Diocese* Brosnan commented that Docci

"...was in Rome in 1881 with Monsignor Sears (Rt. Rev. Thomas Sears, P.A., D.P., First Apostolic Prefect of St. George) and during that time seems to have made up his mind to give up work on the west coast. He pleaded that the trials and dangers were too much for him and that except for being formally ordered to go by Propaganda he could not see his way to volunteer for further service. A lovable character in many ways, he seems to have been of a highly sensitive disposition, a trait of character by no means conducive to success in a mission like west Newfoundland."

In all fairness it should be noted that by the time Father Brosnan came to the island from his native Ireland things were radically different from the years when Father Docci and his contemporaries first worked there. A reasonably good road and railway system were in place by Brosnan's time.

Father Docci left a very positive and favorable impression during his missionary work in Newfoundland. Thanks to the precious and providential interviews that Msgr. White conducted in the early 1960's, we have first hand accounts of Father Docci's stay in American soil.

Mrs. Patrick Doucette of Piccadilly, the Port au Port Peninsula, Newfoundland was interviewed in March 5, 1960, when she was age 86. She had been born and raised at Benoit's Cove, Bay of Islands. Mrs. Doucette remarked that:

"I can just remember Father Docci. He passed our home on one occasion walking along the sea wall. He was a medium size man, dark, and at the time he was wearing mocassins. He saw me watching him through the window and he waved his hand. There should be a lot written about this man and Father Pat Brown. My brother, William Benoit, travelled a lot with these two men in winter and they went through every kind of misery and hardship. He was their guide. Many nights they slept out in camps caught in storms. Both men (Father Docci and Brown) were very friendly and talkative Grand men."

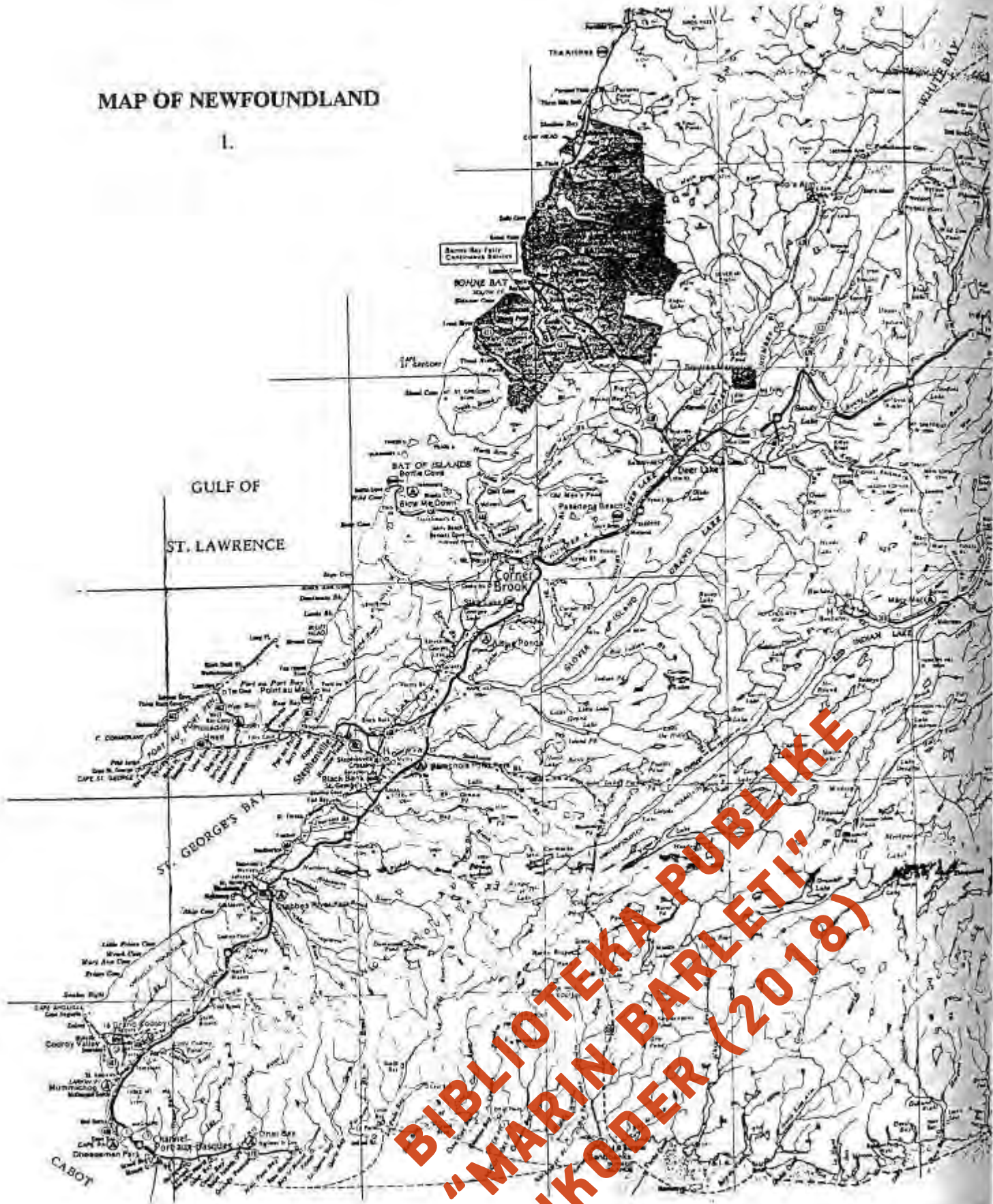
Stephen Wheeler Sr., former resident of Middle Arm, Bay of Islands, also remembered Father Docci. Msgr. White interviewed Mr. Wheeler at Ship Cove, Port au Port Peninsula, Newfoundland on January 23 in 1962, when he was 94. Wheeler said that:

"I was baptized by Fr. Belanger of Sandy Point. Fr. Docci was the priest who heard my first confession. I remember hearing him tell Dom. Jennings (pioneer resident of Middle Arm) how he had to leave his country, Albania, because of religious persecution. He had to jump from the third story of a building and run for his life. He was crying as he told his story of how his mother and his altar boy were left behind and that he didn't know what became of them."

Msgr. White's story of Docci in Newfoundland told of a "a rather interesting example of Father Docci's down-to-earth approach and depth of feeling for people and places" that was passed on to him by a "very senior citizen." This person did not actually remember the physical presence of Docci. I interviewed Prime Power of St. George's in 1969, shortly before his death. Power had been born in or around the Curling Area of Bay of Islands. Father Docci did much of his missionary work in this area during his stay in Newfoundland. Prime told me that he had been baptized by Father Docci and that his parents had informed him that in the course of preparing for the baptismal ceremony the priest had said to them "I expect to be leaving this country shortly and would like to leave a name-sake behind me. Would you mind if I attached my name to your child?" Power said, my parents were of course delighted. They felt honored and told him so. Hence the very rare name of Prime in these parts.²

MAP OF NEWFOUNDLAND

I.



88

Registrum Baptizatorum in Ecclesia *S. Familiae*
 Districtus "Bay of Islands" Diocesis *S. Georgii*

Notae familiae.	A. A. 1880 Die Mensis.	REGISTRUM BAPTISMORUM.	Observanda.
<i>McCarty</i>	<i>Die 4 Novemb</i>	Ego infrascriptus baptizavi <i>Jesum</i> natum die 16 Octobris ejusdem anni ex <i>Jesie M. Carthy</i> ex loco <i>Humble, Sumner</i> et <i>Maria Anna M. Carthy</i> ex loco <i>Cornwall Brook</i> Patrini fuerunt <i>Salomon Barist et</i> <i>Sara M. Carthy</i> <i>St. Dochi Missionarii</i>	
<i>Barry</i>	<i>Die 3 Marti</i>	Ego infrascriptus baptizavi <i>Davidem franciscum</i> natum die 16 Aprilis ejusdem anni ex <i>Joanna Barry</i> ex loco <i>Humble Sumner</i> et <i>Gerarda Hilliard</i> ex loco <i>Half Way Point</i> Patrini fuerunt <i>Patricius Sullivan et</i> <i>Gerarda Catharina Houghlin</i> <i>St. Dochi Missionarii</i>	
<i>Doan</i>	<i>a. D. 1881 Die 15 Jelunij</i>	Ego infrascriptus baptizavi <i>Primum</i> natum die 9 Januarii ejusdem anni ex <i>Richardo Doan</i> ex loco <i>Cornwall Brook</i> et <i>Liliana Walsh</i> ex loco <i>eadem</i> Patrini fuerunt <i>Patricius Doan et</i> <i>Margareta Walsh</i> <i>St. Dochi Missionarii</i>	
<i>Arnold</i>	<i>Die 15 Jelunij</i>	Ego infrascriptus baptizavi <i>Chesam</i> natum die 9 Januarii ejusdem anni ex <i>Chesam Lowell</i> ex loco <i>Cornwall Brook</i> et <i>Sara M. Carthy</i> ex loco <i>eadem</i> Patrini fuerunt <i>Franciscus Barist et</i> <i>Anna Barry</i> <i>St. Dochi Missionarii</i>	



3.

The baptism took place immediately prior to Docci's 1881 departure for Rome. Docci travelled with his superior Rt. Rev. Thomas Sears.

Docci's name does not appear again in the Bay of Islands Baptismal register entries from the day after Primus Power's baptism on February 16, 1881, until September 19, 1881. Subsequent entries in the register are signed by Rev. Richard Phippard. Fr. Phippard arrived from Rome in 1891 as a companion of Docci and Msgr. Sears, the new Apostolic Prefect (see photo). It appears that Docci returned to Bay of Islands just long enough to see the younger Phippard established and made familiar with this far flung territory. Docci soon left Newfoundland for a new post on the milder Canadian mainland at St. John, New Brunswick. Rather than returning to Europe, this new assignment may have been a temporary compromise which he struck with his superior at the Vatican. *The Morning Freeman* of Brunswick in its October 22, 1881 edition mentioned that:

"The priests at the Bishop's Palace have lately received an addition to their number, Rev. Mr. Dochi, (sic) who is to officiate in the city. The reverend gentleman who is an Albanian, studied for ten years at the Propaganda. He spent several years in his own country in the duty of his sacred calling, and was recently a missionary priest in Newfoundland."

Not much is known of Docci's activities in New Brunswick. Mr. Peter Murphy, Archival Assistant at the Diocesan Archives of St. John's Archbishopric, supplied a few relevant details of Docci's stay there.

The parochial registers of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception first refer to Father Docci on November 1, 1881 when he administered the sacrament of baptism to James Wilfred Murphy. The last entry by Father Docci is from 24 January 1883. During that two year period, he baptized 105 persons and witnessed 5 marriages. The religious activity of Father Docci in St. John included heading such benevolent institutions as the St. Joseph society Sr., which may have been an Abstinence Society. An article which appeared in the *St. John Weekend Freeman* on March 10, 1883, told of the esteem and respect that Father Docci had earned from his flock. It also gave an amusing description of the farewell practices of the time that mixed spiritual joy with down-to-earth facts of life:

Presentations. - At the regular monthly meeting of St. Joseph Society Sr., held in St. Malachi's Hall, on Sunday, 4th inst. the following address, accompanied by a well-filled purse, was presented Rev. D. P. Dochi. To the Rev D.P. Dochi, Spiritual Director of St. Joseph Society:-**REVEREND AND DEAR FATHER:** We, the, members of St. Joseph Senior Society having heard with much regret that, at the call of your superiors, you are about to leave our city, perhaps never to return,



4.

cannot let this occasion pass without testifying to you, in as full a manner as possible, our high regard and appreciation of the many shining qualities which have endeared you to us whilst in our midst. When, in obedience to the call of duty and the precept of your Divine Master to go into all nations and preach His Gospel, you came to our shores, your unwearied kindness and goodness won all hearts; and though the same spirit of obedience compels you to resign the charge which you have so faithfully performed as spiritual director of our society, the many kind words of counsel and advice which you administered to us shall long remain to gladden our hearts, and we hope bear the fruit which you so earnestly desired. Reverend and dear Father, hoping that the object of your new mission may be successfully accomplished, and with our best wishes for a safe journey to your native land, we beg to present you the accompanying purse as a slight token of our affection and regard, and of the many pleasant days we have spent with you. Trusting that our Heavenly Father may ever watch over you and that you be long spared to continue the good work you so faithfully performed with us, we remain, reverend and dear Father, ever truly yours,

Robert Coleman, Pres.

Patrick Dillion, Vice-pres.

Michael Kane, Fin. Sec.

John H. McLaughlin, Treas.

John J. McManus, Sec. Com of Man.

Rev. Mr. Dochi made an appropriate reply."

Shortly after this ceremony, Father Docci embarked by ship to Europe and made his way to Rome. Later he was sent on a missionary assignment to India, as secretary to the Apostolic Delegate, Cardinal Agliardi. In 1888, Docci was elected to head the Abbey Nullius of St. Alexander of Oroschi, Mirdita, in his native Albania.

Abbot Docci cherished and treasured the memories of his loving and respectful flock in Canada. The following passage extracted from *Pioneer in Purple* (1951) told the story of Archbishop Neil McNeil who was Bishop of the St. George's Diocese between 1895 and 1910. The scene described took place from ten to twenty years after Father Docci departed Canada. McNeil stated that:

"He was in Rome over a month. There was plenty to do. Though suffering from insomnia and fatigue, it did not dim his interest in the great churches, in history and archaeology. He even met a man who knew the West Coast of Newfoundland. One day he was seated in one of the anterooms of the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda. He was waiting his turn to go in. There walked into the anteroom a Bishop whose appearance astonished him. He was a fine looking man, but had a moustache and the rest of his face clean shaven. Bishop



5.

McNeil started a conversation about the weather, in Italian. The other man answered in Italian and soon they were talking. After a little Bishop McNeil introduced himself in English, and added;

'From the West Coast of Newfoundland, St. George's.'

The mysterious Bishop with the moustache answered:

'How is George Garnier?'

This astonished Bishop McNeil still more, for George Garnier was janitor at Sandy Point and quite a local character.

It turned out that the man was the former Father Dochi (or Doce) who, years previous had spent some time in the West Coast. He was now living in Albania (then a part of Turkey) where all clergymen wore moustaches."

The brilliant Albanian patriot, humanist and man of God was truly "a lovely character." It is hoped that one day a complete and exhaustive biography of Abbot Primus Docci will be written. His extraordinary career ranged from the Mediterranean shores of his native Albania, over the icy coast of Newfoundland to the tropical Indian monsoons before finally ending in his beloved Mirdita, where he died in 1917.

Melhem M. Mobarak



6.



7.

1 See *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. 5, 1984, p. 16 for further details.

2 Msgr. White mentioned that "It is interesting to note that the baptism of Prime Power was the first Roman Catholic baptism to be performed in the district of Bay of Islands in the year 1881. This would explain why Father Dochi used the modifying word "Primum" (i.e., the adverb from prior) instead of Primus (as used in his own case) for the child's name. Primus, as the Latin dictionary indicates, is a form used "in enumerations, or in denoting the order of succession". His ability to handle these subtleties of the language is a clear example of his well-known command of Latin."



8.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOS (WITH LEGEND)

1. Detailed map of the West Coast of Newfoundland.
2. The baptismal registry that recorded the baptism of Prime (Primum) Power on 15 February 1881. It bears the signature of Fr. Dochi.
3. Prime Power, with his wife. Photo taken around 1944, at St. George's, Newfoundland. The couple had 13 children - a closely knit and regular church-going family.
4. Fr. Dochi (on the right) with Fr. Peppard who was to replace him on the West Coast. On the left stands the Rector Apostolic Fr. Seas.
5. Abbot Prenk Dochi in Mirëdita, Albania, 1912.
6. St. Patrick's Church, Woody Point, Bonne Bay, Newfoundland. It was built in 1875. Bonne Bay was part of the extensive territory cared for by Fr. Dochi during stay on the island, between 1877 and 1882.
7. Interior of St. Patrick's Church, Woody Point, Bonne Bay, Newfoundland.
8. Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, St. John, New Brunswick, showing the "Bishop's Palace" and the Convent of the Good Shepherd.

Monsignor Joseph J. Oroshi

A Remarkable Missionary to the Exiles

Msgr. Joseph Oroshi announced his retirement as pastor of the Albanian Catholic community at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, (New York) in June 1986. The announcement surprised his parishioners, however the required age established by Church law prompted his decision. At the same time, he announced that his assistant (and protégé), Father Rrok Mirdita, would succeed him. This simplicity had characterized Msgr. Oroshi's long ministry to his Albanian faithful.

Oroshi's sermon that Sunday referred to the long and difficult journey he made with his flock over two decades to see realized the first Albanian national parish in the United States. With the official suppression of the Church in Albania, Our Lady of Good Counsel was the only Albanian Catholic parish in the Western Hemisphere. Oroshi related the many hardships, disillusionments, hopes and joys they mutually shared over the years. The memories and concern for these people who crossed his path were overwhelming. With a prayer of gratitude Oroshi concluded the Eucharistic celebration asking God to give him strength to serve his people in some other capacity.

Early Life

Joseph J. Oroshi was born in Kaftalla, Mirdita in Northern Albania on November 21, 1915. At an early age he lost his father. His mother had to work hard to support him, two older brothers and a sister.

During the visits of the Jesuit fathers and brothers from the Missionary Center in Shkodra, Oroshi was noticed as an intelligent and religious young man. Father Engjëll Serregji, S.J., headed the missionary band and believed that Oroshi had a vocation to the priesthood. Oroshi was extended an invitation to the Pontifical Seminary of Shkodra in 1927. From the outset he excelled in his studies and in 1936 was sent to the college of Propaganda Fide in Rome. There he received his Bachelor degree in theology and in 1940 his Masters. In March of the same year he was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

Later Years

World War II interrupted his doctoral studies and in 1940 he returned to Albania where he was appointed secretary to the Bishop-Abbot Frano Gjini of Mirdita. During this time, he acted as the administrator of St. Nicholas Church in Spac. Oroshi later was named pastor of St. Mary Magdalen's in Ungrej. In 1946 Bishop Gjini appointed Oroshi as Consultor of the diocese "motu proprio" in addition to his parish duties. By this time the Church was passing through the harsh and bloody persecution. Oroshi immediately distinguished himself as a wise and energetic



Pope Paul VI warmly receives Monsignor Oroshi

clergyman. He encouraged and shepherded his flock through the turmoil and violence despite being closely watched by the new communist authorities. The security forces began to curtail his religious and social activities. Friends informed Oroshi of his impending arrest and Father left for the mountains to join the freedom fighters. There he became the spiritual guide to those who were desperately fighting to preserve their faith and freedom. Throughout the eight months in the mountains Oroshi and his group were continually chased by Albanian security forces. Finding themselves in a tight spot, the decimated group crossed the Yugoslav border and asked for political asylum.

In 1955 he departed Yugoslavia for Rome, Italy. During his sojourn in Italy, Oroshi engaged in a variety of missionary works including the chaplaincy to Albanian refugees in

Western Europe. He was also able to complete his graduate studies, earning a doctorate in theology in 1960. The following year he was sent by the Vatican to care for Albanian Catholics in the United States. Although he encountered new difficulties, Oroshi's strong faith and determination led him to undertake a successful ministry to Albanian Catholics in America. In 1969 Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish was established in Bronx, New York. The many financial sacrifices by the Albanian Catholic community together with the assistance of Albanian Muslim and Orthodox faithful made possible the opening of the Church dedicated to the patroness of Albania, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Oroshi faithfully served his people throughout the years. He looked for no earthly reward and relied only on the grace of God to fulfill his duties as missionary priest, teacher, and friend.

In recognition of Oroshi's fruitful work among Albanians, Pope Paul VI bestowed the honorific title of domestic prelate Monsignor, in January 1974. This appointment was indeed a great honor not only for Oroshi but also for the Albanian Catholic community.

We would be remiss if we failed to mention Oroshi's pioneering work to unify Albanian Catholics in their newly adopted country of America. Oroshi's efforts follow in the unification tradition of orthodox Bishop Fan Noli and the muslim venerables Baba Rexhepi and Imam Vehbi Ismaili. We Albanian Catholics too can proudly honor Msgr. Joseph

J. Oroshi as the pioneer of the Albanian Catholic unification.

Our Center was privileged to host Msgr. Oroshi in the Bay Area during August 1982. He concelebrated a Mass in honor of the Albanian martyrs at the Santa Clara University Mission Church. After Mass he was a guest at a luncheon in the University Faculty Club. During his visit, Monsignor met Daniel Germann, S.J., the university chaplain and Father President, William Rewak, S.J., both friends of Albania.

We wish Monsignor Joseph J. Oroshi a well deserved retirement and assure him of our prayers for the work of his apostolate among Albanians.

Noted Accomplishments:

1960—the publication in Albanian language of the version of the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

1962—the formation of the Albanian-American Catholic League.

1966—the initiation of the Albanian-English quarterly, *Albanian Catholic Life* journal.

1978—the publication of the Albanian language version *New Testament*. Oroshi presented the first copy of the Albanian New Testament to Pope Paul VI during a private audience. On this occasion Oroshi conveyed his gratitude and that of his people for the Pontiff's concern for believers of all faiths in Albania.

Msgr. Oroshi also contributed numerous articles to Albanian periodicals and journals. His writings concern religious, linguistic, literary and historical matters.

Palok Plaku



Cardinal Terrence Cooke with Monsignor Oroshi (r.) and Center Director, Fr. Neal, O.F.M., Conv. (I.), 1969

Recent Impressions:

Imagine Albania

We are always pleased to share with our readership the impressions of recent travelers to Albania. Although we do not always agree with their interpretations of events in the homeland we welcome their observations. As usual, we invite our readers' comments on the travelers' reports.

John Lennon, in his classic song, "Imagine," asked his audience to picture a world where there is "nothing to kill or die for and no religion, too." A world without religion doesn't exist, but one tiny nation in the Balkans, the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, has taken the giant step to rid itself of what Karl Marx called "the opium of the people."

The mystery-shrouded land of Albania, which is ruled by the world's most Stalinist Communist Party, has taken Marxist-Leninism to its logical conclusion and officially declared God dead. Since 1967, all churches and mosques have been closed for worship. Thousands of Christian and Moslem leaders and faithful have been imprisoned or shot, and all vestiges of religion have, on the surface, been brutally suppressed.

It seems that this beautiful mountainous country of 3,000,000 people which shares a border with Yugoslavia on the north and Greece to the south, is proof that John Lennon's dream has come true, in part, with a people living in harmony, and with no religion interfering with their goal to become the world's purest socialistic society. No one has to pay income tax and all medical and educational bills are paid by the state. Abortion, which is widely practiced in many of the so-called Christian nations of the West, has even been outlawed.

Albania is a land which places very little trust in other societies and is constantly on the alert for invaders. Throughout the country there are countless thousands of concrete "pillboxes" which look like gigantic mushrooms. Every valley, hill, beach, village, town, and city has them.

Americans and Russians are not allowed into the country. It is easy to understand why Americans are banned, but Russians?

"The reason is that they are revisionists. We consider what they are doing in the world today as nothing but socialistic-imperialism." They are too right-wing for the Albanians!

But is Albania really the "workers' paradise on earth" the aging leadership would like to believe it is? I found that the only way to learn the truth about the situation in this highly secretive society, which endured the spartan lifestyle and congenital xenophobia of strongman Enver Hoxha's Balkan enclave, was to join a tour from Great Britain.

The official travel brochure explained, "As Albania is officially an atheistic state, Bibles and other religious literature, whether or not for personal use, are not allowed into the country."

Our group of 18 flew from London to Titograd, Yugoslavia, and we were then taken by bus to the Yugoslav border post on an inlet of Lake Shkodër. After our passports were checked, we had to carry our luggage across the 50 yards of no-man's-land to the red-and-white border pike where a solemn-faced Albanian guard, dressed in an olive green uniform, heavy boots, and the obligatory red star on his cap, went through our passports and checked them against names and pictures on the multiple visa.

We were ushered with our luggage into a building dominated by a sign which quoted Hoxha (rhymes with dodger): "Even if we have to go without bread, we Albanians do not violate principles. We do not betray Marxist-Leninism." A picture of this man, whose idol was Joseph Stalin, gazed down at us as if to make sure we did nothing to "corrupt" the "world's first atheistic state."

Each of us had to declare what we had brought with us and were subjected to a search through our luggage, while our tour leader David looked on anxiously.

"On one occasion, I had a woman come in with religious tracts sewn inside her dress and later on in Shkoder she went out into the streets handing them out," he told me later. "It caused quite a serious incident. The Albanians were very upset and watched us like hawks for the rest of the trip."

Nothing subversive was discovered in our group's luggage, and we boarded the Italian-made bus for the nearby town of Shkoder, which houses the Atheist Museum. We were allowed to explore the town itself, where we saw the first bust of Stalin, an omnipresent sight in most Albanian cities.

"They have closed the Atheist museum to foreigners because it caused too many arguments," I was told when I inquired why we weren't going there.

There are Bibles in Albania; a few hidden away in believers' homes, the others in the churches that are now turned into museums. They are under glass in locked cases, so no one can actually read them. At one Orthodox church, we were shown the beautiful icons by a guide who chain-smoked

and flicked his ash on the floor of the church.

Another guide, when asked about mosques and churches, said, "Some are bars, others factories, schools, gymnasiums, and museums."

In Albania, a nation locked in a time warp, one is immediately struck by the lack of traffic in the country. No one is allowed to own a car—the few that are seen on the streets are used by the party leadership.

The people were extremely friendly, and many gazed in amazement at the foreigners who had come to gaze in equal amazement at them as they went about their business. Young men affectionately walked arm-in-arm with each other, and young boys wearing their red Pioneer bandanas giggled as they posed for photographs.

I was surprised at the freedom we were given to talk and mix with the Albanian people. Many wanted to practice their English, and I will never forget walking into a little coffee shop and being immediately approached by a smiling young man who asked me if I would join him for coffee. He insisted on paying for the beverage and began talking to me in faltering English.

On another occasion, I was able to ask an Albanian why religion had been banned in the country.

"Because it was brought here by the invaders," he said firmly. "For instance the Turks brought Islam, the Greeks the Orthodox religion, and Italians brought the Catholic faith. We consider that religion was introduced by outsiders, so we don't need it."

"But," I countered, "wasn't Karl Marx a foreigner, too?" My friend blanched and sipped his drink.

I asked an Albanian woman if atheism was taught to the children in the schools. "Of course! We try and show why religion was just a superstition. If I asked God for something



Atheist Museum, Shkodra



Although deceased, Hoxha's legacy remains

now, would He give it to me?" she snapped. "Of course He wouldn't, because He doesn't exist!" The children are also encouraged to inform on their parents and turn them in to the authorities if they suspect they are "disruptive to the Party."

I then asked if there were any Christians left in the country.

"Maybe a few old people who pray in their homes, but that's all. There are definitely no young people who believe. They have never been taught about religion, and therefore do not accept it or follow it."

The hatred of all religion is illustrated by the passage, in September 1975, of a law which prohibited religious names for the newborn. In June 1977 a new Albanian penal code was issued, Clause 55, which lays down the penalties to be exacted for religious activity. It states that "religious propaganda, and the production, distribution, or storage of literature of this kind will be punished with imprisonment for between three and 10 years. In time of war or if the offenses are deemed to be serious, imprisonment is not for less than 10 years, and the death penalty can be imposed."

Religion was officially banned following Hoxha's speech of February 1, 1967, that ordered a "final attack" to wipe out the church and all religious activity throughout the land. A strong anti-religious campaign followed. Churches and mosques everywhere were burned or converted to other uses; priests and bishops were publicly beaten, arrested and sent to prison and labor camps for "re-education." By the end of the year, 2,000 churches, mosques, chapels and other religious buildings were vandalized and closed. Even the crosses on grave stones were removed.

There was only one messiah to be allowed in Albania—Enver Hoxha. His sayings were put on every public building and his name inscribed on every hill and mountain.

Hoxha was a very charming man and a fluent orator. He was also deeply suspicious and quite ruthless. "His path to power and in power was strewn with the corpses of his enemies," said John Halliday of the London *Guardian*. They were also strewn with the corpses of his former friends. While I was in Albania, I was told that the last major killing he was involved in was that of Mehmet Shehu on December 18, 1981. Shehu was Albanian prime minister more than 27 years.

On April 11, 1985, Hoxha died at the age of 76, after ruling the country with an iron fist for 40 years. He was the longest lasting non-hereditary leader in the world, having been in power consistently since the country's liberation in November 1944. He outlived Stalin, Mao and even Tito.

Hoxha has been succeeded by Ramiz Alia. The Soviets sent their condolences to Tirane, but they were immediately returned to Moscow.

"The Soviet Union is a threat to the freedom of our people", said the Albanian Embassy in Vienna, commenting on the new leadership's first and telling act. So would things ease now for believers in the country?

A recent report in a Czech Catholic journal reports that Ramiz Alia, the general secretary of the Communist Party of Albania, has declared that the people should not be imprisoned, or otherwise punished, for praying at home. If this information is correct, it will be an extremely significant development, since Albania declared itself to be officially atheistic in 1967 and has severely punished religious worship in private homes in the past.

But this does not appear to be borne out by the news that Jesuit priest Pjetër Meshkalla, an outspoken critic of the Albanian government's anti-religious laws and practices, has been arrested again for conducting religious services.

"According to information from recent Albanian refugees, Father Meshkalla was arrested while celebrating Christmas Mass in a private home, in Guri i Zi, near Shkoder," said a spokesman for the Albanian Catholic Information Center in Santa Clara, California.

"He has served a total of 34 years in Albanian prisons and labor camps and is 80 years old."

"This news proves that the crackdown is still in force, and also that there are house groups meeting for prayer and worship in Albania," said a spokesman for the Open Doors, a Dutch-based group that monitors human-rights abuses of Christians in communist nations.

"Alia was the man behind the rewriting of the new constitution that introduced the 'world's first atheist state,' so don't expect too many changes in Albania. But on the other hand, Albania could go like China after the death of Mao. Too many there are disillusioned and will go and search for



Stalin is revered today in only one country in the world

another truth. We all hope they will, in the end, find the whole truth, the real truth."

I asked an Albanian if the country would now open up. "Certainly not," I was told. "We will continue the same policies under the leadership of Ramiz Alia. He was a close friend and ally of Enver Hoxha."

That is bad news for the well over 20,000 political and religious prisoners *The Guardian* of England described as "The Little Country with the Big Gulag." The prisoners include priests, believers and others who refused to bow to Hoxha's version of socialist purity.

When I asked a Marxist traveling with us to explain why Marxism did not consider the well-being of the individual, something which Christianity taught. "The good of the individual is not considered," he said chillingly. "That is why Christianity is the total enemy of Marxism and should not be tolerated."

Dan Wooding

Super-Patriotism: A Shallow Substitute for Religion

I arrived in Albania with a 28 member tourist group on 11 October 1985. From the beginning, the trip was full of surprises. We fully expected thorough luggage searches, confiscations, interrogations, hair-cuts, and even, it was rumoured, being required to paddle through a pool of disinfectant. This last act would symbolically ensure that no "bourgeois contamination" entered the only "genuinely Marxist-Leninist atheist country" in the world. Instead, our arrival was a relaxed affair. The customs officers were pleasant and courteous. They seemed disinterested in the contents of our suitcases. Had we wished to smuggle in Bibles or pornography, nothing could have been easier. The customs house at Hani Hotit is situated on the edge of an attractive inlet of Lake Shkodër. Apart from a few armed guards, we saw no barbed-wire, no military vehicles, and no patrol boats. It was a quiet, idyllic, rural scene.

Albania is opening up her attractive scenery to more Western tourists. Albanians are allowed more access to foreign goods and influences. The general atmosphere seems somewhat relaxed, but I think these first impressions were deceptive. Our twelve day tour was a highly organized affair. Each day we followed a pre-arranged plan, often starting at 8:00 a.m. and not finishing before 6:00 p.m. Our opportunities to meet with Albanians were severely restricted. We were shown scenes and provided with information which probably did not truly reflect the actual conditions of the country. Our two "Albturist" guides were both intelligent, well-educated young men in their 20's. Neither guide had ever been outside Albania. One guide told us that he had sworn a solemn oath of loyalty to the principles of Comrade Hoxha. He was extremely inquisitive about life outside Albania. In fact, he asked us nearly as many questions as we asked him. For instance, after visiting the exquisite Orthodox Cathedral at Berat, he plied me with questions about religion. What denomination was I? What did I do in Church? What did I believe? On a political level, he rarely betrayed the official party line. However, he did ask me whether I really believed that Stalin was as bad a character as he was made out to be. He did not try to defend Stalin when I gave my opinion of the brutalities he perpetrated. Our other guide was less curious, but more experienced in dealing with tourists and avoided discussing sensitive issues. Generally, both men were very friendly and joined in socializing very enthusiastically.

In Durrës we met a Dutch businessman who came to Albania often. He said that the privileged life of the Agtunist guide could come to an abrupt end if he or she became too familiar with their charges. The Dutchman had recently come across young men heaving coal in Durrës port, who,

only weeks before, he had seen enjoying the good life in the Hotel Adriatic.

My wife and I made every effort to discover more. We frequently left the organized group to explore on our own. Being Roman Catholic and having some familiarity with the works of Edith Durham, Shkodër was a place of particular interest to us. We visited the town on our first night and returned on the final day of our holiday. On the northern outskirts of Shkodër, we passed a ruined cemetery. It had been ravaged and desecrated, possibly in the religious purges of the late 1960's. Shkodër is a much smaller town than I had expected. Although many new blocks of ugly government flats have been built, the town retains a good deal of charm and a definite Turkish flavour remains in its older quarters. We first headed for the large Cathedral building with its rounded roof. It is still recognizably ecclesiastical in appearance. The building is located east of the main square in the traditionally Catholic quarter. The main entrance has been entirely reconstructed and the structure now serves as a sports hall. On both visits we unsuccessfully attempted to enter. North of the church was a quadrangle of dilapidated buildings. These might have once served as a convent or the Archbishop's palace. An archway led into a courtyard. Upon venturing in, we found the buildings were inhabited, however, the suspicious stares of the occupants prevented us from lingering too long. We wandered around the narrow alleys and side streets of this run-down area, peering at crumbling houses behind the old stone walls. We completed a circuit of the town and saw the ruins of many once-fine, detached villas. These buildings had deteriorated remains of



A solitary street in Shkodra

"Balkan baroque" facades and balconies. Undoubtedly, they were once consulates or residences of important personages. The facades of some older houses had a Turkish appearance. These one-storied houses have large, overhanging eaves; thick stone walls and secure gates protect them from the gaze of passers-by. The smaller streets were full of pot holes and piles of rubble. It was all a far cry from the bustling town described by Theodora Benson in *The Unambitious Journey* (London, 1935).

The few towns-people we encountered stared at us with a mixture of suspicion and curiosity. In general, the people of Shkodër seemed poor and depressed. However, the colorful national dress was worn by both men and women here with greater frequency than elsewhere in Albania. Most people were reluctant to pose for photographs. When asked, the women would wave their hands and turn their heads away. On the last day of our tour, while the others in our group were drinking farewell brandies at the hotel, my wife and I ventured into a cafe on the street which leads to the Mesi Bridge Road. The cafe was totally devoid of modern equipment and decoration. The air was dank and thick with tobacco smoke and most of the tables were occupied by groups of old men. My wife was the only woman apart from a waitress. As we entered, the men put down their rekiis and coffee, fell silent, and stared at us. We sat down on hard wooden chairs at a bare table. The craggy and haggard faces of the old men were fascinating; some were wearing fezes and all had dark shabby clothes. Their initial curiosity soon wore off, and they continued smoking, drinking and talking. I sensed that the Revolution and Socialism meant little to them. They were no poorer or richer than before. These men seemed to be remnants of an older, more remote order of Ottoman or Catholic Albanian rather than citizens of the Communist State. I longed to be able to talk to them and to ask them what they really thought of the Party, of Hoxha and atheism. I wondered which tribes they belonged to; were they Gruda, Hoti, or Skreli? And perhaps what such names as Edith Durham, Aubrey Herbert and Archbishop Jak Sereggi meant to them.

Historically, Shkodër was slow to welcome communism and had suffered accordingly. There seemed to be less Hoxha-philial here than in other Albanian towns. I noticed no great public portraits of the man. There were fewer walls painted with Revolutionary slogans. The famous (or infamous) Museum of Atheism was closed for repairs. Our first excursion was to the Mesi bridge. Apart from some ugly warehouses along the banks of the nearby dry Kiri River and a new concrete bridge, the scene looked much as it did in Edith Durham's photograph of 1912. Our second excursion took us to the Shkodër Castle. As we drove past the old hillside houses, we caught a glimpse of the ruins of King Zog's palace. Our inquisitive guide told us that Zog is now a reviled figure because he sold out the country to the Italians.



The preserved mosque (Xhamija e Plumbit) located beneath Shkodër castle

He told us the story of how Zog had sabotaged the rifles of the Albanian army by removing their triggers. As a result, in April 1939, the army was ineffective against Mussolini's forces. Ironically, our guide was curious to know about King Zog's son Leka. We were unable to visit the mosque on the south side of the citadel.

At a state run kindergarten in Shkodër we listened to the children sing songs that extolled Hoxha. One memorable verse was "We cannot believe he is dead; he lives on in our hearts." These were certainly curious sentiments for an atheist society. At "Question Time" I mentioned that outside of Albania, the most famous Albanian citizen was Mother Theresa. Although our guides knew of her, and that she had won the Nobel Peace Prize, the teachers had apparently never heard of her. I found the same response when we toured a secondary school in Durrës. Neither the teachers nor the pupils knew of her existence, or at least they did not admit to it.

I learned nothing of religious practices in Shkodër. Two rather trivial incidents occurred on our tour into Central Albania when we stopped briefly in Elbasan. I headed off into the old town beyond the impressive Turkish walls. As I wandered through the narrow alleys, a crowd of small boys gathered behind me. They begged for sterlos (biros), gamma (chewing gum), and even lokars. They even offered to take me into an Orthodox church. Much to my surprise, one boy made the sign of the cross and another did the same. At Kruja, we found a Bektashi mosque located on the edge of the old town, below the castle ruins. The steps leading up to the mosque were broken, and the ascent was tricky. As I approached, I realized I had disturbed an old couple who had come to pray. Although we did not speak, I sensed their apprehension and they disappeared swiftly.

One of the highlights of our tour was a visit to the Thirteenth Century Orthodox Cathedral at Berat. The building has been preserved and restored with great care but it is only open to parties of tourists. We were among the first visitors to see it. The glass chandeliers, the silver thuribles and censers, the rich furnishings and the wonderful frescoes

painted on the wooden screens were marvellously intact and well-cared for. Outside there was a gallery containing hundreds of icons. These icons were from all periods and there were several very fine ones by Onufri. We were assured by our guides that all icons and valuable religious objects, such as the Book of Berat, were carefully preserved. Earlier in our tour we had seen another large icon collection in the Museum at Korcha. There was a team of conservators at Korcha who restored icons. We were told they had enough work to last them hundreds of years. While at Berat, we asked our guides about the suppression of religion. One guide said that no one regretted the closure of the churches and mosques. He told us that the government had found other occupations for the clergy. When he said that there had been no opposition to the closure, our inquisitive guide corrected him, stating that "there had been difficulties." The subject seemed a sensitive one, and I gained the impression that they were not too proud of their government's abolition of religion.

It was certainly cheering that some objects of devotion from the past had been preserved. I was interested to find out what had replaced religion in contemporary Albania. From reading modern Albanian literature and observing the country at first hand, I sense that religion was replaced not by Communist-Marxist ideology but by straight-forward nationalism. Albania is the religion of the people. Their great national leaders, Skendërbeg and Hoxha, come close to being worshipped as deities. Marxist-Leninism merely serves the cause of nationalism. It is convenient to label Yugoslavia as a revisionist nation because it threatens the national integrity of Albania. In order to justify Albania's isolationist policies, China and Russia are accused of revisionist backsliding. It would most surely prove embarrassing for a modern Albanian to be reminded that the ultimate goal of Marxism is the withering away of the national state.

Although Albanians are inordinately proud of their country, neither intense nationalism nor Marxist ideology has produced efficiency or wealth. One day, six members of our party went on an illegal excursion on the railways from Tirana. We witnessed many scenes of poverty along the railway line. Bare-foot, ragged little boys hawked shrivelled apples and old women were bent double sweeping the railway tracks clean. Everywhere we looked there were large numbers of apparently unemployed, depressed-looking men. It took us nearly three hours to journey less than 20 miles. On our return trip, we hired a taxi rather than test the efficiency of public transport.

On the positive side, we saw no conspicuous displays of wealth in Albania. Members of the educated elite do not appear to flaunt their privileges. There is a certain level of equality among the people that is difficult to parallel elsewhere. The refreshing innocence and naivete about the people, derives perhaps from their lack of exposure to



Visitors at Hoxha's gravesite, near statue of Mother Albania

consumerism, and the corruption and avarice of a capitalist society. There is also a moral strength not found in many other countries. In modern Albania, family life is regarded as bordering on the sacred. Premarital sex and divorce are strongly discouraged. Pornography and homosexuality are non-existent.

I believe we came closest to gaining an understanding of what modern Albania is all about when we visited the national shrine: The Palace of the Brigades Park in the hills overlooking Tirana. Our visit on 14 October was just two days before the birthday of the lately-dead Enver Hoxha. A large crowd of people of all ages had gathered at the gates of the park by 9:00 a.m. Some had evidently walked a long way and this was the climax to their pilgrimage. They came to venerate the huge statue of Mother Albania and to visit the graves of the "Martyrs," including the grave of Hoxha. A distinguished-looking man, followed by several pairs of children carrying flowers, walked slowly, as in a religious procession, towards Hoxha's grave. On reaching the grave, they parted ranks and filed to either side. They saluted with clenched fists raised towards the tomb. Several elderly women were seen weeping. As our tourist group stood casually by, with cameras clicking, I felt that we had intruded upon a private and holy scene of grief and devotion. Yet this Super-Patriotism seems a shallow substitute for religion, since it is utterly devoid of an inner spiritual dimension. Albania can only be worshipped by Albanians, while Christianity and Islam are universal. My feelings surely derived from the tragic fact that modern Albanians have been cheated of any opportunity to develop a spiritual life that leads towards true salvation.

Gervase R. Belfield

Kosova Update:

Yugoslavia Continues Oppression of Albanians at Home and Abroad

Developments in recent months in Albanian-populated areas of Yugoslavia, known collectively as Kosovë, told of continuing persecution of Albanian nationals for alleged political and ideological crimes. Albanians in Yugoslavia, now estimated to number close of three million (about as many as the population of Albania proper), are concentrated in the province of Kosovë, which is a constituent part of the Republic of Serbia, and in the two adjacent Republics of Macedonia and Montenegro. Late reports on Kosovë emanating from Yugoslavia showed no signs of change in Belgrade's hard-line policy toward the Kosovars. On the contrary, they are hounded relentlessly, in open violation of their ethnic and human rights, not only at home but abroad, as well, including these United States.

The Case of Pjetër Ivezaj, U.S. Citizen

Pjetër Ivezaj, 30, is an American citizen of Albanian descent living in Sterling Heights, a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. Born in a town near Titograd, Montenegro, he has been in the U.S. since 1972. He is married and works as a technician in the Detroit Public School system. In the summer of 1986, Ivezaj, accompanied by his pregnant wife and their daughter, took a trip to Yugoslavia to visit relatives. He arrived there on July 9, was questioned shortly after by the Yugoslav secret police, and arrested and imprisoned on August 19 because he had taken part in a 1981 demonstration in Washington, D.C., to protest Yugoslavia's treatment of ethnic Albanians.

Ivezaj's arrest and ordeal was picked up by the media in the U.S. about six weeks later, and created a sensation. Although there have been several other Albanian-Americans from Kosovë who have been arrested by Yugoslav authorities when visiting relatives, none of them generated so much interest, or aroused as much concern, as the detainment of Ivezaj. For two weeks, from late September to mid-October, his case made front-page news in the Detroit press, and was widely reported in other major newspapers in Washington, Boston, New York and elsewhere.

Ivezaj's trial began on October 3 in Titograd. He was accused of being a part of an "association that aimed at carrying out hostile activities" against Yugoslavia. On October 8 the court sentenced him to seven years in prison. Citing his involvement in the Washington demonstration, the court said that such demonstrations "were directed against the Yugoslav constitutional order and aimed at overthrowing its communist system" (*Detroit Free Press*, Oct. 4 and 13, 1986). The charge was a clear reference to the demand that Kosovë be made a Republic within the Federation of

Yugoslavia. U.S. Embassy officials in Belgrade complained that Yugoslav authorities refused to let them see and talk to the prisoner prior to his trial.

Ivezaj's arrest and trial was called "an outrage" by officials in Washington. Rep. William Broomfield of Michigan addressed the House of Representatives, saying: "Mr. Speaker, if you are searching for justice, steer clear of Yugoslavia." He then asked: "Where are the humanitarian concerns of the authorities in that country?" (*Congressional Record*, Vol. 132, No. 133, Oct. 1, '86). Rep. Philip Crane of Illinois said the Yugoslav agents who spy in our country on U.S. citizens are "creeps and slimebags" (*Detroit News*, Oct. 9, '86). There were threats from lawmakers in Washington to sever U.S. relations with Yugoslavia.

Nor did the lawmakers limit themselves to verbal threats alone. Rep. Broomfield, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, supported by Gus Yatron of Pennsylvania and Rep. Gerald Solomon of N.Y., both of whom serve on the House Sub-Committee for Human Rights introduced a bill in Congress to suspend Yugoslavia's "most-favored nation" trade status, if Pjetër Ivezaj were not released forthwith. Their initiative was backed up by 150 of their colleagues in the House. Michigan's Sen. Carl Levin and Sen. Donald Riegle, asked the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to open an investigation into Ivezaj's "deplorable" case. Similarly, Rep. Dennis Jertel of Detroit, together with 15 Congressional colleagues, addressed a letter to President Reagan, urging him to intervene in the matter.

The message U.S. officials were sending got through quickly to Belgrade. One day after being sentenced, Yugoslavia released Ivezaj from prison. Relieved and happy, Ivezaj commented: "I went through a nightmare". He would not give any details while he was still in Yugoslavia, but members of his family in Detroit had said earlier that he had been tortured by the Yugoslav police during his investigation.

Pjetër Ivezaj lived through a terrible ordeal. But his suffering has served perhaps better than any single incident involving Albanians in Yugoslavia, to educate our leaders in Washington and the American people about the true nature of the Yugoslav regime, one of the most repressive in the world today. If Yugoslavia can abuse an American citizen in this fashion, we leave it to the reader to imagine what it does to the defenseless Kosovars, who are arrested with impunity, and under the cloak of secrecy, hidden from the glare of publicity, are persecuted without mercy. And not just occasionally but routinely, systematically, without letup.

Commentary by a U.S. Congressman on Yugoslavia

The case of Pjetër Ivezaj inspired a most interesting



A street scene of unrest in Kosovë

commentary by Congressman Jim Courter of N.J., a member of the House Armed Services Committee. The commentary, titled "Sending Belgrade a Signal," appeared in *The Washington Times* on October 28, 1986. Portions of the commentary are given below.

"Americans must have been ill-prepared for Belgrade's arrest of several U.S. citizens for anti-Yugoslav political activity, especially when the politicking occurred in America (emphasis in text).

"Two generations of Western university professors, politicians, and diplomats have intrigued us so with Yugoslavia's break with Stalin and worker management of Yugoslav industries that most Americans view that country as a model of humane Communism, gentle at home and non-aligned abroad. Billions of dollars worth of Western aid and credits have created an unspoken need to preserve the image

"But sometimes it takes the unwarranted arrest of one of us abroad—one such as Peter Ivezaj of Michigan—to make us see a government through the eyes of its subjects.

"As a rule, Belgrade uses the fullness of its police powers, including punishment in psychiatric hospitals, against dissenters. By official admission, hundreds have been sentenced to jail in recent years for political activities.

"Such persecution has never stopped at the Yugoslav borders, and the arrest of an American for joining a demonstration in Washington D.C., six years ago should be less surprising than it was.

"The control the ruling League of Communists holds over the country's centrifugal ethnic and political forces constantly requires reassertion. Denunciation of political opponents as 'fascists' and 'irredentists' has become a commonplace.

"Emigrés who are politically active have become an obsession of the regime, and it appears that the SDB, or Yugoslav secret police, has been deeply involved in killings and intimidations abroad.

"In the United States, there is evidence of extortion,

provocation within emigre circles, and even murder. There is still more evidence of violence in Western Europe. Five anti-Communist activists were murdered in Munich during the first half of 1969. A Croatian exile, Professor Cizek, was abducted to Yugoslavia a few years ago. Three exiled Serbians... were killed in Sydney, Chicago, and Vienna within a space of a few days this February."

Congressman Courter comments also on Yugoslavia's Libyan connection. He says:

"The Libya/Yugoslavia alliance is something no one in Washington ever talks about. But it lies just below the surface of much of the news.

"Libya has purchased Yugoslav arms, including aircraft and naval vessels. According to a new issue of *Der Spiegel*, Libyan pilots are receiving training in MiG-21s in Yugoslavia as part of an arrangement to pay off the latter's oil debts.

"Little wonder that the journalist and Yugoslav expert Nora Beloff describes Belgrade's foreign policy in a new book as 'non-aligned against the West.'"

Congressman Courter ends his commentary with a thought-provoking suggestion.

"Perhaps it's time to take a good hard look."

We agree. Indeed, this is what the Albanians in America have been urging for years, so that our officials in Washington may see Yugoslavia as it is in reality, a dictatorship that has only contempt for the principles on which our country was founded and lives by.

Developments in Kosovë and Yugoslavia

Since late 1985 Albanians in Yugoslavia have come increasingly under attack from a four-pronged drive of government authorities, the intellectual establishment, the media, the Serbian activists.

An ominous burst of anti-Albanian feelings occurred in October of 1985, when 120 Serbs in Kosovë addressed a petition of grievances against the Kosovars to the authorities in Belgrade, urging immediate action against Albanians "chauvinists" and "Fascists". The Serbian petitioners cried out that they were "exposed to violence" by Albanians "unknown to history in peace time in the cradle of our homeland, namely Kosovë; and that "part of Yugoslavia has been occupied by Albanians who are exerting "brutal pressure" on Serbians and their families, and vandalizing their properties, graveyards and holy places. The petition called for the banning of the Albanian flag in Kosovë and charged moreover that 30,000 Serbs in Albania "are exposed to the darkest terror" (The 1979 Albanian census counted a total of 4,063 Slavs in the Country).

The petition is a sad example of Serbian atavistic hostility toward Albanians, and a vivid manifestation of the frenzy that has overtaken Serbia since the Kosovar demonstrations in 1981. Even sadder, however, is that fact that the petition

was supported by the Belgrade-based Committee for the Defense of Freedom of Thought and Expression, a group founded in November, 1984 by prominent academics and other public figures. In January, 1986 the committee addresses an appeal to the Federal Assembly expressing total agreement with the Serbian petitioners. The appeal is phrased in such violent language that it is difficult to believe that it came from academics dedicated to serving reason and truth. The appeal accused the Albanians of "committing genocide" in Kosovë, but offered no evidence to back up the accusation. It noted that "some 200,000 people were moved out of Kosovo" over the past 20 years, falsely implying that the Albanians were responsible for it, instead of deteriorating economic conditions in the province and many other reasons, largely personal in nature. The appeal called for "an end to the internal undermining of Yugoslavia's frontiers"—and indirect attack on the just demand of the Kosovars for a republic of their own within the Federation. Perhaps the most surprising statement in the appeal of the academics is the claim that: "There is no national minority anywhere in the world which enjoys greater constitutional rights (than the Albanians in Yugoslavia)".

Well, let us see how the Albanians are enjoying those constitutional rights. And since no one is better qualified to speak on this point than the Albanians in Yugoslavia themselves, we shall let a Kosovar spokesman take the floor. We shall refer the reader to an interview which the Kosovar scholar, Rexhep Qosja, gave early this year to the Slovenian paper, *Delo*. Following are excerpts from the interview of Dr. Qosja:

"In Macedonia it is now forbidden to give children Albanian names connected with Albanian history and culture, as for example, Kastriot, which is the surname of the renowned Albanian warrior of the 15th Century, Scanderbeg. The names Liridon and Liridona (which mean "freedom-lovers" in Albanian—our Note), have also been declared as unsuitable or unlawful, and the reason given is that they express the desire for freedom! This is like forbidding the names of Slobodan or Slobodanka in Serbian or in Croatian, or Libertino in Italian.

"Off limits also are the proper names Viosa and Tomor (names of a river and a mountain in Albania—our Note). This is the same as preventing the use of the names Vardarka and Drinka (both proper names deriving from two rivers in Yugoslavia—our Note).

"Of 600 Albanian folk songs that have been broadcast until now over radio stations in Macedonia, 570 have been banned because they 'promote Albanian national spirit'. Yet, the majority of those songs are about love and marriage, and about people who go abroad to earn their living.

"At the present, Albanians in Yugoslavia do not

have cultural contacts with Albania (they are not allowed to do so—our Note). This is truly an anachronism not only in Europe, but in the entire world. Within a day one can travel, for example from Belgrade or Tiranë to Tokyo, Sao-Paulo or any other city in the world. Men have even gone to the moon... But they cannot go from Prishtinë (the main city in Kosovë—our Note) to Tiranë in Albania, or from Tiranë to Prishtinë... Scholars in Kosovë cannot obtain literature on Albanian studies, books, newspapers or magazines from Albania or, for that matter, from any other country." (The above excerpts were translated from the Albanian text that was printed in the Albanian daily, *Zëri i Popullit*, Mar. 5, '87).

Such are the "constitutional rights" Albanians enjoy in the Federation of Yugoslavia. The above is but a sample of the daily indignities and sufferings to which Albanians are subjected in Yugoslavia. Early this year reports from Yugoslavia told of bulldozers breaking down scores of walls that surround the houses of Albanians living in Macedonia in towns like Tetovë, Kerchovë, Gostivar, Strugë, Dibër, Kumanovë and others. Civilized people will no doubt be shocked at this news, but Yugoslav officials have their reasons. We are told that the bulldozers were turned loose by the authorities because they viewed those walls—a traditional architectural feature of Albanian homes—as "divisible symbols and great obstacles to interethnic solidarity". Did the authorities suspect that plots were being hatched behind those walls to undermine the social order in Macedonia and the Federation? The campaign to raze the menacing walls targeted the destruction of 2,716 walls of Albanian homes in the city of Tetovë alone (See *Liria* bi-weekly, Boston, Jan. 15, '87). One wonders whether there are any limits to the destructive frenzy of anti-Albanian elements in Yugoslavia.

Anti-Albanian Proceedings of Yugoslav Party Congress

In late June of 1986, the Communist League of Yugoslavia (LCY) held its 13th congress in Belgrade, and a part of the proceedings was devoted to Kosovë. Unfortunately, nothing positive in our view, came out of the deliberations on this question. Basically the congress reiterated ideas that have by now grown stale and proved to be useless and counter-productive.



A Prishtinë street search

The congress took note of the "continuing unfavorable trends" in the province, meaning that there is still trouble in Kosovë, that the region has not been "pacified" and Kosovar dissent has not been crushed. The congress said that "the sources of Albanian nationalism and irredentism have not been stamped out" which is to say that Kosovars continue to nourish and manifest their Albanian awareness, Albanian consciousness, Albanian spirit and identity. The congress complained that "not enough has been done to eliminate . . . the indoctrination of young people in Kosovo with Albanian nationalism," which translated means that still harsher measures will be taken to weaken and emasculate, if not eradicate entirely, the teaching of the Albanian language, literature, history and folklore to Albanian children and youth.

The congress let it be known that the "process of ideological-political differentiation" in Kosovë has "not been completed," which in plain English means that witch hunts and persecution of Albanians for demanding their ethnic and human rights will be pressed relentlessly, with callous disregard for the sufferings of the victims. The congress again rejected the idea for a Republic of Kosovë, calling this a plot to destabilize and break up the Yugoslav Federation—one of the more prominent myths currently clouding the thinking of the Yugoslav leadership in connection with Kosovë. Continuing its tirade against the Albanians, the congress accused Kosovar activists of striving for an "ethnically pure" Kosovë, purged of Serbs and Montenegrins, though we have never seen any evidence to support this accusation.

Much was said at the congress about developing Kosovë's economy and one of the ways to promote development is "family planning." "Kosovo's population policies must be attuned to the general efforts . . . in favor of the Province's more rapid development," the congress said. This is Belgrade's convoluted way of saying that Albanian women are giving birth to too many babies, which only aggravates the province's economic woes—a thesis that is far from proved.

The congress was constrained to admit, however, that "of late Serbian and Montenegrin nationalisms have intensified" in Kosovë, and went on record as opposing those who denounce "the Albanian nationality as such."

The LYC Congress also advocated "strengthening all forms of informational, political and educational work among (Yugoslav) citizens abroad," which properly interpreted means that Yugoslav agents will continue to intimidate and terrorize Kosovar and other opponents of the Yugoslav regime in the U.S. and other countries.

In brief, the congress did not move Yugoslavia a single inch out of the quagmire it has created for itself in Kosovë (The proceedings of the LYC Congress were published in the June-July, 1986 issue of *Socialist Thought and Practice*; the



Army units patrol in Kosovë

sections on Kosovë are on pp. XXIX-XXXI, and 172-185)

Serbian Nationalists on the Move

New anti-Albanian actions took place in Yugoslavia throughout 1986 and in 1987 encompassing the media, academic conferences, and street rallies and marches. In March of 1986 about one hundred Serbs traveled to Belgrade to register complaints against the Kosovars; and in June 1986 several hundred Serbs from the village of Batuse in Kosovë took to the streets to protest "persecution" by Albanians. But the biggest action of this kind to date occurred on April 24, 1987 when a crowd of 10,000 to 15,000 Serbs and Montenegrins staged a rally in Kosovo Polje, a town near Prishtinë, to complain about the Kosovars to the chief of the Serbian Communist Party who was visiting in town (*New York Times*, Apr. 25 and 26, '87).

Serbian nationalists worked overtime in the drive to arouse public sympathy for their position in Kosovë by pointing their finger at the Albanians and yelling "Villains!" But as an old Albanian proverb says: "You cannot hide the sun with a sieve. Commenting on the Serbs' charge that Albanians are harassing and driving them out of Kosovë, and committing genocide against them, an Albanian observer Bajram Tonuzi, writes:

"This is the stuff of science fiction; it's an accusation that has no basis in fact since it is well known that the Serbs have on their side: the local and federal legal apparatus, the police network, the army, the press, the various information media, the chief administrative posts as well as the chief economic and social management positions in the region. . . . What they would like us to believe is tantamount to saying that the Germans, during their military occupation of France in 1940-45, were victims of persecution by the French. Let us admit that this makes no sense at all." (*Koha e Jonë*, Paris, Jan-March '87, p. 28; translated from the French).

The excesses of Serbian activists were too much even for a top-ranking Yugoslav party official. Speaking in Prishtinë on November 5, 1986 the official, Stipe Suvar, said: "Serbian nationalism has indeed had a finger in what has been going

on in Kosovo, encouraging Serbs and Montenegrins to stage protest rallies, to go to Belgrade to seek justice and protection, to emigrate collectively and to propagate ideas to the effect that Albanians are aliens in Kosovo . . . , that all people in positions of authority in Kosovo are in the service of the irredentist movement or traitors, and so on" (*Socialist Thought and Practice*, Oct.-Dec. '86 issue, p. 19).

The above remark represents a glimmer of objectivity on Kosovë that is all too rare on the part of Yugoslav officialdom. But much more of that sort of realism is needed to check the Serbs, who seem bent on turning the clock back in Kosovë. The thesis they defend is, in our view, indefensible, for it reverses completely the roles of the victim and the oppressor in Kosovë. It reminds us of La Fontaine's fable, "The Wolf and the Lamb". The wolf decided to eat the lamb, but needed an excuse to carry out his dark plan. So he presented himself as a victim of the lamb, and made all kinds of false accusations against him: "You've spoiled my drinking water, your brother or your father has insulted me" and so forth. When the lamb refuted all of his accusations, the wolf stopped "arguing" his case and pounced on the innocent creature.

The fact is, the Serbs are bitter and angry not because they are persecuted by the Albanians, but because they are no longer enjoying the degree of power, prestige and well-being in Kosovë that they have been accustomed to for generations. The loss of their former position of absolute supremacy in the province—as in the days of Rankovich, for example—has traumatized and disoriented them. Instead of admitting that the plight of the Albanians in Yugoslavia is real and indeed intolerable, they prefer—as they have done for generations—to spin myths about them and to goad the authorities to take still harsher measures against them for daring to ask for their rights and seeking to improve their lot.

Reportage and Comment on Kosovë in Albania

The Albanian press reacted to the Serbian petition of October, 1985 by calling it "ultra-nationalist" and evidence of hysteria on the part of the Serbs. According to Tiranë, the petition aimed to bring back the bygone times of the Serbian monarchs and A. Rankovich, perpetrator of genocidal acts against Albanians in Yugoslavia (*Zëri i Popullit*, Feb. 11, '86). Commenting on the 13th LCY Congress, an editorial in the same paper (dt. July, '86) said the congress demeaned the Kosovars and that "the resolution (it) adopted on Kosovë, leaves the two million Albanians in Yugoslavia at the mercy of the Great Serbians," that is, imperialist-minded Serbians striving to expand Serbia's borders and power at the expense of other peoples. The Yugoslav policy toward the Kosovars, the editorial said, is a blind alley that can only aggravate the many problems facing the Federation.

At the 9th Congress of the Albanian Party of Labor, held in Tiranë in early November, 1986, a number of delegates made references to the question of Kosovë. A woman

delegate from Mirdita said: "We are incensed when we hear that the Great Serbians prohibit our sisters, the brave Kosovar mothers, from giving their children the time-honored names of Katriot, Shqipe, etc. But let them not forget history, for just as no Sultan was able to defeat Kastriot, so no bolt of lightening can shear off the wings of the shqipe (eagle)."

The most extensive comments of Kosovë at the congress came from Ramiz Alia, leader of Albania. His views on this subject were anxiously awaited by the Yugoslav authorities who were eagerly hoping for a change of policy in Albania. Alia however threw cold water on such hopes. He said that "a grave situation has been created in Kosovë" by Yugoslavia. The autonomy of the province, he said, is being gradually eroded, the teaching of Albanian is being restricted, and the historical and cultural traditions of the Kosovars are being impaired. The persecution of Albanians in Yugoslavia, he said, is taking on the character of "a true inquisition." "We cannot reconcile ourselves to this situation," he continued. He advised the Yugoslav authorities to abandon the use of force in Kosovë, and seek instead to solve the problem calmly, through reason, by eliminating the causes of the problem, which are internal in nature and of Yugoslavia's own making, and avoid blaming them on external agents and forces (*Zëri i Popullit*, Nov. 4, '86, p. 14).

On December 27, 1986 an ATA (Albanian Telegraphic Agency) dispatch told of a conference of Yugoslav historians in Belgrade, at which a Kosovar, Fehmi Pushkolli, complained that history in Yugoslavia is being politicized, and that "everything Albanian, from ancient times to the present, is being presented in a negative light." Even Illyrian rulers, such as King Agron and Queen Teuta, are being dragged into the present conflict and associated, somehow, with "irredentism"—one of the more recent products of the Serbian penchant for myth-making. In early March of this year, Albania observed the centennial of the founding of the first Albanian school. But unlike Greece and Italy, Yugoslavia refused to allow educators and cultural leaders in Kosovë and Belgrade to travel to Albania to attend the commemoration (*Zëri i Popullit*, March 5, '87). Referring to the recent events in Kosovo Polje, Albanian sources said that foreign observers interpreted those events as a new escalation of Serbian nationalism, orchestrated by Serbian activists who are seeking to mobilize all of Yugoslavia in their offensive against Albanians.

Albanians Abroad Demand Justice for Kosovë

The unsettled and unsettling question of Kosovë continued to engage the attention and the energies of Albanians abroad: in America, Canada, West Europe, Turkey, Australia and other countries. In a variety of ways they presented the case of the Kosovars before the court of world public opinion. This was important political work that helped to refute the generally misleading stories given out on

Kosovë by Belgrade's information agencies.

Demonstrations in Detroit and Chicago

On September 7, 1986 a large group of Albanians demonstrated in Detroit against the Yugoslav Festival, heretofore an annual event in that city. The *Detroit Free Press* reported that about 500 people took part in the demonstration, which also included Croatians opposed to the Yugoslav regime. Leaflets handed out at the demonstration said that "almost 3 million Albanians in Yugoslavia are living in conditions similar to those of the Jews under Hitler". The demonstrators accused the Yugoslav government of pushing drugs into the U.S., and facilitating the transportation of illegal aliens into America by way of Mexico. They also called for a national boycott of the "Yugo Car" and a Congressional investigation into the activities of Yugoslav secret agents in the United States.

On April 2, 1987 Albanian-Americans staged another demonstration, this time in front of the Yugoslav Consulate in Chicago. The demonstration, organized by the League of Kosovë (*Lidhja Kosovare*), demanded the release of all Albanian political prisoners in Yugoslavia, who number in the thousands, far out of proportion to the Albanian population in Yugoslavia. Those attending the demonstration also heard speeches by the Rev. Hafiz Isuf Azemi and Mustafa Henci, top-ranking officials of the League of Kosovë.

Activity of "Kosovë Watch" groups — Meanwhile,

Albanian "Kosovë Watch" groups continued to give strong support to the Kosovars. In December, 1986, the Albanian patriotic club, "Jusuf Gervalla" in N.Y. drafted a Memorandum denouncing proposals in Yugoslavia to alter the Albanian flag so as to suit the political prejudices of Yugoslavia's leaders—predominantly Serb ones—in disregard of the feelings of the Albanian population. The Memorandum said: "Hands off the arbitrary proposal to alter our national Flag." Copies of the Memo were sent to the leaders of the Yugoslav Federation and the authorities in Kosovë and the republics. The issue of the flag prompted another Memorandum by a group that signed itself, The Albanian Communities in the United States and Canada. Dated January 20, 1987, the Memo was addressed to the UN Secretary General, noting that "a member of this organization (Yugoslavia) seeks to destroy the flag of another" and wipe off "the most important symbol of our cultural and ethnic identity and unity." The Memo solicited the aid of the secretary General to stop Yugoslavia from oppressing "an ancient and proud people."

A press release of the New York based Albanian League of Prizren, dated September 19, 1986, announced the inauguration of a new radio program in N.Y., called "The Voice of Kosovë." The announcement said that the program, scheduled to broadcast weekly for about an hour, intended "to make known . . . to American public opinion the tragic situation in Kosovë."



Yugoslav police in action in Kosovë

In keeping with a decade-old tradition, in September, 1986 the Albanian Kosovar Youth in the Free World addressed a Memorandum to the UN Secretary General entitled, "On the Persecution and Violation of Human Rights of the Albanian Population In Yugoslavia." In the same month, the organization published a small volume, *The Plight of Ethnic Albanians*, containing valuable source material on the history and nature of the Kosovë dispute. The volume serves as a useful antidote to the Serb version of the dispute.

The League of Kosovë, veteran organization (founded in 1949) and staunch defender of the Kosovars, continued its tireless struggle in the streets of America, in the corridors of diplomats and in the forums of international organizations. In October, 1986 a delegation of the League, headed by Rev. Hafiz Azemi, participated in the congress of the Federation of Minorities in Europe that was held in Klagenfurt, Austria. The delegation presented a Resolution condemning Yugoslavia's repression of Albanian nationals, which was unanimously adopted by the congress. On January 20, 1987, another delegation of the League, this one led by Prof. Luan Gashi, the League's General Secretary, traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of Congress. The delegation had useful talks on Kosovë with Sen. Alan Dixon and Sen. Paul Simon (both of Ill.), and Rep. William Broomfield (Mich.), Rep. Philip Crane (Ill.) and Rep. Joseph DiGuardi (N.Y.). Yugoslav officials have become quite nervous about the work of the League of Kosovë. Early this year the Prishtinë daily attacked the League as a group of extremist exiles hostile to the Yugoslav Federation, proof that the work of the League is effective.

Albanian press activity—The Albanian press in America and abroad gave wide publicity to the cause of the Kosovars. The list included the newspapers *Dielli* and *Liria* in Boston, the *Vineyard*, organ of the Albanian Orthodox Church in America, which is also published in Boston, and the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* in Santa Clara, California. Much interesting material appeared in Albanian publications in Europe, among them *Flamuri* in Rome, and *Qindresa Shqiptare* in Paris. The latter carries concise summaries of developments in Kosovë. The quarterly *Koha e Jonë*, which is published in Paris featured materials on Kosovë in every issue, including the fiery patriotic broadcasts of Hqmet Ndreu on Radio Melbourne in Australia. In Holm, Sweden, another publication, *Youth* (an "independent Albanian historical-cultural magazine"), printed strongly pro-Kosovar articles in Albanian, Swedish and English.

Kosovë activists in U.S. and Canada—A number of Albanians in America worked conscientiously to secure the rights belonging to Albanian nationals in Yugoslavia. In the forefront of the struggle were the leaders of the League of Kosovë, and Dr. Sami Repishti, president of the Kosova Relief Fund, U.S.A. In September, 1986 Dr. Repishti met the

Vice-President of the United States, George Bush, in New York, and had a brief talk with him about Kosovë. The Vice-President expressed his appreciation to Repishti for his views and praised his work as a human rights activist. Dr. Repishti also presented a petition to Mr. Bush describing the plight of the Kosovars and proposing ideas for breaking the stalemate in the province. (For the text of the Petition, see *Liria*, Feb. 15, '87).

Other activists were Dr. Elez Biberaç, a senior official with the USIA; Maliq Arifaj, executive secretary of the Albanian Kosovar Youth In the Free World; Tahir Kernaja in N.Y.; Peter James of Jamestown, N.Y., lecturer; Hasan Risilia in Philadelphia, Pa.; Prenk Gruda and Ekrem Bardha, Detroit, Mich.; Ardian Gjinnaj and Duro Cini in Canada; Ali Gjidiu, an informed and perceptive writer; Zeqir Berisha, Waterbury, Conn.; Zef Shllaku, San Francisco; and Din Kosova in Palm Springs, California. Needless to say, many other Albanian men and women in America and Canada worked energetically behind the scenes to help their co-nationals in Yugoslavia.

The intense activity of Albanians abroad in behalf of their suffering compatriots in Yugoslavia has begun to trouble the authorities in Belgrade. It seems they fear the success Albanian activists are having in turning world public opinion around in favor of the down-trodden Kosovars. A TANJUG dispatch from Belgrade (Feb. 11, '87) complained that some West European countries "have not shown understanding for Yugoslav stands" for they "tolerate the subversive propaganda activity of hostile Albanian groups . . ." This is indeed a cause for concern for Belgrade, for until now Yugoslavia has had a green light in the propaganda battle against Albanians, and as a result managed to lead astray the media, intellectuals, and government officials world-wide. Henceforth, it seems, Belgrade will be treading a bumpy and jolting road in its efforts to mislead world public opinion on Kosovë.

U.S. and Foreign Press on Kosovë

Articles on Yugoslavia and Kosovë appeared in the recent past in many publications in America, among them: the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Times*. Both the major papers in Detroit, the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* gave excellent coverage to the Pjeter Ivezaj case. Pjeter himself published a letter to the editor of the *Washington Times* in which he said that Yugoslavia is a police state, and the UTDBA (the Yugoslav secret police) "did its utmost to recruit me . . . to spy on Albanian and Croatian dissidents" in the U.S. In Waterbury, Conn., Zeqir Berisha published several letters to the editor in the *Waterbury Democrat* to inform readers about Kosovë.

Overseas, the in-passe in Kosovë made news in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in the form of a number of revealing articles by Viktor Meier, an expert on Yugoslav

affairs. In an article on December 23, 1986 Meier wrote: "It is suspected that the issue of migration (of the Serbs from Kosovë) is being used as a political lever to liquidate the autonomy of the province." Elsewhere he wrote that "the tendency of the Serbs to react in an irrational manner" appears to be aggravating existing problems in the province. Developments in Kosovë were reported in the pages of the *Spectator* of London, the *Kayham International* of Teharan which criticized Belgrade's treatment of Albanian Moslems, and the Italian paper, *Il Tempo*, which in late June of this year ran a series of articles that showed understanding and sympathy for the Albanian position, in part perhaps because Italy has had its own problems with Yugoslavia over Trieste.

Books and other studies on Kosovë—Apart from *The Plight of Ethnic Albanians* mentioned earlier in this update, a number of other studies explored the issue of Albanians in Yugoslavia. Foremost among these is the book on the House of Representatives Hearing on Kosovë in October, 1986 (of which more later on). This is a significant publishing event, in the sense that it's the first U.S. Government publication to deal specifically with the violation of human rights by Yugoslavia of its Albanian population. The publication can be obtained from the U.S. Government Printing Office in Washington, D.C. (\$2.50 per copy). Interesting, too, is the book, *Human Rights in Yugoslavia*, edited by Gruenwald and Rosenblum-Cale (Irvington Publishers, Inc., N.Y., 1986), which has an enlightening chapter on Yugoslavia's Albanians by Dr. Sami Repishti. Another book on Yugoslavia entitled, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1963-83* (1984), by Dr. Pedro Ramet, has an excellent section on Kosovë (pp. 156-171).

The *East European Quarterly* (March '87) carried an article, "Kosovo: A Tragedy In the Making," by Prof. Nicholas J. Costa of the greater Hartford Community College. This is a stimulating study based in part on interviews with people like Milovan Djilas, Vukmanovich Tempo, Dr. Elez Biberaj, Anton Logoreci and others. Significant studies on Yugoslavia, with much interesting material on Kosovë, appeared in the Spring-Summer, 1986 issue of the *South Slav Journal* (London), an influential scholarly publication. The same journal published a highly favorable review of the book, *Studies on Kosova*, by Pipa and Repishti (eds), in its Spring, 1987 issue.

Croatian Support for the Kosovars

As in the past, Croatian elements in America and West Europe gave powerful support to the cause of ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia. News about Kosovë, accompanied by thoughtful commentary, appeared in almost every issue of the information bulletin, *That's Yugoslavia*, which is published in Hamburg, W. Germany as an English supplement to the Croatian magazine, *Hrvatska Domovina*. Two issues especially relevant to Albanians are those of December, 1986, and April 1987, which discuss Albanian

political prisoners in Yugoslavia and the situation in Macedonia where Albanians, numbering at least 400,000, are treated even more harshly than in the province of Kosovë.

The *CNC Report* organ of the Croatian National Congress, published numerous reports, news items and analyses on Albanians in Yugoslavia. The April, 1987 issue of the Report carried an account of a speech that Dr. Mathew Mestrovic, CNC President, had given recently in Strasbourg, France, at a convocation of the European Parliament, in which he made several references to the Kosovars. Among other things, he said: "... the 2,000,000 Albanians in Yugoslavia must be granted the right to self-determination and republic status" (p. 10). Other Croatian publications such as *Nova Hrvatska* and *Hrvatska Država*, which are printed in England and Germany, extensively covered developments in Kosovë. Their reporting was sympathetic to the plight of Albanians in Yugoslavia.

Meanwhile, other Croatian human rights activists in the U.S. aligned themselves with the Kosovars. Two of these are Marija Ann Levic, Executive Director of the group, Human Rights in Yugoslavia; and Joseph Vrbich, Coordinating Director of the Northern California Alliance for Justice in Yugoslavia. Both of them wrote excellent letters, in defense of the Albanians in Yugoslavia, to editors of influential papers like the *Washington Times* (July 15, '86), the *Christian Science Monitor* (Dec. 10, '86), and the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Dec. 27, '86). Ms. Levic pointed out that "The tragedy of Albanians in Yugoslavia is that they are the victims of Serbian ultranationalism and supremacy". Mr. Vrbich wrote along similar lines.

Congressional Hearing Held on Kosovë

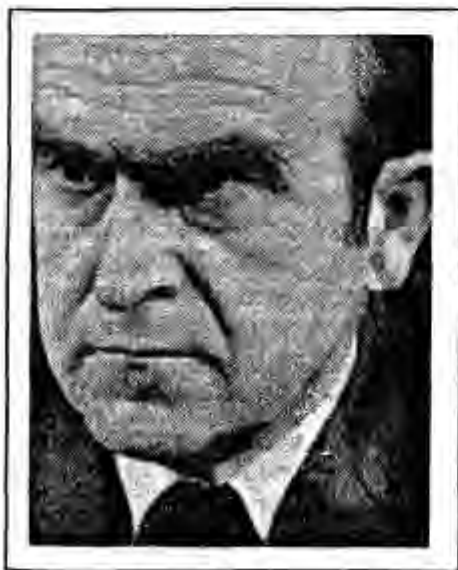
We conclude this update on Kosovë with an account on an encouraging development in our nation's capital. On Wednesday, October 8, 1986, a hearing was held on Albanians in Yugoslavia before the Sub-Committee for Human Rights in the U.S. House of Representatives, the first time such an event has taken place in Congress. The hearing was chaired by Rep. Gus Yatron of Penna. The immediate cause of the House inquiry was the arrest and detention in Yugoslavia of Pjeter Ivezaj. It appears that the initiative for the hearing was taken by Rep. William S. Broomfield of Mich., whose lively concern for justice and readiness to help the victimized Albanians have won the respect and gratitude of Albanians throughout our country.

In addition to Mr. Broomfield, the hearing heard testimony from Rep. Joseph J. DiGuardi of N.Y., who also introduced a Resolution in the House of representatives "Condemning the repression of ethnic Albanians by the Government of the Socialist Federated Republic of Yugoslavia." The Resolution is a fine summation of the issues in Kosovë which deserves to be framed and hung in the living room of every Albanian home in America, and kept there until the day Kosovë has gained its full rights.

Others who testified were: Ekrem Bardha, Chairman, Albanian American Republican Clubs of America; Prof. Albert M. Tosches, Salem State College in Mass.; Prof. Sami Repishti of Adelphi University, N.Y.; and Prof. Pedro Ramet, University of Washington in Seattle, Wash., and the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, Washington, D.C.

Having in mind the ordeal of Pjeter Ivezaj, Mr. Bardha said in his testimony: "Can the United States permit a foreign communist country to dictate to American citizens which of their constitutional rights (such as the right to demonstrate) they can or cannot exercise?" Prof. Tosches (who it turns out, is an Arbëresh) testified that he did not view the demand for a Republic of Kosovë as a threat to the political system of Yugoslavia, but rather as an opportunity for that country to further its goals "for the social and economic and political equality of all her peoples."

At this point, Rep. Philip Crane of Ill. intervened to make a stinging attack on Yugoslavia, following which the hearing continued with testimony by Prof. Repishti, well-known activist and expert on Kosovë. Repishti began by describing in detail the disheartening situation in the Albanian-populated areas of Yugoslavia, and concluded with a proposal that an American Consulate be opened in Prishtinë, in the belief that the American presence in Kosovë would generate a feeling of security among Albanians, reduce existing tensions and "contribute to the political stability of the region, and consequently of Yugoslavia itself." Prof. Ramet, who has written extensively on Yugoslavia, suggested that the U.S. send impartial consultants to Yugoslavia with a view to initiating a fruitful dialogue on Kosovë. He also endorsed the idea for an American Consulate in Prishtinë. (For further details on the hearing, see *Dielli*, Oct. 16, '86 and *Liria*, March 15, '87).



Branko Mikulić, resigned Premier

The Albanians of America respectfully commend our government leaders for their support of the brave and unbowed Kosovars. We trust that in the future they will broaden and intensify their support of this ethnic and human rights issue, until the matter is finally resolved to the benefit of all parties concerned: Albanians, Serbs, Montenagrins and others.



William S. Broomfield

We end on a light social note. When Rep. Broomfield returned home to Michigan last October, following Ivezaj's release from prison in Titograd, he was given "a hero's welcome" by the Albanians in the Detroit area. The Congressman was greeted with bouquets of flowers, embraced, applauded, and thanked heartily by members of Ivezaj's family, where for over an hour he socialized with several dozen Albanians, eating and drinking in a warm festive atmosphere, with toasts of "Gëzuar!" ("Cheers!") coming to him from every side.

Said Broomfield, "In my 30 years in Congress I've never had such a reception. It is unbelievable." (*Detroit News*, *Detroit Free Press*, Oct. 12, 1986).

ADDENDUM—Last minute bulletin from Yugoslavia—

Just as we were winding up this update on Kosovë, it was reported that Branko Mikulić, Premier of Yugoslavia since 1986, had resigned his post. According to the report, Mikulić was driven to that decision by the growing economic crisis in the country, brought on by galloping inflation, labor unrest, and mounting foreign debt, and above all by the impasse in Kosovë.

As far as we are aware, this is the first time in the history of the Communist world that a premier of a communist country has voluntarily resigned his post. It is to be hoped that Mikulić's resignation will have a salutary effect on the future of Kosovë.

Peter R. Prifti

A Glimmer of Light in the Kosovë Tunnel

Despite the depressing trend of events in Kosovë, now and then something happens to relieve the tension somewhat and give rise to hope for a peaceful settlement of the issue.

In late March of this year, a report from Kosovë said that the renowned Albanian academician, Dr. Ali Hadri, of the University of Prishtinë, long Director of the the Institute of History of Kosovë and a member of the Kosovë Academy of Science and Arts, and been found "Not guilty" by the Communal Court of Prishtinë, following charges that he had given false information regarding his retirement (Rilindja, March 25, '87). It is regrettable, nonetheless, that he was brought to trial in the first place.

The newsletter of Amnesty International (summer, 1986 issue) told of the release from prison in Yugoslavia of one, Shemsedin Hoxha, probably a Kosovar (according to DIELLI, Oct. 1, '86) after persistent demands for his release by a group of citizens in Long Beach, Calif., all of them members of AI who had "adopted" him as a prisoner of conscience. The release of Hoxha is evidence that public pressure on a government, even that of Yugoslavia, can sometimes get results.

Certain publications in Croatia and Slovenia, in "defiance" of the press of Serbia which generally portrays the Albanians as boors and savages, have begun to present "the Albanian side" of the story on the conflict in Kosovë, by giving the Albanians a chance to express their views, or simply by printing truthful versions of events in connection with Kosovë. Three such publications are the weekly *DANAS* and the bi-weekly *OKO*, both published in Zagreb; and *Delo*, a Slovenian paper.

In late May of this year, a series of scholarly discussions on the question of Kosovë were held at Zagreb's Institute for Social Research, which showed a remarkable degree of realism and objectivity. The participants in the discussions made many thoughtful observations, for example: "much is said and written about Kosovë, often without knowledge or patience, or motivated by hatred;" "Serbian and Montenegrin nationalisms . . . create problems even where there are none;" Serbian, Montenegrin and Macedonian nationalists "accuse the Albanian nationality of being the cause of all the ills of Yugoslavia at present;" and that "the political solution of the problems of Kosovë must come from the Albanians themselves," in other words, the problem cannot be solved without consulting the Kosovars and taking into account their views, needs and aspirations (*Rilindja*, May 18, 19, and 30, '87 issues).

Some months ago, the foremost Yugoslav economist, Branko Horvat, published an essay entitled "The Kosovo

Question," which broke new ground in the direction of political realism and rational analysis on this question. Horvat denied that the 1981 demonstrations by Albanians were "counter-revolutionary" or the work of an "enemy conspiracy." Commenting on the Kosovar demand for a Republic of Kosovë, Horvat said this is a lawful political demand and not a subversive slogan as charged by opponents of the demand. Horvat also said that he found no evidence anywhere that the Albanians of Yugoslavia want or aim to make Kosovo an "ethnically pure" province. Turning to the need to accelerate the development of Kosovë's economy, Horvat said that "this can be done most effectively by the Kosovars themselves," that is, the Kosovars should be trusted to manage their own economic affairs, without outside interference.

On June 20, 1986, the Belgrade-based Committee for the Defense of Freedom of Thought and Expression addressed an appeal to the Yugoslav authorities which condemned the arrest and imprisonment of 7 Kosovars for alleged political crimes. The appeal said: "Prosecution of Albanians, including even minors, for having read articles, daubed slogans or made utterances which do not call for violence, (has) many illegal aspects, such as extortion of admission of guilt, fabrication of evidence and false testimonies."

Another encouraging development occurred in December, 1986 when the Writers' Association of Serbia issued a Communication (No. 53) calling for the release from prison of the Kosovar writer, Adem Demaçi, the longest prisoner of conscience in Yugoslavia (over 20 years). The Communication was drafted by the association's Committee for Defense of Artistic Freedom. The action of the Serbian writers, though long overdue, was a step in the right direction.

Curiously and sadly, however, these same writers lost their perspective when, in the latter part of May, 1987, they held a series of discussions on Kosovë at which they let loose with a barrage of scorn and abuse of Albanians. Even the Prishtinë daily, *Rilindja*, which expounds the political and ideological line of Belgrade, was offended and reacted by printing a sharp commentary headed, "Politicization in the Name of Literature," which called the discussions "a mass of anti-Kosovar and anti-Albanian theses."

Despite the rantings of the Serbian writers, the positive developments enumerated above add up to a glimmer of light in the Kosovë tunnel which, if encouraged to grow, may at last lead to an exit from the tunnel.

Book Reviews

Giacomo Gardin: Dieci Anni di Prigionia in Albania (1945-1955)

(Ten Years of Imprisonment in Albania (1945-1955)
Roma: Edizioni "La Civiltà Cattolica," 1986, pages 93, price \$10.00, pp.

This short volume tells the story of the ten year ordeal of the Jesuit priest-author in Albanian jails and concentration camps. I first heard of Father Giacomo Gardin in Gjon Sinishta's 1976 volume *The Fulfilled Promise*. Only after much pressure and insistence from his friends did Father Gardin finally consent to publish the story of his captivity.

The author openly discusses the various stages of his captivity that lasted from June 1945 until September 1955. He neither pretends to be an historian nor does he judge the various protagonists but simply describes events the way he lived them.

The volume shares many common points with Nika Stajka's *The Last Days of Freedom*.¹ Gardin vividly describes hearing the cries of tortured people in the night, the torment of insect infestations, the endless interrogation sessions, isolated confinements, threats, insults and the constant deprivations of incarceration. During his various confinements in the Shkoder jail, the construction camps at Maliq swamps, the concentration camps at Beden and Tepelene, and his last period of semi-captivity at Vlore and Lushnje, he maintained serenity and a strong faith in God.

The book relates a number of interesting prison episodes. Gardin was permitted to celebrate an Easter Mass in 1952 and again in 1953 after the jail director announced that the Church has "made peace with the Regime."² He tells of the

agonizing moments following receipt of a telegram announcing the death of his mother in Italy. He also describes some moments of childlike joy achieved with his companions by picking "fresh and juicy Vlore olives" while on their way to build the new Vlore prison. During evening visits to Lushnja he enjoyed coffee and "raki" (a strong Albanian brandy).

The public announcement of Gardin's liberation on 20 September, 1955, caused ambivalent feelings of joy and sadness. He admits feelings of sadness at leaving the people and fellow inmates he had lived with for so long. Simultaneously the joy of returning to his Italian homeland and his loved ones overcame any reluctance to depart.

The author concludes that his internment provided a unique occasion to physically, spiritually and psychologically participate in Christ's passion. Gardin admits the experience gave him a thorough knowledge of mankind at its best and worst.

The beautiful book is written with touching simplicity and an elevated spirituality that neither judges nor condemns but only offers forgiveness.

Melhem M. Mobarak

1 Stajka, Nika *The Last Days of Freedom*. New York: Vantage Press, 1980.

2 1949 - 1954 was a period of "rapprochement" between the Albanian government and the Catholic Church.

B.V. Henry: Albania-Land of the Pioneers

Norway, Prokla-Media Publishing House, 1986, pp.200

Few people outside of Albania have knowledge about this isolated nation. A handful of Marxists-Leninists and even fewer tourists have ventured into the country in the last decade. As a result only a few books have been written about Albania. For this reason it is a true joy to welcome the Norwegian edition of B. V. Henry's volume. The book contains none of the slanted and rosy marxist picture of the most backward country in Europe.

B. V. Henry offers a Christian interpretation of Albanian history and current affairs. This perspective in no way reduces the value of the commentary in the book.

When George Orwell first wrote 1984, very few people saw any direct connection to know totalitarian regimes. In fact the reign of terror depicted was so extreme that it defied belief. Yet the conditions in Albania following the communist take-over in 1944

affords several parallels with the Orwellian descriptions. Indeed Orwell came close to describing the actual situation in "the land of the eagle".

Enver Hoxha ruled Albania with "an iron hand" from the time the Communists took control until his death in 1985. Initially Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and China maintained close and warm relationship with Albania. Then Hoxha broke relations with one nation after another because they did not keep to "the one, true road that leads to the perfect Communist society" either nationally or internationally. He purged all opposition within the country and finally in 1967 Hoxha dealt the final blow to the religions in Albania. The regime declared that the Albanian state was now "the only atheistic state in the world."

According to Henry's estimates there are today in Albania some

Alexandre Zotos, ed.: Anthology of Albanian Prose

Originally published in French as *Anthologie de la Prose Albanaise* by the Paris Librairie Artheme Fayard; Editions Fayard, 1984, \$30.00.

For the French reading public, there now exists a single, 554-page, paperback anthology of short stories currently

David Porter:

MOTHER TERESA-THE EARLY YEARS

(Foreword by Malcolm Muggeridge), England, Eardmans, 1986, \$5.95

The life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta has been studied by a number of biographers. Despite the plethora of publications, few authors have studied her childhood years in Albania. The recent publication of David Porter's *MOTHER TERESA—THE EARLY YEARS* fills this void.

Porter, an English freelance writer authored a study of Malcolm Muggeridge's "practical Christianity" entitled *DISCIPLE OF CHRIST*. In preparing that volume Porter came to appreciate the profound effect the Calcutta-nun had on the British intellectual.

The opportunity presented itself when the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge decided to publish an English translation of the biography by Father Lush Gjergji. The British publisher balked because the Albanian author, who is a cousin of Mother Teresa's, had relied on other published accounts for his subject's later life. However, Gjergji's coverage of her early life was unique.

Thus, with the permission of the Albanian publisher and the blessing of Mother Teresa, Porter based his study on Gjergji's work. Porter simultaneously abridged and expanded the earlier book. The splendid photograph illustrations were taken from the original Albanian publication.

William Griffin

Albania—Land of the Pioneers Continued

12,000 political and religious prisoners held in 18 forced labor camps and 7 large prisons. In every decade since Hoxha first came to power there have been two or three bloody purges, the last one occurred in Autumn 1983. Then the nine top leaders who fell into disgrace after the death of Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, were executed.

Henry's volume offers a thorough historical, cultural, and political study of Albania. It provides a needed contemporary analysis following more than forty years of Communist control and total isolation.

John Solsvik

popular in Albania. This "anthology" does not pretend to be an exhaustive overview of the history of Albanian literature and cultural traditions. Rather, it attempts to popularize and introduce the literary and artistic merits of Europe's "lost corner" to readers in Western Europe and the French-speaking world.

Alexandre Zotos, the principal editor-translator, authored the anthology's introduction. He is a noteworthy French scholar and a talented writer in his own right. As "Maitre-assistant" (assistant professor) of French literature at the University of St. Etienne, Professor Zotos has been a long-time admirer and a serious student of the Albanian language and literature of his ancestors. He holds the prestigious "diplome" of France's Institute of Oriental Languages and is an active promoter of Franco-Albanian cultural relations; Zotos' contributions to both French and Albanian journals are numerous. Among his recent contributions is the scholarly introduction to Jusuf Vroni's French translation of the short novel *The Bridge With Three Arches* by Ismail Kadare ("Le Pont aux trois arches" - "Ura me tri harqe." 1978).¹

The *Anthology of Albanian Prose* is divided into three major sections: Zotos' introduction, the "Prose of the Past", and "Contemporary Prose." The latter presents the short stories of sixteen post-WWII Communist authors. Included are the writings of four Kosovar writers. The greatest amount of space and the most glowing commentary is reserved for those two stars of Socialist realism, Dautero Agolli² and Ismail Kadare³.

Zotos' impressive introduction is a scholarly treatise on the history and evolution of Albanian literature. The Professor provides a very readable and interesting journey across the vast millenniums of Albania's cultural past and present. From the perspectives of style and content it could easily be adapted for a *Readers Digest* series or a television documentary. Unfortunately, some of the interpretations and omissions might prove irritating for more critical audiences.

Zotos traces the origins of Albanian literature from ancient, in pre-Christian myths, legends, songs, and stories to the present. The little-known, but apparently enormous influence of Albanian tradition on ancient Greek literature is underlined. The incredible heroism of Albanian mothers, who for three thousand years wielded songs and stories "better than Scanderbeg's 100 lb. sword" provided Albania's cultural identity to their children. Unfortunately, the Christian and Moslem influence is barely treated. Minimum space and credit is given the churches for their role in handing down ancient oral traditions to modern Arbëresh, Albanian, and Kosovar literati.

Space and source material limitations were Zotos' reasons for the admittedly arbitrary aspect of his selections. However, the character and tone suggest political concern or ideological diplomacy.

The introduction includes short biographical sketches of representative Albanian authors.⁴ Wherever possible, Zotos minimizes the controversy for pre-eminence between Gheg and Tosk writers. He ignores the post-war and current Albanian Communist suppression of Gheg literary forms in education and literature. Unfortunately, Zotos criticizes or ignores religious contributions to literary thought and expression in Albania.

Zotos fully supports the current policy of Tirana's Union of Writers and Artists in condemning and ignoring Father Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940), Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975), Faik Konica (1876-1942), "Viktor" (sic) "Prenushi" (1885-1949), and Father Anton Harapi (1888-1946). They are listed as "collabos" (traitors to Albania).⁵ Zotos' attitude becomes almost clear in the praise given to the WWII Communist propagandist Qemal Stafa, and to Alexander Xhuvani, a wartime member of the Italian "fascist"-sponsored Institute of Albanian studies.⁶ The "Out of favor" Communist literary figures Omer Nishani, Sejfullah Malëshova, and Mehmet Shehu are simply not mentioned. The French translation of Chairman Enver Hoxha's writings represents for this reviewer one of the greatest sleeping pills since Mao Tse Tung's famous "Little Red Book".

Zotos either defends or slightly criticizes "socialist realism" in Albanian literature. He praises the Arberesh and Kosovar contributions. The introduction treats briefly the styles and forms of current Albanian arts in poetry, music, cinematography, painting, and sculpture. Again, his choice of examples appears to have been suggested by someone in Tirana. Incredibly, he mentions "Ndoc Nikaj" as the author of the first Albanian novel but fails to recognize his priesthood. According to Zotos, Nikaj was only a "precursor" and not a true novelist in the "modern" sense of the term.

"Prose of the Past" includes four undated and anonymous passages from Albanian legends and mythology. There follows an adaptation of the "the monk" Marin Barleti's account of the Ottoman siege of Shkodër in 1479. Zotos informs the reader in his introduction that this work was originally published in Latin at Venice in 1504 under the title "De Obsidione Scodrensi". It is somewhat confusing that in all the attached translator's notes there is no mention of why Luan Gjergji found it necessary to translate this from the Albanian language into French.

The selection from Bishop Frang Bardhi is appropriate enough but then is followed by an inexplicable gap of 300 years. The editors skipped over such authors as De Rada, Frashëri, and Noli, to present selections from the Twentieth Century writers Migjeni and Mitrush Kuteli or Dhimitër

Pasko on Albanian bookshelves.

Part II of the anthology is less surprising than the previous two portions. Sixteen "living" representatives of "socialist realism" in the acceptable versions of Tirana or Prishtina are presented. The themes are war, social inequality in Albania's past, and acceptably "adapted" folklore that edifies modern socialism. Not a single Arbëresh author or dissident writer in exile figures in these selections.

The four Kosovar writers included in the volume are Hivzi Sulejmani, Rexhep Qosja,⁷ Azem Shkreli, and Arif Demolli. All four are "officially approved" by Tirana's Union of Writers and Artists "for popular consumption in Albania." Among the other authors included are those of Southern Albanian origin, members of the Albanian Workers' Party, and members of the Union of Writers and Artists in Tirana. They include 11 men: Dhimitër S. Shuteriqi, Sterjo Spasse, Fatmir Gjata, Anastas Kondo, Sotir Andoni, Teodor Laço, Driëro Agolli, Dalan Shaplllo, Ismail Kadare, Naum Prifti, Vath Koreshti, and Elena Kadare is the sole woman author in the entire collection.

This collection is both interesting and lacking. It is a good but one-sided beginning towards an awareness of Albania's contributions to modern literature. Copies of the *Anthologie de la Prose Albanaise*, which are not available in either English or Albanian, may be ordered from the publisher.

Brian Curdy

1 French literary critics regard Kadare as the best of contemporary Albanian authors. Kadare is variously mentioned as the "Albanian Sholokhov" and as a future candidate for the Nobel prize in literature. A good indicator of Kadare's popularity in Europe is the 1984 re-publication by France's Flammarion press of the Vroni-Zotos translation.

2 The President of the Albanian Union of Writers and Artists.

3 The above-mentioned roving Albanian Communist cultural ambassador.

4 "Hicronym" De Rada (1814-1903), Naim Frashëri (1846-1900), "Çajupi" (Andon Zako 1866-1930), Ndre Mjeda (1866-1937), "Adriani" (Aleks Stavre Drenova 1872-1947), Fan Noli (1882-1965), "Migjeni" (Migjeni Gjergj Nikolla 1911-1938).

5 A comparable attitude in America would be the exclusion from authorized high school literary texts of such authors as Edgar Allan Poe, an alcoholic addict, the Confederate Soldier Mark Twain, and Somerset Maugham, a notorious homosexual.

6 Xhuvani later became a "patriotic" nationalist and served as Vice-President of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania from 1946 to 1961.

7 Qosja is now in disfavor in Yugoslavia, though not so in Tirana.



Fr. Ndoc Nikaj — author of more than 400 works — first to print an Albanian language newspaper and to publish a history of Albania was arrested in 1946. He died in prison at the age of 82.

Elez Biberaj:

Albania and China—A Study Of An Unequal Alliance

Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1986, pp. 180. \$22.50

One of the most striking features of international politics is that bilateral alliances often leave the Small Power at a disadvantage. Great Power domination of any alliance reduces the Small Power from ally to satellite status. The Small Power invariably suffers the loss of its sovereignty.

However, in the unequal alliance between Albania (the smallest communist state) and China (the second largest communist nation) the reduction process did not materialize. For 17 years between 1962 and 1978, Albania used this alliance to successfully pursue its national objectives. The diplomatic interaction, examined here from the Albanian viewpoint, was made all the more unique by a basic incongruity of interests, great geographical distance, profound historic and cultural differences, and significant disparities in economic and military capabilities.

Elez Biberaj used a cost-benefit analysis to study the relationship between Tiranë's political allegiance to Beijing and China's economic, military, and political assistance to Albania. Biberaj also demonstrated how Albania extracted

considerable concessions from China. The performance of the alliance is evaluated with a focus on how these relations were affected by both domestic and international developments, and how Tiranë's relations with Beijing evolved in the overall context of Albania's foreign and domestic politics.

Based on primary sources, this study recounts the emergence of political, ideological, and economic differences between these two allies, and traces the national and international developments that finally produced their estrangement. *ALBANIA AND CHINA* is the first book to focus on the relations of these two dissimilar communist nations. It offers practical and theoretical insights into the problems of inter-communist party and state relations.

The author, Elez Biberaj, holds a PhD in political science from Columbia University and is a Washington-based consultant, specializing in Soviet and Eastern-European Affairs.

Dr. Ranko Petkovic, Editor-in-Chief

Relationship Between Yugoslavia and Albania

A Publication of the Review of International Affairs

The first thing that occurs to the reader of this book is that it is mistitled, for the book is not primarily about Yugoslav-Albanian relations but about Yugoslav policy on Kosovë, home of over two million Albanians in Yugoslavia. One half of the chapter in this 300-page volume, and some two-thirds of the textual matter are devoted exclusively to Kosovë, and barely one-third to relations with Albania.

Concern and anxiety over Kosovë was the real reason for the publication of this book. Like so many other books published recently in Yugoslavia, this work too is a product of the Spring 1981 demonstrations of Albanian ethnics in Kosovë. This is apparent in the Foreword to the book which speaks of "... the causes and consequences of the nationalistic, irredentist and counter-revolutionary events of 1981 in Kosovo."

And what were the causes of that rebellion, which made Kosove and the plight of the Albanians in Yugoslavia a newsworthy issue of world wide scope? Here, in this book, *Relationship Between Yugoslavia and Albania*, we are given the Yugoslav version of the story in its clearest form. We are told that three factors played a role in the events of 1981:

One, the rebellion was the work of illegal organizations, linked in most cases with groups abroad that aimed at the "establishment of a so-called ethnically pure Kosovo and its annexation to ... Albania." These organizations sought to coerce Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovë to leave the province, in line with their objective to make Kosovë a Republic. A second factor that contributed to the rebellion was "the policy pursued by the political leaders" of Kosovë, which objectively encouraged "nationalistic and separatist movements" on the part of the Albanian population. Thirdly, Albania itself was "linked in various ways with the irredentist and counter-revolutionary groups in Kosovo, in pursuit of its long-cherished design to annex Kosovë so as to create a so-called Greater Albania" (pp. 8-9). The Kosovars and Albania, of course, reject those tenets as false and provocative and tending only to justify the discredited policy of Belgrade on Kosovë.

Comprehensive Survey of Kosovë

The longest and in many ways the best chapter in the book is the first one, by R. Rajević, who is identified as "a Serbian judge". This chapter of nearly a hundred pages—

one-third of the entire book—is a comprehensive survey of Kosovë, both past and present. Much research went into the making of this informative chapter. The rest of the chapters and materials on Kosovë are largely commentaries and elaborations of the data and analyses presented in this chapter.

Rajević states a number of important truths about Kosovë's past: He notes that the "original inhabitants" of the province were Albanians (p. 13); that the emigration from Kosovë in 1690, led by the Serbian Patriarch Arsenius, included not only Serbs but Albanians as well (p. 14); that the Serbs "terrorized . . . the Albanian population" in 1912-13, causing the victims to rebel (pp. 17-18); that the "agrarian reform" in Kosovë during the 1930s was not settled fairly, since land was taken away from the Albanians and given to Serbs and Montenegrins, an injustice that incited the Albanians to rebellion, and "the army had to be called in" to restore order (pp. 20-21); and that the oppression of Albanian ethnics at the time "went as far as deportation to Turkey" (p. 20).

Rajević admits that the Serbs and Montenegrins were "a comparatively privileged portion of the population" in Kosovë prior to WWII. He blames the oppression of the Kosovars in prewar Yugoslavia on the "greater Serbia bourgeois regime" (p. 38). It is one of the major themes of this book to attribute the deep-seated resentments of the Kosovars to the unjust rule of the Serbian bourgeoisie. That is the reason, Rajević says, why Albanian ethnics viewed the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1941 as something positive, and the occupation of the country by the Germans and the Italians as liberation "from the Serbian occupying powers." That explains also why comparatively few Albanians (only about 4,000) joined Tito's Partisan forces during WWII (p. 54), and why no more than 15 percent of the members of the Yugoslav Communist Party in Kosovë—or Kosovë and Metohija, as the region was then called—were Albanians, even though the Albanians accounted for two-thirds of the population at the time.

According to this book, the majority of the Albanians did not understand Tito's liberation movement, and as a result created "difficult conditions" for the movement in Kosovë. Indeed, they did. Rajević reveals significantly that none of Tito's five battalions and other army detachments that were organized in Kosovë—predominantly with Serbians and Montenegrins—were able to operate on the territory of Kosovë, so great was the distrust and opposition of most Albanians to the Slav-led communist movement (pp. 50-51). It was not until the last two months of the war in Kosovë (Oct.-Nov. 1944), that Tito's National Liberation Army was able to fight on the soil of Kosovë, and then only after the arrival of the 3rd and 5th Army Brigades from Albania to assist the Yugoslav Army (p. 52). Yet, even after Kosovë was liberated from the Germans in November, 1944, Tito's forces

had to fight an army of 10,000 "counter-revolutionary Ballists" (Albanian nationalists) for several months, until April 1945, before taking over control in the region (pp. 53-54, 133). Kosovar elements in exile claim that the Yugoslav army slaughtered about 60,000 Albanians during that operation. Such was the ill-omened beginning of communist Yugoslavia's rule in Kosovë.

Bujan Resolution to Join Albania

We have to say that we are impressed by Rajević's objective and forthright account of the history of Kosovë before WWII. With some exceptions, his account of events in Kosovë during the war is likewise valid. He discusses the famous Bujan Resolution of the Albanians in Kosovë (Dec. 31, 1943-Jan. 1-2, 1944), in which they expressed their desire "to unite with Albania", and let it be known that they were joining the struggle against the Germans only in the expectation that Kosovë would unite with Albania after the war (p. 65). An excerpt of that Resolution is given in this book.

Unfortunately, the moment Rajević—and other contributors to this volume—begins to discuss postwar Kosovë, he switches roles, and is no longer the detached scholar but a partisan writer, using language and logic that is hardly distinguishable from that of a political agitator. He is anxious to convince the reader that, regardless of the Bujan Resolution, Kosovë decided in July of 1945 to become a constituent part of the Republic of Serbia, and that this action "freely expressed the will of the population" (p. 76). This is another major theme in this book, which echoes through its pages like the pronouncements of a Greek chorus on the stage of classical Greece.

But is this not too much to ask of the reader? Is it reasonable to believe that the Kosovars, after adopting the Bujan Resolution, after rebelling against Tito's takeover of Kosovë, and after losing tens of thousands of lives in the rebellion, would suddenly turn around four months later and willingly decide to join their conquerors? We can believe that the Serbs and the Montenegrins in Kosovë gave their consent to unite with Serbia, but surely not the majority of the Albanians who made up the overwhelming portion of the population in the region.

It is fairly evident that the thrust of this argument—namely, that the Kosovars joined with Serbia of their own free will—is to discredit the demand of the Albanians in Yugoslavia for a republic of their own, by showing that there is no political, constitutional or legal ground for such a demand. But such an argument cannot carry weight with those who are informed about Kosovë, or even with the uninformed who are in possession of their logical faculties.

In fact, the cardinal objective of this book, as we see it, is to bury, under a barrage of words, the claims for a Republic of Kosovë. Rajević, for example, denounces the idea as "an nationalist watch word." Jovan Rajičević, who has a chapter

on the "Greater Albanian Pretensions of Enver Hoxha," calls the idea an "absurdity" and "ill-fated watchword" (p. 244). And Dr. Ivan Kristan, who devotes a whole chapter to the constitutional position of Kosovë in Yugoslavia, rejects the idea on the ground that it is "only a preliminary step to ... the annexation of Kosovo to Albania" (p. 162). He says categorically that "... one cannot expect any basic change in the constitutional position" of Kosove (p. 168).

Question of National Equality

A chief argument in this book against making Kosovë a republic, and in favor of maintaining the *status quo* in the province, is that "the Albanian nationality enjoys complete equality" with the other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia (p. 10). It is an argument that is repeated *ad infinitum*. Indeed, the entire book is in large part an endless legalistic and pedantic discourse on the equality and the human rights that the Albanians allegedly enjoy in Yugoslavia. Rajević tells us that the Kosovars have "achieved complete affirmation" of their nationality (p. 87), and Dr. Kristan adds that their "national culture is flourishing" (p. 161). In support of this claim, the book offers a stack of statistics to show the achievements of Kosovë since the war in economic development, education, health, culture and so on. And it is true that Kosovë has made progress, by comparison with prewar conditions in the province. But it is equally true that its rate of development has lagged behind the rest of Yugoslavia, and as a result Kosovë is worse off today, in relation to the rest of the federation, than it was in 1945.

Much of the argument for the equality of the Albanians is based on the Constitutions of Yugoslavia, Serbia, and Kosovë, all of which guarantee to the Kosovars equal rights with other citizens in the federation. And so they do ... on paper, for in theory those constitutions are quite democratic and humane. Indeed, this book would have us believe that the Yugoslav Constitution is the most advanced in the world, superior even to those of France, the United States and other Western societies (p. 182). Concerning the nationality problem, we are told that the Yugoslav solution to this problem is "without precedent in history" and represents "the supreme attainment in social practice ... known in the world today" (p. 90). The implication is that the national minorities have no grounds whatsoever for complaints or discontentment in Yugoslavia.

But as the Kosovars can testify, and the findings of Amnesty International make evident—not to mention other human rights groups in the West—the Yugoslav government is in practice dictatorial and repressive, and no amount of academic and legalistic discourse can conceal that fact. Were it not so, why did the Albanians rebel in 1944, 1968, and not in 1971, and 1974, and 1979, and rebel again in 1981, at the cost of numerous lives? Contented minorities and citizens do not risk imprisonment and loss of life and limb without cause—for the sake of dramatics, let us say, and publicity.

Perceptions and Remarks on Albania

Not much need be said about Albania in this review since, as we said earlier, this work focuses attention primarily on Kosovë. In fact, much of the discussion on Albania, too, relates directly to Kosove.

Perhaps the best of the four chapters on Albania is that of Dr. Ranko Petković. His account of the era of friendly relations between Yugoslavia and Albania (1945-1948) is liberally documented and informative. There is considerable data on the diplomatic, political and economic support that Yugoslavia gave to Albania at that time, as for example, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, and on the issue of Albania's application for admission to the UN.

Unhappily, Petković suffers an abrupt and dramatic loss of perspective when he moves on to a discussion of the post-1948 period in Yugoslav-Albanian relations. He becomes thoroughly defensive regarding Yugoslav policies, and thoroughly offensive regarding Albanian policies. It's apparent, at least to us, that this distortion of perspective has its roots in the Yugoslav obsession—for it is really an obsession—with the Kosovë question. He claims that the Albanian leadership first allied itself with Stalin, and later with Mao Tse-Tung, to gain support for the plan to create a Great Albania by annexing Kosovë (pp. 277, 280). He then goes on to accuse Albania of seeking to destabilize Yugoslavia by "instigating a nationalist-irredentist conspiracy in Kosovo" (p. 284).

This is pretty much the tone and level of discourse adopted in the other chapters on Albania. In all of them the late Enver Hoxha, Albania's leader for over 40 years, is the target of bitter attacks. He is denounced as the architect of the 1948 break with Yugoslavia, and the instigator of Albanian nationalist fervor and disorder in Kosovë. Elsewhere Albania is attacked as a Stalinist, bureaucratic and dogmatic country, based on the unique principle of Self-Management. Readers would not be mistaken if they conclude that, on the whole, this book is self-serving, breast-beating, myopic and chauvinistic.

Most of the criticism of Albania, however, is not persuasive, since it amounts to little more than name-calling. It is rather like the pot calling the kettle black, since in most cases the same criticism—such as violations of human rights—can be laid at the door of Yugoslavia, as well. The majority of the contributors to this book hold doctoral degrees. But this is not readily apparent, for the quality of the writing in these pages is uneven, often illogical and simplistic, and, in a word, below the standards expected of serious scholars. This is regrettable, but perhaps not so surprising, since the sponsor of this book, the Review of International Affairs, is an information organ of the Yugoslav Government, whose express mission is to influence public opinion abroad in favor of Yugoslav foreign and domestic policies. The book, moreover, is defective as a work of printing.

Mario Palermo: Memorie di un Comunista Napoletano

(Memoirs of a Neapolitan Communist) Parma, Ugo

Guanda Editore, 1975, pages 346, available only through rare book stores.

The 1975 publication of Mario Palermo's *Memoirs* did not gain much attention from the scholarly world. Only after the late Enver Hoxha mentioned the *Memoirs* and Palermo at length in *Laying the Foundations of the New Albania* did the volume achieve notoriety. Hoxha praised Palermo because his mission consisted of bringing back W.W.II Italian survivors from Albania and "not remains of a dead army, unlike another general." Hoxha's formal remark was a clear reference to Ismail Kadare's *The General of the Dead Army*.

Although Palermo's volume treats the various stages of his political life, the single chapter on Albania of 24, offers a very important reference source for any serious researcher in recent Albanian history.

Palermo arrived in Albania in March 1945, as the Italian Under-Secretary of Defense. At the time, the Communists were part of the Italian cabinet of national union. Palermo offers important insights on ravaged Tiranë at the end of the war. He vividly describes the pitiful condition of the Italian army remnant living in Albania. Palermo tells of soldiers wandering about in the streets, wearing only rags and torn boots. It was a sad and humiliating display by the once proud army.

Palermo explains that the Albanians attempted to assist the derelict soldiers by sheltering many of them without any animosity. He tells how some soldiers found small jobs in

urban and rural areas.

According to Palermo, the Italian industrialists and traders who lived in Albania, were prepared to help the stranded soldiers but only if the Italian government guaranteed that relief monies handed out in Tiranë would be refunded to the donors in Italy. The philanthropic gesture was merely a clever way of smuggling money from Albania.

Palermo poignantly relates the episode of "Mamma Rosa", a brothel operator who refused to collaborate with the Germans. Mamma Rosa helped Italian soldiers without setting any financial pre-conditions. Her brothel became a shelter for many of them. Within a few months, Mamma Rosa's generous assistance had left her penniless. General Palermo invited "Mamma Rosa" to a ceremony for the Gramsci battalion. He wished to publicly extend military honors to this great lady and thus pay her back the moral debt that Italy owed.

Perhaps the most significant part of the memoirs relates to the various meetings and discussions with Enver Hoxha. These culminated in the Hoxha-Palermo Protocol on 14 March, 1945, which set the terms for the repatriation of Italian troops left in Albania following the collapse of Mussolini's regime in September 1943.

Palermo is one of those rare Westerners who dealt with Hoxha after the liberation of Albania. He reflects at length on the mood of these meetings and the feelings of mutual sympathy between the two men. Palermo describes the discussions as being "tough but tinted with cordiality." Hoxha is portrayed as "pleasant, courteous, proud and an implacable adversary of fascism." According to Palermo, Hoxha was a man of great courage. The armed forces on which he had a big influence, loved and respected him.

During his stay in Tiranë, Palermo was received by Mehmet Shehu, Ymer Dishnica, Spiro Koleka, Ramadan Çitaku and Spiro Moisiu. He mentions how Sejfulla Maleshova "tried to poison the atmosphere" by insisting on the payment of Italian war reparations before any peace agreement could be negotiated.

The various meetings culminated in the Hoxha-Palermo Protocol which stipulated that the repatriation of all Italian soldiers begin with the Gramsci Battalion. The accord was designed to exclude "specialists" who would stay in Albania for a longer time. Albania eventually interpreted this loophole in the broadest sense and used it to advantage by holding a number of Italian specialists for a much longer time than anticipated.

When Palermo returned to Italy, he became entangled in the imbroglio of Italian politics. By 1947, the Albanian question made Palermo a pawn in the opening conflict

Relationships Between Yugoslavia and Albania Continued

There are many errors of dates and names in it, plus work omissions and misprints of words and entire sentences.

Despite the incessant attacks on Albania and the Albanians in Yugoslavia, this book ends with an appeal for friendship and cooperation between Yugoslavia and Albania. That is a sentiment we applaud. But our overall assessment of this work is not favorable. Far from it. We are of the opinion that this book does not serve the cause of peace and justice in Kosovë, nor the cause of friendly Yugoslav-Albanian relations. Rather than contribute to the solution of the Kosovë problem or the improvement of Yugoslav-Albanian relations, this book tends to cloud the issues and perpetuate the dangerous status quo in the area. In essence, it is an apologia for Belgrade's intransigence on Kosovë and the oppression of the Albanians in Yugoslavia. And as long as that is the case, it is not reasonable to expect a radical or meaningful improvement in the relations between Yugoslavia and Albania.

Osumi

Other Publications Received:

Special 25th Anniversary Issue of Koha e Jonë (Our Time), edited by Lec Shllaku, Florence, Italy 1987, 240 pp.

In the past one hundred years, there have been numerous newspapers among Albanian settlements abroad, but only a handful of magazines, most of them short-lived. Apart from half a dozen religious magazines that appeared since World War II, the most influential magazines in the United States were the *Adriatic Review* (Boston, 1918-1919), a monthly; and *Yll'i Mëngjezit* (Morning Star), also a monthly (Boston, 1917-1919). Abroad, the best-known magazine by far in our time was *Shejzat* (Pleiades), a "cultural, social and artistic review," which was published in Rome by the late Ernest Koliqi for eighteen years, beginning in 1957.

Five years after the founding of *Shejzat*, a new Albanian magazine began publishing abroad, *Koha e Jonë* (Our Time), a quarterly with offices in Paris. The magazine, a "political, cultural and social periodical," has appeared regularly for a quarter of a century, under the editorship of Lec Shllaku and the proprietorship of Isa Elez Ndreu, distinguished Albanian industrialist in Italy. Since the demise of Koliqi's review, many regard *Koha e Jonë* as its successor at least in terms of its exploration and coverage of cultural and social topics and events pertinent to the Albanian world.

Early in 1987 a Special Issue of the magazine appeared to commemorate its 25th Anniversary (1962-1986). The issue is dedicated to the memory of about three dozen personages

Mario Palermo Continued

between Christian Democrats and Italian Communists. This conflict jeopardized the quick return of the Italian troops from Albania.

In 1950, Palermo was sent to Albania as part of an Italian communist party delegation to bring back the remains of 23 soldiers who had belonged to the Italian communist party.

The uneventful maritime voyage was followed by a cordial reception in Tiranë by Mehmet Shehu. The official delegation party was sent off from Durazzo (Durrës) by the Albanian authorities. Palermo notes the complete absence of any Italian officials during the entire time of the delegations visit.

These sincere and interesting remarks on Albania, were penned by an ardent Italian communist party member. Nevertheless Palermo displayed human sensitivity, political fairness and objectivity throughout his discussions.

Melhem M. Moharrik

*Doctor Franco Benanti was one of those "specialists." In his book *La Guerra Più Lunga: Albania 1943-1948*, Benanti strongly criticized the Hoxha-Palermo accord.

who collaborated closely with the magazine, some with their writings, others by giving it strong moral support. The Roll of Honor includes Prof. Ernest Koliqi, Father Zef Valentini, S.J., Prof. Karl Gurakuqi, Petraq Ktona, Ymer Doda, Llazo Vishnja, Col. Lazër Bojashiu and Prof. Krist Maloki.

Contributions on Many Disciplines

The contents of this number include contributions from nearly four dozen scholars, writers, prelates, professionals and others residing in the United States, Italy, France, Belgium, West Germany, Kosovë, Greece, Turkey and Australia. There are materials here on Albanian history, ethnicity, folklore, biography, language studies, literature (including poetry and translations), the Albanian press, Kosovë and the Arbëresh.

In the area of history, perhaps the most notable contribution is the two-page spread on the geneological tree of the family of the Kastriots, beginning in the early 15th Century and reaching down to our day. An illuminating commentary by the editor of *Koha e Jonë*, Lec Shllaku, accompanies the chart. Of interest also is a brief account of the "Republic of Korçë" that was founded in 1916, under the leadership of the patriot Themistokli Gërmenji. Two noteworthy studies come from the now acclaimed scholarly couple, Nermin Vlora-Falaschi, niece of Ismail Kemal, and her husband, Italian Ambassador di Renzo Falaschi. The latter has an article on the thoughts and deeds of Ismail Kemal, while V.-Falaschi examines the role of women in Illyrian society. A good exposition of Mrs. Falaschi's challenging theory on the origins of the Albanian people and their link with the Etruscans is given in the article by the Kosovar scholar, Dr. Skender Riza (pp. 203-211).

We might add here that in the survey of *Koha e Jonë's* 25-year-long publishing history, Alan Iliri has high praise for Mrs. Falaschi, but he is mistaken when he says that she participated in the 1982 (not 1980) Seminar on Noli's Centennial at Harvard University (p. 128). Rather, she presided over the seminar to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of Durrës which was held at Boston College in June, 1984. Otherwise, the 31-page-long survey, the longest composition in the commemorative issue, is informative and stimulating.

Biographical and Other Studies

Apart from the article on Ismail Kemal, the Special Issue contains several other biographical studies. Mother Teresa figures prominently in the perceptive study, "Who Is This Woman?" by Gjon Gjomarkaj, and in a shorter piece by Gjon Sinishta which explains, among other things, why she



Mr. Isa Elez Ndreu

has not spoken openly on the matter of religion in Albania. There is a brief but fine essay by Prof. Safete Juka on the late Gjon Mili, renowned *Life* photographer of Albanian origin. The essay includes a sympathetic and amusing commentary on Mili by Jean-Paul Sartre. One of the longer contributions, written in excellent French, is the article on Ali Pashë (Tepelenë) of Ioannina, by Arslan Libohova, a diplomat residing apparently in Geneva. He paints a flattering portrait of Ali, but did not convince this reviewer that the "Lion of Ioannina" was above all a patriot who put the goal of the unification and independence of Albania ahead of his lust for personal power and wealth. There are also biographical articles on Namik Ressuli by Dr. Eduard Licho, and on the "Albanian Betsy Ross," Marigo Pochi, by her niece Demetra Pochi Peters in Worcester, Mass.

Several articles, among them one by Prenk Gruda and another by "Osumi", deal with Yugoslav oppression of the Kosavars. Papas Andon Belushi presents a valuable documentary on the Albanians in Greece with interviews in archaic but picturesque Albanian, and Msgr. Zef Oroshi pays well-deserved tribute to the Arbëresh of Italy for their tenacious preservation of their Albanian heritage, which he rightly calls "a miracle". Of the articles on the Albanian language, literature and schools, the longest and most comprehensive is that of Prof. Arshi Pipa on the unified or standard literary Albanian, now in use in Albania and Kosovë.



Mr. Lec Shllaku

Koha e Jonë is the product of its energetic editor, Lec Shllaku, and its patron, Isa Elez Ndreu. It is distributed gratis to its readers through the generosity of Mr. Ndreu who has been funding the magazine for the past twenty-five years. In a Letter of Greetings to Compatriots, he says modestly that he "has not done any great deed" in paying the expenses of the publication, certainly far less than his forefathers who sacrificed everything for Albania. Impressed by Mr. Ndreu's patriotic gesture, many of the contributors to the Special Issue pay homage to him and to the achievements of the quarterly over the past 25 years. Expressions of respect and praise come from Rev. Baba Rexhep, Rev. Imam V. Ismail, Xhevat Kallajxhiu, Prof. Rexhep Krasniqi, Hqmet Ndreu and half a dozen other people.

The 25th Anniversary Issue of *Koha e Jonë* is printed on quality paper and illustrated with photographs and brief biographical sketches of all but one or two of the contributors.

Prenk Gruda's book: DITA E NJI ZEMRËS SË LENDUEME: 1937-1975 (DIARY OF A WOUNDED HEART: 1937-1975) available only in Albanian is obtainable by writing directly to the author at 3325 Buckingham Trail, West Bloomfield, MI 48022

The Albanians Among Us

This is a brochure by the Rev. Hugh Macdonald, a Presbyterian Minister in the province of Ontario, Canada, designed to give basic information about the Albanians in Canada. Although only a few pages in length, the brochure contains a variety of data on Albanians, who are viewed by the author with great sympathy. There are interesting glimpses into Albanian culture and society, ancient Albanian cities, eminent historical figures such as Scanderbeg and Ali Pashë (Tepelena) of Janina, and the contributions Albanians have made to other nations: the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Greece and Italy.

After World War II, many Albanian exiles in Western Europe and the Middle East settled in North America, including Canada. To the Canadian population at large, the new settlers were practically an unknown element. This was a chief reason Macdonald wrote the brochure. *The Albanians Among Us*, to acquaint Canadians with the new immigrants, and induce them not only to accept them into their country, but to welcome them with open arms.

The author of this work dwells especially on the character of the Albanian people, which he describes in glowing terms. He writes that Albanians are courteous and gentle, tells of the Albanian *besa*, which he defines as "unswerving honesty and firmness in word and deed, loyalty to friends . . ." etc. He is confident that "Canada will gain much from her Albanian immigrants."

Albanians in Canada

This is another brochure by a Canadian, written expressly to introduce the Albanians to the Canadian public and create a friendly environment for them in Canada. The author of the brochure, *Albanians in Canada*, is H. Westen, formerly with the Placement Department in Toronto.

Like the Rev. Macdonald, Mr. Westen writes with great respect, understanding and warmth for the Albanian people. But unlike the former, Westen concentrates on Albanian exiles from Yugoslavia, and shows impressive understanding of the situation in Kosovë. He notes that the absorption of Kosovë into Yugoslavia after World War I "was a gross injustice, indeed, a crime against humanity," that the "tale of horror and atrocities committed against Albanians in Yugoslavia is hard to believe for native Canadians."

The author describes the Albanian immigrants to Canada as "a self-reliant, industrious group," remarkable for their innate dignity, modesty of behavior and hospitality. He concludes with a passionate plea to his fellow Canadians: "Let Canada grant freedom, dignity and security to all those who are worthy of it, among whom are the *Shqiptars*, the sons of the Land of the Eagle."

The brochure, moreover, contains excerpts from Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which relate to Albania and Albanians, plus a beautiful engraving of the poet in Albanian folk costume, including the story behind it.

Italian-Albanian Society Formed in Toronto

As in the United States, so also in Canada there are ethnic Albanians not only from Albania proper and Kosovë, but also from Italy, known as "Italo-Albanese" or Arbëresh. Mostly, they are concentrated in the city of Toronto and its vicinity.

Lately the Arbëresh in Canada felt the need for closer contacts with one another and a more active community life. The result? Toward the end of November, 1986 they founded the "Alleanza Italo-Albanese Di Toronto." About 500 people took part at the founding of the society (see *Corriere Canadese*, Dec. 3-4, 1986, p. 13). The organizers of the society hope to enlist all of the Arbëresh in the Toronto area into their newly-formed group.

Much useful information about the society can be found in the brochure, *Alleanza Italo Albanese Di Toronto* (1986). This is an attractively-printed publication of some 20 pages, well worth reading and having. It features, among other things, an excellent five-page article on the history of the Arbëresh in Italy, including the several waves of migrations of Albanians from Albania and Greece to southern Italy,

from 1448 to 1825. The article lists by name all of the regions and villages in Italy where the Arbëresh settled.

The brochure carries news also about the Arbëresh in Italy, illustrated with photographs and fine drawings. There is a report on the Song Festival that was held at the San Demetrio Corone in August of 1986, an item on the Arbëresh in Lombardia (northern Italy), and a page of vocabulary in Albanian with Italian translations for Italian speakers interested in the Albanian idiom.



In Memoriam

Bishop Joan Stamati (1912-1987)

The sudden death of Joan Stamati, Bishop of the Eparchy of Lungro, Calabria on June 7, 1987 grieved the faithful and clergy of the Arbëresh community in Italy and abroad. His death leaves vacant an important Byzantine Catholic Eparchy composed of the Arbëresh faithful.

Joan Stamati was born on June 9, 1912 in the town of Pilatani, Cosenza where he completed his primary education. In high school a desire to serve the Arbëresh people as a priest was awakened in him and in 1930 he entered the seminary in Palermo. There his piety and simplicity grew and he was subsequently sent to Rome for further studies. In 1938 he was ordained at the Arbëresh Church of St. Athanasius (Rome).

Following his ordination, Stamati was sent to serve in Byzantine Catholic parishes of southern Italy where he labored to instill in the faithful a reverence for their spiritual, cultural and ethnic heritage. His multifold ministry was crowned with his appointment to the vacant see of Lungro. He was consecrated bishop for this see on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29, 1967.

For twenty years Bishop Stamati selflessly served his flock in their spiritual and cultural needs. Nor did he forget his suffering brothers and sisters across the sea, often speaking against their religious oppression. At Easter services in 1981 Bishop Stamati made an impassioned plea to the leaders of Albania to halt the religious persecution. The plea was covered by the western press and our 1982 *Bulletin* carried the text of his Easter message.

Rev. Pjetër Berisha (1912-1986)

Father Pjetër Berisha, a priest in the diocese of Skopje-Prizren, died on September 10, 1986. His last 12 years were spent as a pastor of the vast parish in Binçe, Kosovë.



Fr. Pjetër Berisha



Bishop Joan Stamati

Bishop Stamati was buried on June 9, 1987, the exact date of his 75th birthday. Religious and civil authorities, along with many faithful from Calabria and Sicily, attended the funeral. Father Prenk Jaku was present on behalf of the Albanian diocese of Skopje-Prizren in Kosovë (Yugoslavia). His passing was also observed by the Arbëresh and Albanian community in Rome on June 21, 1987, when Msgr. Eleuterio F. Fortino celebrated a memorial Mass for him at the Church of St. Athanasius.

Our director and editor were privileged to meet Bishop Joan Stamati in 1968, during the fifth centenary celebration of Albania's national hero, Skanderbeg, in Rome. His memory and support remain with us forever.

Father Berisha was born on June 10, 1912 in the parish of Stubllë, Terziai. After his father's death his family moved to Prizren. Berisha completed his primary education in Kosovë and then entered the minor seminary in Travnik, Croatia. There the young man's piety and devotion were noticed by his superiors. At Travnik, Berisha excelled in the difficult program of studies and simultaneously mastered the Croatian language. Upon completing philosophy and theology studies, Berisha was ordained in Zagreb on March 12, 1938.

During his long ministry in a number of Kosovë parishes, Berisha endeared himself not only to his parishioners but to the Muslim Albanians as well. The people often sought his advice in daily matters and his educational assistance.

The diocese of Skopje-Prizren has lost an active and devout priest. The Albanian people whom Father Berisha served so selflessly will miss him greatly, and he is remembered with deep gratitude. The Center staff extends its condolences to the Berisha family, Father's many friends and parishioners.

Bernard Tönnies (1937-1986)



Bernard Tönnies

Bernard Tönnies, the renowned German journalist, publicist and scholar of recent Albanian history, died suddenly on August 17, 1986. He was widely recognized as an authority on Albania's current state not only in the Balkan context but also its main stages of ideological, economic, cultural and religious development.

Tönnies was born on December 31, 1937 in Hagen Westfalen, Germany. He studied at German universities in Hamburg, Berlin and Munich, as well as schools in Belgrade and Prishtinë, Yugoslavia. Although Albania was the principal area of Tönnies research, he majored in Slavic, Balkan and Albanian studies under several renowned mentors. These scholars included Günter Reichenkron of Berlin, Alois Schmaus and Martin Camaj of Munich. Independently, he distinguished himself by specializing in the difficult field of Albanian cultural history. All that Tönnies achieved in his short life span can be attributed to his iron will. His youth and student years were not easy. He had to overcome enormous financial difficulties in order to pursue his academic studies. At times, Tönnies financed his education by undertaking manual labor.

In 1967, Tönnies married Maria Tupeci, an Albanian native from Prizren, Kosovë. The couple had three sons. In the Tönnies home, only the Albanian language was spoken.

Tönnies was employed by a short-wave radio station in Cologne that broadcasts the VOICE OF GERMANY. He became the station editor of the Southeastern Europe Section. At the Cologne station Tönnies gained fame as a reliable authority on Balkan political, social and economic issues. He branched out into writing and soon became editor of the celebrated *Südost-Europe Journal* of Munich.

For 10 years, Tönnies' outpouring of scholarly studies and articles in the journal and a variety of other German publications won him public recognition throughout Europe. His commentaries on Albania and the other Balkan states became a standard of comparison for the members of the European press.

Tönnies devoted himself particularly to studying the problem of religion in Albania. He closely observed the elimination of the Catholic Church and diligently attempted to tell the full truth about this unprecedented persecution of the Catholic faith. Tönnies' efforts earned him sharp criticism of Albanian officials and the government-controlled news media.

Among Tönnies' two most important volumes are *Sonderfall Albanien* (Albania—A Particular Case) 1980, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, Munich, and *Albanien Und Die Albaner im Werk Marko Miljanovs* (Albania and Albanians in the work of Marko Miljanov), 1977, Südost Institute, Munich.

Our Center staff was privileged to have worked closely with the late Bernard Tönnies. We will miss his collaboration and concern in our projects. We extend our sincerest condolences to the Tönnies family and friends.

Stuart Mann (1905-1986)

Stuart Mann, the distinguished British scholar of Albanian Studies, died in England in May 1986. Born in Nottingham, England in 1905, Mann studied at English schools and universities. He graduated with a degree in German philology from the University of Bristol in 1927.

Mann lived in Albania from 1929 to 1931 to familiarize himself with the Albanian language and culture while doing research. He subsequently went to Czechoslovakia to teach English at the University of Brno. On the eve of World War II Mann returned to England to work for the Information Ministry. Following the war, he was employed by the Foreign Office until his retirement in 1972.

The Albanian language became Mann's main subject of interest and intense study. He published two Albanian grammar texts, two vocabularies (Albanian-English and English-Albanian), as well as a history of Albanian literature. After his retirement from government service, Mann taught Albanian language classes in London's University School of Slavic and Eastern European Languages.

Stuart Mann's linguistic achievements won him a respected position among foreign scholars in the field of Albanian Studies.

Lt. Col. Neil McLean (1918-1986)

Lt. Col. Neil "Billy" McLean, one of the English commandos who served in Albania during World War II, died in England on 17 November 1986.

McLean and David Smiley were the first two British commandos to enter occupied Albania in April, 1943. Their first contacts were established with Enver Hoxha's Communist partisans. They helped to set up radio communications with the British military headquarters. During their six-month span of underground operations, the commandos strongly believed that partisan resistance was merely aiming to exploit British prestige and thereby acquire more equipment. They became convinced that Hoxha's partisans, at that time were more committed to fighting other resistance groups than attacking the occupying fascist forces. Their convictions earned them Hoxha's wrath.

McLean and Smiley were later reassigned to the headquarters of two other active groups in Albania. When Hoxha learned of it, he became infuriated and ordered his forces to capture and shoot the British commandos, if they resisted.

Lt. Col. McLean was an outstanding British soldier who exercised not only excellent military judgment but keenly perceived the political undercurrents that unfortunately would bring Albania under the Communist yoke. Although he often voiced warnings to his superiors, he was not heard.

Freedom-loving Albanians will remember McLean as a fine, dedicated soldier who tried to assist them in regaining their liberty.



Lt. Col. Neil McLean (c.) with Enver Hoxha (far left), September 1943, Albania

Mark Lulashi-Kalaj (1916-1986)

Mark Lulashi-Kalaj, a descendant of a distinguished Albanian highlander family, died in Shkodra in September 1986. His father worked closely with Albania's leaders Ded Gjon Luli, Luigj Gurakuqi, Anton Harapi, and Hil Mosi during the struggle for Albania's independence in 1911-1912.

Lulashi was born in Gruda (a north Albanian highland region, presently under Yugoslav jurisdiction) in 1916. During his schooling in Shkodër he excelled in sports. After graduation from secondary school, he continued his sports and cultural activities. He is still remembered as an exemplary Catholic youth.

Throughout the war years, Lulashi participated in the

anti-fascist and anti-communist resistance movement. In 1945 he was arrested by the Communist government and accused of anti-government activity. At his trial in 1946 Lulashi was sentenced to life imprisonment along with Father Gjon Shllaku, O.F.M. and other Catholic clergy.

After 10 years of imprisonment and labor camps, Lulashi was finally released and married shortly thereafter. The long years of imprisonment had already taken their physical toll on him. Lulashi was in poor health until his death. His survivors include his wife and two young children.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to his family and relatives in Albania and the United States.

Bilal Xhaferi (1935-1986)

Bilal Xhaferi, the Albanian activist-journalist, died in exile in Chicago, Illinois, in August 1986. He was born May 10, 1935 at Ninat in the Saranda district of Southern Albania. Xhaferi's father was killed by the Communists during the 1943-1944 civil war. When his mother died shortly thereafter, he and his two sisters were raised at internment work camps. He completed high school in the camps where he exhibited talent as a writer. Later as a journalist, he contributed articles to local and national press.

Xhaferi fled to Greece in early 1969. From Greece he emigrated to the United States and began to write for Albanians in exile. Bilal was haunted by the death of his

parents and the denial of basic human rights in his homeland.

Xhaferi organized Albanians from Çameria (the southern region of Albania under Greece) into an active ethnic organization. The group undertook the publication of KRAHU I SHQIPONJES (Eagle's Wing). The periodical addressed timely issues of past and present-day Albania. Xhaferi was active in other Albanian groups as well as national and religious initiatives.

With Bilal Xhaferi's death, Albanians-in-exile have lost a dedicated and active member of their community. He is survived by his two sisters in Albania. Our sincere sympathy is offered to his family and many friends.

Zef Logoreci (1912-1986)

Zef Logoreci died in Monterey, California, August 28, 1986. For many years Logoreci was a lecturer of Albanian language at the Army Defense Institute in Monterey.

Logoreci was born in Shkodër in 1912. He completed his primary and secondary education and then studied at the American Technical School in Tiranë. He later worked for the government legal services in Shkodra.

Upon the outbreak of World War II, Logoreci aligned himself with the anti-fascist resistance. In 1944, following the Communist takeover of Albania, Logoreci along with many

others escaped to Italy's refugee camps where he remained for four years. He emigrated to the United States in 1948. After a short stay in New York, Logoreci moved to Monterey to take a teaching position at the Army Language Institute. In 1980 he was appointed head of the Institute's Albanian Language Department and remained there until his retirement in 1984.

Our Center staff extends its condolences to his children, his brother Anton in England and the Logoreci family in Albania.

Gaspër Serregji (1915-1986)

The unexpected passing of Dr. Gaspër Serregji on 12 February, 1987 was mourned by his many Albanian and Italian friends in Rome and throughout Italy.

Dr. Serregji was born in Shkodër in September 1915. He received his primary and secondary education at the Jesuit-run *Saverianum* in Shkoder. Following his studies in law at the University of Rome, Serregji served for a short time with

the Albanian government. Later he moved to Rome and spent the remainder of his life in a highly respected legal practice. His funeral attracted large numbers of Albanian and Italian mourners.

Our Center staff remembers Dr. Serregji's many warm and encouraging notes to us. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Laura, his family in Shkodër, and to all his friends.



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SHKODER (2018)

Shenjtënia e Tij Papa Gjon Pali II u Flet Shqiptarëve në Mërgim

«Përfetoj çdo ditë martirizimin e popullit tuej.»

Të diellën, me 27 prill 1986, shenjtënia Tij Papa Gjon Pali II vizitoi famullinë Romane të shën Gregorit VII. Ai u takue me një numër të madh refugjatësh shqiptarë të cilët, në këtë famullë, kanë gjetë një skutë strehimi e mbeshetje për nevojët e tyre njerëzore e shpirtënore. Po japim këtu fjalën e Atit Shenjt të paraprirë nga një koment i shkurt mbi takim.

Nuk ishin stolisun me kostumin tradicional e festiv; çaste gëzimi nuk ka ma për ta. Refugjatet shqiptarë, mblodhur në famullinë e Shën Gregorit VII dolën para Papës të stolisun me shprehjen e tyre të vërtetë: një sjellje që tregon ende qartë dhimbjen e madhe, vëlljetjen e madhe, të shkaktueme nga ajo që ata e quejnë pa ngurim martirizimi i një populli që dëshron të jetojë shpirtënisht i lirë. Që nga dita kur At Daniel Gjeçaj, një françeskan shqiptar, erdhi në Shën Gregorin VII, famullia asht ba një skutë e ngrohët strehimi për të gjithë shqiptarët refugjatë që të ikun nga vendi i të parëve, përpqem të rindertonjë në Itali ose vende të tjera, jetët e tyre të trondituna. Mbas krahëve, ata kanë lanë germadhët e kishave të tyre dhe shkatërimet e qendrave të adhurimit, lotët dhe vëlljetet e atyne që nuk kanë pasë mundësi të ikin bashkë me ta, jashtë, në mërgimin e hidhur të vendeve të hueja.

«Sot jemi mbledhë këtu,» i tha At Daniel Papës, «në prezencën tuej naltësuese si pëfaqësues të thjeshtë të tokës së martirizume të shqipeve, gjeografiskisht afër, moralisht shumë larg nga ne.

Të ndërgjegjshëm për faktin se të parët tonë në çastet ma të trishtueme të historisë tyne e tonën, kristiane e shqiptare, uollën sytë me besim kah Selia e Pjetrit, na dëshorjmë të jemi tani i popullit tonë që sot ka mbetë pa za, dhe me pranue si tonën thanjen e Apostujve të frikësue me nga valët e detit të shqetësue, dhe i kthehem Shënjtënisë suej me të njajti fjalë: **Salva nos, perimus!** (Na shpëto se mbaruemë!).

Ati Shenjt,

Kujdesi i Shënjtënisë suej për të gjitha Kishët, e veçanërisht për Kishët që vëjnë, na siguron se Shqipëria e vogël do të gjej një vend të lakmueshëm në zemrën tande të madhe.

Ndërsa me mirënjohje të madhe ju falnderojmë që, ma shumë se njëherë, ju kenë pasë mirësinë me tëerheqë rekomendjen e botës kah martirizimi i ngadalshëm i popullit tonë sot lanë mbas dore, me përvuejtëni kerkajmë sot Bekimin Tuej apostolik për vehten tonë, për familjet tona, afër e larg si dhe për bashkatdhetarët tonë kudo qofshin ata».

Papa, mbañi ndëgjoi fjalët e At Danielit, shikoi drejt në sy armën e pafat, ata sy të brumosun me vëlljet të

pjesëmarrësve që pritshin nga ai sigurim për një shpresë të re. Ai deshi të sigurojë menjherë se përjeton thellësisht dramën tronditëse që ata, dhe vëllazënit e tyre në Shqipëri, përjetojnë. Njikhësisht, ai dëshroi të bahet aty-per-aty zani i të vëlljetunve, me këto fjalë:

Fjala e Papës Gjon Pali II:

«Ky takimi yni, i pari që bahet këtu në Romë me pjesëtarët e bashkësisë shqiptare, më prekë thellë në zemër. Nuk prekem vetëm sepse takohemi në rrethana të këtilla; këtu asht fjala për një prekje që unë do t'a quajshë një gjendje e pandërpreme. Çdo ditë veçanërisht gjatë sakrificës së eukaristisë (mirënjohjes) përpqem të përjetoj me vehte martirizim e popullit tuej, martirizimin tuej o besimtarë, martirizimin e vëllazëneve dhe motrave shqiptare e lutem çdo ditë për vendlindjen tuej, për të gjithë besimtarët e feve të ndryshme, si dhe për Kishën në Shqipëri, e cila nga jashtë duket sikur asht shue. Por ne të gjithë e dijmë mirë se kisha nuk mund të shuhet nga zemra e popullit, sepse ajo asht e ndërtueme nga Shpirti Shenjt, me Fjalën e Krishtit, nga vetë personi i Krishtit që jeton tek besnikët e vet.

Unë besoj thellësisht, së bashku me ju, se Krishti— ashtu si jeton këtu tek ne në Romë, në bashkësinë shqiptaro-romane—asht njilloj i pranishëm edhe në jetët e vëllazëneve e motrave të shumevëlljetuna në vendin tuej. Ai jeton, Kisha jeton. Krishti nuk vritet! Asht e vërtetë që e vranë; e kryqëzuenë; ai vdiq në kryq. Por ai u ngrit përsëri. Krishti nuk vritet. Po ashtu, Kisha nuk vritet. Njeriu nuk mund të vritet në fortësinë e besimit gjallënes, në besimin që ka në Krishtin. Kjo asht shpresa jonë. Këtu gjejmë njetitjetrin, në këte besim e në këte shpresë.

Bashkatdhetari juej, At Daniel Gjeçaj, zuni me gojë paragrafin e Ungjillit ku tregohet epifania e të cilin Krishti, kur ishte në barkën e Pjetrit e në mes të detit plot dallgë, dukej sikur flinte. Por në të gjithë e dijmë se kur erdhi çasti vendimtar, ai u ngrit dhe qetsoi detin e trazuem; ai qetsoi dallgët dhe çoi gjatë u na përsri e qetë; paqa u kthye në hapsinë ku na para kercnonte rreziku. Duhet të ngrejmë zanin sot e të thërrasim Krishtin ashtu siç banë Apostujt. Duhet të thërrasim me za të naltë, të gjithë së bashku. Unë, po thrras këtu sot mepara botës sepse bota duhet të ajohtohet për këto vëlljet, bota duhet të kuptojë këtë padrejtësi.

Nuk mund të ketë padrejtësi ma të madhe se ajo që vret njeriun për arsye të besimit tij në Krishtin. Njeriu ka të drejtë, themelore, ka të drejtë të pacenueshme. Këto të drejta respektohen kudo nëpër botë. Në qoftë se nuk respektohen, atëherë do thotë se bota nuk asht ma njerëzore. Asht një botë anti-njerëzore. Në qoftë se Zoti asht eliminue nga jeta e njeriut, atëherë njeriu vetë asht shkaktarue. Atëherë nuk mund të flitet përsëri për një botë njerëzore.

Papa Shqiptarve:

«Unë lutem çdo ditë.
për Shqipninë e popullin e saj . . .».

Me rastin e 20 Vjetorit të themelimit të Qendrës Katolike Shqiptare t'Informacionit e Santa Clara, Kaliforni, një delegacion i vet Qendrës ka marrun pjesën Meshën e Shejtë të çueme nga Shejtënia e Tij Papa Gjon Pali i Dytë në Kapelën private, në mëngjesin e ditës s'ejte, 25 shtator 1986.

Mbas Meshës Sekretari personal i Papës Stanislaw Dziwisz, ka ftue delegacionin shqiptar në Sallën «Pio XII» për me takue Atin e Shejtë.

Posa janë gjetun pranë Papës, Padre Leo G. Neal, OFM, Konventual, i ka paraqitur Flamurin shqiptar me shqipen dykrenëshe. Gjon Pali i Dytë ka mbetur si i habitun, porse P. Neal, përmijherit, tue iu drejtue Atij, tha:

«At i Shejtë, kje, ky asht Flamuri që Qendra e jonë ka paraqitur në mbarë mbanifestimet fetare patriotike, e kulturore zhvillue ndër këta njëzet vjet të veprimtarisë, qysh nga themelimi, e, përvujtnisht, të gjithë na lusim Ju me u denjue me e bekue».

Papa, tue vijue me e admirue Flamurin, e ka bekue e asht interesue rreth veprimtarisë së Qendrës.

P. Neal, atëherë, ka fillue me i paraqitur Gjon Palit të Dytë, pjestarët e delegacionit.

«Shejtëni, ky asht Padre Giacomo Gardin (At Jak Gardin), një misionar jezuit që ka kalue dhjetë vjet ndër burgjet e ndër fushat e përgjendrimin në Shqipni».

P. Gardin mbasi i ka dorzue Papës kopjen e parë të volumit të tij *Dieci anni di prigione in Albania (1945-1955)* (Dhjetë vjet burgim në Shqipni) e ka falenderue Atin e Shejtë «per kujdesin e vijueshëm e për lutjet e vijueshme për Kishën Martire të Shqipnisë, si edhe për kultet e tjerë e për mbarë popullin shqiptar, pa dallim feje».

Këto fjalë të mia dolën nga goja ashtu si më erdhën, por emociioni im asht shumë ma i thellë, sepse e ndjenj dhe e bashkëndaj këte vuetje të hatashme të vëllazëne e motrave tona shqiptare që sot nuk gëzojnë as edhe ma të voglën liri fetare, liri për të cilën flasin të gjithë dokumentët nderkombëtare, dhe e percaktojnë atë si një parim themelor.

Le të bashkohemi në lutje për të gjithë besimtarët e vendit tuej, besimtarët e feve të ndryshme, për besimtarët e krishtenë e katolikë. Dëshrojmë të ju sjellim qetësi e ngushëllim në shpirt nepermjet lutjeve. Ky ngushëllim në shpirt penetron në çdo vend, dhe nuk ka forcë njerzore që mund t'a zhgaterroje.»

Në këtë ndërkohë, P. Neal i ka ba të njohun Papës se «pikrisht sot p. Gardin ka celebrue të 50-tin përvjetor t'urdhërimit priftëror». Shejtënia e Tij ka mbështetur dorën mbi kryet e jezuitit, e ka shtue: «Perendia do t'i shpërblejë krejt sakrificat e vuetjet e pësue». Por nuk mjafton me kaq: Papa erdhi në dijeni se «një ditë ma parë (dmth me 24 shtator) P. Gardin kishte mbushun të 81 vjetët» e atëherë me të dy duert mbi kryet e At Gardin-it i tha: «Ti, At i dashun, kjo fsh i bakue nga Zoti për misionin e zhvilluem ndërmjet Shqiptarve, e për jetën tande».

Mbas këtij, Drejtori i Qendrës i ka paraqitur Papës Gjon Sinishtën, Editor i organit zyrtar «Albanian Catholic Bulletin» (Buletini Katolik Shqiptar). Sinishta i ka dhurue Gjon Palit të Dytë mbarë koleksionin e revistës, sëbashkut me dy veprat e tija *Sacrifice for Albania* (Sakrificë për Shqipnië) e *The Fulfilled Promise* (Premtimi i mbajtur), sëbashkut me një zarf që përbbante lutjet e ndryshme që pjestarët e Qendrës do t'i ofrojnë Atit të Shejtë me rastin e këtij takimi.

Gjon Sinishta kështu e përshëndeti Papën:

«Shejtni, Qendra e jonë ka punue me dendësi gjatë këtyne njëzet vjetve për lirinë fetare në Shqipni. Çdo frymzim, inkurajim e mbështetje i kemi patun nga Selia e Shejtë e, në mënyrë te posaçme, nga Ju. Na dëshirojmë në këtë takim të paharrueshëm, përvujtnisht me U falenderue për ndihmën që na keni dhanë n'apostolat tonë e, lutemi, Të denjohet Shejtënia e Juej me na dhanë Bekimin Apostolik për punën tonë t'ardhëshme në këtë fushë.»

Papa tue u drejtue kah Sinishta, kështu përgjegji:

«Unë lus Zotin çdo ditë për Shqipnië e për popullin e saj. Shpesh flas për martirizimin e Fe e të popullit Shqiptar. Perendia e bekoftë veprimtarinë tuejt çmueshme në mënyrë që Popullit Shqiptar t'i ipet përsëri drejta e Fes». Pastaj Papa ka dhanë Bekimin Apostolik.

Gjon Pali i Dytë asht ndalun tue shikue botimet e ndryshme të Qendrës e tue pamun volumin *Premtimi i mbajtur*, tha:

«Unë e kam lexue këtë veprë. Asht, me të vërtetë, tepër e çmueshme për Kishën e Shqipnisë».

Mbas asht intervjuë për përmjetjen e zarfës me lutjet e ndryshme për Atë, Papa ka shpërtue volumin përkujtimor të revistës *Buletini Katolik Shqiptar* e ka njohun, në mbulesën, At Gardin.

Në mbarim t'audiencës, P. Neal i ka paraqitur Papës, edhe murgeshin shqiptarë Motër Lucia Lazza, banuese në Romë, që me veprimtarinë e ndryshme, ban pjesë në Qendrën

Motër Lucia ka lutun Gjon Palin e Dytë me i bekuet zaret e madhet për me u shpërndamun, pastaj, ndër pjestarët e Qendrës. Ati i Shejtë me zemër e ka dhanë Bekimin e Tij.

(Foto-reportazhi i takimit të Papës me shqiptarë gjindet në faqet 20-21 dhe 48-49).

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