



**ALBANIAN
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BULLETIN**

**BULETINI
KATOLIK
SHQIPTAR**



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ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

Vol. XIV

1993

This 1993 edition covers a wide range of important issues for Albania and its people in Kosova and abroad. The historic visit of Pope John Paul II in April was a most significant event in the modern post-communist era of Albanian history. The visit helped heal the wounds of a half-century of oppression. The Pope consecrated four new bishops and thus re-established the Catholic hierarchy. The visit also had a positive international effect on Albania which has desperately sought to join the international community of free nations. Several articles, breathtaking photos and a complete chronological report plus papal greetings, speeches, and sermons are included in this *Bulletin* issue.

We continue to offer our readers reports and personal testimonies about oppressive conditions under the communist regime of Enver Hoxha and his successors. Some descriptions are extremely horrifying and many will wonder how the civilized world, which knew about these atrocities, remained so indifferent and unmoved by the situation. Our readers may be moved to ask why the Albanian intellectuals waited until the last moment to raise their voices to protest against such atrocities. Some of *The Bulletin's* articles focus on one of the leading Albanian intellectuals who waited until the 11th hour to denounce the regime. He then left the country legally and declared himself an "all along dissident!"

Since its inception in 1980, our journal had continually informed the public about the plight of Albanians under the heavy heel of Yugoslav (Serbian) military rule. Our Institute pledges to continue its defense of the rights of persecuted Albanians in Kosovë and other regions of former Yugoslavia.

Several studies and articles discuss the helpless situation of Albanians in Kosovë and attempts by the people to regain their God-given rights. The authors, after objectively presenting the roots of the present crisis, vigorously advocate an international solution in order to avoid another Bosnian carnage.

As in the past, the *Bulletin* covers various Albanian literary, cultural and ethnic topics. This time, the OPINION FORUM section carries an interesting study on the Gheg variant of the Albanian. Our readers will find the book review section useful and enjoy other items covered in this annual issue. The Albanian readers likewise will be pleased to note that this volume carries a sizable section printed in the Albanian language.

Again we take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported us by sending a financial donation to further our Institute's work and enable us to continue to publish the *Bulletin*.

Zoti Ju bekoftë! God bless you!

Paul Bernadicou, S.J.
Director

**BULETINI KATOLIK
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Vjetei XIV

1993

The Daniel Dajani, S.J.
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CONTENTS

Editorial: WITH POPE JOHN PAUL II IN ALBANIA, <i>Gjon Sinishtia</i>	4
Guest Editorial: ALBANIA – THE EMBODIMENT OF CHRISTIANITY, CULTURE & CIVILIZATION, <i>Ernesto Santucci, S.J.</i>	7
POPE JOHN PAUL II RECEIVES THE FIRST ALBANIAN AMBASSADOR	9
HOLY FATHER VISITS MARIAN SHRINE TO ASK PROTECTION ON HIS VISIT TO ALBANIA	12
TELEVISED MESSAGE OF POPE JOHN II TO THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE	13
POPE JOHN PAUL II: THE WORLD MUST NEVER FORGET ALL THAT HAPPENED IN ALBANIA (Chronological report of Pope's historic visit to Albania)	14
POPE JOHN PAUL II SPEAKS OF ALBANIA AT HIS GENERAL AUDIENCE	30
FROM ROME TO ILLYRICUM, <i>Lulash Dajçi</i>	32
ALBANIAN EPISCOPAL LINEAGE TRACED, <i>Charles N. Branson</i>	36
EMERGING FROM THE "TRAGIC UTOPIA", <i>Eleuterio F. Fortino</i>	38
LIFE IN THE LABOR CAMPS OF ALBANIA, <i>Viktor Dosti</i>	42
THE POET ARCHBISHOP VINÇENC PRENNUSHI, OFM, REMEMBERED, <i>Mikel Prennushi</i>	44
THE PAINFUL ORDEAL OF AN ALBANIAN JESUIT, <i>Anton Luli, S.J.</i>	46
THE SOCIETY OF JESUS IN ALBANIA, <i>Richard H. Siebert</i>	51
THE RETURN, <i>Gjon Sinishtia</i>	54
THE ROAD TO SHKODËR, <i>Gjon Sinishtia</i>	54
THE JUDGED AND THE UNJUDGED: NEXHMIJE HOXHA & ISMAIL KADARE, <i>Stephen Schwartz</i>	61
KASEM TREBESHINA: THE WRITER WHO WOULD NOT COMPROMISE WITH HOXHA, <i>Robert Elsie</i>	64
FRANO ILLIA – SPIRITUAL LEADER AND WRITER	66
RELIGION AND THE REBIRTH OF ALBANIA, <i>Nermin Viora Falaschi</i>	67
ALBANIA: ECUMENICAL PROBLEMS AND PROMISE, <i>Steven A. Armstrong S.J.</i>	70
SHAKING OFF THE PAST, <i>Carolyn Brzezinski</i>	73
ALBANIANS IN KOSOVË: FROM WARFARE TO PEACEFUL RESISTANCE, <i>Sami Repishti</i>	76
KOSOVA ISSUE DISCUSSED AT THE PACE UNIVERSITY, <i>Dietrich Fischer</i>	92
ON THE RECOGNITION OF MACEDONIA – WILL ALBANIANS HAVE A FAIR STATUS?, <i>Shkelqim Beqart</i>	95
"CAIN'S WORK": TWO YEARS OF THE SERBIAN WAR, "Friends of Kosovë", <i>San Francisco</i>	96
CARNEGIE REPORT ON 1912-1913 BALKAN WARS REISSUED, <i>Stephen Schwartz</i>	100
ADEM DEMAÇI - EUROPEAN "MANDELA" VISITS SAN FRANCISCO	102
GJERGJ FISHTA: THE VOICE OF THE ALBANIAN NATION, <i>Robert Elsie</i>	104
AN ESSAY IN DEFENSE OF THE GHEG VARIANT OF ALBANIAN, <i>Sandalio Solsona</i>	114
ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALBANIAN COMMUNITIES IN ITALY, <i>Licia Conti & Odette Marquet</i>	117
ALBANIAN ARTISTS IN WORLD THEATRE, <i>Andrea Ferrari & Ardiana Karakasht</i>	122
A SALUTE TO OUR INSTITUTE'S "GODFATHER", <i>Gjon Sinishtia</i>	125
THE ALBANIAN LEGACY OF ERNEST KOLIQI – On the occasion of his 90th birthday, <i>Stephen Schwartz</i>	126
THE SPIRITUAL PATRIMONY OF MSGR. JOSEPH J. OROSHI, <i>Zef V. Nekaj</i>	128
BOOK REVIEWS	133
IN MEMORIAM	160
ALBANIAN LANGUAGE SECTION	165

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May the good Lord reward your generosity and may Our Lady of Shkodër watch over all of the friends of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*.

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Editorial

WITH POPE JOHN PAUL II IN ALBANIA

Like many of my countrymen, I have lived the majority of my life away from Albania. Exiled many years ago from the fatherland, I could only watch from afar, in my "winter home" in America, as my Albania sank deeper into the cold and darkness of communist extremism. Yet even when things were at their worst, I never lost hope that this ideological winter would end. I longed to once again be able to return to Albania.

Despite everything, I trusted that God would redeem his promise of faith and freedom that he made to His martyrs. Years ago, when Karol Wojtyła, a young Polish man with a love for poetry and a tremendous respect for the common worker, was showing great promise as a seminarian, I, too, was studying to be a priest. I had neither his intelligence nor his charisma and nothing that could even approach his promising future. But I had wonderful teachers. My old Jesuit teachers and friends, Fathers Zef Valentini and Pjetër Palladini used to tell me all about God's gift to his martyrs—the same lesson Cardinal Wojtyła and, later, Pope John Paul II would stress again and again. I now feel obliged spiritually and morally to reproduce some of their remarks to me. After all, they too prayed and hoped for a new beginning in Albania. They used to say:

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"Gjon, kjo asth vetem një fortunë, një stuhi e fortë që heret ase vonë do të kalojë. Kisha e katolikizmi kanë mbijetue këso stuhish e madje edhe më të rehta. Por medet, na jena tashma tepër të vjetër për me mujtë me pa atë ditë të bardhë kur lirija e fes dhe e fjalës do të lulzojë përsëri në Shqipërinë tonë. Por ti që je i ri e plot shpresa, Zoti ka me ba që ta shofish Shqipërinë prap të lirë."

(Gjon, this is only a storm, a hurricane which sooner or later will blow itself out. The Church and Catholicism have survived similar storms and even much stronger ones. Unfortunately, we are already too old to have the fortune of seeing the blessed day when freedom of faith and conscience will again flourish in our Albania. But you are young and full of hope. God will grant you to see Albania free again.)

There were many times in the depths of the winter that I couldn't share their certainty. My faith was not like theirs, nor again like Wojtyła's. There was no doubt in my mind that the communist system would eventually fall one day, but I never thought I would live to see it. Meanwhile, Wojtyła was steadily rising through the ranks of the Church hierarchy, from pastor to Bishop, to Cardinal until finally he became Pope John Paul II. The path of his trajectory was destined to converge with Albania's less luminous course.

At the height of the Soviet Empire's power, the Solidarity Movement (*Solidarność*) was born in Poland. About the same time Albania was proclaiming herself the "World's most atheistic country". Pope John Paul II, Lech Walesa and Mikhail Gorbachev, like meteors in a dark night, appeared on the horizon to change the course of our century's history and shatter the thick walls of darkness, and quieted the communist "storm". A springtime of freedom and democracy began in Eastern Europe, and the bright light leaked into Albania, as well. The prophecy of my Jesuit friends was fulfilled on my first extended visit to Albania in September, 1992. Then I saw the communist system crumbling.

However, the joy of returning home was mixed with the bitterness of seeing the damage done to the human spirit and traditional religious and national values which for centuries have distinguished Albanians from their neighbors. All the same, the joy in the eyes of children and youth were a clear sign that in the new atmosphere of freedom, blossoms of hope, courage and self-determination were growing.

My second brief visit to Albania came only a short seven months later, and it was most memorable. I was blessed and privileged to join with other journalists accompanying Pope John Paul II during his first visit to Albania on April 25, 1993. With special Vatican accreditation, I was able to meet and interview top Albanian officials and religious leaders. I even visited the new Tiranë prison, which hosts many former communist leaders, including Mrs. Nexhmije Hoxha, the widow of the former dictator Enver Hoxha.

I was truly impressed discussing religious matters in present-day Albania with Grand Mufti, His Grace Sabri Koçi, Head of the Albanian Muslim Community; His Beatitude, Archbishop Anastasios Yanullotos, Primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Albania and Frano Illia, Archbishop of Shkodër and Primate of the Catholic Church in Albania. All three leaders treasure the traditional fraternal and ecumenical relations among their religious communities.

Koçi spent some 20 years in communist gulags for his faith. Archbishop Yanullotos, a Greek national, until recently a university professor and scholar, was named to the post by the Patriarch of Constantinople in the absence of a qualified Albanian clergyman. Because of his Greek origin, his nomination and subsequent consecration in Tiranë has stirred up much discontent among the faithful, especially in the United States. Illia was sentenced to death at the very beginning of the "cultural revolution" in 1967 for refusing to reject his faith and denounce the Pope. The sentence was later commuted to 25 years in prison.

The charismatic President Dr. Sali Berisha and his youthful administration have managed to direct a bloodless transition from dictatorship to democracy. Certainly it was not easy, considering the

strong grip the communists held on all the instruments of power. Berisha is rightly credited for saving the nation from a fratricidal civil war and for quickly establishing law and order following the fall of communist rule.

It was truly an honor and an inspiration to be able to meet and talk with the President and his closest advisors, including: Alexander Meksi (the Prime Minister), Alfred Serreqi (Foreign Affairs Secretary), Agron Musaraj (Interior Affairs Secretary), and Mitro Çela (Member of Parliament), chief editor of the first opposition newspaper in 45 years *Rilindja Demokratike* (Democratic Rebirth). They enthusiastically welcomed the Holy Father's visit, and did everything possible to make the day beautiful and truly a national celebration.

In their remarks, Berisha's advisors reiterated that the Holy Father's visit would bring about a renewal of faith and human values for all the Albanian people at home, in Kosova and in the diaspora. It would also encourage not only Catholics, but all Albanians who believe in God. It would serve to present Albania to the world as a civilized country and one which was able to overcome the dark legacy of communism in a short time.

"The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, is our greatest friend in Europe. During the visit, he will officially re-establish the Catholic hierarchy, but he will also embrace our people and bless our infant democracy. We respect him greatly and love him dearly," said President Berisha. These words from the head of Albania's government which after years of atheistic communist leadership and an anti-Catholic campaign as vigorous as any in recent memory, were enough to send a shiver of relief down the spine.

From the outset of His Holiness' visit, beginning with his kissing the Albanian soil, every step was carefully planned and executed. It was gratifying to see the glorious way the visit proceeded. It certainly honored the Albanian officials and impressed the Apostolic Nunciature and Vatican representatives. Pope John Paul II was warmly greeted at the Rinas International Airport by many prominent Albanians including Mother Teresa and President Berisha along with other religious and political figures as well as the diplomatic corps. The Pope's

heartfelt greeting conveyed to all the warmth of a family gathering. This spirit continued throughout his tour to Shkodër.

All along the road, the Holy Father's motorcade was greeted enthusiastically and emotionally by the populace of the towns and villages who had travelled for many hours to see the Holy Father. It was a deeply moving scene: rows of men, women and children with handmade crosses and long-hidden rosaries, begging his blessing while joyfully chanting "Papa! Papa!" The crowds, Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox alike had come to express their admiration and love for this Pope, who from the outset of his papacy has privately and publicly defended their religious and human rights.

The motorcade made a stop at the site of the destroyed sanctuary of Our Lady of Shkodër beneath the medieval castle, Rozafa of Shkodër. The Holy Father knelt in silent prayer at a predieu decorated with bouquets of wild flowers and the Albanian and Vatican flags. The crowd knelt and joined him in silence as well.

When he entered Shkodër, the crowds on both sides of the streets burst into exuberant joy. The Holy Father and his entourage were visibly moved by this spontaneous manifestation of love and respect.

At the Cathedral, which was packed with some 5,000 worshippers from all over Albania—many of whom were non-Catholic—all were stunned when the Holy Father began the Mass in Albanian. For several minutes the attendees responded with applause and chanting and the Pope paused, appearing to join the faithful in their joy. This prayerful and joyous spirit continued throughout the three hour Mass and consecration of the first Albanian bishops in fifty years. After the ceremony, the crowds outside of the Cathedral—some 60,000 people—had their opportunity to greet and applaud the Holy Father. He appeared at the balcony of the archbishop's house with the newly ordained bishops and presented them to the crowd. In a highly emotional voice, His holiness then led the crowd in the singing of the Regina Coeli.

An Italian journalist, who had accompanied His Holiness on many of his 58 pilgrimages abroad, told me that he had never seen the Holy Father so totally and emotionally captured—not even in Poland—as he was here in Albania. "Certainly he will not shout to these people *Silentium* as he did to the crowds in Managua years ago", he said.

I told him that the Holy Father was openly demonstrating to Albanians the care and love he has carried for them for years for their witness to the faith throughout this half-century. It certainly was appropriate that these most religious people persecuted for the faith receive such open affection for their staunch fidelity.

Later in the evening, some 150,000 people exuberantly welcomed Pope John Paul II to the capital's main square, Skanderbeg. They had been waiting for hours for the Holy Father to appear. Men, women and children festively dressed, flying Vatican, Albanian and even Polish flags, and holding flowers and banners, exploded into jubilant chant as the Holy Father appeared standing up in his bullet-proof "Pope mobile" vehicle. At his side was the newly ordained Archbishop of Durrës-Tiranë, Rrok Mirdita. As they passed by the crowd, the people exclaimed "Papa! Papa!" and "Rrofte Papa!" (Long live the Pope) and "Rrofte Sali Berisha!" ("Long live President Berisha"). Here, again, the president and the pope addressed the huge crowd. The celebration with greetings and speeches lasted more than two hours.

Despite His Holiness' heavy 13-hour schedule there was no evidence of fatigue in him. He appeared to be enjoying himself thoroughly and it seemed that he was reluctant to end the day. Finally, in a very emotional voice he bid farewell to the people of Albania: "Fë Mirupafshim" ("Goodbye") and "Zoti bekoftë mprejtë popullin shqiptar kudo në botë" ("May God bless Albanian people throughout the world.")

The Holy Father's pastoral visit did indeed become a national holiday celebration. It left a deep impression on all who had the good fortune to be present. The visit will certainly remain an extraordinary event in the history of the Albanian people as a sign of the resurrection and consolidation of the new Albania.

GUEST EDITORIAL

ALBANIA - THE EMBODIMENT OF
CHRISTIANITY, CULTURE, & CIVILIZATION

Civilization could be defined as the sum total of norms, customs and relations among the members of a given ethnic group, above all, the social values of the group.

In general, every society, every nation, considers itself civilized. But the ways in which a civilization is judged differ considerably from one place to another.

The Amazon Indian has "his own" civilization, of course, but it differs sharply from that of an inhabitant of New York. It would be helpful if we could determine which civilization is the most genuine and most authentic. In my view, civilization cannot be gauged by the clothes one wears or the

way one eats, since civilization is an internal matter and far more important than food and clothing.

Having lived in Albania for almost a year, I have naturally noticed some striking differences in the realm of human relations, as expressed in the way people live and relate to one another. Western civilization has evolved its own "standards" with regard to conventions and ways of expression, dress and how one spends leisure time. Albanian civilization differs from the Western model on a number of points. It cannot be classified as Oriental, since it has its own originality, which distinguishes it from all others.

Even though it has incorporated various elements from half a millennium of Ottoman domination, and half a century of Marxist-Leninist oppression, I believe that it has retained native elements that are deeply rooted in previous centuries, when the proud Illyrians welcomed the preachings of the first apostles of Christ Jesus, with their message of love and brotherhood. It is that mixture of militant mountain tribes and Christianity that shaped this Albanian civilization which has withstood so many trials, and which today presents itself once again with characteristic freshness and transparent authenticity.

Editorial Continued

Pope John Paul II's jubilant and uplifting visit to Albania was in truth a half-century in the making. It was an event that in the eyes of many suffering Albanians, who survived Hoxha's anti religious movement, had to happen. On Sunday, April 25, 1993 it did finally occur and is now part of the history of contemporary Albania.

No one but this singular pope, forged in the furnace of Nazi and Communist persecution in his native Poland, could have understood Albania and the suffering of her people so well. And none but the people of this special nation, who endured for so long an ideology which forbade them to even think of the pope or his religion as anything but an enemy, could have been moved so deeply by such a pope. After years of observing the strange path my nation was taking and the determined way this pope set about his mission to set things right, I was startled by the power and simplicity of God's providence. This day was truly "a day the Lord had made" for the entire Albanian nation. May it last forever!

Gjon SINISHTA

Among the most prominent features of this civilization that catch the eye of the foreigner immediately is that of hospitality, a precious feature that needs to be cherished anew and preserved in its entirety. To open the door of your house to anyone who knocks, to seat a guest at your table and shower him with attention and kind manners, is truly a marvelous aspect of Albanian civilization. Never have I been shown in Italy the kind of friendliness shown to me in Albania. Here you are made to feel at home in the true sense of the word, language barriers disappear, and after a few minutes you begin to address others as "brothers."

Another trait of Albanians that has impressed me in a positive way, is their ability to rise above

the terrifying epoch of Communism and its decisive collapse, without plunging into civil war. In other countries of the world, hatred would have raised its head and led to organized acts of revenge. It suffices to mention the fall of Fascism in Italy and the rivers of blood that followed in its wake.

In Albania, on the contrary, an exemplary dignity prevailed. Those whose loved ones were shot, tortured or imprisoned for many years, did not set out to hunt down the killers, the torturers, and the prison guards responsible, so as to take revenge on them. Such revenge is as vain as it is insane.

Those who believed in the "new world" envisioned by Marxism received their punishment in the process of witnessing the overthrow of Marxism. The myth disintegrated. It would have been senseless to have behaved ferociously toward those who saw their utopian dream dissolve before their eyes. Not to deal cruelly with the fallen, not to seek retaliation at all costs—this, too, is civilization.

I am certain that by preserving old traditions of value, the Albanian people shall know how to extract from them those qualities that will enable them to step forward again on the stage, as heirs of a civilization that is far more real and natural than those boastful, pseudo civilizations of the Western world that are languishing from consumerism, egoism and the unrestrained yearning for possessions.

May the youth of Albania know how to regain, guard and cherish those values that define the true Albanian spirit; and strengthened by them, may they know how to present themselves at the forthcoming encounter with United Europe.

Although she is poor materially, Albania will know how to enrich her European sister nations with the enduring values of a civilization that does not fear comparison.

Albania will demonstrate once again that to be is far more virtuous than to have.

Ernesto SANTUCCI

BANISHING GOD IN ALBANIA

THE PRISON MEMOIRS OF FATHER GIACOMO GARDIN, S.J.

Giacomo Gardin, a Jesuit missionary for 20 years in Albania, including 10 years in prison, retells in *Banishing God in Albania* 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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ALBANIA'S FIRST AMBASSADOR TO THE VATICAN

Willy Gjon Kamsi has been appointed as Albania's first Ambassador to the Vatican. For several decades under the communists, Albania's attitude towards Rome was stridently antagonistic. Ernest Koliqi, the last Albanian envoy to the Vatican, served in the post from 1942 to 1945. Then the Albanian government broke off relations and expelled the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Leone Giovanni Battista de Nigris from Tiranë. Koliqi, the renowned Albanian writer, poet and educator continued to represent the Albanian Catholics of his country unofficially until his death in 1975. He was a classmate of Pope Paul VI at the Jesuit Collegio Arici in Brescia and remained his advisor on Balkan affairs throughout his papacy.

In 1920, the Vatican was the first state to recognize Albanian independence from five centuries of Turkish rule. Observers hope that the Vatican's recognition of Albanian independence then and the recent reestablishment of normal and friendly relations will assist the nation internationally and give encouragement to Albanian Catholics who comprise only 13% of the population of 3.5 million people within the borders of Albania.

Despite the four decade lack of official representation, the Vatican has repeatedly come to the aid of Albania throughout the 20th century. Pope Benedict XV supported the integrity of the national territory before the Great Powers in 1919. Pope Pius XII was a staunch defender of freedom and the rights of all nations, especially small countries like Albania. In addition Pius XII twice aided Albanian flood (1940) and war victims (1944).

A listing of previous Apostolic Delegates to Albania follows:

Bishop Ernest Cozzi, 1920-1927

Archbishop Giovanni della Pietra (Jesuit), 1928-1938

Archbishop Leone Giovanni Battista de Nigris, 1939-1945

Abbot & Bishop Frano Gjini (Substitute), 1945-1948

Archbishop Ivan Dias 1991 - (Apostolic Nuncio)

On April 22, 1993, Ambassador Kamsi was received at the Vatican with full diplomatic honors. He was accompanied to the Holy Fathers chambers where he presented his credentials to Pope John Paul II. During the ceremony, the Albanian ambassador greeted Holy Father with these words:

Holiness:

We have had the great honor of presenting in the name of His Excellency President Sali Berisha, of the Republic of Albania, the credential letters, and of representing our people and our Country as Ambassador of Albania to the Holy See.

The several hundred years' history of the Albanian Fatherland is scattered with periods in which the relations between Albania and the Holy See... have had moments of exaltation and instances of weakening, if not of acute hostility, as happened unfortunately during the Communist regime. Nevertheless, the former have conquered the latter. If in the past Albania has managed to survive, this is due also to an ecumenical attitude, *ante litteram*, taken by the Catholic Church towards Albania and the Albanian nation. Such was the mediation of His Holiness Pope Benedict XV at the 1919 Peace Conference of Paris, through President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, to save for Albania our southern regions, inhabited mostly by Moslem and Orthodox Albanians, and in which few Catholics were represented. And for that gesture the Albanian people will always be grateful to the Holy See.

Albania had to bear unspeakable sorrows not only during the five hundred years of Ottoman domination, but also the fifty years under a Communist regime. A utopian project was imposed, in which the government sought to destroy all ties with religion in order to create the larva of a new man, with neither morals nor scruples.

However, by God's supreme will, this infamous design was not able to reach its set goal.

The noxious communist propaganda did not manage to totally seize the youth of Albania. They are witnesses, those very young people who in ever greater numbers approach their Church of origin, having in mind the moral and spiritual values inspired by Catholic doctrine. The same is happening in the two largest confessions present in Albania, the Moslem and Orthodox. The reawakening of these values is a sure indication that Albania, guided by a greater spirituality, guided by that belonging to a single ethnic base... will manage to survive, arise and raise itself up out of the ashes, like the legendary Phoenix bird.

And it is for this that the Albanian people awaits with profound joy His Holiness' visit to Albania for the ordination of the four Albanian bishops.

We thank You with all our heart for having accepted the invitation of our Head of State and from this moment forward we extend to You a sincere and cordial welcome.

Your Holiness, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Albanian State and the Holy See is an auspicious occasion and a measure of reciprocal good will for saying "no" once again to barbarism, in a world shaken by so many cataclysms, both moral and material, by so many wars, and by so many conflicts that are bloodying the defenseless populations of our globe, of our Balkans.

The current Albanian policy is a realistic policy of peace, and a factor for stability in the region and of relations tending to create a climate of reciprocal trust with its neighbors.

We wish that Divine Providence may illumine our work and help us to fully realize what we have proposed, with the goal of a fully democratic stability in an Albania destroyed and broken up by a misgovernment which lasted for an overly long half century.

We desire that the same intentions which pervade us, and especially now the diplomatic relations between Albania and the Holy See, will herald new times for our beloved Albanian Fatherland.

Pope John II listened attentively Ambassador Kamsi's presentation. He then addressed the Albanian Ambassador in these words:

Your Excellency,

1. I am pleased to welcome you, the first Ambassador of the noble Albanian people to the Apostolic See. This meeting is in some way an anticipation and preparation for the long-awaited one scheduled for this coming 25 April, when I shall have the joy of visiting Albania for the first time and meeting that illustrious nation. At this time, however, through Your Excellency, I want to express my deepest appreciation, not only to my brothers and sisters in the faith, but to all the people whom you are honored to represent in their various ethnic and religious elements, and the authorities who govern them.

As you mentioned, throughout history relations between Albania and the Church have known diverse phases: times of constructive cooperation — and how could I fail to mention here that "athlete of Christ", Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu, who had close, fruitful relations with the Roman Pontiffs — and others however, which were filled with painful tension. Here our thoughts turn in particular to the difficult political situations of which the nation was the victim in the last half century at the hands of a regime inspired by a totalitarian, anti-religious ideology.

In the Albanian spirit, however, the golden thread of faith was never broken. It resisted the violence of persecution and today is manifest in all its vigour. The attachment to religious values is a solid foundation for rebuilding democratic life. In referring to religious belief I do not mean merely the Catholic community, but also the Orthodox and Muslim communities which have established an exemplary relationship of esteem and respect with the Church. As for Catholics, they gladly reciprocate these sentiments and are happy to make their contribution of moral and civil involvement in their country's rebirth.

2. Certainly, what the Church plans to offer is not of a political nature, because this would not be in conformity with her mission. As the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council recalls, "the political

community and the Church are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 76). The Church's goal is essentially a religious one. Therefore, it is not up to her to build the "earthly city", but rather the "kingdom of God", proclaiming the Gospel, opening up to people the presence and love of God, inviting them to a new life in Christ's footsteps.

Such an essentially religious orientation, however, in no way leads her to an attitude of indifference and apathy regarding the fate of civil society. Christianity is the religion of God made man: human events, therefore, with all their challenges, enter into the history of salvation, and the construction of a world in conformity with God's plan is an essential aspect of the Gospel message, as Christian social doctrine shows so well. The Church intends to devote herself to such a demanding mission by fulfilling her educational role and through the consistent testimony of her sons and daughters. I am convinced, Your Excellency, that the Church's presence will have definite advantages for Albanian society, especially through the contribution which Catholics will offer in promoting freedom, justice, solidarity and peace.

3. Albania is undergoing a difficult period because of the onerous inheritance of the old regime. Success in overcoming the problems of the present situation must be the ambition and boast of the young democracy, called to resolve grave problems regarding the economy and employment; the same holds true for strengthening the new political and civic

structures inspired by the principles of a constitutional State, in the context of the norms of international conventions.

Indeed, the problems are anything but simple: besides the commitment of all the members of the nation, their solution calls for a more generous

attention on the part of the international community. To the latter the Church makes a pressing appeal not to abandon Albania at this time of historic change, marked by quite a few difficulties. However, the building of a better future, with the help of God who never abandons his children, is in the hands of the Albanian people, in the strength of their inner motivation, in their ability to hope and to persevere in the face of trials and obstacles.

In this regard, I would like to mention here what I wrote in the Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, namely, that the secret of a democracy, its success and its duration, does not depend solely on the proper functioning of structures and laws, but on



Ambassador Willy Gjon Kamsi presenting his credentials to Pope John Paul II

the great values that should be its foundation and inspiration (cf. n. 40). Albania, which has borne the yoke of an oppressive dictatorship, is called to build its future by learning even from the less edifying experiences of the so-called free and democratic world. Indeed, a democracy without values easily turns into an open or thinly disguised totalitarianism (*ibid.*).

It is in this perspective, Your Excellency, that the Catholic Church is committed to making her

contribution to the construction of the new Albania; this is the aim of the plans for cooperation which she and the State can freely realize, in total respect for their mutual autonomy and specific purpose.

Your Excellency, I ask you to express my regards to the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Sali Berisha. Please express to him my esteem and the affection which binds me to the Albanian people, as I wait to come personally to meet them.

I ENTRUST ALBANIA'S FUTURE TO OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL HOLY FATHER VISITS MARIAN SHRINE TO ASK MARY'S PROTECTION ON HIS PASTORAL VISIT TO ALBANIA

On Thursday, 22 April, the Holy Father went to the Marian shrine at Genazzano, in the Diocese of Palestrina. The shrine contains a Marian image of Albanian origin, and is particularly venerated by Italy's large Albanian community. There, after leading the faithful in reciting the Rosary for the success of his visit to Albania, the Pope greeted those present in Italian.

At the end of this Marian prayer, I am happy to greet all of you, dear brothers and sisters, who have wanted to join me in reciting the Rosary in this place dedicated to Our Lady of Good Counsel.

I thank Bishop Vittorio Tomassetti of Palestrina for the words he expressed to me, as well as his invitation to make this pilgrimage to the shrine of Genazzano, so loved by your diocesan community, and visited by faithful from the whole world. I greet dear Cardinal Bernardino Gantin, titular of the suburbicarian Diocese of Palestrina, and the prelates and priests present. My thoughts turn particularly to the Augustinian religious, who have been entrusted with the pastoral care of this shrine. I also greet those who have recently immigrated from Albania to this area in search of work that will offer them, and their families back home, adequate support during the present, precarious situation.

I have come to the feet of Our Lady of Good Counsel to invoke, together with you, Mary's moth-

Your Excellency, in expressing once again my best wishes for the success of the noble mission which you begin today, I assure you of my prayer to Almighty God, that with his gifts he may always help you, your coworkers, and those who govern your noble nation, as well as the beloved Albanian people, whom I always recall with particular affection.

erly protection on the Apostolic Visit which, God willing, I shall make next Sunday. As you know, I am going to Albania, a country, which for many years suffered oppression and a veritable religious persecution. There, for the first time I shall meet the Catholic community and assure these brothers and sisters of ours in the faith of the support and communion of the whole Church. From this moment I entrust their future to the Blessed Virgin. With God's help may they always freely express their spiritual and missionary vitality in constant fidelity to the Gospel.

Dearly beloved, you know the strong bond which unites this shrine to the city of Shkodër, where next Sunday I shall celebrate the Eucharist and ordain four Albanian Bishops. The image of Our Lady of Good Counsel which is venerated here came from Shkodër: according to a pious tradition, it left the church where it was kept, thus miraculously escaping the Turkish invasion in 1467.

Dearly beloved, accompany me with your fervent prayer on the pilgrimage which I am about to make, that I may give comfort and encouragement to the Albanian Church for the journey of renewal they have undertaken.

In the Easter atmosphere in which we are living, I thank you for the welcome you have given me, and I express to each of you and your families my wishes for joy and peace in the risen Lord. I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to all.

TELEVISED MESSAGE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE

On the eve of his Apostolic journey to Albania, Pope John Paul II sent a televised message to the people of Albania who were preparing to receive him on April 25, 1993. Holy Father expressed his great joy at the prospect of meeting the Catholic community of Albania—a community so tried by the long persecution under the Communists—and of ordaining four bishops at the Cathedral of Shkodra. The Pope also sent a special greeting to the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and to the Albanian Muslim Community. The message was broadcast by the Italian and Albanian state-owned television networks.

Following is the translation of the the televised message of the Holy Father:

*

Dear Albanian Brothers and Sisters! On the eve of my visit to your dear and noble nation—a visit so long awaited—I wish to send you my first cordial greetings which are intended as an embrace for all Albanians.

I salute with deep affection the Catholic community of Albania with the anticipated joy of ordaining their new shepherds in the Shkodër Cathedral. Following the long period of unprecedented oppression and violence to which it was subjected, may it take up once again with confidence and great fervor the journey of communion and testimony in the rebuilding of the reign of God for the benefit of all mankind.

My thoughts are also respectfully directed to the President of the Republic of Albania, Dr. Sali Berisha, and to all the civil, political and military authorities of the country. To all I express, even now, my sentiments of gratitude for the disponability with which they have favored my pastoral visit.

I send special greetings also to the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church as well to the Muslim community and to all Albanian citizens. It is my wish that my visit will serve to strengthen the traditional ties of fraternal conviviality which



Pope John Paul II, the cherished friend of Albania

have always characterized the relations among your different religious confessions. Thanks to the united efforts of all her people of good will, Albania will learn to encounter and resolve all the difficult problems which lie before her.

Dear Albanian Brothers and Sisters, I come to you in the name of God. I come to beseech a future of serenity and peace for you.

Mirupafshim nesër. Zoti ju bekoftë!

Goodbye until tomorrow. God bless you!

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Pope John Paul II:

THE WORLD MUST NEVER FORGET ALL THAT HAPPENED IN ALBANIA

Editor's note: We are pleased to present to our readers, in chronological order, all the greetings, sermons, speeches and messages pronounced by the Holy Father during his pastoral visit to Albania on April 25, 1993. They represent an extraordinary treasure for the contemporary church and nation of Albania. May John Paul II's words spoken in Shkodër and Tiranë guide Albanians in wisdom. May they be healed and always remain united in peace and love. Included also are President Berisha's speeches at the Rinas international airport, at the huge meeting in Tiranë, the greetings of Ivan Dias, the Apostolic Nuncio in Albania, Frano Illia, the Archbishop of Shkodër and Primate of Albania and Rrok Mirdita, the Archbishop of Durrës-Tiranë.

The photo review of Pope John Paul II's visit may be found at the center of the book.

During the arrival ceremonies, the President of Albania, Dr. Sali Berisha, greeted Pope John Paul II in these words:

Holiness,

It is a pleasure and a special honor for me to welcome you in the name of the Albanian people to our country today. This visit brings immense joy to all Albanians wherever they may be. It is indeed a special honor for the country of Albania and a memorable event in her history.

You come today to the country of Skanderbeg, to the land of Mother Teresa, and to the land of hundreds and thousands of Christian martyrs. This visit is an expression of your great love, respect,



Dr. Sali Berisha, President of Albania

affection and support for Albania and her people in this difficult but hope filled period.

This visit is also the best expression of the strong thousand year friendship which unites Albania with the Holy See. This friendship continues to have a foundation of old and new ties—ties of the soul and the spirit of liberty. In their ancient history Albanians have found in the Holy See a faithful friend and ally. The Holy See has been a strong supporter of Albania in its struggles and efforts to preserve its liberty. In you they have found a great friend who loves them and who has kept them and their land in your prayers.

The Lord has heard your cry and today you are arriving in a free Albania.

You, Holy Father, have travelled all over the world bringing a message of peace, hope and faith which demonstrates your goal and your passion for the happiness of humankind. You are bringing this message today to Albania, which, as you told me a year ago—has caused you much pain. I wish to assure you on this occasion that your message has been understood, and it is a most precious support for us on our path toward freedom and democracy and toward our integration into the European community of nations.

Naturally, Holy Father, you are coming today on the mission of Saint Peter to care for the faithful of the Catholic Church who have been martyred in the Calvary we are now leaving behind. I wish to thank you with all my heart and to assure you of our full support.

I share your joy over your new freedom

At the international airport of Rinas in Tiranë, the Holy Father was welcomed by dignitaries of Church and State. Following President Berisha's welcoming, the Pope spoke briefly in Italian, telling of his great joy at being able to visit Albania and help the Church celebrate a new springtime.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Representatives of the Government and Parliament,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

Distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Dear Albanian Brothers and Sisters, I am happy to meet you.

1 With profound joy and gratitude to the Lord, today for the first time I am visiting this beloved land of Albania. First of all I express my deferential gratitude to the Head of State, Doctor Sali Berisha, who wanted to join the authorities of the Catholic Church in inviting me to today's meeting; I want to express my sincere appreciation for the words of welcome that he addressed to me, to which I willingly reply with my wishes for peace and serene prosperity for the whole nation.

I affectionately greet Archbishop Anastas and the faithful of the Orthodox Church, who are linked to us by a common faith in Christ and by the commitment to cooperate effectively in proclaiming the Gospel. I address a cordial greeting also to the Kryemufti Sabri Koçi and to the Muslim community, while recalling our meeting last January in Assisi when we asked God for the gift of peace in Europe and in the world.

I embrace in the Lord all my Catholic brothers and sisters, and together with the Apostle Paul, I say to each of you: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:13).

I offer you, the noble Albanian people, my warm and affectionate greeting! Everyone is aware of all the tragic events you have had to face,

especially over the last 25 years. *Years of genuine suffering*, whose consequences it will be difficult to erase through the passage of time and which, in any case, Europe and the whole world must not forget. Years of deprivation of the basic liberties of the human person, including freedom of expression, association and religion, which seriously damaged your social fabric, and profoundly affected your behavior and your consciences.

I share your joy over your new freedom

The Holy See has always followed with close attention — which often became sorrowful anxiety — your difficult journey during the long years of totalitarian oppression, and was near you through prayer and pastoral concern. And today, *I am happy to be able to share with you*, a country rich in cultural and spiritual traditions, *the joy of your newfound freedom*. I am pleased to be able to encourage you in the effort that you have undertaken towards moral and material reconstruction, assuring you of the Catholic Church's loyal and constant support.

2. During such a severe and distressing winter of suffering and trial, "the heroic Church of Albania, upset by a long hard persecution, but enriched by the testimony of its martyrs", as I had occasion to recall during my pastoral visit to the Archdiocese of Otranto in Puglia in October 1980, shared completely in the sorrows and hopes of the nation, keeping alive, even through the personal sacrifice of numerous members, the ancient Christian tradition, in the belief that it represents *an intrinsic part of the authentic Albanian identity that must not be rejected*.

Just as she shared in the recent trials, so now the Church wishes to share in the joy and responsibility of the new season of freedom that has just begun. It is her great desire to make a significant contribution to the achievement of Albania's integral progress and its active insertion into the European context, towards which its ancient historical roots naturally lead.

3. The liturgical and spiritual events which are the main reason for my short visit to your country opportunistically stress the climate of renewal which the country is currently experiencing. With today's

ordination of four Bishops in the cathedral of Shkodër, the life of the ecclesial community will receive renewed impulse and strength. It will thus grow with greater stability and serenity, enriched with fresh energy to serve the cause of the Albanian people and their peaceful development with wholehearted readiness.

Promote understanding between Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims

Today I will also have occasion to bless the cornerstone of the shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel, whom the Albanian Church invokes as her special protectress. May that church be a constant reminder for all to seek in God the strongest inspiration for rebuilding the destiny of the nation in a way that always respects the human person. May Mary most holy, upon whom the Muslim faithful also look with veneration, preserve you, dear brothers and sisters, from every temptation to intolerance and mutual distrust.

My visit is also intended to encourage you to continue united and strong on the journey, even though difficult and not without risk, which leads to complete freedom, with respect for everyone and by following the path familiar to you all, of peaceful coexistence, of open cooperation and understanding among the different ethnic, cultural and religious groups. Just as in the past Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims gave proof of fruitful understanding, so in the present and the future, dialogue and mutual solidarity should be intensified and developed, so as to give strong support to the current effort of reconstruction and national renewal.

On this occasion it is our duty to recall the national hero and fervent Christian, Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu, the "athlete of Jesus Christ", the 525th anniversary of whose death occurs this year. Just as in his own very difficult times, today too the Church will not fail to make every possible contribution to the total, material and spiritual development of the Albanian people.

With these sentiments, I once again thank all those present for the welcome they have given me and my coworkers. I invoke on today's Pastoral Visit the protection of Mary, the Mother of Good

Counsel, and I entrust to her the concerns and hopes of all the Albanian people. May God give each one, especially all those who are cooperating in bringing my visit to Albania to a happy conclusion, the most abundant outpouring of his grace and his kindness.

Once again I cordially greet you!

*

Greeting by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Ivan Dias.

At the beginning of the celebration in the Cathedral of Shkodër, the Apostolic Nuncio to Albania, Archbishop Ivan Dias, greeted the Holy Father in Albanian. Following is the English translation of his words:

Holy Father,

Haec dies quam fecit Dominus: exultemus et laetamur in ea!

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad!

It is with profound joy that all Albania—Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims—welcomes you today. Albania, known as the land of hospitality, fidelity and valor—*mikpritja, besa dhe burmija*—turns to Your Holiness with all its heart. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

It is Albania, evangelized by Saint Paul, which has known moments of glory in its two thousand years of Christian history and has produced renowned representatives of faith, science and culture. It is this Albania of the national hero and Christian patriot—George Kastrioti Skënderbeg, which gave the Albanians a sense of unity and national identity. It is Albania, which in our times has given the world Mother Teresa of Calcutta, a true apostle of love and humble service to the poorest of the poor. And finally it is this same land washed by the blood of the martyrs and the sweat of political prisoners which is emerging with pride and determination from a 500-year nightmare of Turkish domination and 50 years of Communist

dictatorship, which now desires to build a better world, more just and humane.

Holy Father, Albania is welcoming you with profound gratitude for the earnest friendship you have always demonstrated toward her and for keeping her always close to yourself in prayer during her long night of trial and vicissitudes.

Your visit, Holy Father, fills us with immense joy. May the paternal gesture which you will accomplish today with the ordination of the new Albanian bishops announce and indicate a new beginning for the Catholic Church and the entire Albanian nation following our great tribulation.

Holy Father, we thank you heartily for you fatherly affection for us. We pray that through the intercession of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Our lady of Shkrodra and Patroness of all Albania the Lord may preserve you, protect you and bless you ad multos annos. This visit of yours profoundly touches the hearts of all Albanians and

gives us cause for great rejoicing irrespective of our religious affiliations. For us you have long been a symbol of hope. The Albanians as well as other peoples have seen in you—and continue to see—the incarnation of the will of God who grants us the necessary courage to defend, develop and cultivate the values of peace and harmony.

Your visit represents as well an appeal in the name of God and mankind to stop the cruelties and massacres and to build peace and harmony in the ancient Balkan peninsula.

Holy Father, once again I thank you and with all my heart offer you a cordial welcome to Albania.

May God bless this day!

A NEW BEGINNING IN ALBANIA

Before the ceremony of the Episcopal Ordination, Pope John II addressed the candidates and the faithful in the packed Cathedral of Shkodër.

"This is the day the Lord has made", the Pope said several times during the homily he preached before conferring episcopal ordination on the four new Bishops of Albania during his historic one-day visit to the country on 25 April. The Holy Father's homily, which he preached in Italian, was based on the readings for the Third Sunday of Easter.

Brothers and Sisters, Praised be Jesus Christ!

1 "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:26).

Dear brothers and sisters, daughters and sons of the Albanian nation: "This is the day the Lord has made!" (Ps 118:24). Truly, the Lord "has made" this day for your land, for your people, who have passed through a particular experience of death

which lasted many years and claimed many victims. Albania's history is also resplendent with the names of the martyrs who shared in a special way in the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Like the two disciples spoken of in the Gospel passage proclaimed a little while ago, *we too are on the road to Emmaus today*. We are journeying with those two disciples who received the gift of a miraculous encounter with the risen Christ.

"This is the day the Lord has made," a day of joy that the Bishop of Rome has come to celebrate together with you, the Bishop of Rome, who for many years has kept watch in his prayer, together with that of the whole Church, at the tomb in which in this land Jesus and his Mystical Body, the Church, was laid. It is Christ who suffered in those who confessed his name in the Bishops and priests, the religious and consecrated persons, as well as in all those from your land who underwent the devastating experience of death which has so sadly marked your recent history.

Never forget what happened to Albania

2. However, as Peter himself affirms in the first reading of today's celebration "it was impossible for him to be held by" death (Acts 2:24), that is, that it should hold power over Christ and those who believed in him. Peter ends his paschal proclamation about Jesus, saying that *God raised him up*, releasing him from the throes of death, because *it was impossible for him to be held by it*" (Acts 2:24).

Peter proclaims this truth in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the day of the Church's birth.

Today Peter's Successor repeats these words before you who are gathered together! Before Albania and Europe, before the universal Church and the whole world. Your experience of death and resurrection belongs to the whole Church and the entire world.

Every person must reflect once again on "the things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene" (Lk 24:19), condemned to death and crucified almost 2,000 years ago. He must also *reflect on what has happened to you during these years*, rather in the recent decades of the 20th century. *Never forget what happened!* It is right to look ahead in order to build a free future with a proper human dimension; however, take into consideration what has happened in order to avoid repeating the same errors of such a tragic period. What happened in Albania never before took place in the course of history. Truly, "*Misericordiae Domini quia non sumus consumpti*" (Lam 3:22). Albania was sunk in an abyss from which it is a veritable miracle that it has escaped without bloodshed. However, at the very time when all seemed lost, liberation arrived.

3. "Haec est dies..."

Today in her members the Church experiences the mystery of the Lord's passover. She is on the road to Emmaus, and she meets the same Christ who, although he is not immediately recognized, explains to the disciples the profound meaning of the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection: "Beginning with Moses and all the prophets", the evangelist tells us, "he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures" (Lk 24:27),

that is, that he had to suffer and die in order to enter into the glory of the resurrection.

The Church returns to this primitive catechesis, to this Easter catechesis handed on by the Apostles, *so that the Emmaus event, in all its fullness, can be renewed today in your midst*. The Church is returning here after years of brutal interdiction and harsh condemnation so that, refreshed by the word of God, you can live in total freedom the experience of the disciples of Emmaus: "He took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (Lk 24:30-31).

They recognized him in the sacrament of the Eucharist. They recognized him with their hearts. "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:32).

Albanian clergy gave their lives for Christ

Behold, *the Eucharist is returning to your land*. *The Church is returning* coming out of the catacombs, as in the time of the ancient Roman Empire and, full of joy for the freedom she has regained, she proclaims: "The Lord is risen... The Lord is truly risen..."

4. I now turn my affectionate thoughts to you, venerable and dear brothers, who are about to receive episcopal ordination. The conferral of this sacrament, which will unite you in a particular way to Christ, the Good Shepherd, arouses great emotion in us. It is truly an emotional moment, because it naturally makes us *think of all those who have gone before you in the pastoral ministry*, of all those martyred Bishops and priests here in Albania who gave their lives for Christ and the Church.

It is therefore a very moving time, which also stirs the depths of our heart because, with your episcopal ordination, *the Albanian Church begins anew to live in fullness*, to express the life that is hers, in which every aspect of the apostolic inheritance is manifest.

It is an emotional moment: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just

a grain of wheat; *but if it dies, it produces much fruit*" (Jn 12:24).

This is the truth that summarizes the Easter mystery, and which those who faithfully fulfilled their ministry as Pastors in the midst of your people have passed on to you.

5. Remembering each of them, I greet you with particular affection, dear brothers!

I greet you, Archbishop Frano Illia of Shkodrë, on the very day on which, 25 years ago, you were condemned to death, a sentence which was later commuted to hard labor, which you served for 20 years. I greet your Auxiliary, Bishop Zef Simoni, also condemned a year before you, on 25 April 1967, to 15 years imprisonment. Providence also chose 25 April as the date of your episcopal ordination. I greet you, Archbishop Rrok K. Mirdita of Durrës-Tiranë, who have so generously agreed to face the challenges and hardships of a demanding, tiring pastoral service. Last of all, I greet you, Bishop Robert Ashta of Pult, to whom the people of this land are also grateful for the suffering you have borne in the difficult past.

With your ordination, dear brothers, the Catholic community regains stability and security in its hierarchical structure and, through your support and your enlightened pastoral care, it can look to the future with greater serenity and confidence. Thus it will be ready generously to offer its own contribution, as it never failed to do in the past, to the spiritual, cultural and social development of the Albanian nation.

Your ordination is taking place in the cathedral of Shkodrë, one of the most majestic churches of the Balkans, which in recent years was changed into a sports compound; now restored to its original splendour, it has become a symbol of the resurrection of the Church in Albania. This fact therefore acquires singular meaning: for the Church it is the joyous sign of her refound freedom and renewed flourishing after the long, painful winter of solitude and persecution. Having taken part in the suffering and death of the Redeemer, Albania's believers can now share the spiritual joy of the passover of resurrection, from which spring new apostolic and missionary opportunities: behold the

work of the Lord; behold the day which the Lord has made!

You, the new Pastors of this flock of Christ, are entrusted today with the ministry of keeping it in fidelity, of administering it in the truth, of leading it to holiness and to full communion in the sanctifying Spirit, so that it may express the wealth of its charisms and bear the plentiful fruit of solidarity and peace.

Be ready to forgive your persecutors

6. The Christian faith, which came to your land through the preaching of St. Paul and his disciples, must now be guarded, deepened, and handed on to new generations by you, dear brothers, who through episcopal ordination, will become the successors of the Apostles. In this important, demanding apostolic service, may you make good use of the assistance and fraternal cooperation of your priests, your first and closest co-workers, of the religious, consecrated persons, and the laity, to whose formation you will devote the best of your energy. On this special occasion, how could we fail to express sincere gratitude to all those ecclesial organizations and institutions which, hearing the appeals made on behalf of the Albanian Church, have promptly offered their contribution so it would not be without the support of persons and means which are indispensable for restoring life and hope?

Dear Church, Catholic community of Albania, be confident and look with optimism to your future! As in the past you were able to remain faithful to the one Lord Jesus Christ, even paying the supreme sacrifice of your life, now be ready promptly to accept the Gospel of divine charity and bear witness to all its demands with courage. Set an example of a love without conditions, of a life which goes beyond the offences it has received and which, even forgetting them, is ready to offer forgiveness to those who persecuted you.

On the cross Jesus prayed for those who crucified him, asking the Father to forgive them for "they know not what they do" (cfr. Lk 23:34); in the "Our Father" he taught us to complete our request to God for forgiveness of our personal sins by expressing our readiness to forgive others in turn. Always have this teaching of the divine Mas-

ter in your hearts, especially during this time of social change; thus you will be able to help write the story of true and complete national reconciliation in your country's history

7. Lord, "stay with us (Lk 24:29).

The words spoken by the two disciples on the road to Emmaus resound with a very special intensity in our assembly today. At that time they came from the hearts of people who had experienced the three painful days of Christ's passion and death on the cross. Today they are offered by you, dear sons and daughters of Albania, of this so sorely-tried country. You speak them after decades of an authentic martyrdom for the Church of Christ, of a death decreed by law and put into practice by

the whole atheistic social system imposed by a totalitarian State.

"Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over..." (Lk 24:29).

Stay, Lord, now that the night has ended - this dark night in Albania's history - and day has dawned again.

Stay with us, Lord! We offer you this day!

Brothers and sisters, truly this is the day which the Lord has made. Let us be glad and rejoice in it!

Amen!

OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL IS SMILING ON ALBANIA TODAY

At the end of the Mass of Episcopal Ordination, the Holy Father returned to the Archbishop's residence, where, from the balcony, he presented to the enthusiastic crowd the new Archbishop and Primate of the Church in Albania, Frano Illia. The newly ordained pastor of Shkodër, Frano Illia, pronounced in Albanian words of thanks and appreciation toward Pope John Paul II. Below is the translation of his greeting.

Dear Holy Father,

Today the entire Albanian people, at home and far away from their homeland, is profoundly honored by your presence among us following the cruel persecution which ended only a short while ago.

The powers of darkness tried to destroy the foundation of our faith, but they did not succeed and, with God's help, will never succeed. With much gladness and satisfaction we have welcomed the attention and care you have shown toward us since the beginning of your Pontificate. We were—and shall always be—grateful.

You have given our people extraordinary encouragement by restoring our Catholic hierarchy. You are giving us a great impulse toward our Christian faith and human and national unity.

During our long two thousand years of Christian history we have remained uninterruptedly devout sons of the Chair of St. Peter and as such we shall remain.

The remembrance of this day and of this memorable visit will remain indelibly impressed on our minds and on the history of our church and country.

An understanding between the Catholic Church and the Republic of Albania will complement all legitimate aspirations of the Catholic Albanian population.

Another Pope, your predecessor, undertook in the XVth century the journey to our country to crown King George Kastriot—Skanderbeg, our national hero and to elevate the Metropolitan Archbishop of Durrës, Pa Engjulli, to the College of

Cardinals. Unfortunately he could not make it due to his sudden death in Ancona.

Holy Father, Illyria, our land, was evangelized by St. Paul himself, and the first bishop of Durrës, St. Cesar Martyr, was one of the 72 disciples of Jesus Christ. By the third century all this vast territory was Christian.

We Christian Albanians, due to historic circumstances, belong to two different religions. However, our sense of brotherhood never failed among us because our nation and our people remained united. We always shared our joys and sufferings. We shall remain in the future, as we have in the past, one heart and one soul.

Holiness, once again we thank you profoundly in the name of all the people for the honor you have bestowed on us by your visit. We hope you will repeat it. We thank all the dignitaries and national and international celebrities who have honored us on this historic day. We thank also all the friends who came in such great numbers to partake in our immense joy and to honor with us the world's greatest dignitary, our Pope, the evangelizer of the entire world and the friend of all peoples.

Dear Holy Father, bless all the Albanian people, and in a special way, Shkodër, our center of faith and culture, whose guest you are today. Together we pay homage to you and wish you health and a long and prosperous life for the good of all the peoples of this distressed and suffering world. May Our Mother of Good Counsel, Our Lady of Shkodër, help you always and everywhere.

Honor and praise to our Holy Father. Long live the Pope!

The Pope then gave the following meditation in Italian, before leading the people in singing the Regina Coeli.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

1. *Regina Coeli, laetare!* Rejoice, O Queen; be glad, O Mother, because the Son whom you bore in your womb has conquered death and his life shines among us.

Dear brothers and sisters, Our Lady of Good Counsel, so greatly loved by the Albanian people, is smiling on this land which, having suffered far too long, seems finally to have found the joy of prayer in addition to the taste of freedom. For many years, unfortunately, it was subjected to a *complete and total contempt for every human right*. A humiliating condition, which isolated it from the world, destroyed its development and extinguished the joy of life in so many of its children

Today, however, is a day of resurrection and life, a holy day, a day of fraternal rejoicing! The whole Church, which during these long years never forgot you, now embraces you with renewed affection. Today, with intense emotion and gratitude to God, I greet the new Pastor of your Archdiocese, Archbishop Frano Illia, *the visible principle of unity for the diocesan community*.

I joyfully present him to you, together with his Auxiliary, Bishop Zef Simoni. Here they are at my side, ordained a short while ago by the laying on of my hands. Faithful and ready servants of the Gospel, they are here to testify to the continuity of the Apostles' mission and to the deep communion uniting the Catholic community of Shkodër and all Albania to the Successor of Peter and to the universal Church.

I am particularly happy that this is taking place on 25 April, a significant date for many reasons in the life of both your Bishops, and the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel. It is lovely to think that your Archbishop and his Auxiliary have been "consigned" to you as it were by the Pope, under Mary's maternal gaze. This inspiring coincidence vividly symbolizes the union of the two principles with which Christ wanted to endow his Church: the *apostolic-Petrine principle* and the *Marian principle*, inseparable and complementary principles, by which the Holy Spirit each day builds up the community of believers and spurs them to proclaim the word of God with the fervor of the Apostles. He leads them especially to listen to it with the heart of Mary.

2. Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, pray for us! To the solemn celebration just concluded in the cathedral, *the cornerstone of the new shrine* dedicated to Our Lady of Good Counsel was blessed.

Destroyed twice in its history, it will rise again as a symbol of the indestructible faith of the Albanian people. The ordination of your Archbishop and the cornerstone of your shrine, a reference point of faith for all of Albania's believers, are thus two encouraging signs of a community taking up its journey again with renewed vigour and more conscious of its responsibility.

How could we forget that one year ago, on 26 April 1992, on this very spot, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Ivan Dias, in the presence of ecclesiastics, priests, religious, the civil authorities and a large number of the faithful, *entrusted your homeland to Our Lady of Good Counsel?*

I want to renew this filial *act of entrustment*, so that Albania's journey may always continue under Mary's special protection.

Virgin of Good Counsel! To you arises the supplication of this people, who from time immemorial loves you and honors you. Today Albania entrusts to you its hopes and its sorrows, its desires and its needs, its many tears shed and its longing for a better future. O Mother, turn your gaze to this people, accept their generous intentions, accompany them on their way toward a future of justice, solidarity and peace.

3. Dear brothers and sisters of Albania, put your trust in this Mother. Mary knows the path of life and understands what your heart desires. She does not bring you deceptive, passing ideologies but the person of her Son, Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, in whom shines the mystery of God and man.

May Mary protect you always! May she protect every corner of this land of yours; may she reach

Albanians living in the Balkans and Albanians scattered throughout the world. May Mary's powerful intercession obtain peace, especially where for too long a senseless war has raged, shedding the blood of brothers.

Mother of Good Counsel open minds and hearts, grant the gift of harmony and peace to Albania and all humanity!

O Lady of Shkodër, patroness of the Albanian people, pray for us!

After the Regina Coeli was sung, the Pope made a particular mention of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who was present among the faithful. The Holy Father spoke in Italian.

Dear friends, I cannot fail to greet a very humble person who is here among us, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Everyone knows where she is from, what her homeland is. Her homeland is here. Even during the period when Albania was completely isolated, this humble religious, this helpful servant of the poorest, brought the name of your country to the whole world.

In Mother Teresa, Albania was always held in esteem.

This is her mission, and that of all who, like her, are true followers of Christ, apostles of Christ, apostles of charity.

Today I thank you in the name of the universal Church; I thank you, dear Albanians, for this daughter of your land and your people.

Let us all thank the Lord for this day. *Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus*. May the Lord bless you.



TODAY ALBANIANS BELIEVE IN GOD AND FREEDOM

Before some 150,000 citizens of Tirana and other parts of the country, the President of Albania Dr. Sali Berisha, pronounced the following speech at the capital's main SKANDERBEG square during the closing ceremonies of Pope John Paul's II visit to Albania.

Your Holiness

My dear Pope John Paul II,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Brothers and Sisters,

Today we have the great honour and privilege to have in our midst the Holy Father Pope John Paul II, a personality known over the world for his human and spiritual values.

The joy and dimensions of this holiday visit are enormous for us.

Pope Wojtyla is the Pope of the East, i.e. the Pope of human martyrdom, resistance and suffering. In the darkest period of ruthless communist rule that the peoples of the East experienced, the Polish Church offered the first resistance toward this system. Its voice echoed powerfully as a cry not only for Catholic clerics and believers who became martyrs but for all of those who suffered and dreamed of one day exercising their freedom of thought. Its courage was legendary and it honoured the entire Catholic Church and the fatherland, Poland.

The Polish Church gave the Holy See its first Slav Pope, a great missionary, who with the overwhelming power of his ideas and principles made a crucial contribution to the downfall of the Iron Curtain and today struggles and makes every effort to eliminate new walls that threaten to replace the Iron Curtain. Pope Wojtyla is the Pope of hope and revival.

For us Albanians, Holy Father, you are a great friend. On April 5, 1980, when our nation languished in poverty and isolation, You came to Puglia, looked across the sea and denounced the

martyrization of believers in our country. You prayed every day for Albania. God heard Your prayers and now You are among free people. Glory to God!

The communist dictatorship proclaimed Albania as the only atheist state in the world and subjected clerics and followers to ruthless terror, but it never succeeded in eradicating religion because freedoms and human rights, the right to worship, are spiritual freedoms. Indeed they can be suppressed through laws and constitutions, but never in the human heart and soul. They are human and spiritual freedoms and thus they are eternal. For this reason, the Albanians preserved their religious beliefs, which gave them hope and proved what Jacob said: "When your belief is tested, it gives up hope". Therefore, today, although under extremely difficult conditions, we are proceeding toward our national revival. We are determined and confident to proceed with our efforts, because as the philosopher Aquinas said: "Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire; and to know what he ought to do".

Today Albanians believe in God and freedom.

They want to transform their dreams of freedom into a democratic reality; they want Albania to be reintegrated with dignity into Europe.

And today, they know what to do. Therefore, they are striving through great difficulties with sacrifices to build a state based on the rule of law which will ensure the full protection of human freedoms, human rights, and dignity; to build here in the Balkans a model of a society based on the development of spiritual and universal values of Western civilization. In our efforts, we have enjoyed the support of many friendly countries, the most important of which has been that of Italy: "Caritas" has knocked on the door of every Albanian. We are grateful to all those that helped and continue to help us.

Our aim is integration with Europe by preserving and developing our dignity and identity. Today we are indeed materially very poor but this is relative and temporary, not only because we have many natural resources but because above all we have great spiritual values and wealth; our energies and virtues will unite us with the others in a dignified manner.

Your visit, Holy Father, represents great moral and political support for Albania in its efforts to be integrated into Europe and to endure the sacrifices necessary for the building of a different future. Difficulties are great but opportunities offered by freedom are greater.

Your Holiness, You have come to a friendly country and your visit is a great contribution to the revival of religion in Albania. The history of Albania and Christendom are closely interrelated; Albanian's friendship with the Holy See is old and unwavering and is based on the life, sacrifice, and devotion of the distinguished personalities of the Albanian people such as Pope Clement XI, who led the Holy See for 19 years, Scanderbeg, who defended Albania and Christendom for 25 years, and Mother Teresa, an Albanian lady with a small body but a big heart for all humanity. We are very proud of them.

In the collective memory of the Albanian nation, the names of Buzuku and Barleti, Bogdani and Budi, Fishta and Mjeda, Gjeçovi, Prennushi, Meshkalla and many other priests, are written in golden letters. They were not only missionaries devoted to Christendom, but also writers, scholars, scientists, politicians and many of them martyrs of free speech about the word of God.

In August 1464, Pope Pius II was planning to visit Albania to crown Scanderbeg as a King and to ordain as Cardinal His Eminence Pal Engjulli, but the visit was not made (due to the Pope's sudden death in the city of Ancona). A year ago, I had the great honour and privilege to make my first visit as President of Albania to the Holy See and to be received by You. Today in Shkodra, the city of martyrdom and the cradle of our civilization, you ordained our four bishops: Frano Ilia, Robert Ashta, Zef Simoni, and Rrok Mirdita. This was a great day for the Albanian Catholic Church;

Shkodra and the entire Albania will forever remember with pride.

Today, You also blessed the Albanian democracy. This is a great event for our entire nation and we will always remember your gesture.

Holy Father, Albanians welcome you today with their hearts open because Albania, perhaps a unique case in the world, is a country of great religious tolerance. Our three religious communities have for centuries lived in peace and harmony. Here three different religions, like three spiritual roots, feed and enrich the great soul of our great nation. Today in this square You are greeted with great love by Albanian Catholics, Muslims, and Orthodox. Your visit brings them closer together because they are brothers, they have the same God, land, mother, blood, culture, and language. Together they celebrate their holidays, together they have rebuilt the Churches destroyed by the communists. May God bless these people that respect so much each other's religion.

Ladies and gentlemen.

The Holy Father has come to the Balkans at a time when, not far from our country, in Bosnia-Herzegovina massacres and ethnic cleansing are annihilating an innocent civilian population. The international community did not protect the victims, leaving them un-armed. NATO is now supporting them from the sky, but the killing continues. After the Bosnians, it will be the turn of the three million Albanians in Kosova, who to day are experiencing the most ruthless Serbian oppression. They are denied all human and national rights and liberties. A process of silent ethnic cleansing has been underway in Kosova for years. Belgrade is waiting for the appropriate moment to begin a massive massacre for the cleansing and dislocation of Albanians from their thousand-year old hearths, thus sparking a Balkan war. Albania, in close cooperation with the international community, is striving to prevent an outbreak of conflict. We can never allow the ethnic cleansing of Albanians from their territories and we emphasize that without the solution to Kosova's issue, without guaranteeing the Albanians their human and national rights as foreseen by the Helsinki Charter and without respect-

ing these rights in the case of the Albanians in Macedonia the regional crisis cannot be solved.

The Holy Father's stand on the Balkan crisis, gives us hope in prayers, masses, meetings with heads of states and in statements free of passions and egoism. His Holiness has denounced the massacres, rapes, and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.

Pope John Paul II considers the rights of an individual and a nation as both human and spiritual. He has forcefully denounced the ruthless oppression and has demanded the restoration of the human and national rights of the Albanians in Kosova. For this, all the Albanians are grateful to Him.

Your Holiness! Today in Albania, together with the development of religion, culture and economy,

the great human virtues such as compassion, the word of honour and love which have enriched and will continue to enrich our lives, are going through a period of revival. Today, the borders of Albania and the hearts of the Albanians are open; the Albanians believe in justice, friendship and peace and want to transform Albania into a model of a democratic state, where people of different religions and origins are equal before God and the law.

I assure You again that this visit will be remembered as an important event in the history of the Albanian nation.

I wish the Holy Father Pope John Paul II, a long and healthy life.

MAY ALBANIA BE EQUAL TO THE CHALLENGE

The President's speech was often interrupted by the cheering crowd who shouted "Papa! - Papa!", "Rroftë Papa Wojtyła!" (Long live Pope Wojtyła) and "Rroftë Sali Berisha!" (Long live President Berisha). Visibly moved by this outpouring of love and affection, Pope John Paul II took the podium and addressed the Albanians. Speaking in Italian and Albanian, the Pope encouraged all of them in the difficult path they have to travel, urging them to call upon the best reserves of their noble heritage to face the challenges. He also asked the international community to offer Albania the assistance it needs to rebuild its economy and democratic structures.

Mr. President,

Dear Civil, Military and Religious Authorities,

My Albanian Brothers and Sisters,

1. I greet you cordially! After an intense day of celebrations and meetings that have enabled me literally to experience not only the vibrant faith of the Catholic community, but also the warm hospitality of the Albanian people, the time has come to say good-bye and I am deeply moved as I prepare to leave you. In the friendship you have shown

me I have felt the pulse of people capable of deep feeling; in your frank openness I have seen the courage of a young democracy decisively set on the way to freedom, after long, dark years of dictatorship and oppressive atheism.

Thank you for your welcome! I am going back to Rome with a vivid memory of your land impressed on my mind and on my heart. Thank you!

I came among you to carry out my mission as Peter's Successor in the service of the universal Church, to testify to the long-suffering faithful the solidarity of all their brothers and sisters in the faith scattered throughout the world.

I came among you also to express my fraternal respect to the various religious communities that have been living here for centuries: the Orthodox Christian community and the Muslim community, to whom I extend my cordial greetings.

I came to express to every Albanian my admiration and support in this delicate phase of historical transition and for the social and spiritual renewal for which you so greatly hope.

You are right to love your nation intensely

2. Dear Albanians, my brothers and sisters, how often in the past you have had forcefully to defend your identity! In such an undertaking, as this square recalls, an eminent Christian figure distinguished himself, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu* [George Castrioti Skanderberg], esteemed by the Roman Pontiffs, and ever alive in the memory of the Albanian people.

You have suffered for your nation. You are therefore right to love it intensely. *The tragedy of your people under the rigours of communist oppression has truly been overwhelming.*

Indeed, the image of human life in totalitarian regimes such as you experienced, in which human beings were deprived of one of their most basic rights, the freedom of self determination as well as the freedom of conscience, has been terrible. This was a deprivation that often took the form of unspeakable brutality. Were not the churches of every confession closed and the priests who dared to administer the sacraments sentenced to death? Were believers not persecuted, imprisoned, held hostage in every way?

Thus in your land, scourged more than anywhere else by persecution, it is easy to see *the sign of the ancient Christian catacombs* and circuses into which Christ's witnesses were thrown to be torn to pieces by wild beasts. It was a relentless struggle against religion, in line with the untouchable dogma of the social and political program upheld by the communist ideology. It seemed as though the attainment of that much flaunted "earthly paradise" actually depended on depriving the individual of the strength he derives from Christ, a strength that was firmly condemned as a weakness unworthy of a person. In reality, rather than unworthy it was inconvenient as facts would later show. Indeed, strengthened by the energy springing from the faith, people do not easily let themselves be reduced to collective anonymity (cf. 2 Cor 12:9).

Nothing like what happened in Albania, dear brothers and sisters, has ever been recorded in history. It is true that during the Roman Empire Christians were brutally persecuted, but this was a

State that in the name of religion - paganism - fought those who supported Christ's Gospel. Here, on the contrary, the State sought to annihilate *any form of religious expression* in the name of the radical atheism that sprang from the universal and totalitarian system.

All this took place without anyone being able to intervene in defence of the dignity of the human beings deprived of their very "humanity", their freedom. Therefore your drama, dear Albanians, concerns, must concern, the whole European continent and *Europe must not forget it*. In fact the trend today seems to be: we turn the page rapidly, forgetting what has happened in order to look ahead. From a certain perspective this attitude is correct and even necessary, provided that the memory of the previously matured experience is always kept alive. This in fact is the necessary condition for avoiding the repetition of the same regrettable errors, and it is the prerequisite for true reconciliation.

Religious liberty is guarantee of other freedoms

3. Today you have regained your freedom virtually without bloodshed. You have almost miraculously risen from an abyss of tyranny and death. When all semblance of a reasonable confidence seemed to be dying, the dawn of liberation broke. Life is reborn. The courage to exist has prevailed; the flame of hope has been rekindled.

The *religious freedom* which you finally enjoy today, however, is not only a precious gift of the Lord for those who have the grace of faith: it is a gift for all, because it is the basic guarantee of every other expression of freedom. It intimately touches the individual in that inviolable sanctuary of the conscience, where the human being encounters the Creator and is fully aware of his own dignity. Correctly used, there is no social disorder to be feared from such freedom. In fact, sincere faith *does not divide people but rather unite them* despite their differences. There is nothing like faith to remind us that if we have one Creator, *we are all brothers and sisters!* This religious freedom is a shield against totalitarianism and a decisive contribution to human brotherhood. True religious freedom rejects any temptation to intolerance and

sectarianism and fosters attitudes of respectful and constructive dialogue.

The Albanian people, as I am pleased to recall at this time, have set an example in this regard. The three great religious communities maintain relations of mutual respect and cordial cooperation. *Persevere in this attitude*, dear brothers and sisters! You will thus truly serve solidarity and peace in your country, and in the whole of the tormented Balkan region. You will be able to build a mature and solid national unity.

4. However, may the strong patriotic feelings which you are experiencing at this time never degenerate into that intolerant and aggressive nationalism which still claims victims today and is provoking ferocious animosity in many parts of the world, in fact, not very far from here.

Instead, *may your harmony in coexistence continue to grow*. It is necessary to learn the art of dialogue and listening, even when it requires an effort. It is the price of freedom, the secret of genuine moral and civil progress.

Albania, may be equal to this great historic challenge! The path that awaits you is anything but easy. *There are wounds that have yet to be healed*. May the past serve as a lesson, but may it not lead to spiteful revenge. *Now it is time to look to the future with confidence*. Certainly an immense task awaits you and you have already set about it with praiseworthy determination. In addition to the effort of economic reconstruction that is absolutely necessary if employment and the essential means for a dignified standard of living are to be guaranteed to all, there is also the concern to consolidate your young democracy. This can be achieved only through the full recognition of certain basic values, starting with the integrable dignity of the human person and human life. "A democracy without values", as I wrote in the Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, "easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism as history has shown" (n.46).

5. The construction of a democratic society is never completed once and for all: it requires daily vigilance and careful cooperation on everyone's part. No one can be allowed to be a mere spectator.

The Church will not fail to make her contribution to Albania's new found youth. She will certainly not forget that her mission is essentially a religious one, and she will take pains not to intervene in issues of a purely political nature. However, precisely by virtue of the Gospel, of which Christ made her the messenger in the world, she will seek to offer her contribution, both by her active presence in her institutions, and above all by her witness on behalf of a true humanism that puts human persons, seen in the light of God and accepted in all their dimensions, at the heart of any economic, social or political programs.

May faith in God nurture your courage

Man and God are not in opposition, they are not rivals. On the contrary, the human person has a very high dignity precisely because he or she is a creature made in God's image. Recognition of this value centered in the human person will certainly ensure that in the economy *the proper balance is maintained between the rationale of efficiency and the priorities of solidarity*, and will make political involvement a responsible search for the common good, to be pursued always with full respect for all the ethical and moral demands.

6. People of Albania, *proceed with courage on the path of freedom and solidarity!*

This is a way strewn with difficulties, but one also sown with hope. May the strength of your martyrs, vigilant witnesses of freedom throughout the long years of the oppressive totalitarian regime, go with you.

May love for the family, the spirit of brotherhood, your hospitality to foreigners and the virtues typical of your people, which are the precious heritage of the age-old Albanian tradition, light your way.

May your courage be nurtured by believers' faith in the true God, together with every person of good will may they dedicate themselves to the service of justice and peace. How could I fail to mention in this regard a chosen daughter of the Albanian people, Sister Teresa of Calcutta the mother of so many of the poorest of the world's poor? With the warmth of faith, this great little

woman bears within her the generous and indomitable energy of the Albanian heart.

Albania! Look toward your future and do not be afraid, because you already possess such great human resources! May you utilize them unreservedly for the good of all. You will not be alone in the difficult task of your material and spiritual reconstruction.

On your behalf, I would like at this point to ask the international community to turn its full attentions to the needs of your integral development. Only in this way will it be possible to build peace in this Balkan region, stained with the blood of ignoble and senseless fratricidal conflicts.

7. Now it is time to say good-bye: I offer my heartfelt and grateful greetings to all those present. In particular I greet the President of the Republic, who gave me such a warm welcome, and I am grateful to him for his friendly words. I greet the civil and military authorities. I greet the representatives of the various religious confessions. I greet my brothers in the Episcopate, especially those whom I had the joy of ordaining this morning. I wish to address a special greeting to Bishop Joakim Herbut and the faithful of Skopje-Prizren. I greet the priest and religious. I greet the Italian soldiers from "Operation Pelican" who for so many months have striven with admirable dedication in their humanitarian service to the needy population. I greet all the Albanians scattered over the bordering regions and throughout the world. Upon each of you I implore the protection of the Lord, and the Blessed Virgin, who here in Albania is invoked under the title of Our Lady of good Counsel.

Dear brothers and sisters of Albania, may God protect your country. May God protect the Albanian people all over the world. In God's name I embrace all of you and bless you. Good-bye. I cordially wish you well.



TODAY YOU HAVE GRACED OUR COUNTRY

The Pope's address to the Albanian people was enthusiastically received and cheered. At times the Holy Father had to wait for minutes before the chanting "PAPA - PAPA" of the exuberant crowd subsided. Following the Pope's address, the newly ordained Archbishop of Durrës- Tiranë, Rrok Mirdita, greeted the Holy Father in these words:

Your Holiness:

Exactly five years ago in Rome, on May 6, 1988, Your Holiness graciously received in special audience, a delegation of Albanian emigrants from America and from several European countries.

We still remember the sweet and kind words Your paternal Holiness spoke to us that day.

Your words of faith, hope, and courage were particularly inspiring to us, given the sad situation in Albania, still under the inhumane, dark terror of communist tyranny. We did not dare to dream in those days of such a speedy recovery and freedom. But God always takes care of his own.

On that occasion, Your Holiness told us that Albania was very dear to you. It is so close to the Rome of Peter, it is the land where Paul and Andrew formed their first Christian communities, and Durrachium, where I will preside as Archbishop, is one of the first Episcopal sees of Christendom.

Your Holiness, by your presence here today, you are showing the same love and concern that you and your predecessors have shown in the past.

During your pontificate, Your Holiness has visited hundreds of nations and cities throughout the world. Everywhere Your Holiness has traveled you have proclaimed the message of peace, love, justice, and brotherhood. Today, you have come to our beloved country, Albania, and have graced our capital, Tirana, with your presence. By your visit here and by your reestablishing the Catholic Hierarchy, as well as by the sweet and paternal words to the sons and daughters of Albania, you reaffirm the special love you have for the Albanian people.

Touched by your love and concern for us, we Albanians without exception, having overcome the cries and bloodshed of the past, express our feelings with hearts full of joy, and we extend to you our traditional Albanian hospitality and exclaim "Welcome."

Welcome to the land of the Eagle, welcome to the shores of the Adriatic, where the ancient Illyrian language is spoken, where thousands of martyrs shed their blood in their determination to remain faithful to the Holy See and to the Albanian virtues of *Besa* and *Burnija*. Welcome, Your Holiness, to the country of George Kastrioti-Skanderbeg, the Champion of Christendom and the defender of Western civilization, as he was called by one of your predecessors. Welcome, Your Holiness, to the land of Mother Teresa, the missionary of Christian love.

Holy Father, although we Albanians are of different religious faiths, I am convinced that you are welcome by all Albanians regardless of where they reside. Differences in religions here in Albania fortunately did not interfere with the religious tolerance and harmony that existed among Albanians. Our religious tolerance impressed foreigners, who recognized how Albanians were able to maintain a balance even when fanaticism and divisiveness were enhanced and furthered by outsiders whose purpose was to cause disruption and conflict among us in order to divide and conquer us.

We Catholic Bishops of Albania want to assure Your Holiness that we will follow your teaching and advice as you expressed it to the Delegation of the "World Islamic League" on January 28, 1993, "that different religions, now and in the future, must play an important role for the preservation of peace and construction of a just society worthy of human dignity." Here, we will endeavor to preserve the brotherly harmony among the people and rebuild an Albania with traditional values which will unite our people around the national hearth and strengthen their sense of commitment and love for their country.

Your Holiness, I believe that Europe has to be grateful to your Polish people and country for two gifts given by Divine Providence to humanity through the most noble sons of your country.

In 1683, Kara Mustafa had surrounded Vienna with his immense armies, and the legendary leader, Jan Sobjeski, defeated the Turkish hordes and saved Vienna and Western civilization for centuries to come.

On the second occasion, Divine Providence used your person to defeat another threat more dangerous than all others. Communism was a threat not only to Christianity but to humanity in general. Your Holiness, coming from the noble Polish people, saw that danger more clearly than most of the leaders of the world, and with God's assistance and your wisdom, charisma, and leadership, you helped to free Western civilization from the monster of communism. Gorbachev, himself, has declared that without Your Holiness' contribution, these changes would not have been possible.

We thank God for the honor and grace He has given us in having you as a distinguished guest. This is the first time in the history of the Albanian people that the Vicar of Christ has visited us in person. With great humility and gratitude, I ask Your Holiness to bless me personally and to give your special blessing to all the Albanian people and our leaders, our youth and our elderly, our priests and religious.

Long live the Pope!

*

Holy Father's message at the conclusion of his historic visit to the Land of Eagles sent to the Albanian President, Dr. Sali Berisha.

Concluding the visit to your nation and to the Catholic community which I met today, I am obliged to thank your Excellency and the other dignitaries of your country for the warm hospitality you have shown me. My thoughts of affection go out to you and to all the Albanian people with an ardent prayer to Omnipotent God that He may preserve for the Albanian nation the gift of a true and lasting peace in prosperity and social advancement based on the noble human and religious traditions of your land.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

POPE JOHN PAUL II SPEAKS OF ALBANIA AT HIS GENERAL AUDIENCE

The Holy Father's visit to Albania allowed him to see the signs of new life in a country that suffered years of bitter religious persecution

The "resurrection" of the Church in Albania was the theme of the Holy Father's address at the General Audience of Wednesday, 28 April. The Pope had visited the Balkan nation on the previous Sunday to consecrate four new Bishops, thus re-establishing the hierarchy in a land that had endured over 40 years of harsh, relentless persecution. The Holy Father spoke in Italian. Below is the English translation of the discourse.

1. "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" (MK 16:3).

These words of the women who had rushed to Christ's tomb "on the day after the sabbath" come to mind when one considers the recent history of the country I was able to visit last Sunday. For years Albania had become synonymous with the particular oppression established by a totalitarian, atheistic system in which the rejection of God was pushed to its furthest limits. There the right to freedom of conscience and religion had been trampled upon most brutally: those who simply administered Baptism or engaged in any religious practices were threatened with the death penalty. The persecution raged against Christians and Muslims alike.

The country thus became like the tomb in which the Jews buried Christ, putting a stone against its entrance.

2. But behold, the women who came to the tomb "found the stone rolled away" (Lk 24:2). For Albania too, as a result of the events beginning in 1989, the tombstone was rolled away and a period of changes began. Human rights, including that of freedom of conscience and religion, have now become the basis of social life. In these circumstances it became possible - and in a certain sense even necessary, especially with the Catholic community - for the Pope to visit. This took place on 25 April last.

I am very grateful to the faithful of that tormented Church who wanted me to come among them. I thank the President of the Republic, Mr. Sali Berisha, who invited me and welcomed me with great warmth and courtesy. I also thank the civil and military authorities, and all who helped make the visit a success. I am grateful as well to Archbishop Anastasios of the Orthodox Church and to Kryemufti Sabri Koçi of the Muslim community, who honored me with their presence. The spiritual rebirth of Albania is marked by ecumenical dialogue and interreligious cooperation. It is this not a sign of hope?

A Christian presence in Albania dates from apostolic times: perhaps St. Paul visited the region, since at that time Durrës was a usual port of call on the route to Rome. It is impossible to give a brief summary of the complex historical events through which the country has passed down to our times. Suffice it to recall the glorious exploits of the national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu [George Castrioti Skanderbeg], who was supported in his activity by the Roman Pontiffs. He is credited with leading a strenuous defence against the Turkish invaders in the 15th century. In the 18th century, Pope Clement XI, a native of that region, showed particular concern for Albania as well.

Church in Albania is now living a new spring

Unfortunately, the political independence finally achieved in 1912 did not put an end to difficulties: Albania later experienced other sad times which culminated, after the Second World War, in a ruthless dictatorship that sought to drown the most basic civil rights in blood, by trying to erase the very name of God from the hearts of believers.

A vain attempt, as events have shown: the long night was finally followed by the dawn of a new day. The Church in Albania is now living a new spring.

3. My visit last Sunday was meant to hallow this event by consecrating new Bishops in the cathedral of Shkodër, one of the most majestic churches in the Balkans. During the years of dicta-

torship it was turned into a sports complex; now it has returned to its original splendor, becoming the symbol of Albania's resurrection.

The solemn celebration was devoutly attended by a large crowd of the faithful. Almost as at a new Pentecost, one felt the breath of the Spirit, who introduced the prelates into the College of the successors of the Apostles. One of them, Bishop Zef Simoni, the Auxiliary of Shkodër, had been condemned to 15 years in prison on 25 April 1967. On the same day, 25 April, one year later, exactly 25 years ago, a death sentence was issued (later commuted to hard labor) for today's Archbishop of Shkodër, Frano Ilia. This coincidence of dates has made even more touching the remembrance of the events connected with the suffering history of the Albanian Church. The other praiseworthy Bishops ordained are Archbishop Rrok K. Mirdita of Durrës-Tiranë and Bishop Robert Ashta of Pult.

4. How could we not see in all this a sign of the special protection of *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, so venerated in Albania? On Thursday, 22 April, I went to Genazzano, near Rome where Mary is venerated as the Mother of Good Counsel, to entrust to her my apostolic pilgrimage to Albania. An ideal spiritual bond unites Genazzano and Shkodër, where a Marian shrine of the same name was twice destroyed during the course of history. The most recent destruction occurred in 1967, during the fiercest period of the dictatorship, when it tried to wipe every trace of religion from the country. On the ruins of that tragic effrontery, by God's providential design, a new Archbishop was ordained last Sunday and the cornerstone blessed for the new shrine where the image of Our Lady of Good Counsel will be placed.

Build a new society based on solidarity

5. The evening ended in Tiranë with an unforgettable visit with the populace in the square dedicated to the national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu. Also present were the President of the Republic, the State authorities, representatives of the various religious confessions, and a great many people. How could I not mention the valuable help that Archbishop Ivan Dias, the Apostolic Nuncio, gave in the preparations for my visit? I sincerely thank him, as I express my deep grati-

tude to the priests and to the religious, particularly Mother Teresa. I also thank the ecclesial organizations and movements who came from other nations to support the Albanian Church on its journey. *My departure discourse, addressed to the whole nation*, was meant to be a message of hope and encouragement. I invited them not to forget easily the sufferings endured by Albanians in the decades past.

I indicated to the people of Albania *their future challenges*. Their regained religious freedom will certainly be the leaven of a democratic society if the value and primary importance of the human person are recognized, and if all social, political and economic relations are marked by authentic solidarity.

In addition, I expressed the wish that Albania, with the assistance of the international community, may overcome the serious crisis of the present moment. It will be helped by its sense of family and acceptance, and especially by its faith. It will receive great support from a continually renewed understanding between Catholics, the Orthodox and Muslims. Albania has reopened its doors to God, and God does not abandon those who trust in him.

6. *"Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:26).*

These words, taken from last Sunday's liturgy, remind us that human history, the history of peoples and nations, even in the most tragic periods, finds true light in the Redeemer's paschal mystery.

For that nation, so dear to us, we express this wish: *may Christ walk with his sons and daughters*, as he did with the disciples on the way to Emmaus: may he "interpret to them the Scriptures", "open their minds and hearts" (he recognized in the breaking of the bread" (cf. Lk 24: 27, 35, 45), and help them build a new order based on truth, justice and love.

Together with them, let us make our own the joyful cry of Easter: "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon" (Lk 24:34).

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice" (Ps 117 [118]:24).

FROM ROME TO ILLYRICUM

Pope John Paul II's visit to Albania was not merely a departure from the country's recent past—in which priests and bishops were imprisoned and killed on pretense of being "Vatican spies." In fact, John Paul II is the first pontiff ever to visit the little nation on the Adriatic. The fact that his arrival coincided with the collapse of the militantly anti-religious communist government that held Albania for four decades only serves to punctuate the importance of the event.

Especially now, with the Bosnian-Serbian war raging so nearby, the Holy Father's pilgrimage to Albania was a sign to the world that peace must and will triumph over bloodshed. Like so much of Albania's history, the country is again embroiled in political upheaval. And like previous pontiffs, the Holy Father has recognized the importance of the situation there, and the importance of the reconciliation that is so vitally necessary. In our editor's interviews with various Albanian leaders (Berisha, Meksi, Serreqi, Musaraj and Çela) on the eve of the visit, all of them regarded it not only as an important historical event, (for its ability to bring about a religious recovery from a half-century of communist persecution) but also with political and international significance. They believed the visit would benefit Albania's infant democracy, its struggling economy and ruined educational system by bringing the nation back into dialogue with the Western world.

Albania is no stranger to the life-giving truth of Christianity—or the awful reality of war. Sts. Paul and Andrew, the great missionaries of the early years of Christianity were the first to evangelize Albania. St. Paul wrote of the wide territory covered in his travels, pointing out that he had been from Rome to Illyricum, (present-day Albania). From the beginning, Christianity has fought an uphill battle in this "Land of the Eagles." Early martyrs such as St. Astius, Bishop of Durrës, learned that Christians were regarded with the same attitude as Christ was.

Politically, Albania has been a divided land from the earliest days of the Christian era. When

the Roman empire was divided in A.D. 395, Albania found itself under Constantinople civil rule and Rome ecclesial direction. In A.D. 733, the nation was placed under the Patriarchate of Constantinople. After the schism of 1054, north Albania remained in communion with Rome, while the south joined with Constantinople, and adopted the Byzantine liturgy.

With the rise of Islam in the 1400's, Albania found itself on the front lines of a clash between East and West. The nation had successfully fought against the earlier barbarian invasions. However, the Turks were more efficient, more relentless, and therefore a more formidable enemy.

In those days, the crusades had not yet acquired the glamour of romance. The nation was left on its own to fight the Turks, with Albania's George Kastrioti-Skanderbeg, leading the battle. The legendary Skanderbeg was praised by Popes, feared by Sultans, revered and loved by his people. Under his almost mythical leadership, the country held Islam at bay until his death at the end of the 15th century.

Pope Pius II was so impressed with the young warrior he intended to crown him "Commander-in-Chief of all Christian forces." He set out from Rome to the coastal town of Ancona to take a boat across the Adriatic for the coronation. But the Pope died suddenly under mysterious circumstances before he could complete the trip.

Following Skanderbeg's death the Turks gained the upper hand, and the land became mostly Muslim to this day. It was not until the 17th century that the Christian Church was restored in Albania. Afterwards the Church began to thrive—encouraged along the way by Roman pontiffs such as Pope Clement VIII in 1593 (who was of Albanian descent), and Pope Leo XII in 1866. Both helped establish the Catholic hierarchy in the country. Popes throughout the ages have paid their homage to the painting of Our Lady of Shkodër. The painting originated in Albania, but was moved miraculously to Genazzano, Italy shortly after

Skanderbeg's death. In 1630, Urban VIII made the first papal visit to the Italian site of the painting. In 1864, Pius XI also made a pilgrimage to the shrine. Leo XIII who had a tremendous devotion to the painting designated it "Our Lady of Good Counsel" in Church documents. He inserted the title "Mother of Good Counsel" into the Litany of Loreto. Pope Pius XII dedicated his pontificate to the Blessed Mother under that title. Pope John XXIII made a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary to ask her aid for the Church as it prepared for the Second Vatican Council.

The shrine and castle which originally housed the painting symbolizes Albania's tumultuous history. It was destroyed three times: during the invasions of the Turks, and later by Serbian-Montenegrin forces in 1912, and finally by the communist government in our times. It was in 1967, with the rise on Enver Hoxha and his communist regime, that the days of peaceful growth in Albania's Church were ended. Most of the country's 2,169 churches and mosques were destroyed. Albania was proclaimed "the world's first atheistic State." Hoxha said, "We have cut off the Church's arm. Now we will cut off her head." Priests, bishops, religious and lay people were rounded up into labor camps and prisons. Many were executed. Others died natural deaths that were hastened by poor conditions in the prisons.

The persecution only recently ended. In 1990, changes began to take place. In many cases, these changes were fueled and fired by Catholics. While much has been done in the country since freedom was won in 1991, it is still far from the freedom Albanians hope one day to enjoy.

It was fitting that Pope John Paul II chose to step into the history of Albania when he did. It was also fitting that on the eve of his visit to Albania he went to pray at the shrine of Our Lady of Shkodër in Genazzano. "As you know," he said, "I am going to Albania, a country which for many years suffered oppression and a veritable religious persecution. There, for the first time I shall meet the Catholic community and assure these brothers and sisters of ours in the faith of the support and communion of the whole Church. From this moment I entrust their future to the Blessed Virgin.

With God's help may they always freely express their spiritual and missionary vitality in constant fidelity to the Gospel."

The Pope was met in Tiranë by President Sali Berisha, the charismatic democratic leader of Albania. Also on hand to meet him were the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Ivan Dias, Mother Teresa, Grand Mufti of the Albanian Muslim Community Sabri Koçi, His Beatitude, Archbishop Anastasios, Primate of the Albanian Orthodox Church, several Cardinals and Bishops, including John J. O'Connor of New York, diplomatic corps and other high officials.

The Pope greeted the dignitaries and the people present: "I embrace in the Lord all my Christian Brothers and Sisters," along with the Muslim community. He said, "The Holy See has always followed with closed attention—which often became sorrowful anxiety—your difficult journey during the long years of totalitarian oppression, and was near you through prayer and pastoral concern. And today, I am happy to be able to share with you, a country rich in cultural and spiritual traditions, the joy of your newfound freedom." He continued, "Just as she shared in the recent trials, so now the Church wishes to share in the joy and responsibility of the new season of freedom that has just begun."

President Berisha stressed the importance of the visit by referring to the Pope as "Pope Wojtyła," in his remarks. Before he was elected Pope, John Paul II's name was Karol Wojtyła. "In the darkest period of ruthless communist rule that the peoples of the East experienced, the Polish Church has the great merit to have offered the first resistance against this system," he said. He called the Holy Father, the "Pope of the East, the Pope who came from a communist country, from oppression. The Pope who understands the plight of so many former communist countries now struggling to rebuild."

His words were enthusiastically applauded. Part of the "shining" the Holy Father referred to has been a substantial gift to restore the cathedral at Shkodër—a building which has been turned into a gymnasium by the communist government. Mother Teresa and the Pope created a great spirit of hope and joy in Albania. Thousands of people

lined the streets, many with wooden crosses and rosary beads held high, shouting their greetings to the Pontiff and the holy woman.

Near Shkodër, Pope John Paul II stopped at the site of the medieval shrine that once housed the miraculous painting of Our Lady of Shkodër. His visit was brief, but moving. In a tent surrounded by Albanian and Papal flags, the pope knelt to pray. Then, he blessed the crowd. They cheered him, "Rmofte Papa!" (Long live the Pope), and "Rmofte Sali Berisha!" (Long live President Berisha). For his part, the pope had spoken earlier of the corner stone that he would bless to rebuild this shrine, as well as of the significant contribution of George Kastriot-Skanderbeg, and his devotion to Our lady of Shkodër.

The climax of the visit was the Holy father's consecration of four new bishops. Concelebrating the Mass were five cardinals, including Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, and 150 bishops and priests from around the world. Attending the Mass and Consecration were President Sali Berisha, Mother Teresa, Albanian Parliament President Pjetër Arbori, and Prime Minister Aleksander Meksi. In the first pew next to Mother Teresa there were Orthodox and Muslim representatives as well and an international gathering of Catholic Albanians.

Organized Albanian Catholic groups from the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe paraded through the streets of Shkodër to the cathedral showing the flags of Albania, America and the Vatican. A chorus of 150 Albanians from Tiranë, Durrës and Kosovë sang the stirring entrance hymn as John Paul II entered the Cathedral. Then, Mass began. In a heart-rending service, the Pope celebrated Mass and consecrated Albania's four bishops. Until now, Albania had only one old and disabled bishop. The rest had been killed or imprisoned where they died for the faith. As part of the consecration ceremony, the bishops lay prostrate before the altar, dedicating themselves to Christ. Then, the presiding cardinal—in this case Pope John Paul II—laid hands on each individual. The visiting cardinals and bishops laid their hands on the new bishops as well.

The four, Msgr. Frano Illia, Msgr. Zef Simoni, Msgr. Rrok K. Mirdita, and Msgr. Robert Ashta

were lastly given the symbols of their office. Each received a staff and miter. Then as bishops, they concelebrated Mass with the Pope. At the end of the Mass the Holy Father blessed the corner stone of the new shrine of Our Lady of Shkodër to be built where the old one was destroyed. Before the final blessing the Holy Father placed on the altar the replica of the miraculous painting of Our lady of Shkodër as his gift to the Cathedral and he prayed silently for a few moments.

After the 3 1/2 hours ceremony and Mass in an address to the crowds gathered outside the Cathedral, the Holy Father again stressed the importance of devotion to the Virgin of Good Counsel. He prayed:

"O, Virgin of Good Counsel, I am addressing to you the prayer of this people who have loved and honored you for so long a time. Direct, Mother, your eyes to these people. Accept the generous prayers, accompany them in their eagerness for a future based on justice, solidarity and peace. O, Virgin of Shkodër, queen of the Albanian people, pray for us!"

Again and again during his visit, John Paul II returned to a theme that has been the hallmark of his remarks about Albania. The renewal of the Faith in Albania will follow its suppression just as surely as the resurrection followed the death of Jesus Christ. Albania's history is a great testimony to this fact. By any human standard, the Faith should have died in such a hostile environment long ago. That it did not is a sign of the enduring power of Jesus Christ, said the Holy Father speaking about the visit later. He remarked,

"For years, Albania had become synonymous with the particular oppression established by a totalitarian, atheistic system in which the rejection of God was pushed to its furthest limits. There the right to freedom of conscience and religion had been trampled upon most brutally, those who simply administered Baptism or engaged in religious practices were threatened with the death penalty. The persecution against Christians and Muslims alike...The country thus became like the tomb in which the Jews buried Christ, putting a stone against its entrance. The long night is finally fol-

lowed by the dawn of a new day. The Church in Albania is now living a new spring."

With penetrating insight, the Pope predicted the revival all along. Now, he said, it is only a matter of time until the Faith is restored in Albania. But the pope also insists on the importance of Our Lady of Shkodër in the process. John Paul II declared,

"How could we not see in all this a sign of the special protection of Our Lady of Good Counsel, so venerated in Albania? ...An ideal spiritual bond unites Genazzano and Shkodër, where a Marian shrine of the same name was twice destroyed during the course of history... On the ruins of that tragic effrontery, by God's providential design, a new Archbishop was ordained last Sunday and the cornerstone blessed for the new shrine where the image of Our Lady of Good Counsel will be placed."

As if to prove all that Pope John Paul II had said about the return of the faith to Albania, President Sali Berisha in his farewell remarks, showed just how far government in Albania has come from the days of the communists. He stressed religious

freedom in strong language when he said "Man and God are not in opposition, they are not rivals. On the contrary, the human person has a very high dignity precisely because he or she is a creature made in God's image. Recognition of this value centered in the human person will certainly ensure that in the economy the proper balance is maintained between the rationale of efficiency and the priorities of solidarity, and will make political involvement a responsible search for the common good."

Albania's history — from the days of Paul to the days of John Paul II — has been a continual reenactment of Christian redemption. At any point, it is easy to look at this small, struggling nation and say, "God's grace is no longer here." Even today, freedoms are returning slowly to Albania. Yet with the economy and the people's spirits in ruins, it is easy to say, "God has abandoned the land that abandoned Him." His Holiness, John Paul II is too much a student of history and the Faith to give up on Albania. For him, Albania is emerging from the tomb—to a new glory. All Albanians thank him for his large role in speeding the process up.

Lulash DAJÇI

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 BIS Information Technologies DIALOG Information Services and Walsonline.

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ALBANIAN EPISCOPAL LINEAGE TRACED

Editor's note: The apostolic succession has always been a distinctive mark of the Roman Catholic Church. The gospel mission and authoritative powers conferred by Jesus Christ on Saint Peter and the apostles passed in unbroken succession down through the centuries to the present Vicar of Christ and the college of bishops.

The tracing of episcopal lineage is a fascinating field of study. It has intrigued and occupied historians and genealogists for many centuries. Charles Bransom, a young scholar from Brandon, Florida, and a faithful reader of our journal, has recently completed a study of the newly consecrated Albanian hierarchy. He traced the episcopal genealogy of the four new Albanian bishops back in history to the year 1541. The new prelates join the majority of living Catholic bishops who trace their orders back to the same bishop, Scipione Rebiba.

We believe that the following episcopal genealogy will be of interest to our readers. It is also a valuable historical document for the Church in Albania.

The Episcopal Genealogy of the Most Reverend Frano Illia, Archbishop of Shkodrë, The Most Reverend Rrok Kola Mirdita, Archbishop of Durrës-Tirana, The Most Reverend Robert Ashta, O.F.M., Bishop of Pulti and The Most Reverend Zef Simoni, Auxiliary Bishop of Shkodrë

1. FRANO ILLIA, Archbishop of Shkodrë and Apostolic Administrator of Lezhe, Sapë and Orosh, RROK KOLA MIRDITA, Archbishop of Durrës-Tirana, ROBERT ASHTA, O.F.M., Bishop of Pulti, and ZEF SIMONI, Titular Bishop of Bararus and Auxiliary Bishop of Shkodrë. Consecrated 25 April 1993 in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Shkodrë, Albania, by His Holiness Pope John Paul II, assisted by Camillo Cardinal Ruini, Vicar General of Rome and Josef Cardinal Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

2. KAROL WOJTYLA, the future Pope John Paul II, Titular Bishop of Ombi and Auxiliary Bishop of Krakow. Consecrated 28 September 1958 in the Metropolitan Cathedral, Krakow, by Eugeniusz Baziak, Archbishop of Lwow of the Latins and Apostolic Administrator of Krakow, assisted by Boleslaw Kominek, Titular Archbishop of Euchaita and Franciszek Jop, Titular Bishop of Daulia.

3. EUGENIUSZ BAZIAK, Titular Bishop of Phocaea and Auxiliary Bishop of Lwow of the Latins. Consecrated 5 November 1933 in the Metropolitan Cathedral, Lwow, by Boleslaw Twardowski, Archbishop of Lwow of the Latins, assisted by Franciszek Lisowski, Bishop of Tarnow and Edward Komar, Titular Bishop of Alinda and Auxiliary of Tarnow.

4. BOLESŁAW TWARDOWSKI, Titular Bishop of Telmissus and Auxiliary of Lwow of the Latins. Consecrated 12 January 1919 in the Metropolitan Cathedral, Lwow, by Josef Bilczewski, Archbishop of Lwow of the Latins, assisted by Leo Walega, Bishop of Tarnow and Karol Josef Fischer, Titular Bishop of Mallo and Auxiliary of Przemysl of the Latins.

5. JOSEF BILCZEWSKI, Archbishop of Lwow of the Latins. Consecrated 20 January 1901 in the Metropolitan Cathedral, Lwow, by Jan Puzyna de Kozielsko, Bishop of Krakow, assisted by Andrij Szeptyckij, Archbishop of Lviv of the Ukrainians and Jozef Pelczar, Bishop of Przemysl of the Latins.

6. JAN MAURZYCY PAWEŁ PUZYNA de KOZIELSKO, Titular Bishop of Memphis and Auxiliary of Lwow of the Latins. Consecrated 25 March 1886 in the Church of San Giovanni Canzio, Rome, by Mieczysław Cardinal Ledochowski, assisted by Józef Sembratowyc, Titular Archbishop of Teodosiopolis and Frantisek Schonbom, Archbishop of Praha (Prague).

7. MIECZYSLAW LEDOCHOWSKI, Titular Archbishop of Thebes and Apostolic Nuncio to Belgium. Consecrated 3 November 1861 in the Church of SS. Trinita Montecitorio, Rome, by Camillo Cardinal di Pietro, assisted by Salvatore Nobili Vitelleschi, Titular Archbishop of Seleucia and Alessandro Franchi, Titular Archbishop of Thessalonica.

8. CAMILLO di PIETRO, Titular Archbishop of Bairut. Consecrated 14 July 1839 in the Church of SS. Domenico e Sisto, Rome, by Chiarissimo Cardinal Falconieri Mellini, Archbishop of Ravenna, assisted by Ignazio Giovanni Cadolini, Titular Archbishop of Edessa and Fabio Maria Asquini, Titular Archbishop of Tarsus.

9. CHIARISSIMO FALCONIERI MELLINI, Archbishop of Ravenna. Consecrated 15 August 1826 in the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, Rome, by His Holiness Pope Leo XII, assisted by Filippo Bonardi, Archbishop of Ferrara and Giuseppe Perugini, Titular Bishop of Porphyreon.

10. ANNIBALE SERMATTEI DELLA GENGA, the future Pope Leo XII, Titular Archbishop of Tyr. Consecrated 24 February 1794 in the Cathedral, Frascati, by Henry Cardinal Stuart, Duke of York, Bishop of Frascati, assisted by Antonio Felice Zondadari, Titular Archbishop of Adana and Ottavio Boni, Titular Archbishop of Nazianzus.

11. HENRY STUART, Duke of York, Cardinal, Titular Archbishop of Corinth. Consecrated 19 November 1758 in the Basilica of the Twelve Holy Apostles, Rome, by His Holiness Pope Clement XIII, assisted by Giovanni Antonio Cardinal Guadagni, Bishop of Porto e Santa Rufina and Francesco Cardinal Borghese, Bishop of Albano.

12. CARLO REZZONICO, Cardinal, Bishop of Padova, the future Pope Clement XIII. Consecrated 19 March 1743 in the Basilica of the Twelve Holy Apostles, Rome, by His Holiness Pope Benedict XIV, assisted by Giuseppe Cardinal Accaramboni, Bishop of Frascati and Antonio Saverio Cardinal Gentili.

13. PROSPERO LAMBERTINI, Titular Archbishop of Theodosia, the future Pope Benedict XIV. Consecrated 16 July 1724 in the Pauline Chapel of the Apostolic Palace of the Quirinal, Rome, by His Holiness Pope Benedict XIII, assisted by Giovanni Francesco Nicolai, O.F.M. Ref., Titular Archbishop of Myra and Nicola Maria Lercari, Titular Archbishop of Nazianzus.

14. VINCENZO MARIA ORSINI, O.P., Cardinal, Archbishop of Manfredonia, the future Pope Benedict XIII. Consecrated 3 February 1675 in the Church of Saints Dominic and Sixtus, Rome, by Paluzzo (Paluzzi degli Albertoni) Cardinal Altieri, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation Propaganda Fide, assisted by Stefano Brancaccio, Archbishop-Bishop of Viterbo and Tuscania and Costanzo Zani, O.S.B., Bishop of Imola.

15. PALUZZO (PALUZZI DEGLI ALBERTONI) ALTIERI, Cardinal, Bishop of Montefiascone and Corneto. Consecrated 2 May 1666 in the Church of San Silvestro in Capite, Rome, by Ulderico Cardinal Carpegna, assisted by Stefano Ugolini, Titular Archbishop of Corinth and Giovanni Tommaso Pinelli, Bishop of Albenga.

16. ULDERICO CARPEGNA, Bishop of Gubbio. Consecrated 7 October 1630 in the Pauline Chapel of the Apostolic Palace of the Quirinal, Rome, by Luigi Cardinal Caetani, assisted by Antonio Ricciulli, Bishop emeritus of Belcastro and Benedetto Landi, Bishop of Fossombrone.

17. LUIGI CAETANI, Titular Patriarch of Antioch. Consecrated 12 June 1622 in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, by Lodovico Cardinal Ludovisi, Archbishop of Bologna, assisted by Galeazzo Santivale, Archbishop emeritus of Bari and Vulpiano Volpi, Archbishop emeritus of Chieti.

18. IODOVICO LUDOVISI, Cardinal, Archbishop of Bologna. Consecrated 2 May 1621 in the private chapel of his consecrator, near Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome, by Galeazzo Santivale, Archbishop emeritus of Bari, Prefect of the Apostolic Palace, assisted by Cosmo de Torres, Titular Archbishop of Hadrianopolis and Ottavio Ridolfi, Bishop of Ariano.

19. GALEAZZO SANTIVALE, Archbishop of Bari. Consecrated 4 April 1604 in the Chapel of the Apostolic Sacristy, Rome, by Girolamo Cardinal Bernerio, Bishop of Albano, assisted by Claudio Rangoni, Bishop of Piacenza and Giovanni Ambrogio Caccia, Bishop of Castro di Toscana.

20. GIROLAMO BERNERIO, O.P., Bishop of Ascoli Piceno. Consecrated 7 September 1586 in the Basilica of the Twelve Holy Apostles, Rome, by Giulio Antonio Cardinal Santoro, assisted by Giulio Masetti, Bishop of Reggio Emilia and Ottaviano Paravicini, Bishop of Alessandria.

21. GIULIO ANTONIO SANTORO, Archbishop of Santa Severina. Consecrated 1 March 1566 in the Pauline Chapel of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, Rome, by Scipione Cardinal Rebiba, Titular Patriarch of Constantinople, assisted by Annibale Caracciolo, Bishop of Isola and Giacomo de' Giacomelli, Bishop emeritus of Belcastro.

22. SCIPIONE REBIBA, Titular Bishop of Amicle and Auxiliary Bishop of Chieti. Nominated 16 March 1541. Despite extensive research, no record of his consecration has been found.

Charles N. BRANSOM, JR.

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EMERGING FROM THE "TRAGIC UTOPIA"

"Thus is reconstituted the Catholic hierarchy in that nation so long tried by one of the heaviest persecutions of contemporary history" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 25 December 1992). On Christmas Day, the news was made public that the Holy Father had nominated four bishops for Albania. The same Pope John Paul II performed their episcopal ordination on April 25, the Third Sunday of Easter. The event was situated between the two poles of rebirth and resurrection. And in this perspective Pope John Paul II saw the Church in Albania reemerge from the ashes of history, come out from the jails, the labor camps, the catacombs, institutional and cultural mockery. From the Christian standpoint, the Albanian church rose up from martyrdom. Easter Sunday of last year, when the new situation opened up to permit the reconstitution of the Catholic hierarchy, the Pope spoke to 5,000 university students from 400 universities in 40 countries. He pointed out the different dimensions of the Lord's resurrection. The Pope said "In this moment I think of Albania, where the Church has been condemned to death and now is rising up. Now you see that the event and the mystery of the resurrection travels through the history of the Church and of humanity."

The Church in Albania knows the stations of the *via crucis*. In the same year that the Communists took power (1944) the printing presses were seized and every Catholic editorial activity was suspended. In the first days of March 1945 the first Catholic priests were condemned and executed. The Apostolic Delegate was expelled as an "undesirable", and one after another the Catholic pre-schools, orphanages, high schools, colleges and seminaries were closed. The Italian Jesuit missionary, Fr. Giacomo Gardin, some years ago described, with the sobriety and modesty necessary when one speaks of himself, the climate of terror instilled and the tragedy undergone by the Albanian Church. [G. Gardin: *Dieci Anni di Prigionia in Albania (1945-1955)*, ed. La Civiltà Cattolica, Rome 1986].¹ In 1948 the repression was extended to the episcopate with the shooting of the bishops of Sapa and of Pult, the imprisonment of the metropolitan of Durrës Msgr. Vinçenc Prennushi, who died in 1949 in prison. Before that, in 1945 and 1946, respectively, the bishops of Lezha and the archbishop of Shkodër died, one in prison, the other under house arrest. Having almost completely destroyed the institutions and prohibited the public activities of the Catholic Church, an attempt was made to form a seditious "Albanian National



Dilapidated St. Anthony's (Franciscan) Church in Shkodër, 1992

Catholic Church", which was to have been independent from Rome. The only surviving bishop and the remaining clergy did not accept the "statute" of the "independent Church", but the assembly of deputies approved it just the same on 3 August 1951. And with this "statute" imposed upon it the Church continued to survive under ever greater restrictions and under an ever more refined persecution. *Gjon Sinishta* has collected chilling information in the volume entitled *The Fulfilled Promise (A Documentary Account of Religious Persecution in Albania)*, Santa Clara, California 1976.



Sic transit gloria mundi! Empty pedestal of the statue of the late Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha in Tirane. Children now play on the graffiti-covered site.

The struggle for the destruction of the Church must have reached its apex in 1967. After a year of relentless antireligious propaganda, on 24 June the Communist party newspaper *Zëri i Popullit* "announced" that all the churches and places of worship "were closed spontaneously by the people." Consequently with one decree-law, all the religious communities were disbanded and any religious practice was considered a crime. The content of this decree was made part of the Albanian Constitution in 1976. Places of worship (Catholic, Orthodox, Moslem) were transformed into recreation centers, gyms, restaurants, in puppet theaters, into cinemas. One could have had the impression that "everything was accomplished." Despite all that, the policy of persecution continued and intensified. A still recent document, prepared for the Communist Party Congress IX (1986) indicated in its title the perspective that was pursued and the "final solution": "Toward a Totally Atheist Society." However the destruction of the material apparatus and the structures of the Church did not automatically signify the Church's disappearance. Believers continued to maintain their faith in the "catacombs" of the heart and the family. The martyrdom of the bishops and numerous priests sustained them until the present time in which it was possible to reorganize even the ca-

nonical structure and the institutions necessary for the reevangelization, catechesis and the liturgy.

The reconstruction of the Catholic hierarchy – whose destruction was one of the first and principal objectives of the persecution – constituted an essential event not only for the interpretation of the mission of the Church, but also for its own structure.

The local Church is in fact built around the bishop. "The diocese is a portion of the People of God, entrusted to the pastoral care of the Bishop, assisted by its presbyterate, so that adhering to its pastor it is, by means of the Gospel and the Holy Eucharist, united in the Holy Spirit, constitutes a particular Church, in which is present and operates the Church of Christ, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" (Conciliar Decree *Christus Dominus*, no. 11).

The founding moment of the episcopal ministry is the episcopal consecration with which "the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred" (*Lumen Gentium*, 21) together with the office of sanctifying, teaching, and governing. These offices "cannot be exercised in isolation from hierarchical communion with the head and members of the [episcopal] College." The episcopal ordination done by the Pope himself together with the concelebrating bishops visibly expressed the dimensions of the catholicity into which the new bishops were inserted. All the other bishops of the Catholic Church

assured the newly ordained ones of the communion of faith, and reciprocal charity. The new bishops, for their part, were called to insert their pastoral action into the general common perspective shared by the Episcopal College. In the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Europe an "exchange of gifts" was discussed. Even the new bishops had their gifts to offer. Three of them Archbishop *Frano Illia*, Metropolitan of Shkodër; Bishop *Robert Ashta* of Pult; Auxiliary Bishop *Zef Simoni* of Shkodër, lived in Albania. They withstood prison, survived forced labor in the camps, and the "forced secularization." Through their survival, they offered a witness to the faith and the marks of martyrdom. The fourth, Archbishop *Rrok Mirdita* of Durrës and Tirana, came from a different experience. An Albanian, born in Montenegro, he exercised his ministry in the diaspora, among the Albanians of New York since 1970.

The permeation of diverse experiences will be advantageous for the reconstruction of the Church in Albania. If the first ones constitute a concrete recall to the tradition of the Albanian Church, the latter, who has lived practically the application of the Vatican Council in the Albanian community, will bring new pastoral dimensions to Albania. The balance between continuity and renewal could not but favor the harmonious growth of the Church in Albania.

This Church which reemerged from the rubble needed reevangelization, renewed catechesis, an accurate liturgy, and a formation of the communitarian spirit which the persecution and the consequent disruptions inevitably grazed. The bishops as guarantors of the faith and ecclesial communion were called to make this explicit in the ambit of their own territory and in the entirety of the Church.



Father Simon Jubani, the courageous priest who initiated the peaceful return of religious freedom to Albania in 1990.

Within the reconstruction of the Catholic Community the bishops were given specific task of pastors and guides. They aid the Catholic Community to grow in its identity, and they also know how to guide the community according to the orientations of the Church of today, in relationships with other Christians, in Albania particularly in relation to the Orthodox, instilling fraternal relationships based on the common faith and promoting collaboration. In fact, in the first place it was up to the bishops to "sustain and direct among Catholics the ecumenical movement, whose end is

the reestablishment of unity among all Christians, which the Church is held to promote by the will of Christ" (CJC can. 755, p. 1). The bishops help the Catholic Community to continue its positive relationship towards their Muslim brothers who are in majority in the Country, with a spirit of reciprocal comprehension and of respect in syntony with the Council's indications. Together the bishops aid the Catholic Church in Albania to bring its own contribution to the good of the entire Country, for the purification of the residue left by doctrinal materialism and by the consequences of an unimaginable economic and cultural crisis and to participate actively in cultural reirth and the progress of the entire Albanian society.

The Evangelical announcement in all its implications, even social, was the authentic contribution the bishops gave.

The special Assembly of the Synod of the Bishops for Europe (1991) examined the religious situation of post-communist Europe and the perspectives of the "new evangelization." In the *Concluding Declaration* it was noted "In some parts of the continent and above all among the new generations, the Christian faith is all but unknown

because of a systematic atheistic propaganda, or generally the process of secularization that has gone forward so far that evangelization must begin "ex novo"... Therefore it is the urgent task of the Church to newly offer the liberating message of the Gospel" (II.3).

To that synodal assembly the Holy Father invited Auxiliary Bishop Zef Simoni of Shkodër. The reevangelization was in fact an urgent priority in Albania. The new bishops were given the task of promoting and focusing reevangelization. In their declarations after receiving nomination as bishops, they underlined the vital importance of a new evangelical preaching in Albania. The Archbishop Frano Illia, recently published in popular Albanian a book on Jesus Christ. He affirmed that he was particularly inspired by Giuseppe Ricciotti's *The Life of Jesus Christ*. But if from these it assumed structural elements, scriptural passages, and expressive images, the Albanian presentation was simple and attractive as was required for an intro-

duction to the Christian mystery in the current Albanian situation (Dom Frano Illia, *Jezusi: Jetë e Shkurtë e Jezu Krishtit Zot e Njeri Shpetimtar i Njerzimit*, Milot, 1992). The apostolic intent of this publication was clear.

Archbishop Rrok Mirdita of Durrës-Tirana, declared that: "The Lord Jesus is present in the midst of believers. To make his presence ever more transparent is the first task of the bishops. The Church in Albania must assume the form that in general outline was delineated by Vatican II, keeping in mind its specific circumstances determined by a long imposed isolation which has created terrible voids. In this situation the first task of a bishop is the preaching of the Gospel."

On the theme of the reevangelization of Europe and therefore of the single European states, the Holy Father returned in a speech aimed at the participants in the meeting of the Council of the European Episcopal Conferences. He affirmed that "Europe is called to a courageous work of self-evangelization" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 17 April 1993). That was above all necessary for the internal life of the Catholic Community, but it was not without consequences for fraternal relations with other Christians present in the Country, and for the influence exercised on Albanian society itself. In the speech the Holy Father said: "The community of believers has thus a way to make its voice heard also in the civil arena, voice of a concordant community completely extended to announce the Gospel of hope and charity. From this standpoint more than ever is the dialog with other Christian confessions important."

The reconstitution of the Catholic hierarchy in Albania has certainly provided an impetus to this process. Perhaps it was in consideration of analogous reasons that in relation to the naming of the new Albanian bishop it was written in *L'Osservatore Romano*, (25 December 1992) that it was "an ecclesial event of historic relevance and great significance, not only for the future of Albania, but also for the whole Church in Europe."

Eleuterio F. FORTINO



Fr. Gjon Karma, S.J. sits desolately on a bench in the prison yard. Photo was smuggled out in June 1960. Arrested at the end of 1947, he spent 17 years in Albanian prisons, and died at the age of 79, in December 1975.

The book was translated into English under the title *Banishing God in Albania*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, California 1988.

LIFE IN THE LABOR CAMPS OF ALBANIA

Editor's note: Drita Kosturi and Viktor Dosti are among the longest held "prisoners of conscience" in Albania. Both were active in the anti-fascist movement during World War II. Kosturi fought on the side of the Communists, while Dosti served on the Nationalist side. In 1945, Kosturi and Dosti were arrested, along with tens of thousands of others. They were suspected of not supporting the new communist government, and sentenced to prison and labor camps.

With the fall of the Communist regime in 1991, both were freed. Since their release, they have begun to speak about the terrible conditions and endless suffering in the Albanian labor camps. Last year Kosturi and Dosti spoke for the first time in the United States. An attentive audience listened to their description of painful personal experiences. They learned of the suffering of many other prisoners under the stalinist regime of Enver Hoxha. In November 1992, Kosturi spoke at an international conference in Chicago, Illinois. Dosti addressed a gathering of Amnesty International in Los Angeles, California in June 1992.

We are grateful to Mr. Tomor Zavalani for sending us a copy of Dosti's presentation. We believe that our readers will appreciate and be inspired by Dosti's remarks. His testimony and the testimony of Drita Kosturi provide evidence of the brute force and lawless conditions in Communist Albania

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Distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

I am Viktor Dosti visiting from Albania. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak before you.

It is impossible in five minutes to describe the horror, which for 47 years, an entire people suffered the oppression of an inhumane, tyrannical regime. I will endeavor to give you only a glimpse of this half-century holocaust.

I, too, am one of tens and tens of thousands of persons who, in Albania, experienced the consequences of one of the most perverse ideologies of a totalitarian system known to man; a system in which human dignity, development of the indi-

vidual personality, the fundamental right to live freely and equally before the law, were denied.

The most natural right to have and enjoy a family, the right of freedom and expression of thought, conscience and religion, brotherhood and love for one another, were crushed. Instead, was a society in which lawlessness was the law.

Fear numbed the brain. Insecurity poisoned the most simple daily pleasures. Mistrust alienated one from the other. It was a society in which an arrogant and corrupt bureaucracy caused the individual to lose self respect, and in which, more importantly, hatred between one another became a way of life.

One of the ways in which the regime was able to realize this oppression was in the development of prisons and internment camps. What were these camps? Until the end of the 1950s prisoners were forced to drain marsh lands. They would dig ditches. Later prisoners were sent into the mines.

The camps were a plot of land surrounded by barbed wire. Inside these wires were shelters or barracks with ceilings made of asphalt paper. These shelters became furnaces in the summer and, in winter, rains and wind entered from every opening. Above the wood planks or on the dirt floor itself lay mattresses filled with straw where people would sleep or lie for a few minutes of rest after work.

How life would be in these camps was understood the moment we were notified of our jobs. They wakened us in the middle of the night. They had us stand in the prison courtyard, and there, after they tied our hands behind our backs, and, with another rope, tied us together in single file, some 40 or 50 of us were piled in a truck of six or seven meters space. When the trip was a long one, there in the truck, natural functions would take place. No one would dare complain, because the guards would beat us with fist and sticks. The following day or so, we started work with a pick, a spade and a wheel barrow. With these tools, we were forced to dig ditches three or four meters deep. We began work at dawn and finished at dusk. We tired so much that we were not able to command our own bodies. By the morning, fin-

gers and hands were frozen in a fist and required some time to relax them. We would fall onto our mattresses half dead, just as we arrived from work, with our clothes covered with dust or mud. There was no energy left to wash our faces or hands, especially when we returned from work in late evening, after running several kilometers. The guards would round us up like cattle and beat us with long poles to hurry us along. And we hastened. We ran over one another, stepped over people, tore the clothes of one another, our shoes, stuck in the mud, left behind, and the police would laugh and joke at us.

We were obliged to complete a specific amount of work and we would do our utmost to satisfy the goal. Otherwise, we would be locked in a cell, naked, without food or water, or made to crawl into a barbed wire spiral about one meter high, or stand in a tin cell where the sun scorched, the rain drenched, and the cold made one shiver like a dog.

Then there were the poles in the middle of the camp, upon which one was tied, and all other prisoners were forced, one after the other, to spit, and you, covered from head to toe with spit and phlegm, would stand exposed in their midst the entire day. And we all spit, because, alas, we were spitting upon ourselves!

Most unbearable was hunger. Hunger every moment. Night, day. It was hunger that shamed! It caused one to steal from his own brother. It was hunger that degraded; betrayed a friend. A hunger that dehumanized.

Another thing was the night. Night was passed without sleep from invasions of lice, fleas and bedbugs. Night was anxiety and fear of our lives. Because it was night when we were called for beatings. It was night when they called upon us to snitch on one another. At night we were forced to become spies. And unfortunately, these were not few. But this we leave to their own conscience, because man is man. Weak and strong. Good and bad. And when one lives in inhuman circumstances, is there not justification for him to be less than a man? Are we justified in judging another human being when he does not live like a human being? We hope to God that never again will man be put to such a test.

Hunger, unbearable fatigue, aberration of conscience, and spiritual death, sooner or later turned us into walking and talking tools. The brain became a burden. It was of no use. We did not need to think. To reason. To feel. We needed only muscle, muscle, muscle. An entire hunk of muscle. The brain had only one function: to work muscle as much as possible. Let it find muscle wherever it could.

Under these circumstances, it was not surprising that people were happy when they became ill. They broke their own limbs. They opened wounds in their own bodies. They hurled themselves against barbed wire to die. Because this was the only way to save oneself.

How many have gone through these camps? Up to now, no one has come up with a precise figure. Especially the interned. Because these camps were spread throughout every region of Albania. Now, the Society for the Politically Persecuted is endeavoring to document the precise numbers of these interned people. There is no doubt that this number will arrive at the hundreds of thousands in a country of 3.5 million.

Should these issue be raised? If so, who will answer for these human sufferings? Who will be made responsible? Individuals or an entire political social system? Or both?

I know not. I know only that hatred breeds hatred. And he, who for 46 years in succession held hatred in the palm of his hand, fears it most. A society cannot and must not build upon hate.

I know another thing. Only two months ago in Albania, a savage, repressive, immoral system was overthrown. But it has just been overthrown. It is not yet dead. This monster continues to threaten the newborn Democracy. This child needs help to get on its feet and to walk on its own. I do not speak as an Albanian. I speak as a human being. And I say, in a spot on the globe there are 28,000 kilometers where 25 million people live. And they are creatures of God. They have a human right to be human beings. Has the time not come for society to become more moral — nay, more human?

Finally, it is my great wish to see in Albania a branch of Amnesty International, and collaborations with members throughout the world. Thank you.

THE POET ARCHBISHOP VINÇENC PRENNUSHI, O.F.M., REMEMBERED

During the summer from 1941 to 1946, I had the great fortune to have visited my uncle, Archbishop Vinçenc Prennushi, O.F.M. of Durrës and Tirana. He was the last Primate of Albania. At the time I was too young to understand the problems in the nation. However, the memories remain. Now that I am older, I understand the reasons for many of the things that transpired.

My most beautiful memory was when my uncle went for the first time to Durrës shortly after being named Archbishop by Pope Pius XII. While participating in this celebration I was full of joy. The streets were full of people including Muslims and Orthodox who waved and applauded. It was a holiday for everyone. Clearly a true brotherhood existed between believers of every faith. The understanding, tolerance, and respect for the faithful of other religions and the people's reciprocal solidarity was a product of hard work by the Catholic clergy in Albania. Catholic priests and religious had been in the vanguard of cultural development. They promoted good, traditional, Albanian education. The historical documents of many centuries verify this fact.

Each year from 1943 to 1946 my uncle visited Delbinisht. The village faced the Adriatic Sea. It was close to the Church of the Miracles of Saint Anthony to which faithful from every part of the country went. Delbinisht had a beautiful church as well as the summer home of the archbishops.

Not far from the house was a spring of potable water used by the whole village. There, one day in the fall of 1943, some German soldiers bathed semi-nude. The villagers told the bishop about the incident and he immediately went to speak to the German group. The Germans greeted him with respect. When they heard him pronounce German (my uncle had spent the summer translating *Dreizenlinden* by Weber and knew German very well) they immediately stood at attention as if they were standing before a general. He prudently gave them a good lecture on how Albanian custom did not permit such public behavior.

Usually, I spent every day with my uncle until late in the afternoon. He would tell me stories about everything from his meetings with the Holy Father, to the history of the Church, and in par-



Archbishop Vinçenc Prennushi on the day of his ordination, Vienna (Austria).
1938

ticular the history of the Albanian Church. He related events in the history of the fatherland and of our culture.

During the years after the war, my uncle was very sad. Everyday he received bad news in letters. Visitors came from afar to seek advice. Villagers wanted some indicator of hope regarding "That liberation – from rain to hail!" (as Albanians say). The communists were active everywhere imposing upon the country their atheistic dictatorship. I lived in anxiety participating marginally in the long discussions. When we were alone he spoke to me as though I was an adult. All day we were together, from Mass in the morning until late at night. I was the mass server and I knew by heart all the responses to what the priest said in Latin although I did not understand all of their content. Often I entered into his study without knocking (because he wanted me to do so since he loved me so much).

In the evenings our conversations were brief. We used an oil lamp while we ate or read. His meals were scanty and frugal, but his physique was healthy and robust. Even though he had already passed 60 years, he suffered only from eczema in his hands. "We come from a strong race," he told me remembering his mother (my grandmother) who died at age ninety-six.

In August, 1946, he told me about the first government executions of Catholic priests. He was very sad. He prayed. "It is a shame for those who are out of prison," he said to me.

One night government authorities asked him to come to Tirana. It was the last night I would ever spend with my uncle. He left the next day. Several months later we received the terrible news of his imprisonment. What sadness and pain! That sadness has been my life companion.



Archbishop Prennushi, 1936, on the occasion of his episcopal ordination

A few of his possessions including the gray belt from his bishop's vestment, and his books have consoled me all of my life. I kept them at great risk. Most precious are the broken pieces of the simple wooden cross from his desk. The government agents shattered the cross when they searched his possessions.

My uncle was not only an extremely devoted and prudent ecclesiastical prelate, but also one of the most noted representatives of Albanian culture in the first half of the twentieth century. His books, *The Word of the Lord*; *Folk Songs from Northern Albania*; *Flowers and Leaves*; *In the Fields of True Democracy*, and his translations of works of Christian literature including Wiseman's *Fabiola*, Sienkiewicz's

Quo Vadis?...Silvio Pellico's *My Prisons*, and Rolando's *The Betrayal* are good Catholic cultural patrimony for past and future Albanian generations.

He died while under torture in prison on 19 March 1949.

My father, Anton, received his body from the prison in a stormy night. With the help of some friends he brought the remains away in a blanket. My uncle was buried in his cathedral church. In 1967 that church was closed and profaned like many others. The blessed bones of my uncle were removed and now lay on the hills of Durrës.

Today in Albania all of the democrats exalt his splendid example as a true churchman and patriot. Above all they praise his martyrdom for the Catholic faith. He knew well how to live and die worthily for the Faith and Fatherland.*

Michel PRENNUSHI

* First published in "Osservatore Romano" 3/23/1992

THE PAINFUL ORDEAL OF AN ALBANIAN JESUIT

Editor's note: Father Anton Luli, S.J., was director of the Xavier (Jesuit) College in Shkodër, Albania. He was among the few Albanian meteorologists who operated the college's observatory. Following the Communist takeover in 1944, Luli, along with other Jesuits was arrested, tortured and then sentenced to spend many years in the Albanian gulags.

With the collapse of the communist regime in 1991, Father Luli was freed. He is now assigned to the Jesuit Church in Tirana, Albania. In a touching letter to a longtime friend he speaks for the first time about his painful ordeal. We thank Father Luli for his testimony, and with him "Bless the Lord!" Father's testimony extends an indirect invitation to remember his fellow Jesuits and the many other clergy, religious and lay people who suffered persecution and died for Christ in Albania.

*

Dearest,

I have here before me your letter of 21 August 1991. You kept the promise, I did not. The reason: I was not sure of my address. I now live with my brother in a village close to Shkodër. I go to another village to celebrate Mass.

On February 1992, I joined a small community of Jesuits living here in Tirana. Our community comprises two Italian priests and two Albanian priests. We rented a small house from a Muslim, while we await the government authorities return of the old house attached to the Church of the Sacred Heart. In 1967, this house and the church were appropriated by the infamous communist regime and used as a cinema as well as an auditorium for various manifestations.

After 46 years as a wanderer and prisoner, the Lord has called me back into community life. I know God will give me the strength to continue until death.

How good is the Lord. After 50 years He allows us to taste the delights of His heart through contact with the People of God who thirsts and hunger for His word and divine service.

It is too bad that we are so few, and, for that matter, so old, sick and full of infirmities. Although I will be 82 years old in July, I still feel strong, and this even though during my imprisonment I arrived at the threshold of eternity three times. I coveted this opportunity as a liberation from the unbearable and incessant torments. Often I united myself to Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane: "spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma" (The



Fr. Anton Luli, S.J., Shkodër, 1943

spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41)).

When our College at Shkodër was closed in 1946, I was made the pastor of a parish in Shkreli, 20 or 30 kilometers north of Shkodër. After a year and a half I was arrested on 19 December 1947. I was charged with "agitation and propaganda against communism." It was the usual accusation against priests and the constant method used for making us disappear: "percutiam pastores..."



Pope John Paul II warmly embraces Father Luli during a private audience, Vatican, 1991

I was brought to Koplik, a small town in the mountains of Shkodër. The guard opened the door to a small room, hurled me against the wall, and then slammed the door. It was dark. In the door a window threw a pale light. To my great surprise I found myself in a bathroom full of hardened excrement. That bathroom was never cleaned for the nine months that I remained there. However, this was nothing compared to that which followed. Never in my life did I feel the real and true presence of the Lord as in that instant. However, Calvary began right away.

Above that small room lived the head of the police. When I was delivered to him, he received me churlishly. He punched me in the jaw, and then called in two or three guards. They stood in a circle about me. They then shoved my body first toward one and then toward another like a ball. All the while they yelled and cursed. Then one of the guards squeezed my esophagus with his hands. He suffocated my every breath. Finally I fell to the ground just "like a dead body falls."

Then a large policeman wearing heavy boots jumped on me. He broke one of my ribs, I felt the effects of the injury for a long time; I could not breathe without experiencing pain.

The official asked me to confess all of the "sins" I had committed against "the people." When I told him that there was nothing to confess, they put electric current on my earlobes. The experience was horrible and unbearable. With some of the other prisoners the guards practiced their electrical torture upon their genitalia.

Another awful episode occurred on Christmas Eve, 1947. It was a cold and rainy night. The guard ordered me to take off all of my clothes, except my underwear. They brought me to a bathroom on the second floor of the

building where the mire of feces and urine gave off a terrible stench. They got a rope, put it under my armpits and then told me to stand on my tiptoes. They threw the rope over a beam, lifted me up, and left me hanging there for more than an hour. I felt my feet freeze and then my legs. A kind of paralysis reached all the way up to my diaphragm. I thought my life would end. I screamed and screamed. An official came running. He grabbed me under the knees, pulled me down, and then ordered me to put my clothes on. He then told me to stand close to the stove that was red-hot with burning firewood. The whole time I was there my shivering and bodily irritation was so great that it took almost an hour for me to calm down. I do not know how I survived the episode without getting a case of double pneumonia. Moreover, I have not even spoken of the threats, punches, blows and the repeated use of electric current torture for nine continuous months.

The hour for relieving ourselves came twice a day, at 6 in the morning and in the evening before sunset. Outside of that time, we were not allowed to ask to go to the bathroom for any reason. This was one of the most terrible torments, especially if

one had colitis. More than once I had to relieve myself in the container in which I would receive my ration of miserable food. Then, at the usual time, with my cup in hand and seen by all of my companions, I would go to the bathroom and wash it out and then get my meal. What humiliation and pain for me and for my companions passing the whole night with that cup close to the bedside!

After my infernal "probation" of nine long months, I was condemned to seven years of hard labor that ended up being seven years of hell.

I was sent to a camp on the plain of Kavaja (in central Albania). It was up to the prisoner to ready the land for settlement by draining marshes, digging irrigation canals and the like. The means to complete this project were nearly primitive. Yet we did this on a daily diet of 750 grams of black bread as well as moldy corn every once in a while. The food did not satisfy our empty stomachs. Our bodies wasted away day in and day out. There was a serious lack of potable water. It didn't surprise us if we found a myriad of different little worms and other insects swimming in the warm water in our cups. At the same time, the sun burned the area with unmeasurable heat. We could not find even the smallest little bit of shade to cool one's head. Even if we did find some shade we were not permitted to rest. We had to remain working with our shovels until evening without rest for even a minute.

In the marshy areas, like the Maliqi of Korçë, we worked barefoot. It was a continual war against leeches that latched on to the parts on the body left bare. Once the leeches attached themselves to you the only way to get them off was to touch them with a lit cigarette. Many men died from the privation, lack of food, and endless work.

After seven years at hard labor I was set free. Then I went from the "small prison" to the "big prison." With approval of the "Ministry of Cults", I was nominated by the Ecclesiastical Authority to be the pastor of Bregu i Matit (Lezhe). I remained on pastoral duty there until 6 December 1966 the day on which my church was closed. All the churches in Albania were closed in March 1967.

I then went to live in my brother's in the mountains of Lohja near Shkodër. There I worked as a "simple laborer" for an Agricultural Cooperative. I worked with my countrymen for ten months. During this time it was absolutely impossible to perform my priestly ministry. I was watched every moment by the supervisors of this work.

I could not continue that terrible life, whether it be for my complete unskillfulness in that type of work, or the absolute lack of everything necessary for living. I was a weight upon my brother's family. They were considered suspects and often criticized because of my presence. I decided to move to another village and seek a job at the local Cooperative. I was given work in the village of Bushati where another brother of mine lived. The authorities strictly forbade any contact with my brother's family. Instead they rented me a small room in the Communal Housing of the Cooperative. I was one hour distant from my brother's house. It was so painful to be so close and yet prevented forcefully from talking to or even seeing my family.

I stayed at Bushati until 30 April 1979. Every day I worked. Every week I worked. Every Sunday and holiday I worked until noon. Every other day I worked from morning till night and in the summer that meant 15 hour days.

Only on Sundays, after twelve noon, was I free from my chores and could do my laundry. All the rest of the week I had to mount my bicycle very early every morning and disappear into the plains of Bushati to go to work. I was assigned to a job every day by the "brigadier" at dawn. I worked at every kind of agricultural labor throughout the summer and winter. When working in the bogs ones shoes would get stuck in the mud. Then your companions would have to come and pull you out. In the evening, tired and worn out, I had to take the same long and muddy ride home. Many times the required fighting strong headwind that obstructed the bicyclist. It was like this every day of every week of every year. When I would finally arrive at my room, in the winter, there was no fire to warm or to dry my soaked clothes. I would not even attempt making dinner but would hurriedly grab a few pieces of bread

and cheese and go right under the covers to get warm. It was easy to taste sweet sleep after such fatiguing days. There was little or no time to clean my poor "palace."

I spent nearly ten years living like that. I did not take long to habituate myself to such a lifestyle. I took great caution in my relationships with everyone. Whether it was my co-workers or my companions, I did not trust anyone. Every day I went from home to work and then from work to home. Every day I celebrated Mass in my room secretly but I was afraid to administer any sacrament or receive mass intentions from people except in those exceptionally rare cases, when I was completely sure of the donor.

I had a little more than one year of work remaining before I was eligible for a pension. Then one day while I was getting ready to begin work in the rice fields, a police car appeared. The officers told me, "In the name of the people, you are under arrest." I asked why, and a hollow voice responded in an imperious tone, "Get in. You'll know later."

The police brought me, with my hands tied behind my back, to the "caverns" of Sigurimi at Shkodër. There I remained for nine months without ever seeing the sun. The only illumination was the terribly irritating light of electric lamps.

It would take a Dante Alighieri to describe what I saw and heard in those nine months in that "locus tormentorum" (place of torment): weeping, lamentations, desperate screams, insults, and moaning met my ears as soon as I set feet inside that place. There were more than twenty "cells" full of poor unfortunates. Women and men, preceded me to that place. A good many of the prisoners were young people. They were arrested because they had secretly confided to their companions a desire to "cross the border." Their sentence was always 16 years at hard labor. The amount of time actually spent at the labor camps was determined by their "sincerity" in giving names of others who had been involved with them.

Admittedly, there were not any 1947 style tortures in this prison. Yet for nine months there was the continuous pressure of being thrown against



Fr. Luli (center) following the solemn dedication Mass of St. John the Baptist Church in Bilaj, near Tiranë, April 26, 1993

the wall, standing without the slightest movement with my hands tied behind my back all night from evening to dawn, the constant repetition of the same questions. The guards constantly repeated the same phrase, "We know everything you have done, but we want you to confess."

After nine long months, I was brought before a tribunal. The accusations were the usual ones: "Fr. Anton Luli has agitated and propagandized against 'the people', he secretly performed religious dogmas (sic!) and committed economic sabotage," and the like.

The persecutor asked for the death sentence to be performed by a firing squad. After two days when the sentence came back, the death penalty was avoided in favor of 25 years of imprisonment. The sentence did not entail hard labor because of my age. I was 70 years old. I was taken to Ballsh in the district of Fier, in the south. There I found thousands of prisoners among whom were more than a dozen priests. This proved to be a great relief. I began to be a "man" again.

We lived discretely, confined every night and day by three barbed wire fences. Four armed guards

were posted at each of the four corners of the camp. Our lives were well protected.

I was always hungry. When I left Shkodër, I was convinced that during the remainder of my life I could never be satisfied by sufficient bread. The 600 grams a day ration for nine months was never enough. Afterwards I needed a whole year to satisfy my cravings for bread. Throughout the time I never left even a crumb.

We passed our time in a little courtyard or else in a very poor library filled with books of Comrade Enver Hoxha and a few other Marxism authors.

Mass? "Nec nominetur!" (Don't even mention it). Prayers? Woe to he who even gave the slightest outward sign of praying. He would be accused of "propagandizing faith" and perhaps tried and condemned. Nevertheless, the priests as well as many others individually observed secretly some kind of daily devotions.

The dormitories were big barns where everyone was crushed together in beds made of straw that smelled. The beds were sometimes no longer than 50 cm. Woe to he who snored at night! I sinned by doing this. How much this defect cost me! Only rarely did I sleep soundly, because they would awaken me during my most beautiful

dreams, sometimes by hitting me. I would say that the most unfortunate were the prisoners who were from the mountains. They were used to sleeping outside with the animals. Here again it would need another Dante to describe everything.

Now, enough of these miseries. The Lord has done a great miracle with us. As I write these reflections, I find it hard to believe that I am still alive. Yet I am free. I can speak freely and can say Mass. I can hear confessions and give communion to my dear brothers and sisters. I still had ten years of prison to serve before I was suddenly released "without explanation."

Three times on the edge of death, the Lord gave me freedom. Now I am not missing a thing, save my age, which I wish I could put back to 40 so that I could work in the Lord's vineyard without rest. Oh, how much does this poor people which has been martyred for 50 years need our help!

I entrust myself to your prayers and sacrifices. May the Lord give you health and long life in your daily ministry. "Memento!"

Affectionately yours in Christ,

Fr. Anton Luli, S.J.

Tirana, 14 February 1992



THE SOCIETY OF JESUS IN ALBANIA

In August 1990, the *Society of Jesus* returned to Albania to resume the missionary work they had begun in 1841. Once again they encountered a pitiful Catholic population with only a remnant of Catholic clergy to shepherd them. The cause of the disarray among the Catholic population of Albania was not the result of feuding clans as it had been when the Jesuits first set foot on the shores of this country known in ancient times as Illyria. The Jesuits were returning to their Catholic brothers and sisters who had miraculously survived 46 years of persecution under a ruthless Communist regime.

Enver Hoxha realized that the Jesuits constituted an uncompromising threat to the Communists' efforts to erect an atheistic citadel in post World War II Albania. In October 1945 he had stated: *The Catholic [read "Jesuit"] clergy is influential in Shkodër and the surrounding region. Its influence cannot be eliminated merely by administrative measures. The Catholic clergy is a well-organized body, with strong traditions and close links with the Vatican. Therefore, we should confront its organization with our better organization, and oblige it to fight on our ground. We must find the right method of struggle and appropriate tactics to use against the Catholic clergy.* (Enver Hoxha, *Selected works*, Vol. 1. [Tiranë: The "8 Nentori" Publishing House, 1974], pp. 438-439.)

With all the means at their disposal, Hoxha's followers undertook the systematic oppression of the Catholic Church in Albania. Because of their

influential educational system, their faithfulness to the charge given to them four centuries earlier by their founder, St. Ignatius, to defend and propagate the Catholic faith, and their love for the traditions and the culture of the people of Albania, the Jesuits were the primary target of the Communist suppression. Despite the expulsion of all foreign clergy and the unrelenting provocations of the Hoxha government, the Jesuits were able to keep their schools open until March 1946. The Jesuit witness in Albania concluded after a scandalous trial in which Gjon Fausti, S.J., Vice-Provincial Daniel Dajani, S.J., Rector along with Gjon Shllaku, O.F.M., became the first martyrs of a persecution the likes of which had not been seen since the reign of the emperor Diocletian.

The physical presence may have been eradicated, but the Jesuit spirit would not die. In August 1990 the Jesuits returned to their beloved Albania. Their first task was to re-open the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodër. The first Albanian Pontifical Seminary was founded by the Jesuits in 1859. This was followed by a succession of significant developments under the aegis of the Jesuits.

They installed a printing press in Shkodër in 1870. In 1872 the Jesuit Church of St. Joseph was opened. 1875 saw the founding of the Marian Congregation in Shkodër, and in 1877,

the Coat of Arms of the Saverianum Jesuit College in Shkodër, Albania (1877-1946). The National Eagle with the College's motto: For God, For Fatherland and Progress. — IHS Coat of Arms of the Society of Jesus. College's Patron Saint Francis Xavier. — Below the fortress Rozata, Coat of Arms of the city of Shkodër.





Teachers and students of the first academic year at the Saverianum Jesuit College, Shkoder, 1877

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"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

St. Francis Xavier College, the **Saverianum**. The 1880's saw the formation of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, the founding of the Visiting Albanian Mission, the Meteorological Observatory, the Beneficial St. Joseph's Society, the St. Vincent the Paul Hospital, and the inauguration of the **Sacred Heart Messenger**—all in Shkodër. The 20th century saw the founding of the Visiting Albanian Mission House, Shkup, in Kosova, while Shkodër was the site of the inauguration of the **Perparimi** (Progress) journal, the opening of the Sacred Heart Orphanage, the inauguration of the **Leka** review, the founding of the Jesuit Apostolic Preparatory School, and the founding of the Jesuit Alumni Association, **Don Bosco**. The jewel in the crown of Jesuit accomplishments in Albania was the 1941 opening of the Sacred Heart National Shrine in the capital Tiranë. If we can judge by their past achievements, the re-opening of the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodër in 1991, the restoring of the Sacred Heart Shrine in 1992 in Tiranë, the rebuilding "from the ground" of the destroyed St. John the Baptist Church in the historic Catholic stronghold of Bilaj (near Tiranë) in 1993 and the establishment of the Pastoral Ministry Center at the State University will be but the first of many other

contributions to the advancement of the Catholic faith in the service of the people of Albania.

As they resume their mission in Albania with hope and steadfast faith, the Jesuits will need our spiritual and material support. We can be assured that they have the unwavering support of Albanian Catholics. However, since the Catholics comprise only 13 percent of the total Albanian population, the Albanian Catholic Institute is committed to promote and assist their works.

The Albanian Jesuits have passed through so many trials yet remained faithful to Christ and the Church. They look towards us with hope. We ask our Institute friends and Bulletin readers to make a generous response to assist the Jesuits in their various rebuilding projects in Albania. By rebuilding we enable them to embark on new projects. Their immediate goal is a Catholic cultural center

in Shkodër. This will include a college, a pontifical seminary, the St. Joseph's Church restoration, a center for rural missions, a theater, printing press, television station and social service offices. These great projects can and will, with God's help and yours, be realized in times to come. Let us keep the Jesuits in Albania in our prayers

Richard H. SIEBERT



Fr. Pietro Malone S.J. (left), present Rector of the Albanian Pontifical Seminary, Fr. Ják Gardin, S.J. (center), Spiritual director of the 65 seminarians and our editor Gjon Sinishtja, Shkodër, April, 1993

and support them with our contributions.



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THE RETURN

By Gjon Sinishta

*Walking the paths of my childhood
I became lost in darkened alleys
The night was fearful and long.
Lord, lead me to morning brightness
Let me cross each street of my town.*

*Lead me, Lord, on my journey
Because I am so far from home.
I have travelled so long, so many decades,
I want to return, Lead me
To the wounded homeland where my heart lies.*

*Show me Albania once more lit up by dawn
Blessed at last, after so many dark nights.
For I will not ask you anything more;
Only lead me as I walk,
Because I must go back home!*

*Uproot the spirits of evil from the soil,
Wipe away the filth and the symbols of hate
Let Albanians cleave to good will forever.
Lead me, Lord, step after step
Just us together, on Albanian soil.
In the streets of my Shkodra, we will not be alone!*

Translated by

Palokë Plaku and Stephen Schwartz

THE ROAD TO SHKODËR

This past summer, I had the great pleasure — and the sobering experience — of visiting Albania after 46 years in exile. It was a homecoming that I had prayed and hoped for through the years. I never expected to return to a land so utterly destroyed. There remains much to be done. The roads in Albania may be open now, but they need to be paved. There may be freedom to enter and leave the country—but true freedom can only come when the people of Albania live with dignity.

My companion on this journey was Fr. Michael Walsh, a Catholic television producer in San Francisco. We met an old Albanian professor one day, who summed up the bitter reality of this journey. In our conversation, Fr. Walsh remarked that in Central America, the poverty is just as severe as in Albania. However in Central America, the people still sing, and music fills the air. The old man responded:

"Music and song stopped in our throats in 1944 when the Communist took over. After that, in our stomach we had a big scared rabbit, thanks to the Communist Party and the Sigurimi (Secret Service). Whenever we wanted to complain or cry out our real beliefs, the rabbit silenced us. After we pulled down the statue of Enver Hoxha, the rabbit turned into a dog, and is now barking all the time."

Early in my trip, on September 5, 1992, I visited the Jesuit Father's Sacred Heart National Shrine in Tiranë. The last time I had seen the church was in May 1946. I served Mass there for Fr. Pjetër Meshkalla, S.J. During the intervening years, the Church was converted to a Concert Hall and Cinema. Fr. Meshkalla was sent to prisons and labor camps, where he died a martyr for the Faith. It was a typical example of encounter on our journey. We often stopped at places that were now connected to their rich past only by memories. It was a heart-rending stop on the road to Shkodër, the country's Catholic center.

We stopped at Lezha, the sight of a centuries-old Franciscan church and monastery. Evidence exists that this is the place where St. Francis stopped on his way back from the Holy Land, and established his first community. If circumstances were

different, this would be an international pilgrimage place that would draw many pilgrims to Albania. As it is, the place was nearly destroyed by Communists in the late 1960s. It is only now being restored, by the generosity of the Franciscan Order in Italy and elsewhere.

This monastery and Church reminded me that all too often, the Catholics in Albania have led two lives, one beaten into submission by an atheistic government, the other holding fast to the faith in a losing battle against all odds. Just as they did during the Turkish era, Catholics in Albania assumed two names during the Communist years. At home, their Christian names — Peter, Matthew, Mary — were used. Outside the home, they used "public" names accepted to the authorities.

The dictator Hoxha issued a decree that his framed picture be displayed in every household. Reverence to the saints on their feast days was punished. Violators were "re-educated." All the same, in some homes, families would slip a print of their patron behind Hoxha's picture — St. Francis, St. Anthony, Our Lady of Shkodër — and display that picture on their saint's day.

The old professor told me that the sacrament of Baptism was one of the few remaining remnants of the faith for many during the persecution. Special lay ministers, like those developed by Archbishop Pal Engjulli under the Turks in the 15th century, administered the sacrament of baptism, because the priests were mostly in jail. The children were taught the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Sign of the Cross. Marriages were blessed. Prayers for the deceased were recited. The help of the saints was sought. But the faith, like the monastery and other churches, bore a scant resemblance to what it once was. The church struggled to survive amidst the oppression of the communist system.

I remembered the road to Shkodër as it once was — with the streets decorated for the saints' feasts. I remembered the processions, filled with song and joy, as people cheered the saints in the streets. I remembered the liturgical hymns we would sing, and how even some of the Muslims learned the Latin responses so that they could join in. There was no more song on the road to Shkodër.



Author, Shkodër, May, 1946

These memories came to me at Lezha. They were the sort of thoughts that kept me going for so long, strengthened me in the midst of my work. They formed me into a man and sustained my youth as the years passed. But Albania is no longer what I remembered it to be. It made me feel as if a part of myself had been stolen away.

As we approached Shkodër, we stopped outside the town at the site of the shrine of Our Lady of Shkodër, patroness of Albania. It was razed to the ground. In 1968 on this spot, Enver Hoxha declared that "Our party first cut off the Catholic Church's arm — and now we have cut off her head!" He made those remarks at the holiest shrine of Albanian Catholics, the place where Skanderbeg himself once prayed for victory over the Turks. How foolish and short-lived his pride turned out to be!

Hoxha's legacy of destruction remains. As we entered Shkodër, the extent of the destruction began to sink in. Churches and convents have been virtually eliminated in their place, secular schools and other buildings stand. The beautiful Jesuit campus with its classrooms, chapels, sports fields and cloisters, its gardens and walkways were gone. Destroyed. Only the Pontifical Seminary building is left, dilapidated and used as a night school.

We stopped at the dormitory where we were packed like sardines and forced to stay the night the Communists rounded us up at the seminary. They packed us into the building so that we had to lay on the floor and sleep as best we could. Then, they executed our superiors and took us to see the bodies. I looked once again in those windows, and remembered that night in 1946 when I lay on the concrete floor and made my *besa* – my solemn promise to God that I would tell others about the suffering and persecution. And I remembered being led to freedom from here, by a long road that led from Shkodër through the labor camps, through communist Yugoslavia, to Europe and then to Michigan and California.

My cousins and friends who remained behind told me that Hoxha was obsessed with destroying the Catholic Church and Faith. He particularly hated the Jesuits. He set about destroying them, obliterating every vestige of them. I, with many others, have been similarly obsessed with preserving the memories that Hoxha was destroying. On behalf of those Jesuit and Franciscan teachers, the diocesan clergy who taught here and then were left in a pool of blood, I wanted to preserve what Hoxha was destroying. Now, here I was, amidst the ruin

he left, in a place that is alive only in our memories now, waiting to be rebuilt.

Now, along the road to Shkodër, and in the areas surrounding Tirana, fields are strewn with concrete mushroom bunkers. The huge unused defense systems are like monuments to Hoxha's paranoia, the inevitable result of his mistrust of divinity and humanity. But in Tiranë and Shkodër I had the great honor, joy and privilege of meeting those whose faith stood like true bulwarks against Hoxha in the path of his destruction. Priests such as Mikel Koliqi, Simon Jubani, Nikollë Mazreku, Luigj Kqira, Zef Simoni, Ndrek Krraqi, Gjergj Vata, S.J., Anton Luli, S.J., the Franciscans Aleks Baqli, Zef Pllumbi. The Jesuits were my teachers. Each of them experienced Hoxha's hate firsthand, and withstood it. On average, each spent some 26 years in prison. The stories they told me were horrific, but also a beautiful testimony to the strength of their faith under persecution.

I particularly appreciated meeting Marta and Injac Kabashi. These two were a tremendous witness to the faith of the laity amidst the extremes of what would seem insurmountable persecution. They were the ones who offered the rooms and protection of their homes to Fr. Pjetër Meshkalla, S.J., Fr. Lazër Jubani and other priests who offered Mass and the sacraments there. These and many others like them were the lay people who bravely cared for their priests.

The road to Shkodër was long, because Albania has spent much time on the road leading away from its glorious past. It will be traversed, though, with prayer and hard work. Ultimately, we have more than our memories to sustain us. Jesus Christ himself, the strength and power of the Church, has showed us the way and promised to accompany us as we travel it. As Pope John Paul II so often says when he speaks of Albania, it is through his suffering



Author at the Albanian Pontifical Seminary, now being restored after decades of neglect and ruin, Shkodër, 1992



Monsignor Mikel Koliqi(left) and Gjon Sinishta

that Christ reached the triumph of resurrection. So will it be with Albania.

I cannot over-emphasize the message of reconciliation. Many great men agree. Forgiveness is the only viable option for Albanians. Osman Kazazi, the president of the Association of Former Political Prisoners, a Muslim veteran of 40 years in prison, along with the president of Parliament, Pjetër Arbnori and Father Simon Jubani, who led the resistance movement several years ago, have learned from hard experience what we only know by faith. These men who have suffered so much see this so clearly, and we should see it more clearly still. We have suffered with Jesus. If we are to triumph with him, we must forgive with him.

This road, the road of reconciliation, may be the hardest of all. I am reminded of the many letters I have received from men and women whose lives have been wrecked by the communist persecution. People whose families have been literally destroyed tell me that it is easy to write from so far away about forgiveness. One woman wrote that, "It is easy to say Jesus pardons, but I am not Jesus." But what choice do we have? We can either add destruction to destruction, or we can rebuild. We can extend the love that we have for the brothers and sisters who were taken from us, or we can extend the hate of those that killed



Reverend Ndreke Krraqi (right) and Gjon Sinishta. During my second visit to Shkodër, April 1993, I met Father Krraqi again at the Cathedral. Sadly, he was in a wheelchair following a stroke which left him paralyzed and impaired.

them. We can salvage what is left of our homeland, or finish Hoxha's job by destroying for him what he did not already destroy.

The answer, I think, is clear.

But the road back to Shkodër was a sad one, all the same. As the plane left Albania, I felt inside me my childhood memories were gone forever. Hoxha and his armies had rooted them out. I was distraught and disillusioned as Fr. Walsh and I returned to Rome, dejected and depressed.

Then, as we were unwinding during our first evening back in Rome, a messenger came for us. He said that Fr. Walsh and I were invited to join Pope John Paul II at Castel Gandolfo the following morning for Mass in his private chapel. My heart immediately began to revive. Mass was at 7:00 in the morning, and so it was doubtful that we could find a taxi at that time. The messenger said he could provide us with a ride. Neither of us could sleep that night, in excited anticipation of the next morning's event.

On September 20th, Fr. Walsh concelebrated Mass at Castel Gandolfo with the Holy Father and six other priests. Following the Mass, we were received by the Holy Father one at a time. It was a grace-filled moment for me, and it made up for the pain I felt in Albania. His words were encour-



Kissing the Pope's hand



...and offering our publications



Pope John Paul II speaks to Gjon Simishta and Fr. Michael Walsh about his affection for Albania



The Holy Father smiles when Gjon Simishta explains that like His Holiness, "Father Walsh is an adopted Albanian"

aging and helpful, and the aura that surrounds this holy Pope is unforgettable.

I told him that after 46 years I finally got to visit my home country, and I was distressed by the suffering and pain I met there. But I said, "for the past 30 years I have been working from America for religious freedom. I think soon the people will come out from this period of darkness."

The Holy Father responded, "God's work never ends. We should be grateful for the peaceful way the change came to Albania. It was God's grace and God's promise. We should continue to implore the help of Our Lady of Shkodër who has kept Albanian Catholics faithful throughout the centuries."

He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "There is much to be done." As a gift, we have given him copies of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*. Perusing the books, the Holy Father remarked:

"Your publications and the work of your newly established institute [the Daniel Dajani Institute] will certainly be of help at this particular time for the Church in Albania. I will pray for you and for your institute and all who are involved with it, so that you may work again in another kind of atmosphere — an atmosphere of peace for the benefit of the Albanian Catholics and all Albanian people."

I told him that "the Albanian people love you dearly. You were the only person to publicly defend their religious and human rights." I asked him when he would visit Albania and he answered "soon." His staff decides such things, he said, but he reiterated that he "loves Albania and Albanian Catholics, and that he wanted to visit soon." Later, when we were having our picture taken, the Holy Father remarked to Fr. Walsh, "You are not Albanian." I answered him, "No. He is like you—an adopted Albanian. You have been an adopted Albanian for years now." And he smiled.

After the depressing atmosphere of Albania, our visit with the Holy Father was like a breath of fresh air. It is like the experience of losing one's breath, and then being given oxygen. The memories I once had of Albania are gone. But in their place, in the glow of the Holy Father's words and



The author and his former Jesuit teacher, Father Gjergj Vata, embracing each other after 45 years! Fr. Vata, now 75, spent years in prisons and labor camps. Today he is the Vice-Rector and professor at the Albanian Pontifical Seminary in Shkodër.

example, a new hope will grow. A new Albania will grow, too. No longer isolated from the Western world, but rebuilt with the help of the Western world, Albania will be strong again one day. Following the lead of Pope John Paul II, we can only look forward, toward the goal, and not be daunted by the difficulties on the road to Shkodër.

Gjon SINISHTA

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

THE JUDGED AND THE UNJUDGED: NEXHMIJE HOXHA AND ISMAIL KADARE

On January 27, 1993, 72-year old Nexhmije Hoxha, widow of the most ferociously antireligious ruler in modern history, "comrade Enver," was sentenced to nine years in prison for corruption in the misfeasance of about \$75,000 in state funds.

In May, as reported by the Associated Press, she appealed her conviction, but a judge replied to the petition by adding two more years to her sentence.

Her attorney, Dhimitër Beshiri, read a letter in which Nexhmije Hoxha argued for the court to either declare her innocent or to change the penalty to house arrest.

"This would be a humane decision, because I am old and ill and because other persons who are accused of the same things as me have been free and only recently put under house arrest," she declared.

Many who attended the early trial proceedings expressed their dismay loudly at Hoxha's appeal for "humanity." "Where was that humanity in 1946 when the octogenarian dean of Albanian writers Ndoc Nikaj was tortured to death at the express orders of your husband Enver, only because he was a Catholic priest?" one person angrily shouted.

Prosecutors had countered her appeal by asking the judge to extend her sentence by five years. Prosecutor Koço Themeli cut the supplemental punishment request to three years. He noted the total sum she was accused of misappropriating was the equivalent of \$55,000, not \$75,000.

Judge Nikoleta Kita said a court review of documents determined she took just over \$54,000 and then sentenced Nexhmije Hoxha to 11 years.

Since January she had been in solitary confinement in a small cell with only a mattress, a small desk and a light bulb.

Nexhmije Hoxha was the first and so far the only member of Albania's Communist aristocracy to face justice for the regime's crimes. She was, let

it not be forgotten, one of a ruling family that formerly possessed no less than 19 telephone lines, two dozen refrigerators, and 28 color TV sets—in the country that had the lowest average income in Europe.

The trial of Enver's survivor-comrade reveals many aspects of the fall of Marxist-Leninist rule.

In a certain sense she was correct in pointing out that others, accused of the same crimes, had suffered no more than house arrest. Yet, however difficult it may prove, the guilty must be punished.

Nobody sane or intelligent, least of all the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, seeks to foster an attitude of revenge, or to pile new brutalities on top of those committed by the fallen regime. Even to those who sincerely believed in Communism, but who have no blood on their hands, mercy must be extended.

Further, a successful transition to democracy requires the participation of those supporters and cadres of the former regime who, having committed no atrocities, may be permitted to remain in political life, without privileges but with rights equal to those of other citizens.

In addition, some technical and military cadres are needed to help preserve the public welfare as well as for defense preparations in case of direct Serbian aggression.

But those who are guilty of crimes against the dignity of this great nation, the Albanian people, must pay for their transgressions. Neither welfare nor order nor patriotism must be used by these malefactors as a pretext to escape justice. The failure to move against anybody beyond Nexhmije Hoxha shows, however, that the public accounting of these crimes is not an easy task.

The central point is that allowing freedom for sincere and non-culpable former Communists to function in the political arena does not mean granting them immunity or full indulgence for past crimes.

The list of those who should face justice alongside Nexhmije Hoxha is easy to assemble. Among them, the sons of Enver and Nexhmije Hoxha must be included. In January, two Albanian-American intellectuals, Sami Repishti and Nicholas Pano, protested the incredible declarations of "princes" Ilir and Sokol Hoxha, who had declared arrogantly that "there was no infringement of the laws" under the dictatorship of their father.

As we know, if this statement is true it is only because in the absence of law, and the triumph of lawlessness, infringement of the law is not an issue.

Pano comments, "There was no legal judicial system."

Enver's successor, Ramiz Alia, must also definitely figure on the roster of the accused. And I will say, against much opposition, that the novelist Ismail Kadare must also face some accounting for his actions.

Kadare, like the "princes" Ilir and Sokol, claims that Enver's rule has been inaccurately portrayed in the West, where media concentrated on the suppression of religion and the brutal eradication of political dissidence, rather than "the beautiful countryside or the rich intellectual life."

Kadare, who sang the praises of Ramiz Alia's *Our Enver* (*Albania Today* 5, 1988) as if it were



Ismail Kadare (left) and Enver Hoxha during a friendly visit at Hoxha's private quarters of his palace, Tiranë, 1971

the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined, has greatly benefitted from ignorance in the West regarding the history and achievements of Albanian letters. A really shocking example is provided by an article of Bruce Bawer, a well-known and otherwise perspicacious neoconservative fiction critic, published in the right-oriented monthly *The World & I*, for April 1991.

Titled "A Kingdom of Bones," Bawer's article reviews Kadare's *General of the Dead Army* from a position of awestruck admiration that it would be impossible to imagine Bawer expressing about any of the dozens of other writers around the world—the egregious Pablo Neruda comes to mind—whose reputations, like that of Kadare, were owed to the exertions of the Stalinist propaganda apparatus.

Indeed, Bawer's naivete about Albanian reality leads him to a multiple error. He begins with an apparent misquotation from Arshi Pipa, the leading Albanian anti-Stalinist intellectual today, and goes on to describe the country as one where "serious literary expression has been more thoroughly inhibited (than anywhere else) by the severe and stultifying doctrines of socialist realism."

But those in touch with contemporary Albanian history understand that to so write is to misapprehend the character of the Hoxha regime and its criminal cultural policies. Hoxha was not threatened by literature *per se*, but by faith and tradition. His regime could afford to tolerate a number of non-political authors, such as the poet Lasgush Poradeci (who, however, published nothing under Hoxha's regime), but would not permit churches to remain open or the Gheg dialect to be printed.

Of course, Kadare presents a case of a special order, in that he was not simply tolerated, but was subsidized by the regime in order to enhance its reputation in Western Europe. That Bawer was a victim of this campaign is shown when he continues his article by calling Kadare, whom he mistakenly describes as "immensely gifted," by the title usually bestowed on the regime's admirers: "Albania's greatest novelist."

What he really means is "Albania's only writer known outside the language," i.e., a patronizing and deceptive subtextual conception. What would

better describe Kadare is "The only Albanian writer promoted abroad." Kadare's reputation rests not on talent but on exoticism; as the sole Albanian novelist known in the West he could easily assume the title of greatest.

In the panorama of Albanian literature Kadare represents a singular phenomenon, in the elaborate nature of his dance with abusive power. But in the broader global universe of literary Stalinism his only distinction must be his bottomless dishonesty.

Of the Communist intellectuals, Neruda, aside from writing his *Odes to Stalin*, functioned as a Soviet secret police agent, driving anti-Stalinist refugees from the Spanish civil war to their deaths and assisting in the murder of Trotsky; the Hungarian philosopher Gyorgy Lukacs ordered the execution of deserters in the 1919 revolution; the Spanish poet Rafael Alberti has recently been charged with similar deeds as a member of a secret police *checa* in the Spanish war.

But it was left to Kadare to attempt the annexation of Stalin's victims, such as the Russian writer Mayakovsky, to the ranks of Stalinist loyalty; in his "Requiem for Mayakovsky" he portrays the Khrushchev generation, who at least had the virtue of telling the truth about some of Stalin's crimes, as the assassins of Mayakovsky, who died in 1930, under the unique rule of Josif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili.

Stalin proclaimed Mayakovsky the "greatest poet of Soviet literature," because, according to one joke, Mayakovsky was dead. Kadare was hailed as "Albania's greatest novelist" because he was spiritually dead.

In a recent interview, published in *Illyria* (May 13/15, 1993), Kadare had the unparalleled nerve to state: "There is one (Kosovar writer) who sometimes publishes in France, and in every interview, he says, *Don't listen to what Kadare says*. Well, who should be listened to, Dobrica Cosic?"

It is hard to believe anybody would claim that in the intellectual dialogue underway in Albania and the former Yugoslavia, the only alternative to Kadare is Dobrica Cosic, the ill-fated chetnik novelist and politician. But Kadare was right in, probably unconsciously, equating his literary role with that of Cosic. Both are hacks who sold themselves out to the worst elements in the political life of their nations, while serving as protected "dissidents." Both have great responsibility for criminal action carried out by their patrons.

But the intellectual future of Albania, Serbia, and the World, does not involve a choice between Kadare and Cosic, but a rejection of both. In a future where the Catholic master poet Gjergj Fishta, the social poet Migjeri, and honest, non-chetnik Serb intellectuals will be fully recognized, it is certain that, Kadare, like Nexhmije Hoxha and Cosic, will be remembered only for his political ignominies.

Stephen SCHWARTZ



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KASEM TREBESHINA

THE WRITER WHO WOULD NOT COMPROMISE WITH HOXHA

In 1953, Kasem Trebeshina, one of Albania's more outspoken writers, warned Enver Hoxha that he was leading his country down an irreversible road to ruin. It cost him 23 years in prison. Today, he is one of a handful of survivors to have emerged from the concentration camps since the fall of the dictatorship.

Outstanding among the little-known figures of the early years of post-war Albanian literature, **Kasem Trebeshina** was born in Berat on 8 August 1926 and studied at the *Shkolla Normale* (Normal School) in Elbasan until joining the Communist resistance movement in 1942. After the war, he studied at the Ostrovski Theatre Institute in Leningrad. A committed Communist, but by no means a conformist, Trebeshina left the Party and later the Writers Union in Tirana. Much of his work was written in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but never published.

In an extremely rare act of open dissent in Albanian intellectual life, Trebeshina sent a *pro memoria* to strongman Enver Hoxha (1908-1985) on 5 October 1953.

He warned him that his cultural policies were leading the nation down the road to disaster and alerted him to the inevitable outcome. Below is an excerpt of Trebeshina's *pro memoria* to Enver Hoxha as printed in INDEX ON CENSORSHIP 9/1992.

'... Let us take a close look at the contents of the literature of socialist realism, even the best of it. A good engineer, a bad engineer, a reformed engineer. A good peasant, a bad one, a reformed one! The heroes of the moment are always Communists. They appear in the pages of books and on the stages of theatres simply to recite heroic monologues!

Let us look back into history and see how things were in the age of Louis XIV. Everything was clearly partitioned. The kings and princes had assured their roles in the best works. They appeared only in tragedies, whereas the common

people, everyone who was lower than the kings and princes, had their places in comedies. They were objects of merriment, derision and insults of every kind. Are we to accept that something of this kind should take place in the twentieth century and in a society which claims to be socialist?

From the above, it is evident that socialist realism is directly linked to the ideas of French absolutism, both in theory and in practice... The Writers Union itself is organized like an order of mediaeval monks. At the head of the order is a Grand Master and everyone is obliged to hearken as long as he carries out his functions as Grand Master. Do not realize that to distribute 'functions' and 'privileges' in this manner is mediaeval?

Let us examine your actions over the past few years. You decided in the Central Committee that Kolë Jakova was to be a great writer and everyone under you approved your decision. Critics acclaimed *Halili and Hajrija* as a great work of art! Dhimitër S Shuteriqi then caught your attention and found your favour as head of the Writers Union, and so on.

But let me skip over this point. Writers are citizens with the very same rights as everyone else and it is not proper to have them submit to such a strange and unlawful censorship. If, for some reason, you insist that there must be censorship, then let it be institutionalised and let everyone submit to its function. We would all then know to whom we must account and we would not have to be bothered by incompetent Party officials who come and impose their unwanted opinions... You must not treat the Writers Union of Albania as if it were simply the extension of a chain of other organisations set up by the Albanian Party of Labour. The Writers Union is an organization of free individuals and not part of a feudal society in which feudal rights and obligations hold sway.

With respect to rights and obligations, I would like to give you an example of something which should have no place in our society. It is well

known that my novel *Rinia e Kobës sonë* (The Youth of Our Age) was written in 1948 and that another novel, *Mbarimi i një mbretërie* (The End of a Kingdom), was written in 1951. Nor should it be forgotten that the novel *Harbutet* (The Have-Nots) by Sterjo Spasse was written in 1946! So why did the Party make such a fuss and ban these early works and give Dhimiter S. Shuteriqi time in 1952 to write his worthless novel *Clirimtarët* (The Liberators)? Why did the Party publish this novel with such a deafening noise? Why did it mobilise all its feudal knights of criticism to herald it as the first novel in the Albanian language? And not only the first novel, but a great novel of Albanian literature, although it is well known that Albanian-language novels were written in this country earlier, much earlier. Is it dignified for a whole party and all its high-level officials to involve themselves in such activities?

History has its own unwritten laws and has not given anyone the right to do whatever he wants with art. Not even Louis XIV had such a right. Activities based on a feudal structure have no place in our society and must be ended. You must bury the Dark Ages and return to the twentieth century in the name of the ideals for which a great war was fought and sacred things were sacrificed...

I believe that the greatest destruction to take place is going to be in Albanian intellectual life. The people are going to lose confidence in the state and its leadership and withdraw into themselves. And in order to keep control of them, the need will arise to create a brutal police state. This will be but the beginning.

You must give up the road of Louis XIV of Versailles as quickly as possible and stop suppressing opinions, even within Party ranks. It is not a question of poor children by the roadside; it is one of the suppression of opinion which is becoming systematic and which, in the end, will give rise to a new monarchy. If things go that far, there will be terrible poverty and only the reign of unparalleled terror will enable you to remain in power.

Such a regime will be even more dangerous to itself. A dampening and withdrawal of popular support will shake up the ranks of the leadership,

too, which will gradually transform itself into a closed caste like a monarchy with no understanding of the historical realities of the twentieth century. At the end of this historic process you will be obliged to kill one another and the people will be smeared in blood. I believe there is still ample time to avoid such a calamity and this is why I am sending you this *pro memoria*, written in such urgency...

The Albanian dictator was not amused: Kasem Trebeshina, the unpublished author of 18 volumes of verse, 42 plays, 22 novels and short stories, vanished from the literary scene. Trebeshina has now resurfaced to witness the fulfilment of this prophecy.

RECALLED TO LIFE

Among those who have emerged from the concentration camps and internment since the fall of the dictatorship in 1990 are:

Lazer Radi (b. 1916), who spent 46 years in prison and internment;

Pjetër Arbnori (b. 1935), now Speaker of the Albanian parliament;

Kapllan Resuli (b. 1935), novelist, originally from Kosovo;

Jorgo Billaci (b. 1938), poet;

Frederik Reshpja (b. 1941), poet;

Zyhdi Morava, poet, later a founding member of the first independent labour union;

Fatos Lubonja (b. 1951), son of the purged;

Todi Lubonja (b. 1923);

Visar Zhiti (b. 1952) poet;

Bashkim Shehu (b. 1955), son of Enver Hoxha's right-hand man Mehmet Shehu (1943-1981);

Fazli Haliti, poet from the Myzeqe region;

Ferdinand Lahoti (b. 1960), poet who fled to Germany in July 1989 after spending all his life in an internment camp at Satez near Luçane because his father had emigrated to the USA 15 days before his birth.

Many of them were released following a government amnesty in March 1991.

Robert ELSIE

FRANO ILLIA—SPIRITUAL LEADER AND WRITER

Editors note: Frano Illia, the author of the following poem is the new Archbishop of Shkodër and Primate of the Catholic Church in Albania. He spent some two decades in Albanian gulags for his faith. The date of his episcopal ordination by the Pope, April 25, 1993, fell on the 20th anniversary of his "death sentence" by Hoxha's regime. He was sentenced for refusing to publicly renounce his faith during the "cultural revolution against religion" in mid 1960s. Before the ordination ceremony the Pope praised Archbishop Illia for his courage and faith.

Archbishop Illia is also a poet and author of books about religion and Albanian customary law. The recently published volumes were composed after his release from prison in 1989. His earlier manuscripts were destroyed by the communist government. The new works include a *Life of Jesus* (1992) and the *Life of Pope John Paul II*, (1993). The third *Skanderbeg's Law* (*Kanuni i Skanderbegut*) has also been printed in 1993 in a limited edition. Illia compiled and codified the *Kanuni i Skanderbegut* (Skanderbeg's [customary] Law), thus making a lasting contribution to the field of Albanian studies. This book is highly recommended both to scholars and to those of Albanian ancestry who wish to touch base with their illustrious heritage. Illia has asked the Albanian public and others interested in Albanian studies to help the project by ordering the book at: **F. Illia, Pallati i Argjeshkëvisë, Shkodër, Albania**. We should note that all of his books are published in the standard Northern Albanian literary language.

The following poem is taken from his book *The Life of Jesus*. In the same volume, he has printed several poems and (folk) prayers that have existed since Ottoman times, when Catholicism was maintained as an "underground tradition". The English version of the poem has been rendered here by James Torrens, S.J., and Palokë Plaku.

ALBANIA, SWEET MOTHER

*Albania, sweet mother,
dearer than my very self,
as long as the world lasts
you are in my heart.*

*On you my eyes opened,
with your life I pulsed,
You were the truth I learned
and the joy that entered me.*

*With your tongue I praise God
and can sing of nature.
I see through your eyes
and have but you at heart.*

*Albania, sweet mother,
beauty of our earth,
how enriching your breast,
how wide your embrace.*

*You have bound me to others,
your sons and daughters,
equal, united,
joyless is life but for you.*

*Mother, live always,
gather us at your fire
with a single thought and heart,
calling mother on you.*

Frano ILLIA

RELIGION AND REBIRTH OF ALBANIA

There is no doubt that in discussions of Albania in general, and of its three main religions in particular, not to mention the antiquity of its language, perplexity always seems to intrude.

Who, then, are the Albanians, these descendants of the Pelasgo-Illyrians that in ancient times ran the best schools, chosen by such important men as Julius Caesar, who completed his studies at Durrës, or his nephew Octavian Augustus, who perfected his knowledge at Apollonia?

Durrës was described by Cicero as "mirabilis urbs" when to call any city other than Rome "urbs" was exceptional.

Many events, in addition to barbarian invasions in antiquity, helped push Albania into oblivion. Surely, no little responsibility for such disregard resides with the Greeks and Serbians, but two wrongs do not make a right!

Let us try, however, to analyze the history and character of this ancient people that gave great rulers to Rome, such as Justin, Justinian the Great, Diocletian (an Illyrian from Salona, today's Split), Aurelian, who was surnamed "Restitutor Orbis," Constantine the Great, born in Dardania (now Kosovë), and many more. Later, after the Ottoman conquest, Albania also gave Constantinople no fewer than 36 Grand Viziers (prime ministers).

This is but a glimpse into Albanian history. Let us now examine the Albanians' distinctive religious tendencies.

Albert Einstein once commented that "The day will come when faith and reason join hands." Reading this, I thought Einstein must have known about the life and spirituality of the Albanian people, who are probably unparalleled in their ecumenical attitude.

Freedom of the spirit is different from political freedom, which may exist even in societies where the spirit has been suffocated by materialism and humanity is completely robotized. This is precisely the destiny that has stricken Albania. When a teaching enters the ear and stops there it is like a meal eaten in a dream.

But the three main religions in Albania, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim, as well as the small Jewish community, never acted to divide Albanians. This should not suggest that Albanians are anything less than fervent believers; on the contrary, they believe so much in One God that they respect the differences between religions.

Unfortunately, such religious harmony is often misunderstood by outsiders, who are indoctrinated only in their own faith. Indeed, it could be said that Albanians' faith in God is so deep they are imbued with a single belief: their trust in Albania's uniqueness and unity. It is a mental defense, erected in opposition to the aggression of their neighbors, both of which, Serbia and Greece, seek to divide Albania, reduced to a small entity by the Great Powers, which met in London in 1913 and robbed Albania of half its territory. They also divided its people, donating Kosovë to Serbia and Chameria (Epirus) to Greece, while ignoring that 90 percent of the population in those regions was Albanian. Because of international interests that iniquitous decision was reaffirmed after both the first and second world wars.

To demonstrate the unity of faith of the Albanians and better illustrate their distinctive mode of existence I would cite the great Albanian poet, writer, and scholar, Ernest Koliqi: "The Bektashi Teqe (lodges) and the Franciscan Fathers' monasteries provided the cradle of the national movement for (Albanian) independence."

Albanian Muslims belong, for the most part, to the Bektashi sect, founded in the 14th century by Sheik Hajji Bektash, with the intent to revitalize and reinvigorate Koranic law. But in Albania, Islam was influenced by the strong, undaunted, and naturally tolerant character of the local population, so that the original strict Islamic teachings became transformed in the direction of a kind of pantheism, distant from any dogma or fanaticism.

Open-minded and unbiased, the Albanian Bektashis were also inspired spiritually by Christianity and philosophically by *Illuminism*, as well as practically by the rise of nationalism in 19th century Europe. Although defining themselves as

Muslim, the Albanians forged a Westernized Islam that amalgamates Eastern meditation with Western dynamism, while abiding by exterior rules of behavior, suitable to the climate and environment in which they had been formulated, but quite incompatible with the European culture of the Albanians. As a logical outcome of this, Albanian Muslims have always taken part in Christian festivals, just as the Christians partake of those of their Muslim brethren.

Lord Byron, in a note to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, reported on the Albanians: "The Greeks hardly regard them as Christians, or the Turks as Muslims, and in fact they are a mixture of both, and sometimes neither."

To a superficial observer, this note, so synthetic, might appear as evidence of a lack of interest among Albanians in the spiritual world. To so think would be a serious mistake. There are two important elements that must be taken into account: one, the reserved and ineffusive character of the Albanians in general, and the other, the Albanian experience of occupation by foreigners of different culture. These two circumstances make Albanians particularly reluctant to show their feelings, especially religiously. Albanians, although profound believers, are averse to exterior demonstrations of faith.

The word *besa*, meaning *faith*, and root of *besim* (trust), is the very foundation of the ethical, spiritual, and vital essence of the Albanian people. *Besa* also means *word of honor*, and a failure to keep it would mean a person loses all value. When an Albanian says "I've given my *besa*," the whole self is engaged. And once *besa* is given, it must be kept for one's entire life.

In careful consideration of the importance of *besa* for Albanians, one is reminded of Nietzsche's philosophy, in which meaning dissolves into ontological origins. In fact, such a conception remains ontological, if one seeks to understand it without really having a conception of it.

The Albanian Rebirth is wonderful evidence of union in the spirit of *besa*, an expression of faith, tolerance, and brotherhood that allowed Albania to achieve freedom after almost five centuries of

Ottoman dominion. At Vlorë, with the independence proclamation of November 28, 1912, there were present representatives of all of ethnic Albania, from Kosovë to Chameria. They were all united in a single *besa*, a *besa* of that for the personalities gathered at Vlorë, representing all the Albanian regions and religions, meant a *besa* for a God and the motherland.

*

The 80th Anniversary of Albanian Independence Celebrated With Compatriots from All Over the World

Men belong to the historical period in which they live, but even more, they belong to their ethnic group, to the common blood of people cherishing the same culture.

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Albania's independence, various events took place in Albania, all distinguished by their level of dignity and culture, as befits a people now convalescing after a 50 year disease. No brilliant fireworks embellished the sky nor did imposing parades pass by, but conferences were held to discuss the history of Albanian independence, commemorating the efforts of intellectuals, politicians, and diplomats, as well as the great sacrifices endured by the Kosovars with their recurrent uprisings and the blood shed by them, because of their undaunted will to remain Albanian and not serve as slaves to a Slavic population that only arrived in the region in the 7th century A.D.

Indeed, the Kosovars, descendants of the ancient tribe of Dardanians, had and still have full consciousness that their stock has inhabited the region for thousands of years. Historical sources, in particular the epigraphic monuments in stone and bronze, do not lie.

A conference on "Political Problems of Albanian Independence During the Period 1908-1914" was held in Tiranë, sponsored by the Albanian Academy of Sciences and the Kosovë Academy of Arts and Sciences. In addition to scholars from Albania and Kosovë, contributions were delivered by others from Germany, Italy, and France.

The topics were dealt with in a professional way, from the scientific viewpoint as well as in

their patriotic aspect, without surrendering to rhetoric and exclusively based in documentary sources. Much evidence showed the common ethnocultural ancestry of all Albanians, thereby proving the cruelty and absurdity of the Albanian nation's dismemberment.

Science is dry and may lead to neglect of the human, spiritual side of life. But once out of the austere atmosphere of lecture halls everyone felt free of formal bonds, enjoying the pleasure of being together: weren't we all Albanian? Is any power capable of extinguishing our sentiments?

When we met Adem Demaçi we embraced as if we had grown up in the same home. The same thing happened with Rexhep Qosja, just as if we were continuing a long period together. Yet, we had met Demaçi only once in Rome and had seen Qosja only once in Prishtinë.

And what of Ibrahim Rugova, President of the Kosovë Republic, who we have never met personally? When we met in Vlorë's Plaza of the Flag, we embraced like old friends.

I have named only a few of Kosovë's better-known leaders because a whole book would be insufficient to relate all the moving episodes involving the Albanians of that martyred region and to explain events with the necessary clarity. However, all who have lived them can understand their feelings, which others may imagine!

At Vlorë, historic Vlorë, the official celebration of the 80th anniversary of independence was held. In the town's Sports Palace, on the evening of November 27, cultural events were held in the presence of the two Presidents, Sali Berisha of Albania and Ibrahim Rugova of Kosovë. Also present were Albanian prime minister Aleksander Meksi and several cabinet members, as well as the mayor of Vlorë, Elhan Sharra, the diplomatic corps, Albanian and Italian military representatives, and a huge crowd of citizens that made the celebration lively and hearty.

The dances and music, alternating classic and folkloric, were almost magical; the harmony as well as the professionalism of the artists inspired peace and optimism in the soul. It was a wonderful evening and was so considered, especially by

the foreign guests, who appreciate the purity of the performances, something almost forgotten in the West.

Next morning, November 28, the Plaza of the Flag and all the wide avenue were crowded with people waving little Albanian flags. The view was fascinating, as if Albania were enjoying a heavenly blessing and overcoming the oppression of a half century. The scene showed Albania ready to present herself to Europe with the qualities and dignity due her: let this forethought soon be reality!

When Sali Berisha, Ibrahim Rugova, and other personalities appeared, the roar of enthusiasm burst out, rising to the heavens with the strength of a determined people ready for any sacrifice, with the aim of overcoming the present unbearable economic difficulties.

President Berisha raised the flag to the applause of the whole crowd; he then laid a wreath on the tomb of Ismail Qemal Vloë, the statesman who in 1912 made Albania free and independent. Then, after again taking his place on the large plinth on which the splendid monument stands, commemorating the year 1912 and dominating the square, he addressed the cheering audience with balanced and clear words of encouragement and consolation, in which all rhetorical flourish was absent. He stressed that where there is a strong will, there is always a way out of a situation.

Silence was total in the crowd, which extended for miles. The President's voice, with its strong, emotional tones, dominated the surroundings. When his speech touched on patriotic themes, applause and acclamation rose from the people with the force of thunder, echoing through the hills, to the tops of the mountains, along the coast: **LONG LIVE DEMOCRATIC ALBANIA! MURRAH FOR ETHNIC ALBANIA!**

And in the harmony of the chorus rising from the throbbing hearts of Albanians everywhere in the world one could hear the deeper voice of Illyria, spreading in waves, becoming stronger and stronger, and demanding:

Go, my soul, go.
I need young people of all ages!"

Nermin VLORA FALASCHI

ALBANIA: ECUMENICAL PROBLEMS AND PROMISE

Even the most casual observer of the daily news reports from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union cannot help but note the increasing conflict, sometimes verbal but all too often violent, among members of various ethnic, language and religious groups. The tragedy of these struggles reminds us of the Gospel warning that when one devil has been cast out, we must be on the lookout lest he return when we are unwary and bring seven more even worse than himself [Matthew 12:43-45 & Luke 11:24-26].

The evil of Communism was indeed a great curse to be cast off, but it is not the only way human beings are tempted: racism, ethnocentrism and religious strife are all evils too, and sadly, they seem to have been unleashed in the wake of the fall of Communism. That fall was welcome, but now the other ills must be addressed in turn.

Albania has not been completely spared some of this tension, but as in the past, this proud Balkan nation has so far been a beacon of Ecumenical co-operation and good will. One must truly marvel, in 1993, at a country which has as President a follower of Islam, as Speaker of the Parliament, a Roman Catholic, and as Prime Minister, an Eastern Orthodox believer! This example, though, must never be taken for granted. Recently, there have been, and continue to be, threats to this harmony.

When Communism first fell in Albania, the situation of the religious bodies was dire. The former regime had utterly and ruthlessly suppressed the practice of any Faith, with the result that there were relatively few clergy. Although many of the Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim and other faithful had remained true to their beliefs, the result of the persecutions was to debilitate the nation's clergy, depriving them of their usual lengthy formation and education, and subjecting them to imprisonment and death.

When the Churches emerged, it was of course desirable that the native, Albanian Clergy assume leadership once again, yet that proved difficult at

first. The Albanian Parliament passed a law that the heads of Albanian religious groups must be Albanian. However, among the Roman Catholics, the Pope of Rome at first appointed an Indian, the Apostolic Nuncio to Albania, Archbishop Ivan Dias, as temporary head of the Church. The Archbishop was to oversee the restoration of the Catholic Church structure. He has now been succeeded by the Archbishop Primate Frano Illia, an Albanian.

The situation of the Orthodox Church was also difficult, but had some specific problems as well. The Orthodox Church preserves the ancient tradition of choosing Bishops from among the celibate and/or monastic clergy. In Communist Albania, all of these men had died, some from natural causes, and some in prison, such as Archbishop Kristofor Kisi, the Primate of the Church. The only priests who could work secretly among the people were those who were married. When freedom was won, there were, therefore, no celibate or monastic priests in Albania to assume the Episcopacy.

A search was made among the Albanian Orthodox outside of Albania, but, among the very few unmarried Albanian clergy around the world, none seemed to be chosen. The Patriarch of Constantinople sent Archbishop Anastasios Yanullotos to head the Church through this transitional time of rebuilding.

This action was at first interpreted by some as an attempt by the Greek Patriarchate to circumvent the law and institute a Greek hegemony in Albanian Church affairs. To understand the confusion, some historical background will be helpful, which will take us back to the dawn of Christianity itself!

The Orthodox Church preserves the original polity (governing structure) of ancient Christianity. The Church as a world wide Communion does not have a single central governing authority in continual session. The highest earthly authority in the Church is an Ecumenical Council, the last such Council having been held in A.D. 787 in Nicaea, a suburb of Constantinople. Following the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, each Church governs

itself through its own Patriarch and Holy Synod of Bishops.

There are two kinds of Churches: Autocephalous ("Self-headed") and Autonomous ("Self-governing"). The relationship of Churches to one another is Familial. In the beginning, as Christianity spread, the Disciples went out from Jerusalem to preach the Good News and to Baptize. The Communities they founded were "daughter" Churches of Jerusalem. First Antioch, then Alexandria, Seleucia-Ctesiphon (Babylon), Rome, Georgia, Armenia, Constantinople, etc. all became Christian centers. Each in turn sent out Missionaries themselves in time: the Churches of Jerusalem and Alexandria to Ethiopia and Eritrea; Babylon and Jerusalem to India; Jerusalem to Albania; Constantinople to Eastern Europe and the Slavic lands; Rome to Western Europe.

In the ancient, united Church before the schisms, soon after the Emperor St. Constantine changed Roman law to allow Christianity freedom in the Empire, five Imperial Cities rose in prominence to be understood to be the "Pentarchy," the major Patriarchates: Rome (the old Capital), Constantinople (the new Capital), Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

The areas of the Roman Empire around each of these five Cities were understood to be under its ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and the Patriarch and his Synod could appoint Bishops, or regulate the electoral process in each place under his care. Outside the Empire (Persia, Armenia, Georgia, India, etc.), the situation was somewhat analogous, but they were independent Churches, in Communion with the Churches of the Empire, but not jurisdictionally bound to them, except in Ecumenical Councils.

As the Five Patriarchates of the Empire grew, they expanded their territory by Missionary activity. After centuries, this meant that, by original organization or by outreach, each Church had many daughter Churches for which it was responsible. By the year 1300, the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople stretched all the way to modern-day Moscow!

In the Orthodox Church, however, this is not the end of the process. It is the responsibility of each "Mother Church" to nurture her daughter Churches, to the point at which they can govern themselves. At first, missionaries run the affairs of the Church, but soon, the Liturgy is translated into the vernacular of the newly evangelized peoples, and native clergy assume their roles. For a time, the Mother Church still sends Bishops, but when the new Church is deemed healthy enough through the holiness of its people, glorified as Saints, and the strength of its Monastic life, it is granted "autonomy" by its Mother Patriarchate, and a Metropolitan or Archbishop is appointed.

This stage of the "autonomous Church" means that although the new Church governs itself internally, when a new head for the Church is needed, the Mother Church must approve his election. Finally, after a period of time, short or long depending on circumstances, the daughter Church is declared "Autocephalous," by its original Patriarch, and completes the process of Independence, no longer needing approval for its elected head. Some Churches have retained the title "Metropolitan" for their chief Hierarch (e.g. the Orthodox Church of America), while others have been recognized as "Patriarchs," (e.g. Russian Orthodox Church).

Today in the worldwide Eastern Orthodox Church, there are 22 Autocephalous or Autonomous Churches. All these are in Communion with one another in one Faith, but govern themselves internally, as explained above. The Albanian Orthodox Church is one of the Autocephalous Churches.

Christianity was planted in Albania in Apostolic times, but Orthodox Church jurisdiction in Albania passed back and forth for many centuries. Into the 18th Century it was administered by the Church of Ohrida, but in 1767, the jurisdiction returned to Constantinople, which had ecclesiastically governed all this area during the Roman Empire.

In the tumultuous years between 1908 and 1937, all Balkan entities were in upheaval, and the Albanian Orthodox Church was no exception. After a long struggle for ecclesial independence, Autocephaly was finally granted by Constantinople in 1937. As an Autocephalous Church, Albania

governed itself and elected its own native Hierarchy.

The horror of the Communist regime effectively wiped out this Church structure, but when freedom came, some resented Constantinople's sending a Bishop to assist in the rebuilding. Yet it would be difficult to see what other path could have been taken, as the transitional period to self-governance in the Church continues, given the fact that Bishops must be celibate.

Luckily, this controversy has now subsided, but some are trying to fan the simmering Greek-Albanian frictions in southern Albania into a blaze. This summer, the Greek government reacted angrily with mass expulsions of Albanians from Greece, in retaliation for the Albanian deportation of Archimandrite Chrysostomos Maidonis, who was accused of inciting pro-Greek separatist activities.

Six of the major parties in the Albanian Parliament called on both Tirane and Athens to stop escalating the problem, and "not to fall prey to the trap of chauvinistic circles inside and outside the country." Archbishop Anastasios has exercised his good offices by working to keep President Berisha and President Mitsotakis in communication with one another. Hopefully these problems can be peacefully and justly solved, as well as a solution to the emerging protests over the pending Greek legislation which requires the inclusion of religion on Greek identity cards.

In recent interviews with editor Gjon Sinishta and telejournalist Fr. Michael Walsh, His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios expressed the hope for the continuation of the traditional religious harmony among all peoples in Albania, but especially between Orthodox and Catholics. He also eloquently described one of the greatest problems the Catholic and Orthodox Churches are facing in Eastern Europe: fundamentalist protestant proselytizing.

These groups of "evangelicals" or "fundamentalists," as well as other sectarian groups, do not seem to understand that the many of the lands of Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the former USSR are already Christian, and have been for hundreds, or in some cases, as with Albania, almost two thousand years. A recent national ad in the U.S.

showed an Icon of Christ, and then explained, "This is the only face of Christ little Ivan has ever known: help us show him the real Christ."

Such efforts do not build up the Church, but merely confuse and dilute the faith. Following Archbishop Anastasios' call, North Americans, who are the source for most of the funding of these efforts, should be especially careful that they only contribute to those groups which support the rebuilding of the existing Apostolic Christian Churches in these countries, rather than introduce confusion and disunity from abroad.

As so often before, Albania, although not immune to the struggles and temptations of the times, nonetheless signals the call for harmonious cooperation and understanding; and even leads the way, from the acceptance of the necessary transitional times in rebuilding the Churches, and the attempts at calming the ethnic passions in Southern Albania, to the Archbishop's plea for an aid to all of the East which does not divide, but helps in the upbuilding of a just and lasting work together for the Kingdom!

Steven A. ARMSTRONG



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ALBANIA: SHAKING OFF THE PAST

THE LAST OF THE ADRIATIC'S ECONOMIC BACKWATERS SETS ITS SIGHTS ON AN EC FUTURE.

After decades of self-imposed isolation, the last nation in Europe to officially herald in democracy is waging a market revolution that makes Poland's economic travails look like trivialities. But as Eastern Europe restructures, privatizes and draws up foreign investment programs in the name of transition, Albania starts from scratch. "Last year in Albania," says Prime Minister Aleksander Meksi, "nothing remotely similar to a state existed here. We're building one."

Social and political barriers are immense, and making the Albanian "lek" convertible and supplying a beleaguered population with a semblance of comfort will require a more dazzling economic performance than even Eastern Europe has been able to produce.

A history of isolation

Albania's five decades of political and geographical isolation are unprecedented. The repressive communist regime of Enver Hoxha, who emulated Stalin with merciless vigor, kept every political and social nuance in the country firmly under his thumb. A wealth of natural resources permitted the Hoxha government to sever relations with Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and, finally, China. Hoxha denounced these "revisionist" communist systems as threats to pure Albanian Marxist-Leninism. To guard against insurrection, Hoxha turned Albania into a virtual prison, guarded by a powerful, central fortress. Even today, Albania remains one of the most heavily-defended nations in the world, with thousands of concrete, dome-shaped bunkers within firing distance of borders, roads and residential buildings. Like other communist governments, the Albanian regime implemented a rigid system of central planning. It claimed success when it decreased the agrarian percentage of the population from 90 to 60 percent, brought about dubious but well-trumpeted "economic self-sufficiency," a positive trade balance and no external debt. Economic development, however was not attempted in any form, and inept central planning eventually led to a deep crisis. The recent collapse of state-owned enterprises has

inflated the unemployment rate to more than 35 percent, while the average monthly wage is only the equivalent of 12 U.S. dollars.

The market revolution

Albania is building its market economy anew. As the first step, it has established ministries and government offices to tackle the enormous task of economic reform. To address privatization issues, the National Agency of Privatization was established in September 1991 within the Council of Ministries. To address foreign investment and trade issues, the ministries of foreign and domestic trade (once separate entities) have been merged into a single Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations. However, the existing Ministry of Economy, which oversees the state-owned sector of the economy, still holds the most economic-planning clout and often obscures the authority of the newer institutions. Nevertheless, by creating such institutions, fledgling though they may be, the Albanian government is sending out strong signals that it is dedicated to reform. Says Meksi, "First we wanted to build ministries with solid structures. We have achieved this, so now we're establishing justice organs — lawyers, judges, together with all other legal structures. We have begun."

As for privatization, Albania keeps its eye on Eastern Europe's experiments. In an effort to both expedite and depoliticize the privatization process, the government has chosen the privatization-by-auction route, something the government is still trying to perfect to instill confidence in the privatization process and gain public support.

Approximately 75 percent of agricultural land in Albania has been privatized without great social unrest. That agricultural production is expected to be much higher in 1992 than it was in 1991 gives cause for optimism.

The retail trade sector has been almost entirely privatized, although not strictly through auction, and most enterprises were purchased by "previous

users" (employees) as opposed to the highest bidder.

The government expects the large-scale privatization of industry to become easier with the passage of a company law, something lacking until now.

Sounding the foreign investment call

To speed up foreign investment, Albania is drawing from its northern neighbors' experience. As foreign investment incentives, Albania is promoting its low wage rates, its generally well-educated labor force and an abundance of natural resources (including petroleum, chromium, copper and olive trees). With considerable room for industrialization, Albania is promoting unique opportunities for foreign investment in oil exploration, agriculture, mining, seaports and, in particular, tourism.

The latter might be Albania's saving grace, because the country is still an open book for foreigners, and it rests in a mountainous Adriatic climate. Some call it "The Switzerland by the Sea." To take advantage of the geographical blessings, the Ministry of Tourism is embarking on a program to implement new laws facilitating tourism. Prudently, the nation does not want to overdevelop its pristine coastline, so new hotels and tourist facilities will have to comply with strict building regulations. Deputy Minister of Tourism Edmond Spaho has resolved that "the bitter experience of Spain, France or Italy will alert us not to follow the lunacy of building pillboxes on the coast."

Rocky road for investors

Despite the new government programs, investing in Albania is easier said than done. Although "invited" to invest by the government, once within Albania's borders foreign investors are up against uncertain economic laws, crippling bureaucracy and an ill-defined commitment on the part of the government. Recently, many foreign investors have blasted the government's tendency to refuse to honor and protect agreements concluded by the previous government.

Albanian newspapers abound with stories of foreign investment projects thwarted by incompetence or lack of cooperation. For instance, an Ital-

ian company, VENTOUR, having concluded an agreement with the General Directorate of Forestry and Pastures to invest in Albanian tourism, currently claims that it commenced operations only to have its agreement canceled by the new General Directorate which refused to recognize agreements signed by its predecessor.

Another company, ALIAGRI, having established a joint venture with three Albanian agricultural enterprises to produce and sell wheat, claims that its partners have misappropriated profits of the joint venture and has begun formal legal proceedings. A Macedonian company claims to have commenced construction of a business-facility in Albania only to have the district "Pluralist Executive Committee" order its demolition.

To allay foreign investors concerns, Albania drew up a Foreign Investment Law in August 1992 that permits 100 percent foreign ownership, grants foreign investors the same rights as Albanian investors and shields foreign investment from expropriation. Only those investing in major sectors of the economy over a certain value have to obtain special permits.

Obstacles aside, the emergence of an open Albania has sparked some interest. Recent foreign investments include a German-Albanian joint venture to produce drilling, construction and agricultural equipment, and an Italian-Albanian joint venture to produce trailers and truck panels. On the international level, Turkey has issued a protocol supporting aid to Albanian fruit producers and the development of Albanian soap and perfume factories, sugar, olive and oil refineries, bakeries and cement production facilities.

Italian companies are cooperating with Albania on energy matters, most notably the development and distribution of electricity and gas fired heating. Poland, likewise, will help Albania develop port facilities at Durrës.

An international future

Like all new East European democracies, Albania sees and fights at the end of its tunnel. EC presence is already strong in Albania. Most of the country's aid comes from the Community, particularly from the EC PHARE fund.

But other international organizations also play a vital role. In November 1991, Albania joined the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, two sources that bring much-needed technical and financial assistance. The United States, similarly, contributes 200 million dollars a year for emergency food aid.

The war in the former Yugoslavia, once one of Albania's major trading partners, could stir up

Kosova Province, where 1.7 million ethnic Albanians live under Serbian domination. Ethnic strife, in such a case, might sidetrack the country and undermine political and economic reform.

But for the present, democracy seems to agree with Albania. A solid 65 percent majority of the government hails from the progressive Democratic Party (DP), and the country, for all its economic inexperience and turmoil, seems committed to seeing the market revolution through.*

Carolyn BRZEZINSKI

*Warsaw Voice 1.24.1992

STATISTICS ON ALBANIA

Population: 3.5 million

GNP: 90 million dollars

Exports (1992): 60 million dollars

Imports (1992): 450 million dollars

Inflation: 230 percent (December 1991–December 1992)

Unemployment: 35 percent

Interest rate: 36 percent

Public sector deficit: 45 percent of GDP

Cash value of current foreign investments: 40 million dollars

(Figures are approximate and generally exclude the private sector.)

Source: World Bank, Washington, D.C.

INVESTMENT LAWS

•Foreign investments in Albania must be authorized by:

- the Council of Ministers, in cases of foreign investment in branches of particular importance for the country's economy and which have a value above a fixed minimum value, both of which are determined by the Council of Ministers;
- the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, in all other cases, excluding investments under 250,000 dollars or its equivalent in other convertible money, calculated according to average exchange rates proper to the time when the request is made.

Foreign investments under 250,000 dollars do not need this authorization.

•The foreign investor has the right to transfer abroad (outside Albania):

- income resulting from the sale or liquidation, either partial or complete, of his or her investment to an Albanian or foreign natural person or corporate entity;
- income resulting from the reduction of capital when the company has decreased its capital according to Albanian legislation in force;
- the profit and dividends calculated in accordance with Albanian legislation;
- the payments for licenses to persons residing outside Albania according to the rights of intellectual ownership employed in foreign investment;
- the payments necessary to maintain and develop the foreign investment;
- the personal incomes of the foreign citizens employed by the foreign investor.

ALBANIANS IN KOSOVË: FROM HEROIC WARFARE TO DISCIPLINED PEACEFUL RESISTANCE

Editor's note: This paper was prepared and presented at the Conference of the Society for a Scientific Study of Religion, Nationalism, and Revolution, held at Washington, D.C., on November 6-8, 1992.

Since the conference was held, the overall situation in Kosova has been rapidly deteriorating. There is a genuine fear and possibility that Serbian brute aggression in Bosnia will spread soon into Kosova and Macedonia unless the civilized world takes forceful action. Three years of futile talks at the Peace Conferences on Yugoslavia in London, Geneva and New York have only worked to the advantage of Serbia's imperialistic plans of "ethnic cleansing."

We believe that the insightful study by Dr. Sami Repishti, Professor Emeritus of Adelphi University, will inform and enlighten the academic community and our readers at large about the dangerous and even tragic situation in Kosova.

* * *

The recent events in the former SFR (Socialist Federative Republic) of Yugoslavia have raised many questions which require thoughtful answers, if one hopes to find proper and durable solutions. The war between the successor states of the former SFR of Yugoslavia may have surprised many people, but its intensity and its ferociousness have surprised us all. We have been accustomed to thinking that after the World War II massacres and the Nazi terrors, followed by the successful European movements toward reunification, political, economic, and social (through intensive migrations), armed conflicts, avoided by the Continent since 1945, were very unlikely, if not impossible, in Europe. We were wrong!

What is even more disturbing amidst the present carnage in the former SFR of Yugoslavia is the revival of the religious "argument," playing a dominant role in the new states of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Most unfortunately, the argument formally instituted in Serbia since 1844, with Garashanin's "Nacertanje,"¹ continues to be stressed to this day, as was confirmed by the recent state-

ment of Serbian senior officials.⁴¹ Furthermore, reports of close collaboration between the Serbian clergy and the Serbian regular and irregular forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina are brought to us by the daily press.³ The former SFR of Yugoslavia has turned the clock back to the Middle Ages, when Christians fought Christians and all of them together fought Moslems, the invading Arabs first and the Ottomans later. Strange as it may appear, in the eyes of the Serbs and the Montenegrins, "Moslems" in the former SFR of Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Herzegovina, Sandjak, Kosova, and Macedonia) seem to be the modern version of the Ottoman invaders!

The lesson drawn from Yugoslavia is that expediency in politics is short-lived, and that fundamental freedoms and basic rights of peoples should be respected if one aims at a durable solution of the problem. We also see that in spite of many setbacks, the human rights movement, especially since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, is playing a major role in the thinking of government officials, and in their policies. It is the concept of respect for human and civil rights of each individual and of each citizen – including respect for the right as members of a social group: ethnic, religious, political, economic and social, that is openly appealed to all by all parties involved, even when the intention to respect such rights might be missing. The dimensions of human rights are enlarged as the concept itself is being codified by successive conferences all over Europe. A major result was achieved with the Charter of Paris, 1990, where the rights of individuals as members of social groups took a prominent place. It is within this framework that the Carrington Plan⁴ for the settlement of the present conflict in the former Yugoslavia was worked out, and it appears that the same framework will be used in the successive negotiations now under way in Geneva, Switzerland.

Serbian aggression against Slovenia first, then against Croatia after the declaration of independence (April 25, 1991) and more recently the Serbian slaughter in Bosnia and Herzegovina bordering on

genocide, have highlighted the veracity of the consistent claims made by three million ethnic Albanians against the official Serbian repression in the areas of the former Yugoslavia, where Albanians live, i.e., the former Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo, and the former Socialist Republics of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia Proper.

Since 1877-78, the first military onslaught in Kosovo, until 1945, the latest Serb-Montenegrin military occupation of Kosovo and of the Albanian-inhabited lands in the former Yugoslavia, the history of Serb-Albanian relations is a continuous struggle between the armed forces of an organized government and the local Albanian population resisting that rule. The results are frightening: tens of thousand of ethnic Albanians were killed in 1877-78, in 1912-13, in 1915, in 1918-19, in 1941, and in 1945-48.⁵

Albanian resistance has been long, stubborn, and bloody. It was led by prominent national figures and local chieftains distinguished for their military prowess. Their deeds are now the stuff of the local folklore, and remain a mobilizing force for many Albanians, including the young educated generations.

What has changed in Kosovo, since 1945, is the form of Albanian resistance as a result of the changes in the leadership of the resistance movement. The torch has now passed into the hands of a generation grown up and educated after 1945, during the years of Tito's Yugoslavia. They are also the first generation to have been offered the opportunity of education in their native language, Albanian. As the level of education rose from the initial elementary and high schools to Institutes of Higher Learning, culminating in the establishment in 1970 of the University of Kosovo, and the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, in 1975, a new wave of intellectuals - writers, poets, historians, lawyers, and scientists, and especially a huge army of enthusiastic students and teachers - picked up the torch of "Albanianism," the struggle for the assertion of the Albanian national identity, the Albanian objective reality, perceived as a basic existential need. To be "Albanian," a descendant of the ancient Illyrians inhabiting the area for nearly three thousand years, became a badge of pride for

all Albanians in Kosovo. And to be an educated one was seen as the only way that this "pride" would be channelled positively to bring about "the liberation" of an entire people. Politically, it was earning its sovereignty, and socially, it was shedding the overbearing complex of inferiority, the image of an "uneducated and uneducatable populace" (the "siftari") created by vicious and persistent Serbian propaganda for over a century.⁶

The Coming of Age of the Intellectuals

The surfacing of the new Albanian intellectual class in the forefront of Kosovo politics has been achieved through traditional ways.

First, we have seen a small but greatly devoted group of researchers who have brought to life heretofore unknown aspects of the historical past of the local Albanian population.

Second, these "discoveries" were enthusiastically received by a growing number of teachers and young students who found in this "glorious" past of theirs the spiritual nourishment to support their aspirations for self-assertion as individuals, as well as an Albanian ethnic group in surroundings which, to them, were "unfriendly", at best.

Third, the large and young generation included in the massive drive for general education introduced by Tito's regime in the former Yugoslavia, became the ideal transmission belt for the popularization of the frequent "historic discoveries" now enshrined in poems and folkloric songs, memorized by students and non-students alike and sung everywhere, for every occasion, and by everybody.

The results of such an impetus movement was the creation of an atmosphere of romantic-like trust between the educated elite and the less-educated population in towns and villages, with the first group gaining ground with every passing day as the leading force in the movement for a strong Albanian national identity. The process was also facilitated by the fact that the majority of these new "leaders" were recruited from the large stratum of indigenous peasantry, as well as from the newly formed urban working class. Given the political situation in Europe and the absence of armed conflict, the battle was fought with pen rather than

with sword, and in this confrontation with the opposing forces — mainly Serb, Montenegrin and Macedonian nationalisms— the educated elite became inevitably also the political elite of Kosova.

With the increase in the number of university graduates, two groups began to emerge:

1.— Graduates who had been somewhat "privileged" to attend institutes of higher learning thanks to their family "connections" with the Yugoslav authorities, or who have had genuine communist sympathies. They were grateful to the "Comrade Tito regime" for the opportunities offered, and were willing to accept "the status quo" as the best possible position offered to Albanians in Yugoslavia. These intellectuals became also the backbone of the Yugoslav Communist Party (later Yugoslav Communist League) and of the local Provincial administration, as well. In so doing, they had practically accepted the subordinate position of Kosova as a "socialist autonomous region" (later province) and its double dependency: a component part of Serbia **and** a constitutive element of the Federation. To use a frequently quoted saying: "It is the priority of the social over the national"; in other words, "socialist" society was by far more important than affirmation of "the national identity." The opposite was seen as "nationalism," and as such was severely condemned.

2.— Intellectuals who benefitted from the educational and cultural expansion in Kosova, but who did not accept "the status quo" as satisfactory to the Albanian people. With the rise of their educational level, these graduates began to express, in a more coherent way, the wishes and the aspirations of the large Albanian masses, until they succeeded in becoming the voices of the people's consciences. Literature, arts, music, and the screen became the most important vehicle conveying the message of these "literati." The masses responded quickly and enthusiastically. A bond between them generated an atmosphere of understanding. Common people put their trust in their educated sons and daughters, while these in return felt increasingly responsible for giving their parents a hope and a sense of purpose in their political struggle. The Albanian population of Kosova, the largest non-Slavic nation in the former SFR of Yugoslavia,

having been treated as politically unreliable by the Communist Government of Tito, were now being branded also as nationally undesirable by the rest of the Slavic peoples of the Federation. To the epithet of "anti-communist" used against the Albanians since the inception of the new Yugoslavia, in 1945, the new one, "nationalist," was added. Since 1981, Albanians have been accused also of being "separatists."

The label "separatist" had, of course, a broad connotation: it involved a movement asking for the separation of Kosova from Yugoslavia, namely an attack on "the territorial integrity" of the country, and consequently, it was severely punished by law. Since 1968, and especially since 1981, almost every Albanian arrested and brought to trial was accused of "separatist activities" and sentenced to long jail terms. Consequently, according to official sources over 700,000 Albanians have gone through police hands since 1981, and in Kosova alone, or more than one Albanian for every three living in that area.⁷

The Big Break of 1981

One could say with a great degree of certainty that the massive Albanian riots of Spring, 1981 signalled the moment of total break in the relations between the local Albanian population and the Yugoslav State. Since then, things were not, and could not, be the same. The search for a way out had begun.

Provoked by poor living conditions at the University of Kosova, in Prishtinë, the initial outbreak was met with utmost brutality by the federal, mainly Serbian Police, later joined by the Yugoslav Federal Army. Clashes in the streets turned bloody. From 9 dead and 254 wounded, all Albanians, according to official figures, to "over 300 killed" or even "1,000 killed and as many wounded," as reported by outside sources,⁸ the number of the victims was never known to the general public. The aftermath was a constant confrontation between Albanian intellectuals, teachers and students on one side, and the Yugoslav, mainly Serb, police and Federal Army on the other. The chasm kept widening with every passing day as the position of the two confrontational forces became more rigid and more entrenched in their basic beliefs.

For the Albanians, whose demands concentrated on asking for a "Republic of Kosova" as an equal and independent federal unit within the Yugoslav Federation, there was no room left for discussion: thirty-six years of Serbian domination, in their view, were sufficient to conclude that life under Serbian tutelage was impossible, and that independence from Serbia (but not from Yugoslavia) was the only acceptable solution.

For the Serbs, Kosova was the cradle of Serbia's past glory, the empire lost to the Turks; therefore, it was a "sacred Serbian land." Any departure from Serbia, or "the Albanization" of Kosova independently of Serbia, was "unthinkable." Although Kosova was over 80 percent Albanian (it has now reached the 90 percent mark), Serbia's "historical rights" prevailed in the minds of the Serbs. Monuments of Serbian culture were seen as testimony to the past Serbian glory and Serbian history in the 13th and 14th centuries. They were the source of national pride. Serbian medieval myths became the tenets of the present Serbian policy toward Kosova.

The results of the head-on collision are relatively well-known: since 1981, hundred of Albanians have been killed. The wounded are maybe in the thousands. Over 7,000 Albanians were sent to jail for up to 20 years. Beatings, torture, "isolation," arbitrary house searches, and other acts of police brutality have become events of the daily lives for the local Albanian population. Many bridges of friendship between Albanians and Serbs have been demolished, as many local Serbs have taken sides and are now supporting the Serbian Government's repressive policies. The chasm is very deep and many think also permanent, as Albanians continue to be as excluded from participating in public life as Blacks were in S. Africa.

Consequently, Serbia initiated a process leading to the devolution of the autonomy of Kosova granted by the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, inexorably divesting the SAP of Kosova of its constitutional rights. By March, 1989, this process culminated with the abolition of autonomy, and the inclusion of the former SAP of Kosova into the new Republic of Serbia, simply as a district.⁹

The dismantling of Kosova's administration proceeded swiftly and inexorably. The first to go were the educational and cultural institutions, seen by Serbs as "nests of Albanian nationalism." The University of Kosova changed its name. All Albanian administrators, starting with the president and the department heads, were replaced with local and Belgrade Serbs. Department after department, professors and their aids, were dismissed as part of the plan to "de-Albanize the University." Classes in Albanian were closed. The number of Albanian students was drastically reduced, until in the 1991-1992 school year the doors were closed to them. Over 400,000 Albanian pupils were prevented by police from attending classes in public schools. The University Library was "purged" of Albanian books. The Provincial Archives were sealed and secretly transported to Belgrade. The Academy of Science and Arts of Kosova was abolished on October 16, 1991, by the Serbian Assembly at the request of the "opposition parties" led by V. Draskovic. Theaters, art galleries, and cultural associations were also closed. Even sports events were banned to avoid the gathering of Albanian crowds.¹⁰ To further insult Albanians, a huge Serbian Orthodox Church is being planned inside the campus of the University in Prishtinë.

The same assault was directed against health organizations and hospitals. Over 90 percent of all Albanian physicians and medical personnel were fired. Hospitals and clinics are now managed by Serb doctors and for Serbs only, while in towns and villages there are no health services for the excluded Albanians.

The entire juridicial system is in the hands of Serbs. Over 250 Albanian judges were summarily dismissed, including the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Courts of Kosova.¹¹ So are Albanian police who are replaced by local Serbs and others coming from distant regions, operating within the ever growing Serbian Republican Police and Military. Army garrisons are stationed in and around all the cities of Kosova with heavy concentration of artillery and tanks over the surrounding hills. A Bosnian scenario.

The practical military occupation of Kosova is imposed upon a region with 70 percent unem-

ployment as a result of "Serbian mandatory administration" over all state-owned enterprises, and the expulsion of Albanian workers replaced by newcomer Serbs. These working centers are now "for Serbs only!" The loss of job for the workers implies the loss of government housing, health insurance, and all other fringe benefits previously given by a "cradle to grave" insurance system.

The private economic sector is suffocated by a system of capricious and arbitrary taxation on Albanian merchants, forcing a large number of them to close shops. Agriculture is starved for lack of fuel and fertilizers, as the impoverished Albanian farmers return to antiquated implements and work methods.

Albanians' Disciplined Response

Albanian response to these repressive policies and "apartheid" practices has been a movement to orient the struggle for the emancipation of the Albanian population to new grounds, where violence is avoided and dialogue encouraged. Such a daring enterprise involved first and foremost a united internal front, and an organization that would reach all over the region in an effort to counterbalance a repressive Serbian administration.

Consequently, as a result of and a reaction to the intentional exclusion bordering on apartheid, South African style, Albanians began to organize themselves outside the system, and to build "a parallel administration" to serve their needs, shunning "the official" one and taking their fate into their own hands. The results are amazingly creative and effective.

With the state of emergency declared in Kosova on and off since 1981, and the reversion of pre-1966 Serbian policies of forcefully suppressing expressions of popular discontent, Albanians reacted with a series of monster demonstrations. Clearly sponsored by the Serbian Communist Party (now Socialist) since 1987 under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, the local Serbs answered with counter-demonstrations. To add fuel to the quarrel, Milosevic declared his intention to increase the number of Serbs in Kosova and to end Kosova's legitimate autonomy through new amendments that effectively abolished Kosova's autonomy. Nearly the entire administration would go under the di-

rect control of Serbia. Official business would be conducted in Serbian only!

The Albanians reaction was almost universal opposition manifested in huge, orderly, and peaceful demonstrations and marches that brought hundreds of thousands of Albanians to Prishtina, capital of Kosova. The pressure of Serbian domination generated a unanimous sentiment among the Albanians in favor of a secession from Serbia. By the end of 1988, Serbian official propaganda used only the adjectives "counter-revolutionary" and "separatist" to denote Albanian actions. Both terms were extreme qualifications, by official standards, denoting attempts to overthrow "the socialist order" for the first, and "endanger the territorial integrity of Serbia" for the second. Both activities were subject to extreme forms of punishment for the accused, including the official "justification" for a military and police armed intervention.

The threat of bloody repression did not deter the Albanians who undertook a series of strikes led by the miners at Stari Trg (Trepcha mines) in Fall, 1988 (including a hunger strike), supported emotionally and materially by the entire local population. What mostly impressed the observers on this occasion was the incredible degree of organization which characterized the demonstrations, as well as the peaceful conduct of over 500,000 participants.

By January 1989, the tension had reached a boiling point, and by February 27, 1989, strikes had covered the entire territory of Kosova. By personal order of Serbia's president Milosevic, the Albanian Communist leader (of Kosova) Azem Vllasi and 11 leaders of the Trepcha mines were arrested and brought to trial. The Yugoslav Federal Presidency decreed "special measures" on Kosova, taking over the responsibility for public order, and sending federal troops there. The final act of "the Constitutional changes" took place at the Assembly of Kosova on March 23, 1989. The following is a description of the fateful session:

Vukasin Jovanovic, the Serbian President of Kosova Assembly, presided over the tumultuous four and a half hour session. No roll call was taken. About 400 people

crowded the floor. Only about 150 were voting members of the Assembly (of a total voting membership of 184). The remainder comprised some of the sixty-one delegates from Kosovo to the Serbian Assembly and the Federal Assembly, who were entitled to participate but not vote in Kosova Assembly proceedings, and more than a hundred Communist party functionaries and unelected officials. Many of the thirty or so speakers in support of the amendments were not delegates and were therefore not entitled to participate in the debate. The session was disorderly; one of the six speakers in opposition to the amendment was unable to reach a microphone and respond to attacks by Communist party officials on her patriotism.

Caught between the widespread public opposition to the amendments and intensive Communist party pressure to approve the amendments (ninety percent of the delegates of the Assembly were party members, and the party was conducting a campaign branding any opponent of the amendment as "counter-revolutionary"), most of the elected delegates planned to abstain from voting on the amendments. Since adoption of the amendments required an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Assembly, the delegates thought that abstention would lead to the defeat of the amendments. When the issue was called, about sixty persons – some of whom were not entitled to vote – voted in favor of the amendments; about ten voted to oppose. As hands were raised, people seated in the front rows stood to applaud; Jovanovic counted only the negative votes and announced that the amendments had been approved. The affirmative votes and the abstentions were not counted.¹²

For six consecutive days, massive demonstrations of protest were crushed by the Serbian po-

lice backed by tanks and military helicopters. By March 28, 1989, the Yugoslav Government admitted to having killed 24 Albanians. "International press reports, reviewed by Amnesty International, suggest that as many as one hundred demonstrators may have been killed. None of them was armed; 90 percent were shot on the back while running away from Police."¹³ The arrested were in the hundreds. 239 intellectuals were held on "isolation" (arbitrary detention and incarceration) for more than one month, and were tortured for having signed a petition protesting Serbia's attacks on Kosova's autonomy.

The demonstrations and their bloody repression discredited the act at the Assembly of Kosova. Serbia's Government was forced to dissolve the Assembly of Kosova, and by the end of 1989, a new legislative body of delegates, handpicked by Serbia's Communist party, was installed. Expectations for a totally subservient Assembly in Kosova, however, were mostly disappointing. Events proved otherwise!

As soon as the new Assembly was installed, new massive demonstrations broke out all over Kosova. Serbia reacted again with force. On January 30 and 31 and February 1, 1990, at least 34 Albanians were killed and over 200 were wounded by police gunfire.¹⁴ Those arrested were in the hundreds too, according to the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Liberties in Prishtinë.¹⁵ In an effort to calm the situation, the embarrassed Yugoslav Government lifted "the special measures" (April 18, 1990), and after an incident in Malishevë, where three Albanians were killed by the Federal police, they withdrew all but 500 Federal police.

Serbia was unhappy, and on June 26, 1990, the Serbian Assembly passed a "special measures" law for Kosova, placing everything under Serbian control. This was too much even for the handpicked Kosova delegates, who on July 2, 1990, assembled to discuss the situation. Serbian police prevented them from entering the Assembly building. Refusing to leave, the delegates stood their ground outside the edifice and amidst an enthusiastic crowd, they issued "The Declaration of Independence," proclaiming "Kosova an equal and independent unit within the Yugoslav Federation/Confederation."

Serbia responded on July 5, 1990 by suspending the Assembly and the entire administration of Kosova, "including the Constitutional Court, who had initiated a process challenging the legitimacy of the adoption of the 1989 Constitutional Amendments, based on the irregularities during the March 23, 1989 session of the Kosova Assembly."¹⁶

RILINDJA, the only daily newspaper in Albanian, was closed. Kosova TV, radio and other mass media were taken over by the Serbs, who excluded Albanians working there.

The new Serbian wave of repression brought new demonstrations. On August 26, 1990 only six people were wounded and six more arrested, reported the *New York Times* of August 30, 1990. Police searching homes, beatings and detaining inhabitants, constant harassment of the population exacerbated the situation. On September 3, 1990, the Independent Trade Unions of Kosova called for a 24 hour strike. The response was almost universal. Serbia reacted by firing 28,000 workers, including judges, police and other Government officials. Private shopkeepers were given heavy fines; some had their permits revoked.

Four days later, Albanians reacted with the proclamation of the Republic of Kosova (Kachanik, September 7, 1990), making public also a Draft Constitution of the Republic of Kosova. The proclamation was approved by 111 delegates (one absentee joined later) of the suspended Assembly of Kosova. Accused of "counter-revolutionary" activities, and threatened with arrest, the delegates went into hiding. Four were caught and jailed.

On September 28, 1990, Serbia adopted the new Constitution which vested all effective control of Kosova's police, judiciary, economy, and political life in the hands of the Serbian Government, leaving only educational and cultural institutions in the hands of the local Serbian population. Albanians were excluded.¹⁷ Apartheid was fully installed in Kosova!

Struggling for Representation and Participation

The abolition of the Assembly and of the Government of Kosova, coupled with the massive firing of Albanians from the local and regional

administrations – including police, teachers, judges, physicians, etc. – left the skeleton of a government in the hands of Serbs, and on the other the 90 percent Albanian population without representation and participation in government. It was, therefore, vital for the local Albanians to gain the necessary authority needed to replace "the government." They succeeded!

Unable to find a partner in the Serbs who would accept to share the burden of a government by consent and fully representative of the local population, and unwilling to preserve, or to further promote the colonial status offered them by the ruling Serbian clique in Belgrade, Albanians mounted a two pronged offensive: to strengthen the internal front, and to take their fate into their own hands.

If anything, Serbian repression galvanized the Albanian population into a closing of ranks for a long and arduous resistance. In the city of Pejë, a group of young students (led by Miss Hava Shala, a former political prisoner and a senior at the University of Kosova) took the initiative to bring reconciliation among the Albanians who, until then, were fighting each other as a result of the old age "vendetta." The act grew into a movement involving respectable intellectuals, Roman Catholic and Moslem clergy, writers, poets, artists and others. Almost every week, in open public gatherings, in churches and mosques, dozens of former deadly rivals extended their hands to each other in friendship and promised not to seek revenge. In only a few months, Kosova became a safer place to live for many.

Serbian repression and the ensuing economic strangulation brought atrocious poverty to the doorsteps of thousands of Albanian families who could no longer find jobs. A new movement of huge proportions never seen until then developed in Kosova, whereby tens of thousands of migrant workers and immigrants from West Europe and N. America took upon themselves to assist large families and friends. The more comfortable families helped their poor neighbors. Albanians in Macedonia and Montenegro organized centers of assistance, collecting food, clothing, and money. Openly or secretly they succeeded in bringing these

resources into Kosova and distributing them among the needy, mainly through rudimentary organizations of social assistance, such as "Mother Teresa" clubs, individual churches and mosques, and through what was left of the former Kosova Red Cross and Crescent. There is hardly a needy Albanian family in Kosova that has not been reached by this outpouring of solidarity.¹⁸

Given the Serbian military power, and the aggressive policies of Milosevic, the new strategy had to be executed while avoiding direct confrontations. The mission of achieving the goal peacefully needed moral force of major dimensions to lead the way. India's Gandhist movement was a shining example.

This moral force was found in the formation of the Democratic League of Kosova (LDK) on December 23, 1989, by a group of Albanian Kosovar intellectuals, whose prior attitude toward the defunct Communist regime had earned the respect of many in Kosova. A new leadership, the first to challenge the political monopoly of the Yugoslav Communist League, emerged, invested with the moral right to speak on behalf of the oppressed masses. After the initial carefully orchestrated moves to avoid collision with the local Communist authorities and police provocations, the leader of the group, Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, a literary critic, whose political credentials were impeccable, began to come out publicly, while at the same time formally applying for the registration of his LDK with the Federal Ministry of Justice in Belgrade, but not with that of the Republic of Serbia.¹⁹

With one move, Rugova had aimed two strikes: while trying to legitimize the existence of his LDK with the federal Government, thus implicitly recognizing the existence of the Province of Kosova as part of the Yugoslav Federation, he was rejecting the charges of separatism levelled against all Albanian dissidents. At the same time, by refusing to apply to the Serbian Ministry of Justice, Rugova implicitly indicated that Serbia was no longer "the republic" of which Kosova was a part. This distinction between "the Yugoslav federal" and "the Serbian Republican" became an article of faith for the LDK as it delineated the future course of action.

The second major development of the struggle was the open rejection, oftentimes demonstratively, of the Yugoslav Communist League. Party membership cards were torn, burned or otherwise destroyed *en masse*. Soon, the LDK ranks increased, and by March, 1990 only three months after its inception, the membership reached the hundreds of thousands.

This sudden growth did not go unnoticed. The U.S. Congressional Caucus on Human Rights announced its Hearings on the violations of human rights in Kosova. In a move to preempt Albanian complaints in Washington, D.C., the Yugoslav Federal Government lifted, on April 18, 1990, "the special measures" laws in Kosova. On April 25, 1990, a group of 14 Albanian Kosovar intellectuals and five Serbs (three of them were members of the Serbian Orthodox clergy) detailed for the American legislators their points of view. The Albanian group was led by Dr. Rugova, the Serbs by Dobrica Cosic, a writer and politician, known as "the spiritual father" of Slobodan Milosevic. This was the first international exposure of the new political leadership of Kosova. (The hearings were held at the request of the Albanian American Civic League, and its president the Hon. Joseph J. DioGuardi).

The impact of Rugova's trip to Washington, D.C., was immediate. Upon his return to Kosova, following several meetings with the US officials, he became the recognized leader of the movement for an equal and independent status of Kosova within the Yugoslav Federation, thus reinforcing the determination to be fully free from Serbian tutelage. Faithful to the democratic principles of pluralism, Rugova encouraged the formation of other political groups and established close cooperation with them. The outcome was the formation of the Coordination Council of the Albanian Political Parties for Kosova first and for Yugoslavia later (July 24, 1990).²⁰

The Coordination Council was an ambitious enterprise, since it included political parties in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia Proper as well. With the formation of the Coordination Council the struggle of the Albanian population in Yugoslavia had made a qualitative step: the problem of the Kosova province was now a problem concern-

ing three million Albanians in that country, and the constitutional status of Kosova was a matter of vital interest for ALL Albanians in Yugoslavia.

The new dimensions for the Coordination Council led inevitably to a redefinition of political aims for Albanians in Yugoslavia. After frequent consultations and discussions, the Coordination Council came out with three options:

1. If the internal borders of the SFR of Yugoslavia remain unchanged, then the Republic of Kosova will have to be an equal and independent political unit of the Yugoslav Federation/ Confederation.

2. If the internal borders of the SFR of Yugoslavia change, but the external borders remain unchanged, then all Albanian-inhabited areas of the Yugoslav Federation/Confederation should be constituted in one single state within the Yugoslav Federation/Confederation.

3. If both the internal and external borders of the SFR of Yugoslavia are changed, then all Albanian-inhabited areas of Yugoslavia, expressing their will through a general referendum, may decide for the reunification of their territories with Albania, thus forming the integral state of Albania in the Balkans, within their ethnic borders.²¹

With the declaration of independence of Slovenia and Croatia on April 15, 1991, option 1 and option 2 were eliminated. The SFR of Yugoslavia had ceased to exist. For Albanians in Kosova and in the former Yugoslavia, there was only one option left, namely, the option of reunification with Albania. The solution is unacceptable to Serbia; it also involves the state interests of the republics of Macedonia and Montenegro.

The Legitimation of the Movement for Independence

All around the world, large ethnic populations enclosed within the international boundaries of a state they don't call their own, are now making strident demands for maximal political rights within the existing states, or struggling to secure full independence. As David Schaeffer, of the Carnegie Endowment, put it: "In a sense, self-determination has taken on a level of importance comparable to

an individual human rights in the 1960s. It's the new linchpin of U.S. foreign policy."²²

But it is the democratic movement on the rise globally that has advanced the idea of self-determination, mainly genuine representation, pluralism, and rights for the differing social, ethnic, racial, or religious groups. The phenomena we have seen in Asia and Africa after the collapse of colonialism and the birth of many independent states is now reappearing with fury in the former communist world following the collapse of "communist colonialism." The most striking examples are the former Soviet Union and the former SFR of Yugoslavia. Western Governments, though, have shown no readiness to accept *the non-colonial self-determination movement*, apparently because of the delayed effect of the "cold war's" reticence to exacerbate the situation in countries like the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.²³

In the Yugoslav example, the declaration of independence by Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia was the direct consequence of a weakened central power, the Federal Government in Belgrade, and of the discredited Yugoslav Communist League. A series of illegal actions undertaken by Serbia, mainly against Kosova, increased the general feeling of insecurity all over Yugoslavia, pressing the need to separate. This was accomplished through "free elections" and "democratically," a movement which brought independence.

In the case of Kosova, it was the Serbian total disregard for the 1974 Federal Constitution that led to the abolition of the autonomy of Kosova and of Kosova's rights as "a constitutive element of the Federation." Serbia provoked the constitutional crisis of the former SFR of Yugoslavia, and the escalation of the successive unconstitutional steps (in Vojvodina and Montenegro), resulting in total breakdown, and the present civil war in Yugoslavia.²⁴

What was left for Kosova to do was the reorganization of the Province by itself and within the parameters of the usual internationally accepted legal frameworks. After the Declaration of Independence, in July 1990, by the Assembly of Kosova, the several political parties in Kosova agreed to set up the Coordination Councils (mentioned above),

in order to develop the cooperation and the coordination of activities among themselves as political subjects of the Albanian people, organize mutual consultations, and prepare the platform for a joint strategy aiming at the fulfillment of the goals set by the Albanians themselves. The Coordination Council would oppose all measures taken by Serbia, now referred to as "the occupier" and perceived as aiming at the destruction of the Albanians' national existence, as well as the annihilation of all forms of sovereignty for Albanians in Yugoslavia.²⁵

In "A Solution Must be Found in Yugoslavia," dated July 31, 1991, US Senator DeConcini, co-chairman of the US Helsinki Commission wrote:

"— Equal Rights and Self-Determination. This does not necessarily mean secession and independence, a frequent and mistaken assumption. This principle certainly does include, however, the right of any of the democratically elected governments within Yugoslavia to suggest reshaping their relationships with the others in accordance with their laws, if they feel the current political configuration does not reflect the will of the peoples they represent, and some subsequent commitment on all sides to sit together and work things out. It also means that Albanians, the third most populous people in Yugoslavia, and other peoples in Kosova as well as the mixed population of Vojvodina, Serbia's other province, must be allowed to participate in this process through their freely chosen representative." (Full text in *ILLYRIA*, Aug. 2, 1992, p. 8)

Encouraged by a near unanimous support of the local population, and the favorable orientation supporting the movements for self-determination, the exiled Assembly of Kosova, now forced to operate in hiding, in a Joint Session of its three Chambers, met clandestinely on September 7, 1990, in the town of Kachanik (Kosova). It resolved to declare "the Republic of Kosova as a sovereign state, within the framework of the community of the states of Yugoslavia." The Assembly also approved a Draft-Constitution of the republic of

Kosova which was distributed for a public debate.²⁶

Article 1 of the Draft Constitution reads:

1. The Republic of Kosova is hereby defined as the Republic/State sovereign and independent with the right to be a constituent unit in the alliance of the sovereign Republic/States (in Yugoslavia) basing their relationship on freedom and full equality among the Republics/States...²⁷

On September 22, 1991, the Assembly of Kosova resolved to put the status of Kosova and the new Constitution to a popular Referendum, to be held from September 26-29, 1991 all over Kosova.

On September 25, 1991, the Assembly's decision was publicly supported by the Coordination Council of the Albanian Political Parties (in Kosova), thus formally indicating a unity of thought and action with the exiled Assembly.

From September 26-29, 1991, the Referendum took place without major incidents. A "Report" issued by the Central Commission for the Referendum, on October 8, 1991, indicates that from the over one million eligible voters in Kosova, 914,802 or 87.01 percent, did vote. Of them, 913,705 or 99.87 percent voted for the Republic of Kosova as an independent state. About 136,000 or 12.99 percent did not vote for different reasons.²⁸

The Republic of Albania recognized "...the results as legitimate, in accordance with the principle of self-determination as a right recognized by the documents of the CSCE and the UN."²⁹ The Serbian Government called the Referendum "illegal." Nevertheless, some Serbian scholars took notice of it. The academician Dusan Batakovic commented:

Albanians in Kosova are very determined to be independent. I noticed this when I participated in the Symposium called 'Albanians in Europe' held this year in Prishtinë, and met with a number of Albanian intellectuals. I concluded that Albanians are very preoccupied with their national issue and want it resolved.

It is interesting that Albanians, in this instance, are declaring Kosova to be an

independent State within the borders of Yugoslavia and not Albania. In my opinion, this was done not because they do not wish for (reunification) but because (they) understand world circumstances, unlike Serbia which has not let go of past ideology and ignores present international factors.³⁰

On October 19, 1991, the Assembly of Kosova examined the Report on the Referendum concluding that 99.70 percent of the voters had defined the future form of Kosova. In this Session, the Assembly also announced the new coalition provisional Government, and the appointment of Dr. Bujar Bukoshi as Premier. Out of nine departments, two were left vacant for non-Albanian ministers. The Assembly also terminated the functions of the former Executive Council of Kosova.

With an Assembly and a Government representative of the local population's free will, Kosova formally requested recognition as an independent state from the European Community Commission of the 13 Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in Brussels, Belgium.

The document reads:

"We do, hereby, present this document requesting the formal recognition of the Republic of Kosova as a sovereign and independent state...

Therefore, in accordance with the guidelines put forth by the December 16, 1991 Declaration on Yugoslavia, we solemnly state that:

1. The people of Kosova wishes to be recognized as an independent state...

2. The Government of Kosova accepts all commitments and obligations defined by the European Community as pre-conditions for the formal recognition of Yugoslav Republics wishing to be recognized...³¹

Being aware of the fact that the Assembly of Kosova in exile was not able to perform its duties as the legislative branch of the government, and that the executive branch was incomplete without a head of state, the Assembly and the Government of the Republic of Kosova resolved to organize

free elections in the Republic, in spite of strong Serbian objections and open threats. The elections took place on May 24, 1992, in the presence of 61 foreign and domestic news agencies and several international observers from W. Europe and the U.S. Voters had to select 100 delegates from a list of over 500 candidates belonging to 18 political parties. It was officially announced that 87.37 percent of all voters participated. At the same time, voters elected Dr. Ibrahim Rugova as president of the Republic of Kosova. He received 99 percent of the votes cast. The LDK collected 96 seats in a Parliament of 130 (30 delegates were elected by the proportional system).³²

Prevented from having their first Session held on June 23, 1992, by machine gun-toting policemen, Albanian deputies postponed the meeting to an unspecified date. Rugova explained: "Albanians will not use force; they will continue to strive for the fulfillment of their aspirations for independence and democracy with political and peaceful means."³³

Rugova's convictions were repeated in an interview with the French *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Asked:

— How do you foresee the development of the situation in the future?" he answered:

— If we do not succeed in initiating a serious dialogue, I fear the worst. I fear the eruption of a revolt. We are fully aware that such a thing would be a tragedy; therefore, we appeal to Europe to use its influence and stop Serbian repression, as well as recognize the independence of Kosova. The present situation is very serious. Serbs can't wait for a chance to intervene. We will always deny them that chance."³⁴

The recognized and repeatedly stated Serbian unwillingness to dialogue with the Albanians has encouraged the radicalization among the population of Kosova. Rugova is correct in fearing "the eruption of a revolt" as a result of the Serbian repression. The possibility of "provocations" is real. "That's exactly what Belgrade wants," commented Rugova. "It would end up being a massacre, because we have no weapons. This is why we need the UN presence here, before it's too late!"³⁵

Presently, Kosovo has an elected Assembly, a president and a Government that work "in a parallel society." Civil disobedience to Serbian "occupiers" is near total. The administration — including police and the courts — is nearly totally Serb. Neither side concedes victory to the other, as two "administrations" — one Serbian, "official" and non-representative, the other Albanian, "non-official" but representative — try to coexist next to each other, waiting, either for orders from Belgrade to attack, or for the opportunity to initiate a dialogue, with international mediation and presence, as Albanians insist.

The alternative is what John C. Campbell fears the most: "...the Yugoslav civil war extending to Kosovo and Macedonia at any time, and that it will take the conflict beyond the boundaries of the old Yugoslavia, and set the Balkans aflame...I wonder how long," he wrote "will the international community wait for effective ceasefires by the parties concerned before stepping in with force."³⁶

After the London Peace Conference on Yugoslavia, where a delegation of Albanian political leaders presented their views with a five point plan to ease the situation (including the opening of Albanian schools for Albanian children, the lifting of discriminatory laws, the deployment of permanent monitors on borders between Serbia and Kosovo, the exclusion of Kosovo from the current UN sanctions, and the suspension of a forceful Serbian colonization of Kosovo), the political attention has now passed to the Permanent Conference on Yugoslavia, now in session, in Geneva, Switzerland.

On October 2, 1992, Albanian political leaders again presented their views for a two stage action:

1. The creation of the conditions which will ensure an equal dialogue; and
2. Discussions on the questions of Kosovo's status in the future.

Commenting on this approach, Prime Minister Bukoshi said that: "There is a need for talks to be held in a normal, unconstrained setting."³⁷ It is the approach to the right to self-determination through dialogue and negotiations that Albanians in Kosovo

have chosen. It has made inroads in the international community.

Meanwhile, "we will always deny Serbians the chance (for confrontations)" policy was reaffirmed in the first two weeks of October, 1992. One Albanian was shot, hundreds were beaten and injured and over a dozen arrested when Serbian police in riot gear used batons and tear gas to break up the demonstrations of tens of thousands of Albanians in Prishtinë and other towns in Kosovo. "The demonstrations were inspired by the second year of Serbian refusal to allow the Albanian population in Kosovo to hold classes in the Albanian language."³⁸ In addition, two political trials sent 25 Albanians to jail with terms ranging from 1 to 7 years.

The tense situation brought prime Minister Panic of the rump Yugoslavia to Prishtina, and a meeting took place with Albanian leaders for the first time in many years, on October 14, 1992. The agreement was reached in principle to open schools for Albanians, as well as to set up working groups to elaborate the details. The meeting was hailed as a positive step by both sides, as well as the Government of Albania.

In an attempt to further defuse the situation, Albania's President Berisha called, on October 19, 1992, for putting Kosovo under UN control as a step toward the prevention of conflict, while the prime Minister of Kosovo, Bukoshi, in a press conference at the UN, said: "Our interests remain 100 percent behind a peaceful solution," before criticizing the reports of attempts to obtain military aid.³⁹

Prime Minister Panic of Yugoslavia could not deliver. Because of Serbian pressure, another attempt was made on October 28, 1992, with the visit to Prishtina by Cyrus Vance and David Owen, co-chairmen of the Permanent Conference on Yugoslavia. After a closed door meeting with Dr. Rugova, where a range of issues was discussed concerning the status of Kosovo, pressure was put on President Rugova to meet again with Prime Minister Panic. After the meeting Rugova declared: "This is the beginning of the negotiations which we will continue. We will concentrate on concrete problems first, and then we will discuss the status of Kosovo. We do not want to prejudice either the

status of Kosova or the status of this Third Yugoslavia." Panic, speaking afterwards, said: "Evident progress has been made in the field of legislation and education. Our dialogue is constructive. Our next step is the democratization of Yugoslavia, and of Kosova as part of Yugoslavia. We hope that all Yugoslavs, including the Albanians, will participate."⁴⁰

The Absence of Religion in Albanian Politics

In an essay on "Human Rights and the Albanian Nationality in Yugoslavia", I wrote the following:

It is a matter of curious and little noticed historical fact that in two of the most crucial moments of Balkan history, the South Slavs (mainly Serbs and Montenegrins) and the Albanians found themselves united in a struggle for survival against a common enemy. The first instance dates back to 1389, the battle of Kosovo Polje, and the joint defense against the Ottoman invasion of Christian Europe. The second was the Nazi invasion of the Balkans, and the coordinated Yugoslav-Albanian resistance against the invader, especially in the Kosova region.

It appears that friction between Slavs and Albanians developed mainly with the process of Islamization in Albania. With the Treaty of 1489 between Venice and Turkey, which recognized the Ottoman sovereignty over Albania, almost half of the Albanian population emigrated to Italy. Large segments took refuge in the inaccessible mountains; the rest remained in their original settlements. Many Serbs moved northward, reaching Hungary. Until the 17th century there was no pressure for islamization, since the lowlands were controlled, to a large extent, by the newly-arrived Ottoman settlers and Army garrisons. At that time, many Albanian chieftains converted to Islam. As was then customary, the local population followed. Albanians re-

ceived high government positions and — thanks to their military traditions—became a very strong element in the Ottoman Army. The Serbian population that had not withdrawn northward, and was thus still under Turkish sovereignty, remained faithful to the Eastern Orthodox Church, which inevitably brought them closer to the Orthodox Russian Empire. Because of religious affiliations, the two longtime neighboring people became integral parts of two large military camps, and inevitably subject to manipulations of opposing great powers.

By mid-19th century, with the irreversible decline of the Ottoman Empire, the Serbs and the Montenegrins took the offensive southward against a weakened Turkish enemy, and in their push to drive him out of the Balkans, they penetrated the northernmost regions of the Empire. The territories attacked were part of the vilayets (Turkish administrative division) of Shkodër and Kosova, inhabited predominantly by Moslem Albanians, who also began to revolt against the oppressive ruler. The confusion was further increased by Ottoman policies which considered every Moslem to be a Turk. Albanian Moslems were, therefore, called "Turks" and their lands "Turkish lands." The major thrust toward these Turkish outposts took place during the 1877-78 war, which ended with Turkey's defeat and the 1878 Berlin Congress. Large portions of Albanian lands were ceded to Serbia and Montenegro...

At the conclusion of the First Balkan War, 1912-1913, which brought the end of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the Kingdom of Serbia and the principality of Montenegro completed the military annexation of the entire Kosova, the Sandjak, Macedonia, as well as a large section of the new State of Albania, as far as the port of Durrës on the Adriatic Sea. For the Serbs, the war against

the Turks was an act of revenge and compensatory for the debacle of Kosovo Polje, the fulfillment of Serbian dreams of restoring the medieval Empire..."⁴¹

Recent events in former Yugoslavia indicate that Serbian mentality and attitudes have not changed. On the contrary, the present Albanian movement for independence in Kosova has been and remains totally secular, totally divested of religious overtones. Although on the Serbian side, the clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church is playing a crucial role in inspiring Serbian nationalist attitudes, among the Albanians the movement of liberation involves both Moslems and Roman Catholics. The latter, a minority, are fully involved in the organization of the resistance to oppression, as well as of the solidarity movement that has swept the area. Churches and mosques are serving the needy and the victims without any distinction. Catholic priests and Moslem imams direct most of the humanitarian activities in the area, leaving politics on the hands of the intellectual political leaders. No cases of clergy appeals to give the resistance a "religious" connotation have been registered. The leadership of Kosova political parties includes both Moslems and Catholics. The Albanian Christian-Democratic party includes large numbers of Moslems, including its vice-chairman. The same is the case with the LDK. Catholic priests and nuns enjoy the full confidence and respect of the Moslem population. No hatred is inspired by the Albanian clergy against the Serbs. Although they are politicized as a matter of mere struggle for survival, there are no signs of a radicalization on the part of the Albanian clergy in Kosova, either Moslem or Roman Catholic.

One cannot say the same for the Serb Orthodox clergy which has become a pillar of aggressive Serbian nationalism. The spiritual union between the Serbian State and the Serbian Orthodox Church is strong and harmful to non-Serbs; in the long run, it will be harmful to the Serbs themselves, as past experience had indicated, and as the present carnage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina points out.

*

The present attitudes of the Albanians in Kosova, and in former Yugoslavia in general, lead us to conclude that a mutual understanding among the different nationalities in Kosova is a must, and that reconciliation is still possible. Clearly, the present Serbian mass hysteria, their infatuation with the politics of force and violence, and their tendency to dominate over their neighbors by all means – even at the cost of a genocidal war in Bosnia-Herzegovina – is unacceptable to the civilized world. Once the dust is settled – and one hopes it will be before the 2.5 million Moslems of Bosnia-Herzegovina are either dead or made refugees, or before the massacre falls on Kosova – the conscience of Europe, including the victimized Serbs, will be shaken by the immensity and the intensity of the crimes committed on innocent people entitled to their rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

The *New York Times* of October 28, 1992 reported what the returning Croat refugees found in their villages.

The most chilling of all is the cemetery, where delicately carved headstones have been toppled and smashed. Serbian fighters pulled the granite slabs off large crypts and fired bullets into coffins that had laid undisturbed for decades or generations.

"The people who did this live in the next village, just down the road from here," said a woman dressed in black who came to leave candles beside the desecrated graves of friends and relatives." We used to eat and drink with them. All of us ask ourselves how they could have done these things, but we have no answer.

In "Silence of the Churches" Carlo Vallone wrote about the need to come to grips with the religious dimensions of "ethnic cleansing" which reflects the position of the Western powers in general. He asked the question:

"Why is there such a silence from the leadership of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church? Is there no concern for the right to life when the victims are Bosnian Muslims? Doesn't the threat of excommunication apply when Christian fascists kill non-Christians?"⁴²

It is this panorama of death and destruction, the unthinkable dimensions of the terror exercised in many territories of former Yugoslavia by the Serbs that looms large also on the horizon of Kosova, today. The lives of three million Albanians in former Yugoslavia are literally in the balance. As John C. Campbell defined it: "In a way, we are now back to 1912. Let's not wait until it is 1914!"⁴³

Aggression and genocide must be stopped by force here and now!

Sami REPISHITI

NOTES

1. "Serbia's Policy." "The Turkish Empire will certainly dissolve. The dissolution may have two forms:
 1. the Empire will be dismembered; or,
 2. the Empire will be reconstructed again by its Christian inhabitants (the creation of a new Christian Empire). NACERTANJE, DELO K 38, pp.321-336. Beograd, 1906
2. "This is now a basic religious war." Slavko Terzic, prominent Serbian historian, in *The New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1992, p.8. "Mr. Izetbegovic wants a fundamentalist Moslem state in the midst of Europe. The great mistake of the United States is to abandon Serbia and back him in order to please its Saudi and Turkish friends." Gen. Zivota Panic, chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army. (ibidem)

"The official Agency Tanjug press services has charged Libia, and Moslem fundamentalists with financing a secret Moslem organization whose aim is the creation of an Islamic state in Bosnia and Kosova. These are clearly unbelievable lies." (*The Christian Science Monitor*, May 21, 1992, p.²⁰)

"Propaganda from Belgrade about 'Moslem aggression' as a rationale for war in Bosnia tests the capacity of the Serbian population to believe lies." (*The Christian Science Monitor*, May 15, 1992, p. 20.

"A senior (Serb) Foreign Ministry official, Branko Brankovic, even suggested that the Western nations are opening the door to Islamic fundamentalism in Europe." (*The NY Times* May 13, 1992p. 10)
3. "In Serbian controlled villages, like Cajnice...the Moslem community has been forced out. Meanwhile, local Orthodox churchmen are often seen embracing Serbian militiamen." Roger Cohen, "Cross vs Crescent" *The NY Times* Sept. 17, 1992, p. 8. "Alluding to the execution of hundreds of thousands of Serbs by the

puppet Nazi government in Croatia during WW II, the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church recently said of the current war: "This is not the first time in their history that the Serbian people have experienced crucifixion...Our Church is for the unity of the Serbian people and the Serbian lands." (ibidem)

4. Brussels, Belgium, December 16, 1991
5. Fathers Bizaku, Kurti, Gashi. "The Position of the (Albanian) Minority in Yugoslavia," MEMORANDUM addressed to the Society of Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, May 5, 1930. "The documentation exists that during the 1912 alone, 12,777 Albanians were massacred by the newly arrived Serbo-Montenegrin Armies..." Ali Hadri. Quoted by Zvonko Simic: "Meta Pored Cilja," NIN (Belgrade Sept.16, 1984, p. 8. "There were at the same time barbaric crematories in which hundreds of women and children were burned alive..." Quoted in VI. Dedijer et al. *History of Yugoslavia* (McGraw Hill: New York, 1974, p. 436). "Houses and whole villages reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred *en masse*, incredible acts of violence, pillage, brutality of every kind—such were the means employed and are still employed by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians." Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and the Conduct of the Balkan Wars. Washington, D.C. 1914, p.151. Also: "The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, v.XII PPC 184.01 8/3

The Secretary of State to Mr. A.J. Balfour

Paris, April 18, 1919

"...The British Embassy at Washington has informed the Department of State as follows, regarding alleged massacres of Albanians in Montenegro: Gusinje, Plava, Ipek, Bjekova, Podjour, and Roshji have all been scenes of terrorism and murder by Serbian troops and Serbian agents whose policy appears to be the extermination of the Albanian population of the region..." Very sincerely yours, Robert Lansing. "No one knows the number of the victims. Estimates go from 36,000 to 60,000 Albanian Kosovars killed in the 1944-48 years alone." AKFW. TEN MEMORANDUMS (New York, 1995, p. 16. For more recent account, see ILLYRIA (New York) September-October, 1992.

6. "Many Serbs including Belgrade intellectuals, attach monstrous crimes to the Albanians whom they consider subhumans and simians, citing in detail their lascivious overbreeding and referring sceptics to the Serbian Academy of Science..." Ken Danforth, "Serbs Can't Wait to Get rid of Albanians," EUROPE, March 1992. Reprinted in ILLYRIA June 3, 1992, p.5.

7. Committee for the Defense of Rights and Liberties in Prishtinë REPORT. Reprinted in ILLYRIA August 2, 1991, p.1. On August 24, 1991, the IFHR in Geneva asked the UNO and other appropriate organizations to intervene in Kosovo, Yugoslavia, to prevent further human rights abuses in the Republic. A representative of the Federation, Mr. Davie Goldberg, Prof. of Law from Glasgow Univ. in Great Britain, stated: "Kosova is a typical case of what can happen if force and abuse is not punished by others. The Albanian population suffers tremendously since they were stripped of all legal rights by the Serbian regime." (ILLYRIA, Aug. 18, 1992 p.9) p.
8. Dragnich and Todorovic. *The Saga of Kosovo*. CUP: New York, 1984, p. 166. Pedro Ramet: *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1963-1983*. Ind. Univ. Press: Bloomington, 1984, p. 164.
9. For a fuller account see: Sami Repishti, "Darkness in Kosovo and the Dawn of a New Era" in NEUE EPOCHE, Vrlag Adria: Brugg CH, 1990, pp. 69-83.
10. Institutions that were affected by Serbia's assault on Albanian culture are: the Central and University Library of Kosovo, the National Theater, the Kosovo Archives, the Publishing and Editing House, the Institution for Environmental Protection, Prishtina TV, Symphony Orchestra, the Shola Folklore Ensemble, The Pioneer Centre for Youth in Prishtina, as well as many district and municipal cultural institutions. All Albanian personnel of these institutions has been dismissed and financial assistance totally cut, including funding for research. Cultural publications such as *Kosova Antiquities*, *Annual of the Kosovo Archives*, *The Bulletin of the Museum of Kosovo*, the literary magazine *Jeta e Re* (New Life) and other publications are banned. Art objects and items from the Archives have been removed, destroyed, or sent to Belgrade. Many Albanian books from the Central Library have been recycled at the Lipljani Paper Factory. Of an average of 350 new books a year published until 1981, the number has fallen to 6 in 1991. No films in Albanian are found any longer in Kosovo, and there is no information where they have ended up, according to the newspaper ILLYRIA of October 7, 1992.11. Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, New York, N.Y. "Segregation and National is crimination of Albanians in the Judiciary," 1990.
12. REPORT of the Committee of International Human Rights of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, "The Kosovo Crisis and Human Rights in Yugoslavia" by Michael Galligan et al. New York, N.Y., February 13, 1991, pp. 28-29.
13. P. Scammell. "Yugoslavia: the Reawakening" *New York Review of Books*, June 28, 1990, p. 38, note 6.
14. REPORT. Committee for the Defense of Rights and Liberties in Prishtinë. Prishtinë, June, 1989.
15. See note 12. REPORT. p. 32.
16. Ibidem, p. 35.
17. The organization of the solidarity movement, held clandestine to avoid Serbian repression, is activated by small town and village councils, that operate very much as the anti-fascist councils did during the Italian and Nazi occupations in Kosovo.
18. On May 5, 1991.
19. The Coordination Council of the Albanian Political Parties in Yugoslavia includes: the LDK, the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo, the Agrarian Party of Kosovo, the Albanian Christian Democratic Party, the Social-Democratic Party, the Republican Party of Kosovo, the Party of Democratic Prosperity in Macedonia, the Party of Democratic Action in Montenegro and the Party of Democratic Action in S. Serbia.
20. For the full text see ILLYRIA, October 12, 1991, p.2.
21. *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, Mass.) October 11, 1991, p.4.
22. ILLYRIA, August 7, 1992, p. 8.
23. (Prof.) Dennison Russinow believes that had it not been for Milosevic's heavy handedness in Kosovo five years ago, Yugoslavia might still be intact today. "Kosovo provided the fuse and Milosevic provided the detonator that has now led to explosion across the whole country." Strobe Talbot: "The Serbian Death Wish" *TIME*, June 1, 1992, p. 74.
24. The Coordination Council for Kosovo includes all the Albanian political parties in the republic (of Kosovo).
25. The full text of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo is in this writer's possession.
26. For the full text of the Assembly's Resolution see ILLYRIA September 25, 1991, p. 1.
27. For a complete account of the Referendum see ILLYRIA, October 9, 1991, p. 1 and 7.
28. For the full text see ILLYRIA October 2, 1991, p. 2.
29. Ibidem, p. 1 and 7.
30. ILLYRIA, December 28, 1991, p. 13.
31. ILLYRIA May 27, 1992, p. 1.
32. ILLYRIA June 24, 1992, p. 1.

KOSOVA ISSUE DISCUSSED AT THE PACE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS PLEASANTVILLE, N.Y.

Editor's note: The tragic plight of Albanians in former Yugoslavia has been of great concern for years to many international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch, International Society for Human Rights, and many others. Likewise, the international academic community has followed with no less attention the highly combustible situation created in Kosovo by Serbian martial law against the peaceful Albanian majority.

A goodly number of conferences has been held during the past decade on the issue of Kosovo, with the clear aim of enlightening public opinion about the real danger the situation presents, unless the

international community takes decisive action before Kosovo turns into another Bosnian carnage. One of such conferences on Kosovo was held March 27, 1993 at Pace University (Pleasantville), New York. The Symposium, "Speaking out on Kosovo," was sponsored by the University's Albanian Student Society. The event was coordinated by Mithat Gashi, a graduate student and editor of the student paper New Morning, and Dr. David Avdul, Dean of the School of Education.

Below is a report from the Symposium by Professor Dietrich Fischer of Pace University.

Footnotes continued

33. *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Reprinted in ILLYRIA, July 15, 1992, p.9.
34. *The Financial Times* (London, UK) Reprinted in ILLYRIA, July 18, 1992, p. 3.
35. Letter to ILLYRIA dated August 1, 1992, p. 5.
36. ILLYRIA, October 1, 1992, p. 7.
37. "100's of Thousands Rally for Two Days," ILLYRIA October 14, 1992, p. 1. "The recent unrest in Kosovo began with students demanding Albanian language education and the right to set their own curriculum," *The New York Times*, October 14, 1992, p. A10.
38. ILLYRIA, October 24, 1992, p. 2.
39. Bulletin, Center for Information of the LDK, Prishtinë, Oct. 29, 1992.
40. Sami Repishti: "Human Rights and the Albanian Nationalism in Yugoslavia" in *Human Rights in Yugoslavia*, Gruenwald-Rosenblum-Cale Eds. Irving Publishing Co. New York, 1986, pp. 229-232.
41. *The New York Times*, October 9, 1992, p. A 26.
42. See note 36 above.

The first speaker was former Congressman Joseph J. DioGuardi; whose ancestors had migrated from Albania to Italy during the fourteen hundreds to escape the Ottoman invasion, and whose parents came to the United States during the early 1900's. He gave an overview over the long history of suffering of the Albanian people at the hands of foreign invaders. In 1912, Kosova, whose current population of 2 million is 90 percent Albanian, was annexed by Serbia and later incorporated into Yugoslavia. From 1974 to 1981, it enjoyed a large degree of internal autonomy. However, after a 1981 peaceful student demonstration which was violently suppressed, its autonomy was increasingly curtailed and finally abolished. In 1991, 83 percent of the registered voters in Kosova participated in a referendum and 99 percent voted in favor of a free and independent republic of Kosova. This referendum was not recognized by the authorities in Belgrade, who rule Kosova against the will of the overwhelming majority of its population. Serbian police is brutally oppressing the people.

There are many similar situations around the world in which governments deny the rights of national, linguistic or religious minorities. Such conflicts are a primary cause of civil wars, actual or potential. How can such tragedies be prevented? How can civil wars be stopped where they have

erupted? Mr. DioGuardi concluded that the only lasting solution is the principle of self-determination, letting each group of people decide its own future without denying the same right to other groups.

I supported that conclusion by offering a comparison between two similar conflicts—in Northern Ireland and in Switzerland. In both cases, a Catholic minority felt—or still feels—oppressed by a Protestant majority. The British government has tried to suppress a separatist movement with military force, so far unsuccessfully. Trying to suppress a conflict by force without addressing the underlying problem is comparable to pressing the lid on a pot to stop steam from escaping without removing the pot from the heat. By contrast, a peaceful solution was found to the dispute in Switzerland.

The Catholic French-speaking minority in the Jura region within the Canton of Bern in Switzerland had long felt regularly overruled in the cantonal parliament by the Protestant German speaking majority. The simmering resentment erupted in 1950 when Bern rejected a candidate from the Jura for minister of public construction, arguing that as French-speaker he would have difficulty overseeing construction in the mostly German-speaking canton. This infuriated people in the Jura. Street demonstrations were held and a separatist movement formed. The Bernese government kept telling the people of the Jura that they were much better off remaining part of the Canton Bern, since they received more subsidies than they paid in taxes. But only the people of the Jura know what they value more, subsidies or self-determination.

Some cases of politically motivated arson began to appear. Nobody was killed yet, but if the problem had remained unsolved, it might have escalated into a full scale civil war.

Finally, the Bernese government agreed to let the people on the contested region decide their own future in a referendum. The first vote was almost evenly split. No matter what would have been decided, half the affected people would have been deeply dissatisfied. The government of Bern organized another referendum, separately in each of six districts. In three districts, a majority preferred forming their own separate canton, three

other districts chose to remain in the Canton Bern. Each community along the new borderline was then allowed to vote whether it wanted to switch sides. Some switched. In 1978, the new Canton Jura was welcomed into the Swiss Confederation, ending the conflict.

Democracy is no guarantee that people will always make the optimal decision. But if they make a mistake, they have nobody else to blame and can learn from it. However, if a government forces them to do something against their will, and it turns out wrong, they will hate those authorities. Democracy helps avoid such conflicts.

If such a solution had been tried in Yugoslavia before the current war, dividing the country and its provinces into cantons with a high degree of local autonomy according to the preferences of the inhabitants of various regions, war might have been avoided. This solution, allowing people to choose their own future, can still be tried now, but it is necessary that an international peacekeeping force, with the means and authority to separate warring factions, guarantees that the outcome of such a vote be respected by all parties. Once violence has erupted, it is much harder to stop.

Does the international community have the right—or even the duty—to intervene in a country if the rights of minorities are violated? Under ancient Roman law, the head of a household, the "pater familias," had absolute authority over his family. He could sell his children into slavery or beat them to death and the state had no right to intervene in this "internal affair." He could not hurt someone else's children without getting in conflict with the law, but his own family was his to rule. Today we consider that notion absurd. This does not mean that we barge into a neighbor's home and tell a family how they should solve their problems whenever we hear an argument. But if a spouse or children are beaten, they must have a right to seek protection from police, if necessary.

At the international level, we still cling to the obsolete notion of absolute state sovereignty. Yet that concept makes no sense if a government is unable to protect its own population from brutal violence such as "ethnic cleansing," or even massacres its own people. We need an International

Criminal Court to which minorities—or in some cases majorities—who cannot find justice within their own countries can resort. It is unrealistic to assume that the highest court within a country will always guarantee justice, especially when a government oppresses its own people and controls the court. The World Court can now only hear cases in which one government files suit against another government, and it has no power to enforce its decisions. We also need a mechanism to enforce an International Criminal Court's decisions, preferably a new United Nations peace-enforcement unit.

Protecting the rights of minorities, at their own request, is totally different from unilateral interventions by one country in the international affairs of another.

Next, Kadishe Spahija read a moving statement by her father, Dr. Miftar Spahija, who was unable to attend personally due to illness.

William Kunze, the fourth speaker, is an American teacher who has learned Albanian and teaches history at Grover Cleveland High School in Queence. He spoke in Albanian and English. Kunze

expressed high admiration for the patience and persistence of the Albanian people and their spirit of nonviolence.

Mithat Gashi spoke about practical steps that all of us can take to help improve the situation in Kosova. One of the projects will be to encourage ethnic Albanians in New York to vote in the next school-board elections, with the aim of getting a bilingual program for Albanians instituted, as they already exist for many other nationalities living in the United States. The knowledge of Albanian language, culture and history must be kept alive among its people, many of whom live abroad.

Dr. Avdul, whose parents had emigrated from Albania, summarized the day's discussions. He emphasized that peace and justice are inseparable, and that international law must be strengthened.

Portions of the symposium were recorded by radio and television *Victoria* for later rebroadcast. Mr. Isuf Hajrizi, a reporter for the newspaper *Illyria* (the ancient name of Albania) will write about the event. It is highly welcome that students of the Albanian Society, especially Mithat Gashi, took this initiative to help create a better world.

Dietrich FISCHER

BOSNIAN BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

While books of many kinds are increasingly available in many languages, covering the past and present tragedy in former Yugoslavia there remains a distinct lack of useful reference works on the history and culture of Bosnia and Hercegovina.

We have previously noted the utility of a volume of collected papers by Vatro Murvar, *Nation and Religion in Central Europe and the Western Balkans — The Muslims of Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Sandzak* (available from FSSSN Colloquia and Symposia at the University of Wisconsin, P.O. Box 285 Brookfield, WI 53008-0285.)

Murvar's collection offers many insights into Bosnian reality. He covers, at length, the pre-Islamic ancestors of the Bosnian people, voluntary mass Islamisation of the 15th century, Albanian and Croatian visitors in the Ottoman Empire, literary aspects of the common cultural heritage of the Stokanica and Ikavica speaking peoples (Croat, Bosnian, Serb), the history of the Vlachs in the region, and issues involved in the suppression of Bosnian and Croat Muslim culture after the establishment of monarchist Yugoslavia.

ON THE RECOGNITION OF MACEDONIA

WILL ITS ALBANIAN POPULATION HAVE A FAIR STATUS?

Several weeks ago, the United Nations Organization agreed to accept a new member, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a name disputed by Greece who claims the name "Macedonia" should refer exclusively to Northern Greek Macedonia. Albania was among those UN members that immediately recognized the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The number of Albanians living in the newly-recognized Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, ranges from 500,000 to 700,000 (or even more) according to nonofficial estimates. They will be part of a multi-national republic, as Macedonian president, Kiro Gligorov has declared. What their future status will be is a question asked by Albanians inside and outside the republic.

Mr. Dimitar Bidikov, the Charge d'Affaires of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia can usually be found in noisy UN halls. In his 40s, he was a former staff member of the Yugoslav Embassy and follows diplomatic protocol while explaining his Republic's ethnic composition, present situation, and possible tenuous future.

According to Mr. Bidikov, the Albanian population is a "reality" in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Because Albanians boycotted population registration a couple of years ago (that aimed at artificially reducing the number of Albanians in the republic), it is difficult to get a correct count on its Albanian population, said Bidikov. He claims that between 25-28 per cent of the Republic's population is Albanian. But according to the Albanian parties in Macedonia, the estimate runs as high as 40 per cent. Hopefully, a planned 1994 population census of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia might clear this point.

Out of 100 parliament seats, Albanians hold 20, representing 2 Albanian political parties in the Republic, said Bidikov. Moreover, according to him, there are also 6 Albanian high ranking officials in the Macedonian government. But when asked if that is the case, why do Albanians of Macedonia and the Albanian government raise the question of

unfair treatment and ethnic inequality, Bidikov did not rule out such allegations but stated that during recent high level bilateral talks between Albanian president, Sali Berisha and Macedonian president, Kiro Gligorov, Albania itself raised the question of future status and civil liberties of the Albanians in the Republic's 2.2 million population. At this point, Albanians of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have never been allowed to establish their University, though Albanian language classes at the prime school level are common practice, according to the diplomat. "Albania can raise such a question in a European conference," said Bidikov who surprisingly claimed that there are 100,000 Macedonians living in Albania. Actually there are only 6 small Macedonian villages around the Prespa area of nearby Korça. Such a claim would make no sense even counting all ethnic minorities residing in Albania.

Borders between Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are now open to business, trade and visitors. New border crossings have been added to the existing one at "Qafa e Thanës." Though mutually beneficial, Albania represents the only gateway for this republic to the West in an environment of hostile neighbors. "Macedonians and Albanians depend highly on Durrës harbor," said Bidikov. He added that Albania's strategic importance to Macedonia is crucial. A proposed 300 million USA dollars railway project from Durrës, via Skopje to Istanbul is yet to be resolved. Though the possible future partnership of Italy, Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia is presently discussed, Turkey has officially recognized the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. Its status in the European Community and elsewhere will depend on the political and territorial shape of the newly-recognized republic.

Shkelqim BEQARI

"CAIN'S WORK": TWO YEARS OF THE SERBIAN WAR

The Serbian war has, at the time of this writing, gone on for two years. First Slovenia, then Croatia, then Bosnia and Hercegovina fell victim. We greatly fear the next Serbian attack will strike at Kosovë.

The war has produced atrocities so terrible that those who behold them feel deranged. This is authentic terror, and it has to a great extent, succeeded: the victims and the world are terrorized.

Their intention from the beginning has not been military, but simply terroristic. The Serbians knew and know they cannot hold the sections of Croatia and Bosnia they have claimed. However, they have been determined to carry out as much terror and destruction as they can accomplish.

The worst of these atrocities has been the sexual terror against Bosnian Muslim, Croatian, Hungarian, and other non-Serbian people: women, girls, children, and men.

We believe it is wrong to say the Serbian forces in this conflict have made rape a weapon of war. Rather, the Serbians have made war a form of rape.

Rape—direct rape of the female population, and related forms of sexual terror against males—is the essence of this war. The Serbian intention has been to rape whole cultures, to rape women and men, to rape social relations going back 500 years, to rape religion and art.

Serbians of conscience—who often seem non-existent, but who do exist, most of the more prominent of them in the media—have cried out against this horror. In the Serbian opposition journal *Vreme*, a tiny and weak voice of sanity in Belgrade, the TV journalist Goran Milic recently noted that when the Serbian authorities first launched their propaganda campaign against their neighbors some years ago, a million Belgrade residents rallied to protest the alleged rape of a single Serbian woman in Kosovë. Now he asks, "How many gathered because of the 30,000 raped Muslim women in Bosnia?" He points out that the truth of the accusa-

tion has been admitted by a Serbian Orthodox priest.

The Bosnian War will determine the fate of a small, obscure, people, a people who until a year ago were almost completely unknown outside Yugoslavia. A people without powerful allies, with nothing but a great cultural and historic past: the Bosnian Muslims.

What are the roots of the present war in Serbian history?

Serbia was under Turkish rule from the 14-15th centuries to the 19th century: almost 500 years. When Serbia began to regain its national independence, during the 19th century, it chose three aims for itself.

The first was to assimilate, kill, or drive out of the Balkans all Muslims: "ethnic cleansing."

The second was to eradicate or assimilate the autochthonous Albanian population whose Illyrian forebears long preceded the Slavs in the region.

The third was to assimilate all South Slavs, particularly the Croats and Macedonians, but also, at some points, the Slovenes, forcing them to become Serbians, in an enlarged *Great Serbia*.

Serbia first "cleansed" itself, forcing all Muslims to leave, destroying mosques and other Turkish architecture, and killing Muslims in the area known as "narrow Serbia," in the aftermath of *the Serb national uprising of 1804*;

and continuing in *the Serb-Turkish war of 1875-76*, with Serb massacres in Bosnia;

in *the Balkan Wars of 1912-13*, with Serb massacres of Albanians and of Muslims in the Sandzhak of Novipazar, which was then divided between Serbia and Montenegro;

in *World War I and after* in Serb-dominated monarchist Yugoslavia, with Serb massacres and deportation of Albanian Muslims;

during World War II, when monarchist Yugoslavia collapsed in a war of "all against all," with Croats, Serbs, and Muslims all killing each other horribly;

under Tito, with discrimination against Albanians;

and today, when Serbia is bent on the expulsion of 10 million Muslims from Europe.

Nobody can deny that Serbs had legitimate grievances under the Turks. But they use these grievances as justification for a profound, racist hatred of those Bosnian Slavs and Albanians who converted to Islam. They hate the Bosnians, Croats, and Albanians, above all, because these groups decline to become subjects of Great Serbia.

Likewise, nobody can deny that Serbs were the object of massacres by the Croats and Bosnian Muslim *Ustashe* in World War II—but nor can it be denied that Serbs also carried out such massacres, and that both groups assisted the Germans against the Jews.

Indeed, the Croats are by no means wholly defensible, particularly given the present conduct in Bosnia of the Herceg Bosna forces, which are undermining the common Croatian-Muslim defense.

But no historical grievances can justify the atrocities and outrages of the present war: the massacres, the rapes, the deportations, the camps, the taking of hostages, the destruction of hundreds of churches and mosques, libraries and museums... everything we call "ethnic cleansing."

There are today and always have been Serbs who opposed the Great Serbia fantasy. Today thousands of Serbs support the Bosnian government against the terrorism of the Serbian chetniks. Svetozar Markovic, the founder of modern Serbian populism, said a century ago that the fantasy of Great Serbia would lead the nation to a fate worse than they experienced under the Turks. He was correct.

A major theme for future discussion must be the *Origin and Ideology of Milosevicite Fascism*.

Milosevic has crafted a "classic fascist mobilization." We define "classic fascist mobilization" by

comparison with Hitler, Mussolini, and Peron. Milosevic has organized an alliance of the following classes and subclasses: the state and party bureaucrats and military strata threatened with loss of their positions by the end of the former regime; the overeducated and underemployed urban youth; the unstable and insecure rural classes; the permanently unemployed, and the criminal class.

The method and the structure of political mobilization exactly duplicates the practice of Hitler, who gathered together the ruined state bureaucrats, defeated military personnel, the armed bohemia or lumpen intelligentsia, the reactionary peasantry, the hard core unemployed, and a section of the criminal class.

The only element present in the case of Hitler, Mussolini, and Peron, but absent in that of Milosevic, is a small-proprietor class of shopkeepers or petty rentiers/landlords, a class which disappeared in Communist Yugoslavia. But Milosevic is supported by a comparable stratum of newborn financial adventurers such as Dafina Milanovic or Jezdimir Vasiljevic.

Most importantly, the Milosevic regime projects itself as the protector of a Serbian nation threatened by so-called "white death," i.e. a low birth rate and high emigration rate in the rural heartland of eastern Serbia.

The low birth rate brings Serbs into direct competition with Muslims in Sandzhak and Bosnia and Albanians in Kosovë who are seen as reproducing uncontrollably.

The high rate of emigration, low level of agricultural investment, and other aspects of the crisis of Serbian rural life have created a class of so-called "handsome, rich peasant boys who cannot find wives, since all the rural Serbian women have fled the farm regions for the cities. Serbian women no longer wish to live where cows are milked." One might add that is very likely because, typically, Serbian farmers used their wives as beasts of burden.

One might therefore argue that the Milosevic regime has mobilized the section of the rural population that, in contrast with Muslims, lacks wives

and children, and has armed them and sent them against their Muslim and Catholic neighbors.

The most remarkable aspect of this is that such as pattern reproduces considerably the character of previous war frenzies in Serbia, going back to the middle of the last century.

It is worth noting that, speculating on the ignorance, intellectual laziness, and impressionability of Americans, extremist Serbians have boldly asserted a series of propagandistic lies to defend themselves against the foreign critics of their racist and imperialist actions.

We have identified nine such lies that we encounter in op-ed columns, in media reportage, and elsewhere.

1. THE WAR WAS CAUSED BY GERMANY AND THE WESTERN POWERS WHICH WERE IN A HURRY TO RECOGNIZE SLOVENIA, CROATIA, AND BOSNIA.

The truth is that Europe did not recognize Slovenia and Croatia until January 1992, after the war had gone on for six months, after thousands of Croats had been turned into refugees, after the murderous siege of Vukovar had depopulated that Croatian museum-city, after the historical jewel of Dubrovnik had been bombed.

The U.S. did not recognize the three until April 1992, almost a year after the beginning of serious Serb attacks in Croatia.

Connected with this is a minor lie, the claim that Germany recognized Slovenia and Croatia to gain access to the Adriatic. But Germany has Hamburg, one of the biggest container ports in the world. The Serbians speculate on anti-German sentiment as they also did before 1914.

2. ALL THE NATIONS OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA SHARE EQUAL BLAME FOR THE WAR.

The truth is that Serbia began the war, that Serbia was the aggressor, that Serbia coldly assassinated Yugoslavia by its aggressions first against Slovenia, then against Croatia, then against Bosnia. And now it is stuck with the corpse.

3. ALL SIDES COMMIT ATROCITIES AND ALL ARE EQUAL VICTIMS.

The truth is that Croats and Muslims have committed atrocities but that they are minor when compared with the wholesale rocket attacks and sieges against civilians and whole cities mounted by the Serbian forces. It should also be noted that Serbian ethnic cleansing has been aimed not only at Croats and Muslims but also against Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs, Ruthenians, and other non-Serbs living in the war zones, even against Jews.

4. THE WAR WAS CAUSED BY THE BORDERS DRAWN BY TITO AFTER 1945, WHICH WERE DRAWN TO SERBIA'S DISADVANTAGE.

The truth is that the ethnic borders of the Yugoslav republics followed exactly the borders observed for centuries under the Austrians and Turks except in those cases where Serbs gained territory, such as in the Sandzhak of Novipazar, Kosovë, and Srijem; in the latter case the Croats lost territory.

5. THE ALBANIAN MAJORITY IN KOSOVÉ DATES FROM 1945 WHEN ALBANIANS FLED THERE TO ESCAPE HOXHA.

The Albanians are the indigenous people of Kosovë, which had an Albanian majority in the Turkish censuses of the late 19th century.

6. THE BOSNIAN MUSLIMS ARE FUNDAMENTALISTS.

Again, speculation on prejudice, this time against Muslims. A complete lie.

7. THE CROATIAN CHECKERBOARD SHIELD IS A FASCIST SYMBOL COMPARABLE TO THE SWASTIKA AND WAS READOPTED BY THE PRESENT CROATIAN GOVERNMENT.

The Croatian shield was an official symbol under the Serb-dominated monarchist Yugoslav regime and under the Tito-era Croatian Socialist Republic when it decorated every police station and other public building.

8. SERBS PROTECTED JEWS AND FOUGHT ON THE ALLIED SIDE IN WORLD WAR II WHILE ALL CROATIANS AND BOSNIAN MUSLIMS WERE NAZIS.

Serbians collaborated with the Nazis in the puppet government of Nedic. Belgrade was declared the first Judenrein city in Europe in 1942, and the first experiments with gassing by the Nazis, using truck exhaust, were carried out at a camp near Belgrade. Although the Ustashe massacred Serbians and helped the Nazis against the Jews, 230,000 Croats fought in the Tito Partisans. An alternative lie holds that Serbians have no history of anti-Jewish prejudice at all. The truth is that Jews were subject to severe discrimination in monarchist Serbia, including the only pale of settlement outside Russia, and were especially viewed with suspicion as "agents of the Turks."

9. THE REPORTS OF SERBIAN AGGRESSION AND ATROCITIES IN WORLDWIDE MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE "BIG LIE" TECHNIQUE COMPARABLE TO THE PROPAGANDA OF HITLER AND GOEBBELS.

There is a big lie reminiscent of Hitlerite methods: it is the claim by Serbia's propagandists that Serbians did not begin the war.

Robert Marquand, Staff writer for *The Christian Science Monitor*, recently wrote:

"BELGRADE—Almost 18 months into a war that has shown a barbarity many thought would never again be seen in Europe, diplomats and journalists see evidence that a carefully orchestrated media campaign—designed in Belgrade in the late 1980s—has helped prepare Serbians for and then helped prosecute the war against Croatia and Bosnia.

Some diplomats say "the campaign, a product of the 'Greater Serbia' program of Serb President Slobodan Milosevic, is reminiscent of the Nazi propaganda of Joseph Goebbels in its use of lies, ethnic slander, and fear tactics."

"Others compare Mr. Milosevic's reliance on TV to control the Serb public, and the use of working groups in the 1980s to infiltrate and neutralize individual opposition newspapers and maga-

zines, to totalitarian techniques developed by Soviet Communists under Joseph Stalin."

It is despicable that those who have reintroduced the fascist practices of ethnic cleansing, camp internment, and a terrorist war on civilians into Europe would seek to justify themselves by exploiting and distorting the history of the Hitler genocide.

It is outrageously dishonest and unacceptable to compare the State Dept. of President Clinton and the outstanding media institutions around the world with the Nazi propaganda machine.

The present war offers few, if any, simple solutions.

We pray for the Serbian people to regain their senses and overthrow their rulers; curiously enough, such a solution may be considered, in a sense, classically Marxist, in that it would rouse the masses in revolt against war.

We pray for the Croatian people to defend the Bosnian Republic against Serbian aggression; equally curiously, but more negatively, such a solution is associated historically with the program of the fascist *Ustashe* and their Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which encompassed Bosnia.

We recognize that Serbia has exhausted nearly all its political alternatives: that the ill-fated Milan Panic was, from the beginning, a lemon to be squeezed; that he is now a squeezed lemon and nothing more. No Albanian can out-vuk Draskovic, whose anti-Albanian demagoguery exceeded that of Milosevic himself.

In Kosovë we now face the murderous bands of Arkan. Against the crime being prepared there, we can do no more than we have done. We must support the people of Kosovë and the other Albanian-majority areas in their non-violent resistance to Serbian aggression.

Friends of Kosovë
San Francisco, California

CARNEGIE REPORT ON 1912-13 BALKAN WARS REISSUED

It is well and truly said that great conceptions may flower from the tiniest of seeds. In November 1992 the estimable writer David Rieff, son of the world-famous novelist and critic Susan Sontag, reported the ugly truth about "ethnic cleansing" in the present Serbian wars, in a "letter from Bosnia" published in *The New Yorker*.

In this narrative Mr. Rieff alluded briefly to the 1914 report of the International Commission To Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars (of 1912-13), published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

That report examines the two wars that pitted Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria first against the Turks, and then against each other, over the former Turkish possessions in Europe. It illuminates the background of the present Serbian aggression in a nearly-unparalleled fashion, perhaps comparable only to the war correspondence of Leon Trotsky.

Mr. Rieff's article was read by Morton Abramowitz, current president of the Endowment, with the happy outcome that the report, long unlocable even in university libraries, has been reissued by Carnegie, under the title *The Other Balkan Wars*. The volume carries with it an excellent new introduction by George F. Kennan, a former U.S. ambassador in Tallinn, Riga, Kaunas, Vienna, Prague and Moscow, and the dean of American diplomatic scholars.

As Kennan points out, four of the eight members of the international commission were sent directly to the theatre of war for investigative purposes. These were Dr. Samuel T. Dutton of Columbia University, for the U.S., French lawyer and politician Justin Godart, the Russian liberal leader Pavel Milyukov, and British journalist Henry N. Brailsford. The participation of Milyukov and Brailsford, let it be noted, produced objections from the Serbian authorities much like the interference with media practiced by Serbians today.

The Carnegie report is significant not only for its analysis of the causes of the 1912-13 wars but also for its treatment of the atrocities visited on, among others, the innocent Albanian civilian population, in the areas of the former Turkey-in-Europe that encompassed ethnic Albania, including Kosovë, Macedonia, and the sandzhak of Novipazar.

A central claim of Serbian apologists in the present conflict has been that the savagery of Serb aggression represents no more than an understandable reaction to the anti-Serb atrocities of the second world war. These atrocities are, of course, chiefly laid against the Ustashe regime that, supported by the Axis powers, ruled Croatia and Bosnia during 1941-45.

It has frequently been asserted by Serbians that the Croats in World War II followed a policy of killing a third, deporting a third, and converting a third of the Serbians under their control. But the Carnegie Commission report shows that the pattern of "Extermination, Emigration, Assimilation," the wording of subheading number 1 of Chapter IV ("The War and The Nationalities"), most certainly did not begin in 1941.

The focus was then on Macedonia rather than Bosnia or Kosovë, and the bulk of atrocities in this earlier round of Balkan wars were visited by the Bulgarians on the Muslims. But numerous Albanians, Slavic Macedonians, and others were also to feel the brutal effects of *Serbization*, the very term utilized in the report.

Thus, through the pages of the report, we hear the authentic voice of moral protest articulated by the Serbian socialist Dimitrije Tucovic, who, although he is not named, is clearly the same individual as the author of a letter from a member of the Serbian army, published in the Serbian socialist paper *Radnicka Novine*. (Note—some spellings corrected by Albanian Catholic Bulletin.)

"The reference... is to an expedition made to repress a revolt," the report states. " 'My dear friend' writes the soldier, 'I have no time to write

to you at length, but I can tell you that appalling things are going on here. I am terrified by them, and constantly ask myself how men can be so barbarous as to commit such cruelties. It is horrible. I dare not (even if I had time, which I have not) tell you more, but I may say that Ljuma (an Albanian region) no longer exists. There is nothing but corpses, dust and ashes. There are villages of 100, 150, 200 houses where there is no longer a single man, literally not one. We collect them in bodies of forty and fifty, and then we pierce them with our bayonets to the last man. Pillage is going on everywhere. The officers told the soldiers to go to Prizren and sell the things they had stolen.' The paper which published this letter adds: 'Our friend tells us of things even more appalling than this (!); but they are so horrible and so heartrending that we prefer not to publish them.' "

The report continues, "The object of the Albanian expedition, referred to by the correspondent of the *Radnicka Novine*, is known to have been the repression of the plans of the Albanians who at this period revolted against the Serbians. The Albanian revolt was presented by the Serbians as the result of the activities of the Albanians in autonomous Albania, and at the same time of Bulgarian conspiracies. These two reasons are probable enough, but they do not exclude a third—the state of mind of the Albanian population in subjection to Serbia. This population had its own reasons for complaining of the Serbian administration."

A letter from Elbasan published in a Bulgarian journal is cited as follows by the report:

"The Serbian army carried off all the cattle of the (Albanian) Malesia of Dibra (Macedonia). The herdsmen were compelled to defend themselves, and to struggle, but they were all killed. The Serbians also killed the two chieftains of the Ljuma clan... and then began pillaging and burning all the villages on their way... In all these villages the Serbians committed acts of horrible massacre and outrage on women, children and old people. In the town of Dibra itself the authorities published an order to the effect that the bazaar was not to be opened on Sunday or the inhabitants to come out of their houses on that day. Forty-eight notables were arrested. When the Serbians saw that the

inhabitants of the pillaged villages... had come to reclaim their cattle and were surrounding the town, they had the notables brought out of prison and killed them in the most shameless way. Henceforth terror and despair reigned among the Albanians of Dibra..."

The commission further noted that "the Albanian petitioners... did not exaggerate when they stated... that 'the Serbian and Montenegrin regular troops undertook and did everything, from the first day on which they invaded Albanian territory, either to compel the inhabitants to lose their nationality, or brutally to suppress (their) race.' Houses and whole villages reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred *en masse*, incredible acts of violence, pillage and brutality of every kind—such were the means which were employed and are still being employed by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery, with the view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of the regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians."

Thus, "ethnic cleansing." It would seem superfluous to add to these comments the obvious and exact parallel between Serbian conduct in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and the fate that has befallen Croatia and Bosnia, and which we fear will overtake Kosovë.

The Other Balkan Wars, eloquent and detailed, running to some 400 pages and supplemented with numerous photographs and maps, is an indispensable document for all who seek to analyze the present conflict in the Balkans. It is available from Brookings Institution Publications, Washington, DC 20042-0029, tel. 1-800-275-1447. The price is \$15.95.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
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ADEM DEMAÇI - EUROPEAN "MANDELA" VISITS SAN FRANCISCO

Adem Demaçi—an Albanian "prisoner of conscience" in Yugoslavia for 28 years—recently made a whirlwind tour of Australia and New Zealand. He briefly stopped in San Francisco. Demaçi, called the European "Mandela" by his compatriots, since his release in 1990 has become the voice of conscience for three million Albanians living in former Yugoslavia.

The tour was undertaken to promote Albanian unity and to seek international support for the Kosova Republic. While in San Francisco he visited the *San Francisco Chronicle* office where he was interviewed. He decried Serbian repression and the tragic situation of Albanians under Belgrade's military rule. In strong words he denounced the "ethnic cleansing" perpetrated by Serbian Army in Bosnia. Demaçi appealed to the American public and especially to President Clinton to prevent further Serbian bloodshed in the Balkans. He emphasized that without quick action the Bosnian carnage may soon spread to Sandzhak and Kosova, bringing an expanded Balkan war.

Demaçi met with the Albanian Community in San Francisco in a dinner hosted by the Albanian businessman, Zef Shllaku, at his landmark restaurant La Traviata.

Adem Demaçi, journalist and writer, was awarded the European Sakharov Peace Prize in 1991 and honored by the Amnesty International for his non-violent position. Our editor, Gjon Sinishta, greeted Demaçi in San Francisco and accompanied him throughout his visit. They two had worked as colleagues at *Rilindja* newspaper in Prishtinë and later were imprisoned together in the infamous Yugoslav jail of Sremska Mitrovica near Belgrade.

Following is the letter that Adem Demaçi sent to President Bill Clinton pleading for U.S. assistance in the Balkans.



Adem Demaçi (left) with our editor and Demaçi's companion (right) at the San Francisco airport.

The Honorable President Bill Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

January 1993

I realize that your time is limited and, for this reason, I will be brief.

The following statements about sin are stated in the Bible:

Romans 5:12- "Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned".

Isaiah 59:2 - "But your iniquities have separated you from your God and your sins have hid His face from you, that he will not hear".

Romans 6:23 - "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God".

Mr. President, in the name of innocent children, the disabled elderly, and the peace-loving Albanian nation—which has been enslaved by brutal and hegemonistic "Greater Serbian" policies for over 80 years—in the name of innocent Muslim

people who, through fire and steel, have been driven from their homes, whose sons are being executed as if they were nothing more than ants, whose daughters are being raped in the most bestial manner; and in the name of all peace—loving and just peoples throughout the Balkans, I ask that you not allow an inert international bureaucracy to perpetuate the injustice being brought against small and defenseless nations. Do not allow our souls to be burdened by new sins.

Mr. President, the United States has enough strength and means to quickly and effectively bring to an end the agony of all Balkan peoples.

The Albanian, Muslim, Croatian, Macedonian, Hungarian, and Montenegrin peoples are not the only nations to suffer under from the enslavement of "Greater Serbian" politics: the Serbian people also have been abused by such policies. In the

name of our souls, Mr. President, please do not pass up the historical chance to resolve once and for all the Balkan question. The problem in the Balkans can be solved through the creation of the conditions under which the human rights, the right of self-determination and equality will be respected. Such respect will lead to peaceful coexistence of, and harmony among, all the peoples of the region.

May God grant you strength, wisdom, and judiciousness!

Sincerely yours,

Adem Demaçi

(Winner of the Sakharov Prize in 1991 and Chairman of the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms in Prishtinë, Kosovë.)

Our board member Stephen Schwartz, who writes for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and for the national Jewish weekly *Forward*, has published some preliminary studies of a tradition parallel to that of the Muslim *sevdablinke* in Bosnia: the songs performed and preserved by the Sephardic Jewish women of the region. Mr. Schwartz's main text on this topic appeared in the 1990 annual issue of the *Journal of Croatian Studies*.

Mr. Schwartz, who is also a poet and a great admirer of our late colleague Martin Camaj, has organized a series of poetry and song events with a Bosnian theme in San Francisco coffee-houses, collaborating with a Bosnian poet, Dr. Migdat Hodzic.

The perhaps-unique enthusiasm of Bosnians for poetry is visible in such newspapers as *BiH Ekskluziv*, a weekly printed in Split, which includes columns of war poetry in each issue.

Mr. Schwartz informs us that he and Dr. Hodzic have joined with the Croatian American linguistics scholar Katarina Mijatovic to produce a forthcoming anthology of writing by and on Bosnians, their traditions, and their past and present tragedies.

The volume will include an essay by Mr. Schwartz, *Bosnian Begg*, that compares the country's lyrical literature with troubadour and Sephardic balladry and criticism.

Mrs. Mijatovic will contribute translations into English of a representative selection of *sevdablinke*, with the rest of the collection made up poetry about the recent conflict by Dr. Hodzic and other Bosnians.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

GJERGJ FISHTA: THE VOICE OF THE ALBANIAN NATION¹

By far the greatest and most influential figure of Albanian literature in the first half of the twentieth century is the Franciscan Father Gjergj Fishta (1871–1940), who more than any other writer gave artistic expression to the searching soul of the Albanian nation. Lauded and celebrated up until the Second World War as the 'national poet of Albania' and the 'Albanian Homer,' Fishta was to fall into sudden oblivion when the communists took power in November, 1944. The very mention of his name became taboo for forty-six years. Who was Gjergj Fishta and can he live up to his epithet as 'poet laureate' half a century later?

Fishta was born on 23 October, 1871 in the Zadrina village of Fishtë near Troshan in northern Albania where he was baptized by Franciscan missionary and poet Leonardo De Martino (1830–1923). He attended Franciscan schools in Troshan and Shkodër where as a child he was deeply influenced both by the talented De Martino and by a Bosnian missionary, Father Lovro Mihacevic, who instilled in the intelligent lad the love for literature and for his native language. In 1886, when he was fifteen, Fishta was sent by the Order of the Friars Minor to Bosnia, as were many young Albanians destined for the priesthood at the time. It was at Franciscan seminaries and institutions in Sutjeska, Livno and Kresevo that the young Fishta studied theology, philosophy and languages, in particular Latin, Italian and Croatian, to prepare himself for his ecclesiastical and literary career. During his stay in Bosnia he came into contact with Bosnian writer Grga Maric (1822–1905) and Croatian poet Silvije Strahimir Kranjcevic (1865–1908) with whom he became friend and who fostered his literary talent. In 1894 Gjergj Fishta was ordained a priest in the Franciscan order. On his return to Albania in February of that year, he was given a teaching position at the Franciscan college in Troshan and subsequently a posting as parish priest in the village of Gomsiqe. In 1899, he collaborated with Preng Doçi (1846–1917), the influential abbot of Mirdita, with prose writer and priest Dom Ndoc Nikaj (1864–1946), and with folklorist Pashko Bardhi



Fr. Gjergj Fishta, OFM, with four prestigious decorations

(1870–1948) to found the *Bashkimi* (The Union) literary society of Shkodër which set out to tackle the thorny question of the Albanian alphabet. This society was subsequently instrumental in the publication of a number of Albanian language schooltexts and of the *Bashkimi* Albanian–Italian dictionary of 1906, still the best dictionary of Geg dialect. By this time Fishta had become a leading figure of cultural and public life in northern Albania and in particular in Shkodër.

In 1902 Fishta was appointed director of Franciscan schools in the district of Shkodër where he is remembered in particular for having replaced Italian by Albanian for the first time as the lan-

guage of instruction there. This effectively put an end to Italian culture domination of Northern Albanian Catholics and gave young Albanians studying at these schools a sense of national identity. On 14–22 November, 1908 he participated in the Congress of Monastir as a representative of the *Bashkimi* literary society. This congress, attended by Catholic, Orthodox and Moslem delegates from Albania and abroad, was held to decide upon a definitive Albanian alphabet, a problem to which Fishta had given much thought. It was indeed Gjergj Fishta whom the congress elected to preside over a committee of eleven delegates who were to make the choice. After three days of deliberations, Fishta and the committee resolved to support two alphabets: a modified form of Sami Frashëri's Istanbul alphabet which, though impractical for printing, was most widely used at that time, and a new Latin alphabet almost identical to Fishta's *Bashkimi* alphabet, in order to facilitate printing abroad.

In October 1913, almost a year after the declaration of Albanian independence in Vlorë, Fishta founded and began editing the Franciscan monthly periodical *Hylli i Dritës* (The Morning Star) which was devoted to literature, politics, folklore and history. With the exception of the turbulent years of the First World War and its aftermath, 1915–1920, and the early years of the dictatorship of Ahmet Zogu, 1925–1929, this influential journal of high literary standing was published regularly until July, 1944 and became as instrumental for the development of northern Albanian Geg culture as Faik bey Konitza's Brussels journal *Albania* had been for the Tosk culture of the south. From December 1916 to 1918 Fishta edited the Shkodër newspaper *Posta e Shqypniës* (The Albanian Post), a political and cultural biweekly which was subsidized by Austria–Hungary under the auspices of the Kultusprotektorat, despite the fact that the occupying forces did not entirely trust Fishta because of his nationalist aspirations. Also in 1916, together with Luigj Gurakuqi (1879–1925), Ndrë Mjeda (1866–1937) and Mati Logoreci (1867–1941), Fishta played a leading role in the Albanian Literary Commission (Komisija Letrare Shqype) set up by the Austro-Hungarians on the suggestion of consul-general August Ritter von Kral to decide on questions of

orthography for official use and to encourage the publication of Albanian schooltexts. After some deliberation, the Commission rightly decided to use the central dialect of Elbasan as a neutral compromise for a standard literary language. This was much against the wishes of Gjergj Fishta who regarded the dialect of Shkodër, in view of its strong contribution to Albanian culture at the time, as best suited. Fishta hoped that his northern Albanian *koiné* would soon serve as a literary standard for the whole country, much as Dante's language had served as a guide for literary Italian. Throughout these years, Fishta continued teaching and administering the Franciscan school in Shkodër, known from 1921 on as the Collegium Illyricum (Illyrian college), which had become one of the leading educational institutions of northern Albania. He was now also an imposing figure in Albanian literature.



Gjergj Fishta, Ndrë Mjeda (center) with the renowned (Jesuit) priest poet (right) Luigj Gurakuqi (left), Shkodër, 1923.

In August, 1919, Gjergj Fishta served as secretary-general of the Albanian delegation attending the Paris Peace Conference and, in this capacity, was asked by the president of the delegation, Msgr. Luigi Bumçi (1872-1945), to take part in a special commission to be sent to the United States to attend to the interests of the young Albanian state. There he visited Boston, New York and Washington. In 1921, Fishta represented Shkodër in the Albanian parliament and was chosen in August of that year as vice-president of this assembly. His talent as an orator served him well in his functions both as a political figure and as a man of the cloth. In later years, he attended Balkan conferences in Athens (1930), Sofia (1931), and Bucharest (1932) before withdrawing from public life to devote his remaining years to the Franciscan order and to his writing. From 1935 to 1938 he held the office of provincial of the Albanian Franciscans. These most fruitful years of his life were now spent in the quite seclusion of the Franciscan monastery of Gjuhadol in Shkodër with its cloister, church and rose garden where Fishta would sit in the shade and reflect on his verse. As the poet laureate of his generation, Gjergj Fishta was honoured with various diplomas, awards and distinctions both at home and abroad. He was awarded the Austro-Hungarian **Ritterkreuz** in 1911, decorated by Pope Pius XI with the **Al Merito** award in 1925, given the prestigious **Phoenix** medal of the Greek government and the **Mearif Medal** of Turkey, honoured with the title, **Lector jubilatus honoris causae** by the Franciscan order, and made a regular member of the Italian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1939. He died in Shkodër on 30 December 1940.

Although Gjergj Fishta is the author of a total of thirty-seven literary publications, his name is indelibly linked to one great work, indeed to one of the most astounding creations in all the history of Albanian literature, *Labuta e malcís*, (The Highland Lute), Shkodër 1937. "The Highland Lute" is a 15,613-line historical verse epic focusing on the Albanian struggle for autonomy and independence and in particular on events of northern Albanian history from 1858 to 1913. This literary masterpiece was composed primarily between 1902 and 1909, though it was refined and amended by its author over a thirty year period. It is said to consti-



Fr. Gjergj Fishta, OFM, during his stay in Paris as the Secretary of the Albanian Delegation during Peace Conference, 1920.

tute the first Albanian-language contribution to world literature.

In 1902 Fishta had been sent to a little village to replace the local parish priest for a time. There he met and befriended the aging peasant Marash Uci (d. 1914) of Hoti, whom he was later to immortalize in verse. In their evenings together, Marash Uci told the young priest of the heroic battles between the Albanian highlanders and the Montenegrins, in particular of the famed battle at the Rrzhanica Bridge in which Marash Uci had taken part. The first parts of "The Highland Lute", subtitled "At the Rrzhanica Bridge," were published in Zadar in 1905 and 1907, with subsequent and enlarged editions appearing in 1912, 1923, 1931, and 1933. The definitive edition of the work in thirty cantos was presented in Shkodër in 1937 to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the declaration of Albanian independence. Despite the success of "The Highland Lute" and the preeminence of its author, this and all other works by Gjergj Fishta were banned after the Second World War when the communists came to power. The epic was, however, republished in Rome in 1958, Ljubljana in 1990, and Rome in 1992, and exists in German and Italian translations.

In its historical dimensions, 'The Highland Lute' begins with border skirmishes between the Hoti and Gruda tribes and their equally fierce Montenegrin neighbours in 1858. The core of the work (cantos 6–25) is devoted to the events of 1878–1880, i.e., the Congress of Berlin which granted the Albanian borderland to Montenegro, and the resultant creation of the League of Prizren (1878) to defend Albanian interests. Other cantos cover the Revolution of the Young Turks which initially gave Albanian nationalists some hope of autonomy, and the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 which led to the declaration of Albanian independence.

'The Highland Lute' is certainly the most powerful and effective epic to have been written in Albanian. It towers over other attempts at this genre: Dalip Frashëri's Persian-influenced *Hadikaja*, ca 1842 (The Garden); Shadin bey Frashëri's Shi'ite epic *Myhtarnameja*, 1868 (The Tale of Myhtar); Girolamo De Rada's rather meandering *Scanderbeccu i pa-faan*, 1872–1884 (Unfortunate Scanderbeg); Naim Frashëri's nationalistic but not altogether successful *Istori i Skenderbeut*, 1898 (History of Scanderbeg), and his Shi'ite epic *Qerbelaja*, 1898 (Kerbela); Giuseppe Schirò's epic of exile *Te dbeu i buaj*, 1900 (In a Foreign Land); and Francesco Crispi Glaviano's *Mbi malin e Truntafiletvet* (On the Mount of Roses).

The age of Bektash and Shi'ite epics in the Turkish–Persian tradition was of course over and the classical theme for an Albanian epic, the tribulations of the fifteenth century national hero Scanderbeg, which had been approached with only limited success by the two most renowned Albanian writers of the nineteenth century, Girolamo De Rada and Naim Frashëri, was now too distant and nebulous to serve as the focal point for a twentieth century epic. Gjergj Fishta chose as his subject matter what he knew best: the heroic culture of his native northern Albanian mountains. It was his intention with this epic, an unprecedented achievement in Albanian letters, to present the life of the northern Albanian tribes and of his people in general in its heroic dimensions. Indeed it was the author's fortune at the time to have been at the source of the only intact heroic society in Europe. The tribal structure of the inhabitants of the north-

ern Albanian Alps differed radically from the more advanced and 'civilized' regions of the Tosk south. What so fascinated foreign ethnographers and visitors to northern Albania at the turn of the century was the staunchly patriarchal society of the highlands, a system based on customs handed down for centuries by tribal law, in particular by the Code of Lekë Dukagjin. All the distinguishing features of this society are present in 'The Highland Lute': birth, marriage and funerary customs, beliefs, the generous hospitality of the tribes, their endemic bloodfeuding, and the *besa*, absolute fidelity to one's word, come what may.

'The Highland Lute' is strongly inspired by northern Albanian oral verse, both by the cycles of heroic verse, i.e. the long octosyllabic *Këngë kreshnikësh* (Songs of the Frontier Heroes), similar to the Serbian and Croatian *junacke pjesme*, and by the equally popular cycles of historical verse of the 18th century, similar to Greek kleptic verse and to the *baidutska pesen* of the Bulgarians. Fishta knew this oral verse sung by the Geg mountain tribes to the accompaniment of their one-stringed *labuta* and relished in its language and rhythm. The narrative of the epic is therefore replete with the rich, archaic vocabulary and colourful figures of speech used by the warring highland tribes of the north and does not make for easy reading nowadays, even for northern Albanians themselves. An intimate link to oral literature is of course nothing unusual for an epic poem, though some authors have criticized Fishta for 'folklorism', for imitating folklore instead of producing a truly literary epic. The standard meter of 'The Highland Lute' is a trochaic octometer or heptameter which is more in tune with Albanian oral verse than is the classical hexameter of Latin and Greek epics. The influence of the great epics of classical antiquity, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Vergil's *Aeneid*, is nonetheless ubiquitous in 'The Highland Lute' as a number of scholars, in particular Maximilian Lambertz and Giuseppe Cardilone, have delighted in pointing out. Many parallels in style and content have thus transcended the millennia. Fishta himself later translated book five of the *Iliad* into Albanian.

Among major stylistic features which characterize 'The Highland Lute', and no doubt most other

epics, are metaphor, alliteration and assonance, as well as archaic figures of speech and hyperbole. The predominantly heroic character of the narrative with its extensive battle scenes is fortunately counterbalanced with lyric and idyllic descriptions of the natural beauty of the northern Albanian Alps which give 'The Highland Lute' a lightness and poetic grace it might otherwise lack.

'The Highland Lute' relies heavily on Albanian mythology and legend. The work is replete with mythological figures of oral literature who, like the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece, observe and, where necessary, intervene in events. Among them are the *zanas*, dauntless mountain spirits who dwell near springs and torrents and who bestow their protection on Albanian warriors; the *oras*, female spirits whose very name is often taboo; the vampire-like *lugats*; the witch-like *shtrigas*; and the *dranguës*, semi-human figures born with wings under their arms and with supernatural powers, whose prime objective in life is to combat and slay the seven-headed fire-spewing *kulshedras*.

The fusion of the heroic and the mythological is equally evident in a number of characters to whom Fishta attributes major roles in 'The Highland Lute': Oso Kuka, the fierce and valiant warrior who prefers death over surrender to his Slavic enemy; the old shepherd Marash Uci who admonishes the young fighters to preserve their freedom and not to forget the ancient ways and customs; and the valiant maiden Tringa, caring for her brother and resolved to defend her land.

The heroic aspect of life in the mountains is one of the many characteristics the northern Albanian tribes have in common with their southern Slavic, and in particular Montenegrin, neighbours. The two peoples, divided as they are by language and by the bitter course of history, have a largely common culture, and although the Montenegrins serve as 'bad guys' in the glorification of the author's native land, Fishta was not uninfluenced or unmoved by the literary achievements of the southern Slavs in the second half of the 19th century, in particular by epic verse of Slavic resistance to the Turks. We have referred to the role played by Franciscan Father Grga Martić whose works served the young Fishta as a model while the latter was

studying in Bosnia. Fishta was also inspired by the writings of an earlier Franciscan writer, Andrija Kacic-Miosic (1704-1760), Dalmatian poet and publicist of the Enlightenment who is remembered in particular for his *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga*, 1756 (Pleasant talk of Slavic Folk), a collection of prose and poetry on Serbian and Croatian history, and by the works of Croatian poet Ivan Mazuranic (1814-1890), author of the noted romantic epic *Smrt Smail-age Cengica*, 1846 (The Death of Smail Aga). A further source of literary inspiration for Fishta was the Montenegrin poet-prince Petar Petrovic Njegos (1813-1851). It is no coincidence that the title 'The Highland (or Mountain) Lute' is very similar to *Gorski vijenac*, 1847 (The Mountain Wreath), Njegos' verse epic of Montenegro's heroic resistance to the Turkish occupants, which is now generally regarded as the national epic of the Montenegrins and Serbs. Fishta proved that the Albanian language, too, was capable of a refined literary epic of equally heroic proportions.

Although Gjergj Fishta is remembered primarily as an epic poet, his achievements are actually no less impressive in other genres, in particular as a lyric and satirical poet. His lyric verse is regarded by many scholars as his best.

Fishta's first publication of lyric poetry, *Vierrsha i pershpirteshem t'kabyem shcyp*, Shkodër 1906 (Spiritual Verse Translated into Albanian), was of strong Catholic inspiration. Here we find translations of the great Italian poets such as the Arcadian Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782) of Rome, romantic novelist and poet Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) of Milan whom Fishta greatly admired, the patriotic Silvio Pellico (1789-1845) of Udine, and lyricist and literary historian Giacomo Zanella (1820-1888) of Vicenza, etc.

Fishta's first collection of original lyric verse was published under the title *Pika voëset*, Zadar 1909 (Dewdrops), and dedicated to his contemporary, Luigj Gurakuri (1879-1925). It was followed in 1913, on the dawn of Albanian independence, by the first edition of *Mrazi i zânave*, Shkodër 1913 (Noonday Rest of the Zanas), which includes some of the religious verse of *Pika voëset*. The general tone of *Mrazi i zânave* is, however, much

more nationalist than spiritual, the patriotic character of the collection being substantially underlined in the subsequent expanded editions of 1924, 1925 and in the definitive posthumous edition of 1941. Poems such as *Shqypnija* (Albania), *Gjuha shqype* (The Albanian Language), *Atdheut* (To the Fatherland), *Shqypnija e lirë* (Free Albania) and *Hymni i flamurit kombtar* (Hymn to the National Flag) express Fishta's satisfaction and pride in Albania's history and in its newly found independence. Also included in this volume are the allegorical melodrama *Shqypitari i gjyhetnuem* (The Civilized Albanian Man) and its sequel *Shqypitarja e gjyhetnueme* (The Civilized Albanian Woman).

With his nationalist verse concentrated in the above volume, Fishta collected his religious poetry in the 235-page edition *Vallja e Parrizit*, Shkodër 1925 (The Dance of Paradise). The verse in this collection, including poems such as *Të kryqzuemit* (The Crucifixion), *Të zânun e pafaj të Virgjënës Mri* (The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary), *Nuntsiata* (The Annunciation) and *Shë Françesku i Asizit* (St. Francis of Assisi), constitutes a zenith of Catholic literature in Albania.

Gjergj Fishta was also a consummate master of satirical verse, using his wit and sharpened quill to criticize the educational shortcomings and intellectual sloth of his Scutarine compatriots. His was not the benevolent, exhortative irony of Çajupi, but rather biting, pungent satire, often to the point of ruthlessness, the poetic equivalent of the blunt satirical prose of Faik bey Konitza. Fishta had printed many such poems in the periodical *Albania*, using the telling pseudonym 'Castigat ridendo'. In 1907, he published, anonymously, the 67-page satirical collection *Anxat e Parnasit*, Sarajevo 1907 (The Wasps of Parnassus), which laid the foundations for satire as a poetic genre in Albanian literature and which is regarded by many critics as the best poetry he ever produced. In the first of the satires, *Nakdomonicipedija* (A Lesson for Nakdo Monici), he turns to his priest friend, writer and publisher Dom Ndoc Nikaj (1864–1946), whom he affectionately calls by his penname Nakdo Monici, to convey his sympathy that the latter's 416-page *Historia e Shqypnis* (History of Albania), published in Brussels in 1902, had not received due attention among their compatriots. The Albanians were quite

indifferent to their own history and indeed to their present sorry state in general. The reason for this indifference, Fishta tells us, was a contest between St. Nicholas and the devil. St. Nicholas had sailed the seas at the command of the Almighty to sell reason and taste. The devil, for his part, competed with a ship full of old boots which he offered for sale. When the two merchants arrived at the port of Shëngjin, the Albanians took counsel and decided to go for the boots on credit. With such uneducated masses, Fishta recommends that Nikaj take solace in the aloof and cynical attitude of Molière's *Tartuffe*. *Anxat e Parnasit*, later spelt *Anzat e Parnasit*, which contains many a delightfully spicy expression normally unbecoming a mild Franciscan priest, was republished in 1927, 1928, 1942 and 1990, and made Fishta many friends and enemies. *Gomari i Babatasit*, Shkodër 1923 (Babatasi's ass), is another volume of amusing satire, published under the pseudonym Gegë Toska while Fishta was a member of the Albanian parliament. In this work, which enjoyed great popularity at the time, he rants at false patriots and idlers.

Aside from the above-mentioned melodramas *Shqypitari i gjyhetnuem* (The Civilized Albanian Man) and *Shqypitarja e gjyhetnueme* (The Civilized Albanian Woman), Fishta was the author of several other works of theatre, including adaptations of a number of foreign classics, e.g. the three-act *I ligu për mend*, Shkodër 1931 (Le Malade Imaginaire), of Molière, and *Ifigenija n'Aulli*, Shkodër 1931 (Iphigenia in Aulis), of Euripides. Among other dramatical works he composed and/or adapted at a time when Albanian theatre was in its infancy are short plays of primarily religious inspiration, among them the three-act Christmas play *Barit e Betlëmit* (The Shepherds of Bethlehem); *Sh' Françesku i Asizit*, Shkodër 1912 (St. Francis of Assisi); the tragedy *Judas Maccabe*, Shkodër 1923 (Judas Maccabaens); *Sh. Luighi Gonzaga*, Shkodër 1927 (St. Aloysius Gonzaga); and *Jerina, ase Mbretresha e luleve*, Shkodër 1943 (Jerina or the Queen of the Flowers), the last of his works to be published during his lifetime.

The national literature of Albania had been something of a Tosk prerogative until the arrival of Gjergj Fishta on the literary scene. He proved that northern Albania could be an equal partner with

the more advanced south in the creation of a national culture. The acclaim of 'The Highland Lute' has not been universal, though, in particular among Tosk critics. Some authors have regarded his blending of oral and written literature as disastrous and others have simply regarded such a literary epic with a virtually contemporary theme as an anachronism in the twentieth century. Ismail Kadare has decried 'The Highland Lute' as a "long monotonous poem, a sterile chronicle which, being moralizing and didactic to boot, resembles the epics of the north as much as distilled water resembles that of the cascades of the Alpine pastures."² Only time will tell whether Fishta can regain his position as 'national poet' after half a century of politically motivated oblivion.

The Scutarine Catholic school of letters which Gjergj Fishta dominated entered a golden age in the first decades of the twentieth century and much credit for this blossoming of Geg culture goes to him. Franciscan poets and scholars like Pashko Bardhi (1870-1948), Shijefën Gjeçovi (1874-1929), Pal Dodaj (1880-1948), Vinçenc Prennushi (1885-1949), Marin Sirdani (1885-1962), Anton Harapi (1888-1946), Justin Rrota (1889-1964), Bernardin Palaj (1894-1947), Donat Kurti (1903-1969), Benedikt Dema (1904-1960) and Gjon Shllaku (1907-1946), and indeed virtually all other Albanian intellectuals who spent their productive years in Shkodër at some time during the first four decades of the century were influenced in one way or another by the imposing figure of Father Gjergj Fishta. Scholar Eqrem Çabej (1908-1980) in his 1941 obituary of the poet, wrote:

"Rooted profoundly in the soil of his native land, which he rarely abandoned and always returned to, he derived the best of his human and poetic talents from this soil. He spent his life in the annex of the monastery of his order, situated far from the city of Shkodër, in the courtyard of which ancient trees provided soothing shade, and there he listened devoutly to the silent inspiration of the Muses. He was not one of those intellectual writers, not uncommon in the Balkans, who spend most of their lives in large cities abroad. He was

one of those types who grow slowly and organically from their roots. He was a true son of his people and in his symbiosis with the soil, in a manner quite different from Naim Frashëri, has become the national poet of Albania."

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Gjergj Fishta was indeed universally recognized as the 'national poet'. Austrian Albanologist Maximilian Lambertz (1882-1963) described him as "the most ingenious poet Albania has ever produced" and Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) called him "the great poet of the most glorious people of Albania." For others he was the "Albanian Homer."

After the war, Fishta was nonetheless attacked and denigrated perhaps more than any other pre-war writer and fell into prompt oblivion. The national poet became an anathema. The official Tiranë 'History of Albanian Literature' of 1983, which carried the blessing of the Albanian Party of Labour, restricted its treatment of Fishta to an absolute minimum:

"The main representative of this clergy, Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940), poet, publicist, teacher and politician, ran the press of the Franciscan order and directed the cultural and educational activities of this order for a long time. For him, the interests of the church and of religion rose above those of the nation and the people, something he openly declared and defended with all his demagoguery and cynicism, [a principle] upon which he based his literary work. His main work, the epic poem, *Libutane Malësisë* (The Highland Lute), while attacking the chauvinism of our northern neighbours, propagates anti-Slavic feelings and makes the struggle against the Ottoman occupants secondary. He raised a hymn to patriarchalism and feudalism, to religious obscurantism and clericalism, and speculated with patriotic sentiments wherever it was a question of highlighting the events and figures of the national history of our Rilindja period. His other works, such as the satiri-

cal poem *Gomari i Babatasit* (Babatasi's Ass), in which public schooling and democratic ideas were bitterly attacked, were characteristic of the savage struggle undertaken by the Catholic church to maintain and increase its influence in the intellectual life of the country. With his art, he endeavored to pay service to a form close to folklore. It was often accompanied by prolixity, far-fetched effects, rhetoric, brutality of expression and style to the point of banality, false arguments which he intentionally endeavors to impose, and an exceptionally conservative attitude in the field of language. Fishta ended his days as a member of the academy of fascist Italy.³

The real reason for Fishta's fall from grace after the 'liberation' in 1944 is to be sought not in his alleged pro-Italian proclivities but in the origins of the Albanian Communist Party (ACP) itself. The ACP, later to be called the Albanian Party of Labour, had been founded during the Second World War under the auspices of the Yugoslav envoys Dusan Mugosa (1914–1973) and Miladin Popovic (1910–1945). In July 1946, Albania and Yugoslavia signed a Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance and a number of other agreements which gave Yugoslavia effective control over all Albanian affairs, including the field of culture. Serbo-Croatian was introduced as a compulsory subject in all Albanian high schools and by the spring of 1948, plans were even under way for a merger of the two countries. It is no doubt the anti-Slavic sentiments expressed in 'The Highland Lute' which caused the work and its author to be proscribed by the Yugoslav authorities, even though Fishta was educated in Bosnia and inspired by Serbian and Croatian literature. The anti-Slavic element in Fishta's work is also that which is stressed in the first post-war edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, which reads as follows (March 1950):

"The literary activities of the Catholic priest Gjergj Fishta reflect the role played by the Catholic clergy in preparing for Italian aggression against Albania. As a former agent of Austro-Hungarian imperialism,

Fishta, in the early years of his literary activity, took a position against the Slavic peoples who opposed the rapacious plans of Austro-Hungarian imperialism in Albania. In his chauvinistic, anti-Slavic poem 'The Highland Lute', this spy extolled the hostility of the Albanians towards the Slavic peoples, calling for an open fight against the Slavs."

After relations with Yugoslavia were broken off in 1948, it is quite likely that expressions of anti-Montenegrin or anti-Serbian sentiment would no longer have been considered a major sin in Party thinking, but an official position had been taken with regard to Fishta and, possibly with deference to the new Slav allies in Moscow, it could not be renounced without a scandal. Gjergj Fishta, but a few years earlier the lauded national poet of Albania, disappeared from the literary scene, seemingly without trace. Such was the fear of him in later years that even his bones were secretly dug up and thrown into the river.

Yet despite four decades of unrelenting Party propaganda reducing Fishta to a 'clericalist and fascist poet', the people of northern Albania, and in particular the inhabitants of his native Shkodër, did not forget him. After almost half a century, Gjergj Fishta was commemorated openly for the first time on 5 January 1991 in Shkodër. During the first public recital of Fishta's works in Albania in forty-five years, the actor at one point lost his lines and was immediately and spontaneously assisted by members of the audience who still knew many parts of 'The Highland Lute' by heart.

Robert ELSIE

Notes

1. The present article is an excerpt from the author's coming *History of Albanian Literature*.
2. cf. Kadare, *Arbëria e Migjenit dhe letërsia shqipe*, Tiranë 1991, p.40.
3. cf. Shuteriqi (ed.) 1983, p. 470–471. In all fairness it must be noted that Vendi Pala had prepared 40 pages on Fishta for the Academy's literary history, coverage equal to that given to Naim Frashëri, but he was not allowed to publish it.

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Interior of St. Antony's Franciscan Church and front view of the monastery in Gjirokastra (right) Shkoder, 1930

PHOTO REVIEW
CAPTIONS OF
POPE JOHN PAUL'S II
VISIT TO ALBANIA,
APRIL 25, 1993



Pope John Paul II blesses Mother Teresa upon his arrival in Tiranë. At right is Albanian President, Dr. Sali Berisha



Holy Father addresses dignitaries and the Albanian crowds at the Tirane International Airport Rinas



Pontiff kisses the Albanian soil



Tree's and walls along the way were good spots to greet the Pope



Albanian children and teenagers joyously greet the Holy Father

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



Holy Father enjoys the welcome by Tërana youth



Streets of Shkodra are packed and orderly during the Holy Father's stroll to the Cathedral for the episcopal ordination

The Laying on the hands ...



Archbishop FRANO ILLIA



Bishop ZEF SIMONI



Archbishop RROK MIRDITA



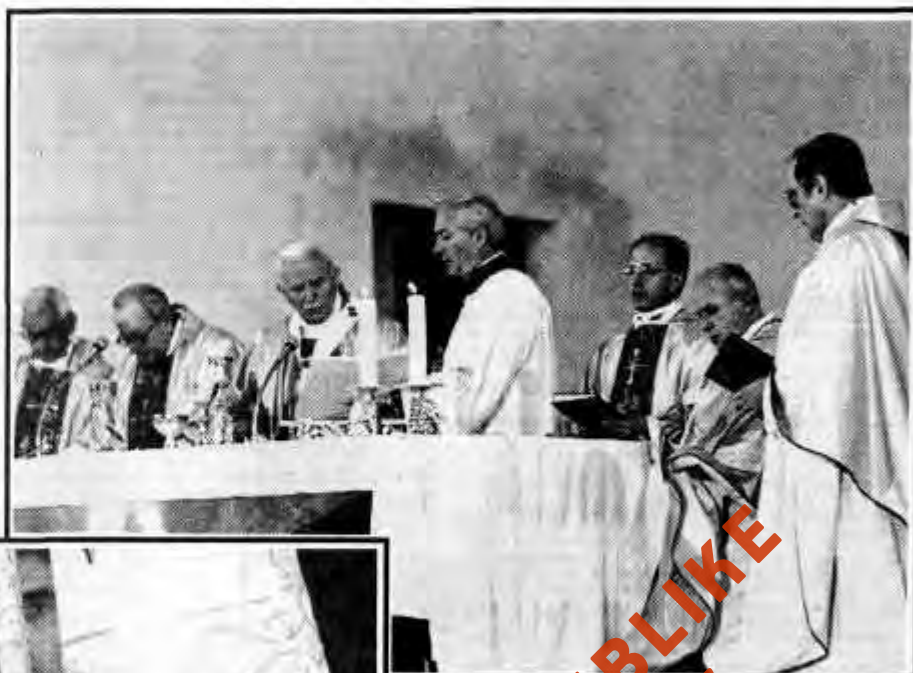
Bishop ROBERT ASHTA

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
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SHKODER (2018)



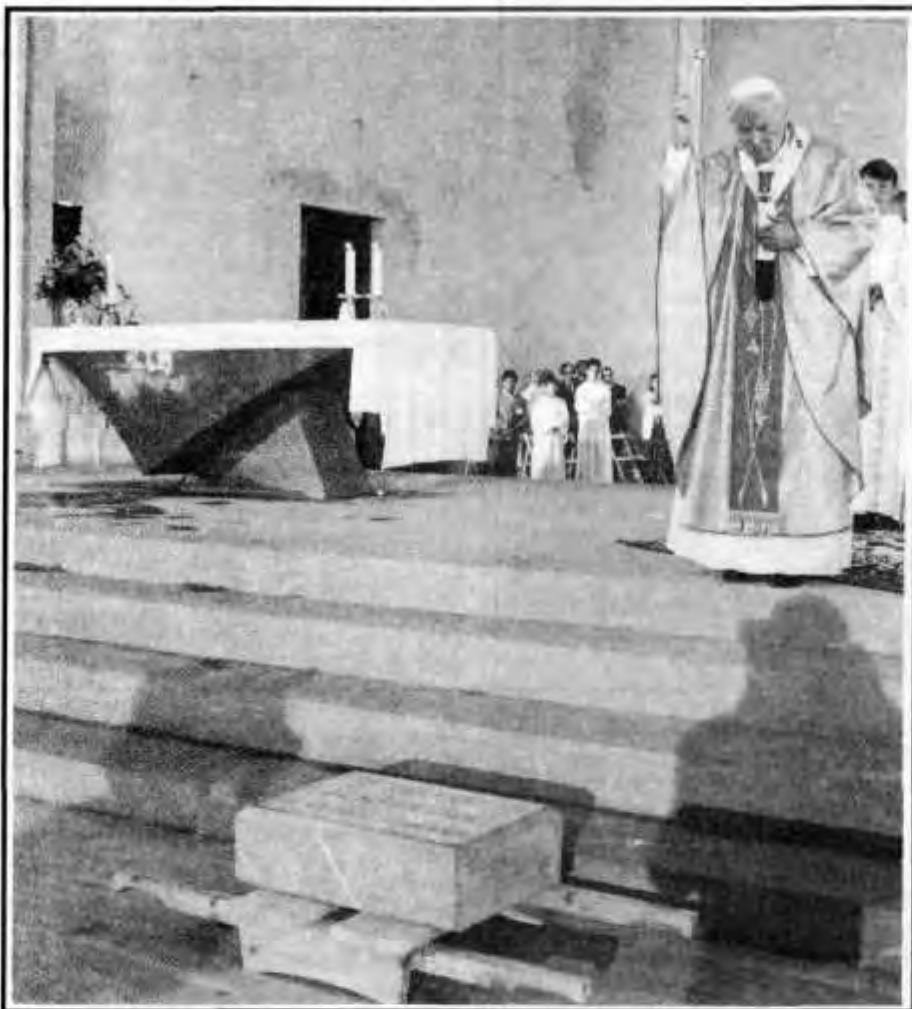
Four bishops lay prostrate before the Pope awaiting his call to become new shepherds

Newly ordained bishops concelebrate Mass with Holy Father



During the Mass the Holy Father greeted Mother Teresa

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)



Holy Father blesses the corner-stone of the new Shrine of Our Lady of Shkodër, soon to be built on the same location as the former church



Before leaving cathedral, Pope John Paul II stops to speak with Albanian President Sali Berisha and his wife.

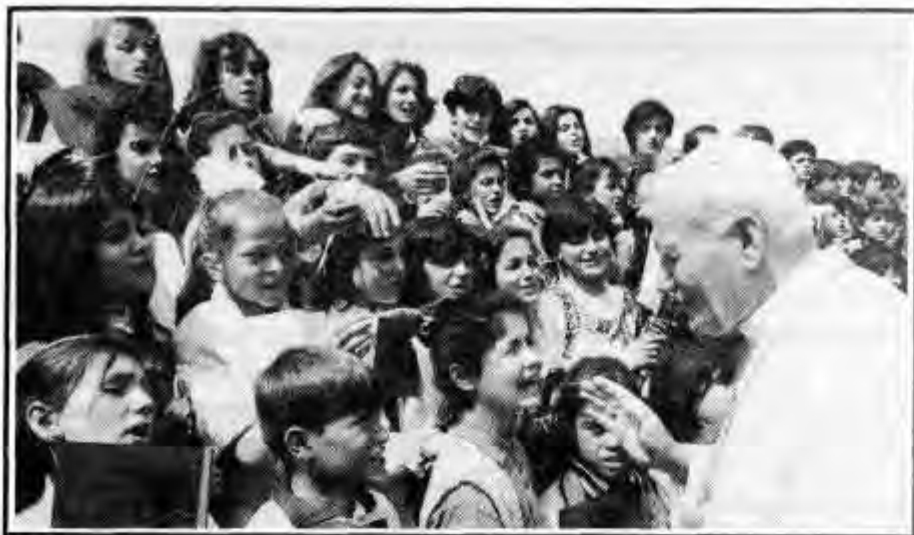
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"MARIN BARLETTI"
SHKODER (2018)



Outside the Cathedral nearly 60,000 Albanians patiently waited to greet the Pope and the newly ordained bishops

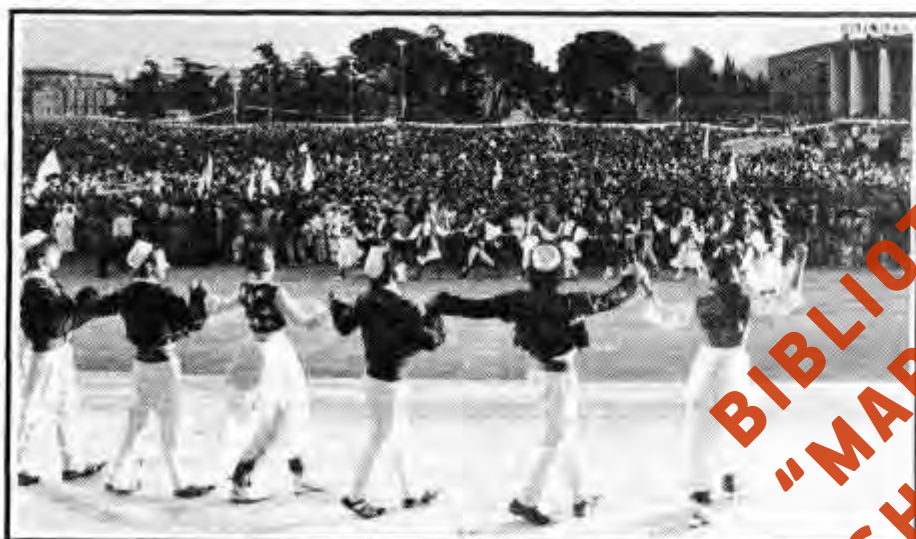


The Pope presents the new bishops to the people from the balcony of the Archbishops' residence



Holy Father stops to greet and bless exuberant children and teenagers

People packed Tirane's streets in order to greet the Holy Father in his "Pope-mobile"



Holy Father's one day visit was truly also a national celebration. The main capitals' square, Skanderbeg, was packed from the early afternoon hours. A folk musical program with songs and dances from around the country and Kosovo entertained the people until Pope John Paul II and other dignitaries arrived for the farewell ceremonies

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

OPINION FORUM

AN ESSAY IN DEFENSE OF THE GHEG VARIANT OF THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

The collapse of Communism in Central and East Europe has carried with it to destruction a vast array of intellectual conceptions, programs, and institutions. Ranging through virtually every field of endeavor, from the academic to the popular, the systems in sudden ruin all now seem characterized by absurdly Utopian expectations, outrageous pretensions and brutal abuses of the integrity of the mind.

Thus, we look back with some wonderment at the belief by which the Communist dictators, presuming their power was permanent, immortal, *destined to last forever*, exalted the products of their bureaucratic primitivism, and consigned whole classes, nations, cultures, and traditions to the notorious (and long-overcrowded) "dustbin of history."

How can the Communist rulers have so misjudged human nature as to believe they could rewrite wholesale the history, distant and recent, of their subjects—indeed, of all society? And yet that fanatical outlook led them to distort the lessons of school children, to build themselves colossal monuments, to exalt as perfected heroes a conspiracy of the failed and ill-formed, which had managed to grab and retain power for a fleeting and tragic period, thanks to certain historical accidents. All of it, in the end, proved utterly ephemeral.

Had Stalin not prevailed diplomatically over a weakened Roosevelt and a too-clever Churchill, the Communist rulers of post-1945 Poland, Hungary, etc. would never have reached the heights they occupied. The sterile, brittle character of their rule was proven in a myriad of ways—beginning with the brutal purges that struck within Communism's own ranks, from Warsaw to Sofia and from St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) to Tiranë, and ending with the failure of the youthful radicalism that exploded throughout the world in the 1960s to even minimally restore or revive the positive elements in socialism.

That sterility—an utter absence of empathy, of imagination, of intelligence—was visible, it seemed, in every political and ideological decision taken by these regimes: in the East German government's manipulation of ultraleftist terrorism as well as neo-Nazi sentiment, with consequences in today's anti-foreigner rioting; in Poland's absurd attempt to buy off the country's working class through irresponsible foreign borrowing; in Bulgaria's campaign against that country's Muslim population; in Nicolae Ceausescu's gross and bizarre program of destruction of village and urban architecture, combined with Pharaonic construction.

The Marxist pseudo-intellectuals, having obtained power in the false light of their supposed grasp on history and its fulfillment, conducted themselves in government like the most backward and corrupt Latin American and Asian dictators.

The grotesque arrogance of these enemies of the human personality found its unparalleled expression in Enver Hoxha's war on religion in "officially atheist" Albania. But along with Hoxha's banditry against churches, mosques, Jewish prayer houses, and believers in general, went criminal fantasies in social policy.

One of the worst of these was the attempt to subordinate all Albanian linguistic and literary traditions to a single standard, that of the so-called *unified Albanian language*. As many non-Albanians are aware, Albanian is historically spoken and written in two dialects, Gheg, in the north and center, and Tosk, in the south. The literary Gheg of northern Albania has also been the historic medium for the development and preservation of the Catholic literary tradition in Albanian literature, including the work of masters such as Gjergj Fishta, for writers in Kosovo beginning in the 17th century with Pjetër Bogdani, and, indeed, for the overall cultural development of the Albanian nation.

After 1945, the Hoxha regime sought the imposition of a "unified language" based on the subor-

dination of Gheg to Tosk forms. The underlying aim was to extirpate all memory of Catholic Albanian culture through the eradication of the Gheg literary tradition.

In a recent communication, our collaborator Zef Nekaj has pointed out that attacks on the Gheg dialect included labelling it, its speakers, and its traditions—even though it had been the medium for development of much of the higher culture of the Albanian people—as “uncultured, ignorant, lawless, uncivilized, impolite, tribal, illiterate, sabotaging, vindictive, traitorous, fanatical, blind,” etc... This continuous hammering caused the impoverished, imprisoned and interned, outcast, and ostracized slave-like beings of Northern Albania to face no choice but obedience or escape into exile, with terror and death as the only alternatives,” Professor Nekaj writes.

The outstanding Albanian independent intellectual of recent times, Dr. Arshi Pipa, has correctly labelled the aim of this “linguistic reform” as “a Stalin-inspired language.” In his collection of essays, *Albanian Stalinism*, Pipa described the “unified language” as “a reformed variant of Tosk enriched with Toskicized Gheg vocabulary.”

Pipa has commented, “the foundations of ‘unified literary Albanian’ rest with Stalin’s thesis... that when two languages mix, one comes out victorious while the other dies out... Inspired by Stalin’s thesis, and under the injunction of Enver Hoxha, himself a Tosk, Albanian linguists have invented a Tosk variant which phonomorphologically, is almost completely Tosk, while borrowing abundantly from richer Gheg vocabulary and phraseology, duly given a Tosk varnish.”

It is seldom recalled today that Stalin, aside from his distinction as a mass-murderer by police purges of his own people, and his notable incompetence as a military leader in World War II, when Russia suffered the worst battlefield reverses in its recent history, assumed for himself the mantle of researcher in the difficult and humanistic field of linguistics. Appropriating to his own signature some ghost-written scratchings of an unenlightening and banal sort, the Captain of Genius, the Sun of Socialism, the Father of All Peoples ordered the pub-

lication of a pamphlet, titled *Marxism and Linguistics*, in the year 1951.

It was thus that Stalin delivered himself of the ludicrous and easily-disproven “theory” of the inevitable assimilation of “weaker” to “stronger” languages. As with Hoxha’s “unified language” scheme, there was an ulterior motive: the destruction of Ukrainian and other “lesser” languages in the interest of Russian.

Hoxha’s “unificationism” also drew on other elements. Pipa notes the similarity between the Hoxhaite enterprise in linguistics and some observations of the Italian (originally Arbëresh) Communist intellectual Antonio Gramsci, the demigod of Anglo-Saxon intellectuals today. In one instance, Gramsci seemed to have wanted to defend “dialects,” which remain strong in Italy, as an item of culture belonging to “the people,” and supporting Gramsci’s conceptions about the people’s “hegemony” in culture. But in the same context, Gramsci called for a “unified language” for the Italians.

Gramsci’s notions seem to derive from the experience of Italian normative linguistics during the 19th century. The Italian experience in national unification was reflected in various ways in the Balkans; Serbian nationalists long expressed admiration for the struggle of the Italian Piedmont for national revival and reunification, and sought to impose Serbia as the Piedmont of the Southern Slavs. Similarly, the Italian conception of linguistic standardization may have found an echo in Hoxha’s criminal fantasy.

But Hoxha, educated in France, doubtless drew more on a particularly powerful and corrupting element in modern history: the Jacobin mentality that, since the French Revolution, served as the original stimulus to the notion that national states must be the uniform, homogeneous “property” of single nations, in which all citizens should be subordinated to a unitary, centralist standard of education, language, and political culture.

Hoxha’s well-known and pathetic adoration of almost everything French made virtually inevitable an emulation of the Jacobin mentality in language issues. The Jacobin attitude in linguistics, like every other accretion of the French Revolutionary

epoch, had as its leading attribute a centralizing and pseudo-modernizing rationalism that increased its attractiveness to nihilist Marxists, bent on the destruction of all tradition.

The Jacobin attitude in the educational system of France resulted first in significant success—with widespread suppression for at least two generations of the Basque, Breton, Provençal, Catalan, Corsican, and other "minority" languages spoken within the borders of the French republic. But it eventually failed, as must all such policies. Today Breton and Provençal in particular are in full revival, with the others not far behind.

Elsewhere in Europe Jacobin linguistic policies have also clearly failed. In Britain, for example, Welsh is gaining speakers in the younger generation. But the greatest counter-example to the Jacobin conception is undoubtedly found in Spain, where some 6 million now speak Catalan daily, with 10 percent of Spanish book production in that language and its variants, such as Valencian and Mallorcan. The Basque language (Euskera) is enjoying a more limited but no less remarkable expansion of its publishing audience, with the appearance of long-awaited dictionaries and dialectal studies. Gallegan, a northern dialect of Portuguese, is also in a literary rebirth.

In the Balkans, we find not only that Stalin's structures failed, with, for example, Slovene holding its own against the former Yugoslavia's attempts to impose a single "Serbo-Croat" linguistic medium—more, we find the latter itself in collapse, with literary Croatian and Bosnian now fully established as independent linguistic forms.

Although some nations, in a partial Jacobin fashion, have adopted national literary languages, as in the case of Norwegian, Greek, Czech, etc., while others, like Turkish, have undergone modernization impelled from the seats of power, nowhere were such "reforms" carried out in so brutal a form as in Hoxha's Albania. Yet linguistic autonomies have survived the attempts of Jacobin "rationalizers" to suppress them. And more—in the new intellectual order defined by "otherness" and "diversity" we find, in Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere, a new interest in the preservation of dia-

lects, creoles, regional styles, and other forms of linguistic differentiation.

Thus, the Hoxha scheme for linguistic unification is condemned not only on grounds of logic and human values, but also by history itself—it is no more reasonable to ask the Gheg speakers and writers in the Albanian ethnic zone to abandon their distinctive dialect than it would be to continue the exclusion of Provençal from French education. Imagine the Croats, for example, attempting to do away with their *Kajkavica* and *Čakavica* traditions in the interest of a single, *Stokavica* literary language! Such would only be worthy of the Serbs, the traditional enemy of Albanians and the relentless champions of Jacobinism and nihilism in the Balkans—and, indeed, such policies have been crucial to Serb governance for a century.

It is widely reported that in the wake of the Communist debacle in Albania the campaign for "unified Albanian" has fallen into disarray. The people of Shkodër are said to have maintained their dialect intact and to be aggressive in its use and defense. A recent article ("Shkodër Awakes" by John Hodgson) in the New York newspaper *Illyria* (February 6-10, 1993), noted, "The city has its own dialect, and you had better use it."

However, it also cannot be denied that the "unified language" has fully replaced officially the Gheg dialect in the Kosovë district as well as in the daily speech of many residents in the northern (traditionally Gheg) regions of the Albanian state.

The reasons for these "successes" are simple of elucidation. In Kosovë, the young rallied to the "unified language" as a symbol of Albanian patriotic resistance to Serb domination, supported by the use of textbooks and other media originating with the Hoxha state. In the state itself, the pressure of the campaign for "unified language" was no less ferocious than that against religion; many Albanians submitted.

It should therefore come as no surprise, however depressing it may be, to find many Albanians today who grew up and were educated in the Gheg literary tradition, with an attitude of passivity or resignation about its disappearance. Some seem

to believe that the "unified language" represents the future, and cannot be resisted.

Those who adopt or accept such an attitude are wrong. Many examples from the past century show dialectal vitality and preservation, rather than disappearance, represent the future. The "unified language" shoved down the throats of the Albanian people is nothing more than the ultimate, absurd fabrication of Hoxha's Stalinism—one of the many such, that have been worthily described by Dr. Pipa as "oddities... enough to make one doubt the sanity of the people responsible for such deeds."

Dr. Pipa has described Hoxha's anti-Gheg support for the "unified language" as "domestic linguistic colonialism," and has pointed out that the

maintenance of a dual linguistic standard, one "popular" and the other "literary," has resulted in Norway and in other European countries in proof "that the existence of more than one literary idiom in one and the same nation can mean... richness rather than want."

The responsible course for today's Albanian intellectuals, rather than persevering with the illusion of linguistic unification, is to foster publications in and on the Gheg dialect, to work for guarantees of Gheg literary "rights" in the new Albania, and to thus support the true renaissance of all Albanian culture. Future readers—and, more importantly, writers—will thank them for their commitment to the ethics of cultural preservation rather than to the Marxist habits of intellectual vandalism.

Sandalio SOLSONA

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALBANIAN COMMUNITIES IN ITALY

Some aspects relative to the induction of the Arbëresh in the south of Italy permit us to more precisely situate these communities in time. Particularly interesting is the study of the origin of the name "Arbëresh." It justifies the grouping of the Arbëresh into the Albanian ethnic community.

The noted Albanian linguist Eqrem Çabej and others, researched the importance and the origins of the term "Arbëresh." They found it is the ancient name for the Albanian nation.

Beginning in the eighteenth-century, the name "shqiptar" appeared frequently as a means to precisely designate a linguistic community in the Ottoman Empire. From that point on the name "Arbëria" made way for the name "Shqipëria."

When Albanians emigrated to Italy they brought with them the name Arbëresh or Arbresh. They continued to refer to themselves with this term. In their newly adopted country they received a number of appellatives including: Albanians, Greeks, Italo-Albanians, Italo-Greeks, Greek-Albanians, Schiavone and Epiroti.

The language and the religious rite that Albanians practiced were the two great elements that

distinguished them as foreigners in the eyes of Italians. Ironically, it was the Arbëresh who bestowed the names "Greek" and "Italo-Greeks" upon themselves because their liturgical language was Greek and also because people from that district did not always know to which group they belonged.

Certain historical circumstances contributed to the birth of an Italian "Albania." From antiquity to the iron age the Illyrian mariners navigated along the coasts of the Adriatic. They had contacts with nearby landed populations among whom were the Mesapes and the Iapiges. Following the Roman conquest, the formation of the province of "Illiricum", and after the division of the empire into East and West, northern Albania found itself in major revolt against Venice, the Papal States and mid-Italy. Meanwhile, southern Albania passed under Byzantine domination and was thus linked to the Eastern Empire. Thus, there were populations which migrated and fused with the indigenous population or with other migrating populations. Unfortunately, little documentation exists for these occurrences.

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth-century there was a systematic movement of populations

from Albania to mid-Italy. Arbëresh populations however, did not identify themselves with the local population. Instead they conserved and exalted their original ethnic identity. They were proud of their origins which were preserved through the centuries under different forms. The most significant expressions were in daily life, religious ritual, artistic production, oral and literary traditions, ideas and concepts of belonging to a nation, feelings of the unity of "gjaku i shprishur" (scattered blood).

The choice to relocate in southern Italy was made for many different reasons. First, its geographic position and the Mediterranean climate of the mountainous region were attractive. Added to this were the economic and commercial ties that favored the Adriatic. It was for centuries the primordial axis of communications between east and west. Finally, Southern Italy was chosen because of the circumstances imposed by the political, religious, and military needs, as well as the personality of Skanderbeg.

Despite the historical circumstances the personality of the Albanian leader, George Kastrioti Skanderbeg, must be singled out. Even before the fall of Constantinople and prior to the Moslem penetration and imminent invasion of the Turks, Skanderbeg sought to contact the papacy and the sovereigns of Naples. In 1461 he undertook an expedition in order to help Alphonse V of Aragon, threatened by the Anjovins. He freed the Trani and Barletta attempting to strengthen the Aragonese dynasty. In recompense Skanderbeg received land in the region of Puglia.

The invasion of Arbëria by the Turks in the fifteenth-century was the main reason for the installation of the Arbëresh communities in the region of the Kingdom of Naples and the Two Sicilies. It is possible to know the origins of the foundations of a great number of Arbëresh communities thanks to the "capitolari" acts. However, a place of origin or an exact date of departure and arrival of these exiled populations is difficult to relate with precision. The documents that refer to the Albanian exodus do not provide much information. Regarding the mode of transit of these populations we know that Venice, where politics oscillated according to its particular interest, as well as the

other northern Italian States, would not permit the Arbëresh a right of passage and even less the establishment of Albanian colonies in their territory. The journey, in any case, was taken across the sea.

The emigration of Corone to Morea, land which was populated by many Albanians and which today is part of Greece, seems to have been quite important. Yet, we cannot rule out that a part of these Albanians came from the north and central part of Albania. They were dropped off in Epirus following the difficulties they encountered with the Slavs and because of the "arnuolamento" in the "estradiote" fleets. After the fall of Shkodër, there were signs that some groups of emigrants probably came from the city or from the surrounding area. The major portion of immigrants originated in the southern regions of Albania. The mountainous regions, which were favorite refuges during the resistance, permitted these populations to remain. Only small numbers emigrated in comparison to those peoples located on the plains.

The different names and the phonetic and grammatical differences of the language and dialects all witness to the multitude of places of these emigrations emanated from and their heterogeneousness. The study of their dialects gives an orientation about the tribes that came from the north and south of Albania, the descendants of whom one can find in central Italy. We have to be attentive to the transformations that took place in the towns that happened to welcome them, to some names that acquired a lexicon particularly figuring to their origins (Matranga-Matrangolo, Cucja-Cuccia). On the other hand, "capitolari" (written records) articles, when they exist, contain precious documentation that give us the possibility of knowing the dates of the official founding of the Arbëresh communities. Most often these written records were contracted after the arrival of the Albanians in a stable place. This official act came when the feudatory of the town and some head representatives of the community would ratify their residency. These records correspond to the conditions of life of the Arbëresh who ceased to hope for a quick return to the Fatherland. Certain clauses in the government give information about their way of life of the inhabitants, the feudal burdens, the

taxes, plus the rights and duties of the new arrivals.

Despite the sovereigns' agreement to privileges for the Albanian population, the viceroys, dominated by prideful ambitions, did not always worry about conceding and maintaining the ancient rights of Albanians. The barons and bishops increased their oppression the more the Albanians demonstrated a rebellious spirit through pride in their culture.*

The choice of places in which the exiled populations installed themselves was dictated less by free choice, than by the politics of the Spanish sovereigns and the military and economic necessities of the area. Also influential were the presence of Byzantine abbeys in southern Italy, the settling down of the descendants of Skanderbeg, by matrimonial alliances made by the princes who were constantly feuding in that place, and by the attractive fact that there were already present the first Arbëresh communities that had previously settled in these places.

Rarely did the Arbëresh seize the uncultivated land left at their disposition. Mostly they were conceded isolated places so that they could not come together as a dangerous force. They were prohibited from constructing fortified cities. These marginal setting places were abandoned or devastated by war, plagues, or destroyed by natural disasters. The local lords profited by the arrival of these exiles by giving new life to these ruined fiefs. They would give this land over to the Albanians and then demand a quota of production thereby giving new value to those fiefs.

Historians divide the principle emigrations into seven different categories extending from 1448 to 1825. There were other sporadic emigrations during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. At the beginning of the fifteenth century the emigrations were made up essentially by groups of soldiers who were at the disposition of certain local princes, one of whom was the most famous, Giacomo Matranga of Sicily. Following these first adventures, around the years 1444-1448 the first voluntarily organized emigration conducted by Commandant Reres, and his two sons, Giorgio and Basilio. One part of this emigration stopped in

Sicily and stayed there. The other part stopped in the province of Catanzaro. This force was supposed to defend the island from the invasions of the Anjovins. After the military goal was accomplished, they were given permission by Countess Entellina to settle in Mezzojuso Palazzo Adriano. An emigration came from Morea to re-supply the Albanian community in Palazzo Adriano in 1534. An important contingent of Reres' forces remained in Calabria and founded the towns of the province of Catanzaro, among which are Caraffa, S. Nicola dell'Alto, and Carfizzi Pallagorio.

In Torrefranca in Molise adding to an earlier emigration was the emigration of 1461-62. This second emigration came because of the military intervention of Skanderbeg in 1461. Some of the soldiers had their families come and remained upon the fiefs given to the leader of the Albanians between 1461 and 1467 in the provinces of Foggia, Campobasso and Lecce.

The third emigration, that of 1468-1506 can be subdivided into two parts: one in 1468 after the death of Skanderbeg and another that began in 1480 after the fall of Shkodër (1479). From this great migratory current were born the communities of Lucania, Barile, in Calabria "citerione" (S. Adriano). Between 1480 and 1482 several waves of refugees populated different communities, some of which were already in existence in Calabria, Frascineto, Eianina, Civita, Acquaformosa, S. Benedetto Ullano, Plataci, and S. Basile. Following the fall of the last fortresses in Albania, other emigrations followed in 1481-92 and in 1506. The majority of these people settled in Sicily (Piana).

The fourth emigration designated as the emigration from Morea and Corone took place in 1534 under the reign of the emperor Charles V. This emigration correspond to an exodus of the populations from the cities of Corone, Monrovia, Nauplia which had fallen into the hands of the Turks. These people were led by the Genovese Andrea Doria, whom Charles V put at their disposition with his numerous galleys. After a pact was signed, they were put under the governance of the Viceroy of the Two Sicilies, Don Pedro of Toledo. This group settled in Basilicata and S. Constantino

TABLE OF ARBËRESH COMMUNITIES

(Courtesy of Demetrio Emmanuele, author of Arbëria, (Coscile Editrice, Castrovillari, 1988)

DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION OF ARBËRIA

ARBËRESH COMMUNITIES		POPULATION CENSUS			
Italian denomination	Arbëresh denomination	1951	1961	1971	1981
Aquafarmosa (Cs)	Firmosa	1.791	1.740	1.523	1.607
Andali (Cz)	Andalli	1.406	1.203	1.306	1.291
Barile (Pz)	Barilli	4.531	4.203	3.696	3.519
Campomarino (Cb)	Këmarini	3.600	3.706	3.972	5.482
Caraffa (Cz)	Garafa	2.793	2.626	2.461	2.318
Carlizzi (Cz)	Karlici	1.642	1.514	1.412	1.353
Casalvecchio (Fa)	Kazalvaqi	3.319	2.862	2.472	2.602
Castroregio (Cs)	Kastërrexhi	1.561	1.396	1.089	.793
(Fraz. Farneto)	Farneta				
Cerzeto (Cs)	Qana	2.862	2.441	1.844	2.412
(Fraz. Cavallenza e S. Giacomo)	Kalvarici				
Civita (Cs)	Shën Japku				
Chieti (Fg)	Çilti	2.041	1.889	1.600	1.499
Contessa Entellina (Pa)	Qalti	2.881	2.560	2.083	1.804
Falconara A. (Cs)	Kundisa	3.052	2.669	2.207	2.041
Firino (Cs)	Fallkunara	2.493	1.986	1.510	1.420
Frasinetto (Cs)	Ferma	2.741	2.700	2.471	2.532
(Fraz. Eianina)	Frasnita	2.591	2.398	2.472	2.432
Ginestra (Pz)	Purçilli				
Greci (Av)	Xhinestra	1.761		1.076	.929
Lungro (Cs)	Groçi Katundi	2.467	2.167	1.670	1.334
Marcedusa (Cz)	Ungro	4.830	4.170	3.293	3.218
Maschio (Pz)	Marqedhuza	1.321	1.021	.881	.820
Mezzolago (Pa)	Mashqiti	3.812	3.589	2.630	2.100
Montecellone (Cb)	Munkilsi	5.026			3.127
Palazzo Adriano (Pa)	Munkhfuni	3.762	3.004	2.369	2.295
Pallagorio (Cz)	Pallëci	4.017			3.035
Piano degli Albanesi (Pa)	Puheriu	2.732	2.321	2.072	1.859
Ploraci	Hora	7.015	6.880	6.130	5.975
Portocannone (Cb)	Pilotani	1.845	1.764	1.562	1.240
San Basile (Cs)	Portkanuni	2.820	2.706	2.423	2.463
San Benedetto Ullano (Cs)	Shën Vasili	2.092	1.820	1.701	1.578
(Fraz. Marri)	Shën Bendhiti	2.638	.776	1.603	1.722
Santa Caterina Albanese (Cs)	Uimari				
S. Cosmo Albanese (Cs)	Picilia	2.138	2.037	1.874	1.628
S. Cosentino Albanese (Pz)	Strigari	1.103	1.045	1.035	.849
Santa Crisina Gela (Pa)	Shën Kostandini	1.789	1.773	1.540	1.270
S. Demetrio Corone (Cs)	Shëndastina	1.014	.924	.753	.700
(Fraz. Macchia)	Shën Mitri	5.871	5.374	4.735	4.036
San Giorgio Albanese (Cs)	Maqi				
San Martino di Fin. (Cs)	Mbuzati	2.069	1.954	1.897	1.815
San Marzano di S. Gius. (Ta)	Shën Murtini	2.247	2.095	1.576	1.369
San Nicola dell'Al. (Cz)	Shën Marconi	5.968	6.131	6.560	8.003
San Paolo A. (Pz)	Shën Kallr	1.910	1.620	1.687	1.721
Santa Sofia d'Epiro (Cs)	Shën Pali	.889	.911	.706	.624
Spezzano Al. (Cs)	Shën Sofia	3.171	3.048	2.709	2.679
Ururi (Cb)	Spixana	6.247	6.279	6.241	6.098
Vaccarizza A. (Cs)	Ruri	4.688	3.799	3.495	3.345
Vena di Maida (Cz)	Vakariçi	1.909	1.955	1.680	1.482
Villa Badessa (Rasciana - Pa)	Vina	1.377	1.207	1.181	1.100
Zangarona (Lamezia - Cz)	Badhesa	.637	.570	.530	.510
	Xangarona	.634		1.065	
TOTAL 43 Communities 9 Fractions (communities)	TOTAL 52 Communities	TOTAL POPULATION 105.981			

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Albanese, where there were already some Albanians from Puglie in Sicily.

The fifth emigration in 1647 took place under Philip IV. It was composed of natives of Maina in Morea. They settled mainly in Lucania, in Chieti in 1680, and Taranto in 1674. A few sources confirm the presence of these refugees in the region of Piacenza as well.

The emigration of 1743 under Charles III was composed of inhabitants of Piqëras in Himara (Southern Albania). They relocated to Abruzzi in Villa Badessa.

The last migrations took place at the end of the eighteenth-century. Forty families from Shkodër landed at Ancona where they were assigned to the ruins of Castello di Pianiano.

In 1774 under the reign of Ferdinand, a few Albanians settled in the city of Brindisi.

The history and the development of these Albanian communities through the centuries are strictly bound to specific factors: to particular geographic positions; to the picturesque relief of these inaccessible regions of little villages; to the religious and socio-economic feudal system; and to the politics of Italy. This geographical placement was a positive contribution to the maintenance of the Arbëresh tradition. Yet it also acted as an obstacle to economic development and progress.

The eastern Byzantine rite acted as an element of distinction for the whole Arbëresh community. It was perceived, by believers and non-believers alike as a national component and an integral part of the Albanian patrimony. The forced passage to the Latin rite had as a consequence, the assimilation of the inhabitants of those villages into the greater Italian population. The creation of the religious institutions of the eastern rite contributed greatly to the growth and development of an Albanian identity. The educational institutions, including the Corsini College in S. Adriano (founded by Pope Clement XII, whose mother was Albanian) and the Seminary of Palermo, became intellectual centers and authentic national institutions for the Arbëresh. These Colleges gave the young Arbëresh the possibility to acquire a very humanist, religious, scientific and patriotic formation. There were many young people from the College of S. Adriano who zealously participated in the *Risorgimento* movement, and who acted with unshakable courage against the oppression of the feudal power of the Spanish in order to acquire the social and political liberation of Italy.

The rites of the cycle of human life, the Byzantine liturgical calendar, the traditions and costumes that made up the life of the Arbëresh left their mark on the physiognomy and the personality of this community. Some of these rites and customs we still find among the Fatherland Albanians. This is a stupendous testimony of the cultural unity of the Albanian people.

Licia CONTI and Odette MARQUET



TEFTA TASHKO & ALEXANDER MOISSI: TWO ALBANIAN ARTISTS OF THE WORLD THEATRE

Editor's note: In our 1980, 1983 and 1989 issues, we briefly wrote about the internationally acclaimed Albanian actor Alexander Moissi. This issue offers profiles of Tefta Tashko, the renowned Albanian opera singer as well as Alexander Moissi. These profiles were authored by Andrea Ferrari and Ardiana Karakashi and were first published in the Italian review La Rivista del Mediterraneo (January 1992).

*

A peaceful beauty, a sweet smile, a folksy joyfulness in the eyes: this was Tefta Tashko. Nevertheless the old photographs show her collected and proper in the poses of that time. She appeared a bit divine, a bit "viper." Tashko was born in 1910 at Fayum, Egypt. In that small cosmopolitan city her father had found a refuge. Times were hard in Albania. The country was torn by internal struggles fed by the opposing interests of the Ottoman, Hapsburg, and Italian empires. Thus Tefta came to know her homeland only in 1921, when she was repatriated with her family. They went to live in Korça. In a short time Albania had won its independence. It was a fragile and shaky state. Intellectual life recovered strength. There was a rebirth of the fine arts, of literature, and music. During this renaissance Tashko had her first encounter with the theatre. She was invited to the premier of "The Death of Pyrrhus." The heavy-handed patriotic drama by Mihal Grameno moved her to tears and left an indelible impression upon her.

Her encounter with Pyrrhus, returning to Epirus after a useless victory, was where the creative flame began. It was one of those fated moments in which whole lives are decided. Tashko already sang in church where her teacher played the organ. The teacher understood that she had not only a young girl able to sing on tune, but a true talent. Her teacher was the first to discover Tashko and the first to fight for her cause. The teacher introduced her to everyone of import and even organized a concert for her. Tashko won a scholarship

to study in Paris. Since she was still a young girl, her mother accompanied her. They both had to live off a small amount of money.

These were difficult years for Tashko, but beneath the tender smile hid the character of a farm-girl used to the suffering of the fields. She refused to give in, even though she did not have enough food. She had to continuously change pension since there was never enough money to pay the rent. Nonetheless, her studies went easily. Unexpectedly she found herself propelled into the artistic and intellectual life of the Ville Lumiere. There she met Debussy, Ravel, Roussel, and Duca. All around her was a musical environment in ferment. Naive, and somewhat infantile Tashko was there, ready to welcome all suggestions. She studied at the Higher Institute of Music. In the concourse competition she sang the third act of *La Traviata*,



Tefta Tashko, Tiranë, 1947

and left everyone breathless. Although there were 127 competitors, Tashko's Violetta seemed to be the one conceived by Verdi. She left the others at the starting gate.

Later, Tashko studied under the artistic tutelage of Jean Grass. The "monk of music", had brusque manners and sadistic discipline, but thanks to him Tashko also won the "Second Access." Soon the doors of America opened wide to her. Those were the years of Caruso, of the Metropolitan audience in tears, of the wild successes. Once Tashko had given her first concerts, fabulous offers rained down upon her. After the times of hunger, the first monies finally arrived. Yet on the eve of her great leap across the Ocean, a miracle happened. Instead of success, and international acclaim, Tashko chose to return home to Albania. It was a fatal attraction but Tashko followed it without argument. Her first concerts at Korça, Tirana, and Shkodra were touching. The public was left dumbstruck following her performance. No one had the courage to applaud because they refused to break the magic atmosphere that she had created in the theatre. Then, unexpectedly, the ovations exploded. These were indescribable triumphs for the young singer.

For Tashko music was a mission that she followed with enthusiasm. Her project was to bring her music to every corner of the country, even the most remote and impervious village. If there were no roads or if transportation could not be found, it mattered little. A grand piano would be loaded onto an oxcart and away she went. Tefta and her companions followed the cart on foot. When they encountered ditches and puddles, they also pushed the cart. Hers was the "theatre of the origins", in which the actors did everything. They sold tickets, set up and took down the scenery, were the costume designers and financiers of the show. Tashko never held back, she was always there, ready to lend a hand. It was enough for her to have a stage – perhaps improvised – and a public. Her voice became the stuff of legend. Her concerts were historical moments in the lives of the spectators. Tashko impatiently criss-crossed the country as if she was in a hurry to make herself heard. She acted as if her immanent end was already upon her. When she died unexpectedly, a piece of the musical soul of Albania disappeared.

The memory of her technique, of her admirable change of octave, of her rich and much sought-after phrasing, has influenced generations of singers and created a school. Although many of her recordings have been lost and everything, except a few photos was burned up by the war, nevertheless the legend of Tefta Tashko survives.

Andrea FARRARI

* * *

"ALEXANDER MOISSI brings the sun of his country everywhere..."

He wants all the people around him to be gay, impassioned and ready to flare up..."

Stefan Zweig

It happens sometimes that a modest attempt shakes off the drowsiness of the memory of our century and refreshes the memory of someone. This is particularly the case since we are speaking of one of the most illustrious personalities of the European theatrical scene, in Germany and Vienna during the first decade of this century.

The German theatre of this period cannot be conceived of apart from the creative genius of Max Reinhard. Yet the shining era of Reinhard cannot be conceived of without the genius of Alexander Moissi.

Moissi was the actor who truly possessed the lightness and grace of the human body and of gestures, the vividness of the "flight" of words and of the Soul, the elasticity of Being and the form of life?

Moissi was born at Trieste on April 2, 1879. His Albanian father was an economic emigrant from Kavaja. His mother was Aboresh. A good part of his infancy was passed in the ancient city of Durrës (called *Mirabilis Urbs* by Cicero) where he studied Albanian along with modern Greek.

His Albanian nature was simultaneously romantic and aggressive. The colors of the sea and its beauties, moulded his character and vividly outlined his temperament.

In 1898 he was suspended by the Conservatory of Vienna with the following remark that has

foreshadowed the debut of many a great performer: "He may become anything, but not an artist." From then on, the genius of Moissi raged on the stages of the most prestigious theatres in Europe. Moissi's success was largely due to the most important encounter of his life, with Keinz.

One reviewer remarked how "His deep voice, moaned and at the end was lost...like the waves, that are hidden one behind the other, like magic voices, like dried flowers, like broken wings..."

This famous voice still draws profound emotions from whoever has the opportunity to listen to one of the few extant Moissi recordings.

The continuous reflections on the crisis of German Theatre, gave way to various attempts at a new type of show, founded on the incisive force and the magic of words.

Moissi was not only a great artist and intellectual progressive, but also an attentive and extremely sensitive observer. He opposed the first winds of Nazism making their way through Germany. He was just as attentive to the events in the Soviet Union following the October revolution.

In regards to the reaction of the Italian theatre world, the



Bust of Alexander Moissi at Vienna's Burg Theatre

high esteem that Pirandello held for him stands out. Pirandello defined Moissi as the greatest interpreter of his characters. Moissi successfully interpreted characters on the operas of Gino Rocca "Il Teatro del mio Tempo" (1935) and Cavicchioli "L'Uomo Moissi" in "Commedia" (1935). Moissi worked in Milan, Rome, and Trieste.

Although he starred in nearly 10 films, including "Le Nozze di Figaro" (1920), he met his true success on the stage in the roles of Romeo, Edipus, Fedra, and in particular Hamlet. Max Brod declared Moissi's Hamlet role "was written for him, and he was born to be its only interpreter."

In his interpretations were some unGerman and unItalian improvisations. It was his "Albanian origin" that shaped his interpretations "with great eruptions" that came to light.

The heir to the Ring of Inland (which was the greatest trophy to German theatre) died at Coteage (Vienna) on March 22, 1935. His remains today rest near Lake Lugano in Switzerland.

The wild roses cling sweetly almost with passion to the cold marble headstone that reads

ALEXANDER MOISSI
1879-1935

Ardiana KARAKASHI



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"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

A SALUTE TO OUR "GODFATHER"

We have all encountered people of faith and goodness who have had an impact on our lives. I have been privileged to have encountered several such people. They have encouraged and inspired me deeply. One such person is Fr. Thomas F. McCormick, S.J., the "godfather" of our Albanian Catholic Institute. From the first day of his rectorship at the Jesuit Community at the University of San Francisco in 1987, he has shown great understanding and interest in our apostolate for the Church in Albania.

On an almost daily basis, Fr. McCormick has shared our thoughts, concerns and prayers for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Albania and in Kosova. Throughout the Institute's association with the Jesuit community, he has been a source of much encouragement, assisting us in many ways to continue our work for the peace and religious freedom of our people. I have experienced his fatherly concern in a special way several times, especially during the "75th Anniversary Celebration of Albania's Independence" in November 1987; the "Day of Prayer and Solidarity for Albanian Believers" in May, 1991; and my first visit to Albania in September, 1992 after 46 years of forced exile. His personal participation and commitment to these important events and personal assistance to me as I left for Albania will always be remembered with much gratitude.

Through Fr. McCormick's kindness and care, and that of the Jesuit Community, our Institute was able to bind ten sets of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin. Each set contained three beautiful volumes. The first set was offered to Pope John Paul

II at the gift procession during the historic Mass (April 25, 1993) in the Cathedral of Shkodër (at which the pontiff consecrated Albania's first bishops in fifty years). Father McCormick's interest made it possible for us, too, to convert and produce for European frequency 5 sets of documentary video-tapes, covering the celebrations in St. Ignatius Church of the 1985 International Ecumenical Program marking



Father Thomas F. McCormick, S.J. (left) with Father Simon Jubani of Shkodër during the "1991 Thanksgiving Mass" for the newly won religious freedom in Albania, St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco, May 1991

the "40th Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania", as well as the "1991 Thanksgiving Program" for the newly won religious freedom in Albania. Father also made it possible for two Video Cassette Recording machines to be sent to Albania from Rome.

Our "godfather" not only showed interest in the Institute's religious and public activities but also cared for the well-being of some of its members in need of education, employment and medicine.

Particularly dear to me was Fr. McCormick's heartfelt announcement of the 1990 Christmas Midnight Mass in St. Ignatius Church. He told of

THE ALBANIAN LEGACY OF ERNEST KOLIQI ON THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH

Writers achieve greatness differently—some through the beauty of their language, some through the brilliance of their scholarship, and some through the integrity of their principles.

The long-exiled Albanian writer Ernest Koliqi, whose 90th birthday has just been celebrated in a liberated Albania, attained great authority among readers of his native language through all three means.

A Salute to our "Godfather" continued

Albania's first public Christmas Mass in 25 years, which was being celebrated at the same time. Then he asked the congregation to give thanks for this miracle and to remember their less fortunate Albanian brothers and sisters. A group of Albanians in attendance were deeply touched. The *San Francisco Chronicle* even reported the story.

We might add that our "godfather" has not only shown his concern for the needs of Albanians, but has also taken under his wing other ethnic groups who have turned to him for assistance. These include Chinese students, the Ethiopian community, and Central American Refugees.

Father McCormick is well-known for his charity and kindness. He seems to embody Jesus' command to go and love one another—"for whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do unto me." This is our experience of Father and we remain grateful for his holy example and genuine care.

Regretfully, Fr. McCormick will soon be leaving us for another assignment. The Albanian Catholic Institute will sorely miss him, as will many others who have come to love him as their "godfather." We wish him good health and every blessing in his new assignment "for the greater glory of God."

Gjon SINISHTA

He was an inspired poet and prose writer, and a dedicated professor and researcher.

But above all, Ernest Koliqi was an enemy of Hoxhaite communism and a moral witness to the dilemmas facing intellectuals in the modern epoch.

He was born in Shkodër, capital of the Gheg dialect and center of the Albanian Catholic literary tradition.

In 1918, at 15 years of age, he travelled to Italy where he began college in Brescia. Three years later he returned to Albania, where he came under the influence of Luigj Gurakuqi and the Shkodër literary circle that included Dom Lazër Shantoja.

He won first place in a literary contest for the composition of the Albanian national anthem, before a panel of judges that included Fr. Gjergj Fishta, Luigj Gurakuqi, Midhat Frashëri, and Bishop Fan S. Noli. In this company, he took his place with the greatest Albanian intellectuals of modern times.

He helped found the newspaper *Ora e Maleve* (The Mountain Muse), and later joined the *Bashkimi* movement founded by Avni Rustemi. He began publishing books, the first being a dramatic poem on the life of Skanderbeg. In 1928, his novel *Hija e Maleve* (The Mountains' Shadow) appeared in print.

From that period on he was one of the most tireless Albanian writers and educators. In 1939 he was nominated to a post as Professor of Albanian Language and Literature at the University of Rome, which he occupied for the rest of his life, except for the short period from 1939 to 1942 when he served as minister of education in the Hranë government.

In that office, he organized the International Albanological Congress of 1940, and created the *Instituti i Studimeve Shqiptare* (Institute of Albanian Studies), which became the nucleus of the future University of Tiranë. In 1941, he launched a similar Institute at the University of Rome.

Koliqi opened the first full high school in Kosovë and pioneered Albanian language education in Kosovë, Montenegro (Mal i Zi), and Macedonia. He sent 200 instructors into Kosovë, where the Albanian population was mainly illiterate because of Serb restrictions on Albanian-language education.

His association with the early war-time regime, in which he did only positive work for the welfare of the Albanian people, led to his being labelled a "fascist" by the Hoxha regime and the banning of his work.

However, Koliqi was no fascist. That much is proven by his intervention in 1942 in an attempt to save the life of the Austrian Albanologist, Prof. Norbert Jokl, a Jew. As minister of education Koliqi sought to arrange for Jokl to leave Austria for Albania, where he would be granted a post as director of the Albanian National Library.

The appeal came too late, unfortunately, and Jokl died in Nazi hands from the effects of torture.

After the war Koliqi had no choice but to remain in Rome, where he resumed his literary and educational efforts with the dynamism that always characterized him. He never again trod the soil of his native land.

He was especially active in researching Arbëresh culture in Italy and America. The University of Rome sent him to the U.S. for several trips beginning in 1968. He recorded Arbëresh speech and folk traditions in New York, New Jersey, Cleveland, and on the West Coast.

Koliqi noted the preservation of Arbëresh culture in America up to the third generation. In 1974, he wrote, "The Arbëresh in America... are far more numerous than generally supposed." He concluded, "The study of the language spoken by the Arbëresh communities in America... has provided some important findings for comparison with the modern dialects spoken by the Arbëresh communities in Italy." His remarks on this topic were



Professor Ernest Koliqi (right) enjoying an evening reception in his honor at Santa Clara University. Our editor is on the left. Santa Clara, California, 1974

published in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* (Vol. X, 1989).

His main activity after the 1950s centered on the journal *Shejzat* (The Pleiades) founded in 1957, on which he enjoyed the collaboration of our friend and mentor, the great Albanian modernist poet Martin Camaj.

He died in 1975. Today his reputation is being fully restored in Albania, a development symbolized by articles on his 90th anniversary. He is now seen as a classic not only by writers of the Gheg dialect and Catholic intellectuals, but also by those in Tiranë and the southern part of the country who cherish Albanian literature. Positive articles of Koliqi's 90th birthday appeared in the influential *Rilindja Demokratike* of Tiranë as well as in the *Rilindja* of Prishtinë, which now appears in Tiranë and Switzerland simultaneously.

The time has come for worldwide recognition of Ernest Koliqi as a great exemplar of intellectual courage, and to facilitate not only the republication of all his works in Albanian and Italian, but the translation and publication of his main writings in English. We owe this to him, to the Albanian people, and to all others who appreciate and honor literature.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

THE SPIRITUAL PATRIMONY OF MSGR. JOSEPH J. OROSHI (1915–1989)

Editor's Note: Five years have passed since the death of Msgr. Dr. Joseph J. Oroshi. To mark the occasion we wish to remember him for his untiring efforts to preserve the Catholic faith, national identity and cultural heritage of Albanians in North America.

Father Joseph J. Oroshi described the thriving Catholic press activity of Shkodra in the 1930s:

The elite of the Albanian intellectuals in exile still remember with respect and admiration the shining productions of different knowledges in seven periodicals which were printed in the city of Shkodra. Among those (authors) were the most bright and professional minds of Albanians. Those magazines were: 'The Morning Star' and 'St. Anthony's Voice' of the Franciscan fathers, 'Leka', 'Përparimi', and 'Sacred Heart Messenger' of the Jesuit fathers, 'The Sunday Bell' of the interdiocesan secular clergy, and 'The Drip', sustained and edited by a group of Shkodran Catholics in a pleasant popular style.¹

The common motto of the Franciscan and Jesuit schools was FE, ATDHE, PËRPARIM (Faith, Fatherland, Progress). Besides religion, all subjects of study were offered. The two institutions stressed art, literature, theatre, music, tradition. They particularly excelled in preparing the students in foreign and classical languages so that they could be accepted at the European universities.

Following his training in Shkodra, Deacon Oroshi was sent to attend the Roman College of Propaganda Fide in 1936. He joined 14 other Albanian students. The student group founded a literary society called 'The Albanian Society of St. Asit'.² They asked the best Albanian writers of that time (Noli, Mjeda, Fishta, Koliqi, Haxhiademi, Pogradeci and others) to send them copies of their works. Most of the authors sent books inscribed with words of encouragement. When Oroshi became

President of the society, he asked his superiors to invite Fr. Fishta to be the guest speaker at the special academy (meeting) to honor the Albanian national poet. Oroshi met Fishta for the first time.

Oroshi earned his bachelors' degree in 1938, an MA degree in Theology in 1940, and was then ordained. It was a great disappointment that he was not allowed to continue studies leading to the doctoral degree. Oroshi was called to serve as aid and secretary to Bishop-Abbot Frano Gjini, Diocese of Mirdita, and was also named administrator of St. Nicholas's parish in Spaçi. In his pastoral life, Oroshi knew how to gain knowledge from his superiors as he did from his professors and teachers. He observed closely and admired bishop Gjini for his advise, eloquence, humility, wiseness, his religious dedication and principles, and for his dignity. (He was executed March 8, 1948 with 18 people by the communist regime).³ Fr. Oroshi respected Bishop Abbot Preng Doçi (Dotchi) of Mirdita, the most foresighted knowledgeable renaissance Albanian Catholic authority and patriot. Abbot Doçi who was exiled for 20 years by the Turkish government before the independence of Albania, was the first priest and Albanian to serve in this hemisphere, in Newfoundland.⁴

After two years of service at the Abbacy, Oroshi became Pastor of St. Magdalene's parish in Ungrej. By 1946, when the Bishop appointed Oroshi a Consultor of his diocese in addition to his parish duties, the Catholic Church was going through the first stages of the post war communist persecution. Fr. Oroshi was very aware and alert to this development. He remained firm in defending the faith despite the violence and unrest. His impending arrest was purposefully postponed to trap him. The 75 page English narration about his impending arrest and flight for freedom testifies his despair, honor and confusion. Oroshi was warned that he will be arrested while celebrating the Holy Mass. He immediately took a mass kit and other sacramental objects and joined the freedom fighters. Oroshi shared the sacraments as well as seven breathtaking months in hiding until he crossed the

border to Yugoslavia with a group of freedom fighters in June 1951.

Fr. Oroshi's request for permission to offer Albanian Catholic refugees the Holy Mass was denied by the Yugoslav authorities; however he was allowed to stay at the Catholic parish rectory in Belgrade and attended courses in philology and philosophy at the Belgrade University until 1954. Then he secured permission to leave Yugoslavia and travel to Rome, Italy.

The Vatican assigned Fr. Oroshi as chaplain of Albanian refugees in Europe. Italy was the center of this activity. While moving from one refugee camp to another, he almost lost his life, but he was determined to continue with his assignment.⁵ Meanwhile he attended the University of Rome. His classes in literature and philosophy were under the guidance of professor Ernest Koliqi. In 1958 Fr. Oroshi enrolled at the Angelicum University. Two years later he earned his doctoral degree in theology. He confided that this was the happiest moment in his life, yet he shed tears of sadness because none of his family could share his joy.

Fr. Oroshi was a man of iron will. In 1960 he published in Rome *The New Testament* and *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* in pocket book form. He translated the text from its original Greek into Albanian.

During his studies and the work with refugees in Rome and Sicily, Fr. Oroshi befriended Professors Z. Valentini, E. Koliqi, K. Gurakuqi and M. Camaj. He contributed excellent articles on Albanian art, folklore, literature, travel to Koliqi's cultural-literary review 'Le Pleiades'.

In Rome Oroshi became acquainted with Arbëresh intellectuals from Sicily and Calabria. He was much impressed and touched by their strong cultural heritage. For 500 years they kept alive their religious rite, the Albanian language and costumes. In recognition of their uninterrupted patriotic love and spirit, Fr. Oroshi wrote two masterful studies about them in Koliqi's review.

In 1960, Oroshi was sent by the Vatican to the United States of America to serve Albanian Catholic refugees. First he went to Boston and meet with Bishop Fan Noli. During his stay in Boston,



Monsignor Joseph J. Oroshi offering the first copy of *The Four Gospels & The Acts of Apostles* to Pope Paul VI, Vatican, 1978

Oroshi engaged in establishing an ecumenical dialogue between Bishop Noll and Cardinal Cushing. The principle and intentions for this encounter were noble, but the time was not right to expect quick results from ongoing dialogue. Soon Oroshi went to New York and settled in Tarrytown. There he established the first church community of the newly arrived Albanian emigres. Initially he sought churches in which to celebrate Sunday Mass in the Albanian language. This proved to be difficult and at times quite frustrating. In order to earn his living, he taught Latin and religion in Catholic schools. That alleviated the economic burden on his flock, and increased their respect for him. In June 1962 he formed 'The Albanian-American Catholic League.' The group of intellectuals and students served as his primary helpers, advisors and counselors. He included the grassroots people as members by free voting. This was a most positive step to draw people together and move in the right direction. There were some obstacles at the beginning of this new activity, but in time they were overcome thanks to the Christian spirit and Albanian brotherhood efforts.

As the number of the newly arrived emigrants increased year by year, Oroshi's ability to find churches for services diminished to the point that in 1964 the door of the hall where Albanians gathered for their services was slammed in the face of the pastor and his flock. Fr. Oroshi, turning to-

wards his people and making the sign of the cross, told them:

They are right. We shall buy or build our own national catholic church as the other nationalities and our Orthodox and Moslem Albanians have done before us.

Thanks to the united efforts a Funeral Parlor was purchased and converted into a church. The hemisphere's First Albanian Catholic Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel was finally dedicated in Bronx, New York on April 12, 1970. Oroshi was officially named pastor. This was a joyous and extraordinary event for Albanian Catholics everywhere. The New York Metropolitan press and news media marked the event in front pages.

The name of the church had a very deep rooted significance for the Albanian Catholics. "Our Lady of Good Counsel of Shkodra" had been the patroness of Albania since the 15th century. When Turks occupied Shkodra in 1578 the portrait of Mary with child Jesus flew west of Albania. The legend has it that 2 Albanian pilgrims followed that vision on boat and foot until it stopped in Genazzano village some 45 km East of Rome. There they build a church and named it in memory of the ruined church at Shkodra. After the independence Albanians build a new church on the foundation of the old one just below the castle of Shkodra. The new church was totally ruined in 1967 by the communists. It was the ongoing suffering of the Church that made Fr. Oroshi seek to preserve the blessed name in this country, so that the Albanian spiritual heritage might continue.

The publication of the periodical *Jeta Katholike Shqiptare* (Catholic Albanian Life) started in 1966. The main aim was to communicate better with Albanian Catholics as well as with all Albanians in the diaspora. Fr. Oroshi's call for cooperation in his periodical was answered by a goodly number of religious and lay Albanians (Fr. Andrea Nargaj, Ph.D., Fr. Paulin Margjokaj, Ph.D., Prof. Zef Valentini, S.J., Prof. E. Koliqi, Dom Prenk Ndrevasaj, Dr. H. Gurashi, Dr. S. Muka, Dr. Çesk Ashta, Kolë Çuni, Tonin and Zef P. Mirakaj, Zef Pashko Deda, Ndoc Vulaj, Franc Shkreli, Lec Shllaku, and a score of young prospects who



Abbey Church of Oroshi, Mirdita, where Monsignor often officiated. The bell tower was demolished in 1967 during the communist anti-religious "cultural revolution"

learned the job working with the director). Fr. Oroshi, because of possible repercussions in Albania, used the penname as Zediku or Theologu. One third of each issue of the magazine was written by him, including "The Four Gospels" – "The Acts of the Apostles." These were printed in series until 1978.

It was natural that the journal themes focused mainly on religion and the church in Albania. It covered also the persecution by the communists who destroyed everything that has to do with religion including most of the clergy, who became martyrs of faith and the nation. Of course Mother Teresa had her share of space in the magazine.

There also appeared good articles on literature, language, history, tradition, folklore and art.

Pope Paul VI, recognized Fr. Oroshi's devotion to his religious activities and his administrative chores for the glory of the Catholic Church. The pontiff elevated Oroshi to the honorific title of *MONSIGNOR* in 1973. Earlier Oroshi made a request through the Archbishop of New York to the prelate of Bar (Tivari) in Montenegro to arrange for an assistant pastor. The parish had grown too large for one priest. His request was accepted and Rev. Rrok Mirdita came from Montenegro to join Fr. Oroshi on a permanent basis as his assistant.⁶ The church building was also too small to hold the flock. The need to either enlarge or build a new church became imperative. The decision was made to build a new church adjacent to the old one. A campaign for contributions was launched. All three Albanian religious groups, (Catholic, Orthodox and Moslem) contributed generously. For Albanian Catholics there was a 'special promise' to be kept. The faithful people answered with enthusiasm. The building of the church was completed by January 1979. His Eminence, Cardinal Terence Cooke, Archbishop of New York dedicated and blessed the new Church of 'Our Lady of Good Counsel' of Albanians.

While the work on the new church was under-way, Msgr. Oroshi's *The Four Gospels and The Acts of Apostles* was published by the Vatican's Polyglot Typography. This 1978 work translated by Oroshi in Albanian from the original texts is his main work in the religious field. It represented the fulfillment of Oroshi's dream.

Msgr. Oroshi's health was slowly deteriorating. He was suffering from eyesight problems and a malignant cancer. This condition forced him to retire before he would have liked. Afterwards, Oroshi served mostly as an advisor and guide. He could not undertake any new activity. After his retirement in 1986, he spent more time in hospitals than at home. Oroshi died on March 15, 1989.

In the above short notes Msgr. Oroshi was portrayed as a persistent learner, a devout and staunch catholic priest, a person of unshakable hope for freedom and human rights, a pioneer, a guide and leader, a translator of the Holy Scrip-

ture, a writer, a scholar and a teacher. He was indeed in the words of his followers and our editor a "remarkable missionary." At his funeral Mass, Cardinal John O'Connor of New York lauded him as "a great scholar, a pillar of the community, and as a strong promoter of ecumenism."

It is our wish that some of Msgr. Oroshi's admirers, disciples, students or scholars would seriously search and reveal more, especially through his correspondence, other aspects of this dynamic personality, who surely has left to the new generations of Albanians a true indelible spiritual heritage.

Zef V. NEKAJ

Notes:

1. Albanian Catholic Life, 1966, p. 7.
2. In honor of St. Astius, the first Illyrian Bishop of Durrës, martyred during the persecution of Caesar Troyianus, A.D. 98-117.
3. For more information on the martyrdom of Abbot Frano Gjini see: Gjon Sinishta, *The Fulfilled Promise - A Documentary Account of the Religious Persecution in Albania*, (San Francisco, California-Ignatius Press, 1976) pp. 91-94.
4. Melhem Mobarak: "Abbot Preng Doçi - First Albanian resident in North America" in *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, 1986-87.
5. In 1956 Fr. Oroshi printed a manual for Albanian refugees entitled *The Spiritual Treasure and the Teachings of the Christian Doctrine*, Rome, 1956.
6. Fr. Rrok Mirdita was ordained Archbishop of Durrës-Tiranë April 25, 1993 by Pope John Paul II in Shkodër.

A CHRONOLOGICAL SYNOPSIS OF THE LIFE OF MSGR. DR. JOSEPH J. OROSHI

1915- (Nov. 21) born in Kufalla, Mirdita, Albania.

1927- Fr. Gjergj Seregi, SJ, noted Oroshi's intelligence and possible vocation and sent him to the Pontifical Seminary, Shkodër.

1936- enrolled in the College of Propaganda Fide, Rome, Italy.

1938- earned Bachelors degree in theology.

1940- received his masters degree in theology and was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Fumassoni Biondi, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide.

1940- returned to Albania as secretary to the Bishop-Abbot Frano Gjini of the Diocese of Mirdita. Simultaneously assigned as pastor of St. Nicholas parish of Spaçi, Mirdita.

1942- named pastor of St. Mary Magdalene's parish, Ungrej, Mirdita.

1946- named consultor of the Diocese of Mirdita in addition to his parish duties.

1950- joined the anticommunist freedom fighters. Served as their spiritual leader.

1951- escaped to Yugoslavia, asked to serve Albanian catholic exiles, but was denied.

1952- enrolled at Belgrade University in philology and philosophy classes.

1954- secured permission to move to Rome, Italy.

1955- assigned as Chaplain of Albanian Catholic Refugees in Western Europe. While stationed in Rome, enrolled at the University of Rome in programs of Albanian literature and philosophy.

1956- published *The Spiritual Treasure and The Teaching of The Christian Doctrine* in Albanian for refugees.

1958- enrolled at Angelicum University, Rome, in theology courses to prepare for his doctoral degree.

1960- earned STD in theology, and published pocketbook version of *The Gospel and The New Testament According to St. Matthew*.

1961- emigrated to the United States of America; stayed briefly in Boston; worked in ecumenical projects.

1961- moved to Terrytown, New York City. Started teaching Latin and Theology in Catholic colleges and assembled newly arrived Albanian catholics to serve them spiritually.

1962- formed *The Albanian-American Catholic League* in New York.

1965- was officially recognized as an associate pastor of the Archdiocese of New York with all rights and duties prescribed by Canon Laws.

1966- founded the Quarterly magazine 'Jeta Katholike Shqiptare' (Albanian Catholic Life) to better communicate with his people.

1968- was assigned as associate pastor at St. Raymond's parish in the Bronx.

1968- appealed to all Albanian-Catholic, Moslem, and Orthodox faithful to support the foundation of the Catholic Center in Bronx. The Albanian ecumenical solidarity response was exemplary.

1969- Nov. 15 permission to celebrate Holy Mass at 'Our Lady of Good Counsel' in Bronx was given.

1970- April 12, Our Lady of Good Counsel Church dedicated.

1972-1973- The Archdiocese of New York formally requested that the Archdiocese of Tivari, Montenegro send another priest to aid Oroshi.

1973- Sept. 6, Rev. Rrok Mirdita joins Oroshi's parish permanently as his assistant.

1973- July 10, His Eminence, Cardinal Terence Cooke named Father Oroshi administrator of the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel. Fr. Oroshi paid off the mortgage of the Center building.

1974- Jan. 24 Pope Paul VI bestowed the title of *Monsignor* upon Oroshi in recognition of his achievements among Albanian Catholics.

1978- Jan. 13 publication in the Albanian language of *The Four Gospels* and *The Acts of Apostles* at Vatican, Rome.

1978- the new church of 'Our Lady of Good Counsel' Parish inaugurated.

1980- retired as the founder of the first Albanian Catholic Church in the western hemisphere.

1989- March 15 died after a prolonged illness at the Albert Einstein-Weiler Section of the Montefiore Medical Center, New York.

BOOK REVIEWS

Zef Simoni & al.: *Martirizimi i Kishës Katolike Shqiptare 1944-1990*, (Martyrdom of the Catholic Church in Albania 1944-1990), At Gjergj Fishta Printing House, Tiranë, 1993.

Msgr. Zef Simoni, auxiliary bishop of Shkodër, with a staff of ten collaborators, has produced the most chilling account yet, in the history of the Catholic Church in Albania, of the Church's sufferings, under the oppressive heel of Albanian communism.

The book is divided into four parts. The First part begins with a dedication page to Pope John Paul II, the staunch defender of religious freedom. The very first copy of the volume was offered to the Holy Father in recognition and devotion for his love and affection for the Albanian people. It was given to him during his historic visit to Shkodër, 25 April, 1993. The volume continues with a brief introduction by Vili Kamsi, the new Albanian ambassador to the Vatican. Kamsi reiterates that "without the publication of documentation on the tragic persecution of Catholicism in Albania, the public will not be able to learn the truth". We may add here that the Albanian Catholic Institute (formerly the Albanian Catholic Information Center) has continually published since 1966 detailed documentation in English and other languages on the severe religious persecution in Albania. Now, with the victory of religious and political freedoms, the publishing of unheard crimes against Catholic clergy should not only be a spiritual relief and inspiration but a duty to the nation. The documentation should expose the crimes of all communist officials, who in the name of a deceiving and devastating ideology beat, tortured and killed, in the most heinous way, the Catholic clergy and faithful, including the poor sisters. This part of the book reprints as well several martyrs' testimonies from the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*.

The second part of the volume is titled "Executed Clergy" and presents a list of names and dates in chronological order of the killed clergy during the period 1944-1990. Brief biographical notes with many photos are indeed touching but at the same time very inspiring for the great love

and fidelity of the victims towards their country, the Catholic faith and the Holy Father.

The third section "Dead in prisons and extermination camps" is most moving and at times chilling for its description of so much sufferings. It shows the calvary of those who sacrificed their lives in a slow martyrdom, giving thus a sublime example how Christians offer with joy even their own lives for the FAITH AND FATHERLAND (Fe e Atdhe).

The fourth and last part of the book "Completed their (prison) term and now serve the Church" gives the names of all who, as by true miracle, escaped the "red monster's" grip and now with much enthusiasm and dedication serve the Church and the suffering flock.

The volume concludes with an awful statistical account which will make your spine shiver. Here below are some of the statistics.

1. The average age of the executed clergy was 47 years;
2. The average age of the clergy who died under torture was 50 years;
3. The average age of the clergy executed or killed without court proceedings was 56 years;
4. The average age of the clergy who died immediately after suffering torture was 52 years;
5. Clergy who died after serving their sentence, served a total of 363 years in prison;
6. Members of the Catholic clergy in Albania served a total of 881 years in prison or almost 9 centuries during the period of 1944-1990. They had studied in 24 European universities in some 450 specialized programs.

Truly a horrifying balance which indelibly stains the record of the communists in the contemporary history of the Albanian nation. What is the explanation or excuse of Enver Hoxha's "offspring" hiding now under a new name—"socialists"—for the national crime of their stalinist predecessors? Tortured and executed clerics taught the people not only about faith but with their enlightening liter-

ary, scientific, and cultural works educated and opened the eyes of our nation to see the glow of our forefathers' treasures in tradition, customs, culture, and religion.

The book *Martirizimi i Kishës Katolike Shqiptare 1944-1990*, not withstanding some printing and language weaknesses, which are understandable during this difficult period of transition, is a first rate document not only for the history of the Catholic Church, but also for the half century of the hated communist dictatorship in our national history. No doubt, the book will be of great help to all interested in the contemporary history of Albania. It can be ordered through: Msgr. Zef Simoni, Pallati i Argjipeshkvisë, Shkodër, Albania. For now, it is available only in the Albanian language.

Palokë PLAKU

Joao S. Cla Dias, *The Mother of Good Counsel of Genazzano*, translated from Portuguese into English by Philip Moran Sr., published in 1992 by The Foundation for A Christian Civilization, Inc., PO BOX 121, Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570.

Joao S. Cla Dias loves the painting of The Mother of Good Counsel at Genazzano with a fierce, passionate and unrelenting love. He writes about the image of the Virgin Mary and Jesus as an admiring child might write about his grandmother. Everything which surrounds the painting, to his mind, takes on a mystery and sacredness which dazzle him.

The book Dias has produced is beautiful. With its large size, its glossy pages and many color photographs and paintings, no corners were cut in making the book as attractive as it can be. To have such a book about the image which is called "Patroness of Albania" is a treat.

Dias is a Brazilian writer whose love for the painting began on a hospital bed, he says. It seems a friend sent him a copy of the picture at a particularly low point during a serious illness he was suffering. He overcame his low spirits by staring at the painting for days and contemplating its meaning. Since then it has been an obsession with him. Dias is not the first to be fascinated by the image,

which is often called "Our Lady of Scutari*," for its association with Albania.

The image was a favorite of Scanderbeg, the national hero of Albania, who venerated it all through his life and credited it with his success in battle. Pilgrims from all over the world come to visit the chapel which now houses the painting in Genazzano, in Italy. Dias is in love with the history of the painting, particularly the mystery that surrounds its origin—no one knows who painted the image nor when. Dias is in love with the miracle cures attributed to the picture, and the many strange stories that surround it, which somehow seem all of a piece. But most of all, Dias is in love with the way The Mother of Good Counsel looks. And so, appropriately, that's where his review begins. First, he describes the child in the picture:

His right arm encircles the noble and delicate neck of His Mother in a gesture of intense affection. His left hand securely grasps the upper portion of her dress as if saying, "Thou art all Mine!" ... The Divine Infant's face, while proper to that of a child, does not express any of the superficiality so characteristic of that phase of life... With a gaze all-embracing, the Infant contemplates the past, present and future... This internal state of contemplation notwithstanding, he wishes to manifest here all his satisfaction, all his happiness, at being in the arms of his mother. (3-4)

Dias's language is strong and at first seems dubious. But on the cover of the book is a beautiful reproduction of the painting. To look at it cursorily, it is only a beautiful painting, nothing more. After Dias's description, a closer look almost makes it look plainer. But then, something like an inner meaning begins to appear and there, just as Dias says, in the eyes of the child and in the very position of his hands, is a lesson in practical theology... Then, Dias describes the mother in a passage that turns out to be his best in the book:

The infant pressed His face ever so slightly against that of His Mother and re-

ceives, in turn, her ineffable affection, veneration, and tenderness, an exchange represented with special adroitness by the inclination of their heads toward one another and by the intimacy of their gazes.

The mysteries of this union made Saint Bernard exclaim: Admire therefore these two marvels, and choose which of them thou wilt admire the more, whether the gracious condescension of the Son, or the glorious exaltation of the Mother. Each of them oppresses our mind, each of them passes our comprehension. That God would obey a woman is a condescension without parallel; that a woman should command God is a glory beyond compare. (5)

Dias goes on.

Who has ever held in his hands a treasure equal to this, the Infinite? At the same time, who was ever more desirous than Our lady of attracting others to share the treasure?

There is an intimacy and a depth of relationship in this union of Mother and Son that surprises and attracts. The union of soul, reflected in their shared gaze, generates in both of them a tranquility and steadfastness in affection, an affection that seems to make them truly sense the blessed delight of this mutual understanding, of this togetherness! (5)

These words hang in the heart of the reader, and linger there through the rest of the book. It's a good thing, too, because some of Dias' language later on would be abrasive if it weren't permeated with this sweetness, and if it weren't qualified constantly by this image that remains in the psychological and spiritual center of the work.

By first exploring this relationship between mother and son, and how it in turn embraces the whole world, Dias changes the whole tenor and character of the chapters that follow. Dias says that this mother's love for her son is not merely tender

and touching, and this son's admiration of his mother is no mere filial respect. Their love is the meeting-place of time and eternity, of creation and redemption, of man and God.

To call attention to the painting's radical departure from the world it inhabits, Dias turns in the next chapter to the town of Genazzano itself. He describes the town with the same painstaking detail he gave the picture itself. But the portrait that emerges is a very different one. Here he means to show the untidy, preoccupied, human city which holds the heavenly image and has named it.

The streets are narrow, winding, and of irregular pattern. One might almost conclude that the inhabitants of Genazzano were horrified at straight lines. There are paths and constructions that were not planned but, rather, resulted from the walking to and fro of many generations, arising spontaneously, organically, in accordance with necessities and possibilities. A house is built because there is an empty space; a street is open, respecting the position of the house; a wide or narrow staircase spans the different levels between streets; an arch buttresses two neighboring structures and simultaneously plans an aesthetic role. Must everything be straight and symmetrical? Without the monotony of planned urbanism, the town acquired extremely varied and picturesque traits. (14)

He is fascinated by the town, but his fascination remains centered on the painting. He means to show that, just as God chose to become a man in this world, as it is, and change it from within, so with the image. The purpose of Catholicism, he says, is not to impose artificially a foreign order to a world that would otherwise be worthless. The Church is rather an agent, not unlike heaven, which elevates and transforms a culture by means of its own interior rhythms.

What if someone decided to renovate and paint all of this, leaving the walls smooth, shining, and like new? What if somebody paved these undulating and un-

predictable streets? What if all the businessmen installed illuminated signs throughout the town? I took care to quickly cast aside thoughts of such possibilities, so befitting modern Vandals. Let us leave Genazzano as it is, time-worn but picturesque and respectable with its happy and unpretentious populace. (14)

The book follows an understandable pattern in the first two chapters. Beginning with the image itself, Dias then describes its surroundings. But the third chapter is misplaced. It probably should have been a part of the appendix. It is a collection of affidavits attesting to the fact that the painting is suspended in mid-air and not actually attached to the wall it is closest to. If the painting is not being held by any fasteners, that fact ought to be mentioned. But to digress into, long testimonials by builders, architects and historians at so critical and early a stage in the book is a bit off-putting.

The frantic pace of chapter four, called "Scanderbeg, Sword and Shield of Christendom", nearly makes up for the preceding chapter's slowness. Dias's fascination fixes on Scaderbeg for now, and again, he is interested in anything and everything that touches on his subject's history and life. Scanderbeg is the Catholic warrior prince of Albania who by his vigorous defense of his homeland practically single-handedly defended the Western World from Muslim invasion in his life time. His successors have rarely been so thoroughly and popularly treated in English.

Dias tells of the childhood of George Castriota, and of his capture when nine years old by Muslim invaders, who gave him the name "Iskender Beg" which later became "Scanderbeg." "As a general of the Ottoman army," writes Dias, "Scanderbeg more than once devastated enemy troops that attacked the Turkish empire. Thus, the Sultan dreamed of making Scanderbeg a frightful renegade who would extinguish the remorse of his apostasy by shedding the blood of Christians."

Dias writes of the crusades with relish. He describes the scene when Scanderbeg switched sides during a battle between his Turkish Muslim army and the Christian Hungarians.

On a cold November night, near Nish, the Hungarian vanguard caught sight of the heterogenous Turkish horde. The warrior sof the Cross silently eyed their enemy until the moment Constable Hunyadi joined them and gave the order to attack. Great shouts of enthusiasm resounded on the battlefield as the crusaders' cavalry hurtled forward in a furious charge. Clouds of arrows filled the sky. Taking advantage of the confusion of the first clash, Scanderbeg and his followers passed over to the side of the followers of the Cross of Christ. (50)

Dias attributes much of Scanderbeg's success to the Blessed Mother. But when he writes of the battles and intrigue of the crusades, the words sound too brutal to modern ears. He remains at his best when he turns to description. Insisting at one point that Scanderbeg was "as gentle in peace as was terrible in war," Dias writes:

According to his contemporaries, Scanderbeg was tall and slender with a prominent chest, wide shoulders, long neck, and high forehead. He had black hair, fiery eyes, and a powerful voice. So warlike was his nature that he truly needed to wage battle from time to time ... In Prince Scanderbeg the people found courage in battle with certainty of victory; he was the man of Providence, the defender of the country, the protege of Our Lady (53)

Scanderbeg was also a great son of Rome. Twice, he made pilgrimages here to seek the aid first of Pope Pius II and then Pope Paul II. In each case, the Holy Father was ready with encouragement. "Beloved son," said Pius II, "continue to defend the Catholic Faith. God for whom you fight, will not abandon his cause. He will, I am confident, grant success against the Turks and other unbelievers to you and the rest of the Christians with great glory and honour." (59)

But the pontiff's call for a crusade in support of Scanderbeg fell on deaf ears among the European faithful. Scanderbeg made a pilgrimage to Pope Paul II at a difficult time after Pope Pius II's

death. He said, "After twenty-three years of unceasing war, I present myself here together with the warriors that remain. Ours is a state exhausted by so many battles; Albania is a body of which no member remains unwounded; only a few drops of its blood remain to be shed for the Christian world. Alas, come to our aid, otherwise the last champion of Jesus Christ will soon disappear from the other side of the Adriatic." (61)

Again, the pope was disappointed by the lack of response among the faithful to his cry for help. Scanderbeg, said Dias, had to turn to the Blessed Mother instead. In January of 1467, Scanderbeg felt his strength waning. He visited his beloved shrine for the last time, kneeling at the feet of the Virgin Most Merciful, his constant protectress in battle. [That is, in front of the picture that is now called "Our Lady of Shkodra."] She had reconquered his kingdom; he returned it to her hands.

He died soon afterward, but not before rising from his deathbed to fight—and win—one last battle. When he finally did die, on January 17, 1467, an Albanian general went through the town shouting, "Today the walls of Albania fell and its fortresses were demolished! All our strength was vanished and our power is lying on the ground! All our hope is extinguished with this one man!" (63)

The fifth chapter is an account of the miraculous transportation of the image from Scutari, Albania to Genazzano. First, Dias describes the scene in Albania after Scanderbeg's death. "Many, heart-broken, chose to leave. Day after day, many faithful flocked to the feet of the holy image to bid their heavenly Lady farewell forever." With Scanderbeg, the country had lost its heart. Dias describes two of Scanderbeg's soldiers who were forced to choose between struggling on without him, or leaving their beloved Albania.

Faced with this cruel dilemma, two friends, both courageous warriors of Scanderbeg, remained undecided. The first, De Slavias, was already past the prime of life; the other, Gjorgi, was still a young man.

The consternation of both men was not without cause. On the other hand, they knew that the Ottoman danger was imminent...on the other, they fully realized that the Patroness of Albania was the real cause behind all the victories of Scanderbeg, her courageous and faithful devotee. De Slavias and Gjorgi thus thought that while the Virgin remained in Albania she would perform any and all miracles to prevent the fall of the country into Turkish dominion. (67)

The two prayed to our Lady of Shkodra for the answer. In a dream the two had, they found it.

In addition to that heavenly and imponderable interior communication, the Virgin of the holy fresco appeared to Gjorgi while he slept. In his dreams, she ordered that he and his friend prepare everything required for a journey, as it had become necessary for them to leave that unfaithful country forever. She added that she herself, in her holy image, would also leave Scutari in order to escape the sacrilegious hands of the Turks who would seek her out in the next invasion to desecrate her. From that moment, her graces and blessings would be reserved for another place. Our Lady ordered Gjorgi to follow her on all the paths she would tread. As soon as he awakened, Gjorgi hurriedly sought out De Slavias, wishing to relate the details of his marvelous dream. De Slavias, however, gave his friend no chance to share the story, telling that he himself had received the same heavenly messages while he slept. Overjoyed at this revelation, they went to pray for the last time at the shrine of the miraculous painting of Most Holy Mary. (68)

What happens next is familiar to many already. While the two prayed before the painting, a white cloud comes to rest underneath it, and the painting slips away from the wall. Like the Israelites

following the cloud of divine presence, the two follow the painting as it floats out the door.

The two tirelessly accompanied her on the nineteen mile journey from Scutari to the Adriatic Sea. Then a new problem presented itself. The cloud indicated that the way would no longer be over firm, well-traveled roads, but over the immense rolling and breaking waves of the sea. What did the Blessed Virgin desire? Was she testing their faith by seeing if they would follow the new way indicated, only then to return to land? Or was she about to perform another miracle.

The two saw that in the same spectacular manner as the Jews had been guided by Moses through the Red Sea or that Saint Peter walked over the lake of Genesareth, they, too, were walking over the water. They watched in amazement as the watery surface was transformed into solid diamonds under each footstep, then became liquid once again as their feet left the surface. (68-69)

As the two Albanian soldiers are thus engaged, another supernatural occurrence is taking place in the town of Genazzano. The widow Petruccia de Norcera, a member of the Third Order of Saint Augustine, was praying for the re-conversion of a broken Christian world.

She hoped for heavenly intervention for many years against all hope, until one day the unbelievable happened. The Holy Ghost enlightened her with a magnificent revelation: "Mary Most holy, in her holy image of Scutari, wishes to leave Albania." One can imagine Petruccia's shock upon learning of this serious and sublime mission. Her surprise was even greater when she heard that Genazzano had been chosen to be the new seat of the miraculous image. Surprise turned to profound perplexity when the Blessed Virgin herself ordered her to build the temple that would shelter the fresco.

Petruccia was already well advanced in years and did not have the necessary means to accomplish such a holy task. However, the Blessed Virgin promised that she would help at the opportune moment. (73)

The rest of the chapter describes the serious difficulties Gjorgi, Sclavis and Petruccia endure before they finally meet together around the image in Genazzano.

The next two chapters are impressive in the sheer number of miracle stories and cures that the image brought to Genazzano. Blind people see, hardened sinners convert, and many more miracles take place. Dias makes a good attempt at including them in a narrative way, so that the story isn't interrupted by them—but he only partly succeeds. After several chapters of history, it is a bit of a surprise to leap into a list of miracles that might, again, be better left for the appendix. But they are invaluable for the testimony they give to the power and majesty of this beautiful painting.

Chapter 8 begins with a note of contrition on Dias' part. "Contemplating pious pilgrims enraptured before the Mother of Good Counsel, lighting candles and praying in silence, someone might be misled regarding the general state of Christendom in the second half of the fifteenth century," he says. "Let us leave the small town of Genazzano, with its multitudes of pilgrims hastening to the feet of the holy image. Let us go instead to the city par excellence, Rome..." Therefore, from the beginning chapter, which was confined to the borders of the painting itself, and the next chapters, which widened the scope to the town of Genazzano to the boundaries of Albania, Dias now contemplates the ancient world, to put the painting in an even larger context.

Afterward, the last three chapters are three of the best. The ninth is another list of miracles, but in these Dias wishes to show that copies, and not just the original painting, have been means of grace. Next, he returns to Albania to the astonishing story of the chapel that was left behind by the image—and the insistence of Albanians not to leave it. A plaque there reads: "Our Lady of Good Counsel, Come Back." Dias points out that popular

belief has it that Our Lady of Scutari, patroness of Albania, will return—once Albania becomes Catholic again. The last chapter is called "Popes and Saints Venerate the Image." Together these three chapters are prophetic.

In spring 1993, Pope John Paul II went to Albania to consecrate four new bishops—the first in many years. At that time, he brought a copy of Our Lady of Good Counsel as she appears in the painting at Genazzano. He blessed the image, laid it on the altar in Scutari and prayed. Here seems to be the beginning of an answer to so many prayers to Our Lady of Good Counsel for a new triumph of the faith in Albania. Here seems a modern story like so many in Dias's book of the ancient painting working somehow to the forefront of cultural and political events.

Dias' book, altogether, leaves the reader with a deep feeling of satisfaction. Its beautifully reproduced pictures and its large size make it an excellent coffee table book, and a good book for children. Dias has done an invaluable service to the Church by collecting together so much information about the painting of Genazzano in one place. His emphasis at key points on the devotion to the image in Albania is much appreciated.

Tom HOOPES

* An alternate name for Shkodër often used by foreigners



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PAL DUKA-GJINI: JETA DHE VEPRATE GJERGJ FISHTES, Printing House Porziuncola at Santa Maria Degli Angeli, adjacent Assisi, Sep. 1992, pp 297, Rome, Italy. (The Monograph can be ordered at: Franciscan Fathers, Via del Cottolengo 4, 00165 Rome, Italy for \$25.00).

Professor Ana Luka's succinct and exemplary introduction to this monograph seems to have exhausted all points that a reviewer could make. This fresh monograph has not as yet been translated into English or any other language. The multifaceted life of the Albanian national poet has been relatively hidden from Albanians, especially those of past two generations who lived under communist rule. The following paragraph will highlight some key ideas in the first part of *The Life of Gjergj Fishta*.⁹¹

"Fr. Gjergj Fishta was a catholic priest who wrote poetry and prose. Among his works was the epic masterpiece *The Lute of the Mountains*. He published numerous articles in the magazine "Albania" and then edited and published "The Morning Star."

Pal Duka-Gjini may be the only person alive who worked in collaboration with his "Father of the letters of Albania." Duka-Gjini was first a pupil, and later a colleague of Fishta until his master's death. Distress over the atrocities against both church and nation, and particularly against Fr. Gjergj Fishta and his epic masterpiece caused Duka-Gjini to write this important study. It is a happy coincidence that this precious work about our national poet has been published on the occasion of the triumphal return of religious freedom in Albania.

This volume is unique for its detailed documentation of facts. It offers passionate, breathtaking and minute descriptions of the manifold activities of Fr. Fishta. The moments of joy and glory of the poet were often followed by distress and sadness. These feelings were overcome by more intensive work that rejuvenated the spirit. Duka-Gjini's monograph should be read in conjunction with Fr. Daniel Gjeçaj's (ed.) *Labuta*. Each "canto" in Gjeçaj's 1958 edition is preceded by definitions of rare and difficult words. All lines of the poem were numbered for the first time in order to facilitate research and reference. Fishta's

brief biography was included in the two inside pagecovers.

Fishta was born October 23, 1871 in Zadrima. At an early age he could recite songs heard in the family. He was a brilliant pupil at the elementary school and later at the Franciscan colleges in Troshan, as well as in Livno, Bosnia where he was sent to continue his theology and philosophy studies. He often spent his time reading the Bosnian and Croatian poets, Italian and Latin literature. Fishta's studies in Bosnia implanted a solid religious-nationalist outlook on life. The efforts of Bosnians to gain their liberty in 1878 were similar to those of Albanians. In school the Bosnian professors would advise, enrich and encourage their Albanian students with their experience. They told pupils,

Listen! If we, in front of our people, whom we never let down for seven centuries, but shared the dark prisons, carried the rusty chains, fell in wars, enjoyed victories, lived and died to deserve their epithet of love, then you too, the offsprings of the Albanian Province, should carry that surname of Fathers of your Noble Nation!

...Learn, yes, our and other foreign languages, but you dare not to forget yours. With that and no other language you will talk to your people; with it you will teach of illiterate ones; with it you will preach the word of the Gospel; with it you will revive the love for your fatherland; for it you will work; with it you will vote, and lift the hearts of your kin and the ardent desire for freedom and independence of your country. (27)

The encouragement and advice to pupils will raise feelings of deep sorrow about the present situation of Serbian atrocities and "holocaust" against Bosnian friends and our brothers in Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro. All these people are being ethnically cleansed from their fatherland.

The author skillfully recreates such ceremonies as Fishta's ordination and his first Holy Mass in

February 1894. He justifies his conjectural reconstruction by stating that "As Fishta was excellent and extraordinary, so he would have shined and overwhelmed during his consecration and dedication to God, his nation, language, his fraternity and the people."⁽³²⁾ The talented young Franciscan priest joined the faculty of the Troshani College at the same time as he served as parish priest in the historical city of Lezha. On market days in Lezha, Fishta would enjoy conversing with the proud and brave race of highlanders and farmers dressed in the multicolored fashions of their respective regions. He listened to their rich phraseology and figurative talk. They came to Lezha from Kastrati, Shkreli, Kelmendi, Nikaj, Hoti, Vukli, Zadrina, Mirdita, Dukagjini, and Pulti. From these market day encounters the poet was inspired and impressed. "There" writes Duka-Gjini, "the literary genius found the literary gender of the Illyrian rhapsody, their Homer to tune up the lute, which they were accompanying with their songs while working and resting."⁽³⁴⁾

In 1889 Fishta ministered for a while in Gomsiqe, Mirdita. There he became acquainted with Abbot Preng Doçi, a cultured and foresighted nationalist. The Gomsiqe experience convinced the poet that the Illyrian character was alive. In the people of Mirdita, their freedom and independence, their beliefs about honor and manhood, as well as their backward traditions and fratricide manifested Illyria prod never died. Duka-Gjini adds that the whole character and life of the Albanian people was melted in the oral tradition and in the popular epic. He noted that,

Fr. Gjergj at Gomsiqe touched with his own hands that the Albanian in general, and particularly that of mountains would dream everything for freedom, and that couldn't have it; would desire the independence, and they wouldn't give it; would seek the moral help from great powers, and they couldn't find it; would seek progress, and the foreigners would deny it; would burn in their heart for culture and education, and the occupator would hinder them.⁽³⁴⁻³⁵⁾

Fishta became a member of Doçi's "Shoqnija Bashkimi" (Union Society). The organization was better known among foreigners than Albanians. Doçi acted like a magnet in gathering around him Fishta the poet; Fr. Ded Koleci, a lexicographer; Monsignor Koleci and Dom Ndoc Nikaj, an author and printer; the writer Fr. Pashk Bardhi; Fr. Ambroz Maraskaj, a philosopher; and Luigj Gurakuqi, the writer and patriot. The society printed syllabaries, reading and text books, anthologies, and a 'Bashkimi Vocabulary'. Fishta participated wholeheartedly in the above activities. In 1900, Fishta started to write pieces of prose and poetry for the great literary magazine "Albania."⁹² His sharply satiric poems appeared in print under dozen pennames. His literary production was profuse. When Fishta was named Director of the Franciscan School in Shkodër in 1902, he installed 'Albanian' as the primary language of classroom instructions. The policy caused him considerable troubles, because the youngsters of wealthy families could not be accepted in foreign middle schools. Fishta then filled the school with the children of poor people. On their own, the parents renamed the school 'Shkolla e Fishtës' (Fishta's School), for which the director would say: "That is the barometer of Albanians love for their language."⁽⁴¹⁾

In 1907, these problems were exposed in Fishta's satirical poem 'Anzat e Parnasit' (Vesps of Parnasus). The verses hit hard on the wealthy class that did not appreciate their mother language. They believed it limited their opportunities to trade with foreigners. "Fishta's School" accepted pupils from the three major religious groups without distinction.

During summer 1902, Fishta was sent to Rapsha in the Hoti region to temporarily substitute for Franciscan priest pastor. There he met a venerable old man, Marash Uti (Utsi). The elder had participated in the War of Rrëshat twenty years before during the League of Prizren (1878). Both men became close friends. Upon returning to Shkodra, Fishta wrote the poem 'Marash Utsi'. The poet often read his poems to his Franciscan brothers. Whenever they were too busy, he would read them to the doorman from Shkodra. Sometimes he would even play table games with a wandering storyteller in order to find an audience.

Fr. Pashk Bardhi printed Fishta's first Song in 1905. It was published in Borgo Erizzo, Croatia under the title *Labuta e Maltsiis-Kangë Popullorë-Marash Utsi*. This was the first foundation stone of the national epics. Fishta wanted to recognize the people like Marash Utsi who fought for his country. Instead of identifying himself as author, he used the title "Popular Songs." However, people readily identified him and congratulated Fishta for his humility and his kindness.

The Gjuhadoli Franciscan Convent of Shkodra became a headquarters of the Albanian intellectual nationalist renaissance. However as group membership popularity increased the attack on Fishta intensified. Consequently Fishta was forced to seek shelter in Gomsiqe in order to escape from anonymous accusations made to government authorities. During this period of isolation he learned that his friend Luigi Gurakuqi dedicated his book on *Versification in Albanian Language* (1906) to him. When Fishta returned to Shkodra with Fr. Shtjefën Gjeçovi, he founded the first school library in Albania in 1907. Shortly afterward Fishta published the second song of the *Lute* (Vranina). In the canto Shkodra's favorite son, Oso Kuka was the hero. Fishta initiated the first night classes for the illiterate adults. Simple workers, apprentices, learned to read and write and be awakened in those turbulent years. A philanthropic society for children and the poor was started by Fishta in 1907. These deeds of the poet were colossal for the time.

Fishta mercilessly attacked the enemies of the nation in his satirical poem entitled *Wasps of Parnassus*. He labelled them as "microbes." Fishta sharply attacked Hil Mosi's article "The Nationality and the Catholic Clergy" splendidly defending the role and the merits of the Albanian Catholic Clergy. During the decade from 1921 to 1931 Fishta produced the third part of the *Lute*; the poem "The League of Prizren" and an epilogue "The Raising of the Flag" and "The Declaration of the Independence."

In fact, Fishta vehemently and purposefully dealt with one nation, one ideal, one soul for the love of the fatherland, for the national unity to reach freedom. (52)

Although his ideals were not completely realized, Fishta presented them as realized.

Fishta was a master of encouragement and hater of pessimism. Fishta as "The Homer of the Nation" was absolutely void of fanaticism, division of clans and class struggle.(54). The other literary genres of satire, drama and religious themes aimed to correct errors, calm the souls of people, and instill religious tolerance.

One triumphant moment in Fr. Fishta's career was his election as President of the Commission for the Selection of the Albanian alphabet at the Congress of Manastir, 1908. The poet received 49 votes from the 52 delegates present. His version of the Latin alphabet was accepted due to his clear reasoning, eloquence, citation of historical facts and practicality. In commenting on Fishta's "Parody of Scanderbeg", Mjeda evaluated the author "as one of the greatest satirists that he ever has read." On another occasion Fishta was described as "... the greatest flagbearer of the Albanian letters up to our time." (63)

Another aspect of Fishta's untiring educational efforts was the building of a theater adjacent to the Shkodër school. The edifice belonged not only to Franciscan fathers, but also to the people of the city, the North and the whole nation. On that stage Shkodra youth without any religious or class discrimination were prepared to offer spiritual, cultural and moral entertainment to the people under the motto "For Faith, Fatherland and Progress." The presentations were always under the guidance of their great teacher, Fishta.

After 1925 the poet priest was helped at the Normal School by the Stigmatine Sisters of the Franciscan order. Fishta's stage productions and his guidance over the Franciscan Lyceum and Normal School not only energized the youth of Shkodër, but more importantly gave the nation educated and dedicated mothers, sisters, nurses, teachers, employees and trade professionals. Above all, the graduates raised the dignity of Albanian women, so much downgraded during the long, dark Ottoman occupation. Fishta composed a series of masterful articles for the benefit of the Stigmatine Normal School. "Our Program", "The Distaff", "The Family", "To Albanian Mothers",

"Good Parents", told of pedagogical and professional concerns of Fishta. Fishta wrote several plays to help this institution including "The Brotherhood of St. Francis of Assisi", "Odyssey and Iphigenia in Auli" etc. These dramas together with *The Cutting of the Head of St. John* made up the trio entitled "freedom, brotherhood, equality." They were performed on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the foundation of the Stigmatine (Franciscan) Order. When Fishta opened the ceremony the audience was overwhelmed with joy. Later that year the poet published his poem "The Square Dancing of Paradise", (nee "Drips of Dew") in Zara, Croatia. He then translated a series of poems and other reading materials for schools from the best Italian authors.

Fishta wrote profusely during times of national unrest. While the conscience of freedom seeking Albanians was awakened, in Kosova and Northern Albania General Turgut Pasha's Turkish army was stampeding rebellious Albanians. This defeat plus the fact that not all countrymen joined the brave Albanian fighters disturbed the poet greatly. He immediately started writing the tragedy "Juda Makabe". The publication was postponed until 1914. The play was then issued on the anniversary celebration of religious and educational activity of Franciscans in Albania. For this occasion Fishta also wrote the melodrama "Homage to Fine Arts" inspired by Schiller. When this melodrama debuted all high Shkodra authorities plus foreign representatives were present. The play was a public apotheosis of a free Albania, the civilized Albanian, "self government, progress and democracy." (78)

At that time, Turkish governor Bedri Pasha wired Istanbul that:

The Albanian people are reawakening. As far as I see it, the sentiments for national independence among them have reached the point that I consider it futile any obstacle or war we may want to make against them... (80)

When Riza Pasha, Commander in Chief of the Turkish Army asked Fishta to write a hymn for his Albanian soldiers, the priest did. However he turned

over his compensation to Shkodra's poor school children. This led the Istanbul government authorities to select Fishta together with Archbishop Serreqi, Luigi Gurakuqi, Dom Ndre Plani, Dom Luigi Bumci to go to Podgoritsa and make peace with revolutionary mountaineers. (81) Again Fishta's pen and dramatic productions did more than confronting the occupier with force of arms. The poet was decorated by the Sultan with the "Mearif" medal for his peace activities and humanitarian services. The poet was far more pleased when the "Albanian Language Club" of Shkodër donated two basso-relievos to the Franciscan School. The instruments represented Religion and Knowledge. The poet received a silver crown in gratitude for his literary efforts.

The same year that Fishta wrote and staged a comedy adapted from Moliere entitled "The Tricks of Patuk", he was also decorated by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The medal was for the "benefits he has bestowed to the culture and progress of his people." Dark days soon came for Shkodra and its people. The city was besieged by the Montenegrin Army from October 9, 1912 until April 22, 1913 when a treaty of surrender was signed. During the siege shells, bullets and cannon balls hit the city uninterruptedly. Because the enemies heavy artillery guns could not reach the Franciscan complex or the Stigmatine Normal School, the buildings became shelters for many people ranging from the poor to the highest ranked officials. All of these people were provided for by the Franciscans. Meanwhile war was raging throughout the entire Balkan Peninsula. The city was defended by Hasan Riza Pasha, a friend of many Albanians and particularly the Franciscans. Riza had established a liaison with Fr. Pal Dodaj in Rubik through Fishta and the Franciscans. Unfortunately the commander was shot dead while leaving the residence of the acting army commander. Fishta had to escape out from Shkodra when the Montenegrins army entered the city, in mid May the Montenegrins had to leave the city for good. When Admiral Sir Cecil Bornev became governor of the city, Fishta returned with the Franciscans. On June 12, 1913 a 6 meter long Albanian flag was raised on the steeple of the Franciscan church against the direct order of the admiral. Although the governor sent a letter

ordering the Franciscans to immediately take the flag down, they defied the order. Fishta wrote a letter to the commander who neither answered nor took any other steps over the incident. During that flame of moral victory Fishta wrote the "Hymn to the Albanian Flag."

Later that year Fishta first published his magazine 'Hylli i Dritës' (The Morning Star). It was dedicated to the religious and cultural advancement of the Albanian people. The magazine became a platform for the best Albanian writers and thinkers of that time, including Faik Konitsa and Vangjel Koça. The highly regarded periodical encouraged writers to wholeheartedly participate and send its director-editor articles of the facts and reason, eloquence, love, and nostalgia.⁽⁹²⁾

The first issue of the magazine came out in October 1913, on the eve of the first anniversary of the raising of the flag and the Declaration of the Albanian Independence by the patriot Ismail Qemali. Almost all the residents of Shkodra came out to celebrate the freedom day. As a sign of solidarity they connected the minaret of Džamia Fushë-Çelë to the steeple of the Gjuhadori Church with lights. Fishta's unification ideal became a reality.

In July 1914, the 'Morning Star' carried Fishta's combative article entitled "A Dishonest Comedy of the XXth Century." The author strongly criticized the international authorities who did nothing else but have fun. Instead of being just and impartial in their defense of individual rights and the rights of small nations like Albania, which has already been slashed by her neighbors, the authorities achieved little. The magazine was ordered to close immediately. This did not end Fishta's misfortunes. Foes complained against him. The British governor of Shkodra, Colonel G. Philips sentenced Fishta in absentia to 20 months of exile to Malta. Upon learning about the sentence Fishta and Fr. Justin Rrota slipped away from Shkodra. They moved to Gomsiqe, then to Vig in Mirdita and finally joined Fr. Pal Dodaj at Troshan for almost two years. They remained outside the jurisdiction of Shkodra city. The governors order of exile ended only when World War I erupted.

In their pursuit of the defeated Serbian armies, Austro-Hungarians occupied more than half of Albania. Fishta took pity on the famine, epidemics and sufferings of the Serbians. Because Fishta was

a catholic priest, and more as a follower of the Saint of Peace, San Francis, was and remained first a human being, then an Albanian; first a religious father, then a fighter.⁽⁹⁹⁾

The poet became a member of 'The Literary Commission', to study the question of an official common language to be used in civil and military administration. Representatives of Albanians included Luigj Gurakuqi (who headed the Commission) Fishta, Mjeda, M. Logoreci, Hil Mosi, Luigj Naraçi, A. Xhuvani, K. Gurakuqi, Fr. Ambroz Marlaskaj, Sotir Peçi, Gjergj Pekmezi, A. Paluca, Fr. V. Prennushi. In order to reach their goal these intellectuals published a bilingual paper in Albanian and German. "Posta e Shqipnris" (The Albanian Post) was printed biweekly. It lasted from December 5, 1916 to February 23, 1918. The editor-in-chief was Fishta. Fishta also edited the Albanian edition while an Austrian directed the German language portion. The Austro-Hungarian Empire has previously tried to help Albanians and promote their culture, and in particular support the Roman Catholics. Besides editing the news and reports, Fishta authored 37 serious articles.⁹⁵

The paper was ordered "closed" by the French governor of Shkodra, Bady de Fourton. Thus the voice calling for the rights of Albanians was silenced in the same manner as was the 'Morning Star'. In November 1918, the Franciscans organized a rally against the arbitrary closure of Fishta's paper. The protestors also demonstrated against the assigning of Albanian territory and population under control of their enemy. These Franciscan organized demonstrations prove that the allegations of communist writers against Fishta and Franciscans for economically profiting from the Austro-Hungarian occupation were patently false. During the occupation period on cold days of winter Fishta could not leave the residence for want of shoes. He had to save his cigarette butts because tobacco was scarce. The only material gain Fishta achieved on behalf of his order, was

acquiring a printing press. Under the pretext of printing the "Albanian Post", Fishta asked for and received a printing machine. After the defeat of the occupiers the press remained where it had been assembled. It remained property of the Franciscan Fathers until it was confiscated by the communist government in the 1940s. In that Franciscan printing establishment a series of literary, historical, folklore, religious and law books as well as text books were published. The *Lute of the Mountains* was also printed at the press.

At the end of the war a temporary government of 50 representatives was chosen in order to protect the rights of Albania on December 25, 1918. Turham Pasha, an old Albanian diplomat and former Ambassador of Turkey to Petrograd became head of that government. An Albanian delegation traveled to the Peace Conference at Versailles. Turham Pasha headed the delegation of Msgr. Luigj Bumçi, Luigj Gurakuqi, Mehdi Frashëri, Dhimitër Berati, Mehmet Konitsa and Mustafa Kruja. Fishta attended as "an expert". He later became secretary for Bumçi who succeeded as head of the delegation. On their trip to Paris, Bumçi and Fishta stopped in Rome. Together with Fr. Serafino Cimino, Superior General of the Franciscan Order, the Albanian representatives had an audience with the Pope Benedict XV. They requested the Pontiff's help to save the two southern cities, Korça and Gjinokastr from annexation by Greece. The Pope promised that "I will do the best I can to help you...". Fishta was instrumental in composing the brochure "The Albanians and their Rights" which was delivered at the Conference of Versailles. Fishta's introduction of that document was "as if one entered the highest gothic temple where sharp arches unwittingly lifted you up towards the sky." Bumçi and Fishta pleaded for help for the Albanian cause from the Belgian Cardinal Désidré Mercies. He promised them that he would write to the Cardinal Bury of London and to marshals Foch, Dechanel, and Millerand. The result of their common efforts brought the recognition of the Albanian Independence on August 30, 1919. Later in December 1920 Albania was accepted as a member of the League of Nations in Geneva.

Fishta was the promoter of the movement to change Franciscan policy. He believed that the

Franciscan Province of Albania should be administered only by Albanian priests and not foreigners. The result was that Fr. Pal Dodaj was named the first Albanian Provincial of Franciscans in February 1920. This administrative step was laudable, daring move in many respects because it formally recognized Albanian leadership capacity. Publication of the magazine "The Morning Star" was resumed.

Both Fishta and the new provincial worried that their elementary and supplementary schools were not adequate enough to properly educate pupils in practical skills necessary for modern life. A secondary school, a lycée with instruction in the Albanian language was badly needed. However they lacked land, buildings, equipments, personnel, and recognition by and operating permits from the church and state authorities. What they lacked the most was money. The two priests wrote Pope Benedict XV. He was pleased to hear that the new lycée would not only accept catholic pupils, but also muslim and orthodox students, as well as poor students from the entire country. Upon gaining a donation of 100,000 lira from the Pope the priests approached the Superior General of the Franciscan Order and received another 40,000 lira. This sum was enough to purchase a building for the lycée. On October 10, 1922 classes started at the new school.

Albanian democratic elections were held for the first time in June 1921. Shkodra voters chose representative deputies. Among them were: Mjeda, Fishta, Gurakuqi, and Mosi. Deputy Fishta distinguished himself for ability, justice and eloquence. He was chosen as a member of the state budget committee. Later he became president of the same commission. He also held membership on the education commission. Eventually Fishta became acting president of the parliament.

Although Albania was admitted to membership in the League of Nations, some countries did not officially recognize Albania. (Among them were the U.S.A.) With the initiative of the Gjinokastr deputy, Petro Hamzo, a "Sacred Union" was formed. Many deputies participated including Ferid Vokopola, Anstas Pandeli, Qasim Koculi, Hoxhë Kadrija, Paliz Daci and Fishta. Deputy Fishta asked the representatives to materially support the Illyricum

Lycée' of Franciscans. He finally was given two professors and a small subsidy to support the school. Fishta unofficially arrived in the U.S. in March 1922. While in Washington, D.C. his ecclesiastic friends (such as Goldfrid Shilling) arranged for Fishta to meet some Catholic senators and high officials of the State Department. He sought official US recognition of Albania. In a letter to Father Provincial Doda, Fishta asked that the Albanian Foreign Minister should send an official request for recognition to the acting secretary of the U.S. State Department. The authority and prestige of Henry Cabot Lodge and his intervention on the basis of Wilsonian principles fulfilled Fishta's request. Fishta then visited Albanian communities in Boston and New York and then returned home. Afterwards he completed work on his satirical poem 'Babatasi's Donkey' (1923). In commenting on this satire, Pashko Gjeçi described Fishta as "Mephistophelian chirurg." Duka-Gjini called him "Rex Poetarum" (125)

Both 1923 and 1924 were full of internal unrest in Albania due to the inclination of some people to exploit the moment for personal gains. Fishta engaged in sharp polemics in order to protect the country and defend its people from the slavery of conscienceless people. He became part of a group that founded the Shkodër newspaper "Ora e Maleve" (The Fairy of Mountains). The paper gathered the best minds of the city. Gurakuqi, Shantoja, Harapi, Prennushi, Topalli, Z. Harapi, Kamsi, K. Gurakuqi, Koliqi, and Palaj wrote for the paper. There the "Father of Letters" taught, directed, wrote, urged old and new pens to write, thus made "The Fairy..." the ideal school of Albanian journalism. (126) No issues of the paper exist outside of Albania.

In 1924 the democratic government of Bishop Fan Noli left Albania as Zog's forces, (helped by Belgrade) pressured the capital city of Tirana. Fishta too went into exile in Italy. He remained there until 1930. Although the "Morning Star" ceased publication Fishta never remained idle. He wrote religious works for the "Voice of St. Anthony" magazine. The *Life of St. Luigi Gonzaga* was published in 1927. Fishta composed a melodramatic poem entitled *The Civilized Albanian Lady* on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Stigmatine School of Shkodra (1879-1929).

In November 1926 a shortlived rebellion against the government of President Ahmet Zogu, took place in the Dukagjini region of Northern Albania. It collapsed in a few days when other regions did not join the daring rebel mountaineers. Unfortunately the Franciscans were blamed as instigators. As a result *Illyricum* Lycée was badly damaged: the school archive was destroyed, scientific cabinets were broken into pieces, musical instruments smashed and burned...Fishta was outside of Albania at the time. Amazingly the printing house was saved by the mistake of an officer, who established his headquarters in the Lycée instead of entering the printing house.

In 1928 the *Illyricum* Lycée graduates underwent for the first time a double state and religious-private examination. The inspector from the Ministry of Education, Dr. Jani Minga, was so pleased with test results, that he awarded the Lycée graduates with a free tour through Albania to honor them for their examination performance. Fishta, the faculty and the students were elated. Dr. Minga became an admirer and a sincere friend of the Franciscans.

Beginning in January 1930 'The Morning Star' resumed publication. The journal was placed under the direction of Fishta's former students. They followed their master's principles. Earlier that year after delivering a speech at the inauguration ceremony of the Shkodra Cement Factory, Fishta toured the plant. He had an accident that nearly cost his leg. However he was saved and hospitalized. The waiting lines of people who visited Fishta demonstrated their affection, admiration and respect for their most distinguished citizen poet. His bedside became a shrine.

Between 1930 and 1932 Fishta represented Albania in the Interbalkan Conference meetings in Athens, Istanbul, and Bucharest. Fishta distinguished himself by his knowledge of issues, impartial reasoning, dignity and eloquence. In 1932 Fishta was accepted as a member of the Union of International Poets.

By the early 1930s there were two main opposing trends in Albanian education: 1-national, free, western and religious and 2-materialist and antireligious. The latter gained ground in the state appa-

ratus). Foreseeing the future, Fr. Anton Harapi wrote in a "Morning Star" article entitled "New Educational Trends", about the dangers that the educators were preparing for themselves, and for the nation.⁽¹⁴²⁾ Minister of Education, Hilë Mosi responded with an article in "Besa" (The Pledge) newspaper that labeled Harapi as a pessimist, morose, sick-hearted. Fishta then wrote an "Open Letter" entitled "Gabove Hilël" (You made a mistake, Hilël). This admonition was made to the young representative Hilë Mosi during parliament debates in 1923-1924. The minister was at first upset, then became sick and shortly died. Upon hearing this sad news Fishta felt very sorry because he had praised Mosi and actually had written a stanza in *Lute of the Mountains* for that brave young man at the frontline defending his country. Mosi was replaced by another atheist-materialist. Dr. Mirash Ivanaj as new minister of education asked the government to change the constitution, and close all private and foreign schools. The new law went into effect in 1934.

Fishta gathered the faculty and the students and formally announced the closure of the Lycée. Ever the optimist Fishta added:

"Por ani: Shqipnija rroftë edhe pa në!"

(But it's OK: May Albania live even without us!) (147)

In October 1934 Ismet Toto, a revolutionary polemicist wrote the article "Quarrels with the Clergy." Toto denied the existence of God, Jesus, Apostles, and the church in offensive terms. Fishta replied somewhat sarcastically and then argued philosophically, historically and scientifically.

Fishta was elected by Franciscan brothers as their Provincial in 1935. During his term he was visited by Superior General of the Franciscan Order. The Lycée school was reopened as well as other private schools. *The Lute of The Mountains* was published on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Independence 1912-1937. The publication made Fishta very happy, because it expressed the gratitude of the nation.

Fishta was then sent on a mission to Czechoslovakia by his superiors in Rome. In Prague he

was treated with honor and dignity. By the time Fishta finished his term as provincial, he felt tired.

The last two years of Fishta's life were turbulent as a consequence of the fascist Italian occupation of Albania. An assembled delegation of the ten prefectures of Albania met in Tirana, 12 April, 1939.

In this moment so critical, only that of Shkodra, in which the clergy and the Franciscans participated, raised their voice against the occupation, and bravely asked what Italy had promised with solemnity before the military operation: 'Help with arms, yes; occupation, no' (155)

The only thing Albanians could do was to protest. Thus Harapi asked the Assembly for:

The absolute independence of Albania with its clear flag, with language, schools and educational development, with our own state, military and civil administration; with our representation with foreign countries; with all that is in the nature of a state and sovereign nation: with race, language, history, tradition and its laws. (156)

The daring decision of the Franciscans when they authorized Harapi to represent them in that assembly deserves to be singled out:

...if the Franciscan Province and the Franciscans themselves ought to disappear because of fascist reaction, then let them end in the field of war, but without a stain of treason in the glorious history of seven centuries for the benefit and well-being of the nation.(157)

In June 1939 Fishta was nominated to be a member of the Italian Academy. As a literary person, educational leader, benefactor, staunch activist and protector of his fatherland, Fishta accepted the honor. Fishta died six months later. Fishta was such a renowned preacher that when he celebrated the Holy Mass at the Cathedral of Shkodra, both the church and exterior yard were not large enough for the crowds who gathered there to listen, and

for sure there were not only catholics who listened to him. As the author mentions it later, his whole life he was a dedicated priest, and ardent preacher of Gospel, a true missionary and apostle of Faith and Fatherland.

Professor Umberto Giunti of the Academy of Arts at the University of Siena was a friend of Fishta. He remarked that:

Never in my life have I seen such a classical man's face, nor have I observed a more vivid and expressive, strong and penetrating eyes than his. In front of those eyes the brush and the colors may represent the organ of sight, but in no way they could reach to express as it should the spirit and force that comes out of those two shining suns.(175)

The famous albanologist and translator of *The Lute of The Mountains* into German, Maximilian Lambertz depicted Fishta as:

...a man with proportionate body, with pleasant presence, attractive and sweet. His eyes show cleverness. His face is surrounded by hair in bronze color, and the tonsure of the disciples of St. Francis is covered by a small woollen cup. According to Albanian church mores of that time, he grows his thick moustaches, without which in this land even the priest's mass has no value... Furthermore Fishta is blessed with an absolute human presence, in company he is very attractive and dear, full of anecdotes and fluent in conversation. This behavior earns the hearts of people he meets, and so he is capable to accomplish so much that no one with less natural gifts could have reached.(176)

In conclusion some suggestions ought to be made.

Short essays from this monograph should be selected and included in all the anthologies used in Albanian middle schools.

The life of Fishta as described by his disciples might be made into a film. This would be the sure hit and way to acquaint Albanian people with their Homer. Thousands of video tapes would be sold to the diaspora all over the world.

This monograph should encourage young and old scholars of Fishta to seek out more precious material about him and his deeds.

And most important would be that the "Luigj Gurakuqi" University of Shkodra, the Franciscans, in cooperation with the University of Tirana establish a team of scholars to gather and publish all Fishta's works.

Zef V. NEKAJ

Notes

1. Part 2 will be carried in the next issue of *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*

2. The renowned Albanian scholar Faik Konitsa edited "Albania."

3. It is distressing that literary historians and critics including the Kosovars have never acknowledged the cultural and social activities of these Franciscans.

4. A number of albanologists as well as the media for the past 50 years presented Fishta as an aggressor at that Congress. He has been called an open enemy of Dom Ndre Mjeda who was keen linguist with less practicality. The communist action was a "distortion and falsification." In reality Fishta and Mjeda were very good friends who highly respected each others literary works. (59)

5. Among the important articles that Fishta published were "The Road We Follow"; "About Ethnic Albania"; "The Whole World is a village" and "Albania". In these articles he expressed the principles upon which the nation would stand. With his articles, such as "After 450 years of the First Commemoration of the Anniversary of the Death of Scanderbeg", "The Union", "The State and the Religion", "Albania and the Culture", Fishta brought up the need for education. He repeatedly stressed that without schools there would not be an Albania. In "Albania and the Minister of Bulgaria, D. Rizov," Fishta rejected the minister's negative as-

sermons about Albania, country and people. Fishta authored other articles and studies, the most ardent ones being "Albania of Albanians" together with "The Memorandum of the Clans of Hoti and Gruda" which were left out of fatherland.

*

Weigel, George: *The Final Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Inc., 200 Madison Ave. New York, N.Y. 10016, USA (1992, pp255, \$25.00)

How John Paul II Taught Polish and Czechoslovakian Greengrocers to Defeat Communism by Arranging Their Produce Displays with Truth and Courage

The above title is not meant to be facetious. The image of the greengrocer comes from a parable by Vaclav Havel, which Weigel uses as a characterization to emphasize the pervasive, soul crushing influence of the Communist regime's mendacities. Havel writes:

The manager of a fruit and vegetable shop places in his window, among the onions and carrots, the slogan, 'Workers of the world, Unite !' Why does he do it? What is he trying to communicate to the world? Is he genuinely enthusiastic about the idea of unity among the workers of the world? Is his enthusiasm so great that he feels an irrepressible impulse to acquaint the public with his ideals? Has he really given more than a moments thought to how such a unification might occur and what it would mean?

These are rhetorical questions. Havel justifiably anticipates that his readers will answer a resounding "No!" to each of them. The greengrocer's sign is an act of surrender to the regime. It is but one example of the price one pays to be left alone. As Weigel puts it, the sign among the produce is more than lip service to Marxist-Leninist ideology; its true message is: "I am afraid and therefore unquestioningly obedient."

This portrait of deceit and fear as tools of oppression of the very spiritual core of men and women is reminiscent of Milosz *The Captive Mind*

and Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*. But Weigel takes pains to make clear to his readers what the soul-paralyzing evil of communism was in order that they might see what in fact caused its collapse in eastern Europe. Ultimately it was caused, he argues, not by Gorbachev nor by Reagan or the Helsinki Final Act or Economics and/or History. These are all legitimate and important causal factors, but they fail to get at what Weigel calls "the heart of the matter."

The communist regimes of Poland and Czechoslovakia finally collapsed in 1989 as a result of "the final revolution," which was "the revolution of the spirit." That revolution was set in motion by the *ostpolitik* of John Paul II which led the Polish people to the understanding that it was possible "to live without being a liar." Weigel goes so far as to call John Paul II the "architect of the Revolution of 1989" by reason of his preaching on the final revolution. John Paul II's June 1979 pilgrimage to Poland gave the people hope that such a life was possible. That the pope's *ostpolitik* avoided direct confrontation with communism cannot, Weigel insists, be attributed to the pragmatic consideration that the latter had all the means of coercion at its disposal. Rather his philosophical and theological viewpoint allowed him to see that the chink in the armor of communism was in the area of truth and that its economic, political and social failures were consequences of its mistaken notions of the human person.

The subsequent resistance of Polish workers, clergy, and intellectuals to the government gave rise to Solidarity. Despite its flaws (e.g., factionalism and political infighting, Solidarity proved an enormous success. For one thing, it exploded the assumption, widely entertained both among the Western elite and the Kremlin, that Marxism-Leninism held all the cards and that the future was theirs. In Weigel's words: "Solidarity demonstrated, empirically, that there were in fact two revolutionary traditions in the modern world, and that the depredations which had grown out of the French Revolutionary tradition could be met by a morally driven commitment to the democratic revolution of Jefferson and Madison. Solidarity did what armies could never have done: avert a nuclear holocaust; it killed the 'Warsaw Pact'."

The success of Solidarity could hardly have passed unnoticed by the other Warsaw Pact countries. Weigel describes the impact of this success on Czechoslovakia, where the influence of the Church was also great in the downfall of communism. The "normalization" following the failure of the Prague Spring is characterized by Weigel as something out of a Kafka novel. Drawing again upon Havel, he describes the prevailing "soul-rotting cynicism" that affected both rulers and ruled as a return to "the culture of the lie." Thus a moral and cultural opposition to normalization was dictated for the simple reason that the latter, as in Poland, was grounded in lies and deceit. The core of this opposition was the human rights movement, of which the Catholic and Christian groups were the largest components. In addition to the influence of Solidarity, John Paul II's emphasis on human rights as conferred by nature rather than by the State as well as on his emphasis on the virtues of truth and courage in the face of the regime proved catalytic forces for the Czechoslovakian resistance. But it was the Pope's personal witness that exerted the greatest influence on the Czechoslovakian resistance. The enormous importance of his role in shaping the revolution resided in the Czechoslovakian people's perception of him as a fellow slav who had lived under communism and struggled against it; he understood the communists, was not naive and defended the slaves. Weigel maintains that Cardinal Tomasek's relinquishing of the more acquiescent *ostpolitik* of Pope Paul VI to the tougher *ostpolitik* of John Paul II was without doubt the result of the latter's preaching on the final revolution.

Having chronicled the events leading up to the collapse of the communist regimes in Poland and Czechoslovakia, Weigel makes some fitting observations about the problems facing these countries in the postcommunist phase. Before the collapse of the Marxist regime in Poland, there was a simplicity in the "us against them" state of affairs. There was one goal, upon which all the political factions could agree: the destruction of communism. Now, however, the prospects of unified conceptions and action are dampened by the very nature of the challenges confronting the Polish people: "full-bore capitalism or a more measured

approach? Parliamentary democracy or a strong presidency? Poland—in Europe or a revival of nationalism and Polish exceptionalism?", etc. Despite the passing of the "us"—against—"them" circumstances, there remains in some quarters the assumption that "incorrect" answers are the product of "personal mendacity, corruption, ambition, or cantankerousness," instead of indicating honest disagreement over contingent issues. Weigel seconds the view that it is harder to accept the half truths and compromises endemic to the democratic process than to live the truth.

And the Catholic Church in Poland has challenges of its own. During the forty-two years of oppression, the strength of the resistance Church lay in its role of tough-minded teacher and pastor of souls. It managed the task of providing guidelines for democratic culture formation in a socio-political context that required no legislation: "A Church that maintained its strength... by celebrating (and demanding) unity-through-uniformity is now exploring the boundaries of unity-within legitimate diversity: within the Church, and in terms of the Church's address to social and political issues."

The problems in postcommunist Czechoslovakia, both for the society in general and the Church in particular, are, to be sure, similar to those in Poland, but, at the same time, they have their own distinctive challenges. Some, particularly the older clergy, entertain memories of the way things were before communism and suppose that they can be brought back now that the forty-one year oppression is over. But this romanticized version fails to take into account that too much has changed in the interim. The reign of deceit and terror atomized and fragmented society in addition to making it more materialistic. The task for Catholicism in the 1990s in the Czech lands and Slovakia will be to attempt reevangelization in what is now a post-Christian society.

Not only the Church but the entire society suffers from a web of social and psychological problems known as the "communist hangover." The mild hedonism of Hrusakian "normalization" has grown, among the young people, into the dominating hedonism characteristic of the west.

The patrimony of the regime of deceit and fear is distrust of others, lack of cooperativeness, passivity, and loss of personal responsibility. Then, too, there remains the serious threat of the loss of national unity.

As he unfolds this gripping and inspiring account of communism's collapse, Wiegel gives us portraits of the popes in their differing responses to communism: Pius XII's confrontational, unbending stance; Paul VI's more diplomatic, accommodating maneuvers; and John Paul II's tough but shrewd chess game with the Kremlin and its Polish representatives. More interesting yet are his depictions of the Church leaders in Poland and Czechoslovakia. For example, as Primate of Poland, Cardinal Wyszyński's found himself to be interrex of Poland under the regime; he stepped forward in the face of Jaruzelski's "state of war" with its intimidation, imprisonments and house arrests, to lead and protect his people as they in turn looked upon him as their leader. There is a poignancy about the efforts of his successor, Cardinal Glemp, who lacked Wyszyński's personal moral authority, had little feel for the popular Catholic sensibilities and was tactless in dealing with the press, but who nevertheless acted with courage and spirituality in defense of his flock. And, there is inspiration in the already mentioned account of how John Paul II's preaching led the Czechoslovakian primate, Cardinal Tomasek to abandon the acquiescent approach of the *ostpolitik* of Paul VI to the more steeled approach of John Paul II's *ostpolitik* in his stand against Gottwald and Husak.

Beyond being a fast-moving, well researched account of the Church's decisive role in the collapse of communism in Europe, *The Final Revolution* is a kind of home-test kit for the health of democracies outside the postcommunist countries, such as the United States. Wiegel's thesis, that the revolution that finally dismantled the communist monolith was a **moral** revolution, deserves serious attention in our own country, where hygienic and economic improvements are increasingly viewed as the infallible markers of national well being. He makes a telling point when he cites the conceptual dichotomy that separated the people resisting communism in Poland and the peace-activists in the United States. The latter supposed

that if the arms race between Russia and the United States were brought to a halt, world peace between the Warsaw Pact nations and the West would be guaranteed. Conversely, the members of the Polish resistance immediately saw the superficiality of that nostrum. The major threat to world peace was a politics based upon deceit. Hence what was needed was a moral revolution. In this they were echoing the words of Charles Peguy: "If the next revolution is not a moral revolution, it will amount to no more than turning over a dunghill." Pace the liberal critics of Ronald Reagan, Russia and its satellite nations were the "evil empire." Their evil consisted, in the first instance, in the rejection of God and, in the second and consequent instance, in the refusal to serve the truth. That is, a *fortiori*, to deny the truth about the human person. Hence John Paul II's claim that the freedom of religion is the most important human right is hardly an exaggeration.

The question Wiegel's book poses to the United States is this: "Given the undeniable religious and moral foundations of our democratic society and given our increasing secularization and adoption of moral relativism, can we maintain a politics of truth?" "Can we, in other words, intellectually and morally defend democratic society?" "Dare we, then, to follow John Paul II's exhortation, hope to live without being a liar?"

Raymond DENNEHY

AN ELUSIVE EAGLE SOARS: *Anthology of Modern Albanian Poetry*, ed. and trans. by Robert Elsie. UNESCO Library of World Poetry—Forest Books, P. O. Box 312, Lincoln Centre, Mass. 01773. 1993. xx + 214 pp.

Linguist Robert Elsie, the valued contributor to the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, has produced in this volume a beautiful, inspiring, and indispensable addition to Albanian literary studies.

The volume brings together 24 poets from within the borders of the Albanian state, as well as Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. They also include such a singular writer as Lasgush Poradeci (1899-1980), whose slender volumes of exquisite verses resembling the lyrics of the Ro-

manian poet Mihai Eminescu, were published in Romania during the 1930s (and from whose work the book takes its title.)

The collection presents many of the relatively few poems of Migjeni (1911-1938), the outstanding Albanian language poet of the experimental period after the first world war. On the other hand, it has its shortcomings: no work by Naim Frashëri, Gjergj Fishta, Lazër Shantoja, Ernest Koliqi, and other non-modernists, and only five poems by Martin Camaj (1925-1992), the finest modernist poet in the language.

Above all, it includes far too much by the egregious Ismail Kadare, who I suppose must, unfortunately, be represented thanks to his state-subsidized fame. It also would have been better to present Albanian originals along with the English translations.

The versions of the poems created by professor Elsie are exceptionally clear and fine. One will respond particularly, I think, to the refined lines of Poradeci, to Migjeni's "The Sons of the New Age" and "Poem of Poverty," and Camaj's "The Old Deer."

The case of Migjeni is especially interesting.

Born Millosh Gjergj Nikolla in Shkodër, his family was representative of a local phenomenon in north Albania, the Albanization of some local Montenegrin families. He embraced the Albanian language and culture as his means of literary expression, and emerged as one of Albania's leading exponents of the chaotic, youthful energies that exploded after the transforming events of the first world war.

That generation of Albanians expressed its strivings by support for the short-lived democratic regime of Fan Noli, but these yearnings for modernity mirrored the complex sentiments and self-affirmations expressed elsewhere in Europe.

In a way that seems almost unbearably typical of the romantic poet's life, Migjeni contracted tuberculosis and died at 26. Although short of full literary maturity at the time of his death, Migjeni shares the broader post-1918 modernist tradition represented in Croatia by Miroslav Krleža, Tin Ujević

and others, in Serbia by the surrealists, in France by the original surrealists, in Italy and Russia by futurism, constructivism, and by other bold, new art movements.

Migjeni's "Sons of the New Age", tinged with bitter radicalism and even with anticlerical attitudes, is nonetheless unforgettable. He writes,

"We the sons of the new age,
Leaving the old to its 'holiness',
Have clenched our fists to fight
In new battles
And to triumph...

.....
We, the sons of the new age,
Brothers born and raised in misery,
When our ultimate and joyful hour
Rang out
We learned to say:
We will not be lost
In the bloody game of human history
No! No! We will not be forever lost."

Other poets in this collection include two who were published and widely read under Hoxha: Dritero Agolli, a "peasant poet" who seems rather artificial in the selection here, and Bardhyl Londo, who emerged in the 1970s as a major voice. Some of Agolli is funny, much of Londo's work is charming; but to this reviewer, at least, they cannot match our exiled mentor and long-time friend of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, the late and greatly-missed Martin Camaj.

Other contributors, through poetry, bring to the reader a comprehension of Albanian literary vitality in Kosovë, Mal i Zi, and Makedonia (Macedonia). This book is a revelation in every sense.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

Rexhep Ismajli, ed. *Poezia e shtime arbereshe*. Prishtina: Yug Rilindja, 1990. 32 pages.

The beginning of the nineties has seen the Albanian nation in a political and economic catastrophe having dramatic repercussions on contemporary literature and culture. Albania itself has

nothing to show from forty-six years of "splendid isolation" and Stalinist dictatorship but starvation and ruin such as Europe has not seen for half a century. Kosovo, for its part, is faced with a level of oppression and persecution unparalleled on the continent since World War II. Virtually all Albanian-language publishing companies have either gone bankrupt or been shut down within the space of one year. No money, no paper, no ink, no hope. Is there no isle of bliss where the little flame of Albanian culture can be nourished and fostered under normal human conditions and continue to reflect in the radiant mosaic of European civilization?

One "solid root" has survived the new Balkan apocalypse. The 100,000-strong Albanian minority in southern Italy are scions of refugees who fled Albania during the Turkish invasion after the death of national hero Scanderbeg in 1468. These "Arbëresh" took refuge in the isolated mountains of Calabria and Sicily, where they have remained to this day, cherishing, indeed fiercely guarding, a minute and quite unique language and culture. It was a Sicilian Arbëresh writer, Luca Matranga, who in 1592 was the first to record a poem in Albanian. Over the centuries the Arbëresh have contributed to Albanian literature more than their numbers would warrant, in particular with the figure of Girolamo De Rada (1814-1903), a giant of the Albanian national revival.

And how is Italo-Albanian literature faring today? Not badly at all when one peruses the anthology *Poezia e sotme arbereshe* (Modern Arbëresh Poetry), compiled by the Kosovo scholar Rexhep Ismajli (b. 1947). The 210 poems by twenty-two poets from Molise to the mountain villages of Sicily, an unprecedented collection, reflect more than simply the preoccupations of a minority culture. Arbëresh verse is intellectual verse, the pursuit of an educated handful of scholars, teachers, and clerics giving direction to the aspirations of their people. One of the most popular and respected of these poets is Vorea Ujko (1918-89), pseudonym of Domenico Bellizzi. He was a modest priest from Frascineto who taught modern literature in Firmo (Calabria), where his memory has been much cherished since his death in January 1989. Ujko's verse is bathed in the *gjaku i shprishur* (scattered blood)

of his ancestors. At the same time it far surpasses the lingering sentiments of romantic nationalism in earlier Arbëresh verse and the standard motifs of exile lyrics.

Though the long-range forecast for the survival of Arbëresh culture may be gloomy, as it is for all other minority-language groups in Europe, a new generation of contemporary poets—among them Giuseppe Schiro Di Maggio (b. 1944), Agostino Giordano (b. 1950), Kate Zuccaro (b. 1955), Mario Bellizzi (b. 1957), and Anna Ventre (b. 1957)—has not hesitated to take up Ujko's heritage and continue to give refined lyric expression to the Arbëresh experience as the century draws to a close.*

Robert ELSIE

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THREE SOURCES ON ALBANIA IN THE 1912-1913 BALKAN WARS

Leo Freundlich: *ALBANIA'S GOLGOTHA*. Original edition, Vienna 1913. Reprinted 1992 in the original German with an English translation by S. S. Juka. Available from: Hans Peter Rullmann, Hudtwalckerstr. 26, D-2000 Hamburg, Germany, 56 pp., \$7.00.

Leon Trotsky: *THE WAR CORRESPONDENCE OF LEON TROTSKY: THE BALKAN WARS, 1912-13*. New York, Monad Press, 1980. xxii + 526 pp., \$8.95.

Adela Spindler Roatcap: *RAYMOND DUNCAN: PRINTER—EXPATRIATE—ECCENTRIC ARTIST*. San Francisco, The Book Club of California, 1991. vii + 45 pp. \$50.00.

The carnage of the present Balkan war calls the attention of scholars, journalists, and other observers to the Balkan wars of 1912-13, which saw earlier examples of many of the same horrors: above all, Serbian and Montenegrin attacks on civilian Albanian and other Muslim populations.

The Balkan wars of that period were greatly impelled by Serbian expansionism. In the first, beginning in October 1912, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece allied to liquidate the greater

part of the former Turkey-in-Europe, i.e. Kosovë, the Sandzhak of Novipazar, and Macedonia. On November 28, 1912, Albania declared its independence. In the second, Romania joined Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, in attacking Bulgaria for a redivision of the spoils.

In these prior Balkan wars, however, aside from the local Muslim populations, the main victims, following the invasion of their territory by Slav forces, were Albanian.

The extent of atrocities brought about the formation of a Carnegie commission, based in the U.S., to investigate the conduct of the conflict. Numerous documents attested to the brutality of Belgrade's "crusade."

Leo Freundlich, a Jewish journalist based in Vienna, was among the first to attempt a serious analysis of the change in social attitudes expressed by the onset of the Balkan horrors.

Freundlich warned, in language that applies today without need of emendation, *"People were murdered in the thousands—men, women, children, the elderly, tortured to death - villages burned down or looted - women and young girls raped - a whole land, devastated and ransacked, has been immersed in blood... A brave and remarkable people is being tortured on the cross before the eyes of the world. Yet Europe, Christian Europe, civilized Europe, is not uttering a word about it. Tens of thousands of defenseless people have been butchered, women raped, elderly people and children strangled; hundreds of villages burned down, priests slaughtered. But Europe is remaining silent!"* (Emphasis in original).

S.S. Juka and Hans Peter Rullmann have done an irreplaceable service in reproducing these documents.

A warning of equal eloquence, that also could have been written today, emerges from the war correspondence of Leon Trotsky.

Regardless of the criminal and other tragic consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution, in which Trotsky played a central role, this other Jewish journalist travelled to the battlefields of the wars and discovered inhuman degradations equal to

those of today's "ethnic cleansing" campaigns. Like today's journalists, he denounced the murderous Slav aggression in powerful articles.

Trotsky reported the burning of Albanian villages and the massacre of Muslims in terms that boldly challenged the Russian political establishment of the time, alleging a direct complicity in what he called, with what seems an eerie premonition of events 80 years later, "massacres of the people of the Crescent in the interests of the 'culture' of the Cross."

In fiery polemics directed to the liberal politician Pavel Milyukov, Trotsky asked, "D(o) not the facts, undeniable and irrefutable, force you to come to the conclusion that the... Serbians... in their national endeavor to correct data in the ethnological statistics that are not quite favorable to them, are engaged quite simply in systematic extermination of the [Albanian] Muslim population?"

Trotsky's war correspondence has yet to be discovered by most commentators on the current Balkan nightmare, yet it seems a uniquely significant source for the study of all three Balkan wars. A topic worthy of further examination is that of the moral and spiritual atmosphere created in world politics by these events. It is generally recalled that the first world war undermined the faith of millions in European institutions, leading first to the Bolshevik convulsion and then to fascism. But the Balkan wars of 1912-13, as a "dress rehearsal" for the chaos beginning in 1914, were long forgotten.

Adela Roatcap's beautifully designed and printed work on Raymond Duncan, brother of the dancer Isadora, is beyond the economic reach of most readers of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, but is a delightful account of the eccentric Raymond, whose enthusiasms for ancient Greece, for hand printing, and for theatre were even more remarkable in their way than the creative powers of his sister.

Born in San Francisco in 1874, Raymond Duncan followed a long vagabondage through Europe that included an episode in Albania when in June 1913 he, his wife Penelope Sikelianos, and his son Mañalkas attempted to develop a relief project to aid Albanian victims of the conflict. The episode is a picturesque one in an overwhelm-

ingly picturesque life; Duncan attempted to establish something close to an independent state made up of his Albanian "disciples."

Duncan died in Paris in 1966. Mrs. Roatcap's monograph provides no more than a footnote to Albanian studies, but a valuable one nonetheless.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

TWO BOOKS ON THE BALKAN BACKGROUND BY IVO BANAC

Banac, Ivo: *THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN YUGOSLAVIA: ORIGINS, HISTORY, POLITICS*. Cornell University Press, 1984, 456 pp. \$14.95 paperback.

Banac, Ivo: *WITH STALIN AGAINST TITO: COMINFORMIST SPLITS IN YUGOSLAV COMMUNISM*. Cornell University Press, 1988, 320 pp. \$32.50 hardback only.

With the eruption of today's successive wars in the Balkans, journalists and academics representing many viewpoints have rushed into print with historical, analytical, and polemical works. Meanwhile, media and political commentators deluge those of us previously active in the field with requests to identify the best and most informative titles.

Some past writers, such as the Serbophiles Ivo Andric, Rebecca West, and Nora Beloff, are now being revived. Many of the more recent works in this area (such authors as Robert D. Kaplan, Jr. come to mind) present a hastily assembled and superficial "tour" of the Balkan background. Still others, following the tradition of Beloff & Co., offer a rehashed defense of Serbian aggression, reflecting long-standing efforts by Belgrade to influence opinion in the West.

The two main books of Professor Ivo Banac, master of Pierson College at Yale University and unquestionably the leading younger Slavist in the country today, contrast both brusquely and brilliantly with the cobbled-together narratives of a Kaplan, as well as with the propagandistic fantasies of Serbian apologists.

In place of such intellectual waste, Banac has produced, in these two accounts of major aspects of the Yugoslav conundrum, outstanding contribu-

tions—thoroughly researched, acutely insightful, and perhaps most importantly, beautifully composed and written.

Banac is a Croatian-American in heart, soul, and mind, but is also a firm democrat and critic of the flaws of Croatian democracy under General-President Dr. Franjo Tudjman. Above all, he is a gifted historian.

His **National Question...** belongs at the bedside of every policy planner or media personality concerned with the present war. If there is one book that all observers of the current convulsion must read, it is this.

A profoundly sympathetic but objective understanding of the cultural and political underpinnings of the Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, and other national movements during the 19th century informs this work. To such understanding Dr. Banac brings, in addition, full detail on lesser-known phenomena; for example, Muslim political organization and Albanian resistance during the period of South Slav nationalism's "stillbirth", with the end of the first world war and founding of Yugoslavia.

Banac's lucid and elegant style makes this book an authentic work of literature as well as a scholarly achievement of the highest quality. His lyrical evocation of the impact on the Croatian consciousness of Stjepan Radic and the Croatian Peasant Party is, I think, a masterpiece of 20th century historiography. His treatment of such episodes as the Slovene national awakening or the Montenegrin "Green" and "White" rivalries are eloquent as well as useful.

Banac's **With Stalin Against Tito** is not merely a major addition to the study of Yugoslav socialism; it is also an indispensable item for the overall bibliography of Bolshevik communism.

To write an objective history of the anti-Tito communists involves an immense challenge: the Cominformists come down to us, later witnesses to Balkan tragedies, as one of the least attractive political formations of the century. After all, they sided with Stalin, and would clearly have supported that bloody dictator in his aggressions, some

effected and some only intended, against the very limited "liberalism" of the Titoists.

But as we know, history can play tricks. For dissidents such as the Croatian Communist hero and martyr, Andrija Hebrang, repelled by the treasons and corruptions of Titoism—as impeccably portrayed, for example, in Ivan Supek's barely-fictionalized **Krunjski Svjedok Protiv Hebranga**—Stalin may have represented an unpalatable ally but also a final desperate hope.

Although Moscow repudiated Hebrang and it is hard to imagine the gentle Andrija, who believed in political pluralism, remaining a faithful Stalinist, Banac's book shows that many who found themselves in a place similar to that of Hebrang embraced Cominformism as a form of protest. For those imprisoned on Goli Otok and elsewhere in the Yugo-gulag, it was a legitimate such form.

Enver Hoxha himself reflected the peculiar and obscure logic of such Stalinophilia in its most remarkable expression—he called on Stalin (successfully) to defend Albanian independence against the assimilationist and expansionist schemes emanating from Belgrade in 1948. And Stalin did so defend Albania, but at the price of bloody purges elsewhere in the Soviet controlled camp, and in a way that entrenched Titoism while encouraging Hoxha's worst excesses.

It is to the great credit of Ivo Banac that he has confronted these, the primary moral and intellectual problems of post-1914 Balkan history, penetrating to the core of events past as well as present, with the most refined intellectual tools; those of the professional historical investigator and the inspired man of letters.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

Ferid Hudhri: ALBANIA AND ALBANIANS IN WORLD ART. Athens, Christos Giovanis A.E.B.E., 1990. 302 pp.

Ferid Hudhri has assembled in this volume a remarkable collection of the images of the Albanian countryside and people, including architecture as well as national costumes, in world painting and drawing.

One of the greatest artists to have dedicated himself to Albanian nature and environment was the British writer and painter Edward Lear (1812-1888), generally known as an author of nonsense verse popular with all Anglo-Saxon children.

Lear's delicate watercolors and oils, reproduced in this volume, portray Albanian topics with full artistic fidelity but without "Orientalist" trimming. Many of the scenes are breathtakingly beautiful—particularly his views of Shkodra, his "Evening after Rain in Berat" (1848), and his exceptional "Acroceraunian Mountains, Albanian Seacoast," an oil held in a private American collection.

His glimpses of Albania also range to the picturesquely charming, such as his gorgeous "Pelicans in Vlora," an 1848 lithograph.

Ferid Hudhri is a historian and art researcher, born in Albania in 1949. He is also author of "The Best Albanian Masters," published in Brisbane, Australia in 1990.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON BEKTASHI ISLAM AND ALBANIA

We have received a communication from Professor Hamid Algar of the Near Eastern Studies Dept., University of California, Berkeley, dealing with the topics of Haji Bektash Veli, the Bektashi order in Islam, and, specifically, its role in Albania. These were treated in an article by me in the 1991 issue of *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*.

Prof. Algar has published a biographical essay on Haji Bektash and an entry on Bektashism in the *Encyclopedia Iranica*. He argues that although Bektashism had greater influence in Turkey (Anatolia) than in Iran, and although Haji Bektash's *Vilayet-Name* was based on *vilaya* given by him in Turkish, the founder himself was not Turk. It is "highly probable that Haj Bektash... form(ed) part of the westward migration that was occasioned by the Mongol invasion of Khorasan (his birthplace-SAS) and that his origins were therefore Iranian," he writes.

In his encyclopedia entry on the order he notes that the Bektashi, known among its initiates of the past century and a half as *tariq-e nazanin* or "the

delicate path," became strongly identified with the Janissary corps or military elite of the Ottoman state. Haji Bektash was considered the patron of the corps, and this association protected the order, which was, as Algar describes it, "a markedly heterodox element in the Sunni environment. The spread of the Bektashi order in the Balkans may also have been due in large part to the Janissaries, who established the order in the regions they conquered," he states.

However, this link led to the banning of the Bektashi in 1826 by Sultan Mahmud II, who resented the frequency of rebellions among the Janissaries. Some Bektashi *teqe* (lodges) were turned over to the use of the Naqshbandi order, which also has a history in the Balkans, notably in Bosnia. In addition, some Naqshbandi became Bektashi.

Within decades the order had begun to reassert itself. During the period of Sultan Abdul Hamid (1876-1908), at the same time as the Bektashi played a notable role in the Albanian national revival, they were also involved in Masonic lodges and the Young Turk movement, which participated in the sultan's overthrow.

As we know, the Sufi orders were all banned in Turkey in 1925, and the leadership of the Bektashi order was transferred to Albania, which had been the main center of its activity in the Balkans.

Algar notes that "the Bektashiya arrived in Albania probably as early as the fifteenth century and it became well-established there by the early 1700s." He points out that the strength of the order in Albania was so great that it came to function as more than a Sufi order; rather, as a separate religious community alongside the Sunni Muslims.

He also recognizes the evil fate meted out to the Bektashi, who had contributed so greatly to the Albanian national revival as well as to the later Partisan struggle, by the communist regime: "a series of restrictions were placed on their activity, culminating in the official prohibition of the Bektashiya — together with all other religions — in 1967."

Algar comments, "in Thrace, Kosovë, and Macedonia, the Bektashiya continues to survive,

although it is to be presumed that it has been all but eradicated in Bulgaria as a result of the official measures taken against all Muslim groups in 1985."

Albanians and Turks residing in Egypt had kept Bektashism alive there until the 1950s. Algar also takes note of the activity of the Bektashi *teqe* maintained by Albanian emigres in Detroit.

A major volume, *Actes de la table ronde sur l'ordre des Bektachis et les groupes se réclamant de Hadji-Bektach, 29 juin-2 juillet 1986, Strasbourg*, is forthcoming. We look forward to an opportunity to review it.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Katundi Ynë

Several publications which focus on Italo-Albanian (Aberesh) culture are published in Cosenza, Italy including *Katundi Ynë* (Our Village) and *Lidhja* (Union). The *Katundi Ynë* quarterly, was founded in 1970 and proclaims itself as a journal involved in the "political-cultural battle of threatened minorities". Its editor is Demetrio Emanuele.

Katundi Ynë is a voice for those people of Albanian heritage who have lived in Italy for centuries. They wish to preserve the memory and validity of their noble heritage in the modern world. The Arbëresh people wish to safeguard the aspects of their culture and language which express their unique contribution to the human family. Among the topics discussed in recent issues have been the "Return of Freedom and Democracy in Albania"; "Grave Situation of Human Rights in the Albanian Region of Kosovo"; "Rehabilitation of the Renowned Writer Ernest Kollaj"; "Illyrians and Palasgians (ancestors of modern Albanians)"; a "Profile of Terenc Toci" (the well-known Arbëresh and Albanian patriot, politician and publicist executed by the communists in 1946 in Tiranë); plus an article on "Albanian Migrations in the XV century and in 1991".

Katundi Ynë publishes articles and studies on the current progress of democracy in Albania. At the same time it chronicles the Arbëresh struggle in Italy for their rights to educate their children

and to promote their culture. Although most of the articles appear in the Italian language, a good number are in Arbëresh, including Arbëresh poetry.

Lidhja

The review *Lidhja* was founded in 1980. It is published semi-annually by the **George Skanderbeg Social-Cultural Research Center** in Cosenza. Its editor is Fr. Antonio Belusci. He has a team of collaborators in the Arbëresh community in Italy, Canada, and the United States. The articles give evidence of the internationality of the Albanian and Arbëresh people. In fact, the masthead of *Lidhja* describes the periodical as "a semi-annual publication of Italian-Greek-Albanian culture". *Lidhja* treats a wide variety of issues bearing on the international Albanian community. Kosova is a topic which is much discussed in the pages of *Lidhja*. The efforts of the new democratic government to transform Albania from a ruined country, after the half century of communist rule, into a free and prosperous state has been widely reviewed in the pages of *Lidhja*. Large sections are devoted to the letters sent in by readers from around the world. The letters make a real contribution to promoting the friendly dialogue among the Arbëresh. Among articles recently published are those dealing with the Albanian refugees in Italy and with the Albanian cultural heritage in Greece. Two aspects of *Lidhja* deserve special mention. First are the beautiful photographs of the Arbëresh people participating in the various cultural, religious and social ceremonies. Second is the concerted effort which *Lidhja* makes to advance the Arbëresh literature and language.

Oriente Cristiano

One of the little known facts about the Catholic Church in Italy is that there is a sizable number of Catholics who for many centuries have been celebrating the Holy Eucharist and other sacraments in the Eastern or Byzantine rite. These Catholics are mainly to be found in the southern regions of Italy and on the island of Sicily. Their liturgy is closely related to the traditions of the Church dating back to apostolic period in Albania. Among their institutions are the Abbey of Santa Maria in Grottaferrata outside Rome. It was founded in the

11th century by St. Nilo, and the eparchies (Dioceses) of Piana degli Albanesi and Lungro. They have their own publications including a real treasure entitled *Oriente Cristiano* (Eastern Christian World) which keeps alive and makes known the traditions of the Eastern Church which are vibrant in the lives of their people. The publication also helps to provide an ecumenical bridge between Catholic and Orthodox Christians. *Oriente Cristiano* is published quarterly in Palermo, Sicily. From a historical perspective the publication describes the human and divine spiritual realities which have nourished Christians in Italy for more than 1000 years.

Oriente Cristiano carries studies by eminent theologians plus reports about ongoing Catholic-Orthodox forums and dialogues. It includes articles on liturgy, eastern orthodox art and spirituality. One finds in its pages important messages and documents from the hierarchies of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Matters of dogma are treated with honesty and respect for all parties concerned. There is an openness to different approaches by East and West which will help to bring about the day that John Paul II described when the "Church can breathe once again with both its lungs".

For more than thirty years *Oriente Cristiano* has been following its difficult but inspiring ministry of unity. Among articles which have been published in recent years we should mention the study on *Mariology in the Eastern Churches* (Vol. XXXIII, no.1-2); the *Holy Eucharist* (Vol. XXXI, no.1); and the *Message of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches* (Vol. XXXII, no.1). Especially worthy of note are two entire editions devoted to *The Orthodox Church in Albania* (Vol. XVII, no.4) and *The Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist in the Liturgical Expressions of the Byzantine Churches* (Vol. XXII, no.3-4). The latter includes valuable photos, documentation and a glossary of important Greek and Latin terms used in liturgy.

It is clear that *Oriente Cristiano* is rendering a much needed service to promotion of the unity of Christians while also being an eloquent voice of Italo-Albanian (Arbëresh) Catholics who seek to nourish their own faith in Christ and His Church.

Raymond FROST

LE NETTOYAGE ETHNIQUE: DOCUMENTS HISTORIQUES SUR UNE IDÉOLOGIE SERBE. Rassemblés, traduits, et commentés par Mirko Grmek, Marc Gjidara et Neven Simac. Paris: Fayard, 1993. 340 pp., \$US40.00.

This volume, issued by a major French publisher under a title that translates as "Ethnic Cleansing: Historic Documents on A Serbian Ideology," merits an effort at imitation by an American firm. It brings together, with necessary but abbreviated commentary, the main documentary sources in the history of Great Serbian expansionism.

Many of these texts have frequently been cited in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, as well as by such collaborators as Vatro Murvar. They include accounts of the early "ethnic cleansing" pursued by Serbian extremists in Belgrade against the "Turks" (mainly indigenous Muslims) at the beginning of the 19th century.

The collection further includes notes on themes of ethnic violence and vengeance in Serbian and Montenegrin poetry (particularly the ever-instructive Njegos case), as well as the Nacertanije or Plan of Ilija Garasanin, dating from

1844, in which the Great Serbia scheme is first outlined in detail.

The infamous Cubrilovic Memorandum of 1937, proposing the expulsion of the Albanian population from Kosovë and taking its direct inspiration from Hitler and Stalin, is included, along with data on the preceding and succeeding events in the career of this notable Great Serbian terrorist.

That key document is accompanied by the text of the 1985 *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, along with edifying notes on its evolution.

Additional chapters cover such significant texts as the 1902 letter of Nikola Stojanovic, "Do istrage nase ili vase"—"Toward Extermination—We or You?" which marked the onset of the serious Croato-Serbian conflict in the 20th century.

Le Nettoyage Ethnique is an important addition to the secondary bibliography on the history of the Great Serbian fantasy and its tragic and criminal consequences.

Stephen SCHWARTZ



A rare photo of St. Mary's Church (Kisha e Sh'Mërisë në Vaun e Dejës) near Shkodër. It was erected in 1291, when the towns of Iaç and Deja were Albanian principality centers.

As can be seen from the picture the small 1291 church was well preserved. The new, much larger structure in the foreground was built at the beginning of this century to accommodate the pastoral needs of the faithful. Both buildings were considered historical monuments because of their architectural and artistic qualities.

The photo and descriptive comments about the church buildings were published in the *Histori e Shqipërisë* (History of Albania, Tiranë, 1959, pp. 232-233).

In 1967, at the height of anti-religious campaign of the "Cultural Revolution," Mehmet Shehu, Albanian Premier and chief assistant of dictator Enver Hoxha, was inspecting the area. He was surprised to see the building still intact. Shehu was informed by the local Party secretary that the churches were

being preserved at the request of the Ministry of Culture as "historical monuments." Shehu ordered the immediate demolition of these "remnants of religious obscurantism".

IN MEMORIAM

Msgr. Nikollë Mini **(1924 – 1991)**

Msgr. Nikollë Mini died suddenly while celebrating Mass in his parish in Prizren, Kosova, in October 1991.

Monsignor Mini was born in 1924 to a pious family in Kosovë. He completed his primary education in the Serbian language, in his hometown of Prizren. At the time instruction in the Albanian language was not permitted.

In 1941, Mini enrolled at the Albanian Pontifical Seminary in Shkodër. There he excelled academically. He was esteemed by his Jesuit superiors for his zeal and example.

In 1946, with the closing of the Pontifical Seminary, Mini returned to Kosovë and continued his priestly studies in Croatia. Following his ordination in 1950 he was assigned pastor of Our Lady Help of the Christians Cathedral in Prizren. Soon he was engaging parishioners in the day-to-day life of the parish. He spiritually and culturally enriched them with his programs.

In March 1970 Mini founded DRITA (The Light), the first Albanian Catholic Monthly in Kosovë. With this publication he reached the Albanian Catholics living in Yugoslavia and diaspora. The journal encouraged them in their faith as well as their cultural, social and political commitments.

Mini helped to establish the first convent and school of the (Italian) Evangelical Sisters of St. Paul in Prizren. He was instrumental in sending 14 young women to Rome to study and become religious of the afore-mentioned congregation.

Albanian Catholics in Prizren and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia will sorely miss Msgr. Nikollë Mini. Our sincerest condolences to his family and many friends in Kosovë, Albania, and elsewhere.



Msgr. Nikollë Mini

DR. MARK KOLIQI **(1942 – 1992)**

Dr. Mark Koliqi died of heart failure unexpectedly in October 1992. Koliqi was the son of the renowned professor and writer Ernest Koliqi.

Koliqi was born in Shkodër in November 1942. He lived only briefly in Albania before going with his parents to Italy in 1943. There he completed his primary and secondary education. He received his doctorate degree in law from the University of Rome.

In 1972 Koliqi became editor of "SHEJZAT (Le Pleiadi)", the well-known Albanian (international) review, owned and directed by his father. Upon the death of his father in 1975, Koliqi moved to Milan where he held an important administrative position with an American company.

Koliqi will be remembered for his humility and for his cultural excellence. His sincerity combined with a strong will made him an example to many.

Although Koliqi lived only briefly in Albania he spoke a pure Albanian and was well versed in Albanian religious, cultural and political affairs. Our Institute (formerly the Albanian Catholic Information Center) was privileged to have him as a guest in 1989.

A funeral Mass was offered for Koliqi at the Jesuit church in Milan



Dr. Mark Koliqi

on October 29, 1992. It was attended by a great number of friends and compatriots. He was buried in Rome on October 30, 1992 in his parents grave.

His sudden passing remains a shock not only to his family but to many of his friends and acquaintances. We will miss his encouragement and support but, most of all, his care and kindness toward our Institute.

Our sincerest condolences to his wife, Carla Gafuri Koliqi; his sister, Elizabetta Koliqi Oliviera; his dear uncle Dr. Petro Vuçani; and to the rest of his family in Albania and the United States.

SAHIT KRYEZIU (1917 – 1993)

Sahit Kryeziu, a descendant of the legendary Kryeziu family of Kosovë, died in May 1993 in New York City.

Kryeziu was born in 1917 in Gjakovë. His patriotic family excelled in traditional Albanian hospitality and bravery. He completed his primary and secondary education in Gjakovë and Prishtinë. His father, Riza Beg Kryeziu, played a role in liberating the city of Shkup (Skopje) from the Ottoman Turks

in 1908 that encouraged Albanian efforts towards complete liberation.

Kryeziu was sent to Paris for further studies. Just before World War II Kryeziu received his degree in political science at the Sorbonne. He was among the first to actively oppose the fascist occupation of Albania. He joined his brothers in organizing an active resistance to the enemy. They drew much support in Kosovë and in Albania for their patriotic efforts to oppose the Nazi-Fascist and Communist occupiers.

Following the Communist takeover in 1944, Sahit Kryeziu, along with many other freedom fighters, left Albania but never relinquished his struggle. In 1949 he became a member of the Free Albania Committee. The Paris-based Committee, comprised the most distinguished diaspora political leaders. It acted as a "free government in exile", to liberate Albania from Communist rule.

Kryeziu died with his dreams fulfilled. He saw Albania finally freed from Communist slavery. A multitude of friends and associates attended his funeral in New York.

To his relatives and many friends our sincere condolences.

KOLË MIRI DEDËVUKAJ (1911 – 1992)

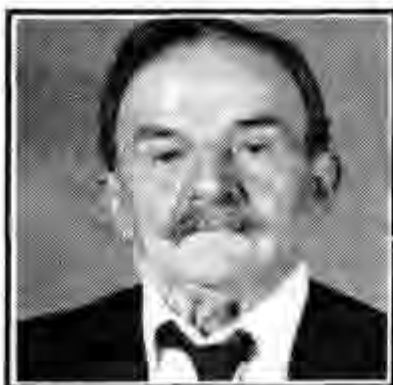
Kolë Miri Dedëvukaj, the distinguished warrior of Albanian Highlands, died in May 1992 in New York following a long illness. He immigrated to the United States with his family in 1972 along with many other Albanian Highlanders of Montenegro. They fled from their land because of Montenegrin and Serbian repression. Miri settled in New York. He was held in high esteem not only by the large Albanian community in New York but also by Albanian immigrant highlanders in Detroit, Cleveland, and Los Angeles for his wise example and dedication.

Kolë Miri and his older brother, Mark Miri Dedëvukaj, became living legends among the Highland people in 1944 and 1945 for their courageous stand against the communist security forces



Sahit Kryeziu (left) with Mithat Frashëri (center) and Abaz Kupi (right) of the Free Albania Committee, London, 1949

who attempted to capture the anti-communist guerilla leader, Captain Gjelo Luli. The then allied Yugoslav and Albanian communists, barbarously tortured the two brothers and members of their families in a desperate



KOLË MIRI DEDËVUKAJ

effort to learn the whereabouts of Captain Luli. Both brothers hid Luli and gave him their solemn *besa* (word of honor) that they would rather die than reveal his hiding place to the communists. They kept their promise at the high price of personal suffering. Their stoic example of courage was in keeping with the traditional Albanian *besa*. They were celebrated in words and songs throughout the years. Now that the fear of reprisal has disappeared they have been recognized for their heroism and for exemplifying the Albanian traditions: to love and to defend their country; to respect and protect the weak; and to live their Catholic faith.

A large crowd of Albanians from all over the United States attended Miri's funeral. It was a clear indication of how much he was loved and respected by his countrymen. Accompanied by his family and friends Miri's body was flown by private jet to Tiranë where the funeral party from New York was joined by other relatives and friends at Miri's birthplace in Hot. There, following the customary religious ceremonies offered by the Franciscan Fathers, Kolë Miri Dedëvukaj was laid to rest according to his wishes. Only the respect for the Albanian Highland traditions made this solemn funeral possible. Albanians irregardless of their religious affiliation were pleased to witness such an outpouring of love and return to tradition.

Our Albanian Catholic Institute, which labors to preserve the Albanian heritage in the United States, offers Kolë Miri's Dedëvukaj family its sincerest condolences on the loss of their father.

May he rest in well deserved peace.

TONIN HARAPI: COMPOSER (1926 – 1992)

Tonin Harapi, the talented Albanian composer, died in July 1992 in Tiranë after a prolonged illness.

Harapi was born in Shkodër in 1926 where he completed his primary and secondary education at the Jesuit *Saverianum* College. From childhood his musical talent on the organ and piano was evident. His Jesuit teacher, Father Viktor Milizia, encouraged Harapi's obvious talent. His parents urged him to pursue a musical career abroad. His parents however, were disappointed when young Tonin informed them of his desire to enter the Pontifical Seminary to prepare himself for the priesthood. Initially they tried to discourage him from this pursuit but they ultimately gave him their blessing.

While in the seminary Harapi continued his musical studies. His performances seemed to uplift the soul and inspire those who heard him. His dedication, exemplary conduct and spirituality were noticeable to his Jesuit superiors. His colleagues remember some of his first compositions which were used at solemn ceremonies.

In 1946, with the closing of the Pontifical Seminary and Catholic schools, Harapi and other seminarians were forced to enroll in state schools. He eventually studied in Tiranë's Conservatorium of Music where he received a teaching degree. He composed various musical pieces on themes about the beauty of nature and youth. Some of these compositions won festival and competition prizes. Yet his composing talent was confined by government censorship. Only with the fall of communism in 1992 was Harapi able to freely perform his long censored compositions and to compose new ones on themes of freedom.



TONIN HARAPI

Only with the fall of communism in 1992 was Harapi able to freely perform his long censored compositions and to compose new ones on themes of freedom.

With the re-opening of the Jesuit Church in Tirana in 1991, Harapi became Music Director and organized the church choir. The deadly illness which he stoically endured with deep faith, however, cut short his newly found freedom. A multitude of relatives and artist friends attended funeral services for him at the Jesuit Church in Tirana.

Our condolences to his family and friends. May he rest in peace.

DR. INJAC SARAÇI (1925 – 1992)

The distinguished Albanian bacteriologist, Dr. Injac Saraçi, died unexpectedly of heart failure in his home in Tirana in July 1992. He was the nephew of the noted Jesuit writers and educators Ndoc and Zef Saraçi. His father, Dr. Gjon Saraçi, was one of the first Albanian physicians.

Saraçi was born in Shkodër in 1925. His primary and secondary education was completed at the Jesuit *Saverianum* College. He pursued a medical education at the University of Tirana, obtaining a degree in bacteriology.



INJAC SARAÇI

Dr. Saraçi was not only renowned for his scientific research work but also for his writings. In a letter to our editor shortly before his death, he wrote that, "My ideal was literature but I ended up working in the field of science. For more than 40 years I have been writing in silence, without publishing anything, because I could not reconcile myself with the oppressive communist regime. For half-century I lived under constant pressure because of my writings. I was saved only because of my scientific work. I have written several historical and psychological works, some 15 dramas of a historic, social and psychological nature, 3 volumes of novels, 3 volumes of literary, social, religious and political treatises, some 100 short stories

for children and other works. Only now, with the newly won freedom, have I begun to publish small things in the Jesuit monthly, *E ARDHMJA* (The Future)."

Our editor, during his April journey to Albania, visited with Dr. Saraçi's widow. He was able to peruse some of his works and was impressed and saddened at the same time by the tragic circumstances which silenced such a talented writer as Dr. Saraçi.

Funeral services for Dr. Saraçi were held at the Jesuit Church in Tirana. A multitude of relatives and friends were at hand to console his son and widow.

Our sincerest condolences to the Saraçi family and friends in Shkodër and Tirana. May he rest in peace.

PROF. GEORGE LERSKI (1917 – 1992)

George Lerski, professor emeritus of History at the University of San Francisco, died of heart failure in San Francisco in September 1992. He was an anti-Nazi war hero. Lerski received many medals and commendations for his work and bravery during World War II.

For many years Lerski headed the Coordinating Committee of Americans from East Central Europe (AECE) of which our former Albanian Catholic Information Center was a member organization. He was particularly interested in Albania and her struggle through centuries to survive as a nation. On many occasions he spoke of Albania and Albanians with great admiration and respect. Lerski will be especially remembered by Albanians for his impassioned speeches during the 1985 International Conference Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania and during the Solemn Celebration of the 1987 75th Anniversary of Albania's Independence. Both events were organized by the Albanian Catholic



GEORGE LERSKI

Information Center in conjunction with St. Ignatius Church and the Campus Ministry Office of the University of San Francisco.

A Mass of resurrection was offered for Dr. George Lerski at St. Ignatius Church, attended by his former colleagues, relatives and friends.

To his son and wife, our Institute offers its most sincere condolences. May he enjoy a well deserved rest.

PASHKO SINISHTA (1939-1992)

Pashko Sinishta, younger brother of our editor, died in June, 1992 in Sydney, Australia following a prolonged illness.

Sinishta was born in 1939 in Podgorica, Montenegro. His family had emigrated from Shkodër to Montenegro in 1923. During the war Sinishta's family returned to Shkodër and it remained there throughout the war. In 1946 they moved again to Yugoslavia and settled in Prishtinë, Kosovë.



PASHKO SINISHTA

While in High School, Sinishta was involved in pro-Albanian activities. To avoid arrest, he escaped to Italy in 1957. After a stint in refugee camps, he finally emigrated to Australia in 1960. There he married and with his wife Patricia had two

children Jody and Paul Victor.

For the past several years he was ill from cancer. Sinishta suffered especially from a longing for his mother, whom he did not see for over 30 years. He died in his sleep.

His funeral was attended by family and many friends and compatriots. Our sincerest condolences to his family. May he rest in peace.



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ALBANIAN LANGUAGE SECTION

PJESA SHQYP E BULETINI-T

VIZITA HISTORIKE E PAPËS GJON PALI II SHQIPËRISË, <i>Lec Zadeja</i>	166
PËRSHNDETJA E PRESIDENTIT TË REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË DR. SALI BERISHA NË MITINGUN MADHËSHTOR T'ORGANIZUEM NË SHESHIN SKANDERBEG TË TIRANËS, 25 PRILL 1993	168
PËRSHNDETJA E ATIT TË SHEJTË PAPA GJON PALI II PUPULLIT SHQIPTAR NË SHESHIN SKANDERBEG TË TIRANËS, 25 PRILL 1993	171
TRE MOMENTE NGA JETA E MARTIRIT TË FESË, MONS. VINÇENS PRENNUSHI, Mikel Prennushi	174
IMZOT ERNEST ÇOBA, <i>Lec Zadeja</i>	178
VUEJTA, O BIR, E BAN MA FISNIKE FITOREN – Në kujtim t'Ët Ciprian Nikës, OFM, Sami Repishti	180
DOM PJETËR GRUDA, Mikel Prennushi	182
DOM MARK HASI, Mikel Prennushi	184
LUTE E DESHPRUEHME, Ernest Koliqi	185
DOKUMENTIMI I TIRANISË KOMUNISTE, Sami Repishti	188
KRONIKË NGA SHKODRA: Perkujtohen Ndre Zadeja E Pjeter Meshkalla, S.J.- Nderohet Monsignor Mikel Koliqi, <i>Lec Zadeja</i>	192
VEPRA KULTURALE E ELEMENTIT KATOLIK NË SHQIPNI, P. Donat Kurti, OFM (Ribotim)	196
ORGANIZATA "BASHKIMI SHQIPTAR" – LUFTETARE E VENDOSUR KUNDËR KOMUNIZMIT, Refik Bushati	211
SHENIME PËR VEPRIMIN E ORGANIZATËS ANTIKOMUNISTE "PËRDPJEKJA SHQIPTARE, Xhevat Gjyrezi	219
DISA KUJTIME TË MJEKUT T'ËT GJERGJ FISHËS, Injac Saraçi	221
SHQIPËRIA LINDORE – PARA "ZGJIDHJES FINALE", Sami Repishti	224
Recensime Librash:	229
Martirizimi i Kishës Katolike Shqiptare 1944-1990, Palokë Plaku	
Dhetë Vjet Burg në Shqipni (1945–1955), Petro Vuçani	
Ët Pjeter Meshkalla, S.J., Palokë Plaku	

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SHKODER (2018)

VIZITA HISTORIKE E PAPËS GJON PALI II SHQIPËRISË MIRËSEVINI ATI I SHEJTË

Qyshë nga dita e hapjes së lajmit të gëzuar se Ati i Shejtë, Papa Gjon PALI II do të vizitojë në muajin prill të vitit 1993 Shqipërinë dhe më vonë njoftimi i dhanun në mesin e mjesnatës me rastin e Krishtëlindjeve të vitit 1992 nga Mons. Ivan Dias, Nunc Apostolik i Selisë Shejtë në Shqipëri për emnimin e katër ipeshkëvijvet të rinj, Atdheu ynë e veçanarisht Shkodra jetoi çaste të paharrueshme. Këto ngjarje i dhanë edhe një shtytje me të madhe punës për përfundimin e rikonstruksionit të Katedrales, në mënyrë, që çdo gjë, të ishte e gatëshme për datën 25 prill 1993, ditën kur do të shuguroheshin nga vetë Ati i Shejtë ipeshkëvijt e ri, Imzot FRANO ILLIA, Imzot RROK MIRDITA, Imzot ROBERT ASHTA dhe Imzot ZEF SIMONI.

Dhe sa ma shumë afroheshin ditët e ardhjes së Papës, aq më tepër shtoheshin përpjekjet në përfundimin e punimeve për këtë datë të shenue.

Dhe ja me në fund dita e mirëpritur.

Java dhe ditët e saj që nga 18 prill e deri me 24 ishin të mbushuna me veprimtari e aktivitete nga ma të ndryshmet. Botimet e veçante për Papën, Gjon Palin II të bamë nga Shoqata "Gjergj Fishta", Katedralja e Shkodrës dhe shtypi katolik i Kishës së Zojës Ruzare, si dhe ai i "Kumbonës së Dielles" me titull *Martirizimi i Kishës Katolike Shqiptare*, zbukurimet e shumta në dy qytetet kryesore, Tiranë e Shkodër me panulla, banderolalla shumëngjyrëshe dhe të shkrueme në dy gjuhë, shqyp e italisht si dhe mjaft zbukurime të tjera të kryera nga punëtorët duarantë shkodranë, fishekzarrat në mbrambjen e datës 24 prill të kujtonin Zojën e Shkodrës dhe festën e gëzueshme që organizohej po brenda mureve të Katedrales gjithëmonë të tretën diele të tetorit për popullin e Shkodrës.

Ora 8,30 aeroplani që sillte Papën, zbret në pistën e aeroportit të Rinasit. Për të pritë këtëfigurë të ndritur të globit, në aeroport kishin dalë personalitete të nalta të vendit tonë përfshi Presidentin, Dr. Sali Berisha, Kryeministrin Z. Aleksander Meksi, Kryetarin e Kuvendit Popullor, Z. Pjetër Arbënori, Bamirsën me origjinë shqiptare,

Nanë Terezen etj. Kështu PAPA, pasi bekoj dhe puthi token shqiptare, u përqaftue dhe bekoj dy figura të ndritura të vendit tonë: Nanë Terezen dhe Presidentin Z. Sali Berisha. Me këtë rast, ky i fundit, tue i urue mirëardhjen, në mes të tjerave i tha Papës: "Ju vini në një Shqipëri të lirë. Në, dhe brezat që vijnë, do t'ju jemi gjithnjë mirënjohës..."

Mandej përshndeti dhe Ati i Shejtë. Pasi kaluen në revistë truprojen, nën tingujt e hymneve të Vatikanit e të Shqipërisë, Papa dhe personat që e shoqënuen, u nisen me automobila për në Shkodër.

Nga Rinasit e deri në Shkodër, rrugët, kudo të kalote Papa ishin mbushë me popull, që brohoritëtë "Rroftë Papa"! Shumë prej tyre kjanin, disa të tjerë i driheshin duert, tue mbajtë në duer kryqin e drujtë e të gjujuem merrshin bekimin barituer të Papës.

Në hymje të qytetit të Shkodrës, Papa bani një ndalesë të shkurtë tek rrenojet e Kishës së Zojës së Këshillit të Mirë, bri kalasë "Rozafa." Këtu u prit nga autoritetet e vendit dhe ju dhurue një tubë me lule të freskta. Nderkohë Kisha Katedrale ishte e mbushur si asnjherë tjetër. Brendë janë besimtarë të Shkodrës, të krahinave për rreth e nga tërë Shqipërinja, miq dhe të ftuar nga diaspora, përfaqesues të besimeve tjera e të trupit diplomatik. Telegjinazhi i shqiptarve nga Amerika me flamur kombtarë, të Papës e të SHBA, hynë në Katedrale pas një procesioni, të primun nga barit e krye Dom Anton Kqira, Dom Prenk Ndreyashaj e Domoni Marash Shkreli.

Ora 11,30; Në mes të dy trokitjeve të shumta hynë në Kishë Nanë Tereza e mbis saj edhe Presidenti Z. Sali Berisha, Pjetër Arbënori, Alfred Serreqi, Ministri i Jashtëm e shumë personalitete të tjera politike, kulturore e shoqërore.

E së fundi edhe Papa, Gjon Pali II. I primë nga seminaristët, klerikët, ipeshkëvijt, kardinajt, Papa zbulovend në tronin e tij, Nunci Apostolik Mons. Ivan Dias i uron mirëseardhjen dhe e falënderon për vizitën. Gjate falës ai përmendi të kaluemen e

popullit shqiptar, persekutimin e tij e sidomos të fesë, të katolicizmit nën diktaturen komuniste. Gjithashtu vuni në dukje figurat e shqueme të popullit shqiptar që kanë nderuar kristianizmin, si Gjergj Kastriotin e Nenë Terezen.

Menjherë filloi mesha. E gjatë saj, pas disa lutjeve dhe liximit të Veprave të Apostujvet nga qytetarja Jolanda Baba, të Psalmi nga Kolë Gashi (Kosovar), të Letres së Parë të Shën Pjetrit Apostull nga Paulin Ujka dhe të Ungjillit nga Diakoni Marash Shkreli nga Amerika, erdhi momenti i shugurimit të Ipeshkëvjvet të ri. Përpara Nunci Apostolik i paraqet katër kandidatët Atit të Shejtë, të cilët, të shtrinë përpara lterit, marrin bekimin nga Ati i Shejtë. Në fjalën e tij që mbajti me këte rast Papa foli për eksperiencën e vdekjes që kaloi populli shqiptar dhe nderoi me lavdi martirët e katolicizmit shqiptar. Në mes të tjerave theksoi: "Ne nuk duhet të harrojmë atë që ka ndodhë. Të kqyrim përpara për të ndertue një të ardhme të lirë dhe me dimensione njerzore, por të mos harrojmë eksperiencën e kaluar." Me këte rast bekoi dhe shuguroi katër ipeshkëvj të ri, tre prej të cilëve kanë kalue e provue burgje komuniste. Bile ishte karakteristike që Mons. Frano Illia në atë ditë përkujtote edhe 25-vjetorin e dënimit me vdekje. Në fund, në gjuhën shqipe Papa tha: "Vllazën dhe motra. Me të vertetë kjo asht dita e falun prej Zotit..." Mandej iu dorëzoi prelatëvet të ri simbolet e hierarkisë kishtarë.

Menjherë filloi dorzimi i dhuratave Papës për Meshë. Bukën dhe venen ja dhuruan respektivisht: Lidia Laca dhe Pjerin Luli, ndersa rushin e frutat Klaudia Gajtani dhe Desaret Cefa. Më prekse kjenë çastet kur çifti Manjola (Emanuela) e Paç Berisha, nga Shkodra i falen Papës "ZOJEN E SHKODRES" të punueme në filigramë.

E si shperblim i këtyne edhe Papa solli si dhuratë nga Gjenacani kopjen e figurës së Zojës së Këshillit të Mirë, të cilën e vuni mbi lter mbas mbarimit të Meshes. Në të njëjtën kohë, Papa bari bekimin e gurit të parë që do të vendoset në temelet e Kishës së Zojës së Këshillit të Mirë, bri kalasë "Rozafa" e cila do të rindertohet, pasi u shkatruet dy herë, një herë në kohën e pushtimit otoman dhe të dytën gjatë diktaturës komuniste.

Shumë besimtarë patën fatin e mirë të marrin kungimin nga vetë dora e Papës, ndersa besimtarë të tjerë nga klerikë të ndryshëm.

Mbas mbarimit të Meshës, Papa del në Balkonin e Argjipeshkëvisë dhe pershndetë popullin e shumë, që ishte mbledhë për të pamë e dëgjue fjalën e tij. Gjatë fjalës së tij Ati i Shejtë kujtoi meritat e Shkodrës, si djep i kulturës dhe i katolicizmit dhe falënderon gjithashtu Shqiperinë që i ka dhanë njerëzimit një shejtëneshtë, siç asht Nanë Tereza. Në fund u këndue kanga "Regina Coeli."

Atmosferën e kësaj feste madhështore do ta bante ma të gëzueshme sikur pritja dhe percjellja e Atit të Shejtë të shoqërohej prej orkestrës frymore të qytetit. Kjo do ti kishte tregue Papës e personaliteteve të hueja të larta që e shoqërojnë se në Shkodër gjithnji vepron banda e njoftun, vazhduesja e asaj që themeloi në fillimet e këtij shekulli Palokë Kurti e drejtoi Frano Ndoja, mu në këte Kishë Katedrale. Mbas këndimit të hymnit Marjan populli i entuzjazmuem vathdonte të duetrokitë e të brohoritë "Rroftë Papa." Ai priste me interesim largimin e pershndetjen e tij të fundit. Dhe ja, pas një takimi të shkurtë me klerikët, Papa del edhe njëherë në ballkonin e Argjipeshkëvisë, pershndetë me dorë të pranishmit tue iu dhanë bekimin dhe mandej i percjellun nga autoritetet e vendit, largohet në ora 17.30 nga Shkodra me elikopter, për në Tiranë, ku në ora 18.00 pati një takim kortezije me Presidentin e Republikës, Z. Sali Berisha.

Në këto veprimtari korrespondentët e shumë (kund 500) të Atshë-së dhe të agjensive tëndryshme të Radios, Televizionit dhe shtypit e jepnin korrespondencat e tyre me titull ju flasim nga Shkodra."

Dhe tashti gëzim do të kalote në Tiranë. Ora 19.30, Papa priste nga ma se 100.000 njerëz të mbledhun në sheshin tëndror përpara Muzeut Kombëtar. Të gjithë kanë dëshirë ta shofin, pershndetjen e të marrin bekimin e tij në çastin kur ai zbrei nga makina e bardhë e tij. Mijëra flamuj të Vatikanit e të Shqiperisë e madje disa të Polonis valon në ajr. Menjherë, pasi Papa ulet në fronin e tij, Presidenti Berisha edhe njëherë e falënderon për vizitën e Tij. Mandej Papa pershndeti dhe bekoi

PËRSHNDETJA E PRESIDENTIT TË REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË DR. SALI BERISHA NË MITINGUN MADHËSHTOR T'ORGANIZUEM NË SHESHIN SKANDERBEG TË TIRANËS, 25 PRILL 1993.

Sot, patëm nderin dhe kënaqësinë e madhe të kemi midis nesh Atin e Shenjtë, Papa Gjon Palin II, personalitetin që me jetën e tij sa tokësore, aq dhe hyjnore, ka pushtuar globin.

Gëzimi dhe dimensionet e kësaj vizite-festë për ne janë shumë të mëdha.

Vazhdim i Vizitës Historike

token e popullin shqiptar. Në mes të tjerave, në fjalën e Tij, Ai theksoi: "Kam ardhë për t'i manifestue çdo shqiptari adminrimin dhe mbështetjen në këte fazë delikate të kalimit historik dhe të ringjalljes shoqërore e shpirtërore." Në fund në gjuhë shqype Papa shqiptoi këto fjalë: "Zoti e ruajt Atdheun tuaj. Zoti e mprojtë popullin shqiptar në mbarë botën. Në emen të Zotit ju përqafoj dhe bekoj të gjithëve."

Mes përshndetjeve të shumta dhe duartrokitjeve të pandame, Papa, Gjon Pali II u largue nga Tirana, i përcejllun nga Presidenti dhe personalitete të larta shqiptare.

Rrugës për në Romë, nga aeroplani, Papa, Gjon Pali II, i dergon këte mesazhë Presidentit të Republikës: Sali Berisha: "Në përfundim të vizitës në Shqipëri dhe tek Komuniteti Katolik që munda të takoj sot, ndjej detyrën për të falënderuar Shkelqesinë tuaj dhe autoritetet e vendit për mikëpritjen. Ndersa falënderoj Ju dhe kombin shqytar, i lutem Zotit të plotëfuqishem t'i japë popullit tuaj një jetë me të mirë dhe t'i këthehet paqja dhe zhvillimi social sipas traditave njerëzore e fetare të kësaj toke." Ora 22,55 Papa arriti në Romë.

Kështu përfundoj kjo vizitë e shkurtë 13-orëshe në Shqipëri dhe 6 orëshe në Shkodër, e mbushur plot me kujtime, që do të kujtohet si ngjarje me shumë rëndësi në historinë tonë bashkëkohore.

Lec ZADEJA

Papa Vojtila është Papa i Lindjes, domethënë, i martinizimit, qëndresës dhe vuajtjeve njerëzore. Në terrin e thellë të pushtimit të egër komunist, që përjetuan popujt lindorë, kisha polake pati meritën e madhe të jetë rezistenca e parë, e paepur ndaj këtij sistemi. Zëri i saj oshëtinte fuqishëm si një kushttrim, jo vetëm për klerikët dhe besimtarët e martinizuar katolikë, por për të gjithë ata që vuanin dhe ëndërronin për mendimin e lirë. Kurajoja e saj ishte legjenda e lirisë, ajo nderoi kishën në tërësi dhe vendin e vet, Poloninë.

Por kisha polake i dha Selisë së Shënjte Papën sllav Vojtila, misionarin e madh, që me forcën e mbipushtetshme të ideve dhe parimeve dha kontribut parësor në rrëzimin e perdes së hekurt, dhe sot, po me këtë armë ai lufton dhe përpigjet të rrafshojë murin e parave që rrezikon ta zëvendësojë këtë perde. Prandaj Papa Vojtila është dhe Papa i shpresës dhe i ringjalljes.

Për ne shqiptarët Ju, Ati i Shenjtë, jeni një mik i madh. Me 5 prill të vitit 1980, kur kombi ynë lëngonte në varfëri dhe izolim, Ju erdhët në Pulje për të hedhur shikimin tuaj përtej detit, për të denoncuar kalvarin që përjetonin besimtarët e Zotit. Ju jeni lutur çdo ditë për Shqipërinë. Zoti ka dëgjuar lutjet Tuaja dhe ja, këtu, ndodhemi midis njerëzve të lirë. Lavdi Zotit!

Diktatura komuniste e shpalli Shqipërinë si shtetin e vetëm ateist në botë dhe ushtroi ndaj klerit dhe fetarëve terrorin më të egër, por ajo kurrë s'i a doli ta kthente në ateist popullin shqiptar, sepse liritë dhe drejtat e njeriut, tija e besimit janë liritë e shpirtit. Ato vleret mund të suprimohen me kushtetutë dhe ligje, por larg jo në shpirtin dhe zemrën e njeriut. Ato janë njerëzore dhe hyjnore, janë të përgjeshme. Për këtë arsye shqiptarët ruajtën gjithnjë të parprektin besimin, me atë krijuan shpresën dhe ndodhi kështu siç thotë Jakovi: "Kur besimi naq vihet në provë, kjo ju sjell

qendrueshmërinë." Ndaj sot, ndonëse në kushte tejet të vështira, në ecim në rrugën e ringjalljes kombëtare, ne jemi të vendosur dhe të sigurt në këtë rrugë, sepse siç thotë i dituri Aquino, tri gjëra janë të rëndësishme për shpëtimin e njeriut: të dijë ç'të besojë, të dijë ç' të kërkojë dhe të dijë ç'të bëjë.

Sot shqiptarët besojnë në Zotin dhe lirinë.

Ata kërkojnë që endrrat e tyre të lirisë t'i shndrojnë në realitet demokratik, kërkojnë që Shqipëria të integrohet me dinjitet në Evropë.

Dhe sot ata dinë ç'të bëjnë. Prandaj po përpiqen me vështirësi dhe sakrificë të mëdha të ndërtojnë shtetin e së drejtës, të bazuar në respektin e plotë të lirive të të drejtave dhe të dinjitetit të njeriut, dhe të ndërtojnë këtu në Ballkan modelin e një shoqërie të bazuar në zhvillimin e vlerave shpirtërore dhe universale të qytetërimit perëndimor. Në këto përpjekje ne kemi patur ndihmë të madhe nga shumë vende mike, ndër të cilat më kryesore ka qënë ndihma e Italisë; "Karitasi" trokiti në çdo vatër shqiptare. Ne u jemi mirënjohës të gjithë atyre që na kanë ndihmuar dhe na ndihmojnë.

Ne synojmë integrimin në Evropë duke ruajtur dhe zhvilluar dinjitetin dhe identitetin tonë. Vërtet sot jemi shumë të varfër, por kjo është relative dhe e përkohshme, jo vetëm pse ne disponojmë pasuri natyrore, por edhe sepse parasëgjithash ne kemi pasuri dhe vlera të mëdha shpirtërore, kulturore; energjitë dhe virtyti do të na bashkojnë denjësisht me të tjerët.

Vizita Juaj, Ati i Shenjtë, është një mbështetje e madhe morale dhe politike për Shqipërinë në rrugën e saj të integritetit në Evropë, në përballimin e sakrificave që kërkon ndërtimi i një tëardhme tjetër. Vështirësitë janë të mëdha, por shanset që ofron liria janë më të mëdha.

Shenjtëria Juaj, Ju keni ardhur sot në një vend mik dhe kjo vizitë është një ndihmë e çmuar në ringjalljen e fesë në Shqipëri. Historia e Shqipërisë dhe e krishtërimit janë të lidhura ngushtë, miqësia e Shqipërisë me Selinë e Shenjtë është sa e vjetër, aq edhe e palëkundëshme. Ajo ka në themel jetën, vetëmohimin dhe përkushtimin e figurave të ndritura të kombit shqiptar si Papa Klementi XI, që kryesoi Selinë e Shenjtë për 19 vjet, Skenderbeut,

këtij *Atleta Christi*, që mbrojti Shqipërinë dhe krishtërimin për 25 vjet dhe Nënë Terezës, kësaj shqiptareje me trup të vogël, por me shpirt dhe zemër të madhe për të gjithë njerëzimin. Ne krenohemi me ta.

Në memonien kolektive të kombit shqiptar, emrat e Buzukut dhe Barletit, Bogdanit dhe Budit, Fishtës dhe Mjedës, Gjeçovit, Prennushit, Mëshkallës dhe shumë e shumë priftërinjve të tjerë, janë shkruar me gërma të arta. Ata ishin jo vetëm misionarë të përkushtuar të krishtërimit, por edhe shkrimtarë, studjues, shkencëtarë, politikanë dhe shumë prej tyre martirë të fjalës së lirë, fjalës së Zotit.

Në gusht të vitit 1464, Papa Piu i II, u përgatit të vinte në Shqipëri, për të kurorëzuar Skenderbeum mbret dhe për të shuguruar kardinalin Emzot Pal Engjëllin, por kjo vizitë nuk u realizua. Para një viti, pata nderin dhe kënaqësinë e madhe që vizitën e parë zyrtare si President i Shqipërisë ta bëj në Selinë e Shenjtë dhe të pritem nga Ju. Ndersa sot, Ju në Shkodër, qytetin martir, djepin e qytetërimit tonë shuguruat katër ipeshkvinjtë tanë, EMZOT FRANO ILLIA, EMZOT ROBERT ASHTA, EMZOT ZEF SIMONI, EMZOT RROK MIRDITA. Kjo ishte një ditë e madhe për kishën katolike shqiptare. Shkodra dhe Shqipëria do mburren me të gjithmonë. Por Ju sot, gjithashtu puthët tokën shqiptare dhe Shqipërisë i bekuat demokracinë. Ky është fat i bardhë për mbarë kombin tonë dhe këtë ai do ta mbajë mend gjithmonë.

Ati i Shenjtë, shqiptarët ju presin Ju sot me zemër të hapur, sepse Shqipëria mësoni unikenë botë, është vendi i tolerancës fetare *par excellence*. Këto prej shekujsh jetojnë në paqe dhe harmoni tre komunitete fetare. Këtu ne fe, si tre rrënjë hyjnore ushqejnë dhe pasurojnë shpirtin e madh të këtij kombi të lashtë. Sot, në këtë shesh, Ju, ju përshendesin me respekt dhe dashuri të madhe katolikë, muslimanë dhe ortodoksë shqiptarë. Ardhja Juaj i afron ata të shumtë me njëri tjetrin, sepse ata janë vëllezë. Ata kanë të përbashkët Zotin, tokën, nënën, gjuhën, kulturën, gjunën. Ata së bashku gëzojnë dhe festojnë së bashku ringritën kishat dhe xhamiat e shkatërruara. Zoti i bekoftë këta njerëz që ndërtojnë kështu shumë fenë e njëri tjetrit.

Zonjë e Zotërinj,

Ati i Shenjtë, vjen sot në Ballkan në një kohë, kur jo larg nesh, në Bosnjë-Hercegovinë demonët e krimit, nëpërmjet masakrës dhe pastrimit etnik po shfarosin një komb të tërë. Lufta e Bosnjës, si asnjë tjetër në historinë e Evropës, është e tëra e drejtuar kundër popullsisë civile të pafajshme. Komuniteti nderkombëtar nuk mbrojt dot viktimat, i la ato pa armë. NATO-ja po i mbron tani nga qielli, por kriminelët po i vrasin nga toka, Pas boshnjakëve, radhën e kanë dy milionë shqiptarë të Kosovës, që përjetojnë sot shtypjen më të egër serbe, mungesën e plotë të të drejtave dhe lirive njerëzore dhe kombëtare. Pastrimi etnik e heshtur i Kosovës po realizohet prej vitesh. Beogradi, po pret momentin që të fillojë masakrën masive për pastrimin dhe çrrenjosjen e tyre nga vatrat mijëvjeçare, duke filluar kështu, luftën Ballkanike. Shqipëria, në bashkëpunim të ngushtë me Komunitetin nderkombëtar përpiqet të shmangë konfliktin. Por, ne kurrësesi nuk mund të lejojmë spastrimin etnik të shqiptarëve nga trojet e tyre dhe theksojmë se pa zgjidhjen e çështjes së shqiptarëve në Kosovë, garantimin e të drejtave të tyre njerëzore dhe kombëtare që parashikohen në kartën e Helsinkit dhe respektimin e këtyre të drejtave për shqiptarët në Maqedoni e Mal të Zi kriza në rajon nuk do mund të zgjidhet.

Por kjo vizitë, lutja e Asizit si dhe i tërë qëndrimi i Atit të Shenjtë ndaj krizës së Ballkanit, janë plot shpresa. Shenjtëria e Tij, në lutje, predikime dhe

takime me burra shteti, me fjalën e tij që ngrihet mbi pasionet dhe egoizmin ka dënuar dhe denoncon masakrën, përdhunimin dhe pastrimin etnik në Bosnjë.

Papa Gjon Pali II, të drejtën e individit dhe popullit e kosakron sa tokësore aq edhe hyjnore. Ai ka denoncuar me forcë shtypjen e egër dhe ka kërkuar rikthimin e lirive dhe të drejtave njerëzore dhe kombëtare të shqiptarëve në Kosovë dhe për këtë ai ka mirënjohjen e thellë të të gjithë kombit shqiptar.

Shenjtëria Juaj! Sot në Shqipëri, së bashku me fenë, kulturën dhe ekonominë, po ripërtërihen dhe virtytet e larta njerëzore, si mëshira, ndershmëria, besa, dashuria, me të cilat shpirti ynë ka qënë dhe do të jetë shumë i pasur. Sot dyert e Shqipërisë, zemrat e shqiptarëve janë të hapura. Ato duan që tek ne të mbijetojë kudo e drejta, miqësia, paqja dhe Shqipëria të shndërrohet në modelin e një shteti demokratik, ku njerëzit e besimeve dhe origjinave të ndryshme të jenë të barabartë para Zotit dhe Ligjit.

Edhe një herë ju siguroj se kjo vizitë do të mbetet një ngjarje e shënuar në historinë e kombit shqiptar.

Shëndet dhe jetë të gjatë Atit të Shenjtë, Papa Gjon Pali II!

Zoti e mprojtë popullin shqiptar në mbarë botën



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

PËRSHINDETJA E ATIT TË SHEJTË GJON PALI II POPULLIT SHQIPTAR NË SHESHIN SKANDERBEG TË TIRANËS, 25 PRILL, 1993.

Zoti President,

Te ndenur zotërinj të Autoriteve civile, ushtarake dhe fetare.

Vëllezër dhe motra shqiptarë, Ju përshendes për zemërsisht! Pas një dite me një program të ngjeshur me kremtime dhe takime, të cilat më dhanë mundësinë të takoj me dorën time jo vetëm fenë plot afsh të Bashkësisë Katolike, por edhe ngrohtësinë e mirëpritjes së popullit shqiptar, - ja ku erdhi çasti i ndarjes dhe i prekur thellë, më duhet t'ju lë. Në miqësinë që më keni shfaqur kam kuptuar se pata të bëj me miq që kishin një zemër të madhe. Në çiltërsinë tuaj pashe kurajon e një demokracie të re, një demokraci që po ecën me hapa të sigurt drejt lirisë, pas sa vitesh të pafund dhe të errët të një diktature dhe të një ateizmi mbytës.

Ju faleminderit për mikpritjen. Do të kthehem në Romë me një kujtim të ngrohtë për vendin tuaj të ngulitur në mendjen dhe në zemrën time. Ju faleminderit.

Erdha mes jush për të përmbushur misionin tim si Pasardhës i apostullit Pjetër në shërbim të Kishës Universale, për t'u dëshmuar besimtarëve shqiptarë, prej shumë kohësh të munduar, solidaritetin e gjithë bashkëvëllezërve të të njëjtit besim, të cilët janë shpërndarë në të katër anët e botës.

Kam ardhur këtu për t'u shprehur nderimin tim vëllazëror edhe komuniteteve të ndryshme fetare, të cilat bashkëjetojnë këtu prej shekujsh: Komunitetit Kristian Ortodoks dhe Komunitetit Mysliman, të cilëve u sjell një përshendetje të përzemërt.

Kam ardhur për t'i shfaqur çdo shqiptari admirin dhembështetjen në këtë fazë delikate të kalimit historik dhe të shumë të dëshiruara ringjallje shoqërore dhe shpirtërore.

Të dashur Vëllezër dhe Motra! Sa herë në të kaluarën ju është dashur ta mbronit me forcë

identitetin tuaj. Me një angazhim të tillë, sikur edhe vetë ky shesh na e kujton, u shqua figura e lartë e të krishterit Gjergj Kastriotit Skënderbeut, i respektuar nga Papët e Romës dhe përjetësisht i gjallë në kujtimin e popullit shqiptar.

Ju keni vuajtur për Kombin tuaj. Prandaj dhe keni të drejtë ta doni aq shumë. Populli juaj kaloi njëp tragjedi vertetë tronditëse nën shtypjen komuniste.

Ishte vërtet i tmershëm përfytyrimi i jetës njerëzore nën rregjimet totalitare, si ai që ju keni njohur, ku njeriut i mohohet një nga të drejtat më thelbësore: liria e shfaqjes së mendimit dhe e besimit të tij, si dhe liria e ndërgjegjes. Mohim ky që shpesh mernte formën e një shtypjeje të tmershme. A ka gjë më të rëndë se sa mbyllja e Tempujve të çdo besimi dhe a nuk u dënuan deri me vdekje priftërinjtë vetëm pse guxuan të ushtronin ritet fetare? A nuk u persekutuan besimtarët duke u burgosur, ose duke u fyer me të gjitha mënyrat?

Në vendin tuaj, të fshikulluar më shumë se asnjë vend tjetër nga persekutimi është e thjeshtë të gesh gjurmët e Katakombave të lashta Kristiane dhe të arenave ku dëshmitarët e Krishtit me dhunë hidheshin për t'u shqyer nga bisha. Që një luftë e ashpër kundër fesë, sipas një vije dogmatike të një programi shoqëror dhe politik të mbështetur nga ideologjia komuniste. Duke i shkur mjeti më i domosdoshëm për të realizuar të trumbetuarën "Parajsë nëtokë", që duke i mohuar njeriut atë forcë që e lidh me Krishtin, forca kjo neptësisht e dënua si një "dobësi e pandashme për njeriun." Në të vërtetë kjo forcë e parë jo me të sy, ishte më shumë se ka shqetësime për atë ashtu siç e treguan faktet. Personat njerëzor në të vërtetë me energjinë që vjen nga feja, nuk lejoi lehtësisht të hidhet në anonimatit kolektiv.

Ajo që ka ngjarë në Shqipëri, të dashur Vëllezër dhe Motra! nuk ishte parë kurrë në historinë e njerëzimit. Është e vërtetë se edhe në Perandorinë

Romake janë bërë pëmdjekje të ashpra ndaj të krishterëve, por atëhere ishte fjala për Shtet, i cili në emër të një feje, asaj pagane, luftonte ata që mbështesnin Ungjillin e Krishtit. Kurse këtu, Shteti është përpjekur të shuajë çdo shprehje fetare në emër të një ateizmi radikal të mbështetur në një sistem universal dhe përgjithësues.

E gjithë kjo, ngjiste në një kohë kur askush nuk mund të ndërhynte për të mbrojtur dinjitetin e njerëzve, të cilëve u ishte mohuar gjithçka, duke i zhveshur deri nga më "njerëzorja", liria e tyre. Drama juaj, shqiptarë të dashur, zgjon interesimin e gjithë Kontinentit Evropian dhe është e domosdoshme që Evropa mos t'ju harrojë. Dhe në fakt ky duhet të jetë piksynimi sot, të kthejë shpejt fletën, duke harruar atë që ka ekzistuar, për të shikuar përpara. Pikpamje kjo që në një prizëm verhtimi është e drejtë e madje e domosdoshme, por me një kusht, që të mbetet përgjithmonë në kujtesën tonë, ajo që ngjau në të kaluarën. Në të vërtetë ky është kusht i domosdoshëm për të mos u rikthyer tek të njëjtat gabime të përlotura dhe është shtegu më i mirë për një proces pajtimi të vërtetë.

Ju sot keni fituar lirinë në një mënyrë krejt të veçantë, të papërgjakur. Jeni ngjitur lart mrekullisht, nga një greminë tiranie dhe vdekjeje. Kur dukej se po shuhej gati çdo motiv i arsyeshëm besimi, zbardhi agimi i lirisë. Rilindi jeta. U ringjall kurajo për të qendruar, u ndez përseri drita e shpresës.

Por kjo liri besimi fetar, të cilën ju më në fund po e shijoni, nuk është vetëm një dhuratë e çmuar e Zotit për ata që kanë hirin e fesë, por është një dhuratë për të gjithë, sepse ajo është themeli i garancisë për çdo shprehje tjetër të lirisë. Ajo prek njeriun në intimitetin e vet, në atë cep të shenjtë dhe të padhunueshëm që është ndergjegjia, ku qenia njerëzore takohet me Krijuesin, dhe fiton ndergjegje të plotë të dinjitetit të vet. Nga një liri e tillë, e trajtuar ashtu siç duhet, nuk ka përse t'i trembemi asnjë çrregullimi njerëzor. Besimi i çiltër në të nuk i përçan njerëzit, por përkundrazi, i bashkon me gjithë veçantitë e tyre. Siç na e mëson edhe feja nëse kemi një Krijues të përbashkët, që të gjithë jemi vëllezër. Kështu që feja është një Kështjellë mbrojtëse kundër totalitarizmit dhe një kontribut vendimtar për një vëllazërim human. Liria

e vërtetë fetare i shpëton ngacmimeve të intolerancës dhe të sektarizmit dhe ofron mënyra dialogu të respektueshëm dhe konstruktiv.

Populli shqiptar, – dhe po më pëlqen që po e kujtoj në këtë çast, – është për t'u marrë si shembull në këtë pikpamje. Që të tre Komunitetet fetare mbajnë një raport respekti reciprok të një bashkëpunimi të njerëzishëm. Qendroni në këtë pikpamje Vëllezër dhe Motra të dashura! Ju do të keni merita për solidaritetin dhe për paqen në Atdheun tuaj dhe në krejt zonën e shumëvujtur të Ballkanit. Kështu ju mund të ndertoni një bashkim kombëtar të urtë dhe të qëndrueshëm.

Megjithatë, dashuria për Atdheun, të cilën ju e ndjeni të fortë në këto çaste, nuk duhet të degjenerojë në nacionalizmin intolerant dhe agresiv që sot e kësaj dite, po shkakton viktima dhe po ndez urrejtje të papërmbajtura në vende të ndryshme të botës, madje dhe jo fort larg nga këtu.

Përkundrazi, u shtoftë gjithnjë e më shumë harmonia në bashkëjetesën tuaj. Duhet mesuar arti i dialogut edhe i të dëgjuarit, qoftë dhe kur ky art është i lodhshëm. Ky është çmimi i lirisë, ky është sekreti i progresit të vërtetë moral dhe civil.

Shqipëri, qëndro në lartësinë e kësaj beteje të madhe! Rruga që do të bësh nuk është aq e lehtë. Ende ka plagë të pambyllura. E kaluara le të shërbejë si mësim, por kurrë mos të të shtyjë në haknarrje mlllefesh. Tani është koha për të shkuar me besim drejt së ardhmes. E madhe është detyra që të pret, për të cilën ti tashmë e ke fituar punën me një zell të lavdërueshëm. Në përpjekjen për rimëkëmbjen ekonomike, është e domosdoshme që të gjithëve tu garantohet puna dhe që ajo është më esenciale, për të fituar me dinjitet, le ti bashkohet edhe vullneti për të konsoliduar demokracinë tënde të re. Kjo nuk arrihet pa çmuar siç duhet disa vlera thelbësore duke filluar së pari nga dinjiteti i çdo njerëzu. "Në demokraci pa vlera, – kanë shkruar në Enciklikën *Centesimus annus* – mund të shpërdrohet vërtetësisht në një totalitarizëm të hapur ose të ishtë, siç po na e tregon historia".

Krijimi i një shoqërie demokratike nuk bëhet menjëherë me një klikë. Ajo kërkon një kujdes

të përditshëm dhe një gatishmëri bashkëpunimi nga të gjithë. Askujt nuk i falet të rrijë mënjane e të sodisë.

Kësaj Shqipërie të porsalindur Kisha nuk do t'ia kursejë kontributin e saj. Ajo sigurisht nuk harron se misioni i saj është kryesisht fetar, dhe do të ketë shumë kujdes për të mos hyrë në çështje thelbësisht politike. Por, e mbështetur në forcën e Ungjillit, Kisha që u ngrit nga Krishti si lajmëtarë në botë, do ta ofrojë ndihmesën e vet qoftë me pjesëmarrjen në punë të institucioneve të saja, qoftë mbi të gjitha, me mbështetjen e saj në favor të një humanizmit të vërtetë, i cili ngre personin, i parë ky në dritën e Zotit dhe i përfshirë në të gjitha dimensionet, në qendër të çdo projekti ekonomik, social dhe politik.

Njeriu dhe Zoti nuk janë kurrë në një alternativë, dhe nuk konkurrojnë njëri tjetrin. Përkundrazi, njeriu ka një dinjitet të lartë, tamam siç i ka hije një krijese të bërë sipas imazhit të Zotit. Njohja e kësaj vlere, te çdo njeri, do të bëjë që edhe ekonomia të gjejë ekuilibrin e drejtë ndërmjet arsyeve të aftësive dhe të spikatjes së solidaritetit dhe do ta çojë kështu impenjimin politik me një kërkesë përgjegjësie ndaj së mirës së përbashkët, duke ndjekur gjithmonë kërkesat e respektimit ndaj etikës dhe moralit.

Popull shqiptar, ec përpara me kurajo drejt shtigjeve të solidaritetit. Është një rrugë e vështirë kjo, por në të janë të mbjellura farërat e shpresës. Le të shoqërojnë forca e martirëve të tu, dëshmitarë gjithmonë në roje të lirisë në vitet e pafund të shtypjes së regjimit totalitar. Le t'i ndrisë hapat e tu dashuri për familjen, shpirti i vëllazërimit, mikëpritja ndaj të huajt dhe vetitë që e dallojnë popullin tuaj, veti këto që përbëjnë pasurinë më të çmuar të traditave shekullore shqiptare.

Le të ushqejë guximin tënd feja e besimtarëve të tu në një Zot të vetëm të cilët së bashku me çdo njeri vullnetmirë do t'i përkushtohen shërbimit ndaj drejtësisë e paqes. E si të mos kujtojmë tani, një bijë të zgjedhur të popullit shqiptar Motrën Terezë të Kalkutës, nënë e shumë të varfëve ndër më të varfërit në Botë? Me zjarrin e fesë në kraharor, kjo grua e vogël dhe e madhe njëkohësisht, sjell dhe ruan brenda vetes hovin e bujarisë së papërmbajtur dhe të pamposhtur të zemrës shqiptare.

Në emrin tënd popull shqiptar, po i drejtohem këtu Komuniteteve Ndërkombëtare që ta kthejnë vëmendjen e tyre vepruese ndaj kërkesave të zhvillimit tënd të përgjithshëm. Vetëm kështu mund të mëkëmbet paqja në këtë zonë të Ballkanit, të përgjakur nga konfliktet vëllavrasëse të ulta e të pakuptim.

Erdhi çasti i ndarjes. Ju përshëndes, i prekur thellë në zemër e me mirënjohje, që ju kam pranë. Përshëndes veçanërisht Presidentin e Republikës, që më përkushtoi një pritje të ngrohtë. I jam mirënjohës për fjalët dashamirëse që më drejtoi. Përshëndes autoritet civile e ushtarake. Përshëndes vëllazërit e mij të Episkopatës dhe veçanërisht ata që pata kënaqësinë t'i shuguroj sot. Kam dëshirë t'i drejtoj një përshëndetje të veçante MonsinJOR Joakim Herbut dhe Ausiliarit MonsinJOR Nik Prela; gjithashtu edhe besimtarëve të ardhur nga Shkupi dhe Prizreni dhe murgeshave. Përshëndes ushtarakët e kontigjentit "Pelikan", të cilët prej muajsh po përpiqen me një dedikim të admiruar në shërbimin humanitar ndaj popullit nevojtar shqiptar. Përshëndes të gjithë shqiptarët të shpërndarë në të katër anët e botës. Lus Zotin që mbi secilin të jetë dora e Tij dhe e Virgjërshës Mari, që këtu lutet me emrin Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë.

Vëllazër dhe motra shqiptare fort të dashur! Zoti e ruajt Atdheum tuaj. Zoti e mbrojtë popullin shqiptar në mbarë botën. Në emër të Zotit ju pëfqafoj dhe ju bekoj të gjithëve.

Mirupafshim. Ju uroj me gjithë zemër: Gjithë të mirat!



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

TRE MOMENTE NGA JETA E MARTIRIT TË FESË MONS. VINÇENS PRENNUSHI

At Vinçens Prennushi qe jo vetem një françeskan i devotshëm, një misionar i denjë i fesë, një prelat kishtar në shenjë, po dhe një perfaqësues i shquem i letërsisë dhe kulturës shqiptare në gjysen e parë të këtij shekulli. Ai i perket atij brezi fatlum, që, tue vazhdue rrugen e letërsisë katolike shqipe të Veriut, rrugen që hapi Don Gjon Buzuku, Don Pjeter Budi, Imzot Frang Bardhi, Imzot Pjeter Bogdani e të tjerë, e vazhdoi në Rilindjen kombëtare shqiptare dhe në periudhen e mavonshme. Këtij brezi i perkasin shumë meshtarë, figura të denja të misionit fetar dhe të misionit kombëtar shqiptar. Nder ta një vend kryesor në krijimtarinë letrare zënë Poeti Kombëtar At Gjergj Fishta, Don Ndre Mjeda, At Vinçens Prennushi e të tjerë.

Konributi i klerit katolik në kulturen shqiptare ka qenë i ndieshëm në çdo periudhë historike dhe atyne u takon ndera që, me veprat e tyre, rrejtën të gjallë fenë e krishtenë dhe çelen të parët shtigje të një zhvillimi kulturor e artistik me hapjen e shkollave të para shqipe, me teatrot e para, formacionet e para muzikore, me zhvillimin e pikturës, të skulpturës etj.

At Vinçens Prennushi i perkiste Urdhënit françeskan për të cilin prof. Arshi Pipa ka shkruar: "Urdhen fetar të cilit Shqipëria i detyron nderimin ma të madh për shërbimet e mëdha në lamen e kulturës dhe përgjithësisht të çashtjes shqiptare."



Nji foto e rallë historike: Dreka në nderim të Argjipeshkvit Vinçens Prennushi, Shkodër, 1916. Nga e djathta dallohen: Don Mikel Koliqi, Don Ndre Mjeda, At Felice Chiesa, S.J. Rektor i Jezultve, Argjipeshkvë Prennushi, Delegati Apostolik Mons. Giovanni della Pietra, S.J. Argjipeshkvi Metropolit i Shkodrës Gëpër Thaçi, kurse i katërti nga e djathtëja At Gjergj Fishta, OFM. Tjerët nuk kemi mundësi t'i identifikojmë.

Ai lindi me 4 shtator të vitit 1885 në Shkodër në lagjen Rus, sot rruga "Gjon Buzuku", në një familje të nderueme atdhetare. Baba i tij Gjon Prennushi ishte njeri i thjeshtë, por që e çmonte shumë shkollimin e fëmijëve të tij. Nana e tij Drande (Roza) ishte nga Shiroka. Ata qene kater vllazen: Kola (kështu quhej At Vinqensi), Zefi, Nushi, Ndoci. Në moshë të re iu perkushtue vokacionit fetar (4 tetor 1900).

Shkollen fillore dhe atë të mesme të ulët i kreu në Shkollen françeskanë (kjo shkollë u hap në Shkodër që në vitin 1861) dhe në seminarin e françeskanëve në Troshan. Shkollen e mesme të plotë dhe shkollen e naltë per teologji i kreu në Tirol të Austrisë, ku dhe u shugurue meshtar më 25 mars 1908 me emnin At Vinqensi. Ishte njohës i mirë i gjuhes dhe kulturës gjermane, po dhe i gjuhëve dhe kulturave të tjera evropiane.

I kthiem në atdhe ai iu perkushtue misionit të madh të meshtarit dhe njëheri filloi të shkruajë në revisten "Elçija e Zemrës së Krishtit" (më vonë u quejt Lajmëtari i Z.K.), në revisten "Hylli i Dritës", në gazeten "Posta e Shqipnisë", në revisten "Zani i Shna Ndout", në gazeten "Ora e maleve" etj. si në një kuvendim me besimtarët dhe me mbarë popullin.

Më 1911 në Sarajevë ai botoi *Kangë popullore gegnishte*, një permbledhje nga folklori ynë i Veirut, i Kosovës dhe i Shqipënisë së mesme, që përbën vëllimin e parë të *Visareve të kombit*.

19 Mars 1914 siç dihet me sulmin e mbret Nikollës të Malit të Zi kunder Shkodrës, në tetor 1912 filloi Lufta e I Ballkanike. Deri në prill 1913 Shkodra kaloi muej të vështirë në rrethin. Qe pushtue perkohsisht, por në maj të vitit 1913, forca të Pesë Fuqive të Mëdha e morën atë në dorëzim. Ishte një periudhë kur në planin politik, diplomatik, po edhe ushtarak Mali i Zi luftonte per ta pasë Shkodrën. Po edhe forcat atdhetare shqiptare dijen ta mbrojnë. Me daljen e forcave të Fuqive të Mëdha, per herë të parë, Flamuri kombëtar shqiptar u ngrit në kala. Qe ky një manisfetim i zjarrtë, ma i madhi që kishte pa deri atëherë atdheu ynë. Shqiptarë nga të gjitha krahinat e Veriut me 19 mars 1914 u mbloodhen per të brohoritë këtë ditë fatlume, bashkimin e Shkodrës me mbarë Shqipërinë. Atë ditë *Fjalimin e mbajti françeskani*



Nji nga fotografat e mbrama t' Argjipeshkvit para vdekjes së tij martire

i ri At Vinqens Prennushi foli edhe Hafiz Guta nga Gjakova. Ishte ky një tregues se At Vinqensi i kishte dhanë shumë çeshtjes kombëtare shqiptare. (Këtë Fjalim, edhe vite ma vonë, e paten botue gazeta "Populli" e Shkodrës, "Djalëria" e Vjenës dhe "Shqipëria e Re" e Kostancës etj.)

Krijimtaria letrare e At Prennushit qe e pasun. Në vjetin 1918 ai botoi *Fjala e Zotit*, një permbledhje me predikime dhe poemën *Grueja shqiptare*. Me 1924 duel permbledha e tij poetike *Qelb e hule*, që e bani të njohun si poet i ndiesive të holla, poet i qytetit të vet. Më 1919 kishë perktthye, pershtatë e botue dramen *E tradhtuarja* nga T.A. Rolando, ndersa më 1922 librin *Ndër flamur e demokracisë së vertetë*, një vepër kjo si bazë per nderimin e një partie demokratike.

Të gjitha vepret e tij qenë botue në Shtypshkronen françeskanë në Shkodër. At Prennushi u shqu edhe si prozator i mirë në krijime origjinale, po dhe në perktthime e pershtatje. Ai perktthiu kështu vepre leterisë si *Fabiola apo Kështjën e mirë* të kardinalit Wiseman, I, II (1920); romanin *Quo vadis...?* të polakut E. Sienkiewicz, pj. I, II (1933); romanin e Silvio Pelico

Burgjet e mia (1939) etj. Në vitet e fundit të jetës së tij ai u muer me perkthimin e poemës gjermane *Dretzebnlinden*, të cilën edhe e botoi, pjesërisht në "Hylli i Dritës" me pseudonimin Epril (nr. 7, 1944, numri i fundit). E vitit 1931 asht dhe drama *Prej robrije në liri*.

Gjatë jetës së tij At V. Prennushi pati detyra me randësi në hjerarkinë kishtarë si Drejtor i Kolegjit Françeskan, Drejtor i Shkollës françeskane, Provincial i Françeskanëve të Shqipënisë perveçse kryeredaktor i "Posta e Shqipënisë" dhe për 11 vjet i "Zani i Shna Ndout" etj.

Me 19 mars 1936 emnohet nga Shejti At Papë ipeshkev i Sapës (Zadrimë) detyrë të cilën e mbajti deri në vitin 1940, kur u emnue argipeshkëv metropolitan i Durrësit. Ky qe një ndër i madh për te dhe Françeskanët e Shqipënisë.¹

Në dhjetor të vitit 1928, kur ishte provincial i Fretënve ai udhëtoi për në Gjermani për të kerkue ndihma për kumbonaren e kishen françeskane të Shkodrës. Jashtë atdheut, në Itali, Spajë, Francë, Austri, Poloni kishte udhëtue sa herë me sherbime fetare dhe i favorizuem nga fakti se ishte poliglot, po në këtë vit ai pati fatin (në dhjetor 1928) në Bavari të Gjermanisë, në fshatin Konersreuth, të takojë dy herë të Stigmatizuemën Teresa Nuemann, një shejtleshë e gjallë, me të cilën kishte bisedue gjatë. (Kujtimet nga kjo vizitë ai i shkroi në "Zani i Shna Ndout" fruer-dhetor 1929 faqe 27, 43, 57, 76, 103, 121, 135, 153, 167, 193 dhe në kallnduer 1930 f.11 nën titullin "Nji e Stigmatizue me ditëve tona").²

Në këto kujtime të jetueme me devocion fetar ai nuk shkroi asgja për vedin e vet, po në Kuvendin françeskan dhe në familjen tonë unë, nipi i tij, e kujtoj shumë mirë sepse sa herë e persëriste: Teresa Nuemann e Konersreuth i kishte thanë françeskanit shqiptar:

"Do të kesh një aksident rrugor, do të bahesh ipeshkëv dhe mbas 13 vjet të ipeshkvisë do të vëdesësh martir i fesë."

Këto kujtime të paharrueme sot m'i persërisin vllazent e tij françeskanë P. Leon Kabashi, P. Aleks Baqli, P. Konrad Gjollaj (ndonjeni i ka dhanë të shkrueme), ndersa në familje unë e kujtoj mirë, kur thonte: **"Dy profeci të Teresa Nuemann u realizuen,** (e kishte fjalën për një incident që

pati kur u rrzue nga kali në udhëtim malor dhe për emnin e tij më 1936) **tashti mbetet e treta. Ku ta marr atë fat të vdes martir i fesë, po nuk mund ta mendoj se në ç'rrethana."** Këto fjalë i kujtoj shumë mirë të thanuna prej tij rreth viteve 1939, 1940 dhe të persërituna disa herë, ashtu si pohojnë dhe vllazent e tij françeskanë.

Në vjetët e fundit unë kam pasë fatin të jem pranë tij (shih kujtimet e mia të botueme në "Osservatore romano" datë 25 mars 1992, p. 3)³, po nuk më kujtohet t'i ketë persëritë këto fjalë, ndoshta për të mos më trishue, po ai, mbas vendosjes së diktaturës së eger komuniste, e shihte mirë se ku do ta çonte vendin mënia e ateistëve, të etun për gjak dhe për pushtet. "Asht marre për atë që asht jashtë" (burgut) - më ka thanë në bisadat e fundit që kam pasë në Delbinisht, vendndaja e tij gjatë luftës dhe deri sa u arrestue. Sa herë merre lajme për salvimet e meshtarëve, dhe këto nuk ishin të pakëta në vjetët 1945, 1946, ai trishohej dhe lutej për ta. Mënia e egersia e komunistëve ateistë kundra kishës dhe meshtarëve nuk kishte kufi. Dhe erdhi dita që edhe axha im, Mons. Vincens Prennushi u arrestue dhe u torturue tmerrësisht. Kujtimet e botueme mbi te për vjetët e burgut nga Prof. Arshi Pipa, janë një dëshmi e çmueshme vërtetësie dhe vlerësimi për qendrimin e denjë të tij në këtë provë të madhe të jetës. Sa herë axha im do t'i ketë persëritë me vëdi fjalët që na thoshte "ku ta marr atë fat të vdes martir i fesë..." Dhe kjo i ka dhanë zemer në momentet ma të vështira, ma të randa të torturave fizike çnjerëzore që provuen mbi te.

"Dinjiteti kishtar i Vincens Prennushit - shkruen prof. Arshi Pipa - i ka mbahuem me vlerën e tij letrare dhe i kqyrur në punimin patriotizmes shqiptare i jep fytyrës së tij një randësi madhorre në radhët e perfaqësuesve të Kombit."

Gojëambet i dashur me të gjithë, me një mirësi shpirtërore që i lehtëjoj në punën e tij, në gjestet; i devotshëm, i shillmire për të gjithë, i kulturuem, prelat kishtar dhe Prift i fundit i Kishës Katolike në Shqipëri, ai kurseu nuk do ta meritonte një fund të tillë në torturë po pikërisht kjo vdekje e shpirtërore dhe ma eper kujtimin e tij. Asht feja e krishtetë ajo që dha forcë të qendrojë me dinjitet dhe të vërtetë ashtu si me po këtë qendrim

të shumë meshtarëve të tjerë, se Kisha asht e pavdeksheme!

... Me 18 mars 1949 ka ardhë një telegram në shtëpinë tonë nga një bamirës. Unë atëherë ishe mëues në malësitë e Veriut, po baba kujtonte:

"U nisa menjëherë, po rugët atëherë nuk kishin siguri. Sa mrija në Tiranë, mora trenin për Durrës, po ai aq ngadalë ecte, sa unë me mzi qendrojshe. Po të kishte ecë ma shpejt treni unë do ta kishe gjetë gjallë. E gjeta trupin e tij në një barakë të burgut të Durrësit pa jetë. *Ishte 19 marsi i vitit 1949.* Trupi i tij ishte ende i nxehtë. U përshëndeta me tim vëlla dhe lotët i pëmbajsha. U solla deri sa u err nata. Ju luta rojeve ta marr, po ata vetëm vonë ma dhanë këtë leje. Në një batanie, në një natë gjithë shi e stuhi vetë i katërti e çova deri në kishë. Më ndihmoi me e bartë dhe doktori i burgut Z. Propopulli, grek shpirtësi sa nuk bahet. Atë natë 3-4 muratorë punuen për të ba gati vorrin në kishë ngjithë me atë të Mons. Pjeter Gjures. Të nesermen u tha mesha e përshpirtëshme dhe, me gjithë frikën e madhe, erdhen shumë durrsakë me më ngushllue. Nder ta unë pashë dhe muratorët që kishin punue tanë naten dhe i ndala për ri shpërblye për punën, po ata nuk ndigjuen. «Ja kena pasë borxh edhe njëqindfish», më thanë dhe u larguen me lotë në sy. Miqtë që kishe afër më thanë se ata kjenë të besimit tjerë. Unë as emnat nuk muija me ua marrë shenim. Të gjithë durrsakët, po dhe tanë Shqipëria e ka dashtë e ka derdhë lotë..."

Të ishte baba gjallë do t'i kishte dftue me gojen e vet këto fjalë që na përsëriste në shtëpi me lotë në sy.

Vjetët e terrorit komunist kanë ba kerdinë mbi të pafajshmit, mbi meshtarët, po nuk kanë muijtë kurrë të shlyejnë kujtimet e atyne që vuenjtën diktaturen. Ato mbeten në mendjen e në zemrën e njerëzve si dëshmi të gjalla të perjetueme në kohët ma të vështira që ka pa ky vend.

19 mars 1949 na kujton jo vetëm sytë e mbyllun të një françeskani nga torturat, po edhe profecinë e Teresa Nuemann, që hjedh dritë të re mbi një martir të fesë.

Mikel PRENNUSHI

nip i Mons. V. Prennushit

Shenime:

- 1 Dekreti Papal asht i 19 mars 1936. Kjo asht e botueme të "Hylli i Dritës."
- 2 Për profecinë e Teresa Neumann, e Stigmatizuerija, axha ka shkrua gjallë. Ajo jetonte vetëm me ostet e kungimit dhe në ditë të caktueme duertë e kambët e saj baheshin me gjak, mu në ato vende të plagëve të Krishtit. Në kohën e saj Teresa Neumann ka pasë çuditë boten. Mijëra vizitues nga tanë bota, dhe nga Amerika - shkruen axha. Një mrekulli e gjallë jeta e kësaj vajze!
- 3 Përkthimin anglisht të ktyne kjitimeve mund ta gjeni në pjesën anglishte të këtij Buletini.
- 4 Prennushi - me dy nn. Asht ruejtë nga axha në të gjitha veprat nn dhe ne e kemi mbajë. Në kohën e diktaturës na kanë shtrëngue nn me e ba në pasaporta se thoshin se asht italianizëm. nn në shekullin e kaluem lexohej nd, pra nn asht e alfabetit tradicional të veriut. Të gjitha shkrimet e axhës e kanë qartë nn. Unë kam botue me nn studimin "Kryengritjet e Veriut më 1912" në *Studime historike* dhe më bane namin. Mandej e kam shkrua me një n. Tashti përsëri e shkruaj si e kam pasë.

Cilla dor'deshti arit kunoren

N'llom t'a shkryte e pse balli i Shqypnis

Qi nuk njofti kurr marren, as koren,

N'kob'ma t'miren aq trembshëm u zverdh?

Nato fusha ku bishin zymylat,

N'auo kroje ku Zânat u kqyrshin,

Ndër zabele, ku kudojshin lylbylat,

Sot kndon qyqja prej vorri në vorr.

Çilnyu vorre, pse t'ejali t's'loan vendit;

Çonju, burra, qi un pata për bri-

Ka da Enri, n'ligjiti t'nji kucendit

T'bij'pajpari; n'ballkan t'ndet Shkjaun.

Vinqens PRENNUSHI

IMZOT ERNEST M. ÇOBA

Bën pjesë në katëreshën e ipeshkëvivet të vdekur ose të pushkatuar nga rregjimi komunist, në periudhën 1946-1980. Është i fundit nga radha, por nuk gabojmë po të themi, më popullori dhe që gëzoi respektin e tërë popullit të Shkodrës dhe të famullivet për rreth. Me punën dhe ndihmesen që ka dhënë, atij me të drejtë mund t'i jepet vlerësimi, "babai i të varfërvet."

U lind në Laç të Vaudejës, më 16 shkurt 1913. Familja shpresonte që Ernesti do të meritë rugën e tregëtisë. Por nuk ngjau kështu. Që në moshë të re dha shënjat e përkushtimit për meshtar. Kështu më 5.X.1930, nga Shkelqesia e tij Imzot Lazer Mjeda, veshi petkun e klerikut, në Kapelen Ipeshkvnore. Është po ky Imzot që dy vjet më vonë, dhe konkretisht më 16.VIII.1932 i bani edhe tonsuren. Nga këto të dhëna rezulton se ai ka hyrë për prift kur nuk ishte më shumë se 17 vjeç.



IMZOT ERNEST M. ÇOBA

Pas mbarimit të studimeve, Imzot Gjon Della Pietra S.J., aso kohe Delegat Apostolik dhe Administrator i Arkidieozit të Shkodrës (pasi kishte vdekur Imzot Lazer Mjeda) e shuguron meshtar me titull *Patrimonti*, dhe, dy ditë më vonë, më 11.II.1936 ai çon meshen e parë në kishën e Shën Jozefit (pranë Jezuitëve).

Prej kësaj dite e deri më 6.IX.1936 ai vazhdoi punën si mësues pranë Seminarit Papnuer. Në datën e sipërme, Imzot Gasper Thaçi (shuguruar Ipeshkëv më 19 mars 1936), e bani ndihmës famullitar të Shkodrës, punë të cilën e kreu më së miri deri më 30.IV.1946, kur do të emrohet si zv/famullitar.

Si ndihmës famullitar dha mësim edhe në shkollë të qytetit lëndën e besimit, për një periudhë prej vitit 1938 deri 1946.

Me këto detyra dhe të tjera, ai drejtoi dhe mbikëqyri Kryqzaten Eukaristike si dhe shkollën e besimit "E Dielle e Kremte."

Nga periudha 16.XII.1946 deri më 1.I.1952 është Provikar i Arkidieozit të Shkodrës. Më datën e sipërme merr titullin Famullitar i Shkodrës.

Pas vdekjes së Imzot Gasper Thaçit (1946), arrestimit të Mons. Mikel Koliqit dhe vdekjes së Dr. Tom Laçaj, ai merr tërë detyrat e shërbimit të përsidëshëm në Kishën Katedrale të Shkodrës.

Pra e tërë jeta dhe veprimtaria e tij sillet vetëm në qytetin e Shkodrës, duke kontribuar me të gjitha energjitë në pëhapjen e fesë dhe të kryerjes me përpikmëni të shërbimeve fetare.

Më 20.IV.1952 shugurohet Ipeshkëv nga Imzot Bernardin Shllaku, Ipeshkëv i Pulit dhe Kryetar i Kishes Katolike të Shqipërisë. Me detyren e Sekretarit të Përgjithëshëm të Kryesisë së Kishes Katolike, punon deri në vdekjen e Imzot Bernardin Shllakut (9.XI.1956). Nga data 9.XI.56 deri më 21.III.1957 u miratua si Kryetar i Kishës Katolike të Shqipërisë.

Në vitin 1967 në Shqipëri shpërtheu një stuhí antifetare. Një fushatë e shfrenuar filloi kundër kishës dhe klerit. Të gjitha institucionet fetare të vëndit tonë u mbyllën. Ata pak klerikë që kishin mbetur, nuk u lejuan më të kryenin shërbime fetare. Për të dhe tërë klerin katolik shqiptar filloi një periudhë e vështirë dhe e zymë. Pas mbylljes së këtyre institucioneve, a detyrohet të qëndrojë në shtëpi.

Në vazhdim të njerëzve dhe persekutimeve që i u bënë ngaft prelatsve dhe klerikëve, në vitin 1976 (kur ai arrestohet, nxiret në gjyq, dënohet

me 25 vjet burgim, me akuzë se kishte mbajtur libhje me Selinë e Shenjtë nepermjet Delegatit Apostolik. Mbas dhënies së vendimit, e dërgojnë në burgun e Tiranës. Vdiq në spitalin e burgut më 12 janar 1980, pikërisht në ditën e emrit, në moshën 67 vjeç.

Përveç çka u thekësua më sipër, ndihmesa e Imzot Ernest Çobës është e madhe në shumë sfera. Në se nuk na ka lënë ndonjë vepër madhore të shkruar, përmendim ndimesën që ka dhënë në *Kumbonen e së Dielles*, jo vetëm si zv/kryeredaktor, por edhe duke shkruar artikuj të ndryshëm, me pseudonimin ERBA (Ernest Çoba).

Klerikët më të rinjë që sot po punojnë për zhvillimin e fesë dhe edukimin e rinisë (pas rihapjes së kishave), si Dom Simon Jubani, Dom Ernest Troshani, Dom Martin Trushi, Dom Ndoc Nogaj, Dom Zef Simoni, Dom Luigj Kçira, etj. jo vetëm që u përgatitën, por edhe u shuguruan nga dora e tij nga viti 1957 deri 1961. Ai shuguroi Imzot Antonin Fishten e Nikoll Troshanin. I takoi gjithashtu të punojë e të drejtojnë Kishen Katolike të Shqipërisë në një periudhë mjaft të vështirë dhe me pengesa nga më të ndryshmet.

Dihet se për Kishen e Shqipërisë janë mbledhur tre konsile: i pari në vitin 1703, i dyti më 1871, i tretë më 1895 dhe së fundi, Mbledhja e përgjithshme e klerit katolik shqipëtar më 26.VI.1951, nën kryesinë e Imzot Bernardin Shllaku.* Pjesëmarrësit firmosen edhe Statutin e Kishes Katolike të Shqipërisë. Emri i Çobës është i pesti, aso kohe me detyrën e Zv/Vikar, Kapitullar i Arkidieçezit të Shkodrës.

Vepra më e madhe që i la një emer të pavdekshëm Çobës, ishte puna që bëri për festimin e 100-vjetorit të Kishës Katedrale të Shkodrës. Kjo Kishë, siç dihet u themelue më 7.IV.1858 (e njohur në Shkodër edhe sot, Kisha e Madhe). Idenë për këtë festim Imzot Çoba e dha qysh në vitin 1956. Nisi kështu, nën drejtimin e kujdesin e Imzot Çobës, piksimi i mbarë kishës (piktura murale, ndërtimi i lterit të ri, guri i të cilit u bekue me 29 qershor 1957 etj.) Me 16 prill 1958 filluen në Kishen Katedrale të Shkodrës, kremtimet për 100-vjetorin e themelimit të saj. U çelen me ceremoni të ndryshme fetare, u vazhduen me shugurimin e Kishës e të lterit të ri nga vetë Imzot Çoba. U

vazhdue me të tjera dhe u mbyll me meshën Pontifikale dhe shugurimin e meshtarit të ri Ndoc Volaj, nga vetë Imzot Çoba.

Është kjo Kishë, nga ku prej datës 19 mars 1967, nuk jehuan më tingujtë e kumbonëve, dhe që më vonë do të këthehet në pallat sporti për lojrat me dorë, dhe që për afro 25 vjet nuk do t'i api mundësi askujt të shohi një ceremoni fetare.

Dhe u desht 7 marsi i vitit 1991, kur pas rihapjes së kishave, ajo do të merret përsëri në duantë e klerit dhe të fillojnë disa ceremoni fetare, për t'u nderpre gjatë vitit 1992. E na duhet të presim 25 dhjetorin që nuk është i largët, i këtij viti, kur populli i Shkodrës dhe i malësive e fshatrave, do të mbledhet për të festue Krishilindjet, por njëherit për të bërë edhe shugurimin e ri të saj. E në mes të sa prelatëve, do të mungojë Imzot Ernest Çoba, Imzot Luigj Bumçi, Imzot Gasper Thaçi, Imzot Vinqenc Prennushi, Imzot Bernardin Shllaku, Imzot Pjeter Dema, Imzot Antonin Fishta, Imzot Gjergj Volaj dhe Imzot Frano Gjini, të cilët u përkujtuen me 19 korrik 1992, me meshën Pontifikale, celebrue nga Nunci Apostolik Imzot Ivan Dias. E populli besimtar i Shkodrës, nuk i harron këto, në mënyrë të veçantë, nuan në zëmër një dashuri e respekt për priftin dhe Imzotin Ernest Çoba. Atë dëshirë që ka shprehë edhe e mbesa, atë e dëshiron edhe i tërë populli i Shkodrës: që eshtrat e tij të pushojnë pranë vorrit të Kolë Idromenos, dajes së tij, në varrezat e Rrmajit. Le të shpresojmë të realizohet kjo dëshirë.

Dr. ZADEJA

* Simbas historjanit Wadham Peace, Konsili i parë shqiptar asht mbajtur aty kah viti 1199 në provincën e Tivart, e në shkrime të Propagandës njëzet nën emrin *Konsili i Dioklës (ALBANIA-The Founding State of Europe, I. 244, D. Appleton & Co. New York, 1914)*. Nji mbledhje e peshkviive të Shqipërisë asht bërë edhe kah fundi i vitit 1945 në pallatin anijpërkvnuar në Shkodrës, për të diskutue situatën e të si rriedon i marrës së fuqis në vend nga komunistat e fillimin e sovimit fetar. Në ket mbledhje asht njoftue Simbas kalizmit të të në emrin Monsinior Zef Oroshit - vendimi i Sells Shejte me emnue Abatin e Mirditës, Monsinior Frano Gjinit, Delegat (Regent) Apostolik në Shqipri. Si kjo mbledhje ashtu dhe mbledhja e përgjithëshme e Klerit Katolik me 1951 mund të quajet si konsile. (Shenim i editorit)

"VUEJTJA, O BIR, E BAN MA FISNIKE FITOREN" NË KUJTIM T'AT CIPRIAN NIKËS, OFM

Skenim i editorit: At Ciprian Nika, isb-provencial i Urdhënit françeskan shqiptar në Shkodër, u arrestue në Tetorin e vjetit 1946 me akuzën absurde të mësbesjes armësh në Kuvendin françeskan. Kjo ngjarje u kombinue nga Sigurimi i Shkodrës dhe u përhap si komedi me radio e shlyp nga komunistat shqiptarë dhe me film nga Jugosllavët, në 1947. Komedia, qi u shëndrrue në tragjedi, u kushtoi jetën shumë Etënve françeskanë. At Cipriani u pushkatue në Marsin e vjetit 1948.



At Ciprian Nika, OFM

Shkrimi qi vijon në kujtim t'At Ciprijanit u botue së pari në gazetën Shqiptari i Lirë (organ i Komitetit Kombtar "Shqipnija e Lirë" me qendër në New York) me 1964. Dy vjet më vonë u ribotue në broshurën Flije Atdheut (Sacrifice for Albania), me rasën e perkujtimi të 20-vjetorit të salvimit fetar në Shqipëri, nga Qendra Katolike Shqiptare e Informacionit në Detroit të Michiganit. Auktori i shkrimit e shoqë burgu i At Ciprijanit, Prof. Dr. Sami Repishti, përdorte n'atë kohë, për arsye të kuptueshme familjare, pseudonimin Ilir Bali.

Me rasën e 45-vjetorit të martirizimit t'At Ciprian Nikës, OFM, me knaqësi po ribotojme kujtimin prekës e përmallues të Prof. Repishtit, dishmitarit të drejtëpërdrejt të ditëve të fundit të këtij martiri françeskan.

Në qelinë e vogël që na asht caktue, një frati i heshtun rrin gjujzue, duert bashkue mbi parzëm, kokën ulun, sytë gjymës të mbyllum, dhe buzët që pa leshue za me mëzi i dalloj se levizin në gjymës-terrin e banesës sonë të përkoheshme. Të përkoheshme, sepse presim fundin, fundin si shokët t'onë për rreth. Shiqojsha në fëtyren e tij atë

madhështi të pashkallë që përvuejtnija falë vetem për nejerzit e kushtuem, atë qetesi që buron vetëm nga shpirti i njeriut pa kërkesa, atë hiri që leshojnë vetëm ata që kanë idenë një afsh zemre, e përpjekjen për te njëmisjon. Shiqoj fratin që për shumë ditë me rradhë po më lehtëson me frymën e shpresës, e më mbushë me shpirtin e qindresës. Ka çaste kur ai asht i vehtes, krejt vehtes.

... Sepse ç'jeton ai, janë pikërisht këto çaste kushtimi kur shpirti dhe ndergjegjia lëshohen pa kushte n'altarin e Krijuesit, me ndjenjën e vogelsisë, dhe afshin e lutjes për mëshirim: O Ati im më ndihmo të jemë i dejë për hiri e dashtuni t'ande.

Por në jetën që bajmë, çastet nuk ndjekin njëri tjetrin në veprime të njëjta e të vazhdueshme. Rreth e rrotull ushtarët e falangës pa-Zot, kërcënojnë, bastisin, lidhin, varin, torturojnë ditë e natë. Kur hekuri i randë i portës në qelinë t'onë gervisht hallkat që e mbajshin, e partizani që hyri e thirri të ngrihej, At Cipriani nuk ndigjoj gjë. Një shkëlqim i këpucës ushtarake, një britëm prej të menduni, një shamje e ndytë, dhe gaz histerik i dy tjerëvet të dera. Frati u ngrejt në kambë. Nodhi një shikim nga unë, buzëqeshi, dhe tui më ba lutas shejin e lamtumires me krye, u nis për një Golgotë të re.

... Nuk kam më masën e kohës. Mendoj të kem kalue orë të tana në vetëm. Tash ndigjohet zhurma e ushtarakëve në shtatet prej betoni. Duket se po e bijnë. Korridorët vijnë të qeshunat, nga talljet nga shamjet e të ranet. Përsëri hekuri i portës s'inte dukur çirë. Një ushtar me një të shtyeme përplasi kundër meje e murit, një trup pothuaj pa shpat.

"Si ndjehesh At?" — e pyeta unë, kur mbas shumë ferkimesh e kujdesi (që nuk dijsa si t'a perdoroj) e pashë se hapi sytë.

"Jam mirë," m'u pergjegg me gjymës zani, "jam krejt mirë. U kam dhanë një mësim të mirë."

"At Ciprian, të kanë torturue shumë, ka kaq kohë që ke humbë ndjënjat. Dëshron pak uj?"

"Mirë, bir i im." E mbasi piu dy grushta, me buzën në gaz vijoi:

"Më thanë se dojshin me bisedie akademikisht ekzistencën e Zotit. Ishin katër oficerë tënaltë. Kurr s'kam qenë ma i lumtun. Ciprian, thashë me vete, që një rasë me meritue dashurinë e mëshirën e të Lumit. U tregova — e këtu i qeshi fytyra e nëxime prej të ramesh — u tregova një prej arsytimeve të Shën Tomës prej Akuinit. 'Ka shumë njerëz, u thashë, që për gjith jetën e tyre punojnë zi e ma zi e me gjithate kalojnë një jetë pa trazime e plot andje. Ka shumë tjerë që nuk pushojnë së përpjekuni për të mirë e lumni të njerzimit, e me gjithate kalojnë një jetë plot vujtje e përbuzën. Në këtë botë të krijueme, ku harmonija asht ligji themeltar, a nuk do t'ishte një gjë e padrejtë për Krijuesin mos me ndreqë një gjendje të tillë të gjanave? Si qenëje me arsye, jam i prirun me besue se duhet t'ekzistojë diçka tjetër që ndjekë mbas kësaj jete të shkurtë njerzish, ku e mira dhe e keqja të gjejnë shperblimin dhe ndeshkimin që meritojnë. Një diçka, mendoj

unë, që kalon kufijtë njerzorë dhe të natyrës s'onë, diçka mbinjerzore, diçka e mbinatyrëshme, ku e keqja, e shtrembëta nuk kanë vend." Por nuk muejta me mbarue fjalët e mija sepse ata humbën durimin dhe filluen të më torturojnë. U baftë vullndesa e Tënzot: nuk shqetsohem për këtë. Asnjë s'gjet mënyrë me përgjeggje veçse me dru dhe me shqelma. Më duket sikur kam ndigjue njerin të thotë" «Zoti i im asht Enver Hoxha.» Une qesha atëherë si pa dashtë dhe, më beso, e mëshirova me zemër. Por buzëqeshjen t'ime, ata e morën si një tallje për të parin e tyre. S'mbah mend tjetër gjë...."

"Ky qendrim po të kushton shumë, At Ciprian. Ti e din se ata e bajnë për t'u tallë. Më duket se duhet evitue e keqja ku ka mundësi me u evitue...."

"Ke të drejtë, bir i im, ashtu asht. Por unë kam një misjon në këtë mes ma shumë se të tjerët: më duhet të ndezë dritën, kudo që ajo asht shue. Vujeja sigurisht që nuk asht e lehtë, por — e tue më shique drejtë në sy, me atë fëtyrë të qeshun, e vetëmja e mirë që më kishte mbetë — por vujeja o bir, e ban ma fisnike fitorën e korrun."

Pak muej ma vonë, ky bir i dëj i Shën Françeskut, freshtohej në vargun e gjatë të martirëve.

Sami REPISHIT



Një pamje e Shkodrës, 1930, me Kishën Françeskane në qendër

Per ata që nuk u kthyen ma:

DOM PJETËR GRUDA

Në kolanen e artë të martirëve të fesë e të atdheut, që luftuen për një Shqipëri demokratike, ku liria e fesë, si liri fundamentale të respektohej krahas lirive të tjera njerëzore, asht edhe Don Pjetër Gruda, i cili pakë ditë mbas shugurimit të tij si meshtar, më 1946, u arrestue dhe vdiq me 12 kallnduer 1990 në kampin famëkeq të të burgosunve politikë në Sarandë. Jeta e tij dhe e familjes së tij asht një tragjedi e vertetë....

Patrioti Palokë Gruda (Lulgjura), mbasi kishte luftue për të drejtat e Horit dhe të Grudës për t'u bashkue me Shqipërinë, në kohen e Revolucionit Demokratik të vitit 1924 së bashku me familjen e tij dhe birin e tij Pjetrin foshnje, kerkoj strehim mbrenda kufijve politikë të Shqipënisë.

I zgjuet, i shkathët, me tipare pozitive të një malësori, që në fëmijëni Pjetri u duk se do të ecte perpara në jetë. Vokacioni fetar e bani atë të hyjë në Seminarin Papnuer të jezuitëve në Shkodër. Që në rininë e parë ai këtu u shque për krijime letrare plot ndenjë e mendim në poezi po dhe në prozë me tregimet e tij prekëse. Krijimet e para u botuen te revista "Aurora consurgens" e Seminarit, po edhe në revisten prestigjoze "Hylli i Dritës" etj.

Po fusha së cilës ai iu perkushtue kryesisht, si aktor, autor apo regjizor, asht dramaturgjia e teatri.

Me sa dimë vepra e parë që ai perktheu dhe vuni në skenë tue pasë ai vetë rolin kryesor, asht një dramë që bante fjalë për periudhen e Napoleon Bonapartit në Itali dhe lëvizjen patriotike italiane në atë kohë. Ndersa vepra e dytë e



DOM PJETËR GRUDA

inskenueme asht ajo që i kushtohej revolucionit meksikan të vitit 1927. Shtypi i kohës, në vitet 1941, 1942, ka shknuar pershtypjet ma të mira për këto inskenime të suksesshme të seminaristit Pjetër Gruda.

Tue lexue materialet që shtypi i kohës jepte për tmerret bolshevike nën diktaturen staliniane, Seminaristi Pjetër Gruda shkroi dramën "Tragjedia e Madhe", veper e cila u vu në skenë dhe pati jehonë të gjanë kudo nder spektatorët. Në rolin kryesor vetë autori i dramës.

Duhet të theksojmë këtu se nder jezuitët e Shkodrës kanë fillue shfaqjet e para teatrore në Shqipëri qysh në kohen e viteve të Lidhjes së

Prizrenit (1878-1881) dhe se nga fundi i shekullit XIX kje ndertue pranë Kolegjis Saveriane një salon teatri, i pari, ma i madhi (400 vende) e ma i bukuri në Shqipëri dhe me të gjitha mjetet e kohës për inskenime të suksesshme.

Pikërisht këtu në këtë salon të jezuitëve duartrokitjet e para të publikut i dhanë forcë, shtytje krijuese si autor, aktor e regjizor Seminaristit Pjetër Gruda.

Tue e pa gjatë Lidhës së II Botërore, ahimin e mortajës bolshevike në Shqipëri me përhapjen e propagandës së hucj sillave komuniste, Seminaristi i ri shkroi dramën "Fëmijë Atdheut", një veper e frymëzue me nga një tragjedi e Spanjës martire që u mbyl në gjak në vitet 30-të. Tingllimi aktual i kësaj drame për kohen, ishte ma se i kjtartë e domethanës. Mbrojtja e Alkazarit dhe fitorja në këtë betejë të pergjashme shenonte fundin e ideve

bolshevike ateiste dhe të nderhyrjes brutale staliniane në këtë vend kristian.

Interpretimi i flaktë i kolegëve të tij aktorë, efektet shenike, dritat, skenografia, të gjitha të shkruara në një platformë regjizoriale të mendueme bukur prej Seminaristit Pjetër Gruda i dhanë shfaqjes një sukses të jashtzakonshëm, vetë veprës një vlerë të veçantë dhe kjo dukej qartë në duartrokitjet e publikut artdashës shkodran që e prit nxehtësisht këtë spektakel. Në vitin 1943 e më vonë kjo dramë u shfaq ma se 150 herë, ngjarje pa precedencë për një dramë deri në atë kohë. Drama e frekuentimi i saj e ndjekja me kaq emocione fliste qartë për ndjenjat antikomuniste të popullit.

Po kjo dramë do të shenonte kalvarin e jetës së tij..

...Pakë ditë mbasi u shugurue meshtar (1946) Don Pjetër Gruda u arrestue si antar i "Bashkimit Shqiptar" nga forcat e errëta të Sigurimit. Akuzës kryesore për veprimtari antikomuniste në dramaturgji e teater, që regjimi komunist i dha, në gjyq iu shtuan edhe akuza të tjera false dhe kjo mjaftoi që ai të kalonte në tortura e burgje vite të tana të jetës së tij.

Në vitin 1953 ai kje lirue tue perfitua nga një amnistie.

I devotshëm, shpirtmë, njeri i çilter dhe i ndershëm, me një humor të kandshëm, figura e tij e paster morale prej meshtari do të mbetet në kujtesën e të gjithë atyne që e njohten, që e duartrokiten në skenë, që i panë aftësitë e tija krijuese në gjininë e dramës. Kur ai përgatiti dhe shfaqti "Flije Atdheut" me siguri nuk i shkonte në mendje se këtë kalvar do ta kalonte atdheu i tij, e jo si Spanja gjatë dy viteve, po për gati gjysëm shekulli.

Pas daljes nga burgu ai kreu me devotshëmëni detyren e meshtarit në Dedaj, në Dajç të Bregut të Buenës, në Sheldi tue kenë gjithmonë shembull në jetë. Besimtarët e Shkodrës e të këtyne fshateve rrejnë kujtimet ma të mira...

Në vitin 1967 shpertheu persëri mënjia ateiste kunder fesë. U mbyllen kisha e xhamija, u arrestuen, u torturuen meshtarët, u profanuen vendet e shenjta....Dom Pjetri kje shtemgue të punojë së

bashku me P. Anton Lulin, S.J. në Femmen e Bushatit si punëtor i thjeshtë. Asnjëri nuk mund t'i fliste, të rinte me të. Regjimi diktatorial i Enver Hoxhës përgatiti mundime të reja për klerin katolik. Dom Pjetër Gruden e arrestuen, e burgosen, e torturuen, e munduen në kampet e punës së detyrueshme, po ai mbahej i fortë. Ishte vertetë një shembull morali të naltë, solidariteti për të gjithë të burgosurit e tjerë. Jeta e tij i ishte kushtue një lufte të drejtë! E për këtë ai ishte krenar. Po erdhi koha që ai u lodh, u ligështue nga shëndeti e në mungesë të barnave mjekësore, vdiq në kampin famëkeq të punës në Sarandë. (Per ironi të fatit ai figuron ende sot i gjallë në regjistrat e gjendjes civile?) Vdiq më 12 kalinduer 1990 dy ditë para demonstratës së parë antikomuniste në Shkodër kunder statujës së perbindshit Stalin (14 kalanduer 1990), demonstratë e cila shenoi fillimin e luftës për shembjen e komunizmit në Shqipëri.

Ah, sikur Dom Pjetri i shkretë t'i kishte pa së paku skenat që pasuen këtë demonstratë në luftën kunder diktaturës ma të tmerrshme që ka pa atdheu ynë i vujejtun!

...Mbi vorrin e tij të heshtun në një bregore të vetmueme në Sarandë qinda kilometra larg Grudës së tij të lindjes dhe nga Shkodra ku u rrit dhe zhvilloi veprimtari për të parandalue mortajen komuniste, asht vu kohët e fundit një kryq i thjeshtë druri, simbol i jetës së tij të thjeshtë e të vujejtun, po dhe i fitores: *In Hoc Signo Vincas!*

Po sa ka nga këto kryqa neper Shqipëri sot? Shumë meshtarëve, martir të fesë, nuk u dihet as vorri. Ndersa jeta e tyne, mbrojtja detyroze e fesë dhe e drejtave të njeriut dhe e të drejtave kombëtare nga ana e tyne, shkelqejnë si hëviz të shndritëshëm, si permendore të pamposhtura për breznit e ardhëshme.

Mikel PRENNUSHI

DOM MARK HASI

Dom Mark Hasi ka lindë në Malin Kolaj me 1917, nga një familje malsore me origjinë nga Kelmendi (nga zonat që sot ndodhen nën Malin e Zi). Në Shqipëri kanë ardhë mbas vitit 1912.

I vogël, i zgjuet, i shkathët, asht mbajtë afer nga Dom Kolec Prennushi, famullitar i Dajçit, i cili e mbajti me vedit e mandej ka jetue në Seminar e n'argjipeshkëvi pranë Mons. Gasper Thaçit. Mark Hasi gjithashtu ka studjue për prift disa vjet në Itali, Romë e Padovë. Asht shugurue meshtar me 24 Fruer 1945.

Në dhjetor 1957 asht arrestue dhe për 7 vjet deri me 1964 ka jetue në tmerret e burgjeve e kampeve në Beden, Vlashuk, Maliq. Mbas lirimit ka jetue në lagjen Tre Heroj të Shkodrës.

I devotshëm, i papërtueshëm, trim në shërbimet fetare, predikues i flaktë i fesë e Unjillit, Dom Marku sa e sa herë asht ndeshë me komunistët ateistë tue mprojtë fenë me guximin e *priftit e të qytetarit*. Gjatë kësaj perjudhe, ai së bashku me Mons. Ernest Çoben kanë qenë klerikët kryesorë në Kishën e Madhe në Shkodër që pa frigë e me një përkushtim e dinjitet të pashoq i kanë shërbye popullit në nevojat e detyrat shpirtnore.

Me 6 fruer 1967, diktatori Enver Hoxha mban fjalimin famëkeq kundër fesë, tue nxitë e urdhnuet turmën e pafre komuniste për më mbyllë kisha e xhamija e persekutue klerikët, sidomos ata katolikë. Mons. Çoba thirret në një mbledhje ku i kerkohet të dënojë Zotin, Papën e besimin katolik. Ai mbron burrënisht e me dinjitet fenë kunder ateistëve të çuem peshë; ndërsa Dom Mark Hasi u del përpara turmave të terbueme që donin çilcat e Kishës së Madhe për ta profanue e plaçkitë.

Dom Marku arrestohet me 7 Prill 1967 dhe ndër të parët gjykohet për vdekje. Gjygi iu ba te Kisha e Murgeshave Stigmatine. Me vdekje u denue me te edhe Dom Zef Bici e cill edhe u pushkatue menjherë. Dom Zef Bici ishte famullitar i Tiranës, po gjygi iu ba apostafat në Shkodër për të terrorizue katolikët e Shkodrës.



DOM MARK HASI

Dom Mark Hasi iu shndrrue denimi në 25 vjet burgim të randë. I shkretë ka pritë për shum kohë pushkatimin para se t'u njoftonte për vendimin e burgimit të gjatë. Në burgun e dytë të gjatë ka provue tmerret e Repsit, Burrelit, dhe ma në fund në kampin famkeq të Ballshit ku edhe vdiq në duert e Dom (tash Monsinor) Mikel Koliqit.

Me 22 Fruer 1992 në Shkodër asht zhvillue ceremonia e vorrimit të eshtnave të tij, që u gjetën në Ballsh. Duhet theksue me këtë rast diçka të jashtzakonëshme, se si u gjetën eshtnat e Dom Markut.

I burgosuni Mark Dema, shkodran, me banim në Durrës, profesor, ka qenë i bashkëburgosun me Dom Markun e klerikët tjerë në Ballsh. Kur Dom Marku ka vdekë, Profesor Dema ka shkruet një biljetë me këto shenime:

MARK ZEF HASI

lindun 1917 mali Kolaj

banues në Lagjen Tre Heroj

arrestue 7.4.1967. 25 vjet dënue tradhtar

vdiq 1.10. 1981

mbas 14 vjet, 5 muej e 24 ditë

do të delte me 7.4.1992

Kjo biljetë e shtime në një shishe të mbyllun siguroi familjarët, miqtë e shokët e Dom Markut për eshtnat e tij të vërtetë. Biljeta u shkruet nga profesor Mark Dema, siç pohoi ai vete, me lejen e disa rojeve të burgut.

"Dom Marku – siç thotë Monsinor Mikel Koliqi, bashkëvuejtes i tij në Ballsh e kampe tjetra – vdiq në paqën e Krishtit tue i qindue dot në fund besnik mësimit të tij hyjnor."

Vuejtjet teta e vdekja martire e Dom Markut dhe e bashkëvllazorëve të tij u banë "farë e të Krishteve të ri" që do të niten e edukohen në shembullin e tyre.

Mikel PRENNUSHI

LUTË E DESHPRUESHME

(Shtetimi i editorit: Poema *Lutë e deshprieshme* nga i mirënjohuri poet e shkrimtar Ernest Koliqi u botue së pari në revistën JETA KATOLIKE SHQIPTARE të Monsinjon Zef Oroshit në New York me 1968. Me akter vandale të "revolucionit kulturor" të stillit kinez, në pranverën e vjetit 1967, Enver Hoxha me shokë u vërsulën kundër atyne pak intelektualve e klerikve (sidomos katolikë) qi ende kishin mbetë gjallë për të krijuë "shtetin e parë ateist" në botë!

"Fletë Rrufët", denoncimet e mëshefta e publike, arrestimet, exekutimet e dënimet e randa me burg, internim e pushim nga puna krijuen një atmosferë shantazhi e frige të pashembullt në historinë kombtare. Në këtë fushatë tmerri të pashoq, skuadra të rinis, policis, Sigurimit e t'intelektualve "përparimtarë" (të tipit Jup Kastrati, Rakip Beqaj, Agim Bejleri, Anesti Boçka, Hamid Beqja, Hulusi Hako, Hajredin Celiku e shum e shum të tjerë të kësaj kategorije), çuen në vend "porosit e Partis e të shokut Enver" e mrafshuen përdhë kisha e xhamija, mrahën, çburmuen e torturuen me qinda

e qinda besimtarë e klerikë qi kundërshtuen rrenimin e institucioneve fetare e djegëjen publike të librave fetar e teksteve tjera me përmbajtje të dijes e kulturës premdimore.

Poeti Ernest Koliqi, i ndieshëm për damin e madh qi po i bëhej traditës fetare e kulturore e në të vërtetë mbarë kombit, shpreh me fjalë e rrymë të fuqishme e prekse gjendjen e tij shpirtnore. *Lutë e deshprieshme* është njëherit uratë e protestë për fatin e keq e tragjik qi n'atë kohë po përjetonte populli shqiptar.

Poema rënqethse e Koliqit u përkthye edhe n'anglisht nga Prof. Zef V. Nekaj e me 1976 u botue në librin THE FULFILLED PROMISE – A documentary account of religious persecution in Albania, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, California 1976, (Premtimi i mbajtur – Një dokumentar i salvimit fetar në Shqipëri). Shenojmë se poema u përkthye edhe në gjuhën suedeze nga shkrimtari i mirënjohuri Alfred Berglund dhe u botue në *Buletini Katolik Shqiptar* (Vol. VII–VIII, 1986–7).

LUTE E DESHPRUESHME

Ju qi keqas t'vorrosun keq flëni ndër murâna
mbi shpate t'pjerita n'pyje, n'breg deti ase n'breg lumi,
deshmor', q'ëmën t'lavdishem keni thadrue n'gojdhâna,
nën dhë me gjak t'uej t'rîmun idhnîm' nuk u a shuen gjumi.

Ju qi n'vorre t'vetmueme keq flëni e nuk pushoni
e as deka vart e shtatit nuk thau as nuk u a mbylli,
qi eshtnat vrik ju dridhen kur del një zâ nga pylli,
a kur një zhapllim' hapash përbrî murân's ndëgjoni.

Ju qi n'msime fisnike t'lahutës jeni rritun,
ju qi burrnîn e patët si mësuese,
ju qi lirîn kreshnike zgjedh' e kishi për nuse,
ju qi n'mprojen e nderit botën keni çuditun.

sot n'murâna t'harnueme kërkoni kot pushimin:
ju qi epopë t'panjofun shkruet me gjakun e kuq,
plot vrumullisje n'eshtna mini tue bluem idhnimin,
fatosa orzez, për flijen e jetës q'u shkoj huq.

U rrzuet tue rrokun armën dhe u rrzue me ju edhe fisi,
ato q'atdheut i kjenë ndër mote gardh çeliku,
parzmat vigâne t'ueja, jo, nuk i mposhti anmiku,
por nâma e fatit, nâma qi befas mbi në krisi.

N' heshtim t'natës shqiptare s'ndëgjohet kund zâ njerit,
prân' votres s'fikun nanat n' vaj nuk e njomin bukën,
por me sy t'përplotun plot shkndija mnije, strukën,
tue prit' furin ahmarre qi t'thej' t'përnumt e mnerit.

Jo vâj por gjamë e ahtë prej pyjesh sjell jehona,
zhumhura e rrebtë e lumit kushtrim zâ – mbytur ngjanë,
shpirtnat errson e ballet vrugon, ndiell mort zezona,
q'atdheut palcet gjallnuese mâ t'mshefta po i a thanë.

O Perendj, na tokën pranuem qi Ti na fale,
n' të tash tridhet' qindvjeta na u end e ndershme jeta.
Jetuem m' kto troje t'vobta, n'kto brigje t'thata e t'shkreta,
ngujue larg botës tjetër tue rrejtun dhën mbi male.

Me mzi strëhueme trupin nga shiu e breshni e marrdha,
n' kasolle e stane t'brishta qi shpërthejshin duhinat,
pa dijt' qejfet e holla, pa dijt' ç' janë miradinat,
pa njoft' doket e lmueta të kombeve fatbardha.

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

E, pra, t' ushqyem n'kto gryka me bukë kollomoqe,
 qi e zbutshim n' uj të kronit, s'lypshim kurgjâ mâ shumë,
 sepse bylmet na kishim një liri t' thjesht t'pashoqe,
 qi me hiret e veta na e bante gjakun t'lum.

Nanat me qumsht' të pastër andjen n'shpirt t'on' dikojshin,
 me fluturue si shqipe në qiell t' nderit shqiptar,
 n' flak' t dokeve m'u kendellun e n'zjarrm t'buzmît bujar,
 qi kobin e zvetnimit nga votra na e largojshin.

O Perendí, ndër shekuj úja buzën na e zverdhi,
 shpesh u errem pa hangër bukën m'e nujt' për fmín
 e mitun q' ish n'e mitun, por n'qe se 'i mik né shpin
 na msyni, ia vûm para at buk mikut kur erdhi.

Pse kshtu na e randon jetën me dhunë e me krajata?
 Lirin e dy gisht nderi n'shtek t'ballit, s'kishim tjetër:
 kto dy të mira zbritshin vobeksín t' on' të vjetër.
 Po pse, o i Lumi i Qiellvet, na i rmbëve kto dhurata?

Deshmorve u dridhen eshtnat n'vetmina plot murâna
 e qetí n'vorr nuk njofin as tash qi ata kan' vdekë:
 e, pra, gjat' jetës luta T' naltuen, Zot, n' qiell't e gjâna
 e n'shekull udhën t' Ande përhera shkuen tue ndjekë.

Pse nuk i a kput' Ti kombit vargun e ditve t'zeza?
 pse nanave kërcûna, mbështjellun n' futa zije,
 s' i a zbardh' ftyrat e zêmrat me një reze linje?
 Pse nuk i fal' deshmorve një gjum' të qet' n' vorrezat?

Romë, 1967

Ernest KOLIQI

Refleksionet e Një Mërgimtari:

DOKUMENTIMI I TIRANISË KOMUNISTE

Një muajin gusht të këtij viti, shijova kënaqësinë e madhe të takimit tim me familjarët e shokët e shumë mbas një ndamje të detyrueshme prej ma shumë se 33 vjetësh, për arsye të kundërvenëjes dhe përbuzjes sime për rregjimin e PKSH(PPSH). Vitet e kësaj ndamje të gjatë i kam jetue si refugjat politik në SHBA.

Gjatë qëndrimit tim në Shkodër, qyteti im i lindjes, shumë kolegë më kërkuen të çfaqë mendimet e mia në lidhje me fajesinë dhe përgjegjësinë për krimet e shumëta, dhe veprimet e paligjësme që u bënë në Shqipëri, dhe në kurriz të shqiptarëve gjatë një periudhe 46 vjeçare. Nji përmbledhje e përgjegjes sime u botue, në atë kohë, në gazetën PISHTARI, organ i Shoqatës për ish-të burgosurit dhe të persekutuemët politikë të Shkodrës.

Arsyet kryesore për ngritjen e këtij problemi sot, në mes tjerave janë dhe këto:

E para, ashtë një detyrim moral për të gjithë shqiptarët dhe shqiptaret të denojnë pa rezerva diktaturën, e çfardo ngjyre qoftë, dhe tiraninë politike që ajo imponon mbi qytetarët.

E dyta, ashtë një detyrim legal për administratën e sotme demokratike shqiptare që të ndjekë me ligjë, dhe vendosmëni, të gjithë ata që në mënyrë direkte, dhe si përkrahës koshientë, janë fajtorë dhe përgjegjës për konceptimin, planifikimin, fillimin, dhe zbatimin e tiranisë komuniste në Shqipëri.

E treta, dhe kjo ka të bëjë me momentin e zgjedhur për këto refleksione, ashtë çfaqja e një filmi të ri amerikan mbi jetën private të Josef Stalinit, një prodhim i mbështetur në dokumentacion të shumë, dhe i treguem kryesisht nga bija e Stalinit, Svetlana,

Ajo që më ka lanë një përshtypje të pashlyeshme nga ky film ashtë denimi i guximshëm, thellësisht heroik, që i bëri Stalinit grueja e tij, Nadja, dhe vajza e tyre, Svetlana. Bashkëshortja

e Stalinit, Nadja, e qortoi bashkëshortin kriminel disa herë me rradhë, gjithmonë me shpresën e përmirësimit, megjithë kërcënimet e vazhdueshme. Ma në fund, e lodhur nga atmosfera mbytëse e krimit që e rrethonte në Kremlin, ajo kreu vetë-vrasjen, si akti suprem i mospajtit me kriminelin.

Vajza e Stalinit, Svetlana — e njohun për largimin e saj nga Bashkimi Sovjetik dhe për botimin e "20 letrave" ku denohet sistemi dhe Stalini për terrorin e institucionalizuem në Bashkimin Sovjetik — refuzon jetën plot konfort pranë babës, dhe jeton larg nga atmosfera e krimit në Kremlin. Ma vonë, ajo gjen guximin moral të denoncojë Stalinin, babën e saj, edhe publikisht.

Nji zhvillim i këtill i ngjarjeve në Kremlin krijon dy imazhe kryesore në mendjet tona:

njëti, tregon haptas se çfarë skëterre ka qenë Kremlin, sidomos gjatë rregjimit të kriminelit paranoik Stalin; dhe

tjetri, tregon fisnikërinë e dy grave, nanë e bijë, që gjetën guximin e rrallë të denojnë krimin dhe kriminelin, burrë dhe babë, dhe t'i tregojnë botës mbarë se edhe në thellësinë e plotë të skëterrës së Kremlinit ashtë gjetë përsëri një fisnikëri njerëzore që u ngrit ma nalt se krimi vetë, me gjithë çmimin suprem që pagoi.

Heroizmi i Nadjas dhe i Svetlanës janë dy shembuj madhështorë të një qëndrimi që na mbushë me entuziasëm të gjithëve për natësinë e dinjitetit të njeriut, për përpekjen e pambarrim të së mirës kundër së keqes, të luftës së pengjellit kundër demonit që përpiqet të na shkatërrojë si qenëje njerëzore të lira dhe me dinjitet. Atëherë lindë pyetja: ashtë heroizmi një cilësi ekskluzive ruse? Përse nuk e shohim njëri njeri tjetill edhe në Shqipëri?

Ka dy përgjegje të prantëshme:

1) Grueja dhe familjarët e diktatorit shqiptar Enver Hoxha, kanë pranue plotësisht sjelljen dhe veprimet e diktatorit, dhe janë ba pjesëmarrës koshientë të këtij procesi të gjatë kriminal me të

gjitha përgjegjësi që rrjedhin nga një qendrim i këtill.

2) Grueja dhe familjarët e diktatorit Enver Hoxha nuk e kanë pranue sjelljen dhe veprimet e diktatorit, por nuk kanë gjetë guximin e mjaftueshëm t'a kundërshtojnë (nga një frikë që spjegohet), ose nuk kanë dashtë të humbin privilegjet e shumëta që kanë gëzue (sepse kanë qenë vetë të korruptuemë).

Heroizmi është një cilësi e mallë dhe është gabim të kërkohej nga të gjithë ne, njerëzit e zakonshëm. Heroizmi është privilegj i një grupi të kufizuem "të zgjedhunish", pavarësisht se në shumicën e rasteve e gjejmë tek njerëzit e thjeshtë në jetën e tyre të përditëshme (shembull shqiptar: të gjithë herojt që shpëtuen jetën e izraelitëve gjatë okupacionit nazist kanë qenë njerëz të thjeshtë). Heroizmi përballon vdekjen ose vuetjetet e pambarim me një stoicizëm që na tronditë (shembull shqiptar janë burgjet dhe kampet e internimit komunist). Por në qoftë se vdekja dhe vuetjetet e pambarim sot nuk kërcënojnë përsëri ata që janë në gjendje të denoncojnë diktatorin pranë të cilit kanë jetue, ata që janë në gjendje të demaskojnë tiraninë me të gjitha njohuritë e gjana që disponojnë si "pjesëmarrës", atëherë, cila është arsyeja që goja e tyre është e mbyllur, cila është arsyeja që ende "ish të frikësuarit" gjithënjë mbulojnë me heshtje të plotë njohuritë e tyre për diktatorin dhe krimet e tija?

Një fenomen i këtill është shumë shqetësues për Shqipërinë! Psikologët do të quejshin një qendrim të këtill antiheroik e "mungesë karakteri", mungesë e asaj cilësie të qëndrueshme – jo temperamentale – që dallon individët nga njëri-tjetri, e asaj cilësie që ban çdonjerin nga ne të jemi ata që jemi e jo "të tjetrit", e asaj cilësie të konceptueme si forca e përherëshme morale, si kambëngulja për të mos trathëtue atë që është ma fisnike në natyrën tonë njerëzore. Sirjedhim i këtij fenomeni, kemi sot në atë grup të ish-privilegjuemësh një gjendje shnjerrëzimi, një çthurje morale, një mbyetje të zanit të ndërgjegjes, një predispozim të pranojnë të keqen në heshtje, pa kundërshtim ose edhe me kënaqësi sadisti! Shqipëria do të kishte fitue shumë para syve tonë dhe para botës sikur në Kremlinin e Tiranës të kishin jetue Nadjat heroike shqiptare, sikur nga ai reth i mbyllur e vicioz të kishin dalë

Sveitanat guximtare shqiptare, dhe të kishin tregue para botës se me diktatorin dhe aktet e tija kriminale nuk pajtohen as anëtarët e familjes.

Perkundrazil Qendrimi i bashkëpunëtorëve të diktatorit dhe i familjarëve të tij në Shqipëri është njëri nga aspektet e shumë të tragjedisë morale që ka pësue populli jonë gjatë pesëdhjetë vjetëve të fundit. Ky qendrim i ban të gjithë ata dhe ato bashkëfajtorë koshientë, dhe prandaj edhe bashkëpërgjegjës për krimet e diktaturës komuniste pesëdhjetë vjeçare.

*

Shqipëria është sot një vend i lirë dhe i pavarur, me një shoqëni që ka fillue të shijojë frytet e para të demokracisë, kryesisht me heqjen e frikës. Ajo që më bani përshtypje të madhe gjatë qëndrimit tim në atë vend ishte shpresa e madhe që gjeta te shumica e shokëve në një të ardhme ma të mirë. Dëshiroj të shtoj këtu se shpresa, për mendimin tim, është edhe esenca e demokracisë: shpresa se njeriu, po të lihet i lirë, të jetojë e të veprojë i lirë, do të jetë në gjendje të krijojë dhe të zhvillojë një shoqëni të lirë për të gjithë. Kjo shoqëni, natyrisht, do të jetë e bazueme mbi disa kolona të shëndosha që ushqejnë frymën dhe veprimin e lirë të të gjithëve. Njena nga këto është edhe drejtësia, qoftë si parim korrektesë dhe mirësjellje kundrejt tjerëve, qoftë si administrim i ligjit, si shprehje konkrete e barazisë për të gjithë. Një koncept i këtill është i qartë sidomos në betimin që amerikanët bejnë para Flamurit: "with liberty and justice for all" (me liri dhe drejtësi për të gjithë)

Drejtësia është paanësi, integritet, ndershmëni, besë, burrëni, e të tjera cilësi si këto që përkrahin zhvillimin e matejshëm të rregullave morale të një shoqënie, të drejtat dhe detyrimet e një qytetari, dhe që nxisin vetë-plotësimin (self-realization) e individit të lirë. Në praktikën qytetërore drejtësia është edhe detyra qytetare për respektimin e së drejtës dhe kundërshtimin e të padrejtës, si dhe ushtrimi i pushtetit për këtë qëllim. Kështu, në botën moderne, ushtrimi i drejtësisë siguron të drejtën dhe pengon të padrejtën, siç janë përcaktue me ligj të bame nga pushteti të zgjedhuna lirisht, dhe të zbatueme nga organe të caktueme të pushtetit gjyqësor. Por, ushtrimi i drejtësisë funksionon edhe ndëshkimin për shkeljen e saj,

me denime të përcaktueme që, simbas parimit amerikan nuk janë "capricious and arbitrary" (të dhana "simbas qejfit" ose jashtë ligjit)

Fatkeqsisht, në Shqipëri, për 46 vjet me radhë ka mungue drejtësia! Ajo ashtë zavendsue me një listë "ligjesh të konceptueme nga një grup i ngushtë i shoqënisë shqiptare në shërbim të interesave të një seksioni të ngushtë të shoqënisë shqiptare – në këte rast PKSH – dhe si rrjedhim një seksion pa të drejtën morale e të domosdoshme të shumicës, për vendime legjislative. Kjo lloj drejtësie nuk ka respektue të drejtat, dhe nuk ka përcaktue detyrimet e të gjithë qytetarëve, por vetëm të atyne që kanë shërbye interesat e atij seksioni shumë të politizuem, dhe të kufizuem, të shoqënisë shqiptare.

Një drejtësi e konceptueme dhe e zbatueme mbi këto parime jo-barazie ka krijuë një gjendje arbitrariteti ku ligji ka shërbye interesat e individit që mban pushtetin, dhe jo anasjelltas. Shoqëria shqiptare nën komunizëm ka qenë viktimë e përhershme e kapriceve të udhëheqjes ma të natë të PKSH (ose PPSH) natyra e të cilave ndryshonte me erënat që fryjshin në atë vend. Drejtësia nën komunizëm ka qenë anti-teza e drejtësisë, ashtu si e kupton bota e qytetnueme, ka qenë antidrejtësia *par excellence!*

Dhe në një vorbull të këtillë anti-drejtësie ashtë ndërtue i ashtu-quejtuni "pushtet popullor", administrimi i të cilit u ba nga diktatori dhe bashkëpunëtorët e tij, bashkëfajtorë dhe bashkëpërgjegjës. Rezultati i një anti-drejtësie të këtillë janë krimet e panumerta, dhe arbitrariteti i ngritun në sistem dhe i imponuem simbas kapriceve të një bande me përpjestime gangstereske mbi tre milionë shqiptarë. Pushteti komunist në Shqipëri për 46 vjetë ka qenë një kancer mafioz që ka infektue të gjitha porët e shtetit shqiptar. Dhe e gjithë kjo sepse ashtë shkelë tragjikisht koncepti i drejtësisë.

*

Kjo ishte dje. Ç'duhet të bajme sot?

Tue folë për arsytet e formimit të një Gjyqi për Krimet e Luftës në ish-Jugosllavinë, kongresisti Steny H. Hoyer, kryetar i Komisionit të Helsinkit për Kongresin amerikan tha:

"E para, ne kemi një detyrim kundrejt viktimave, atyne që kërkojnë denimin e fajtorit.

E dyta, këto tmerre pa asnjë dyshim do të ndezin zjarrin e hakmarrjes tek breznitë e reja, të cilat në kondita normale do të ishin përpjekë me ndërtue shoqëri të lira dhe të begatshme.

E treta, do të dergojmë një mesazh të fuqishëm kudo në botë, mesazhin se një luftë kundër popullsisë së pambrojtun do të ketë rrjedhime serioze."

Edhe ne, sot pyesim: Cili duhet të jetë qëndrimi jonë kundrejt fajtorëve që shkaktuen të gjitha këto viktima në Shqipëri? Ç'duhet t'u themi viktimave?

Cili duhet të jetë qëndrimi jonë kundrejt atyne që shkelën aq keq dhe për aq shumë vite me radhë të drejtat ma elementare të njeriut, që kryen vrasje me ndërgjegje të plotë të krimit, që torturoen të burgosurit dhe familjarët e tyre, që ushtroen abuzime ditore për vite me radhë mbi mijëra të rij e pleqë, gra e fëmijë në qendrat e dëbimit dhe internimit, që sulmuen qellimisht qytetarët e pafaj në shtëpi, në rrugë, në zyrë, dhe në qendër pune, që shkatërruen sistematikisht dhe qellimisht pasurinë e qytetarëve, që detyroen me polic me mijëra familje të shpërngulen nga vatrë stërgjiyshore dhe të jetojnë për gjysëm shekulli në moçalishtet dhe zonat ma të papërshtatshme vetëm sepse kështu ishte "urdhëri i partisë" që zbatonte jo drejtësinë por "diktaturën e proletariatit" dhe "luftën e klasave" dhe vdekjen e çdonjerit me një fjalë goje ose një gjest të përcjellun me një buzëqeshje satanike? Cili ashtë mesazhi jonë?

Cili duhet të jetë qëndrimi jonë kundrejt atyne që friksuen një popull të tanë që detyroen gruen të spiunojë burrin, djalin, prindërit, vëllau vëllau dhe motrën, e shoku shokun që e dashu ma shumë se vehten?

Cili duhet të jetë qëndrimi jonë kundrejt atyne që shkatërruen me mijëra familje, që dermuen shpirtërisht me mijëra qytetarë të pafajshëm, që detyroen me mijëra të rij e të reja të hudhen në pellgje të turpshme ku urehet vetëvehtja dhe ku jeta shpesh aq kuptim? Cili ashtë mesazhi jonë për këto viktima?

Cili duhet të jetë qëndrimi jonë kundrejt atyne që shkatërruen të ardhëmen e tre gjeneracioneve, të cilave u ashtë mohue e drejta e shkollimit dhe përgatitjes së tyre për përballimin, simbas aftësive, të vështirësive të jetës ku u përplasën?

Unë nuk kam sot një përgjegjë të preme për këto pyetje kardinale e të tjera si këto, për këto faje të ngarkueme me peshën e randë të krimit e që akuzohen nga pafajnia e kryqëzume për 50 vjet me rradhë! Kam vetëm një bindje me shprehë: urrejtja shkatërron ata që e ushqejnë, dhe nuk e mund "armikun"! Eksperiencia 50 vjeçare komuniste kundrejt "amikut të klasës" tregon se urrejtja nuk ka fitore, dhe prandaj ashtë një rrugë pa kyre e pa të ardhme! Urrëjtja ashtë kancer!

Unë mendoj se para së gjithash, duhet të nisemi nga parimi themelor se qëllimi i vetëm nuk duhet të jete dënimi i fajtorëve përgjegjës, por para së gjithash, përpilimi i një dokumentacioni të periudhës së rregjimit komunist në Shqipëri që nga dita e formimit të PKSH, 8 nandor 1941, dhe vjetët e luftës e deri me 22 mars 1992, një dokumentacion që do të përcaktonte përtej çdo dyshimi natyrën kriminale të rregjimit komunist, dhe mreshtin e gjatë të krimeve të bame nga ai rregjim. Ashtu si ashtë veprue me fashizmin, nazizmin, dhe militarizmin japonez, ky dokumentacion duhet të jete një mësim në histori për mbar njerëzimin, jo vetëm për Shqipërinë.

Dokumentacioni do të tregojë se ç'ashtë diktatura, dhe çdo të thotë të jetojsh në terror dhe nën tirani, çdo të thotë të ndjekësh një diktator, si dhe cili ashtë çmimi që një popull paguen kur diktaturës nuk i këputen rranjët që në fillim. Dokumentacioni do të zbulojë krimet komuniste, sasinë dhe madhësinë e të cilëve, populli vetë nuk i din tani. Dokumentacioni do të provojë se akuzat e pabesueshme janë në të vërtetë ngjarje reale e të besueshme. Dokumentacioni do të provojë gjithashtu se kemi të bajmë me një plan të caktuem dhe të ekzekutuem me përpikmëri nga funksionarë të privilegjuemë dhe të korruptuemë.

Ky dokumentacion duhet të bahet i plotë dhe sistematik. Dhe këtë mund t'a bajë një "Komision i Posaçëm për Hetimin e Krimeve Komuniste në Shqipëri". Një Komision i këtill duhej të përfshijë përfaqësues nga të gjitha shtresat e popullsisë, përfaqësues të të gjitha partive politike të

përfaqësuese në Parlament, përfaqësues nga të gjitha shoqatat që merren me mbrojtjen e të drejtave të njeriut, përfaqësues të rinisë së sakatueme pa arsim dhe pa zhvillim, të grues shqiptare, bashkëshorteve, nanave, bijave dhe motrave tona, vujtja dhe përkrahja e të cilave i kanë dhanë rezistencës anti-komuniste shqiptare dimensionin e saj ma njerëzor, përfaqësues të klenit, përfaqësues të punëtorëve të shfrytëzuemë dhe të bujqëve gjysëm-skllavë etj.

Ky Komision duhet të hapë degët e tij në çdo qendër banimi, dhe të grumbullojë sidomos çdo dokument ekzistues, çdo dëshmi personale ose okulare të ngjarjeve, dhe të kryej regjistrimin e krimeve ditë mbas dite, në një kronologji që duhet të përfundojë si arkivi i plotë i monstruozeitetit komunist në Shqipëri. "Në epoken e dokumentëve, shkruen Lord Acton, na jepet mundësia të shkruejmë historinë, pavarësisht nga historianët."

Ky Komision duhet të sistemojë landën e mbledhun dhe:

a) t'a botoje atë për të gjithë publikun e vendit dhe të jashtëm;

b) t'a paraqesë në Prokurorinë e Përgjithëshme të Shtetit si landë bazë për ndjekje ligjore kundër atyne që besohet të jenë fajtorë dhe përgjegjës për shpërdorimin e pushtetit dhe mospërfilljen e drejtësisë.

Gjatë qëndrimit tim në burgun e Shkodrës, një ish-oficer i Sigurimit të Shtetit që u burgos ma vonë, na tregonte se Sigurimi mbante dy kategori dosjesh:

e para, dosjet e veprimtarëve sekrete të vetë Sigurimit, dhe *e dyta*, dosjet e kundërmartarëve dhe familjarëve të tyre me akuzat e bame kundër njërit tjetrit nën kërcënimin e torturës, humbjes së punës, ose burgosjes që merrte nga refuzimi me bashkëpunue. "Në rast se do të detyrohemi të lëshojmë pushtetin, mendoj se Sigurimi do shkatërojë të të parën që të zhdukë çdo gjurmë të veprimtarisë së tij, dhe na të lajë të paprekun të dytën, kështu që ju do të gjeni të paprituna të mëdha dhe nuk do të keni kohë të merreni me ne."

Një Komision i Posaçëm për Hetimin e Krimeve Komuniste në Shqipëri do të kundërbalanconte

këte plan djallëzor të Sigurimit, dhe do të përqendrohej në riformimin e dokumentacionit të humbun, ose të shkatërruem mbi veprimtaritë e Sigurimit. Dosja e dytë ashtë dosja e viktimave, e plagëve të hapuna me djallëzi në trupet tona, aktet e të cilëve nuk mund të kriminalizohen.

Vetëm dekonspirimi i plotë i krimeve të bame nga komunistët në Shqipëri do të krijojë në vendin tonë një atmosferë të atillë ku ish-komunistët, dhe sidomos fëmijët e tyre, do të kishin turp prej vehtes për ate që ata, ose prindët e tyre, kanë ba në kurriz të popullit të shumëvujtun shqiptar. Me një akt të këtill do të shpëtojmë brezërinë e re që ka sot ndërgjegjen e randueme nga pesha e krimit të prindëve e që denon veprimet e tyre, dhe që ne duhet t'i afrojmë si një akt parimor drejtësie. Vetëm një akt i këtill do të shenonte mundjen e turpshme dhe të përherëshme të komunizmit, dhe fitoren përfundimtare të demokracisë që porsa kemi fillue të ndërtojmë në vendin tonë.

Nji Komision i këtill do të hjedhë poshtë gjithashtu edhe kërkesen e atyne që preferojnë shkarkimin e përgjegjësisë së fajtorëve pa një gjykim të përshtatshëm, dhe do të konfirmonte bindjen e përgjithëshme se një shkarkim i tillë pa shqyrtim do të ishte— ashtu siç ashtë edhe denimi pa gjyq— “një përjetësim i paligjshmënisë” (a perpetuation of lawlessness)

Mbi naten 50 vjeçare të tiranisë komuniste duhet të lëshojmë driten e informimit të plotë, të ndershëm dhe sistematik, me dokumentimin e parimeve dhe praktikës së diktaturës së kuqe. Vetëm kështu do t'u përgjigjemi si popull i kulturuem kërkesave të viktimave sot, dhe kërkesave të historisë dhe brezëve të reja në të ardhëshmen.

Nji nisme e këtill duhet të merret nga “Shoqata Kombëtare e ish të Burgosurëve dhe të Persëkutuarëve Politikë të Shqipërisë.”

4 dhjetor 1992

Baldwin, New York

Sami REPISHTI

ish i burgoson politik

KRONIKË NGA SHKODRA: VEPRIMTARI NË KUJTIM TË DOM NDRE ZADEJËS

Pas marrjes së Kishave dhe fillimit të veprimtarive nga institucionet fetare në rrethin e Shkodrës, filluen edhe perkujtime të klerikëve poetë e shkrimtarë, të cilët diktatura komuniste i pushkatoi gjatë sundimit 50-vjeçar. Nji i tillë qe edhe Dom Ndrë Zadeja. Per këtë figurë të nderuar u zhvilluen këto veprimtari:

a) *Perkujtobet 100-vjetori i lindjes*

Perkujtimi i këtij jubileut u bë në qytet dhe në fshat me këto veprimtari:

1. *Mesbë përsbptirje dhe bekim i varrit të ri.* Kjo veprimtari u zhvillue me datën 3 nëntor 1991 në Kapelen e varrezave të Rmajit pikërisht në ditën e 100-vjetorit të lindjes dhe me rastin e përvjetorit të parë të hapjes së Kishës në Shkodër. Me këtë rast meshen e celebroi i nderi Dom Loro Nodja, i cili mbajti edhe homelinë. Gjatë homelisë u benë biseda për figuren e Dom Ndreut edhe të klerikëve të



DOM NDRË ZADEJA

tjerë nga Z. Lin Martini, Shef i Seksjonit të ish burgosurve dhe të përndjekurve politikë.

Pastaj nxanës të shkollës së Guri Zi shpallen listat e klerikëve të pushkatuar ose të vdekur në burg gjatë viteve 1945–1990.

Pas mbarimit të meshes, besimtarë të shumtë u grumbulluan tek vorri i ri i ngritun në granit. Për jetën dhe veprën foli Z. Ndreku Luca. Nxanës të shkollave Ragam e Sheldi recituan pjesë të ndryshme nga krijimtaria letrare e Dom Ndrë Zadejës. Mandej u bë bekimi i vorrit.

Duhet të shtojmë se një ditë më parë dhe konkretisht me datën 2.XI.1991, në kishën e fshatit Ragam (të cilës ai i ka shti themelet) u tha një meshë në perkujtim të 100-vjetorit të lindjes nga kleriku Dom Loro Nodja. Të pranishëm vet për jetën dhe veprat u folën Zotërinjtë Prekë Ejlli dhe Pashko Hazhari.

2. Sesjon jubilar në Universitetin "Luigj Gurakuqi"

Perveç veprimtarisë së sipërme, me datën 23 dhjetor 1991 në një nga sallat e Universitetit "Luigj Gurakuqi" të Shkodrës, u organizua një sesjon jubilar në bashkëpunim me shoqatën "Dedë Gjo Luli". Në këtë veprimtari u synue të vihet në dukje Lufta e 1911-tës dhe ngritja e Flamurit në Deçiq nga Dedë Gjo Luli, pra ishte 80-vjetori i kësaj ngjarje dhe 100-vjetori i lindjes së poetit Dom Ndrë Zadeja.

Në veprimtarinë, ku morën pjesë miq dhe dashamirë, pjestarë të familjeve të Dedë Gjo Lulit dhe të Dom Ndrë Zadejës u mbajtën këto kumtesa:

1. *Dedë Gjo Luli dhe Lufta e 1911-tës*, nga Zef Leka, kryetar i shoqatës.

2. *Dom Ndrë Zadeja, figurë e shquar në letërsinë shqipe*, nga studjuesi Lec Zadeja.

3. *Atëdashedbunija, motivi kryesor në krijimtarinë letrare të Dom Ndrë Zadejës*, nga gjuhëtari Tef Topalli.

4. *Ndihmesa e Zadejës në fushën e Pedagogjisë*, nga pedagogu i Universitetit të Shkodrës "Luigj Gurakuqi", Z. Fatmir Karagjozi.

5. *Lidhjet në mes të Dom Ndrë Mjedes e Dom Ndrë Zadejës*, nga Z. Mentor Quku, Drejtor i Muzeut të Shkodrës.

Në mbyllje të veprimtarisë diçka interesante. Nga salla ngrihet shkrimtari Sander Gera dhe kërkon të lexojë një hartim të shkruar në vitin 1946 dhe të ruajtur për 45-vjet, kushtuar Dom Ndrë Zadejës, pak ditë pas pushkatimit. Titulli i tij ishte "Kush e vrau Bylbylin". Ky, pasi i bëri një përshkrim të shkurtë rrethanave në të cilat u shkrua, duke kujtuar se tema e lirë u dha nga Prof. Qemal Draçini, edhe ky viktimë e komunizmit, tregoi se e punoi dhe e ruajti me kujdes të mëshehun për afro 50-vjet. Sot, në këtë përvjetor ai e shpalli dhe të gjithë pjesëmarrsit e falnderuan si për punën e bërë ashtu dhe kujdesin për ruajtjen të paprekur të tij pas kaq vitesh. (Homelit e Dom Loro Nodja, fjala e rastit e Lin Martini dhe Ndreku Luca, si dhe recitimet janë të inçizuara dhe të ruajtura).

b) Përkujtohet 47-vjetori i pushkatimit

Fshati Sheldi, fshati ku shërbeu deri në ditën e arrestimit dhe të vdekjes, nuk e harron Dom Ndrë Zadejen. Dhe në këtë drejtim ai dha një provë të mirë, duke organizuar me 25 mars 1992, pikërisht në ditën e përvjetorit të 47-të të pushkatimit, një meshë drite, të cilën e celebroi i ndertë At Gjergj Vata, S.J. Gjatë meshës merrnin pjesë shumë besimtarë e besimtare nga Sheldija, Rogami e Shkodra. Homelinë e rastit e mbajti At Vata, nëndrejtor e profesor i Seminarit Papnuer Shqiptar në Shkodër.

Në mënyrë të farëfisit, besimtarët u foli edhe Z. Lec Zadeja. (Edhe këto dy biseda janë të inçizuara).

c) Ngrihet një pllakë për Dom Ndrë Zadejen

Shkrelli, qendra e famullivet të Malesisë së Madhe të Shkodrës, ka qenë një nga famullitë ku Dom Ndrë Zadeja ka shërbye para se të vinte në Sheldi (nga viti 1926–1934), d.m.th. 8-vjet. Edhe ky fshat nuk e harron.

Me rastin e përvjetimit të ndertimit të Kishës së re, për të cilën kontribuen edhe shatërvanët e kësaj famullie dhe disa të tjerë që ndodhen në SHBA, me datën 9 maj 1992, pikërisht në ditën e festës së famullisë (për Kollit të Majit), këtu u organizua një meshë dhe u bë perurimi i pllakës të vendosur tek hyra kryesore e Kishës. Në këtë janë të pranishëm rreth 5 përfundimtarë që kanë shërbye në këtë famulli dhe të populli i ka venë emrin "Martiri i Kishës". Këta janë: Dom Frano Karma,

Dom Ndrë Zadeja, Dom (Imzot) Gjergj Volaj, Dom Nikoll Gazulli dhe Dom Pjetër Gruda. Famullija e Shkrelit krenohet me ta, pasi pjesa dermuese dhanë jetën ose duke u pushkatuar, ose duke vdeku në burg e jasht vendit. Kështu Dom Franja vdiq në Francë, i merguar, Dom Ndreu, Dom Gjergji e Dom Nikolli u pushkatuan nga regjimi komunist, kurse Dom Pjetër Gruda vdiq në burgun e Sarandës.



At Pjetër Meshkalla, S.J.

Gjatë kësaj veprimtarie, nga familja e farefisit të Dom Ndreut u kerkue që brenda vitit 1992, në prag të 101-vjetorit të lindjes së poetit të vramë, në këte kishë të re të thuhet një meshë në kujtim të tij. Me 13-nandor të 1992-it këte meshë e celebroi Dom Luigj Kqira. Pas meshet Lec Zadeja u foli shkurtimisht besimtarëve për 5 martirët e Kishës e në veçanti për jetën e veprat e Dom Ndrë Zadejës i cili sherbeu në këte famulli për 8-vjet.

Theksojmë gjithashtu se nga një komisjon i veçantë në Shkodër, po punohet për të hartuar një monografi të plotë të veprave të tij, e cila synohet të perfundojë brenda vitit 1992. Gjatë vitve 1993 dhe 1994 do të korrektohet, redaktohet, botohet dhe në vitin 1995, me rastin e 50-vjetorit të pushkatimit, të dalë në shitje dhe t'i jepet për lexim dashamirvet dhe miqëvet të Dom Ndrë Zadejes.

Dorëzohen dekoratat e larta

"PISHTAR I DEMOKRACISË"

Me datën 26 shtator 1992, në një nga sallat e auditorit të Universitetit të Shkodrës "Luigj Gurakuqi", shoqata e ish të persektuarvet dhe të përndjekurve politikë organizoi ceremoninë e dorëzimit të dekoratës së lartë "Pishtar i Demokracisë" dhanë (pas vdekjes) At Pjetër Meshkallës, S.J.

Merrnin pjesë një numer i madh miqësh, dashamirësh dhe qytetarë të tre besimeve nga Shkodra e fshatrat.

Me këte rast Z. Refik Bushati, kryetar i shoqatës së të persektuarvet e të përndjekurve politikë të Shkodrës foli për jetën e veprimtarinë e këtij kleriku të nderuar të Shkodrës dhe të vendit tonë. Në mbyllje folën edhe meshtarë dhe klerikë të tjerë si At Jak Gardini, S.J., At Gjergj Vata, S.J. dhe e mbesa e të nderuarit, Albina Meshkalla. Pastaj Z. Pjetër Arbënor, Kryetar i Parlamentit dorëzoi dekoratën e lartë



Ceremonija e bekimit të Varit të ri të At Pjetër Meshkallës. Z. Njac Kabashi, kujdeset për At Meshkallën në vjetet e fundit të jetës, tue mbajtë fjalimin e rastit. Nga e djathtë dallohen bashkëvllaznit e Pjetër Meshkallës, atërit Jezuit Ják Gardini, Gjergj Vata e Pietro Malone.

"Pishtar i Demokracisë" dhanë nga Presidenti i Shqipërisë Dr. Sali Berisha.

Në këtë mbledhje solemne u bëne edhe përshndetje e fjalime të tjera.

*

Dy dite më vonë, me 28 shtator, në theatrin "Migjeni" të Shkodrës, Muzeu i qytetit në bashkëpunim me shoqatën e të persekutuarvet dhe të përndjekurve politikë organizuan një veprimtari kushtuar 90-vjetorit të lindjes të klerikut të nderuar MonsinJOR Mikel Koliqi.

Merrnin pjesë klerikë, Z. Kolec Topalli, Sekretar i Presidencës, Zoti Sokol Miraka, e mbesa e Msgr. Koliqit, Zonja Elizabeta Olivieri (vajza e shkrimtarit të njohur Ernest Koliqit) dhe miq e dashamirës të tij.

Në emër të Kishës dhe të Famullisë së Shkodrës të pranishmit i përshndeti Dom Zef Simoni, vikar-kapitular i Shkodrës.

Për jetën, vuajtjet e punën si famullitar foli Z. Lec Zadeja, mësues veteran. Ndërsa për krijimtarinë e tij muzikore të pranishmit i njohu Z. Tonin Zadeja, pensionist.

Në emër të Ministrisë së Kulturës përshndeti Z. Sandër Çefa, në emër të shokëve të burgut foli Z. Leka Dosti.

Në mbledhje u lexuan edhe përshndetje të tjera të dërguara nga ish të burgosur që kanë kaluar vite me te.

Nën drejtimin pastaj të muzikantit Zef Çoba, nga orkestra e shkollës së mesme Artistike të Shkodrës "Prenkë Jakova" dhe të disa solistave e instrumentalistave të Teatrit të Operas dhe të Baletit të Tiranës, për të pranishmit u dhanë disa pjesë nga krijimtaria muzikore e MonsinJOR Mikel Koliqit.

Nji ditë më vonë, dhe pikërisht me 29 shtator 1992, ditën e emnit, Radio Shkodra, në një emisjon të veçantë dha për ndigjuesit një program të plotë të krijimtarisë muzikore të MonsinJOR Mikel Koliqit.

Lec ZADEJA



MonsinJOR Mikel Koliqi. Nji foto e rrallë e MonsinJOR Koliqit, Shkodër, 1942

LULET E SH'MRISË

*Dikur lulzojshin në kopshtin tonë
nen bijen e mandit zamakët e bardhë;
tshin gezimi i fëmijës sonë
dhe koba e cegmë s'mund me t mardhë.*

*Nana t quente "lulet e Sh'Mrisë".
Njt këndellje t' ambël sillesh me erë
zamakët e bardhë rreth e rreth shpise
mbramjeve të vona për çdo verë.*

*E kur ajo t kputte në mën
e t vente n' lter m' bjet mend si sot
në harë shëndrëte flyra e sta
para luleve t' pruna për çdo mot.*

*Për sytë e mësës që tash janë mardhë
në kopshtin e vjetër m' s' lulont,
zamakët e mjt, zamakët e bardhë
ju në zemër t' me gjithnjë jetont*

Gjon SINISHTA

P. DONAT KURTI, O. F. M.

VEPRA KULTURALE

E

ELEMENTIT KATOLIK NË SHQYPNË

(BOTIM I „ HYLLIT TË DRITËS “)

(RIBOTIM I “BULETINIT KATOLIK SHQIPTAR”, 1993)

SHKODËR
SHITYP SHKROJA FRANÇESKANE
1935

VEPRA KULTURALE E ELEMENTIT KATOLIK NË SHQYPNI

Europjant e sotshem si edhe amerikajt e qytetnuem dikur s' u paten lânë gjã mangut per kahë mesa e per kah ndiesit e ulta popujve mã t' egjer e mã primitiv të viseve të harrueme të botës. Kje kristjanizmi, qi me parime të veta hyjnore i xuer prej shpellave t' errshme, i dyndi prej pyllave të shpeshta, u a zbuti zëmren, u çili një ravë të ré jetet, i drejtoi kah qytetnimit e u dha kulturen.

Kultura okcidentale a mã mirë kultura kristjane na paraqat mndyren mã të pershtatunen e mã të dëjen, në të cillen mund të rrojë nieri, pse, posë se perkon në gjithshka me arsye, i ep shkas edhe zhvillimit të personës, të familjes e të shoqnís mbarë. Sot shofim, se u imponohet popujve e mbretinëve, pershîn në rreth të vetin dijetarë, hartista e nierz të mdhaj e sistemon kode e ligjë.

Kjo kulturë rriedhë prej realizimit të parimeve kristjane, kshtû qi kûdo kje perhapë a perhapet besimi i Unjillit, aty ndrrom faqe vendi, pse çilet një lamë e ré veprimi, qi është per lulzim e madhní të tuj, e jeta kapet në kulmin e idealit.

Historija e qytetnimit të komeve të ndryshme e provon ket të vertetë; por na, tuj mos dashtë me kënë të merzitshem, po u paraqesim per së shkurtit lexuesave të ndershem, se shka perftoi katolicizmi në vend t' onë gjatë mã se 19 shekujve.

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At Donat Kurti, OFM. në një foto të rrallë si Françeskan i ri

errsiyet e ligshetit.

Veprimi i katolikve në Shqypni kje i vijueshem qysh prej fillimit të kristjanizmit e deri nder dit t' ona; por, prejse me pushtimin otoman fati i vendit t' onë kje në mndyrë të jashtzakonshme i kobshem mbasi na dau ndermjet vedit, na dha rrugat e mergimit, na dermoi e na faroi gati krejt, kshtû edhe veprimi i elementit katolik per kah kultura mund të dahet dysh:

1) Veprimi i katolikve sã komi qindroi në besimin e krishtënë, e

2) Veprimi i katolikve gjatë pësë shekujsh robnimit,

*

Nji qi shikjon nder ledhe të kirklova të hershem blokat e shkamive të renduem niëni mbi tjetrin gjatë korzitet të kalave, mund ajojë një farë ideje per fuqí të jashtzakonshme e per trup të lidhun, qi kan pasë nierzt motit. Prap edhe një qi kalon neper Atenë a neper Romë e vron me kujdes tepricat e tempujve, të skulptures e të harit, mund t'a çojë menden të madhní, të perparimi, të luksi, të kultura e aty të kryeqytetove të ndishme. Kshtû na bjen rása edhe në më mende per veprim të katolicizmit gjatë 14 shekujve të parë.

Aty këtu ndeshim nder srenime të kishve, të ledheve, të nyetzave e t' urave të hershume. Gjithanë na i shumon per gjith vend e per gjith latund. Ato pak na arkitekture na diftojn madhnín

e atyne të mbetunave shëjte; do copa afreskesh me njeje të gjalla na tregojn doren e msueme të piktoreve, qi u rriten në vend t' onë. Ndoi kumbonë piramidale me mbishkrim të thjeshtë e me kumbim të tinglueshem na kallxon perparimin e mjeshtrove edhe në Shqypni. Ndoi mermër i zgavruem prej dalte don me na folë per të hershme; por është thermue prej mizoris s'anmikut e të moteve e s' na ep kumfarrë drejtimit. Tjeter nuk gjëjm perveç lavdeve e nderimeve, me të cillat t'onët e të huejt pershndesin nder shkrime të veta kulturen e katolikut shqyptar.

Marin Barleti¹ tuj na kallxue jeten e Skanderbegut, mât të madhit fatos të kristjanizmit, bân aty-ktû pershkrime të gjalla e poetike qytetesh, ndertesësh e monumentash, sidomos në Durrës, në Krue e në Lezhe; permendë nierz të mdhaj e të perpiekuna diplomatike; kishë, preleten, dhanit të çmueshme etj., sende të gjitha, qi nenkuptojn një perparim e një kulturë verte të lulzueme.

Prof. Giuseppe Gelcich² një nder studjozt mât të zott e mât të censhemt e mât me auktoritet të vjetersive shqyptare, tuj folë permby zhvillim t' onë kulturâr para të XV shekull, thotë: « Shqyptari i pajisun prej natyret me t' kuptim të fortë e me i shijim të bukur, kishte stolisë qytetet e veta me permendore (monumenta) hartistike fort të çmueshme e, deri qi kto qytete rân rrash per tokë prej zjarmit e pezmit t' anmikut, s' prân tuj dergue me shumicë sende argjanti, fildishi, kureli, kriri (zadefi), si edhe shkallme, armë e ënë rêmi të pûnueme me mjeshtri e hollim të madh gjithkund neper Ballkan e nder vise kndej e andej detin. Peikat mandej të qendisuna n' âr per bukurî, qi u perdorshin aso kohe në Ballkan per stolî shtati e shpije, vishin edhe kto prej andej. Harti rromanesk në Dalmacie pat shkasin mât të madhin e të parët apostuj prej Shqypnië ».

Kta ndollte sâ mbretnote pagja në vendin t' onë, pse si nisen m' u dyndë Shqyptarët katolikë, gjith perparimin, kulturen e influksin e tyne kah Dalmacija Gelcich e permledhë me kto fjalë:

«Sâ familje, qi sot thirren dalmate, rriedhin prej të hikunve t' atyne kohve! Sâ sende, qi sot shumica i mban per harte e vepra dalmate, nuk janë tjeter veç krijime e vepra të daluna prej mjeshtërës e zhenis shqyptare!»

Prap Prof. Gelcich, tuj râ në bisedë me P. Gjergj Fishten permby harte të hershme në Shqypni, dishmoi, se veç mbrenda një shekullit të vetem, tuj nisë gjatë Bregut të Bunës e deri në qytet të Djoklës afer Podgoricës, njëfeshin 82 piktora në zâ, të cillve u dihej edhe ëmni.³

Kto e sâ të mbetuna të shkelxyeshme të historis s' onë na paraqesin, veç sâ me thânë, veprimin e katolikve per perparim të vendit; veprim, i cilli vijoi edhe mbasi u buer linja, kûr prendoi Hylli i Shqypnis, d. m. th. edhe mbas të XV shekull.

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* *

Jena në robnî. Koha, qi po marrim me pershkrue, do të thirret per katolikë kohë heroizmit, pse, jo veç u lyp heroizem me pshtue ndiesit fetare në mjes të një korupcionit të pakufi; por u lyp edhe heroizem me pshtue ndiesit komtare në mjes të një trathësis e të një robnis së poshter.

Kundra rymës së kohve e të rrethanave katoliku shqyptar me urtë e me dashni zhvilloi një program perparimtar, qi kje themeli i kulturës së sotshme në vendin t'onë. Me njato pak mjete, qi pat per doresh, u mundue me shpirt me mbajtë gjallë moralin e një popullit të shkatrruem e të bâm rob e i lidhi traditat komtare me detyrë, qi kerkon besimi e ndergjergja, tuj çilë

Shkollat.

Mât të parat shkolla, mbas të blerrunit t' autonomis në Shqypni, kjenë, per sâ dijm na, tri: shkolla e Pldhanës, e Blinishtit e e Shkodër.

Në vj. 1638 P. Hiacinti e Sospitello O.F.M., italian me fis, por shqyptar me zëmer, pat guxim me i u perveshë per të mirë të vendit një pûnës në veshtim të plotë kulturele, tuj çilë shkollën fillore në Pldhanë,⁴ aso kohe vend mjaft i banuem. Kje ndiekë me zell prej vendlasve e i mirijti zâni deri nder katunde të lareta të Zndrimës, qi me më zi qi pritshin me i çue fëmij e vet. Numri i xânsave të jashtem pat mjetë deri në 25 e kta na ep shkas me nenkuptue se do të kenë pasë edhe ndoi konvikt. Gjurm prej dokumentash, se posë uratve nëshin edhe msime letrare d. m. th. mbahej deri dikû në shkollë e mjesme pà perjashtue gjûhen e

vendit. Perparimi kje aq i madh, sa i terboi Turqt, të cillët mbas 9 vjetsh e rrenuen fare.

Në vjetë 1697 kje çilë rishtas. Se deri kûr vijoi, nuk dihet; dokumenti mbaron tuj thanë per të, se «kâ gjasë se gjindet edhe sot» (1702?)⁵

Nji vjetë mbas themelimit të shkollës së Pdhansë d. m. th. në vj. 1639 kje çilë prej fretenve të kuvendit të Troshanit nji tjetër shkollë në Blinishtë⁶, drejtori i së cillës kje P. Karl Mirandulanus O. F. M.

Me shka duket, kje nji shkollë mjeft e plotsueme. Ndiqej prej mâ se 50 xânsash e posë kndimit e shkrimit xêheshin edhe landë tjera, posaçe gjûha latine prej atyne qi dojshin m' u bâ meshtâr. Deri sundimtarët çuditeshin per perparim, qi bâhej n' at shkollë; por anmîqt ishin të panumer e në vj. 1640 drejtorin e ksajë shkollë e gjëjm në burg⁷ tuj psue mundime të mdhaja. Kâ gjasë se kjo shkollë s' mujt me vijue gjatë, pse P. Karli kah mbarimi i asajë vjete njehet nder msuesa në shkollë të Pdhansë.

Në vj. 1698 a aty pari gjëjm se P. Filipi prej Shkodret O. F. M. çilë shi në Shkodër⁸ nji shkollë private e mson fmît e tregtarve e të pasanikve.

Nji qi i kâ perpara sysh pshtieillimet e atyne kohve, mnîn posaçe kundra katolikve e kundra çdo shêjit kulturâr, mund t' a mârrë me mend, se ç' vlerë paten kto shkolla per shpîrt të shqyptarit edhe vetem porsî hap kah qytetnimi.

Por kush mundet mandej me dyshue, se në kto shkolla nuk flitej shqyp? Në çë mndyrë katundari i padishem i ndiqte me zëll, në kje se s' mërte gjâ vesh? Veprat, qi na kan mbetë prej atyne pûntorve të palodhshem, prej atyne msuesave të kujdesshem, na dishmojn kjarë, se ato shkolla s' kjenë mjete të hueja per me influencue në shpîrt të popullit shqypatâr simpatî e partî; por paten per qellim drejt per drejt të naltuemt e moralit e shkasin kahë kultura, e kta tash gadi 300 vjet.

Kta msuesa kjenë, qi me 20 Prill 1711, të ndimuem e të nzitun prej Papës shqypatâr, Klementit XI, ngrehen në Romë në kuvend të S. Pietro Montorio nji kathedër per gjûhë shqype,⁹ per me i bâ gadi misjonarët e huej me mujtë mâ letas me i vijtë vendit t' onë; e njatêherë kûr së mendote kush per gjûhë shqype e per zhvillim të sajë, kta

jânë qi perpilojn mâ të parat gramatika, fjalorë e perkthime.

Në vj. 1644 P. Zef Iccaran O.F.M. shkruen „*Dizionario italiano-albanese*“ f. 120; dorshkrim i nuejtun në bibljotekë të Jesuitve në Shkodër.¹⁰

Në vj. 1675 P. Bernadus a Quintiano O.F.M. shtypi nji liber shqyp „*Dottrina cristiana* (epirotica)“ — Venetiis 1675.¹¹

P. Leo a Cittadella O.F.M., qi diq në vjetë 1678, tuj pasë kënë Misjonâr në Shqypni, shkrou „*Dictionarium epiroticum*“.¹²

Nji gramatikë të vogel shqyp, të shkrueme si duket prej ndonji Misjonari në vj. 1710 me nji shtojcë në gjûhë turqishte, i a dedikoi në vj. 1805 kardinalit Prefekt të Propagandës nji Eksprefekt i Misjonit të Shqypnis.¹³

Në vj. 1716 P. Françesk M. da Lecce O.F.M. shkruen e shtypë mâ të paren gramatikë shqyp, qi kâ randsî edhe sot: „*Osservazioni grammaticali nella lingua albanese*“ Roma, 1716 dalla tip. della S. Cong. di Propaganda. — Mâ vonë shkrou edhe nji fjaluer, per të cillin nuk dihet si mbaroi. Kje pershkrue pjessisht prej G. Camarda, i cilli e levdon fort.¹⁴

Në vj. 1722 edhe P. Didacus a Desio O.F.M. perpiloi nji gramatikë shqype, qi s' kje botue.¹⁵

Në vj. 1752 P. Bonaventura Prucher O.F.M. prej Castel Giovio la në Romë nji dorshkrim gadi per me e botue „*Manuale Catechetico italiano-epirotico*“ e nji fjaluer per sherbim të Misjonarve të Shqypnis.¹⁶

Në vj. 1848 P. Luka da Monte Giove O.F.M. na kâ lânë nji fjaluer shqyp-italisht, qi ruhet si dorshkrim në bibljotekë të bashkës se Todit n' Itali me ket numer: „Cod. 224 format 8o fq. 328.“

Në vj. 1858 P. Dario Bucciarelli O.F.M. la nji dorshkrim „*Grammatica della lingua albanese*“ qi ruhet në Bibljotekë Françeskane të Gjûhadolit në Shkodër.

Në vj. 1862 P. Bonaventura da Francavilla O.F.M. shkrou „*Elementi grammaticali di lingua epirotica*“ në format të fq. 110 e ruhet si dorshkrim nder françeskan të Gjûhadolit.

Në vj. 1866 P. Francesco Rossi da Montalto O.F.M. shtypë „*Regole grammaticali della lingua Albanese, compilate sulle tracce dei buoni grammatici e del P. Francesco M. da Lecce*,” - Roma 1866 — Stamperia della S. Cong. de Propaganda for. 8o fq. 350.

Shi n' ar vjetë shtypi edhe „*Vocabolario Italiano-Epirotico*” con tavola sinoptica në f. 8o fq. 954.

Në vj. 1875 perpiloj e shtypi një fjaluer edhe më voluminos „*Vocabolario della lingua Epirotica-Italiana*”, compilato sui vocabolari Panfani-Trinchera f. 8o fq. 1400. Më vonë shtypi edhe Unjillin e Sh'Mateut.

Në vj. 1881 P. Leonard de Martino O.F.M. që kje një nder më të parët, që punoi vjetërsha në gjuhë shqype mbas metrikës moderne, qiti librin „*L'Arpa di un Italo-Albanese*”, Venezia 1881.

S' do hamue, se nder Misjonarë ky kje më i pari që u a lshoi kushtimin nierzve të mldhaj, e neper ta Europës, per indipendencë të Shqypnis.¹⁷

Mbas gjithë këtij veprimi kultura katolike nisë me marrë haptë në vend t' onë. Balli i perulun i shqyptarit në robni xën me njoftë e me kujtue kunoren, që dikur e rrethote, nztet, kerkon me pünue, me perparue e m' u mkambë. Civila e klér dora-doras duen me e pertrë popullin e më të pertrëm të popullit, pertrëjn komin. Ky entuzjazem vrohet posaçë në shekullin e 19ë.

Prej vj. 1800 e deri në vj. 1861 çilen aty-ktu shkolla private me klasë fillore. Veç në Shkodër mbahen mend 12 shkolla fillestare: 8 per djelm e 4 per varza. Mjetet ishin të vogla e primitive, prandë nuk është per t' u shikjue gjithë aq perparimi a dobija, që xierej prej sosh, sá inicjativa, hapi heroik, zelli per të hapun të kulturës. Një msues perfaqsoje një shkollë në vedi. Ende sot, si në shëj evarije, kujtohen me ande ëmnat e tyne prej popullit katolik shqyptar.

E perkohshmja „Perparimi”¹⁸ i rreshton ëmnat e msuesave më të njoftun me ket rend: Gegë Kodheli, Gjergj Benussi (1836), Gjón Shkrumi, Zef Kamsi, Jaku i Tushit të Mark Krajës (Speci), Shor Markja, Don Pepini, D. Ejell Radoja, D.P. Babi.

Prindt me më zi që pritshin me i çue fmit e vet në shkollë, bile u zotnoshin me pague edhe

msuesin.

Edhe jashta Shkodrës çilen shkolla tjera katolike në gjuhë shqype. Në Pezrend b.f. në Pejë e në Gjakovë i gjejm shkollat e çiluna per djelm shum para vj. 1840; por prej mungesës së datave të sugurta e të njoftimeve më të caktueme, jemi të ngushtuem vetun me i xënë gojë.

Koha veç i a kishte mrrjtë me i a hī një vepres më të madhe.

Në vj. 1861 françeskajt çilin më të paren shkollë fillestare publike në Shkodër. I kje ndimue e kje mprojtë prej Episkopatit shqyptar e kje pershndetë me gzim prej mbarë popullit katolik pors i mirë, pors i voter kulturet, pors shndi lirijet. E pernjimend kje voter kulturet per 72 vjet, pse aty xun e u mriten me mija fmiş.

Msimet erdhen tuj u permisue perherë e më teper. Qysh nder vjett më të parat kje ngrehë edhe një salon akademijet e konferencash, e të dāmt e pervjetshem të çmimeve ishte një rasë gzimit e harejet jo veç per fmi, por per mbarë katolicizmin, pse aty ndiheshin vjetërsha të bukura, kangë të tinglueshme e fjalë e msime t' urta.

Në vj. 1880 me 24 Dhetuer P. Leonard de Martino, O.F.M. kje më i pari që çfaq i mbrendë në kishë në gjuhë shqype një dram barituer.

Kohë mbas kohet xāsāt e dikurshem u xun vendin msuesave të vet: shqyptar i mrrin me pasë aq kulturë, sá me drejtue e me organizue ai vetë vepre per të mirë e perparim të komit.

Në vj. 1902 zgjidhet pors i Drejtues i kësaj shkolle P. Gjergj Fishta O.F.M., i cilli per qeter vën pors i gjuhë msimit nder të gjitha lantët gjuhën shqype e çon zānin e u thotë të gjithë shqypetarvet, se:

Pors i kanga e zogut t' veres,

Q i vallzon t' blerim t' prillit,

Pors i ambli fllaz e veres,

Q i lmon gjithë drandofillit,

Pors i vana e bregut t' detit,

Pors i gjama e mës zhgjetare,

Porsi ushtima e një termetit,
Njashtë a gjithë e jonë shqyptare

Prë mallkue një bër Shqyptri,
Që ket gjithë të Perëndis,
Trashigim, që na la i Pari,
Trashigim s'i a lën ai finis;
Edhe atij i u thafte, po, goja,
Që e perbuzë ket gjithë hyjnore;
Që n' gjithë t' huej kurr s' është nevoja,
Flet e t' veten lën mbas dore.¹⁹

Në vj. 1909 tri klasve të para fillore, që paten mënjtë deri në të gjashten plotore, u kënë shue tri klasë qytetse, me museum e gabinet fiziket të mjaftueshem. Në salon mandej vjetë per vjetë kënë çfaqë drama me njeje edukative e atdhetare si: Shqyptri i Qytetnuem, Odisea, Juda Makabë, I ligu per mend, Dredhit e Patukut, Sh'Françesku, Sh'Aleksi, Shkolla e muzikës etj.

Me ndrim të kohve, per perparim të vendit, u ndmue edhe sistemi shkolluer, kshutë në vj. 1921 kje ngrehë në vend të klasve qytetse gimnazi 8 klasësh e më vonë 7 klasësh, tuj i u adaptue programit të Ministris s' Arsimit.

Do pasë perpara sysh edhe, se qysh në vj. 1882 françeskajt kan pasë çilë një kolegje per me rritë e me msue njata që dishroishin m' u bër freten. Msimet ishin të rregullueme mbas programit të gimnazeve t' Austris e prej vj. 1905 shkolla kje bër krejt në gjithë shqype.

Perpara veç se m' u çilë kjo kolegje, Ipeshkvit e Shqypnis, tuj dashtë me i dhanë popullit shqyptr prisa të mirë e të kndueshem në lamë të besimit e të kulturës paten themelue qysh në vj. 1859 seminarin (konvikt per ata që duen m'u bër pristen) e u a paten lshue në dorë Jezuitve, të cillët prej andej moren shkas me e ditue perherë e më teper aktivitetin e zotsin e vet në të hapun të kulturës katolike.

Në vj. 1868 nisen me e avitë prej vedit ndoi xas, e nandë vjet më vonë, kurr kënë forcue me msuesa të nevoishem, çilem në vj. 1877 shkollen publike fillestare, që shkoi tuj u permirsue kohë mbas kohe e tuj u naltue me klasë reale e tregtare. Qysh prej vjetës 1914 fillojn m' u bër hapat per të çilun të një gimnazit per civila, pse s' do harrue, se Jezuit e kan pasë çilë gimnazin e mbrendshem per seminarista pak vjet mbas themelimit të Seminarit. Në vj. 1922 kan të rregullueme më të parin lice. Per edukatë të fime shofim, se s' kursehen, si kah lokali, si kah argtimet, si kah mjetet tjera.

Në vj. 1890 ndreqen një salon të madh e të bukur, kurr çfaqen sà herë drama të ndryshem, u dhan çmimet fime me më të madhin lulzim e mbajten disa heresh konferenca per dob shoqnore.

Me gjith se komsijet të huej, Jezuit u munduen edhe per lavrim të gjithës shqype.

Në vj. 1862 P. Giulio Buffoli S.J. la një fjaluer italisht-shqyp, që ruhet si dorshkrim në Kolegje Saverjane.

Në vj. 1880 P. Jak Jungg S.J. botoi në Shkodër librin „*Regole grammaticali sulla lingua albanese*“, e një vjetë më vonë „*Elementi grammaticali della lingua albanese*“.

Në vj. 1889 P. Dedë Pasi S.J. shkrou një „*Liber per m' u msue me lexue shqyp*“.

Në vj. 1895 P.J. Jungg S.J. botoi një fjaluer shqyp italisht.

Në vj. 1909 P. Anton M. Xanoni S.J. shtypi librin „*Gramatika shqyp*“ e një rend librash tjerë edukativ.

Në vj. 1910 P. Anton Busetti S.J. boton „*Gramaticetta della lingua albanese*“ e një vjetë mbrapa fjalorin vologinos të pëpiluen me mund të madh „*Vocabolario italiano-albanese*“ me fq. LVI-1148.

Prej vjetës 1920 e tekstej Jezuit botuen gjithfarë librash per shkolla. Numri i librave shqyp a në të përkujt me gjithë të kjoja kapet në 52.

Në vj. 1929 çilen në Tiranë një shkollë fillore e në vjet mbrapa filluen edhe ndoi klasë gimnazjare.

Posë ktyne shkollave me randsi kryesore shofim, se gjatë kësaj kohe livron nder dej e në zëmer të katolikut shqyptar një të prirun kah perparimi e ane-kand Shqypnis së verit çilen shkolla fillore.

Para vjetës 1880 Shkupi e Zymbi e pak më vonë Ferizoviqi e Stubla e kanë shkollën e vet në gjuhë shqype per djelm.

Në vj. 1892 xën fill shkolla e Shirokës, qi vijon deri në ditë të sotme.

Në vj. 1893 P. Joakin Serreqi O.F.M. ndreqë në Selcë një shkollë me lokal të mjaftueshem per 50 xansa.

Shi në ket vjetë edhe P. Basil Chiaroni, O.F.M. çilë një shkollë shqype në Hot (Traboinë).

Në vj. 1897 P. Pjeter Gjadri O.F.M. u ep msim fmive në kuvend të Troshanit.

Në vj. 1898 D. Ndoc Mjedja çilë një shkollë në Pldhanë, të cillen në vj. 1904 e mban P. Tomë Bicaç O.F.M.

Në ket kohë edhe në kuvend të fretenve të Rubigut hapet një shkollë katundi.

Në vj. 1901 edhe Biza ka shkollën e vet, kû mson P. Severin Lushaj O.F.M.

Në vj. 1907 Shtjefen K. Gjeçov O.F.M. çilë shkollën në Gomsiqe.

Ne vj. 1907 P. Gentil Biella O.F.M. mban n' lballë një shkollë në gjuhë shqype.

Në vj. 1909 P. Ejëll Vjerdha O.F.M. avitë fmit e Bazit e i mson me kndue e me shkruë.

Në vj. 1900 e ndoi vjetë mbrapa, neper zëll e të nzitun të shoqnës « Bashkimi » e « Agimi » çilen shkolla në shum katunde. Kemi mritë me dritë se e ka pasë shkollën e vet Rrshëni, Oroshi, Miloti, Dajçi, Kallmeti, Spaçi, Kashnjeti e Nenshati.

Prej vj. 1916-1929 katolikët kanë pasë shkolla, të thuesh, nder shum katunde të Shqypnis së verit. Msojshin Priften, Fretën e civila katolikë. U ndimohet pjessisht prej mbretnis Austro-Hungare e më von edhe prej Shtetit Shqyptar. Në ket perjodë kohet veç famullitarët françeskaj kanë pasë 17 shkolla katundit.

Por sot kultura çmohet më fort prej nderimit e lirës, qi i epet seksit fëmnuer, në kontrast me robri e poshtnim të pagajve e të popujve të paqytetnuem.

Edhe në ket pikë katolikët kanë parin.

Qysh në fillim të shek. XIX e deri s'kje çilë shkolla e Stigmatineve vëm oroe një të nzitun e një zëll per me ngrehë shkolla fëmnuore. Varzat mldheshin neper shpija private e aty u msohej me kndue e me shkruë si edhe per punë dore. Kta vin mjaft sã me i diftue rracës shqyptare, se kto shkolla primitive ishin një hap heroik kah kultura. Jënë punë 80-90 vjetçe e ende mbahen mend ëmnat e atyne msueseve të hershme, nder të cillat njehen: Kush Micja, Tone Radoja, Tereze Berdicja e Tina e Nikës.

Kto shkolla mund të thohet, se e poqen mendimin per me themelue një shkollë publike fëmnuore.

Në vj. 1879 Motrat Stigmatine çilin më të parën shkollë fillore per varza e më të parën shkollë pûnet. Aty u mriten me kujdes jo vetem zoja shpijash; por edhe nana shqyptare.

Qysh nder vjett më të parat çfaqeshin prej bijave shkodrane drame e argtime rrethue prej dritës së ndritshme të nderës e të njerzís.

Si mbas kohet edhe shkollat fëmnuore erdhen tuj u permirsue. Në vj. 1924 në vend të klasve plotore e qytetse kje ngrehë prej Motrave Stigmatine normalja, aq e hatrueme prej të gjithve.

Në vj. 1885 a aty parë në Pezrënd gjëjm një shkollë fillore shqype per varza. Në at kohë xëhet e themelueme edhe ajo e Shkupit.

Në vj. 1890-1903 Motrat Stigmatine shkojnë në Durrë e aty mbajn per 12 vjet një shkollë fillore per varza e një shkollë per punë dore.

Në vj. 1896 në gjëjm e në Kallmet Motrat e Mshirës (Vingercjanet) kshin një shkollë fillore per varza e per djelm.

Më vonë shkollat fillore per varza të drejtueme prej Stigmatineve shumohen.

Në vj. 1907 Shiroka ka shkollën e vet per varza.

Në vj. 1925 çilin një shkollë katundit në Dajç për djelm e për varza; kështu bëjnë edhe në vj. 1927 në Nenshat.

Në vj. 1930 çilen një shkollë për varza në Tiranë.

Prej ktyne vrejtyeve të shpejta mund të vrohet se gjatë pushtimit otoman d.m.th. deri në vj. 1911, katolikët kanë hapë nder kohë të ndryshme 47 shkolla shqype, nder të cilat 10 për varza.

Kultura e parhapun neper mjet të shkollave s'mbaron me kaq.

Flia n' ideal të katolikut merrin deri në heroizem.

Për të mirë të vendit, si mbas fuqive e mjeteve, s'u kursye gjë.

Durimi e dashtnija pasqyrohen fort bukur nder fëmijë të njomë, të mledhun nder azile a strehë foshnjore.

Në vj. 1898 me 3 Tetuer Motrat Servite hapin dyerët e kuvendit të vet në Shkodër për një azil; e kaq mirë e rregullojnë e e mbajnë, s'a m' u bindë deri të huejë për të.

Në vj. 1920 Motrat Stigmatine nisen me i avite fëmijë e lagjeve të largta të qytetit neper një azil, që e çilen në Rus.

Në vj. 1929 Motrat Servite shkojnë në Tiranë e ngrehin një azil të ri.

Konviktat.

Mungesa e mjeteve e e nierzve e vshtirësia e rrethanave bëshin të ngushtohet veprimi kulturor mbrenda gjyteteve e katundeve t' aferme. Malcorët e largtë s' mujshin me pasë shkolla, por edhe ata kishin të drejtë për zhvillim. Me ndimë të Mbretit Austro-Hungare kje mendue m' u çile një konvikt i madh për djelmogë të maleve.

Kjo punë u realizue në vj. 1907 e u kje lshue në dorë Vllazeneve të shkollave (Schulbrüder), të cillët i çoshin fëmijë me marrë msim në Shkollën françeskanë.

Shum nder oficerë të sotëm, me fis prej malesh, do t'i kujtojnë me ande ato vjet, që kaluen n' at konvikt të rregulluem në çdo pikpamje.

Në vj. 1921 Motrat Stigmatine hapen në Shkodër një konvikt për varza me afër 72 vendesh. Kje levdue e çmue prej të gjithëve e deri prindt besimesh të ndryshme çuen bijat e veta n' at vend plot uzdajë, edhe me bursa të veta.

Shtypshkrojat.

Na s' mundena me i pasë perpara sysh e me i rreshtue dobët, që pat perftue ky invencion katolik në vendin t'onë në kohë fill mbas të gjetunit. Mjafton me thënë, se qysh nder vjet më të parat kjenë prur shtypshkrojat në Shqipëri. Permendet ajo e Obotit në vj. 1493 e ajo e Shkodërs në vj. 1563.²⁰

Një njëgull azjatike na dau prej atyne kohëve e gjatë robnis kje shue gjithshka.

Me të mkambun të shkollave u ndie edhe nevoja e shtypit e katolikët kjenë, që i a sollen më të parat shtypshkroja vendit t'onë.

Në vj. 1871 Jezuitt prur në Shkodër më të parën shtypshkroje në kto ana. Pësë vjet mbrapa botohet me të libri shqyp i Don Ejell Radojës «Dotrina e Kerscten»; në vj. 1881 «Gramatika për gjuhë shqype» e P.J. Jungg S.J., e në vj. 1892 «Vakinat e ligsh hercme e t' ligsh ree» të Don Pashko Babit.

Ç' prej asajë kohe e deri në sot kjo shtypshkroje ka botue më se 320 vepra të ndryshme fare shqyp a në të perpiekun me gjuhë të hueja.

Në vj. 1909 Don Ndoc Nikaj prur në Shkodër me shpenzime të veta një shtypshkroje të re «Nikaj», që botoi deri në vj. 1922 afër 52 veprash në gjuhë shqype. Shi në ket vjetë me makina më moderne çili një tjetër në Tiranë.

Në vj. 1913 Dr. Terenc Koca pat prur në Shkodër shtypshkrojen «Taraboni», me të cillen pat botue një fletore e pak libra.

Në vj. 1916 Françeskaj sollën në Shkodër një shtypshkroje me të cillen u botuen kund 112 vepra të ndryshme të gjitha në gjuhë shqype për veç ndoi për pshumit të vogël.

Shkrimtarët e librat.

Për me e paraqitë në një mndyrë më të gjallë shkasim që edhe elementi katolik zhvillimit të gjuhës

e të kulturës, të shikjohen librat e shkrimet e botueme e dorshkrimet e rrejtura neper biblioteka.

S' ká kënë degë ditunijet, qí s' á mǎrrë para sysh. Në ket katalog të madh, qí edhe në na vjen merzí me e lexue, gjëjm libra besimi, morali, gramatologije, letratyre, historië, socjologije, didaktike, filozofije, shkenxash positive etj.

Shkrimtarët katolikë shqyptarë, posë se dahan në shëj per zotsí, janë edhe të palodhshem, pse, per me i a mrríjtë idealit, qí kan para sysh, të kulturës e t' atdheut, perdorojn edhe shtypin e jashtem e gjúhët e hueja; kshú qí á púnë e vshtirë me e paraqitë në mndyrë të plotsueme veprimin e tyne. Me gjithkta kemi mrríjtë, si per kurjozitet, me i njehtë veprat mǎ të njoftunat e me caktue si mbas shekujsh numrin e tyne aproksimativ.

Prej vj. 1555 deri në vj. 1700 njofim 12 vepra e 9 auktorë, nder të cillët ásh Buzuku, Bardhi, Budi, Bogdani, Barleti, Tivarsí etj.

Prej vj. 1700 deri në vj. 1800 kemi 11 vepra, 9 auktorë e 6 dorshkrime, nder kta P. Françesk M. da Lecce O.F.M., Kuvendi i Arbnit, D. Gjon Kazazi etj.

Prej vj. 1800 deri në vj. 1900 kemi njehtë 81 vepra, 34 auktorë e 4 dorshkrime. Dahan në shëj posaçe në ket kohë:

P. Leonardo de Martino O.F.M. qí mǎ i pari nisë e i lmon vjerrshat shqype mbas metrikës moderne e mundohet me shpírt me interesue boten e qytetnueme per çashtë shqyptare. Zef Jubani (i Ndokillís), i cilli m' áné të verit kje mǎ i pari qí mldh kangë shqype e i perkthei italisht.

Pashko Vasa, i cilli msímet fillore i bǎni në shkollen françeskane në Shkodër, nisi me shkruë qysh nder vjet të para e botoi 6 vepra në gjúhë të ndryshme per pamvarsí shqyptare. Kaq me urtí e dije punoi, sa mrríjtí me i a mbushë menden Abdull Hamidit t'í epte lëjen me ngrehë në vj. 1879 një shoqni letrare shqyptarësh shí mbrendë në Stamollë. Në ket rasë Pashko Vasa, në bashkpunim me tjerë, trajtoi një alfabet të pergíthshem per shqyptarë e qysh atëherë e ká para sysh unitetin e komit, dashnín ndaj të cillin e shprehi plot ndiesí në kangën, qí kndojm edhe sot:

O moj Shqypní, e mjera Shqypní

Kush të ká qitun me krye në hí?

Tí kē pasë kënë një zojë e rande,

Burrat e dheut të thirrshin nǎnë.

Mandej janë per t'u permende: D. Ejëll Radoja, D. Pjeter Zarishí, P. Françesk Rossi da Montalto O.F.M., P. Ják Jungg S.J., D. Ndue Bityçi, P. Tomë Marcozzi O.F.M., D. Pashko Junki, D. Pashko Babi e tjere shkrimtarë të rí të cillve u del zǎni në shekullin e XX.

Do pasë perpara sysh, se edhe andej detin n'Italí, katolikët italo-shqyptarë tregojn një dashnín të posaçme per atdhë të lǎnun, zhvillojn një letratyre fort të haptë e i apin të nzitun të madh kulturës e idés komtare.

Dahan në shëj nder ata të hershemt: Lukë Matranga, Nikol Figlia, Jul Variboba, Nil Catalani etj; nder ata mǎ të vonshemt: Jeronim de Rada, i cilli, per posë shkrimesh të panumer propagandet e raset shkrou edhe 13 vepra me randsí per gjúhë e çashtë komtare; P. Anton Santori O.F.M. qí shkrou trí vepra shqyp e shum vjerrsha satirike; Zef Serembe; Zef Schirò, qí shkrou 9 vepra me randsí e shum shkrime raset; Zef Camarda etj.²¹

Prej vj. 1900 deri në vj. 1912, prá mbrenda 12 vjetve, gjëjm 59 vepra e 16 auktorë. Dahan në shëj sidomos:

P. Gjergj Fishta O.F.M., qí në ket kohë shkruen: «Lahuta e Malsís» 1905; «Anxat e Pamant» 1907; «Pika voeset» 1909 etj., deri në ditë të sotshme gjithsejt 17 vepra, të gjitha shqyp e plot ndiesí komtare.

Lutgj Gurakuqi, i cilli tan dashnín per atdhë e kalon të rít e vet në mërgim, s' lén të perkohshme pá e mbushë me artikuj të vet s' lǎn shoqni shqyptarësh pá njërë pjesë edhe ai shkruen 6 vepra të ndryshme.

D. Ndoc Nikaj, i cilli lilloi qysh në vj. 1888 me i dhǎnë komit libra shqyp. Shkrou shum nder te perkohshme e fletre; deri në ditë sotçme ká shkruë 27 vepra me subjekt të ndryshem.

D. Ndrë Mjedja, i cili u muer fort me gjuhë e shkrou shum libra shkollet e libra të pershpirtshem; deri në ket vjetë ká shkruë 12 vepra.

P. Anton M. Xanoni S.J. i cili, si puntuer i palodshem i gjuhës shqype, shkrou mǎ se 14 vepra e la shum dorshkrime.

P. Shtjefen K. Gjeçov O.F.M. i cili qysh në të rí të vet u vû me mledhë prej gojës së popullit shka áisht mǎ të bukur në gjuhë e nder doke t' ona; shkrou shum në të perkohshmen «Albania» e na la 7 vepra të ndryshme, nder të cillat edhe «Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit».

Posë ktyne në ket kohë dahen në shêj porsí shkrimtarë të mirë neper të perkohshme e fletore: P. Pashk Bardhi, O.F.M., Hilë Mosi, Filip Shiroka, Mati Logoreci, Gasper Merturi, P. Anton Buseti S.J., Kolë Thaçi etj.

Prej vj. 1912 deri në vj. 1933 shkrimtarët shtohen e pûnojn per herë e mǎ me zéll. Kemi mrrjtë me njehë 304 vepra të ndryshme e 69 auktorë.

Kan një randsí të posaçme në ket kohë:

Dr. Terenc Tocci per artikuj, qí shkruen e per 8 vepra qí boton;

P. Vinçenc Prennushi O.F.M. per artikuj të panumer e per 20 vepra të ndryshme.

P. Fulvio Cordignano S.J. qí shkruen mbí shum çashtje të ndryshme e nja dy libra.

P. Ndoc Saraçi S.J. i cili boton 13 libra shkolle.

Karl Gurakuqi, qí shkruen në shum të perkohshme e fletore e perkthen mirë 8 vepra të ndryshme.

Ernest Koliqi, i cili tuj bashkpûnue nder gjithfarë të perkohshmesh, mrrín me fitue një stil të riedhshem e elegant e shkruen vetë e perkthen gjithsejt trí vepra.

Per mǎ teper dahen në shêj gjatë ksajë kohe per botime të ndryshme e per artikuj me randsí: P. Ambroz Marlaskaj O.F.M., Gasper Mikeli, P. Anton Harapi O.F.M., Gasper Beltoja, D. Iazer Shantoja, P. Marin Sirdani O.F.M., Zef M. Harapi, P. Justin Rrota O.F.M., Kolë Kamsi, D. Gasper Gurakuqi, D. Lekë Sirdani etj.

Prej ktej mund të shifet, se para vjetës 1800 gjuhë e jonë s' kishte me pasë asnjí veper shqype, po t'u hiqshin shkrimtarët katolikë deri n' at kohë d.m.th. D. Gjon Buzuku 1555, D. Fran Bardhi 1635, D. Pjeter Budi 1664, Emz. Pjeter Bogdani 1685, Auktorët françeskaj, qí kemi permendë, tuj folë mbí shkolla, Kuvendi i Arbenit 1706, Kazazi 1743 si edhe auktorët jashta Shqypnië d.m.th. D. Lukë Matranga 1592, Nil Catalani 1694, Nikoll Figlia 1736, D. Jul Variboba 1762, Teodor Cavallioti 1770 etj. të cillët i ngrehin një monument të pamort gjuhës s'onë.

Letratyra e jonë mandej s' kishte me e pasë as të katerten pjesë, per mos me e çue krejt pa gjǎ, të materjalit e të perparimit, qí ká sot, po t'u hiqshin 460 vepra të njehuna deri tash, pá mǎrrë perpara sysh të perkohshmet, e po t' u perjashtoshin 136 shkrimtarë katolikë, prej të cillve kjenë asish, qí moren pjesë në Kongres të Monastirit (1908) e në Komisjon letrár të vj. 1916.

Të perkohshmet e fletoret.

Nji mjet tjetër per me e shtypë e me e perhapë kulturen kristjane e sidomos per me e edukue popullin e me e bǎ t' aftë per independencë kjenë të perkohshmet e fletoret, qí duelen kohë mbas kohe.

Në vj. 1891 nisi m' u botue në shtypshkrojen e Zojës së Paperlyeme prej Jezuitve e perkohshmja fetare „*Elçija e Zëmërs së Krishtit*“, qí njehet mǎ e vjetra nder kto ána. Në vj. 1908 i kje shtue edhe pjesa letrare, në të cillen pûnoi mǎ e forti P. Anton M. Xanoni S.J. Në vj. 1914 kje dá dysh: pjesa fetare me émen „*Lajmtari i Zëmërs së Krishtit*“, e pjesa letrare-kulturare nen émen „*Perparimi*“, qí ngjati deri në vj. 1916.

Në vj. 1912 xû m' nder françeskaj një e perkohshme tjetër fetare „*Zëni i Shna Ndout*“, qí permban edhe shum shkrime të bukura letrare.

Në vj. 1912 nen drejtim të G. Gjerj Fishtës O.F.M. fillon m' u botue e perkohshmja letrare-kulturale „*Hylli i Djalës*“, qí mbas sǎ vujtjesh ende vijon i pelqyem e i çmuem prej mbarë popullit shqypnár si edhe prej të huajësh.

Neper të i u lshue kushtimi gjith shqyphtarve per lavrim të gjühës e per kerkim të drejtave të veta.

Në vj. 1917 nen drejtim të D. Ndrë Zadëjës duel në Shkodër per tri vjet e perkohshmja fetare „*Zoja e Shkodërs*“.

Në vj. 1921 nen drejtim të Z. Gasper Mikelit duel në Shkodër e perkohshmja arsimore „*Shkolla e re*“, qi mâ vonë nen tjerë emna kje bâ gadi si organ i Ministris s' Arsimit.

Në vj. 1929 porsî organ i Shoqnîs L.E.K.A. të drejtueme prej Jezuitsh duel e perkohshmja letrare-kulturale „*L.E.K.A.*“ fort e çmueme prej popullit.

Katolikët s' kjenë kursye me e çue zânin edhe jashta Shqypnijs. Jânë per t' u permendë posaçe Italo-Shqyptarët si edhe shkrimtarët t' onë mâ të mirët, qi bashkpûnuen në „*Albania*“ të Bruxelles.

Në vj. 1887, drejtue prej Jeronim de Rada, duel e perkohshmja „*Fiamuri i Arbërit*“, qi ngjati 4 vjet.

Në vj. 1887, drejtue prej Franc. Stassi Petta e Zef Schirò, kje botue e perkohshmja muejore „*Arbri i ril.*“

Në vj. 1896 nen drejtim t'Antonio Argondizzo duel fletorja „*Ili i Arbreshëve*“.

Në vj. 1897 duel per pak kohë „*L'Albania letteraria*“ drejtue prej disâ djelmoçash italo-shqyptarë.

Në vj. 1897-1924 del, „*La nazione albanese*“, e perkohshme politike-letrare-kulturale dyjavshe, e drejtueme prej Anselm Lorecchio.

Në vj. 1907 në Trieshtë nisë m' u botue per do kohë e perkohshmja „*Dashamiri*“ nen drejtim të Mati Logoreci.²²

Posë të perkohshmeve jânë edhe fletoret, qi në mndyrë mâ t' ardhshme e mâ popullore influencojn me i fuqi magnenetike n' opinjon publik.

Në vj. 1910 duel në Shkodër fletorja „*Bashkimi*“ qi kje thirrë edhe „*Koba*“ e vijoi deri në vj. 1913; mandej ndrroi ëmen e kje quejtë „*Besa shqyptare*“ qi qindroi deri në vj. 1924 nen drejtim të Don Ndoc Nikaj. Pat kundërshtime të mdhaja kjo fletore

edhe prej shqyphtarve, por trimnisht luftoi per independencë t' onë.

Në vj. 1913 Dr. Terenc Tocci botoi fletoren „*Tarabashi*“ në dy perioda të ndryshme.

Kah mbarimi i vj. 1916 nen drejtim të P. Gjergj Fishtës O.F.M. duel fletorja „*Posta e Shqypnis*“, në të cillen posë pjesës politike, mund të gjëjë nieri shum copa të bukura letratytet shqype.

Në vj. 1923 del fletorja „*Ora e Maleve*“ nen drejtim të grupit me at ëmen.

Shoqnî.

Idealistat e komit, katolikët e njimendte, kuptojshin mirfillit, se asnji hap i organizuem s'mund të bâhej, se asnji program s'mund të zbatohej pâ dashnî e pâ lidhnî me njani-tjetrin. Prandej nisen m' u qandmue si civila, si klër per rreth ndoi nieri mâ në shëj e mâ me auktoritet e kshtû dora-doras u formuen edhe shoqnî të ket vendin t'onë.

Tuj kënë se kultura mërr haptë e s'mund të pershîhet veç, me i program, kshtû shoqnî kjenë formue me programe të ndryshme per nji qellim të vetun, qi kje kultura e perparimi i vendit.

Në vj. 1899 Emzot Prengë Doçi, Abat i Mirditës, themeloi shoqnî „*Bashkimi*“ me program letrar. Pat pershî nierzt mâ të zott në lâinë letrare e asajë do t'i dihet alfabeti i sotçem. Botoi shum libra shqyp, nder të cillët edhe „*Fjalori i ri*“. Entuzjazmoi e nziu edhe tjerët shqyptarë, tuj shprehë nder shkrime të ndryshme dashnîin per atdhë e per independencë. Qysh prej vj. 1900 pat gadi të thuesh si organ të vetin nji kalendâr të pervjetshem fort të bukur, me ëmen „*Shqypari*“, të cillin e botoi per tri vjet. kje çmue prej të guth atdhetarve të vertetë e kje perfaqsus në Kongres të Monastirit.

Në vj. 1901 shumica e Ipeshkvive, në bashkpûnim me Z. Don Mdre Mjeda, ngrehen shoqnî „*Agimi*“ eane kje me program letrar. Ndoq nji alfabet në veti e shqyp disâ liron. U dha shkas shum çastjeve gjësore, kshu qi erdhen tuj u caktue rregullat mâ mirë. Kje perfaqsus edhe kjo në Kongres të Monastirit.

Në vj. 1907 kje ngjehë nder Jezuit nji shoqnî e thirrur „*Vepra Pijore*“ me qellim me gjetë mjetet

per botim të librave shqyp. I vjefti shumë letratyres shqype me më se 40 vepra të ndryshme.

Në vj. 1911 me 22 Kallnduer prej një grupi idealistash katolikë kje formue një shoqni tjetër letrare me emen, „*Klubi Gjilba shqype*“. Nziti me kujdes shkrimtarët e ri për kahë lavrimi i gjuhës e me shpenzime të veta botoi edhe ndoi liber.

Në vj. 1924 për me shue sidomos analfabetizmin në vend t' onë kje formue shoqni „*Lidbja e msuesave katolikë*“ qj s' pat jetë të gjatë.

Në vj. 1929 prej ish-xânsave të shkollës së Jezuitve kje ngrehë shoqni L.E.K.A. me program letrâr-kulturâr, qj vijon në botim t' organit të vet të permuejshem „*Leka*“.

Të gjitha këto shoqni kan pasë për program më fort letratyren e arsimit.

Në vj. 1914 kûr levizjet politike vishin tuj u egersue përherë e më fort e shumkush dishrote me i a njëjtë thojt Shqypnîs, kje formue prej disâ djelmoçash katolikë, entuzjasta për atdhë, shoqni „*Nji tubë djelmoçash shkodranë*“, qj nziti shpesh popullin nder rasa të ndryshme me metinga e ligjirata për me lypë të drejtat e veta. Vijoi der në vj. 1921.

Në vj. 1918 na themelohet në Shkodër shoqni „*Rozafat*“ me program muziko-hartistik; qj mriti me trajtue një orkester e në vj. 1923 organixoi më të parën ekspozitë pikturash komtare.

Në vj. 1919 prej do djelmoçash idealista kje themelue shoqni „*Bogdani*“ me program muziko-dramatik. Formoi një nder bandat më të plotsuemet e Shkodërs e çfaqti me zotsi të rallë drama gjithfarësh. Në salon të shoqnîs kjenë mbajtë disâ heresh edhe konferenca çashtjesh shoqnore si edhe akademî.

Mbasi na râ rasa me folë permbi shoqni, qj u moren me muzikë, nuk âsht jashta vendit me çekë, se ky hart muer shkas në Shqypnî të verit e u zhvillue vetun prej elementit katolik.

P. Tomë Marcozzi de Rapino O.F.M. kje më i pari qj formoi në Shkodër një bandë private (muzikore).

Në vj. 1882 n' oborr të Kishës Kathedrale ushtuen për të parën herë burijat, qj kjenë lajmtaret e kohve më të mira, qj do të vishin për Shqypnî.

Kush mundet me i a paraqitë vedit gzinim, qj ndieu n'at rasë populli katolik, njai popull, qj ndrydhë nën robni, s' kishte pse kndote?

Ajo bandë për të gjith të dielle e për të gjith kremte nisi me knaqë gjithkëndin e kje një fuqi e rë, qj e shtyni popullin kahë lavrimi i harut të muzikës, pse qysh atëherë nisin në Shkodër me e çmue muziken e pûnueme mbas hartit.

Në vj. 1917 P. Martin Gjoka O.F.M. mriti me formue në Shkodër më të plotsuemen orkester e më të mirën kangtori në vend t' onë me afer 90 veglash muzikore; e shi ky muziktâr në vj. 1922 me xâsa të vogël shkollët ngrehi një bandë complete me 42 vegla e me uniformë, një pûnë kjo qj bindi mbarë popullin e Shkodërs, qj e shikjote me simpatî. Kjo bandë vijoi deri në vj. 1924. Rishtas kje ngrehë në vj. 1930 e në konkurs bandistik-teatruer, qj kje bân në Tiranë prej Ministris s' Arsimit me 8 X-1930, fitoi çmimin e parë.

Vepra tjera kulture.

Të huejët, sâ herë kan pasë rasë me ardhë në Shqypnî, jo vetem në kohë të pushtimit otoman por edhe nder dit t'ona, kan vû oroe me ande nder katolikë ndertesë e kishë të ndertueme mbas arkitekture. Të thuesh vetem kto kan tregue të prirunt kah bukuria e kah estetika e i kan lânë nderë vendit.

Mjeshtrit e ndryshme, prej të cilëve, gjithkush e din, se rriedhë përparimi ekonomik i vendit, kjenë përfutue e lavrue posaçë prej elementit katolik. Nder ta kë gjetë farmacistat, terapistët, kundrtarët, marangona, farketarë, argjentarë, llashtarë, tregtarë, fotograf e sâ e sâ mjeshtër tjera të kryeme me aftsi e shije.

Qysh në vj. 1903 (2) hulla pat ngrehë në Shkodër një shkollë mështërish, qj kje ndiekë prej shumë katolikësh, qj botjanë mjeshtër të plotsuem në degët e vet seicilli.

Nder në mardiej u marto me çmue archeologin e me i a ruajtë atdheut vetersit e mija vjetve.

Jezuitt për zhvillim të msimeve qysh ndër vjetër më të parat e shkollave të veta paten formuar një gabimet fiziket e sidomos një muzium, që për shumicë të sendeve të mledhuna mund të njëhet ende më i bukuri e më e rregulluemi në Shqipëri. — Françeskajt në tjetren anë, posë muzeut të vogël në këto vjetër e mbrane mrritjen me themelue një farë pinakoteket me bukur do piktura të rralla e të vjetra. Por ai që e pat më për zëmër archeologin e vendit t' onë kje pë dyshim i njoftuni P. Shtjefen K. Gjeçov O.F.M., i cili qysh ndër vjetër më të parat e zyres së vet kje mundue me kerkue vetë e me nritë edhe tjerët për me i ruajtë e me i mledhë vjetërsit e vendit. Shkrou sá heresh mbi ket subjekt e shtyni deri funksionarët e naltë të Shtetit me formue komisione të ndryshme për ket qëllim; pënë kjo që tregon një ndiesi fort delikate për përparim të vendit.

Veprat filantropike.

Najao ndiesi e ambel, që zhdakë egoizmin, tuj na perkulë para mjerimeve të vllazenve t' onë pë ndryshim besimi, nuk është fjeshtë prej natyret, por prej besimit kristjan, që e shprehë me fjalën *charitas*. Ky virtyt na nallon para mbarë njerzimit porsí idealista të njëmendtë. Bota liberale e ndien influksin e kësaj vepers vigane, por s' do me e njoftë kavin, prandej e pagzon me fjalën filantropi.

Katolicizmi diji me përftue në mndyrë të ndryshme kso veprash filantropike, që gjithmonë do të kujtohen me evarí.

Në vj. 1885 Jezuitt për me u vijtë edhe atyne që s'mujshin me ndiekë shkollën, themeluen një „Oratorium“, kú fmit e të mdhajt posë argtimit kishin edhe ndoi msim fetár. Vioi për bukur do vjet e kje ndiekë prej shumkúj.

Në vj. 1889 kje themelue prap ndër Jezuit shoqëria bãmirse „*Frëthi i Sh'Jozefit*“, që kishte për program me mledhë lmoshë e me u pague qirán të vorfenve. Vioi deri në vj. 1916 e dau një lmoshë kund 50000 K.

Në vj. 1890 (?) me ndimë të mbretnis Austro-Hungare kje çilë në Shkodër një smutore, kú sherbyen me durim e dashnri të jashtzakonshme Motrat Vingencjane ase Motrat e Mshirës. Aty kje mjekue gjithkushí pë ndryshim besimi. Vioi deri në vj. 1918.

Në vj. 1898 a ndoi vjetë përpara, gjëjm në Kallmet një „*Ambulatorium*“, të mbajtur prej Motrave të Mshirës, kú mjekohej katundarija e mërreshin baret pë parë. Kto Mungesha edhe sot sherbejn në smutore të Shtetit në Shkodër.

Në vj. 1897 në kuvend të françeskajve kje themelue „*Buka e Shna Ndout*“, një veper bãmirsije, që mund të thirret më e frytshmja në vend t' onë. Për gjith të Martë u dahet buka pë ndryshim besimi më se 200 vetve; u epet lmoshë muejore sá familjeve të vorfna e teren sá lot. Lmosha, që mledhë e shpërdán për gjith vjetë, është përnjimend e bindshme, pse kapet në 24-25000 Krs. Jashta kësaj sume prej vj. 1902 e deri në vj. 1912 u kje dhënë ndër shkolla të fretenve më se 60 të vorfenve bukë, minester e tesha.

Në vj. 1905 (?) Motrat Salesjane i sollën syt kah më të mjeruemt e popullit, kah pleqt e plakat e mbetuna e të vorfna e me një durim e me një dashnri heroike i mblodhen në një shpí, që kje thirrë „*Streba e pleque*“. E mbajten ket veper të mshirshme deri në vj. 1916 atëherë d.m.th. kúr për rrethana politike ju u desht me e lënë Shkodrën; e vijuen at veper për trí vjet rresht Motrat Stigmatine.

Në vj. 1907 Motrat Salesjane çilin me ndimë t' Italis një orfanotrof për varza jetime, tuj i edukue kah zëmra, kah mendja e kah jetë. Ky orfanotrof vijoi deri me 24 Prill të kësaj vjete.

Shi në ket vjetë (1907) edhe Schulbrüder-t me ndimë t'Austro-Hungaris hapen një orfanotrof për djelm, të cillin e mbajten fort mirë deri në vj. 1916.

Në vj. 1914 Motrat Salesjane i gjëjm se sherbejn në smutoren „*Iolanda*“, të hapun prej Italis. E mbas një pushimit të gjatë prap e vijojn ket veper bãmirsije ç' prej vj. 1928 e tjetër.

Në vj. 1920 kje hapë prej Etenve Jezuit „*Orfanotrofi i Zëmës së Krishtit*“ për djelm, veper që gzoí deri në Prill të kësaj vjete afër 40 jetimash.

Në vj. 1924 nisi një tjetër veper bãmirsije. N'at vend kú mbretnor mjerimi e ankimi d.m.th. në burg të Shkodërs, kje shtí një treze drite, një shkas pagë e dashnri. Françeskajt e kan marrë mbi vete me u sherbye atyne të shkretve, e posë kujdesit fetár, ndër të kremet më të mdhát nper të nritun të atyne mllihen lmoshë, që shpesh kapen deri në

3000 Krs. e të burgosurve pa ndryshim besimi u dahet bukë, djathë, voe, duhan, petka etj.

Misjoni

Gjithshka u permend deri ktu është fryti i njasajë detyrës shpirtnore, qi i vën feja setcillit katolik me e çpallë të verteten, më e ndiekë e me e mprojtë; por populli shqyptar s'kishte mujtë me qindrue në ket detyrë, as s'ishte mbajtë i ndershem, i thyeshem e idealist mos t' i kishte ndëjë gadi meshtarija neper misjone, tuj i msue e tuj i drejtue.

Franceskani s'i u dë popullit shqyptar per 700 vjet.

Kur mbas pushtimit otoman franceskanit i kjenë rrenue kuvendet e kishët e i kjenë hiekë mjetet e rmesës e erdh tuj u ligshtue fuqish d.m.th. pakue personali, ajo kohë kje mē e mnershmja per vend t'onë.

Në vj. 1634 vinë frenen prej Italijs e bashkpunojn me ata pak frenen, qi kishin mbetë në Shqypni. Kta e kerkojn shqyptarin nder male të thepisuna e nder fusha. Msojn, predikojn, i mbajn gjallë ndiesit bujare të racës, pshtojn të prirunt kah kultura, gatojn zëmrat per lirë. Rrahen njimend, burgosen e mbyten, por nuk ligshtohen, nuk thehen. Me dashtn e tuj bā mirë mrrijn me fitue deri simpatin e anmiqve, e tuj pshtue besimin katolik, pshtojn idealistin shqyptar.

Kjo çetë misjonarësh vijon deri nder dit t'ona. Prep meshtarija nder predke, nder shkrime e nder msime kerkon me e bā popullin leal, me ndergjegje e me karakter e jo fanatik.

Në vj. 1883 e mē vonë në vj. 1888 edhe Jezuitit fillojn me zhvillue një program të ri per dobë të popullit. Sajojn misjonet shetitse, qi shkuen gjithkund tuj bā mirë, tuj i avitë zëmrat me zëmra, tuj pajtue gjaqet, tuj zhdukë poshtersit, tuj çile shtiqe kahë drita e njimendshme e kahë kultura.

*
* *

Në një studim kaq të vogel, tuj mos mujtë me i paraqitë faktet nder intime të veta, jemi të sugurtë se janë lënë jashtë shumë vepra, qi kishin me e ndritë mē teper aktivitetin e elementit katolik në

Shqypni per kah kultura; por kaq të mjaftojë. Neper rreshtim të datave, si në një film kē m' u pā tendenca e perhershme e katolikut kah perparimi, veprimi i tij i ndryshem nder kohë e nder rrethanë fort të vshtira e negative e njherit dashtnija e tij për atdhë e per pamvarsi.

* * *

* Në vjeten 1923 kjo shoqni hapi në Shkodër të paren ekspozitë kolektive të pikturës në Shqipni me veprat e piktoreve Kolë Idromeno (1860-1939), Ndoc Martin Camaj nga Dukagjini (1880-1916), Simon Rrota (1887-1961), Lajde Muzhani, Zel Kolombi (1907-1949) etj. Piktori Camaj asht ma i talentuemi i të gjithëve. Ka vdekë nga t.b.c. në Paris. (Shenim i editorit)

** Kje formue në vjeten 1878. (Shenim i editorit)

*** Per herë të parë në Shqipni Cinematografi u vu në Kolegjen e Sh'Francesk Saverit në Shkodër në vjeten 1912 nga Al Shtjefen Zadrima S.J., (shih "Kongregacioni i Zojës Nuncjatë rrokull pesdhet vjetve" Shkodër, Shtypshkroja e Zojës së Paperlyerne, 1920, f. 25) e ma vonë (Shtatuer 1912) nga Kolë Idromeno në shtëpinë e vet, natyrist kinema pa zā. (Shenim i editorit).

Shenime:

- 1 *Marinus Barletius*. — *Historia de Vita et Gestis Scanderbegi, Epirotarum Principis* (impressum Romae per B.V.).
- 2 *Giuseppe Gelcich*, — *La Zedda e Dinastia dei Baiscidi*. — Spalato 1899-1906 vr. Hylli i Dritës 1921 fq. 171.
- 3 Vr. Hylli i Dritës vj. 1921 fq. 341.
- 4 *Orbis Seraphicus*, PP. Marcellinus a Civita et Theophilus Domenichelli O.F.M. De Miss. Fr. Minorum Tom. II C. II, n. 49 Quaracchi MCCCXXXVI.
- 5 Ibidem Nr. 49.
- 6 *Orbis Seraphicus* T. II. C. II. n. 50.
- 7 Ibidem C. IV n. 126-127.
- 8 Mons. Spila. — *Memorie storiche*, tom II, p. 374, n.22. *Orbis Seraph.* Tom. II. C. I, n. 25.
- 9 Vr. Hylli i Dritës vj. 1931, n. 4, fq. 218.
- 10 Vr. *Kolegja Saveriane* nder 50 vjet. — Shkodër 1928 fq. 27.
- 11 *Vro Anacleta Franciscana* Tom. I, fq. 338.

12 Kjo veper çeket n' Anacî. Franc. Tom. I, fq. 352 por pà shênjue as gurren, as daten, as vendin, kô mund të gjindet.

13 Vro. „Diturija“ — Tiranë 1927, n. XXII, fq. 336.

14 Vro. „Hylli i Dritës“ vj. 1931, n. IV, fq. 219 e sidomos veprën „Popolo, Lingua etj.“ të Prof. P. Gaetano Petrotta fq. 104, në të cilën flet gjatë edhe mbi fjaluer.

15 Ibidem fq. 220.

16 Biografia Serafica v. e ç. sec. VI. fq. 818.

Per ket veper kshut shkruen P. L. Rosat („Contributi alla Storia della Provincia di Trento. I Missionari in Albania pag. 231, n. 5); Lucubavit, et S. C. de Prop. Fide imprimendum obtulit *manuale* quoddam duarum linguarum ad usum praedictarum (Clementinarum in Regno Servia) Missionum. Needum (an. 1765) tamen fuit praelo commissum. Scriptum autem fuit ante annum 1752, quo idem Pater in Provinciam hanc rediit.“

17 P. L. de Martino O.F.M. „L' Arpa“ fq. 25, tuj i shkruen nji letrarit të madh e dijetarit në zâ t' asajë kohe, ndër tjera i thotë:

Ammirator qua venni d'Albania,

E una piena di gioia il cor m'inonda;

Ma fra tanto splendor he ti circonda

Non obliar t'antica patria mia.

Serva ella giace e di catene avvinta

L'indomita Eroina, e ognor si strugge

Di lacrime e sospir, senza conforto.

In man la spada d'atro sangue tinta

L'ombra di Skanderberg sdegnosa rugge:

Ah ingrata Europa... è tua la colpa e il torto!

28 Giugno 1872.

18 „Perparim“ vj. 1915, fq. 113, 131, 145.

19 *Mrizi i Zânave* — Shkodër 1924 fq. 16.

20 *Narodna Enciklopedija S. Z.* — Zagreb 1929 vr. *Hylli i Dritës*, vj. 1930 fq. 38-39.

21 Në ket studim te vogel, tuj dashtë me paraqitë më fort veprat e katolikve të perftueme mbrenda Shqypnije, s' po mund të shtyhen me folë më gjatë permbl shkrimtarët e palodhshem italo-shqyptarë; por per njoftime më të plotsueme mjafton me shênjue veprën e Prof. Gaetano Petrotta "Popolo, Lingua e Letteratura Albanese" — Palermo 1931.

22 Prof. Gaetano Petrotta. — Popolo, lingua ecc. Palermo 1931 - p. III. d) stampa periodica.

23 Vro „Kolegja Saverjane“ - Shkodër 1928, fq. 46.



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

ORGANIZATA "BASHKIMI SHQIPTAR"

LUFTETARE E VENDOSUR KUNDËR KOMUNIZMIT

Dëshira e brezave të rinj e të vjetër për të njohur nga afer jetën e martirëve të kombit, është një gjë aq fisnike sa është detyrë e domosdoshme e atyre që përjetuan së bashku me ta, të pasqyrojnë me vertetësi realitetin që kaluan, megjithëse historia pa tjetër do të bëjë punën e sajë duke i dhënë çdonjerit vendin që i takon.

Brezat e rinj duan të njohin martirët tonë jo vetëm nepermjet rolit e vendit që ata zënë në histori, por edhe si njerëz të gjallë, ashtu siç qenë në jetë. Duan të dijnë se si punuan për këtë popull për ta librue nga diktatura komuniste, si kaluan nëpër tortura, qëndrimin e tyre heroik para presioneve fizike e psikologjike që iu bë nga xhelatët e diktaturës në menyrën më çnjerzore dhe në fund edhe si dhanë jetën e tyre në menyrë heroike, duke treguar vehten se para çashtjes kombëtare jeta nuk llogaritet fare. Dëshira për të njohur këta martirë, nuk është çeshtje sentimentale dhe as një kureshtje, por diçka më e rëndësishme, pse këta martirë me shembullin e tyre të gjallë, u shndëruan në burim force të pashtershme dhe pregaditën brezat e ardhëshëm fizikisht e moralisht t'i bëjnë ballë me vetmohim bishës komuniste Tito-Stalino-Enveriane.

Por për të ia aritur në një farë mase këtij qëllimi, megjithë vishtirsitë e shumta e të gjithanëshme, koha e gjatë që ka kaluar, mungesa e dokumentacionit përkatës të cilin nga terrori i kuq kemi qenë të detyruar ta zhdukim; prap se prap falë kujtesës dhe ndihmës së bashkohësve, do të mundohemi të kryejmë këtë detyrë mjaft të vështirë që kemi ndaj bashkëlufëtareve tonë të paharruar, për të ngritë këta martirë që ranë nga thundra shtypëse e komunizmit mbi pedestalin e kujtimit, megjithëse fatkeqësisht varret e tyre qëndrojnë nën mbulesën e sekretit e të padijtun, ndoshta të mbuluara nga ferra ku vetëm zogjët endacakë u thurin me cicërimat e tyre lavdi përjetë; si dhe për të nxjerrë atë të vertetë që diktatura me këtyshët e vet e me kalemxhijtë rrenacakë e bojatisi dhe e deformoi.

Ishte pikërisht viti 1945, vit tensionesh, masash e kundramasash, veprimesh e kundraveprimesh, reprezaljesh e arrestimesh, shpronësimesh e grabitjesh, torturash e pushkatimesh, hakmarrjesh e larje hesapesh me gjithata që guxoishin me folë apo me shprehë ndoj mendim kundra veprimeve të paligjësime të qeverisë, apo me shfaqun pikpamjet e tyre demokratike. Diktatura Enveriane e mburjtun me mësimet famëkeqe të Serbëve të Dushan Mugoshës dhe Miladin Popoviçit, nuk mund të qëndronte në këmbë pa terror e gjakderdhje, sepse nuk i kishte rrënjët në popull sikurse pretendonte. Populli shqiptar ishte i lidhur me fenë e ishte e pamundur që jo vetëm të përqafonte, por as të pranonte një ideologji të pafë. Pra në rrethanat të tilla politike, shoqërore e shpirtërore në Shkodrën e lashtë 2500 vjeçare, qytet ku janë zhvilluar ngjarje të rëndësishme historike e politike, dhe gadi çdo kulturë e lashtë ka lënë gjurmët e sajë, në Shkodrën ku ishin përballuar me sa sakrificat invazorët e vjetër e të rinj si: Turku, Serbi, Malazezi, Italiani e të tjerë; disa studentë klerikë katolikë të Seminarit Jezuit, që në Dhëtorin e vitit 1944, kishin fillue të hidhëshin shkëndijat e para për një organizim të nevojshëm e të domosdoshëm, pasi po shihej kjarë qëllimi e veprimi i partisë që erdhi në pushtet, e cila me zhdukjen e një diktature të nazifashizmit, po vendoste diktaturën e proletariatit, që nuk ishte gjë tjetër veçse një diktaturë ruse, që kishte për qëllim të çkombëtarizojë, të shpronësojë e të denatyrojë popullin tonë dhe nënërit të zhdukë fë e nderë.

Në këtë situatë me 1 Maj 1945 në Seminarin Jezuit të Shkodrës, u krijua organizata "Bashkimi Shqiptar" e kryesuar nga seminaristi Mark Çuni. Bëjshin pjesë në këtë organizatë, përveç disa seminaristave edhe shumë të maj intelektual, studenta, nxënës të shkollave të mesme, ku u grumbulluan edhe shumë ushtarakë, puntorë e fshatarë. Si organizatë kishte për qëllim kryesor të përfshinte në punën e sajë edhe grupe të tjerë me pikpamje të njëjta politike që ishin në opozitë me diktaturën komuniste dhe kishin të njëjtat pikpamje:

luftë komunizmit dhe vendosjen e një regjimi me të vetetë demokratik në vendin tonë. Një bashkim i tillë u arrit me grupin "Demokristjan", të kryesuar nga Dr. At Gjon Shllaku i Urdhit Françeskan, grup që u krijua në Korrik 1945, që edhe ky kishte në përbërjen e tij elementë intelektual, nacionalist, studentë, etj.

Duhet theksuar pra se tashti Organizata Bashkimi Shqiptar kishte rritë numrin e sajë me ish studentë të shkollave të mesme e intelektualë të mirëfilltë që së bashku me klerikë të ndershëm nuk kishin kurrfarë pretendimi për poste të larta e kolltuqe qeveritare, por po rrezikojshin vehten e rinisë e tyre për hirë të kauzes së shëjtë të lirisë e demokracisë. Programi politik ishte jo luftë e armatosur për gjakderdhje si e paraqiste qeverija komuniste, por për të pregaditur njerëzit intelektualisht e shpirtërisht se kush ishte komunizmi e ideologjia e tij dhe kush ishte udhëheqëja me veprimet e saja, sepse po kalojshim nga një diktaturë e huej, nën një diktaturë edhe më gjakpirëse, që ishte edhe kjo plotësisht e huej; sepse partia komuniste shqipëtare ishte pjellë e sllavëve e kryesisht e jugosllavëve, të cillët sillleshin në Shqipëri si në shtëpinë e tyre, ku një poet popullor në at kohë e pat cilsue në këte menyre:

Enver – Koçi ka pa andërr

Shqipërinë nuse e Titon dhandër

N' një shpi t'bukur n' një shpi t' gjanë

Prej Beogradit der' n'Tiranë.

Pra në këto kushte doli e domosdoshme lufta direkte kundra pushtetit në fuqi, duke perdonur format e ndryshme të propogandës si bisedat, konferencat, agjitacionin me popullsinë e ndershme në qytet e fshat. Përpilimi dhe shpërndarja e trakteve në popull me përmbajtjekombëtare, antikomuniste dhe antisllave, si dhe me që do të shkojshim drejtë zgjedhjeve parlamentare, iu dha rëndësi e veçantë këtij problemi për të bindur popullin që të mos votonte për Frontin, me që kjo organizatë nuk ishte gjë tjetër veçse një pjellë e partisë komuniste që nën masken e tij të gëniente popullin dhe ajo që ishte më e rëndësishme të bojkotoheshin këto zgjedhje. Gjatë kësaj periudhe në traktet që iu drejtoheshin mbarë popullit, në mes të tjerave u thonte: "Partia Komuniste ka tradhtue popullin.

Mos gabo me votue për bishen komuniste; mos votoni për Frontin, etj.....Rroftë Shqipërija e pastër, e ndershme dhe e madhe".

Në planin organizativ u punua me një koncept realist, ku në bazë grupeve të vogla si në qytet ashtu dhe në fshatra, sidomos në ata të veriut të zhvillohesh aktiviteti në menyren sa më ilegale, si dhe në bazë të programit të shtrihesh veprimi në të kater anët e vendit; gjithashtu në detyrat kryesore doli që të bashkëpunohesh me grupin e Rezistencës dhe Organizaten "Bashkimi Kombëtar" në Tiranë, bashkëpunim i cili dha rezultat mjaft pozitiv, ku u shkëmbyen pikpamje, u morën trakte e programe për të bashkërenduar punën në një plan sa më të gjërë. Për të bërë të njohur edhe në arenën nderkombëtare këte aktivitet, u hartuan memorandume dhe peticione (ku vlen për t'u theksuar ai i Prof. Gjellosh Lulit në gjuhën frenge), që iu dorëzuan misioneve aleate që gjindeshin në Tiranë në atë kohë, duke kërkuar ndihmëm e nderhyrjen e tyre në problemin shqiptar që po shkonte drejt greminës nga qeveria komuniste.

Në situatën e krijuar është për tu çmuar shumë puna edukative me frymë kombëtare e fetare që bënë me studentët e Seminarit dhe të Kolegjes Saverjane e të tjerë, drejtuesit e Kuvendit Jezuit të Shkodrës At Daniel Dajani-Rektor i Kuvendit dhe At Gjon Fausti-nenprovincial. Këta jo se drejtuan organizatën "Bashkimi Shqiptar" (siç u mundua ta paraqesi më vonë dhe r'i bëjnë përgjegjës regjimi i E. Hoxhës), por si personalitete me një edukatë të lartë teologjike, filozofike e shkencore të cillët pregaditën këte gjeneratë me ndjenja të zjarra t'atdhedashurisë.

Ndërsa Dr. At Gjon Shllaku, një personalitet me një kulturë të gjërë fetare e shkencore dhe me ndjenja të forta kombëtare, i lauroi në Francë dhe Belgjikë në vitin 1938; me tu kthyer në atdhe, në vitin 1939 detyrohet për tu larguar në Jugosllavi pasi ndiqet nga fashistët italian për pikpamjet e tija antifashiste. Me vonë kthehet në Shqipëri pasi nderhynë Provincin e Urdhit Françeskan në Shkodër. At Shllaku formoi Grupin Demokristjan në Korrik 1945, grup i cili ishte pjesë e pandarë e Bashkimit Shqiptar. Si një demokrat i vetetë punon pa u lodhur me rininë e popullin, duke mësuar e drejtuar si si me nxitur atdheun nga sistemi

totalitar në fuqi. Në ato pak mbledhje që pata rastin të bëj me te kam mësuar shumë prej tij dhe me kulturën e gjerë që zotëronte, kishte aftësi të veçantë për ta kultivuar edhe tek të tjerët, si dhe me vetitë e tij shprehëse të bënte pa tjetër për vehte. Ky njeri punoi pa u lodhur (për aq sa premtoj koha), me konferenca në popull, me predikimet e tij në Kishë e kudo; punoi që popullit tonë t'i bëhej sa më e kjashtë se çfarë rreziku po i sillte sistemi komunist vendit tonë, se si po u torturonte populli në të gjitha menyrat, se si po u zhdukte pjesa më e mirë e intelektualëve dhe bijëve të këtij populli, duke paraqitur shembuj konkretë burgimesh, internimesh e pushkatimesh, ku shpesh përsëritëte pushkatimin pa gjyqë të një pjese intelektuale e klerikale e në menyrë të veçantë rastin konkret të Dom Ndrë Zadejës, e të tjerë.

Për anën organizative na këshillonte bashkëpunimin me të gjithë grupet antipushtet, siç qe edhe unifikimi me "Bashkimin Shqiptar" dhe sidomos lidhja me grupet e Tiranës, ku në këte drejtim (me gjithë rrethanat shumë të vështira të asaj kohe), unë jam munduar që të mbaheshin lidhje të vazhdueshme me to, sidomos nepërmjet të Zojushës Musine Kokolarit në Tiranë, që bënte pjesë në grupin e Rezistencës, e cila ishte një demokrate e njohur dhe e vendosur, me një kulturë të shëndoshët premdimore, e lauruar në letërsi në Universitetin e Romës dhe që mjedhte nga një familje Gjirokastrite me tradita patriotike, familje që i ka dhënë shtatë martirë vendit tonë. Këto lidhje At Gjoni i vlerësoi shumë sidomos kurë u afruan zgjedhjet për në parlament, për të koordinuar të gjitha grupet veprimet e tyre për bojkotimin e sabotimin e zgjedhjeve.

Organizata "Bashkimi Shqiptar", që në këte kohë kishte konsolidue vetveten dhe përfshinte në gjirin e saj një mori pjestarësh me pikpamje të njëjta politike dhe organizative, i dha edhe një rëndësi të veçantë edhe bashkëpunimit me forcat nacionaliste që gjindeshin në ilegalitet nder malet e verit. Në këte menyrë kur aleatët Anglo-Amerikan ta shihshin të arsyeshme të nderhyjshin në Shqipëri për të zhdukë këte farë të keqe që kishte filluar me lëshuar rrënjë, organizata jonë me forcat nacionaliste në arrati të kapte situatën në dorë (së bashku me të gjitha grupet e tjera antikomuniste që aktualisht gjindeshin në vendin tonë), për të vendosur

demokracinë e për të zhvilluar zgjedhje me të vertetë të lira, ku populli të shprehëte lirisht aspiratat e tija për liri e demokraci.

Kjo organizatë arriti të fitojë popullaritet, dhe fjalët e saja e binden popullin për rugen që duhet të ndjekë. Rezultatet e kësaj pune u panë edhe në zgjedhjet e 2 Dhetorit 1945, ku pjesa demuese e popullit të zonës së veriut, të nisur edhe nga ndjenjat antikomuniste votuan pothuajse totalisht në kutinë e ashtuquajtur të zezë (kundërshtarë e Frontit). Mirëpo me makinacionet që dijnë të bëjnë vetëm komunistët duke falsifikuar numrin e votave, u shpall se në Zonën e Shkodrës (që në ate kohë përfshinte pesë rrethet e veriut) u votua 90% për Frontin, rezultat që ishte krejtësisht i falsifikuar.

Gjendja e krijuar në Shkodër, Tiranë, etj. tronditi regjimin diktatorial të Enver Hoxhës, prandaj filluan të rriten edhe më tepër masat drastike bolshevike. Nepërmjet "besnikërisë" ndaj partisë, u fut spijunazhi pothuajse në të gjithë antarët e saj; u rekrutuan nga pjesa e degjeneruar njerëz të ulët moralisht dhe kanierista për të spijunuar kedo e kudo, deri brenda për brenda familjeve qytetare e fshatare, kështu që në këto kushte u vështirësua shumë aktiviteti i organizatës, sa që me 27 Nëntor 1945, nga ana e Sigurimit të Shtetit, u ra në gjurmët e saja në kohën kurë disa aktivista po vazhdojshin shpërndarjen e materjaleve propogandistike me rastin e festës kombëtare të flamurit dhe të të zgjedhjeve të 2 Dhetorit 1945.

Këtu fillon të pushojë aktiviteti i organizatës, duke nisur një fazë tjetër edhe më të vështirë, të ballafaqimit direkt me aparatën shtetëro-policor të diktaturës komuniste.

Arrestimet filluan në menyrë të menjëherëshme, duke përdorur në personat e parë të arrestuar torturat me çnjerzore, që të zbulohej nën pjestarët e tjerë të organizatës dhe udhëheqësit e saj. Në kushtet gjeografike, që në ate kohë Shkodra ishte e rrethuar nga jug-sllavët dhe i pamundur largimi jashtë shtetit i antarëve për t'i shpëruar këtij terori megjithëse edhe në këto rrethana, pat nga ata që kaluan në ilegalitet dhe mandej më vonë kaluan edhe kulturin grek.

Terrori kuq bëri punën e vet me organet e sigurimit të shtetit, duke përdorur metodat e tyre

më çnjerzore, arritën të arrestojnë pjesën më të rëndësishme të organizatës, por duhet dijtur edhe se një pjesë e mirë e pjesëmarrësve nuk u zbulua nga qendrimi burreor i shokëve të arrestuar. Në këto rrethana duke gjetur rastin e pëshuatëshëm për t'i dhënë një goditje të fortë dhe plotësisht shkatruese Klerit Katolik në Shqipëri, me anë të torturave Sigurimi detyroi xhakojt e Seminarit si: Mark Çuni, Gjon Shllaku, Gjergj Bici, etj. të pranojnë se kanë patur për udhëheqës At Daniel Dajani dhe At Gjon Faustin, pse duke eliminuar këta dy udhëheqës të Urdhit Jezuit në Shkodër, ia arritëshin qellimit për të zhdukur plotësisht këtë qender fetare e kulture të qytetit të Shkodrës, t'i jepëshin një goditje të fortë klerit në përgjithsi në vendin tonë, dhe njëherit kërkoshin të delëshin para popullit dhe opinionit nderkombëtarë, se kjo organizatë nuk ka karakter kombëtarë, por ka karakter fetarë. Kjo u vertetua në at kohë nga vetë thëniet e Enver Hoxhës, që, si kryeminister i vendit, në intervistën e dhënë gazetarëve të kryeqytetit dhe botuar në gazeten "Bashkimi" të dt. 27 Janar 1946, shprehet tekstualisht: "Nuk mund të quhet erastit që elementët e klerit katolik dhe sidomos nga rrethet e larta të këtij kleri, të dalin në luftë të hapët kundra popullit dhe pushtetit të tij. Të tillë elementë fenë e kanë përdorur si mashë për të luftuar popullin". Për të sensibilizuar popullin e Shkodrës kundra organizatës "Bashkimi Shqiptar" si dhe klerit katolik, për të paralizuar rininë e këtij qyteti nga ndonjë kunderveprim i mundëshëm, në ditët e para të Janarit 1946, erdhi në Shkodër Nako Spriu, Sekretar i Përgjithëshëm i Rinisë Komuniste të Shqipërisë në atë kohë dhe zhvilloi disa mbledhje me rininë e këtij qyteti dhe posaçërisht me rininë studentore të Liceut të Shtetit, duke shprehur urrejtje e përdorur fjalët më fyese për Organizatën "Bashkimi Shqiptar" dhe në veçanti për At Daniel Dajani me shokë.

Numri i të arrestuarve arriti në 39 vetë, kundra të cilëve filluan torturat si: rrahje duke i goditur në menyre më shtazarake, tortura me korrent elektrik deri në humbjen e ndjenjave, lënëje përjashta në borë, shi e të ftohtë të lidhur për pemë për ditë dhe netë të tëra, lënëje pa ngrënë dhe pa pirë, përdorje e metodave të pagjumësisë e forma nga më shtazarake që u improvizoheshin sipas rastit. Këto metoda u përdorën në të gjithë pjestarët e

arrestuar, por në veçanti kundrejt xhakojve, që kerkojshin nga këto të fundit me iu imponuar se gjoja kanë pasur për udhëheqës At Dajani dhe At Faustin, sa që Xhakoni Mark Çuni arritën t'i thyejnë edhe gjymtyrët. Në këto rrethana tepër të vështira, xhakojt duke pasur parasysh se do të vijë koha për të dalë para gjyqit, ku do të vertetojshin se si qëndron e verteta, qoftë për udhëheqësit e organizatës, qoftë për torturat që po kalojshin ata vetë; pranuan ata çfarë iu imponua nga organet e Sigurimit.

Skenat makabre që kam përjetuar, është shumë vështirë t'i tregoj, por ndonjë më, ka mbetur në kujtesë edhe pas aq vitesh e shtati gjithënjë më rrëqethëset.

Ishte janari i vitit 1946, natë torturash, ora kishte e kaluar mezin e natës, një të dridhur më përshkonte tërë trupin, i lidhur këmbë e duar dhe pa ngrënë dhe pa pirë asgjë, i detyruar të qëndroj në këmbë në podrumin e nderesës ku na kishin futur. Në një qoshe tjetër qëndronte një i dytë po si unë, në një skutë pak majtas po edhe një i tretë i cili u mundonte të zgjatë kokën për të parë këndej nga na dhe që u mundonte të na zinjalohte për diçka që nuk po e kuptojshim. Roja që ishte vendosë enkas për të mos komunikue njeri me tjetrin, na vëzhgohte me kujdes dhe nuk na lejonte as lëvizjen më të vogël. Përpara meje shfaqej shkalla që shërbente për ngjitje në katet e sipërme; po kjo shkallë ishte diçka e papershkrueshme për faktin që edhe kjo i vlente xhelatëve të kuq për të improvizuar tortura të ndryshme. Nën këtë shkallë egzistonte një W.C. tmerrësisht i vogël dhe kundermonte një erë të qelbur të padunueshme. Në këtë nderkohë vërej një hije të vezë që lëvizte pa pushim dhe herë pas here qitete pak kryet nga një si dritare e vogël e kësaj dhënshealle. Unë me sa kuptova ky njeri që ishte brenda bente me shej për të iu avitur, këtë veprim e përsëriti disa herë. Mendoem t'i kundërpergjigjem, por roja me sytë nga unë nuk më lejonte të bëja lëvizjen më të vogël drejt këtij njeriu. Përgjithëse në ato rrethana të vështira që isha për bente, kërkoj nga roja për të më lejuar të shkoj në W.C. Pas shumë lutjesh dhe pasi më zgjidhën këmbët më në fund më lejon. Kur futem brenda në t'ambjent, që jo njeriu por as kafsha nuk do të qëndronte më afrohet ajo hije e zezë që kishte një kohë që më bënte me shej,

por nuk e dallojshe se kush ishte për arsye të errësirë si dhe nga transformimi që kishte pësuar nga torturat, por nga veshja dukesh si klerit katolik, i lidhur vetem nder duar. Me anë të disa shenjave (pasi po të dëgjonte roja se po flitëhim do të vepronte menjëherë mbi ne) më kerkon një cigare. Me vështirsi të madhe arrita të xjerr nga xhepi një cigare dhe me po aq vështirsi arrita të ia ndez. Me krye e me duar me sa kuptova më uroj. Por nuk vonoi shumë e pasi unë isha kthyer në vendin tim dhe ai kishte përfunduar së piri cigaren, vijnë dhe e marrin për ta derguar lart. Thirrja atje "lart" në ato orët pas mesit të natës, u dinte se për çfarë është, kështu ne të tre që ishim aty filluam të hamojmë vetveten duke menduar për këtë të njerë se çfare do t'i bëjshin atje lart. Para mëngjezit dëgjojmë se po e sjellin përsëri dy roje që e terhiqëshin zvarë, e përplasnin aty para nesh. Ishte pa ndjenja. Munduan ta fusin përsëri në at strofullen e pistë ku kishte qenë më parë, por nuk arritën pse vetë rojeve iu bë e padurueshme ajo erë e qelbur që kundermonte aty branda. Atëherë u detyruan me e lanë shtrirë për tokë mbi shtresen e betonit. Në at gjendje që ishte nuk lëvizte, vetem se fshante nga një herë. Ishte i përgjakur, sytë i lotojshin gjak, me sa duket e kishin torturuar edhe me korrent elektrik, pse kjo lloj torture lente këto pasoja prapa. Këmbët e zbathura i kishte të ënjtura e të nxira, kishte faza që u duktetë se nuk jep shenja jete. Pas disa orësh fillon e lëvizë e shikon nga neve, e din fort mirë se ne nuk kemi asnjë mundësi për ta ndihmë, kështu nuk na drejtohet për asnjë gjë. Në kohën e drekës, kurë njerit prej nesh, i sjellin diçka të thjeshtë për të ngrënë, ky i fundit merr një portokall dhe afrohet të ia japi padres, fshehurazi nga roja. Por padreja nuk ia pranon duke i thënë me gjysëm zëri: "Jo, bir, këtë duhet ta hashë ti, pse je i ri dhe ke më nevojë nga unë." Veprimi i këtij njeriu të Zotit në ato momente është i papershkrueshëm, pasi ishte një veprim sa human aq edhe kurajoz për ne më të rinjtë. Përsëri pas pak e fusin të lidhur në birucen e tij nën shkallë, të pistë, me lagështirë, të errët dhe të padurueshme. Më vonë e mësova se kush ishte ky njeri që po perballonte këto tortura kaq çnjerëzore duke ruajtur dinjitetin e tij dhe pa u perkulur dhe pa bërë asnjë herë "Oh." Ky ishte martiri At Daniel Dajani, profesori i im i para do viteve, që nuk

kishe arritur ta dalloj nga transformimi që kishte pësuar nga torturat.

Kaluan nepër tortura të ndryshme, herë pas here të 39 vetët e arrestuar për të njëjtin qellim. Sejcili për vehte provoi këtë kalvar në një menyre apo në një tjetër. Atë çka pershkrova për At Dajani, në më pak ose më shumë, kaluan edhe At Fausti e At Gjon Shallaku, të cilët nuk pranuan të bëjnë lojen e Sigurimit të Shtetit, por i rezistuan torturave burrërisht, si dhe nuk pranuan të bëjnë fajtor ata që nuk kishin faj. Po ashtu edhe të njëjtë që shumica ishin në moshënnën 20 vjeç, i pëballuan torturat e nuk pranuan gjëra që nuk qëndroshin, bile pat edhe raste që shpëtuan shumë shokë të tyre që mos të pësojshin fatin e keq si ata vetë.

Në këtë ndertesë, që më parë kishte sherbyer si ndertesë banimi, gjindeshin kaq shumë skuta, biruca, W.C., nënshkalla, podrume, kthina të vogla, etj., sa ishin torturues për fatkeqët që kalojshin nepër to, aq ia lehtësojshin punën atyre që përdhunojshin e torturojshin njerëzit e ndershëm e të pafajshëm; ku u dallojshin për këto tortura: Zoi Themeli, (shefi i Sigurimit për Shkodrën) një shpirt-kazëm, që nuk donte të dijë fare se çfarë pasojash do t'i lejë njerëzve nga torturat që iu bënte; Fadil Kapisyzi, një pijanec, që torturat më të tmerrshme i bënte atëherë kurë ishte i pirë; e të tjerë që i pasojshin këto dy të parët si: Pjetër Ballati, Nesti Kopali, Dul Rjolli, Elez Mesi, Dulaq Lekiqi, e të tjerë si këta. Por në këtë kasaphanë, Zoti kishte derguar, me sa duket me doren e vet, edhe një njeri me shpirt të mirë, i ndershem, i dymbëshëm e kurajoz, që sherbente në këte vend si roje, pse me gjithë detyrën e vështirë që kishte, pothuaj se të gjithë pjestarëve të grupit tonë i ka ndihmuar shumë fshehurazi duke iu dhënë qe, bukë, ushqime, ndonjë robë kurë kishin të frihtë, si dhe duke lajmëruar familjet e të ardhurave për ndonjë nevojë të çastit që ata fatkeq mund të kishin. Ky ka qenë Fadil Rakiqi, njeri i ndershëm nga një familje e ndershme e qytetit të Shkodrës.

Mnija për sistemin tortur, dashuria për Atme e Fë, janë rolet e kësaj ndertesë, nota që shkrihen në sinfoninë e pafund të shpirtit shqiptar, të tokës shqiptare. E ky shpirt vigan ngrihet dalëngadalë nga çdo qendresë e këtyre martirëve, nga çdo pëballim i këtyre vejtjeve të pafund duke

perballue këto stuhi të tmerrshme me sakrifica sublime. Kalvari që kaloi populli shqiptar në një horizont të tmerrshëm torturash e lufta gjaku, është e pamundur të përshkruhet, por në këte përshkrim u munduam të japim më tepër një vizion të shkurtë të një prej ngjarjeve tronditëse që kaloi vendi i ynë nën diktaturën 47 vjeçare.

Në vargun e gjatë të gjyqeve famëkeqe që u zhvilluan në vendin tonë për 47 vjet me radhë, i një rendësie të veçantë është padyshim edhe gjyqi i Organizatës "Bashkimi Shqiptar" me grupet e tij, që u zhvillue në Shkodër nga 31 Janari 1946 deri me 22 Shkurt 1946, gjyqë i cili demaskoi para popullit pushtetin komunist, i cili nuk ishte gjë tjetër veçse një pushtet i vendosur me dhunë dhe gjakderdje. Të gjithë të akuzuarit u mbrojtën më dinjitet, duke pranuar se kanë punuar dhe janë përpjekë me të gjitha forcat e tyre për të ia arritur në një kohë sa më të afërt vendosjes së një regjimi me të vertetë demokratik dhe për të luftue sistemin komunist në vendin tonë, i cili po shkatronte çdogjë me vlerë si: kulturën, ekonominë, bujqësinë, dinjitetin, nderin e fenë e popullit tonë. Aspekti tjetër i këtij gjyqi, që demaskimi para popullit i organeve të Sigurimit të Shtetit, që me torturat më çnjerëzore arritën të iu imponojnë një pjesë të pjestarëve të organizatës, akuza e veprime të paqena si për vehten e tyre, ashtu dhe për udhëheqësit e organizatës në drejtim të terrorit, propogandës fashiste, ndasive fetare, etj, që gjoja këto kan qenë programi i organizatës. Këto akuza u hodhën poshtë me fakte dhe u deklarue para gjyqit botënisht, se janë akuza nën presionin e torturave dhe të makinacioneve të ndryshme të Sigurimit të Shtetit.

Në deponimet e tyre, xhakojt me në krye Mark Çunin, i cili mori gjithçka mbi vehte, nuk pranuen në asnjë menyrë që të kenë pasur udhëheqës të organizatës At Dajani dhe At Faustin; megjithëse edhe gjatë zhvillimit të gjyqit, Sigurimi i Shtetit u mundua të krijojë makinacione të reja, duke akuzuar Xhakonin Gjon Shllaku se ka marrë urdher me anë të një letre të mshefët (gjatë zhvillimit të gjyqit) nga seminari për të mbrojtur udhëheqësit e vet, ky i fundit këte akuzë të kurdisur e hodhi poshtë me fakte. Kurse Xhakoni Pjetër Gjoka i mbrojti At Dajani e At Faustin duke deklaruar se: "gjithmonë me neve kanë kryer detyren edukative dhe fetare, si dhe na kanë këshillue dhe udhëzue për korrektësi

e diciplinë si brenda e jashtë seminarit; përse ipërket marksizmit si doktrinë materjaliste, duke qenë se është në kundërshtim me filozofin idealiste, nga pikpamja teorike neve duhet ta luftojshim, për çashtje të organizatës këta nuk kanë pasur dijeni fare".

At Gjon Fausti, edhe ky vetë u mbrojti me dinjitet, duke mos pranue në asnjë menyrë të ketë drejtue organizaten, nuk pranoi të ketë punue për të përca popullin as të ketë edukue studentët e vet me edukatë fashiste, për më tepër deklaroi se e ka denue okupimin fashist në Shqipëri, dhe vertetoi se nga ana e gjermanëve është qenë i plagosur në luftën e Tiranës. Për këte ka shkruar edhe autori Stavro Th. Frashëri në librin e tij "Këtej kaluan hordhitë gjermanë" në vitin 1945. Por veprimi më skandaloz i bërë nga prokurori i gjyqit Aranit Çela, që kurë u mundua me i pragaditur gracken për të pohue se në Shqipëri katolikët janë "minoritet" edhe për këte u mbrojti burërisht duke mos e pranuar, por si të gjithë metodat komuniste edhe kjo u trumbetue në popull për të ngjallë përcarje ndërsa në fakt thënia e At Faustit ishte se pjesa katolike në Shqipëri, si besim fetar është në minorancë e jo se është pjesë minoritare.

Po kështu edhe At Dajani i hodhi të gjitha akuzat poshtë, duke u shprehur: "asnjë akuzë nuk është e vertetë"; mbajti një qëndrim burëror para trupit gjykues ashtu siç i takon një kleriku dinjetoz, megjithëse iu kërkue llogari për të gjithë veprimtarinë e klerit katolik në Shqipëri, gjë për të cilën ai nuk kishte se si të jepte llogari për një gjë të tillë, pasi për shumë vite kishte qenë profesor i thjeshtë në Seminar dhe vetëm që nga 27 Shkurti 1945 ishte bërë Rektor.

Mbrojtja e At Gjon Shllaku pati një karakter tjetër, për faktin se ai ishte Kryetar i Grupit Demokristjan, por me aftësinë dhe elokuencen e Tij diji të hedhë poshtë akuzat pa bazë se ka qenë bashkëpuntorë me At Dajani dhe At Faustin duke u shprehur teks tjetër: "Këto akuza nuk i përshtaten të së vërtetës, por nga ana tjetër pranoi me burëri se grupi i tij nuk ka qenë një grup që do të ngjallte dasinë fetare, por përkundrazi bashkimin e tyre në luftë kundër komunizmit, gjë që e vërtetonte se në këte grup bënte pjesë edhe një

antarë i besimit mësulman (siç ishte rasti i këtij artikullshkruesi).

Trupi gjykues së bashku me prokurorin duke përdorur forma dhe metoda më të paligjshme, u mundue që lidhjet e Klerit Katolik të Shqipërisë me Selinë e Shejtë të Vatikanit, t'i paraqitëte si lidhje me qeverinë fashiste italiane dhe se janë marrë subvencione nga kjo qeveri për t'u bërë vegël e imperializmit për të përçur popullin. Këto akuza jo vetëm që nuk u pranuan, por u hodhen poshtë me fakte nga të tre të sipërpermendurit.

Po kështu mbrojtje dinjitoze bënë të gjithë të pendehurit e tjerë, nuk pranuan asnjë akuzë denigruese e përçarëse, demaskuen organet e sigurimit të shtetit për menyrat çnjerëzore që kishin përdorur kundra tyre, si dhe mbrojtën pikpamjet e tyre antikomuniste, duke kërkuar që drejtësia dhe arsyetja të dominojnë mbi padrejtësinë dhe paarsyen.

Për 22 ditë me radhë, të 39 të akuzuarit kalojshin krenarë për gjatë rrugës kryesore të qytetit për të shkue në sallën e këtij gjyqi që u zhvillue në Kinema Rozafat, me bindje se nuk kishin bërë asnjë krim ndaj popullit të vet, por për më tepër po sakrifikojshin vehten e tyre për këtë popull, që edhe ky me plot gojë mund t'u quante i martirizuem. Por me këtë rast nuk munguan edhe renegat të flliqur si: Prof. Mark Ndoja, malësori Martin Margilaj dhe mësuesi Gaspër Leci, që me sjelljet e tyre prej rugaçësh shanë dhe ofenduan e sulmuan gjatë rrugës për në gjyqë të gjithë pjestarët e organizatës, por në menyrë të veçantë At Dajani, At Faustin dhe At Gjon Shllaku, pse kështu ishin të udhëzuar nga prisat e tyre komunist. Veprimi që kryen këta renegat të kristjanizmit, nuk bënë gjë tjetër veçse shtuan edhe më tepër rrespektin për këtë organizatë, në sa në anën tjetër u shtue urrejtja e popullit për rregjimin në fuqi, i cili më vonë megjithëse i dha edhe pozita këtyrë paliaçove, por edhe nuk u kursye pastaj t'i përplasi në burgje me denime të rënda dy të parët.

Lufta e bërë në këtë gjyqë, që një luftë e gjithë popullit të ndershëm shqiptar, që tregoi se nuk ka komunizëm të arsyeshëm që e kupton zërin e historisë, prandaj u pa kjo luftë që në fillim se çfarë vendimi makabër do të marrë ky gjyqë. Kështu prokurori i gjyqit Aranit Çela, një vampir i pangopur me gjak njerëzish, kërkoj denimin e 11 vetëve me

vedkje, pra gadi për një të tretën e pjesmarrësve në këtë gjyqë. Kjo që një bombë jo vetëm për ne që po u denojshim, por për mbarë popullin patriot të Shkodrës. Më të dispenuar ishim ne të tjerët se sa ata që po u denojshin me vdekje, këta na jepëshin kurajo ne, ishin kryelartë se në fund të fundit nuk po denoheshin për krimë, por po jepëshin jeten e tyre për një çeshtje sublimë, për kombin shqiptar dhe po vdisëshin të qetë se po kryejshin një detyrë që hisotira pak njerëzve iu rezervon.

Një mbrojtje dinjitoze iu bë të akuzuarve, nga grupi i avoketëve si: Kol Dhimitri, i cili kërkoj pafajsinë për At Dajani e At Faustin, Myzafer Pipa (të cilit më vonë iu hoq edhe e drejta e mbrojtjes në këtë gjyqë, me akuzë implikimi), Paulin Pali, E. Tedeskinj, Nush Luka, Sabri Quku, etj., mbrojtje që nuk u vlersua fare nga trupi gjykues.

Gjatë ditëve deri në vendimin e gjyqit, më rastisi ta kaloj me martirin Gjellash Lulashin, ish shoku i im i shkollës vite më parë, me moshë 20 – 22 vjeçare, një djalë nga malësia e Shoshit, i pashëm, inteligjent dhe shumë kurajoz. Nuk e pashë një herë të mërëzitur, por gjithmonë të qeshur dhe me humor, megjithëse po lintëte prindërit dhe rininë e tij, kurr nuk u ligështue. Asnjë çast nuk mendonte se çfarë fat i zi e pritëte, përkundrazi na jepte kurajo jo vetëm ne që ishim më të ri si ai dhe denimet tona ishin të paperfillëshme kundrejt të atij vetë, por edhe të tjerëve më të moshuar se ai. Shpesh herë përsëritëte një thënie: "Një herë vdesin burrat, më mirë me vdeke me nderë se me faqe të zezë."

Në periudhën e gjyqit çdo natë këndoishim këngë patriotike, kjo na ngritë moralin lart të gjithëve. Por në kohën kur në pretencën e prokurorit u këkue denimi me vdekje i gjithë atyreshokëve, zëri na u pre. Nëpër qelitë ishim nder grupe, në ato që më takoi të qendroja unë gjatë këtyrë ditëve përball kishës qelinë e At Dajani, të cilit iu dha 6 viteve e kisha pasur profesor në Kolegjin Saverjane. Unë kisha një respekt të veçantë për të, edhe ai ushqente për mua një simpatji të jashtëzakonëshme, dhe sa herë që kalojsha para qelës së tij, gjatë kësaj kohe, kisha emocionë kurë këndoishja se edhe pak ditë më vonë nga kjo jetë. Një nder këto netë, në sa po

kalojsha para kësaj qelije, në kohën që delëshim për të kryer shërbimin vehtjak, At Dajani hapë dritaren e vogël të qelisë më thërret me zë të ulët, unë përfitoj në kohën kurë roja kalon përpara dhe afrohem pranë portës së At Dajanit, ky menjëherë më pyet: "Myfit pse nuk jeni duke kënduar këte netë?" Unë i pergjigjem: "Si na bën zemra me këndue mor Pader kurë mendojmë për Ju"! Atëherë At Dajani vazhdon përsëri: "Këndoni dhe këndon fort, pse po nuk kënduet, atëherë u bëhet qefi komunistave, këta duan që të na mposhtin, por na t'u tregojmë se nuk mposhtemi kollaj". E pa tjetër kjo porosi e At Dajanit u zbatue menjëherë.

Në fjalën e fundit para se të jepesh vendimi i gjyqit, në përgjithësi u deklarue nge neve se nuk i trembem sa do i rëndë të jetë ai vendim. Fjala e fundit e jona, filloi me ate të At Dajanit që u shpreh në këte menyre: "Jam i bindur dhe deklaroi pa më të voglin hezitim se detyrën që i kam vue vehtes për çashtjen e Atmes dhe fesë, dhe për një Shqipëri me të vertetë të lirë, po e vazhoi deri në fund të jetës sime, dhe jam i bindur se çfarë do që të ndodhë, këte do ta arrijnë pasardhësit tone. Përpara këtij trupi gjykues kërkoj drejtësi dhe jo mëshirë".

Me në fund erdhi dita e zezë e 22 Shkurtit 1946, ku Gjykata Ushtarake e Shkodrës e përbërë nga Mustafa Iljazi kryetar, dhe Namik Qemali e Tonin Miloti antarë si dhe Shaban Skuqi sekretar, të gjithë inkompetentë, mori vendimin monstruoz ku denoi 8 vetë me vdekje dhe të tjerët me punë të rëndë e me burgime nga të përjetëshme deri në 3 vjet, vetëm 2 veta liroi si të pafajshëm. Ndersa ky vendim drastik u zbatue me 4 Mars 1946, ku plumbat komunistë rrëzuanpër tokë 8 martirë.

Me dhimbë i kujtojmë këto ditë ne pak që kemi mbetur të gjallë nga ajo kohë, por jo me më pak dhimbë i kujtojnë edhe ata që kanë ndigjue sado pak për to, pse ata martirë që dhanë jeten, që atdheu i tyre të rrojë, se shokët e tyre që jetuan por kaluan nën zgjedhë dhe nuk e përkulen qafen, si dhe ata që pranuan gjitha mundimet nga që vendin e popullin e tyre e deshën më shumë se vehten, shumë e shumë të tjerë që nuk dijtën ose nuk deshën të dinin se çbëhej në emër tyre, do të mbesin në mendjet e zemrat e popullit tonë si një kujtim i paharnuar.

Myfit Q. BUSHATI

*Koçi Xoxe

... "O ata të lumt, qi dhane jetën
O ata të lumt, qi shkrine vetën,
Qi për Fë e vend të parve
Qi për erz e nderë të shqiptarve
Derdhne gjakun tuej luftue
Por si të part u pan punue!
Lët u kjoft mbi vorr ledina
But u kjoftin mati e stina
Aklli e bora e serotina.
E der të kndojë në mal ndoj zanë
E der të kët në det uj e ranë
Dersa të shndrisin diell e hanë
Ate kurr mos u barroshin
Në kangë e në valle por u kndojshin."

At Gjergj NANTA

PAK SHENIME PËR VEPRIMIN E ORGANIZATËS ANTIKOMUNISTE "PËRPIJEKJA SHQIPTARE"

Një bluzë e thjeshtë sportive, me ngjyrë të bardhë e dorca qielli, sipër e shkrueme "Skenderbeg". Një bluzë pra, po sa kujtime sjellë kjo bluzë? Kujtime të pashlyeshme, të atyre oborreve të shkollës për volejbol, basketbol, sallat e pinpongut, biljardos, fushen e futbollit që nuk harrohet asnjëherë prej nxanësve të dikurshëm, të cillët kaluen ndër bankat e asaj shkolle, që thirrrej Shkolla e Jezuitve të Shkodrës.

Sa shume kujtime të sjellë nëpërmend një bluzë!

Ditë Bajrami 1944. Atë ditë ishte festa e qytetit tonë, në shkollë e kudo, por krejt e veçantë në shtëpinë tonë... Vizitat s'prajshin, pershendetjet për festen ndigjoheshin kudo, ndër shtëpia, shkalla, oborre, dyer e ruga, gëzim e harë, të gjithë vetem urojnë: "Për shume mot!"

Në shtëpinë tonë ky Bjaram asht disi ndryshe prej të tjerëve, kishin ardhë kushnjë, të afërm, shokë, miq, por kjo e veçantë që do të bante të paharrueshme këte festë në shtëpinë tonë, ishte ardhja e profesorave të nderuar At Ják Gardini, At Mario Spiringhetti, At Anton Luli dhe prefekti i klasës Pjetër Topalli. Edhe sot mbas kaq vitesh kujtoj shqetësimin e grave për të pritur sa më mirë profesorët Jezuit, që po na nderojshin me viziten e tyre. Baba në menyre të veçantë, kishte ndë në një anë duhanin ku ishte ma i miri për të nderue miqt. Kujtoj preukupimin e nanës për mësalat, sofren, kujdesin për komplete që duheshin vendosë në sofer, por të gjitha ishin kot, se këta profesorë ishin kaq të thjeshtë, aq sa ishin të dashtun, e as që vejshin oroe se çfarë ka tavolina. Ata vrojtojshin vetem një gjë *mikpritjen shqiptare* dhe kësaj i pergjigjeshin me bujarinë e fisnikerinë e tyne të pashoqe e modeste. Kur i ndaluem për drekë, ata me kenaqësi e pranue ftesen, por me kusht me njoftue eprorin e Kolegjit se ku ndodhen....dhe ashtu vepruene. Kjo më ka mbetë në mendje edhe sot. Ajo ditë feste ishte një ditë e paharrueme për shtëpinë tonë, Pomuk zgjatit shumë.

Erdhi viti 1945, shkolla do te mbyllej. Profesorët e nderuem do të arrestoheshin, diktatura komuniste

do te fillonte shkatërrimin e shkollës, bibliotekës së mbrekullueshme dhe të krejt kulturës dhe qytetnimit europian që përhapte Shkolla e Jezuitve të Shkodrës. Pikrisht kjo shkollë, që në gjokset tona kishte vulosë Heroin Kombëtar "Skenderbeun", që na edukonte me ndjenjat e atdhedashunisë pa kufi e në menyre të veçantë dashuninë e vllaut për vlla pa dallim feje, do të konsiderohej prej komunistëve, qender tradhtie e të sa e sa epitetesh tjera, për të cilat komunistat ishin specialistë.

Kujtoj me dhimbje vendet e mjetet sportive të dyllësuna prej organeve të Sigurimit, oborri i vorfnuem. Filloi ajo qe shohim edhe sot, zhgattrim i plotë i terë kompleksit të Kolegjit Saverjan!

Një dite së bashku me Lec Vasinë e Bert Çoben muejtem me marrë disa matreiale sportive, dhe menjëherë krijueme shoqinë "Besa". Sigurisht berthama ishte shoqinja e Shkollës së Jezuitëve, por me ne u bashkuene edhe mjaft djelm të familjeve të mirëfillta të Shkodrës, që nuk i njihnin dallimet fetare si: Bardhosh Dani, Mark Triepshi, Ferit Myftija, Beqo Seknej, Simon Deda, Bardh Shiroka, Nexhip Osmani, Njac Kujxhija, Alfons Rodovani, Agostin Dema, Hilmi Hoxha, Zef Gjon Marku, Hil Nika, Enrik Kraja, Kol Gjoni, etj.

Kaluem nga fusha e zakonëshme e Kishës së Madhe, tek Ara e Pashës dhe ndër lagje, që lamije ose tek fusha e tigrin në Parrucë.

Kryetar i shoqatës u zgjodha une, ndërsa nenkryetar ishte Bert Çoba. Por ajo që të binte në sy qysh në takimet e para ishte mospajimi ynë me parimet komuniste. Nga takimet sportive fillueme me u njoftë edhe me djelm të tjerë të mi edhe trima si Bib Smailli, Medin Shpura, Fetih Myrto, Haki Tuzi, Xhabir Noli, Nuh Valishi, Ali Komí, etj. Në lagjet Ndoci e Dudas, në të nat filloi edhe komunikimi i mendimit se si u duk ma vonë u perputh plotësisht kështu që një ditë vendosëm në një mbledhje në fillim të vitit 1947, me formue një organizatë ku u betuam për qëndrimin besnik në lirinë që do të bashkim kundër komunizmit.

Kjo organizatë e mirefilltë antikomuniste, u formue prej shokëve të njoftun në fushat sportive, plus elementin e paster të Gjinnnazit të Shtetit. Organizata u quajt "PERPJEKJA SHQIPTARE" dhe kryetar u zgjodh i ndjeri Bardhosh Dani, djalë trim, i squet e guximtarë, BURR deri në vdekje. Nga vetë emni i kësaj organizate, kuptohet qellimi. Perpjekje për shpëtimin e kombit nga mortaja komuniste, që kishte fillue ç'prej ditës së parë me arrestime, shfarosje, internime, pushkatime të elementave më të ndershem, liridashës dhe demokrat të vërtetë që kishte Shkodra. Antarët e Organizatës kishin detyra që për atë kohë ishin shumë të rrezikëshme. Shkruheshin parulla antikomuniste, hidheshin trakte, baheshin mbledhje të mshefta dhe lidhjet ishin me të vërtetë të forta. Këto akcione janë të parat perpjekje të organizueme prej Organizates "PERPJEKJA SHQIPTARE" kunder komunizmi e për liri dhe demokraci.

Elementi komunist, kryesisht i inkuadruem në Klubin "Vllaznia", që aso kohe drejtohej prej Isa Milotit e Faik Zenelit, luftojne dhe ia arrijnë qellimit për të nxjerrë shoqin në tonë sportive jashta ligjit. Kjo bani që tue mos pasë mundësi me u grumbullue në sheshe sportive për lojna, takimet tona filluene me u konsiderue si grumbullime të elementit armik, kështu që tue ra në sy filloi edhe ndjekja e jonë nga Sigurimi.

Me dt. 18.7.1948, Sigurimi i Shtetit fillon gjurmimin e veprimtarisë së Kryetarit të Organizatës Bardhosh Dani, i cili kupton se ishte ne prapen e arrestimit dhe tenton te arratiset dhe se bashku me Mark Triepshin e Ibrahim Dergutin vriten në kufi.

Vrasja e papritun e këtyne djelmoshave topiti organizaten e cila për pak kohë e pushoi veprimtarinë. Mue dhe Hilmi Hoxhen Sigurimi na arrestoj për dyshime, por pa prova; ndersa Lec Vasija, Fetah Myrtja, Zef Shllaku e Donat Rexha u arratisen.

Pak kohë mbas vrasjes së shokëve, kah fundi i 1948 në shtëpitë e Viktor Lukës e të Alfons Rodovanit, bahen mbledhje për riorganizimin e organizatës "PERPJEKJA SHQIPTARE". Unë në këtë kohë isha i arrestuam së bashku me Hilminë, Mikel Muzhanin, Ahmet Bushatin, Tom Sheldinë, Xhevat e Remzi Qukun, Ernest Perdoden, Refik Bushatin, Thabit Rusin e tjerë. Të gjithë torturoheshim në mënyrë çnjerezore në Sigurimin e Shtetit, për të muejt me ligështue me anë të nesh shpirtin e rinisë shkodrane. Nga kthesa e politikës së Koçi

Xoxës lirohem unë, Hilmiu dhe Mikeli, por pa të drejtë me vazhdue shkollen, kështu që mundësia për të punue ishte vetem me shkue në Pukë, dhe ashtu veprova së bashku me Haki Tuzin. Vjeti 1949 na gjeti në Pukë. Asnjëherë nuk u shkëputem as un as shokët nga betimi i bamë. Atje u njoha me t'arratisurit e Pukës e Mirditës që jetojshin nder male dhe u lidha me Zef Luken, Pal Biben, Frano Kolen, Kol Çunin, Gjon Lushin, Pashko Leten, Tahir Hoxhen e Gjon Gjinaj, të cilët më dhanë besimin e plotë, dhe fillueme aktivitetin. Detyra kryesore ishte me ndihmue materijalisht shokët e burgosun, si dhe familjet e të arratisunve dhe të pushkatuemeve që ishin tue vdekë për bukë në internime.

Aktiviteti në Shkodër vazhdonte. Organizata u rrit mjaft e vinte e forcohej, megjithë reprezaljet që vijshin tue u shtue për ditë e më tepër.

Arrestimi i grupit të studentëve të Gjinnnazit të Shkodres, Et-hem Bakallit, Alfons Rodovanit, Njazi Uruçit, Mergim Danit, Nexhip Osmanit, Viktor Lukës, Ferit Myftisë, Gjon Mark Ndojt, si dhe dënimet e randa të tyre, damtuenë randë Organizaten "PERPJEKJA SHQIPTARE", mbasi nga grupi u arrestuen organizatorët kryesorë.

Une vazhdova aktivitetin deri në Tetor të 1952 kur u arrestova përsri dhe u dënova me proges të bardhë me 17 vjet burg, prej të cilave bana 12 vjet.

Organizata "PERPJEKJA SHQIPTARE" tregoi me punë e sakrifica të mëdha se kishte themele të shndosha e të forta perkundër të gjithë pëmdjekjeve e torturave shnjerezore të komunistave në pushtet, të panjohuna në historinë moderne. Ajo u perpoq me perforcue në popull dashurinë e besnikinë pa dallim feje, atdhedashurinë e lindun në familjen shkodrane dhe persosë e t'arritur në Shkollen e Jezuitëve dhe shkollat tjera fetare e laike të qytetit tonë me tradita nderi e kulture nën binomin për PE e ATDHE. Provë e këtij veprimi asht se persekucioni, arratiset, pushkatimet e burgjet e tmerrshme komuniste i ndodhën jo vetëm antarët e kësaj organizate, por edhe familjet e tyre, të cilat i përballueme me ndër për gjashtë shekulli pa u pajtue asnjëherë me bëmëne n'yet komuniste.

Per mue sht një ndër i madh që kam qenë antar i Organizatës "PERPJEKJA SHQIPTARE" e qytetit tonë të dashur të Shkodres.

Xhevat GJYREZI

DISA KUJTIME TË MJEKUT T'AT GJERGJ FISHTËS

Shenim i editorit: Me knaqësi po botojmë shkrimin e Dr. Injac Saraçit me disa kujtime t'atit të tij, mjekut të mirënjohur Shkodran, Gjon Saraçit për poetin kombtar Gjergj Fishtën. Falkeqsisht, shkrimi na mrriti tepër vonë për të muejtë m'e përfshirë në numrin e vjetit të kaluem (1992), çka do ta kishte gëzue fort doktorin, mbasi si thonte vetë në letrën e tij të datës 5/VI/1992: "Disbroj të bashkëpunoj me revistën Tuej, ashtu si punoj me gazetën e Jezuitëve në Tiranë 'E Ardhmja,' ku shkruaj me pseudonimin Ignis. Këtë pseudonim e kam pasë qysh në rrethin "Don Bosko" të Veprimit Katolik, të drejtue, si vetë e dini, nga Jezuitët e Shkodrës."

Me keqardhje të madhe mësuem për vdekjen e papritun e të parakobëshme të Dr. Injac Saraçit të ngratë pak kohë mbasi na dërgoi shkrimin e tij të vlershëm. Në letrën e përmendun ai na njofton edhe për veprimtarin e tij letrar. Ndër të tjera ai rrëfen: "Për mënse 40 vjet kam shkruar në beshtje pa shtypë asgjë, se nuk muese të pajtohem me qeverinë totalitare. Vazhdoj të ndjekë traditën letrare shkodrane, kombtare. Qysh në vjetin 1948 kam filluar të shkruaj një roman të ndamë në tri vëllime, që përfshinë perjudhën krye të historisë sonë të sotme,

1939-1955. Titullohet "Endrrat e një brezi të shuar" e zhvillohet kryesisht në Shkodër, Malsi, Tiranë e Itali. Kam edhe një roman tjetër psikologjik ambientuar në Shkodër në 1935 me titull "Mendja dhe Zemra." Kam lavrue dramaturgjin, tue shkruar 15 drama historike, psikologjike e shoqnore. Kam 3 vëllime me tregime. Vjetët e fundit kam shkruar për fëmijët 100 përralla e 14 drama të vogla. Së fundi 3 vëllime publicistike për probleme letrare, shoqnore, fetare e politike. Kam bërë edhe një sagë ilire të shekullit të V (70 faqe) me titull "Liqeni i bjeshtës" kushtuar të merguemve. Bashkëpunatori i jusej, Pater Ndoc Kelmendi, S.J. - përfundon letra e Dr. Saraçit - më këshilloi të ju shkruaj se ndoshta gjeni mundësi e mjete me botuar ndonjë nga këto vepra."

Tue lexue shkrimin fort interesant e shumë të vlershëm përmbi jetën e At Gjergj Fishtës të Dr. Injac Saraçit, zbulojmë një stil të thjeshtë, të rrjedhshëm e të kandshëm që mban lexuesin pezull. Urojmë që veprat e tjera, të cilat pa tjetër kanë vlerë letrare e historike, të shohin shpejt dritën e botimit e të kënaqin lexuesit e shumë që sot janë të etshëm për shkrime të pastra nga ideologjia me forcë, e të lira në subjekte e mendime).

Në agimin e shekullit të XX At Gjergj Fishta u duk si një yll i rrallë.

Në atë kohë erdhi në Shkodër i pari mjek shqiptar i diplomuem në universitetin e Padovës, i cili punoi në vendlindje për 44 vjet, me një humanizëm të thellë.

Qysh në vitin 1908 ai u njoh me Pater Gjergjin dhe u bane miq të ngushtë.

Kohen e rrethimit të Shkodrës prej Malitzi, në vitin 1912, Fishta qindroi pranë Kishës së Zojës Ruzare të Arraemadhe. Edhe mjeku shkoi atje, se thojshin që gjyket dhe shkrapnelat e topit të Kraj Nikollës nuk mrrinin deri në këtë lagje.

Ata të dy çdo ditë shifeshin në kishë e u afruan edhe më shumë.

Te asaj vjetë, unë ruaj një kujtim të vogël prej poetit, një kartëvizitë dt. 11/X/1912, me anën e të cilës e fton mjekun të vizitojë një kupaën e tij.

Dokumenti i dytë më i çmueshëm asht një letër e pabotueme shkruar me dorën e Fishtës, dt. 6/X/1918, me anën e të ciles i bën ngushllimet mikut për humbjen e djalit të parë. Tëri i letres asht shumë i afertë, i përzembetur, prekës e tregon njëkohësisht edhe theksin e ngushtë dhe respektin e thellë.

Në atë kohë - më tregonte babë - At Gjergj Fishta ishte i ri, tanë shëndet e energji, i përfshimë në një valë të madhe pune krijuese letrare, por edhe shoqërore atdhetare.

Çdo herë që e thirrshin mjekun në kuvendin e freterve, në Gjuhador, pater Gjergji nuklente pa e takue doktorin e pa bisedue me te.

Biseda e poetit ishte gjithnjë shumë e kandshme – thonte baba – e figurshme, optimiste, gjithë kulturë e humor. Prej natyrës Fishta ka këne burrë, i fuqishëm, energjik, i pashem, hijerandë dhe synin e kishte pishë.

Ka vuajtë njëherë prej malarjes (që atëherë i thirmin "Ethe ajrit"), por e kaloi shpejt.

Kur hyna në gjimnaz, kishe profesor letërsie Pater Mark Harapin, S.J., i cili ishte mik dhe adhures i zjarrët i Fishtës; ai na e shtini edhe ne një admirin të madh për Te.

Ne atë kohë baba i im shihej shpesh me poetin, e kur vinte në shtëpi unë e pyetshe gjatë për te.

Nji ditë se si kishte ra fjala, e doktori i foli atij për këtë punë. Atëherë Poeti Kombëtar, u çue buzagaz, mori një kopje të veçantë të kryevepres së Tij, që e kishte shtypë posaçërisht për miqtë dhe dashamirët e tij e i shkroi këtë kushtim:

P. Georgius Fishta O. F. M.
 I lutet Zotin si të me
 vishë veset made e me
 selus barck e me paq një
 kuyatë të emen të ligë
 I him shusët!
 SHKODER, 11/4/1912

Të Ndrir-mit Z. Dr. Gjon Saraçit

në shëj çmimit e miradijet

Auktori

Shkodër me 3/XII/1937

e ia dha kujtim.

Këtë libër, gjatë gjithë këtyne vjetvet që kje i ndahuem, unë e kam ruajtë si një thesar të rrallë.

Edhe kur u ba Akademik e ruajtë miqësinë dhe me 24/VI/1940, ditën e Shën Gjonit ia dergoi babës urimet për emën, mbasi nuk mujtë të vijë vetë si zakonisht.

Qysh se u aksidentua në Fabriken e çementos në Shkodër, kur një rratë i kapi zhgunin e terhoqi edhe e plagosi në kambë, ai shkejonte pakësi dhe mbante shkop.

As në atë rast nuk e la humorin: "Per pak – geshej – kjeç tuj u ba edhe unë çemento me më futë në thes!"

Kohët e fundit ankohej se i dhemb kamba dhe ftohej shpesh në gjoks, kështu që mjeku këthehej gati çdo ditë me karrocë me e pa.

Dimni i vjetit 1940 bani i ftohët. Në dhjetor Pater Gjergji mori një bronkopneumonë, që nuk ia ulen mjekimet. Megjithëse me ethe, ai i ruante kthiellësinë e mendjes dhe humorin. Pak ditë para se të mbaronte tha: "Doktor, don Zoti të shëndoshem se due me i shkrua disa vargje me ia kuqë disave."

Vdiq me 30/XII/1940. Në meshen e pershpirtëshme, e pashe baben tim në kishë, me shenj të zi në krah tue ba një nderim pranë arkivolit të mikut. Kur i kënduen *Requiem*, sytë e tij ishin të përlotun dhe i dridhej buza.

Mandej i gjithë populli i Shkodrës e percolli birin e tij të madh me nderim e dhënë të thellë në pushimin e tij të fundit.

Perveç admirimit të naltë për veprat e Tija, unë Atë Gjergj Fishtën e kam nderue edhe si njeri i madh, tamam i denjë për titullin Poet i Kombit!

Injac SARAÇI

Tiranë me 5/VI/1992

Shkoder, 6 Tetuer 1918

Y Kshritshmi Katur,

Me gjithë qëndrën po m'at me marnë fipër në
 dhimë të njezmashme qis të kës në naper sekë të
 Sjalit të Ues, të cillin Kati prantof me e marnë
 lula për vëdi e mos me e lounë me u veshkë nden
 të vshkira të këtij shekullit të qii. Kati u thashtë
 forcë e durrim!

Kati, qis s'kan vëdi s'at dy Freten të Kū
 vensit t'ouë, për me parajellë Sjalin në të mra
 min pūshim, është vëdi i tūi; për m'duël me
 ndje parajja, qis m'dha fjaltoni i Katur s'at
 e s'at louna të Parin me Sije me Kshë. Kūen
 Katur e Jota t'at Sije, se m'është dështë me u
 loun quti për fudh të Kijës Rūzore të dvanashē
 si edhe pūnen e fletor, qis s'at s'at s'at s'at
 e vëdi - Edizione straordinaria, shpursj
 se kës me m'at fudh kës faj.

Dishmohem me ndonë

Shërbuer i Persojë i Katur të Katurshme

P. Gjergj Fishta

Meditime

SHQIPËRIA LINDORE – PARA “ZGJIDHJES FINALE”

Shenim i editorit: Prof. Dr. Sami Repishti ka lindë në Shkodër ku edhe ka krye studimet fillore e të mesme. Studimet e nalta i ka bërë në universitetet e Firenzës, Parisit dhe New Yorkut.

Në vjetin 1946 Profesor Repishti asht dënuar me 15 vjet burg për perkrahje të së drejtës së vetëvendosjes për Kosovën. Me 1959 ai ka hënë nga Shqipëria dhe ka emigruar në Shtetet e Bashkuara të Amerikës, ku ka punuar si pedagog i frengjishtes dhe italishtes pranë shkollave amerikane. Profesor Repishti asht autor, në mes tjerave, edhe i shumë pesdhetë studimeve, artikujve dhe memorandumëve për Shqipërinë Lindore. Gjatë kësaj kohe ai po ashtu ka organizuar simpoziume shkollorësh dhe folë e dishmë para Kongresit amerikan, gjithmonë për fatin e tre milion shqiptarëve në ish Jugosllavinë. Profesor Repishti ka shkruar shpesh edhe për revisten tonë dhe asht antar i Këshillit të Institutit Katolik Shqiptar e tash gjendet në pension.

Një nga kuptimet e fjalës “problem” është edhe ai i një gjendje të pa dëshirueshme që kërkon një zgjidhje. Problemi i Shqipërisë Lindore është i këtill.

Ky problem u krijua me 1877 nga sulmet ushtarake serbe në zonat e Leskovacit, Kurshumlisë, Nishit në veri-lindje të Kosovës, dhe sulmet malazeze kundër Tivarit, Ulqinit, Hotit e Grudës. Me okupimin e këtyre trojeve, u bënë masakrat dhe dëbimi i më shumë se 200.000 shqiptarëve (të njohur si “muhaxhirë”).

Problemi u thellua më shumë me Luftat Ballkanike (1912–13). Sulmi i “aleatëve ballkanikë” kundër imperatorisë otomane, u bë kryesisht mbi tokët e banuara nga shqiptarët e vilajeteve të Shkodrës, Kosovës, Manastirit, dhe Janinës.

Nga Shkodra u shpëputen Tivari dhe Ulqini me rrethet dhe malesitë e Hotit e Grudës. Ngjallina u shpëput e tërë Çameria, troje të destinuar për një martirizim të pa mëshirë, dhe të mbuluara nga një heshtje kriminale. Nga Manastirin u marrën

pothuajse tërë tokat e vilajetit, ndërsa nga Kosova u shpëputën të gjitha trojet e përfaqësuar sot nga Republika e Kosovës.

Një ndarje territoriale e këtillë me forcë, dhe e mbajtur me forcë, është në parim e paligjeshme. Një ndarje e këtillë mund të konfirmohet nga konferencat ndërkombëtare – ashtu siç u bë në Berlin në 1878, në Londër 1913, në Paris në 1919 dhe 1946 – por nuk zgjidh problemin. Një ndarje e këtill quhet aneksim ushtarak, ku popullsia është e nënshtruar një rregjimi të imponuar me forcë dhe nga jashtë, ku tokët e banuara nga kjo popullsi e shtypur quhen “tokë të okupuara”, dhe prandaj gjithëherë subjekti i kërkesës për çlirim, ose objekt shtypje për pushtuesin.

Kjo ndarje, ashtu siç është rasti edhe për Gjermaninë mbas luftës së dytë botërore, për Korenë mbas vitit 1950, dhe për Vietnamin mbas vitit 1956, është imorale në esencën e sajë, dhe e paligjeshme sepse mban të ndarë me dhunë dy pjesët e të njëjtit komb. Kjo është edhe gjendja e kombit shqiptar sot, në vitin 1993: i ndarë me forcë ushtarake, i ciptuar nga traktate ndërkombëtare padrejtësisht dhe pa pëlqimin e popullsisë vendëse. I paafte të reparojë me forcë padrejtësinë e pësuar me dhunë, kombi shqiptar vazhdon të përjetojë i tronditur tragjedinë e vet kombëtare.

Ndarja e një kombi në dy ose në shumë shtete ruan zakonisht emrin duke e përcaktuar atë me adjektivin gjeografik të përshatshëm; p.sh. Gjermania Perëndimore ose Lindore, Vietnami i Veriut ose i Jugut etj. Por në bashkimin e drejtë dhe të natyreshëm të tij. Atëherë mon emrin e plotë pa kualifikime: Gjermania, Vietnami etj. Shqipëria është e një natyre të këtillë; prandaj emri Shqipëria Perëndimore për Republikën e Shqipërisë, dhe Shqipëria Lindore për të gjitha tokët jashtë kufijve të Shqipërisë Perëndimore është i logjikshëm. Në Shqipërinë Lindore janë tokët e banuar nga shqiptarët në Mal të Zi, në Serbinë e Jugut, në Maqedoninë e Greqi dhe natyrisht në Republikën e Kosovës.

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Për arsye të zhvillimeve politike të fundit në Ballkan, dhe kryesisht në Jugosllavi, problemi i Shqipërisë Lindore është komplikuar akoma më shumë, nga fakti se popullsia shqiptare e atyre trojeve banon tani mbrenda kufijve ndërkombëtarë të pesë shteteve të deklaruara "të pavarur", dhe si rrjedhim ballafaqohet me pesë situata të ndryshme nga njera tjetra, dhe të pavarura nga njera tjetra. Shqiptarët e Republikës së Kosovës, Serbisë, Malit të Zi, Maqedonisë dhe Greqisë janë venë para një dileme e cila me gjithë unitetin e saj në esencë (pjesë të kombit të vetëm shqiptar të mbajtura me dhunë) paraqet diversitet, si rrjedhim i konditave politike që ekzistojnë në secilin nga shtetet e ndryshme ku banojnë. Është një fakt se jo vetëm mbajtja me dhunë e gjysmës së kombit shqiptar është një akt imoral dhe i paligjësëm, por edhe ndarja e tij në pesë grupe të inkuadruarë në pesë shtete të ndryshme, është një padrejtësi që as nuk justifikohet, as nuk spjegohet, po të ishte e mundur të eliminohej dhuna, forca ushtarake që e mban. Prandaj, teza që mbron bashkimin e dy Shqipërive, Perëndimore dhe Lindore, në një Shqipëri të vetme, të vërtetë, dhe atdhe për të gjithë shqiptarët është një kauzë moralisht e shëndoshë, dhe ligjërish e justifikueshme.

Me qenë se elementi që e krijon dhe e mban sot këtë gjendje është forca ushtarake dhe dhuna, zgjidhja e problemit paraqet dy alternativa:

a) konflikti i armatosur, përdorimi i forcës ushtarake dhe i dhunës, për të rifituar të drejtat e kombit shqiptar; dhe

b) përdorimi i diplomacisë, si mjeti më i fortë, dhe i rezistencës aktive e paqësore, si metoda më e pranuar për zgjidhjen pa konflikt të armatosur të problemit të Shqipërisë Lindore.

Për arsye të natyrës komplekse të problemit, do të përqendrohemi në analizen e gjendjes në Republikën e Kosovës.

Republika e Kosovës, e lirë, e pavarur, dhe neutrale u shpall më 7 shtator 1990, në Kaçanik. Ky akt guximtar dhe largpamës u krye nën kërcënimin e bajonetave serbe. Republika e Kosovës ka lindë e larë me gjak, dhe është një foshnje e kërcënuar në djep.

Historikisht, pak kombe gëzojnë të drejtën e shtetit të lirë më shumë se kombi shqiptar i Kosovës: i ndërgjegjshëm dhe i vendosur të ruaj identitetin e vet kombëtar qoftë edhe me sakrificat supreme. Mbas tronditjes së pësuar në 1877-78, erdhën luftat ballkanike. Historia ka shënuar se vetëm në vitin 1913, serbët kanë vrarë 12.777 shqiptarë (nuk dihet sa kanë vrarë malazezët, bullgarët dhe grekët). **Carnegie Endowment For International Peace** shkruan:

"Shtëpi dhe fshate të tëra janë bërë shkrumb e hi, popullsia të pa-armatosura dhe të pafajshme janë masakruar në masë, akte të pabesueshme dhune, grabitje, brutalitet i çdo lloji -të këtyre janë mjetet e përdorura dhe që akoma përdoren nga ushtarakët serbo-malazez me qëllim që të ndryshohet krejtësisht karakteri etnik i këtyre trojeve të banuara terësisht nga shqiptarët." Udhëheqsi socialist serb, D. Tucović spjegon: "Në të njëjten kohë kemi parë krematorët barbarë në të cilat me qindra gra dhe fëmij janë djegur për së gjalli." (1914)

Sekretari i Shtetit amerikan, Robert Lansing, njofton kolegun e tij britanik Lord Balfour sa vijon:

"...Ambasada britanike në Washington ka informuar Departmentin e Shtetit sa vijon, në lidhje me masakrat e Shqiptarëve në Mal të Zi: Gusinje, Plavë, Pejë, Gjakovë, Pozhur, dhe Rozhajë janë të gjitha skena terrorizmi dhe masakre nga ana e trupave serbe dhe agentëve serbë, qëllimi i të cilëve është çfarosja e popullsisë shqiptare në ato troje..." (Paris, April 18, 1919)

Studjuesit kosovarë kanë zbuluar krime të reja e të shumëta serbo-malazezë kundërshqiptarëve. Gjatë regjimit monarkist në Jugosllavi (1919-1941) shtypja e pamëshirë e popullsisë shqiptare është gjithashtu subjekt i studimeve të dokumentuara, duke përfshirë edhe origjinin në forcë të më shumë se 400.000 shqiptarëve të konsideruar si turq, me konventën jugosllavo-turke. Asnjë shqiptar nuk është lejuar. Asnjë shqiptar nuk është lejuar. At Shtetin Gjercorin vra sepse u mësoi shqip fëmijëve shqiptarë. Lëvizja e rezistencës ("Kaçakët") nën drejtimin e çiftit legjendar, Azem dhe Shota Galica, u revolt në gjat. Tre deputetë shqiptarë në Parlamentin jugosllav u masakruan nga policia serbe në kishat në shumë stacione policie se

shkolla në Kosovë. Urrejtja për shqiptarët dhe për çdo gjë shqiptare kultivohej me sistem shkencor.

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Ky ishte trashëgimi!

Me Luftën e Dytë Botërore, lëvizjes kombëtare të çlirimit në Kosovë i u shtua edhe një element i ri elementit social. Lëvizjes patriotike i u shtua edhe bindja ideologjike e cila në esencë frymëzohej nga një besim fanatik në forcën çlirimtare të marksizmit. Faktori ideologjik impononte përgatitje për agjitacion dhe propagandë, dhe detyrimisht kërkonte kuadro të shkolluara. Në Kosovë, lëvizja patriotike deri në atë kohë, udhëhiqej nga para vendëse dhe luftarë të njohur për trimëri. Me hyrjen e elementit të ri social dhe organizimit që ai pruri në luftën kundër okupatorit, udhëheqja e lëvizjes së rezistencës në Kosovë filloi të kalojë nga para e njohur e vendit, në duart e propagandistëve të ideologjisë komuniste, elementë të panjohur.

Vetë natyra internacionaliste e lëvizjes komuniste (e njohur publikisht si Lëvizja Nacional-Çlirimtare) dhe mungesa e eksperiencës politike në elementin udhëheqës nacional-çlirimtar shqiptar të Kosovës, e vunë këtë lëvizje nën drejtimin e udhëheqjes komuniste jugosllave. Megjithatë, forca e sentimentit kombëtar në mesin e popullsisë shqiptare ishte aq e fortë, sa qëvetëm një premtim solemn për bashkim me Nenën Shqipëri mbetej si mjeti i vetëm i mobilizimit të masave në luftën kundër pushtuesit fashist. Ky premtim solemn u bë me 2 janar 1944, në fshatin Bunjan (Tropojë) nga 49 delegatët (shqiptarë, serbë, dhe malazez) e Konferencës së Parë Antifashiste Nacional-Çlirimtare për Kosovë dhe Metohi: "Ashtu si gjithëherë më parë, edhe sot populli i Kosovës dhe Metohisë kërkon bashkimin me Shqipërinë." Nuk duhet harruar se katër muaj më parë, në shtator 1943, në Prizren, Lidhja e Dytë e Prizrenit mori të njëjtin vendim: bashkim me Shqipërinë, dhe se një delegacion i kësaj Lidhje parashitroi kërkesën e vet formalisht para Asamblesë Kushtetuese të Shqipërisë, në Tiranë (me 13 tetor 1943) e cila e aprovoi unanimisht.

Ngjarjet e vitit 1944 u zhvilluan me shpejtësi. Fitorët e aleatëve anti-fashistë favorizonin forcat e Lëvizjes Nacional-Çlirimtare të Kosovës. Shqiptarët formuan bataljonet dhe brigadat e rezistencës të frymëzuara nga premtimi solemn i Bunjanit, por

udhëheqëja komuniste jugosllave hodhi poshtë kërkesat e tyre (mars, 1944). Në këtë mënyrë konfrontimi dhe konflikti u bënë të pashmangshëm. Me largimin e ushtrisë gjermane, presioni serb u rrit. Shqiptarët reagueshan me kryengritjen e Drenicës (dhjetor 1944-Maj 1945) nën udhëheqjen e Shaban Polluzhës, Prof. Imer Berishës, Gjon Serreqit, Mehmet Gradicës, Marije Shllakut, Muftiut të Gilanit dhe tjerë. Vlerësimet e tragjedisë së shkaktuar arrijnë nga 36.000 në 60.000 shqiptarë që humbën jetën në luftë me komunistët serbo-malazez, ose në masakrat e bëra në kampe të ndryshme koncentrimi ushtarak. Shpresa e shqiptarëve për bashkim kombëtar u tradhëtua. Kësaj tradhte, ata u tradhëtuan edhe nga bashkëatdhetarët e tyre komunistë nga Shqipëria Perëndimore, e cila në atë kohë kishte rënë në duart e një klike komuniste, të rij fanatikë, të etur për pushtet, pa eksperiencë politike, dhe pa asnjë respekt për jetën e njeriut, dinjitetin e individit, e të drejtën e qytetarit.

Me ngritjen e ekranit, filloi akti i ri dramës shqiptare në Shqipërinë Lindore: popullsiashqiptare e nda në mes të tri republikave jugosllave, me pjesën më të madhe në kuadrin e Republikës së Serbisë. "Krahinës autonome" të Kosovës i u njoh një autonomi e kufizuar që në 1946, e pakësuar në 1963, e zgjeruar më 1969, dhe e konfirmuar si një njësi e Federatës Jugosllave me Kushtetutën e vitit 1974. Si rrjedhim, Kosova siguroi pushtetin e vet legjislativ, ekzekutiv dhe judiciar, por humbi të drejtën e barazisë si republikë federale.

Me revoltën e vitit 1981, raporti i marrëdhënjëve në mes të shqiptarëve dhe Federatës Jugosllave, kryesisht Serbisë, u lëkundë në thellësi, dhe në mënyrë të përpunueshme, por u krijua një gjendje cilësore e re: pakënaqësia popullore shqiptare tregoi natyrën e saj të vertetë të shtypur të lenë mbas dore, të përbuzur, të vërfënuar dhe të shgënjyer nga një udhëheqje lokale të kishte pranuar nënshtrimin ndaj serbëve si nat për shqiptarët, masat e gjëra të udhëhequra nga diktatori dhe vajzat kosovare të dëduara dhe ngamësues të frymëzuar nga një histori e gjatë përpjekjeje për liri, barazi e jetë me dinjitet filluan të kërkojnë zgjidhje të reja në shtatat e reja të krijuara në Jugosllavi me rritjen e shovinizmit serb. Ballafaqimet e pandëprera në mes të forcave të organizuara e të armatikuara të pushtetit serb (dhe jugosllav) nga

njera anë, dhe e shqiptarëve të pambrojtje nga ana tjetër, shkaktuan vdekjen e qindëra të rrije, pjesëtarë të një breznie që me ndërgjegje të plotë mori mbi supa rolin historik të çlirimit kombëtar. Në rrugët e fshatit dhe në sheshet e qyteteve kosovare u dëgjuan zërat e protestës shqiptare dhe krisma e pushkës vrasëtare serbe, çdo ditë, çdo kohe, dhe pa pushim.

Lëvizja e re u ushqye me gjakun e deshmoreve të rij, heroizmi i të cilëve frymëzoi edhe prindërit që i lindën me dëshirën e papërmbajtur për rezistencë. Përpjekja kosovare për çlirim fitoi çdo ditë e më shumë admirimin e botës së qytetuar. Emri i Kosovës dhe lufta e shqiptarëve për vetëqeverisje u bë e njohur në çdo kënd, u diskutua në simpoziume shkollorësh, dhe në kançeleritë e diplomacisë ndërkombëtare. Gjaku i derdhur nga rinia kosovare po vinte themele të një ndërtese të re që do të konkretizohej më vonë, në shtator 1990, me shpalljen e Republikës së Kosovës.

Me eliminimin e autonomisë së Kosovës (mars 1989) u thye kontrata kolektive që përbente bazën kushtetuese të federalizmit jugosllav. Lodra politike e Slobodan Millosheviqit do të bëhej tani e mbrapa jashtë kuadrit kushtetues: ajo lodër nuk do të respektonte më rregullat e ligjëshmërisë. Si rrjedhim kemi heqjen e autonomisë së Vojvodinës, grushtin e shtetit të Malit të Zi, dhe kundërshtimin ushtarak serb për kërkesat e pavarësisë së Sllovenisë, Kroacisë, Bosnje-Herzegovinës, dhe Maqedonisë. Çekani serb në Kosovë frikësoi republikat tjera të Federatës, e cila dy vjet më vonë, u çthur krejtësisht. Përpjekjet serbe për t'a mbajtur federatën jugosllave me forcën e Armatës jugosllave dështuan në Slloveni, në Maqedoni, ndërsa në Kroaci dhe sidomos në Bosnje-Hercegovinë mbollën terrorin, dhe sollën vuajtje të pa para. Sot jemi dëshmitarë të shkatërrimeve, të vdekjes, dhe të turpërimit që ka shkaktuar në tërë Jugosllavinë shovinizmi serb i krypto-komunistëve të Beogradit.

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Nuk ka asnjë dyshim se tragjedia që ka mbuluar sot Bosnjën e Herzegovinën është planifikuar edhe për Kosovën. Shtypi dhe udhëheqësit e sotshëm serbë në Beograd nuk e fshehin këtë plan, dhe kjo është një e dhënë që duhet të orientojë çdo mendim tonin, çdo qëndrim tonin sot, dhe çdo plan veprimi për të nesërmen. Ky fakt i hidhur shkakton

shqetësim tek të gjithë shqiptarët sepse kemi të bëjmë me "zgjidhjen finale" serbe të problemit të Kosovës, d.m.th. masakrën masive të popullsisë shqiptare, dhe dëbimin e një milionë shqiptarëve nga Kosova, simbas thenjeve të vetë politikanëve serbë.

Pyetja e natyrshme që na imponohet është: "Ç'duhet të bëjmë me qellim që të pengohet rreziku i planifikuar nga shovinistët serbë të Beogradit për çfarosjen e shqiptarëve në Kosovë?"

Duke u nisur nga premisa se çdo shqiptar ka të drejtën e patjetërsueshme të çfaqje lirisht mendimin e vet për këtë problem gjithëshqiptar, duhet të shtojmë menjëherë gjithashtu se, duke marrë parasysh seriozitetin e jashtëzakonshëm të problemit, çdo mendim i çfaqur duhet të jepet me sensin e përgjegjshmërisë supreme. Spekulumet politike, qellimet karieriste, euforia romantike, konceptione të gjetura në folklor dhe llomotitje të pa asnjë kuptim nuk kanë vend sot, dhe para situatës ekstreme që përballojmë në Kosovë, Problemi kërkon një studim shkencor të faktorëve që e përbejnë, një studim të ndërlidhjeve reciproke në mes të këtyre faktorëve, të brendshëm dhe të jashtëm, forcat që ballafaqohen, avantazhet dhe pengesat që përballohen, dhe të arrihet në konkluzione, qoftë edhe të përkohëshme, por që sigurojnë të paktën dy objekteve permanente:

a) ruajtja e jetës së popullsisë shqiptare në trojet e tyre;

b) ruajtja e vijave themelore të programit të çlirimit kombëtar të tre milionë shqiptarëve në ish Jugosllavinë.

Si pikë fillestare duhet marrë fakti se popullsia shqiptare e Shqipërisë Lindore jeton nën kërcënimin direkt të rrezikut serb, prandaj ajo duhet të jetë ideatore dhe ekzekutuese e çdo programi për vetëruajtjen dhe çlirimin e vet. Si rrjedhim, është zëri i përfaqësuesve të shtetit që duhet të ngrihet, të dëgjohet, të respektohet. Çdo zë tjetër është sekondar, dhe plotëson atë. Sot shqiptarët e Shqipërisë Lindore kanë pamundësi të tyre politike, dhe në rastin e Republikës së Kosovës kanë shtetin e tyre me organet legjislative dhe ekzekutive republikane, megjithatë refuzimin serb të njohjes. Këta organet që përfaqësojnë interesat e qytetarëve

që kanë çfaqë vullnetin e tyre të lirë në votime të përgjithshme, të fshehta, të rregullta nën mbikëqyrjen e subjekteve ndërkombëtare. Detyra e çdo shqiptari, brenda dhe jashtë Shqipërisë Lindore, është të respektojë vendimet e marrura nga këto organe legjitime.

Kjo nuk do të thotë se vija politike e ndjekur nga udhëheqja e sotme e Shqipërisë Lindore është jashtë çdo kritike. Uniformiteti mbyllë krijimtarinë. Shkembimi i lirë i mendimeve është aq i rëndësishëm sa edhe ajri që thithim për organizmin tonë. Por ky shkembim duhet të nisët nga një vetë-disiplinë koshiente që imponon serioziteti ekstrem i problemit dhe momenti në të cilin jetojmë. Bëndjet politike, preferencat ideologjike, mbingarkesat krahinore ose fetare, e të këtyra nuk kanë vend. As kanë vend qëndrimet megalomane të "shpëtimtarëve të kombit." Asnjëri nga ne nuk është aq i madh sa të balancohet me interesat jetike të tre milionë shqiptarëve në Shqipërinë Lindore. Figura e Skënderbeut i takon epokës mesjetare, dhe atje duhet të qëndrojë. Ne jetojmë në shekullin njëzet, dhe po hyjmë në shekullin njëzet-e-një, jetojmë në një botë e cila më të gjithë të metat e mëdha që ka akoma, ka bërë hapa të mëdhej drejt respektit të individit, për lirinë e dinjitetin e tij që e nxjerrin nga konfuzioni i masave të pafomë e të shfrytëzuara nga demagogët politikë e fetarë, në një botë që ka kodifikuar mjaft mirë të drejtat e njeriut dhe detyrën e qytetarit brenda një shteti, si dhe normativen e marrëdhënjëve të njerit shtet me tjetrin. Jetojmë, menjëherë në një botë të qytetruar shumë larg nga obskurantizmi i demagogjive që ushqen mentaliteti mesjetar.

Tragjedia e përgjakëshme e Bosnje-Herzegovinës është, sidomos për ne shqiptarët, mësimi më i fuqishëm që kemi marrë si rezultat e shkëljes së normave ndërkombëtare më elementare nga klika e papërgjegjësi e Beogradit. Si shqiptarë, ne nuk mund të veprojmë jashtë kuadrit ligjor ndërkombëtar, jo vetëm sepse nuk kemi forcën që na mbështetë (siç bënin Serbia), por sepse kjo duhet të jetë bindja e jonë koshiente. Brenda këtij kuadri ligjor ndërkombëtar, ne duhet të veprojmë me pjekuri të madhe, dhe me vendosmëri që të evitojmë masakrën serbe në Shqipërinë Lindore, dhe njëkohësisht të avancojmë para botës së

qytetruar kauzën e të drejtave tona legjitime. Shqipëria Lindore pa shqiptarë nuk është Shqipëri Lindore; ajo është një shkretëtirë ose një truall serb. Një Shqipëri e atillë nuk është vizioni jonë i nesërm. As nuk është vizioni jonë i nesërm një Shqipëri e ciptuar në pesë shtete të ndryshëm siç është sot. Por ne nuk do të jemi në gjendje të arrijmë objektivin tonë pa unitet veprimi, pa unitet qëllimi, dhe natyrisht pa mbështetjen e bashkësisë ndërkombëtare.

Për këtë, është imperativi kategorik i sotshëm që udhëheqja shqiptare e Shqipërisë Lindore të bashkëpunojë ngushtë me qeverinë e Shqipërisë Perëndimore, dhe së bashku të mobilizohen për të fituar mbështetjen e mbar kombit shqiptar, për një kauzë gjithëshqiptare, dhe atë të bashkësisë ndërkombëtare.

Shqiptari e ka provuar me shekuj se din të luftojë dhe të vdesë për atdhe e liri. Sot duhet të provojmë një rrugë të re, me bashkëkohore: sot duhet të luftojmë me mend dhe me guxim, dhe me një respekt të thellë për shenjtërinë e jetës së çdonjerit nga ne, dhe të të gjithë shqiptarëve.

Me varreza, jemi ngopur për tre mijë vjet me radhë!

Sami REPISHTI

Baldwin, New York

3 mars, 1993



REÇENSIME

Zef Simoni & al. *Martirizimi i Kishës Katolike Shqiptare 1944-1990*, Shtypshkroja "At Gjergj Fishta," Tiranë, 1993.

Monsinjon Zef Simoni, Ipeshkëv auxiliar i Shkodrës me një kolegium prej 10 bashkëpunorësh tue përfshi tre artistë shtypi, ka prodhuar dokumentin më rëndësishëm të historisë së Kishës Katolike në Shqipëri nën zgjedhjen dhunuese të komunizmit shqiptar. *Martirizimi i Kishës Katolike Shqiptare 1944-1990* është prodhim i pendave të më së 21 autorëve. Është një simpozium i kujtimeve e dishmive okulare t'atyne pak dishmitarve të tragjedisë së madhe të katolikizmit shqiptar.

Libri, i redaktuar nga Mons. Zef Simoni (drejtues), Kolec Çefa (redaktor përgjegjës) me bashkëpunorë Simon Pepa, Lec Zadeja, Karlo Suma, Tom Sheldija, Fritz Radovani, Gjergj Kola dhe artistët e shtypit Pjerin Sheldija, Angjelin Nenshati e Fritz Radovani është i ndamë në katër pjesë. Pjesa e parë fillon me një përkushtim të librit Atit të Shejtë, Papës Gjon Palit të II, të cilit iu dhunë kopja e parë gjatë vizitës historike në Shkodër më 25 Prill, 1993. Mandej Vili Kamsi, ambasador i Shqipërisë në Vatikan, e hapë librin me një artikull të shkurtër por kuptimplotë. Kamsi thekson se pa botimin dokumentues të salvimit tragjik të katolikizmit shqiptar nga komunistat "si do të mund binden njerzit për të vërtetën?" Na mund të shtojmë këtu se shkrime dokumentuese për salvimin fetar në Shqipëri ka botuar Instituti Katolik Shqiptar në Shtete të Bashkuera që nga vjetë 1966 në shumë gjuhë, por sidomos në anglisht. Tash, me fitoren e lirive fetare e politike në Shqipëri, është jo vetë një nevojë shpirtërore por edhe detyrë kombëtare e fetare me vull në shkrim e dokumentim krimet e pandiura t'atyne që në emër të një ideologjie të rrejshme e shkatërrimtare morën nëpër kambë, rrahën, munduen si mos kushin e mbytën në mnyrën më barbare prijsat e pjestarët e thjeshtë të Klerit Katolik, tue mos kursyer as murgeshat e mjerat.

Kjo pjesë e librit përmban edhe disa dishmima thekse për jetën e torturave të Argjipeshkëv Prennushit e të meshtarve Nikaj, Shllaku, Dajani, Meshkalla, Çoba e Maçaj që u botuen së pari në gjuhën

anglisht në botimet e ndryshme të Institutit Katolik Shqiptar.

Pjesa e dytë "Klerikë të pushkatuar" paraqet një listë kronologjike me emra e data t'atyne klerikëve, që mbas torturave të tmerrshme, u pushkatuen gjatë vjetve të salvimit t'egër 1944-1990. Përshkrimet e shkurta, shumica me fotografina të martirëve, janë sa të trishtueshme aq inspiruese për dashtënin e madhe, kurajoni e besnikin e këtyne tribunve ndaj atdheut, Kishës Katolike e Papës së Shejtë.

Jo më pak prekëse është pjesa e tretë e librit me titull: "Të vdekun në burgje e në kampe çfarosëse." Këtu shkurtazi dëftohet kalvari i atyne ipeshkvijve e meshtarve që flijuen jetën në një martirizim të ngadalshëm, por gjithmonë tue dhanë shembullin sublim se si i krishteni falë edhe jetën me knaqësi për Fe e Atdhe. Edhe këtu riprodhohen fotografina individuale e përshkrime rëndësishme mbi momentet e fundit të jetës së tyre të shejtë.

Pjesa e katërt dhe e mëbërme me titull: "Vucjtën dënimin dhe sot janë në shërbim të fesë" jep emnat e atyne meshtarve që si për mrekulli pështuen nga këthetrat e kulshedrës së kuqe e tash plotë hov e dashtëni po i shërbejnë Kishës e popullit të shumvucjtun.

Libri përfundon me një statistikë të hatashme që ban me t'u dridhë shtati nga mënjëra. Po riprodhojmë vetëm një pjesë të sajë.

1. Klerikët e pushkatuar kanë pasë moshën mesatare 47 vjeç;
2. Klerikët që kanë vdeqë në tortura kanë pasë moshën mesatare 50 vjeç;
3. Klerikët e mbytun pa gjyq kanë pasë moshën mesatare 56 vjeç;
4. Klerikët që vucjtën pak kanë mbas torturash, kanë pasë moshën mesatare 52 vjeç;
5. Klerikët që kanë vdeqë mbasi kanë vucjtë burgun kanë ba gjithë jetë 315 vjetë burg;
6. Klerikët që kanë vucjtë dënimin dhe sot janë në shërbim të fesë kanë ba 563 vjetë burg;
7. Të gjitha vitet e burgut që antarët e Klerit Katolik kanë vucjtë prej 1944-1990 janë 881 vjetë

ose gadi 9 shekuj! Ata kanë krye rreth 450 studime neper 24 univerzitete të ndryshme evropjane.

Me të vërtetë një bilanc i tmerrshëm që i ven njollën e pashlyeshme në historin kombtare *Partis Komuniste Shqiptare*. Çfarë justifikimi kanë "çunat" e Enver Hoxhës të maskuem sot nën një emen të rij – "socialista", për krimin kombtar të baballarve të tyre stalinista? E pra klerikët e zhdukun aq mizorisht predikuen jo vetëm fen, por me veprat e tyre të ndrituna letrare, shkencore e kulturore i çilen kombit syt me pa shkelqimin e trashigimit tonë të pasun stergjushuer.

Libri *Martirizimi i Kishës Katolike Shqiptare 1944-1990* me gjithë disa të mbeta të natyrës teknike e gjuhsore, të cilat janë edhe të kuptueshme në këte fazë të vështirë tranzitore, asht dokument i dorës së parë jo vetëm për historin e Kishës Katolike, por po ashtu për përfudhen gjysëm shekullore të kombit tonë nën diktaturën e egër komuniste. Libri do të jetë po ashtu ndihmesë për gjuermuesat vendas e të huej të historis sonë bashkohore e mund të porositet pranë Argjipeshkvisë së Shkodrës ose edhe neper famullina (kisha) të qyteteve e katundeve.

Palokë PLAKU

Glacomo (Ják) Gardin, S.J.: *Dhetë vjet burg në Shqipni (1945-1955)* — *Parathanja* nga Paolo Dezza, S.J. — Botim i *La Civlta Cattolica*, Romë, 1992. Faqe 108. Perktbye nga italishtja; Zef V. Nekaj e Petro Vuçani.

Botimi origjinal i kësaj vepre *Dieci anni di prigionia in Albania (1945-1955)* ndodhi me 1986. At Gardin ia dhuroi kopjen e parë Atit të Shejtë, Papës Gjon Palit të II gjatë një audijencës private të delegacionit t'Institutit Katolik Shqiptar të San Francisako's, me 24 Shtatuer 1986. Ati i Shejtë u gëzue për dhantin e në letren e falnderimit që i dergoi Gardinit ma vonë shprehet kështu: "E kam lexue me vemendje e emocjon librin tuej *Dhetë vjet burg në Shqipni (1945-1955)*... Ju falnderoj nga zemra për ketë dhuratë tue shpresue se nga përvoja e juej si i burgosun për ëmen të Krishtit, tjerët do të kuptojnë se Zoti jep ngushllime të thella edhe në periudha të vuetjes së randë..." (Faqe 101)

Përnjherit, të gjithë ata që lexuen librin patën përshtypjen e gjendjes së mjerushme të Shqipnis nga çdo pikpamje, veçanërisht persa i perket fës. Reçensime të shumta u botuen në shtypin italian e madje edhe vende të tjera. Suksesi i librit në një anë, por ma fort dashtënjia e miqësija me ish profesorin e tij e mxiu Editorin e *Buletin Katolik Shqiptar*, Gjon Sinishta me e përkthye anglisht me titullin *Banishing God in Albania* (Dëbimi e Zotit nga Shqipnija), Ignatius Press, San Francisco (USA), 1988. E qe tashti, prap me perpjekje të Gjon Sinishtës duel edhe botimi në gjuhen shqipe.

Kush asht Ják Gardin? Një misjonar jezuit italian që ka kalue në Shqipni permbi njëzet vjet, dhetë prej tyre neper burgjet e kampet e punës së detyrueshme në Shqipnin komuniste. Ka dhanë mësim e sherbue si drejtues shpirtnuer në Seminarin Papnuer Shqiptar dhe në Kolegjin Saverjane të Jezuitve në Shkodër. Flet një shqipe të pastër e për mesues të saj ka pasë vetë Dom Ndre Mjeden!

Por le të kërthehemi te vepa e At Gardinit. Çka asht permbytja e librit të tij?

Fillon me një *Parathanje* të Palo Dezza, S.J., edhe ky e njeh Shqipnin, mbasi si Provincjal ka qenë përgjegjës i drejteperdrejt për Misjonin Jezuit në Shqipni, e po ashtu e ka vizitue Shqipnin për çdo vjet. Pastaj fillojnë kapitujt e ndryshëm qysh nga "Arrestimi e Proçesi" deri tek "Çastet e fundit të dramës." Duhet me e lexue librin per me kuptue vuetjet e tmerrshme që kanë pësue tri konfesjonet fetare n'atdheun tone, veçanërisht Kisha Katolike. Përshtkrimi i torturave ban me tu dridhun shtati e komunizmi krenohesh se "Shqipnija ishte i pari shtet ateist në botë!" Zoti ka fatkeqsi ma të papërshtkrueshme! E perdojini i të burgosunve ma zi se shtazët. Dënueshan gjindia per asgja, ndërsa klasa sunduese me Enver Hoxhën e klikën e tij vazhdojshin, pa as ma të voglën meshirë, me e braktisë popullin në mienat e pa bukë. At Gardin nuk mban mënj për kurke nd porse tregon me thjeshtësi të verteten ashtu si ka pa e jetue.

Versioni shqip përshtin po ashtu edhe predkun historik që At Gardin mori në San Françisko të Kalifornis, në rasën e Përkujtimit Nderkombtar të 10 vjetorit të Salvimit fetar në Shqipni. Ky Përkujtim

u ba me 13-14 Prill, 1985, n' Univerzitetin e San Françiskos, Kaliforni, USA.

Në fund libri permban edhe një shënim t'Editorit të *Buletin Katolik Shqiptar* mbi recensimet e ndryshme në shtypin botnuer që perkthimi anglisht ka pasë gjatë këtyne vjeteve. Z. Sinishta po ashtu njofton për perkthimin e librit *Dhetë vjen burg në Shqipëri* në gjuhën e popullit mik krot që duhet të dali së shpejti.

At Gardini mandej me një koment kuptimplotë i paraqet publikut zhvillimet e reja dhe disfaten e komunizmit.

Libri *Dhetë vjet burg në Shqipëri* do të ketë sigurisht sukses edhe në gjuhën shqipe e pa tjetër do t'influencojë pozitivisht në breznit e ardhëshme, të lira nga zgjedha fizike e shpirtnore e komunizmit.

Libri *Dhetë vjet burg në Shqipëri* mund të porositet pranë **Seminari Papnuer Shqiptar, Pallati i Argjipeskvisë, Shkodër, Albania** ose pranë **Instituti Katolik Shqiptar, University of San Francisco, Xavier Hall, San Francisco, California 94117/USA.**

Petro VUÇANI

Radovani, Fritz: *At Pjeter Meshkalla, S.J., Shtypshkroja "At Gjergj Fishta", Tiranë, 1993.*

Me sa di, ky asht libri i parë kushtue jetës e veprës të një kleriku katolik që botohet në Shqipëri mbas përmbysjes së komunizmit. Me shkruar për At Pjeter Meshkallen, e në të vërtetë për secilin meshtar katolik të mbytur mizorisht nga plumbat ose torturat, puna e detyrueshme në kampet e vdekjes ose helmimi prej dorës së komunistave, do të duheshin volume të tana. Fritz Radovani, auctor i këtij punimi të shkurtë por të ndieshëm e plot inspirim human e fetar, e ka vu muzën e parë në kollanën e artë t'atyne fatosave që ranë flije për fë e atdhe. Tjerë auctorë si Fritz të marrin tash shembull e të vazhdojnë me ia shtue këto muza kollanës me shkrime e vepra tjera për martiret tonë.

Libri *At Pjeter Meshkalla, S.J.*, ndahet në tri pjesë. Në pjesën e parë auctori përmbledhëtas e me një gjuhë të thjeshtë e t'afërme për lexuesin, si i thjeshtë e i afërme ka qenë vetë At Meshkalla, paraqet jetën e tij si atdhetar, meshtar e jezuit me bindjet e tija të forta filozofike, fetare e humane. Radovani përshkruen këtu argumentat e të vërtetë e shqiptueme në rasi të ndryshme prej meshtarit jezuit, që janë ba tashma si legjendë e thesar shpirtnuer jo vetem për katolikët por për tanë shqiptarët e ndershëm e liridashës. Qe disa shembuj nga libri:

Prej melosdisë së lehtë të zanit të tij ruhen prap këta tinguj:... "Vllazën me të gjithë, pa dallim feje!" Asht Ati i madh, Ati i të gjithëve, mysliman e të krishtenë, me fë e pa fë, që hapte krahët e u thonte... "Eni, eni djelmët e mij, durim, të lutem për ta dhe ti falim!", dhe së bashkut me të gjithë vazhdonte vujtjen e mjerimin e pa kufi, gjithmonë si Feja e pat mësue, tue pritë delën e humbun... E kur t'irani me sy të ngërthyem si mordja, na dukej n'at sketërnë, e plot lakmi shifte rinin shqiptarë, kah gjak ne vetull vllau vllaut po i merite, si t'ishte i huej, që kombin po i shklet; i Madhi Meshkalla veç brofte në kambë e zani, si prej vorrit naltohej deri në qiell: "Na nën dhë e ju mbi dhë, por na jemi ma të fortë se ju!"

Kur britën me djegë Ungjillit - një za u ndigjue - inkvizicion...! E Ati u tha: "Digjeni po deshët, se as s'keni për t'u dalë, si paraardhësit tuej, që tash 2000 vjet veç djegin Ungjijt, por fën e Krishtit nuk kanë mujtë me e zhdukë." Mizorët tërbohën ma zi kur Punë dy përmbë u thotë: "Unë në Zotin besoj e do t'fijtoj... ju më dënoni sa të dëni, se unë prap se prap do të dal, ju shpeshojnë ken me hangër, e aty asht fundi i ju!" Feja e Krishtit s'mbaron kurr!"

Paqe 2

Kjo pjesë e librit përshkruen epizode tjera të fuqishme nga jeta e këtij martiri në pritje m'u shpallë *shpejt shpejt*.

Epizodë me randësi e tronditëse që sjell libri i Radovanit asht ajo e mbledhjes së përgjithëshme t'arsimtarve me 1967 n'Institutin e Lartë Pedagogjik të Shkodrës, gjatë fushatës së turpshme të "Revolucionit Kultural". "Unë jam katolik e besoj në Zotin", ishte një nga deklaratat e Meshkallës. "Se po të shprehin lirisht mendimet e tyre (njerzit), ky pushtet nuk ka për të zgjatë shumë", kjo deklaratë i terboi pjesëmarrësit e shumë prej tyre bërthën "Pusho fashist reagonar". Ndër ata që folën dhe e shanë Meshkallën me përkushtim e zell *partijak* ishte edhe Jup Kastrati, që sot mban ligjerata i ftuem nga diaspora e New Yorkut!!!

Pjesa e dytë e librit përmban poezi e shkrime me themë të ndryshme shkruar prej At Pjeter Meshkallës. Që një poezi të cilën autori e ka shkruar gjatë burgimit të tij në Burrel e asht në themën e Shën Augustinit.

JETE E RE

Në zemrën time lindi jeta
Shpirti asht mbushun me dëshirë
më ndriti mendjen e vërteta
viejtjet më duken gurrë me hirë.

Lindi Krishti në zemrën time
më pruni pagjë e dashuni,
më reshi forcë e ngushëllime
Zhduku errësinë e burgut të zi

Unë dikurë me mburje shkojshe
për pusina, kurtha e leqe;
krime në terr unë farkojshe:
holla vrapin për rrugë të keqe...

Epshi e faji janë veriga
që, tue të lëmue, të skllavërojnë
shpirti s ka qetësi në punë të liga,
që veç rrathët ma fort shtërngojnë.

Mallkue kjoftë për jetë mbrapështia,
ruga e turpit sot kjoftë pré!
u thyen prangat, ktheu *liria*
shteku u hap për *jetë të re!*
(Faqe 48)

BB (Burgu i Burrelit) 1954

Pjesa e fundit e librit të Fritz Radovanit për At Meshkallën, riprodhon shkrime zyrtare nga *Bashkimi* e fletore tjera komuniste kundër këtij tribuni të pamposhtun për fë, liri e drejtësi. Po ashtu botohen disa intervista si dhe një biografi e shkurtë e martirit. Në fund njoftohet për dekretin e Presidentit të Republikës së Shqipërisë, Dr. Sali Berisha, me të cilin At Pjeter Meshkalla, S.J. dekorohet me medaljen e artë PISHTAR I DEMOKRACISË.

Libri i Fritz Radovanit asht për t'u lexue nga çdo shqiptar që mban për zemer parimet e shejta të atdheut, fës e liris.

Palokë PLAKU



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SHKODER (2018)

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(Jesuit) Sacred Heart National Shrine in Tirane, 1941



... in 1967 being remodeled for secular use



... in 1968 as Cinema and Concert Hall

Evolutionary Albania...



Father Ernesto Santucci, S.J., the Jesuit Superior in Tirane is the prime mover in restoring this beautiful edifice and in rebuilding from-the-ground St. Gjon the Baptist Church in Bilaj near Tirane. The Bilaj Church was consecrated 26 April, 1993 by Camillo Cardinal Ruini, Vicar General of Rome and newly ordained Archbishop of Durrës-Tirane Rrok Mirdita. Father Santucci also established Pastoral Ministry Center at the University of Tirane



... in 1992, following the end of the Communist rule, being restored



...in 1993 restored (outside) to its original beauty. Much has to be done to restore the interior of the Shrine

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