

**ALBANIAN
CATHOLIC
BULLETIN**

**BULETINI
KATOLIK
SHQIPTAR**



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

VOL. XI

PUBLISHED ANNUALLY BY THE ALBANIAN CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER
1032 IRVING STREET, SUITE 518, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94122 U.S.A.

1990

ISSN 0272-7250

ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

VOL. XI

1990

With this issue the Center concludes its cycle of studies on the history of the Catholic Church in Albania. Previous issues in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1988, and 1989 have carried documentary essays on catholicism, the missionary work of the Jesuit order, the pioneer activity of religious sisters in developing educational opportunities for Albanian women, and the present government's campaign efforts to stamp out any sign of Catholic presence in the life of the Albanian people. The 1990 *Bulletin* explores the centuries old apostolic and educational work of the Franciscan order in Albania.

Included are a selection of studies by a variety of scholars from Europe, the US and Australia. They discuss religion in Albania and its impact on national life.

In this issue we also salute Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa on the occasion of their birthdays. Both religious leaders are beacons of Faith, Love and Peace for people across the globe.

The recent "signs of change" as well as the dramatic exodus of thousands of young Albanians to freedom are topics of a special commentary. A report on the action of UN Human Rights Commission against Albania is included.

During the past few years tragic events in the Albanian populated Kosovë region of Yugoslavia have resulted in the deaths of hundreds and the loss of formal autonomy for Albanians. A discussion of these events forms another topical area of this 1990 *Bulletin*.

Reports of other important events in Albania and among its people in exile are presented in the following pages. We are also happy to offer our readers a broad selection of reviews on recent publications about Albania.

Once again we appeal to our readers and friends to assist us in meeting the printing and mailing costs of our journal which have substantially increased. *Thank you and God bless you! Ju faleminderit e Zoti ju bekoftë!*

BULLETIN KATOLIK SHIQIPTAR

Vjeteri XI

Albanian Catholic Information Center Board:

Leo Gabriel Neal, O.F.M., Conv. Director
Jak Gardin, S.J.
Richard H. Siebert
† Barbara Kay
Palok Plaku
Steve Bosque
Gjon Sinishta
Julio Fernandez
Lulash Dajci
Donald Banas
Petro Vuçani
Daveen Spencer

Editor:
Gjon Sinishta

Editorial Advisor:
Michael Kotlanger, S.J.

Contributing Writers:
Steve Bosque
Tom Hoopes

Typesetting:
K K Graphics, Inc.
1485 Bayshore Blvd.
San Francisco, CA 94124

Printing:
Alonzo Printing Co.
1094 San Mateo Ave.
South San Francisco, CA 94080

Cover Printing:
h. c. Johnson Press, inc.
2801 Eastrock Drive
Rockford, IL 61109

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

The opinions expressed in the signed articles represent the views of the author and not necessarily that of the *Bulletin* or of the Albanian Catholic Information Center.

Letters and inquiries should be directed to:

ALBANIAN CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER

1032 Irving Street, Suite 2-8
San Francisco, CA 94119 U.S.A.



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Notes and acknowledgements	2
Authors	2
Editorials	3
He Changed The Face Of The World - 70th Birthday of Pope John Paul II	6
A birthday tribute to Mother Teresa, by Nikë Prela	9
A rare letter and poem by Mother Teresa	11
Mbi botën e mjerimit - Me rasën e Ditëlindjes së Nënës Tereze, nga Nikë Prela	13
Nji letër e poezi e panjoftun e Nënës Tereze	15
Mother Teresa's visit to Albania prompts criticism	17
Something beautiful for God, by Safete S. Juka	20
Apostolic and educational work of the Franciscan order among the Albanian people, by Vinçenc Malaj, OFM	23
Father Gjon Karma's slow road to Martyrdom, by Ják (Giacomo) Gardin, S.J.	55
Toward a New Albania: Evolution or Revolution? by Nicholas P. Pano	59
Catholic Refugees Tell of Albania's Horrors, by Desmond O'Grady	64
1990 UN Human Rights Commission - New indictments againsts Albania	66
I will never forget that day..., by Nikollë Isufaj	69
Gëzuar Pashka - Happy Easter ! Report from a recent visit to Albania, by Melhem M. Mobarak	72
OPINION FORUM:	
The hand of God: Reflections on May 1990, by Geoffrey Hull	76
Is there movement in Albania's religious policy? by Wolfgang Stoppel	83
Nationality and religion in Albania, by Odile Daniel	90
Albania: An atheistic state? by Finngeir Hiorth	98
Enver Hoxha's unfulfilled dream, by Dennis R. Janz	104
The "common graves" of Albanian literature, by BESA/FEDE	107
Will the works of banned Albanian writers re-appear? by Petro Vuçani	107
Ismail Kadare: Literature and Human Rights	108
Profile: Ismail Kadare, by Brian Curdy	111
Gjergj Fishta - Poet laureate of Albania	113
Albanian news and events	116
The Constitutional Declaration on Kosova	124
Albanians in Yugoslavia, by Sami Repishti	126
Farewell to a friend, by Gjon Sinishta	136
Nermin Viora Falaschi's scholarly work, by Peter R. Prifti	138
Antiquity of the Albanian language, by Nermin Viora Falaschi	140
Albanian Cultural Centers, by Tom Hoopes	142
A picture is worth a thousand words, by Steve Bosque	143
Shqiptarët nderojnë kujtimin e Pjetër Bogdanit, nga Zef. V. Nekaj	145
Seminar në kujtim të mrturit Zef Oroshtit - Me rasën e përvjetorit të parë të vdekjes së tij, nga Palok Plaku	156
Përkujtohet 150 Vjetori i lindjes së Dedë Gjon Luftit dhe 79 Vjetori i kryengritjes së Malësisë së Madhe, nga Lulash Dajçi	161
Symposium madhështues për Kosovën në New York, nga Lulash Dajçi	163
Kosova kërkon ndihmë, nga Sami Repishti	164
Book reviews	167
In memoriam	199

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank our many readers for their kind letters and inquiries. As much as we try to answer correspondence and remain in personal touch with our readers, it is sometimes impossible due to an insufficient staff and time constraints. Limited space in this issue prevents us from publishing even a few of the letters received and for this we apologize.

Again we express deep gratitude to our many faithful friends and readers who for years have been financially contributing to the printing and distribution costs of the **Bulletin**. We acknowledge the following major contributors: the Jesuit Community at the University of San Francisco; St. Pauls' (Albanian) Catholic Church community, Warren, Michigan; Brian Curdy; Donald Banas; the Dudley Perkins Foundation, San Francisco; Fr. John Neiman; Prek Gruda; Arthur and Agnes Richter; Kolë Mëhilli; Anne Meridier; Zef Luka; Maria and Ismet Lesko; Paul W. Smith; Anton Syku; Gene X. Kortsha; Lec Zojzi; Van Christo; Shefki Çitaku; Fr. Bernard Guirch; Brian and Irene Maguire; Kolec Pikolini; Bruce P. Ritter, Patrick Digby.

We thank all those other individuals of fixed or limited income who have contributed to keep the **Bulletin** alive - as the Albanian Catholic's voice in exile.

* * *

Our heartfelt thanks to Rosemarie Deist, Donald C. Forée, S.J., Chris Bacic, Louis Ramirez, Thomas McCormick, S.J., Sr. Sophie Connie, RSCJ, and Beatrix Arevalo for their kind assistance with this issue.

* * *

Some errors appeared in the 1989 **Bulletin** on pages 121, 146, and 161. Page 121, line 4, from **The Old Deer** is missing "boasting about women"; page 146, third paragraph, line 8 should read "(con)sent of the provinces. There followed six days of violent clashes between ethnic"; page 161, paragraph 1, line 6 should read "given by Mrs. de Fontanes"...

We apologize for any inconvenience the mistakes may have caused our readers.

* * *

PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Front cover: Mother Teresa, from Nëna jonë Tereze, by Dr. Lush Gjergji

Back cover: Albanian Franciscans Victims of Communism, by Fr. Daniel Gjeçaj, OFM

AUTHORS

STEPHEN A. ARMSTRONG, S.J., is Pastor of the Byzantine Catholic Russian Center/Our Lady of Fatima Byzantine Catholic parish in San Francisco and Lecturer at the University of San Francisco.

PAUL BERNADICOU, S.J., is Associate Professor of Theology at the University of San Francisco.

STEVE BOSQUE is a free-lance writer who makes his home in San Francisco.

MARTIN CAMAJ is Professor of Albanian Studies at the University of Munich, Federal Republic of Germany. He is also a noted Albanian writer of prose and poetry.

BRIAN CURDY is an American student living in Switzerland with a keen interest in Albanian studies.

ODILE DANIEL teaches at the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilization at the University of Paris. She has done extensive research and published a number of works on Albanian cultural history.

LULASH DAJÇI teaches history in the state of Washington and is an associate of our Center.

NERMIN VLORA FALASCHI is a linguist and noted author of books in prose and poetry. She writes in the Albanian, Italian, and English languages.

ELEUTERIO F. FORTINO is a Vatican Undersecretary in the Secretariat for Christian Unity. He is founder of BESA press service and the Arbëresh cultural center in Rome. His writings on religion in Albania regularly appear in **Osservatore Romano** as well as Italian Catholic and Arbëresh publications.

HIORTH FINNGEIR is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oslo, Norway.

JAK (GIACOMO) GARDIN, S.J., formerly a Jesuit missionary priest in Albania now residing in Italy. He spent ten years in Albanian prisons and labor camps.

JOHN HOOCHES is a graduate of the University of San Francisco and a free-lance writer living in San Francisco.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

GEOFFREY HULL is Lecturer in Modern Languages at the University of Wollongong, New South Wales, and a part-time journalist for the Australian branch of **Aid to the Church in Need**.

NIKOLLË ISUFAJ is an Albanian refugee living in the United States. He formerly taught in elementary schools in Albania.

DENNIS R. JANZ is Professor of the History of Christianity in the Department of Religious Studies at Loyola University, New Orleans.

SAFETE S. JUKA holds a license in literature and a doctorate from the Sorbonne. She has taught French literature courses at Lafayette College and Lehigh University in Pennsylvania.

ISMAIL KADARE is the leading Albanian writer who makes his home in Tiranë, Albania.

ANTON LOGORECI is a noted political analyst for the BBC in London and an author. His articles and studies on Albania regularly appear in British and Albanian (diaspora) publications.

VINÇENC MALAJ is a Franciscan priest and Albanian scholar. Presently he is the superior of the Franciscan Mission in **Montanis**, Tuzi (Montenegro).

MELHEM M. MOBARAK is a researcher of books, lithographs and art of Albania. His articles on Albanian topics often appear in French Canadian and Lebanese publications.

ZEF V. NEKAJ is a retired teacher of Albanian and Russian languages at the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California.

DESMOND O'GRADY is a free-lance writer and **Our Sunday Visitor** Rome correspondent.

NICHOLAS C. PANO is Professor of History and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Western Illinois University. He also is Editor of The Journal of Developing Areas and President of the Society for Albanian Studies. His research and writing has focused on the areas of Albanian history and politics.

PALOK PLAKU is a retired Albanian educator residing in Sacramento, California. He is a board member of our Center.

NIKË PRELA is the Bishop of Prizren, Kosovë. The prelate is the spiritual leader of Albanian Catholics in Kosovë and Macedonia. He is publisher of the Albanian Catholic periodical **DRITA** (The Light) printed in Ferizaj, Kosovë (Yugoslavia).

PETER R. PRIFTI teaches at the University of California at San Diego. He is also an author and journalist who devotes much of his time covering abuses of human rights of Albanians living in Yugoslavia.

SAMI REPISHTI is chairman of the foreign languages department for the Malverne Public Schools District and is associated with Adelphi University, New York. A former political prisoner in Albania, he is a leading human rights activist working on behalf of persecuted Albanians in Yugoslavia. His is a regular contributor to American, German and Albanian (exile) publications.

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ is a writer for the **San Francisco Chronicle** newspaper, San Francisco.

JAMES V. SCHALL, S.J., is Professor of political science at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He has authored numerous books and essays on political, philosophical and theological subjects.

RICHARD H. SIEBERT is an educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a board member of our Center.

WOLFGANG STOPPEL is a Judge of the Federal Patent Court in Munich and consultant for Albanian affairs at the Institute for Eastern Law of Munich, Federal Republic of Germany.

PETRO VUÇANI is a veteran Albanian journalist and broadcaster in Albanian for the Italian Radio in Rome, Italy.

EDITORIAL

A TIME FOR CHANGE – TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

The recent "dramatic events" in the USSR and Eastern Europe have ushered in a new era of freedom and democracy. The removal of ruthless and corrupt communist systems has been amazingly peaceful, apart from Rumania. Credit for this peaceful transformation lies with both sides: those seeking change and those holding power. The conscientious and responsible means employed in this process of democratization honors the people of these countries as well as their leaders who demonstrated a highly mature national consciousness. At the same time their example is indeed informative and encouraging to those people who still yearn and struggle for democratic change.

Albania is the only European communist nation to resist the winds of democracy. It continues to hold its people captive. Communist government officials do not seem to understand that their control of Albania is fast coming to an end. They should act immediately to join progressive forces for a peaceful and democratic transformation. The propaganda manipulation and double talk about "reforms" issued on May 8, 1990 aimed solely to keep the party in power at any cost. Meanwhile the authorities are polishing their brute image. This action can hinder but not halt the movement for democracy embraced by people of all walks of life. Peaceful demonstrations and the recent mass exodus of Albanian youth to freedom are convincing evidence of a highly explosive situation. A single spark could plunge the entire country into the abyss of civil war from which only our perennial neighboring enemies would benefit. The time is now for those in power and those seeking change to initiate a sincere dialogue about the future of our nation.

Our Center has attempted to build a spirit of reconciliation, forgiveness and national consciousness in pursuit of religious freedom. We support the peaceful means to achieve the goal of a democratic Albania. We invite all Albanians of goodwill to join us in seeking peaceful change in our homeland. We condemn any use of outside force or internal violence within our homeland. Any civil strife would pit Albanian against Albanian thus inviting our enemies to take advantage of the turmoil and endanger the independence and integrity of Albania. Only a careful approach to our country's present political and economic crisis will demonstrate to the world that Albanians are responsible and mature people, especially when the fate of their land is at stake.

Gjon Sirishita

Articles from the **Albanian Catholic Bulletin** are found indexed in the **Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO)**; book reviews can be located in the **Index to Book Reviews in Religion**; published by the American Theological Library Association, 820 Church Street 3rd Floor, Evanston, Illinois 60201. The indexes are also available online through BRS Information Technologies DIALOG Information Services and Webonline.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

GUEST EDITORIAL

BETWEEN TWO FIRES: The Tragedy of the Albanian Nation

The last one hundred and fifty years in Western history have been dominated by the epic of nationhood. Some nations attained and lost full independence, such as the Poles, then saw it restored, in the grand European revolution whose consummation began with Solidamosc.

Other nations, such as the Croats in Central Europe or the Catalans in Spain, remain waiting at the gate, in anticipation of a future full sovereignty.

Against this historical backdrop are those nations that have suffered a divided fate, gaining a partial and tragic fulfillment of their destiny as a people. The Irish provide one example: national freedom in the south combined with a catastrophic failure to resolve the national question in the north. Israel is another: having embarked on the national adventure, the Zionist movement found itself condemned to establish itself under the worst possible moral, political, and social conditions.

Unhappy are they who live between two fires. In a certain sense there is no example more moving and more dramatic than that of the "Sons of the Eagle" — the Shqiptars, known to the world as Albanians.

Today a part of the Albanian nation lives under a regime in Tiranë that preserves an image as the last Stalinist enclave in Europe. Although some intellectuals and writers such as the novelist Ismail Kadare have initiated a dialogue that may result in a democratic transformation, there remains a bitter heritage of obscurantism and brutal terror. Gjon Sinishta has chronicled the calvary of conscience in Albania in his book *The Fulfilled Promise* — a book I treasure — and in the journal you hold in your hands. THE ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN represents a precious historical and spiritual resource.

The remaining part of the Albanian nation, in the Kosovë region of Yugoslavia, continues to suffer ethnic terrorism by the Serbian power. No amount of argumentation can absolve Serbia from responsibility for the brutal violations of human rights that have taken place in the tormented region. A mere glance at the past eight decades of history shows that Serbs subjected Albanians to terror during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13; again during the second world war, and yet again beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the most dramatic headlines of the present moment. It is a ghastly irony that the Serbian regime in Belgrade has assumed a neo-Stalinist ideological coloring that makes it, if anything, a near-twin of the Tiranë government.

The world may be confused by Ulster and Lebanon, but, by and large, the world sees clearly the identity of the victim in Kosova.

The cause of human rights in Tiranë and that of human rights in Kosovë are the same, and it is the duty of every individual who defends the freedom of nations to support both of them with equal energy.

I believe the Albanian people will gain full freedom, both in Tiranë and in Kosovë. At this dramatic moment for the future of the Albanian people, I am inspired by the words of Lazër Shantoja, the poet I know of thanks to Gjon Sinishta:

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

Stephen Schwartz*

* This statement reflects authors personal views and does not express those of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

He Changed the Face of the World

70th Birthday of Pope John Paul II

Virgin of Shkodër, Patroness of Albania, our sweet Mother! You bear in your heart the lives of the peoples: look to this nation, which received the first proclamation of the Gospel from the Apostles, and which always venerated you with tender fruitful filial love. Today too, in the darkness of trial, this nation has trusting recourse to your maternal help.

You precede the Church in the pilgrimage of faith: look upon your Albanian sons and daughters, as they experience the path of trial and tribulation. Sustain the weak, give comfort to the afflicted, keep the faith alive in the hearts of all.

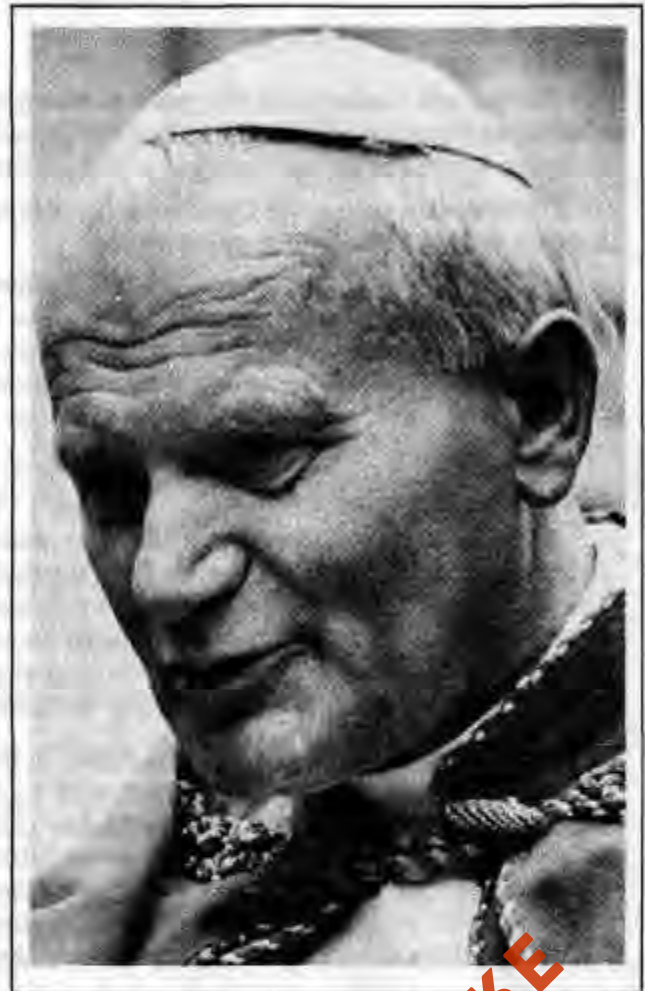
Mother of the Savior, bless the Christian families, which express a fundamental dimension of the Church of your Divine Son.

Mother of Hope, hasten the day when this noble people can once more see recognized the deepest aspirations of its spirit, when all its sons and daughters will be once more united and in harmony, in the building of a future of justice and peace.

--John Paul II

With these words, Pope John Paul II invoked the Mother of God before imparting his Apostolic Blessing on the Albanian exile pilgrims in Rome in May of 1988, the Marian year. Now, two years later, his prayer may have begun to be answered.

Grateful for his special attention and assistance, we rejoice with Catholics and believers around the world on the seventieth birthday of John Paul II. Since his papacy began in 1979, he has proved to be the catalyst of sweeping social change. He has become the channel of God's work towards peace, justice, and universal human rights around the world.



Pope John Paul II

This prayer of John Paul's was by no means his first appeal to divine help for Albania, nor his first public mention of the Albanian Church. In 1980, the Holy Father made a pilgrimage to Otranto in Southern Italy. He celebrated an open air mass on the Hill of the Martyrs to commemorate the fifth centenary of the death of Blessed Antonio Primaldo and his 800 companions who died for their faith at the hands of the occupying Ottoman army. John Paul placed Albania's martyrs firmly in the ranks of the holy line of men and women who have passed "the ultimate test" since St. Stephen was stoned to death nearly 2,000 years ago.

The pope stated that,

"on this occasion today I cannot but turn my eyes across the sea, to the not distant heroic Church in Albania, upset by harsh and prolonged persecution, but enriched with the testimony of its martyrs: bishops, priests, men and women religious and the simple faithful.

In addition to them, my thought also goes to the other Christian brothers and to all believers in God who are undergoing a similar fate of privations in that nation.

To be spiritually close to all those who are suffering in Albania because of their faith is a special duty of all Christians, according to the tradition inherited from the first centuries. I would say more: here it is also a question of a solidarity due to persons and communities whose fundamental rights are violated or even completely crushed."

With that speech, highly criticized by the Albanian government, John Paul referred to two ideas that would help change the face of Eastern Europe in the decade to come. However, they are not so much "ideas" as they are realities; they are elements of a Truth so rich and so universal that it triumphs like a martyr over the heartless "ideas" of tyrants. First, he said that solidarity has become both the unfurled banner and the battle plan of the "soldiers" in the war against oppression. Secondly, he noted that solidarity has been successful only insofar as it has safeguarded those fundamental rights that are part of what Pope John Paul calls the "primacy of the human spirit."

Solidarity--true solidarity--has become both the means and the end of John Paul II's revolution. With his prayers and his speeches as well as his refusal to ignore the problems of his native Poland, the Pope has unleashed the Holy Spirit on Eastern Europe. With the help of the Holy Spirit, who finds his special home in the

human spirit, the Gdansk electrician Lech Walenza rose to international fame while the Soviet General Secretary Mikail Gorbachev stooped to kiss the papal ring during a Vatican visit.

Pope John Paul II spoke of solidarity and spirit again when he initially met with an Albanian delegation in Rome in 1986. At that meeting he said,

"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.



Mikail Gorbachev and Pope John Paul II share their worldviews.

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."

John Paul likened the Albanian Church to Peter's boat in the storm, where Christ seemed to be sleeping as the Apostles cried out, "Rescue us or we perish!" The pope reminded his audience that:

"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. The rights are respected in the world. If they are not respected, then it means that the world is no longer human. It is antihuman world. If God is destroyed in the life of man, man is destroyed.

Mine are improvised words, but my emotion is much deeper, because I feel and profoundly 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."

The Albanian believers and in a particular way the Albanian Catholics have found a special place of love and concern in the Holy Father's heart. In his 1988 address to the exile pilgrims, John Paul said:

"I see in your faces the ancient pride of the Albanian people, but I also see your nostalgia for your homeland, 'the land of the eagles', a nation most noble by reason of ancient memories, illustrious traditions and long struggles for freedom. This land, geographically so near, is particularly dear to me.

And how could it fail to be, since it preserves the memory of the presence of the Apostles Andrew and Paul, of the apostolic origin of Durrës, the first episcopal see, the martyrdom of Saint Astius, and then, down the centuries, a long series of martyrs and confessors? How could I fail to have a particular affection for a nation whose Catholic community has always been faithful to communion with the Apostolic See, even in the most difficult and painful circumstances."



Shejtni i Tij Papa Gjoni Pauli i Dytë në mes të shtegtarëve shqiptarë
Pope John Paul II with Jubilee Albanian pilgrims, Vatican, 1988

Our Center joins all Albanian Catholics at home and in exile in rejoicing for our Holy Father on this special happy occasion. In appreciation for his fatherly concern, his kind words for the Albanian people, and in recognition for his

indispensable role in remaking Eastern Europe, we offer our prayers for his continued health and well being. We join our congratulations with the world's on Pope John Paul II's seventieth birthday.



A Birthday Tribute to Mother Teresa

ON THE WORLD OF MISERY

Nikë Prela, Bishop of Prizren, Kosovë

There was once a woman called Drane (Roza), known now in all the languages of the world as **Nëna Loke** (Mother Loke). She has three children, one boy and two girls. The youngest daughter was called Gaxhe. Today few people remember her as the daughter of Kolë Bojaxhiu, but rather as the renowned **MOTHER TERESA**, now in her 80th year.

Eighty years ago no one imagined that this Albanian infant from Shkup (now Skopje in Macedonia, Yugoslavia), would one day become world renowned.

Mother Teresa demolishes all obstacles and tears apart all veils between people. Irregardless of a person's world view, race or religion, she reveals to them that all people share a common lot of suffering.

With the warmth of her love she melts away worry. She consoles the distressed, and brings back hope and strength to countless people who are the embodiment of sickness, exhaustion, and dark despair. She works to transform strife with love, sympathy, healing, and goodwill.

Having a sensitive and compassionate heart, she struggles insistently and without hesitation for a better world. Her goal is the spiritual and physical renewal of humanity, the independence of people and nations, the welfare and advancement of each and every family, the implementation in daily life of the legitimate rights of humankind--the most sensitive and conscious of beings. She promotes the right to life, which appeals to the elderly, as well as to those yet to be born.

She fights against the war that rages against life.

She is the conscience of humanity.

She is the ambassador of Truth, Love, and Justice.

Her Truth is so clear, her Justice so keen, and her Love so attractive that you cannot fault her life, nor refrain from admiring her humility in the face of living Misery.

Men and women from all continents and all countries make up her religious order known as "Missionaries of Charity." The Missionaries are governed not only by the three rules that apply to all religious, but by a fourth one, which obliges them to share, with a glad and cheerful heart, their last morsel with the poorest of the poor. Their charter inspires them to trust in the Bounty of Heaven and the generosity of humankind. It is thus that she entices others, the world over, to take part in one way or another in these missions of mercy.

Yes! -- she is the representative of the most enduring Heavenly Kingdom in human history, a kingdom born of grace which overcomes the confines of human dimensions.

Her inspiration and her Lord is Jesus Christ, with whom she identifies as she reveals His mercy to the World.

At one of my meetings with her, I requested that she explain briefly the meaning of the works she initiates. To which she replied -- simply and directly: "I SEEK THE CHRIST WHO S U F F E R S THROUGH MANKIND, AND I WANT TO LIGHTEN HIS SUFFERING!"

Her ever constant love seeks out suffering among ruined dwellings, under caved-in roofs, in filthy and stifling huts ...in the streets and byways of cities wrecked by poverty and disease, skirmishes and wars, hunger and parching thirst. She responds by giving help and saving the lives of children and old people, undernourished pregnant women, and those who are cast aside like putrid trash. But she goes even further. She encounters suffering also in the luxurious homes of the world's metropolises, where lonely people are in need of the "nourishment" of love, companionship, tenderness and attention. These sufferings can be "treated" with a word that comes from the heart, and a kind look

that can fill the void in their lives, and banish the cobwebs of neglect, the hell of loneliness, and the fog of boredom.

In words we cannot measure the scope of her humanitarian work, so greatly has she touched the hearts of her contemporaries, though not, unfortunately, the human conscience.

Nevertheless, think how the whole world has risen to its feet to "fix" her with admiring looks and surround her with grace and affection, competing one against the other in a race to award her the greatest of prizes. But the



Mother Teresa is flanked by President and Mrs. Reagan following a private luncheon at the White House, Washington, D.C. 1981

common, familiar and well-deserved award, representing a unity of feelings and convictions for her, is expressed by that loftiest, most human and comforting epithet, MOTHER!

In the face of the awards presented to her by persons in high places, her own people, the Albanians could not remain apathetic. They are rightly proud of their most honored sister and daughter. DRITA, the only Albanian Catholic magazine published in her birthplace has brought important information to light regarding Mother Teresa. Recently DRITA published a **Monograph** on Mother Teresa. The volume was created spontaneously by Albania's cultural elite. It is the most natural gift, the most sincere expression of gratitude, and the most intimate award – surpassing all others – for our Mother Teresa. It comes from the heart, the blood and the genius of the Albanian people. This **Monograph** represents the most cordial greetings to Mother Teresa from all her Albanian brothers and sisters. On the occasion of her 80th birthday, it is like a fragrant bouquet of flowers because it embodies the very feelings that we nourish for her in our hearts. These feelings are as varied and as beautiful as the colors of the rainbow. It is like the comforting beams of light that Ganxhe sheds on the world of misery; or like perfectly-formed multi-hued flowers that have come to resemble the features of this Woman who over time passes, softens the deformed and frightful features of misery and those responsible for it.

Behold the national pride, gratitude and honor we feel in our hearts as we are enfolded by the resplendent light of our MOTHER TERESA -- hostage to the yearning for eternal grace.



A RARE LETTER AND POEM BY MOTHER TERESA

In 1928 Ganxhe Bojaxhiu, now known as Mother Teresa, left her native city of Shkup to become a missionary sister. Hundreds of her relatives and friends came to the railroad station to bid farewell. Leaving her mother, whom she affectionately called **Nëna Loke**, her sister Age and brother Lazër must have been a painful experience. However the call to serve the Lord Jesus was stronger than family bond.

Ganxhe arrived in Dublin, Ireland, where she entered the convent of the Sisters of Loreto. She began English language studies. Later that same year she traveled to Darjeeling in India for her novitiate program of religious formation. While on the journey to India she sent a letter to the Croatian Catholic monthly *Blagovijest*. The periodical was regularly read by her relatives and friends at the Sacred Heart Church, in her hometown parish. Enclosed with the letter was a poem she wrote during the long journey.

On the occasion of Mother Teresa's 80th birthday we happily wish to share with our readers excerpts from that letter and poem. Both documents were only recently discovered by the Albanian priest-scholar, Dr. Lush Gjergji. We offer our prayers to Mother Teresa and extend our good wishes for her continued health and the success of her labors with the poor and the needy of the world.

The following is an excerpt from *Blagovijest*.

"The eighteen-year-old girl from Shkup (now Skopje Macedonia Translator's Note), with the Albanian name of Ganxhe, who was quite known in the city, has become now a religious sister, and has taken the name, Little Terese. Until last autumn, she was active in the church choir, encouraging her friends from the Marian Congregation to help the missions, and training

the younger girls. All the while she was a model student at the local gymnasium for women. On December 9, 1928, while sailing in the Mediterranean Sea, she wrote a letter for the readers of *Blagovijest*, and expressed her spiritual feelings in a short and simple poem. We are herewith publishing an excerpt from this letter, and also giving her exact address, which is: M. Teresa Bojaxhiu, Novitiate, Loreto Convent, Darjeeling, British India. May this excerpt and this poem be an inspiration to the Catholic youth in Shkup, especially to those who understand well the word: Sacrifice!



Ganxhe as Loreto Sister

Dear readers,

I am writing to you this very day, so that you do not think that in my new-found happiness I have forgotten you.

It's been two months since I left my dear Shkup to follow the Lord, who had beckoned me for so long. For 7 weeks I was in Dublin, where I familiarized myself with the life I am going to live as a sister. At the same time, I prepared myself for missionary work. And now the day I have been waiting for so eagerly, the day of departure has come. I am setting out for my new Homeland, the legendary India... (she describes the boat and what it's like to live in a boat). I am traveling together with one Slovenian and three English women... (describes the trip)..."

"Our Missionary [sister]" (Blagovijest, No.1/1929, p.3-4)

Below is a translation in English of Mother Teresa's poem entitled Goodbye.

A poem by Mother Teresa

"Goodbye"

*I am leaving the light of my heart, home,
Leaving my birthplace and kin,
For disease-wracked Bengal,
So far, far away.*

*I bid goodbye to the reluctant,
Turn away from the relatives and hearth,
To obey my heart that tells me
To serve Christ.*

*Goodbye, dear mother,
Friends of mine, take care;
A pure purpose stays in me
Drives me toward fiery India.*

*The boat sails ever so lightly,
Expectant of stormy seas;
For the last time I survey
The coastline of ferocious Europe.*

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)



Ganxhe Bojaxhiu in 1928

*On board, exultation and joy
Light up the modest face
Of a soul betrothed to Christ—
Young bride of the new world.*

*She clasps a small iron cross
Ringing out news of salvation;
Readily her spirit
Will sacrifice all for it.*

*"Accept, O Lord, this sacrifice,
As a testimony of my love;
And on this day help a soul
Who wishes to magnify Your name.*

*"In return, O Gracious Lord,
Our kindly Father,
I ask only, grant me the spirit
... You alone know what it is."*

*My wistful tears fall softly,
Pure as an early drizzle,
To confirm what I publicly pledged—
My life, an offering of thanks to You.*

Ganxhe Bojaxhiu

*(Composed on December 9, 1928, en route to India)
(Translated from Albanian by Peter R. Prifti)*

Mbi botën e mjerimit

Nikë Prela

Ishte një grua me emrin Drâne, e njohur tani në të tëra gjuhët e botës - >>Nëna Loke<<, si thërrisnin fëmijët e saj. I kishte tre fëmijë, një djalë e dy vajza, ndër të cilat e vogla quhej Ganxhe, të cilën pak kush e njeh si të bijën e Kolë Bojaxhiut, por vetëm si Tereze, e cila edhe sot pas 80 vjetësh jete, është e përmendur si NËNA TEREZE.

Ndërsa ende e bartte në parzëm e ëma para 80 pranverave, askujt s'i vete mendja se kjo foshnje shqiptare nga Shkupi, do të dilte në pah si dhe sa asnjë frymë njeriu përpara saj, e njohur dhe e përfillur nga mbarë rruzulli.

Përkundra ajo i rropos të gjitha pengesat, i vërvit mbarë perdet mes njerëzish të çdo botëkuptimi, race, religjioni për t'i bashkuar unji - me qëllim ngushëllimi e lehtësimi, në një të vetmin terren të quajtur: MJERIM.

Ajo e shkrin akullin e krajatës rrëqethëse me ngrohtësinë e dashurisë; ngushëllon të pikëlluarit, u kthen forcën dhe shpresën taborave të mishërimit neveritës, të ligështisë dhe mishërimit të mugët të dëshprimit. Ajo përpiqet për t'i shndërruar kacafytjet në dashuri, ngushëllim, shërim e mirëkuptim.

Edhe duke qenë zemër e ndjeshme - vërgëluese, lufton me ngulm e pa u ndjësuar për gjallimin e përvijueshëm e të lumtur të mbarë botës, për përtërirjen shpirtërore e trupore të njerëzimit, për mëvetësinë e kombeve e të kombesive, për të mirën e përparimin e çdo familjeje, për përparimin, në jetën e përditshme njerëzore, e të drejtave të përligjëshmë të krësës më të ndjeshme e të vetëdijshme siç është e drejta për të jetuar - për njeriun që përshkohet hullisë së jetës si edhe për atë të fëmijës ende të paundur.

Ajo lufton kundër luftës që u tërbua kundër jetës.

Ajo është ndërgjegjja e njerezimit.

Ajo është ambasadorja e së Vërtetës dhe e Dashurisë, e Drejtësisë.

E Vërteta e saj është aq e qartë, Drejtësia e saj është aq a mprehtë dhe Dashuria e saj është aq e tërheqëse saqë nuk mund t'u kundërshtosh qortimeve të jetës së saj të njëmendët dhe nuk mund të mos admirosh të prumët e saj ndaj Mjerimit të gjallë.

Përfaqësuesit e të gjithë kontinenteve - gra e burra të të gjithë shteteve dhe të meseve përbëjnë shoqërinë e saj të quajtur >> Misionaret e Dashurisë - Misionarët e Dashurisë<< që bëjnë jo vetëm tri kushtet rregulltare si të gjithë motrat e rregulltarët e tjerë, por - edhe të katërtin, i cili detyron që me buzëqeshje dhe kënaqësi ta ndajnë kafshatën e fundit me më të varfërit. Kushtetuta e Shoqërisë së tyre i frymëzon që të lëshohen ndër duar të Provanisë Hyjnore dhe ndër ato të bujarisë njerëzore.

Kështu, pra, ajo galshen edhe të gjithë të tjerët, anembanë botës, që të marrin pjesë në një apo tjetër mënyrë nëpër këto fushata mëshire të cilave u prinë vetë Nëna Tereze.

Pol - ajo është ambasadorja e Mbretërisë Hyjnore më jetëgjatë në Historinë njerëzore, që rrjedh nga amshimi dhe i shpartallis kufijtë e përmasave njerëzore.

Frymëzuesi dhe Mbreti i saj është Jezu Krishti me të cilin identifikohet ajo vetë, duke i zbuluar botës mëshirën e Tij.

Në njërin nga takimet e mia me të, e luta që të më shpjegojë shkurtimthi kuptimin e veprimtarisë së të nismave të saja; ajo - thjesht e drejt: >>KËRKOJ KRISHTIN QË VUAN NË VËLLAZËRIT E TIJ, DHE DUA T'IA LEHTËSOJ VUAJTJET!<<

Dashuria e saj e përhershme i ndjek vuajtjet jo vetëm ndër gërmadha të vendbanimeve periferike, nën pullaze të shembura, nëpër baraka të ndotura dhe frymëzënës., nëpër rrugët e hendeqet e qyteteve në skamje dhe sëmundje, ndeshtrasha dhe luftëra, në uri dhe etje zharitëse, duke u ndihmuar dhe shpëtuar fëmijët dhe pleqtë, foshnjat e palindura nga nënat e paushqyera, njerëzit e lënë pasdore sikur të ishim mbeturina të fëlliqtë; por ajo ia del edhe të hasë ndër vuajtje të shtëpive luksuoze të metropolave botërore, ku njerëzit që jetojnë të vetmuar kanë nevojë për >>ushqimin<< dashuri, shoqërim, afrim, e përfillje. Këto vuajtje mund të mjekohen me një fjalë zemre vërtet njerëzore, me një të prirur shikimi të ëmbël për të mbushur zbrastësirën e jetës ku merimanga ka thurur rrjetën-vulë braktisjeje, ferrë vetmie dhe mjegull mërzie.

Me një fjalë: nuk mund ta përfshijmë hapësirën e veprimtarisë së saj humanitare aq sa ka prekur zemrat e bashkëkohesvë, por mjerisht jo edhe ndërgjegjën njerëzore.

Megjithatë, ja! - mbarë bota u çua në këmbë për ta >>shigjetuar<< me shikim admirimi, për ta rrethuar me meritime e simpati, duke bërë gara se kush i pari më së tepërmi ta dekorojë me shpërblimet më të mëdha, duke bashkuar ndër ndjenjat dhe bindjen për një shpërblim të përbashkët, familjar dhe merituar - në shpallurit e epitetit më të lartë, më njerëzor, më ngushëllues:

NËNË!

Vallë, do të mund të ngjete duarkryqëzuar populli i saj shqiptar përballë këtyre garave të personave të rangut të larë, shpirt nga krenaria e përgjishme për motrën dhe bijën e tij më të ndershme të Historisë së tij të gjatë?!

DRITA,

e vetmja revistë shqiptare e vendlindjes dhe e bindjes e saj, e bëri qysh prej fillimit detyrën e vet duke ia qitur ne dritë bijën dhe motrën, anembanë botës popullit të vet bashkëkohës.

Monografia per nderë te Nënës Tereze botue tash vonë nga DRITA e spontanisht e perftuar nga elita kulturore shqiptare, është dhurata më e natyrshme, mirënjohja më e çiltër dhe shperblimi më intim i cili do t'ia dalë çdo shperblimi tjetër, për shpirtin e Nënës sonë Tereze, sepse është i zemrës, i gjakut dhe i gjeniut të popullit të saj, shqiptar.

Kjo Monografi është njëheri edhe urimi më i përzemërt në emër të të gjithë vëllezërve the të motrave të saja shqiptare për ditëlindjen e sajë, si tubë lulesh që kundërmon këndeshem, si vetë ndiesia që ushqejmë në zemrat tona per Nënen Tereze, me ngjyra të ylbërta, si vetë rrezet ngushëlluese që lëshon Ganxhja mbi botën e mjerimit; shi si vetë trajtat e perkryera të luleve të nduarnduarta të cilat kanë ngjashmëni me tiparet e kësaj Fytyre që shkon gjithnjë duke zbutur shemtimin e trajtave të perçudnuara dhe perfriguese të mjerimit e të shkaktareve të tij.

Ja: çka farferinë në shenjë krenarie, evarie e nderimi, nga syri, veshi, truri dhe zemra jonë kombëtare per t'u strehuar në krahnorin e NËNËS sonë TEREZE, peng deshire per lavdi të amshuar.



NJI LETËR E POEZI E NËNËS TEREZE

Ganxhe Bojaxhiu, sot e njoftun në mbare botën si Nëna Tereze, u largue në vjetin 1928 nga Shkupi, qyteti i saj i lindjes për t'u ba motër misionare. Me qinda kushrij, t'aferm e të njoftun duelën në stacionin e trenit për ti dhanë lamtumirën. Pa tjetër ndamja nga nëna të cilën Ganxhja e quente në përkdhelje **Nona Loke**, nga motra Age e vllau Lazër do të ket qenë një experiencë e dhimbëshme. Mirpo thirrja për ti sherbye Jezu Krishtit ishte ma e fortë se sa nyja e familjes.

Ganxhja mbërriti në Dublin t'Irlandës ku hyni në kuvendin e Motrave të Loretos. Këtu ajo menjëherë iu shtrua studimit të gjuhës anglishte. Pak ma vonë gjatë të njajtit vjet ajo udhton për Darjeeling n'Indi për të hy në noviciat e ndjekë programin e formimit si murgeshë misionare. Gjatë udhtimit Ganxhja i dërgon një letër të përkohshmes katolike kroate *Blagovijesti* e cila ishte e përhapun ne Shkup e sidomos në famullin e Zemrës së Krishtit ku ishte pagëzue e rritë Ganxhja. Bashkë me letër ajo dergon po ashtu një poezi të cilën e kishte shkruar gjatë udhtimit të gjatë nepër Detin Mesdhë.

Me rasën e 80 Vjetorit të Ditëlindjes së Nënës Tereze me andje po botojmë pjesë të letrës si dhe poezin e sajë me titull *Lamtumirë*. Si letra ashtu dhe poezija janë zbulue nga i mirënjofturni shkollar shqiptar Dr. Lush Gjergji, të cilat i botoj në të përkohshmen katolike shqiptare të Kosovës *Drita*. Dr. Gjergji asht editor i *Dritës*.

Me këtë rasë të gëzueshme të ditëlindjes na i urojmë Nënës Tereze shndet e sukses të vazhdueshem ne veprimtarin e sajë fetare e humanitare për te smuadur e të vorfnut e mbarë botës.

Më poshtë botojmë pjesë nga letra e në vazhdim poezin e sajë *Lamtumirë*.

— Vajza të ëmëdhjetëvjeçare prej Shkupit, me emër shqiptar Ganxhe e njohur mjaft mirë, tani është bërë motër rregulltare dhe ka marrë emrin Terezja e Vogël.

Deri në vjeshtën e kaluar ka ndihmuar në Shkup këndimin kishtar, i ka entuziazmuar shoqet e veta në Kongregatën e Marisë për t'i ndihmuar misionet, i ka ushtrua vajzat më të reja dhe ka qenë nxënëse shembullore e gjimnazit femëror të këtushëm. Qysh më 9. XII. 1928, duke udhëtuar me anije nëpër Detin e Mesdheut, ka shkruar një letër për lexuesit e **Blagovijesti** dhe i ka shprehur ndjenjat e saja të përsjirtshme në një poezi të shkurtër dhe të thjeshtë. Tani po botojmë një pjesë nga kjo letër dhe po japim edhe adresën e saktë të saj: M. Terezija Bojadij, Novicijat, Loreto Konvent, Darjeeling, Britsih India. Lë të jetë kjo pjesë e këtij shkrimi dhe kjo vjershë nxitje rinisë katolike në Shkup, sidomos atyre që e njohin fort mirë fjalën: **Flijohu!** <<

>>Lexues të dashur,

Që të mos mendoni se ju kam harruar tani në lumturinë time, ja sot po ju lajmërohem me gëzim.

Kanë kaluar dy muaj që jam ndarë prej Shkupit tim të dashur dhe jam nisur pas zërit të Zotit, që më ka grishur aq gjatë. Në Dublin kam qenë 7 javë, ku jam njohur me jetën time të ardhshme rregulltare; njëkohësisht jam përgatitur për misione. Erdhi dita e udhëtimit, ditë kjo që e kam pritur me afsh. Dhe jam nisur kah Atdheu i ri, kah India legjendare...(përkthyer anijen dhe jetën në anijë. Me mua udhëtojnë një slovene dhe tri engleze...(përkthyer udhëtimin)...<<

>>MISSIONARJA JONË<<

(>>BLAGOVIJEST<<, nr. 1/1929, fq. 3-4)

Lamtumirë

Po lë shtëpinë zemërfanar
Vendlindje e farefis,
Po vete n'Bengalin dergjevrarë
Atje, në të largtin vis.

Lë të njohurit në mejtime
Të afërmit e vatrën shqim,

Më tërheq zemra ime
T'i shërbej Krishtit tim.

Nënë e dashur, lamtumirë
Ju le shëndet'n, miq të mi
Më djeg, o, një fuqi e dlië
Drejt të përflakurës Indi...

Dhe anija lehtë lehtë lundron
Pret valët e detit të trazuar,
Për herë të fundit syri vrojton
Brigjet e Evropës së hakërruar,



Nëna Tereze rridhim për Indi

Qëndron në anije e galduar
Fytyr'e përvuajtur gjithë hare
E Krishtit flijetarja e vluar
Nuse e njomë e botës së re,

Një kryq hekuri n'dorë shtërngon
Shpëtimi lëvarshëm kumbon në të,
E shpirti i gatshëm pranon
Blatën e rëndë fli për të,

>>Pranoje, këtë flijim, o Zot,
Dëshmi e përbetimit që të dashuroj,
Ndihmoi gjallesës Tënde sot
Që emrin do të ta madhëroj!

Si shpërblim, Të lus o i Hirt',
O Ati ynë plot mirësi
Të më japësh vetëm atë shpirt
Atë shpirt që - veçse Ti e di<<.

Dhe t'imtë, të pastër si n'ag vere vesojnë
Të valët lot rrjedhin qetë, me mall,
Që betimin për Ty prore e madhërojnë
Për të madhin blatim që tani u shpall.

Ganxhe Bojaxhiu

MOTHER TERESA'S VISIT TO ALBANIA PROMPTS CRITICISM

In an effort to upgrade its tarnished world image, the Albanian government at last allowed Mother Teresa to pay a visit to her country in August 1989. For many years the country's most heralded daughter had routinely been denied permission to enter her homeland. She nonetheless persisted in her attempts to gain entrance to the world's only official atheistic country. Being this century's most celebrated religious figure no doubt caused her efforts to be futile. Mother Teresa often spoke of her desire to visit the graves of her loved ones. (Her mother and sister died in 1972 and 1973 respectively, within Albania's borders). At long last she was given the opportunity to do so.

At this particular time of uncertainty for its own future, the Albanian government took full advantage of this visit to show that they are open to visits by luminaries of her stature. In its usual fashion the government tried to distort actions and



Graves of Mother Teresa's loved ones: Mother Roza Bojaxhiu (l) and Sister Ange Bojaxhiu (r).
(Photos kindness of Meltem Mobarak.)

statements made by Mother for propaganda reasons. When Albania's news media described Mother's visit to her homeland they quoted her as saying, "I am deeply impressed by the veneration paid here to the heroes of the nation who laid down their lives for the freedom of the country." While she probably made some respectful comment concerning Albania's dead, a statement containing such political overtones is completely out of the ordinary for what Mother Teresa stands for and believes in. This leads to the conclusion that the press simply put these words in her mouth. It would certainly not be the first time she has been misquoted.

The reports about her visit strategically avoided any mention of her Catholic faith, or even the fact that she is a nun. This was a fact very difficult to avoid considering the habit she wears and the cross she keeps pinned to her shoulder at all times.

During her three day stay in the country (August 14-17) Mother's visit was restricted to the capital of Tiranë and the seaport of Durrës. Nevertheless she managed to visit with some relatives and family friends. She also visited a few health and educational institutions including Kindergarten School no. 40, the Oncological Institute and the Institute against tuberculosis. However it was her visit to the Martyr's Cemetery where she laid a bouquet of flowers at the grave of former communist leader Enver Hoxha, that drew comments of disapproval from both Albanians and non-Albanians. Those who criticize Mother for showing respect to deceased leader are simply ignorant of her philosophy. Those critics should remember that she is above all a Christian, following in the

footsteps of Jesus. The heart of Christian message is love and forgiveness, and in Mother's own words, "Without forgiveness, there can be no real love." To view her as pawn in government's game is to vastly underestimate this saintly woman. She is above all politics, and in demonstrating her own lack of bitterness, she sets an example for us all.



Mother Teresa among hospital workers, Tiranë, 1989

Mother's visit was made possible largely through the kindness of Nexhmije Hoxha, the late dictator's widow and current President of the General Council of the Democratic Front of Albania. While the authorities used her visit as a positive piece of public relations, they unwittingly opened the door to forces they were ill-prepared to face. During a session with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Reis Maile, and Nexhmije Hoxha, Mother pressed a medal of Our Lady into Hoxha's palm. Out of courtesy she was obliged to accept. Hoxha was reportedly "deeply moved by Mother" and sent her a heart-felt get-well message during her recent illness. Later this year, she wrote to Mother

Teresa inviting her in glowing terms to again visit Albania for a period of recuperation. In her letter dated April 25, 1990 Mrs. Hoxha says:

"I wish you good health and 'Pleqëri të bardhë' ('a good old age'), as we say in Albanian.

"All Albanians are proud of the daughter of their country, Ganxhe (Agnes) Bojaxhiu, who with sublime abnegation, has dedicated her entire life to the poor and the abandoned, without discrimination with regard to race, religion or nationality, and whose humanitarian activities have made her well known throughout the world. We have the warmest memory of your visit to Albania and we hope to have you among us again. We think that a period of rest in our country, where you can visit your relatives and at the same time revive the memory of your deceased loved ones, would help enormously in your recovery. Our warmest greetings and best wishes for your good health. May you live as long as the mountains of Albania and continue with the same success your humanitarian and charitable work" concludes the letter.

It seems that Mother Teresa contemplated accepting the invitation when she was visiting Rumania to open her orders first house in Bucharest. However, she had earlier made plans to visit her sisters in Russia and Eastern Europe. Those trips could not be put aside. Nevertheless, she accepted the invitation of Albanian Bishop Nikë Prela of Prizren, Kosovë (Yugoslavia) to visit her birth place at Shkup (Skopje) and Kosovë. According to the latest issue of DRITA (The Light) Mother will lead a recitation of the rosary and speak to the faithful at the Sanctuary in Letnicë, near Prishtinë on the October 7, Feast of Our Lady of Rosary. Some sixty two years ago, Mother received her vocational call during a family pilgrimage to this sanctuary. Following her visit to Kosovë, Mother Teresa is expected to visit Albania and meet again with Mrs. Hoxha before touring the country. This second visit to

her homeland could pave the way for the opening of the first Missionaries of Charity house in the Albanian capital of Tiranë.

Reports on recent changes and unrest in Albania as well as the governments readiness to introduce some democratic reforms in the country, has set the wheels in motion towards a new era in Albanian society. Indeed, the stage is already set for change in Albania. Just as the rest of Eastern Europe has opened itself to democracy and religious freedom, it seems inevitable that Albania is also moving in a similar direction. It is only a matter of time. It is extremely important at this time to adopt and promote a concilia-



Mother Teresa and Nexhmije Hoxha. In the background an unidentified sister and a lay worker of the Missionaries of Charity, Tiranë, 1990.

(By permission of Jorgo Melica, head of the Albanian Committee for cultural and friendly relations with other countries to Mehmet Mobariki)

tory attitude in order to avoid a bloodbath such as the one which occurred in Rumania. Father Ják (Giacomo) Gardin, the Italian Jesuit missionary who was imprisoned in Albanian labor camps for ten years expressed this attitude beautifully in his memoirs entitled *Banishing God in Albania*. He stated "Most importantly, my long experience had taught me to understand, pity and forgive all in the name of Christ."

Mother Teresa, far from being a puppet in the hands of a government with its back to the wall, is a living message of peace to the world. She has recovered well from her recent illness and is at this time travelling in Eastern Europe. She is busy establishing new houses for her Missionaries of Charity. In a letter to her co-workers dated August 6, 1990, she offered some sage words of advice: "Remember- works of love are works of peace."

* * *

Something Beautiful for God

Safete S. Juka

In 1969, my sister and I met Lazer Bojaxhiu in New York. We spoke with love and admiration about his sister, Mother Teresa. He thanked us, saying "I do not hear very often such words of praise about her, for, regrettably, not too many people outside India are aware of what she has achieved."

Presently there are few people who have not heard of Mother Teresa's work. Thousands of articles and an incredible number of books have told the story of her life and apostolic works. The single volume which has contributed decisively to make Mother Teresa's work known worldwide was published in 1971 by the India-based British journalist, Malcolm Muggeridge.

Not only did this book made her work famous, but it also enabled Mother Teresa to expand her operations. Muggeridge decided that the sales proceeds should go to fund the Missionaries of Charity. The book sold well in English-speaking

countries and was translated into other several languages. The sales earnings must have been considerable.

Subsequently, numerous publications about Mother Teresa caused me to forget the Muggeridge book.

I remembered *Something Beautiful for God* in 1984 when I read *The Betrayed* (originally published in England under the title *The Betrayal*). Lord Bethell's book concerned the British-American sponsored mission to subvert and sabotage Albania's Communist government. This 1949 expedition ended tragically in 1955. Several young Albanians had been recruited to join the mission. After receiving proper training in Malta, they were parachuted into Albania to operate in the areas where they had relatives and friends. The goal of the agents was to secure local support to overthrow the Communist regime. All these Albanian agents were captured, however. The government tried them as "spies" and "traitors". Hundreds of Albanian families who had been contacted by the agents

were rounded up, tried and imprisoned. It was a tragedy for those Albanians who joined the expedition. The government was so disturbed at the attempted subversion that a decision was made to build the "infamous" bunkers. Since then, a number of foreigners have written about the bunkers and ridiculed the Albanian authorities.

In the late 1960s, a British foreign service officer, Kim Philby, was found to be a Soviet spy. For years he had supplied information to the Russians. It was evident that Philby had informed the Russians, who then passed on the information to the Albanian government, about when and where the young Albanians were to arrive. As a result, these men were either captured immediately, or closely observed by government agents until they made their contacts. Their tragic end resulted from Philby's betrayal.

Bethell pointed out that the Albanian recruits for the expedition joined for patriotic reasons. They sincerely believed what they were told, namely, that the US and England were intent on freeing their homeland from Communist rule. They remembered how the two powers had recently given valuable support to free Greece from Communism. Little did they realize that they were merely used as puppets to serve the interests of Great Britain and the US. The primary purpose of this operation was to retaliate against Stalin's "aggressive moves" and to "relieve Communist pressure in Greece." It was not intended in any way "to liberate Albania."

In connection with this failed expedition there was still another betrayal. Albeit of a different order, this betrayal concerns Malcolm Muggeridge.

Lord Bethell mentioned an Albanian National Committee "which represented those Albanians who wanted to establish a democratic government and fundamental liberty." At a party in London for the purpose of presenting the committee to some leading British writers and intellectuals, Muggeridge was among the invited guests. As reported in *The Betrayal*, Muggeridge spoiled the party by announcing "in a loud voice that Albania was 'a ridiculous country' which ought to be partitioned as soon as possible between Yugoslavia and Greece."

This remark was particularly disturbing. Muggeridge's betrayal seemed much worse than Philby's. Pat Whinney of British Intelligence, based in Athens, considered the personalities of Philby and Muggeridge to be very similar. He remarked that both men were "caustic, sarcastic, full of intellectual arrogance." Philby, however remained what he appeared to be, while Muggeridge experienced a sudden change.

Before his distinguished journalistic career, Muggeridge had lectured at the University of Cairo (1927-1930). He later served as rector of Edinburgh University (1967-1968). Late in life, Muggeridge discovered faith. His *Jesus Rediscovered*, which appeared in 1969, described how the "caustic, sarcastic, intellectually arrogant" atheist had unexpectedly become a believer after his visit to "The House of the Dying" in Calcutta, India. There he was spellbound by the atmosphere of simplicity and serenity surrounding the residents. He perceived a supernatural light which he registered with his camera. This community of moribund people, from among the "poorest of the poor" in Calcutta, was the creation of a tiny nun who was not a native Indian.

In caring for the "poorest of the poor," Mother Teresa was doing "something beautiful for God." Her work inspired faith in the soul of the unbeliever. In his turn Muggeridge did "something beautiful for God" by assisting that community of the sick and poor with the proceeds from his book sale. The title of the work haunted me for several years. I thought of Dr. Lush Gjergji's beautiful book about Mother Teresa. In it he told of Nikolla Bojaxhiu's boundless joy when the decision of the London Conference in 1913 became known. Although two-thirds of the Albanian population were left outside the national borders, there was great celebration. Like many Albanians, Nikolla Bojaxhiu lived in fear that the great Powers might heed remarks made years earlier in Berlin by Otto von Bismarck that "Albania is merely a geographic expression; there is no Albanian nation." Regardless of those fears, there was reason for Bojaxhiu to rejoice. The independent state of Albania, no matter how small or poor, meant that his language and the traditions of his ancestors would continue.

Yet nearly forty years after the state of Albania came into existence, and at a time when so many young men sacrificed their lives to rescue her, an arrogant British journalist wanted to wipe it off the map.

"To find God" means to find one's "self." The "intellectual arrogance" that characterized Muggeridge was most probably a screen to hide his real personality. Mother Teresa's great gift to him was simply to have enabled him to become aware of his "true self."

When Mother Teresa met the noted journalist, she very likely had no knowledge of the remark he had made in London years earlier. Neither is there any evidence that Muggeridge knew that Mother

Teresa's father was a martyr who had been poisoned by the Serbs in 1918. When informed that Mother Teresa was of Albanian origin, he must have remembered the remark he once made. Perhaps he felt ill at ease. Perhaps unconsciously he realized then that the nun he admired and respected belonged to the most humiliated and most unjustly treated nation in Europe. Yet this nun had chosen to serve the poorest of the poor in a foreign land.

We normally base our judgment on what we call "real facts." What is based on imagination should rightly be regarded as illusory or simplistic. What is essentially "real" sometimes escapes us, for it unfolds in a domain that remains hidden from our senses and our reason. Nevertheless, one may attribute to the title of Muggeridge's book a meaning that is more subtle and more significant.



Pope John Paul II gives the keys to the "S. Igino Papa" building to Mother Teresa. The house, which is Vatican property, will be used as a home for abandoned children.

APOSTOLIC AND EDUCATIONAL WORK OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER AMONG THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE

Vinçenc Malaj, OFM

PART I: The First Franciscans in Albania

There are no written documents which fix the exact time that the Franciscans first came to Albania. However, according to popular legend St. Francis stopped in the town of Lezha (Alessio) in 1220 during his travels from Egypt to his homeland.¹ At Lezha, he established the first community of his order.² On his departure, he took a branch of a pine tree and planted it at the *Eremo* monastery in Venice. The *Pino di San Francesco* (the "Pine of St. Francis") still thrives on the monastery site.³

The old Gothic inscription over the entrance of the Franciscan Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lezha hints that legend may be true. The Latin inscription reads: *HOC TEMPLUM MINORUM AEDIFICATUM EST ANNO MCCXV* ("This Temple of Franciscan Friars Has Been Built in the year 1240.")⁴



Servant of God Giovanni da Pian del Carpine



View of Lezha with Franciscan Monastery, 1940

It is certain, though, that the Franciscans, along with the Dominicans, were brought to Albania by the famous missionary and Servant of God Giovanni da Pian del Carpine (1182-1252)⁵ in 1248. When he was chosen as Archbishop of Tivar (Bar) da Pian del Carpine was commissioned by the Vatican to attend to the afflicted and deteriorating situation of the clergy and faithful and to resolve the jurisdictional conflict between the archdioceses of Tivar and Ragusa (Dubrovnik).⁶

At the time, all the bishoprics of northern Albania (eleven suffragans) were under the jurisdiction of the Tivar archdiocese.⁷ Benedictines were abandoning the many monasteries they had inhabited for years in the area, and the new metropolitan Archbishop del Carpine decided to replace them quickly with Dominicans and Franciscans.

The first written document indicating the Franciscan presence in these territories is a letter of Pope Alexander IV, dated February 13, 1258. In the letter Pope Alexander demanded that the bishops of Zadar (today Zadar) and Tivar

protect the Franciscan friars in Albania from the various attacks and difficulties they were facing.⁸

In a decree dated October 26, 1272, King Carlo I of Sicily ordered his military to prepare a ship *in secreto* (in secret) to transport a group of Franciscans from Apulia to Albania, in accordance with another papal assignment.⁹

Another document, dated 1283, mentions the locations of several Franciscan monasteries in Albania. Among those listed are Tivar, Ulqin, and Durrës, which belonged to the Custody of Ragusa of the Dalmatian Province.¹⁰



St. Francis of Assisi

Five years later, the Serbian King Uroš's wife Jelena and her sister Marija, the widow of Anselmo de Chau, built St. Mary's Church and Monastery in Shkodër, as well as a monastery in Ulqin for the Franciscans. Jelena also built monasteries in Kotor and Tivar, dedicated to St. Francis. She is buried in the Ulqin monastery.¹¹

The first Franciscans and their monasteries between Kotor and Durrës were under the jurisdiction of the Custody of Ragusa (*Provinciae Slavoniae*), with seats in Split and Zara, respectively.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, a good number of priests and religious of Albanian descent served the faithful of the Dalmatian towns Kotor, Ragusa, Split, Šibenik and Zara.¹² For example: in 1300 the Vicar of the Ragusa Franciscan friars was Fra Shëjefni, an Albanian;¹³ in 1385 the Provincial of the Dalmatian Franciscan Province in Zara was *sacrae theologiae magister* (sacred theology teacher)¹⁴ Fra Minor de Duracio, an Albanian; and in 1396 the guardian of the Franciscan monastery in Zara was an Albanian Friar;¹⁵ and the Provincial of the Franciscan Dalmatian province in 1440 was Fra Nikola, from Durrës.¹⁶

Among the famous Albanian Franciscans of the Order's ancient years are those who by their holy, self sacrificing and heroic lives became blessed or martyrs. They are registered in the Franciscan martyrology and are venerated even today in many parts of Albania, Dalmatia and Italy. Among them are Blessed Francis of Durrës (Oria, Apulia 1305), Blessed Filip of Durrës (Oria, 1309), Blessed Gjergj of Tivar (Trobisonda, fourteenth century), Blessed Adam of Durrës (Kotor, fourteenth century), Blessed Gjon Buka of Durrës (Trogir, 1359), Blessed ? the Albanian (Cres, 1350), Blessed Andrea the Albanian of Durrës (Bribir, 1355), Blessed Vital the Albanian (Puglia, 1460), Blessed Pjetër of Durrës (Forlì, 1477), Blessed Dhimitër the Albanian (Spoleto, 1491) Blessed martyr Nikola the Albanian (Constantinople, the fifteenth century) and others.¹⁷

The monasteries of Tivar, Ulqin, and Durrës, mentioned above, remained under the Custody of Ragusa until the beginning of the fifteenth century. On January 10, 1402, at the request of the Provincial of Zara, Pope Boniface IX re-

moved them from the Custody of Ragusa and created the new Custody of Durrës especially for them.¹⁸

During the period of the legendary hero of Albania, Gjergj Kastrioti - Skanderbeg (1444-1468), the Franciscans played a very important role in Albania's religious, diplomatic and national affairs. They were the right hand men of the Christian defenders of the land.¹⁹ Among six Papal legates we mention the famous Eugjen Suma, Papal nuncio and Apostolic Administrator for Albania, Serbia, and Bulgaria. Suma was



Seal of the Albanian Franciscan Administration preserved to this day.

authorized to establish five new Franciscan monasteries and he was given the authority of the Provincial.²⁰

The Custody of Kotor, re-established in 1464 due to the Ottoman penetration at Durrës, included Tivar, Ulqin and Lezha under its jurisdiction. In 1488, Pope Innocent VIII turned St. Mary's Benedictine monastery at Kep Redoni (Caporedoni, near Lezha, which was destroyed by the Turks) over to the Franciscan's Dalmatian Province. The monastery later became the center of the Albanian Franciscan Province from 1713 to 1727.²¹

After Skanderbeg died in 1468, and the Turks occupied all of Albania, her Franciscan monasteries were either totally destroyed or heavily damaged. The great distances between Albania and Zara, Ragusa, or Kotor made communication between Albanian Franciscans and the outside world impossible. A special administration with extraordinary powers was needed immediately. Such an administration was promptly established by the Franciscan Superior General Francis Gonzaga in 1585. The newly established Albanian Franciscan Administration possessed its own seal which is still preserved to this day. It is inscribed *Sigillum commissarii Macedoniae Ordinis Minorum Regulae Observantiae*, with AGB at the top and SB at the bottom. An image of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is printed in the center and an image of St. Blaze at the seal's bottom.²² The administration or commissariat was thirty-first in line of establishment and fell under the direct jurisdiction of the Superior General. Its five monasteries at Sebasta, Lezha, Rubig, Memli, and Kep Redoni housed over forty Franciscans.²³

In 1589, with the General Capitol in Naples' decision, confirmed later by Pope Clement VIII on March 5, 1592, the Albanian Custody became a Province.²⁴ The decision allowed for the establishment of four more monasteries at Vela, Oroshi, Qafë Krraba, and Kurbini.²⁵

In the sixteenth century, despite severe Ottoman oppression, the Albanian Franciscan Province reached its peak of development. It boasted twenty-eight monasteries and residential houses.²⁶ The inevitable decline came by the end of the century, when those numbers and the numbers of religious had begun to decrease steadily.

Archbishop Marin Bici, the Apostolic Visitor to Albania mentioned eleven monasteries and eighty religious under Albanian Franciscan provincial Fr. Gjon Koleci of Kruja in his report to the Vatican in 1610. He described them as *...soggetto di intelligenza e dottrina. E questi soli con la predicatione ed esempio vanno dove possono arrivare, provvedono ai bisogni, riparando ai*

disordini, opponendosi ai abusi e sostendendo la fede." (That is, as "...examples of intelligence and doctrine. And these [religious] alone, by their sermons and examples work hard to provide for the needs of the faithful, repairing disorders [mistakes], opposing abuses, and safeguarding the faith.")²⁷

Continued violent Ottoman Islamic proselytizing, poverty, general religious deterioration, lack of vocations and lack of communication with Rome and other European religious and cultural centers all worked together against the Franciscans. Their numbers increasingly declined. In 1625 only seven monasteries remained.²⁸

Apostolic Visitor Archbishop Vincenc Zmajević of Tivar traveled through all of northern Albania in 1702. In his report to the Vatican about the deplorable situation of the clergy and faithful, he mentioned the Albanian Franciscan observants whose number at the time had dropped to only nine members -- six priests, two brothers, and one lay cleric. Two were left at St. Mary's monastery in Lezha which had been "*diruto dal terremoto... fabricato della pietà del Gran Scanderbeg, che ne fu il fondatore;*" ("shattered by the earthquake... and rebuilt by the charity of the Great Skanderbeg, who was its founder.")²⁹ Four remained at the monastery in Sebasta, near Durrës, and three (including the fifty year old provincial, Fr. Martin Gjonima) at the monastery Kep Redonë. Zmajević remarked "*Sono molestati continuamente dagli Turchi dulcinotti, che li consumano tutto l'avere a li obligano a continuo questo...*" ("They are continually harassed by the Turks of Ulqin, who plunder them of all they have and force them to a constant run...")³⁰

With Fr. Gjonima's death in 1719, the Albanian province lost its autonomy. Until 1827 it relied on Franciscans from various provinces for its provincials, elected directly by the Superior General of the Order. Of the thirty-seven provincials designated during that time only one was an Albanian, Fr. Anton Kreyzezi from Lezha. He was chosen Bishop of Lezha in 1784.³¹ In 1819 there were only two Albanian Franciscan religious. The rest of the Franciscans

were from Bosnia and Southern Italy. Although, the friars spent twelve years without a provincial, they nevertheless diligently and faithfully served the Church, their order, and the faithful.

With the papal bull of Gregory XVI "Felicis recordationis" of October 9, 1832, the Albanian province ceased to exist. It became an *Apostolic Mission* with a prefect at its head and under the care of the Croatian Franciscans from Bosnia. Fr. Petar Pinotić was the first prefect. Until 1906 there were twelve prefects, three came from Bosnia and the rest from Italy.³²

PART II: The Franciscan Mission in Albania

It is necessary to acquaint the reader with the indispensable contribution these foreign Franciscan missionaries made to the religious and cultural patrimony of Albania. First of all, this review would be incomplete without this recognition, and secondly, the true extent of the apostolic and cultural work of the Franciscans in Albania would otherwise be slighted.

The newly created Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* -- established in 1622) responded to the lack of native priests and religious and the great need for apostolic work among the Albanian faithful by sending Italian Franciscan missionary reformers into the country. The missionaries were requested in a 1633 letter to the Congregation by Bishop Gjergj Bardi (Bianchi) of Sapa. On January 13, 1634, the following year, a group of Franciscans, lead by Fr. Bonaventura Palazzolo and Fr. Kerubino de Vallebona arrived in Albania from Venice and Ragusa.³³

Later, nine new missionaries, assisted by some members of the Third Order and by their interpreter, Gjergj Johani, settled down in the house of Don Prenka, pastor of the village of Troshani near Lezha. They soon spread out to various parishes, in Gashi, Mirdita, Pëdhana, Shën Pelegrini, Dervenci, and Gruda.³⁴



Martyrdom of Fathers Ferdinand da Albizzola and Giacomo Zampa near Shkoër, 1648

By 1636, twenty-four other groups of missionaries had come to Albania from Venice, Rome, and other parts of Italy. These priests, and brothers, among them medical nursing brothers, worked with great zeal throughout the dioceses and eventually expanded their apostolic effort throughout all of Northern Albania.

Inured to St. Francis' austere rule, the missionaries courageously faced what would otherwise have been unbearable conditions with a strength that transcended the circumstances of their environment. Patiently and diligently, they learned the language, attitudes, and customs of the Albanian people. They built missionary stations, hospices, chapels and churches in the villages of Pëdhana, Trushi, Gashi, Dervendi, Qerreti, Shoshi, Kiri, Gjakova, Bytyçi (near Prizren), Kelmendi, Hoti, and Gruda. The missionaries opened Albania's first schools at Blinishti (Zadrimë) in 1629, Pëdhana in 1638, and Shkodër in 1698, teaching reading, writing, and catechism to the children of the villages.³⁵

The way was not easy for the first seraphic missionaries in Albania. They suffered all sorts of insults, deprivations, worries, and degradations, at the hands of the Ottoman Turks, and from some segments of fanatic Albanian Mus-

lims. They heroically endured the persecutions of 1639 and 1643-44. The persecution of the Catholic Church and its clergy was especially fierce during the wars between the Ottomans and the Republic of Venice in 1646-49. The first Franciscan victims were Fr. Paolo da Veglia of Mantova and Fr. Salvatore da Offida, who were killed at the Cem River, near Tuzi (in Yugoslavia) on January 14, 1644.³⁶ In 1646, Gjergj Jubani was impaled on a pole near Tivar. He was a Third Order layman assisting the missionaries in various ways and was a right hand man to Fr. Bonaventura. On February 28, 1648, Fr.



Martyrdom of Father Antonio Matteucci da Sora, 1718

Ferdinando da Albizzola of Savona and Fr. Giacomo Zampa of Sornana, near Macerate³⁷ were martyred in the same way by the Turks of Shkodra. A year later, in 1649, another Third Order layman, Fra Gjergj Suma, like Jubani, was impaled on a pole near Tivar.³⁸ Again, in 1688, at Gruda near the town of Tuzi, the Turks decapitated Fr. Gaudioso, a priest from Cuneo. In 1693, in Podgorica (now Titograd), they knifed Fr. Antonio a San Giacomo. The persecutions continued into the next century when in 1718 the Ottoman Turks publicly hanged Fr. Antonio da Sora in Shkodër.³⁹

This savage persecution forced many missionaries to flee the country. They found refuge in the monasteries in Kotor, Perast and Prčanj which were built by Venetians specifically for Albanian missionaries.⁴⁰ When the storm of

persecution finally subsided, the nobleman Francis Bolica of Kotor, who was also the friend of the Turkish Pasha (governor) of Shkodër, assisted the missionaries in their return to Albania. They resumed their apostolate among the Albanian Catholics at the earliest opportunity, and immediately began the reconstruction of the damaged and destroyed hospices, chapels and churches. With a new zeal and vigor, they engaged in various activities as priests, teachers, counsellors and educators. Soon, new active missionaries, who were educated and trained at the well-known Roman missionary school San Pietro in Montorio, came to their aid.⁴¹

Franciscan missions gained momentum and prospered thanks to a process of reorganization into the *apostolic prefectures*. In the beginning there were only three prefectures. These increased to five⁴² and were divided as follows into:

1. *The prefecture of Epirus*, encompassing the territory of the dioceses of Durrës, Lezha and Sapa, with stations in Biza, Laçi, Lezha, Rubigu, and Troshani (Observants);

2. *The prefecture of Pulti*, in the same diocese with stations at Shala, Shoshi, Toplana, Dushmani, Plana, Kiri and Nikaj-Merturi;

3. *The prefecture of Kastrati*, in the archdiocese of Shkodër with mission stations at Kastrati, Bajza, Rapsha, Traboini, Selca, Vukli, Gruda, Triepshi, Koqa and Podgorica;

4. *The prefecture of Macedonia*, with stations at Lura, Bazja,

Bishkashi, Pëdhana, Preveza and Janina in Southern Albania;

5. *The prefecture of Serbia*, in the archdiocese of Shkup (today Skopje) with stations at Gjakovë, Pejë, and Zymb.

This organization of Franciscan missions in Albania lasted until the papal bull "Felicite quadam" was issued on January 32, 1897. With this bull, four families of the Franciscan order were united since there was no longer any need to distinguish observant and reformed missionaries. Accordingly, on November 24, 1897, the Superior General of the Order requested that the five Albanian prefectures unite in a single *missionary province*, with one superior or provincial "ad instar." However, the transition period of the reorganization lasted until July 6, 1906, when the new Albanian Missionary Province was formally constituted

Part III: The Restoration of the Province

In the period between 1897 and 1906, there were two superiors of the now united Franciscan missions. They were united by the



Newly ordained franciscan priests with their provincial father Lovro Mihačević, Shkodër, 1909.

General Definitor of the Order, Fr. Augustin Zubac, from Herzegovina, who established their seat in Shkodër (Arra e Madhe). He collected the pupils of the two Franciscan seminaries of Troshan and Kastrat in Shkodër, and opened a joint novitiate at the monastery in Rubig, establishing the Franciscan institute for philosophy and theology in Troshan.⁴³ When he was chosen provincial of the Herzegovina province in 1901, Fr. Zubac was replaced by Fr. Anastasio Vincenzoni.⁴⁴ Fr. Vincenzoni's wisdom guided the united Franciscan missions until the General Definitor's decree of May 8, 1906, which restored the ancient Albanian province. Appropriately, the well known and well beloved missionary Fr. Lovro Mihačević from Bosnia was appointed to be the first provincial of the newly re-established province.⁴⁵

At this time the province included four monasteries and thirty-five parishes scattered among various Albanian dioceses. Despite turbulent war conditions, political upheavals, and resulting national instability, the province progressed, growing larger each year. Like their predecessors, these Franciscans repeatedly demonstrated their love and dedication for the Albanian people with their unabated works of charity, reconciliation, and religious tolerance. They encouraged and instilled the sense of unity and national conscience in Albania's people that they needed to preserve their independence and territorial integrity.

With the creation of the new state of Yugoslavia by the 1918 Treaty of Versailles, several Franciscan hospices, chapels, and parishes in the archdiocese of Tivar and Shkup fell under the new state's jurisdiction. New administrators from Italy and Croatia had to be appointed for them.

The opening of several new religious institutions provided the momentum to bring about a kind of parish renewal. The Franciscan seminaries first in Troshan in 1882 and then in Shkodër in 1897, along with the Institute of Philosophy and Theology at Rubig and Troshan combined to inject new life into the Albanian

Church. The zeal and devotion of Fathers Marian da Palmanova, Gianpiero da Bergamo, Lovro Mihačević, Ivan and Bonaventura Božić accounted for the success of these developments. Financial support from Austria helped maintain the institutions so vital to the growth of the province.

Starting in 1886, many Albanian Franciscan seminarians were sent to Bosnia for further education. Among these students were Frs. Gjergj Fishta, Shtjefën Konstantin Gjeçovi, Pashko Bardhi, and Lorenz Mitroviqi. All later became leaders of their province, as provincials, teachers and administrators, writers, poets and leaders of their people. Again, after World War I, many Franciscans were sent to Austria, Italy, Belgium and France for advanced studies. Some of these individuals attained fame as preachers, educators, poets, writers and church leaders. In passing we can only mention Fathers Vinçenc Prendushi, Anton Harapi, Bernardin Palaj, Martin Gjoka, Pal Dodaj, Justin Rrota, Luigj Marlekaj, Gjon Shllaku, Paulin Margjokaj; there were but several of many others.

Between the two world wars, Franciscans also served in the parishes of eight dioceses: in Tivar, in Shkodër, in Durrës, in Lezha, in Sapa, in Pulti, in Mirdita. They worked in a total of thirty-eight parishes. Most of the parishes were located in very poor and inaccessible mountain regions of Albania. The parishes were scattered and composed of many hamlets, with some containing up to 350 different settlements. The distances between the hamlets and the parish churches were often great, taking several hours travel by foot. At that time the number of Albanian Franciscans was sixty priests, eight brothers, sixteen theology students, nine novices, and thirty seminarians. In the ranks of the Franciscans were two prelates: Archbishop Vinçenc Prendushi of Durrës and Bishop Bernardin Shllaku of Pulti.

In the various dioceses of Albania throughout the centuries over one hundred archbishops and bishops, both native Albanians and foreigners have been members of the Franciscan Order.⁴⁶

This report would be amiss were it not to mention those Croatian Franciscans of the nineteenth century whose ministries among the Albanian Catholics were distinguished by extraordinary charity, zeal, and wisdom in leadership. It is only appropriate to record the names of: **Anton Maroević** (who ministered in Kosovë between 1829 and 1856), **Petar Pinotić** (who was general delegate and first prefect of Albanian Missions from 1820 to 1841), **Pavao Kardun** (who died in Kep Redoni in 1822), **Petar Martinčević**, **Matija Radoš** (who ministered in Troshan for thirty years), **Andrija Karačić**, **Jakov Lipovac** (who ministered in Sebasta for twenty years, and died there in 1854), **Ilija Skorić**, **Filip Nikić**, **Andrija Vukičević**, **Gaudecije Barbić** (who ministered in Kosovë for eighteen years), **Franjo Brkić** (who served Kosovë for twenty-three years), **Onorat Miloš** (who also served Kosovë), **Pacifik Kaštelan** (who worked in Biza for fourteen years), **Metod Radić** (in Tivar for sixteen years), **Josip Gudelj** (who served Tivar for 15 years), and **Lovro Mihačević**, along with the two brothers **Ivan** and **Bonaventura Božić**, and then **Blažo Ikić** and **Paško Dumanić**, who were distinguished educators and administrators of the Troshan seminary from 1883 until 1906.⁴⁷

Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim families and clans throughout Albania (and other regions of the Balkans) recognized the

Franciscan as not only priest, religious, and catechist, but teacher and educator, judge, leader, defender, counsellor, and peacemaker. With love and respect he was called "*l Bekuemi*" which means "Blessed one," "*Urata*" or "Prayerful One," and "*Axho*" which means simply "Uncle."

Some Noted Franciscans

Both the native and foreign-born Franciscans were most active from the very beginning of their missionary work in the field of Albanian education and culture. They encouraged and assisted many attempts to liberate their people from the Ottoman yoke. They contributed enormously to the development and progress of Albanian language, philology, literature, folklore, archeology, and art. With their manifold activity they have left a lasting imprint on Albania's religious, cultural and national patrimony. This can be

seen in the pages of any textbook of Albanian literary and national history. It has also been noted by the many foreign visitors to Albania.⁴⁸

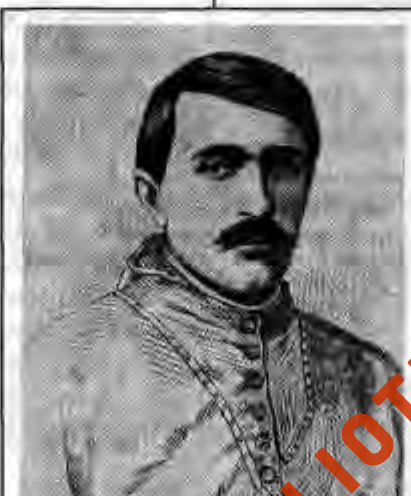
We mention here first those noted foreign-born Franciscan authors who have enriched Albania's cultural history. Some works by native Albanian Franciscans which have helped to advance the Albanian nation will follow this first list.

Fr. Leoda Cittadella, authored the *Dictionarium Epiroticum* (Albanian Dictionary) in 1671;

Fr. Bernardino Quinziano, authored *Dotrina Christiana Epirotica* (Christian Doctrine in Albanian) in 1675;



Father Leonardo de Martino da Greci, 1873



Archbishop of Shkoder, Bucciardi, (1864-1878)

Egidio Quinto d'Armento, Archbishop of Tivar (1719-1722) translated the famous text entitled *Kuvendi i Arbënit* (Albanian Council) of 1706 by Vicko Zmajević;

Fr. Francesco Maria da Lecce, wrote the *Osservazioni Grammaticali nella Lingua Albanese* (Albanian Grammar), Rome 1716;

Fr. Bonaventura Prucher, prepared the *Manuale catechistico italiano epirotico* (Manual of Catechism in Italian and Albanian), 1752;

Fr. Didaco da Desio, authored *Grammatica Albanese* (Albanian grammar) in 1772;

Fr. Antonio Francesco Santori, an Arbëresh (Italo-Albanian) poet and writer who ministered to the Arbëresh people in Calabria, wrote some twenty important literary works in Albanian and Italian;

Archbishop Dario Bucciarelli, of Shkup was a long time missionary who authored the *Grammatica della lingua Albanese* (Grammar of the Albanian language), Rome, 1862; the *Udha e Krygjës* (The Way of the Cross), Rome 1862 and *Dotrina e Krishtenë* (Christian Doctrine), Rome 1877

Fr. Tommaso Marcozzi da Rapino, was a very active missionary in Shkodër, who built monasteries and organized the Third Order groups. He translated *T'pergiaamit e Jezu Krishtit* (The Imitation of Christ) by Gersen, and published it in Rome in 1881. He also authored several devotional books, including *Moji i Majit* (May Devotions) and *Nançe* (Novenas) for clergy and faithful. They were published in Rome in 1883;

Fr. Leonardo de Martino da Greci, an Arbëresh (Italo-Albanian) was a professor at the Franciscan college in Troshan and well known poet and writer. Martino wrote a number of works. Among them were *L'arpa di un italo-albanese* (Harp of an Arbëresh) published in Venice in 1881 and a translation

of *Mundimi i Jezu Krishtit* (Passion of Jesus Christ) by Metastazi, which was published in 1875;

Fr. Francesco Rossi da Montalto Ligure served as a longtime missionary in Kosovë. He authored the 350 page manual *Regole grammaticali della lingua albanese* (Grammar rules of the Albanian language) which was published in Rome in 1866. Rossi also authored the *Vocabolario italiano-epirotico* (Italian-Albanian Dictionary) of some 2350 pages. The dictionary was published in Rome in 1866. The *Vocabolario epirotico-italiano* (Albanian-Italian Dictionary) was published in Rome in 1875;

Fr. Lovro Mihačević, director of the Franciscan college in Troshan and first provincial of the restored Albanian province (1906-1909) authored two valuable books dealing with Albanian history and customs. *Po Albaniji, dojmovi s puta* (Across Albania, Travelogue impressions) Zagreb, 1911 and *Crte iz albanske povijesti* (An outline of Albanian history), Sarajevo, 1912 are two important sources on the ancient customs and history of Albanian people;

Fr. Francesco Melchiori da Bieno, was a builder of the Franciscan church in Shkodër, organizer of the Third Order, Diviner of the Bread of St. Anthony, and the Archbishop of Durrës (1921-1928). He managed to author the manual for the Third Order members *Sullet e rregulla e të Tretit Urdhën* (Program and rules of the Third Order), that was published in Shkodër in 1895;

Fr. Fabian Barcatta, from Tirol, wrote several fascinating novels about Albanian life in German. Some of these works have been translated into Albanian and Croatian, including *Këmbona e Thyeme* (Broken Bell), *Gjak i Julun* (Spilled Blood), and *Lule* (Rose), which were published first in German (München 1924) then in Albanian (Tiranë 1930) and Croatian (Zagreb 1939).

Below we list some native Albanian franciscans who in various ways have contributed to the advancement of Albanian culture and education.

Fr. Pal Hasi, (?-1599) was one of the first native Albanian poets and writers (after Gjon Buzuku [1555] and the Arbëresh Lukë Matranga [1592]). He was born near Prizren, Kosovë. The devotional poems in his work *Dita e gjyjit* (Judgement Day) were a sort of versified catechist manual. It is memorized and recited to this day. Bishop Pjetër Budi published Hasi's poems in his book *Doktrina e krishtenë* (Christian Doctrine) in Rome, 1616.⁴⁹

The enthusiastic young graduates of the Franciscan college in Troshan were able to follow in the steps of their predecessors and teachers despite the difficulties and war conditions all around them. After completing their advanced specialized studies abroad (between 1886 and 1892) Frs. Gjergj Fishta, Shtjefën Konstantin Gjeçovi, Pashko Bardhi, and Lorenc Mitrovqi and others returned home to continue the sacred Franciscan tradition of laboring for *Faith, Fatherland and Progress* with rare enthusiasm and dedication.⁵⁰

Fr. Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940) was the greatest Albanian poet and writer of contemporary times. He reached the highest peaks of Albanian literature. He was respectfully called *poeti kombtar* (poet laureate) and *Homeri shqiptar* (Albanian Homer) both at home and abroad.⁵¹ He was born on October 23, 1871 in the small village of Fishtë near the college of Troshan. He was baptised by the Arbëresh poet Fr. Leonardo de Martino who, along with Fr. Lovro Mihačević, became his first teachers in the Troshan Seminary. Fishta became known for his keen spirituality and his deep penetrating mind. He demonstrated his brilliant ability for learning from a very early age. He was sent to Bosnia in 1886 to study philosophy and theology at Sutjeska, Livno and Kreševo. It was there that he met the emi-

nent Croatian writers and educators, Grga Martić and Ivan Kranjčević. Their shared ideas on art and national concerns made them close friends. Their friendship lasted long after Fishta's graduation and return to Albania in 1892. Fishta was ordained in 1894 and immediately began teaching in Troshan. He also ministered for some time at the parish of Gomsiqe. In 1899, Fishta, along with Bishop Prenk Doçi, the Abbot of Mirdita, founded a cultural-literary society named *Bashkimi* (Union). This society included some of the best known cultural and public professionals of Northern Albania. Fishta became the backbone of this circle. By age thirty he was an active participant in Shkodra's cultural and public life. He was appointed director of all of the Franciscan schools in the Shkodër district in 1902. His first act was to proclaim Albanian as the official language of the schools. This ended the domination of the Italian language, which had lasted for centuries.

Fr. Fishta entered the world of literature at the turn of the century with several artful poems of exceptionally strong patriotic feelings. These were published in 1900 in Faik Konica's well known journal *Albania*. Fishta's world fame followed on his publication of *Lahuta e Malcis* (Lute of the Mountains). In the epic poem, he skillfully and wittily described the struggle of the Albanian people for freedom and independence. He chronicled various events of fateful importance for Albania during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The work contained thirty poems with over 15,000 verses. The first and second parts of *Lahuta e Malcis* were printed in Zëra in 1904 and 1907. Later printings of other sections followed in 1912, 1913, 1923, 1931, and 1933. A complete edition of *Lahuta e Malcis* was finally printed in Shkodër in 1937 on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Albania's independence. The second and third complete

editions were released in Rome in 1958 and again in 1988. *Lahuta e Malcis* has been translated into Italian and German.³²

Meanwhile Fishta published many other works of poetry. These were enthusiastically received by his countrymen, irrespective of their religious and political affiliations. For the record, we list some of these titles below:

Vjersha të përshpirtisme (Devotional Poems) Shkodër, 1906;

Anzat e Parnasit (The Wasps of Parnasus) satire, Sarajevo 1907, Shkodër 1942 and Rome 1971;

Pika voeset (The Drops of Dew) Zara 1909;

Sh'Frangësku i Asizit (St. Francis of Assisi) melodrama in three acts, Shkodër 1912;

Mrizi i zanave (Muses' Resting Place) Shkodër 1913, 1924, 1931, 1941 and Rome, 1973

Jerina ose Mbretënesha e Luleve (Jerina, or the Queen of the flowers) poems, Shkodër, 1920, 1923, 1928, 1940, and in 1973 translated into Italian by L. Marlekaj in Bari (Italy);

Juda Makabë (Judas Macchabeus) melodrama, Shkodër 1918, 1920, 1923, 1928, 1942;

Gomari i Babatasit (The Ass of Babatasi) satires, Shkodër 1923, 1939 and Rome 1971;

Vallja e Parrizit (The Heavenly Dance) Shkodër, 1925, 1941 and in Rome 1971;

Shna Ndou i Padues (St. Anthony of Padua) poems, Shkodër 1927;

Sh'Luigj Gonzaga (St. Aloisius Gonzaga) melodrama, Shkodër, 1927;

Odisea, Ifigenia n'Aulli (Odisea, Ifigenia in Aulli) melodrama, Shkodër, 1931.

Although these titles of verse works captivated readers and theater goers, Fishta also wrote extensively in prose. His contributions were published by the best Albanian journals and periodicals of his time. In total, Fishta authored some 200 articles and studies in widely varied subjects.³³

Fr. Fishta's public activity also deserves special mention. He gradually grew to become a distinguished personality in Albania's public life, carrying a great deal of influence. In 1908 he took part in the Congress of Manastir (Bitola). He represented Albania's academic elite of various schools and cultural societies. Fishta was instrumental in the delegates choosing the present day Albanian alphabet. In 1913, he founded *Hylli i Dritës* (Star of Light) journal, which dealt with Albania's religious, cultural and national affairs of the past and present. Three years later he began printing the *Posta e Shqypnis* (Albanian News) periodical that published from 1916 to 1918. Fishta was selected as a member of the 1916 literary commission which was entrusted with the goal of establishing a unified Albanian literary language. In 1919 he was appointed secretary general of the Albanian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. Fishta traveled to the United States in this capacity, and visited Boston, New York, and Washington D.C. He tried to establish political and diplomatic support for his country, whose territorial integrity was in danger from its neighbours in Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy. In 1921 he was elected deputy of the Shkodër group in the Albanian parliament, and soon after that he became vice president of the same and President of the Financial Commission. Fr. Fishta represented Albania at the 1930 inter-Balkan conferences in Athens, in 1931 at Constantinople, and again in 1932 at Bucharest. From 1935 to 1938 he was the provincial of the Albanian Franciscans.

In recognition for his extensive literary and public labors, Fr. Fishta earned many honorary commendations, awards and medals.

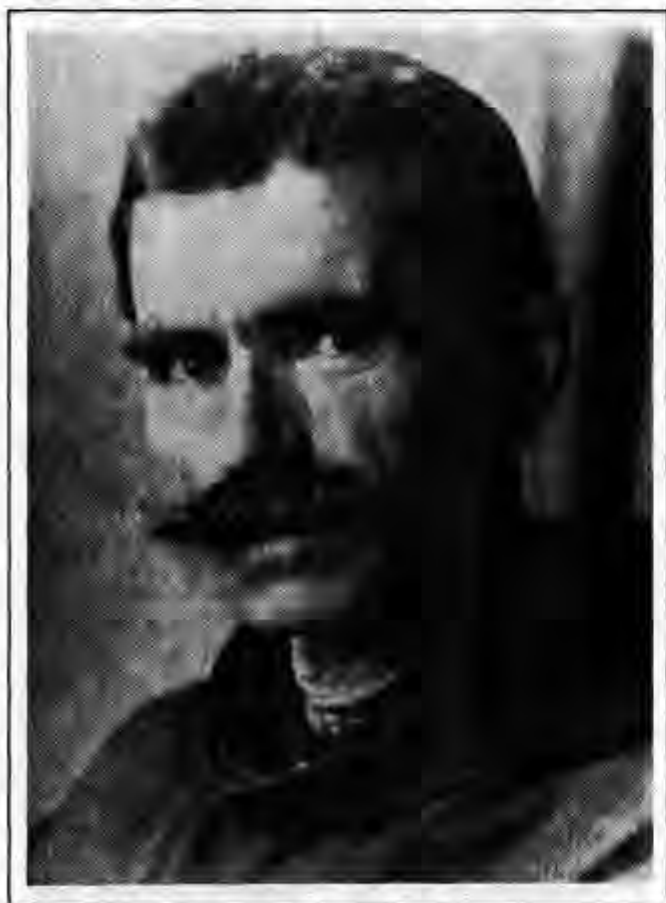
The citizens of Shkodër, where Fishta lived and worked, honored him on various occasions with solemn academies and diplomas. Citizens of the southern city of Berat honored him in 1911 with a golden pen, symbolically recognizing his literary works, and in 1911 he was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* medal of Austria and the *Mearf K1.II* medal of Turkey. Pope Pius XI decorated him in 1925 with the distinguished *Al Merito* medal. Greece honored him with the prestigious *Phoenix* medal in 1931. The Franciscan Order gave Fr. Fishta the honorific title *Lector jubilatus honoris causa*. In 1939 the Italian Academy of Arts and Sciences elected Fr. Fishta as its regular member. He died in Shkodër on December 30, 1940.

Today, Fishta and his works are completely ignored in Albania. He is referred to only with degrading terms and names. He is

called an "obscurantist," a "traitor to his people and his country," a "reactionary" and a "spy," an "enemy of culture and progress." He is regarded as a "typical representative of national betrayal..."⁵⁴ Fishta's poetry is currently characterized as "anti-national, anti-artistic, reactionary, formalistic, a mixture of anemic folklorism...."⁵⁵

Fr. Shtjefën Konstantin Gjeçovi (1873-1929) is no less meritorious to Albanian culture and science especially its history, custom law, ethnography, and archeology. He was born in the village of Janjevë, Kosovë, October 3, 1873. He entered the Franciscan Seminary in Troshan at an early age, and continued his studies in Bosnia and Zara. He taught in Shkodër and was one of the first promoters of ecumenical dialogue with the Albanian Orthodox Church. He was also the pastor of the impoverished parishes in Gomsiqe (Albania) and Zymb (today in Yugoslavia) for many years. Gjeçovi was endowed with great natural intelligence, which, combined with a highly educated and industrious mind, made him one of the leading intellectual personalities during the struggles for national independence in 1912. He was a tireless and passionate collector of the country's treasures in archeology, custom law, and history. Fr. Gjeçovi was the teacher of an illiterate populace, and also a courageous defender of the rights of his people. On October 23, 1929 he was martyred near his parish in Zymb (near Prizren), Kosovë. His blood quenched the thirst of the soil from whose viscera he was extracting the archeological treasures of his Thrako-Illyrian forefathers. At the time, Gjeçovi's archeological findings were confirming the Albanian autochthony and antiquity of Kosovë.

Fr. Gjeçovi's works covered a variety of religious, cultural, historical, and archeological subjects. His studies and articles on broad contemporary issues can be found in many of the Albanian journals and periodicals of his time. Here we list some of these publications.



Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi, OFM.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Jeta e Shën Luçisë (Life of St. Lucy) Shkodër, 1904;

Agimi i qytetnisë (The Dawn of Civilization), an essay for people about human society, religion, fatherland and language, Shkodër 1912;

Atil Reguli (Atil Regula), a drama, Shkodër 1912;

Vajza e Orleanit (The Virgin of Orlean), Shkodër 1915;

Shna Ndou i Padues (St. Anthony of Padua), Shkodër 1912;

Argëtim arkeologjik (Amusement in Archeology), Shkodër 1920;

Sebaste n'Armenit apo n'Arbënit (Sebaste in Armenia or Albania) treatise about the life and martyrdom of St. Blase, Shkodër 1920;

Trashigime Thrako-Illire (Thraco-Illyrian Legacy), Shkodër 1924,

Gjeçovi's main work was

Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit (Code of Lekë Dukagjini) - Albanian Custom Law. It was first published in *Hylli i Dritës* (between 1913 and 1924) and then again posthumously in Shkodër in 1933 and Prishtine in 1972. An Italian translation of *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit* by Pal Dodaj and Giuseppe Schirò was published in Rome in 1941 by the Italian Academy of Arts and Sciences. Gjeçovi's *Kanun* has also been recently translated into English by Leonard Fox, with an introduction written by Professor Martin Camaj of Munich.

This monumental work of Gjeçovi is classified in twelve books with about 1263 paragraphs. It presents the unwritten custom of ethico-moral laws that guided the life, economy, social system, family, religion and traditions of the Albanian people. Indeed

the work represents the condensed wisdom of the Albanian highlander. Despite numerous calamities and misfortunes which befell him, Gjeçovi was able to preserve and authenticate the artifacts of his origins. Today, when we mention *Kanun*, we inevitably think of Gjeçovi. Without his painstaking and patient labors in codifying and classifying the custom law Albanians would have lost one of their rare national treasures.³⁶

In 1936, the German University of Drezden awarded Fr. Gjeçovi a posthumous honorary PhD degree in recognition for the outstanding value of *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*.

Fr. Pashko Bardhi (1870-1948) of Shkodër, like Fr. Fishta and Fr. Gjeçovi, also studied his philosophy and theology in Bosnia. Following his ordination, Bardhi served the Franciscan order in various capacities as educator, teacher, provincial, writer, historian, folklorist, organizer of the Third Order, and editor of Franciscan publications. He wrote frequently for Konica's prestigious journal *Albania* as well as other Albanian periodicals. In 1897 Fr. Bardhi translated and published the famous Croatian poem *Razgovori Ugodni* (Pleasant Colloquies) by Andrija Kačić-Miošić. Having taught at Zara's High School, Bardhi authored *Gjuha shqype e arbëneshve në Zarë* (The Albanian Language of the Arbëresh in Zara), published in 1905. Another important book by Bardhi was *Shenjime mbi At Shtjefën Konstantin Gjeçovin* (Biographical notes on Shtjefën Konstantin Gjeçovi). It was published in Shkodër in 1933. While Fr. Bardhi was imprisoned by the communists, he died in 1948.

Archbishop Vangjel Prendushi (1885-1949) because of his holy life and goodness, was called affectionately the *Angel of Shkodër* by Albanian Christians and Muslims alike. He was a lyrical poet of exquisite taste and elegant form, and very popular among the young and the old alike. His broad cultural and intellectual knowledge showed in his work. Prendushi served as provincial from

1929 until 1935. He was chosen to be Bishop of Sapë the following year, and in 1940 he became Archbishop of Durrës. His life ended tragically in the convulsions following World War II. (An inspiring testimony of his death by Arshi Pipa, his cellmate, may be found in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*. Vol. X, 1989).

Prendushi is the author of many works. The best known of them are:

Visari komtar (The National Treasure) Sarajevo, 1911;

Nji lule miradijet mbi lter t'Shna Ndout (A Flower in Gratitude to St. Anthony) Shkodër, 1916;

Ndër lamiye të demokracisë së vërtetë (In the Fields of True Democracy) Shkodër, 1922;

Fjala e Zotit (God's Word) in ten volumes, Shkodër 1918-1934;

Java e madhe (Holy Week) Shkodër, 1925;

Sh' Françesku i Asizit (St. Francis Assisi) Shkodër, 1927;

Gjeth e lule (Leaves and Flowers) lyrics, Shkodër 1925 and 1931.

Prendushi's pure and concise language lent itself to his Albanian translations of several works by world-reknowned authors such as *Quo vadis* by Sienkiewicz, *Fabiola* by Wiesman, *Le mie prigioni* by S. Pellico and the epic *Dreizenlinden* by Weber.

Fr. Ambroz Marlaskaj (1884-1939), with his uncompromising stand on religious, cultural, and national issues (particularly poverty and its causes) earned himself the popular reputation of "a man without stain nor fear." As a member of the Albanian parliament, Marlaskaj was a strong advocate of democracy and progress. King Zog exiled him in 1925 for his ideas. In the following year, Fr.

Marlaskaj began teaching theology at the Antonianum in Rome. He authored several enlightening treatises which were published in *Hyll i Dritës*.

Fr. Marlaskaj died in Rome on June 16, 1939, longing for his people and his land. He left behind various manuscripts on moral theology which are preserved at the Antonianum Library in Rome.

Fr. Marin Sirdani (1885-1962) was an impassioned historian, teacher and pedagogue, director of the Franciscan College and Liceum in Shkodër and a prolific writer. Among his published works are:

Skanderbegu mbas gojëdhanash (Legends about Skanderbeg) Shkodër, 1926 and 1929;

Kontributi i elementit katolik Shqyphtar në lamë t'atdhetaris (Contribution of Albanian Catholicism to National Development) Shkodër, 1933;

Per historinë kombtare (For a National History) Shkodër, 1936 and 1937;

Rreth 25. vjetorit t'indipendencës (On the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Independence) Shkodër, 1938;

Të venduemit e françeskanvet nëpër vise të ndryshme të Shqypnis (The settlement of Franciscans in Various Parts of Albania) Shkodër, 1940;

Mëndoret e Provincës françeskane të Shqypnis (Monuments of the Albanian Franciscan Province) Shkodër, 1940;

Vepre atdhetare e françeskanvet në Shqypni (Franciscan National Contribution in Albania) Shkodër, 1940;

Shqypnia e Shqiptarët (Albania and the Albanians) Shkodër, 1941;

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

His productive manifold activity was cut short with his arrest in 1947. Fr. Sirdani died in 1962 in an Albanian labor camp.

Fr. Pal Dodaj (1880-1948) was the first native provincial of the restored Franciscan Albanian Province (1919-1926). Dodaj was an industrious chronicler and historian as well as a refined writer and translator. His most important works include:

Shqypnija e kohës së mesme (Medieval Albania) Shkodër, 1913;

Dorëshkrimet e At Gjeçovit (Fr. Gjeçovi's Manuscripts) Shkodër, 1936;

La provincia missionaria della SS. Annunziata in Albania (The Missionary Province of the Annunciation in Albania) Rome, 1923;

L'azione culturale dei francescani in Albania (Cultural activity of the Franciscans in Albania) Milan, 1940.

Fr. Dodaj worked together with the Arbëresh Giuseppe Schiró to translate Fr. Gjeçovi's main work *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*, which was published in 1941 by the Italian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Rome. Fr. Dodaj died in prison in 1948 at the age of 68.

Fr. Marian Prela (1887-1976) was a tireless missionary from Shkodër who devoted his life to serving the needs of the faithful. He ministered for a long time in various districts of Kosovë – Glllogjan and Zllokuqan, of Malcija (Highlands) and also Grudë, Traboin and Tuz (today in Yugoslavia). He became a famous preacher and an organizer of the Third Order as well as a builder of a number of churches, chapels and shrines. The beautiful shrine of St. Anthony in Tuz was erected during the 1920s and 1930s due largely to Prela's efforts and care, despite



Father Marian Prela, OFM.

obstacles caused by some Muslim fanatics and (Yugoslav) government authorities. It was in this shrine, in 1932, that Fr. Prela was shot in the chest during Mass. He miraculously survived. The "unknown" perpetrators were never apprehended. Following this incident Fr. Prela was expelled to Albania by the Yugoslav authorities. Back in Shkodër, he became editor of the popular monthly magazine *Zani i Shna Ndout* (The Voice of St. Anthony). Fr. Prela also authored:

Jeta e Shën Klarës (Life of St. Clair), Shkodër, 1912;

Udhëtimi i bijave të Zojës (The Way of Our Lady's Daughters) Shkodër, 1914;

Kosova ndër doke e bestytin (Customs and Superstitions in Kosovë) Shkodër, 1933. His articles on various subjects can be found in Albanian Catholic periodicals. Fr. Prela died in Tiranë on November 12, 1976.

Fr. Anton Harapi (1888-1946) was a perspicacious philosopher, and a penetrating orator and writer. Harapi held responsible posts within the Franciscan order as teacher and director of the college and lyceum in Shkodër (1923-1941), and as philosophy lecturer and provincial (1941-1943). He was also a member of the Regency during the German occupation (1943-1944). He was executed in Tiranë on February 19, 1946. Harapi accepted the government position during Nazi occupation for the sole purpose of preventing further bloodshed among his countrymen.

Fr. Harapi contributed some 100 articles and studies from the fields of philosophy and sociology to various Albanian journals and periodicals. He also authored the following volumes:

Edukata ose mirërritja e fëmijëve (Education or Good Upbringing of Children) Shkodër, 1925;

Vlera shpirtnore (Spiritual Values) Shkodër, 1936;

and the excellent psychological novel about the life and customs of the Gruda highlanders, *Andrra e Pretashit - Kontribut për kulturën shqiptare* (The Pretashi's Dream -- A Contribution to the Albanian culture). It was first published serially in *Hylli i Dritës* between 1933 and 1940, and then posthumously in Rome. The 1959 edition contains a passionate introduction by Daniel Gjeçaj, one of Fr. Harapi's former students.

Fr. Justin Rrota (1889-1964) was a spiritually profound religious, active youth educator, tireless teacher, expert linguist and meritorious scientist in the field of Albanian studies. Rrota authored many works which are still considered to be masterpieces in their field. These include:

Reth gramatologjis shqype (Albanian Grammatology) Shkodër 1923 and 1933;

Letratyra shqype (Albanian Literature) Shkodër, 1925, 1934, 1936 and 1944;



Father Anton Harapi, OFM

Analyzimi i rasavet t'emnit e zhvillimi historik i tyneve (Analysis of nouns and their historical development) Shkodër, 1931;

Sintaksi i shqypes (Albanian Syntax) Shkodër, 1932, 1942 and 1944;

Per historin e alphabetit shqyp (History of the Albanian Alphabet) Shkodër, 1936 and Prishtinë 1968;

D. Gjon Buzuku, monumenti më i vjetër i gjuhës shqype -- 1555 (D. Gjon Buzuku, the Oldest Monument of the Albanian Language - 1555) Shkodër, 1930 and 1938;

D. Lukë Matranga, shkrimtari më i vjetër i italo-shqyptarvet -- 1592 (D. Lukë Matranga, the oldest Italo-Albanian writer - 1592) Shkodër, 1931 and 1939;

Reth votrës (Around the Hearth) novels from the city life of Shkodër, 1945.

Rrota also authored many philological treatises and studies on the ancient Albanian writers in numerous Albanian journals and anthologies.³⁷



Father Martin Gjoka, OFM

Fr. Martin Gjoka (1890-1940) was originally from Tivar. He gained fame as an excellent composer and conductor. Gjoka studied in Tyrol, Austria where he distinguished himself as a naturally gifted musician at the P. Singer Musical School. After his ordination, he taught music and composition in Albania. He also became the director of the famous Shkodër orchestra, and established the Rozafat chorus in 1918, and the

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Illyricum in 1922. Among Gjoka's major compositions was the 1913 hymn to the flag, entitled *Porsi fleta e ejllit t'Zotit* (Like the wing of God's Angel). His music, along with Fr. Fishta's lyrics stirred the populace with high patriotic sentiments at a time when Albania was struggling to preserve its territorial integrity after its newly won independence in 1912. Fr. Gjoka continued to create other works with religious and patriotic themes. He won the admiration of both musicians and the common people for his inspiring artistic creations. Among his best works are:

Rapsodi mbi kangë popullore (Rhapsodies on the motives of Albanian folk songs);

Te ura e Shalës (At the Bridge of Shala) for flute and piano;

Nji vjollcë shkodrane (A Shkodra Violet);

Ps. 137 Permbi lumë të Babilonit (Psalm 137, On the Banks of the Babilonian rivers);

Pastorale for orchestra;

and *Juda Makabé* (Juddas Macchabeus) for Fr. Fishta's Melodrama by the same title, among many others.

Fr. Gjoka's main work, *Dy lule mbi vorr të Skanderbegut* (Two flowers at the Skanderbeg's grave) was performed for the first time in 1922. It was very well received, and contributed a great deal to the building of the national conscience and the patriotic spirit. He musically adapted most of Fishta's melodramatic works, which were performed in Shkodër at the turn of the century. Fr. Gjoka's writings and musical bequest are preserved today at the State Archives in Tiranë.⁵⁸

Fr. Bernardin Palaj (1894-1949) was a profound connoisseur of the Albanian language and the custom law of northern Albania. He is well known for his writings on these subjects. He was also a careful collector of folk-

lore and a good poet and writer. In cooperation with Fr. Donat Kurti, he collected a select group of the most beautiful epic songs and rhapsodies from the northern Albanian Alps under the title *Visaret e Kombit* (The National Treasures) Tiranë, 1937. Fr. Palaj is the author of several penetrating and piercing poems, such as:

Prej burgut të jetës (From Life's Prison) Shkodër, 1933;

Valët e një shpirti (The Waves of a Soul) Shkodër, 1934;

Vorreve të flamurit (To the Graves of the Flag) Shkodër, 1934;

Kuq e zi (Red and Black) Shkodër, 1937;

Ndërmjet të Shën Gjergjave (Between St. George's) Shkodër, 1938 and 1940;

Kah nata e vetme (Towards the Solitary Night) on the occasion of Fr. Fishta's death in 1940.

Fr. Palaj also wrote extensively about Albanian Custom Law, and these works include:

Doke a kanu në Dukagjin (Customs and laws in Dukagjin) Shkodër, 1942 and 1943.

Mite, besime e legjenda (Myths, Beliefs, and Legends) Shkodër, 1943;

Kanuni i maleve (The Law of the Mountains) in Albanian and Italian, Shkodër and Rome, 1944.

He authored the enlightening historical dissertation *Diozëzi i Pultit* (The Diocese of Pulti) Shkodër in 1943.

At the height of his literary activity, Fr. Palaj died from injuries due to torture in the Shkodër prison in 1949. A collection of his poems in Albanian and Italian translation were published by Angela Cirrincione in

Rome, 1968. The beautiful volume included a documentary study on the life and work of Fr. Palaj.

Bishop Antonin Fishta (1902-1978) of Shkodër was an historian, writer, poet, and a fine musician. In 1957 he was chosen Bishop of Pulti, succeeding the venerable Bishop Bernardin Shllaku. Here are some of his works:

Ma i pari frat në Shqypni (The First Franciscan in Albania) Shkodër, 1930;

Skanderbegu e françeskajt (Skanderbeg and the Franciscans) Shkodër, 1930;

Emzot Luigj Çurçija (Bishop Luigj Çurçija) Shkodër, 1931;

Dr. Milan Šufflay ndër shkrime të veta (Dr. Milan Šufflay and His Writings) Shkodër, 1931;

Njizetepesvjetori i Kongresit të Manastirit (25th Anniversary of the Manastir Congress) Shkodër, 1933;

Kuptimi shkolluer në Shqypni (The Importance of Education in Albania) Shkodër, 1933;

P. Françesk Rossi ndër shkrime të veta (P. Francesk Rossi and His Writings) Shkodër, 1937;

Tribuni i Traboinit Dedë Gjo' Luli (Dedë Gjo' Luli hero of Traboin) Shkodër, 1937.

Bishop Fishta was also the author of many essays, studies, biographies, as well as necrologies of the noted poets Filip Shiroka, Ndre Mjeda and the historian Theoder Ippen. These were published in *Hylli i Dritës* in 1935, 1936 and 1937. Among his poems, the *Fatosave të 1912-ës* (To the Heroes of 1912) is considered his best.

Bishop Fishta died in a labor camp in 1978.

Fr. Donat Kurti (1903-1969) of Shkodër was an educator, teacher, folklorist, and guardian. He authored valuable school texts, among which were two outstanding volumes on the Latin language entitled: *Gramatika latine* (Latin Grammar) Shkodër, 1933; and *Sintaksa latine* (Latin Syntax) Shkodër, 1939. Frs. Kurti and Palaj co-authored the monumental volume *Visaret e Kombit* (The National Treasures) in 1937 and *Lojë të kombtare* (The National Dances) published in 1940, 1942 and 1943. Kurti published philological and critical studies and articles in all the major Albanian journals and periodicals.

Fr. Benedikt Dema (1904-1960) was another native of Shkodër. He spent many years as director of the Franciscan printing press and editor of *Hylli i Dritës* (The Star of Light). Dema taught at the Franciscan college and lyceum. He authored over fifty treatises and studies on Albania's history, literature, ethnology and religious history. Among his best known works were:

Nji dorëshkrim i vjetit 1671 mbi Shqypni (A 1671 manuscript on Albania) Shkodër, 1930-1932;

Shqypnija katolike në vjetin 1671 (Catholic Albania in 1671) Shkodër, 1933;

Kontributi i rregulltarve për zhvillimin e kulturës së përgjithët (The Contribution of the Religious to the General Education) Shkodër, 1934;

Shtypi Françesk në Shqypni (Franciscan Press in Albania) Shkodër 1941 and 1943;

Paraqitja e gjendjes etnologjike në Ballkan (A review of the ethnological situation in the Balkans) Shkodër, 1943.

Veprimet letrare të Gjergj Fishtës (The Literary Works of Gjergj Fishta) Shkodër, 1943.

Dema also translated A. Koenig's three volume manual for secondary schools, entitled *Mesimi i besimit katolik* (Teachings of the Catholic Faith) Shkodër, 1942 and 1944; as well as *Jeta e krishtenë* (Christian Living) by P. Pescha, Shkodër, 1941.

Fr. Luigj Marlekaj (1906-) a native of Pllanë in Northern Albania, holds a PhD in philology and is a professor emeritus at the Italian State University of Bari. As a productive and fine writer and translator, his collaboration was sought by many Albanian, Italian, and German journals and periodicals. He was a regular contributor to *Hylli i Dritës*, *Leka*, *Zani i Shna Ndout*, *Osservatore Romano*, and the journal *Shejzat* (Le Pleiadi). Marlekaj is also the author of a number of books, essays, and studies on Albania's history, culture and religion. Some of these titles include:

Problemi i letratyrës kombtare (The Question of a National Literature) Shkodër, 1932;

Shkrimtarët e sotëm (Modern Writers) Shkodër, 1933;

Natyra në poezi e muzikë (The Nature in Poetry and Music) Shkodër, 1933;

Gjornalizmi mjet edukativ (Journalism as a medium in education) Shkodër, 1934;

Bijat e Maris (Mary's Daughters) Shkodër, 1939;

Pesdhjetëvjetori i Zojës Rruzare (Fiftieth Anniversary of Our Lady of the Rosary in Shkodër) Shkodër, 1939;

L'anima dell'Albania nel canto di Giorgio Fishta (The Albanian Soul in the Songs of Gjergj Fishta) Bologna, 1941;

Aspetti di ospitalità indoeuropea presso gli Albanesi (Notions of Indoeuropean Hospitality among the Albanians) Rome, 1951;

La piu antica pubblicazione in lingua albanese (The most ancient publication in the Albanian language) Bologna, 1959;

Rassegna di toponomastica albanese (A topographical review of Albania) Rome, 1960;

Giuseppe Schiró e le tradizioni popolari albanesi (Giuseppe Schiró and the Albanian popular traditions) Bari, 1966;

Skanderbeg nelle Tradizioni popolari albanesi (Skanderbeg in the Albanian popular tradition) Bari, 1969;

Vita di Scanderbeg di un storico cinquecentista italiano (Life of Scanderbeg by an Italian historian of cinquecento) Rome, 1973;



Father Gjon Mollaku, OFM.

Poezija e popullit e poezija e Fishtës (The People's Poetry and Fishta's Poetry) Rome, 1961;

Gjuhësija shqiptare ne dhetë vjetët e fundit (Albanian Linguistics During the Past Ten Years) Bari, 1968;

and others. Marlekaj also translated Gjergj Fishta's melodramatic poem *Jerina, or the Queen of the Flowers* into Italian. It was published in Bari, Italy, 1973.

Fr. Marlekaj's master work is, without doubt, *Pietro Bogdani e l'Albania del suo tempo* (Pjetër Bogdani and the Albania of His Time) Bari, 1989. (See the review of this book on page 167)

Fr. Leon Kabashi (1906-) was for many years a zealous educator of seminarians and college students at the Antonianum of Shkodër. Kabashi contributed numerous papers, especially on art (his specialty) to *Hylli i Dritës* and *Zani i Shna Ndout*. As an academic artist, he decorated and restored several Catholic churches and chapels in Albania.

Gjon Shllaku (1907-1946) recieved a PhD in philosophy from the Louvain and taught at the Franciscan college in Shkodër. As an apt pedagogue he directed the Franciscan Association SHOQNIJA ANTONIANE and other student sodality groups. At the time of the Italian fascist attack on Albania in 1939, Fr. Shllaku was the editor of *Hylli i Dritës*. In an editorial titled "ASHT TOKA E JONË" (It is Our Land) he sharply denounced the occupation of his country.

Fr. Shllaku is particularly remembered as a defender of Christian values. Through a series of discerning lectures, he exposed the regimented trend of Communist-Marxist propaganda as a mortal danger to Albania's national and Christian tradition.

Fr. Shllaku is also the author of a number of enlightening essays and polemic and critical essays such as:

Filozofija e ditunitë (Philosophy and the Sciences) 1934;

Zija ne Rusi (Hunger in Russia) 1934;

A po Kuptohemi (Are we being Understood?) 1938;

Problemi i njohjes (The Problem of Notion) 1938;

Breznis së re (to the New Generation) 1938;

Dokumenta Historije Kombtare (Some Documents of the National History) 1940;

Shqyptari, Frati, Shqypnija (The Albanian, the Franciscan, Albania) 1941;

Rreth çashtjes së alfabetit te Manastirit (On the Question of the Manastir Alphabet) 1943;

Katolicizmi në Shqypni e animiqët e tij para gjykatores së historis - pergjegje N. Ivanaj (Catholicism in Albania and its Enemies Before the Court of History -- a reply to N. Ivanaj) 1944;

and others.

Fr. Gjon Shllaku suffered a violent death in 1946 at the hands of Communist persecutors. (An inspiring profile of him, written by his confrere Daniel Gjeçaj, may be found in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* Vol. VI & VII 1966-67.)

Fr. Paulin Margjokaj (1908-1975) earned a PhD in history from the University of Graz in Austria. He had a long and successful teaching career in Albania and Austria. Margjokaj also wrote extensively for Albanian and Austrian publications. Among his better known works are:

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)



Father Daniel Gječaj, OFM.

Epizode historike nga koha e Ali (Pashë) Tepelenës (Historical Episodes of Ali [Pasha] Tepelene's Time) Rome, 1958

Levizja e madhe për çlirimin kombtar (The Great Movement for National Liberation) Rome, 1969-1970.

The many writings that Fr. Margjokaj left in manuscript form are preserved at the Franciscan archives in Vienna and Graz.

Fr. Viktor Volaj (1910-), in addition to his duties as a teacher of literature and a collaborator of journals, was the editor and publisher of Fr. Fishta's works *Mrizi i zanavet* and *Vallja e Parrizit*, Shkodër, 1941. Fr. Volaj is known for his contemporary approach to his writings.

Fr. Daniel Gječaj (1913-) is a native highlander of Dukagjini in the Northern Albanian Alps. He distinguished himself as a teacher and educator



Father Filip Mazrreku, OFM. Composer and Music Educator. Died in 1984 in a Labor Camp

at the Franciscan seminary and college in Shkodër. He also wrote in Latin, and translated from Italian to Latin. After World War II, the communist authorities singled him out as an enemy of their new order. To avoid arrest, Fr. Gječaj took to the mountains and spent years in Yugoslavian refugee camps until he was allowed to go to Rome. He is the author of several studies and essays published in Ernest Koliqi's diaspora journal *Shejzat* (Le Pleiadi), such as:

Proza Fishtjane (Fishta's Prose) 1961;

Hije e drita në male të Dukagjinit (Shadows and Lights in the Dukagjini Mountains) 1961,

and others.

Fr. Gjeçaj prepared and published the second (1955) and third (1988) editions of Fishta's main work *Lahuta e Malcis* (Lute of the Mountains) with his own introduction, interpretation and comments. He also published Anton Harapi's novel *Andrra e Pretashit* (Pretash's Dream) in Rome, 1959. Lastly, Fr. Gjeçaj translated the liturgical books *Meshari i të kremteve* (The Holy Days Missal) Rome, 1966; and *Rendori i meshës* (The Daily Missal), Vicenza, 1973, into Albanian.

In recognition for his untiring efforts to keep the Catholic faith alive in the hearts of many Albanian refugees, the Vatican appointed Fr. Gjeçaj to the post of spiritual director of Albanian exiles in 1976. He is stationed in Rome but makes frequent visits to the Albanian Catholics scattered around the world.

Here we should add the names of many other members of the Albanian Franciscan Province who, with their preaching, counsel, pen and example as pastors, superiors, educators, teachers, esteemed patriots, and writers gave their precious contribution to promoting Catholic tradition and national consciousness, cultural and general knowledge, and the other virtues that have distinguished Albanians for centuries from other Balcan nationalities. We can mention the following only in passing: **Qiril Cani, Frano Kiri, Rrok Gurashi, Mark Papaj, Gegë Lumaj, Rrok Vataj, Augustin Ashiku, Ferdinand Palaj,**

Mëhill Miraj, Filip Mazrreku, Konstantin Pistulli, Aleks Baqli, Robert Ashta, Konrad Gjollaj, Cyprian Nika, Mati Prendushi, Bernard Lupi, Karl Serreqi, Leonard Tagaj, Gaspër Suma, and Ejëll Vjerdha.

Many of these aforementioned brethren have recieved the heavenly reward and the balm of martyrdom. Others still suffer in prisons and camps with a considerable number of the faithful who patiently await the cleansing and freeing of the soul from the mortal body. Truly we can say that they don't live and suffer alone. In them the Lord Jesus Himself lives and suffers.

PART IV Franciscan Works And Institutions

In Shkodër, the Albanian Franciscan Province was in the very hearth of cultural and religious life of the Albanian Catholics.³⁹ Shkodër housed two monasteries, a seminary school, a school of philosophy and theology, and a series of other offices and institutions.

The monastery Gjuhadol, located in the center of the city included the Provincaill office, the clergy residence, the ground breaking scientific library established by Fr. Gjergj Fishta, the archeological museum and the art and picture galleries established by Fr. Shtjefën Gjeçovi. The monastery was built in 1861 and was continually enlarged. Next to the Gjuhadol monastery were a five-year Grammar school, established in



Diamond jubilee celebration of Father Joakim Serreqi, Shkodër, 1934

1861, in which 500 students were enrolled, the classical lyceum *Illyricum* with its 300 Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox students; and the printing press, established in 1915, which produced three monthly journals and some twenty books a year. Near to the monastery the offices of the Third Order (6000 in strength) were located, St. Anthony Youth Society (*Shoqnia Antoniane*), along with the drama theater, movie hall, and the famous men's choir *Antonianum*. In the same complex the charity organization called "The Bread of St. Anthony" served the needy with a soup kitchen.

The other monastery, *Arra e Madhe*, established in 1887, was located in the eastern section of the city. Next to its sanctuary of Our Lady of the Rosary was a rest home for missionaries and the elderly, along with the center of the nationwide society of Our Lady of the Rosary.

The lovely seminary building was located near the center of the city, and it housed some thirty Franciscan seminarians who attended the lyceum. Many of its seminarians came from the Albanian regions of

Kosova and Montenegro which had fallen under Yugoslavia's jurisdiction after World War I.

In addition to its Shkodër institutions, the Franciscans established and maintained twenty-seven grammar schools throughout Northern Albania. The schools were subsidized by the Albanian government until April 24, 1933, when King Zog's administration closed all the private schools.



View of Shkodër with St. Anthony's Franciscan Church (center), 1927



Inside view of St. Anthony's Church at Christmas, 1927

Franciscan priests and religious staffed thirty-eight parishes scattered in Albania's six dioceses, ministering to over 50,000 faithful.

Franciscans instigated and promoted various religious devotions during the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. Besides the Third Order, to which the majority of diocesan priests belonged, Franciscans disseminated the daily devotions to the Blessed Sacrament, the Forty Hours Adoration, the Holy Ro-

sary, May Devotions, the Stations of the Cross, series of Lenten Talks, St. Anthony's Tuesdays, Novenas in honor of saints, and other devotions. For this purpose they printed a good number of missals and prayer books for individual and congregational use. All of the devotions, especially the Forty Hours Adoration and the May Devotions were combined with lectures and sermons as well as the inspiring multivocal singing by the Antonianum choirs. Franciscan churches were filled to overflowing during these services. The most honored saints in Albania are the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, St. Joseph, St. George, St. Andrew, St. Nicholas, St. Blaze and St. Anthony. A number of churches are dedicated to each of them.

We should also mention here, though in passing, the tireless work of the Franciscan sisters of the Holy Stigmata -- the Stigmatines⁶⁰. They were brought to Shkodër in 1879 by the Franciscan missionaries and put in charge of women's education. Throughout the years, the sisters established many schools, orphanages, kindergartens, associations, laboratories, orchestras, choirs, art and sewing schools, and other religious, beneficial, and educational institutions. The Franciscan Stigmatine Province in Albania grew rapidly and before the outbreak of World War II, it numbered some 80 members, the majority of which were native Albanians.⁶¹

The Pastoral Activity of the Franciscan Friars and Franciscan Sisters Among Albanians in Montenegro and Kosova

As mentioned above, Franciscan missionaries came among the Albanian tribes of Hoti, Gruda, Triepshi and Kojë as early as 1640.⁶² The territory these tribes inhabited is known as the Malësija. It was under the ecclesial jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Tivar starting in 1878, but it was the Franciscan Province that served the faithful of this region. Until the 1930s, foreign missionaries and native Albanian friars worked together to catechise and provide pastoral care for all the parishes of the Archdiocese,

including: Tivar, Zubci, Cetinë, Shestan, Livar, Ulqin, Salç, Shën Kollë mbi Buenë, Shën Gjergj, Podgoricë (now called Titograd), Nikshiq, Kojë, Triepsh, Grudë, Tuz, Vuksanaj and Traboin. Franciscans were the pastors of nine of these parishes.

During the later part of the 1800s, under the leadership and guidance of the Franciscan Archbishop Shimun Milinovich of Tivar (1886-1910), missionary activity flourished in all of these parishes. Everywhere churches, hospices, chapels and rectories with schools were built or restored. A true renewal of faith caused vocations to the priesthood to increase and strengthened the religious commitment of the Albanian faithful. The Albanian Franciscans gained sixteen dedicated members from the region, and the holy lives and works of these men are reverently remembered to this day.

Following World War I, the Franciscan Albanian province instituted the office of a Delegate to oversee the works of its members under the jurisdiction of the newly created state of Yugoslavia. The last Franciscan delegate after World War II was Ejëll Vjerdha (1886-1952), a well loved zealous country missionary and tireless pastoral worker whose reconciliatory advice was sought by the Albanian mountaineers for their tribal disputes. Fr. Vjerdha was particularly dedicated to the assistance of youths who sought to pursue the priestly vocation. Many Franciscans and diocesan priests credit him for their vocations. One of Fr. Vjerdha's pupils and proteges is Petër Perkoliq, the present Archbishop of Tivar.

In 1966, the office of the Delegate was upgraded to a formal Mission under the name *Missio B.M. Virginis in Montanis* (Mission of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Mountains). The seat of the Mission is located in the Albanian town of Tuz in Montenegro, and is under the South-Croatian and Istrian Province of St. Jerome. The Mission is composed of six Franciscan priests, two theology students and two seminarians.

There were also Franciscans at work in the region of Kosovë as early as the Seventeenth century. Their pastoral and cultural work among the Albanians in this territory was especially fruitful during the Nineteenth century. Their activity was centered in the following parishes: Pejë, Zllokuqan, Glogjan, Zymb, Prizren, Janjevë, Letnicë, Ferizaj and Gjakovë. Through their holy and sacrificial lives, some Franciscans became respected church leaders. As archbishops and bishops of this archdiocese they left a lasting imprint among the Christian communities of Kosovë. Their successes in strengthening the faith by educating the clergy and the faithful earned them lasting appreciation and love. Among the most known were Daniel Duranti (1649-1713), Dario Bucciarelli (1864-1878) and Fulgencije Carev (1879-1886). Bucciarelli built the Cathedral of Prizren, and Carev strengthened and enlarged the Church in Kosovë. He openly supported Albanian insurgents against the Turkish occupiers.

Thirteen Franciscans came from the Catholic community of Kosovë following World War I. A few of them excelled in the field of education, but all were dedicated missionaries of the Church and their Albanian people. They refused to compromise in matters of faith or in the cause of their people. The authorities who replaced the Ottoman occupiers at the turn of the century despised the Franciscans for being the unwelcome beacons of the Catholic faith and the nation. It was not long before some of these Franciscans were paying for their faith and patriotism with their own blood. Fr. Alojz Paliq was killed near Gjakovë in 1913 by Serbian troops, Shtejfën Gjeçov Kryeziu was killed in Zymb in 1929 by the Yugoslav police and Fr. Lorenz Mitrovici-Mazrreku was killed near Pejë in 1943 by Yugoslav communist partisans.

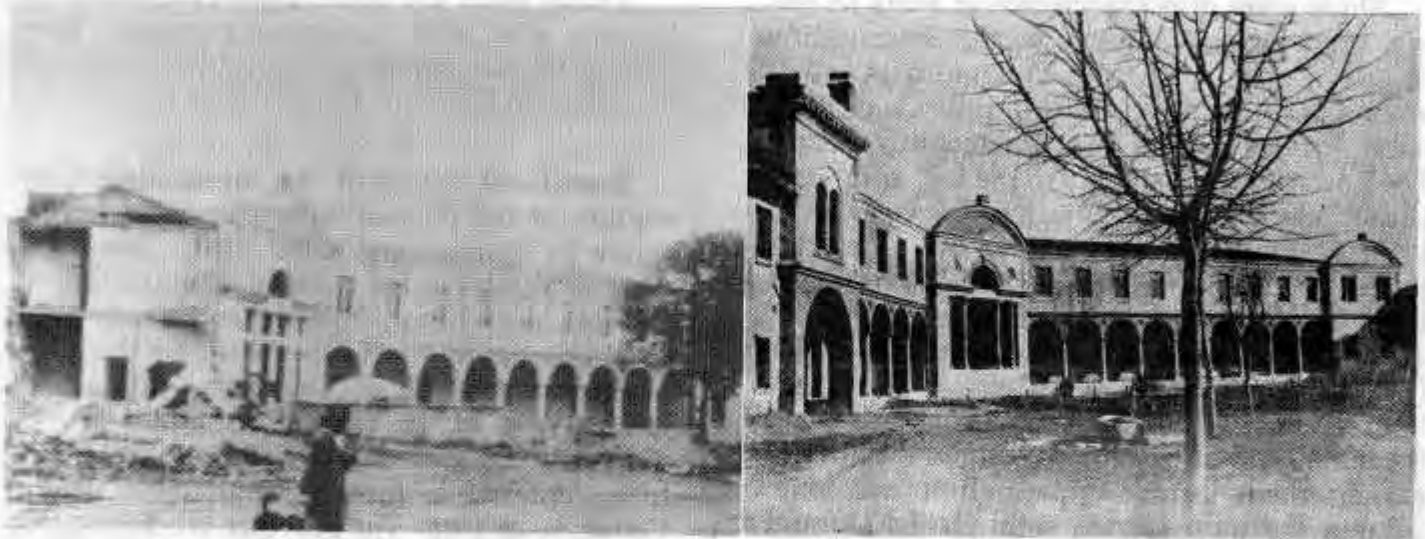
Today there are some eight Franciscans in Kosovë, who work in various parishes. They administer one parish and direct St. Anthony's Sanctuary in Pejë.

Franciscan sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin have been very active in Montenegro since 1946. They also work as nurses in the state hospitals of Cetinë, Dobrota near Kotor, Nikshiq and Tivar. The sisters govern and serve the Home for the Aged in Petrovac near Tivar. They also work in various parishes of the Tivar, Shkup, and Prizren dioceses. The sisters have had their own province, centered in former Montenegro capital Cetinë, since 1965. The province is composed of over one hundred members and some two dozen novices and candidates. The senior sisters are Slovenian by origin, while the younger sisters are all Albanian from Kosovë and Montenegro.

Some seventy more Franciscan sisters from the Congregation of the Holy Cross work among the Albanians of Kosovë and Montenegro. These sisters attend to the hospitals, homes for the elderly and parishes as nurses, administrators and catechists.



A group of Albanian Franciscan theology students, Shkodër, 1944



Franciscan Monastery in Gjuhadol, Shkodër, (right), 1944 and (left), 1990.

Photo (left) kindness of Melhem Mobarak



Delegates to Albanian Franciscan Province meeting in 1942 at Shkodra. Sitting, Left to right: Frs. Pal Murçija, Nikollë Bajçi, Anton Harapi, Cyril Cani, Serafin Koda. Standing, left to right: Bernard Serreqi, Leonard Shajakaj, Marian Kiri, Klement Miraj, Zef Gici, Zef Lumaj, Simon Mikeli, Anton Kiri, Second row: Egjid Gilaj, Silvester Hila, Engjëll Vjerdha, Antonin Fishta, Franc Kiri, David Pena, Antonis Çuni, Karl Serreqi, Konstantin Pistulli. Third row: Dhyonis Makaj, Rrok Gurashi, Gaspër Suma, Rrok Vataj, Leonard Tagaj, Sedat Deda, David Pici. Most of them were later to die by execution, torture or in the labor camps

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

These Franciscan sisters, with the sisters of other congregations active among the Albanians in Kosovë and Montenegro, are well loved and appreciated by the populace – Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic alike. Even the state media has written of their tireless and indiscriminate efforts to comfort and heal the suffering. Some sisters have been awarded citations and medals by the state authorities for their unselfish work and care among the sick and poor.

The Suppression of the Albanian Franciscan Province

Soon after the Communist partisans took power in Albania at the end of 1944 they began a vicious campaign of harassment and coercion against the Catholic Church. The Franciscans were not spared. Squads of the new regime's security forces investigated convents, monasteries, Catholic schools, churches and their rectories for any incriminating evidence. Their repeated searches did not produce the expected outcomes. The authorities nevertheless mounted a campaign of accusations and intimidation; they labelled the Church and her clergy "perfidious conspirators against the people's power."⁶²

The Church maintained calm despite these oppressive actions, and continued her ministry to the faithful. The Communist authorities were particularly eager to shut down Catholic schools and end all Catholic education. However to do this they needed an excuse which would make their action look legal. The opportunity came when some members of the national *Bashkimi Shqiptar* (Albanian Union) organization were arrested for allegedly plotting against the government. Without the knowledge or permission of their superiors, some diocesan seminarians and students of the Jesuit and Franciscan colleges of Shkodër were involved in duplicating and distributing pamphlets that were critical of the

Communists. They were arrested immediately and the authorities accused the Jesuit and Franciscan orders of high treason. Soon, Jesuits Fr. Gjon Fausti, Vice-Provincial, and Fr. Daniel Dajani, rector, were arrested along with Franciscan Fr. Gjon Shllaku. They were accused of being accomplices, and following a monstrous and fraudulent trial were executed by firing squad on March 4, 1946. Exactly one month later, on April 4, 1946, Jesuit and Franciscan schools and colleges were closed, including the Pontifical Seminary. The Jesuits and their seminarians were disbanded. The seminarians and novices of the Franciscan monasteries were spared for a short period, but were placed under constant military guard.

The Albanian Communist authorities were well aware of the fact that all the Franciscans were Albanian natives and were highly regarded by the people as patriots, teachers and religious leaders. They were immaculately clean of any political involvement. In order to create a pretext to destroy their good name, the Communists smuggled arms and ammunition into the Franciscan church and monastery of Gjuhadol by night. Security police then "discovered" the cache of arms that they themselves had planted in the Franciscan headquarters. The event was widely publicized and even filmed and shown at cinemas throughout the country as a "sensationalist" news event from the "Catholic citadel" of Shkodër. As a result, Franciscans were accused of anti-government activity and tossed out of their monasteries. Many were arrested and some were even executed after being brutally tortured.⁶³ The order was outlawed. The Franciscans, mostly elderly, were left alone to join the depleted diocesan clergy in serving the Church and her faithful the best they could under such extremely difficult circumstances. Finally, in 1967, religion was banned altogether and the government proclaimed Albania the "first atheist country in the world."⁶⁴

Conclusion

This study was by no means a full report, but was rather an attempt to chronicle some of the apostolic and educational work of the

Franciscan order among the Albanian people. The record clearly shows that the Franciscans remained faithful to the teachings of their Holy Founder Francis of Assisi and strongly attached to their courageous Albanian people. Along with other religious orders of men and women, the Franciscans labored tirelessly for some seven centuries not only to preserve the Catholic faith, but also to safeguard and promote the Albanian language, culture and national identity as well. For this the Albanian people are forever grateful to the sons of Assisi."

End Notes

1. GURAKUQI, KARL: "Frangeskajti në Shqipëri", *Diturija*, Tiranë 1928, vol. 3, pp. 88-95;
2. FABIANICH, DONATO: "Schizzo storico sulla opera dei francescani in Albania", *Scutari* 1930, 2; "Schematismus Almae Provinciae Missionariae Albaniae", Sarajevo 1908, 25;
3. D'ACQUAVIVA, BONAVENTURA: "Memorie circa la missione francescana in Albania", *Cronaca delle Missioni francescane*, Rome 1861, 1/6, 378-79; SIRDANI, MARIN: "Të venduemit e frangeskajvet nëpër viset e ndryshme të Shqipërisë 1240-1940", *Hylli i Dritës* (H.D.)XVI, Shkodër 1940, 1, 65-67;
4. Concerning the legend of St. Francis' stay in Lezha and the inscription over the church door see *Archivum OFM*, Roma, Albania, Volume XII/2, 421, 434-437, Volume XII/3, 67, Volume 2, 31v, Volume 5, 517. The church of the Annunciation of the B.V. Mary and the monastery in Lezha were destroyed by fire during the retreat of the Austro-Hungarian army in 1918. The franciscan pastor Fr. Severin Lushaj, reported «a sera di 25 ottobre mentre le truppe austro-ungheresi sgombrarono questo piccolo storico paesetto d'Alessio incendiarono l'ospizio e l'antica e monumentale chiesa dedicata alla B.V. Nunziata, la quale fu fondata da nostro Patriarca S. Francesco d' Assisi. Le fiamme causate dall'inimico consumarono tutti gli oggetti preziosi e tante cose antiche che arricchivano la chiesa, l'unica perla che c'era rinomata per la sua antichità...» (On the evening of October 25, the austro-hungarian troops scattered through this small historic village of Lezha and burned the hospice and the old and monumental church dedicated to the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary which was founded by our Patriarch St. Francis of Assisi. Flames caused by the enemy consumed all the precious objects and many other pieces of antiquity which adorned the church, the only pearl which was so renowned for its antiquity.) - *Archivum OFM*, Roma, Albania, Volume 10, 218-218v;
5. OREB, MARIN: "Ivan Karpin «Provijest Mongola, koje nazivamo i Tartarima», *Starine JAZU* (Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences), Zagreb 1975, knj.56, 37-107;
6. STANOJEVIC, STANJE: "Borba za samostalnost katoličke crkve u nemanjičkoj državi, SAN (Serbian Academy of Sciences), Belgrade 1912, 94ss
7. According to DANIELE FARLATI, *Illyrici Sacri*, t.VII, Venetiis 1817 suffragans of the Archdiocese of Tivar were: Ulqini, Shkodra, Shasi, Shurdhahi, Fshati, Deja, Bardheci, Drishti, Pulti, Prizrendi and Arbëni; suffragans of the Durrës Archdiocese were: Lezha, Shën Shtjefni, Kryte, Kunaiva, Vrega and Vlora;
8. THALLOČZY, LUDOVICUS, JIRECEK, CONSTANTINUS, SUFFLAY, EMILIANUS: *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia* (ADA) I, Vindobonae 1913, br. 244, 70-71;
9. RICCIO, MINIERI: "Il regno di Carlo I di Angio negli anni 1271 e 1272", Napoli 1875, 96s;
10. HISTORIJSKI ARHIV u Dubrovniku, *Diversa cancelariae* 1282-1284; SMICIKLAS, TADEJ: "Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae", Zagreb 1908, VI, 508; ADA I, nr. 479, 144;
11. FARLATI, DANIELE: *Illyrici Sacri* VIII, 59; ADA I, nr. 509, 151;
12. SUFFLAY, MILAN: "Das mittelalterliche Albanien", *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen*, I, München 1916, 266-267; M. SUFFLAY, "Srbi i Arbanasi", Beograd 1925, 104-105; SINDIK, ILIJA: "O naseljima i migracijama u Dubrovniku i okolici", *Glasnik geografskog društva*, IX, Beograd 1923, 49s; Të venduemit, 78-79
13. ADA I, nr. 658, 198-199 note 3; Farlati, *Illyrici Sacri*, VI, 329 and 369; SMICIKLAS, *Codex diplomaticus*, VII, 581;
14. SIRDANI, Të venduemit, 79; BRLEK, MIJO: "Tri dubrovačka kodeksa iz dubrovačke prošlosti", *Analitički historijski institut u Dubrovniku*, Dubrovnik 1954, 135-136;
15. Schizzo storico, 3;
16. Historijski arhiv u Dubrovniku, "Lettere e commissioni di Levante", XII (1435-1440) f. 190r; MISCELLANEA FRANCESCA, XIV, 1912-1913, nr., 44, 123;
17. DA VENEZIA, SIGISMONDO: *Biografia serafica*, Venezia 1846 passim; *Martyrologium Franciscanum*, Romae 1938 passim; MARIN OREB, "Zasluzni članovi hrvatske provincije Sv. Jeronima Franjevača Konventualaca od njezina postanka do naših dana", Split 1973 passim; "Alcuni Beati Albanesi o che honoraron la Albania appartenenti all Ordine Franciscano", *Le Missioni Francescane in Palestina*, Roma 1893, III/X, 611-612;
18. ARCHIVIO SEGRETO VATICANO (Vatican Secret Archives) (ASV), Reg. Vat. Ser. Lat. 1109, 157; Bonifacius IX, 13 dec. 1402 Nicolao de Jadera ministro provincie Dalmatiae O.M. Concedit facultatem eligendi in ea novum custodiam Albaniae; Eubel, Conrado: *Bullarium Franciscanum*, Romae 1904, VII, nr. 442, 159; ADA II, nr. 712, 215;

19. FISHTA, ANTONIN: "Skanderbegu e Françeskajt", H.D. 1930, 366-376; PANDZIC, BAZILJE: "I francescani a servizio dell'Albania nell'epoca di Scanderbeg", V. *Convegno internazionale di studi albanesi*, Palermo 1969, 177-202;
20. ASV, Reg. suppl. n. 453, f. 267r; Reg. Val. t. 418, f. 60v; HÜNTERMANN, URLICUS: *Bullarium franciscanum*, Ad Claras Aquas, 1929, t. I, n. 1508, 756-758; PANDZIC, I francescani, 186-187, 196-197, 200-201;
21. THEINER, AUGUSTIN: *Vetera monumenta Slavorum meridionalium*, Romae 1863, t. I, 705, 524; PANDZIC, *Historia missionum O.F.M.*, Romae 1974, t. IV, 93;
22. GONZAGA, FRANCISCUS: *De origine Seraphicae Religionis*, Romae 1587, t. I, 53;
23. GONZAGA, De origine, t. II, Custodia Albaniae 547-548; PANDZIC, *Historia missionum*, 94;
24. ASV, Secretaria brevium, L. 189, f. 368rv; *Chronologia historico-legalis Seraphici Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, Neapoli 1650, l. 360; *Annales Minorum* a. 1590 n. 12 (XXII, 313); PANDZIC, *Historia miss.* 94;
25. SIRDANI, Të venduemit, 80-81; SIRDANI, MARIN: "Mëndoret e Provincës françeskane të Shqypnis", H.D. 1940, 3-4, 171-173;
26. DODAJ, PAL: "La provincia missionaria della ss. Annunziata in Albania", *Le Missioni Francescane*, Roma 1923, 1/9, 265;
27. BIBLIOTECA VATICANA, Cod. Barb. Lat. 5334 "Relazione della visita fatta da me Marino Bizzi, Arcivescovo d'Antivari, nelle parti della Turchia, Antivari et Serbia, f. 61; RACKI, FRANJO: "Relazione", *Starine* (JAZU), Zagreb 1888, knj. XX, 139; ZAMPUTI, INJAC: "Relaçione mbi gjendjen e Shqipërisë veriore e të mesme në sh. XVII", Tiranë 1963, Vol. 1, 204;
28. ARCHIVUM PROPAGANDA FIDE (APF) 1625, Vol. 262, Relazione di Giovanni Colesio, f. 65; ZAMPUTI, Relaçione I, 364;
29. APF, Scritture riferite, Albania Vol. IV Relazione dello stato d'Albania e Servia visitata da Vincenzo Zmajevich, Arcivescovo d'Antivari nell'anno 1702, f. 133;
30. Ibid 164-165;
31. Schematismus prov. Albaniae, Series ministrorum, 19-20;
32. Ibid 20; PANDZIC, *Historia miss.* 97-98; Archivum OFM, Vol. XII/2, 557;
33. APF Scritture rif. nei congressi gen. Vol. 263, f. 12-18; *Annales Minorum* a. 1634, n. 29 (XXVIII, 167ss); DI VENEZIA, PIETRO ANTONIO: *Historia Seraphica overo Cronica della Provincia di S. Antonio detta anche di Venezia*, de Min. Oss. Riformati, Venezia 1688, 315-391, 395-417, 469-481; FERMENDZIN, EUZEBIJE: "Missionis Albaniae Fratr. Minorum de Observatia Riformata historicae notitiae ab a. 1634-1708 ex codice cartaceo hospiti Castrati inferioris seu Buiza anno 1885 in civitate Scutari descriptae", *Le Missioni Francescane in Palestina*, Roma 1892, 349-354, 481-483, 530-534; PANDZIC, *Historia* 98-99;
34. AFP, Miscellanea diversa, Vol. 20, f. 218r-220v;
35. DI VENEZIA, *Historia Seraphica*, 352-353, 355-357, 379; GEGAJ ATHANAS: "Vepra arsimore e françeskajvet në Shqypni ne sh. XVII," H.D. 1932, 3, 135-138; DODAJ, "L'azione culturale dei francescani in Albania", *Vita e pensiero*, Milano, 1940, 2, 77-78;
36. DI VENEZIA, *Historia Seraphica*, 395-411; Vita del Venerando Padre Paolo di Mantova; DA VICENZA, ANTONIO M.: *Vita e martirio dei servi di Dio P. Paolo da Mantova e P. Clemente da Bressanone*, Bologna 1871;
37. DI VENEZIA, *Historia Seraphica*, 381-385; *Vita e martirio dei Padri Fernandino Isola Genovese e Giacomo Zampa della Marca Minori Osservanti Riformati, Missionari Apostolici in Albania*, Seconda edizione sulla prima del 1660 a cura del P. Marcellino da Civezza, Roma 1864-1865. Ristampa della Cronaca delle Missioni Francescane, Roma 1864-1865;
38. FERMENDZIN, *Missionis Albaniae*, 553;
39. Ibid., Schizzo storico, 29-30;
40. DI VENEZIA, *Historia Serafica*, 260-264; AFP, 1636, Vol. 12, f. 136-137; *Confirmatur licentia Fr. Bon. de Palazzolo aedificandi conventus in Albania et Cattaro, ut in eis aeducari possint novitij albanenses pro fidei propaganda*;
41. KLEINHANS, ARDUINO, *Historia studii linguae et Collegii missionum S. Petri in Urbe*, Quaracchi 1930, 508;
42. Archivum OFM, Albania Vol. 1, Missionari francescani in Albania, 128-139v; Schizzo storico, 5-6; PANDZIC, *Historia*, 107-106;
43. Archivum OFM, Albania Vol. 6, 163; Ibid 165-166 109 studiorum uno; B Ibid 390;
45. Ibid Albania vol. 7, 289-290, Vol. 8, 325; DRLJIC, RADOSLAV: "Fra Lovro Mihačević, *Dobri Pastir*, IV, 1935, Sarajevo;
46. VENIANI, GABRIELE: "Vescovi francescani nelle missioni", *Le Missioni Francescane in Palestina*, 1893, 226-231, 286-297, 541-550; Schizzo storico, 16-21;
47. Archivum OFM, Albania Vol. XIII, 3, Vol. 1-10 passim;
48. DURHAM, EDITH: *High Albania*, London, Edward Arnold, 1909, pp. 84-90; BRIDGE, ANN: *Singing Waters*, New York, Harold Matson Co. 1946, 1943, pp. 176-138;
49. SHUTERIORI, BRIMTËR S.: "Pal Hasi (shek. XVI)", *Studime Shqiptike*, Tiranë 1976, 3, 71-180; Ibid, *Autorë dhe Tekste*, Tiranë 1977, 63-73; Archivum OFM, Albania Vol. 5, 43 Catalogus clericorum missionis Albaniae degentium in Bosnia; Ibid 208 in Bosnia sono 26 giovani albanesi;

50. ESIH, IVAN: "O Gjergj Fishti", *Dobri Pastir*, XI-XII/1962, 1-4, 257-275; DODIC, LAZAR: "Gjergj Fishta - život i rad", *Marulić*, 1975, 4, 275-286;

51. FISHTA, GJERGJ: Die Laute des Hochlandes (Lahuta e Malcís), übersetzt, eingeleitet und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Max Lambert, München 1958; G. FISHTA, Il Luto delle Montagne (Lahuta e Malcís), traduzione, introduzione e note a cura di Ernesto Koliqi, Roma 1971-1973;

52. DEMA, BENEDIKT: "Veprimi letrar i Fishtës", H.D., 1941, 433-451; DUKA, GJIN: "Proza Fishtës", *Shejzat - Le Plejadi*, V, Roma 1961, 11-12, 438-467;

53. AT Gjergj Fishta 1871-1940, numër përkujtimor botue nëpër kujdes të At Benedikt Dema, Tiranë 1943, 583; LAMBERTZ, MAXIMILIAN: Gjergj Fishta und das Albanische Heldenepos Lahuta e Malcís - Laute des hochlandes, Leipzig 1949, 76; "Celebrazione del 90° anniversario della nascita di Giorgio Fishta", *Shejzat - Le Plejadi*, Roma, 1961, n. speciale 11-12, 363-538;

54. "Roli reaksionar dhe antikombtar i Gjergj Fishtës, Zani i Rinisë, Prishtinë 1968, n. 45, 23; TIRTJA, M.: "Probleme të besimit", *Studime historike*, Tiranë 1976, 4, 221-222; HAKO, HULUSI: "Zhdokja e faltoreve dhe klerikëve në Shqipëri, Konferenca e studimeve etnografike, Tiranë 1977, 311-312;

55. ZHEJI, GJERGJ: "Probleme të metrikës së poezisë shqiptare të realizmit socialist", *Studime filologjike*, Tiranë 1976, 1, 3-4;

56. PUPOVCI, SYRJA: *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*, Prishtinë 1972, V-XIV; IBID, *Zivoli i rad Stjepana Dječova* (transl. E. Kljajic), *Nova et Vetera*, 1977, II, 113-125; MALAJ, VINKO: "Shenime bibliografike mbi Gjergjin me rastin e 50-vjetorit të vdekjes", *Koha*, Titograd 1979, 5-6, 479-504;

57. KASTRATI, JUP: "Justin Rrota në 75 vjetorin e lindjes", *Studime filologjike*, Tiranë 1964, 2, 204-206;

58. ÇURÇIJA, LIN: Në dekë të At Martin Gjokës, H.D., Shkodër 1940, 1, 87-90; SOKOLI, RAMADAN: *Figura e Skenderbeut në muzikë*, Tiranë, 1978, 48; PRENUSHI, MIKEL: *Të parat kompozime të muzikës sonë, Bashkimi*, Tiranë, 1990;

59. Archivium OFM, Relazione del Provinciale d'Albania P.G. Fishta, del 10 ottobre 1935;

60. FACIN, DOMENICO: *I Frati Minori e le Suore Stimmatine durante l'assedio di Scutari del 1912-1913*, Quaracchi 1913, 98; *Cent'anni di vita dell'istituto delle suore Stimmatine (1850-1950)*, Firenze 1960, 541; ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN, Vol. X, 1989, pp. 55-70;

61. Archivium OFM, Montenegro, Sullo stato locale e personale della missione, relazione del 14 febbraio 1912;

62. BEQJA, RAGIP: *Veprimtaria arëmiqësore e klerit katolik shqiptar nga v. 1945-1971*, Tiranë 1973, 347 with photos;

63. SINISHTA, GJON: *The Fulfilled Promise - A Documentary Account of Religious Persecution in Albania*, Santa Clara, California 1976, 251; F. CAVALLI: "Persecuzione religiosa in Albania", *Civiltà cattolica*,

Rome XCVIII/1947, II, 409-422, III, 132-145; BRUNELLO, ARISTIDE: *La chiesa del silenzio*, Rome 1952, 267-282; GALTER, ALBERT: *Libro rosso della chiesa perseguitata*, Milano 1965, 91-105; THÖNNES, BERNHARD: "Religion und Kirche in Albanien", *Kirche in not* XXIV, Königstein, 1976, 101-109;

64. GAZETA ZYRTARE (The Official Gazette), No. 4337, Tiranë, November 1967.

* This study was first published in the Croatian quarterly KACIC, XIV, Split, 1982, marking the eighth centenary of St. Francis of Assisi. The English translation has been updated.

PËRMBLEDHJE

VEPRIMTARIA APOSTOLIKE E KULTURORE E FRANÇESKANVE NË KATOLIKË TË KOMBIT SHQIPTAR

Urdhni françeskan në Shqipëri, simbas gojëdhane, kje themelue prej vetë Patriarkës Shën Françeskut. Megjithatë asht e sigurtë se rregulltarët françeskanë, bashkë me domenikanë, i prunë me vëdi ndër këto vise i lumi Gjon prej Pian del Carpine, kurse kje emënuarë argjipeshkëv i Tivarit në vjetin 1248 për të xavendësue benediktinët.

Për praninë e bjive të Shën Françeskut në Shqipëri flasin dokumentat e vjetve 1258, 1272, 1283 dhe ai i vjetit 1288, i cili edhe i numëron disa ndër të parat kuvende (Kotor, Tivar, Ulqin, Shkodër, Durrës dhe Lesh), që ishin nën jurisdikcionin e provincës dalmatine (Zadër e Split). Në vjetin 1402 kje themelue Custodia e Durrësit e në vjetin 1589 Provincja e Maqedone e 31. e Urdhnit, me 5 kuvende dhe 40 rregulltarë. Më vonë mëkamben 28 kuvende dhe residenca me 80 rregulltarë. Por me përshkrimin e moteve të vështira, nën sundim Turq, françeskanët shqiptarë dita me ditë shkonin tue u pakësue, aqë sa në vjetin 1719 Provincja shqiptare e humbë autonominë e vet dhe ka për të parë fretën të huej, derisa në vjetin 1832 baret misjon i drejtue prej 5 prejtave. Në vjetin 1898 ky misjon bashkohe me një komisar provincial të përgjithshëm P. A. Zubac. Së mbaramit në vjetin 1906 më kamëet rishas Provincja e moçme françeskanë me titull Provincja misionare e Zojës Muncjate me provincuarin P. Lovro Milhačević prej Bosnje.

Ndër motet më të vështirat për françeskanë shqiptarë sidomos prej të XVII sh, e deri në të XIX sh., atyne u vinë në ndihmë tjerë sivëllazën misjonarë nga Italia, Austria, Gjermania e Bosnja, për të mujtë më e mbajtë gjallë fenë e stergjyshave arbenorë. Kanë mbetë të famshëm sidomos dy fretën italianë, P. Bonaventura Palazzolo e P. Cherubino da Val di Bona, të cilët bashkë me disa shokë u përshkuen në Skqipni në vjetin 1634. Disa ndër misjonarë herokisht derdhin gjakun e vet, të tjerët ndërtojnë kisha, hospice e kuvende të rrënueme, të tjerët themelojnë shkolla, kolegje e institute fetare, e prapë të tjerët me shkrime të veta i apin kontribut të çmueshëm zhvillimit e përparimit të fesë katolike, të kulturës kombëtare dhe të gjuhës shqipe. Nga Urdhni françeskan kjenë ëmënue ndër dioçeze të ndryshme të Shqipnisë rreth 100 ipeshkvij dhe argjipeshkvij.

Frytet e mundit të tyne kjenë trashigue dhe zhvillue më me dendësi nga françeskanët shqiptarë, sidomos mbas rimëkambjes së provincës në vjetin 1906, të cilët veprimtaris së tyne fetare e kulturore vrultas i dhanë një drejtim kombëtar.

Në Shqipninë Veriore, me Shkodrën në qendër, çilën 27 shkolla fillore, një shkollë mësuesësh me konvikt për varza, drejtue nga motrat Stigmatine, themeluen liçeun klasik, seminarin e shtypshkrojt, që botonte tri revista mujore dhe qinda librash në gjuhën shqipe. Përposë këtyne drejtoshin një numër mjaft të bukur tercjarësh françeskanë, shoqëni fetare të rijësh e të rejash, teatrin, grupe kangëtarësh e kështu pari. Ndërmjet dy luftave botënore me 90 fretën shërbeshin ndër dioçeze të ndryshme 38 famulli, ndër më të vorfënat dhe më të vështirat vise malore.

Ndër bijtë më të dalluemët që Provinca shqiptare i dha Atdheut dhe Urdhënit, ndër të tjerë janë të dëjë për t'u përmendë poeti komëtar P. Gjergj Fishta, P. Shtjefën Gjeçovi, P. Pashko Bardhi, P. Marin Sirdani, P. Pal Dodaj, P. Anton Harapi, P. Justin Rrota, P. Martin Gjoka, P. Bernardin Palaj, P. Gjon Shllaku, Mons. Bernardin Shllaku, Mons. Vinçenc Prennushi, Mons. Antonin Fishita e sa e sa të tjerë, që për

veprimtari fetare e kulturore, për shkrime të veta ose gjak të derdhun kanë për të mbetë gjithmonë të kujtuem prej breznisë së ardhshme.

Mbas luftës së dytë botënore, prej vjetit 1945 deri në vjetin 1967, Provincës së moçme të fretënve shqiptarë, që për më se shtatë shekuj ishin të pranishëm ndër këto vise, i kje dhanë goditja e fundit. Ajo u zhgatrrue krejtsisht, kjenë konfiskue pronat, mbyllë shkollat, seminari, kishat dhe institucionet fetare, burgosë e gjykue me padi fantastike, bashkë me të tjere meshtarë dioçezanë e ipeshkvij. 32 rrigulltarë françeskannë, ndër ta 14 më të vlershmit kjenë vra e pushkature.

Sot për sot vetëm një grup i vogël fretësh shqiptarë, bashkë me dy kongregacione murgeshash françeskane, lirisht zhvillojnë veprimtari fetare e humanitare ndër shqiptarë të Jugosllavise në misjoinin e Malit të Zi dhe atë të Kosovës.

Vinçenc Malaj, OFM

RIASSUNTO L'ATTIVITA APOSTOLICA E CULTURALE DEI FRANCESCANI TRA I CATTOLICI DELLA NAZIONE ALBANESE

L'Ordine Franciscano, secondo la tradizione, fu introdotto in Albania dallo stesso Patriarca S. Francesco. È certo però che i religiosi francescani, insieme con i domenicani, condusse con se in quelle parti il beato Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, nominato arcivescovo d'Antivari nel 1248 a sostituire i benedettini.

Della presenza dei figli dell'Assisi in Albania ci fanno menzione i documenti del 1258, 1272, 1283 e nel 1248, nel quale vengono enumerati alcuni dei loro primi conventi (Cattaro, Antivari, Dalcigno, Scutari, Durazzo ed Alessio) sotto la giurisdizione della provincia dalmata (Zara e Spalato). Nel 1402 fondarono la Custodia di Durazzo e nel 1589 la Provincia di Durazzo. Nel 1589, dell'Ordine, con 5 conventi e 40 religiosi. Più tardi ebbero 28 conventi e residenze con 60 religiosi. Ma con andare dei

residenze con 80 religiosi. Ma con andare dei tempi turbolenti, sotto la pressione turca, i francescani albanesi da giorno in giorno diminuiscono cosichè nell'anno 1719 la Provincia albanese perdette la sua autonomia ed ebbe superiori dalle provincie straniere, finchè nell'anno 1832 diventò una missione, retta da 5 pro-prefetti. L'anno 1898, sopresse le prefetture, veniva eletto il Commissario provinciale P. A. Zubac. Finalmente l'anno 1906 veniva nuovamente ricostruita l'antica provincia col titolo di Provincia Missionaria della S. Annunziata con il provinciale P. L. Mihačević, (di Bosnia).

Nei tempi più difficili per i francescani albanesi, specialmente dal XVII al XIX s. accorsero in aiuto altri confratelli missionari dall'Italia, dall'Austria, dalla Germania e dalla Bosnia a perseverare l'Albania nella religione dei suoi avi. Famosi sono rimasti due padri italiani, P. Bonaventura Pallazzolo e P. Cherubino da Val di Bona, che approdarono sulle coste albanesi nel 1634. Alcuni dei missionari eroicamente sparsero il loro sangue, altri ricostruirono chiese, ospizi e conventi distrutti, altri fondarono delle scuole, collegi ed istituti religiosi ed altri coi scritti diedero il suo prezioso contributo allo sviluppo della religione, della cultura nazionale e della lingua albanese. Dall'Ordine Franciscano furono nominati nelle varie diocesi circa 100 vescovi ed arcivescovi.

La tradizione dei primi fu raccolta e con maggiore intensità svolta dai francescani albanesi dopo il restauro della provincia nel 1906, i quali alla loro operosità culturale e religiosa, con nuovo slancio diedero un indirizzo nazionale.

Nell'Albania Settentrionale, con Scutari al centro, fondarono 27 scuole elementari, una scuola magistrale e convitto per le ragazze diretti delle suore Stimmatine, un liceo classico, un seminario, una tipografia, che imprimeva tre riviste mensili e centinaia di libri in lingua albanese. Inoltre dirigevano un centro numeroso di terziari francescani, pie unioni dei giovani, teatro, scuole cantorum ecc. Fra le due guerre

mondiali con 90 religiosi reggevano nelle varie diocesi 38 parrocchie, tra le più povere e difficili regioni montuose.

Fra figli insegni che la Provincia albanese diede alla Patria e all'Ordine, tanto per citare alcuni nomi, sono degni di lode il poeta nazionale P. Giorgio Fishta, P. Stefano Gjeçov, P. Pasquale Bardhi, P. Marino Sirdani, P. Paolo Dodaj, P. Antonio Harapi, P. Giustino Rrota, P. Bernardino Palaj, P. Giovanni Shllaku, Mons. Bernardino Shllaku, Mons. Vincenzo Prennushi, Mons. Antonio Fishta e molti altri, che per la loro attività pastorale e culturale e per i loro scritti o per il sangue sparso, rimarranno sempre in memoria delle generazioni future.

Dopo la seconda guerra mondiale, dal 1945 al 1967, alla vecchia Provincia dei francescani, che da sette secoli sussisteva in Albania, veniva dato il colpo di grazia. Essa è stata completamente distrutta, confiscate le proprietà, chiuse le scuole, il seminario, le chiese e le istituzioni religiose, imprigionati e giudicati sotto varie e fantastiche accuse, insieme con gli sacerdoti e vescovi 32 religiosi francescani, tra cui 14, i più validi, uccisi.

Oggi solo un piccolo gruppo dei francescani albanesi, insieme con due congregazioni delle suore francescane, liberamente svolge attività pastorale ed umanitarie fra gli albanesi in Jugoslavia (missione di Montenegro e Cossovo).

Vicente Malaj, OFM



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

FATHER GJON KARMA'S SLOW ROAD TO MARTYRDOM

Ják (Giacomo) Gardin, S.J.

When reflecting upon this century's Albanian Catholic martyrs, those who come immediately to mind are the ones who died abrupt, violent deaths at the hands of communist persecutors. They are, however, not alone in their martyrdom. Other Albanian Catholics have died less dramatic - though no less insidious - deaths as a result of long years of suffering brought about by their refusal to renounce their faith.

Among those who suffered a slow death for their faith was Gjon Karma, the last Jesuit rector in Shkodër. Granted, he had reached the advanced age of 79 years when he died in 1975. However his passing was directly traceable to the tortures and deprivations he endured during 17 years of confinement in Albanian prisons and labor camps.

Karma was born on May 17, 1896, in Gur i Zi, a picturesque village a few miles from Shkodër. At an early age he entered the Albanian Pontifical Seminary where he advanced in his studies and spirituality. His superiors and teachers were impressed with Karma's thirst for knowledge and his eagerness to impart the Gospel to others. Among his classmates he became somewhat of a legend for his gifted ability to preach. It is said that there was no

subject in which he could not hold the rapt attention of an audience.

In 1920 Karma was ordained a diocesan priest in Shkodër by Archbishop Lazër Mjeda. Following ordination he engaged in apostolic activities in the Archdiocese of Shkodër. His reputation as a powerful preacher spread quickly. Soon he was sought by pastors to direct novenas and recollection sessions for parish organizations on feast days.

Father Karma's desire to one-day become a Jesuit missionary began at the time of his priestly formation in the seminary. His dream was finally realized. The Jesuit superiors at the Pontifical Seminary who had followed his vocation closely agreed to receive him into the Society of Jesus as an aspirant in May 1927. At this time I met him in Gorizia where he spent two years in novitiate training. His openness and frankness of mind combined with a good sense



Father Gjon Karma, S.J., (center) with a group of Jesuit seminarians, Shkodër, 1941. Others in photo, left to right: Gjon Sinishta, Ndue Makaj, Lazër Sheldijë (deceased), Ndue Deda, Dede Raci, Mark Kola, Rrok Gjuraç, Tish Correç

of humor made a lasting impression on me. I was at the time considering undertaking missionary work in Albania. Karma's counsel concerning Albania's vicissitudes and pitiful religious situation helped me seriously evaluate my plans. I met on and off with him through the years until 1936 when I came to Shkodër to teach at the Pontifical Seminary and Xavier College. Father Karma was then the Director of the Missionary Center (Misioni Shetitës Shqiptar). The recognition of his preaching gifts was by now legendary among northern Albanian clans. Karma and his band of missionaries spent the major part of the year preaching the Gospel and instructing the people in the Christian faith. They were engaged especially in educating them and in mediating peace and forgiveness among the feuding clans. He was the mind and soul of the missionary band efforts to reform the ugly customs and traditions of the Albanian highlanders especially blood feuds, arranged marriages and superstitious pagan like attitudes. These Catholic missionary efforts helped considerably in the emancipation of the mountain Albanian clans.

Father Karma also wrote for the *Lajmtari i Zemrës së Krishtit* (Messenger of the Sacred Heart). He briefly directed the Apostleship of Prayer in 1940 and lectured in religion and history at the Pontifical Seminary. As early as 1938, he was informed that his name was proposed to become a bishop. Karma used all of his oratorical strengths to convince the Apostolic Delegate and the Archbishop of Shkodër (the Primate of the Catholic Church in Albania), that he was unfit for such an honored appointment.

Between his missionary journeys, Karma wrote on several subjects. He focused primarily on the lives and customs of the Albanian highlanders. His many articles were published by both the Jesuit and Franciscan presses. In his writings he was well known for his simplicity of style and purity of thought. A series of Karma's

articles - rich in observations on the customs, manners, idioms and poetry of the regions he visited as a missionary - were published by the Albanian Ministry of Education as part of the collected folklore of the country entitled *Visaret e Kombit* (Treasures of the Nation).

Throughout this period when I was perfecting my command of the Albanian language, Father Karma became an example for me.

During the 1940s when my sermons were sought at the Cathedral and other churches in Shkodër, it was no doubt due to Father Karma's influence. His style and penetrating truths influenced me profoundly.

In 1944, with the advent of Communism in Albania, the Missionary Center was closed. Father Karma and his missionaries joined other Jesuit works in Shkodër as teachers, instructors, and administrators. Soon the new government authorities expelled all foreign missionaries and clergy. Among them were 29 Jesuits. At that time I was arrested, imprisoned, tried and sentenced for allegedly spreading anticommunist propaganda in my sermons. Also imprisoned were Fathers Vice-Provincial Gjon Fausti, and Rector Daniel Dajani, (December 31, 1945). Father Karma became the new rector. He guided the Jesuits wisely, yet without compromise in a most difficult period of their Albanian history. In April 1946, all Jesuit institutions were closed and the government outlawed the Order. Father Karma, the last Jesuit rector, nevertheless kept in touch with the disbanded Jesuits advising and encouraging them to persevere in their faith and vocation.

On Christmas eve 1946 Father Karma was arrested and kept isolated in the basements of *Mbrojtja e Popullit* (Security Police). I heard of his arrest three months later. Since I was already sentenced I could receive visits occasionally. It was during one of these visits that I heard of Karma's imprisonment. I knew from

personal experience and that of other priests the kind of hardship and torture he would be enduring because of his rectorship. For many months I longed to see and talk to him about our common trials. Finally, just before Easter 1948 the police brought Karma with a group of other prisoners to Burgu i madh (Big prison), where I was incarcerated. We were then being selected for summer work in southern Albania. It had been three years since I had last seen him. It was with great pain that I saw him reduced to a bare skeleton. His characteristic sharpness of mind and sense of humor, however, was alive well. We poured forth to each other our trials and sufferings. We shared our worries and hopes for the future of the Church in Albania.

I vividly remember his account of the tortures inflicted on him by the police. For a full year he was the subject to a vigorous investigation intended to uncover the hiding place where the Jesuits supposedly kept caches of arms, documents, and secret treasures. The communists based their suppositions on the Jesuits ties with the Vatican. They suspected all Jesuits were Italian spies or insurgents. On one occasion they dragged Father Karma into St. Joseph's chapel and forced him to watch as they opened the crypt where several dead Jesuits were entombed. They hoped that by witnessing this macabre desecration, Father Karma's will to

resist would snap and he would divulge the whereabouts of incriminating evidence. Needless to say, since no such cache existed the results of their investigation were less than satisfactory. Nevertheless, after 18 months of interro-

gation which produced no results Father Karma was sentenced to 17 years in prison. The trumped up charges designated Karma as a Vatican spy, an enemy of the people, and a reactionary cleric. Thus he entered the horrible world of forced labor camps from which few people ever returned. He recounted to me the other forms of torture to which he had been subjected. Among the preferred methods were beating his feet with metal rods, placing steaming hot boiled eggs under the armpits, electric shocks administered to his body and the constant denial of adequate rations of food and water. Apparently, Father Karma was able to withstand these particular



Father Gjon Karma, S.J., in the prison yard.
Photo was smuggled from Albania in June, 1960

tortures with very little difficulty—a testament to his strong will and constitution. One torture, however, stood out in his mind as being intolerable and nearly proved to be his undoing. In the summer of 1947 he was removed from his cell and brought to the Stigmatine Sisters convent which had been converted into a prison for "special" prisoners. The police would tie him to a schoolyard tree in the midday sun without benefit of a hat. He was left there until he collapsed from heat exhaustion. His captors would

then revive him by throwing water in his face, only to repeat the process. It was at this point that Karma felt closest to death.

In May 1948 I was chosen to join the working crew of prisoners for southern Albania. I left Father Karma with a brotherly embrace, tears and a prayer to meet him in better circumstances. I never saw him again.

Through refugees at the camp in Trieste where I ministered for a time after my own release from imprisonment in Albania, I learned that Father Karma served the full 17 years of his sentence. Some Muslim refugees who shared similar hardships with him in the Tepelena and Ballsh labor camps recounted to me how he taught them to read and write and how to confront difficulties in life with confidence in God. I

also came to know through a few short letters from a Jesuit friend that after Father Karma's release he was harassed by the police and prevented from receiving his proper allotment of food rations. He was also denied proper medical treatment for his deteriorating health. He died at the end of 1975, not so much from old age as from malnutrition and neglect. While the communist authorities were able through subtle means to starve the priest's body, they were not about to starve his spirit.

Father Gjon Karma was a great and yet humble man for me and the many others who cherish Christian and human values. His long and painful road to martyrdom stands as a testament to his courage and faithfulness to his God and his Jesuit confreres.

BANISHING GOD IN ALBANIA

The Prison Memoirs of Fr. Giacomo Gardin, S.J.

Here, published for the first time in English, is the actual eye-witness account and personal experiences of one of the many victims of perhaps the most brutally persecuted communist country in the world, Albania. Fr. Giacomo Gardin, a Jesuit missionary for 20 years in Albania, including 10 years in prison, retells with moving simplicity and deep faith the story of the communist takeover, mock trials, labor camps, persecution and the heroic suffering and martyrdom of his fellow Albanian prisoners. "Like 'poor Jonah,' I was spewed out onto the beaches of freedom, while my persecuted fellows—priests, religious, and laypeople—gathered in their hands the palm of martyrdom! This was the role that Providence assigned to me! Maybe I was not ripe for martyrdom. Or maybe God wanted me to be His witness here today, in order to bring you a living testimony of how much people have suffered there, in that small land of Albania; a testimony of how much labor in hardship and bloodshed I witnessed during the ten years I was there."

—Fr. Giacomo Gardin, S.J.

IGNATIUS PRESS - 15 Oakland Avenue, Harrison, NY 10528
162 pages \$7.95 ISBN 0-89870-220-8 Sewn Softcover



"I have read your book with interest and emotion as I remembered the suffering endured by the Albanian Church and people. I offer my prayers for the Albanian Church whose life is still so tried but enriched by the testimony of the martyrs."

—Pope John Paul II

Toward a New Albania: Evolution or Revolution?

Nicholas P. Pano

By the beginning of 1990, it was apparent that the winds of change which had swept through Eastern Europe were being felt in Albania. Although the events in Eastern Europe served to accelerate the pressures for change in Albania, it is important to note that Ramiz Alia, the first secretary of the Albanian Party of Labor (APL) and the nation's head of state, had recognized the need to address the problems confronting the country when he came to power following the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985.

Of the problems confronting Albania in the mid 1980s, the state of the economy was clearly the most pressing. It was evident by 1985 that the Seventh Five Year Plan (1980-85) would, as its predecessors, not meet its assigned targets. And the prospects for the Eighth Five Year Plan (1986-90) would be equally bleak if the shortcomings that plagued the economic sector – an inefficient, highly centralized planning and management system, aging and outmoded technology, and an unmotivated, poorly disciplined and inadequate labor and management force – were not corrected. The weakness of the economy, in turn, had condemned the Albanian masses to endure the lowest standard of living in Europe and had contributed to their alienation or indifference toward the regime.

Alia, however, was also sensitive to the disaffection of Albania's youth which comprised the most numerically significant group in a country where the average age of the population in 1989 was 27 years. The small, but growing intellectual community in the country also resented the strictures to which they were subjected that stifled their creativity. Alia, in turn, was sympathetic to the need to strengthen the quality and appeal of the nation's cultural output for an expanding and more sophisticated domestic audience.

Finally, the Albanian leader was desirous of expanding the country's international contacts in order to promote stronger commercial and cultural relations both with Western Europe and Albania's Balkan neighbors. He also abandoned the regime's long-standing opposition to participation in multilateral diplomatic activities. Alia was especially intent on changing Albania's external image as an isolated, dogmatic, and repressive nation.

Alia sought to deal with these issues by undertaking a series of initiatives, beginning in 1985. It is important to note to this respect that Alia had a relatively modest and limited agenda for reform. His primary concern was to strengthen the stability of the communist regime through a program of controlled administrative change from above. In this context, Alia, between 1985-89, should be viewed as more of a pragmatist than a reformer. He rejected suggestions that his policies resembled those of Gorbachev who had come to power in the USSR only one month before the elevation of Alia to the Albanian leadership.

Between April 1985 and August 1989, Alia sought to revitalize the Albanian economy by introducing wage incentives for workers permitting plant managers more autonomy in fulfilling plan directives, and encouraging peasants to market the production from their private plots. He also placed heavier emphasis on the provision of consumer goods and services and sought to improve worker discipline and output. These and other related measures failed to effect the turnaround of the economy that Alia had anticipated. In addition to worker apathy and bureaucratic footdragging, Alia's economic reforms were further hampered by unfavorable weather conditions and lack of investment capital.

Similarly, the efforts to win over the nation's youth by providing them with additional recreational facilities, special radio programming, improved employment opportunities, and promises of educational reform met with only limited success as did a spirited campaign to upgrade the quality of the country's literary, artistic, and musical productions and to ease somewhat party control over the nation's cultural and intellectual life.

It was in this context that one of the most important cultural events of the 1985-89 period occurred – the publication in August 1989 of Neshat Tozaj's novel, *Thikat* [The Knives]. In this work, Tozaj, a seasoned Albanian writer and employee of Ministry of the Interior, provides a moving account of the lack of respect for truth and for basic human rights by the Albanian secret police. Underscoring the significance of the work was the fact that it was reviewed prior to publication by Dritëro Agolli, the Chairman of the Albanian Writers and Artists Union, Nasi Lera, the Union's secretary, and Ismail Kadare, the nation's most distinguished literary personality. Kadare subsequently published a strongly positive review of the novel in the October 15, 1989 issue of *Drita*, the weekly newspaper of the Union. This review attracted considerable attention within Albania owing to its plea for a more just society based on the rule of law, respect for the rights of the individual, and freedom of expression for writers and artists.

During the last half of the 1980's, Albania made considerable progress in strengthening its ties with the outside world. Relations with Greece were fully normalized with the ending of the state of war between the two nations. Tirana abandoned its long-standing reservations against participation in multilateral diplomatic activities. Albania in 1988 participated in the Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Balkan States, hosted a meeting of the deputy foreign ministers of the region the following year, and will host the second foreign ministers meeting in October 1990. Additionally, there were numerous exchange visits by Albanian and Western European diplomatic and economic delegations during this period. A major motivation

by the Albanian diplomatic opening to Western Europe and its Balkan neighbors was economic – the need for markets for Albanian exports and for foreign capital and technical expertise to modernize and diversify the nation's economy.

While it is significant that Alia sought to bring about changes in key sectors of Albanian life prior to the overthrow of the Eastern European communist regimes, it should be noted that he did not develop a systematic well defined program for reform. It is also important to recognize that there may not have been consensus on the part of the leadership regarding the appropriateness of the changes advocated by Alia and his supporters. There is also little doubt that there was a lack of enthusiasm for Alia's initiatives within the ranks of the middle and lower levels of the bureaucracy. The workers seem to have been generally indifferent. Their major interest lay in the improvement of their living standards and some feared they would have to work harder or receive lower wages if they failed to meet their productivity quotas. In sum, the intellectuals, the smallest segment of Albanian society, appeared to be the most supportive of Alia's policies. And, among the intellectuals, there were many who were dissatisfied with the pace of reform.

The reform process in Albania began to accelerate with the demise of the Eastern European communist regimes and the intensification of discontent within Albania during the autumn of 1989. This development was spurred by the widespread ownership of radios and television receivers in the country that enabled the masses to follow events in Eastern Europe from a variety of foreign sources. The reforms promised and promulgated during the first half of 1990 represented, in many areas, an extension of the policies initiated by Alia since 1985. As the leadership sensed that the masses were dissatisfied with the pace of change, it appears to have accelerated its time table for reform. This situation seems to have produced discomfiture within the echelons of both the party and government and created difficulties and confusion in implementing changes.

Ramiz Alia's reform program was announced in stages at the 8th (September 1989), 9th (January 1990), and 10th (July 1990) Plenums of the APL Central Committee and May 1990 session of the People's Assembly. It focused on such areas as the economy, the political system, the legal system and human rights, freedom of discussion, education, and foreign relations.

The Albanian regime has designated the economic program it is in the process of developing, "The New Economic Mechanism," a term borrowed from the Hungarian economic reforms of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Thus, while revolutionary by the Albanian experience, the economic changes are modest in comparison to the transformations of the economic systems that have occurred in the Soviet Union and East Europe during the past few years.

In essence, the Albanians retain the structure and many of the features of the former centralized economic planning systems of Eastern Europe. However, individual economic enterprises and the district-level governments will have a greater input into the planning process and more authority in implementing plan directives. Enterprise managers will have greater freedom in decision making, but will be held to higher standards of accountability. Subsidies for inefficient or unprofitable industrial, service, and agricultural units are being phased out and replaced by long-term credits. The size of private plots on collective farms has been doubled and farmers encourage to sell their produce at free markets which have been established throughout the country. Ownership of livestock from the herds of the collective farms is being transferred to the peasants. Artisans, craftsmen, and individual retailers have been granted permission to carry on trade in a newly created private sector. Wages for the lowest categories of workers have been increased and workers have been guaranteed 80 percent of their wages when laid off for conditions beyond their control. The government will lessen its control over prices and allow market forces to operate in the pricing of

"non-essential" items. To increase the consumer goods in circulation, special shops which stock Yugoslav goods have been established.

These changes have met with mixed reaction and have produced confusion. The nation's total economic production decreased by 6-7 percent in July 1990 as compared to June of that year. The government also reported that for the period January-August 1990, imports were exceeding exports by 20 percent and that this situation, if uncorrected, would pose a serious threat to the economy. To help stimulate the flagging economy the regime has promulgated legislation permitting foreign investment in Albania and approving joint adventures between Albanian and foreign firms. Since Albanian managers lack basic business skills such as marketing, planning, and resource management, short-term seminars conducted by European businessmen have been held in Tirana. It is apparent that the new economic reforms have come to late to have any impact on Eighth Five Year Plan and that they have created problems in drafting the Ninth Five Year Plan (1991-95). Whether Alia will be able to limit the scope of his economic changes to their present parameters and whether they will have a positive impact on the economy remains to be seen.

Alia has been least willing to make concessions in respect to the nation's political system. He has emphatically stated on repeated occasions that the Albanian Party of Labor has no intention of surrendering its political monopoly of power and that it will continue to play a leading role in all aspects of the nation's life. Proposed reforms have provided for contested elections for party and state offices, with the exception of the highest offices. Party and state officials will be ordinarily limited to two five-year terms. The Democratic Front, the mass political organization to which all Albanian voters belong, has been encouraged to play a more active role in Albanian politics. The changes proposed by Alia resemble those introduced by Khrushchev to the Soviet Union in the mid 1960s. It is uncertain whether Alia will propose additional reforms at the October 1990 session of the People's

Assembly or the 10th Congress of the APL scheduled for "early 1991." At least part of the former meeting will be devoted to the establishment of a commission to revise the 1976 Constitution to reflect the recent changes in the country.

The changes proposed by the regime in the areas of legal reform and human rights have attracted considerable attention both within Albania and from abroad. The Ministry of Justice, which was abolished in September 1966 has been reestablished and given the responsibility for preserving "socialist legality" within the country. With the formal revival of the legal profession, elaborate protections have been provided defendants in criminal cases. The number of capital crimes was reduced from 34 to 11 and penalties for other criminal violations eased. From the perspective of non-Albanians, one of the most important provisions of the legal reforms was the lifting of the prohibition against the private practice of religion. Most Albanians, however, were especially interested in the right to receive a passport and to travel abroad. Relatively few Albanians have been able to make use of this privilege because they lack funds to travel. It also appears that the government has been slow in processing passport requests. In part, confusion over the interpretation and implementation of the new passport law and regulations contributed to the exodus in July 1990 of some 4,500-5,000 Albanians who had taken refuge in foreign embassies in Tirana. In the aftermath of this development, the regime in early August 1990 issued a regulation restricting the right to organize and participate in public gatherings. Reports from Albania also suggested that the nation's police and security forces had heightened their vigilance to prevent a reoccurrence of the July episode.

One of the most remarkable developments during 1990 has been the extensive and largely unfettered exchange of views in the Albanian communications media. As in the case of Gorbachev, Alia has sought to use the freer press to mobilize support for his policies. But the discussions in the press have generated a variety of perspectives on

contemporary issues in Albania and have provided some useful insights into conditions within the country.

Albania's opening to the outside world has been enhanced with the growth of tourism. Between 1987-1989, the number of foreign tourists who visited Albania grew from 7,000 to 14,435. It is still uncertain whether there will be an immediate significant increase of Albanians travelling abroad for pleasure. In March 1990, Albania's contacts with the rest of the world were increased with the inauguration of direct international telephone service. Albanians made extensive use of this service mainly from their places of employment. By August 1990, the government had imposed strict restrictions on this service, owing to the fact nearly \$2 million in charges to state enterprises were run up by Albanians starved for contact with relatives and friends.

In July the government announced a series of education reforms that will result in compulsory ten-year schooling for the entire population, a restructuring and redefinition of the secondary schools and increasing opportunities for secondary education for students in rural areas. Additionally, university entrance procedures will be revised and the number of students admitted for study in the nation's institutions of higher education will be increased. These matters have been issues of great concern to the nation's youth. Also the curriculums, textbooks, and instructional techniques for the entire spectrum of the educational system are being reviewed and will be changed to reflect "the new conditions in the country."

That the changes taking place in Albania are intended to improve the country's external image as well as to deal with serious internal problems is reflected in the fact that the Albanians have invited numerous foreign journalists, statesmen, and professionals to visit their homeland, especially during 1990. U.N. Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar made an official visit in May. Several U.S. legislators such as congressman Tom Lantos and Joseph Kennedy along with senator Dennis di

Concini were received in Tirana. Albania expressed interest in participating in the activities of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), ending its self-imposed isolation from that group. Tirana also signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and expanded its participation in United Nations' activities. The USSR and Albania restored diplomatic relations which had been severed in 1961 at the height of Sino-Soviet polemics. Albania and the United States were engaged between May-August 1990 in discussions that were expected to lead to resumption of diplomatic ties between the two nations. In July 1990, Albania maintained diplomatic relations with 115 nations and commercial ties with over 50. It was making a conscious effort to shed its image as Europe's most isolated country. Whether it would succeed in this endeavor will depend on its ability to maintain tranquility in the nation without resort to force.

The exodus of the 4,500-5,000 Albanian refugees in July, did cause the leadership considerable embarrassment. Tirana has sought to prevent a repetition of this episode by increasing the security around the diplomatic quarter and by seeking to discourage further illegal emigration through a propaganda campaign intended to paint an unappetizing picture of the plight of economic and political refugees in Europe. It is uncertain whether these efforts will succeed in discouraging further attempts to flee the country.

The intensification of the reform movement along with the continuing shortcomings in the economy and the persistent alienation among many segments of the population has resulted in some significant political changes during 1989-90. Of the 23 cabinet members in office in January 1989, only 10 had managed to hold their seats in the extensive ministerial shuffles that occurred between February 1989 - July 1990. During 1990 three veteran members of the APL Politburo were "retired." There were also two changes in the composition of the Central Committee secretariat. Rather than representing a climatic phase in the struggle between the "conservative" and "liberal" factions of

the Albanian leadership, these changes were intended to remove aging, unpopular party leaders from positions of responsibility. Alia's appointments to the cabinet and Politburo and Secretariat are relatively young, well educated individuals who presumably will be more effective in carrying out their assigned duties. Whether these changes will help restore faith in the leadership has yet to be seen.

The events in Albania between January-August 1990 revealed that there is still considerable lack of trust and confidence in the regime. It appeared, that like Gorbachev in the USSR, Alia was reacting to events from below in an effort to remain in power. Unlike in the Soviet Union, however, there is no organized opposition in Albania to challenge the leadership. This does provide Alia with the opportunity to develop a long-range program to address the demonstrated concerns of the Albanian masses. The extent to which Alia is able to respond to the challenges confronting Albania will in large measure determine whether the transition to a new Albania will be evolutionary or revolutionary.

* * *

The Puebla Institute, a lay human rights organization which monitors violations of religious rights around the globe, published last year a comprehensive report on religion in Albania. According to the report the government of Albania is the worst abuser of faith rights.

Copies of the report entitled: Albania, Religion in a Fortress State may be ordered from the Puebla Institute, 1030 Fifteenth Street, NW Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20005.

CATHOLIC REFUGEES TELL OF ALBANIA'S HORRORS

Martyred priests and youths who have never seen a Mass are the fruits of an atheist regime

Deasmond O'Grady:

(Editors note: The following is an abridged version of an article which appeared on August 26, 1990 in Our Sunday Visitor.)

"Mother Teresa's cross was the first sign of Christianity in our state television since at least 1967," said Ralf, one of the 833 Albanian refugees in Restinco camp outside the Italian port city of Brindisi. The refugees were among some 4,500 Albanians who were permitted to join a boatlift to Italy in July, 1990 after seeking asylum in foreign embassies in Tirana, Albania.

Ralf was referring the visit by Mother Teresa of Calcutta to her mother's grave in Tirana.

In 1967, Albania's communist government officially proclaimed the country to be the world's first atheist state, launching its efforts to annihilate religion, whether Christian or Muslim.

*

Fear of the secret police has followed the refugees to Italy. One refugee, seeing a car from the Albanian embassy in Rome cruising through Brindisi, fled back to the camp fearing that he could be seized and returned to Albania.

There are also fears of reprisals against relatives remaining in Albania. Because of this, some who were interviewed refused to give their names or to be photographed.

In Albania, one can receive television broadcasts in Italian, Greek and Yugoslav, said Ralf. "We have windows on the world, but the world cannot see into Albania".

There are many examples of people's tenacious adherence to faith. Theodore, for instance, an Orthodox waiter, persisted in wearing a cross around his neck at work in Tirana, even though it could have led to imprisonment. Other waiters made fun of him, but he persisted "because I am a Christian."

Catholics in the camp (there are 145) spoke of a faith confined to home celebrations of major feasts, such as Easter, Christmas, St. Nicholas and St. Anthony. Even Christian names were not allowed by civil authorities.

Pashk Shisa, a 38-year-old housepainter, said, "I was baptized because I was born before 1967, but my brother, who was born in 1970, was not." Teaching of religion in the family was inhibited by teachers who interrogated students about what was said at home.

In Albania, Catholics are found mainly in or near the northern city of Shkodër. Catholics were both a minority and a cultural elite because of the high standards of Catholic education before the Communist takeover. The government apparently feared them as potential dissidents.

Bepin Oroshi, 35, a truck driver from Shkodër, said that although Catholics were often the best students, they found university entrance very difficult. He left school at 15. His father was an economist who was imprisoned because of his opposition to the anti-religious laws. Bepin Oroshi himself spent six years in the harsh Burrel political prison.

He expressed admiration for fellow prisoner Father Simon Jubani, who was sentenced in 1967 to 25 years in prison with three additional 10-year sentences because he kept writing Enver Hoxha to tell him he was ruining Albania. Oroshi recounted that after Father Jubani's third supplementary trial, the priest said, "Next time just give me an additional 10-year sentence without pretending to go through legal procedures."

Oroshi said Father Jubani underwent indescribable tortures without even a moan or a complaint. After one of his letters to Hoxha, Father Jubani was beaten mercilessly by 10 policemen who broke nearly every bone in his body. Reportedly, one of the policemen later said, "If anyone convinces me there's a God, it'll be Simon Jubani." (The brother of Simon Jubani, Lazer, also a priest, perished in the labor camps in 1968. See testimony about him on page 3 of 1989 *Bulletin*)

According to Oroshi, Father Jubani and about 10 other priests have been released from prison. Father Jubani is in poor health and under

house arrest. But it seems some of the priests manage to perform some of their priestly functions in today's still restrictive circumstances.

Because all churches and church institutions were closed in 1967 and priests labelled as "enemies of the people", Catholics had almost no community life. But apparently there is fire under the ashes.

Refugees reported that on June 13 the feast of St. Anthony several thousand gathered at the site of the former shrine of the Virgin Mary, at Laç, near Shkodër. It was the largest religious gathering since before 1967. Refugees also said that Catholics were the core of the anti-government protest march of about 5,000 in Shkodër on June 11. (It was reported to our Center by another source that during this protest march a 26 year old man was killed by the police)

In addition to releasing some priest-prisoners, there are other faint signs that the regime is reducing its hostility toward religion. It is now possible again, in some areas at least, to give children Christian names. Religion can now be practiced in homes without fear of being imprisoned.

How can Christians outside Albania help the reforms to continue? The best way, said several refugees, is to bring international pressure upon the Albanian government to recognize human and religious rights.



A young Albanian mother with child in Brindisi



THE FULFILLED PROMISE
A Documentary Account of Religious
Persecution in Albania
John Sinishua

A moving account of the incredible courage
and faith of Albanian martyrs by a man who
escaped from the Communist persecution.
248 pp. Quality Softcover, \$9.95

IGNATIUS PRESS -

15 Oakland Avenue, Harrison, NY 10528

1990 United Nations Human Rights Commission

New Indictments against Albania

Albania has been a member of the United Nations since 1955 and as such has solemnly agreed to uphold the organization's mandates. However for decades, Albania's government and its official propaganda have engaged in double talk. They have consistently maintained that the demise of organized religion in Albania, including the destruction of churches and mosques, was carried out by the free will of the people and with no administrative coercion. The hard facts are that it was the communist party and the government itself who initiated and carried out the campaign against religion and its institutions. Hundreds of clergy and lay people perished during this campaign.

The tremendous violations of human rights seemed to go unnoticed outside of Albania, but for a few voices raised in defence of the rights of Albanian citizens. The most outspoken of these were Popes Paul VI and John Paul II. At the same time, the UN Human Rights commission has been discussing the situation for the past decade, under a "confidential procedure." By private measures they hoped to end the government's violations quietly. But the Commission was spurred to more aggressive action by a number of human rights organizations. Among the groups that broke the silence by publishing reports of the grave violations of human rights in Albania are Amnesty International, the International Society for Human Rights (Germany), the International Association for Defence of Religious Liberty and Pax Christi International (both in Switzerland), the Europa Dansk Mission (Denmark), the United Churches of Christ USA, the International Human Rights Committee (Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA), and the Committee for Human Rights in Albania (Italy). The PUEBLA Institute of Washington, D.C. and the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights

Committee recently conducted extensive investigations on the subject. With the backing of all of these organizations the UN Commission finally went public in 1988 and again in 1989.

The UN Commission has only given this ultimate, public sanction twice before: to Equatorial Guinea in 1979, and to Afghanistan in 1983. The move to hold public hearings was prompted in part by the organizations listed above, but more conclusively by the overwhelming outcry of the citizens themselves, and by the refusal of the Albanian government to appear before the Commission in confidence. As a result of this orchestrated international pressure, Albania was finally forced to respond to the accusations leveled against it. The government's first pronouncement again twisted the truth about the religious situation. In a document distributed at the United Nations in 1988 Albania again asserted that "nobody was ever persecuted for his religious beliefs" and that "people are free to practice their religion in the privacy of their homes." In reality, even private religious practices were punishable by Albanian law. The government announced that "There is genuine freedom of conscience in Albania," and that the government had no intentions of interfering with that freedom. Nevertheless, the UN Human Rights Commission voted again to keep open the discussion of the many violations of religious and other human rights in Albania on its public agenda.

In their first report, the UN was "Deeply disturbed by the continuing reports of grave violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Albania..." The Commission expressed "grave concern about the constitutional and legal measures adopted by Albania to forbid religion in any form..." It announced that the government's measures "constitute an affront to human dignity, a

flagrant and systematic violation of human rights, a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations and peoples..." They called for full compliance with the UN Charter, and for an unrestricted freedom of religion in Albania.

Despite the public condemnation of its practices, and despite the government's professed innocence, the violations of human rights seemed to go unabated in Albania even after the UN's first report. In February, 1990, the International Federation for the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and other Minorities and the Minnesota Lawyers

International Human Rights Committee presented the Commission on Human Rights with reports of the progress made in Albania. The reports made it clear that the Albanian government had not kept its promises to abide by the UN's mandates. With detailed examples of individuals and particular cases, they showed that the brutality of the Albanian Government continued unabated.

"Albania needs again, perhaps in a more forceful manner, to be reminded that the time for posturing is over and the time to join the civilized world is long past." Here we publish the latest UN resolution that these reports prompted in March, 1990.

* * *

**UNITED
NATIONS**



Economic and Social Council

E/CN.4/1990/L.53

1 March 1990

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Forty-sixth session

Agenda item 12

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Belgium, Canada, Luxembourg, Morocco, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: draft resolution

Situation of Human rights in Albania

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling that the human rights situation in Albania has been under consideration by the Commission on Human Rights since 1984 under the confidential procedure governed by Economic and Social Council resolution 1503 (XLVIII) of 27 May 1970,

¹In accordance with rule 69, paragraph 3, of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Bearing in mind that, in its resolution 1988/17 of 2 March 1988, the Commission on Human Rights, acting under paragraph 8 of Council resolution 1503 (XLVIII), decided to discontinue consideration of the human rights situation in Albania under the confidential procedure and to take up consideration of the matter under the public procedure provided for in Council resolution 1235 (XLII) of 6 June 1967,

Bearing in mind also Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities resolution 1988/15 of 1 September 1988,

Recalling its resolution 1989/69 of 8 March 1989,

Welcoming the fact that for the first time the Government of Albania responded to the Commission's Special Rapporteur on the implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (E/CN.4/1990/46, para. 26),

Considering however that the concerned Government has failed to respond to the specific allegations transmitted to it by the Commission's Special Rapporteur on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,

Concerned about the reports on the situation of human rights in Albania which, in spite of reflecting some positive developments, continue to reveal violations of human rights, especially freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to leave the country and the right to a fair trial with all guarantees necessary for the defence,

Noting the invitation by the Government of Albania to the Secretary-General to visit the country,

1. **Calls upon** the Government of Albania to provide information on the concrete manner in which constitutional and legal measures comply with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to respond to the specific allegations transmitted to it by the

Commission's Special Rapporteur on the implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief;

2. **Requests** the Secretary-General:

- (a) To bring the present resolution to the attention of the Government of Albania and to invite it to provide the requested information;
 - (b) To take the present resolution into account when availing himself of the invitation by the Government of Albania to visit the country;
 - (c) To report to the Commission at its forty-seventh session on the results of his efforts under this resolution;
3. **Decides** to continue its consideration of the situation of human rights in Albania at its forty-seventh session.

*

Albania's response to this recent report has been much more heartening. Since its publication in March 1990, the Albanian government has introduced a variety of reforms and on May 8, its People's Assembly voted to lift the government ban on religious expression. The new legislation calls for the separation of state from religious affairs. Religious freedom has been proclaimed, and individuals ostensibly have the right to worship privately.

However, so far the government has not amended articles 37 and 55 from the country's Constitution or article 55 from the country's Penal code. As such, the legal reality is still very different from the government's proclaimed intentions. As long as public worship remains illegal, the churches and mosques remain in communist control and the government continues to carry out punishments against those who practice their religion over and above mere profession, there will be no true religious freedom in Albania.

I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT DAY...

Nikollë Isufaj

Editors note: Since the "new" constitution of Albania was promulgated in 1976, the national leaders and government propagandists have repeatedly announced that religion in Albania has been eradicated. The measures taken by both the party and the government in pursuit of this "revolutionary goal" have been represented in the world forum as being carried out willingly and spontaneously by the people. Most recently after the May 8th announcement of reforms in the area of human rights by the People's Assembly - Albanian leaders insisted that "it was the Albanian people itself who got rid of religious institutions," and "does not wish them ever to be re-established", thus "there will not be any opening of churches and mosques, even though the ban on religious propaganda is lifted". In July, 1990, President Alia of Albania repeated the same points in a rare interview with the American international affairs analyst, Cyrus L. Sulzburger.

Contrary to the official statements there are people who have witnessed the government's violent actions against religious institutions and the clergy. In past issues the *Bulletin* has presented ample evidence indicating that both the party and government organized and executed the drive to abolish all signs of religion in the nation. In this issue we wish to share with our readers the testimony of a young Albanian who witnessed a 1967 "action against religion" in village of Kastrati near Shkodër. Nikollë Isufaj escaped from Albania a few years ago and currently lives in the United States. His family was interned as punishment for his "act of treason". Isufaj informed us by letter that a similar fate befell other families whose members had escaped in search of freedom. Isufaj's family still remains in a detention camp for his "crime against the fatherland."

The following is the testimony of Nikollë Isufaj.

"The campaign of closing and destroying the churches and mosques in Albania took place in early 1967. At that time I was in the 4th grade, but the event which took place in our village of Kastrati is still fresh in my mind. It was a Monday morning in early spring of 1967. A military truck drove into the center of the village and stopped in front of the church. Our school was located next to the church building. Military trucks would very seldom pass by our village unless it was some special occasion. I remember the previous day when several "delegates" from the district party committee of Shkodër had organized a people's meeting in front of the church after Mass. At the meeting the "delegates" spoke to the crowds telling them "the clergy have exploited and misled the people"; "the priests have always been enemies of the Father-

land"; "they have worked against the people and its power"; "they are agents of the Vatican and reactionary powers" and similar other accusations. The speakers concluded the meeting by requesting the assembled crowd to "respect and obey the law of the party by taking an active part in demolishing the mosques and churches, these symbols of obscurantism and regress."

I remember the fearful apprehension in the faces of my parents on the way home from the gathering. That night our regular recitation of the rosary took longer. My father added several extra prayers for the land and the people. We children were feeling that something extraordinary soon would happen and we were scared.

Next day, Monday, when the heavy truck stopped in the front of the church we instinctively knew that something bad was about to occur. We could hardly wait until recess time to go out and watch. We saw a group of soldiers with their officer, two police officers, one of the "delegates" (who spoke day before) and 3 communists from our village. All were busy loading the truck with statues, candle holders, paintings, crosses, church robes and vestments and other religious artifacts. Our pastor, Pater Kola was tied up to the memorial cross located in the church front yard. He was loudly protesting and at the same time praying and admonishing us who were watching painfully and in disbelief of the vandal act to "remain steadfast in the Christian faith of our forefathers". His face and eyes resembled that of a man dying in pain. I carry to this day his expression of desperation and helplessness.



Father Egid Gilaj (left) and Benedikt Dema (center) with a group of Antonian Youth Association. On the top of the memorial cross, Tish Daija, today renowned composer, Kastrati, 1941



Family rosary, after a day's labor, in Albania still a daily devotion

A number of people were watching the operation in silence so were our two teachers. One of the police officers came over and ordered us to go "about your business". A courageous woman stepped up and began to cry loudly and to protest the arrest of the priest and closing of the church. She went without fear towards the truck when she noticed how the soldiers dumped the old painting of "Our Lady of Shkodër" into the truck. She wrestled with police and soldiers for the painting which was her family's gift to the church years before when the church was built during the Ottoman occupation. She was forcibly removed and escorted to her nearby home and threatened with arrest. The name of this great woman was Katrira Lekaj. (She later died in despair without having the consolation of the last sacraments).

When the loading job was completed, the police sealed the church door and took Pater Kola with them. In meantime we returned to class with a void in our hearts.

At home that evening after our customary recitation of the rosary, our father took the cross and St. Joseph's picture from the wall, handed them to my mother saying "Hide them somewhere." Then he turned to us and said "My children, the dark days for our Christian faith and our country are back again, the same as it was during the Turkish occupation. From now on we will pray secretly and not at usual time before dinner. Watch and pray for Pater Kola and all the priests who are defending our faith".

That night my brothers and sisters were really petrified with fear. We could not fall a sleep as other nights. Each one of us was tightly holding the small medal and crucifix around our necks and wondering how long before the police will stop people to check them for what symbols they were wearing.

The next two days were quiet. Nobody dared to ask or even comment about the police raid.

A week later we again heard a commotion on the road in front of the church. We were just about to begin our first school period. Again the military truck was parked at the church. Near the bell tower were large ladders. Two policemen and three communists from our village were asking for "volunteers" to demolish the bell tower. I still remember that the name of one of the communists was Tom Zefi. He was one of those show off people who wanted to please the policemen. While the discussion was going on we had to enter the class. No one was very attentive to the teacher. Everybody was thinking what they will do with the church building, and the bell. The church bell had in some way regulated our daily lives. At the

sound of the bell we invoked Mary's help -our heavenly mother's help and then went about daily business chores.

At the lunch recess we saw the communists removing the crosses from the bell tower and the church entrance. Helping them were three "volunteers" who were picked up by police.

The next day early in the morning the bell tower was demolished with the help of the soldiers. We again saw Pater Kola, now dressed in shabby civilian clothes. He was assigned with some other prisoners to work in remodeling the church "for other use." The work on remodeling lasted for about five months. No one was allowed to talk or see Pater Kola and the four other prisoners. I now believe they were all priests. When the remodeling job was finished the church became the "House of Culture". We never saw Pater Kola again.

Although more than two decades have passed since the tragic event took place in our village, the people in Kastrati still refer to the House of Culture as "vendi ku ka kenë kisha" (building where the church used to be). I keep asking myself "Why this terrible deed have to happen?"

I am now living in a free country and working to secure a bright future for my family in America and Albania. I am most grateful to Divine Providence and Our Lady of Shkoder for having protected and guided me. I am happy with the freedom and bounty found in my new, adopted country, but I will never forget that Monday in Spring 1967, when they closed our church and took away our beloved pastor, Pater Kola."



GEZUAR PASHKA -- HAPPY EASTER

(Report from a Recent Visit to Albania)

I had the privilege of visiting Albania three times, in 1967, 1978, and 1990 respectively.

At every visit, important events were taking place there that were to drastically shape the socio-cultural structure of this beautiful Balkan country.

In 1967, the Cultural Revolution was raging. Imitating his Chinese counterpart but with different intentions, Enver Hoxha had decided to give the final blow to religion in his country.

I saw centuries-old mosques and churches being torn down, the elegant and slim minarets of Elbasan being decapitated, their graceful crescents replaced by the red star. I photographed the beautiful monasteries and churches of Gjirokastër without their crosses, reminiscent of a body without its head.

In the north, I visited Boga and Thethi: only goats were roaming around the small derelict chapels and churches, surrounded by shrubs and devastated cemeteries. That painful sight contrasted sharply with the beautiful autumn colored surroundings.

Shkodër, the center of national Catholicism, was having its cathedral transformed into an atheistic museum and a gymnasium.

And the years passed...and the world remained silent.

1978. I was to be instrumental in arranging the return of the remains of Vaso Pasha from Lebanon to Albania on the occasion of the centenary of the Prizrend League. Fate is strange: from a Catholic grave on the Lebanese hills, his remains were to be buried into a crossless tomb in Shkodër.

Upon this second visit to Albania, I was given the red carpet treatment by the official authorities. However, when I asked to visit Oroshi, my request was diplomatically denied. As for my wish to meet with some priests, hoxhas or babas, the answer was that "there are no more such relics of the past," that they had all been "converted" to the communist ideology and were living now like any other "citizen."

However, I was fortunate enough to be one of the very few foreigners since World War II to visit Mirdite. What a beautiful countryside! But in this cradle of Albanian Catholicism all visible signs of worship had been eradicated.

Only old and serious faces could now tell the story of the past eleven years.

Elsewhere in the country, Bektashi cemeteries would crop up every now and then, particularly in Kruja and Berat.

In the south, the beautiful string of villages of Dervitsiani, Gouranzi, Sofratik and Goritza inspire a feeling of anxiety. It is strange how one can draw parallels between this period and the one of Ali Pasha (Tepeleva). The grey limestone and the bare mountainsides blend mysteriously with the people's faces and seem to tell of the very sad history of this part of the country.

My "guide" throughout my second visit was no less than Shoku (comrade) Mito Treska, ex-Press Secretary to Enver Hoxha, former head of the Committee for Cultural Relations with other countries, and about to become the Albanian ambassador in Paris. He is certainly one of Albania's most pleasant, intelligent and outspoken personalities. The winding roads in the Albanian countryside encourage casual talking.

Shoku Misto tells me with pride that he, as General Prosecutor, ordered and obtained the execution of Father Anton Harapi in 1946.

He is clever enough to admit that religion is not totally eradicated in the country. A patient and meticulous work must be constantly maintained.

He tells me how his own mother who was a very religious and zealous orthodox opposed the 1967 anti-religious campaign with words and deeds. Torn between the desire of confronting to her son's official Party line and her own beliefs, she kept vacillating as to what to do. Misto Treska told her to carry on with her beliefs if that was what she wanted. She therefore went on venerating the icons of Christ and the Virgin Mary for years. Just a few months before her death she finally acknowledged that this "religious devotion was a big farce," and that, "the Party had been right all along."

I must admit that this unconvincing story nevertheless left a bitter taste in my mouth.

1990 was to prove very different.

Since I had been officially invited by the Albanian authorities, I requested permission to meet with Bishop Mëshill Troshani prior to my arrival, in a letter to Jorgo Melica, President of the Committee for Albania's cultural and friendly relations with other countries. Bishop Troshani is the last surviving Albanian Catholic bishop. He had been released from jail a year or so earlier and was now living with relatives in Lezhe.

However, when I visited with Mr. Melica he told me, somewhat apologetically, that he could not agree to my request "because it does not befit a guest like you to mingle with such category of persons." When I met with Ismail Kadare a few days later and told him what had happened, he shook his head and said, "They were wrong. They should have let you meet with him."



Melhem M. Mobarak (l) and Ismail Kadare (r)

Despite this first set back, I was to witness dramatic changes in the behavior and mentality of the people there. People talk more or less freely in the streets. A waiter tells me that he is a Catholic and prays at home everyday with his family. At Rinas airport, a woman gently refuses some candies I offer her and adds with a smile, "I am fasting for Ramadan...."

Even some Albanian officials admit to me that their parents still adhere the faith into which they had been born.

This mentality is confirmed by Professor Milliez, the former French private doctor of Enver Hoxha. In his recently published memoirs⁽¹⁾ he admits that "some [Albanian] leaders, staunch marxists, are still baptizing their children clandestinely with the help of discreet popes [Orthodox priests]."

In another book just published in Paris,⁽²⁾ one can read: "the French cultural center regularly dispatches books to the Albanian authorities. In 1984, the order surprised us. We were requested to send the 'Pensées' of Pascal, a book on St. Francis of Assisi and works on Mother Teresa. We knew that the first reader of those texts would be no other than Enver Hoxha himself who knew he was very seriously ill..."

When one also knows that Nexhmije Hoxha wears black since her husband's death, one can wonder whether religion is not in the back of the mind of every single Albanian, regardless of his or her political or social affiliations.

I arrived in Albania on the eve of Easter day. I must confess that the lack of external religious manifestations and the silence of Church bells during Easter night made me feel uneasy.

Sunday morning, however, a gorgeous sunshine witnessed streets filled with people. I was struck by the beautiful dresses adorned with ornate jewelry that women and children wore that day.

The men also looked very smart in their dark suits, shining shoes and freshly pressed white shirts. It is as if every one was heading for church. Easter was obviously in people's minds. Many people in the streets would welcome me, although somewhat discreetly, whispering "Gëzuar Pashka" -- "Happy Easter!"

In the evening, I was to watch an Italian television program in the lobby of the Dajti hotel broadcasting "The Passion of Christ" complete and uncensored. Things are indeed changing in Albania.

While in Shkodër, I went to lay a bouquet of flowers on the crossless tomb of Vaso Pasha. In this city of the North, I was allowed to visit and photograph practically everything: the old convent of the Franciscan order, the former St. Anthony's Church re-christened today "Klub të Rinisë," which was formerly called *Kinema Republika*.



Formerly a Catholic church, Kinema Republika is now a Youth Club

As for the museum of Atheism, Midhat Dibra, curator of Shkodër museums tells me that, "Foreigners have criticized us too much for this museum. We shall soon be presenting the facts of atheism in a more scientific and less provocative way."

From Shkodër to Puka and then on to Kukës, one can see some derelict cemeteries on the hillsides. Coming back through Mirditë, I saw Oroshi from afar. It is now linked by a motor vehicle road to Rrëshen. However, only trucks, jeeps or high chassis vehicles could use it. Since it was raining very heavily that day and there was the threat of mud-slides, I decided with deep sorrow not to visit Oroshi.

Back in Tiranë, I went to lay some flowers on the crossless graves of Rosa and Age Bojaxhi, respectively mother and sister of Nënë Teresa. I wish to thank here, all the Albanian officials who made this pilgrimage possible.

In the cemetery of Tiranë, most of the tombs are well looked after and spotless. No religious symbols, neither cross nor crescent, are to be seen anywhere. I was, however, fortunate enough to notice a cross engraved on the funeral slab of a young soldier killed in an automobile

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

accident. When I wanted to take a photo, the caretaker of the cemetery, guessing my intentions, felt uncomfortable. Sulejman Tomçini, my touring companion and ex-ambassador of Albania to the Middle East was to soothe his qualm by interjecting "S'ka problem. Është Kulturël!" (It is ok. Cultural use).

Looking around the cemetery, one would notice people praying silently in front of the tombs of their loved ones. A woman dressed in black mutters some Qu'ranic verses. Someone else lights a candle and sticks it onto or beside the grave.

In Korçë, the museum of Medieval Art contains dozens of beautiful icons painted by famous masters such as Onufer, Seleniccasi and Shpataraku. There is also a very impressive iconostasis created by Master Dhimitri. This ugly looking museum is the former church "Burimi Jetëdhënë."

On market day, the Sunday after Easter, amidst caravans of donkeys, sheeps, goats, mules and pigs, we leave Korçë for Voskopojë.

The road surface is muddy and full of potholes. The green okra and mauve colors of the surrounding hills enhance the beauty of the scenery. After one hour, we reach our destination. The village had been completely destroyed during the war and has been since then entirely rebuilt anew.

Only few of the 500 churches and monasteries of yesteryears have survived. I visit the substantial remains of Shën Koll and Shen Maria. Their polychromic frescoes are very beautiful. The Albanian authorities are now in the process of restoring all churches and mosques, trying whenever possible to slow down or eradicate the harmful consequences of the 1967 Cultural Revolution.

This restoration has now reached the intellectual level. Ismail Kadare has lately denounced the official long standing literary policy of the present regime. He has praised Gjergj Fishta and Ernest Koliqi, both prominent Catholic writers and their books will soon be re-published in Albania. When I asked Kadare if Terenc Tocci's works would follow suit, he answered with humor: "I am sure Tocci can fit between Fishta and Koliqi!"

On the eve of my departure, Jorgo Melica held a farewell dinner for me. Just before the meal, he handed me some colored photos representing Nexhmije Hoxha welcoming Mother Teresa in Tiranë.

Enver Hoxha's widow was graciously consented to let me have them. She had also remitted to Milica for my attention a very courteous letter written in perfect French welcoming me to Albania and apologizing for not having had the time to receive me during my stay there, owing to her busy schedule at the time of the Tenth Plenum (of the Party).

Coincidentally, this letter dated April 21st precedes the beautiful one she was to write to Mother Teresa by four days. The letter to Mother Teresa was subsequently published in the May issue of "Shqipëria e re," in which she wished her "Pleqëri të bardhë." May this wish extend to all responsible Albanians so that wisdom will always prevail.

Melhem M. Mobarak

(1) Paul Milliez. *Ce que j'espère*. Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 1989.

(2) Elizabeth et Jean-Paul Champseix: 57 boulevard Staline. *Chroniques albanaises*. Editions La Découverte, Paris, 1990. The authors were teachers of French at Tiranë University from 1982 to 1988.

OPINION FORUM

The Hand of God: Reflections on 8th May 1990.

Geoffrey Hull

Since its fall to the Communist partisans of Enver Hoxha in 1944, Albania has been variously described as 'a land of martyrs,' 'the little country with the big gulag,' and even 'Satan's kingdom on earth.' Such dramatic titles have not been idly bestowed: among other Marxist regimes, that of Tirana has been unique in its deeds, especially those of 1967, when, its leaders translated into a terrible reality, their declared intention of creating the 'first atheist state in the world.' "In no other country in the world are fundamental human rights so completely denied," wrote Anglican Canon Trevor Beeson in 1974, "and in no other place is the persecution of religious believers so relentless."

There is something disturbingly unusual about the sufferings of this much-tried land where poverty, despair and constant fear of discrimination, torture and imprisonment have become a way of life. The predicament of the Albanian people can easily be explained in earthly terms, but the religious mind instinctively suspects that there are other, less definable factors in play. Nowadays, of course, attempts to discern in the events of human history the guiding hand of Divine Providence are frowned upon, and perhaps not wrongly, as 'mystification' of this kind can be dangerous: the actions of God are, after all, beyond our understanding. Nevertheless those familiar with the recent history of Albania may well share my suspicion that this small nation has been chosen by God to play a symbolic role in the apocalyptic duel between the powers of light and darkness that has characterized our century.

After 1967 Albania was the only country on earth in which every public manifestation of religious faith was a criminal offence, where all churches and mosques had been closed, demolished or converted to secular uses, and where most of the outlawed clergy had been either murdered or imprisoned. By the end of the 1980s ordinary believers in this country had all but run out of hope; they could now only pray the prayer of despair, the spirit of which has been captured by the exiled poet Ernest Koliqi:

*The bones of our martyrs shiver in solitude among the ruins,
And know not the silence of the grave even in death;
Yet during their lives they exalted Thee, God of the Universe,
And in this world they always followed Thy paths!*

*In this day of sorrow, why wilt Thou not break our nation's
chains?*

*And the hearts and faces of our women in mourning;
Why wilt Thou not make them shine with rays of freedom?
And wilt Thou not bless our martyrs with a sweet sleep in
graves?*

Then, on 8th May, 1990, after forty-five years of suffering, came the first sign that God was not deaf to those groans of anguish: the Albanian government suddenly announced a package of reforms, among which was the lifting of the twenty-three year old ban on religious practice. A slow thaw is set in motion; Albania begins to emerge from the artificial isolation from the rest of the world forced on her by the notorious Hoxha regime.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Across the sea Monte Gargano, the 'spur' of the Italian boot, points to the Stalinist fortress Albania like a cannon poised to attack its seemingly impregnable walls. What does Monte Gargano have to do with Albania? The answer is obvious to any Latin-rite Catholic who knows his liturgical calendar (I say Latin-rite because the promontory in question points directly towards Shkodër, the capital of Catholic Albania). The 8th May is the feast of the Apparition of Saint Michael the Archangel on Monte Gargano, and in this Marian age, the Archangel who cast Satan and his rebellious angels down to hell has been repeatedly invoked by the Popes as a protector of the Church under attack from its formidable modern enemies. In her recent apparitions in Europe, the Blessed Virgin has been accompanied or announced by the Great Archangel. And in 1884 (after experiencing a terrifying vision of a future assault on the Bark of Peter, it is said) Pope Leo XIII ordered the recitation after Low Mass of a series of prayers for "the liberty and exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church." (Later, in 1934, Pope Pius XI directed that these prayers be said for the conversion of Communist Russia.) One of the Leonine prayers was addressed to Saint Michael as the Church's defender against the attacks of Satan. In no country of Europe was the assault of evil so powerful, and the patronage of its great enemy St. Michael so necessary as in Albania.

An early apocryphal work, the Testament of Abraham, describes Saint Michael as "commander of God's forces, endowed with power of intercession so great as to prevent souls from becoming captives of hell." His shrine on Monte Gargano is one of the great holy places of Christendom. The pilgrimage to Saint Michael's Mount dates from around the year 525, when he appeared there to Laurentius, the Bishop of Sipontum. Throughout the Middle Ages, pilgrims visited the shrine in their thousands. It was a favorite haunt of the warmongering

Normans who had an understandable devotion to the great Heavenly Warrior. The Normans themselves became so familiar with this pilgrimage that they began to cast covetous eyes on the rest of Apulia and eventually launched their conquest of Southern Italy and Sicily. Their successor, Charles of Anjou, crossed the Strait of Otranto in 1272 to create the first Kingdom of Albania; and the first Albanian settlements in Italy began a century and a half later when one of a new line of Neapolitan kings, Alfonso of Aragon, made land grants to Albanian mercenaries brought in to help quell the revolt of feudal barons still loyal to the Angevins. Thus the holy mountain of Saint Michael in Apulia was bound up with the beginnings of the modern Albanian nation.

In 1895 the same Pope who invoked Saint Michael's protection for the Church gave his blessing to the Third Council of Albanian Bishops, which met in Shkodër and, among other things, proclaimed Our Lady of Good Counsel the Patroness of Albania. On the same latitude as Shkodër and Monte Gargano is the small Latian town of Genazzano, famous throughout the Catholic world because one of its churches houses the miraculous image of Our Lady of Good Counsel, which found its way hither in the 15th century from Shkodër, where it was previously venerated. According to the legend, the icon of the Blessed Virgin under this title left Albania in 1467, the year the country fell prey to the forces of Islam. Exactly five hundred years later, in 1967, the continuous Eucharistic Sacrifice ceased there when every remaining altar was destroyed.

The great holocaust of the spring of 1967 had been inspired by similar events the year before in Maoist China, Albania's sole ally, where the Cultural Revolution unleashed its iconoclasm and all the churches and temples in the land were profaned and closed. After Comrade

Hoxha's quarrel with Khrushchev, Albania's new alliance with China seemed to the rest of the world a strange friendship. But in her spiritual history, Albania had been linked with China long before the twentieth century through the person of an Albanian (or rather, Arbëresh) Pope, Clement XI (Giovanni Francesco Albani). Rome, the seat of the Universal Church, also lies near the 42nd parallel, as do Genazzano, Monte Gargano, and Shkodër...What did this Albanian Pope have to do with China? It was Clement XI who, in 1704, issued a decree condemning the so-called Chinese rites, the attempt by the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci and his followers to facilitate Chinese conversions to Christianity by permitting formal ancestor worship and veneration of Confucius. The Chinese Emperor reacted angrily to this decision, eventually expelling Catholic missionaries from China. Catholicism in the Far East seemed to have suffered an irremediable set-back, and ever since progressive-minded historians have decried the Albanian Pope's decree as unenlightened and imperialistic. After all, it is urged, was not Fr. Ricci's approach finally vindicated by the Holy See in 1939?

Be this as it may, Catholicism enjoyed a remarkable growth in nineteenth-century China, thanks to the heroic labors of French and Italian missionaries. The new faith to which over four million Chinese had con-

verted by 1949 made no compromise with paganism, though this did not prevent the Latin rite from acquiring something of a Chinese flavour in regard to art, music, custom and spirituality. And whatever criticism the proponents of 'enculturation' may make of the adaption of these Chinese to Latin Catholicism, the fact remains that this 'foreign' faith has now survived over forty years of ruthless persecution by a



Our Lady of Shkodër

Communist regime. A priest of progressive tendencies who recently toured the 'Patriotic' Catholic churches of China told me despairingly that the Chinese are so steeped in the Latin tradition that they will almost certainly resist the imposition of the new all-vernacular liturgy when relations with Rome are normalized. The survival and vitality of the Chinese Catholic Church after the ravages of the Cultural Revolution are surprising enough, but the Chinese faithful's loyalty to the much maligned decision of an Albanian Pope is even more remarkable!

In 1968, the year after the Maoistic annihilation of organized religion in Albania, a revered religious figure died in the monastery of San Giovanni Rotondo on Monte Gargano. He was Padre Pio da Pietrelcina, the saintly Capuchin who, like his spiritual father Saint Francis of Assisi, bore on his body the stigmata, the living marks of the passion of Jesus. Padre Pio came from good Apulian peasant stock, and given that thousands of Albanian refugees from the Turks settled along the lower Adriatic seaboard from the fifteenth century onwards, it is not unlikely that this holy man, who experienced the depths of human suffering and understood its value in the economy of salvation, shared in his veins some of the blood that flowed from the wounds of his martyred brothers in faith across the water.

From the first the Franciscans (of whom the Capuchins represent a 16th-century reformed branch) have distinguished themselves by their ministry of suffering humanity. Suffering has been the common lot of Christians in the Balkans for hundreds of years, and for much of this time their churches have languished through persecution and neglect. Ever since the thirteenth century, the Franciscans have been the apostles par excellence of the Balkans and of Albania. There is a legend that Saint Francis himself passed through Lezha (Alessio) while returning from his mission of peace to the Egyp-

tian Sultan in 1219 and providentially founded there the Albanian branch of his order. During the dark days of Ottoman domination the Franciscans, many of whom were Albanians from Italy, managed to keep the flame of the Catholic faith alive in northern Albania as they did in Bosnia, another area where Islam made numerous converts. As Edith Durham wrote in 1909: "That any Catholics now remain in North Albania is mainly due to the efforts of the Franciscans, of whose courage there can be no question, and who, through the three darkest centuries, took Albania under their special care." Later, in the bloody years following the Second World War, the Franciscans were to furnish to Albania many of her martyrs for the Faith.

Among the priests who gave their lives for the Faith during the long dictatorship of Enver Hoxha were several members of the Society of Jesus. The origins of the Jesuit order are in Spain; its founder was the Basque nobleman St Ignatius Loyola. Like China, Spain is linked with Albania in a special way. The Jesuit order might be originally Spanish, but Ignatius' ideas for the foundation of a religious order dedicated to the defence of the Church matured while he was a student of Catholic theology and philosophy at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Four hundred years later another young foreigner would be studying a different philosophy at the Sorbonne. He was from Albania; his name, Enver Hoxha...After the French Revolution, the war of 'Reason' against the Church found ample scope for development in Spain. The anti-clerical strategies of the Spanish Liberals of 1812 culminated over a century later in the vicious and bloody persecution of the Church under the Republican government between 1936 and 1939, when churches and monasteries were wantonly desecrated and burned, priests were hunted and gunned down as public-like animals, and Communist soldiers danced in the streets with the disinterred corpses of Carmelite nuns. Another link with Albania here: one of the more enthusi-

astic participants in this orgy of blasphemy and hatred was an Albanian Marxist, Mehmet Shehu. Before he "committed suicide" in 1981 following his falling out with Comrade Enver, Prime Minister Shehu had spent years tormenting God's Albanian sons and daughters with the methods he had learned in Spain.

I have tried to trace the movements of the Hand of God in the recent sufferings of Albania by highlighting a number of significant coincidences. But the fundamental question remains: Why, among so many nations, was Albania singled out for this terrible martyrdom? In 1945 the 8th May had been the day on which the surrender of Nazi Germany was announced to the world. Peace and freedom were restored to much of Europe, whereas in Albania an horrific nightmare was just beginning. In A.D. 313, the Illyrian (i.e., Proto-Albanian) Roman Emperor Constantine had brought an end to the persecution of the Christian Church; seventeen centuries later the modern Illyrian usurper Hoxha was forging his own version of the anthropocentric state religion of the Empire and plunging his God-fearing country into a new age of the catacombs.

No one can hope to understand fully why Albania is so special in God's plan, but it is nevertheless instructive to consider some of the characteristics of the Albanians as a nation. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Albania is that it is the only country of Europe in which



Bishop Teofan S. Noli

Moslems, not Christians, form the majority. Yet if Orthodox and Catholic Christians represent today barely a third of the population, this minority has long distinguished itself by a tenacious loyalty to the faith that was once common to all Albanians. No religious community has given Albania more martyrs during the recent holocaust than the Catholics. Moreover, in the struggle for national identity and independence, the Catholic minority played a leading role out of all proportion to their numerical strength, and it is no secret that the success of the Marxist take-over in 1946 depended largely on the destruction of the Albanian Catholic Church. (The contemporary Soviet assault on the Uniate Church of Galicia, the champion of Ukrainian nationalism, offers a close analogy). The contribution of the Catholic Luigj Gurakuqi to the formation of the new Albanian state can hardly be overlooked; nor can that of Orthodox bishop Teofan Noli, who led the Albanian government in 1924. Albania, then, is a land where the Christian churches have stood out as symbols of freedom and progress, refusing to identify themselves with the powers conspiring to keep the nation in subjection and the people in poverty and ignorance.

The Albanian people's love of freedom is proverbial. In their homeland this manifested itself in centuries of resistance to the encroachments of invaders, from the struggle of the Illyrian kings against the territorial ambitions of Alexander the Great, to the glorious campaign of



Luigj Gurakuqi

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Scanderbeg against the Turks; from the throwing off of Ottoman rule during the Balkan Wars to the ill-fated but heroic fight of the Catholic tribesmen of the Mirdita against the Communists in 1945. Even in Southern Italy and Sicily this love of freedom continued to be a distinguishing trait of the Albanians. In Calabria and elsewhere the Albanian newcomers refused to become serfs of the feudal estates or latifundia. "They do not built houses," noted a contemporary observer, "so as not to be subject to the barons, dukes, princes or other lords. And if the owner of the land they inhabit ill-treats them, they set fire to their huts and go elsewhere." It is hardly surprising then that the Arbëresh should have given Italy one of its great Liberal leaders, Francesco Crispi, who was Premier in 1887 and 1893. At home the Tosk emigrants had chafed under the yoke of their feudal landlords, most of whom eventually embraced Islam in order to retain their social and economic privileges, and obliged all those subject to them to follow their example. It is no coincidence, and yet another irony, that Enver Hoxha was a child of this oppressed, Islamicized Tosk peasantry, who, however, exorcised his past by making himself a new type of feudal lord, one who forsook not only the religion of his ancestors but faith itself, and did everything to impose this ultimate apostasy on his serfs--the Albanian people.

If Albania gives the lie to the charge that Christianity is the enemy of freedom and progress, the recent history of her people also demonstrates that there is at least one nation that pays more than lip service to the ecumenical ideal. Unlike so many of their neighbors, the Albanians have learnt that the schism separating Catholic from Orthodox can be easily healed, and that it is possible for Moslems and Christians, both worshippers of the one true God, to live in harmony and respect for what is good in each other's religions. Brought closer together and spiritually refined by their common suffer-

ings, the believers of twentieth-century Albania have grown far beyond the internecine tendencies of their Balkan environment.

Long before the Second Vatican Council, Albania was a showcase for Christian ecumenism. The Great Schism of 1054 was slow in coming to the Byzantine-rite churches of southern Albania. Some mountain parishes remained in communion with Rome until the eighteenth century, and several of the archbishops of Ohrid showed a desire for reunion with the Holy See. In 1765 the Greek Catholic community was lost to Orthodoxy only when the Turks barred the entry of Catholic missionaries. Then in 1895 a group of Orthodox parishes in the Mali Shpatit district near Elbasan tried unsuccessfully to re-enter the Roman communion. Finally in 1938 a delegation of Basilian monks from Italy organized a small Uniate community in Elbasan which flourished until the Communists destroyed it in 1945. Before the war it had been common for Orthodox Albanians to attend Catholic services and seek out Catholic priests for confession. Orthodox Primate Noli told one Franciscan priest: "With my heart and mind I am for unity with the Catholic Church." Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople, who went to Rome in 1965 so that he and Pope Paul VI could withdraw the mutual excommunications of 1054 was, not surprisingly, an Albanian. And in Italy, Sicily and Malta the Hale-Albanians have borne faithful witness to the Byzantine tradition within the Catholic Church for almost seven centuries. During his tour of Calabria in 1915 the British writer Norman Douglas noted how in the town of Vaccarizza "the two churches stand side by side, and I was shown through them by their respective priests, Greek and Catholic, who walked arm in arm in friendly wise."

As for Moslem-Christian relations, Albanians have not forgotten how, during the Great Persecution, Moslem defended Christian and Christian defended Moslem. Today, among the

diaspora, members of the two faiths meet at common social functions and contribute generously to each other's material needs. It is far from the minds of either Christians or Moslems to gloat over the destruction of their respective religious communities at home. Thus the Albanian American Imam Vehbi Ismaili told those commemorating the Fortieth Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania (1985): "There will be no peace in Albania for as long as the churches do not joyously ring their bells, the muezzin does not call the faithful from the minarets, and the flocks do not fill the Houses of God praying in silence or singing in chorus the glory of the Creator."

This spirit of human co-operation and deep sense of religious brotherhood owe much to the joyful poverty of the Albanians, for paradoxically materialism was the least vice of the people whose homeland was forcibly turned into a kingdom of materialism after the last world war. Norman Douglas told his British readers how the ancestors of the Arbëresh had arrived in Italy with nothing but "their shirts and their rhapsodies." At home the Albanian people were never morally crushed by their poverty, nor did it lessen their ancient traditions of hospitality, as Ernest Koliqi recalls in *Desperate Prayer*.

*For centuries, O God, our lips paled with hunger;
Often our dinner we left untouched, so as to save it
For our growing children, so that, should any guest arrive,
We might share with him that bread, for having honored us.*

For a crusty old Calvinist like Douglas, the anti-materialism of the Albanians he met in Southern Italy was quite shocking, and it explained why their villages and houses were so squalid by contemporary British standards. Lacking "the sense of home as a fixed and old-established topographical point," the Albanians thought exclusively in terms of the family: "We think of a particular house or village where we were born and where we spent our impression-

able days of childhood; these others regard home not as a geographical but as a social center, liable to shift from place to place; they are at home everywhere, so long as their clan is about them." People, not things, were important to the Arbëresh: "They have none of our sentimentality in regard to inanimate objects. Eliza Cook's feelings towards her 'old arm-chair' would strike them as savoring of childishness." (Such is the contempt of the ordinary Albanian for materialism that in Marxist Albania, Communist Party members are reportedly careful not to flaunt too much the higher standard of living they enjoy, unlike their counterparts in the Soviet Union and other Communist states.) Only a people with the deep-rooted conviction that spirit is more important than matter and that people come before things could have given the world a Mother Teresa. And in spite of all that has happened to them over the past forty-five years the loyalty of most Albanians is to the family, the last refuge of religious faith, and not to the state, the oppressive promoter of atheism.

Today one thing at least is certain: the blood of the modern Albanian martyrs, so profusely shed since 1944, has kept alive the flame of religious faith in "the world's first atheist state." During his meeting with a delegation of Albanian Catholic exiles in September, 1986, Pope John Paul II remarked that although the Church in Albania had disappeared externally, she "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 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.

Outside the northern city of Shkodër, where the national shrine of Our Lady once stood, there is today a plot of level ground in the middle of which rises a tall column topped with the Red Star, a sinister monument erected twenty-three years ago. The sanctuary of the heavenly Patroness of Albania may have been razed to the ground exactly five hundred years after the departure of the miraculous image it once enshrined, but veneration of Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ is still alive in the hearts of Albanian believers of every religious background. Albania may remain for the time being a country without sanctuaries, one where visitors to the Museum of Atheism in Shkodër can view a monstrosity and ciborium containing consecrated hosts plundered from a church in 1967. But little did the perpetrators of this sacrilege realize that they were in fact enthroning in the very temple of godlessness the sacramental presence of the same Incarnate God and lover of mankind whom they hoped, and failed, to destroy.

IS THERE MOVEMENT IN ALBANIA'S RELIGIOUS POLICY?

Wolfgang Stoppel

In the past years, international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International have repeatedly addressed the question if and to what extent Albania is guilty of human rights violations (i.e., political prisoners, the status of the -primarily- Greek minority groups, religious prohibitions). In 1984 these concerns culminated in the Conference of German Bishops Day of Prayer for the persecuted church in Albania;¹ an edition of "ai" specifically dedicated to Albania;² and the International Society for Human Rights' (Frankfurt) Report dealing with Albania³. However, the materials presented to these organizations proved to be of little legal value because of numerous, easily discernible mistakes and because they lacked verifiable information. These findings were, therefore, at best suitable for political speculations but meaningless as a basis for objective, impartial discussions.⁴ Proof for this contention was provided when members of the British "Albania Society" (the British-Albanian Friendship Society) visited the international secretariat of "ai" in London. There they found that not one single member of the Albanian section possessed even rudimentary knowledge

about that country, but that such absence of knowledge was substituted by keeping close ties with Albanian emigrant groups, however, without maintaining the proper distance to the anti-Albanian political propaganda of these groups.⁵

In view of this it is hardly surprising that there was never an official Albanian response to these accusations. At most, Albanian diplomats spoke of "CIA manipulations". In 1985 Paskal Haxhi, editor-in-chief of the only journal of law in Albania and juridical cadre at the High Court, in an interview for Danish television merely stated that the "...reports by Amnesty International did not contain an ounce of truth".⁶ But it appears that the Albanians in their stubborn resistance had not only underestimated the persistence of "ai" but especially the world-wide prestige of that organization. In 1984 "ai" successfully instigated "procedures for confidentially investigating reports about human rights violations in Albania" with the UN Human Rights Commission.⁷ In the years following these non-public hearings produced more substantiated and far better researched reports by the "Sub-

Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination and for the Protection of Minorities".⁸ These reports were presented only to the member countries of the commission and to the Albanian government. Their central theme was - contrary to the accusations of "ai" - primarily freedom of religion in Albania and not the fate of political prisoners or the absence of minority rights.⁹ In their respective resolutions the sub-committee and the committee itself reprimanded Albania's religious policies as not being in compliance with chapter IX, articles 55 and 56 of the UN-Charter and stated that Albania had neglected its obligations as a UN-member.¹⁰

It is difficult to understand why the Albanians refused to reply again. Possibly, they did not estimate correctly the consequences of such an intransigent demeanor.¹¹ Reaction was swift: on March 2, 1988 the Human Rights Commission decided¹² at its 44th convention to convert the non-public hearings into public hearings¹³ - a procedure which in the history of the UN had only been carried out in the case of Guinea (1979) and Afghanistan (1983)! Of the 43 member nations, 15 voted for public hearings (among them Argentina, Belgium, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Great Britain, USA) and 11 against (among them Algeria, Bulgaria, China, DDR, Yugoslavia, Nicaragua, USSR), 11 countries abstained (among them Brazil, German Federal Republic, France, India, Italy, Japan, Austria, Spain). Surprisingly, this decision went largely unnoticed in the media and the general public. In Albanian quarters this was viewed as a stroke of luck, because it provided at least a brief interval in which their marred image could be repaired in the diplomatic world. Already on May 10, 1988, Albania's permanent representative to the UN, Bashkim Pitarka, submitted a letter to the UN General Assembly to be distributed among the member countries. This letter stated among other things:

"There are no restrictions on the exercise of conscience in Albania. Religious freedom is equally considered an individual and private right. Concerning religious institutions, the Albanian people have made their decision out of free will and without any external compulsions; for this reason nobody in Albania can be forced to believe in God or to practice religious customs. However, this does not mean that such customs are in fact not practiced. It is merely held that it is a personal and private choice, to be decided by each family."¹⁴

This diplomatic maneuver was unsuccessful since at its 40th convention the sub-commission repeated in another resolution of August 31, 1988 the previous accusations¹⁵ and the commission itself, at its 45th convention, affirmed in a resolution of March 8, 1989 that public hearings should continue¹⁶ with votes overwhelmingly 23 to 3 for the resolution and 13 abstentions; only China, Cuba and Pakistan voted for Albania and against the resolution. The commission regretfully stated that Albania then as now had refused to engage in constructive cooperative efforts to help clarify the above questions. The Albanian government was asked expressly to reply specifically and concretely to the accusations regarding human rights violations and to provide information if and how the Constitution and the laws corresponded to general human rights declarations. Additionally, that is to say, inspired by these actions, Albania was pressured by her West European trade partners with respect to religious freedom. The Albanian foreign minister Reis Maek felt this pressure during a state visit to France in 1989 as much as the Albanian chief ideologue and member of the politbureau Fero Cani during a visit to Bonn in May 1989. It was heard from CDU (Christian Democratic Union) circles that he was questioned there about religious freedom in Albania by the president of parliament, Rita Süssmuth, in an unusually sharp, even rough tone. So far, Alba-

nia has not reacted to these accusations and, particularly, has not yet replied to the questions posited by the UN. Nevertheless, certain activities in Albania lead us to believe that the massive world-wide reaction has found a certain resonance in Albania.

Recently, there has been more official tolerance toward the observance of private religious customs. This could indicate a "laissez faire" policy as long as this would not mean forming religious groups; there are more efforts to explain and help accept the incriminated religious policies to an international audience; internationally, more ideological disputes against "out-moded" customs and traditions take place while at the same time atheism is propagated even more intensively. Particularly it can be said that aside from the official interpretation that religious belief is a private matter, one could recently detect, when such religious belief was practiced within the family and did not conflict with the social duties of the citizens, an astonishing reticence on the part of government and party officials. Journalists and tourists as well as Albanian informants have corroborated this observation.¹⁷ In a more or less unofficial way, avenues have been opened up here which transgress a mere tolerance of religion even if expressed guarantees to uphold this new religious freedom are (still) lacking. At any rate, the Albanian foreign minister Reis Malile maintained in an interview with the French newspaper "Le Monde" in March 1989 as what could be perceived an affirmation of this "state of suspension":

"Many invaders - in the distant and recent past - have used religion in Albania to attain their goal, the occupation of the country. Therefore, there is no place for religion in our country. For us, religion is solely a matter of consciousness. Whoever wishes to believe, may believe. No one will forbid it. But the state does not actively support religion."

It is also remarkable that, probably as a signal of good will, since the middle of 1988 a number of imprisoned clergymen have been released. Among them is Bishop N. Troshani, the last Catholic bishop still living. He had been incarcerated since 1974 and was not allowed to join his family in Lezha.¹⁸ Concurrent with these activities come the surprising news that the former Catholic church of Tirana ("Sacred Heart National Shrine") - used since 1967 as the "Rinija" movie theatre - is to be reconstructed. The old facade with the two towers will be remodelled and the building itself be used for chamber music concerts. It is possible that all this in the end might mean a return to the church's original function. The Albanian-Italian commission is even trying to solve the case of the 6 sisters and brothers Popa who on 12/12/1985 took refuge in the Italian embassy to force their emigration and who have been there ever since.¹⁹ Restrictive entry regulations have been eased and representatives of all denominations present in Albania have been permitted to visit the country, possibly to fashion in this manner a positive world-wide opinion about Albania. For instance, in summer 1988 the chancellor of the Albanian-Orthodox (autocephalous) Church of Boston, Reverend A. Liolin, who is of Albanian origin, travelled through Albania for 2 months. He was allowed to wear his religious garb and to carry religious books and journals. Later he declared in several interviews given in the US²⁰ how impressed he was with Albania's economic growth, her industrial development, with progress that had been in education, health, but also in agricultural and cultural sectors. He said the "happy faces of the people bore witness to this progress achieved in such a short time." He believed that the ideas and aspirations of Fan S. Noli, as whose student he sees himself, would bear fruit in the future as well.²¹ Similar thoughts were expressed by American Baptist missionaries, Dorothy and Edwin Jacques, who had been teachers in Albania from 1932 until 1940 and who had been allowed now for the first time to return to their former places of

teaching. Also in summer of 1988 the director of the Albania-Islamic Center in Detroit/USA, Imam V. Ismaili, visited Albania together with his family. He reported to have found no visible signs of religious practices anywhere in Albania. However, in his discussions with Albanian young people he detected great interest in question concerning religion. There were, to his great astonishment, discussed freely and without fear.²² In September 1988 the Jesuit N. Kelmendi, who had left Albania in 1940, received permission to visit his family near Shkodër.

Other similar cases exist, but the most spectacular visit would certainly be that of Nobel Price winner Mother Teresa in August 1989. Her visit of several days was declared to be a "private one", however, her schedule reveals that it was at least a semi-official visit. She met with representatives of the Albanian Red Cross, was received by foreign minister Reis Malile and, above all, had a long talk with the chairperson of the General Council of the Democratic Front, Nexhmije Hoxha, the widow of Enver Hoxha. Mother Teresa brought flowers to Enver Hoxha's grave and declared at his gravesite:

"I am deeply moved and pay my deepest respect to the victims, the martyrs of the nation, who have given their life to free their country",

and after having seen day care facilities for children:

"I am moved and overjoyed to see the great care given to bringing up the new generation, the future of the country. Children brought up under such favorable and caring conditions cannot be but happy."²³

It is strikingly obvious that one does not find one word of criticism about Albania's religious policies in any of these remarks. Conversely, the Albanians could take this absence of criticism precisely as proof against the alleged religious

persecutions. Although it is entirely possible that these visitors refrained from criticism out of personal or political considerations. Nevertheless, one has to congratulate the Albanians for selecting their guests so carefully, since they left Albania with favorable impressions - or at least with a less hostile or critical attitude than before - and have contributed to a more positive opinion about Albania. The Albanians were prepared to accept possible negative reactions, such as a resurgence or even strengthening of religious forces, as a result of these visits. But this observation seems to be in contradiction to recent Albanian statements that remnants of Albania's religious past are still present despite 45 years of Communist rule and 20 years after the iconoclast. The chairperson of the Democratic Front, Nexhmije Hoxha, referred to this in her report of activities during the 6th Congress in June 1989:

"The Democratic Front has always been in the front lines to free the people from the chains of religion and from the savage laws of the unwritten code of the mountains. But this does not mean that we have eradicated all traces of patriarchal, conservative and religious rule. The revolutionary experience of our organization shall be used against such reactionary traditions in order to strengthen at the same time our new order and to cement successfully and psychologically our socialist society."²⁴

One should nevertheless not overvalue such concessions because Albania is troubled by many urgent (primarily agricultural) problems, and questions of religion are of more secondary importance as my Albanian interlocutors have repeatedly assured me. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that recently the number of articles dealing with religious and traditional topics have increased as a systematic examination of the national bibliography has shown. Still, one cannot assume this to be a new strategy, com-

parable to the 1970's, against obsolete customs and habits. Atheism is equally propagated as is stated in article 37 of the Constitution:

"The state does not recognize any religion and engages in atheistic propaganda."

Contrary to former publications, however, these new writings are astonishingly frank about the present situation and the accusations against Albania raised abroad. Possibly for the first time Albanians are now informed rather bluntly about the status of the various religions in their country and about the accusations of human rights violations, in the Western media. For instance, an article which appeared at the end of 1986 in the journal "Studime politiko-shoqërore"²⁵ about "The Atheistic Policies of the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA) and the Experiences in the Fight Against Religion" states (the journal is the mouthpiece of the Institute for Marxist-Leninist Studies at the CC of the PLA, the director of which is also Nexhmije Hoxha):

"There are still people who have religious prejudices together with other foreign ideologies; this manifests itself in manifold, reactionary ideas, customs and habits..."

Presently there are in our country former clergymen, fanatical and backward believers, uprooted elements, who cannot adhere to our society or are disappointed by it and who continue to cherish their religion and at the same time are agitators for their hidden goals...

The ever-present ideological pressures of the capitalist-ideological world surrounding us and its religious propaganda...equally foster religious remnants...

The existence of these external and internal factors, which preserve, support and reactivate such remnants of religion, warrant to continue our fight against these factors..."

At the beginning of 1988 the same journal published an article by G. Habibaj, professor of political science and law at the University of Tirana, with the title "The Aims of Vatican Propaganda Against Albania and Their Unmasking".²⁶ In this article the author took issue with the role of the Catholic Church in the history of Albania, and then addressed actual events and accusations of the recent past (e.g. the case of S. Kurti²⁷ and other trials of the 1970's). He said:

"The lies of the Vatican with respect to religious freedom have even more ambitious aims. By portraying the mass movement against religion in our country as a violent movement, where allegedly human rights are not upheld, where Catholics are not allowed "to practice their religion", where people are forbidden to travel from one place to the next without permission by the police, where all the faithful are executed, where "the dictatorship of the proletariat is incapable to ensure social justice for all classes and even less capable to guarantee freedom".

These sermons by the Vatican are incorrect and ridiculous, which every reasonable person can see, who has visited our country even for a short period of time."

In the 1988 April issue of "Rruga e Partisë" (The Road of the Party), the theoretical mouthpiece of the PLA, appeared an article about the topic "Nation on one hand and religion on the other - there is no inner relationship between the two".²⁸ It continues: The Catholic Church traditionally has always spoken of "faith, fatherland, progress" and has maintained that "catholicism is the soul of Albanian patriotism". This is wrong and fictitious because the clergy had always pursued denationalizing the people. The article admitted, however, that neither radical or administrative means would be able to cause a "natural death" of religion, therefore, the class struggle against the remnants of religion must be continued. It would be impossible to

analyze here all articles dealing with this topic. The following selection of titles should be self-explanatory and they are given in translation to facilitate reading:

Y. Halilaj: "Family Customs Freed From Religion Are An Expression Of Truly Human Sentiments"²⁹

H. Hako: "To Intensify the Struggle against Remnants of Religion and Obsolete Customs"³⁰

A. Bilbili: "People Create Exemplary Models and Religious Rites, but Religion does not Create People (To light the fire against foreign ideas and conventional customs)"³¹

E. Çela: "Lack of Evidence of Religious Fanatism in our People"³²

Ibid.: "For an Active and Militant Atheistic Education in the Schools"³³

Against this background and the well-known lack of information from Albania, a prognosis for the further development of human rights and religious questions can only be tentative. One can predict with some certainty that socio-political changes are bound to occur within the not too distant future. For now, perestroika and glasnost are not topics of interest and are used merely as evidence for the "bankruptcy of Soviet revisionism".³⁴ But more and more frequent contacts of the people with foreigners, especially through television programs of the neighboring countries (although the first Yugoslav television program continues to be jammed) and through tourism, new ideas are awakened in the people and more material things are desired. Party and state will not be able to satisfy these desires, at least not in the near future, especially since the present system of food supply is anything but rosy (basic food items such as milk, butter, cheese, eggs and meat, for example, are still rationed with food stamps in some parts of the country). In order to constrain discontent and

pressures of expectation in the people, a compromise must be reached. This can only be done by granting more individual freedoms and not by making mass concessions. Greater individual freedom coupled with fewer public duties (especially the constant mass activities in the labor and ideological sphere) means, however, that the state must relinquish its claim of "absolute control" which inevitably would result in more tolerance toward opinions and practices (such as religion) not in conformance with state ideology, as long as they remain within a certain framework of state control. A revitalization or even re-creation of religious institutions can not be expected (yet?).

The situation will become clearer if Albania in fact does not fulfill her obligations to the UN. One must wait for the outcome of the 46th convention of the Human Rights Commission in February/March 1990, which will again address the question of human rights in Albania. By then, if Albania has not provided satisfactory explanations, one can expect the hearings to be taken over by the Human Rights Board and then, finally, by the UN General Assembly. This would mean a great deal of negative publicity and resulting loss of prestige for Albania. It is doubtful that Albania would be prepared for such a confrontation, because that would put into question the international credibility of her state system and would jeopardize at the same time concrete economic interests. The common market countries, for instance, are Albania's primary trade partners especially in the import of absolutely essential technical know-how, and would certainly not tolerate such an affront.*

* Originally published in *Südost Europa*, 38, Jg., 11-12/1989

Endnotes

* see "Anschließen Nr. 35" of the secretariat of the Conference of German Bishops for the "Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church" on May 27, 1984 (Bon., 1984)

2. "Albania - Political Imprisonment and the law", London 1984 (German translation: "Albanien - Politische Haft und die Gesetze", Bonn 1985), see also the annual reports published every October by "ai".

3. "Violations of Human Rights in the People's Social Republic of Albania" - documentation - Frankfurt, 19

4. see W. Stoppel: A letter to "amnesty international", "Albanische Hefte" 1/1985, pp. 13 ff.; substantiated materials for the legality and jurisdiction of criminal offenses in W. Stoppel: "Albanian Criminal Laws", Berlin (de Gruyter), 1989 (Collection of non-German criminal laws in German translation, vol. 105)

5. according to: "Albanian life" (of the Alb. Society), no.31(1/1985), pp. 34ff., 36

6. according to: "ai" Annual Report 1986, p. 348 (Germ. ed., Frankfurt, 1986)

7. according to resolution 1503 of the Economic and Social Council of the UN of 5/27/1970 (Germ. text: Vereinte Nationen, 1981, 178 f.)

8. the basis was res. 1985/20 of the sub-commission of 8/27/85 (E/CN.4/Sub.1/1985/L.39), see Vereinte Nationen 1985, 97; the report is generally in accordance with "Human Rights in Albania" in the journal of the International Commission of Jurists "The Review", no. 34 (1985), pp. 5 ff.

9. selected literature regarding these topics: B. Tonnes: "Religions in Albania", Osteuropa 1974, 661 ff.; *ibid.*: 1978; *ibid.*: "Religious Persecution in Albania", Religion in Communist Lands, vol. 10, 1982, pp. 242 ff.; *ibid.*: "The Situation of the Catholics in Albania", in: P. Lendvai, ed.: Religionsfreiheit und Menschenrechte, Graz, 1983, pp. 238 ff. P. Prifti: "Socialist Albania since 1944", London, 1978 (pp. 150 ff. The Abolition of Religion); R. Grulich: "Albania - for 20 Years the first Atheistic Country in the World", Südost-Europa, 11-12/1987, pp. 728 ff.

10. for the commission's resolutions of 2/14/1986 and 3/2/1987 see Vereinte Nationen, 1986, 114 and 1987, 98.

11. according to the Albanians, all attempts are made to be an active and constructive member of the UN, see A. Puto: "Albania and the World Organization", Vereinte Nationen, 1988, 161 ff.

12. resolution 1988/17, cf. Vereinte Nationen, 1988, 126.

13. according to resolution 1235 of the UN Economic and Social Council of 6/6/1967 (Germ. text in Vereinte Nationen, 1981, 178 f.).

14. in Albanian Catholic Bulletin, Vol. X - 1989, p. 20.

15. resolution 1988/15 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/L.34), see Vereinte Nationen, 1988, 198 and K. Brennan et. al.: The 40th Session of UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Human Rights Quarterly, vol. 11 (1989) no. 2, p. 295 ff., 301 with important evidence.

16. resolution 1989/69 (E/CN.4/1989/L.11/Add.8), see Vereinte Nationen, 1989, 92.

17. similarly M. Schmidt-Neke: "Power and Legitimacy in Albania", Südost-Europa, 7-8/1989, 414 ff., 424.

18. according to Menschenrechte (publication of the IGFM), 1/1989, p. 17; Glaube in der 2. Welt, 5/1989, p. 2.

19. see C. Buchalla: "The Six in the Rruga Labinoti", Südd. Zeitung 6/13/1986.

20. for example Dielli (publication of the VATRA, Boston/USA) 10/28/1988.

21. Fan S. Noli has been and is now highly regarded in Albania because of his patriotic and democratic views. He was a statesman and poet, leader of the unsuccessful bourgeoisie-led democratic revolutions of 1924 and founder of the autocephalous Church (1923). He emigrated to the US in 1932 where he died in 1965. His works in 10 volumes will be published in Albania. Recently see B. Fischer: "Fan Noli and the Albanian revolutions of 1924", East European Quarterly, vo. 22, 1988, pp. 147 ff.

22. according to Albanian Catholic Bulletin, vol. X - 1989 - p. 80.

23. in Zëri i Popullit 8/16/1989; the FAZ of 10/30/89 reports that Mother Teresa was permitted to open a child care home in Tirana in which a Catholic priest would be present.

24. Zëri i Popullit 6/27/1989; in the abridged German version (Albanien heute Nr. 99 [3/1989] pp. 9 ff.) this passage is missing!

25. D. Sadikaj: "Politika ateiste e PPSH dhe përvoja e saj në luftën kundër fesë", Studime politiko-shqetore 11/1986, pp. 97 ff. (Engl. transl. in: Socio-Political Studies, vol. 5, 1986, pp. 95 ff.).

26. G. Habibaj: "Qëllimet e propagandës së Vatikanit ndaj Shqipërisë dhe demaskimi i saj", Studime politiko-shqetore, 1/1988, pp. 161 ff. (Engl. transl. in: Albanian Catholic Bulletin, vol. X, 1989, pp. 32 ff.).

27. Detailed documentation regarding the Kurti case with opinions by all parties in "Is baptism a crime", in G. Sinishta: The Fulfilled Promise - A documentary account of religious persecutions in Albania, Santa Clara/USA, 1976, pp. 150 ff.

28. H. Hako: "Tjetër është kombësia e tjetër është feja, asnjë lidhje të brendshme nuk ka midis tyre", Rruga e Partisë, 4/1988, pp. 76 ff.; recently by H. Hako on the same topic the book *Ateizmi shkencor* (Scientific Atheism), Tirana 1988.

29. Jeta e re ("New Life") 7/2/1988 (in Alb.)

30. Kultura masive ("Mass Culture"), 2/1988, pp. 70 ff. (in Alb.)

31. Përpara ("Forward", publication of the council of the church) 7/6/1988 (in Alb.)

32. Shkenca e jeta ("Science and Life"), 4/1988, p. 58 f. (in Alb.)

33. Lëndët e shkencave shoqetore në shkollë, 16/1988, pp. 96 ff. ("Materials of the Social Sciences for the School"), (in Alb.)

34. Albanian defamations continue; the "anti-Marxist ideas of the Soviet revisionists" had already been denounced at a "scholarly convention" with the topic "Perestroika - an anti-socialist theory and practice" in March 1989 (see "Albanien heute", Nr. 98 [2/1989], p. 19); the 8th plenum of the CK of the PLA in September 1989 was exclusively devoted to this topic. Where Ramiz Alia in his report even spoke of "having betrayed Marxism-Leninism" but at the same time revealed the surprising news that more than 1 candidate had been suggested at the nomination-meetings for the election of the people's councils. (Zëri i Popullit 9/23/1989)

NATIONALITY AND RELIGION IN ALBANIA

Odile DANIEL

Faith is faith, nationality is nationality¹⁾

Albania's political attitude is distinguished by the tenacity of its choices. Its ideological fervor has not been affected by the recent turn of its former allies, the USSR and China. Albania appears to defy time. Its ideological face is well-known but its religious portrait is unseen. It is veiled by the curtain of atheism, drawn in 1967 by the state authorities over Islam, Orthodoxy and Catholicism. All places of worship were closed. The "new" constitution of 1976 affirmed (article 37) that "the state does not recognize any religion whatsoever; it sustains and develops atheist propaganda to instill in people the scientific materialist concept of the world." In this regard also, Albania remains defiant. Although there are no churches, mosques, convents or monasteries open for worship, the twenty years of atheist policies have not been enough to erase the nearly 2,000 years of Christian religious history and 500 years of Muslim faith activity.

Statistical and Territorial Factors

Albania is characterized by its Muslim majority population. The latest known figures date back to 1942. Then there were 763,723 Muslims (68.9%) of whom 599,524 were Sunnites and 164,199 (21.5%) Bektashies. There were only 229,080 (20.7%) Orthodox and 113,897 Catholics (10.4%).

The geographic spread of the three religions is not uniform. There are two poles. Catholics are concentrated in the northern city of Shkodër and in the northern mountains ranges with a heavy concentration in the Mirdita Mountains. The southern boundary of the

"Catholic region" is the city of Durrës. The Orthodox group claims the southern city of Korçë as its home base. Their religion includes Gjirokastër in the southeast and the southern mountains as well as the coastline between Vlora and Saranda. Islam, introduced by the Ottomans who first set foot in Albania in the 15th century, was generally scattered about, following the paths of the conquest along the eastern borders. It vigorously penetrated the urban centers including Shkodër, the garrison towns of Elbasan, Berat as well as the plains regions and the southern river basins. This area was occupied by Muslim landowners. They were compensated with land grants given by the Sultan for their military service. The landowners were converted to Islam and their Christian peasants followed the example. Those who lived in the isolation of the mountains remained faithful to their Christian faith especially the Mirdites, the Highlanders of Malcija, Himara, Shpati and Zagori.

Catholicism's Sources and its Cultural Role

Christianity is deeply rooted in Albania's past. The faith was not brought in by colonists or missionaries but was initially preached by the apostles. Saint Paul preached the word of Christ in Illyria, the ancient land of the Albanians while on his way from Jerusalem (Romans XV, 19) to Rome. Saint Andrew also traveled through northern Epirus. In 58 A.D., a significant Christian community existed in Durrës (Durrëcium), one of the oldest bishoprics in the world. The cities of Shkodër (Scodra), Vlorë (Aulon), Preveza (Nikopolis) all became dioceses. Albanians suffered during Roman persecutions. The first Illyrian martyrs, Florian and

Laurin of Ulpiana (near present day Prishtinë in Kosovë), were massacred under Emperor Hadrian (76-138 A.D.). In 395 when the Roman empire began to oscillate between east and west, the Albanian territories were divided into the four provinces of Prevalitana (north), Epirus Nova (middle), Dardania (Kosovë), and Epirus Vetus (Sud).

By the 7th Century, Constantinople's influence was strong. In 1054, the schism made official the reattachment of the Albanian Catholic Church of the North to Rome and the attachment of the South to Orthodoxy, under the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The rupture was aided by the geographic demarcation that already existed between the two Albania's along the Shkumbini river and the old Via Egnatia Roman road. Albanians already lived on each side of this line with the Gëgs occupying the north and the Tosks, the south. These groups spoke two dialects that were only slightly different from each other. On the religious plane, the division of Albania rested essentially on the language of the liturgical rites. The people in the North used Latin while those in the South employed Greek.

During the period of Ottoman occupation, the Orthodox benefited from their bonds with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Only in 1609 by decree of the Sultan, Catholic priests received official authorization to celebrate mass. Following the defeat of Turkey by a holy alliance of Austria, Russia, Venice and Poland, the Peace of Karlowitz designated Austria as protector of Catholics in the Balkans. In the second half of the 19th century, Austria took advantage of Turkey's defeat in the Crimean War (1854-56), to press the Turks into lifting restrictive measures that had been imposed on the Jesuit order since 1842. The "Kultusprotectorat" permitted Austria to exert its influence on all of Northern Albania. It granted subsidies for confessional schools, and helped in the establishment of a seminary. These favors served to undermine

Slavic influences and to define Austrian power before Italy's strong presence on Albanian soil. The accounts of the Jesuit missionaries in that period serve as testimony. When a local problem was to be resolved, or whenever confrontation occurred between Muslims and Catholics, the clergy turned towards Austria which would approach the Ottoman rulers on behalf of the Catholics.

There were numerous monastic communities established on Albanian territory including the Basilians, Benedictines, Dominicans, Sons of Divine Providence, Lazarists, Salesians, Franciscans and Jesuits. All left an important legacy not only in religious but also in the social and cultural lives of northern Albanians.

The Franciscans began their activities in 1283 in the area of Durres. They established the province "Custodia Durracensis" in the 14th century. The friars tried to prevent Christian conversions to Islam. They initiated the publication of Catholic literary works by establishing a press in Shkodër in 1593. A Franciscan run school was opened in Pdhinë in 1638. The school issued an Italian-Albanian dictionary in 1644.³⁾ The Franciscan role in education began to expand in 1855 with the opening of the "Collegium Illyricum". A seminary opened in 1861. Italian missionary friars encouraged and promoted vocations in Albania. During 1920s the Arbëresh clergy who descended from Albanian emigrants of the 15th century to Southern Italy and Sicily, joined members of the other religious communities in a spiritual and cultural revival of the Albanian people. Two periodicals were established and directed by the Franciscans: *Hylli i Dritë* (the Star of Light) and *Zani i Shën Antonit* (the Voice of Saint Anthony).

The Jesuits also established themselves in Albania in the 19th century. Following a request to the Collegium de Propaganda Fide in 1841 by Archbishop L. Guilelmi of Shkodër, a Jesuit Mission was established in Durres. This was later

transferred to Shkodër when the order undertook the construction of an interdiocesan seminary. The founding efforts were twice destroyed by fanatic Muslims and the Ottoman authorities. The armed intervention of Austria which sent warships to the mouth of the Buna River below Shkodër intimidated the Turkish government. The Turks then presented their excuses and paid the damages. The seminary was opened in 1859 as the Kolegja Papnore Shqiptare (Albanian Papal College). Its program of studies was extensive. Coursework included theology, languages (Latin, Albanian, Italian, Greek), history, geography, philosophy, mathematics, agronomy, botany and zoology. In 1877, the College of Saint Francis Xavier (Saverianum) was founded. In that establishment of higher learning the Albanian language was taught. The catholic school was well attended by students of all 3 faiths. In 1886 a missionary center composed of Italian and Albanian Jesuits was opened. The priests went on preaching missions into the most remote corners of the country. Their goal was to evangelize and bring the message of peace to the sixty feuding tribes. Written accounts of these missionaries (Fathers D. Pasi, A. Zanoni, F. Cordignano, G. Karma) serve as a precious source of knowledge about society and customs in the northern mountains where daily life was dictated by unwritten tribal law. Like the Franciscans, the Jesuits also established printing presses. In 1876, the Jesuit press published *Doktrina e Kërshtenë* (Christian Doctrine), the first book printed in the Albanian language. They also produced Albanian language teaching materials. The press also issued the magazines *Lajmtari i Zemrës së Krishtit* (The Messenger of the Sacred Heart), *Leka* (an abbreviation for Lidhja (Union), *Edukata* (Education), *Kultura* (Culture), *Argëtimi* (Leisure) and *Përparimi* (Progress). Along with social and hospital works, the Jesuits developed a number of cultural institutions including, a theater for Saverianum students; a botanical museum, a library, a numismatic museum, archives and an observatory. The missionary center at Shkup

(Skopje) was opened in 1910.⁴⁾ After the foundation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, the Albanian Jesuit missionaries were replaced by Croatian Jesuits from Zagreb.

Following the formation of the new, independent Albanian state in 1912 the Orthodox together with a number of Jesuits and Franciscans began an ecumenical discourse. Efforts were made to forge some mutual agreement to draw closer towards an eventual union. The rites question remained separate. At the same time dialogue between Christians and Muslims ensued. The movement grew stronger in the 1930s with the publication of a series of articles in *La Civiltà Cattolica* of Rome.⁵⁾ The initial dialogue resulted in the arrangement of regular scheduled meetings. Some form of unity among Albanians was a necessary goal in view of the permanent political instability that troubled the new state. These difficulties eventually caused Albania to fall into the hands of the Italian fascist armies in 1939.

Orthodoxy and Hellenism

Differences between Catholics and the Orthodox did not intensify as a result of 18th century foreign influences. Instead the Orthodox benefited from a large degree of tolerance by the Porte in Constantinople. They remained subject to the Patriarchate of Constantinople and were under the influence of Hellenism.

Islam quickly spread through the Orthodox regions because the Albanians were not fervent followers of a faith that had been a vehicle of Hellenism during the Ottoman period. Numerous schools were opened in southern Albania, where Greek was the language of instruction. In Zagorë, Himare, Vlore and around Korça, there were about 200 Greek schools in the 19th century. In these schools, as well as in the local churches, spoken Albanian was forbidden. By the 1850s southern Albanians looked unfat-

vorably upon such educational politics. Southerners united to demand that the Ottoman government reopen the Albanian language schools. The Istanbul authorities had promoted the creation of Greek schools, because they preferred the diffusion of Hellenism over Slavic expansionism. Until 1912, Istanbul vacillated between a liberal policy of opening Albanian schools, and later closing them.

The Albanian Orthodox became militant in the movement for national independence. They simultaneously promoted a national church. In 1900 the emigres of the Romanian diaspora pressured the Ottoman government for the creation of a self-governing Albanian church which used the Albanian language in liturgy. [This goal was first achieved overseas in Boston, Massachusetts (USA) in 1908. Bishop Fan Noli founded the Albanian Orthodox Church of America.] The self-governing church in Albania was born in 1929 in the city of Korce. Once the Albanian government recognized the national church Bishop Fan Noli embarked on his political career guiding the democracy movement. Because the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, and the Patriarchate of Alexandria and of Moscow condemned the Albanian "exarchy", the Church was not recognized by the Holy Synod until 1937.

A conquering Islam

Islam was introduced to Albania by the Ottoman conquerors. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Muslim faith spread rapidly and soon involved nearly three-quarters of the population. Islam's fast and firm entrenchment was the result of powerful economic and social forces. The landowner group owed their property titles to the Sultan. These protected administrators were all converts to Islam. They proved very attractive to a conquered population which had no other choice but to immigrate. The "devshirme" system introduced by the Ottoman's caused the separation of young

Albanian children from their families to educate them as Janissaries in the Sultan's court. This system hastened the Islamization of the Albanian people. Traditionally Albanians took up the military profession. When the opportunity presented itself, they were quick to enlist in the Ottoman armies. Many enlistees willingly changed their faith in order to gain access to rank and honor.

The rapid numerical increase in conversions to Islam can also be explained by the fact that the Orthodox Church did not have a national structure. It had its primatial seat located in the capital city of the Ottoman rulers and the Albanian lands were nothing more than a marginal province. Moreover, the Orthodox church conveyed a foreign culture that opposed any manifestation of Albanian identity. The Ottoman authorities forced Albanian Orthodoxy to assimilate itself in the same manners as the other ethnic groups of the same religion like including the Greeks, Bulgarians, and Rumanians. The Orthodox Christians in the southern regions were more receptive to external influences and rapidly shifted their allegiance to Islam.

Economic factors played an important role in the developments of both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Financial burdens were heavier for Christians as a result of the prohibition against their living in the centers of the cities. As a result Christians faced difficulties in working as artisans. This was another means used by the Porte to create infidels, known as "gjaohur". Many converts to Islam, nonetheless, maintained their old faith, traditions and practices. They changed their names but continued to observe the Christian rites. For example, some of the Catholic Mirdites in the Northern Mountains took Muslim names. Then during difficult periods of poor harvest and low supplies, they would buy corn at warehouses in Shkoder. Lists of Islamic names had to be furnished to the authorities in advance to secure supplies.

Unique in the Albanian Muslim world is the Bektashi sect, which comprises 20% of the Muslims.⁶⁾ This community which was tied to the mother house of Anatolia had for its center the Tekke of Kalkandelen in Tetovë (present day Macedonia). In 1920 when the Albanian Muslim Sunnites were still tied to the Sheik ul Islam of Istanbul, the Bektashi sect liberated themselves from the Turkish control. Tirana became the world center of Bektashism. The mystical orders of the Coulshens, the Khalveties, the Kardiries, the Melames, the Rita'ies, and the Sa'dies found a favorable landscape in Albania. The adherence of the Albanian faithful (Muslim) to Bektashi sect could be viewed as a manifestation of either emancipation from the orthodox Sunni group of Islam or from an Orthodoxy heavily compromised with Istanbul through its dependence on the Patriarchate.

A national debate: Culture, Faith, Patriotism

The independence movement incarnated with the League of Prizren in 1878. The League united patriots who opposed the dismantling of Albanian territory by the Congress of Berlin. League members organized armed struggle for national liberation. The movement was repressed by the Ottoman troops in 1881. Nevertheless a general unification of nationalist forces occurred. This demonstrated that Albanians when united could defend the integrity of their southern and northern lands.

Religious affiliation remained a dividing element because it separated the population into three groups which had various historical ties to the cultural blueprint. The nationalist movement aimed at the goals of emancipation and cultural autonomy. Nationalists believed success in these realms would help attain final political victory. Two courses were followed. These included the creation of a unified Albanian alphabet and the opening of lay academic establishments with instruction provided in the Albanian

language. This cultural autonomy movement was charged with obvious political dimensions. It specifically aimed to unify Albanians despite religious differences. Cultural choice became the cornerstone for national aspirations and a determining factor in the political orientations of the future state. The preservation of Islamic culture, adherence to Islamic teachings, and the use of the Arabic alphabet symbolized attachment to a Turkish eastern culture. The choice of a Latin culture implied political allegiance with Austria-Hungary or Italy. Partisans of Hellenism wanted to preserve Greek Orthodox schools and maintain a Greek alphabet. It was necessary for Albanians to choose between the Latin-Venetian influenced northern regions, the Greek orbit in the south or to adopt Anatolian laws, mores and thoughts.⁷⁾ In the end it was the choice of a common ancient language, completely different from neighboring peoples, that united the Albanians.

A group of Albanian exiles living in Bucharest addressed a letter to the Archbishop of Korce. He had excommunicated any Christians who sent their children to Albanian schools. The exiles told the prelate that "Albania is no longer under the regime of the Byzantine empire of past times for the Greek language to be imposed as the language of the state...We find it is necessary to disagree with your policy in a period of nationalities...If the saints had imposed the Hebrew language in the Orthodox church one would at least find the reason that it was the national language of the Lord Jesus and his disciples. The Greek language however can it still violate and torture the conscience of unhappy, faithful Albanians?"

Albanians also complained that the Orthodox church confused the various nationalities on the basis of religion. The Orthodox were classified as "alvanophonoi-hellenics, vlahophonoi-hellenics, bulgarophonoi-hellenics." If there were Muslims they were designated "roums,"

"islams," "turks," or "gjaours." By this same backward logic, any individual who changed religion also changed races.⁹⁾ The Bulgarians who had founded an independent Orthodox church in 1879 were then placed under the official name of "Bulgarians" by the Ottoman authorities.

The nationalist movement concentrated its efforts on achieving a unity of language. An effort was made to purge all signs of foreign influence. It was decided to have one common spelling of terms that could be used by everyone in the north as well as the south. The effort was the first political goal, the next step was towards emancipation.

In 1879, a league in Istanbul sought to unite Muslim and Orthodox Albanians under the presidency of Abdyl Frashëri, a Parliament Deputy. The league document outlined an alphabet composed of Latin characters as well as some Greek symbols. League members organized the Congress of Monastir in 1908. Delegates from about 20 Albanian cities and representatives of the exile communities attended the meetings. A 25 letter alphabet with some newly devised letters to convey the specific sounds of "dh," "gh," "th," was produced. Although the partisans of Arabic writing were soundly defeated, the alphabet question remained an object of discord for some time. Demonstrations were organized by the pro-Arabic letter group even though writing Albanian with the characters of the Qu'ran militated against national development. The press expressed the idea that "We do not want a 'Turkified' Albanian-Shqipëri të Turkosur."¹⁰⁾ Opting for the letters of Qu'ran meant the choice of eastern civilization over Albanian culture. The leaders of the nationalist movement were concerned that Albania become a European land. For this reason their language had to be written with European characters. This meant Latin letters because "We are a European state, we are not Mongols; we have Arabic as our language of faith, Turkish as the language of the administration and Albanian as the lan-

guage of our country."¹¹⁾ Speaking Albanian and writing it with the Alphabet of the Congress of Monastir did not indicate infidelity. Rather it validated the principles of nationality, which had nothing to do with matters of faith.

Religion and Politics

When the Party of Labor (nee, Communist Party) of Albania assumed power in 1944, it adopted aggressive policies against those holding religious power. Their approach meant periods of repression and manipulation of religious authorities. These policies culminated in the total elimination of all religious practices and symbols in 1967.

During the first phase of religious repression the Communists spared the Bektashi clergy. This may have been the result of some respect for the Frashëri brothers and others in the nationalist movement that brought an end to Ottoman domination in 1912. Approximately 6,000 Bektashis fought alongside the Communist partisans and died in World War II. The Communist Party also found support with the Bektashis. Faja Martaneshi and Fejzo Mallakastra were members of the General Council of Democratic Front who were elected to the People's Assembly in 1945. However these two Bektashis were assassinated in 1947 by the Great World Dede (Chief) of the order, Hilmi Dede of Tirana. He committed suicide after the act.¹²⁾ The Bektashi community thereafter divided between partisans of communism and those who refused to collaborate.

The Sunni Muslims were called upon to assist in consolidating the new regime. The existence of Albanian Islam became an element in the communist propaganda for Islamic countries. Delegations of Albanian Muslims were sent on visits to the Middle East and North African nations. In order to enhance ties with the

Soviet Union delegations under the leadership of Hafiz Musa Haxhi Ali were sent to Uzbekistan, Samarkand, and Tachkent in 1950.

Members of the Orthodox clergy had earlier been sent on government sponsored tours to Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad. Finally, a conference of religious representatives of the three faiths met in Tirane for the "defense of peace" in 1951. The meeting declared the opening of "the battle against imperialism." In 1953 the Bektashis took part in the World Council of Peace in Budapest (Catholics did not participate in any of these gatherings.)

After winning a portion of the clergy and faithful over to the communist ideology, the government declared open war against religion. Although the Constitution of 1946 had guaranteed freedom of religion and conscience to all citizens, its actions were quite the opposite.¹³⁾ In 1945, a law nationalized the waq'fs (religious assets). Between 1945 and 1950, religious instruction was banned, sermons were forbidden, the publication of pastoral letters, and social assistance to the hospitals and charitable institutions was prohibited. The government's policies aimed to destroy the church hierarchy. Upon gaining control the Communists attacked the Catholic church. By the 1946 half of the Catholic clergy was in prison, foreign priests were thrown out, and the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Leone G. Nigris was expelled. The Jesuits Jak Gardin and Gjergj Vata, professors at the Jesuit college, were imprisoned. Gjon Fausti, the order's vice provincial and Daniel Dajani, the rector of the Pontifical Seminary of Shkodër, were shot. Franciscan Father Gjon Shllaku, was imprisoned and later executed. In 1946, all Jesuit institutions in Albania were closed (including the Saverianum, with its 400 students and the Pontifical seminary with 100 students). The Substitute-Apostolic Delegate Monsignor Fran Gjini was executed along with 18 clerics and lay people in 1948. Archbishop Vincenc Prendushi of Durrës died in prison the following year.

Relations between Catholics and the Albanian state improved following Stalin's expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform. [Albania formally severed its ties with Yugoslavia in 1948.] The situation led to some tolerations of the church, even though the hierarchy refused to break ties with the Vatican. The government's "official view" of the Vatican continued to be an "enemy of the people."

An Atheist State

In February 1967, Enver Hoxha delivered a speech in which he violently attacked religious superstition and prescribed a war against religion. Hoxha described religion as "bourgeoisie and reactionary ideological expression." The People's Assembly annulled all statutes governing religious communities. In that period, there were 2,169 churches, mosques and monasteries in the country. Over 600 of these buildings were Orthodox owned and 327 were Catholic. All church buildings were closed and soon converted into gymnasiums, movie theatres or cafes. Albanian youth who were reared in the milieu of a cultural revolution similar to that in China, participated in the government's anti-religious movement. The "new" constitution promulgated in 1976 contained articles 37 and 55, which confirmed the government's intention to rigorously carry out policies opposing "the creation of any sort of fascist, anti-democratic, religious or anti-social organization..." (Article 55). The new penal code of 1977, provided penalties of 3 to 10 years (clause 55) for possessing or distributing religious propaganda which illustrated the history of religious practice and faith among the population. In 1973 the foreign press covered the case of an 80 year old Catholic priest who was executed for baptizing a child in a labor camp at the request of its parents. Periodically, campaigns were launched to prevent parents from naming their children with religious names. Press articles denounced the survival of "regressive customs" namely religious practices.

A number of motives can be singled out to explain the government's eagerness to destroy all religion. Albanian communists who formed the early stages of post war government were mostly Muslim. The repressive government activities initially affected Catholics more than any other group. The situation could be explained by the juxtaposition of not only political considerations but also ones dealing with clans and regions, namely Gëgs and Tosks.

Communist ideology also sought to assert itself as a new form of "purified" nationalism, detached from all the traces of the past. The government authorities wanted to create a "new world" and fashion a "new man." Catholicism had deeply marked national life and gave it great historical weight. Along with the territorial factor the Catholic traditionalism involved the entire Northern region in the matter.

The Albanian language, which served as a unifying element in forming a national consciousness, had a history that was inseparable from the Catholic faith. The first document written in Albanian was a baptismal formula dating back to 1462. Archbishop Pal Engjelli of Durres wrote the formula in the Latin alphabet using the northern dialect.¹⁴ The first literary works were written by Catholics. The first book entirely written in Albanian was the *Mëshari* (Missal) of Gjon Buzuku (1555). A series of Albanian language publications followed the 1618 catechism of Bishop Pjetër Budi of Mati. The *Dictionarium Latino-Epiroticum* by Bishop Frang Bardhi of Sapë was published in 1635. In the same year Bishop Pjetër Bogdani of Shkodër published the *Life of the Prophets*. While the great Muslim expansion was slowed down during the 19th century Catholic teachers and authors such as N. Bytyqi, P. Doçi, Z. Jubani, N. Mjeda, S. Gjeçovi, G. Fishta continued to write and to fashion a national literature.

The communist state took Catholicism's ties to the historic linguistic heritage into account. The intensity of the government policies against the faith must not be linked solely to its former ties to foreign powers. It appears that the communist authorities had to attack Catholicism because of its cultural and educational leadership role, its well-structured hierarchy and its territorial compactness. The state also wanted to create a base of operations in the middle of the country. This sort of centrality had not existed because Albanian territory had been traditionally controlled by the two metropolises of Shkodër in the north and Korce in the south. The Albanian government established itself in a Muslim center to avoid conflict with Catholicism in the north and Orthodoxy in the south.

The historic government ties to Islam were marked by certain suppleness. The Muslim dominated state of Zog supported those who fashioned an independent Islam. When this group detached itself from Califat in 1923, it abolished polygamy, the mandatory use of the veil, the rites of prostration as well as certain prayers and ablutions. Because Albanian Islam lacked ties to the outside Muslim community, it did not present a threat to the communist government. The regional particularities of the two forms of Christianity went directly against the goals of national unification and regional harmonization. Christianity stood in the way of state homogenization plans to erase differences between the cities, the countryside, and the traditionally free mountain society attached to its customs and faith. After 4 decades, the government's anti-religious programs have failed to totally erase ancient tradition. Only 5% of citydwellers and 3% of the rural population have carried out mixed marriages. Recent visits to Albania from the Chancellor of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, from the Director of the Albanian Islamic center in Detroit and from Mother Teresa allow for some hope

for an easing up of government policies on religion. Modern Albania must remember that she was created with the participation of three religious communities, which produced many eminent and revered figures of the national movement.*

*Originally published in *L'autre Europe*, No. 21-22, 1989, Paris, France.

Notes

1. Korça, January 1910, No.30.
2. G. Sinishta, *The Fulfilled Promise*, Santa Clara (Calif.) 1976 and "La chiesa ortodossa albanese" in *Oriente Christiano*, Palermo, Ottobre-Dicembre 1978, No.4, pp. 7-36.
3. Albanian Catholic Bulletin, 1984, Vol. V and 1988, Vol. IX (Santa Clara University, Calif.).
4. Mother Teresa (Gonxhe Bojaxhiu) winner of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize was educated there.
5. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Roma, 1931, 1933.
6. A. Popovic, *L'Islam balkanique*, Wiesbaden, O. Harrassowitz, 1986.
7. *Fiamuri*, Boston, February 1910, No.2.
8. *Shpresa*, Sofia, Octobre 1902, No.1, p. 23.
9. *L'Indépendance albanaise*, Sofia, June-July 1915.
10. *Shqipetari*, March 1912, No.12.
11. *Fiamuri*, Salonica, February 1916 and *Lirija* (Salonica) February 1910, No.73.
12. T. Schreiber, "La République Populaire d'Albanie" in *Notes et Etudes Documentaires*, March 1964, No.1845, 3rd part.
13. "Constitution de la République Populaire Socialiste d'Albanie" in *Notes et Etudes Documentaires*, March 1954, No.1844 and June 1968, No.3504. French text of the constitution of 1976 has been published by the Publishing House "8 Nentori", Tirane.
14. It is preserved in the Laurentine Library of Florence and was discovered by Romanian historian Nicolas Iorga, who published it for the first time in 1915 in Bucharest as "Unte paghesont premerit Alt et birit et spertit senit" in the ancient Albanian.

Albania: An Atheistic State?

Finngeir Hiorth

In 1967 the government of Albania officially proclaimed itself "the first atheistic state in the world". All religious institutions were closed and religious officials were forbidden to exercise their functions.

This paper intends to present a summary of known facts about religion and atheism in Albania, since 1944 when the Albanian Party of Labour (the communists) took power.

In 1938, the religious affiliation of the population in Albania was 10% Catholic, 21% Orthodox, 54% Sunni Muslim, and 15% Shiite Muslim. The majority of Shiite Muslims belonged to the Bektashi Dervish order.

The Albanian Party of Labour (APL) led by Enver Hoxha came to power in November 1944. Immediately a wave of persecutions against real or imaginary political enemies started. It was obvious that the ALP aimed at gaining total control of the political, cultural and economic life in Albania.

The conflict between church and state in Albania began during the partisan struggle for power during World War II. The tensions between the Albanian communists and religious groups worsened in the post-war period. The communists characterised clergymen as "class enemies" and regarded any religious position as incompatible with their version of Marxism-Leninism. Clergymen who dared to hold a different opinion from the communists were either executed or imprisoned.

In the beginning Muslims and the Orthodox were supported financially by the state because of their political cooperation. The Catholic Church however was immediately attacked as a foreign element and an exploiter of the people.

It was perceived as anti-Albanian through its link to a foreign centre, the Vatican. Foreign catholic priests and religious were expelled. The majority of these were Italian. Religious houses and churches were searched, printing offices were confiscated, and schools and homes for children were nationalized.

Religious instruction was forbidden, and the education of the youth became the sole responsibility of the state. All religious communications had to be approved by the government before being made public. The state exercised control over the election and appointment of all religious personnel. Finally a land reform law in 1945 deprived the religious communities of most of their property. These government initiatives met with resistance from the clergy, and the communist party responded by indicting, arresting, trying and executing recalcitrant clergymen.

Although the oppression of the Catholic Church was particularly savage, the communists were in no way lenient in their attitude towards the Orthodox and the Muslims. Within a few years the Orthodox Church leadership was virtually eliminated. Similar purges took place in the Muslim community. In the case of the Orthodox, the communists found a church leader who had supported them during the war, and he was designated archbishop.

In the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* (vol. 6/1985/pp. 48-9) a listing of 164 names was published. This list contained the names of clergy of all faiths known to have died during the period from 1943 to 1979. The list of Muslims contains 28 names. Two of these died in 1943, 22 more died between 1944 and 1947, whereas 4 died during the years 1950-53. The list of orthodox dead contains 7 names, of whom 1 died in 1946, 1 in 1949, and the others during the period from 1951 to 1973.

The longest list was that of the catholics. It contained 129 names. The largest number died in the period from 1945 to 1960. The cir-

cumstances of each deaths were not known, however a significant number were executed. Many others perished in prisons or forced labour camps. The names of the many Muslim and Orthodox clergy who perished were never recorded in one place. Thus the exact number of Albanian clergy who perished since 1944 will probably never be known.

Nonetheless, the Communist Party's drive against the clergy resulted in the virtual elimination of religious leadership of the various denominations. By 1968 according to a report of Free Albania Committee in New York, some 200 clergymen had been executed or sent to labour camps.

The religious communities were seriously weakened as early as 1949. They hardly could function effectively. This achievement was still not enough for the Albanian authorities. The government issued a formal decree in 1949 which made it mandatory for all religious communities to profess loyalty to the communist party. In May 1950 new statutes were approved for the Muslims and the Orthodox. At this time the Albanian constitution still allowed "freedom of conscience and religion". The following year government authorities approved new statutes for the Catholic Church. These laws implied that all links to the Vatican were severed. Any contacts with the Vatican were illegal for Albanian Catholics.

After 1951, there was little heard about religious life in Albania. During this time the Albanian authorities were satisfied with religious communities living on the periphery of Albanian society, completely unable to influence anything of importance in Albania. Their means barely sufficed to take care of the needs of the elderly and infirm members. It was quite possible that the communist authorities fully expected religion to die out of itself.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

It seems the Albanian authorities believed that a thoroughly materialistic and atheistic education system would eventually lead to an atheistic society. However there were also some officials who wanted to hasten the process of the death of religion by "active information" and propaganda. In April 1955 a meeting of the party plenum stressed the need to "strengthen the materialist and scientific world outlook among the workers" and to combat religious beliefs and backward customs which were hindering "the spread of...socialist culture among the masses".

Some leading Albanian communists were well aware that religion was a phenomenon which could not easily be isolated from traditional customs, moral values, education, family life and other social relations. In their opinion any offensive-against-religion had to be prolonged and multi faceted if it was to succeed. Other leading communists, were indifferent in their attitude towards religion. For them it was sufficient that religion could not play any meaningful political role.

This situation continued until 1966. At that time Albania was allied with China where the cultural revolution became a major issue. The cultural revolution in China stimulated a fevered atmosphere in Albania. An Albanian cultural revolution started in March 1967, yet the party congress in November 1966 hardly touched on the question of religion. In his speech at the congress Enver Hoxha devoted less than one minute of his remarks to religious beliefs and backward customs. His short mention of religion did not contain any warning about the events which were soon to follow.

The Albanian newspaper *Zëri i Popullit* (18 January 1967) emphasized that freedom of religion existed in Albania. An anti-Vatican article stated that: "The Albanian catholic church is independent and has no connections with the Vatican. And that does not worry the catholic believers at all, because they can practice their

faith. The power of people respects the religious convictions of people whatever the religion to which they belong. That is guaranteed by the constitution and our laws".

Less than three weeks later, on 6 February 1967, Hoxha delivered a speech which led to a new policy towards the religious communities. He primarily attacked liberal and bourgeois tendencies in society but also mentioned the "backward customs" including one about a worker of Durres.

When the speech was published in *Zëri i Popullit*, the example of a "backward" worker from Durres reportedly led pupils and teachers of a local school to take action. All religious institutions in Durres were either closed or demolished. *Zëri i Popullit* celebrated the action as a "revolutionary feat".

It is not known whether the events in Durres were spontaneous or organized at the instigation of leading party officials. Hoxha certainly did not like "spontaneous" actions which might counteract his policies. At this time he was firmly established and few dared to initiate actions which might incur his disfavour.

In any case, the events at Durrës were soon followed by similar actions at Gjirokastrë, (Hoxha's birthplace) and other places. By May 1967 all remaining churches and mosques had been closed or demolished. Six months later the Albanian literary monthly *Nendori* announced that 2,169 religious buildings had been closed and that Albania had thus become "the first atheistic state in the world".

The government published a decree on November 1967 which annulled the religious charters and all laws pertaining to state-church relationship. All religious rites were prohibited and grave penalties were imposed on violators. The few remaining priests were apprehended and sent to forced labour camps for "re-education". At this time the Constitution still guaran-

teed freedom of conscience and religion. However this was changed in 1976 when all religious organizations became constitutionally illegal.

Since 1967 it has been forbidden to own religious literature and religious objects. All kinds of worship, even private worship, have been forbidden. Baptizing a child can lead to severe punishment. Religious buildings have been turned into sports arenas, dance halls, movie theaters, workshops, museums or apartments.

Most observers agree that religion has not disappeared from Albania. The religious beliefs of individuals cannot be eradicated. Nor is it possible to enforce any prohibition of individual prayers in private. It is also known that some believers still meet for communal prayers or hold pilgrimages. Some believers do not work on important religious holidays and many hold to the rules of the fasts. Marriages across religious borders remain rare. They represent about 4 % of the newly-weds.

All public forms of religion have for the time being come to an end. There exist rudiments of religious organizations but these exist only underground. It is not known how many such clandestine organizations may be in existence. Social and political control excludes the widespread occurrence of clandestine organizations. It is not known how many Albanians are atheists or religious believers. Any assertion as to the percentage of atheists and believers under the present circumstances remains pure guesswork.

Some observers have suggested that the destruction of organized religion in Albania has been possible because Albanians never took their religion seriously. However, it is also true that philosophical materialism and atheism, as explicit faiths, were almost non-existent among Albanians prior to the communist take-over in 1944.

It is sometimes suggested that religious people in Albania have been persecuted more than non-religious people. Perhaps this is true. Yet Albanian communism under Hoxha was strongly authoritarian and his ruthlessness also

hit a number of fellow-communists. His ruthlessness was also directed at anyone who opposed him.

One communist supporter of the regime and who was persecuted was Liri Gega. She was a member of the party's central committee. Gega was executed after being accused of having been a titoist agent. Another victim of Hoxha's ruthlessness was the commander of Albania's naval forces, Admiral Teme Sejko. He was reportedly tried and executed in 1961. In the mid-1970s General Beqir Balluku, Minister of Defense, and a number of others were reportedly executed. It is widely believed that in 1981 Hoxha murdered, or executed, his close collaborator of thirty years, Mehmet Shehu. Hoxha, then announced the arrest of Feçor Shehu, minister of the interior. Sources outside Albania claimed that Feçor Shehu had been executed in 1982 together with Kadri Hazbiu, a former defense minister, and two other senior officials (see the Amnesty International Report On Albania, 1984, p. 32).

These executions were only the last in the long story of terror which began in the 1940s. Soon after the communist victory in November 1944, a wave of terror swept the country. Hundreds or thousands were summarily executed for alleged collaboration with the enemy. Various crimes were invented by the new rulers to destroy their opponents.

In 1955 the United States government submitted a report to the United Nations on "Evidence of the existence of forced labour in Albania". The report listed some 40 prisons, labour camps and places of internment which had operated in Albania between 1944 and 1954. Some 16,000 persons were said to have perished in them. The number of political prisoners was estimated to be 8,000 at the end of 1947, whereas in 1954 there were supposedly 10,000 political prisoners and another 10 - 15,000 persons in labour camps (Amnesty International, Albania, 1984, footnote pp. 33-4). The number of political prisoners in 1975 has been estimated to be approximately 12,000 in some 18 labour camps or prisons.

In its 1984-Report Amnesty International stated that it had the names of 400 political prisoners. Until at least 1982 important prisons or camps could be found in Ballsh, Spaç and Burrel. These institutions held 2000-2700 prisoners at the beginning of the 1980s. In addition Amnesty International believed that there were political detainees in or at Tirana, Berat, Vlorë, Fier, Shkodër, Elbasan, Fush-Krujë and Laç. Since the number of prisoners at these places was not known, Amnesty did not attempt to estimate the total number of political prisoners at the beginning of the 1980s.

Considering this information garnered from Amnesty International and other sources, it is clear that not just religious people have been persecuted in Albania. It is not even possible to say that religious people have been persecuted more than non-religious people. It is true that the catholic clergy and the muslim bektashi have suffered the most of all the religions. The information about the orthodox and the muslims is rather scanty. Apparently the sunni muslims and many of the orthodox have been better able to adapt themselves to the communist regime than the catholics and the bektashi. It is interesting to note that Hoxha and most other leading communists came from an Islamic background.

The developments in the field of religion following Hoxha's death in 1985 suggest a very slow liberalization. Under Ramiz Alia, Hoxha's successor, Albania has entered a period of gradual reform which to some extent represents a continuation of trends which had started even under Hoxha. The Hoxha cult has continued but with diminished strength. Government representatives have started to suggest that Albania favours freedom of religion.

Among the signs of liberalization bearing mention are the few former missionaries and Albanian clergymen from abroad who have been allowed to visit the country in 1986 and in 1988. The most remarkable of these visits was that of the very reverend Arthur E. Liolin of the Alba-

nian Orthodox Diocese in America. He toured Albania for three weeks in July and August 1988. During his visit Liolin was allowed to wear clerical garb and he visited more than 20 private homes. He spoke freely with many people and was able to pray at seven cemeteries with groups of thirty and forty at a time. He was even allowed to speak in Albanian over Radio Tirana.

Thus, there are a few indications that the Albanian authorities are starting, very slowly, to respect freedom of religion. But they have certainly a long way to go before Albania becomes a liberal country with due respect for the full scale of human rights. And in this connection we should not forget that Albania has a long tradition of illiberal regimes.*

*Originally published in *Mennesker og Rettigheter*, Oslo, Vol. 7., No. 4, Dec. 1989, pp. 51-59.

Selected list of sources

Albanian Catholic Bulletin, vol. 5-9/1984-88. Albanian Catholic Information Center, 1032 Irving Street, Suite 518, San Francisco, CA 94122, USA.

Albanien (1978) 39 pp., Glaube in der 2 Welt, Postfach 9, CH-8702 Zollikon, Switzerland.

Amnesty International (1984) Albania. London, 58 pp.

Bland, William B. (1988) Albania. World Bibliographical Series 94. Oxford, 300 pp.

Brown, Janice (1989) Albania-Religion in a Fortress State, 47 pp. Puebla Institute, 910 17th Str. N.W. Suite 409, Washington DC 20006.

Gardin, S.J., Giacomo (1988) Banishing God in Albania. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 165 pp.

Gstrein, Heinz (1986) Albania: Religion on the Upswing. Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe (OPREE) 6/1/1986/29-37 (c/o Paul Mojzes, Rosemont College, Rosemont PA 1901).

Prifti, Peter (1983) The Current Situation of Religion in Albania. OPREE 3:3/1983/1-6.

Sinishtaj, Gjon (1983) Grave Violations of Religious Rights in Albania. OPREE 3:5/1983/3-20.

Stavrou, Nikolaos A. (1986) The Politics of Religious Persecution in Albania. Religion in Communist Dominated Areas (RCDA), N.Y., 25:4/1986/161-163 + 191.

Stavrou, Nikolaos A. (1988) *Glasnost in Albania*, 7 pp. forthcoming in RCDA.

Tønnes, Bernhard (1982) *Religious Persecution in Albania*. *Religion in Communist Lands*, UK, 10/3/1982/242-255.

Postscript

The paper "Albania: An Atheist State?" was written in August 1989. It received a letter response in January 1990 from Mr. William B. Bland, Secretary of the Albanian Society of Great Britain. Mr. Bland objected to my use of the term "persecution". In his opinion: "No one has ever been executed or imprisoned (in Albania) for holding an opinion, only for actions proscribed by law. In the 1940s and the 1950s a number of clergymen were tried and found guilty of serious criminal acts". One of these was "Anton Harapi, who was well-known as a Regent under the Nazi occupation, and was charged with treason". According to Mr. Bland such cases are misinterpreted if they are called "religious persecution".

Mr. Bland also maintained that the official Albanian government view is that "many of the precepts of religion are unethical" and that "as Albanian scholars see it, Christianity serves the interests of the exploiting classes,...Albanian lawyers, therefore, claim that the prohibition of religious propaganda is not a violation of human rights, but is necessary to protect human rights".

According to Mr. Bland "individual religious worship is not illegal... and that no lay person has ever been persecuted under the law prohibiting religious propaganda and public religious worship". Mr. Bland also denied "that the mass campaign against the churches in 1967 was carried out on Hoxha's initiative". Hoxha and his partners "endorsed the 'popular action' post facto".

Mr. Bland took exception to my calling Hoxha "a dictator" and believed that Mehmet Shehu committed suicide in 1981. In his opinion my paper "does not present an objective study of the Albanian position on religion, but mainly reiterates the anti-Albanian propaganda of the Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches".

The above excerpts are intended to present the gist of Mr. Bland's criticisms. I do not want to polemicize against Mr. Bland's views. He knows much about Albania and has for many years been very close to the Albanian authorities. He has often presented the views of the Albanian authorities in a better way than the authorities themselves. I believe it is well worthwhile to offer a summary of some of his views.

It should be noted that the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee (430 Marquette Ave., Suite 402, Minneapolis MN 55401) published a thorough report on Human Rights in Albania in January 1990. Chapter 7 of this report deals specifically with topic of freedom of religion.

The dramatic events in Eastern Europe in 1989 have so far had few repercussions in Albania. However, according to newspaper reports, the National Assembly in Tirana decided on 9 May 1990 to reintroduce "freedom of religion". However, details of this decision have not been made available thus far and it is still too early to say what this means, if anything.

Oslo, 2 June 1990

F. H.

The Minnesota International Human Rights Committee, an independent group of more than 800 lawyers, professors and judges, released earlier this year a documentary book: **Human Rights in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania**.

Calling Albania "a bastion of internal repression" former Vice President Walter F. Mondale, a member of the Committee, wrote in the preface to the report that he hoped it would help "... the long-suffering people of this Balkan country by encouraging the Albanian Government to change its human rights practices."

The report of the Minnesota Human Rights Committee is a down-to-earth work which deals concisely with most aspects of Albania's totalitarian system. It covers such issues as penal legislation, restrictions of movement in the country, torture and detention, abolition of religion, lack of freedom of thought and expression, discrimination of minorities, etc.

Copies of the report "Human Rights in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania" are available for \$12 from the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, 430 Marquette Ave., Suite 402, Minneapolis, MI 55401

ENVER HOXHA'S UNFULFILLED DREAM

Denis R. Janz

Enver Hoxha was born into an undistinguished Muslim family in the southern village of Gjirokastra in 1908. As a youth he learned French and then immersed himself in French communist literature at the high school in Korçë. By the early 1930's Hoxha was studying at the University of Paris where he allied himself with the communist movement and campaigned against the Albanian monarchy. On his return to Albania in 1936 he took up a teaching position in Korçë. Associated with the anti-fascist resistance from the beginning, he was instrumental in founding the Albanian Communist Party and became its leader in 1941. From the time of liberation in 1944, Hoxha was the single, undisputed leader of the nation. For forty-one years it was the will of this man which dominated public and private life in Albanian society. It was his vision of what Albania should become which drove his relentless attempts to reshape the nation. And the cornerstone of that vision was the dream of utterly annihilating religion from the Albanian national consciousness.

The contours of Hoxha's dream are available to us in his voluminous writings. By 1966 Hoxha seems to have wearied of the mundane day-to-day business of governing. After two decades of haranguing workers to meet production quotas, he now envisioned a more exalted role for himself on the world-historical stage. Consequently he began to commit his thoughts to paper; to date no less than fifty-six volumes of his writings have been published. The lifeless prose and the endless repetition of Stalinist dogma is enough to daunt even the most avid

researcher. Nevertheless it is here that one must look for the key to Hoxha's hatred of religion.

Hoxha was of course not the first in the Western world to long for the death of religion. It becomes clear in his writings that he was indebted first of all to the great rationalists of the bourgeois Enlightenment in the 18th century. These thinkers, for the most part, saw organized religion as an unsightly stain on the fabric of modernity. Reason, especially in its scientific mode, was propelling humanity towards a bright future in which the dark superstitions of the past would have no place. The childish illusions of religion, they held, stand in the way of such progress and should therefore be consigned to the dustbin of history.

The rationalist critique of religion surfaces again and again in Hoxha's writings. The backward customs and oppressive prejudice which remain, especially in the peasant elements of Albanian society, stifle development and block Albania's entrance into the modern world. And these primitive customs, prejudices and habits of thought, Hoxha argues, have religious foundations. Uprooting these religious world-views would create a space for rationality in Albanian society and thus would constitute a giant step toward social, economic and cultural progress.

Though there are endless variations on this theme in Hoxha's writings, one example will suffice. One of the "backward customs" for which religion is responsible, in Hoxha's view, is the appalling treatment of women.

An old Albanian proverb says, "A woman must work harder than a donkey for the latter feeds on grass while a woman lives on bread". The prevalence of this degrading view of women is due to Christianity and Islam. Hoxha made his argument for this thesis in a remarkable speech to the Central Committee of the PLA in 1967. Here he cited the fierce misogynist John Chrysostom and the somewhat milder Thomas Aquinas to show how sexism is deeply embedded in the Christian tradition. He cited as well an old code of Albanian law, which the church supported, allowing husbands to beat their wives and demanding that wives kneel in obeisance to their husbands. Religion gives divine sanction to such backward customs, denying the equality and dignity of women. Modernization and progress demand, therefore, that it be swept away.

There is a second and even more important reason why Hoxha longed for the death of religion in his society. Here his debt was not to the bourgeois Enlightenment but to the Marxist Enlightenment. Marx has argued of course that religion always serves the interests of the dominant class in a society. Going beyond Marx, Lenin concluded that for this reason religion was "unutterable vileness... contagion of the most abominable kind." Stalin, for his part, heartily agreed and advocated the most ruthless measures to eliminate it. Here, as is well-known, was another source of inspiration for Hoxha's campaign against religion.

The tireless repetition of this theme is one of the hallmarks of Hoxha's writings. In all of the unrelenting tirades against Western imperialism, Yugoslav and then Soviet revisionism and Eurocommunism, in all the fervent defenses of Stalin as a hero of world-historical dimensions, religion is depicted as

always taking the side of the exploiting classes in society. Albania, as the lone standard-bearer of authentic Stalinism in the modern world, is embarrassed by the remnants of religious faith in its midst. And therefore Hoxha called for a "merciless, life-and-death struggle" against it.

Important as these reasons were for Hoxha's campaign against religion, I would argue that there was a third, even more fundamental one. It has to do with xenophobia, the fear and hatred of the foreigner. Hoxha does not explicitly say that this is the most important reason, but one senses it nevertheless throughout his writings. Its origins lie more in primitive tribalism than in any Enlightenment. The history of Albania is of course largely a history of foreign domination. The centuries-old collective longing of Albanians for independent nationhood finally expressed itself, in the person of Enver Hoxha, as the hatred of religion. For in his view, the great religious traditions of the West are essentially alien to Albania. Greek invasion brought with it the Orthodox Church. And Italian aggression had included the introduction of Roman Catholicism. Thus religion must inevitably be associated with foreign domination. And since religion has always been on the side of the foreign oppressor, since the foreign enemy had unfailingly used religion to further its own ends, it constituted a grave danger to Albanian independence. For Hoxha, therefore, "revolution" means not so much war between classes in this society, but rather as he puts it, it means "to uproot alien customs, traditions and influences, religious superstitions" etc. It was thus above all xenophobia which fueled the fire of anti-religious sentiment in Hoxha; foreign

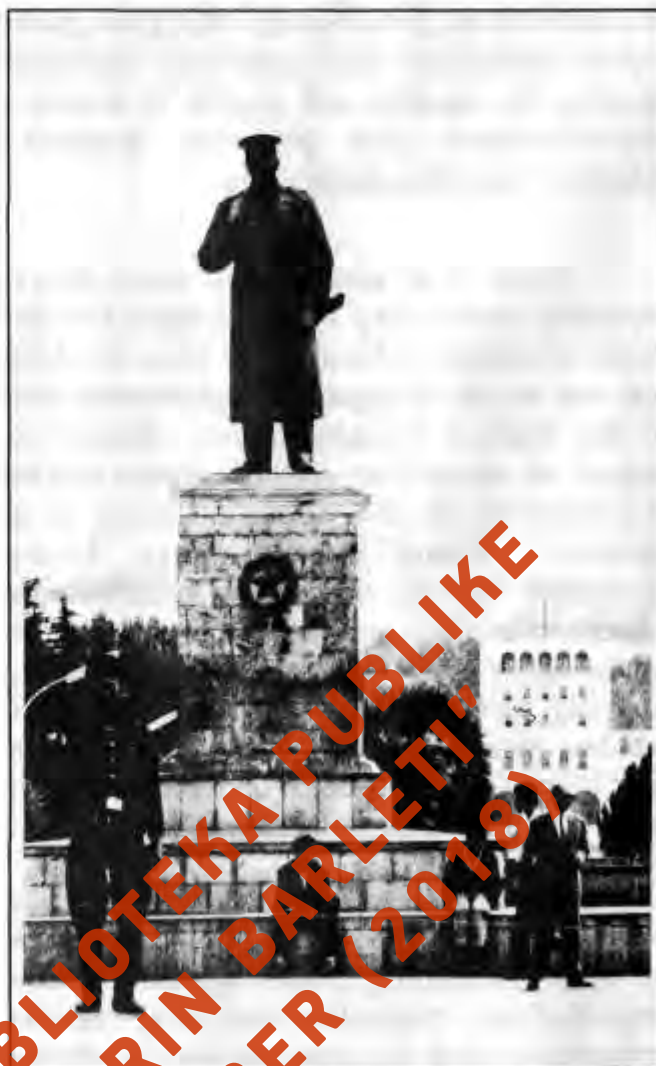
domination, steered over the medium of religion, was the greatest threat to Albanian national life.

Hoxha's dream to transform Albania into the world's first religionless society did not come to an end with his death in 1985. It was in fact carried on with great fervor by the Party and by his successor as First Secretary, Ramiz Alia. And it is common knowledge that Hoxha's dream, long before his death, had turned into a nightmare for those Albanians who clung to their faith. But the dream now appears to have abruptly come to an end. On May 8 the People's Assembly lifted the ban on religious practice. Though the future of religion in Albania is uncertain, it seems clear that the hopes of those who longed for the death of religion have been shattered.

How, finally, can one evaluate the reasons for Hoxha's hatred of religion. It has often been said that in every great lie there is a particle of truth. In my view, this is the case here: certain elements in the Christian tradition did lend support to customs which were fundamentally unjust; the church did sometimes serve the interest of the ruling class; the churches did legitimize foreign exploitation. Christianity would be foolish to claim for itself perfection in any of these spheres. And yet the amazing resilience of Christianity in Western history is attributable at least in part to its capacity to overcome these negativities within itself. If Christianity can acknowledge its failures and once again itself experience redemption, it will assure for itself a place in any future Albanian society.



Enver Hoxha (r) with his mentor Joseph Stalin, Moscow, 1954



Statue of Stalin in the center of Albania's capital, Tirane, 1990!

The "Common Graves" of Albanian Literature

Every authoritarian regime that monopolizes public opinion has its own "common graves" in which it seeks to bury all those who held different opinions. We discover this phenomenon in every epoch and in the most diverse geographical areas. During the post-war period, Albania dug its own common graves and cast aside writers of great value, including Gjergj Fishta, Faik Konica, Ernest Koliqi, Vinçenc Prendushi, Lazër Shantoja, Bernardin Palaj, Arshi Pipa and Martin Camaj.

The truth is that this cultural crime is an ephemeral and definitely useless effort. In fact, archeology and restoration have only shed more light on the past and thus revealed many surprises. These sciences will bring back the past and its disfigurement "almost to life."

One such trial of Albanian literature has already begun. The writer Ismail Kadare has recently declared that in Albania there was "too much dogmatism," that is, an indiscriminate use of an ideological mechanism. He expressed the opinion that men like Konica, Fishta, Koliqi, must be reinstituted into Albanian literature and that men such as these must, obviously, be evaluated critically. He also added, "I am convinced that religion is something profound that belongs to the individual...Here in Albania the greatest writers, with some exceptions, were Catholic." We congratulate ourselves on this fact. Every time the truth is affirmed history progresses and common civil life is strengthened.

BESA/FEDE, Rome

WILL THE WORKS OF BANNED ALBANIAN WRITERS RE-APPEAR?

Petro Vuçani

Since the advent of the communist regime in Albania in 1944, a number of works by important prolific writers have been removed from the lists of Albanian literature. Enver Hoxha and his co-horts have labeled the writers and their works as "reactionary," "obscurantist," "chauvinist," "anti-national," etc. Unfortunately, this policy has deprived Albanian readers in the post war generation of highly artistic works by distinguished authors, whose ideas did not coincide with communist ideology. Some of the banned literati were national leaders in the drive towards greater emancipation and progress. Their patriotism was never contested.

Among the 55 silenced authors are bishops, priests, and religious. Because of their untiring labors and holy ones they rightly deserved a lasting place in the records of Albania's cultural history. Instead, they were consigned along with other inspiring literary personalities to the "garbage bin of history" by the new masters of the land. Ironically the communist government's lengthy efforts to disparage and eliminate the multifaceted contribution of these literary figures are definitely destined to fail. Since the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985, more and more voices are being raised about past er-

rors of policies regarding art and literature. Those errors have impoverished Albania's cultural patrimony.

For the record we are printing the names of the "banned" literati.

Rev. ALEKSANDËR SIRDANI
Fr. ANTON ZANONI, S.J.
Fr. BENEDIKT DEMA, O.F.M.
ERNEST KOLIQI
FRANO ALKAJ
ILO MITKE QAFËZEZI
KARL GURAKUQI
KOSTË A. ÇEKREZI
LAME KODRA (Sejfullah Malëshova)
LEF NOSI
LLESH BITROJ
MARTIN CAMAJ
MUZINE KOKOLARI
NDOC VASIJA
Fr. PASHKO BARDHI, O.F.M.
STAVRO SKENDI
VASIL ALARUPI (Bendo Shaperdani)
ZEF SCHIRO, Jr.
GJERGJ PEKMEZ

Fr. ANTON HARAPI, O.F.M.
ARSHI PIPA
BRANKO MERXHANI
ETHEM HAXHIADEMI
Fr. FULVIO CORDIGNANO, S.J.
Fr. JUSTIN PROTA, O.F.M.
KOLË THAÇI
KRIST MALOKI
Rev. LAZËR SHANTOJA
LUIGJ THAÇI
Fr. MARIN SIRDANI, O.F.M.
MATI LOGORECI
MUSTAFA KRUJA-MERLIKA (Shpend Bardhi)
Rev. NDRË ZADEJA
Abbot PRENG DOÇI
TAJAR ZAVALANI
Archbishop VINÇENC PRENDUSHI
Fr. ZEF VALENTINI, S.J.

ANTON LOGORECI
Fr. BERNARDIN PALAJ, O.F.M.
ENGJELL RADOJA
FAIK KONICA
Fr. GJERGJ FISHTA, O.F.M.
KOLEC PRENDUSHI
KONSTANTIN KOTE
KRISTO FLOQI
Fr. LUIGJ MARLEKAJ, O.F.M.
LUMO SKENDO (Mithat Frashër)
Fr. MARK HARAPI, S.J.
MEHDI FRASHËRI
NAMIK RESULI
Rev. NIKOLL GAZULLI
SIMON SHUTERIQI
VANGJEL KOÇA
ZEF M. HARAPI
ZOI XOXA

Ismail KADARE: Literature and Human Rights

*"In Tiranë no body is talking about anything else." In an interview with a Union of Albanian Youth newspaper writer Kadare launches his message of renewal in which he speaks of justice, civil rights and national culture. The Italian weekly **Il Manifesto** (April 1, 1990) defined Ismail Kadare as "a provocative Garcia Marquez of the Balkans", and presented the contents of relaxed interview from Zëri i Rinisë (The voice of the youth) March 21, 1990. Important pieces of this interview/essay were also sent to the foreign press. It was thought impossible to forget the symptom of the regained awareness of the necessity for cultural renewal to surpass dogmatic and ideological stereotypes and to start on the way to social democratization and the renewal of culture. For Kadare it is necessary to review the history of literature. "The problem of critical texts," Kadare declared, "and of anthologies has a colossal importance, not only for the future of the culture, but also of our civilization in general." It is significant that the interview of this very famous Albanian writer and Vice Secretary of the Democratic Front Organization was given to the official youth press. To this point Kadare returns many times on different occasions.*

*We report here a portion of Kadare's interview with Remzi Lani that was originally published in the Italian magazine **Il Manifesto** (April 1, 1990)*

Question: What do you think of the critical evaluation of our ancient literature and what place should it hold within education?

Kadare: The correct evaluation of literary inheritance determines the destiny of a country's literature. There are Albanian critics who affirm, for example, that the first Albanian novel dates from 1950. This is a grave offense to the cultural inheritance of our people. And yet, the same people who aren't surprised when one says that the first Russian novel is Eugene Onegin by Alexander Puskin, which was written in 1836, remain instead stupefied when I say that the novel, *Milossao*, by Jeronim De Rada, published in 1836, must be considered the first Albanian novel. Already in 1929, an unknown student, wrote that our poet, Poradeci, was among the best poets in Europe and years later Albanian critics still haven't even read his works. Such critics ignore the development of literature in the period in which Christianity flourished in Albania and the other European countries. They say, "What on earth was Gjon Bazuku doing, translating the Daily Missal from Latin into Albanian. He simply translated a book of a religious character." But, they don't understand that the translation of the Bible by Martin Luther in 1534, 20 years before Bazuku's work in 1555, constitutes the beginning of German literature. Therefore, the priest Bazuku, when considered in this context, is revealed as a great figure of culture. The zeal of these critics brings fuel to the fire of the great Serbian chauvinism that, knowing well the antipathy which a neutered Europe has for fundamentalist Islam, portrays the Albanians in Kosova, even in 1990, as fundamentalist Muslims fighting a war against the Christian culture in Serbia. Such critics forget, or pretend to forget, that Christianity came to Albania in the first century, more than one thousand years before the Slavs.

Question: What can you say about the crisis in Kosova?

Kadare: Actually in Serbia a pathological psychosis has sprung up against Albanians, a psychosis that is anti-Albanian as much as it is anti-Yugoslavian. Contrariwise, it is also anti-Serbian because it insults Serbia in front of the whole world's eyes.

Question: In the introduction of the work by Migjeni (the great Albanian poet), you spoke also of writers who could be considered representatives of "regressive currents". What does this mean?

Kadare: I am of the opinion that the consciousness of a literature can be exact only if the historical processes of its evolution, whether they are positive or negative, are truly known and meditated upon deeply. In the introduction of our great poet Migjeni it wasn't by pure chance I mentioned other examples of very significant Albanian writers like Konica, Fishta, Koliqi, because the literary picture of the first half of our century, like the poetic work by Migjeni, could not be understood clearly without a historical setting and in such a setting they occupy a significant post. It's known that their ideological positions and also a part of their works, are counter to a current within Albanian literature, a current which is, in general, progressive. Fishta's and Koliqi's sympathy for fascism made their position more serious and it was this that determined the attitude taken toward them after liberation. Here, I want to add, that all over the world collaborationist writers were treated with similar severity. It is enough to remember Ezra Pound and the attitude of the USA; Ezra Pound is now considered among the major poets of the century in the English language but back then he was imprisoned, closed in a cage as if he were a leper. Or the severity of France, with the shooting of some writers of the right like Brasillach. But, with the passage of time and particularly the disappearance of the situations that condition behavior toward problematic or ambiguous writers, the judgement upon these writers and upon their work changes. World

history has known many similar examples. Certainly I think that Faik Konica, notwithstanding political oscillations, must occupy a place within our national literature also for the role of his journal "Albania" founded by him before the declaration of independence of our homeland. Such publications would help not only the reader and the critic to follow the literary process in Albania during different periods, but also better know other writers who may be already considered well-known. In this way studying Fishta would enable one to discover other works by other great writers: the poet and priest Ndre Mjeda, likewise the understanding of the novels by Koliqi would give more value to the great poets of history. Speaking concretely about the representative tendencies of these authors, I would say that they use superfluous amounts of folklore, a thing which gravely damages the artistic level of their work and which are often dogmatic, moralistic, and xenophobic. They often have wanted the isolation of culture and generally of the Albanian world. But, what they reveal also surprises one incredibly. The poet and priest, Mjeda, for example, has a wider point of view. It is enough to remember his poem "Liria" (Liberty, 1911), in which, challenging the modes offered by old Europe, half monarchical and half chauvinistic, he evokes for the Albanian people the value of the American Revolution. It seemed really strange that a priest, abandoned in the mountains of Albania, was speaking to the Albanian people about the United States, about Washington D.C., about New York and about the new American society. His verse is famous, "You have liberty/we have chains."

Question: Our literature is crossing our borders. Are our readers sufficiently informed about this?

Kadare: The comparison of our literature with that of the progressive world is by now an ingredient within its evolution. In this sense, how-

ever, I do not believe in the skepticism, nor in the euphoria with which we often face this question.

Question: The ninth plenum of the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA) has posed a very important problem for the intellectuals. What opinion do you have in this regard?

Kadare: The problem brought up at the plenum of our Party is undoubtedly an important one. Those who don't understand that together with the betterment of our material welfare lies the problem of the democratization of our society haven't understood anything of the aspirations of our people. Because in order for democratization to take place, everyone must participate, above all the intellectuals. I think that no intellectual could be called honest if he did not do everything he could to promote the democratization of life and democracy in general. Democracy and culture are among the fundamental values of a nation and everyone must do their best and make them become the dominant guidelines of our lives.

I think that these problems would be a task also for literature, a test, a fortune that we have been given. Democracy and justice have close ties which are very strong and ancient with the art of literature. They are of the same race. Not wishing to be fastidious, I would like to repeat what I wrote about Eschylus of whom it is difficult to understand where the playwright finishes and the defender of justice begins. Of him, one must surely say that he was the prime minister of justice, not only of the government, but also of all of humanity. A literature that doesn't contain the problem of democratization and human rights as he does, is not only a false literature, but its morality is very dubious."

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

PROFILE:

ISMAIL KADARE

Brian Curdy

In our last issue we presented a profile of Martin Camaj, the talented and prolific Albanian writer-in-exile. Camaj is currently a faculty member at the University of Munich. The New York University Press has just published an English translation of his *Selected Poems*.

This year we offer our readers a profile of Ismail Kadare, the most celebrated Albanian writer living in Albania. With the exception of Mother Teresa, Kadare is perhaps the best travelled Albanian in that nation today. He has been an eloquent spokesman for the government of Enver Hoxha abroad. His many literary works have been translated into several languages.

With the death of Albania's communist leader Enver Hoxha in 1985, Kadare began to distance himself from the Stalinist party line. He objected particularly to the communist party's cultural monopoly and its restrictions on artistic liberty, human rights, and democracy in general. Presently he seems to be emerging as a major dissident leader, calling for a complete democratization of his country. As vice president of the Democratic Front, he is nearly as powerful as Nexhmije Hoxha, Hoxha's widow who is the president of the Democratic Front. Kadare is called "Albania's Vaclav Havel" by many of his compatriots. The recent dramatic developments in Albania may show what truth there is in such speculations.

Ismail Kadare was born in Gjirokastra — Hoxha's birthplace — on January 28, 1936. He attended the Tirana Faculty of Letters, which later became a college of the University of Tirana. In 1957 he published his first collection of poems, entitled *Endërrime* (Day Dreams). As a foreign exchange graduate student he studied

at Moscow's Gorky Institute from 1958 to 1960. During his school years Kadare became a member of the Communist Albanian Workers Party. He published a second collection of Albanian poems *Shekulli im* (My Century, 1961).



Ismail Kadare

Kadare was twenty-six years old when he first published in embryonic form *Gjenerali i ushtrisë së vdekur* (The General of the Dead Army). The short story was initially published as a two-part serial for the Albanian Communist Youth Weekly *Zëri i Rinisë* (The Voice of the Youth, June 23 and 30, 1962). He later reworked, enlarged, and republished the work as a 167 page novel. It was reedited and further enlarged to 242 pages for a 1967 printing. A fourth edition was introduced in 1980. Luciano Tovoli produced a 1983 film based on the novel starring Marcello Mastroianni. *The General of the Dead Army* has now been translated into more than thirty languages and published in both communist and non communist countries. The story follows an Italian general who travels to Albania in company with a priest to exhume and repatriate the remains of his fallen soldiers.

The author's travels seem to inspire his writing. In 1962, Kadare was the Albanian delegate to the annual Communist Youth Festival, held that year in Finland. Upon his return he published another collection of poems, *Përse mendohen këto male* (What Are These Mountains Thinking?, 1964).

The novel *Dashm* (The Notes), and a collection of documentaries entitled *Qyteti i Jugut* (The Southern City) were published in Tirana during 1967. In October of that year he traveled to Hanoi to support the North Vietnamese in their

war against the United States. The following year he published another collection of poetry, *Motivë me diell* (Sunny Compositions).

Kadare published *Kështjella* (The Citadel) in 1970 and then came to New York City to attend the United Nations World Youth Congress.

He published the novel *Kronikë në gur* (Chronicle in Stone) in 1971. That year the Danish government invited Kadare to Denmark. The author was also a guest of the Society of Albanian and Swedish Friendship in Sweden in both 1971 and 1975. The second visit coincided with the publication of the Swedish edition of *Dasma*. His travelogues were published in Albania under the title *Linjë të largëta* (Long Runners, 1971) along with *Autobiografia e popullit në vargje* (The Autobiography of the (Albanian) People in Verse, 1971).

In 1972, Kadare visited France and Prishtinë, Yugoslavia. He revisited Prishtinë (capital of the Kosovë region) on the eve of the 1981 troubles. The anthology *Ismail Kadare et la nouvelle poesie albanaise* (Ismail Kadare and the New Albanian Poetry), edited by M. Metais was published in 1973. Kadare journeyed to Romania as a guest of Zacharie Stanko, president of the Romanian Writer's Union in 1974. Following his second visit to Sweden in 1975, Kadare returned to Albania where he published another novel *Nëntori i një Kryeqyteti* (A Capitol in November). The novel was followed by a collection of poems entitled *Koha* (The March of Time, 1976), and then by a collection of short stories *Emblëma e dikurshme* (Signs of Other Times, 1977).

His novel *Dimri i Madh* (The Great Winter) was also published in 1977.

In a 1979 interview, Kadare revealed that he had been at work on the epic of the Sino-Soviet split for eight years. His research had resulted in a short first version, entitled *Dimri i vetmisë së madhe* (The Winter of the Great Loneliness,

1973). The novel chronicles the clash of ideologies and the political maneuvers that led to the dramatic break of Albania with the Soviet Union in 1961.

In 1978, Kadare published a collection of four short novels: *Ura me tri harqe* (The Bridge with Three Arches), *Pashallëqet e mëdha* (The Great Pashalics), *Muzgu i perenditë të stepës* (Sunset for the Gods of the Steppes) and *Komisjoni i festës* (The Holyday Commission). The last work can be found in Alexandre Zoto's 1984 *Anthologie de la prose albanaise* (Anthology of Albanian Prose, reviewed in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, 1986-1987).

Kadare was invited to Turkey by Ankara's Academy of Human Sciences as a participant in the 1979 Congress of South Eastern European Studies. Shortly afterwards he published a collection of short stories under the title *Gjakftohëtsija* (Cold-Bloodedness) 1980). He later enlarged two of those stories into the novels entitled *Kush e solli Doruntinën* (Who Brought Doruntine Back?) and *Prilli i thyer* (April Broken, 1982).

Kadare was scheduled to appear on the French Television show "Apostrophes," hosted by the internationally known French literary critic Bernard Pivot in 1981. However Kadare cancelled his appearance for political reasons when he learned that the American writer Saul Bellow was also scheduled to appear on the set with Pivot.

Despite his well-established loyalty to the Tirana regime, Kadare became a target of the official public criticism in the spring of 1982. Kadare was criticized for the apparent conflict between his treatment of Albanian folklore and history and the Marxist literary school of Socialist Realism. However by that time, Kadare's foreign royalties and his skillful diplomacy as the regime's principal spokesman abroad had become strong arguments in his defense.

to his native Albania and was ordained a priest of the Franciscan order. During his first years as a priest, he was exposed to the sweetly lyrical songs of the mountain people. These songs affected him deeply. They stirred within him a sense of national pride. These village canticles reminded him of the epic songs of Andre Kačić, a Croatian with whom Fishta had studied. Thus, the concept of an Albanian epic poetry began to take shape within Father Fishta's mind.

His poetry was written during a critical time in the history of Albania. The country was in the process of leaving the Ottoman Empire and struggling to keep its lands free from Slavic encroachment from the North. Over half of the Albanian territories were assigned to the Slavs as a result of the 1878 Treaty of San Stefano between Russia and Turkey. During the treaty negotiations, the rights of Albanians to self determination were never taken into account. As a result the people rebelled against both the Slavs and Turks. For 4 years (1878-1881) they defended their territories, and in the process strengthened their sense of national and cultural identity. The events of this struggle provided the raw material for *The Lute of the Mountains*. This epic tale of love and sacrifice in the midst of the horrors of war contained 16,883 rhymed verses in 30 separate cantos.

The epic heroes were carefully chosen to represent a cross-section of the Albanian population. One episode featured Oso Kuka, a Muslim from Shkodra, whose army was vastly outnumbered and under siege by the Slavs at Vranina Castle. In a last-ditch effort, reminiscent of the Japanese kamakazi squadrons of WWII, Kuka's army set fire to the powder barrels. The ensuing explosion de-

stroyed both the attackers and the defenders. Another memorable character was a wise old Catholic highlander and warlord who admonished his sons to uphold national codes and customs of the mountain people in order to preserve their independence. A Franciscan priest named Gjon pleaded with villagers to draft an armistice with the enemy during another episode of conflict. When the enemy refused all overtures toward a peaceful settlement, the Franciscan then urged them to put their fate into God's hands and go into battle.

Throughout the epic Fishta infused his work with a great confidence in God. He offered a constant cry for justice and dignity for his tiny, ancient nation. The main characters appealed to God during many desperate moments, and through his grace they achieved great acts of heroism and self-sacrifice. Fishta also employed supernatural beings from popular Albanian folklore, such as fairies and muses. In this regard he was a precursor of the 20th century literary movement known as "Magical Realism" (which is currently "fashionable" among South American novelists). It is, however, the vivid descriptions of pitched battles and skirmishes which proved to be the most breathtaking aspect of Fishta's work. They elevate *The Lute of the Mountains* into a class by itself. While unquestionably an ardently patriotic piece of poetry, Fishta's epic managed at the same time to extol the virtues of fighters on both sides of the battle lines. The struggle was simply that of a people trying to avoid being swallowed up. His ecumenical approach was particularly commendable in view of Turkish and Slavic religious intolerance.

His strong sense of national awareness, as well as his adherence to the moral standards of his time, made Father Fishta a cham-

In 1984, he was a guest of the Greek Minister of Culture, and in the years following Kadare's works broke the long term cultural barrier that had formed between Albania and its neighbor. One of the late Enver Hoxha's final works, *Dy popuj miq* (Two Friendly Peoples) signalled the trend toward the resumption of friendly relations between Albania and Greece. This moment was epitomized in the 1988 publication of Kadare's *Eskili, ky humbës i madh* (Aeschylus or the Eternal Loser). Kadare has also translated several modern Greek works into Albanian.

Kadare recalled that the title and the themes of his novel *Dimri i madh* (The Great Winter) was symbolically entwined with his novel

Koncert në fund të dimrit (Concert at the End of Winter, 1988). The latest novel dealt with Hoxha's break with Mao Tse-Tung's China in 1978. This break paralleled the split with the Soviets that occurred nearly two decades earlier.

Since Hoxha's death in 1985 Kadare has continued to travel abroad and to write. He has simultaneously increased his own literary reputation and international prestige. Recently he has been mentioned as candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature. Readers in several languages eagerly awaits his new works.

* * *

GJERGJ FISHTA - POET LAUREATE OF ALBANIA

A Memorial Tribute

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Gjergj Fishta, the Franciscan priest who captured the voice of the Albanian people and committed it to paper. Inspired by the epic songs of the Northern Albanian villagers among whom he served, he fashioned verses that glorified the freedom-loving spirit of the mountain folk and which gave Albanians a body of literature written in their native tongue. The language survived the five centuries of Turkish occupation, and Father Fishta managed to sculpt from it his epic masterpiece, *The Lute of the Mountains*. It introduced Albanian readers to a cast of characters that bordered on the mythical. His heroes, in fact, were so greatly admired by the public at large that he become something of hero himself.

Fishta was born in 1871 in a village near Shkodra. His education began at the local Franciscan college. He later studied philosophy and theology in Croatia and eventually obtained his degree. In 1893 he returned



Gjergj Fishta

pion to Albanians at home and abroad. Foreign scholars were also taken with his work. Professor Max Von Lambertz, who translated *The Lute of the Mountains* into German, dubbed its author "the Homer of the Albanians". He received many honors during his life time including a Silver Crown and Golden Feather in 1911, the Mearif Medal of Turkey in 1912, and the Phoenix of Greece in 1925. Not only was Fishta the most highly regarded Albanian poet, but was also recognized as an accomplished writer of prose, a publisher, an educator, a devoted and be-loved priest of Holy Mother Church.

He was chosen to be "President of the Commission" at the 1908 Congress of Manastir. The delegates convened to decide which type of alphabet the Albanians should officially adopt (Arabic, Cyrillic, Greek, Latin or a combination thereof). Fishta was instrumental in having the Latin alphabet accepted by the Congress. Within a few years it became the standard throughout Albania.

From 1919 to 1921 Fishta served as Secretary of the Albanian delegation at the Conference for the Treaty of Versailles. Upon his return to Albania he was elected as a representative of Shkodra in the Albanian Parliament.

Partly as a result of his administrative position, along with the fact that he was a tireless representative of the much despised Roman Catholic Church, the Communist Party posthumously accused him of "clerical reactionary fascism". They burned his books and removed his name from the record of Albanian literature, when they took power at the end of WWII. The only references made to Father Fishta under the Communist regime are those instances in which officials inter-

preted his contacts with foreigners and local "reactionaries". For these meetings Fishta was naturally labelled a "traitor". Since *The Lute of the Mountains* is set during the war against the Serbs, the Albanian government is especially retiscent about acknowledging Fishta. The authorities fear that his recognition might upset Albania's relations with Yugoslavia.

Perhaps it is fortunate that Fishta died on December 30, 1940, several years before the Communist takeover. He was spared the horrible indignities endured by many of his fellow priests and religious. Albania's ban on its own premier poet is doubly ironic considering that his works are read and appreciated in several other Communist-run countries including Yugoslavia, East Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Russia.

Our Center remembers with pride and gratitude the great Poet Laureate of Albania Father Gjergj Fishta on this 50th anniversary of his death, and hopes that one day his name will be restored to his proper place in the annals of Albanian literature.

* * *

The Lute of the Mountains as well as other works of Father Gjergj Fishta may be obtained by writing to: Franciscan Fathers, Via Cottolengo 6, 00165 Rome, Italy.

ALBANIAN NEWS AND EVENTS

PRIESTS WHO SURVIVED RELIGIOUS
HOLOCAUST IN ALBANIA

We have recently learned that 27 priests have survived the post World War II religious holocaust in Albania. A priest/tourist from Slovenia, Yugoslavia (whose name we cannot disclose for obvious reasons) had met with Bishop Nikollë Troshani, the only surviving member of the Albanian Catholic hierarchy. According to the priest's report the old bishop was frail and weak from his long captivity, but otherwise was in high spirits and very confident that the government will soon allow public worship. The Slovenian priest further reported that he met with several priests and was able to establish a list of Albanian diocesan and religious clergy. They have resurfaced over the past two years following decades of the worst religious persecution in the history of the Albanian nation. The list, however, is incomplete. He was told that there are other priests who are still unaccounted for and are believed to be in various Albanian gulags.

We wish to share with our friends and readers the list of priests as it was sent to us:

Diocesan clergy:

Nikollë TROSHANI, Titular Bishop of Cisamo and Apostolic Administrator of Lezha and Durrës.

Reverends: Ndoc NDOJA, Mikel KOLIQI, Pashko MUZHANI, Martin TRUSHI, Injac DEMA, Ndoc SAHATÇIJA, Jak GAZULLI, Nikollë MAZRREKU, Simon JUBANI, Luigj KOLAJ, Loro NODEJ, Frano IDHIJAJ, Zef MANI, Kolec TONI, Zef GILAJ, Ernest TROSHANI;

Religious clergy:

Jesuits: Anton LULI, Gjergj VATA;

Franciscans: Robert ASHTA, Leon KABASHI, Aleks BAQLI, Dhionis MAKAJ, Konstantin PISTULLI, Shtjefën PISTULLI, Konrad GJOLEJ, Zef PLUMBI.

We noted with joy that NIKOLLË MAZRREKU, PASHKO MUZHANI, LORO NODEJ, DHIONIS MAKAJ, and ANTON LULI, who were listed in 1985 as "deceased" or "executed"

have survived the ordeal after being kept "incomunicado" for decades by the communist authorities.

The list, however, does not contain the names of Mark HASI, Injac GJOKA, Zef NIKOLLA, Ndreç GEGA, Rrok GJURAJ, Hile GJONI, Fran ILLIJA, or Federik MAZI. As of 1985 all were being kept in labor camps or prisons. We pray and hope that they too will join the ranks of released clergy and can begin to minister publicly to the Albanian believers.



Reverend Mark Hasi in 1945. Last reports by Albanian refugees and former prisoners indicate that as of 1986 he was in the dreadful Burrel prison. Is he still alive? Where is he kept?

Finally, the priest/tourist reported that he witnessed a large gathering of several thousand people in the town of Leq (Northern Albania) for the feast day of St. Anthony (June 13, 1990). Present were two elderly priests who led the gathering in the recitation of the Rosary. People then continued with devotional hymns and socializing. The police were present but did not intervene.

May this first open expression of faith lead to the legalization of full public worship in Albania.

ALBANIA REMOVES BAN ON "RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA" YET PUBLIC WORSHIP STILL FORBIDDEN

In a surprise move to improve its image as "worst abuser of human rights," the Albanian parliament introduced a package of reforms on 8 May, 1990. These may advance the cause of democracy. The announced reforms are apparently an attempt to soften the Party's Stalinist line, which has staunchly resisted the wave of change-towards-democracy in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The reforms give individuals, for the first time in over four decades of communist rule, more legal powers. They change the definition of crimes against the state." The Ministry of Justice, which was abolished in 1961, is reinstated.

The official Albanian news agency (ATA) reported on 9 May that "parliament unanimously approved draft laws reducing the number of crimes punishable by death from 34 to 11; gave all the citizens the right to hold a passport; removed the ban on religious propaganda; and legalized foreign investment." The agency added that the "reforms do not signify a weakening of the socialist system but rather its strengthening."

It is worth noting that the announcement of reforms preceded by only two days the visit to Albania of the United Nations General Secretary Javier Perez de Cuellar.

The long overdue development was welcomed by all Albanians at home and in exile, who for decades were victims of inhuman policies imposed on them by a ruthless government. Immediately the people began to exercise their right, according to voted reforms, and demanded passports en masse. It seems that the government was taken by surprise when thousands of youth demonstrated in the streets seeking to depart the country. When the government used force to quell the protests, the demonstrators stormed the foreign embassies requesting political asylum. Following a dramatic week of international negotiations in

which the United Nations played a major role some 6,000 received necessary passports to leave the country.

The lifting of the ban on "religious propaganda" was received by believers with caution and reservation. The hesitancy results from the fact that Article 55 of the 1976 Constitution, forbids any religious activity and Clause 55 of the 1977 Penal Code sets penalties for practicing religion. These laws have not been officially amended. Subsequently the Albanian leaders were quick to declare that "public worship will not be allowed because it could endanger national unity" and that "no churches or mosques will be open or given back to clergy because they represent a remnant of obscurantism." For Christians the public expression of faith is a fundamental need and requirement of their religious belief. The present provision to allow the private practice of religion is no doubt a positive first step. However, Albanian believers demand full freedom of conscience and religion as provided by United Nations' Charter and other international laws and agreements, to which Albania wishes to be a signatory.

Some Christian organizations, including the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America have enthusiastically welcomed the announced changes in the laws regarding religion in Albania. Officials of the Albanian Orthodox Church have written to President Ramiz Alia of Albania, commending him and the Albanian government for "removing regulations prohibiting religious faith and practice." An archdiocesan resolution released earlier this year suggested that "national and ideological necessity" prompted the government "to close all houses of worship and to curtail religious liberty in Albania." With all due respect to the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, we disagree with the above assessment. The truth is that Enver Hoxha and his cohorts could not tolerate any organiza-

tion, especially a religious one, which could stand in the way of their communist indoctrination. We don't see how forbidding people the right to worship can safeguard their unity. It was believers of the three major religious groups - Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic and their clergy - who created Albania as an independent state in 1912. The same church document rightfully states that "Albanians of Orthodox, Moslem, Bektashi, and Roman Catholic belief have always lived together in harmony and mutual respect." We may add here that this has been a fact and reality in Albania before and during the communist era of religious persecution.

A simple statistic drawn from the questionnaire which young refugees from Albania completed upon their arrival in Italy is a strong evidence against government's anti-religious policies. Of the 830 refugees questioned, 621 declared themselves to be Muslim, 145 Catholic, 33 Orthodox, and only 2 did not belong to any religion. Considering the past decades of "official atheism," these numbers are an outstanding testimony of the people's faith and the government's failure to abolish religion.

MOTHER TERESA RE-ELECTED

Mother Teresa planned to retire as head of the Missionaries of Charity. However delegates to the general chapter meeting re-elected her to head the charity order. Mother Teresa announced this decision was "part of God's own plans." She withdrew her resignation as superior general of the Missionaries of Charity when 113 delegates from around the globe voted unanimously to retain her.

A NEW BISHOP FOR ALBANIANS?

VATICAN'S RADIO "ALBANIAN PROGRAM" - DISAPPOINTING

Albanian Catholics in exile are the only ethnic group from Eastern Europe without a Bishop or Vicar General to serve their spiritual needs. For many years the representatives of Albanian Catholic exiles have pleaded with Vatican officials to name a spiritual leader in the rank of a Bishop. Today this demand has become even more significant in the light of imminent changes in Albania's religious policies.

In past issues of the **Bulletin** we have voiced the strong desire that a monthly Mass in Albanian be established at the Vatican's Radio "Albanian Program" to meet the needs of the Albanian faithful enduring religious oppression. Several young refugees who participated in the July 1990 exodus of Albanians to freedom have complained about the contents of the Albanian program. They claim that Albanian Catholics at home need religious instruction, the recitation of the rosary and most especially a Mass in Albanian.

U.N. LEADER VISITS ALBANIA

At the invitation of Albania's President Ramiz Alia, the United Nations' Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar visited the capital city of Tirane on May 15, 1990 for talks with the country's leaders.

While Perez de Cuellar praised Albania's "strong commitment to independence," he also spoke in terms that implied the U.N.'s dissatisfaction with Albania's human rights record. At the dinner given by Foreign Minister Reis Malile, the Secretary-General said that "Experience proves that the rights of man are indivisible and that the enjoyments of economic and social rights cannot be separated from that of individual liberties."

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION VISITS ALBANIA

A United States Congressional delegation composed of Hon. Tom Lantos and the Hon. Joseph J. DioGuardi, (President of the Albanian American Civic League [AACL]), visited Albania and met with government leaders, from May 28 to May 31, 1990.

The delegation was impressed by the openness of their hosts. They thought that the meetings were positive and will hopefully pave the way for diplomatic relations. Delegates remarked that the atmosphere was cordial and interesting. Talks involved opposing points of view with a common goal - to communicate.

Following this first official visit by United States delegation, the AACL issued a public statement urging the Albanian government "to further advance on the road of bringing Albania fully and unequivocally within the community of nations which hold dear the ideals of personal freedom, moral integrity, social justice and international friendship." The League expressed confidence that the Albanian Government will find it timely, wise and appropriate to "declare a general amnesty for all political prisoners... to guarantee civil rights... to

permit and assist the establishment of religious institutions and their activities as an inseparable part of the right to worship."

The AACL reaffirmed its position expressed in a January 1990 Statement by Hon. DioGuardi to "support the independence and territorial integrity of Albania, and to see Albania become an equal member of the larger European family of nations... to reject all outside pressure, interference or calls for violent actions as instruments of change in Albania as undemocratic and dangerous... to support the evolutionary democratic changes in Albania through peaceful and progressive means... to encourage all Albanian-Americans to work for and promote friendly relations between the United States and Albania."



Hon. Tom Lantos

We applaud the U.S. Congressional delegation on its bridge-building efforts. We affirm its strong stance regarding human rights. We also commend the Albanian American Civic League for its realistic and patriotic approach to the present difficult situation in Albania.

LEGISLATION AIMS TO HALT PUBLIC DISSENT

The recent unrest in Albania has prompted the government to quickly adopt measures to prevent citizens from demonstrating. In June and July 1990 thousands of Albanians took to the streets in a first public display of discontent against the government. They were forcefully dispersed. Many



Hon. Joseph J. DioGuardi

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

sought refuge from the confrontation in foreign embassies. As many as 6,000 were granted political asylum. Many others were wounded by the police while attempting to flee.

On 31 July 1990 the Albanian Parliament approved Legal Decree #7408 which sets penalties for unauthorized public gatherings. Eight days later the new law was published in the official daily newspaper *Bashkimi*. It is now required that a written police permit be obtained at least three days before a public gathering. Failure to comply is punishable by a fine of 1,000 Lekë (\$150 US) and "re-education by means of hard labor and imprisonment for up to one year."

Article 6 of the new law provides that "the police will warn any gathering twice before using force to disperse them." President Ramiz Alia of the Presidium of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania endorsed the new law.

EXILED ALBANIAN GROUPS APPEAL FOR QUICK REFORMS

A joint statement issued by four exiled Albanian political parties in early 1990 welcomed the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe. The Free Albania Committee, the Albanian Democratic Union, the National Independent Block, and the National United Front expressed "deep concern regarding the Albanian government's persistence to continue on the road of Hoxha's Stalinist dictatorship and the danger which it poses."

The authors of the statement said that Albania could become another Rumania if "immediate democratic reforms do not take place so that the people can reclaim their freedom, well-being and dignity." They are concerned that the violence which may occur in Albania could "endanger Albania's territorial integrity and create a vacuum situation in the Balkans."

The statement concluded that "the time has come for the Albanian regime to make way for reforms in a peaceful manner so that the danger-

ous speculations and pretensions of our neighbours could be avoided, and the future leadership could be based on justice and human rights, reflecting Albania's traditional values and the spirit of European democracy."

Similar statements have been issued by other exiled parties including the National Democratic Committee for a Free Albania (Paris), the Albanian National Organization "The Movement of Legality" (New York), and the Committee for Human Rights in Albania (Italy).

LITERATURE AND RELIGION

The Socialist daily newspaper *Avanti* dedicated a 40 page supplement April 1, 1990 to Albania entitled, "The Last Frontier of Communism in Europe." It also had a length interview with the writer Ismail Kadare. Among other things the interview touched upon the theme of "Literature and Religion." We reprint here the questions and his responses.

Question: Yours is a country atheist by law. You, however, as a writer understand well that religion occupies an important place in the development and cultural tradition of a people. Do you not think that this absence has left an empty space in the culture of your country?

Kadare: Yes, I think so. I think that in Albania there has been too much dogmatism. Our culture has been, in great part, based on Catholic tradition and not even the Turkish invasion succeeded in erasing this imprint. We spoke about this recently during a meeting which we had of the Union of Writers. This meeting was also mentioned in the local press. I'm convinced that religion is something deep which belongs to the individual. My belief is that its interaction with the other elements of culture has an important role to play in the development of man and of society. Here in Albania the great writers, with few exceptions, have been Catholic while Islam, despite centuries of occupation, has had an influence which may be ignored.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S SECTION APPEALS TO EUROPEAN LEADERS

Professor Lino Totaro, a representative of Amnesty International's Italian Section, sent letters to the European Parliament and to all Italian Parliamentary Groups, outlining the plight of Albanians in their own country.

The letters urged international pressure through various channels, in order to effect a change. Totaro argued that "non-intervention permits a government to commit genocides." He also mentioned the fact that Albania is the only country in the world which does not have a Ministry of Justice. This was the most recent effort in a letter campaign initiated by Professor Totaro on behalf of Amnesty International's Italian Section.

PROMOTION FOR ARCHBISHOP LAGHI

Archbishop Pio Laghi, Papal nuncio to the United States and a long-time friend of the Albanian people, has recently been named head of the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education. From the onset of his tenure as Papal nuncio to the U.S., Laghi has shown concern and sympathy for the plight of the Church in Albania and other believers. Our Center is indebted to Archbishop Pio Laghi for his unfailing support. He will be missed. We extend our best wishes, and offer him our prayers.

OUR EDITOR MEETS THE PRESS

A string of recent appearances have kept our editor, Gjon Sinishta, rather busy this spring. He appeared on the "Live Show" with Mother Angelica in February; at the Italian Cultural Center - "El Cenacolo" in April; spoke in May



Archbishop Pio Laghi

in Berkeley at the Interfaith Council, as well as at the Kiwanis Club in Santa Clara. During this time Sinishta was also interviewed by Voice of America, News International Network and several radio stations.

ALBANIAN INTERFAITH MEMORIAL SERVICE HONORS VICTIMS OF REPRESSION IN KOSOVO

Some 400 members of the Albanian-American community from the Tri-State area around New York, gathered for an interfaith religious ceremony. They honored the memory of the Albanian victims of repression in Kosovo, Yugoslavia. The ecumenical service was held on 2 June, 1990 at the Royce Hotel in New York. It was presided over by the Very Reverend Arthur Liolin, Chancellor of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America; Reverends Rrok Mirdita and Pjetër Popaj of the Our Lady of Shkodër (Albanian) Catholic Church in the Bronx, N.Y.; and Reverend Imam Isa Hoxha of the Albanian American Islamic Center of New York and New Jersey.

International human rights organizations, the European Parliament, the U.S. delegation to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, both Houses of the U.S. Congress, and the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Yugoslavia have deplored and condemned the senseless killing and the use of force by Serbian police against the peaceful Albanian population in Yugoslavia.

The Albanian-American Interfaith Community, Bronx, New York, which coordinated the interfaith memorial, issued the following statement:

"We consider life as the most precious gift of God, and the preservation of life as our most sacred mission. The killing of innocent Albanian demonstrators, struggling peacefully to gain freedom, dignity and respect for human rights, has offended the conscience of the civi-

lized world and provoked a wave of protest by people of good will. It is in this spirit that we assembled, Christians and Muslims together, as one single body, to pray for the souls of the dead and the sinners who committed the crime, and to let the world know that the blessed names of those who fought and died for freedom and justice will not be forgotten by us today, or by future Albanian generations."

SERBIAN VIOLENCE AGAINST ALBANIAN CATHOLICS IN KOSOVË

Rather than seek any form of reconciliation with ethnic Albanians, the Serbians have further escalated the conflict in Kosove.

According to a recent report the Serbian police have ransacked the premises of *Drita* (Light), an Albanian Catholic monthly in Yugoslavia, located in the city of Ferizaj, Kosovë. *Drita* is the official organ of the Catholic Diocese of Prizren, but serves Albanian Catholics throughout Yugoslavia. The police briefly detained *Drita's* editor Dr. Lush Gjergji as well as the publisher, Bishop Nikë Prela of Prizren.

The convents and hospices of the Holy Cross Sisters in Janjevë and Binçë (Kosovë) were also ransacked by the police. All the medical supplies were confiscated because the Sisters allegedly knew of "the Albanian separatist's plans for insurrection."

Franjo Kardinal Kuharić of Zagreb, president of the Catholic Conference of Yugoslavia, and the Archbishop Alojz Suštar of Ljubljana, president of the Catholic Conference of Slovenia, have vehemently protested against the police actions to the Yugoslav federal authorities in Belgrade.

What is needed in Kosovë is not a further aggravation of the conflict, but understanding, good will and a spirit of reconciliation. A positive step in that direction would be for the Yugoslav authorities to repudiate and condemn such violent actions by the Serbian police, punish the evil doers, and thus serve notice that no such actions will be tolerated in the future.

ADEM DEMAÇI - LONGEST ALBANIAN POLITICAL PRISONER - RELEASED

Adem Demaçi, the Albanian Mandela of Europe, was recently released after a stint of 28 years in the worst Yugoslav prisons and labor camps.

Demaçi, a dissident writer, voiced merely his discontent and peacefully opposed discriminatory and oppressive policies towards Albanians by the Yugoslav government. He never used, nor advocated the use of violence against the established order in Yugoslavia. Demaçi was adopted a "prisoner of conscience" by Amnesty International and a number of other international human rights organizations.

Happy to return home to his family, Demaçi immediately joined the 350,000 strong Democratic Alternative Union of Kosova. The aim of this mass organization, headed by Albanian writers and intellectuals, is the establishment of democracy and freedom in the region of Kosovë, through peaceful means.

We congratulate Adem Demaçi on his re-won freedom and wish him good health and success in the works of peace, democracy and freedom.



Adem Demaçi

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

ALBANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ASSASINATED

On 24 February 1990 gunmen ambushed and killed a leading Albanian human rights activist in Belgium. Witnesses told police that several men shot Enver Hadri, chairman of the Brussels-based Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Albanians in Yugoslavia. Hadri was riding in his car in Brussels suburb of Saint Gilles when the shooting occurred. Hadri died shortly afterwards at a nearby hospital.

It was immediately suspected that the assassination was carried out by the agents of the dreaded Yugoslav Secret Service (SDS). This was confirmed in an account made public in Yugoslavia by the Serbian magazine *Nezavisne Novine* of Belgrade on 10 June, 1990. According to the magazine's report the assassination of Hadri was arranged and carried out by the Serbian branch of SDS. "Hit agents" were Andrija Lakonić and Veselin Vukotić.

Thousands of Albanians and friends from all over Europe attended Hadri's funeral in Brussels. The mourners included a delegation from the Albanian American Civic League of Washington. The Hon. Joseph DioGardi, AACL president, gave a fiery eulogy on behalf of Albanians from America. He vowed that Albanians will continue their peaceful efforts until freedom and democracy in Kosovë are won.



Enver Hadri

YUGOSLAVIA INDICTS ALBANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LEADER

On 14 March 1990 the public prosecutor of Prishtinë, Kosovë charged Dr. Zekeria Cana (Secretary of the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Kosovë) with promulgating so-called "hostile propaganda" under article 133 of the Yugoslav criminal code. The authorities lifted Dr. Cana's passport, preventing him from travelling to the United States where he was scheduled to talk on the human rights situation in the Kosovë region of Yugoslavia.

A statement read by Richard Boucher, Deputy spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State announced the "United States regrets the indictment of Dr. Cana and the lifting of his passport as an effort to suppress free speech and the expression of opposition views. This action is particularly disturbing because it comes at a time when the Yugoslav Federal Assembly is debating changes in the criminal code that would, among other things, limit the applicability of article 133. We call on Yugoslav authorities to halt Dr. Cana's prosecution and restore his passport."



Dr. Zekeria Cana (1) presented Hon. Joseph DioGardi with a gift-plaque in appreciation for his work on behalf of persecuted Albanians in Yugoslavia, Prishtinë, 1990

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Long Live the Republic of Kosova!

Note: On July 2, 1990, the Assembly of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosova (Yugoslavia), the legislative body of that Province, tried to meet at the Assembly's main hall, but it was denied entrance by the Serbian police. The Government of Serbia has recently taken over the full control of the police forces and the judiciary in the Province of Kosova against strong Albanian protests. Offended by this unusual action of Serbian police, one hundred fourteen indignant representatives decided to convene in the hallways of the Assembly Building and to proceed with the agenda: the discussion on the future constitutional status of Kosova. The attending representatives elected their colleague, Bujar Gjurmehalla as chairman. After lively debate they unanimously approved a statement read by the representative Mr. Muharrem Shabani. The following is an unauthorized translation from the original document in Albanian. (Courtesy of Dr. Sami Repishti)

INSPIRED by the will unmistakably expressed all over Kosova by the majority of the people of Kosova and duly elevated by the statement of the Academy of Science and Arts of Kosova regarding the new constitutional position of Kosova, and

CONSCIOUS of the role and the status the Assembly of Kosova has as the highest representative body of the Kosova Administration and its self-government system invested with the constitution-making powers, the Assembly proclaims:

THE CONSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION

ON KOSOVA AS AN INDEPENDENT AND EQUAL CONSTITUENT UNIT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE FEDERATION (CONFEDERATION) OF YUGOSLAVIA ENTITLED TO THE SAME CONSTITUTIONAL DENOMINATION AS THE OTHER CONSTITUENT UNITS.

1. THIS DECLARATION EXPRESSES AND DISTINCTLY STATES THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTITUDE HELD BY THE PEOPLE OF KOSOVA AND BY THIS ASSEMBLY TOWARD THE CONSTITUTION AND CONSIDERS IT AN ACT OF POLITICAL SELF-DETERMINATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF YUGOSLAVIA.
2. THIS ASSEMBLY, ON ITS OWN AND WITH ITS STANDING, IN DECLARING KOSOVA AN EQUAL CONSTITUENT UNIT WITHIN YUGOSLAVIA, ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES OF GENUINE DEMOCRACY AND RESPECT FOR THE EXPRESSED WILL OF THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL GROUPS AND NATIONAL COLLECTIVES, EXPECTS TO OBTAIN THE CONFIRMATION OF THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL ACT IN THE (FORTHCOMING) CONSTITUTION OF YUGOSLAVIA AND THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC VOICES IN YUGOSLAVIA AND OF THE INTERNATIONAL OPINION AS WELL.

3. THIS ASSEMBLY CONFIRMS THAT KOSOVA, IN ITS CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION, IS A POLITICAL - CONSTITUTIONAL COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE, ITS POLITICAL - CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION BEING SHARED IN COMMON BY ALL ITS CITIZENS AND BY THE NATIONAL GROUPS OF KOSOVA ON AN EQUAL BASIS. ALSO, ALBANIANS BEING THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN KOSOVA AND ONE OF THE NUMERICALLY LARGEST PEOPLES IN YUGOSLAVIA CONSIDER THEMSELVES TO BE A PEOPLE - NATION - AS SERBS AND OTHERS DO - AND NO LONGER A NATIONALITY (NATIONAL MINORITY).

4. IN THE MEANTIME, WHILE WAITING FOR THE JURIDICAL AND DEFINITE FULFILLMENT OF THIS CONSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION THE ASSEMBLY AND THE ORGANS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KOSOVA IN THEIR RELATIONS WITHIN THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER OF YUGOSLAVIA WILL RESPECT THE EXISTING CONSTITUTION OF YUGOSLAVIA AND NOT THE AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SR OF SERBIA OF THE YEAR 1989. THIS STATEMENT ALSO VOIDS THE DECISION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVA OF MARCH 23, 1989 WHICH APPROVED THOSE AMENDMENTS AT THAT TIME.

5. FROM NOW AND UNTIL THE PROMULGATION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF KOSOVA, THE ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVA WILL COMMUNICATE PUBLICLY WITH THIS NAME. AS A REPRESENTATIVE BODY, IT WILL SIMULTANEOUSLY REFER TO THE SOCIO-POLITICAL COMMUNITY SIMPLY AS KOSOVA.

Prishtinë, July 2, 1990.

(Distributed as a public service by the Albanian-American Civic League, 717 Second Street NE, Washington, DC 20002.)

There are thousands of Albanians suffering in Yugoslav prisons. Their only crime is being Albanian and seeking equal rights with the other states of the Yugoslav federation. There are also hundreds of families whose children were gunned down by the Yugoslav military and police. These victims of violence were peacefully protesting the abuse of Albanian human rights in the Kosovë region.

In order to assist in the legal defense of the imprisoned and support the families of these killed, The Kosova Relief Fund Inc., USA (the sole humanitarian Albanian organization), is appealing for financial help. Please contribute generously to the Albanian victims fund. Any amount, no matter how small, will be most helpful and welcome.

Send your donations to: KOSOVA RELIEF FUND INC., USA

P.O. Box 489

No. Baldwin, N.Y. 11510 USA

Personal Viewpoints

ALBANIANS IN YUGOSLAVIA

(Children of a lesser god)

Introductory remarks

On July 2, 1990, the Assembly of the Socialist Autonomous Province (SAP) of Kosova Yugoslavia tried to meet, as usual, at the Assembly's Main Hall. However, the delegates were denied entrance by the Serbian police. The Government of Serbia has recently taken full control of the police forces and the judiciary of Kosova against strong Albanian protests. It has been reported -- and later documented by the Council for the Defense of Rights and Liberties in Kosova -- that at least 75 Albanians, including minors, were killed by the Yugoslav Army and Serbian police forces since March 1989. The army and police were sent there to quell demonstrations and protests against Serbian hegemony.

Offended by the Serbian police's arbitrary action, 114 indignant representatives decided to convene in front of the Assembly Building and proceed with a discussion of the future constitutional status of Kosova. The representatives elected the Hon. Bujar Gjurgjeala, as chairman pro-temp. After a lively debate, they unanimously approved the Constitutional Declaration on Kosova. The Hon. Muharrem Shabani read the Declaration which proclaimed Kosova "...an independent and equal constituent unit within the framework of the Federation (Confederation) of Yugoslavia entitled to the same constitutional denomination as the other constituent units." The lawmakers announced that the Declaration would be presented to the full Assembly for ratification. Incidentally, the Kosova Declaration was approved on the same day as the Declaration of Sovereignty issued by the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia.

Serbia's action was swift and uncompromising. The Serbian Government declared the Declaration "has no legal basis... and it is another form of political violence in Kosova by ethnic Albanian nationalists and separatists, against whom corresponding measures by the legal state will be taken... The decision is unconstitutional, invalid, and therefore, non-existent." Serbia suspended the Assembly and the Government of Kosova and silenced the Province's Albanian language television and radio broadcasts. Meanwhile, armed riot police stormed the TV studio and led away all Albanian staff members. Police cradling AK-47 automatic rifles took over the only Albanian language newspaper RILINDJA.

Reacting to this de facto military occupation of Kosova by Serbia, the leaders of the democratic forces of Kosova appealed for calm. They advised the local population not to take to the streets in protest. Meanwhile, a group of Albanian Assembly representatives went to Belgrade for an appeal to the Federal authorities. The latest cycle of brutality used in Kosova has increased Albanian suspicions that Serbia's ultimate goal is the total elimination of the present autonomy of Kosova and the institution of a military administration in the Province.

My critical view of the situation in Yugoslavia is not that of the Yugoslav-born dissidents. I am not affiliated with any political party in exile, nor do I represent any ideological movement. I believe we are bound together with millions of people around the world in a common belief that

in a free society, each individual has the innate right to independently elevate oneself and attain the vision one has forged for himself; and, that

2. In a country where this innate right is denied, or arbitrarily and capriciously limited, the free individual and the social group to which it belongs have the right to revolt. Otherwise, people become worthless participants, useless members of an oppressive society, mere biological creatures. The twentieth century has seen abundant cases of dehumanization, both individual and collective.

My viewpoint concentrates on "the problem of Kosova." The sole purpose of this essay is to encourage a civilized discourse as a substitute for the present violence.

Defining the problem

"The problem" of Kosova is generated by the presence of nearly three million Albanians, a non-Slavic population, within the borders of the SFR of Yugoslavia (a federation of six south-Slavic peoples). In 1990, we are confronted with two indisputable realities:

1) The nearly three million Albanians are restive because of their perception as victims of political injustice, economic neglect, educational and cultural suffocation, and social discrimination by the country's government and its Slavic society;

2) The Government of the SFR of Yugoslavia is exclusive in its south-Slavic perceptions. It sees the presence of a large non-Slavic ethnic group as an intruder, and a threat to its legitimacy, stability, and territorial integrity.

The Kosova problem appears to center on two conflicting facts:

— Firstly nearly three million Albanians in Yugoslavia have undeniable rights to take their destiny into their hands to secure for themselves and their descendants a free and meaningful existence in an organized civil society.

— Secondly, the government of the SFR of Yugoslavia has a responsibility and a right under international law to protect and defend its political stability, independence and territorial integrity.

-- Finally, the means to reach a "modus operandi," that would provide sufficient and satisfactory assurances to both sides, allay their fears, generate a confidence-building atmosphere, and promote a mutually beneficial and peaceful co-operation, is the problem.

The dimensions of the problem

"The problem of Kosova" has two dimensions: human and national.

A) The human dimension. It is my view that today, in the SFR of Yugoslavia, being an Albanian is tantamount to being *à priori* subject to suspicion, prejudice, and contempt. In the streets of Belgrade and in the towns of Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia wearing a traditional Albanian white skull cap is as "provocative" as wearing a yarmulke in the early days of Hitler's regime in Germany. The wearer is insulted, spat at, kicked, stoned, or beaten by gangs of young, and not so young, people who hate "the šiftari." The use of the derogative terms "šiftari" or "arnaout" — instead of Albanac or shqiptar — is now back in fashion. It appears that Albanians are regarded by their Slavic neighbors as the modern version of the "Ottomans." Albanians are made fun of at private parties, in the meetings of Serbia's Writers Union, in high school classrooms and in the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts.

In Montenegro, Albanians are forced to slavicide their names, to speak the Serbian language, and to stay away from beaches and city areas where Montenegrins bathe and live — unless they are called to serve!

In Macedonia, they are confined to well-defined ghetto areas of Skoplje, Kumanovo, Ochrida and Struga to circumvent their demo-

graphic expansion into areas reserved for members of "the nation" (a Macedonian only policy). Macedonians openly discuss "a second Kosova" due to the demographic changes in favor of Albanians in Macedonia. The fact that Albanians are human beings, and Yugoslav citizens, is conveniently forgotten, thus allowing a violation of their basic human and constitutional rights.

In both Serbia and Montenegro, pregnant Albanian women were denied maternity services in state supported hospitals, because, "the newly born Albanians, in Vranje or Titograd may later lay nationalistic claims on the city of birth."

The Yugoslav press reports that large ethnic groups (over 100,000 in Belgrade alone) live in the ghettos of the capital, as well as Sarajevo, Zagreb, Rijeka, Ljubljana and especially of Skopje. They are totally ostracized and denied basic human rights, such as decent jobs, housing, health services, schooling or education in their mother language. They are haunted by the fear of expulsion or the humiliation of rejection by their Slavic neighbors. They are treated as the Gypsies were all over Europe. They live with an unbearable stigma as "inferior" humans, outcasts of a society which refuses to accept them as normal human beings.

In Kosova, two million Albanians presently reside. They make up 90 percent of the population. Yet they are perceived by the ruling 10 percent Serb and Montenegrin minorities as newcomers, intruders, and trouble makers, and are treated accordingly. This is especially telling on the Albanian youth. Their perception has succeeded in radicalizing even the older generation of parents.

Living in overcrowded miserable conditions is definitely not conducive to internal peace and good community relationships. To be used as a pool of cheap expendable labor, as the Albanians in Yugoslavia are, instills little pride or self-respect. They are the exploited proletarians

to whom socialist promises have been denied. They need little outside instigation to explode.

The "socialist" system of Yugoslavia has allowed such a dangerous anti-Albanian hysteria to build up among the Slavic population. An Albanian is considered to be damned by the "original sin of birth." This hysteria is present especially in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia.

People knowledgeable on Kosovan affairs state that so long as Albanian blood was not shed in the streets of Kosova by the Serb and Montenegrin forces, there was the possibility of peaceful co-existence between the Albanians and the local Serb and Montenegrin minorities. The wartime hero, Koča Popović stated that: "We will never succeed in making an Albanian a Serb or vice versa; however, there is still a chance to make an Albanian or a Serb a good Yugoslav." That opportunity is now being lost.

Genuine equal treatment could be the key to a longlasting and peaceful settlement in the region. The massive student demonstrations in 1968, 1981, 1988, 1989, and Spring 1990 were treated as insurrections by the Yugoslav Government. This closed the door to a political settlement and to peaceful co-existence. The new generation of ethnic Albanians is growing up in an atmosphere of political terror which reminds them of the infamous Ranković days. Statements such as "we are harsh with Albanians and proud of it"; "kill half of the Albanians and throw the other half beyond the Prokletije" (Albania); have destroyed the possibility for a compromise. Such ideas have killed any hopes for any dialogue replacing them with the politics of hatred. The media has reinforced the prejudices by competing for materials on which to build a negative image of Albanians. Lies and disinformation have not been excluded.

The result of the hate impregnated atmosphere in Kosova gave birth to the ugly "Milosević phenomenon." This neo-fascist movement is presently sweeping Serbia and Montenegro.

B) The national dimension. Albanians are the largest non-Slavic group in Yugoslavia. They are the third largest ethnic group in the country, after Serbs and Croats. Presently, they number nearly three million (over 11 percent) in a population of 24 million. By the end of the decade, there will be over 3.5 million Albanians in Yugoslavia, representing nearly 13 percent of the total population. (In Albania, there will be over 4 million people. Thus, by the year 2000, a bloc of nearly 8 million Albanians will be living along the western shores of the Balkans.)

Albanians have a long history of efforts and movements aiming at national independence. If they did not succeed, it was largely due to the nefarious political power brokers of Europe. From 1877 to 1918, all the nations of the Balkans threw away the Turkish yoke and became independent. Kosova was annexed militarily into the two kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro. It was later incorporated in the newly constituted Yugoslav State. The annexationists invoked "historical rights" dating to the 1389 Battle of Kosova against the Turks.

Today, the same arguments are used to reach a "logical conclusion" to the "given" premises on which the survival of the Serbian people supposedly depends. The fact that during the Middle Ages, both Albanians and Serbs allied in the same resistance movement against the Turks is overlooked. A distrust against Albanians developed immediately after their Islamization. This antagonism grew after the 19th century formation of the Serbian state. An atmosphere of distrust nourished popular prejudices and suspicion towards the neighboring Albanians. They were treated as "Turks", after conversion to Islam. Ironically, similar charges were aimed against Christians before their legal status was established in Rome. Albanians were regarded destroyers of "the established order," and subject to "justifiable persecution." Even the Serbian Orthodox Church offered a metaphysical explanation for the situation.

In the realm of "realpolitik," the religious affiliation of the Orthodox Serbs with the Ortho-

dox Russian Empire, and the Moslem Albanians with the Moslem Ottoman Empire heightened the animosity. The religious affiliations led to intense manipulations.

In Kosova during the turbulent years of WW II, there was a relative calm in inter-community relations, despite Serbian government policies against the Albanians. There were no major conflicts between Albanians and Serbs, no mass reprisals, no "death camps," no mass killings of the Slavic population. In fact there was less violence in Kosova between Albanians and Serbs during the WW II than inside Serbia where the Chetniks and Partisans slaughtered each other mercilessly.

Many Serbs and Montenegrins were forcibly introduced as colonists into Kosova between the world wars. They were used by the Monarchist Government as instruments of repression against the local Albanians. Although the Fascists made a concerted effort to incite an Albanian uprising against the local Serbs, they failed. The few and isolated regrettable incidents were the exception, not the rule.

At the end of WW II the Albanian inhabited regions of Yugoslavia were divided among the three "republics" of Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia, in order to break the influence of the large ethnic community. The SAP of Kosova was constituted as an "autonomous province," not a "republic," and included within the framework of the republic of Serbia although no popular vote was taken. The denial of equality to Albanians with the other constituent units of the Federation has resulted in a dependency on Serbia. This is the very core of the present political unrest in Kosova.

In my opinion, the first error was made in 1945. Kosova was not allowed to join with Albania although Kosova's Anti-Fascist Council has made its will known publicly with the Bujan Resolution (January 1941), "... now, as always, we wish to unite with Albania." The intensity of this desire was soon evidenced by the popular uprising of November 1944-May 1945 against

Tito's oppressive "partisan" brigades.

A second error was the refusal to recognize Kosova as an equal partner in the new Federation despite of the wartime promises. Ironically the Kosovan population was twice as large as that of Montenegro.

A third error was to give Vice-President Aleksander Rankovic of Yugoslavia (a Serb known for his hostility toward Albanians) a free hand in Kosova. The subsequent terror and persecution was made public after the 1966 Brioni Plenum.

A fourth error was the swift, cruel and unjustified reaction, and the military intervention to crush Albanian explosions in 1968, 1981, 1988, 1989, and 1990. The government decreed "emergency measures" which transformed Kosova into a large military camp. The politicizing of the Serbian abandonment of Kosova as the result of "pressure" brought about by the Albanian acts of violence compounded the error. The government in fact "legitimized" anti-Albanian feelings by a mass media campaign in Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. The Albanian protest demonstrations only turned bloody when the Yugoslav army and the Federal police intervened. Not a single Serb or Montenegrin resident in Kosova was hurt by any Albanian. The demonstrations were clearly directed against the Communist government, not the Serbians or Montenegrins.

It seems safe to infer that after forty-five years of the present Yugoslav Administration, Tito's ideology was not able to dislodge the yearning of Albanians in Yugoslavia to become masters of their own destiny and live free from outside interference.

Now, in 1990, Albanians in Yugoslavia are fully aware that the Yugoslav Federal leadership does not guarantee their security. That leadership is perceived as the extension of Serbia. Albanians also realize that Belgrade officials are closely monitoring the situation in

Kosova. Whenever demonstrations occur again, the Serbian leadership will strike mercilessly and without hesitation. Indeed, from March 1989 to February 1990, at least 75 students and minors were killed by the heavily armed Serbian police.

It is now clear, that the frequent army and police interventions against Albanians in Kosova have encouraged the organizations of "vigilante" groups by the cynical demagogue, President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia.

In Kosova, there has been a confrontation between distinct ethnic communities who share and claim the same native land. Shockingly few people know what to do with the situation. In the midst of this emotional upheaval, all Albanians in Yugoslavia have come to view the communist authorities as the same enemy. Consequently, they feel increasingly alienated.

The basic reality is that the land belongs to all those who inhabit it on a permanent basis, who cultivate it year after year and make a living on it, who love it and care for it, namely, the nearly three million Albanians and the Serbs, Montenegrins, Turks, Gypsies, and others. The self-evident truth is contested only by the usurping political power brokers. Although some Serbian writers urge that half of the Albanians be killed and the other half be sent back to Albania, it does not resolve the problem of Kosova. Such a policy will simply make that region a huge cemetery.

In my judgement, the attempt to escape the ugly reality of history has convinced a handful of Serbian communist officials that the only solution for "Serbia's decline" was to adopt a myth as the mobilizing factor in pursuit of a political goal. They fell into the myth of Kosova, and believe in a renewal of past Serbian glory that ignores the heavy present.

This perspective rejects the surrounding new Europe. It has no guard against the danger that when the myth becomes a dogma (i.e., "the Milosevic phenomenon" and its ideology of

"Great Serbian values") -- the price of the promised salvation is inevitably the surrender of per-

sonal responsibility. The amorphous masses demonstrating in the streets and squares of Belgrade since Milosevic came to power in 1987, the vicious slogan campaigns, the irresponsible press and mass media coverage of events are the best indicators of massive surrender of personal responsibility by the majority of Serbia with few gallant exceptions.

These are the reasons why we deplore such chauvinistic "documents" as the 1986 Petition of Serbian Intellectuals, the Memorandum of the Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Chronicles of Pravoslavlje, the Programs of the Serbian Renewal Party, and the speeches, poems and essays of the Serbian Union of Writers. The "documents" are a feeble effort to intellectualize the hostile emotions of the Serbian masses.

Trends are likely to influence future events in Kosova

a) The 1981 census of population indicated that in the SAP of Kosova out of 1441 settlements, in which 1,625,000 people lived, 927 were inhabited almost entirely by Albanians. In 224 additional villages Albanians represented over 65 percent. In December 1989, the Kosovan population reached the 1.95 million figure, of which nearly 90 percent were Albanians. The demographic explosion will certainly spread into the neighboring republics of Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia, further exacerbating the existing frictions and animosities. Hardly a day passes by without a press report on this acrimonious situation or some local government decisions detrimental to local Albanians.

b) The inevitable flight of the local population in search of better conditions in other parts of Yugoslavia will continue at an increasing pace. The artificial establishment of "ethnically pure" Serbian villages, or "city quarters" in Pristina, or "new communes" in Serbian areas will assure a Serbian local administration. This policy

will not be the answer. These Serbian islands in the midst of an Albanian sea will only be an additional inflammatory element in an already explosive situation.

For the Serbs and Montenegrins there are no acceptance and assimilation problems in Yugoslavia. Thus their emigration will be easier and, therefore, more intensive. Their emotional attachment to Kosova is a big factor, but emigration is mainly an economic phenomenon. We see it also in other parts of Serbia, (e.g., in the region of Rashka, the birthplace of the Middle Age Serbian Empire), where there are no ethnic Albanians. There, entire villages are already empty, schools are closed for lack of pupils, and youth leave the village and small town for jobs and a more comfortable life in the northern industrialized cities. The dying old men and women reminisce of a past gone forever. The process is sad, unavoidable, and not exclusively Serb.

For Albanians, however, the problem is different. With their different nationality, language, and religious differences, their emigration will be slow and painful as the present experience confirms. Most recently, in the towns of Rijeka, 12,000 Albanians are trying to find jobs and resettle against all odds. They are facing rejection, ghettoization, and low paying jobs.

Furthermore, the traditionally large Albanian families have an atavistic love for land. There is no surprise in seeing thousands of young Albanians working hard all over the world and sending their savings to their families at home. The money is used primarily to build houses or buy land. Due to land scarcity and the density of the population, real estate now commands unusually high prices. Land is the best security for an Albanian patriarchal family, whose experience in mobile trade and industry is very limited.

Official government statements and reports in the press blame Albanians for the situation because they refuse to accept Government policies on family planning. Drastic measures are being taken by the Government to reverse this trend, such as the denial of health care to children, and denial of social security benefits to parents. UN studies confirm that there is a high correlation between high birth rate and poverty, illiteracy, and lack of economic programs. The most impoverished areas of the world are experiencing the same problems as Kosova.

No matter what the answer to the problem might be, the ultimate responsibility falls on the Yugoslav Government for its failure to provide a proper economic environment for normal business activity in the areas inhabited predominantly by Albanians. By all accounts, and surely not by accident, these areas are the poorest and the most backward regions in Yugoslavia. The central government remains deaf to the warnings of a tragedy in the making. It is tragic to observe the daily deterioration of the quality of life among Albanians in Yugoslavia. Destroying their hopes, one increases the chances for new convulsions.

c) If one adds to the political repression a stagnant economy in an overpopulated area, a better picture will emerge of what is simply called "the disparity of the rich and the poor." Although Kosova started on a weak base due to many decades of intentional neglect, the Federal Government excluded it from the list of less developed federal units to benefit from the central fund of economic assistance. This inequity continued until 1957.

As the rest of the country was building the foundations of a post-war economy oriented toward a speedy industrialization, Kosova remained a stagnant agricultural area with a growth rate of less than 1 percent.

During that time, Kosova's social product was under 40 percent of the Yugoslav average.

When the government aid came in 1957, the largest portion was devoted to extractive industries and to coal mining. Both activities being capital intensive did not stimulate employment. Unemployment intensified with the farmers influx into the cities. Furthermore, the benefits derived by the extractive branches went mostly to the industrialized republics which did the processing, and exported it in exchange for hard currency. The same was done with energy production. It was used to supply the neighboring republics at a low fixed price, and resold by Serbia at real market prices. By 1971, open complaints against this economic orientation "smelling of colonialism" were made public in the Slovenian press. Even bread grains were bought cheaply in high season by the richer republics from an impoverished Albanian farmer, and resold later on as finished product of the alimentary industry.

Meanwhile, new cities with impressive buildings began to rise for the party and government elitist bureaucracy. An artificially swollen administration grew even further with the new cadres now having finished their higher studies and looking for easy and comfortable jobs in urban areas. Agriculture, the main branch of the economy, was neglected. The economic infrastructure was not prepared to support a faster development, and as late as in 1980, it was openly admitted that Kosova was standing on "glass feet."

Since 1981, economic aid slowed down, and willingness to assist Kosova was fatally crippled: no one wanted to waste money in a "bottomless pit". It was said that the fault lies with the local population and their inability to deal with their own problems. The conclusion reached is clear: Kosova needs direction, supervision, and control. These tactics were used before. In 1945, Serbia took upon itself to assist and develop the region, and failed. Although the problem of Kosova's economy is being pre-

sented as an all-Yugoslav problem, actually it is not meeting with an understanding by the "rich republics" who are not overly concerned to assist a Kosova now reduced to "a Serbian district."

It goes without saying that a change in the mentality of the local Kosova population is a must for any faster economic development. It is also true that a more favorable atmosphere and environment requiring changes in the Kosova society could facilitate the change. "White whale" projects, mining without processing, coal extraction for Yugoslavia's use, a weak and limited road network, an extensive agriculture relying on old methods and quasi-primitive implements and, an education which has neglected the technical and the scientific are all negative influences to economic progress in Kosova.

One cannot help but think that in Kosova, the authorities have consciously sacrificed economic efficiency to acquire – and maintain – political stability. This policy proved to be a short sighted one, indeed! Yet the fault for the absence of a balanced, long term economic policy is not the sole prerogative of the Kosovars. Kosova was a component part of Serbia, and of the Yugoslav Federation, as well. Therefore, economic decisions have not been made freely and without outside interference.

d) Kosova seems to have a good number of educated economists, who if wisely mobilized could turn the present economic tides. We see the University of Prishtina, the Academy of Sciences and Arts, and the associated institutes of higher learning and research as the best promising hopes for the future of the area. We must also add that the interventions of the Communist League with its policy-making powers are politicizing these educational and scientific institutions. As all other unnecessary government interferences they cause the erosion of the institutions' solid foundations, which only genuine knowledge and a critical capacity independent of the political establishment can provide.

The most critical problem of Kosova should be brought to the doorsteps of schools.

Kosova's schools could provide the answers. The imagination and the educated decisions of the intellectuals joining with the sweat of the worker and the farmer could provide the key. With generous aid from the Federal Government, the local population could well bring about a solution favorable to all.

e) In 1988, a headnurse at the Clinic of Pediatrics (Prishtinë Hospital) stated that: "...Our internationality and inter-personal relations are quite good! Cold-shoulder cases are, in the first place, the result of the poor material basis in which this Clinic has found itself. We lack the most rudimentary working conditions. I fear the minute when I have to start working, because I don't know whether I shall find medicine, clothing, food for patients. The Clinic cannot provide penicillin which is one of the essential and least expensive medicines. There are no pajamas for children. When a sick child is brought to the hospital it comes wrapped in paper; then, the physician on duty oftentimes takes off his white mantel and wraps the baby. This is what destroys our nerves, and of course affects our friendship. If we will succeed in improving the material conditions of the Clinic, our friendships would be renewed, and confidence in our Clinic would return ..."

Any further comment would weaken the powerful effect of this sincere admission by a devoted, and yet, frustrated headnurse.

f) Since December, 1989, a large group of Albanian scholars, students, journalists, and professionals threw themselves into the political arena of Kosova. Their professed intentions were clearly to reject the policies and practices of the ruling Communist League as both deceptive and discredited. Under the influence of the democratic sweep in Eastern Europe, this group pooled their experiences and intellectual abilities. They represented the popular will and forged a new democratic alliance. It was the first attempt to be responsive to genuine popular demands, and to free emotions of a population that had been bottled up by fear of repression and government persecution.

Now, the first step has been made. The vitality and the diversity of the groups that have emerged in Kosova since December, 1989, has released an unprecedented energy. If allowed to develop, they will be the irrepressible moving force of Kosova. Today, they are struggling to have their identities recognized, at home and abroad. Their leaders have been well received in both Western Europe and the United States. The democratic movement of Kosova has gained international standing. Kosova now has a genuine popular voice.

This auspicious development is in full agreement with the fast changing modern world where democracy is succeeding with breathtaking speed in areas where only a few short months ago communist regimes controlled large populations. In Kosova, too, the phoenix of democracy has risen from the ashes of communism. The new spirit of Europe is permeating the political life of the region, it may well lead to an open and honest dialogue, and the eventual settlement of every people's rights and freedoms.

Soon the population of Kosova will build its own free society in the European image.

The European Presence

The Yugoslav experiment of 1945-1990 failed Albanians in Yugoslavia. It gave rise to the political abscess, known as "the Milošević phenomenon". Fortunately, the European option offered an opening for Albanians in Yugoslavia. This option by-passes the prevailing views of the Kosova problem either as a historical development of the Albanian nation, or Serbian historical rights, or the state structures of the Yugoslav Federation.

The latest developments in Eastern Europe and the stampede for democratization indicated the possibility of a United States of Europe. This seems to be more an inevitability than a prediction: united and prosperous, free and democratic and yet with inviolable political frontiers.

The potential new structure holds promise. While the governments of Western Europe still make conscious efforts to be "political and

practical" when it comes to the taking of steps for the defense of human rights and the rights of peoples and nations, the European Parliament in the specific case of Kosova reversed past practices and gave more weight to human rights than economics. Many European parliamentarians spoke out for Kosova, and the Parliament itself passed three Resolutions (in 1989 and 1990) reprimanding Yugoslavia. They demanded respect for human rights in Kosova. One representative, Gerard Israel (Gaullist, France) proposed a Resolution where "...he draws the attention of the Yugoslav Government to the usefulness of recognizing in the province of Kosova a status equivalent to the other Yugoslav republics."

In addition, in the Report to the Copenhagen Conference on the Human Dimensions of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in June 1990, the Hon. Steny H. Hoyer urged: "...that this Meeting and the CSCE summit this year, consider creating a permanent CSCE Conflict Resolution Council to work with States and Peoples. This Council," he added, "should supplement, not replace, existing conflict resolution institutions. It might mediate internal problems with the concurrence of the state in question, and could be particularly useful in disputes between ethnic groups."

If this is the trend of Europe, then, the regional demands for greater autonomy and the right to self-determination are not a story of the past, but the perspective of the future. European interdependency will cancel the fear of aggression resulting from nationalistic policies, while at the same time respecting the right of every people -- as a nation or as part of a nation -- to its own distinctive characteristics, and its full and unhampered development of its own future. In a free society, the cultivation of a different language or a different culture does not signal a movement backward, but an enrichment of the existing culture and a contribution to the universal evolution of humanity.

A people formed by its own history will naturally grow and only develop its potentialities only if it lives in freedom. In slavery it will unnaturally die of alienation and asphyxiation.

A United States of Europe will guarantee the build-up of the awareness of one's own specificity, and it will avoid its alienation, by encouraging a positive ethno-psychology. It will, make possible a rejection of the abuses of both cultural and political "imperialisms."

Some tentative conclusions

This analysis of the present situation leads us to predict that as long as the Presidency of the SFR of Yugoslavia remains a prisoner in the hands of Serbia's present manipulative leadership Kosova is condemned to remain politically and economically a Serbian appendix. Albania is not demanding a reunification with Kosova. Yugoslavia is not even contemplating a process of self-determination for the nearly three million Albanians. The Serbian Parliament's decision of July 5, 1990, to suspend the Assembly of Kosova, to abolish the Executive Committee, to place the judiciary under its supervision, to take over the mass media and to rule by police decrees are the best indications of Serbia's intentions for the future. Serbia appears to wish the extinction of the recognized existing autonomy of Kosova, and the imposition of a military administration to break the spirit of the local Albanian population.

Because of the mounting tide of Serbian nationalism, the Constitutional Declaration of July 2, 1990, will remain a historic expression of Albanians' political will with no immediate changes to succeed. By challenging the present Serbian leadership, the Declaration will make life more difficult for Kosova. I firmly believe that, the demand for an independent and equal status of Kosova within the Yugoslav Federation (Confederation), remains basically just in principle, and reasonable in practice. It voices an elementary political right of each people to self-determination. Today, with Europe and the United States watching over the situation, the demand should be pursued with firmness and maturity.

Now, more than ever, nearly three million Albanians in Yugoslavia should not allow themselves to think that the only lesson they have learned from their suffering is hatred for the perpetrator and a desire for revenge against

their oppressors. Violence begets violence and annihilates human rights and is unacceptable in a civilized world.

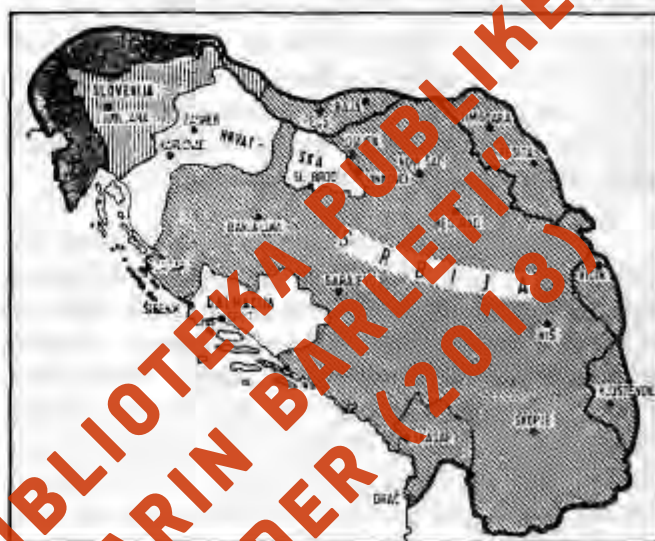
There is hope that the democratic transformation taking place in Slovenia and Croatia may induce an evolution toward a democratic society throughout Yugoslavia, provided that the anti-Milošević forces in Serbia have enough strength to stop the neo-fascist movement.

A democratic movement which brings a greater democratization of the Yugoslav society, inspired by European ideals and values, could work in favor of a Yugoslav confederation of eight sovereign federal units, with no accent on secession.

Such an atmosphere will, most probably, create the necessary political environment in Yugoslavia, where nearly three million Albanians in Kosova will ultimately be granted equal treatment.

If Serbia persists in subduing Kosova the alternative for nearly three million Albanians will either be the formation of an independent state of Kosova, or reunification with their mother country. Serbian pressure and repression, by justifying the Albanians' struggle for freedom and independent status, will hasten the pace of the Albanians' movement towards full self-determination.

Sami Repishti



Administrative Yugoslavia according to Milošević

FAREWELL TO A FRIEND

Gjon Sinishta

In Spring 1967 I first met Jesuit father James Torrens in Clarkston, Michigan. He was working towards a doctoral degree in English at Michigan State University. At the time Torrens was accompanying Father Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit Superior General. Arrupe was visiting Jesuit institutions in the US, and was spending a day at Colombiere College in Clarkston. I was taking English classes at the college in order to pursue further education in America. Father Arrupe candidly told me, "You are the very first Albanian I met".

When Father Torrens came to teach at Santa Clara University in 1969 our paths crossed again. This second encounter developed into a long lasting association and friendship. At the time the Albanian Catholic Information Center was located at the University under the sponsorship of the Campus Ministry office. Soon Torrens was introduced to the Center's apostolate of restoring religious freedom in Albania.

Being an English teacher and poet with knowledge of several classical languages (Italian, Latin, French, Spanish) his assistance was invaluable in the various projects of the Center and later in the publication of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin. He translated prose and poetry selections about Albania from these languages into English. Many of the translations were used in our Center publications (e.g., *The Fulfilled Promise*, *The Albanian Catholic Bulletin* and various anniversary programs).

Torrens met and came to appreciate the zeal and the works of a number of Albanian scholars and religious leaders in the field of Albania's cultural and religious history. Among these were professors Ernest Koliqi, Arshi Pipa, Martin Camaj, Adalbert Fekeqi, George Nasse, Nelo Drizari, Zef V. Nekaj, Petro Vucani, Msgr. Zef J. Oroshi, Reverends Imam Vehbi Ismail, Prenk Ndrevasaj, Lazer Sheldija, Ambroz Mar-



Fr. Torrens speaking during commemoration ceremonies honoring the martyrs of Albania, St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco, April 1985

tini. Torrens also encountered the Arbëresh leaders Ann Meridier, John Carline as well as Albanians from a variety of professions.

I consider myself most privileged to have been very closely associated with Father Torrens. We often shared our common concerns at work and for Albania. For a period of time he was also my superior. Our friendship which evolved throughout these years will not fade out no matter how far the distance.

We are sad to report that Father Torrens will soon be leaving Santa Clara University and our Center to begin a new assignment in New York City. He will join the editorial staff of the weekly opinion magazine, *America*, as an asso-



James Torrens, S.J., speaking at the literary meeting honoring the late Albanian scholar and poet, Ernest Koliqi, Santa Clara University, California, 1974

ciate editor. I know that he will continue to be an "adopted Albanian" in his new position. All of us will miss his broad smile and his personal involvement in our projects for justice and peace in Albania.

The French say that "Partir, c'est un peu mourir" (Parting is like a little death). While no doubt Father Torrens is experiencing this feeling those of us left behind will truly miss him.

Fr. Torrens has translated a number of poems by various Albanian authors, some of them banned today in Albania. We reprint Ernest Koliqi's *WHITE VISITANT* which Torrens translated from the Italian text in 1976 as our farewell to him.

* * *

White Visitant

*White Visitant,
who suddenly with silent step
appear upon the evenings grass,
your finger with its fateful beckoning,
imperative, does not alarm me.*

*I will receive serenely
the slight fondling
of your shadow hands
when you close up these eyelids,
tired of the light they shed on sorrow,
with a maternal touch:*

*I will seem to feel upon my face
the soft brushing
of a forest branch, fingers
of your woods, Albania,
fingers of fresh leaves
sprinkled with dew,
the tears of our delightful sky
and secret moisture from our earth,
alone tempering
the fervors that consume
this human clay of mine,
where ashes of my fathers
live and suffer once again:*

*I will follow you at once,
my wordless guide,
over the air's long path
that leads us to the threshold
of that one Great light whom you reveal:
enough for me, before I cross
the high frontiers and free myself
from this encumbrance of human clay
if you but show me
far, far off, amid the mist
of earthly days moving towards sunset,
my native mountains
now at last encircled
with a flaming veil of free dawns.*

Ernest Koliqi

Nermin Vlora Falaschi's Scholarly Work

Interest Growing in Her Research on Ancient Roots of Albanian Language

Peter R. Prifti

Nermin Vlora Falaschi has been making news in the Albanian world, and beyond, for more than two decades, at first in the field of literature, and afterward as a researcher and interpreter of ancient inscriptions. She is respected not only as the niece of the celebrated patriot Ismail Qemal (Kemal) Vlora, or as the wife of Italian Ambassador Renzo Falaschi, but in her own right for her achievements in a variety of disciplines: literature, translation, history, linguistics, archaeology, etc.

Falaschi is the author of 21 works of poetry, novels and essays, a devoted scholar of civilizations of antiquity, and a lecturer much in demand. Among the works that make up her rich bibliography are a collection of poems titled, *Zotëruesi i kohës* (The Master of Time), published in 1967; and more recently *L'Idiome Pelasgien dans l'Europe Méditerranéenne* (The Pelasgian Idiom in Mediterranean Europe), *L'Etrusco Lingua Viva* (The Etruscan Language Lives), and a *Pelasgic-Illyrian-Etruscan Dictionary*.

She has visited countries as far as China, and as near as her native land of Albania. Other countries besides Italy where she has lectured or lived for a time are: England, Portugal, Uganda, Colombia, and U.S.A.

Nermin V. Falaschi has a gift for languages, and can speak half a dozen of them, including Albanian, Italian, French, Turkish, Spanish, and English. Since her approach to the study of ancient languages is that of a comparative linguist, her facility with foreign languages has been a boon to her in her academic work.



Nermin Vlora Falaschi

Ancient Idioms and the Albanian Language

As a scholar of ancient civilizations, Nermin Falaschi's specialty is epigraphy, or the study and interpretation of ancient inscriptions carved on statues, buildings and monuments of one kind or another. Using the comparative method as a guideline, she has been able to interpret or decipher, as it were, an impressive number of inscriptions in the Pelasgic, Illyrian, Etruscan and other idioms of antiquity. She maintains that Albanian is the key to an understanding of these idioms. In other words, the writings of those bygone civilizations can be best interpreted through the Albanian language. Her research in this area has led her to

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

conclude that there is a linguistic continuity from the Pelasgians, Thracians, Illyrians, and Etruscans to the Albanians.

To the eye of the layman, that is to say the "uninitiated", the epigraphic materials that Falaschi deals with seem positively inscrutable. But to the trained eye of Falaschi, they present no mystery. Her interest in ancient civilizations began in 1977, and has been growing ever since. She says that, in general, her epigraphic studies have been well received by the academic world.

Indeed, scholars have been paying increasing attention to her work as a linguist, and as a writer of literary works of prose and poetry. She has given lectures in some dozen universities, academies, and other institutions of learning in several countries. In Italy, she has lectured at the Mediterranean Academy and the Dragan European Foundation, both located in Rome; the Academy of Rozzi in Siena, and the Lyceum of Fermo. She was in Kosovë for a talk at the University of Prishtinë. In April of 1988, she honored an invitation to speak about her epigraphic work at the University of Warwick in Coventry, England, while in October of 1989, she lectured on the Pelasgic idiom at the New University of Lisbon.

After many years of devoted work on old languages and civilizations, Nermin Falaschi is being recognized and honored for her accomplishments. The International University of Tucson, Arizona has conferred on her an Honorary Degree in Comparative Linguistics. And the Government of Colombia in Bogota – where she has lectured at the Academy of Linguistics – has awarded her the Order of San Carlos in appreciation of her studies and findings about the Chibcha pre-Colombian civilization in that country.

Visit to Albania

We conclude this information piece on Falaschi with a note on a visit she made recently to Albania. While there she gave a most interesting interview to *Drita* (Light), weekly newspaper of the League of Writers and Artists of Albania. Asked about her impressions of the works at the Gallery

of Figurative Arts in Tiranë, she replied that she found in them "the spiritual wealth inherited from our Pelasgic ancestors". Asked to comment about her early years in Albania, she said: "I have wonderful and unforgettable memories of my childhood and youth" there. Elaborating on this point, she had kind and tender words to say about her grandmother, mother, teachers, and girl friends she grew up with. And does she have any mementoes from the venerable Ismail Qemal? She answered that she has only a single letter, which she prizes for its moving sentiments.

The interview with *Drita* showed once again her intense pride in her Albanian background and heritage – a heritage that she ennobles with her work and her life.



Pelasgo-Illyrian	Albanian	English
TEI = TEI	Tei	Beyond
TOC = TOC	toc,	the earth,
TEI = TEI	tei,	beyond
MH = MH	(abbr. d') malle	the great
NOC = NOC	nat	night
XAIPE = H. IRE	Hai	for the Good.

Antiquity of the Albanian Language in the common Pelasgic civilization from the Aegean to the Atlantic

Nermin Vlora Falaschi

There is no doubt that linguistics is the most important expression of man's creativity. In fact few elements are more peculiar than the language which is spoken. The "ethnic" identity of each person depends more on language than from any other characteristic.

In my opinion, culture ought to be an agreement, not a disagreement of ideas. When research is carried out it is necessary to fell all limitations of borders or nationalisms lest it be conditioned by prejudices. Culture research requires "citizens of the world" scholars without fateful preconceived opinions.

Paying attention to the most remote civilizations, especially under the linguistic aspect, and listening to the waves of the thought of many scholars, both ancient and recent, I have received the message carried by those waves and now I am sure that the Pelasgians represent the farthest horizon of our most ancient civilization.

In order to better understand this thesis, let us briefly look at the opinion of the ancient scholars. This opinion was validated by the epigraphic documents collected in the region from the Aegean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. All were written with the Pelasgic alphabet and can be interpreted by means of the Pelasgic language.

Thucydides "History of the Peloponnesian War" (I, c.3), wrote that

<<Before the arrival of the Hellenic Deucalion, this name [Hellenes] did not exist at all; other peoples and the Pelasgic people gave their names to most places>>.

Many authors recorded this fact including Herodotus. He recalled that the "divine Pelasgians", as Homer had called them, used to live on the territories later occupied by the Hellenic tribes. These people learned from the Pelasgians how to build great walls and how to forge iron and took from them myths and deities. In his "Histories" (I, c.57), Herodotus remarked that <<The Attic tribe was originally Pelasgic, but once assimilated by the Hellenes, changed also its language>>.

Histories (VII), also provided information of great importance to understand how the word <<jon>> (our) has a Pelasgic origin. Herodotus stated that

<<...the inhabitants of the islands, armed as the Hellenes, had given seventeen ships. And later these Pelasgic tribes were called "Ionian">>.

This term was applied also to the seas comprehended within the system of the Pelasgic tribes, including the Adriatic Sea. The <<Ionian Sea>> was a <<Mare Nostrum>>, meaning in fact <<Sea of the Pelasgians>>.

Again in Herodotus' (II, c.56), it is written that

<<...the territory known today as Hellas and formerly called Pelasgia...>>.

This incidental information is quite significant because it shows that during Herodotus' time the term was current to recall that Greece had previously been Pelasgia. By analogy when the name of a street is changed it is necessary for sometime to mention the former name.

Another interesting evidence comes from Pausanias, who in his book three "Arcadia" (III) reports that

<<The Arcadians say that Pelasgus was born on their land, Arcadia... As Pelasgus became king, the country took the name of Pelasgia>>.

The poet Pindar, in his 5th century work <<Carmina>> (Fragmenta Selecta, I, 240) sets this people in a frame of metaphysical poetry with the fascinating interpretation that

<<...Earth made Man to be born first...but Arcadia made the Divine Pelasgian to be born even before the Moon!>>

Considering the literary display of admiration, almost of adoration, it is impossible to fail to notice that the Pelasgians were in fact a special people. They were able to enlighten the whole ancient world. Their phonetic alphabet invention spread all over Europe. They made their language the accepted and recognized means of communication wherever the enterprising Pelasgic tribes went in their fast boats that were the only ones capable of sailing the open sea, that is the "pelasgic" waters.

Virgil's "Aeneid" (I. 602 & 603) tells that

<<It is said that the first inhabitants of Italy were the Pelasgians>>.

Pliny the Elder confirms that the letters of the alphabet were brought to Italy by the Pelasgians. Diodorus Siculus upholds that the Pelasgic alphabet had been adopted throughout Europe, obviously with due adaptations. In addition Diodorus maintains that the Pelasgic alphabet was used by all the pre-Homeric poets.

It is impossible to quote all the illustrious scholars who have studied the Pelasgians. The result will be general agreement that recognizes

in the "divine" people the primogeniture of all the Euro-Mediterranean nations. They would acknowledge that the science of the Pelasgians enlightened the populations of Northern Europe and others regions.

The direct descendants of the Pelasgians were the Illyrians and Thracians. The various highly advanced tribes who settled on the Italic Peninsula were most likely Pelasgic, proceeding from the Illyrians. This fact is exhaustively shown by all the inscriptions found there.

The affinity between the civilizations of the opposite shores of the Adriatic, only 70 Kms. apart at the Strait of Otranto, is indeed remarkable. This affinity can be recognized in archaeological findings and in the cosmogonic philosophy in the respective epigraphic documents and, in the culture which flourished on both sides of that sea.

It is not by chance that the Etruscans called themselves "Rese", that is "rays". They considered themselves as the "irradiation" from their homeland of Illyria. In comparison to the backward autochthonous populations, they were radiant sunbeams.

It is impossible not to mention the great and meticulous Albanian scholar, Prof. Spiro Konda. In his study entitled <<The Albanians and the Pelasgic Problem>> (1961), Konda performed a superb work interweaving different disciplines and digging out the assertions of a number of scholars in order to bring forth the truth about the Pelasgians.

On page 237 Konda offered an important confirmation of my long held thesis on the identity of the Pelasgic, Etruscan and Albanian language. Supported by much evidence Prof. Konda asserted that

<<...the Etruscan problem cannot be solved other than along with the Pelasgic problem of which the former is part.

<<We are deeply persuaded that the "Etruscan problem" could be definitely cleared up should the scholars begin their research relying upon the Albanian language, a sure basis for resolving the Pelasgic problem in the whole>>.

Twelve years of research brought me to the conclusion that the idiom of the Pelasgians, inherited by the Illyrians, now survives almost intact in the popular and dialectal manner of speaking, as well as in the literary form, of the Albanian language.

The worthiness of this conclusion is proven by the interpretation of a large number of epigraphic findings discovered in the Euro-Mediterranean territories from the Aegean Sea (e.g. the Stele of Lemnos) to the Atlantic Ocean (inscriptions of South Portugal). It is important to clarify that it is not by attributing some arbitrary meaning to select single words, but, on the contrary, it is the matter of an exposition of whole texts made comprehensible in their full concept with an absolute coherence and even with a possibility of appreciating their frequent deep philosophical and human meaning.

ALBANIAN CULTURAL CENTERS:

Tearing Down Another Sort Of Wall

Tom Hoopes

There are now so many Albanians living in the United States that stereotypes and misunderstandings have begun to crop up. Of some 300,000 Albanians who live in North America, 40,000 alone live in Detroit, where they are served by two Catholic churches, one Orthodox church, one mosque, and one Bektashi (Muslim) house of prayer. As evidence of the stereotyping of Albanians and the need for cultural education of Americans the top-rated situation comedy on American television, "The Simpsons," recently depicted an Albanian child in one of its episodes as a conniving hard-line communist spy. Such misunderstandings are now being addressed outside of the churches and mosques by Albanian cultural centers. In the past, most ethnic and cultural activity in the Albanian diaspora was promulgated by religious institutions. Especially following World Wars I and II, the Mosques and Catholic and Orthodox churches were the hearths of everything Albanian for tens of thousands of emigrants.

Nonetheless, cultural education in religious institutions was incidental to the practice of the religion itself.

With the recent influx of new immigrants and refugees into the United States and other countries, some community activists have undertaken the expansion of Albanian cultural education independent of the churches and mosques. These new efforts are designed to salvage the heritage of second and third generation Albanians, and to familiarize their American neighbors with Albanian customs.

One such center opened last September in Detroit. Gjon Martini (who guided the organization of the center) has stocked a storefront with books, both in Albanian and English, chronicling Albania's history and culture. With his fellow organizers, Martini plans to begin a weekly newsletter and to offer help to newly arrived Albanian immigrants. Says Martini, "There is a great need,

an urgent need here to help. Our young people are losing touch. They don't know we have a language, a culture, and they are not sufficiently bonding to American society."

The organizers of the center boast that it is the second Albanian-American public library in the United States and the first since World War II. A similar cultural center operates in New York, and more are being planned in twenty-three states. The projects aim first to promote cultural literacy among Albanians, but even moreso, says Martini, "By organizing here, we could be a help, not only for ourselves but more to society. We'll also be able to have a close touch to the folks left behind."

The United States is not alone in its response to the influx of Albanian emigrants. The need for cultural information is being met on the European continent, as well. In France, Ms. Djevaline Nerguti was instrumental in the formation of the ambitious "L'association des étudiants et lycéens albanais de France" (The Association of Albanian Students in France) now numbering over one hundred members.

Unable to find support from Albanian political organizations in exile, the French organizers had to fund their own endeavors as best they could. Most of the students involved in their programs are in secondary school, and the association has made use of two doctors, a nurse and a French teacher, all of them Albanian, as well as three other Albanians still studying English in the University. They provide invaluable education to Albanian youngsters growing up in France.

The center also seeks to impart the Albanian culture to its members and French speaking friends in Europe. To that end, the center would like to employ three distinguished Albanians who have gained international fame in France, the actor Redjep Mitrovica and the dancer Angelin Preljocaj, both of "Comedie Francaise," as well as the writer Cizia Cyke. With their help, the organizers hope to create a kind of Albanian foundation in France, to promote their heritage and traditions and to fa-

cilitate a student exchange between the different Albanian communities throughout Europe and the United States.

On the banner that "L'association" carried in Berlin in December of 1989, the following words were written: "Believe in your dreams, they will come true! The wall is down, that's what we do!" Through the French and American Cultural centers, exiled Albanians hope to destroy another sort of wall, the cultural barrier that separates their children from their past and separates the diaspora Albanian communities from their new neighbors.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Steve Bosque

Tomor Zavalani is a man with a mission. He has invented a pictograph language system that, in his opinion, could demolish barriers in communication.

"Man has yearned for a universal language since the Tower of Babel," said Zavalani in a recent interview for the Los Angeles Times. "Happily, that goal is now within reach."

Zavalani, 69, is a retired waiter who devised the system as a response to his own frustration with learning to speak English. He left his native Albania after the end of World War II. Despite his European education he was unable to secure a job in the travel industry, his chosen field. He lays the blame for this on his inability to communicate. One thing that Zavalani re-

membered from all the travel literature he ingested was the way tiny symbols were used to denote accommodations. Thus, the seed was planted. Zavalani said to himself, "I should invent a sign language with symbols like that."

In 1983, in collaboration with Mary K. Piser, Zavalani published *Jet Era Glyphs*, a system which incorporates 600 hand-drawn symbols. Since then he has been expanding and perfecting his picture vocabulary. Only last year did Zavalani completely finish his enterprise. He invented his last symbol- interlocking rings, to signify the word marriage. Since its first publication, *Jet Era Glyphs* has made inroads to becoming the preferred pictograph system. There are others, for working with communicatively disabled persons such as victims of stroke, head injury or cerebral palsy. According to Pamela W. Schiffmacher, Director of Communication Disorders at Northridge Hospital, "the logic of the symbols in Zavalani's book makes it easy for family and friends to learn quickly."

Gail Pickering, a speech pathologist at Northridge, praises the system after using it in her work with speech-impaired stroke victims. She says, "It is a good system because it teaches the concept of language."

Zavalani himself says, "My system is so easy to grasp. It can be adapted into other languages and taught in other countries. People such as hotel clerks and policemen who know it could wear badges that identify them."

Part of the reason why *Jet Era Glyphs* is so easily learned--Zavalani feels that 30 hours of instruction and study are adequate--is that many of the symbols are immediately recognizable. The pictographic symbol for a fish looks like a fish, and likewise for a multitude of nouns. Sentences are constructed by

combining symbols for nouns with symbols that indicate action. In order to ensure a sense of the universal language, Zavalani contends that he "kept in mind the cop, the travel agent and the child" when devising his own graphic sign system.

Indeed, *Jet Era Glyphs'* simplicity is its strongest asset. Perhaps Tomor Zavalani has formulated a truly universal and universally appealing system of communication, a kind of Rosetta Stone that will help dissolve the mystery surrounding a foreign tongue and culture.

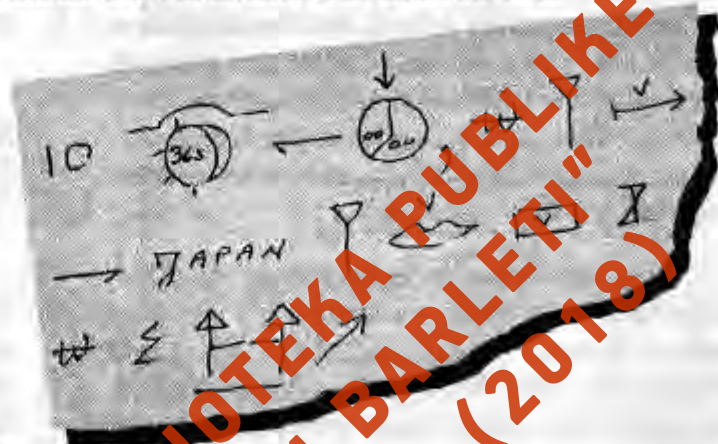
The popular German weekly EINE featured Zavalani and his pictograph language system last June in a full page report.

For more information contact the author. *Jet Era Glyphs* can be purchased directly from the author at 14664 Rosco Blvd., #33, Panorama City, CA.91402.

* * *

WRITING IN 'PICTOGRAPHS'

This is an example of a written language devised by Tom Zavalani of Panorama City, who envisions its use around the world.



Translation

Ten years from now when you go to Japan you will speak in pictographs with the people there.

SHQIPTARËT NDEROJNË KUJTIMIN E PJETËR BOGDANIT

Festime përkujtimore me rasën e 300 Vjetorit të vdekjes së tij

Zef V. Nekaj

Bashkësia katolike shqiptare—amerikane e famullisë "Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë" në New York përkujtoi me solemnitet themeluesin e letërsisë shqipe, Argjipeshkvën e Shkupit Pjetër Bogdanin me një seminar akademik me rasën e 300—vjetorit të vdekjes së tij. Seminari u mbajt me datën 7 tetuer 1989 në Qendren e Universitetit Fordham të New Yorkut në praninë e ma se një mijë të ftuemve.

Seminarin e hapi me disa fjalë të zgjedhuna për ket rasë, Zotni Tonin Mirakaj, kryetar i komisionit përgatitës kurse lutjen fetare e bani Z. Dom Pjetër Popaj, zevendës famullitar i famullisë. Hymnet kombtarë të Shteteve të Bashkueme e të Shqipnisë u egzekutuene nga kangtarët e mirënjoftun të komunitetit shqiptar në New York, Miliana Mirakaj e Fran Shala.

I përndritëshmi Dom Rrok Mirdita, famullitar i kishës i përshndeti të pranishmit tue nenvizue randësin e këtij pervjetori për historinë e sidomos kulturën shqiptare. Ai falnderoj komisionin përgatitës: Tonin Mirakaj, Gjek Gjonlekaj, Pretash Curanaj, Ndoc Shkreli, Prenç Koçaj, Gjeloš Rukaj, Fran Shala, Alex Mirdita, Simon Simolacaj dhe kumtuesit: At Daniel Gjeçaj, OFM., profesor Arshi Pipa, Ibrahim Rugova, Engjëll Sedaj dhe Martin Camaj.

* * *

Po ashtu në Prishtinë, kryeqendrën e Kosovës, u banë mbledhje përkujtimore me këtë rasë.

Me 4 dhetuer 1989 në Fakultetin e Filozofisë, referatin mbi Bogdanin e paraqiti profesor Engjëll Sedaj. Gjatë mbledhjes u recituen vargje origjinale të poetëve kosovarë.

Me 10 dhetuer u ba përkujtimi kryesuer në Famullin e Shën Ndout në Prishtinë. Imzot Nikë Prela, Ipeshkëvi i Shqiptarëve katolikë të Kosovës e Maqedonisë me seli në Prizren celebroi një meshë pontifikale në nderim t'argjipeshkvit Pjetër Bogdanit. Bashkëmeshuen me Imzot Prelën të përndritëshmit Dom Zef Gashi, famullitar i Prishtinës, Dom Lush Gjergji, famullitar i Ferizajt



Kopertina e Cuneus Prophetarum (Çeta e Profetëve) dhe portreti i Bogdanit me 1685.

dhe Dom Ndue Gjergji, famullitar i Binçës. Mesha u përcuell me kangë të divotshme shqip e latinisht. Gjatë meshës Imzot Prela foli mbi figurën e ndritëshme të paraardhësit të tij, Bogdanit. Ai theksoi faktin se Bogdani ka qenë pioner i letërsisë shqipe e njëherit mbprojtës i pafrigueshëm i fës katolike gjatë persekutimit mizuer t'Osmanlije t'asajë kohe. Imzoti tha në fund se trashigimi fetar e letrar i Argjipeshvit tonë Bogdani do të jetojë gjithënjë e do të vijojë me i frymzue brezat e ardhëshëm të popullit tonë të shuenvuejtun.

Mbas meshës, në të cilën muer pjesë një mori e madhe shqiptarësh katolikë e muslimanë u zhvillue një akademi solemne në sallat e famullisë në kujtim të Bogdanit, u recituen shumë vjersha origjinale të shkrueme për këtë rasë, kori i porsaformuem "PJETËR BOGDANI" këndoi disa kangë të komponueme për këtë përvjetuer prej kompozitorëve shqiptarë. Gjatë akademisë u lexuen gjithashtu edhe referate e relaçione mbi rrethanat kishtarë e shoqërore të kohës së Bogdanit. Programin e pasunoi pjesëmarrja e artistëve kosovarë, si Illir Shaqiri me grupin e tij folkloristik, Afrim Kasapolli, aktor i Theatrit Krahinor e artista tjerë. Mandej, profesor Ibrahim Rugova zbuloi bustin e Pjetër Bogdanit në sheshin e kishës që tash e mbas do të quhet "SHESHI I PJETËR BOGDANIT". Busti është veper e skulptorit të njoftun kosovar, Sami Shabani. Programi i kësaj dite u mbyll me një takim vllaznuer të shkrimtarve e intelektualve të profileve të ndryshme në famullin e Prishtinës.

Me 14 dhetuer n'Institutin Albanologjik folën shtatë ligjerues mbi aspekte të ndryshme nga vepra e Bogdanit: Ibrahim Rugova, Engjëll Sedaj, Rexhep Ismeti, Anton Berisha, Sabri Hamiti, Hasan Ymeri, Ragib Mulaku. Këta dëshmuen projektin e hapët shumdimenzjonal për vërtetë të nduernduarta që vepra e Bogdanit përmban.

Me 19 dhetuer në Fakultetin Filozofik të Prishtinës paraqitjen e këtij përvjetori e bani Dr. Shefqet Pllana, Dekan i fakuletit; referatin mbi veprën e Bogdanit e lexoi Dr. Mahmut Hysa, profesor i letërsisë së vjetër shqiptare. Kjo mbledhje u përcuell me muzikë të veçantë e recitime nga pjesarë të Fakultetit Filologjik, dhe u mbyll me një mbramje letrare ndër sallat e fakuletit.

Me 20 dhetuer në Rektoratin e Universitetit u zhvillue një akademi solemne shkencore. Dr. Skender Karahoda, rektor, bani paraqitjen, kurse referatin e mbajti Dr. E. Sedaj. N'akademi muerën pjesë shkenctarë, personalitete nga strukturat politiko—shoqërore të Krahinës si dhe perfaqësues të mjeteve t'informimit.

Nepër shkollat e mesme e t'ulta të krahinës së Kosovës u mbajtën gjithashtu mbramje letrare e kulturore kushtue përvjetorit të Bogdanit.

Radio Televizioni i Prishtinës (RTP) trasmetoi pjesë të ndryshme të programeve, sidomos meshën pontifikale, akademin e ceremonin e zbulimit të bustit të Bogdanit në sheshin e kishës. Shtypi i Kosovës po ashtu botoi raporte, komente e informata për këtë përvjetuer të randësishëm historik.

Edhe në Tiranë u përkujtue 50—vjetori i vdekjes së Bogdanit me mbledhje akademike të letrarëve e intelektualëve. Në ana tjetër e përkohshmeja "SHQIPËRIA E RE" e dhetorit të 1989 botoi me këtë rasë një artikull të Xhevat Lloshit me titull "Autori i librit të parë origjinal shqip".

Këtu poshtë po botojmë përmbledhjet e referateve të mbajtura gjatë seminarit kushtue Pjetër Bogdanit në New York.

* * *

At Danijel Gjeçaj, OFM., Romë, Itali:

SHENIME KRONOLOGJIKE MBI "JETËN E PJETËR BOGDANIT"

(nxjerrënga kumtesa e At Daniel Gjeçajt, OFM.)

1627—Lën në Kishaj të Hasit, emni i t'et Tadeu, e ama Mazrrekajsh;

1636—E çojnë në shkollë në Çiprovac, Bullgari, 9 vjeç;

1642—Agja, André Bogdani, Ipeshkëv i Ohrit, e përcjell në Kolegjën Urbane në Romë, 15 vjeç;

1647—Dërgohet në Loreto për vijim studimesh; kërkon të studiojë jashtë kolegjes edhe mjekësi e moral për t'u shërbye baskvillazënve të terrorizuem;

1650—Shugurohet meshtar 23 vjeç;

1651—Doktorohet në teologji në Kolegjën Urbane në Romë: i shkëlqyeshëm;

1652—Kthehet në Shqipëri mbas 9 vjet studimesh në Itali; agja André e mban si zavendës (vikar) të vetin ku mbruhet me përvojë;

1655—Emnohet Ipeshkëv i Sapës;

1656—Papa Aleksandri i VII e emnon Ipeshkëv të Shkodrës, ndërsa Ipeshkëvin e Ohrit, Andren, e emnon Argjipeshkëv të Shkupit e krejt Kosovës (Serbis);

1658—Viziton gjithë dioqezin, shenon ç'i lypej për relacionin mbi gjendjen e kishës, katolicizmit, qindresës së popullit, lavdon Kelmendasit në sajë të veprës pijore të françeskanëve;

1659—Emnohet edhe Administrator i Dioqezit të Tivarit;

1660—Udhëton për Romë ku paraqet gjendjen e Dioqezit;

1661—Kthen në Shkodër i urrejtun prej pashallarëve, vihet nën vrejte si pengues i përhapjes së islamizmit;

1665—Udhëton prap për Romë, paraqet relacionin: shqiptarët më të vorfnit e Perandoris Otomane, shkollat mbyllë krejt, populli e kleri katolik—analfabet; kërkon ndihma për libra dhe edukimin e tyre për të shpëtue fën e gjuhën shqipe;

1667—Pa seli ipeshkëvnore, me çadër, shkop e strajcë në dorë, i përndjekun, jetoj radhazi në Barbullush, Trush, Melgushë, Shën—Gjergj, Manatë e Rrjoll. Kjo ikje quhej krijim çerdhesh kryengritse e luftë kundër turqve. Pasha dyfishon rojet, e fut në burg për pak kohë.

1669—Morë ushtrish osmane mbledhen në Shkodër me u rë Kotorit e Dalmacis: gjatë pritjes grabisin, ndjekin, djegin e shpronësojnë popullsin e pamprojtje...

1670—Zhgarkohet nga barra e Dioqezit të Tivarit. Vritet i kushrini, Pjetër Mazrreku, Vikar i Pultit, nga turqit gjatë udhtimit për Shkup.

1671—Rranxë Alpeve, në Rrjoll ndërton një seli të përkohshme: një kishë e një shkollë të vogël që vonuen procesin e islamizimit në ato ana;

1673—Në Shkodër e rret me bje muntaja që çel vorre të reja e zhbën sidonën;

1674—Popullin musliman: ep e gjitha ndihmat e mundshme;

1675—U shkruen Kardimjve të Romës se anmiku edhe ma i madh se turqit për besimtarët e tij ishte mesdija e pashkollimi, e proponon të shkruente një apologji vetare diturore "Fashojt e Profetëve mbi ardhjen e Mesias" dhe e shkruen, por i ndërton

titullin në "Çeta e Profetëve"; shkon në Romë, paraqet dorëshkrimin, por i thonë ta përkthente italisht për ta marrë vesht. Kjo i nxuer punë, mundime e kohë;

1676—Kthen në vendlindje me zavendsue ungjin e motnuem me seli në Janjevë, se Shkupi e Shkodra ishin muslimanizue; gjen probleme nga Patriku i Pejës, popat e kallugjerët serbë; paditet prej tre priftënvë katolikë nga Shkodra dhe i duhet të bájë në Vatikan një apologji pauline vetmprojtëse; Ipeshkvij e personalitete nga Lezha, Venediku, Kotorri, Dalmacia, Tivari e rregulltarë tjerë dishmuen në favor të P. Bogdanit: u shfajsue plotësisht;

1680—Ban vizitën baritore në dioqezin e ri: veç predikimeve, pajtoi 24 gjaqe në fisin e Gashit; shenoi kronologjin kishtarë, nekrologjin, vrejtje historike, dokesh, të dhanash, fisesh, etj;

1681—Dërgon në Romë relacionin e përgjithshëm t' Arkidioqezit të Shkupit se ka predikue shqip në Has, Zogaj, Lipovec, Tropojë, Krasniqe, Letaj, Babaj, Batushë e në vende shumgjuhësh si në Prizren, Pejë, Janjevë e Labukjevë edhe serbisht;

1682—Viziton dioqezin: Crattovo, Shkup, Letnicë, Gjakovë, Has, Prizren, Trepçe, Novobërdë: tepricat katolike paksohen nga taksat e randa e mungesa e meshtarëve;

1683—Lidhja Shëjte Austrí—Poloní—Venedik—Rusi, qi fitoi dhe humbi, shkaktoi egërsimin e pafrenueshëm t' anadollakëve kundër shqiptarëve, sidomos kishtarëve; me 23 dhetuer i vdes ungji Andrea qi vorrohet në Janjevë tue i thá zemrën nipit;

1684—Turqit mbyllin të gjitha kishat, ndjekin Bogdanin e gjith klerin;

1685—Gjendja ashpërsohet në kulm: lën zavendës nipin Dom Gjonin, tërhiqet në Raguzë, Venedik e mbaron në Padovë, ku mirëpritet prej Kardinal Barbarigu—t, i cili i ep të gjitha mundësit për shtypjen e librit *Cuneus Profetarum* 'Çeta e

Profetëve' italisht e shqip: e kryen punën mbrenda 6 muejsh tu punue ditë e natë; në Romë u paraqet Papës e Kardinajve nga një kopje; niset me libra për atdhë, por i u desh të presi në Venedik, ku shkruen relacionin mbi gjendjen e gjithmbarshme të katolicizmit në Shqipni tue cekë dioqezet e Pultit, Medunit, Drishtit, Ulqinit, Shasit, Sapës, Sardës, (Shurdhahit) e të Lezhës pa përmendë Durrësin; proponon strategjin e luftës për shlirim nga pushtuesi, prandej s'e firmon relacionin qi dërgon nga Venediku;

1686—Mrrin në Shkup në maj, burgoset, kërcënohet me vdekje, por lirohet sidomos me ndërhyrjen e një miku musliman;

1687—Ngarkohet nga Kongregacioni i Romës me administrimin e misioneve të Dioqezit të Pultit: fillon vizitën baritore në Gash; kërcënohet me burgim; lën besnikët nën kujdesin e françeskanëve e kthehet; merr lajmin e vrasjes së kushrinit Dom Lukë Bogdanit, 25 vjeçar;

1688—Legen Pasha vërhon Maqedonin, mbjell vdekje e tmer; Bogdani me popull merr malin, ndiqet nëpër borë, fshihet ndër bodrume, përvidhet e bje në Prishtinë: në ndjekje të tij Pasha i Shkupit i kap të nipin Dom Gjonin në Janjevë qi e tërhekin për dy ditë zhag me kuaj nëpër qytet por shpetohet me një shumë të madhe të hollash qyteti plaçkitet, zhbihet;

1689—Me 15 maj lajmon romen se ushtrit e Lidhjes kristjane muerin Novipazarin; Pasha i Pejës kap Bogdanin dhe bashkë me dy xhakoj e sjell në Prizren gati të zdeshtin për ta dënuë, por e liron befasisht veçse i buron rishtas Dom Gjonin. Takohet me kryekomandantin gjeneral Gjon Norbert Piccolomini në Maqedoní: të dy venë në Prizren, por gjenerali vëmnet nga murtaja qi kishte ra aty dhe vdes; edhe Bogdani merr sëmundjen e dërgohet në Prishtinë për mjekim, por edhe ai vdes e vorrohet aty me nderime të mëdha nga kleri, ushtria e populli;

At Daniel Gjeçaj e mbyll ligjeratën e tij akademike me një të vërtetë historike rrënjëqethëse mbi tragjedinë e familjes Bogdani dhe të popullit etnik shqiptar:

1690—"U shkretënu Shkupi, Prishtina, Prizreni, Gjakova, Peja. Ata pak të krishtenë që i pështuen zjarrit të parë e shpatës në vringllim, u mshefën apo muerën, kush mujtë, rrugat e mergimit.

Nga një vorr i dhunuem, ku është e të dekunit të Bekuem në vend të paqes gjetën mëninë barbare (të) të gjallëve të mallkuem dhe dhambët e prehtë të bishve mish—granësa, sot mbas tre shekujsh historia kërkon at vorr të pa—rrasë, të pa—emën, të pa—kryq dhe vërteton se aty, në Prishtinë të përgjakun si sot treqind vjet, diq dhe u xuer prej dheut më i përmenduni lëshkëv arbënuer i kohës, më i dëji pinjuell i Kosovës hasnjane, më i squeti shkrimtar lavruer i gjuhës neo—ilire, më i zellshmi Apostull dhe më i palodhshmi mprojtës i Fesë e i Kombësisë.

Ky është Pjetër Bogdani i Gurit të Hasit."

Dhe na përvujtnisht shtojmë: "Kjo është LITANIJA E PJETËR BOGDANIT".

* * *

Prof. Arshi Pipa, Washington, Shtete të Bashkueme:

BOGDANI DHE GJUHA SHQIPE

Profesor Pipa e ka shqyrtue çashtjen e gjuhës së Bogdanit në "Çeten e Profetëve" tue e prekë si në pikëpamje fonetike, morfologjike, sintaktike, semantike, polisemike, ashtu edhe letrare e patriotike; por, ndër profesorat që ligjeruen, ai që i vetmi që ka përmendë kritikuesit e Bogdanit në ndonji pikë tue spikatë edhe dishka të vetën. Kjo n'asnjë mënyrë nuk ia ul vlerën monumentale veprës së Bogdanit, për çka Prof. Pipa e vërteton pa ndruejtje, por kjo tregon vetëm përkushtimin e objektivitetin në punimin e tij.

Ndërsa Budi e Bardhi, dy priftën katolikë, paraardhës të Bogdanit që përkthyen e botuen ungjillin shqip ua drejtojnë parathanië e veprave të tyre lexuesve, Prof. Pipa komenton se Bogdani me veprën e tij origjinale me përmbajtje fetare e njëherit vepër letrare i drejtohet letrarit, njeriut të kulturuem, i cili e di që është letërsia dhe e çmon atë. Çetës së profetëve i prin një parathanje, në të cilën autori përfshin edhe jetshkrimin e vet me një mori vështirësish që e ndoqën deri në vdekje, e veçanisht keqardhjen e tij të thellë për humbjen e gramatikës së ungjillit të tij, Argjipeshkvit të Shkupit, André Bogdanit gjatë luftës së Turqve kundër Austrisë. Bogdani e thotë hapët qysh në fillim së pushtimi i tokës së Arbënit prej turqve erdhi nga mungesa e ditunis, prandaj ai përpigjet që ata të shëndriten me anën e shkrimit e ta rifitojnë lirin e humbun. Ai shkruen se "n'at vend ku lulëzojnë doktorat e letrarët, lulëzon edhe feja shëjte"; së këndejmi u sajue prej françeskajve edhe fraza "atme e fé". Simbas Profesorit, qellimi i mbam i Bogdanit ishte me botue librin për të rrujtë gjuhën shqipe e fën katolike.

Përsa i përket përkthimit italisht, të gjithë ligjëruesit, bashkë me Prof. Pipën, shpjegojnë se ai që detyruet nga censura, gjatë autorit i ka kushtue mjaft kohë, punë, mundime e vonimin e botimit. Por Bogdani ankohet edhe për gjuhën e vet si citon profesori: "...tue qenë unë prej Gurit të Hasit, Sanxhakut të Dukagjinit, Dioçezit të Prizrenit m'është dashtë me i përmirësue me dierse të mëdha në rrethin e Shkodrës shumë fjalë, e tue qenë vepra fort e naltë /dhe/ e hollë, dialekti ynë që me dijen humbi edhe fjalët, është vështirë me i shpëllue punët deri në fund. Prandaj u përvoja me ndjekë një udhë të ndërmijme por tue përdorë edhe fjalë plaka" (të moçme). Kështu ai qorton fjalët, fonetiken, kuazimet, shiron neologizma, fjalë të perbamë dhe ndërtoim e shkrimi, thotë Prof. Pipa dhe shton se Bogdani e ka shpërll hasnjancën në ligjerin e Shkodrës si Mazoni milanezçen në Arno të Francës.

Këtu vijonjnë ndryshimet fonetike që vren Prof. Pipa ke Bogdani: uo del ue; për tingujt Y, z, th, dh s'i përdorin shkrojat romake, por Bogdani është i pari shkrimtar gegë që ë—n e dallon prej ë—s tue i vù theksin e randë (è); kurse Matranga përdoroi ae për ë; megjithatë Bogdani i ndërron shpesh format e të shkruemit. Për hundoret ai përdorin një n si ansht për është, njësoj si Barleti, për atan për atà, për aten për atë; për theksin e gjatë përdorin dy zanore: dyy, lee, nierij, etj.; t—n e ë—n i dyfishon ndërmjet zanoreve, p.sh. lettërari, passun (ndikim italian); ai përdorin emnat foljorë: të ardhunitë, të shkruemitë; shpesh i ngjet nyjat e paravume: ndë lumtë Nilit për 'në lum të Nilit'; po kështu ban edhe me përemnat vetorë: mei nxirrë për 'me i nxirrë'; të pakryemen e ka vij për vinte, doj për donte; në shumës sh—n e hjek: hajin për hajshin, bijin për bijshin; mënyrën kushtore e trajton me foljen me pasë: kishin me shërbyem e jo do të shërbeheshin; por syntaksa zakonisht është e çalë, e ngatrrueme dhe i mungon shkathtësia e ndërtimit; lidhjet llogjike nuk janë forca e tij dhe çashtja e presave për të është problem.

Në syntaksë Bogdani përdorin periudha të gjata (nga ndikimi klasik) dhe herë herë i dalin të ngatrrueme. Në kritikën e ndërtimit Prof. Pipa citon edhe shkollarin Arbëresh Gaetano Petrotën, i cili e cilëson periudhën e Bogdanit... "të pasigurtë, të parregullshme", etj. dhe se ban ndryshime kur ia përshtatë tekstin italisht tekstit shqip. Bihen shembujt për sa më sipër. Natyrisht, thotë Profesi, ka edhe shumë gabime shtypi. Mandej bihen shembuj mbi dialektet e Shkodrës e të Hasit, mbi fjalët që s'janë as kosovarçe as shkodrançe, që dmth se Bogdani shtrihet edhe më gjanë se në karakteristikat e gegënishtes verilindore tue përdorë fjalë që kanë përdorë edhe Buzuku, Budi e Bardhi. Por Bogdani përfshin edhe të folmet e trajtave qendrore e jugore: pësojmë, lëndohet, shpie, shpumë, godit (për qëllon), të vejë, hua, shtëpi, baticë, dhjet, neve, si edhe mbrapashtesën zvogëluese—zë. Përdorimi i këtyre trajtave të të folunit në gjuhën e tij, thotë Prof. Pipa, flet për një koncept të gjuhës së shkrueme në një plan

superdialektor, një tentativë e parë gjuhe komëtare e bazueme në një gegënishte superdialektore të pasunueme me trajta toskënisht. Ligjëruesi thotë se këtu përfshihen edhe neologizmat (fjalë të reja), nëo shumicë shprehje abstrakte që i mungojshin shqipes, si p.sh.: shembulltyrë, zanë—fillë, vështëri (veshtrim), shumënduer—vështëri (shumëvështimisë, polysemy), i përshpirtshëm (për spiritual), brymi i parë (për shtator—shih fr. brumaire), pakuer (pë kursim, abundantly), pëtoqark (rrethëqark), vollendete (vullnet), me ndepërkambun, etj. Bogdani përdorin edhe turqizma e sllavizma.

Mandej Prof. Pipa kalon në interpretimin e lidhjen ndërmjet dy biblave në Çeten e Profetëve t' autorit dhe mbaron me çashtjen e përfshimjes së Sybilave delfike në gravurën ma tërhjekse të librit, të cilave u është kushtue një poezi 162 vargjesh. Këto komentuesi, si poet i merituem i analizon me imtësi mjeshtrore si për teknikë, ashtu edhe nga pikëpamja e rëndësis historike të zanafillës së metrikës shqipe, dmth t'interpretimit figurativ dhe të metaforave qoftë në poezi, qoftë në prozë. Bogdani përlavdohet këtu edhe si poliglot që dinte përveç gjuhës amtare, edhe latinishten, greqishten e vjetër, italishten, turqishten, serbishten (ndoshta e edhe bullgarishten—shtesë e jona), dhe se duhet të ketë pasë njohuri t' arabishtes e hebraishtes. Madje Bogdani e mbyll librin me përkthimin e kapitullit të IXtë të profetit Daniel në të gjuhë tue përfshij arabishten, armenishten, hebraishten e sirishten. Ketu Prof. Pipa vë në dukje se kur disa shtete të Ballkanit nën të natën pushtim turk kishin harrue ç'është letërsija Shqiptare, nxori një erudit letrar, i cili në sajë të fës së katolike mundi me botue një libër shqip të lavruem.

Profesor Pipa ban pyetjen dhe ep arsye se pse Shqipëria ka bërë pak e Kosova deri në këtë jubilé thueja aspak për Bogdani: Në Shkodër më 1920 (si thote edhe Dr. Canaj në kumtesën e tij) që themelua "Shoqëria Bogdani" për zhvillimin e gjuhës shqipe e botimin e librave shqip. Më 1930 Në Mjeda botoi një antologji të librit të Bogdanit

me titullin "Jeta e së Lumes Virgjën Mri"; me 1940—1943 Mark Harapi ribotoi në seri në revistën "Lajmtari i Zembrës së Krishtit" veprën e Bogdanit; kurse Injac Zamputi botoi artikuj historikë në Buletinën e Universitetit të Tiranës më 1954 dhe 1963 dhe Selman Riza një kapitull mbi Bogdanin në "Fillimet e Gjuhësisë Shqiptare" (1965). Po në atë vjet Matteo Sciambra botoi një studim gjuhësor filologjik mbi Bogdanin, kurse Ibrahim Rugova më 1982 në "Vepra e Bogdanit" (1675—1685) botoi një vlerësim të përmabajtjes theologjike e retorike të veprës¹⁾

Këtu poshtë vijojnë arsyet e Prof. Pipës se pse për këtë shqiptar të ngritur është botue aq pak në gjuhën shqipe:

- "1 — vështirësia e leximit të veprës sidomos në fillim ku nis me teori,
- 2 — gjuha metaforike e shkrimeve shëjte, koncepti i figurave,
- 3 — shumëvshtrimësia (polysemia),
- 4 — gjuha ende e vobegët për të shprehë koncepte abstrakte,
- 5 — mospërkimi aty—këtu i tekstit shqip me atë italisht e anasjelltas,
- 6 — paqindrueshmëria e autorit në të njëjtën trajtë të fjalëve e shprehjeve,
- 7 — sasia e madhe e gabimeve të shtypit. Të gjitha këto s'e joshin lexuesin me e gjurmue Bogdanin.

Arsyet politike:

Katoliçizmi në Shqipëri ka qenë anmiku numër një i Partisë komuniste dhe s' ka dashtë me ia ndigjue emnin Bogdanit as si katolik as si kosovar. Sikurse ka përjashtue Fishtën, Konicën, Koliqin, Camajn, Pipën (Profesori s'e përmend veten për modesti) e një radhë tjerësh, kështu e ka përjashtue edhe

Bogdanin, i cili ka shërbye si ipeshkëv i Shkodrës e administrator i Tivarit, argjipeshkëv i Shkupit dhe administrator i Serbis, e quen fën katolike "feja e shqiptarit", gjuhës shqipe i thotë epirote, veten e quen maqedonas dhe priret të pranojë tezën serbe se kosovarët janë t' ardhun nga Shqipëria. Këte kosovari s' mund ta kapërdij se atij s'i vjen mirë aspak që Bogdani e quen veten 'maqedonas' sidomos tash që maqedonasit janë tue i trajtue shqiptarët mizorisht, pa marrë parasysh se Bogdani e quen Lekën e madh 'shqiptar' si nip që ishte."

Kumtuesi mandej përkrah tezën se, po t' ishte ribotue vepra e Bogdanit me kohë, analizue në pikëpamje polisemike, polifonike, retorike, etj., tue bërë krahasimin me gjuhën e paraardhësve t' autorit, të kohanikëve të tij e të mavonshëm, por tue ndjekë metodën e tij demokratike si u tha më nalt se e ka përdorë në Çetën e Profeteve e jo si u shtampue arbitrarisht 'gjuha e njësuar' me vulën e recetës staliniane më 1972, atëherë nuk do të kishte qenë nevoja për 'arbitraritet'.

Në lidhje me këtë Prof. Pipa me të drejtë kthehet dhe i fajson kosovarët për pranimin e këtij arbitrimi e zhdukjen e gjuhës së tyre amtare me tradita të shëndosha katërshekullore, për braktisjen e Bogdanit, jo vetëm si birin më të ndritun kosovar të kohës së tij, por të të gjithë shqiptarëve t' atëherësh në botë, për braktisjen e dialektit gegë, për të cilin me aq zell e sukses punue në traditën që filloi pikërisht gjatë luftës së dytë botnore.

Prof. Pipa përligjëron në fund se kosovarët me emnin e Bogdanit në ball të platformës kulturore kosovare do t' ishin gjete në rrugë të sigurtë, sepse Serbët nuk do të kishin mujtë me i akuzue ata se po duen me u bashkue me Shqipërinë staliniane, mbasi Bogdani kishte bashkëpunue me Serbët kundër turqve, dhe as nuk do e mund t' akuzohej si nacionalist, sepse kjo termë nuk perdorohej atëherë.

Atë mbyllë kumtesën e tij tue i u drejtue mërgatës sonë që e përpigjet në i mprojtë të drejtat e popullit shqiptar kur këtu merren nëpër kambë në Shqipëri,

Jugosllavi, Greqi ose n' Itali, e po qe nevoja edhe këtu në SH.B. simbas këshillës së Bogdanit "possi lëfton gjithë dheu e shekulli për të vet". Në fund propozon qi të themelohet një shoqni kulturore për lavrimin e gjuhës shqipe në të dy dialektet kështuqi gjuha shqipe të mos "dvaret" e emnin ta ketë "Shoqnia Bogdani"

1) Simbas kumtesës së Prof. Dr. Engjëll Sedaj, nga 1960 deri këndej përmenden një katër shqiptarë kosovarë qi kanë shkruar për Bogdanin pa përfshi ata qi kanë shkruar në revistën katolike "Drita" të Ferizajt.

* * *

Prof. Ibrahim Rugova, Prishtinë, Jugosllavi:

HISTORIJA SHQIPTARE NË VEPRËN E PJETËR BOGDANIT (1685)

a) Historia shqiptare, thotë Dr. Rugova, është e pranishme në krejt veprën e Bogdanit nga Adami e Eva deri te Jezu Krishti. Ai vren se Bogdani e end historin tonë përmes personaliteteve e ngjarjeve të parahistoris e lashtësis e mandej nga mesjeta me Skanderbegun deri në kohën e tij; se kronologjin e tij mund ta shikojmë si një skicë të parë të historis sonë; së kriteret e Bogdanit pajtohen me ato të historiografis së sotme shkencore; se Bogdani s'i përdoron emertimet regjionale t' administratës së Vatikanit, pro i lidh me termat 'epirot e Maqedon' në vazhdimësi ilire për 'shqiptar', tezë e pranue me nga rilindasit e historianët e tashëm. Simbas tij Dardania, Kosova e sotme, u bâ mbretin në shek. e XVI p.K. qi përfshinte Shkupin e krahina tjera. Këto të dhana përputhen me zbulimet ilire në Bosnje e në Ma; kurse vendet antike ai i sqaron me emnat e vendeve të sotme, p.sh. mbretin e Morës 'Egjsko Drino' të Shek. XXII p.K. me etimologjin ilire të lumit 'Drini' dhe me faktin së Historia e Morës së Greqis së sotme pranon se kishte ilir. Prej Bogdanit lexojmë se 'Mbretinija e Arbënit' filloi me 2878 në të XII shek p. K. nga Mollosët nga koha e Luftës së

Trojës me Akilin si themelues; se Leka i Madh ishte prej Petrele të Arbënit dhe e filloi monarkin e vet në Ma; se Aleksa e motra e Aleksandër Mollosit ishte nana e Lekës, të cilin e nderonte së tepërmi simbas etnopsikologjis shqiptare së 'nipi është pjestar i familjes'; po ashtu edhe Pirron e vë në radhën e personaliteteve si mjeshtër luftash i Arbënit të Poshtërë, shek. III p.K. dhe së Cesar Augustit i pëlqeshin shumë arbëneshët, sepse 'e durojnë urin e etin dhe se janë më trima se të tjerët'. Për këto, Prof. Rugova sugjeron të shikohen ma tej burime tjera.

b) Tue përshkruar mesjetën shqiptare e Skanderbegun, Bogdani e lidh emnin e familjes së tij me kohën e heroit kombetar e të koalicionit të tij me Gjon Huniadin për një betejë në Fushën e Kosovës më 1448, ku parashihej qi Skanderbegu të merrte pjesë, por nuk mundi sepse qe i zanun në luftën përreth Krujës. Skanderbegu dërgoi disa forca për në Fushën e Kosovës, por Gjurgj Brankoviç—i i pengoi ato dhe me trahitë zuri rob Huniadin, për lirin e të cilit ndërhyne Papa i Romës dhe dubrovnikasit të shtymë nga stergjyshi i Bogdanit. Familjen e vet Bogdani e përmend qysh nga koha e Stefan Nemanjes.

c) Dr. Rugova e cilëson Bogdanin jo vetëm si historian të lashtësis e të mesjetës, por edhe si kronist të kohës së tij, p.sh. kur përshkruan Kryengritjen e Kelmendit (1638), Bogdani shkruan se me një thirrje "Eja kush anshte trim" (Mbretin buri për shpi), u bënë 500 vetë e vranë Vuçe Pashën e Bosnjes. Aty përmendet për trimni edhe Vllam e Kelmendit, kurse Dedë Gjeri për punimin e një topi nga trangu i lisit, si e përmend edhe historia shqiptare. Me këto ndodhi historije në një libër shqip Bogdani ua ngriti shqiptarëve të vjetër vetëdijen historike si një popull i vjetër i ndrueshëm si gjatë shekujve, ashtu edhe gjatë kohës së tij. Mandej ligjëruesi e përmbledh mendimin mbi Bogdanin kështu: Duke i ndihmuar Lekën e Madh e Skënderbeun si shembuj të jetës, Bogdani edhe vetë, posë veprimtari intelektual, u bë edhe udhëheqës i kryengritjeve

dhe luftës në koalicionin me austriakët në vitet 1688—89, ku udhëhoq 6.000 shqiptarë në luftë kundër turqve." Në fund ai proponon që esenca historike e Bogdanit të përfshihet në gjithë historinë e Shqipërisë antike, mesjetare e moderne.

* * *

Prof. Engjëll Sedaj, Prishtinë, Jugosllavi:

Vepra e Pjetër Bogdanit nga aspekti i Traditës Kulturore Kosovare

Nga studimi i veprës "Çeta e Profetëve", i relacioneve e letrave të Bogdanit, Dr. Sedaj pohon se Pjetër Bogdani e ka kaluar në Shkup e Kosovë pjesën më të madhe të jetës e veprimtarisë së tij të gjithanëshme: fetare, atdhetare, politike, kulturore, shkencore dhe artistike—letrare. Si administrues fetar atje ai ka krijuar vetëdijen e naltë të bashkjetesës, botëkuptimin dhe nevojën e bashkëveprimit për idealet e përbashkëta me fqijtë serbë, kroatë e bullgarë për të luftuar bashkarisht pushtuesin turk. Rrethanat e jetës e bijnë që ai të kryej filloren në Çiprovac të Bullgarisë, studimet e nalta në Loreto me kroatë, t'i hapë zemrën Patrikut të Pejës, Maksimit për bashkëpunim në një kryengritje gjithëballkanike, t'i kushtojë kroatit Andrea Zmajeviq, mikut të shqiptarëve një poezi, e cila përmbledh përpajnimin e idealeve të tija: Krishtin, Arbërin dhe bashkjetesën.

Sjellja e tij me dinjitet ndaj klerikëve të vet e udhëheqesve të dioqezeve përreth i shtynë Shtjefën Gasparin, Gjergj Vlladonjin, Grigor Barbarikun, etj. ta përgëzojnë për botimin e veprës së tij "Çeta e Profetëve". Por rrezatimi i miqësisë e veprimtarisë së tij zgjonte edhe Dubrovnikun, Venedikun, Vjenën, Romën, etj., ku ai shtronte problemet e kohës e të vendit të tij nën pushtetin turk: ai ia paraqet Evropës gratë shqiptare e serbe të gërvishtuna fytyrë e të përgjakuna tue vuerjtë shpirtnisht si Zoja e Bekueme tue pa të birin gozhdue në kryq. Diqysh "Çeta e Profetëve" duket si ungjilli i shqiptarëve e i serbëve.

Bogdani në pershkrimet e tija e perjetëson vendlindjen e tij, Gurin "ndë Hast, Sangjakijet e së Dukagjinit, dioqesit... së Preserendit", por edhe vendet tjera, si Prishtinën, Trepçen, Janjevën, Shëngjeçin, Novobërdën, Shkupin, Dunavën, Drinin, Vardarin, Bunën, Zadrinën etj. Dr. Sedaj na vërteton edhe se termi "Kosovë" në letërsinë e vjetër shqiptare përmendet së pari nga Bogdani; gjithashtu ai vëren se Kisha e Shen Marisë në Gurin e Hasit do t'i ketë lanë aq mbresa të forta Bogdanit, sa me i bërë Zojës së Bekueme një pershkrim të mrekullueshëm të frymëzuar nga kangët popullore kosovare.

Kur më 1647 i vdesë e ama e Bogdani studjonte në Loreto dhe në Kosovë vazhdonte lufta e ashpër kundër pushtuesit, Bogdani u lutet eprorëve ta lejojnë për të studjuar jashtë kolegjit edhe moralin e mjekesin për t'u ardhur në ndihmë bashkatdhetarëve të plagosur e të laskaruar nga lufta.

Me qenë shqiptar dhe me folë shqip për Bogdanin nuk dmth se do të jesh në gjendje edhe me i qindruar anmikut, por duhen edhe ideja e përparimi a shkolla. E këto vërtetë aso kohe gjëndeshin në Has të Thatë prej kah ishte autori, sepse ata e durojnë urin, s' e drojnë anmikun e qindrojnë trimnisht kundër mizorit. Kjo vë në pah rolin pozitiv t'ungjit Andrea, i cili ishte hapë shkollë në Janjevë me një 25 nxënës por shkolla kishte edhe në vende tjera të drejtuar nga kosovarë, si p.sh. Pjetër Mazreku (misionar e mësues), Gregur Mazreku, Vincenc Matoviq—i (në Janjevë) e edhe në Subotikë, Prizren, etj. Të gjitha këto shkolla ishin hapë nën drejtimin e ndikimit të Andrea Bogdanit, ungjit të Pjetër vren d'gëruesi.

N' Arkivin historik të Propagandës Fide të Romës Dr. Sedaj ka gjetë një dokument ku misionarët P. Karagiq (Trepçe), N. Baciq (Mal i Zi), Gjo. Jankoviq (Shkup), Mark Mazreku (Novobërdë), Vincenc Vlashiq (Kratovë), Gjo Bogdani (misionar i përgjithshëm), To. Rospasani dhe Peter Tolit (Prizren) n' emën të popullit kanë

kërkue nga Vatikani që Andrea Bogdani të shpallet "shëjt". Kjo kërkesë, sadoqi nuk u realizue, tregon se sa i ndritshëm e i përsipirtshëm kishte qenë agja i Pjetër Bogdanit e sa shumë do të ketë ndikue në formimin e nipit Pjetër, të cilin e ka përcjellë vetë në Loreto për shkollim dhe ma vonë i ka lanë edhe rrugën e tij të zakonshme për t'u laurue.

Por në spektrin e traditës kulturore kosovare Dr. Sedaj përmend edhe poetin e shkolluëm Lukë Bogdanin, si edhe Lukë Sumën, të cilët hyjnë në Rilindjen Evropiane. Gjithashtu ai thekson se vepra e Bogdanit na udhëzon për hulumtim veprash shqipe para Barletit, si është p.sh. emni deri tash i panjoftun i Martin Segoni—t nga Novobërda e Kosovës. Ky klerik i shkolleum në Padovë, doktor i së drejtës civile dhe kishtarë, para se të vdiste shërbeu në Ulqin si ipeshkëv. Ai e mbante veten me kombësi kotores aty ku shkruen për shqiptarët e luftat e tynë kundër Osmanëve. Ai i quen shqiptarët epirotë e po aty flet edhe për qytetin Arbana që lidhej me rrugën e Apolonis.

Në të vërtetë tradita kulturore kosovare nuk fillon me Pjetër Bogdanin, por me fratrë Palin e Hasit, autor i "Ditës së gjyqit", për të cilin P. Budi shkruen se ishte origjinal, kurse ai vetë, përkthyes. Edhe Budi ka shërbye në Prokupje e në Shkup, si vikar i pergjithshëm i gjithë Serbis, kurse përpara kishte shërbye në Kosovë, por nuk dihet as takimi i tyne as se cilët kuvend i perkitte fratrë Pali dhe as se ishte Bogdanësh a jo. Sidoqoftë Bogdani propozon që të ribotohet vepra e Buzikut, *Ungjilli me këtë rend: 1. Ungjilli në gjuhën shqipe, 2. Pasqyra e të Rrëfyemit, 3. Rituali Romak në gjuhën shqipe e 4. Doktrina e Vogël në gjuhën shqipe*. Në ndihmë të këtyne librave do të vinte Gramatika latinisht—shqip e Andrea Bogdanit, që më vonë i humbi gjatë përndjekjeve.

Poezin e Bogdanit Dr. Sedaj e lidh ngusht me atë të paraardhësve të autorit, sidomos me tetërrokshin e poezive popullore kishtarë të Budit, e po ashtu edhe prozën agiografike me letërsinë popullore shqiptare. Në pjesën e dytë të Çetes së Profetëve, shkruen në prozë, Krishti është personazhi kryesues i

ketij romani të parë të letërsisë shqiptare, ku shfaqen shumë tipare të kreshnikëve dhe të atynë burrave të urtë që flasin me parabola, si p.sh. Shën Jozefi "landëtar" është paraqitë simbas modelit të fshatarëve të trevës. Dr. Sedaj vren edhe se nga vepra e Bogdanit, relacionet e letrat e tija del se frymëzimi i jetës e shumë simbole të artit letrar janë nga viset kosovare, p.sh. Pashtriku i tij është krahasue me Olimpën, ndersa Sibila Dellica, kryesorja dhe më e madhja e të gjithave në gravurën e librit të Bogdanit quhet edhe Hasnjana. Afër saj gjindet Przenasja (Cunea), Shkupjana (Frigia), Shkodrana (Libica), etj.; por është Hasnjana që mban në dorë librin, në të cilin shkruen

Këndoj Birrë e Madh mbi Qielet të Lumit Atë.

Vetë Bogdani e ka arsyetue përfshimjen e Sibilave profetesha misterioze, apokrife të Biblës së Vjetër në gravurën e librit me një letër të vjetit të botimit 1685 tue thanë se Sibilat kanë dashtë t'i paraqes simbas veshjeve shqiptare e Serbe për t'u dhane ngjyrën e atij populli të vorfën dhe për ta ngushllue sa kanë pasë mundësi. Prof. Sedaj nga ana e tij e arsyeton këtë përfshimje në bazë të të gjitha arteve liberale "duke i kaluar kufijtë e botës shqiptare me shtrirje të hapët tematike e me tehun e vet përparimtar." Përveç arsyetimeve të tjera bindëse në harmoni e ndërlidhje me traditën evropiane të humanizmit, profesori ynë e mbyll ligjeratën e vet me këtë paragraf: "Duke pasur parasysh ato 133 vargje në gjuhën shqipe mbi Sibilat, si dhe disa dhjetra vargje origjinale dhe të tjera të përkthyer, kuptojmë se Pjetër Bogdani nuk ishte vetëm, siç thotë në mesjetë *clericus et litteratus*, por edhe poeta, i frymëzuar me motive kosovare."

Me këtë lasë e moment në na pëlqen të pyesim: "E pra, pse të mos e quajmë 'Çetën e Profetëve' të Bogdanit 'Ungjillin e Shqiptarëve' e ndoshta edhe 'Ballkanasve'?"

* * *

Prof. Martin Camaj: Mynhen, Gjermani:

PJETËR BOGDANI, MJESHTËR I GJUHËS E I STILIT.

Zhvillimin e temës së stilit të mjeshtrit Prof. Camaj e fillon me rrëfimin e seriozitetit, të përvujtnis e të përkushtimit t' autorit, i cili thotë se i është dashtë me e ndreqë dialektin e Hasit të tij tue marrë material nga Shkodra e krahina e saj qi të mundet me i kthjellue punët deri në fund, qi ndryshe do të thotë traditën letrare të Shkodrës' tue e çue ate përpara me një veper më të përsosun.

Fitoret e turqve kundër koalicionit kristjan e futën Bogdanin me popullsin katolike të trevës së Kosovës, Shkupit e Serbis në vorbullin e procesit t' islamizimit me ndjekje mbas lufte, shthurje të shoqnís, vorfnim e epidemí e shpërngulje e mërgim, dhe me to shterjen e pajës shpirtnore, kulturore dhe të vetë gjuhës amtare. Prandej, thotë Camaj, dalja e një veprë aq madhështore n' at gjendje të mjerueshme duhet të mbahet si fenomenale. "Sot, mbas tre shekujsh -vren Profesori- habiten njerëzit kur lexojnë në këtë veper në një shqipe kaq të pasun, përmbajtje kaq teorike e për shqipen në atë fazë zhvillimi, tepër e pasun me emertime mbi filozofi e çështje doktrinare të ndryshme prej kristianizmit në mitologji të lashtë, mbi shkencën konkrete apo fenomene të natyrës dhe të sistemit të korpnave qiellorë." Bogdani, vijon ai, jep prova se është e mundun të shprehet në gjuhën shqipe mbarë dija. Dr. Camaj asht i mendimit se Bogdani u asht drejtue me at veper edhe intelektualeve shqiptarë muslimanë me anë të metodës krahasuese ndërmjet parimeve kristjane e islamike.

Dr. Camaj dishmon se vepra e Bogdanit në Shkodër ka qenë lexue, studjue dhe ka ndikue në çdo kohë e thellësisht në stilin e shkollave shkodrane. Edhe ky, si Prof. Pipa, bie shembuj të botimeve t' autorit bā në Shkodër. Mandej thotë se si veper origjinale Çeta e Profetëve asht e shliueme nga kalket apo modelet sintaksore të gjuhëve të hueja. Këtu analizuesi bie shembuj të përdorimit

të drejtë t' autorit të foljeve modale të pazgjedhueshme të t'pit *domethanë* (due, duhet, mund, etj.+ folje paskajore, ndërtim qi asht përjashtue nga gramatika e gjuhës së njësuar dhe asht zavendësue me pjesoren megjithëse, shkruen profesori me të drejtë, 'duhet me thanë' dhe 'duhet të them' ndryshojnë në kuptim.

Bogdani e ka marrë landën gjuhësore nga goja e popullit ku ka lé e shërbye dhe ia ka përshtatë landës ideore tue i u shmangë fjalëve të hueja e tue krijue të reja simbas natyrës së gjuhës sonë. Si poliglot i përkryem, thotë Profesori ai duhet të mbahet edhe sot si shkencatar gjuhësie. Në lidhje me dijen e gjuhëve të Bogdanit, Dr. Camaj lajmon se n' Universitetin e Mynihenit zhvillojnë një program të veçantë sepse ajo ndikon gjithmonë në gjuhën e stilin e shkrimtarit.

Jeta e autorit prelat në pozita fort delikate e të rrezikshme, e stërmbushun me ngjarje për jetë a vdekje të fës e të kombit të vet, e dyndin nga selija ipezhkvnore, katund më katund, në shpella e male e në burg e në shtabe t' ushtrís e në këshillë të Kardinajve për t' u kthye prap në të njajtin qarkullim derisa vdiq. Këto ia forcuen karakterin e pasionuem por edhe të matun në veprime, vren Camaj, qi pasqyrohen edhe në stilin e veprës për bindjen e besimin e tij. E "ky besim n' atë që mendon e thotë i ban periudhat e tij, ndonëse fort të gjata, të sigurta dhe të përsosuna në formë." Në përmbajtjen "e naltë e të thellë" te Çetës së Profetëve gjinden vetvetiu trajtat e përshtatatura gjuhësore që i shohim në lidhje me fjalive kryesore me ato të varuna në struktura të kapërthyme sintaksore. Dr. Camaj then edhe se Bogdani nuk e përdoron prozën 'e kapërthyme' në prozën ekspozitive kur ai shpjegon pikat doktrinale, si p.sh. në përkthime t' ungjillit në shifra konciz.

Kuntuesi, si profesor i gjuhësís dhe poet tepër i moshëm lind vren ke Bogdani përdorimin e shumëllojshëm muzikuer të zanoreve të thurun me gjimëz zanoren "ë", që si thotë ai, gjinden rrallë në ndonjë gjuhë indoeuropiane në fazën e tyne moderne dhe ep t' gjatësis shkallzimi: zanore gjymëz zanore e puthesume, e theksueme dhe e

gjatë, si edhe zanore hundore dhe jo hundore. Këtu Camaj me të drejtë ankohet kundër shlyemjes së kësaj ndryshmenije tingujsh nga katër në dy tue lanë vetëm zanoret e theksueme e të patheksueme në gjuhën shqipe. Tue hjekë zanoren e gjatë e hundore, reformuesit arbitrër e kanë shtrydhë e vorfnue gjuhën dhe kanë përjashtue gjuhën e autorëve të vjetër të shqipes. Ai vjen në përfundim se farkatarët e gjuhës së tashme nuk e kanë njisue, por krasitë e thjeshtue zanet, idiomet, fjalët, muzikën e larshmenin e pasunís shekullore, pa kqyrë kriter ase traditë a motërzim historik. Ai proponon lanjen e lirë të përdorimit të thesareve të rralla të gjuhës për të mos e fetishizue dialektin e tyne të pakicës tue ia imponue shumicës.

Përkundrazi, thotë Camaj, Bogdani u mundue me hulumtue e përfshi fjalët 'plaka' nga paraardhësit e tij dhe e bani "të qartë se pa gjuhë të pasun nuk ka letërsi të ngritun e se poeti apo shkrimtari pa njete gjuhësore të mjaftueshme s' ka se si t' ia thotë lexuesit të vërtetën e plotë artistike.

Dr. Camaj e cilëson Bogdanin si autorin më të vështirë të letrarëve tonë të vjetër dhe pohon se kërkesa e censorit për ta paraqitë veprën edhe italisht i ka nxjerrë punë të papritun e mundime n'at kohë përndjekjesh.

* * *

SEMINAR NË KUJTIM T'IMZOT ZEF OROSHIT

Me rasën e përvjetorit të parë të vdekjes së tij

Palok Plaku

Me 18 marc, 1990 në sallat e Hotelit Eastwood Manor, në Bronx u mbajt një seminar kushtue përvjetorit të parë të vdekjes s'Imzot Zef Oroshit, themeluesit e famullitarit të parë të Kishës Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë në Bronx, New York. Ishin të pranishëm shumë personalitete t'emigracionit shqiptar, intelektualë, miqë e admirues të prelatit si dhe një mori ndigjuesish nga New Yorku e rrethet. Seminarin e organizoi pasardhësi i MonsinJORIT të ndiem, Dom Rrok Mirdita në bashkëpunim me Dom Pjetër Popaj, zëvendës famullitar e antarët e Këshillit të kishës, Zz. Fran Sokoli, Simon Simolacaj, Tom Shkreli, Fran Shala, Sokol Vukli, etj.

Z. Fran Sokoli hapi seminarin tue ftue Dom Pjetër Popaj për të ba lutjen fetare. Mandej Zoja Miliana Mirakaj e Zotni Fran Shala exekutuen hymnet kombtare të Shqypnis e të Shteteve të Bashkueme. Dom Rrok Mirdita i përshndeti



Monsignor Dr. Zef Oroshi

presëmanësit tue vëne dukje kontributin e madh që Monsignor Oroshi dha për kauzën e përshtatësme kombtare e fetare me themelimin e

kishës së parë katolike shqiptare në mërgim e një serie veprash tjera. Dom Rroku mandej paraqiti folësat në seminar: Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi, Kryetar i Komitetit "Shqipëria e Lirë," New York; Dom Prenk Ndrevashaj, famullitar i Kishës "Zoja Pajtore e Shqiptarve," Detroit; Prof. Zef V. Nekaj, Monterey, Californi.

Dr. Krasniqi foli në referatin e tij për "personalitetin e veprimtarin e Imzot Oroshit n'Amerikë" e bashkëpunimin e ngushtë me 'te për sjelljen e sistemimin e emigrantave të shumë shqiptarë n'Amerikë. Ai përmendi në referat se para ardhjes së Imzot Oroshit katoliket shqiptarë ishin të pa-organizuar dhe u mbledheshin kohë mbas kohë në kisha të ndryshme të shërbyem prej At Andrea Nargaj, një françeskani shqiptar i cili jeptemësim në (Sena College) Landonville, New York. Dr. Krasniqi foli në hollësi për aftësitë organizative të bariut të ri e veprimin shumë të vlerëshëm në lami fetar e kombtar. Ai nënvizoi se mbrenda një kohe tejet të shkurtë, Oroshi që i zoti me krijue Lidhjen Katolike Shqiptare Amerikane (1962), kryetar i parë i së cilës u zgjodh Dr. Henrik Gurashi. Për të komunikue ma mirë me emigranta, numri i të cilve shtohet dita ditës, Imzoti themeloi revistën Jeta Katolike Shqiptare (1966) e tri vjet ma vonë edhe kishën (famullin) e parë shqiptare n'Amerikë me emën Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë (1969). Mbas do kohe numri i katolikëve shqiptarë ishte aq i madh sa u pa nevoja e blemjes së një godinës së re për kishë. Kjo u realizue me 1978. Kardinali i New Yorkut, Terrence Cooke bekoi solemnisht kishën e re në një ceremoni madhështore në pranin e mija besimtarve katolikë e bashkëvllazënve musliman e orthodox.

Dr. Krasniqi mandej foli për nderimin që Selija Shejte tregoi kundrejt Imzot Oroshit tue e emnue Monsignor t'Odës Papnore, titull i shkallës naltë kishtarë. Krasniqi gjithashtu vuni në dukje largëpamsin e Imzot Oroshit kur me 1973 kërkoi prej Argjipeshkvisë së New Yorkut e Argjipeshkvisë së Tivarit një ndihmës për të mujtë me përballue përgjegjësit e ndryshme fetare që kërkonte një famulli shumënumërshe si famullija e

Zojës së Këshillit të Mirë. Kjo nevojë u kënaq me ardhjen e Dom Rrok Mirditës dhe emnimin e tij si zevendës t'Imzot Oroshit.

Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi ceku në referatin e tij të gjatë edhe rrolin vendimtar që Imzoti, Dom Rroku e kisha me shërbimet e projektet e ndryshme në lami fetar, kombtar, kultural e social kanë pasë për emancimin e gjithanshëm të komunitetit katolik shqiptar. Ai theksoi se si kisha ashtu i tanë komuniteti katolik i kanë dhanë një kontribut të çmueshëm bashkësisë shqiptare të New Yorkut e rretheve. Padyshim personaliteti e përpjekjet e Imzot Oroshit kanë luejtë rrol pozitiv jo vetëm si drejtues e udhëhjekës fetar, por edhe si mësues, intelektual e patriot i flakët.

Dr. Krasniqi e përfundoi referatin me këto fjalë:

"Imzot Zef Oroshi ka marrë pjesë gadi në të gjitha manifestimet kombtare, përkujtimore e shoqnore me një dinjitet të pashoq, tue nderuë komunitetin që përfaqsonte. Ai mbetet një ndër personalitetet ma të dallueme t'emigracionit tonë."

* * *

Folësi i dytë në seminar që Z. Dom Prenk Ndrevashaj, i cili kishte zgjedhë temën:

NË KUJTIM NJIVJETUER TË MONSINJOR ZEF OROSHIT

"Për Fé, Atdhe e Përparim"

(Eksperjencë Personale)

Dom Prenka, i padluem për vdekjen e mikut të tij bashkvllaz të meshtanis, tregon se në Shqipëri ka pasë raste ka takonte Dom Zef Oroshin vetëm dy herë e të dyja herët në shoqim e shërbim t'Abatit të Mirditës, Imzot Frano Gjinit, martir. Në pari e ka takue kur studjonte në Kolegjin Papnore Sverjanë, kur Imzot Gjini ka vizitue kolegjin dhe u ka dhanë këshillë e zemër:

"Rritnju në shejtni, në dije e shkenca, në dashtni për Zotin e për Shqipni. Eprorët i keni të mirë. Na Ipeshkevijt jemi me ta edhe me ju.... Ndoshta shpejt do të vije koha e Zoti do ta sprovtojë vokacionin tonë." Mandej si papritmas u ka thanë: "Kqyrni! Ky asht Dom Zef Oroshi nga Mirdita, i ardhun para do kohe nga Roma, i përgatitun mirë dhe i mbërthyem n' armët e dashtnis nga Propaganda Fide: PËR FË, ATDHE E PËRPARIM." Fjalët e Abatit janë përcjellë nga një breshën duertrokitjesh. Hera e dytë e takimit ka qenë mbasi rrufeja komuniste ka mbyllë e shkatrrue kolegjet, pushkatue eprorët, burgosë popullin e shumë xhakoj, ndër të cilët edhe Ndrevashaj për pak kohë. Delegatit Apostolik i asht dashtë të dilte nga Shqipnija, kështu Imzot Gjini asht emnue nga Roma "Nuntius Apostolicus" për Shqipni në vend t'Argjipeshkvit Leone G.B. De Nigris. Xhakoni Ndrevashaj, mbetë pa dokumenta të kolegjit për shkak të burgimit, i drejtohet Imzot Gjinit, kur ke dera e Qelës se Katedrales gjen Dom Zef Oroshin, të cilit i kallxon arsyen e vizitës. Ai e çon ke Delegati, i cili i lëshon një vërtetim studimesh të kryeme në vija të përgjithshme.

Me 1956 Ndrevashaj i shkruen Dom Zefit nga Kosova për të ndërhy q i ai të mundte me dalë n' Itali e me vijue studimet e alta per meshtar në Romë. Edhe në ket rasë ndërhyrja e Oroshit ka pasë sukses. Para se të nisej për Amerikë, Dom Zefi ka shkue në Vatikan dhe ka shënue emnin e Dom Prenkës q i emnohej Kapelan i emigrantave shqiptarë në vend të tij, dhe ashtu asht ba porsa Dom Prenka asht shugurue meshtar.

Por Dom Prenk Ndrevashaj tue pasë vetë prirje të lakmueshme poetike e letërsije në përgjithësi (ky asht komenti ynë) e ka admirue Dom Zefin për zellin e etjen e tij të hershme në Kolegjen Propaganda Fide. Aty gjatë dy vjetvë të fundit të studimeve xhakoni Ndrevashaj ishte kujdestari i Bibliotekës Kombtare Shqiptare të kolegjes. Dishmija q i ai riprodhon asht aq interesante sa edhe e vlefshme, madje e shkelqyeshme për talentin udhëheqës t' Oroshit si student. Ndrevashaj ka gjetë në bibliotekë Librin e

Proçes-Verbaleve të mbledhjeve akademike të xhakojve shqiptarë. Drejtuesi i mbledhjeve dhe ratifikuesi mbi pelqime të vendimeve ishte "P. Zef Oroshi". Ket libër ai e ka fotokopjue për librarin e vet në Romë. Këtu vijon permbajtja e ketyne mbledhjeve dhe rendi i tyre:

PËR FË, ATDHE, PËRPARIM.

1- ÇASHTJE FETARE: Karakter sociologjik i mbështetun në parimet filozofiko-teologjike. (spjego shkurt e kuart)

2 - PIKPAMJE MIJONARE dhe plane zbatimit n' Atdhe - Shqipni. (Spjego!)

3 - PËRPIEKJE BASHKPUNIMIT me besime Jo-Katolike në Shqipni në dritën e Revelacionit.

4 - ÇASHTJE PATRIOTIKE, tue e vu Shqipninë PERMBI Interesat Personale -o- partjake -o- krahinore, POR JO PËIRMBI INTERESAT E SHELBIT SHPIRTNUER i cili asht për të gjith njerzit e të gjitha kohnavet i paxevëndsueshëm!

5 - ÇASHTJE LETRARE, tue ba përpjekje për të njoftë mirë zhvillimin kulturuer-lettar mbrenda e jashta Atdheut nepërmjet të shtypit a të kontaktevet me shkrimtarë, poetën, hartista të kohës; dhe tue u stërvitë në përpjekje KRIJIMTARE!

6 - ÇASHTJE STRIKTE SOCJALE, tue ba përpjekje përgatitore psikologjikish, t'organizueme mbi shtresat shoqnore në vendin tonë dhe tue ba gjurmime mbi zbatimin të mjetetvet dhe të veprimevet. (spjego shkurt)

7- ÇASHTJE STRIKTE ARTISTIKE, mbi dramatizimin poetik, pikuresk, real veprash para masave popullore të moshave të ndryshme me qellim edukativ dhe arsyelimisht delektativ, tue iu përshatë Kishës e cila hecë prej shekullit në shekullin e ri me njeri, si hieja e ti, si Engjulli i ti.

Mandej ligjëruesi përmendi zellin e tij për ndihmë shpirtnore shqiptarizmit të stërvuejtun mbas luftës së dytë botnore, mospajtimin e tij me padrejtësin dhe tragjedin që ai vetë pa e përjetoi, vullnetin e fortë në punë, shpirtin guximtar, shëndritjen fetare gjatë përkushtimit meshtarak forcue shkencorisht që e banë me i u vu përkthimeve shqip të Shkrimit Shejt në të njëjtën kohë kur ndihmonte me afsh valët e refugjatëve bashkatdhetarë si n' Evropë, ashtu edhe n' Amerikë.

Mbasi ka mrrijtë Dom Prënka n' Amerikë, ai thotë se bashkë kanë qa hallet, ushqye shpresat, zgjidhë rrugdaljet e dhanë dorën shoqishoqit, p. sh. në prapësi e krijimit të Qendrës së Dytë Katolike Shqiptare "Zoja Pajtores e Shqiptarëve", Dom Prekës i asht dashtë të nisej papritmas për Romë. N'at rasë Dom Zef Oroshi e ka zavendsue para popullit në Michigan dhe Delegatëve t' Arkidiocezit të Detroit-it tue u ndejtë besnik të gjitha pikësnyimeve e planit të dhanun nga Dom Preka. E ky shërbim vllaznuer meshtarak ka qenë i anasjellshëm.

Simbas përkujtuesit, kryevepra e veprimtaris apostolike-kombtare e Imzot Zef Oroshit asht një prizëm tri faqesh:

I- ZOJA E KËSHILLIT TË MIRË, dhe me këte pushojnë lotët!

II- THIRRJE NDIHME ME KOHË:
ARDHJA E NDIHMËSIT: DOM RROK MIRDITA.

III- NDIHMA E DYTË: DOM PJETËR POPAJ, MESHTARI RI.

Dom Preka shpreh mandej besimin e plotë se dy kishat do të bashkëpunojnë si në kohën e Imzot Oroshit dhe kujton me mallëngjim dy vizitat e fundit që ai i ka ba Prelatit të ndiem në kohën ma kritike e të fundit të jetës, kur asnjani vllaut s' mundte me u nda e të dy kanë fillue me qa...Ma në

fund ai pohon se Imzot Oroshi ka pasë shumë përkrahës: Zotin së pari, popullin e zgjedhun, meshtarin Dom Rroku, miqë e njerëz të shkelqyeshëm besnikë e prandej mbasi e ka krye detyrën, si Shën Pali, ka hy në jetën e Amshueme.

* * *

Kumtesa e folësit të tretë, Prof. Zef V. Nekajt, me titull "Provë për vlerësimin e pendës s' Imzot Oroshit" u lexue nga Z. Fran Sokoli, mbasi Z. Nekaj s'qe në gjendje të vinte; por theksojmë se punimi i tij ishte mjaft i hollësishëm e pra i pasun edhe i gjatë, ndoshta tamam i përshtatshëm për krejt një mbramje letrare.

Në ket punim verëhet etja e pashueme e xhakonit Zef Oroshi për të lexue të gjitha veprat letrare shqipe ma të zgjedhuna të kohës kur jetonte. Ky asht pa dyshim frymëzimi i mësuesit të tij t'adhuem, poetit ma të skalitun shqiptar, Dom Ndre Mjedja. Ky frymëzim i ka ngjallë dishirin që të vihet në lidhje të drejtperdrejtë me letrarët ma të spikatun të kohës tue përfshi Fishtën, Nolin, Koliqin, Poradecin, etj., të cilëve u ka kërkuë dhe marrë veprat e tyne në sa studjonte në Kolegjin "Propaganda Fide" në Romë. Por leximi i veprave t'autorëve bashkëkohorë ngjallë detyrimisht dishirin për t'u njoftë drejtperdrejt me ata autorë. Dhe kur Dom Zef Oroshi bahet emigrant e vjen n' Itali, ai njëfet me Prof. Koliqin, ndoshta shkrimtarin e poetin ma të ndieshëm shqiptar që ka pasë deri tash. Dom Zefi ndjek kurset e Koliqit n' Universitetin e Romës, por në të njëjtën kohë edhe kurset për fe e filosofi n' Universitetin katolik Angelicum. Universiteti i Romës me anë të Koliqit e përgatit në pikëpamje letrare, ndersa Universiteti Angelicum e përfundon në misionin fetar. M'anën tjetër përfundim i fe në Shqipëri, që mbi fen katolike ra si llava vullkanike, e përgatiti dhe e përkreu në misionin me trinom "Për fe, atdhe e përparim". Ket trinom Dom Zefi e perbloi, e njëpërmtoi dhe e cementoi në drejtim të misionit të t'at, simbas shprehjes mallëngjyese arbreshe "gjaku i shpirtshur", dhej të ruente që "gjaku të mos shpirtshet" jo vetëm në mergimin e



Papa Pali i VI pret n'audiencë Monsinjur Zef Oroshin, i cili i dhuron Papës të katër Ungjiit e Shkrimit të Shëjtë në gjuhën shqipe, të përkthyer prej tij.

padishruem, por edhe n' atdhe. Për këtë ai punoi derisa jetoi. Për këtë ai e provoi pendën e tij në revistën kulturore, shoqërore, artistike "Shejzat" të Prof. Koliqit; për këtë ai botoi katër libra fetarë me kryeveprën "Katër Ungjiit e Shkrimit Shejt"; për këtë ai botoi me bashkëpunëtorët e tij emigrantë të rij dhe disa nga shkrimtarët ma të mirë të këtij emigrimi, si Prof. E. Koliqi, K. Gurakuqi, M. Camaj, J. Bayron, etj. revistën tremujore "Jeta Katolike Shqiptare" për 12 vjet rresht (1966-1978), ku ai mbetet shtylla kryesore e asaj ndertese poliedrike

frymëzuese me artikuj fetarë, shoqërore, kombëtarë, letrarë, komentues, kritikues, arsimorë, etj., që gjithmonë kapshin prej 1/3es-1/2en e landës së revistës.

Ndër këto tri veprimtari publicistike t' Imzot Oroshit, Z. Nekaj shqyrton, komenton e njeh si punime thjeshtë letrare kryesisht artikujt që Oroshi ka shkruar në revistën "Shejzat" t' Ernest Koliqit. Megjithatë ai nuk i përjashton nga kjo kategori disa shkrime t' Oroshit në "J.K.SH.", në "Dielli" e gjetiu; madje pohon ngultas se në historiati e Kishës Katolike Shqiptare Imzot Oroshi mund të përmendet me shumë nderim për këtë veprë pionere misionare për rrejtjen e gjakut të këtij emigrimi ende të pashprishur.

Titujt e artikujve të marrun nga "Shejzat", disa pjesë të të cilëve ishin shkëputë për t'u lexue, qenë: "Nji arkitekt e skulptor i rilindjes në Dalmati, Andrea Nicolo Alessio, Alexijer da Durrazzo", vj. II, Nr. 1-4, 1958; "Çohaja", vj. III, Nr. 3-4 e 5-6, 1959; "Mirënjohja shqiptare ndaj Arbreshëve t' Italis", vj. III, 7-8; "Tue përkujtue Fishtë", vj. VI, Nr. 1-2, 1962; "Nji oazë rilindjeje në diasporë", vj. VIII, Nr. 3-4, 1964; "Kryq-Tërthuer nepër Ujdhezat Karabjane", X, Nr. 9-12, 1966; "Nji pishtar i letërsisë e i kulturës shqipe fiket." (Numër Përkujtimuer kushtuar Prof. Ernest Koliqit), vjeti 1977.

Me referatin e Prof. Nekaj muer fund seminari kushtue përvjetorit të parë të vdekjes s' Imzot Zef Oroshit. Shumë pjesë marrës në seminar uruen që çdo vjetë të vazhdojë përkujtimin i jetës e veprës s' Imzot Zef Oroshit, udhëheqës ma të dalluem fetar katolik dhe shqiptar në mergim.



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

PËRKUJTOHET 150 VJETORI I LINDJES SË DEDË GJON LULIT DHE 79 VJETORI I KRYENGRITJES SË MALËSISË SË MADHE

Lulash Dajçi

Në marsin e këtij vjeti shqiptarët e Malësisë së Madhe përkutjuen dy data me randësi në historinë e popullit shqiptar: 150 Vjetorin e ditëlindjes së patriotit të madh e luftarit trim Dedë Gjon Lulit dhe 79 Vjetorin e Kryengritjes së Malësisë së Madhe. Fatkëqsisht kremtimet u zhvilluen kryesisht në Shtete të Bashkueme t'Amerikës. Në Kosovë e Malësi të Madhe auktoritetet serbe e malazeze ndalojnë çdo manifestim kombtar e sidomos t'atynë burrave shqiptarë që flijuen jetën tue luftue kundër sundimit të tyre. Në kremtimet përkujtimore n' Amerikë muer pjesë gadi i tanë komuniteti shqiptar. Festimet kryesore u zhvilluen në New York e Detroit ku asht vendosë një numër i madh shqiptarësh prej Malësisë së Madhe të mbi Shkodrës.

Në New York kremtimi madhështuer u mbajt me 24 Marc, 1990, në Estwood Manor të Bronxit në praninë e qinda bashkatdhetarve të New Yorkut e rrethinave si dhe mysafirve t'ardhun edhe nga qytetet tjera t' Amerikës. Celebrimi i këtij jubileut u nderue edhe me pjesëmarrjen e intelektualve shqiptarë nga Malësia, profesorat Tom Berisha dhe Gjergj Gjokaj Daku, e Lekë P. Lulgjuraj. Profesor Zekerije Cana, Kryetar i komitetit shqiptar për të drejtat njerzore nga Prishtina u ndalue të merrte pjesë nga auktoritetet Jugosllave.

Kryetari i mbramjes Z. Tom Gjoka falnderoi të pranishmit dhe foli shkurtazi për randësin e jubileut të dyfishët për historinë tonë kombtare. Mbasi u exekutuen hymnet kombtare t'Amerikës e Shqipnis, ai i ftoi të pranishmit të mbajnë një minut



Tribuni i Traboinit, Dedë Gjon Luli (1840-1915) organizuesi e udhëheqësi i Kryengritjes.

heshtje në kujtim të dëshmorve të kombit. Lutjet fetare të rastit u banë nga At Andrea Nargaj dhe i Përndritëshmi Imam Isa Hoxha.

Fjalimi kryesor i mbramjes ishte pregaditë nga Z. Zef Pashko Deda, mirpo u lexue prej Prof. Vasel Camaj, mbasi Z. Deda për arsylene shndetsore nuk muji të vihtë.

Z. Tom Gjoka mandej paraqiti folësat e mbramjes, Profesor Tom Berishën, Profesor Gjergj Gjokaj Daku dhe Z. Lekë P. Lulgjuraj. Të tre ligjeruesat, secili nga aspekte të ndryshme, folën për ftyrën e ndritur të heroit kombtar Dedë Gjon Lulit si dhe rrolin e përvendimtar në organizimin e drejtimin e Kryengritjes së Malësisë së Madhe të vitit 1911. Fjalët e tyre u përshndetën me entuziazëm e duertrokje të gjata.

Pikërisht një javë ma vonë me 31, 1990 edhe në Detroit u mbajt një kremtim i bukur në kujtim të Dede Gjon Lulit dhe të përvjetorit të Kryengritjes së Malësisë së Madhe. Si dihet komuniteti shqiptar në Detroit kapë njatë afer 40.000 shpirtën. Prei këtij numri gadi gjysma janë prej Malësisë së Madhe. Mbramja përkujtimore u hap nga Z. Nikoll Ujk Junçaj, antar i Këshillit të Kishës Shqiptare Katolike Shën Pali, i cili i përshndeti të pranishmit e mysafirët e mandej presentoi folësin kryesor Z. Gjon Lulçjuraj. Z. Lulçjuraj asht një nga liderët e këtij komuniteti i cili për ma se 18 vjetë drejtoi radio-programin shqip në Detroit. Me një zotësi oratorike të rrallë Z. Lulçjuraj foli për etapat e historikut të Kryengritjes së 1911 si dhe figurën e personalitetin e dalluem të Dedë Gjon Lulit.

Zotni Junçaj mandej presentoi njezin mbas tjetrit tre folësat të tjerë, Profesor Tome Berishën, Profesor Gjergj Gjokaj Daku dhe Z. Lekë P. Lulçjuraj. Që të tre, përvec paraqitjes së fakteve dhe të spjegimit të rrethanave ndër të cilat u zhvillue Kryengritja e Malësisë së Madhe dhe të figurës legjendare t'udhëhjeksit të sajë, këshilluen të pranishmit e krejt shqiptarët të vazhdojnë me ushqye dashtënin për vendlindjen e tyne e të mburrën për herojt si Dedë Gjon Lulin e tjerët. Ata theksuen në fjalimet e tyne se populli shqiptar asht sot tue përjetue caste kritike, të thuesh si në kohën e Dedë Gjon Lulit, e prandej asht e nevojshme të marrim shembull nga luftarët e Kryengritjes së vjetit 1911 për të mujtë me përballue rrezikun që po i kërcnohet sot popullit shqiptar në Jugosllavi.

Mbramja e përkujtimi përfunduen në një atmosferë vllaznimi e bashkimi.



Flamuri historik që kryengritsat shqiptarë të Malësisë së Madhe ngrehën në malin e Deçiqit përmbi Tuz me 1911

Lavdi u Kjoftë Dëshmorëve

... E kuer Shqypitari ndër ma t'largtat mote
Nepër t'cillat do t'endet jeta e njerit,
Kuer t'kndojë Shqypitari m'ato kangë kreshnike
Sa gjaku e mundi kje prej jush dikue
Për me u ndertue atdheu i tij -- Shqypnija:
-O t'lumët ata, ka me brohoritë me veti
Qi flija e Atdheut u ban, e, tuj dhe në jetën,
Liri Atdheut e t'ambël jetë i suenen.--
E aj vorret t'ua atherë, ka me kerkue,
E ka me i gjetë, e ka me t'uejtë, t'ruehet
Elteri i Atdheut, me kunora t'blerta
Ka me i lulzue, e masandej jua besën
Ka per t'u athenë mbi vorret e kurrë për s'gjallit
S'ka me t'koritun namu t'uej e mderën,
Se ka me dekë për t'uej si d'as buerrat,
Shqiptet, qe, in për një Shqypni t'irume...

At Gjergj FISHTA

NJI SYMPOZIUM MADHËSHTUER KOSOVAR NË NEW YORK

Lulash Dajçi

Me 29 prill 1990 Organizata Pan-Albanian-American organizoi një simpozium të profesorave dhe intelektualëve kosovarë mbas kthimit të tyre nga Washingtoni, ku patën shkue për të dishmure para Kongresit të Shteteve të Bashkueme t' Amerikës mbi shtypjen e popullit shqiptar prej serbo-malazëzve me tanksa, aeroplana, helikoptera, pushkë automatikë, gaze, etj. sepse ai pupull kërkonte me demonstrata paqësore të drejtat e barabarta me popujt tjerë të Jugosllavis.

Symposiumi u mbajtë në Sheraton Center të New York-ut, ku ndermjet të huejve shquheshin edhe tre përfaqesues të popullit amerikan, miq të të drejtave të shqiptarëve, të nderuemit ZZ. D'Amato, Lantos dhe DioGuardi.

Këtu po apim radhazi vetem thalbin e mendimeve që shprehu secili përfaqësues vullnetar i kësaj elite intelektuale kosovare n' emën të krejt popullit shqiptar nën Jugosllavi:

Anton Berisha: "Megjithëse shtypjet vazhdojnë, asht krijuar njëfarë hapsine mbrenda së cilës lejohet deri diku veprimtaria e disa organizatave, si p.sh. Organizata e Nisjativës Demokratike të Kosovës, Partija Fshatare dhe Levizja e Gjelbërt."

Isuf Berisha: "Gjaja kryesore asht shpërbamja e sistemit autoritar. Çashtja aktuale asht ajo kombtare. Shteti po mundohet të pengojë procesin demokratizimit. Partit komuniste në Jugosllavi e shfrytzuën rastin për të krijuar ligje të reja."

Tone Berisha: "Asht tejet e vështirë të thuhet se çfarë mund të ngjajë në t'ardhmën. Në goftë se i vazhdojmë përpjekjet që i kemi fillue e nuk dobësohemi, pa tjetër do të dalim fitues."

Idriz Ajeti: "Çashtja duhet të shikohet në prizmin ballkanik dhe evropjan. Demokratizimi asht çashtja ma me randësi për zgjidhjen e problemit kosovar, shqiptar."

Hajrullah Gorani: "Ndryshimet tash bahen me anë evolucioni e jo me anë revolucioni. Sistemi totalitar ka krijuar bazën për shkatërrimin e vetvetës. Tashti Kosova gjindet në një nivel të naltë kulturor."

Hivzi Islami: "Partija Komuniste nuk mundi t'i zgjidhte problemet e fshatarëve, por imponoi një burokraci që vazhdimisht pengoi përparimin e bujqësisë."

Anton Kala: "Komunizmi mbetet parullë boshe. Ai nënçmon komponentet kombëtare. Pozita e shqiptarëve në Jugosllavi asht specifike."

Shkelzën Maliqi: "Gjendja e tashme në Kosovë nuk mundëson parashikime të qarta. Çashtja e statusit republikan për Kosovën asht legjitime, por nuk asht zgjidhja e vetme."

Ragim Batoshi: "Shqiptaret në Jugosllavi kanë të gjitha karakteristikat të konsiderohen si komb e jo si pakicë kombëtare."

Rexhep Qosja: "Fundamentalizmi, termë propagandistike. Në Jugosllavi ka fundamentalistë, por jo në rradhët e shqiptarëve. E drejta historike asht e drejtë e vdekun. Politika serbe nuk i përshtatet kohës së sotshme. Andrra e Bashkimit Evropjan po bahet realitet. Shpresojmë se edhe Kosova do të bahet një rajon i Evropës së Bashkueme."

Luleta Pula: "Mbi 4000 nxënës helmuen."

Ndër tjerë emigrantë, Anthony Athanas i Boston-it tha se shqiptarët e SH. B. t' Amerikës dhe të vendeve tjera në këtë rast kanë tregue një solidaritet të jashtzakonshëm dhe se ky simpozium ishte mledhja më madhështore e shqiptarëve që arritën mend në këtë vend; ndërsa Z. Masar Kraçiqi i ardhur nërgje nga Australija deklaroi se në simpozium u mblokuhën ma tepër se trimij shqiptarë.

Të tre përfaqesueset e pranishëm të Senatit Amerikan i u ba propozimi që të ndërhyjnë pranë Administratës Amerikane për hapjen e një konsullatë të SH. B. t' Amerikës në Prishtinë.

KOSOVA KËRKON NDIHMË

Angazhimi i plotë i Shtetit Shqiptar - imperativ për ngritjen e problemit të Kosovës në nivelin ndërkombtar

(Fjala e mbajtur nga Dr. Sami Repishti, në drekën e dhënë, me 28 qershor 1990, për ndër të përfaqësuesëve kosovarë të ardhur në Amerikë për pajtimin e gjakeve në mes të bashkësisë shqiptaro-amerikane)

Zonja dhe zotërij, Mirëdita!

Vëllezër e motra kosovare, mirë-se-vini në Shtetet e Bashkuara të Amerikës! Me këtë rast dëshroj të falndëroj vëllezërit Bitiqi që ofruan bujarinë e tyre në organizimin e kësaj dreke për nder të këtij grupi të dalluar aktivistësh kosovarë.

Cdo herë që ju kosovarët vizitoni bashkësinë tonë, për ne është një ditë feste. Me zhvillimet e fundit të ngjarjeve në Kosovë, vizitat e juaja kanë marrë, përveç karakterit simbolik, edhe një rendësi të dorës së parë. Sepse gjendja në Kosovë mbetet edhe sot, me okupimin e ri serb, plaga më e rëndë dhe më e hapur për kombin tonë, për tetë miljonë shqiptarë.

Ne, vëllezër e motra, kemi ndjekur me vemendje dhe zemër të ndrydhur rrjedhën e vështirë të jetës që po kaloni, sidomos që nga masakrat masive të vjetit 1981. Ne jemi vëllezërit dhe motrat e juaja. Guximi juaj, dhe sidomos trimëria e rinisë kosovare, kanë fituar zemrat tona, dhe zemrat e miliona njerëzve nepër botë, kudo që është i shtrenjt koncepti i dinjitetit personal, i lirisë, dhe i zhvillimit më të tejshëm të shoqërisë së qytetruar.

Nuk dyshon me askush në vendosmerinë e popullsisë shqiptare në Jugosllavi! Siç shkruante edhe një gazetë greke: " Në Kosovë, nuk mund t'u mohohet liria shqiptarëve që tanksit i thojnë Polle skllavërisë Jo!" Ne nderojmë gjakun tuaj të derdhur për liri, sepse është gjaku i jonë, ne respektojmë dëshmorët tuaj që dhanë jetën për

demokraci, sepse ata janë edhe dëshmoret tonë, dhe në çmujmë me krenari përpjekjet e juaja të vazhdueshme për barazi të plotë sepse jemi pjesë e botës së lirë dhe pjesë e trupit tuaj, dhe ndjejmë, njëllon si ju, peshën e rëndë të diskriminimit politik dhe kombëtar.

Por ajo që ngjet sot në Kosovë, krahas rezistencës kundër pushtimit ushtarak dhe policor serb, është diçka e jashtëzakonshme, zonja dhe zotërij, dhe ju musafirët tonë këtu jeni ndër aktivistët më të dalluar të këtyre ngjarjeve. Sot në Kosovë, koncepti i shqiptarizmit po fiton një dimension të ri. Në Kosovë, shqiptarët luftojnë hakmarrjen dhe jo njeriun. Në Kosovë, shqiptarët përqafojnë pajtimin dhe jo pushkën. Në Kosovë, shqiptarët po u falin tokën e shtrenjtë atyre që mbeten pa tokën e të parëve sepse ashtu e deshi Çubrilloviqi, Rankoviqi, dhe Millosheviqi. Në Kosovë, shqiptarët po ofrojnë krahun e punës dhe djersën e tyre për të dobëtin, po falin bukën e krypën për të papunët dhe fëmijët e uritur. Në Kosovë, shqiptarët po strehojnë në shtëpitë e tyre studentët që lëshuan konviktet sepse nuk pranuan ndasinë kombëtare dhe urrejtje-in e imponuar nga Beogradi. Në Kosovë, shqiptarët po i tregojnë botës mbarë formën me fisnike të qytetrit shqiptar. Kosova e juaj, vëllezër e motra kosovare, sot po bashkohet denjësisht me shpirtin e qytetrit europian. Kush mund të akuzojë persëri shqiptarët se janë një popull i paqytetruar, sot kur dhunës serbe një popull mbarë i përgjigjet me demokraci, me qetësi dhe me një vendosmëri të paparë që shpesh me lidhjen e Francëve në Lezhë, dhe me Kuvendin e Arbërit?

Vëllezër dhe motra kosovare, ju jeni përfaqësuesit më të mirë të kësaj lëvizje qytetruese në Kosovë, të këtij manifestimi madhështor të burrërisë, besës,

dhe bujarisë shqiptare. Kombi shqiptar dhe ne shqiptaro-amerikanët, të gjithë jemi kryelartë me ju!

* * *

Më lejoni të them edhe dy fjalë, si individ dhe si shqiptaro-amerikan, mbi një problem qenësor që na paraqitet:

Kosova ka nevojë për miq, për ndihmë, për përkrahje, në këto ditë shumë të vështira. Kemi lexue deklaratat publike të Dr. Ibrahim Rugovës në Bruksel të Belgjikës, si dhe të tre delagatëve të Kuvendit të Kosovës, Skendër Skenderi, Muharrem Shabani, dhe Bujar Gjurgjeala, të bëra në Vjenë të Austrisë. Këto deklarata theksojnë një mesazh: domosdoshmërinë e demokratizimit të Shtetit Shqiptar, dhe domosdoshmërinë e dytë, që ky Shtet Shqiptar, si anëtar i Organizatës së Kombeve të Bashkuara duhet të ndërhyjë në favor të Kosovës pranë OKB. Ky mesazh publik është një element i ri në krizën kosovare.

Fakti që kjo kërkesë e forcave demokratike të Kosovës bëhet plot nëndë vjet mbas demonstratave të përgjakshme të vitit 1981, është kuptimplotë. Mungesa e një zëri të vërtetë e përfaqësues i vullnetit gjithpopullor në Kosovë deri me dhjetorin e 1989-ës, zë që do të përcaktonte edhe orientimin politik jashtë Kosovës, si dhe dilema e rendë e pothuaj të gjithë neve këtu në Amerikë, dilemë e krijuar nga frika e rrezikimit të pavarësisë dhe integritetit tokësor të Shqipërisë në një botë të pasigurt, na ka penguar të shprehemi publikisht. Por sot, bota ka ndryshuar. Në Kosovë, sot kemi një zë autoritativ, të vërtetë dhe përfaqësues i aspiratave gjithpopullore nga njëra anë, dhe nga ana tjetër, në vitin 1990, agresioni ushtarak i një shteti kundër një shtetit tjetër sovran në Europë është praktikisht një pamundësi. Me një fjalë, gjendja politike në Europë ka ndryshuar rrejtësisht. Prandej, sot, në mundemi dhe duhet të shprehemi publikisht në lidhje me problemin Kosovë-Shqipëri.

Që udhëheqja demokratike e Kosovës flet sot hapur tregon një gjë: se është mbushur kupa, dhe se qendrimi i Shtetit Shqiptar kundër problemit të tre milionë shqiptarëve në Jugosllavi nuk është i pranueshem, dhe se duhet të rishikohet. Prandej një orientim i ri kah një angazhim më serioz dhe më aktiv në mbrojtjen e të drejtave të tyre dhe të lirisë së asaj popullsie shqiptare të shtypur është një detyrë dhe domosdoshmëri historike dhe imediate për Shtetin Shqiptar.

Me gjithë masakrat që janë bërë dhe që po bëhen njera mbas tjetrës në Kosovë, sidomos që nga viti 1981, me gjithë viktimat e shumëta dhe të pafajshme, mijërat e të arrestuarëve, të burgosurve, të denuarëve, të torturuarëve, me gjithë mohimin e të drejtave më elementare të tre milionë shqiptarëve në Jugosllavi, me gjithë varfërinë, diskriminimin social e përbuzjen e vazhdueshmë të asaj popullsie të pa mbrojtje, Shteti Shqiptar nuk e pau të arsyeshme të tërheqë, qoftë edhe përkohësisht, ambasadorin e saj në Beograd, në shenjë proteste. Asnjë herë deri më sot nuk është lejuar qoftë edhe një demonstratë kundër politikës jugosllave në Kosovë nga populli shqiptar në Shqipëri, ndërsa rreth e rrotull botës, kudo që ka shqiptarë, mbushën sheshet me demonstruese. Por jo në Shqipëri!

Është dashur të presim deri në Shtator 1989 që Qeveria Shqiptare të denoncojë politikën jugosllave të shtypjes para Organizatës së Kombeve të Bashkuara. Edhe sot protesta shqiptare është e mbuluar në shazën e disa paragrafeve zyrtare të përsëritura, dhe në riprodhimin e artikujve të marrur nga shtypi i huaj. Shtypi shqiptar akoma sot raporton atë që thuhet e shkruhet në shtypin botëror mbi Kosovën, por nuk merr inisiativën që të bëhet burimi kryesor i informacionit mbi Kosovën, nuk merr përsipër edukimin e opinionit publik, kombëtar dhe ndërkombëtar, mbi situatën në Jugosllavi e fqinje, e veçanërisht Kosovën martire. Me përdorim të disa artikujve të rrallë, intelektualët shqiptarë kanë përqafuar heshtjen që imponohet nga politika e ditës dhe që nuk mund

të justifikohet. Është e vështirë të pranohet teza se Shqipërisë i mungojnë intelekti dhe pjekuria e duhur për një trajtim shkencor, të hapur, dhe të ndershëm të krizës kosovare. Heshtja zyrtare dhe ajo e intelektualëve shqiptarë në këto ditë vendimtare për afër tre milionë shqiptarë në Jugosllavi, dhe sidomos në Kosovë, është e ngarkuar me një përgjegjësi të madhe historike, dhe mundëson rreziqe politike fatale për zhvillimin e mëtejshëm të ngjarjeve në Kosovë. Kjo heshtje njollosë rendë konceptin e përgjegjësisë morale e politike që mban udhëheqja e shtetit në formimin e karakterit të popullsisë mbrënda Shtetit Shqiptar. A nuk e shohin intelektualët e Shqipërisë se c'bejnë kolegët e tyre në Kosovë megjithë kërcënimet e pushkës serbe? Ka kaluar koha e fjalëve të mëdha, e kërcënimeve të pakuptim, e frazeologjisë ideologjike të hedhur për konsumin e një popullsie të detyruar të duartrokitë deklaratat zyrtare dhe harangat pesë-orëshe të politikanëve. Sot Kosova, të gjithë shqiptarët në Jugosllavi, kanë nevojë për ndihmë konkrete, për përkrahje të sigurtë, për një internacionalizim të problemit kosovar, për një europianizim të gjendjes së Kosovës, kanë nevojë të thyejnë heshtjen dhe vargojt e gënjeshtreve të propagandës serbe dhe jugosllave që po e mendojnë dhe që rrezikojnë t'i marrin frymën. Dhe këtë ndihmë konkrete mund t'a japë Shteti Shqiptar, si i vetmi organizëm që ka mjetet e duhura për një funksion të këtill.

Në mendojmë se ndihma më e mirë, më efikase, dhe më praktike është ngritja e problemit kosovar në nivel ndërkombehtar. Kosova në Europë, Kosova në botën mbar! Ndërsa shqiptarët e Amerikës dhe të Europës po e kryejnë dhe do t'a kryejnë detyrën e tyre në paraqitjen e problemit para Kongresit amerikan, Parlamentit europian, dhe organizatave për mbrojtjen e të drejtave të njeriut, Qeveria e Shqipërisë duhet të ngrejë këtë problemp para të gjithë organeve të Kombeve të Bashkuara, dhe me të gjitha qeveritë ku ka përfaqësitë e saja, dhe të bejë këtë vazhdimisht dhe me fuqi. Si shtet anëtar i Kombeve të Bashkuara, dhe si shtet me më shumë se njëqind përfaqësi pranë qeverive të huaja,

Shqipëria ka mundësitë dhe mjetet e duhura të bejë këtë shërbim kombëtar për tre milionë shqiptarë në Jugosllavi, dhe duhet t'a bejë këtë mënjeherë. Një shërbim i këtill mund të bëhet vetëm nga një Shqipëri e lirë dhe demokratike. Prandaj, demokratizimi i shtetit dhe shoqërisë shqiptare është një domosdoshmëri dhe përgjegjësi historike.

Në këtë udhëkryq të historisë shqiptare, cdonjëri nga ne ka përgjegjësinë që të zgjedhë rrugën e nderit, si individ dhe si pjesëtar i kombit shqiptar. Kësaj përgjegjësie nuk mund t'i shmangët as Shteti Shqiptar.

Falemnderit!

... "O ata të lumt, qi dhane jetën
O ata të lumt, qi shkruan vetën,
Qi për Fé e vend të parve
Qi për erz e nderë të shqiptarve
Derdhne giakun tue luftue
Por si të part u pan punuej
Lét u kjoft mbi vorr ledina
Bút u kjoftin moti e stina
Aklli e bora e serotina
E der' të kndojë në mal kndoj zallë
E der të kët në dajç e ranë
Dersa të shndrist diell e hanë
Ata kurr më u harroshin
Në kang e në vallë po u kndojshin
ANGJERON FISHTA

BOOK REVIEWS

ARCHBISHOP PJETËR BOGDANI (1625-1689)

FOUNDER OF ALBANIAN LITERATURE

In 1989, the 300th anniversary of the death of Archbishop Pjetër Bogdani was commemorated by Albanians across the globe, regardless of religious affiliation. Bogdani ranks among the greatest writers of Albanian literature. According to many scholars he was the "founder" of this literature, because his *Cuneus Prophetarum* (Padua, 1685) was the first original book published in the Albanian language. Other earlier liturgical or catechetical books in Albanian were translated from Latin, Greek or Italian.

Bogdani was commemorated in the USA. A "Bogdani Seminar" was organized by our Lady of Good Counsel Albanian Catholic parish in New York. Specialists from Europe and America took part. According to Voice of America, over 1000 people participated in the 2 days seminar conferences.

In Prishtinë, the capital of Kosovë, where the Archbishop died, several meetings were organized by the university and various literary groups. These meetings drew a number of students and specialists from abroad. The meetings concluded on December 6, the date of Bogdani's death, when a bust of the Archbishop was unveiled at the entrance of the parish church in Prishtinë. Thousands of students and Albanian Catholics and Muslims gathered from all parts of Kosova for the ceremony. The Albanian writer and humanist was also commemorated at Tiranë, capital of Albania. The Tiranë meetings were restricted solely to men of letters and professors.

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO (Dec. 30, 1989) published a long article entitled: A Builder of the Culture and Freedom of the Fatherland by

the Arberesh prelate Msgr. Eleuterio F. Fortino. It portrayed the Archbishop as "an exceptional man in everything". Despite ideological and territorial boundaries the attitude of everyone towards Bogdani is indeed exceptional.

Luigj Marlekaj's work, *PIETRO BOGDANI E L'ALBANIA DEL SUO TEMPO (PJETËR BOGDANI AND THE ALBANIA OF HIS TIME)*, which was published in Italy last year is the best study ever issued on Bogdani. The volume contains 132 accounts that Bogdani sent to the Roman Curia while he served as Bishop of Shkodër, and then Archbishop of Shkup (Skopje) and Apostolic Administrator of Albania and all Serbia. The accounts cover the period from 1650 until 1688. Marlekaj (Professor Emeritus of Albanian Studies at the University of Bari) collected majority of the documents in the Rome archives of the Propaganda Fide and in the Vatican's Secret Archives. The documents were unknown to scholars until now. Certain documentation was given a knowledgeable introduction of 170 pages. Marlekaj arranged the documents in chronological order. He then added biographical data pertinent to the life and activities of Bogdani as well as to the history of the Balkans and Europe.

Pjetër Bogdani descended from a noble family in the mountainous region of the Prizren district. The family were originally vassals of Hasi. No one knows the reasons why the Bogdanj went from being a warrior family to members of the tribe of Levi during the Turkish occupation. The Bogdanj furnished the Albanian Church with a number of prelates and priests. His uncle Andrea

Bogdani, Archbishop of Shkup, and his uncle Gjon Mazrreku, bishop of Oher (Ochrida) were prelates renowned for their culture and education.

Bogdani held doctorates in philosophy and theology as well as writing and foreign languages. His *Cuneus Prophetarum*⁽²⁾ indicates he had knowledge even of several oriental languages. His reports to the Curia and to the College of Cardinals offered clear ideas regarding the situation in the Balkans under Turkish domination. They contain recommended measures to reinforce the Catholic faith in the dioceses under Bogdani's care. His territory extended from Bulgaria and Macedonia to the borders of the Republic of Venice at the mouth of Cattaro (Kotor) in the Adriatic. This territory contained a populous of three faiths: Islam, Serbian Orthodoxy and Catholicism as well as various religious sects. The deep rooted national enmities in the region have lasted until modern times. The situation of Catholic Albanians was tragic, since they professed the same religious faith as the western powers who were at war with the Turkish Empire. Bogdani reported that in 200 years of Ottoman domination, churches and monasteries which had flourished in the Middle Ages, were completely destroyed. The clergy were in a deplorable state. Many priests rebelled against their bishops. The "islamization" of the Albanians caused the patriarchal and tribal structures of the region to collapse.

In order to block the islamization process, Bogdani took up life of an itinerant bishop without fixed see or home. He informed the Vatican that he had no other way of performing his functions and remaining alive. This action irritated the Turkish authorities who suspected that the Albanian bishop was an agent of the enemy Holy Alliance of Austria-Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Venice.

The "most effective weapon for reinforcing the Catholic faith", according to Bogdani, was "instruction in the mother tongue". The itinerant bishop founded different schools under the care of the mountain parishes of northern Albania. They

were probably clandestine, because the Turks would not tolerate Catholic educational institutional in their dominion.

The bishop declared that "ignorance is the ruin of [Christian] souls" unlike contrary religions which based themselves upon the ignorance of the people. He sought to convince his superiors in Rome to republish sacred Christian books in the Albanian language. At the head of his list was The Gospels in Albanian. This was probably a collection of texts rather than the Gospels in complete form. No copies of this book are known to exist. It seems that the work The Gospels in Albanian was the basis for the Missal of Gjon Buzuku (1555) which was the first recognized publication in the Albanian language. These books⁽³⁾ about which Bogdani writes represent the written tradition in the Albanian language. As most ancient documents of this language, they have immense value for contemporary Albanian cultural studies. Today these texts are studied in many linguistic institutes as the earliest examples of the Albanian language.⁽⁴⁾

Archbishop Bogdani was conscious of the importance of establishing an Albanian written tradition. This fact has made an impression upon Albanian language scholars irregardless of faith, ideology, or political affiliation.

Bogdani's patriotic sense appears in a 1675 report which stated that the Albanian nation, "finding itself continuously in the midst of Turks, Greeks and Serbs, is losing its language." It was his duty as bishop to remedy the lack of liturgical texts and those of Catholic doctrine. On a visit to Rome he presented the Propaganda file with an Albanian text entitled *Prophetarum*. This was the first draft version of *Cuneus Prophetarum*. Since the work was in Albanian it was totally incomprehensible to the members of the College of Cardinals, and they advised him to translate it into Italian.

Bogdani spent 10 years reworking and translating the Albanian texts into Italian. The work was first published at Padua in 1685, in the printing house of the seminary directed by Gregorio Cardinal Barbarigo (1625-1679), a friend of Bogdani during his studies in Rome.⁽⁵⁾

Marlekaj has reproduced the Cuneus with inscriptions and ornamentations that surely made it an expensive edition. Without doubt it was the most costly book printed in the Albanian language. The copper etchings used to illustrate the texts offer documentation of ethnographic value since the Sibyls are dressed in the women's costumes of various regions in Albania. Each figure carries the name of cities and regions (e.g. Sibilla scodrensis (the Sibyl of Shkodër). These styles of women's costumes have disappeared from modern Albania.

Cuneus Prophetarum was printed in folios. The first 50 unnumbered pages contained a description of the book and the remarks in Latin, Italian, Croatian and Albanian by various religious personalities and government representatives. The original Bogdani introduction explains to the reader the goal and linguistic form of the book as well as the difficulties that he had to overcome in the preparation of his work. The main goal of the author was "a renewal of the literary tradition in the Albanian language." Towards that end he had to correct the language and the style of the work and base it upon the "civic language" (*sermo urbanus*) of Shkodër.

The text was divided into two books. Book I (pp. 1-180) contained that section of the Old Testament which told of the creation of the world. The prophecies regarding the advent of the Messiah according to the greater and lesser prophets are also included in the initial book. The treatise used selected quotes and interpretations to demonstrate that the coming of Christ was even pre-saged by the ten pagan sibyls as well as by the ancient authors. The columnar pages contain the Albanian text printed alongside an Italian translation.

In Book II (pp. 1-162) entitled *De Vita Iesu Christi Salvatoris Mundi* Bogdani brought forth various proofs for the truth of the message of Christ. Indeed here he interpreted the essence of the structure of the New Testament.

Folios 145-150 reproduced selected biblical passages in eight languages (Latin, Greek, Armenian, Syriac, Hebrew, Arabic, Italian and Albanian) in the original alphabet fonts of the printshop of Cardinal Barbarigo. The treatise represents a nation with two cultures, one occidental and the other oriental, influenced by western and eastern religious ideas. The Albanian bishop wished to demonstrate definitively, even to the infidels, that the true faith was the Christian faith. His primary target was the Turkish authorities who were forcing the Albanians to become Muslims.

Bogdani was a personality that has fascinated scholars and artists for years. He had a superior intellect and all the qualifications of a European humanist in the true sense of the word. He was endowed with vast theological and philosophical knowledge and an aesthetic sense. He was also a polyglot who possessed very clear ideas about the function and form of a language.

Giuseppe (Zef) Valentini, S.J., one of the great modern scholars in Albanian literature and history admired Bogdani as a man "of happy insight" who was passionate about what he believed. He "established an apologetic method that one could call very modern. His writings offered a more than direct confutation of the doctrines of the Qu'ran. Bogdani made *de veritate Fidei Christianae* a positive work. He freely helped himself to Muslim texts of divine authority upon which the Qu'ran was based."⁽⁶⁾ In his desperation upon seeing the brutal treatment of his fellow Albanians by the Turks he referred to the authority of the Sultan who command his followers to leave the Albanians to profess their true religion in peace.

Bogdani was a true Renaissance man. For him truth was given as a gift for the betterment of humanity. He believed in the good sense of honest men. In fact in *Cuneus Prophetarum* he provided more than treatises of religious content. They also offered humanistic commentary about arts and aesthetics, rhetoric and styles, as well as notions of the natural sciences of astronomy, geology, mathematics and medicine. Bogdani's interests from the time of his youth in Loreto and Padua were in the Albanian language. In fact, after Bogdani's writing reached perfection in his mother tongue, he was able to produce texts of comparable significance in the written Italian of his time. Bogdani was a true pioneer founder of the Albanian literary language.

The work of Fr. Luigj Marlekaj, O.F.M., represents what may be the best volume ever printed about Archbishop Pjeter Bogdani. It is a recommended work to any library.

Martin Camaj

Notes

1. Marlekaj, Luigi: *PIETRO BOGDANI E L'ALBANIA DEL SUE TEMPO* with reproductions of 132 documents. Liantonio Edition, Paolo del Colle, Bari, 1989. (distribution: P. D. Gjeçaj - Via del Cottolengo 6, 00165 Rome (Italy))

2. Macedone, Sacr. Congr. de Prop. Fide Alumno. Philosophiae, & Sacrae Theologiae Doctor... Patavii, M. DC. LXXXV.: *Cuneus Prophetarum de Christo Salvatore Mundi, et eius evangelica veritate, italice, et epirotice contexta, et in duas partes divisa a Petro Bogdano*

3. Works in Albanian prior to *Cuneus Prophetarum* included:
- The Missal of Gjon Buzuku (1555). The sole extant copy is in the Vatican Library collection. (Republication: Namik Resuli, ed. *Il Messale di Giovanni Buzuku*, Vatican City. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1958).
 - Meshari i Gjon Buzukut (1555), edited by Eqrem Cabej, Tirane, 1968
 - Mirror of Confession by Emiro de Bonis, translated into Albanian by Pietro Budi, Rome, 1621.
 - *Rituale Romanum*, translated into Albanian by Pietro Budi. Rome 1621.
 - Christian Doctrine by Bernard of Verona, translated into Albanian by Pietro Budi. Rome, 1618. (This work was reprinted by Pjeter Bogdani in 1675 at Rome).

4. The Albanian language belongs to the stem of Indo-European languages, as an independent branch, on equal footing with Latin, ancient Greek, and old Indian. The importance of the Albanian language is

measured not only as the language of a people, but also by its position in the hierarchy of Indo-European languages.

5. Gregorio Cardinal Barbarigo was a man of high culture and profound sanctity. He was canonized in 1960 by Pope John XXIII.

6. Bogdani, Pjetër: *Cuneus Prophetarum*, patavii MDCLXXV. Reprinted by Dr. R. Trofenik 1977, Munich; With a Presentation by G. Valentini, S.J., and 'linguistic keys for reading the text' by M. Camaj.

* * *

A New Edition of the Psalter in Albanian (Translated by Konstantin Kristoforidhi)

A beautiful new volume was recently published in Prishtinë, Kosovë. The Book of Psalms in a classic Albanian language translation by the nineteenth century Orthodox writer, Konstantin Kristoforidhi, is again available to Albanian readers. The psalms are an apex of world religious literature and of all humanity's spirituality.

The new edition is complex. However this complexity is aimed at facilitating reading and comprehension by modern Albanians.

The volume is organized into two major sections. Part one includes the photostatic reproduction of the first edition of the Kristoforidhi translation from Hebrew into the (Albanian) Gheg dialect (Constantinople, 1872). The introduction contains a transcription in the present alphabet and literary language as defined and adopted by the Conference for the Orthography of the Albanian language (1972). This format simultaneously achieves the dual objectives of providing language scholars with the original Kristoforidhi text and an easy to read text for the general public.

The second part contains a new translation of the Psalms by Kosovar writer Vehap Shita. Ironically this skilled Albanian writer is neither a biblical scholar nor a Christian. He is of Muslim descent. Shita translated the psalms text into the standard modern written form of Albanian. He worked from a Croatian translation by Filbert Gas that depended on the Kristoforidhi translation.

This new translation is in verse form while that of Kristoforidhi was in a prose form that is a part of the Albanian "chrestomathy." Shita considers himself honored to have been invited to work on this important spiritual volume. He has expressed profound thanks to Kristoforidhi and Gas because "I not only received help and support, but also because I have learned much."

This new edition of the Kristoforidhi psalms has great cultural significance. Kristoforidhi's volume was part of then Albanian Risorgimento movement of the last century (RILINDJA) that brought independence from Turkey (1912) and secured the autonomy of the Albanian Orthodox Church (declared in 1922 and recognized in 1937).

Konstantin Kristoforidhi was born in Elbasan in 1830. He completed his elementary studies at a local Greek school. Later he left Ionina and attended junior high in Zosimea (1847-50). He spent two years in a seminary in Malta before returning to Albania. He taught at the Greek school in Tirana before he went to England to finish his studies. Between 1859 and 1864 he taught at a Greek school in Tunis. There he married a Greek woman. In Tunis, Kristoforidhi began to translate Sacred Scripture into the Albanian Gheg dialect. In 1864 he was hired by the British Biblical Society to complete an Albanian translation of the New Testament. He published "The Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles" in 1866. Six years later he completed the entire New Testament (Dhjata e re) in Gheg dialect. The volume was published in Constantinople (1872). Until that time, the only extant Albanian translation was that of Vangjel Meksi (1872), which was revised for publication by Grigor Gjirokastriti. Kristoforidhi dedicated particular care to the Psalms. In 1868 he published a Tosk dialect version of the Psalms in Constantinople. He followed it with a Gheg version in 1872. His Albanian translation contract with the English Biblical Society ended and he travelled back to Tunis to handle business matters. During the trip "he spent a few months with the Arberesh

of Calabria in order to learn their language." (Dh. Shuteriqi, *Histori e Letersise Shqipe*, Tirane, 1954, p. 81).

In 1877 he was re-hired by the British Biblical Society to translate the New Testament into the Tosk dialect. This publication was issued in 1879. During the period between 1880 and 1884 he published portions of the Old Testament in the Tosk dialect. He concluded his relationship with the Biblical Society in 1884 and returned to Elbasan. There he resumed his teaching activities and later became a Justice of the Peace. Kristoforidhi died in poverty in 1895.

Kristoforidhi also wrote popular and scientific teaching materials. In order to aid readers of his translation of Sacred Scripture and to heighten the reading skills of the general populous, he published an Albanian "Abecedario" (Abetarja), in 1872. The volume assumed great political significance for the national independence movement. The nationalist theme is especially treated in the author's stories for boys. *Gjahu i malesorve* (The Hunt of the Highlanders) was written in 1884 but published posthumously. It describes a fox hunt in the highlands. It is a nationalistic parable in which the characters are patently obvious: the Ottoman Empire fox which dominated Albania was pursued by Albanian hunters. The moral of the story is that only by working together, Tosk, Gheg and Arbëresh - could they kill the fox.

He also published a "Grammarian" in Constantinople (1882) and then completed his major linguistic work *Fjalor shqip-greqisht* (Albanian-Greek Dictionary), which was published posthumously in 1904. Kristoforidhi completely researched the ancient Albanian authors as well as the field of the spoken language in order "to find the whole of Albania."

While studying in Ionina he knew the scholar George von Hahn (1811-69) who chose him as an informant about the Albanian language and Albanian folklore. The Hahn influence on

Kristoforidhi is recognizable in the "Albanische Studien," (Iena, 1854). It is equally certain that Hahn's ideas appear "Among the 25 works of Kristoforidhi, translations and originals, Fjalor holds the most weight. That is the first Albanian dictionary compiled with scientific criterion and accuracy." In this manner professor Alexandër Xhuvani describes the new edition in the introduction (Tirana, 1961). The original edition (Athens, 1904) was written in the Greek alphabet. In the new edition reprinted in Prishtinë (Rilindja, 1977), Xhuvani has transcribed the introduction into the Albanian alphabet.

Kristoforidhi's work has had a great resonance and profound influence upon Albanian literature. The following judgement on Kristoforidhi appeared in *The History of Albanian Literature* (1975). The writer was

"one of the principle initiators of our national movement of the 19th century, particularly in the field of culture. As a capable translator and author of some original writings for boys, he is one of the creators of the new Albanian prose. With these works and with his work for a new, literary Albanian from two dialects, Kristoforidhi cleared the way for the Albanian literature of the Risorgimento. Like a scientist, he did a work which is greatly appreciated in the field of Albanian lexicography, and, together with Camarda and some others, is among the initiators of the science of the Albanian language."

Kristoforidhi dedicated his life to great search of the Albanian language. He studied the ancient writers, particularly Budi and Bogdani. Moreover he studied the living Albanian language spoken according to the Gheg as well as Tosk dialect. "The work of Kristoforidhi is the first to have revealed the true treasure of the Albanian lexicon." (*Histori e letërsisë shqipe*, Prishtinë 1975, p. 431). He paid particular attention to the purity of the language and expurgated the "barbarisms" of

Greek, Turkish and Italian. At the same time, he intentionally attempted an approach from the roots and the ancient literary traditions existing among Tosk and Gheg. This made him a precursor to the unification of the language movement. Nevertheless, he did this without creating artifices, unnatural elements or impositions. Rather he started methodologically from the living language and from its literary tradition. Kristoforidhi's studies will certainly bring new inspiration to the linguist, the Albanian aesthetic, and to the purification of the language.

In 1984 the University of Kosovë, Prishtinë, hosted an "International Seminar of the Albanian Language, Literature and Culture." The symposium dedicated a scientific session to Kristoforidhi. The 15 presentations dealt with his different contributions to the Albanian language, literature and culture.

The body of Kristoforidhi's work has specific historical, linguistic, literary and religious value. The new edition of the Psalter recalls the memory of the heart of Kristoforidhi's work. His principal interest, the tradition of Sacred Scripture, made him emerge profoundly within the culture of his country and tied his destiny to its history.

The Albanian Orthodox Church, initially was opposed to the Albanian translation but, when they declared their autonomy, they adopted the Kristoforidhi's translation for the special liturgy. The evangelistary of Gospel selections, which are proclaimed daily during the liturgy, are now Kristoforidhi's translation by "order of the Holy Synod" (Tiranë, tip. Gutenberg, 1960). Man's greatest destiny is to proclaim the Word of God in comprehensible manner so that people may be elevated spiritually and culturally.

Eleuterio F. Fortino

Egan, Eileen: *Such A Vision Of The Street: Mother Teresa- The Spirit and the Work* (1986), Image Books, New York, pp. 552, Paperback, Price \$9.95

Five years have passed since the first printing of *Such A Vision of the Street*. Eileen Egan's, Christopher Award-winning, treatment of Mother Teresa of Calcutta's life, remains the definitive biography of the world's most beloved and respected woman. It is a worthy addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in Mother Teresa.

Egan writes objectively in a crisp, journalistic style, sparing the reader from intrusive emotional outbursts. Considering Egan's close relationship with Mother Teresa, this detached yet compelling approach is especially commendable. The author has been personally associated with Mother for over 30 years, and could easily have lapsed into a series of anecdotes revealing more about herself than her subject. Instead, she sticks to a straight biographical format, inserting private encounters with Mother only when they illuminate the project at hand- the life story of a modern-day saint.

The story begins in Shkup (Skopje), where Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born on August 26, 1910. At that time the Yugoslav province of Kosova was still part of the Ottoman Empire. Its inhabitants were in great majority Albanians. From the very start of her narrative Egan emphasizes how strongly Mother Teresa feels her Albanian roots. She states, "There is an ineradicable aspect of Albanian identity deeply imbedded in her character. It throws a vivid light on the reality of a rare woman. It is called *"besa"*. Egan later defined *besa* as the "sacredness of the word of honor, the inviolability of the pledged word in daily life." *Besa* is a deep-rooted concept in the consciousness of Albanians. Egan feels the importance of *besa* can be traced to the nation's long history of foreign occupation and internal feuds. In such an environment, where documents and treaties did not exist, the trustworthiness of a person's word of honor was essential for survival.

Egan maintains that Mother Teresa has transplanted the concept of *besa* into her religious life. The vows of poverty, chastity and obedience take on even deeper shades of commitment when viewed in this light. *Besa* becomes a recurring theme, and is mentioned several times throughout the text.

Before delving into Mother Teresa's early family life, Egan includes an excellent summary of Albanian history, the author then introduces the reader to the Bojaxhiu family, and embarks on a fairly standard biographical sketch of Agnes Bojaxhiu's early life, up to the time of her joining the Sisters of Loreto. At that time she wrote a letter to her brother Lazer, who had been made a lieutenant in the service of King Zog I. She wrote that "You will serve a king of two million people. I shall serve the king of the world." Sister Teresa spent 17 years as a Sister of Loreto before responding to an inner call to found her own order that would be dedicated to serving Jesus in the poorest of the poor.

The majority of the book concerns events after September 10, 1946, when Mother Teresa received her inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Egan provides the reader with an exhaustively researched report of events, from the first fledgling days in the streets of Calcutta, up to the present. Egan supplies hard facts and helps to bring them to life by giving the reader the words of the people who have been involved with Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity throughout the years. These observations, along with Egan's own eyewitness accounts, add an agreeable sense of immediacy and dimension to the chronicle.

In 1960 Mother Teresa journeyed to Rome to make a personal and formal application for recognition of the Missionaries of Charity as a society of pontifical right. Without this formal recognition the Sisters could not move out from India to other countries. While waiting for her appointment with Pope John XXIII, she met with her brother Lazer, whom she had not seen in over thirty years. During their meeting they spoke with sadness about their

mother and sister who were living in Albania and beyond reach for either of them. The episode subtly illustrates the frustration and sorrow that families felt when separated by the Iron Curtain.

Egan takes the reader through the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize presentation and into the decade of the 1980's. The reader is provided with enough information about Mother Teresa to make this biography the essential reference book for future scholars. In Appendix A, Egan described a 1986 visit by Pope John Paul II to Kalighat in Calcutta. The pontiff toured the facility with Mother Teresa. They went pallet to pallet, bending down to feed some of the weaker patients. He greeted and blessed over one hundred patients, and blessed the bodies of four who had recently died. The author described a photograph of Pope John Paul II leaning over the body of an emaciated and forgotten man, as being "the ultimate validation of a work that proclaimed that mercy, as love under the aspect of need, was the heart of the Christian message."

Such A Vision Of The Street manages to be that rare combination of comprehensive biography and inspirational reading. It is highly recommended.

* * *

Soter, Michael, Ed.; *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Albanian Archdiocese, 529 East Broadway, South Boston, MA 02128, pp. 158, 1988, \$10.00s.

The Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America has published an edition of the Divine Liturgy for use by the people in parishes of the United States. It combines many very attractive features into a single volume.

Although a different translation, the text of the Liturgy is essentially consistent with that of the editions published by the Orthodox Church in

America (with which the Albanian Church is in full communion, and jurisdictional union), with two primary variations.

First, the editor, Fr. Michael Soter, has taken the option of using the second person formal "you" rather than the familiar "Thou" and its accompanying verb forms for direct address to God, an option shared by many Eastern Christians today. Secondly, some particulars vary slightly, due to the differences in Russian and Albanian usage in the Liturgy. Nonetheless, this is an accurate and complete translation of the Liturgy.

Especially praiseworthy is the preservation of the more correct translation of the conclusion of the doxology: "...now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen." The original Greek, "...nun kai aie, kai eis tous aïōnas ton aïōnōn. Amin." is accurately rendered in Latin "...saecula saeculorum...", French "...des siecles aux siecles...", Spanish "...por los siglos de los siglos..." and so forth. It is only in some translations of the Liturgy in English that the neologism, "...for ever and ever..." has been introduced, which loses the depth of both temporal and generational meaning in the original Greek.

Although some Eastern Christian parishes have begun in recent times to "abbreviate" the Divine Services, it is of the utmost importance to have an edition such as this one which includes the complete text for the people. Our society, so intent on rapidity, is in desperate need of time to allow the truths of the faith to sink deeply within us.

The Divine Liturgy is not the preserve of any particular group or official, but is a divinely given treasure belonging to the whole Church. As such, even if some have judged it expedient for the moment to omit certain sections, the clear goal must be seen to restore the celebration of the Divine Liturgy to its fullness everywhere.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

The Second Vatican Council, which included the Hierarchy of all the Eastern Catholic Churches, as well as observers from the Orthodox Churches, called all to the restoration of the fullness of Orthodox Tradition:

"[The Eastern Faithful] should attain to an ever greater knowledge and more exact use of [their Tradition], and if...they have fallen short, owing to contingencies of times or persons, they should take steps to return to their ancestral traditions. "[Decree "On the Eastern Churches", Sec. 6]

This recommendation may well be taken to heart by Orthodox jurisdictions as well as Eastern Catholic Churches, and such a volume as this one is a very good step in that direction!

It is no surprise that such a well conceived volume should be the product of the Albanian Orthodox Church in America. Metropolitan Theophan Noli was one of the great pioneers of Orthodoxy in the United States. This Liturgy Edition is very appropriately dedicated to this great Hierarch, on the 80th Anniversary of the first Albanian Divine Liturgy in the U.S. Following in the footsteps of two Missionary Saints who were Bishops in the new world, Sts. Innocent and Tikhon, Metropolitan Theophan Noli began working towards the translation of the Services from Greek into English, so that the Faith could be spread to the peoples of North America.

Consistent with his evangelical spirit, the Metropolitan was one of the first to call for a unified Orthodox jurisdiction in this country. Although that goal is not yet fully accomplished, its desirability is seen and accepted by most; Thanks be to God, the process towards restoration of full communion among Orthodox and Catholics is further along as well. "Having asked the Lord for unity in faith, and for the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life unto Christ our God," in the words of the Divine Liturgy.

The present volume is admirable for its many features. The Liturgy itself is presented in English and Albanian on facing pages, with full rubrics. The type is a clean, easily readable sans-serif font, and the leatherette soft cover and binding are designed for heavy use and durability.

The Appendices include a great deal of useful material as well. The prayers of the Liturgy of St. Basil form one of the most important and magnificent treasures of our Church. Other texts include the Troparia, Kondakia, Prokimenia etc., for the Paschal Cycle, the weekdays, the Octoechos and the Great-Feasts. The material included in the Appendices is presented in English, signaling the intention so dear to Metropolitan Theophan's heart: the Evangelization of North America.

With this volume, a cantor has most of the basic texts for Divine Liturgy in the regular cycles of celebration, and a congregation will be able to fully participate by singing and chanting the Divine Service. The Albanian Orthodox Church in America has once again provided a fine example for Eastern Christians in the United States and Canada, an example of leadership in evangelization and outreach, preaching the Faith of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ to all men and women, as it has been handed down to us from the Apostles! May God grant them many years!

Stephen A. Armstrong, S.J.



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Champseix, Elisabeth and Jean: *57 Boulevard Staline - Chroniques Albanaises*, Editions La Decouverte, 1, Place Paul-Painleve, Paris Vème, France, pp.311, 1990, \$15.00s.

Elisabeth and Jean-Paul Champseix are well qualified to write about contemporary Albania. They spent six consecutive years in Tiranë teaching French at the Enver Hoxha University as part of a French-Albanian exchange program. We are particularly interested in the chapter entitled: *Atheisme su fond de tapis volant* (Atheism on the Bottom of a Flaying Carpet) pp. 78-97. It begins with a brief account of Albania's religious history and focuses on the atheistic communist country which halted religious practice in 1967. Although Albania is a small country it is divisible into 3 major religious regions. The north is predominantly Catholic (10% of total population); the center, Muslim (70%); and the south, Orthodox (20%). According to the authors no major difficulties were evident among the faithful of these three religions. Instead they report an ecumenical tolerance and spirit was traditionally observed.

The interdiction of religion in 1967 had three goals. The first was meant to assure absolute power for the Communist party. The second intended to unify the country since those in power argued that the various religions divided Albania and favored diverse foreign influences. Catholics looked to Italy, the Orthodox to Greece, and the Muslims to Turkey. Thirdly, religious suppression would eliminate Islam and cut off Albania from the East. And all this would enable the new leaders to orient it towards Europe, something the rulers of Albania had wanted since the time of King Zog.

Thus an attempt was made to suppress religion, even by violent measures including decimating the Catholic clergy and religious. Albania became the first "officially atheistic state in the world."

However religion has survived. The authors cite numerous recent events and impressions from their extended stay and travel. For instance, in 1984 they were surprised to hear that the regime ordered three religious books from the French cultural center. These included Pascal's *Pensées*, a book about St. Francis of Assisi, and a volume about Mother Teresa. It was widely known that the first reader of these books was none other than Enver Hoxha, the very dictator who had engineered the forcible suppression of religion but who was now very ill.

The authors' personal experience of religious syncretism in Albania bore out the continuance of an observation made by the eighteenth century English traveler, Lady Montague: "The people who live between the Christians and Muslims... say that they are absolutely incapable of judging which religion is the better; but in order to be sure not to entirely reject the truth, with a great deal of prudence, they observe both religions and go to the mosque on Friday and to the church on Sunday..." Similarly, the Champseixes note the anomaly of Albanian Muslims venerating St. Nicolas and St. George. Following the frightening quake of January 9, 1988, an Albanian Muslim remarked on man's powerlessness in the face of nature. He said "What can you do?...nothing but that", as he made a full sign of the cross.

The authors record evidence of clandestine religious practices inspite of the 1967 prohibition. For example, there are churches and mosques where it was obvious that religious exercises had been performed or at least some type of community activity. They speak of occasions when the elderly dared to manifest openly their discontent with the atheistic regime. Once when the door of the very beautiful Orthodox church of Mborje was left open for them an old woman passed by and threw a coin in the church while complaining "They have closed it." Another time, a diplomat who was taking a walk in Shkoder was invited by an old man to have coffee. Since the diplomat was followed by the dreaded *Siqurimi* (Secret Police), he could not accept. The elderly Albanian replied

"I am not a Communist. I am a Catholic. Those who govern have no religion, they belong to the devil." With a loud voice he wished the diplomat "Happy Easter" so that everyone could hear.

For Christians of course religion remains basic to daily life. In the north where the Catholics are primarily concentrated, there was always hostility to Communism. Catholic symbols were a distinctive way of connecting to the West. In the region of Shkodra, many Catholics wore a chain and cross under their shirts.

In the spring of 1989 in Tirana a foundationless rumor revealed the current religious situation. Both the Rinja cinema in a church building and the nearby mosque which served as a warehouse were to undergo repair. Religious services would soon be authorized for foreign visitors. In August, Mother Teresa was welcomed to Albania and met with Mrs. Hoxha. The authors conclude by asking the question "what could they possibly have said to each other."

Paul Bernadicon, S.J.

* * *

Tyranny in Tirana?

The title of the latest novel by Albanian author Neshat Tozaj, *Les Couteaux* (The Knives), is directly linked to the story plot. Someone is slashing the tires of foreign diplomatic vehicles along Tirana's Embassy Row. It is immediately thought that such an act of vandalism must be aimed at harming relations between Albania and certain countries represented in the capital city. It is only logical, furthermore, that this interpretation will be the first idea to enter the minds of certain officials in the "Sigurimi", the secret political security police of Albania's Ministry of Internal Affairs.

It quickly becomes apparent, that the tire-slashing is not politically motivated. Rather it is the act of a mentally disturbed person. Greatly

minimized by the apparent facts of an initial investigation, the "Affaire" seems destined to become a matter of ordinary police routine.

For certain Internal Security officials, however, these facts are impossible to accept. They can not bring themselves to abandon their initial hypothesis. Their careers oblige them to follow a peculiar form of logic. This logic is one which justifies their abuse of power and the violation of democratic rights and the moral and political perversions which accompanies their acts.

They abandon the real leads to the case and throw all the weight of their authority in favor of the first theory involving political sabotage.

The act of a single deranged woman thus becomes the action of an enemy terrorist organization. The woman and any person possibly linked in the remotest way to the knife are transformed into members of an underground organization carrying out the will of foreign powers... Contrary to Albania's constitution of 1976 and contrary to the "human rights enjoyed by the Albanians citizens" the Sigurimi now proceeds to arrest and deport these supposed criminals to internment camps. To achieve their ends, these corrupt and sadistic officials do not hesitate to ruin the lives of a large number of innocent people.

Les Couteaux (The Knives) is one of the most striking novels to be produced by an Albanian author in recent years. How can such a thing take place in Albania? How has this social cancer been able to develop over the years? Tozaj's novel offers a clear answer to these questions. The principal question concerns the terrible logic of a phenomenon which makes its own laws. Instead of addressing real problems it creates a convenient but fictitious criminal diversion in the manner of the medieval inquisition's practice of trial by coercion.

In page after page, chapter after chapter, Tozaj exposes the danger which is imposed on a society when individuals lacking scruples or con-

science rise to positions of relative power and responsibility. These individuals may become department directors, even government ministers

The entire gallery of characters is described pitilessly by Tozaj. What they seem to have in common is a thirst for power and a capacity to abuse it once acquired. A sick ecstasy accompanies each of their acts. They possess neither a national consciousness nor a social conscience. For them "Albania" and "the Socialist State" are simply hollow expressions which one must pronounce during meetings. Abusing the very concept of class struggle, they remain convinced that socialism reserves no place for democracy. Mediocre and incompetent, they suffocate the efficiency and integrity of honest, lesser officials. They are both ignorant and clumsy and hate those who are cultivated and intelligent. Patiently, they await occasions to entrap such victims. Violence is the revenge for their frustrations. Jealous and cowardly, they suffer an inferiority complex. Through terror, the manipulation of laws, and the violation of both democratic and human rights they obtain an illusion of superiority.

A crowd of opportunists from every level of Albanian society contributes to create what Tozaj calls "The Cult of the Sigurimi." The form of this new expression is borrowed from the language of party documents themselves! This crowd of cynical, career-blinded people seek favor from the officials of the Sigurimi because they believe that this is the surest road to promotion and success. Their ranks include conformist film makers who appear to be motivated by a mixture of party ideology and selfish personal interest. Flattered in this way, the officials are brought to believe that they are above the law, the nation, the state, and the party. They see themselves as modern "crusaders." Only a sick society may view its officials as "crusaders" and the Albanian society of today is unable to accept that.

Tozaj, himself an official of the Albanian Ministry of Internal Affairs, has praised the Sigurimi's heroism in his other works. In *Les*

Couteaux (The Knives), he rebels and denounces the dubious practices of those who pose as servants of the people while trying to enslave the people. It is rare for a small group of people to succeed in holding down the masses of a nation while ignoring the rights of those masses. This is particularly unthinkable in Albania.

The Albanians have quite enough reasons to be sensitive to such matters.

A people of European origins the Albanians possess ancient judicial concepts in their culture. The thousand year-old code of customs ("Kanun") is a constitutional model enveloping every aspect of life. Equality before the law is a fundamental principle of the Kanun. The Kanun rigorously protects human dignity, a man's honor, his house, and his life.

Questions of democracy, legality, and human rights awaken our interest just as they would for any civilized population. These questions cannot be satisfied by a few pat phrases. Whatever your origin, these questions must be dealt with frankly and openly. One must admit that Albanian literature has done little in the past to address or satisfy these questions and problems. That is no honor for contemporary Albanian literature.

The attention given to these problems by Albanian writers, artists, sociologists, scientists, historians, and journalists proves that these elements in fact do respect the people. Respect, however, is not something which may be expressed by backward slogans. Respect presupposes a profound understanding of reality, a knowledge of history, and an understanding of the aspirations of society. Problems of democracy and human rights may not be dissociated. The relations of human rights cuts its perpetrators off from social real

Therefore it is only by the assumption of responsibility that a writer, a prosecutor, a historian or a policeman will be able to understand the

inestimable value of the individual and the respect which he or she merits in order to protect the rights of citizens...

The violation of these fundamental principles is a crime which the responsables will have to atone for. A man is accused, illegally imprisoned and executed. Life and time freeze. The Kanun demands justice. To this terrible process the guilty party must reply. The ancient code, often logical in its illogic has been hard and rigorous. Its guarantees of the protection of human dignity have gone far towards forging the mentality and national character of today's Albanians. It explains their resistance to centuries of foreign domin

That a man be persecuted and deprived of his rights is insupportable and intolerable for any people, anywhere. For us, the Albanians who know their history and all its 2,000 years of tribulations, this is doubly, triply intolerable and unacceptable.

The voice of a writer must cry out and that is why Tozaj has written this novel.

He bears witness with talent and passion. He awakens the conscience and affirms his freedom-seeking character. A society which dares to denounce evil and to exorcise this evil - even if the process is painful - is sure to advance with determination toward progress in such a way that no force on earth may stop it.*

Ismail Kadare

1. Neshat Tozaj is still an employee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He was able to publish this novel thanks to the support of Ismail Kadare and President Dritero Agolli of the Albanian League of Writers and Artists.

* Ismail Kadare's review originally appeared in the Albanian literary newspaper *Drita* on October 15, 1989. This is a translation from the French version of the same review published in the Paris weekly *Libération*. Brian Curdy translated the review for our Bulletin.

Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, *Human Rights in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania*, Minneapolis, 1990 (430 Marquette Ave. Suite 402, 55401, \$12)

Albania has been the last of the Eastern European Countries to demonstrate active opposition to a repressive and alien government. No doubt, the Albanian people have been under the most backward and most tyrannical of the many unfortunate governments which have, until recently, been imposed on this section of Europe. Fortunately, even in Albania some change seems on the horizon.

However, this study by the Minnesota Lawyers Committee will remain, along with Gjon Sinishta's *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, the most concise account of the legal and human situation in Albania. It serves as both an indictment and an effort to account accurately for the nature of this regime.

The Minnesota report, written by six members of the Committee - Barbara Frey, Carol Soderbergh, Peggy Hicks, Lisa Schlitz, Peggy Clutch, and Lynn Gorguze - carefully explains its own often frustrating efforts to gain information from the Albanian government. It has sought information from various exile and foreign sources. The book contains a lengthy Appendix with the letters and documents that the Committee obtained in its researches. In view of the difficulty of any information on Albania, these documents are themselves valuable in revealing the anti-democratic nature of the Albanian Marxist regime. The Appendix contains pertinent parts of the Albanian penal code to show the supposedly legal basis of government methods. In addition are photos of the Albanian churches that have been taken over by the government as well as other scenes of Albanian life.

The bulk of the book is an account of the various rights violations in Albania. The modern history of Albania is recounted. The provisions of the penal code that justify government actions are discussed, together with an account of the prisons, of torture, and the death penalty. The report next discusses of freedom of movement, religion, and

speech in Albania. Since these areas are almost totally controlled by the government, the account is a good study in the nature of a state with no limits on its own action. The report next recounts minority rights, women's rights, family rights, and economic and cultural rights.

Though I am most concerned with the tenuous intellectual status of modern "rights" themselves and feel that the Albanian government is not so far from justifying itself on the same philosophic basis that "human rights" established in a will theory are founded all over the rest of the world, it is possible to see this report as a useful account of the situation. The report seeks action and concisely recommends a number of policies to individuals and governments that might assist in correcting this long and difficult situation.

The recommendations are but a summary of the basic freedoms that most people seek to live under. However, in the context of the Albanian government, they serve to summarize the violations of natural law and dignity that the actions of the Albanian government have recorded. These are the recommendations to the Albanian government: 1) To ratify the pertinent U.N. Documents, 2) To agree to comply to these statements, 3) To repeal the anti-religious provisions of the Constitution, 4) To permit freedom of movement, 5) To forbid summary arrests for opposition, 6) To guarantee freedom of expression, 7) To protect minorities, and 8) To allow inquiry into the internal situation in Albania.

Needless to say, compliance with such proposals would revolutionize the Albanian scene. But it is perhaps a useful time to have this clear and useful document published as a guide for Albania to direct itself in the manner that other Eastern European countries, with remarkable unanimity, have succeeded in doing. This study presents the kind of concern and attention that private organizations that do their homework can generate.

James V. Schall, S.J.

LANGUAGE MUTILATION

After the dramatic crumbling of the communist governments of eastern and central Europe in 1989, communist Albania is the last remaining fossil of the massive political structures which have weighed down upon millions of people for more than forty years. In the hope of avoiding disaster, the Albanian leaders have since made a number of cautious attempts to reform their system. In doing this they hoped to achieve two things: to improve the terrible image they had created in the outside world during the past four decades; to placate the many critics at home, particularly among young people, who are well-informed about the historic upheavals of eastern Europe. Whether this policy will prevent the Stalinist leadership from being swept away by a popular uprising is an open question.

A recent American publication - *Human Rights in the Socialist Republic of Albania, a report of the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, January 1990* - provides a very comprehensive and up-to-date account of the dismal political, social and economic conditions under which the people have been living for over four decades. The report, which has taken two years to compile, is based on the evidence of recent Albanian refugees living in Europe and the United States. It also contains very useful information on the country's post-war history, its penal legislation, and its many violations of international agreements on human rights.

Arshi Pipa's book *The Politics of Language in Socialist Albania*, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1989, is another important work of a different kind which deals with a disturbing cultural feature of modern Albanian history. This is the imposition of an artificial standardized idiom on the Albanian language, which has two dialects: northern (Geg) and southern (Tosk).

During the period between the two great European wars the two dialects - whose differences are mainly structural, not lexical - had existed quite happily side by side in a spirit of remarkable tolerance and mutual understanding. This was based on a decision reached at a conference of linguists and scholars in 1916-1917, when it was agreed to adopt the northern idiom of Elbasan (a town in central Albania) as a goal towards which the two dialects would converge through natural and unforced evolution. Although no unification, in the real sense of the term, did take place, there was nevertheless a good deal of rapprochement between the two dialects, a feat achieved, as I said, with great tolerance and tact. Some of the best prose writers, poets, scholars and journalists contributed to this process by making a close study of both dialects, borrowing from one another, and gently smoothing over unnecessary differences.

This state of affairs was brought to an end when the communist party came to power. As most of its leaders came from the south, the southern (Tosk) dialect became the official language of both party and state. This gradually spread to books, periodicals and other publications. And consequently northern writers stopped writing in their own dialect or the literary language which had evolved before the war. The drive to bring about an artificial "unification" of the language was opposed by Aleksander Xhuvani and Eqrem Cabej, two of the country's leading linguistic scholars. But they were overruled. The drive passed through various stages involving changes in orthographic structure. *The Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian* (Fjalori i Gjuhës së Sotme Shqipe) published in 1980 embodies the final shape of the new official language, or "unified literary Albanian". Its editor Androkli Kostallari is a communist linguist who has been involved with the enterprise from the very beginning.

Pipa provides ample documentary evidence which shows that this bizarre enterprise - the creation of an artificial language - was an act of political cultural conquest of northern Albania by communist fundamentalists of the southern prov-

inces. From their point of view the northern region had several unacceptable features. It had put up strong opposition to the establishment of communist rule after the Second World War. It had a fairly large Catholic population which became one of the main targets of the religious persecution culminating in the official banning of all religious practices in 1967. Catholic bishops and priests were the authors of the first Albanian books published between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Some of the best modern poets and writers used the Geg dialect or its modified form. One of the gravest losses suffered by Albanian literature and culture has been the banning and complete disappearance the work of the Franciscan Father Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940), epic, satirical, religious and lyric poet of great power; scholar, teacher and editor. This was almost tantamount to wiping out the works of John Milton and Jonathan Swift from the history of English literature. Another northern writer who has suffered the same fate is Ernest Koliqi (1903 - 1975), a fine short story writer and poet, translator of Italian poetry, and literary editor.

When compared to the other countries of eastern and central Europe, Albania has suffered a double blow in the field of language and literature. Apart from the concoction of an artificial bastard idiom there has also been the ideological pollution, turgidity and the jargon-ridden mendacity that has afflicted all the languages of eastern Europe during the past forty years. The final outcome has been enormous literary and cultural impoverishment. Nowhere has this impoverishment been greater than in Albania.

Václav Havel, the Czech playwright and now President of Czechoslovakia, has explored this twentieth century monstrosity in his play *The Memorandum* (1966). A new artificial language called *Protispe* has been introduced in a large organization without the knowledge of its managing director who is a keen supporter of the natural language of the country. The man behind the strange scheme is the deputy director, who claims that the masses are behind it. A leading supporter

of Ptydepe says it is "a synthetic language, built on a scientific basis." The managing director, on the other hand, believes that if you take away from man "his human language, created by the centuries-old tradition of national culture, we shall have prevented him from being fully human and plunge him straight into the jaws of self-alienation."

Nevertheless, the boss finally succumbs to strong official pressure and supports the new idiom, with disastrous results. A flood of incomprehensible gibberish soon spreads throughout the organization, making it impossible for its members to communicate with one another in such a semantic fog. In the end, the new language campaign is declared a fiasco, "a profoundly harmful attempt to place office communications on a confused, unrealistic, anti-human basis."

When the Albanian communist tyranny has been finally overthrown, one of the many formidable problems the liberated Albanians will face is finding ways and means of returning to the old tolerant and natural evolution of the two dialects towards a genuine common literary language.

There could be no better guide to that difficult undertaking than Pipa's scholarly work. His qualifications are unique. He has spent ten years as a political prisoner in various Albanian labor camps and prisons. After his release he emigrated to the United States where he published a volume of poetry *Libri i Burgut* (The Prison Book 1959) which is a moving and scorching testimony of great human suffering and degradation. Pipa has published two other books of poetry as well as, among other works, a three-volume study of Albanian folklore and literature *Trilogia Albanica*, (1978).

He is also an outstanding Italian scholar, and has been professor of Italian literature at a number of American universities. His main work in this field is *Montale and Dante* (1968); he has also contributed essays on Italian poetry to American, Italian and French learned journals.

I believe that Albania will only be truly free when its people are able to read, study and appreciate the work of writers of high quality like Arshi Pipa.

Anton Logoreci

* * *

Valentini, Giuseppe, S.J. (in honor of), *Studi Albanologici, Balcanici, Bizantini e Orientali* (Albanian, Balkan, Byzantine, and Oriental Studies) Firenze, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1986, pp. 502

In 1986 the friends and co-workers of Father Giuseppe Valentini, S.J., compiled a 500 page volume in his honor. The collection of 23 essays reflects Father Valentini's spirit and scholarly passion. It is truly an international selection of writings. The volume contains pieces written by Albanian, American, German, French, Dutch, Romanian, Italian and English authors. All the authors are scholars in the fields of Albanian, Oriental, Byzantine, Hellenic and Balkan studies. Two Italian scholars from Padova, Carlo Messori Roncaglia, S.J. and Giovan Battista Pellegrini, worked with Father Valentini for many years. They are responsible for the publication of this valuable volume.

Born in Padua, Italy in 1900, Valentini served as a professor at the Pontifical Albanian Seminary and the Xavier College of Shkodër in Albania from 1922 to 1941. As luck would have it, he was absent from Albania during the months of the Communist takeover in 1944. Unwelcome in Albania by the new masters of the land, Valentini remained in Italy and resumed his manifold activities in Albanian studies.

Valentini was a tireless scholar who produced 60 books and more than a thousand articles and studies in various fields over the course of his career. During a public audience in 1968 Pope Paul VI, a classmate of Father Valentini, urged Albanians to cherish this great man who so loved

them. Valentini was a formidable champion in the cause of promoting Albanian culture. He also was instrumental in mediating ecumenical encounters with the Orthodox Church. At the time of his death in 1979, Father Valentini was still active as Director of the International Center of Albanian Studies at the State University of Palermo and as Editor-in-Chief of the prestigious Jesuit book review journal *Letture*, published in Milan.

Raccuglia and Pellegrini who managed the collection of this important *Miscellanea* of Studies in honor of Valentini were able to attract a roster of professors and noted scholars including: Namik Resulli (University of Rome), Martin Camaj, (University of Munich), Eric Hamp, (University of Chicago), Robert Taft, (Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome and the University of Notre Dame, USA), Antonino Guzzetta, (University of Palermo), Maria Luisa Agosti, (University of Calabria), Haralambie Mihaescu, (University of Bucarest), Carmelo Capizzi, S.J. (Gregorian University, Rome), Vincenzo Poggi, S.J. (Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome) and many others.

On describing Valentini's amazing scholarly production, Guido Sommovilla, S.J. recalled how Valentini was tireless in searching the Albanian scientific historiography. The product of Valentini's efforts in this field was the monumental 30 volumes entitled *Acta Albaniae Veneta*. The work contains all the documents concerning the historic relations between Albania and Venice in XIV and XV centuries.

The remarkably varied writings in this important volume, pay just homage to the good priest who gave glory to God and to the Albanian people whom he admired. May Father Valentini be long remembered and loved by all of those he served with his extraordinary intellect.

Studi Albanologici, Balcanici, Bizantini e Orientali (in onore di Gieuseppe Valentini, S.J.) has been printed by Leo S. Olschki Editore Printing House in Padova. The establishment has for the

past several decades published various works by Albanian and Italian authors in the field of Albanian Studies. The high quality printing of the text is an asset to this anthology. To order the book, write to: *Centro Italiano Relazioni Umane*, Via Magenta, 00185 Rome, Italy or *Antonianum*, Via Donatello 24, 35123, Padova, Italy.

* * *

Camaj, Martin: Selected Poetry, New York, New York University Studies in Near East Civilization #14, 1990, pp.220, \$35.00s.

Martin Camaj has earned an international reputation as a linguist and scholar in Albanian Studies. His literary achievements in both prose and poetry have made him the undisputed leader of Albanian-writers-in-exile. Although his works are banned in his native Albania as "obscurantist" and "imaginary", Camaj has been making inroads on the international literary scene. In the past decade some of his works have been translated into Croatian, German and Italian. Camaj is now widely acknowledged as "one of the greatest living authors writing in Albanian."

The volume entitled *Selective Poetry* was just released by the New York University Press. It marks another literary success for Camaj. Camaj is the only current Albanian writer whose poetry has been published in English as a monograph.

The entire range of Camaj's work - from early lyrics to recent examples of a highly intense spare style, is represented. Despite variations of form throughout Camaj's poetic evolution, his thematic material has always remained the same. He portrays various facets of traditional Albanian life as symbols for psychological insights.

Camaj is a graduate of Xavier (Jesuit) College in Shkoder, Albania. Following World War II he escaped to Yugoslavia and after much difficulty managed to enroll at the University of Belgrade.

He eventually earned a degree in linguistics. While a student in Belgrade Camaj's first two volumes of lyrics *Nji fyell ndër male* (A Flute in the Mountains, 1953) and *Kanga e vërrinit* (The Song of the Valley, 1954) were published by Mustafa Bakija, Prishtinë, Kosovë.

Camaj did postgraduate studies in Rome where he earned a doctorate in literature. As a lecturer at the University of Rome he actively participated in the literary life of the Albanian emigres. He served as editor-in-chief of the renowned literary review *Shejzat* (Le Pleiadi). The review was owned and directed by Camaj's mentor and teacher Professor Ernest Koliqi. Since his appointment as professor of Albanian Studies at the University of Munich, (West Germany) in 1965 Camaj has divided his time between the classroom, research and literary publications.

Selected Poetry was translated from Albanian into English by Leonard Fox, a specialist in Albanian and Malagasy literature. Fox taught linguistics and Sanskrit at New York University for many years. Among his published works are *The Code of Lekë Dukagjini* (The Code of Albanian Custom Law); and Hainteny: *The Traditional Poetry of Madagascar*.

* * *



Fox, Leonard (translator), *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit* (The Code of Lekë Dukagjini) Albanian Text Collected and Arranged by Shtjefën Gjeçov, New York, Gjonlekaj Publishing Company, 1989, pp.269, \$37.50.

The distinguished linguist, Leonard Fox, who collaborated with Dr. Martin Camaj on the Albanian Grammar (1984), has recently presented the English-speaking world with an invaluable source book for Albanian studies. His translation of *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit* (The Code of Leke Dukagjini) was made from the original text compiled and arranged by Franciscan Father Shtjefën Gjeçov, during the first quarter of this century. This is an outstanding work of cultural preservation. It had to overcome extreme difficulties and complexities in preparation.

Although attributed to a contemporary of Skanderbeg's, the actual laws and customs of the Code were centuries in the making. Some of the articles and proscriptions date back to the ancient Illyrian ancestors of the modern Albanians. The laws were orally transmitted from generation to generation for more than five centuries. They served as a basis for self-government among the northern clans of Albania. The Law of Lekë was of foremost importance and ranked above the Church laws and those of the occupying forces. The Law of Lekë Dukagjini made it possible for Albanians to maintain their national and cultural identity while being ruled nominally by the Ottoman Empire.

Certain aspects when taken out of context, can be considered savage and barbaric. There is an emphasis on acts of vengeance and a demeaning outlook towards women. However the reality of the blood feud was so engrained in the Highlanders way of life, that to judge such activity from a contemporary Western point of view is merely a sign of ignorance and insensitivity. Other more positive aspects of the Code, such as the concept of besa, must also be scrutinized.

Besa means a sacred promise and obligation to keep one's given word. It can also mean a truce or peace. The concept is strong and is kept alive in Albanian communities throughout the modern world.

Church and clergy have an important position and rule in the Kanun which are highly protected. The Kanun

"cannot place any imposition on the church, but has the duty to defend it. The person of the priest is inviolable. Whoever slanders the priest or insults or threatens him, or places his hands upon him, or murders him, will be punished by the parish according to the laws of the place" (Book One, Part I, Chapter IV, No.10,1).

The Appendix contains application of the Kanun. These are presented in a simple and vivid fashion to cover all the chapters. One which relates to the Church states that

"Around the year 1700, in Dushman, the Franciscan priest of that parish was murdered. The perpetrators were two men of two brotherhoods, named Papaj and Ndrejokaj. Before killing the Franciscan, they went to the vicarage one evening and said: 'Sir, if a person has to do something, is it better for him to do it immediately or later?' The Franciscan, not knowing what was brewing in the minds of these two, replied: 'It is better to do it now rather than later.'

The man of Papaj took out a pistol and killed the Franciscan. One of Ndrejokaj then went through his clothes, looking for money, since, according to the traditional account of the present inhabitants of Dushman, the object of this murder was that the two men wanted to rob the Franciscan. After having committed the murder, they searched through his clothes for money, but did not find anything.

The two assailants, after killing the Franciscan, fled beyond the Drin. When the Banner heard about this, it took their property as a fine, expelled the members of their families from the Banner, laid waste their land to remain fallow for ever, and burned down their houses. The two families fled and went to stay in Mez, in the Banner of Thac, and after a certain time, moved elsewhere." (Appendix, page 226).

Father Gjeçov compiled and codified the present text of the *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*. He made a lasting contribution to the field of Albanian studies through this time consuming effort. Although his work was incomplete at the time of his death in 1929, the Franciscan fathers used his notes and manuscripts to put the Kanun into order. They published the work under his name in 1933. In this exhaustively researched English translation, Leonard Fox has performed a similar service for the academic community as well as general readers with an interest in Albanian culture. The book is highly recommended for those of Albanian ancestry who would like to touch base with their illustrious heritage.

It is through the kin interest and generosity of Gjonlekaj brothers, Gjekë, Lucë and Tomë that this treasure of Albania's past has been made available in a beautiful English translation and luxury printing. The parallel column printing of the Albanian original with the English translation makes it easy to compare the text.

Those interested in obtaining a copy of this book, should contact the publisher: Gjonlekaj Publishing Co., 118-21 Queens Blvd., Ste. 608, Forest Hills, New York 11375. A special discount is offered to libraries, churches and individuals ordering 5 or more copies.

BIBLIOTHEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLET"
SHKODER (2018)

THE RIGHTS OF ETHNIC ALBANIA

(TË DREJTAT E SHQIPNISË ETHNIKE)

A Study of the Claims Against the Albanian Nation by Its Enemies and the Refutation of

Those Claims

The Rights of Ethnic Albania is the title of a Special Issue of *Leka*, the noted scholarly magazine of the Jesuit order in Albania. The issue was published in Shkodër in 1944, just as the war was winding down in Albania. It was produced in wartime conditions, when one era of Albania's history was coming to a close, and another era, full of uncertainty and anxiety about the nation's future, was about to begin.

In these circumstances, the Jesuit editors of *Leka* thought it wise and essential to address a single question: THE RIGHTS OF ETHNIC ALBANIA, that is, its inherent rights as a member of the family of nations. The Special Issue examines this question in the light of Albania's long and turbulent history, brought about by successive invasions and conquests by foreign powers, and presents arguments designed to prove that such conquests were in violation of its fundamental rights as a nation. The question is discussed in depth, with the care and concern of a diligent scholar, and deals not only with Albanian history, but numerous aspects of Albanian society: ethnicity, language, religion, customs and tradition, economy, politics, art, and the social structure. The result is a book-length publication of nearly 400 pages.

Setting Forth the Premises of the Study

Before examining the specific claims and charges against Albania, made by its enemies, the editors of the Special Issue present an incisive scholarly study of what constitutes a nation. The point is made that:

"A nation is a natural society of people, having a common origin, language, culture, history, customs and tradition, and often a common territory and religion; and who moreover are conscious of this unity and want to live together in order to preserve, defend and develop their society, and in this manner realize more fully their potential as human beings." (p. 6)

Every nation, we are told, has a right to political independence, which has both the will and the means to be independent, and whose independence does not prejudice in any way the valid rights of any other country. Now, ethnic Albania is a nation that meets this criterion in every respect. It has the will and the means to be an independent state. It does not pose a threat whatsoever to the rights of other states. Consequently, it has the right to be independent within the territories inhabited by its people.

This argument is developed in great detail and brilliant fashion, through the first five chapters of the study. Each chapter is extensively documented with data drawn for the most part from the writings of foreign authors. The editors chose this approach deliberately, in order to be as objective and impartial as possible.

Accusations and Refutations

Theory and logic aside, the ethnic rights of the Albanian nation have been ignored and trampled upon for over two thousand years of its recorded history. The long parade of offenders includes Macedonians, Celts, Romans, Huns, Byzantines, Slavs, Bulgarians, Normans, Venetians, Angevins, Turks, Serbs, Montenegrins, Greeks, and Italians. The arguments used by the invaders to justify their violation of Albania's rights range from the bizarre to the ridiculous. For example, Vladan Djordjević, Prime Minister of Serbia around the turn of the century, claimed that "Albanians are still at a pre-historic level of culture [read, civilization]" (p. 41). In a book published in 1913, *The Albanians and the Great Powers*, he abandoned

himself to his hate-filled fancy, and vilified the Albanians from the first to the last page. Sadly, his book influenced the Great Powers at the 1913 London Conference of Ambassadors, which deprived Albania of Kosovë and Chamouria, turning the first over to Serbia, and the latter to Greece.

Below we shall consider some of the more important accusations leveled against the Albanian nation and people by their opponents, followed by refutations as given in The Rights of Ethnic Albania.

Accusation (1) - Albanians are barbarians or semi-barbarians. This notion, propagated zealously especially by the Serbs and the Greeks, gained currency in the Western world. The notion is based largely on the banditry and blood feuds that were a part of Albanian society in the not too distant past.

REFUTATION - Albanians do not deny or defend those wretched customs. On the other hand, how can the Serbs call themselves civilized who, during the Balkan War and World War I, slaughtered thousands upon thousands of people in Kosove and Albania, out of hatred of Albanians? Or the Greeks who in 1914-16 burned down scores of villages in southern Albania, and caused as many as 50,000 refugees to die of starvation. (p. 91-92)

Accusation (2) - Albanian is a hybrid language. It is a mixture of other languages (Greek, Roman, Slavic, Arabic, Turkish...), and lacks a standard phonology, orthography, and alphabet (although the charge against the alphabet had to be dropped after 1908, when the Congress of Manastir was held, which adopted Latin characters for the Albanian alphabet).

REFUTATION - As long ago as 1855, the distinguished German philologist, Franz Bopp, proved that Albanian has its roots neither in Greek, nor Slavic, nor Romance languages, but in the Indo-European tree of languages, of which it is a separate and genuine branch (p. 80). Far from be-

ing a divisive element in Albanian society, the Albanian language has been a powerful unifying force. "Albanians preserved the language of their forefathers, and the language preserved the Albanian nation" (p. 79).

The fact is that the linguistic unity of Albania is greater than that of France! And as for the dialectal differences between Ghëg and Tosk, they are smaller than, say, the differences among the Piedmont, Tuscan, and Sicilian dialects of Italy (p. 79, 89-90).

Accusation (3) - Albanians are not very religious; they remain pagan at heart. Moreover, they suffer from religious disunity, because they adhere to three different faiths: Moslem, Eastern Orthodox, and Catholic.

REFUTATION - Writing in 1921, French author Justin Godart said that he found no religious fanaticism in Albania, because for Albanians country comes first, and patriotism stands above differences in religious faiths (p. 125). As for the charge that Albanians are pagans at heart, this is refuted by the hundreds of Albanian saints and martyrs that one finds in the pages of the religious history of Albania, which dates back to the beginning of the Christian era. Albanians are not pagans, but a monotheistic people, and this is borne out, among other things, by many of their sayings, such as: "God is the Creator of the world", "God is the Giver of all good things," etc.

Accusation (4) - Albanians lack a national consciousness. They have never had the idea of country or nation. Hence, they do not know themselves as Albanians.

REFUTATION - But documentary evidence shows that Albanians, in spite of being small in number, in spite of being oppressed for centuries by one occupier or another, and in spite of being denied schools in their own language, have been able to keep alive their national consciousness and preserve it unimpaired through the ages. As the memorandum of the Albanian League of Prizren

to the Congress of Berlin (1878) said: "Just as we are not, nor wish to be, Turks, so we are ready to resist with all our might those who want to make us Slavs or Greeks. We want to live only as Albanians" (p. 185-86)

Accusation (5) - Albanians lack national unity. They have no sense of patriotism to bind them together. They are divided ethnically, regionally and so on.

REFUTATION - This accusation is as mean as it is insulting, say the authors of this study. The entire history of Albania bears witness to its falsity. Albanians have rallied behind their flag and national leaders, and have fought for their right to be free and independent with exemplary fortitude and bravery. Over the past seven centuries (from 1256 to 1943), they rose in rebellion against foreign occupation over 100 times—an average of one uprising every seven years.

Had they lacked patriotism and a strong sense of solidarity, born of a common cultural heritage, would they have survived all these millenniums?

Accusation (6) - Albanians lack the political ability to govern themselves. They lack the experience and skill to organize and maintain a viable and stable country.

REFUTATION - This is another falsehood. Albanians have demonstrated their skill to organize and govern since ancient times. At least half a dozen Roman emperors and several Byzantine emperors were Illyrians, the ancestors of Albanians. The saga of Scanderbeg, the more than two dozen Grand Viziers (Prime Ministers) of the Ottoman Empire of Albanian origin, the founder of modern Egypt, Mehmet Ali, and the creator of modern Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, are shining examples of the governing skill and indeed political genius of Albanians (p. 286, 296).

Moreover, Albania together with Kosova has all the natural and mineral resources it needs for a viable and prosperous economy and state.

Baseless Claims for Aggression

The aggressors of the Albanian nation (particularly the Serbs and the Greeks) have not only failed to acknowledge the right of Albanians to have a nation of their own, but have used every means to deprive them of that right, including malicious propaganda, Machiavellian diplomacy and brutal military force. To justify their claims against Albania, they have presented arguments based on history, economic and strategic considerations, the decisions of the Great Powers with regard to Albania and so forth (p. 332-49). A favorite argument is that they want to bring civilization to a barbarian or semi-barbarian population.

The editors of this Special Issue of *Leka* reply that such arguments have no moral or juridical basis whatsoever. They are groundless and invalid. There is no justification therefore for Montenegro's possession and control of Tivar (now Bar), Ulqin (Ulcinj), Podgoricë (Titograd) and the Highlands north of Shkodër; or Serbia's control over Kosove, let alone its claims to northern Albania as far down as Durrës. Serbian control over Albanian cities and lands in western Macedonia (since WW2 under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Macedonia), is also illegal. Similarly there are no valid grounds for Greece's claims to Korçë, Gjirokastër and other territories in southern Albania, or its possession of Janina (Ioannina) (p. 348)

After an elaborate and insightful analysis, the authors of this work conclude that there can be no justification for the invasion and occupation of a nation, or a part of it, except to restore lost rights of that nation, when all other efforts to restore those rights have failed. (But no foreign power ever invaded Albania to restore its lost rights, but only to violate them, on whatever pretext suited the invader at the time.

* * *

We have to say that, except for a few reservations, we are highly impressed by the quality of this publication: the high theoretical level of the discourse, the systematic exposition of the main theme of the study, the abundant data drawn from many facets of Albanian life, and the erudition of the authors who, in addition to Albanian sources, used to good effect the major writings on Albania in Croatian, Italian, German, French, and English.

Within the pages of this publication one finds the clearest and fullest expression on the question of Albania's ethnic rights, as far as we are aware. *The Rights of Ethnic Albania* deals a crippling, if not fatal blow to the propaganda machines of potential aggressors against Albania, for it cuts the ground from beneath them, and deprives them of arguments to justify an attack on the country.

Peter R. Prifti

Korsika, Bojan, et.al., eds: *Srbija i Albanci* (Serbia and the Albanians), Volume I, II, III Ljubljana, Narodna in Univerzitetna Knjižnica, 1989, pp. 379.

The enmity between Albanians and the Serbian Slavs dates back to the VI and VII centuries. At the time Serbian pagan hordes from the East invaded into Illyrian lands and destroyed all vestiges of Christian civilization. The Illyrians, the autochthonous inhabitants of the region fiercely resisted, but outnumbered were forced to retreat to mountain strong-holds in Montenegro, Kosova and Albania. The Serbians tried to subdue and then assimilate the Illyrians (Albanians) and dominate the Balkan peninsula. These efforts were met with a staunch and sometimes suicidal resistance

by the Albanians. Nevertheless Serbians were obsessed with extending their dominion to the Adriatic Sea.

The Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and World War I gave Serbia the long dreamed of opportunity to swallow up newly independent neutral Albania. The determination of the Albanian people plus the intervention of the great powers (especially the United States), saved Albania and allowed it to preserve its independence. However, half the Albanian territory and population were given over to her neighbours, Yugoslavia and Greece.

The Albanian efforts to resist Serbian pressure and penetration has been subject of many scholarly studies. Last year the 3 volume work *Srbija i Albanci* (Serbia and the Albanians) was released by the prestigious Slovenian Narodna in Univerzitetna Knjižnica in Ljubljana (Yugoslavia). It is the most comprehensive scientific undertaking to date in the field of foreign relations between these two enemy nations. *Srbija i Albanci* documents three important periods in which Serbia attempted to eliminate Albania from the map of Europe.

Volume I contains 155 pages which detail relations during the period from 1878 through 1914 when Serbia was a kingdom. The 93 pages of Volume II cover the period of the Balkan Wars, World War I, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and World War II (1913-1944). The third volume of 131 pages treats the modern period under communist rule (1945-1989). The objectivity of the contents can be noted from the very first page in which the editor Bojan Korsika states that "All the sources used in these books are Serbian and accessible to every citizen of Belgrade who is a member of the City's or the National Library".

The editorial staff of *Srbija i Albanci* has been viciously attacked by the propaganda agents of Serbian president Slobodan Milošević. This indicates that the publication authored by elite writers of the western Republic of Slovenia is an important work

of intellectual integrity. It will certainly undermine any claims by Serbian leaders that Albanians living under their rule in Yugoslavia are "uncivilized creatures" or "fundamental fanatics-Khomeni style".

Srbija i Albanci offers an objective review of the relations between Serbs and Albanians. For the benefit of scholars working outside Yugoslavia on the topic of contemporary Balkan history, these volumes deserve to be translated into other European languages. For those with a command of either Serbian or Croatian, *Srbija i Albanci* can be purchased directly from the publisher at: Časopis za kritiko znanosti, Beethovnova 9, Ljubljana, Slovenia (Yugoslavia).

* * *

The Investigator, Foreign Police Spying on U.S. Albanians, New York, N.Y., 1989, pp. 114, \$10.00s.

Albanians have been hounded by the police of Yugoslavia for decades. And not only in Yugoslavia, but abroad in Germany, in Belgium, and even here in our own United States.

That is what the publication, *Foreign Police Spying on U.S. Albanians*, is all about. This is a bold and scorching exposure of the activities in America of the Yugoslav secret police agency, known as UDBA for short. The author of the monograph is a retired Albanian educator in America, who writes under the pseudonym, "The Investigator".

In this work he deals a heavy blow to the image of Yugoslavia as a "modern" and "democratic" state, friendly to America. He does this in a step-by-step indictment of UDBA's practices, based on an abundance of evidence, gathered over many years.

Setting the Stage for the Investigation

The Investigator begins his case with a brief inquiry into Yugoslavia's treatment of its ethnic Albanians, known as Kosovars. The inquiry covers the period from the Balkan Wars of 1912-14 to the present, and reveals a grim tale of persecution and repression. Albanians have suffered so cruelly at the hands of the Serbs and Montenegrins, the author says, that it is difficult to believe. To quote from one passage:

"... they burned down [Albanian] villages, grabbed their livestock, plundered their homes, and put to the sword their women and children... They slaughtered Catholic Albanians in a drive to force them to become Slavs. They herded Moslem Albanians by the hundreds into their mosques, where they massacred them, after cruelly torturing them." (pp.3-4)

The barbaric crimes of these oppressors of Albanians, notes the **Investigator**, are of the sort we commonly associate with Attila.

* * *

The scene now shifts to the United States, where tens of thousands of Albanians have emigrated from Yugoslavia since World War II, settling mostly in New York, Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles. Freed from the shackles of their oppressors in Yugoslavia, Albanians here began to make remarkable strides in business, educational achievements and social life-- a development that alarmed Yugoslavia. To quote from the text:

"Belgrade, which rejoiced when Albanians quit their ancestral hearths [in Yugoslavia] to come to America, was terror-stricken by the unity and progress of Albanians in this country--the very Albanians Yugoslavia had kept in darkness and captivity for generations, on end" (p. 55). For the Yugoslav authorities looked upon them as Yugoslav citizens, and expected them to be faithful

and obedient only to Tito and Yugoslavia. They could not conceive of "losing" their Albanian "subjects" in America.

Yugoslavia's UDBA Goes Into Action

The solution to the problem, according to Belgrade, was to get UDBA into the act. The notorious espionage organization was entrusted with the mission to do whatever was necessary to prevent Albanians from slipping away from Yugoslav influence and control. By the late 1960's UDBA agents started to infiltrate Albanian communities, above all in the Detroit-Chicago area. Working methodically, they began to sow doubt, suspicion, fear and enmity among Albanians, so as to create turmoil, disunity and weakness among them. Using all kinds of intrigues, they made inroads into Albanian sports clubs and social and cultural institutions, and turned them into centers of Yugoslav propaganda.

And who are these UDBA operatives? They are Yugoslav diplomats in America, Yugoslav tourist agencies and other commercial firms, visiting Yugoslav students and artistic ensembles and, sad to say, many Albanian immigrants from Yugoslavia who have been beguiled, deceived or intimidated into becoming lackeys of Belgrade. These Albanians, whom the *Investigator* calls "traitors to their nation and forefathers", are working against their own countrymen here, in flagrant violation of the laws and democratic traditions of the United States. Playing on the natural desire of Albanians to visit their relatives and friends back in Yugoslavia, Belgrade's agents warn them that unless they collaborate with them, they will not be granted visas to travel to Yugoslavia.

Like an implacable prosecuting attorney, the *Investigator* accuses UDBA of forming espionage cells wherever Albanians are congregated in America. "Many operatives in those cells," he says, "enjoy God's blessings in America, yet they light a candle to the devil in Belgrade". He denounces UDBA for smuggling thousands of Albanians Book Reviews across the Mexican border and into America,

importing illegal drugs via the Yugoslav airline, forging Social Security cards for its agents and dupes, and instigating several murders among Albanians, above all in Detroit.

Appeals to U.S. to Crack Down on UDBA

The author of this fiery document makes a convincing case, in our opinion, for opening an official U.S. investigation of Yugoslavia's espionage activities against Albanians in this country. Why, then, have not American authorities taken any action against UDBA? Is it possible, he asks, that they don't know what's going on? And if they do know, how can they remain silent "in the face of these illegal activities of Communist Yugoslavia" in our country?

His plea, however, has not gone entirely unheeded. He has found a sympathetic listener in one Washington official, Congressman William S. Broomfield of Michigan, whose remarks on the subject are quoted at the end of this monograph. Referring to Yugoslavia, the Hon. Broomfield has said: "Make no mistake about it, we are dealing with a government which...practices terrorism against its own people around the world." He added that he favored holding Congressional hearings on this issue.

In addition to exposing UDBA in America, *Foreign Police Spying on U.S. Albanians* has a number of excellent chapters on the ongoing struggle of Albanians in Yugoslavia for freedom and democracy. In sum, the *Investigator* has produced an original work which should rightly lead to the total destruction of Yugoslavia's criminal underground activity in our country.

Copies of the monograph may be obtained for \$10 each, by writing to Fatmi Kozova, P.O. Box 1605, N. S. Beach, FL 33470, USA.

REFERENCE WORKS ON KOSOVA

To appreciate the complexity and urgency of the problem of Kosova, one has to do more than keep up with reports in the media on events in Kosova. One has to have a fund of background knowledge of that region, including its history, economics, folklore and other aspects of its society.

Fortunately, a couple of scholarly works on Kosova are available to those interested in the broader aspects of the subject. One is *Studies on Kosova*, an East European Monograph published in 1984 and distributed by Columbia University Press in New York. The book was edited by two well-known Albanian scholars in the states, Arshi Pipa and Sami Repishti. The other work, also published in 1984, is titled, *Kosova- the Albanians in Yugoslavia in Light of Historical Documents*. Its author is S.S. Juka, another Albanian scholar in the United States.

Both books are offsprings of the International Conference on Kosova that was held in New York in November of 1982. The conference was organized in the wake of the uprising in Kosova by Albanians in the Spring of 1981. Some twenty scholars of Albanian and non-Albanian backgrounds in America and abroad were involved with the conference, either by speaking there in person, or by submitting papers prepared specifically for the occasion. *Studies on Kosova* has chapters on the region's history, language, ethnology, economy and politics, plus related topics. This data-laden hard-cover book (of 280 pp.) may be obtained by contacting Columbia University Press, 562 West 113th Street, New York, NY 10025. Its original price was \$27 per copy.

The second book—presented as an essay on Kosova totaling some 70 pages—is divided in three parts: Part One discusses the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and the struggle of Albanians to defend their territory. Part Two considers the causes and aftermath of the loss of Kosova to the Serbs and Montenegrins, an injustice, as Juka notes, perpetrated on the Albanian nation by the Great Powers of Europe. Part Three deals with the history of

Kosova since World War I, and offers illuminating material on the relentless oppression of Albanians in Yugoslavia. *Kosova* is a useful hard-cover book that may be obtained for \$20 a copy by contacting: Baker & Taylor Bks., Eastern Division, 50 Kirby Ave., Somerville, N.J. 08876

*

Albania's Golgotha is another booklet, published in 1913, which contains newspaper reports and articles from the world press concerning the mass massacres of the Albanians by the Serbo-Montenegrins, which were later confirmed by the Carnegie report on human rights. The articles and reports which comprise this booklet tell of thousands of people, including women and children, who were burned or buried alive, and of tens of thousands of others slaughtered in the most cruel ways.

Disturbed by these atrocities, the editor of the booklet, the journalist Leo Freundlich, wrote this:

A whole people is bleeding on the cross and Europe is not saying a word... to remain silent is to assent... I appeal to the governments of the Great Powers and to the entire European public in the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, in the name of the unfortunate Albanian people who from its Golgotha is asking for help...

At present, when the whole of Kosova is nothing but a concentration camp, Albanians make the same appeal that was made nearly eighty years ago by Leo Freundlich. They appeal to the United Nations, to the government and the people of the United States of America, to the European Parliament, to the Commission of the European Community and the European public, to human rights organizations, to church leaders and representatives—to all those who can lend a hand: Please help.

Fischer, Bernd Jurgen: *King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania*, Boulder, East European Monographs, 1984, pp.353.

Bernd Jurgen Fischer has produced an objective and illuminative study of the era of King Zog of Albania. The volume treats both the monarch as well as the forces of history which proved to be his undoing.

Ahmet Zog was born in 1895, the son of a northern Albanian chieftain. He died in Paris in 1961 at the age of 66. He began his career as an army colonel and rapidly moved through cabinet positions to complete power. He was first the Minister of the Interior, then Prime Minister, and ultimately the self-proclaimed "King of the Albanians." Zog possessed all the necessary qualities to assume leadership of a land that was teetering between the Middle Ages and the 20th century. Although he was intelligent and understanding of the Albanian temperament, he was also unabashedly ruthless and cunning. Zog knew that politicians were never loved for the power they held, and therefore resorted to "calculated acts of violence" to strike fear into his opponents and to secure his position as monarch.

When he declared himself King Zog I in 1928, he was fresh from his victory over Bishop Fan Noli's government. Distrustful of Yugoslavia, which had aided him in that particular conflict, he turned his attention toward Italy, in the hope of obtaining badly needed funds. This flirtation proved disastrous in 1939 when Mussolini invaded Albania with over 40,000 troops. Zog and his family were driven into exile. The first king of Albania never returned to his homeland. His failure to return and lead a resistance against the Italian occupation forces has been cited as one of the reasons the Communists were able to seize power after the end of WWII.

With the benefit of hindsight, the author concludes that Zog was less than entirely successful in bringing his country out of the Dark Ages. Conditions in Albania in 1939 were not much dif-

ferent than they were in 1924, when Zog wrested power after Noli's experiment with Western democracy had failed. Zog's Land Reform scheme failed unequivocally, social conditions remained primitive, health services were non-existent, and the majority of the population was still illiterate. The picture which Fischer paints of King Zog is of a man torn between the trappings and traditions of the Orient and the West. While he chose to wear European-style clothing and uniforms, his attitudes and actions were decidedly Eastern. He apparently could not rise above his personal history and abandon his penchant for intrigue and violence.

Fischer noted Zog's drawbacks, but did not fail to give credit where credit is due. On page 306 the author states that,

When Zog left in 1939 the process towards creating a rudimentary form of modern state nationalism had begun... Zog's contribution, then, was of considerable importance.

The book is well-researched and filled with interesting bits of data. It is a comprehensive investigation into the life and times of the only man to establish a monarchy in Europe after WWI.

Steve Bosque

* * *

Falaschi, Nermin Vlora: *L'Etrusco Lingua Viva* (Etruscan, A Living Language), Rome, Bardi Editore, 1989, pp.173, \$40.

Nermin Falaschi is the only Albanian woman author to achieve international recognition. She is a talented poet and writer of fiction and non-fiction. Thus far in her prolific career Falaschi has produced some 20 volumes. Her collection of poems *Book Reviews* (The Lord of Time), was written in Italian with parallel Albanian text and was well received especially among diaspora group in Italy and other countries. With the publication of her

second volume on the ancient Euro-Mediterranean civilization, she firmly establishes herself as a linguist of considerable ability.

The main thesis of *L'Etrusco Lingua Viva* is that the modern spoken Albanian language holds the key to unlocking the many mysterious epigraphs left by the ancient Etruscans. The Etruscans were direct descendants of the Pelasgians, the "Sea People" who civilized the entire Mediterranean area and formed the culture foundation for the Roman Empire. Falaschi bases her theory on the work of several scholars who have gone before her, most notably Zacharie Mayani. He first proposed this theory in a 1961 volume entitled *The Etruscans Begin to Speak*. Before Mayani's discovery of the similarities between modern Albanian and Etruscan inscriptions, the language had remained a mystery for nearly two thousand years.

Falaschi has expanded on the premise of the Etruscan-Albanian connection with astonishing results. Her strategy is deceptively simple: she starts by showing a Etruscan inscription—their alphabet served as the basis for the Latin lettering system which we use to this day—then she breaks the epigraph down to individual words arranged in vertical columns. The first column is the original Pelasgo-Etruscan, the second is modern day Albanian, the third is Italian, and the fourth is English. This comparative approach enables readers to see obvious similarities. It is, indeed, the general reader to whom this book appears to be geared. Certain words such as *me* and *fate* in English, are nearly the same in the ancient Etruscan. Similarities between ancient Etruscan and modern Albanian terms are even most striking. Many Etruscan inscriptions carry over practically word for word. After analyzing the epigraphs in this manner, the real mystery seems to be how the epigraphs remained a mystery for two thousand years.

Falaschi's book is divided into two sections—the first is written in Italian and the second part being in English translation of the first. This two language approach certainly opens the door for international appreciation. The first chapter, en-

titled "Preliminaries", contains excellent historical background information and grabs the reader's interest from the onset. Her interpretation is both scholarly and eminently readable.

L'Etrusco Lingua Viva is a handsome volume. It is cloth-bound and printed on high-quality paper. The text is lavishly illustrated with color plates, black and white photographs as well as the drawings. There is an informative bibliography, as well as a comparative analysis of alphabets, to be found at the back of this remarkable book. We highly recommend this study which would no doubt make an excellent gift for someone with an inquisitive mind.

To order a copy, apply directly to the publisher, Bardi Editore, Salita dei Crescenzi 16, 00186 Roma, Italy.

* * *

Koch, Guntram : *Albania: Art and Culture in the Land of the Skiptars*, Cologne, Du Mont, 1989.

Guntram Koch was born in 1941. He studied classical archaeology, ancient philology as well as Christian archaeology and byzantine art history in Goettingen and Athens. Currently he is professor of Christian Archaeology at the University of Marburg. Since 1982 he has visited Albania several times—often on the invitation of the Albanian government.

In this art-travel-book Koch provides a comprehensive overview of outstanding monuments of art and architecture extant in Albania today. The author received significant assistance from the Archaeological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, the Institute for Monument Preservation and the Minister of Culture in Tirana.

Since the Federal Republic of Germany and Albania entered into diplomatic relations in 1987, Albania has become ever more open to the outside world. The number of travel groups interested in

viewing treasures of art and architecture in this long inaccessible country has correspondingly increased.

There are objects of immense historical and artistic value to be seen. Some date from the time of the Illyrians, 500 B.C.-CA. 300 A.D. There are also artifacts from the period of Roman hegemony. The early Christian and early Byzantine period, CA.300 - 843, can be viewed in the numerous well preserved ruins of churches. During the middle ages, 843 - 1468, catholic and germanic influences reached north Albania, while byzantine architecture dominated the south. For almost five hundred years, from 1468 - 1912, the Turks ruled the Balkans up to the Adriatic Sea. They left behind impressive fortresses, mosques, bridges and baths.

The book is also a dependable guide for the museums of the country. Until this volume there have been no catalogs and the explanations of individual objects were extremely rare. The most important exhibition pieces were explained in their historical context.

Detailed practical travel tips and an excellent bibliography round off this professional panorama of the cultural history of Albania. The one flaw that must be noted is why so little is mentioned of the specific catholic contribution to the amazingly rich cultural heritage of this small and oppressed land. Is it because the communist regime in Albania has not preserved a single catholic church, while maintaining many byzantine and turkish monuments? One asks oneself if Professor Koch has not fallen in the trap of viewing catholic influence in Albania as if it had been first introduced in the 18th century (See Balkan Cultural Studies by Prof. Stavro Skendi, part III, Religion in Albania during the Ottoman Rule, pp.151-162). A guide to the cultural history of Albania which does justice to its catholic heritage is yet to be written. Archbishop Pal Engjelli, Skanderbeg's ambassador, as well as scholars and poets such as Buzuku, Budi, Bardhi, Bogdani, Matranga, the religious milieu which nourished them and the churches, monasteries and

schools they left behind bear eloquent witness to this indefensibly neglected component of Albanian culture.

Richard Siebert

* * *

Renzo Falaschi, *Ismail Kemal Bey Vlora, His Thought and Work* (as seen through Italian documents), Rome, 1985 pp. 418

This book on Ismail Kemal (Qemal) by the well-known Italian diplomat, Renzo Falaschi, is a strongly sympathetic account of the life and deeds of the great Albanian patriot, who on November 28, 1912 proclaimed Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire.

The work is based on a voluminous collection of Italian documents, which indeed take up almost one-half of the book. The text of the book is published in three languages: Italian, Albanian, and English, each approximately 70 pages in length.

Following an introductory chapter on the Albanian nation, there is a discussion of Kemal's family background, his education, character and personality. The record reveals a history of friction between Kemal's forefathers and the Turkish government, owing to their opposition to various policies of Istanbul. As a youth, Kemal studied at the famous Zosimea Gymnasium in Ioannina (Janine, Greece), and later in Istanbul, where he received a law degree. He knew several languages: Albanian, Greek, Turkish, Italian, and French. As a public official in the Ottoman Empire, he served a Governor General of Lebanon and in the Turkish parliament as an Albanian deputy. He was respected for his intelligence and ability, but his liberal, reformist ideas aroused suspicion and fear in the Sultan's court, and as a result he was interned for many years in Asia Minor, known then as Anatolia.

The author of this volume draws an attractive portrait of Kemal as an elderly man. He was a pleasant old man with gray hair and beard, and an air of authority and dignity. Equipped with a wide culture, affable in conversation, Ismail Kemal belonged to that breed of gentlemen of the 19th Century who had no regard for money, a disposition that brought him many financial worries in his old age.

Every chapter in this biography is a document of Kemal's deep love of Albania and freedom and democracy. Falaschi acclaims Kemal's record of service to his country, and defends him vigorously against all accusations by his rivals. He calls him "a master of diplomacy" who navigated with great skill in the "treacherous waters of European politics".

Proclamation of Albania's Independence

Of central interest in the biography is the dramatic story of the proclamation of Albania's independence. Like nearly all Albanian nationalists of his day, Ismail Kemal's initial goal was to obtain autonomy for Albania, within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, so as to gain a measure of self-determination, and at the same time assure that no Albanian territories (Kosova and Chamouria) would be severed from the Albanian nation. But the fast-moving events in the Balkans in the autumn of 1912 persuaded him to change his position, and seek instead immediate independence for the country.

Hastily, Kemal traveled to Vienna where he held talks with Austrian Foreign Minister, Berchtold, and Italian Ambassador to Austria, Avarna, and won their support for Albanian independence. He then went to Albania, first to Durrës and from there to Vlorë—to evade Serbian troops who were advancing toward Durrës—where on November 28, 1912 he proclaimed the independence of Albania before a wildly enthusiastic crowd.

A Provisional Government was formed, with

Kemal as President. This was a historic step for the modern Albanian state, but as Falaschi rightly notes, Kemal's government had a precarious and uncertain start, since it had neither military power to defend the country from aggression, nor economic power to provide for the needs of the population, especially the urgent needs of thousands of refugees from invading Serb and Greek armies.

There is material in this book about the London Conference of Ambassadors of the Great Powers, which met in 1913 to decide, among other things, the fate of Albania. Kemal attended the Conference, accompanied by Luigj Gurakuqi, his Minister of Education, and Isa Boletini, the hero of Albanian insurrections in the North against Turkey that paved the way to independence. Referring to the Conference, Falaschi observes that Austria-Hungary and Italy were the only ones that defended Albania's national interests, but for opposite reasons: each wanted to place Albania in its own sphere of influence. Albania's first President lamented the decisions of the London Conference. He said: "More than half of my country's territory" has been given to Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece—territory that includes "the most flourishing towns and the most productive parts..." (p. 375)

In connection with Kosova, Falaschi cites a prophetic warning of Isa Boletini to a Serbian diplomat by the name of Ballukesh. He told him that Serbia would repent bitterly, should it insist on holding on to Kosova, since Albanians would never cease to fight for its liberation (p. 375)

Kemal Leaves Albania

In January of 1914, Kemal and his cabinet were forced to resign because of an incident involving the government that was said to be in violation of Albania's position of neutrality. Kemal transferred power to the International Control Commission that was formed by the Great Powers, and migrated to Italy.

In the next few weeks, no less than half a dozen European princes, dukes and counts were proposed as candidates for the vacant Albanian throne. The Great Powers finally settled on a German Prince, Wilhelm zu Wied, upon the strong recommendation of his aunt, Queen Elizabeth of Romania, and vigorous backing by Austria-Hungary. Despite Wied's incompetence as head of Albania, Ismail Kemal supported him, for the reason that he represented, at least symbolically, the unity of the Albanian state.

The author of this study devotes much attention to the relations between Italy and Albania. Indeed, the two main themes that run like a thread throughout the book are: 1) Falaschi's all-out defense of Ismail Kemal's character and deeds; 2) His equally strong defense of Italian policy toward Albania.

We feel that he succeeds admirably on the first point. Making good use of facts and logic, he refutes one by one accusations by Kemal's enemies (such, for example, as Esad Pashë Toptari) that he had sold himself to Italy, or Great Britain, or Greece, or Austria, or that he was disloyal to Albania! Incredible as it may seem, the great Albanian patriot was a victim of malicious rumors and groundless charges, all aiming to blacken his character and his record as a statesman.

On the second point, Falaschi argues that Italy has had no imperial designs on Albania. Even when Italy occupied a part of Albania during and after World War I, its underlying motive, he says, was to prevent Greece and Serbia from partitioning the country.

This view is perhaps open to debate. It is contested, for instance, by scholars in Albania. A review of Falaschi's book, published in the magazine *Studime Historike* (Nr. 1, 1987), grants that Italy opposed Greek and Serbian aggression against Albania, but only in order to make the country a protectorate of Rome. Not the presence of Italian troops in Vlorë, but their departure from that city and from Albania assured that sovereignty

of the country, according to the review. Otherwise, the review published in Tiranë is quite favorable to Falaschi's book.

On January 23, 1919 Ismail Kemal suffered a stroke in Perugia, Italy, where he was residing, and died three days later. The following month his body was transported to Vlorë, where he was buried in a casket wrapped with the Albanian flag, and mourned by the population of the city and villagers from the surrounding countryside. We might add here that Falaschi dismisses reports that Kemal died of unnatural causes, claiming there is no substance to them.

The Albanians of America had a high regard for Ismail Kemal, and in 1918 they entrusted him with the mission to represent them at the forthcoming Paris Peace Conference. The day before he suffered the fatal stroke, he wrote a letter saying: "If I had the money, I would have made a trip to America..."

Summing up this study of the father of modern Albania, author Renzo Falaschi says that Kemal created a viable Albanian state against immense odds. The venerable patriot, he says in a striking phrase, lived "a tormented but magnificent life".

This biographical work, written with great sincerity and convictions, is an interesting study that widens our knowledge of Ismail Kemal and his times.

The address of the publisher is: Bardi Editore, Salita de' Crescenzi 16, 00186 Rome, Italy.

M.R.P.

Elsie, Robert: *Dictionary of Albanian Literature* (1986), Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, Connecticut 06881, pp.170, Hardbound, Contact publisher for price.

Robert Elsie has provided the English speaking world with its first lexicon of Albanian authors and literary terms. The work is truly informative and highly readable. Names of the writers are listed alphabetically. Each listing offers a brief biographical sketch, mentioning the writer's specific contribution to Albanian literature. The abbreviated approach makes for easy and enjoyable research. This book can be appreciated by both the serious scholar and general reader interested in Albanian studies.

One typical entry reads: CICKOJA, Haxhi (19th century). Muslim poet from Korçë. Author of a "mevlud" (poem on the birth of the prophet Mohammed).

Elsie includes an extensive bibliography which will be a valuable tool for future students of Albanian literature. The author is a graduate of the University of Bonn. He has travelled extensively in Albania and Kosovë. Elsie previously published the *Anthology of Albanian Poetry*. The *Dictionary of Albanian Literature* is the work of a professional, and it shows.

As with any "all inclusive" project, the dictionary invariably falls short of its goal. Several authors have been overlooked or left for one reason or another. Elsie, himself, apologizes in the preface for any omissions in the contents. This flaw can be overlooked since this dictionary is the only book on the subject written in English. It will be the benchmark by which all such future efforts will be measured.

Schiro Di Maggio, Giuseppe: *Vjeç të tua 500* (500 Years of You), Piana degli Albanesi, Mondo Albanese, 1988, pp.30 with illustrations.

In 1988 the Arbëresh (Albanians in Italy) celebrated the 5th centenary of the founding of Piana degli Albanesi (Hora e Arbëreshvet). The city is the most important Arbëresh religious and cultural center in Sicily. Indeed the town is often referred to as Piccola Albania (the little Albania) by Italians. It is well known to foreign tourists for its distinguished ethnic composition and rich cultural and religious (Byzantine Catholic) traditions.

The Arbëresh poet and writer Giuseppe Schiro di Maggio has published a handsome volume titled *Vjeç të tua 500* (500 Years of You) to honor this anniversary in a special way. Di Maggio has written extensively on the Arbëresh. His earlier works were warmly received by the readers in Albania, Kosove and Italy.

Di Maggio's poetry is distinguished for its narration of historic events. It follows the literary style and tradition of Gabriel Dara, the noted 19th century Arbëresh poet. The wide variety of topics and the well crafted style makes this volume interesting and enjoyable. A parallel text in Italian enables those with no command of Arbëresh to enjoy the warm and simple verses of Di Maggio's poetry. Illustrations by several noted Arbëresh artists enhance the volume with accurate portrayals of Arbëresh life, past and present.

This volume is now available for \$10.00 through Mondo Albanese, Piana degli Albanesi (Palermo), Italy.

Petro Vuçani



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

IN MEMORIAM

XHEVAT KALLAJXHIU (1904 - 1989)

*"Freedom is as vital to man, as the sun is to life.
Where there is no sun, life becomes a robot."*

Kallajxhiu, Lot e Shpresa, 1976

Xhevat Kallajxhiu lived a long, active and productive life, about half of it in his native land of Albania, the rest in exile, mainly in the United States. He was born around the turn of the century, and was close to ninety when he died on November 8, 1989. For a long time he lived in Forestville, Md., in the vicinity of Washington, D.C., together with his family.

Kallajxhiu was a fervent believer in the ideals of democracy and the democratic way of life. And it is a curious coincidence that he died at a time when all of Eastern Europe was in ferment, as one communist government after another toppled and gave way to democracy. He died with the knowledge that his political dream had come true in a large part of Europe, though not in his native land.

A Biographical Sketch

Kallajxhiu was born in the town of Gjirokastrë in southern Albania, the birthplace also of the late Enver Hoxha. But while the two men shared the same birthplace, in their politics and world outlooks they were poles apart. Years later Hoxha attacked Kallajxhiu on a couple of occasions, in attempts to discredit him as an exiled political figure.

Opposed to the radical, authoritarian politics of the Albanian Communist movement during World War II, Kallajxhiu allied himself with the Balli Kombëtar (National Front) movement, main rival of the Communist forces. When the war ended, he migrated to Italy for a brief period, then came to the United States, where he spent the rest of his life.

For a long time he was on the staff of the Albanian section of the Voice of America in Washington, D.C. We recall meeting him there for the first time, when we visited the VOA offices together with the late Louis Prifti, who also worked there. After his retirement from VOA, he ac-



Xhevat Kallajxhiu

cepted an invitation from the Vatra society to become editor of the *Dielli* newspaper. He did so mainly out of respect for the oldest Albanian newspaper still publishing, and his conviction that our community needed a democratically-oriented paper such as *Dielli*. He continued in that post for ten years (1976-86), far longer than he expected but was finally forced to resign for reasons of bad health.

Xhevat Kallajxhiu was a Moslem of the Bektashi faith. Moreover, he was a sincere believer, and spared no effort for the good of his faith in the United States. He played an important part in the founding of the Bektashian Teqe (Tekke) in Detroit, Michigan in 1954. The Teqe was for him a welcome spiritual and social retreat, and he would make periodic trips from his home in Forestville to Detroit, and stay there for several weeks or months at a time.

He was also an author who commanded respect. From 1961 to 1988, he published a total of seven books, of which three were biographies: *Lincoln* (1961), *Skenderbeu* (1975), and *John F. Kennedy* (1980); one a volume of history, *Bektashizmi dhe Teqja Shqiptare në Amerikë* (Bektashism and the Albanian Tekke in America) (1964); two books of poetry, *Lot e Shpresa* (Hopes and Tears) (1976), and *Engjëllimet e Zemrës* (Chimes of the Heart) (1988); plus a collection of humorous pieces titled *Për të*

Qeshur (1978). This last one recommends itself especially for the ever funny, ever fresh anecdotes of Nastradin Hoxha, the legendary jester-wit-folk philosopher who holds a prominent place in Albanian folklore. All of these works are in Albanian. Another work of Kallajxhiu, called *Larg Atdheut* (Far from the Fatherland), described by him as "a historical romance", remained unpublished.

The Man and His Works

Kallajxhiu was first and foremost a man who cared deeply about the Albanian nation. At the same time, he had strong feelings of sympathy and admiration for America. In this respect he resembled Fan Noli, who dedicated his life to the defense of the interests of the Albanian nation, and worked diligently to bring Wilsonian democracy to the lives of the Albanian people. Kallajxhiu, too, was a fervent advocate of democratic principles and ideals. His allegiance to the democratic way of life dates back to Gjirokaster, where he published a newspaper called none other than *Demokratia*. Democracy, freedom, independence, and peace—these were no mere slogans for Kallajxhiu, but vital and indispensable conditions for a just and well-governed society.

His book on Scanderbeg was not only a eulogy of Albania's national hero, but a celebration of freedom and independence. The great respect he had for "the virtues and ideals" of Abraham Lincoln impelled him to write a book about the Great Emancipator. The same respect for a distinguished American president inspired him some twenty years later to write a biography of John F. Kennedy, whom he calls a "champion of peace and liberty".

The quotation about freedom at the head of this article expresses well Kallajxhiu's political philosophy. Indeed, these words could well serve as an epitaph over his grave.

As editor of *Dielli*, he made that venerable paper a powerful platform for democracy. Writing in clear and vivid prose, with logical arguments

and strong emotions, he spelled out the virtues of freedom and government by consensus in a way every reader could understand.

That was one of his notable achievements as a journalist. Another was his unwavering commitment to the cause of Kosova. During his ten-year tenure as editor of *Dielli*, Kallajxhiu made Kosova a top "issue of the day", devoting as much space to it as he could spare, and backing the demands of the Kosovars to the hilt. He served well the cause of the Albanians of Yugoslavia, and not only in the pages of *Dielli*. In his first book of poetry, *Lot e Shpresa*, some of his best work is on Kosova. In it he calls Kosova "emër legjendar...tok' e bekuar...që s'u munde" (legendary name...blessed land...that has never been subdued).

Xhevat Kallajxhiu was a biographer, a historian, a poet, and an anthologist of humor. In general, he wrote with a decent respect for facts and the restrained manner of a scholar. Temperamentally he was an idealist with broad humanitarian sympathies for the oppressed. In his own life he knew much sorrow and suffering, but he bore his misfortunes with a calm spirit and a sense of humor. After publishing his book, *Per te Qeshur*, he sent us an autographed copy with the words, "...to read whenever you feel depressed".

We shall remember Xhevat Kallajxhiu as a staunch Albanian nationalist, a journalist and author of much power, and a vigorous voice for freedom and democracy.

A Friend of Xhevat



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

DOM NDRË ZADEJA

Ndalu dorë mizore! Si guxon t'qëllosh Dom Zadenë!
Priftin-patriot shum' të shquem që ka lind' Shqipnija?
Që gjithë jetën e kushtoi për të sherbye Atdhenë,
Dhe për 'Te gjithëçka ishte Zoti e Shqiptarija!

"Fashist"! e qojte pa turp atë që me guxim kumtoi:
"Adries m'i thuej krenare--Valona asht tok' shqiptare!"
Që n'gjithë jetën e Tij as u ndal, as ngurroi
Me lartësue çerdhën Ilire me qenë krenare!

"Armik"! e qojte atë që burrënisht Shkjaun njoftoi:
"Çka ka liqeni e Buna qi po lajmojn poter,"
(Kur Rozafa maj'n e Taraboshit e kqyr me droj')
"T" a dijë jugosllavi se Shkodra des me ndër."

Me Ty, o misjonar i Krishtit dhe i Memëdheut,
Të tjerë misjonarë të shquem jetën e tretën.
Besnikë të traditave të Tokës' Skenderbeut,
Me gzim jetën falën për Liri, Fé dhe të Vërtetën.

T'përunjem, Dom Zadeja, krenarija e Fisit t'Ilirisë!
Lavdi Kombit që të lindi, o bir i denjë e me vlerë!
Lavdi Ty, që gjakun pa kursim i fale Shqipnisë!
N'faqe t'historis do t'përmendesh me adhurim përherë!

1945

Xhevat Kallajxhiu



Dom Ndrë Zadeja

Shenim i editorit: Vjersha e sipërme u muer nga vepri *Lot e Shpresa* e të ndiemit Xhevat Kallajxhiu, ish editor i *Dielli-t* që vdiq me 8 nandor 1989. U recitue për të parën herë nga vetë auktori me 10 Prill 1945 gjatë një ceremonie përshtpirtnore në Kishën e Leuca-s n'Italinë Jugut, në kujtim të poetit të vramë.

Dom Ndrë Zadeja, "bylbyli i Rozafës" si e quajshin në Shkodër humbi tragjikisht jetën së bashku me shumë klerikë tjerë katolikë, orthodox e muslimanë, vikime e përshtpirtit komunist. Vjershën e botuamë me rastin e 45-vjetorit tëvdekjes së tij tragjike.

MONSIGNOR ZEF SHESTANI (1912-1990)

Monsignor Zef Shestani died on 16 March 1990 in Rome, following a long illness. He was born in Shkodër on 29 June 1912. He completed his early education at the Jesuit-run Xavier College and continued his studies for the priesthood at Propaganda Fide in Rome.

Shestani returned to Albania in 1935 and undertook apostolic works in the vast parish of Markolaj, near Shkodër. He vehemently opposed the fascist occupation of Albania in 1939. From the occupation's inception he aligned with the anti-fascist movement.

Throughout his priesthood Msgr. Shestani was active in promoting Catholic action youth groups. He was also a gifted musician and poet who authored a number of devotional and patriotic songs that are still very popular today.

Following World War II, Shestani escaped to Italy where he shepherded Albanian Catholic and Muslim refugees.

Msgr. Shestani founded and directed the Vatican Radio's "Albanian Program" until December 1988 when he retired because of poor health and age.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at the Church of Santa Maria in Traspontina, Rome. It was attended by many Albanian and friends from afar. Some 40 members from Vatican Radio also attended the rites.

To his family in Albania and to his many friends throughout the world we express our sincere condolences.



Monsignor Zef Shestani (center) with members of the Albanian Catholic Action in exile, Vatican, 1948

MËHILL TROSHANI, S.J., (1904-1983)

Father Mëhill Troshani was born in the peaceful village of Troshan, near Shkodër on 12 May, 1904. He died in 1983. We learned belatedly of his death through Jesuit Brother Gaspër Jubani.

At an early age Troshani entered the Jesuit operated Albanian Pontifical Seminary. His desire to become a Jesuit missionary was soon fulfilled. In 1923 he entered the Society of Jesus in Gorizia, Italy. Following two years of novitiate he was sent to Chieri, near Turin for further studies. Troshani spent his last year of religious formation in Florence and in 1934 was ordained a priest.

The same year Troshani returned to Albania and taught for a while in Shkodër and Tiranë before joining a program in Byzantine worship. Drawn by a desire to serve his Albanian Orthodox brothers, he took special courses and was soon ordained in the Byzantine Rite. Along with Rev. Pashko Giadri, S.J., who pioneered the dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox in Albania, Troshani initiated a regular ministry to Albanian Orthodox believers. In the Jesuit church in Tiranë it was built for this purpose a Byzantine chapel for the needs of Orthodox faithful. Unfortunately, this fruitful ministry abruptly ended with the advent of communism in Albania in 1945. Troshani and Giadri were labelled by communist authorities as "Vatican agents working to dissolve the Albanian patriotic Orthodox Church" and "incorporate it into the Vatican's jurisdiction." For this both priests spent time in prison.

Father Mëhill Troshani is well remembered for his gentle and kind character, which combined with the traditional Shkodra sense of humor made him likeable to friends and even some police officials. May he enjoy his well deserved rest with his confreres in the presence of his Lord.

* * *

GASPËR JUBANI, S.J., (1902-1989)

Jesuit Brother Gaspër Jubani died in Shkodër on 17 November 1989. Born in the village of Juban, near Shkodër, in 1902 he entered the Jesuit Order at a mature age in 1924. Following his religious formation in Italy he returned to Albania to join the band of Albanian missionaries who ministered to clans in the highlands.

Brother Jubani was a skilled and gifted administrator who during World War II managed to secure food and other necessities for some 150 Jesuits and seminarians.

With the advent of communism Brother Jubani was briefly harassed by the police authorities. After the Jesuit order was outlawed and disbanded, he returned to his native village and remained with his family undisturbed. From time to time he would write to inform about the deaths of fellow Jesuits.

Brother Jubani's passing ends the line of that remarkable group of Albanian Jesuit brothers, who with their work and exemplary lives, left a lasting imprint on the highlanders. Brother Jubani goes to a deserved rest for his tireless work among his Jesuit confreres and his beloved Albanians. We will always remember his goodness.

* * *

GJON RADOVANI, S.J., (1907-1983)

Brother Gjon Radovani was born in Shiroka at the banks of Lake Shkodër in 1907. He died during 1983. The belated news of his death reached us in a brief note from his confrere and friend Brother Gaspër Jubani.

Radovani joined the Society of Jesus in his mature years following a successful career in the restaurant and hotel business. He spent four years in Italy from 1935 to 1939 in religious formation as a Jesuit brother. Back in Albania, Radovani served his religious order well in various positions of re-

sponsibility until the dispersion of the order in 1946. Radovani persisted with the new authorities and eventually succeeded in obtaining permission to be a custodian of the Jesuit Cathedral in Albanian capital of Tiranë. In his position Brother was able to assist disbanded Jesuits in their various needs. He often visited Father Ják Gardin and other priests in the prison and labor camps. He gave them spiritual support and provided for their physical needs, especially food, clothing, and medicine.

Following the abolition of religion and the formal closure of all the churches in 1967, Brother Radovani returned to his native village Shiroka and earned his living by working at the state run enterprises. Despite the ban on religion, he was able to impart basic Catholic instruction and the Gospel message to many people.

Brother Gjon Radovani will be remembered for his self-sacrificing spirit and love for people in need. May he rest in the peace of the Lord.

* * *

REVEREND SOTIR DILOGIKA (1899-1990)

Father Dilogika was born in Hoshteva (Pemet), Albania on 19 February 1899. He studied at schools that instructed in Greek, when the Albanian language was prohibited. His later studies were in local Albanian high school.

Father Dilogika was ordained a priest by Metropolitan Theofan Noli on 21 June 1953. He served as pastor of SS Peter and Paul in Rochester, New York until 1964. Until 1972 he served as Dean of St. George Cathedral in Boston and General Secretary of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese. From 1965-1970 Father held an administrative post of "Acting Bishop" until the election of Bishop Stephan Lasko.

Father Dilogika was also the rector and assistant pastor at St. Mary's Assumption Orthodox Church in Worcester until his retirement in 1980 when he returned to Albania with his wife, Agathia Dilogika. Father Dilogika had a profound knowledge of Byzantine chant, an excellent command of English, and was a talented iconographer. He appeared in an Albanian television program on 13 March 1990 which focused on the life and work of Bishop Theofan Noli.

Father Sotir Dilogika and his gentle soul will be long remembered by those he served.

* * *

PROF. STAVRO SKENDI (1905-1989)

Stavro Skendi, professor Emeritus of Balkan Studies at Columbia University, died on 18 August 1989.

Skendi was born in Korçë in 1905 where he completed his primary school years. In 1928, he graduated from Roberts College in Constantinople and continued advanced studies at the School of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. He returned to Albania and taught for a few years until the fascist occupation of Albania. Although persecuted, Skendi managed to leave Albania for Turkey in 1943. In 1946 he emigrated to the United States and in 1951 received a doctorate from Columbia University (New York).



Prof. Stavro Skendi

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Skendi authored three important works on Albania including: *Albanian and South Slavic Oral Epic Poetry* (1954 and 1969); *Albania* (1956 and 1958); and the *Albanian National Awakening, 1878-1912*, (1967). A selection of studies by Skendi was published by University Press in New York in 1980 under the title *Balkan Cultural Studies*. These works are an indispensable reference source on Albania.

Funeral services were held on August 20 with Father Sergey, a family friend, officiating.

* * *

DR. EDUARD LICH0 (1920-1990)

Dr. Eduard Licho, editor of Dielli, died on 14 June 1990 following a brief illness. He was born in 1920 in Korçe, Southern Albania. There he completed his elementary and high school education at the French Liceum. In 1940 Licho received an education degree from the Teaching Institute of Elbasan. Following World War II he received a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Rome. He specialized in the field of journalism.

In the late 1940s he was named editor of the L'Albanie Libre newspaper which was directed by Professor Ernest Koliqi. Under Licho's editorship the newspaper achieved professional excellence both in journalism and layout. Licho was a member of the Free Albania Committee in Rome from 1953-1955. He came to the United States in 1957 and worked in maritime businesses in New York.

There he received a Masters degree in business.

Dr. Licho is remembered especially for his able organizational skill with VATRA seminars



Dr. Eduard Licho

and in his editorship of published seminar reports and studies, (e.g. Seminar on Albanian Affairs 1969, N.Y.C.; the League of Prizren and Austria-Hungary, N.Y.C.; Seminar on the Life and Work of Faik Konitza (1876-1976); Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit (1878-1978); Flamurtari i Kombit - T.F.S. Noli (1882-1982); Namik Resuli, *Albanian Literature*, 1887 and *Skenderbeu* (1468-1968), 1968).

Following the retirement of Xhevat Kallajxhi in 1986, Licho was chosen to be the new editor of Dielli, the oldest Albanian newspaper in the United States. In this position he faithfully followed in the footsteps of his great predecessors Konitza, Gegaj, Gurrazezi, and Kallajxhi.

Licho will be greatly missed by his family, associates and friends as well as by many readers who now await with interest his successor. Our Center extends sincere condolences to Licho's family in the United States and Albania.

* * *

PAULINE LOUKAS (1921-1989)

Pauline Loukas, past President of the Pan-Albanian Federation of America (VATRA) died on 18 October, 1989 after a brief illness.

Born 31 March 1921 in Worcester, Massachusetts, Pauline spent her early years and had her education there. In 1945, she married Peter Loukas who, like herself, was active in Albanian affairs in



Pauline Loukas

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

addition to raising a family she enthusiastically involved herself with various associations of the Albanian Orthodox Church and Pan-Albanian Federation (VATRA), and acted as managing editor of *Dielli* for many years. Under her dynamic leadership a number of celebrations were promoted which served to strengthen the Federation (VATRA). She will be missed by all her associates and family.

Funeral services were held at St. George Cathedral, Boston, with Very Reverend Arthur Liolin, Chancellor, presiding and her family and many friends in attendance.

* * *

DHIMITËR R. NIKOLLA (1917-1990)

Dhimitër Nikolla, editor of the Albanian newspaper *Liri* (Liberty), succumbed in Boston on 8 February 1990. He was born in Korçë, Albania and emigrated to the United States at an early age.

Nikolla was active in Albanian affairs and was one of the leaders of the Boston based Free Albania Organization. He served as editor of the organization's newspaper for many years and zealously worked to promote Albania's cultural heritage in the United States.

He leaves behind his wife and three daughters. Nikolla is very much missed by his family and the large Albanian community in Boston.

Funeral services were held at St. George (Albanian) Cathedral, Boston with Very



Dhimitër R. Nikolla

Reverend Arthur Liolin, Chancellor, presiding. Among attendees was also, Mr. Bashkim Pitarka, Albania's representative at the United Nations in New York.

* * *

STEPHEN PETERS (1907-1990)

Stephen Peters-Treska died on 17 January, 1990. Peters was born in 1907, in Treska, near Korçë, Albania. He emigrated to the United States in 1920 where he completed his education at Harvard University. He returned to Albania in 1936 and taught for a while at the Teacher's Institute in Elbasan. Shortly before the fascist occupation of Albania Peters returned to the United States.

With the outbreak of World War II Peters joined the US State Department. In 1945, he briefly served at the American mission in Tiranë until relations with Albania were severed. He then was assigned to the American consulate in Trieste and later became the first secretary of the American Embassy in Rome. Subsequently, he was awarded the "State Department Superior Honor Award."

Following his retirement from the State Department, Peters actively engaged in Albanian cultural activities.



Stephen Peters

Funeral services were conducted by the Very Reverend Arthur Liolin, Chancellor of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese. Our sincere condolences are extended to Peter's family in the United States and Albania.

* * *

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

PROF. SELMAN RIZA (1909-1988)

Recently we learned of the sudden death of the distinguished Albanian linguist Selman Riza in 1988.

Born in Gjakovë, Kosovë (Yugoslavia) in 1909, Riza studied at the French Liceum in Korçë, Albania. He later studied law and linguistics in both Paris and Vienna.

In 1944, following the liberation of Albania, he was arrested and handed over to Yugoslav partisans who sentenced him to a prison term for his "intellectual opposition to communism." Upon his release, Riza worked for a while at the Albanian Studies Institute in Prishtinë before being deported to Albania in 1955. At the University of Tiranë he actively engaged in documentary research of Albanian grammar.

The late Professor Riza will remain for Albanian scholars an example of intellectual excellence and steadfastness.

* * *

PJETËR PALOKË BERISHA (1915-1989)

Captain Pjetër P. Berisha of the Royal Albanian Army died in Shkodër on 23 November 1989. He was born in 1915 in Priften in the Albanian highland region of Grua (the Treaty of Versailles in 1918 gave his territory to the newly created State of Yugoslavia). Since Albanian schools were not allowed in Yugoslavia Berisha's father brought his son illegally to Shkodër and enrolled him at the state boarding school Konvikti i Maleve Tona.

A naturally bright and gifted child Berisha excelled throughout his time at the boarding school. He was subsequently sent to a military academy in Naples, Italy. Here, too, he advanced in military studies and was commended for his achievements. It is of interest to know that Berisha was in the same class with the future communist leader and prime minister, General Mehmet Shehu

(who allegedly killed himself in 1981, following a dispute with Party First Secretary, Enver Hoxha). Berisha graduated from the military academy and returned to Albania where he served as a commanding officer (captain) in the army.

With the communist takeover, in 1944, Berisha refused to join its ranks. He aligned himself with anti-communist guerilla fighters in the highlands. Berisha will be remembered for his refusal to surrender or to cooperate with the Yugoslav Secret Service (UDB-a), which contacted the freedom-fighters at their mountain strongholds. Instead, he surrendered to Albanian communist authorities who sentenced him to death in 1946. Later, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. After a stint in various prisons and labor camps, Berisha was conditionally released in 1985. His health had seriously deteriorated from his almost forty years in prisons and labor camps.

It was reported to his cousins in exile that Berisha died peacefully while forgiving those who had caused him and his family so much suffering.

Our condolences to his brothers Gjergj, Nikë, and Ndue and his family in Albania, as well as his Berisha highland tribe relatives in the United States. May he rest in peace. May his life and deeds be an example of steadfastness and patriotism to others.

* * *



Pjetër Berisha (I) with his friend Prerk Gruda, Shkodër, 1944

LUDOVIK SHESTANI (1916-1989)

Ludovik Shestani died suddenly in Milan, Italy on 7 November 1989. Born in Shkodër in 1916, Shestani pursued his elementary and high school education at the Jesuit-run Xavier College. He continued his college education in Italy. Afterwards he returned to Albania. Following World War II, Shestani left Albania with many others who opposed communism. He re-settled in Milan.

For many years Shestani worked in administrative positions for the Milan-based Jesuit journals: *Lettura* and *Aggiornamenti Sociali*. He was also secretary to Father Zef (Giuseppe) Valentini, S.J., the Italian born missionary-to-Albania who is well known for his Albanian studies. Our editor had the privilege during 1964 and 1965 of working with Shestani in Milan and remembers fondly his kindness and assistance.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated in the Jesuit church San Fedele in Milan. It was attended by his family and many Albanian and Italian friends.

Our sincere condolences to his wife, Angela, his brother, Dr. Kin Shestani, and other family members in Albania, Italy, and the United States.

* * *

MARK ÇUNI (1943-1989)

Mark Çuni died in Melbourne, Australia on 29 May, 1989 following a prolonged illness. He was born in Prizren, Kosovë in 1943. His family was forced to flee the country in 1945 following the communist takeover. After staying several years in refugee camps in Italy his family emigrated to Australia and settled in Melbourne. He enrolled with his sister Rosa in a Melbourne school. They were able to quickly overcome difficulties with the new language and environment.

Mark's father, Professor Lukë Çuni (a distant cousin of Mother Teresa) was a distinguished Albanian teacher who opposed communism. Thanks to his language skills he found suitable employment and was able to help other Albanian refugees in re-settling in Australia. He worked as an interpreter for the Family Law Court in Melbourne. It was during a court session in 1980 that Lukë Çuni was gunned down along with a fellow Albanian he was assisting. (The story of his tragic incident appeared in last year's issue of the Bulletin, page 182.)

Mark Çuni, like his father was very active among Albanians in Australia. His passing at such a young age has saddened his family and many friends. Some 800 people attended his funeral services.

Our Center extends sincere condolences to the Cuni family in Australia, Kosovë, and Albania.

* * *



Mark Çuni

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Books

Campan, Martin (1990), *Selected Poems* (New York University Studies in Near East Civilization #14, Washington Square Center, New York, NY 10003).

Champserx, Elisabeth & Jean (1989), *57 boulevard Staline—Chroniques albanaises* (La Découverte Enquêtes, Paris, France).

Egan, Eileen (1986), *Such a Vision of the Street: Mother Teresa—The Spirit and the Work* (Image Books, Garden City, New York).

Elsie, Robert (1986), *Dictionary of Albanian Literature* (Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, Conn. 06881).

Falaschi, Renzo (1985), *Ismail Kemal Bey Vlora, His Thought and Work* (Bardi Editore, Rome, Italy).

Falaschi, Vlora Nermin (1989), *Lietrusco Lingua Viva* (Bardi Editore, Rome, Italy).

Fox, Leonard, transl. (1989), *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit* (Gjonlekaj Publishing Co. 118-21 Queens Blvd., Ste. 608, Forest Hills, NY 11375).

Jürgen, Bernd Fischer (1984), *King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania* (Boulder, East European Monographs).

Koch, Guntram (1989), *Albania: Art and Culture in the Land of the Skiptars* (Du Mont, Cologne, FRG).

Korsalo, Bojan, et. al., eds. (1989), *Srbija i Albanci* (Narodna in Univerzitetna Knjižnica, Ljubljana, Slovenia, YU).

Lerski, George (1988), *Poland's Secret Envoy 1939-1945* (Bicentennial Publishing Corporation, New York, NY).

Marlekar, Luigi OFM (1989), *Pietro Bogdani e l'Albania del Suo Tempo* (L'antonia Edition, Paolo del Colle, Bari. Distribution: P. D. Gjeçaj—Via del Cottolengo 6, 00165 Rome, Italy).

Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee (1990), *Human Rights in the Peoples Socialist Republic of Albania* (430 Marquette Avenue, Suite 402, Minneapolis, MN 55401).

Pipa, Arshi (1989), *The Politics of Language in Socialist Albania* (East European Monographs, Boulder).

Schiro Di Maggio, Giuseppe (1988), *Vjeç në tua 500* (Mondo Albanese, Piana degli Albanesi, Palermo, Italy).

Shita, Velup, transl. (1988), *Psalteri i Kristoforidhë* (Sipërmarrja Botuese "Rilindja," Prishtinë, Kosovë, YU).

"The Investigator" (1989), *Foreign Police Spying on U. S. Albanians* (New York, NY Distribution: Fatmir Kosova, P. O. Box 1605, N. S. Beach, FL 32170).

Tozaj, Neshat (1989), *Tiuka* (Shtëpia Botuese "Naim Frashëri," Tiranë, Albania).

Valentini, Giuseppe, S. J. Festschrift In Honor Of, Eds. C. M. Roncaglia & G. B. Pellegrini (1986), *Smali Albanologjia, Balcanici, Bizantini e Orientali* (Leo S. Olshki Editore, Firenze, Italy).

Periodicals

Arthen, in Albanian and English (P. O. Box 20040, Dag Hammarskjöld Center, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.).

Besa, occasionally in Albanian (Postfach 23, D-7322 Donzdorf 1, West Germany).

Alleanza Italo Albanese (Comunicati Arbëresh), Annually in Arbëresh and English (190 Rosemount Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada).

Cristianità, monthly in Italian (Casella Postale 185, 29100 Piacenza, Italy).

Arberia, in Albanian (Dr. V. Goletti, Wielandstrasse 23, D-6900 Heidelberg, West Germany).

Le Clavis Au Monde, Revue Internationale d'Experiences Apostoliques (Via di Propaganda 16, 00187 Rome, Italy).

Gente, monthly in Italian (Via degli Astalli 16, 00186 Rome, Italy).

Missioni, Jesuit Monthly (Piazza S. Fedele 4, 20121 Milano, Italy).

The Albanian Eagle, Newsletter in English and Albanian (1220 19th Street, N.W. Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036, U.S.A.).

Lirija, semi-monthly in Albanian and English (409 West Broadway, South Boston, MA 02127, U.S.A.).

Our Lady of Grace Newsletter, in English and Arbëresh (51 Redgrave Ave., Staten Island, NY 10306, U.S.A.).

Ndërgjegjja, quarterly in Albanian and English (871 McKenny Ave., Deltona, FL 32725, U.S.A.).

Dielli, monthly in Albanian and English (517 E. Broadway, South Boston, MA 02127, U.S.A.).

The Free Albanian, occasionally (150 Fifth Avenue, Rm. 832, New York, NY 10011, U.S.A.).

Koha e Jonë, quarterly in Albanian, French, Italian and English (84 Rue La Fontaine, 75016 Paris, France).

Lidhja, Italo-Arbëresh-Greek periodical (Via S. Lucia 20, Cosenza 87100, Italy).

Oriente Cristiano, an Arbëresh religious and cultural quarterly in Italian (Piazza Belini 3, 90133 Palermo, Italy).

Katundy Yhë, Albanian (Arbëresh) and Italian quarterly (87010 Civita (CS), Italy).

Zëri Arbëreshvet, Albanian (Arbëresh) and Italian periodical (C.C.P. 21 / 7155 Ejannà (CS), Italy).

Zëri i Kosovës (Voice of Kosova), a monthly periodical of the movement for the Kosova Republic in Yugoslavia (Buchhandlung, Badhausstr. 35, 2503 Biel-Bienne, Switzerland).

Zjarr, Albanian (Arbëresh) and Italian periodical (87069 S. Demetrio Corone (CS), Italy).

Drita, monthly in Albanian (Ruga Lenjngnadi 48, YU-38230 Ferizaj, Kosova, Yugoslavia).

Info, quarterly of the Aid to the Church in Need (Postfach 1209, D-6240 Kinigstein 1, West Germany).

Catacombs, monthly Messenger of the Church of Silence (B.P. 98-92405 Courbevoie Cedex, C.C.P. 1206 29 Z Paris, France).

Open Doors with Brother Andrew, monthly (P. O. Box 6, Standlake, Witney, Oxon OX8 7SP, England).

Novi Hrvatska, Croatian political monthly (P. O. Box 190, London, SW19 8DL, England).

Hrvatska Država, Croatian political periodical (Gustav-Adolfstr. 15, Postfach 711, D-8192 Geretsried 2, West Germany).

That's Yugoslavia, monthly information digest about Yugoslavia in English and Croatian (Ost-Dienst, Hudwalckerstrasse 26, D-2000 Hamburg 60, West Germany).

HRI-Human Rights Internet Reporter, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA 02138, U.S.A.).

The South Slav Journal, Quarterly (7 Chesterford Garden, London NW3 7DD, England).

BESA-FEDE, (Arbëresh) press service (Via dei Duchi 46, 00187 Rome, Italy).

RCDA - Quarterly on Religion in Communist Dominated Areas (475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, U.S.A.).

Lidhja Kosovare, occasional newsletter of the Union of Kosovars, (P. O. Box 4304, Steinway Station, L.I.C., New York, NY 11405).

Kosova, monthly newsletter of the Committee Kosova e Lire, 1205 1/2 Hwy 8 A, Stoney Creek, Ont. L8G 1E5, Canada).

The Newsletter, bi-monthly Byzantine Catholic publication (18024 Parthenia Street, Northridge, CA 91325).

Hamdard Islamicus, Quarterly journal of Durrat Al-Hikmat (Karachi-74700-Pakistan).

Such a Europa, monthly (Gullstr. 7, 8000 München, FRG).

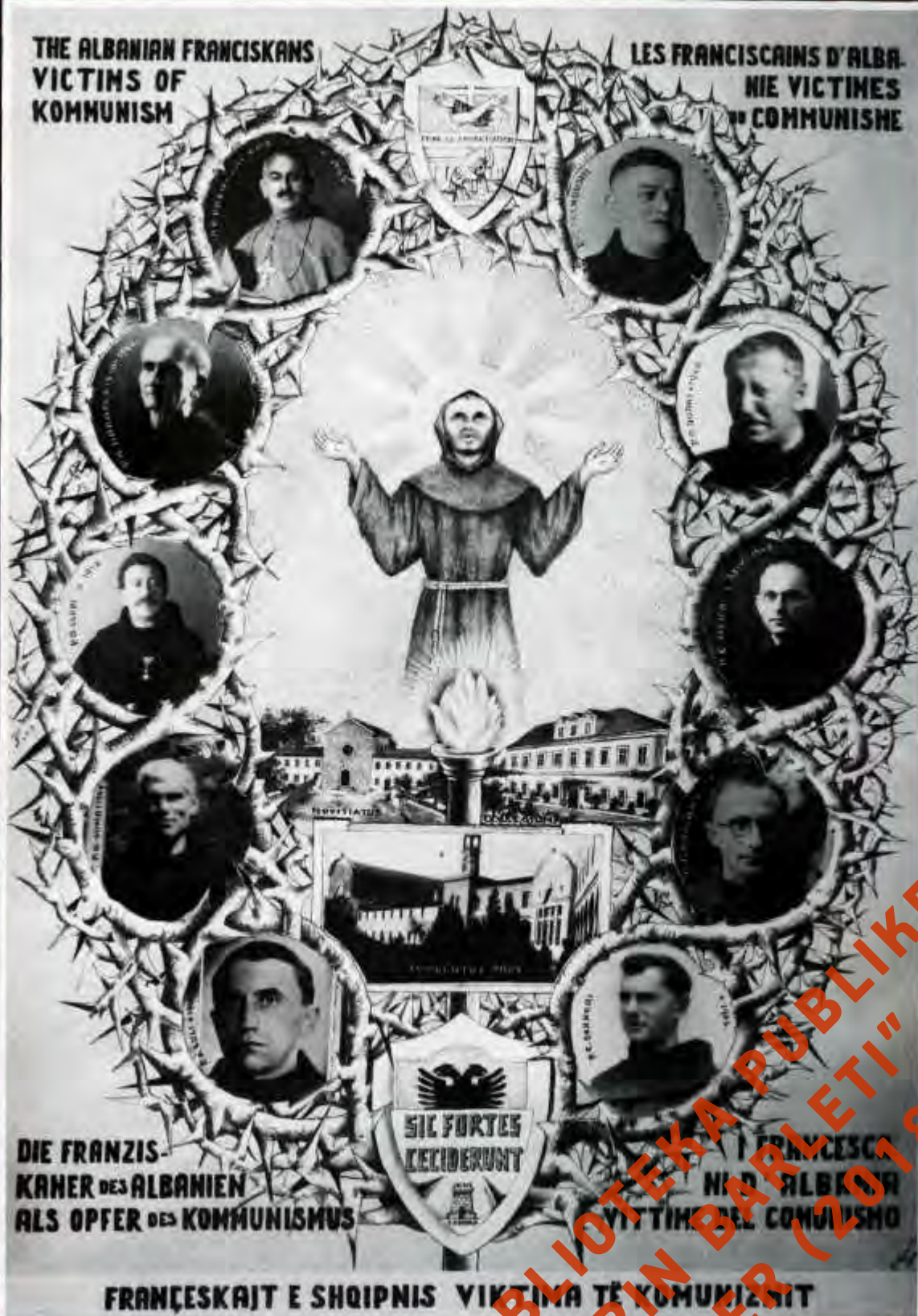
Europe Europe, quarterly (L'As du Homme, 5, rue Férou, 75006 Paris, France).

La Civiltà Cattolica, monthly (Via di Porta Pinciana 1, 00187 Rome, Italy).

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

THE ALBANIAN FRANCISKANS
VICTIMS OF
KOMMUNISM

LES FRANCISCAINS D'ALBA-
NIE VICTIMES
DU COMMUNISME



DIE FRANZIS-
KANER DES ALBANIEN
ALS OPFER DES KOMMUNISMUS

I FRANCESCO
NID ALBANO
VITTIMA DEL COMUNISMO

FRANÇESKAJT E SHQIPNIS VIKTIMA TË KOMUNIZMIT

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)