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BULLETIN**

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SHQIPTAR**



Daniel Dajani, S.J.

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ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

Vol. XIII

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We are happy to inform our readers and friends that the newly established Albanian Catholic Institute will continue to publish the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* as its official journal. With the triumph of democracy in Albania following almost a half century of Communist dictatorship, our Center's mission has been accomplished. The new institute will now engage in another kind of activity and the *Bulletin's* content will reflect this change.

The 1992 issue contains a series of articles and studies on various efforts to rebuild the Catholic Church in Albania. It concludes with testimonies of the surviving clergy.

Pope John Paul II has been credited by many analysts, including former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, for the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union. The pope's role in the peaceful transformation from dictatorship to democracy in Albania has been equally important. *Pope John Paul II and Albania* is the title of the article which explores his role as well as the other Vatican's efforts to assist Albania since the XV century.

In honor of the 80th anniversary of Albania's independence the back cover of this issue carries a listing of the dates and sites of important events in national history.

This year's *Bulletin* explores the religious conditions in Albania under the dictatorship and after the victory of freedom of conscience. It also discusses the overall situation in Albania during 1991.

The struggle of Albanians under Yugoslav (Serbian) rule for their God given rights, is another familiar topic in this 1992 *Bulletin*.

Coverage of other important items include: "Hebrews and Albanians", reports on Albanian migration and minorities, Mother Teresa, plus discussions of religious and cultural themes.

Please continue to remain with our new institute assisting us in whatever ways you can.

*The Daniel Dajani, S.J.
Albanian Catholic Institute*

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NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Please note that Albanian Catholic Information Center has ceased operations. No longer is the mailing address at 1032 Irving Street, San Francisco in use.

The address of the recently established Albanian Catholic Institute is: **Xavier Hall, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080 (USA)**. Please send all correspondence to our new address. We look forward to assist the people of Albania to move peacefully into a new era of freedom as well as spiritual and material progress.

* * *

Thank you to our many friends and readers for your kind letters and inquiries. We are especially grateful for those correspondents in Albania. For the first time they are freely writing to us and expressing their appreciation for our work on behalf of persecuted Albanians. One writer stated that "Your Bulletin is being passed hand to hand and enjoyed immensely. Some articles, especially in the Albanian language, are photocopied and disseminated among the people who are thirsty to read about truth from a Catholic publication published in America. Please do not forget us and send us as many copies as possible."

These kind of letters are truly an encouragement for our Institute staff and Board members. We will strive to help our sisters and brothers in their journey to recover from half century of spiritual and material ruin. With God's help and the intercession of Our Lady of Shkodër, Patroness of Albania, we will succeed in pulling out Albania from the brink of the abyss where it presently stands. Prayers and any kind of assistance in this endeavor from our friends and readers will be much appreciated and gratefully received.

* * *

Your generosity has greatly assisted us in meeting our printing and mailing expenses. Without your help we would have been unable to produce the 1991 issue of the *Bulletin*. We wish to thank in a special way the following: Reverend Anton Kqira and St. Paul's (Albanian) Catholic Church community of Warren, Michigan; Reverend John Sweeney, pastor of Our Lady of Peace Church in Santa Clara, California; the Dudley Perkins Foundation, San Francisco, California; Donald Banas; Brian Curdy; Arthur and Agnes Richter; Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi; Reverend Bernard Guirch; Zef Luka; and Mr. & Mrs. Philip Adams. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all those individuals of fixed or limited income for their assistance.

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

EDITORIAL

A TIME FOR HEALING AND MOVING FORWARD

Two recent letters from *Bulletin* readers reveal the deep roots of Albania's problematic situation. The first, from an Albanian living in exile, speaks of the tremendous pain and suffering which lingers in Albania. The author writes: "As much as I have valued your *Bulletin*, the past two editorials were disappointing. I wish you had expressed some words of praise and comfort for the victims of communism in Albania. Instead, you turned your column into a preaching pulpit. Many of us who have lost entire families during the bloody regime of Enver Hoxha and his communist clique cannot and will not so easily forget the red butchers who still hold important positions in Albania's government, some of them even commanding positions."

The second letter came from Albania. Its author is a member of a once high ranking communist family whose members were thrown in jail by the express orders of Hoxha. This writer longs for forgiveness and fears revenge. "The writing is on the wall," says the author, "and it is a call for revenge. The writings bear the signature 'Partija Revanshiste,' the Party of Revenge. What is our crime, except that we are the sons and daughters of Communist leaders? We realize that our parents committed horrible crimes against the people, but they also became Hoxha's victims themselves. We served our time for our fathers' crimes. Why should we be targeted once again for revenge now?"

Both letters show that the scars of pain and suffering inflicted on the innocent people of Albania during four decades of oppressive communist rule run long and deep. Certainly, we agree, forgiving your blood enemies is not easy. Humanly, it is almost impossible. However, if you are a believer, what choice do you have? Consider this scenario. "From my very birth they have hounded me. They slaughtered whole villages in order to find me out and kill me. Several times they surrounded me, trying to stone me to death. They cut off the head of my best friend. And now they have beat me heavy barbed whips so that I am bleeding from every part of my body. They have stripped me naked in front of my mother and the few friends I still have. They have pounded a crown made of sharp spiked thorns into my temple. And now they are attaching me to a cross with sharp nails. They

were not satisfied to take away dignity and my beauty - they will take even the blood from my veins."

What kind of a man would Jesus be if he had rallied his apostles and family to his aid and directed them to avenge his death? What kind of a God would we have if He had said from the cross, "All else I have endured, but this is too much. They have gone too far. I must put each of them on a cross and torture them in return for what they have done to me." Only God can help an individual overcome anger and feelings of revenge and help you understand that violence only begets violence.

To forgive and to raise humankind is the response of Christ and Christians. One simply joins forces with evil by playing its game. Revenge and violence is not ours. It belonged to the Nazis, Fascists, and Communists. Where are they now? Our task is to build the "brotherhood and reconciliation of all peoples," in the words of Pope John Paul II and the "era of a new world order of democracy and freedom," in George Bush's.

The paramount task confronting Albanians today is hard work for the spiritual rebirth and the repair of the ruined education system and economy. It is only by achieving these goals that Albania will be able to enter the family of free and prosperous European nations.

The victory of democracy over oppression, the victory of reason and conscience over the quasi-medieval communist darkness in the March elections of 1992 guarantees Albania, with the help of its traditional friends, a brighter future of peace and freedom as well as national reconciliation and integrity.

Dr. Sali Berisha, the charismatic leader of the contemporary Albanian liberation movement "LIRI-DEMOCRACI" (Freedom-Democracy) and President of the new Albania, understands well his role as a healer and just arbiter of the tragic Albanian past. Our editorial board and the board of the Albanian Catholic Institute offers our prayers for Dr. Berisha and his well-qualified team as it works for the success and well-being of all the Albanian nation

Gjon SINISHTA

GUEST EDITORIAL

ALBANIA REBORN:

THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF ALBANIAN INDEPENDENCE

God almighty in his wisdom created nations large and small, thus establishing as a principle of nature, opposed to the considerations of power politics, a multiplicity of ethnic species. The survival of these defies the dominance of huge and arrogant nations, and will do so unto the end of time.

The thinkers of the Enlightenment enunciated the argument, in view of the example of a Poland suffering the international crime of repeated partition, that "A great nation may fall, but only the miserable fail." The expansionist military empires have disappeared and, as we see in the Yugoslav case, continue to disappear. But it is an ill-founded fallacy, however widely believed, that all nations are destined to the cycle of birth, youth, maturity, and decay.

The Japanese and Jewish cases clearly show the baselessness of this oversimplification. So does the case of one of Europe's smallest and poorest but proudest nations, the Albanians.

The Albanian people, descendants of the ancient Illyrians and speakers of an Indo-European language predating the Slavic invasions, pushed by those invasions to the mountains and shores opposite Otranto at the strategic confluence of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, have survived against great odds.

In 1388 the Turks penetrated Albania for the first time, soon conquering it. Turkish rule lasted over five centuries. Yet the Albanian struggle for freedom proved irrepressible. Their fierce sense of cultural autonomy, their attachment to their language, their land, and their customs, drove them to rebel — most notably in the heroic instance of Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg, who inspired all of Christendom in his war on the Turkish power.

Gaining independence on November 28, 1912, Albania was greeted in the form of its flag, by its leading patriot of the moment, Ismail Qemali, who declared, "from this day forward we are FREE, INDEPENDENT, and SOVEREIGN." But Albania nonetheless remained the prey of its neighbors' ambitions. The secret diplomatic agreements published at the end of world war I revealed offers by the Allied powers to subdivide Albania. Restored to independence after that war by the intercession of Pope Benedict XV and the direct action of Woodrow Wilson, Albania's borders still failed to include the ethnic Albanian territories of Kosovë, Montenegro (Mal i Zi), western Macedonia (Ilirida), and

Çameria, leaving half the Albanian nation outside the state.

Interwar Albania witnessed a conflicting governmental situation, with the democratic movement of Fan Noli giving way to the monarchy of Zog, followed by the Italian fascist invasion of 1939. The collapse of the Axis order and assertion of Communist claims in central and eastern Europe contributed to the rise of Enver Hoxha, the most extreme of all the Communist imitators of Stalin. A half-century of Hoxhaite tyranny ended with the free election of March 1992 and the victory of the Democratic Party of Dr. Sali Berisha.

Albania is reborn, a virtual infant among the nations, in conditions of bitter poverty. This miraculous event comes at the close of the process of peace and liberation that began in Poland with the nonviolent revolt of Solidarnosc and that ended the cold war in Europe.

Albania's history under Hoxha saw the nightmarish rape of a profoundly spiritual and moral entity, an Albania known for its tolerance to all religions, by the criminal brutality of atheist Communism. This noble people has seen the coexistence within its communities of Sunni and Bektashi Islam, Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, and Judaism — and during the Holocaust of 1939-45 distinguished itself by protecting Jews.

Today Albania needs more than recognition of her independence. The Albanian people are fighting to defend their Kosovar brothers and sisters against discrimination that is the worst blot on human rights in Europe today. Albania also needs serious economic investment and political assistance.

Suffering starvation and homelessness under the remnants of the Hoxha regime, tens of thousands of Albanians fled to Italy, but many were forced to return. The Albanian nation that produced Mother Teresa surely deserves more in the way of solidarity from its neighbors and friends in the world.

Albania has survived the attacks and embraces of Roman, Byzantine, Serbian, Turkish, Austrian, Bulgarian, Greek, Italian, Russian, and Chinese rulers and "partners." Albania survived Hoxhaite Communism. On the 80th anniversary of Albanian independence, we salute this diamond-hard nation.

George J. LERSKI and Stephen SCHWARTZ

ALBANIA:

EIGHTY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE, 1912-1992

On November 28, 1992, nearly ten million Albanians around the world, will celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, which took place in the town of Vlorë, where the "old wise man" (plaku i urtë) Ismail Qemali raised the flag.

For eight decades, Albanians wherever they lived, have commemorated this day. According to the prevailing situation in their native country, the day have been marked with pomp and festivities or with prayers and silent meditation. Unfortunately, Albania is among those small and poor European countries which often are victims of outside, uncontrollable, and irrational historical forces unleashed on the continent.

One may wonder why, after such extenuating circumstances, this country still exists. The answer can be found in the resiliency of its people, their indomitable spirit, and their determination to preserve a national identity, in spite of hostile forces and unfortunate events. The most dangerous threat to national existence was the long Ottoman occu-

pation. Albania was separated from Europe at a time when the continent was entering in full bloom, the eras of Renaissance, Humanism, Illuminism, the social ideas of the 19th century, and the fervent intellectual adventure of the twentieth century.

Shortly after the apocalypse of World War II, and the beginning of a new and more humane march of history, Europe suffered the greatest calamity since the plague in the Middle Age. Over half the continent was covered by a veil of darkness, "the Iron Curtain" of communism. It was kept under the iron heel of the huge Soviet military complex.

Among the victims was Albania. During 47 years of communist leadership, the young and inexperienced group of Albanian cadre turned into fanatical and corrupted careerists. They did all they could to preserve the darkness. They violently extinguished every candle that was bravely lit. The best and the brightest opponents were its victims. This left the country in the hands of a mediocrity that was unable to understand the monstrosity of the crimes committed or the degree of regression they brought upon their nation and people.

Albanian communists struggled to be ideological rather than rational, to be cruel rather than compassionate, to be tribal rather than universal, and they nearly succeeded. Their regime produced a huge concentration camp, a frightened population, a disheartened and hopeless youth, and an impoverished country. The image of Albania after the communist debacle is that of an abandoned land at the mercy of blind forces ravaging it. Albania was a country of despair and misery until March 22, 1992.

If there is a constant in Albania's history, it is the uncompromising struggle of the Albanian people for their independence. After their shameful submission to Yugoslavia and then to the Soviet Union, the Albanian communist leadership finally under-



Ismail Qemal Vlorë, "Father of Albanian Independence"

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stood the situation and returned to the historical source of Albania's strength. They held on to the core of Albanian nationalism which is, the fear of their neighbors. However, they reduced the concept of independence to political isolation and a refusal to cooperate with the international community. The Albanian communists shaped the country into a huge ghetto. Xenophobia was coupled with suspicion of people towards each other. There was a complete distrust of the government. "The State" organism that was set up to protect the rights and freedoms of the individual, became the monster-god which was never satiated by the human sacrifices made on its behalf. The organized state structure including all its organs and parts were placed at the service of an ideology which worshipped materialism while rejecting humans. Greatness was perceived in terms of "bigness." In the great construction projects of steel and concrete "the human ants" were lost or crushed by machines. Instead of helping humans to help themselves, technology became the new god: cold, steely, and hated by all. Liberty and independence, the indispensable conditions for a free society of sovereign people, lacked its free spirit. The modern monstrosity was founded on the acceptance of people's slavery as the price to pay for its existence.

*

In 1992, Albania is being given the chance to have a fateful encounter with freedom! The free elections of March 22, 1992, were the first demonstration of a people coming out of the shell of fear. Nearly 5 decades of oppression have left an indelible mark on humans. It numbed the senses of many, broken the hearts of others, and generated a sense of helplessness for most. Now, the popular victory in the election could very well mark the conquest of fear. This would be the greatest victory of all. The March 22 election appears to have broken the chain of oppression. Now people seem to be freer, more confident, and consequently, more hopeful. With renewed national energy, and some help from the outside world, Albanian society can slowly emerge, victorious over its painful past.

History has taught us that the foundation of any durable society must be freedom from fear and hunger. If national independence was the hallmark of Albania's history, from now on the independence of the nation should be coupled with the independence of the individual. Only free individuals can build a free society. This is the best guarantee of the country's independence. Free people are not dependent on others. Albania must commit itself to building a society that encourages the quest for maximum freedom, and promotes the liberation of humans from anything that threatens to crush them. This will stimulate the courage needed to think freely and act accordingly. This will open all avenues to genuine creativity for one's own satisfaction and service to mankind. Albania must now embark on a course of action that will ensure for all its inhabitants a mastery of basic human rights and the privileges of a citizen. Individuals who are armed with the unlimited will to make "good faith" decisions and assumed responsibilities of their own acts, will find unlimited self-fulfillment. Albanians now must "exist" not simple "vegetate." Albania must now be the land where its citizens will be able to think and act without compulsion, where its citizens feel deeply for the unlimited movements that do not foresee obstacles.

Finally, Albania must now be the country of millions who willingly recognize and accept responsibility for their individual and collective actions. Albanians must cherish the notion of moral accountability, and be answerable for their thoughts and actions, always conscious of the responsibility toward themselves and others at home and abroad.

I dream of an Albania that fulfills my best dreams. On the eightieth anniversary of the independence of my beloved native country, my thoughts and my heart go out to all those countrymen who have gallantly suffered so much for so long. Their efforts to gain independence will bring true freedom and justice in Albania.

For theirs is the honor, theirs is the glory of
 a free Albania!

Sami REPISHTI

THE DANIEL DAJANI, S.J. ALBANIAN CATHOLIC INSTITUTE

Now that religious freedom has been won for the Albanian people, we believe that the mission of our **Albanian Catholic Information Center** has been fulfilled. Because we existed so that such an event might occur, the Center Board of Directors has decided to close operations as of 1 May, 1992. Throughout the years we have been truly blessed in our efforts to serve the cause of religious freedom for persecuted Albanians.

At the final board meeting in March, 1992 some Center members and associates discussed the need to establish an institute to assist the re-emergence of the Albanian Catholic Church. It was decided that the new institute should bear the name of Father Daniel Dajani, S.J.. When the Communists disbanded Catholic schools in early stages of their rise to power, Father Dajani was Rector of the Pontifical Albanian Seminary and President of Xavier College in Shkodër. Dajani was executed 4 March 1946.

In keeping with the spirit of this holy man and martyr, the **Daniel Dajani-Albanian Catholic Institute** is to be a religious and educational body. As such, it cannot involve itself in humanitarian activities. Other Albanian organizations have already been established for such purpose.

The new institute will promote Albania's religious and cultural heritage through publications as well as the organization of public gatherings. It will also coordinate opportunities for Albanian seminarians and young priests to study in the United States. The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, now in its thirteenth year of publication, will continue to be issued as the official journal of the Albanian Catholic Institute. Father Paul Bernadicou, S.J., Professor of Theology at the University of San Francisco, has been unanimously chosen as the new director of the institute.



Father Paul Bernadicou, S.J.

At this time we wish to express our gratitude to Fr. Rector, Thomas F. McCormick, S.J., and the Jesuit Community at the University of San Francisco for offering the new institute hospitality at Xavier Hall.

We also take this opportunity to sincerely thank all our benefactors, contributors and readers who have assisted us in various ways during the 25 years of our Center's apostolate.

Thank you and God bless you always!

Ju faleminderit! Zoti gjithmonë ju bekoftë!

Leo Gabriel Neal, OFM. Conv.
Ják (Giacomo) Gardin, S.J.
Honorary Directors
Gjon Sinishta, Editor
Albanian Catholic Bulletin

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

A LEGACY OF LOVE AND PEACE

(Editor's note: For those readers who are not familiar with Father Daniel Dajani's holy life and deeds, we reprint the testimony of Reverend Lazër Sheldija. Father Sheldija was Dajani's pupil at the Shkodra seminary in 1946. Following many hardships Sheldija was ordained a priest in Rome in 1960 and was then sent to Brazil as a missionary.

Sheldija's testimony was originally published in *The Fulfilled Promise - A Documentary Account Of Religious Persecution In Albania* (1976). At the time Sheldija used the pseudonym "Mark Kolaj" to prevent any government retaliation against his family in Albania. Reverend Sheldija came to the United States in 1973 and settled in the large Albanian Catholic community in Bronx, New York. He soon became a zealous missionary and ethnic community leader. He personally assisted many Albanian refugees to settle in the area, find jobs, apartments, and schools. Sheldija established St. Peter & Paul Church-Albanian Catholic Community in Bronx. Unfortunately, his fruitful apostolate was cut short. In 1988 three young refugees, whom Sheldija assisted, brutally killed the priest. They robbed his modest apartment of \$98.00.

Throughout his long missionary career, Reverend Sheldija preached a message of faith and freedom. He inspired his people to resist the evil of communist oppression. He was a true martyr for faith and fatherland).

* * *

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

the ordeal now experience in modern Albania grave hardships and difficulties. They do not enjoy even basic human rights.

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

Shortly after the first spate of arrests of Catholic clergy, I accompanied Dajani on a visit to a wealthy family that provided financial support to maintain the Jesuit institutions. At the time the Jesuit com-

munity, the seminary students, and the college pupils were suffering from malnutrition. The government was bringing pressure to bear in hopes that the Jesuits could first be coerced into silence and then give their support to the new regime. Dajani was faced with the problem of feeding a community of over 150 people. Despite scarce supplies, the generosity of the benefactors was great.

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

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



Father Daniel Dajani, S.J.

be under them although Communists, than to be occupied by the Greeks, Italians or Yugoslavs, who are our enemies." He must have seen the confused look on my face for he said, "One day you will see my answers are right." Today, 30 years later, I can understand his remarkable insight into the situation.

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

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

The priests challenged the prosecutor, the judges and the mob with their direct answers and their immediate denial of the false and ridiculous accusations. Several declarations from Parliament representatives were offered in support of the defendants' claims of innocence. Despite having suffered terrible tortures, the prisoners remained calm and serene. They readily pardoned insults and impressed many in attendance with their innocence. Some plaintiffs had swollen faces with purplish marks around their eyes from the fierce beatings they had received. One seminarian could



Father Gjon Fausti, S.J., Vice-provincial of Jesuits in Albania

not stand to answer questions because of painful injuries received in preliminary interrogations.

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

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

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

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

Lazër SHELDIJA



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

SEMINARIAN MARK ÇUNI MARTYR OF FAITH AND FREEDOM

The Albanian seminarian Mark Çuni (Chuni) was a theology student about to be ordained a diocesan priest. He was executed by the communist authorities on March 4, 1946. Four months earlier Çuni was arrested and accused of "disseminating anti-communist propaganda" and "anti-state activity" and for having founded the **Bashkimi Shqiptar** (Albanian Union). Çuni organized this anti-communist Union in the seminary without the knowledge or permission of his Jesuit superiors. Çuni's action gave the communist government authorities the pretext for arresting, convicting and executing the Jesuit superiors in Albania. The communists suppressed all the orders' schools and other apostolic works. They also proclaimed the Jesuit order in Albania to be illegal. At his trial Çuni disavowed that the Jesuits had anything to do with his organization. He declared that:

"We seminarians are not sorry and do not ask for mercy for ourselves because we employed the propaganda means which the constitution guarantees and you yourselves promote. Nevertheless we are sorry and



Seminarian Mark Çuni

can't be absolved from the guilt of having broken the rules of obedience and thus having implicated our superiors whom you are falsely presenting as ringleaders of our Albanian Union organization."

During the trial Çuni was so weak from torture that he could not stand by himself. He had to be supported by guards while he was being interrogated by the court. In his testimony Çuni courageously defended the principles of freedom and democracy. He turned the tables on the presiding court and judge, and became their prosecutor. He showed their violations of the constitution and international law.

Last year in Shkodër on the anniversary of his death, a commemorative service was held. Many of his friends from the Albanian Union who were likewise sentenced to long terms in prisons and labor camps participated. During the service Çuni and other executed members of **Bashkimi Shqiptar** were eulogized for their sublime sacrifice for freedom and democracy. All present pledged to uphold the ideals of Çuni and his fellow martyrs.

(We are grateful to Kolë Mbilli for informing us of the commemoration and for sending us Mark Çuni's photograph from his seminary days.)

REPORT ON ALBANIA TO THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

(Editor's Note: On 5 December, 1991, The Eighth General Congregation of the Synod of Bishops was held in the Synod Hall of Rome with Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo serving as President-Delegate. Bishop Ercole Lupinacci of the Vatican's delegation to Albania was present. The delegation spent 3 months in Albania in an attempt to assess the losses and the needs of the Church as she emerged from the catacombs. We are pleased to present to our readers Lupinacci's presentation before the synod. It was originally published in the 22 January, 1992 edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*.)

The people of the Eparchy of Lungro of the Italo-Albanians are particularly grateful that their Bishop was named to this Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops; they offer reverent homage to His Holiness John Paul II.

The dramatic images of the Albanian refugees massed on the docks at Brindisi and in the stadium at Bari remain in the eyes and consciences of all. Five centuries ago the Albanian refugees, our ancestors, fled Turkish domination and came

to Italy and were welcomed. Today, this situation is repeated not only for the Albanians but for all of Eastern Europe. Therefore, Europe is called to choose a life that is ascetical, upright and honest, renouncing "consumerism," in order to share hope and resources with its brothers and sisters. It must imitate the "good Samaritan" who did not ask about the name and origin, but bent down to help his "neighbor" at his own expense, without asking for anything in return. The Apostle Paul, describing the program of the Church's "catholicity," wrote to the Christians that, having received the gifts of the Spirit from the community in Judea, in the sad situation which that community was facing they had to react in the sense of truly accepting those gifts, giving material gifts in exchange. We have much to receive because we have much to give. Speaking to the Albanians, in 1968 on the occasion of the 5th centenary celebration of the death of George Kastrioti—Skanderbeg Pope Paul VI affirmed: Fidelity in all your tasks, the sense of true honor and the complex of manly virtues.... These virtues George Kastrioti Skanderbeg left to you as a sacred heritage in your homeland, and in

the diaspora and in exile. And if history has seen you oppressed and scattered, God's goodness has enabled you and all the members of your 'Gjak i shprishur' (scattered blood), with your innate fervent activity and acquired understanding, to give yourselves everywhere through alliances and collaboration which have often made you the fore-runners of modern ecumenism."

A special case of ecumenical solidarity by the faithful can be found in Tirana, the capital of Albania. The Catholic church of the Sacred Heart has been re-opened for worship. Its bell-tower had been razed to the ground. The Catholics, however, had succeeded in saving the bell. Next to it is the Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, whose bell-tower was intact, but without any bell. This church too has been re-opened for worship. The Catholics offered their bell to the Orthodox, who placed it in their bell-tower. Thus a single bell and a single bell-tower calls the faithful of the two churches to their celebrations. This is a nice story, but a symbolic one, too, as it shows that the vocation and mission to the world is common, and that we need communion and solidarity among the faithful to proclaim the one Gospel.

There is another story to tell. When the Muslims of Albania received their first financial aid from their brothers and sisters throughout the world, a nice sum was given for the immediate needs of the Christian community.

These facts lead us too reflect on the urgent demand for evangelization, which His Holiness refers to as "the new evangelization": restoring faith and substance to the ancient Christian communities who, because of historical events, have lost their past enthusiasm,

As the voice of the Eastern Churches, we Italo-Albanians — we Arbëresh — can make a contribution to the common reflection of our brothers and sisters of the Christian West, beginning with our theology, our liturgical life, and our long, difficult historical experience, which reveals original values.

The missionary and apostolic method in regard to the "new evangelization," while fulfilling the modern views which concentrate on children and adolescents, should, in the current situation, be addressed especially to adults, benefiting from the experience of the Fathers of the Church who spoke primarily to adults.

Ercole LUPINACCI

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 Watsonline.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

THE GREAT ENDEAVOR TO RESTORE THE CHURCH IN ALBANIA

(Editor's Note: Religious believers are emerging from the Albanian catacombs into the open air of freedom. Recently, an Orthodox priest from Albania participated in the Ecumenical Encounter at Santiago de Compostela. The Reverend Zef Simoni of Shkodër, at the personal invitation of Pope John Paul II, participated in the 1991 Special Assembly of the Synod of the European Bishops in Rome. The smoldering flame of Albanian Christianity has been rekindled. A new day of hope, peace, and reconciliation has begun.

We are happy to publish Fr. Simoni's speech to the Synod of the European Bishops. The *Osservatore Romano* and the European press have published lengthy commentaries on Fr. Simoni's presentation. We are sure that our readers will appreciate the words of an Albanian priest who endured religious persecution for so many years.)

* * *

I come from Albania, a small country on the Adriatic coast, with a population of little more than 3,000,000 people of various religions. The majority of the inhabitants are Muslim (approximately 70 percent), Orthodox Christians (20 percent) and 10 percent (approximately 400,000) are Catholic.

Christianity in our country goes back to the earliest times of preaching. In one of his letters St. Paul tells us that before he came to Rome he spent a whole winter in southern Albania.

The 15th century was a time of great disturbance due to the great barbarian invasions by the Turks; our country, however, which was divided into so many principalities, was somehow reunited and it named as its king one of the first kings of Europe, George Castriota Skanderbeg, who fought uninterruptedly against the Turkish invasions for 25 years.

After Skanderbeg's death, Albania continued to fight for a few years but weakened by such a long period of warfare, it could no longer resist and fell to Turkish domination.

Albania took its first steps towards reawakening and our Catholic faith took on new life after the proclamation of independence on 28 November 1912. Unfortunately, our refound freedom did not last long, because in 1944 the communist regime came into power and brought terrible oppression. In a single year the convents and the schools run by the clergy were all closed (in the city of Shkodër there were three secondary Catholic schools which accepted students of all religious denominations).

There was both direct and indirect persecution, brought about through the use of trickery, pressure, tactics, violence, in a subtle, refined way, of control even of every sacred image, every cross (even the women's trunks which they had at home, Easter eggs and sweets and other things).

In November 1990 freedom of religion began in Albania. Until July of this year Masses were celebrated every day in the town cemeteries, and especially on Sundays, with 30,000 people participating with great calm and true devotion outside, in the wind, cold or summer sun.

In the name of all the Albanian Catholics, or rather, of the whole of Albania, I want to thank the Holy Father for his concern in having reached out to us. The Holy See's delegation, led by Archbishop Ercole Liguori, in which Mons. Vincenzo Paglia and Fr. Pietro Maione, S.J., took part, was among the first delegations to come to Albania.

The needs are great. There are more than 200 parishes in all of Albania, but with only 31 priests, many of whom are sick and elderly. The youngest is 59 years old. Because of the lack of priests many people, especially in the mountain regions,

have not been baptized. However, there is great demand for religion. We need only mention that more than 200 young men have already asked to study for the priesthood.

The task awaiting us is enormous; we are talking about totally re-founding the Church in Albania, from the reorganization of Dioceses to parish structures, from the Church's works to catechesis (we have no liturgical book other than the missal which was published a few days ago; there are absolutely no catechesisms, prayer books, etc.). However, perhaps the greatest problem is that of the catechesis of the young people and young adults. We need only consider that the average age of the population is 27; of a population of 3 million people, 850,000 of them are students from elementary school to university level. Obviously, the great majority of these have never heard of Jesus, or hardly know his name. The great challenge for us is evangelization.

We are in a country with a majority Muslim population and a large Orthodox presence. This situation also presents a task for us. Maybe in Albania we can promote the climate of mutual tolerance which has characterized us in this century.

Zef SIMONI



Shkodra Cathedral today with Albanian Pontifical Seminary (1)



Shkodra Cathedral as sport arena, 1968



Interior of Shkodra Cathedral 1933.



Bell tower of the Shkodër Cathedral. The Cathedral constructed in 1858, was the largest church building in Albania. Over 5,000 people could worship within its walls. In 1967 the bell tower was demolished during the anti-religious campaign.

REBUILDING ALBANIA'S CHURCHES

"We love the Pope," read the signs greeting Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Ivan Dias at Tiranë airport on December 16, 1991. Both the signs and the Papal representative would have been illegal in Albania until recently.

Dias found the churches and religious institutions of Albania in grave disrepair. But along with the American Bishops and Germany's non-profit corporation **Aid to the Church in Need** (ACN) the Vatican plans to help the situation. Each party has agreed to provide \$200,000 of the overall \$600,000 needed for the reconstruction projects.

"Our prayers have been answered," said Rev. R. George Sarauskas, director of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) Office. "Our bothers and sisters are beginning to experience not only the joys of freedom, but the challenges as well. This is an opportunity for us to help."

The funds will be used almost exclusively for the Cathedral located in the nation's Roman Catholic center — the northern city of Shkodër.

"The cathedral has a great symbolic significance for the faithful," said Rev. Florian Kapusciak, C.M., head of programs for ACN. "Until the Cathedral is made functional, Church life in and around Shkodër cannot be made normal."

People used to travel through the night to attend services at the cathedral on holy days. After the communists took control of the country, it was converted into a gymnasium and sporting arena, with bleachers. To restore it, it will have to be gutted and almost entirely reconstructed.

Its location, in Shkodër, makes it even more important to Albanian Catholics. Shkodër is the Catholic center of Albania. It was in this northern town where Fr. Simon Jubani celebrated the daring public Mass on All Souls Day (Nov. 4) 1990 which sped the demise of the communist ban on religious worship. 50,000 people gathered for the

Mass which was held in the town cemetery, which had been desecrated by the communists in 1967.

"As Christians, we forgive all those who have done wrong to our people, but we cannot forget our martyrs' sacrifice for faith, justice and freedom," said the celebrant of the Mass, Fr. Simon Jubani.

There is much to forgive. By the end of the Communist rule only one Catholic bishop, 30 priests, and about 50 nuns remained alive in Albania, most of them elderly. At present there is no Albanian bishops conference, and all the pastoral needs have to be managed by the Papal Nuncio, Dias.

Archbishop Dias found Albania's situation desperate. He encouraged individuals and government agencies in the United States and Western Europe to send more aid. According to Dias, many smaller projects could be accomplished by volunteers, such as upgrading the performance of Albanian farmers or simply helping civilians to achieve a decent standard of living.

About 13 percent of the Albanian population was Catholic before the Communist rule, but there is no reliable way to arrive at an updated figure. An estimated 35,000 people were executed by the communists, and at least 40,000 served life sentences in forced labor camps.

Archbishop Dias considers it necessary to seek Albanian priests from abroad, especially Italy and the small Albanian Catholic communities of the United States.

Aid to the Church in Need is trying to raise an additional 1.5 million dollars to fully renovate or partially restore four other Albanian Churches. Sources in Albania suggested the candidates.

The organization has chosen St. Lucy in Durrës; St. Paul in Elbasan; Sacred Heart in Albania's capital, Tiranë, and St. Rochus in Shirokë. In its recent newsletter, ACN says it needs \$15 donations from

100,000 people to make the reconstruction possible.

To calculate the need, two ACN representatives visited Albania in the summer of 1991. An Italian construction firm with experience in Albania has been commissioned to prepare plans and cost estimates. Most of the building materials will be imported from Italy. Work will begin in November, 1992 on the projects. They will not be completed without more donations.

With these organizations adding their hand, things can only get better in Albania's Church. But without the help of the rest of us, even these kind efforts will be destined to fail. Our friends and readers who wish to participate in this important project can send their donations to:

ACN (Aid to the Church in Need (Albania))

PO BOX 576

Deer Park, NY 11729-0576

or:

US Catholic Conference

AID to the Church in Albania

3211 4th Street, N.E.

Washington, D.C. 20017-1194



Exterior view of the Jesuit Fathers' Sacred Heart Church, Tirane, 1941

Lulash Dajçi



Interior view of the Sacred Heart Church, Tirane, 1941

ALBANIA'S CLERICS LEAD A REBIRTH

"Even a dog would not have slept where we had to," said Haxhi Hafiz Sabri Koci, the religious leader of Albania's Muslims, the largest of this country's three major religions.

Mr. Koci, whose title is Mufti, showed his hands - toilworn, the joints of some fingers swollen out of shape from his years in prison.

"Twenty-one years at hard labor," he said, nodding toward them. "In the cooper mines, I was a welder, a plumber. I did every kind of work, just like the other prisoners. They were mainly political."

At the age of 71, Mr. Koci and other clergymen - Muslim, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox - have stepped out of shadows of nearly a half-century of persecution and are leading a rebirth of religion. Of the population of three million, estimates are that more than 65 percent are nominally Muslim, 20 percent Orthodox and 13 percent Catholic.

Icons Ripped Out

The Albanian Orthodox Annunciation Church in the center of this capital is beginning to resemble what it was until the old Government ripped out the iconostasis, the wall of icons that is a feature of Orthodox churches, painted over the frescoes and destroyed most paintings while sending the oldest to a museum. Workers are busy reconverting the church, which has served as a gymnasium.

A wizened man entered and crossed himself. He made his way through the masons at work to the rear of the iconostasis, then knelt, kissed some sacred pages and muttered a prayer.

He was the Rev. Theodor Plushko, 74 years old, returning to a consecrated church for the first time since the Government closed his village church in the north in 1967 and gave the roof tiles and other removable materials to a collective farm. Fa-

ther Plushko was sent to work in its orchards. Asked if his church would be repaired, he answered, "With God's help."

Albania staged a witchhunt for people in all religions, like other nations where Communist Governments took power in Eastern Europe in 1944-45. Then, in 1967, Albania's dictator, Enver Hoxha, declared this country officially atheist and wrote the ban on all religious observance into the Constitution.

Then, without public announcement, the wreckers went to work throughout the country to raze and gut what leaders of all faiths now estimate to have been 95 percent of the mosques and churches.

The few that were spared were either marked by plaques identifying them without mentioning their purpose, as "cultural monuments," like this capital's 18th century Ethem Bej Mosque, or desecrated for state use, like the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Shkodra, once the seat of an archbishop, which became a sports arena.

Religious leaders of different faiths now speak hopefully of rebuilding plans, but in this impoverished country's state of economic collapse and total dependence on foreign aid even for its minimal food needs, construction is not at the top of the agenda.

Bardhyl Fico, a Muslim cartoonist who heads the new State Secretariat for Religion, said of Mr. Hoxha's campaign to destroy religious buildings: "He also destroyed the human soul. This will take generations to restore."

Ignorant of Religion

Bishop Jean Dias, a Vatican diplomat here, said, "More than the churches, we need to build up the human person." Monsignor Dias, an Indian prelate, is Papal nuncio, or ambassador, to Albania, and he was also named by Pope John Paul II to be bishop in charge of all Roman Catho-

lics, in the virtual absence of Albanian priests still able to serve.

Of 300 priests in this country when the Communist came to power, only 30 survive, said Monsignor Dias.

Mr. Fico said: "The Catholics suffered the most. They were the most loyal to their faith, the most intransigent. It is to their honor that they were the most persecuted." Because of the terror engendered by a vast network of informers, people here say, parents did not dare pass on their faith.

"We were afraid to tell our children that secretly we continued to pray," said Peter Rama, 77 years old, an elder of Annunciation Church. "We feared they might talk about it outside."

As a result, the many who now flock to mosques and churches are for the most part ignorant of the religion they are learning to profess.

"The mosques are full of young people who know nothing about Islam," said Sali Tivari, Secretary General of the Muslim Community.

All faiths have started seminaries and schools, and several Islamic countries have sent young men here to teach Albanian youths. Christian teachers report that their task is made exceptionally difficult by what Monsignor Dias says the Pope called "Communism at its worst" when he sent him here.

"They reduced them to subhuman condition," the Bishop said. "I find the material sometimes is very raw."

Henry KAMM

**New York Times, 3/27/1992*

BANISHING GOD IN ALBANIA

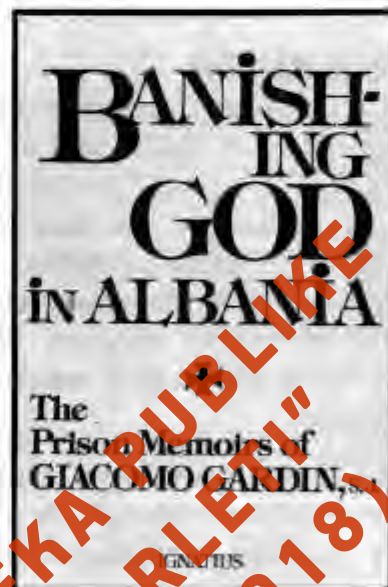
The Prison Memoirs of Fr. Giacomo Gardin, S.J.

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 countries 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.

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ALBANIAN CHURCH RISES FROM THE RUINS

(Editor's Note: *Aid to the Church in Need* has for several decades been active in the apostolate of providing humanitarian work and aid to the Church in Eastern Europe. The group has recently taken an active interest in Albania. The October, 1991 edition of *Mirror*, the bimonthly newsletter of *Aid to the Church in Need*, recently featured an article describing the organization's work in Albania. We present a summary of it here.)

Horn blaring, our taxi jolts along the country road, frightening cows, sheep and goats out of the way. Crowds of pedestrians in tattered clothing step back with a contemptuous wave of the hand. Here and there a young goat-herd remains stretched out in the street and lets the traffic drive around him. It takes almost an hour for us to travel the 20 miles from Tiranë to Durrës.

Beeping the horn almost incessantly, the taxi winds its way between carts drawn by oxen or horses, overtaking Soviet-style trucks and packed buses with broken windows. Finally we arrive at the dock area which is cordoned off by police units. "Italian Embassy, Italian Embassy," shouts our companion to the police who let us pass as if we were top-ranking diplomats.

In a sort of scrap-yard amongst the ruins of warehouses and dockyard buildings, we climb out of the taxi and make our way to the landing where the ferry from Trieste has just docked. A thousand, perhaps two thousand people, have gathered here. Militia men with rubber truncheons, riot shields and ancient bayonets prevent the crowd from storming the ferry. Nervously we watch the proceedings. Two young Albanians are in process



Before (1967) and after (1991) view of St. Joseph's Church, Shkodër. The Communists confiscated the building from the Jesuits in 1946.

of pushing an old Fiat on to the dock, its left head-lamp is held on only with plaster. Somewhere in the ship's hold must be the jeep, a donation from *Aid to the Church in Need* to the Church in Albania. The vehicle is intended to be used for the pastoral care of the faithful in the mountainous regions and remote villages.

Half an hour later, 62 years old Fr. Zef Simoni emerges from the stern of the ship where he has been negotiating with the crew. He has come to collect the vehicle. Wearing his Roman-collar and with a warm smile the little man greets us. Of the thirty surviving Catholic priests in Albania, he is one of the youngest. Twelve years in prison camp, several arrests for the unauthorized exercise of his ministry and a life of hard work have left their mark, but have not broken him.

After an hour of futile waiting during which three cars, a refrigerator, a washing machine and a deep-freeze were unloaded, we leave Father Zef and our Italian guide and go to seek out the only remaining Catholic church in the town. The passers-by, even those wearing a cross around their neck are unable to point the way for us shrugging their shoulders helplessly. We stumble through winding back alleys and finally find ourselves in front of a heap of rubble. There, behind a crumbling wall with a rusty wrought-iron gateway, beneath which a stinking open sewer has cut its course in the sandy soil, we find the last relic of almost two thousand years of Christian Durrës - a tiny little church with gaping cracks in the walls, a collapsing roof, smashed windows and a wooden plank for a door. In the church yard, now hidden beneath make-shift shacks, two geese peck about for something to eat.

This is the beginning of our depressing stock-taking which over the next few days leads us from Tiranë, through Lezha, to Shkodër 70 miles to the north and to Elbasan 33 miles south-east. That same evening in Tiranë we meet Mother Teresa. In recent months she has set up three small houses in Albania - one in Shkodër and two in Tiranë.

Fourteen nuns and eleven aspirants are on duty night and day. In Shkodër they have set up a home for forty abandoned children who had been left to die a slow death of starvation in the state hospitals. Some are physically handicapped, others mentally disturbed or so malnourished that they lie apathetically on their cots. Since then Mother Teresa has opened another two houses in Elbasan and Durrës for homeless women and under-fed children.

You do not need to look far to find poverty in Albania - it is literally lying on the streets - half-starved children and emaciated adults. Mother Teresa's houses are besieged night and day by old people and disillusioned mothers with their sickly children. Hour after hour they wait in the oppressive heat in the vague hope of help. For weeks the Sisters have not had minutes peace or a night's sleep. Their attempt to distribute clothing and medicines amongst the waiting people ended in a brawl. When Mother Teresa ordered her exhausted nuns to have a night's rest and had the doors locked, stones rained down on the house for hours.

On the way to Lezha we visit the former Franciscan church and friary which were badly damaged in 1967 at the height of the anti-religious "cultural revolution." Recently they have started to hold Sunday Mass here again. The faithful have made make-shift repairs inside and set up a small altar with a wooden cross. The central nave is stark and empty. As we make our way back to the car a young militiaman runs after us shouting loudly. Having recovered from the initial shock, I realize what he wants: a little cross for his neck chain. As I did not have one, I gave him the rosary which Mother Teresa had just given me. Beaming with delight, he takes it in his hand and kisses it again and again.

The political situation of Albania remains unclear. Nobody believes that anything will really change. The old structures are still in place and the people will live in fear. What they need most in this situation is international aid to put an end

to the catastrophe which is gaining ground: help for the economy, for education, in the socio-charitable field and, last but not least, for pastoral care, to make these people, deformed by 45 years of terror, once more into the likeness of God.

This is our task! A task which can only be achieved with faith, hope, and charity. With a faith to move mountains, with the hope of salvation, the only thing which gives our life any meaning. And with charity, without which all our deeds are built on sand. A task which cannot be accomplished without priests. But priests are not apply-

ing to go to Albania, to the great disappointment of Mother Teresa. We have promised her Sisters little chapel trucks for the religious, charitable and medical care for the population. Sadly we cannot send priests there, because in old Europe with its two, one or no child families are hardly any. While the priest and the Levite continue to walk past this need, Albania can only wait for the Samaritan, who cannot remove the need, but who can relieve it a little. You could be this Samaritan!

Christine DECKER



Before (1967) and after (1991) view of the Franciscan Monastery and Church in Lezhe (left to right). The Communists authorities seized this structure in 1967



Exterior of Elbasan church stripped of religious symbols. The Communist government recently returned the structure to Christian believers. Aid to the Church in Need will help in its restoration

THE CALVARY OF NIKOLLË TROSHANI

ALBANIA'S LAST SURVIVING BISHOP

(Editor's Note: The brash and bold experiment of communism has failed. Try as they might, men could not build an earthly paradise on a foundation of atheistic materialism. All that is left from the years of communist occupation in Albania is death, economic devastation, and despair.

But there is also hope, particularly the distinctively Christian hope whose source is the very death and devastation which would otherwise cause despair. The November 3, 1991 issue of 30 Days magazine published an interview by Tommaso Ricci with Albanian Bishop Nikolla Troshani. In it, Troshani shows how atheistic political oppression causes Christian hope. The facts and quotations below were first published in 30 Days.)

Bishop Nikollë Troshani was born into a very poor Albanian family on May 4, 1915 in Troshan, a small town in the north from which his surname derives. His father was murdered before he was born, and his mother dedicated her life to her son. She sent him to the Jesuits' seminary in Scutari when he was 12, and then on to the Jesuits in Padua in northern Italy when he was 17. There, he completed his theological studies and was ordained a priest on March 8, 1941, when he was 26 years old.

Troshani served in several parishes in his home region, in Kallmet and Zejmen. Communism came to Albania and made it dangerous to be a priest. With many others, Troshani fell prey to the ideological mandates of the new regime. He was accused of spying for the Vatican, convicted on falsified evidence, and sentenced to 12 years in prison. Arrested on August 31, 1946, he served his sentence in Scutari until his release, in 1958.

Undaunted by the displeasure of the communists, Fr. Troshani immediately began parish work once again. He served the Catholics in the mountains of Vela. In 1959 he was consecrated a bishop



Bishop Nikollë Troshani

there by Ernest Çoba, then bishop of Kozha. A few years later bishop Çoba was arrested and sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment—a sentence he would not live long enough to complete.

In 1959, things were still free enough in Albania that Troshani could be consecrated publicly. It was not long before such a thing would be impossible in Albania. In 1967, Enver Hoxha made his notorious claim that Albania was to be "the world's first atheistic state." Says bishop Troshani, "All believers of whatever confession suddenly found themselves outlawed. In that one terrible year, Albania's Communist regime executed two bishops, a seminarian and several priests by firing

squad." Troshani had to flee Vela *incognito* to avoid a similar fate. He went to a cousin's home in Scutari and was arrested there on November 12, 1972.

He underwent excruciating tortures before being sentenced to another 15 years in prison. He was released on January 13, 1986, three months before his sentence would have come to an end. Altogether, Bishop Troshani spent 22 years of his life in Albanian prisons. He says of his time there:

"For those who were sentenced to hard labor, in the mines, it was a terrible life. Many died of hunger and exhaustion and many more in accidents. But doctors had diagnosed hypertension in me so I was exempted. I am alive only by the grace of God and the Blessed Virgin."

Through all the hardship, says Troshani, "No priest gave in to pressure from the regime. Not a single one of them did anything against the Church and against the Pontiff. We did receive many requests, some polite and some not so polite, to become spies in the service of Communism but all the priests preferred prison, torture or death. Despite this fearful situation, the people have preserved the Christian faith."

His words refer to the Orthodox Christians as well as the Catholics of Albania. The Catholic Faith has been an integral part of Albania's development since St. Paul and St. Andrew evangelized the pagans when they stopped at Durrës on their way to Rome in the earliest days of the Church.

In Troshani's words, "Christianity may well have had to lie low several times but it has never faded. There were times when the only way to live the faith was to kneel, recite some prayer or other and teach these things to children. But even when God seemed angry with His Church and permitted persecution, the people remained faithful. They preferred prison to becoming forgetful of God."

A cousin, now 75 years old, from Troshan was the only person brave enough to welcome and help Troshani when he was released. He said,

"The Government can do what it likes but I will not abandon you." Bishop Troshani has been living in his home for the past six years.

Asked in the *30 Days* article about the changes in Albania which began in November, 1990, Troshani gives credit to Fr. Simon Jubani from Shkodër, calling him "the first to take courage and risk his life" for reform. On November 4, 1990, Fr. Jubani said the first public Mass in Albania since the communists outlawed religion in 1967. In a striking symbol of the hope that sustains Albania's Catholics in the midst of hardship, Fr. Jubani's mass took place in a cemetery. "The cemeteries are the only places of worship left in Albania," says Troshani. "The churches and canonicals no longer exist. We celebrate Masses in the muddy cemeteries."

On July 18, 1991, Troshani travelled to Rome at the invitation of the Holy See. He had an audience with Pope John Paul II on August 7, but the Pope was very tired. They could not discuss Albania's situation in any detail. The Holy Father told him at that time, "Tell the Albanian people that the Pontiff has always held Albania close to his heart and will continue to do so his whole life long." Hearing that Troshani would have to go to an Italian hospital in a month, the Pope invited him back. The second audience, at noon on September 16, was a lengthy one.

Troshani reports that he was deeply moved by the meeting. His Holiness addressed the Albanian people in the piercing words, "Albania, have faith and do not despair. The day will come when I will visit you, too." Archbishop Ivan Dias, the Papal Nuncio, has already set up residence in Albania.

In Troshani's words, "Bishop Troshani carries out his priestly and episcopal vocation. 'How do I spend my days?' he asks. Being the only bishop in Albania is a busy life. Masses, baptisms, Communion. People, even communists, seek me out. They invite me to their homes, to meet their families." He is responsible for ten parishes in a country without automobiles. He has to walk for hours to get from

one to the next. There are only thirty priests in Albania. Fifteen of them are all but incapacitated as a consequence of old age, disease and years of suffering and maltreatment.

And so the Catholic Faith in Albania struggles on, lacking in everything but hope. In closing, Bishop Troshani commented briefly on the Serbian aggression in neighboring Yugoslavia. "I am thinking especially of the suffering of our brothers in the Kosovë region of Yugoslavia where so many Albanians live," he said. "They have plenty of rea-

son to be afraid. The Serbs have always harbored a burning hatred for Albanians. May God help us."

He also spoke about the famous Albanian, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The paradox did not escape him: at a time of such great suffering in Albania, an Albanian has become a tangible sign of hope in Christ to countless people all over the world. Said Troshani, "I have met Mother five times since my release. I hope that one day she will be canonized, because she is a saint."

Tommaso RICCI

THE TESTIMONY OF A PRIEST SURVIVOR

At age 87 Father Leon Kabashi is the oldest Albanian Franciscan survivor of the religious holocaust. In a recent interview with a writer from DRITA, the Albanian Catholic publication in Kosova, Kabashi recounted his 21 year ordeal in Communist goulags. Printed below are some excerpts from this interview.

Since 1945 I have been arrested three times. The first time I was sentenced to seven years in prison on the charge that I had propagated religion among the youth. I was condemned, although by Constitutional law this practice was not permitted. Following my release seven years later the government offered me the opportunity to teach if I would relinquish my priesthood and faith. Of course I refused their offer. I told the authorities that my mother had raised me in the faith of Jesus Christ and I would not reject it for any reason, even if my life was at risk. I assured them that I was a priest and would serve my people until death. I was immediately arrested a second time... My third arrest came when I was 71 years old. This time the sentence was ten years at hard

labor for engaging in illegal celebrations of the Mass and for unlawfully conducting religious rites. I was sent from Shkoder to Kavaja to dig canals. During twenty-four days of severe work amidst extreme suffering and hunger, 7 priests in our work company died. This company was comprised of elite educators and religious. I remember once the guards sent us to the river Shkumbini allegedly to obtain water but, in fact, their plan was to liquidate a select number of our group to shoot us. In order to justify their action, the guards were prepared to claim that we were trying to escape. Thank God, we learned this plan was rejected by the prison director. I wish to recount another incident that occurred after my second imprisonment. The government assigned me to work as a house painter. I had graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence and it was thought I would be a good painter. People were so afraid that they avoided greeting me when I was working. Once, while I was painting a house in Shkodër, I made a small sign of the cross before I started to

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eat lunch. A five year old girl observed me and said : 'No, not that way. You make the sign of the cross to your forehead, then to your chest, left side and right side and then put your hands together.' She was a real example to me. I asked the child who taught her to make the sign of the cross ? The child looked at me and said 'Mommy.' During all 45 years of brutal persecution, Albanian Catholics and their shepherds never ceased to believe firmly in God. The tortures and terrorism served to

strengthen our resolve and our faith. I have to give thanks first to Our Lord for helping me to survive these many years of suffering and hardship. Likewise I am very grateful for the love and support of my sister, Rosa, who throughout my three imprisonments sacrificed to assist me spiritually and materially. I firmly believe that all Albanians will live in happier times of peace and freedom. God sometimes is slow in responding but the Lord never forgets his children.



Father Leon Kabashi, OFM

Sister of Father Kabashi, Roza tracked her brother for 15 years through prisons and labor camps



A group of Don Bosco Saverianum College Association, Shkoder, 1945 with Father Gjon Fausti, S.J. (center) Vice Provincial of Albanian Jesuits. Left of Fausti is Father Jak Gardin, S.J., President of the Association. To the upper right of Father Fausti can be seen Father Gjon Vllas, S.J.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE IN ALBANIA: THE TRANSITION FROM "YES" TO "NO"

We are pleased to present our readers with an English translation of the study *Freedom of Conscience in Albania: The Transition from "Yes" to "No"*, done by Fatos Tarifa and Elira Cela. The remarks were initially published in French by the renowned *CONSCIENCE ET LIBERTÉ* (Nr. 42/1991) quarterly of Bern, Switzerland. We disagree with the authors on several of their assertions.

First, the study refers to the role played by religious groups in opposing the Ottoman occupiers. Tarifa and Cela do not make it clear that Albanian Catholics opposed the Ottomans for centuries, as enemies of "Faith and Fatherland." They failed to acknowledge that Franciscan and diocesan priests were largely responsible for preserving Albanian language, customs and culture.

Second, in the discussion of Enver Hoxha's anti-religious campaign of the late 1960's, the study commits a serious error of fact. The authors stated that, "Although there was no blood shed, it was an unprecedented violation of the freedom of conscience." Indeed, there was blood shed in the 1967 campaign: 14 priests and at least one bishop, (Bishop Ernest Çoba of Shkodër) are known to have been killed. Shtjefën Kurti was executed in a labor camp for baptizing a child at the parent's request.

Third, the report asserts that, "It is not surprising that the first [to encourage reform] were intellectuals such as the renowned writer Ismail Kadare." We would remind the authors that the first substantial opposition to the communists came from Shkodër, Albania's center of Catholicism. Catholics led the way. Fr. Simon Jubani's public Mass, held in open opposition to Albanian authorities, galvanized the resistance movement and paved the way for the massive student demonstrations in Tiranë. All of this happened a short while after Kadare defected to France, where he has quietly refused to denounce the Albanian communists outright and has continued to defend the books he wrote praising Communism and Enver Hoxha.

Tarifa and Cela's study is slightly flawed but nonetheless worthwhile, and we reprint it here in full.

The authors of this article have the honor of being the first to be able to have a paper appear in the review *Conscience and Freedom*. Natives of an atheistic country, they earlier would have had great difficulty in publishing this paper in the official organ of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Freedom. This paper is, in fact, one of numerous signs illustrating the recent democratic changes in Albania.

The problems linked to freedom of conscience are numerous. Instead of tackling this subject from a theoretical point of view, we found it more reasonable to provide first, a brief history of religion and its role in Albania and second, to examine the political, social and historical elements which led to the "extinction," then the "revival" of religion during the last twenty five years. This seems important, since not one objective piece of information on religious freedom was able to filter through the hermetically closed borders of the country. The extremely limited contacts with Albania and its inhabitants and the censorship on information formed an image of Albania which does not necessarily reflect reality.

I

The history of monotheism in Albania began with the Christianization of Illyria - the old name of Albania and its neighboring provinces -, during the occupation by the Romans.

Following the division of the Empire, the Albanian territories found themselves in the Oriental Party. The evolution of Christianity and its division among the Catholic and Orthodox churches, in particular, were determined for Albania, in view of its geopolitical position as the boundary between the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Byzantine Empire. While forming part of the Byzantine Empire, the population of Illyria maintained ties with the Roman Church for centuries. The division of the Albanian populace into Catholics and Orthodox did not occur until after the definitive separation of the two churches in 1054. The conversion from one church to the other remained, nevertheless, frequent in this region. The expansion of the Catholic and Orthodox churches into different parts of Albania during the course of the High Middle Ages, generally depended on the destiny of the Empires to which the region belonged.¹

With the arrival of the Ottoman armies in 1385, a new religion, Islam, was introduced into Albania. The Ottomans succeeded in islamicizing nearly two thirds of the Albanian population, either by economic pressure or by violent means. However, they did not succeed in assimilating this population.

II

This last point naturally leads us to examine the relationship existing between religion and the awakening of national sentiment. The second half of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman occupied territories of the Balkans was marked by the awakening of nationalism and the increase of liberation movements.

The case of Albania distinguishes itself, however, from that of other countries. While the Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians and other peoples of the Balkans were Orthodox Christians, the Albanians were

divided into three religious faiths. For the Balkan peoples, the Ottoman intruders were a national enemy as well as a religious enemy. However, the majority of Albanians shared the religious convictions of their rulers. This is one reason why religion was never able to play the same role in the national renaissance in Albania as it did in similar movements which developed elsewhere in the Balkans. The struggle against Ottoman oppression was not solely motivated by national interests but was also a defense of the Christian faith against Islam.²

In the remainder of the Balkans, the religious membership of the population was able to play a role in national cohesion. In Albania different religions slowed the movement. This explains why the representatives who favored the national renaissance adopted as their political slogan: "The religion of Albania is Albanianism." This creed, in spite of the diversity of religious convictions, strengthened the national unity of the Albanians. Nevertheless, the relations between the different religious communities were always characterized by an exceptional tolerance and the total absence of religious conflict.

III

These historical facts are important to understand the subsequent evolution of religious life and of relations between religious groups. One other interesting aspect is that each one of these three religions was propagated in its native tongue: Latin (Catholicism), Greek (Orthodox) and Arabic (Islam). The Holy Books which grounded the faith and morality of each of these religions could not take root in the heart of believers. They remained a foreign element. Religion, instead of becoming a doctrine, was preserved under the form of rites and customs mixed with popular tradition and with daily life.

After the foundation of the national Albanian state in 1912, the three religious communities and their institutions were able to coexist in a spirit of exemplary tolerance. For decades relations be-

tween the state and religious institutions in Albania resembled very much the ones practised in all civilized society.

IV

The communist regime which gained power after World War II originally applied a democratic policy towards religion and the different religious communities.

The first Constitution of the Hoxha government (1946) stipulated that:

Freedom of conscience and religious freedom is guaranteed to all citizens. The Church is separated from the state. Religious communities are free to profess and practice their faith. It is forbidden to use the Church and religion for political ends. Likewise, every political organization founded on religion is equally forbidden. The state can materially support religious communities.³

Unfortunately this policy was one of short duration. It was replaced by extremist attitudes towards religion and freedom of conscience which ended up as a veritable "hunt for sorcerers" among the clergy and an unprecedented violent attack on one of the most fundamental human rights: the freedom of conscience.

From the beginning of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," we witnessed an economic attack on the clergy. In placing them in the same category as the exploiting class which had just been overturned, the Albanian state was able to expropriate the property of religious institutions. Numerous Catholic priests were qualified as "enemies," or "counter-revolutionaries" and condemned by the existing government power.

The official propaganda of the totalitarian regime invented the philosophical postulate that freedom of conscience can only be genuine and complete when we abandon all religious convic-

tion and liberate ourselves from this religious opium which enslaves the human spirit.

V

Hostility towards religion and restrictions on freedom of conscience attained their height in the middle 1960's. A mass revolutionary movement, launched by the youth, led to the almost total collapse of religion and its institutions. It was a unique experience in the history of civilization, because it was taken to an extreme that even the great Utopians of the 18th century could not have imagined.

The official press, history books and museum guides tell us that on January 21, 1967, the secondary school students of Durrës (Albania's second city) declared war on religion and decided to expel all religious conviction from the spirit of the people and to close and destroy all the country's religious institutions.

In fact, this initiative corresponded to the policy inspired by the totalitarian regime. The antireligious campaign was launched only two months after Albania's Party of Labor's Fifth Congress. In the course of the congress, Enver Hoxha made a report on the necessity of increasing class struggle at the ideological level.⁴

The campaign was accompanied by a whole series of Hoxha's discourses and declarations on the subject of the struggle against religion. On February 27, 1967, some weeks after the events at Durrës, Hoxha sent a message to all party Committees, declaring that:

Religion is the opium of the people. It is our task to convince the citizens of this fundamental truth and to liberate from it those who found themselves intoxicated - and there are many. This will not be an easy task, but it is not impossible. We must not hope that this problem resolves itself spontaneously, or that new generations renounce themselves from this drug...

Our struggle against religion must be led at once against its dogmas, its philosophical, idealistic and mysterious vision of the world and against all religious customs rooted in the heart of believers and even of nonbelievers...

We have rendered all religious propaganda impossible and especially the publication of books and documents. We have equally forbidden the formation of new ecclesiastics. It is necessary now, therefore, to look for the problem in churches and mosques as being the last places where religious officials can gather their faithful and incite them to not abandon their faith, even if it expresses itself only in limited forms. It is necessary, therefore, for us to pursue the struggle until they have disappeared from our soil.⁵

Such ideas filled the discourses of Enver Hoxha and other leading communists of official communist propagandists of the late 1960's. They clearly indicated that the attack against religion, was not a spontaneous movement of youth but, a perfectly orchestrated action by the totalitarian regime. In record time, all places of worship - approximately 2,171 - were closed, and the Catholic, Orthodox and Islamic clergy were put into the streets. The Islamic community, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the Bektashian Community (Muslim) were banned. This systematic action was highly successful. Although there was no blood shed, it was an unprecedented violation of the freedom of conscience.

This attack on both religion and freedom of conscience was justified in juridical terms by the 1976 Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania which proclaimed religion illegal. Article 37 stipulated that:

"The State recognizes no religion whatever it may be and supports atheist propaganda in order to inculcate in its citizens,

the scientific, materialist conception of the world."

Article 55, reiterated that,

"It is forbidden to found any organization which would be of fascist, antidemocratic, religious or antisocialist character. All activities or propaganda in favor of fascism, religion, war and against democracy, socialism, even any incitement to xenophobia or racism, are forbidden."⁶

There is nothing more absurd than to juxtapose religion, its institutions or its means of information with fascism and its propaganda. This, however, was done. Albanians were deprived of their right to freedom of thought, conviction and expression, not to mention numerous elementary freedoms and rights. Even if freedom of conscience and expression were formally accepted in principle it was refused in practise. Under the pretext of fighting the "spiritual dictatorship of religion"⁷ another form of spiritual dictatorship was emplaced. By means of propaganda, education and law, the citizens were required to renounce their religion, espouse atheism and reject all ideology but Marxism-Leninism. The 1976 Constitution officially adopted Marxism-Leninism as "the overseeing ideology," on which all socialist order bases itself (Article 3). The Communist Party, in deciding at the Constitutional level to prohibit the creation of any political party, implied that, in the near future, this ideology would be the only one existing in Albania. Consequently, Atheism and Marxism became obligatory for all Albanian citizens. Nobody dared to speak out against Marxism, nobody dared to proffer a positive judgment on Freud and psychoanalysis or on Sartre and existentialism. Their works, moreover, were not available in libraries or at least not accessible to the common run of people. Nobody could admit to admiring decadent writers such as Kafka and Joyce. Even Dostoevski and Hemingway were considered a threat to the Communist morality of the Albanians. Any indication of admiration for an impressionistic or expressionistic

work was reprehensible. A book on Van Gogh could have been the object of juridical proceedings. Although the quality of life was extremely low in Albania in relation to Europe, the average Albanian was required to accept that socialist Albania was happy, whereas it was hell for the simple worker in capitalist Europe.

VII

It is quite evident that laws and decrees were never able to suppress freedom of thought or conviction, even religious conviction. A law can only slow their development, but it cannot destroy freedom of thought. Prohibited ideas conceal themselves in order to escape despotism and police terror. They even circulate in a secretive way, in order not to constitute any provocation of official ideology, but they cannot disappear completely. As a rule, the more severe a law, the more freedom of thought roots itself deeply in the human conscience, until the day when it once more expresses itself freely and openly. It is sometimes a long and difficult process, but eventually democracy will bring about human liberty.

During the second half of the 1980's, the pressure became greater and greater in order that religion be reintroduced. Throughout the two decades of prohibition, families had discretely conserved religious rites (especially the Catholics). However, it was a question of liberating individuals from their fear of repression, of liberating their conscience from ideas imposed by law and of allowing them to take an individual approach to the truth.

It is not surprising that the first to formulate this demand were intellectuals such as the renowned writer Ismail Kadare. Due to a climate of peace, security and democracy reigning in Europe, Kadare could no longer tolerate controlled repression on the conscience of Albanian citizens. The era of dictatorship based on a single party seemed gone. After the fall of the Berlin wall, it became clear that Albania, although having been isolated from the rest of the world, could only develop by

joining itself to modern European civilization. As in other European countries, a multiparty democracy took the place of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless, democracy and pluralism imply tolerance and complete freedom of conscience. Even before the birth of the political opposition movement, one of the first requirements of the democratic initiative was to abrogate articles of the Constitution which forbade freedom of religion. At the outset, the totalitarian Communist regime was vehemently opposed to any reintroduction of religion in Albania. But due to the pressure from the people, and changes in foreign governments on which it depended, the government accepted change. The party amended the historical error that had caused the Albanian people to suffer.

When the new Constitution was elaborated, there was controversy about the formulation of the article on religion. Yet no one opposed the already existing opinion that, in a new democratic and pluralistic society, such as was being formed in Albania, freedom of conscience could not exist without freedom of conviction and religious practise.

Although the new Constitution has not yet been adopted, the pluralistic Parliament, that issued from the first free elections in March, 1991, voted a law on the essential dispositions of the Constitution. In this law, no mention is made of religion. In the most recent plan of the Constitution, appearing in the official government newspaper, the articles ratifying the restoration of religion and freedom of conscience were drawn up as follows:

The Republic of Albania is a lay state. The state respects freedom of conviction. Religious sects are free and equal before law. It is forbidden to use them for political ends or in order to provoke national division. Relations between the State and religious institutions are regulated by law. (article 23)

The citizens have the guarantee of freedom of conscience. They have the right of believing in religion or in not believing in anything at all, of preaching their religion or of making propaganda for atheism. (Article 44)

Although the new Constitution has not yet come into effect, freedom of conscience has become a reality. Everyone can have religious convictions, defend their philosophy, express their opinions and adhere to a political party or organization to the measure in which they are not of fascist character, do not advocate war and are not opposed to national interests.

However, despite this freedom, religion has not yet been fully restored in Albania. Freedom and the right to practice a religion - including religious propaganda - are accessible to everyone. However, the institutionalization of religion will require more time. This state of affairs is due to the historical reality of the past twenty-five years in Albania, during which all religious activity was paralyzed and illegal.

It is difficult to imagine a society where, for more than two decades, nobody had the right to believe in God and where every prayer had to remain secret, as though it constituted a sin or a crime. The new generation of Albanians, born in this period or just prior to it, had no idea of what religion was. Their education remained purely atheistic. Due to the average low age in Albania (50% are less than 23 years of age), we can deduce from it that more than 70% of the population has never crossed the doorway of a church or a mosque, and has never listened to religious texts. In an inquiry led some months ago with 346 students from the University of Tirana, the question: "To what religion do you belong?" received the following response: 23%, Islam, 13%, Orthodox, 9%, Catholic, 51%, no religious affiliation, 4%, without opinion. The other question: "Do you consider yourself a believer?" gained the following responses:

6%, strong believers, 14%, moderate believers, 77%, not at all, 3% without opinion or response.

For more than twenty-five years, no religious institutions existed in Albania. Most of them were destroyed in the anti-religious campaign which swept the country in 1967 and subsequent years. A large portion of religious buildings was transformed into warehouses for wheat or corn, others were converted into cinemas, cultural centers, museums or gymnasiums. Very valuable religious artifacts were damaged or destroyed. The few buildings which still exist must undergo repair work and be reconverted for religious use. Nevertheless, in Albania's catastrophic economic situation, we can only hope that this can be done with the financial aid from foreign religious centers or religious communities of other nations.

The complete reintroduction of religion is equally slowed down by the lack of clergy. Many



Father Simon Jullini

priests are too old to take up their commitments again. Nevertheless, some of them have begun to gather their faithful around them.

In the new democratic climate which reigns in Albania, the pluralistic government seems inclined to favor the return of religion, despite the difficult economic situation. Recently, the local press announced the creation of a Department of Culture, Youth and Sports in order to promote relations with religious communities for the restoration of religion and the new formation of priests in Albania and abroad.*

We conclude by saying that religion has not completely disappeared in Albania. It now knows a new awakening parallel to the progress of democracy in this country. We observe a transition that we could qualify historically from No to Yes in regards to freedom of conscience. We want to believe that the restoration of this principle will be complete, thus broadening the freedoms and human rights of all. We also want to believe that the return of religious life will not bring discord between the different confessions, although these have demonstrated remarkable tolerance in the past. Finally, it is the conviction of a well-known Catholic

priest, Shkodra's Dom Simon Jubani, who declared that: "The Albanians are all brothers; some are Muslim, others are Catholic, but all are Albanians."

Fatos TARIFA and Elira CELA

Notes:

*Fatos Tarifa is the director of the Center for Sociological Research at the University of Tirana. Elira Cela is a researcher in the Sociology Department of Religions at the same Center.

1. E. Cela, *Tradita afetare të popullit shqiptar*, (ed. 8) Nëntori, Tirana, 1991, p.23
2. F. Tarifa, *Drejt Pavarësisë: Çeshnja e çlirimit kombëtar në mendimin politik-shoqëror rilindës 1900-1912*, (ed. 8) Nëntori, Tirana, 1985, p.139
3. *Constitution on the Socialist Republic of Albania*, published by Albania's Defense Committee, Boston, Massachusetts, 1949, p.6,7
4. E. Hoxha, *Selected Works*, Vol. IV, (ed. 8) Nëntori, Tirana, 1982, p. 163-180
5. E. Hoxha, *Vepra*, Vol. 35 (ed. 8) Nëntori, Tirana, 1982, p.103
6. *Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania*, (ed. 8) Nëntori, Tirana, 1977, p. 20, 26,27
7. Cf. *Zëri i popullit*, April 10, 1991
8. Cf. *Zëri i popullit* August 2, 1991



Execution of a group of Catholic clergy in Albania, 1946. Reconstruction of the scene by a witness

ALBANIAN JESUIT HONORED AT ST. PETER'S

The 500th anniversary of the birth of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus was marked in 1991. The Society's members are called Jesuits. The Holy Father Pope John Paul II and the Superior General of the Jesuits, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach celebrated the event at Mass in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome along with some 400 Jesuits from around the world.

In the special edition of the Jesuit yearbook, which celebrated 500 years of the order's active apostolates, Fr. John O'Callaghan, S.J., gave a personal account of the ceremony. Fr. O'Callaghan is the General Assistant of the Society. He wrote that,

"At the enormous vesting table set up in a wing of St. Peter's, so long it is called 'Via della Sagrestia,' or 'Sacristy Road,' Providence had put me next to a small weatherbeaten old man in what seemed to be a Franciscan habit, putting on his vestments with more than the usual difficulty."

Fr. O'Callaghan was soon to learn that this inspiring little man was no Franciscan - he was a Jesuit: Fr. Gjergj Vata, S.J., of Albania.

"What an honor for us, Father," said O'Callaghan, mistakenly wishing to give a warm welcome to a brother from a different religious order.

"Oh no," replied Fr. Vata. "It is an honor for me!"

Fr. Vata informed him that he was from Albania. O'Callaghan asked if he had been able to function as a priest in Albania, and Vata told him a sad truth with a wry smile: no, he had not — he had been in and out of prison for twenty years.

Later, Mass was celebrated by the Holy Father and concelebrated by Fr. General Kolvenbach, and several Jesuit bishops. O'Callaghan was surprised to see one other person on the altar. It was Fr. Gjergj Vata, the 75 year old Albanian priest.

Some fifty years earlier, Fr. Vata had been in Italy to study for the priesthood. And now here he was teaching his fellow priests the meaning of endurance through suffering and hardship.

It is difficult to imagine how Fr. Vata must have felt. After being cut off from the Church and the Society of Jesus for so many years, he was standing in St. Peter's Basilica, with the Holy Father, surrounded by hundreds of Jesuits, concelebrating a Mass.

Among the people who attended the Anniversary Mass was at least one other Albanian, Mother Teresa. One can imagine that she shared many of Fr. Vata's feelings. Her country had futilely tried to rid itself of its priests — but here was a priest from her homeland concelebrating the Eucharist.



Father Gjergj Vata (left) with Reverend Mark Hasi (center) and Jesuit Father Luciano Caldirolì, Shkodër, 1944. Hasi died at the Ballsh camp in 1981. Father Caldirolì is now the director of the Jesuit Printing House SO-GRA-RO in Rome.



Father Gjergj Vata (left) talking with Pope John Paul II and Jesuit Superior General Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach at St. Peter's, 1991.

JOHN PAUL II AND ALBANIA

Pope John Paul II's experience of facing hostile secular authority is perhaps unique among the popes in modern history. During his lifetime, Pope John Paul II has seen his native Poland ruled with an iron hand by both the Nazis and the Communists. Their persecution was not just destructive bigotry, like the old-fashioned religious persecutors, instead, the Nazis and Communists advocated the end of *all* religion in hopes of establishing a society based on materialistic philosophy.

It is no wonder then that John Paul II is a most outspoken and influential defender of human rights. He is revered by the Catholic faithful not only as the Vicar of Christ, but as a strong and powerful advocate of the oppressed, the poor, and neglected. People across the globe look to Pope John Paul II for guidance as the conscience of our time. A recent article in *Time* magazine acknowledges the credit due the pontiff for the triumph of freedom over oppression in Eastern Europe.

In particular, John Paul II's many words of faith, hope and encouragement for the Albanian people have lifted their spirits and strengthened the dedication of those who work in the cause of freedom. As the pontiff told our editor during a 1986 audience, "I never miss an opportunity to speak of the persecuted Church and the suffering of all believers in Albania."

The present Pontiff follows in a well-established tradition of Papal care and concern for the Albanian people: spiritually, culturally and ethnically. On June 1, 1932, Pope Pius XI greeted a group of Albanians who had come to see him. He said, "Albania is more dear to my heart now than when I was a young priest." As a young man, he often wrote in defense of Albania. "How many beautiful pages of history you recall to mind in this moment, my dear children," he said.

The long family history of the Vatican's paternal care for her sons and daughters in Albania

began with St. Peter. After the three year preparation for his ministry, St. Paul recorded that he conferred with Peter for fifteen days. It was Peter, with James and John, who later gave Paul a mission to the gentiles. He later writes, "...from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum [present day Albania] I have finished preaching the gospel of Christ." (Romans 15:19-20).

The Catholics of Albania always remained faithful to the Holy See, even during fierce persecutions. When the Turkish armies tried to invade the West in the fifteenth century, the first and strongest resistance they met was from Albanians. Pope Calistus III gave Albania 20,000 ducats to defend the West against the invasion of the Turkish armies. In 1457, the Pontiff sent a letter to Albania's leader, George Castrioti, the legendary Skanderbeg. "There is not a man in the world who may ignore your heroic undertakings and who with the greatest praises does not hold you up to heaven and who does not speak of you as a true champion and magnanimous defender of Christianity," he wrote. The Pope sent a papal legate to help Skanderbeg gather the necessary troops and weapons. In a second letter to Skanderbeg the pope exhorted him to resist, and predicted his victory. The Popes who continued Calistus' support of Skanderbeg, included Eugenio IV, Niccolo V, Pius II and Paolo II.

In 1919 Pope Benedict XV promised Bishop Luigi Bumçi that he would help uphold Albanian rights in the cities of Kocë and Gjirokastra against the Greeks. The pope said, "Give [the Albanian people] our word that tomorrow we will recommend and we will intercede for the two cities in danger." Indeed the two cities were saved. One year later the same pope announced that the Vatican would be the first European government to officially recognize the Albanian state. On that occasion, his Holiness Benedict XV wrote: "Now that your noble nation has been able to acquire free-

dom and begin down the road towards true progress, it was fitting that, through our Delegate, we renew once again and better those relations which for centuries bound Albania to the Apostolic See."

More recently, Pope Pius XII, at the opening of the Italo-Albanian (Arbëresh) Synod of Grottaferrata in 1940, wrote:

"It is true that the tree which one time had matured fruit so beautiful and delicate appeared to be drying up and dying.... and behold a new vigor of life began to make itself felt towards the end of the fifteenth century with the coming of many Albanian refugees, who were still showing signs of the winning strength of George Castrioti-Skanderbeg. When, after the death of the hero, these noble people defender of freedom and the faith, were threatened by the fury of the enemy, they preferred exile, rather than sacrifice that which was more dear to their heart and was most precious; and here they found a second homeland, with full liberty to follow their own rite and their own traditions."

In 1968, Pope Paul VI marked the occasion of the 5th centenary of Skanderbeg's death. He received the Albanians from all over the world at the Vatican. He had the following words of praise for their hero:

Dearest sons of Albania!

Today, the 5th Centenary of the death of George Castriota Skanderbeg, one of your nation's heroes, and a Christian hero too, We welcome you to the Holy See, which you may consider your father's house. It is a great pleasure to see you; We know that the spirit in which you celebrate this occasion is the traditional spirit of your race, which has always placed above all others the traditional values of the "bessa" or faithfulness to all obligations, of the "ndera," or

sense of true honor, and of the "burnia" or the complex of many virtues.

Your hero Skanderbeg was the living personification of these qualities; he bequeathed them to you, together with attachment to the old friends of your country - among them the Holy See, for it is numbered with those who have never been untrue.

George Castriota has left these virtues in your fatherland, to follow you in diaspora and exile. And if history has brought you oppression and dispersion, God in his Goodness has seen to it that you, with all the members of your "gjaku i shprishur," (scattered blood-brotherhood) with your strong, innate energy, and acquired understanding, have made yourselves everywhere the medium of alliance and collaboration. This has often resulted in your becoming the forerunners of modern ecumenism.

None of the pontiffs has been as fond of the Church in Albania as John Paul II. From the very outset of his papacy, he took the cause of Albanian believers under his wings. By numerous personal and group contacts with Albanian representatives in exile, John Paul II openly encouraged the suffering faithful in Albania. At the same time he issued a strong condemnation of anti-religious and anti-human laws and practices of the Albanian Communist government.

In 1979, John Paul II visited the century old Arbëresh monastery Grottaferrata, near Rome. During the conversation with Arbëresh monks, the Pope said, "I pray every day for Albania. I love Albania very much." He expressed his deep sorrow at the financial religious oppression that his children endured there.

John Paul II made a pilgrimage to Otranto in southern Italy in 1980. He celebrated an open air Mass on the Hill of the Martyrs to commemorate the 500th Anniversary of the death of Blessed An-



Pope John Paul II embracing an elderly Albanian woman during his visit to the Church of San Gregorio, Rome, 1986

tonio Primaldo and his 800 companions. They had died for their faith during the persecution imposed by the occupying Ottoman army under command of Gjedik Ahmed Pasha.

During his homily, John Paul II paused and said, "I cannot but turn my eyes to the 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."

As a further sign of his great concern for the plight of the Albanian people, the Holy Father announced his mission intention for the month of November 1984, "Religious Freedom in Albania." He asked for the prayers of millions of Catholics throughout the world for an end to the suffering in Albania, and that the Church there may be reborn. The Pope sought to draw attention to the needs of his Albanian children who for four decades had experienced many hardships as well as the blood of martyrdom. Responding to Pope John Paul II's request, the Apostleship of Prayer distributed tens of thousands of copies of its monthly leaflet to

parishes around the world. In addition to the Holy Father's words, scripture passages and a special prayer were printed on the leaflets. The pope stressed the importance of this intention during the month of the dead. He petitioned the intercession of two Albanian saints: St. Jerome, who first translated the Bible into the Latin *Vulgate*, and St. Nicetas, who composed the *Te Deum* prayer.

John Paul II took the opportunity of a visit to Bari, Italy in February 1984. There he spoke about Albania. He remarked, "My thought goes from this city also to our brothers and sisters of Albania, who cannot demonstrate externally their religious faith, a fundamental right of the human person. While I recommend them to your prayers in common, I want to assure these brothers who are so tried that they are particularly present in my heart and that I entrust them to our Lady."

In April 1986, the Holy Father visited with the Albanian Catholic Community in Rome at the Church of St. Gregorio, just outside the Vatican walls. He was warmly received. At this church Albanian refugees and residents of Rome worship

regularly. The community's chaplain, Fr. Daniel Gječaj spoke for the group, saying, "We are happy you do not forget us as your smaller and more afflicted children, with whom you suffer." The pope responded that,

"Every day, especially during 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... I believe profoundly, together with you, that Christ lives - as he lives 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 a cross. But he rose. Christ 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.... We must cry out to Christ as the Apostles did [in the boat.] We must cry out together. I do it standing before the world, because the world must understand this suffering: it must understand this injustice."

Later that same year, His Holiness met with a delegation from the Albanian Catholic Information Center in San Francisco. He was presented with the Center's publications, which promoted religious freedom in Albania. During the meeting, the Holy Father reiterated that he prayed daily for Albania, and said, "I often speak of the martyrdom of the Church in Albania and the sufferings of the Albanian people. May the good Lord bless your precious activity and help you in your efforts until religious freedom is restored to Albania."



Holy Father Pope John Paul II peruses the Albanian Catholic Bulletin during a 1990 audience with Albanian Catholic Information Center delegation

In 1988 on the occasion of the Marian Year, a delegation of Albanians from the United States, Canada and Europe met with Pope John Paul II in Rome. The group was composed of Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox Christians. They thanked the Pope profusely for his defense of the religious rights of Albanian believers. The Pope was deeply moved. He responded that, "This meeting fills our heart with emotion. 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." His words showed an extensive knowledge not only of Albania's present plight, but of its glorious history. He ended it with his prayer of the Virgin of Shkodër, (which follow this article).

His Holiness love for the Albanian Catholics has not diminished. On Easter Sunday, 1991, he said, "I think also of you, most precious Catholic community of Albania which remained faithful to the Gospel of Christ. Take courage again and walk confidently toward the season of the harvest, the bountiful harvest of the fruits you so deserve."

Later that same day, the Pontiff met with 5,000 university students from 400 universities in some 40 various countries. He reminded the youths about "another dimension of the Lord's resurrection: the resurrection of the Christian Church." He referred specifically to the Church in Albania, saying: "And then it is necessary to seek and to find other places where the Church was condemned to death. At this moment my thoughts go to heroic Albania where the Church was condemned to death, but now is rising from the dead. So, it is clear now the event and mystery of the resurrection walk hand in hand through the history of the Church and of humanity."

On April 17, 1991, a delegation from the Albanian Catholic Information Center once again visited John Paul II in Rome. He was in high spirits, and spoke about the triumph of the Albanian Church.

"I am extremely happy that Almighty God has responded to our prayers and to the prayers of all believers who turned to Him during the difficult period of your dear homeland. We join in your celebration of religious freedom in Albania, and together we express our gratitude to the Almighty for this grace and valuable gift which is so precious to each and all. It is fitting that you celebrate this event with a Mass of Thanksgiving for Religious Freedom in Albania, and I promise to remember your May 4 assembly in San Francisco in my prayers."

The delegation presented him with a painting of Our Lady of Shkodër, the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary, Patroness of Albania. The Holy Father said, "Let us continue to seek the refuge of Our Heavenly Mother, Our Lady of Shkodër, and offer thanks for her miracles to the Albanian people and to the whole of our Church."

Mikhail Gorbachev, in a recent *New York Times* editorial, calls John Paul II a close and personal friend. The two apparently get along very well, and write letters back and forth. Gorbachev's praise of the pope - he makes no attempt to avoid superlatives - is perhaps some of the most telling. That John Paul II could gain the support of the world for his outspoken support of human rights is not so surprising: people cannot help but recognize him as a champion of what is good and right. But it is really something to have won such high praise from a deposed communist ruler, albeit one who took the role of a reformer. It speaks well of John Paul II, and it also speaks well of the irresistible truth of his cause, which is Christ.

There are many forms of suffering in the world. There is systematic suffering, when a nation tries to replace the will of the individual with the state defined will of "the people." John Paul II has suffered this form of suffering in Poland, under both the Nazis and the Communists. There is also personal suffering, such as a man feels when he is

shot by another man who has targeted him personally as an enemy, John Paul II suffered that as well, in the October 11, 1981 attempt of his life in Rome.

Christ felt both those kinds of suffering on the cross. He was condemned by "the system" for proclaiming his spiritual kingship: because he was a savior of persons among a world that only understood political ideologies. And he was condemned personally as well: people resented him as a person because his holiness and righteousness made them uncomfortable. But there is a third kind of suffering, different in kind from the first two but no less real.

This third kind is suffering that is done as a consequence of another's pain, suffering that wounds the heart rather than the body. This was the suffering that Jesus's mother felt at the foot of the Cross as she watched her son dying, abandoned and bleeding. This is the suffering of a father or mother on behalf of a dying child. By his heart-rending words on behalf of the people of Albania, John Paul II has shown that he knows this third kind of suffering as well.

High atop Albania's calvary, he has watched his children in torment. Yet he spoke out for them and prayed for them even when the entire world seemed to have abandoned them to their death. John Paul II was the one who helped take Albania down from its cross, and it is in his lap that the nation's hopes lie. It is only fitting that in such a moment His Holiness should turn to the Blessed Virgin to ask her help for needful Albania - and that he should rejoice with her once the resurrection has been achieved, as God has promised it will be.

John Paul II's Prayer for Religious Freedom in Albania to Our Lady of Shkodër

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



Our Lady of Shkodër - Patroness of Albania

Gospel from the Apostles, and which always venerated you with tender 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 so 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.

With my Apostolic Blessing.

+ John Paul II, Bishop of Rome

A JOYOUS EASTER VIGIL: DURRËS, 1992

In Albania the world is witnessing an incredible "mad dash" to the baptismal fountain by hundreds of aspiring candidates to the sacraments.

In the small Albanian port-city of Durrës, a place where only a year ago thousands of Albanians fled the country on merchant and fishing as well as makeshift vessels, a beautiful future is being born. More than 100 local adults and youths were baptized and entered the Roman Catholic Church on Easter, 1992. In the five months previous, an additional 300 entered the Church.

These figures, quoted from remarks made by the new Durrës parish priest, Fr. Mark Sopi, were recently published in the Croatian Catholic newspaper, *Glas Concla*. Fr. Sopi and his vicar, Fr. Damjan Kurti, are natives of Kosovë. They have been in charge of the Durrës parish since October 1991, and are assisted by five of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.

Many of the *Bulletin's* readers may recall the history of this Roman Catholic archdiocese. An important Adriatic sea port since at least the 7th century B.C., Durrës is believed to have been founded as "Epidamnos" by the seafaring Greek merchants and colonists in 627 B.C.. By the second half of the first century A.D., Durrachium was already the seat of one of the earliest Christian dioceses as the result of missionary activity carried out by St. Paul and St. Andrew. At some time between 98 A.D. and 117 A.D., St. Astius, "the Bishop of Durrës," was martyred on the express orders of the Roman Emperor Trajan.

In the middle of the 2nd century A.D., the famous Egyptian geographer, "Ptolemy" (Claudius Ptolemaeus) of Alexandria, published a map of the Roman Empire which shows Durrës as the nearest seaport to a city which Ptolemy identified as "Albanopolis, capital of the Albanoi." From the beginning of the 4th century A.D., Durrachium was noteworthy, not just as a seaport, but also as

one of the major strategic and commercial outposts along the "Via Egnatia," a vital highway in the Roman system of communication by land and sea linking Rome to Constantinople and the eastern extremes of the Roman Empire.

Prior to the end of the 4th century A.D., from at least some time before 395 A.D., (387 A.D.?), Durrës became the seat of a Christian archdiocese or ecclesiastical province administered by a metropolitan archbishop with jurisdiction over nearby subordinate dioceses and their bishops. Until the 20th century Durrës continued to serve as the seat of Metropolitan sees. At different periods following the "Great Schism" (1054-1965) which separated the Roman Catholic Church from the Eastern Orthodox Church, Durrës was either alternately or simultaneously the home of both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Metropolitan Archbishops.

From the 16th century on, in the wake of the Ottoman conquest of Albania, Durrës became an important center of spiritual activity for leaders and institutions of the Islamic faith. The port of Durrës, like the rest of Albania, has maintained its links to the Christian faith and the Catholic Church despite centuries of wars, invasions, famines, earthquakes, epidemics, pagan persecution, heretical disputes, church schisms, atrocities by medieval "crusaders," Islamic forced conversions, and, only recently, the so-called "cultural revolution" of Enver Hoxha's Stalinist oppression. Durrës is hardly Albania's "newest" Catholic parish.

The city has had some impressive clergy recently, as well. Arrested in 1946, Msgr. Vangjel Prendushi (1885-1949), the last Archbishop of Durrës, died in the city's prison from torture. From the moment of his consecration in 1959 until his arrest in 1967, Msgr. Skollë Tromani (1915-), the last Apostolic Administrator of Lezhë and Durrës, was effectively prevented from carrying out his pastoral charge. Convicted of criminal activity

against the interests of the communist state in 1968, Msgr. Troshani remained in prison until 1988.

Fr. Shtjefën Kurti (1897-1972), a Kosovë native like his namesake, the new parish vicar of Durrës, studied for the priesthood in Albania, Austria, and Rome before returning to the Diocese of Skopje/Shkup (now in the independent Republic of Macedonia) where he served as confessor to many believers including a young lady named Gonxha-Agnës Bojaxhiu who is now known throughout the world as Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Fr. Kurti emigrated to Albania when he became parish priest in 1929, and was arrested by communist authorities in 1945.



Fr. Shtjefën Kurti

In 1963, following his first 18 years of prison and administrative detention, Fr. Kurti was permitted to live and work in Durrës where official state policy obliged him to conduct his pastoral activity clandestinely. Arrested and deported in 1967, Fr. Kurti was later shot by a firing squad following a 1970 communist "people's court" conviction on charges which were reported to include baptizing a child at the request of the child's father, a fellow prisoner. Albanian's suppression of places of worship in 1967 and the news in 1974 of Fr. Kurti's execution shocked the world.

The numbers and the names of the priests, monks, religious sisters, and ordinary parishioners as well as those of our brethren of the Orthodox Christian and Islamic faiths who were executed, imprisoned, tortured, or who simply disappeared, were deported, or were publicly coerced to renounce their religious beliefs and traditions under the weight of overwhelming physical intimidation will probably never be fully known.

How joyful must be the dead of the persecution period, 1944-1991, to share in the spiritual liberation and the sense of inner victory expressed even by non-believers and highly placed, con-

vinced communists such as the internationally known Albanian writer Ismail Kadare who returned to Albanian in April, 1992 after fleeing to France where he lodged a dramatic but comfortable request for political asylum in October, 1990. Mr Kadare deserves some credit for his repeated calls to forget and renounce the hatreds arising from Albania's terrible recent past.

For those of us who believe and practice as members of the Christian and Islamic faiths, the Bible, the Koran, and the "Kanun" are foundational. The concepts of *besa*, truce, and welcome oblige us to open our hearts to all, especially to former persecutors. After all, St. Paul persecuted the Church before he became its mightiest apostle.

Returning to Durrës and Albania, it is worth noting that both Fr. Sopi and Fr. (Damjan) Kurti were formed for the priesthood abroad. All Albanian parochial schools, seminaries, and other centers of religious instruction were formally closed or "nationalized" (expropriated) by the Albanian communist decree of March 6, 1946. Included among those institutions were the Pontifical College of Albania, the equally prestigious Apostolic School and College of St. Francis Xavier, and the Franciscan College "Antonianum," all of them located in Shkodër, to the north of Durrës.

The provisional seminary recently reopened in Shkodër under the direction of the Society of Jesus initially received no less than 200 applications by young Albanians desiring to begin studying for the Roman Catholic priesthood during 1991 - 1992. Of these, 30 were finally accepted as sufficiently prepared and confirmed in their calling to begin this serious course of study early in 1992.

A large part of the pastoral work actually being performed by the Church in Albania is presently carried out by religious sisters since priests are still too few. The majority of these sisters and priests are missionaries from the newly independent states

which formerly made up what was known as Yugoslavia. Some of the missionaries have come from Italy or other countries as well.

In conclusion, it appears that the thrilling and triumphant victory celebration of Easter in Durrës and elsewhere in Albania has only begun.

Brian CURDY

Notes

1. See "Echo," the French-language Catholic newspaper, of Geneva, Switzerland (April 4 & 11, 1992).
2. See "Glas Koncila," Croatian Catholic newspaper, Zagreb, Croatia (April, 1992).
3. Gjon Sinishtia, *The Fulfilled Promise* — A documentary account of religious persecution in Albania — (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1976), pp. 30-37.
4. See Arshi Pipa, "How Men Die for Ideals" — A memorial to Archbishop Vangjel Prendushi, *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, San Francisco, Vol. X, 1989, pp. 11-14.
5. Giacomo Gardin, S.J., *Barishing God in Albania*, (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1988), pp. 21-34.
6. Ibid.

ALBANIAN CATHOLIC MISSION IN SWITZERLAND

Fr. Alexander Kola

c/o The Dominican Congregation

Kapuzineriveg 13, 6006 Luzern

Tel (041) 3655 03.

THE ALBANIAN CATHOLIC MISSION IN SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Conference of (Roman Catholic) Bishops has nominated Fr. Alexander Kola, an Albanian priest from Skopje (Shkup) in Macedonia, to the position of resident chaplain for Albanian-speaking Roman Catholics in Switzerland. Switzerland's French-Language Roman Catholic press and a Swiss-Catholic inter-diocesan organization, known as "the Swiss-Catholic Community of Labor for the Concerns of Resident Foreigners" (SKAF) announced the nomination. Fr. Kola officially took charge of his new mission on April 1, 1992.

According to the latest estimates, over 7,000 Albanian speaking Catholics now live and work in Switzerland. Most of them are from the former federation of Yugoslavia, Kosovë (Republic of Serbia). Others are from Montenegro and Macedonia, as well as some from Albania.

For years, these hard working and much-appreciated guests of the Swiss, many of them former victims of persecution or oppression in their native lands, have been seeking the presence of an Albanian-speaking clergy in their midst.

Albanian language and culture are richly expressed in divine services and the devout practice of religious traditions and various forms of popular piety. The cultural and linguistic ties of these believers to the Church is very strong.

Fr. Kola is now elaborating a pastoral mission for Switzerland's Albanian Catholics through contact with believers and through the organization and planning of services in different parts of the country in the Albanian language.

The pastoral mission, in addition to its spiritual care for the Albanian Catholics, will look to the welfare of non-Catholic Albanians — mostly Muslims and Orthodox. Albanian Catholic Pastoral Missions which serve the spiritual welfare of Albanian refugees and guest workers have already been established in Italy, Belgium, France, and Germany.

“MOTHER TERESA OF ALBANIA” VISITS AMERICA

San Francisco, California was blessed in December, 1991 with a visit from Albanian-born Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She came to receive the final vows of 13 of her Missionaries of Charity. The congregation which she founded in Calcutta in 1950 has two houses in San Francisco.

Mother was kind enough to meet *Bulletin* editor Gjon Sinishta on December 10, 1991 at St. Paul's in San Francisco. The Church is the home of the American novitiate for the Missionaries.

After greating each other in Albanian, the two spoke in English. Mr. Sinishta thanked her for paving the way for religious freedom in Albania by her prayers and visits which called attention to Albania's plight. He asked her opinion on the future of the Church in Albania.

“We must be thankful to the Lord for the gift of religious freedom to the Albanian people,” she said without hesitation. “Now, we must pray for vocations. The priests are few, and most of those who remain are old and some are infirm. Albanian priests in exile should return. American and other foreign priests should conduct missions to Albania.”

She reassured priests that the difficulties of missionary work are easily surmounted by love and sincerity. “When I went to India, I did not speak the language — God will help you overcome the obstacles when you do His work.”

When asked about the Catholics of Albania, she said: “I am impressed with the devotion of Albanian Catholics. I already have a group of 14 girls in Shkodër preparing to join our congregation.”

At the end of the visit, Mother gave Mr. Sinishta a handful of miraculous medals that she wanted to give to Albanians — especially Albanian children. She also signed a picture of herself for *Bulletin* readers.



English translation of Albanian blessing prayer; “Blessed be the Name of Jesus. May you be blessed”

*Kjoftë leodue Jezu Krishti
Kjoshi Bekue
le Teresa me*

Later that day, in San Francisco, Mother Teresa accepted the Catholic Youth Organization's “Service to Youth Award.” She later visited the Jelani House, a drug rehabilitation center for pregnant women. Addressing the young mothers she said, “We must give love to the children of the world. But before you can do that you must give the love to your family — to your own children.”

The stop was part of a world tour for Mother which ended on Christmas Day when she became ill in Tijuana, Mexico. She was taken to the Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation in La Jolla, California where she was diagnosed as having bacterial

pneumonia and myocardial ischemia, a condition in which the flow of blood to the heart is restricted.

Her condition was caused in part by her rigorous schedule of fasting and work.

A group of about 50 Albanians living in Southern California travelled to La Jolla to visit and comfort Mother. They brought flowers for her, along with a letter. They reassured her of their prayers and good wishes for her health. Mother Teresa met with two representatives of the group and said, "Pray for me. I'm going to pray for you."

By early January, she was doing better. "So many prayers, so many doctors —" she said, "I am being spoiled."

To honor Mother Teresa, we publish below in English and Albanian a poem by the Albanian poet Gjon Ljarja. He is from Shkodër. He and his family suffered during the communist rule.

Tom HOOPES



TO MOTHER TERESA

"In appreciation of our precious and dear Mother Teresa of Albania."

*The moment you set foot down here
God turned his eyes upon us.
We had been outcasts in the world,
We your dear motherland, Albania.*

*You prayed that God would lift
Hell's darkness from your holy soil,
And that Our Lady whom we bless at Shkodër
Would win for us a dawn of light.*

*When the news broke of your arriving
Sparks of hope burst from my heart.
I just had to see you, kiss your hand,
hand held so tightly in Our Lord's.*

*How often, sorrowing, I groaned,
"None are born good here or can pray."
Far from my thoughts Calcutta then,
And its great woman from Albania.*

*From India nonetheless you came,
Praying down liberty upon us.
Thanks be, the Lord Almighty heard,
Turning his eyes to this poor people.*

*The storm has passed, the sky opens,
Joy almost bursts my heart.
Happiness fills up this wasteland
And peace comes, hope of hopes, at last.*

*The world directs its Nobel award
To Mother Teresa of Calcutta.
We, though, from whom you've been so far,
Call you the Mother of Albania.*

Gjon LJARJA

Mother Teresa is greeted by Pope John Paul II at the Vatican following her recent hospitalization in California. She was treated for a heart ailment and pneumonia.

NANËS TEREZE

N'at çast kûr shkeli mbt ket tokë kamba e jole
Po n'at çast sollti sytë nga ky vënd Perëndija
Se teper larg na kishtim tretun prej kësaj bote
Por Ti ktheve në memëdhenë tande Shqypnija

E lute Zotin për ket tokë të shëjtë arbnore
Që mbulu kishte hije e zezë e fundit i'ferri
E shpresen te Zoja e Shkodrës kurr s'e bore
Se 'i duë do t'na e kthente dritën me dalë prej territ

N'at çast kûr mora vesht lajmin e ardhjes tande
Në zemër më shperthej nji shkëndi e madhe
n'shpresë
Dishroj me t'pa, me puthë doren tande m' kande
Shëjten dorë që me Krishtin ka lidhë jë e besë

E sa herë nder vjerrsha i dispruem kjeçë anku:
<<S'paska kenë ndo 'i mirë prej kti dheu Zotin m'e
luë>>
Por kurr nuk pata mendu 'e - mendja kurr s'm'pat
shku
Se shqypnarja e mirë po u gjindte larg n' Kalkutë

Nga Indija larg Ti erdhe dhe nuk pritove
Perëndisë lype për Shqypnin me t'pru libritmin,
O Zot Ty t'kjosha falë që lutjen t'a ndigjove
Kah ky popull t' shkrete solle o t' Lum shikimint

U hap qielli e kaloi stubija dhe u shkëm rrëja
Zemra mu' don me m' dalë prej gjoksit nga gëzimi
Ob sa e madhe është në ket vend të mjerë barëja
Ma së fundit mbrrini në tokën tonë paqtimi

Nanë Tereze e Kalkutës të thirret Ty bota mbare
T'gjitë popujt t'njofin Nobel shembull t'hamtisës
Por per popllin shum t' vuajtun t' memëdheut
shqyptarë
Ti ma parë se e krefte botës je nana e Shqypnis.

GJON LJARJA

Në shëj mirnjohje të pakufi shum të shtrëjtës e të
dashnues NANËS TEREZE

ALBANIAN AID SOCIETY
SEEKS SUPPORT

Since 1989 the breakdown of the communist system and the deterioration of the social and economic situation, has resulted in critical shortage of basic goods including food, clothing and medicine. In order to alleviate the effects of this worst crisis in decades, many international humanitarian groups have been mobilized. Among these organizations is the **Albanian Aid Society (AAS)** in Detroit, Michigan. It formed in 1990 for the purpose of collecting food, clothing, medicine and financial contributions to assist needy Albanians. The AAS is sponsored and supported by five religious institutions in the greater Detroit area: **Albanian Islamic Center, St. Thomas Albanian Orthodox Church, the Muslim Bektashi Monastery, St. Paul's Albanian Catholic Church, and Our Lady of Albanians Catholic Church.** The administrative board of the Society is composed of the Venerable Baba Rexhepi, Rev. Primus Ndrevashtaj, Rev. Anton Kqira, Rev. Vehbi Ismaili and Rev. Nicholas Liolin.

The AAS is sending aid packages not only to the needy in Albania but also to needy Albanians in Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia. Those interested in helping this charitable endeavor may contact the

Albanian Aid Society

P.O. Box 652

Birmingham, MI 48012-0652

Tel (313) 644-8666

Fax (313) 644-6651

FATHER JÁK (GIACOMO) GARDIN RETURNS TO ALBANIA

The beloved Italian missionary to Albania Fr. Ják (Giacomo) Gardin, S.J. was imprisoned from 1945 to 1955 by the Albanian communists and forced to work at hard labor. Upon his release in 1955 he was expelled from the country. Recently he returned to Albania. Once again he has taken up his work interrupted over 45 years ago—that of training Albanian youth who desire to become Catholic priests. The life of Father Gardin has certainly been dramatic—as he recorded in *Banishing God in Albania* (Ignatius Press, 1988).

Father Gardin first arrived in Albania in 1933. He did not know the Albanian language. However with diligent study he progressed to the point that he was perfectly fluent in that language and at home in the Albanian culture. In a short while he became a true Albanian. After serving as a teacher and spiritual adviser in the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodër Fr. Gardin was one of the first religious to be arrested, tortured, tried and convicted then sent to the labor camps by the new communist regime. While in the camps he learned through experience what it means to be united to the suffering of Christ for the good of one's neighbor and even for the good of those who hate and persecute you. After ten years he was released from the labor camps and sent back to Italy. There he worked as a parish priest and pastor until 1991. Then an unexpected opportunity presented itself for Gardin to return to Albania. Upon learning of his chances to return Gardin remarked that "From that September, thirty five years ago when I was released and expelled from Albania, everyone thought that the door would remain closed and that history had stopped, yet suddenly the door was smashed open and history had begun again." In returning to Albania despite his advanced age of eighty-seven years, Gardin chose to once more put himself at the service of the Albanian people. He desires to work for the future of the Albanian Catholic community to whom he had dedicated the years of his youth. He perceived the will of God clearly mani-



Father Ják (Giacomo) Gardin, S.J. shortly after his release, speaking with a Vatican official, 1955



Recently, Father Ják (Giacomo) Gardin, S.J. was visited in Shkodër by his former student Zef Luka of Cleveland, Ohio. Luka was an anti-communist freedom fighter before coming to the United States in 1959.

fested again in his life which "is in God's hands—it is God's fatherly hand which moves us to do God's will."

Fr. Gardin's life is once more around the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodër. The school has been re-established for the first time since 1946 in the former Archbishop's residence. During the intervening years this residence became a hotel for visiting athletes. At the same time the nearby Catholic Cathedral was turned into a sports arena. Now both the Archbishop's residence and the Cathedral have been returned to the Church for spiritual purposes. Fr. Gardin is residing in Shkodër, at the seminary. He intends to dedicate the final years of his life to the spiritual, cultural and material needs of Albanian youth. As a Christian missionary he is a modern follower of the great apostles who, throughout the ages, have left the comforts of their own land to preach the Gospel despite trials and difficulties. In a recent letter from Shkodër Fr. Gardin related his joy at being once again in Albania. He wrote "I am grateful to the Lord for having given me the opportunity to finish my life serving Him and the Albanian people." May many others follow Fr. Gardin's example of Christian love and concern for the noble people of Albania.



*This volume will be printed in an Albanian and Croatian language edition in 1992 through the generosity of Donald G. Banas and Reverend William J. Perkins.

AN APPEAL FOR AID FOR ALBANIAN SCHOOLS

An appeal to help financially distressed Albanian schools has been launched by a non-governmental commission in Albania. The appeal has been sent to all Albanian groups throughout the world. The situation in Albania's schools is extremely critical. Classrooms, laboratories and library buildings are falling apart. Teachers often go without pay because the Albanian government is bankrupt. New books are desperately needed because the old books are filled with communist propaganda. The economic level of the student's families is precarious. The commission, composed of teachers and intellectuals, realizes that there is no possible "quick fix." Thus they are appealing to Albanians abroad and their friends who hold progress in Albania dear. Over 900,000 of Albania's 3.5 million population are students. Without educational opportunities for all of them there is no future for a new Albania. Please help the schools in Albania. The present and future generations of Albanians will be grateful to you forever. Cash donations as well as packages of school supplies can be sent to the following address:

Komisioni Pë Ndihmë Financiare
Shkollave Shqiptare
Pranë Ministrisë së Armëve, Zyrë 50
Tiranë, ALBANIA
(Tel) 00-355-43-26928
(Fax) 00-355-42-25858

FAREWELL TO AN "ADOPTED ALBANIAN"

I met first time Father Donald C. Forée, S.J., at the annual Campus Ministries meeting in Santa Cruz in 1971. I knew he was ordained with a Croatian Jesuit friend of mine (Ivan Cindori) in 1967 in Saint Ignatius Church in San Francisco. We met other times occasionally.

In 1981, Fr Forée joined the Campus Ministry staff of the University of San Francisco. Our contacts intensified through our work and various reli-

the cause of religious freedom in Albania and was assisting in various ways in this work. Many Albanians remember him well for his happy, smiling face, his kindness, and especially for his prophetic words spoken during various celebrations of Albanian history, for example, the fortieth anniversary of religious persecution in Albania (1985), the seventy-fifth anniversary of Albanian independence (1987), and the thanksgiving Mass for religious freedom in Albania (1991). Fr. Forée's concern for

Albanians wasn't limited to these public events. Albanians always found help and consolation during their personal difficulties over family matters, the death of a loved one as well as in immigration and employment difficulties. He responded like a caring and concerned parent in many cases. He always had time for other people's needs.

I recall two instances of his care and affection for Albanians. In 1985 Fr. Giacomo (Jack) Gardin, S.J., represented the Superior General of the Jesuits at the commemoration of

forty years of religious persecution in Albania. Since Fr. Gardin spoke no English, Fr. Forée, a fluent Italian speaker, became Fr. Gardin's guide and made sure that he felt at home. Fr. Gardin appreciated this helpfulness and consideration and still refers to Fr. Forée as gran padre and allo padre both for Fr. Forée's greatness of heart and for his greatness of stature.



Father Donald Cyril Forée, S.J. St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco, 1985

gious activities. Often in our casual conversations I would mention bits and pieces about Albania and the plight of the Church and all believers there. Soon he became not only interested but truly concerned about ongoing religious and political oppression in Albania.

When Fr. Forée was appointed in 1982 Prefect of St. Ignatius Church he had already embraced

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In 1991 when Fr. Simon Jubani received an honorary degree from the University of San Francisco, Fr. Forée spontaneously performed the same service for Fr. Jubani. He demonstrated his support for the Albanian cause. Fr. Jubani, who had served more than 26 years in Albanian gulags for his faith, needed a gentle spirit to guide him throughout the time of his visit to the USF community, and found just that in Fr. Forée. His help with the fortieth anniversary of religious persecution in Albania program will always be remembered and cherished by Albanians. By his dedication and hard work Fr. Forée became a truly "adopted Albanian" joining many others throughout America who have embraced the cause of Albanian people for freedom and peace.

Much to the sadness of the Bay Area Albanian community, Fr. Forée will soon be leaving us for another assignment. The Jesuits are like soldiers, they aren't attached to one position or duty. They must be ready to obey whatever orders they receive to go and serve God's people without looking to their personal likes or dislikes. For many years, Fr. Forée as prefect was the person to whom I reported at St. Ignatius Church. He never acted in a domineering way. Instead we worked together as a team. Father was the team leader. Moreover he offered many personal kindnesses to me which gave me the strength to carry on my work for Albanian freedom.

In many ways, large and small, Fr. Forée contributed to the Albanian cause. He will be missed not only by those of the Albanian community and people of all ethnic backgrounds, but especially by the sick and needy who were touched by his fatherly presence and love. We are sure that in the future this beloved "adopted Albanian" will continue to be a part of our community and participate in our projects for Albania. We will sorely miss him at St. Ignatius Church. We wish him every blessing and pray that God will grant success to all his future ministry.

Gjon SINISHTA

EUROPEAN CATHOLIC LAITY TO UNDERTAKE MISSION TO ALBANIA

The Legion of Mary, an international Catholic association dedicated to promoting the involvement of the laity in the Church's work of evangelization, is organizing a group of Legionaries of Mary. They will visit Albania for two weeks this summer. The visit is part of the *Peregrinatio Pro Christo* movement of the Legion of Mary. Legionaries dedicate a part of their summer vacation to travel to a foreign country in order to talk to people in their homes or in public areas about the Catholic faith. The Legionaries on *Peregrinatio* have been invited by the Albanian Catholic diocesan and parochial authorities to perform their apostolate in the name of the parish priest of the area where they will be working. They will be meeting with as many Albanian priests and sisters as possible to offer them support. In addition they hope to set up several Legion of Mary groups (*praesidia*) among Albanian Catholics in order to strengthen the laity and to help in the religious development of Albania.

Peregrinatio Pro Christo (Latin for pilgrimage or travelling for Christ) is a movement of the laity inspired by the Irish monks. From the sixth century onward monks traveled into all parts of Europe to evangelize and to grow in their love for Christ. Many *Peregrinations* take place annually throughout North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Russia.

Frank Duff, an Irish civil servant founded the Legion of Mary in Dublin, Ireland in 1921. It has since grown to include over one million active members and over ten million auxiliary members across the globe. The Legion has been highly praised by all the Popes from its foundation to the present. The Legion of Mary organization exists in almost every diocese and ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the world. It is especially active in Africa, the Philippines and Korea. Its founder and several of its members including Edel Quinn and Alfie Lambé are being considered for beatification by Roman authorities.

JOSEPH DIOGUARDI - AN "ARBËRESH" PUBLIC SERVANT

Joseph DioGuardi has been a very busy man in the past few decades. After 22 years of work at the accounting firm Arthur Anderson & Co., DioGuardi was elected to the House of Representatives in 1984. His work for the rights of Albanians, particularly those in Kosovë under Serbian military rule, has been matched only by his zeal for financial reform on Capitol Hill.

DioGuardi was born in Bronx, New York on September 20, 1940. His father, Joseph DioGuardi Sr., emigrated from Southern Italy in 1929. DioGuardi Sr. was an ardent Arbëresh. With his wife Grace he achieved his dream of owning and operating a store in Westchester County.

In 1962, DioGuardi Jr. graduated from Fordham University with honors. After 10 years at Arthur Anderson & Co., DioGuardi became a partner in the firm. He and his wife Carol were married in November 1968. They have one daughter and one son.

DioGuardi, a Republican, is the only Certified Public Accountant to have ever served in Congress. His extraordinary knowledge of accounting procedures, culled from his extensive work experience, gave him a unique perspective on the interior workings of Congress. He compares Congress' ability to spend tax monies to a "credit card with no limit." In his recently published book, "Unaccountable Congress," DioGuardi provides an unprecedented detailed account of the "smoke and mirror budgeting" that hides the true extent of the Federal debt.

In order to improve the fiscal responsibility of Congress, which he calls a "House of Ill Repute," DioGuardi founded and chairs a non-partisan foundation called *Truth in Government*. He says that if business executives managed money the way Congressmen do, they would be thrown in jail. In the words of J. Peter Grace, Chairman of the Citizens Against Government Waste Organization, "Joe

DioGuardi... is one of the real heroes in the War on Waste. Joe reads the riot act over how our lawyer-filled Congress mismanages your money and 'cooks' our national books, using numbers like a drunk uses a lamp post - for support rather than illumination."

Currently DioGuardi's most important fight is not on Capitol Hill, but rather in the Republic of Kosovë. As president of the Albanian-American Civic League (AACL), he has taken that fight to the highest levels of government around the world. He has met with delegations from the United States, Hungary, Canada and many other nations to inform them about the human rights abuses against Kosovar-Albanians. He has urged opposition to a Serbian regime bent on prolonging the oppression. It was largely through the efforts of the AACL that the United States brought the Kosovë issue for discussion before a recent Helsinki Conference meeting.



Joseph DioGuardi cordially greets Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, newly elected President of the Republic of Kosovë, New York, 1990



Hon. Joseph J. DioGuardi

DioGuardi was instrumental in establishing sister organizations for the AACL across the globe. Affiliate AACL chapters have been founded in such important European countries as Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. The group will serve to enhance the AACL's ability to counter Serbian attempts at white-washing the Kosova situation without fear of recrimination.

A *Wall Street Journal* article (March 18, 1992), highlighted DioGuardi's "ingenious solution" for the undoing of communism in Albania. The Congressman arranged for 60 Albanians from Macedonia to drive their own cars, food and fuel into Albania. There they will serve as drivers for opposition candidates as they travel from town to town delivering posters and holding rallies. The Albanian regime responded by closing the nation's borders to traffic from Greece and Macedonia. DioGuardi went to Albania himself to persuade Nikolla Nosi, the chairman of the Election Commission, to change his mind. Mr Nosi finally relented.

DioGuardi plans to run for congress again this year. He has already garnered much support. His pro-family and fiscal-reform stance make his prospects for success look good. He is particularly popular among Albanians - both home and abroad.

DioGuardi visited California in May 1992, to promote his book *Unaccountable Congress*. He met with Albanian communities throughout the state. In San Francisco he was a guest on a Radio KGO live interview program in May. Many listeners inquired about his origin and his crusade on behalf of persecuted Albanians in Yugoslavia. Later, the same day he was enthusiastically received by a group of Bay Area Albanians. At the dinner in his honor held at Zef Shllaku's *La Traviata* restaurant, DioGuardi urged all Albanians to unite in efforts to gain freedom and democracy for their brothers and sisters in Kosovë. Present at the gathering was also Stephen Schwartz of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, a sincere and much appreciated friend of Kosovë and Albania.

Because of his hard work and determination to bring the plight of oppressed Albanians in Yugoslavia to the awareness of the American public, DioGuardi has won for himself a special place in the hearts of all Albanians. His effort on behalf of Albanians everywhere honor his Arbëresh origin, his "gjaku i shprishur" (scattered blood). We salute Joseph DioGuardi Jr. and his family. All his Albanian brothers and sisters wish him success in his election campaign for United States Congress.

Palokë PLAKU

ADDRESS CHANGE

Effective immediately,
address all correspondence to:

Albanian Catholic Institute
University of San Francisco
Xavier Hall

San Francisco, CA 94117-1080 (USA)

THE ARBËRESH: FORERUNNERS OF MODERN ECUMENISM

In older literature on the subject, and still today, one often finds the term Eastern "Rites" used to describe the Eastern Catholic Churches. Western Christians, sometimes confused and yet genuinely seeking to use proper and respectful terminology, have eagerly appropriated the term "rite." Nevertheless, since Vatican II, the term is no longer acceptable, because it fails to express with clarity the full Ecclesial status and nature of the Eastern Christian Churches. Thus, the term "rite" in this context should be banished from the vocabulary of all Christian men and women of good will.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For the first 1000 years of the Church, East and West lived together in peace, developing different Liturgies, theological vocabularies and approaches to expressing the Apostolic Faith, canon law, etc. in the places where the Holy Spirit had planted the Christian people.

It is an unfortunate and completely inaccurate view of history—although quite widespread—to think that all of the Apostolic Christian communities find their origin in Rome. Each has its Apostolic mandate directly from Christ through its own founding Apostle. The confusion may result from the fact that, at the Protestant Reformation, communities which did indeed originate within the Patriarchate of Rome, left their Mother Church. The situation of the Eastern Christian Churches, however, is something else entirely.

Sadly, in the years between AD 451—500, and later, AD 800—1453, there were various strains and difficulties among the five Patriarchal Sees: Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem. During the first 1000 years it was for the most part recognized that these five Patriarchal Bishops were the heads of the Churches, with the Pope of Rome, as Bishop of the old Capital, having the first seat at Ecumenical Councils in order to safeguard Orthodoxy of Faith, and his brother Patriarchs' rights. The Patriarch of Constantinople,

the Bishop of the new Capital, had the second place in honor, etc.

By 1453, however, the strains had become so great that the schism between the four Apostolic Patriarchs in the East and the one in the West was solidified at the fall of Constantinople to the Turks. This put a political end to the Roman Empire. Subsequent "reunions" which formed the Eastern Catholic Churches were intended to re-establish full communion among all the Churches, but sadly failed in this lofty goal. These resulted in segments of the Orthodox Church (Eparchies, etc.) restoring Communion with Rome, but not the desired Communion of all the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

Today, the Eastern Catholic Churches include: Armenian, Byzantine (Greek-Catholic) [includes many particular Churches, e.g. Italo-Greek-Arbëresh], Chaldean, Coptic, Ethiopian (Ge'ez), Malabar, Malankar, Maronite, Syriac, etc. Over the centuries, however, the guaranteed rights of the Eastern Catholic Churches have been gradually eroded, so that the policy of "Uniatism" has fallen into disrepute, and has formally been repudiated as a model for the full restoration of the Church. Instead, an older model, "*Fully equal sister Churches in full ecclesial Communion*" has been re-claimed. This more closely images the experience of the Italo-Greek and Arbëresh peoples.

CHURCHES, NOT "RITES"

The very title of the Vatican II document on Eastern Catholics signals the restoration of a sound Patristic Ecclesiology: *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*: "On the Eastern Churches."

"Rite" is a very useful term for a liturgical Service: The Rite of Baptism, The Rite of the Blessing of Water, etc. However, it does not serve well as the name of a Church, since it ignores the fact that the Catholic Church is made up of many independent Churches, each with its own Liturgy, History, Theological approach and vocabulary, Canon Law, Hierarchy, and most importantly, its

own Apostolic Mission directly from Christ, not mediated through any Patriarch other than its own. Thus Melkites trace their Church back to St. Peter, the first Bishop of Antioch; Copts to St. Mark, the first Bishop of Alexandria; Romans to St. Peter (who came to Rome after heading the Church of Antioch), etc. The Slavic Churches are daughter Churches of Constantinople, the See of St. Andrew. The Albanian peoples have ties to the Apostolic Sees of Jerusalem, Constantinople and Rome.

These Catholic Churches are in communion with one another, and have as the chief spokesman and guardian of Orthodoxy, the Pope of Rome, but this does not lessen their independence and distinctiveness. The term rite is inadequate to express their dignity and shared Apostolic Succession. Western Christians are used to using the term Church to mean "parish church building," "Church in a particular Diocese," and "Universal Church." This is one more meaning to add to the list.

The correct usage, then, is *Byzantine Catholic Church*, *Italo-Albanian Byzantine Catholic Church*, *Coptic Catholic Church*, *Malabar Catholic Church*, *Roman Catholic Church*, etc. This is simpler, neater and more accurate than any other usage.

Although there is only one Western Church (i.e. The Patriarchate of Rome), there are many Eastern Churches, and so it is actually inaccurate to think of the Church as two halves. Therefore the expression "the Eastern Church" (singular), which is sometimes heard does not refer to any real entity, and should not be used. One should either refer to the "Eastern Churches" or to the specific Church: Byzantine, Coptic, Ukrainian, etc.

In the past, in a fervor to "prove we were Catholic," many Eastern Catholic Churches used the term "Roman Catholic Eastern Rites." As we have seen above, "rite" is inadequate to the task. But it is also inaccurate to equate Catholic with Roman. The Church is essentially Catholic, i.e. "Universal." It is not essentially Roman. Vatican II points this out when it says that all the Churches are of equal rank (O.E. 3). The Pope of Rome has a

special charism of shepherding and guarding the faith within the Church, but that does not make all the Churches of God essentially "Roman," just as they are not all Greek or Slavic.

Among the Eastern Churches, many are primarily, if not exclusively, found among the peoples of one nation alone. There are Syriac Churches in both the Middle East and India, but the most universal and trans-cultural of the Eastern Churches is the Byzantine, with Churches on all Continents and among all peoples. It is probably no coincidence that the two Churches which are heirs to the two Capitals of the Empire (Rome and New Rome [Byzantium or Constantinople]) are the two most widely-spread international Traditions within the whole Church.

During the long night of Communism, the Churches of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, whether Eastern or Western, were forced underground, or at least were subjected to various degrees of persecution. As this nightmare has gradually lifted, freedom has slowly come, but the mere lifting of political sanctions against religion has not solved every problem.

Old rivalries, e.g. Catholic vs. Orthodox, and Roman Catholic vs. Greek Catholic, have arisen, with more and more urgency. Each is seeking to redress past wrongs, and although these past wounds may well be real, the resulting fray is damaging the present progress of the Gospel. In many places, from historical memory, the Orthodox perceive the Roman Church as the religious arm of Western European expansion into their territory, while Eastern Catholics recall the co-operation of some misguided Orthodox leaders with Communist forces. The list goes on, with tragedies on all sides. Efforts are being made to address these concerns, but co-operation and respect among Christians in these lands will be hard won.

THE EXAMPLE OF ALBANIA

The example of co-operation among the people of Albania is a welcome relief in the East. In 1968, Paul VI, Pope of Rome, praised the Arbëresh and

Albanian pilgrims who had come on the occasion of the 5th Centenary of the death of the great hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, telling them that they had "made [themselves] everywhere the medium of alliance and collaboration. This has often resulted in [their] becoming the forerunners of modern Ecumenism." The praise was well founded and accurate.

I am no Albanian scholar, but from my wonderful experiences of the Albanian people, I began to read what I could, and I have come to understand the acumen of these words. What follows is but a brief reflection from a brother Byzantine Catholic of another particular Church, offered in admiration and thanks!

The history of ancient Albania [Illyria] reaches back to the Indo-European migrations of ca. 1000 BC. Their own migrations led them to Northern and Southern Italy. Although in constant contact with the Hellenistic world, they did not lose their own culture. In the mid 200's BC Queen Teuta sent a fleet to occupy the Greek areas of Sicily and the East Coast of Italy (long ago colonized and living in Greek Culture, this area was known as Magna Græcia). A series of conflicts with the growing Roman power finally led to Illyria's becoming a part of the Roman domain in 168 BC. Even under Roman administration, however, the Illyrians further inland continued their ancient council meetings, *kuvend*. Illyrians became famous as Roman Warriors, and even Emperors.

The greatest of all these was St. Constantine the Great, Emperor of the Romans, who, together with his Mother Helen, is called "equal to the Apostles," since he was the first Christian Emperor, and began the process which eventually converted the Empire. We celebrate their Feast on May 21. St. Constantine was a native of Moesia, considered part of the "greater Illyricum" of the Romans.

In AD 395 the Empire was divided into Western and Eastern administration, and the Eastern section of Illyria (from the River Drina) became part of Constantinople's jurisdiction. Later, the Slavic

invasions of the 6th-7th Centuries left only the modern Albanians as direct descendants of the original Illyrians.

The original Evangelization of the Albanian people began with the Apostles. St. Paul writes that he had preached "...from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum..." [Romans 15:19-20]. The Apostle Andrew, Patron of Constantinople and traditionally the first to head toward the Slavic lands, is also associated with Albanian Christian beginnings. One of the earliest saints of the region was the Hieromartyr Astius, Bishop of the first episcopal see, Durrës (Dyrrachium) (1st-2nd Century). He suffered Martyrdom under the Emperor Trajan, and his feast is kept in the Byzantine Church on June 4.

Christianity spread rapidly throughout the region, often aided by the reputation of the Illyrians as the best warriors in the Roman Empire. This meant that they were heavily recruited into the Imperial Army, and thus repeatedly came into contact with Christianity in the first centuries, both within and outside their homeland. Also, as a crossroads of the Empire, traders from Epirus and Macedonia doubtless reinforced the Faith of its people. The majority of early Albanian Christians appear to have been of Eastern tradition, though of course, in the first three centuries, the Churches we now know were gradually forming themselves according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit using human cultures for the spread of the Gospel.

During the centuries, the Albanian Christians, being situated in the middle of the world as it were, passed variously under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Church of Serbia, and others. With various influences, the Christians of the Northern areas became more Latin, while the South remained Byzantine.

After the disputes between the Patriarchates of Rome and Constantinople (8th-15th Centuries), the Byzantine Albanians, like many Eastern Christians, preferred to have the essentially political conflicts in the Imperial Capitals, and continued to live the

Apostolic Christian Life which had come to them from the East.

Islam came to Albania after Christianity, and then the Ottomans invaded and attempted to subdue the land in the 12th Century. Even under these strained conditions, however, the Albanians, now both Eastern and Western Christians and followers of Islam, tried to live together in harmony, respecting each other's traditions and way of life.

In the 15th Century, a great Albanian Warrior, Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, arose. He had been sold into service in the Ottoman Court as a child and raised in Islam, but later chose to return to his family's ancestral religion, Byzantine Christianity. He fought against the Ottomans, but eventually his people had to flee to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, after his death in 1468. Thus the Arbëresh people came to Italy.



Gjergj Kastrioti - Skanderbeg, Albania's national hero

The areas they settled in, in the South and Sicily, had been Greek and Byzantine from the beginning of Christianity, forming part of Magna Græcia. Nevertheless, under the neglect, persecution and proselytizing of the local Latin Clergy and Hierarchy, the Byzantine Church of the area was all but extinct. The Arbëresh breathed new life into the Italian/Sicilian Byzantine Church!

Those who fled to southern Italy and Sicily in the 15th Century were as often as not, members of Orthodox Churches, although some came from Eparchies in Albania which had been favorable to Rome. Nevertheless, the Popes of Rome consistently acknowledged their Faith, declaring that there was nothing in their Byzantine Church which would prevent Communion with the Latin Church, even though Constantinople and Rome had technically been in schism from one another (on and off) since 1054! The Italo-Albanian Byzantine situation anticipated by many centuries the decrees of Vatican II.

Eventually, with this new infusion of Arbëresh, as well as Byzantine Greeks fleeing from the fall of Constantinople (1453), the Byzantine Church in Italy and Sicily struggled to survive. Although the Popes were consistently favorable, the local Latin clergy and Hierarchy were usually very much opposed. It was not until Benedict XIV of Rome issued his constitution *Etsi pastoralis* in 1742 that the Italo-Greek Church was recognized as a fully equal sister Church. From then until the present, the Church has revived, so that today there are two Eparchies (Dioceses), Otranto and Piana dei Greci, and one great Monastery, at Grottaferrata.

IN NORTH AMERICA TODAY

As did so many other Europeans, the Italo-Greeks and Italo-Albanians began migrating to North America around the turn of the century. By now, estimates place their total number at nearly 150,000. Even with such a population, however, there are no jurisdictions established for them at the present time. Fr. Ciro Pinnola attempted to found a parish in Manhattan early on, but this work continues today only in the Byzantine Society which bears

the name of that fledgling Church, *Our Lady of Grace*.

This sad lack of Italo-Greek & Arbëresh Byzantine Churches is probably due to a number of factors. The infamous and well-documented opposition of Archbishop John Ireland and his "Americanist" party to any Catholics other than Roman (late 19th Century) certainly made it difficult for all Eastern Catholics in the United States. Among other Byzantine Catholic immigrants, the intransigent "Americanist" attitude was responsible for some 250,000 - 500,000 Eastern Catholics giving up communion with Rome in order to preserve the Apostolic way of life which had been guaranteed to them by the treaties of Union centuries before.

Although eventually other Eastern Catholic groups did receive Hierarchies and parishes in the US, the Italo-Greek-Arbëresh have never done so. Most have melted into the larger Roman Catholic Italian-American community. This "ethnicizing" tendency has proven to be one of the most difficult problems for all Eastern Catholics (and Orthodox as well) to deal with creatively.

It is an unusual and sad fact that the very thing which has preserved and strengthened the Eastern Christians in our homelands -- complete identification ("inculturation") with the culture and nation -- has proved to be the factor that divides us in the New World. More often than not, one observes the following phenomenon. There are numerous Byzantine Catholic (Greek-Catholic) jurisdictions in the U.S. (e.g. Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Melkite, Romanian), as well as parishes of other particular Byzantine Catholic Churches (e.g. Russian, Belarusyn) with more than 1 million members. In most cities there is at least one Byzantine (Greek) Catholic Parish, but generally, if it is of one particular Church (e.g. Ukrainian), members of the others, although fellow Byzantine Greek-Catholics, will attend the local Latin Church rather than a Church which is of their own Ecclesial Tradition, but of another ethnic background.

This is a puzzling and curious fact, and one which has kept Byzantine Catholics "ghettoized" for a century in the North America. Orthodox Christians have experienced similar situations as well. The Italo-Greek-Arbëresh Byzantine Catholics have also sometimes fallen into this way of thinking.

A wonderful counter-example is the Melkite Greek Catholic parish of St. George in Sacramento, CA. Although the jurisdiction and primary Tradition of the parish is Byzantine-Antiochian (Melkite), there are Ukrainian, Arbëresh, and other Greek Catholics in the parish, as well as those from other particular Churches. The Greek Catholics from different ethnic backgrounds have recognized in one another the universal Byzantine approach to Liturgy, Prayer, Feasting and Fasting, Theology and way of living the Christian life.

Without losing their own proud Arbëresh traditions, the people have joined other Greek Catholics for mutual support and edification. Once again, we see in this the proof of Paul VI's words. May the Ecumenical example of Albania, of the Italo-Greek-Arbëresh Byzantine Catholics in *Magna Graecia*, and of those here in the New World, be a sign to us all that we need not remain divided, but may rejoice in the unity of Christ, while at the same time enjoying the fullness of the diversity the Holy Spirit granted to the Apostles' tongues at Pentecost.

"Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit; through them, Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of Man, Glory to Thee!" *Tropar of Pentecost-tone 8*

Steven A. ARMSTRONG



A SURVEY OF MINORITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE

(EDITOR'S NOTE: *Radio Free Europe & Radio Liberty Research Institute dedicated the December 13, 1991 issue of the Report on Eastern Europe to the coverage of the minority problems in post-communist Eastern Europe. The sections on Albania and Kosovë - Yugoslavia will be of interest to our readers. We disagree with the authors of the Albanian section about their contention that the 1975 campaign to eradicate the use of religious names for children actually targeted the assimilation of the Greek minority. We claim the program was primarily aimed at religious believers who resisted the government's efforts to prohibit giving religious names to new born children. The government program also pressured adults with religious names to adopt Albanian pre-Christian (national) names.)*

ALBANIA

Minorities: An Overview

Of the very few minority peoples in Albania, Greeks constitute the largest group. There is no evidence of discrimination against either ethnic or religious minorities, despite the fact that the practice of religion was banned during the communist era. Greeks and Jews are currently emigrating from Albania.

The last Balkan country to gain its independence from the Ottoman Empire and the last to free itself from monolithic communism, Albania is currently facing an uncertain future. The most recent census, conducted in April 1989, suggests that 98% of the population is Albanian. According to official statistics, in 1989 non-Albanians totaled 64,816, of whom 58,758 were Greeks; 4,697 Macedonians; 100 Serbs and Montenegrins; and 1,261 belonged to other nationalities, including Gypsies, Vlachs, and Jews. Some Greeks, in particular, have charged that these figures were deliberately set low.

Indeed, only limited information is available on the current status of minorities in Albania, which

for much of its four decades under communist rule was virtually hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world. During the communist era the practice of religion was illegal, although the use of minority languages were permitted. In 1975 an assimilation campaign began under which people were required to change non-Albanian names to authentic Albanian ones. The success of this campaign cannot be determined, since no studies have been made.

The Greek Minority

Greeks constitute by far the most numerous minority group in Albania. Most settled in the Dropulli area of the Gjirokaster district in the 18th century, where they farmed land for Albanian feudal lords. Official figures suggest that some 50,000 Greeks live in Albania, although it is likely that as many as 100,000 would claim that nationality if a census were to be held now. The Greek language was not proscribed during the communist era, but its use was evidently not encouraged. Most predominantly Greek-inhabited villages in Albania have primary schools in which instruction is in Greek. Two agricultural high schools have chosen Greek as the language of instruction, and the pedagogical institute of Gjirokaster has a Greek-language department. The Greek-language semi-weekly newspaper *Laiko Vima* (People's Tribune) has been published in Albania since 1945. The Greek minority movement OMONIA, although not a political party, won seats in three of the five electoral districts on March 31, 1991, during Albania's first multiparty elections since before World War II. In early 1991 many ethnic Greeks fled to Greece, despite appeals by both the Greek and Albanian authorities that they remain in Albania.

Other Minorities

All other ethnic minorities in Albania are very small. In fact, little is known about these groups, which include Vlachs, Macedonians, Jews, Serbs, Montenegrins, and Gypsies.

The Vlachs, whose language is related to Romanian, live in the Pindus Mountains, as well as in the districts of Fier, Vlorë and Korçë. Most are migratory shepherds, as were their predecessors. Sedentary by nature, the Macedonians live in the Albanian-Macedonian border region near Lake Prespë. Earlier this year the provincial Radio Korçë began regularly broadcasting in Macedonian for several hours a day.

There are several small Jewish communities in Albania. Many Jews settled in Albania before World War II to escape anti-Semitism in the rest of Europe. Culturally isolated from the Jewish diaspora, most Albanian Jews have no Jewish education, have been well integrated into Albanian society, and are members of the professional class. Most live in Tirana; there are also small groups in Vlorë and Korçë. In the summer of 1991 about 300 Jews were allowed to emigrate to Israel.

Small numbers of Serbs and Montenegrins are to be found around the city of Shkodër. The Yugoslav government maintains that this minority group is much larger than Albanian figures suggest. Finally, Albania has a small Gypsy population; but little is known about the members of this group, who are apparently scattered throughout the country.

Outlook

Neither the Albanian people nor the Albanian government has traditionally discriminated against minority groups, except during the 1975 assimilation campaign. Whether this should be attributed to the relative smallness of minorities or to the Albanian character is hard to say, although both factors are probably at play here. Given the level of the minorities' integration with ethnic Albanians and recent immigration trends, it is unlikely that Albania will experience serious difficulties with groups seeking expanded minority rights.

Duncan M. PERRY and Louis ZANGA

Notes:

- 1 Statistical Yearbook of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania (Tirana: 1990).
- 2 The Jerusalem Post, April 20, 1991.

YUGOSLAVIA

The Minorities' Plight amid Civil War

Yugoslavia's minorities find themselves in a kind of limbo at a time when the system set up by Josip Broz Tito has in effect ceased to exist but no replacement has yet emerged. The two largest minorities, the Albanians and the Hungarians, live primarily in Serbia; they regard many of the Serbian government's policies as antagonistic to their political and cultural interests. The continuing civil war has added to the minorities' sense of uncertainty, especially in the cases of the Hungarians and the Gypsies. Finally, the situation of some of the minorities has affected relations with some Yugoslavia's neighbors.

Yugoslavia means "land of the South Slavs," and its 1974 constitution recognizes six South Slav "nations" as peoples of the state: Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins. The two largest non-Slavic minorities, the Albanians, numbering between 2,500,000 and 3,000,000 and the 427,000 Hungarians, are called "nationalities," along with Vlachs, Russians, and over a dozen other groups, most of which number only a few thousands or tens of thousands of a total population of 23,500,000. There are, however, perhaps 1,000,000 Gypsies as well as more than 100,000 Turks among the larger minorities. Croatia's declaration of independence placed the status of its Serbian minority—12% of the republic's population—on the agenda.

Yugoslav population statistics can for several reasons only be considered approximate, at best.

First, the last complete census figures are those from 1981, which are obviously out of date. This is especially true in the case of the Albanians, who, together with the Albanians in Albania, are generally believed to have Europe's highest birth-rate. A new census was taken in 1991; but while some figures have appeared in the press, the current crisis seems to have delayed publication of the complete results.

Second, some spokesmen for minority interests suspects that official figures have been deliberately set too low in an attempt to keep minorities from recognizing their true strength. Especially in the case of the 1991 census, taken at a time of great political turbulence, some manipulation of figures might have occurred. Third, and perhaps the most relevant point regarding the recently conducted 1991 census, some observers believe that many ethnic minority people might have thought it was not "safe" to declare oneself a member of a minority at a time when the South Slavs' nationalisms had come to the fore in political and social life. In such circumstances, many minority people might have told the census takers that they belonged to one South Slav "nation" or another or might have described themselves simply as "Yugoslav."

THE ALBANIANS:

Self-determination and Majority Rule

Regardless of which set of figures one takes, however, it is clear that the Albanians are Yugoslavia's largest minority. Some 2,000,000 live in Kosovo, which the 1974 constitution treated as an autonomous province of Serbia; and there are perhaps as many as 300,000 in Macedonia, primarily in the western areas and in the capital Skopje. Albanians from these impoverished southern regions have, moreover, migrated in large numbers in recent decades to the northern republics and abroad to seek their fortunes. In fact, it seems something of a misnomer to call them a minority

since they probably outnumber all the South Slav "nations" except the Serbs and Croats.

The Albanians are clearly not a minority in Kosovo, however. There they constitute over 90% of the population; and their share has grown steadily during this century thanks to their high birthrate and to the emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins to richer lands in Vojvodina and elsewhere to the north.

The key issue facing the Albanians concerns precisely Kosovo and its political status. The 1974 constitution gave Kosovo and Vojvodina a large measure of self-government as autonomous provinces of Serbia. While this helped make some Albanians feel something like masters in their own house after years of often harsh Serbian rule, many Serbs regarded autonomy as a partitioning of Serbian lands, noting that no other Yugoslav republic was divided in this way. They asserted their claim to Kosovo, the cradle of medieval Serbia, on historical and emotional grounds and maintained that Serbs and Montenegrins had left the area over the years under Albanian pressure and intimidation, which may have been the case in some instances but which is open to dispute as a general observation.

In any event, the decline and the collapse beginning in the 1980s of the system put in place by Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito was accompanied by a steady growth in nationalism among the Yugoslav "nations." This was particularly evident among the Serbs; and the former banker and communist official Slobodan Milosevic skillfully used Serbian nationalism to boost his popularity during his meteoric rise to power, which began in 1987. One of his central themes was the need to restore Serbian control over all of Serbia and to revoke the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina.

Milosevic was never completely clear as to how he intended to subjugate such large numbers of Kosovo Albanians in the long run, but he did make plain from the start that he intended to end the "partition" of Serbia through constitutional

amendments, which were introduced in 1990. As a result of the tension surrounding the campaign for the amendments, which the Albanians strongly opposed, the Serbian authorities implemented a series of strong measures. Among other things, they suspended Kosovo's self-government; brought in militia reserves; heavily armed the local Serbian police and eventually the Serbian and Montenegrin civilian population as well; controlled or shut down the Albanian-language media; and in effect abolished Albanian-language education.

The Albanians responded by setting up an extensive political organization, of which the most important part is the Democratic Alliance of Kosovo, which claims 700,000 members. One of the Albanian leaders, Veton Surroi, said that for the Albanians "democracy is the key: free elections rather than conflict. This is the whole new plan within the Albanian national movement. We saw that it worked in Eastern Europe."

The Albanians' immediate goal is to be recognized as a seventh Yugoslav "nation," with Kosovo as their home republic; the slogan "Kosovo-a Republic" has, in fact, been their battle cry since the unrest in the spring of 1981, when many were killed. On September 7, 1990, Albanian legislators from the dissolved parliament met in secret and proclaimed republican status for Kosovo in a basic law known as the "Kacanicka Constitution," named after the town where they met. Later that month the Serbian authorities enacted their own constitution, which formally abolished Kosovo's autonomy. From September 26 to 30, 1991, voters turned out in large numbers to endorse the Kacanicka Constitution, despite warnings from the Serbian authorities that the referendum was illegal. In September and October pupils and students boycotted classes to protest the dismissal of teachers who had insisted on retaining their old Albanian-language syllabus and had rejected the new Serbian-language program from Belgrade.

In the meantime, tension in Kosovo continues unabated. Many Albanians fear that the Serbs may

seek to consolidate their hold on the area once the conflict with Croatia has been settled; specifically, they worry that the Belgrade authorities might try to resettle Serbs from Croatia in Kosovo. The Serbs, for their part, seem determined to control this large community that to them is an alien body in the Serbian heartland; and they have warned the Albanians that they had best get used to being a national minority with limited rights and no territorial autonomy to speak of.

Such prospects, needless to say, do not appeal to the Albanians. During the many meetings and discussions in the spring and the summer between representatives of the various "nations" to find a solution to the overall crisis, Democratic Alliance Chairman Ibrahim Rugova and other Albanian leaders warned repeatedly that they had to have a voice in determining any new arrangement in what had been Yugoslavia. As time went on and they continued to be excluded, some began talking openly of an eventual union with a newly democratic Albania as an alternative. "Nobody (in Kosovo) worries anymore about saying that union with Albania is on the agenda," the Frankfurter Rundschau reported; one scenario envisaged the entire Kosovo question becoming "internationalized" by a war breaking out between Serbia and Albania.

In the meantime, on October 19 the clandestine parliament met again to approve a declaration that "the Republic of Kosovo is a sovereign and independent state" and elected Bujar Bukosi Prime Minister. Kosovar leaders were warmly received in the Albanian parliament in September; and in October Albania recognized Kosovo's independence, rejecting Serbian charges of interference in Yugoslavia's internal affairs.

The situation of the Albanians in Macedonia has also become tense in recent years. A purge of ethnic Albanian officials began in 1987, and the Macedonian authorities authorized the knocking down of the traditional walls surrounding Albanian homes. The walls were a matter of both

symbolic and practical importance for the Albanians, who used them for drying tobacco and other products on which their livelihood depended. The officially controlled media ran articles critical of an Islamic revival among Albanians and other Muslims, suspecting the phenomenon to be in some way anti-Macedonian. But since 1989, as in Kosovo, the emergence of democratic, multiparty politics brought with it the rise not only of nationalistic politicians of the majority "nation" but also of an Albanian party, the Party for Democratic

Prosperity. Like Rugova's party in Kosovo, it won the support of all Albanians.

Patrick MOORE

Notes:

- 1 Milan Andrejevich, "Kosovo: A Precarious Balance between Stability and Civil War," *Report on Eastern Europe*, no. 42, October 18, 1991.
- 2 *The Independent*, September 10, 1991.
- 3 August 12, 1991; and Patrick Moore, "Yugoslavia's Neighbors and the Crisis," *Report on Eastern Europe*, no. 32, August 9, 1991.

ALBANIANS IN ROMANIA: A BRIEF HISTORY

The Albanians are an ethnic group numbering 8 million people. Over 3.5 million live in Albania. Approximately 3 million dwell in Yugoslavia, especially in the Kosovë province. They constitute 90% of the Kosovar population. Diasporan Albanian communities exist in Italy, Greece, Belgium, France, Germany, the United States, Canada, Australia, and Romania. The Albanians are descendants of the ancient Illyrians who held vast territories extending from the Adriatic and Ionian Seas to the interior of the Balkan Peninsula.

The Albanian community in Romania is one of the oldest of the Albanian diaspora. They rank second to the *Arbëresh* in Italy.

Following the conquest of Dacia, Emperor Trajan brought some Illyrians into this area, with the aim of using them to exploit the mines found in the Apuseni Mountains of Transylvania. The first documented Albanian emigration occurred in 1595, when the Romanian Waivoda Mihai Viteazu permitted a sizable group of Albanians to settle their families in Romanian territory north of the Danube. This document furnishes the first evidence that a large and unified Albanian group

settled in hospitable Romanian territory. The report was written by Giovanni de Marini Poli, an agent of the Imperial Councillor Pezzen. The Councillor stated that "...the Albanians of Cernavoda and other neighboring Albanian villages having sent a petition to the Waivoda of Walachia that they wanted to come with their families and live in Walachia and abandon their homes in Turkish lands. The Waivoda immediately agreed and shortly 15,000 Albanians, with all their belongings and beasts crossed the Danube and came to live in Walachia..."

The Albanian migration to Rumania followed a persecution by Ottoman authorities. Economic difficulties also prompted the move. North of Danube River the Albanians found protection, hospitality, and support. The favorable conditions allowed the group to continue their fight for national emancipation.

The Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga defined the Albanians as "blood cousins of the Romanians". Because of the affinity of their language and traditions the migrants succeeded in rapidly integrating themselves into Romanian society. Some Alba-

nians became guardians of science, art and culture. Others succeeded as doctors, architects and teachers. The Albanian Vasile Lupu was Prince of Moldavia and Rumania during the 18th century.

The most important period of the Albanian community in Rumania extended from the late 19th to the early years of the 20th century. In 1844 the Albanian patriot Naum Panajot Veqillaxhi developed and published the first Albanian abecedarius (Alphabet). It was sent to Albania where it was well received. Veqillaxhi also sent a manifesto which incited his compatriots to fight for a national rebirth. He ranks among the true promoters of "Rilindja".

The contacts between the Albanian-Rumanian community and Albania were frequent. Testimony about this relationship is found in the "Condica de la Bobostica" ("Register of the Bobostica"). It recorded the visits to Bucharest of some Bobostica inhabitants who sought financial aid for the liberation of the Ottoman-ruled village of Emlaqi.

Princess Elena Ghica (Dora d'Istria) was a promoter of Albanian national liberation. In 1873 she published *Albanians in Rumania* at Florence. The first unedited documentary history of the Albanians of Walachia contributed to the Albanian cause. It gave the liberation movement prestige throughout Europe. The princess was rightly named the "brightest star in the unfortunate Albanian firmament."

During 1880, a group of young Albanians created an Albanian literary association in Bucharest. The association was modeled on that of a similar group in Constantinople.

From the founding of the *Drita* society in 1884, numerous Rumanian intellectuals and political activists supported the organization. C.A. Roseti, D. Bratianu, the poet V. Alecsandri, Prince Ion Ghica, the historian V.A. Urechcs, Lascar Catargui, Petre Carp promoted the society. Some Albanians in Rumania hesitated to openly espouse the emanci-

pation movement since there could be Turkish reprisals against relatives in Albania.

In 1887, the *Diturija* cultural association was created. Under the dual patronage of *Drita* and *Diturija* important works of literature and history were published. The groups supported printing of Albanian language school books.

The writings of the Frashëri brothers, Sami, Abdyl and Naim, Jan Vretua, K. Kristoforidhi and others were also printed. Bucharest became an important spiritual and cultural center for the Albanian national movement.

Nikolla Naqua and *Drita* association oversaw operations of the Rumanian-Albanian Institute. This Normal School which operated between 1892 and 1901 was partly subsidized by the Romanian State. Diplomat teachers were sent to various Albanian settlements "even at risk of life" to instruct in the Albanian national language.

Dr. Ibrahim Themo, the writer Asdreni, Neofit Simoni, Mihail Lehova, and Thomas Avrami taught at the Albanian school in Costanza. It opened in 1901 to teach Albanian laborers in that region.

The newspapers and magazines published between 1887 and 1893 played an important role in the preservation of the Albanian language. They also promoted national cohesion.

Under the presidency of Prince Albert Ghica, a Pan-Albanian Congress was organized in Bucharest in 1905. At the congress, Ismail Kemal deliberated with Bucharest's Albanian community.

Some Albanians in Bucharest insisted that Nicolae Iorga author a *Brief History of Albania and the Albanian People*. The volume written in French was used as the basis of discussion by the Albanian delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris.

In 1955, an arbitrary decision of the communist authorities suppressed the last Albanian organization in Rumania. The government agents confiscated all the property of the Albanian associations

including libraries, archives, national costumes and musical instruments. It is hoped that the current government will agree to return the property of the old associations in order to enable us to resume our ancient traditions.

Today, the Executive Committee of the Albanian Cultural Union of Romania is striving to

reinvigorate a sense of pride among Albanians in Romania. Cultural exhibits, television shows and radio broadcasts, as well as printed articles, are offered to encourage a spiritual renewal following decades of oppression.*

Cristia MAKUTOVICI

**Katundi Ynë 5/1991*

KOSOVË TIME BOMB TICKING

As if the holocaust in Bosnia-Herzegovina were not enough, the ramshackle frame of the old Yugoslavia holds another disaster. It is taking shape and waiting to burst in Kosovë, where 90 percent of the 3 million population are Muslim ethnic Albanians held tight in the grip of Serbian chauvinism.

The story of Kosovë has been the familiar one of ruthless cultural, economic, and political domination. To justify the straitjacket put on the ethnic Albanian majority, the Serbian occupiers invented grave dangers including criminal violence and separatist plots. Ravished Serbian maidens were dished up by the controlled press together with other examples of ethnic propaganda. More Serbian police and Yugoslav Army units moved to Kosovë to curb growing protest. The ethnic Albanian opposition reports that weapons have been issued to Kosovë Serbs, whose number has been increased through colonization.

MEANWHILE, 100,000 Albanian civil servants, teachers, and physicians have been dismissed. A recent human rights investigation by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe found that Kosovë's education and health systems no longer function. It warned of the danger of epidemic diseases.

The social emergency has brought the previously passive Kosovë Albanians actively together. In a referendum last September they demanded a state of their own. In May, despite Belgrade's prohibition, they held elections for a parliament

of the "Kosovë Republic." Serb extremists replied by demanding more colonization together with expulsion of ethnic Albanians, with resistance to be crushed by force.

Such a turn could start a Balkan war. Early in June, Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel of Turkey traveled to Albania to sign a treaty of military and economic cooperation. Little was said of the military terms beyond Turkey's training of Albanian cadets, but it was rumored that, with an eye to the trouble in neighboring Kosovë, Turkish advisers are to reorganize the Albanian Army. Mr. Demirel told a press conference, "Kosovë concerns us too." Turning to Albania's President Sali Berisha, he added, "If anything happens in Kosovë or in the Sanjak, we will stand with you." The Sanjak is the district of Novi Pazar in south Serbia, with a predominantly Muslim population. Unmentioned, but very much in mind also, is the increasingly disaffected and disadvantaged large ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has made Turkey a more prominent player in a region that extends from the Atlantic to Central Asia. Turkey has repeatedly expressed its interest in the welfare of the Turkish peoples to the east and of the Muslims in the Balkans. Its warnings deserve to be taken seriously.

*Christian Science Monitor, July 7, 1992
(More on Kosovë pp 74-86)*

FRIENDS IN THE WEST ASKS HELP FOR ALBANIAN CHILDREN

The international non-profit charitable organization, **Friends in the West**, has begun an effort to alleviate the suffering of Albanian children who have borne the brunt of the social and economic disintegration in Albania. Following an April 1992 visit to Albania by a small group headed by **Friends** founder Ray Barnett, a campaign was begun to alert people of the United States, Canada and Great Britain to the needs of Albanian children. On their visit the group found distressing signs of an emergency requiring international help. Albania is unable to feed, clothe and provide medicine for its youngest citizens. The group visited hospitals and orphanages where they saw children malnourished and wrapped in rags. The buildings themselves were without heat and often missing glass in the windows. Hospitals had no medicine, according to Barnett who appeared on the CBS program "This Morning" to tell of the Albanian children's plight. "The average couple in America has more in their medicine chest than there is in an entire children's hospital (in Albania)." Albanian parents, who earn an average of \$6-\$8 per month, often surrender their children to orphanages and hospitals hoping that these institutions will be able to provide for them better than they can.

According to **Friends in the West**

- *35% of urban children and 50% of rural Albanian children are malnourished

- *milk, meat products and baby formula have nearly disappeared from Albania

- *an estimated 25% of all Albanian children are currently hospitalized for malnutrition

- *treatable pneumonia and diarrhea are the leading causes of death among Albanian children

In order to respond to this emergency **Friends in the West** is prepared to send a small operational team with much needed supplies. The organization has twenty years of experience in this type of relief work in such places as Lebanon, Uganda and Romania. They are asking for help from all people of good will. Donations of money or supplies, especially vitamins, medical equipment, medicine, baby food, clothes and blankets are sought. They hope to provide aid to five homes for handicapped children (approximately 400 beds), nine dystrophic hospitals (for malnourished children—approx. 545 beds), and for five orphanages (approx. 525 children). They will also be working with Albanian day care centers as well as the families of former political prisoners to assist them in their needs.

Any person interested in helping Albanian children with donated materials or a financial contribution can call toll-free to **ALBANIAN CHILDREN IN CRISIS HOTLINE 1-800-441-1900**. The mailing address of **Friends in the West** is:

P.O. Box 250

Arlington, WA 98233 (USA)

(tel) 206-435-8983

or

P.O. Box 146

Surrey, BC V3T 4W4 Canada



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THE ALBANIAN NATION IN 1991

(Editor's note: A symposium on the above theme was held at the New York University Law School, Vanderbilt Hall, in New York City on October 21, 1991. Several scholars specialists in Albanian Studies presented papers on contemporary Albania. We are pleased to present Dr. Sami Repishit's remarks to our readers. Since this event many new changes have occurred in Albania, nevertheless we feel that Dr. Repishit's presentation merits publication in our journal.)

* * *

The allied victory over Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in WW II opened a new era for the continent of Europe. Without counting the events that occurred in Europe since 1945, which is far beyond the scope of this gathering, it is generally agreed that one major positive approach was primarily responsible for the new atmosphere of understanding and cooperation in Western Europe. It resulted in eventual economic and political integration of the continent. The Allied victors did not suffocate the vanquished, as they did with the Versailles Treaty of 1919. On the contrary, while both Italy and Germany were being disarmed, they were called upon to join in the common effort to build a new Europe of peace and prosperity for all. The Marshall Plan of the late 1940's best illustrates this constructive and farsighted policy.

Since then, Europe has gone a long way towards political integration, and has achieved unparalleled economic development and prosperity. This in turn has decreased the importance of previous emotional appeals to nationalism and calls for "lebensraum", or to manifest destinies for some "superior nations" to build empires.

Unfortunately, not all of Europe joined in "the miracle." Half of the continent fell under the Soviet rule. "From Stettin to Trieste," to paraphrase Winston Churchill, "an iron curtain fell,"

dividing the continent and closing in over 100 million Europeans. Among them, were the Albanians who lived in Albania and in Yugoslavia. Greece escaped this destiny at the price of a cruel civil war.

The State of Albania was formally established on November 28, 1912. It was meant to be the homeland for all Albanians living in the western part of the Balkan peninsula. European diplomats, without Albanian representation, decided otherwise. Half of the Albanian population was locked in a small territory of 28,000 km². The other half was left to reside in Yugoslavia and Greece.

The dismemberment of the Albanian nation was a shocking experience for all Albanians on both sides of the border from which they have never recovered. It has also been and it continues to be, a major element in the internal as well as external policies of the Albanian State.

After the Paris Peace Conference of 1919-1920, and the admission of Albania to the League of Nations (1920) it became evident that the future of the Albanian nation would be one designed and imposed by the great European powers. Small, poor, dismembered, Albania carried the seeds of doom and failure. It is a curious historical fact that the difficult years of 1920-24 were also years of an incipient parliamentary democracy. In spite of its shortcomings sprinkled by a few acts of violence, it was a model of western parliamentarism in Albania's history.

From 1925 to 1939, Albania was ruled by an intelligent and autocratic leader, King Zogu. The monarch had little faith in "constitutionalism" the sovereignty of the legislature, and much less so in "republicanism", and the sovereignty of the people. His personal reign, however, succeeded in shaping Albania into a state out of a conglomerate of various personal and tribal interests. For the first time, Albanians saw an administration patterned

after the western models. Yet, in spite of the western appearance, prewar Albania remained essentially an oriental country.

The Italian fascist invasion of April 7, 1939, produced revolutionary changes in Albania. The invasion acted as a shock therapy for the rather lethargic mood that had debilitated the country, mainly as a result of a stagnant economy. Albanians suddenly realized that their country had lost its independence. It was a case of instantaneous mobilization of a population, not to defend the outgoing regime, but to confront the new danger coming from outside. The foreigner galvanized the masses. Huge demonstrations against the incoming invasion took place in the streets of major Albanian cities. From villages, volunteers flocked into towns to join the fight against the invader. They were great days!

Left without leadership (the government was paralyzed and then fled), the angry masses joined the patriotic youth and some intellectuals who took the lead in the resistance. For the first time, Albanians acted as other Europeans did in such occasions. A massive popular movement arose. It was not the mobilization of uninformed irregulars following a chieftain whose interests were often of a dubious character. This time, Albanians had a goal that was well-understood and well-defined. The nation was in danger, it had to be saved, the invader had to be expelled. A sweeping sentiment of national pride overwhelmed the people. The whole state structure crumbled as the King and his aides left the country. The power vacuum created after the collapse left the door open for any one to offer leadership. Albania would never be the same again.

The 1939-44 years of resistance are a chapter little explored, except for the distorted historiography that was offered by Communist-controlled scribes. The fact remains that anti-fascist resistance in Albania was a massive, all embracing movement which affected everyone's life. Initially, there was a genuine movement for national libera-

tion and the independence of the country. In the 1942 Conference of Peza, the National Liberation Council of Albania resolved to fight "for a free Albania, indivisible, independent, democratic." Under the influence of the communists, however, the movement took on social overtones. In Albania, as in other European countries, those who joined in fighting the invaders began to advance demands for more powersharing in the future. Even non-communist organizations such as Balli Kombëtar offered a program which recognized the needs of the time and expressed the social aspirations of its large membership.

The war years also politicized the countryside. The Albanian peasantry, representing over 75 percent of the population, began to move. Enthused by promises for a better life, farmers especially in the South where the land was held by a few landowners, began to join the communist-led movement. The first guerrilla units appeared in remote areas. They were protected by the poor or landless peasants.

Courage, the Albanian perennial virtue, was at its best. Daring actions were taken against the Italians and later the German armies by ill-trained, ill-equipped, but highly motivated units of three different political groups. The guerrilla warfare also disclosed that Albanians were unprepared to fight special warfare. Only the communist-led groups received training from experienced Yugoslav communist agents. An iron discipline and an organization befitting the rules of secret guerrilla warfare gave them the upper hand. For those who lived those days, the extreme harshness and the conspiratorial methods used by the communists left indelible impressions. It was the prelude to the state they built after their victory. It also explains the communist tendencies for intolerance, their eagerness to have it all at any cost, as well as their fanatical belief in the rightness of their cause. With the passing of time, most of the true believers were mercilessly eliminated and the field remained open for a group of careerists resulting in pseudo-leaders who, as we have recently seen,

turned out to be corrupted illiterates divested of all morality.

Internationally, the resistance movement secured for the Albanian state the right to sign the 1947 Peace Treaty with Italy as "associate ally." It later gained Albania admission to UNO (1955).

The communist takeover soon revealed the immaturity of the young leaders. Having failed to realize that with Nazi Germany's defeat Albania had the chance to genuinely be free and independent, they leaned toward their social convictions at the expense of the national interests. The dependency of Albania first on Yugoslavia, then on the Soviet Union and later on communist China demonstrated the infantilism of the communist leaders who were willing to accept even the protection of a foreign power rather than dropping the dreams of building a communist society at any cost. We now know the results: Albania is among the poorest of the poor nations. Albanians are dissatisfied with their fate in their own country. The

balance of 147.000 political prisoners and over 400.000 people passing through internment and internal exile camps makes the Albanian communist regime appear as bad or worse than Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. Today, in Albania, only one year after the termination of the communist monopoly on that country, the former communists are ashamed of their own acts. Many of them have apologized publicly. Communism in Albania has failed politically, economically, and morally.

With the emergence of the Democratic Party in December 1990, and the subsequent development of the Republican Party, a system known as "political pluralism" has become a reality in Albania. There are now 16 different parties in the country. Nevertheless, the communist heritage remains. There's a deeply rooted fear and lack of trust in government. There is a total reliance on a welfare system with a resulting lack of initiative. The 45 year isolation produced a darkness in people's



From prison cell to Parliament: Pjetër Arbnori (right), the newly elected president of the Albanian Parliament, spent 28 years in the Burrel prison. Released in 1990, Arbnori joined the opposition Democratic Party. Following the first democratic free elections in Albania, Arbnori was elected president of the Parliament. Pictured with Arbnori are Zef Luka (left) and Arbnori's sister (center)



Dr. Sali Berisha, leader of the new democratic Albania. He visited with President George Bush and Congressional leaders in Washington, June 1992. Berisha, along with Dr. Ibrahim Rugova of Kosovë, was awarded the fourth annual Raul Wallenberg Human Rights Award. Previous recipients have been Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia, Dalai Lama of Tibet and the Chinese Students democracy movement

minds and the belief that the world had forgotten Albania. There is a resignation to the forces of "destiny" and a sense of guilt especially among the intellectuals for having remained silent for so long among others. All this remains a monstrous obstacle which requires gigantic efforts to overcome it plus substantial outside assistance. Only recently has Albania joined the Helsinki process. It established diplomatic relations with the US, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain. It has also made some efforts to become associated with the European Community, and has joined the IMF as well as the World Bank. How deeply Albanians have resented their long isolation was reflected in the subsequent exoduses of tens of thousands. The unprecedented welcome given by 300,000 people to the US Secretary of State Baker last June was an expression of relief their isolation had ended.

* * *

The developments in strife ridden Yugoslavia will most definitely have an adverse effect on the normalization of the situation in Albania. As my colleague, Elez Biberaj said, "although Albania is ill-prepared for a military confrontation with Yugoslavia, the outbreak of an armed conflict in Kosovo will in all probability involve Albania." Albanians in Yugoslavia are seen by most Albanians not as a minority, but as the other half of the Albanian nation. Even during the war years, the "Albanian" problem in Yugoslavia was heatedly debated. In 1943, the otherwise hostile political groups of Balli Kombëtar, Legaliteti, and the (Communist) National-Liberation Front reached an agreement at the village of Mukaj. They acknowledged that the Albanian inhabited territories in Yugoslavia belonged to Albania. The agreement was later rejected by the communists. Soon after, an Assembly of Kosovars - the name used to designate all Albanians in Yugoslavia - resolved to join with Albania. In October, 1943, a delegation of Kosovars was received by the Parliament of German occupied Albania. Their request to declare the reunification of all Albanian lands into one state was unanimously approved. Later events did not support

these decisions, but their impact was strong and durable in the minds and hearts of all Albanians.

With the communist movement growing in Yugoslavia, the Kosovar leaders realized that the idea of reunification with Albania was their single most important card in their efforts to mobilize the local Albanian population to undertake resistance against the Nazis. Therefore, on January 2, 1944, the First Conference of the National Liberation Front of Kosova met in the village of Bujan. The delegates unanimously resolved to reunite Kosova to Albania, once the German forces were defeated. The Yugoslav Communist Party rejected the resolution and the Kosovar leaders were accused of "nationalism." The document was shelved, but the idea never died.

Albanian (Kosovar) partisan brigades were taken over by Serbo-Montenegrin commanders. Squeezed by the Serbs and abandoned by the communist leaders of Albania at the end of 1944, the Kosovars found themselves powerless. A popular insurrection against Serbian mass executions of Albanians took place in Kosova. Tito's brigades were merciless in their repression. They were assisted by two Albanian divisions. Among those responsible for the violence was a 19 year old colonel, the present president of Albania (Ramiz Alia).

After a 45 year long negative experience in Yugoslavia, the three million Albanians presently living there have embraced the democratic movement. It was first organized in December, 1989 by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, a highly respectable intellectual. The movement has adopted tactics of peaceful but active resistance to achieve its goal. The movement aims to achieve the status of a nation, and the right to become an independent republic. In July, 1990, the Assembly of Kosova declared the Province an equal and independent unit of the Yugoslav Federation/Confederation. Serbia reacted by issuing orders for the arrest of the delegates. With the Assembly, the new Government of Kosova went into exile. Then the entire governmental structure of Kosova was taken over by

Serbia. On September 7, 1990, the underground Assembly declared the Republic of Kosova and made public its Constitution.

With the deterioration of the situation in Yugoslavia, and especially after the proclamation of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia which provoked the present war, the existence of Yugoslavia became practically a political fiction. Faced with a rapid desintegration of the former SFR of Yugoslavia, the Assembly of Kosova, on

September 22, 1991, proclaimed Kosova a sovereign and independent Republic with the right to join other sovereign republics in a free Yugoslavia. A well-organized Referendum was held between September 27 and 30, 1991. The final results were 99.7 percent in favor of the Republic of Kosova. Consequently a new provisional government of Kosova was formed on October 19, 1991, with the authority to represent Kosova domestically and internationally. At this juncture, leaders of the Kosova democratic movement representing all Albanian parties in Yugoslavia have been invited to the Peace Conference in the Hague. Their position was presented in a "Political Declaration" dated October 17, 1991. Here are the main elements:

1. Albanians in Yugoslavia are a nation not a national minority. Since Yugoslavia has proven to be an unsuccessful model for the solution of the national question, Albanians now insist on their right to self-determination, according to the principles enumerated in several international conventions,

2. Albanians in Yugoslavia see the following options:

Option a) If the external and internal borders of Yugoslavia remain unchanged, then Kosova must have the status of a republic, joining the league of other republics in a free Yugoslavia.

Option b) If the internal borders between the republics are changed, Albanians

in Yugoslavia request that the Albanian Republic in Yugoslavia be formed on the basis of ethnic and other principles that apply also for the Serbs, the Croats, the Slovenes and others.

Option c) If the external borders of Yugoslavia are changed, Albanians in Yugoslavia request that decisions about the union of Kosova and other Albanian territories in Yugoslavia be taken through a plebiscite only under international supervision.

If the Albanians in Yugoslavia have succeeded in publicly defending their cause, Albanians in Greece, often referred to as the "the Chams" belong to the category of those national minorities that had all their rights denied and are in a process of forced assimilation. No Albanian schools were allowed by Greece, and even the speaking of Albanian in public was prohibited. In 1923, 35.000 Muslim Albanians were forceably transferred to Turkey, and in 1944, 23.000 more were expelled to Albania. On a single day in June, 1944, the Greek General Zervas killed over 500 Muslim Albanians, and subsequently burned 68 Albanian villages. For the past 47 years, the Albanian Communist Government totally neglected the tragic plight of the Albanians in Greece. Only recently has the situation been brought to the attention of the Greek Government, first in a ministerial meeting in Corfu, last June, and later at the Moscow CSCE Conference in September, 1991. Last September, the foreign ministers of both countries met at the UN offices and discussed the possibilities of opening consular offices. In the meantime, an association called *Chameria* has been formed in Albania to monitor the violations of human rights of the Albanian population in Greece whose number remains unknown.

Large groups of Albanians are found in Turkey where the process of assimilation has been rapid and inexorable due mainly to the religious affinity. Turkey is a country where many Albanians distin-

guished themselves, has never shown any interest or respect for the preservation of the Albanian heritage among the millions settled there in the 20th century alone.

In Italy, about 250,000 Albanians, known as "Arbëresh" are fighting the battle against the invasion of Italian mass media. Having been in the forefront of Albania's National Awakening during the 19th century, these Arbëresh who kept Albanian language alive for 500 years are now trying to institutionalize the preservation of the Albanian language. They seek mandatory teaching in Arbëresh in the elementary schools, as well as frequent contact with mother country.

There are many groups of Albanians spread out all over Europe. Large numbers of Kosovars reside in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Belgium. The former Albanian colonies of Romania, Bulgaria and Egypt are fading away. The largest group of Albanians in the Western world are in the United States. Their exact number is not known. Albanians in the United States are perhaps the most advanced and certainly the most prosperous emigrés group outside Albania.

* * *

In 1991, clearly there is a movement among the Albanians to think of themselves as members of the Albanian nation. Judging by the latest developments both in Albania and in Kosova we can venture to say that the idea of the reunification of the Albanian nation has made great strides in the minds and consciences of Albanians in both sides of the border. The July 1, 1991, Resolution of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania ended with the statement: "The legitimate will of the Albanian people of Kosova cannot be denied."

Statements supporting Albanian Kosovar demands have been made by representatives of all political parties of Albania, and by many government officials. On August 10, the Albanian Defense Minister declared that "Albania will do everything to defend the national identity and the

lives of our Kosovar brothers." In an interview given to the British papers, Albanian opposition leaders went so far as to say that in case of a Serbian massacre in Kosova, Albania will intervene. Albanian diplomacy has been activated, and the problem of Kosova, and lately also of Chameria, have been brought to the attention of the international community. In a meeting with the US Secretary of State James Baker his Albanian counterpart concentrated on the Kosova issue. Two days earlier, Albania presented the UN Security Council with a statement on the situation in Yugoslavia. Simultaneously, the president Ramiz Alia of Albania, addressed Lord Carrington, chairman of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia, the UN Secretary General, and the leaders of the five great powers as well as Germany. In an interview, given on June 28, 1991, president Alia said: "The issue of human rights is not the fundamental problem of Kosova. The main issue is the right of a nation, since Kosova is denied the right to be a free nation."

With the opening of Albania the free movement of "ideas and people" has brought an influx of Albanian visitors from Greece, Italy, and the diaspora to the mother country. The diasporans are renewing old ties and creating new ones.

In Albania, the Academy of Sciences is being reconstructed to include Albanians from abroad. A PEN Club was recently formed, where names of several prominent political exiles were included. Albania has offered to help Kosovar students whose right to an education has been denied. We have also noticed a close cooperation between the Democratic Party of Albania, the Democratic League of Kosova, and the Democratic Prosperity Party in Macedonia.

In Kosova, a Forum for all Albanian intellectuals in Yugoslavia has been formed. Also, a coordination Committee of all Albanian political parties has been set up. It represents the interests of all Albanians in Kosova, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia proper. Movements and forces are converging.

The movement for the reunification nevertheless, cannot be advanced in a vacuum. It must evolve in a favorable context. That is to say in a favorable European context. Judging by the present situation in the Balkans, one can conclude that this area is still not a part of Europe.

It is highly possible that in the spirit of the Helsinki Act of 1975 and the 1990 Paris Charter, Albanians will succeed in achieving an all-Albanian cultural integration. Then the free movement of ideas and people will flow with relative ease.

It is also conceivable that with the improvement of the situation in Yugoslavia and the strengthening of relations with Greece, economic ties, especially between the bordering areas on both sides of the frontier will facilitate the free movement of merchandise. In the long term, this will prepare the ground for an initial economic integration of the Albanian-inhabited areas.

In 1991, Albanians wherever they are must be fully aware of the world in which they live, and especially of the sensitivity of the areas they inhabit. History divides the Balkan nations. Only our commitment to the principles of freedom and democracy can serve as a common ground for an understanding.

At the beginning of these remarks, I referred to the positive approach taken after WW II. Namely the Allied victors did not suffocate the vanquished. Instead they brought peace and prosperity in Western Europe. It is this philosophy that should inspire the thoughts and the actions of the Balkan peoples if they dream of having similar results.

I believe that the greatest challenge to the Albanian nation in 1991 would be the creation of an atmosphere with its neighbors where one could say as the Americans and Canadians do: We have no neighbors to fear! All the rest will follow!

Sami REPISHITI

ALBANIA GIVEN "MOST FAVORED NATION" STATUS BY THE UNITED STATES

On May 14, 1992, a trade relations agreement between the governments of the United States and the Republic of Albania was signed in Washington, D.C. According to the Albanian Boston based *Lirija* (June 1992), signatories to the agreement were Carla Hill for the United States and Deputy Minister of Commerce Naske Afezulli for the Republic of Albania.

This agreement has major significance. It gives Albania the "Most Favored Nation" trade status with the United States. Albania will now gain membership in the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

During his tour through United States Mr. Afezulli visited San Francisco, California. He spent a day at the University of San Francisco and met with the members of the newly established Albanian Catholic Institute. The Institute operates from Xavier Hall at the University campus. Mr. Afezulli met with the University of San Francisco President, Father John Schlegel, S.J. He expressed appreciation to Schlegel on behalf of the Albanian people for honoring Reverend Simon Jubani last year. (Jubani was a prisoner of the former regime. He initiated the peaceful process of securing religious freedom in Albania). During the meeting the possibility of a scholarship for Albanian students was also discussed.



Mr. Naske Afezulli (right) with University of San Francisco President, Fr. John Schlegel, S.J.

ADEM DEMAÇI WINS SAKAROV PRIZE

Adem Demaçi, "the Albanian Gandhi" was awarded the prestigious Sakarov Prize by the European Parliament in November, 1991. The prize was awarded for "spiritual freedom." Demaçi is a writer who spent some 28 years in prison for his non-violent opposition to the Yugoslav regime's oppression of Albanians in Yugoslavia. He is author of the book *Gjarpijt e Gjakut* (Serpents of Blood), which advocates peace, harmony and forgiveness among feuding Albanians who still use vendetta in solving their conflicts.

In presenting Demaçi with the award, Eurik Baun, president of the parliament commented, "I am proud to present this prize to a man who spent 28 years in prison. He is one of the greatest promoters for peace and freedom in our time."

Demaçi became a hero to the Kosovë freedom movement by insisting on the truth – even in the face of persecution against the Albanian ethnic group. Demaçi was badly tortured that he became nearly blind.

Albanian intellectuals in the United States initiated an information campaign in 1984 calling for his release. Various human rights organizations supported his cause. Amnesty International adopted him as a prisoner of conscience and for years worked to secure his freedom.

Demaçi credited the right of freedom of speech in the West for much of the success in the freedom struggle. In his acceptance speech before the Parliament, he said that the,

"Freedom of speech is the strong weapon that breaks the darkness and tears the mask off the oppressor. That is why all fighters for freedom of speech are harassed, jailed and sometimes executed by the robbers of the free word."

The Serbs had "cut off the arteries of the Albanian people by destroying everything that is Alba-



Adem Demaçi, the "Albanian Mandela"

nian." He spoke candidly and fearlessly about the extent of Serbian atrocities.

"The entire world is shocked at the grave injustice and brutality which have occurred in the heart of Europe in the wake of the Paris, Helsinki, Copenhagen and Moscow conferences. The world rightfully asks: How can Yugoslavia, as a member of the United Nations, commit such brutality in this country? The slaughter house in Croatia is terrifying."

He spoke of the reasons behind those atrocities. He noted that "In Kosovë the Serbs have replaced Albanians with Serbs, in this way creating rivalry between Albanians and Serbs." Further, he remembered that "In Croatia they persecuted the Serbs there that the new Croatian democratic system would threaten their existence. They armed these Serbs and threw them into a life-and-death war against the Croats. Serbian parasites are preparing the same scenario for Kosova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia."

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While he criticized the Hague Conference, he was confident in the European Community's ability to alleviate the country's problems. He said, "I have faith in the EC's ability to ultimately resolve the problem fairly."

In conclusion, he said, "The logic of blocs, blocks the logic. I invite you all and the rest of the world to get rid of the racial, religious, national and ideological blocs. Let us open the road to working together by respecting the interests of each other and open the paths of human love and harmony to create a world where people will live equally and free of fear."

In awarding Demaçi with this prestigious honor, the European parliament took at least a symbolic step towards a recognition of the important fight



Adem Demaçi (center) with John Fund of the Wall Street Journal (left) and Stephen Schwartz of the San Francisco Chronicle (right). The newsmen are "Friends of Albania and Kosovo".

against Serbian aggression in Yugoslavia. It is fitting that the center of their attention should be a man such as Adem Demaçi. His life highlights the best qualities of the peace-loving Albanian Kosovars: namely an unflicking fidelity to the truth and a dedication to the ideals of non-violence.

U.S. AGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES ASSISTANCE TO ALBANIAN SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS

The United States government has provided some 600,000 school textbooks to replace propaganda-laden materials of the old Communist regime. The textbooks, printed in the United States are in the Albanian language. They include course work for mathematics, English, civics, and history. The books were enthusiastically received by the school children and their teachers. The depoliticized textbooks will undoubtedly help improve the Albanian educational system.

In 1991 the United States government also funded an airlift to Albania. Approximately \$1 million worth of medicines and basic medical equipment which are in critically short supply were shipped. These items included, antibiotics, insulin, syringes and needles, stethoscopes, surgical gloves, laryngoscopes, otoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, heart monitors, resuscitators, sterilizers, and physician's desk reference books. All of these supplies have been distributed to 35 target locations by Project HOPE and the Albanian Ministry of Health.

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IN DEFENSE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN KOSOVA

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9 December 1991

Dear Colleagues:

I was pleased to learn in the December 4, 1991 issue of the *The Chronicle of Higher Education* of the formation of your committee. Given the threats to and abuses of academic freedom in a number of countries throughout the world, there is certainly a need for this organization.

I should like to bring to your attention a situation which I believe merits the support and assistance of your organization. This is the plight of the University of Prishtina in Kosova, the Albanian-inhabited province of Yugoslavia, which recently declared its independence as a consequence of both the civil war now engulfing Yugoslavia and the growing repression of the Albanian population in Yugoslavia by the regime of the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic.

Kosova has been a constituent political unit of Yugoslavia and its predecessor states since 1913 when the region was incorporated into Serbia by the decision of the then "Great Powers" of Europe following the conclusion of the First Balkan War. Since that time the Albanians of Yugoslavia have enjoyed what may be charitably characterized as second-class citizenship within Yugoslavia. Throughout most of this period they have been subjected to political, social, economic, and cultural discrimination.

It was not until the outbreak of widespread demonstrations in Kosova and the Albanian inhabited areas of western Macedonia in late 1968 that the Yugoslav government sought to address some of the concerns of the Albanians and to improve their status. Although the Yugoslav regime refused to grant the main political demand of the Albanians--the elevation of Kosova to the status of a republic within the Yugoslav Federation--it did accord Kosova the status of an autonomous province within the Republic of Serbia. The University of Prishtina was established as part of the reform program of this period.

During the decade of the 1970's, the University of Prishtina flourished, despite inadequate funding and a shortage of Albanian speaking faculty and instructional materials. There was instruction in Serbo-Croatian for non-Albanian students and in courses offered by non-Albanian faculty. By the beginning of the 1980's, the university enrolled over 35,000.00 students. Although the university, as with any rapidly growing institution, had its share of problems, there were few serious difficulties involving academic freedom issues until 1981.

In March 1981, student demonstrations took place at the university to protest the poor quality of the food and residence hall facilities. These demonstrations subsequently emphasized political concerns, the most important being that Kosova be granted the status of a republic within Yugoslavia. The demonstrations were crushed by the combined forces of the Yugoslav army and the federal police. Since that time, the position of the Albanian population of Kosova has steadily deteriorated.

The University of Prishtina, which has been characterized by Serbian authorities as "a citadel of Albanian nationalism," has been the focal point of the ongoing campaign to curtail the cultural and intellectual freedom of the Albanians of Kosova during the past decade. Since 1981, the size of the

student body at the university has been reduced, several hundred Albanian faculty members have been fired, and the percentage of non-Albanian students at the university is being increased. The administration of the university is now comprised predominantly of non-Albanians and the curriculum is being revised so that less instruction will be offered in the Albanian language. Additionally, course offerings in Albanian language, history, and culture are being reduced. These changes have been imposed by the Serbian administration despite the expressed opposition of the overwhelming majority of Albanian students and faculty.

Similarly, many Albanian scholars, scientists, and intellectuals associated with the Kosova Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Albanological Institute as well as other scientific institutions have been dismissed or resigned their positions to protest the restrictions on their academic freedom imposed by Serbian authorities. Even Albanian faculty members of the School of Medicine of the University have been purged for their "nationalist sentiments." It also appears that non-Albanian applicants are being given preference over Albanians for admission to the medical school in Kosova where Albanians comprise 90 percent of the population. If this practice continues, it will have serious implications for the future of medical services in Kosova.

The position of the Albanian population of Kosova in general and of scholars and intellectuals in particular has markedly deteriorated since the emergence in 1987 of Slobodan Milosevic as the dominant political personality in Serbia. At the instigation of Milosevic, the Serbian constitution was amended in March 1989 to deprive Kosova of the autonomous powers it had been granted under the 1974 Yugoslav constitution. There are large contingents of Yugoslav army and federal police stationed in Kosova and the province is under a regime of martial law. Under these conditions, civil liberties and academic freedom have for all practical purposes ceased to exist in Kosova.

Following the dissolution of the Provincial Assembly in June 1990 by order of the Serbian government, the Albanian members of the Assembly on July 2, 1990 proclaimed Kosova's sovereignty and independence within a confederated Yugoslavia. In September 1990, they approved a constitution for the Republic of Kosova. These actions were ratified by the people of Kosova in a referendum held during September and October of this year. Milosevic, of course, has refused to recognize the validity of these actions.

Since it is impossible to give in this letter a full account of the situation which confronts Kosovar academics and intellectuals today, I am enclosing some additional materials. They include an article from the July 24, 1991 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on conditions at the University of Prishtina; a letter by a group of prominent intellectuals on "The Plight of Kosova" from the April 11, 1991 issue of the new York Review of Books; a report of the chair of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Claiborne Pell, on his April 1991 visit to Yugoslavia; and a summary of an article titled "The Forbidden People" by Rexhep Qosja, a prominent Kosovar intellectual and scholar.

I hope these items will convince you of the gravity of the situation in Kosova and of the serious abuses of academic freedom that have existed there since 1981. Any assistance your organization can provide in the effort to ameliorate the conditions under which Albanian scholars and intellectuals in Kosova must live and work will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Nicholas C. Pano, Associate Dean and Professor of History
Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL/USA

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Prishtina,
9 December 1991

AN APPEAL

To: All the Universities of the World
All Institutions of Higher Learning

Ladies and Gentlemen :
Dear Colleagues :

Prishtina University (Kosova, Yugoslavia) was formally established on February 5, 1970. It now has a record of 21 years of successful work and honorable accomplishments.

The first unit to operate was the Faculty (Department) of Philosophy, founded in 1960. One year later, 1961, the School of Law and the Faculty of Economics were also opened. Prishtina University was founded mainly to serve the needs of students of Albanian nationality in Kosova, and Yugoslavia, but it was opened also to all students of other nationalities. Presently, Prishtina University has thirteen departments and serves also seven Institutes of Higher Learning (pedagogical and technical). About 90 percent of the population of Kosova are ethnic Albanians. There are about three million ethnic Albanians presently living in Yugoslavia.

1. In 1990, the School of Medicine was the first victim. On July 1, 1991, the Government of Serbia, which has for some time operated as an occupying power in Kosova, introduced compulsory-emergency measures for Prishtina University, including the seven Institutes. One year earlier, the School of Medicine was the first victim. Thus, since July 1, 1991 until today, academic freedom has been denied to us brutally and violently.

2. From the teaching process of Prishtina University, 682 professors, associate professors, and their assistants have been dismissed, as well as 88 members of the administrative staff. They are ALL ALBANIANS. By this action the victims are denied work, compensation, and fringe benefits (social security, insurances for themselves and their families, etc.)

3. The enrollment of the Albanian students, and their class attendance are not allowed for the 1991-1992 school-year. Over 14,000 Albanian students registered for the competitive entrance examination which was never administered.

4. In fact, after 21 years of successful operation with integrity, the firing of the teaching and administrative staff means that instruction in the Albanian language at Prishtina University is practically abolished from freshman to the senior year. Examinations are cancelled, and the graduation of students is made impossible even for those being short only one exam.

By Police order :

--Albanian students are not allowed to enter University grounds and buildings.

--The use of the University Library by Albanian students is prohibited.

--The buildings, auditoriums, office spaces are occupied by Police or closed, in spite of the fact that these facilities were built by the people of Kosova, which are overwhelmingly Albanians.

5. More than 23.000 full and part-time Albanian students, who were attending the four year courses in Albanian at Prishtina University, as well as students of post-graduate courses are deprived of the right to study in their mother tongue, in an unlawful, uncivilized, and inhuman manner. All students have lost the right to student status, granted by the norms of international documents such as: children's assistance, social insurance, scholarships, food and living accomodations etc.

6. All these illegal developments have taken place in an atmosphere of rabid Serbian chauvinism characterized by its anti-Albanianism and denationalizing policies, with the concurrence of the Federal Yugoslav authorities. It has lasted for decades but deteriorated disturbingly these last ten years.

7. The world knows little, indeed, about the brutal methods used to violate political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights of the Albanians (in Yugoslavia), as well as the vicious obstacles used to prevent the work for, and the development of, the very existence of Albanians (as a nation), and of their elementary rights.

8. Serbian and Federal Yugoslav authorities are now carrying out classical racial, and segregational policies toward the Albanian educational system, at the detriment of all schools in Albanian and the Prishtina University in particular.

This University is the only university in Yugoslavia serving the needs of three million Albanians living in that country.

9. These uncivilized actions of the Serbian and Yugoslav authorities go against all generally known international covenants, as well as against the laws of the country. They defy all norms of a civilized and democratic society and the legislation of any democratic country.

10. We are embarrassed to report that these shameful acts have been done following the (Government's) "emergency measures" and executed by no one else but the present president Dr. Radivoje Papovic, an illegally Serb-appointed official and his Serb/Montenegrin appointees who serve as department chairpersons. All of them call themselves "scholars" and claim to lecture "justice", "humanity", "democracy" etc.

The information we are sharing with you about Prishtina University, and especially about the situation of the teaching process in Albanian schools (including the deplorable position of the teaching and administrative staff), will serve, we trust, to highlight the truth about us which has been hidden for far too long.

We sincerely hope that you will grasp the full impact these violations have left on us, and will accordingly decide to solidarize yourselves with us by publicly denouncing these practices against our University.

We sincerely hope that thanks to your moral authority you will be in the position to alert world public opinion to turn the tide, and that you will be able to influence your Government's thinking, as well as the thinking of the other Yugoslav and world's universities. The international democratic public opinion must be made aware of this monstrous situation.

Pressure must be brought to protect the integrity and the dignity of Prishtina University, of its educators and of its staff. Pressure must be brought to force the present illegal authorities to admit the return of all Albanian professors to their desks, and to resume the teaching in Albanian language, thus providing the possibility for all students to proceed normally with their studies.

On our side, we would like to reiterate our determination to never reconcile ourselves with this dangerous situation imposed by the Government of Serbia and the Federal Yugoslav authorities in Kosova. We will never accept the closing of our University, the firing of our professors, the exclusion of our students, or the elimination of the education in the Albanian language.

Although the auditoriums, conference or lecture halls, libraries, study rooms, labs, computer centers, office space and buildings have now all been taken over forcibly by the Serbian Police we are determined to teach anywhere we can and without remuneration. (Ironically, the money previously allocated for the salaries of the Albanian educators expelled from their jobs is now being used to overpay Serb/Montenegrin colleagues, or for purposes unrelated to the University).

We will do all we can to protect the existence of the University, to continue teaching, and make it possible for our students to continue their education in Albanian, as described by the regulations and the laws still valid. We shall try to pursue our scientific research and professional work even under the condition of the present (Serbian) occupation regime.

At this time, we plead for your understanding of our predicament, and request that you continue your communication with us and support us in our determination to resist until this tragic turn of events ends, and our University returns to normalcy.

For this purpose, and to achieve our goals, we have constituted the *ad hoc* committees of the University under the direction of the legitimate president of the University.

Being fully aware of the obstacles ahead of us and the difficulties we will face, we are confident that your understanding and support will help in alleviating some of the present more outright pressure, as well as aid in overcoming ALL of the before-mentioned obstacles in the future. Although the Albanian teaching staff and students have been thrown out in the street, we will endure, persevere, and succeed.

We look forward to your moral and intellectual understanding and support which we badly need. We hope to win over your continued and overall communication with us, and that you will take the necessary measures needed to back our determined efforts for the protection of the integrity of our University and its return to us, where it belongs, and to bring back faculty, students, and the learning in Albanian language.

Very truly yours,

Prof. Dr. Ejup STATOVCI, President

Prishtina University

KOSOVA: THE STRUGGLE FOR STATEHOOD

It was in autumn of 1912, eighty years ago, when the Serbian army overran what was then known as the *vilayet* or province of Kosova. This happened in the context of the Balkan War against the Ottoman Empire, of which Albania was a part. The following year, the Serbian occupation was officially sanctioned by the Great Powers of Europe. With the loss of Kosova (and Chamouria in Greece), one-half of the Albanian population and land was cut off from the body of the Albanian nation.

Kosova had entered the Twilight Zone. Its time of troubles had begun, casting shadows over the province for the better part of a century.

The year that Kosova fell, was also the year when the struggle for its rebirth began. The Kosovars never consented to Serbian or Slav rule. Ever since 1912 they have fought, sometimes with arms, but more often in silence, to emerge from the twilight zone into the light of day. Theirs is a story of unrelenting struggle for freedom and self-determination.

Historic Steps Toward Statehood

Until recently their drive for self-determination was amorphous and lacking in political sophistication. But the picture changed dramatically in the last two years.

1) THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The first milestone occurred on July 2, 1990, when the Assembly of Kosova met in Prishtinë and solemnly proclaimed Kosova a Republic, equal in status and jurisdiction to the other constituent republics of what was then Yugoslavia. The Assembly issued a 5-point Declaration stating that Kosova "is an independent and equal unit" of the Federation of Yugoslavia. In effect and in fact, the

action of the Assembly was a Declaration of Independence from Serbia, much like the American Declaration of Independence from England in 1776.

Item 1 of the Declaration said: "This Declaration expresses and proclaims the political will of the people of Kosova and of this Assembly for self-determination in the context of Yugoslavia."

Item 4 said that henceforth the Kosovars would no longer be bound by the Constitution of the Serbian Republic, nor would they recognize the jurisdiction of Serbia over them.

Item 2 appealed to the "democratic opinion in Yugoslavia" and to "international opinion" for support of the action taken by the Assembly.



Balkans and Surrounding Regions (© 1991)

The July 2, 1990 Declaration amounted to a giant step in the political awareness of the Albanians of Yugoslavia. But like King George III of England, who paid no heed to the American revolutionary patriots, so also "King" Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia ignored the Declaration of the Kosovars. The obtuseness of the Serbian leader obliged the Albanians to take another momentous step on the road to self-determination.

2) THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

The second milestone was "The Resolution of Kachanik", which was drafted on September 7, 1990. It is also named because of the town Kachanik in Kosova, where the "outlawed" deputies of Kosova convened in secret.

The gathering in Kachanik was nothing less than a Constitutional Convention for the newly-proclaimed Republic of Kosova. The delegates accomplished what they set out to do, in spite of great risks to themselves. They fashioned a Constitution for the Republic.

Unlike the Declaration of Independence in July, 1990, which took its framework the federation of Yugoslavia, the Constitution of the Republic of Kosova envisioned a new Yugoslavia, organized as a Confederation of independent states. The document was drafted with that assumption in mind. For this reason the document refers to the Republic of Kosova as "a state", with all the symbols and attributes commonly associated with states.

The Resolution of Kachanik notes that, owing to the terroristic regime of Serbia, the Kosovars had no choice but to establish their own sovereign state. The new state is defined in the Constitution as a democratic social order, composed of Albanian nationals and members of other nationalities: Serbs, Moslems, Montenegrins, Croats, Turks, etc. The state guarantees to all citizens equality and all the rights and freedoms common to democratic systems of government. The Kosovar delegates felt confident that by taking this step they were making a contribution to the "democratic processes

already in progress in Yugoslavia, and to the integration of Yugoslavia into the democratic European Community."

Like the July, 1990 Declaration, the Constitution of September, 1990 showed the political maturity of the Kosovars, their firm commitment to democracy, and their orientation toward the new Europe.

The Kachanik Resolution might have been seen by Belgrade as a warning signal that Albanians were not going to be denied their inalienable rights to liberty and self-government. But the Serbian leaders only expanded their mechanisms of repression, targeting in particular the Albanian schools and language.

3) REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE

A year later, the Kosovars strengthened even more the legality of their claim to govern themselves. They held a Referendum on Independence not only from Serbia (which they proclaimed in the July 2, 1990 Declaration), but from the Yugoslav Federation, as well, just as Slovenia and Croatia had done a few months earlier. The referendum was held over a four-day period, from September 26 to 30, 1991. The vote for independence was decisive—practically 100 percent! (99.87%, to be exact).

This was the third milestone on the Kosovars' road to statehood. Three historic steps within 15 months, leaving no doubt about their political will and the direction in which they want to go.

Commenting on the Referendum, a well-known Serbian intellectual, Dusan Batakovic, warned that it must be taken seriously. "Albanians in Kosova are determined to be independent," he said. "They are 'very preoccupied with this...issue and want it resolved.'" But his was the voice of reason crying in the Serbian wilderness. The Serbian leaders stuck to their failed hard line, oblivious to the cost in human lives and suffering.

The Three Options of Albanians In Yugoslavia

In June, 1991 war broke out in Yugoslavia, pitting the Serbs against the Slovenes and the Croats. The Federation was beginning to unravel at the seams. In these circumstances, leaders of eleven political parties of Albanians in Yugoslavia, met to deliberate "on the Albanian national question in Yugoslavia" and how to resolve it.

A Coordination Council representing all the parties was formed, with Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Democratic League of Kosova, as President. The Democratic League is the largest Albanian political party in Yugoslavia. The other parties represented in the Council were: Farmers Party of Kosova, Parliamentary Party of Kosova, Albanian Demo-Christian Party--Kosova, Party of Albanian National Unity--Kosova, Social Democratic Party of Kosova, Party of Democratic Prosperity--Macedonia, People's Democratic party--Macedonia, Democratic League in Montenegro, Party of Democratic Action--Serbia, and Albanian Democratic Party--Serbia (The last two are parties of Albanian communities in southern Serbia).

On October 11, 1991 the Council issued a Political Declaration in Prishtine, summarizing first the grim situation of ethnic Albanians, then setting forth the options they might consider, depending on how the crisis in Yugoslavia is resolved.

Option One: "If the external and internal borders of Yugoslavia remain unchanged, then Kosova must have the status of a republic as a sovereign and independent state..." This conforms to the Declaration of Independence which said that the Kosovars will no longer recognize nor accept Serbian jurisdiction over them. They will govern themselves.

Option Two: "If the internal borders between the republics are to be changed,...the Albanian Republic in Yugoslavia [must] be built on the bases of the ethnic and other principles that apply to the Serbs, the Croats, the Slovenes and other peoples



Dr. Ibrahim Rugova was recently elected first President of the Republic of Kosovë

of Yugoslavia." The language of this option seems to say that the Albanian Republic would include all ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia living in compact territories in Kosova, Macedonia, Montenegro and southern Serbia. In other words, Albanians are poised to claim the same rights and powers to organize themselves politically, as the Serbs, Croats and other groups in Yugoslavia.

Option Three: "If the external borders of Yugoslavia are to be changed, the Albanians in Yugoslavia [would opt for reunification of Kosova and other territories in Yugoslavia with Albania..." The reunification would take place through a "plebiscite under international monitoring."

The Political Declaration of October 11, 1991 goes on to say that the "crisis in Yugoslavia began in Kosova...and it cannot be solved without the participation of around 4 million Albanians in Yugoslavia."

The October document served to clarify the position of ethnic Albanians in a disintegrating Yugoslavia. In particular, it laid the groundwork for reunification with Albania, if the other two options are no longer relevant or feasible.

The Drive for Recognition of Kosova

Over the past two years, Kosovar leaders have worked hard to gain recognition for Kosova as a sovereign independent state. The basis of their argument is the demonstrated will of the Albanians in Kosova (who make up 90% percent of its population) for statehood. A government of the Republic of Kosova is in place, but is forced to operate in exile. Its representatives have been busy traveling to numerous countries--such as Turkey, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Belgium, the United States-- and conferring with high government officials in a determined drive to win international recognition.

So far, however, only Albania has taken that step. On October 22, 1991 the People's Assembly of Albania issued a declaration saying that it "recognizes the Republic of Kosova as a sovereign and independent state." The Assembly also recognized the provisional government of Kosova, headed by Dr. Bujar Bukoshi. The Assembly's declaration on Kosova won unanimous approval and "was greeted with frantic and prolonged applause," according to a dispatch from Tirane. The Albanian Assembly also appealed to the international community, above all to the member nations of ECSC (European Conference on Security and Cooperation), to accord recognition to Kosova.

As of this writing (April, 1992), Austrian and German officials have taken the lead in putting this question on their diplomatic agendas. Turkish leaders, too, are reported to have said that they were considering recognition.

In the meantime, Albanian communities abroad have been active in raising public awareness on this issue, and appealing to their respective governments to give official backing to the Kosovars'

quest for statehood. As a result of such efforts in our country, interest in the question of Albanians in Yugoslavia has grown considerably of late in Washington. One thing that heightened the concern of officials was the annual State Department Report on the situation of human rights in Yugoslavia, which showed that in 1991 Serbia had stepped up its brutal violation of the rights of Albanians.

Beginning in January of this year, a growing number of Senators and Representatives in Congress called publicly on the Bush Administration to recognize Kosova "as an independent state." Over a period of three months, from January through March, 1992, four Resolutions were introduced in Congress urging recognition. Leading the drive for recognition in the Senate were Senators Alphonse D'Amato (N.Y.), Bob Dole (Kansas), Larry Pressler (S.D.), and Clairborne Pell (R.I.). Strong support for recognition in the House came from Representatives Tom Lantos (Cal.), William Broomfield (Mich.), Ben Gilman (N.Y.), and Dick Swett (N.H.). Two other prominent supporters of the Kosovars in Congress are Rep. Susan Molinari (N.Y.), and Rep. Eliot Engel (N.Y.).

But the laudable efforts of these friends of the Kosovars brought no change in Administration policy on Kosova, despite the fact that our Ambassador in Belgrade, Warren Zimmerman, admitted last March that "*the human rights problem in Kosova is the most serious in all of Europe*," and that Serbian domination in Kosova is "*a typical colonial situation, in which a subject people is denied its most elementary rights...*" (our emphasis) (*Illyria* semi-weekly, Bronx, N.Y. March 28, 1992, p. 4). Back in 1920, President Woodrow Wilson saved one-half of the Albanian nation from extinction. Will President George Bush make a serious effort to rescue the other half?

The focus, however, of Kosova's drive for recognition was the Hague, Netherlands, site of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia. Seated at the conference were representatives of all the repub-

lies of what was Yugoslavia, except the Republic of Kosova. Leaders of Kosova, and numerous Albanians the world over, made repeated appeals to British Lord Peter Carrington, the Chief Coordinator of the conference, to grant a seat also to the Kosovars. To date, he had not agreed to such a proposal, although he realized the importance of Kosova in the overall peace scenario for Yugoslavia. He has been quoted as saying: Kosova's future is one of three key issues that must be resolved, before agreement can be reached on resolving the Yugoslav crisis."

We trust that a representative of Kosova will soon take his rightful seat at the Hague Peace Conference. In the meantime, it would be unreal-

istic, in our opinion, to pin all hopes on the West for recognition of Kosova's independence. At a recent meeting with Albanians in the Bronx, N.Y., Adem Demaçi, symbol of Kosovar resistance to Serbian oppression, said that if the Albanians of Yugoslavia are to win independence, they must understand that it will not come as a gift from outside, from foreign powers; rather, they must look primarily to themselves, they must organize more effectively, they must heighten the level of resistance to the oppressor.

Words of wisdom from a man whom the European Parliament honored lately with the prestigious Sakharov prize.

Peter R. PRIFTI

SERBIA'S JUDGEMENT AND THE FALL OF MILOSEVIC

As the 1992 issue of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* went to press, events in the former Yugoslav "empire" continued to be exceptionally unpredictable, changing direction in a truly dazzling fashion.

While these words were written, at the end of June, the following was in effect:

*U.S. Secretary of State James Baker had finally responded, with a threat of U.S. participation in an international intervention against the Serb forces, to Yugoslav army and Serbian chetnik terror in Bosnia. The Yugo-chetnik terrorists had murdered and interned thousands, and destroyed hundreds of churches and mosques, as in Croatia. Mostar was reduced to rubble. The historic Jewish cemetery in Sarajevo had been taken over by the Yugo-chetnik scum as an artillery post, and was destroyed. The Bosnian Jews had emerged as a major element in the patriotic, multicultural, Bosnian resistance. But the day when Sarajevo might be

rescued from the horrific onslaught could not be foretold.

*Nor could the day of Milosevic's fall from power be predicted, notwithstanding growing unrest in Serbia itself, culminating in continuous demonstrations by the Belgrade students. An effort to unite the Serbs had resulted in appointment of the racist writer Dobrica Cosic as king of the dunghoop, with the official title of Yugoslav president.

*The Kosovë Republic had declared its independence, with establishment of a defacto government underground. Albania's first democratically elected president, Dr. Fahir Beqishi, had warned President George Bush that further Serbian aggression in Kosovë might involve Albania in a broader replay of the pre-1914 Balkan wars.

*Bosnia and Croatia had formally allied against Serbia, with Croatian soldiers joining the brave, patriotic Bosnian militiamen in fighting a hitherto unequal battle against the Yugo-chetnik terror.

*In Croatia itself a powerful counterattack against the chetnik rabble was underway in the Sibenik region.

But if the future remained vague in these elements of the crisis, one aspect was sharply-defined. As predicted 130 years ago by Svetozar Markovic, as the Serbs were warned by Dimitrije Tucovic 50 years later, the fantasy of Greater Serbia has led the Serbian nation to a new and frightful disaster, to a shame unparalleled in history, to an ignominy worse than the Serbs suffered under the Turks.

Were we not in mourning for our own brothers and sisters, Albanians, Croats, Bosnians and others who have fallen under the Serbian knife, were we not first concerned for our freedom, our holy places, our posterity, were we not committed to the defense, UNTO DEATH, of our new republics, we would feel nothing but pity for the Serbian people. Serbia today is completely isolated, the object of an entirely-justified loathing by the entire democratic world.

Cosic will not save Serbia from further decline, nor will the blood-crazed Sesselj, nor will the Albanian-hating Draskovic, nor will Serbia's erstwhile friends abroad, such as the Russian neo-Bolsheviks and the business "friends" of the Lawrence Eagleburger type, in Washington.

Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church, who has called for peace, may lead his flock to salvation, but only if the Serbian people themselves rise in millions against the iniquity they have, in great part, brought upon themselves. Until Serbia's conscience awakens, Serbia is without hope.

We who believe in One God cannot but see in this His judgement against Serbia, after decades and centuries of genocide against its neighbors.

We take no pleasure in this judgement, but we recognize its justice.

Serbians! Workers, peasants, intellectuals, business people, priests! Join us, your fellow human

beings of Kosovë, of Croatia and Bosnia, of the world! Rise! Tear down the bandits' fortress! Cast out the rotten gang of Milosevic', Cosic, Sesselj, Draskovic! Make the name of Serbia beloved among the free nations of the planet, rather than the curse it has become, and will remain, if the genocide continues!

Recognize that Serbs and Albanians may be good neighbors, if Kosovë's liberty is granted! Struggle for cultural independence, for democracy, for Europe, for your own future and ours! For your own freedom and ours!

Destroy the last vestiges of the Bolshevik past! Accept God's dominion, not that of the chetnik knife! The hour is nearly past!

The people of Serbia must find their conscience, and join the peoples of Europe and the world in working for peace and reconciliation. The alternative is a further descent into savagery, alienation, and horror.

In these decisive days and weeks, we say:

THE CAUSE OF KOSOVË, OF BOSNIA, IS THE CAUSE OF ALL HUMANITY.

Long Live the Kosovë Republic! All honor and support to the non-violent resistance of the Kosovar people!

Long Live the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina! Never forget the heroic resistance of the people's militia!

Long Live Croatian democracy!

DOWN WITH MILOSEVIC! DOWN WITH GREAT SERBIAN IMPERIALISM! FOR LIBERTY AND PEACE!

Friends of Kosovë
San Francisco, California

THE UNIVERSAL LEGACY OF MARTIN CAMAJ

The untimely death of Martin Camaj in March, 1992, left a serious void in the contemporary Albanian letters. As the latest representative in the long chain of illustrious Catholic writers from Shkodër, he will remain irreplaceable in his field for sometime to come. Camaj died just as democracy was returning to Albania after a half-century of totalitarian rule. His writings will continue to influence the rebirth of human freedom and the renewal of the intellectual and spiritual values of the Albanian people.

From humble beginnings in an Albanian mountain village, Camaj lived a very full intellectual life with repercussions throughout the cultural capitals of Europe and Americas. Camaj was the longtime editor of the most influential Albanian diaspora review, *Shejzat* (Pleiades). The journal was published and directed by Camaj's teacher and mentor, Prof. Ernest Koliqi. During his career, Camaj published a total of 25 books and 144 articles and studies. He ranks among the most refined and productive Albanian contemporary writers. His writings were primarily in the Albanian language, except those dealing with linguistics and folklore. His poetry was written totally in his native language. However, a number of these compositions were translated into English, Italian and German. It is important to note that besides his work as an editor and author, Camaj was also a linguist and scientific expert on the Albanian language and its dialects. We must not forget to mention his teaching career which began in 1960 at the University of Rome under Professor Koliqi. Camaj continued teaching at the University of Munich in Germany. He held the rank of Professor of Albanian Language and Literature for some 30 years. Thanks to Camaj's teaching and scientific research the University of Munich is the only western European institution to grant M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Albanian Studies.

Although Camaj lived 44 years in forced exile far away from his homeland, his poetry and prose focused on the mountains and folk of his native Dukagjini. The bulk of his writings contain the voices of his fellow post World War II diasporan Albanians. Camaj also discovered a new and surprisingly fresh reference point for his own Albanian identity in the Arbëresh world of southern Italy. Drawing upon all these experiences and voices Camaj brought forth his literary, scientific and teaching efforts. These efforts mark him in solidarity with those who stand for the freedom of the human conscience. He explored suffering to point towards hope and reconciliation. In the end Camaj always returned to his Albanian experience. In the preface to his final volume of poetry, *Palimpsest*, Camaj vividly recalled a boyhood memory.

"At the age of thirteen I returned to my birthplace. On the second day after my return, my relatives told me to go to the cemetery, to the graves, in order to visit those who had died during the time when I was away. I was accompanied by an old man whom I did not remember having known before. I needed a guide, since none of the gravestones in our mountains had names inscribed on them. When we arrived, instead of telling me that this was the grave of my father or of some other person, he called out in front of every gravestone, 'Ooo!' and the name in precisely the same ritual manner and in the same tone of voice that he would have used in calling out to the living individual before the door of his house: 'Ooo!' and the person's first and last name.

When we left the cemetery, I thanked the old highlander who had shown me the graves of my relatives. Very irritated, the vein in his forehead stood out:



Professor Martin Camaj, Belgrade, 1952

'Why,' he said, 'do you thank me for such a small thing? I only left them a voice, young man, nothing more; God grant that they heard me!'"

The book proceeds to unravel the mystery of this story. This format is common in all Camaj's works. For Camaj, the poet's vocation was to find a place for the eternal in the transient world of time. It was a vocation that Camaj fulfilled in his own life's work.

Although he was not an explicitly religious writer, in a recent letter to the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Camaj said he was grateful for the formative influence he received at the Jesuit College in Shkodër. "They made us men," he said. "They were honest, straightforward, strong people. Their formation allowed us to face the difficulties of the Communist era with wisdom and strength. Jesuit educational skills and stamina left a lasting imprint in our future intellectual development."

That formation, along with the circumstances of his life, helped make Camaj a simple, plain-spoken, yet profound poet and writer. It also was the source for his central theme that the poet marries eternity to time and language to concrete reality in a way analogous to the Church, which celebrates "the Word made flesh." His verbal skill and power put him in a class with other 20th century poets whose works celebrate a similar theme, but never mention the Catholic Church specifically. These poets include Germany's Gertrude von le Fort, France's Charles Peguy, Brazil's Gabriela Mistral, and the Lithuanian-Polish Czeslaw Milosz.

Camaj grew up in the Albanian mountain village of Temal, in Dukagjini near the Drini River. It was a harsh environment which gave little practical opportunity for learning. The village priest was the first to notice young Martin's intellectual aptitude. He convinced Camaj's father that the boy's talents would be best spent in school. Camaj later recalled that an older brother rebuked him for leaving the farm to become a scholar, saying, "Latin is not our business. Learn the language of the snakes first."

He was educated by the Jesuits in Shkodër until the school was disbanded and its leaders killed by the emerging communist government in 1946. Camaj escaped Albania in 1948 and pursued his education at the University of Belgrade, Yugoslavia. He specialized in Albanian language and culture. His first two short volumes of poetry, published in 1953 and 1954 in Prishtinë, Kosovë, were well received. Entitled *Ngjallja në Malësi* (A Flute in the Mountains), and *Kënga e Vërrinit* (The Song of the Valley) they celebrated Camaj's Albanian mountain origins.

In 1960, Camaj received his doctorate in literature from the University of Rome, and then stayed on as an instructor there while he studied the oldest existing Albanian texts. Camaj published his first novel, *Djalla* (Dominique) in 1958. After becoming a lecturer in Linguistics in Munich, he published the poem, *Legjenda* (Legends) in 1964.

Lirika mes dy Moteve (Lyrics between seasons) was published in 1967. In 1978 Camaj produced the novel *Rathë* (Circles). It was a lyrical work about the survival of the individual and the power of tradition over ideology. *Rathë* was sternly rejected by the Communist literary establishment.

Among the most important of his works was a comprehensive manual entitled *Albanian Grammar*. Leonard Fox published the English translation in 1984. This work, considered the best effort of its kind, traced the tension and development of the Albanian language in its three major strands: Geg, Tosk, and Arbëresh. Even here we see the powerful central theme of Camaj's work: the pre-eminence of language in culture. He incorporated the language reforms into his grammar, without regard to the personal opinions of the author, respecting certain aspects of the 'unified language.' More recently, Camaj's work followed Fehime Pipa's *Standard Albanian, A Reference Grammar*, and Newman and associate's *Spoken Albanian*.

Camaj was best known for his poetry. His treatment of death and the transcendence of voice is seen in his poem, "The Skull." It was written shortly after World War II and reflects the great anxiety that the nuclear age caused. The following English version was done by the Jesuit poet James Torrens, S.J., who met Camaj at Santa Clara University in 1986 and 1988.

The Skull

*In a desolate place I saw a skull on the ground,
Young teeth fallen from bare jaws,
which smilingly stay open as if to say:
"Don't be afraid, this happened long ago!"
In the hollow eye one detects
A youth never to return.*

*On the wide forehead a kernel-sized hole glares,
And the nose bone is cracked
It seems to be saying to me: "Didn't he hit me
straight!
No sound came out of my mouth!"
In the hollow eyes one detects
The sky darkened by clouds.*

*"I am happy that they didn't bury me;
With no dirt in my mouth, I listen to the wind and
speak.
I see the light and the stones where I fell with my
fellows.
The travellers can see and tell about us!"
And the hollow eyes intently
Regard the nearby pile of bones.*

*"I am afraid of just one thing! I wonder if this time
The flash of new weapons would burn our skulls?"
Horrified, I hurry from that place, but look back
The skulls seem still beseeching:
"Have mercy on us, traveller!
Toss a little earth over us!"*

While "The Skull" was terrifying, it also served well to express Camaj's favorite theme. Voices came to the poet from outside time and space –



Professor Martin Camaj participating in a discussion of his works, Naples, 1991

from beyond the grave. They remained deeply concerned about their friends and their bones which remained behind. In this way, Camaj showed the interconnectedness of time and eternity, of voice and matter. Camaj once said, "I enjoy elaborating on language, as if language were hard stone taking different forms when carved." Language behaves in precisely that way in his poetry.

Camaj was not a political propagandist. Along with his deep religious spirit, his works showed his zeal for political freedom and human rights. In a recent interview in the Prishtina periodical *Fjala* (The Word) he was asked about his lack of political activism. He said, "Often in conversation I have spontaneously said, 'I am no political person'. But I have never said, 'I am not a political person.' The distinction between the two propositions is that I refuse to put myself at the service of certain political and ideological trends, my interest remaining *the destiny of the human being*."

The strength of his convictions led to his works being banned in his native country. He once told *Voice of America* that "[My works] are banned in Albania and also in Kosovë because in my poems and prose I side spontaneously, [i.e., without ideological preconceptions], with the individual rather than with the collective. Now the literature of socialist realism in Albania celebrates collectivism while exacting from the individual discipline, subjection and abnegation." In that way it was his very interest in the destiny of the concrete, individual human being, as opposed to socialist artificial abstraction "*the people*," which made his works illegal in Albania for most of his life.

The Albanian community worldwide will sorely miss Camaj. His contribution was valuable not only within his own ethnic group, but of all peoples. He was one of the greatest Albanian writers-in-exile. He was a pioneering linguist. He was an outspoken champion of human freedom and individual rights. He was a faithful friend to all Albanians.

Camaj's books are finally being published in Albania and enjoyed in Kosovë. It is in one way unfortunate that he died without hearing the praise of his countrymen who are being introduced for the first time to his hard work. This need not be a cause of sadness because it is the final fulfillment of Camaj's own wishes. Death has not silenced his voice or his hopes for freedom. They found concrete expression in the world he left behind.

TO MY COUNTRY

*"When I die, let my bones become grass
in my mountains in springtime;
in the fall I will become seed.*

*When I die let me become water
and my breath mist
in the field will rain.*

*When I die let me become rock
at the far point of my homeland
as a border guard.*
1967

VENDIT TEM

*Kur të vdes le të bāhem bar
në malet e mija në pranverë,
në vjeshtë do të bāhem farë.*

*Kur të vdes le të bāhem ujë
e fryma e eme avull
në fusha do të bte si shi.*

*Kur të vdes le të bāhem gūr
në skajin e vendit tem
të qindroj kufi.*
1967

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ERNEST KOLIQUI: AN APPRECIATION

The Albanian poet and scholar Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975) comes to us as an outstanding representative of his country's literary tradition, as one of the greatest modern poets, and as an example of integrity and independence for writers everywhere. He has rightly been considered the equal of Fr. Gjergj Fishta and Bishop Fan Noli and was a collaborator and mentor to other leading writers including Dom Lazër Shantoja and the recently deceased Martin Camaj, Albania's leading contemporary poet.

Born in the northern town of Shkodër, Koliqi is also a major figure in the country's Catholic and Christian Democratic intellectual history. As a young man, in the early 1920s, he became a member of the Shkodër literary circle. Soon he has founded the periodical *Ora e Maleve* (The Muse of the Mountains), with the support of Archbishop Lazër Mjedja and of the Christian Democratic political leader Luigj Gurakuqi.

In 1924 he joined the *Bashkimi*, or literary union movement, created by the radical intellectual Avni Rustemi. He participated alongside Gurakuqi and Shantoja in supporting the short-lived Fan Noli government. That and the critical language employed in Koliqi's writings forced him to leave Albania, as Gurakuqi, Shantoja, and so many others did, for a five-year exile in Yugoslavia. At the same time, he published his first major poetic work, *Kushtrimi i Skenderbegut*¹ (Skanderbeg's War Cry), which marked his debut in letters.

He saw to print his first novel, *Hija e Maleve*² (The Shadow of Mountains), in which he discussed the influence of the **Kanun** of Lek Dukagjin and the urban culture of Shkodër.

Like many other important modern writers, Koliqi was a significant translator. His Albanian versions of the great Italian poets, including Petrarca and Dante, began appearing in 1932.³



Professor Ernest Koliqi

In 1937 he was awarded his doctorate by the University of Padua, and in 1939 he was named a professor at the University of Rome. Later that year, after nearly two decades of constant literary activity, Koliqi entered the difficult world of governmental responsibility, accepting an appointment as minister of education in the new, Italian-controlled Albanian regime established after the flight of King Zog.

Holding this post until 1942, he established the *Instituti i Studimeve Shqiptare*⁴ or Institute for Albanian Studies, later to become the University of Tiranë. He set up the first extensive Albanian language educational system in the new Albanian zones of Kosovo, Malishtë Zi, and Maqedoni, and fostered the publication of textbooks, periodicals, and monographs.

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This activity led to his being labelled a "fascist" and an iron prohibition of any mention of his works under the post-1944 Communist terror of Enver Hoxha. Only now is Koliqi's work being reread in Albania, thanks to the cultural liberation following the end of Communism in Central and East Europe.

Was Koliqi a fascist? Did acceptance of an educational post under Mussolini's control make Koliqi an abject accomplice in the crimes of which the Italian dictator stood accused?

That is the question that links Koliqi with many other figures in world literature, in the continuing debate over the responsibility and political commitment of writers, especially in the 20th century. In this century we have seen such intellectual icons as Ezra Pound, Louis Ferdinand Celine, Paul de Man and Mircea Eliade associated with the defense of fascism, at the same time as numerous famous intellectuals stained themselves and their work by their support for Stalinism. In the latter category we find an Albanian writer who could be considered a kind of double for Koliqi, Ismail Kadare.

The contrasts are instructive. While Koliqi joined the 1939 Tiranë puppet government to help educate the Albanian masses, Kadare used his alliance with the worst tyranny in modern European history, that of Hoxha, to advance his personal fortunes.

A digression on Kadare is appropriate here. In an article distributed by the *Reuter* news agency on May 6, 1992, the return of Kadare from his two years of "show exile" in France, and his rather despicable political turn to the new regime, is described from Tiranë by journalist Ilir Ikonimi.

Ikonimi notes that the 56-year old Kadare, "was mobbed by eager journalists and a crowd of some 100 well-wishers when he arrived back in Albania, now headed by its first non-Communist government in four decades.

"I am happy, Albania is free," Kadare told reporters at Tirana airport. 'Freedom is a magic word

for the Albanians. You may repeat it a thousand times and each time it has a particular beauty'... He repeated his support for the new leaders. 'I believe that the Albanian people will follow them. They will correctly understand this new epoch,' Kadare said.

"He added that he believed Albania would be able to shrug off the lingering shadows of Communist rule and return to a tradition of democracy it enjoyed before the 15th century.

"I believe it has all the conditions to become such a country again," he said."

"Kadare told reporters that the regime of Stalinist leader Enver Hoxha would now be remembered as a 'disease' ... "Kadare also said he was not looking for high political office at home. 'Everyone asks me whether I shall be minister or prime minister. I take it as an insult,' he told the French newspaper." 'I was born for other things than power.'"

In this last assertion Kadare is correct: he was born to flatter, rather than to exercise power. Koliqi, on the other hand, while he shared in power, was never its courtesan. But more remarkable than this difference is the contrast in how "rightist" and "leftist" writers *in general* have been treated by current literary scholarship. For writers who may have sympathized with fascism even in a highly limited way, such as T.S. Eliot or W.B. Yeats, have been subjected to rigorous criticism to a point where we may expect their works to be more or less excluded from the contemporary curriculum. And for those chosen for the full process of interrogation, no reproach is too trivial. Lately, for example, the impeachment of Paul de Man has come to the point where his record as a tenant and occasional difficulty paying debts is exposed to the world.

Yet leftist writers who acted as henchmen to Stalin and his imitators have been absolved of their terrible crimes by a failure of scrutiny: neither Kadare, nor Pablo Neruda, nor any of their ilk,

although complicitous in various terrorist campaigns, have seemed to merit any substantial scrutiny.

The ideology of literary criticism aside, it is clear that a great intellectual work will survive, independent of an author's failings in politics or personality. Thus, Prof. Arshi Pipa has written, of Lazër Shantoja and others disqualified as "fascist" under Hoxha's rule, "I am opposed to judging a writer solely according to political criteria, for one must differentiate for the sake of objectivity between man and artist, between ethical and aesthetic values."⁵

And the critic Brian Curdy has pointed out that the exclusions, as the product of "traitors", of the works of Fishta, Koliqi, Harapi, and others, from Hoxha-era anthologies of Albanian literature, would be the equivalent in America to excluding Mark Twain for having served in the Confederate army during civil war.⁶

Koliqi's work bears no trace of fascist ideology - no glorification of militarism, "order," or leadership, no propagandastic emphases on youth or overheated nationalist rhetoric, no demand for mass obedience or communal unity. Rather, his writing celebrates nature, God, and, in a non-chauvinist way, Albanian culture. There is no suggestion in his texts that Albanians are superior to anybody else; only beautiful language and praise of the epic history they have experienced.

In his "Final Vision" he writes, "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 toward sunset,/my native mountains/nor at last encircled/with a flaming veil of free dawns." (Tr. by James Torrens, S.J.)⁷

Rather, Koliqi's literary spirit remained imbued with the Christian Democratic values and quest for truth that characterized his activity during the period of the Fan Noli regime, and which he shared with other notable figures of the Scutarine literary and political tradition.

In 1945, with the end of the second world war, Koliqi had no choice but to remain in Italy, where he had gone in 1942, returning to his post at the University of Rome. In the conditions of the Hoxha dictatorship, his life would have been worthless. The Communists, after all, did not hesitate to wipe out some two generations of outstanding Albanian clergy and intellectuals, including Rev. Ndoc Nikaj, dean of Albanian writers, printer and publisher of the first newspaper in the Albanian language, author of the first novel in Albanian, and also publisher of the first study of Albanian history, as well as Lazër Shantoja and Anton Harapi, of the group involved with Fan Noli, and many others.

In his second exile, however, Koliqi became a highly prolific and serious scholar. Studies in Albanian Catholic literature, long poems, and anthologies poured from him. In 1957 he founded *Shejzat* (The Pleiades)⁸, a review in Albanian and Italian that became the intellectual flagship of the Albanian diaspora. During this period, in works like his studies of the Arbëresh in America, ranging through the communities of both coasts, including San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles, Koliqi made permanent contributions to the science of linguistics and to folklore studies.⁹

He also contributed to the glory of Albanian literature by continuing the publication of the later cantos of Fishta's *Labuta e Maltës* (The Mountain Lute) and by his support for and collaboration with Martin Camaj. *Shejzat* published three of Camaj's works: his *Djella* (1958), and *Legjenda* (1964), and his linguistic examination of Gjon Buzuku's *Missal*, the first Albanian printed book. In addition, the series *Studi Albanest* established by Koliqi printed Camaj's study of the Albanian speakers in Greece.

Koliqi's own bibliography includes over 50 titles¹⁰, ranging through all genres but united by a consistent preoccupation with the highest standard of literary and scholarly quality, and spiritual values. Koliqi was dedicated exclusively to the comprehension and dissemination, throughout the

world, of the finest products of Albanian speech and tradition. He and other Albanian exiles dedicated much of their modest earnings to the printing of journals and books, which often appeared in meager editions.

This commitment could not but contrast rather brusquely with that of Kadare, whose only concerns throughout his career seem to have been his personal wealth, his self-preservation and the satisfaction of his phenomenal vanity. Kadare benefitted from Hoxha's sentimentality about the dictator's own schooling, such as it was, in France, and therefore of Hoxha's lifelong desire for Gallic acceptance. The Hoxha regime produced a brand of cognac, *Skanderbeu*, that attained some distinction in Europe as if to prove he was successful in introducing French "cultural" habits even as his people starved in cultural and religious darkness. The novels of Kadare are a product not unlike *Skanderbeu* brandy - Hoxha promoted Kadare's superficial, excessively-elegant works, their printing paid for out of state funds, to prove that in literature, as well as in distilling, Albania was up to the standards of Paris.

Kolliqi's work never served such purposes, under any regime. This is not to say, however, that it was without political passion - in fact, Kolliqi was imbued with anti-Communist commitment, which would lead him to write heroic poems exalting figures from the post-1944 anti-Hoxha resistance.

In the aftermath of Communism's definitive collapse in the West, writers and other intellectuals in the democracies will, I believe, discover that they have greatly misunderstood the history of this, the 20th century. Many iconic figures who associated themselves with Communism, including not only the Nerudas and Kadaras but also the likes of Bertolt Brecht and Vladimir Mayakovsky, will suffer the decline of their work and the disappearance of their names from the canon.

And in this "revision of verdicts," one of many now seemingly underway, the works of "politically incorrect" but gifted and dedicated writer-scholars

like Ernest Koliqi will come into their own, world wide, as have the once-forgotten, once-ignored, heterodox works of other writers ignored or suppressed in their time - from the English poet William Blake to the American novelist Herman Melville.

We may therefore honor in Ernest Koliqi a true and great classic.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

NOTES

- 1 Published by Shlypshkroja "Nikaj", Tiranë, 1924.
- 2 Zara, 1929 and Shqopia Letrare, Livonia, Michigan 1984.
- 3 See Poetët e mëdhej t'Italis (vol. I), "Nikaj", Tiranë, 1932.
- 4 Among distinguished members of the Institute were: Gjergj Fishta, Aleksander Xhuvani, Anton Paluca, Vangjel Koça, Anton Harapi, Xhevat Korça, Bernardin Palaj, Mustafa Kruja, Ernest Koliqi, Dhimitër Berati, Zef Valentini, S.J., Ekrem Vlora, Karl Gurakuqi, Nicola Lo Russo Attoma, Lazër Shantoja.
- 5 See Arshi Pipa, "Communism and the Albanian Writers," in Gjon Sirishta, ed., *The Fulfilled Promise*, Santa Clara, 1976 (distributed by Ignatius Press).
- 6 *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. VII & VIII, 1987, p.85.
- 7 *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. XI, 1990, p.137.
- 8 *Shejzat* often published studies and articles in German and English.
- 9 See Gjon Sirishta, "The awakening of Arbëresh cultural heritage in America - Koliqi's uncompleted educational endeavor," in *Shejzat* (Rome), 1975.
- 10 See "Nota bibliografica" in *Shejzat*, 1975, ibid.



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REMEMBRANCES AND MEMORIES AT THE GRAVE OF ERNEST KOLIQI ROME, JULY, 1991

To return, after half a century, to the city where you studied, to that city in whose every corner is preserved a sweet memory of youth, a dream and an awakening of the most beautiful years of your life—is something unpleasant and sad. You cannot take a step without foundering in the terrible river of memories and emotions. Dazed, your legs move, step after step demolishing the street, alone, when, after a time, you find yourself facing something that makes your memories come back and causes emotion...You continue to look at it and, with all that, you remain bewildered.

...There it is, the way it happened to me that day in July, when I found myself in front of the monument to Minerva in the University City.

After climbing the stairs on the right, I reached the corridor where the noise gave you the impression that you found yourself in the middle of a beehive. There were people from all over the world. I threw myself in the midst of them and tried to find my one-time companions...I looked for Gino, Valeria, Rino, Claudia...Like a crazy person who tries to fish in a bucket of water, I tried to find those who were not there...

Neither my white hair, nor my body weighed down by the years made any impression on anyone...not even me! I continued to climb those stairs on the second floor because I wanted to find the department of Albanian language and literature, I wanted to find Professor Ernest Koliqi seated there, speaking in that soft voice, in Albanian so fruitful and clear, for Gjergj Elez Alia and for all the heroes of the Jutbina.

The door was closed. Only then could I get myself clear and find myself. Ernest was no longer there. Without Koliqi, even Rome, even the University City seemed a desert to me. I went down-stairs, and everywhere, between those corridors

and those stairs, I seemed to find the imposing shadow, the immortal footprints, that he left behind in the treasure of Albanian letters.

I had decided to meet with my professor.

I took transport and left directly for the new cemetery of Prima Porta, some kilometers from the city. In the solitude of my journey, I tried to reconstruct the memory of the different stages of contact with my teacher.

I cannot stop here without going to the grave of my Professor Ernest Koliqi.

Feeling profound emotion, I walked with heavy and thoughtful strides in the deep shadow of cypresses and pines. It was a good distance to the grave. Petro, Ernest's friend and brother-in-law, accompanied me. We didn't speak. I saw that he was more saddened than I: near Koliqi's grave, rests Petro's sister, too, whom he loved so much and who left him alone on the path of bitter exile. The silence of the city of the dead added still more to our sorrow. Along these paths, we should walk praying, for in no other spot does man understand better than here that all the people in this world are only passing through. All our wealth is only that grave and that earth that covers us...

...I neared the grave. I stared fixedly trying to make out some bust or some tombstone. Some monumental tomb must present itself to me...worthy of the great man that it contained. Nothing! It was the "quarter" of the earthen homes.

Finally we arrived at the graveside.

A simple tombstone of red marble and a small lamp, eternally alight, as if to say that here, in this foreign earth, reposed a soul that will never be extinguished, for souls that sacrifice everything for their Homeland can never be extinguished. Touch-

ing that marble tombstone and leaving in tears, I said to him:

"May this foreign earth be light on your body. I have faith that your Shkodër, that dear Shkodër that you loved so much--will not leave you a

"refugee" for eternity. One day, Shkodër will claim your bones and they will be placed next to its greatest sons...

Lazër RADI

Kombi (The Nation)

Tiranë, September 26, 1991

FREE ALBANIA COMMITTEE ENDS OPERATIONS

After 35 years of intense political, cultural and social activity, the **Free Albania Committee** (FAC) recognizes that its work is completed. The FAC acted as a voice from the free world to the silenced and oppressed Albanian people. It organized political gatherings, conferences, and seminars on various Albanian cultural topics. Each year the FAC sponsored a November 28 celebration in honor of Albanian Independence Day. More than 15,000 Albanian refugees were resettled in the United States through the efforts of the FAC. Housing, employment, education as well as legal representation was provided for many of the refugees. One of its most important activity, was the publication of a monthly newspaper *Shqiptari i Lirë* (The Free Albanian).



Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi

With the demise of communism and the victory of democracy in Albania, the FAC board of directors believes that its function is no longer needed. It was decided that FAC would close its operation in New York. The moving force behind the FAC's intense activity was German educated Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi. Albanians at home and abroad owe much to the FAC and President Krasniqi. Many Albanians in exile have been able to achieve the goals of their dreams through FAC efforts. Albanians at home were urged to resist communism because the FAC organization was working outside Albania on their behalf.

The Albanian Catholic Information Center (ACIC) has maintained constant contact and co-operation with the FAC throughout its existence. This contact has been most fruitful and beneficial to the cause of human rights for the Albanian people. The FAC never failed to send a representative or message to the gatherings sponsored by our Center. Our new Albanian Catholic Institute wishes Dr. Krasniqi and his FAC associates good health and all God's blessings for their great effort for all Albanians.

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THREE POETS OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCUTARINE CATHOLIC LITERATURE IN ALBANIA¹

The educational foundations laid by the Catholic Church in Shkodër in the second half of the nineteenth century had visibly borne fruit in the independence period. Northern Albania, and in particular the isolated regions of the northern Albanian Alps with their unique tribal culture, had always lagged behind the more advanced south from an educational point of view, and indeed still do today, but in the first third of the twentieth century, Shkodër itself greatly overshadowed the country's new capital city Tiranë, both educationally and culturally. It was primarily due to these educational facilities in Shkodër that Scutarine Catholic literature of the period was able to eclipse all contemporary writing in the Moslem and Bektash traditions² and, with the exception of the works of Fan Noli (1882-1965), any remnants of literature in the Albanian Orthodox tradition³.

A fundamental role in the cultural advancement of the north was played by the Catholic clergy which, with the support of church circles from Catholic Austria and Italy, provided the half-Catholic, half-Moslem city and surrounding region with access not only to formal education, to publishing and cultural facilities, but also to a wide range of new Western ideas. Albanian literature continued to benefit from the attention it received from the Franciscan and Jesuit fathers as it had in the nineteenth century, when nationalist-minded members of the Catholic clergy, such as Pjetër Zarishi (1806-1866), Leonardo De Martino (1830-1923), Ndue Bytyçi (1847-1917) and Preng Doçi (1846-1917), were among the first of the period to write and publish poetry of note in Albanian, not all of which had been restricted to religious themes.

The two dominant figures of Scutarine culture, and of Albanian literature in general, between the two world wars, were the Franciscan Father Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940), voice of the nation, and the

Jesuit-educated prose writer Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975), a treatment of whose works is beyond the scope of this article. But there were many others who contributed to the awakening of an independent Albanian culture in the north of the country, in particular three Catholic poets of note: Vinçenc Prennushi (1885-1949), Lazër Shantoja (1892-1945), and Bernardin Palaj (1894-1949). These three men personified the zenith - and at the same time the downfall - of Scutarine Catholic literature.

The first of these writers from Shkodër would now seem to symbolize, more than any other, the final decades of Scutarine Catholic culture and its demise after the communist takeover. Poet, folklorist and translator Vinçenc Prennushi (1885-1949), (also written Prendushi) was born on 4 September, 1885 in Shkodër and studied at a Catholic college in Austria. On 25 March, 1908 he was ordained as a Franciscan priest. Prennushi, fascinated by the oral culture of northern Albania, began collecting folksongs from the mountain tribes. This compilation of folklore material was published by Austrian archeologist and historian, Carl Patsch (1865-1945) in the volume *Këngë popullore gegnishte*, Sarajevo, 1911 (Geg folksongs), and made a major contribution to the study of Albanian oral literature. Prennushi also wrote articles on various subjects for the Catholic press of the period, for Scutarine periodicals such as *Lajmtari i Zemers t'Jezu Krishtit* (The Messenger of the Sacred Heart), *Hylli i Dritës* (The Day Star), *Posta e Shqypniës* (The Albanian Post) and *Zëri i Shna Ndout* (The Voice of St. Anthony).

In his ecclesiastical career, Vinçenc Prennushi served as a provincial from 1929 to 1936. In 1936, he was made Bishop of Sapa and in 1940 was appointed Archbishop of Durrës, thus becoming one of the two highest dignitaries of the Catholic Church in Albania.

In 1924 Prennushi published a volume of elegant lyric verse in Geg dialect entitled *Gjeth e lule*, Shkodër, 1924 (Leaves and Flowers), which was reprinted in 1931. This collection of sixty-five poems contains verse of both nationalist and religious inspiration. His patriotic poems are reminiscent of the standard motifs of Rilindja verse: Scanderbeg, the flag, and self-sacrifice to the homeland in bondage; they often have a martial, indeed rather un-Franciscan, ring to them. Such poems were popular at the time and many were recited by the public. In *Grueja shqiptare* (The Albanian Woman), a maiden spends her days embroidering a red and black Albanian flag only, in her concern for the nation, to die of grief and be buried in it herself. Prennushi's spiritual poems, of mood rather than of ideas, are pensive. Many take up typically Catholic themes: the saviour on the cross, the Virgin Mary, Saint Francis of Assisi, and Dun Scotus. The general tone of these poems, some of which offer poignant reflections on the futility of our earthly existence, is sombre and melancholic rather than serene and confident.

Of Prennushi's translations, mention may be made of the children's drama *E Trahtuemija*, 1919 (The Betrayed One), from the Italian *Tradita* (1903) by one Teol A. Rolando, as well as his Albanian versions of the novel *Quo Vadis* by Polish Nobel Prize winner Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916); of the novel *Fabiola* by Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865); of *Dreizehnlinden* by minor German poet Friedrich Wilhelm Weber (1813-1894), an epic on the introduction of Christianity to the Saxons; and of *Le mie prigioni*, the memoirs of the Italian patriot and dramatist Silvio Pellico (1789-1845).

Vinçenc Prennushi was, according to his contemporaries, a man of virtue and humility and enjoyed great respect among the Catholic population. Apparently not politically active despite his lofty position in the church hierarchy, Prennushi was arrested by the communist authorities after the war, tortured and sentenced by a military court in Durrës to twenty years of prison and hard labour as an enemy of the people. Weakened by prison

conditions and assailed by asthma and heart disease, the sixty-three year old archbishop died in the prison hospital in February, 1949⁴.

The second of this literary triad, Lazër Shantoja⁵ (1892-1945), was a poet, essayist and translator from Shkodër. Though talented, he published little. Born on 2 September 1892, he studied at the Jesuit-run *Kolegja Papnore Shqiptare* (Albanian Pontifical Seminary) in Shkodër, where he was taught by poets Ndrë Mjeda (1866-1937) and Anton Xanoni, S.J. (1862-1915) who instilled in him a love for his native Albanian and for foreign languages. Shantoja studied theology at Innsbruck in Austria and following ordination as a priest in 1920, worked in several village parishes in northern Albania, notably in Sheldijë, east of Shkodër. The temperamental priest loved music and was known in the region as the 'pastor with the piano' after arranging for his piano to be transported to him by mule. When Lazër Mjeda, brother of poet Ndre Mjeda, was nominated Archbishop of Shkodër in 1924, Shantoja was appointed his personal secretary. Among his duties in Shkodër was to participate actively in the Catholic Democratic weekly *Ora e maleve* (The Mountain Fairy), founded in April, 1923 by Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975) and Anton Harapi (1888-1946). This he did with articles of forceful style and corrosive Scutarine irony. When Ahmet Zogu (1895-1961) took power in the *coup d'état* of December, 1924, Lazër Shantoja like many other intellectuals of the period, went into exile, initially to Yugoslavia and Austria. In Vienna, in January, 1928 he began publishing a short-lived fortnightly periodical 'of an independent political group of Albanian refugees' entitled *Ora e Shqipërisë* (The Muse of Albania). Shantoja later continued on to Switzerland where, accompanied by his aging Scutarine mother, he worked as a chaplain in Berne.

Lazër Shantoja is remembered as a brilliant stylist, much like Ernest Koliqi, though the paucity of his publications and his long years away from Albania have placed him somewhat on the sidelines of Albanian literature. Few modern Alba-

nians have ever read his works. He is the author of prose texts of stylistic finesse, such as his essay *Grueja* (The Woman), and of refined lyric verse scattered in Scutarine periodicals such as *Hylli i Dritës* (The Day Star), *Zâni i Shna Ndout* (The Voice of St. Anthony) and *Leka* (Leka). Under a pseudonym, he published a series of love sonnets dedicated to a young lady of Shkodër. His *Përnatë kazanesh*, 1919 (For Kettle Night), is a humorous collection of anecdotes, proverbs and sayings. Much admired are his translations, primarily from the German. Among these are *Wilhelm Tell* and *Das Lied von der Glocke* by Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), and *Herman und Dorothea* (1936) and sections of *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). The indefatigable Fan Noli (1882-1965), himself a translator of note, had begun and abandoned a translation of *Faust* while in exile in Berlin after the collapse of his 1924 government. On reading Shantoja's translation, he wrote to the latter in Switzerland to express his admiration:

"I can think of no congratulation for your Albanian version of the poetry other than to assure you that, had the giant of Weimar known Albanian, he would have thanked you, an Albanian Nerval, for this translation."

After long years abroad, Shantoja made the unwise decision of returning to Albania in 1940. He settled with his mother in Tiranë. Four years later, he was arrested by the communist authorities, mercilessly tortured and shot in the spring of 1945.

Bernardin Palaj⁶ (1894-1949) was a Franciscan poet with a passionate interest in folklore. He was born on 2 October, 1894 in the mountains of Shllaku region and began his elementary schooling at the school of the Franciscan fathers in Shkodër, known later as the *Collegium Illyricum* (Illyrian college), directed by Gjergj Fishta. The Franciscans sent him for secondary education to Salzburg in Austria and for theological training to Innsbruck. He became a member of the Franciscan order on 15 September, 1911 and was ordained a

priest in August, 1918. On his return to Albania, Palaj worked as a parish priest in the mountains and later taught Albanian and Latin at the *Collegium Illyricum*.

Like Vinçenc Prennushi and Shtjefën Gjeçovi (1873-1929), Bernardin Palaj collected folksongs on his travels by foot through the mountains and wrote articles on Geg oral literature and tribal customs. He was particularly taken by the *Këngë kreshnikësh*, the heroic verse cycle of 'frontier songs' of Mujo and Halili which he published in collaboration with Donat Kurti (1903-1969) in *Këngë kreshnikësh e legjenda*, Tiranë, 1938 (Frontier Songs and Legends).

Palaj was also the author of classical lyric and elegaic verse, much of which was published in the thirties in the Franciscan periodical *Hylli i Dritës* (The Day Star). This poetry of harmonious musicality and technical perfection evinces, like that of Italian poet Giosuè Carducci (1835-1907), a patriotic vision of the historic past and of the rich native culture of his people. His first poem, *Prej burgut të jetës* (From Life's Prison), published in 1933 under the pseudonym Kukel Lapaj, is a 248-line religious hymn on the fall of man and his redemption. It concludes with the exhortation:

"O njeri i shkretë! Mbate, si të duresh ket jetë:
Kë rruga këto që të qesin në Hind - te Leka,
Te Çezari në Romë, a larg atje m'njt detë,
Nji Napoljon kë e xhën në ngjifim dëka.
Kot u rrek njeri gjithnduersh për të dënuem.
Se kë i kë shtonet e veta humbija
Në daç shoq me kë në me Zotin e misbnuem,
'Kalo tuj bā mtrë!' - kshin u abnon Perendija!"

(Oh wretched man! Consider, if you will, this life:
It has roads that will take you to India - to
Alexander
To Caesar in Rome, or far off into the ocean
Where death overtook Napoleon in prison.
In vain man strives in sundry ways to discover
Where bliss has its channel!
If you wish to be a companion of the Lord Incar-

'Go your way doing good deeds!' as God commands.)

The 1953-line *Valët e nji shpirtit* (The Waves of a Spirit) of 1934 is devoted to the Roman emperors of Illyrian origin, in particular to Constantine the Great (r. 307-337), who introduced Christianity to Europe. 1937 was a particularly productive year for Palaj, as it was for Albanian literature in general. It was then that he published: the 893-line *Moskë-Alkazar* (Moscow-Alcázar) on the siege of the Alcázar military academy in Toledo at the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, an event in July of 1936 which profoundly shook pro-fascist sections of the Catholic clergy of southern Europe; as well as *Vorreve të flamurit* (At the Graves of the Flag) and *Kuq e zi* (Red and Black), nationalist hymns composed on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Albanian independence in which the poet calls upon the Zâna, his muse, to honour the graves of the heroes of the nation. The 1184-line *Ndërmjet të Shën Gjergjave* (Between the Two Saint Georges) of 1938 contains fresh pastoral scenes of colour and light at the arrival of St. George's Day in spring. In deference to his master, Gjergj Fishta, Palaj did not compose much epic verse, although his affinity for the magical rhapsodic world of frontier heroes Mujo and Halili gave him both a talent and an inclination to do so. The great Fishta died on 30 December, 1940, and Palaj was moved by the tragic occasion to compose the 1180-line elegy *Kah nata e vetme* (Towards the Solitary Night) in his honour. Again it is the Zâna, the awesome muse of Fishta and that of the Albanian nation, who laments cruel fate and the solitude of the tomb in the tradition of the *gjâmë*, the dirge of Geg oral literature. Palaj's verse had been edited by Angela Cirincione in the bilingual Albanian-Italian volume *Opere*, Rome, 1969 (Works).

In the war years, Palaj also published a number of ethnographic studies on tribal laws, myths and legends. In the autumn of 1944, having lost all hope that anti-communist forces might win the day and realizing that the end was nigh, he con-

fided to Karl Gurakuqi (1895-1972), with tears in his eyes:

"I will withdraw to a parish up in my beloved mountains and there, where the Albanian spirit is kept alive, in contact with the common people, I shall continue the work I began many years ago, by carrying on research in history, in folklore and especially on the *Kanun*. I shall complete and systematize the rhapsodies which I meticulously collected so long ago."

Bernardin Palaj was arrested in Shkodër, severely mishandled and then sentenced to death for treason. He died ca. 1949, apparently being executed in the courtyard of the ancient Benedictine monastery of Rubik².

These three Catholic poets, Vinçenc Prennushi, Lazër Shantoja and Bernardin Palaj, stand for a host of scholars and secondary writers from among the Catholic clergy who were active in the field of culture and education up until 1944 and who made a significant contribution to Albanian letters. The death of these three men, concomitant with the death of the Geg dialect as a literary language, is also symbolic of the demise of Scutarine Catholic writing as a current of Albanian literature and indeed of the golden age of Scutarine Catholic culture in Albania.

Robert ELSIE

- * According to the testimony given in 1991 by his confrere, Father Aleks Baqll, Palaj died under torture in December 1947, at the institute "Konvikti i Maleve Tona", one of the many prisons in Shkodër of that time.

NOTES

- 1 The present article is a short excerpt from the author's forthcoming history of Albanian literature.
- 2 Cf. Elsie, *Modern and Bektashi Literary Traditions in Albania from 1850 to 1950*. Publication forthcoming.
- 3 Cf. Elsie 1991, *Albanian Literature in Greek Script*.
- 4 For an account of Prennushi's final years and death, cf. Pipa in Sinishta 1996, p. 79-80.
- 5 Cf. Kolliqi in Sinishta 1976, p. 110-117, and Kolliqi 1986-1987.

6 Cf. K. Gurakuqi 1953, Koliqi 1972 and Palaj 1969.

7 Cf. K. Gurakuqi, 1953.

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THE CUSTOMS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLIES IN ALBANIA (1444-1912)

Throughout history Albanians have organized committees or assemblies, despite different social and religious convictions, to safeguard the integrity of their territory and culture. Despite different religious and social convictions, the popular groups resisted foreign dominance by uniting the Albanians for common objectives. From the fifteenth century until independence in 1912, Albania was a province of the Ottoman Empire. Yet for five centuries popular assemblies functioned on Albanian soil. These assemblies compensated for the lack of national institutions. The Ottoman government was a totally foreign and distant power which the population did its best to elude. Despite difficult circumstances, the Albanians created their own laws. These actions affirmed the Albanian aptitude to organize a program of cultural and political emancipation that allowed them to conquer their independence.

The Custom of General Assemblies or "Kuvend"

Albanian society, particularly the mountain people, affirmed its independence by refusing to submit to Ottoman power and instead obeyed laws that they had created. Customs, oral laws, complexes of legal principles, institutional laws preexisted before the arrival of the Ottomans. These codes were transmitted from generation to generation by the tribal communities or "fis". These laws regulated social behaviors which permitted the administration of collective goods and of justice. They were the privilege of an autonomous society solicitous of guaranteeing security and freedom.

Albanians refused to submit to the Ottoman administrative system. Instead they made good use of ancestral laws to make collective decisions which not only affected daily life but also played a decisive role in the political framework. United Albanian communities exercised their power in the

framework of customary regulation through assemblies called "kuvend." Men whose age, experience or wisdom guaranteed the validity of their judgment were designated by the name "plak." This term meant old and corresponds to the modern term "ancients" or "Prophets," benefited from the confidence of the people who had chosen them to be their representatives in the communities' assemblies. Albanians were thus equipped with the necessary structure for the exercise of the power in the economic, juridical and social domain for the local territorial community or for the region. They also intervened to regulate political problems which arose in relation to the Ottoman government. The consequence of this process was an aptitude for collective awareness and deliberation among populations whose interests might be highly divergent at the outset. The functioning of the "kuvend" broke the isolation of Albanian society and offered to the population the possibility for expressing itself. News did not remain confined behind closed walls, in the village, or countryside but was broadcast over great distances. Gradually the assemblies which functioned to regulate local debates grew to resolve the national questions bearing on the political future of the entire Albanian community.

The successions of such representative assemblies, focused on maintaining territorial integrity, the development of education and culture, the realization of linguistic unification, the request for autonomy and the eventual attainment of independence.

Assemblies at the Service of National Territorial Integrity Defense.

These assemblies date back to the fifteenth century, when the Albanian military leader, George Kastrioti Skanderbeg hoisted the double-headed black eagle on a red flag in Kruja. He found

himself attacked by the Ottoman armies. He decided to call for a "kuvend" to meet in Lezha on March 2, 1444. The general assembly of leaders of the insurrection included such notables as Gjergj Arianiti, Andre Thopia, Nikollë Dukagjini, Theodor Muzaka, as well as representatives of the free mountain tribes. The League of Lezha was the first gesture towards collective solidarity. It brought about the unification of several personalities whose feudal privileges favored a rival position. However personal interests were set aside for a common agreement to continue the struggle against the Turks.

Scanderbeg created a political and military alliance solidified by a league of oaths or "beselidhja." Participants gave their word of honor to defend Albanian territory. This network of oaths exercised an incisive role for the Albanians who had to enroll as soldiers in the League's armies.

After Scanderbeg's death in 1468, the resistance to Ottoman occupation continued to be organized through regional assemblies. Even Albania's Balkan neighbors participated. Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniacks, Greeks, Macedonians, were invited to participate in the ("kuvend.") In 1601, a general assembly took place at Dukagjini in Mati. Fifty-six Sages, representing more than a dozen regions: Malësia, Dukagjini, Lezha, Kurbini, Mati, Dibra, Kruja, Durrësi, Petrela, Myzeqeja, Elbasani, deliberated. They took an oath to repossess Albanian land and requested help and money from abroad. Similar Assembly meetings followed at Kuç in 1614; at Prokopje in 1616, and at Belgrade in 1620.

If military engagement and tactical action did not succeed in totally repelling the advance of the Turkish armies, the collective resistance helped secure vast regions of Albania from Ottoman takeover. People in the northern mountains around Dukagjini, as well as Southern areas of Kurvelesh, Suli, Parga, Himara, Laberia were able to preserve their freedom and their laws.

The Assemblies Striving for Territorial Integrity

The Albanian assemblies guided the people's opposition to Ottoman domination. At the end of the nineteenth century, the territorial problem surfaced again with a particular acuteness. The 1878 treaty of San Stefano gave autonomy to Rumania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria but denied the existence of Albania. Part of Albanian land was distributed to its neighbors including the areas of Ulqin, Hoti, Plava, Gucia to Montenegro, the sandjak of Prishtinë, to Serbia, Korça, Pogradeci, Dibra, to Bulgaria.

Again the local communities, regional assemblies, and interregional unions went into action to demand full autonomy. By limitless perseverance the national question reached a happy conclusion in 1912.

The limited representation of Albanian leaders in Istanbul's parliament could not suffice. The Committee of Defense for Albanian Nationality Rights was founded in 1877. The Albanian representative, Abdyl Prashëri, with the financial support of the vilayet of Janina, was the constitutive element of a collective action of native patriots in different Albanian regions. The patriot group was charged with creating committees on national territory. The members of Istanbul's committee decided to convene the Albanians engaged in the national movement in order to oppose the breakdown of the borders and to defend Albania's integrity. The meeting took place three days before the Congress of Berlin which risked ratifying the provisions of the Treaty of San Stefano. On June 10, 1878 in Prizren, an assembly of 80 delegates was held by vilayets of Kosova, Shkodra, Monastir and Janina. The delegates declared a new, great "beselidhja," for the progress of a defense program to prevent the dismembering of Albanian territory. Delegates pledged to continue the struggle for autonomy. A delegate approved memorandum was presented to the Congress of Berlin. It opposed the breakup of Albanian inhabited territory. An armed offensive of the

League's levying troops moved into the zones concerned.

Assemblies in the Service of Autonomy

On this occasion the League was not merely a simple interregional reunion in charge of strict military organization, but it also conceived an authentic political program. It functioned as a representative organ. It had by statute, a 56 member general council formed from representatives of four vilayets, representing all regions and three religions (Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic). Three commissions were created. Foreign Affairs was headed by Abdyl Frashëri, Internal Affairs was directed by Haxhi Shabani, and Sulejman Vokshi guided finances. Furthermore, three Interregional Committees were formed to treat local problems.

Finally, in the Parliamentary Assembly, different interest groups were represented. Some radical proposals were submitted to the Sultan. Members of the moderate Bourgeois, owners of *tchifliks*, religious authorities and free mountain people, all had different conceptions of the meaning of autonomy. Despite these divergences, the problem of the recognition of the Albanian people arose from the problem of territorial recognition. The agreement had been formulated on the belief that it was essential that an intact territory be recognized by the Great Powers. This was the indispensable base for the existence of a future Albanian state. These objectives were presented to the Sultan and the Great Powers, who controlled Albanian destiny, after being submitted for a vote by the delegates.

All political claims were presented by the League. In 1879, an appeal was made to the Congress of Dibra by the delegates of 150 communes. They requested an Albanian constitution be formed. They called for a union of four vilayets into a single territorial entity which could bear the name "Shqipëri." Unification could not be realized without the recognition of a linguistic community. The League's program included the request that the Albanians themselves be charged with governmental

administration and with justice. The program suggested common councils and a general provincial council composed of members elected by universal suffrage, without distinction of religion. The Albanian language had to be the official language. The movement expressed its appeal in these terms:

We no longer want to suffer because our rights are not recognized. We no longer want to remain slaves while free people around us form such powerful States. We encourage Albanians of all the sandjaks to act in agreement with us so that our people escape from the political national grave and so that our country becomes a country of freedom.¹

A meeting of the League's delegates was held at Gjirokaster, July 1880. It regrouped the members from the North and South. Delegates approved Abdyl Frashëri's program. On Oct. 20 1880, an assembly was formed. Membership included 120 radicals, 130 moderates and 50 opponents. They gave approval in Dibra to the programs of autonomy which had to be presented as an ultimatum to Istanbul. In January 1881, the League elected itself as the provisional government. However its existence was a very short four months. In April 1881, the Ottoman armies crushed the League's armies and imprisoned its leaders. Two decades later, the Turkish authorities forcefully dissolved the League of Peja which had taken up the objectives of Prizren. But the movement was not crushed. The tactic was to organize and to bring the claims simultaneously to the political and cultural arena. The Congress of Monastir meeting in 1908 called for the adoption of a unique alphabet. This tactic was similar to the struggle for education by the creation of National schools.

Although Otto von Bismarck and several Turkish ministers declared that no Albanian nationality existed, because even though the region was part of the Ottoman Empire, it was not the ethnic criterion which was considered, but the religious element as assimilator of nationalities. The request

for the recognition of an Albanian nationality was unwarily presented to the Sublime Porte, "Kombesija." This claim was sustained by a growing number of Albanians, acting through numerous clubs and committees existing in all provinces and in Rumania and Bulgaria as well. They established a network of national agreements designated by the name "Besa-Besë," pledge to pledge. This process of securing group identification in the heart of the Ottoman Empire's community of Balkan peoples, had a very precise function. It aimed at gaining recognition of the population by a collective name, identical for all members of society despite any religious or administrative distinctions. The Albanians would no longer be called "Arnauts," "Muslims," "Turks," "Gjaours" or infidels, but "Shqiptars." They wanted to be members of a single entity, the language community of "shqip". This would differentiate them from neighboring peoples. The name would create a national community. Afterwards a new political state could be created. However the territorial problem was not to be easily resolved.

Assemblies Seeking Independence

The constitution of 1908, which was granted by the Young Turks, recognized neither the formation of a vilayet nor the creation of an Albanian identity. Yet the Albanian Deputy Ismail Qemal again took up the League of Prizren's torch following his return from exile. He promoted the program of emancipation first suggested by Sami Frasheri in his 1899 work: *Albania, Its Past, Its Present, Its Future*. With several Albanian deputies (out of 25 representatives from Istanbul's Parliament) he formed a liberal opposition consisting of Nexhip Draga, Hasan Prishtina, Shadin Kolonja. The group expressed itself in a memorandum to the assembly in Geric in June 1911. Again, national institutions, constitutional guarantees, free elections, opening of schools, were requested.

Ismail Qemal was supported by patriotic clubs which organized people's revolts. However, he also had to make his program esteemed abroad. The spark that set off the movement for indepen-

dence, was the threatened loss of territory. The Serbs were at Elbasan and Dures, the Turks at Vlora, the Montenegrins at Shkodra, the Greeks at Himara. Ismail Qemal understood that Albanian territory could be saved only if a state were created. He sealed the destiny of Albania by opening a national assembly in November 1912. Delegates from all provinces at Vlora proclaimed Albanian's independence. They constituted the first Albanian national government under Qemal's presidency. The desire of the patriots was expressed in the statement: "Të bëhet Shqipëria më vete," Albania belongs to itself. The assemblies that gathered throughout the period of Ottoman domination, whether tribal, feudal, military, political, cultural, or multiparty, always placed themselves at the service of the movement for independence. They became the source of a real national action that not only led to the guarding of Albanian territory, and the formation of an independent Albania, but also to the maintenance and development of its language, culture, and identity.

The entire Albanian community was involved. The action for independence was not the privilege of famous leading figures of the movement whom we know and appreciate. It was also led and supported by a common will animated at the core by local assemblies. The capacity to organize the powers of representation, to work for national union, was the fruit of an enormous work.

The Albanians surmounted many handicaps and learned how to acquire a place in the world of geopolitics. The task did not cease in 1912. Everything remained to be organized on the level of political institutions, but the society's historical capacity to organize served the base which produced and arranged the modern Albanian state.

Odile DANIEL

Notes

1. Political Correspondence, Vienna, May 20-1880, Archives of Vincennes, A. 1. 7. N 1105.

EVENTS WHICH HAVE SHAPED THE ALBANIAN NATION.

For those readers who are unfamiliar with important dates and sites in Albania's national history, we offer highlights on the back cover of our Albanian Catholic Bulletin.

- LEZHA 1444 -** First **Kuvend**, formal assembly of Albanian leaders. The meeting was called by the legendary Skanderbeg. The **Kuvend** created a holy alliance of Albanian princes to war against the Turks.
- PRIZRENI 1878 -** Creation of the (Albanian) League of Prizren. The League prevented the dismembering of Albania and the assigning of territory to Serbia and Montenegro by the provisions of the Congress of Berlin.
- MANASTIRI 1908 -** The congress of Manastir was attended by 50 delegates from all regions inhabited by Albanians. It formulated and adopted a unified alphabet for a written Albanian language.
- DEÇIQI 1911 -** The Uprising of the Mountain Tribes against the Turks. Legendary mountain leader Dedë Gjon Luli led the mountaineers in the battle of Deçiq. The mountaineers defeated superior Turkish forces. Insurgents hoisted the Albanian flag at the top of Mount Deçiq.
- VLORA 1912 -** Albanian leaders headed by the venerable Ismail Qemal-Vlora proclaimed the national independence on 28 November, 1912.
- LUSHNJA 1920 -** Internal and external uncertainties prompted Albanian leaders to convene in Lushnja on January 21, 1920. The delegates drafted a resolution vigorously protesting foreign plans to partition Albania. The city of Tiranë became the new capital of the nation.
- PRISHTINA 1981 -** Massive Albanian student and workers demonstration in Kosovë to protest against Serbian oppression. The event initiated the disintegration process of Yugoslavia. It also marked the birth of the movement for establishment of a Republic of Kosovë.
- SHKODRA 1990 -** First public Roman Catholic Mass in decades was celebrated in defiance of Communist laws prohibiting any religious activity. The courageous priest-celebrant was Father Simon Jubani, a former prisoner. The Mass initiated a peaceful legalization of religion.
- KAÇANIK 1990 -** On September 7, 1990 the Assembly of Kosovë met secretly at the town of Kaçanik and drafted the Constitution for the Republic of Kosovë. The event paved the way for Kosovë's independence which was won in a September 1991 Referendum.
- TIRANA 1991 -** The birth of democratic opposition which peacefully removed oppressive Communist rule of five decades.

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ALBANIANS AND HEBREWS: 'THE DARKER THE NIGHT, THE SOONER COMES THE DAWN!'

The Hebrews have always been persecuted and hunted down. At the same time, they've always been conscious of their origin, tradition, their holy Talmud and their Sinagogue....Life has taught them to be steadfast, to adapt to new situations and to stubbornly preserve the ethics of work and education.

Although small in number today, the Hebrews in Kosovë speak well of Albanians, who accepted them and developed friendly relations with them a long time ago.

Viewed historically, the Hebrews have always been a persecuted people. With the strengthening of the Catholic Church in Spain in the XII Century, the beginning of the expulsion of Arabs (from Spain), and the spread of the Inquisition (1480), the position of the Hebrews worsened to the point that they had to leave Spain in massive numbers. As a result of decrees by the royal couple, Isabelle and Ferdinand (1492), the Hebrews were expelled definitively from Spain and later from Portugal, as well. A portion of the emigrés settled in England and Holland, while the rest made their way to southern Italy, Dubrovnik, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovë, Macedonia and other parts of the Turkish Empire. Their position in Europe had hardly improved by the XIII Century. They continued to be seen as a patient alien minority, and as such they were confined to separate quarters, to their ghettos. They paid special taxes, and did only work that they were permitted to do....In the Turkish domains their situation was different. They occupied a position between social classes; consequently their status and activity were not spelled out concretely. At this time, they were hardly visible, having sunk into the lethargy of the Levant (Eastern Mediterranean world—Translator's note). It was only later that they experienced a genuine rebirth. This came in the wake of an educational movement

called *haskala*, by virtue of which they emerged from their cultural isolation....

When Did the Hebrews Settle in Kosovë?

According to Turkish statistics (taken from the Central Archives of Albania, specifically the collection known as "The National Defense of Kosovë," file 27, document no. 707936), on the *Vilayet* (Province) of Kosovë, in 1911 there were 1343 Hebrews in Shkup (Skopje), 93 in Kumanovë, 547 in Prishtinë, and 26 in Mitrovicë. In 1913 (according to document no. 708417, file 22...), there were 567 Hebrews in Shkup. This proves that after the occupation of Kosovë by the Serbian army, following the outbreak of the Balkan War, the number of Hebrews in the former *Vilayet* of Kosovë diminished by half.

In 1921, 104 Hebrews settled in Mitrovicë, while those who had left Prishtinë returned in 1919, after the signing of the Peace Treaty of Versailles, and the St. Germain Agreement on national minorities. At this time, 322 Hebrews returned to Prishtinë for a limited time. They were employed in trades, commerce and other types of activities. In the interval between the two World Wars, the Hebrews of Kosovë were not singled out for special treatment. When work operations began in Trepçë, the Kosovë Hebrews oriented themselves toward Mitrovicë, being that the town was a source of capital.

Yugoslav statistics for the year 1931 give population data based on religious affiliation, for reasons that are known. It is not surprising, therefore, that these statistics make no mention of the Hebrews and their number. In connection with the attitude of Ahmet Zog's government toward the Hebrew minority, Elisabeth Barker makes an interesting remark in her book *England's Balkan Policy In The Second World War* (Zagreb, 1978, p. 173). According to the intelligence service, SOE, of the

British Foreign Office, in 1943 Ahmet Zog declared to a Hebrew representative that if he (Zog) returned to a liberated Albania, he would grant to the Hebrews 150,000 hectares of land to accommodate some 200,000 of them. Thereupon, the Hebrew representative asked the Foreign Office whether Zog could guarantee that he would return to Albania, so that he might initiate negotiations with him. He was told that no such guarantees could be given.

The Internment of the Hebrews of Kosovë in Albania

Following the German occupation (of Kosovë and Albania) during WWII, the position of the Hebrews worsened, because of persecution by German forces. The stories told about the Hebrews during this dark period, are very disturbing. But despite the persecutions and internments in ill-famed camps, a number of Kosovë Hebrews, namely those who lived in Albania, survived. Today, there are only two Hebrew families in Kosovë. We were able to talk to the head of one of the families. Mr. Llain Adizhes, who reside in Prishtinë, where he and his father were born. He tells of many difficult moments in the lives of Hebrews, in the course of the Second World War!....

"My grandfather and great-grandfather lived in Mitrovicë. Their ancestors had come from Spain, as part of the exodus that settled in the Balkans in the days of the Ottoman Empire. Life was easier for the Hebrews in this region, since they were not persecuted by the Turkish authorities, nor subjected to any form of pressure. The language spoken at home from that time until now, has been Spanish. Our line of work has been business. We've had our own store. I was in school, as I recall, when I first became aware of anti-Semitism. The year was 1939. I remember people saying at that time that a party had been formed, headed by a Serb, Dimitrie Lotiq. He was a Fascist who preached anti-Semitism. At school, the lessons were in the Serbian language, and every so

often we were the butt of insults. That same year, a law was passed which prohibited schooling for the Hebrews. The law that prevented us from enrolling in school was called Prostreta. The Germans arrived in Prishtinë on April 10, 1941. At first, they would round us up to do physical labor. They put identification marks on Hebrew stores, and took whatever goods they wanted without paying for them. Later, in 1942, the Italians came over. They were a little easier on us.

"That year they interned us in Berat, Albania. We were well received by the Albanians. We were free and able to work. Albanians helped us a lot. We paid rent for lodgings to Shyqri Mitë, who arranged for me to work for his brother. We remained there until 1943, when Italy surrendered. When the Germans came, we were afraid they might kill us, so we departed for Prishtinë. The Albanians told us to stay put, since no harm would come to us, but we set out for Prishtinë, anyway. As we now know, nothing happened to the Hebrews who remained in Albania. They survived with the help of Albanians. Some of them joined the Partisans of Albania, so as not to fall in the hands of the Germans. We arrived in Prishtinë in November of 1944. A few days later, the Germans arrested us and shipped us to the notorious camp of Sajmishte in the Belgrade area. After a month, they sent us by train to the Bergin-Belsen concentration camp in Germany (About 300 of us were from Kosovë).

"At first, conditions in this camp were not so difficult. We did hard labor, but ate well. As time passed, a great number of Hebrews were brought in. We slept three people to a bunk, and the food was terrible. There were outbreaks of diseases and people were dying of illness or starvation. In April of 1945, they told us that whoever was able to walk, could take the next train out, wherever it was going. My mother and father, and my sister got on the train, but both mother and father died on the way. On the 23rd of April, 1945, the locomotive suddenly stopped. We noticed that there were no German troops around; only He-

brews. After a while, we were found by the Russians. We remained in that spot until August; then, after many ups and downs, returned to Prishtinë."

According to the testimony of our interlocuter, the Hebrews who were in the Ukrainian military units had suffered, as well, since the Ukrainians on occasion turned the Hebrews in their units over to the Germans. As for the way the Russians have treated the Hebrews at different period of history, this subject has been dealt with by the Hebrew Nobel prize winner (Isaac Bashevis) Singer.

Albanians Are A Gentle People

In the course of our conversation, Ilaim Adizhes said that he expected shortly to move to Austria, to join his youngest son who moved there several years ago. His oldest son migrated to Israel last year. In answer to our question whether he was moving to Austria on account of conditions prevailing in Kosovë over the past several years, the 65-year old man, who holds a degree in economics, said:

"The current situation is very grave for Albanians who are without jobs and without schools. I say this with deep sorrow, because we have always gotten along well with Albanians. However, I shall not comment on the situation, since this is a political issue, and I have never been involved in politics. We do not hate anyone, being a people who have been persecuted in the past. With the Albanians we are closer spiritually; and we have a similar mentality and character.

"I don't think war will break out in Kosovë, since you Albanians are a gentle, peace-loving people. The present situation cannot last much longer. A solution must be found through dialogue with the Serbs. Things cannot continue this way, for, as a proverb of ours says: 'The darker the night, the sooner comes the dawn'."

Another man who spoke to us about relations between Hebrews and Albanians is Nexhat Fetah, who is, he says, half Hebrew on his mother's side.

His father is Turkish. His mother died several years ago, but Nexhat remembers stories she told about life among Albanians and others in Prishtinë and Albania....

"My mother was first married to a Jew in Prishtinë, who was killed early in the war, after the Germans came here. Afterward, she was interned in Albania, together with her two children. The Albanians looked after her, and that's how she was able to survive. Mother used to tell how one time the man of the house in Berat, where she was staying, was upset because she had bought some vegetables in the market place. He and his family had plenty of vegetables in their garden, and he had told her that whatever the family had, was hers to use, as well. The family kept her and her two kids in hiding, away from the reach of the Germans. I recall her telling me how brave and loyal the Albanians are. The man of that family had told her that as long as he had a head on his shoulders, she was safe. That's what that Albanian told her. While the war was still going on, she returned to Prishtinë, where she was picked up by the Germans and sent to internment camps, first to Sajmishte, and later somewhere else in Germany. When the war ended, she returned to her five homes in Prishtinë, which however had been taken over by the township, leaving her with only 25 percent of the fixed assets. She then married my father, Kadri Fetahu. I am their only child. My brothers on my mother's side went to Israel in 1948, it seems. Until 1957, mother kept filing appeals asking that the town return to her at least one of her houses, but the replies from Belgrade were all negative. Mother was very pleased with Albanians. To give you one example: When I was born, mother could not breastfeed me, because they had cut off her breasts in the internment camp in Germany, and so I was fed with the milk from our Albanian neighbor, Gjylizare Sopa. To this day I feel very close to her family and children."

Massive Migration to Israel

The state of Israel was founded in 1948, over the greater portion of the former British mandate of Palestine, with the authorization of the United Nations. In the wake of the U.N. decree, hundreds of thousands of Hebrews or Israelis from all over the world, above all Europe, settled in the new state. At that time (but also afterward, at various intervals), bloody clashes occurred between the Hebrews (Israelis) and the Arabs.

Once the state of Israel was founded, nearly all the Hebrews of Kosovë migrated there, and so did the Hebrews of Albania. This is the chief reason why today there are only two Hebrew families in Kosovë.

In recent years, Serbian propaganda has gone out of its way to profess the Serbs' old friendship for the Hebrews, and to assume the role of savior of the Jews. From the discussion, however, that we had with Llaïm Adizhes, it is clear that Serbia's profession of friendship for the Hebrews is motivated essentially by economic benefits that she hopes to reap in Israel. At a time when Serbia is losing friends all over Europe, it is fairly obvious why its propaganda about the Hebrews is intensifying, and why it's dressed up in such dazzling colors....

Valentina SARAÇINI

*Zëri, Kosovë, January 1992

* * *

THE FIRST ALBANIAN TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A SAVIOR OF HEBREWS

The first Albanian ever, was honored last week in Jerusalem with the citation, "Righteous Gentile". He was Refik Vesli (64), who as a young man helped his late parents, Vesli and Fatime, to shelter Hebrews who had fled from Yugoslavia. He became the fourth Moslem to be so honored.

Vesli and his wife, Drita, came as guests of Gavra Mandil, a businessman, who was four years

old when his family found refuge in the home of Vesli's family. Mandil kept in touch with his Albanian saviors ever since he migrated to Israel in 1948. However, it was not until two years ago that he wrote to the President of Albania, and set in motion the process that culminated in the ceremony of last week.

Gavra Mandil's father had a photography studio in Belgrade. Evading the Germans in 1941, he left Belgrade and settled in the southern part of Yugoslavia, which at that time was under Italian control. After being interned by the Italians for about a year, he persuaded his captors to permit his family and 120 other Hebrew "to go" to Albania, which likewise was controlled by the Italians. There, the Hebrews dispersed among the friendly population, and lived in relative security until September, 1943, when the Germans arrived. It was then that Vesli hid Mandil and the families of Ben-Yosef in his home, in the mountaneous town of Krujë, until the end of the war.

When the war was over, the youthful Refik Vesli went to Belgrade, where he learned Mandil's profession of photography, prior to returning to Albania. All of the Hebrews who remained in concealment in Albania survived. Those who participated in last week's ceremony were full of praise for the hospitality of Albanians and their spirit of self-sacrifice. Upon receiving the medal (in recognition as a "Righteous Gentile"), Vesli said: "I am very proud that my poor little country was able to help the Hebrews to survive." He broke down and wept when a woman in the crowd began singing an Albanian song. Most of the survivors spoke to Vesli in Serbian, since they had forgotten their Albanian.

The Jerusalem Post

December, 1991

BOOK REVIEWS

Roman Missal in Albanian

An essential instrument is now available for the reconstruction of the Albanian Catholic Church: the Albanian translation of the EDITIO TYPICA of the Roman Missal ("Meshari Romak," Ed. Drita [Ferizai/Jugoslavia] - Velar spa [Gorle/Italia], 1991, pp.954). Recently, the Albanian bishop Monsignor Nikë Prela delivered the first copy to the Holy Father. This publication is important not only for its liturgical-ecclesiastical aspect, but also for the general culture of the Albanian people.

The first book printed in Albanian is the "Missal" of Gjon Buzuku (1555), the only existing copy of which is in the Vatican Apostolic Library. In Albania's new situation, that is, following a quarter of a century during which the Church was declared institutionally non-existent, the complete translation of the Missal, revised according to the instructions of the Second Vatican Council, is indeed an extraordinary achievement.

To understand its importance adequately, it is necessary to understand the reality of the situation of the Albanian people and of the Albanian Catholic Church in particular.

The Catholics in Albania are a minority, about 13% of the population. We must keep in mind also that in the period during which the Second Vatican Council met, the Albanian Church was undergoing a dreadful and inhuman persecution. No Albanian bishop was able to take part in the Council. Soon after, in 1967, every religious expression was made unlawful. When the first edition of *Missale Romanum* (1970) was published in Rome, the Albanian Catholics knew nothing of it. And in the catacombs, whoever could keep the old traditions, using the books from the time before the Council, was unable to conceive of an updated liturgy.

There was, however, a small Albanian Catholic community of over 100,000 faithful living in better

conditions in Yugoslavia: in Kosovë, in Macedonia, and in Montenegro. This community was able to welcome the directions of Vatican II and translate the liturgical texts into Albanian.

There was yet another problem to be faced: that of the language. During the communist regime, an old linguistic dispute was solved through authoritarian and indeed forceful means: the unification of the literary Albanian language. This generated, obviously, understandable tensions among linguists, particularly among those who cherish the traditional Gegë literary dialect.

In any case, the language, now "unified," came to be taught in every class and grade, both in Albania and in Kosova (Yugoslavia). Consequently, and wisely, the translations of liturgical books have been done according to the norms of the current literary language. For a numerically limited community, that required notable analytic work on its own literary tradition, with the aim of determining and codifying a sane liturgical terminology, theologically and linguistically correct and expressive. Until then, liturgical texts in Latin were used. Only the homiletic tradition, the catechetical teaching, and the common prayers used the Albanian language. Reaching a translation worthy of the original was, therefore, a slow process. A sober hint of explanation is given in the introduction to the Albanian Missal. The first translation of the text was done in the 70's and authorized for use ad experimentum. Next, the competent Congregation for the Sacraments and the Divine Worship approved it August 25, 1981. Afterwards, cyclostyled copies of the text were regularly used in the churches in Kosovë until publication of the present, accurately printed edition (1991).

In the meantime, with use, suggestions were collected for improving it, both from the clergy and from people qualified in doctrine and in linguistics. Significant revisions, therefore, were made before the final printing. This has resulted in an Albanian Missal of good linguistic quality that also

keeps in view the requirements of recitation and of chant.

The principal translator is biblical scholar Msgr. Simon Filipaj, to whom we also owe the translation of the New Testament. Liturgical and linguistic control has been done by a commission of priests (Lush Gjergji, Dodë Gjergji, Lucjan Avgustini, Jak Sabedini, Engjëll Kamençiq, Zef Gashi).

One edition of the Missal has been made for use at the altar and another for popular distribution, identical in content, but in a smaller format. Of the whole run, one part is destined for Kosovë and the other for Albania and abroad. This edition carries an introduction by Joseph Cardinal Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for Evangelization of the People, in whose jurisdiction are found Albanian Catholics of the Latin Rite.

The event is important and particularly significant. All Albanian Catholics now have at their disposition a common liturgical text that corresponds to two fundamental requirements: the Second Vatican Council's directions for the liturgy, and the state of the unification of the Albanian language. It will be a text that will help the communion of all Albanian Latin Rite Catholics in the country, in Kosovë, and abroad.

Moreover, it is important to consider that the translation and use of the Missal will contribute not only to the correctness of liturgical celebration and to evangelization—a priority for present-day Albania—but also to Albania's linguistic patrimony.

The ideological ostracism of the last half century had almost definitively rejected the religious linguistic patrimony in Albania.

The present translation has made use of the entire Albanian Catholic literary tradition, from the Missal of Gjon Buzuku (1555) to the Roman Ritual and Christian Doctrine of Pjetër Budi (1618) to the Dictionarium Latino-epiricum of Frang Bardhi (1635) to the Cuneus Prophetarum of Pjetër Bogdani (1685), carrying on to the present day—and into the future—a lexical patrimony without which the

Albanian language itself would remain impoverished.

Today, it is possible to return to God also in the language of the Albanian people. But, equally, it is possible for us to return to the Albanian people to proclaim the Word of God in the common language of all Albanians.

Perhaps Monsignor Nikë Prela means to say just that when, in the introduction to the Missal, he speaks of "a truly historic work both for the Church and for our people."

Eleuterio F. FORTINO

Carraro, Giorgio: *Albania Cristiana*, Padova: Editrice Grafiche Messaggero di S. Antonio, 1985. pp. 230. \$25.00 (U.S.)

The Franciscan Conventuals were among several religious orders that were active in Albania before the communists came to power. The apostolic, cultural and educational contributions of the Franciscans to Albanian society were substantial. This is all the more impressive given the relatively recent arrival of the group to Albania—in the late 1930s. They won over the hearts of the Albanian people with their self-abnegation, zeal for the faith and their missionary spirit.

The Franciscan Conventuals established themselves in central and southern Albania, which were populated mostly by Muslims and Orthodox Christians. Eventually, the goal of their evangelization was clear: it was their mission to extend the ecumenical movement between Catholic and Orthodox Christians which was begun by the Jesuits and Franciscans after World War I. Outside of Albania, only a limited number of people noticed the Franciscan Conventuals' missionary work among the Muslims and Orthodox Christians of Albania.

With the advent of communism in the 1940s, the Franciscan conventuals were harshly persecuted by the Albanian government. The communists were so relentless in their persecution of

religious orders that few historical records remain. Now thanks to the 1985 book *Albania Cristiana*, published by the Provincial Curia of the Franciscan order in Padova, we can trace the story of the order's mission in Albania. The book's author, Giorgio Carraro, is well qualified to tell the story of his order in Albania. He was one of the ministers whose work in Albania was brutally and abruptly ended by the communist authorities.

The book's preface was written by Lanfranco M. Serrini, a former Superior General of the Conventuals. Serrini emphasizes the importance of documenting the Conventual mission to Albania. He states that "...[*Albania Cristiana*] is an inspiring act of love and gratitude to those many confreres who labored in Albania and who have already finished their work on this earth. This book is also a just and necessary reflection on the various phases of a brief mission in a difficult country which has since cut all its ties with the rest of the world and the Church."

Carraro recounts his well-researched and exhaustively documented story in simple, compelling language. He narrates the history in a straightforward manner, allowing the events to speak for themselves. There are five sections to the book, tracing the story from "The Beginnings," to the time when it became illegal to continue.

The first section, "The Beginnings," is mainly concerned with the earliest requirements for the founding of the order in Albania. It tells of obtaining the necessary ecclesial approval and establishing the first footholds on Albanian soil. The second section takes up the arrival of the Conventuals, their first houses, and their earliest work. It is called called, appropriately, the "Arrival of the Mission." The third section, entitled "The First Period," shows the various activities of the Conventuals in the years spanning July, 1940 to August, 1941. Then follows the account of the highly successful "Second Period," from Fall, 1941 until 1943, when five new houses were established. The final section, on "The Third Period" tells the tragic ending.

Carraro traces the work from the triumph of 1943 to the suppression of the order, when many of the missionaries were imprisoned and finally expelled, in 1946.

Carraro gives a wealth of information not only about the Church's heroic survival in the midst of the horrors of communist oppression, but also about the Catholic Church's ecclesial history. For instance, it is interesting to learn that prior to the expulsion of the Apostolic Delegate Archbishop G.B. Nigris in 1945, Vincenc Prendushi, Archbishop of Durrës was appointed by the Vatican to lead the Apostolic Administration for central and southern Albania.

Albania Cristiana is complete with a map of Albania and photographs of various conventual missions and churches, as well as pictures of the friars who labored in Albania. It is the most thorough book available on its subject.

Carraro shows that the spirit of St. Francis still survives in the Conventuals. The friars show no signs of bitterness or hatred against those who made them suffer. Rather, they return the bitterness and hatred of their persecutors with the love and forgiveness of Christ. The book is available in an Italian printing, and can be ordered by writing to:

Curia Provinciale
Basilica del Santo — Padova, Italy.

Camaj, Martin: *Palimpsest*. Munich & New York, Braun-Brumfield, Inc. Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, 1991, \$12.00.

Lovers of poetry worldwide, and of Albanian literature in particular were saddened to learn of the death of Martin Camaj, the greatest contemporary Albanian poet.

A distinguished linguist as well as a poet, Camaj was the author of numerous collections of verse as well as his pioneering study of ALBANIAN GRAMMAR, published in 1984. He collaborated with

Ernest Koliqi, another of Albania's outstanding 20th century writers, on the journal SHEJZAT (The Pleiades). (See my article on Camaj in ACB, 1991).

In 1990 Camaj's SELECTED POETRY, in English and Albanian, was published by New York University Press. PALIMPSEST, a second bilingual collection appeared in 1991, subsidized by Camaj himself and issued by the preeminent U.S. printer of poetry, Braun-Brumfield of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

This new volume of 64 pages includes 52 short poems, all in the distinctively hieratic and musical style of Camaj. The title refers to the medieval use and reuse of manuscript parchment, with remnants of previous texts, or palimpsests, often detectable beneath a later script. Similarly, Camaj believed that an Albanian literary tradition existed, as a kind of palimpsest, prior to that recorded in existing documents.

The themes and titles, derived from the examination of parchment and script, reflect Camaj's scholarly passions: "The Layer Under the Material is the Sound," "The Leaf in the Palimpsest," "The Magic of the Text."

The most beautiful, I think, is the poem titled "Antelope With Parchment," reproduced below.

ANTELOPE WITH PARCHMENT

*From above, from where the apples fell,
intermittent drops of rain fall at my feet
sprinkling the earth and
jars filled with ashes of bones in another color.
In his mouth the antelope holds a leaf
of parchment and follows in my heelless
tracks, follows with legs growing slender
straight toward another world,
altogether different, altogether different there,
with the parchment as an amulet around his neck,
ever more slender, slender, slender.*

ANTILOPA ME PERGAMENE

*Bien prej nalt nga ranë dhe mollat
cirka aritmike shtu para kambës*

*dhe stërptkin dheun e
shtama bint eshtnash tjetër ngjyrë.
Në gojë antilopa mban një fletë
pergamene dhe ec gjurmave t'mta,
pa thembra, ec e bollobet kambës
drejt andej kab emisfera tjetër
krejt ndryshe, andej krejt ndryshe
dhe me pergamene në fyti bajmalë,
e bollë, e bollë, e bollë.*

Beautifully designed and typeset, this book is a fitting memorial to Camaj, whose work embodied the beauties of Albanian speech while transcending a local sensibility.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

Camaj, Martin: *Gedichte* tr. from the Albanian into German by Hans-Joachim Lanksch, published by Kyril & Method Verlag, Munich, 1991, 127 pp., 29,00 DM.

The following appeared under the logo "Best Books... in November" in FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG, Dec. 9, 1991:

Camaj's poems are picture puzzles, which makes them enchanting. They are not fabricated but rather are experienced with all the senses. Occasionally Camaj's diction is reminiscent of far distant antecedents of Albanian literature, such as the Thracian poet Orpheus and the wild origins of the Dionysian cult.

In an epilogue to this elegant edition of Camaj's verse Hans-Joachim Lanksch writes:

Martin Camaj was born in 1925 in Temalica, a small village in the inaccessible mountains of North Albania. Thanks to the help of the local priest he was able to attend the Catholic seminary in Shkodër, the Xaverianum. He worked briefly as a teacher but in 1949 began studying at Uni-

versity of Belgrade, in Slavic and Romance linguistics.

During that period his first two volumes of poetry appeared, making evident his full command of classic forms, rhymed lyrics, and traditional themes. With the help of an Italian professor he was able to move to Rome in 1956 and continued his education, meeting and learning from, among others, the great Italian modernist poet Giuseppe Ungaretti.

In Rome, Camaj contributed to *SHEJZAT* (The Pleiades), an important Albanian literary journal, and published his third and fourth books of poems. His head was often fuller than his belly, and his style became spare and plain.

In 1961 he began teaching Albanian at the University of Munich, and in 1970 he gained a full professorship. He published three volumes of prose and four more of poetry. His style has become yet more simple: the texture of his verse seemed "feather light/iron heavy."

Temali, Camaj's birthplace, does not appear on contemporary maps of Albania, but its erratic landscape of boulders and cliffs lives in his work and is mirrored in his lapidary (stony) style. He writes the language of his native people, an Albanian as pure as if he still lived among the simple and wise people of the mountains of Dukagjin, his North Albanian home.

Camaj's poetry is deeply rooted in the oral traditions of Dukagjin; he acted as a sponge, soaking up the songs, fairy tales, legends, puzzles, and sayings of the highland shepherders among whom he grew up. This imaginative imagery and formally spare style of this folk literature is at the roots of Camaj's elliptical poetry, in which we find a stylistic symbiosis and thematic

representation of the modern and the archaic in confrontation.

In an age of homogenized East European literary output, Camaj's poetry traced itself to the "lost thread" of Shkodër's (Scutarine) poetic tradition, which especially influenced him during his Belgrade period.

A further inspiration and a second home was found among the Arbëresh, Albanians living over five centuries in southern Italy and Sicily.

Finally, Italian literature, which he studied particularly in his Roman period, was an important determinant in shaping his poetic work. Dante's "Divine Comedy" was as familiar to him as the work of Quasimodo or Ungaretti.

No interpretations have been annexed to these poems. Camaj's work is too multileveled for such judgements or analyses. He often said and wrote that he hated "speculations" about his texts, especially about a possible political content.

The reader should not depend exclusively on the translations, for the translator often had to interfere with the text to gain access to the poem.

Read the poems, read them as a word landscape, sink into this landscape, feel your way carefully on the narrow paths of sensibility: watch out on the cliffs of "understanding," find "the road unknown to foot or hoof," listen to the silence, wander through the peaks and plateaus, the abysses, colors, sounds, echoes of words: lose yourself in this landscape, in the "shadow-depths of things."

Translated from the German
by Richard SIEBERT

Gjergji, Lush: *Mother Teresa: The Mother of Charity*, EDITRICE VELAR SPA, 24020 Gorle (BG), Italy, 1990, 220 pp. \$50.00

Lush Gjergji has written a beautiful book about Mother Teresa, "The Mother of my Dreams." It is one of the few books about Mother Teresa that focuses on her Albanian heritage. Gjergji shows, that Mother Teresa is not just a saint who happens to be from Albania: she is an Albanian who happens to be a saint.

His account places Mother Teresa firmly in the context of Albanian Roman Catholicism. Gjergji divided his study into three sections. He titled them after the three names Mother Teresa has been known by in her lifetime. In the section on "Ganxhe Bojaxhiu" the reader meets an Albanian girl who would later become an Albanian saint. The brief historical outline of the history of the Albanian people, includes a reprint of the painting of George Castrioti Skanderbeg which the Albanian Catholic Information Center presented to Pope Paul VI in 1968.

Gjergji links Mother Teresa's drive and single mindedness to the fact she descends from the stock of Albania's tough and unstoppable Catholics. He notes that: she is from the same nation that St. Paul mentioned twice in his epistle letters; from the nation of Skanderbeg the defender of the faith; from the nation of St. Jerome, the premier Biblical scholar; from the nation of Orthodox Patriarch Athenagora's, who sought reconciliation between the Eastern and Western Christian Churches. And, from the nation whose people endured persecutions for their faith and survived.

Gjergji delights in providing little known information about the Bojaxhiu family. He tells a strong, patriotic father and a loving mother who "was busy all day long, but then, towards the evening she always made it a point to get everything finished so as to be ready to welcome my father." Mother Teresa's brother Lazër states that "Every year she went to Letnica on a pilgrimage on foot with a group, praying and singing." With the

insight that only a fellow Albanian can offer, the Bojaxhiu family comes alive.

The third section of the book is entitled "Sister Therese Bojaxhiu." It traces the period in Mother's life when she entered the convent of the "Sisters of Loreto." In that religious congregation, she was a teacher for several years. She learned to speak English at the sisters school in Ireland. With great poignancy, Gjergji speaks of the call that brought Mother Teresa by train and boat to Calcutta, India. The chapter on "Mother Teresa," speaks of her work in recent years, spent in the limelight of international acclaim.

The book is filled with beautiful photographs. There are many pictures ranging from her childhood to old age. Some of the pictures are of the people most important to Mother Teresa. These include photos of the Albanian people. Many of the women pictured are carrying rosaries. Their husbands are always by their sides. There are also pictures of "the poorest of the poor," who are blood brothers and sisters to Mother Teresa in Jesus's Sacred Heart.

A set of colored photographs at the end of the volume show Mother Teresa standing with the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, looking lovingly at the sick and dying in Mother's house. These pictures show the great unity in the diversity of the Catholic Church community. The juxtaposition of the little woman from Albania who has lived among the lepers and the diseased standing side by side with the man from Poland who has lived under the most oppressive of governments speaks volumes.

The most valuable contribution of this volume is the beautiful text. Gjergji is an Albanian priest-scholar. He is the author of several books. His 1977 publication, *The Role of Albanian Women in the Family and Society*, is his best effort. Gjergji is also the editor of the Albanian Catholic magazine, *Drita*. The Kosovë based journal is outstanding for its outspokenness on human rights issues. In the name of the Albanian people, he dedicated the

book on Mother Teresa to, "our sister-mother on her 80th birthday with much love and gratitude." The author's preface, makes it clear he considers his subject a mother and sister in a more profound way than mere words can express.

Gjergji begins his story by recounting what Mother Teresa has meant in his own life. He speaks of the rumors he heard as a young boy in Kosovë about her. People said that there was an Albanian girl in India who was performing great miracles and becoming famous the world over. She was a nun who, spent all her time among the "poorest of the poor" in Calcutta. Albanian priests would tell her deeds as a living example of the charity of the gospel.

In a very spiritual way, Mother Teresa became Gjergji's mother. He found a book in Albanian on Mother Teresa which became "a spiritual testament" for him. It caused in him "a kind of restlessness, a wish and an ardent desire were born in me. Coming to know this Mother personally, she who was becoming the Mother of my dreams, my desires, my fantasy and even my vocation..." He was inspired by the holiness and charity of this woman, to enter upon the journey of studies that ends in ordination to the Roman Catholic priesthood.

He tells how the personality of Mother Teresa filled his heart and his thoughts. She was the mother of his dreams and of his vocation. Although he had never seen her, he knew her well. He had the opportunity to personally meet Mother Teresa in 1968, while he was studying philosophy and theology in Rome. At the invitation of Pope Paul VI, Mother Teresa started a house of her congregation in the city. Gjergji was overjoyed with the news. When he finally met her, he was speechless. It proved the Albanian proverb that "When the heart is full the mind is empty."

When Mother heard that her visitors were Albanians, she looked up toward heaven, opened her arms and said, "What a nice surprise! The Lord unites us in His Sacred Heart, in the Immacu-

late Heart of Mary - welcome." It is significant that this woman of the Church and of Albania would greet people in such a manner. Her words show that she recognizes that the universal fellowship of humankind is found in Jesus' and his mother's heart. The unity is stronger than ties of family or nationality. It is this same recognition that allows her to see Jesus in the poor - His Sacred heart contains all men and women, without distinction. Gjergji says that in their initial meeting, "Mother was full of questions about Albania."

He tells that "She asked so many questions about her native town of Skopje, about the parish of the Sacred Heart, about her diocese, about our people of Kosovë in Yugoslavia. She felt a great desire to speak in Albanian, to hear how things are going on back home, to 'return,' at least with her mind and her memories, into the past." Although the Albanian nun recognizes the sacred fellowship of humankind, she holds a special place for those hailing from her nation. Her excitement revealed a very human element of a saintly woman.

This beautiful, full-color, over-sized volume is printed by the renowned Italian publication House EDITRICE VELAR of Gorle, Bergamo. It is written in English, with a foreword by Simon D. Cardinal Lourdusamy, Prefect for the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. It is a perfect gift for everyone who cherishes in Mother Teresa, God's gift to humanity.

Tom HOOPES

Jesuit missionary writes 3rd book on Mother Teresa

Jesuit Fr. Edouard Le Joly, spiritual adviser to the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta for the past 33 years, has published another book on Mother Teresa, "The Glorious Years."

The third book on the founder of the congregation by the 33-year-old priest gives insight into the life and work of Mother Teresa from 1985 to

1991, a time in which her influence "became truly phenomenal."

The book's English version was released in February, Fr. Le Joly said.

Highlights of the new book include accounts of opening homes for AIDS patients in New York and Washington in 1986, for children with AIDS in Bucharest in 1990, and Mother Teresa's 1985 speech at the United Nations, in which she condemned abortion. The nun has been successful because "Mother has a fascinating personality - her conviction convinces and her example draws to action," the book says.

It also notes that her international standing and good relations enable her to enter countries that harass other religions and ban missionary activity.

The book focuses on the congregation's development of contemplative branches, which began with houses in New York City and Washington, D.C., in 1981. The congregation now has nine such houses in the United States, two in India and one each in Cuba, Sweden, Nepal and Rome (brothers).

Mother Teresa says a daily hour of adoration in all their houses "has transformed our sisters."

Started initially as a prayer support for active nuns, the contemplatives now carry on ministries to jail inmates, the sick and old, and to lonely persons on the streets.

Fr. Le Joly, a Belgian, devotes himself to evangelization in a Calcutta parish.

As spiritual director, he recalls Mother Teresa saying, "I want you to teach my sisters to pray and serve God perfectly."

At her request, he wrote "Remain in My Love," the first of a trilogy of meditations for her nuns that Mother Teresa says she uses for her own daily meditation.

Fr. Le Joly says his books on "the most revered nun in the world" are an indirect way of spreading

the Good News, as many who will not read books on Jesus will read about Mother Teresa "because she is a contemporary spiritual phenomenon."*

-- Union of Catholic Asian News

*Book is available by writing to: "The Mother House", 54 Lower Circular Rd., Calcutta, West Bengal, India.

Kemal Bey Vlora, Ismail: *Memorie*, (Nermin Falaschi, ed.) Noi Publicisti, Rome, 1978, pp. 465, \$25.00.

The 1992 celebration of the 80th anniversary of the proclamation of independence of Albania is a fitting time to remember the father of Albanian independence, Ismail Kemal Bey Vlora. His grand niece, the distinguished scholar and poet, Nermin (Vlora) Falaschi sought to diffuse knowledge of her great uncle's life and career by publishing the *Memoirs* of Ismail Kemal. Kemal wrote these *Memoirs* during World War I. They were edited by Somerville Story. The Englishman was a close friend of Kemal. The *Memoirs* were published in an English version shortly after Kemal's death.¹

As a non Albanian, the present reviewer hesitated to evaluate such a work because it is so fundamental for understanding how Albania came to be an independent nation. Throughout the *Memoirs* Kemal's humanity stands out. He had a great capacity for understanding others. Kemal was widely traveled and well educated. He was proficient in languages but excelled in science. His ability to understand people well befitted him for his career as a diplomat in the multicultural Ottoman Empire. Kemal employed a personal touch in his diplomatic responsibilities. He conscientiously applied himself to his work. He knew his friends and enemies and adapted himself to the necessities of the times. As a representative of the Ottoman rulers his constituency was all members of the Empire. These included not just Turks and Moslems, but also Christians, Jews and people

of all ethnic backgrounds. He believed that everyone should be treated equally.

The *Memoirs* begin with a reference to the Hatt (Rescript) of Gulhane which was promulgated in 1839, five years before Kemal's birth. The Hatt was applicable to all people in the Ottoman Empire. It was "Magna Carta" guaranteeing equality to all, without racial or religious distinction. It also guaranteed the inviolability of the individual and private property. Kemal's entire career was an effort to put the Hatt principles into practice, for the good of all people, especially Albanians.

Kemal undertook his diplomatic mission during the tumultuous early years of the twentieth century. It was a decisive period in the establishment of relations between modern national states. Many of the issues about which Kemal wrote are difficult for the modern day readers to comprehend. However, Nermin Falaschi has provided the reader some assistance with highly explanatory footnotes. An additional chapter, not in the original English edition, offers an introduction to a 1963 historical study entitled *The Provisional Government of Valona and its Acts from November 1912 to January 1914*. It covers the period in which Kemal was the President of the Government.²

The *Memoirs* concluded with an article written for a British review in which Kemal set forth his views on the developments leading to the decision to declare independence. He also discusses events immediately following that momentous decision. This article was not originally intended for the *Memoirs*. However Kemal's death at Perugia, Italy in 1919 prevented him from completing the final two planned chapters of his *Memoirs*. Nonetheless what Kemal did manage to write remains a legacy for Albanians and for all people who envision a world where human dignity is respected and promoted.

Raymond FROST

Notes:

- 1 Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1920.
- 2 For a good historical background to the *Memoirs*, the volume by Renzo Falaschi entitled *Kemal, His Life and Thought* (Bardi Editore, Rome, 1985) is highly recommended.

Hibbert, Reginald: *Albania's National Liberation Struggle, The Bitter Victory*, St. Martin's Press Inc., 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA, 1991, \$57.50

This extremely well written and impressively detailed volume may stand as THE definitive account of the Albanian partisan movement during the second world war. In any event, it is certainly the most serious attempt by a B.L.O. (British Liaison Officer) who served with the partisan forces to explain in a way satisfactory to professional historians what happened in the partisan war and why.

Hibbert, who was assigned beginning in 1943 to work with both the nationalist (anti-Communist) guerrillas of the Legalitet movement (Abas Kupi) and Balli Kombëtar, and the Communist army under Hoxha, is by no means an apologist for either faction on the anti-German side, although he has drawn on Hoxha-era official sources and accepts the victory of the Red faction as something almost inevitable.

Hibbert believed and continues to believe the Hoxhaites were more disposed than the nationalists to direct confrontation with the Germans, and he argues fairly persuasively that thousands of young Albanians, particularly in the southern, Toskë region of the country, came to support Hoxha's grab for power. He also points out the military abilities of Mehmet Shehu, the Spanish civil war veteran. And he stresses the fatal weaknesses that plagued the anti-Communist efforts of Abas Kupi and others like him.

But he also describes two aspects of the war that have never been adequately analyzed by foreigners. One was the role of the "lost" Albanian

lands of Kosovë and western Macedonia (Ilirida, as it is now known), which had been given to Albania by the axis, in complicating relations between the Albanian masses and Hoxha's Albanian Communists, and between the latter and their Titoist advisers. The Yugoslav Communists who acted as political godfathers for their Albanian counterparts allowed no meaningful discussion of a non-Serbian order in Kosovë, regardless of Marxist arguments for "proletarian internationalism."

Indeed, as noted by Hibbert, at a joint meeting of Yugoslav and Albanian partisans from Kosovë, in December 1943, the "Kosmet National Liberation Committee" passed a resolution promising Albanians in the region "the right of self-determination -- including secession." But for Stalinists, particularly Serbophilic Stalinists, such proved to be propaganda and no more.

The second aspect of the war previously lacking in extensive treatment by foreign historians involves the Hoxhaite policy of deadly repression against dissidents within leftist ranks, as well as against nationalist rivals. The Albanian Communist Party's formal organization was marked by purges directed against virtually all the pioneers of Marxism in the country, but especially against supporters of the non-Stalinist "Zjari" (Flame) movement and other so-called "Trotskyites" (see the obituary of the Trotskyist Sadik Premte in the 1991 *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*).

An especially important case of murderous political reprisal against an independent leftist involves Llazër Fundo, a leading figure in the history of Albanian Marxism. Fundo had gone to Moscow as a supporter of the Communist International. There he was apparently denounced for his independent views by the Communist writer Sejfulla Malëshova, who after the war would himself fall victim, in turn, to Stalinist purge fever, under Hoxha. Fundo missed trial and execution in the Soviet mass purges of the mid-1930s by the personal intervention of the Bulgarian radical Georgi

Dmitrov, with whom Fundo had a good relationship.

Fundo went to Western Europe and participated in the Spanish civil war, apparently under the name "Jovan," alongside Demetrios Yotopoulos (Vitte), the leader of the Greek Archeio-Marxist party, a non-Stalinist force. His relationship with official Communism during this period remains unclear, but Fundo, who returned to Albania soon after world war II began, was identified as a major "Trotskyite" target by the Yugoslav Communists in their letter to the Albanian party in September 1942.

Fundo was soon interned by the Italian occupying forces and encountered the Kryeziu brothers, leaders of a powerful Kosovë clan allied with Abas Kupa's Legalitet movement. The Kryezius had launched a remarkably successful independent nationalist-revolutionary movement that called for liberation of Albania but also for continued unity of the Albanian state of 1912 and Kosovë. As Hibbert notes, "The Kosmet partisans led by Facil Hoxha and Mehmet Hoxha... were not popular with the predominantly Albanian population of Kosovë and made little headway there. The Kryeziu movement, if it had continued, might have led to a general nationalist uprising of the Kosovars; but this would have been embarrassing and perhaps dangerous... to the Communist leaders of both Yugoslavia and Albania."

Fundo, perhaps seeking yet another opportunity for revolutionary commitment, became a translator and political adviser to the Kryezius. In September 1944, Enver Hoxha, following the Stalinist pattern and fulfilling the bidding of the Yugoslav Communists who insisted Kosovë was Yugoslav territory, attacked the Kryeziu forces -- acting, therefore, not only against an independent political alternative, but also against the legitimate interests of the Kosovë people and the Albanian people as a whole. Fundo was brutally killed, to the alarm of the British liaison personnel.

The killing of Llazër Fundo was symbolic of the tragedy awaiting the Albanian people as a whole, during the 45-year Hoxha dictatorship that followed. But it also stood as testimony to the fate of more than a few independent leftist intellectuals, in the years after the consolidation of Stalinist rule in Moscow: Fundo encountered the same destiny, in his native Albania, that he had seen in Spain, where independent revolutionaries were hunted down and killed by the Soviet secret police. The parallel must not have been lost on those British advisers who had followed events in the Spanish war. (Ironically, Major Peter Kemp, assigned as an adviser to the Albanian partisans, had fought in Spain on Franco's side).

Hibbert's narrative is, however, more a military account than a personal or political history, and, given its precision and conciseness, that is clearly a virtue. Hibbert outlines the development of British policy options and decisions, the activities of the various missions, and the impact on these of the Communist-nationalist conflict. His central argument is that, destructive as it may have turned out for the Albanian people, and difficult as it was for the British military men such as Hibbert, of basically conservative bent, the decision to give significant backing to the Albanian partisans rather than the nationalists was understandable given the context of the war and British priorities.

London's war aims emphasized killing Germans rather than saving the possibility of Albanian democracy. The British liaison officers agonized over the practical consequence of this short-sightedness, which allowed Hoxha free reign not only to kill his rivals during the war but to lay the basis for the attempted spiritual and cultural murder of the entire Albanian people, after 1945. It is a decision that has continued to trouble the conscience of numerous participants, Hibbert included. In this regard this work is not only a useful historical source: it is also an irreplaceable inquiry into political morality in our time.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, *Trimming the Cat's Claws: The Politics of Impunity in Albania*, Minn. Lawyers Intl. Human Rights Comm. 400 Second Ave South, Suite 1050, Minneapolis, MN 55401, USA; 1992.

Many organizations have dedicated their efforts to documenting Albania's human rights violations. The contribution of the Minnesota Lawyers international Human Rights Committee has been one of the most thorough. In 1990 they published their initial report on the situation in Albania. Recently, they published a second report which assessed the current Albanian situation. It makes recommendations based on the observations collected by a delegation of the lawyers in October, 1991.

This report is concise and specific. It is concerned with particular problems and their solutions. Divided into four sections, the report begins with a summary and recommendations, gives a history of recent developments, examines Albania's criminal justice system, and lastly studies its codes and laws.

Despite recent reforms, the report point out, much needs to be accomplished before Albania will be truly free of human rights violations. In its recommendations, the report focused on the Albanian Secret Police (SHIK, formerly *Sigurimi*). It suggested several ways in which the group should be sanctioned and alternative ways of organizing a police force. These suggestions included: all officers should be deprived of their weapons; individual officers should be investigated for human rights violations; and the police group should be accountable to an elected government agency. "The Albanian people do not trust in SHIK to serve as a crime-prevention agency," the report stated.

It left the question of *Sigurimi* files open to debate. There has been tremendous controversy about the files. Opening the files to public scrutiny could easily cause retaliatory violence, in the same manner it did in Romania. However, in the interest of justice, many think the files should be opened. "At a minimum," the Minnesota Lawyers' report

said, "The files of the secret police should be placed under secure and impartial control until a constitutional government determines their fate."

The report demanded financial compensation for political prisoners. A photograph showed people lined up outside the government office which issues certificates entitling them to compensation for internment or imprisonment. The government's recent decrees on the treatment of political prisoners goes far towards a response to the situation. The Lawyers' report points out that articles 26 and 27 of the Penal Code still allow exile and internment as criminal punishments for citizens. Also, the report stated that the Albanian People's Assembly should repeal Law 7388 which still permits the use of "preventative means" against persons who "commit a criminal offense, which is not a crime, but is incompatible with proper behavior and social morality," or people who "could" commit a crime.

The report further pointed out the need for the government to publicly acknowledge the criminal nature of the past practice of anonymous mass burial of political prisoners. Every accommodation should be made to the friends and relatives to make personal, private memorials for their deceased loved ones. This recommendation means that the government must carry out requests to exhume graves and help identify remains. If help must be employed from outside the country, then so be it.

Television and radio markets must be privatized, offering independent broadcasters the opportunity to compete with official government broadcasters. Prisons must be upgraded to comply with the U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, including adequate food, medical services, contact with the outside world, education and recreation. The delegation examined prison conditions in some detail. Their report included a photograph of women prisoners as well as a men's prison cell. The prisons were not in the best condition, but they were generally well kept. The women's prison was cleaner than the men's. The

noticeable difference was found particularly in the kitchens.

The nation's constitution should reflect the wishes and needs of the Albanian people. Especially, it must be in compliance with United Nations rules governing economic, social and cultural rights. Law schools should use merit as their standard of admission, not geography. The courts should be independent of the other branches of government. Those who are called before a court must be guaranteed legal counsel, Albanian courtrooms should allow defendants easy access to their attorneys while they are being tried. Prosecutors should not have sentencing rights except in extraordinary circumstances.

The book's title, "Trimming the Cat's Claws: The Politics of Impunity," summed up its view of the situation in Albania. Although reforms have been made, they have done nothing, as one former political prisoner explained, but "trim the cat's claws." One of the most serious problems facing Albania today is the exemption that the government "cat" has from punishment. While the report was thorough in its condemnation of Albania's continuing human rights abuses, it also record some of the country's human rights advances. In addition to the government documents printed in full in the report's appendix, the book mentioned several non-governmental agencies that have been established as well.

Among these are the Forum for the Defense of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Forum) established in December, 1990. In order to insure impartiality, its members are not allowed to belong to political parties. The forum has done charity and relief work, as well as documented injustices.

The Society of Ex-Political Prisoners was formed in 1991. It is chaired by Osman Kozazi, who spent 40 years in prison. The society sponsored a hunger strike in September, 1991. Its goals are to depose the late Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha and his collaborators, "criminals," destroy the

Sigurimi, reform Albanian mass media, abolish Communist Party symbols, try the former government elite, declare the innocence of former political prisoners, and allow their children the right to attend the school of their choice.

The Research Centre for Human Rights and Fair Elections was formed in December, 1991. Its governing body is made up of law faculty members from the University of Tiranë who had previously been active in the Tirana Committee of the Forum for Human Rights. The Research Centre is intended to function as a clearinghouse of information concerning human rights issues. The Research Centre will not, however, take on cases of individual human rights violation.

This latest publication by the Minnesota Lawyers group is a welcome addition to the much needed documentations of Albania's current political and social situation. It gives a clear picture both of the present condition of the country and recommends how it ought to be improved. It records the good work that has already begun towards that goal. This report is a valuable contribution to Albanian studies because it is presented in a straightforward manner by a reputable organization.

Alush A. Gashi, M.D., Ph.D, Ed.: **THE DENIAL OF HUMAN AND NATIONAL RIGHTS OF ALBANIANS IN KOSOVA**. New York, 1992, 314 pp., paperback, \$10.00 per copy, from Illyria Publishing Co., 2321 Hughes Ave., Bronx, NY 10458

In this well-produced volume, published by the New York Albanian-American newspaper *Illyria*, the ignominious record of Serbian rule in Kosovë is thoroughly recorded in a way that cannot but provoke the outrage of any reader concerned for human rights, especially in Europe. The documentation here in is based on material collected by the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms in Prishtinë.

The collection begins with an introduction that minces no words: "Kosova has been in a state of crisis since it was separated from its motherland in 1912. But in the past decade, the pain has become agony."

The account enumerates Serbian atrocities ranging from the police repression of a full quarter of the Kosova Albanian populace in the 1980s to the closure of schools and medical facilities today.

For the benefit of those unversed in Balkan ethnology, the book includes a section on the Illyrian and Albanian peoples reprinted from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. More useful for the serious scholar or analyst will be an extremely useful section on Serbia's plan to colonize Kosova, drawn up by the terrorist "intellectual" Vaso Cubrilovic in 1937, an official both, of the monarchical and Communist regimes in Serbo-Yugoslavia.

The English translation of Cubrilovic's Hitlerian memorandum on "The Expulsion of the Arnauts" (sic) is a unique resource that deserves the widest circulation. Cubrilovic writes, in the true Nazi style, "the mass removal of the Albanians... is the only effective course for us... The law must be enforced to the letter so as to make staying intolerable for the Albanians: fines, and imprisonments, the ruthless application of all police dispositions... compulsory labor, and any other measure that an experienced police force can contrive. From the economic aspect: the refusal to recognize the old land deeds... Health measures; the brutal application of all dispositions even in the homes, the pulling down of encircling walls and high hedges around the houses... ill-treatment of their clergy, the destruction of their cemeteries..." The hellish discourse continues.

Thus, it becomes immediately clear to the previously-untrained reader that, as we know, Great-Serbian aggression is nothing new, and is simply refurbishing, today, its genocidal practices and plans of the past.

The grim chronicle continues with the racist legal clauses adopted by Serbia in 1990, abolishing the autonomy of Kosova's Albanians, along with a comparative study of the Tito constitution of 1974, under which Kosova's autonomy had been guaranteed.

In addition, the book brings together a list of more than 185 Albanians killed in cold blood by Yugoslav police and army personnel in the period 1981-1991, a lengthy roster of those injured by police in 1990, registers of Albanian judicial and medical officials dismissed by the Serbian authorities, and a record of Albanian media personnel imprisoned and otherwise silenced.

This frightful panorama of Belgrade's cruelty and hatred concludes with excerpts from human rights reports by such outside bodies as the International Helsinki Federation and the U.S. State Department.

This collection is an indispensable addition to the libraries of all Balkanologists, all human rights activists, and all Albanian patriots.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

Fultz Kontos, Joan: *Red Cross, Black Eagle: A Biography of Albania's American School.* (East European Monographs, number 75.) Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs; distributed by Columbia University Press, New York. 1981. Pp. xv, 216. \$17.00.

Owing principally to widespread sympathy in Albania for President Wilson, to the enormous prestige of American-educated Bishop Fan S. Noli, and to the influential role in Albanian affairs of the Pan-Albanian Federation of America (VATRA), Albania in the 1920's was fertile soil for the growth of American influence. The American presence was evident in such institutions as the Phineas Kennedy School for Girls in Korçë, the American School of Agriculture in Kavajë, the antimalaria efforts of the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Albanian Vocational School (often referred to as the American Technical School) in Tiranë.

This fine book by Joan Fultz Kontos tells the story of the Albanian Vocational School (AVS) from the time of its establishment in 1921 until its nationalization by King Zog's regime in 1933. The book is dedicated to the two primary figures of the school, Charles A. Hollingshead (1867-1954) and the author's father, Harry T. Fultz (1888-1980), who directed AVS from 1922 to 1933. Both men were exceptionally able and devoted educators.

AVS operated under the auspices of the American Junior Red Cross. It was funded mostly by the Junior Red Cross with the balance of funds coming from the Albanian government and from income generated by a variety of commercial enterprises of the school. These included a printing shop, an electric plant, an ice plant, and a farm.

Writing in a restrained, scholarly, and dignified style, Kontos gives a detailed and vivid account of the twelve-year life span of AVS. She makes effective use of documentary materials to tell about the growth of the school from an initial enrollment of 32 students in 1921 to over 500 in 1933 and about the teaching program of AVS which included not only vocational training but also instruction in mathematics and the social and physical sciences, plus a rich roster of extracurricular activities, such as dramatics, publication of a school newspaper, *Laboremus* ("Let Us Work"), and sports, including baseball. But beyond these, the students at AVS learned occupational, social, and human skills and values of inestimable worth, not the least of which was "the dignity of work," especially manual labor.

The story of AVS is told against the background of an evolving and fluid Albanian society. As a result the book gains greatly in scope, vitality, and meaning.

Among the 150 alumni of the school are the names of Mahmut Dingu, Hamdi Kerçiku, Mustafa Qishti, and Mehmet Nuhu, Albania's prime minister since 1954.

This well-written book enriches the scholarship on Albania. It increases our understanding of an

American initiative to contribute to the progress and enlightenment of a very backward Albania of half a century ago through the development of education. The book shows year by year the trials and frustrations, but also the rich rewards of a "pioneer program of technical assistance" (p.xiii), as implemented by AVS.

The book has a good foreword by Nicholas Pano. It has, in addition, over a dozen pages of illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index.*

Peter R. PRIFTI

**American Historical Review*, Feb. 1982,.

DioGuardi, Joseph J.: *Unaccountable Congress: It Does Not Add Up*, Washington, Regnery Gateway, 1992, \$17.95.

The Hon. Joseph J. DioGuardi is undoubtedly best-known to readers of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* as president of the Albanian American Civic League and as America's number 1 fighter for the rights of the Kosovar Albanian population.

But Joe DioGuardi, who served two terms as a Republican congressman in 1985-1988 (representing Westchester Co., New York), and who is running for the same office this year, has gone beyond the struggle for Albanian rights in this short new book. Here he has produced a cogent critique of Congressional behavior that, for the majority of Americans, will offer many of the same lessons found in the struggles of Albanian people against government abuses of power.

DioGuardi, who is of Arbëresh origin, has chosen to open his book with an Arbëresh quote: "Po më besën ca na lanë e që kurrë u mek as pakë." That is, referring to his forebears, he writes, "They instilled solid values in us which have never faded."

"Joey the Waiter" went to Congress as the first of its members to hold the title of Certified Public Accountant. Unfortunately enough, the fiscal prin-

ciples he had learned and practiced professionally were not taken seriously by his colleagues.

His views on government spending and budgetary responsibility did not prevail in the Congress, as we may see from the succession of scandals plaguing that body, the legislative model for the entire democratic world.

In chapter after chapter of this readable but alarming book, Joe DioGuardi explains the twists and turns of congressional practice. He begins with "the most expensive credit card in the world," the plastic voting card used by members of Congress. He follows through with a trenchant dissection of the congressional system and its need for the therapy of reform -- a therapy long, perhaps fatally, overdue.

This book will serve as a manifesto for those U.S. voters who find themselves not only disgusted by the antics of their elected legislators, but also hungry for the conservative fiscal values necessary to rebuild the country's national greatness. To emphasize, the tasks before the Albanian people and those in the U.S. are not that different -- but Americans have a head start in recreating democracy. Joe DioGuardi has used this book to suggest the means of rehabilitation required for American institutions to regain their basic health.

This is an important book deserving of the widest possible readership.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

Laudone, Cosmo: *San Giorgio Albanese: Ieri ed Oggi* (Mbuzati dje e sot), Rome, Nuove Edizioni Culturali Italiane, 1989, pp.78, \$8.00.

San Giorgio Albanese. Ieri ed Oggi (Albanian Saint George: Yesterday and Today) is the title of an interesting and valuable monograph about this Arbëresh town in Calabria, southern Italy. Some 900 years (1099-1989) of history of San Giorgio Albanese are presented in a documentary and readable fashion by the native son author.

In particular, the volume records various demographic, religious, cultural and political changes since the arrival of the Arbëresh refugees in the fifteenth century. A map and twelve illustrations plus documents, costumes and various personalities enhances the volume. The front cover offers a beautiful town view. Arbëresh with a command of the Italian language will find this volume helpful and enjoyable.

* * *

Laudone, Cosmo: *Le Poesie di Antonio Argondizza* (Poems of Antonio Argondizza), Rome, Nuove Edizioni Culturali Italiane, 1983, pp.136, \$8.00.

This is another important work by Cosmo Laudone. He is not a literary author by profession, but only a passionate curator of everything with regard to his home town - San Giorgio Albanese! Indeed, Laudone works hard for his living in Rome. Yet he devotes much of his time and fortune to preserve and promote the rich heritage of the Arbëresh people. His seven publications, although brief and modest, are beautiful tributes to his town and to all of the Arbëresh.

Poems of Antonio Argondizza is a work of research and love. Antonio Argondizza (1839-1918) was one of the great Arbëresh poets and educators. His writings were mostly scattered among the periodicals of his time. They treated various subjects of Arbëresh history, traditions, religious and social life. He was a dedicated Arbëresh priest and scholar, who travelled in North America and Europe. He was able to visit Albania. Seeing the tragic oppression and poverty of the land of his ancestors, Argondizza dedicated all his efforts to the cause of Albanian liberation from the Turkish yoke.

Argondizza's poetry reflects the will and strength of his polemic and uncompromising spirit. In his verse there flows a delicate sincerity and faith expression which is rarely found in the works of other Arbëresh authors. Argondizza wrote easily

in both Arbëresh and Italian. His use of language is rich and penetrating.

Laudone has done a service to all Arbëresh by assembling and printing this brief anthology of Antonio Argondizza's poetry.

Both books are available by writing to: Pro-Loce di San Giorgio Albanese, Via delle Pietre, 87060 San Giorgio Albanese (Cosenza), Italy.

Petro VUÇANI

Kadare, Ismail: *From One December To Another, Chronicles, Correspondence, Meditations* 1991, Librarie Artheme Fayard, 75, rue des Saints-Peres, 75278 Paris Cedex 06, France, pp.262, \$20.00

Due to space limitations in our 1991 *Bulletin* we were unable to review the third part of Kadare's work entitled "Contemplation." (pp. 151-241) The subtitle "Përsiatje", (English "contemplation"), is synonymous with "Shpresë" (English "hope"). However, Kadare may have consciously done this to express his desire to be rid of the dictatorship which he compared with a Tyrannosaurus.

The author mentions some of the ways a dictatorship takes power, by way of plot (s), revolution or counter-revolution; by a neighboring country's attack; by long self-isolation; or paradoxically, by participating in a celebration. This was the case in Albania with National Liberation Front (NLF) of partisans in November 1944. The Albanian partisans, he explained, were lucky to side with the Allies. As a result they initiated some democratic steps including free press, news, dialects, religion, and love. On the other hand, the victory celebration euphoria was covered with the drama, or "tragedy" of the overthrown people. These experienced the nationalization of their wealth and property. They were brought before people's courts, and subjected to jails, executions and violence. Somehow Kadare justifies his behavior as "understandable." Their celebrations simply coincided with the downfall of fascism. Moreover, the Alba-

nian communists were members of the same front with the Soviet Union, USA and England. This reviewer believes that there was no justification for the partisans massacre of their own people. The names and portraits of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill hung over all the streets and buildings. There was an official day of mourning declared by the Albanian communist government upon the death of President Roosevelt. However, these actions were a camouflage for their crimes.

The intrigues and struggle for power among the victors are revealed by Kadare. He tells how the Yugoslav and Russian delegations arrived at night in the Tirana airport. Yet people did not know who were the communists or where their offices were located. These were hidden under general and vague names such as "people's councils", "communal services", and "youth offices." He mentions how the fate of Albania was decided at Yalta Conference. He explains how Greece was saved by luck. Kadare demonstrates that Yugoslavia saved herself in 1948. He termed the fracture of relations between Albania and Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and later with China as "delayed reflections." From the emissaries of these communist countries came the darkest instructions for spying, arresting, torturing, provocation, and "elimination without a trace." The group plotted the mining of the Corfu Channel where two destroyers and many British marines were lost. This incident prompted the breaking of diplomatic relations between Albania and England. The break with the USA was done on a doctrinaire and ideological pretext. The Communist Slavic countries determined that Albania should remain isolated from Western Europe, according to the author.

In 1967, Enver Hoxha sought to further the isolation of the nation when he declared Albania "the first atheistic state in the world." Here the author concurs with the often repeated contention of our *Bulletin* that the three religions in Albania have never created serious problems. Catholicism, as the most wide spread religion in Europe, was most fiercely hit by government authorities. (p.

159) Worse, Kadare points out that at the peak of world opposition to Stalin in 1979, Hoxha wrote "Conversations with Stalin." The book was "a shameless challenge against civilization." That same year a new constitution followed. Barbers were stationed at the Rinas Airport and along Albania's border to prevent long haired foreign tourists from visiting the country. The author correctly reads this action as effort "to cut relations with the world forever...!"

Kadare discusses the events of 1948-49 including the execution of the interior minister Koçi Xoxe and the harshest anti-Tito campaign. However, he offers not a single word about the plight of Albanians in Yugoslavia.

There are numerous theoretical speculations about dictatorship so Kadare discusses longevity, popular impression and participation, the degrees of harshness, inconsistencies, contradictions, ability to change and manners of hybrid adaptation. He discusses the new man of the socialist epoch, who simultaneously produced satraps and victims by turning the people against each other. He clearly states that according to Marx's class struggle principles, death or power is the choice afforded anyone in a dictatorship.

In discussing the breakdown of dictatorship, Kadare states that this usually occurs shortly after the death of the tyrant. The violent death of the Rumanian dictator shows the hidden desire of dictatorship to remain heroic. He adds that "if chronicles of a dictatorship, press, propaganda, art, philosophy and its archives are closely studied, one would clearly see that death is predominant." Thus, in Albania, he predicts, communism will die standing on its own feet, but it would not betray marxism. Kadare remarks that Rumania would sacrifice herself for the ideas of Causcescu. Cuba island would drown, but Castro would not abandon socialism, and Irak would blow up in the air, but would not bend to the USA (p. 171).

Kadare explains that the dictatorship apparatus, upon building bunkers, secret channels and

hidden airports, prepares hit-lists of their opponents and reveals them in their strict circles. Then the functionaries proceed to terrorize the whole nation. However, a dictatorship fearing bloodshed and vengeance, insists on dialogue. According to Kadare this is noble, but then he sets the condition that "...if the democratic forces reach to take away from the dictatorship the death idea as one takes the weapon from a thief, or a bomb from a terrorist, then one may say that they have arrived at the first serious victory. (p.174)

Currently fearless democratic forces are now in power in Albania by virtue of the free vote. They have given assurances that they are not going to practice or profess vengeance. Mr. Kadare has returned to Albania. It is hoped that he will stay there and work without fear; however if he returns to live in France, then the truth of almost all the statements of his book will crumble.

One of the best analyzed sections of this volume is the third chapter on guilt-sharing. This is the basic mechanism over which a totalitarian regime places a great deal of hope. Kadare introduces this theme by quoting from Dostoyevsky's "The Devil." In that important work one of five revolutionaries is killed. The four surviving conspirators are equally guilty. The basic principle is adapted and the program is set. (p.178) Kadare argues that confidence and guilt spread in waves: 1. from family to members of leadership, 2. from Politburo to the most naive denouncers; 3. from militant fanatics, party secretaries of the armed forces to border-guards, 4. spies and denouncers and those who are caught in guilt, 5. intellectuals: scientists, writers, poets, artists, academicians, 6. indoctrinated school children and students, 7. amorphous crowds who fill plazas, stadiums and parades with noise; 8. foreign friends: paid charlatans, psychopaths, fools, perverts. The reasoning goes that since we have done all things together, when death comes we all shall go together. (p.182)

Kadare maintains that guilt sharing is borrowed by communists from christianity. He argues that:

All people are guilty before God (Party) who is unerring and from whom we have bread, life and country. Being guilty, people have to confess (make some self-reproach orally or in writing). This happened to the writer because of his work "The Red Pashas" (p.176)

A new kind of fear is instilled in the new man with a "new anguish" which pursues people all the time everywhere. This breaks their normal life patterns, their traditional customs and relations, their vision, and substitutes them with new ones. "A fear campaign", he writes, "starts by whispering here and there that... something has happened,... has been uncovered,... bad will occur..." The terror reigns until one day it hits with arrests, sentencing and execution..., and as soon as the storm subsides, new investigations, identifications, escalations follow vertically and horizontally with the same results. Kadare tells how a typical thunderstorm like this occurred during 1972-75. Then writers Fadil Paçrami and Todi Lubonja were sentenced as "deviationist plotters." The defense minister Beqir Balluku with his aides Petrit Dume and Hito Çako were eliminated. Later on when sabotage was discovered in the ministry of economy, the chief with his aides met the same fate. (p.185) It seemed that all were blamed as "tools of western bourgeoisie." Blame on one another dominated, nobody felt secure, because the superstrata was hit so hard.

Another horrible tool of dictatorship which Kadare stresses, is the "blind hit without criterion", without announcement and without due process of law. Among the victims are some loyal, overzealous hated fanatic. Their purge serves to demonstrate that the dictator is a just man. Dictator Hoxha would smash anyone who had shown joy during purges of such magnitude. Both Stalin and Hoxha's tactics would not give the enemy any rest. The enemy was the whole people who wanted to lead a normal life. People were not only denied their human rights, but were exploited through poverty, long hard working hours and rationing of life necessities. Some families were

ostracized as "enemies of the party." The government interfered in family marriages, death rites, feasts, holidays, visits, even personal names.

Among the prime examples of interference in the life of people by high party officials and dictator Hoxha was Pali Miska, a former driver and then Politburo member. In order to save energy in Tirana, Miska ordered electricity turned off at night. Anti-government tracts forced Miska to withdraw the order. E. Hoxha was or became opposed to coffee shops. When President Nixon went to China in 1972, Hoxha told the Politburo that "... now they will open the coffee shops." On another occasion Hoxha said that "Girls drink liquor in coffee shops". Consequently the term was changed into "Pastry." (p.192)

Fear of persecution resulted in the following macabre scenes. When P. Gusho, a Central Committee member, was accused of sabotage in the petroleum fields he committed suicide. Upon hearing this sad news, Gusho's wife climbed onto a balcony and started singing. (p.193) One man received a 15 year prison term because he was "arrogant." Because Hoxha's anger could not be without some cause, a few people said the man did something wrong. Kadare explains that, "The mystery of the chief of state was part of the disorientation machinery." (p.193)

In attempting to create a "new man", dictatorships use brutal police force, the army, party militants, newspapers, radio, TV, and classics works of marxism. Against these oppressive forces Kadare describes an infinite unorganized army of people. They are without any badge or sign. They all have different wants. They seek to work and enjoy their lives. Being that this infinite army is uncontrollable - and there is no place in this world for both forces, then the author surmises that the party will loose its own head. This stage appears slightly farfetched, but as events have recently proved the silent resistance sometimes wins.

Kadare follows with a description of the stage where this war is waged. He tells of state built

apartments. These are poorly constructed, very narrow, uniform cages with no comfort. Occupants become nervous and are bored to defeat. It is a "pre-jail" as the writer describes the situation. Yet, he asserts, people do not give up. They react by changing portraits, selling or burning books, praying in the darkness, minding their business and telling nothing to anyone. These people will wind up in the silent, uncontrollable, undefeatable resistance, assures the writer.

In offices, business halls, auditoriums and colleges, Kadare writes, everybody knows as who is with or against the party. However they dare say nothing to anyone. Furthermore, people recognize the high ranking officials by sight. Their pale plump faces, body fat, manner of walking, sitting, standing, table manners, greetings, jargon and gestures. These officials stir feelings of hatred. As a result they create a state of servitude, which prolongs the life of dictatorship.

The sharp difference between urban and rural areas is presented as persisting. The only sign of agreement in both was the slogan "Party-Enver." Otherwise dust, heat, desert everywhere, and above all boredom were the travelling companions of dictatorship.

The author nostalgically recalled the 1950s when he was a student in the Soviet Union. He regularly would travel 3000 km by air from Moscow to Tirana to have dinner at the "Club of the League of Albanian Writers!" (CLAW) (p.198) Considering the depressed condition of the nation and the expenses involved, the reader may ask Kadare, who paid for these trips since he did not bother to note it. Kadare's description of the Moscow-Tirana flight reminded the reviewer of the rejection of travelling expenses to the fiercest poet of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Mayakovsky. He committed suicide mainly because of the denial. The Communist Party of Albania (CPA) probably learned a lesson from the Mayakovsky affair. All of us can be sure that Kadare is safe. However to the regret of the writer, the CLAW was later closed.

Kadare described at great lengths the ups and downs of progress in Albania. He records how people would substitute the never ending books of Hoxha with chandeliers, icons, and battle pictures. He continually stresses that even under such harsh conditions there were people of high cultural value. Some were even geniuses. It would be a great injustice if they were not recognized. (p. 200)

Government pressure on writers caused some to stop producing, others dragged on without much success. Still others went ahead with the order of the day. The party counter attacked with Marx's maxim: "The real meaning of life is war...." The result was the deprivation of the Sunday - day of rest - for street cleaning projects, political speeches, and other public chores.

While in Luare, France, Kadare heard a broadcast of the Mass in the Cathedral of Shkodra being celebrated by Fr. Simon Jubani and attended by Catholics and Muslims. He felt proud because Albanians by now feared no more. He pondered over his 1962 temptation not to return to Albania, and then wanders:

"How could it be explained that being in Finland I wanted to go to the Soviet Union and not to the West? Was I so much indoctrinated, so numb by the opium?" (203)

No matter that he was disillusioned and despaired of stalinism and socialism, glad about Albania's break with the Soviet Union, still he opted only to defect to the Soviet Union. Kadare adds that

"Everytime, after I thought about this, I was overwhelmed by despair. It seemed to me that there was something fatal in this withdrawal." (204)

This self confession cleanses the author, so there is no more 'ultimate fear' for him. However he continues to justify his great dilemma. Kadare compares the huge size of the Soviet socialist camp

with the western countries. Suddenly he stops his comparisons without elaboration. Instead he tries to console himself by recalling a drama of the late Albanian writer, Professor Ernest Koliqi in "The Roots Move." (Rome, Italy, 1968) Koliqi envisions the 1970s when communism will collapse and churches will be reopened. At one point a young writer among the celebrants looks downcast. He is reprimanded by a participant who asks: "Why do you, who have complained so much about communism, look so sad? How could you become so quick nostalgic about it?" (p. 205) Apparently Koliqi's hint pleased Kadare because it justified his moments of nostalgia.

The author then courageously considers both sides of the communist coin. He remarks that

"...it suffices to mention the colossal spiritual wealth that was created under its sky, that treasure which now belongs to the whole mankind, and without which this century would have been poorer." (206)

If we could find this "colossal spiritual wealth" in Albania, then we should invite the whole world to go and see it right now. Kadare's lofty evaluation is hard to resolve with his description of the reality of Albania. The only fault of communism according to Kadare is that "it bragged so much about its achievements that it lost the right to recognize them." He complains that the world is unmerciful in judging communism. Ordinarily at a persons funeral only their good deeds are mentioned, while at communism's funeral not a single good word is ever pronounced. His complaint reminds reader of the old Greek lesson in which an adversary is deprived of his rights. The writer contends: "Although communism deprived its opponents of their rights, mankind should recognize the 'good deeds' communism claims to have accomplished, i.e. to recognize its rights; otherwise it will reappear harsher than before." He admonishes that "it is too soon to judge communism by its first appearance in the Marx's and Engel's fanaticism, because we may be waiting for other

fantasm from this or other planets, the real tragic ones."

At this point Kadare begins to trash the disciples of communism. Marx is blamed for producing crimes by propagating the class struggle (p. 210); Lenin is labeled as a miser. The criticism includes the smaller idols and heroes who wiped out the names of tzars and saints to rename cities, streets, national buildings with designation like Leningrad, Stalingrad, etc.

Writing about this cult in Albania, the writer affirms that the bust of Hysni Kapo, a former nurseryman and then Politburo member, was many times larger than that of Ismail Qemali the founding father of the Albanian republic. Politburo member, Lena Çuko was a cooperative worker, and Politburo member. She is given a larger space in the Albanian encyclopedia than the former president Bishop Fan Noli. (p. 212) He observes that the level of culture of the members of the League of Prizren in 1878 was higher than that of the members of the Albanian government a century later. Kadare also notes with despair that the worst thing about communists was their eager destruction of the values of the nation.

Kadare reveals the criteria for evaluating workers, and employees and offering them incentives was nothing more than "loyalty to the party." In order to camouflage the ignorance of the party cadres, "The V.I. Lenin School of the Party" was founded. It offered a shallow course of studies based on the model of the Soviet school of Comsomol. It was declared the equal of the university. In order to put a cup on this farce, the Lenin School would draft students from the University of Tirana. These party members hated intelligentsia. Graduates like Sofokli Lazri formed the bureaucratic machine that changed the language and generated such deceptive slogans as "The stronger the party, the greater freedom." (p. 216)

As a teenager, Kadare thought Stalin was a good smiling old man put on the stage to salute

parades. He felt somewhat the same towards young Hoxha. He and his peers would ask each other 'Who is the real chief? Who has the power and who has not..' (p. 217) Today his answer is: "The government's mystery is one of its foundations."

The highest phase of mystery or deception is self deception, because it involves the whole state machinery in constant inflammatory and hysterical actions, senseless orders, outrages and stupid actions. The blending of these deceits resulted in the creation of an institute called "The Directory of the Hospitality" which furnished the leadership with privileges in disregard of all communist principles and doctrines...(In connection with these privileges a good number of communist leaders were arrested before the last elections. Among them was Nexhmije Hoxha, wife of the former dictator for "abusing the treasure of the nation.")

Mr. Kadare sees fit to mention the searching of his Tirana apartment after he sought asylum in France. Authorities confiscated six boxes of his manuscripts. Being that nobody was harmed or arrested, this case has to be considered as unique in a dictatorship.

The author concludes that as an outcome of all of these confusing decisions and actions, "the citizens of a socialist country, from the street sweepers to the head of the state, should not be ashamed to accept that in their life there has been at least one period of craziness (C), which may have lasted years, months or weeks." He mentions that:

"The writer of these lines has thought many times that an exact biography of anyone, including here his biography, couldn't be such (exact) without depicting the zone or zones of..." (pp. 217-7).

In fact "... in this universe one cannot get crazy alone because that phenomenon comes in waves engulfing strata of populations and even its whole generations."

Efforts at analyzing human interrelations, he admits, "are strange, not understandable and unsolvable. This brings about misunderstandings. There is a rush to judge the morality or the courage of others, most of the time, the result is arrogance, and in some cases sadism. Those who confess to being moral, sometimes do not scrutinize themselves."

All of these are worthy thoughts for all of us in general, but one may wonder as to how and why are they brought here? Who, what and where is the target? Is the author impeccable about his strong critique and even high praises of the communist system? Where does he find those "colossal spiritual values?"

On p. 228 the author does offer an example of civil courage involving the author of "Knives." Nexhat Tozaj, let his friends know that he was going to defend Kadare when the author was criticized in 1982. However Tozaj's friends stopped him physically. Kadare apparently was glad that he could not speak because he could have made things worse.

He criticizes those who bragged after the collapse of the dictatorship. He chides those who want revenge on employees of the fallen dictatorship. Hatred is treated by the author as an essential part of marxism-leninism. Indeed, he adds, that it is epitomized in the narration of Shollov's *The Science of Hatred*. (p.230) "When the wind of hatred from the Soviet Union came to Albania," he writes, "it created one of the greatest tragedies of the nation." In order to explain this statement, Kadare mentions the unwritten code of law of the Albanian mountaineers which forces a killer to show respect for a victim by taking part in the burial ceremony. The author mentions a personal example involving Dritëro Agolli the Head of the Albanian writers. Agolli was forced to criticize Kadare during meetings; yet whenever Agolli repented, he was forgiven by Kadare because 'We were in the same profession.' Kadare praised Agolli's talent. Besides in 1983 while returning

from Paris in a delegation of five writers, the group stopped in Budapest. At the hotel Agolli was given a separate room while the others shared rooms. Agolli went to Kadare's room and without notice asked him to use his single room. Kadare writes that "this act of repentance shows that in our country human relations were not and will not be ruined."

The theme of the Albanian death rites, banishing religion and crosses on graves is recaptured here. The ancient rites conducted by priests and muezzins were somehow substituted for with representatives of the 'Democratic Front' who would pronounce some silly communist slogans, and talk about the loyalty of the deceased towards the party. However, to the amazement of the stalinists who had ruined the private property, human friendship, weddings, and the justice system they themselves contrived substitute rites. (p. 234) At death people dropped by with condolences, had a rite of coffee, chattered about senseless slogans, calmed themselves with friendly wishes, and even invoking God. By 1990 the rites spread to clubs and auditoriums of the opposition, people's cemeteries were illuminated with candles. "Death", writes Kadare, "no matter how paradoxical may appear, has risen to protect life."

Recalling the euphoria and the noise during the communist festivities and anniversaries, he fears that hatred will prevail and the tragedy would resume with the outbreak of vengeance, the screams of the deposed, the anguish and the death.... The nation would roll down and everything would start from the scratch.

To some people Kadare may seem an illstarred fortune-teller, to others an intellectual overwhelmed by fear from within and outside Albania, and to others a supplicant who knows well the hell the communists created. No matter how much he supplicates and requests peace, he is not heard. The fact remains that most of his fears and predictions have not proven to be true.

His main worry is to explain the past and persuade the people to calm down. This dilemma bring forth unanswered questions and appeals for "forgiveness."

A portion of a 1967 poem, entitled 'Epilogue' was addressed to the 'future generations' by the author. The translated lines give some credit to him.

*You'd come in more peaceful times
Many of our words would seem to you meaningless
Because life would have rejected many of them
As it perhaps might have extinguished tigers.
Entering into the strong and majestic ruins of our
poems
With your cool logic
Maybe you will try to judge us.
The ruins would be silent. But they will ricochet
The echo of your voice...*

However he does not go far enough. Instead he makes a generalized, misguided, ambiguous appeal to Europe for:

"The Albanian people, chased by Europe for so many years, is knocking again at her gates as the spendthrift son. He holds in his hands new signs and new flags. He will verify that it is a nation that does not forget, but pardons. He takes upon himself to spread the guilt." (p. 141)

This reviewer must ask, was the Albanian nation really chased by or from Europe? Was it not Enver Hoxha and the Communist Party of Albania that isolated the Albanian people not only from Europe, but also from the world? Is it not true that the author of this book earlier wrote how Enver Hoxha declared: "The Albanian people shall eat grass, but shall not bend to anyone?" Is the writer blaming Europe for the attempted suicide of Albania by Hoxha and his followers?

It is a shame that Kadare cannot rid his writings clichés and slogans. However for some readers the sayings may be poetical and nostalgic.

Kadare's introductory promise to analyze and autopsy Albanian communism has been accomplished. He has drawn from his life experience with the highest communist leaders of the country

including Enver Hoxha and his successor Ramiz Alia.

Although Kadare offers deep insights, he often breaks off from his theme to take up in another theme and later return to his initial theme. This may come from eagerness to present and analyze more information.

The title of this revised section is 'Hope'. In it Kadare sincerely offered a number of facts. The reader can HOPE for nothing else, save that Kadare would pronounce the wonderful soul saving word: "MEA CULPA!"

Zef V. NEKAJ

NOTE: "A STRANGE SILENCE"

While the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, throughout its career, has been limited to publishing materials on Albania and the Albanian people, we wish to make an exception with regards to the recent book by our editorial board member Stephen Schwartz.

Mr. Schwartz, a journalist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and a prolific author, has just published *A Strange Silence: The Emergence of Democracy in Nicaragua*. This book is a study of the struggle against Sandinista rule by the Nicaraguan people and the failure to understand it on the part of the U.S. political and media elite.

In this book Mr. Schwartz deals with many of the same themes that have characterized his writings on Albanian questions and the Balkans in general. These include: the positive role of the church as a social institution, the cultural struggle against the "decadent modernism" represented by the left, and criticism of political corruption among today's intellectuals.

It is a book that should be warmly welcomed by our readers. It may be ordered from the publisher, ICS Press (Institute of Contemporary Studies), 2415 Creamy St., San Francisco, CA 94108 or by calling 1-800-325-0263.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

DEBUT OF A NEW ALBANIAN JOURNAL

Albanian scholars and intellectuals living in the U.S. have created a new periodical of Albanian studies. Two issues of *ALBANICA: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ALBANOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND CRITICISM* have appeared, dated winter 1990 and spring 1991.

The magazine's editor, Dr. Arshi Pipa, has also been the main contributor, but the enterprise has recently gained new editors and writers. Associated editor Odile Daniel and managing editor Faye Powe are now working with an editorial board consisting of Peter Bartl, Stephen Fischer-Galati, Gerhard Grimm, and Eric P. Hamp.

The winter 1990 issue clearly presented the intentions and political position of the editors. They hope their efforts will help Albania to "shake off her Stalinist legacy and reenter the family of European nations, after forty-five years of estrangement and isolation."

The magazine also aims to preserve and promote the Albanian language. A "Language and Literature" section includes linguistic studies, poetry and prose, reflecting the beauty and vitality of the Albanian language. The editors make it clear that "the function of this section is to correct the deplorable situation of the Albanian language after its Stalin-inspired reform."

Each issue has focussed on a single theme. The editors support Kosovar independence and have opposed Serbian aggression, but Pipa has also included an in-depth analysis of "Kosovar Stalinism" that examined the origins of the ideological developments in the region. Elsewhere, Pipa examined the problem from the Serbian perspective.

In addition, the article of the late Anton Logoreci, "Europe's Last Domino," traced some of the work

done by Westerners in the struggle against human rights abuses by Albania's Communist government. The 1990 issue called for assistance to Albania in its desire to enter the community of civilized nations.

The goal of the editorial board is "to encompass Albanologists of different nationalities." The editors note that while the main language of the journal will be English, other internationally-recognized languages will not be excluded. Several non-English essays were included in the first issue. Odile Daniel, who has become prominent in Europe for the acuity of her analyses of Albanian reality, offered "Pour une Albanie démocratique et européenne" (For a Democratic and European Albania), while the late Martin Camaj wrote on "Pjetër Bogdani, Mjeshtër i Gjuhës e i Stilit" (Pjetër Bogdani, Master of Language and Style).

The spring 1991 issue was dedicated to Martin Camaj. Camaj's sudden death in spring 1992 could not be anticipated, but several articles paid homage to him, along with selections from recent interviews, in a way that was comforting in that it gave Camaj the respect and recognition he deserved while he still lived.

Both issues of the journal have dealt at length with the novelist and poet Ismail Kadare. In 1990, Pipa answered Kadare's attack on him, and thoroughly exposed Kadare's narrow-mindedness. In the spring 1991 issue, Pipa offered a critique of Kadare's review of Neshat Tozaj's *THE KNIVES*, a novel dealing with the activities of the secret police under Hoxhaite communism.

Pipa argued that Kadare's thinking was infected by Hoxhaism from his earliest days, and continues to be so infected. He cited a 1982 statement by Kadare that "The memory of Comrade Enver (Hoxha) contribute a new, very important factor to the further development of our literature." Pipa demonstrated that Kadare's review of *THE KNIVES* followed Hoxha's political philosophy. Pipa used Kadare's own words over the past two decades to prove Kadare's enthusiastic flattery of Hoxha.

Ardian Klosi harshly reviewed Kadare's post-"defection" memoir, *FROM ONE DECEMBER TO THE NEXT*, effectively questioning Kadare's posturing as a maverick. He noted that "The number one dissident in Albania could not imagine himself a reformer within a broader movement from below. He wanted to be the rebellious leader from above, not sharing his leadership with anybody." Thus Klosi argued that even if Kadare supported real change, his personal arrogance would not have permitted its fulfillment.

In Kadare's letter to Alia he wrote, "I decided to leave the country when I became convinced that my efforts as an intellectual to soften the regime proved fruitless." Klosi asks, "First, can one single intellectual 'soften the regime?'" Klosi noted that the regime had tamed not one, or some, but many intellectuals including Kadare. Klosi also asked when Kadare began his efforts to soften the regime, and why he waited so long.

Klosi reviewed Kadare's career and found statements for which Kadare refuses to disassociate himself, but which nonetheless condemn him. For example:

*Through the communist light on the concrete of the
dike*

flows the giant and eternal beard of Marx

*It brings down the frightful barricades
of property, interest and egotism*

And there will be light.

It is not the Bible speaking,

it is the Party. Its roaring voice

resounds through people's hearts like loudspeakers...

We the poets of socialist realism

will come, too,

with notebooks of verse in our pockets

*and turn to the place where molten steel pours
down.*

Klosi states: "The above statements show that the writer exalted communism not because he was

forced to, but only proceeding from his own conviction, although (Kadare claims that) "since 1962 (he) knew well about Stalin's crimes, the Russians' disillusionment with socialism, their worries and despair." If he knew of Stalin's crimes, it was inhuman for him to create a Stalinist vision of Albania in his poetry."

ALBANICA, this new journal, should inspire Albanians who are sick of propagandistic falsehoods. It provides an antidote to the venal refusal of the self-satisfied intellectuals who failed to denounce the injustices of the Communist regime. The journal is insightful and solidly anti-Communist. It is an important contribution to the reexamination of Albania's history, in the light of truth, cleansed of Stalinism.

Koha e Jonë: Three Decades of Publication

After World War II a number of newspapers and magazines treating Albania and Albanian culture were published in the diaspora. Not many were long lived. Among those that did survive were two of the most celebrated Albanian reviews, *Shejzat* (Pleiades) and *Koha e Jonë* (Our Time). Upon the death of Professor Ernest Koliqi in 1975 *Shejzat* ceased publication. *Koha e Jonë* then became the leading journal in the Albanian diaspora. It covered all aspects of Albanian culture and life, from politics to religion. Although dedicated to report Albanian affairs in the Albanian language, *Koha e Jonë*, published in Paris, became an international review, with articles in French, Italian and English as well as Albanian. It chronicled the happenings of the world-wide Albanian community.

Last year *Koha e Jonë* celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. This publication, which has contributed so much to Albanian culture, owes its existence to the generosity of the Albanian patriot and philanthropist Isa Elez Ndreu. Mr. Ndreu, the founder and publisher of *Koha e Jonë*, has devoted a sizable portion of his personal wealth to underwrite the review so that it can be sent gratis to

many individuals and associations. Under the editorship of Lec Shlaku, a veteran Albanian journalist in exile, a roster of the best writers from the Albanian diaspora have contributed to the success of the publication. Noted writers have published in *Koha e Jonë* including Ernest Koliqi; Zef Valentini, S.J.; Karl Gurakuqi; Krist Maloki; Martin Camaj; Nermin Vlora-Falaschi; Petro Vuçani; Sami Repishti Tahir Kolgjini; Adem Hodo; and Peter Prifti. *Koha e Jonë* has always published interesting and valuable studies on Albanian history and culture specifically folklore, biography, literature, language, and the Albanian heritage in Kosovë, Greece and Italy. No less important is the fact that *Koha e Jonë* has distinguished itself as a leader in promoting the cause of human rights in Albania and Kosovë. Many appeals to Albanian and world leaders have appeared in pages of *Koha e Jonë*. Numerous articles have served to educate the readership about the realities of daily affairs in Albania and Kosovë.

During the past few articles have treated the Franciscan poet - patriot Gjergj Fishta (Vol. XXX, nos. 7, 8, 9, 1991) and the awarding of an honorary degree to Fr. Simon Jubani by the University of San Francisco (Vol. XXX, nos. 4, 5, 6, 1991). There was a touching interview with the Catholic priests Mikel Koliqi (brother of Ernest Koliqi), who spent 43 years in Albanian prison camps (Vol. XXX, nos. 4, 5, 6, 1991). The complete transcript of Dr. Sami Repishti's testimony regarding human rights violations in Kosovë given before the United States Congressional Caucus on Human Rights appeared in Vol. XXIX, nos. 4, 5, 6, 1990.

A recent article by Petro Vuçani on Italo-Albanian cultural influences was quite good. It summarized the most influential Albanian authors from the nineteenth century and presenting a rather inclusive and impressive list of Italo-Albanian authors plus their contributions to Albanian culture. Vuçani made special reference to the authors work for *Shejzat* (Vol. XXVIII, nos. 10, 11, 12, 1989). In recent years Nermin Vlora-Falaschi's cultural program broadcast on Vatican Radio have been trans-

scribed in *Koha e Jonë*. Historical studies and literary criticism by Hqmet Ndreu have been a regular feature. The cover of each issue of *Koha e Jonë* carries a photograph of historical significance. All in all *Koha e Jonë*, in its thirty years of publication has shown itself to be a well rounded review which has served the Albanian community well. We salute the publisher and the editor of *Koha e Jonë* and all their collaborators wishing them continued success in works for the good of Albanian people at home and abroad.

ZJARRI - Twentieth Anniversary Special Edition

The distinguished Arbëresh journal, *Zjarr* (Fire), *A Review of Albanian Culture* celebrated its twentieth anniversary of scholarly publication in 1989. To mark the event a special issue was produced. The 300 page anthology is packed with articles and studies on many aspects of Arbëresh culture—literature, religion, linguistics, and social sciences. The articles serve to show forth the enormous cultural resources which the Arbëresh possess. Of special interest are the articles which demonstrates the inter-connectedness between the Arbëresh and their ethnic counterparts in Albania and Kosovë.

The opening article is actually an appeal to the Socialist Republic of Serbia and to the public opinion of Yugoslavia by the scientific and cultural leaders in Kosovë. These intellectuals ask that the civil rights of the residents in Kosovë be guaranteed by the conservation of the Autonomous Region in Kosovë. This manifesto was signed by over 200 Kosovë intellectuals.

Giuseppe De Bartolo's study of the Albanian minority in Calabria is an attempt to provide demographic information in support of the official recognition of the Arbëresh community by the Italian state. De Bartolo lists the Albanian towns (comuni) and their populations in 1661, 1971 and 1981. He traces the influence of Arbëresh immigration to America since the 1800's. Altogether population figures demonstrate that in 1981, there were 5,167 people of Albanian descent in Calabria. There is an interesting study by Paul Stahl on religious cult in the Italo-Albanian community of

San Demetrio Corone, Calabria. Stahl emphasizes the activities surrounding birth and baptism, marriage and funerals. Stahl also compares the Arbëresh rituals of San Demetrio Corone with those found in Slavic and Greek orthodox rituals.

The editors printed "A primary source relating to Albanian immigration to Tuscia, Italy." This report was found in the chancery office of the Diocese of Acquapendente. It was probably authored by Bishop Michelangelo Calmet of Acquapendente. He refused to take the "oath of the civil constitution" imposed by Napoleon Bonaparte.

Innocenzo Mazzioti wrote on the unusual system of land distribution which prevailed in the regions of San Demetrio, Macchia, and San Cosmo from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The "enfiteutic" system allowed the peasants who were granted the use of local abbey land from the free reign in the development of their portion. Source documents from 1759 describe the various enfiteutic divisions of land and their tenants.

Agnija V. Desnickaja, a Russian scholar in Albanian studies authored an article in Arbëresh about Jeronim de Rada's (1814-1903) poem "Këngët e Milosaos." Kosovar scholar Shëfqet Pllana also wrote in Arbëresh about the extremely important contribution of de Rada to Albanian and Arbëresh folklore. The Italian article by Nasho Jorgaqi (Tiranë) deals with the image of Albania presented by Arbëresh poets. He notes the importance of this image and how it has undergone a transformation since Arbëresh poets have been able to visit Albania. It must be noted that all these poets have known Albania under Stalinist regime of Enver Hoxha, however. The next to last literature article summarized the life of the Arbëresh teacher and poet Scanderbeg Bellusci (1851-1931). Bellusci's heretofore unpublished poem, "Kerke Kajzerit" (Satire on the Kaiser) is published. The literature section concluded with an Arbëresh folk tale from 1989 which was recounted by Maria Pane.

Over half of the special issue is dedicated to 8 linguistic articles. Three articles are written in Arbëresh, four in Italian, and one in English. Martin Camaj provides a continuation of an earlier Zjarrt article on Arbëresh, Italian and English and

they are spoken among the Arbëresh immigrants and their descendants in America. Camaj then relates a short folk tale in Arbëresh, Albanian, Italian and English. Eric Hamp presents a short English essay about his research on various Arbëresh grammatical forms in Falconara Albanese. The influence of Arbëresh on the romance dialects of Southern Italy is the theme of an article by Francesco Altimari.

Various aspects of Arbëresh linguistic research and culture, are discussed by Gjovalin Shkurtaj who provides the reader with many important references to source materials in recent books and articles. Androkli Kostallari (who recently passed away) narrated the sixteenth century story of the *Albanian Catechism* (Embsuame e krështerë) written by Lukë Matranga. A comparison between the vocabulary usage of Matranga and his contemporary Gjon Buzuku, is found in Emil Jafe's article.

A major study on Arbëresh morphological processes by Leonardo Savoia concludes the section on linguistics. Savoia's research was influenced by the work of the American scholar Noam Chomsky. Savoia collected his data from Arbëresh speakers in several Italo-Albanian villages. He shows the variations in the Arbëresh spoken in each village.

The final piece in this 30th anniversary edition is Mauro Giancaspro's appreciation of Hevzi Nuhî. The Albanian wood sculptor left his native Kosovë to work in Italy in 1982.

Raymond FROST



IN MEMORIAM

Martin Camaj: Educator, Poet and Writer (1925-1992)

Martin Camaj died on March 12, 1992 following a long illness. He leaves behind his devoted wife Erica in Germany and two brothers in Albania.

Funeral services were held on March 19 in Bad Tölz. A Mass of Resurrection was offered in the Stadtpfarrkirche Church by Rev. Prenk Ndivashaj, Camaj's classmate at the Jesuit Seminary in Shkodër. The priest travelled from Detroit, Michigan (USA) for the funeral. Following the service Professor Arshi Pipa, delivered the eulogy before some 200 colleagues from the University of Munich and many friends. Graveside eulogies were delivered by Gene Korça (USA); Ardian Klosi (Albania), Rexhep Ismaili (Kosovë), and Gerhard Grimm (Germany). Camaj's remains were interred at the Waldfriedhof Cemetery in Lenggries. Numerous flower arrangements and messages were received from friends, and admirers of the late writer.



Martin Camaj a few months before his death

Die Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München betrauert den Tod ihres Mitglieds

Herrn Universitätsprofessor
Dr. phil. Martin Camaj

Professor für Albanologie i. R.

Der Gelehrte gehörte seit 1965 unserem Lehrkörper an.

München, 16. März 1992

Rektoratskollegium und Senat
der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Prof. Dr. Wulf Steinmann

Das Requiem findet am 19. März 1992 um 10.00 Uhr in der
Stadtpfarrkirche Maria Himmelfahrt in Lenggries statt, anschließend
Beerdigung auf dem Waldfriedhof Lenggries.

Camaj's Obituary notice from the German newspapers

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

The untimely death of Professor Camaj, has saddened not only his family, friends and many readers. Students in the Language Department of the University of Munich where Camaj taught for some 30 years were especially hurt by their teacher's death. Many newspapers and journals reported Camaj's death. Several lengthy articles discussed the great value of Camaj's literary works. Leading German dailies such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, as well as Italian, Albanian and Kosovar publications devoted entire pages to the literary creations of Camaj. Excerpts from his poetry volumes were printed.

The passing of Camaj was remembered elsewhere with memorials and receptions. His brothers in Shkodër held a traditional memorial reception. In San Francisco Camaj was commemorated with a Mass at St. Ignatius Church of the University of San Francisco. On the evening of April 2 a poetry reading in Camaj's honor took place at the North Beach Poets and Writers Club in San Francisco. Among the poems read at the artists' gathering were "The Cathedral of San Francisco" and "A Genuine Verse". Both pieces originated from Camaj's frequent visits to The City. Poet Stephen Schwartz, who had fallen in love with Camaj's poetry, read and commented on Camaj's literary works. The North Beach club was packed. A rose colored candle flickered at the front of the room to symbolize Camaj's gentle spirit and the undying memory he left us in his works.

Camaj's literary works, particularly his poetry and linguistic writings, were far better known to readers in the outside world than they were to those within the confines of Albania and Kosovë. The official Albanian (communist) policy which sanctioned only works expressing "socialist realism" caused Camaj works to be rejected and ultimately banned. Camaj was privileged to witness the demise of dictatorship and the rebirth of democracy in Albania. Now his works will find a fertile soil in his beloved homeland. Some of his books are already being reprinted in Kosovë and in Albania. We extend our deepest sympathy and

condolences to his wife Erica, to his brothers and his relatives in Albania and to his many friends all over the world. We are consoled that the gentle spirit and literary legacy which he left behind will live forever. May he rest in peace.

Rev. Gjergji Schiroi (1907-1992)

The beloved Arbëresh priest and scholar Gjergji Schiroi died peacefully in the Lord January 16, 1992. He was affectionately called "Papas Gjergji i Schirojve" referring to the celebrated Schiroi family who gave the Church and Albania many devout priests and bishops, educators, poets and writers.

Schiroi entered the Arbëresh Seminary in Palermo in his teens, excelling in studies and especially in spiritual growth. He was sent to Rome to continue his higher education at the Gregorian University. Following his ordination in Rome, he served in Arbëresh parishes in southern Italy. During WWII he went to Malta and helped rebuild the Byzantine (Arbëresh) church which was badly damaged by war.

In 1958 Schiroi returned to Piana degli Albanesi (Palermo) and was appointed pastor of St. Mitër Arbëresh parish.

Here he engaged in a series of pastoral projects. One most important contribution to his people was the translation of biblical, liturgical and devotional materials from the Italian, Greek, Latin to Arbëresh. He immersed himself in this endeavor which substantially helped the Arbëresh people learn more about



Papas Gjergji Schiroi

God and His love for humanity. He authored and translated some 20 volumes.

Father Schiroi devoted his entire life to Christ and the service of his Church. His love for the Albanian people moved him to engage in works of charity. In 1963 he co-founded (along with Bishop Joseph Perniciaro, Fr. Sofron Prençe and Mr. Ndue P. Gjomarkaj, an Albanian exile) **Relief Committee** to assist materially and spiritually many Albanian refugees in the camps, several of whom had immigration difficulties. Often he paid personal visits to the camps to alleviate the pain and endless monotony afflicting so many Albanian refugees. He was profoundly revered by the refugees for his golden heart and compassion for them.

Our Center was privileged to have known and collaborated with Father Schiroi in his projects to aid the refugees and to spread the knowledge about the plight of the persecuted Albanian people under communist oppression. He will be sorely missed not only by his Arbëresh flock in Piana degli Albanesi but by many of his friends and admirers in the U.S. and elsewhere. May he rest in peace.

**Rev. Peter Nicholas Kurguz O.P.
(1929-1992)**

Rev. Peter Nicholas Kurguz, a Dominican priest who was devoted to the cause of religious freedom in Albania passed away in Ontario, California in January, 1992. Fr. Kurguz was born on June 29, 1929 in Columbus, Ohio. He became a member of the Dominican order of the Catholic Church in 1949 and was ordained a priest in November, 1966 at New Orleans, Louisiana. Fr. Kurguz earned his Bachelor's Degree at Providence College and his Master's and PhD degrees from Stanford University's Hoover Institution. Shortly after his ordination he founded a Newman Center for Catholic students in Marin County, California.

The work for which Fr. Kurguz will be best remembered was his activity in Mexico City where

he devoted his life to the service of the gospel in the Dominican Province of St. James. Fr. Kurguz was in charge of the philosophical and theological training of the Dominican seminarians. He was responsible for providing their cultural, spiritual and material needs. He was also instrumental in bringing about the re-opening of the Pontifical University of Mexico. Fr. Kurguz wrote many articles to promote religious vocations and Christian spirituality. In 1976 he published a prophetic pamphlet entitled "Is Communism Intrinsically Evil." It gave many convincing arguments from reason and experience to show why people should firmly reject communism. Fr. Kurguz was a tremendously beloved and loving man of God. He had a profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary following the example of St. Dominic, the twelfth century founder of his order. He will be sincerely missed by the members of his Dominican Order and by the many people, young and old throughout the United States and Mexico, whose lives he touched.

**Hon. Robert F. Wagner
(1911-1991)**

Former New York City Mayor, Robert F. Wagner died on February 12, 1991 after a brief illness. He served for three consecutive terms as Mayor of the world-metropolis. His father was a distinguished United States Senator from New York. Wagner followed in his father's footsteps by becoming one of New York City's most celebrated mayors.

Wagner was sensitive to the needs and aspirations of all the ethnic groups represented in the New York metropolitan area. He was especially sympathetic to the Albanian cause. He honored the Albanian nation and state by proclaiming November 28, 1962 as Albanian Independence Day to celebrate the 50th anniversary of independence. This act opened the doors for subsequent mayors to continue to honor the Albanian community in New York and indeed in the world.

Albanians in New York and throughout the United States are forever grateful to Robert F. Wagner for his magnanimity and interest in their well being. He will always be remembered with affection.

Rev. Hysni Hoxha (1916-1991)

Hysni Hoxha died on January 13, 1991 in Boston following a brief illness. Hoxha was born into an intellectual family in Gjakovë, Kosovë. He received his primary education in his hometown. As a young man he felt the call to serve his people as a Muslim clergyman and enrolled himself in the religious school in Durrës, Albania. Later he continued his religious education in Tirana.

In 1936 Hoxha graduated with high honors from the *Instituti Kombëtar* (National Institute) and was sent for theology studies to the University of Al-Ahzar in Cairo, Egypt. He graduated with degrees in theology and pedagogy in 1943. Because Albania was occupied by Italian forces, Hoxha remained in Egypt and earned his living as an administrative secretary for a commercial firm. In 1956 he moved to Saudi Arabia where he taught in various schools at Mecca and Jedda for some 18 years. Hoxha and his family moved to the United States in 1974. They located first in New York, and then moved to Detroit. For two years Hoxha was guest of the Venerable Baba Rexhepi at the Bektashi Monastery. There he organized an Albanian language school for children.

When Hoxha returned to New York in 1976, he was appointed Imam of the Waterbury, Connecticut mosque. Besides his religious duties he also taught Albanian language, history and culture courses. Hoxha was endowed with vast cultural gifts not only in the religious sphere but also in the scientific realm. He was fluent in five languages and well-versed in the Qu'ran, the Christian Bible and the sacred books of other religions. Hoxha later served in Chicago where he gathered

and galvanized the Albanian community in its efforts to help the cause of oppressed Albanians in Yugoslavia. He was the author of numerous articles and books on religion as well as Albanian national affairs. He was a truly popular and devoted spiritual leader and patriot. Hoxha was buried with honors in Boston on January 17, 1991. Our sincere condolences go out to all his family and friends in the United States and Kosovë.

Zef Margjinaj (1921-1992)

On February 10, 1992, Zef Margjinaj, the Secretary of the organization *Albanians for Human Rights*, passed away as a result of a tragic automobile accident near Gorizia in northern Italy. Margjinaj was born at Bozhiq-Selita, Mirditë in northern Albania on March 19, 1921. Following the annexation of Albania by Italy in 1939, Margjinaj joined the local public order units and remained on duty until September 8, 1943. He then became a member of the Army for the Defense of the Albanian Nation. He remained in the Army until the imposi-



Zef Margjinaj

tion of the communist regime in Albania in November 1944. At this point he went into the mountains and joined the anti-communist organizations which battled the communist forces. He continued in the struggle to liberate Albania by serving as Secretary of the General Council of the Anti-Communist Liberation Committee. In 1952 he fled to Greece and then moved on to Malta where he was a part of a proposed joint British-American effort to destabilize the communist government in Albania. This mission was betrayed by Kim Philby a high placed British official and abandoned in 1955 after the Suez Canal crisis.

In July 1955 Margjinaj married Velia Onesti, an Italian citizen working in London. After living in various European cities they established their home in Cividale dei Friuli in Udine, Italy. Margjinaj despite many difficulties eventually became an Italian citizen. He described his odyssey in his autobiography *Marcia di un Albanese Verso la Libertà* (An Albanian's Journey Toward Liberty) in 1983. In collaboration with Gianpaolo Sabbatini, he authored a history of Albania entitled *Piccolo Compendio della Grande Storia dell'Albania* (A Short Compendium of the Great History of Albania).

Margjinaj's life outside Albania was marked by the struggle to survive in the free world while preserving his national and political identity. He was a member of the *Alleanza Cattolica* (Catholic Alliance) and the Italian section of the International Conference on Resistance in the Occupied Countries. He spoke at many conferences in Italian cities during which he gave dramatic testimony documenting the condition of the Albanian people. In his writings and speeches Margjinaj expressed his beliefs without rancor toward anyone. He defended the freedom of ordinary and simple people such, as himself in the face of totalitarian power. In 1991 Margjinaj was able to visit his homeland. There he began a project to relieve the great material need of Albania. It was while he was driving to Trieste to load food and medicine on trucks headed for Albania that he was involved in a fatal automobile accident. Margjinaj's life was a testi-

mony to Albania's struggle for faith and freedom. He will be sorely missed by all who hold these ideals dear.

Dr. Çesk Ashta (1919-1991)

Dr. Çesk Ashta died on September 30, 1991 in Bologna, Italy. Following a "successful operation" he took ill and declined rapidly. All his friends and family are saddened by his unexpected death.

Ashta was born in Shkodër in 1919. There he received his primary and secondary education. His parents sent him to Italy for his higher education where he enrolled at the University of Bologna. World War II interrupted his studies as it did for many other Albanian students. After the war Ashta was fortunate to receive a scholarship to study mathematics at the University of Palermo. He excelled in his field and received his doctoral degree.

Upon the completion of his studies he emigrated to the United States settling in New York City. Dr. Ashta dedicated himself to his adopted country to the preservation of Albanian culture. He was one of the founding members of the American Albanian Catholic League. For many years, he edited the quarterly journal *Albanian Catholic Life*. During his tenure as editor, the late Monsignor Joseph J. Oroshis' quarterly constantly improved. Each issue was eagerly awaited by Albanian readers, whether Catholic or not, because of its cultural and patriotic content.

Ashta was a dedicated patriot and a fervent Catholic layman. His works show him to have been noble and wise. He promoted the best of Albanian tradition. Ashta was always generous in helping the cause of Albanian freedom. He witnessed to the truths of the Gospel to those who were tempted to despair. Ashta especially sought to give hope to Albanian youth who sometimes said "God has forgotten Albania."

Ten years ago upon his retirement Ashta returned to Italy. He settled in Bologna among his old friends from the university. Ashta was a very generous supporter of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*. He proudly showed the *Bulletin* to friends and priests in his parish in Bologna. He often asked (and paid for) Albanian Catholic literature in order to promote the cause of religious freedom in Albania. His encouraging words to our Center were most beneficial and uplifting.

Dr. Cesk Ashta will be sorely missed by his family in Shkodër and by his many friends across the globe. We are consoled by the fact that Dr. Ashta lived to see the fall of communism and to savor the victory of the human spirit in Albania.

Zef Pashko Deda (1935-1991)

Zef Pashko Deda died on July 12, 1991 in New York City following a prolonged illness. He was born in the village of Kastrati in 1935. During the 1950's Deda was forced to leave his homeland. After several years in Yugoslav and Italian refugee camps he emigrated to New York. There he worked in various jobs and soon became an activists in the Albanian community. Deda wholeheartedly joined the American Albanian Catholic League. He often wrote interesting and valuable articles for the review *Catholic Albanian Life*. For many years Deda



Zef Pashko Deda

edited the periodical *Atdheu* (Fatherland) of the monarchist-nationalist party-*Legality*. His articles often appeared in other Albanian diaspora publications.

Deda stoically endured his long illness with a firm belief and hope in eternal life. He was consoled and strengthened by his Christian faith although from time to time his heart was saddened when he thought that he would die far from his homeland. When God finally heard the prayers, tears and sufferings of Albanians, Deda was overjoyed because freedom to worship and live in freedom had returned to Albania. Deda will always be remembered by the New York Albanian community for his generous heart and active spirit. He will be truly missed by all, but especially by his family and many friends in Albania.

Hon. Mikel Marku (1928-1991)

Albanians in Yugoslavia were saddened by the murder of Mikel Marku by the Serbian police. Marku was a well respected lawyer and district judge who bravely defended Albanian dissidents and all who turned to him for legal help. On November 6, 1991 Marku and his family were stopped by police in Kosovë while they were on their way to a funeral service. Without any provocation dozens of police launched an assault upon the group. They were taken to jail where the severe beatings continued. Marku was beaten to unconsciousness and lapsed into a coma. Five days later, on November 11, he passed away. Outraged citizens of Kosovë and Albanians in United States have protested this horrifying abuse of state power. Our sincere condolences go out to Marku's family and to all Albanians in Kosovë who have suffered such a tragic loss.



INSTITUTI KATOLIK SHQIPTAR - DANIJEL DAJANI, S.J.

Me lirin e fitueme fetare në Shqipëri na jemi të mendimit se edhe misjoni i Qendrës sonë katolike t'informacionit u plotsue me sukses. Për ket arsye drejtorija e Qendrës muer vendim me pushue veprimin e saj me 1 Maj 1992. Gjatë tanë ktyne vjetve t'apostullimit, antarët e Qendrës e kanë ndie veten të lumtur e të privilegjuem qi kanë mujtë me i sherbye çashtjes së liris fetare të shqiptarve të përsjektuem.

Gjatë mbledhjes përfundimtare mbajtë në mars të këtij vjeti, një grup i antarve dhe bashkëpuntorve të Qendrës diskutoi për nevojën e formimit të një instituti të ri qi do të ndihmonte rimbëkamjen e Kishës Katolike në Shqipëri. Propozimi u pranue dhe u vendos qi instituti të mbajë emnin e At Danijel Dajani-t, S.J. Kur komunistat mbyllën shkollat fetare me 1946, At Dajani ishte Rektor i Seminarit Papnuer Shqiptar e Drejtor i Kolegjes Saverjane në Shkodër. Ai u pushkatue me 4 Mars, 1946.

Me qellim të ndjekjes së shembullit të këtij shëjti e martiri, Instituti Katolik Shqiptar "Danijel Dajani, S.J." do të jetë një shoqatë fetare dhe edukative. Si e tillë nuk mund të merret me veprim humanitar. Tjera organizata shqiptare e të hueja janë formue e po veprojnë në ket drejtim.

Instituti i ri do të përhapë në botë, me anë të botimeve e konferencave, trashigimin e pasun fetar e kulturier të shqiptarve. Do të koordinojë po ashtu vizitat me qellim studimi të seminaristave e priftënvë të ri shqiptarë në Shtetet e Bashkueme t'Amerikës. *Buletini Katolik Shqiptar*, qi po botohet per 13 vjet rresht, do të bëhet organ zyrtar i Institutit. At Paul Bernadicou, S.J., Profesor i Theologjis n'Universitetin e San Francisko's, u zgjodh njizani drejtor i institutit.

Me ket rasë s'mundemi me lanë pa u shprehë evarin tonë të thellë Rektorit At Thomas F. McCormick, S.J. si dhe Bashkësis së Jezuitve t'Universitetit të San Francisko's per misionin e tyre



At Paul Bernadicou, S.J.

me përfshij institutin tonë në selin e tyre - Xavier Hall.

Po ashtu shfrytzojmë rasën me falnderue sinqerisht të gjithë bamirsat, antarët, kontribuesat e lexuesat e *Buletini-t*, të cilët per më se 25 vjet na kanë ndihmue e përkrahur në mënyrat të ndryshme n'apostullimin e Qendrës.

Ju faleminderi Zoti gjithmonë ju bekoftë!

At Leo Gabriel Neill, OFM, Conv.,

Drejtor Nderi

At Ark (Giacomo) Gardin, S.J.

Drejtor Nderi

Gjon Sinishta, Editor

Buletini Katolik Shqiptar

ÁT DANIJEL DAJANI, S.J. - MISJONAR I PAQËS E DASHUNIS

(Shenim i editorit: Ky shkrim i të ndiemit Dom Lazër Sheldija në kujtim të jezuitit Danijel Dajani, u botue, me disa shtesa, për të parën herë i përkthyer anglisht, në librin *The Fulfilled Promise - A documentary account of religious persecution in Albania* (Premtimi i plotsuem - Nji dokumentar i salvimit fetar në Shqipëri) më 1976. Dom Lazri përdorte n'at kohë në shkrimet e veta pseudonimin Mark Kolaj për arsye të justifikueshme. I shkreti Dom Lazër u torturue shpërjetisht në banesën e tij në Bronx, New York prej refugjatve shqiptarë, të cilët ai u mundonte me i ndihmue e sistemue me punë, banesë e tjera. Tre refugjatët që e mbytën Dom Lazrin në Shtatorin e vjetit 1988 kishin ardhë rishtas n'Amerikë e, si prodhim i sistemit të pa fé e imoral t'Enver Hoxhës, nuk ngumuen me çue dorë kundër bëmirsit të tyre, për të zbatue udhzimet e SIGURIMI-t.

Dom Lazër Sheldija vdiq tue krye detyrën e tij si meshtar e misjonar e kështu muer ne dorë kunoren e martirizimit. Ai la mbas nji bibliotekë të pasun e nji thesër shkrimesh të veta në prozë e poezi, të cilat s'ë shpejti do te bâhen pronë e popullit shqiptar, që ai deshti aq shum. Por përmbi të gjitha, Dom Lazër Sheldija la me kujtimin e tij shembullin e atdhetarit e të puntorit të palodhun për Fé e Atdhé).

Për popullin e vogël shqiptar, numri i atyne që ranë flit gjatë luftës së dytë botnore e deri sot, qe shumë i madh. Të huejt nuk na lanë kurr me çue kry, por mjerisht edhe vllavrasja e shqimi e paksoi gjakun shqiptar.

Krenët e Shqipërisë, njerzit e dijtun, ipeshkvij, meshtarë katolikë e orthodoxë, hoxhallarë e baballarë, fretën e jezuit, popull i krishtënë e

musulman, në qytete e katunde, të pasun e të vorfën, murgesha e grá shpije, pleq e të rij, të gjithë vultën mjerime e mundime të papershkrueshme ndër burgje e kampe të shfárosjes. Shum humbën jetën ndër torturat më barbare që i ka njoftë koha. Shum tjerë u shnderuen e vranë ndër zaje e prroska, pa i u dijtë as sot vendi i eshtnave të shëjta.

Me faj e pa faj, me gjyq e pa gjyq, me trathiti e padrejtsi, bazue vetem në forcën e n'egjës faratike t'ideologjis materjaliste, vultjti ose m'atë vazhdon të vult gjaku i shprishun, Shqipëria.

Nji nder filizat e bukur të Shqipërisë, bër i Shën Injacit të Lojoles, djal i mteheve të Shkodrës, dishmuer i atdheut, martir i fës, ai sa e sa tjerë, qe edhe At Danijel Dajani, epruer jezuitve në Shkodër. I pregatitun me studime të halta filozofike e teologjike, ndër qytetet e bukura t'Italis së Veriut, At Danijeli lthën në Shqipëri më 1935, i butë si kji me nji zemër të marte atnore, plot dije e shëjtni për t'u shërbye vllazënyet natdhën e dashtun. Egersia e konës e zhdun nga dheu, por emnin e dishmim e t'as koha nuk e shqim. Me të tjerë heroj e martirë u mteshtue At Danijel Dajani në



At Danijel Dajani, S.J.

lterin e Fës e t'Atdheut. U hodh ndër malet e Shqipërisë së dashtun për të mësue vllaznim e dashuri e paqë. Si të tjerë priftën, fretën e jezuit predikoi fë, shpresë e pajtim. Gjatë misjoneve ndër male e katunde, At Dajani predikoi e mësoi si me falë gjaqet e si me dashtë njëni tjetrin.

E njofta të pjekun, gaztuer e mësues, ndër ato kopshtije të Kolegjës Saverjane e të Seminarit Papnuer Shqiptar të Shkodrës. Si Kolegja, si Seminari ishin jo vetëm votra feje, por po ashtu atdhedashunije, edukimi e dije. Mjeshtër e edukues, i ămbël e i kuptueshem për nevojat e vështirësive të studentave, e gjeishem kurdoherë të qeshun. Të tjerëve bashkvllazën dinte me u ardhë me ămbëlsim. Kryente detyrën në qetsi e me zell, prandej gjithkush e donte e sidomos rinia. I përvujtë, me t'u dukë një shoq shkolle. Në dhomën e tij të vorfën më pritë gjithmonë me knaqsi e buzë qeshje. Drue se me pershkrue At Dajanin e vetit e mira të tijat po i zvogloj bukurit e një virtyti që nuk la shoq, e një martirit të pafrigë. Edhe pse mjerimet e luftës se dytë botnore ishin tue shkrepë mbi Shqipëri në çdo ănë, At Dajani qindron i qetë e i thelluem n'uratë. E kjo paqë e përsheptur u jep zemër të gjithëve: studentave, seminaristave e bashkvllazëve, të cilët n'At Dajanin shikojshin eprorin e ngushlluesin. Kishte një zemër të gjănë edhe për anmiq.

Më kujtohet qartë një rasë e shpirtgjănsis së tij, sigurisht mbështetë jo vetëm n'Unjill të Krishtit, por edhe në butsin e karakterit të tij. Bashksija e jezuitve me seminaristat e apostolikë ishte përmbi 100 veta e n'ato ditë nuk ishte lehtë me sigurue ushqimin për tanë at grumbull. Më mori m'e shoqnie për një vizitë në qytet: me lypë lmoshë. Familja shkodrane krishte qenë bămirse e jezuitve për një kohë të gjatë. Një gjeneratë e tanë e saj ishte edukue prej jezuitësh. Mirpo me 1945 edhe kjo familje, emni i së cilës nuk më kujtohet, ishte në hall e e persekutueme. Sidoqoftë, vizita duel me sukses e me lmoshën e dhănun At Dajani mund të siguronte ushqimin e bashksis së jezuitve për disa javë. Tue u kthye në Seminar vuna rë zgimin e tij sikur të një babë kur në mbrănje,



At Gjon Fausti, S.J., Nënprovincjal i Jezuitve në Shqipëri

mbas punës, i bjen darkën familjes. Gjatë rrugës hasim në një grumbull të rijshe e ushtarësh, që posa na hetuen u drejtuen kah na e filluen me bërthitë: "Fashista", "Trathtarë", "Reakjonarë." Ftyra e At Dajanit u mprehe me mue me pshtoi goja: "Mă keq se nën italianë ase gjermanë!" Ai tha: "Jo, jo s'ăsht ashtu." Pak i friguem e pak i zemruem, thash prap: "Mă mirë nen të huej se sa komunistat sllavë." At Dajani ecte ngadalë e me ănjitet si mos me ndie të shamet, më tha me at butsin e zănit: "Këta sadoq komunistat janë shqiptarë. Mă mirë nën ta se të huejt. I shpëtoni Lazer, kjo fortunë erdhi me armë e dhunë, por një ditë, jo të largët, do të fashitet e prap paqë e drejtsija do të zotnojë." Tue pa çudin në sytë mij, ai përsëri tha: "Ndoshta nuk mundesh tash si i rri e i zemruem, me kuptue çka thash, por një ditë do të shofish se Zoti ka me e bă mirë."

Një zgjatë e Provanija bashkoi shëjtent për t'i vù shpirt në themel të besit, të cilët me gjakun e jetës tynen bënë flim për fë e lirë. At Gjon Fausti, S.J., italian dhe At Danijel Dajani, ishin jo veç

vllazën t'urdhnit Jezuit, por edhe njëherë më tepër vllazën të martirizimit. Rreshti është i gjatë, jo veç gjatë historisë së përgjakun të katolicizmit shqiptar, por edhe i ditës ku ranë përdhë djelmosha e burra me fretën si Pater Gjon Shllaku e djaloshi xhakue Mark Çuni e tjerë. Lidhun dora dora, të ngrehun rrshânë e të shqelmuem dalin ndër gjyqe të kurdisuna të kësaj bote, me një guxim që veç Zoti jep.

Zani i At Dajanit në gjyq vazdoi të jetë i qartë, i qetë por edhe guximtar. Edhe pse një turmë e pafat britte: "Plumbin ballit! Plumbil ballit!" e këndojshin:

*Ky Pater Dantjel Dajani
Desht gjithkrah t'i vende zani.*

Kur At Dajani me shokë pohoishin në sallën e kinemas Rozafat, ku u zhvillonte procesi gjyqsuer, se besojnë në Zotin, publiku i "zgjedhun", i etshem për gjak e zhgatrim, rrahte shqelma, tue thirrë: "Plumbin ballit! Plumbin ballit!", si Judejt: "Kryqzoje!" "Kryqzoje!" E trupi gjykues nuk ndoq arsyen e drejtësin, por epshin e etjen e turmës e t'atynë që kishin grabitë fuqinë shtetnore, e dënoi At Dajanin me shokë për vdekje. Por nuk vdes martiri e heroj. Koha nuk do t'i shqimi e emnat e tyne do të mbeten përherë si pishtarë nderi, burmije e mirsije për breznitë e ardhshme. Shëmbulli i flijës s'At Danijel Dajanit e të shokve të tij, do t'i frymzojë breznitë e reja shqiptare për m'u ndëjtë besnik idealeve të shëjta të fës e burrnis e atdhedashunisë. Do t'i përforcojë në ndjetet e përpjekjet për të krijuar një Shqipëri të re e të lirë nga çdo fanatizëm ideologjik, fetar e politike, një Shqipëri të pastër si herojt kombtarë e martirët fetarë kanë dishrue.

Lazër SHELDIJA

SEMINARISTI MARK ÇUNI - NJË NDËR MARTIRËT E PARË TË FESË E TË LIRISË S'ATDHEUT

Diktatura komuniste në Shqipëri u sul në radhë të parë kundër klerit katolik si kleri më i përgatitur, më i kulturuar dhe kundërshtar i hapur kundër çdo lloj diktature dhe çdo lloj forme të ateizmit. Atdhetarizmin e tij kleri katolik e ka tregue edhe me këtë luftë të drejtë kundër atyne që donin t'i mohonin popullit shqiptar edhe të drejtën më fundamentale, atë të besimit në Zotin. Këndej asht pikërisht kleri katolik ai që, qysh në fillim të shek. XX vuni në dukje se bolshevizmi, stalinizmi asht një rrezik i madh për kombin, atdheun, për familjen shqiptare.

Një ndër martirët e parë të kësaj lufte të drejtë, një ndër viktimat e para të diktaturës komuniste asht edhe i riu 27 vjeçar, seminaristi Mark Çuni, i cili si gjatë torturave në burg ashtu dhe në gjyq dhe para ekzekutimit diti të qendrojë burrënisht dhe denjësisht. Ai kje ndër seminaristët e parë të Kolegjit Saverian që iu kundërvu diktaturës komuniste dhe mbrojti me gjakun e vet idealin fetar, kombëtar e demokratik.

Ai lindi në Rranza Bushat të Shkodrës, më 30 tetor 1919 në një familje të devotshme fshatare. I shkelqyeshëm në mësim që në fillorë, ai ndoqi edhe shkollën e mesme në Shkodër dhe, në moshën 18-vjeçare hyni në Kolegjin e pënuer të Jezuitëve në qytet. Pati vokacion fetar që në fëmijërinë e tij, po, si djalë i veten për të ndjekë këtë rrugë ai pati edhe kundërshtime nga të afermit ndërsa axha i tij P. Mëhill Çuni kishte lanë të lirë të vendoste ai vetë. Dhe ai u perkushtue me zell misionit të meshtarit. Përgatitjen e tij dhe aftësitë intelektuale ai i shfaqti që në moshë të rinisë së parë kur botonte shkrime të frymëzueshme dhe me mendime të pjekura për moshën në revistën *Kumbona* e në *Veles* dhe në periodikun e seminarit *Aurora consurgens*. Artikuj, poezi, perkthime, studime ai shkroi e botoi, po shumë prej tyne mbeten edhe dorëshkrimet. Ndër dorëshkrimet e tij mbetet edhe punimi në vargje *Stolia e ligjeratës* i vitit 1943.



Seminaristi Mark Çuni

Gjatë luftës ai u shque për ndjenjat e tij kundër diktaturës fashiste. Dhe këtë ai e shprehu haptas kur shkyente portretet e diktatorit fashist apo kur fliste haptas kundër pushtimit të vendit.

Në vitin 1943, 1944 ai mori pjesë si aktor në dramën **Flje Atdeut** të Pjetër Grudës, veper me frymëzim antikomunist të percaktuar e që merrte shkas në ngjarjet që mbyten në gjak Spanjën martire.

Mbas luftës seminaristi Mark Çuni asht aktiv dhe në ballë të qendresës kundër diktaturës, që po vendosnin me terror dhe gjak komunistët e Enver Hoxhës. Në Shkodër u krijue organizata "Bashkimi shqiptar" me të rij seminaristë e laikë si Ernest Dema, Gjon Shllaku, Luigj Kçira, Pjetër Gruda, Gjovalin Zeza, Zef Mirdita etj. të cilët, të bashkuem dhe me një grup të rijsh të Demokristianes kishin si synim të kerkonin liri demokratike, zgjedhje të lira, perparimin e vertetë të vendit dhe, kryesorja, luftën kundër diktaturës komuniste në Shqipëri. Si organizatë paqësore ajo kerkoi rrugë demokratike për realizimin e programit të saj me mbledhjet që organizonte, me trakte që shperndante, me bisedat e lira me popullin, të gjitha këto në mënyrë të fshehtë sepse komunistët kishin fillue që në ditën e parë të mbasluftës terrorin e tyre të pashembulltë. Në traktet e para të kësaj organizate lexojmë:

"Masakrat në Shqipëri Komunistët i bajnë me urdhën të Titos dhe të Stalinit!"

Organizata u diktue. Mark Çuni kje ndër të parët të arrestuem (20 dhjetor 1945). Qendroi heroikisht në tortura dhe po ashtu edhe në gjyq. Ai mori persipër gjithë veprimtarinë e organizatës kur e kuptoi se duhej sakrifikue jeta. Shkodra mbarë perjetoi ditë ankthi në ato ditë të gjyqit, po dhe ndoqi me krenari të heshtun qëndrimin trimënor të këtij djaloshi të guximshëm. Ishin idealet e nalëta që ai mbronte ato që i jepnin forcë kundër bishave të etuna për gjak.

Mbrojtja që ai i bëri qellimeve të nalëta fetare, demokratike e atdhetare të organizatës e bëri emrin e tij të paharrueshëm në popullin e qytetit e të rrethit të Shkodrës.

Mark Çunin e dënuen me vdekje dhe me 4 mars 1946 e pushkatuen së bashku me të tjerë meshtarë e shekullarë, po terrori komunist nuk mundi kurrë të mposhtë qendresën e një populli.

E martirët e parë u bënë vertetë pishtarë të kësaj qendrese antikomuniste.

Mikel PRENNUSHI



Dom Ejlli Deda i seminaristit Mark Çuni gjatë një ceremonije fetare, Shkodër, 1943

PATER GJON SHLLAKU MARTIR I FËS E ATDHEUT

Vjeti 1946 për të krishtenë në Shqipëri shenjon aktin e parë dramatik të asajë tragjedi, e cila dalë-nga-dalë do ta çonte Kishën e këtij vendi në asgjatimin e plotë të çdo shprehje së jashtme të besimit e me këta në vorrimin e dukëshëm të asajë fuqije e të atij shpirti që Shqipërisë e Shqiptarëve tash gadi nijet shekuj i dha dritë, jetë, zemrë, fizionomi.

Në këtë tragjedi, e cila vazhdon gjithnjë me të njajtin ritëm, edhe pse jo me të njajten metodë, më këtë furrë të ndezun nga Nabukodosorat (Dan. 3,19) e ri shtatë herë ma tepër se në të kaluemen e idhtë të pushtimit otoman, s'kishin si të mungojshin Françeskajët: pionerë këta feje e kulture, mësues letrash e atdhedashunije, edukatorë njenjash kombëtare e roje e kujdesëshme e asajë votre, ku raca ilirjane s'la ti shkimbej kurr zjarmi i jetës as flaka e Ungjillit.

E kaluemia e Shqipërisë katolike sidomos me shekullin e XIII e tekndej, më një farë mënyret, identifikohet me të bijt zhgunamurrët të Vobekut të Assisi-t: fati i kombit arbëneur ndjek pak a shumë në këto kavaljete të errta të historisë sonë fatin e Fratit e Frati fatin e kombit. Kështu, me arsye, la të shkrueme studjozi i përmendun i çashtjeve shqiptare At Zef Valentini S.J.

E prejsë e kaluemia me urdhën të Moskovit e të Beogradit do të zhdukej edhe në Shqipëri, do të zhdukeshin edhe Françeskajtë aq ma tepër mbasi këta ishin e njëfeshin posi korifejt e traditave gjyshore të racës e përfaqësuesët gjenuin të shpirtit vulkan të Shqiptarit.

Dënimi me deké dhe pushkatimi i bujshëm i At Anton Harapit, përfaqësuesit ma të njoftunit të Françeskanizmit në Shqipëri mbas Fishtës së madh, dha shejin e parë alarmues të atij plani, i cili i studjuem mirë nga komunistat e Tito-s e të Stalinit, tue përdorë duerët e lyeme në gjak vëllazënsh dhe armët e Enver Hoxhës e të Mehmet Shehut e

shokë, do të përfundonte me zhgattrimin e plotë të gjitha enteve fetare. Taktika në misjonin djallzuer nuk ishte e gabueme. Nji ka nji do të rrëxoheshin spari shtyllat e ndertesës së kristjanizmit: muret e perdet, mbuloja e dyshemet do të bijshin vedit: do të dhetohej Kleri: do të asgjatoheshin dy qandrrat, më të cilat ushqehet e rritej Kleri, do të shpallej jashta ligjit çdo veprimtari q' s'ishte me frymën marksiste: këndej do të mbylleshin shkollat, do të ndalohej shtypi, do tu hiqej dore edukata, do të lejohej dhe do të propagandohej linija morale.

Për të ja mbrijtë këti qellimi -spakut për faqenevojiteshin pretekte. Se këto, mandej, ishin të vërteta apo të sendergjueme, s'kishte randësi. Mjaft që në baze të tyne propaganda shurdhuese e Partisë mos të lejonte popullin të shofë kjashtë dhe të dallojë aty-për-aty të vërtetën nga rrena, të saktën nga shpifjet.

Flijet e para në këtë nisjativë djallzore e antifetare për natyrë kjenë Etënt Jezuit, në duerë të cilve, përposë tjerash, ishte qe tash sa kohë, formimi i Klerit dioçezan të Shqipërisë. E prejse këta në shumicën e pjestarëve ishin itallaj, anmiqt e Kishës e kishin ma të kollajtë ti paraqitëshin para Popullit, në shumicë jo kristjan, posi bashkëpunëtorë të Italisë e të Vatikanit: këndej anmiqtë vendit e të kombit i cili ende kishte të freshtë pushtimin fashist të Romës musolinjane (1939-1943).

Mbyllja e shkollave të tyne, zbulimi i papritun i organizatës fantomatike reaktionale e terroriste në Seminarin Papnuer e interdioçezan dhe mbyllja e tij, gjoja në flagellim të kësaj, burgosja e P. Faustit e e P. Dajanit, bërgegës të Jezuitëve e të Seminarit, kapja e Seminaristave vetë, s'ateizimi i të gjitha pasurive materiale, kulturore, fetare e misjonare ishte "il colpo di grazia" i atij Institutit që çme vërdosjen e të bivit të Shën Injazit në Shqipëri



Pater Gjon Shllaku, OFM

(1841) i dhanë aq kontribut përparimit e kulturës, fesë e dijes në vendin tonë.

Mbas Jezuitëve, njehë ma fort si të huej, Françeskajët shqiptarë.

Furra antiklerikale e antifetare tashma ishte kallë dhe zjarmi kishte nisë të shkrijë gurt e temelit. S'jitetë tjetër veç që ky zjarm t'ushqehej me landë të thatë e të njomë, me druj të trashë e të hollë. Gjith çashtja ishte te koha e oportuniteti taktik.

Françeskajët kishin endë në kambë gimnazin-licë, kishin të çiluna kuvendet e famullitë dhe, sadoqë nën kontroll të shtërnguet, po thue se të përditëshëm, ishin të pranishëm gadi në tana aktivitetet e përparëshme.

Ditë më tjetër randoheshin rëtë e zymta që lajmojshin stuhí e shterngatë edhe për në.

Punojshim tue dijtë se para nesh kishim një humnere, kishim vorrin e çilun. Pritëshim se kujë do ti binte rendi ma së pari. E dijshim se mujshim me u errë, por s'dijshim se ku do të njehëshim e se a do të njehëshim a jo.

Më kujtohet si sot trishtimi që na kishte mbulue të gjithve e sidomos më ka mbetë e thadrueme në mende gjendja shpirtnore e P. Gjonit. S'prante tue thanë: "Tash më tokon mue, por mjerisht s'jam i pari as i fundit. Të lutemi që Zoti të na apë forcë e zemrë për të përballue martirizimin".

Ja kishte ndie zemra? Dishka ma tepër se zemra. Me shka përlitej e me sa mujshim me vjedhë nga antarët e Partisë, miq të dikurshëm, Pater Gjon Shllaku ishte në krye të listës për tu eliminue.

Kallxon një zojë, e cila aso kohe bante përkthyes në shërbim personal të Sekretarit të Partisë Enver Hoxhës në marrëdhaje diplomatike me ambashadën e Jugosllavisë në Tiranë si një ditë, më një bashkëfjalim ndërmjet ambashadorit titoist e Enverit, ky i fundit shend e verë i paska pasë kumtue përfaqësuesit të Beogradit gadi gadi si tue u krenue: "E mbytëm P. Anton Harapin e me të kemi plagosë për dekë Klerin katolik!" Simbas rrëfimit të grues ambashadori, diplomat i vjetër pan-serbjan, i pasëka pasë përgjegjë: "Po, po, por keni endë gjallë P. Gjon Shllakun, i cili peshon sa dhetë Antona!" Duhet - vazhdoi ai - simbas porosisë që kam prej qeverisë sime, të zhdukni Shllakun dhe të zhgatroni kulm e temel çerdhen e Klerit katolik në Shqipëri me në krye Françeskajët!"

Këto fjalë i kishin ra në vesh P. Gjonit shi prej të sho'it të zojës përkthyes.

Kush ishte Pater Gjon Shllaku?

Një frat i thjeshtë me një shpirt të madh. Një lartë e zakonshme në një mende të lartë. Një fletë e përvitë me një vlerë të rrallë.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Jo i bëshëm me shtat. Ma fort i mjesëm se i gjatë me trup. I hajshëm, por jo i thatë sa me të ra në sy. Në paraqitje e në të hecun i përvujtë. Fëtyrë e njaj frati të zakonshëm, që trajtës së jashtme e dukës s'i ep randësi as peshë. I kandëshëm në të folun dhe plot njerzi. Tërhyekës e njiherit imponues. Fëtyrën dhe formën e kresë karakteristike të racës ilire. Ballin të shpërvjelun dhe flokët ma tepër në të rrallë, të drejtue ambël në përpjetë. Hundën gadi të theksueme me riljev të lehtë në mjes, por jo sproporcionale. Zigomt të ndieshëm ashtu si të theksueme mjekrrën të damë dyshë prej njaj quku të dukëshëm. Bante syzat, por këta nuk ja pakoishin gjallsinë atyne syve, që shprehëshin posi në pasqyrë të kulluet shpirtin, inteligjencën, squetsinë, vullëndetin. Ishin dy fenër që depërtoishin me një të këqyrun deri në fundin e msheftë të ndergjegjes së djaloguesit. I përvujtë, si i ka hije njaj frati dhe i pa kurrfarë madhniye e pra tërhiqte dhe bante për vedi kedo e afronte për këshill a por për probleme shoqnore e private. Dinte me u mbajtë në shoqni dhe në çdo ambjent a rend shoqnuer ruente të pacenueshme dignitetin e Meshtarit, zotsinë e filozofit, praktikitetin e sociologut, pasuninë e njaj kulture së hapët e të thellë. Kishte një mbamende të fortë e reflektive. Lexonte shumë e shka lexonte e thadronte në mende me kollajsi të çuditëshme. Njifte në maje të gishtave filozofët modern dhe veprat e auktorëve ma të përmendun të kohës: itallaj, françez, gjerman. Ishte i gatshëm të diskutojë mbi çdo çashtje ditunore a letrare edhe pse s'ishte dega e tij e veçantë. Çmonte mendet e squeta, por s'përbuzte njeri të gjallë, fshatâr të pa-shkollë apo të vorfën të pa-elegancë. Pat një miqsi të veçantë me ma të madhin kirurg të Shqipnisë, me Doktor Shirokën, dhe ky me squetsinë që kishte çuditej në bisedë me të për kompetencë e terminologji të përshtatëshme, me të cilën Shllaku mernte pjesë në diskutim.

Me 10 prill 1940 albanologët ma të njoftunt e Italisë: Tagliavini Carlo, Bartoli Matteo, Schirò Giuseppe jr., Ercole Francesco etj vizitojnë Shqiprinë me një të formojnë një akademi për studjime shqiptare. Në mungesë të P. Gjergjit, aso herë

akademik i Italisë, i përcjellë miqt P. Gjoni. Albanologët shofin muzeun e bibliotekën. Mbeten të kënaqun. Në shpërblim të veprimtarisë françeskane në lamën e kulturës e për të pasunue bibliotekën e tyne kërkojnë një listë librash e veprash, të cilën ata do të ja paraqitëshin Qeverisë së Romës për të jau dergue Françeskajëve si dhanti. P. Gjoni pregatitë listën dhe kjo merrin në Romë. Ministrija itallane merr në shqyrtim përmbajtjen dhe bindet. Kush e ka përpunue - përgjegjet - duhet të ketë një kulturë fort të hapët dhe një shije letraro-ditunore të spikatur: veprat e shenjueme janë vizar edhe për në, prandej s'mund u kondenojmë. Squetsija e trathton vedin dhe me një gja të vogël e të pa-randësi del në shesh inteligjenca e njerit.

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P. Gjoni leu në Shkodrë me 27 korrik 1907. I jati, Lorja dhe e ama Marija Ashtja ja ngjitën emnin në pagëzim Kolë. Endë i vogël hini në kolegjin françeskane të qytetit dhe aty kreu filloren e gimnazin e ultë, tue u da në shej për squetësi e sjellje. Me 4 tetuer 1922, shi ditën e Shën Françeskut, veshi petkun e tij në Troshan. Aty filloi jetën rregulltare, tue ndërmue emnin e pagëzimit në Gjon. Shpotitej ma vonë: si i krishtenë kam Shën Nëkollin për gjith vë, si frati kam Shën Gjoni si vëllë që më mpron. Me 5 shtatuer 1923 gjithnji në Troshan bani kushtet e përkohëshme e 5 vjet mbrapa, në Shkodrë, me 13 shtatuer 1928 u lidh me kushte të përjetëshme rregulltare. Kreu shkëlqyeshëm licenë e kursin e filozofisë në atdhë dhe ma vonë kje dergue në të tanë studentat e Françeskajve përjashta. Në Molandë kreu teologjinë dhe me 15 marc 1931 u shpallte meshtâr. Po në këtë vjet kje dergue nga Provincjali i atëherëshëm P. Vinçenc Prenusini, ma vonë ky ipështkëv i Sapës (27 kallnduar 1936) e ngjipështkëv i Durcit (26 qershtuer 1940), dekë në burg ne truer të 1949, në Louvain. Këtu P. Gjoni ndoq me e parë degën e shkencave e ma vonë atë të historisë e filozofisë, tue u laureue me një tezë të shkëlqyeshme në filozofi në vitin 1931. Fillë mbas doktoratit kthei në vendlindje dhe këtu u vu me një herë të apë

mësim në gjimnazin - liçë që e kishte përgatitë për universitet. Që në ditët e para u dallue ndër profesora tjerë për kompetencë e metodë mësimi. Pak mbrapa përposë filozofisë muer mbi vedi gjuhën frangishte, tue çilë, përposë orëve të shkollës, edhe kurse të veçanta për të gjithë më këtë gjuhë. Posë tjerash, mandej, i kje ngarkue drejtimi i Djelmnisë Antonjane, më të cilën merrshin pjesë jo veç studentat e liçeut, por edhe shumë nga ex-nxanësat e gjimnazit Illyricum e të rijë tjerë të qytetit.

Okupimi fashist i 1939 e nxuni në këtë detyrë. Tashma P. Gjoni kishte mbëledhë rreth vedit undyrën e rinisë shkodrane, ndër të cilt profesora moshe së vet, të rijë përparimtarë, shkrimtarë e aktorë, hartista e nëpunësa, punëtorë e zanatli në shej. Gropa e Shkodrës, forum i Atenës së kulturës arbënore, kishte gjetë në fratin e ri të Louvainit udhëhjekësin e përshtatshëm.

Simbas traditës së Françeskanizmit në Shqipëri e si pasojë e edukatës së fitueme nga të Mëdhajt me zhgun: Bardhi, Gjeçovi, Harapi, Fishta, Rrota, Gjoka, që i kjenë mësuesë mendje e zemrë, P. Gjoni dikoi ndër të rijë jo veç ndjenat fetare, por edhe kulturën e shëndoshtë e ndiesitë kombëtare. Edhe atij si të tjerëve Etën të Provincës fretnore i kje ideal binomi "Fë e Atdhë".

Në pikëpamje atdhetare kje ngushtue të braktisë vendin dhe të strukej në Jugosllavi atëherë, kur trupat fashiste shkelën qytetin e Rozafës. Kthei në Atdhë me 13 qershier 1940 vetëm mbasi për të ndërhinë auktoritete civile e fetare, tue u garantue se i merguemi s'do të përzihej me shkrim as me mësim në kurrnji lëvizje anti italjane, gja të cilën Shllaku, tue përjashtue aktivitetin thjeshtë politik s'e pranoi kurr në parim as në ndërgjegje. Ai njimend s'desht kurr luftë, gjak as hakmarrje, por më tjetrën anë s'pranoi - as s'kishte si të pranojë - robri, okupim, padrejtësi, dhunë, shkelje. Përherë koherent me parimet kristjano-soçjale, punoi aty e mbrapa në heshtim gjithmonë në mprojtje të drejtave temelore të njeriut. Edhe në këtë përdhë ai shtoi përherë e ma tepër numrin e

simpatizuesave. Çetat e djelmnisë shkodrane u lidhën me të.

Kur në vendin tonë nisën të miellëshin, të bijshin dhe të përhapeshin idë e parime materjaliste, të marruna uha nga marksizmi bolshevik dhe agjitorë, të maskuem nën atdhetarizëm e shirim të vendit, filluen të depërtojnë, nën dhë, në moshën e ré e në rrada entuzjaste të nacionalistave njet-mirë të asajë kohe, P. Gjoni me një seri konferencash publike, të zhvillueme në kishën e Françeskajëve të Gjuhadolit, vuni në beh rrezikun e njaj propagande të tillë, me të cilën ndër në shpërdahej helmi nën etiketën e mjalit, shitej shapi në vend të shiqerit, mbijellej fara e hithave në vend të barishteve ushqimore, përgatitej zhgatrrimi në vend të përparimit, gatohej robrija në vend të librit. Ai e shifte kjahtë rrezikun që na kërcnohej. Parashifte stuhinë, e cila në pak kohë do të pështielte në zi popullin e vendin tonë, tue kapërdi në gjire të veta Kishë e Klër, besimtarë e rregulltarë, fshatarë e qytetarë.

Logjikën e shtërngueshme të tij, kjahtësinë dhe fuqinë e arsytimit, modern në paraqitje, të kthellë dhe të paluejshme në parime, skematike dhe të sigurtë në përfundime e pasoja, s'mund e përballojshin kundështarët as anmiqt. Këta tash për tash e drojshin: pritëshin të merrshin në duerë fuqinë dhe, kështu, të shfrejshin mëninë e inadin, që i drejti dhe e vërteta i sjellë vedit paratytne, që të vërtetën s'e njofin dhe drejtësinë e mirësinë e kanë shndërrue me rrenë, shpifje, hakmarrje, gjak.

Konferencat i përcillte diskutimi i lirë në lokale françeskane të Djelmnisë Antonjane. Këtu Shllaku pranonte me andë e ndesh, me nder e përvujtëni françeskane objeksione e kundërshtime, sqarime e shkoqitje. Ai s'dinte të fyejë apo të nërënojë, të përvujë apo të poshtënojë vend, por as s'pranonte të lëshojë për asnjë komprometohet para së vërtetës, të heshtë para gabimit as të lakohej para kërcnimit e rrezikut.

Konferencat e u duhur shue predket e mbajtura në kishë ndër të cilat e të kremte, në muej të majit ndër të cilat të Shën Andout. Shllaku

s'kje oratuer në veshtrimin tradicional të kohës: kje e mbetet psikolog i kthellë, konferencjer i përkryem, teolog e sociolog i kuartë e i prehtë. Kënde shka e bante popullin ta veshtrijë me ande e interesim s'ishte harti i gojtarisë, zani as paraqitja e jashtëme: ishin mendimet, landa, arsyetimi, logjika.

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Shka e dallon P. Gjonin në misjonin e tij meshtarak e françeskan është penda e shkrimi. Këtu dha provët e para të njaj zotsije së rrallë, të një talenti të veçuem. Shkrou pak, përse koha e shkurtë e aktivitetit të tij e rrethanat e vështira, më të cilat u gjet posa hini në rradhët e shkrimtarëve, nuk i dhanë mundsí tjera. Jam ma se i sigurtë, se po të kishte pasë jetën e gjatë e gjendjen normale të kohës dhe po të kishte hecë me zhvillimin e natyrëshëm të vendit, ai pa fé dyshimit do të kishte vazhdue me nderë traditën e lumnueshme të Françeskajëve në Shqipni, jo veç posí shkrimtar i prehtë, por edhe, e sidomos, posí mësues i ndërgjegjes kombëtare. Edhe pse më një lamë të ndryshme veprimi e në kondita tjera, P. Gjoní do të kishte xanë vend, më një ndër elterët kryesorë të panteonit të Mëdhajve pranë Leonardit De Martino, Fishtës, Gjeçovit, Prennushit, Harapit, Bardhit, Palajt, Sirdanit.

Si drejtuer përgjegjës i "Hyllit të Dritës", revista za-madhe e së kaluemes, P. Gjoní mblodh rreth vedit pendat ma të prehtat e kohës. Në votrën fishtjane, ku u shkri platforma e njaj Shqipnije së lirë e së përparueme, u ulën në kuvend si dikur pleqt e Kanunit, shkrimtarët e ri ma në shej, jo veç ndër bashkëvëllazën të Shllakut, por edhe ndër civila, të krishtenë a jo, por gjithmonë adhuresa të një Zoti e besnikë të një ideali. Pranoi idé moderne e përparimtare, por pa ju shmangë parimeve kristjane e kulturës shqiptare. E veshi të përkohëshmen me një petk të ri nusnuer, tërhjekës për brëzni në evolucjon. I ndei besnik - e s'kishte si ti largohej - natyrës së rivistës e parimit "motto", mbas të cilit u karakterizuen përherë fletët e Hyllit, pa lanë që ti lëmekeshin rrezet në qiellin e



Meshtarët françeskanë: (rreshti i parë) Pater Ndoc Kiri, (rreshti i dytë) Pater Gjon Shllaku e Pater Frano Kiri me një grup nacionalistash në Prekal të Dukagjinit më 1944 (Foto e Ndoj Prendushit)

Shqipnisë: "Ubi Spiritus Domini, ibi libertas" = Aty ku është Fryma e Perendisë, aty është lirija (II Cor. 3.17).

Ky kje trashigimi, ky testamendi i fundit, që baba i letrave arbënore, At Gjergj Fishta, poeti i Kombit, ja pat dorzue P. Gjonit e, në P. Gjonin, tanë rinisë françeskane atëbotë, kur natën para dekës (30 dhutuer 1940) e desht afër vedit për të ja porositë me të mbramen fije të zanit Provincen, Shqipninë, Hyllin. E ketë porosi, ketë amanet shejt - pse shejt e i randë është ndër amanet - amanetin e mban toka - P. Gjoní e ruejt me kujdes e ndërgjegje, me kompetencë e dashuni deri sa për ketë amanet ra fletue vulosë me gjak atë Fé, që ai dishmoi në jetë, atë komb, që ai desht me zemrë, atë zhoun, që ai ndërroi me vepra.

Mbi tanë shka kemi thanë deri tani P. Gjoní kje Meshtar e Hyll. Si meshtar s'ha roi kurr të jetë e të bihej pos ministër i Zotit, si nat ruejt si sytë e ballit karakteristikë e Françeskanit: përvujtëninë, dashtëninë për të votën e të bjeshtë, popullaritetin, vorfëninë. Binë lej i Vobekut të Assisi-t, u mbajtë përherë i vogël edhe pse nën zhgunin e vrashtë, të pa-mirë, në një madhnië shpirtnore e

lartësinë mendore. Ndigjesa e bani të kthejë në atdhë në kohën e okupimit fashist: ndigjesa e frymzoi mos ta lëshonte vendin në vërsimin e komunizmit.

Për këtë ndigjesë rregulare e për këtë vetëmohim ra flije në ma të mirën moshë të jetës.

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E muerën në kallduer të 1946 ndërsa epte mësim. Endë s'kishte shenjue landën e ditës në regjistër të klasës, më të cilën epte filozofi, si ishte detyrë për të gjithë profesorët e liçeut të Françeskajëve në Shkodër. Atë çast e mbrapa Shllaku ndërroi katedrën e mësimi me dhomën e torturave, regjistrin e lekcioneve me procese të papreme hetimesh, që s'e lejshin të pushojë ditë as natë, nxanësar, që e adhurojshin, me njerz të Sigurimit të pashpirt, që në trupin e tij të ligështë shfryen sadizmin në mëni të Zotit e të shërbëtorëve të Tij.

Kur na tjerët, kolegë, kryeme orën e mësimi dhe si për gjithë ditë në 10 minutat e pushimi u gjetëm në salën e profesorave, në gojë të gjithëve kaloi vetëm një fjalë, kumtim i idhtë: "E pat edhe P. Gjoni!" E dijsim të gjithë, na bashkëvëllazënt e tij, si e kuptojshin nxanësar, se shka e pritëte, jo për shka kishte bërë, por për shka komunistat mendojshin me shfrye në të. Vetëm kush i ka përjetue ato çaste, mund e kuptojë gjendjen shpirtnore tonën e trishtimin që na mbuloi. Me P. Gjoni biershim elementin ma të mirin e asaj Provincë, që në të kaluemen, gjatë shtatë shekujsh, lindi përherë e rriti njerz të mëdha.

Tashti P. Gjoni bashkohej me viktime tjera në pritje të qiten në anfiteatrin e bishve, në arenën e koloseut të Rozafës. Shtonte rreshtin e P. Dajani e të P. Faustit jezuit, të seminaristave e të besimtarëve, gjoja antarë të organizatës fantomatike terroriste antipopullore: "Bashkimi shqiptar".

Gjatë hetimeve, të caktuemët për dënim nga vendimi i Partisë e jo nga provët e fajit, me anën e

torturave e të mjeteve ngushtoheshin të pohojnë ata, shka as në andërr s'e kishin pa ndonji herë. Më këtë përdhë vujtjesh pak kushi muji me e pa e aq ma pak me e takue P. Gjoni.

Ndërkaq përgatitej gjyqi publik, i ashtu quejtuni gjyqi i popullit. Gazetat e përditëshme, radio, konferenca e grupe të organizueme të Partisë ishin vu në dispozicion për të formue në publik opinionin, se Klerikët e burgosun ishin njëmend organizuesët e përgjegjsat e një kryengritje, së drejtue me prej Vatikanit në damin e Shqipnisë.

P. Gjoni ishte - simbas organeve të Shtetit - kryetari e shpirti i këtij plani subversiv. Këta del në shesh edhe ma kjarë nga pretenca e prokurorit në akt-akuzë famë-keqe. Mbas tij vijshin - gjithnji simbas pretencës - P. Danjel Dajani e P. Giovanni Fausti si nënkryetarë, ndërsa si sekretar vinte seminaristi Mark Çuni. Ishin këto të gjitha sende të trillueme nga vetë organet e Partisë, para të cilave të akuzuemët, tashma të lodhun nga torturat e përditëshme, a do të pranojshin apo do të heshtojshin. Mprojtja, në fakt, u këputej në të parat fjalë.

Për formalitet, e vetëm për formalitet, për ti dhanë gjyqit faqe legale dhe për tu përligjë para botës së jashtëme e propagandës së bërë, nominalisht u pranuen advokatët privat.

Për P. Gjoni menduem ti sjellshim advokatin guximtar, Muzafer Pipën. Ishte ky ish-student i liçeut françeskan, dishepull i shum prej profesorave fretën dhe shoq klase i të nënshkruemët. Muzaferi kishte ruejtë gjithmonë ndjenia tsuike evarije ndaj mësuesave të dikurshëm dhe çmonte punën e veprat tona. Ai e njëfte personalisht P. Shllakun dhe me të kishte atë familiaritet që lidhin në të parat takime personalitetet e scueta e murrzët e drejtë.

Më kujtohej si sorse ky nesh u paraqitëm në zyren e advokatit të nat'përmedun, për ti lypë të merrtembi vëdi mbrojtjen e P. Gjoni. E pranoi me të veshurë, tui e dijtë se dalëzotja do ti kushtonte shpejt e ndoshta-ndoshta do ta paguente me jetë.

E shtoi: "shka mund të bajë juristi, ku s'ka ligjë as drejtësi? Si mund ta mproj një njeri në kje se me kohë, para se të provohet a jo faji i tij, ai është i dënuem?"

Dikur, mbasi tragjiko-komediya ishte përgatitë në të tana partikolaritetet, u hap gjyqi. Vetëm atëherë mujtëm me e pë për larg P. Gjonin. E ndoqëm hajnisht me sy të përvajshëm në procesjonin e martirëve, të lidhun me pranga të kriminelve, kah, përvujtas, ditë për ditë kalonte prej burgut në salën e gjyqit të caktuem më një ndër salat ma të mëdhatë e lokaleve çinomatografike të gjytetit. Në rresht të viktimave kryesinë e kishte ai. Mbas tij vijshin dy Meshtarët jezuit, seminaristat e mandej civilat tjerë. Procesjoni i dekës përcillej, përposë se prej policisë së mprojtëjes, edhe prej grupeve të organizueme nga rinia komuniste, të cilt, gjatë rrugës, bertitshin si të dejun në koro: "Plumb ballit, plumb ballit" e "Vdekje Klerit, vdekje Klerit!"

P. Gjoni hecete kadalë, gadi i pasugurtë në kambë të veta. Shifej se ishte i lodhun tejët dhe i ligështuem fuqishë: paraqitëte njerin e vuejtun posi t'ishte çue prej njaj lëngate së gjatë. Në ball i vrohej një varrë, si e prëme e freskët, endë e pa thame. Syzat me mëzi i rrjshin në hundë. Ndërronte gjurmë mundëshëm me krye ultë, si i tretun në mendime, gadi-gadi si mos ti kujtohej zhurmës e shka ishte tue ndodhë rreth tij.

Në lokale të gjyqit i pritëte tmera e asajë kohe, prokurori ushtarak Aranit Cela. U bā ky i përmendun për mizori e ete gjaku. Nji publik i selekcionuem, në shumicë antarë partije, mbushte salën. Posa të paditunt vejshin kambë në derë të salës, altoparlantat, mbrendë e jashtë, shashkut me një pjesë të publikut, intonojshin një kangë satirike e ngacmuese hakmarëje ndaj Klerit. Niste, mandej, seanca me pëvetje të vrullshme nga të tanë antarët e gjyqit, në mënyrë që të paditunve mos tu lëhej rend as mos tu epej munds i mprojtje. Fajtorit s'i jitetë tjetrë, jashta pohimit të fajeve të pa bame apo heshtimit. E vërteta kishte për pasojë tortura të reja e hetime të pafund.

Akuzat, të planifikueme nga nalt, paraqitshin P. Gjonin tonë pors i idealogun, organizatorin e udhëhjekësin e ashtu të quejtunit "Bashkimi shqiptar". Në ndihmë të tij, mandej, vijshin Etënt Jezuit, Seminaristat e besimatët tjerë. P. Shllaku - simbas akuzës - drejtonte "Dorën e zezë" që do të krynte atentate në të gjith Shqipninë. Ky mbante lidhje të vazhdueshme me Vatikan me anën e P. Faustit, ndërsa në vend, lidhej me sa atëbotë ishin çeta antikomuniste të aratisuna. Mbante ndërlidhje anmiqsore me Shtete kapitaliste, me Ingliz e Amerikaj.

Ishin këto disa ndër akuza, që Fratin tonë e paraqitshin fajtuer deke, jo veç posi kundërshtar rregjimi, por edhe si kriminal e njeri të damshëm për Popull e Komb.

Kur advokati mprojës muer fjalën për të qitë poshtë akuzat, të cilat ai i ndiente për të parën herë në aulë, nga publiku e nga trupi gjikues s'u ndie tjetër veç fishkullim e brimë: "Poshtë trathtarët e bashkëpunëtorët e tynel!" Deri deputeti i Rrethit, Prof. Kolë Prela, nacionalist-shlirimtar i orës së parë, që trimnisht dishmoi, se ai e shokët e tij në P. Gjonin kishin gjetë gjithmonë mirëkuptim e mprojtje, aty e mbrapa buer çmimin, që kishte para Partisë, e jo shumë ma vonë u pushkatue në Tiranë si reaktjonar e mprojës i Klerit. Ashtu me dënim deke pak mbrapa ka për të mbyllë jetën Muzafer Pipa, dishmitar drejtësisje.

Dënimi për dekë - si kemi thanë shpër - ishte i prëm çme kohë dhe vinte prej Tiranës.

Kot shkuen tana përpjekjet tona, ku mujtëm e ku dijtëm, për të ja pëshue jetën bashkëvëllaut tonë të pafaj.

Me P. Gjonin dënohen për dekë P. Dajani e P. Fausti, seminaristat Mark Cuni e Gjergj Daci, mandej civilat Qerim Sadiku, Gjon Vata etj. Senteca merre fund me 22 fruer 1946.

Ishte agimi i përgjaksuem i 4 marcit 1946. S'ishte e para herë, që shi në orër e para të ditës, në të

zbardhun të dritës, në qytetin e Shkodrës ndiheshin të shtime pushkësh me ushtimë të xanun si ato që bien në mish njeri. E t'i mend, Komunistat, atëherë, e kishin doke të zbatojshin dënimin me pushkatim shi atëherë, kur shumica e banorëve ishte ende në të shtruar.

Mbas pushkatimit, zakonisht, trupët e të dekurve, ashtu njani mbi tjetrin, lësheshin, si t'ishin thasë plehi, në dispozicion të qytetarëve për të tanë ditën: kush për të shfrye mëninë, kush për të marrë mënderë e trishtim.

Në muzg të natës, mandej, ashtu grumbull si ishin, ngreheshin rrëshanë dhe hidheshin përzieras me një gropë të përbashkët. Mbuloheshin me vemendje, mundsist për mos të lanë gjurmë as shej vorri. Ky fat e gjet Martirin tonë e shokët e tij, martirë si ai.

Të kthejmë për një çast te dekikat e fundit të këtyne dishmorëve të Fesë.

Çeprej 22 fruer 1946 deri në orën e pushkatimit herojt tonë qindruen në të lutuna të vazhdueshme e në bisedë shpirtnore, tue i dhanë zemër njani tjetrit për hapin e fundit në dishmë të Fesë e në besnikë të Ungjillit, të Kishës.

Në vërtetim të këtyne fjalëve na vjen në ndihmë pohimi i Dom Tomë Lacës, sekretar i Argjipëshkëvit të Shkodrës dhe famullitar i përkohëshëm i katedrales së qytetit. I tokol këtij, tu çonte të dënuemëve Kungimin e mbramë dhe ti përcielte ata në vendin e egzekutimit. Ma vonë edhe ky ka për të provue të njajtin Kalvar.

E njimend, në të zbardhun të 4 marcit, i shoqnuem nga antarët e rojës së burgut Dom Toma paraqitet në dhomën e errtë të dënuemëve. Ishte i ngushtuem ti rrëfente të gjithë sbashkut, por dishmitarët e Fesë, plot trimni e paqë shpirtnore i banë me dritë se s'kishin nevojë për rrëfim, mbasi ishin rrëfye ditë-për-ditë njani me tjetrin, e këta edhe më atë nade. Gjatë kohës ndërmjet dënimit e atij çasti - i thanë - kishin jetue ma fort për qiell, që i pritëte, se për tokë, që po e lëshin. Muerën, prandej, Kungimin me përkushitë të Martirëve të

parë të Krishtenimit dhe me një trimni, që vinte nga nalt, u banë me dritë rojeve se ishin gadi për udhëtim.

Udhëtimi në kamjonin e dekës prej burgut e në rëmaj, pranë qytetit, ishte relativisht i shkurtë. Shkuen, tue këndue psalmet e shtegtarëve të Popullit të Zgjedhun në drejtim të Jeruzalemit. Ata drejtoheshin kah Jeruzalemi qielluer. Shkuen tue i dhanë zemër, ata Meshtarit, i cili ishte i ngarkuem me i zemrue. Dom Toma derdhej në lot:

P. Gjonit e shokëve s'u dridhej buza as s'u ligështohesh zemra. Udhëtojshin për amshim, pritshin me padurim dekën, që i çonte në të ngjallun.

Të rreshtuem njani bri tjetrit, me P. Gjonin në mjes, të lidhun dorë me dorë, si të dojshin me formue një kunorë, të gërshtueme me zhguna e veladona, me rregulltarë e besimtarë, mbasi një ka një puthën Kryqin e Shëlbimit, shqiptuen një zani e një zemre fjalën e fundit të jetës e porosinë e mbrame: "Rrënoftë Krishti Mbret, rrënoftë Kisha Katolike!"

Batarja e trupit egzekutues, plumbat e plotonit me hyll të kuq këputën zanin e tyne.

U rrëxuen për dhë, tue zbutë me gjak edhe një herë atë tokë, që me gjak është lagë tash sa shekuj e me gjak vazhdon të ushqehet edhe sot.

Gjaku i Shllakut shkrou edhe një rresht në analet e përgjakshme të shtatë shekujve historik të Françeskanizmit në Shqipëri.

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Atë ditë binte shi si domë Zoti vetë.

Në baltë e gjakësh deshi me pa muti të dallojë kjanë me një grumbull të delunsh frat e prift, jezuit e të krishtenë, ishte Kisha martire e Shqipnisë.

Heshuen vizituesat dhe miq e anmiq kaluen para tyne, të parat tue derdhe lot, të dytët tue u

përkulë me nderim para të fortëve: "Sic fortes ceciderunt" (II Reg. 1, 19)

Dikush nesh, pa u kujtue rojet, lagu në gjak të P. Gjonit një faculetë të bardhë mëndashë, për ta rrujtë porsë relikve. Ishte sheji i Kishës nën dhë, që pret ditën e ngallnimit. "Sanguis martyrum semen christianorum",

Ne nesre sbashkut me një kolegë temin shkruem, kinse për të shetitë, kah vendi i pushkatimit me qëllim të vërtetojmë se ku i kishin vorrue. Kurrkund shej grope as dheu të çuem rishtas. Ma vonë muerëm vesht, se gropën e kishin çilë natën afër shtratit të lumit, në zall, që e mbulon uji mbas shinave në njeshkë. Dheun tepriçë e kishin tretë e gropën e kishin rrafshue me kujdes me fundri të qytetit: teneqe, kutija, zhele etj. në mënyrë, që mos të dukej shëj as gjurmë për krimin e kryem.

Me kohë Kiri, i çuem mal e breg - do të kenë mendue Neronat e rij - do ti merite eshtënt dhe do ti tretëte ne dët.

S'e dijshin ata, se toka e Shqipnisë, lumejt e deti i brigjeve tona do të shejtnoheshin me relikvet e Martirëve arbënorë, me gjakun lum të Fretëve.*

Pål DUKA-GJINI



*(Shenim i editorit: Ky shkrim i Pål Duka-Gjinit në kujtim të 45 vjetorit të martirizimit të Pater Gjon Shllakut u botue së pari në përkthimin anglisht në *Buletini Katolik Shqiptar* (1986-1987) me disa shkurtime. Tash po e botojmë shqyp në tanësi e urojmë që lexuesat të frymzohen prej shembullit fisnik të Pater Gjonit e shokëve të tij.)

DOM LAZËR SHANTOJA (1892-1945) NJI NDËR STILISTAT MÂ TË NDRITSHËM TË LETËRSËS SHQIPE*

Ndër mâ të randësishmit shkrimtarë të kapërdimë nga stuhija e mënës dhe e gjakut sillav komunist ndërmjet 1945-ës e 1948-ës, Dom Lazër Shantoja mund të konsiderohet si rasti mâ i dhimbshëm. Argjipeshkvi i Durrësit Imzot Vinçenc Prennushi, Provinçiali i Françeskajve At Anton Harapi, dramaturgu Et-hem Haxhiademi, interpretuesi i pastër i shpirtit malsuer shqiptar At Bernardin Palaj, për me çekë vetëm mâ përfaqësuesit ndër shkrimtarët e zhdukun në mënyrë tragjike mbas luftës së dytë botnore, kishin dhanë masën e vlefshmenisë së tyre letrare e edhe përcaktue mesazhin e tyre njerzuer e poetik. Përkundrazi, Dom Lazri, nga shkaku i ngjarjeve politike të pafat që ia shtrëmbtuen jetën qysh nga vjetët e para të rinisë, nuk pat mundësinë me na dhurue veprën organike që pritej nga ai. Kush shkruen që vllaznisht pranë tij n'atdhë e në mërgim nga 1918 deri më 1943 e i njëjte krejt qëllimet e tija të flakta e frymëmarrëse letrare. Qysh në Zvicër, në La Motte të Giura Berneze-s rreth vjetve 1935-38, ai ndiente tue iu pjekë për mbrenda vetvetes një vepër me frymë të gjanë që, në sheshtimet e veta do të përmbledhte ankthe të posaçme trashigimi stërgjyshuer shqiptar, kalue pëper shoshitjen e kulturës perendimore, e të frymë në një formë kristaline modëme. I madhi Poet i popullit shqiptar, At Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940) kishte këndue luftën heroike të Shqiptarve kundër sdo tentativë anmik për me thye bashkimin etnik të kombit. Shantoja lakmonte me përqitë, në një afresk të gjanë, jetën familjare, me virytet e panjohura -- madje të keqkuptueme të saj -- të cilat llozojnë rreth votrës ku flaka simbolizon kultin e liris, bazue mbi besimin të Perëndijës mbi bindjen se ndera është për jetën dhe mâ e nevojshme se ajri e dielli. Flitë për ket

vepër të veten në përgatitje e sipër me mjaft rezervime, me një lloj ngurrimi që përfundonte në heshtje. Nxitjeve të mija u përgjigjesh se për me e çue në vend projektin e veprës së vet të shestueme me vjet, i nevojitesh kontakti me tokën, me gjinden, me atmosferën e Atdheut. E tue përdorë si zakonisht fraza tipike mahitse e mallëngjyese që ishin mnyra e natyrshme e të shprehurit të tij, përfundonte: "Kam nevojë me ngranë bukë misri me djathë dhije, at djath që ruen shijen e gjetheve të ahishtave tona malore me të cilat ushqehen dhinë tona".

Në La Motte, në famullin e tij që gjindesh ndërmjet kufinit francez-zviceran, kishte me vete nanën e vet plakë, një shkodrane pothuaj e pashkollueme, por e pasun me një eksperiencë njerzore të pamasë. Ajo, pa njoftë asnjë fjalë frengjisht, jetonte vazhdimisht e mundueme nga një përmallim i pashërueshëm, e zhytur natë e ditë në kujtimet e Atdheut të humbun. Nuk bisedonte tjetër vetëm se për ngjarjet e Shkodrës, për çashtje kushtrijsh e të njoftunish, për kujtimet e së kaluemes. Flitte një shkodranishte të persosun, plot me ngjyime therse e të gjalla, gjithmonë me tonin e asaj fisnikije që është karakteristikë e shprehjeve femnore shqiptare të mbarë klasave shoqnore. I biri, poet, i detyrohesh për së tepërmi. Në stilin e tij lulzohet shprehjet e lëmueme nga mjeshtri artistike e të folurit t'ambël amnuer.

Por, ndoshta për me rravizue më mirë figurën e Shantojës e me vleftësue cilsin e tij të jashtzakonshme stilistike, është e nevojshme me dhanë ndonji shenim biografik.

Lé në Shkodër me 1892, ai qysh në fminë që prirë kah meshtarija, sigurisht mbas këshillave të një dajë prift. Në Seminarin Papnuer të Shkodrës drejtue nga Etnit Jezuit, pat një përgatitje të shëndoshtë kulturore e studjoi, tue u dallue, latinishten, greqishten e italishten. Në djelmnin e tij, sidomos ndërmjet 1908-ës e 1912-ës, ndjeu thellësisht ndikimin e levizjes letrare dalë prej rymës së lëvizjeve të para rilindase shqiptare. Etnit Jezuit shqiptarë Mjedja, Xanoni, Bazhdari etj., mësues të

ndritshëm, i u banë shembull jetë e letërsije. Për kurset filozofike e teologjike që dërgue n'Austri (besoj n'Innsbruck) ku përvetsoi gjuhën gjermane jo vetëm me e folë, por edhe me e shkruë. Kthye n'Atdhë, sherbeu në famullin të ndryshme, por më gjatë e ushtroi misionin e vet barituer në Sheldi, të begatshmin e të lulzueshmin vend maluer jo fort larg nga Shkodra. Përpara se ta njëfshem, pata ndigjue tue folë në Shkodër për ket famullitar të ri të kulturuem, i cili kishte baje mbi shpinë të mushkut një pianofort neper shtiqet e vështira të malit të Sheldis. Prandej në mbarë atë zonë e quejshin Famullitari i pianofortit.

Me 1924 merrti nga Shkupin për me zanë selin vakante argjipeshkvnore Imzot Lazër Mjedja, vëlla i poetit të mirënjohun Ndrë Mjedja. Argjipeshkvi i ri, njeri me moral e mendje të ndritun, me largpamje politike të jashtzakonshme, me karakter energjik e vullnet të fortë, ndërmori përnjehetit një veprimtari të vlefshme e të ndritun për me ngritë nivelin shoqnuer e civil të popullsis katolike. I dha krejt mbështetjen veprimtaris politike të Burnit të Shtetit, Luigj Gurakuqit të madh, prisi i Partis së Krishtenë Demokratike, themelue e drejtue nga ai vetë. Me ket parti u lidh me aleancë edhe pjesa më e mirë e qytetarve muslimanë. Imzot Mjedja i cili mendonte me mbështetë edhe çdo nismë kulturore qytetare, muer vesh se flitesh për Shantojën dhe e emnoi sekretar të vetin. E poeti zbriti me librat e pianofortin e vet në Shkodër, i shoqnue nga një numër i madh famullitarësh të dërgun e të zemruem për transferimin e tij. Shpesh, me mbramje, nga dritoret e katit të tretë të Pallatit Argjipeshkvnuer, n'at kohë një nga ndërtesat më të natës të qytetit, ndigjoheshin nota të muzikës së Schuman-it e të Schubert-it poshtë në sheshin e katedrales e deri në arteriet e qytetit. Mëhu i muzikës këndellte kalimtarët e habitun e të kënaqun me çue kryet kah dritoret e shëndritun të pallatit.

Organ i shtypit i Partis së Krishtenë Demokratike *Ora e Maleve* (katolikët shqiptarë janë në shumicë mallore) filloi botimet e veta me 1923 e Argjipeshkvi deshti që Shantoja të merrte pjesë aktive në redaktimin e organit. Fletorja pati

përmijherit një sukses të jashtazakonshëm. U lexonte në krejt Shqipërinë e, gjatë shumë me randësi për at periudhë, ishte tepër e përhapur ndër shtresat popullore. Përhapë idetë e veta demokratike në një botë (bota e vogël shqiptare) ende të ndryme në konceptin anakronik të jetës mesjetare.

Shantoja u hodh me krejt vullin e temperamentit të tij frymzues në garën politike, më tepër me shpirt e stil artisti se sa me pasion të njeriut të njëanshëm. Por, ndoshta pikërisht ky temperament artistik i tij, pëllcitet në pikënisje polemike të shkëlqyeshme, kishte sukses ndër lexuesit, entuziazmonte miqtë e acaronte kundërshtarët. Me shprehje zhgjetare të dallueshme qillonte në shëjin. Fletorja *Ora e Maleve* e bëri shpejt të njohur si shkrimtar. Veçanësisht artikujt e tij të shkurtë në prozë, e vargjet e tij satirike thekse e gërvishite të qillueme popullore, pritësin me interes lakmues nga lexuesit. Por, edhe në këto shfrymje (qi e dëfrejshin shtëpërmë), si në artikujt e ngurtë (tejdrukesh drita e qellimit të tij të naltë rigjallërues), me afsh besimtarë e me një vullnet të pashembshëm për me krye si njeri kulture detyrën e vet përkundrejt Atdheut, ai çdo rrathë të shkrimeve të veta ia kushtonte naltësimiit shpirtit të popullit shqiptar.

Porse n'at kohë populli shqiptar nuk kishte mrijtë ende pjekurinë politike sa me kuptue e me mbështetë veprën shpëtimtare të novatorve, t'atyne qi urojshin metoda më të mira qeverisjeje e nivele shoqërore më të nalta.

Në mbarim të 1924-ës qeverija e Metropolitit Fan Noli, i së cilës Gurakuqi ishte shtylla më e fortë, u rrëxue. Tjetërkush e muer pushtetimin e u bë zot në Shqipëri me ndihmën e mercenarve të huej. Edhe Shantoja, sëbashku me qinda intelektualë tjerë, u detyrue me u largue nga vendi. Jetoj si i mërguem për disa vjet në Jugosllavi, më vonë shkoi në Vjenë dhe më në fund gjet një sistemim si kapelan në Zvicër, së pari në Bienne, ku predikonte gjermanisht në kishën katolike, e mbasandej në La Motte, ku mbrenda një kohe së

shkurtë fitoi famën e një predikuesi të mirë në frëngjisht.

Asnjë shkak mënjë nuk e kishte shty me marrë pjesë në veprimtarinë politike në Shqipëri. Si shpirt bujar, zemrimet e tij zhdukeshin shpejt e fytyra e tij u shkaronte në një buzëqeshje qi zbulonte ndienja e mendime të një freskije rinore të përhershme. Shkrimet e tij, edhe më thekset u admirojshin edhe nga kundërshtarët për besnikin qi i frymzonte. Forma elegante pastaj zbutte lidhënimin e ironisë.

I pajisun me një ndieshmenie artistike, me baza të shndoshta kulturore, njoftës i rrallë i gjuhëve më të dallueshme evropjane, zotnues i sigurtë i gjuhës amnore, dashamirës i manifestimeve më të ndryshme të jetës, dashunues i muzikës, i sportit (me çantën mbi shpatull e *alpenstock* (shkop) në dorë shpesh i u ngjit alpeve në Shqipëri, n'Austri e në Zvicër), mund të thuhet se ishte i paracaktuem me lanë një vepër të madhe, e cila do të zbulonte fuqinë e tij krijuese gjeniale. Fatkeqsisht krijimi i tij do të mbetet i rrujtun ndër proza të shkurta shkelqyese e pak lirika frymzuese, margaritarë e diamanta qi dhetëfishojnë vlerën e tyre.

Për pesëmbëdhjetë vjet, e në stinën më të mirë të jetë së vet, jetoj në mërgim. Për me krijue i nevojitesh frymzimi jetëdhanës i gjindes së tij, një kontakt fizik me popullin e vet. Në pritje të këthimit, përktheu në mënyrë të ndritëshme nga Goethe, nga Schiller e nga poet të ndryshëm italian. E shkroi artikuj e vargje në gazetat e mërgimtarve, shty nga impulse të çastit, por në të mbette gjithnjë ideja me u bë gati për ndërmanien e veprës, e cila do ta kishte dftue në menyrë globale e të plotë gjenialitetin e tij artistik.

Ktheu në Shqipëri në një periudhë politike të rrëmuishme, shoqërore, prekupues. Ngjarjet e përllanë pikërisht ndërsa u sistemome me nanën e vet në Tiranë në një shtëpi të vogël ku kishte vendosë me u shokë me libra të veta të vendosura më në fund në raftet e librarisë së tij e me fletoreve të tij me shënime për me punue në qetësi.

Me 1944 qe arrestue, hjedhë në një burg të tmerrshëm e torturue në mënyrë shpënjësore: i a thyen eshtinat e duerve dhe të kambëve. Hecte tue u mbështetë mbi bërryla e mbi gjûj. E âma, lejue me e vizitue, tue e pà n'at gjendje të mjerueshme, iu lut rojeve të burgut: "vriteni, banie ket mëshirë, mos e leni me vuejtë kështu!".

Shum kanë pyetë pse komunistat u suellen aq egërsisht me të mjerin poet, i cili mbas kthimit në Shqipëri, jetonte pa u përzie në rymat e ndryshme politike qì turbullojshin vendin, veçanisht në periudhën nga vjetë 1941 deri në 1943.

Spjegimi âsht vetëm një. Komunistat shqiptarë, antiprendimorë, antikristjanë, mënijshin në Dom Lazrin shkrimtarin i cili, lidhë me traditat mǎ të shëndoshta autoktone, mbillte në shkrimet e veta thelbin ringjallës të një qytetnimit të pastër përendimuer të mbrûmë me krishtenimin. Shkrîmja e qetytnimit përendimuer qì shkëlqente në prozat e lirikat e tija, i acaronte komunistat e në të njajtën kohë i friksonte, tue qenë se në të ata zbulojshin një vegël antikomuniste me depërtim të lehtë ndër shpirtinat e rinis. Shija e të rive përkonte me stilin e Shantojës, t' ushqyem prej frymzimeve etnike, por të shprehun në mënyrë moderne, ku patetizmi e humorizmi harmonizohen në mënyrë elegante. Ai dinte me përkthye esencën sarkastike të përshtatshme racës shqiptare me përpikni humorizmi të vulës përendimore. Shkrimet e tija të pakta por shembullore, e vendosin atë në historin e letërsisë së Shqipnis pranë mǎ të rafinuemit stilist shqiptar, Faik Konicës (1875-1942).

I rrëguem në mbarim të jetës nga torturat mǎ të patregueshme, komunistat i a dhanë grushtin e fundit tue e vra me një plumb në zverk. U vorrue në një vend të panjoftun pa i u dijtë vorri. Po në të njajtën gropë, pranë trupit të Dom Lazrit, u hudh kufoma e Sulço bej Bushatit, një fisniku tetëdhervëçar musliman, mbasardhës i një familjeje princore, qì sunduen në Veri të Shqipnis gati të pavarun nga Porta e Naltë e Konstantinopolit, në shekullin XVIII. Shtatnaltë, me sjellje e pranë bujare, i nderuem në mbarë Shqipnin e Veriut, edhe Sulço

bej Bushati paraqitte personifikimin e traditave mǎ bujare shqiptare. Tue i vorrue sëbashku mohuesit e Perendis e t'Atdheut kujtojshin se me plakun Sulço Begun do të vorrojshin edhe rrājën e traditave shqiptare, kurse me Shantojën, atë qì donte me i ringjallë e fuqizue kto tradita me brûmin e qytetnimit përendimuer.

Ndokush mund të jetë shkandullue tue lexue kolanën e shkëlqyeshme të soneteve të Dom Lazër Shantojës kushtue një zojës së ré shkodrane. Ai i botoi sonetat me një pseudonim, por shpejt u muer vesh identiteti i autorit. Besoj se Shantojës, martir i fës katolike, nuk mund t'i preket në kurmji mënyrë karakteri moral.

I ndieshëm për bukurin e dhuratat e mrekullueshme qì Perendija na dhuroi në të vdekëshmeve, ndër të cilat shkelqen bukurija femnore, poeti nuk mund të mbette indiferent kundrejt ndiesive qì një zojë shumë e bukur shqiptare, admiruese e tij, kishte nxitë në të. Ai ndër ato vargje shtrydhë në vetvete turbullimin e ngashërimeve e hjek dorë nga dashunija, tue pohue se vetëm në Jetën e përtejme do të zgjidhet nga kushti fetar e do të lirohet prej ndiesive toksore.

Sonetat e Shantojës, janë sonetat e hjekjes dorë nga dashunija. Edhe pse prift ato mbesin ndër mǎ të bukurat poezi të letërsisë shqipe kushtue një fëmme.

Ernest KOLIQI

Shtenim i editorit: Ky artikull i të ndiemit Profesor Ernest Koliqit, kushtue kujtimit të Dom Lazër Shantojës, u botue për të parën herë në përkthimin anglisht me 1979 në librin *The Fulfilled Promise - A Documentary Account of Religious Persecution in Albania* (Premtimi i mbajtur - Një dokumentar i sakrimit fetar në Shqipni). Në vazhdim të shkrimit të Profesor Koliqit po botojmë kolanën e soneteve *Për një puthje të vetme të Dom Lazër Shantojës* botue për parë n' *Illyria*, 6 maj 1934.

PËR NJI PUTHJE TË VETME

I.

Nji dit' prendvere... me do leira n'dorë
ngjithshëm tuj ecun rrug's për t'parën herë
t'kam pâmun, vashë e bukur, st'prendverë
me faje t'bardha porst e bardha borë.

Zânin t'a kësba ndij... dhe kur n'at orë
t'sodita st' n'vegim tue hy n'nji derë,
<< ajo >> thashë << është për t'sakt' >> e zëmra e
mjerë
dësbrot n'at ças për ty lyrë e kunorë.

Me t'kndue e me t'bâ t'lume: n'Elíkone
njashitë do t'kndojshin zânat sikur vetë
dësbrosbem me t'kndue ty me t'âmbulat jone.

e mâ t'lumin ndër t'lum djalosh me t'gjetë,
qí t'naltonte mbretshë t'dashnis mbi frone.
Ç'u bâ kunora? Lyrën kap, poetë.

II.

Këndò, poet': - porse nji tingull lyre
a mundet kurr me shpreh' kaq bukurí?
T'tân' jazminat e lilat t'vetat ngjyre
t'a falne asaj, t' tân' lulet n'Shqipëni.

E flokë e vetilla e t'ndritshmit sy, pasqyre
e mëndes s'hollë, e gushë e qafë e gjí
e buz' lakmuese puthjesb prej natyre,
t'tân' trupt t'saj driton dasbni, dasbni.

e e dashun shuturoi tue thith' defrime
mbi lule t'jet's st' shutur hareplote:
ndër theatra mâ n'zâ, n'salone e n'gjirë

t'vallzimeve kur duel, veç adhurime
korri gjithkund, e hota e shtangun thote:
<< t'bukur st' kës s'këm pá kurr vashë ilire! >>

III.

Kalove!... mâ n' lultshita t'Shqipënis,
o lule, s'po lulzon. Në dhë t'mërgimti
st' marshallloj' rrethue prej avullis,
bartisesh n'terr nën voes' të njelin' t'mjerimti.

Heu! ganxhet t'ruja qí dër tash t'saksis
ngushticën kurr s'sprovuen, veçse t'lrimit
gjith-her' nder vise çilen t'bukuris,
mysteret mâ s'do t'gzojn në koh' t'agimit

sikur përpara... Veç kur nata t'biçe
e gjithëkafshen t'mbuloj' me t'vetat hje
nji fllad erandshem ardh' nga bregu t'detit

tash t'freskon e tu'u përkund' let-letë
nga nji nga nji tash mbyllin syt me fjetë
gjetilat e njom' mbi vargje t'nji poetit...

IV.

Kufom' vorrosun tash kahmot n'humnerë
t'detit n'tallaz është dashnija e tme:
kurr dielli nuk e gzoj e pse n'andrrime
st' nënqeshje fantazmash ndonji fiere

t'zhët për pak e shndritit e kndot ndojherë
e dielle e drandofille edhe defrime,
qen' kang' t' e saja vetëm vezullime
flake mjes krizantemave t'kalierë

n'vorreza natën... Pra ç'pubi n'dhë t'huej
tinzare pò t'shtyn gjetilat qí t'lakojnë
kryet për pushim në muzg të nat's lakmueshem

n'hemistitkun e vargjeve t'irishtueshem?
A porpërkulen n'të me mujt' t'prigjojnë
n'qetën e nat's nji varg qí s'mund të shkruet?

V.

Ah! mos e hyj at varg!... Është shumë mâ mirë
kortimbat t'u mos t'dijni ç'a do me thënë
me qën' poetë e mos me qënë t'lyrë,
me kndue me goj' kur zëmërngrita qanë.

Kshtu qënka jeta... Me nji lamtumirë
lyrën qí për ty kapa due me e lënë
pse tell t'saj, o lule, dridhet vshtrë
kur jehon' tjetër s'ka përveç nji zâne.

Lulzò ti prap! Un t'padashitë jetën
tash e kaloj, t'vetmi ndër t'jetën;
e tue kujtuemun pushim e nji ate,

puthjen t'ande n'përgim... Në tash t'përdaj
mâ t'bukrin e byneshet t'jerditë
ndër hje gjithëkafshen t'përdaj...

(Nga <ILYRE> 6 maj 1974).

MBLEDHËSI I VISAREVE TË KOMBIT - PATER DONAT KURTI - E KALOI JETËN NË BURGJE E INTERNIME

Shenim i Editorit: Auktori i këtij shkrimi ka ndjekë shkollën e mesme në Gjimnazin françeskan "Illyricum" (6 klasë) e mbas mbylljes së tij në Gjimnazin e shtetit Shkodër, me nota të shkëlqyeshme. Shokët e tij të klasës u nisën për studime në Evropën Lindore, ndersa ai si nip i Mons. Vincenc Prennushit, sherbeu për 17 vjet në Dukagjin, Mirditë etj. si mësues i shkollës fillore, ndersa kishte krye me korrespondencë "shkëlqyeshëm" si fakultetin e letërsisë ashtu dhe fakultetin e historisë. Ka botue shumë studime, të ribotueme dhe jashtë atdheut, në USA, Itali, Kosovë, Sloveni, Francë etj. si dhe librat *Kontributi shqiptar në Rilindjen Evropiane* dhe *Kolë Idromeno*. Mbas shumë vjetësh pune, mpron disertacionin *Shkodra e rrethime më 1912-1913* (vepër e pabotueme).

Mësuesin e drejtorin tim të mirë të gjimnazit françeskan në Shkodër P. Donat Kurtin, të fundit herë, me frikën e zemrës, e kam takuar në varreza. Ndersa grumbulli i njerëzve priste të shperndahej pata fatin e mirë fshehurazi të bisedoj me të. Hallet e jetës, diktatura e egër qenë temat e bisedimit, po më kujtohet mirë se më tha edhe këto fjalë: "gegënishtja jonë letrare po harrohet dhe pa të nuk mund të kuptohet as trashigimi i çmueshëm letrar shumëshekulluer i saj". Dhe kishte plotësisht të drejtë profesori im i nderuem!

P. Donati, mbledhësi e botuesi i visareve të kombit, autori i studimeve mbi historinë e artit në Shqipëri, mbi historinë e ngritjes së flamurit kombëtar shqiptar në Rilindje e më vonë në krahinat e Shkodrës, i studimit "Vepra kulturele e elementit katolik në Shqipëri" (1937), jetonte në vorfëni të plotë dhe i harruem, mbas 17 vjet burgje në Burrel e Beden dhe internime. E ashtu i implakun, po me moralin nalt, vazhdonte të shkruante e të krijonte (mbas vdekjes janë gjetur 19 fletore dorëshkrime, kryesisht mbi folklorin), megjithëse në kushte jashtzakonisht të vështira në një barakë në "Rugen e plepave" buzë zallit të Kirit, jo larg vendit ku ishin pushkatue shumë meshtarë, patriotë e demokratë, që nuk e deshën diktaturen dhe luftuen kundër saj. Vitet e fundit të jetës i kaloi me të motren e vet në vorfëni, po me një qetësi

shpirtënore që të jep, edhe në rastet më të vështira, besimi te Zoti, feja jonë katolike.

P. Donati lindi në vitin 1903 në një familje me tradita qytetare e atdhetare në Shkodër. Pas mësimeve të para e të mesme në qytetin e lindjes, vokacioni fetar e radhiti me misionarët e fesë së Krishtit. Në Romë, në ateneon "Sant'Antonio" (Antoniano) kreu mësime të larta shkëlqyeshëm për teologji dhe filozofi më 1927 dhe po atë vit këtu u shugurua meshtar.

Me vrull rinor e kulturën që kishte fituar ai u kthye në atdhe dhe u emërua profesor në gjimnazin "Illyricum" dhe më vonë drejtor i kësaj qendre mësimore e atdhetare në shenjë për mbarë Shqipërinë. Njeri me kulturë të gjërë, poliglot (njohte mirë latinishten e greqishten, malishten, frengjishten, po dhe gjermanishten e anglishten), ai bënte shenjë mes profesorëve të nderuar të këtij gjimnazi. Ai qe dhe njohës i muzikës dhe piktor i talentuar, po në radhë të parë një studiues i zellshëm. Dhe studimet e tij i vari në shërbim të kombit.

Më 1911 në Sarajevë në Vincenc Prennushi botonte *Kançe popullore gegënishtje*, të parën permbledhje serioze të folklorit të Veriut, të Kosovës e të Rrafshit të Dukagjinit dhe të Shqipërisë së Mesme. Vepra përënte vëllimin e parë të Visareve të kombit shqiptar. P. Donati së bashku me

sivëllaun e vet P. Bernardin Palajn e vazhduan këtë mugë duke botuar më 1937 "Kangë kreshnikësh dhe legjenda" si vëllim i dytë i Visareve të kombit. Janë botuar këtu brilante të letersisë sonë folklorike nga Cikli i Kreshnikëve si "Orët e Mujit", "Martesa e Halilit", "Gjergj Elez Alia" etj., si pjesët më të zgjedhura ndër më se 500 rapsodi të mbledhura me aq kujdes e dashni prej tyre. Vepra pati jehonë të gjërë në mbarë vendin dhe jashtë atdheut. Në vazhdim të kësaj pune të çmuar ai botoi më 1942 dhe më 1943 dy vëllimet e para të "Përralla kombëtare", vepra të denja për kolanen e botimeve shqiptare mbi folklorin dhe një kënaqësi e vertetë si për studiuesit ashtu dhe për lexuesit e tyre, e veçanërisht për moshat e reja. Ai ka meritën e madhe që botoi shumë nga përrallat e bukura popullore që deri atëherë nuk ishin njohur gjerësisht. Në Fjalën hyrëse vetë P. Donati shkroi: "Përrallat kombëtare shqiptare s'ju lanë gjë mangut përrallave më të permënduna të kombeve të tjera...Populli shqiptar është populli më i vjetër i Ballkanit...ai ka rrujtë mjaft mirë motive shumë të hershme, qi, të studiuar, kanë me lëshue dritë mbi historinë e popullit tonë. Nder doke të tija dhe në folklorin e tij gjinden elemente qi e naltojnë para çdo kombi." Në këtë vazhdë pune të kujdesshme studimore në shërbim të kulturës shqiptare, ai pati përgatitë edhe vëllimin e tretë gati për botim, po paslufta shenoi për të dhe intelektualët atdhetarë shqiptarë një deziluzion të tmerrshëm nga diktatura që u vendos. Megjithatë P. Donati edhe me ato që botoi mbeti një punëtor i palodhën i kulturës shqiptare i çmuar dhe nga të huajtë si Dr. Norbert Jokli dhe nga dijetarët tanë si Prof. Eqrem Çabej, Aleksander Xhuvani etj.

Më 1946 Pater Donati arrestohet. Ishte vit i kur diktatura komuniste godiste pa mëshirë klerin katolik. Provoit torturat më të tmerrshme në burgjet e Shkodrës (atë vit Shkodra kishte 13 burgje!) dhe na vënë, mbasi u dënue, në burgun e Burrelit, në atë të Bedenit etj. Plot 17 vjet vuajtë në këto vende tmerr të pashoq! 17 vjet burg ky misionar i paepur, ky atdhetar e njeri i kulturës! Është e kotë të flitet për akuzat false që fabrikonin hetues, xhelatë,



Pater Donat Kurti, OFM

prokurorë, guardianë burgu etj. Qëllimi i tyre ishte zhdukja e klerikëve atdhetarë e intelektualë. Po nuk ja arriten qëllimit, sepse vepra e tyre rron dhe do të jetë kurdoherë një akuzë e rëndë për ata që provokuan gjakderdhjen, që torturuan e masakruan njerëzit ma të nderuem të këtij kombi.

I lodhun nga jeta dhe nga moshë e shtyeme, i torturuar dhe i paushqyer për vitë me radhë, nga internimi i Orman Pojanit ai do të gjysem i sakatuar, po jeta për të vazhdoi dhe, në vetëminë e vorfëninë e tij, punonte papushim. Zelli i tij është shembull i një studiuesi atdhetar të apasionuar. Nga derëshkrimet e tij përveç përrallave për të cilat e përvijoi punën dhe përvetësoi popullorë (disa prej tyre i pati botuar në "Hylli i Dritës") perfundoi studimet mbi karunin e Shënderbeut dhe mbi jetën familjare dhe të dhëna etnografike mbi Dukagjinin.

Përçmimi dhe goditja që i dha diktatura këtij dijetar shqiptar nuk ka precedentë në historinë e kombit të intelektualëve. Më 1983, në tetor, ishte vendosur të mbledhej në Shqipëri në Tiranë, një

simpozium mbi ciklin e Kreshnikëve. Qenë ftuar të huaj edhe nga vende të tjera, nga Italia, Franca, Austria, Danimarka (diktatura me të huajtë mbante fytyrë tjetër për t'u treguar se interesohej për zhvillimin e kulturës!), po P. Donatin, pikërisht mbledhësin e botuesin e parë të këtyne perlave të folklorit shqiptar (P. Bernardin Palaj kishte vdekë në tortura më 8 dhjetor të vitit 1947 në ishburgun te Konvikti i Maleve tona - informacion nga P. Aleks Baqli dhanë më 1990) nuk u kujtua askush ta thërriste, dhe as t'i përmendte emrin e tij në sesionin shkencor. Pseudoshkencëtarët apo grabitësit e vlerave kombëtare studimore menduan se do t'ia varrosnin dhe emrin e mirë të tij (kështu kanë vepruar dhe me të tjerë!) po më turp për ta është tani kur del e verteta në shesh.

Pater Donat Kurti do të mbetet në kujtesën e të gjithëve që e njohën si një françeskan shembullor, me trup të naltë, me sy e zemër të çilter, me embelsinë e fytyrës dhe të bisedës së tij. Ne nxënësve të tij na mjaftonte vetëm shikimi qortues. Asnjë prej nesh nuk e pau P. Donatin të vrazhdë, të vranët, por gjithnjë të qetë, të matun, të dashur. Si meshtar dhe si mësues ai ia kalonte herëherë perkujdesjes së prindit.

Si punëtor i zellshëm e i palodhur i kulturës kombëtare shqiptare ai do të mbetet një emër i pahamuar!

Në broshuren e tij mbi veprën kulturele të elementit katolik në Shqipëri vetë P. Donati shkruen: "Kultura që rrjedh prej realizimit të parimeve kristiane, ban që kudo të perhapet Ungjilli, aty ndrron faqe ai vend, sepse çilet një lamë e re veprimi, që është për lulëzim e madhni të atij vendi e jeta kapet në kulmin e idealit."

Këtij ideali ai i sherheu gjithë jetën e tij! Ndërsa po mbyllja këto pakë shenime për të vlerat mësuesin tim, një nxënës i imi, djali i ish-të burgosures Marta Daja, një katolike e flaktë, më solli tri poezi të P. Donatit të shkruara me laps në deren e burgut. Kjo nënë e burgosur, ma vonë, i ka pa këto poezi dhe i ka mbajtur në mend. Tashti unë e kuptoi se P. Donati paska qenë edhe

poet! Dritë pastë! Këto vargje të shkrueme në errësirën e burgut janë relike të çmuara, janë një mesazh i vertetë shprese e dashinje kristiane!

Mikel PRENNUSHI

* * *

P. Donat KURTI OFM;

I BURGOSUNI

*Lidhë duersh e kambësh me bekura,
Në tokë shtrur me lëvër,
Zbeh në ftyrë, ligshtrur,
Sytë e gropuem sjell nga dera
Tanë frigë rrin e pret,
Kush po gërsel,
Pse e sheh vedin t'penguem,
Është i burguem.*

U DHA KUSHTRIMI

*Erdh dita të gëzohemi,
Që u dha kushtrimi,
Në fusha e në male,
Në shëj ngallnjim
Të valojë prepë flamurit
Se armiqitë u thyen.
Tu dha fund vujtjeve
Prej kah e psoi jeta
Duel në shesh e drejta,
Dert prej vorreve
Vigma shpërtheu!*

NË DORËN TANDE

*Lum kush n'Tenzonë shpueson,
Dhe e ka për Prijës dhe Mbret,
Se n'gëzime e n' të vështitë,
Pret ditë ma të mira,
Se i Lumt të gjithë i don.
Ngushllim është për atë zemër,
Që e mësyeme prej dështimit,
Nuk ka si t'peshin rrezikut
Qindron e s'trëket,
Pervuhtas lulet,
E thotë: "N'dorë tande, o Zot!
Në dorë tande, o Zot, kur t'm' shpëlin,
Kur t'm' shajnë e të më shpëtojnë,
Kur t'm' na bijnë e t'm' poshtrinojnë
Kur t'm' na jerrin shpëtim,*

BIBLIOTHEKË PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

*Kur t'më ndajnë sboqntje,
N'dorë tande deh mos m' lësho!
Nën bjtje t'krabëve të tu,
Mâ t lum jam unë se fëmija,
Që e mpron e nanës dashnija,
Kur të kem ty n'roje,
Unë mri pa droje,
Se jetën e nderin m'pshton!*



SHQETËSIMET E NJË MËRGIMTARI POLITIK

Gëzuar Vitin e Ri 1992!

U mbushën plot 33 vjet që nga koha kur u detyrova të largohem, me rrezikun e jetës, nga Shqipëria, nga vendi im, vendi i të parëve të mij.

Vitet kalojnë! Ndryshojnë kohët, dhe vendet kanë ndryshuar ashtu siç ka ndryshuar edhe Shqipëria e ime. Popujt që jetojnë në këto kohë dhe në këto vende të ndryshme kanë pësuar gjithashtu transformimet e paevitueshme qoftë në filozofinë qoftë në mënyrën e jetesës së tyre. Edhe shqiptarët kanë udhëtuar si të tjerët në një botë që lëvizë pa papushim. Cila është ruga që kanë marrë shqiptarët? Me mendime të këtilla fillova vitin e ri 1992, vitin e premtimeve të mëdha!

Mendoj se si popujt që banojnë këto planet, të ndërgjegjshëm ose jo, në shumicën e rasteve gjejnë vehten e tyre të nënshtuëmë disa forcave, dhe disa rrethanave jashtë kontrollit të tyre individual ose grupit shoqëror të cilit i perkasin. Vetëm një pakicë e privilegjuar individësh ka aftësinë dhe guximin e jashtëzakonshëm të brumosë të ardhem me duart e veta dhe të reklamojë pavarësinë nga "fatit." Herojt, shenjtorët, dhe artistët e vertetë nuk janë të shumtë....

Shenim:

Këto tri vjersha të shkrueme me laps në një derë të çelisë së burgut u zbuluen nga Marta Daja më 1947 kur edhe ajo vetë ishte e burguson. Pater Donat Kurti kishte ndejtë në atë çeli.

Nuk jam pjesëtar i kësaj pakice të privilegjuar. Jam thjeshtësisht një individ i lirë, dhe një viktimë, ashtu siç ishte i tërë populli im: viktimë e kulshedrës së kuqe që shkatërroi shumë jetë të pafajshme padrejtësisht.

Ashtu e pashë unë, dhe akoma e shoh, popullin shtatë milionë e gjysëm shqiptar: viktimë e një fati të pamerituar, viktimë e një intrige ndërkombëtare, viktimë e një grupi kriminelësh që i u imponuan popullit me forcë e terror, në të dy anët e kufirit artificial.

Këtu e shoh edhe burimin e tragjedisë sonë kombëtare: një popull i ngritur në kembë nga dëshira e çlirimit kombëtar dhe social –e gjenë vehten, si në një tragjedi të antikitetit të paradënuar nga perendi të padukshme që së pari në Beograd, e më vonë nga Moska dhe Pekini caktojnë fatin e tij për dekada të tera, pavarësisht nëse përpiqjet mbinjerëzore dhe në kontradiktë me aspiratat e viktimës shqiptare.

Perënditë e dhëturës kanë agentët e tyre, udhëheqës të krijuar me dekrete. Sa kanë qenë kështu në Shqipëri këta agentë për rolin e tyre si instrumente të perëndive hakmarrëse është një

pyetje që është vështirë të përgjigjet plotësisht sot. Historia, ngjarjet e rreshtuara në kohë dhe hapsirë për shekuj me rradhë, është mësim-dhenëse dhe nuk mund të neglizhohet pa rrezikun e ecjes kundër saj, pa renë në anti-historiken. Por agjentët e diktaturës janë fajtorë për aktet e tyre, dhe të paktën për periudhën e dy dekadëve të fundit ata janë dhe përgjegjës të plotë.

Koncepti i fajit është relativisht më i përcaktueshëm sepse mbështetet në konkretësinë e aktit të bërë. Koncepti i përgjegjësisë është më i komplikuar, është më abstrakt. Ai kërkon spjegim dhe justifikim të aktit kriminel nga autori vetë për hir të atyre që, drejt për së drejti ose terthorazi, kanë qenë viktimat të dramës. Sepse përgjegjësia është detyrim që kërkon shpagimin e dëmit të bërë, shpërblimin e të demtuarit, si dhe ndëshkimin e fajtorit, shkelës i kontratës sociale, dhe i institucionalizimit të saj të bërë me ligjë.

Përgjegjësia individuale, si element i grupit shoqëror, don të thotë edhe solidaritet me të tjerët në shërbim të kauzës së përbashkët dhe të së drejtës. Përgjegjësia është një cilësi e përvetësuar me ndërgjegje të plotë, është vetëdija e individit që reklamon se njeh të vërtetën e vet dhe që është në gjendje të gjykojë vlerën morale të aktit të vet. Përgjegjësia e vertetë është, mendoj unë, kombinimi fatlum i ndershmënisë dhe guximit civil.

Sot, para së gjithash, ndjehet një nevojë e madhe të përcaktohet një standard përgjegjësie, një masë e pranuar nga shumica, ndershmënie dhe guximi civil. Ç'është ndershmënia dhe sa guxim civil kërkohet nga secili, si qenëje njerëzore dhe si qytetarë? Vështirësitë politike dhe ekonomike që po kalon sot populli im janë të një natyre të përkohëshme -- për këtë jam i bindur -- me gjithë peshën e rëndë që ushtrojnë ata sot në jetën e përditshme të vendit. Elementi i përgjegjësisë morale të secilit është i një natyre të përhershme dhe, ashtu si në të kaluarën, ai mbetet guri themeltar i një jete me dinjitet për secilin nga ne dhe i një shoqërie shqiptare të organizuar, të qytetruar, dhe me fibër morale të shëndoshë.

Hapi i parë në këtë drejtim është çiltërtia. Le të jemi të hapur me vehte dhe me të tjerët, jo në guajtjen e shtrigave por në një përpjekje serioze dhe të kultivuar për të zbuluar shkaqet e tragjedisë më shumë se për të denuar aktorët e sajë, dhe me qellimin e caktuar që të hedhim bazat e një shoqërie që nuk do të lejojë përsëritjen e katastrofës së kaluar. Kuptimi korrekt i mësimet që muarrëm nga historia e mbas 7 prillit 1939 është garancia më e mirë që tragjedia kombëtare shqiptare të mos përsëritet më.

Tragjedia shqiptare bashkëkohore paraqitet sot si një zinxhir aktesh misterioze dhe irracionale që tregojnë një mungesë flagrante të kuptimit të procesit historik, të forcave që e influencojnë historinë tonë kombëtare, si dhe një mungesë flagrante, nga ana e aktorëve kryesorë të kësaj tragjedie, e njohjes së natyrës së vërtetë të një sistemi politik që u bë fati i vendit tonë për një gjysëm shekulli. Që nga kataklizmi i 7 prillit dhe deri në mesin e 70-ës fati i vendit tonë u lidh me qendra të jashtëme në lojën e madhe politike të të cilave Shqipëria ishte vetëm një pion shahu. Si është e mundur që "qeveritarët" shqiptarë të pranonin që Roma imperiale do të shpëtonte Shqipërinë e varfër, ose një Gjermani në prak të humbjes do të mbronte intereset shqiptare? Si është e mundur që "luftëtarët" për çlirimin nacional u nënshtuan vullnetarisht kërkesave jugosllave për kontroll të gjithanëshëm të vendit, ose para kërkesave sovietike për bashkimin e Shqipërisë në rugën e aventurave ushtarake agresive kundër Perëndimit? Si është e mundur që mbas prishjes me sovietikët drejtohen sytë në Pelini i largët dhe enigmatik, dhe më në fund si është e mundur që deri në vitin 1991 mbahet Shqipëria e izoluar nga bota e jashtëme?

Natyrisht, përgjigja nuk është aq e thjeshtë siç e dëshirojmë ne, ose siç e mendojnë disa. Por fakti që një problem kaq esencial nuk ngrihet me fuqi e përkuri në shtypin shqiptar më shqetëson. Dhe më shqetëson akoma më shumë fakti se asnjë nga aktorët e kësaj politike irracionale nuk gjen guximin e duhur civil të dalë në shesh para

publikut e të spjegojë, (ndoshta edhe të justifikojë) këto qendrime.

Gjendja e sotme në Shqipëri përshkruhet si faza e dekompozimit të burokracisë. Nga njera anë, ajo është e paralizuar nga injoranca dhe korrupsioni dhe e karakterizuar nga këmbëngulja e burokratëve që të mos largohen nga skena. Nga ana tjetër, shohim forca të reja, me vullnet të mirë por pa eksperiencë dhe pafuqi që ofrojnë alternativën e ripërtitjes. Si rezultat, është krijuar një paralizë e strukturës shtetore që po sjellë kaosin e plotë, anarkinë shkatërruese. Një dikotomi e këullë e shoqërisë shqiptare është e rrezikshme. Ajo që më shqetëson në këtë mes është këmbëngulja e atyre që e kanë sjellë vendin në gjendjen e sotme e që vazhdojnë të reklamojnë akoma të drejtën e përfaqësimit dhe pjesëmarrjes në pushtet si udhëheqës. Dhe shqetësohem akoma më shumë kur shikoj se asnjëri nga ata "drejtues" nuk gjen guximin civil të mjaftueshëm që të ngrihet hapur para bashkëqytetarëve e të pohojë peshën e fajit dhe të përgjegjësisë që rrjedh nga ai.

Tani që "e kuptojmë së lufta nacional-çlirimtare nuk ka qenë aq 'çlirimtare' sa reklamohet dhe Balli Kombëtar nuk ka qenë "bashkëpunim me okupatorin" siç shkruante një fletore shqipe e Shkupit, lufta kundër okupatorit, që sherbeu si justifikimi i vetëm i marrëjes së pushtetit në Nëntor 1944, duhet shikuar në një prizëm të ri, dhe mundësisht pa paragjykime. Disa aspekte të periudhës së okupacionit mund të përcaktohen me një dozë realiteti të pranueshme nga shumica. Mund të thuhet p.sh. se të gjithë ata që dhanë jetën në luftën kundër pushtuesit të huaj janë deshmorë, pa dallim nga simbolet që kanë mbajtur, kauza për të cilën ata kanë dhënë jetën është e shenjtë, është një altar i hapur për të gjithë! Mund të thuhet se të gjithë ata që drejtuan armën kundër vëllaut e motrës shqiptare janë kriminelë, pavarësisht nga simbolet që kanë mbajtur; vëllavrasja nuk justifikohet! Mund të thuhet p. sh. se të gjithë ata që kanë luftuar okupatorin kanë bërë detyrën e tyre patriotike, por nuk kanë fituar asnjë privilegj. Dhe njëkohësisht, mund të thuhet se të gjithë ata

që nuk kanë luftuar okupatorin nuk e kanë bërë detyrën e tyre patriotike por nuk kanë humbur të drejtën të jenë qytetarë shqiptarë me të gjitha të drejtat që u takojnë. Çfarë do të shkruaj nesër historia?

Artikujt e gjatë që boton sot shtypi shqiptar me të cilët agjentë aktivë të historisë sonë bashkëkohore tregojnë hollësi të panjohura deri tani për publikun e gjerë shqiptar bëjnë një sherbim: ata konfirmojnë një dyshim të përgjithshëm, d.m.th. se historiografia shqiptare e këtij gjysëm shekulli është një gënjeshtër e madhe, e serializuar, dhe e sherbyer kohë mbas kohe një publiku të detyruar të duartrokitë. Si mund të jetojë një popull pa histori? Si rrjedhim, kemi konfuzionin e sotshëm. Por fakti që nuk bëhen përpjekje që të paraqiten disa parime bazë, të pranueshme nga shumica, ku të përcaktohen standarde reale ndershtmenie dhe guximi moral për gjykimin e akteve të së kaluarës, më shqetëson. Dhe më shqetëson akoma më shumë fakti që "historianët" e rregjimit nuk dalin në shesh të thuan të vërtetën e shtrembëruar me pendën e tyre nën presionin e diktaturës.

Një shtet juridik është i mbështetur në sundimin e ligjit dhe jo në kapricet e autoritetit sado i lartë që është ai, ose të një partie cilado qoftë ajo. Prandaj edhe një shkelje aq flagrante e koshiente e ligjëshmërisë siç ka qenë ajo që u bë gjatë pesëdhjetë vjetëve të fundit, nuk justifikon shkeljen e të drejtave të individëve "fajtorë". Është një parim themelor i ligjëshmërisë që nësa kohë që një individ nuk është dënues nga një gjykatore e rregullt, ai apo ajo, është i pajetshëm para ligjit. Si rrjedhim, ata ligjërisht gëzojnë të drejtën e një qytetari të lirë, duke përfshirë në drejtën e zgjedhjes qoftë edhe në funksionet me të larta të shtetit. Por ekziston edhe një tjetër aspekt i problemit: aspekti moral. Vetë peshën ose rëndësinë e krimit që i ndjek këmba-këmbë duhet ta mjaftojë në ata individë të heqin dorë nga korrupsioni për të drejtuar shtetin e shoqërinë e sotme shqiptare, sepse është një turp. Kështu u bë me fashistët, kështu u bë me nazistët, kështu duhet të jetë edhe me komunistët. Fakti që nuk ndryshoi ky detyrim moral me shqetëson. Dhe

fakti që ata dëshirojnë të përjetësojnë privilegjet e tyre si sundimtarë, haptazi dhe në forma të organizuara partiake, me shqetëson akoma më shumë. Kur mendoj akrobacitë politike të presidencës së republikës këto tre vitet e fundit, dhe se si kjo presidencë akoma kërkon të përfaqësojë popullin e ekzodeve, studentët demonstratorë, dhe punëtorët e minatorët grevistë, që po kjo presidencë ka detyruar të largohen ose i ka shtyrë në buzë të greminës, (pa zenë me gojë qindëra mija të burgosur dhe të internuar vuajtjet e të cilëve kjo presidencë i ka sanksionuar me ligjë!) atëherë vazhdimësia e saj më duket një anormalitet i shekullit njëzet, diçka groteske. Dhe, natyrisht, si shqiptar, shqetësohem shumë.

Pasqyra e gjendjes sotme në Shqipëri është dëshpruese: krime të rënda, vjedhje, dhunime, thyerje dyqanesh etj. Djegje shkollash dhe grabitje spitalesh: akte të papara në shoqërinë shqiptare. Ka lajme akoma më shqetësuese që tregojnë thellësinë e degradimit moral të një pjese të shoqërisë shqiptare. Shtypi dhe mjetele televizive të botës së jashtme tregojnë skena të pabesueshme të varfërisë, mbrapambetjes, moskujdesimit total kundrejt fëmijve, sakatëve, pleqëve të lenë mbas dore për pesëdhjetë vjetë me rradhë. Kush është përgjegjës për të gjitha këto? Fakti që asnjë nga përgjegjësit nuk gjen guxim të mjaftueshëm dhe ndershmëri që të dalë haptazi para viktimëve e të pranojë krimin –sepse ky është një krim!–e bërë me një ndjenjë pendimi më shqetëson. Dhe kur shikoj se në olimpin e tyre të mbyllur hermetikisht gjaku dhe djersa e milionëve është shpenzuar pa asnjë skrupull jo për foshnjoret, jo për invalidët e luftës dhe punës, jo për shtëpitë e pleqëve por për vilat e një grupi "udhëheqësish" të korruptuar deri në palc dhe familjarëve të tyre, më shqetëson akoma më shumë. E meritonte këtë Shqipëria?

E meritonte Shqipëria të shohë 400.000 burra e gra, pleq e fëmij të kalojnë nëpër kampet e përqendrimit? E meritonte Shqipëria të shoh afër 150.000 të tjerë të dënuar e me burgime të gjata vetëm sepse nuk pranuan diktaturën dhe i thanë JO! rregjimit që rrafshoi individualitetet, që shuajti

talentin, që urrej inteligjencën dhe frymën e nismës së lirë individuale, dhe që kërkoj me çdo mjet nënshtrimin e një populli mbar, duke imponuar një bindje të verbër për të gjithë? Para qëndrimit të moderuar dhe frymës së faljes që karakterizon sot mendimin dhe veprimin e viktimave të shtypjes – e që na mbushë me krenari si manifestim i fisnikërisë shpirtërore të popullit tonë-- heshtja e bashkëpunëtorëve që janë shkaktarë të këtyre vuajtjeve që akoma vazhdojnë, me shqetëson. Dhe shqetësohem akoma më shumë kur lexoj dhe dëgjoj "spjegime" që lëndojnë plagët akoma më shumë, "spjegime" që akuzojnë kaosin e sotshëm duke harruar qellimisht të kaluarën pesëdhjetëvjeçare, sikur ajo e kaluar të mos ishte rrënja e çdo të keqeje që trashëgojmë ne sot.

Ashtu si për vendet tjera, për Shqipërinë gjithashtu, pyetja është në se rregjimi i korruptuar komunist duhet reformuar apo zëvendësuar. Komunizmi në Shqipëri është treguar intolerant në një shkallë kriminale, një brutal i paisun me forcën e shtetit në dorë. Sundimtarët komunistë në Shqipëri janë dalluar nga njeri tjetri vetëm nga shkalla e intensitetit të urrejtjes që ata kanë ushqyer për popullin e mjerë, e sidomos kundrejt kundërshtarëve të tyre të pambrojtë. Një rregjim që ka ngritur urrejtjen në shkencë, dhe e ka adhuruar atë, nuk mund të reformohet. Ai meriton të shkatërrohet, dhe mbi gërmadhat e tij të ndërtohet bota e re shqiptare si antinom i urrejtjes bota e vëllazërimit. Mbas eksperiencës gjysëshekullore, a ka kuptim të flasim për bazat e shëndosha të socializmit, ndërsa luftohen "defekmet staliniane"? Thirrje patetike se po prishet një shtet kur ai ka nevojë të reformohet dëshpëruar edhe në Bashkimin Sovietik. Nuk kanë vlerë gjithashtu vlerësimet që na arrijnë këtu e që uraguesin "udhëheqësit" si instrumente kryesore të përgjigjeve të gjakderdhjes nëpër rrugët, sepse një gjë e vetillë është minimumi që pritet nga ata që mbajnë fuqinë. Dihet nga të gjithë se edhe sot "dora e pushtetit" padyshim është në gjendje të shkallojë dëme të mëdha në popull. Dhe kur mendohet se një vjet mbas hyrjes së pluralizmit në Shqipëri akoma sot kjo "dorë"

ekziston, atëherë shqetësohem. Dhe shqetësohem akoma më shumë kur shoh se nuk ka një mobilizim të mjaftueshëm që të pritët kjo "dorë" një herë e përgjithmonë.

Lista e shqetësimeve është e gjatë. Më shqetëson rinia që ka humbë besimin në vetëvehte dhe në vendin e vet e që largohet si turmat e ndjekura nga lufta. Me shqetësojnë mijërat e familjeve të shpërndara e të shkatëruara për gjysëm shekulli, dhe që nuk dijnë se ku të fillojnë jetën përsëri. Më shqetësojnë punëtorët e vendpunimeve industriale, dhe ata të nëntokës që u shfrytëzuan si skllevër medievalë nga i ashtu-quajtur i "regjim i klasës punëtore." Më shqetësojnë fshatarët që u këthyen në bujk-robër në shërbim të 300 familjeve bujk-pronarësh të kuq. Më shqetësojnë intelektualët të cilëve u zu goja nga frika, dhe që u asiksuan nga ajri i qelbur i diktaturës, shkrimtarët, artistët, poetët (oh, sidomos poetët!) që u këputën në rrënjë, lule që u shkelën me kembë. Me shqetëson gjendja e rendë ekonomike, varfëria, papunësia, mungesa e bukës, e dritës, e shërbimit mjeksor e mbi të gjitha mungesa e shpresës për një të ardhme më të mirë që ka mbuluar të dashurin vendin tim. Dhe natyrisht më shqetëson fati i tre miljonë shqiptarëve në Jugosllavi e Greqi, plagë që rrjedhin gjak që nga 1877, dhe që u harruan për një shekull të tërë...! Më shqetësojnë persekutimet e vëllezërve katolikë ("ata Lleshrat e Prengrat që i kemi vrarë faj e pafaj", thoshte Pandi Kristo në burg!) vetëm sepse kanë qenë katolikë, e që sot jetojnë akoma me frikën se holokosti i tyre mund të përsëritet po të mos fitojë demokracia e vertetë.

Por nuk ecet përpara duke shikuar mbrapa. Vizioni i së ardhmes është një duel me negativizmin e së kaluarës dhe armik i status quos së tanishmës. Ashtu si për Somalinë, Etiopinë, Sudanin e vende tjera, veprimet vetëshkatërmuese mund të përsëriten edhe në Shqipëri, ndërsa bota do të shikojë, do të kalojë, do të harrojë, dhe do të na dënojë. Tani që lufta e ftohët u eliminue, tani që nuk ka rivalitet në mes dy superfuqive, bota e lirë do të tregojë

akoma më pak interesim edhe për Shqipërinë, dhe në se shqiptarët nuk i ndihmojnë vehtes, kjo botë e idealizuar nga ata që nuk njohin botën reale do të kthejë kurrizin si një portë që na përplasit në surrat.

Sot, na duhet një edukim i ri politik. Duhet të arsimohemi. Por nuk mund të flitet për një edukim politik në qoftë se ky edukim nuk do të jetë në gjendje t'i përgjigjet nevojës që kërkon rugëdalje nga qorr-sokaku ku kemi rënë. Si e shoh unë, në Shqipëri sot ky edukim duhet të përqendrohet në plotësimin e natyrës së njeriut me përpjekje kundër forcave deformuese, konvencionale, dhe plot paragjykime. Mbas pesë dekadësh indoktrinimi, asgjë nuk ndihmon gjeneracionin e ri shqiptar më shumë se një arsim që përpiqet t'i bëjë ata dhe ato qenëje individuale autonome e jo grupe automatësh kolektivë. Do të shkojshe edhe një hap me larg: Shqipëria ka sot nevojë për "rebelë" që të shkundën letargjinë gjysëm shekullore. Është gjithmonë e rrezikshme me ngrëjtë zerin e vetmuar kundër opinionit të përgjithshëm, por është me fisnike. Fisnikëria e shpirtit të njeriut! Atë kanë bërë profetët biblikë: ata kanë thirrur të vërtetën, qoftë edhe në shkretirë, dhe kanë proklamuar atë ashtu siç e kanë menduar në thellësinë e mendjes dhe e kanë ndjerë në thellësinë e zemrës së tyre. Shqipëria ka nevojë për brezëri që ekzistojnë, jo për turma që vegjetojnë!

Shqipëria ka nevojë për dialog, jo për monologe. Shqipëria ka nevojë për një opinion publik të kulturuar, për një shtyp të dedikuar, sepse në një atmosferë të këtill intelektualë do të fillojnë takimet e tyre, dhe do të zbulonin të reja pa pengesë. Sidomos në një botë antagonistë siç është sot Shqipëria, intelektualët duhet të fermentojnë shoqërinë shqiptare me vërtetësinë e hots së lirë, mendimit të lirë, shkrimit të lirë, dialogat dhe debatit të hapur, të kërkuarve të pakompromis të së vërtetës ashtu siç e konceptojnë ata lirisht. Sepse deri më sot, intelektualët në Shqipëri kanë qenë të "intelektuar" si masa e me kampi refugjatësh ku mendje gjatë të hequra jashtë vendeve të tyre nga neveri diktatorial e të lenë pa atdhe, sorollatën

të pa punë...! Intelektualët duhet të gjejnë atdheun e tyre në një Shqipëri të lirë.

Në se një individ dëshiron të flasë ose të heshtë, është një çështje thjesht personale. Por është detyra e intelektualëve më shumë se të tjerëve që të sigurojnë të drejtën e fjalës për të gjithë ata që e dëshirojnë, kështu që të bëhet i mundur diskutimi me guxim i problemeve thelbësore që afektojnë të ardhmen e vendit tonë. Dhe këtu, shtypi, kjo armë që bën dhe çbën mbretërit, radioja dhe TV duhet të jenë të hapura për mendjet e ndritura të vendit tonë.

Duke pasur parasysh gjendjen morale siç është ajo e sotmja në Shqipëri, në këto momente dhe në atë vend, a duhet menduar e ardhmja e rinisë si etapa e shkollarëve të shumëzuarë, apo si periudha e qytetarëve të rij, individë me virtyte morale? Cila na duhet, cila na ndihmon? Cila na ven në rrugë të mbarë e na siguron mos-përsëritjen e katastrofës që pësua për 50 vjetë? Menjëfjalë, sa kujdes duhet t'i kushtojmë ardhmërisë së kombit: të jemi të virtytshëm, të jemi punëtorë, të jemi luftarakë, a po të jemi të shkolluar para së gjithash?

Këtu, çdo ditë lexojmë në shtyllat e shtypit të vendit qëndrime të reja në lidhje me problemet që ballafaqon shoqëria amerikane. Rinia e këtij vendi është bërë shoqërisht koshiante. Problemet që ballafaqon shoqëria tërheqin vemendjen e masave të reja çdo ditë e më shumë. Është krijuar, si të thuash, një etikë kolektive. Abortimi, zgjatja e jetës artificialisht, e drejta me vdekë me dinjitet, SIDA dhe epidemi të tjera, racizmi, paragjykimet fetare dhe sociale, varfëria dhe sidomos të pastrehuarit, vendet e varfëra, uria në botë, problemet ekologjike e tjera mobilizojnë miliona të rij e të reja amerikane. Ky është njeri aspekt i konceptit universalist të shekujve të ardhshëm. Megjithatë, një problem tjetër del para nesh me të gjithë forcën e vet: problemi i etikës individuale. Shqip: virtyti tek secili nga ne. Sa të ndershëm jemi ne? Sa të sinqertë, sa mëshiruesë, sa të gatshëm për sakrificë? Deri në çfarë pike jemi tolerantë, të lirë, të barabartë me të tjerët? Dhe sa jemi ne si

individë të gatshëm me luftue intolerancën, shtypjen, dhe padrejtësitë shoqërore? Dhe sa jemi ne të gatshëm për sakrificë me qëllim që të mbrojmë të drejtat e tjetrit me të njëjtin vetëmohim që mbrojmë të drejtat tona?

Shqipëria kërkon sot të hyjë në Europë. Ska dyshim se atje e ka vendin dhe do të hyjë në një të ardhme jo të largët: politikisht, ekonomikisht, konvencionalisht. Por Europa e sotme është rezultati i renaissancës, i humanizmit, i iluminizmit dhe i doktrinave sociale të shekullit të kaluar, si dhe i çmendurive ideologjike të shekullit tonë. Europa është një kontinent qytetrimi i së cilës pruri Karten e OKB, konventat ndërkombëtare për të drejtat e njeriut, Aktin Final të Helsinkit, Kartën e Parisit dhe të tjera si këto. Kjo është Europa që na pret, kjo është Europa që ne kërkojmë, kjo është Europa që na duhet të meritojmë. Sepse, hyrja në Europë nuk është thjeshtë një dëshirë: ajo hyrje është kryesisht një vullnet këmbëngulës që të fitojmë të drejtën e pjesëmarrjes me mendjen tonë, me punën tonë, me sjelljet tona. Nuk kam asnjë iluzion për vështirësitë që ballafaqon vendi im. Por bindja ime në vullnetin dhe aftësinë e popullit tim, e sidomos të rinisë, është shumë më e madhe se dyshimi.

Para popullit shqiptar po hapet tani një fazë e re e historisë, po hapen dyert e qytetimit përëndimor që u mbyllën qysh me ardhjen e Otomanëve, dyert e begatisë ekonomike që nuk u hapën asnjë herë. Dhe këto do t'i sjellë fitorja e demokracisë së vërtetë në Shqipëri. Por duhet dituri dhe punë, dhe përsëri punë. Nuk jetohet me dhurata; vetëm djersë e punë era ndershmëri!

Për vitin e ri uroj që të fillojë edhe në Shqipëri dialogu, shkëmbimi i ide, i edukuar, dhe konstruktiv i mendimeve si dhe të ngjallet përsëri zjarri i punës me djersë e ndershmëri për mbarë kombin dhe të miljonësh shqiptar. Përmoftë Zoti.

Sami REPISHTI
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Baldwin, New York

NEKROLOGJI

Martin Camaj
(1925-1992)

Vdekja e Martin Camajt është një humbje e randë jo vetëm për letërsinë shqiptare por për mbarë popullin shqiptar, mbrenda e jashtë atdheut. Ai vdiq më 12 mars 1992, mbas një smundje së gjatë, të cilën e bëri me zemër e durim, pa paksue aktivitetin e vet letrar e shoqëror. Vorrimi u bë më 19 mars në vorrezat Waldriedhof në katundin Lenggries ku ai banonte me të shoqen, Erika. La pas gruen, pa fëmijë.

Në vorrimin e tij morën pjesë rreth 180 vetë, t'ardhun nga vende të ndryshme të Europës së Shtetit të Bashkuar. Ndër ta ishin një shumicë kosovarësh. Pati edhe një përfaqësi shqiptarësh nga Shqipëria. Shërbimi fetar shqip u bë nga Dom Prenk Ndrevashaj, ardhur postafat nga Detroiti. Fjalimi i rastit, përkëthye gjermanisht nga Prof. Fiedler, u mbajt nga Arshi Pipa në kishën Stadtpfarrkirche në qytetin Bad Tölz. U vendosën rreth 20 kunora e tufa lulesh nga familjarët, kolegët dhe miqt, Universiteti i Munichut, dhe Departamenti i Gjuhësisë ku Martini dha mësim për gati tridhjetë vjet me radhë, sëdhe përfaqësi studentash shqiptarë dhe kosovarë. Rreth 60 telegrame dhe faxe u dërguan prej entesh zyrtare, miqsh e dashamirësh, fqinjsh dhe personash të ndryshme, sëdhe shumë letra.

Lajme dhe komente mbi vdekjen e tij janë botuar në një shumicë gazetash dhe revistash, tue përfshirë këtu artikuj mbi vlerën e madhe letrare të veprave të Martinit. Të tilla janë sidomos shkrimet e botuara ndër gazeta të mirënjohura gjermane si *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* dhe *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Revista shqiptare dhe kosovare i kanë kushtuar faqe të tana veprimtarisë letrare të Camajt, me citata të shumta nga vëllimet poetike. Martini qe shumë pakë i njohur në Shqipërinë e Enver Hoxhës. Ai do të njihet siç meriton në Shqipërinë e re demokratike. Sa e deshti ai këtë Shqipëri e tregon përshëndetja që ai i drejtoi grupit letrar



Martin Camaj disa muaj para vdekjes

demokratik ALBANIA pakë para se të vdiste, kur ai gjindej në spital:

“Të dashun miq e vllazën Shqiptarë, intelektualë, artistë dhe mbarë popull shqiptar, përshëndetjet e mija ju janë drejtue të gjithëve. Gëzohem pamash se keni vendosë të vlerësoni veprën time: ky vlerësim na afron. Bata bëmë në më shtini në rreshtin tuej. Konse të ndamë për një gjysmë shekulli, unë jam i jetej e ju jeni të miqt”.

Gjatë shërimit të përmonime për shkrimtarin, poetin e etnologun tonë të shkrutë folën Arshi Pipa e Gërd Korça nga SHBA, Ardian Klosi nga Shqipëria, Rexhep Ismaili nga Kosova dhe Gerhard Gamm i Universitetit të Mynihut.

Ma poshte po botime fjalën e prof. Arshi Pipës në mesazhin përshëndetës për Martin Camajn në

katedralen e Bad Tölz-it si dhe fjalën e Ardian Klosit mbi vorrin e shkrimtarit, ashtu si u botuen në të perkohshmen *Libertas* (Tiranë, Prill-Maj 1992).

Prof. Arshi Pipa:

Të dashun bashkatdhetarë

Zonja e zotërinj

Miq e dashamirë,

Vdekja e Martin Camajt është një humbje e madhe, një humbje kombëtare.

Martinin e kam njoftë së pari në Romë, mbasi lashë Shqipërinë. Kjo ka qenë në vitin 1957. Kemi ndëjtë bashkë për afër tri javë para se të shkoja në Shtetet e Bashkueme. Qysh prej atëhere kemi qenë në kontakt të vazhdueshëm. Po të shihet dosja e korrespondencës që kam me Martinin, ajo është më e madhja në zyrën time.

Po filloj me një frazë përmbledhëse: Martini është përfaqësuesi më i naltë i kulturës shqiptare. E them këtë jo vetëm sepse ai është një poet, poeti më i madh që ka Shqipëria sot, por edhe për cilësinë të tjera intelektuale të tij. Sikurse e dini, Martini ka qenë editor i një reviste, "Shëjzat", që është revista më erudite në kohnat e vonshme. Martini është edhe linguist, një njeri i cili i ka dhënë albanologjisë ndoshta si pak vetë të tjerë, sidomos në fushën e gramatikës dhe të dialektologjisë. Martini ka një emën shumë të rëndësishëm si pedagog. Ai ka qenë mbajtësi i së vetmes katedër të gjuhës shqipe në Gjermani. Ai ka qenë profesor i kushedi se sa nxansave, të cilët sot janë albanologë të shquem dhe janë ndoshta këtu bashkë me ne sot. Asnjë intelektual tjetër shqiptar, me sa di unë, nuk përmbledh në personin e tij të gjitha këto merita sikurse i spjegova.

Revista *Albanica* e ka emnuë Martinin si kandidat për çmimin Nobel në letërsi.

Unë do të kufizohem për me thanë diçka për Martinin si letrar, si poet. Pse po kufizohem vetëm në këtë lëmë të Martinin, do ta shihni prej sa do të thuhet më tej.

Në një letër të vitit 1959 drejtue mue Martini shprehet me këto fjalë: "Nga lirika kam kalue në shkencën gjuhësore, për mos me u nda nga krijimi letrar. Prej letërsisë kam pasë gjithçka, edhe vullnetin tim për me jetue." Unë nuk di a ka pasur një tjetër person në gjithë historinë e letërsisë shqipe, i cili ka mundur me folë në këtë mënyrë, i cili ka pasë kaq pasion intens për letërsinë. Një njeri, i cili e bân letërsinë, poezinë, qëllimin e jetës së vet, ky njeri është sigurisht i veçantë, një njeri i jashtëzakonshëm. Në një poezi të rinisë Martini shprehet me këto vargje:

*Kur të vdes le të bëhem ujë
e fryma e eme avull,
në fushe do të bie si shi.*

E kuptoni se fjalë të tilla janë të frymëzueme nga një dhimbisuri e madhe për popullin shqiptar e sidomos për popullin e maleve tona, për një vend që ka qenë vazhdimisht i unshëm, i vorfën.

Martini flet për Shqipërinë si për një popull të lidhun te buka. Në një tjetër strofë të kësaj poezie të shkurtër Martini zhvillon një ide e cila ka qenë e vazhdueshme në apostullat e tij. Kjo është fryma e autoktonisë shqiptare, të cilën Martini e shpreh me fjalën shqipe dheas: shqiptarët janë dheas.

*Kur të vdes le të bëhem për
në shkëlqim e në ndriçim
të qndrojtë kufi.*

Me këto fjalë Martini shpreh patriotizmin e vet, njerëzje e kufinit para anëtarëve të Shqipërisë. Por poezia e Martinin nuk

kufizohet me nacionalizmin. Te një tjetër poezi, edhe kjo e rinisë, gjendet edhe kjo frazë:

Avitu, njeri!

*Nga palci i urrejtjes dëshiroj me dalë
si bima prej fare në pranverë.*

Këtu Martini i lëshon vendin humanizmit, një humanizëm që sigurisht ka një tingull kristian, por një humanizëm i cili ka një shtrirje universale, pa dallim seksi, feje, race, gjinie. Fjala është për njeriun në përgjithësi. Poeti shprehet këtu për atë që quhet solidaritet njerëzor. E me këtë thotë diçka, e cila kalon në letërsi përtej vlerave etike të zakonshme, përtej edhe së mirës e së keqes, ashtu sikurse e gjejmë tek fraza evangjelike "Zoti e lëshoi shiun mbi të mirin edhe mbi të keqin".

Ky është një ideal poetik, i cili, për me e arritë në atë shkallë sikurse e shpreha, është filtruar te Camaj, në mendjen e në shpirtin e tij, në një proces psikik që është i pashembullt në historinë e letërsisë shqipe. E kam fjalën tek kryevepra letrare e Camajt me titullin "Dranja". Dranja është një emën i zakonshëm grueje në malet e Veriut. Dhe njëri prej personazheve të kësaj vepre është një vajzë e re, më tepër fëmijë sesa grue, e cila quhet Dranje. Por ajo që duhet vënë në dukje është se po me këtë emën Martini quen një... breshkë. Poeti identifikohet me breshkën. Po, mund të thoni ju, çka i pëlqen kaq shumë breshkës Martini? Martini i pëlqen breshkës disa cilësi, të cilat përbajnë etikën e të jetuemit si breshkë. Për shembull, breshka ecën në vijë të drejtë, pa bërë dredha si gjarpni. Ashtë e durueshme. Ashtë e paqshme. Nuk ankohet. Nuk idhnohet. Ashtë indiferente për pronën. Jeton pa plâng e pa shtëpi. Pullazin e shtëpisë së vet e ka përmbi kurriz. Ashtë nomade. Poeti e quen në një vend kozmopolite. Ai vëren rrashtën e saj, e cila

ka do kutia, të cilat i kujtojnë Martinin gjeografinë e hemisferit. Edhe më e rëndësishme sesa kjo që thashë, ky simbolizëm emblemantik i breshkës, është përkufizimi i breshkës prej Camajt. Breshka është për Martinin një qenie e papërsosun. Kjo është shumë e rëndësishme për mendimin poetik të Martinit. Kur ai thotë qenie e papërsosun, edhe këtë e përcakton, madje imagjiron në papjekuninë shtazore të breshkës diçka të ndërmjeme midis mamiferëve, sisorëve, edhe reptilëve. Me fjalë të tjera, ai flet për breshkën si për një qenie transitore në evolucionin e jetës përmbi dhë.

Mua më duket se në këtë definicion që Martini i jep breshkës ai merr një qëndrim për gjendjen e sotme të njeriut. Njeriu sot është shumë larg së qeni i përsosun. Ju e shihni se çfarë po ngjitet në botë. Ne ende jemi njerëz të cilët jemi shumë afër kafshës, ne vrasim, ne shkatërrojmë. Por, prapëseprapë e dimë, e ndiejmë se njeriu nuk mund të kufizohet me këtë gjendje që është sot, se duhet të kalojë përpara. Ashtë nevoja nga ana tjetër për njëfarë pastrimi mendor, për njëfarë katarsis. Ashtë kjo rendje e njeriut për ta kaluar këtë fazë, është kjo që e shpëton njeriun prej damnacionit.

Kuptoni prej kësaj edhe qëndrimin filozofik të Martinit. Kjo mund të përkufizohet me fjalën optimizëm. Ata që e kanë njoftë Martinin merrin shpesh e dinë mjaft mirë që ai ka qenë një njeri me gjallni të madhe, me një dëshirë të madhe për me u shprehë në një mënyrë që shprehia e tij të vendoste kontakt me njerëzit. E kjo natyrisht shprehte optimizmin në drejtimin e një farë rilindjeje të njeriut. E kur më flas për njeriun, nuk has për ndonjë njeri të jashtëzakonshëm por për njeriun e zakonshëm. Këtu bëj në shesh një tjetër përmendje shumë e rëndësishme e personalitetit të Martinit, në atë që e kemi

quajtë demokratizmi i Martin Camajt, diçka që është në kundërshtim krejt me kultin e heroit, diçka prej së cilës del se Martini ka qenë përbuzës i këtij kult. Martini nuk e donte heroizmin, një ashtu si breshka. Martinit nuk i pëlqejshin ideologjitë revolucionare, qofshin ato të djathta ose të majta. Por nuk duhet ta kuptoni këtë se Martini ishte për rezignatë. Jo nënshtrim pasiv ndaj së keqes. Mesazhi i Martinit në këtë mes mund të shprehet me fjalën rezistencë. Jo rezistencë pasive, por rezistencë aktive. Në veprën e tij "Dranja" Martini e përcakton këtë koncept me një titull shumë të rëndomtë e grotesk: "Ngjarje dite". Për çka është fjala? Ashtë fjala për një vendim që merr qeveria, s'ka rëndësi çfarë qeverie, për me çfarosë breshkat. Agjentët e qeverisë, tregtarët e breshkave, mbushin vagona me breshka, të cilat i çojnë në kasaphanë. Ai që çon një breshkë, paguhet si çmim me kafe e me sheqer, në peshën e vet breshkës. Por mandej lind pyetja, çka me bën me rrashtat e breshkës? Mirë që mishi të hahet, por çka me bën me rrashtat e breshkës. Ndërsa bisedohet në instancat e nalta të qeverisë, çka ndodh? Nji armatë breshkash shkon te hekurudha, vihet ndër binarët e trenit e kështu ndalon trafikun.

Kjo është një alegori, por e cila, më duket mua, i shkon fort bukur për shtat diçkaje që ka ndodhë në kohët e fundit. Fliter këtu në bllokimin e trenit. Çka bënë studentët e Tiranës, kur bllokuen sheshin "Skanderbej" edhe ngrazuen monumentin e diktatorit? Ata dhanë sinjalin për një mënyrë komportimi, e cila ta shkatërronte diktaturën pa gjak. Mund të thuhet se të njëjtën gjë janë tue bënë kosovarët në Jugosllavi.

Moisiu iu prini hebrenjve për me i çue te Toka e Premtueme, por ai vetë nuk hyni mbrendë. Camaj vdiq, pa pa fitoren e demokracisë ndër këto dy fronte kombëtare

shqiptare që përmenda. Ndoshta ky krahasim mund t'i duket dikujt tepër i shtymë. Por nuk duhet të harrohet edhe një gjë: se poezia e madhe është disa herë profetizuese. Në latinishten ka një fjalë për këto dy cilësi të përmbledhuna në një. Kjo është fjala *vates*.

Vepra e Martinit nuk u plotësue për shkak të vdekjes së tij të parakohshme. Edhe këtu unë gjej pak a shumë një profeci të tij. Ai e përshkroi breshkën si një qenie të papërsosun. Por ajo çka ka mbetë e papërsosun, ajo do të vazhdojë, do të vazhdojë të jetojë me shpirtin. Martini mund t'i thuhet pikërisht kjo, që vepra e tij do të vazhdohet. Kjo është edhe dëshira e të gjithë të dashunve të Martinit, e grues së tij, e familjarëve të tij në Shqipni, e shokëve të tij më të dashun.

Pusho në paqë.

• • •

Ardian Klosi:

Martin Camaj nuk është më. Ne, miqtë e tij nga Shqipëria, do ta kishim më të lehtë sikur ai të jetonte gjatë. Ne e takonim gjithmonë dhe ai na jepte shpresë. Mendonim se do të jetonte gjithmonë, ashtu si fjala shqipe që ai shkruante.

Martin Camaj ishte për ne jo vetëm një njeri. Camaj ishte një institucion, institucion i fjalës së pastër dhe të vërtetë shqipe. Ashtu siç na e lanë të parët tanë, shqiptarët që besonin tek fjala, pa e se të vënin ata që e dhunuan fjalën për ta vënë në shërbim të gënjeshtërs. Ne, qytetarët e Republikës Shqiptare, ish-socialistë u pritëm nën një zhurmë fjalësh mashtruese. Prandaj trokisim tani tek Camaj si tek një institucion, si të hyjmë në Akademinë e vjetër shqipe në Mërgim.

Në të vërtetë Martin Camaj nuk bënte pjesë në Akademinë zyrtare të Shqipërisë.

Ky njeri i rrallë i dha Shqipërisë shumë: dijen e vet dhe ndriçoi më tej gjuhën shqipe, shpirtin e vet dhe begatoi poezinë shqipe. Kurse Shqipëria nuk i dha aspak: me asnjë titull nuk e nderoi, asnjë libër nuk i botoi. Shqiptarët ende nuk e dinë kush ishte Martin Camaj dhe çfarë ka bërë ai për kulturën shqiptare.

Martin Camaj nuk është më. Institucioni i fjalës së pastër shqipe nuk punon më. Akademia shqiptare në Mërgim i mbylli dyert. Asgjë dhe askush nuk e zëvendëson dot Camajn.

Një peng do të më ngelet gjithmonë, i dashur profesor, që të njoha kaq vonë. Në këtë dhimbje më ngushëllon sadopak vetëm një dëshirë: që ta bëjmë të njohur e ta përhapim sa më parë veprën tënde në Shqipëri.

Ti je i yni e ne jemi të tutë, Martin Camaj.

Trokitje

DËSA HERE NE JETË

*Dësa herë në jetë e ndieva në fëtyrë
erën e trupit të saj në lëvizje
dhe s'pata frigë. - Mordja! - thashë
e duert e mija ishin të ngjiftuna
ngusht njana me tjetrën
dhe s'pata frigë.
Në gishtat e mij kisha lidhun
dhimbën
me fije të kuqe
dhe dashurinë s'e barrova.*

*Besoj se është larg,
por kur ajo në ndonji fatkeqsi
ngreh kambën rrëshanë nëpër
pluhurin
e gëzhgatsëm t'udhave, më
përqethet
shtatë, e s'kam frigë.
Besoj se është larg,
por kur era muzgut më kapet për
tesha
merdhës e parndjenja e saj m'fryn
zemrën
me plashë: Ajo është e ftohtë!*



Vorri i poetit Martin Camaj i mbuluar prej kunorave e luleve në varrezat e Leizit, Gjermani

*Kur të vdes, më veshni me tesha të
leshta
sikurse ishte dokja ndër të parët e
mij.*

Kthimi

*Varrët janë mbyllë përjashta.
Faleminderës, o shënim i diellit,
që prësh edhë sot mbi triqna
tonë.*

*Pse jam shqiptar,
trishtimi i kaluem i seme amë
jeton si gjaku i sâj në mue:
të gjitha bapstë avyten në gjanstë
e dritës së syve.*

*Edhe rë të janë ulë e t prektm me
dorë.*

*Kur tallazi të bjtë në pushtin
e njëmij btmë ujce kryepuzull
të përbëndestin ngjyrat e agut,
due me kthye në jetë buzë ujti
që e njoh si veteten.*



Nji foto e rallë. Nji grup i nxanësve të Shkollës Apostolike në Shkodër me mësuesit e tyre. Në qendër Martin Cani. 1937. (Fotografi e Dom Prek Ndrevashaj, shoq klase me Martinin)

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- Catacombs*, monthly Messenger of the Church of Silence in French (B.P. 98-92405 Courbevoie Cedex, C.C.P. 1206 29 Z Paris, France).
- Cristian Order*, monthly in English (53, Pennerley Rd. Catford, London SE6 2LH, England).
- Cristianità*, monthly in Italian (Casella Postale 185, 29100 Piacenza, Italy).
- Democracija*, weekly in Albanian (Zoll. Str. 122, 8005 Zurich, Switzerland).
- Dielli*, monthly in Albanian (Herczogovačka 111, 41000 Zagreb, Republic of Croatia, Europe).

- Dielli*, monthly in Albanian and English (517 E. Broadway, South Boston, MA 02127, U.S.A.).
- Drita*, a Catholic monthly in Albanian (Ruga Lenjingradi 48, YU-38230 Ferizaj, Kosovë, Yugoslavia).
- Gentes*, Jesuit monthly in Italian (Via degli Astalli 16, 00186 Rome, Italy).
- Glas Koncila*, Catholic weekly in Croatian (Kaptol 8, pp 1011, 4100 Zagreb, Republic of Croatia, Europe).
- HRI-Human Rights Internet Centre*, (University of Ottawa, 57 Louis Pasteur, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N5, Canada).
- Human Rights Worldwide*, monthly in German, French and English (Kaiserstrasse 72, D-6000 Frankfurt/Main, FR Germany).
- Illyria*, twice weekly in English and Albanian (2321 Hughes Ave. Bronx, New York, NY 10458, USA).
- Islam*, bimonthly in Italian (Corso Trieste 90, 00198 Rome, Italy).
- Katundë Ynë*, Arbëresh and Italian quarterly (87010 Civita (CS), Italy).
- Koha e Jonë*, quarterly in Albanian, French, Italian and English (84 Rue La Fontaine, 75016 Paris, France).
- L'autre Europe*, quarterly in French (L'Age d'Homme, 5, rue Férou, 75006, Paris, France).
- La Civiltà Cattolica*, Jesuit monthly in Italian (Via di Porta Pinciana 1, 00187 Rome, Italy).
- Le Christ Au Monde*, monthly in Italian, French, English (Via di Propaganda 1c, Rome, Italy).
- Libertas*, bimonthly literary in Albanian (Pallatet e Lanës, Shk. 6, Ap. 31, Tiranë, Albania).
- Lidhja*, Italo-Arbëresh-Greek periodical (Via S. Lucia 20, Cosenza 87100, Italy).
- Lrija*, monthly in Albanian and English (409 West Broadway, South Boston, MA 02127, USA).
- Missioni*, Jesuit monthly (Piazza S. Fedele 4, 20121 Milano, Italy).
- Open Doors with Brother Andrew*, monthly in English (P.O. Box 6 Standlake, Witney, Oxon OX8 7SP, England).
- Oriente Cristiano*, an Arbëresh religious and cultural quarterly in Italian (Piazza Belini 3, 90133 Palermo, Italy).
- Our Lady of Grace*, Byzantine Arbëresh newsletter in English and Arbëresh (51 Redgrave Ave., Staten Island, NY 10306, USA).
- Our Sunday Visitor*, weekly in English (Noll Plaza, Huntington, Indiana 46750).
- Qendresa*, monthly in Albanian (Postfach 117, 8059 Zürich-Ch. Switzerland).
- RCDA - Quarterly in English on Religion and Human Rights in Closed Societies*, (475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, USA).
- Rilindja Demokratike*, daily Albanian newspaper (Rruga Asim Vokshi Nr. 49, Tiranë, Albania).
- Südost-Europa*, monthly in German (Gulles 7, 8000 München, FRG).
- The Albanian Eagle*, newsletter in English and Albanian (717 Second St. N.E. Suite 303, Washington, D.C. 20002, USA).
- The First Freedom*, bi-monthly in English (1319 Eighteenth St. NW, Second Floor, Washington, D.C. 20036, USA).
- The National Catholic Register*, weekly in English (12700 Ventura Blvd., Suite 200, Studio City, CA 91604, USA).
- The South Slav Journal*, Quarterly in English (7 Clarendon Gardens, London NW3 7DD, England).
- Urtija*, religious, occasionally in Albanian (Jordanićevac 110, pp. 169, 41001 Zagreb, Republic of Croatia, Europe).
- Zeri i Arbëreshvet*, Arbëresh and Italian periodical (C.C.P. 21/7155 Ejanina (CS) Italy).
- Zeri në Vërtetë*, monthly in Albanian and English (PO Box 742 Ridgefield, NJ 07657, USA).
- Zeri*, weekly in Albanian (Pallat i Shtypit, 38000 Pristinë, Kosovë, YU).
- Zjarr*, Arbëresh and Italian periodical (87069 S. Demetrio Corone (CS), Italy).

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