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It is indeed painful for me to announce that our journal, after fifteen years of fruitful and dedicated service to the Albanian people and all those interested in Albanian affairs, will be suspended with this Volume XV. The serious illness of our editor makes it impossible to continue our publication. In the meantime, we have approached the Albanian Catholic parishes in the United States offering them our experience and support if they are willing to continue publishing the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*. Unfortunately the response has been unsatisfactory. These parishes are unable to add another burden to their pastors' already heavy schedule of spiritual and social duties. Our Board thus has had no other choice than to cease publication of the Bulletin, with much regret. But while the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* will no longer be published, the Daniel Dajani Albanian Catholic Institute will continue its religious and educational work. In the future our Institute will again publish materials on Albania.

As a consolation our readers will find in this last Volume XV much that is interesting and enjoyable. Studies and articles treat a variety of Albania's present-day challenges and especially its struggle toward the democratic transformation of the nation. "The Current State of Religion" and "The Implementation of Religious Freedom" deal with the somewhat confusing religious atmosphere in the country with many foreign Christian and Islamic missions active today in Albania. The "Jesuit Mission in Albania" and "The Seventieth Anniversary of Fr. Jāk Gardin" (a Jesuit missionary imprisoned in the early stages of the communist dictatorship) are an inspiring witness and example of Catholic missionary contributions to the Albanian Church.

This year's issue also discusses at length the Greek minority question in Albania, in light of the currently tense diplomatic relationship between Greece and Albania. We also present an article on the seventieth anniversary of the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church written by a scholar in Orthodox and Byzantine studies.

As in previous issues we continue to monitor the tragic plight of the Albanian people in Kosova. There is also an inspiring article on Adem Demaçi, a Nobel Peace Prize Candidate in 1994, who as we have reported many times in the past, was the longest held political prisoner. Demaçi spent more than twenty-eight years in the Yugoslav gulag, becoming a symbol of Gandhian peaceful resistance for all oppressed Albanians.

The *Opinion Forum* again this year focuses on the literary figure Ismail Kadare. The Albanian dissident writer Anik Kasoruho together with *San Francisco Chronicle* journalist Stephen Schwartz discuss Kadare's controversial "change of heart", which took place just months before the fall of the communist dictatorship.

The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* spotlights the profound literary legacy of Martin Camaj in an article on his poetry by Ardian Klosi and a report on a recent symposium on Camaj held in Shkodër.

Readers will enjoy selections of uplifting poetry as well as two suspenseful short stories. Historians will find a valuable contribution to Albanian Catholic and national history in the study published on the missionary activity of the Franciscans from Dubrovnik among the Albanians living under the Ottoman Turkish occupation. This concluding issue addresses many other topics which have an important bearing on present-day Albanian life.

Finally, on behalf of our Daniel Dajani Albanian Catholic Institute I wish to express our gratitude to all who have helped us, with their prayers and financial support to publish the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* through these fifteen years.

Zoti Ju shpërblefë! **God reward You!**

Paul Bernadicou, S.J.

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Vjeti XV **1994**

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* * *

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May the Lord, our common Father, and Our Lady of Shkodër reward you and watch over all our friends and benefactors.

Zoti ju ruejtë e bekoftë të gjithëve! (God save and bless you all!)

* * *

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The symbol of the cross shown on the front cover of this last issue with the inscribed words FÉ, ATDHE, PËRPARIM (Faith, Fatherland, Progress) has been for centuries the Albanian Catholic Logo. During the five decades of harsh Communist rule the motto and symbol instilled into Albanian Catholics the will to resist the government's godless oppression and to remain faithful to Christ, to the Holy Father and to their beloved fatherland. May the new generations of Albanian Catholics now living in freedom continue to uphold this sacred tradition.

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Editorial

THE END OF AN ERA

The end of one era always marks the beginning of another, with new elements of time and circumstance. This is the case with our *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* which, with this issue, comes to the end of its service to the Albanian and world community. For fifteen years our publication survived, under very difficult conditions, despite the fact that it was not subsidized by any government, religious or social agency. We depended on our readers and friends for our existence. During these years the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* came to be seen by many people as a primary resource of information about Albania and its people, and especially about religious matters in Albania since World War II.

When the first issue of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* appeared in 1980 President Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi of the **Free Albania Committee** in New York, called it " 'a voice crying in the wilderness' seeking to reach the nearly deaf ears of the international community about the unspeakable religious oppression of the Albanian government towards its own people". Now with the victory of democracy and the beginning of religious freedom new elements and possibilities for Albania's future have opened up. The Catholic Church and other religious groups are flourishing. As reported in this issue, the Albanian Catholic press is resuming its rightful place in the nation's cultural life. Three large Albanian Catholic parishes are growing in the United States and inserting themselves into the life of the Catholic Church in Albania, as well.

The fifteen years in which the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* existed was the most tragic period of religious oppression in Albania. There was no other voice to publicly defend Albanian believers or to be their advocate in world public opinion. Our publication based on the West Coast of the United States took upon itself this role in the international community. From this privileged place of freedom we raised our voice. As our 1984 editorial stated that, "we ask all religious and civic leaders to include in their concerns not only the plight of the oppressed masses in Central America, but also the plight of believers in the Soviet Union, North Korea, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, etc . . . Greater still is the need for public concern and action on behalf of the suffering believers in Albania." In every issue of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* the conscience of our readership was addressed. We asked everyone to become educated about the ongoing savage religious oppression in Albania and to voice protest through their governments as well as the United Nations.

The *Bulletin* from its inception was not dedicated merely to Catholic issues or religious matters in Albania. It attempted to be a voice for all Albanians suffering at home, or in exile, who were targeted for extinction by the Albanian communist government. People were sent to prison and labor camps, and in some cases executed, for contacts with the world outside Albania, even with their immediate family members. The *Bulletin* soon became a unique source of information on Albania, its culture, its religious situation, its history, and latter-day persecution, which as Pope John Paul II emphasized, "happened to no other people".

The Albanian communist government was quite successful for a long time in squelching any dissent within the country. It lent a deaf ear to protests of the international community. Through its propaganda machine, the government directed its anti-religious campaigns. Government authorities tried to wipe out any vestige of the Catholic Church and religion in Albania. They especially aimed to erase the memory of the Catholic Church's presence and contribution to the Albanian nation and culture. Their principal means was the falsification of history, either by covering up well-known facts,

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or by maintaining silence about important aspects of Albanian history and contemporary life. All this was in addition to the jailing, torture and death that they inflicted on both the clergy and laity, and the destruction of religious cultural treasures such as churches and schools. The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* published articles and studies to present the truth about Albania (the majority was the exact opposite of what the Albanian government told its people and the world). Soon the Albanian government became aware of our *Bulletin's* influence on the academic communities and on world opinion. Human rights organizations around the world, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (Geneva), and the Vatican as well as the leaders of other churches were appraised of the facts about the persecution of believers in Albania.

The number of *Bulletin* copies printed was never great. The first issue had a printing of 500 copies. Other issues increased to a total of 2000. These were distributed to universities, libraries, foreign affairs departments of various governments, human rights organizations, religious leaders and others interested in human rights. The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* and other publications of the Albanian Catholic Information Center were smuggled into Albania. Through its international connections (e.g. Albanian friendship committees and associations) the Albanian government labeled our Center, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* and its editor as the "worst enemy of the Albanian people" and charged that the Bulletin was a "work of American propaganda paid for by the CIA".

Fifteen years ago we never thought that the *Bulletin* would become a highly respected publication about religious freedom in Albania or Albanian culture, but the lot fell to us. Although our journal was mainly devoted to the Catholic Church and its religious tradition in Albania, the *Bulletin* published in each issue a variety of studies and articles on Albania's culture, language and politics. It nevertheless emphasized the scope of the Catholic contribution to Albania in such unique studies as "The Catholic Church in Albania" in Vol. 5 (1984); "The Missionary Works of the Jesuits in Albania" in Vol. IX (1988); "The Works of Religious Sisters in Albania" in Vol. X (1989); and "The Apostolic and Educational Work of the Franciscans in Albania" in Vol. XI (1990). The *Bulletin* also dedicated itself to defending the rights for oppressed Albanians in Kosova in former Yugoslavia. This struggle continues.

Now the rejuvenated Catholic press in Albania will lift the burden from our shoulders. We feel the need to thank you, our friends and readers from across the globe who supported us these fifteen years, with contributions and with your prayers and spiritual support. We especially thank the Holy Father Pope John Paul II and his Vatican assistants. From the beginning of his papacy (which coincided with the birth of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*) John Paul II has been an inspiration in our efforts. Our thanks go to Mother Teresa, our Albanian sister and model of Christian life, for her care, concern, faithful prayers and words of encouragement. Our deep appreciation as well to the Jesuit Community at the University of San Francisco for their genuine support throughout the years.

Although the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* now withdraws from its place in Albanian affairs those who participated in its work will continue to play their part in the publications which will now, no doubt, flourish in the freedom of a renewed Albania. The Daniel Dajani, S.J. Albanian Catholic Institute which has published the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* will continue its religious and educational mission at the University of San Francisco. New possibilities await, in the new era before us.

Gjon SINISHTA

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GUEST EDITORIAL

A TRIBUTE TO THE ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

For many people on several continents, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* is now an institution!

Founded by a humble young Albanian devoted to the fulfillment of a promise made to God and to himself while incarcerated, the *Bulletin* became a beacon of light for many thousands of Christians and non-Christians, who since 1945 had recognized the presence of evil in Albania and had found the courage needed to fight it. The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* (ACB) is a classic example of that old saying: "It is better to light a candle, than to curse the darkness!" The *Bulletin* did light a small candle, and all around it the world began to see better, to think better, and to judge better the events taking place in Albania. And for this, we all are grateful!



Bishop Gjergj Volaj on the day of his episcopal ordination, June 26, 1940.

I clearly remember that day in November 1947, when the late Monsignor Gjergj Volaj was brought to trial by the Communist Government of Albania. He was asked by the Judge of the Special Military Court in Shkodër: "What are you?" Expecting an answer befitting his narrow ideological frame of mind, the Judge was stunned when the Bishop, earmarked for execution, responded calmly but firmly: "Jam Ipeshkëv i Kishës Katolike Apostolike Romake Shqiptare!" (I am a Bishop of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church of Albania). The Judge coughed a couple of times as if he wanted to find his voice again, and then, launched into a tirade against the Church, and particularly against the Vatican. But Monsignor Volaj's message, "Catholic" and "Albanian", had done its job. It was now clear that in the struggle between the persecuted Church and the omnipotent ruler, the former came out victorious. The Albanian Catholic Church survived! The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* is a living proof of it.

The ACB has been just that, a bulletin, a publication issued periodically, which has chronicled the proceedings of a society. It has attempted to present an historical account of facts and events that happened in Albanian society.

The primary merit of the ACB is its success in being both, Catholic and Albanian, the balancing of both terms which although analytically different, are empirically inter-related. They serve a Catholic population which satisfies its spiritual needs in the context of an Albanian framework that includes other confessions. Catholic and Albanian are used inseparably!

This, I think, proves the depth of love for their country that nourishes Albanian Catholic believers. It is a sentiment reflected all over the pages of the Bulletin. It is the living proof that the land visited by the Apostles Paul and Andrew in the early days of Christianity has kept the seed of "the

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universality" that Christ Himself wanted His Church to preserve. The ACB has endeavored to preserve that "universality" in its work by avoiding the interpretation of "Catholic" simply as a useful term designating a particular group of Christians. The *Bulletin* has told us that Catholicism implies "unity in multiplicity". We are all equal human beings, all individuals free to act and responsible for our actions, all members of the human race, independent of our nationality or creed.

One has to go through the pages of the fourteen issues that have enriched our lives since 1980. Their contents are so diversified, and yet, so faithful to the goals and objectives of the Editorial Board. From the calvary of the Catholic clergy in Albania to the accounts of the simple individuals who literally went through hell, one sees a sequence of stories and confessions that support the concept of redemptive suffering. Suffering with a purpose, whether understood in religious terms or not, always makes us wonder about the power of conviction. The *Bulletin* accounts showed people accepting suffering either as biblical retribution for their sins, or as a birthpang of a new era of restoration. Such suffering could also be seen as a "gift" enabling us to atone for others.

In our beloved land of Albania, during the difficult days of persecution, some thought of our collective situation as that of an apostate nation which was being punished with extreme suffering. Very few accepted this premise. Albania, a valley of tears for many long centuries, belongs to that category of nations whose ratio of suffering has been disproportionately high. To me, that is still a mystery!

One has to go through the pages of the ACB to be convinced of this truth! Truth about the suffering endured by all Albanians has been told by the *Bulletin* in simple terms or in more sophisticated descriptions, but always revealing the indomitable spirit of the victim fighting against the criminal: in Albania, and in East Albania (Kosova, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia Proper and Western Greece) as well. All through the pages of the *Bulletin* the focus has been on the human will to resist the temptation of surrender to evil. We feel for the victims, join them in solitary cells, hear their cry and cry with them, and either on chorus or in our own solitude, we pray for them!

The *Bulletin* has made public the names of many who perished in secrecy. By doing so, it has revived them, it has given them a place among the living, and actually has saved them from the oblivion, where those who tried "to save their lives" were lost! Now, we know them and respect them as symbols of a victory of life over death. Their permanence is thus assured!

I see in Gjon Sinishta, the humble editor of the ACB, a Christian possessing the "gift" and accepting the "mission" of seeing the grace of the Lord applied to Albanian society, now in a state of healing and redemption. That is optimism inspired by faith. Whether we accept it or not, it is a redeeming quality we all wish to possess. The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* and its editor have substantially contributed to this kind of optimism among us. We are grateful for it. History will recognize the monument he erected, as the stone which survived the builder.

Sami KRISHTI

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

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THE WORTH OF A RECORD

At first sight, it will seem strange that one of the primary records of events, particularly of religious events, that occurred in Albania from the end of World War II to 1994 was published in English in California, at Santa Clara in the beginning, then in San Francisco. No doubt there are Albanian immigrants in other parts of the United States and elsewhere, particularly in Italy. Many of these have also sought to make known the oppression of religion in their homeland. But the main impetus for the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* (1980-94) was Gjon Sinishta, the *Bulletin's* editor, who lived in Santa Clara and San Francisco during the past decades.

Sinishta worked as Supervisor of St. Ignatius Church at the University of San Francisco. In the back of this large Church, he found space and time to collect all the information he could about his native Albania. During its hard Communist years, Albania, was one of the most closed and intransigent nations in the world. To find any information at all about Albania required persistence and inventiveness.

Under Sinishta's inspiration, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* became the primary source of news and commentary about Albania. Sinishta himself wrote extensively and often used the pen names *Lulash Dajçi and Palokë Plaku*. He passionately researched and translated articles and editorials written about Albania. He tried to have reviewed in the *Bulletin's* pages books written about Albania wherever found. Sinishta collected whatever he could discover about Albania in the Italian, German, French or Spanish press. He managed to obtain some access to Albanian newspapers, journals, and memoirs, as well as books written about Albanian history and politics or those concerning individual Albanians.

Sinishta was also interested in the fate of Albanians located outside Albania, especially those in Kosova, in the former Yugoslavia. Naturally, he followed the career of Mother Teresa as she was perhaps the best known person of Albanian heritage in the world. Pope John Paul II had a permanent and intense interest in Albania, something Sinishta was careful to record in his pages. Indeed, in a touching moment, Sinishta was able to present all the copies of the *Bulletin* to the Holy Father himself.

What was of particular concern to Sinishta was the religious character and situation of his country of birth. Albania with its peculiar complexus of Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic population was one of the most unique countries in the world. In addition, the Albanian Communist Party declared that the nation was officially atheist. The Churches and mosques were confiscated and turned to other purposes. Seminaries, schools, and libraries were closed. No country in the world experienced quite the intensity and length of religious persecution as that obtaining in Albania since World War II.

Sinishta was careful to document the murders of individual religious, clerics, and laity during these years. The *Bulletin* has carried the biographical information of each priest, bishop, layman or woman who was killed specially in the line of his faith. This effort is an invaluable record both as a simple witness to religious persecutions in this century and as an account of the nobility of those people killed by leaders of their nation in the cause of their atheist ideology.

Solzhenitsyn had already noted the importance of simply setting down accurately the names, times, places, and circumstances of actions of the state against individuals and groups. These sorts of facts depend on testimony, on the memory of those who witnessed them. As such, the record can be very fragile because the apparatus of a totalitarian state can, through use of torture and fear, prevent such information from being acknowledged. The *Bulletin*, in so far as was possible, performed this service during a period when it was almost impossible for this information to be known within Albania itself. This indeed is why a small journal,

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Gjon Sinishta offering Pope John Paul II the collection of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vatican, September 1986



Holy Father Pope John Paul II speaks to the Albanian Catholic Information Center Delegation, Vatican, September, 1986

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financed and published largely through the efforts of Gjon Sinishta and his friends, has become the record of one of the most unfortunate persecutions in modern religious history.

In one sense, though much remains to be done, the task Gjon Sinishta set out to perform is completed, completed with quiet dignity, honesty, and truthfulness. This record and its worth will stand the test of time. Whenever any scholar or journalist will want to know what happened to religion during these awful years of oppression and persecution in Albania, he will necessarily turn to the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* to find there as clear and accurate account of what went on as was possible to discover.

No doubt now, with a more free atmosphere—Sinishta himself was able finally to visit his native land—much new material will come forth. We cannot forget, however, that when no one else saw the need of this record, Gjon Sinishta did. At the cost of much energy, money, and worry about how to finance and produce this record, he managed to present each year a new volume. These volumes are the record of one man's efforts in the course of which he managed to engage all those interested in Albania, in religion, in freedom, and in truth. It is indeed a remarkable effort.

I can often remember Gjon Sinishta writing me or calling me to ask me to review or write something for his *Bulletin*. In the course of these years, I felt that I came to learn something about communism, about Albania, about religion through his efforts. There are, no doubt, many kinds of heroes of scholarship and journalism. Gjon Sinishta is one of these, an honest man who knew, even in such an unlikely place as a church sacristy in San Francisco, that a record of religious persecution had to be set down.

We must be grateful for his efforts and for his persistence. Without them, many things would not be known to us. And we can also suspect, that the very fact of this *Bulletin* made the Albanian Cummunist Party, in its darkest moments, realize that what it stood for was really exposed to the eyes of those willing to read the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* during these past decades. It was there that the nature of that oppressive regime was seen. It was there too, on a more profound level, where the reality of faith and suffering played itself in yet another way before the eyes of God and mankind.

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INFORMATION CENTER ON ALBANIA

During my studies at the University of San Francisco I met a not-so-young man who told me that his homeland was Albania. This fascinated me as prior to meeting Gjon Sinishta I hardly knew anything about Albania except that Mother Teresa and the comedian John Belushi were both Albanian. In conversation with Sinishta I realized that he possessed within himself the burning desire to inform the whole world about the plight of modern day Albania. As an aspiring journalist I soon became acquainted with Sinishta's work in the Albanian Catholic Information Center. I visited the Center often. I wrote about the Albanian situation in the student newspaper *The Foghorn* and in the *National Catholic Register*. I conducted a lengthy interview with Sinishta which appeared as the main article in one issue of *The Foghorn*. No one could have imagined a Center of such importance conducting its operation in a small sacristy space at the back of St. Ignatius Church.

As time went on I began to assist Sinishta in the production of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*. My work on the *Bulletin* greatly influenced my formation as a journalist and has made me feel a close relationship with Albania. What I gained from the time I spent working on the *Bulletin* has far surpassed anything I gave it. For those of us who have been privileged to be a part of its work it has been a transforming experience. What I discovered in the Center were profound truths about the greatness of the human spirit which are hard to find elsewhere.

The story of the Center is inextricably linked with the story of Albania. The Center existed to get out the truth about Albania, come what may. The terrible atrocities committed against the people of Albania, particularly against its Catholics, were largely ignored by the world's press and where they were mentioned they were often misunderstood. Albania was considered a faraway and forgotten place, and its people were considered to be backward, thanks to the propaganda of Albania's Serb and Greek neighbors. For the most part, the plight of Albania was met with little but indifference by the rest of the world.

In history, this has been a common reaction to the plight of Albania, but it remains a sorely misguided one. Albania has often served as a microcosm of the world around it, and as a point-player in the skirmish for Western Civilization. When Turks attacked Christendom, Albania was their point of entry and Albania held them back. When Albania finally fell, following the death of her legendary leader Skanderbeg, the tide turned to favor the Turks in other parts of Southern Europe. And the persecutions began. In Albania as in no other place, the severe consequences of ideas have tested people's fidelity. To be Catholic in Albania has always meant to be persecuted. But at the same time, the Catholics of Albania closely identify their rugged and rough religion with their homeland. "Faith and Fatherland" is their motto, and Albanian Catholics say it with more vigor in a predominantly Muslim country than those in other, more statistically Catholic countries can say it.

In the stark countryside of Albania the divisions and differences between Christianity and Islam showed themselves less than anywhere else. Albania has clearly shown the possibility of a peaceful coexistence between opposing religions. Albanians report that before religion was outlawed in Albania altogether, Muslims would frequently join in observing Christian feast days, and Christians would take part in Muslim festivities. In Albania, diametric opposition in beliefs did not preclude civility.

The Albanian Catholic Information Center showed all of the depth and force of these traditionally Albanian traits in its own work. When all seemed lost to communism and cultural decay in Albania, the Center was hard at work, collecting and disseminating information about all things Al-

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banian. It provided the documentation indispensable to the compilation of an accurate historical record of the country's recent and distant past. It was picked up by the Library of Congress and libraries across the world as a key information source. Many universities depended upon the Center for their research. A number of students preparing theses and doctoral dissertations came to the Center to do research, receiving help freely at this source which was the only place available to them in the Western Hemisphere for such a wide variety of information on Albania. In late 1990 the Center received a visit from Lindita Bupci, the Director of the Albanological Department of the National Library in Tirana. She was on a tour of universities in the United States sponsored by the United States Information Agency. Ms. Bupci visited the Center for two days and was very impressed with the scope and amount of the documentation available at the Center. I assisted Fr. William Monihan, S.J. and Sinishta in providing her with those books and periodicals available at the Center and at the University of San Francisco lLibrary. The only other places Ms. Bupci visited on the West Coast were Stanford University, San Diego State University and the University of California, Berkeley. On her visits she was especially interested in books and periodicals on Albanian culture and society printed outside Albania, either in Albanian or other languages.

Human rights organizations also looked to the Center for information about Albania. The Minnesota Lawyers' Group and Amnesty International turned to the Center in compiling their own reports on persecution in Albania. In the face of overwhelming odds, like Skanderbeg five centuries past, the Center stood its ground and did its job superlatively.

In an important way the Center was distinctively Catholic, and at the same time fully Albanian. In its understanding of the meaning of suffering, in its willingness to forgive enemies, and in its devotion to the Holy Father, the Center kept its own set of beliefs firmly in place. It was tenacious and unwavering in its fidelity to Christ. But at the same time, there was no hint of antagonism toward Albanian Muslims, there was great respect for Islam and members of its Albanian hierarchy. The Center recorded and published with the same care and affection the persecution of their Moslem brothers and sisters. In these ways the Center imparted to those of us who associated and worked for it not only the lessons of the history of Albania, but the lived experience of all that is best in the Albanian spirit.

In confronting communism, Albania showed its true colors. The pith and power of its people showed itself equal to this threat. By telling the story of Albania under Enver Hoxha, the Albanian Catholic Information Center had some surprising results. The Center's commemorations of the persecution in Albania attracted attention from great spiritual leaders including Mother Teresa, Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, Basil Cardinal Hume of England (President of the European Bishops' Conferences), Joseph Cardinal Hoffner of Germany, Humberto Cardinal Medeiros of Boston and a score of Vatican officials. Political leaders such as Michgan Governor George Romney, California Governor George Deukmejian and President Ronald Reagan sent messages of support as well as Senators Jesse Helms, Robert Dole and Edward Kennedy; Undersecretary of State Elliot Abrams; Congresswoman Sala Burton and Congressmen William Broomfield, Tom Lantos and Joseph DioGuardi.

These commemorations organized by the Center in 1966, 1972, 1985, 1987 and 1991 show just how committed Albanians in the diaspora are to those that they have had to leave behind. Filled with color and ceremony, the commemorations attracted clergy and lay-people from all over the United States and Canada, and indeed even from Europe and Australia. Cathedral-sized rooms were filled with participants at these functions. I personally participated in two of these gatherings, the 75th anniversary celebration of Albanian independence held in 1987 and the celebration of Albanian religious freedom in 1991. Both ceremonies impressed me immensely and I felt myself to be a part of the Albanian people, adding my voice to those imploring justice and freedom from God. I was especially touched by the devotion of the

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Albanians to Our Lady of Shkodër. Now I could answer "yes" to those who would ask me, in jest, "Did Gjon Sinishta 'albanize' you too?"

To study Albania is to study all of the tragedy and triumph of mankind. All the elements are there: the ruthless regime, a people that is oppressed by their rule, but others who refuse to be broken, and a strong religious sense that undergirds the movement of resistance. But to study Albania at the Albanian Catholic Institute "Daniel Dajani, S.J." (which has now taken over the work of the Albanian Catholic Information Center) is something more still. For there, you see the spirit of Albania in action. A promise is a precious thing there and the faithfulness of God is apparent to all who have eyes to see.

Having been a part of the efforts of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* for several years I was saddened by the news of its closing with the 1994 issue. This closing will bring a kind of void to my life, and not only to me but to all the scores of other *Bulletin* writers, contributors and readers. The *Bulletin* has done its job educating people around the world not only about religion and persecution in Albania but about all things Albanian. I have come to be quite knowledgeable about Albania and this knowledge will serve me well in my present work in Washington, D.C. and in my future life. The energy and commitment that made the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* a success will be passing to other projects for Albania in its place. And for those of us who have been privileged to work for Albania, the vibrant and hopeful attitude that was imparted to us at the Center will be present in many ways in our own lives for years to come.

Tom HOOPES



Opening moment from the 1985 Commemoration, St. Ignatius Church, University of San Francisco, California

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AGAINST THE STREAM:
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE ALBANIAN CATHOLIC INSTITUTE, 1966-1994

The year 1966 was filled with significant events throughout the world. In the United States a narcissistic youth rebellion was on the rise, with demonstrations against the Vietnam war increasing, drug use proliferating and popular music assuming the fantasy tones of the "love generation". Civil rights demonstrations continued to shake the southern United States and ghetto insurrections repeatedly broke out in the northern and western cities of the country. In the then-Soviet Union, the writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Danyel emerged as the first open literary dissidents in many decades, and were charged with treason. China saw the "Cultural Revolution" begin with the purge of Peng Zhen and Lo Juiching, and Mao Zedong's swim in the Yangtze River. An outbreak of student and labor rioting in the Netherlands, leading to the emergence of the anarchistic Provo movement, briefly fascinated Europe and the world. The French poet André Breton, founder of the surrealist movement and long-time anti-Stalinist, died at age seventy. And in Detroit, Michigan, an Albanian immigrant auto-worker and former Jesuit seminarian, Gjon Sinishta, established the Albanian Catholic Information Center, the predecessor of the Daniel Dajani, S.J. Albanian Catholic Institute.

The establishment of the Albanian Catholic Information Center began with a modest aim: to record the martyrdom suffered by the Catholic Church in Albania under its dictator Enver Hoxha. By any account Albania under the communists was the most isolated and Stalinist, and by very far the most brutally antireligious of the European communist states.

It seems strange to recall, in the interest of future readers, that in 1966 the communist dictatorships ruling from the Adriatic to the Pacific were considered immutable powers, destined to last forever, or at least, into the far and unpredictable future. Yet more bizarre is the recollection of the indifference, if not outright hostility, that greeted any campaign to educate the American intellectual public on the atrocities of Communism. Nearly all such attempts were rejected by the literary and political elite of the time as "cold war propaganda" associated with the unpopular war in Vietnam.

A handful of hardy individuals—perhaps best exemplified in the Communist world by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and in the West by British poet and historian Robert Conquest—dedicated themselves to an accounting of the deadly perversities of Marxist rule. Although much less known than that of Solzhenitsyn and Conquest, Sinishta's effort—the commitment of a single exiled speaker of an obscure foreign language seemingly lost in the vastness of the American landscape—would prove extraordinarily fruitful. Not only did Sinishta and his friends at the Albanian Catholic Information Center memorialize the sacrifice for Albania of their religious brethren, they also established a beacon of hope for the cause of Catholic Albanians whose religious and literary traditions were the particular object of Hoxha's attempt at extermination.

In addition, the Albanian Catholic Information Center was destined to make a major contribution to the defense of the oppressed Albanians of Kosovë, a part of the former Yugoslavia, and to the study of the Arbëresh culture of Southern Italy and the United States. Finally, after a quarter century of work for the cause of religious freedom in Albania, Sinishta and his collaborators would, triumphantly, see the liberation of Albania from communism, and the restoration of religious liberty to Catholics in 1991.

Sacrifice for Albania was the title of a 52-page multi-lingual magazine issued by the newly founded Albanian Catholic Information Center in Detroit, Unity with a significant Albanian-Ameri-

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can population, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the communist assault on the Albanian clergy. Bringing together reports, poetry, memorials and other documentation, the magazine was elegantly printed in 3,000 copies by a Franciscan press in Detroit under the direction of Fr. Leo G. Neal O.F.M. Conv. A beautiful, if grim, colored cover depicted uniformed communist soldiers herding chained priests into trucks.

Support for the printing of the magazine came from Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston, a city with a notable colony of Albanian-Americans, and the commemoration organized in conjunction with its launching was the first politically and religiously ecumenical meeting to address the issue of religious persecution in Albania. It was supported also by Albanian Muslims living in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Argentina. *Sacrifice for Albania*, distributed throughout the world, introduced the English speaking public to the "calvary" of Albania's most famous recent religious martyrs, killed by Hoxha's cohort beginning in earnest in 1946. First the leading clerics: Msgr. Vinçenc Prennushi, Archbishop of Durrës, imprisoned and tortured to death; Msgr. Gjergj Volaj, Bishop of Sappa, arrested and executed; Msgr. Frano Gjini, Bishop of Lezha, shot; Msgr. Gasper Thaçi, Archbishop of Shkodër, died while in police custody. Then the scholars, poets and writers: Fr. Anton Harapi, Fr. Bernardin Palaj, Fr. Gjon Shllaku, Dom Lazer Shantoja, Fr. Donat Kurti, Dom Ndre Zadeja, Dom Ndoc Nikaj, octogenarian father of modern Albanian letters, and others.

Christianity in Albania dates back to apostolic times, even before its illustrious son St. Jerome. Since the Turkish conquest of the country in the fifteenth century and subsequent mass Islamization, Albania's majority has been Muslim (70 percent), with about 20 percent Orthodox Christian (in the south) and 10 percent Catholic (concentrated in the Gheg-speaking area in the north of the country). The Catholic Church has made immense contributions to the preservation and dissemination of Albanian culture, and above all, has stood as the bulwark of Gheg local identity in Northern Albania.

The communist assault on Catholicism, following World War II, represented not only the gruesome fulfillment of the atheist claims of Marxism, but also an attempt to cut off Albanians from the traditional fountainhead of their literacy, and to obliterate Gheg and Scutarine (Shkodër-based) regionalism. In addition the Orthodox background held in common by Soviet Russia, the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav communists who assisted Hoxha in his rise to power, and the Greek communists who carried out a brutal terror war in their own country using Albania as a safe haven, all bred an especially ferocious hatred of Catholicism among Albanian communist cadres.

The Albanian Catholic Information Center soon enjoyed the authorization of John Cardinal Dearden, Archbishop of Detroit. The Center worked with the Arbëresh Bishop of Piana degli Albanesi, near Palermo in Sicily, to resettle some five hundred Albanians from refugee camps in Italy. With the help of Franciscan Conventuals and Jesuits these Albanians were brought to the Detroit and Cleveland area and became productive members of American society. The Center also appealed unsuccessfully to the Vatican to name an Albanian Cardinal.

The inauguration of the Albanian Catholic Information Center and publication of *Sacrifice for Albania*, both in 1966, were to prove depressingly apt, for the worst was about to come. A new and unsurpassed explosion of Hoxhaite fury broke out the following year. In 1967, the darkest moment for the believers of Albania, the Hoxha regime, seemingly inspired by the wholesale terrorism of the so-called "cultural revolution" in China, its powerful ally and mentor, officially abolished the practice of all religion in Albania, declaring it "the world's first atheist state". So-called "red guards" were organized among the young, again in emulation of Maoist China, and set about the total destruction or transformation for secular use of 2,169 churches, mosques, monasteries and other religious structures. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the Sunni Muslims and Bektashi (Dervish) sects, saw their legal status revoked.

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United States Assistant Secretary of State Dixon Donnelley wrote to Sinishta on August 17, 1967, "the Albanian people are living through a difficult period at present and are subjected to many hardships. There have been some reports of a recent step-up in the regime's drive against religion and religious practice among Albanian people." However, the United States had no diplomatic relations with Albania at that time and therefore had no regular means for reporting on the situation there. That same year Fr. Pedro Arrupe, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, noted in a letter to the Albanian Catholic Information Center that Fr. Pietro Palladini, S.J. (former missionary in Albania) had turned down the suggestion that he head a special deputation in Rome to coordinate and assist the activity of the Albanian Center in Europe, because he had previously been labelled a spy by the Hoxha government.

But the work of the Albanian Catholic Information Center continued, with slender resources, following valiantly in the footsteps of so many ethnic advocates before, who founded "marginal" but unique and necessary cultural enterprises in America. At the same time it entered into the country's long-established and rich tradition of small press publishing. As a recognition of their apostolate a delegation from the Albanian Catholic Information Center had its first audience with the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI in 1968. That year the pontiff issued a special document on the 500th anniversary of the death of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, Albania's defender and national hero, whom Paul VI's predecessors had acclaimed as "Savior of Christendom" and "Athlete of Christ".

In 1971 a happier chapter opened. The Albanian Catholic Information Center moved its operations to the University of Santa Clara in California. Moral support began to be received by the Center, from Catholic Bishops' Conferences from around the world—even from as far away as Japan. A significant moment for Albanian-Americans and their cultural aspirations came in 1974 with the visit to the United States of poet and scholar Ernest Koliqi. Koliqi was a member of the faculty of the University of Rome, publisher of the literary journal *Shejzat* (The Pleiades) and at that time the world's leading Albanologist.

Koliqi's visit produced important contributions to the study of the Arbëresh culture in America, among other materials. The Albanian Catholic Information Center sponsored Koliqi's tour of San Francisco and Santa Clara. He spoke to Albanian and Arbëresh-Americans at the Universities of San Francisco and Santa Clara, where receptions were held in his honor. At these receptions he personally met many Arbëresh from the Bay Area and beyond.

The year 1976 was a crucial one for the Center and its work, as it was for the world in general. The mass revolutionary hysteria of the 1960's had ended, although occasional crises in such countries as Germany, Italy and Argentina saw increased terrorism, and new wars and revolutions were on the horizon. Exaggerated secular hopes were waning, but a new spiritual rebirth had yet to take place. Throughout the world people began to redefine themselves in terms of personal responsibility and fulfillment.

It was a time for grand projects. That year the Center had its first direct contact with Nenë Teresa, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the Albanian woman born in Macedonia with the name Ganxhe Bojaxhiu, who exemplified the authentic spirit of human solidarity that had been traduced by the radicalism of the 1960's. Also in 1976, the Center published a kind of masterpiece, the collection of documents entitled *The Fulfilled Promise—A Documentary Account of Religious Persecution in Albania*. A handsome volume of 250 pages, *The Fulfilled Promise* presented to the English speaking world many dramatic, heartbreaking and outrageous testimonies, photographs, poems and related texts on the martyrdom of Albanian Catholics. It was a singular and irreplaceable chronicle, and copies penetrated everywhere it was needed—and, of course, into the secret archives of the Albanian communist state.

The title referred to the promise Sinishta had made to himself and God during the early torment of the Albanian Catholics, which he had

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personally witnessed in 1946. At that time Sinishta had vowed to thoroughly record the sufferings of his mentors, friends, teachers, peers, spiritual leaders and brethren. Professor James Torrens, S.J. of the University of Santa Clara's English Department and the translator from Italian into English of several of the book's piercing poems wrote that the book "is an important one and the quality is good . . . one of the books from which the history of Albania will be written."

The Fulfilled Promise was printed in 3,500 copies and brought about an outpouring of supportive letters from around the world, from religious and civic leaders alike, as well as from ordinary people concerned about the plight of the people of Albania. In the following year, 1977, the Center initiated a petition for beatification of Albania's modern Catholic martyrs. The Center also collaborated with Humberto Cardinal Medeiros of Boston and the Albanian Orthodox Bishop of Boston, Mark Lipa, on an appeal for religious freedom in Albania. In addition, in 1977 the Albanian Catholic Information Center established relations with the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, which was sent much information on the suppression of religious faith in Albania. An important relationship was also begun with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, through their Albanian commentator, Louis Zanga. During Vice-President Walter Mondale's visit in 1977 to the University of Santa Clara, the Center's representatives briefed the Vice-President on the situation in Albania and presented him with a copy of *The Fulfilled Promise*.

The first slivers of a radiant dawn came in 1979—the year of greatest significance for all those concerned with the struggle against the communist dictatorships. Karol Wojtyla, a Polish Cardinal who understood first hand and in the deepest parts of his being the criminality of marxist pretensions, was elected the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. It was the beginning of the end for communism. Pope John Paul II, in his inaugural speech, spoke in Albanian for the first time ever, along with the other languages of the presentation. It was clear that the Illyrian land, so long in the history of the faith, so terribly tormented by atheism, was very dear to his heart.

One year later, in 1980, among the first fruits of the new epoch symbolized by John Paul II, the Albanian Catholic Information Center produced the inaugural number of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* from Santa Clara. The Bulletin's first issue was fifty pages in all, but over the years it would expand to become a thick annual journal. In fifteen years of publication over 2000 pages of documentation were presented to the consciousness of the world. Similar to other publications associated with the churches of silence, including the underground, small Samizdat organs in the former Soviet Union such as *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* and *The Herald of the Ukrainian Catholic Church*, it was a small voice with a powerful range.

Indeed, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* quickly became known as a leading intellectual medium of the Albanian exiles, a kind of "Encyclopedia Albanica" including countless documents on the plight of Kosovë under Yugoslav (i.e. Serbian) domination, the Arbëresh, the Gheg dialect and achievements of such notable intellectuals as Ernest Koliqi, Martin Camaj, Arshi Pipa and others. Nevertheless, the main focus of the *Bulletin* was on the religious situation inside Albania, which throughout the 1980's saw "a continual Good Friday".

The *Bulletin* saw as part of its mission the revival, for new generations, of such classic northern Albanian, Catholic-inspired literary works as the epic poetry of Fr. Gjergj Fishta, Albania's national poet. Fishta's works, along with most of Albania's outstanding literary figures, had been mercilessly suppressed by Hoxha's regime. Finally, ecumenical concerns continued to be visible in its documentation mirroring the traditional cooperation between all believers in Albania.

The Center was especially successful in promoting the cause of Albanian believers in Europe. At the urging of the Center the German Bishops' Conference organized a Day of Prayer for Albania in 1984. Basil Cardinal Hume of England in a

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public statement of April 1985, on behalf of the European Bishops' Conferences decried the religious oppression in Albania and asked the faithful throughout Europe to pray for their persecuted Albanian brothers and sisters. In the same year and in 1985 the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty, whose past presidents included Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr. Albert Schweitzer and Belgian statesman Paul-Henri Spaak, presented a resolution in the United Nations to censure Albania. Only Cuba voted against the 1985 resolution.

On April 13, 1985 the Albanian Catholic Information Center sponsored a major commemoration of the forty year martyrdom of Albanian believers. The commemoration was held at the University of San Francisco with the participation of representatives from Albanian Muslims and Orthodox congregations as well as Jews, Protestants, and even nonbelievers and human rights advocates. Fr. Ják Gardin, an Italian Jesuit missionary who had been imprisoned by Hoxha delivered the main address. Two days before the event Enver Hoxha, the enemy of God, died; so that the day of remembrance in San Francisco coincided, remarkably, with his funeral. The commemoration included a civil ceremony, an ecumenical service and concluded with a Solemn Mass of Peace. Greetings were sent to the gathering by President Ronald Reagan and Undersecretary of State Elliot Abrams while California Governor George Deukmejian sent a personal representative.

Soon after that commemoration, a delegation consisting of Sinishta, Fathers Neal and Gardin, and Albanian Sister Lucia Lazza of Vatican Radio, was honored with a special private papal Mass and audience. During the audience Pope John Paul II commended the work of the Albanian Catholic Information Center.

The Center produced a videotape of the 1985 commemoration at the University of San Francisco which was distributed around the world, in over one hundred copies. In 1987 members of the Center began a major collaboration with the Minnesota Lawyers' International Human Rights Committee, resulting in publication of their report, *Human Rights in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania*, issued in 1990. Former Vice-President Walter Mondale, who had previously been briefed by the Center on religious oppression in Albania, wrote the introduction to this report. Another documentary report on the religious situation, *Albania: Religion in a Fortress State* by Janice Broun, was published in 1989 by the Puebla Institute, with the Albanian Catholic Information Center's cooperation and assistance. In 1988 the Center translated from the original Italian the prison memoirs of Fr. Jak Gardin, *Banishing God in Albania*, published by Ignatius Press. In 1992 translation and support were provided by the Center for the Albanian language edition of Fr. Gardin's memoirs. Both the English and Albanian editions of the book were made possible by the generous contribution of one of the members of the Center.

To celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of Albanian independence in 1987 a festive gathering was held at the University of San Francisco, attended by Albanians and Arbëresh from all over Northern California, with some from other parts of the United States. The cultural and religious heritage of Albania was celebrated by all present. The director of the Albanian Catholic Information Center, Fr. Leo G. Neal, O.F.M. Conv., was the principal celebrant of a Mass of Peace and preached the homily during which he commended the Albanian believers and encouraged them in their belief in Faith, Fatherland and Progress (Fé, Atdhe, Perperim). California Governor George Deukmejian officially proclaimed November 28, 1987 Albanian Independence Day in California.

In 1989 the Berlin Wall was dismantled and the Communist system collapsed in Eastern Europe. The Albanian Catholic Information Center moved to the campus of the University of San Francisco. Albania was late in throwing off the Marxist yoke, but in November 1990 the Center received electrifying news: an immense crowd had attended the first open Mass in Shkodër in decades, celebrated by a formerly-imprisoned priest, Dom Simon Jubani. The promise—the promise of God's grace and of the liberation of humanity

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through faith—had been again fulfilled. Albania was free.

Five months later, on May 4, 1991, the University of San Francisco honored Fr. Simon Jubani with an honorary doctoral degree which, in being conferred upon him, also paid tribute to the whole Catholic Church and other believers in Albania. The Albanian Catholic Information Center sponsored on that same day, in conjunction with the University of San Francisco, a Day of Solidarity and Prayer for Albanian Believers which was attended by Albanians, Arbëresh and Americans from all over the United States. A Mass of Thanksgiving for Religious Freedom was celebrated in St. Ignatius Church.

As a flood of news from Albania arrived it became known that *The Fulfilled Promise* and all issues of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin had been kept under lock and key in a closed section of the Albanian National Library in Tirana. Ardian Klosi, whose father was a high functionary of the government, had discovered them there, translated a selection of the texts, and circulated them clandestinely, at enormous personal risk.

Meanwhile the Albanian people faced a new, yet ancient danger in the form of Serbian imperialism, which, exploding in 1991, pursued war first in Slovenia and Croatia and then in Bosnia-Hercegovina, where the criminality of Serbian aggression, written in grotesque and horrific bloodshed and torture, stunned the globe. In the same year, at the dawn of religious freedom in Albania, a delegation from the Albanian Catholic Information Center was received for the third time at the Vatican. The Holy Father John Paul II spoke warmly to the delegation about the miracle of religious freedom and asked the members of the Center to give thanks and to continue to implore Our Lady of Shkodër for the full re-establishment of the Albanian Catholic community, its churches, monasteries, press, schools and charitable institutions, but above all for the renewal of the flame of devotion in Albania's consciousness.

To that end, the Albanian Catholic Information Center was reorganized as the Daniel Dajani, S.J. Albanian Catholic Institute. In his office in St. Ignatius Church on the University of San Francisco campus Gjon Sinishta, the moving force behind the new Institute and the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, could now sit beneath a pennant from the Kosovë Democratic Movement and a picture of Nenë Teresa and read the revived Gheg-language Catholic periodicals published in Shkodër. Indeed he could now depend on the Catholics of Shkodër themselves to carry on the work of preserving and promoting the Albanian Catholic religious and literary heritage.

Such a work of cultural reconstruction, maintained by religious believers, is of the greatest importance for all the countries formerly ruled by Marxism—from Nicaragua to (soon, we pray) Vietnam.

In 1992 a delegation of the Albanian Catholic Institute paid a visit to Albania. It was Sinishta's first time there in forty-six years! Following the visit, the delegation traveled to Rome and were received in a private audience at Castel Gandolfo by Pope John Paul II. The next year two Institute members, Fr. Michael Walsh and Gjon Sinishta, were invited to join the Pontiff during the Pope's tumultuous visit to Albania, the first papal visit ever to the country. Gjon Sinishta and his associates from the Albanian Catholic Institute—together with all the believers of Albania—Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox, Bektashi, Jewish—truly swam against the stream, for many hard years, until the tide reversed, and they were lifted onto the mighty current of God's glory. The gentle humility of truth had overcome the arrogance of Marxist power.

We need not embellish this remarkable and magnificent experience. It truly speaks for itself. While the heartless, smug, pseudo-liberal intelligentsia turned its back, supported by a corrupt Western academic establishment, Sinishta and his associates patiently assembled every scrap, every trace, of truth about Albania's religious martyrdom.

There is no room in this outcome for triumphalism, for gloating, for revenge. We now face a new world no less filled with danger for

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those who believe in and keep God's laws. The sharp knife of the Serbian extremists, threatening Albanians in Kosovë and elsewhere, is no less a terrible threat than was the cruel dictatorship of Hoxha.

We may be certain that soon the evil reality of Communism which the Albanian Catholic Institute, and its predecessor the Albanian Catholic Information Center sought to record for the world, will be taken for granted by many who once denied or ignored it, and may even fade from the collective historical memory. Sinishta and his friends committed themselves to a long and lonely struggle to which many may become, sooner than we wish to imagine, once again indifferent.

But the record remains, now permanent, as God's power remains, unchallengeable. The work of Gjon Sinishta and the Albanian Catholic Institute at the University of San Francisco, in the interest of faith, of the Albanian national cause, of civility between differing human communities, will prove a bright example for those who follow after, in the same spirit and with the same goals, however few or many they may prove to be.

Stephen SCHWARTZ
Raymond FROST





First public Mass in Tiranë, December 25, 1990. Officiating priests Ndoc Sahatçija and Zef Pllumi, [illegible] decades in Albanian gulags for their faith

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THE CURRENT STATE OF RELIGION IN ALBANIA

Since November 1990 when Father Simon Jubani celebrated the historic public Mass in the cemetery of Shkodër for 50,000 worshipers, religion has returned to the daily life of Albania. The communist government, no longer able to resist the movement of religious freedom, submitted to the will of the people. At first the government looked the other way while religious services were being held. But soon relations were begun with the Vatican; a government official spoke at the Protestant Prayer Service in the Tirana soccer stadium; and one year after the electoral victory of democracy, Pope John Paul II arrived on a pastoral visit to consecrate four Albanian bishops. The Pontiff was greeted at the airport by Albanian President, Sali Berisha. To coincide with Pope's visit, the Albanian parliament adopted a Bill of Rights in which Article 18 guaranteed "freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the freedom to change one's religion and to manifest it privately and publicly". This marked a radical departure from the previous constitution which made religious belief "a crime against the state to be punished with the most severe measures."

In practice what has the new era of religious freedom or tolerance meant for religion in Albania? Judging by the great activity of the pre-communist era religious groups who have already re-established their ministry, and the influx of many new groups, religion is poised to have an important role in the nation's future. For many Albanians religion represents an opening to the world outside their nation. It also affirms their traditional belief in a supreme being. This belief was never erased from the mind of the people despite fifty years of communist anti-religious oppression and propaganda. Because of the total lack of religious formation on education for several generations of Albanians there is great need for outside help in order for religion in Albania to go forward. This presents a challenge to Albanian as well as foreign missionaries. They must avoid introducing elements of division or ways of thinking and acting which would prove harmful to Albania. Respect must be shown for the Albanian culture and traditions at the same time religious doctrines and truths are presented.

The national population is broken down into three major religious groups. The Orthodox christians representing 20% of the population, the Muslims 70% and the Catholics 10%. These old estimates need to be updated. According to an article in the journal *Orbis* (37: 2 Spring 1993) "the idea that Albania remains 70% Muslim is ludicrous. The overwhelming majority of the population was born under the communist regime, which pursued an aggressively atheistic policy, officially abolishing religion in 1967 and declaring Albania the world's first atheist state. Under these circumstances only the Catholics maintained strong ties to their religion." Other sources indicate that Catholics actually now represent a higher percentage of the population, as much as 15%, and certainly they are a much higher percent of the total number of those "with strong ties to religion".

Albanians, especially in the urban areas and outlying villages, are currently facing a variety of choices regarding religion. Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox groups are re-opening mosques and churches, conducting classes in religious education as well as distributing literature and offering health and social assistance. They are seeking to reclaim the adherence of people who are the descendants of those who once filled the churches and mosques. There is a certain sense of competition between them which is compounded by the arrival of many new religious groups in Albania. Most of the newcomers were never before present in Albania and certainly were unknown to the population. Non-Christian groups including the Bahai"s, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Mormon's Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints,

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sent missionaries to Albania in the late 1990. Twelve Mormon missionaries arrived from the United States. This group included a medical doctor as the head of the mission. They translated Mormon texts and hymns into Albanian and began to offer health care services. Although the Mormons have recruited less than one hundred members in Albania they now have the use of a chamber music room in the Palace of Culture, (formerly the Enver Hoxha Museum), and have also built a church in Tirana with plans to do the same in other localities. The Baha'i church has been far more successful in their recruitment. It appears that the Baha'i concept of a universal religion strikes a tolerant chord among Albanians. The national secretary of the Baha'is estimates that six to seven thousand converts were received into the faith during the past two years.

In 1991 Evangelical and Protestant groups began an organization called the Albanian Encouragement Project. It gained official government recognition under the title of the Evangelical Brotherhood. This organization is the revival of a movement which was begun in the early 1900, by a small group of Albanian protestants calling themselves the Evangelical Brotherhood. The members had studied in the United States and were assisted by Congregationalist missionaries from Boston. Some of the missionaries from this group who ministered in pre-communist Albania are still living. They are actively promoting the diffusion of protestantism in Albania. In July 1991 the Albanian Encouragement Project with government permission held a prayer meeting over several nights in the Tirana soccer stadium. About 2,000 people attended the services to hear talks by 120 evangelical "activists" who had converged on the city from seventeen nations. The group was lead by Brother Andrew of Holland. They received publicity on state television and in the Communist daily *Zeri i Popullit* (Voice of the People). One year later over 200 activists were working in Tirana and in fourteen centers around the country. Besides evangelism and "church planting" they engage in medical work, orphanages, agricultural counseling and school repair. The evangelical Brotherhood was officially recognized by the government in May 1993. At their founding Congress held in June 1993 over thirty evangelical or protestant groups were represented.

The activities of some of these groups have unfortunately stirred up a great deal of division and misinformation among Albanians. An editorial in *Pishtari*, the Shkodra newspaper of the Association of Politically Persecuted, denounced "the offensive behavior of self-proclaimed evangelists from northern Europe who tried to put splinters between the Catholics and Muslims". The writer was referring to some cases of unfair approaches made to Catholics in Shkodra. Catholic worshipers were met outside the churches and the evangelicals claimed to be the "new church". Such preachers misrepresent the Catholic Church's teachings in order to confuse people who have not been instructed in Christian doctrine. These groups together with the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses represent "a harmful element" in the minds of many Albanians. This situation has caused some Albanians to call for the government to grant recognition to the traditional religious groups only—Islam, Roman Catholicism, Bektashis (an offshoot of Islam), and the Eastern Orthodox Church. However, with the recently passed Bill of Rights, the Albanian parliament denied this request. In fact, in addition to the Evangelical Brotherhood, the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Baha'is have all received official government recognition in keeping with the concept of religious freedom enunciated in the Albanian Bill of Rights.

Tensions and problems have also surfaced in the Orthodox Church religion. Due to the absence of an Albanian clergy, the Patriarch of Constantinople appointed an ethnic Greek, Anastasios Yannoulatos along with three Greek archimandrites to lead the Albanian Orthodox Church. These appointments have been difficult for Albanians to accept. It has been well reported by the European Union's Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe that "the Greek Orthodox Church is known to be among the forces from within Greece encouraging nationalism and irredentism among the ethnic Greeks of Albania".

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This factor along with the recent expulsion of a Greek archimandrite for circulating separatist materials among the Greek population in Albania, has caused problems within the Orthodox community. It is hoped that soon an Albanian Orthodox cleric will canonically qualify to lead the Orthodox hierarchy in Albania.

The Muslim community has been receiving help from outside Albania, through the Islamic Charity Project International which emphasizes business investments. The group sponsors the building of hotels, the development of agriculture and the establishment of airline service between Tirana and Istanbul. Mosques are being rebuilt with monies from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It is common opinion throughout Albania that more money for development is being received from the Arab countries than from the countries of the West. Some groups of Muslim fundamentalists have also arrived to spread division among the Albanian population by denouncing Christianity. In a recently published Albanian language translation of the Qu'ran the introduction states "Albanians rejected communism but soon on the scene appeared the wretched devil—the satan of Christian baptism".

Despite the unfortunate tendencies toward division and a false novelty in religious culture the overall relations between the heads of religious groups in Albania remains good.

The leaders manifest the spirit of religious toleration, harmony and mutual respect which has characterized Albania's religious climate. As the Papal Nuncio Ivan Dias says "I have met with the head of the autocephalous Orthodox Church and the leader of the Muslims. Our common understanding will help us to create a climate of mutual trust." Efforts are also being made to establish an Albanian Bible Society which will include Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical representation. Nevertheless, Archbishop Dias does not hesitate to criticize those "groups and sects which are coming from every side and give bad example. If a sect presents itself as Christian the people do not distinguish between them as Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. Some groups are doing damage to the country". At the same time the President Sali Berisha remains confident that there will be peace among all religious groups in Albania. Archbishop Rrok Mirdita of Durrës-Tirana, in an interview with the *National Catholic Register* expressed the same hope and said that "we Albanians can also provide a good example of tolerance, which might also serve as a model for other Balkan countries. Three peoples, with three different faiths, are fighting each other in Bosnia, while in Albania, where the situation is the same, there is harmony and peace. This contradicts the view that religion is a source of conflict, as some would have us believe."

According to Archbishop Mirdita, "the future of the Catholic Church in Albania is bright. Great interest is being shown in the Church and Catholicism, especially among Muslims and among the country's young people." In order to look toward the future the Church is not only rebuilding churches and re-opening schools and seminaries which were closed by the communists but is also establishing new works. Many young people have come forward to join the ranks of religious congregations. Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity have opened nine houses in Albania and at present they have a total of forty Albanian postulants. The Jesuit Fathers have begun a pastoral ministry to the university students in Tirana and have initiated Project Hope to help the youth of Albania. The Salesians will soon open a technical school for seven hundred students and there is talk of a Catholic university. The Albanian government has asked the Catholics to open a hospital in Tirana. The work of Catholic religious men and women is a demonstration for the Albanians of the greatness of the Lord and of the force of providence. One of the Jesuit missionaries in Tirana, Fr. Ernesto Santucci, describes the conditions of the Albanian people which the Church must seek to alleviate—"The actual devastation of the country isn't just physical or economic but also psychological and moral. The shadows of the past weigh heavily and darkly on Albania. The Catholic Church can help young people to understand the true values which were negated for fifty years—the values on

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which you can build a just and prosperous nation—such as respect, self-love, charity, rights, duties, freedom, work, society and leisure". An Italian missionary-journalist, Maurizio Giuliano, wrote in *Mondo e Missione*, about his visit to a mountain village school house as a "heart breaking experience". He saw "no smiles on the faces of children or old folks". According to Giuliano "communism had suffocated the joy of living and the enjoyment of freedom by seeking to cancel from the heart of the people the presence of God".

At the fall of communism a total of 31 priests survived of the 221 priests and seven bishops who were serving in Albania in 1945. Presently the number of Catholics would be in the neighborhood of 500,000 although not all of these are baptized. All the priests who survived, without exception, suffered prison and labor camp sentences of between fourteen and forty-seven years. The youngest surviving priest is sixty-five years old. Thus there is a great need for priests. The Catholic religious congregations are striving to fill the void by sending young missionaries and by training young Albanian men for the priesthood and diaconate. At the present time there are around sixty Catholic priests ministering in Albania. These include three from the United States—a Jesuit, a Maryknoll and a diocesan priest. The Jesuits run Pontifical Seminary in Shkodra, now has almost 100 students. Cardinal Meisner of Cologne, Germany is assisting in the establishment of a theological studies program to provide for these seminarians who are now working on their pre-theological studies.

Despite the official Bill of Rights guarantee of religious freedom in Albania, the Catholic Church has been encountering difficulties with government officials in reclaiming the Church's buildings and lands which were confiscated by the Communists. There have been problems in the carrying out of church projects even after government permission has been received. Rectories in Vlora, Tirana and other cities have not been returned to the church. Government buildings have been constructed on locations where churches formerly stood. These churches were razed to the ground during the anti-religious campaigns of the 1960's. The Church is now seeking compensation in land for these losses. Yet they are finding the government very slow in acting on these issues. In Shkodra the police are still in possession of buildings belonging to the Franciscan Fathers and Servite Sisters. Despite their repeated appeals for these buildings to be returned nothing has been done by the government officials to make this happen.

In order to deal with this situation the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Albania has issued a "Declaration Regarding Relations Between the Church and the State". Archbishop Frano Illia of Shkodra, president of the Conference signed this declaration on 28 September 1993. The Bishops decried the lack of laws protecting the Church and non-profit organizations. They stated that government administrators are still heavily influenced by communist ideology and anti-catholic bias. Thus these officials are withholding and delaying permits for Catholic Church projects. Often even after government authorization is received many government bureaucrats and local officials do not look favorably upon the implementation of the approved plans. The Bishops mention two particular cases, that of the Salesian Technical School in Tirana and that of the hospital in Tirana which will be opened on land belonging to the Catholic Church. Although both projects were approved some time ago by the competent government officials, these projects are still blocked because of the stalling tactics of the city hall bureaucracy.

The Bishops are also concerned with discrimination affecting Catholics in institutions. At an orphanage in Shkodra run by an Islamic foundation the religious affiliation of the children is 50% Catholic and 50% Muslim. Nevertheless out of thirteen teachers only one is Catholic and of the thirty other workers in the institution only four are Catholic. The Bishops note that Mother Teresa's sisters are impeded from instructing the Catholic children even outside the orphanage.

Another disturbing sign for the Bishops comes from several decisions handed down by the Albanian Ministry of Education. On September 13, 1993

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in Protocol Number 4501 regarding the administration of the Durrës primary school "Vincens Prennushi", the Albanian Ministry of Education ruled that "this school will be treated as a state school. No religious activity will be allowed or any exposition of religious symbols" despite the fact that the Catholic Church built the school and provides for the maintenance of the school. In another decree of the same ministry, Protocol Number 213 of September 14, 1993, the fact that the Albanian state is a secular one is interpreted in an extreme way, contradicting basic principles concerning religious freedom and education accepted around the world and adopted by the Albanian government in its basic law of April 21, 1991 and in the Albanian Bill of Rights. The Albanian Bishops state that such decisions as these "remind them of the sad period of the all-powerful anti-religious dictatorship".

In their Declaration which they sent to the President, the Prime Minister and the head of Parliament, the Bishops said that, "The Catholic Church in Albania wishes to give its contribution to accelerate the country's democratic process and integration into Europe. The Church is developing throughout the whole country many programs in the fields of health, schooling, social service and the assistance of Albanian women preparing for married life. These programs are open to all citizens without religious or political distinction. Our statistics indicate that the beneficiaries of these programs are in the great majority non-Catholics (Muslims, Orthodox and even non-believers) . . . The Albanian Episcopal Conference urgently appeals to all the high government officials of the Albanian government asking that these problems we have mentioned be addressed with seriousness and resolve. If what we have presented is considered as the official policy of the government we are afraid that it will create a serious obstacle in the relations between the state and the Catholic Church in Albania".

It is evident that the Catholic Bishops have shown themselves to be courageous and caring leaders for their flock as well as standing in favor of equal justice for all. They have underscored their position not to accept a government attitude which in the past kept the Catholics oppressed for five decades under communism and for five centuries under harsh Ottoman rule. In both cases the Catholic community was on the brink of extinction. With the new freedoms blowing throughout Europe Albanian Catholics are looking forward to exercising these freedoms as they make their contributions to Albania as fully respected citizens of their beloved nation.



Holy Father Pope John II is cordially greeted by a (Muslim) Bektashi leader, Tirané, April 25, 1993

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ALBANIA

Throughout my years of reporting on the religious situation in Eastern Europe, the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* has been invaluable to my research, providing information on Albania unavailable anywhere else. The *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* was especially helpful to me in the development of my book *Albania: Religion in a Fortress State* (Puebla Institute, 1989). When I was approached to contribute a piece for the final issue of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* I was honored to participate. Since the victory of democracy and religious freedom in Albania there are now many more sources available on the religious situation in the country. Some of the ones I utilized in the preparing of this article are: *Radio Free Europe; Informationsdienst Osteuropaisches; European Baptist Press Service; News Network International; Albanian ,Insight* (Thessaloniki); *Pro Fratribus* (Germany).

Due to five decades of communist oppression which was unprecedented in its scope, most Albanians were ignorant of religion. However, widespread abhorrence of Enver Hoxha's "final solution" for the "opium of the people" provided a favorable atmosphere for a religious renaissance in Albania, not only of its traditional faiths but also for dozens of strange proselytizing sects, for which Albania represented a *tabula rasa*. Confusion reigned, with dozens of faiths to choose from. Even more perplexing was that over forty different missions proclaimed the same Protestant Evangelical Christianity. In the first flush of freedom, people drank every drop of religion they could get, sometimes sampling several. The thirst is not so intense now. People are more selective. Most early converts have relapsed or returned to the religion—or atheism—of their families. Understandably resentment grew against the newcomers, as it has elsewhere in Eastern Europe. President Sali Berisha welcomed the rehabilitation of a normal religious life, emphasizing the traditional Albanian mutual tolerance of other faiths.

In other East European countries, even in those more genuinely committed to democracy, churches encounter considerable hostility and obstruction from communist rearguards, especially in the sphere of restitution of property and at the local level. Just laws may be passed. The problem is how to enforce them. Albania was subjected to a far more thorough brain washing and isolation than anywhere else so it is not surprising that its communist mafia is clinging on the power everywhere it can.

Unlike most post-communist governments the Albanian government decided to set up a Secretariat for Religious Affairs, which is closely linked with and advised by representatives of the main faiths: Islam, Bektashi, Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Like many it tried to revert to pre-communist constitutional patterns of church-state relations. The first draft of a religious law, in the autumn of 1992, was practically identical with the old Balkan and Turkish model, which protects the main faiths and limits proselytism by other religious bodies. The draft would have made legal recognition of the other religious bodies dependent on the approval of the established ones. As has happened elsewhere, in Bulgaria for instance, so deep is public ignorance of what different faiths stand for that responsible mainstream Protestant churches which had gained a foothold prior to communism were lumped together with sects. Only persistent protests from Protestant churches and human rights observers prevented the same thing happening in Albania. The first draft of a religious law was thus shelved.

The second draft proved more acceptable to religious groups and human rights organizations but was difficult to interpret because of its stipulation that leaders of religious communities must have Albanian nationality. This clause was intended to force incoming religious groups to seek out indigenous leaders or leave the country. However, even the established churches had to import leaders from other countries so depleted were the ranks of the clergy.

The third draft, produced in March 1993, was cut from 38 clauses to 7. Albania was declared to

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be a secular state and all religions placed on a "separate but equal" status before the law. Guaranteed were "freedom of thought, conscience and religion", including the right to change one's religion and practice it freely in public and in private. This freedom could only be limited by some restrictions "essential in a democratic society." The third draft specifically named public security, preservation of public order, health, morality and respect for the rights of others. It is defined a religious community as "an association of individuals who belong to the same religion." Three principal communities were named, Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox, making no differentiation within Islam. It required that the religions should be "in complete harmony with one another" and that whoever violated this harmony would be "answerable before the law." The religious leaders are required to be Albanian by birth. President Berisha expressed his approval of this draft. Nevertheless, other officials of the government blocked the acceptance of this draft, arguing that only with the ratification of the new constitution will a definitive law be required.

This has caused concern to the religious communities in Albania and especially among Catholics. In October of 1993 the Episcopal Conference of the Albanian Catholics addressed the government complaining of suffering discrimination while the Islamic community was favored. It particularly objected to the "indoctrination of the Islamic faithful" being promoted by outside Islamic states. The Catholic Bishops made a number of complaints backed by well-documented evidence. They protested against the deliberate obstruction from state and local officials. The bishops pointed out that the majority of those making use of their social and educational initiatives are not Catholics but Mohammedans, Orthodox and unbelievers. They maintain that the defective law on religious freedom and privatization serves as a pretext for officials to block or delay permission for some excellent projects. They maintain that corrupt elements and former communists still dominate decision-making processes. For instance, the Salesians have not been able to get back their specialist school in Tirana which should equip 700 students for community development. The Polyclinic in Tirana still belongs to two political parties. The property confiscated from the church was put to uses for which it was never intended, sometimes sacrilegiously.

The government claim that it doesn't occupy any church property is false. The police are in possession of buildings in Shkodër which formerly belonged to the Franciscans and Servites. The bishops said it was deplorable that throughout Albania the church still has to plead for restitution to authorities who don't seem in the least concerned. Discrimination is particularly bad in Shkodër where the Catholic majority is barely represented in public offices. Half of the children in the local orphanage are Catholic and half are Muslim. Yet there isn't a single Catholic teacher. Of the thirty assistant staff only five are Catholic. Sadly, completely contrary to the tolerant welcoming atmosphere traditional among Albanians of different faiths, Muslim children are now taught a fundamentalist creed antagonistic to Catholicism. Mother Teresa's sisters, who attempted to instruct the Catholic orphans, have been manhandled in front of the orphanage. The bishops also strongly criticize the decision of the Minister of Culture which declared the "Vinçens Prennushi School" in Durrës a state school even though it was built and maintained by Catholics. The church cannot gain access to catechize there and all crosses and religious pictures have been removed.

The Bishops protested against Decree No. 20 of September 9 which declared Albania a secular state. They said that this could be interpreted in a totalitarian sense and is inconsistent with the principles of a free democracy declared in the constitutional law of April 29, 1992. The new attitude reminded the Bishops of the sad times of religious persecution and they feared that the government's postponement of discussions between church and state was damaging the Catholic community. As the smallest of the four traditional faiths, they are the most vulnerable to arbitrary decisions and find the lack of legal clarity particularly frustrating.

Janice BROUN

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BREEZES OF FREEDOM NOW BLOW THROUGH ALBANIA

To participate in the resurrection of the Albanian people and Church was an experience I had never dreamed would be possible in my lifetime. Albania was the "worst-case scenario" of communist persecution in Eastern Europe. Of the 200 Catholic priests there in 1945 (when Catholics were 10 percent of the population), some 100 were executed while 60 others died in jail. By the 1980s, Albania had become the most isolated country in the world.

The communist persecution of all religions reached full force in 1967, with venomous attacks made on Catholics and other Christian and Moslem believers. Churches and mosques were either destroyed or converted into gymnasiums, museums, cinemas, or communist party halls. Crosses even in cemeteries were destroyed, and wearing or having in your home any religious symbol was—if discovered—a sure route to a long prison term or martyrdom.

A woman I met in Korça (pronounced "corch") in southeast Albania brought out of hiding for me the prayer book she had kept for decades in a stack of firewood by the stove. Discovery of the book would have brought swift and drastic punishment. I also heard of a married couple who were three years into their marriage before they admitted to each other they were both believers.

But last fall I was able to walk in the soft breezes of religious freedom blowing gently throughout Albania, the land that former dictator Enver Hoxha once declared "the world's first completely atheist state."

How I got to this country of 3.3 million people, 10 percent of whom are Roman Catholic, is itself an interesting story. I had met Mother Teresa of Calcutta several times in Bangladesh, where I have been doing missionary work since 1979. I met her again in India in January 1991.

Mother announced with enthusiasm that she had just received permission to open houses for her Sisters to work in her native Albania. Impulsively, I offered to serve as chaplain for her Missionaries of Charity. After thinking prayerfully, she replied, "Father, I think you can do the best work for God, for the poor and for my Sisters by persevering in Bangladesh. Please keep sending me good vocations. The world needs lots of vocations. Then we'll see!"

When I next met Mother Teresa in November 1992, there were seated next to her at the motherhouse in Calcutta two young women novices who were from my parish of Mausaid in Bangladesh. I had kept my part of the bargain!

Planning to take several months of sabbatical in 1993, I offered to spend a few months of that time serving as chaplain to the Sisters wherever such service might be needed. This time Mother Teresa accepted my offer and asked me to spend as much time as possible as a chaplain for the more than 40 Missionaries of Charity working in seven centers around Albania. (Five of those Sisters are originally from Bangladesh.)

I spent almost two months as acting pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in Korça. Father Gary Walsh (on loan from the archdiocese of St. John's, New-foundland, Canada) began the work there 18 months before my arrival in March 1992. Catholic laypeople from Malta recently established a fine English-medium high school, while three Little Company of Mary Sisters from England are setting up health services.

At this "moment of grace" for the Albanian people and Church, it is important to start pioneer missionary work as soon as possible. For example, Franciscan Bishop Robert Ashta of the diocese of Pult, in northeastern Albania (on the border with Kosova in former Yugoslavia), does not have a single priest working with him.

During the first half of October I helped out in the "new town" of Lukë (pronounced "pook"),

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which has an estimated population of about 4,000. There in the northern Albanian Alps many thousands of Catholics live in remote villages, which in the old days had churches or chapels. There are another 10,000 Moslems who live in the same district. In July 1992 Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity established a house in Pukë town, where Father John Gibson, a Missionary of Charity from Chicago, has catechized and baptized 1,700 Albanians this past year. Working with Father Gibson, the only priest now working full-time in this vast district, I had the privilege of baptizing 26 young Albanians in a faith that was once considered to have been completely eradicated.

For Christians who lived through the devastating years of atheistic communism, the need for reconciliation is great. One woman told me, "I know Jesus tells us to love our enemies. But I'm not Jesus . . . Yet."

Strong feelings of nationalism, fostered over years of tyranny, could turn into right-wing fascism. Nonetheless, the basic feeling in Albania today is hope.

Pope John Paul II, during his visit to Albania in April 1993, said, "Every person must reflect again . . . Never forget what happened! It is right to look ahead. However, take into consideration what happened in order to avoid repeating the same errors of such a tragic period. At the very time when all seemed lost, liberation arrived."

While Albania is doing well in progress toward democracy, there are some extremely grave problems, such as 70 percent unemployment and, for those who find work, salaries averaging about $25 per month.

The European community is helping a lot. Although there is malnutrition, I don't believe the people are starving. But renewed relations with the outside world have opened the door to Western materialism.

With the tragic upheaval in the former Yugoslavia, the border north to Montenegro and northeast to Kosova is tense. Albanians fear being drawn into a broader Balkan war, but, please God, that catastrophe can and will be averted.

While I was moved by the people's response to our mission work, the religious needs in Albania (as well as the rest of Eastern Europe) are enormous. There are some 65 Catholic priests, 150 Sisters, and perhaps 50 lay missioners (the laypeople are mostly from Malta), but it is true here now as in the days of St. Francis Xavier that "in these regions, there are many who do not become Christian simply because there is no one to preach the Gospel to them." *

* *Maryknoll, April 1994*

William McINTIRE



Mother Teresa has sent 40 of her Sisters, from 12 countries, to work in her homeland. Already they are attracting Albanian postulants

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BLESSED ARE THE SIGHS

The family gathers in the family room,
shades down, around the portrait
of the dictator. The children have been sworn.

Out of the portrait's backing, papa
can slip the oleo of the Blessed Mother.
Sign of the cross, everyone. Ave Maria.

These are they who have washed their robes
in terror, and can be marched away by spies.
These are not names appearing in the paper.

On the great day of freedom, many a house
will miss them, gape like a jaw
of precious teeth knocked out.

Many who saved their skin will wince
at sharp reminders, or shield themselves
in the old way. Let the exorcisms begin.

Albania, bloody the road you walked,
and pitiless the imperatives laid on.
Praised be his feet who hallowed this dark way.

Blessed are they whose hunger and whose thirst
was for fair treatment. And peace to those
whose sighs went muffled to the Lord.

James TORRENS



Family rosary, after a day's labor. The tradition was kept alive during the harsh communist persecution, despite the danger of imprisonment.

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THE MARTYRDOM OF PAPAS JOSIF PAPAMIHALI

During the past five decades Albania has not been lacking in saints and martyrs. Many remarkable examples of courage and self-sacrificial love in the face of horrible suffering and death have been recorded. Yet there are many unknown or otherwise forgotten men and women whose memory must be brought to the light so they can be given proper respect and reverence. Among these "forgotten ones" is Father Josif Papamihali. He was affectionately addressed by his friends and parishioners as Papas Sifi. In Vol. IX (1988) of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* Father Papamihali's picture appears on page 69 with the title "the great promoter of Catholic-Orthodox reunion". We believe that our readers will be enlightened and moved by the story of his life and martyrdom. Jesuit Fathers Jak Gardin and Ndoc Luli recall Fr. Papamihali's exemplary strength and courage in being able to go forward with heroic faith while enduring imprisonment, enforced labor, torture, slow death and martyrdom.



Reverend Josif Papamihali

Father Papamihali was a Catholic priest of the Byzantine Rite. He was born at Elbasan in October 1912, (the year of Albania's independence). As a young man he was sent by Archimandrite Pietro Scarpelli to study at the Benedict XV Pontifical Seminary at Grottaferrata near Rome. Papamihali spent five years at this seminary. He was noted for his spiritual fervor and intellectual dedication. Upon completing his courses at Grottaferrata he enrolled at the Pontifical College of Saint Athanasius in Rome. There he completed his philosophical and theological training.

On December 1, 1935, he was ordained a priest in Rome by the Bishop Giovanni Mele of Lungro. He returned to Albania in 1936 where he was assigned as pastor to the church of St. Peter in Elbasan. For nine years he joyfully labored for the families of Elbasan. He was appreciated especially for his wise counsel. In 1945 he was taken into custody by the communist authorities because of being a priest. He was sent to the work camps. He labored in terrible conditions in the swamp area surrounding Korçë and in the swamps of Maliq. Along with his fellow prisoners, he was assigned the work of draining these swamps. The prisoners had to work for long hours in unhealthy conditions often with only their bare hands because tools were lacking. They had to endure bitter cold and the infestation of insects without anywhere near a sufficient diet for the hard work they were required to do. Fr. Papamihali survived for three years under these conditions. Finally succumbing to the inhuman rigors of such a life, he collapsed in the muddy swamps. His beastly captors did not allow his workmates to assist him but instead gave the order to bury him alive. Fr. Papamihali thus received the grace of martyrdom on October 26, 1948 at the age of thirty-six years old. In his life and death he was truly what Jesus asked all his disciples to be, "a seed which dies but bears much fruit". Four years later his younger brother Kostaq was put to death in Tirana, by a firing squad, because he was the brother of a priest. The Byzantine Catholic Church in Albania glories in these two martyrs for the faith and seeks their intercession in building a new Albania.

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AN EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE LAST DAYS OF FR. DANIEL DAJANI, S.J.

Editor's Note: Myfit Q. Bushati spent ten years in Albanian prisons. He was arrested in late 1945 along with other members of the anti-communist *Albanian Union* (Bashkimi Shqiptar) organization. When Bushati studied at the Jesuit Xaverianum College in Shkodër, Fr. Dajani was one of his teachers. Bushati wrote an account of the activity of *Bashkimi Shqiptar* including the prison experience of its condemned members. His Albanian language account was printed in the 1993 edition of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, pp. 211-218. The following excerpt is a translation from that account.

* * *

The macabre scenes which I have lived are very hard for me to express on paper. Some have left a strong imprint on my memory. Even after many years my whole body shakes when they come to mind. It was January, 1946, a night of torture sessions. The hour was past midnight. Shivers were passing through my whole body. I was bound hand and foot and, without having had any food or drink, ordered to stand in the basement room where they had thrown us. In another corner of the basement was another prisoner, and close by to the left, a third prisoner who was trying to raise his head to look in our direction. He was attempting to signal for something which we couldn't understand. The guard stationed near-by to prevent any inter-prisoner communication was looking with suspicion and didn't allow us to make any movement. In front of me was the stairway which led to the upper floors. But this stairway was something more than just a series of stairs because it also served the red persecutors as a space to improvise various tortures. Under the stairway was also an open latrine, horribly dirty, from which emanated an awful stench almost impossible to endure. In this space I noticed the appearance of a dark shadow which moved continuously back and forth. From time to time this shadow would raise his head to the window. He was trying to let me know that he wanted to communicate with me. He repeated this attempt several times. I tried to give him a signal that I understood his wish to communicate. However the guard prevented me from moving closer. I was in a very perilous condition myself. But nevertheless I begged the guard to let me use the latrine. After repeated requests the guard finally untied my feet and allowed me to go to the latrine. When I entered this space, where not only human beings but even animals wouldn't be able to stay for a moment, the shadow which had been signalling to me stepped forward. I couldn't recognize who it was because it was quite dark and because of the transformation of his face which had become disfigured due to the tortures inflicted. By his cassock I recognized that he was a Catholic priest. His hands were bound together with rope. After several signals he gave me a sign asking for a cigarette. With great apprehension and fear I finally pulled one out and put it in his mouth. With his head and bound hands I understood that he meant to thank me. Soon after, when I had returned to my place and it seemed he had just finished his cigarette, the guards came to take him "upstairs". After midnight "upstairs" in our prison language meant interrogation including torture. The three of us immediately began to



Fr. Daniel Dajani, S.J.

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forget our situation thinking about this poor priest and what would happen to him "upstairs". Just before dawn we heard the guards dragging him down the stairs. They dumped him in front of us. He was motionless. The guards tried to drag him back to that dirty hovel of a space under the stairs but they were unable to because they were overcome by the stench. They just left him before us on the cement floor. He was motionless, he only moaned from time to time. His cassock and face were covered with blood which came even from his eyes. It seems that the interrogators had used electric shock because this torture has this effect on a person. He was without shoes or socks and his bruised feet were badly swollen. At times it seemed he was not even alive.

After several hours he began to move. He looked towards us. It seemed that he was well aware that we couldn't help him because he didn't ask for help. When lunch time came one of us received food from his family and managed to offer him an orange without the guard seeing it. Nevertheless the priest refused and to our amazement told him, "No, my son, this is for you to eat. You are young and you need it more than I do." This gesture of this man of God in those horrible moments is something indescribable. It was a gesture so human and courageous for us young men. After a while the guards took him and moved him under the stairs in that horrible, dark place full of excrement and slime. Only later did I learn the identity of this man who was going through such inhuman torture. He valiantly preserved his dignity without giving in and without a broken spirit. This was the martyr Fr. Daniel Dajani, my former professor whom I could not recognize due to the torture he had suffered.

Altogether 39 people of our organization went through various tortures for the same ideal. All of us experienced Calvary in one way or another. Like Fr. Dajani, the same fate befell Fr. Gjon Fausti (Jesuit Vice-Provincial), Fr. Gjon Shllaku (Franciscan writer) , Mark Cuni (seminarian) and others. Finally the dark day of February 22, 1946 came and the military court of Shkodër sentenced eight among us to be shot, including Fr. Dajani. Others received long prison sentences. During the nights following our sentencing we stopped singing the patriotic songs which we had been singing during the interrogation period. One night while I was passing by Fr. Dajani's cell he whispered to me" Myfit, why aren't you singing these nights?" On my way back to my cell I whispered to him ,"How can we sing while thinking of your fate?" Fr. Dajani quickly answered, "Please sing even more loudly, if you don't sing then the communists will be satisfied because they want to see us down and we should show them that we will never give up." At the request of Fr. Dajani we began to sing the songs twice as loud as before.

I will always remember and cherish the last words of Fr. Dajani before he was sentenced to death, "Before this tribunal I don't ask mercy, only justice".

Myfit Q. BUSHATI



Artist's rendering of the martyrdom of Fr. Daniel Dajani, S.J. Original painting hangs in the Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Blinisht, Dajani's birthplace

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FR. DAJANI'S HOME IN BLINISHT SOON TO BECOME A SHRINE

Our Institute has received a letter from Sister M. Clare Millea, ASCJ, Vicaress General of the congregation of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Sr. M. Clare's congregation worked in Elbasan prior to the communist take-over of Albania. They returned in 1992 to do missionary work in Albania by teaching catechism, running a first-aid station and operating a pre-school program. Her sisters are working in the Jesuit Sacred Heart Parish in Tirana as well as in several villages surrounding the Albanian capital. In Sister M. Clare's letter she speaks of her visit to Blinisht, the home town of Fr. Daniel Dajani after whom our Institute is named. We are happy to share an excerpt of her letter. Sr. M. Clare writes:

"With the Sisters, I visited the **Misioni Katolik Blinisht** in Lezhe, Albania, in the Archdiocese of Shkodër, whose very zealous pastor is Father Antonio Sciarra, a priest of the diocese of Avezzano, Italy, and a member of the institute "Fidei Donum", a missionary association of Catholic priests. Father Antonio has been in Blinisht nearly two years and I confess that I was deeply moved by the beautiful spirit that unites him and the parish community there. When Father rang the large church bell, people of all ages flocked to the Church for the rosary (entirely sung in a beautiful chant) and evening Mass. Though he used a young man as interpreter for the homily, Fr. Antonio's whole being spoke to them of the love of God and our response to that love. Not a sound was heard other than a unison of prayer and song. Andrea, a very talented, legally blind parishioner, accompanied the singing on the accordion. A very enthusiastic young woman was particularly active in leading the congregation in prayer and song. I learned that, until a short time ago, as a school teacher in the village, she was the one who taught many of children that God did not exist.

Fr. Antonio, with the aid of his own parishioners in Blinisht and other benefactors, is building a church which will be dedicated to the Albanian martyrs. Each family of the parish has pledged to collect a cubic meter of rocks from the surrounding mountainside to help build their church. Already piles of rocks are beginning to fill the lot where the church will stand.

I was fascinated by Fr. Antonio's account of the life and martyrdom of Fr. Daniel Dajani,S.J., a native of Blinisht, killed at Shkodër, at the beginning of the communist regime. The brothers of this heroic and remarkable saint (whose cause of canonization is being personally encouraged by the Holy Father) still own the modest home where Fr. Daniel was born and raised. It is right next to a little square.

A ten meter deep well separated Daniel's house from the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, destroyed by the old regime. Informed by the people that when the church was torn down, the sacred vessels were thrown into the well, Fr. Antonio sent a workman to see what he could find. He was able to remove the large rocks which blocked the well opening and to dig down seven meters into the well. Candelabras and other precious items that belonged to the church were found. The workman who did the excavation then confided to the priest that, as a young man, it was he who had torn down the church's bell tower and thrown the rocks into the well."

In her letter Sr. M. Clare also speaks of Fr. Sciarra's plan to purchase the home of Fr. Dajani and to preserve it as a shrine to his memory. Fr. Sciarra has composed a hymn recounting the bravery of Fr. Dajani. He hopes to assist the young Albanians to work for the renewal of their nation. We encourage our readers and friends to write to Sister M. Clare and to help this most worthy project to preserve the memory of a soon to be saint — Fr. Daniel Dajani.

Her address is:

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JESUIT MISSION IN CONTEMPORARY ALBANIA

One of the most hopeful signs for the rejuvenation of the Catholic Church in Albania has been the re-establishment of the Jesuit Mission in Albania. Since 1991 a group of Italian Jesuits lead by Pietro Malone, S.J. and Ernesto Santucci, S.J., have been ministering in Albania, together with the sole remaining Albanian Jesuits, Frs. Gjergj Vata, Anton Luli, and Ndoc Kelmendi, in a fruitful pastoral ministry in Shkodra, Tirana and surrounding villages. The group is following in the footsteps of the Jesuit missionaries who accomplished so much good from 1841 until their expulsion after 1946. The main projects which have been undertaken by the Jesuits are the direction of the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodra, the rebuilding from-the-ground St. Gjon the Baptist Church in Bilaj near Tiranë, the pastoral ministry to the university students in Tirana, and the reconstruction of the Sacred Heart National Shrine in the Albanian capital of Tirana. Soon they will reopen Xavier College in Shkodra to begin once again the training of young people in various professional fields as well as Albanian culture. Each summer since 1991 the Jesuits have operated **Project Hope** by which over 200 students from Italy and other European countries come to Albania to teach languages, catechize the youth, and help in the construction of churches and clinics. The Jesuits are thus operating a broad based program of evangelization.

The Italian provincial, Fr. Gian Giacomo Rotelli has personally visited the Jesuit houses in Albania. He has taken a great interest in promoting the development of the Church in Albania. In a letter of December 3, 1991, the feast of St. Francis Xavier, Rotelli addressed the first seven Jesuit priests sent to Albania. He cited the great example of earlier missionaries to the country and especially the witness of the Jesuit martyrs Frs. Daniel Dajani, Gjon Fausti, Gjon Karma, and Brother Gjon Pantalia. He stated that the first apostolic work of the Jesuits would be the formation of priests at the Pontifical Seminary in Shkodra, "to educate and form ministers of the Gospel, with as much spiritual effort, human richness and intellectual seriousness as the Jesuits expanded up until the advent of communism." By September 1991 the seminary had re-opened with 31 students. The Archbishop's palace was utilized as a temporary residence until larger and more adapted quarters could be found or constructed. Four Jesuits were assigned to this work, including Fr. Giacomo Gardin, Gjergj Vata, Luciano Fozzer (former missionary to Brazil), and Pino di Luccio, an Italian scholastic. Soon more seminarians arrived. Despite difficult living conditions an orderly and functioning seminary was soon established. A second, smaller near by house was obtained as the student population reached 90. According to one of the Jesuit fathers this number could double if space were available. Sleeping quarters are crowded and classes are held in every available area including the dining hall. Nevertheless the spirit and devotion of the students, who "are the sons and grandsons of martyrs", is excellent.

The Jesuit community in Tirana has overseen the return of the Sacred Heart Shrine from the government for use as a place of religious worship. During the communist period the shrine was used as a cinema and concert hall. The reconstruction of the building is now complete. Once again it functions as a shrine. It is also serving as the temporary Cathedral Church of Archbishop Rrok Mirdita of Durrës-Tirana, until the new Cathedral is constructed. In Tirana the Jesuits are ministering to university students. They celebrate Mass, organize small prayer groups and provide Christian formation classes for students. With the assistance of the Alumni Association of the Jesuit Schools in Italy, the priests are conducting study weeks for professors at the University of Tirana. These study weeks are directed by Italian professors and serve to update the knowledge of the

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Albanian educators. The Jesuits are also setting up a library at the University for the same purpose. They likewise provide assistance to Albanian students who wish to pursue their education in Italy.

During the summer months, each year since 1991 the Jesuits have conducted summer work camps under the name **Project Hope**. Over 200 Italian, Spanish and Maltese students from Jesuit schools or Christian Life Communities have instructed Albanian young people in various languages such as Italian, Spanish, German, English and French. The volunteers of **Project Hope** have also taught catechism and built churches and clinics. In the village of Bilaj they rebuilt the Church of St. John the Baptist as well as the priest house. Father Cristoforo Sironi, S.J., editor of the Missionary Student Association magazine *Gentes* of Rome is one of the main promoters of **Project Hope.**

They have worked in conjunction with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity and Salesian Sisters to teach the catechism to children and young adults. The volunteers, who are aided by the Caritas organization of Italy, live in tents and are very well received by the Albanian people because of their self-sacrifice and generosity. In Summer 1994 the volunteers of **Project Hope** intend to work in the village of Bize where they will build a retreat house. In three near-by villages they will work with young people and teach catechism. They also will continue to provide language classes in Tirana and Shkodra.

Fr. Santucci, who is stationed in Tirana, has been celebrating Mass in the district around Kruja which has a minority Catholic population. He has received permission from the government to rebuild a sixth century church which was destroyed by the Turks. The Church will be dedicated in honor of Mary, Queen of Albania. Fr. Santucci hopes to organize youth pilgrimages to the Church from Tirana. The Jesuits in Tirana are also involved in the construction of the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Vora, a newly settled community situated in the area between Durrës, Tirana and the International airport at Rinas.

Some of the Jesuit Fathers have conducted short missionary trips among the mountain people of northern Albania who have not seen a priest for decades. Travel to these areas is very difficult, but as Fr. Fozzer found during a visit to these areas with Fr. Vata, the people are eager to receive priests. Much good is accomplished by the Jesuits who have undertaken these missionary travels. Fr. Fozzer, returning invigorated by his experience, challenged the younger Jesuits from Italy to get involved "where there is so much need."

Within a short time the Jesuits in Shkodra will be reestablishing their Xavier College which was closed by the Communists shortly after World War II. For many decades the Xavier College provided an opportunity for the youth of Albania to become formed in Christian as well as Albanian values. Xavier College graduates were among the most illustrious and patriotic citizens of independent Albania. No doubt the future graduates of Xavier College will make great contributions to the progress and development of Albania in the twenty-first century. Xavier College will re-open in a school building which was constructed by the communists on the grounds of the former Jesuit complex. The entire building is now being restored.

From this brief summary of recent Jesuit activity in Albania one can see that the Society of Jesus is involved in the construction of the nation's future, and is preparing Albania's young people for the tasks which they will be called upon to undertake for the good of their own society and the larger society of the world outside Albania.

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70TH ANNIVERSARY OF FATHER GIACOMO GARDIN, S.J.

Father Giacomo Gardin (better known to many Albanians as Ják Gardini), celebrated 70th anniversary of his religious life last October. A Jubilee Mass was concelebrated at the recently restored Cathedral of Shkodër. A multitude of friends and well-wishers participated. Many of the guests were Father's pupils and companions during his ten years ordeal in the prison and labor camps of Communist Albania.

On this special and happy occasion, our Institute wishes to honor Father Gardin, who has been with us since the inception of our apostolate for Albania in 1966, with the following tribute.

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Giacomo Gardin was born in Friuli at Prodolone di San Vito Tagliamento in the province of Pordenone, Italy on September 24, 1905. At eighteen years of age he joined the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). After the customary two years of novitiate and preparation in philosophy at Gorizia, he moved to Chieri, Turin, where he attended courses in philosophy for three years. Beginning in 1930 he spent several years as a teacher in Albania in order to learn the language and become familiar with the customs of the people. He then returned to Chieri to study theology. On July 15, 1936 he was ordained a priest by Cardinal Maurilio Fossati. He spent 1937 in France at Paray-le-Monial, where he concluded the last part of the long training required by the Society of Jesus, i.e. the Third Probation. Immediately afterward, he worked as a teacher and spiritual director at Saint Francis Xavier College and at the Pontifical Seminary of Shkodra. This master of the Albanian language and culture remained totally dedicated to the spiritual and physical formation of Albanian youth until he was arrested and imprisoned in 1945.

What makes a man leave all things behind and, putting himself under obedience to other men, dedicate himself solely to Jesus Christ and His Church? There are as many answers to this question as there are priests and religious but, in the case of Fr. Giacomo Gardin, we have a particularly poignant and eloquent response. Quite simply, Fr. Gardin is one of God's people who instinctively are driven to a life of solidarity with suffering people after the example of the crucified Christ. If the priesthood of Christ means anything to people of this age, or any other, it rests on the fact that Christ truly suffered and died out of love for all humanity. Fr. Gardin's whole life has exemplified Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. His life testifies to the historical and eternal truths of Christianity and remains a splendid part of the larger mosaic of the Catholic priesthood, and more specifically of that influential and awe-inspiring group founded by the intrepid Spaniard, St. Ignatius of Loyola. Several years ago the society of Jesus celebrated the 450th anniversary of its foundation. This year Fr. Gardin has passed the boundaries of 70 years within these 450. By any measure Fr. Gardin personifies much of what could be called "the Jesuit experience". He has known success in completing the rigorous spiritual and cultural program demanded of all Jesuits in their time of formation. As a young man he became a missionary to Albania at a particularly difficult, yet important, time in the history of the nation. He dedicated himself totally to the development of the youth of Albania. At the point of his priestly life when he was at the height of his manhood, the age of 40, he was unjustly imprisoned and spent ten years "in privation and total poverty" as he described it in his *Prison Memoirs*. Much in his memoirs (which were written in obedience to his religious superiors' orders), deserves to be quoted, and even memorized. One particularly revealing section of his prison experience encapsulates his priestly service while incarcerated. Fr. Gardin wrote "I was

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Fr. Gacomo Gardin, S.J., Shkodër, Albania, April, 1993

brought to a familiarity with humiliation, to be dragged in chains from one end of the town to the other in filthy, ragged clothes . . . I experienced, not with joy, but with patience, the meaning of extreme poverty. This meant eating only bread and soup, sleeping on wooden floors, wearing rags, working hard for long hours in often inhumane conditions, putting up with parasites." At this point one reaches the limits of human endurance, the depth of what one person can give. Fr. Gardin had left his native Italy to be a servant of the youth of Albania, he had offered every energy he had for their benefit, and wicked men decided to make him a beast of burden and to classify him "an enemy of the people".

What meaning did life have for Fr. Gardin at this point? Fr. Gardin put it this way, "A very precious opportunity was offered to me in those years, namely that of dedicating my sacerdotal heart and sacramental power to the confidence and the helping of many of my companions in misfortune". While Fr. Gardin was laboring under awful conditions for ten years in prison camps, he was living a priestly life in solidarity with the suffering people in Albania's prisons and work camps. Christ's suffering and death are part of every Christian's life, and even more of every ordained Catholic priest. In the twentieth century we have come face to face with the crucifixion of vast numbers of innocent men and women, and shining among them are the priests who accompanied them, consoling them and pointing the way to a better world.

The testimony of Fr. Gardin reveals a life of loving dedicated service to Christ and to those for whom Christ died. As a result of his mission to Albania, Fr. Gardin developed and continued for decades, links of Christian charity which have extended across national borders and even across the oceans. A precious legacy of Fr. Gardin is his 70 years of service to Christ in the Society of Jesus. His being set apart for the gospel gave him a love for the Albanian people without diminishing his love for his family and for his fellow Jesuits. During the time spent in Albanian prisons and work camps Fr. Gardin was able to write several dozen letters to his loved ones in Italy. In these letters one finds a warm and moving spirit, a man who pours out his heart without self-pity. He was unashamed to ask for help, for material and spiritual succor. Yet he never dwelled on the horrible conditions that he faced. He even gave witness to his belief in the providence of God, despite all his troubles.

During his time in the Shkodra penitentiary, called Burgu i armiqëvet të popullit (Prison of the Enemies of the People), he was able to write only a few letters, in Albanian, to his mother. These letters had to be inscribed with the initials "V.F.L.P." (Vdekje Fashizmit—Liri Popullit), which stood for "Death to fascism—Liberty to the people!" He secretly gave the letters to Sister Dava (Victoria) Kallmeti, an Albanian nun who was a spiritual daughter of Fr. Gardin and helped him while he was in prison. Sister Dava's congregation had been secularized by the communist authorities, along with all the other congregations of religious women at that time. She translated Fr. Gardin's letters into Italian and forwarded them to his family. Sister Dava appraised the family of Fr. Gardin's needs and at the same time reproved them when they did not send him letters as often as she thought they should. When Fr. Gardin was released from prison he was forced to live as a worker in the

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labor camps under difficult conditions. However, he was at least able to more freely correspond with his family and religious community in Italy. In a 1952 postcard sent to Fr. Pietro Alfenore, his religious superior, when it seemed he might soon be returning to Italy, he described the sweet memories he had of his religious life in Italy, of his teachers and old friends among the Society of Jesus. The news that he was soon to be released caused great joy among his Jesuit confreres and especially Fr. Pietro Palladini, a very dear friend who had worked with Fr. Gardin in Albania until being expelled in 1946. Yet it was to be three more years before Fr. Gardin could return to Italy.

In the meantime Fr. Gardin worked as a laborer and helped those he could with his priestly ministry. In one of his letters to his brother Attilio he expressed his faith in God, "Don't worry about me because God is alive and God will provide. I live in serenity because my treasure is with me—God." To encourage his brother Fr. Gardin continued, "We have a country where surely all of us will be reunited—heaven—this life passes like a dream—eternity awaits us and this is the hope that Christ has placed in our hearts. So away with every regret."

Finally in 1955 Fr. Gardin was allowed by the Albanian communist regime to return to his native Italy. For over thirty years Fr. Gardin labored there as a pastor and director of the Spiritual Exercises. He served as a Spiritual Director to the Jesuit students at Lonigo (Vicenza) until 1960 when he was appointed superior at the retreat house at Rivalta (Reggio Emilia). Between 1964 and 1976 he lived in Trieste as superior of the Jesuit community and Pastor of Sacred Heart Church. During this time he assisted hundreds of Albanian refugees with their legal needs as well as material, but especially in dealing with their spiritual dispair. From 1976 until 1991 he was stationed at the Jesuit church in Parma. In April 1985 Fr. Gardin traveled to San Francisco to participate in the Commemoration of the Fortieth Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania which was held at the University of San Francisco. Fr. Gardin was the representative of the Superior General of the Jesuits at this commemoration. During the Mass of Peace celebrated in St. Ignatius Church on the university campus Fr. Gardin delivered the homily in the Albanian language. To enlighten our readers about Fr. Gardin, and as a tribute to him we are printing below an English translation of his classic testimony to Christian martyrdom in Albania delivered on April 13, 1985 in St. Ignatius Church, in San Francisco, California.

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

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

Today the Society of Jesus is invited to join the company of Clergy and the heroic Franciscan Fathers who for centuries have labored and poured out their blood in Albania. Since about 1841 the Society of Jesus has also labored intensely in that part of the Lord's vineyard, and in 1945, when the storm broke out that ravished the country, the Society also suffered the destruction of its works, the dispersion of its sons, and the blood bath which, by a mysterious coincidence with the Paschal Mystery, is necessary so that a land may become fertile in Christ.

This is why the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, **Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.** would have been present at this commemoration, should it have been possible. It is he who should be here, not I. It's true that I was numbered among the generous sons of

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the Society who were engulfed by the furious persecution; but afterwards, like "poor Jonah", I was spewed out onto the beaches of freedom, while my persecuted fellows—priests, religious and laypeople—gathered in their hands the palm of martyrdom! This was the role that Providence assigned to me! Maybe I was not ripe for martyrdom. Or maybe God wanted me to be His witness here today, in order to bring you a living testimony of how much people have suffered there, in that small land of Albania; a testimony of how much labor in hardship and bloodshed I witnessed during the ten years I was there; a testimony of how high a price must still be paid today, in order to bring to its glorious conclusion the destiny of that Land which is so sacred to you but also to me—if I may claim it as my own without presumption.

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

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

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

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

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

Would I have done well in saying that certain unhealthy beaches of the Albanian coast lands, well-known as hotbeds of malaria, were transformed into dry and fertile land, and that I labored in this task, but without declaring at the same time that those lands became arable and healthy as a result of blood sucked from the veins of countless prisoners? How could I speak only of myself, whom you can see be-

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fore you today, healthy at eighty years of age, and not speak at the same time of so many who, after indescribable tortures, were thrown like carcasses into pits without a hint of religious ceremony? And among the many, I want to remember at this moment the Bishops Prendushi, Gjini and Volaj; the Priests Shantoja and Zadeja, Tracki and Sirdani, Pizzi, Gazulli and many more; the Franciscan Fathers Ciprian Nika, Anton Harapi, Mati Prendushi, and the Jesuit Fathers Fausti, Dajani, Gjon Karma, Gjon Pantalija, and Florian Berisha. Many Albanian Orthodox and Muslim clergy perished in the same manner.

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

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

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

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

In 1992 the Albanian language edition of his *Prison Memoirs* was published and Fr. Gardin contributed an epilogue which discussed his sentiments on seeing the return of religious freedom to his adopted homeland of Albania. We are glad to publish below an abbreviated English translation of Fr. Gardin's epilogue from the Albanian edition of his book.

From that far away September there have passed a full thirty-five years, (*Editor's note: since his release from prison work camp and return to Italy*) and because God has gifted me with such a long life as to be able to see the continuation of history I believe it is necessary for me to write a brief postscript. This postscript speaks of the triumph of God and of the stupidity of man. My far away experience as well as all my questions as to why, regarding all the things which happened to me and to others, have today found their true response which cannot be passed over in silence.

The relief that I felt on my repatriation was a natural reaction after my ten years of imprisonment and total and complete loneliness. In Italy I soon found the warmth which I was missing during my imprisonment. Very quickly I recovered my health and became

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once again a full time minister with many important positions. But while I was beginning to lead a new life in Italy my Albanian confreres remained in their suffering. It was impossible to communicate with them or to assist them in any way. The only thing we could do for them from the free world was to pray for them.

However God was preparing for us, in silence, his triumphant return. Everything happened so quickly that we could not believe our eyes and ears. It started with the events in Eastern Europe, the Berlin Wall crumbled, the symbols of tyranny were razed to the ground, and peoples began again to breathe freely. Isolated Albania was the last bastion to succumb and to bow before the logic of history. After five decades we Jesuits quickly reclaimed what was left of our confreres and of our works. Out from the darkness into the light came Fr. Gjergj Vata and Fr. Ndoc Luli, 70 and 80 years old respectively. Only these two remained alive—"the remnant of Israel". They personified the continuity of the Society where it had been broken. Both came to Italy to profess their final solemn vows after 50 long years. Soon our Father Provincial went to Albania and began to organize the return of the Jesuits. During 1991 the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Society of Jesus were celebrated. On April 22 of that year a Mass was celebrated by Pope John Paul II at St. Peter's Basilica to commemorate these two anniversaries. Along with the Holy Father and Fr. Hans-Peter Kolvenbach, the Jesuit Superior General, there were a total of fourteen concelebrants, including some bishops and also Fr. Gjergj Vata, S.J. Vata's presence in that place and circumstance was a clear and convincing testimony to God's victory. This is why I thought that the logical conclusion of the story of my ten year imprisonment should not be merely a declaration of my relief that now freedom was won. Rather it should be a reflection of what Manzoni (*the famous Italian novelist of the nineteenth century--editor's note*) puts in the heart of the persecuted "Betrothed". He stated, "God never disturbs the happiness of his sons and daughters without having in mind to prepare for them another, even greater joy . . ."

After His Resurrection Christ remained for forty days on earth to give witness to those who would later be His witnesses "to the end of the earth". Now that Christ's Church in Albania has experienced its own resurrection after its long Good Friday, Fr. Gardin has returned to Albania to complete his work serving the Albanian people by forming new priestly witnesses for Christ. As he approaches 90 years of age he lives among the Albanian seminarians who wish to dedicate their lives to the same task to which Fr. Gardin devoted his entire life—the priestly mission of Jesus Christ. By his presence and words of wise encouragement he is providing for the future evangelical fruitfulness of the Albanian church. Neither the difficulties of life in present day Albania nor his advanced age deterred Fr. Gardin from taking up his post among the Albanian youth from which he had been forcibly removed forty-five years ago. Fr. Gardin, in addition to his work among the seminarians in Shkodra is also much in demand as an honored preacher and speaker at the Cathedral and in local parishes as well as at cultural and civic celebrations. On the occasion of his seventieth anniversary as a member of the Society of Jesus everyone involved in the work of the Daniel Dajani, S.J. Albanian Catholic Institute pays him tribute and prays that God, who preserved him during his period of imprisonment in Albania, might preserve him **ad multos annos** in his inspiring and uplifting service to the Albanian people and the entire community of God's people.



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Fr. Giacomo Gardin, labor camp, Lushnja, Albania 1954



Fr. Gardin (l) with his close confrere Fr. Pietro Palladini, S.J. following his release, Rome, 1955



Holy Father Pope John Paul II attentively peruses Father Gardins' book



Fr. Gardin delivering the homily at his first Mass after arriving in Italy, Rome, September 1955



Gjon Sinishta (l) in a rare encounter with Fr. Gardin his former teacher and mentor, Parma, 1991



Fr. Gardin, San Francisco, California 1985

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THE ALBANIAN CONNECTION OF OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL

In 1966 I was approached by a group of Albanian refugees in Detroit, Michigan who were seeking to gain relief for themselves and their countrymen. At the time I was unaware of a common devotion which we all shared. I began to provide for their physical needs. Later on I devoted myself to making known to the English speaking world the plight of religious believers in Albania. As a Franciscan priest I always had a tender devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel. It was a devotion that I had practiced from my youth. It was a joy to my heart to learn from these Albanian refugees that the picture which is known throughout the world as Our Lady of Good Counsel had its origins in the ancient shrine of Our Lady of Shkodra in Albania.

Since the 1400's this wonderful icon, which portrays the child Jesus embracing his mother Mary, has been venerated in the church entrusted to the Augustinian Fathers. The church is located in the small hill top village of Genazzano about thirty miles southeast of Rome. The story of how the picture came to be a part of this church is quite remarkable. It tells much about the religious and social history of the Albanian Catholics, and can even shed light on recent events in Albania.

Before 1467 the church at Genazzano was in a state of serious disrepair. This church building dated from the 4th century. It had the title of St. Mary, Mother of Good Counsel. A local woman who had a great devotion to Mary, longed to see the church re-adorned in all its former splendor. Petruccia de Nocera, upon the death of her husband sold her home and sacrificed what little income she had so that the work of rebuilding might be started. The project was commenced but her meager funds were soon exhausted. The widow refused to lose heart and prayed to Our Lady of Good Counsel so that the church would be totally restored.

In April 1467 a large crowd assembled to celebrate the feast of St. Mark, patron of Genazzano. Suddenly a single cloud rose on the horizon and drifted towards the town. The cloud descended on the wall of the half-restored church. After the cloud dissipated, a picture of the heavenly Mother of God with her Child remained. The rebuilding of the church of Our Lady of Good Counsel was soon completed.

The town's people believed that the mysterious picture had come from heaven. However, two Albanian pilgrims soon arrived with a marvelous story to tell. Prior to the picture's appearance in Genazzano these two pilgrims were praying at the shrine of Our Lady of Shkodra in their native Albania. Suddenly they saw the picture remove itself from the walls of the church, pass over their heads and leave the church. The two men followed and saw the picture rise into the air. High in the sky it was wrapped in a cloud and vanished in the direction of the Adriatic and Italy. Inspired by God to follow the holy image to its new resting place they set out as pilgrims to Italy. They searched for it everywhere. Finally they heard rumors of the astonishing appearance of a new picture at Genazzano. The two pilgrims hurried to the town and found the sacred object of their devoted quest. This was their own beloved holy picture which they had seen rising into the sky at Shkodra.

For many centuries this holy image was regarded as having miraculous powers. It was revered by the Shkodrans, especially in time of national peril. During the latter part of the fifteenth century the Albanian people found themselves threatened by the invading Ottoman Turks. Despite the heroic efforts of their famous leader Skanderbeg, they fell under the yoke of the Turks. Many Albanians were forced to flee their homeland. They settled in Southern Italy where they continued their devotion to Our Lady. For the past 500 years these Albanian descendants preserved their faith, language and ancient customs. The holy image of Our Lady in Genazzano remains an object of veneration for these faithful.

The picture is remarkable in that it is very fragile. It is painted on plaster about as thick as an egg shell. It measures in size 18 by 20 inches.

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No human skill of the 15th century could have detached it whole and uncracked from one wall, and transported it to its new location. This wafer thin sheet of plaster stands upright with no support of any kind except for the narrow ledge on which it rests. Since its arrival in Genazzano the picture has been venerated by faithful of all classes and conditions. It has become known to Christians all over the world. Many Popes have visited Genazzano and given their approval to the devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel.

In 1987 Pope John Paul II, addressed a group of Albanian pilgrims from France, Belgium, Germany and the United States during the Marian Year. He referred to "their pilgrimage to the shrine of Genazzano where according to tradition is venerated the picture of Our Lady of Shkodër, Patroness ofAlbania." The Holy Father addressed a prayer to the Virgin of Shkodër and asked that she might "precede the Church in the pilgrimage of faith as they experience the path of trial and tribulation". The pontiff referred to the religious persecution which had then been raging for over 40 years in Albania.

I will always remember the celebration of November 28, 1987 in St. Ignatius Church on the campus of the University of San Francisco which commemorated the 75th anniversary of Albania's independence. During the celebration a beautiful image of Our Lady of Shkodër was venerated and a song was sung in her honor in the Albanian language. I was privileged at that time to tell the story of the miraculous picture of Our Lady of Shkodër which is now present in the church in Genazzano.

Several years later, Mother Teresa encouraged all people to turn to Our Lady in prayer. "We must pray to Our Lady of Shkodër", Mother Teresa said, "she does miracles everywhere, and we must trust that she will do a miracle for us." According to God's divine plan the prayer for miracle was accomplished with the return of religious freedom to Albania. One sign of this miracle was the visit of Pope John Paul II to Albania. He was invited by the President of Albania and the religious lead-



Fr. Leo G. Neal offering the Albanian Catholic Bulletin to Pope John Paul II during the Marian Year of 1988

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ers of the nation. His April 1993 visit was primarily to consecrate the first Catholic bishops in Albania in 50 years. Yet another purpose of his visit was to bless the cornerstone of the new shrine of Our Lady of Shkodër. Three days before his visit to Albania John Paul II paid a visit to Genazzano. He entrusted his apostolic pilgrimage to Albania to Our Lady. During his Albanian visit to Albania he referred to Our Lady of Shkodra and Our Lady of Good Counsel as one in several of his talks. In a prayer he entrusted Albania to Mary under both titles. After blessing the cornerstone of the new shrine of Our Lady of Shkodra the Holy Father placed the replica of the miraculous painting on the altar as his gift to the Cathedral. Then he prayed silently for a few moments. In Rome John Paul II spoke about his Albanian visit and specifically discussed the connection between Genazzano and Shkodër. His words were rich in significance. He said that "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."

The miracle of the return of freedom to Albania has been accomplished. Now let us pray to Our Lady of Shkodra, Mother of Good Counsel for the development and progress of the people of Albania. Our Lady of Good Counsel has always been a support to me in my life and I feel privileged to have been of service to the people of Albania in the United States and to share with them their devotion to **Zoja e Bekueme** (Blessed Lady). She will certainly do more miracles for us all if we pray to her in faith.

Leo G. NEAL

MY SOLITUDE

It is called a cell—I think of night
It is called the night—I think of solitude
A cell, two meters by two in size
Where the fourth dimension is solitude
A cell, four darknesses, four walls
And two broken, uneven windows
A cell where solitude sobs silently
Because pain has touched the eye's pupil

Listen! Here I am never alone.
In every two meters
I measure ten years of my life
On every wall
I hang the portrait of my youth
From the warmth that rises
From the pillow of my hands
I bake a big bowl of belief!

When you are alone, come and dream with me
Come even if it is early, but come
Before four darknesses become a single being
And four walls become an affliction
And two broken windows become dawn
Come then at five in the morning
When instead of day
I may call it solitude.

Gjon SINISHTA
Prishtinë Prison, 1956

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THE ALBANIAN CATHOLIC PARISHES IN THE UNITED STATES



Fr. Andrew Nargaj, OFM



Msgr. Joseph J. Oroshi

Before World War II the few Albanian Catholic immigrants to the United States attended church without the benefit of pastoral help from Albanian priests. They usually attended church with their Polish or Italian Catholic brethren. Albanian Catholics began to settle in significant numbers in the United States in the mid 1950's. Among the new arrivals was Fr. Andrew Nargay, O.F.M.. He was the first Albanian Catholic priest to make his home here. The priest gathered Albanian Catholics for Mass, Christian formation and the administration of the sacraments. Fr. Nargay was able to do this work only on a part-time basis. He had the permission of his religious superiors but was kept busy with his teaching duties at East coast Franciscan Schools including Siena College in Buffalo, New York.

It was not until the arrival of Fr. (later Msgr.) Joseph J. Oroshi in 1960 that the Albanian Catholics in America had an official pastor. Fr. Oroshi was sent by the Vatican to specifically minister to Albanians. At the invitation of Cardinal Spellman he settled in New York. Oroshi began to regularly celebrate Mass in Albanian and administer the sacraments at various Churches throughout the New York City area. At the same time he taught Latin and theology in Catholic colleges in order to alleviate the financial burden on his flock. The number of Catholic refugee immigrants from Albania to America increased rapidly during the 1960's. It soon became evident that Albanians in the New York City area needed a church of their own. In 1970 with the permission of Cardinal Cooke, Fr. Oroshi founded Our Lady of Good Counsel in the Bronx. It was the first Catholic church for Albanians in the western hemisphere.

The response of the Albanian community to the new church was so great that a second Albanian priest, Fr. Rrok Mirdita, arrived from Montenegro in 1973 to assist Fr. Oroshi. That same year another Albanian priest, Fr. Lazer Sheldija (former missionary in Brazil), came to New York to minister to Albanian Catholics. Fr. Sheldija founded the second Albanian



Rev. Lazer Sheldija

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Rev. Peter Popaj

Catholic church in New York, St. Peter's and Paul's. It served the ever growing number of Albanian Catholics there. Albanian immigration to the United States had reached its peak in 1972, the year before Fr. Mirdita and Fr. Sheldija arrived. The activity of the Albanian Catholics in New York was inspiring to the entire Catholic population in the Archdiocese of New York.

As a sign of Albanian Catholic vitality, and in recognition of the service of Fr. Oroshi to the Albanian Catholics, Pope Paul VI named him a "domestic prelate" with the title of Monsignor.

The Albanian Catholic community continued to grow and develop throughout the 1970's and 1980's. In November 1985 Fr. Peter Popaj became the first Albanian Catholic priest to be ordained in the United States. His ordination was at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Cardinal John J. O'Connor was the ordaining prelate. Seven months later, in June 1986, Msgr. Oroshi retired as pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church. He had devoted the past twenty-five years of service to Albanian Catholics in the United States. His assistant Fr. Rrok Mirdita replaced him and worked together with Fr. Popaj to serve Albanian Catholics. In 1988, following the tragic death of Fr. Sheldija, the Church community of St. Peter and St. Paul was attached to the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel. In 1989 the much beloved and dedicated founding pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Msgr. Oroshi, passed to his eternal reward.

Due to the ever expanding Albanian Catholic community in New York it became necessary in the early 1990's to find a larger church site. With the permission of Cardinal O'Connor a site was purchased in Hartsdale, New York. A large church building is presently under construction. The new church will be named "Our Lady of Shkodër". The church grounds will have a rectory, cultural center (to accommodate 2500 people), as well as recreational facilities. In 1992 Fr. Mirdita was chosen to become the Archbishop of the ancient sea of Durrës-Tirana. His assistant Fr. Popaj took over as pastor at Our Lady of Shkodër. With the help of Fr. Andrew Nargay and Rev. Deacon Marash Shkreli, Fr. Popaj is ministering week by week to the large and ever growing Albanian Catholic community.

In the Detroit area Albanian Catholics began to arrive *en masse* in 1966. A decade later their numbers had surpassed 10,000. From 1971 to 1976 Fr. Prenk Ndrevashaj, the first Albanian Catholic priest in the area, ministered to Albanians in various churches that opened their doors to their Al-



Rev. Rrok Mirdita now Archbishop of Durrës

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Rev. Prenk Ndrevashaj

banian brothers and sisters. In 1977 the Albanian Catholic community in Detroit built their own church in suburban Birmingham with the help of Albanians of other religious affiliations. Fr. Ndrevashaj was named pastor of the church Our Lady of Albanians. Just a few years later, in 1981, a second larger church was constructed to serve the Albanian community living in Warren, Michigan near Detroit. Fr. Prenk Camaj was the founding pastor of St. Paul's church. The present pastor of St. Paul's is Fr. Anton Kqira.

All three Albanian Catholic Churches in the United States are not only centers of religious and spiritual activity but also offer social, cultural, and recreational activities for the entire Albanian community. These three churches conduct relief campaigns to assist needy Albanians in Kosova and Albania properly. They assist their Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox brothers and sisters in need.



Rev. Anton Kqira (r) presenting Dr. Sali Berisha, President of Albania with a gift-plaque in recognition of his work for a new Albania.

Ecumenical relations among Albanians are a reality and not just an idea. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised for relief activities in Kosova and Albania. The President Dr. Sali Berisha of Albania, spoke at St. Paul's during his first visit to the U.S. in 1991.

On a recent visit to the Detroit area Archbishop Rrok Mirdita concelebrated a Mass with the Archbishop of Detroit. In speaking to the Albanian-American community he thanked them for their support for the reconstruction and renewal of the Catholic Church in Albania. He asked the whole American Catholic community to join the effort as well. Archbishop Mirdita also encouraged Albanian-American Catholic families to promote priestly and religious vocations for the Albanian church and for the whole Catholic Church.

For those interested in learning more about the Albanian Catholic parishes in the United States or assisting them in any way we have printed their addresses below.

Rev. Peter Popaj, Fr. Andrew Nargay, OFM

or Rev. Deacon Marash Shkreli

Our Lady of Shkodër Church

361 W. Hartsdale Ave.

Hartsdale, NY 10530

Rev. Prenk Ndrevashaj

Our Lady of Albanians Catholic Church

20855 W. 13 Mile Rd.

Beverly Hills

Birmingham, MI 48010

Rev. Anton Kqira

St. Paul's Albanian Catholic Church

3411 Twelve Mile Rd.

Warren, MI 48092

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ALBANIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN WORLD YOUTH DAY IN DENVER, COLORADO

A group of young Albanian Catholics attended the Eighth World Youth Day held in Denver, Colorado from August 11 to 15, 1993. Past World Youth Days, which are convened every two years, have been held in Rome, Argentina, Poland, and Spain. Pope John Paul II, whose idea it was to begin World Youth Day as a project for the world's youth, was in attendance and gave a number of addresses. Over twenty cardinals, five hundred bishops and 200,000 young people came on pilgrimage from all over the world to meet one another, to pray together and to learn about the theme chosen "I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly." Everyone who attended was overjoyed at the spirit and unity of the event. John Paul II himself called it "the highlight of the Church's year in 1993". In a letter to the youth prior to the event the Pope said that "the World Youth Gathering is a first step and a proposal of a new unity, a unity which transcends the political order but enlightens it. It is based on awareness that only the Creator of the human heart can adequately satisfy its deepest yearnings. The World Youth Day is thus a proclamation of Christ who says to the men and women of our own century too: 'I came that they might have life, and have it to the fullest' ".

At the closing Mass held on August 15, the feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven, Pope John Paul II announced that the next World Youth Day will be held in Manila, Phillipines with the theme "As the Father has sent me, so I also send you". The dates for the gathering, the first World Youth Day to be held in Asia, are January 10 to 15, 1995.

For the first time a group of more than a dozen youth from Albania participated in the celebration of World Youth Day in Denver. The group was lead by the Pastor of the Albanian parish Our Lady of Shkodra in New York, Rev. Pjeter Popaj. The group from Albania joined Albanian-American youth from Detroit and New York for the pilgrimage to Denver. While visiting New York the young Albanians were hosted by members of the Albanian community in a spirit of true Albanian brotherhood and hospitality. The youth group from Albania were overwhelmed at being able to participate in Denver in such a joyful manifestation of Catholic unity. They were exuberant and emotionally moved by the experience of seeing Pope John Paul II who had just several months before visited their homeland. They were also touched by the greetings which they received from all the young people of America and the world when they revealed to them that they were from Albania. Youth everywhere associate Albania with Mother Teresa who is beloved by all the youth of the world and especially by the Catholics. Certainly these young Albanians will pass on the spirit of faith and solidarity which they received at the World Youth Day in Denver to their fellow Catholic youth and indeed to all young Albanians who are breathing now the fresh air of religious freedom and other liberties.

Agreement Between Vatican Radio and the Albanian Radio and Television Company.

In November 1993 Vatican Radio and the Albanian Radio and Television Company reached an agreement for the rebroadcast of Albanian language programs produced by Vatican Radio. Cooperation in the fields of culture and journalism is also part of the agreement. Moreover Vatican Radio will provide technical assistance and help in the training of personnel.

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MOTHER TERESA DEFENDS HUMAN LIFE BEFORE WASHINGTON, D.C. AUDIENCE

During the long darkness of faith in Albania, Mother Teresa was the light and hope of the oppressed Albanian people. During the forty years while her life and message was becoming known and accepted throughout the world, the Albanian communist government ignored her. Even to speak her name in public (which was associated with anti-state propaganda) made one liable for up to ten years in prison.

Mother Teresa's entire life has been at the service of suffering humanity, seeking to alleviate physical hunger and hunger for God. Mother Teresa said that "When I meet Albanians I always stress devotion to Our Lady of Shkodra encouraging the family rosary in her honor. I tell them to stay away from consumerism. Albanians have always had large families and stayed together. Even more now that they have freedom they should practice that wonderful devotion. My sisters are going to care for Albanian children, for the sick and the elderly, to teach catechism because Albania has suffered the agony of Our Lord longer than any other country. My sisters will assist Catholics, Orthodox, Muslims and everyone."

In February, 1994 Mother Teresa was asked to give the keynote address at the National prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C.. The gathering was attended by many American government officials and foreign guests. President and Mrs. Clinton participated, as well as Vice-President and Mrs. Gore. For the first time Albanian leaders from Kosova were present. President Ibrahim Rugova of the Republic of Kosova and the Prime Minister Bujar Bukoshi attended. This was a very significant recognition by the White House of the cause of the Albanians living in the former Yugoslavia who are ruthlessly persecuted by the Serbian military rulers.

Mother Teresa, in her address, firmly admonished her listeners to reject what she forthrightly said was "the greatest destroyer of peace today"—abortion. She called abortion "a war against the child, a direct killing of an innocent child . . . if we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?" For decades Mother Teresa has been caring for needy children and promoting the adoption of children whose mothers cannot or will not take care of them. In this regard, she is following the teachings enunciated by Pope John Paul II and by all the Catholic Bishops. This message and clear teaching has been unfortunately rejected by many governments around the world, including the United States. The Americans have made abortion legal and even use public funds to pay for the destruction of unborn babies. President and Mrs. Clinton are notorious for their efforts to expand the availability of abortion in the United States and throughout the world. The aim is to reverse the policies of presidents Reagan and Bush. President Clinton has used political appointments and executive decisions to harass and place obstacles in the way of those who wish to protect human life. He has also sought to expand and increase government funding for abortions. Mother Teresa spoke bluntly and forcefully. She said "any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion."

Mother Teresa emphasized in her address that we have to love our neighbor so we can truthfully say that we love God. She described love as "doing good to others" which gives peace to the heart. Mother Teresa pointed to Jesus dying on the cross as our supreme example of selfless love which gives us the strength to love one another. She stated that "It hurt Jesus to love us . . . If we are not willing to give whatever it takes to do good to one another, sin is still in us. That is why we, too, must give to each other until it hurts."

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Mother Teresa's talk to the American people, represented by the nation's leaders, was centered on God's love for humankind and each human being's response to that love. Nevertheless throughout her address she kept returning to the main point which she wished to make—abortion is a great evil which must be rejected. The unborn child must be protected and cared for. Her closing words were "If we remember that God loves us, and that we can love others as He loves us, then America can become a sign of peace for the world. From here a sign of care for the weakest of the weak—the unborn child—must go out to the world. If you become a burning light of justice and peace in the world, then really you will be true to what the founders of this country stood for. God bless you!"

Mother Teresa belongs to the universal Church and indeed to all humanity. Albanians, however, feel a special closeness and love for her and try to emulate her works of faith, hope, charity and peace. May her message of respect for life and love for God and neighbor be heard and accepted in Albania and America, and wherever human hearts beat.

Raymond FROST



Mother Teresa often visits Albanian families with children during her travels abroad. Here she is pictured with Frank and Vicki Shkreli (l), Kadire and Elez Biberaj (r) and their children. Frank and Elez are high ranking officers for the United States Information Agency, Washington, D.C.



JOHN A. ZIERTEN

Lum Oslo, 10/12/79
Unë gjithmonë e kam në
zemër popullin tim Shqiptar
Nënë Teresa Bojaxhiu

"My Albanian people are always in my heart..."

M. Teresa Bojaxhiu

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THE ACTIVITY OF THE FRANCISCANS OF THE DUBROVNIK PROVINCE AMONG ALBANIAN CATHOLICS

1. The Links of Dubrovnik with the Albanians and Albania

In old chronicles, genealogies, and archive documents of the millennium-old history of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) one very frequently finds both patrician and plebeian Dubrovnik families that, by tradition, link their origins with Dioclea, Old Zeta, Albania and Greece, that is with the regions where Albanians have lived mixed and sometimes melded with the Slavs, Vlachs and Greeks.[1]

The immigration of Albanians to Dubrovnik began at a very early period. Without exaggeration, the immigration may be called permanent. Thanks to its favorable geographical position, on the one hand, and its political system of a neutral and later of the single free Christian state in the Balkans, on the other hand, Dubrovnik as the most developed commercial and sea port was in a sense the goal and safe refuge of numerous individuals, families and groups of Albanians. Albanians were forced to emigrate by turbulent local surroundings, banishment by various conquerors, wartime devastation, years of famine, by epidemics, earthquakes, and other calamities. The raids of the Turks at the end of the fourteenth century caused especially large movements of people in all the Balkan lands. A significant number of them sailed through Dubrovnik to Italy, and especially to the neighboring Apulia and Calabria.[2]

Besides that, the wish for knowledge, schooling and apprenticeship attracted people to the City of St. Vlaho [i.e., to Dubrovnik]. There were many tradesmen, craftsmen, servants, soldiers, priests, friars, and even humanists, scientists and physicians from the coastal areas of Old Zeta and Albania. In the beginning they appeared as *habitatores*, or residents, and later as *cives*, or citizens, too. They easily grew accustomed to the new homeland.[3]

Dubrovnik was oriented towards Albania in supplying different commercial goods and raw materials: wheat, salt, wine, wax, wood, etc. Dubrovnik had its representatives there and enjoyed good relations with individual landed proprietors. Since both sea and land routes to Albania were short, trade with the country has been lively for centuries. The citizens of Dubrovnik exported to Albania mainly textile products, cloth, soap, tools, etc.

As early as the beginning of the thirteenth century they reached a free trade agreement with Dimitrius, son of the Albanian nobleman Progon, ruler of the territory between Lezha (Lesh), Durrës and Ochrida (1208-1216).[4] Dubrovnik had also good connections and real trade agreements with the Nemanjics, Balsics, Stratimirovics, Crnojevics, Dukagjins, Topias, Arianitis, Zakarijas, Muzakijas, Kastriotis and other dynasties and noblemen of those regions. Many of them were granted citizenship, preserved property they had mortgaged, offered help, protection and shelter in face of the danger from the Turks.

The existence of Dubrovnik's ties with the near lands of the Levant is confirmed even in the 1272 Dubrovnik Statute. Chapter 24 of book 2 of the Statute (determining the wages of emissaries departing for various regions) mentions the Albanian cities of Durrës and Valona as well as the area of Arbanon (Kruja).

South of Dubrovnik, the towns of Kotor, Tivar (Bar), Ulqin (Ulcin), Sv. Srdj [St. Srdj on the Bojana river, Shkodër Shënjin, Lezha, Kep Redoni (Capo redoni, near Lezha), Durrës, Spinarica, Valona (Porto Raguseo near Valona), Parga, Preveza, Arta and other larger or smaller sea ports of the Adriatic and Mediterranean Sea were the important meeting-points for Dubrovnik with the Slavic, Albanian and Greek areas of the Balkan peninsula. There

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inhabitants of various ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious characteristics and traditions were mixed.

It is noteworthy that the *Albanian language* is mentioned for the first time in 1285 in Dubrovnik, in the abovementioned documents (it was used by some fugitives[6]), and again about one hundred years later, in 1401.[7] Today's national name of the Albanians, *Shqiptar*, also appears for the first time in Dubrovnik, as the last name of some priests from Drivast, *Schiputar/Schipudar*, between 1382 and 1399.[8]

In Dubrovnik one frequently finds the Albanian first names Gjin, Gjon, Lezha, Lek, Gjergj, and the surnames Zoch, Çoghi, Thani, Barlota, Span, Donci, Maxi, Lepori, Palumbi, Fisi, Shestani, Kryebleta (Caput apis), Vogli (Pizolo),[9] along with the generic names *Albanensis* and *Arbanas* or names taken from some towns or provinces.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the acts of the Dubrovnik archives mention more than thirty priests from Tivar, Ulqin, Svac, Balec, Danj, Shkodër, Drivast, Sarda, Pulti, Lezha and Durrës as well as many monks: Benedictines, Franciscans, and Dominicans.[10] They came to the Dubrovnik area primarily to escape from persecution of the Catholics carried out by [the Serbian ruler] Dusan the Mighty.[11]

Under the Archbishop Andrija of Durrës, these refugees created the priests' foundation *Sodalitas presbyterorum sub patrocinio S. Petri*.[12] Priests from the abovementioned regions were chaplains or spiritual fathers in the city of Dubrovnik itself and the surrounding parishes, clerks in the offices of Dubrovnik's *konti* [officials] in Ston, Lastovo and Mljet, or else teachers at schools. The monks in monasteries carried out spiritual work and service, and some of them were superiors, priors, custodians, and provincials.

Among the more important arrivals from Albania and neighboring regions in Dubrovnik, one should mention just the best known: Nikollë Arbanas, teacher in Ston (1345); Ivan, painter of Durrës (1388-1389); Gjorgj Span, physician of Shkodër (1439); Miho Brajkov of Tivar, the constructor of the cloister of the Minorites (1317-1348); Gjino Gazuli, astronomer and mathematician of Lezha, and his brother Paul, rector of a school in Dubrovnik (1442-1444) and Skanderbeg's envoy; Marul Tarkanjota of Arta, a Latinist poet (1453); Marin Becikemi of Shkodër, humanist and school director in Dubrovnik (1492-1496), and others.

One should also emphasize the generally friendly attitude of Dubrovnik towards the Albanian national hero of the fight against the Turks, Gjergj Kastrioti - Skanderbeg. Residents of Dubrovnik gave him money, helped him in some diplomatic undertakings and offered him shelter. Skanderbeg visited Dubrovnik in 1450, 1462 and 1466 and he stayed there, in Dubrovnik, with his army for several days.[13]

2. Franciscans in Albania

In the middle of the thirteenth century, the blessed Giovanni da Pian del Carpine was named the Archbishop of Tivar (1248-1252). He came to Dubrovnik several times. In the St. Thomas Monastery he reached an arrangement with representatives of the Church authorities in Dubrovnik, concerning the metropolitan jurisdiction of Catholic bishops in the state of Dioclea (Tivar, Ulqin, Svac, Drivast and Shkodër). It was he himself who calmed down dissent over this issue. To some degree he brought to a close a long-lasting struggle and argumentation, often supported by falsified documents. During the term of his successor, Franciscan Lovro (1255-1273), those questions were no longer mentioned.[14]

Blessed Giovanni himself and later all his successors and bishops under his jurisdiction, brought both Franciscans and Dominicans to their dioceses as a help to the clergy in preaching the Word of God and instructing the people, as well as to inquisitors and visitators.

The first Franciscans and their monasteries between Kotor and Durrës were under jurisdiction of the *Custody of Dubrovnik* (*Provincia Slavoniæ*) with its seats in Split and Zadar (Zara). In 1291, Pope Nicholas IV permitted the election of a bishop of Sarsa and Sapë at the request of Queen Jelena

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[Hélène] Anjou, the wife of Uros. The Pope decided that this issue should be decided according to the advise and authority of the Dubrovnik Dominican prior and guardian of the Franciscan Monastery of the Minorites.[15]

The Franciscan monasteries in Tivar, Svac, Ulqin, Shkodër and Durrës remained under the Custody of Dubrovnik until the beginning of the fifteenth century. At the request of the Zadar Provincial Nikola, Pope Boniface IX separated them from the Dubrovnik Custody and founded a new, *Durrës Custody*.[16] This change was made because of repeated attacks on the part of the Turks as well as the impossibility of communicating with the distant city of Zadar.

From 1464, after the capitular held on the island of Pasman, the abovementioned monasteries were under the jurisdiction of the Kotor Custody until 1585. Then, in 1585, a *Commissariat* was formed for Albania with special authorities. Thanks to the initiative of Ambroz Capitius, Archbishop of Tivar, the autonomous *Albanian Province* (*Provincia Macedoniæ*) was established in 1589-1590. This was confirmed by Pope Clement VIII in 1592.[17] The Province had its seal, showing the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in its upper part, and a figure of St. Vlaho in the lower part. The Province consisted of five monasteries (Sebaste, Lezha, Rubigu, Memli and Kep Redoni) with a total of 40 Franciscans. In its apogee (in the sixteenth century), the Albanian Province had 28 monasteries and residences, despite the Turkish yoke. Soon after, it would shrink ever smaller. Because of the lack of the native priests and friars and because of the needs of the apostolate among Albanian believers - who under the Turkish yoke converted to Islam *en masse* - the Holy Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith sent from Italy to Albania the reformed Franciscans led by Fr. Bonaventura Palazzolo and Fr. Cerubin da Vallebona. They came through Dubrovnik to Albania on December 13, 1634. Soon after (1636, 1645, 1650 and on), numerous other groups of missionaries from Venice, Rome and other regions of Italy followed. They included priests and brothers, and in particular male nurses. Located in various dioceses, they began their apostolate with great enthusiasm and ardor throughout northern Albania. They learned the Albanian language, built mission stations, hospices, and little churches, and opened the first schools. Persecution by the Turks (1639 and 1643-1644) and during the Turkish-Venetian Wars (1646-1649) were not lacking. The first victims were Father Paolo da Veglia of Mantua and Father Salvatore da Offida on the Cem river in Montenegro (1646); Gjergj Jubani, member of the Third Order [Tertiary], near Tivar (1648); Father Ferdinando da Albizzola and Father Giacomo Zampa (1649); Brother Gjergj Suma near Tivar and Father Gaudioso of Cuneo in Grudë near Tuz (1688); Father Antonio a San Giacobo near Podgorica (1693), and others.

Other missionaries fled in various directions, taking shelter in monasteries in the Bay of Kotor in order to return to Albania after the storm of persecution calmed down. They reconstructed the ruined hospices and little churches. With a new élan, with the aid of newly arrived missionaries, they continued the work initiated earlier. The missionaries in Albania were organized in Apostolic prefectures. In the beginning there were three, then four and, finally, five prefectures. That division lasted until 1897, when all of them were united in one Mission Province under the General Commissar or Provincial "ad instar." This lasted until the formation of a new *Albanian Province* on July 6, 1906.[18]

3. Albanian Franciscans in Dubrovnik

As early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, one finds a significant number of priests, friars and clerics from Albania and neighboring lands in Dalmatian cities (Kotor, Dubrovnik, Sibenik, and Zadar). In Dubrovnik, one may mention only the several (although there were probably more of them) whose names are recorded in the archival documents of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[19] They include, for example, Ciprian of Tivar, who was, together with Marin of Dubrovnik, sent by Pope Nicholas IV as his envoy to Queen Helena (1288); Stephen of Shkodër, vicar of the Minorites' Monastery (1300); Luka of Tivar (1340); Andrew of Shkodër, guardian (1347);

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Andrew of Durrës (1348), later guardian (1371 and 1382); Dimitrius of Shkodër, custodian (1348), later Bishop of Stefan (1354) and Archbishop of Durrës (1363); Nikollë Markov of Ulqin (1349 and 1354); Gjin the Albanian (1349); Crnjo of Albania (1354); Stan, lay-brother of Ulqin (1355; Minor and Srdj of Durrës (1384); Andriol of Shkodër (1362); Minor of Durrës, teacher of theology and provincial (1377-1385); Gjur of Tivar, missionary in the Holy Land (1382); Stephen of Shkodër, lecturer in theology (1395); Margarisius of Drivast (1406); Nikollë of Durrës, provincial (1432, 1437, and 1445) and contemporary of St. Jacob of Mark (in 1432, the Dubrovnik Senate asked him to return some books and chalices that were possessions of the Minorites' Monastery); Matija of Tivar, who was expelled (1434) from Dubrovnik for five years; Andrew of Durrës, doctor of the Holy Writ, provincial and inquisitor (1438), later Bishop in Senj (1443-1456) - together with two other friars from Dubrovnik, Andrew was a witness during the promotion of Gjin Gizuli in Padua in 1430; Sebastian of Tivar, who was killed by Turks in Tivar in 1588, and others.

If the documents of the Dubrovnik Archives or at least the sources published up to the present were systematically examined, I believe that the number of priests, friars and clerics from Albania and neighboring lands could be higher. In subsequent centuries, they were mentioned less and less. Nevertheless, there were individuals from Albania who lived and worked as brothers in the Dubrovnik Monastery. They include, for instance, Honorius of Tivar, a simple but very devout brother (died in 1651); Luka of Pastrovici, devout brother (died in 1809); Julian Sorba Raschi of Shkodër, who arrived in Dubrovnik with a certain missionary from Albania, lived there for forty years and served as wine-cellarer, was an exemplary friar, devout and book-learned (died in 1821); Ivan Gashaj (Gasanji), runaway from Albania, who died in his youth as a candidate (1828).[20]

Some friars and missionaries in Albania spent a year of candidature and novitiate or studied in Dubrovnik. Filip Nikic, a member of the Bosnian Province, missionary in Albania, studied for a part of 1864 in Dubrovnik; Antun Papa da Regale, lay-brother, member of the Albanian Province, completed his novitiate in Dubrovnik in 1878; Carlo Orazio da Villa S. Giovanni, lay-brother of the Albanian Province, completed his novitiate and stayed in the Minorites' Monastery in Dubrovnik (1870-1873); Policarpo da S. Martino professed solemn vows after completing his novitiate (1869).[21]

In the nineteenth century, both the Franciscans and the bishops of Albania often invited persons from the Dubrovnik Province as missionaries for Albania. Their requests, however, could not have been met because of the small number of members of the Province itself. In 1826, they had the government invite missionaries from Zadar.[22] In 1829, they invited them through the Superior General of the Order (and then a Dubrovnik man, perhaps Father Felix Felicevic, was sent to them).[23] In 1886, the Superior General of the Order requested that the administration of the Province take seven or eight Albanian clerics for study and novitiate in Dubrovnik.[24] In 1890, the Archbishop of Tivar, S. Milinovic, requested that the then Provincial Father Urban Talija take three boarders into a boarding school in Dubrovnik.[25] In 1895, Archbishop Felicevic invited Father Alfons Peric for the parish priest in Koja. The Guardian of the Monastery in Shkodër asked through the Superior General of the Order that Albanian novices be sent to Dubrovnik, but the Provincial Antun Kazilari gave him a negative reply because *"indole indomabile degli albanesi...e potrebbero nuocere alla nostra gioventù."*[26] In 1904, Archbishop Milinovic invited Father Uskokovic for Tivar and Father Pavlic for Cetinë (Cetinje, the former capital of Montenegro), and in 1912 he invited persons for a mission in Montenegro.[27]

In our time, we should mention with special gratitude the kindness of the administration of the Dubrovnik Province and the Minorites' Monastery towards the *"reliquiis reliquiarum"* of the Albanian Province. In 1947, five persons were expelled from Albania. After various troubles and calamities, they continued their study at the Theological College in this Monastery (1947-1952) and, finally, became members of the St. Jerome Prov-

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ince. Some of them worked for years in Dubrovnik or nearby monasteries. Father Dede Markolaj worked in Kuna and Janjina, Father Zef Jankaj in Kuna and Nerezine, and Father Vinçenc Malaj in Kotor and Dubrovnik. Since the Franciscan mission was re-established among the Albanian Catholics of Malësija in Montenegro (in 1966), under the title "Missio B. M. V. in Montanis," with its seat in Tuz and under the administration of the St. Jerome Province in Dalmatia and Istria, six brothers have served as pastors for more than half the Catholics of the Archdiocese of Tivar. They administer the parishes of Tuz, Traboin, Grudë, Trieshi and Koja. At this moment, three young men from these areas are studying theology.

4. Residence of Albanian Missionaries in the Minorites' Monastery

In the Archives of the Dubrovnik Province (ADP) and the Guardianship of the Monastery (AG), as well as in *Necrologium* (Rode), one often reads about shorter or longer residence of individual missionaries from Albania, mostly Italians, who came to Dubrovnik for medical treatment and sickleave or to rest in the peace and quiet of the Monastery walls and splendid cloister. Some spent their declining age there after long years of hard work among Albanian Catholics in pathless mountains and ravines. For some, Dubrovnik was a transient refuge, for others the last shelter on earth.

Thus Father Tomas of Rome, lay-brother and a companion of the Provincial, was on sickleave in the Monastery hospital. He died there on May 22, 1760, 46 years of age (Rode, No. 695).

The very devout and likable Father Francesco Faà of Casale Monferrato lived in Dubrovnik as a member of the Province and served in various monasteries from 1808 to his death (February 20, 1830), 84 years of age. For thirty-five years he had been a missionary in Albania. He fell ill there, came to Dubrovnik for medical treatment, and remained in the city because there was no way for him to return to his native Province (B. Rode, *Necrologium*, No. 847; ADP, IV, 69, V, 1, 16, VII, 91). Among the manuscripts of the Minorites' Library (No. 1996), there exists a bundle from his bequest entitled *"Canzone della mia improvisa e all'estremo dolorosa partenza dalla deliziosa Grudda presso Podgorizza in Albania."* It is a poem in which he bids adieu with nostalgia to the place where he lived for many years and spent his youth: *"Addio mia cara Grudda... Triepzzi, Clementi e Podgorizza..."*

Father Pavao of Fojnica, missionary in Albania and the secretary of Bishop G. Barisic in Lezha, was bed-ridden for some time in the Monastery hospital and died there on July 13, 1830 (*Necrologium*).

Father Antun Maroevic of Hvar, meritorious missionary for many years in Albania and Kosova (Letnicë), stopped in the Minorites' Monastery during a transit on July 29, 1836, on his way to the place of his birth (ADP, XI, 133).

Carlo Pooten, the Archbishop of Tivar and Metropolitan of Shkodër, stayed at the Minorites' Monastery. After his consecration as bishop, Pooten confirmed several clerics in minor orders (ADP, XIV, 101).

Father Giuseppe da Bergamo, missionary in Shkodër, underwent a cure in Dubrovnik in 1845 (ADP, XVI, 78), as did Bishop of Shkodër G. Labella in 1846 (ADP, XVII, 46). Father Onorato da Gradoli was bed-ridden in the Monastery hospital in 1855/1856 (ADP, XX, 64, 70, 148). Father Ricardo Petrelli of Ancona, who had been a missionary among Albanians for more than forty years, went from Shkup (Skopje), old and sick, to the monastery in Cavtat in 1859 (ADP, XXII, 100, XXV, 52). He spent ten years in Dubrovnik and died there on October 3, 1871 (Rode, No. 895). Father Valentino da Piacenza came to Dubrovnik in 1860 for medical reasons (ADP, XXII, 164). Father Alfonso da Nocera was in Dubrovnik in 1861 (ADP, XXIII, 64); Father Quintilio Capocci in 1862 (ADP, XXIII, 66, 78); Father Bonaventura d'Acquaviva and Brother Filippo da Longo from 1866 to 1870 (ADP, XXIV, 48, 101, XXV, 12). Brother Policarpo Spadetto solemnly professed monastic vows in Dubrovnik in 1867 (ADP, XXIV, 120, 164); Father Giovanni da Carpi in 1869 (ADP, XXIV, 165). Father Orazio, missionary from Albania, resided there

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for a time during 1870 (ADP, XXV, 1). Father Serafino Cuzzari da Melia, from Sicily, was in the Monastery as school lecturer from 1870 to 1872 (ADP, XXV, 43, 60) and later, for several years, was a missionary in Kosova (Prizren, Janjevë, Gjakovë) and the secretary of bishops Dario Bucciarelli and Fulgencije Carev.[28] Msgr. Gabriele Capoccio da Bracigliano was a missionary for many years in Albania and a friend of Msgr. L. Çurçija. As the Auxiliary Bishop of Tivar, Msgr. Capoccio became ill during a visitation in Sestani and underwent medical treatment in Dubrovnik in 1874. (He died in Venice in 1878.[29])

Researching the archive documents of the Monastery, one finds the names of numerous other missionaries as well. They include those who traveled through Dubrovnik to Albania as well as returnees to their homeland who stayed in Dubrovnik for a short period for medical control or while waiting for the weather to permit travel. They are not mentioned here.

The meritorious and devoted missionary in Albania, Father Ejëll Vjerdha (born in Ulqin), the last monastic Commissar of Montenegro and General Vicar of the Tivar Archdiocese, with his tireless work incurred the gratitude of his people and his native land, caring for monastic and priestly vocations. He spent his old days and underwent medical treatment in the Minorites' Monastery in more recent times (1947-1951). A significant number of living friars and priests of the Tivar Archdiocese, including the current Archbishop Msgr. Pjetër Perkoliq, are indebted to Father Ejëll Vjerdha. Father Ejëll died in Dubrovnik on March 12, 1951.

5. Dubrovnik Franciscans who worked among the Albanians

The Dubrovnik Province of St. Francis was established between 1484 and 1517, and in 1899 it was unified with the Province of St. Jerome. Although the Dubrovnik Province during that period [1484-1899] had no special obligations towards the Albanian Province and Albania besides, as was mentioned above, the period where the both provinces were under common Province and Custody, it is a fact that over centuries there were a few members of the Minorites' Monastery and the Dubrovnik Province whoworked for a longer or shorter time in the areas where the Albanians lived. They worked as ordinary missionaries, spiritual fathers and educators, or as administrators of the diocese, bishops or archbishops.

Here I mention those dedicated and meritorious Minorites who are important for the Albanian people. They are listed in a chronological order along with brief and most necessary data about their lives and activity in Albania. The data are to be found in the Archives of the Order in Rome, the Provincial and the Monastery Archives in Dubrovnik, in *Necrologium*, and other published documents and studies I have occasionally had the opportunity to consult.

This chapter presents data concerning ordinary friars, while the next chapter deals with bishops and archbishops who were members of this glorious and ancient Monastery.

1. After Tivar was captured by the Turks in 1571, the Dubrovnik Province sent there Father Bernardin of Dubrovnik, Professor in theology, along with a Benedictine and a Dominican. The Franciscans had two monasteries in Tivar; one in the town itself, the other very close to it. Pope Gregory XIII gave special privileges to the Guardian of the St. Nicholas Monastery in 1577.[30] No one knows exactly when the Franciscans ceased their activity under the Turks in Tivar.[31]

2. Father Sebastian of Tivar, a very devout friar and preacher, was killed *in odium fidei* by Turks in Tivar in 1588.[32]

3. Brother Rafael of Dubrovnik died as a martyr, stoned by Turks in Tivar in 1599.[33]

4. Father Lovro Florio from Peljesac (as a lay-brother, he was a male nurse and pharmacist) is mentioned about 1626 as a missionary in Albania (in Kosova, Janjevë or Novo Brdo). There he was ordained. Later he went to Bulgaria (Ciprovec and Trnovo) to the Archbishop of Sofia, Petar Bogdan Bakic. Father Lovro provided medical treatment to both the Bishop and the Vallachian (Rumanian) Duke Radul. Along with Fathers Pjetër

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Koqi, Nikollë Kabashi and Marin of Dubrovnik, Father Lovro is mentioned in 1637, 1638 and 1641 as definitor and guardian. He hoped to become bishop. He died about 1642.[34]

5. Father Donat Jelic from Spic near Tivar was born about 1600. As a young man he came to the Minorites. After he had completed primary classes, he entered the novitiate in 1618. In 1621 or 1622, Father B. Ursini sent him to continue study in Italy. In Padua, Father Donat joined the reformed Franciscans. In 1631, he returned to his native land and remained there because of a lack of priests. With the permission of his superiors, he served in Spic and Sozina where a joint Catholic-Orthodox church existed, the St. Tekla Church, but the Orthodox Christians did not like him. Father Sante of Split was with him for a short period (in 1637). During the Crete war in 1648, the Turks executed 73 Catholics from Tivar and the neighboring villages of Pastrovici as well as several missionaries because of uprisings in Herzegovina and Albania. For that reason, Father Donat took refuge in Dubrovnik. He brought his nephew Marin, later Bishop of Sapë, to Rome, but Marin was not enrolled in an order. Father Donat returned to Dubrovnik and stayed there for eight years, serving as a teacher to novices, and a guardian. Having been informed that the Turks had enslaved and sold more than fifty persons from Spic (including eighteen members of his own family), he collected alms from the Clarisses of Dubrovnik and departed for Naples in 1656. He found the persons working as servants in several households in Naples. There he worked as spiritual father and buying the freedom of some of the slaves. Meeting resistance and difficulty, he returned to Dubrovnik in 1671 or 1672. He stayed in Dubrovnik until his death (April 29, 1676).[35]

6. Father Petar Dragisa from Dubrovnik was a missionary and chaplain of Dubrovnik merchants in Prokuplje. He, along with Pjetër Budi, was named vicar in Shkup by Archbishop of Tivar M. Bizzi in 1610.[36]

7. Father Blaz from Graz was Vicar General of Archbishop of Tivar Toma Ursini. For a certain period he was Vicar General of the Bishop of Shkodër Dominik Andrijasevic. Obeying the commands of both the archbishop and bishop, he was active in Herzegovina, in the so-called "Stjepan Diocese." He died in Dubrovnik in 1623.[37]

8. Father Bernard Begeta called Cukota from Dubrovnik, former guardian and definitor, was named Provincial of the Albanian Province between 1782 and 1787. This occurred in a period when, because of a lack of ordained priests, the Albanian Province was administered mainly by missionaries from Italy or by Dalmatian and Bosnian Franciscans. Father Begeta died in Dubrovnik on April 4, 1802.[38]

9. Father Bernardin (Ivan) Vujcic was secretary of the abovementioned Father B. Cukota. Father Bernardin painted golden and silver decorations and palms on altars in the Minorites' Church. He also copied some choral books in 1818. He died in Dubrovnik on March 4, 1826.[39]

10. As a provincial, Father Ambroz Markovic from Rijeka Dubrovacka, lecturer and writer, was named Visitator of the Albanian Province in 1815. However, he could not carry out the visitation because of a plague that had appeared and because the local brothers, by tradition, asked for new habits as a gift from new visitators. Father Ambroz could not gave them that gift since he did not have enough money. He sent them only acircular letter in 1818.[40] The same year the Provincial of the Senj Province from Kotor requested the seal of the Albanian Province that was with Father Ambroz in Dubrovnik. The same seal was also requested by Father Petar Pinotic of Albania in 1820.[41]

11. Father Silvestar Milic from Kuna was a missionary in Smirna and Constantinople from 1825 to 1836. About 1838 he was mentioned as a missionary in Shkodër perhaps in the service of Msgr. B. Albertini, for [Father Silvestar] requested missionary privileges from there. Later he served as a parish priest in Vrutok and a superior in the Monastery in Slano. Father Silvestar died in Dubrovnik on October 6, 1860.[42]

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12. Father Venceslav Batinic, lecturer and definitor from Dubrovnik, served in Shkodër as a secretary of the Bishop Luigj Çurçija (Lujo Curcija) from 1860 to 1866. Later he left the order and died in 1901.[45]

13. Father Ljudevit Vulicevic from Cavtat also served Bishop L. Çurçija in Shkodër around 1866. For a certain time he resided in the newly established monastery and taught children in a primary school that was opened by Franciscans with the help of Msgr. Çurçija. Later Father Ljudevit moved to Venice and apostatized about 1872.[46]

14. Father Gaudecije Barbic from Lastovo was secretary of Msgr. Çurçija in Shkodër in 1865. Later he was secretary of Msgr. D. Bucciarelli in Prizren. For several years he served as an assistant to the parish priest in Pejë, as a missionary and teacher in a local school. For three years he was teacher and administrator of the then newly established Franciscan Seminary in Troshan (near Lezha), from about 1880 to 1883. He died in Dubrovnik on March 30, 1907.[45]

15. In 1880, Msgr. F. Carev in Prizren invited Father Josip Maria Torre while the latter was still a clerk in Dubrovnik. Msgr. F. Carev intended to lay the foundations of a monastery for Franciscans and nuns and to open a school for boys and girls.[46]

16. Don Niko Djivanovic, priest of the Kotor Diocese, lived as a Tertiary in the Minorites' Monastery since 1872. He probably was a teacher in the Seminary in Troshan in 1882, because that year Father Marian da Palmanova invited him.[47]

17. Father Pacifik Kastelan from Zrnovo went to Shkodër as a missionary in 1887. From 1893 to his death (October 20, 1895), he served in the parish of Biza near Lezha and was teacher at the Franciscan College in Troshan, together with Bosnian-Herzegovinian Franciscans Father Pasko Dumancic and Father Lovro Mihacevic. Father Mihacevic was the first Provincial of the Albanian Province when it was re-established in 1906.[48]

18. Father Bernardo Markovic from Rozat, a praiseworthy musician, school lecturer in Dubrovnik and amateur painter, was chaplain of the Austrian legation and spiritual father in Cetinë from 1904 to 1909. He was decorated by Montenegrin Prince Nikola in 1907. Father Bernardo died on September 17, 1909, in Cavtat.[49]

19. Father Urban Talija from Lopud was born on November 17, 1859. He was professor of theology, provincial and prominent writer.[50] Several times he served as a visitator of various provinces. He was one of the candidates for archbishop in Tivar in 1910.[51] In 1926, he was named Visitator for the Albanian Province. He successfully carried out the visitation from April 18 to May 22, 1926. After Father Pal Dodaj, Father Pashko Bardhi was elected Provincial. The Monastery archives of the Minorites[52] have preserved Urban's 12-page-long circular letter, several memoranda to various Albanian Franciscans, and a large photograph of the then newly named administration of the Province. Father Urban successfully intervened after a request from the Bosnian Provincial that two missionaries in Kosova, Father Shtjefën Konstantin Gjeçovi and Father Aleksandar Filic, be released from prison in Sarajevo.

6. Bishops and Archbishops of the Minorites among the Albanians

For centuries, friars, especially Franciscans from Dubrovnik - because they were learned and well-prepared - were entrusted with the administration of several dioceses and archdioceses among Catholic Albanians. As citizens of Dubrovnik, they moved easier among the Turks and were to a certain degree protected and assisted by representatives and merchants of the Republic in those areas. Dubrovnik always tried to maintain peaceful relations with the Turks. For centuries, it had lively trade relations and traffic with the Levant. On the other hand, in Turkish Albania there were only a few priests or even no suitable priests - due to a lack of schools and seminaries - to carry out pastoral duty.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the visitator of the Balkans Pjetër Masreku (1623-1624) recommended Dubrovnik Franciscans for work in Belgrade, Serbia and Bulgaria, but not for Albania.

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The Franciscans were of less use in Albania, for they did not know the Albanian language.[53] For the same reasons, some Albanian bishops and clergy in Albania - e.g., bishops Nikollë Mekanjshi, Nikollë Bianchi, Pjetër Budi, and others - were not completely satisfied with the Franciscans. A group of priests at a meeting declared (if one is to believe the allegations) that they "do not want to accept any more bishops-strangers who do not know their language, customs and situation in Albania."[54]

1. Petar Brajkov Bogojevic is one of the first Minorites from Dubrovnik to be mentioned [in the old documents]. In 1420, Eugene IV named Petar Bishop of Svac (near Ulqin). The canon Ivan of Tivar, elected on March 21 1420, was deposed because of a canonical error. Petar was entrusted with the administration of the Tivar Diocese until the new elections in 1423. In 1435, he disclaimed his rights of the Svac Diocese and was removed to Ulqin. He died in 1441.[55]

2. Marin Brajanovic (Braiani), lecturer of theology and former provincial (1575), was for seven years a missionary among the Catholics of the Shkup Archdiocese (Janjevë, Novo Brdo, Trepça, Letnicë), where there existed a numerous colony of people from Dubrovnik and of *Sasi* miners. The inhabitants of Janjevë asked Pope Gregory XIII twice (on August 25 and 31, 1578) to name Father Marin as bishop of Tivar or Lezha, because of the latter's learning and zeal. They were ready to support Father Marin, his assistant and his attendants. They praised him and say that he had build three little churches there. At that time certain Brother Bernardin from Dubrovnik was staying in Janjevë, who stole some belongings of Father Marin, denounced Father Marin in Rome, and converted to the Turkish [Muslim] faith.[56]

The same year (on October 15, 1578) Brajanovic was named Bishop of Lezha.[57] Until then, the diocese was administered under difficult conditions by the Shkodër Bishop Teodor Kolompsi because the Lezha Bishop, Ivan Krasinja of Ulqin, was arrested and deported by Turks. According to other sources, Krasinja lived in freedom but behaved very arrogantly.[58]

It is not known with certainty whether Brajanovic went immediately to his diocese or stayed there only for a short time and occasionally. According to Farlati,[59] Brajanovic was entrusted with the administration of the Shkodër Diocese from 1580 to 1582. Church superiors and believers of Lezha complained of Brajanovic to Pope Gregory XIII. Four years after he had been named bishop, Marin was not yet a permanent resident in Lezha.[60] Answering on February 20, 1580, to Marin's letter, Gregory XIII wondered why Marin complained of the income of his diocese. Gregory XIII rebuked Marin suggesting him to sacrifice himself for the spiritual good of the faithful who were entrusted to him.[61]

Marin replied to the Pope on May 12, 1580. From his reply, in which Marin described the situation in his diocese in dark colors, one can conclude that Marin was there for a certain time but could not hold out. He complained that neighboring bishops had usurped the authority over some of his parishes, that he had nothing to live on, that the Turks persecuted him, that they had imprisoned him, and that he was forced to flee to Dubrovnik.

According to the book of accounts of the Roman Curia, Gregory XIII sent him 100 *scudos* [Italian gold or silver coins] for support. However, it is not known with certainty whether Marin visited his diocese during the four years or continued his residence in Dubrovnik, as superiors and the faithful of Lezha complained in 1582.[62]

Marin was in Dubrovnik even in 1584, when an unpleasant incident took place. Bishop of Dubrovnik Jerome Mateucci unlawfully banned Marin from entering the Dubrovnik Cathedral.[63] On February 3, 1588, Marin attended the St. Vlaho procession,[64] but one cannot establish whether he found himself in Dubrovnik occasionally or resided there permanently.

During his absence in Lezha he was replaced by Bishop Septimius Borsario. On August 12,

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1596, the Dubrovnik Benedictine Innocent Stojkovic (Stoicini) was named bishop of Lezha. At that time Stoicini was in Rome; he stayed there from 1599 to 1601. The Visitator of Albania, the Bishop of Stefan Father Nikollë Mekanjshi, and Nikollë Bianchi, Bishop of Sapë and Sarda, twice wrote memoranda to Pope Clement VIII during 1602. The bishops complained of both Brajanovic and Stoicini that neither of them knew either the language and the customs or how to behave with the Turks; that both of them were guilty of turning the Cathedral into a mosque; that they came into a conflict with the friars because of the property, and that the diocese had in fact been without pastoral guide for 15 years.[65]

Brajanovic died in Dubrovnik on May 16, 1605.[66]

3. Ambroz Antun Capizzi (Capitius, Kapic) was born in Osor on the island of Cres. He was called *de Ragusio* because he probably was a member of the Province of Dubrovnik and lived and worked in Dubrovnik. He was a doctor of theology, very learned and devout. He served twice as Provincial.[67] On January 9, 1579, Gregory XIII named Ambroz (the latter was 50) Archbishop of Tivar and the administrator of Budva.[68] Seven years later, Ambroz succeeded Archbishop Ivan Bruni of Ulqin who was enslaved by the Turks as a militant adversary after the capture of Tivar in 1571. Bruni was later put to death by the Turks in a galley.

Ambroz had to intervene several times in Venice (1852-1583) and in Rome (1854-1585) on behalf of his archdiocese, especially because of usurpation of the church property. Since he was no longer able to stay in Tivar, he moved to Budva. He occasionally visited Tivar and some neighboring parishes. He took special care of Franciscans in Albania. Together with Father Bernardin da Lecce, who was then superior, Ambroz advocated in Rome (in the administration of the Order as well as the Curia) that the Custody of Albania be organized as a new province. He succeeded in that effort.[69]

Ambroz was the last archbishop who celebrated Mass in the St. George Cathedral in Tivar, where sometime after 1585, after a fierce sermon against heretics, he was imprisoned, maltreated and tortured with fire by the Turks, and the Tivar Cathedral was turned into a mosque. Ambroz died in Budva on August 31, 1598.[70] He was succeeded by Father Toma Ursini.

4. Toma Ursini (Bastic, Medojevic) was born in Ravno in Popovo Polje, Herzegovina. He studied and defended his doctoral dissertation in theology at the Sorbonne in Paris. He was a good preacher and writer and, from 1556 to 1559, he was the Provincial of the Dubrovnik Province. He was named Archbishop of Tivar on February 17, 1599, after Ambroz Capizzi. He resided in the St. Francis Franciscan Monastery in Budva.[71] Pope Clement VIII sent him a pallium and warned him as *Primas Serbiæ* to pay attention to Serbian clerics for the sake of the Uniate Church.[72] To achieve that goal he also worked as the provincial in Dubrovnik. In 1597, Ursini sent the Serbian monks Damjan and Pavle - emissaries of the Serbian Metropolitan Visarion and Patriarch Jovan - to Rome with warm recommendations and with letters for Pope Clement VIII.[73] Immediately after his nomination, he visited his diocese and sent a report to Rome. He was allowed to take along several friars from Dubrovnik as an aid in working on the Uniate Church. Ursini invited Father Serafin who resided as a Professor in Pavia. Father Vlaho from Graz, member of the Dubrovnik Province, was his vicar general for a certain time.[74]

Ursini built a monastery and a church for the Franciscans in Lastva (Pastrovici). He worked for and negotiated about the Church Union with Monk Damjan Ljubibratic and Patriarch Mardarije (the latter visited Ursini in Cetinë).[75] Ursini worked intensively on organizing an uprising for liberation of Christians in the Balkans. For this reason, he maintained permanent contact with the Korcula Bishop A. Quinitius, Fr. A. Bertucevic, Sir Tomo Peles, D. Andrijasevic and Albanian bishop Nikollë Mekanjshi.

In a 1603 letter Ursini was addressed as *Princeps Croiae*.[77] It was probably he who first invented the *Stephanensis* Diocese in Popovo Polje.

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In 1604 he sent there Father Filip Dobrosaljic and Father Vlaho from Graz, who was born in Popovo Polje, and named them parish priest and vicar general, respectively. Since at that time the Trebinje Diocese was void, no one opposed him. Ursini held several functions there and made confirmations.[78]

In 1605, Ursini relieved his Vicar General Mark Gjorga of his duties because of his disorderly life. In Budva Ursini had problems with some priests because of permanent friction. He made several visitations of the diocese and sent reports to Rome. In the era of Ursini, the Christians in Tivar were still in possession of the St. Ilija Church in the town and the St. Maria Church outside the town. Three priests served at these churches. Ursini introduced special taxes for nuptials of the believers in his diocese, on the demand of the Turks. He died in Budva in 1607.[79] He was succeeded the next year by Marin Bizzi from Rab, who is well-known for his detailed visitation of Albania in 1610.

5. Benedikt Ursini (Orsinic, Medojevic) was born on August 12, 1596, in Orahov Dol, Herzegovina. He came to Dubrovnik in his early youth. In Dubrovnik, Benedikt had an uncle, the Franciscan Father Toma, and his own [Benedikt's] brother, Father Donat, was a Dominican there.[80] Benedikt studied in Italy, was an excellent theologian, lecturer of the Minorites' School, preacher, devout and of exemplary life - as one can read from the commendation the Dubrovnik Senate gave him in 1620.[81]

In his youth, probably as a friar, Benedikt wrote a comprehensive work in order to demonstrate his patrician descent from the famous Roman family Orsini, which was connected with the Byzantine family of Comneno. Benedikt also wanted to portray his fellow Dominican, Father Vinçenc Piranese from Slano, as a descent of the Comneno family.[82] The work was probably printed by Father Vinçenc in Naples in 1636; the second enlarged edition appeared in 1663 in Venice.[83] Benedikt mentioned that he had also written a *Grammar of Five Languages*.

Gregory XV named Benedikt the bishop of Lezha on June 21, 1621,[84] after the Benedictine Innocent Stojkovic who, like his predecessor M. Brajanovic, resided more in Dubrovnik than in his diocese.

The same year B. Ursini went to the diocese, made a visitation and sent a report to Rome.[85] In his report he says that for eleven years the diocese indeed had no pastoral leader and that he found it in complete material and spiritual dissolution, *"in direptionem et rapinam omnium bestiarum..."* He complained about the Albanian Franciscans because they usurped his church property and better parishes, and about some of the priests because they disobeyed and would not submit to him under the pretext that they did not belong to his jurisdiction. The priests even agreed that in future they would no longer accept any foreigner as their bishop.[86] Churches and parish priests' offices were either pillaged by Turks or in ruins.

In 1623, B. Ursini and D. Andrijasevic, the Bishop of Shkodër, sent from Dubrovnik the news of the death of Bishop of Sapë Pjetër Budi, one of the main organizers of an uprising against the Turks. B. Ursini recommended vicar Gjergj Bardhi as Budi's successor. In a March 1623 letter from Lezha, B. Ursini wrote recommendations for the Dubrovnik Franciscans Father Honorat and Father Martin, and complained of the very difficult local economic and political situation.[87]

The newly appointed bishop Dominik Andrijasevic had to leave Shkodër because of difficulties after a couple of months. B. Ursini was entrusted with the administration of Dominik's diocese. B. Ursini was to supervise the diocese until the new bishop, Frano Kruta from Budva, was named in 1640. Like his uncle Toma, Archbishop of Tivar, B. Ursini constantly supported Dominik Andrijasevic in the latter's efforts to obtain the so-called "Stefan Diocese" in Herzegovina.[88]

In 1624, after the departure of Andrijasevic, the Turks imprisoned several priests and a large number of believers in the vicinity of Shkodër,

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and executed the Shkodër parish priest D. Mark Kishaj.

Several times B. Ursini made visitations of his diocese in Lezha (in 1625 and 1629) as well as the Shkodër Diocese (1628 and 1629). In his reports he describes the sad conditions of the faithful and churches, and threats and danger from the Turks. He complained about the Albanian Franciscans who usurped his church property and some parishes; and about priests who lacked discipline and obedience. He was also in permanent friction and argument with neighboring bishops because of contestable borders and jurisdiction of some parishes in both the Shkodër and the Lezha dioceses. After mediation by the envoys of the Holy See, D. Djordje Uskokovic from Dubrovnik (1637) and Franjo Leonardi from Trogir (1641), the border issue calmed down somewhat.[89]

With the arrival of a group of Franciscan missionaries from Italy, in 1634, 1636 and later, at the call of the Sapë Bishop Gjergj Bardhi, and with their tireless work in the whole of northern Albania the religious situation improved to a certain degree. However, their activity soon abated because of the expeditions of the Turkish army under the command of Vuço Pasha (General) in 1638, and especially during the wars for Crete, waged between the Turks and the Republic of Venice, during various uprisings in Albania itself, and during the persecution and execution of some missionaries in 1648.[90]

During that chaos Bishop Ursini was imprisoned, maltreated and finally ransomed for a high price from the Turks. He left his residence in Mrkinje and took a shelter in safer mountainous areas among the Mirdita Catholics where he built his new home.

He reported himself to the Congregation in Rome in 1648 and 1650. He complained that he was too old and ill; that the Turks had killed his nephew, a deacon, in 1648; that he lived in great fear and difficulty at the mercy of neighboring priests. He died on January 5, 1654.[91]

6. Dominik Andrijasevic (Andriassus) was born in Ravno, Popovo Polje (Herzegovina) about 1572. In his early youth he moved to Dubrovnik where he entered the Franciscan Order and completed his education. Of a fairly restless disposition, he became very early (1595) quite a prominent and distinctive person of his age and one ofthe main organizers of the movement to liberate Christians from the Turkish yoke in the Balkans.[92]

At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century a movement of the *raya* [non-Muslim subjects in the Turkish Empire] ready for action against the Turks began. It was caused by changing circumstances in the Turkish Empire, as well as Western propaganda calling for an uprising. Commissioners of the dissatisfied *raya* traveled constantly to western countries bringing letters to the Pope, the Austrian Emperor, the Spanish King and Italian Dukes, asking for help and proposing plans. The western rulers would send their agents to examine the possibilities of landing on the Turkish [i.e., occupied Croatian-Albanian] beach. The agents would receive proposals of broader actions and send money to the [occupied] regions. Dubrovnik was one of the centers of such arrangements.

As Venice in the sixteenth century was losing more and more of its old power because of its inferior military and its interests in Levantine trade, it cared most of all to maintain peace, avoiding conflicts with Turkey. Therefore, Venice made ruthless efforts to cut off all connection between the *raya* and European powers. Sometimes, Venice even informed the Turks of preparations and undertakings against them. Moreover, Venice expelled the [rebellious] leaders and agents from its territory, the more so because neither Austria nor Spain were friendly towards the Republic of St. Mark [i.e., Venice].

Among the commissioners who established contact between the dissatisfied *raya* and European powers in order to destroy the Turkish authorities, there were a variety of people. These included many swindlers and adventurers. For a long time people of suspicious origin would bring the most

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various proposals and plans concerning the liberation of the Balkans from the Turks and submit them to Graz, Madrid, Rome, Naples and Turin. They used all means available, and did not shrink from falsifying letters and seals.[93]

Among the best-known leaders and organizers of rebellions in the sixteenth and seventeenth century were the Korcula Bishop Augustin Quintius (Kvincic); Sir Tomo Peles from Lezha (murdered in Venice in 1596); Sir Mark-Samueli Kolojani from Tivar; Sir Franjo-Antun Bertucevic, Franciscan from Hvar; captains Mark and Ivan Gjini from Albania; Antun Petkovic from Budva; monk Damjan Ljubibratic; Father Rafael Levakovic; captain Ivan Renesi from Lezha; Sultan Jahja (Alexander Varna the *"Prince of Montenegro,"* who died in Kotor in 1649), the alleged son of Sultan Mahmut III; and many others.[94] Among Albanian bishops Nikollë Mekanjshi, Mark Skupra, Pjetër Budi, Benedikt Ursini, and Simon Suma stand out.

Dominik Andrijasevic - enthusiastic as many other leaders of conspirators and organizers of uprisings in the Balkans - visited the capitals of all European powers beginning in 1895. He collaborated with outstanding figures of his age, with popes and rulers as well as those from the rebellious movements in our regions.[95]

He was a contemporary confrere and a fellow countryman of the Tivar Archbishop Toma Ursini and Benedikt Ursini of Lezha, both of whom he closely collaborated with. He was expelled twice from Dubrovnik (1606 and 1607) and imprisoned in Venice (1612-1613), but he did not give up. With a recommendation from Graz, he tried in vain to obtain the bishop's seat in Senj, Tivar or Shkup. Finally, he succeeded in obtaining the Shkodër Diocese. He was named its bishop on May 23, 1622.[96]

In 1622, Dominik Andrijasevic arrived at his diocese in Shkodër, that is, in the village of Trushi, where his residence was located. He immediately made a visitation of several coastal parishes around the river of Bojana. He undertook various reforms, energetically introduced strong discipline of the clergy according to the TridentineCouncil, renewed churches, confirmed a great number of believers (7,500), converted a few hundred Orthodox Christians, worked to eradicate improper customs among the people, and punished disobedient priests. With the help of the Turkish authorities Andrijasevic expelled two priests, Teodor and Franjo Pasquali, and for that reason he acquired enemies and adversaries.[97] At the same time Andrijasevic continued imprudently to work in secrecy on organizing a rebellious movement and prepared a conspiracy against the Turks. He was soon discovered, imprisoned and then ransomed and, after several months of residence in the diocese, he had to take refuge in Dubrovnik and Herzegovina.

On February 1 and March 8, 1623, Andrijasevic from Dubrovnik informed Cardinal Berberini that the Bishop of Sapë Pjetër Budi had been drowned in the Drim river, and that the faithful in Albania had decided not to accept foreign bishops any longer, but only native people. Andrijasevic recommended Father Vlaho from Graz for the "Stjepan" bishop of the Neretva river, and the vicar Gjec Bianchi as the successor of Father Budi.[98]

After Andrijasevic's departure from Albania, in the same year the Turks imprisoned several priests and killed the Shkodër parish priest Mark Kishaj (1624) because they had found a letter from Andrijasevic at Kishaj. The Lezha Bishop B. Ursini was entrusted with the administration of the Shkodër Diocese.

In July 1624, D. Andrijasevic requested the "Stjepan Diocese" in Herzegovina (indeed, it existed in Albania, south of Durres) from the Holy Congregation. He managed to obtain the diocese and after that he initiated a long-lasting conflict and quarrel with the bishops of Makarska and Trebinje, on whose territory the controversial "Stjepan Diocese" was located.[99] Losing the battle, crushed and suppressed by his illness, he was finally withdrawn to a monastery in Rome (1629), where he died at the beginning of 1632.

Benin (Benignus) Albertini was one of the most prominent Minorites of his age. He was born in Dubrovnik on December 1, 1789 (his Chris-

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tening name was Antun), in a family originally from Naples. At an early age he became an orphan, but as the Franciscan, Father Athanasius, was his uncle, the latter helped him to study with the Dubrovnik Piarists under the leadership of Fr. M. Appendini. Having entered the Franciscan order in 1805 and completed his novitiate in 1806, Albertini began to study his first philosophical disciplines in the Minorites' Monastery School under the leadership of I. Culic and A. Markovic. As Albertini stood out as a talented student, he was sent to continue study in Italy (Ancona, Macerata and Ravenna). There he completed the study of philosophy and theology, was ordained in 1814, and in 1815 he defended his public exam.[100]

Having returned to Dubrovnik, Albertini was appointed lecturer of philosophy, law, physics, and geometry at the Monastery School. He encouraged his students to organize special activities. Several times a year he rehearsed the public appearances and observance celebrations with them, reciting his own compositions, poems, and speeches. He himself was an excellent orator and preacher. He made public appearances in both Italian and Croatian not only in Dubrovnik and Dalmatian towns but also in Italy (Rome and Naples). Albertini dealt with literature and helped his confrere Father Ambroz Markovic to research and arrange the manuscript of Ivan Gundulic's *Osman*. Albertini wrote poems in both Latin and Italian. He was a member of the *Arcadia* Academy in Rome, where he recited his Latin poems under the poetic name of *Clariscus Parthenius*. A large part of his poetic *fiuvre* consists of poems for special occasions. Some of them were published separately,[101] while most were included in collections of poems by various authors and printed by the Dubrovnik publisher A. Martecchini.[102] Records of various contents as well as some letters and poems sent to him are preserved in the Minorites' Library.[103]

Albertini served as guardian in the Minorites' Monastery in 1828, and as Provincial from 1829 to 1832.[104] He worked very hard in collecting alms for renewal of the Monastery and the Church of the Minorites, which were damaged from the long residence of both French and Austrian armies in the Monastery. He repaired the cloister, paved the church, supplied the sacristy with paraments, and the library with a collection of Italian and Latin classics.

Pope Gregory XVI noted Albertini's outstanding abilities in administration during the latter's business visit to Rome. On April 13, 1832, the Pope named him Bishop of Shkodër. Albertini was consecrated in Dubrovnik on July 22 the same year. On that occasion, his admirers, confreres and friends dedicated to him a collection of laudatory poems.[105] Albertini immediately sent a pastoral letter to the clergy and populace of his eventual diocese.[106] He arrived to Shkodër in December 1832 and immediately started with a canon visitation of the diocese. Even though he was in a difficult and delicate situation, he took care of the reconstruction of ruined churches and residential (parish priests') houses and of church discipline of the clergy and worked for eradication of bad customs among the people. After that he convoked a diocesan synod in Shkodër, published acts of the synod, opened a small seminary and took care of the initial plans and work for building a cathedral. The building was continued by Msgr. I. Topic, and completed by the latter's successor Msgr. Luigj Çurçija. In Albertini's time there were no churches in Shkodër, and mass was celebrated under the open sky.

When the Bishop of Pulti Msgr. Pjetër Gjinaj was killed in the beginning of April 1833,[107] Albertini was entrusted with canon visitation and the diocesan administration he directed until his death.

During his bishopric (1833-1838) in Shkodër and in the whole of Northern Albania bloody events (mutual conflicts and constant uprisings of citizens and hill tribes against the Turkish regime) were interwoven with reprisals, suppression, violence and plunder, plus military campaigns by punitive expeditions of the Turkish army under the command of Ali Namik Pasha (1833) and Hafiz Feriz Pasha called mockingly "Kryelopa" (1834-1835). Those events took place because the

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Shkodër Pasha Mustafa Bushatlija (semi-autonomous lord of the Shkodër *vilayet* [province]) and Hamzo Kazaja as well as other feudal lords and the Malisori hill tribes were opposed to the centralist reforms (*tanzimat*) that were carried out by Sultan Mahmut II.[108]

Bishop Albertini found himself between the hammer and the anvil, and he tried constantly to calm the spirits down. He gave advice, intervened, and organized aid to the suffering. For that reason he traveled to Rome in 1836, remaining there for several months. The Pope honored him the title *"Prelate domestico"* and made him an Auxiliary of the Papal throne. Albertini traveled from Rome to Vienna, to the Emperor Ferdinand I, for consultation. There he came into contact with some politically influential persons. In 1836, he returned home through Venice and Kotor and visited his native Dubrovnik. After a brief rest he went back to his diocese, where he was solemnly met by both the people and the local authorities. For a second time, he went all over the diocese, he worked hard and made great efforts to calm spirits down and prevent mutual clashes, quarrels, and blood feuds among citizens and the hill tribes.

Although he found himself in difficult and chaotic political circumstances and a delicate situation, Bishop Albertini was, as his successor Msgr. Carlo Pooten says, *"prudentia atque dexteritate ita munere suo functus est ut tum cleri tum populi benevolentiam et amorem sibi conciliavit."*[109]

Because of his reasonableness and knowledge and because of the unbearable conditions in Albania, in May 1838 Albertini was named Bishop of Split and Makarska, but Providence would decide otherwise. On the Holy Day of Our Lady (August 15, 1838) he went to the neighboring parish of Shiroka to confirm believers. On the next day, on the holiday of St. Rok, the patron saint of the parish, he fell severely ill. Several days after that (on August 24) Albertini died in Shkodër in his 49th year.

Escorted and mourned by a large number of believers and citizens who had loved and respected him, Albertini was buried in the St. Maria Magdalena Church, the only church then standing in the environs of Shkodër. Thanks to the care of his secretary, D. Petar Bacic of Dubrovnik, a sepulchral slab was erected with a text in both Italian and Albanian.[110] He was succeeded by Msgr. Alojz Guglielmi from Hvar. A portrait of Albertini by an unknown author is preserved in the Minorites' Monastery Library, along with books and a substantial bequest of manuscripts.[111]

8. Urban Bogdanovic was born in Dubrovnik on October 1, 1806 (his Christian name was Nikola). Having completed primary school in Dubrovnik, he entered the Franciscan order and completed his novitiate in 1827. On January 8, 1832, he was ordained. Bogdanovic was a schoolmate of Father I. Kuzmic, Father D. Stoic, and Father S. Frankovic. Having successfully passed the exams at the central school in Zadar in 1836-1837, he became lecturer in Law and Church History. He served in that function in the monasteries of the Minorites and Della Vigna in Venice from 1842 to 1844. He was an excellent preacher and good writer.[112] In the Province he had the duty of definitor and provincial from 1844 to 1846.

On September 30, 1845, in 39th year, Bogdanovic was named the titular Bishop *"Europensis"* and the Administrator of the Archdiocese of Shkup. He was consecrated in Dubrovnik on March 8, 1846.[113]

In his time, the Archdiocese of Shkup was very disorganized and in a very delicate religious and political situation. As Bishop Pjetër Shala has been suspended, vicar Gaspër Gurakuqi took over administration of the archdiocese for a certain period of time. In 1842, the Shkodër Bishop Ivan Topic was entrusted with the administration of the archdiocese.[114]

In a 1837 decree, the Roman Curia transferred the right of protecting the Albanian Catholics in the Balkans to the Austrian Emperor, and the naming of bishops was proposed and controlled by Vienna. From that time on it was predominantly citizens of lands under the Austrian Empire who were named bishops of Albania. Austria also financed the building of churches and residential

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houses, opened and assisted schools and other religious and cultural institutions. At the same time, Austria pled for freedom of religious rites and was a protector of the Church in the Balkans.

In the middle of the eighteenth century in all of Albania, especially in the north where the majority of Albanian Catholics lived, and in Kosova (Prishtinë, Prizren, Pejë, and Gjakovë), rebellions against centralist reforms (the so-called "tanzimat") appeared and spread. Numerous regular Turkish armies under the command of Omer Pasha crushed the rebellions of *agas* and *beys* in blood, destroying villages and robbing the population in the regions of Gjakovë, Gashi and Krasniqi in 1845. From 1848 to 1853 constant wars were waged, fighting went on against the rebels, and reprisals were carried out in the rebellious areas.[115]

Bishop Bogdanovic resided in Prizren, as had his predecessors since 1821. The whole diocese had only six parishes (Prizren, Gjakovë, Pejë, Zymb, Janjevë, and Letnicë) with many scattered villages where six priests and four Franciscan missionaries were engaged in various activities.[116] In the whole diocese, especially in the territory of the Skopska Crna Gora, there were many crypto-Catholics, called *laramans* ("the motley"). Secretly and in the family circle, they maintained their faith in a way, practiced the sacraments and surreptitiously christened their children, while publicly they appeared to be Muslims, went to mosques to pray, had Muslim names and wore Muslim clothing, held the Muslim *ramadan* fast and other Muslim obligations and customs. Secretly, the priests and missionaries administered the sacraments to them and celebrated mass inprivate houses at late hours. They went about in civil clothing and adapted themselves to the circumstances. These priests and missionaries were called and still are today *axhë* ("uncle").

That "legalized" situation lasted until the Albanian National Synod (*Kuvendi i Arbënit*) in 1703. The synod was attended by all Albanian bishops, led by the Tivar Archbishop Vicko Zmajevic. From that time on all spiritual Fathers were banned from giving the sacraments to the crypto-Catholics. Later, the decisions of the synod were confirmed by the 1754 Constitution of Benedict XIV.

According to the decree *Hati Sherif Djulhana*, known under the name of *tanzimat* ("reform, order"), issued under pressure from the great European powers on November 3, 1839 by Sultan Abdul Mejid, all citizens of the Turkish Empire were guaranteed, generally and formally, personal freedom, and the right to property and religion - according to the model of the western countries. The decree was published in Kosova no earlier than 1843, in Shkodër in 1844, and in the south of Albania in 1845.[117] Thus the Christians in Kosova were freed from a nightmare that had oppressed them for a long period of time. In the whole state it was heard that a new age had started and that everyone could pray to his/her own God freely.

The crypto-Catholics of the villages of Binça, Stubla, Vrnakolo and Karadak (Letnicë) in the Skopska Crna Gora - encouraged by their parish priest, the zealous missionary Father Antun Maroevic, a Franciscan and member of the Albanian Province who came from Stari Grad in Hvar[118] - publicly declared themselves to be Catholics. But this happened at a bad hour. All the wrath of the local authorities, particularly Maliq Bey of Gjilan and Hafiz Pasha of Prishtinë, demonstrated itself through horribly barbaric acts with harsh consequences. In the beginning of 1846, about 25 families from the abovementioned villages were imprisoned, first in Gjilan, then in Prishtinë and Shkup, and tortured. Finally, in 1846, they were sent as slaves to Anatolia, first in the Muhaliq marshland and then in the villages of Brusa and Filedare. In March of the same year Father Antun Maroevic was captured, shackled in irons and sent below a horse's belly to Thessalonica. After much difficulty the Austrian consul managed to set him free. Immediately after that Father Maroevic went to Istanbul to intervene for his flock, visit it and console it in Muhaliq and Filedare.[119]

Thanks to the intervention of western powers, particularly the Austrian, French and English consuls at the Porte, out of about 150 persons some 79 managed to return home in November 1848.

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Some of them died during travel, while others died of old age, weakness, and epidemics while in exile. But even after their return the difficulties and maltreatment did not stop. Their lands were confiscated, and their homes looted and burned down. Msgr. U. Bogdanovic paid them special attention, intervened in all directions, sent D. Pavao Berisha to Istanbul in 1846 to intercede for them through both the Austrian and the French envoys at the Porte. This action had no success. In 1862, Msgr. Bogdanovic sent D. Pavao Berisha to argue for a return of their property and an arrangement of their position.[120]

During Bogdanovic's administration the Archdiocese of Shkup numbered about ten thousand Catholics intermingled with Muslims in six parishes, which had also a great number of scattered villages and hamlets and approximately the same number of the crypto-Catholics (*laramans*). The latter exist there even today.

Franciscan missionaries arrived gradually in Kosova (Pejë and Gjakovë) as early as the end of the seventeenth century. The Turks persecuted them and the Orthodox Christian clergy caused them difficulties. The Franciscan mission was re-established in 1839 (or 1841) by vicar Gaspër Gurakuqi. The mission was aided and enlarged by Bishop Bogdanovic. He gave the parish of Zymb over to the friars in 1849, when they built a church and a hospice there.[121] Three missionaries from Italy worked there, the popular "Father Mile" - Emilio da Cles from the Tyrol, and Father Francesco Rossi da Montalto, the compiler of a large Albanian-Italian and Italian-Albanian dictionary and author of a grammar.[122] Marian da Palmanova, dubbed "Marjan Pasha," resided as his secretary and vicar in Prizren. He protected Father Antun Maroevic (who resided in the parish of Letnicë) from priests who wanted to take the parish from Maroevic. When at times misunderstandings concerning the parishes appeared among missionaries and the native clergy, Bishop Bogdanovic calmed them down, reproved and reminded them to live and work in harmony, not to wear secular clothing, not to keep female servants in their residential houses, etc.[123]

He took care of the renovation of churches, of the fencing and proper maintenance of cemeteries, and of opening primary schools in Janjevë, Prizren, Pejë, and Zymb.[124]

Bogdanovic died in Prizren on July 2, 1863, after a short illness. The news was reported by his secretary Father Marian da Palmanova,[125] who took it upon himself to have a tomb and a sepulchral slab with an inscription erected for Bishop Bogdanovic in the cathedral church. A portrait and several works (both printed and in manuscript) by Bogdanovic along with several of his books have been preserved in the Minorites' Library.[126] On September 2, 1863, in the Minorites' Church a solemn commemoration of his death was held. On that occasion Father I. Kuzmic issued a booklet with a brief biography and occasional writings of Bogdanovic.[127] Father Dario Bucciarelli (1864-1878) succeeded Bogdanovic and continued the latter's work. Father Fulgencije Carev (1879-1889) succeeded Bucciarelli.

9. Luigj Çurçija (Christening name Ivan) was born in Dubrovnik on December 8, 1818. He was the son of Bozo from Popovo. He entered the Franciscan order on August 15, 1834. Having completed the novitiate in Dubrovnik, he was sent to Zadar in 1835 to study philosophy. He completed the study of theology in the Minorites' Monastery School under U. Bogdanovic, S. Frankovic, and D. Stoic. He was ordained in 1843. The following year he became the secretary of the province. From 1845 to 1853 he was the secretary of the Dubrovnik Bishop Tomo Jederlinic. In the province he served as definitor and provincial (1853). He was also a professor of mathematics and physics in the Dubrovnik *Gymnasium*. Bishop Jederlinic sent Çurçija to Rome several times to deal with affairs related to his diocese. In Rome Çurçija made the acquaintance of the Montenegrin bishop Petar Petrovic Njegos.[128]

Because of his talent, learning and knowledge of church organization and because of his virtuous life and delicacy of address, Çurçija was named Bishop of Lezha in Albania by Pius IX. On September 27, 1853, Çurçija was named the successor

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of Msgr. Ivan Topic, who was transferred to Shkodër. Çurçija was consecrated as bishop in Dubrovnik on March 19, 1854.[129]

From his residence in Kallmeta near Lezha Çurçija began his canon visitation, the restoration of churches and parish priests' homes as well as education of the clergy. The diocese was under the Durrës metropolis and had 24 parishes with 13 lay priests and 7 Franciscan missionaries. With his word and his example Çurçija for four years strove to renew the neglected diocese. For his exemplary work, he was removed as co-adjutor with the right of succession to the already decrepit and ill Shkodër Bishop Ivan Topic, a Franciscan from Split. The following year (February 6, 1859) Çurçija would become ordinarius, after Bishop Topic withdrew to Rome.

Despite the difficulties, Çurçija began with all his strength to develop his tireless pastoral activity in Shkodër. He visited one parish after another in his diocese. He tried to make peace between families divided by blood feuds. He worked to eradicate backward customs and arranged church property. In accord with the Catholics and with the Shkodër *vizier* [high officer], Çurçija issued regulations for contracting marriage. He cared for the translation and publication of religious books, and he especially cared for clergy education and for the seminary. He enlarged and renewed the seminary, which along with the primary school was run by Jesuits. On the occasion of their arrival at the city, Çurçija wanted to gave the Franciscan missionaries from the mountainous areas a shelter in the administrative and religious center. Since the Franciscans had not had a monastery in Shkodër, Çurçija gave them a house called "Shtëpija e koprraces" in the Serreqi neighborhood of the city. The "Shtëpija e koprraces" was the prebend of the Bishops' Mess Hall. Çurçija arranged permission for and construction of the monastery. Thanks to his care and the assistance of Austria, the first public primary school was opened in the same building in Shkodër in 1860-1861.[130] Father Ljudevit Vulicevic, a native of Cavtat, and Father Ilija Skoric from Bosnia, both from Çurçija's province, were brought to the missionaries to assist the latter in their work (1860). The first school in Shkodër - along with the Jesuits' school - later became a secular high school and finally a complete classical *Gymnasium* (*"Liceum Illyricum"*) with public rights. It was one of the most established schools in the whole of Albania.

In 1875, the Franciscans built a new and larger monastery with a great church in the "Gjuhodoli" quarters, and the previous monastery was given to Franciscan "Stigmatine" Sisters. At the initiative of Çurçija and under the leadership of the friars, the sisters later opened the first female school. In the beginning it was a primary school and later a normal school. The first Albanian female teachers attended this school.[131]

Msgr. Çurçija spared no efforts in the building of the Cathedral Church in Shkodër.[132] The Cathedral was planned and begun by Msgr. Albertini. Msgr. Topic obtained permission from the Turkish authorities. Çurçija extended, enlarged, completed and solemnly inaugurated it at the presence of the Shkodër *vali* (Province Governor) in 1865. Çurçija consecrated it on the occasion of Father Dario Bucciarelli's consecration as bishop on March 10, 1861. Father Dario Bucciarelli was his secretary and collaborator. The Shkodër Cathedral was the largest church in Albania. It could receive about five thousand believers. In 1966, it was turned into a sports hall. In the nearby rooms of the residential house, Çurçija's previous residence, the world's first "Museum of Atheism" was opened![133]

Çurçija tried hard to renew the clergy and to establish a religious-cultural center for education of the younger generations and intelligentsia in Shkodër. For that reason, he chose and brought to Shkodër the most qualified persons among the missionaries, for instance, Father Dario Bucciarelli, later Bishop of Sappa and Shkup; Father Marian da Palmanova, the famous "Marjan Pasha"; Father Leonardo de Martino, an Italian-Albanian poet; Father Joakim da Velleri; Father Tommaso da Rapino, and others. For a certain period of time, natives of his own Dubrovnik province worked in Çurçija's service, for example, Father Venceslav Batinic (1861-1862), Father Ljudevit Vulicevic and Father

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Gaudecije Barbic (1865). Çurçija's household was managed by Brother Arkandjeo from Peljesac (since 1861), also a member of the province. Later Çurçija brought Brother Arkandjeo with him to Cairo.

Çurçija's activity in Albania, both in Lezha and Shkodër, was carried out under very difficult religious and political circumstances. In his time, relations between the Turkish and local administration in Shkodër itself, as well as in all of northern Albania, were very strained, especially in 1861 and 1862.[134] This was a period of uprisings and national movements for liberation from the Turkish yoke, of wars with neighboring Montenegro and the mountainous predominantly Catholic Malisor tribes, particularly the Mirdita. Msgr. Gaspër Gurakuqi and Msgr. Pal Dodmasej were imprisoned as leaders of the rebellions. Çurçija himself was accused of encouraging the Catholics *not* to wage war against Montenegro. The Turkish army frequently carried out punitive expeditions in Shkodër, Prizren and Gjakovë.[135]

Many times Bishop Çurçija intervened successfully, persuaded and reconciled both Catholics and Muslims. With his authority he managed to prevent a very dangerous rebellion in Shkodër, so that even the Turkish authorities respected and liked him. For those merits Çurçija was awarded the "Mejidiya" Medal by the Sultan. He had a friendly relationship with the Shkodër *vali* Ismail Pasha[136] and through the intervention of the latter Çurçija managed to obtained the release of several rebellious Shkodër *beys*.

After twelve years of hard work in Albania, Çurçija received (on September 27 and again on November 30, 1865) a decree from the Holy See. It was a decree of his removal to Alexandria as titular Archbishop of Irenopolis. He served as the Apostolic Vicar for the Latins [i.e., Catholics] in Egypt and the Apostolic delegate for the Orientals in Egypt and Arabia.[137] Çurçija's letters to the Superior General of the Order reveal that Çurçija accepted the duty reluctantly, with hesitation and grudging. Çurçija was tired of constant work and of delicate health, and in some degree embittered because of lack of understanding of his situation. On October 7 Çurçija wrote to the Superior General in reply to the latter's urging that Çurçija accept the honor and the very important mission with which he was entrusted. In his letter Çurçija mentioned the main reason of his dissatisfaction: *"Io non ho secreti per V. P. Rev. sma, perciò parlero con tutta franchezza di figlio. Il mio costante desiderio era sempre quello di uscire dall'Albania per mille ragioni, delle quali la prima e fondamentale è che S. C... per questi luoghi si lascia influenzare da persone appasionate e decisamente avverse ai francescani..."*[138]

Before his departure for Egypt Çurçija made a visitation (from June 6 to July 7, 1865) of a large mountainous part of his diocese where Franciscan missionaries worked. He visited the villages of Boga, Shkreli, Vukli, Selca, Gusinje, Koja, Grudë, Traboin, Rapsha, Bajza, and Kastrati. In every place, multitudes of the faithful and other people met him enthusiastically. Even horse races were organized, accompanied by thunderous gun fire. Çurçija was accompanied by a priest from Shkodër and by the prefect of the missions Father Gabriele Capocci da Braccigliano, later Auxiliary Bishop in Tivar. Father Gabriele notes at the end of a detailed report to the General Curia:[139] *"Ora poi con dolore e rincrescimento sento che la S. C. ha trasferito altrove il nostro vescovo. Fortunata la diocesi dove va! Io per altro senze ulteriori elogi al Prelato dico, che per la nostra Missione e forse per tutta la Diocesi sia una vera disgrazia [illegible] sotto tutti i riguardi, perchè mi sembra molto difficile che venga un Vescovo fornito di tante belle doti da incontrare la sodisfazione del popolo, del clero e del Governo benchè Turco, che con zelo, dolcezza, prudenza ed avvedutezza sappi colpire al segno senza fallire, che conosca tanto bene l'indole del popolo e secondo essa agisca, che apporti tanti provvedimenti materiali e morali quanti in poco tempo ne ha arrecati Mons. Çurcia o che piuttosto non mandi e male tutto il ben fatto (come altrove si è veduto) per inesperienza, per leggerezza, per caparbità, o per poca conoscenza del terreno..."*

Having finally accepted his new position, Çurçija departed for Alexandria on August 6, 1866. There Çurçija replaced Bosnian Franciscan Msgr.

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Pasko Vujcic, who hadpreviously been bishop of Pulti in Albania. In Egypt Çurçija gave the benediction of the newly opened Suez Canal in 1869,[140] and attended the First Vatican Council in 1870.

In Shkodër, Çurçija was succeeded by Msgr. Carlo Pooten, under whom the Tivar Archdiocese was joined *"æque principaliter"* with the Shkodër Archdiocese and declared a metropolis. Father Gabriele Cappocio was named Auxiliary Bishop in Tivar.[141]

After fifteen years of conscientious work in Egypt, Archbishop Çurçija wanted to spend the rest of his life in the peace of the Monastery walls of his native city, in the circle of his confreres. He sailed on the French steamship "Messagerie;" during the voyage he suddenly fell ill and after a short agony died on July 15, 1881. There is a suspicion that he was poisoned by sailors, who wanted to rob him. The next day his dead body was lowered into the sea, 40 miles from Calabria.

A solemn requiem for the rest of his noble soul was held in the Minorites' Church on September 16, 1881. On that occasion, Father Candido Mariotti compiled a brochure of Çurçija's biography and writings.[142] A part of his legacy in four coffers is preserved in the monastery: personal things, books, pontifical paraments and a chalice (a gift from Pius IX), a pile of official letters and letters from his friends, and a large photograph. Thephotograph was a gift from his friends from Gand (or Gent, in Belgium) on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Çurçija's bishopric (1878).[143]

An Albanian Franciscan describes Çurçija in the following way: "Msgr. Çurçija was of handsome face, very attractive in his appearance, courteous and in harmony with everyone, truly noble in manners, unbiased in his judgments and in speech, all in all - a real patrician of Dubrovnik."[144]

Father Bonaventura Rode ends his *Necrologium*, the biographical list of late Franciscans of the St. Francis Dubrovnik Province,[145] with Mato Vodopic's elegy "Dubrovnik Lament," a dirge on the occasion of Archbishop Luigj Çurçija's death. In the elegy the last three outstanding Minorites are mentioned as well:

"It was either destiny or God's will
that - when the glory of the Minorites
and the pride of old Dubrovnik [i.e., Franciscans]
moved from the headquarters
and devoted themselves to another Church -
all of them suddenly perished there
and even their dead bodies were not returned!
Only thou, God, knowest how
Shkodër swallowed *Albertini!*
Bosnia ate *Frankovic*
and that death had objections [*sic*]:
Fr. Urban sleeps in Prizren,
and he shall sleep until the Day of Judgment.
But their dead bodies have been buried
with funeral processions and requiem.
On their graves people pray even today.
My prayer joins that prayer
and my spirit flutters near their graves
with hope in a better future.
And where was *our Luigj* stuck?
In returning from the flat Egypt
It [God's will] met him in the midst of sea
To It we are to pray
It met him and disconnected his life...
If It at least gives me his dead body!..."[146]

I finish this perhaps incomplete and truncated retrospective survey of archival and general data about the connections of the ancient Dubrovnik monastery with the Albanians and Albania - like the still unarranged parti-colored small stones for a greater mosaic. I end with the ardent desire and hope that someone else do it better with the subject and in more detail, and that he or she would put everyone [of the mentioned Catholic bishops and priests] in his appropriate place.

Vinçenc MALAJ

Translated from Croatian by Anto Knezevic

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Portrait of Bishop B. Albertini



Portrait of Bishop Luigi Çurçija who completed the building of the Cathedral of Shkodër, 1858



The completed Cathedral of Shkodër on the day of dedication

Vorri Nderuesciem
Benignos Albertinit Ypeschvi Scodres
Decun ne 24 ditne Gust 1838.

Papa Sceit ner Fretenij
Sgoz Ypeschev per Sgyptarij
Albertini Dobranichlij,
Chetu vorrue corbi tij.
Duel sani muer zeen
Ne Arbenj scendrue[illegible]en,
Dye te maze [illegible]urtij
Chërcoi Scchipre[illegible] Malzij.
Me se saa [illegible]
Ner ne[illegible] maza nauget,
Ndej ne[illegible]ce giest viet
E[illegible] Roma me scue n' splet.
Ne[illegible]mer cater[illegible] nan viet
N[illegible] brachtiss me dech te vet,
Corbin [illegible] me ndeme
Te [illegible] Scodra m[illegible]m ucine.
Mell[illegible] Paz[illegible] per [illegible] sebet
G[illegible]villajet[illegible] bani medet!
[illegible]ater Bacc[illegible]ciracu ittij
Me le[illegible]sa dubet sdij.

Poem in Albanian dedicated to Bishop Albertini by Fr. Petar Bacic

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THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AUTOCEPHALOUS ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH:
RESOURCES ON THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ISSUES SURROUNDING AUTOCEPHALY

The years between 1992 and 2007 mark the 70th Anniversary of the struggle for the independence (Autocephaly) of the Albanian Orthodox Church. From its foundation at the Congress of Berat (Sept. 10-19, 1922) to its final acceptance by Constantinople on April 12, 1937, the Albanian Church steadfastly held to its ideal of becoming one of the world's autocephalous Orthodox Churches. Certainly, the Orthodox Church in Albania had existed from Apostolic times, but this movement toward independence marked the Church's understanding of itself as a fully mature part of world-wide Orthodoxy.

Albanian Christians' influence as part of the larger Christian world can easily be seen in such examples as the devoted service of Roman Catholic Albanian Gjon Sinishta of San Francisco to common work for freedom and understanding among Catholics, Orthodox, Jews and Muslims, and the recent travels of Fr. Arthur Liolin, Chancellor of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America. Fr. Liolin attended a Jewish-Christian symposium on Scientific and Social challenges facing religious leaders, held in Jerusalem. Following this Conference, he proceeded to Italy, where he met with the Arbëresh community (Italo-Albanian Greek-Catholics) and with John Paul II, Pope of Rome. Certainly, Albanian Christians contribute much to the international Ecumenical scene!

The history of the Albanian Orthodox Church's journey toward Autocephaly has been well documented, most recently by the Symposium on this Anniversary, published in Tirana in 1993.[1] There is no need to rehearse all of the complex history here, but some notes may be of help, especially to Western Christians who may be unfamiliar with the structure of the Orthodox Church, and the issues which surround the question of autocephaly in general.



Very Rev. Arthur E. Liolin

The Eastern Orthodox Church world-wide preserves the ancient Christian form of organization, which recognizes a oneness of faith, while maintaining complete independence in local governance. Only when the Church assembles in an Ecumenical Council (the last was held in AD 787 — The Second Council of Nicæa) is fully universal legislation passed. Although there is a primacy of honor among the Churches, each Autocephalous Church is fully self-governing. The order of the primacy of honor among the five great Patriarchates is: Rome [i.e., if Communion were to be re-established between Rome and the Orthodox Church], Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

These great ancient Sees have, through their missionary effort, founded many daughter

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Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

These great ancient Sees have, through their missionary effort, founded many daughter Churches. Today, there are 15 Autocephalous (fully self-governing) Eastern Orthodox Churches: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, the Church in the Czech and Slovak Republics, and the Orthodox Church in America. In addition, there are five "Autonomous Churches," which, while essentially independent, still have some ties to their Mother Churches: Mount Sinai, Mount Athos, Finland, Japan and China.[2]

(The Oriental Orthodox Churches — Coptic, Ge'ez (Ethiopian and Eritrean), Armenian, Syrian and Malabar Oriental Orthodox Churches, although they have a similar system of polity, are not in Communion with the Eastern Orthodox Church, and so are not dealt with in this study. The same is true of the Assyrian-Chaldean Church of the East. Both of these groups, although of Apostolic antiquity and origins, have differences with the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches over the Christological formulæ of the Councils of Chalcedon (AD 451) and Ephesus (AD 431) respectively. Dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches has progressed in recent years, but has not yet led to the restoration of full communion with either the Eastern Orthodox or Catholic Churches.[3])

Outside of Ecumenical Councils, then, there is no continuing central earthly governing body for all the Orthodox Churches taken together (as contrasted with the centralized control which has evolved in the Roman Catholic system over the centuries). The polity is much more like a family relationship of mothers and children, both growing and adult.

In general, when a Church clearly has had the responsibility for evangelizing a particular area, that Church has the right to grant independence in the stages of autonomy, autocephaly and finally, recognition of Patriarchal status. That was the case of the Church in Rus' (now the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow), which, evangelized by missionaries from Constantinople, was granted Patriarchal status in 1589. (The Ukrainian Church, also a part of the Church Rus', is still struggling for its recognition as Autocephalous.) In like manner, the Russian Church was the first to missionize North America (1794), and granted the Orthodox Church in America autocephaly in 1970. Although this action is still in dispute by Constantinople, the Russian action has clear historical precedent.

Constantinople's protest over the OCA's autocephaly may strangely have some relation to its reluctance during the period 1922-1937 to recognize the Albanian Church's status. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Turkish government created a system of "millets" or "nations" to govern the peoples it had conquered.

The "Roum Millet" was formed for the Christians, since Constantinople was New Rome, and its citizens called themselves *Romaioi*. Under this system, the Patriarch of Constantinople became an Ethnarch, answerable to the Caliph. This position, imposed by the occupying forces, forced Constantinople into jurisdiction over other occupied Christian Sees (e.g. Antioch, Jerusalem) that it had not experienced in the Imperial Christian world. This jurisdiction contradicted the Orthodox polity, and may have led to a concept of centralization which was foreign to the Tradition, transforming Constantinople's role of primacy of honor into one of actual jurisdiction. If this theory is correct, both benefits and problems have arisen as a result in the centuries which have followed, and the Albanian story is a good example.

Albania, part of the Roman province of Illyricum, was situated between the Latin influence of Rome and the Byzantine traditions of Constantinople. Its evangelization took place starting from Apostolic times. The Ghegs, peoples of the North adopted the Latin usages from the west, while the Southern Tosk peoples became Byzantine Christians. They co-existed together for many centuries, as indeed did the Church as a whole, accepting the legitimate diversity in practice and outlook which characterized early Christianity.

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At the Turkish invasion of Albania in the 15th Century, many Christians fled to Southern Italy. There, in areas that had traditionally had strong Greek influence, the Byzantine Albanians (Arbëresh) became the core and foundation of the Italo-Albanian Greek-Catholic Church which flourishes today in Italy and has many faithful in the US as well (although sadly without parishes in North America).[5]

Albania was evangelized in the early years of Christianity, and cannot clearly be said to be a "daughter Church" of any particular Patriarchate. Understandably, however, after the Turkish conquest in the 15th Century, the remaining Orthodox population came under the jurisdiction of Constantinople, largely due to the "millet" system described above. This situation served to care for the religious needs of the people for several centuries, but also emphasized the Hellenic character of the Church as well, just as Roman/Latin jurisdiction in Ireland influenced the indiginous Celtic Christian Church there after the Synod of Whitby (AD 664).

When Albania finally gained its political independence in 1912-13 following the Balkan conflicts, the growing sense of national identity naturally flowed into a movement for independence of the Albanian Church. This sentiment was certainly fueled by the tide of nationalism which was common throughout Europe, but more deeply, it reflected the way that the Orthodox Church grows in a particular place.

In place after place, century after century, missionaries bring the faith to new peoples, and quickly translate the Divine Liturgy, the other Services, the Scriptures and works on Theology, Prayer and Church life into the native language of the new Christians. Sts. Cyril and Methodios did this for the Slavs, and Sts. Tikhon and Innocent began this task for North America. Albanians understandably wanted this traditional path to be a reality for themselves.

The Orthodox Churches of Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia had all been under the jurisdiction of Constantinople during the Turkish occupation.



Bishop Fan Noli

Constantinople recognized the Autocephaly of Serbia and Romania quickly after their independence from the Turks during the 19th Century, but political problems (1. the autocephaly had been declared by the Ottomans; 2. the situation described in the next paragraph) prevented such recognition for the Bulgarians until 1945. All three Churches now have Patriarchal status.

In the 1860s and 70s, a disastrous situation had arisen in Bulgaria. Because of ethnic hatred, Bulgarian and Greek Orthodox Christians had set up rival jurisdictions in the same area, based solely upon national and linguistic distinctions. The Patriarchate of Constantinople, alarmed by this turn of events, condemned the principle of the coexistence of nationally defined Churches as the heresy of *Ethnophyleticism*.[6] Following the teaching of the Council of Nicea, that there should only be one Orthodox Bishop in one place (city),[7] it was re-emphasized that the Orthodox Church in any particular place is responsible for all the Orthodox Christians in that locale, regardless of ethnicity or language. This is the basis of the current discus-

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sions about Orthodox jurisdictional unity in North America.[8])

Albanians, knowing this history at the turn of the Century, saw their own autocephaly as a natural outgrowth of their independence, and so, in 1922, encouraged by (then) Fr. Fan Noli, an eminent Albanian Orthodox priest from the United States, unilaterally declared their autocephaly at the Congress of Berat (September 10-19, 1922). The impetus was part of the larger renaissance of Albanian Culture which began during the 19th century.

Use of the Albanian language in the Divine Liturgy and other Services of the Church had become a prime issue for Albanian Orthodox Christians for more than a century before the Autocephaly. This was consistent with the traditional inculturation of the Faith into the local language and customs. Yet the presence of a Greek minority population, political designs on Southern Albania by Greece, and the desire to sharply distinguish the Christian population from their Moslem neighbors, all contributed to an hellenophile policy by Constantinople and the Greek clergy and hierarchy in Albania.[9] The teaching and use of Albanian was opposed.

It may be supposed that Constantinople understood this linguistic development as a new outbreak of "ethnophyleticism," or that, as in the later case of the Orthodox Church in America, the Ecumenical Patriarchate claimed jurisdiction where there was a claim of mixed missionary origin. From an historical perspective, however, we can see that the Albanians were not trying to set up a separate "Albanian language" jurisdiction as opposed to a "Greek language" one, but rather, to regularize their Church structure according the ancient model that their neighbors Serbia and Romania had so recently followed.

Support for Albanian religious independence came strongly from the expatriates in the United States. Fr. Fan Noli and his successors were instrumental in encouraging their companions at home to continue the struggle. In America, the Albanian Orthodox had, in 1907-08, established a parish in New York under Fr. Fan's (Theophan's) leadership, who had been ordained by Bishop Platon, the Russian Metropolitan of the United States.



Albanian Orthodox Cathedral, Tiranë, 1994

In 1919, the Albanian Orthodox Church in the U.S. became independent,[10] and today exists in two parts: (1) the majority as the Albanian Archdiocese of the Orthodox Church in America, and (2) two parishes which make up the Albanian Othodox Diocese of America under the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and administed by the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America.[11]

With this support from abroad, and with the failure of Greece to annex southern Albania, Hellenic influence in Albania waned after the end of the First World War. In an atmosphere now much more favorable, the Congress of Berat continued the process by establishing the Autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church in September of 1922. Constantinople refused to acknowledge this move, offering autonomy only in 1922-23, which would allow the Ecumenical Patriarch the right to approve the appointment of the Metropolitan Archbishop, and to have a hand in other administrative details. Another attempt, ceding more local authority was offered in 1927.

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The importance of national identity, and the past history of difficulties, however, made these compromises impossible to accept, and in February 1929, the Holy Synod of the Albanian Orthodox Church, headed by Bishop Visarion Xhuvani, was recognized by the Albanian Government. Fr. Vasil Marko was named as the chief mitred presbyter.

Finally, after a decade of negotiation, Constantinople recognized the Autocephaly, with certain personnel changes which soothed past perceived hurts. With this, the Albanian Church was indisputably recognized and fully functional. [12] Sadly, of course, with the advent of the Communist régime in the 1940s, the Church fell under control and persecution. Until 1967 the Church was allowed to continue to operate, even if under tight control. In 1967, however, with the other religious bodies in Albania, the Autocephalous Church suffered the same dissolution.

As freedom emerged in the 1990s, the Albanian Orthodox Church was bereft of celibate clergy, due to the persections and murders of the communist period. For the time being, since the Church was without a Hierarchy, Constantinople in 1992 appointed Archbishop Anastasios, a professor from the University of Athens, to lead the Albanian Church back to full health. This appointment has raised fears of a new Greek attempt to subvert the Albanian character of the Church among some, citing the contradiction with Albanian statutes.[13]

Under the leadership of Archbishop Anastasios, 25 Churches have been regained, 28 priests and 9 deacons have been ordained, and some 80 men were studying for the priesthood by early 1993.[14] Only time will tell if this will restore the full Albanian quality of the Orthodox Church there, and complete trust be re-established among the sister Churches of Albania, Greece and Constantinople, an outcome devoutly to be prayed for and worked toward.

Steven A. ARMSTRONG

Notes

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3. See for example: (Roman Catholic - Oriental Orthodox:) Thomas F. Stransky & John B. Sheerin (eds), *Doing the Truth in Charity (Ecumenical Documents I).* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), pp 230-249. (Eastern Orthodox - Oriental Orthodox:) (1) John Meyendorff, "Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians: the Last Steps to Unity." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33:4 (1989) 319-330. (2) "Communiqué of the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue bewteen the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 34:4 (Winter 1989) 393-399.

4. Roberson, p 56.

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6. Greek text of the decrees quoted in Maximos of Sardis, *The Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Orthodox Church.* (Thessaloniki: 1972), pp 323-5.

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11. Roberson, p. 58, 63, 74-7[illegible].

12. Prifti, p. 96.

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ON GREEK-ALBANIAN RELATIONS

Good relations between Albania and Greece are always welcome, since it reflects their incontrovertible shared destiny in the Balkans and in Europe. This has not always been the case. Suspicion and duplicity has most often been the norm underlying competing pacts and treaties over the years, resembling a defensive duel between related rivals.

The historic and centuries-old Albanian presence in Greece is undeniable and one cannot fully and honestly hope to interpret much of Greek history—ancient and modern—without appreciation for its Illyrian and Thracian antecedents, as many objective scholars have attested.

At the same time, Greek cultural influences in Albanian regions—along with many others—is also a fact of history to be recognized and valued, however cautiously by those who safeguard Albania's patrimony.

Today, as always, when two different people live side by side, their proximity produces tension while hopefully inviting cooperation. That is why clearly defined bilateral agreements based on international rule of law and mutual respect for prevailing conditions are essential if both parties are to benefit. Advancing chauvinistic claims when your neighbor is vulnerable shall only breed future strife and ill will, whether it occurs in the political, economic, ethnic or religious spheres of human endeavor.

It is clear that Albania's present struggle to nurture the consciousness and build the apparatus of a democratic state requires skill, foresight, patience and pain as the nation defines a new national purpose. Safeguarding national interests shall logically follow this vital first process.

It is also very clear that Greece—if it purports to face its own deep economic crisis and secure the vast aid it seeks from the European Community—will have to appear to not abuse an emerging, vibrant new Albanian reality: in Kosova, in Macedonia and in Greece as well.

Respecting each other's identity and unique history can lead to advantages for both Greece and Albania. Appealing to xenophobic fantasies—on either side—will eventually destroy both peoples. It has already corrupted their ideas. Grandstanding and the polemics of fear will only dismember all that each nation holds sacred about itself. World diplomats and ordinary folk are amused, disgusted and disillusioned when claims and counterclaims surface from otherwise credible sources citing distortions of history as fact and intentionally obscured religious census statistics as truth. It leads to a dismal chasm and pervasive illness from which neither shall recover.

Both countries have much to retrieve, Albania: the joy of work, its ecumenical religious treasure, the power of *besa* and trust, a sense of mercy and justice, its historic morality and self-respect. With an educated populate motivated toward self-improvement, Albanians must stop feeling sorry for themselves and wake up to the 21st century they aspire to inherit.

Greeks must stop their maneuvering and incessant complaining, on the other hand; reread their classical greats, learn to live by those precepts and not trumpet a distant past. They must practice what they were preached and leave the sophistry for the coffee house. It has no place in the diplomatic arena. "The glory that was Greece" and "the nobility of the Albanian" can be theirs again if they channel those strident emotions into the constructive channels available to the contemporary European. *

Arthur E. LIOLIN

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SALEM STATE COLLEGE SYMPOSIUM ON SOUTHERN ALBANIA

The Salem State College of Massachusetts recently held a symposium on the case of Southern Albania. It was represented by the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies and the East European and Russian Studies Program. The subject of the symposium, which was attended by mostly Albanian-Americans and a couple of Greek-Americans, was the "Northern Epirus" issue which is widely regarded as an excuse used by Greeks to make territorial claims to Southern Albania.

Albert M. Tosches, an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at Salem State College, who is of Arbëresh descent (as his last name suggests "Toske"—south of Albania), presented a paper on "Southern Albania in the context of State Formation in the Balkans".

The audience enjoyed guest speakers Nicholas C. Pano of Western Illinois University with his study of "The Northern Epirus Question: A Historical Perspective"; Lynn Berat of Yale Law School with her "Competing Claims to Southern Albania, An International Legal Perspective"; Elez Biberaj, head of the Voice of America's Albanian Service with "Albania and Greece: Accommodation vs. Confrontation" and Professor Sami Repishti of Adelphi University with his study of "Human rights: Albanians in the former Yugoslavia and Greeks in Southern Albania."

Each guest speaker denied that the ethnic Greeks in Southern Albania are deprived of schooling in their own language and emphasized that they enjoyed the same equal rights as all Albanians. Professor Pano stated that Albania has a fair human rights record and there are Greek schools and newspapers in Southern Albania that he had visited during his recent trip to Albania. Most of the speakers' evidence was based on their personal fact-finding studies and visits to Albania.

Professor Pano's statement brought an emotional reaction from a Greek-American, Dimitrios Tsoumbanos, who stood up in the audience and claimed that there are 500,000 Greeks in Albania that allegedly live all over the country. However, Mr. Tsoumbanos failed to provide any evidence or documentation of his claim. He told Boston's LIRIA newspaper editor that his statement was based on a so-called "Recent CIA survey on ethnic groups in the Balkans." He also stated that the Greeks in Albania should be granted autonomous status, similar to that the Albanians of Kosova demand.

Professor Repishti, denied the alleged parallel between the rights of the Albanians of Kosova to have their own Republic and the rights of Greeks in Albania.

Speaking on current issues of contention between Albania and Greece, Elez Biberaj stated that Greece is taking advantage of Albania's difficult economic situation by putting pressure on Tirana, mainly by threatening with mass expulsions of Albanian immigrants from Greece, (the daily average of deportations is 400-500). Biberaj, who has visited Albania several times, said that during his recent visit he had noticed that the Albanian currency, lek, had been replaced by the Greek currency, dhrahma, in Southern Albania. Biberaj stated his concern on the future of Albanian-Greek relations with suspicions on both sides that might prevent immediate rapprochement.

The Salem State College symposium made a contribution to the Albanian National Question with these scholarly studies by speakers of Albanian descent who warned against mounting threats from the Greek government.

Only a few weeks after the symposium, the newly elected Greek Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou, undertook a mass expulsion of Albanians from Greece following in the footsteps of his predecessor Mitsotakis.

Shkelqim BEQARI

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THE GREEK MINORITY IN THE ALBANIAN REPUBLIC
A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Albania, whose (modern) independence was proclaimed at the Congress of Vlora on November 12, 1912, has a more homogeneous national population than its neighboring states in the Balkans. The Sixth London Conference of the great powers in 1912-1913 severely divided the territories inhabited by the Albanians. The conference toreapart more than half of the territories and population belonging to the ethnic Albanian regions as follows: In the East and the Northeast-Kosova, Dibra, Ohri, Struga and Pollugu up to Shkup (Scoplje); in the North-Tivari, Ulqini, Gruda, Tuzi, Hoti, Plava and Gucija; in the South-Çamërija. These lands, with an autochthonous Albanian population, were annexed by Serbia, Montenegro (in 1918 by the new Yugoslav State) and Greece in 1913. Thus, the borders of Albania were reduced to an area of 11,097 square miles and a population of a little more than 800,000.[1]

Nevertheless, within the boundaries of the Albanian State there were ethnic minorities, located in island-like areas, mostly along the borders with the Slavic states and with Greece. These ethnic minorities have been counted and acknowledged officially at every census conducted by the Albanian Republic. The Greek minority is the largest among all the minorities and is located almost entirely in the southern corner of the Republic in the areas of Pogon, Dropull and Vurgu which belong to the districts of Gjirokastra, Delvina and Saranda.

Linguistic and historical data support the notion that this Greek minority arrived in these lands not before the 18th century, when Greek farmers abandoned the arid lands of Southern Greece and settled in the fertile lands of Dropulli and Vurgu as tenant farmers of the Albanian feudal lords.[2] In this manner, the Greek minority entered as if into the womb of the Albanian population, made up of Moslems and Orthodox, which were spread as a compact population as far as the bay of Ambrakija.[3]

Greek officials and Greek propaganda in general suggest that the Albanian Orthodox are Greek nationals. This campaign is a revival of the ethnic activities of the Greek patriarchate during the last century when Orthodoxy and Hellenism were treated interchangeably by the Greek missionaries to Albania. Knowing that the Albanian Orthodox population constitutes more than 20% of the total Albanian population, the Greeks make use of this willful confusion and juxtaposition in order to justify their ambitions of annexing southern Albania, the area south of the river Shkumbin, which the Greeks call Verio Epir.

The claims made by Athens about the number of ethnic Greeks in Albania have found acceptance also in international public opinion and especially in Western Democracies. In part this is due to the willful absence of the Albanian side of the issue caused by the xenophobic behavior of the Stalinist regime in Tirana. This is one reason why, in various western democratic publications, encyclopedias, demographic studies and scientific and popular writings, one finds rather exaggerated numbers regarding the Greek minority in Albania. Only recently Reuters has begun to publish two very different numbers for the ethnic Greeks in Albania: 60,000 according to Albanian sources and 250,000 according to Greek sources.

THE CENSUS

In this study we will use the last census of the Albanian population which took place April 2-8, 1989. The results of this census, including the count of the various ethnic minorities, were published in the "Annual Statistics of the Albanian Republic" by the Economic Ministry in 1991 both in Albanian and English.[4]

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The 1989 census was conducted after the Statistical Directorate sent a group of Albanian specialists to Geneva, in March, 1987, to learn the details of the recommendations of the United Nation's Statistical Commission which were published in 1988.[5] Those recommendations were intended to serve as guidelines for all European countries. Among other things, the recommendations stated that each individual has the right to state his nationality freely and that this right must be protected vigorously. The recommendations contained language such as "Some of the basic traits which distinguish ethnic groups are: national origin, linguistic relationships, religious affiliations, customs, special attire . . . "[6]

In preparation for the census of 1989 the Albanian Government took the following measures:

On October 12, 1987 the Planning State Commission distributed the proposed regulations for the general census of the population and on December 2, 1987 presented those regulations, along with the comments and suggestions of the various institutions throughout the country, to the Council of Ministers. On January 13, 1988, the Council of Ministers issued regulation No. 25 on "The General Census of the Population of Albania, April 2-8, 1989."[7] Moreover, the Council of Ministers prepared an implementation plan and on February 13, 1988 approved a budget of 800,000 Leke (US $114,000). Two pamphlets were printed, one with the title "Instructions for the Census Workers" and the other "General Instructions."[8]

In March of 1989 all the forms were ready. Throughout the country, in every work place and residential building, an "announcement" was posted which stated the date and the particulars of the census procedures.[9] These details were also made known to the public by Albanian radio and television.

At the same time, the government published official document No. 1729/1 dated July 25, 1987, entitled "On the Determination of the Ethnic Affiliation", which was sent to all census officials in Albania. The document stated that the declaration of the citizen is binding regarding the nationality question in the census forms, whereas the children take on the nationality of the parents.[10] In the same document it is stated that "The children born of Greek parents must preserve their Greek nationality. For children born of parents with differing nationality, the child's nationality is determined by agreement between the parents."[11]

The census began on Sunday, April 2, 1989 and continued until April 8. The forms were filled out in the homes of the citizens. Census workers went to every home in their area and filled out the census forms in the presence of all family members. Every citizen was required to present his identification card. Citizens under 16 years of age were required to present their birth certificate or other document to determine their identity.

The census workers filled out one form for each individual citizen and were required to write all the answers in ink. The citizen verified the answers on the spot by reading each form.

We emphasize that form A contained the question on nationality and was written as follows: Nationality: Albanian___; Greek___; Other___.[12]

Initially, the census material was used to determine the population and household count in each sector. Once this was completed, the information was sent to Tirana for the final analysis. The results of the general census of 1989 have been recorded and are stored in the archives of the Statistical Institute in Tirana. The principal results were published in the "Population and Housing Census, 1989," printed in Tirana, in October of 1991.[13]

It is noted that at the end of the registration and after the publication of the results of the census of April 2, 1989, there was not a single complaint of any kind by any individual or organization. This census was conducted when Albania had begun the liberalization process and was very sensitive towards international opinion.

Based on the results of the census of April 2, 1989 the overall Albanian population was 3,182,417. Of these 64,816, or 2% of the population, were Albanian citizens of non-Albanian nationality.

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Within this non-Albanian population there were 58,758, or 90.6%, of Greek nationality.[14]

On the basis of the first census taken after World War II, on September 30, 1945, the overall population of Albania was 1,122,044. Of these, 46,577 were citizens with non-Albanian nationality and of the latter there were 26,535 of Greek nationality.[15] On the basis of the census taken on January 7, 1979 the overall population of Albania was 2,590,600. Of these 54,687 were non-Albanians and of the latter there were 49,307 of Greek nationality.[16]

A comparison of the results of these three census would indicate that the Greek minority in Albania in 1989 was 2.2 times greater than that of 1945 and 19.2% greater than that of 1979. This increase of the Greek minority is close to the increase in the overall population: 2.8 times versus the 1945 census and 22.8% more than the 1979 census. If we use the rate of increase of the overall population of Albania and apply it to the Greek minority we obtain the following table.[17]

- The Greek minority as a result of the 1989 census **58,758**
- The Greek minority growing at the rate of 22.8% from 1979 to 1989. Thus, 49,307 x 1.228 = **60,549**
- The Greek minority growing at the rate of 2.8 times from 1945 to 1989. Thus, 26,535 x 2.8 = **74,298**

One explanation for the differences is the relatively low rate of natural reproduction of the population which characterizes the lands along the southern border of Albania such as the areas of Zagorija, Lunxherija, Kreza e Permetit, Bregu i detit Jon, etc. This seems to be true for ethnic Greeks and Albanian nationals. This condition is a far reaching consequence of the emigration from these areas prior to 1945. Another explanation is the traditional proclivity of the people in these areas to have fewer children.

Another factor contributing to the lower rate of increase in the Greek minority is the internal movement of the ethnic Greeks. The women who marry non-Greeks outside the minority areas often give up their Greek nationality. The same thing can be said about the ethnic Greeks, especially those with university training, who would be employed outside their villages. In particular, those working in large cities like Tirana very often would not declare their Greek nationality.

The results of the 1989 census shed light also on the geographical distribution of the Greek minority in Albania. (See Table I).

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TABLE I
THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE GREEK MINORITY COMPARED TO THE OVERALL ALBANIAN POPULATION, APRIL 2, 1989 (1)

Districts and District Groupings	The Greek Minority	The Whole Population
1. Saranda and Delvina (2)	36,531	87,768
2. Gjirokastra	19,921	66,373
Three district sub-total	**56,542**	**154,141**
3. Berati and Kuçova	49	179,398
4. Fieri and Mallakastra	123	245,062
5. Gramshi	13	43,565
6. Kolonia	20	24,781
7. Korça and Devolli	158	215,221
8. Lushnie	51	134,280
9. Permeti	442	39,775
10. Pogradeci	19	71,446
11. Skrapar	16	46,503
12. Tepelena	57	49,850
13. Vlora	202	176,788
Subtotal Southern Albania	**57,602**	**1,377,810**
14. Dibra	17	149,650
15. Elbasani and Peqini	131	241,950
16. Durrës and Kavaja	192	245,499
17. Kruja and Laçi	17	106,852
18. Kukësi and Hasi	17	101,302
19. Lezha	15	6[illegible]001
20. Librazhdi	33	[illegible],982
21. Mati	22	76,674
22. Mirdita	16	50,447
23. Puka	17	48,969
24. Shkodra & Malësie Madhe	53	236,289
25. Tirana	610	368,213
26. Tropoia	16	44,779
Totals all Albania	**58,758**	**3,182,[illegible]17**

(1) Population and Housing Census of 1989, principal results, Tirana, October, 1991, page 12.

(2) Delvina and the following districts: Kuçova, Mallakastra, Devolli, Bulqiza, Kavaja, Peqini, Laçi, Hasi, Malesija e Madhe, were made into districts in July 1992. During the 1989 census these districts were coupled with other districts as given in the table.

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As we can see from Table I, the preponderant number of Greek nationals, 57,602, live in southern Albania, south of the Shkumbin River. Only 1,156 ethnic Greeks reside outside of this region, principally in the cities of Tirana, Durrës and Elbasan. Thus, in southern Albania, with an area of 13,000 km² and a population of 1,377,810, the Greek minority makes up 4.18% of the overall population.

Yet the highest concentration of the Greek minority is located in an area of 1,000 km² in the enclaves of Pogon, Dropull and Vurg. (The townships of Lower Dropull, Upper Dropull and Pogon in the district of Gjirokastra; the townships of Vergo, Finiq, Aliko, Mesopotam and the City of Delvina in the district of Delvina; the townships of Livadhja, Dhiver and the city of Saranda in the district of Saranda). This concentration has a total population of 53,986 ethnic Greeks. Yet, these enclaves are within the districts of Gjirokastra, Delvina and Saranda, with an area of 2,234 km² which contains a total of 56,452 ethnic Greeks, or 36.6% of the general population of 154,141 in the region.

THE ELECTIONS

To further test the validity of the 1989 census, we will examine the results of the parliamentary election of March 22, 1992, when the Greek minority had an opportunity to declare not only its partisan sympathies but also its ethnic affiliation. The Greek minority in Albania is represented by the political and social organization "OMONIA" which fielded the political party called "The Party of the Union of Human Rights" (PUHR), during the 1992 elections.

It is very well known that the 1992 elections were recognized by all official international observers sent to Albania, and by the international media, as free and democratic elections. We add that the Greek government followed the elections with considerable interest through its embassy personnel in Tirana who were free to roam the country at will.

Nobody, including the Greek minority and for that matter the Greek government, had any complaint or allegations of impropriety with regard to the election procedures and results.

In the elections of March 22, 1992, the Greek party PUHR received a total of 48,923 votes or 2.9% of the total votes cast in Albania.[18] Those vote secured two seats in the Albanian parliament which are occupied by two Greek nationals representing PUHR.

We note here that in all Albania the voter participation was 90.35%.[19] We will use this figure in the computations of this study even though the Greek minority participation is believed to have been much higher, since they were the most prepared and the most interested voting group in the country.

If we take into account the fact that in Albania the legal voting age is 18, and knowing that the population under 18 years of age constitutes 33-37% of the whole population, we may say that the people who voted for the PUHR could represent a population of 75,266.[20] If we also take into account the voting participation figure of 90.35%, the election results seem to suggest that a Greek minority population of 83,305 was present in all Albania. However, these people need not be all Greek. Albanians and other non-Greek nationals are known to have voted for the PUHR. Greek nationals may have voted for other parties, especially in those instances when the individual affiliation with the major political parties was a matter of public knowledge. The non-Greek voters, Albanians and other nationals who voted for the PUHR, were not inspired by the party's political platform. They voted for the PUHR for purely economic reasons, hoping to secure through the PUHR personal gain in the form of visas and employment in Greece when jobs were not available and there was extreme poverty in Albania. These expectations were amplified by Greek propaganda coming from Greece during the election campaign. At that time, Greek authorities did not hesitate to bring from Greece those Albanian migrant workers who had promised to vote for the PUHR. This economic pressure upon the electorate is illustrated by the following example: the area of Lunxherija in the district of Gjirokastra has no Greek population, yet in the elections of March 22, 1922 they voted in great numbers for the PUHR.

Let us now compare the figures which resulted from the 1992 elections with those which resulted from the 1989 census. Using the national rate of population increase of 1.9% per year the Greek minority population in 1992 was a total of 62,107 in all Albania. This figure is lower than the figure developed using the election results of March 22, 1992 and the votes received by the PUHR. Keeping in mind that there are some 200,000 Albanian migrant workers in Greece, we underscore anew the weight of this economic factor upon the Albanian electorate which results in unwarranted support for the PUHR, not only by the Greek minority but also by a portion of the Albanian population.

Below we present Table II., entitled "The Geographical Distribution of Two Greek Minority Estimates Versus the Overall Albanian Population in April 1992."

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TABLE II
THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF TWO GREEK MINORITY ESTIMATES VERSUS THE OVERALL ALBANIAN POPULATION IN APRIL, 1992

Districts and District Groupings	Greek Minoritiy Normalized. **89-92(1)**	All Population Normalized. **89-92**	Greek min. calculated from election. **3/22/92(2)**	The votes for PUHR 3/22/92
1. Saranda and Delvina	38,613	92,771	41,641	24,455
2. Gjirokastra	21,056	70,156	23,997	14,092
Three district sub-total	**59,669**	**162,927**	**65,638**	**38,547**
3. Berati and Kucova	50	186,453	458	269
4. Fieri and Mallakastra	130	259,031	986	585
5. Gramshi	14	46,048		
6. Kolonia	21	26,193	684	402
7. Korca and Devolli	167	227,488	926	544
8. Lushnie	54	141,934	470	276
9. Permeti	467	42,042	1,264	742
10. Pogradeci	20	75,518		
11. Skrapari	17	49,154		
12. Tepelena	61	52,691	659	387
13. Vlora	214	186,865	8,722	5,122
Subtotal Southern Albania	**60,884**	**1,456,344**	**79,807**	**46,874**
14. Dibra and Bulqiza	18	158,180		
15. Durres and Kavaja	203	259,492	589	345
16. Elbasani and Peqini	138	255,741	605	353
17. Kruja and Laci	18	112,942		
18. Kukesi and Hasi	18	107,076		
19. Lezha	16	65,535		
20. Librazhdi	35	76,085		
21. Mati	23	81,044		
22. Mirdita	17	53,322		
23. Puka	18	51,760		
24. Shkodra & Malesi e Madhe	56	249,747		
25. Tirana	645	389,201	2,300	1,351
26. Tropoia	17	47,331		
Totals all Albania	**62,106**	**3,363,810**	**83,301**	**48,923**

(1) The results of the 1989 census are normalized to 1992 by applying the national rate of population increase of 1.9% per year for three years, from 1989 to 1992.

(2) The voting numbers are increased twice:
a. Using 35% for the non-voting population under 18 years of age;
b. Using 90.35% for the voter participation during the election of March 22, 1992.

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SUMMARY

In the table below, using two approaches, we calculate the percent of the Greek minority in relation to the overall population of Albania for three geographical regions so that the reader may draw his/her own conclusions regarding the claims on the number of ethnic Greeks in Albania.

THE GREEK MINORITY AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE OVERALL POPULATION IN THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The Geographical Area	Accoding to the Census of April 2, 1989	According to the elections of March 22, 1992
All Albania	1.84	2.48
Southern Albania	4.18	5.48
The Districts of Delvina,	36.60	40.28

Further, it is worth noting that the Greek minority in the districts of Gjirokastra, Delvina and Saranda makes up 98% of the Greek population in southern Albania according to the results of the 1989 census and 82.2% according to the calculations based upon the election results of 1992.

This study has been centered upon the census of the Albanian population of April 2-8, 1989, as the most reliable and the most direct source for the evaluation of the Greek minority in Albania. Using the national population increase rate of 1.9% per year, we produced the April, 1992 population of Albania. To reinforce this result, we used two indirect estimates:

1. Applying the general rate of the population increase to the Greek minority counts of 1945 and 1979.

2. The election results of March 22, 1992 for the Albanian members of the parliament, as a basis to calculate a projection of ethnic Greeks in Albania.

The results of these two indirect methods are not very far from the results of the census taken in 1989. Necessarily, there are differences which we have attempted to explain by interpreting the indirect methods. Nevertheless, we believe that the value of the indirect methods becomes very important as a means of defining the upper limits of the Greek minority in Albania in a credible manner.

In this study we have failed to justify the Greek version which claims that there are 250,000 or 300,000, or at times even 400,000 ethnic Greeks in Albania. A possible explanation is the manner in which the Greek version counts the non-Greek Orthodox population, which comprises Albanians, Vllah and others as Greek nationals only because they are Christians who want to have their own Eastern Orthodox Church. It must be said that the Greek method of attributing Greek nationality to the Albanian Orthodox and counting them as ethnic Greeks is an affront to Albanian Orthodox history. In September of 1922 the Albanians founded the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church precisely for the purpose of distinguishing Albanian Orthodoxy from Greek Orthodoxy.

Aqile BERXHOLLI
Kristaq PRIFTI
Sejfi PROTOPAPA

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Prenk Gruda Receives Award for his Educational and Patriotic Service



Mr. Prenk Gruda, a pioneering educator among the mountaineers of his native region of Malesia who also encouraged and assisted numerous Albanian refugees in their quest for education in their new found homes in the diaspora received in April, 1994 the prestigious first class "Naim Frasheri" award which was bestowed upon him by Albanian President Sali Berisha. The citation presented with the award stressed Gruda's great contribution in introducing primary education to the scattered mountain villages of Malesia, which are unfortunately today under Montenegrin rule. The citation also praised Gruda for his patriotic work against the communist dictatorship and for his untiring service to the Albanian-American community.

Gruda's book, *Ditar i Nji Zemre Se Lendueme* (Diary of a Wounded Heart) published in 1983 and reviewed in the 1985 edition of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, chronicled his difficult struggles to survive and work for the benefit of the Albanian people. The book is also a testimony to Gruda's great love and knowledge of the Albanian land and countryside.

We rejoice with Prenk Gruda on this special occasion and wish him long life and continued success in works for Albania.

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SOUTHERN ALBANIA IN THE CONTEXT OF STATE FORMATION IN THE BALKANS

The Illyrian antecedents of the contemporary Albanians were in occupation of much of the western Balkans during the time of the Greek proto-states. Later, although coastal areas were colonized and commercial links with the interior were established, southern Albania remained peripheral to the cultural influence and political organization of the Greek city states. In fact, political control and Hellenization of the Illyrian population of the region was to be directed, not from the core of Greek civilization, but from Macedonia, which ultimately succeeded in imposing its will on the other Greek states in 338 B.C. Subsequently, a frontier region that included southern Albania with a predominantly Illyrian population controlled by a small, Hellenized upper class, was organized as a vassal state and designated the Kingdom of Epirus. Until its demise a century later, however, this entity was transformed into a regional power that was able to consolidate its territory and expand its political influence among the divided and contentious Greek states, becoming a formidable opponent to Roman expansion in the process.

The entire Illyrian area of settlement in the Balkans remained under the unified imperial rule of Rome until the division of the Empire in the 4th century A.D. Most of southern Albania was included in the Province of Epirus in which Latin cultural and political elements combined with the Hellenic influence in the interpenetration of the Illyrian population.

Hellenic influence in the region was enhanced during the Byzantine period highlighted by the rise of the Despotate of Epirus in the 13th century. In current terms, its territory extended from central and southern Albania to western Macedonia and northwestern Greece, and, consequently, included a large Illyrian component in its population. Like its ancient predecessor, however, it remained in continuous conflict with the other Greek states in the southern Balkans.

Contemporaneous with the rise and fall of the Byzantine Empire and its successor states, new ethnic and political elements were being introduced into the southern Balkans. By the 7th century A.D. the South Slavs had already penetrated as far as the Pelopponesus. Despite the considerable influence of the Slavs on the Balkan Peninsula, however, southern Albania remained peripheral to their cultural and political influence until the 14th century. At that time, the medieval Serb state supplanted the Byzantines and their successors over a large area that included all of southern Albania. A concerted policy of social control and cultural assimilation was imposed, but the objectives were not realized as the state soon fragmented and finally disappeared a century later.

Slav political organization in the southern Balkans was hindered not only by conflict with the Byzantines, but by the intrusion of the Asiatic Bulgar tribes into the peninsula in the 8th and 9th centuries. The military organization of the Bulgars proved successful in establishing a territory of control over much of the Hungarian Plain and the Balkans that extended to part of northwestern Greece and southern Albania.

However, as the Bulgars were neither sufficiently large in number nor inclined toward cultural domination, they were quickly assimilated by the Slav population of the conquered regions. With regard to southern Albania, the Bulgars disrupted the cultural and political organization of the Byzantines but had little cultural impact upon the indigenous Albanian population. However, together with the later Bulgarian and Macedonian Slav state, the Serbs, and the Greeks, they established an historic claim to a portion of territory in southern Albania.

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The social, cultural and political character of southern Albania, together with much of the Balkan Peninsula, was profoundly affected by the five hundred years of Ottoman domination that followed upon the collapse of the Byzantine and medieval Slav and Greek successor states. The situation of southern Albania within a cultural and military frontier was further complicated by the progress of Islamization, which would sharply reduce the Orthodox Christian element in the population of the region. Ottoman cultural policy, furthermore, attempted to suppress Albanian ethnic identity and discourage national development by associating the Albanians with the cultural and political goals of Ottoman administration. The Slavs and Greeks, on their part, had disregarded the ethnic distinctiveness of Albanians even in the pre-Ottoman time and were unlikely to recognize an Albanian ethnic identity with Ottoman and Islamic features superimposed upon it. The result was that it became common practice among most Europeans to ignore the ethnicity of Albanians and to accept religious profession as the basis for ethnic identity by distinguishing the population of southern Albania as either "Turk" or "Greek".

For some time many Albanians were convinced that their acceptance of Ottoman social and cultural policy and support of Ottoman administration was a means of preserving their ethnic territory against Slav and Greek claims. Ottoman administration of southern Albania, however, was designed to heighten the antagonisms among the nationalities and to foster divisions among the Albanians themselves. The consolidation and expansion of Moslem Albanian settlement into western Greece occurred while southern Albania remained administratively divided. Civil divisions which contained Greeks and Macedonian Slavs also included Christian and Moslem populations as well as ethnic Turks. At the end of the 19th century southern Albania was divided between the sandjak of Gjirokaster in the vilayet of Janina and the sandjak of Korçë in the vilayet of Monastir.

As the southern Balkans began to emerge from the long period of Ottoman domination in the 19th century, the Albanians, consequently, were in a difficult position to assert their national identity and territorial sovereignty. Greece, however, having achieved independence within its ethnic and historic core, sought to extend territorial control over areas of Orthodox Christian populations that extended into the ethnically-mixed frontier zones. As a result of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, Greece acquired considerable territory in Thessaly, and was able to secure its claim to the Albanian districts of Arta and Preveza. There followed a period in which Greece attempted to extend its influence further into the political frontier of southern Albania, though more by cultural penetration than by political or military confrontation. Greek schools were established and the monopoly of the Greek Orthodox Church was confirmed with the acquiescence of the Ottoman administration and to the detriment of Albanian national interests. Although the Ottomans were pressured by the European powers, they also viewed the policy as a means of encouraging division among the Albanians and competition between Slavs and Greeks.

The Albanian response to Ottoman duplicity and the encroachment of the Greek and Slav nation states upon its national territory would thrust Albania firmly and decisively into the history of modern Europe and the Balkans. This period has been ably discussed by Stavro Skendi in his book, "The Albanian National Awakening, 1878-1912". A diplomatic response centered initially upon a plan to create a single, autonomous Albanian vilayet within the Ottoman political and administrative system which would unite four existing vilayets: Shkodra and Kosova in the north, and, in the south, Janina and Monastir. This proposal was rejected by the Balkan states since it would separate large numbers of Slavs and Greeks from their nation states and would maintain Ottoman authority in the region, not to mention interfering with their territorial ambitions. The Ottomans, despite their deteriorating political and military situation, were adamantly opposed to any further concessions to their subject peoples.

Maintaining the integrity of Albanian national territory would be difficult in view of the enduring weakness of the Ottoman system, the

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assertiveness of the Balkan nation states, and the absence of effective support from the European powers. This was strikingly apparent in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. The friction of Ottoman authority was exposed and the Balkan states were determined to partition the remaining Ottoman territory. As a result, Albania, despite its emergence as a completely independent state, was deprived of nearly two-thirds of its national territory, and half of all Albanians became political minorities in surrounding states. Greece acquired the southern portion of the vilayet of Janina along with a considerable population of Orthodox and Moslem Albanians. Within this territory Greece refused to recognize the ethnic distinctiveness of the Orthodox Albanians and identified Moslem Albanians as Turks. This policy of non-recognition resulted in the virtual proscription of Albanian language and culture and the expulsion of thousands of ethnic Albanians to Turkey.

Unable to secure further territorial concessions in southern Albania, Greece would consistently pursue territorial claims in the region on the basis of its own ethno-religious formulations until well after the conclusion of World War I. Despite the efforts of Greece to secure regional and international recognition for its claims to southern Albania through military as well as diplomatic means, the international boundary remains as it was first established in 1913 and later confirmed by the treaties and protocols concluded at the end of World War I.

Today, within a general context of instability and conflict in the Balkans, Albania struggles to overcome numerous political and economic obstacles and establish the foundation of a democratic state. While perceptions of Albanian political and economic weakness have clearly encouraged some to resurrect old ethnic and territorial arguments, Greece officially maintains that no territorial claim is being advanced in the dispute over the condition of the Greek minority in southern Albania. As the inviolability of boundaries and the territorial integrity of states are enshrined in such regional institutions as the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, one might have no concern that this dispute will escalate into political and military confrontation. Nearby, however, in the former Yugoslavia, principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states have been brutally violated, while Europe and the international community act to rationalize the result. One might hope that the best efforts of Albania and Greece to resolve differences about southern Albania will obtain wide support and prevent further deterioration in Balkan political life. *

Albert M. TOSCHES

* Presented at the Salem State College Syposuim, September, 1993

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"THE ALBANIAN 'PEOPLE' IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND THE GREEK 'MINORITY' IN SOUTHERN ALBANIA-HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES"

After the incident of June 5, 1993, the day Albania expelled a Greek clergyman charging him with anti-Albanian activities incompatible with his role, Greece ordered the mass deportation of over 23,000 Albanian refugee workers from Greece, and canceled several meetings at ministerial level. In addition, on July 14, 1993, Greek Premier Mitzotakis, asked for more schools in Greek, the normal functioning of the local Orthodox Church, the return of Church properties, freedom of religious practices for priests, including Greek priests, repatriation of the Greeks expelled by the communist regime, and more Greek elements in the Albanian's administration.

In a note delivered to the Albanian Ambassador to Athens, the Greek Premier laid down a six-point program which, in his words, should serve as a basis for the improvement of relations between the two countries. Speaking about "the main point of the official policies concerning the Greek community in Northern Epirus", the name used by him to refer to Southern Albania, he added: "The Greek Government demands from the Albanian Government to recognize for the Greek minority living in Albania, the same rights that the Albanian Government demands for the Albanian community in the former Yugoslavia. Our Government will not accept any attempt by anyone to apply for the Greek community in Albania measures that differ from those applied for the Albanian communities outside Albania . . . We will support all serious attempts aiming at the solution of the problems of both the Greek community in Northern Epirus and the Albanian community in Kosova."

Albania reacted by calling the "linkage" "the most convincing proof of the alliance between Athens and Belgrade." Albania also reacted to the Greek warning of bringing the case to the international Court of Justice with a warning of its own, namely, "it is ready to appear before the Court and demand recognition of the rights of "Chams" to return to their homes in Greece, as well as full rights for the Albanian minority in Greece."

To our knowledge, this is the first time the full weight of the Greek Government has formally introduced "a linkage" between the three million Albanians in the former Yugoslavia, and the rights of the Greek minority in Albania. In recent years, the Greek press has repeatedly referred to this "linkage", especially the press of the Greek Orthodox Church. The same has also been used by elements of the Greek lobby in the U.S.

From the realm of human rights, the argument has surfaced as "the main point of the (Greek) official policies" and a stumbling block in the relations between the two countries.

Defining the term "minority".

As of this day, the definition of the term "minority" has not achieved general acceptance. In fact, there is no explicit definition of "minority" in the CSCE documents. Sometimes, even the numerical strength is disregarded to denote a "minority". The definition offered by the London-based Minority Rights Group states that a minority is " . . . any racial, tribal, linguistic, religious, caste or national group within a national state, and which is not in control of the political machine of the state."

This thesis is supported by the majority cases of Albanians in the Republic of Kosova, the Black population in South Africa, the Russians in some republics of the former Soviet Union, etc.

Since "not being in control of the political machinery of the State" is the key phrase of the definition, the present discussion on "minority rights" deals with the rights these populations are entitled to, but actually denied by the ruling class of caste, sometimes numerically smaller, as are, for example Serbs in Kosova, or Blacks in South Africa, etc.

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With the 1920 League of Nations conventions, the 1945 U. N. Charter and the related documents, legislation defending the rights of minorities has extended considerably. This was especially true in Europe where extreme nationalism, particularly in the newly formed states—as were Albania, Greece and Yugoslavia—minorities were threatened with extinction or assimilation.

After the experiences Europe lived through during and after WWI and WWII, the need to find an acceptable solution and avoid violence became urgent, always fearing that "minorities with no viable means to address peacefully their concern may take up arms as a course of last resort." Furthermore, today, the international public opinion would condemn international inaction, as in the case of Bosnia, or force the action, as in the case of the Kurds and Shiites in Iraq, and now in Somalia.

If the League of Nations guaranteed religious freedom, equal civil and political rights, the use of native language, the right to establish one's own institutions and an "equitable share" of funds for educational, religious and charitable activities, the post-WWII covenants and especially the CSCE documents since 1975, have stressed the importance of "national minorities", the "national groups" equality before the law, protection of their legitimate fundamental freedoms, and protection of "ethnic, linguistic, and religious" identities.

With the 1990 Copenhagen Document, a new element is introduced, i.e. the individual right to self-identification: the right "to belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice." This element is important mainly for national censuses, provisions for education, voting, funding indicates that not all the rights of an individual are protected through the traditional set of individual rights. We are dealing here with, a qualitative jump, where the right of one individual can be protected through the rights recognized to the group it belongs.

Self-identification for a group would be the manifest volition to identify oneself as distinct from the majority (or from the ruling community which is in control of the political machinery of the State) by preserving its culture, religion, language, and heritage. Self-preservation becomes thus "the essential element of the minority rights."

The need for preservation implies the threat of extinction. In a democracy "the threat" can be diluted, if not eliminated, by providing effective channels of direct and open communication which eventually would lead to effective domestic remedies. Western democracies with their stress on individual's civil and political rights relate to the principle of Inalienability and Universality, which in itself implies the fundamental concept of Non-discrimination. But when it comes to "the group" or "groups" the problem is more complicated since it is difficult to identify who represents the interests of the group, or which "group" represents the interest of other, or all other, "groups." We have witnessed, today, especially in the multi-national states, that political and economic objectives prevail over ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences.

Yet, if some ethnic, religious or linguistic groups find the "group" situation advantageous for their self-preservation as a "minority", others avoid it, preferring instead the term "people", whose definition has not been universally agreed upon. The difference is an essential one, since the 1945 UN Charter as well as the Principle VIII of the Helsinki Final Act recognize the right to self-determination to each "people".

Although self-determination may mean different things to different people, it may also mean "the right of people to choose their own form of government within the existing borders, for example by overturning a dictatorship or achieving independence from a colonial power [illegible] or to secede from the federation and become an independent sovereign state."

Therefore, the term "people" inspires hopes as well as fears from a popular movement for self-determination, sovereignty, and ultimately independence. Nevertheless, the 1990 Copenhagen document includes a few sections where the individuals of a minority group are guaranteed the right to engage in various collective activities. Of

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course, the interpretation of this right differs according to the perceived interests of one or another government or to the political climate in a given place and time.

While Greeks in Albania, due to their relatively small number prefer using the term "minority" and press for the "minority rights", the three million Albanians in the former Yugoslavia reject it, since they are the third largest ethnic group in that country. In the former Socialist Autonomous Province (SAP) of Kosova, they make up for 90 percent of the population; they do not consider themselves a "minority", although they are not in control of the political machinery of the state. They insist to be treated as "people", therefore, entitled to the inalienable rights of people's sovereignty.

The differences between the two situations are self-evident. They are not cosmetic; they are substantial and profound.

1. Politically, Albanians in the former Yugoslavia are a three million strong ethnic group divided among four independent republics. Most of the Albanians live in the former SAP of Kosova, about two millions; the rest live in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia Proper. Although Albanians in Kosova are a group numerically superior, they are treated as a minority, a subordinate position which does not control the political machine of the state.

With the dissolution of the former Socialist Federal Republic (SFR) of Yugoslavia, it was natural that all of its peoples would claim the right to self-determination. Albanians being the third largest people did the same. They set, therefore, in motion the process of "statehood". This course of action was imposed as the only alternative left to them given the horrendous record of violation of their rights by the Serb authorities. The successive waves of Serbian, Montenegrin, and Macedonian repression resulted in mass killings of Albanians, torture, and jailing to long prison terms. The 1992 CSCE Report on Military Rights concluded: "Albanian protests against this loss of autonomous status let to violent clashes and numerous deaths and injuries. Albanians have also been harassed, beaten, detained, imprisoned, fired from their place of employment or mistreated in other ways for expressing points of view deemed "separatist". More recently, the Albanian media, educational system, and economic life have been threatened by the efforts of the Serbian authorities."

No one has been arrested, jailed, tortured or killed among the Greek minority in S. Albania since 1991. No such statements have been made, or could be made, regarding the Greek-speaking minority in S. Albania.

The constant rioting in Kosova is in great contrast with the development in S. Albania, where rioting and political unrest did not take place. This indicates the positive role their participation in government has played in protecting their rights and interests. There is no fear among the Greek minority of an impending massacre. The constant threat of an "ethnic cleansing" operation by the Serbian army and irregular units in Kosova is inconceivable in S. Albania. Nor is there any fear of a "quiet ethnic cleansing", or a fear among the Greek minority that they might lose their religious, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identity.

2. Albanians in Kosova refuse to participate in the political system that determines the course of their daily lives and their representation in government, because there is nothing in the Serbian government that can give them hope for a fair play in their relations. The results are a deep mistrust between the two peoples. In S. Albania the situation is different. In the two elections of 1991 and 1992, the Greek minority in S. Albania did participate with good results: two representatives from the predominantly Greek Party of Human Rights Unity. In addition, four more representatives from this minority belong to the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party. In the present government, the Minister of Science and Technology, the vice-Minister of Education, and the Albanian Ambassador to Slovenia belong to this minority. In the central administration and the judiciary (including the Court of Appeals) the Army, the Police, this minority is duly represented. The

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Albanian Government estimates that "there is no other minority in the Balkans which won 49 thousand votes in fair elections and has such a powerful representation." The 55,000 Albanians in Montenegro and the over 100,000 Albanians in Serbia Proper, with no representation or participation, are two cases in point. Even more striking is the case of an undetermined number of Albanians in Greece (both Moslem and Christians) who enjoy no "minority rights" and whose very existence is officially denied by Greece.

The power-sharing arrangements of the Greek minority in S. Albania is the best guarantee that the respect of the political and civil rights of the local Greek minority cannot be violated at will. In May 1993, in the local administration there were 13 district chairpersons, 159 district councilmen, 32 town councilmen, etc. The district executives in Gjirokaster, Sarandë and Delvinë, and the mayor of Sarandë are members of this minority.

This is not the case with Albanians in Kosova, where Albanian representation and participation in government is totally absent.

3. While in Kosova, the Serbian government has forced most of the economic enterprises to close or transfer to Serbia, or to expel 130,000 Albanian workers, denying them public housing, social assistance, and free exercise of their skills in private enterprises, causing wide-spread poverty with some cases of starvation, or forcing them to involuntary exile, the Greek minority in S. Albania have become the owners of the land they never owned, or of properties and wealth, and in the difficult economic situation in Albania, has begun to emerge as a healthy and relatively prosperous segment of the society. Proximity with Greece and free movement have helped.

In Kosova, Albanians are restricted, their contact with Albania denied, their commerce placed under the strict control of a government and a crushing taxation without representation.

4. While in Kosova there are sharp cultural differences between Albanians and Serbs (religion also plays a major role) and mutual historical claims over a land that saw too much blood, war and misery, the population seem to be also caught in a pattern of diverging demography: the poor rural Albanians with large families, attached to the land they till and love, and the more urbanized, resentful Serbs searching for easy lives in government jobs, and highly paying positions.

In S. Albania, Albanians and Greeks live the same kind of life, till the same land together, and trade with each other without animosity.

5. In Kosova, schools are now closed for the third consecutive year, and over 400,000 pupils are being taught by volunteer teachers in private houses. The University of Kosova has been closed to Albanians. A separate apartheid school system "for Serbs only" has been put in place, where Serbian children are "educated" away from the "harmful" presence of their Albanian colleagues.

In S. Albania, schools are open to all, from kindergarten to university, in Greek, taught and directed by Greeks, whenever the local Greek population requested it. Two new Greek high schools in Gjirokastër, and one in Sarandë will be open, provided that the necessary contingent of pupils is guaranteed. Also, a new branch of the Gjirokastër University providing 4-year courses to prepare teachers in Greek language was opended in October.

6. In Kosova, the hospitals are run by Serbian physicians, and for Serbs only. Albanian colleagues are excluded, and forced to work in make-shift clinics to care for the discriminated local Albanians.

In S. Albania such a phenomenon is unthinkable.

7. Maybe the most damaging aspect of Serbian rule is the open and sometimes even cultivated social ostracism against the Albanians in the former Yugoslavia. The notorious 1913 V. Djordjevic discoveries about Albanians as being "... prehumans, who slept in the streets, to which they fastened their tails," continues, "it simultaneously dehumanizes Albanians, presenting them as utterly incapable of governing themselves, and a sort of

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element that ought to be exterminated. . ." It is this thoroughly racist attitude that may turn to be also the real stumbling block in reducing the tension between the two adjoining nationalities, and an approaching confrontation.

Such an attitude in Southern Albania is inconceivable. In spite of their differences in language and ethnicity, the Greek minority in S. Albania share the same cultural values and the same religion with the local Albanian orthodoxes. Today, the temporary head of the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, is a Greek bishop.

8. Finally, while Serbia has expelled the European Community and CSCE monitors from Kosova, to avoid an international embarrassment brought by its repression of the local Albanian majority or possibly to conceal its preparations for an approaching massacre Bosnian-style, conceived and planned by the Serbian extremists in Belgrade, the Albanian Government has expressed its readiness to open the doors and allow any international organization to investigate the situation in the area. Albanians have also asked for advice and counsel on how to avoid frictions with the Greek minority, as the case of the invitation extended by President Berisha to the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities illustrates.

It is our opinion that the new democratic Albania has made great strides in implementing the commitments dealing with the respect of human rights of all individuals, and the rule of law. Of course, more remains to be done, and the very difficult conditions the country is going through could slow down the process, and provoke more reaction from the dissatisfied minorities. However, the will and the determination, to fulfill the obligations taken seem to be strong and durable.

It is also our opinion that "a linkage" between the position of the Albanians in the former Yugoslavia and the Greek minority in S. Albania is false and does not help the situation; it only exacerbates it. The present Greek "linkage" between the two seems to us more an argument used mostly for domestic consumption by the Greek political parties who are playing on the nationalist sentiments of some sections of the Greek society, especially given the delicate balance of the Greek political forces in the pre-electoral campaign. The desire to please Serbia, Greece's traditional ally, should also not be excluded.

It is hoped that both Albanian and Greek governments reacting to this minority issue will respect the minority rights by refusing to bow to domestic nationalist pressures. *

Sami REPISHTI

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IN MEMORY OF MILAN SUFFLAY: CROATIAN FRIEND OF THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE

Milan Sufflay (1879-1931) is undoubtedly the most distinguished unknown among the major public figures of 20th century Croatia. Very few historians have attempted to lift the obscurity that has fallen over his exploits and views.

This much is usually noted: Sufflay was assasinated in February, 1931, at the high point of King Aleksandar's royal Yugoslav dictatorship, by special agents of the political police in Zagreb. The assassination provoked an international outcry and condemnation of the Yugoslav "white terror" by some of the period's most notable exponents of human rights, including Albert Einstein and Heinrich Mann. Sufflay was buried as a Croat national martyr under the arcades of Zagreb's Mirogoj cemetery, in the same tomb as Stjepan Radic (1871-1928), the murdered leader of the Croatian Peasant Party or *Hrvatska Seljacka Stranka*(HSS).

More knowledgeable people also know that Sufflay was the scion of a family of impoverished gentry of Wurttemburg or Saxon origin (Sufflay de Othrussewecz) ennobled by Leopold I in 1675 in the district of Samobor near Zagreb. Sufflay's grandfather, a hatmaker by profession, settled in Krapina, Varazdin county. His son Augustin, Sufflay's father, was a schoolteacher in Lepoglava, the town notorious as the site of the principal prison in Croatia. Augustin married a lady of German gentry stock from Hungary, who had reason to understate the family's genteel poverty, nurturing pride in their noble origin.

Milan Sufflay was a classic prodigy, consistently the best student in his class (graduating 1897) at the Zagreb gymnasium, and the favorite of the historian Tadija Smiciklas at the University of Zagreb. Sufflay received his degree with a finished doctoral dissertation at the tender age of 22. Further, he held independent and frequently nonconformist views. His specialty was not Croatian medieval history in any narrow sense; contrary to the general practice of his time, he specialized in the history of the entire Balkan region, thereby opting to study Croatia in its Balkan and eastern aspects.

The title of his dissertation was *Croatia and the Last Exertions of the Eastern Empire Under the Sceptre of the Three Comneni (1075-1180)*. This interest increasingly drew him to the troubled history of the southern Adriatic littoral: the lands of the ancient Dioclea (Duklja) and Dyrrachium (Durazzo, Alb. Durres), that is, to the study of Albanian and Montenegrin history. He became the greatest Albanologist of his generation, unsurpassed, in some respects, even today.*

The scholarly side of Sufflay's activities would not have brought him to public attention were it not for his decided political engagement. It is generally assumed that Sufflay was a lukewarm Frankist, that is, a follower of the Croat Party of (State) Right or *Hrvatska Stranka Prava* (HSP), a minor, distinctly urban, and mainly petit-bourgeois nationalist organization, which traced its origin to Josip Frank (1844-1911). The Frankists were known as the most determined opponents of Hungarian hegemony, South Slavic unity, and especially, Serb national sentiments in Croatia. They favored a trialist solution to the national question in the Hapsburg monarchy, whereby the South Slavic parts of the Monarchy would emerge as the Monarchy's separate third unit, together with Austria and Hungary, based on the legitimizing agency of ancient Croat state right. After the collapse of the Monarchy and the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia) they held an isolated position on the fringe of the Croat national movement at the mercy of Radic's HSS, which they alternately reviled and grudgingly trailed after.

Though not a Frankist of major standing, Sufflay certainly was involved in the activities of the Frankist movement. He was arrested toward the end of 1929 for his alleged ties with the emigre Frankist Croat Ustase, an insurrectionist organization dedicated to the establishment of independent Croatia. Despite his evident inability to play the role of a genuinely dangerous conspirator, he

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was nevertheless sentenced to a term of 42 months, half of which he served. More important, Sufflay was a frequent contributor to **Hrvatsko Pravo** [Croatian (State) Right], the organ of the legal Frankist HSP.

Sufflay's writings, both polemical and scholarly, offer a unique insight into the ideology of conservative Croat nationalism, midway between its classic Frankist form and its disintegration with the rise of *Ustasa* radicalism, which was conceived and charged with fascist ideas by Ante Pavelic, a prominent Frankist of the 1920's.

Most important, Sufflay's writings express a mnemonistic theory of nationhood, typical not only of Croatian nationalism or nationalism in general, but also highly representative of the spatial, Central European concepts of nationhood, in which the past (no matter how distant) is at one with the present.

Ivo BANAC

* Editor's Note: Sufflay defended the autochthony of the Albanian nation in the Balkan peninsula, and remains an object of the highest respect among Albanians.

SHKODRA'S "LUIGJ GURAKUQI" UNIVERSITY TO RECEIVE PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE BY THE MICHIGAN SCHOLARS

After the victory of democracy in Albania, new universities have been created in Albanian cities such as Shkodra, Korçë, Elbasan and Vlorë. Some European and American universities are assisting these new Albanian institutions in supplying equipment and upgrading their administrative and academic programs. Shkodra's "Luigj Gurakuqi" University has recently initiated a cooperative plan with the academic community at Wayne State University in Michigan. A distinguished group of Michigan educators, including two Albanian-American experts in the field of education, will be visiting Albania in August, 1994. They will determine the needs of the University of Shkodra which can be met with the assistance of various universities in the state of Michigan. The effort is being undertaken with the goal of equipping the Shkodra institution with a greater capacity to provide an education to students. Among the participants in the university delegation are Dr. Rodolfo Martinez, (PhD, Wayne State University), Dr. Linda Martinez, (EdD, Mott Community College), and Dr. Otto Feinstein, (PhD, Wayne State University). The two Albanian natives are Dr. Gjeka Gjelaj, (PhD, Hamtramck Public Schools), and Professor Frano Ivezaj, (Detroit Public Schools). All these educators have wide experience in the field of teacher training, as well as bilingual education and the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL).

While in Shkodra the visitors will have a number of meetings and planning sessions with the administration and faculty members of the University. The Rector of the University of Shkodra, Dr. Gjovalin Kolombi, who visited a number of American universities in August, 1993, is enthusiastic in encouraging this cooperation between American and Albanian institutions of higher learning. The visit of the American educators is being carried out under the aegis of the Michigan Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, a well-established educational organization headquartered at the University of Michigan. The Center has ties to Michigan State University, Eastern Michigan University, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University. It has links to universities throughout Mexico, Europe, and the former Soviet Union. The center is currently cooperating with the Small Business Administration of the U.S. Department of Education to develop a curriculum for multicultural education.

The American delegation intends to work together with the administration and faculty of the University of Shkodra to lay the ground-work for future programs in higher education administration; teacher training; elementary education; special education; early childhood education; science education; adult education; and English as a Second Language (ESL) training. There is a desire to bring between 20-25 Albanian scholars to obtain advanced degrees at Michigan universities and to send a similar number of Michigan graduate students to study in Albania. A further plan of the educators is the establishment of a computer network at the University of Shkodra to train Albanian students in this important technology. Albanian educators will also gain access to the curriculum materials that are available through computers.

The Albanian-American diaspora community in the greater Detroit area is providing financial aid to this academic and humanitarian undertaking. Funding is also being sought from international foundations as well as from the Albanian-American business community. All Albanian-Americans are urged to support and contribute to this worthy ongoing effort which will have beneficial effects for Albanians in the United States as well as in Albania.

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CALVARY IN KOSOVA: ALBANIAN CATHOLICS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Editor's Note:

Reverend Lush Gjergji, PhD, University of Rome, completed his theological studies at the Urbanianum in Rome. He was the editor of the Albanian religious-cultural monthly *Drita* (the Light). The magazine suspended publication in 1992 due to pressure from the Serbian military government. Gjergji has authored a number of books in Albanian, Croatian, and Italian which have been translated into a number of other languages. His Albanian writings include: *The Role Of Albanian Women In The Family And In Society* (1977); cathechisms entitled *Christ Among Us* (1978); *Christ With Us* (1988). *God Cares for His People* (1985) and *Toward the Promised Land* (1985). *Our Mother Teresa* (1980), was translated into Slovenian, Italian, Spanish, and French; *Mother Teresa, Her Life and Works* (1986) was published in English by New City Press and reviewed in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* Vol. XII (1991). Gjergji published the following books of essays in Croatian: *Our Whole Life Means Saying: Thanks and Pardon* (1989); *Living, Loving, Serving* (1987); *The Voice of Silence* (1989). In 1990 he published in Italian *The Mother of Charity*.

Gjergji is currently the President of the "Humanitarian Association of Mother Teresa"; a member of the governing body of the "Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms"; and the "Forum of Albanian Intellectuals" all are headquartered in Prishtinë. As a Catholic priest, author and human rights activist he is presently carrying out his ministry abroad in order to avoid harassment and imprisonment by Serbian government officials. During a recent conference in Milan at the headquarters of "Alleanza Cattolica" (Catholic Alliance) Gjergji spoke to a large audience about the situation now facing Albanians in the former Yugoslavia. He gave particular emphasis on those who are Catholics. We are pleased to present to our readership a portion of Gjergji's talk about the Catholic Church in Kosova.

* * *

The Catholic Church in Kosova

Christianity was brought to the peoples of Illyria during the first two centuries after Christ. St. Paul himself preached in Illyria and Macedonia. In 325, at the Council of Nicea, there were two Illyrian bishops from Kosova present. The Illyrians accepted Christianity because of the value Christianity gave to the human person. Illyria was the starting point for Christian evangelization of the slavic peoples. With the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches the Albanian Church found itself divided between two worlds and two rites. Christian believers became separated. The southern part of Albania became Orthodox, and the Kosovars who lost their Catholic faith came under the sway of Serbian culture.

In Serbia there presently exists two dioceses incorporated into one: the diocese of Skopje-Prizren encompasses both Kosova and Macedonia. The total regional population is around four million people. The Catholic population totals more than 85,000, of whom 75,000 are Albanian, 10,000 are Croatian or another ethnic group. In Macedonia there are approximately 5,000 Eastern rite Catholics who have resisted the combined Orthodox religious pressure from Serbia and Greece. In addition to this diocese there is the archdiocese of Antivari in Montenegro with more than 20,000 Albanian faithful. This archdiocese is situated in the area bordering Albania and is almost totally populated by Albanians.

In the diocese of Skopje-Prizren there are two bishops. The Ordinary is the Most Rev. Joakim Herbut of the Eastern rite. His episcopal residence is in Skopje. Bishop Herbut was originally from Vojvodina. He does not speak Albanian, and thus he has considerable problems communicating with the people. This makes for a difficult pastoral situation, and evidence indicates this deficiency was not given adequate consideration before his nomination. The second bishop in Skopje-Prizren is the auxiliary bishop "saedi datus", Most Rev.

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Nikë Prela, (titular bishop of Rufiniana). He is ten years older than Bishop Herbut.

Adding to the problem there are over 5,000 Catholic Albanians who have emigrated in past years to Croatia and Slovenia in order to avoid various persecutions. Since 1950 around 10,000 Catholic Albanians have emigrated to other parts of the former Yugoslavia. Today Catholics of Albanian nationality who reside in the former Yugoslavia number more than 100,000.

There has existed and continues to exist a strong migratory impulse toward America. In the United States there are four large parishes serving the Albanian community. Migrants have also moved toward the countries of Western Europe, (e.g., in Switzerland alone there are around 100,000 Albanian workers, of whom 10,000 are Catholics). Just a few days ago I celebrated a Mass for Albanian Catholics in Aarau, in the German speaking area of Switzerland.

The Albanians in Yugoslavia Before the Establishment of the Communist Regime

In 1918 the "old Yugoslavia" was created from the dismembered Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Until that time the Turkish persecutions against the Albanian Christians had been unceasing for centuries. The only interlude occurred in the golden era of the Albanian nation led by George Castriota Skanderbeg. The movement of Albanian communities into southern Italy was a result of the persecutions that followed the Turkish conquest after the death of Skanderbeg in 1468. During that era it is estimated that one third of the Albanian people fled their homeland.

In 1845 a law was passed guaranteeing religious freedom to Christians in the Ottoman Empire. The legislation was never actually put into practice. Under the Turkish rulers, Christians were treated as outlaws. According to a 1908 law to kill a Christian and to kill a dog amounted to the same thing. In fact, for a Moslem, to kill a dog did not bring any merit, at the same time by killing a Christian one saved one's own soul and possibly that of a victim. Faced with this situation many Christians sought a modus vivendi: thus the crypto-Catholic phenomenon began—some were internally Catholic but externally Moslem. The problem of the crypto-Catholic phenomenon was taken up at the Albanian Council. It was convened in 1703 by Pope Clement XI, who was born in Urbino of an Albanian family. This Council condemned crypto-Catholicism as a renunciation of the faith.

In response to the Declaration of Religious Liberty in 1845 Albanian Catholics revealed their true faith before the Ottoman authorities. They took pride in the fact they always had been Christians. However, their naivete proved fatal. The Turkish government called in the army, who arrested the twenty four heads of the Christian delegation and deported them to Turkey along with the entire population of the four Catholic villages of Stubla, Binça, Vernacola and Terziaj. The parish priest was also deported along with the faithful. Along the road from Kosova to Turkey, via Greece, at least 150 Christians, with 20 pound chains around their necks, died as a result of the hardships. After two years in exile, thanks to the diplomatic intervention of Austria-Hungary and France, ninety-seven managed to return. Today these four parishes have 10,000 faithful. They are descendants of the ninety-seven survivors and act as the main source of religious and priestly vocations.

During this period unprotected Kosova was caught between two powerful enemies, the Orthodox Serbs and the Moslem Turks. The Albanian bishops of the era wrote that, sometimes they didn't know which enemy was worse. There are those who say that many Allbanians embraced Islam as a lesser evil in reaction to the Panslavic and Orthodox pressures. Many Albanian Catholics in "Old Yugoslavia" between the two world wars, were martyred by the Orthodox. The Serbo-Orthodox persecution during the 1930's was brought to the attention of the League of Nations with a memorandum written by three priests. In these same years the Church suffered the martyrdom of three Franciscans, and another three were forced to flee across the border of Albania. One of these was Fr. Shtjefen Kurti, who died as a martyr in communist Albania at the beginning of the 1970's.

In 1945 the "socialist" new Yugoslavia" was created. A false internationalism was born while, in fact, the predominance of the Serb nation continued. Under communism there was created a

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wide-spread poverty. In the Tito's Yugoslavia the Orthodox Church and the Moslem community served the communist regime. Only the Catholic Church resisted the antireligious persecution. A prime leader of this resistance was Cardinal Archbishop Stepinac of Zagreb in Croatia.

The Catholics of Kosova after the Establishment of the Communist Regime

After 1946 persecution was unleashed in Kosova. No priest failed to serve long periods of "retreat" in jail. The Churches were expropriated and used for other purposes. My own parish church was transformed into a barn. Until 1970 there were no construction or restoration permits granted for churches. The religious persecutors made use of every tactic, including outright lies. In 1968 a priest was condemned to 15 years in prison, because he allegedly advocated killing the secretary of the local communist party.

Because the Catholic Church was very active, it was targeted for persecution. It still remains a small minority church community among the population of Kosova. This fact is a mystery which demonstrates that conversion always matures slowly and is a gift of God from the Holy Spirit. There is special difficulty regarding evangelization of the Moslems. I have personally prepared catechumens from the Islamic faith and I discovered enormous difficulties on their part to relate to particular points of the Catholic faith. When I began to explain the mystery of the Eucharist, one of them, a professor, stopped attending the instructions because he could not conceive how God could make Himself present in a tiny piece of bread. The God of Islam is a God of power; He is like the God of the Old Testament. God is not envisioned as a person. The Moslems cannot begin to understand the concept of divine personhood. The personalism intrinsic to Christianity is particularly threatening to Moslems. The Albanian people has a great esteem for the Catholic Church, but between this high regard for the Church and a conversion to the faith there is a great chasm. Nevertheless one cannot imagine the Albanian national culture—literature, poetry and all the rest—without the presence of the Catholic Church. The first phrase written in the Albanian language was an instruction on how to baptize. The Albanians have always put a greater emphasis on the fifteen centuries of Christianity that preceeded five centuries of Islamic influence. In order to overcome the difficulties of conversion today we must work for a "cultural baptism" and not simply remind the non-Catholics of the Christian roots of Albania. We must also try to foster in non-Catholics a desire to know the "faith from our fathers". We must explain the content of faith so that they might seek out instruction and accept baptism. Thus the movement to the goal must proceed from national culture to Catholic culture, and from Catholic culture to the faith. European civilization is rooted in Christianity. It offers profound motivation for humans to creatively express themselves in values which are deeply human and Christian. It is necessary to bring together in collaboration non-Catholic Albanians and their Christian brothers who remained in continuity with their own roots in fidelity to God, to the Church, and to everything that flows from it.

Fundamentally the Albanian people have a natural tendency towards religion. It persists at a profound level of their consciousness. Albanians are believers in the existence of God, they hold the existence of an immortal soul which persists after death, and they recognize the need to do good and avoid evil. The Catholic Church is admired by the Albanian people, as a decisive factor in their national history because "the Catholic Church has always remained faithful to its people". For example, in 1990, when approximately 7,000 cases of poisoning were reported among the Kosovan population, a great number of those affected were cared for in the numerous small and impoverished private clinics run by Catholics. The people will remember this. The visit undertaken by Pope John Paul II to Albania in April 1993, and especially his concern shown for the Albanian people in his discourses while there have increased the respect and admiration of the entire Albanian population for the Catholic Church.

Lush GJERGJI

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SERBIAN NEOFASCISM: THREE YEARS OF WAR AND INTERNATIONAL INTRIGUE

This is the meaning of Great Serbian imperialism in former Yugoslavia in 1994: One thousand mosques have been destroyed in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Some 400 Catholic churches and about the same number of Orthodox churches have been destroyed in Croatia and Bosnia. Jewish synagogues and graveyards have been damaged and destroyed.

Some speak of a lack of resources in Bosnia such as would compel the democratic powers to act there. We forget that resources may be cultural rather than merely economic.

We should better understand that the mosques, the Catholic Churches, the Serbian Orthodox churches, the synagogues and graveyards, and other structures in the region to be valuable resources that the world should act to save.

Human beings are a resource we should act to save.

What happened in former Yugoslavia is self-evident; by now people know enough about it to make up their own minds.

The post-Yugoslav wars of the 1990s originated with extremist Serbian nationalists. The destruction of Yugoslavia—that uneasy assemblage of eight major national groups—began in the former Serbian "socialist" republic and reflected the revived ideology of Great-Serbian expansion, an ideology existing for more than a century, and the basis of which is the belief that Serbia should dominate the Balkans and should assimilate to itself both Slavic and non-Slavic residents of the region, including the autochthonous, indigenous Albanians.

The war began with the mobilization of formerly dissident, formerly democratic Serbian intellectuals on an explicitly ultranationalist platform, which was exposed to the Yugoslav public in 1986—the so-called *Draft Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts*.

It continued with the emergence of Slobodan Milosevic as boss of the Serbian Communist organization. Milosevic and his demagogic campaign to rouse the Serbs against their neighbors—Albanians in the first instance, then Slovenes, then Croats, then Hungarians and Ruthenians, and finally Bosnians, were reported in the world press beginning some time before the names of president Franjo Tudjman, of Croatia, and of Alija Izetbegovic, the war president of Bosnia and Hercegovina, appeared anywhere significant.

This is not because of a conspiracy or the action of a lobby, but because Milosevic and his circle initiated the process of polarization that led to the collapse of Yugoslavia, a process that was thoroughly documented as it unfolded.

Of course, we cannot consider the Croatians to be entirely blameless in the events that have occurred in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Tudjman, the Croatian leader, has followed a course of meddling in Bosnia and Hercegovina; but Tudjman acted opportunistically, in reaction to Milosevic and Great Serbian aggression. Had there been no Milosevic regime in Serbia, Tudjman would very likely not have gained power in Croatia.

Above all it cannot be doubted that there have been victims—Muslims and Croats—and aggressors—mainly Serbs—in this tragedy.

This outlook has been declared by Serbian apologists to be based on an anti-Serbian bias. But we are not alone in this view; it is shared by President Bill Clinton and his cabinet. It is shared by political leaders and media from throughout the world, including leaders of countries such as Mexico and Korea that can have no possible bias against the Serbs.

Milosevic and his camarilla have used war to maintain themselves in power in Serbia; they unleashed the war when Serbia, by blocking the

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normal rotation of the Yugoslav federal executive, which was supposed to be occupied by a Croat, Stipe Mesic, propelled first Slovenia, then Croatia to declare independence.

At the time this occurred both Slovenia and Croatia were arguing for a looser confederation rather than outright secession, because both of them realized, as they still realize, that the problems of economic development in the region make full independence an extremely difficult proposition. Slovenia and Croatia had been selling their products to the internal Yugoslav market for so long that a radical go-it-alone policy, or one of attempting to suddenly switch from the Yugoslav market to those in Austria or Italy, was impractical.

We would best analyze the Yugoslav war by beginning with the understanding that the basic phenomenon at work has been the emergence of Europe's first neo-fascist regime, in Serbia. Serbia under the domination of Milosevic, from the very beginning, has been the testing ground for Stalinism-turned-fascism, of the kind that now also threatens Russia.

It is no accident that the election gains by the Jew-baiting, ultranationalist KGB party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, which chilled the bones of every Jew and supporter of democracy in the world, were hailed in Belgrade, and that similar sentiments have been put in print by Serbian American apologists for the war.

It is no accident that Zhirinovsky's extremist speeches during his visit to Serbia at the end of January 1994 were delivered to wild enthusiasm. Zhirinovsky visited Bijeljina, a town in northern Bosnia whose name means terror and sadness to every Bosnian, for it is there that the first wholesale massacres, and the desecration, and finally, the destruction of historic mosques, occurred. Zhirinovsky told a cheering rally in Bijeljina that "the great Russian people are with you."

"Catholics from the west, Muslims from the south, enemies from the north thought they could stamp out Serbia," Zhirinovsky declared. "For 100 years, this policy has been carried out. The Serbs are defending the western frontiers of Slavdom."

The West, which refused to act in former Yugoslavia to stop neofascism, now faces it in Russia. The two are inseparable.

Further, the month of March brought with it the electoral victory in Italy of a rightist alliance that includes the neo-fascist Alleanza Nazionale, which has demanded the "recovery" of Istra, currently under Slovenian and Croatian authority. This provocative venture has echoes from Belgrade: Serbian politicians have long sought an agreement with Italy to the detriment, above all, of Croatia. Great Serbian expansionism has always utilized intrigues beyond the country's borders, corrupting and manipulating powerful circles in London, Paris, and Washington as well as in Moscow.

In this context Rome is a minor affair, however, the inveiglement of Italy into the Yugoslav war would be the end of European stability, for at least a decade. Such a crime would even overshadow the similar, Greek scheme for war against Macedonia or Albania.

We may therefore speak of an extraordinarily dangerous, *de facto* international alliance—aggressive, criminal, and neofascist—between Milosevic, Zhirinovsky, and the Italian politician Fini.

The goal of Serbian neofascist terror has been to perpetuate Milosevic and his Stalinist caste in power in Belgrade, just as the aim of Zhirinovsky and his KGB henchmen and Stalinist allies in the "Red-Brown" coalition in Moscow is to perpetuate the former Soviet Stalinist caste in power through incitement of violence against Jews and Muslims. The tragedy of Yugoslavia is no more than the westernmost instance of a process that began in Azerbaijan and Armenia and that now threatens to drown Ukraine, the Baltics, and the Central Asian states in blood.

Lest the threat to Ukraine be considered a matter of rhetoric, let us note that the same maneuvers that took place in Croatia, where the local Serb community was aroused against the independent government, are now taking place in the Crimea where the Russian population is being mobilized against the Ukraine authorities.

Indeed, to speak as so many do of efforts to prevent *further* Yugoslavias ignores the unfortunate fact that Azerbaijan and Armenia, Georgia

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and Abkhazia, Moldova and Transnistria, bloody civil wars in the post-Stalinist era impelled by the need of communist bureaucrats to keep themselves in power by spilling blood, *preceded* the Yugoslav war.

However, the political outlook in southern and southeastern Europe is not wholly negative. Many presumed the unionist and loyalist government of the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina, often misdescribed as "Muslim" but in fact uniting Muslims, Croats, Serbs, and Jews who believe in the region's historic traditions of multicultural coexistence, could not but lose the struggle for its defense.

Multicultural BH has refused to disappear. The Bosnian unionists have organized their defense. They have fielded an army of 200,000 men and women. Nobody knows if they will win, but they clearly have a fighting chance.

Thousands of Serbs support the Bosnian government against the terrorism of the Serbian chetniks, and there always have been Serbs who opposed the Great Serbia fantasy. As we have previously noted in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, 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. Dimitrije Tucovic, who fought in the front lines of battle, in the Serbian army during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, condemned Great Serbian aggression against Albanians. They were right.

In this sense, the Serbian people who have allowed themselves to be lashed to the cart of fascist aggression are victims, as the Bosnian Muslims and Croatians are victims. But such victimization of the Serbs by their leaders cannot be ended unless the Serbs' leaders are prevented from further pursuing their criminal career.

Why has the West failed to act decisively in the Yugoslav war? Some explain the abandonment of BH to its fate by anti-Muslim prejudice. But Croatia was also abandoned to its fate, and Croatia is not Muslim. Some may say that Croatia was thrown to the wolves because of its pro-Nazi government during World War II. But Armenia was also abandoned to its fate, and Armenia has no fascist history, and is certainly not Muslim. Slovenia was also left on its own. And we greatly, greatly fear for Kosovë.

We have previously analyzed (in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* for 1993), the similarities of Milosevic's regime and the examples presented by Hitler, Mussolini, and Peron.

A very brilliant Caribbean Black intellectual, C.L.R. James, pointed out that before Mussolini or Hitler, there were the Black Hundreds in Russia, an anti-Jewish mass movement with a psychology and practice much like that of Hitler. One may argue that the fascist tendencies represented by Zhirinovsky simply represent the return of fascism to its birthplace. But at the time of the Black Hundreds, other European precursors of fascism included the Ulster loyalists in Northern Ireland, and the Serbs who conducted massacres of Muslims in Bosnia, Herzegovina, the Sandzhak of Novipazar; of Albanians in Montenegro, Macedonia, and Kosovë, in the late 1870s and in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, as well as following World War II.

The revival of fascism in Serbia, Russia, and Italy, calls for a common front of all those threatened by it: Catholics, Muslims, Jews, democrats, for the defense of human rights, human dignity, and interethnic civility and cooperation.

END THE YUGOSLAV WAR!

DOWN WITH GREAT SERBIAN IMPERIALISM!

Friends of Kosovë,
San Francisco, April 1994

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ADEM DEMAÇI - SYMBOL OF KOSOVA'S GANDHIAN RESISTANCE PROPOSED FOR THE 1994 "NOBEL PRIZE" FOR PEACE

There is no doubt that it is not freedom that is lacking, but rather it is free men that are missing, because freedom of the spirit is quite different from political freedom: it is a freedom that succeeds in resisting, in fighting even in a society where spirit has been obscured by matter and overwhelming savagery strives to "robotize" a whole ethnic group.

Adem Demaçi, a martyr among the martyrs of Kosova, is the most representative figure of the non-violent struggle that two million Albanians of Kosova wage in order to free themselves from the heavy, inhuman and oppressive chains inflicted upon them by the cupidity for a pan-slavic "ethnic cleansing" of the Serbian dominators.



Adem Demaçi

It ought to be remembered that Kosova, a name imposed by the Serbian invaders who arrived in the Balkans between the sixth and seventh centuries of the Christian era, is ancient Dardania, a region where from time immemorial lived an Illyrian tribe peacefully extended, as Homer tells, as far as Troy (in Albanian: troja = [our] territories) after crossing the strait that still recalls their name, the Dardanelles. It was the same Dardanian tribe, which, led by Aeneas, landed in Latium and joined another glorious Illyrian tribe, the Etruscans, giving birth to the greatness of Rome.

This noble region, which has given to the civilized world more than one illustrious personality, has been inhabited without interruption by a population that for language and culture is today identified with the Albanians. However, because of wicked political compromises, the region was granted to Serbia and Montenegro by the Conference of the Ambassadors of the "Great Powers" of the time, assembled in London in 1913; this donation because of inertia and the same old intrigues was confirmed in 1919 and 1945.

Who then is Adem Demaçi?

Adem Demaçi, in spite of his frail appearance, displays all the characteristics of his early ancestors, Illyro-Dardanian of direct Pelasgian origin, those Pelasgians who according to Virgil (Aeneid, VIII, 602-603) were the first to settle in Italy and who certainly represented the "cradle" of all the European cultures.

Scrutinizing beyond Demaçi's wide-open blue eyes, filtered through lenses that exalt their brightness, one can seize an extraordinary serene willpower and can reach a soul matured by the furious storm of unrelenting struggles . . . of implacable struggles in the dynamics of an apparent helplessness with a flame longing for freedom hidden in a breast rent by the anguish of slavery.

Prisoner, yet intimately free even during the over 28 years of inhuman detainment when his body was imprisoned, his spirit ranged the world seeking a telepathical dialogue with free men so as to communicate to them the great sufferings of his people, deprived of hospitals, lacking rights, without work and even with willfully poisoned drinking water in order to get rid of children and adults!

Twenty-eight years of jail, 28 years of life stolen from a man only because Albanian, writer and educated, hence a doubled danger! First of all, a danger because belonging to the ethnic group autochthonous of those territories. But Adem Demaçi felt himself free in spite of being in chains: his soul had learned to scream in silence, that succeeded in eloquent silence in making his voice heard by free, non-violent and peace-loving men.

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His voice was listened too, understood, so that he was honored with the "**Sacharov Prize,**" an acknowledgment which meant to point out not only the martyrdom of a human being, but that as well of a whole people of three million tormented, vilified and oppressed human beings, considering besides the two million Albanians of Kosova also the million surviving amid no less difficulty in Macedonia and Montenegro. Indeed, the Albanian nation, sacrificed on the altar of the interests of the Great Powers, happens to be half under the dominion of the border states, with the result that the Albanian state forms a phenomenon unique in the world, being totally surrounded by its own people.

When, after 28 years of imprisonment, the organization of Human Rights demanded that the Government of Belgrade release Adem Demaçi, he was the one who objected, asserting that to an innocent is due justice, not an act of mercy, and that outside of those harsh walls there was another prison no less oppressive and inhuman, so that he would have preferred to remain in jail from where at least he did not have to see the sufferings of his compatriots!

Adem Demaçi knew who his enemies were, and in some sort this can even be considered an advantage. It is in fact even more awful not to know from where a stab in the back is coming. In this case, as in many others, doubt is no help, but firmness and serenity. And Demaçi is well endowed with both of these virtues; since he was released in spite of his objections, with his head held high, he travels to make the world conscious of the dreadful conditions of life in Kosova, of the lawful claims of its ancient people and the cause of its being Albanian.

The sorrow due to suffered injustices can make a human being become harsh and vindictive. Adem Demaçi's soul has undergone an opposite course: his smiling face, the innocence of his look, his natural cordiality, his extraordinary serenity prove his remarkable spiritual richness and great honesty of thought achieved during the sequel of unending nights and tragic dawns during a protracted confinement.

There is no doubt that the origin of all our discouragements comes often from our own impatience and that our destiny does not lie outside us, but inside ourselves, in our will. This appears true analyzing the exemplary monument of the human species that is Adem Demaçi, the writer, the humanist **proposed for the "Nobel Prize" for Peace, 1994, by five members of the Norwegian Parliament**. The other two candidates are the Chief of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Yaser Arafat, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. The latter two struggle for peace and fight themselves with arms, while Demaçi uses only the weapon of diplomacy and non-violence: he travels from one continent to another armed only with a right cause and the persuasive power of his serenity, invoking help and freedom for his people.

Applying an article of the Yugoslav Constitution, July 2, 1990, with a plebiscitary vote, Kosova declared itself a Republic within the context of the Yugoslav Federation, electing Ibrahim Rugova as President and Bujar Bukoshi as Prime Minister.

Although perfectly legal, the event was ferociously condemned by Serbia with an even harder military oppression and with a dramatic suppression of all Albanian institutions in Kosova: schools and University were closed, mines and industries were shot down, hospitals and law courts were prevented from operating, press, radio and television in the Albanian language were banned and Serbian language was made compulsory. Since then, the people are brutally and without reason thrown out of their own homes in order to settle immigrant Serbian families. The many goldsmiths, pride of the local craftmanship, are plundered of the little gold and silver remaining from better times, all in a Dantesque context which could be envied as a whole by the cantos of the *Inferno* of the great Tuscan poet. The young Albanians who have not been able to escape from military conscription are forced to throw themselves into fratricidal battles, kept under fire by the Serbian soldiers who follow them ready to slay them at any sign of reluctance towards the cruel inter-ethnic war.

President Rugova travels incessantly between the European Union and the USA with the aim of impressing on the minds of the statesmen a true picture of the dramatic situation of his country. He was recently received by President Clinton and by several American members of Parliament

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to whom he pleaded for his cause, encountering promises of support and appreciation for the non-violent resistance of the Kosovars, as well as for their enduring efforts to prevent the spreading to neighboring regions of the conflict that rends former Yugoslavia.

The activity of the Kosovar community in the USA is remarkable and flourishing in all fields. Many are youths who escaped to avoid military enrollment under the Serbs. All work energetically together with those already settled and together they offer a 30 per cent of their earnings to their Kosovar Government in order to support those who have remained at home without work; these represent the great majority. Besides, for over three years they have published in New York the paper "ILLYRIA" in English and Albanian so as to let the world know their country's problems. This paper can be considered one of the best among those published both inside and outside the State of Albania. In Germany and Switzerland too, as well as elsewhere in Europe, there are many prosperous Kosovar communities that devote themselves enthusiastically to save their country with stubborn, constructive optimism waiting for better times.

This is a very limited picture of the environment in which Adem Demaçi operates, the most appropriate candidate to the "Nobel Prize" for Peace in 1994.

Another angle of this picture concerns the efforts made by the brothers of the State of Albania, aimed not only to make this period, hopefully transitory, more tolerable, but above all to find a definitive and human solution to the problem of Kosova by means of self-determination.

The President of the Republic of Albania, the heart surgeon Sali Berisha, who graduated in Moscow and specialized at the Sorbonne in Paris, has displayed and goes on displaying a fervent action both to prevent the spreading of the Serbian conflict into Kosova and to find a peaceful conclusion in favor of the severed Kosovar brothers.

Last 23rd of February, at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, where he had been invited by the Secretary General Manfred Werner for the signature of the "declaration of partnership" between NATO and Albania, President Berisha raised the question of Kosova, one of the principal knots of the Balkan crisis, pointing out that Albania could not remain disinterested in case of Serbian aggression against the Kosovar brethren. Consequently, he asked for appropriate pressures being exerted upon the Serbs in order to make them start negotiations with the true representatives of Kosova, to have human rights respected and to obtain without delay the restoration of the sequestered properties and to allow freedom of practice for all the frozen institutions, so that a statute apt to re-establish peace and understanding may be approved without further delay.

Werner answered Berisha that NATO would be inclined to support the Albanian Government's attitude and that it would make an effort to make the legal institutions of Kosova work again. Werner also expressed to Berisha his satisfaction with the reforms accomplished, encouraging him to go on in the course engaged.

Appreciations and expressions of confidence also came from the various permanent representatives of the member countries of NATO, quite conscious of the dangers hanging over the Albanian State and favorable in principle to have Albania integrated also in other international institutions. On the other hand, the World Monetary Fund has given evidence of the progress achieved by the Tirana democratic Government with a report on the increase of the national income, which in 1993 is 11 per cent higher since the fall of the Communist regime, thus bringing Albania to the first place in comparison with the other countries of Eastern Europe in economic achievements.

Inside the great frame where the Kosovar candidate for the "Nobel Prize" for Peace stands out, there is also an important space for the cultural past of this most ancient people of Pelasgo-Illyro-Dardanian descent. As a matter of fact Kosova, or rather Dardania, was an integral part of that Illyria that in addition to the famous jurist Justinian the Great, has given birth to many other illustrious emperors, such as Justin I, Justinian I, Justin II, Diocletian, also known as "the Illyrian of Salona" (Spalato or Split), Aurelian, Constantine the Great, born at Naissus, near Prishtina.

Before the Roman conquest of 168 B.C., the Illyrians had powerful and famous sovereigns, such as King Agron, Queen Teuta and King Gentius, who was also a renowned naturalist (to him is

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due the discovery of the therapeutic properties of the "gentian"). Alexander the Great and the Roman Empire availed themselves of the bravery and endurance of the Illyrian legionaries.

There is no doubt that the Mediterranean culture begins with the Pelasgians, inventors of the phonetic alphabet. The Pelasgians, also known as "the Peoples of the Sea," were highly skillful seafarers, and the word "pelagic" (pellg, in Albanian) has remained in modern languages with a common meaning of "open, deep sea." With their agile boats, perhaps already equipped with a sort of compass, they have brought their culture to all the world. Naturally free, they called their land Illyria, that is "Country of the Free People."

According to Herodotus and other authors of ancient times, Greece was called "Pelasgia" before the arrival of the Hellenic tribes.

Virgil in his Aeneid (VIII, 602-603) wrote:

"The first inhabitants of our Italy were the Pelasgians."

In order to complete synthetically this special picture giving the correct background of the Kosovar candidate Demaçi, it is convenient to quote at least three important encyclopedias:

NOUVEAU PETIT LAROUSSE, (Paris, 1950, p. 1599):

"PELASGIANS, very ancient people that lived in prehistoric times in Greece, in the Archipelago, on the shores of Asia Minor and Italy . . . In general the ancient Thracians, Phrygians, Lydians, ETRUSCANS, Epirotes, ILLYRIANS, the Italic peoples (Samnites, Oscans, etc.) and the PRESENT ALBANIANS are considered the principal branches of the Pelasgians."

THE GREAT GREEK ENCYCLOPEDIA (Vol. XIX, p. 873):

" . . . Therefore, the great-grandchildren of the PRESENT ALBANIANS, the PELASGIANS, have resided since prehistoric times in the major part of the world then known, developing a very important civilization and building up works of great value."

ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA (1967 ed. vol. 17, p. 534):

"PELASGIANS, ancient people of the Aegean . . . pre-Hellenic inhabitants . . . Trojan allies (Homer, Iliad, II, 840) . . . Herodotus (I, 56) links them with the Etruscans of Italy, and Thucydides (IV, 109, 4) seems to identify them with the 'bilingual barbarians' (speaker of Greek and a native vernacular) of a group of settlements on Mount Athos peninsula . . . up to the Mountains of Dodona. Herodotus points out that they spoke a language which was not Greek . . . Herodotus identifies them with the Dorians . . . and with the Phoenicians . . ."

This is only a glimpse at the story of Adem Demaçi, tireless fighter with clean, unarmed hands, but with an iron will devoted to the success of his sacred ideal.

Let us wish full success to the candidate for the "**Nobel Prize" for peace 1994**, Adem Demaçi, who sacrificed himself to bear hunger strikes and knew how to wage his battles to give peace and dignity to his people in slavery, abiding by the principle that it "is better to convince than to win".

But this time let us wish Adem Demaçi to WIN, because it is everybody's hope that he succeeds in CONVINCING the Jury of the "NOBEL PRIZE" to acknowledge his indisputable merits of fighter for the triumph of PEACE in the world and for preventing the expansion of the conflict to KOSOVA.

The famous philosopher Socrates has written:

"I am sure that anyone can acquire virtues by means of exercise."

Adem Demaçi is one of those!

Nermin VLORA FALASCHI

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THE POETRY OF STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

by Gjon SINISHTA

In this issue of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* we are very pleased to present a selection of poetry by our contributor and board member, Stephen Schwartz.

Mr. Schwartz was born in 1948. He has lived virtually all his life in San Francisco, but has travelled widely in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. He is a poet, translator, historian, and journalist.

He is a staff writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and a frequent contributor to national periodicals, including *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Forward*, *The American Spectator*, and *Commentary*.

He has also served as a research associate at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington and as a consultant for the U.S. State Department.

He was educated in linguistics and history.

Mr. Schwartz first became active in the San Francisco Bay Area political and literary scene in the early 1960s, when he was a teenager. He began in the extreme left, where he remained politically for two decades before adopting a free-market, conservative political stance.

He was prominent in the revival of the Communist youth organization in the U.S., but was also associated with the 'beat' poetry movement focused on the City Lights Book Shop owned by the internationally-known poet, Lawrence Ferlinghetti. He participated in the 'hippie' excitement of the late 1960s although mainly oriented toward political radicalism.

At the same time, he encountered the works of the French surrealists, some of whom he translated and published in English in his first major literary effort, an anthology of recent surrealist



(L) Stephen Schwartz and his friend Vladimir Bukovsky, San Francisco, California, 1985

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writing, titled *Antinarcissus* (1969-70). He worked for some years in close contact with the American surrealist poet Philip Lamantia, and was praised by the critic Roger Shattuck as the best of the younger American surrealist poets, in *The New York Review of Books* (1972).

Mr. Schwartz's literary interests, in the first decade of his work, were greatly oriented toward regionalism, and the study, in particular, of indigenous, Hispanic, and other submerged aspects of the culture of California and the West. He studied Spanish and became genuinely bilingual, visiting Latin America and, particularly, Spain, and publishing there.

He has published two collections of poetry : *A Sleepwalker's Guide to San Francisco* (1983) and *Heaven's Descent* (1990).

In 1968, following the Soviet invasion of then-Czechoslovakia, Mr. Schwartz broke with Soviet communism and soon joined the Trotskyist movement. Although he later broke with the revolutionary left altogether, he has maintained an interest in the history of Trotskyism. He is a member of an International Commission for Documentation on the History of Spanish Trotskyism, based in Barcelona, and has collaborated in leading publications on this topic.

His first major book, *Brotherhood of the Sea: A History of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific*, reflected this mix of concerns. It was published in 1986 as an official document by the S.U.P., an organization with an outstanding history as a West Coast institution as well as of opposition to Stalinist communism. In his study of the S.U.P., Mr. Schwartz addressed Scandinavian influence in the molding of West Coast identity, and the development of a local syndicalist militancy and 'political' identity associated with maritime workers.

Even before *Brotherhood of the Sea* appeared, Mr. Schwartz was one of few Marxist intellectuals to perceive the global moral crisis affecting the radical left, and in 1984 he broke with the left over the policies of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, whom he opposed first because of their aggression against the distinguished Managua daily, *La Prensa*.

He joined the San Francisco-based free-market Institute for Contemporary Studies in 1984 and was involved in editing *The Grenada Papers* (ICS Press) as well as the creation of a short-lived program to support anti-Communist intellectuals in Latin America.

His second major work, *Spanish Marxism vs. Soviet Communism: A History of the POUM*, was published in 1988 by Transaction Books (Rutgers). A collaboration with a leading Spanish journalist and political historian, Victor Alba, based originally on a translation of Alba's work, this volume stands today as a definitive contribution on Soviet political interference, and resistance to it, in the Spanish civil war of 1936-39.

Mr. Schwartz joined the staff of the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1989. His writings for the paper have ranged from local community affairs to major worldwide political events.

In 1992, ICS published his most recent book, *A Strange Silence: The Emergence of Democracy in Nicaragua*, a poetic/political account of the fall of Sandinismo and of Mr. Schwartz's experience, in the U.S. literary community, as an isolated defender of the "contras." The book is an affirmation of truth and morality against the propagandistic corruption of language.

Mr. Schwartz has also written significantly on the history of the American Communist Party, on the transition in the former Soviet Union, and on other themes in the history of leftwing radicalism, as well as on Hispanic and Jewish literature, spirituality, and many more topics.

He was one of the first U.S. journalists to write on conflict in the former Yugoslavia, with his earliest work appearing in the *Chronicle* several years before the war began, in 1987. He visited the region twice and interviewed many of the leading protagonists, and was a panelist at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in 1992.

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He was the first U.S. journalist to reveal the rape and sexual torture of men as well as women in the Bosnian war and the victimization of Bosnian Jews by ethnic cleansing.

Mr. Schwartz first became aware of the plight of Albanian believers in early 1985. He attended the International Ecumenical Conference commemorating the 40th Anniversary of Religious Persecution in Albania along with his friends, the distinguished Russian dissident Vladimir Bukovsky and the Editor of the Russian *Samizdat* journal Olga Stacevich. The Conference was held in St. Ignatius Church at the University of San Francisco, April 13, 1985.

He began working with the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* in 1990, out of a desire, according to him, "to compensate for my Communist past by aiding the reestablishment of religion in Albania." His work for the *Bulletin* has recapitulated the themes he has addressed throughout his still-short but productive career: regionalism, cultural interchange and mixture, language and history, and the 20th century tragedy represented by Communism.

Stephen Schwartz is a partisan of justice and liberty, particularly religious liberty. He is a warm friend of the Albanian peoples, and has developed an attachment to the work of Martin Camaj and other modern Albanian writers. He has written on the defense of the Gheg dialect and was a coeditor with Gjon Sinishta of the Albanian section of the *Mediterranean Europe Phrasebook*, published by the Australian travel firm Lonely Planet.

SPANISH ELEGIES, X
(SARAJEVO ELEGY, 1991)

Raindrops strike the window and run down
One by one, they seem to make a choice
Whether to remain or go alone
And so it is with moments of a voice:

The news from Lithuania was bad.
I sat alone, in winter, with Dubrovnik
To myself. The mobs of tourists were gone
Away from the white stones and the eyes of cats.

It was January 1991. We waited
For word of war and peace in Kuwait.

Israel was threatened; in Dubrovnik
The Jews' Street and its ghetto are no narrower
Than any other—unlike in Barcelona;
But on Sunday night the synagogue was closed.

And so I climbed the hill, to the Jesuits' church
For mass, the night of January 13th.
The deadline come, in Lithuania,
I prayed and prayed for the people of Vilnius.

In Dubrovnik we are all philosophers
Walking slowly, silent with our thoughts
In Gundulic Square, an allegory of freedom
Shows her—*Sloboda*—as a beautiful queen

Menaced by ravening monsters,
Dragons and griffins.

Death surrounds us, even in Dubrovnik;
On the city walls, New Zealanders
And in the hotels, some Australians
Asked for news from the Middle East.

On Monday, *Vecernji List* came from Zagreb
With terrible headlines—prayers did not save Vilnius—
BLOODY TRAGEDY IN LITHUANIA;
Fourteen dead and hundreds more injured.

I sat in the Gradska Kavana, weeping with rage
And cursed Russia, and cursed communism;
On Tuesday, new word came from the Kremlin
Vecernji List asked, **DID GORBACHEV KNOW?**

Dawn lights up Dubrovnik's walls
And a wind casts the birds aside.

Wednesday. The Gulf War not yet begun,
I drove from Dubrovnik to the Albanian frontier
Suddenly seeing mosques, immaculate
And Islamic graveyards, with mushroom-headed tomb stones.

This land is Albania, on both sides of the border,
At Ulqin, where Sabbetai Zevi lies buried
But at Sukobine Yugoslav guards turned us back
And we drove north, into the cold Black Mountains.

Viewing the river Buna from higher up
We turned a corner and confronted Lake Shkodër
Immense and mysterious. We followed the narrow road
To Virpazar, where in 1702, Turkish blood flowed.

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Young Albanians flashed us the victory sign
As if to seek help against their own oppressors.

We talked, and the Albanians assured us
America would always stand for freedom
Among these sons of the eagle we found brothers
And in Albanian we toasted freedom—*Liria*.

Grieving in my heart for Lithuania
I knew the same would come, there to Croatia,
To Slovenia, and to the Albanians
With Tanks and soldiers ordered from Serbia.

In Lika tree-trunk barricades were up
As Serbian *chetniks* defied the croatian Republic
Even as word came from Tiranë
Of new relations with America.

And the Albanian-language *Kosovë Constitution*
Carried the Statue of Liberty on its back.

I spoke neither Croatian, nor Serbian, then—
And so I walked, philosophical in Dubrovnik,
Under a cloak of silence, knowing nothing
Until I was told the news, of war or peace.

Thursday morning. The bombing of Iraq
Began with news broadcast from CNN
And Croatians in Dubrovnik's streets
Acclaimed America, and denounced Saddam.

I left Dubrovnik in the afternoon
Riding the bus into the Bosnian mountains,
Sharper and more abrupt than Mal të Zi,
Overshadowing Jewish graves at Mostar.

The way wound upward, further into the cold
To Sarajevo, where world war was once provoked.

Under walls of loftier, snowy peaks
Jews and Muslims, Catholic and Orthodox
Raised their gorgeous temples in an island of peace
In the heart of Bosnia, the iron rose.

On Friday I woke to a muezzin's groan
Amplified from the nearby minaret,
Of the Ferhadi mosque, behind the hotel
In Old Sarajevo's Oriental bazaar.

I walked through the *bascarsija*
Past the Husrevbeg Mosque, to the Old Synagogue
Built by the Sephardim of Sarajevo
In 1581; its courtyard was beautiful.

But as in Dubrovnik's jewel-like synagogue
No congregation remained. I stood alone.

I read the placards of historical displays
Revealing the lost world that spoke *Ladino*,
The Castilian dialect of Cervantes
Brought through years and miles of exile.

In Sarajevo there lived illustrious Jews,
Rabbis, poets, mystics, translators
Of the *Zohar* and Scripture into Spanish
A people who preserved the Iberian muse:

En la mar hay una torre
En la torre hay una ventana
En la ventana hay una niña
Que a los marineros llama

Dame la mano tu paloma
Para subir donde ti
Para ver tu sueño dulce
Cuando te echas a dormir.

Abre tu ventana Paloma
Quiero subir a tu nido
Lástima que duermes sola
Dormiré yo contigo

Yo me echo en cama enalto
Tu debajo del sherishul
Pobrecito el mancebo
Que murió detrás de mi.

By the sea there is a tower
In the tower is a window
In the window is a girl
Who calls out to passing sailors

Give me your hand oh my dove
So I may climb up there with you
That I may watch your sweetly sleeping
When you take yourself to bed

Open your window oh my dove
I want to climb into your nest
It's a shame you sleep alone
I will come to sleep beside you.

I lie in my bed above
You beneath a cot[illegible] board
Poor and trusting little boy
Who before me died of love.

At noon I went to the Ashkenazi temple
With its full appointed community center
But likewise, no regular congregation
Save for a few elders, on the high holidays.

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Those within were electrified by the news
That Saddam's rockets had violated the soil
Of *Erez Israel*. But nobody knew
If Israel would or would not retaliate.

A young Sarajlija, Ranko, guided me
Back and forth in the maze of relationships
There, in Sarajevo's surviving Jewry
Lighting up my spirit, with promises

Of the *Zohar* printed in Spanish, in *Rashi* letters
And other Ladino treasures, in Saraj.

I left the Ashkenazi synagogue
Trembling with ecstasy, at the thought
Of books unknown, Jewish, in Castilian:
Here, I thought, must be my destiny.

I wandered back along the Miljacka's banks
In late afternoon, with *Shabbat* approaching
And walked into the grand Imperial Mosque
Past its libraries, and slender minaret.

An old man, the caretaker, welcomed me
In his green sweater and his green apron
Among the Muslims at their afternoon prayers
And the women screened off, by curtained panels.

I listened to the music of their voices
But saw no more of them than the narrowest glance.

The caretaker encouraged me to take pictures
Pointing out each feature of the structure;
The carpets were fine and warm, and I felt welcome
No less than in the empty synagogues.

I left the mosque; the old man, with a smile
Born of his pleasure at hospitality
To one who clearly was no Muslim follower
Handed me a fresh-baked loaf of bread.

I felt embarrassed, not knowing how to respond
But he whispered in Bosnian, "Take it. It's good."
And so I thanked him, saying, "*Salaam wa-alaikum*.
Peace be with you." And the bread was delicious.

I returned to my home, in San Francisco
And it rained, and I wept, as I remembered
Lithuania, Croatia, Albania, all seeking freedom,
And Dubrovnik, that always stood for freedom

Like our America; and I remembered the bread
Of peace, in a Sarajevo mosque.

* * *

Four Songs for Sarajevo

I

It's said that in the mountains to the East
A city is besieged, children are dying,
Holy places profaned, tombs uprooted,
And the defenders of that city feel the lash
Of cold, and hunger, and disease.

It's true, that city is distant from our city,
Although sometimes it seems all cities are one:
A place where merchants, adventurers, and strangers,
Meet to learn what they can about each other—
At least, that's how it is in times of peace.

It's true, that city is distant from our city
And difficult to reach, though it once took but a day
To get there from the coast of the Adriatic.
The bus would take you through the mountains
Past Mostar, and Jablanica, and Konjic.

Those towns were pretty once; I saw them all
While travelling through that part of the world.
There I first saw minarets, along the landscape
And heard the muezzin's cry, calling for prayers—
A voice from a throat now cut,
from a tower blown up.

What world is this, where beauty is destroyed
With the bark of cannon levelling Sarajevo
Roaring in our ears, like the cry
Of a frightful monster, come to devour our hearts?
What world is this, where Sarajevo burns?

II

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
There are two synagogues
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
Two houses built for God,
In Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
The Jews no longer pray
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
They wait to get away
From Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
In death there's no release
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
No grave remains at peace
In Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo

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A child dies in bed.
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
A shell tore off her head,
In Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
Two lovers in their youth
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
Killed by Serbian truth
In Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
The Chetniks maim and kill.
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
Give up? No Bosnian will,
In Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
The people there still fight.
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
Though death commands the heights,
In Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
The world has found a name,
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo,
Against the cowards' game,
In Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
They won't give up their song,
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo,
They know what's right and wrong,
In Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
They know what's right and wrong
In Sarajevo, in Sarajevo
The righteous all belong
In Sarajevo.

III

I saw a Serbian woman I once knew;
She did not look well.
Her eyes were pained and anxious
As if they looked at hell.

I wondered, does she have sleepless nights?
Or hear the children scream?
Does she hate the things done in her name?
Will she ever share our dream?

IV

I sing a private, silent song
For those alive, for those now dead
I sing a silent, private song
It runs unceasing through my head
I sing a private, silent song
I sing it now, I'll sing it dead

I sing a song for lovers gone
For women who once graced my bed
I sing a song for youth undone
A song for me and mine alone
Its words are gold, its music fine
I sing a song of pain unknown

I sing a song for family woe:
My father gone, my mother weeps
I sing a song of days forlorn
I cannot dream, I cannot sleep
I sing a song no stranger knows
I sing a private, silent song

I sing a song nobody hears
A song for me, and me alone
I sing a song nobody knows
I sing it now, I'll sing it dead
I know I'll never see my home
I sing a silent, private song.

Spanish Elegies, XII
(St. Francis Day/October 4, 1993, Elegy)

For Gjon Sinishta

St. Francis of Assisi's day came to me in 1993
In the city of León, Nicaragua,
Birthplace of Rubén Darío
And resting place for Nicaragua's poet.

Awaiting the mass in León's cathedral,
I read the news in *La Prensa* from Moscow
News for which I had prayed
The victory of Yeltsin and of Russia's
Orthodox Christian Russia, for which I prayed and prayed
In the Catholic churches of Nicaragua,
That weekend.

The same issue of *La Prensa* reported
That in Diriamba, home of my friend Father Argüello,
The clock tower would be repaired after years of disuse.
A few minutes after reading that item,
When I photographed the house
Where the old dictator Somoza was shot dead in 1956
My camera broke.

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In the mass the priest's voice was measured and solemn,
Reminding me of Cardinal Obando Bravo;
In an interview Monsenor Pablo Vega of Juigalpa
Once expelled from Nicaragua by the Sandinistas
Preaches forgiveness.

In Moscow today Yeltsin has triumphed—
He whose fate is somehow linked
To that of Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua—
And in *La Prensa* Albanian president Berisha,
Leader of a country martyred above all others by Marxism,
Where religion had been officially banned,
Is quoted, hailing the good news.

On St. Francis' Day I heard my Rebecca's voice
And I learned that in Moscow the Dzerzhinsky Division
Led the attack on the fascist-communist mob,
Iron Felix in the vanguard!
In the black velvet of Moscow nights
The Dzerzhinsky Division is storming the heights!
Forward, forward, ever forward!

'Whirlwinds of danger around us are swirling,
Overwhelming forces of darkness and fear,'
In the mass I hear the voice of Rebecca,
With those of Darío and Salomón de la Selva,
Buried nearby, and with me, as St. Francis knew:
For in God's universe all is single and whole
Past and future, love and absence, freedom and death.

American soldiers are dragged dead through Somalia's alleys,
But in Moscow the Taman Division has joined the battle,
Forward, forward, ever forward!
As the mass continues.

Later, I pick up and put down Dostoyevsky,
Whose nemesis I am:
A reform Jew, once a Communist, now a friend of Rome,
Praying for Orthodox Russia in Catholic cathedrals,
Though Russia may never embrace me.
Later, on my altar to Saint Barbara,
I place a famous postcard of count Tolstoi,
With Turgenev, Goncharov, and others
And with Tolstoi himself in his youthful uniform,
Though Russia may never embrace me.

Gjon, how often, at these moments, I have wanted
To join you fully in the Catholic communion
I know far better than Dostoyevsky imagined
The soul of your church:
An Indian woman, on her knees in León's Cathedral,
Follows a syncretism of her indigenous faith,
That is no Inquisition.

And in Turkish-ruled Bosnia a century or more ago
Franciscan fathers wrote,
'The church without Croatia would still be herself,
And Croatia without the church would be no less Croatian.'
As the Albanian Franciscans, in their martyrdom,
Cried out, 'Long live Albania, even without us!'

St. Francis' Day: Managua, too, seems besieged,
Rain falls and the lights go out.
Sandinistas and UNO have begun a dialogue.

Two days later, in Panama, Leonid Kuzmin
Is playing the piano in the Teatro Nacional.
In Schubert's 'Wanderer' I seem to hear Russia's struggle;
On Kuzmin's sweating face I see Russia tormented.
The Dzerzhinsky Division spilled its blood for freedom;
The Taman Division took its place in battle,
For the freedom of Orthodox Russia, for which I prayed
In Catholic churches, in Nicaragua, in Croatia,
And even in Panama.

Kuzmin plays Chopin; Dzerzhinsky, too, was Polish,
And a Catholic, who mortified himself.
In Michaux's book *Ecuador*, bought in Panama,
I find again the name of my favorite saint:
Joseph of Copertino, another Franciscan,
Surnamed 'The Ass,' as Michaux has it.
And I turn, Gjon, to the lines of St. Francis' **Cantico**,
'Nullu homo ene dignu te mentovare.'

A week later, the Pope announces the beatification
Of Catholic martyrs in the Spanish civil war;
Seven thousand priests, monks, and nuns were murdered
In that conflict. The Holy Father has honored
The Bishop of Almería, and seven Christian Brothers,
Killed in Almería, "an anarchist stronghold,"
In August 1936, in the first days of fighting.

I pray for them, as I have prayed for Albania's martyrs,
Honored by the Pope in his visit to that country.
'**Never forget what happened in Albania!**'

But though I have prayed, at a mass in León,
At Darío's tomb, as elsewhere in Nicaragua,
With Christians, as with Muslims in Sarajevo,
And although at times I may even pray with Buddhists,
Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhisvaha,
I know in my heart that what I know I know as a Jew:
Barukh ata adonoi eloheinu melekh alom,
Blessed is the Lord our God, King of the universe.

It is God's universe, every particle of it,
Nothing can equal Him, no person is worthy to speak His name.
On St. Francis' Day—for Russia, Nicaragua, Somalia,
Croatia, Albania, and Bosnia
And, for peace, I pray.
Blessed be He: **Barukh Hashem.**

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SYMPOSIUM ON MARTIN CAMAJ

WELL-KNOWN ALBANIAN WRITER AND EDUCATOR HONORED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SHKODRA

The figure of Martin Camaj (1927-1992) is well known to readers of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* (cf. "Albanians Who Honor Their Origins" in Vol. IV (1983) p. 48; "Martin Camaj: A Profile" in Vol. X (1989) p. 120-122; and "The Universal Legacy of Martin Camaj" in Vol. XIII (1992) p. 87-90). The prolific writer, linguist and university professor has become of even greater importance to Albanian and world culture since the victory of democracy, receiving acclaim among a new generation of Albanians in his homeland. He is rapidly acquiring a literary stature which sets a high ideal for the Albanian culture of the future.

Camaj was born in the Albanian mountain village of Temal in Dukagjini near the Drini River. He was deeply rooted in the Albanian mountain traditions and had to overcome the opposition of his family in order to obtain a formal education. His teachers were the Jesuits of Shkodra for whom he always had a high regard. He witnessed the martyrdom of the superiors of the Jesuit community in Shkodra while he was a student at their Xavier College.

Upon the closing of Xavier College by the communist authorities Camaj escaped to Yugoslavia and continued his studies at the University of Belgrade, completing a doctorate at the University of Rome in 1960 under the direction of Professor Ernest Koliqi. Already in 1953 and 1954 he had published two well received works of Albanian poetry *Nji Fyell Ndër Male* (A Flute in the Mountains) and *Kanga e Vërrinit* (The Song of the Valley) both of which were published in Prishtina, Kosova. (Both works were reviewed in the *Rilindja* of Prishtinë by Gjon Sinishta who was at that time editor of the literary supplement of the newspaper.) Upon receiving his doctoral degree Camaj began his life's work first as a lecturer at the University of Rome, then as a Professor of Linguistics at the University of Munich in Germany.

During his career he published a total of twenty-five books and one hundred and forty-four articles and studies, including novels and a comprehensive *Albanian Grammar* which is considered the best of its kind. Camaj was the long-time editor of *Shejzat* (Pleiades) the most influential Albanian review in the diaspora. He was very interested in the pre-eminence of language in culture and was an expert on the Arbëresh culture in Italy and the United States. A number of his works were translated into Italian, English, German and other languages. His works were banned in Albania by the communist authorities because as Camaj himself said, "in my poems and prose I side spontaneously with the individual rather than with the collective . . . my interest remaining the destiny of the human being." Camaj's poetry was remarkable for the deep sympathy he possessed for the sufferings of humankind and for his compassionate spirit which gave his works a breadth of vision and hope. Camaj died just as the re-birth of free Albania was dawning. His legacy to Albania is vast, and his death, though saddening, seems in itself to be a personal sacrifice for the Albanian people.

Camaj and his work were honored at the University "Luigj Gurakuqi" of Shkodra on June 24, 1993 at a symposium whose theme was "Martin Camaj—Tradita dhe Bashkëkohësia (Martin Camaj-Tradition and Contemporaneity). Various papers on Camaj's works and contributions were read as well as papers on present day issues facing the Albanian culture following the victory of freedom and democracy. The president of the University of Shkodra, Professor Giovalin Kolombi, greeted the guests and participants among whom was Dr. Erika Camaj, widow of the late Albanian educator. A roster of over twenty Albanian and foreign scholars, specialists in Albanian cultural affairs and experts on the work of Martin Camaj presented their

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papers. The auditorium of the university was filled with an attentive audience, drawn from Albania's intelligentsia, especially from the north of Albania. The students, for whom Martin Camaj was revealed as an example of integrity and dedication, acclaimed the initiative of the University of Shkodra as a helpful and meaningful gathering. The proceedings were captured on videotape and it is hoped that soon they will be available in book form.

Due to the number of papers and interventions by participants it is not possible to print all the proceedings of the symposium. However, we are happy to list below the authors and titles of each of the papers presented at the symposium.

Hasan Lekaj—"Opusi letrar i Martin Camajt dhe vendi i tij në kulturen kombëtare shqiptare" (The Albanian Literary Opus of Martin Camaj and His Place in the Albanian National Culture)

Stefan Çapaliku—"Traditë letrare në vazhdimësi—Letërsia e Qarkut të Veriut" (Literary Tradition in Continuity—Literature of the North)

Artan Haxhi—"Çështje të gjuhës letrare kombëtare shqipe" (Questions Regarding the Albanian National Literary Language)

David Luka—"Pse ithtarët e Kongresit të Drejtshkrimit nuk e pranojnë debatin shkencor?" (Why don't the Disciples of the Orthography Congress Accept a Scientific Debate?)

Anton Berisha—"Botë burimore dhe botë a pasur artistike" (A World Heritage and a World Rich in Art)

Alfred Çapaliku—"Camaj—Ungaretti. Paralele dhe meridiane" (Camaj—Ungaretti, Parallels and Crossings)

Miaser Dibra—"Veçori të stilit në prozën e Koliqit" (The Characteristics of Style in Koliqi's Prose)

Eli Karamitri—"Martin Camaj, subjekti poetik dhe lirizmi" (Martin Camaj, Poetical and Lyrical Subject)

Ardian Marashi—"Përftesa poetike të gegërishtes" (Poetic Creations of the Gheg dialect)

Neki Lezha—"Dukuritë e traditës e ndikimet moderne në poezinë e Camajt" (The Outlook of the Tradition and Contemporary Influences in the Poetry of Camaj)

Selami Tabaku—"Tradita leksikore të folklorit të Veriut" (Lexicographical Tradition of Northern (Albanian) Folklore)

Fatbardha Hoxha—"Tradita dhe vepra e Martin Camajt" (Tradition and the Work of Martin Camaj)

Eric P. Hamp (from the University of Chicago)—"Shenime për një drejtshkrim fonologjik të njësuar" (Some Reflections on the Unified Phonetic Orthography) Dr. Hamp is a linguist and specialist in Albanian language and culture at the University of Chicago, (Ed. note).

Kolec Topalli (Secretary to Albanian President Sali Berisha)—"Vepra e M. Camajt ne aspektin gjuhësor" (Martin Camaj's Work in its Linguistic Aspect)

Bahri Beci—"Problemet e gjuhës letrare në etapën e sotme" (The Problems of Literary Language at the Present Stage)

Frano Illia (Archbishop of Shkodra)—"Veprat fetare dhe etnografike ne veshtrimin gjuhësor" (Religious and Ethnographic Works in a Linguistic Context)

Kapllan Resuli—"Gjuha letrare kombëtare shqipe (Albanian National Literary Language)

Vili Kamsi (Albania's Ambassador to the Vatican)—"Gegënishtja në raport me gjuhën letrare 'të njësuar' " (The Gheg Dialect in Relation to the 'Unified' Literary Language)

Tomor Osmani and Nuri Gjokaj—"Çështjet e shqipes së sotme letrare në Gramatikën e Camajt" (Questions Regarding present Day Literary Language in the Grammar of Camaj)

Mark Dema—"Lavdia e të parëve asht drita e pasardhësave" (The Praise of Ancestors is the Light of Descendents)

Following the symposium a group of Albanian and foreign scholars and friends of Martin Camaj established in Germany the "Martin Camaj Society". The Society will promote Albanian literary and cultural heritage in Europe and elsewhere. It will also encourage works by young Albanian writers following the example of Martin Camaj. Those interested in joining the society or obtaining more information may write to:

Martin-Camaj-Gesellschaft e.V.
Tiefenweg 3
8366 Lenggries
Germany

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MARTIN CAMAJ—THE MAN AND HIS POETRY

In the past decades Albania has experienced grave hardships. Political changes in Europe after World War II brought bitter fruits for Albanians. Nevertheless, within the darkness there was light; beyond the barbed wire of isolation lived free minds and souls. Above the staleness and the censure of a language and literature as old as the Albanian, arose the great writers like Martin Camaj. Here is a brief presentation of his personality seen through the prism of his life and his poetry.

LIFE

Martin Camaj was born in Temal, in the mountains of Dukagjini. Although he came from a very poor family and the poorest region of Albania at his death he was one of the most refined European poets. His life to us, often, looks like a dream, with dim images, but also with magical scenes.



Martin Camaj speaking at the International Seminar of the Pan-Albanian Federation VATRA, New York, 1968

A few days after his death in Munich, along with the photographer Junta Benzenberg, we visited his family in Dukagjini. His relatives still live there the same way Dukagjini must have lived centuries ago. Thus we were unable to fully understand how, from this environment, Martin had ascended to become the man and the personality we came to know during our several meetings in Munich. Who knows, maybe this is the paradoxical history of Albania that gives forth these contradictions. But let us return to his life.

The child that tended sheep, like his peers in Malësi, was discovered by Jesuit priests, who took him to be educated in Shkodër. It is well-known that the Catholic clergy of Northern Albania at that time, in close association with all social strata, even the common peasants, had nourished in Shkodër the real heart of the country's literature, in order to develop Albanian culture and to counteract the expansionism of Slav Orthodoxy. Until the end of World War II, in Shkodër, there flourished seminaries, schools, libraries, printing shops, editorial offices and publishing houses, unique to the ancient Illyrian city. Here, Martin Camaj was able to study, thus creating a foundation for his inborn sensibility to language and his poetic feelings. At the end of World War II, this young man worked as a teacher in a village near Shkodër.

That was also the time of communist attacks in Shkodër, on its cultural institutions and on the Catholic clergy. Countless scientists, writers, clergy, teachers and seminarians were victims of imprisonment, torture and execution.

The Tirana regime was then a vassal of the Yugoslav army. The storm of brutality in Shkodër, and the hatred toward this cultural bulwark of Northern Albania, were a testament of the regime's loyalty to Belgrade. Martin Camaj can be considered a "fortunate man" because he managed to leave Albania in 1948, at a time when his friends were disappearing daily.

He studied Philology in Belgrade. In the 50's, in Prishtinë, he published two volumes of poems. These collections were the first signs of Kosova's

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new poetry and were to influence a number of later poets of this region. The central theme of the volumes "A Flute in the Mountains" and "The Song of the Valley" present lyrical and dramatic images of the lost homeland. In 1956 Camaj moved to Rome. There, he studied literature and philosophy. Among his professors was Giuseppe Ungaretti, who, with his hermetic poetry, influenced, to a great extent, the development of Camaj.

Martin Camaj graduated with a dissertation on Gjon Buzuku. With this work began a long series of linguistic and philological studies which complete Camaj's personality, and without which it would be impossible to understand him. We are taught often that science and poetry are two skills that do not correspond, that are almost opposite. This suggests that a professor of science cannot be a "free poet", in fact is a prejudice. Martin Camaj proved the opposite; furthermore, he proved it consciously. He is as much a master of modern Albanian Literature, as he is a personality of contemporary Albanology. Since he was forced to live in exile, only his commitment to Albanian studies to an extent, fulfilled his need for a natural interaction with the homeland and its people. Furthermore, the more theoretical and linguistic works he produced, the more refined his literary work became. We are reminded of the similar example of the Italian philosopher and writer Umberto Eco, who returned to fiction only after having written a series of theoretical works, though his motives for writing literature were different from Camaj's.

In Italy Camaj had a fruitful collaboration with Ernest Koliqi. The main product of their work was the review "Shejzat", one of the best in the world of Albanian culture. It is here that he completed many studies on Alberesh speech, a topic he pursued until his death.

In the mid 60's Camaj transferred to the University of Munich, where he defended a thesis on word-formation in the Albanian language. Here, gradually but passionately, he founded the only Department of Albanology in the German speaking countries. He taught for more than twenty years in Munich, and published many more literary works: poetry, poetic prose, dramas and novels. Among them: "Lyrics Between Two Seasons", "Poetry", "Dranja", "Buffalo", "Palimpsest", the novels "Circles", and "Karpa", etc.

The poet published these books at his own expense and distributed them to a close circle of friends. But these books, due to their quality, have an arguable place in Albanian literature. A glimpse at Camaj's poetry suffices to realize the high rank it holds in comparison with the poetry of "the other crowd" who in Albania, shamefully put their poetry in the service of Enver Hoxha and the Labor Party. Camaj managed this dissent from his contemporaries without being a political poet, but simply using the magic of the Albanian word. After the year 1990, in Albania as well as in other Eastern European countries, the communist system collapsed. However, it was too late for a last encounter of the poet with his homeland. The reality of Albania had changed too much from the vision of his youth. Furthermore, Martin Camaj was already suffering from a grave illness. He died on March 12, 1992.

POETRY

Camaj's poetry is not simple, but as we savor and understand it, his poetry penetrates deeply into our consciousness. We will try to briefly present here the four main features of this poetry: his vision of Northern Albania; mythological foundations; the poet's dilemma; the poet's resistance.

The vision of Northern Albania accompanied Camaj from his early poems to the end of his life. In this vision are, first of all, the landscapes of Dukagjini, stern landscapes with high mountains, deep valleys, bare rocks, but also highlands immersed in greenery. Included here are also the people with their everyday struggle for life, with legends and ancient rites. In the end, this vision, among these landscapes and these people, includes his childhood and adolescence.

Camaj did not typically treat Northern Albania as an object of nostalgia, but rather as a source of his poetry. We find all these elements in this poem:

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DAY IN MY MOUNTAINS

My land is renowned
for its deep ravines
among dwellers in mountain and plain
up to the sea. There, at evening
the scream of the magpie is heard
in the eagle's talons and its spirit
is sacrificed to the shadows.
There, light plays now and then in human eyes
and no one knows passions by name.
Repayment is made in blood, for example,
as a snake under a stone and the snake itself
is the mind of a woman
under a white or red kerchief.

There, at dusk each touches his forehead
and feels against his fingers the thread of life
and rejoices.

• • •

We find here another element which has not been mentioned yet; how to understand these lines:

"Repayment by blood is, for example,
a snake under a rock, and the snake itself
is the mind of a woman
under a red or white kerchief.

The snake is a central figure in the mythology of Northern Albania, inhabited by all sorts of gods, symbols and beliefs in nature. A red and white kerchief are directly associated with the customs of blood-feuds; but for the poet it does not have the negative connotations of blood-feuds, since the snake-scarf signifies a sharp wit, which in Albania we call "a woman's mind". The mythology in Camaj's poetry consists of many symbols that we encounter in spoken Albanian traditions. We will mention here the ones used most frequently: rock, wolf, deer, muse, the beaks of the birds of prey, the eyes of domestic animals, numbers: three, seven, etc.

The close connection of this poem with the mythic life of his fellow countrymen gives Camaj a substratum and foundation that harbors deep roots in the centuries of Albanian history. At the same time it makes him a modern poet, because this symbolism does not serve to evoke the past of the homeland (banal notions of patriotism were foreign to Camaj), but first and foremost it serves to express his inner psychological state and the hidden tremblings of the soul.

POET'S DILEMMA

His life itself created contrasts: mountain/field; village life/European life; Albanian poetry/cosmopolitan currents; mythic world/world of science. This is a laconic example:

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

The sweet bee and the wormwood gnat
were known to every flower in our fields
and honey and poison are in my blood.

The shadow of my father with heart of gold
and pistol in his belt summons me
and I can hate with all my soul.

The firefly lights of distant cities
and pearls around delicate throats
shimmer confused before my eyes.

From the opposites Camaj manages to create harmony, the currents of memories and of the nostalgia he was able to turn into symbolism for his poetry. No doubt the poet suffered enormously from having lost his homeland. Dukagjini must have appeared in his dreams, but he was able to endure the suffering through the filter of the poetic philosophy not through sentimentalism.

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FIRST ELEGY

When I shall be plucked
from the effort of years, as though from a steep precipice
do not be sad for me, Taze,
outstretched upon the planks of death,
a lamb extended for the sacrifice.
Let the old women keen over me on that day
for their people long since dead.

One more thing, my wife,
when my father died, we slaughtered two oxen
to sate the hungry—and the ants of the threshing-floor
with breadcrumbs.
But I will die among people who are always sated,
so at my wake serve
only bitter coffee.

Finally, let us analyze the poet's resistance. As a poet of exile Camaj represents, in post-World War II Albanian literature, a link between the North Albanian poets of the first half of our century, and the contemporary European poetry. We can say today, without a doubt, that Martin Camaj elevated the Albanian lyric from complete ideological and poetic mediocrity to the levels previously unknown. His language implies resistance. At the time when in Albania the Gheg literary language was pronounced dead with a decree, and was banned from the state in every form, Camaj did not hesitate for even a moment to write its natural idioms. Camaj followed in the centuries-old tradition of our literary language, not only with literary work,



Gjon Sinishta (l) and his school companion and friend Martin Camaj (r) Milan, Italy, 1964

but also with theoretical work, with grammars and textbooks. Therefore, we can say that today, he, along with his other colleagues in exile, managed to save literary Gheg for future generations.

Two years after his death, Martin Camaj speaks to us more than ever. The task of knowing and spreading his work has only begun.

Ardian KLOSI

Translated by: Zana Ibrani

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VISAR ZHITI: VICTIM OF THE SURREAL

Half a century of Stalinist dictatorship has left deep wounds in the souls of Albanian writers and intellectuals. Under the iron rule of Enver Hoxha (1908-1985), virtually no one was allowed into or out of a country transformed into a planet of its own. Among the writers, only Ismail Kadare, the literary showpiece of the Communist regime, was free to travel abroad and enjoy an international reputation as a novelist.



Visar Zhiti, poet with a "bad biography"

The government used two strategies to keep writers and intellectuals under control. The classic form of censorship known to most dictatorships ensured that anything which might be construed as critical of the political system and its leaders was removed from manuscripts before publication. A volume of Albanian prose or poetry in the 1970s and 1980s had, for instance, to go through the hands of 10-15 politically vigilant 'revisors', and a play had to be read by at least 30 such 'experts'. The latter explains the lack of good Albanian theatre.

The level of censorship varied considerably over the years and was a good barometer of the political situation in the country. Some years it was possible to publish politically ambiguous works if they were skilfully packaged; in years of major political purges, nothing but Party propaganda was printed. Albanian writers were quick to adapt and learned to judge the limits of the permissible to such a degree that this form of censorship became superfluous in most cases. In Albania, as in many other countries, censorship was soon replaced by self-censorship.

The second strategy was a system of arbitrary persecution. No writer could feel secure unless he or she had close family ties with a member of the Politbureau. The principle of class struggle stated that the political enemy was not only abroad in the capitalist and revisionist countries but also within the country itself. A certain portion of the population, the so-called *armiq të mbrëndshëm* (internal enemies), had thus to be combated continuously. Directives were issued to local Party officials every year for arrests by professional category: a certain number of teachers, for instance, or civil engineers, or writers. Who was to be arrested, tried and imprisoned depended very much on the whims of local officials. Many latent political opponents were indeed 'uncovered', imprisoned or sent into internment. But in most cases arrests and convictions were quite arbitrary. Particularly vulnerable to such prosecution were individuals with so-called 'bad biographies'. A bad biography could, for instance, be the result of a grandfather, an uncle or a cousin having escaped from the country 20 years earlier, or of some distant relative having been convicted of 'agitation and propaganda'.

Whereas Russian writers were able to breathe a sigh of relief in the 1950s with the death of Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) and the Khrushchev reforms that followed in 1956, constant purges continued in Albania right up to 1990. The intellectual community in Albania was kept in a state of fear until the very last days of the Communist dictatorship.

Among the many talented writers to have suffered appalling persecution for no apparent reason was **Visar Zhiti**. Born on 2 December 1952 in Durrës of an actor father, he grew up in Lushnjë, where he finished school in 1970, and taught in

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the northern mountain town of Kukës. Zhiti showed an early interest in verse and had published some poems in literary periodicals. In 1973 he was preparing the collection *Rapsodia e jetës së trëndafilave* (Rhapsody of the Life of Roses) for publication when the purge of intellectuals was unleashed at the infamous Fourth Plenary Session of the Party. Zhiti, whose father had earlier come into conflict with the authorities, was one of the many scapegoats selected as a means of terrifying the intellectual community. The manuscript of the verse collection which he had submitted to the editors of the Naim Frashëri Publishing Company was seen to contain grave ideological errors and interpreted as blackening 'our socialist reality'.

The absurdity of most political judgments on works of literature in Albania is illustrated by the reaction to Zhiti's couplet:

Mos lyeni këpucët tek Ilustraxhintë

s'i dua njerezit tek këmbët e mia.

(Do not have the shoeshiner do your shoes,

I do not want people at my feet.)

On the basis of these two lines, Zhiti was accused of being against the working class. The manuscript was then re-interpreted as 'agitation and propaganda' and there was nothing Zhiti could do or say to his interrogators to prove his innocence.

After six years of uncertainty, Visar Zhiti was finally arrested on 10 November 1979 in Kukës, where he was still teaching.

He spent the following months in a cell in solitary confinement. To keep his sanity, he composed and memorized 97 poems.

Sentenced in April 1980 to 10 years in prison, Zhiti was transferred to Tiranë prison and from there to the infamous concentration camp at the copper mines of Spaç and to the icy mountain camp of Qafë-Bari, where he worked until his release on 28 January 1987.

He was subsequently allowed to work at a brick factory in his native Lushnjë until the end of the dictatorship. In the autumn of 1991, Visar Zhiti fulfilled a dream and spent a year working in Italy and tasting freedom for the first time.*

Robert ELSIE

*Index on Censorship 4/1993



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OPINION FORUM

THE RANSOM OF NOTORIETY
AN ALBANIAN DISSIDENT'S VIEW OF ISMAIL KADARE

Editor's note: With this issue of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin, we continue the discussion of writer Ismail Kadare, who remains a topic of debate throughout the Albanian communities.

*Our **Opinion Forum** here offers two commentaries on Kadare, his role, and his responsibilities, by Albanian dissident writer Amik Kasoruho and by our collaborator Stephen Schwartz.*

Previous articles on the controversial literary personality of Kadare included a profile of him by the critic Brian Curdy, living in Switzerland, in our issue for 1990, in which Mr. Curdy pleaded with Kadare to assume a posture as the "Vaclav Havel of Albania."

In 1991, Tom Hoopes, a freelance writer from Washington, D.C. wrote on Kadare, criticizing his record of sycophancy toward the Communist regime. The year after and again last year, Stephen Schwartz commented on Kadare in articles on the heritage of Ernest Koliqi and on the judgement of former prominent figures of the regime.

Albanian poet Dritëro Agolli, former president of the Writers' Union under the Communist regime, has called on honest Albanian writers to disclaim the productions they were forced to issue under the dictators Enver Hoxha and Ramiz Alia. Such an apology might partially redeem Kadare, and lessen for him the "weight of the cross" he bears for his past association with the regime.

Amik Kasoruho is an Albanian dissident writer now living in Italy. His father took part in the resistance movement during WW II. Following the liberation of Albania (1944) he fell into disgrace for opposing the communist dictatorship and was executed in 1957.

Kasoruho was born in 1932. At the age of 17 he was arrested and condemned to 10 years in prison. After his release he worked as a surveyor for over two decades. He was paid as a simple laborer in a state construction enterprise. He married in 1961 and lived in a small village near Durrës with his elderly mother, wife and two sons. The boys, although excellent students, were never allowed to study at the University.

Kasoruho has written and translated works of Blasco-Ibanez, Pirandello, Trilussa, G. Bernd, Harold Robbins and others, but his work was never published because of his "bad family background." He and his family were among the first to seek political asylum during the massive boat exodus of Albanians to Italian shores in 1990/91. One of his works, a kaleidoscope of reminiscences, has been recently published in Italy. Kasoruho's critique of Ismail Kadare, which we print below, originally appeared in Katundi Ynë 1993/2. Victoria Elliott did the translation for this Bulletin issue.

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In Albania today, where one regime has been overturned and another, diametrically opposed to it, has been set up in its stead, there are the preconditions for a settling of scores and—with or without reason—for a resurgence of vendetta. I do not wish to be thought of as someone who did nothing but wait for the opportunity to get things off my chest. There is some basis to such an assertion: I did in fact wait—for well over 40 years--for the possibility of having my say, as I see it, in defense of what for me (and for many of my fellow citizens, I think) is a truth that deserves to be brought to light.

Let me say this straight out: I have nothing personal against Ismail Kadare—we have, in fact, never even met. I do, however, in a certain way, feel myself in his debt: In 1969, I translated Harold Robbins' novel "Never Love a Stranger," a typewritten manuscript of which circulated from hand to hand for several months in Tirana and some other cities. I knew that no book I had translated could be published (I had previously had this satisfaction denied to me in the case of my translations of Pirandello, Ibanez and Giuseppe Berto), and had not even come close to any publishing house in Tirana.

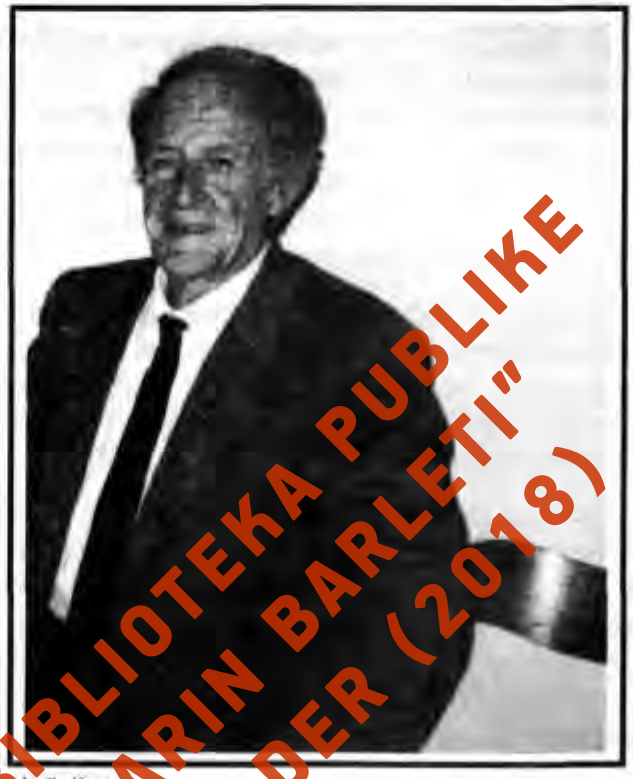
The truth is that Kadare, who had had occasion to read the translation, without saying anything to me and knowing full well that its translator was in jail, took the manuscript, delivered it to the publishing house and insisted that the book be published.

Naturally, nothing came of this, but as far as I am concerned, Kadare remains the only intellectual of the other side to have put in a good word in my favor.

Nothing of the kind has ever happened before nor did it occur again. If Kadare took such a step, it was because he was convinced of the worth of Robbins' book, because he wanted to raise the consciousness of the editors, and consequently of the readers, as regards a literature that departed from the rigid, absurd and counterproductive canons imposed by party censorship.



Ismail Kadare



Amik Kasorla

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Quite apart from the fact that the doors to any possibility of publishing were slammed shut in my face, I can still not forget Kadare's interest.

I must say, then, that I have nothing personal against him, but as the good counsel of the days of Rome teaches, one must render unto Caesar what is due unto him—no more, no less. Not only out of a concern for accuracy, but because it is the duty of a citizen. One must dot i's and cross t's to disperse the thick clouds that descended on the spiritual values of the Albanian people during the 50 years of a devastating dictatorship.

I may not be the first to say this, but I am firmly convinced that it is the duty of every Albanian intellectual sincerely and without prejudices to help restore the honor that was denied to the personalities whom the regime crippled and consigned to inhuman oblivion—and at the same time to strip from the figures created during those 50 years such merits as were not intrinsic to them but were conferred on them at the time by the regime: a difficult task, perhaps, and one that is certainly painful, but for all that a debt of honor and a task that cannot be shirked.

As Arshi Pipa wrote in the preface to his book "Contemporary Albanian literature": "One is tempted to follow Dante's verse: 'Non ragionar di lor, ma guarda e passa,' 'Do not talk about them, but watch, and go on,' in relation to the works of this literature and its scribblers. For good examples cannot be learned from the wicked."[1]

Socialist realism and those who promoted it, putting themselves outside true art and transforming literature into a brutal expression of historical falsity and spiritual impoverishment, will be seen in a different light, removed from the political.

I do not believe the lives of public figures can be separated from their works. Complementing each other, they make up a whole that can perhaps give rise to further discussion and yield various judgments, but should not blind us to the actual worth (whatever that may be) that these men have in the world of culture.

Pierfranco Bruni, in No. 82 of "Katundi Yne," says:

"Certainly Kadare is readable—and let us read him—but let us not forget his guilt. It has become easy today to slough of a past of complicity, but tearing off the mask does not mean to forget, and the responsibility of writers and of intellectuals is undoubtedly heavier than that of the common person."[2]

Ismail Kadare burst upon the Albanian literary scene on his merits and is indubitably a writer of talent. I can add nothing more to this than is already known. But at the point at which he began to give interviews and make assertions that provoke not only astonishment, but doubts, arguments, and even indignation, things begin to change and problems arise. As Seneca teaches us, "Nam cum in caelum insanitis, non dico sacrilegio facitis sed operam perditis," or, "Swearing at the heavens is not only sacrilege, but a wast of time."[3]

To tell the truth, I was dumbfounded when, on a seat in a railway compartment, I came upon an Italian magazine I was not familiar with.[4] As I began to leaf idly through it to pass the time, I chanced upon an interview with Kadare.

That everyone has the right to answer when asked questions (and this was after all an interview)—and even to speak when no one has spoken to him—is understandable enough, even if it is often tiresome.

That the liberty to express one's own thoughts is an irrefutable right of a democratic society is also self-evident. Up until that point, Kadare is also fully entitled to rejoice in and exploit this right, like anyone else. But there is a caveat.

After I had read the interview, I took another look at the name of the magazine that published it: I was not familiar with it. This fact, of course, was evidence of the lamentable deficiencies in my knowledge of this particular manifestation of Italian culture. But I was somewhat consoled when some of my intellectual friends confirmed that the magazine in question was not among the ranks of well-known cultural periodicals. And this was why

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my first question was: What could have prompted Kadare to give an interview to so obscure a publication? Some desire to educate? Had he been unable to refuse the request that Giuliano Soria interview him? I cannot imagine that this was in fact the case. The interviewer wrote at one point: "It is difficult to contact him: he lives in virtually secret exile." (But is this not what other opponents of the regime in Tirana experienced before him, when they made the decision to emigrate?) This proves that the interview was not an anomaly. It was an appointment—in other words, it connotes acquiescence.

Ismail Kadare is well-known, I would say even in Italy, for some of his works have been published by Longanesi. With his literary talent, he has become the postwar Albanian writer best-known outside his own country. This fact, notwithstanding all the more than comprehensible reservations and limitations, can only be of satisfaction to Albanians. But why, then, would he rush indiscriminately to give interviews? (I must apologize to Giuliano Soria: I do not in any way wish to cast doubts on his worth and abilities; he conducted a fine interview, intelligent and well-informed on the substance and the personality of his subject, casting light, if only in a single question, on what I would call Kadare's political ambiguity.)

It is probably not as difficult as it might seem at first blush to give an answer to this question. And, unfortunately, it is only a reply: the consciousness of becoming famous, of popularity and fame, often go to the head. What Soria has written gives an adequate portrait of Kadare as a writer. One interview more or less can have virtually no impact on the standing he enjoys thanks both to his mastery of writing and to the protection that he enjoyed from the higher echelons of the party-state of Albania after the war. Such a truth cannot be suppressed, if for no other reason than that it is only too well-known. This is a first observation. But it is too little in the face of a certain preoccupation that steadily becomes more apparent as the interview continues.

In the interview, Kadare refers to the famous verse of "Milosao" of the great de Rada [the well known 19th century Arbëresh poet and writer]: "Acorns have changed life." It is a verse that expresses, in the continual periodicity of perennial and inexorable change, the concept of the dialectical development of life. The ideas of men will and should evolve for the better, for otherwise the Christian concept of the absolution of sins, and democratic society's spirit of tolerance, would not have the sense and the meaning that they have today.

But it is no easy thing to change and to renounce a mistaken attitude in order to embrace a more positive and progressive one. AS Fuad Asllani[5] put it in the prison of Burrel[6] to the vice minister of Internal Affairs who asked him whether he had changed his political opinions after his years in prison: "Opinions cannot be changed like dirty shirts that can be cast aside for clean ones." There is no doubt that Kadare was not aware of this incident, because he had no link or contact with that segment of Albanian intellectuals who were jailed and persecuted by the Communist regime. But it cannot be doubted that he was aware of something else: that such a change of heart and of behavior, to be credible and consequently acceptable, must be convincing. And to be such, it must involve the necessary ordeal, for such a step presupposes a kind of sacrifice. It is not possible to cross the barricades without turning one's weapon on those who have remained on the other side.

To what extent has Ismail Kadare done this?

A writer intrinsically, up to a certain point, is, if not the product of the society that gives birth to him, at least a reflection of it. He represents, in his person and in his work, the values of this society—its aspirations, what it esteems and its defects. The writer becomes the reflection, for the future, of the qualities that each society singles out. A writer who is born in Socialist Realism and who represents it when he undertakes to cross to the other side can only be convincing when he says that he was constrained to write in a certain

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fashion. If I am not mistaken, Kadare has not yet openly said as much, nor will he be able to say so without prejudice to his personality, which, he maintains, was established free of any political pressure. But the exigencies of the transformation of values today both in Albania and in what is known as the Communist world are crystal clear: To afirm the new need to oppose the substance of the old; to deny the very thing that made you and raised you to the point where you are today. Ismail Kadare should condemn even the unknown subtleties, the hidden details (which the world of his readers can never know) of the social, political and ideological system that embraced him and offered him its support to afirm himself as the greatest Socialist Realist writer. And to disclaim above all, the thoughts, the pages, the works that this system has inspired, all of which are neither few nor of irrelevant importance. It seems to me that not even this has been done by Kadare.

The cultural legacy handed down from one generation to the next is not, and never has been, a purely cultural problem. It has been above all an ethical value.

I think that it is somewhat understandable that we are not dealing here with a political constraint but an ethical code. Better even than an equation of nobility and courage: Let it be expected of Kadare that after the sign of equality he may present the values that he holds dear, let him dissipate the doubts of others and restore to Albanian culture—perhaps re-evaluated in certain respects, but qualitatively clarified in many others—the fact that the indubitably is one of the most interesting artists to have published his works within the political confines of former communist Albania. And without losing any more time.

Let us speak plainly: Ismail Kadare comes to the field of true literature from the so-called school of socialist realism.

Socialist realism, this abortion of a philosophical Utopia that degenerated naturally into an unparalleled dictatorship, this bastard offspring of communist facelessness, this indescribable category that cannot be classed as a philosophy of art but was highly effective as all-powerful censorship, in whose ambit toiled miserable intellectuals whose privileged position in Socialist Albania had assured for them a consequent political blindness and moral flabbiness—Socialist realism, then, was the cause of so much harm to the Albanian world that, I think, it can be stated outright that the period of its dominance, sadly enough, was a period of 50 lost years.

Kadare had his debut and produced his work in the midst of this nightmare. He might have kept silent and refrained from writing, as did so many others, naturally unknown today in Albania. But he chose another path: that of the affirmation, at whatever price, of the Albanian literary world. This is not necessarily a fault, for sometimes the fire of inspiration cannot contain itself. But one fact must be made clear: Kadare, like anyone else, rose to fame gradually. And before he became what he is today, he began in mediocrity, as a beginner. And the arsenal that he employed (the literary arsenal, that is) did not exclude either the verses so dear to the vanity of those in power, nor the pretentious poems trumpeting the greatness of the system, nor conformist novels. Let us discuss this openly and without prevarication: a novel such as "The Wedding," in which he beat the drum of Enver Hoxha's way of the masses, in lockstep with China's "cultural" Revolution—one of the most anticultural episodes of the history of humanity—a novel like "The Great Winter," which sets on a pedestal the saviour of Albania, Enver Hoxha, who was a curse on his country and who, for 50 years on end attacked everything in his nation that was honorable, noble and Albanian, can only provoke a sense of guilt in their author today. And he need not keep this sense of guilt to himself, since, throughout the years he was writing, he spoke out on many things, perhaps more than he should have.

Two years ago Kadare undertook a step of considerable importance for his life, when he turned his back on a regime that, up to a certain point, had contributed to his success within, but even more outside the state. It was a step that surprised his friends in Albania as much as it did

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his enemies. Naturally, there were those who felt that it would have been better that his desire to take such a step not be dictated by the fear of persecution (since this entailed a certain reappraisal of Kadare's standing) but by the spirit that finally succeeded in shaking him from a mindless and contemptible torpor. In this step, above all, he was driven by a self-critical vision that could bring him—why not?—to refute some of his former values, concepts and also part of his literary production. His flight to France from Albania, I think, must only have served to take him across this gulf.

But had there truly taken place in Ismail Kadare that radical, qualitative transformation, full of denial and justifying what society expected of him, but that he himself must feel to be a liberating and inevitable step?

Without pretending to analyze the breadth of his creativity over a period of time, measured in years of work, I will dwell only on the aforementioned interview of this well-known writer, an interview that, I must say straight out, left me with a bitter aftertaste.

And this is why:

He asserted in his interview: "Albania today still nurtures an archaic world in which daily existence has not disavowed a symbolically intense past. The same is true of my novels." Here is some truth to this assertion, but it does not tell the whole story. The truth is that Albania cannot forget the past, without which it would feel diminished, since it would come to miss the continuous national identity, ethical and moral, that is passed on from generation to generation. One of the reasons why Enver Hoxha's regime was so reviled by Albanians was precisely because of his nihilistic desire to sweep away the past and build a new society based on a hideous vacuum of custom, tradition and cultural values. The perspective of the state of the dictatorship was at the root of the blindness imposed on the people.

Kadare, sometimes masterfully, has pressed this past into the service of the present.

But let us not forget that this "archaic" world, which I would define as the natural expression of a spirit that sought to perpetuate values under the intolerable conditions of the reign of violence and willful ignorance, had been brought to the heart of the Albanian world by men whose very names had been suppressed for 50 years. Let us not forget those who labored so masterfully to bring to us the epic of Gjerj Elez Alia or the tragedy of Doruntine and Constantine[8], that world of harsh but noble laws[9], the love of country, the echo of the struggles for liberty and the profoundly humane lesson of faith—Father Donat Kurti[10], and Father Shtjefen Gjeçovi, for example, Zef Schiro and Father Gjergj Fishta. Their work, and their efforts, are universally admired—how much more should respect be forthcoming from anyone who plunges himself into the world of art, which they have lit up before him with their luminous example. Shame on anyone who neglects them!

There is no doubt that seen against these great figures of Albanian culture (and naturally not only against those I have mentioned) Ismail Kadare remains in their debt. This is the lacuna to which I have alluded.

At a time when it was not absolutely necessary—no one would have noticed one opinion more or less subjecting the illustrious figures of the past to gratuitous obloquy—and how much worse when one considers that no one was constrained to join in the chorus of such unscrupulous denigrators, those creatures of Hoxha—Kadare made precisely this false step. The list of those to whom the Party-State granted the right to dictate laws in the world of the arts, marginal figures themselves, was this long.

Kadare ignored Schiro, derided Gjeçovi, was silent on the subject of Donat Kurti and attacked Fishta, attacking with him a galaxy of personalities of indisputable worth. Without wanting to pass judgment on such attacks, which like a boomerang, of course, only backfired upon the person who launched them, one cannot but hint at the

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conspiracy of silence against Martin Camaj, the unworthy polemic against Arshi Pipa, the disdainful attitude to the contributions to the Albanian world of a Selaudin Toto, a Branko Merxhani, a Lazer Shantoja, a Bernadin Palaj, the disrespect for Faik Konica. In short, it can be said that such an attitude toward this part of Albania's literary and culturual legacy cannot be forgotten. Kadare obviously considered that such an attitude on the part of the most famous Socialist Realist writer, by the talent spoiled by Enver Hoxha, would be the final blow to these values. He knew only too well, at a time when everyone knew it, that no one could set himself up in defense of the suppressed. It was the equivalent of striking a man whose hands and feet are bound—and whose mouth is also closed. In this unequal and entirely dishonest struggle, no one but he who could consider himself omnipotent could emerge victorious. One might, in this case, paraphrase Socrates: "You are wrong if you think that killing men will hinder others from calling to account your way of life." The memory of history is stubborn.

To take up another assertion Kadare makes in the interview: "The Turks really dominated our land, and the Italians as well fought us." One immediately wants to ask: but does this square with the facts? Were not other enemies, just as ferocious and even more inhuman, unleashed on the land and on the lives of the Albanian people? The true story is revealed in the half-truths and testimony on which Kadare chose to keep silent.

It may be chance or else an intentional lapse of memory that only Kadare can explain (it is something he must explain!), but how is it that neither the Serbs nor the Russians figure in the ranks of Albania's enemies marshaled in Kadare's works? With the exception of "The Great Winter," in which the Russians are set up against Kadare's hero of that winter in the '60s, against Enver Hoxha, of whom it was said that the Russians helped Albania negate its past and darken its future? Where does he tell of the Serbian and Montenegrin massacres in Kosovë and Dibra, in Shkodra and Tropoja? Kadare's novels tend to look to the past for their themes, to use allegory to interpret the problems of the present. So how is it that this allegory does not convey to us the historical truth of a past in which the Slavic States brought only conflict to Albania?

At certain moments, literature has the obligation to echo the tumult of the human spirit. These are the great historical events that, by sheer momentum, change the course of history. When a writer precedes such events and manages synthetically, to predict in his writing the truth of what is to come, quite independently of his artistic skills, he will be cloaked in the status of an oracle or a prophet. And he will not be able to talk honestly of the future unless he knows himself, and if he does not value and honor the past. In this sense, a simple poem entitled "The Horses"[12], of 1990, assumes the mantle of greatness and sees even more of what, before it, poems of grandiose title replete with mountains and mothers and eagles[13] had claimed to say, but bear no trace of that same tragic and proud history that was contemporaneously being swept from the Albanian world.

In this respect, Kadare has a debt toward the historical truth. I do not want to think that we have to do here with premeditation but an omission caused by the fact that, as Kadare himself says in the interview, "when I have contemplated treating a politically sensitive topic and could not do justice to it, I have avoided it, favoring arguments in which I could have the greatest freedom. I did not want to attack myself. But what has been written requires reinterpretation, and what is omitted demands a justification that springs from the honesty of the writer and not from the fad of the moment. This truth will come to light. Today the possibilities present themselves. With his flight from Albania, Kadare clothed himself in the mantle of a dissident. It is now time that in a clear-cut and courageous fashion he establish his works and his position not only in the context of an Albania where so many elements are seeking to find their own place, but in a nation that is indubitably going forward, sifting out the worth of both men and their works. And I do not believe that such a step can be achieved simply by the

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publication in France of "Albanian Spring," as Kadare maintains in the interview.

It will be achieved; in fact, it should be achieved without delay, when Kadare has seen fit to express his attitude on issues that he has not so far touched upon: on the haggling between Tito and Enver Hoxha over the future of Kosovo; on the massacres of the 1950s and '60s; on the brutal suppression of the movements in Kosovo in the 1980s; on the closing of Albanian-language schools and publications throughout Kosovo; on the blood spilled in Albania for 50 years; on the distortion of history and the impoverishment of the spiritual life of a people. Naturally, one cannot close the books on a writer because he has not written on a given problem, but one can demand explanations of the reasons for which he has chosen to write on another subject is an irrefutable right for anybody who has believed more in cultural figures, than political ones.

If Kadare had not emigrated to France, if he, like Ramiz Alia, had been as docile as he was with Enver Hoxha, the need for such reasoning would not have been felt. But one must not forget that a person who manages to raise himself above those around him, at the very moment that he is conscious of belonging to others as much as to himself—if not more—should take upon his own shoulders an obligation that can be carried out only under the conditions of a correct and obligatory transparency.

In the introduction to the publication of the works of Migjeni[14] in 1988 (only two years before he undertook to become an emigre), when he talks of the literary world of the 1920s and 1930s, Kadare writes of a group associated with the servile idolaters of King Zog and his regime, a group "of reactionary writers who, although they were more serious and of greater authority . . . while not bowing to the regime, nevertheless served its purposes. These were for the most part the Catholic writers of the north."[15]

Further on (there is no doubt that he is referring to the epic of "The Mountain and Lute"), he says that this "artificial work was, above all, a reactionary phenomenon, the idealization of a backward, canonical and medieval Albania."[16] And furthermore: "Similar works, like diseases, became outmoded. By good fortune, Albanian literature freed itself more quickly from this misunderstanding and this obsession."[17]

Naturally, Kadare does not say how and at what costs this "salvation" was bought. And as he did not say so then, neither does he say so today.

It is superfluous to add that with such assertions, he stoops to the very lowest level of denigration.

If it is usual that the personality of a writer informs the continuity of his works, I will not dare to imagine how he can speak in this case of a creation without flaws, of a crystalline personality.

Memory may be faulty, but what has once been committed to print cannot so easily be cast aside. Here is another passage of the introduction mentioned above:

"As in all tyrannical regimes, under the Albanian monarchy (he is referring to the reign of Ahmet Zog—my parenthesis) official and semiofficial writers who were dependent directly or indirectly on the regime, lawyers who legalized oppression, backwardness and crime, were everywhere. Their conformism (which some of them later, under the pressure of history or remorse of conscience, were to try to justify) was totally unjustifiable—their conformism was neither more nor less than literary prostitution."

One need only transpose this tirade to a few years later (from the period 1924-39, to which Kadare is referring, into the period 1944-90) and, without adding anything, the parallel between the two epochs is made plain, the milieu of Socialist Realist writers. But what Kadare does not say, we are duty bound to add: Conformism is, in fact, above all, political and moral prostitution. I found a truly striking similarity between Kadare's words and his own fate. If only I were wrong!

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There was another thought-provoking quotation in the same interview: "And then I left (in Albania) my books, which could work for liberty more effectively than I could." It may be his right to say so, but which books is he speaking of? What of those, which, according to his own reasoning, can be considered conformist?

I don't want to rub salt into a wound, but I cannot agree with Kadare when he states: "Certainly, I have never been put in prison, but prison is not the worst fate."

I am dumbfounded by so categorical a statement from someone who has no experience of the number and the conditions of prisons and the inhuman forced labor camps established by the dictatorship in Albania, lauded in its time by Kadare himself. What "worse fate" is he alluding to? Oppression of conscience? Has he forgotten that the "powerful arm of the Party" that was the Albanian Democratic Front, whose vice president was none other than the self-same Kadare, controlled, oppressed, censured and condemned the right to be free? Did the thousands and thousands of young Albanians and intellectuals who were shot, imprisoned and interned suffer less than Kadare would have had to if he had jettisoned the popularity he attained with his works, however, conformist? Does he recall that he would have had to be silent and never write again, while he knew that he could contribute more, and of the best, to Albanian literature? Would he have lost more than dozens of other writers who were incarcerated, forbidden to write and who remained unknown in the Albanian world but who swelled the ranks of that great group not of dissidents, but of proud adversaries of violence, of deceit or simply of the "conformism" of which Kadare writes and talks so freely?

"Enver Hoxha," he continues in the interview, "who was no imbecile, knew that for the nation's image it was worse to send a writer to prison than to massacre the inhabitants of an entire village."

I do not take this phrase as the cynical expression of a self-evaluation that exceeds acceptable limits, but I want to remind Kadare that Enver Hoxha in fact committed both these crimes: not only did he shoot and incarcerate dozens of writers (and exclusively those who did not toe the party line) but he arrested and shot thousands of citizens. They included: Dhimiter Pasko, Et'hem Haxhiademi, Mustafa Gerblleshi, Vinçenic Prendushi, Qemal Draçini, Arshi Pipa, Pashko Gjeçi, Lazer Shantoja, Donat Kurti, Bernardin Palaj, Kin Dushi, Kapllan Resuli, Mark Ndoja. And is this list long enough? I regret that Giuliano Soria lets pass without comment Kadare's reply: "I am a writer, not a political reporter"—as is plain, he is not familiar with Kadare's work. And how are we to classify "The Great Winter"?

Clearly, a figure known for his conformist past cannot be rehabilitated beating his breast and crying "mea culpa" while he hurls insults in all directions. This is a period in Albania when, at the drop of a hat, one party card is dropped in favor of another, and a few too many elements rush to grasp the laurels of the struggle for freedom and democracy (something that reminds me of "The Veteran," that fine satire by Pjeter Gjini that unmasks the pretense of those who had the effrontery to class themselves as veterans of Albanian independence, a movement for which they had not lifted as much as a finger.) And it is above all comprehensible that in such circumstances, people have difficulty believing in repentances that are not clearly stated.

The jibe of high-sounding words and half-truths cannot be consonant with the personality of a truly talented writer. But neither can one let pass in silence a past that was not limited to the world of letters. History has shown that humanity cannot neatly dissociate a writer's works from his life. Yet Kadare, it seems to me, wishes to claim this in an interview he gave to Zeri i Rinise (Voice of Youth), the organ of the Union of the Labor Youth of Albania), shortly before he left the country. There he talks of Mishta, no longer as one of those "northern Catholic" writers for whom "Europe began and ended with Mussolini's Italy" (a premise he puts forward in the introduction mentioned above on the work of Migjeni)—but as an Ezra Pound who may be shut up in an iron cage but

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whose works may still be read. I, who knew my fellow-citizens from the perspective of a dissident, will say that Albanians have a somewhat different idea from that of someone who, through his abilities and talent, raises himself up and becomes the mouthpiece of the culture of his country, particularly now when it appears, everyone condemned the Hoxha dictatorship and worked to bring the light of democracy to Albania (waiting inside this Trojan horse, of course, for the right moment to proclaim their personal merits!) Albanians, it must be said, are tired of rhetoric: today they are asking for evidence—honest evidence.

At a certain point in the interview, Kadare says: "At a congress of young Albanian writers (three or four days after I left the country), when a leader of the party stood up to criticize me, the audience made a violent protest, and this was the first collective resistance against the government"

To say that Kadare is mistaken—seriously mistaken—in making such an assertion is not to say very much. To say that he experienced the drama of Albania in these last 50 years without understanding would be wrong. But to credit himself with the role of pioneer of democratic protest, and I must say this openly, is to ad insult to injury, and an offense to his own people and his nation.

I would like to remind Kadare that many, many years before 1990, in an Albania in which he implied indirectly that there had not been public resistance to the government, other brave men—men of fewer words but of courage nevertheless—did something more than to spur a congress of young Socialist Realist writers to solidarity. On the balance sheet of the history of a people's struggles for freedom, the thousands of lives sacrificed and the hundreds of years spent in prison will account for much more than a trip on Air France from Tirana to Paris, transformed into a political flight.

The first 84 victims of the Socialist dictatorship, during the battle for the liberation of Tirana in November 1944, shot without trial somewhere on the outskirts of Tirana, represented an act of public rebellion. The group that tried to create the Social Democratic Party in Albania in 1946 and their subsequent trial constituted public resistance. The armed movement of Postriba was collective resistance that was drowned in blood. Must I go on?

The thousands of those who went over to the mountains after the "liberation" were a public reaction. The behavior at their trials of thousands of those persecuted for their political beliefs—full of dignity and heads held high—constituted a collective reaction. The disaffection with the collectivization of the villages was a collective movement that resulted in thousands of other imprisonments; the stubborn resistance of Albanian youth in the early years against Serbization and Russification, and against the Sinofication of life and culture (some years later), with the sole exception of a class of young men who went to study in the universities of Russia or Eastern Europe, was a collective movement—and what a reaction it was!—as was the riot of thousands of Albanians in front of the foreign embassies in Tirana in July, 1990 (only four months before Kadare's flight)—an event that in its scale has perhaps no equal in the history of Europe. And if I am not mistaken, joining the chorus of those who were outraged by this act of "hooliganism" were many "personalities" of Albanian culture, among whom, it seems to me, was non other than Kadare.

History usually comes to be written by the victors. In Albania, I think, the opposite phenomenon has occurred: violence does not supress the desire to keep alive the personalities and the values of the "resistance." And furthermore, it happened that some palace troubadour (the troubadour of that ill-famed block in the heart of Tirana, where these story-tellers were gathered to ring their tales under the rule of the dictatorship in proof of gratitude for services rendered to the system with their "art") felt it somewhat belatedly the desire to turn a page of his life (I want to believe with sincerity).

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But we must not forget that there are many pages of the book of his life that will be "turned" once and for all.

And I would like to add one last thing: it is not only the interview "The Train Ride," which Kadare granted to Mr. Giuliano Soria and which was published in the Italian periodical (four columns of text with a good five photographs of the writer) that prompted me to write these lines.

As the English proverb has it: "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." It is not worth letting truths pass into oblivion by remaining silent on them. This is a right and a duty of every Albanian. As it is of Kadare himself.

Amik KASORUHO

NOTES

1) Arshi Pipa, Contemporary Albanian Literature, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1991, p. III.

2) Pierfranco Bruni, The Figure of Kadare in His Work, in "Katunde Yne," Anno XXIII, N.82, 1992,4, p. 13.

3) Seneca, Happiness, Rome, 1992, Edizioni TEN, p. 84.

4) "The Train Ride," n.8 - 11, Sept./Dec., 1992, "The Place of Dreams,"

interview with Ismail Kadare by Giuliano Soria, starting on page 34.

5) A courageous intellectual and lawyer who was among the first to raise his voice in defense of the freedoms curtailed by the dictatorial state of Enver Hoxha.

6) The most brutal prison in socialist Albania, located near the little town of Burrel, about 50 kilometers northeast of Tirana.

7) In November 1990, Kadare took refuge in France, where he sought and obtained political asylum.

8) Figures in Albanian folklore.

9) He is referring to the "Laws of Lek Dukagjini," edited by Father Sh. Gjeçovi.

10) Father Donat Kurti, the great folklorist and writer.

11) Plato, The Apology of Socrates, Epoca, Rome, 1993, page 40.

12) A poem of a few verses, titled "The Horses" was published in the journal "Drita" in Tirana. This poem whipped the Albanian people into exhaustion in the world of the Communist party-state.

13) The poems "What the Mountains Are Thinking," "The Eagles Fly Over," and "Mother Albania" by Kadare and Agolli.

14) Migjeni, Vepra, Naim Frasheri Publishing, Tirana, 1988, edited by Mojkom Zepo.

15) Migjeni, op. cit., page XXVI.

16) Ibid, page XXIX.

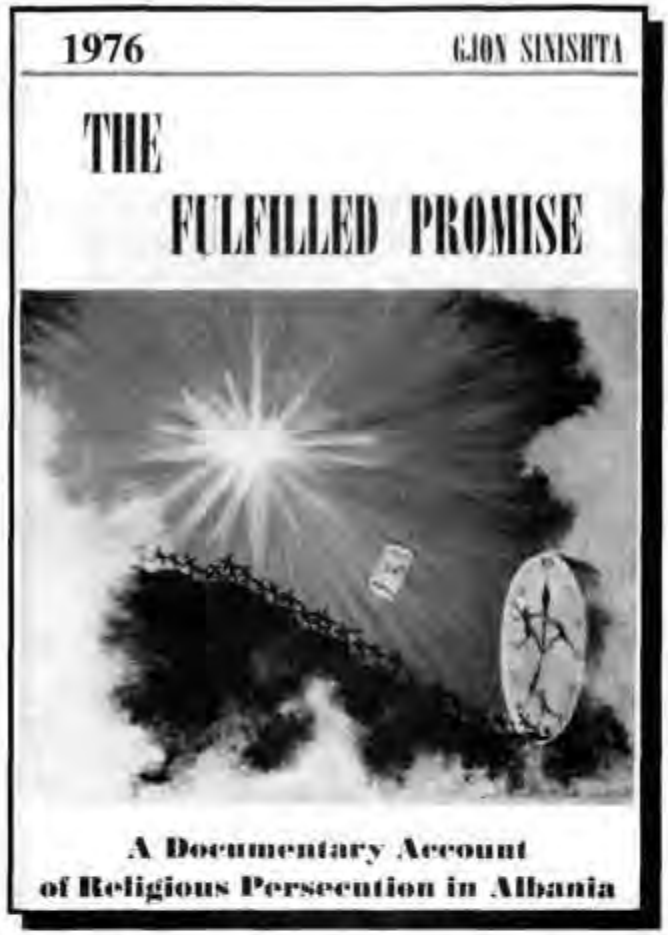
17) Ibid, page XXIX.

18) Ibid, page XXV.



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Throughout its 28 years of existence the Albanian Catholic Institute (formerly known as the Albanian Catholic Information Center) has produced fifteen volumes of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin, two books, and co-operated in the production of a half-dozen other books and documentary accounts in order to tell the world about Albania's history, culture and religion. The intent of our efforts was to shed light on the past and especially to make known the actual struggles of the Albanian people during five decades of communist oppression. The Institute also organized a number of events with the participation of international human rights organizations and religious associations concerned with the restoration and safeguarding of religious freedom in Albania. On the following pages we are printing a photo collage of our institutes' publications beginning with the *Sacrifice for Albania*, issued in 1966.



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COMMEMORATION ISSUE



ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

1985

BULETINI KATOLIK SHQIPTAR

ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

BULETINI KATOLIK SHQIPTAR



1966 - 1986

ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

BULETINI KATOLIK SHQIPTAR



ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

BULETINI KATOLIK SHQIPTAR



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ALBANIAN CATHOLIC BULLETIN

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1966 - 1991

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A DAY OF PRAYER
AND
SOLIDARITY
FOR ALBANIAN REFUGEES

DITË LUTJE
E
SOLIDARSHIE
PËR REFUGJATËT SHQIPTARË





Evolutionary Albania...















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THE PALACE OF HALLUCINATIONS:
DOES ISMAIL KADARE DESERVE THE NOBEL PRIZE?

The Nobel Prize for Literature, since it was first awarded in 1901, has had a career of mixed fortunes.

Many of its recipients, famous in their time, are utterly forgotten today. Who, for example, recalls the name of Rene Sully-Prudhomme, its earliest recipient?

In recent years, the favor of its bestowal has often seemed to be dedicated by political rather than aesthetic criteria. In 1961 it was given to Ivo Andric, the Serbophile "Yugoslav" novelist, in a decision many Croats and others criticized, believing as they did that Miroslav Krleza was a more deserving representative of South Slavic letters.

Three years afterward, the rampantly leftist Jean Paul Sartre turned the prize down; perhaps in ideological penance, the Nobel jury, the next year, presented the 1965 prize to the Russian writer Mikhail Sholokhov—whom many have said plagiarized his most famous work.

In 1971, after many years of lobbying in his behalf (including an effort by Sartre) the award was given to the Chilean Communist writer, and former active service agent of the Russian secret police, Pablo Neruda.

Neruda, author of *Odes to Stalin*, had long been denied the prize because of the objections of Scandinavian and other European intellectuals to his role in the conspiracy to murder Trotsky.

During the 1980s the prize was granted to some with clear justice—Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz in 1980, followed by Bulgarian-born Jewish writer Elias Canetti (who spoke the Sephardic dialect of Spanish in his home while writing in the German he, like other Balkan Sephardim, learned in Vienna). The Czech poet Jaroslav Seifert was appropriately honored with the prize in 1984, as was the Russian-American poet and essayist Joseph Brodsky, in 1987.

With the resurgence of the Iberians as a major force in world literature it was perhaps predictable that in 1982 the prize would go to Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a strident leftist, followed by Spanish novelist Camilo Jose Cela, in 1989, and, in 1990, Mexican poet and polymath Octavio Paz.

The award to Paz was among the most significant in recent years. Ten years before, in a 1980 interview published in the San Francisco postmodernist magazine *Re/Search*, Paz said: "When I was young I took as my own a motto of Andre Gide, 'The writer must know how to swim against the current.' "

When the Nobel Prize was presented to Paz, I wrote in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Throughout his life, Paz has been characterized by limitless curiosity and a profound, almost irrational belief in the link between independence and creativity. As a writer, Paz believes that his relationship with culture, language and profession can only be individualistic; that genuine inspiration is unclassifiable, unexplainable and resistant to all imposition. On receiving news of the Nobel award, he said: 'Writers should be independent, free and solitary.' "

Thus, the award to Paz stood as an honor of intellectual independence, of integrity, courage, and recognition of the relationship between literary excellence and the refusal to conform to "political correctness."

For notwithstanding his origins in the intellectual left, Paz in recent years has broken with the prejudices and dogmatism of the leftist outlook.

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As I wrote in 1990, "Paz rejects the outlook, popular on university campuses on both sides of the Rio Grande, that treats pre-Columbian Mexico as a lost paradise, and its successor, a Hispanized culture, as 'a vacuum in which nothing of importance occurred . . . the period of the Mexican nation's bondage.' As he writes, 'although official (Mexican government) opinion does not accept it, there are greater affinities between (modern) independent Mexico and New Spain than between them and pre-Hispanic societies.'

Paz has come to see a bulwark of pluralism in the modern Catholic church as well. In an interview with the Italian conservative Catholic magazine *30 Days*, he cited the contradiction between the commitment to tolerance and pluralism frequently voiced by the Mexican political elite and the harsh treatment meted out to the catholic community in that country in the past 70 years.

"In that interview he also declared his love for what unites Catholicism with the deepest elements of Mexican existence. 'Popular Mexican Catholicism moves me profoundly,' he said. 'It is the source of much popular creativity and also of kindness among individuals.' "

Octavio Paz has undergone a conversion, in his view of the Catholic church, from his early days as a revolutionary. In this experience, which is a product of his sense of independence, Paz provides a useful contrast with another writer who claims to have undergone a conversion—from hardline, Stalinist communism to democracy—but who cannot under any circumstance make a claim of intellectual or moral independence.

That writer is the Albanian novelist Ismail Kadare. In recent years various literary figures have been (usually unsuccessfully) championed for the Nobel Prize by lobbies actively promoting their candidacies, a feature of the awards that provides comedy relief, more than anything else, for observers of the annual event. Even before the collapse of the Albanian dictatorship such a lobby had emerged in favor of Kadare, for the Albanian Communist regime groomed Kadare for international literary success in the same way the former Soviet and East German regimes "manufactured" athletes to be sent to the Olympics and other global sports events.

Kadare has claimed a conversion to democracy, more or less simultaneous with his flight to Paris late in 1990, a few months before the regime of Hoxha's successor, Ramiz Alia, fell. Was this conversion sincere?

Certainly, not one known instance of protest or dissidence on Kadare's part preceded this political turn, which seems, rather, to have been dictated by utter expediency—knowing the regime which had so long sustained him, and for which he played the role of kept entertainer, was doomed, he sought to escape its ruin.

Thanks to the subsidies provided to him from the public budget under the Communist regime, the translated works of Kadare have achieved a certain fame in French, Italian, Spanish, English, etc. On the basis of this government-funded "success," which allegedly introduced the glories of Albanian "socialist realism" to foreign audiences, Kadare is now offered as a worthy recipient of the Nobel Prize.

In reality, such an award to the chief pet of East Europe's most repressive Communist criminals would dishonor such figures as Paz, Canetti, Brodsky, Seifert, or Milosz.

Let us examine the character and conscience of Ismail Kadare as it is expressed in his own writings—a selection of Ismail's pearls.

Kadare is known for his use of multiple genres: poetry and the novel, as well as polemics. In the field of literary "debate" he excels in intolerance, calumny, and obloquy. To my knowledge, the Nobel Prizes for Literature have yet to be granted for achievement in the latter forms of discourse.

I have commented previously (see *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, 1993) on the rank falsity with which, in a poem, Kadare labelled the Russian writers of the Khrushchev era as the assassins of Mayakovsky, who committed suicide decades before, under Hoxha's hero, Stalin. In his poem "What

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These Mountains Are Thinking" *(Përse mendohen këto male)*, published in 1964, Kadare fully affirmed his dishonesty, when he wrote that Albania waited, through long historical epochs, for the Communist Party.

We perhaps need spend little time on such works, or on other Kadarean verses, like the following:

With you Party

Even piercing pain

Is more valuable than any joy

or . . .

And there will be light.

It is not the Bible speaking,

it is the Party. Its roaring voice

resounds through people's hearts like loudspeakers . . .

We the poets of socialist realism

will come, too,

with notebooks of verse in our pockets

and turn to the place where molten steel pours down.

It should be more than obvious that the author of such lines, while perhaps fit to be placed in the company of the Stalin-worshipping Neruda, has little standing to join in the honors extended by the Nobel Prize committee to Paz, defiant of all orthodoxies; Brodsky, persecuted by the Soviet regime for his assertion of literary independence from bureaucratic control; Seifert, likewise a victim of repression in the former Czechoslovakia, or Milosz, for decades an eloquent enemy of Communist totalitarianism.

It is above all in his "chronicles" and "essays" that Kadare's unfitness for the Nobel Prize becomes most obvious.

His "commentaries" gravitate between two ignoble extremes, inextricable one from the other: on one hand, nihilistic assaults on all critics of his activities, as well as opponents of his patrons, Hoxha and Alia; on the other, literally fulsome (i.e. "copious, offensive, disgusting, obsequious, overdone") praise of those same patrons.

Before any member of the Nobel committee gives even the merest consideration to the claims of the Kadare lobby, let it be recalled that the regime of Hoxha and Alia, Kadare's mentors, pursued the most extreme antireligious policy of all the Communist regimes, without exception; that in conformance with that policy numerous priests were executed, tortured, imprisoned, and their families subject to reprisal, as was the fate of thousands of other alleged "enemies;" that in further fulfillment of that policy Catholic churches, mosques, medieval Turkish buildings and bridges, and other cultural treasures exceedingly precious to the lives of the Albanians, a poor and little-known nation, were wantonly destroyed.

In a speech, "The Literature of Socialist Realism is Developing in Struggle Against the Bourgeois and Revisionist Pressure," published in *Albania Today*, issue 3, 1977, Kadare, speaking with the manners of a teenaged hoodlum, and voicing an outlook reminiscent of the Italian Futurist intellectuals who supported Fascism, delivered himself of the following judgement on both the religiousness and the literature that form the common store of universal culture:

"In their spirit, in their content, even in their style and intonation, many of the works of the present-day decadent bourgeois literature are reminiscent of the *Bible*, the *New Testament*, the *Koran*, the *Talmud*, and other tattered remnants of the Dark Ages."

The "decadent bourgeois" writers so characterized must presumably include Paz, whose appreciative statements on the Catholic church we have cited, Canetti and Brodsky, whose work is suffused with a Jewish mentality embodied in the *Talmud*, as well as Seifert and Milosz—in other words the writers with whom Kadare would be

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associated if he were to be awarded the Nobel Prize.

It should hardly need to be said that compared with a single line extracted from *Shir Hashirim*, The Song of Songs which is a supreme glory of the *Bible*, or from the Sermon on the Mount, or from the graceful verses of the *Holy Qu'ran*, or from the traditions of Talmudic commentary, the works of Kadare count as a grain of sand beside the whole of those Albanian mountains whose real thoughts Kadare can never learn.

As it is written in the *Bible*, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fools despise wisdom and instruction," (Proverbs 1, 7). A little further, the *Bible* includes these words that could well apply to Kadare and his Communist masters: "If they shall say, come with us . . . We shall find all precious substances; we shall fill our houses with spoils. Cast in thy lot with us, let us all have one purse. My son, walk not thou with them, restrain thy foot from their paths. For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood," (Proverbs, 1, 11, through 16).

How does Kadare judge the work of those courageous Albanian intellectuals who protested the evil, the bloodshed, the uncounted crimes of the Communist order? As we learn from his 328-page collection of jottings, *Ftesë ne Studio* (*Invitation to the Studio*), issued by a state-controlled publisher in Tiranë in 1990, Kadare considers Kasem Trebeshina, a dissident Communist writer, who opposed with conscience and logic the primitive dictates of Enver, and who spent many years in prison, to be no more than a "mediocre writer with boundless ambition."

Therein he also labels Arshi Pipa, an outstanding figure in the history of antitotalitarian protest in Europe, "diabolical; to his misfortune mediocre; a denouncer; an absolute spy; an old hyena; a new Salieri (presuming, therefore, that Kadare is Mozart??—SAS)." He suggests that Pipa is both a Serb (Pipic) and comparable to the noise made when one urinates ("pipi").

But condemnation of those who, like Arshi Pipa, challenged the Hoxha regime is insufficient for Kadare—he also extends his anathemata to those who preceded it, such as Gjergj Fishta, the Catholic epic poet of Albanian nationhood, Ernest Koliqi, his successor as a defender of Christian humanism, and even Faik Konica, a pioneering political leader as well as a major Albanian writer.

In his previously-cited 1977 effusion, Kadare even goes so far as to label Faik Konica, "this bey in the service of the anachronistic Albanian monarchy," who "had close connections with the decadent modernist circles of Europe and was even their patron."

The hallucinatory quality of this last accusation should not be ignored, for while Kadare has sought to lure his readers into a *Palace of Dreams*, the title of the novel that is his most recently-translated work in English, the tone of his imprecations is that of a morbid fever rather than of a dream. Faik Konica as the *patron* of "decadent modernists in Europe?"

In the same article, the sense of disorientation is heightened by such Kadarean pronouncements as: "The coexistence of liberalism with conservatism is a phenomenon often encountered amongst decadent and reactionary men of letters."

Eleven years later, in his encomium to Hoxha and Alia, "A Broad Vision of the Leader and the Epoch," published in *Albania Today*, Issue 5, 1988, Kadare emphasized his devotion to Hoxhaite ethics. He acclaimed Hoxha as "an outstanding (sic) intellectual (sic!), erudite (sic!) and humanist (sic! ! !)." He even quotes, sounding almost satirical, the unbelievable description of Hoxha offered by Ramiz Alia, who should have blushed with shame if he did indeed write the following words: "A man with such a broad culture and learning as Enver could not allow the isolation of the (Albanian) people from the most outstanding achievements of world culture and science of all times."

This, about the brutal, willful gangster whose terrorist *Sigurimi* works, far exceeding the depradations of the Turks themselves, levelled, as

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we have said, historic structures, sought to eliminate the Gheg dialect, and forbade the printing of numerous classics of Albanian culture. Let us also not forget that Hoxha and Alia banned foreign study by all but the most pliant favorites of his bureaucratic elite and maintained extraordinary border controls that split the majority of the Albanian people away even from their suffering fellows in Kosovë!

In March 1990, only a few months preceding his flight to Paris, Kadare wrote in the classic Stalinist idiom, in "Our Time and Our Literature," published in *Albania Today*, issue 3, 1990. He began with a speciously favorable comparison of Communist-era Albanian writing with the Albanian literature of the Renaissance. He then swung into the familiar mode of inquisitorial denunciation by blaming Koçi Xoxe, a Slavophile Communist politician killed by Hoxha not long after the establishment of the Communist regime, for "a considerable damage to literature." In reality, Xoxe's period of influence—and that of the Slavophile faction of Albanian Communism in general—lasted no more than three years, while the succeeding, Xoxe-free decades saw no end of harm done to Albanian intellectual life, by individuals including Kadare, in whom Slavophile tendencies were, at least in public, absent. For while the Slavophile and especially Serbian danger to Albanian culture was open and obvious, at least to Albanians, the threat to Albania from Marxist fanaticism was no less real.

Kadare, in this testamentary declaration before his death as a communist and resurrection as an alleged dissident and democrat, incoherently charged Xoxe with fostering, among Albanian writers, "a sense of guilt. . . (aiming to) disarm them and destroy their personality . . . changing them . . . into jesters of old feudal courts." It is grossly obvious that Kadare feels no guilt for his career as Hoxha's jester. Some pages further, he directly called on Albania's writers to seek "facts, events, and protagonists" for works of poetry and fiction from "the history of our socialist state, the published records of our Party, (and) Enver Hoxha's works."

These are the words of a man living in a palace of hallucination. One of the most bizarre products of his mentality was Kadare's claim that, throughout its history, Albania waited for the Communist Party. Albania did not wait for the Communist Party, except that, after it arrived, Albania waited long and painful years for the Communist Party to leave.

For his part, Kadare should wait no longer for "his" Nobel Prize, that other hallucination. He does not deserve it, and we firmly believe that the Nobel committee will not be misled by his hallucinations, or by fables disseminated by those lobbying on his behalf, anent his imaginary status as Albania's "greatest writer" and "creator of the Albanian novel," to lure them to the moral disaster that such an award would represent.

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Stephen SCHWARTZ

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THE SKYLINE

Skyline
It's an unremembered rampart
The repeated, indefinitely repeating itself
Perfect boundary
To none
Making itself present to me
In every departure
In every anxiety of hopeful indicators
And coming, fiery and haughty, against me
Against the Rules
The perfect Skyline
Letting drop the sky
Letting it drop beyond
My self-confinement
My boundary of eyes, hands, hair, etc.
My body boundary clasped in nullifying love
Which is left to be reshaped
Indefinitely by the pregnant skyline
By the ray generating
A peak on the skyline
A peak that sprinkles a body
In the world
Undersky world
Which aspires, breathes
Its nullity
In the free skyline
Onto the closed sky
Which bursts open its bud and lets everything be made
In a suicidal skyline

Lluka QAFOKU

28.09.1991

(Ed. Note: Lluka Qafoku is a young Albanian poet and writer, whose work, like that of many other young talents, could not be published under the Albanian Communist regime because of their nonconformism and rejection of "Socialist realism." We have chosen this poem from a sheaf sent to us).

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REFLECTIONS ON PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON OUR "GREAT FRIEND AND DEFENDER"

"There won't be any fair elections in Albania as long as the statue of Lenin is still kept in the center of Tirana" said one of the American congressmen visiting Tirana in March 1991 to the Chairman of the Albanian Election Committee. All of us at the press conference were benumbed with astonishment. Now Lenin, our savior, must also be removed!

A few months earlier Stalin's statue in the center of Tirane had been surreptiously removed during the night. Now Albanians were toppling the statues of their former communist friends—Tito, Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Lenin. Likewise, their works were burned into a hill of ashes at the center of Tirana.

In the *Albanian Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, as well as in all other history books written by the government-controlled scribes during half a century of communist rule, only Lenin was mentioned as the "savior of Albania" for having "denounced the 1915 conspiracy". Deliberately these historians never mentioned the names of President Woodrow Wilson, Cornel Aubrey Herbert, Robert Cicilly, or Edith Durham.

During the years of communist suppression in Albania there was no mention of President Wilson's name. Yet, Albanian patriots remained greatly indebted to him. Wilson, the great defender of small nations, was Albanias' real savior.

In January 1924, Lenin died. Two weeks later, Wilson died. The Albanian weekly *Hylli i Dritës* (The Star of Light) in an article entitled *Dy Vdekje* (Two Deaths) compared Lenin's activity to Wilson's ideals. Lenin tried to violently instigate Bolshevik revolutions and build Soviet republics on the ruins of bourgeois states. The article said that the peoples of the world had been taken in by the ideology of the Bolshevik leviathan. Undoubtedly history would condemn Lenin as a dictator of Russia, whereas Wilson's ideals would live forever because they were based on the principles of justice, humanitarian love, and equality among nations. Unfortunately, the article said that Wilson's high ideals failed to materialize because of the intrigues, plots and selfishness of politicians.

The Albanian Constituent Assembly was invited to honor the memory of Wilson, Lenin and Vani Kosturi by reflecting five minutes in silence upon their deaths. In commenting on this event the Albanian-American newspaper *Dielli* (The Sun) published the cable of condolences sent by the Albanian Constituent Assembly to the White House. No one knows for certain whether they sent a similar telegram to the house of Lenin, the article concluded.

That day Fan Noli was not present at the Assembly. In the next meeting of the Assembly, however, Fan Noli delivered a speech about President Wilson. That speech was received by thundering ovation. He told of the benefits that southern Albania received because of immigration to the United States during the years Wilson was in the White House. That successful immigration helped ease social tensions and created economic well-being. From the Shkumbini River to the southern border, eighty per cent of the new housing was built with the money sent by Albanians in America. For the Albanian immigrants America was a school wherein they learned work discipline, respect for law, the advantages of organization, and the allegiance to their country.

Noli mentioned that America was the one country which allowed the establishment of the Albanian Orthodox Church. This dream of Albanian Renaissance patriots could be realized only in America, in Boston, in 1908. Another twenty years had to elapse before the Albanian Orthodox Church could be transplanted from America to Korça, because the patriarchs of Alexandria and of Moscow as well as the Orthodox Church in Cyprus had

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excommunicated the Albanian Church. The Holy Synod would not recognize the Albanian Church until 1937.

Noli mentioned that without the Albanian immigration to America there would be no money to finance the publication of Albanian books, or the convening of the Congress of Lushnja so the Albanian Renaissance would have greatly delayed.

Among the direct actions of Wilson for Albania, Noli cited the American assistance in 1914. The Toskëria region was occupied and only the United States did not overlook the miserable plight of thousands of Albanian refuges who were swarming into Vlora and perishing from cold, hunger and disease. At the end of WW I when Albania was devastated and ruined by foreign invasions, America sent her Red Cross to Albania.

The White House was still headed by Wilson when the American Technical School was founded. The school run by Principal Harry Fultz was the only modern school in Albania.

So great was the respect of Albanians for Wilson that whenever they came to a deadlock with grabby chauvinists, they found recourse in saying: "We have Wilson our great friend". This great trust of Wilson came naturally to Albanians because of his 14 Points and especially his principle that *We shall fight for the rights and liberties of small nations*. On July 1, 1917, when Wilson was on his presidential yacht heading to Washington's Memorial to deliver a speech, Fan Noli met him and elicited his promise to help Albania: *There will be one voice at the Peace Conference, and I will use that voice for Albania*.

The Albanian newspaper, *Drita* (the Light) compared Wilson's ideals to the teachings of the Bible and to the projects of Immanuel Kant and of Bernardin de Saint Pierre. Among the three greatest Americans, this newspaper mentioned President Washington as a symbol in the struggle for independence; President Lincoln as a symbol in the struggle against social injustice; and President Wilson as a symbol of the struggle for international justice among nations.

In January, 1920, Albania was in mourning. Kosova remained under Serbian control. France and England planned to divide Albania among the Serbs, Italians, and Greeks. Luckily, through an American missionary in Albania, the Albanian delegation was able to reach Mrs. Woodrow Wilson. Afterwards the President called in the French and the English delegations and told them the United States would never allow such a division. "Albania will be a free country", he said firmly. Though confined to bed, President Wilson not only did not sign this plan but he wrote on the document two important notes which Noli called "Wilson's masterpieces". With them he saved Albanian independence and forestalled the partition of Albania. Noli wrote that "Wilson made it possible for us to breathe freely and achieve our freedom". Faik Konica described Wilson's defense of Albania as the sending of a "thunderbolt crashing on the table where robbers of freedom and the torturers of small nations were hatching their plans".

In a telegram sent to Mrs. Woodrow Wilson Albanian-Americans expressed their deep grief at the death of her husband and their defender and friend in times when their country faced extreme danger. Vatra of Boston sent a tribute of 100 red and white carnations bound with a red and black ribbon matching the colours of the Albanian national flag. She replied "Mrs. Woodrow Wilson desires to express to the officers of the **Vatra** her deep appreciation of their kind sympathy, and her grateful thanks for their tribute of flowers".

Wilson had saved Albania with his idea for a League of Nations proclaimed in January 1918. He called for the establishment of a "general association of nations, affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike." When Albania was admitted to the League of Nations in December 1920, her independence was, therefore, officially recognized.

To honor the memory of President Wilson as well as to express their gratitude, the Albanian-Americans of the Vatra Federation sent a proposal to the Chairman of the Albanian Constituent As-

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President Woodrow Wilson

sembly to rename the town of Saranda or Shën Gjin after Wilson. In their telegram they said this was very easy to do because neither name was connected with any definitive event in Albanian history. Both were Venetian names. Shën Gjini is an Albanianized word for *San Giovani di Medua*, whereas the name Saranda derives from the Italian word *Santi Quaranti*.

In Geneva today Wilson is memorialized three times—by a placque on the lakeside Palais Wilson, the original building of the League; by a bronze globe in the gardens of the League's permanent headquarters; and by the lifelong gratitude of Albania. Noli best expressed Albanian affection for Wilson when he remarked that "when our country was protected from foreign invasions, when our country was blessed with the days of freedom after so many untold sufferings, I had a lump of emotion in my throat and a name kept presenting itself in my mind, the name that has won the gratitude of all Albanian hearts, the name of President Wilson".

Eighty years ago in the Balkans, in Sarajevo, the Serbian nationalists lit the wick of a power keg. The chauvinistic fevers and greed to enlarge the empires had blurred the vision of the Europeans of those days. At the end of WW I they did not understand the Wilsonian vision of peace settlement. Clemenceau sneered. "Why, God Almighty has only ten commandments!"

It took another world war to understand Wilsonian principles. At the end of WW II, the allied victory opened a new era for the continent of Europe. It resulted in the eventual economic and political integration of the continent. This time the victors did not suffocate the vanquished, as they did with the Versailles Treaty of 1919. On the contrary, Italy and Germany were called upon to join in the common effort to build a new Europe of peace and prosperity for all. The Marshall Plan best illustrates this constructive and farsighted policy. Since then Europe has gone a long way towards political integration and has achieved unparalleled economic development and prosperity. Unfortunately, half of the continent fell under Soviet rule. Today a new cycle of "mother party" chauvinism and Serbian nationalism is repeating itself on this 80th anniversary of the outbreak of WW I. Yet, present generations of Europeans, however, have learned the lessons of history the hard way. Thus in 1991 Albanian students together with the workers shouted the slogan in Sheshi Demokracija: *"Unite, Unite, Europe!"* It gladness our hearts to learn that President Clinton cherishes transcendental ideals like Wilson but with a more pragmatic attitude. By holding to these ideals, Albanians hope to advance more decisively into the coming century.

Ozzim HADAJ

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ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE 1911 NORTHERN ALBANIAN HIGHLANDERS REBELLION

In March Albanians annually observe the anniversary of the 1911 Northern Albanian Rebellion against the Turks. The celebration brings together Albanians of different political, social, religious, and regional backgrounds. In a spirit of sincere brotherhood and elation they commemorate the leaders of the rebellion in Malësia who spearheaded the path of Albania towards freedom and independence in 1912.



Dedë Gjon Luli, the legendary leader and hero of the 1911 Highlanders Rebellion

On March 24, 1911 the Albanian double-headed eagle flag was raised for the first time in 5 centuries since the death of Skanderbeg. The flag was raised on Deçiq mountain top, near the town of Tuzi. It had been wrapped and secretly carried from Shkodër by Franciscan Father Mati Prennushi under his religious habit. This territory, Malësi e Madhe e mbi Shkodërs, unfortunately is presently under Montenegrin and Serbian occupation. The legendary leader of the uprising, Dedë Gjon Luli, with his brave highlanders defeated the well equipped Turkish forces and issued a cry throughout Albania for a general armed rebellion against the Turkish regime. Thanks to this rebellion and the uprisings which followed throughout the country, Albania was freed and on November 28, 1912 proclaimed its independence.

In North America the main celebrations of the 1911 Rebellion are held in New York and Detroit. In March 1994 at the anniversary celebration in New York, Albanian political, cultural and religious leaders, were joined by New York Congressmen Benjamin Gilman and Eliot Engel. A similar festive reunion was held in Detroit. There the majority of Albanian-Americans have roots in Malësia. The celebration at St. Paul's Church had over 1500 people in attendance. For the first time Albanians of the Southern California celebrated the 1911 Rebellion in Downey with a sizable Albanian community from Malësia.



The historical Albanian flag raised at the mountain of Deçiq, 1911

The celebration of this important anniversary is always a joyous opportunity to revive the rich Albanian patriotic, cultural and religious traditions. May these celebrations encourage Albanians to issue another cry for freedom and create another alliance, similar to that of 1911, in order to defend their nation as well as the threatened Albanians, in Kosova.

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ALBANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY LEADER FORMS CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The charitable Frosina Foundation was established last yrar in Boston by the distinguished Albanian-American Van Cristo. We are pleased to print Mr. Cristo's remarks made to the National Independence Day celebration in Boston in November 1993 concerning the immediate need for such an institution because of the ever increasing number of young Albanians reaching America.

* * *



Van Christo

The past year or so has seen the arrival of many Albanians who have come to America to make a new life for themselves. With the collapse of communism in 1991 and the loosening of travel restrictions that had been in place for almost 50 years, these Albanians took the first opportunity available to them to come to this country in order to share in the same good life as those earlier Albanians who had emigrated to America before World War II.

With high expectations, these new Albanians sought out their relatives or other American-Albanians in the churches and mosques throughout this country to help them. Yet, frustration, disappointment, and resentment quickly set in on both sides because the American-Albanian community was neither prepared nor equipped to provide services to the new arrivals. Also, the economic environment in the 1990s is much different than in the 1920s, and America has become a place where large corporations are laying off people in droves and traditional, large manufacturing institutions are moving their businesses out of the country.

In short, America does not have the need or place for a new immigrant labor force that it once had. Another issue is that our children, the American-Albanians in their 20s and 30s, feel less kinship with the new immigrants because they have a different culture and language.

These dashed expectations on both sides have created, at least, an unease and, in some cases, a rift between the new Albanians and the established community. Without question, we'll soon reach that time when we can anticipate the arrival of many Albanians to America who will be granted both citizenship and immigrant status. It is not unreasonable to assume that we can expect anywhere from three to five thousand Albanian emigres each year whose instincts will cause them to settle in those parts of America where there already are existing American-Albanian communities—Boston, Worcester, New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit, to name a few.

The task then falls on the American-Albanian community to welcome the Albanian emigres and to render as much assistance as possible to help them adjust—especially during their first weeks in America. However, this is not an easy task because there are no existing structures in the present American-Albanian organizations to help the new Albanians adjust to this country, to work through the maze of institutions and organizations, and to help them connect with agencies that can assist them to find homes, jobs, relatives, and sources of medical and financial assistance until they can fend for themselves.

I believe what is needed as a means by which the interest and involvement of the American-Albanian community as a whole can be centralized so that the combined efforts of all the organizations can have a real impact in helping our Albanian brothers and sisters make a new beginning in America. We should be able to create one non-sectarian organization that can serve as a clearing house for information and offer substantive referral services. We also need to begin to identify and secure federal, state, and private funding. We will need the support, guidance, and cooperation

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of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, the American-Albanian Islamic Centers, the American-Albanian Catholic churches, and all other existing American-Albanian organizations that are now offering some services and guidance to the new emigres.

Drawing on the resources of these established institutions and their networks and finding the necessary outside funding, we can construct a framework so that our assistance can be effective, efficient, and timely, and so that we can ease the burden from individuals and families.

Historically, Albanians have always banded together during times of stress for their common good. The most important benefit to all of us is the resumption of the immigration of Albanians that will increase the numbers of ethnic Albanians in the USA. As an ethnic minority, we must embrace, with pride, our religious diversity. As Orthodox, Catholics, and Moslems, we must serve as an example to our chosen country, America, of an ethnic group with a glorious history that can get beyond religious differences to come together to pursue our common dreams. This will enrich the lives of everyone including our American neighbors who will have greater access to the Albanian culture and traditions.

Our history has proved how the early Albanians in America came forward, and by their efforts, time, and hard-earned monies helped to ensure the survival of Albania and our right to be called Albanians when other countries had sought to deprive us of our nationality. It's now time for all of us to come together wherever we are in this great country of America to help our fellow Albanians so that this chapter in the history of American-Albanians does honor to our parents and grandparents.

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Mr. Christo, a community leader and activist for many years, recognized that newly arrived Albanians needed assistance. He has taken the initiative to start a charitable organization for this purpose. It is called the Frosina Foundation. This foundation will initially serve as a clearing house for Albanian emigres where they can gain information regarding translation services, immigration law, the location of lost relatives, social security, employment opportunities and medical assistance. Among the long-term services that the Frosina Foundation hopes to offer are low-interest business and personal loans, business marketing data, information about educational opportunities and scholarships, social counseling and citizenship application procedures.

According to Cristo, "The Frosina Foundation is something that I have been thinking about for the past few years. It will begin activities by requesting initial financial support from American-Albanians and other interested individuals. Simultaneously it will seek grants and assistance from other foundations and corporations. The Foundation will be truly non-sectarian so it can serve Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Moslem Albanians equally. The Albanians have a glorious history as an ethnic group that can get beyond its religious differences to work together for the common good of all Albanians. For me it is a dream come true and I am happy to make the commitment to the new endeavor."

Van Cristo, a native of Albania, came to Boston as an infant with his parents. Cristo has been a longtime supporter of Albanian culture in the United States. He has served as conductor/director of the "Kor' I Usterit", an Albanian men's chorale group. He has published articles on Albanian art and music, and has been a television and radio commentator on Albanian affairs and a consultant to Radio Tirana. Since 1991 he has been the Executive Editor of the American-Albanian monthly newspaper **Liria** (Liberty).

The "Frosina Foundation" will seek and should be able to receive a Federal Ruling that it is a Section 501 (c) (3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code, publicly supported, so that donations and membership will be deductible for income, gift and estate tax purposes. All financial records will be public and annual reports will be available to all members.

Those interested in joining the "Frosina Foundation" or assisting its noble work may contact:

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FIVE YEARS OF THE ALBANIAN AMERICAN CIVIC LEAGUE

The Albanian-American Civic League (AACL) was founded in 1989 by Joseph DioGuardi, an ardent Arberesh and at that time a Republican member of the U.S. Congress representing Scarsdale, N.Y. Since then Mr. DioGuardi has distinguished himself not only as the leading public figure from the Italo-Albanian Arberesh community in the U.S., but also as America's outstanding crusader for the rights of Albanians throughout the Illyrian region — in Kosove, in Montenegro, in the Sanjak, and in Chameria as well as within the boundaries of the formerly communist-ruled state.

In 1989, Mr. DioGuardi bought a bulletproof vest and travelled to Kosove for the first time, as a witness to the depredations visited on the province by the Serbian demagogue Milosevic, his tanks, troops, and special police. He also conducted a suprise press conference in Belgrade, to the dismay of the Serbian authorities.

The next year Mr. DioGuardi and the AACL lobbied for the first congressional hearings on the Kosove issue, with testimony by Ibrahim Rugova, Rexhep Qosja, and other outstanding Kosovar personalities at hearings called by Congr. Tom Lantos (D-Cal) of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

In late spring of 1990, Mr. DioGuardi, Congr. Lantos, and Mrs. Lantos traveled by car from Prishtine, the capital of Kosove, to Tirane, to urge the still-Communist government of Albania to establish democracy in the interest of Kosove in particular. Mr. DioGuardi and the AACL also held rallies and saw economic sanctions against then-Yugoslavia through the U.S. Congress.

In the years that followed, Mr. DioGuardi and the AACL have worked tirelessly for the welfare of the Albanian people. In 1991, the AACL and the National Republican Institute monitored the first elections held in Albania, which were fraudulently fixed by the Communists — an outcome denounced by the AACL. Mr. DioGuardi returned to Albania for the second election in 1992 and brought Albanians with automobiles from Macedonia to support the democratic electoral campaign of Dr. Sali Berisha; the same year he went to Macedonia to monitor that country's referendum on Albanian autonomy.

Last year, Mr. DioGuardi organized visits to Albania and Macedonia with the participation of U.S. congressional staff. He also spoke to the First International Conference for Investment in Albania, describing Albania as a future Hong Kong of Europe and Switzerland of the Balkans. He called for Albanians to recognize the economic power represented by the large Albanian community abroad, and compared Albania with Israel as a country with a small population but a big future, thanks to the support of its diaspora.

In a letter sent to Republican Sen. Robert Dole late in 1993, Senate Majority Whip and a firm friend of the Albanian and other victims of Serbia, Mr. DioGuardi outlined the concerns shared by all Albanian Americans. These include:

**Kosove and the fight against Serbian "ethnic cleansing."* Mr. Dioguardi wrote, "Kosove today is a concentration camp for those who refuse to leave their homeland." He stated that the only solution in the short term is establishment of a United Nations protectorate for Kosove.

**Macedonia and the campaign by Slavic nationalists to limit Albanian rights there.* Mr. DioGuardi has called for withholding aid to Macedonia until the status of Albanians is fully rectified.

**Montenegro, where 100,000 Albanians suffer oppression.*

**Albania itself*, for which Mr. DioGuardi and the AACL have called on the U.S. Agency for International Development to support small and medium industry through an enterprise fund, and on the U.S. to expedite full membership for Albania in NATO.

Most recently, Mr. DioGuardi and the AACL has called for continued pressure on the Clinton administration to follow through on its promised actions against Serbian aggression in Bosnia and Hercegovina today, and we fear, in Kosove tomorrow. He has launched "Project Truth" to educate the whole American public on the plight of the Albanians threatened by Serbian imperialism.

Mr. DioGuardi has written, "Only when we capture the hearts of the American people can we count on the aid, weapons, and investment crucial to the survival of ethnic Albania."

To Mr. DioGuardi and to the Albanian American Civic League goes the warmest regards of the **Daniel Dajani Albanian Catholic Institute** and the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*.

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A NOTE ON 17TH CENTURY ALBANIAN JEWRY

Jews have played a minor role in Albanian history, but one worthy, nonetheless of serious study. In the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* for 1991, the author of these lines presented "Some Notes on Albanian Jewry", covering the history of the community up to the recent migration of most of its members to Israel.

As we have noted, Albania and its people played a specially honorable role during World War II and the Holocaust, having protected Jews under its jurisdiction both in the territory of the 1912 Albanian state and in Kosove and western Maqedoni while those areas were under Albanian local administration; indeed, some Jews who fled into the Albanian zone were among the very few who escaped the disaster visited on the ancient Jewry of Maqedoni thanks to the collusion of the German military and the Bulgarian occupation authorities. It is also notable that of the former Yugoslav territories, during the war, Kosove had the highest rate of survival of Jews (more than 60 percent).

The presence of Jews had been noted in Albanian territory since the 12th century, with the communities of Durres and Vlore, which were centers of maritime trade, and in the inland towns such as Berat, Elbasan, Prishtine, Prizren, Peje, Gjakove, and Shkup greatly strengthened by the arrival of *Sephardim* expelled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the 15th century. As elsewhere in the then-Ottoman dominions, the Sephardim were welcomed by the Turkish authorities.

The Sephardim of Albania prospered through trade, thanks to their constant communication with the Jewries of Split and Dubrovnik in Dalmatia, with the communities spread throughout Bosnia and Hercegovina, and with those in Maqedoni centered on the "Sephardic capital", Selanik, the Jerusalem of the Balkans that until the end of the 19th century and the withdrawal of Ottoman power had a Jewish majority.

Like the Sephardim elsewhere, the Jews of Otttoman Albania maintained their Iberian culture, using the Castilian language, known as "Ladino" or "Judeo-Spanish", in a form that originally assimilated Catalan and Portugese words, reflecting the differing origins of its speakers, and later borrowed many Turkish words.

Using this Castilian medium the Balkan Sephardim created a rich literature, ranging from wonderful ballads, religious songs and proverbs to the magnificent religious encyclopedia known as *Me'am Loez*, the first volume of which on *Bereshith* (Genesis) was compiled by R. Jacob Culi and printed in Constantinople in Castilian, using Hebrew letters, in 1732. A compilation of religious commentary intended to facilitate Sephardic literacy as well as piety, and steeped in the specifically Sephardic outlook, *Me'am Loez* became the greatest Sephardic classic, found in every home. It remains a major Jewish source today, and has been translated into English, under the title *The Torah Encyclopedia*.

The survival of Castilian modes of expression among the Balkan Sephardim was, of course, not limited to religious life. It should be noted that when the great Spanish archivist of Sephardic balladry, D. Manuel Manrique de Lara, toured the Balkans in 1911, collecting texts in the company of Moshe Attias, a trip to Kosove turned up a rich store of dozens of Castilian songs, then still sung by the Jews of Prishtine and other Kosovar towns.

The Jews of Albania also played a significant role in one of the main episodes of Jewish history in the last thousand years: the movement of Sabbetai Sevi, the 17th century "mystical messiah" whose claims of an imminent fulfillment of divine justice overwhelmed and in many ways transformed the Jewish life of the period.

The life of Sabbetai Sevi is described in a study that is a central contribution to modern Jewish historiography, the magistral *Sabbetai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* by Gershom Scholem. This volume of 1000 pages, published in 1973 by Princeton University Press, may be considered the apex of the work of Scholem, an outstanding intellectual who came to maturity in Weimar Germany, in the company of the brilliant, unorthodox Marxist Walter

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Benjamin, whose criticism is today the touchstone of many university careers in Europe and the Americas. Unlike Benjamin, Scholem found fulfillment neither in Marxism nor in modernity but in religion and above all in Kabbalah. His *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* has opened up this side of Jewish life to more than a generation of readers and scholars.

Sabbetai Sevi was born in Izmir in 1626, on the 9th of Ab, the date marking the destruction of the Temple and one of the most significant in the Jewish religious calendar. In 1648, i.e. at 22, he underwent an internal revelation, conceiving himself as Messiah. Of course, it is to be noted that this insight occurred at a time of millenarian disturbances in the Christian world, with both the ecclesiastical and the secular orders challenged by radical protest movements, of which the Protestant sects in northern Europe, and particularly the Cromwellian movement in England, were most typical.

Sabbetai Sevi's instability and excesses were soon visible and he was expelled from the Jewish community of Izmir. He travelled throughout the Sephardic world, via Selanik and Egypt, to Palestine, making his way back and forth with the remarkable mobility of Jews at that time. He was joined by an apologist, a Sephardi Kabbalist like Sabbetai, Nathan of Gaza, and they together engaged in many singular adventures.

Sabbetai's belief in his messianic status, supported by the declamations of Nathan, brought about a mass awakening in the Jewish world, beginning in Palestine but affecting Jews everywhere from London to Fez in Morocco, to Yemen and Baghdad. Entire communities committed themselves to the new illumination profferred by Sabbetai and Nathan. Thousands became his followers. Kabbalistic arguments proving his messianic nature through numerology and textual exegesis began to pour from the Hebrew presses of Europe. Vienna and Amsterdam, Venice and, of course, Selanik, homes to enormously influential Jewish merchant classes, became the centers of fantastic excitement. The mass exaltation that began among the Sephardim spread throughout the Ashkenazi Jewish communities as well.

The advent of the new "king of the Jews" became so tumultuous a phenomenon as to attract considerable attention even among Christians. But in September 1666 the greater Sabbatian hysteria collapsed when, in Edirne, and apparently under compulsion, he apostasized his Judaism and converted to Islam, adopting the name Mehmed. His most faithful followers, refusing to abandon him, also converted, and thus was created the obscure Muslim sect of *Donmeh*, or "crypto-Jews" practicing the religion of Mohammed in public but maintaining Jewish beliefs in private.

The Donmeh, as described by Scholem, exhibited characteristics in common with the Bektashi dervish order, of notable significance in Albanian history. As Scholem notes, the subject of Sabbatian-Bektashi contacts is "of considerable importance", and "it seems probable enough that Sabbetai somehow found his way to dervish circles". In a curious further connection, one Sabbatian author, Baruh of Arezzo, argued that the entry of Sabbetai Sevi and his followers into Turkish Islam was dictated by the concentration in Islam of sacred "sparks" from within the Christian world, specifically represented by the *Yeniceri* or Janissaries, the body of men drawn from the Christian youth of the Ottoman empire and trained for imperial service; it is well-known that the *Yeniceri* maintained a special relationship with the Bektashi order.

Sabbetai Sevi's preachings and questionings did not stop, nor did his charisma cease to be perceived as threatening. In 1673 he was banished by the Turkish authorities to a form of house arrest, in Ulqin on the Albanian-speaking coast of the Adriatic. Scholem consistently refers to this concluding chapter of Sabbetai Sevi's life as his "Albanian exile".

It is curious for those of us involved in Albanology to learn that Sabbetai and his followers interpreted the name of Ulqin Kabbalistically, sometimes rendering it as Alqam, referring to a citation in *Proverbs*, to *melekh 'alqum* or "the king against whom there is no rising up". By the same method the name of Elbasan in Albania was interpreted as a reference to *Psalms*, in which the name Bashan occurs. Bashan or Bassan thus became the sacred Sabbatian name for Albania.

The last years of Sabbetai Sevi were lonely. From Ulqin, he communicated with Jews in Konstantinopoje, Edirne, Sofia, Selanik, and Kastoria

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(where Nathan of Gaza came to reside), and his disciples visited him occasionally, sometimes disguised. But Ulqin lacked much of a Jewish presence, which may have been precisely the reason he was banished there.

Nonetheless, the Albanian town of Berat, which had a small Jewish community, became a center of Sabbatian communication. The sole surviving autograph document by Sabbetai Sevi is a letter to the Jews of Berat, written in August, 1676, and asking them for a Hebrew prayer book for use in the High Holy Days of the following month. This request had come some months after his last mystical illumination, which produced a kind of testament issued from "Alqum" and kept secretly by his followers.

Only weeks after sending his request for a prayerbook to the Jews of Berat, Sabbetai Sevi died in Ulqin, on Yom Kippur, September 17, 1676. Ten years and one day had passed since his conversion to Islam. Word spread slowly through the Jewish world — his remaining followers seem to have sought to keep the news quiet, and there were many reports of his burial in Berat, with belief in that Albanian city as his final resting place remaining current late into this century. But as Scholem notes, he was most likely interred in Ulqin.

Scholem writes, "the unmarked grave in (Ulqin) was visited up to the beginning of the 20th century by Donmeh pilgrims from (Selanik)". Sabbetai's disciple, Nathan of Gaza, died in Shkup in 1680.

We need not share the extraordinary imaginings, indeed, the madness, of Sabbetai Sevi. But his role in Jewish history deserves and will undoubtedly attract continous study. We can imagine him in his last years, visited by his disciples, who followed the road to Ulqin via Shkodër, along the southern rim of dark, mystical Lake Shkodër, on a high, mountainous road this writer has also travelled in part. We can think of him taking inspiration in Albania's mountains and rivers, in the wide and tranquil Adriatic. We can strain to hear his voice as he sang, ecstatically, his favorite of all songs, the Spanish and Sephardic ballad *Meliselda*, known throughout the Balkan and Ottoman lands:

To the mountain I ascended
To the river I descended
Meliselda I met there
The king's daughter bright and fair.
There I saw the shining lass
As she came up from the bath
Her arched brow dark as night
Her face a gleaming sword of light
Her lips like corals red and bright
Her flesh as milk, so fair and white.

Sabbetai Sevi interpreted this song, in the Kabbalistic manner, as an evocation of the beloved such as appears in *Shir Hashirim*, the "Song of Songs", that is the crown of Jewish mystical expression, and of the Kabbalistic Shekinah herself, the divine force.

And above all, we understand that the last years of this unique figure were doubtless made easier by the traditional hospitality, the generosity of his Albanian neighbors. The least one can hope is that one day, when Ulqin is perhaps restored to Albania, the tomb of Sabbetai Sevi will be marked anew, in recognition of this remarkable personality. His life speaks to all of those who have travelled, physically or symbolically, from Berat via Shkodër to Ulqin, and beyond — to all those mystics and poets, who give a special meaning to the cultural experience of the Balkan peoples.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

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ALBANIA IN THE 'ANONYMI DESCRIPTIO EUROPAE ORIENTALIS' (1308 A.D.)

The Albanians first entered the annals of post-classical recorded history in the second half of the 11th century and it is only at this time that we may speak with any degree of certainty of an Albanian people as we know them today, although their predecessors, no doubt with a strong Illyrian element, seem to have inhabited the same northern Albanian mountains since ancient times. In his 'History' written in 1079-1080, Byzantine historian Michael Attaliates was first to refer to the *Albanoi* as having taken part in a revolt against Constantinople in 1043 and to the *Arbanitai* as subjects of the duke of Dyrrachium.

The period between this eleventh century of initial Crusading fervour with an awakening interest in the east and the fifteenth century when the first substantial traces of the Albanian language were recorded was one of evolution, consolidation and migratory expansion for the Albanians. As a people they began to make their mark on history. Any reference to Albania and the Albanians in this period is therefore of crucial significance.

The 'Anonymous Description of Eastern Europe' is a mediaeval Latin text from the year 1308 A. D., containing a survey of the lands of Eastern Europe, in particular, the countries of the Balkans. Its anonymous author is thought to have been a French or French-educated cleric, most likely of the Dominican Order, who was sent by the church to Serbia where he gained much of his information on the Balkans. The text of the *Anonymi Descriptio Europae Orientalis* is contained in several mediaeval codices, among which Ms. Lat. 5515 and Ms. Lat. 14693 at the Bibliothéque Nationale in Paris, Ms. 263 of the library of the City of Poitiers, and Cod. Lat. 66 of the University Library of Leiden. The manuscript was edited in Kraków in 1916 by Olgierd Górka. In addition to sections depicting the various regions of Byzantine Greece, Rascia, Bulgaria, Ruthenia, Hungary, Poland and Bohemia, it contains a section on Albania, one of the rare descriptions of the country in the early years of the fourteenth century. The text reads as follows:

Consequenter dicendum est de Albania, que est coniuncta Grecie immediate a parte meridiei et est sita inter Rasiam et terram despoti. Est enim Albania regio satis lata et magna. Habens homines bellicosos valde, sunt enim optimi sagitarii et lancearii. Quatuor fluviis magnis tota hec regio irrigatur, videlicet Ersenta, Mathia, Scumpino, Epasa. Terra est fertilis in carnibus, caseis et lacte, [in] pane et vino non multum habundant, sufficienter tamen habent presertim nobiles; civitates, castra, fortalicia et villas non habent, sed habitant in papilionibus et semper moventur de loco ad locum per turmas et cognationes suas. Habent tamen unam civitatem, que vocatur Duracium et est Latinorum, ab ea habent pannos et alia necessaria. Partem huius regni cum civitate duracena tenet nunc princeps tarentinus filius regis Sycilie et hoc ex voluntate libera dominorum de terra, qui ipsum propter naturalem amorem, quem habent ad Gallicos, sponte et libere eum in dominum receperunt. De Apulia et de civitate brundensima nocte potest transiri in Duracium et de Duracio per Albaniam potest iri in Greciam et in Constantinopolim valde faciliter et bene absque difficultate viarum et periculo aquarum et hanc viam faciebant antiquitus imperatores Romanorum, nam nimium tediosum est exercitum copiosum ducere tanto tempore per mare et per tam longam viam. Dictum Albaniae regnum nunc regem nullum habet, sed terra dividitur per principes terrae, qui ipsam regunt et ipsi nulli subsunt. Dicitur autem hec provincia Albania eo quod albo crine homines illius regionis nascuntur. Canes sunt in ea ingentis magnitudinis et tante ferocitatis quod leones perimerunt, unde et Plinius refert, quod Albani miserunt unum canem alexandro magno, qui de leone, elephante et tauro in stadio triumphavit. Oculos habent depictos et glaucos in pupilla adeo quod melius de nocte vident quam de die. Duas tamen constat ese Albanias, unam in Asia que est circa Indiam et de illa non loquimur hic, aliam in Europa, que est de imperio constantinopolitano et de hac loquimur hic. Duas provincias continet in se, videlicet Clisaram et Tumurici. Preter has duas provincias habet iuxta se alias provincias, videlicet Cumaniam, Stopbanatum, Polatum, Debre que quidem provincie sunt tributarie eisdem Albanensibus et quasi serue, quia exercent agriculturam et colunt vineas ipsorum ac seruiant necessaria in domibus suis. Homines istarum provinciarum non moventur de loco ad locum, sicut prefati Albanenses, sed habent stabiles mansiones et opulia, nec sunt pure catholici,

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nec pure scismatici. Si tamen esset, qui eis verbum dei proponeret, efficerentur puri catholici, quia naturaliter dilgunt latinos ut dictum est. Habent enim Albani prefati linguam distinctam a Latinis, Grecis et Sclavis tta quod in nullo se inteligunt cum aliis nationibus, et hec de Albania dicta sufficiant.

(Now we come to speak of Albania which, on its southern side, is right next to Greece and is situated between Rascia and the land of the despot[1]. Albania is a rather extensive and large region. It has warlike inhabitants indeed, for they make excellent archers and lancers. This whole region is fed by four large rivers: the Erzen, the Mat, the Shkumbin and the Osum[2]. The land is productive in meat, cheese and milk; it is not very abundant in bread and wine, though the nobles in particular have enough. They do not have cities, camps, fortifications and farms, but live rather in tents and are constantly on the move from one place to another with the help of their troops and relatives. They do have one city called Durrës which belongs to the Latins and from which they get textiles and other necessities. The Prince of Tarento, son of the King of Sicily[3], now holds sway over part of this kingdom including the city of Durrës. It was the free will of the landowners who, on account of their natural love for the French, spontaneously and freely received him as their lord[4]. From Apulia and the city of Brindisi one may cross over to Durrës in one night, and from Durrës one may travel on through Albania to Greece and to Constantinople much more easily and without all the road difficulties and perils of the sea. The Roman emperors of ancient times used this route[5] for it is excessively tedious to transport a large army in such a period of time by sea and by such long roads. The said kingdom of Albania now has no king, the land being divided among the landowners who rule it themselves and who are subject to no one else. This province is called Albania because the inhabitants of this region are born with white (*albo*) hair. The dogs here are of a huge size[6] and are so wild that they kill like lions. As Pliny mentions, the Albanians sent such a dog to Alexander the Great which vanquished lions, elephants and bulls in the stadium. They have painted eyes, greyish in the pupils, such that they can see better at night than in the daytime. There are two Albanias, one in Asia near India of which we are not speaking here, and the other in Europe which is part of the Byzantine Empire and of which we are speaking here. It contains two provinces: Clisara[7] and Tumurist[8]. In addition to these two provinces, it has other provinces next to it: Cumania[9], Stophanatum[10], Polatum[11], and Debre[12] which are provinces tributary to the Albanians and more or less subjected to them, for they are active in farming, tend their vineyards and take care of the necessities of life at home. The inhabitants of these provinces do not move from place to place as the aforementioned Albanians do, but live rather in solid mansions and towns, nor are they entirely Catholic or entirely schismatic. Should anyone preach the word of God to them, they would pretend to be true Catholics for it is reported that by nature they have a liking for the Latins. The aforementioned Albanians have a language which is distinct from that of the Latins, Greeks and Slavs such that in no way can they communicate with other peoples. This is enough on Albania.)

From the text, it cannot be ascertained whether or not the unnamed author actually had an opportunity to visit Albania himself or had gathered his information on the country from the reports of other clergymen who had been there. We do know that the Dominicans were active in Durrës from 1304 onwards when the town fell to the West after twenty years of Byzantine rule. In a letter dated 31st. March, 1304, Pope Benedict XI asked the head of the Dominican Order in Hungary to send to Albania some of his subordinates of 'good moral character, active and eloquent' for missionary activities. With the support of the Holy See, the Dominicans thus had full power to set up a Latin hierarchy of their own liking on the Albanian coast to replace the Orthodox church which had been forced to abandon position. In such a context, one can appreciate the author's allusion to the religious ambivalence of the Albanians, a characteristic they were to retain for centuries (cf. their so-called crypto-Christianity in the later Moslem period).

Aside from the significance of this section of the 'Anonymous Description of Eastern Europe' for the information it provides on economic and political relations, administrative divisions, geographical knowledge, communications, ethnological and religious matters on Albania in the period, it offers the second oldest reference to the existence of the Albanian language, a 'linguam distinctam'. This historic reference comes twenty-three years after a text discovered in Dubrovnik referring to a 'lingua albanesca' in 1285[13], fourteen years before a similar reference in the itinerary of Simon Fitzsimons[14] (Simon Semeonis) in 1322, and twenty-four years before the often quoted passage by the Dominican monk Burchard (also known as Brocardus monacus

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or frére Brochard)[15] in 1332 in his *Directorium ad passagium faciendum* to a 'linguam diversam' and to the use of Latin letters in the books of the Albanians. What light it would throw on this dark age if any such books could be discovered! For the present, however, Latin and Greek texts written by foreigners will continue to constitute our best sources of information on Albania in the Middle Ages.

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Robert ELSIE

NOTES

1 I.e. the despot of Epirus.

2 *Epasa* no doubt ancient *Apsos*, i.e. the Osum flowing through Berat, tributary of the Seman.

3 Philip, Prince of Tarento.

4 Cf.DU CANGE, Hist. Const. I. 102.

5 Reference is made to the Via Egnatia, the main road of ancient communication between Rome and Constantinople, passing through Durrës, Elbasan and Ohrid.

6 Half a millenium later the English painter and poet Edward Lear (1812-1888) was to make the same discovery on his travels down the Himaran coast in 1848. In his 'Journal of a landscape painter in Greece and Albania' (London 1851), he records on 22nd October, 1848 being attacked by "some thirty immense dogs, who bounced out from the most secluded corners and would straightway have breakfasted on me had I not been so aptly rescued; certainly the dogs of Khimára are the most formidable brutes I have yet seen."

7 Këlcyra, ancient *Kleisura* on the upper Vjosa river in southern Albania.

8 Probably in the Myzeqe region around Kavaja. The chronicle of Giovanni Musachi speaks of a locality called Tomorista.

9 No doubt Chounavia, formerly the site of an Orthodox diocesa, somewhere between Durrës and the Mat region, perhaps on the Ishëm river.

10 No doubt Stephanatum, a diocese of the time somewhere near Durrës.

11 Pulatum, Polati or Pult near the Drin in northern Albania east of Shkodër.

12 The present-day region of Dibra or Debar on the Albanian-Yugoslav border north of Lake Ohrid.

13 *Audivi unam vocem clamantem in monte in lingua albanesca* (I heard a voice crying in the mountains in the Albanian language). See Jirecek 1901 & Ajeti 1977, p.683.

14 *Albanya est provincia inter Sclavoniam et Romaniam, per se linguam habens* (Albania is a province between Slavonia and Romania, having a language of its own). See Elsie [forthcoming].

15 *Licet Albanenses aliam omnino linguam a latina habeant et diversamtamen litteram latinam habent in uso et in omnibus suis libris* (The Albanians indeed have a language quite different from Latin, however, they use Latin letters in all their books). See *Recueil* 1906, p. 484.

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EDWARD LEAR AND ALBANIA: A CHAPTER IN ART HISTORY

The uniquely lyrical humor of the English writer and painter Edward Lear (1812-88), has left a profound mark on the English and American generations that came after him, and made him a figure in literature as singular as his work.

Virtually every child who grows up speaking English learns the beautiful "nonsense" love poem, "The Owl and the Pussycat", and Lear's whimsical limericks, with their wonderfully inventive illustrations, have earned a similarly unchallengeable place in the humorous section of the Anglo-Saxon canon.

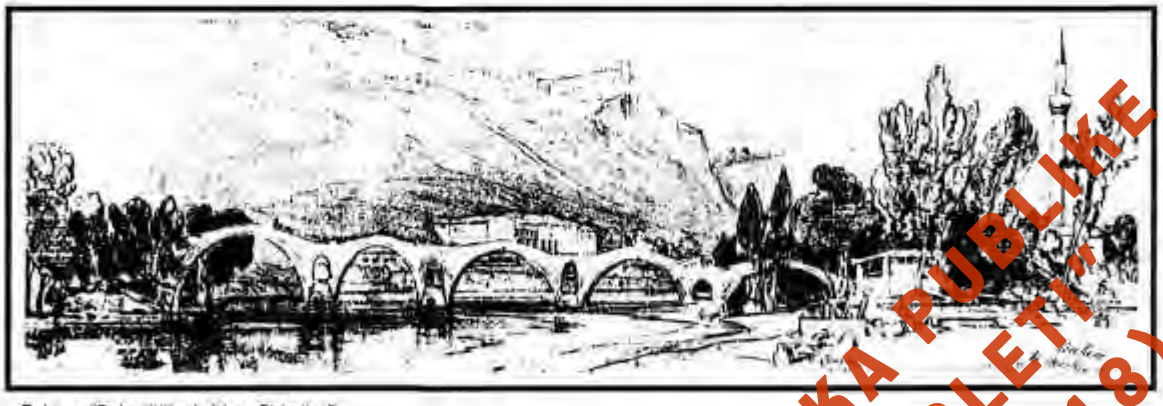
Lear was also a painter of distinction. He was an associate of the pioneering experimental group, the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, founded by his friend and confidante, William Holman Hunt, painter of the magnificent "Lady of Shalott", along with Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Lear was also a friend of two literary figures linked to the Pre-Raphaelites, the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson and the critic John Ruskin.

But Lear, whose classic nonsense writings are untranslatable and therefore unknown in Albanian, nonetheless provides a major reference point for modern Albanian studies, thanks to the extraordinarily beautiful sketches and paintings executed during his trips to the country in 1848 and 1856-57, a time when very few foreigners traveled there.

The writer Ferid Hudhri, in his preface to the volume *Albania and Albanians in World Art* (Athens, 1990), has commented that "Lear stands at the head of those who have dealt with Albanian subjects". Lear's personality showed great spiritual depth and perception of beauty, particularly visible in his wonderful renderings of the Albanian countryside, landmarks and costumes.

Lear is an individual about whom the word unique may be frequently and justifiably applied. Some of his drawings and paintings are important to Albanian culture as records of monuments destroyed under the Communist dictatorship (1944-1991). For example, his watercolors of the aqueduct at Gjirokaster and of the Bahcalleku Bridge, erected near Shkodër over a period of many decades and destroyed, along with the enormous covered market in Shkodër at the order of communist legate Mehmet Shehu, are uniquely valuable.

Regarding the Bahcalleku Bridge, as noted by Hudhri, "(Lear's) watercolor is the only figurative evidence of the stone bridge on (the river) Drin, near Shkodër, which remains a monument of architectural and artistic value. It is similar to the Mesi Bridge, one of the finest specimens of Albanian architecture. The value of Lear's watercolor lies in the fact that it shows the whole bridge, which today has almost disappeared without a trace." Lear himself wrote of this watercolor, in his



E. Lear, "Bahçallëku bridge, Shkodra".

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diary (as cited by Hudhri), "I drew throughout the whole day unremittingly, from various points below the south side of the castle (of Shkodër), whence the view is very imposing, and near a wondrous old bridge across the (Bune), constructed of pointed arches of irregular width, suddenly resolved on spanning the stream, some with little steps, some with long." Hudhri notes further that in a watercolor titled "Scutari" (Shkodër) "we can distinguish the arched bridge appearing partly in depth amidst the intense vegetation. Thus there are two works of Lear depicting this important monument, about which we have no other pictorial information."

Many to view the Bahcalleku Bridge as a special artistic symbol of Scutarine (Shkodër-based), north Albanian and Gheg-speaking sensibility and identity. Built in stages, with its five irregular arches it had a dreamy, surrealistic, quality, very much reminiscent of the "Mediterranean" surrealist style embodied in the Catalan modernist architecture of Antoni Gaudi, the profoundly religious but also profoundly experimental "decorator" of Barcelona, whose work is now recognized as classic.

To recover the inspiration of the Scutarine, north Albanian, Gheg-speaking culture, to revive the work of Fr. Gjergj Fishta, Fr. Bernardin Palaj, of Msgr. Vincenc Prennushi, the latter two dead by execution and in prison under the Marxist regime, to once again see flourish the poetic and spiritual beauty of this regional community, unique as the Catalans are unique, is a major and worthy goal for the Albanian intellectuals and Albanologists of the future.

To return to the life of Lear and his passage through the Illyrian landscape: He was born in 1812. He was a prodigy in that he chose his way forward as an artist while still a teenager. At 18, he began work on his magnificent bird paintings, with his *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots*. However, he proved unable to raise the funds necessary for the printing of that work. In the early 1830's he began his wanderings through Europe, an addiction to travel that would leave him poor most of his life: Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Ireland (where he turned to landscape painting), the English lake district, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, and Switzerland again, Italy.

With his return to England from Italy he published *Views of Rome and its Environs* (1841), but continued tramping around Europe: Scotland, Rome, Sicily, the Abruzzi. The year 1846 saw publication of a further two-volume set based on his Italian travels, and the first edition of *A Book of Nonsense*. The next year he was a witness to revolutionary events in Calabria and Sicily. Revolution swept Italy, and he left Rome for the Greek coast, traveling via Malta to Corfu and the Ionian islands. He made his first trip to Albania in the autumn and winter of 1848, having gone through Athens to Constantinople and thence back across Greece.

In a letter (printed in his *Selected Letters*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988), dated from Shkodër October 21, 1848, and addressed to his sister Ann, he wrote of Albania as "a very different place" from Constantinople, whence he had come via Manastir in Macedonia. Coming from Manastir via Lake Ohrid, he wrote, "for four hours I never saw more magnificent scenery — though it consisted of one huge valley only — (that of the river Shkumbin), — but with such oak woods and infinity of mountains around it that I was delighted. The great feature of this country is its superb foliage." Further in the same missive he wrote of a landscape that was "the most stupendously beautiful; it is of no use describing precipices and forests, nor can language give an idea of them."

Describing the Ghegs of Albania north of the Shkumbin river, he wrote, "their dress is more rich than even the southerns, as they wear a long crimson vest over the kilt of Fustanello — and over that again a spencer of scarlet trimmed with fur!! and such pistols and boxes as project from their gilt leather belts!" He left a number of vivid portraits of women in the costume of Shkodër.

He had tried to sketch views of Elbasan, where there were "beautiful studies all around the walls" and he had "got a great many", but, as elsewhere in the then-Ottoman domains, he first had to engage a Turkish policeman to protect him from superstitious crowds who called him a devil. He then went to Tirane, "bright...with mosques and minarets", and "whose mosques are its great boast: and really they are like porcelain" he wrote, "so arabesqued and ornamented. I have drawn several

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of the prettiest." He proceeded to Shkodër via Kruje, the citadel of Skanderbeg, commenting on its "oak wooded hills" and Lezhe, where, he found, "The scenery of the river Drin is exquisite — up and down."

Lear was above all a painter of birds, as we may see from his exquisite lithograph, "Pelicans in Vlorë" from 1848. In a letter of 1849 he had written, "When I was at Avlona (Vlorë)..I went across the salt marshes to see a Convent on the shore — and perceiving an innumerable multitude of odd looking white stones (as I thought) — I rode up to them, when lo! they were all pelicans! And away they flew! They are very shy, and feed on the fish caught in low pools near the sea, cavities artificially sunk for salt-making...I was never more amused in my life than at seeing so many thousand pelicans all together."

He wrote poetically of the vigor of nature in the Macedonian and Albanian lands: "Beginning from Salonica, the great plains below Olympus are *full of birds*: Hoopoes — numberless, — Hawks so tame that they allow you to come within two or three yards of them — eagles and vultures — all sorts of crows in multitudes — pigeons — quails — in fact it is a wide aviary." As he travels deeper into Albanian territory, he found "tortoises...run across your path, by twos and threes. Geese are in countless numbers on every plain and in all the streets of the towns and villages, and make a horrible clamour: — they are taken out daily (like sheep) in the meadows near Avlona with what I call a "gooseherd" who watches them all day and returns with them at night...Farther north, towards the vast Lake of Shkodër, great flocks of wildfowl are seen — for at the time I was there (October 1) the snow had already fallen on the higher mountains. There are also wolves, jackals, wild boars and deer in the great forests near those parts...The whole coast of Albania swarms with all kinds of plovers — ducks — sandpipers, herons, etc. and in many of the towns there are a great many storks".

In Chameria (Cimarra) where he was the first known English visitor, he "saw nothing zoological but two huge eagles who caught up two hens daily from the town to the disgust of the gun-less inhabitants. The dogs of Cimarra are the strongest and fiercest I ever saw", he declared.

Lear was enchanted by Albania, as was demonstrated by his publication in 1851 of *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Albania, &c.* That was the year of his first encounter with Tennyson and his wife, which would lead him to a friendship with William Holman Hunt, a period of residence with Hunt at Hastings on the Sussex coast, and entry into the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

In 1856 and 1857 he returned to Albania, beginning his relationship with an Albanian, Gjergj Kokalli, whom he seems to have encountered first in 1848, and then met again in 1856, when he hired him as his servant. Kokalli remained Lear's travel companion, throughout the Orient, India and Ceylon, until Kokalli died in 1883. Hudhri has written that "because of his close relationship with Lear", Kokalli too is a name worth mentioning in the history of Albanian subjects in world art.

Lear's Albanian works possess a serenity and balance that appears to be intrinsic to Albania itself, a country then still seemingly underpopulated and even ruled by nature. The landscapes have a glorious stillness, along with a subtle, tranquil light, even through the screen of mist and rain that is present in such works as his watercolor, "Evening After Rain in Berat" from 1848. These works seem timeless: mountains, castles, the sky, and bird life are eternal, while human figures, although authentic and lively, take second place. They are an appropriate homage to the beauties of Albania.

Lear died in 1888. To the end, he remained fascinated by Albanian and Montenegrin subjects, although his surrealistic imagination had led him to compose lunar landscapes in the spirit of his nonsense poetry. More than a century — 105 years later— the author of these lines had the pleasure of introducing "The Owl and the Pussycat" to a leading post-communist Albanian politician, who read it out at a San Francisco gathering, with warmth and humor.

Hudhri has written, "Edward Lear's landscapes serve to create a more complete picture about the many objects and monuments of the Albanian national culture in his time". It is to be hoped that the future cultural relations of Albania with the world may be governed by the gentle wit and loving sensitivity of Edward Lear.

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A TOUR THROUGH THE ALBANIAN VOCABULARY
(THE FIRST LEG)

Few of the modern languages of Europe can boast the richness of Albanian, a wealth evident above all in its vocabulary. The composite nature of the Albanian wordstore, in which layer after layer of new elements has blended with older ones, reflects the great tenacity and adaptability of a people threatened throughout the ages with absorption by more powerful neighbours.

Yet in spite of the structural complexity of Albanian, its long life is today an open book. Contrary to what one sometimes reads in popular writings on the subject, there is nothing 'mysterious' about Albanian: reputable scholars consider it both futile and absurd to claim substantial Etruscan, Pelasgian or other exotic connections for a language that is clearly a member of the great Indo-European family. Far from being a potential key to archeological secrets, the vocabulary of the Albanian language is a faithful mirror of the mottled history of the people who speak it today.

The Albanians are the oldest residents of the Balkans. Their language was spoken in this region of Europe centuries before the Proto-Slavonic that produced Serbo-Croatian and Macedo-Bulgarian and the Vulgar Latin that begot nineteenth century the researches of Franz Bopp, Franz Miklosich and Gustav Meyer established beyond doubt the Indo-European character of Albanian.[1] Analysis of its structure and vocabulary had revealed it to be fully Indo-European, though it appeared to be, like Greek and Armenian, a branch all on its own. For geographical reasons it seemed plausible to view Albanian as the modern development of ancient Illyrian, the Indo-European language spoken over the western area of the Balkans. Closely related to Illyrian was the Messapian language of the adjacent Apulian coast of Italy.

Unfortunately, because Illyrian was known to linguists only very imperfectly, mainly through toponyms and personal names in ancient inscriptions, the evidence for its being the ancestor of Albanian has had to remain circumstantial. If Albanian linguists like Eqrem Cabej have strenuously defended the Illyrian filiation of their language partly for nationalistic reasons, many foreign scholars less subject to bias have found good reason to support the same hypothesis, first advanced by the 'father of Albanology', Johann Georg von Hahn, in the nineteenth century.[2]

Complicating the problem of Albanian's origins was an apparent structural difference between modern Albanian and Illyrian. The former is definitely an eastern (or *'satem'*) language, whereas the latter seems to have been of the western (or *'centum'*) type. These eastern affinities inclined some scholars like Carlo Tagliavini, Gustav Weigand and Henrik Baric to seek the origins of Albanian in the language of the Thracians, another Indo-European people inhabiting ancient Moesia (the territory of modern Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria). Finally a compromise theory suggested that the Albanian language may have been formed in a region, probably Dardania (modern Serbia), where the Illyrian and Thracian languages converged. According to the Austrian Albanologist Norbert Jokl, it was in this zone (the Nish-Sofia-Skopje triangle) that the Albanian and Romanian languages (both spoken by Thraco-Illyrians) were formed before later spreading to other regions.[3]

Whatever the exact provenance of Albanian, the Indo-European character of its basic vocabulary is transparent, as the following list of cognates shows:[4]

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Albanian	*English*	*Latin*	*Greek*	*Serbian*
barrë 'load'	bear	fero 'I bear'	phérô 'I bear'	brati 'gather'
bijë 'daughter'	-	filia	thêlys 'female'	-
dashje 'liking'	choose	gustus 'taste'	géuô 'I taste'	-
derë 'door'	door	foras	thyra	(OS.) dveri
diell 'sun'	sun	sol	hêlios	sunce
dimër 'winter'	-	hiems	cheimôn	zima
dru 'tree'	tree	larix 'larch'	drys	drvo
dhëmb 'tooth'	comb	-	gomphios 'molar'	zub
emër 'name'	name	nomen	ónoma	ime
grua 'woman'	queen	-	gynê	zena
gjak 'blood'	sap	sucus 'juice'		sok
gjumë 'sleep'	-	somnus	hypnos	san
motrë 'sister'	mother	mater	mêter	mati
muaj 'month'	month	mensis	mên	mesec
natë 'night'	night	nox, noctis	nyx	noc
pelë 'mare'	foal	pullus 'young'	pôlos 'foal'	-
plot 'full'	full	plenus	plêros	pun
ter 'I dry'	dry	torreo	térsomai	
udhë 'road'	way	via	ochos 'vehicle'	voz 'cart'
ujë 'water'	water	unda	hydôr	voda
vesh 'ear'	ear	auris	ôus	uho
vit 'year'	wether	vetus	êtos	-

Like all the other Indo-Europeans, the Proto-Albanians intermarried with the aboriginal inhabitants of the region they conquered, and from the language of these people they borrowed a number of words. This Pre-Indo-European element in the Albanian vocabulary consists of such common lexical items as *bukur* 'beautiful', *dardhë* 'pear', *errët* 'dark', *dosë* 'sow', *dash* 'ram', *gur* 'stone'. Here again, the pre-Indo-European origin of such words rests on largely circumstantial evidence: since linguists have been able to find no cognates in other Indo-European languages they assume that such forms must be older.

Without a doubt the greatest challenge to the cultural integrity of the Illyrians in ancient times was the conquest of their lands by the Romans. After the initial invasion of 168 B.C. the lowland region of the Danube and Sava basins was soon subjected to Roman rule, but the mountaineers of the Dalmatian and Albanian seaboards resisted the foreigner until A.D. 9, when the Emperor Tiberius subdued them and created the province of Illyricum. The difficult Roman subjugation of the region eventually brought two distinct Illyrian cultures into being: in the western highlands a traditional one hostile to Rome; in the eastern lowlands where Illyrian met Thracian, a strongly romanized society whose people increasingly spoke Vulgar Latin and began to forget their ancestral language.

The cultural resistance of the western Illyrians to Rome could not last much longer than their military resistance. From the reign of Tiberius, the Dalmatian coast was also latinized in speech. As for the fierce mountaineers of what is today Bosnia, Hercegovina, Montenegro and northern Albania, the ancient language to which they clung became more and more permeated with Latin loanwords and expressions. Roman civilization in Illyria lasted over four centuries and during this time the region gave Rome no less than four emperors. One of these Illyrian emperors was Diocletian, who in A.D. 285 divided the Empire into East and West. The assignation of Illyria to the eastern circumscription had, however, little effect on language

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since all the Illyrians lived north of the so-called 'Jirecek line' (stretching from Lezhë through Skopje and across the north of Bulgaria to the Black Sea) which marked the boundary between Latin and Greek civilization in the Balkans.[5] It is certain that what is today southern Albania was neither Latin nor Albanian-speaking in Roman times, but rather Greek in speech: the whole of Epirus was most likely Illyrian in ethnic origin, but its population had been hellenized since the time of Pyrrhus. Indeed, the Romans distinguished between *Illyria barbara*, the region from Lezhë (Lissus) northwards which had retained its ancient language, and *Illyria græca*, the hellenized zone south of the River Drilon (Drin). This river boundary would be of capital importance in the future cultural history of Albania because it was also the dividing-line between Latin Christianity (in the north) and Greek Christianity (in the as yet hellenophone south). Today this line of religious demarcation still separates Catholic from Orthodox Albanians.[6]

Whatever resistance there had initially been to Roman rule, it is clear from linguistic evidence that with time the Illyrians were completely absorbed into Latin civilization. Indeed so Roman did daily life become in both urban and rural Illyria, that Latin words for all sorts of things found their way into the local language. By the end of the Roman period Illyrian had died out completely in the Roman-built cities and towns of Illyricum, and although the old language lingered on in rural areas it had (like the ancestor of Welsh in Roman Britain) lost a huge part of its ancient vocabulary.[7]

For instance, many Albanian time-expressions are borrowings from Latin, e.g. *herë* (< HORA) 'time; hour', *mëngjes* 'morning' (< MANE + suffix), *javë* 'week' (< HEBDOMAS), *pranverë* 'spring' (< PRIMAVERA), verë 'summer' (< *VERA), *shekull* 'century' (< SÆCULU). Since most of these words are very basic elements of any vocabulary, how could they have been so easily lost and replaced by foreign ones? The cause seems to be the general similarity of Illyrian to Latin, a formal closeness that encouraged the intermingling and ultimate confusion of kindred words and forms. Take the six Roman time-expressions *hora* 'hour, time', *dies* 'day', *nox/nocte* 'night', *hebdomas* 'week', *mensis* 'month', and *hiems* 'winter'. Four of the Illyrian equivalents (the ancestors of *ditë, natë, muaj* and *dimër)* were so formally similar that there was no need to borrow from Latin. These resemblances lowered the conceptual gap between the languages and facilitated the adoption of Latin words with no cognate in Illyrian. So in the other two cases the Latin words were simply adapted to local phonetics to become fully-fledged Illyrian and, later, Albanian words: *herë, javë.*

Some apparently pure Albanian words are actually latinisms in disguise: loan translations or 'calques'. Take the days of the week. The names for 'Wednesday' and 'Saturday', *e Mërkurë* and *e Shtunë* are obviously borrowed from the Latin (DIES) MERCURIS and (DIES) SATURNI, but *e Dielë* 'Sunday' and *e Hënë* 'Monday' are pseudo-Illyrian, being translations of the Latin DIES SOLIS "day of the sun" and DIES LUNÆ "day of the moon". The same trends may be observed in the Albanian names of the last four months of the year: shtator, tetor, nëntor, dhjetor are calques on Latin *september, october, november, december.*

As might be expected, in the Illyrian vocabulary of urban and social life Latin elements completely outnumber the native ones. Albanian has inherited from its remote past the words *udhë* 'road', *urë* 'bridge', *varr* 'grave', *derë* 'door', *vatrë* 'hearth' and *kopsht* 'garden'. But almost all the other basic Albanian terms in this semantic sphere turn out to be borrowings from Latin:

shtëpi 'house' (< HOSPITIU), *mur* 'wall' (< MURU), (obsolete) *fënjashter* 'window' (< FENESTRA), *tullë* 'brick' (< *TUBULA), *shkallë* 'stairs' (< SCALAS), *portë* 'gate' (< PORTA), *rrugë* 'street' (< RUGA), *rrotë* 'wheel' (< ROTA), *ndërtoj* 'I build' (< *INDIRECTO), *burg* 'prison' (< BURGU), *fqinjë* 'neighbour' (< VICINU), *ftoj* 'invite' (< INVITO), *mik* 'friend' (< AMICU), *shok* 'companion' (< *SOCIU), *dëfrej* 'have fun' (< DEFRENO 'unleash'), *fshat* 'village' (< FOSSATU), *qytet* 'city' (< CIVITATE), *popull* 'people' (< POPULU), *turmë* 'crowd' (< TURMA), *mbret* 'king' (< IMPERATOR),

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ligj 'law' (< LEGE), *gjykoj* 'I judge' (< JUDICO), *dëshmoj* 'I testify' (< TESTIMONIO), *trashëgoj* 'I inherit' (< TRANSIGO), *detyrë* 'duty' (< *DEBITURA), *shërbej* 'I serve' (< SERVIO), *rrogë* 'wage' (< *ROGA).

Overwhelmingly Latin, too, are the Albanian words denoting domestic objects and activities. Alongside the Illyrian-derived *fshesë* 'broom', *lugë* 'spoon', we find, for instance:

thikë 'knife' (< SICA), *kupë* 'cup' (< CUPPU), *qelq* 'glass' (< CALICE), *fërgoj* 'I fry' (< FRIGO), *shportë* 'basket' (< SPORTA), *sapun* 'soap' (< SAPONE), *shtrat* 'bed' (< STRATU), *mbulesë* 'blanket' (< *INVELITIA), *fashqë* 'swaddling clothes' (< FASCIA), *gjilpërë* 'needle' (< ACUCULA), *gërshërë* 'scissors' (< *CÆSORIA), *fill* 'thread' (< FILU), *arnoj* 'I patch' (< RENOVO), *brekë* 'underwear' (< BRACAS), *këmishë* 'shirt' (< CAMISIA), *mëngë* 'sleece' (< MANICA), *mëndafsh* 'silk' (< METAXA), *shark* 'woollen coat' (< SERICA), *unazë* 'ring' (< *VIRANA).

In the Albanian vocabulary of food Illyrian words and latinisms are fairly evenly matched:

(Illyrian) *gjalpë* 'butter', *djathë* 'cheese', *miell* 'flour', *kripë* 'salt', *mish* 'meat', *lëng* 'broth; juice', *vezë* 'egg', *uthull* 'vinegar', *mjaltë* 'honey'.

(Latinate) *bukë* 'bread' (< BUCCA), *qumësht* 'milk' (< COLOSTRU), *vaj* 'oil' (< OLEU), *peshk* 'fish' (< PISCE), *verë/venë* 'wine' (< VINU), *thërrimë* 'crumb' (< *FRAGMINO), thelë 'slice' (< OFFELLA).

Family life and kinship are another lexical domain which show the extent to which Illyrian and Roman civilization merged in Illyricum. Numerically the Latin words have the slight edge over the indigenous ones:

(Illyrian) *at* 'father', *nënë* 'mother', *bir* 'son', *bijë* 'daughter', *vëlla* 'brother', *motrë* 'sister', *nip* 'nephew', *mbesë* 'niece', *vjerr* 'father-in-law', *dhëndër* 'son-in-law', *nusë* 'daughter-in-law; bride', *e-ve* 'widow'.

(Latinate) *gjind* 'household' (< GENTE), *prind* 'parent' (< PARENTE), *fëmijë* 'children, family' (< FAMILIA, cf. Rom. *femeie*), *femër/femën* 'female' (< FEMINA), *mashkull* 'male' (< MASCULU), *ungj* 'uncle' (< AVUNCULU), *emtë* 'aunt' (< AMITA), *gjysh* 'grandfather' (< *AVUSIU), *kushëri* 'cousin' (< CONSOBRINU), *kunat* 'brother-in-law' (< COGNATU), *njerk* 'stepfather' (< NOVERCU), *thjeshtër* 'stepson' (< FILIASTER), *fijan* 'godchild' (< FILIANU), *shoq* 'husband' (< SOCIU).

Since Latin was the exclusive medium of education and intellectual life in Roman Illyricum, it is less surprising to find an almost total predominance of borrowings from the language of Rome:

shkollë 'school' (< SCHOLA), *shkroj* 'I write' (< SCRIBO), *fjalë* 'word' (< FABELLA), *kuptoj* 'I understand' (< COMPUTO), *këndoj* 'I sing; I read' (< CANTO), *përralle* 'tale' (< PARABOLA), *mësoj* 'I teach' (< *INVITIO), *dëftej* 'I point out' (< INDICTO), *arsye* 'reason'(< RATIO), *shkak* 'cause' (< EXCALCO), *shqyrtoj* 'I inquire, examine' (< DISQUIRITO), *këshillë* 'advice' (< CONSILIU), *vullnet* 'will' (< VOLUNTATE), *shenjë* 'sign' (< SIGNU), *shëmbëllej* 'I resemble' (< SIMILO), *vjershë* 'poem' (< VERSU), *kuvend* 'conversation; congress' (< CONVENTU), *vijë* 'line' (< VIA), *qarkull* 'circle' (< CIRCULU), *fund* 'end; bottom' (< FUNDU), *nder* 'honour' (< HONORE), *turp* 'shame' (< TURPE).

Similarly Latin are virtually all basic Albanian words denoting military activity, commere and industry:

Military: ushtar 'soldier' (< *HOSTARIU), *kalë* 'horse' (< CABALLU), *fre* 'rein' (< FRENU), *shalë* 'saddle' (< SELLA), *luftë* 'war' (< LUCTA), *betejë* 'battle' (< *BATTUALIA), *[illegible]rdhër* 'order' (< ORDINE), *kufi* 'border' (< CONFINE), *armë* 'weapons' (< ARMA), *shpatë* 'sword' (< SPATHA), *shqyt* 'shield' (< SCUTU), *[illegible]k* 'bow' (< ARCU), *ther* 'I slaughter' (< FERIO), *plagë* 'wound', *armik/anmik* 'enemy' (< INIMICU), *paqe* 'peace' (< PACE).

Industry: vepër 'work' (< OPERA), *vegël* 'tool' (< VEHICULU), *argjend* 'silver' (< ARGENTUM), *ar* 'gold' (< AURUM), *plumb* 'lead' (< PLUMBU), *ndryshk* 'rust' (< *INRUSSICO), *thëngjill* 'embers' (< FAVILLA), *farkë* 'smithy' (< FABRICA), *furkë* 'spindle' (< FURCA), *furrë* 'bakery, oven' (<

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FURNU), *sharrë* 'saw' (< SERRA), *limë* 'file' (< LIMA), *ngjyej* 'I dye' (< UNGUO).

Commercial: blej 'I buy' (*ABLEVO), *shkëmbëj* 'I exchange' (< excambio), *kursej* 'I save' (< *CURTIO), *çmim* 'price' (< ÆSTIMO), *vyen* 'is worth' (< VALET), *arkë* '(money) box' < ARCA, *but* 'barrel' (< BUTTE).

In the spheres of health and medicine, the Latin imprint is also remarkable, as the following comparison of native and borrowed terms shows:

(Illyrian) *sy* 'eye', *vetull* 'eyebrow', *ballë* 'forehead', *vesh* 'ear', *hundë* 'nose', *gjuhë* 'tongue', *grykë* 'throat', *krah* 'arm', *dorë* 'hand', *gjisht* 'finger', *thua* 'fingernail', *sup* 'shoulder', *gji* 'breast', *lukth* 'stomach', *gju* 'knee', *veshkë* 'kidney', *gjak* 'blood', *eshtërë* 'bone', *lëkurë* 'skin'; *vjell* 'I vomit', *lind* 'I am born', *vdekje* 'death'.

(Latinate) *krye* 'head' (< CEREBRU), *fytyrë* 'face' (< FACTURA), *faqe* 'cheek' (< FACIE), *flok* 'hair' (< FLOCCU), *gojë* 'mouth' (< GULÆ), *gjymtyrë* 'limb' (< JUNCTURA), *shpatull* 'shoulder' (< SPATULA), *bërryl* 'elbow' (*BRACHIULE), *kërthizë* 'navel' (< CORTINA), *kofshë* 'thigh' (< COXA), *këmbë* 'foot' (< *CAMBA), *themër* 'heel' (< FEMUR), *shuall* 'sole' (< SOLU), *lot* 'tear' (< FLETU), *fshik* 'blister' (< VESICA), *vrer* 'bile' (< VENENU), *mjek* 'doctor' (< MEDICU), *shëndet* 'health' (< SANITATE), *dështój* 'I miscarry' (< DEPOSITO), *shpirrë* 'asthma' (< SPIRO), *shëroj* 'I heal' (< SANO), *kafshoj* 'I bite' (< *CAPTIO), *pështyj* 'I spit' (< SPUTO), *rruaj* 'I shave' (< RADO), *jetë* 'life' (< ÆTAS), *mortje* 'death' (< MORTE).

When it comes to religion, and to Christianity, the common faith of Albanians by the end of the Middle Ages, the Latin predominance is absolute, if we except the native words for 'vow, oath' *(be)*, 'believe' *(besoj)*, 'pray' *(lutem)* and 'God' *Zoti* and *Hy*. Today most of these latinisms remain common to both the Latin Catholic Ghegs and the Greek Orthodox Tosks. These include theological and ecclesiastical terms:

Perëndi 'God' (< IMPERANTE), *parajsë* 'paradise' (< PARADISU), *engjëll* 'angel' (< ANGELU), *shenjt* 'saint' (< SANCTU), *dëshmor* 'martyr' (< TESTIMONIU, calque on Greek *martyr*), *Shëndërtat* 'Trinity' (< SANCTA TRINITAS), *e virgjër* 'virgin' (< VIRGINE), *shpirt* 'soul' (< SPIRITU), *fe* 'faith' (< FIDE), *mrekulli* 'miracle' (< MIRACULU), *adhuroj* 'I adore' (< ADORO), *bekoj* 'I bless' (< BENEDICO), *mallkoj* 'I curse' (< MALEDICO), *lëmoshë* 'alms' (< ELEEMOSYNA), *Ungjill* 'Gospel' (< EVANGELIU), *dlirë* 'chaste' (< DELIBERO), *mëkat* 'sin' (< PECCATU), *faj* 'fault' (< *FALLIU), *pendohem* 'I repent' (< PENTIOR), *mëshirë* 'mercy' (< MISEREOR), *ndiej* 'I forgive' (< INDULGEO), *short* 'fate' (< SORTE), *shpresë* 'hope' (< *SPERANTIA), *e vërtete* 'truth' (< VERITATE), *djall* 'devil' (< DIABOLU), *dreq* 'demon' (< DRACO, cf. Rom. *drac*), *ferr* 'hell' (< INFERNU); *kishë* 'church' (< ECCLESIA), *prift* 'priest' (< *PRÆBYTER), *dhjak* 'deacon' (< DIACONU), *peshkop* 'bishop' (< EPISCOPU), *murg* 'monk' (< MONACHU).

and liturgical terms:

altar, lter 'altar' (< ALTARE), *kryq* 'cross' (< CRUCE, *uratë* 'prayer' (< ORATA), *lavd* 'praise' (< LAUDE), *agjëroj/agjënoj* 'I fast' (< JEJUNO), *blatim* 'offering' (< OBLATA), *pagëzoj* 'I baptize' (< BAPTIZO), *nun* 'godfather' (< NONNU), *famull* 'godchild' (< FAMULU, whence *famullí* 'parish'), *rrëfej* 'I confess' (< REFERO), *krezmoj* 'I confirm' (< CHRISMO), *meshë* 'Mass' (< MISSA), *kungoj* 'I give Holy Communion' (< COMMUNICO), *fëjoj* 'I betrothe' (< FIDO), *martoj* 'I marry' (< MARITO), *vajtim* 'lament' (< VAGITO), *Kreshmë* 'Lent' (< QUADRAGESIMA), *Pashkë* 'Easter' (< PASCHA), (dial.) *Krishndellë* 'Christmas' (< CHRISTI NATALICIA).

The massive Latin influence on the Albanian vocabulary of agriculture indicates that whatever traditions of farming may have existed among the tribal Illyrians, these were superseded by newer techniques and crops imported from other parts of the Roman Empire. Of Illyrian descent still are such Albanian words as *vathë* 'sheepfold', *shat* 'hoe', *korr* 'I harvest', *farë* 'seed', *mbjell* 'I sow', *kashtë* 'straw', *dru* 'tree', *lis* 'oak', *vith* 'elm', *ende* 'bloom', *degë* 'branch', *gjeth* 'foliage', *gjemb* 'thorn', *bar* 'grass', *elb* 'barley', *hudhër* 'garlic', *bathë* 'bean', *arrë* 'walnut', *rrush* 'grapes'. But these elements

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were soon overshadowed by Latin-based synonyms falling into several broad semantic groups:

Husbandry: arë 'field' (< AREA), *bujk* 'farmer' (< BUBULCU), *lëroj* 'I plough' (< LABORO), *parmendë* 'plough' (< APPARAMENTA), *kullos* 'I graze' (< COLO), *ushqej* 'I feed' (< VESCO), *shartoj* 'I graft' (< SERTO), *grunar* 'barn' (< GRANARIU), *pus* 'well' (< PUTEU), *mullar* 'haystack' (< MOLARE), *sëpatë* 'hatchet' (< SPATHA), *frushkull* 'whip' (< *FISCULA), *bluaj* 'I grind' (< MOLO), *mokrë/moknë* 'millstone' (< MACHINA), *mulli* 'mill' (< MOLINU), *kasolle* 'hut' (< CASULA), *qerre* 'wagon' (< *CARRIA), *lundër* 'boat' (< LUNTER).

Trees and plants: lule 'flower' (< LILIU), *fletë* 'leaf' (*FOLITTA), *rrënjë* 'root' (< *RADICIA), *egjër* 'darnel' (< EBRIA), *furatë* 'stick' (< FURCATA), *fier* 'fern' (< *FILICARIA), *frashër/frashën* 'ash tree' (< FRAXINU), *shelg* 'willow' (< SALICE), *plep* 'poplar' (< POPULU), *lende* 'acorn' (< GLANDE), *tërfojë, tërfil* 'clover' (< TRIFOLIU), *li* 'flax' (< LINU).

Fruits: pemë 'fruit (tree)' (< POMU), *fryt* 'fruit' (< FRUCTU), *mollë* 'apple' (< MALU), *pjeshkë* 'peach' (< PERSICU), *kumbull* 'plum' (< *COLUMBULA), *qershi* 'cherry' (< CERASEU), *fik* 'fig' (< FICU), *ftua* 'quince' (< COTONEU), *gështenjë* 'chestnut' (< CASTANEA), *ulli* 'olive' (< OLIVA), *pjepër/pjepën* 'melon' (< PEPONE), *bërthamë* 'stone, pit' (< *PETRAMEN).

Vegetables: rrillë 'pea' (< ERVILIA), *qiqër* 'chickpea' (< CICERE), *thjerrëz* 'lentils' (< *FABARIU), *qepë* 'onion' (< CÆPA), *kungull* 'squash' (< CUCUMIS), *rrikë* 'radish' (< RADICE), *grurë/grunë* 'wheat' (< GRANU), *tërshërë* 'oats' (< *TRIMENSANA), *thekër* 'rye' (< SECALE).

Latinisms in the Albanian names of the natural elements and landforms are also abundant, but stand beside a basic nucleus of native terms:

(Illyrian) *diell* 'sun', *hënë* 'moon', *yll* 'star', *re* 'cloud', *shi* 'rain', *zjarr* 'fire', *hi* 'ash', *ujë* 'water', *akull* 'ice', *tym* 'smoke', *dhe* 'earth', *pluhur* 'dust', *mal* 'mountain', *det* 'sea'.

(Latinate) *qiell* 'sky' (< CÆLU), *brymë* 'frost' (< BRUMA), *erë* 'air; wind' (< *ARIA), *flakë* 'flame' (< FACULA), *pyll* 'forest' (< *PADULE), *shpellë* 'cave' (< *SPÆLEU), *lumë* 'river' (< FLUMEN), *ishullë* 'island' (< INSULA), *rërë/ranë* 'sand' (< HARENA), *zhavorr/shur* 'gravel' (< SABURRA), *zall* 'pebble' (< SABULU), *tërmet* 'earthquake' (< TERRÆ MOTU).

By contrast, Albanian names of animals, both domestic and wild, are much more likely to be borrowings from Latin than Illyrian heirlooms:

(Illyrian) *dhen* 'sheep', *dele* 'ewe', *dhi* 'goat', *derr, thi* 'pig', *ka* 'ox', *lopë* 'cow', *viç* 'calf', *dem* 'bull', *pelë* 'mare', *mëz* 'foal', *ujk* 'wolf', *dhëlpër* 'fox', *zog* 'bird', *shpend* 'fowl', *gjarpër/gjarpën* 'snake', *mizë* 'fly', *plesht* 'flea', *morr* 'louse', *krimb* 'worm', *bisht* 'tail', *bri* 'horn'.

(Latinate) *kafshë* 'animal' (< CAUSA), *bishë* 'beast' (< BESTIA), *qen* 'dog' (< cane), *qengj* 'lamb' (< *AGNICULU), *buall* 'buffalo' (< BUBALU), *lepur* 'hare; rabbit' (< LEPORE), *iriq* 'hedgehog' (< ERICIU), *gjel* 'rooster' (< GALLU), *kapua, kaposh* 'cock' (< CAPONE), *pulë* 'chicken' (< PULLA), *klloçkë* 'brood hen' (< *CLOCEA), *dallëndyshe* 'swallow' (< *HIRUNDUSIA), *pëllumb* 'pigeon' (< PALUMBE), *turtull* 'turtledove' (< TURTURE), *fallkua* 'hawk' (< FALCONE), *korb* 'raven' (< CORVU), *hutë* 'vulture' (< OTU), *thëllëzë* 'partridge' (< *FULINGIA), *breshkë* 'turtle' (< *BRESCU, cf. Rom. *broasca), bretkocë* 'frog' (< *BRUTACU), *ngjalë* 'eel' (< ANGUILLA), *bletë* 'bee' (< *ALVITTA, cf. Rom. *albina), mushkonjë* 'mosquito' (< *MUSCONEA), *shushunjë* 'leech' (< *SANGUISUNGIA), *pendë* 'feather' (< PINNA).

Most surprising of all, however, is the number of latinisms among the verbs and adjectives that are of most common use in the Albanian language, words like:

(Verbs) *vij* 'I come' (< VENIO), *shkoj* 'I go' (< SEQUOR), *ecij* 'I walk' (< *ITIO), *shpëtoj* 'I escape; I save' (< EXPEDITO), *fluturoj* 'I fly' (< *FLUCTULO), *shikoj* 'I look' (< *SEDICO), *dëgjoj* 'I

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hear' (< INTELLIGO 'I understand'), *kujtoj* 'I remember' (< COGITO), *flas* 'I say, speak' (< FABULOR), *dua, do* 'wants' (< DEBEO 'I must'), *dëshiroj* 'I wish' (< DESIDERO), *pëlgej* 'I like' (< PLACEO), *urrej* 'I hate' (< HORREO), *dhuroj* 'I donate, give' (< DONO), *lëshoj* 'I let' (< LAXO), *dërgoj* 'I send' (< DIRIGO), *flë* 'I sleep' (< FLO 'I breathe'), *lot* 'I play' (< LUDO), *gëzoj* 'I enjoy' (< GAUDEO), , *vërshëllej* 'I whistle' (< FISTULO), *notoj* 'I swim' (< *NOTO), *laj* 'I wash' (< LAVO), *shpëlaj* 'I rinse' (< *EXPERLAVO, cf. Rom. *a spală*), *fëllíq* 'I dirty' (< FORNICE 'brothel'), *ngarkoj* 'I load' (< INCARICO), *pushoj* 'I stop; I rest' (< PAUSO), *zgjoj* 'I wake' (< EXVIGILO), *mungon* 'lacks' (< *MANCAT), *vështroj* 'I take care' (< VISITO), *qërtoj* 'I scold' (< CERTO).

(Adjectives) *i vjetër* 'old' (< VETERE), i *lashtë* 'ancient' (< LASSU), *i lartë/naltë* 'high' (< *INALTU), *shkurt* 'short' (< *EXCURTU), *i fortë* 'strong' (< FORTE), *i rëndë* 'heavy' (< GRANDE), *i drejtë* 'straight; right' (< DIRECTU), *i mëngjër/majtë* 'left' (< *MANCINU), *i ngushtë* 'narrow' (< ANGUSTU), *i shtrembër* 'crooked' (< STRAMBU), *i ashpër* 'rough' (< ASPRU), *i verbër* 'blind' (< ORBU), *i shurdhër* 'deaf' (< SURDU), *i varfër/varfën* 'poor' (< ORPHANU), *i tërbuar* 'mad' (< *TURBULU), *i egër* 'wild' (< ACRE), *përtonjës* 'lazy' (< PIGRITO), *i belbër* 'stuttering' (< BALBU), *i lirë* 'free' (< LIBERU); *i kuq* 'red' (< *COCCEU), *i kaltër* 'blue', (< CALTHINU 'cornflower-colour'), *i gjelbër/gjelbën* 'green' (< GALBINU 'yellow'!), *i verdhë* 'yellow' (< VIRIDE 'green'!: the only Illyrian colour-adjectives in Albanian are *i bardhë* 'white' and *i zi* 'black').

(Adverbs) *afër/afën* 'near' (< AFFINE), *lark* 'far' (< LARGU), *shumë* 'much' (< SUMMU), *pak* 'a little, few' (< PAUCU), *kundër* 'against' (< CONTRA), *nuk* 'not' (< NUNQUAM), *kur* 'when' (< QUA HORA).

The name of the Albanian language itself, *Shqip* (whence are derived *Shqipëri/Shqipni* 'Albania' and *Shqiptar* 'Albanian') is of Latin origin, from the old verb *shqipoj* 'I understand' (< EXCIPO 'I catch, grasp'); the semantic connection with the similarly derived word for 'eagle', *shqiponjë* (literally "catcher") being pure folk etymology. The Albanians termed their speech *shqip* (i.e. 'understandable speech') in contradistinction to the 'gibberish' of their neighbours, so that *Shqipëria* means 'the land of Albanian-speakers', not 'the land of the eagle'.[8]

The wholesale latinization of Illyrian in Roman times was undoubtedly a prelude to the complete extinction of its ancient linguistic traditions, but in the highlands at least the language escaped this fate because of the events of the late sixth century. In the 580s the Avars, a barbarian tribe from the Caucasus, invaded the Balkan peninsula. Small in numbers, the Avars used Slav mercenaries in their armies, and as they marched south towards Constantinople, they devastated many imperial cities. These Avar incursions set off a mass migration of Slavs from Central Europe into Illyria. As a result of this upheaval, the Latin-speaking people of Dardania fled in different directions before the Slav advance, some towards the south, where they splintered into numerous Vlach communities, others north into the Carpathians, where they formed the nucleus of the future Romanian nation. In the fortress-cities along the Adriatic coast other groups of romanized Illyrians maintained their Latin speech. Meanwhile their semi-latinized compatriots consolidated themselves in the mountain fastnesses of Montenegro and northern Albania. This zone became the cradle of the Albanian nation.

Although the advent of the Slavs caused the Illyrian-speaking Illyrians (Albanians) and the Latin-speaking Illyrians (Dalmatians, Vlachs and Romanians) to part ways forever, their common origin continued to be proclaimed by a large number of parallel developments in their two languages. A close study of the Romanian vocabulary shows that though fundamentally Latin, it has a layer of old Illyrian words that are still current in Albanian,[9] e.g.

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Albanian	*meaning*	*Romanian*	*(different meaning)*
avull	*steam*	abur	
bredh	*fir-tree*	brad	
brez	*sash*	brîu	
i bukur	*beautiful*	bucuros	*joyful*
buzë	*lip*	buza	
dasmë	*wedding*	zestre	*dowry*
dhallë	*buttermilk*	zara	
faroj	*exterminate*	farîma	*crumble*
flutur	*butterfly*	fluture	
gadit	*guess*	ghici	
gëlbazë	*phlegm*	galbeaza	*sheep-rot*
gropë	*hole*	groapa	*pit*
gurmaz	*windpipe*	grumaz	*nape, neck*
katund	*village*	catun	*hamlet*
kodër	*hill*	codru	*forest*
lëkund	*swing, rock*	leagan	*cradle*
mal	*mountain*	mal	*bore, bank*
modhull	*vetchling*	mazare	*pea*
moshë	*age*	mos	*old man*
mushkuer	*young water-buffalo*	muscoiu	*mule*
nëperkë	*viper*	naparca	
përrua	*torrent*	pariu	*brook*
pikë	*drop*	picatura	
rrush	*grapes*	strugure	
vatër	*hearth*	vatra	
vjedull	*badger*	viezure	
zhapi, xhapik	*green lizard*	sopîrla	*lizard*

Throughout the rest of the Middle Ages the Serbian and Bulgarian domination of Albania, the migration of Albanians southwards into Byzantine-ruled and ecclesiastically Greek Epirus, the activity of the Venetians along the coasts and, from the fifteenth century, the Turkish domination, would all leave their mark on the vocabulary of the *Shqiptare*. Yet none of these imprints, not even the thick Turkish one of early modern times, equals in breadth or depth that of Latin. If Illyrian (or Thraco-Illyrian) was the mother of the Albanian language, the Roman tongue was its foster-mother. The indirect legacy of Latin was to make the Albanian language supple and adaptable, ever ready to admit new, enriching elements. But the second part of our tour, certainly no less spectacular than the leg we have just completed, is another long story to tell, and must wait for another occasion.

Geoffrey HULL

Footnote:

1 F. Bopp, *Über das Albanesische in seinem verwandschaftlichen Beziehung* (Berlin, 1854); F.X. Miklosich, "Albanesischen Forschungen", *Sitzungsbereiche der Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften*, XIX (1870), pp. 337-74; XX (1871), pp. 1-80, 315-23; G. Meyer, *Albanesische Studien*, Vienna, 1883; "Die Stellung des Albanesischen im Kreise der indogermanische Sprachen", *Beiträge zur Kunde der indogermanischen Sprachen*, VIII (1883), pp. 185-95.

2 J.G. von Hahn, *Albanesischen Studien* (Jena, 1854); E. Cabej, "Problemi i autoktonisë së shqiptarëvet në dritën e emravet te vendëve", *Buletin Universitet Shtetëror të Tiranës*, II (1958), pp. 54-61.

3 In support of this hypothesis is the fact that fishing terminology is almost entirely lacking in the original vocabulary of Albanian. Even the word for 'fish' *(peshk)* is borrowed from Latin. For a discussion of these competing theories, see Arshi Pipa, *The Politics of Language in Socialist Albania* (New York, 1989), pp. 155-164. Important studies in this field

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include N. Jokl, *Linguistisch-kulturhistorische Untersuchungen aus dem Bereichen des Albanischen* (Berlin/Leipzig, 1923); G. Weigand, Die Aromunen. 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1894-5); H. Baric, *Hymje në historin e gjuhës shqipe* (Introduction to the History of the Albanian Language), tran. H. Thaçi and H. Kaleshi (Prishtinë, 1955); C. Tagliavini, *La stratificazione del lessico albanese* (Bologna, 1943). In reviewing these theories, Arshi Pipa admits that "Nationalism, on the one hand, and on the other, state politics and vested cultural interests have played major roles in the elaboration of these contrasting theories and theses." *(op.cit.*, p. 160). Regarding the extreme Illyrianism that excludes the idea of the Dardanian provenance of Albanian and rejects the possibility of later (medieval) migrations, one might compare the unconvincing hypothesis of the Dacian geographical origin of Romanian that has long been national orthodoxy in Romania.

4 Most of the Albanian examples given in this article are noted in their standardized form, i.e. according to the somewhat artificial (and controversial) norm established by the pro-Tosk Hoxha régime after 1945. The orthographical guide employed here is Gasper Kiçi's *Albanian-English Dictionary* (Tivoli, 1978).This new literary standard, superseding both the official Gheg based on the usage of Elbasan (and, later, Tirana) and the literary Gheg of Shkodër which were predominant between 1914 and 1945, is essentially Tosk in phonology and morphology and literary (as opposed to dialectal) Gheg in vocabulary. Where two forms are given for a word, the first is Tosk and the second Gheg. Regarding the Communist standardization of Albanian, see Pipa, *op.cit.*

5 This line was established by the Czech scholar in 1903 on the basis of evidence from regional inscriptions.

6 Pipa, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

7 See F.X. Miklosich, "Die romanischen Elemente im Albanischen", *Denkschriften der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl.*, XX (1871); G. Meyer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der albanesischen Sprache* (Strasburg, 1891; incorporating an article of 1888 on latinisms.); Harald Haarmann, *Der lateinische Lehnwortschatz im Albanesischen* (Hamburg, 1972); Addolorata Landi, *Gli elementi latini nella lingua albanese* (Naples, 1989). It should be noted that not all the proposed Latin etymologies of words cited in the present article are universally accepted.

8 The word *Slav* likewise means 'speaker' *(slovo* 'word') in contradiction to *Nemec* 'German", literally 'dumb' (i.e. unable to speak like the Slavs). *Shqiptar* replaced the older *Arbër/Arbën* (whence *Albanian)* as the ethnic name of the people after the fifteenth century.

9 See Johannes Hubschmid, "L'interprétation historique des concordances lexicales albano-roumaines et le substrat dacomusien", *Studime filologjike* 19 (1982) 3, pp. 77-84.

Fr. Ndoc Luli's inspiring "Letter to a Friend" which was published in the 1993 edition of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin has been reprinted in the award-winning monthly Jesuit News which goes to all the Jesuits of the United States and Canada. Also published in the same periodical is a striking photo of him as he looks today in his ninetieth year. Fr. Luli is still actively ministering in the Albanian capital of Tirana. He loves to receive visitors who come on pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Sacred Heart with whom he converses in Albanian, Latin or Italian. Fr. Luli's experience has also been reprinted by the *Catholic Digest* which has the largest circulation (650,000) of any Catholic publication in the United States. "Letter to a Friend" by Fr. Luli appeared in the June, 1994 issue of the Catholic Digest.



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THE CURRENTS OF MOSLEM AND BEKTASH WRITING IN ALBANIA (1850-1950)[1]

Though the most creative and innovative forces of Albanian literature and culture in the second half of the nineteenth century were encompassed within the Rilindja movement of national awakening, Albanian literature in Arabic script did not wane completely[2]. Indeed, the Moslem and Bektash literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with its primarily religious fixation continued to evolve in accordance with the literary, cultural and, in particular, spiritual traditions set in the eighteenth century and, in the process, came to evince not only a higher level of skill, discipline and erudition, but also an increase in artistic and linguistic refinement. Nonetheless, it must be said that the more directly religious focus of Albanian writing in Arabic script in this period resulted in its gradually more restrictive usage as a vehicle of literary expression and thus in its estrangement from the mainstream of Albanian literature and culture.

It was the Bektash who best maintained the link between the Albanian nationalist movement and the cultural traditions of the Orient in the nineteenth century. The relatively liberal and open-minded character of their religious practices and their pantheistic beliefs including both Islamic and Christian elements enabled them to strive to break down the barriers separating the Moslem, Catholic and Orthodox communities. The best known Albanian Bektash author by far was **Naim bey Frashëri** (1846-1900) whose religious, nationalist and didactic works, because of their significance and exceptional impact on the national awakening in the late nineteenth century, are best treated within the realms of Rilindja literature.

Among the many other Bektash poets of the period was **Baba Muharem Mahzuni** or Mehzuni (d. 1867) from Gjirokastër who, from 1845 to his death, lived at the famous Bektash *teke* (monastery) of Durballi in Thessaly, one of the oldest in the Balkans. He wrote verse both in Turkish and in Albanian. Amongst his disciples at the great *teke* of Durballi was **Baba Abidin Leskoviku** from Leskovik in southern Albania, founder of the Leskovik *teke*. Leskoviku composed spiritual verse in Turkish and Albanian, including a hymn to Durballi. Another talented author of much mystical verse was **Baba Adem Vexh-hi** (1841-1927) from Gjakovë. He travelled widely, in particular on pilgrimages to Mecca, Medina and Kerbela. In 1877, he was sent as a *baba* (father) to Prizren where he opened a *teke*. From 1922 to his death, he headed the *teke* in his native Gjakovë. **Baba Meleq Shëmbërdhenji,** also known as Meleq Staravecka, was from the Skrapar region of southern Albania and was educated at the now abandoned Bektash *teke* in Cairo, where he became a dervish. He returned to Albania and took part in the nationalist movement, in particular by illegally distributing books and spreading new ideas. Shëmbërdhenji held the title of *baba* at the *teke* bearing his name until 1914 when the latter was destroyed. He is the author of both nationalist and religious verse in Albanian collected in a now extremely rare volume published in the twenties. Shëmbërdhenji is considered one of the best Bektash poets of the period. He was also a friend and admirer of Naim Frashëri whom he called, "*Zemra e Shqipërisë, gurra e dritësisë, pishtar i vegjëlisë, shejtor i mjerëzisë*" (The heart of Albania, the fountain of wisdom, torch-bearer of the poor, saint of humanity).

The Bektash tradition of religious and patriotic verse, inspired both by the sect's mystic and pantheistic beliefs and by its nationalist aspirations, continued well into the twentieth century. **Baba Ibrahim** from the *teke* of Qesarakë near Kolonjë

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in southern Albania was active, like many other Bektash leaders, in the secret distribution of Albanian books and literature, and suffered imprisonment by Turkish military forces. In 1913, he was also arrested by the Greek authorities but was subsequently freed by nationalist figure, poet and guerrilla Sali Butka (1852-1938). When the Greeks took Kolonjë again, Baba Ibrahimi was forced to flee and his *teke* was burnt down. In one of his poems, *Dimri* (Winter), he compares the Albanian nation, ravaged by war and oppression, to the burden of a long hard winter. **Baba Salihu** from the southern Albanian village of Matohasanaj near Tepelenë used his *teke* as an illegal Albanian-language elementary school. He was also active in the distribution of Albanian books and was imprisoned by the Turks in 1902. It was in prison that he wrote much of his poetry and translated the epic *Hadîqatû as-su'adâ* (The garden of the blessed) of the great Azerbaijan poet Fuzûlî (1494-1556), the work which had also inspired the nineteenth-century poet Dalip Frashëri in his Albanian epic *Hadika*. Also from the Tepelenë region was **Baba Ahmed Turani** (d. 1928), who travelled to the Middle East in his youth. He took the title *baba* in 1908 in his native village of Turan. In 1914, his *teke*, like many others, was burned down by Greek extremists and he was forced to move to Vlorë. He is said to have been a talented poet. Another author of Bektash spiritual verse in the period was **Salih Nijazi Dedei** (1876-1941) of Starje e Kolonjës who was raised in Anatolia, became a *baba* in 1908 and a *kryegjysh* (elder) of the Bektash community in 1916. He remained in Turkey even after the closing of the *tekes* there. He returned to Albania at the end of 1930 and was shot to death on 28 November 1941 in Tiranë, apparently for his opposition to Italian rule. **Baba Hamza Gjakova** (1882-1952) from Gjakovë also journeyed to the Middle East as a young man and returned to take the title *baba* at the *teke* of Shtipi in Macedonia in 1912. He was the author of much verse of Bektash and Shi'ite inspiration. One of the best educated Bektash writers of the period was **Baba Selim Ruhi** (1869-1944) from Elbasan who became a *baba* in 1907 and is the author of three poetic *divans* in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. Towards the end of his life, he also wrote in Albanian. The German oriental scholar Franz Babinger (1891-1967) who visited Baba Selim at his *teke* described his verse as being exceptionally beautiful. Poet, writer and translator **Baba Ali Tomori** (d. 1947) was born in Shalë near Tepelenë and studied in Janina (Ioannina in northern Greece) as had Naim and Sami Frashëri. After the burning of the *tekes* in 1913-1915, he moved to Cairo, returning to Albania only after the end of World War I. He helped organize the three Bektash Congresses held in Albania in the twenties (1921 in Prishtë, 1926 in Gjirokastër, and 1929 in Korçë) which led to the establishment of a recognized religious community in the country. Tomori is the author of at least six books of Bektash literature and history, including poetry translations and original verse, some of which was published under the pseudonym Ali Tyrabiu. He opposed all religious fanaticism in his writings and endeavoured to combine Christian and Bektash elements. Tomori was one of the rare Bektash authors who abandoned Arabic script and used the Latin alphabet for publication, a change worthy of note. Some of his works also appeared in newspapers and journals of the period. In 1947, he was accused of espionage, sentenced to death and executed.

The last of the Bektash poets in this tradition is **Ibrahim Hasnaj** (b. 1912) of Tiranë, who uses the pseudonyms Hima and Bardhyl Nizami. Hasnaj, who is also remembered for his rediscovery of the early nineteenth-century Bektash poet Zenel Bastari, became a Bektash himself in 1935, the year he began writing verse. He was secretary-general of the pre-war Bektash community and editor-in-chief of the Bektash periodical *Djersa* (Sweat), of which eight issues were published up to 1947. Ibrahim Hasnaj was imprisoned for ten years from 1947 to 1957 in Tiranë prison, initially in a cell with writers Petro Marko, Andrea Varfi and Mitrush Kuteli, and suffered a further five years internment. He is the author of three volumes of as yet unpublished mystical verse of Bektash inspiration: *Unë dhe ndjesia e mia* (My absolution and I), *Lot zkalmorës* (Tears of the suffering), and *Rreze të zjarrta* (Fiery rays). It goes without

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saying that these volumes, written in Latin script, remained well hidden over the long years in which religion was persecuted in Albania and any literary expression thereof was extremely dangerous. With the final lifting of the ban on religion, the seventy-eight year old Ibrahim Hasnaj was chosen president of the provisional committee of the Bektash community which was solemnly re-established in Tiranë on 27 January 1991.

Although the Bektash had gradually come to enjoy full recognition as a religious community by the 1930s, they had lost ground culturally. The burning and looting of the southern Albanian *tekes* by Greek extremists during the Balkan War and World War I constituted an immeasurable cultural loss from which Bektash writing never recovered. In addition, the transition to Latin script which would have offered greater opportunities for the publication and mass distribution of literary and religious works did not take place to any substantial extent. Indeed it was no doubt the inability of what remained of Bektash literature to adapt to the Latin alphabet and to contemporary publishing which signalled its final demise.

Though by far the strongest group, the Bektash were not the only dervish order to devote itself to religious verse in Arabic script. **Dervish Salihu** (1820s-1890s), born in the village of Libizhdë e Hasit near Prizren, was an adherent of the Kadiri. He grew up in Rahovec where the sheik of the local *teke* recognized his aptitude and interest in philosophy and mysticism and sent him to Ko ani in eastern Macedonia for further education among the Kadiri under Myhliz Dedja. There he became a dervish and returned to his native Libizhdë e Hasit to open a Kadiri *teke* himself. He actively supported the League of Prizren in his old age and had many adherents, including political figure Bajram Curri (1862-1925). Although the manuscripts containing his poetry were all destroyed, in particular during the Balkan wars, some of his verse has been preserved in the liturgy of many of the Alevi orders. Dervish Salihu 's son, **Sheh Kadria** (d. ca. 1903), was another Kadiri poet and public figure of note who was murdered in Gjakovë about 1903. From **Sheh Emini i Sadive** (d. 1918), a leading religious and political figure from Gjakovë who is said to have headed a *teke* there for seventy-five years, we have one piece of religious verse entitled *Thirr me zemër* (Call out with your heart). **Sheh Jonuzi** (1848-1909), also known as Hajdar and by the pseudonym Sabri, was a Melami dervish born in Jashanicë e Toplicë in Kosovo. He studied theology in Istanbul and returned to Kosovo to open a school in Suhadoll i Ulët near Mitrovicë where teaching was given in Albanian, something quite illegal at the time. He was often at odds with the religious and government authorities of the period and suffered much persecution. Sheh Jonuzi is the author of nine *ilâhî* (religious hymn), an *elifi*, i.e. a collection of twenty-nine poems designed to teach the Arabic alphabet, and about ten other poems.

Moslem literature in Albania and indeed Albanian literature in general was an exclusively male prerogative and, with a very few exceptions, was to remain so until the 1960s. At the turn of the century, we nonetheless find the trace of what may be the first female poet in Albania, Nesibe of Gjirokastër, the author of a *qasîde* (historical ode) in thirty-one quatrains, dated 1897 [1313 A.H.], depicting the fighting which took place in the southern Albanian border region between Greek and Turkish forces. In one of these common frontier skirmishes, the Greeks had bombarded Sarandë and were obviously threatening Gjirokastër itself. The *qasîde* or *gjyftei* of Nesibe was discovered in the 1950s by Osman Myderrizi in a 78-page manuscript containing twenty-five poems by various authors including Nezim Frakulla, which found its way via Shkodër and Durrës to Tiranë. It is conceivable that Nesibe was simply the variant spelling for a male poet called **Nesib Mezini** though the latter, in one of his own poems, recommends that Nesibe "leave the *qasîde* alone." We know nothing more of her life at any rate. Also in the manuscript in question is historical verse, though not of the same quality, by one Abdulhamid of Gjirokastër and religious poetry of Bektash inspiration by **Hoxhë Dobi**, both no doubt of the turn of the century.

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The oriental tradition of the *mevlud*, religious verse celebrating the birth of the prophet Mohammed, which has been referred to in the literary production of earlier Albanian authors, notably Hasan Zyko Kamberi, Abdullah Sulejman Konispoli and Ismail Floqi, continued to find favour with a number of Moslem authors throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. The most direct source of inspiration for Albanian writers remained the famous *mevlud* of the Turkish poet Suleyman Çelebi (d. 1422). **Hafëz Ali Ulqinaku** (1853-1913), who was a Moslem writer from Ulcinj (as his surname denotes), an Albanian-speaking port on the Montenegrin coast, made a translation of Çelebi's *mevlud*, entitled simply *Ter ume-i mevlud 'alâ lisân-i arnavûd* (Translation of a *mevlud* into the Albanian language), which he published in Istanbul at the beginning of 1878 [1295 A.H.]. Ulqinaku was also the author of other translations from Turkish and of a large Turkish-Albanian, Albanian-Turkish dictionary compiled in Arabic script about 1897. The Turkish-Albanian section of the dictionary comprises 915 pages whereas the subsequent Albanian-Turkish section, of which we possess the original, covers only 168 pages and includes about 4,000 different Albanian lexemes. **Tahir efendi Halil Popova** (1856?-1949), known too as *Mehmet Tahir efendi*, from the village of Popovë near Vuÿitërnë in Kosovo, also wrote a *mevlud* based on that of Çelebi and had it published in Istanbul about 1876. Popova's *mevlud*, which is said to have been recited widely in Moslem circles in Kosovo until recently, and that of Ulqinaku are thus the earliest known Albanian-language works to have been published in Arabic script, a good decade before Jani Vreto 's modified version in the Latin alphabet of Muhamet Kyÿyku 's *Evlebeja*, written originally in Arabic script about 1820. Other *mevluds*, be they originals or translations of Çelebi, are known to have been written in Albanian by the nineteenth century **Haxhi Çiçkoja** of **Korçë**, by Tahir efendi Lluka (d. 1908), by **Hafëz Ali Korça** (1874-1957), member of the High Council of the Sheria (a *mevlud* dated 1909), and by **Hafëz Abdullah Sëmlaku** whose *mevlud* went through four editions, the last of which published in Korÿë 1944. **Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu** (1878-1952), a writer known for his biting satire and editor of the Tiranë weekly newspaper *Dajti* from 1923 to 1926, was the author of a 250-page mevlud, the longest in Geg dialect.

Almost all remaining authors of twentieth-century Moslem literature we know of at present are from Kosovo. One of the most prolific of these was **Hilmi Abdyl Maliqi** (1856?-1928), also known as *Sheh* Mala of Rahovec or *Sheh Maliqi*. He was born in Kopila Gllavë near Rahovec and received a good education both in Rahovec and at the *Medresa* (Islamic school) of Mehmet Pasha in Prizren, learning not only Albanian and Serbo-Croatian, but also Turkish, Persian and Arabic. His mystical, descriptive and sentimental verse in a divan consisting of seventy-seven poems, as yet for the most part unpublished, marks a transition from traditional oriental verse to the classical poetry of the late Rilindja period. Maliqi was also the author of sixteen *risalet* or religious epistles and of translations from Turkish, Persian and Arabic, including a four-hundred-page translation of the *Wâridât* of the Arab poet, jurist and rebel Bedr ed-Dîn of Samâwnâ (1358-1416). Maliqi 's manuscripts are said to be preserved at the *teke* of Rahovec. Maliqi's contemporary **Haxhi Ymer Lutfi Paÿarizi** (1871-1929) was a poet and mystic from Prizren who studied at the Fatih *Medresa* in Istanbul. Though steeped in Islamic tradition, he welcomed the October Revolution and supported the fledgling Communist Party in Shkopje as early as 1920, an activity which brought him into conflict with the Serbian police. A noted disciple of Hilmi Maliqi was **Shaip** (1884-1951), a Melami dervish from the village of Mamushe. He was the author of seventeen poems in Albanian, twenty in Turkish and five in Serbo-Croatian, all written in Arabic script. His emotionally charged verse in an Albanian less suffused with oriental vocabulary includes spiritual topics and love lyrics.

Although Arabic script had been used for Albanian for almost two centuries, it was never fully suited to the Albanian phonological system and could cause quite a number of misunderstandings

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for the inexperienced reader. **Rexhep** Voka (1847-1917), a Moslem scholar from Tetovë (Tetovo) in Macedonia, devoted himself to the problem and came up with an alphabet in Arabic script comprising forty-four letters, both consonants and vowels, which he published in his *Elifbaja shqip*, Istanbul 1911 [A.H. 1327] (Albanian spelling book). Rexhep Voka, born in the village of Shipkovicë in the largely Albanian-speaking Tetovë region, began his studies in Istanbul in 1868 where he later worked as a teacher and journalist. He returned to Tetovë in 1895 and was active as a mufti in Monastir (Bitola) during the revolution of the Young Turks as well as a member of the *Bashkimi* (Unity) Society. Voka was the author of three other works of note: *Vendimet e Kongresit të Dibrës*, Monastir 1909 [A.H. 1325] (Resolutions of the Congress of Dibër); *Mendime*, Istanbul 1911 [A.H. 1328] (Thoughts) in which he expounds on the backward state of Albania and the necessity of education; and *Arnavudje mûfessal ilmihal*, Istanbul 1911 (Primer of religion in Albanian). Rexhep Voka 's alphabet did not go unnoticed as it was used the year after its publication by one Fazil of Tiranë to print a 32-page Albanian grammar with the Turkish title *Sarfi iptidai arnavudi*, Istanbul 1911 (Elementary Albanian grammar). By this time, however, the days of writing in Arabic script for non-religious works were numbered.

Also from this period are a number of little known Moslem poets of whom only a few poems have survived. Among them are: **Dervish** Veseli (1887-1950) of Rahovec, who travelled widely in the Middle East and was killed accidently at the Great Sa'di *teke* of Gjakovë in 1950; **Hafiz Imer** Shemsiu (1893-1945), imam of Talinovc, who opened an Albanian-language elementary school in Sazli-Talinovc and of whose estimated thirty religious poems we have but three; **Dervish** Idrizi, a blacksmith from Gjakovë and author of one poem dated 1908; educator **Faik** Maloku (1900-1935), also known as Faik efendi of Prishtinë, and **Sheh** Osmoni of Junik, of whom we have two poems each; and **Hafiz Islami** (ca. 1910 - ca. 1934), pseudonym of Islam Mehmet Bytyqi, from the village of Mllanaviq i Llapushës, who after religious studies in Gjakovë under Fahri Efendiu died young while performing military service in Slovenia. A certain **Sheh** Ahmedi of Shkodër, a dervish of the Rufai sect, was also little known until recently when twenty-three of his religious and subtly nationalist poems were discovered in a manuscript from Strellÿ i Epërm near Deÿan. **Sheh** Hyseni i Halvetive (1873-1926) was a religious scholar of the Halveti sect in Prizren of whom we have one twenty-four line *ilâhî* of no particular literary or theological value. Nothing seems to have survived of the works of Azem Efendi Olluri (1825-1913) of Kroimiroc in Kosovo or of his contemporary Hasan Efendi Hoti of Drenica in Kosovo, whose Albanian-language divan was in his son's possession until 1945.

Two poets active in the 1930s and 1940s bring to a close the history of Albanian literature in Arabic script. **Vejsel Xhelaludin** Guta (1900-1979) was born in the village of Zaskok near Ferizaj in Kosovo and studied at the Medresa of Mehmet Pasha in Prizren where he learned Arabic and Persian. He later worked as an imam and school teacher in Vojnoc near Shtime. Of his verse, we have five ilâhîs and one other poem dated 1942. **Mulla Hysein Hysni** Statovci (b. 1900), born in Batllavë, lived in Prishtinë and Podujevë where he served as vice-principal of the Moslem elementary school opened by the above-mentioned Faik Maloku. He was involved in political and social life of pre-war Kosovo and was a strong supporter of Albanian-language teaching. His poems were written between the years 1935 and 1947.

With these last two religious poets, still active during the Second World War, the tradition of Albanian in Arabic script vanishes once and for all. Though Albanian literature in Arabic script had always been strongly influenced by Islam and the cultural traditions of the Orient, by the twentieth century it had become a devotional and liturgical pastime cultivated almost exclusively by dervishes, imams and local religious figures in Kosovo. Although an anachronism in itself, it maintained one modest flame of Albanian culture in southern Yugoslavia at a time when writing and education in Albanian were unthinkable and those

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who openly advocated them were subject to swift and ruthless persecution by the Serbian authorities. In such a repressive atmosphere, this literature offered a haven for Albanian writers since its Arabic script and its ostensibly religious character made it too remote or too pious for the Belgrade authorities to attack and suppress, an incomprehensible world of oriental mysticism cherished in the seclusion of the *tekes*, mosques and *medresas* by a seemingly uneducated, impoverished and little understood Moslem minority within the Christian realm of the southern Slavs.

Other Moslem literature was no doubt written in Arabic script between the wars in Albania too, parallel to the dynamically developing 'real' literature in the Latin alphabet, but few traces of the former have come to light. It is to be feared that many such works in Arabic script, whether with literary pretensions or not, were lost or destroyed during the revolutionary campaign for the abolition of religion in Albania in 1967 which resulted not only in the dissolution of all religious communities but also in the physical destruction of virtually all mosques, *tekes*, churches and monasteries in the country. It is widely admitted in Albania now at any rate that many works of art were simply cast onto garbage heaps or burnt. The three volumes of verse by Bektash poet Ibrahim Hasnaj would seem to constitute an exception. The coming years will show what else has survived of this vanished cultural tradition.

Robet ELSIE

1 The present article is an adapted version of material from the author's coming *History of Albanian Literature*.

2 On Moslem literature in Albania before the mid-nineteenth century, see the present author's article: Albanian literature in the Moslem tradition. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Albanian writing in Arabic script. In: Oriens, Journal of the International Society for Oriental Research, Leiden, 33 (1992), p. 287-306.

MY "DHE-MITER"

Tell me, O my Demeter Pelasgia, how fare You today?!
Our "Earth Mother" You were; what do Your Children now say?
Do they know You as our common "Dhe-Miter"
Though their names have changed in the lands they now stay?

Your Albanian Children DO know their Fathers as Illyrians
Though some may call themselves Epirotes or Macedonians.
But what about your Albanian Kosovar Children;
They may know but yet who calls them Dardanians?

Who knows that "Kosova" is Homer's "Dardania",
(He also called You "Divine Pelasgia")
And he tells us how these ancient Dardanians
Aided their Trojan kinsmen against the Greek barbarians?

Who knows that Your other children, the Etruscans,
Were the Forefathers of the ancient Romans;
That Umbrians, Ausmians, Oscans, and Brutians
Are the first names of the modern Italians?

Who knows that before the Hellenes inhabited Pelasgia,
All of Greece was part of your Illyria;
That thus the "Ionian Sea/Our Lake" comes from Your language
Which still is said "DETI I JON" in modern Albanian?

Who knows that the Phoenicians, also Children of Your Womb,
Originated the phonetic alphabet which Greeks assume;
And that Your descendants throughout the Mediterranean area
Can still be "heard" via their carvings on the tombs?

Show me, O my "Dhe-Nene", how can I make aware
All my Pelasgian kinsmen now living everywhere
To realize and admit You as our common "Earth-Mother"
And let the world know that in Albania You are still there?

Victor Chacho

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THE GARDEN

by Ernest Koliqi, 1928
Translated by Adalbert Fekeçi
1975 with notes by the translator

Shuk Dila left home and walked lazily toward Arra e Madhe.[1]

A light breeze coming from the hills beyond the river Kiri had started to weaken the heat of that July afternoon. Yet, the streets and the walls[2] were still blazing from the sultry heat although the sun was about to set. He had awakened from the siesta a little while before that, he had thoroughly washed and refreshed himself with water from the well (oh, finally, after many long years, he was enjoying again the water of Shkodër's wells, the virtues of which have made so many legends flourish), had taken time to dress carefully since he knew that many an eye would scrutinize him from behind partially opened doors, and through the slats of venetian blinds.

Shuk Dila was headed to Arra e Madhe to return a visit.

Upon his arrival in Shkodër, after so many years of absence, a great number of relatives, friends and well-wishers had come to see him. Returning such visits had always been a nuisance for him. That day, on the contrary, paying a visit to Shaqe, a distant relative, was a pleasure. In her house and backyard, he had spent happy hours in his boyhood life.

It is a well known fact that the longer we stay away from the places which have been the scene of games in the early stages of our lives, the more we surround these places with reverie, and the greater our longing becomes to see them again.

And in those first days which followed his return, beginning from the smallest alcove of his house and ending in the most recessed alley of the city, every place and everything had revived in Shuk forgotten memories and all of him had been pervaded with sensations, at times pleasant, other times nostalgic, but whatever these sensations were, they were always new and fascinating.

Walking with the lazy steps of a passer-by who has plenty of time to wander about, he would glance at everything with special appreciation. Yes, all those walls, all those fences, those houses were familiar to him; yes, he remembered them. It's true that, in his memory, they all were vague, swathed in myth—which made them twice as appealing; nevertheless, even now when he was passing among them, after so many years, he found in them new and unexpected charm. Yes, here is that curved house with the dense mulberry tree in front; here is the wall from which spilled out, in clusters, fragrant honeysuckle; here are the many alleys, full of shade and mystery, which make you dream of the most fabulous parks.

So, walking, he felt as though he were being rocked in a sweet dream. Quite often, when he was overseas, from a table of a cafe, amidst the distracting noise of a big city, he would go into a daydream; he would dwell upon Shkodër, flying there on the wings of his imagination. When this happened, he would roam through aromatic streets, through the still of the gardens, moving across imaginary parks. "Chimerical strolls" this was the name he had given to those fictive flights to the far-off city where he was born.

Now, after 10 years of absence and nostalgia, the reality had the same beauty as the dreams.

Suddenly, he shook his head to interrupt his train of thought and said to himself: "Have I lost my way?".

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He looked around and tried to orient himself, to find the way as he remembered it when he was a child.

"I must have missed it . . .".

Indeed he had. The alley was behind him. He turned around, found the alley and stopped at the gate. The gate . . . darkened and smoothed by the weather; the cobblestones in front had thinned out, grass had grown amongst them.

He knocked with the warm sensation of knocking on a magic door which would open into the vanished world of his childhood.

The din of clogs being dragged through the courtyard was heard, and the gate opened by a red-faced housemaid, who blushed as she saw him; she recognized him at once, and her face became even redder; she ran back, left her clogs at the bottom of the stairway and went upstairs to inform the lady of the house.

Shuk, smiling because of the bashful maid, closed the gate himself and slowly headed toward the stairway. His eyes grew calm and filled with elation as he looked around. The courtyard looked the same; oh, no, there was a wall over there where once there was a fence. The house was freshly painted and somehow remodeled, but no other changes could be noticed: the same open veranda with wooden stairs, the windows framed with iron bars; exactly as in times past. But Shuk's eyes were fixed, full of longing, on the little gate leading to the garden which stretched along one side of the house and behind it, when a woman's voice echoed from the veranda:

—Come in, Shuk! Please do come in!

Shuk saw Shaqe, whose hands were behind her back, trying to hurriedly untie the immaculate apron she was wearing. He climbed the stairs, embraced her and entered the guests' room.[3]

Even here everything was in its erstwhile place. Shaqe, sitting in front of him, began talking:

—Would you believe me, I swear to God, I did not recognize you a few days ago when I came to see you. My! How years go by! I remember you this little . . . I can see you playing in the garden. My God, what a hard time you gave me when you were a little boy! You know why? You would bring all the children of the neighborhood here . . . Do you recall when you came to spend nights here? Lush, may his soul rest in peace, always talked about you. You were in his mind all the time you were overseas.

Lush was her husband.

Shuk kept smiling with contentment, but did not answer Shaqe's voice sounded sweet at the bottom of his heart, reviving in him, incessantly, forgotten moments, obliterated thrills. Ah, if he were to close his eyes, he would take flight and would be taken away by the flow of memories; then, all his life spent away from Shkodër would disappear as if it had never existed; he would become a little boy again, a restless child, always ready, night and day, to play and have fun.

Shaqe continued:

—Ah, my dear Shuk, how much Lush loved you! As I said before, not a single day went by without his mentioning your name . . . Lin was still attending college . . . I had to . . . when Lush passed away, I had to have him leave college and send him to work . . .".

Lin was her son.

Shaqe continued:

—You cannot imagine how much I would have liked you to have been here when Lin got married, last year. I kept saying to everybody: "I am so sorry Shuk won't be in the wedding". Oh, the wedding party was marvelous. And what a wonderful girl, the bride! One could not ask for a better one. But, where is she? Where is the bride?[4] Come on now! Shuk is one of us. There is no need for primping!

Shaqe got up to look for the bride. From the chair on which he was sitting, Shuk attempted to contemplate the garden through the window. The view of the garden was not obscured, but from where he was sitting he could not see but a little

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part of it and the giant fig tree, the branches of which now touched the window. Ah, that garden . . .! the stage of the most beautiful games of his childhood . . . Shuk had not seen it for 10 years, but he knew that he would recognize every tree, every shrub and perhaps every wisp of grass, because in each of them flourished a sweet memory.

Overseas, in foreign lands, in his heart that garden had grown green every spring.

—Here, this is Lin's bride.

Shaqe, entering with the bride, interrupted his train of thought.

They all sat down and engaged in conversation. Shuk also began to say a few words here and there; he would have preferred to stay with his nostalgic thoughts, but his being silent would have been misunderstood. Talking, he would look at the bride out of the corner of his eye.

She was not exceptionally pretty, yet quite a warmth emanated from her face, which made her very attractive. She was dressed in Shkodër's native costume: shiny, black "branavekë",[5] silky blouse, red apron, a necklace of medallions, "sallman"[6] embellished with small gold coins. She kept her head lowered, looking at a white handkerchief she was holding in her hands which were adorned by many shiny rings. From time to time, she attempted to look up, but her eyes would meet his, and, at once, she would lower her head again, her eyelashes fluttering.

Shuk felt as though he had always known her, but this impression vanished completely after he noticed the soft features of her face, characteristic of all women from Shkodër.

—Vida was not with me when I came to see you, upon your return, because she was at her folks, where she was spending a few days—said Shaqe.

Vida was the bride's name.

And, after uttering these words, she started to enumerate Vida's virtues: Industrious, meek, neat, just born and created for Lin.

The bride blushed and lowered her head even more. Shuk kept his eyes fixed on her, but he was not seeing her, for he was caught again in deep thoughts: "Where would all those little girls who played with me in the garden be now, I wonder? Certainly, they are grown up; of course, many of them are married and perhaps I have already seen them on the streets, but alas I don't recognize them; some of them have died . . . who knows!".

His mind flew to Dusha.[7] Dusha, the dearest girl-friend of his childhood, the sweetest living memory he had taken with him from Shkodër and had guarded jealously through his pilgrimage, away from his fatherland. Dusha: skinny and pale. In her delicate face, only her big eyes showed life, only her black eyes had vitality. He had taken her under his protection; no child would have dared to harm her. Everyday, he would give her walnuts,[8] multi-colored kite papers, spools of string, holy card. Once--my, he remembered!—he wanted to give her a beautiful box with a penholder, a pencil, an inkwell and an eraser in it. His uncle had brought it for him from Italy. She wouldn't take it: his begging or threatening had been of no avail; it had been impossible to convince her to accept that present.

Where was Dusha now?

Except for that sweet name, he knew nothing about her; neither whose daughter she was, nor where she was living at that time. He had met her right there in the garden, and only now was he able to realize why he liked so much to come here, to this house, to spend nights, time and again: to see Dusha and play with her. During these 10 years of absence, he had never heard a thing about her. An inexplainable feeling induced him to think that being so skinny, so fragile, she could not have been able to withstand the harshness of the years. He imagined her, without knowing why, in Ermaj's Field.[9] His heart was pounding.

He heard Shaqe saying:

—In a little while, Lin will be home. He will be terribly sorry if he doesn't find you here. Are

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you going to wait for him? I am going to put a bottle of "raki"[10] in the well and prepare a delicious appetizer. Please wait for him! He won't delay . . .

Shuk answered:

—Yes, I will. But, I am dying to see the garden. While I am waiting, may I go down?

—Why of course! Get up, bride! Accompany him into the garden.

The bride got up, blushing.

When they arrived downstairs, she opened the garden's little gate and in a soft voice she said:

—Please enter!

Shuk entered and started walking, as in a dream, on the green, soft grass. Nothing had changed. Yet, now that he was a man, the garden seemed narrower, the walls, lower, the trees, smaller.

The sun could not be seen any longer; it had disappeared behind the wall. The garden was flooded with that unique light having no shimmer at all, the light which precedes the last moments of the sunset and which is filled with a sweet yearning as if in it were blended a touch of sadness for something that is about to disappear. Even the bulky and rough leaves of the fig tree, even the small leaves of the plum trees which were planted in a circle in the middle of the garden and which, all together, formed a giant bush, even the dark-green ivy and the lavishly blooming honeysuckle which enveloped the high walls, even the tent-shaped myrtles, under each window of the house stood quiet, without any movement, as if they knew that they were to stay still in order to revere the descent of the night's majestic shadows.

The motionless air, imprisoned in there, was impregnated with all kinds of fragrances: scents of different fruits, the smell of fresh grass, the smell of flowers, different smells of plants hidden in cool corners. All these mixed scents, within the walls that did not let them escape and fade away, formed one single, special, strong smell, as exquisite as an aromatic drink.

The dusk, with its light shade, was about to fall and so supress all colors, yet to set alight a myriad of stars in the piece of sky which stood as a silver cupola over the walls. But strange! before the dreamy eyes of Shuk, the garden was taking another shape, another appearance: the image of a dawn.

And, for a few moments, everything changed as by a miracle. The light of the past most beautiful springs shone over green living things which started swaying joyfully as if they animated by a surge of resuscitating juices. The silence which had swathed the garden in a light veil, suddenly was supplanted by voices and shouts of joy. Among those sounds, he recognized one soft voice of a girl; his heart was about to stop. He had become a child again. He rolled in the grass, climbed the trees, stretched his gluttonous hand toward the sweet figs, hid himself under a dense myrtle. Suddenly, he stopped running and looked, astonished, toward the little gate which was opening: Dusha, his tiny girlfriend, the sweet playmate of his early youth, entered with red candy in her hand. She walked toward him, and as she approached, she kept putting the candy in her mouth, sucking at it . . .

—This garden of ours is quite pretty, isn't it?

The bride's voice woke Shuk from his dream. For a few moments, he was filled with anger, for those words dispersed his sweet vision, then feeling guilty for his prolonged silence, he began talking:

—Pretty indeed . . . I adore it because it reminds me of my childhood. I used to come here, quite often, to play. Memories, however sweet they are, always perturb us somehow. That's what happened to me when I entered here.

He spoke and looked at her.

The bride, in whose living body prospered beautiful youth, listened smiling. Her eyes ex-

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pressed joy, happiness and serenity; there was no more shyness in her face.

Shuk thought:

"I envy you for not knowing what melancholy is. I have invariably been afflicted by it. If I were to tell you what feelings are tormenting me now, you would find them amusing and perhaps, ridiculous. I certainly envy you."

And in a louder voice he said:

—I have been away from Shkodër for more than 10 years. When one stays away from his country for such a long time, upon his return, particularly during the first days, the smallest thing stirs him.

Her lips moved as if she wanted to say something. Shuk tarried; but she did not speak.

The light was gone; nightfall reigned over the garden. In that darkness, and because she stayed at a distance from him, he could not distinguish well the bride's face, yet he thought he perceived that her body had trembled as if she were restraining and stiffling something.

Thinking that he was boring her, Shuk walked toward the exit saying:

—Shall we go in?

She did not answer, but followed him. After having walked a few steps, Shuk could not withhold any longer the question that had risen to his lips so many times, but which he had managed to swallow.

—Would you be able to tell me about a little girl whose name was Dusha and who lived nearby?

The bride walked on, still following him. Not having had an answer, he continued speaking, without turning around:

—She was in ill health and had a sickly-hued face. I really don't know why, but I have an uneasy feeling that she is dead . . .

A pause followed. Shuk whispered: "You plum trees that have been the witnesses of a happy childhood, tell me what has happened? Why a moment ago was I exuberant thinking that the dearest creature on earth was alive, while now I am grieving for her death?".

He turned around as if he had been struck by lightning.

The bride had answered:

—Shuk, don't you recognize me?

* * *

NOTE:

1. *Arra e Madhe* : a neighborhood in the city of Shkodër; it used to be inhabited exclusively by Catholics.
2. During the Turkish domination, high walls were erected around the houses to give women complete privacy. The walls give Shkodër an ugly appearance, yet, within those walls prosper most beautiful, refined gardens.
3. The Albanians, just as the rest of the Europeans for that matter, have a particular, beautifully furnished room which is not used but for guests. It is in the kitchen, which is quite large, or the dining room, if there is one, where members of the family get together to spend their time.
4. A young wife continues to be called "bride", rather than by name, for as long as she has not borne a child or until another young spouse has joined the family (Albanian boys do not leave the paternal house after being married).
5. *Branavekë* : long breeches with many pleats.
6. *Sallman* : head-ornament of women.
7. A name, meaning *Lovely*
8. Children have special games with walnuts; while they might like to eat them too, walnuts are not given them mainly for this purpose.
9. Ermaj's Field (*Fusha e Ermajit*): This is the name of Shkodër's Catholic cemetery.
10. A brandy. In the U.S. it is known by the name of "grappa" (in Italian) or "eau de vie" (in French).

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MY BROTHER, MY ENEMY

My name is Luan . . . and my family was composed of my father, an important person in the Albanian Government, and my mother, a gentle good woman. My family enjoyed a good financial situation; they sought to give me all I desired and whatever was good for me. I had all I wanted and was very happy with the fact that many of the young people of my city were my friends. They often came to my house to enjoy a good time and games. My best friend was Peter. He and I grew up together from childhood and we went to school together. His house was not far from ours, divided by a wall which had a small gate by which we could come and go.

Peter's father died, leaving him and his mother in a very poor financial condition. His mother helped my mother with her housework and for this she received a monthly wage. With Peter I shared everything; my clothes, the money that my father gave me to spend. Peter was rather delicate in health and always pale. He was not at all interested in sports, but in school he was at the top. Most evenings, instead of joining my friends and myself for an evening of enjoyment, he would stay at home reading books, many of which were about revolution.

This was the situation in Tirana, a small city where all the inhabitants knew each other and were happy until the day of Good Friday, April 7, 1939, when the Italian Fascists Forces occupied Albania. The 7th of April will ever be remembered by the people as the worst day in the history of Albania, because from that day our misfortunes began. Many lives were lost.

There is not an Albanian who could forget the night that Prince Leka was born and the poor Queen had to flee in an old automobile across rough roads to Greece so that she would not fall into the hands of the Fascists.

A year later, the Italian fascists attacked Greece and the situation in Albania worsened.

Everybody expected that in a few days the Italian Forces would arrive in Athens, but instead the opposite happened. The Greeks resisted and defeated the Italians who, to save face, began to accuse the Albanian Troops of being traitors. Many of the Albanian military units refused to fight against the Greeks and deserted from the front line. They were imprisoned and sent to concentration camps.

From that time things changed in Albania. The Albanian people revolted against the Fascists. They began to propagandize and demonstrate in various cities of Albania. Many Albanian lives were lost.

Peter and I were always the first to react in a demonstration. We began to distribute leaflets against the Fascists. A little later we started to form small bands of men in the mountains.

In 1942 many students, among them Peter and I, protested against the occupiers of our country. We left school. We met secretly at night to decide what to do against the Fascists.

In one of these reunions I met Rozafa, a beautiful girl, and we fell in love. From that time we were inseparable.

My parents and the family of Rozafa were very happy with this union and after a short time we became engaged. From then on Rozafa spent most of her time in my house with me and Peter. Peter did not seem very happy about this, but I thought that he was jealous of my happiness.

One evening, at one of the reunions, Peter had to give a speech. He began by saying, "Now that Russia has come into the war, it is time that the Albanians should go into the mountains to fight. The Russians will help us." He continued making propaganda for the communists. This was the greatest blow to me, for this was the first time I had heard and understood that Peter's ideas were not the same as mine. Before he finished speaking I rose and said, "We are here for other things and not to hear communist propaganda."

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He became very angry. He then started to shout. I had never seen him so enraged. He shouted, "It is time that the system changes. The time has passed when the rich can make the poor suffer. The Church has left the people in ignorance. It has to pass with many other things." He continued, "The Communist Party will give liberty to all, land to the farmers, and work for the labourers." I interrupted him again, saying that he was mad if he thought that Communism in fact was as good as what he read in his books. Taking Rozafa with me, I left the room. Many others who thought the same as I also left.

From that day Peter never came to my home. When we happened to meet in the street he would pretend that he had not seen me.

One morning Peter's mother came to my home. Crying, she told my father that the police had arrested Peter. She begged my father to use his influence so that he would be freed. My father went to the Commissioner of Police, who happened to be one of his friends. The Commissioner told my father that Peter had been arrested because he distributed Communist leaflets, but because it was his first offense he would let him go. However, the Commissioner told my father that if the same thing happened again, he should not come again to beg on Peter's behalf.

Peter never even came to thank my father. A short time afterwards we heard that he had fled to the mountains with the Communist Forces.

Often we heard of him and of the acts that he was committing against the Fascists and against the Albanian people.

At the end of 1943 things became worse. The Italians surrendered to the Allies and the Germans entered Albania. With them there was no joking.

In 1943 Rozafa insisted that we marry as soon as possible because she had a horrible premonition that fate was against us. She wished to pass the short time that was left to us together as husband and wife. One Sunday we were married, against the wishes of our parents who insisted that we should wait until the war was over.

The short time I spent with Rozafa was the happiest I have had in all my life. I would return home with pleasure because I know that Rozafa was anxiously waiting for me. Many nights I would be away from home for political reasons or for some act of sabotage, and poor Rozafa would not eat or sleep until I arrived safely home.

In 1944 the English Secret Mission in Albania wanted the Albanian people to come out into the open in war against the Germans because already they saw that the end was near. It was then that my Commander, our Albanian National Hero Abaz Kupi, "Son of the Eagles," called all the Royalist Forces into the open to fight in the mountains.

After I had kissed and bade farewell to Rozafa and my parents, who were crying as though they knew we would never see each other again, I left for the mountains.

Very soon we realized that our cause was lost because the Allies had decided that Albania was to become a Russian Zone, so one bleak night the English left in their submarines, abandoning me and twenty thousand other men.

The next day, many of us decided to continue the war against the Communists. Some decided to escape to Greece, a long and almost impossible journey; others opted to escape with the Germans to Germany; and still others chose to hide in Shkodër, the only Albanian city which was still free.

I went to Shkodër and hid in the house of my uncle. In a few days Shkodër was also occupied by the Communists. Each day my uncle would bring me the news of the brutality and the shootings in the city. They were killing people without any reason and without any trial, especially tradesmen, priests and nationalists. After a few days an order was issued that everyone was obliged to register with the police. Those who did not present themselves or were without documents or were hiding so-called traitors to Communism would be shot on the spot.

That day my uncle begged me to surrender myself because he was afraid for his life and for

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the life of his children. For his sake I surrendered myself to the police who right away put me in prison. After a short time they called me to the office of the Chief of Police. There I found many others I knew. Others I did not know, but in all the faces I could see fear. A little later I understood the reason for that fear.

Whoever came out of the inner office held their hands over their faces. Blood was coming from their mouths and noses. The guilty and the innocent had been beaten bloody.

Finally it was my turn. I entered with shaking knees. With a great surprise I saw my old friend, Peter, who was seated in a corner of the room. I had heard that he had become a very important person in the Communist Party, but I never expected to find him in that very room.

Seeing me, he also was very surprised. I smiled, thinking that at least he would save me from the beatings, but without even speaking he arose and left the room, leaving me to my destiny, which was no different from that of the others—curses and beatings.

From there they took me to the city prison where I stayed for weeks. In this prison I met many friends and acquaintances. Each one told his story and we all wondered how all this was going to end, because in our country, Albania, nothing like this had ever happened—(We won the war and at the same time lost it)—to be treated in this manner by fellow citizens. But this was nothing compared to that which was to come after.

One day the order was issued that all the prisoners were to return to their own cities or villages to be tried by a so-called Court of the People, which was composed of Communists.

I along with many other prisoners was sent to Tirana (capital of Albania) on foot, a journey of 130 kilometers (100 miles). We were chained like beasts and throughout the whole journey we were treated like beasts. The second day was terrible because by that time we were very tired, without sleep or food. We were all exhausted.

A poor old Catholic priest suffered most. Every time he fell to the ground from his exhaustion a guard would strike him with the butt of his gun and kick him until he fainted. One time the priest was so tired that he could not resist and asked for a little water. The guard, instead of giving him water, said to him "Look, ask your God for water and see if He will give it to you." Seeing that the priest did not answer, the guard stripped the cross from him and threw it to the ground, shouting that his God was false and if he wanted water he would have to pray to Stalin who would give him all the water he wanted. Then the guard threw water into the priest's face.

Late that night while we were resting we heard the sound of buses coming from Shkodër. We all arose, hoping that there would be free space to take us to Tirana. Many officers and soldiers alighted from the buses. One was my friend, Peter. Our head guard explained that he had some prisoners destined for the prison of Tirana and that they were exhausted. Peter saw me among the prisoners. He answered the guard, saying that from now on we should not be given any more rest until we reached Tirana; if any prisoner made the slightest disturbance he was to be shot on the spot, and he would take the responsibility. After giving us a hateful look he left with his soldiers. When I heard this order, I could not believe my ears and could not understand why he hated me so much after all that my family and I had done for him.

We reached the prison of Tirana almost dead; the priest died that same night from exhaustion and the beatings he had received on the journey. The room in which they put me was full of prisoners. With much difficulty I managed to find a place between two friends. There were no mattresses, no covers, no lights and no windows; the food was just bread with a warm water soup. At night the guards would come and take some prisoners. We would not see them again. Many of us were interrogated and were forced to bear insupportable tortures, tortures never before seen or heard of in Albania. After these tortures many prisoners died or went mad.

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While in this prison in Tirana, I received the bad news of the death of my mother. She was killed during a battle in Tirana between Communist Partisans and Germans, who were fighting from house to house. When they came to my house my mother, who spoke German, went into the garden to tell the Germans that there were no Partisans there and one of them without any reason shot her. When bad news strikes, it all seems to come at once.

Each new prisoner brought news and each tale was worse than the last. Each prisoner would tell the story of his capture. I recall these:

(1) One gentleman during the revolution forbade his son to go into the mountains with the Communists. The son went just the same and now accused the father of treason and asked the Party for his death. The father was later executed.

(2) A father had turned his daughter out of his house. She had gone with the Communist bands and had become pregnant. She came home to have her illegitimate child. Things like that do not normally happen in Albania, and the father to save the honor of the family wanted to kill her, but the intervention of the neighbors saved the girl. Later she had her father shot.

(3) A father had hidden himself in an underground room which he had built years before the end of the war. It was a place the Communists would never have found, if it were not for the treason of his son who had become a Communist. Always the same stories. Sons against fathers, brothers against brothers, and friends against friends.

I remained in prison for a couple of months until the day came when I was to be tried. That day about fifteen prisoners mounted the bus and were transported to the so-called Court of the People. The court was in a theatre constructed by the Fascists and was filled with Communists and families of communists who had been killed in the war. Every time a prisoner went in front of the Court, the mob shouted, "To death, to death," without knowing or wanting to know who the prisoner was nor what crimes he had committed.

The Court was composed of the worst Communists in the Party; there were no defense lawyers, no jury, only the shouting mob.

We prisoners had to wait in a room nearby. Shortly they began calling us by name. We were from all classes: ministers, officers, priests, tradesmen and students like myself. Many, after hearing their crimes read, were condemned to death. Those who were sentenced to years of hard labor felt themselves fortunate because at least their lives were saved.

Those who were sentenced to hard labor lost any property which they owned, but this was already lost when the Communists took power, because the first thing they did was to confiscate the property of their enemies.

The first to be called that day was an old Albanian Patriot accused of having collaborated with the Fascists. He answered that it was true, but he had done it only for the good of Albania and of the Albanian people because someone had to sacrifice himself to save what could be saved. Hearing this, the people in the theatre began to laugh and to shout, "to death, the traitor." The Court did just that. They condemned him to death without taking into account that he had spent all his life serving Albania.

The second to be tried was a Catholic Archbishop who was not even given the opportunity to speak, because the crowd shouted "to death, to death," and the poor prelate was condemned to death.

After the prelate came an old general. After hearing the accusation, he answered that he had sworn loyalty to King Zogu and had always been loyal to his oath. And all the Albanian people knew that he had fought against the Fascists and the Nazis.

One judge answered that this was true but that he had also fought with another Party damaging the Communists; therefore he was condemned to fifteen years of prison. Hearing his sentence, the general grew angry, and shouted that they were villains, and he preferred to be shot in the

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manner which was befitting a soldier like himself. Two of the guards took him by the arms and threw him out of the courtroom.

After him came the turn of a commander of the Nationalist Forces, a very courageous man who had fought against all the Fascists, Nazis and Communists. Before he entered, the mob began to shout and call him bad names. When he finally entered, the crowd was shouting so loudly that even the Judges could not stop them. He then raised his arms and asked if he might speak. The people, hearing this, thinking that something rare was going to happen, became silent. He began to speak: "You people—villains, miserable people, was it not you that just a few years ago were shouting 'Viva King Zogu' and after that 'Viva Mussolini and Hitler' and whoever else came to Albania. You shouted 'Viva' You are ignorant. Now you are shouting for my death when just a few months ago you came to me seeking favors." Turning to the Judge, he said, "One day these same disgusting people who are now calling for my death and are shouting 'Viva Stalin' will turn and shout, 'Down with Stalin' and 'Viva' to whoever comes after him." Then, without waiting to hear his verdict, he left the court.

When order was restored once again, I was called. I heard the accusation against me, which was that I had refused to help the Communists and on many occasions had spied against them. Seeing by this time that the people were tired of hearing more accusations I answered that it was not true and that many persons present there could testify in my favor. I mentioned the name of Peter. Peter did not arise in my favor. I turned to the public and asked if there was anyone who had any accusations against me. Since nobody opened his mouth against me, the Judge had no alternative. He condemned me to only twenty-five years of hard labor.

In the beginning I was content with the sentence which I received, but then I began to think that twenty-five years is a very long time to wait, when at home there was a young wife with whom I had not even passed one year of married life.

After a few days I received the news from home that they were seeking all ways to have me liberated, and that they had gone even to Peter to beg for me. Inside of me I knew that Peter would not do anything in my favor; I was sure that instead he would seek my complete ruin.

After a couple of weeks about a hundred of us prisoners were crowded on buses like sardines and without a word we were driven away.

During the journey we told each other, "They are taking us here", "They are taking us there." For sure that they were taking us to dig a canal or to build a dam. Finally we heard that we were being sent to the Lake of Maliq.

Many companies before World War II had tried to drain the Lake of Maliq but none of them were able to do so. It did not matter how good they pay; nobody ever worked more than a few weeks. Malaria was so bad there that all became sick very soon and could no longer work. Now that the Communists had free laborers they decided to drain it, and the work began in earnest. The Lake of Maliq became a cemetery for many prisoners. The survivors will never forget Maliq.

The barracks where the prisoners lived were so filthy and old that even the animals would not have been able to live there. There is an Albanian proverb: "Man is stronger than iron." We lived in those barracks for years. The food was boiled water with a few potatoes thrown in. We did not even speak of meat. There was no hospital. Those who got sick just died. The infirmary was a miserable barrack. The doctor was an ignorant male nurse. The guards were chosen from the Party's criminals. They had the power of life and death over us.

The Camp was encircled with a wire fence. If any one of us approached the wire the guards shot at us without asking who we were or what we wanted.

We arose with the sun in the morning, and went to work without food. We labored the whole day, at times up to the waist in water unbearably cold. We had a few minutes of rest to eat our

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slop, then back to work until it got dark. Many scenes remain in my memory today. Many of the older men died at work from hunger or exhaustion. I remember one of them who, while working, fell to the ground and could not get up again. His son, who also was a prisoner with us, sought to help him but the guards began to beat him with their clubs, so the poor boy had to run away. The lieutenant of the guards, one of the greatest criminals that I have ever met in my life, gave the order that the man was to be thrown in the hole nearby and covered with dirt just as he was, still alive. The son, seeing this cruelty, began to shout and cry. From that moment on he was a madman; in a few days he also suffered a cruel death. The same happened to a poor Moslem clergyman. Every time the lieutenant had the occasion he would strike the old clergyman and pull his beard until one day he spat in his face. The clergyman died on the spot from the beatings he received. Among other cases of cruel inhumanity that I witnessed the following has left a permanent scar in my mind and soul. One day while two of the prisoners were making a hole, the ground caved in and covered them. We tried to help them but the guards stopped us. That hole became their tomb.

A couple of months later the lieutenant called me and five other prisonsers. He gave us the good news that we were to be transferred to the prison of Tirana. We received this as though we had been liberated. We left the next day content but also regretful for those we were leaving behind.

The prison of Tirana seemed to us like a hotel as far as comfort was concerned after all the sufferings of Maliq. That day we rested well; later we heard the reason for our transfer.

A few weeks before, one of the chiefs of the Communist Party had tried with the help of the Yugoslavs to take power but the coup failed and all the members of the clique were shot with the exception of those who escaped to Yugoslavia and to Greece. Amongst these was Peter. He had escaped to Greece.

While in prison I met an old friend of mine, whose family was in America. Since he was an American citizen he waited daily for his liberation so that he could join his family. He gave me the worst news. My father and my wife were dead. He told me the story of their deaths.

The Communist Party had issued an order that all the wives of prisoners, or of those who had died, or of those who had escaped abroad were to re-marry as soon as possible. It was no use waiting for men who would not be returning. Rozafa also had been ordered to re-marry. If she did not obey, she would be forced to marry someone chosen by the Party. Shortly after this order, Peter came to Rozafa and told her that inasmuch as she had to re-marry, there was good reason to marry him. He was in a position to give her all she wanted as the Communist leaders lived like lords. Rozafa replied that she would prefer death before she re-married. She loved only one man and as long as he was alive she would have no one else. With curses and kicks she threw him from the house.

The following morning my father found Rozafa had hanged herself on one of the trees in the garden with an old rope taken from the well. That same night my father put on his best suit and shot himself. Before he died he had written me a letter in which he said, "Dear Son, I have lived for many years happy and honest but seeing that from now on my life will become more difficult and seeing that there is no hope that it will improve, it is better that my sufferings end now.

It will be better that you receive the news about Rozafa and myself at the same time. You will only have to suffer once for both of us."

The following day Peter went to the house, maybe because his conscience disturbed him. He arranged everything so that my loved ones could have a fitting funeral.

From then on the days seemed longer. I wanted to get away. I wanted revenge. I wanted to find Peter and strangle him with my own hands. The suffering caused me to lose much weight. My hair began to fall out and what remained turned white.

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Suddenly one day I was called by the director of the prison who, after reading to me the greatness of the Communist Party and of all the good things that it did, told me that I was free to go home. Hearing this I began to laugh because now that I was free I had no home to go to. Therefore, I went to my uncle's and after a long time found some peace. Gradually I became stronger. I slept better, and ate better.

Every day I took a long walk to the cemetery, where I spent the whole day near the graves of my parents and Rozafa. On hers I always put fresh flowers.

I never missed these long walks each day because I knew that soon I would have to escape from there. I knew that the Communists would not leave me free for long. They would find some excuse to throw me into prison again, and perhaps for life. So every day I schemed to find a manner in which to escape the country. One day the occasion presented itself. The soccer team of Tirana had to play a championship game against the team of Korça, a city near the border of Greece. Since many fans were going to see the game, I went also. Everything went well and that night I arrived in Korça and sought out an old friend of mine to whom I explained my intention. He introduced me to a farmer he trusted, who knew the border area well and for a fee was smuggling people into Greece. After paying him well we set out that very night on foot towards the Greek border.

The journey was difficult for me because I was not yet strong and tired quickly, but after three nights walking (resting by day) we crossed safely the Albanian-Greek border.

We passed the first point of interrogation by the Greek police, who were very sympathetic and gave us food and drinks immediately. The next day we started for Athens where I met many Albanian friends who had escaped before I did. In Athens I lodged in the house of a friend and started asking about Peter. They told me that he was in the city in the service of the Greek police who were using him to get information about the Albanians who had escaped to Athens. Having been a Communist, he would have known all who were Communists. My friends advised me not to disturb him. They were sure that he would harm me even in Greece. I told them not to worry themselves. One day I would find him and then would happen what had to happen. I could not lose more than I had lost already.

The day came when I finally found Peter. I was seated in an outdoor cafe with some friends when I spotted Peter walking in the street. I lost my head. I jumped up, took my friend's beer bottle and ran towards him. When he saw me he stood petrified, never made a move. I struck him on the head with the bottle, which shattered. Before I could strike him again my friends and the people who were nearby stopped me. After a while the police arrived and Peter, with the blood running from his head, said something to them in Greek and they took me to the police station and from there to prison where I remained for months.

Thanks to friends who explained to the Greek government that I was not a Communist as Peter had claimed, I was released.

I continued inquiring about Peter, but nobody knew anything. He had disappeared completely and many thought that he had emigrated.

From that day I started writing letters to all the Albanians I knew all over the world asking if any of them had heard or seen anything of Peter. Finally I heard from someone who had seen him disembark from a ship in New York. That very day I went to the American Consulate and applied for a visa. They told me that it would take a long time. That did not bother me; I had all the time in the world. I was sure that one day I would find Peter and he would pay for everything.

After years of waiting, my visa came through and I emigrated to America. In New York I asked about Peter; nobody knew anything. Again he had disappeared.

I looked for work and found a job; in fact, two. By day I washed dishes in a restaurant and at night I cleaned offices. My friends joked with

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me, saying that if I continued in this manner, in a few years I would become rich. Those who truly knew me understood the real reason for all this hard work. They advised me to slow down before I got sick with T.B. I did not heed them and continued to work hard. I needed all the money I could get to continue my search.

When I had a little free time I wrote to Albanians all over America, friends and acquaintances, still hoping that someone somewhere would have some news about Peter. Many answered negatively. Then one day I received a letter from Miami, saying that Peter had been seen there. I left for Florida immediately. I searched for weeks, but in vain. So my Odyssey continued, trying to find one man amongst two hundred million in a strange country a hundred times larger than Albania. I never left a town or a city without asking, but it seemed hopeless. Nobody had seen him. My money was running out. Many nights I had to sleep in the open and many days to go without food. I lived anywhere and worked anyhow, until almost exhausted, I returned to New York.

In New York, I found Stefano, with whom I had been in prison. He was an American citizen so the Communists had let him go. He joined his family who lived just outside New York. Stefano had a restaurant. He invited me to his home and gave me work in his restaurant. I went with him after leaving word with my friends that if Peter showed himself they should advise me immediately.

Stefano's family received me with open arms. I met their daughter, Rosa, a beautiful girl, who by day went to school and in the evenings helped in the restaurant. Rosa impressed me; there was something about her that reminded me of Rozafa. Maybe it was her eyes. She looked at me as if to search my secret soul. That first night Stefano, Rosa and I went for a walk to see the city. While we walked I felt my knees giving way and my head whirling. The only thing I remember was falling to the ground. When I came to, I was in a bed in a lovely room with Stefano's mother beside me. She was putting cold compresses on my forehead. I tried to speak but she made a sign for me to keep quiet. After a while Stefano and Rosa entered the room. Seeing that I was awake, they smiled, and told me that I had fainted two nights ago, but that the doctor had told them that there was no danger. I had fainted from exhaustion and nerves. My nerves had kept me going. Now that I had found some peace and rest, they broke down.

Stefano and his mother left the room to go to the restaurant, leaving Rosa with me alone. Rosa told me that she knew all my story and that she was very sorry for all that I had suffered. She also told me that while I was delirious I had talked a lot and always called Rozafa's name. She understood that I had loved Rozafa very much. This kind of love, she said, one did not find nowadays, and she herself would have sacrificed anything for a man who would love her that much. She was happy when I accepted their hospitality, and said that she would make my stay with them as happy as she could. She said all this with tears in her eyes.

I thanked her and told her that she was the first person since leaving Albania whom I liked to talk to freely without fear.

I passed many pleasant months with Stefano and Rosa. We went everywhere together: cinema, sports, picnics, dancing. All the young Albanian people got to know us. We were constantly invited to parties. But this soon came to an end, because one day I received a letter which said that Peter had been seen in San Francisco. For the first time such news did not please me. The months that I had spent with Rosa and Stefano had made me forget the past a little. However, later that night when I began to think of Rozafa and my father who had sacrificed themselves for me, I realized that I would have no peace until Peter was dead. I knew I would also be killing myself, but destiny cannot be changed. I belonged to a people who hold "honor" above everything.

The next day I left for San Francisco, leaving Stefano and his family very unhappy. Rosa accompanied me to the station. She was crying when she said to me "Do that which you have to do

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and if when all is finished you want to come back, I will be waiting for you." I knew then that she was in love with me. I also felt something for her, something that I had felt for another, millions of years ago. I told her that if the time came for me to return, neither mountains nor seas would stop me coming to her.

In San Francisco I immediately went searching for Peter, but in vain, because he had never even been there. My friend who wrote me the news had mistaken another man for Peter. There was nothing left for me but to keep on looking. I bought a car and found work and on my days off I went on searching.

After some months, one night when it was too late for me to return home, I stayed at a small motel between Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. I left the motel early the next morning and stopped at a small restaurant, one of those where the owners lived in a room at the back of the restaurant. It was empty at that hour. I sat down at a table, and in a little while a woman entered who seemed to be the owner's wife. She took my order and went back into the kitchen. Then from the kitchen came a little girl, her eyes heavy with sleep. When she saw me she was a little scared. I smiled at her and called her to me. She looked, then a little shyly approached, first with a little fear, then all of a sudden she ran towards me, throwing her arms around my neck. I hugged her in my arms and kissed her on the cheek and adjusted her tousled hair. In a few moments we were friends. When the mother returned she saw her daughter sitting on my knees and told her not to disturb the gentleman. I told her mother that she was not disturbing me; in fact, it was a great pleasure, that it had been a long, long time since I had received the affection of a little one. I asked what the little girl's name was, and to my surprise I was told that it was Rozafa. When I heard this name, the knife fell from my hand. The mother, surprised, asked me what was the matter. I replied "That is strange, because that also was the name of my wife." She smilingly said, "You must be an Albanian, just like my husband. The name Rozafa exists only in Albania." She told me that she had met her husband when she was on the way to America and that they had been married on board ship. For the first few years everything went wonderfully for them, but all of a sudden her husband changed. He seemed disturbed and moved around just as if somebody was coming after him. She was very tired of moving from place to place, and she hoped that one day he would find some place where they could settle once and for all. While she was saying this, I suddenly realized that at last I had found Peter.

Fate had dealt me a cruel blow. I had searched over half of the world and waited and wasted many years of my life awaiting this moment. Now I had met the wife of my arch enemy. She had suffered without any fault or without even knowing why. I had embraced in my arms and kissed that little innocent creature who bore the name of the person most dear to me in all the world. Peter had given that name to his daughter, maybe from remorse, maybe because he too was suffering, perhaps more than I. Time had healed my suffering, but his continued.

In tears the woman asked me if I knew her husband. I told her, "No." She begged me to wait and meet her husband. He had gone into the city and would return in a few hours. I told her that I could not wait, that I had to go to work. After once again kissing the little girl good-bye, I left.

From the compartment of the car I took a revolver. From it I removed a bullet, and returned to the restaurant. I handed the bullet to the wife telling her that it was a gift for her husband. She looked at me astounded, telling me that this was the most extraordinary gift she had ever received. I explained that in Albania an unfired bullet was the greatest gift one could receive, that it was like receiving the "Gift of Life itself." I think it was at that moment she understood all, and the reason for her husband's continual moving. On leaving she said to me, "Go with God." I replied that "From now on God will be with you also."

I entered my car and sighed the greatest sigh. All the hate that I had kept locked up within myself for years left me. I felt peace at last.

I started the car and turned towards **HOME.**

Akil DERANI

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THE MODERN ALBANIAN THEATRE

I. The rise of Albanian theatre to 1945

Professional theatre has always been the prerogative of an urban society. In Albania, which has always had a strong rural population and lacked large urban centres, theatre never developed to the extent that literary poetry and prose did, nor did it ever capture the attention of the Albanian public to any substantial extent.

There is little in the way of Albanian theatre to report on before the second half of the nineteenth century and, in actual fact, little professional theatre at all before the second half of the twentieth century.

The first Albanian-language plays were written in the second half of the nineteenth century but we have little information as to whether they were actually performed, or even meant to be performed.

The earliest original Albanian drama is no doubt the melodramatic *Emira* by Italo-Albanian writer Francesco Antonio Santori (1819-94) of the Arbëresh village of Santa Caterina Albanese (Alb. Picilia) in the province of Cosenza. *Emira* was published rather erratically, some parts appearing in the Italo-Albanian monthly journal *Fiamuri Arbërit* (The Albanian Flag) in November 1887 and others in Girolamo De Rada's Albanian anthology of 1896[1]. Santori wrote a number of other melodramatic plays: both comedies and tragedies, not all of which were completed. These remained in manuscript form during his lifetime. Among them are the tragedy *Jeroboam* and the Scanderbegian melodrama *Alessio Dukagino*, written between 1855 and 1860[2].

Rilindja ideologist and scholar Sami Frashëri (1850-1904) was author of a 180-page play written in Turkish entitled *Besa yahud ahde vefa* (*Besa* or the fulfilment of the people). It was premiered on 6 April 1874 at the Ottoman Theatre (*Osmanli Tiyatrosu*) in Istanbul and published there the following year[3]. In this, for modern tastes somewhat melodramatic work on a very Albanian theme, we observe the tragic dilemma of an Albanian father who prefers to kill his own son rather than break his *besa*, his word of honour.

The first Albanian-language drama to be written in Albania itself was a short nativity play entitled *Nata Këshnellavet*, Shkodër 1880 (Christmas night), by the Franciscan priest and poet Leonardo De Martino (1830-1923) originally from the Arbëresh village of Greci (Alb. Greçi) in the province of Avellino. Another Scutarine Catholic author, Pashko Babi (1843-1905) wrote an early Albanian play entitled *I biri i çifutit* (The son of the Jew), which we know to have been performed at the Saverian College in Shkodër in February 1882.

One shining star on the otherwise rather vacant heaven of Albanian theatre at the dawn of the twentieth century was the Albanian actor Alexander Moissi (1879-1935)[4]. Moissi (Alb. Aleksandër Moisiu) was born in Trieste of an Albanian father from Kavajë and an Arbëresh mother. After a childhood in Trieste, Durrës and Graz, the twenty-year-old Alexander finally settled with his mother and two sisters in Vienna. It was there, with the encouragement and support of Austrian actor Josef Kainz (1858-1910), that Moissi's career as one of the great European stage actors of the early years of the twentieth century began. The following years took him to Prague and then to Berlin, where he became a protégé of Max Reinhardt (1873-1943). Moissi followed the Reinhardt Ensemble to Russia in 1911 and was acclaimed in St. Petersburg by critic and dramatist Anatoliy Lunacharsky (1875-1933) for his interpretation of Oedipus. Among other roles for which Alexander Moissi is remembered in particular are Hamlet, Faust, Fedya, in Tolstoy's "The Living Body", and Dubedat in George Bernhard Shaw's "The Doctor's Dilemma". Though primarily a stage actor, Moissi also appeared in ten film productions from 1910 to 1935, of which seven silent and three talking films. His own play "The Prisoner", about Napoleon's later years on St. Helena, proved

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a failure. Alexander Moissi died on 22 March 1935 and lies buried at the Morcote cemetery overlooking Lake Lugano in Switzerland.

In Albania itself, the early twentieth century saw a strong increase in the number of plays being written but little actual staging. A number of amateur theatre groups had formed in the country's two main cultural centres, Shkodër and Korçë (Tirana was still a village in the early years after the First World War), and other groups arose sporadically in smaller communities. Durrës, Vlorë, Pogradec, Elbasan, Berat, Gjirokastër and Boboshticë, but performances were rare and lacked any particular talent or skill. Much of this chapter of Albanian theatre is still undocumented. Professional theatre on the other hand remained a purely foreign institution.

II. Professional theatre in Albania from 1945 to the present

The post-war professional theatre of Socialist Realism is said to have its origins in the amateur theatre groups of the partisan movement in Albania from 1942 to 1944 but its roots obviously go back to the amateur ensembles of the twenties and thirties. The amateur groups of the partisan movement which travelled the country not only entertained the partisans but also endeavoured to instruct the peasantry about the ideals of and need for a Communist revolution in the country. It was a political theatre, a mixture of polemics, heroism, nationalism, sentimentality, and satire. Among the early authors of partisan and socialist theatre were Zihni Sako (1912-81)[5], Gjikë Kuqali (1921-44), and Besim Levonja (1922-68) of Elbasan, remembered for his three-act comedy *Prefekti* (The Perfect), Tirana 1948.

The unprecedented wave of persecution against Albanian intellectuals was of course unnerving for all surviving writers or would-be writers of the age. By the time Enver Hoxha (1908-85) was securely in the saddle and had laid the foundations for a modicum of political stability, he had also, whether he had wanted to or not, created a virtual cultural vacuum in Albania which lasted well into the 1960s and the effects of which can still be felt throughout the country today[6].

Albanian theatre was, thus, very slow to develop in post-war writing despite its obvious utility as a means of education, propaganda and political persuasion. It was nonetheless the post-war years which first saw the founding of publicly subsidized State Theatres and State ensembles in most major cities. This institutionalization of Albanian theatre went hand in hand with the conscious eradication of amateur groups, which might have been more likely to elude State and Party control. By the 1960s, amateur theatre in Albania had disappeared, one of the many cultural losses of the period.

From the Communist takeover in November 1944, Albanian theatre, like Albanian prose and poetry, was remoulded to conform to the doctrine of Socialist Realism, and in the fifties fell heavily under the influence of Soviet models (Konstantin A. Trenyov (1876-1945), Boris A. Lavrenyov (1894-1959), Nikolay P. Pogodin (1900-62), Boris L. Gorbatov (1908-54). A feeble echo of the theatrical traditions of Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) of the Moscow Art Theatre and of Erwin Piscator (1893-1966) of Berlin was to be felt on the Adriatic, but what Stalinist Albania adopted, in general, were the weakest elements of this tradition. While the effusions of sentimentality which had been characteristic of much pre-war theatre had now been toned down, the declamatory style and the heavy-handed use of political propaganda made most plays of the fifties and sixties quite intolerable.

A beginning in the theatre of Socialist Realism was made by Kolë Jakova (b. 1916), the son of a silversmith from Shkodër, with the heroic drama *Halili e Hajrija* (Halil and Hajrija), Tirana 1950. The dramatic techniques of this first substantial work of post-war Albanian theatre, a portrayal of Albanian resistance to the Turks in the sixteenth century, are questionable, though the structural weaknesses of the play are compensated for to a certain extent by the moving heroism and patriotic sentiment in the face of death of the play's protagonist. Of greater quality and more widely

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admired is Jakova's drama *Toka jonë* (Our Land)[8], Tirana 1955. Lokja, a 43-year-old mother of two is forced to flee from her native village on the banks of the Mati River when a landowner, Tuç Maku, besmirches her reputation by spreading rumours in order to seize her land. Her return home and struggle to regain her rights in a hostile environment are facilitated by the initial agrarian reform in the autumn of 1946.

A noted playwright, satirical poet and humourist of the sixties was Spiro Çomora (1918-73)[9] born in Vuno on the Himaran coast, who is remembered for his comedy *Karnavalet e Korçës* (The carnivals of Korçë). Tirana 1961. Action takes place in pre-war Korçë and revolves around the indefatigable attempts by the wealthy but miserly merchant, Nikollaq Jorganxhi, to marry his daughter Afroviti off as cheaply as possible.

Sulejman Pitarka from the Dibra region began his career as a playwright with *Familja e peshkatarit* (The fisherman's family)[10], Tirana 1955, a rather uninspiring drama about young Petrit, son of the fisherman Jonuz Bruga, who risks his life to save a wounded comrade in hiding from the Italian fascists during the Second World War. Of slightly more varied dramatic technique is Pitarka's classical tragedy *Trimi i mirë me shokë shumë* (The good hero with many friends), Tirana 1958, which centres, like countless other Albanian plays, on Scanderbeg and his struggle against the Turks.

Among other playwrights of these early years are: Ndrekë Luca (b. 1927) whose five-act historical drama *Shtatë Shaljanët* (The seven from Shala), Tirana 1958, focussed on the struggle for autonomy among the tribes of the northern Albanian mountains at the beginning of the nineteenth century; Andrea Skanjeti (1906-92), remembered and subsequently persecuted for his three-act *Nora, heroina e bjeshkve* (Nora, heroine of he mountain pastures), Tirana 1961, set in the years 1632-39; and Jonuz Dini (1925-82) of Shkodër.

The second great blow to be dealt to Albanian theatre after the eradication of the amateur groups, was the banning of all foreign repertories. The Albanian public had never had much opportunity to see contemporary European theatre at all, but a number of classics had been translated into Albanian and performed on stage. Molière, Shakespeare and Schiller, for instance, had been quite popular. Even such classics, however, fell out of favour in the seventies. In the years of the Sino-Albanian alliance, virtually all western culture was considered bourgeois and decadent. Revolutionary drama *a la chinoisess* was to hold sway on Albanian stages and on television for quite a number of years.

The dramatist who best reflects the proclivities of this period is Loni Papa (b. 1932). His noted play *Cuca e maleve* (The mountain lass)[11], Tirana 1967, portrays a woman's fight for equality among the feudal mountain tribes of northern Albania. Its staging was all the more effective during the late sixties and early seventies as the Party's campaign for women's emancipation in Albania was in full swing. *Cuca e maleve* is perhaps the most obvious Albanian reflection of Chinese revolutionary theatre and opera under Mao Zedong (1893-1976), and like many of its Chinese counterparts, was made into a ballet, with the music of Nikolla Zoraqi.

Dramatist Fadil Paçrami was born in Shkodër on 25 May 1922 and, although of Moslem origin, was educated by the Franciscans who sent him to Bologna where he studied medicine. In 1942, he interrupted his studies to join the partisan movement back in Albania. After the war, he worked in the RKSH, became deputy minister of education and culture under Sejfulla Malëshova, and editor in chief of the daily newspaper Zëri i popullit (Voice of the People) from 1948 to 1957. In 1965/66 he served as Minister of Culture and Arts and from 1971 to 1973 as President of the KuP. Paçrami's plays of the period are accordingly well within the confines set by Socialist Realism. Up to 1973, he had written thirteen plays, of which nine had been published. Among them are: *Cështja e inxhinier Saimirit* (The case of the engineer Saimir) which was performed on stage in Durrës; *E bardha dhe e zeza* (The white and the black); *Lagja e të varfër* (The poor neighbourhood); *Ngjarje në fabrikë* (Incident in a factory); and *Shtëpia në bulevard* (The house on the boulevard). At the 4th Plenary

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Session of the CC on 26-28 June 1973, Paçrami and Todi Lubonja were purged.[12] Paçrami was arrested on 21 October 1975 and spent an initial eighteen months in Tirana prison awaiting trial. In March 1977 he was socratically convicted of sabotage in the field of culture for having introduced foreign influences and corrupted the youth, and of the usual charge of agitation and propaganda, and was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. After fifteen years and five months, he was released on 17 March 1991. Paçrami was by no means inactive in prison in Burrel and Kosovë e Madhe. He finished a total of fifty-one plays, as yet unpublished, many of which reflect his country's painful struggle for democracy and freedom.

The Paçrami/Lubonja purge of 1973 led to the ousting of many a talented figure in the arts. Plays and staging were reviewed for their ideological purity and anything found modernistic, liberal or foreign was immediately banned. Even stage designers were thrown into labour camps for modernistic decorations. This period of "revolutionary" art, as defined and interpreted by the PPSH or, more precisely, by Enver Hoxha personally, caused a major setback to the advancement of Albanian theatre in the seventies. Some progress was, however, made from about 1982 onwards, though Albanian drama still remains a definitely neglected genre. There are now ten well-attended professional theatres in Albania and in addition about fifteen variety theatres and a puppet theatre. The quality of acting and staging has improved substantially in recent years although the subject matter has remained bland by Western standards.

Ruzhdi Pulaha (b. 1942)[13] from Korçë is perhaps the most successful contemporary dramatist. His comedy *Zonja nga qyteti* (The lady from the city), Tirana 1976, depicts with typically Albanian humour the confrontation of a sheltered young lady of good breeding with the down-to-earth realities of village life[14]. Another comedy, *I harruari* (The forgotten one), was staged in Tirana in 1988 with some success. Other authors to have devoted much of their creative energy to the stage are Ibrahim Uruçi (1925-89), Fadil Kraja (b. 1931) from Shkodër, Hamza Minarolli (b. 1931), Naum Prifti (b. 1932), of Korçë, officially lauded for his partisan drama *Mullliri i Kostë Bardhit* (The mill of Kostë Bardhi), Tirana 1971, Dhimitër Xhuvani (b. 1934), Teodor Laço (b. 1936), Fahri Balliu (b. 1954), Xhemal Broja (1917-86), Selman Vaqari (b. 1928), Maku Pone (b. 1939) and Artur Zheji (b. 1961). Of playwrights to have been released from prison recently are Minush Jero (b. 1932) of Durrës, who was imprisoned for five years for ideological shortcomings in his play *Njolla të murrmë* (Grey stains), 1968, and Visar Zhiti (b. 1952) of Lushnjë.

Among leading actors of the Albanian stage over the last forty years are: Mihal Popi (1909-79), Besim Levonja (1922-68), Loro Kovaçi (1903-66), Zef Jubani (1910-58), Pjetër Gjoka (1912-82), Naim Servet Frashëri (1923-75), Lazër Filipi, Marie Logoreci, Sandër Prosi, Kadri Roshi, Violeta Manushi, Skënder Sallaku, Prokop Mima, Pandi Raidhi, Tinka Kurti, Tano Banushi, Sulejman Pitarka, Ndrekë Luca, Roza Xhuxha, Margarita Xhepa, Nikolin Xhoja, Demir Hyskja, and Melpomeni Çobani. Noted Albanian theatre directors include: Sokrat Mio (b. 1902) of Korçë, Pandi Stillu (1914-70), Andrea Malo (1919-66), Esat Oktrova of Shkodër, Nazmi Bonjaku of Vlorë, Lec Shllaku of Elbasan, Kujtim Spahivogli of Tirana, Gjergj Vlashi of Durrës, Pirro Mani of Korçë, Serafin Fanko of Shkodër, and Muharrem Shtylla of Tirana. Of periodicals relating to theatre in Albania mention may be made in particular of *Skena dhe ekrani* (Stage and screen), an illustrated quarterly devoted to theatre, cinema, television, stage, opera, ballet and circus. It was first issued in Tirana in February 1980.

Throughout the almost half a century of "people's power", theatre was always subject to much greater political control and censorship than prose or poetry and thus never really had a chance to flourish on its own. Each volume of prose in the seventies and eighties had to go through the hands of ten to fifteen "revisors", a play had to be read by at least thirty such experts, and anything which might possibly be construed as critical or controversial was removed. The spirit of non-conformism, so antithetic to Western theatre and culture

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in general, was unthinkable, as was the individualist whose ideas could provoke and even outrage his or her audience. For obvious political reasons, Albanian playwrights were very reticent, or to do them justice, were not able to utilize the power of the stage to its full and to provoke their audiences into reflection with really controversial material and with the sort of scandalous stage productions which Western theatre-goers have become quite addicted to. Instead they usually sticked to a bland mixture of edifying morality plays and historical dramas imbued with patriotic pathos and heavy-handed political messages. The result has been absolute sterility in Albanian theatre, such that even today, Albanian drama can vie neither in quality nor in quantity with poetry and prose. Modern theatre in Albania still remains to be created.

III. The development of Albanian theatre in Kosovo

As in Albania, theatre in Kosovo never enjoyed any solid tradition. The origins of Albanian drama in Yugoslavia lie strangely enough not in Kosovo itself but on the distant Dalmatian coast. Josip Rela (1895-1966) was born and raised in the village of Arbanas (Borgo Erizzo), now a southern suburb of Zadar, which was founded in 1726 by Albanian settlers from Brisk and Shestan west of Lake Shkodër. Rela, who worked as a teacher, theatre manager and school principal in Zadar, is the author of a number of melodramatic plays written in his archaic Geg dialect which can be said to constitute the first serious attempts at Albanian-language drama in Yugoslavia. The best-known of his plays is *Nita* evoking the tragic fate of a young maiden from Brisk, caught up between her own desires and tribal law.

Murteza Peza (1919-81) is an Albanian dramatist and prose writer from Macedonia. He was born in Elbasan and moved to Yugoslavia in 1941 where he took part in the partisan movement in Macedonia. Though some of his plays, of which *Parajsi i humbur* (Paradise lost) is the best, are superficial and overly didactic; his contribution to the advancement of Albanian drama cannot be denied. Other playwrights of note of this period are Hivzi Sulejmani (1912-75), Xhemil Doda (1915-76) of Prizren whose dramatization of the personal tragedy of the mountain peasant in *Halit Gashi* drew heavily on folklore material; Kristë Berisha (b. 1923) of Pejë who with his burlesque *Kryet e hudhrës* (The heads of garlic) in the *commedia dell'arte* genre laid the foundations for comedy in Kosovo; journalist and politician Jusuf Kelmendi (b. 1927) with his dramatic *Hakmarrja* (Vengeance), a moving study of the institution of vendetta; and actor and film director Muharrem Qena (B. 1930) from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica noted in particular for his prize-winning drama *Bashkëshortët* (The spouses).

The first Albanian-language theatrical performance in Kosovo is said to have been organized by Mati Logoreci (1867-1941) of Shkodër who opened the first Albanian-Language school in Prizren on 1 May 1889. The public use of Albanian was, however, forbidden both under the Turks in the Ottoman Empire and later under the Serbs when Kosovo was incorporated into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918. This ban of course precluded the development of any Albanian theatre. During the Axis occupation from 1941 to 1944, Albanian schools were opened and amateur theatre groups performed throughout Kosovo for the first time, though under obviously difficult conditions. Immediately after the liberation in 1945, the People's Theatre (*Teatri Popullor*) was established in Prizren. 1949 was a year of significance for Albanian culture in Kosovo, for it marked the foundation of the first Albanian-language literary review *Jeta e re* (New life), edited by poet Esad Mekuli (b. 1916). This periodical, for the first time, provided a forum not only for poets and prose writers, but also for playwrights and dramatists in southern Yugoslavia. The fifties also saw the establishment of the Theatre of the National Minorities (*Teatri i Kombësive*) in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia which has a large Albanian-speaking community. The Skopje theatre now vies with those of Prishtinë and Gjakovë as a centre of Albanian-language drama in Yugoslavia.

The last major impediments to the public use of the Albanian language and to the evolution of

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Albanian culture in Yugoslavia ceased with the historic Brioni meeting of the CC in 1966. On 1968, a two-year drama course was set up at the People's Regional Theatre of Prishtinë and was integrated into the curriculum of the College of Education there to improve the level of acting and staging in Kosovo. The improvement was indeed very soon felt. Up until the mid-sixties, the repertories of Kosovo theatres consisted almost exclusively of Yugoslav and foreign works in Albanian translation. In 1967, the early 19th century Albanian verse tale *Erveheja* by Muhamet Kyçyku (1784-1844) was adapted for stage with some success by Muharrem Qena, director of the People's Regional Theatre, and by Ahmet Qirezi. Erveheja was subsequently staged in Tirana in 1972. In 1969, the age of Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Eugene Ionesco, Kosovo playwright and novelist Anton Pashku (b. 1938) of Grazhdanik introduced "theatre of the absurd" to the Albanian public with his controversial plays *Sinkopa* (Syncope), Prishtinë 1969 and *Golf* (Explosion), Prishtinë 1976. This drama was of course not staged in Tirana where such experiments were stubbornly decried as harmful to the youth and social progress.

In the early seventies, a liberalization of Yugoslav policies towards the Albanian minority and a temporary improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and Albania led to an increase in cultural contacts between Prishtinë and Tirana, involving exchanges of ensembles, directors, actors, writers and university professors. Although these exchanges were fruitful for both sides, their effect was limited. The heavy-handed political dogmatism and Stalinist propaganda of the Albanian side was regarded with a good deal of suspicion by the Yugoslav authorities and the broader range and eclectic, experimental nature of much theatre in Kosovo was regarded with equal suspicion by the Tirana authorities. As such, the political barrier had once again impeded the development of a unified Albanian culture. After the 1981 uprising in Kosovo, virtually all cultural contacts with Albania were cut off.

Of other contemporary dramatists in Kosovo, mention may be made in particular of scholar Rexhep Qosja (b. 1936), author of *Mite të zhvesbura* (Unclad myths), Prishtinë 1978; poet Azem Shkreli (b. 1938) whose novel *Karvani i bardhë* (The white caravan), Prishtinë 1960, was adapted for stage as *Fosilet* (The fossils) in 1969; Teki Dervishi (b. 1943); Beqir Musliu (b. 1945) of Gjilan; the productive Ymer Shkreli (b. 1945); critic and poet Sabri Hamiti (b. 1950); and poet and archeologist Edi Shukriu (b. 1950) of Prizren whose first drama *Kthimi i Euridikës* (The return of Eurydice) was published in 1987.

IV. Institutions of Albanian theatre

People's Theatre of Tirana (*Teatri Popullor*)

The People's Theatre was founded in Tirana on 25 May 1944 under the name "State Theatre" and began functioning in 1946 under the direction of Sokrat Mio and Pandi Stillu.

Migjeni Theatre of Shkodër

Shkodër in northern Albania has a comparatively rich theatrical tradition. The professional theatre there, which bears the name of the Albanian poet and short story writer Migjeni (1911-38), was founded in 1949. In the first thirty years of its existence, the Migjeni Theatre performed 110 plays and provided a forum for some of Albania's greatest actors.

A. Z. Çajupi Theatre of Korçë

Ten professional actors and fifteen amateurs founded a professional theatre for the southeastern city of Korçë on 22 June 1951 in what was then the Morava Cinema. It was named after Albanian poet and playwright Andon Zako Çajupi (1866-1930). The theatre's first director was Sokrat Mio (b. 1902) and its first stage designer was painter Vangjush Mio (1891-1957). From 1961 to 1967, the theatre was directed by Pjetro Marko and from 1967 to 1973 by M. Luarasi who was ousted during the Paçrami/Lubonja purge. Luarasi's successor was Dhimitër Orgocka.

Aleksandër Moisiu Theatre of Durrës

A professional theatre in Durrës, named after Alexander Moissi (1879-1935) was founded on 11 January 1953. The first play to be performed there

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was *Vajza nga fshati* (The girl from the village) by Fatmir Gjata (1922-89) which premiered on 12 April 1953. The Aleksandër Moisiu Theatre, which has had a new building at its disposal since 1965, has since produced an average of four new plays a year.

Professional Theatre of the City of Vlorë

Though a professional variety ensemble had been founded in the port city of Vlorë in October 1955, the professional dramatic theatre was not created here until 1962.

Skampa Theatre of Elbasan

The Skampa Theatre, given the ancient name of the central Albanian city of Elbasan, was founded on 16 July 1962. Its first performance was held on 5 September 1962 and in the first twenty years of its existence, it produced over fifty new plays.

Professional Theatre of Gjirokastër

This theatre was founded on 28 November 1968 in a city which is comparatively lacking in theatrical traditions.

Professional Theatre of Fier

The city of Fier already had some amateur theatre groups before the Second World War, and thus a certain theatrical tradition. The professional theatre in this town on the plain of Myzeqe was however founded relatively late, in April 1971. Its first production was *Hijet e Natës* (The Shadows of the Night) by Vedat Kokona under the direction of Leka Bungo.

Professional Theatre of Berat

The professional theatre of Berat, cultural centre in central Albania, was founded in 1984.

Professional Theatre of Peshkopi

The professional theatre of Peshkopi, serving the Dibër region on the border with Macedonia, is, with that of Berat, the youngest of the regional theatres. It too was founded in 1984.

Puppet Theatre (*Teatri i Kukullave*)

Although there had never been much puppetry in Albania, a Puppet Theatre was founded in Tirana on 27 December 1950, modelled on the rich traditions of puppetry in the Soviet Union. Its first director was Llazar Vëria, appointed on 20 March 1951. Performances, primarily for children, were held at the Republic Cinema in the centre of Tirana.

Aleksander Moisiu College of Drama (*Shkolla e Lartë Dramatike*)

The College of Drama in Tirana was founded in 1959. In 1966 it was merged with the colleges of music and figurative art to form the College of the Arts (*Instituti i Lartë i Arteve*) for the training of actors, musician and artists. The first students in drama graduated from the college in 1963.

People's Theatre of Prizren (Kosovo) (*Teatri Popullor*)

The first professional theatre in Kosovo, the People's Theatre was formed in 1945 in Prizren, which was then the administrative capital of the region. It gave performances both in Albanian and in Serbo-Croatian, but survived only one season until the administrative capital was transferred to Prishtinë.

People's Regional Theatre of Prishtinë (Kosovo) (*Teatri Popullor Krahinor i Prishtinës*)

The People's Regional Theatre of Prishtinë was founded in September 1948. It gave its first performance in Albanian on 1 May 1949, a translation of a comedy by Serbian playwright Branislav Nusic (1864-1938).

Professional Theatre of Mitrovicë (Kosovo)

The professional theatre of the Kosovo city of Mitrovicë e Kosovës, formerly Mitrovicë e Titos, was opened in 1953 and gave Albanian-language performances. It is not active at the present.

Theatre of the National Minorities of Skopje (Macedonia) (*Teatri i Komunës*)

This theatre, designed to promote minority-language culture in Macedonia gives regular per-

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formances in Albanian for the large Albanian-speaking community there.

People's Theatre of Gjakovë (Kosovo) (*Teatri Popullor*)

The People's Theatre of Gjakovë (Djakovica) was formed in 1977 and gives performances both in Albanian and in Serbo-Croatian. *

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Robert ELSIE

NOTES:

1) Modern ed.: Emira, Ed. trans. F. Solano. Grottaferrata, 1984.

2) Modern ed.: Alessio Ducagino, Melodrama. Ed. transl. F. Solano. Grottaferrata, 1983.

3) *Besa* was translated into Albanian by Abdyl Ypi Kolonja in 1901 and into English by Nelo Drizari (1902-78) as: Pledge of honor. An Albanian tragedy. New York 1945. Modern ed.: Frashëri, S.: Vepra (Works). Vol.1. Tirana 1988, pp.19-95.

4) A biography in English: Moisi, V.: Aleksandër Moissi. Paris 1979; and in German: Moisi, V.: Alexander Moissi. Tirana 1980.

5) Sako, Z.: Vepra letrare (Literary works). 3 vols. Tirana 1985.

6) See the chapter "Literature" by the same author.

7) Jakova, K.: Vepra letrare (Literary works). 7 vols. Tirana 1986.

8) German transl. Unser Boden, Halle 1961; Spanish transl. Nuestra tierra. Tirana 1978.

9) Çomora, S.: Vepra letrare (Literacy works). 4 vols. Tirana 1980.

10) English transl. The fisherman's family. Tirana 1980.

11) French transl. La fille des montagnes. Tirana 1978.

12) See the chapter "Literature" by the same author, p. 661.

13) Pulaha, R.: Drama (Dramas). Tirana 1981.

14) See also the chapter "Film" by A. Hetzer, p. 701.

Table 1: Professional Artistic Institutions*)

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1989	1990
Number	4	18	25	27	28	27
Seats	1332	4614	7132	7734	8635	8375
Performances	194	3094	4204	5165	5566	4563
Spectators (1000)	138	931	1709	1751	1833	1660

*) includes variety shows (*estradë*)

Source: VS. 1971/72, p. 174; 1990, p. 168; 1991, p. 113.

Table 2: Amateur Theatres 1989/90

	1989	1990
Number	881	858
Performances	3882	3178
Participants (1000)	18.5	15
Spectators (1000)	752,3	637

Source: VS. 1990, p. 169; 1991, p. 113.

Table 3: Theatres in Kosovo

	1960	1970	1980	1987
Professional	1	1	2	
Seats	456	466	[illegible]	1[illegible]
Performances	63	218	[illegible]	278
Spectators (1000)	16	50	60	76
Amateurs	5	4	4	5
Members	395	226	498	202
Performances	83	29	9[illegible]	60
Spectators (1000)	22		3[illegible]	[illegible]

Source: Statistički godišnjak SAP Kosova. 1988, p. [illegible]18

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BOOK REVIEWS

Gjergj Fishta, *Lahuta e Malsisë: Botim i tretë,*. Rome, Qendra e Katolikëve Shqiptarë jashta Atdheut. 1991. 525 pages.

Pal Duka-Gjini, *Jeta dhe veprat e Gjergj Fishtës.* Rome. Provinça Françeskane Shqiptare. 1992. 299 pages.

It is an unusual phenomenon indeed for a country to lose its national poet, but it happened in Albania. Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940), a Franciscan priest and writer from Shkodër, was the greatest and most influential literary figure of his age, producing a literary epic which, though some regard it as having been written a century too late, still ranks among the most impressive creations in all of Albanian literature. It is the work which gave artistic expression to the searching soul of his people.

Lahuta e Malsisë (The Highland Lute) is a 15,613-line historical verse epic in thirty cantos, focusing on Albania's struggle for autonomy and independence and in particular on border conflicts between the fiercely independent northern Albanian tribes and their equally fierce Montenegrin neighbors from 1858 to 1913. This literary masterpiece, which we may regard as the first Albanian-language contribution to world literature, was composed between 1902 and 1909, though it was constantly refined and amended by its author over the following thirty years. The definitive edition of the work was presented in Shkodër in 1937 to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the declaration of Albanian independence. After exile reprints in Rome (1958) and Ljubljana (1990) and translations into German (1958) and Italian (1968), the present full-length edition of "The Highland Lute," published by the Albanian Catholic Center Abroad in Rome, is the first to make the epic accessible once again to the reading public in Albania itself.

The Albanian Franciscans in Rome and Assisi have also come out with a monograph on Fishta's life and works by one Pal Duka-Gjini, the first major study of the Scutarine poet and dramatist in half a century. This 299-page monograph, "The Life and Works of Gjergj Fishta," contains an extensive biography of the poet, an overview of his works, and comments and views on Fishta made by domestic and foreign authors. As such, it is a highly useful compilation, though nothing revolutionary from a scholarly point of view.

Up to his death on 30 December 1940, Father Gjergj Fishta was lauded as the national poet of Albania, indeed as the Albanian Homer. Gabriele d'Annunzio called him the "greatest poet of the glorious people of Albania." After the war, however, Fishta was attacked by the new rulers and denigrated more than any other prewar writer, and he fell into prompt oblivion. The national poet had become an anathema.

The reason for Fishta's fall from grace after 1944 is to be sought not in his life or works but rather in the origins of the Albanian Communist Party, which took power under Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu. In July 1946 Albania and Yugoslavia signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance which gave the Yugoslavs effective control over Albanian affairs, including the fields of education and culture. 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. In actual fact, "The Highland Lute" is no more anti-Slavic than the *Chanson de Roland* or the *poema de mio Cid* are anti-Arabic, but such were Balkan sensitivities. After relations with Yugoslavia were broken off in 1948, expressions of anti-Montenegrin or anti-Serbian sentiment would certainly 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 Slavic allies in Moscow, it could not be renounced without a scandal. Such was the fear of Gjergj Fishta in later years that even his bones were dug up secretly and thrown into the river.

Despite four decades of unrelenting party propaganda reducing Fishta to a "clerical and fascist poet," the people of Albania, and in particular the inhabitants of Shkodër, did not forget him. After almost half a century, Gjergj Fishta was commemo-

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rated openly for the first time on 5 January 1991 in his native city. During the first public recital of the poet's works in forty-five years, an actor at one point lost his lines; he was immediately and spontaneously assisted by his large audience—who still knew "The Highland Lute" by heart.

Robert ELSIE

Ferdinand Laholli, *Mjaft ky paradoks i hidhur: Poezi 1980-1990*, Tiranë, Alb. Pasqyra, 1992, 95 pages. 15 Lekë.

In July 1990 one of the most dramatic events of recent Albanian history took place: about five thousand refugees who had sought asylum in the German, French, and Italian embassies in Tiranë arrived by boat in the port of Brindisi in southern Italy. They had camped out on the embassy compounds for over a week with little food, water, and medical care in order to gain their freedom and to bring the existing forty-six-year-old Stalinist dictatorship in Albania to its knees. In both objectives they succeeded. They were simple people for the most part, unskilled workers, farm laborers, the dregs of Albanian society as they were to be called, people who were now about to embark on a grueling forty-eight-hour train journey to Germany and who had no idea of what awaited them in the outside world. Among them was a poet.

Ferdinand Laholli (b. 1960) was born and raised in the mournful internment camps of the muddy plain of Myzeqe around Lushnjë. His father had escaped from Albania fifteen days before the poet's birth. Laholli and his remaining family were, in accordance with Albanian custom, automatically declared enemies of the people and consigned to spend the next thirty years of their lives in internment, without the benefits of normal education, housing, and jobs. Of his father, Laholli learned only that he had managed to reach America, the promised land, and had died there.

Savër, Gradishtë, and the other internment camps in Myzeqe, though primitive, were not completely devoid of intellectual stimulus. After all, many of the most talented people in Albania were in prison or in internment. Of their cherished possessions, all that these innocent victims of Stalinist repression had been able to take with them into internment were their dreams, their thoughts, and their language.

Laholli spent his first year of freedom at a refugee center in Lower Saxony. There he spent most of his time in his room writing and liberating himself from the anguish of his past. The result of this year of monastic contemplation is the poetry collection *Mjaft ky paradoks i hidhur* (Enough of This Bitter Paradox). It is Laholli's first collection of verse after a good many poetic contributions to the numerous little Albanian-language periodicals now appearing in Western Europe.

Laholli is a representative of a new generation of poets in Albanian literature. They are young writers who, for the most part, have never had the benefit of formal literary training or of a thorough education for that matter. What is important, however, is that they are poets who are free to express genuine sentiment and emotion without self-censorship from fear of what the editor at the state publishing company might have to say.

Robert ELSIE

Visar Zhiti, *Kujtesa e afrit*, Tiranë, Lidhja e Shkrimtarëve, 1993, 209 pages.

Visar Zhiti is one of the many talented writers of modern Albania to have suffered appalling persecution for no apparent reason at all. Born on 2 December 1952 in Durrës as the son of a stage actor, he grew up in Lushnjë, where he finished school in 1970 and taught in the northern mountain town of Kukës. Zhiti showed an early interest in verse and had published some poems in literary periodicals. In 1973 he was preparing the collection *Rapsodia e jetës së trëndafilave* (Rhapsody of the Life of Roses) for publication when the purge of intellectuals broke loose at the infamous Fourth Plenary Session of the party. Zhiti, whose father had earlier come into conflict with the authorities, was selected as one of the numerous scapegoats in the aim to terrify the intellectual community. The manuscript of the verse collection which he had previously submitted to the

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editors of the Naim Frashëri publishing company was now reinterpreted as containing grave ideological errors and as blackening "our socialist reality." There was nothing the poet could say to his interrogators to prove his innocence.

After six years under the people's own Sword of Damocles, Zhiti was finally arrested on 8 November 1979 in Kukës, where he was still teaching, and spent the following months in solitary confinement. In order to retain his sanity, he composed and memorized ninety-seven poems (pencil and paper were of course forbidden in jail). Sentenced in April 1980 to ten years in prison for "agitation and propaganda," Zhiti was transferred to Tiranë prison and from there to the infamous concentration camps from which many talented Albanians never returned: the copper mines of Spaç in Mirdita and the icy mountain camp of Qafë-Bari near Fushë Arrëz. Released on 28 January 1987, he was then permitted to work in a brick factory in his native Lushnjë until the end of the dictatorship. In autumn 1991 the poet fulfilled a dream and spent a year working in Italy, tasting freedom for the first time. Visar Zhiti is now director of the same Naim Frashëri publishing house which had once abandoned him to his fate.

Kujtesa e ajrit (The Memory of the Air), a volume of ninety-nine compelling poems, takes us into the very soul of the dictatorship, which we encounter incarnate in a prison skull. Here, in the first half of the book, the poet evokes all the terror, revulsion, despair, and hope of those long years. Added to the collection is a cycle of poems from after his release, including his first travels in Italy and Austria. What distinguishes Zhiti's poetry from other volumes of what might be described as "prison verse" is his absolute reverence for the humane. This chronicle of contemporary horrors is devoid of acrimony, of animosity, and of that ever-so-Albanian characteristic—the inexorable call for revenge.

Robert ELSIE

Kasëm Trebeshina, *Stina e stinëve.* Ardian Klosi, ed. Prishtina, Kosovë, (Yug.) Buzuku, 1991. 303 pages.

An age of discovery has dawned in Albanian literature. Writers and intellectuals are now rediscovering foreign literature, which, with the exception of selected works of the very "progressive" Left, was beyond their reach for half a century, thanks to the watchful eye of the Albanian Party of Labor. What is equally fascinating for them is the rediscovery of the other half of their own literature, works and authors outlawed and expelled from the Parnassus of the nation. Virtually all "preliberation" authors of the thirties and forties, including the sublime national poet Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940), were made to vanish at the flick of a party wand.

Also among the literary *desaparecidos* are a number of writers from the fifties, including Kasëm Trebeshina (b. 1926), who once studied at the Ostrovsky Theater Institute in Leningrad. A committed communist at the time, but by no means a conformist, he was early to sever links with the party and later with the Writers Union in Tiranë. Of his voluminous writing from the late forties and early fifties, only one modest collection of poetry, *Artani dhe Minja* (Artani and Minja; Tiranë, 1959), and an anonymous translation of the plays of Garcia Lorca were ever published.

On 5 October 1959, in an extremely rare act of open dissent in Albanian intellectual life, Trebeshina sent a pro memoria to Communist Party leader Enver Hoxha (1908-85) warning him that his cultural policies were leading the nation down the road to disaster. In that document he wrote:

Let us take a closer 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, etc., etc. A good one, a bad one, a reformed one! . . . 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 medieval monks. At the head of the order is a Grand Master, and all are obliged to kneel before him as long as he carries out his functions as such. Are you aware that the distribution of "functions" and "privileges" in this manner is medieval?

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. . . I believe that the greatest destruction to come is going to take place in Albanian intellectual life. The people are going to lose confidence in the state and its leadership and withdraw into themselves. In order to keep control of them, a need will arise to create a brutal police state. And this will be But the start . . . The oppression of opinions, even within the party ranks, is becoming systematic, and in the end this will give birth 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 stay in power. Such a regime will be much more dangerous for itself. A dampering 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 historical process you will be obliged to kill one another and the people will be drenched in blood.

It goes without saying that the Albanian dictator was not particularly amused by the letter. Following this voluntary act of self-destruction, Trebeshina, the unpublished author of eighteen volumes of verse, forty-two plays, and twenty-two novels and short-story collections, vanished from the literary scene with little trace. After seventeen years in prison, with interruptions—a comparatively light sentence, as he later noted—and twenty years of silence, he has now resurfaced from the Balkan gulags with a handful of other writers and artists to see that his predictions indeed came true.

The scholar and publisher Ardian Klosi (b. 1957) has now assembled and edited a number of representative prose pieces and issued them in book form as *Stina e stinëve* (The Season of Seasons), providing for the first time a glimpse into Trebeshina's fantasy world. The tales are salted with a good dose of the absurd, or the seemingly absurd, and are in many ways not unlike those of another victim of Stalinist repression, Mitrush Kuteli (1907-57). His inspiration is drawn from folktales and from his allergic reaction to the official literary teachings of his age. What could be more innocent and yet more politically revealing than the universe of a child? Is the world an infant discovers around him the same place he will be in as an adult? Where does reality begin and end? The surrealist touch of what the author calls his "symbolic realism" is one of the consequences of this conscious revolt against the predominant current of socialist realism which stifled so much creative writing in Albania for almost half a century.

Robert ELSIE

Xhevahir Spahiu, *Kohë e krisur,* Tiranë, Lidhja e Shkrimtarëve, 1991, 122 pages, 4 Lek.

The region of Skrapari at the foot of lofty Mount Tomorr, the legendary Father Tomorr of Albanian mythology, is noted for its excellent *raki* and its Sigurimi agents. Quite independent of this rather dubious fame, it is also the home of Xhevahir Spahiu (b. 1945), one of the most forceful, vociferous, and talented poets of modern Albania, a voice of survival. During the 1973 purge of writers and intellectuals, the dictator Enver Hoxha referred to Spahiu by name for having composed a short poem reminiscent—though by pure coincidence—of a line by Jean-Paul Sartre. Although the poet had never had an opportunity to enjoy the forbidden fruits of the late French philosopher, he was condemned as an existentialist (tantamount to high treason) and survived only by the skin of his teeth, by channeling his passions into appropriate revolutionary fervor. After a couple of years he was, to his and our good fortune, allowed to publish once again. Now that the red tide has receded, he can go about the poet's business and is quite content to do so.

Spahiu is not a poet of reclusion or of pensive solitude. He is at his best with an audience. It is then that his eyes take on an elfish sparkle (*xhevahir* in Albanian means "diamond") and his voice begins to convey all the emotion of which true verse is capable. His audience is always enthralled. In a country in which until quite recently every poem, every word, every thought was subject to a dense filter of ideological and personal

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conformity, this habit of spontaneous and passionate declamation on the otherwise bleak streets of Tiranë has made him something of a unique phenomenon.

Kohë e krisur (A Mad Age), written when Europe's most awesome dictatorship was in its last throes, is one of the first volumes of poetry to be printed by the newly formed publishing company of the now semi-independent Albanian Writers Union. Spahiu's verse is both entertaining and thought-provoking. The sixty-nine poems in the present volume range from striking aphorisms and bons mots, at which Spahiu has always delighted, to passionate verse on the martyrdom of Kosovo, a tragedy in the making which gnaws away at the spirit of Albanians on both sides of the Albanian-Yugoslav border. *Kohë e krisur* was awarded the 1991 Migjeni Prize as the year's best volume of poetry. In choosing this work, the members of the jury, composed of poets, critics, and publishers, praised not only the book's profound humanitarian and democratic spirit and its dramatic impact, but also its anticonformity. Albania has come a long way in one year.

Robert ELSIE

Ali Podrimja, *Buzëqeshja në kafaz / Das Lächeln im Käfig*, Hans-Joachim Lanksch, tr, Klagenfurt, Austria, Wieser, 1993, 129 pages, öS 198/DM 29.80.

Kosovo (Alb. *Kosova*), the restless Plain of the Blackbirds in the southern part of what was once Yugoslavia, still remains to a large extent a *terra incognita* of European literature, despite the excellent poets it produced during the ever-so-brief flourishing of Albanian culture there. From the fall of the dreaded Serbian minister Aleksandar Rankovic in July 1966 to the bloody quelling of the 1981 movement for equality and republic status, Kosovo enjoyed a fleeting period of relative freedom and prosperity. It was during those years, after decades of suffocation, that Kosovo Albanian culture came of age. University education in Prishtinë took root, and publishing and cultural activity advanced substantially. The suffocation has now resumed with even greater intensity since Slobodan Milosevic's coup d'état in July 1990.

Of the many daring poets, prose writers, and critics of the generation that grafted West European ideas onto the traditionally tribal culture of the northern Albanian mountains and the fertile plains of Kosovo, one writer has emerged as a figure of international literary stature. Ali Podrimja (see WLT 624, p. 708) has remained an elliptic poet over the years and one of harsh, uncompromising metaphors. The rock, the snake, the wolf, the distant riverbank, and the lonely stone tower haunt his verse. The poet's work was marked more than anything by the suffering and distress of his youth. A deprived childhood in Kosovo and the early death of his parents gave the young Podrimja little opportunity to relish in the joys of life and little time to take flight into the spheres of the sublime. Profoundly shaken in later years by the death of his son Lumi, Podrimja is now faced with the possibility of yet another tragic loss, that of his country. The poet must come to terms with one cruel and overwhelming reality that his whole people have fallen victim to the ravenous appetite of the wolf.

In the summer of 1992 the city of Munich invited the poet to spend a few months of reclusion at a villa on Lake Starnberg in the Bavarian Alps, a stay which gave him temporary respite and an opportunity to extract himself emotionally from the Balkans, to breathe freely and, at the same time, to reflect on the somber fate of his people: "God gave them nothing, not even grass/ only snakes and stones." It was a period of profound creativity for the writer, who has now become the literary representative of his people at the international level. In his most recent verse Podrimja's stoic composure has, not surprisingly, been overlaid by a new, political dimension which was previously marginal in his work. Poems such as "Black Angel of Sarajevo" and "Wandering with Wolves" evince not only his sense of helplessness and anguish but also his growing bitterness at Europe's indifference.

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The forty-one poems of the bilingual (Albanian/German) edition titled *Buzëqeshja në kafaz / Das Lächeln im Käfig* (The Smile in the Cage) constitute Ali Podrimja's second major verse collection to appear in German translation. In preparation at present are editions of his works in English and French which will offer the international reading public further opportunities to discover a recusant voice and a little-known culture.*

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*World Literature Today, 1992-1993.

Robert ELSIE

Giraudo, Cesare, *Già Dato Per Martire . . . I Fioretti di un Gesuita Albanese* (Already Called a Martyr . . . The "Little Flowers" of an Albanian Jesuit), Edizioni Apostolato della Preghiera, Rome, 1993, 68 p.

More than ten years ago it was widely rumored and even reported in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* that Fr. Ndoc Luli, S.J. had died a martyr in Albania. However, with the return of religious freedom to Albania Fr. Luli was found to be very much alive. Together with Fr. Gjerj Vata, the only other surviving Albanian Jesuit, Fr. Luli traveled to Rome to stay for a time with his Jesuit confreres. There he made his final solemn profession of vows as a Jesuit. Fr. Luli then returned to Albania to participate in re-establishing the Jesuit church in Tirana.

An Italian Jesuit journalist, Fr. Cesare Giraudo, has recently published an interview which he conducted with Fr. Luli at Tirana during Eastertime 1992. Fr. Giraudo wished to have Fr. Luli, as a surviving Albanian Jesuit priest, give his testimony regarding the last fifty years of the Catholic Church in Albania. Fr. Giraudo simply allowed Fr. Luli to speak, which Fr. Luli did without difficulty, regarding times which were for the Church "a constant Calvary".

For over forty years Fr. Luli lived without the help of his Jesuit confreres. He spent seventeen years in prisons and labor camps. He was incarcerated from 1947 to 1954 and again from 1979 to 1989. While in prison Fr. Luli was tortured with beatings and electric shocks. In the work camps he had to work long hours with little food digging canals and draining swamps. While in the camps he was often segregated by the prison officials. He usually was placed with a group of other priests who were among the best workers. In the Beden camp Fr. Luli joined Fr. Jak Gardin, the Italian Jesuit whose *Prison Memoirs* have been published in several languages.

From 1955 until 1966 Fr. Luli was able to function as a pastor in the village of Shenkoll. Throughout this period there was no true freedom for him or other priests in Albania. There was rather a type of tolerance. In his preaching and contact with the people Fr. Luli noted that he had to be very careful because there were always spies who attempted to find some pretext for a new arrest. Finally in December 1966 his parish church was closed by the government and turned into a "cultural center". It was the first church closed by the Albanian government. By Palm Sunday 1967 all other churches were closed. Fr. Luli along with all other priests had to seek work as farm laborers. For the sake of their families they had to live alone or share a room with a fellow priest. They were not allowed to openly function as priests, and in fact it was difficult to even function in secret. Fr. Luli celebrated Mass every day by himself in his room. Even Fr. Pjetër Gruda his roomate was unaware of this. During his free time Fr. Luli often listened to a crystal radio which he had built during his time as pastor in Shenkoll. He showed others how to make these primitive radios and for this he was accused of being in contact with the Vatican. However, upon investigation by the local secretary of the Communist Party, Fr. Luli was exonerated of the charge.

Fr. Luli gave his impressions of the return of religious liberty to Albania. He expressed his great joy at the fact that the church in Shenkoll, the first to be closed in Albania in 1966, was the first to be reopened at Eastertime 1991. Fr. Luli's testimony was enlightening and uplifting in its nobility and simplicity. Despite all the horrors which Fr. Luli

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and so many others endured for nearly fifty years, there was no rancor shown, only Fr. Luli's faith, hope and charity in the dark days of the martyrdom of Albania. Fr. Luli's final word is a reminder of the need for Christian pardon of ones persecutors. Fr. Luli himself, upon seeing the man who was the very person most responsible for his prison sentence, greeted him and embraced him. This act did not ignore the past but rather called everyone, including the oppressors, to acknowledge the love of God and the dignity of the human person.

Both Fr. Luli and Fr. Giraudo are to be commended for making this interview available to the public. This book deserves a wider audience than just the Italian speaking populace. Other Albanians of the period deserve to be heard just as was Dante who returned from his descent into hell. They can point us on the way to our true heavenly home.

Raymond FROST

Gjoka, Vasel Pjeter, *Një Jetë e Vështirë* (A Hard Life), Shtëpia botuese "At Gjergj Fishta", Shkodër, Printing House "Migjeni", pp. 140, Shkodër, Albania.

In his foreword the author thanks God for arriving alive in this blessed country of the USA, where he could work, form his family and keep his religious and ethnic traditions, including the language of his fatherland. These traditions made his children curious about their parents' small country, Albania, and her people suffering under a cruel communist rule. Their vivid interest persuaded their father to put down notes through the years and finally come out with the present volume *"Një Jetë e Vështirë"* (A Hard Life).

The complete destruction of the traditional order, of patriarchal family life, of religion, and the confiscation of property, all carried out in a continuous ruthless rhythm, has been the focus that forced the author not only to reject, but to rebel against the communist order, and consequently suffered as most of the Albanian people did. In his book he describes the events in which he took part, and as he saw them, beginning with his own experience and that of his fellow villagers. His simple, unpretentious narratives are disjointed reminiscences in chronological order, at times enlivened by a type of humor, characteristic of shkodrans and their surrounding proud highlanders in Northern Albania.

The first chapter of the book deals with the history of the author's notable family dwelling at Petroshan village of Kastrati, north of Shkodra city. For generations his ancestors have actively participated in the efforts of northern Albanian mountaineers to free themselves and the country from the five century Ottoman occupation, and during the last eighty years from slavic Montenegrin and Serbian attacks. The writer has provided clear historic, folkloristic, and printed evidence, even from the Montenegrin press, about his family leadership and courage (pp. 5-7).

During 1942-43 the author was serving in the Albania Army which was in disarray because communists were creating effective propaganda to encourage desertion to their ranks. The communists took power in November, 1944. A chain of rebellious attacks against communists was mounted in 1945 in Kastrati and Kopliku near Shkodra, and in 1946 in Postriba led by Jup Kazazi and in Mirdita led by Mark Gjomarkaj. Thousands were killed, wounded, captured and imprisoned. Among the latter was the author, who describes the prison life in Shkodra similar to that of Father Gardin, *(Banishing God in Albania,* 1988 Ignatius Press, San Francisco), but in a simple style and with fewer details and impressions. When describing horrible events, his narratives are serious, sad, dry and short; while describing the usual treatment in prison, he seems to be more at ease, pleasant and even humorous.

Here is to be noted that Vasel had no chance to attend school until he was put in Shkodra prison where courses for illiterate people were opened. He joined the course, but before he could finish the alphabet he was packed off with others and sent to work in the swamps of Lake Maliqi near Korça city. From then on he never attended any school, but learned by himself with perseverance.

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So his small book is the result of his qualities and his efforts, an excellent example per se for others, even for some intellectuals . . .

Here follows a typical paragraph:

At Maliqi swamps we worked all the day in mud and water . . . If by bad luck your shovel slipped from your hands while throwing with force the material at the top of the ditch, you would face two hardships: you had to climb to the top of the ditch by sliding on the mud with your knees, and if the guard saw you, you would most likely be beaten with sticks beyond the point that you could endure. No day passed without the beating of two or three people; as for scoldings, they were considered gifts . . . (p. 52).

In this chapter there are incidents involving prisoner cooks setting aside good portions for themselves, barbers who had accepted tips, merchants dealing with exsergeants. All of them got beaten mercilessly until they collapsed. The author comments calmly about them:

These people seem to forget where they are, and thus they give chances to guards to blow up in the most brutal way. (p. 56).

On January 11, 1948 he finished his three year prison term and was released from prison and hardship. He meditates about that occasion:

In what kind of spiritual disposition was I when I crossed the threshold of prison? I can't describe it, or forget it today or ever until I die . . . As for joy, yes, but also misery when thinking about the hard time (spent) and friends left behind . . .(p. 61).

He was still saddened and desperate to the utmost because . . . my father and brother continued to rot in prison.(p. 62).

Seven months later he escaped to Yugoslavia with his brothers Tomë and Gjokë, following his uncle, Nikë Gjeloshi, whom they had found in prison. The atmosphere and treatment of the Albanian refugees in Yugoslavia posed a very difficult dilemma, because the policy of that country under Tito, supported by Anglo-American money, insisted on persuading these refugees to go back to stalinist Albania, distribute printed propaganda, and sabotage the Hoxha-Shehu government in Albania. Besides the fratricide, comments the author, this would put their relatives in jail and concentration camps; therefore, most of them did not cooperate. Consequently thousands of Albanian refugees there went through endless interrogations, imprisonment and forced labor in more than twenty towns of Montenegro and Serbia.

The treatment of Albanians was so bad that the Yugoslav police could shoot them without warning and without process of law. This was also the case with a cousin of the author and a young boy. Against that criminal act his brother Gjoka protested strongly and was put in prison. After release he took revenge for his relative and lost his life too. There in Nikshiq, Montenegro, they learned that their father and brother were executed in Albania. Both brothers, Vasel and Tomë, were arrested and sent to Gerovo gulag, the worst in Yugoslavia. With the intervention of the International Organization for Human Rights in 1956 they were handed over to the International Refugee Camp in Trieste, Italy, where the treatment was as day to night compared to what they went through in Albania and Yugoslavia. This ongoing chapter is a particular documentary of intrigues, cruelties and villainies. By 1958 both brothers went to France and in 1960 arrived in New York and then moved to San Francisco, where Tomë settled while Vasel moved to Connecticut, then Detroit, back and forth from San Francisco, and finally settled in Detroit for good, bringing up his children in the best Albanian tradition.

The author has an exceptional ability to remember faces and names of people, and to relate their stories as if they occurred yesterday. He has an urge to meet people, to follow events that are linked with the interests of the nation: so he joins the Albanian pilgrims on the occasion of the 5th centenary of the flight of Our Lady of Shkodra to Genazzano, 45 km east of Rome, where Hildebrand Cardinal Antoniutti, former Apostolic Delegate to Albania, lifted the hearts of the faithful attendants with these words:

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You have to keep the hope that one day God, who has never abandoned you, will open the door to your country when you least expect it." (p. 116.)

These prophetic words were inscribed in the author's heart and mind, and their sense has reflected many times in his book. The following day an audience with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican took place, the day after he joined Prof. Ernest Koliqi and others for festivities in Sicily. While in San Francisco he visited the staff of the Albanian Department, Defense Language Institute in Monterey and stood in national costume during the "Language Day" events; he invited former Albanian ministers Hasan Dosti and Djafer Deva to his home; he attended Commemorations of the Persecution of Religion in Albania, in Santa Clara and San Francisco Universities; he participated in and contributed to worthy causes like erecting the bust of our national hero Scanderbeg in Brussels and naming a plaza with that hero's name in Paris; he also took part in demonstrations held in Washington, D.C. and New York to protest Serbian atrocities against Albanians in Yugoslavia.

The material of the last 50 pages of the book is based in the TV daily news, on local and national press in USA, and on the Albanian press in diaspora and Albania. Actually on these pages he seems more a gazetteer than a writer.

Stressing the ascendency of Michael Gorbachev with his 'Perestroika Program,' his steering approach to democracy and economics, his meetings with presidents Reagan and Bush, with Pope John Paul II and western leaders, the writer expresses his wishful thinking:

"We hope that Gorbachev's earthquake will shake up the brains of the Albanian (communist) leaders!" (p. 130).

As the Soviet Union's economy was collapsing, writes the author, the above meetings directly or indirectly encouraged the 'Solidarnosc' Movement in Poland, Albanian-Kosovar demonstration in the 80's, the precipitous events in all Eastern Europe, the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany.

As for Albania, he conjectures that the first sign of Ramiz Alia to relieve pressure on his people was to allow three Albanian religious emigrants to visit Albania, followed by Mother Teresa's visit; then came the first daring spontaneous mass celebration by Rev. (now Msgr.) Simon Jubani at the Shkodra's Catholic cemetery after 23 years of prohibition. That was the triumph of the Church and of all Albanian people, comments the author. Then he deals with the multi-party issue, the formation of the 'Democratic party,' the change of the name 'communist' to 'socialist' party, the first elections since 1924, the victory of socialists, the anxious moment for fear of violence that happened in Shkodra and Kavaja, demonstrations of students and miners which forced the government to change the name "Enver Hoxha" University and topple his huge monument in the main square of the capital, the massing of youth in foreign embassies to get out of Albania, later followed by the historic mass exodus of Albanians at the ports of Durrës and Vlona to go to Italy.

On March 15, 1991, Drs. Sali Berisha and Gramos Pashko, leaders of the Democratic Party of Albania, came to ask for USA help. They also made a stop in Detroit. The happy author writes:

"It was a day of triumph for us (here in USA). Two former communists came to the USA fighting against their former communists, and supporting the causes for which we (emigrants) have struggled for so many years." (p. 134).

With the visit of the Secretary of State, James Baker, to Albania, the chapter of the communist oppression was closed, and Vasil decided to visit his homeland:

"I am returning to my country which I left, not because I did not like it but because I wanted to act honestly and to live completely as a free man." (p. 137).

After a night's sleep in Athens, Greece, he thought it was a dream to go back to Albania.

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Indeed it was a realized dream, but when he met his people, he hardly could pronounce the words:

"I am glad to see you after 43 years!"

He felt sick with nosebleeds, sought a doctor's help, which was given promptly, but remained very weak and decided to return to Detroit where he underwent surgery; after that he was happy and able to finish his book, for which he is proud and needs readers. 'Good for you, Vasel'!

Observations:

Although there are good titles, no table of contents has been provided for this book. The reader easily notices plenty of printing and other mistakes which may upset him/her. Some sentences are repeated twice, as on p. 72; some lines are mixed, and at least one is upside down. There is also a blurry paragraph at the end of p. 3, continuing on p. 4, and one third of the photos are blurry too.

The book is written mainly in gheg dialect, but mixed unnecessarily with the toskë dialect to give the impression of the 'unified language' in reverse. The book should have been written in clear gheg for we are no longer under the dictatorship of Hoxha-Shehu, and we should not have any inferiority complex, when we write, or speak our mother tongue, be it gheg or toskë dialect.

These observations are made with the sincere aim that the second edition may come out even better.

(The book *Njt Jetë e Vështirë* may be obtained by writing to the author at: 31672 Lamar, FARMINGTON, MI 48024, USA)

Zef V. NEKAJ

Zet Luka, *Njiqind Shqipe Që Erdhën Me Prue Lirinë*, (One Hundred Eagles Who Came to Bring Freedom), Shkoder, Albania, 1994, 116 pp. (Available by writing to author: 4122 Chester Avenue, Apt. 6, Cleveland, OH 44103).

On 18 of May, 1994, Pope John Paul II addressed a special message to the Polish people who had gathered to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino, Italy. Many Polish patriots gave their lives in this battle to further the allied struggle against Hitler's Germany. Many Polish veterans joined Cardinal Glemp, the Polish primate, at the Monte Cassino cemetery. There they paid tribute to those who had sacrificed their lives to defeat totalitarianism. John Paul II urged the Poles to always remember the sacrifice which their countrymen made "to defend the Christian tradition of Europe and the 'European Spirit' " against the forces which aimed "at uprooting Europe from its Christian past". The pontiff linked their heroism with that of other Polish patriots including those who died in 1939 and during the Nazi occupation, as well as in the Warsaw Uprising. John Paul II mentioned another group of patriots, when he stated that "We must also remember how many were killed at the hand of the Polish institutions and security services that served the system imposed by the East. They must at least be remembered before God and before history, in order not to veil the truth about our past at this decisive moment in history." No doubt John Paul II intended this remembering "before God and before history" to apply to all the countries of Eastern Europe and to all the martyrs who struggled in the same spirit as the Poles to defend the Christian tradition of Europe.

Zef Luka has undertaken the very task of remembering and recording the events of this crucial period in regards to his native Albania. As a participant and eyewitness to the struggle which began at the end of World War II to free Albania from totalitarian communist rule, Luka testifies to what he saw and what he attempted to do as a young Albanian patriot. In 1944 Luka was eighteen years old and about to finish his high school education when the communists forcefully took over Albania and instituted a 5 decade long reign of terror. He witnessed the earliest stage of communist persecution directed against many of his former teachers. They were the first victims of communist injustice. Having been educated by Franciscan and Jesuit teachers, who instilled in their students a love and devotion for God, family, and the fatherland ("the Christian tradition of

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Europe" of which Pope John Paul II spoke) Luka could not reconcile himself to a silent acceptance of totalitarian rule.

One Hundred Eagles Who Came to Bring Freedom is a brief account of the major events which Luka witnessed between 1943 and 1956. It is a most interesting and valuable contribution to the history of modern Albania because it relates a number of here-to-fore little known details about the attempts by Albanian patriots to liberate their country from communist control. Luka gives readers a personal account of the formation of the "one hundred eagles" group of Albanian guerillas assembled and trained by American, Italian and English allies to parachute into their homeland and lead the movement to remove the communists from power.

In March 1945 Luka and many other young Albanians who had been forced to join the communist partisan army were sent to Gjirokastër in southern Albania. Many of these young conscripts were not at all sympathetic to communism. Luka was assigned to the 2nd Company of the 15th "shock brigade". He was soon able to gather a group of fellow conscripts from his native Shkodër and other Albanian towns and cities who had been labeled "reactionaries" by their military superiors. After weeks of careful preparation and gathering enough ammunition and supplies Luka and his anti-communist group successfully crossed the border into Greece and were granted political asylum there. Luka and his friends stayed in various refugee camps in Greece. In the overcrowded camps they suffered from malnutrition and ill-treatment by the Greek authorities. In 1949 Luka and some companions were selected to join a group of Albanian refugees to be trained by the allies and air-lifted to Albania. According to plan they would parachute into Albania to organize and instigate anti-communist uprisings.

These one hundred men were carefully selected from among the Albanian refugees who had fled the fatherland at the communist takeover. Allied Intelligence Services had approached Albanian nationalist leaders in exile and asked for their help in choosing a brave and resourceful group of men who were willing to return to their homeland and make contact with their relatives and freedom fighters in Albania. These were to be the backbone of a future organized insurrection.

There was a common feeling that they would quickly succeed in shaking the foundation of the communist state. There was great hope they would cause Albania to become the first nation liberated from communist control. The men selected for this mission were assembled in Italy and Malta. They underwent a six month training period in military tactics, parachuting, and the use of explosives and radio devices. In December 1949 the "eagles" landed in Albania. Unfortunately at the various landing points they found heavily armed communist forces fully ready and waiting. Their mission had been betrayed by British operatives of the KGB service, among whom was the notorious Kim Philby. Philby had treacherously passed information to the Soviets about the training of the "hundred eagles" and the time of their landing in Albania.

When Luka and his company landed in Mirditë in northern Albania, they managed to avoid capture. The other groups which parachuted into central and southern Albania were quickly captured as a result of Philby's betrayal. Luka and the surviving patriots carried out operations in the northern mountains of Mirditë and Puka for almost two years. By August, 1951 Luka's group was dangerously low on military supplies and ammunition. They crossed the border into Yugoslavia, where instead of receiving support they were forced into refugee camps, by the authorities. With their detainment, all hopes for the success of the anti-communist mission were dashed.

Luka's account concurs with the findings of two earlier books which studied this effort to liberate Albania: *The Philby Conspiracy*, by Page, Leitch and Knightley (New York, Doubleday and Company, 1968, pp. 192-203) and *The Great Betrayal: The Untold Story of Kim Philby's Biggest Coup* by N. Bethell (London, Hodder and Staughton, 1984). More importantly, Luka's vol-

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ume is a tremendous source for learning about the men who undertook this dangerous mission, their principles and motivations, and their heroic sacrifices. Luka also wrote about the enemy, those who opposed or betrayed them. In regards to these, friends and foes, he offers a candid brief opinion of their personalities and actions. He endeavors to judge both communists and patriots by the same objective standards. The men who risked and gave their lives for this noble cause are rightly and justly remembered by Luka for what they attempted.

Luka deserves praise, not only for having participated in the patriotic struggle but also for remembering the names and sacrifices of the martyrs. The "Eagles" should be honored for remaining faithful to their ideals throughout the fifty years of the communist era. After the hardships of the guerilla war in Albania and his life in the Yugoslav camps he could have forgotten Albania and built a new and prosperous life in exile, as others did. However, the teachings and example of his Franciscan and Jesuit teachers regarding faith, family and fatherland prevailed over a selfish desire for wealth and possession of the "good things of life". Luka remembered his debt to Albania and gave of his time, talent and earnings to keep alive the spirit of freedom. He supported projects to build Catholic churches and mosques in Detroit and New York. He helped support the cultural and publishing efforts of his diaspora friends. Now he has told the story of the struggle for freedom to which he and his companions committed their younger years. Zef Luka and those who served with him deserve proper honor and grateful respect by all Albanians.

Lipsius, Stephan, *The Democratization Process in Albania*, Doctoral Thesis, Philips University, Marburg, Germany, 1992, 154 pp., In German with an Extensive Bibliography.

Stephan Lipsius' doctoral thesis, *The Democratization Process in Albania*, presented on February 3, 1992 at the Philipps University in Marburg, Germany, is an astounding feat of scholarship in contemporary political science and history. Mr. Lipsius' thesis begins with an historical overview which succinctly traces the political history of Albania from Skanderbeg's death in 1468 to the events which led to the collapse of Enver Hoxha's brand of atheistic communism and the integration of Albania into post cold war Europe. The unparalleled rigors of the Hoxha tyranny are seen in the perspective of historical dynamics which, while not mitigating their inhumanity, provide students as well as experts in the field of recent Albanian history with a fresh approach to understanding the catastrophic political and social developments in Albania under communism.

Mr. Lipsius divides his thesis into three areas of investigation. First he provides the historical background of the foundation of the Albanian state in 1912. Then he presents an overview of the stormy years which led to the establishment of the royal dictatorship under Zogu and the period of Italian and German occupation during WWII. His account of the period he calls "Socialistic Albania After 1945: The Securing of National Independence as the Goal of Albanian Foreign and Domestic Policy" is of greatest interest to the readers of the *Bulletin*. Lipsius' topics include: 1)The Yugoslavian Annexation Plans; 2)Reliance on Moscow; 3)The Albanian-Chinese Pact; 4)Liberation From Alliances; 5)Breakdowns in the 1980's (principally the death of Hoxha in 1985). Mr. Lipsius then presents an analysis of Albania's situation at the beginning of the 1990's. Topics in this section include the leading role of the Albanian Workers' Party, changes in the politics of religion, and the effect of the publication of the book, *The Knives*. The third area of study is entitled "The Democratization Process". This is the focus of the the thesis and it is treated with exhaustive scholarship. Topics include: 1)Stalin's Forgotten Children; 2)First Reforms; 3)The Albanian Spring"; 4)Disappointed Aspirations: The Ambassadorial Crises; 5)The Foreign Minister Conference of the Balkan States in Tirana and the Flight of Ismail Kadare; 6)The New Voting Law; 7)Social Unrest and the Founding of Opposition Organizations; 8)Political Pluralism,

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New Parties and their Programs; 9)The First Free Elections; 10)The Continued Development of a Handicapped Democratization Process.

Mr. Lipsius' erudite treatment of the Albanian-Chinese alliance is the most intriguing and controversial aspect of his thoroughly researched doctoral study. It is his contention that the political isolation of Albania after its break with the Soviet Union forced it in 1954 to look once again, as in 1948, for an economically stronger partner. The Peoples' Republic of China was quick to supply the economic aid no longer available from the Soviet Union. From 1954 until its break with Peking in 1978, Albania received approximately 10 Billion *Yuan* in support from the Peoples' Republic of China. In addition, the Chinese sent almost 600 specialists to Albania while over 200 Albanians were sent to China for training. Notwithstanding this economic and intellectual dependence, Albania was not entirely swept up in China's ideological position, nor was the Albanian "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1969) a mirror of China under Mao. But Hoxha did import Mao's "War Against Religion" and shortly thereafter, Hoxha was able to declare Albania the first atheistic state in the world. Gjon Sinishta's 1976 work, *The Fulfilled Promise: A Documentary Account of Religious Persecution in Albania*, is cited by Mr. Lipsius as the only hitherto existing study of the war against religion in Albania as it targeted the Catholic Church. Mr. Lipsius goes on to state that since 1967 Albania had been the only state in the world in which not only religious buildings were closed or used for other purposes, but also according to the Constitution of 1976, Article 55, all activities of religious organizations were suppressed and no type of religious community was recognized. This led to Albania becoming the object of many formal protests by world wide human rights organizations. Readers of *Buletini Katolik Shqiptar/ Albanian Catholic Bulletin* are well aware of its diligence in reporting the persecution suffered by so many Catholic as well as other religious leaders during the Hoxha tyranny. The publication is cited several times in the thesis as an authority in this area.

Mr. Lipsius sees difficult times ahead for the family of Balkan states of which Albania is the weakest member. The sorry state of its economy thanks to the years of isolation and mismanagement under the communists, its difficulties in forming a stable government, its lack of a democratic tradition and the disparities between the rural and urban populace place it in a deep social, economic and moral crisis. In Mr. Lipsius' view, if Albania does not soon achieve economic stability and the pacification of contending political factions, its future will be bleak.

Richard H. SIEBERT

Gjelaj, Gjeka and Ivezaj, Frano, *Multicultural Awareness for the Classroom—The Albanians,* Detroit Public Schools Division of Educational Quality, Office of Bilingual Education, 1993, 128 pp.

A guidebook for the teaching of public school students about matters relating to Albanian culture has been published by the Detroit, Michigan Department of Public Schools. We believe this is the only publication of its kind presenting the Albanian national, cultural, historical and religious background in such an accessible way. The guidebook is the work of two American educators who are natives of Albania, Dr. Gjeka Gjelaj and Mr. Frano Ivezaj. It was prepared under the direction of Dr. David Snead, President of the Detroit Public Schools and Dr. Felix Mario Valbuena, Director of the Office of Bilingual Education in Detroit. Gjelaj and Ivezaj are widely experienced teachers and scholars. Dr. Gjelaj is the Assistant Director for Curriculum and Staff Development for Hamtramck Public Schools and Ivezaj is a Bilingual Specialist for Detroit Public Schools. Together they have collaborated on a highly readable manual which captures the rich panorama of Albania in the context of world history.

The guidebook is divided into twenty sections. Each section deals with the various important elements of Albanian culture. There are also five lesson plans provided for the benefit of teachers who wish to prepare classes on Albanian culture as suggested by the book. Lesson plans include "The Law of the Mountain of Lek Dukagjini"; "Al-

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banian Hospitality"; "Marriage Customs"; "Folktales"; and "Telling Time in Albanian". In each of these lesson plans an effort has been made to relate the Albanian experience to a school population coming from a multitude of ethnic backgrounds. Pupils can be guided to a consideration of their own cultural background in comparison to the Albanian.

In the foreword the authors state that "the purpose of the guide is to provide the classroom teacher of multi-ethnic students with as much information and as many teaching resources as possible to enhance multicultural awareness of the total school population". The guidebook has been developed by teachers in public schools for use by teachers and administrators. Ultimately the benefit will go to the students of the Detroit Public Schools, a significant number of whom are of Albanian descent. The authors hope that the students will be given "a sense of admiration for the cultural heritage and linguistic background of the many people who are an integral part of the Detroit school community".

The Albanian guidebook is part of a series of such guides which are available on the various ethnic groups present in the Detroit school system—Polish, Indian, Chaldean, Spanish, etc. The Albanian component was begun in 1978 under the guidance of the Director of the Detroit Public Schools Office of Bilingual Education Dr. Felix Valbuena. The authors received the assistance of many individuals in the Albanian-American community and also drew upon the counsel of fellow professionals in the Detroit public school system and at Wayne State University. Ivezaj and Gjelaj utilized a number of published works on Albania. They listed in their bibliography thirty-five publications which are available in English. Some of the authors cited are Faik Konitza, Nicholas Pano, Arshi Pipa, Sami Repishti, Nermin Vlora Falaschi, Shtjefen Gjeçov, Gjon Sinishta, and Martin Camaj. Interested scholars have here a gold mine of works which can point their way toward a further investigation of Albanian culture.

The first section is devoted to an overview of Albania and its people. It describes the origin of the name Albania and of the name Shqiptar (Sons of the Eagle). The authors point out basic facts of Albanian geography, its size, location, population and climate. Maps are provided to show Albania's place in Europe and to help the students find the main cities and regions of Albania, (including the Albanian populations of Kosova, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Greece). This section mentions the interesting fact that "Albania is one of the most ethnically homogeneous states in the world—98% of the total population is Albanian in origin and speech." The authors also note that Albanian is one of the oldest spoken languages in the world and is the only modern representative of a distinct branch of the Indo-European family of languages.

The second section of the guidebook gives a chronological history of Albania from 3000 B.C. to 1992 A.D. It covers approximately 5000 years. This section runs for seven pages and presents seventy of the main dates of Albanian history with a brief description of the reasons for their importance. The authors state that "Albanians are direct descendants of the Illyrians, an ancient Indo-European people whose culture flourished long before that of Rome or Athens". This shows that the Albanian people and culture are of crucial importance for understanding European and world history. Naturally the authors emphasize the momentous fifteenth century A.D. and also the events in the twentieth century surrounding Albania's independence and its difficult road toward freedom and democracy.

The section entitled "The People" describes the differences between Gegs and Tosks and the main characteristics of each group. At the same time the difficulties which these peoples experienced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in coming to international recognition of an independent Albanian national state are enumerated. The role of United States President Woodrow Wilson and Pope Benedict XV in securing Albania's independence is understood. The authors do not fail to mention that there are over three million Albanians in their ancestral homelands of Kosova,

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Macedonia and Montenegro, and that there are over one million Albanians in the Chameria region of Greece.

At this point Gjelaj and Ivezaj speak of the Albanians in Detroit, stating that the first Albanians arrived in the Detroit area in the late 1800's. Most of them came to America for economic reasons while some came to avoid political, religious and ethnic discrimination in Albania, Yugoslavia and Greece. Since 1945 Albanians have come in even greater numbers to America, most of them as political refugees from the Stalinist regime of Enver Hoxha. Altogether the authors estimate that there are more than 40,000 Albanians in the Metro Detroit area, 65% of whom come from Montenegro, especially from Malesia (Malësia e Madhe e Mbi Shkodërs) a region of Northern Albania given by the great powers to the former Yugoslavia by a treaty following the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and reaffirmed by the Versailles Treaty following World War I. 18% of the Albanians in the Detroit area come from Kosova and 17% directly from Albania. Many of these arrived as laborers but rapidly became self-employed businessmen, often as owners of restaurants because of their human gifts developed in Albania of hospitality and welcome toward all. Their children have become university graduates and have pursued professional careers. Albanians are now residing in many suburban communities as well as in the city of Detroit.

A whole chapter is devoted to Gjergj Kastrioti—Skanderbeg, Albania's national hero, his life and place in the national affection and history. The titles bestowed on Skanderbeg by three Popes—"Savior of Christendom", "Champion of Christendom", and "Athlete of Christ" are enumerated and the legend of the origin of Skanderbeg's goat-head helmet is related.

The authors discuss various elements of the Albanian language and its principal dialects, Geg and Tosk, pointing out the controversy surrounding the imposition of the Unified Albanian Language by the Communists. A very helpful history of Albanian literature and the main Albanian authors is provided. The early Albanian authors were mainly religious writers—the earliest known sample of Albanian literature is a baptismal formula translated by the Cardinal Archbishop of Durrës, Pal Engjulli. Ivezaj and Gjelaj call attention to the importance of the 19th century Albanian-Italian writers (Arbëresh) such as Jeronim de Rada and Demetrio Camarda. During the Renaissance of Albanian literature (mid 1800's to 1912) Albanian writing began to flourish in the works of Naim Frasheri, Faik Konitza and Ndre Mjeda. The importance of works by Fr. Gjergj Fishta, Albania's National poet, and Bishop Fan Noli in pre-World War II Albania is emphasized. Contemporary authors noted include Ernest Koliqi, Martin Camaj, Arshi Pipa, Ismail Kadare, Rexhep Qosja and others.

In several sections one finds practical information on the Albanian language. There is a pronunciation key to the thirty-six letters of the Albanian alphabet and also the script of each letter is reproduced. A glossary of important phrases in Albanian and English translation is provided with their phonetic pronunciation. There is a list of common vocabulary words, e.g. Albanian foods, days of the week, months of the year and the Albanian way of telling time.

Gjelaj and Ivezaj emphasize the importance of the cultural characteristic/value "besa" (given word). The authors describe besa as characterizing "three interdependent components (of) Albanian life: honor, valor and hospitality". The students who hear of these virtues in their classrooms will certainly edified and inspired to become honorable citizens. Other cultural characteristics of the Albanian people are defined including "ndera" and "burrnia", and "the three greatest values—God, Family and Homeland". The practical nature of Albanian hospitality to all is expressed in the traditional saying "Bukë e kripë e Zemër të Bardhe" (Bread, salt and a kind heart). It is said that "the home of an Albanian is the house of the guest". A recent visitor to an Albanian mountain village, a Jesuit missionary, found that this noble virtue of hospitality is indeed alive and well in present-day Albania.

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Among other topics discussed are Albanian marriage customs and the history and importance of religion in Albanian culture. The basic beliefs and holidays of Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims are described and the authors note that there have always existed good relations between the followers of the various religions in Albania. The uprising of the Albanians in Malësia on March 24, 1911 against Turkish oppression is described and the raising of the Albanian flag for the first time in four centuries. The story of Albania's national day of independence, November 28, 1912 is related and the origin and significance of Albania's flag. A list of famous Albanians is given. It may surprise some students to learn that Alexander the Great, Constantine the Great, and St. Jerome were all Albanians. Famous Albanians in America include Fan Noli, John and Jim Belushi, Bill Kovach, Msgr. Zef Oroshi and Baba Rexhepi. Fittingly Ivezaj and Gjelaj devote a whole chapter to the most famous and beloved Albanian in the world—Mother Teresa. They emphasize her love for the poor, sick and needy, and the missionary work done by herself and her sisters as Catholic religious throughout the world. There are several photos of Mother Teresa as well, showing her receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and together in Boston with Albanians of the Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim faiths. A newsclipping is also reproduced which reported her being present in Albania in April, 1993 for the visit of Pope John Paul II.

A delightful feature of the guidebook is the section on Albanian folktales. Several folktales about Nastradin Hoxha are reproduced and are sure to be entertaining to the students. No less entertaining is an exciting Albanian legend about Gjergj Elez Alia, one of the most popular figures in Albanian folklore.

Ivezaj and Gjelaj are to be highly commended for their work which has already become a handy reference for many educators and journalists who need to know about Albania and its people. Thanks are due to Drs. Snead and Valbuena of the Detroit Public Schools for their encouragement and support for this project. The guidebook will have a beneficial effect on the teaching of Albanian culture not only in the Detroit schools but wherever there are students of Albanian descent.

Raymond FROST

SOME REMARKS ABOUT THE PUBLIC PORTRAYAL OF THE ALBANIANS

Alex N. Dragnich, *Serbs and Croats: The Struggle in Yugoslavia*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1992. 202 pages. Soft cover.

Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. 308 pages. Photographs. Soft cover.

Anthony Daniels, *Utopias Elsewhere: Journeys in a Vanishing World (North Korea, Cuba, Albania, Romania, Vietnam)*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991. 202 pages. Hardbound.

Eric Silver, *The Book of the Just: The Unsung Heroes Who Rescued Jews from Hitler*. New York: Grove Press, 1992. 176 pages. Photographs. Hardbound.

The four books under review all deal with the Albanians in one way or another, even though the Land of the Eagle is not the exclusive focus of the authors' attention. This means that the Albanians are shown in a broader historical-geographical context and in their interrelationships with other nations. Also, since each of the works describes several nations, the targeted readership (predominantly American) is much larger than it would be if the books described the Albanians only. Therefore these books have a stronger potential for influencing the public image of the Albanians.

Each of the four books raises - from different perspectives - questions of ethical responsibility of the authors.

Dragnich's continued "Saga of Kosovo:" Hatred of the Albanians

Nine years ago the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* published a critical review of Alex N. Dragnich and Slavko Todorovich's *The Saga of Kosovo - Focus on Serbian-Albanian Relations*. At that time the *Bulletin* critics asked a rhetorical question: Are the Serbian authors of *The Saga of Kosovo*

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ignorant of historical facts? Immediately after that the *Bulletin*'s critics offered the self-evident answer:

Not likely. A more likely hypothesis is that those facts are filtered into the mind of the Serbs or Serbophiles in such a way that they are distorted or dismissed altogether in favor of some trivial data that are derogatory to the Albanians...[1]

Although Dragnich's attention in his recently published book *Serbs and Croats* (1992) is focused on the Serbian-Croatian relationships, he continues - alongside his main points - his anti-Albanian *Saga*. And this is nothing new. As American Professor Kemal H. Karpat correctly notes, "Like many myths, Kosovo has been used for political purposes ever since the story of the [1389] battle was revived by the Serbs in the nineteenth century."[2] The 1389 Serbian military defeat by the Turkish army has served as the point of departure for Great Serbian ideologues. Karpat explains:

In 1815 Kosovo was not part of Serbia and did not become so until 1912. However, Kosovo lies exactly in the only possible direction for expansion of the fledging [Serbian] principality which was still formally under Ottoman suzerainty until 1878. Kosovo was inhabited mostly by Albanian Muslims; because of their faith it was easy to treat the old battle of Kosovo as a struggle for Christendom and to transform the Serbs into the saviors of Europe, to establish Kosovo as the target of Serbian "reconquest." Serbia come to regard itself almost as divinely empowered to take Kosovo and then to serbianize its population by disposing somehow of its overwhelming (90% as of 1992) Muslim Albanian population.[3]

Dragnich confirms the correctness of Karpat's words:

"The holy ground of Kosovo was not regained until the Balkan Wars of 1912. During the intervening centuries, many Serbs fled Kosovo to escape enslavement, while the Turks sent in more and more Islamicized Albanians, who engaged in massive persecutions of Serbs, which today would be called genocide, and which were reported in detail by consuls of the European powers. These persecutions were particularly odious in the nineteenth century. The net result was a sharp increase in the percentage of Albanians in Kosovo. The high birthrate among Muslim Albanians also contributed to that increase." (*Serbs and Croats*, p. 162)

Here Dragnich uses a well-established propaganda technique in Serbia portraying their real or imagined enemies. In 1993, American journalist Roy Gutman was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his reportage on Serbian ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. In an introductory note to his book, *A Witness To Genocide*, Gutman correctly observes, "The best guide to what the *Serbs* were doing came from their own propaganda."[4] He gives this example:

At the headquarters in Banja Luka, Major Milovan Milutinovic sat behind a portable typewriter churning out lurid diatribes. "Under such a hot, Balkanic sky," began one tract, "necklaces have been strung of human eyes and ears, skulls have been halved, brains have been split, bowels have been torn out, human spits [?] and children's bodies have been pierced by bayonets, once again have become a part of Serbian people's enemies' folklore." The document was titled "Lying [sic] Violent hands on the Serbian Woman," and its main allegation was that Muslims and Croats were committing genocide against the Serbs. I viewed the propaganda as a coded message for the [Serbian] army and the paramilitary bands operating under loose army supervision. It was a green light for atrocities.[5]

The same pattern appears in Dragnich's book, whose primarily purpose seems to be psycho-propagandistic. See for example, Dragnich's description of alleged Albanian crimes against the Serbs, "which today would be called genocide" (*Serbs and Croats*, p. 162). To analyze the propaganda technique, one must separate Dragnich's statements point by point. He writes:

The Kosovo Albanians lost no time in seeking to make of Kosovo an ethnically pure area [1]. To that end, they engaged in continual and brutal

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persecution of the Serbs [2]: They raped and pillaged; desecrated Serbian religious institutions, including cemeteries [3]; set Serbian barns and hay-stacks on fire [4]; cut timber on Serbian lands, and constructed buildings on Serbian property [5]. The purpose, of course, was to force Serbs to flee, and they did so in large numbers [6]." (*Serbs and Croats*, p. 163)

It seems that Dragnich - like Major Milovan Milutinovic - is actually summarizing Serbian criminal acts committed against their enemies. The sequence of persecutions echoes the famous Great Serbian political program, "Deportation of the Albanians," written by Vasa Cubrilovic in 1937. According to Cfiubrilovic, Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia could achieve political stability through two parallel processes: Serbian colonization of lands with non-Serbian population and expulsion of some nationalities from the country. The Serbian Academician saw the Albanians as the most dangerous nationality. He proposed that they be deported to Albania and Turkey. Note Cubrilovic's proposed points of anti-Albanian action:

[1] In order to cause a massive emigration [of the Albanians] the first prerequisite is to generate fear.

[2] It is impossible to repulse the Albanians only by means of gradual colonization..., the only way and the only means to cope with them is the brutal force of organized state power in which we [the Serbs] have always been superior to them.

[3] When it comes to religious issues, the Albanians are very touchy, therefore they must be harassed on this score too. This can be achieved through ill-treatment of their clergy, the destruction of their cemeteries...

[4] There is one more means which Serbia used with great practical effect after 1878, secretly burning down Albanian villages and city quarters.

[5] The second prerequisite is the pressure of the state apparatus... Old deeds should be rejected, land registry should be stopped, but all the taxes as well as all public and private debts should be ruthlessly collected. The use of state and community pasture lands should be banned; all concessions, licenses for coffee houses, shops, and trades should be abolished; they should not be granted monopoly licenses and should be fired from state, private, and self-employment, etc. - thus the emigration can be accelerated.

[6] If Germany [under Hitler in the 1930's] can evict hundreds of thousands of Jews, if Russia [under Stalin] can transport millions of people from one part of the continent to another, then a few hundred thousand deported Albanians will not provoke a world war. The deciding bodies [government agencies with the proper jurisdiction] must know what they want in order to carry through with their plan and not worry about world opinion.[6]

Serbian forces acted in accord with the abovementioned points in Albanian-inhabited areas during the Balkan wars (1912-1913). During these wars of expansion, Serbian soldiers committed horrible crimes against several nationalities, including Albanians. The 1914 *Report of the International Commission To Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* cites a letter written by a Serbian soldier who was a witness to Serbian crimes against Albanians.

"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 Liouma (an Albanian region along the river of the same name) 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 to 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 Prisrend [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

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horrible and so heartrending that we prefer not to publish them."[7]

Other independent sources corroborate such eyewitness accounts.[8] During the Balkan wars mass rape was so feared that, for instance, "four women went mad from fear in their flight from Kavadartsi and two of them are said to have killed their own children, lest they should fall into the hands of the Servians [*sic*]."[9]

M. Edith Durham, an English war correspondent, describes some of "even more appalling" things in her book *The Struggle for Scutary*. Durham mentions explicitly the main war goal of Albania's Slavic neighbors: "The destruction of the whole Albanian race was the avowed intention of both Serb and Montenegrin."[10]

Durham saw with her own eyes mutilated bodies, cut off ears, noses, and upper lips - crimes committed by Montenegrin as well as Serbian soldiers.[11] This bestiality was applied even to Christian icons: "The desire of the Orthodox Montenegrins to stamp out not only Mohammedanism, but Catholicism, was shown by cutting off the noses of images of the saints, and by using a crucifix as a mark to fire at, throwing down the Host from the altar, and similar outrages in more than one church, and made the Catholic Maltsors [Albanian Malisors] furious."[12] Durham, who helped wounded Montenegrin soldiers, portrays in detail the Serbian and Montenegrin irrational hatred of the Albanians. In this context her conversations with Montenegrin and Serbian soldiers may be of special interest. In a dialog between reason and irrationality sometimes the former wins, sometimes the latter. Let us consider first a dialog before the Montenegrin attack on Shkodër.

A youth in officer's uniform sat next to me one day at table, and boasted that in two years no one would dare to speak Albanian in Scutari. I pointed out that the Albanians had been under the Romans, the Byzantine Empire, the Bulgars, the Serbs, and the Turks, and still spoke their own language. 'Do you suppose,' I asked, 'that in two years Montenegro can effect what all these have failed to do in over a thousand years?' He could not reply. But someone else said that if Europe would give Montenegro a large piece of Albania, they would soon settle down the Albanian question by destroying every Albanian in it."[13]

Logically, only living Albanians can speak Albanian; the intention of the quoted "someone else" is not to ban the language but to annihilate its speakers. In another conversation Durham, who spoke Serbian, brilliantly exposes the absurdity of Serbian anti-Albanian propaganda.

"Some [Serbs] even declared that no such things as Albanians existed. All were Slavs, who out of 'pure cussedness' had elected to speak Albanian and turned Catholic! Kovachevitch the Professor of Nose-cutting declared to an admiring audience that he could prove it by anthropological reasons. 'The Albanians,' said he, 'burn the yule-log. This is purely Servian custom, therefore,' etc. 'On the contrary,' said I, 'the yule-log is an old English custom. And your favourite St. George is our patron Saint. It is evident we have the right to occupy Cettigne [Cetinë], shut your schools, and force you all to speak English. You are clearly Slavized English.' The Professor, who with his friends had agreed that 'if our rule is strict enough, the Albanian tongue will be killed in a year,' was speechless with wrath."[14]

During World War II as well, various Serbian quisling military formations committed war crimes against Albanian civilians. Three main Serbian pro-Nazi formations - the Serbian Volunteer Corps of fascist Dimitrije Ljotic and the Serbian State Guard detachments of Milan Nedic as well as Draza Mihailovic's pro-monarchist Chetniks - all advocated plans for creating an ethnically cleansed Great Serbia within Hitler's New European Order. Of course, the planned Great Serbia encompassed not only Kosovë and Albanian-inhabited areas of Macedonia and Montenegro, but also northern Albania with Shkodër which should belong to Montenegro."[15] On November 16, 1941, a politically important meeting was held in Nis. The participants in the meeting - Dr. Georg Kiessel, German high officer in Serbia, Milan Acimovic, representative of Milan Nedic's Serbian quisling

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government, Chetnik Duke and Nazi collaborator Kosta Pecanac, and Ali Draga, representative of the Albanian nationality of Kosovë - discussed several political-military issues, including "crimes committed by Kosta Pecanac's Chetniks against the inhabitants of Albanian nationality in Kosovë."[16] The meeting was without results.

These *facts*, among others, are omitted in Dragnich's book.

Kaplan's pro-Serbian portrayal of the Albanians

The author of *Balkan Ghosts*, Robert D. Kaplan, is a prominent American journalist who contributes to *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Republic*, and other publications. Kaplan covers mainly Middle East countries.

The Summer 1993 issue of *The National Interest* published a six-page scholarly review of Kaplan's book. The reviewer Noel Malcolm, former Foreign Editor of the London *Spectator* who now writes for the London *Daily Telegraph*, notes that Kaplan is "extraordinarily dependent on Serb nationalist sources" and that he "construct[s] a web of association between ethnic Albanians [of Kosovë], modern Turks, Ottoman Turks, Islam, primitive behavior, and dirt - a characteristically Serbian pattern of association."[17]

Kaplan tried to offer a reply to Malcolm's strongly negative criticism in the next issue of *The National Interest*. However, Kaplan displayed mainly his own ignorance of the matters Malcolm referred to. The depth of Kaplan's knowledge of the Albanians may be demonstrated by his interesting conclusion that "Albanians, of all Balkan peoples, identify with Turks."[18] Malcolm answered that he criticized *Balkan Ghosts* - among other things - because what Kaplan "wr[o]te about the Kosovo Albanians was in agreement with modern Serb hatred, since it ignored the history of the Serb treatment of the Albanians throughout this century and seemed to imply that the very presence of Albanians in Kosovo was a crime."[19]

Nevertheless, Kaplan's response offers an interesting argument. He points out that "*Balkan Ghosts* is in its seventh hardcover print run."[20] His words are supported by *The New York Times Book Review*'s praise of *Balkan Ghosts*:

"In this analysis [*Balkan Ghosts*], chosen one of the best books of 1993 by the editors of the Book Review, he [Kaplan] explains the politics of the former [Yugoslav] nation and its neighbors Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania. Our reviewer, Istvan Deak, said, "Mr. Kaplan demonstrates his literary powers at their fullest."[21]

However, another detailed review of Kaplan's "literary" work is devastating in its criticism. American Professor Henry R. Cooper, Jr. begins his review of *Balkan Ghosts* with the following words:

"Perhaps the worst thing that can happen to a journalist is to wind up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Such apparently was the case with Robert D. Kaplan, who happened to be in the Balkans in the 1980s, just before anything really exciting was happening. Undaunted by this, and unintimidated by his ignorance of local languages and history, he has cobbled together *Balkan Ghosts*, a dreadful mix of unfounded generalizations, misinformation, outdated sources, personal prejudices and bad writing."[22]

Cooper writes that "repeatedly [Kaplan] compounds his errors of judgment with errors of fact."[23] In the last paragraph Professor Cooper warns the reader:

"*Balkan Ghosts* is deceptive, for it portrays itself as a lively account of the contemporary Balkans, based on history and first-hand experience. In fact it is a distasteful mix of tired clichés, undigested or incorrect historical fact, and personal bias. Let the reader beware."[24]

How to explain the fact that, as a book of this quality, *Balkan Ghosts* is "in its seventh hardcover" edition? There are several possible reasons. First, Kaplan has had the good luck of completing a book on one of the hottest current political regions just as public interest was fanned by news coverage of the "Balkan" tragedy. Second, he describes what appears in the West as a highly "exotic" topic. Finally, Kaplan's writings may at-

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tract the attention of some readers through his obsession with blood, death, bizarre details and even apocalyptic visions of the modern world.[25] Malcolm, noting this tendency, concludes that the purpose of Kaplan's book is "to conjure up a ghoulish world of mysticism and murder, of irrational, superstitious hatred."[26]

Kaplan's book demonstrates deep anti-Catholic feelings. Professor Cooper notes, for example, that Kaplan's "treatment of the Croatian Cardinal Stepinac, not to mention Roman Catholicism or Christianity in general, is so unfair and contemptuous that I am amazed it was printed."[27] It is useful to look at some of the sources Kaplan relies on in his judgments.

"The Catholic Church here [in Croatia] has never searched its soul. The young priests are now uneducated. Only when educated young men are attracted to the priesthood can pressure mount from below for the Church to look seriously at its own past and at [Cardinal] Stepinac," explained Zarko Puhovski, a Croatian Catholic and liberal politician, over a plum brandy at the Esplanade bar [in Zagreb]. (*Balkan Ghosts*, p. 20)[28]

Here Kaplan directly misinforms the readers, though perhaps he is only repeating what he has been told. Zarko Puhovski is not a Catholic but an atheist; he is not a "liberal politician," but a Professor of Marxism and Political Philosophy at Zagreb University.[29] In a 1984 interview in a Belgrade magazine, Puhovski declared that "Yugoslavia had become a fictional state" and that the Yugoslav People's Army was the only guarantor of the existence of socialist Yugoslavia.[30] Puhovski made a successful career in Serb-dominated Yugoslavia and has often aired anti-Albanian statements. In a 1987 interview in another Serbian magazine, Puhovski stated that if human rights in general were respected, then the "threatened Serbs and Montenegrins" in Kosovë would be protected as well.[31] The Serbs and Montenegrins are being "expelled" from Kosovë, declared Puhovski, and any discussion about "whether the Serbs and Montenegrins are nationalists is, in my opinion, especially perverse."[32]

Kaplan's description of the Albanians represents a case-study of propaganda promoted by a Serbophile. Kaplan maintains that, "at its very best, travel writing should be a technique to explore history, art, and politics in the liveliest fashion possible" (p. ix). Kaplan successfully imitates "Dame Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*," which is, in his own words, one of "the best examples of this that I can think of" (p. ix). Kaplan confesses to his reader that "*Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* drew me to Yugoslavia" (p. 8). What he neglects to say about Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*[33] is that it can also be described as a "polemical pro-Serbian travel diary."[34]

Using predominantly pro-Serbian sources that misrepresent Albanians as Muslim only, Kaplan cannot know that there are Albanians of Catholic faith and that the Albanians he saw in Zagreb (p. 41) might be Catholic. Catholic mass has been celebrated in Albanian, in a church on Frankopanska Street in the Croatian capital.

In "Old Serbia," Kaplan describes seeing "a luxuriant eastern carpet" (p. 30). This is so in the eastern part of the former Yugoslavia. However, in the west, in Croatia, in the house of Monsignor Djuro Koksa, "next to the Cardinal of Zagreb," Kaplan sees "typical Balkan carpets" (p. 14). In this context, the adjective *Balkan* has explicitly negative connotations. In Kaplan's system of values, the Balkans is so negative that he arrives to the original conclusion that "Nazism, for instance, can claim Balkan origins" (p. xxii). This is how Kaplan elaborates the Balkan origins of Nazism: "Among the flophouses of Vienna, a breeding ground of ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously" (p. xxiii)!

If "Nazism can claim Balkan origins," then one may suppose that the Balkan nations were originally Nazi or at least pro-Nazi. According to Kaplan, during World War II the Balkan Nazi collaborators were Croats (p. 6), Bulgarians (p. 66), Hungarians (p. 87), Rumanians (p. 95)... Kaplan does not forget to mention that Serbs killed many Albanians using the "collaboration issue" as a pre-

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text: "Tito's Serbian partisans were murdering large numbers of Kossovo's [Kaplan's orthography!] ethnic Albanians, whom they accused of having collaborated with Mussolini's Italian troops" (p. 45). What Kaplan does forget to mention is the strong Albanian resistance movement. Other pro-Serbian advocates, even some of the most ardent, nonetheless mention the Albanian resistance; one of them is Michael Lees, British liaison officer to the Chetniks near Leskovac, Serbia, in 1943 and 1944. Lee's pro-Chetnik stance originates in his gratitude to the Chetniks because they did not kill him, as they slaughtered - before his eyes - three Croats.[35] Lees nonetheless testifies that

"The Serbs were inclined to be hostile to the Arnautis [the Albanians of Kosovë], and I was not at all clear where the ethnic Albanians fitted into the picture. But I was certain that the group was genuine in wanting to form a resistance movement."[36]

The presence of Kosovar and Macedonian Albanians in Josip Broz Tito's communist-led partisan resistance in Fall 1943 "caused resentment among the Serbs, who considered internal politics their own affair and not that of Muslim 'invaders.'"[37] Although the Albanians participated in Tito's movement, Lees thought that "the Arnauti peasant would be even less sympathetic to communist propaganda than the Serb peasant."[38] Lees summarizes the main goal of the Albanians during the war:

"What the Arnautis and Albanians wanted was contact with the Western Allies and a drop [of war material] to demonstrate that they were recognized; they were then prepared to gather together as large a group as we [the British] asked."[39]

Kaplan emphasizes that helpless Serbs were very often victimized by their pro-Nazi neighbors during World War II. Here Kaplan neglects two more facts. First, he does not mention the numerous Serbian quisling military formations in General Milan Nedic's pro-Nazi Serbia (1941-October 1944). It is a historical fact that Serbia had as great a variety of quisling formations as any other European country, and that - along with the Nazis - "the [Serbian] Special Police, Serbian State Guard, City Police, Ljotic's [fascist] volunteers, the Chetniks of Kosta Pecanac and others, sent the greatest number of inhabitants of Serbia, arrested for different reasons, to specially organized concentration camps."[40] Second, Kaplan does not mention that Serbian pro-Nazi formations - both in Nedic's Serbia and in neighboring regions - committed acts of genocide against Jews, Muslims, Albanians, Croats, Gypsies, and others.[41]

In his review of *Balkan Ghosts*, Henry Cooper cites Kaplan's factual errors concerning the former Yugoslavia, Greece, Rumania, and Bulgaria; a good example is Kaplan's misrepresentation of the Albanians. On the "Map of the Balkans" (p. xiii) Kaplan presents Kosovë as having no border with Montenegro. Instead, it makes up a unified territory with Montenegro. In complete accord with many Serbian-made maps, the Croatian city of Dubrovnik is also placed in Montenegro. Also in keeping with Serbian oral tradition, Kaplan spells Albanian names as they are mispronounced by Serbs (e.g., "Azen Vlasi" instead of the correct Azem Vllasi, pp. 34, 47). For Kaplan as well as the Serbs, Kosovë is "Old Serbia" and "the 'Judea and Samaria' of the Serbian national consciousness" (p. 35). Kaplan discovers that the medieval Serbian state of Stefan Dusan encompassed even Bosnia-Herzegovina! Kaplan writes that, in this century,

[Serbian political] defeat even has a name: Prishtina, the Tito-built, Albanian-dominated, slum capital of "autonomous" Kossovo, situated, as though as a deliberate insult, midway between the two Serbian crowd symbols of Grachanitsa and Kossovo Polje. To travel from one to the other, you must pass through Prishtina. (p. 40)

Kaplan quotes Ismail, an Albanian, who says that during World War II Serbian Chetniks threw Albanian children in the air and caught them on knives in front of the children's mothers. "Ismail shuddered. 'There are things that are beyond evil that you just can't speak about'" (p. xvii). Kaplan interviews twice in Ismail's story. When Ismail mentions the Chetniks, Kaplan misinforms

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his readers that the Serbian Chetniks were "World War II Serbian partisans." True, some of Chetniks - like *Tito's partisans* - were guerrilla fighters. However, "By order of Draza Mihailovic of November 30, 1941, Chetnik detachments in Serbia for the most part were legalized by the [German] occupiers,"[42] and these "legal" Chetniks fought *against* Tito's partisans.

As if to question the truthfulness of Ismail's story, Kaplan comments: "Ismail was only twenty-six; he had no personal knowledge of the events he described" (p. xvii). However, when Serbs describe alleged Albanian misdeeds, Kaplan does not challenge the Serbs' age or "personal knowledge" of the events they described (p. 45).

Any doubt about Kaplan's pro-Serbian position is dispelled by Kaplan himself: "My coverage of Albania is folded into the chapter on 'Old Serbia'..." (p. x)

Kaplan cites a Serb from Belgrade who says that "Rankovich was right, he knew how to control these people [the Albanians]" (p. 47). In a footnote Kaplan explains, "Until his fall from power in 1964, Aleksandar-Leka Rankovich, a Serb, was Tito's feared head of the secret police" (p. 47). Rankovic, who persecuted hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavia's Albanians, fell from power in 1966, not 1964.[43] But, for Kaplan, facts are not important since he - like Rebecca West - is writing with "his *literary* powers at their fullest."

An irritating Albania according to Daniels

The year of 1989 was a promising one: the "Iron Curtain" was lifted and East European countries were overthrowing their totalitarian regimes. Or, in Anthony Daniels's words, "the spectre of liberty was haunting Eastern Europe" ("Introduction," p. 1). Daniels was aware that he had to hurry "if ever [he] were to experience the full flavour of communist aristocracy" (p. 1). Daniels began his journey in April 1989 with Albania and ended it with Cuba in January 1990. *Utopias Elsewhere* is a book about everyday life in five communist countries (Albania, North Korea, Romania, Vietnam, and Cuba), seen through the eyes of another Western traveler.

Daniels's profession (psychiatry), his observations and fine sense of detail and, finally, his analysis of Marxist theory and practice give his work the depth and texture of an intelligence officer's report. What makes his book different from such a report is his own *changing* view of communist reality from one country to another as well as his troubling questions concerning *Western* civilization. In a word, *Utopias Elsewhere* is an excellent, thought-provoking book; a *chef-d'œuvre* of its genre. Keeping in mind this fact, it is unfortunate that Daniels's chapter devoted to Albania contains so much prejudice and misinformation about the Albanians. A possible explanation - although it is no justification - of Daniels's attitude towards Albania is the fact that he experienced the strongest cultural and political shock in the first communist country he visited. Coincidentally, this was Albania.

The first chapter of *Utopias Elsewhere*, entitled simply "Albania," is probably the most controversial part of Daniels's book. He begins the chapter with the following sentence: "Where religion is compulsory, I am an atheist; but where religion is forbidden, I am a believer" (p. 3). This statement suggests Daniels's opposition to any kind of repression, but at the same time it reveals the fact that he may tend to act less in accord with any inner belief than in opposition to external factors. Opposing the official imposition of atheism in Albania (beginning in 1967), Daniels wore in Tiranë a sweatshirt with a "religious" message.

"I arrived in Tirana one morning in spring, 1989, wearing my protest against such intolerance. It was a sweatshirt with a picture on the chest of a toucan sitting amidst tropical foliage. Above the picture were the words *South American Handbook*; below it, the Spanish words *Vaya con Dios*, Go with God. In the circumstances, the sweatshirt might have been considered subversive, an attempt at religious propaganda. "(p. 3)

However, Daniels consciously chose a safe kind of "protest," with a non-religious picture and a

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message in a language that is virtually unknown in Albania. He admits that "no one at the airport [in Tiranë] understood Spanish" (p. 3), so his "protest" was probably for soothing his own conscience. Or was it perhaps an indication to his readers of the traveler's courage?

Almost everything Albania-related caused Daniels irritation. He was irritated by and cynical about the "leftist" and "upper-class" London-based Anglo-Albanian society (p. 5). Daniels was frustrated even by the silence in the Albanian capital: "It is the silence, interrupted only rarely by a distant rumble over the cobbles of an approaching vehicle, that disturbs" (p. 9). Interestingly enough, several months later, in another communist state, Vietnam, Daniels was to experience the "mystery" of silence: "At once an almost mystical tranquillity enveloped us: silence was the only way of expressing it. All too soon, we had to leave, but the moments of peace I shall always be able to recall." (p. 147)

At times Daniels seems more familiar with prejudices about the Albanians than with historical facts. When he writes that "Albanians were privileged within the Ottoman empire" and that "Albanian troops were used by the Turks to put down Greek rebellions" (p. 7), he in fact repeats Serbian and Greek propaganda statements that are well known to any historian of Southern Europe. The assertion that "the people Skanderbeg fought against were mainly Albanians" (p. 7) may be considered Daniels's "original" contribution to the history of Albania. Unfortunately, Daniels had not glanced at any respected source of information on Albania. If he had looked, for example, at *The Encyclopedia Americana*, he would learn that Skënderbeg fought successfully against the Turkish occupiers.[44] The fact is that, "For twenty-four years [1444-1468], Skënderbeg fought the Turkish army, twice led by the Sultans themselves."[45] Even the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* notes this fact.[46]

Daniels is completely right in his criticism of Albanian communists' misrepresentation of the past, but he himself makes a similar error in challenging the fact that Albania, "a tiny and backward nation" (p. 17), liberated itself at the end of World War II. Daniels does not explain who fought against the Italian and German occupiers if not the Albanian resistance (both nationalist and communist). While Daniels leaves this historical issue open, his general judgment about Albania's past is a closed case: Albania is "a country with an immemorial tradition of banditry" (p. 12). Here Daniels is in no way original. The Albanian freedom fighters were qualified as "bandits" by retreating Nazi occupiers in 1944.

Daniels correctly concludes that western-supported attempts at overthrowing Enver Hoxha "would have failed" even if Kim Philby had not revealed the plan to the Russians (p. 17).[47] Daniels's criticism of Hoxha's dictatorship is equally sound and based on facts. However, it seems that Daniels sometimes wrongly identifies Hoxha's tyranny with the whole Albanian people. Daniels mentions a "wild nationalism and xenophobia that has so completely isolated Albania from the rest of the world for nearly half a century" (p. 6). Albania was isolated by a state-security apparatus based on a particular kind of *internationalist* ideology (Marxism), not necessarily a nationalist one. The isolation was a result of failed attempts at creating international connections with other socialist countries (Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, China). Moreover, the Albanians are well known for their hospitality, and not for "xenophobia." Daniels continues:

Where does this insane xenophobia come from? After all, human behaviour has an explanation, if not a justification. And it isn't long before your guides in Albania (there are always two of them, one to watch the behaviour of the other) recite the list of invaders and occupiers of their country: Roman, Bulgarian, Serbian, Byzantine, Turkish, Italian, Austrian, French, German, and Anglo-American. Thus the Albanians have learnt the harsh lesson of history: unfortunately, the wrong one. (p. 6)

Unfortunately, Daniels does not elaborate *what* that "wrong" and "harsh" lesson of history is. Perhaps he maintains that suffering under a dictator

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of one's own nation is more demeaning than suffering under foreign dictators? Like Kaplan, Daniels is not interested in facts. He does *not* question the correctness of the statement concerning the numerous invaders of Albania. Instead, he uses that true statement to draw conclusions about the "wrong" lesson the Albanians have learned.

In contrast to his diatribe against Albanian "xenophobia," Daniels himself testifies that two Albanians in an outdoor Tiranë café invited him to sit at their table. Obviously the encounter was not planned in advance by the Albanian authorities. Daniels was confused because their act contradicted his image of the Albanians: "They were army conscripts on leave, and I was surprised that they showed no fear of speaking to me [in Italian]" (p. 11).

Not surprisingly, Daniels, a resident of democratic Great Britain, demonstrates a lack of deeper understanding of real life in a country of "real socialism."

I wondered what went on in Albanian minds behind those impassive, weatherbeaten peasant faces. Had lies become truth simply through repetition? Or did they not impinge on consciousness at all, acceptance of them having become part of every citizen's repertoire of automatic behaviour, like walking or climbing stairs? One cannot, after all, be angered by the same lies year after year. But what effect, if any, did passive acceptance of systematic untruth have on the human psyche? (p. 20)

Daniels poses an interesting question, but does not evidently bother to ask anyone who lived with the official lies of Communism how individuals dealt with such psychological pressure. Unfortunately, Daniels's travel records contribute little to an illumination of Albania and its reality.

The Albanians through the eyes of the threatened Jews

According to an up-to-date Jewish source, Jews lived in Albania - under Turkish rule - from 1478 to the establishment of independent Albania (1912). The Jewish community was granted official recognition on April 2, 1937.[48] The worst period for the Jews in Albania - as elsewhere in Europe - was during World War II.

Under Italian rule (1939-43) local Jews were unharmed, but Jewish refugees from Yugoslavia were deported to Belgrade and killed. Under German rule (1943-44), 300 Albanian Jews were imprisoned in Pristina and 400 deported to Bergen-Belsen, of whom only 100 survived. In 1945 there were approximately 400 Jews in Albania.[49]

The Book of the Just by Eric Silver[50] sheds some light on European individuals who testified to the light in a dark age. Silver records stories of people who rescued Jews from Hitlerites; the stories are told both by Jews saved and by their rescuers. In this record a honorable place belongs to the Albanians.

After the German occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941, Moshe Mandil, a photographer, fled with his wife, son and daughter from Novi Sad to the Italian occupation zone. About 150 Yugoslav Jews, including the Mandils, were gathered in Prishtinë, Kosovë. In March 1943, they were deported to the Albanian town of Kavajë. In Fall 1943, after Mussolini's capitulation, the Germans occupied Albania. Almost a half century later, in 1990, Moshe's son described the situation in Kavajë:

"Everyone knew we were Jewish Yugoslav refugees... There were five families of us living in the same house, each family in a single room. There were other Jewish families elsewhere in the town." (p. 109)

Feeling insecure in Kavajë, the Jews moved to Tiranë. Trying to find a job in the Albanian capital to feed his family, one day Moshe saw the sign of the studio "Photo Neshad." It turned out that the studio owner, Neshad, had previously been an assistant of Moshe's father-in-law, Gavra Confino, who had worked as photographer to the Serbian royal court.

Neshad offered Moshe space in his studio and invited the entire family into his home. Moshe adopted Neshad's seventeen-year-old assistant, an-

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For several months the Mandils resided in Neshad's house. Moshe took portraits of German officers while hiding under a black cloth. In the beginning of 1944, the Germans were informed that some Jews were hiding in the city and began house-to-house searches. One day Refik Veseli, who also lived in Neshad's house, answered a knock and saw Germans on the doorstep. Refik recalls that moment:

"I felt very shaky. The Jews not only looked different, they didn't speak our language. I said everyone here was Albanian. We could hear screams from the house opposite, where the Germans had seized a Jewish family." (p. 110)

Fortunately, Refik succeeded with his bluff that time, but all of them knew that it was too dangerous to remain in Tiranë any more. Refik consulted with his father, Vesel Veseli, and his older brother, Hamid, about what to do to help them. The family decided to bring them to Vesel Veseli's native townof Krujë. Refik remembers how and why the risky decision was made:

"How could we save them? The question whether we should save them never arose. The only question was how to get them to the village [of Krujë]. It was too dangerous by car, so we decided to go by donkey. Why did we take the risk? Our people had been underdogs for generations. All Albanians had been oppressed: by the Serbs, by the Austro-Hungarians, by the Turks, by the Italians, and now by the Germans. We were used to being under occupation. It was in our blood to help whoever suffered. Every child knew it was risky to help Jews, but help was a natural action. We saved only a few Jews. Others saved more." (p. 110)

Moshe Mandil asked to bring along another Jewish family, the Ben-Yosefs. Vesel agreed. The Veselis possessed a small holding, a few olive trees, and a couple of cows, but only enough for their family's own needs. Four Mandils and three Ben-Yosefs mixed with Vesel's extended family and shared a room over a cowshed. No neighbor knew about the presence of the Jews in the village. The adult Jews went outside the house to walk only at night. During the several months of their residence in the village, Albanian resistance forces captured Krujë twice and twice it was reoccupied by the Germans. During the first liberation of Krujë the adults broke cover.

They could walk and breathe by day as well as by night, but the neighbours started to ask questions. Vesel was indiscreet. Soon the whole village knew that he was hiding refugees. He assured his guests that they had nothing to worry about. "They won't get to you before they get to me," he told them. "If they get to you, it will be over my dead body." Forty-six years later, his son, Refik, told me [i.e., to Eric Silver], "We are very proud that in Albania no Jews were betrayed by Albanians. After the partisans invaded, all of Kruja knew that we were hiding Jews. When the Germans came back, nobody betrayed us. Some even came to warn us when the Germans were coming." (p. 111)

When the German recaptured Krujë the second time, Vesel took the two Jewish families back to Tiranë. They witnessed the house-to-house battle for liberation of the Albanian capital. Moshe's son describes those events:

"We ran from house to house, getting away from the Germans to the partisans. Refik fought in this battle. After seventeen days all was quiet. The streets were full of bodies and dead horses." (p. 111)

Early in 1945, Moshe's family went back to Novi Sad. Moshe invited Refik to complete his apprenticeship in the city, and Refik did so in 1946-1947. Silver ends this story with the following paragraph:

In December 1948, the Mandil family emigrated to Israel. Gavra, Moshe's son, took up photography. Although Albania became the most repressive of Communist societies, closed not only to Israel but also to almost the entire world, the two families kept in touch and exchanged photographs. Refik called his first grandson Ron, the same name as Gavra's son, his old teacher's grandson. In July 1990, Refik and his wife came to

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Israel to be honoured at Yad Vashem - and to attend Ron Mandil's wedding. (p. 112)

Silver's book is accompanied by several photographs of the Righteous Among Nations. One of the photographs - taken on the day of Liberation in Tiranë - shows Refik, Moshe, and Moshe's son Gavra "nursing a bottle of Chianti." Another photograph was taken outside of the village house where the Jews were hidden. The picture shows thirteen persons, including Vesel and Fatima Veseli, their children, and members of both of the Jewish families the Veselis hid. This photograph is also reproduced (with two others) on the cover of the book.

In Place of a Conclusion

The four books under review describe Albania and Albanians from four different viewpoints.

In the first work, Dragnich's, the Albanians are seen from a clearly Great-Serbian perspective. Although Dragnich's book deals primarily with Serbian-Croatian controversies, his "incidental" portrayal of the Albanians has the political purpose of justifying the current Serbian oppression of the Albanians of Kosovë.

Kaplan's description of the Albanians relies primarily on Serbian propaganda sources. Kaplan's pro-Serbian position is so obvious that he himself finds necessary to deny it in his Preface: "nothing I write should be taken as a justification, however mild, for the war crimes committed by ethnic Serb troops in Bosnia, which I heartily condemn" (p. x). Kaplan's condemnation is not convincing enough. He condemns war crimes committed by "ethnic Serb troops" but not those committed by the other major perpetrators - Serbian forces from Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia. Kaplan condemns Serbian crimes in Bosnia but not in Kosovë, Sandzak, and Croatia.

Daniels's portrayal of Albania is based on an officially-supervised two-week tourist trip through the country. Daniels himself is completely aware of the insufficiency of his insights and conclusions: "My visits [to the communist countries] were short and hence my experience of each country, however intense, was necessarily limited." It turns out that the Albanian-related segments of Daniels's book, like Dragnich's and Kaplan's, speak more about the author than about the Albanians.

Eric Silver allows the Albanians and those who lived with them during the worst times to speak for themselves, with their own words, and the result militates against the negative opinions expressed by other authors. Only by giving the reader access to authentic facts of individual lives in this way does an author provide what the reader needs to come to his or her own conclusions about the Albanians.

Anto KNEZEVIC

NOTES

1 "An Exposition in Twenty-One Questions and Answers," *The Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. VI (1985), p. 77.

2 See Kemal H. Karpat's review of the *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle*. Eds. Wayne S. Vucinich and Thomas A. Emmert (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), published in the *Slavic Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2, Summer 1993, pp. 383-384.

3 Ibid., p. 384. It is interesting to note that the same pretext of a "struggle for Christendom" is being used by Albania's other neighbor, Greece, in its plans for territorial expansion. Several newspapers recently published news of a brewing conflict between Greece and Albania. "On the morning of April 10 [1994], a 'Northern Epirus Liberation Front' spokesman in Athens claimed responsibility for an attack early that same morning on an Albanian barracks which left an Albanian officer and a soldier dead. The Albanians claimed that six or seven men in Greek military uniform burst into the army training centre, shot up the sleeping draftees and fled back over the border into Greece ... The first floor of the house where Radio Drynoupolis's studios are located have been turned into dormitories for 40 young 'students' (men and women [members of the Greek minority from Albania]). Once they complete their training, they go back [from Greece] to northern Epirus to fight for Hellenism and prevent Islam taking over this country.'" "Greeks and Albanians square up in the Balkans," *Guardian Weekly*, April 24, 1994, p. 13. The article was first published in the Paris daily *Le Monde* of April 14, 1994.

4 Roy Gutman, *A Witness To Genocide: The 1993 Pulitzer Prize-Winning Dispatches on the "Ethnic Cleansing" of Bosnia*

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(New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), p. ix. Italics are added.

5 R. Gutman, *A Witness To Genocide*, pp. ix-x.

6 Cfiubrilovic's lecture, entitled "Deportation of the Albanians," was presented in the Serbian Cultural Club on March 7, 1937. The author of the expulsion program, Vasa Cfiubrilovic (1897-1990), was a member of the terrorist group "Young Bosnia," which carried out the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, the event that provoked World War I. The text of "Deportation of the Albanians" is (or was) deposited in the Military Historical Institute of the Yugoslav People's Army in Belgrade (Archive of the Royal Yugoslav Army, No. 2, Fasc. 4, Box 69). The text is cited from *Izvori velikosrpske agresije*. Edited by Boze Cfiovic (Zagreb: August Cesarec and Sfikolska knjiga, 1991), pp. 106-123. I separate Cfiubrilovic's statements point by point. The order of his statements and the text in brackets are mine.

7 *Report of the International Commission To Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914), p. 149. (In 1993, the Carnegie Endowment reprinted the book under the title *The Other Balkan Wars: A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflections on the Present Conflict by George F. Kennan*, with a Preface by Morton Abramowitz.)

8 A well-known war correspondent gives this testimony by a Serbian eyewitness: "I had the opportunity - whether fortunate or unfortunate, it's difficult to say - while the war was still on, to visit Skoplje [Skopje or Shkup, the capital of today's Macedonia] just a few days after the battle of Kumanovo. The horrors actually began as soon as we crossed the old frontier. By five p.m. we were approaching Kumanovo. The sun had set. But the darker the sky became, the more brightly the fearful illumination of the fires stood out against it. Burning was going on all around us. Entire Albanian villages had been turned into pillars of fire... In the town, or more precisely in the streets, everything was quiet as though the place had been deserted... But with the coming of the night the *komitadjis* began their work. They broke into Turkish and Albanian houses and performed there the same task in every case: plundering and killing. Skoplje had 60,000 residents, of whom half were Albanians and Turks. Some of them, to be sure, had fled, but the overwhelming majority remained. And now, by night, reprisals were being carried out against them. For two days before my arrival in Skoplje the inhabitants had woken up in the morning to the sight, under the principal bridge over the Vardar [river] - that is, in the very center of the town - of heaps of Albanian corpses with severed heads. Some said that these were local Albanians killed by the *komitadjis*, others that the corpses had been brought down to the bridge by the waters of the Vardar. What was clear was that these headless men had not been killed in battle." (Leon Trotsky, *The Balkan Wars 1912-13* (New York: Monad Press, 1980), pp. 266-268.) Another war correspondent identifies the perpetrators as "Servian Comitadjis." [M. Edith Durham, *The Struggle for Scutary* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914), p. 175.]

9 *Report of the International Commission To Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, p. 317.

10 M. E. Durham, *The Struggle for Scutary*, p. 239.

11 M. E. Durham, *The Struggle for Scutary*, pp. 185, 237, 238.

12 M. E. Durham, *The Struggle for Scutary*, p. 247.

13 M. E. Durham, *The Struggle for Scutary*, pp. 251-252.

14 M. E. Durham, *The Struggle for Scutary*, p. 267.

15 Milan Borkovic, *Milan Nedic* (Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1985), p. 276.

16 M. Borkovic, *Milan Nedic*, p. 295.

17 Noel Malcolm, "Seeing Ghosts," pp. 83-88; the quoted segments on p. 87.

18 R. Kaplan, "Balkan Ghosts," Letters, *The National Interest*, No. 33, Fall 1993, p. 110.

19 N. Malcolm, "Balkan Ghosts," Letters, *The National Interest*, p. 110.

20 R. Kaplan, "Balkan Ghosts," p. 110.

21 "New & Noteworthy Paperbacks," *The New York Times Book Review*, March 27, 1994, p. 24.

22 See Henry R. Cooper's review of *The Balkan Ghosts* in the *Slavic Review*, Vol. 52, No. 3, Fall 1993, p. 592.

23 Cooper, p. 593.

24 Cooper, p. 593.

25 See, as another instance, Kaplan's essay, "The Coming Anarchy: How scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 273, No. 2, February 1994, pp. 44-76.

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[26] N. Malcolm, "Seeing Ghosts," p. 84.

[27] Henry R. Cooper's review, *Slavic Review*, p. 592.

[28] A documented account of Cardinal Stepinac's religious and political activity from a different perspective than Kaplan's can be found in M. Landercy's book *Le Cardinal Stepinac: martyr des droits de l'homme*. Préface de S.E. le Cardinal François Marty (Paris: Apostolat des éditions, 1981).

[29] Puhovski was one of the crown witnesses against Zagreb student leaders in a political show trial in 1972. In day-long testimonies, Puhovski not only supported but broadened the prosecution's indictment. [Mladen Maloca, "Svedocenje dugo sedam casova," *Politika* (Belgrade), August 17, 1972, p. 12.]

[30] Interview with Puhovski by Dragan Tanasic, *Intervju* (Belgrade), December 21, 1984, p. 11.

[31] "Nacionalizam nasa dika," interview with Puhovski by Veselin Radunovic, *Duga* (Belgrade), October 31, 1987, p. 17.

[32] "Nacionalizam nasa dika," p. 17.

[33] Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia* (New York: The Viking Press, 1941).

[34] As described in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature*. Edited by Claire Buck (New York: Prentice Hall, 1992), pp. 1131-1132.

[35] Lees writes, "Their [the Croats'] throats were slit. That ours were not was by the grace of God." [Michael Lees, *The Rape of Serbia: The British Role in Tito's Grab for Power 1943-1944* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), p. 249.] Note that the same publisher - whose name has now changed to Harcourt Brace & Company - printed another markedly pro-Serbian work (Dragnich's book) two years later.

[36] M. Lees, *The Rape of Serbia*, p. 169.

[37] M. Lees, *The Rape of Serbia*, p. 168.

[38] M. Lees, *The Rape of Serbia*, p. 170.

[39] M. Lees, *The Rape of Serbia*, p. 170.

[40] M. Borkovic, *Milan Nedic*, p. 135.

[41] For more data about these crimes, see the documented account based on archival material in Milan Borkovic's *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinska uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga I (1941-1942)* (Belgrade: Sloboda, 1979).

[42] M. Borkovic, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinska uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga I (1941-1942)*, p. 223.

[43] Fred Singleton writes in *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), "In early 1966 it was decided to investigate complaints against the activities of UDBA [the secret police], especially in its harsh treatment of Albanians in the autonomous region of Kosovo-Metohija, or Kosmet. Kosmet was a part of Serbia, and the degree of autonomy which it enjoyed was considerably less than that of the autonomous province of Vojvodina. All key positions in the region were held by Serbs, although they represented a minority of 23 per cent of the population. In particular, Serbs ran both the regular police force and Rankovic's UDBA." (p. 249)

[44] Nicholas C. Pano, "Albania," *The Encyclopedia Americana*. International Edition (Danbury, Connecticut: Grolier Incorporated, 1989), Vol. 1, p. 481.

[45] *Albania*. Edited by Stavro Skendi, with the assistance of Mehmet Beqiraj, George Bossy, Fred Pisky, and Qemal Vokopola. 2nd edition (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958), p. 5.

[46] "Albaniia (Shqipërija)," *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Ėntsiklopediia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Sovetskaia Ėntsiklopediia, 1970), Vol. 1, p. 385.

[47] An American source describes the context of the unsuccessful operation in Albania: "With the help of the Gehlen Organization, the OPC and the SIS mounted several joint paramilitary operations in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and early 1950s. They were, for the most part, failures. The most spectacular OPC failure was in Albania, where the British SIS proposed a joint Anglo-American paramilitary operation to overthrow the Communist regime of Enver Hoxha, perhaps thereby precipitating a general anti-Soviet uprising in Eastern Europe. The joint SIS-OPC operation began in April 1950, when the first of many Albanian émigrés who had been recruited in Egypt, Greece, and Italy and trained in Cyprus and Malta were sent back into Albania. Most of the agents were never heard from again; a few made their way back across the Greco-Albanian border to report that the Albanian militia had been waiting for them when they arrived in the country. By some accounts five hundred agents were captured and executed before the SIS and the OPC terminated the operation in 1952. The means by which the Albanian security forces learned of the time and place of the agents' landings became apparent several years later, when SIS

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officer Kim Philby was exposed as a Soviet penetration agent. Philby, the SIS's liaison officer with the CIA and FBI in Washington, had been one of the two British representatives on a four-member Anglo-American panel that managed the day-to-day running of the operation." [G.J.A. O'Toole, *Honorable Treachery: A History of U.S. Intelligence, Espionage and Covert Action from the American Revolution to the CIA* (New York: The Monthly Press, 1991), pp. 454-455.] The OPC means the Office of Policy Coordination, a special unit established by the U.S. National Security Council (p. 439); the SIS is the British Secret Intelligence Service.

48 Martin Gilbert, *The Atlas of Jewish History*. Completely Revised and Updated (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993), p. 121 (along with a map describing "The Jews of Albania, 1945-1991").

49 According to Gilbert, in November 1990, there were 435 Jews in Albania. By May 1991, 378 Jews had emigrated from the country - 317 left for Israel, 37 for the USA, and 24 for Greece. (*The Atlas of Jewish History*, p. 121)

50 Eric Silver was a staff correspondent for the London *Guardian* in Israel from 1972 to 1987. He lives in Jerusalem and contributes to several publications (*The European, Jewish Chronicle, Observer, Jerusalem Report*, etc.). He is also the author of a biography of Menachem Begin.

* I express my gratitude to Mr. Boris Petrovchich (Los Altos Hills, California) who turned my attention to the ***Albanian Catholic Bulletin*** and who supplied me with some material for this text.

TUDJMAN'S 'BESPUCA' (WILDERNESS) AND SERBIAN DISINFORMATION

A Discussion of Tudjman's Text and Anto Knezevic's "An Analysis of Serbian Propaganda"

As author Anto Knezevic notes in the opening lines of his book, **An Analysis of Serbian Propaganda** (published by Domovina TT, Zagreb, 1993, 254 pp., paperback), "came into existence for two reasons. The first reason is Franjo Tudjman's book *Wilderness of Historical Reality (Bespuca Povijesmi Zbiljnosti)* . . . The second reason is the . . . flood of writings and articles in the international media attacking Tudjman, provoked by his book. In reading these writings I came to the conclusion that, even if people are against *Wilderness*, that does not mean that they offer any kind of path out of the wilderness" (p. 9).

However, in dealing with Serbian disinformation and its use and misuse of *Wilderness/Bespuca* it seems logical first to establish the background of the controversy; second, to discuss Knezevic's handling of it; third, to elaborate on the overall issue of anti-Semitism in Croatia and finally to analyze some aspects of Tudjman and his political role that continue to excite discussion.

I: TUDJMAN AND THE JEWS

Tudjman and Croatia were indeed tainted with the evil reputation of *Wilderness/Bespuca*, beginning at the country's declaration of independence in 1991. As Knezevic shows in detail, excerpts from the book were utilized dishonestly by Serbian propagandists to label the new Croatia a neofascist state, bent on reviving the terrorist *Ustasha* traditions and methods of the 1941-45 Independent State of Croatia.

The *Ustasha* state governed territories, including most of today's Bosnia and Hercegovina, assigned to it by its Axis masters, Germany and Italy, who also divided the state's terrain into two sectors. The *Ustasha* carried out ethnic atrocities against Serbs throughout its domain; but, also in the German sector the *Ustasha* state facilitated the removal and slaughter of Jews and Gypsies.

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The horrors of the contemporary Yugoslav war have mainly overshadowed the issue of Tudjman's alleged comments or attitudes about the Ustasha and their role in the Holocaust of the Jews. But these issues remained a persistent irritant both for his regime and for Jews and others who sympathized with the sad plight inflicted on Croatia by the war.

Tudjman and *Wilderness/Bespuca* drew particular attention in the U.S. last year when the Croatian president attended the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Elie Wiesel denounced Tudjman's presence as a "disgrace."

However, the controversy did not prevent major figures in the Croatian Jewish community from taking leading roles in the country's defense; nor did it stop Jewish intellectuals outside Croatia, such as the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, from aiding the Croatian victims of Serbian aggression.

To be fair, Jewish topics are not a major element in the book.

The Croatian word bespuca means "a place without roads." But if, as Knezevic says, few of the enemies of "wilderness" have offered a way out of such, it must also be said that "a place without roads" may be taken as an unintended but exact description of Tudjman's mentality, and the products thereof. He is an unsophisticated, unclear thinker, as well as a waverer in political and military affairs whose indecision greatly contributed to his country's tragedy.

The most offensive item in *Wilderness/Bespuca* was a declaration that the figure of 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust was based on "both emotional, biased testimonies and on exaggerated data."

Other comments attributed to Tudjman as author of the book, as Knezevic shows, were taken out of context, though a bumptious insensitivity about Jewish matters, expressed in the habit of quoting anti-Semitic Statements paired with insufficient disclaimers, is an unarguable characteristic of the book.

Slavko Goldstein, former president of the Zagreb Jewish community and a leading Croat-language publisher, declared, in the London *Times Literary Supplement* of July 16, 1992, "Tudjman is not an anti-Semite." But in the same commentary, he described Tudjman as "strongly inclined to an authoritarian style of leadership."

Goldstein further described Tudjman's party, the Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica or Croatian Democratic Union, as a movement in which Tudjman "tries to combine national radicalism with proclamations of tolerance, threats of war with a policy of appeasement, the partisan antifascist tradition with some of the Ustashe . . . ideas and symbols."

Goldstein finally referred to *Wilderness/Bespuca* as "an inconsistent mixture of different and often controversial opinions on the broadest possible range of disciplines . . . based on a massive variety of superficially-selected sources." He remarked, "No wonder that such an approach created a conglomerate from which it is easy to take out individual sentences that could prove almost anything: (the) author's anti-Semitism or philo-Semitism, tolerance or intolerance, modernity or obscurantism."

The history of Tudjman's involvement with Jews and Jewish issues in Croatia itself since the arrival of independence in 1991 (the definitive edition of *Bespuca* dates from 1989) is perhaps of some significance. One of his earliest official acts following the assumption of power consisted in a letter promising to return to the Zagreb Jewish community the property on which the beautiful and historic Zagreb *shul* stood before its *Ustasha*-ordered destruction in October 1941.

The grand Zagreb *shul* was not rebuilt, but after terrorist bombs exploded in August 1991 as the Jewish community center and *shul* on Palmotic street in downtown Zagreb—a place where I have prayed and have listened entranced to the Judeo-Spanish speech of Bosnian Sephardim—his government rushed to provide a loan for the complete refurbishment of the center, which was reopened in September 1992.

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Jewish institutions are also active in the Croatian cities of Rijeka, Split, Osijek, and Dubrovnik, maintaining synagogues (of which those in the last two cities were damaged in the recent war). Jewish community centers function as well in Daruvar (where the Jewish graveyard, of great age, was damaged by Serbian shelling), Cakovec, Koprivnica, Slavonski Brod, and Virovitica.

But although few Croatian Jews seem to consider Tudjman a real anti-Semite, the problem of **Wilderness/Bespuca** could not be wiped away, either by Croatian state generosity to the Zagreb community or by the largely-unreported but significant assistance provided by Tudjman's government for the evacuation of Jews from besieged Sarajevo.

In mid-February 1994 president Tudjman issued a statement dissociating himself from Holocaust-revisionist comments in **Wilderness/Bespuca**, and apologizing to Jews around the world, in a letter delivered to representatives of B'nai B'rith International at a meeting in the Croatian Embassy in Washington.

In the letter, Tudjman declared that in the four years since **Wilderness/Bespuca** was published, he "had the opportunity, or better yet, actively sought to become more intimately informed about and involved in the Croatian world and Jewish community so that I might gain a broader and better perspective on its needs, its culture and its history, its hopes and fears. This sustained contact has led to a different perspective on my part from that which I might have had years ago, at a time when I was writing the book."

Tudjman said in the letter that future editions of **Bespuca** will not include the questioned references. He further declared, "I admire the Jewish people immensely, and I admire their strength and their struggle, not unlike that of the Croatian nation, for independence and freedom."

He continued, "It is in terms of my evolving relationship with and increased understanding of the Jewish people that I now realize the hurtfulness of certain portions of this book and the misunderstanding they have caused. For this, I offer an apology both as the president of the newly independent state which wishes to forge a firm and enduring friendship with the Jewish people and as a human being who desires to make amends."

He concluded by promising to "comprehensively address the needs of the Croatian Jewish community and to work toward an even better understanding between the world Jewish communities and the Republic of Croatia."

At the end of March 1994, as reported by the Associated Press, Tudjman again apologized to Jews for their suffering during the *Ustasha* period.

The apology came during a ceremony in Zagreb, honoring Branko Lustig, a Croatian-born Jew and a producer of Steven Spielberg's movie "Schindler's List."

"I take this opportunity to apologize to you and to all the members of the Jewish community for those who, in the (wartime) Independent State of Croatia, took part in implementation of the Holocaust and Nazi-fascist laws," Tudjman told Lustig.

Tudjman said "Schindler's List" would "always remain . . . a reminder to people . . . not to permit such occurrences again, and not to let the Holocaust happen again to Jewish or any other people."

II: KNEZEVIC'S ANALYSIS . . . AND OURS

Anto Knezevic, a former member of the faculty at Zagreb University, has analyzed the Serbian use of the **Wilderness/Bespuca** controversy to defame Croatia.

Early in his book he writes, "The numerous anti-Croatian articles and audiovisual programs in the world media all start from the fundamental premise that Croats are ugly, dirty, and evil.' " He proceeds to an analysis of one of the most disastrous examples of the failure of American policy journalists in dealing with the Yugoslav war: that is, the career of Robert D. Kaplan.

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The Kaplan case is perhaps the most representative of all the failures for which media were responsible during the Yugoslav war. It is unarguable that the daring, the aggressiveness, the brutality of the Great-Serbian attack on Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Hercegovina, took the worldwide—and, especially, the Western—media and governing elites by surprise.

The unexpectedly terrible conflict could not be explained according to the geopolitical guidelines adopted over the previous 25 years by the dominant factions in contemporary affairs. It was not a simple struggle between left and right, between socialism and the market, or between the rich north and the poor south; although these issues were present they were subordinated to the brutal outburst of Great-Serbian extremism—a phenomenon that virtually nobody in the world's chancelleries or newsrooms, and even, incredibly enough, in the world's universities—seemed to comprehend.

Thus, one could not predict the attitude observers of and commentators on the war would take. Liberal Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times*, an opponent of Western intervention in many parts of the world, ended up strongly favoring intervention against Serbian aggression in Bosnia—in the company of his former enemies, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. "Conservative" Patrick Buchanan, after many columns expressing his affection for Slovenia and Croatia, nonetheless opposed direct action against Serbia, since it would run against his defense of American isolationism.

The Western opinion elites, in dealing with the Yugoslav war, were plagued above all by simple *ignorance*, although *arrogance* and *influence* also played a role.

Ignorance was visible in that, because Titoite Yugoslavia had been a prosperous, Western-allied state for so long, it seemed to have been considered an absurdity to analyze its internal conflicts.

Arrogance was present in the widespread attitude that Yugoslavia and its peoples were distant, irrelevant, incomprehensible and unworthy of notice.

Influence was exercised for decades by Yugoslavia and by Serbian interests in particular. First, there were, in London, Paris, and Washington, the assiduous activities of pro-Serbian politicians—including those who had behind them a career as diplomats to the Tito court, those who harked back to the Anglo-French-American alliance with Serbia during World War I, and those taken in by legends concerning "Serbian anti-Nazi resistance" in World War II.

Then there was the corruption of the intellect: for decades, academic efforts in Western universities were drawn in Serbophilic directions by the trend of fellowship awards and other funding, which encouraged research supporting Yugoslav and Serbian political and cultural pretensions. Very few doctoral dissertations were written, in the west, on Croatian figures such as Stjepan Radic or Miroslav Krleza, or on Albanian linguistic and historical issues; by contrast, dozens were published that presumed the permanence of Yugoslav nationality and the glories of Serbian culture. This was no accident.

Western opinion was baffled by the Yugoslav war in a way similar to the confusion when Soviet communism collapsed. At the 1992 annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, David Joravsky of Northwestern University, author of major works on soviet science, began his commentary with the incredible statement, "History has failed us."

In this suddenly-yawning void, individuals like Kaplan were able, at least in the short term, to impose themselves as experts. The author of a work titled *Balkan Ghosts* in addition to books on Afghanistan and the pro-Arab influence among Western policymakers, Kaplan was available as a "scholar" on Balkan issues, and was taken up, for a time, by *The New Republic* and other Washington journals.

The New Republic published one of the ugliest of Kaplan's broadsides, a short text titled

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"Croatianism" that appeared in its issue of November 25, 1991, after six months of horrific atrocities perpetrated by the Serbian aggressors against the newborn Croatian republic. In it, Kaplan introduced into the Western debate the so-called "Kitchen translation" of excerpts from *Wilderness/ Bespuca*, thoroughly dissected by Knezevic.

The New Republic, in the years succeeding, and particularly after the spread of Serbian aggression from Croatia to Bosnia and Hercegovina, withdrew its 'carte blanche' from Kaplan, as did other journals that had favored him with access to their pages. Indeed, it could be said that Kaplan was "burned" by the Yugoslav war; although he got a book out during the conflict, his profile as an expert on the area has unquestionably diminished.

Knezevic cogently illuminates the character of Kaplan as an example of the Janus faces of Western failure in analyzing the Balkan tragedy: on one side, the ignorance, arrogance, and influence we have described; on the other, bluffing and intrigue by self-styled authorities.

In the years leading up to the 1991 explosion, Western policy experts and media powers were without interest in the national struggles of the Albanians, Croats, Slovenes, Slavic Muslims, and other victims of Serbian imperialism; once the explosion occurred, they rushed to acclaim those like Kaplan who fed them familiar-sounding lies, all originating in Belgrade: "fascism reborn in Croatia," "Albanian interlopers in Kosovë," "the 'Serbian renaissance' under tsar Stefan Dusan," etc., etc.

Knezevic's survey goes on to outline the adoption by Western media of similar myths manipulated for propagandistic ends by Belgrade: that the Yugoslav war is a religious conflict, that the Serbian minority in Croatia was threatened by the independence of the Croatian Republic, that Tudjman and the other leaders of the Croatian Republic are equally to blame with Milosevic for the descent of "civilized" Yugoslavia into chaos.

We have analyzed these and other falsifications at some length in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, including many of the subsidiary myths cited by Knezevic: the claim that the Croatian checkerboard grb or sahovina is an Ustasha symbol, the fantasy that Germany started the Yugoslav war to gain an Adriatic port, etc.

Knezevic quotes Finkielkraut, whose objectivity cannot be doubted, and who said at the beginning of 1992, "on the French market of ideas critics of the regimes from Serbia and Croatia very often appear together, in order to prove the point that they are equally tribal idiots everywhere . . . I think that today it is very important to expose this snare, which often leads the insufficiently-knowledgeable European public astray."

We can only concur. The struggle to fully enlighten world opinion about the crime of Serbian imperialism in Yugoslavia may be expected to take a generation or more. However, we can say that the undisguised cruelty, the sadism of Serbian aggression, as expressed in the "ethnic cleansing" already practiced in Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina and, we fear, in the offing in Kosovë, have taught the world at least one lesson it will not soon forget—even if a real understanding of the Yugoslav war remains elusive, world opinion now knows Serbia and its claims cannot be trusted.

III: JEWS IN CROATIAN HISTORY

A seminar on Jewish life in Croatia was a high point at the 1992 annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS). The seminar was sponsored by the Association for Croatian Studies, a constituent member of AAASS, under the chairmanship of Prof. Ivo Banac, master of Pierson College at Yale University and an outstanding figure in contemporary Slavistics.

The event was very well-attended by a lively audience. The panelists were Andrea Feldman, a graduate student of Prof. Banac, and Slavko Goldstein. The author of this article was included as a discussant.

Goldstein made two presentations, one in substitution for Dr. Miljenko Gross of the University of Zagreb, who was unable to travel to Phoenix, and

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the other on his own. His substitute presentation for Dr. Gross dealt with the situation of Jews in Croatia before 1941.

Goldstein began by noting that Croatian Jewry had been dominated by its Ashkenazic, or Germanic, element since the mid-18th century, notwithstanding the existence of a major Sephardic or Spanish tradition in the Dalmatian coast cities of Split, Dubrovnik, etc. This reflected the rule over "civil Croatia" (mainly Slavonia) by the Hasburg empire, while Dalmatia remained under the Venetians, with extensive communications in the Turkish empire, the center of Sephardi life, until the early 19th century. Croatian identity was long focused on Zagreb and civil Croatia even while Croatian literary, religious, and scientific figures were prominent in Delmatia.

In the Habsburg system, civil Croatia was administered by Hungary, and the Ashkenazim who migrated to such cities as Zagreb, Osijek, Karlovac, etc., mainly came from Hungary and the Czech lands. The first rabbi in Central Croatia was Aaron Palotta, from Hungary. Community life was greatly influenced by the situation of commerce, which developed under the typical anti-Jewish restrictions characterizing the Habsburg empire in that period.

A major turning point for Croatian Jewry, as for gentile Croatia, came with the revolutionary conflicts of 1848. Croatia came under the authority of Ban (Count) Josip Jelacic, a Croat patriot and reformer. Jelacic, a leading figure in the rebirth of the Croat nationality in the modern epoch, emancipated the Jews and abolished serfdom before leading a Croat army in a counter-revolutionary expedition against the Hungarians.

The emancipated Jewry of civil Croatia followed the path of *Haskalah*, or "Enlightenment," in a manner similar to that followed by Jews elsewhere in Middle Europe. The Jewish youth after the time of Jelacic supported a "Liberal" (i.e. Reform) Judaism on the German model, that reflected the tremendous movement of professionalization of the new generation. As elsewhere in the region, the young Jews of civil Croatia rejected their fathers' life of commerce and the small trades, accompanied by religious piety, in favor of entry into the professional classes, as doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, journalists, etc.

Political anti-Semitism first made its appearance in civil Croatia at this time, although it originated with the Serb elements of the populace rather than the Croats. The Catholic Croat population was overwhelmingly composed of middle and smallholding peasants who were relatively secure economically and had a good relationship with the Jewish merchant families of the villages and small towns.

Indeed, the Croats lived in a peasant environment in which the Jewish merchant was well integrated while the Jewish moneylender or landlord's representative, such as served to inflame anti-Semitic feelings in Poland and the Ukraine, was absent. However, Jewish merchants, more for class than for religious or ethnic reasons, were occasionally the victims of violence in peasant disturbances and riots, which were not uncommon.

The Croatian intelligentsia was mainly an ecclesiastical class and did not feel a sense of competition with the new Jewish professional class. Still, a "Catholic Action" political movement which engaged in a typical form of anti-Semitism was prominent for a time. Serb anti-Semitism in civil Croatia was, by contrast, fuelled by resentment at the loyalty of the Jewish professional classes to the Habsburg authorities, seen as the Serbs' enemies.

Two figures of Jewish origin played controversial roles in pre-1941 Croat history. One was the bizarre, self-hating Vienna philosopher Otto Weininger, who formulated a theory of "female and Jewish decadence and weakness" and who ended up committing suicide (he is known as "Hitler's favorite Jew" for the latter reason). Weininger's works were read by, and, for a time, influenced the outstanding Croat political figure of the 20th century, Stjepan Radic, founder of the Croat Peasant party, which became and remained for 50 years the majority party of Croatians.

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Radic wrote a 35-page essay titled "On the Jews" in which he gave vent to a mentality, borrowed from Weininger, that equated Jewishness with the evils of urban life. As the most important and charismatic leader of the middle-European peasantry in its modern political awakening, Radic had embraced a mystical belief in the evil of cities—he is famous for the statement, "A great city is a great wound."

But Radic's essay on the Jews, written soon after his reading of Weininger, seems to have reflected Radic's tendency to immediate enthusiasm for new ideas rather than a deep-seated hostility to Jews. It was an isolated item in Radic's works, and anti-Semitism as a political slogan or a platform for popular mobilization played no role at all in the history of the Croat Peasant Party.

The other figure of Jewish origin whose role was widely debated in Habsburg-era Croatia was a convert to Catholicism, Josip Frank. Frank, a lawyer and businessman, emerged as the political heir of the most important Croat separatist politician, Ante Starcevic, founder of the Party of Croat Rights. This party was a classic nationalist formation of the middle-class, equally fiercely opposed to the cultural domination of Croatia by Hungary and to the social demands of the Croat Peasant Party.

Frank and his followers, the "Frankovci," or clean Party of Croat Rights, by an irony of history, were Jew-baited by their opponents in the Magyarone (pro-Hungarian) Croat establishment, but evolved directly into the extremist, separatist Ustasha of the 1930s, who adopted anti-Semitism after gaining the patronage of the Nazis.

Andrea Feldman's presentation dealt with the cultural situation of Jews in Croatia in the last half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, and reflected the practice of social history now dominant in the Anglo-Saxon universities. She noted that even in the absence of a widespread or violent anti-Semitism social barriers existed between the gentile military and state classes of the Habsburg empire and the Jewish professional strata. Habsburg officers, for example, were discouraged from courting Jewish women.

At the same time, Jews were honored for their participation in the urban life of such cities as Zagreb. A Jewish architect was largely responsible for the redesign of Zagreb in the last decades of imperial rule, before World War I. Jewish life in Croatia had fascinating parallels with the history of the Jewish community in the Czech lands before and after World War I. Jewish families contributed enormously to cultural activities also involving the gentile population.

A very interesting expression of this situation was pointed out by Feldman, with regard to the late 19th century opening of Mirogoj cemetery on the mountain heights above Zagreb. The property for Mirogoj had belonged to the South-Slav and Croat "enlightener" Ljudevit Gaj, who had been associated with Ban Jelacic, and Mirogoj was conceived as a pantheon of great Croat personalities. The Jewish section of Mirogoj, which is a central element in the cemetery, includes massive monuments to all the great Jewish families of the period, as well as a post-1945 Holocaust memorial.

Feldman also commented valuably on the career of the writer Manes Sperber, who was a prominent member of the European anti-Stalinist generation of the 1930s and 1940s, and whose early works depict the life of intellectuals and leftist activists in Croatia in that period.

A second presentation by Goldstein—in fact, his own contribution—dealt with the experience of Croatian Jewry during World War II. This issue is, in many respects, the most tragic, difficult, and emotionally-charged episode in modern Croat history. Prof. Banac had noted in another discussion that the Association for Croatian Studies had chosen this topic specifically for this reason, in hopes of offering as much candor and "new light" as possible to the AAASS audience.

It was therefore perhaps predictable that Goldstein's comments on this topic were enunciated in an atmosphere of absolute, rapt silence on the part of the audience and panelists.

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Goldstein began by stating simply, "Everybody in Croatia knows what happened, and I believe most who are here know, as well. And some of us were witnesses to it."

He then said that he would discuss two questions that are at the head of the agenda for intellectuals and political commentators in Croatia today: 1) how anti-Semitic were the *Ustasha*? and 2) did the majority of Croatians support the Nazi genocide of Jews?

On the first issue, Goldstein noted that many contemporary Croat nationalists have sought to diminish the reality of *Ustasha* anti-Semitism; while they admit that the *Ustasha* were genocidal in their attacks on Serbs, they argue that the suffering of Jews was largely the fault of the German authorities on the scene, and that the *Ustasha*, with their "Frankist" origins, were mainly unwilling participants.

Goldstein firmly repudiated this rosy, revisionist claim. Although the *Ustasha* were not originally anti-Semitic, by 1930-40 they were very much so. In advance of the *Ustasha* coup of 1941, which installed Ante Pavelic as dictator, the movement prepared racial laws modelled on the Nuremberg codes. Indeed, once they were allied with the Nazis, the *Ustasha* joined in anti-Semitic measures with a marked enthusiasm; they were "very anxious" to carry out German orders.

Goldstein went on the note that while Serb and Croat historians have argued over the number of each nation's victims in World War II, there is no doubt about the number of Jewish victims, which totalled about 65,000 for the whole of Yugoslavia, including about 20,000 in Croatia itself. Some 14,000 at least, were killed by the Nazis and *Ustasha* in Bosnia and Hercegovina—mainly Sephardim, with some 10,000 murdered in Bosnia proper.

He then turned to a discussion of Croatian sentiments about the Holocaust of the Jews, both during and after the experience. He recounted his own history, as a young boy from the town of Karlovac. He was hidden in a village of 300 Croat peasants, Brezovica (which means "The Little Birch Grove.") Such actions were, he said, extremely dangerous for Croats but were rather widespread; 55 Jews, altogether, were saved by the inhabitants of Brezovica.

However, the refuge in "the little birch grove" did not last. Slavko Goldstein and his family had to flee to the Italian occupation zone.

Goldstein discussed at some length the fate of the last rabbi of Zagreb, R. Miroslav Shalom Freiberger, for whom Zagreb's present-day Jewish cultural institution is named. R. Freiberger was protected by the Croat Catholic Cardinal Aloizije Stepinac, who offered him a permanent residence in Kaptol, the ecclesiastical precinct of the Zagreb old town. R. Freiberger declined, although his son was one of a group of Jewish children sent to Turkey via Budapest, and thence to Palestine (where the son was killed in the first Israeli war of independence.) R. Freiberger himself was deported to Auschwitz and was murdered while protesting at the camp gate.

Goldstein concluded his presentation by pointing out that there is no political entity in present-day Croatia with an anti-Semitic program, even the revived Party of Croat Rights/Croat Defense Forces (HSP/HOS) headed by Dobroslav Paraga, a movement commonly considered heirs to the *Ustasha*. He stated his belief that the Croatian people, with no real history of anti-Semitism, were "deeply shocked" by the Holocaust of the Jews, and that their conduct since reflects anguish over the criminality of the *Ustasha*.

Stephen Schwartz commented as discussant on the three presentations. He expressed some dissatisfaction at the focus on the Ashkenazim and the failure to make thoroughly study Sephardi life in Dalmatia and in Bosnia, the latter being considered by most Croats a border zone with strong historical and cultural links to the Croat area. He noted that sources on Sephardi life in the Balkans, including Croatia and Bosnia, during the first half of the 20th century, were accumulated for several decades by the government of Spain, and are now available in Spanish. For example, Zagreb was the

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home of a union of Balkan Sephardi alumni of the University of Vienna, known as "La Esperanza." (The Bulgarian-born Sephardic writer in German, Elias Canetti, is an example of such alumni.)

On the basis of the papers presented, Schwartz suggested several topics for further academic investigation: Ban Jelacic's emancipation of Croat Jewry, the relationship of *Haskalah* to the professionalization of the emancipated Jews; parallels between Jewish life in Croatia and the Czech lands, on the one hand, and between Croat and Czech gentile politics, on the other; anti-Semitic actions in Croat peasant riots; and the personality and experience of Manès Sperber, an important historical link, for South Slavists, between the anti-Stalinists of the 1930s and the liberal anti-Communists in the West two decades later.

He also strongly stressed the need for more academic study of Jewish *religious*, rather than secular, history in the Balkans, including that of the Sarajevo *Yeshiva* before 1941, which drew students from throughout the Sephardi world; *kabbalistic* and other commentaries, and Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish manuscript production and printing in Dalmatia, Bosnia and Serbia.

As might have been anticipated, the question period following the presentations turned quickly to the issue of anti-Semitism in Tudjman's writings, brought up in a rather agitated fashion by a professor from the University of Michigan.

Goldstein said that having known and worked with Tudjman during the Communist era, he does not consider him an anti-Semite. But neither, he stated clearly, does Goldstein consider Tudjman a serious scholar or historian.

Goldstein was reproached by another member of the audience, who pointedly identified himself as a Serb, and who accused Goldstein of being "very happy in Tudjman's Croatia." Goldstein responded by denying that he is very happy, and insisting that, on the contrary, he is always concerned and vigilant regarding anti-Semitism in the country. However, he insisted that no manifestation of serious anti-Semitism is present in Croatia today.

IV: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

It would seem the debate over Tudjman's "anti-Semitism" may be closed. But the exposure of Serbian disinformation in the Yugoslav War by Anto Knezevic leaves unresolved a certain number of crucial issues involving Croatia and its future, and notwithstanding the profound sympathy with Croatia presently felt throughout the world, it is necessary to face them directly. Otherwise, one may fall victim to the temptation to which both the Tito Communists in Yugoslavia and the Hoxha Communists in Albania eagerly surrendered themselves—that of refusing to admit the existence of negative aspects of reality.

The credibility of Croatia as a victim in the Yugoslav war was deeply harmed by the way in which, in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Tudjman's local clients pursued a war-within-a-war against the Bosnian Muslims.

At the end of March 1994, Tudjman, in an interview with the *Christian Science Monitor*, sought to shift all blame for the internal crisis of the Bosnian Republic to the Muslims: "Some Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina faced mujahideen fundamentalist attempts at making inroads against the Croatian people . . . in order to create an Islamic state," he said.

He continued, "There were songs sung by the Muslims that there would be no Croats from Istanbul to all the way to Trieste (northern Italy). And this caused some people to lose their bearings."

The Croat vs. Muslim division in the anti-Serbian front has apparently been healed, thanks to pressure from Washington. But Tudjman's bid for betrayal of Bosnia and Hercegovina—for it cannot be honestly described as anything else—was also paralleled by his sequence of diplomatic coquetries in the direction of none other than Milosevic, the Serbian dictator.

It was obvious from the beginning of the war that Tudjman would be tempted to forge a deal

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with Milosevic at the expense of Bosnia and Hercegovina. However, it has also been obvious from the beginning that if Tudjman colludes with Milosevic to slice up Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia will have little or no standing to pursue the return of its sliced-off, Serbian-held territories, the *Krajine*.

Such a course has been viewed as suicidal by Croatian opposition leaders, who feared that Tudjman's accommodation and complicity with Milosevic would not only weaken Croatia's defenses against Serbia, but also lead to the consolidation of an authoritarian tendency within Croatia.

This tendency is clearly visible in an irritability, on the part of Tudjman and many of his supporters, toward criticism by the independent Croatian media. Tudjman's performance since the war began has left Croatian opinion, both within the country and in the very large Croat diaspora, severely divided between his worshippers and his detractors, with the majority of Croatians increasingly among the latter.

If the threat of Croatian treason in Bosnia and Hercegovina has been alleviated, there remains another major issue on which Tudjman's position is ambiguous, and dangerously so. That is the matter of Kosovë, about which some Croatians have taken to arguing that the status of Kosovë and its Albanian majority are "an internal matter for Serbia."

While some Croats argue that granting Serbia free rein in Kosovë is unavoidable if Croatia wishes to maintain control over the *Krajine*, this parallel is not only sinister, it involves a form of political blindness. There can and should be no *quid-pro-quo* between victims, such as the Croats, and aggressors (the Serbs). It is much more correct to argue, in accord with Prof. Banac, a leading intellectual opponent of Tudjman, that the security of Croatia, and of the *Krajine* in particular, is inseparable from the defense of Kosovë against Serbian aggression.

Similarly, the defense of Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina, and, in the future, of Kosovë, are inseparable from the defense of democracy.

Notwithstanding the efforts of Tudjman himself and of sincere commentators like Knezevic to defend Croatia by improving relations with Jews and others, and by answering the lies cast against their people, no defense against slander will aid Croatia as much as will the establishment of unchallengeable democratic institutions: a free press, above all. That is the only path out of the wilderness.

Stephen SCHWARTZ

* * *

James, Torrens, *Presenting Paradise—Dante's Paradise: Translation and Commentary.* University of Scranton Press, 1993, 268 pages.

Usually the Albanian Catholic Bulletin only reviews books which are directly related to Albania and its people. We are making an exception to this policy for two reasons—first the author of *Presenting Paradise* is James Torrens, a Jesuit priest who is board member of our Institute and has labored for Albanian causes since 1966. Fr. Torrens has translated a number of poems, (from Italian into English) by the Albanian poets Vincens Prennushi, Lazer Shantoja, Ernest Koliqi, and the Arbëresh poet Mario Ferraro Brasacchio. Some of these translated poems were published in the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*. Secondly the topic of the book—the *Paradise* of Dante Aligheri, Italy's greatest poet, has been a favorite of Albanian readers. Before the communist period Albania enjoyed close cultural ties with Italy. The greatest minds of Albanian religious and cultural history were educated in Italy. They were influenced by the poetry of Dante which is an essential part of Italian culture. The well known Albanian poet and educator Ernest Koliqi translated into Albanian portions of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, of which *Paradise* is the final segment.

Presenting Paradise is the result of Fr. Torrens' life-long study of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The

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project began during his undergraduate days at Gonzaga University. During Fr. Torrens' graduate study at the University of Michigan he conducted an investigation of Dante's influence on the great twentieth century poet T.S. Eliot. *Presenting Paradise* is truly a labor of love. It enables the modern reader to have access to the world of the fourteenth century poet. Fr. Torrens has succeeded in his goal of introducing readers to Dante's *Paradise*, which he believes has fewer readers than the *Inferno or Purgatory*. This is due in part to the modern mind that needs substantial commentary to grasp all that Dante portrays *in Paradise*. As Christians no subject should be of more interest to us. Fr. Torrens' book will certainly please everyone with a desire for the joys of that better world, the goodness and beauty of which is the way to union with God.

Fr. Torrens, a native San Franciscan, is Associate Editor of America Magazine. He presented his book at a conference sponsored by the English Department of the University of San Francisco in April 1994. An attentive audience of faculty and students was present. He also introduced his book in conferences held at the University of California at Berkeley the University of California at Davis, and Santa Clara University, California.

Raymond FROST

Cosmo, Laudone, *La Genesi*, Grottaferrata (Rome), Gruppo Editoriale Gesualdi, 1993, pp. 202., $20.00.

The Arbëresh author, Cosmo Laudone, lives in the town of Grottaferrata in he Alban hills near Rome. He recently published an epic length poem entitled *La Genesi*. Laudone, whose monograph on his native town of San Giorgio Albanese was reviewed by Petro Vuçani in the 1992 edition of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* has made another significant contribution to Arbëresh, Italian and Albanian cultural studies with *La Genesi*. The work is dedicated to "the Arbëresh, Kosovar and Albanian people—one and three (who) have the same roots, the same blood and the same language". The title looks back to one of the fundamental books of Western Civilization—*Genesis*, the first book of the Old Testament. It also looks forward to the new "genesis" (beginning) of every individual who turns to the truth, and by extension to the new beginning of every society which bases itself on truth after a period of denying the truth. His theme is appropriate to the current situation in Albania. The nation finds itself confronting newly won freedom after five decades of suppression.

In the poem evil captivates the minds and hearts of seven people, who represent the seven main vices of the twentieth century world. Unlimited power has corrupted the world which these individuals inhabit. Their minds are darkened by their failing to recognize the God who created them. The sultan represents this unlimited power. He holds in his grasp a beautiful woman who symbolizes lust which is subjugated to power. Entwined with the sultan and the woman are five characters representing the prevalent evils of our age: a communist, a drug addict, an arms merchant, a movie producer and a scientist. Together they inhabit a world without hope which, despite its promises for human development and fulfillment is poised on the brink of self-destruction. Virtue and goodness have no place in this world because there is no foundation upon which these can be built. Laudone proposes that the Cross and Resurrection of Christ is the way to salvation for all these characters. Laudone subtitled his work "the cry of the convicts or the drama of the subconscious". He alludes to the fact that he is drawing upon his professional experiences working among the prison population in Rome as well as upon his personal struggles to understand the problem of evil in the world. The image of prisoners caught up in a world with seemingly no means of escape describes in a succinct way the dilemma that western culture experiences today. The West is closing in upon itself despite its understanding of freedom, separated from truth as an absolute. While relying on the myths of his ancestral homeland of Albania, Laudone paints a rich tapestry of human weakness seeking salvation. The writer deals with the struggle of each human being in his individual search for truth. He shows the reader how this is connected with the universal struggle

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that mankind is undergoing in its quest for lasting peace.

A unique aspect of *La Genesi* is that Laudone has provided an Arbëresh translation of his poem on the facing page of the Italian verses. This is indicative of his desire to be a contributor to and facilitator of an Italian and Albanian cultural exchange.

First Secretary Rando Devoli of the Albanian Embassy in Rome, stated that "Cosmo Laudone has been an important contributor to the cementing of good relations between Tirana and Rome."

As Albania emerges from its dark period of political, religious and social repression the people come into contact with a strain of western civilization which does not have a healthy concept of how to use its freedom. A current Western concept of freedom actually leads to moral enslavement. *La Genesi* portrays the difficulties which freedom, at the mercy of a deformed conscience, presents to individuals and peoples. Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the name of a false freedom, and brought sin and death into the world. This lesson from the book of Genesis is an important one for all people to remember. Laudone, while recognizing the awful hold that evil has on twentieth century peoples, refuses to lose hope. His solution to the problem of evil is clear and unambiguous—turn to Christ and proclaim Him as Lord and Savior in order to find the truth which truly sets us free. Those who despise or reject Christ, especially in the light of what has been revealed before the nations, are imprisoned in a world which brings with it evil and confusion that is salutary for all people to contemplate—and then reject.

Raymond FROST

Zavalani, Tomor, in collaboration with Mary K. Piser, *Jet Era Glyphs: A Pictural Communication System*, Sherman Oaks, California, 1991, 278 pp. $30.00. (Available by writing to the author: 14664 Roscoe Blvd., #33, Panorama City, CA. 91402).

Since the time of the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, humankind has sought to find a universal way to communicate. Written communication is generally considered to have begun during the rise of the Sumerian civilization in the form of wedge writing, commonly known as cuneiform. These first wedges pressed into wet clay were pictorial concepts, and later developed into syllabic symbols.

For centuries the language of Christendom and education was Latin. In 1887 Ludovic L. Zamenhof introduced to the world a new universal language: Esperanto. Zavalani's efforts in his *Jet Era Glyphs* joins in the effort to bring about a system of universal communication.

Anyone who has traveled in a foreign country, in which the writing system does not use a script with which one is familiar, can greatly appreciate the simplicity of "pictorial words." More and more we see road signs, for example, which "picture" the situation or road conditions that we can expect. These "picture words" simply and quickly "tell" us what to expect.

There can be little doubt that the value of Zavalani's steps to introduce a new universal language would be of immense value to those individuals, world-wide, who are communicatively disabled. Granted, we do find other "glyphic" systems in use today in a number of Asian countries such as China, Korea, and Japan, but these require great endurance and the "patience of Job" to master.

The beauty of Zavalani's work is found in its simplicity. The glyphs are easily recognizable world-wide and can be adapted to any culture, regardless of its sophistication or simplicity. The pictorial signs can grow with the rapid technological developments of the modern world.

Zavalani's pictograph language system appears to be a language which can be easily and quickly learned by people of all ages. The linguistic structure follows an English grammatical model which, as Zavalani notes, present no difficulties for those who are English-speaking persons. Due to its simplicity, I would venture to say that few difficulties would be encountered by those whose language is not patterned after English or a non-Indo-European language.

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Tomor Zavalani's efforts should be applauded and not quickly dismissed. His work can open up a new world for countless numbers who now live in a very closed one. *Jet Era Glyphs* is a God-send for those who are communicatively disabled.

Donald B. SHARP, S. J.

Pjetër Arbnori, *Mugujt E Mesjetes* (Medieval Daybreak), Shtëpia Botuese "Naim Frashëri", Tiranë, 1993, 345 pp.

In the 1992 edition of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin, p. 69,there was a brief note about Pjeter Arbnori, the newly elected President of the Albanian parliament. Released in 1989 after twenty-eight years in the harsh environment of the infamous Burrel prison, he immediately joined the opposition Democratic Party. Following the party's sweeping victory in the March, 1992 election he was chosen President of the parliament. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that the former long-term prisoner was also an accomplished writer.

Recently we received a copy of his novel *Mugujt E Mesjetes* (Medieval Daybreak), a beautifully bound book of almost 350 pages. It is truly amazing that Arbnori, who spent nearly three decades in prison, was able to compose a novel of such charm and ease of description. Unfortunately Arbnori's novel reached us too late to write a complete review. Nevertheless we wish to briefly make a note of it and recommend it to our readers. We found the novel intriguing and full of suspense. It treats in a unique style and rich language the medieval period in Albanian history when the country was called *Regnum Albaniae* and was under Angevin and Serbian rule. Albanian noblemen, as well as simple folk, were suffering under the heel of these invaders and were trying to preserve their national identity.

Arbnori tells us that he wrote the novel in 1982 at the Burrel prison. The first copy was taken from him by the prison authorities and never returned. He then made another copy of the novel and improved the manuscript in 1984 and 1988. It is truly painful to read how Arbnori and for that matter other dissident writers in Albania had to go through so many hardships in order to safeguard their literary creations. The fact that many prison writings such as Arbnori' s historical novel didn't have anything to do with the (communist) system and yet were still confiscated indicates how sick and paranoid was the communist dictatorship.

Arbnori and other imprisoned authors were living in constant fear that their spiritual treasures would be discovered and that they would be tried again for "treason". Arbnori himself experienced this gross injustice in 1979 when he received an additional ten years sentence solely for having previously written a novel. Commenting on this decision of the communist authorities Arbnori states, "it was not so important or hurtful to me to receive an additional sentence.What was even more heartbreaking was the loss of the manuscript."

When we read of Arbnori's and others' ordeals to exercise their literary talents, and compare their noble spirit with the servility of government and party subsidized writers we certainly applaud and congratulate Arbnori and those like him for their astonishing and admirable will and love for art and freedom. It is to the honor of the Albanian people that they have chosen such a man for a place of responsibility in the nation, a man who has kept his balance, pleading for reconciliation and forgiveness despite years of injustice directed toward him and his chosen field of expression. After suffering so much he has kept his character and humanity alive. The Albanian people have recognized these virtues by electing him president of the parliament.

We certainly recommend *Medieval Daybreak* to our readers and are convinced that it will enrich their outlook on this particular period of Albanian history. We have learned that earlier this year another two novels by Pjeter Arbnori have been published in Albania, both of which were written during his time in prison. We hope to soon have the enjoyment of reading them also.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

STERLING HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN PUBLISHES PAMPHLET ON ALBANIA

A pamphlet-sized informational leaflet entitled "Getting to Know Your Albanian-American Neighbor" was published in Sterling Heights, Michigan during 1993. Though different from other available publications about Albania, the leaflet is a

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able publications about Albania, the leaflet is a most informative and useful quick reference guide not only about Albanians in Detroit, Michigan, but also on the Albanian people in general. Frano Ivezaj, an Albanian-American educator and member of the Sterling Heights Ethnic Issues Advisory Committee was primarily responsible for this pamphlet. It is mainly intended as a resource for the citizens and all residents of Sterling Heights (population 120,000) in their noble quest for dialog and understanding between people of all backgrounds. It is truly a valuable resource for anyone seeking to learn about Albania and Albanian-American history and culture.

The pamphlet is divided into eight sections subtitled "In Search of Bread and Freedom" (Albanian Immigration to the United States); "Physical Characteristics of Albania"; "Religious Beliefs"; "Language and Culture"; "Ancient History"; "National Hero (Skanderbeg)"; "Modern History"; and "Famous Albanians". The format is well designed and is remarkable for the fact that it includes a rather comprehensive introduction to the main points of Albanian culture.

The pamphlet has received many favorable reviews in Albanian publications, in Michigan newspapers, as well as in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. It was reviewed in the newspaper Nation's Cities Weekly, (the official publication of the National League of Cities), which praised it for "aiming to abolish stereotypes created by lack of adequate information". The Albanian newspaper *Illyria*, which appears twice weekly in New York, in its May 13-15, 1993 edition described the pamphlet as a "unique pocket-sized reference on Albania and its people". *Illyria*, which has a large world-wide Albanian and English speaking audience, reported that the Mayor of Sterling Heights has received many letters of appreciation and commendation for printing such a useful reference.

The leaflet is part of a Sterling Heights' Program to make information on ethnic matters available to all members of the community. The aim is to foster unity and to provide city services to all ethnic groups. Frano Ivezaj, a member of the Sterling Heights Ethnic Issues Advisory Committee since its founding in 1990, has spent many hours promoting these ideals along with his Polish, Chaldean, Indian and other neighbors. As a result of his work Ivezaj has been featured in articles appearing in the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Detroit News*, and the Macomb, *Michigan Daily* newspaper. Ivezaj was quoted in one article as stating that "the purpose of the brochure is to educate American and other ethnic groups about Albanian culture and to combat the stereotypes and bias. I hope people will reach a better understanding of their neighbors by taking time to read the brochure." Ivezaj is also a host of "Ethnic News" which is broadcast weekly on local Channel Five in Sterling Heights. Along with other members of the Ethnic Issues Advisory Committee he is promoting the printing of city service directories in Albanian and other languages as well as in English. Recently this committee was honored with a Michigan Municipal Achievement Award for its Ethnic Outreach Program.

Frano Ivezaj and the Advisory Committee are to be commended for the publication of this well-done and informative leaflet. It can certainly be seen as a foundation for broader Albanian-American self-knowledge. It can also serve to make their fellow Americans aware of what the Albanian people and culture offers to the American way of life. This leaflet could be an example for other U.S. cities and metropolitan areas with multi-ethnic populations. The leaflet is being distributed (free of charge) to hundreds of schools, libraries, and individuals interested in the Albanian people and culture, not only in Sterling Heights but throughout the Detroit Metropolitan Area and the State of Michigan. A free copy of the leaflet can be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

City of Sterling Heights, Office of Community Relations

c/o Ethnic Advisory Committee

40555 Utica Rd.

P. O. Box 8009

Sterling Heights, MI 48310

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PRESS REVIEWS

KOHA E JONË—THE LONGEST ALBANIAN DIASPORA JOURNAL IN PUBLICATION CEASES OPERATIONS

With the publication of the 1993 *Koha e Jonë* (Our Time) the editors announced the cessation of operations at the Paris based journal. *Koha e Jonë* was the official organ of the Albanian Democratic Union in Exile. The journal was also dedicated to worldwide coverage of Albanian political, cultural and linguistic affairs. The editors studied every facet of Albanian life at home and abroad. In its thirty-two years of operation *Koha e Jonë* was one of premier Albanian publications. It regularly published a variety of important articles and interesting materials in French, English and Italian.



Elez Ndreu

According to the editor's announcement a newspaper will now be published by the party in Tirana with the name *Koha e Re* (New Times). This newspaper will begin publication following the Third Congress of the Albanian Democratic Union (Bashkimi Demokrat Shqiptar), to take place in Tirana in March 1994. The meeting date was purposefully chosen to coincide with the democracy election victory of March 1992.

The two individuals who contributed greatly to the past success of *Koha e Jonë* were recently decorated by the Albanian government for their anti-communist efforts on behalf of human freedom and for their positive contribution to the Albanian nation. On February 8, 1993 President Sali Berisha presented medals "For Patriotic Service" to *Koha e Jonë's* editor Lec Shllaku, to the philanthropist Isa Elez Ndreû and to the journal *Koha e Jonë*. In the presentation Leo Shllaku was honored for his articles which aided the anti-communist efforts. It was noted that "his writings always highlighted national ideals and Albanian patriotism". In the citation honoring Isa Elez Ndreu he was acclaimed as "an anti-communist patriot who personally financed the Albanian free press of the diaspora". President Berisha also awarded the journal *Koha e Jonë* the same medal with the following dedication: "for thirty-two years *Koha e Jonë* has kept alive in the Albanian diaspora not only national aspirations but has faithfully served in the education and formation of the Albanian people, its language, identity and anti-communist stand".



Lec Shllaku

Mr. Shllaku and Mr. Ndreu have devoted their energies, time and wealth to the good of the Albanian people at home and in exile for over three decades. *Koha e Jonë* has been the longest running publication in the Albanian diaspora with

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select materials in all fields and with a roster of celebrated authors. The board of the Albanian Catholic Institute salutes these distinguished Albanians and wishes them continued success in their future works for Albania.

Münchner Zeitschrift fur Balkankunde. 7. und. 8. Band. München 1991. (Albanian-Institut, Wagmüllerstr. 23, 80538 München, Germany).

The two issues in one volulme—are a "Festschrift" in honor of Professor Rudolf Trofenik, the founder and publisher of the journal *Münchner Zeitschrift für Balkankunde*.

The Festschrift was initiated by two members of the editorial board, professors Peter Bartl of Münich and Sergio Bonazza of Verona. Professor Bartl is also the editor-in-chief of the journal.

The volume contains a series of articles by international scholars concerning the variety and richness of philology and literature, history, art history and politics of the Balkan-states. They are written primarily in German, but some in English and Italian. The topics reflect the scholarly interests of the Festschrift's recipient, Professor Trofenik.

The contributors to the first section discussed philological-literary developments in Slowenia (Boris Paternu, Joze Pogacnik, Sergio Bonazza, Reinhard Lauer, Anton Terstenjak, France Bernik), in Albania (Titos P. Jochalas) and in the Osmanian Empire (Hedda Reindl-Kiel). Other articles offer insights into the political-historical systems of southeastern Europe (Emanuel Turcynski, Hildrun Glass, Harald Heppner). One section is devoted to historical and art historical traditions (Karl Kaser, Machiel Kiel, Peter Bartl, Gerhard Grimm, Horst Glassl for history; Leopold Kretzenbacher, Michael Weithmann, Brigitte Moser-Weithmann for art history)

Rosemary DEIST

ALBANICA

The review *ALBANICA*, subtitled *A Journal of Albanological Research and Criticism*, was established in winter 1990, Washington, DC, by Prof. Arshi Pipa, the leading intellectual personality in the Albanian anti-communist diaspora in the U.S. and professor emeritus of Italian at the University of Minnesota.

Like Prof. Pipa's other publications, *Albanica* reflects the highest standards of intellectual integrity and literary quality. Much of the contents of issue 3-4, for winter 1992, concerns the Albanian language issues. Prof. Pipa's own signature appears in the issue over an excellent study of the Italo-Albanian humanists, alongside a similar work by our friend, the outstanding modern Albanian poet Martin Camaj.

The journal's editorial also notes the death of Camaj and states its opinion, shared by us, that while he lived Camaj was the Albanian writer most deserving of the Nobel Prize.

Prof. Pipa also takes up, in this issue, as the main topic in linguistic affairs, the defense of the Gheg dialect against the Marxist imposition of a so-called "unified literary Albanian" by the former Tirane Communist regime.

In his article "Geopolitique de la langue albanaise: La fraude de l'ULLA", Pipa clearly states, from its very first line, the character of the "unified language" imposture: "linguistic policy, as a means for totalitarian states to overcome regional resistance and do away with cultural differences, is an aspect of the politics of repression which have been used by the Communist powers to extend their dominion."

Pipa's arguments, which have previously been analyzed in his book *The Politics of Language in Socialist Albania* (1989), are trenchant and necessary. He notes that the forcible assimilation of Gheg dialect to a Tosk-based "unified language", in addition to its reflection of the wholesale adoption of the Stalin-Soviet model of governance after Hoxha's break with Tito, was predicated on arguments that were to say the least, unscientific.

For example, Dhimiter Shuteriqi, a writer from Gheg-speaking Elbasan in central Albania, who had previously written in the Gheg variant originating in that area —including hymns of praise

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to the Communist regime —suddenly went over to an advocacy of the forcible merging. In a paper published in 1952, Shuteriqi cited the domination of Tosk over Gheg in recent Albanian printing (ignoring the tradition of Gheg printing from the 16th to the 18th centuries), the Tosk origin of party cadres, and other basically irrelevant arguments for the imposition of the "unified" standard. Shuteriqi even contradicted himself by admitting that Gheg and Tosk were at an equal stage of development, thus undercutting the spurious and antiscientific Stalinist argument, invented by the pseudo-linguist N.Y. Marr, and employed by Hoxha, that said "more developed" languages or dialects should triumph over and replace "less developed" languages or dialects.

Pipa summarizes the defense of Gheg dialect with great eloquence. He asks, "Why force a unification that deprives a nation of half its literary potential? Far from presenting a problem, bidialecticalism is a title of distinction, a title that Albanian shares, among European languages, with Norwegian." He declares, "The Albanian Stalinists invented a problem" of Gheg-Tosk communication where none previously existed.

Pipa also points out that the Albanian pseudo-Marxist acolytes of Marr had silently adopted another Marrite conception — that which held that dialects are survivals or remnants of other "degraded" languages that had been assimilated by a dominant language. The Albanian Marrites held that Tosk was not an Illyrian language but a descendant of Thracian, the theoretical common ancestor of Romanian and Aromanian or Vlach. The Marrites went further in the direction of denying the Illlyro-Albanian continuity, in order, Prof. Pipa argues, to strengthen Albanian links with the Communist east. He concludes masterfully, "'Unified language' is a form of regional linguistic colonialism."

Albanica No. 3-4 also includes Gheg language summaries of each of its articles published in languages other than Albanian (English, French, Italian, German), as well as documents on Faik Konitza, an essay by Martin Camaj on his style, and other useful contributions.

Albanica has unfortunately announced that number 3-4 was its last issue. However every effort should be made to support the other worthy activities of Prof. Arshi Pipa, a mentor and model for Albanian intellectuals.

Hylli i Dritës Resumes Publication

Together with the Jesuit monthly LEKA (which stood for Lidhja-Edukata Kultura-Argetimi or Union-Education-Culture Recreation), the Franciscan sponsored *Hylli i Dritës* was one of the most influential and scholarly publications of pre-war Albania. *Hylli i Dritës*, founded in 1913 by Fr. Gjerj Fishta, Albanian's national poet, and supressed during the period of communist rule along with other Catholic and democratic periodicals, now has resumed, with great energy and enthusiasm, its place among Albanian letters. Despite the best efforts of the communists to stamp out the legacy of *Hylli i Dritës* and *Leka*, the re-appearance of *Hylli i Dritës* signals the renewal of the work to which the publication devoted itself since its inauguration in the year following Albania's obtaining of national independence. During the years of its publication (1913-1914; 1921-1924; 1930-1944) *Hylli i Dritës* provided a forum for some of Albania's most influential citizens: Faik Konitza, S. Gjeçov, V. Prenushi, Z. Valentini, I. Rrota, P. Dodaj, G. Schiro, Sr., L. Skendo, T. Tocci, L. Gurakuqi, [illegible] Koliqi. Now a new generation of Albanians finds a home for their ideas on the pages of the same journal.

Thanks to the peaceful victory of democracy and the return of religious and other freedoms to Albania the Catholic press is again making its impact felt not only on the Catholic population but on Albanian readers at large. The Franciscans of Albania wish through *Hylli i Dritës* to give their contribution together with intellectuals and scholars from throughout Albania to the progress of their country at this momentous time in the nation's history. By providing a forum for ideas, *Hylli i Dritës* serves to point out the road of reconstruction hearkening to the immortal values of Alba-

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nian society and of Europe at large. *Hylli i Drites* is now the most advanced literary and scholarly journal published in Albania, covering all the facets of Albanian life—political, religious, cultural and historical.

So far we have received Volume 1 (220) and the double Volume 2-3 (221-222), both of which were published in 1993. The list of articles and studies in both editions of the journal is very impressive and includes well-known authors and scholars from all three of Albania's religious groups. Among the authors in Volume 1 are Namik Resuli, Visar Zhiti, Zef Pllumi, Engjëll Sedaj, Kolec Çefa, Gjergj Zheji, Anton Berisha, Adem Istrefi, Zef Zorba and Aurel Plasari. This first volume is dedicated to the life and work of Gjerj Fishta, the founder of the publication, whose works were banned during the five decades of communist oppression. The first editorial bears the title "Lindi Dhe Nji Herë *Hylli i Dritës*" (Once Again *Hylli i Dritës* is Born).

In Vol. 2-3, a double issue, *Hylli i Dritës* prints a variety of articles and studies on different cultural issues facing Albania as well as historical studies and samples of recent poetry. The editorial is a reprint of Gjergj Fishta's enlightening article from *Hylli i Dritës* Vol. 1 of 1921 in which he discusses, from an intellectual viewpoint, the forces within Albanian society which at that time were threatening Albania's hard-won independence. Fr. Konrad Gjolaj, a present-day Franciscan who spent half in life in prison writes about the long awaited visit of the Pope to Albania. Professor Artan Haxhi discusses contemporary issues facing Albanian literary language. Fr. Zef Pllumi, acting editor of *Hylli i Dritës*, reproduces documentary accounts on Albania, of Fr. Pal Dodaj, the Franciscan provincial who died in a communist prison. The accounts of Fr. Dodaj cover the period 1907-1911. Robert Elsie, a regular contributor to the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*, tells of the discovery of a novel on Skanderbeg written by the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. Disraeli, who was Prime Minister during the time of Queen Victoria, published the work as a young man in 1833 with the title *The Rise of Iskander*. Elsie indeed assists many scholars who have long sought works about the Albanian national hero. Other contributors include Nuhi Vinca, Pjetër Arbnori (President of Albanian Parliament who spent 28 years in the infamous prison of Burrel), Dashnor Kokonzi, Rudolf Marku, and Mentor Quku. These authors take great pleasure in the re-appearance of *Hylli i Dritës* and all offered their best wishes for its continuing in the future to claim its rightful place in Albanian letters.

The acting editor of *Hylli i Dritës*, Franciscan Father Zef Pllumi, paid a brief visit to San Francisco in October of 1993 and met with members of the Albanian community. He spoke to them about the trials and joys of re-starting the publication. Fr. Pllumi was also interviewed on a local Catholic television program during which he appealed to American Catholics to support the Albanian Catholic press which has only now been able to come alive after 50 years of suppression. As a token of recognition and esteem Fr. Pllumi was offered a collection of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* and other publications of the Daniel Dajani Albanian Catholic Institute.

Our Institute (formerly the Albanian Catholic Information Center), which for twenty eight years has labored for the Catholic Church in Albania and on behalf of all oppressed Albanians, extends its prayers and best wishes to the publishers, editors and writers of *Hylli i Dritës*. May their labors flourish and inspire the new generation of Albanians.

Mbas Teje, the Voice of Catholic Youth, Publishes Anniversary Edition

In December of 1991 Fr. Nikoc Nogaj began one of the first Catholic publications in Albania after the communist repression, the first by and for Catholic youth. *Mbas Teje* (Following You) is its title and it is published by the Catholic youth association of the church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Shkodra under the direction of Fr. Nogaj. The publication in its articles and in its artistic layout, exhibits a great deal of life and enthusiasm as befits a work carried out by youth.

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The first anniversary edition (no. 11 of 1992) has as its cover a beautiful color photograph of young people at Mass filling the church of Our Lady of the Rosary. The anniversary edition also includes small reproductions of the covers of each of the previous editions of *Mbas Teje*. These covers are all indicative of the profound spiritual and cultural effort on the part of the staff of *Mbas Teje*, whose picture is printed on one of the inside pages of the publication. They are a group of several dozen Albanians eager to participate in the Church and Albanian society, to give their contribution to others, witnessing their faith in Christ and in the human person. Among the features of the anniversary edition is an article on Assisi and world peace, an interview with Archbishop Rrok Mirdita, Albanian poetry and a discussion on recent world history and culture.

The Catholic youth of Our Lady of the Rosary Church also published a calendar for 1993 which included the holy days and saints of the Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim religions. Fr. Nogaj and the youth of *Mbas Teje* are to be commended for their efforts to spread the light of faith in a spirit of unity with all believers. Their monthly publication and calendar are both inspiring and helpful and serve as a good example for the near-by peoples who are suffering civil strife and division.

Re-appearance of *Kumbona e së Dieles* (The Sunday Bell)

Kumbona e së Dieles (The Sunday Bell) was founded in 1938 as an inter-diocesan monthly publication. Its founder was Fr. Mikel Koliqi, the chancellor of the Shkodra Diocese and the brother of the well-known writer and educator Ernest Koliqi. Under his wise and scholarly direction the journal attained a wide distribution and considerable fame and success. *The Sunday Bell* was the official organ of the six Albanian dioceses which existed prior to the communist storm. It was noted for its high quality treatment of not only Catholic church affairs but also of historical, literary, catechetical and world topics. The last issue of *The Sunday Bell* was published in December of 1944 after which it was suppressed by the communist regime, together with every other Catholic publication, and its printing presses and offices confiscated.

With the return of religious freedom to Albania *The Sunday Bell* has begun publication once again. The first issue appeared in July of 1992 with a letter from the Apostolic Nuncio Ivan Dias who said,

"I announce with much pleasure the re-establishment of the publication *The Sunday Bell* . . . It will be a means of communication between the faithful and pastors and will be a useful resource for their catechetical and spiritual formation giving them the opportunity to enter more deeply into the mystery of God and His holy Church. I extend my best wishes to *The Sunday Bell* which for so long has remained silent. Now may it peal ever more vigorously to announce the magnificent resurrection of the Catholic Church in the Albanian land. I pray that Our Mother of Good Counsel, Our Lady of Shkodra be present and bless all who will work in the production of the publication and all who will read it."

The first issue carries an article by the founder and first editor Fr. Mikel Koliqi, who by the grace of God lived to see the rebirth of his publication. His article is entitled "The Sunday Bell Again in Print". In recent issues *The Sunday Bell* has carried articles and studies on a wide variety of church news, treating church doctrine, the rebuilding of Albanian churches, and missionary work. To the editors and staff of *The Sunday Bell* our Daniel Dajani Albanian Catholic Institute expresses its congratulations for a very fine example of rekindling the rich tradition of the Albanian Catholic press.

Jesuit Publication *E Ardhmja*

The Jesuits in Tirana began in 1991 to publish a monthly entitled *E Ardhmja* (The Future) which was the first Catholic periodical following five decades of communist oppression. This publication provided useful education and catechetical information for both Catholics and non-Catholics. *E Ardhmja* published cultural, political and literary views and was well received by Christians and Muslims alike. Unfortunately, according to news

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received from the director of the publication Fr. Ernesto Santucci, S.J., the publication has been temporarily interrupted due to the breakdown of the printing press and the shortage of funds to repair it. It seems pitiful that such a good and useful publication has had to close due to lack of funds.

Kultura dhe Jeta

Another important publication made its appearance as an independent voice in 1993 in Shkodra—*Kultura dhe Jeta* (Culture and Life). In its introductory editorial the following program was proposed: "Our publication's main aim is to present Albanian culture and its development which for almost five decades was neglected, sullied and interpreted entirely through the distorted prism of communist class ideology. During this period enlightened figures of Albanian culture were wiped out, and their works were either destroyed or forgotten. Others were called 'enemies of the people' and many others, who had built the foundations of Albanian culture, especially in Shkodra, were mistreated and persecuted. Purposely to shed light on this culture, to make it known to our Albanian people at home and in the diaspora, and to show to our new generation the damage which the communist dictatorship did to our culture for fifty years, we are printing the first issue with a desire and hope to be able to continue this project with important studies and articles."

Albina Gjondrekaj, the editor of *Kultura dhe Jeta*, hopes to organize a strong collaboration with other promoters of Albanian culture to work together for the sole purpose of advancing all the elements of culture in Albania's national life. *Kultura dhe Jeta* treats a variety of historical, literary and linguistic issues in its first edition. We applaud the efforts of this cultural elite of Shkodra and wish them continued success in their noble work.

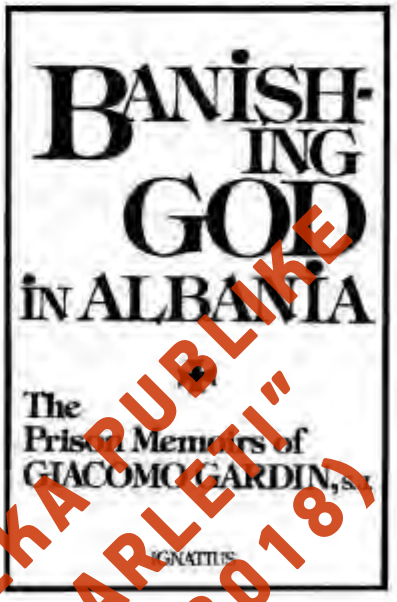
PALOKË PLAKU

BANISHING GOD IN ALBANIA

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

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

—Fr. Giacomo Gardin, S.J.



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IN MEMORIAM

William (Bill) L. Lindl
(1925-1993)



William (Bill) L. Lindl

William Lindl was a good friend of the Albanian people and the Albanian Catholic Institute. He passed away at his home in Kenosha, Wisconsin in late 1993. Just the month before his death, Mr. Lindl was awarded the Skanderbeg Medal by our Institute "in recognition of his devout commitment to the Albanian nation, in appreciation for his deep respect and love for the traditional values of Albanian people and in thanksgiving for his exemplary Christian life". For almost twenty years Mr. Lindl, his wife Alma and his entire family were strong supporters of our activities. Three times (in 1985, 1987, and in 1991) he traveled over 2000 miles to San Francisco from Kenosha with many members of his family to participate in the principal Albanian commemorations sponsored by the Institute. Mr. Lindl's interest in Albania began with his marriage to Alma Lazza whose parents were natives of Albania. Alma's parents were very much loved by Bill. He enjoyed listening to them tell about their life in Albania. Bill always dreamed of visiting Albania and was making arrangements to do so when he became ill.

Bill and Alma were the parents of five children and the grandparents of fourteen. He served in the United States Navy Air Corps during World War II and was a respected engineer in the state of Wisconsin. Bill and his best friend Arthur Richter, a fellow navy pilot, married sisters Alma and Agnes Lazza in a double wedding ceremony on July 4, 1949. At Thanksgiving, 1993 the Lindl and Richter families celebrated a family reunion at Disneyland. At a Mass of Thanksgiving, during the reunion, Bill was presented with the Skanderbeg Medal.

Over 500 friends and members of the family participated in the Funeral Mass which was celebrated in Kenosha by Revs. Gerald Brittain and Richard Schlenker. Our most sincere condolences go to Alma, their children and grandchildren and also to the Arthur and Agnes Richter family. ***May be rest in peace!***

MARIO FERRARO BRASACCHIO
(1911-1993)

Mario F. Brasacchio, a devout priest-poet and dynamic voice in favor of Arbëresh cultural traditions died peacefully last year in his beloved town of Pallagorio. Brasacchio wrote extensively. Both his prose and poetry, always concerned his Arbëresh roots. He often interceded with Italian government agencies on behalf of neglected Arbëresh causes. He urged the government to issue postage stamps and to name streets and plazas in honor of Arbëresh figures such as Francesco Crispi, Jeronim de Rada, Giuseppe Schiro and others who contributed to Italian independence and cultural development. Brasacchio was also a great promoter of co-operation between Italy and Alba-

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nia. Our *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* will miss his continuing support and his regular literary contributions. From the printing of his essay in our first volume (1980), Brasacchio almost always contributed an essay or poem for each issue of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*. In his honor we are reprinting his touching poem "As If Dreaming" which originally appeared in Volume 5. (1984) of the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin*.

As If Dreaming
by Mario Ferraro Brasacchio
translated by James Torrens, S.J.

On wings of thought
To those hills I fly,
To the open sky,
Which give such peace and charm
To Pallagorio.

From the mountaintop
I gaze on the wide roads,
I hear Albanian spoken
And turn child again,
Seeking dear faces gone.

I hear age-old bells ringing
Their mighty echo,
Over the mountains, over the sea,
Will reach the brothers of Albania,
Will sing assuringly.

Deep in our blood we bear,
We the Albanians,
Some immortal essence
That speaks with our fathers' tongue,
Makes and keeps us brothers,
Though scattered through the world.

For you, Albania, our love throbs,
Love that the old ones brought to Italy,
Love fostered in remembering sons;
It does not fear the mountain heights,
It knows the ways of the sea;
To you it stretches on the wind's wing,
Coming down with the dawn from heaven . . .
Have I dreamed this? seen it? heard?
A favoring future will make clear . . .

LIN DELIJA
(1926-1994)

Lin Delija, the acclaimed Albanian artist and painter from Shkodër, died in April 1994 at Antrodoco near Rome following a brief illness. Delija was born in Shkodër in 1926. He was educated at the Franciscan College Illyricum in his home town. After 1944 Delija, along with other Catholic students, opposed the anti-religious campaign of the communist authorities. He became a target of the communists for this stand. In order to escape arrest he fled to Yugoslavia in 1949. He spent time there in refugee camps before being



Lin Delija (c) with his friends from Shkodër Zef Shiraku (l) and Kolë Sinishta (r)

allowed to continue his studies. He studied at the Dalmatian Art Institute and at the Academy of Fine Arts in the Croatian capital of Zagreb. He was finally given permission to leave Yugoslavia to go to Rome. There he completed his art studies

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at the University of Rome by achieving the Master of Arts Degree.

Delija's entire life was dedicated to his art. He became a well-known artist in both Europe and the United States. He earned fame for his fine paintings of Albanian themes and for his realist style in depicting the tragic events following the communist takeover. Delija's artistic creations were much sought after. Many are now displayed in art galleries, museums and churches. He held exhibitions of his art in Rome, Florence, Milan, Palermo, Munich, Brussels, New York, and Detroit. Several of his paintings are on permanent display at the Vatican Art Museum in its collection of modern art.

In 1963 Delija found his artist's retreat in the village of Antrodoco. He became its honorary citizen, as well as professor at the Academy of Art in Florence. Delija, who never married, was beloved by everyone in the village and treated as an honored figure by all. In June 1976 under the auspices of "Free Europe", Delija exhibited in Rome many of his major works dealing with Albanians suffering under communist rule. Delija's spirit had been permanently influenced by the sight of his Franciscan teachers being maltreated, tortured and put to death. Their martyrdom and the wholesale destruction of churches and other cherished symbols of religious life did not drive him to despair however. He poured out his anguish into powerful visions of religious faith, compassion, and heroism overcoming the terror. These themes marked all of his works.

The Mass of Resurrection for Delija was celebrated in Antrodoco. The entire town participated. He was buried, according to his wishes, in the local cemetery of Antrodoco. Albanians from Rome and the surrounding area came to pray for him and to bid him farewell. The well-known Albanian Franciscan missionary and author, Fr. Daniel Gjeçaj, a former teacher of Dalija and fellow companion in the Yugoslav refugee camps, celebrated the Mass of Resurrection. Members of the Albanian Catholic Institute and the *Albanian Catholic Bulletin* will cherish his memory. Delija unceasingly encouraged and wholeheartedly supported our work to make known to the world the plight of Albanian Catholics. To his family in Shkodër and in Italy our sincere condolences. ***May he rest in peace!***

DURO CINI
(1916-1994)

Duro Cini, the distinguished Albanian patriot and much decorated Canadian citizen, died peacefully after a long illness in Toronto, Canada. Throughout his life he defended the rights of Albanians. He was a noted promoter of Albania's



Duro Cini (r) in a cordial discussion with Hon. [illegible] Davies (l), Premier of Ontario and Hon. Yure Shymko (c), member of Ontario legislature, Toronto, 1982

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rich cultural and religious heritage. Cini gained reknown for his life-long commitment to helping all people in need, irregardless of their race, religion, nationality or social background. He received numerous awards including the Ethnic Press of Canada's Award of Merit, the Province of Ontario's Medal of Good Citizenship, the Canadian Government's Award of Merit and the Prime Minister's Certificate of Appreciation.

Cini accomplished all this despite enduring many personal difficulties in life. Following the communist takeover of Albania most of his family were methodically murdered or imprisoned. Their property and goods were confiscated by the communists. Cini fled Albania in 1948. In Yugoslavia he spent time in prison for protesting violations of human rights in that country. In 1960 he immigrated to Canada where he soon became known by many as a trusted friend, wise teacher, skillful communicator and tireless worker for the benefit of Albanians in his adopted Canada.

The Albanian Catholic Institute gratefully acknowledges his fraternal encouragement to us and the service he rendered our Institute and its *Bulletin* in Canada. He was our liaison to the Albanian community in Canada and our link to Canadian human rights organizations, government agencies and officials. Cini, as a leader in the Albanian-Canada community, leaves a record of solid accomplishment of which all Albanians can be proud.

ESAD MEKULI (1916-1993)

Esad Mekuli, the father of modern Albanian literature in Kosova, passed away in August, 1993 at Prishtina. Mekuli was born in Gusinje, a region populated by Albanians under the jurisdiction of Montenegro. He studied veterinary medicine at the University of Belgrade. His whole life was dedicated to the advancement of Albanian culture. In 1949 he founded the literary monthly *Jeta e re* (New Life) and remained its editor until 1971. He published many Albanian translations of Serbian and Croatian literature. Among these was the traditional masterpiece of Montenegrin Orthodox literature, *Gorski Vijenac* (The Mountain Wreath), done in co-operation with our Board Member Zef V. Nekaj. Mekuli authored a good number of collections of poetry of which the most celebrated are *Për ty* (For You, 1955), *Poetët e Bagdalles* (The Poets of Bagdalla, 1966), and *Brigjet* (The Hills, 1981). Mekuli's works and his honest stand for human rights in Kosova will remain his permanent legacy among Albanians everywhere.



Esad Mekuli

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ALBANIAN LANGUAGE SECTION
PJESA SHQYP E BULETINI-T

11 Mars 1948 ..... Fritz Radovani

Martin Camaj - Njeriu dhe Poezia ..... Ardian Klosi

Koliqi Familjar ..... Petro Vuçani

Shtypi i Komitetit "Shqipëria e Lirë" 1956-1990 ..... Rexhep Krasniqi

Dom Ndre Zadeja - Jeta dhe Veprat ..... Gjon Sinishta

VOLUMI I FUNDIT I BULETINI-T KATOLIK SHQIPTAR

Me keq-ardhje të thellë njoftojmë lexuesat, miqët e dashamirët se me ketë numër do të pushojë botimi i matejshëm i *Buletini-t Katolik Shqiptar*. Gjendja shndetësore e editorit Gjon Sinishta, i cili ka mbajtë mbi shpinë pergjegjësinë e prodhimit e të shpërndamjes së revistës për 15 vjet rresht, e ban të pamundëshme vazhdimin e këtij botimi.

Redaksija e Këshilli Drejtues i Institutit Katolik Shqiptar "Daniel Dajani, S.J." në San Françisko, Kaliforni, së bashku me lexuesat e dashamirët tonë anë e mb'anë botës ku revista asht shpërnda, i janë mirenjofës editorit Sinishta për përpjekjet e sakrificat e tija të shumta me mbajtë të ndezun qirin e shpresës e të qindresës gjatë perjudhës s'errët të robnisë komuniste. *Buletini Katolik Shqiptar*, si dhe veprat e shkrimet tjera të Sinishtës, drejtuesit e mikut tonë të dashtun, do të mbeten nji dokument i pashlyeshëm i perjudhës tragjike që populli shqiptar përjetoi nën thundrën barbare të komunizmit.

Instituti Katolik Shqiptar "Danijel Dajani, S.J.", pa marrë para sysh mos botimin e matejshëm t'organit të vet, do të vazhdojë gjithënji misjonin e tij fetar e kulturor ndër shqiptarë e të huej. Për të bashkërendue e vijue veprimin e kontaktet që *Buletini* vendosi gjatë përjudhës pesëmbëdhetë vjeçare na shpresojmë të botojmë së shpejti nji FLETË LAJMESH n'anglisht e shqyp.

Shfrytzojmë ketë rasë me iu shprehë të gjithëve evarin tonë e t'editorit personalisht për përkrahjen e dhanun në botimin e revistës sonë *Buletini Katolik Shqiptar*.

Këshilli Drejtues i Institutit Katolik *Shqiptar*
"DANIEL DAJANI, S.J."
San Françisko, Kaliforni

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11 MARS 1948

Sa ma shum të mundohesh me dijtë e me ndigjue se çfarë asht ba n'ata vite në Shkodër, aq ma teper do të bindesh se çka komunistat kane ba në ketë qytet, ata nuk e kanë ba n'asnjë vend tjetër . . .

" - Edhe sot nuk dij pse më kishte dalë gjumi aq heret atë ditë - tregon një vajzë (I. S.) që atëherë ishte e vogël 15 vjeçe - veç ndigjova një zhurmë; si duket vinte prej burgut të Fretenvet që atëherë një mur e ndante shtëpinë tonë prej tij. Prej friget thirra nanen per t'a çue, por ajo si zakonisht ishte e zgjueme . . Nanë çka asht kjo zhurmë? "Si duket po i marrin!" - u pergjegj e shkreta. . . Ndigjoheshin zane: "Çou! . . . çou . . . ngrihu . . .! E nata sikur na sillte zhurmen e thumbave të çizmeve të xhelatve, që shkrepëshin kambët per dyshemet që ushtojshin ma shum se kurr. Ishte heret, si tash e kujtoj 4 e 20' e nades. Ndigjoheshin hekra. Ishe e re e nuk dijshe ma gjatë veç mbas pak çastesh çdo zhurmë humbëte bashkë me gervishtjet e shulave të dyervë, që atë natë dukeshin sikur janë me qindra që çilen e mbyllen. U nis nje makinë, mbas pak edhe një tjetër, e mu duk se ra prap qetësia e natës . . . Por, nuk zgjati shum, e mbas pak minutash kujtoj si tashti që trupi mu holl si peshku nga krizmat e mitralozave. Nanë! - thirra. "Flej bij," më tha ajo. Mbas pak krizmat e këputen zhurmën e zakonshme t'atyne orëve, që ishim mësue me ndigjue. Kujtoj disa krizma të shkëputuna që të shtojshin ankthin e pritjes se çka do të ndodhi e, që ma vonë mora vesht, se armët e fundit ishin ato që kriminelat e pangopun nga plumbat e automatikëve, u shprazëshin në gjokse, u shkrepëshin edhe nga një plumb kokës, per të mbajtë fjalën e tyne: Plumbin ballit! . . .

Nuk e kujtoj as si as tek, veç per pak minuta jam ndodhë tek Penda e Kirit. U afrova, u kapa per telim që mbështillte gurt, muejta me hypë sa me pa andej pendet një varg njerëzish të ramë per dhe' sejcili ndryshej prej tjetrit, mu duken si të lidhun . . . e, n'atë dritë që më dukej krejt e kuqe, prej reflekseve të pellgjeve të gjakut, në dritën e hanës muejta me dallue prej veshjes vetem një Frat, sepse atë kishe ma afer, nuk dij se kush ishte . . . . por, porsa kerkova më qartësue pamjen, më afrue afer mbi pendë nje çizme, mandej tjetra me holli poshtë andej kah kishe hypë. "Kur rashë e pashë vedin per tokë, ndigjova një za: Ik prej këtu! Ik, se nuk ke njeri tandin këtu!" . . .Ishte roja e dëres së burgut që më njifte kur shkojshe me çue ushqimet me nanen ose motren e vogël. Mbi atë pendë me automatik në dorë më dukej edhe disa herë ma i madh prej friget, ishte Elez Mesi me një pelerinë krahve. U mbështeta pak kohë me ftyrë per pendë e sikur u qetësova prej fjalëve të tij, i besova kur përsëriti: Ik kendej . Edhe unë ika . . .

Kur nana u këthye në drekë prej burgut, që shkoi me çue ushqimet, Ajo i solli me vedi sofatasat, së bashku me një strajcë të vogël me plaçka, ecte si e marrakotun, holl çka pat nder duer tek dera. u mundue me u mbush me frymë. I dola para e porsa më pau më tha: " Të ka rrejtë ai qen . . . .e kanë pushkatue! " Edhe sot kjo vajzë ka në ftyrë vijat e telave të Pendës së Kirit.

Kështu ndodhi atë ditë në 16 shtëpi të Shkodrës, me 11 Mars 1948 . . . . Me 11 Mars 1948, rreth ores 4.45' u pushkatuene:

1. **Imzot Frano Gjini, Zv. Nunsi Apostolik**
2. **Imzot Nikoll Deda, i Dioçezit të Sapes,**
3. **Át Mati Prennushi, Provincial i Françeskanve të Shqipnisë,**
4. **Át Ciprian Nika, Guardian i Kuvendit të Françeskanve të Shkodrës,**
5. **Caf Dragusha,**
6. **Cin Serreqi,**
7. **Guljelm Shtjna,**
8. **Ing. Fahri Rus[illegible],**
9. **Abdullah Kazazi,**
10. **Pjeter Pali,**
11. **Dulo Kali,**

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Msgr. Frano Gjini

VIKTIMA TË MASAKRËS TË 11 MARSIT 1948



Át Ciprian Nika



Át Matí Prennushi



Msgr. Nikollë Deda

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12. Xhelal Hardolli,

13. Zef Kol Prela,

14. Gasper Simon Gaspri,

15. Murat Hysen Haxhija,

16. Bilbil Hajmi, prej Jugut të Shqipnisë.

Me këta pak rreshta asht e pamuejshme me përfshi ata lot t'atyne familjeve që derdhën atë ditë të zezë, e ndoshta dy pika me përkasin edhe mue, por per mungesën e madhe të dokumentacionit, i kerkoj ndjesë të gjithë atyne personave, qen'ate ditë zije mund të kenë humbë njerzit e dashtun të tyne e, që kanë vuejt shpirtnisht e fizikisht per 45 vjet luften e pamshireshme të klasave, e që ndoshta unë edhe nuk i kam përmendë, mbasi per të shkrue të verteten e kesaj drame i perket kryesisht bashkevuejtësve, qofshin ata të hetuesive apo të burgjeve, ose familijarëve të tyne që këte të vertete e mbajten të ndryeme gjithmonë në zemrat e tyne, se asnjëhere s'ishte koha me folë.

Pushkatimi i tyne lidhet me disa akuza: kryesorja Levizja e Postribës, agjenturë në sherbim t'anglo - amerikanve, të Vatikanit, etj. etj. si zokonisht e perdorun në gjyqet komuniste. Por ajo që u kujtohet të gjithve ishte se Klerikët kishin "futë armë" në Elterin e Shna Ndout, në Kishen e Hulusi Hako, Dilaver Sadikaj Françeskanëve të Gjuhadolit, e me këto armë do të organizojshin "kryengritjen e armatosun" per të permbysë pushtetin; do të lidheshin me të huejt etj. Per këte ngjarje u mbushen mijra faqe proçesesh false, u xhiruen filma, u botuen albume fotografijash, libra me faqe të tana parathanjesh, u mbrojten tituj shkencor e anti shkencor prej atyne pseudointelektualve si: Jup Kastrati, Rakip Beqja, Viron Koka, Mark Dodani, Skender Drini e sa e sa të tjerë që edhe pse e dijnë të verteten per të cilën spijujt e Sigurimit vranë njeni tjetrin, gjoja per dekonspirim, prap se prap nuk rrfehen, makare para shpirtënve të atyne martirve që u pushkatuen PAFAJ.

Zhvillimet historike në Shkodër do të bajnë edhe ma të qartë për të gjithë lexuesit pse u veprue kështu, me pak fjalë: Qendra e vemendjes së regjimit komunist ishte Shkodra, sepse komunistët gjithmonë kanë konsiderue "popullin e Shkodres me krahinat për rreth popull armik", sepse këtu perqendrohej inteligjenca e vendit, këtu ishte Kleri Katolik, pa injoruar aspak atë mysliman, pra këtu ishte ajo pjesë e Shqipnisë që nuk pajtohej me komunizmin, sepse këtu ishte qendra e katoliçizmit e këtu ishte edhe qendra e atdhetarizmit. Puna ishte fillue ç'prej ditëve të para. Në fillim të 1945 u pushkatue Dom Ndre Zadeja së bashku me bajraktarët e Malsisë. U arestuen Dom Mikel Koliqi, At Dioniz Maka, At Gjergj Vata e At Gjakomo Gardin S.J. Nuk zgjatë shumë pushkatohet At Fausti, At Dajani, Françeskani At Gjon Shllaku e seminaristi Mark Çuni. Në 1945 vdes Imz. Bumçi, në 1946 vdes Argjipeshkvi i Shkodrës Imz. Thaçi. Mbasi arestohet e torturonet vdes në burgun e Durrësit edhe argjipeshkvi Vinçenc Prennushi. Arestohen në Tiranë, At Pjeter Mëshkalla e Dom Shtjefen Kurti, fillojnë vrasjet pa gjyq të Dom Luigj Picit, Dom Pjeter Çunit e Dom Aleksandër Sirdanit të mbytun në mënyrën ma shnjerzore. Pushkatohet Át Anton Harapi e mjaft shpejt Dom Alfons Tracki. Në vitin 1945 nxiret jashtë Delegati Apostolik Leone De Nigris, si dhe grupi i Jezuitve italian. Per herën e parë në historinë e Kishës Shqiptare emnohet Zv. Nunc Apostolik Imzot Frano Gjini, Abat i Mirditës, klerik i njoftun në të gjithë Shqipninë, mbasi kishte punue në Vlonë, Durrës ku ishte shugurue Ipeshkëv dhe njifte pëllambë për pëllambë Mirditën si Abat i saj. Kishte kulturë të gjanë. Burr'i qetë i njoftun në kuvendet e krahinës, shumë inteligjent dhe orator, për mbi të gjitha këto veti ishte TRIM jashta masë, gja e cila u provue ç'prej ditës së parë të arestimit me 15 Nandor 1946 e deri me 14 Mars 1948, që u pushkatue pa pranue asnjë akuzë dhe pagjyq, vetëm me një vendim marrë nder dhomat e Kuvendit të Fretënve, metodë e njoftun për ata që kaluene nëper atë burg të mbrëshëm. Hetuesi i njoftun Lilo Zeneli shkruen në proçesin e Imz. Gjinit: "... Je të më dalë një njeri në ballafaqim, e mandej do ta pranoj pushkatimin me knaqësi të madhe ..." Nder hetuesi Neki Ahmeti deklaron se i pandehuri nuk pranon asnjë lidhje me grupin e Demokristianes.

Pra, dihesin likujdue: Delegati Apostolik i pari, mbas Tij Imz. Gjergj Volaj e Nikoll Deda të

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Sapës, Provinçiali i Françeskanëve At Mati Prennushi, Guardiani i Fretenve të Shkodres, At Çiprian Nika, At Pal Doda, Drejtori i gjimnazit At Donat Kurti, i cili kishte thye vulen metalike të këtij institucioni, per t'mos ia dorzue komunistave që këta ta përdorshin për falsifikime dokumentash. arestohet Sekretari i Argjipeshkvit të Shkodres Dom Tom Laca, Famullitari i Shkodres Dom Mark Hasi 27 vjeç, At Gjon Karma, Rektor i Jezuitve te Shkodres, ndersa At Mhill Miraj, Dom Anton Muzaj e Dom Nikoll Shelqeti vdesin shumë shpejt prej torturave të bame në Sigurim prej hetuesve kriminela: Zoj Themeli, Lilo Zeneli, Neki Ahmeti, Dul Rrjolli, Nesti Kopali etj. që punuene ditë e natë per të pregaditë proçese false, per të bind popullin per "fajsinë"e këtyne klerikve. Në të njajtën kohë vetëm një firmë e Dyl Zajës duhej, e shumë shpejt ndër pranga do të ndodheshin edhe hoxhallarët Hafiz Ali Tari, Hafiz Derguti, Hoxhë Xhemal Naipi e mjaft atdhetarë të kulturuem, profesor, ingjinjer, avoketën, perkthyes të njoftun, shkrimtarë, filozof, artista, studenta e deri tek njerzit e thjeshtë e të ndershem me uratë e tespi në dorë, deri ditën e pushkamit si: Caf Dragusha, Dulo Kali, Guljelm Suma. Pjeter Pali, një mësues i urtë që len nusen me tri vajza jetime, akuzohet per strehim armësh, e pa armë personale në të 30 vjetat pushkatohet pa dijtë ku janë ato armë. Abdullah Kazazi nuk kishte nevojë për "prova", mjaftojshin kushrijt e pushkatohet edhe ky. Xhelal Hardolli per rrezik të tij dinte anglisht, "provë e sigurtë" agjent anglezi, i arestojnë nanën, gruen dhe i internojnë fëmijtë me far'e fis, Xhelalin e vrasin. Zef Kol Prela i lidhun me diversionin, nuk tregon shtëpijat ku strehohen diversantat në Malsi, prandej edhe ky pushkatohet. Ingjinjer Fahri Rusi, vjen prej një familjes intelektuale, nuk ka rendësi se asht ndër të radhët specijalist per pyjet, ky pushkatohet, ndersa vllaznit denohen rand; hija e tij tash 45 vjet thrret: "Vllazën, kushrij e shokë më besoni se jam pushkatue pafaj!" Ishte i ri 28 vjeç! Gesper Simon Gaspri e Murat Hysen Haxhija paraqesin rrezikshmëni, akuzohën për organizim të fshatarve përreth Shkodrës, prandej duheshin likujdue edhe këta dhe ashtu u veprue, u pushkatuene; e së bashkut me këte grup rreshtohet edhe Bilbil Hajmi, oficer prej Jugut, që per rrezik të tij vjen në Shkodër për t'u strehue e bjen në duert e komunistave, pushkatohet si agjent edhe ky si të tjerët.

Veprimet duheshin krye shpejt. Prej Enver Hoxhes kjo detyrë i besohet Mehmet Shehut. Ky dinte si me u sjellë me Klerin, ishte i njoftun si kriminel qyshë në luftën e Spajës, per veprimet që kishte krye atje. S'parit kerkohej bashkëpunimi, mbasandej shkeputja prej Vatikanit, tjerat vijshin ma vonë. Por, si e para si e dyta pa asnjë resultat, kjo provohet ndër të gjitha takimet e bame me Imz. Prennushin e Imz. Thaçin, At Mëshkallën, Dom Shtjefën Kurtin, Imz. Frano Gjinin dhe At Mati Prennushin, të cilit në Janarin e 1945 vetë Mehmet Shehu i kërkon me dijte qendrimin e Françeskanvet ndaj Pushtetit komunist, dhe si do të veprohet në t'ardhmen në lidhje me Vatikanin? At Matia u pergjegj: "Na do të kqyrim punën tonë, sepse nuk na lidhë asgja me komunistat e ateistat, ndersa për Vatikanin çdo gja aisht e përcaktueme në mënyrë të pandryshueshme". At Matia për këto njofton Argjipeshkvin e Shkodres Imz. Thaçin e ma vonë edhe Imz. Frano Gjinin kur emnohet Zv. Delegat Apostolik. Po në këte kohë ban edhe një mbledhje me të gjith Françeskanët e Shqipnisë, të cilët i ven në dijeni për veprimet e kryeme. Të gjithë e aprovojnë.

Imz. Frano Gjini i shkruen një leter Enver Hoxhës, kritikon veprimet e vartësve të tij, dhe kërkon me u takue per të qartësue çeshtjet që sa vijishin e baheshin përditë e ma serjoze. Ai nuk e pranon këte takim, sigurisht njifte forcen e mendimit t'Imzot Gjinit. Imz. Gjini i shkruen edhe letrën e dytë, në të cilën këtë herë i ban të qartë E. Hoxhës rrugën që do të ndjekë Kleri Katolik me qeverinë e Tiranës si dhe Vatikanin, njëkohësisht shprehet haptas kundër represionit që komunistat ishin tue krye ndaj popullsisë katolike, inteligjencës dhe Klerit. Letrat i dergon edhe në Vatikan, tuj bat diplomatik që ishte n'atë kohë këtu, si dhe ky kopje ia dergon Sekretarit të vet Dom Lec Sahatçiut, fati i të cilave s'dihet!

Kur diktatorit shpija i rrjedhte gjak çdo minut, këta veprime zemruese i shtojnë etjen për gjak, por edhe mendimin për forcimin e pushtetit diktatorial komunist. Kra, në fund të vitit 1946, fillojnë arestimet në masë me Lëvizjen e Postribës e vazhdojnë me prelatet e Klerit si dhe grupin e "

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Një foto e rrallë e disa antarve të *Veprimit Katolik Shqiptar, Tiranë, 1938.* Nga e mbajta (në qendër) dallohen klerikët e mirënjohtun Dom Mikel Koliqi, Dom Shtjefën Kurti e Át Mëhill Troshani, S.J., jezuit i ritit orjental. I dyti nga e mbajta në rreshtin e parë asht mësuesi e paharrueshëm ose "baba i letrave shqipe" si e quejshin shkollarët e asajë kohe, Profesor Karl Gurakuqi

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Klerikëve t'armatosun", tue veshë per zhgun të At Mati Prennushit e At Çiprian Nikës shpifjet e makinacionet e organizatorëve të futjes së armëve në Kishen Françeskane të Gjuhadolit, sëbashku me At Donat Kurtin, At Pal Doden, At Bernardin Palajn, At Frano Kirin, At Zef Pëllumbin etj. e deri tek Fra Ndue Vila që u masakrue pse nuk kishte dhanë çilsin e Kishës kur ishte kërkue prej njerëze të Sigurimit, per të krye vepren që e kryene nëprermjet të nji trathtari që sot thohet se asht n'Amerikë! . . . . .

Asht shumë e randësishme dhe duhet theksue se ky skenar i pregaditun me qellim në Kuvendin Françeskan të Shkodres që në Shqipni ka xanë vend qysh në Shek. XIII, dhe gjithmonë ka qenë qender e edukimit dhe të atdhe dashunisë, asht fakt i pamohueshëm se asht ideu, projektue e zbatue pikë për pikë prej komunistave jugosllav, me veglat e tyne besnike-komunistat shqiptarë. Në zyret e hetuesisë në Kuvend, në kornizat e fugureve ishte vendosë fotografia e Marshalit Tito. Oficerat jugosllav vizitojshin këte burg si një kopësht zoologjik, dhe zgjidhëshin gjahun me dorën e tyne. Ja se ç'tregon Z. Terezina Pali (Zorba): "Një natë erdhën në burg disa emisarë jugosllav, të veshun me kapicat ushtarake të tyne në krye. Pranë meje në një birucë ishte Fratel Gjon Pantalia, të cilin e dijshin se kush asht, mbasi e pyetën: "Kako si Pope?" Ky u përgjegj diçka sllavisht, ma vonë më tregoi se mbas pyetjes së tyne, ky i kishte pyet: "Kush jeni ju?" Ata i kishin thanë: "Tash po e merr vesht mbrama"! Dhe, me të vertetë në mbramje e muerme vesht të gjithë kush ishin ata. Ata merrshin në pyetje, sigurisht personat që konsideroheshin të rendsishëm, instruktojshin hetuesit shqiptarë si me veprue me ne, si me na torturue e çfarë barbarizmash me ba mbi ne. Këta tregoheshin të zellshem dhe vepronin egzakt simbas porosive të jugosllavëve. Sigurimi shqiptar kështu asht instruktue ma vonë edhe prej sovjetikëve e kinezve.

Sigurisht per "Përrallën e armëve" në Kishë nuk ishte zgjedhë paqellim At Mati Prennushi. Ai ishte një nder organizatorët e bashkëpuntorët e Ded Gjo'Lulit, se ky ishte Ai që kishte çue në gjoksin e tij Flamurin Kombëtar, që u ngrit në Deçiq me 1911. Per këte Serbët e patën dënue me vdekje, (por edhe pse e falën atëherë ata ia kishin mbajtë nder mend) e ma vonë pat qenë tue u pushkatue në lidhje me leviizjen ne Malsin'e Madhe prej Mbretit Zog. Ishte bashkëpuntor me Imz. Lazër Mjedën, At Gjergj Fishtën, Luigj Gurakuqin e Imz. Bumçin. Pra, çkado që mund të lidhte At Matin ne armë "besohej", por për të besue populli, duheshin ba me folë në "gjyqin e populllit", gja e cila nuk u realizue kurr me gjith torturat e mnershme që filluene në arestimet e shtatorit të 1946, e deri në ditën e pushkatimit me 11 Mars 1948. T'arrestuemit u mbajten rreth 17-18 muej në hetuesi e vetëm këte me mendue asht boll!

Bashkëvuejtësit flasin me dhimbje por edhe me krenari për kohën që kanë kalue me ata heroj! Z. Terezina Pali po më tregonte një ditë se si e kishin torturue për vdekje At Matinë kur i kishin filmue jugosllavët tek Elteri me armë në dorë, dhe mbasi e sollën në dhomë e pyeta: "Çka të bane Pader Mati?" Ai u pergjegj me za të ulët "Mos pëvet, por për mos me i kënaqë këta, eja të këndojmë", e filloi Ai vet i pari kangën. "Në Shkodër tonë ka ra një dritë" . . . U mundonte mos me na lanë me u ligështue para torturave, na epte zemër edhe ne!

Ndërsa për At Çiprianin, që me të vertetë ishte si nji Shejt, vazhdon Terezina, vuente shumë prej kambëve, se ia kishin djegë me hekur të skuqun, çorapët iu ngjitëshin për mish, kësi plagësh kishte edhe në shpinë, këmisha iu shkapte prej plagëve vetem kur e thirrte hetuesi, i cilli ma shpesh e sillte pa ndjenja se me kambët e veta, e nje gjithatë i gjente forcat me qindrue, e vetem me duratë!

Prof. Adem Bazhdari tregonte: "Nuk e harroj kurr Mons. Gjinin të varun në një pemë, po e torturojshin Zoj Themeli e Pjetrin Koira. Monsinjori ju lypi pak ujë, ata i mbushen një safë me urinë dhe ia dhane, ai kishte tri dit i varun pa pi ujë, kështu që piu çka i dhanë ata. E zgjidhen por ai nuk ecte. E sollen në dhomë, por mbas pak erdhën e na morën të dyve, sa m'errijtem në krye të shkallës se gurit, Pjetri hodhi poshtë At Matinë . . . mendueme se vdiq, por jo; ishte gjallë e i gjakosun ftyren." "E shifte"? na pyeti Zoji, "kështu dot ju a bajnë edhe ju". "Mos flitni po deshët!" "Ku hymë në dhomë Monsinjori tha vetëm kaq: "Per hatër të Zotit". Krahët, kambët e shpinën i

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kishte me plagë të qelbëzueme, ia mjekonin vetem me krypë e ia lynin me pezhgëve të nxehtë, stjetullat i kishte të hapuna." Ndersa për Imzot Nikoll Dedën thonte Ademi, se nuk njifej,ishte ba sa një fëmijë, i futëshin vezë të ngrofta nen stjetull, e megjithate nuk i ndigjohej zani.

Kater oficera të naltë kishin ardhë prej Tiranës, njeni dukej jugosllav i tregonte i ndjeri Caf Dragusha një bashkëvuejtësi. N'ato dite mjerimi që po kalojshin së bashku në qeli, agjentat ngulshin kambë me dijtë prej Cafit të vertetën; janë ba ose jo mbledhjet per të cilat bahet fjalë në proçese, në shtëpinë e Cin Serreqit? Ky u ishte pergjegjë: "A janë ba a nuk janë ba mbledhjet unë nuk e dij, por për derisa më keni perzie edhe mue, e thoni se ke qenë edhe ti, e mbasi unë nuk kam qenë, edhe mbledhjet nuk duhet të jenë ba!" , dhe perfundonte i shkreti Caf, "ah këta komunistat janë derbedara!" Në darkë i kishte hapë sportelin Fadil Kapisyzi e i kishte thanë: "Po ti Caf, na ishe ba edhe avokati i Cin Serreqit, dije mirë se një qind krena me pasë, një nuk të shpëton as ty as atij, a more vesht?" ; dhe me të vertetë e kishte mbajtë fjalën . . .

Z. Ana Daja kishte vrejtë njëherë P. Matinë të lidhun për një pemë, s'e bajshin ma kambët se ishte e katerta ditë që ishte në shi. Afrohet Pjerin Kçira dhe e pyet: "Hë P. Mati si po e kalon?" "S'ka ma mirë, i pergjegjet, shyqyr po bjen edhe shi e po lahëm, se më ka pas qenë ba një vjet pa u la." Pjerini thirri një polic, e zgjidhi P. Matinë e ma sollen në dhomë. Unë i thashë, "po ti sa mirë u kujtove me i thanë ashtu!" Qeshi . . e më tha, "këtyne kur të bajnë keq, duhet me u thanë se jeni tue më ba mirë, se këta bajne të kundertën, aty e kanë kënaqësinë!". . .

Z. Elez Troshani thotë "Lum ata që kanë ndejë ata muej para pushkatimit me Monsinjorin e P. Matinë, se nuk kuptohej ku po të çojnë, a në piknik, a por me të pushkatue. Ata të largojshin frigën e vdekjes! . . ."

Z. Ragip Meta, i dënuem atëherë me vdekje tregon, se "ishim në një dhomë 25 vetë të dënuem me pushkatim. Kur hapej dera u çojshim me shkue të parët m'u pushkatue. Na vinte keq kur nuk na merrshin, kaq na ishte merzitë jeta prej torturave, urisë, etjes e pagjumsisë."

Z. Tom Leci pyet Hafiz Dergutin, pse të torturojnë kaq shumë, çka kerkojnë prej tejet? Ai i përgjegjët: "Kerkojnë dëshmi per priftën me qellim me na përça, e nesër me thanë se u pushkatuen priftnit me dëshmitë e hoxhallarve. I u kam thanë se unë këte punë nuk e baj, më vritni e bani çka të dueni!"

Një bashkëvuejtëse difton: ". . . . .na rrahëshin, na shajshin me fjalët ku ishin ma të ndytat. Ishim të reja 18 vjeçe, nuk i kishim ndigjue kurr ato fliigështina, na torturojshin e mandej na çveshëshin, dhe vetem ndër këmisha na hudhëshin ndër dhomat e priftënve . . . por ata menjëherë na mbulojshin me pelerinat e tyne, e vetë mërdhitëshin të shkretit gjithë natën. Kur na delte gjumi i ndigjojshim tue thanë uratë. Na i u thojshim, "merre tash ti e flej pak, se nuk ke nbyllë sy gjithë natën." "Jo, jo, vazhdo e flej ti, thonin ata, flej edhe pak se ju jeni të reja, na jemi të mësuem e durojmë." Porosia e tyne ishte: "Duroni për hatër të Zotit!" Ata janë në Parriz! Kur u pushkatuen të gjithë brohoritën njëzani: "RRNOFTË KRISHTI MBRET, RRNOFTË SHQYPNIJA EDHE PA NE!"

SHQIPNIA RRNON! . .historia e Shqipnisë asht një libër i madh, bile kohët e fundit i pa shkruem. U patën mundue me i shkrue një rrasë "Marrshon Shqipnia Socialiste", por një ditë u thye, ndër fletët e saja historia e vitit 1948 fatkeqësisht u persërit prap me 1968, i famëshmi "Revolucion kultural" plot mbas 20 vjetesh edhe njëherë arestime, tortura, internime, qjyqe e pushkatime, e një ditë do të shifshim me sytë tonë drejtue me gisht [illegible] Dom Frano Illia "Me e pushkatue edhe këte". Ishte 25 Prilli 1968, vetëm se ishte prift, dijetar, shkrimtar e ATDHETAR, e edhe ky kisht [illegible] punue vetëm për Shqipni . . . .Një mbrekulli e vertetë me 25 Prill 1993, 25 vjet-ditë në ditë me datën e dënimit me pushkatim-plot mbas 45 vjetesh të pushkatimit të prelatve të Klerit në vitin 1948, Shejtnia e Tij Papa Gjon Pali i II do të shuguron me duert e tija Dom Frano Illinë, Arqipeshkëv [illegible] Shkodrës . . . . .

Si duket me të vertetë duhet të këndojmë:

"Në Shkodër tonë ka ra një dritë . . . .!"

Fritz RADOVANI

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MARTIN CAMAJ - NJERIU DHE POEZIA

Në këta dhjetëvjeçarët e fundit Shqipnia ka perjetue shumë ma teper të këqia se të mira, shndrrimet politike n'Evrope pas luftës së dytë botnore prune ma teper fryte t'idhta se peme të pjekuna për shqiptarë. E megjithate, mes errësinës pati drita, pertej telave më gjemba t'izolimit jetonin mendje e shpirtna të lirë, permbi bajatizimin dhe censurimin e nji gjuhe e nji letërsie kaq të vjetra sa ato shqipe u ngritën shkrimtarë të perbotshëm siç që dhe Martin Camaj. Le të më lejohet këtu paraqitja e shkurtë e personalitetit të tij, veshtruem në kandin e jetës dhe në kandin e poezise së tij.

JETA

Martin Camaj leu në Temal, në malësinë e thellë të Dukagjinit. Vinte prej nji familjeje ma së të thjeshtë e prej nji krahine nga ma të vorfnat e Shqipnisë; kurse jeten do ta mbyllte si njeni prej poetëve ma të kultivuem e ma të brishtë evropianë. Jeta e tij shpesh na duket si anderr, me pamjet e veta të zymta po edhe me tablotë magjike. Pak ditë pasi kish vdekë Martini në Mynih, i bamë nji vizitë familjes së tij në Dukagjin së bashku më fotografen Jutta Benzenberg. T'afermit e Martinit jetonin aty siç do të kenë pasë jetue dukagjinasit edhe para ndonji shekulli, ndaj dhe nuk arrinim me e realizue krejt rrugen nga që ngjitë Martini për me u ba ai njeri e ai personalitet që kishim njoftë nga disa takime në Mynih. Kushdi, ndoshta e tillë ashtë vetë historia paradoksale e Shqipnisë qi prodhon kësi të kundertash. Por le t'i kthehemi jetës tij. Fëmija, i cili merrej më ruejtjen e dhenve e të dhive si gjithë moshatarët e tij në malsi, u zbulue nji ditë nga etenit jezuitë, të cilët e moren për me shkollue në Shkodër. Siç dihet kleri katolik i Shqipnisë së Veriut, i lidhun ngushtë aso kohe me gjithë shtresat e popullsisë deri te fshatarët e thjeshte, për më lavrue kulturen shqiptare e kunderveprue ndaj etjes për ekspansion të orthodoksisë sllave, kishte ushqye në Shkodër zemnen e vërtetë kulturore të vendit. Në Shkodër punonin deri në mbarim të Luftës së Dyte Botnore nji numër seminaresh, shkollash, bibliotekash, shtypshkronjash, redaksish dhe shtëpisë botuese, të cilat i kishin dhanë nji lulëzim të panjohun deri aty qytetit të moçem ilir. Këtu mundi me mësue edhe Martin Camaj, tue i vue themele të forta ndjeshmenisë së tij të lindun për gjuhën e për krijimin poetik. Me mbarimin e luftës djaloshi do të punonte si mësues në nji fshat pranë Shkodrës. Kjo qe edhe koha e stuhisë komuniste mbi Shkodër, mbi institucionet e saj kultorore e mbi klerin katolik. Të panumërt dijetarët, shkrimtarët, klerikët, mesuesit, seminaristët që rane viktimë e burgimeve, torturave dhe ekzekutimeve. Regjimi i Tiranës ish aso kohe nji vasal i armatës jugosllave: veç më servilizmin e tij ndaj Beogradit dhe me alergjinë e vjetër serbe ndaj kësaj keshtjelle kulturore të Shqipnisë së Veriut mundet me u shpjegue brutaliteti i stuhisë mbi Shkodër. Martin Camj mund të radhitet ndër njerezit "me fat" të asaj kohe; ai ia doli me u arratisë prej Shqipnie me 1948, në nji kohë kur shokët po i zhdukëshin ditëperditë prej syve.

Në krye studioi filologji në Beograd. Në vitet '50 botoi dy vëllime me poezi në Prishtinë. Këto përmbledhje kishin me dhanë sinjalet e para për poezinë kosovare dhe kishin me ndikue nji numër poetësh të mavonshëm të kësaj treve. Tema qendrore e vëllimeve "Nji fyell ndër male" dhe "Kanga e vrrinit" janë imazhet lirike dhe dramatike prej atdheut të humbun.

Në vitin 1956 Camaj u vendos në Romë. Këtu studioi në universitet lande letrare dhe filozofike. Midis profesorëve të tij qe edhe poeti italian zamadh Giuseppe Ungharetti, i cili më poezinë e tij hermetike do të ndikonte deri diku zhvillimin e mateishem të Camajt. Martin Camaj promovoi këtu me nji disertacion mbi Gjon Buzukun. Me këte punim qëset nji seri e gjatë veprash filologjike-linguistike, të cilat plotësojnë personalitetin e Camajt e pa të cilat ai nuk do mund të kuptohej. Jetën mësuese shpesh dijetarinë dhe poezinë të tij i paraqesin si mjeshtri të papajtueshme, gati si të kunderta. Domethanë profesori i shkencës

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Martin Camaj si student në Beograd, 1952

ekzakte nuk mundet me qenë poet i "pafre". Ashtë ky në të vërtetë nji paragjykim. Martin Camaj na vërtetoi të kunderten, mandej me vetëdije të plotë. Ai ashtë po aq mjeshtër i letersisë moderne shqipe saç ashtë edhe nji personalitet i albanologjisë bashkëkohore. I detyruem të rrojë në mergim, veç intensiteti i studimeve mbi gjuhen shqipe mundej më ia plotesue disi mungesën e takimit të natyrshëm më vendlindjen dhe më publikun e vet. Madje, sa ma shumë vepra teorike dhe linguistike shkruente, aq ma e rafinueme dhe shumëkuptimshe bahej vepra e tij letrare. Nji shembull të ngjashëm na kujton filozofi dhe shrimtari italian Umberto Eco që iu kthye fiksionit vetëm pas nji serie veprash teorike - ndonëse motivimi i tij për me shkruejtë letërsi të mirëfilltë ka qenë i ndryshëm nga ai i Camajt.

Në Itali Camaj pati nji bashkëpunim të bëgatë më Ernest Koliqin, fryti kryseor i të cilit që revista "Shejzat", nji nga ma të mirat në botën kulturore shqiptare. Po këtu ai kreu edhe studime të shumta mbi të folmet arbëreshe, nga të cilat nuk kish me u shkëpute deri në fund të jetës.

Aty nga mesi i veteve '60 Camaj kaloi në universitetin e Mynihut, ku mbrojti docenturen më nji punim mbi fjalëformimin në gjuhën shqipe. Këtu ai ngriti dalëngadalë dhe më pasion të vetmen katedër të albanologjise në vendet e gjuhës gjermane. Për mëse 20 vjet dha mësim në Mynih Martin Camaj, e në intervale të rregullta botoi nji numër veprash letrare: poezi, proza poetike, drama, romane. Përmendim ndër to: "Lirika mes dy moteve", "Poezi", "Dranja", "Buelli", "Palimpsest", romanet "Rrathë" dhe "Karpa" etj. Këta libra mjeshtri i botoi më shpenzimet e veta dhe sa qe gjallë mundi t'i shpërndajë vetëm në nji rreth të ngushtë miqsh. Por janë libra që shumë shpejt, falë cilësisë së tyne, po zanë vendin e vet të pashlyeshem në letersinë shqipe. Edhe nji shikim i shpejtë mbi poezinë e Camajt na mjafton më kuptue së sa ma nalt qëndrojnë ato krahasue më "turmën e poetve të tjerë" të cilët në Shqipni, për turpin e tyne, poezinë do ta vinin në radhë të parë në shërbim të Enver Hoxhes dhe Partisë së Punës. E këte shkëputje nga bashkëkohasit krijues Camaj e arrin pa qenë kurrsesi "poet politik", por thjesht më magjinë e fjalës së tij shqipe.

Edhe në Shqipni, si dhe në vendet e tjera të Lindjes, mbas vitit 1990 sistemi komunist u shkërmoq. Megjithatë ishte shumë vonë për nji takim të fundit të shkrimtarit më atdheun e vet. Realiteti i Shqipnisë që lanë pas e tepermi nga vizionet e rinisë së tij. Vet kësaj Martin Camaj vuente prej kohësh nga nji semundje e randë. Vdiq më 12 mars 1992.

POEZIA

Nuk ashtë e thjeshte poezia e Camajt, por nëse e kuptojmë dhe e shijojmë aq ma thellë na hyn ajo në vetëdije. Këtu do mundohem më paraqitë shkurtimisht katër tipare kryesore të kesaj poezie: *Vizioni i Shqipnisë së Veriut; themelet mitologjike; dhuna e poezit; rezistenca e poetit.*

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Vizioni i Shqipnisë së Veriut e shoqënoi Camajn prej poezive të para e deri në mbarim të jetës. Në këte vizion hyjnë kryesëpari peizazhet e Dukagjinit, peizazhe të rrepta më male të nalta, lugina të thella, shkëmbenj të zhveshun, po edhe më bjeshkë të buta zhytun në gjelbrim; këtu bajnë pjesë edhe njerzit më luftën e tyne të përditshme për mbijetesë, më legjendat dhe ritet e tyne të lashta; në këte vizion, së fundi hyn edhe fëminia dhe rinia e tij e parë mes këtyne peizazheve e këtyne njerëzve. Tipike ashtë për Camajn së ai Shqipninë e Veriut nuk e trajton thjesht si nji objekt malli, por e ka para së gjithash burim të poezisë së vet. Ja ku i gjejmë për shembull të permbledhun gjithë këta elemente në nji peozi si:

Dita e malit tim

Dheu im ashtë i përmendun
për humneret e thella
ndër banorët e malit e të fushës
deri në dét. Mbramjeve atjè
ndëgjohet klithma e grizhlës
ndër kthetrat e shqipes e shpirtì i sáj
u flijohet hijevet.
Atje lot drita në sytë e njerzve tash e parë
e epshet s'i njeh kurrkush më emën.
Shpagimi më gjak ashtë, për shembull,
gjarpën nën gûr e gjarpni vetë
na qenka mende femne
nën ruben e bardhë ose të kuqe.
Në muzg atje secili prek ballin e vèt
e ndin ndër gishta fillin e jetës
e gëzohet.

Gjejmë këtu edhe nji element tjetër i cili ende nuk u permend; si t'i kuptojmë vargjet:

"Shpagimi më gjak ashtë, për shembull,
gjarpën nën gûr e gjarpni vetë
në qenka mendje femne
nën rubën e bardhë ose të kuqe"?

Gjarpni ashtë figurë qendrore e mitologjisë së Shqipnisë të Veriut, të populluemе më gjithfarë zotnash e simbolesh të besimeve natyrore. Edhe ruba e bardhë ose e kuqe lidhet drejtperdrejt më doket në gjakmarrje; por për poetin ajo megjithate nuk ashtë e ngarkueme veç më shenjat negative të gjakmarrjes, mbasi gjarpëni-rubë nenkupton edhe nji zgjuarsi të hollë, ate që në Shqipni e quejmë "mendjefemën".

Mitologjia në poezinë e Camajt përmban simbole të shumta e nji pjesë të mirë të tyne i hasim edhe në traditën gojore të shqiptarëve. Përmendim këtu ata ma të shpeshtët: guri, ujku, dreni, orat, konat, sqepat e shpendëve grabitqarë, sytë e kafshëve shtepiake, numrat tri, shtatë etj. etj. Lidhja e ngushtë e kësaj poezie më mitologjinë e bashkëvendasve, i jep Camajt një substrat e një themel që ia lëshon rranjët thellë në shekujt e historisë shqiptare, njikohësisht ajo e ban ate nji poet modern, sepse kjo simbolikë nuk i shërben ndonji rievokimi të së kaluemes s'atdheut (nocionet banale të patriotizmit ishin të hueja për Camajn), por në radhë të parë shprehjes së gjendjeve të brendshme psikologjike e dridhjeve ma të fshehuna të shpirtit.

Dilemat e poetit. Vetë jeta e tij krijoi edhe kontrastet malësi/fushë; jetë katundi/jetë evropiane; poezi shqipe/ rryma kozmopolite; botë mitike/ botë e shkencës. Japim për këtë nji shembull lakonik:

Mes dy botnave

Bletën e ambël e mbledhkajën pelini
e njofti çdo lule ndër fusha lona
e kam mjaltë e helm ne gjak.
Hija e tij et më zemër ari
e kobure në brez më ngreh më vehte
dhe mund të jetoj me shpirt.
Xhixhilloja dritash qytetesh të larga

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e inxhij ndër qafa delikate

më përzihen ndër sy.

Prej të kundërtave Camaj arriti më krijue harmoni, rrymat e kujtimeve e të mallit ai mundi më i kthye në simbolikë për poezinë e vet. Natyrisht qi poeti vuejti shumë prej humbjes së vendlindjes, natyrisht së shumë here duhet t'i këte dalë Dukagjini n'andërr, por vujetjen ai dijti më e kalue nepër filtrin e filozofisë poetike e jo në atë të sentimentalizmit.

Elegji e parë

Kur kam më qenë i këputun
nga mundi i vjetve të rrëpita sa 'i shkamb,
mos të vijë keq ty, Taze, për mue
të shtrimë mbi drrasat e vdekjes,
kingj i ngatuem për flije.
Leni plakat të qajnë mbi mue at ditë
për njerzit e vet, vdekë qyshë kúr.
Edhe një amanét, moj grue:
kur vdiq im atë, premë dy qé
më ngimun të unshmit e thneglat e lamit
më grimca buke.
Por un do të vdes mes njerzve gjithmonë
të ngishem,
prandej ndër drekët e mija qitni
vetëm kafe të idhta.

Le të vrojtojmë së fundi *rezistencen e poetit*. Si shkrimtar i mergimit Camaj përfaqeson në letërsinë shqipe të mbasluftës nji gjymtyrë lidhëse mes poetëve shqiptarë veriorë të gjysmës së parë të shekullit tonë dhe poezisë kontemporane t'Evropës. Mund të themi sot pa ngurrue së Martin Camaj e ngriti lirikën shqipe prej ideologjizimit të plotë dhe mediokritetit poetik në nivele ende të panjohuna për të.

Edhe thjesht gjuha e tij nenkupton rezistencë. Ndërkohe që në Shqipni varianti geg i gjuhës letrare u qujt më dekret i vdekun dhe u ndalue prej shtetit në çdo formë, Camaj nuk hezitoi për asnji çast më shkruejtë deri në fund idiomën e tij natyrale. Dhe jo vetëm më vepren mirëfilli letrare por edhe më vepra teorike, më gramatika e libra mësimi Camaj kambënguli në këte traditë shumëshekullore të gjuhës sonë letrare. Ndaj mundemi më thanë sot së ai, bashkë më kolegë të tjerë tij të mërgimit, ia doli më e shpëtue gegënishten letrare për breznitë e ardhshme.

Dy vjet pas vdekjes Martin Camaj flet më në edhe ma shumë së dikur. Puna për më njohë dhe përhapë vepren e tij veç sa ka fillue.

Ardian KLOSI



Nji takim i përzemertë miqësh e baskëpuntorësh, Prof. Ernest Koliqi (mbrapa), Martin Camaj dhe kritiku i njohtun letrar Prof. Krist Maloku, Romë, 1962

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KOLIQI FAMILJAR

Kur miku e shkrimtari Kosovë Rexhë Bala më telefonoi së bashkatdhetarë banuesa në Svedi kishin vendosun më perkujtue Ernest Koliqin më rastin e 90 vjetorit të lindjes, mbeta si i shtangun e nuk mujta as më e falënderue, aq që gezimi; por u detyrova t'i shkruejshem së "gjendja shëndetsore e emja nuk asht aspak e knaqshme e së vetëm kjo më shtërngonte mos më u gjetun atje".

E, më të vërtetë ashtu ndodhi. Mbas pakë ditve nji tjetër prekje zemre më ndali e u shtrova përsëri në spital. Mjeku gjithmonë më porositë të kem kujdes e të rrijë i qetë. Ashtu jam kah baj tash sa vjet. Vijoj më vuejtun nga kardiopatija e dy herë më ka ra pika. Të paren, shum vjet kanë kalue, e më kujtohet së Ernesti do të shkonte në Palermë për nji konference mbrenda pak ditve. Kur e njoftuen së unë, papritmas e tue punue, kisha pase ket goditje e më kishin shtrue në klinikë, erdhi menjiherë e i tha të birit: "Mark, më telefonue në Palermë për të njoftue së nuk mund të shkoj prej kesaj ngjarje të papritun!" Posa isha zgjue e ndigjova gjithçka, thirra Markun e e porosita që mos t'u ngutte e të pritshim sëpakut 48 orë për më dijtun diagnozën e mendimin e mjekve. Deshti Perendija e çdo gja duel në rregull, por Ernesti nuk u bindte e m'asht deshtun më e lutun për më u nisë e së do t'a mbajshim në dijeni më telefon ma së njihere në dite.

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Por, le të kthejmë tek Koliqi familjar.

Vonë, unë kam muejtë me ndejtun më Ernestin për kohë të gjatë e më bisedue e më ndigjue për gjithçka më tregonte, më mesonte e m'udhezonte. Kjo ndodhi pikerisht mbas vjetit 1956 kur u ktheva definitivhst në Romë mbas kryemjes së studimeve universitare në Palermë.

Dëshiroj më e theksue edhe periudhen e Palermës. Atje pata fatin të njifeshem me Prof. Karl Gurakuqin, Mjeshtri i Gjuhës Shqipe, si e quente im kunat. Bursa e studimeve ishte e mjerueshme n'atë kohe, e atëhere Profesori më udhëzoi në daktiloshkrimin e tezave të doktoratave. Qe diçka teper e dobishme së "ndodhesha më ndonji liretë në xhep"! Kjo veprimtari u përhap tue qenë së Prof. P. Zef Valentini, para Komisjonit të Doktorave, gjithmonë përseriste së "duhet përkrahun kandidatja për kujdesin e treguem në daktiloshkrimin e teksteve në gjuhen shqipe": shtohesh nota e votuesit! Kete e bana, jo vetëm për vehte, por edhe për Ernestin së donte më pasun nji kopje të çdo teze. E, më këte rast, mund të thom së filloi bashkëpunimi i em më Të.

Psc? Sepse kur u ktheva në Romë isha i papunë e vendosa më emigrue për në Shtetet e Bashkueme. Gjatë periudhës së pritjes, çdo ditë shkojsha në shtëpi për me i rregullue arkivin e më i daktilografue gjithçka ai kishte nevojë. Isha i lumtun kur mendojsha së disi po i vlej këtij personaliteti. E fillova më e njohun mirë mbasiqë rrijshem më Ernestin tue bisedue, sidomos mbas darke, kur Motra e femijët shkojshin më flejtë. Ma parë pra, nuk kisha pasun rast sepse as në Shkodër në



Koliqi ndërmjet kunatit, dr. Petro Vuçani dhe djalit, dr. Marco

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shtëpi të Koliqve nuk kisha shkue kurr, megjithse më kishte ftue ma së njiherë.

I kisha krye gadi krejt formalitetet e mërgimit. Ndodhi që Ernesti u ftue në Spanjë për nji konferencë. Nuk donte që t'emigrojsha së thonte: "Më duhet nji person që të më mbajë në rregull çdo gja". Edhe unë e mendojsha këte, porse nuk kishte rruge tjetër për mos më ndejtun "në shpinë të Tij". Në Spanjë fletoret kishin njoftue lajmin e konferencës. Atje banon e punon ende Dr. Franz A. Suma, i biri i nji atdhetari që kishte qenë i detyruem me u largue nga Shqipnija, në mos gabofsha, aty kah 1924. E ama e Franzit e lexon padeshtas lajmin e ia tregon të birit. Nuk i besohesh e, natyrisht, shkuen përnjiherit më u takue sepse ishin edhe miq familjarë në Shkodër, e nji miqsi e ngushtë i lidhte të dy familjet. Më tregonte Ernesti së tue bisedue "Franzi më tregoi së kishte nji pune më randësi tek nji Laborator medicinalesh më qendër në Pisa". E pernjiherit edhe Ai i tregon së "edhe unë kam nji kunat, papunë, e doktorue në Farmaci", Franzi nuk i premëton gja, por "do të mundohem", i thotë.

Nuk duhet harrue së kjo ndodhte, më duket, aty kah shtatori i vjetit 1959. Kthehet Ernesti e më tregon ngjarjen. I thash së "po pres derisa mos të më therrasin për emigrim". Ishte i lumtun sepse shpresonte që unë të sistemohesha e të qindrojsha pranë Tij. Duhet pasun parasysh së Shejzat ndodheshin në qarkullim për dy vjet e ma teper, e më krenari, mund të thom së isha ba "i domosdoshem e i pazavendesueshem" për mbarevajtjen, qortimin e nisjen e revistës.

Para së më vazhdue, më duket e arsyeshme më tregue si filloi botimi i Shejzave

Kur erdhi n'Itali i paharrueshmi Martin Camaj, Koliqi gjindesh në nji kuvend jashta Romës, ku shkonte shpesh më pushue e më punue në qetësi. Martinin e shoqnonte jezuiti P. Luigi Rosa që kishte qenë në Shqipni për sa e sa vjet. Ernesti i tregoi gjendjen e së nuk mund t'i siguronte ndonji pune të sigurtë, perveç së bursës së studimeve për më marrun doktoratën edhe n'Itali. E ashtu ndodhi. Martini, mendoi e vendosi qendrimin këtu.

Me botimin e Shejzave, unë pata nji farë "muhabeti" më t'im kunat. Gjendja e Tij financjare nuk ishte aspak e lulzueshme. Koliqi ka sakrifikue gjithmonë çdo gja për familjen e familjarët. Shiti shtepin e gjithçka tjetër për më mbajtun Babën, Nanën, Vllaznit e Motrat. Zemërgjansija e Tij edhe përkundrejt të gjithë atyne që i janë drejtue, ka qenë e habitshme dhe e pabesueshme: kurr nuk asht largue ndonjeni pa pasun nji diçka, qoftë edhe "të vogel"! E kur mësova shpenzimet për revistë, i kundërshtova, jo për revistën, por për gjendjen financjare. Numuri i parë asht botue më nji hua marrun tek nji prift jezuit! Nuk m'u durue, por ime Moter, Vangjelija e dashtun, më tha tekstualisht: "Ti mos u trazo e mos u perzie! Ai din çka ban!" E sot, kur më kujtohen këto shprehje më dridhet shpirti e mendoj sa të drejtë kishte Ajo e cila nuk mendonte tjetër vetëm më e shikue bashkëshortin të lumtun, e vetën të gatëshme më ba çdo sakrificë.

Pastaj, Shejzat vazhduen e patën suksesin që meritojshin e sot kurrsesi nuk po mund të zavendesohen. Vetem së pritja e numurave të parë e trazonte e nuk kishte durim derisa delte, së donte më dijtun mendimin e të tjerve.

Unë kisha punën e Ernesti kur u sigurue, që aq i lumtun sa më thonte shpesh: "Petraq, Perendija na ndihmoi mue e ty: do të vijojsh punën në Romë e jam i bindun së nuk do të kursehesh edhe për revistë." Koliqi ishte nji person që dinte më e afrue tjetrin e më "ta hangë [illegible]emren", si thuhet në Tirane. Me mendue së për çdo numur që shkruente "Xixat" apo "Fjala [illegible] fjalen" etjera, kërkonte më ia lexue ndonjëherë, qoftë Martinit, apo mue apo ndonji mikut a dashamiri tjetër për më dijtun mendimin, kështuqe mos të "gabonte"!

Nuk duronte "gjysmakët"; atë që përmendojnë së dijnë më shkrue "shqipja" apo nuk dijnë së ku ashtë "shqipja". Gezimi i Tij ishte kur shikonte ndonji të ri që meritonte më u përkrahun. Nuk u kursente me këshilla e qortime pse, thonte "kemi nevojë për kulturë e vetëm kultura mundet më e trondit regjimin komunist e më i u nxjerrun turbullime afrue të mshpirtve!"

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Qysh në numurin e parë filloi më përkrahun arbëreshet e më e ringjallun ndër ta përsëri dashunin për Gjuhën e Atdheun e të Parve. E mendoj së ka qenë nji ndër sukseset që kurr nuk mund të harrohen. Njiherë edhe unë pata shkrue:"Shejzat e Koliqi u detyrohen shum Arbëreshëvet, por — pa mujtë kurrsesi më u përgënjeshtrue — e verteta historike asht së, edhe Arbëreshët pa Shejzat e Koliqin, nuk do t'a kishin pasun ket Rilindje të tyne të re". E asht fakt historik sepse mbas Shejzave filluen përsëri botimet në gjuhen shqipe ndër keta bashkëvllazën. Në revistë gjinden gadi të gjithë të njit, të cilët filluen më u dallue e me vijue me folun e me shkrue gjuhen e të Parve shqipen që gadi po e harrojshin. Besoj së kjo ngjarje nuk mund e nuk duhet të harrohet ndër të gjithë ata që vijojne më u marrun më letrat shqipe. Gëzimi i Tij kur shikonte çdo të ri më talent por, sidomos nëse ishte arbëresh, ishte i dyfishte. E për t'a ringjallun e rranjosun prap shqipen, shkonte çdo jave në Kolegjin arbëresh të Romës për me u dhanë mesime e më u mësue shqipen studentave të kolegjit. Me shi a më vapë, kurr nuk mungoi, megjithse kishte nevojë për pushim. "Me dalun nga shtëpija menjiherë mbas buke e mos më e humbun ket pikpjekje tepër të randësishme", theksonte ai, "asht detyrë e shejtë."

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Jam kah e paraqes Ernestin ashtu si më kujtohet, megjithse nuk jam "i denje as në gjendje më e krye këte detyre si duhet për nji personalitet që meriton!" Pata fatin më ba "diçka" për Te, megjithse Ai kudo ndodhesh e paraqitesh rasti, u thonte të gjithve: "Mos t'ishte Petraqi, kurrgja nuk do të mundshëm më ba!" Kur ndigjojshem këso shprehjesh, gëzimi ishte i papërshkrueshëm, jo vetëm për mue, por edhe për t'ime Motër, e cila më nxiste që të mos mungojshem kurr më ia plotsue deshirat e qellimet Ernestit. Për mue qysh nga fillimi i botimit të Shejzave (gusht 1957) mbanuen edhe "pushimet e festat". Për gadi 17 vjet pushimet e mija kane kalue me "shoqninë" e Shejzave. Natyrisht, ndodhte ndonji herë që mërzithesha, por ime motër, më buzeqeshje e dashuni vllaznore, dinte si më më zbutun e më ia rifillue punës. Shpesh të djelave, kur revista ishte gati për nisje Motra dhe unë rrjshim tue ngjitun adresat ndër zarfa, ndërsa Ernesti shkonte më pushue. Bisedojshim më motrën për familjen: Prindët që nuk ishin ma e vllaznit e humbun, ndërsa kërkojshem me ba ndonji send për ata që na kishin mbetun. E deshti i Lumi që unë të punojshem në mënyrë që mos më u kursye për ta mbrenda mundësive.

Kur Ernesti çohesh e na shikonte gjithmonë tue punue, na thonte: "Sonte do t'u baj nji pilaf më...poezi!" E, me të vërtetë, ishte diçka "që të kënaqte shpirtin e gëzonte edhe synin". Duhet dijtun së Koliqt, përgjithsisht, kanë qenë "merakli" në ngranëje. Ernesti, si i ati, sidomos për tavën më peshk e qepë, ishte specialist. Kur vendoste, atëherë shkonte ai vet në pazar më ble peshkun; e pastronte vetë e nuk donte që askushi t'a trazonte, perveç grues. Çka më hangër!...Nuk mund të përshkruhet kënaqesija e të gjithë atyne që e kanë shijue at specialitet. Edhe sot, kur ndeshemi, e kujtojme "tavën më peshk t'Ernestit!"

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Nuk bante kurr premtime, po të mos t'ishte i sigurtë se do ta kryente kërkesen e premtueme. Këte ia thonte qartas t'interesuemit. Ka ndodhun që ndonjeni mbeste i trazuem e mendonte së "Koliqi nuk donte...", porse e vërteta asht se edhe Ai vetë mbetesh me ankth kur nuk mundte me u ardhun në ndihme të tjerve, sidomos të rijve. Shumkushi medonte së Ai kishte mundësin më zgjidhë çdo telashe, e gjindja nuk e dishin luftën që bante shpesh ndër autoritetet e ndryshme. Unë, që kam jetue me Të, i njoh më ngjarjet e vuejtjet shpirtnore që Koliqi kishte kur nuk ia mrrinte qellimit. Bujarija e Tij ishte proverbiale e të gjithë ata që kanë trokitun tek dera e Tij, kurr përsëris kurr — asnjeni nuk ka dalun pa diçka. Ishte jashtazakonisht mikpritës e qeshte fytyra kur e shifte sofrën e shtrueme për mik e dashamirë. Gadi kreit shkrimtarët shqiptarë që ndër ato kohna vijshin rrallë për studime a tjera cashtje, të gjithë bajshin vizita tek Ernesti. Sa Lahuta ka shpërnda, Zoti vetëm e din! Por, po tregoj çka ndodhte më shkrimtarin Hasan Kaleshi. Ai ishte i shtëpis. Bisedojshin mbi cashtjet e gjendjen e Shqipnis e të Kosovës; kur, dikur, Kaleshi i thonte: "Profesor,

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dy shishe shlivovice i kam, por due Lahuta!".Të dy qeshëshin e bajshin shkëmbimin "e mallnave". Në Kosovë Lahuta e Fishtës asht bukurshkrue më dore nga shum persona, si bajshin edhe më Shejzat. E nuk e dij sa numura dërgoshim për më arritun ndonji, mbasiqe "megalomanët e atij vendi, krejt të huej", nuk dojshin që Kosovarët të "dashunoheshin" edhe ma tepër më gjith kulturen shqiptare. Shkollat shqipe në Kosovë, në rast së edhe sot ekzistojnë, merita kryesore për to i përket Koliqit.

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Jam kah kaloj nga nji ndodhinë në tjetrën, por nuk mundem mos më citue edhe dërgimin e Shejzave. Kudo mendohesh së revista kishte nji redaksi e nji numur bashkëpuntorësh e askushi kurr nuk e ka besue së revista drejtohesh nga Koliqi, Camaj e si qortues, isha vetëm unë, ndërsa për dërgim nidhmonte, në mënyrë të jashtzakonshme, Dr. Nos Qirjaku. Kush nuk e ka njohun at mjek, nuk mundet më ia kuptue vlerën jo vetëm në mjeksi, por edhe në kulturë të përgjithshme. Dashamirë librash, më sakrifica të panumurta krijoi edhe nji "bibliotekë" të vogël. Mbas sëmundjes sime, kolegjeumin e Shejzave e përbajshin Koliqi-Camaj-Qirjaku-Vucani; por, ndër dy tri vjetet e fundit i dashtuni Nos u sistemue, u martue e u trasferue. Edhe Martini ishte sistemue me kohë në Munich. Kështu mbetëm Ernesti e unë, ndersa pjesen italishte e kryente i biri, Marco. Na u shtue, ma vonë, Dr. Angelo De Genti, nji arbëresh, banues për sa e sa vjet në Bashkimin Sovjetik. Shkruen nji shqipe të habitshme. Më vjen keq së ka kohe që nuk po mundem më e vijue bashkepunimin më të.

Kur shkojshim në shtypshkrojë na të katër Ernesti shpesh gjindesh vetëm më Martinin e i thonte: "Martin i dashtun, Nosi e Patraqi janë kah pregatisin Komedinë Hyjnore shqiptare e, duket, së janë edhe bajagi përpara. Po druej së mos po na e xanë vendin!..." Ndodhte që Martini idhnohesh, por edhe qeshte tue qenë i bindun se Nosi e unë nuk ishim "poetë" e as "shkrimtarë", megjithse Nosi ka shkrue disa artikuj në Shejzat. Kur bashkoheshim prap e shkojshim në ndonji restaurant më hangër drekën, riflitesh për këte çashtje e gazi shpërthente vrullshëm: kjo tregonte vllaznimin e miqasin e fortë që na lidhte. E po bie këtu vetëm pak rreshta të ndonji bejtje që Ernesti shkarraviste aty për aty:

...Elbasani dhe Tirana
për ket' her' na jan' bashkue
shi n'at shesh ku t'rriti Zana
ty, Martin, më t'a kalue.

e perfundonte:

Vjerrshës s'ate hiqi vizë
se ata t'dy t'a muerën famën:
vjerrsha e Nosit çon n'parrië
dhe e Petraqit sheron flamnë...

Thom së na pak vetë i kena mbajtun Shejzat me sakrifica të pamendueshme; ndërsa motra e unë, për ditë festash, pregatitshim zarfat, kur revista ishte gadi për nisje, atëherë së bashku më Nosin e bajshim dy tri herë rrugen në kambë kah Posta me kursye shpenzimet e dërgimit.

E kur u kryente gjithçka, ishim jashtazakonisht të lumtun e na dukesh nji fitore tjetër në dobi të çashtjes.

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Nji virtyt tjetër që kam admirue në Koliqin ishte edhe përgjigjeja e krejt atyne që i shkruejshin. E ju siguroj se posta ishte e shumtë dhe e përditëshme. Thonte: "Çdo person që të shkruen, të nderon e të kujton, e përgjigjeja asht detyrë e detyrë e shejtë!" Letrat i vendoste më radhë simbas datës që kishin mrritun. I përgjigjesh atyne urgjente e të tjerat pa asnji ndryshim po mashun paraysh personen: qoftë ma i thjeshtë qoftë personaliteti! E habiteshim së si mujte me e përballue mbarë këte veprimtari. Nuk anashesh, përkundrazi, ishte i kënaqun nga gjithky letërshkembim për kishte dishirë më u gjetun pranë ndqve e dashamirve që, dita ditës, shtoheshin. Marku e unë gjindeshim përhera pranë tij e ma vone e kam vijue unë krejt ndihmën mbas sistemimit të djalit jashta Romës.

Ai adhuronte bashkëshorten e fëmijet. Ndiqte, pa u dukun, studimet e tyne. Ai vetë, kur dilte nga shtepija, i tregonte grues së ku po shkonte e

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oren kur mund të kthehesh. E dinte së gruaja rrinte në kujdes, prandej, kur shikonte së po vonohesh, i telefonte menjiherë për me qetsue. E këte e kërkonte dhe nga fëmija: "Duhet gjithmonë t'i tregoni Nanës ku shkoni e kur kthëheni: ajo rrin gjithmonë në kujdes për në kur gjindemi jashta shtëpis". E kurr, me sa mbaj mend, nuk ka ndodhun që mos t'ishte lajmue ime motër për ndonji vonesë. Ajo nuk flinte e priste që të gjithë t'ishin kthye, e athërë, e qetë e pa mendim, shkonte në shtrat.

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4 Maj 1969, data ma tragjike për Ernestin e mbarë familjen, dmth Markun, Elisabeten (e bija) e mue: asht dita e tmerrshme e largimit prej nesh e Bashkëshortes, Nanës e Motrës: Vangjelis, e cila ishte baza e familjes, bashkshorte e Ernest Koliqit. Kam parasysh çastin e paharrueshëm kur Marku erdhi nga klinika e përqafoi Babën tue i thanë: "Banu i fortë! Nana nuk asht ma!" Ai Burr që kurr nuk ishte tregue i dobët, filloi më derdhun lot, e e vetmja shprehje që tha që: "Sot ka vdekun Vangjelija e ime e unë me Te"! Jemi mundue më qindrue, por nuk ka qenë e nuk asht edhe sot e mundun. Ernesti mendonte edhe për mue. I tha djalit: "Rrini më Axhen Piero e bindeni së sot, ma tepër së kurr do të na kete në, e ai duhet të rrije doemos më në!". Adhuronte pra femijet e nipat. Me e shikue tue u tregue perralla nipave, nuk besohet e nuk u kuptonte së "kush ishte fëmija e kush gjyshi!". Nder muejt e parë rrijshim të gjithë në kujdes për Ernestin: mësue me e pasun Vangjelin perhera pranë për çdo nevojë, kur gjindesh në studjon e vet e, padeshtas, bertiste: "Vangjo, ujin" apo "kafen" a nodnji send tjetër. Kur shkojshim ndonjeni prej nesh më ia plotsue dishiren, kujtohesh së Ajo nuk ishte ma e atëherë, ndodhte ta shifshim tue derdhun lot si fëmija. Deri në çastin e fundit të jetës nuk kishte ndërmend tjetër vetëm së Shoqen e jetës!...

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Sa e sa kujtime mund të jenë harrue në këte shkrim! Çka **Mësova** unë nga ky gjigant? Shum:

Mësova më dashtun Atdheun e më u përpjekun në çdo rast e më çdo mënyrë që të jetë përhera i lirë e në përparim, sidomos nga kultura. Ai tregonte së si Patrioti Luigj Gurakuqi e kishte udhëzue në rrugën e ndërmarrun, e qortimet e këshillat e Tij, na i përsëriste në, sidomos femijeve, të cilve, nuk lente çast pa u folun për Vendin e të Parve e, veçanisht, djalit, i cili kishte lindun në Shkodër.

Mësova më pasun durim e mos më i ndalun përpjekjet edhe kur je i luftuem nga gjysmakët, turbulluesit e shpifsat. Nuk ka gja pse të luftojnë më çdo mjet "Ti vijo në rrugen tande të drejtë, sepse e drejta, heret e vone triumfon" ma kujtonte shpesh Ernesti.

Mësova më e dashtun Familjen e mos më u kursye kur të kërkojnë ndonji ndihmë a këshillë.

Mësova më qenë "bujar e zemërgjanë" e më respektue krejt miqt e dashamirët.

Mësova më respektue e më iu përgjigjun atyne që të shkruejnë e të kujtojnë.

Mësova më qenë "mikëpritës", qoftë edhe në pamundësi.

"Mësova...Mësova...", mundem më vazhdue e nuk dij edhe për sa gjana të tjera **"mësova"**.

Çka bana për Koliqin? Kurrgja si duhet perveç Numurit Përkujtimuer të Shejzave kushtue krejtësisht Atij e edhe sot deshiroj më i falënderue të gjith ata që më ndihmuen moralisht e materjalisht. Jam mundue më ndonji artikull më e perkujtue sepse detyra m'a imponon tue qenë së Ernest Koliqi për mue ka qenë Kunat, Mik, Vëlla, Babë e gjithçka e kurr nuk asht kursye ashtu si edhe unë nuk u kurseva më qenë dobi e vlefshem për personin e Tij e veperimtarinë që zhvillonte, megjithse nuk kam qenë, nuk jam e as nuk kam më qenë kurr shkrimtar. Por kam edhe krenar e i knaqun sidomos sot, që edhe në Shqipni Ernest Koliqi po rivleftsohet ashtu si duhet t'ishte e si meritonte më qenë: Shkrimtar, Poet, Novelist e Atdhetar.

Kur mendoj së nga grupi i Shejzave janë zhdukun Koliqi, Vangjelija, Cama, Nos Qirjaku, mbetem si i shtanguem e më dridhet shtati, e tash nuk prej tjetër vetëm që edhe unë të bashkohem më këta persona të dashtun e të parharrueshëm!

Petro VUÇANI

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SHTYPI I KOMITETIT KOMBËTAR "SHQIPËRIA E LIRË" 1956-1990

Shenim i editorit: Me knaqësi po botojmë artikullin e Dr. Rexhep Krasniqit SHTYPI I KOMITETIT KOMBËTAR "SHQIPËRIA E LIRË" 1956-1990. Dr. Krasniqi asht nji figurë e dallueme e skenës politiko-kulturore shqiptare të këtij shekulli. Laureu n'univerzitetin e vjenës në pragun e Luftës së Dytë Botnore, ai i kushtohet me mish e shpirt veprimit kombëtar në fushën e arsimit e të kulturës.

Me hapjen e shkollave të para shqipe në Kosovë, Maqedoni e Mal të Zi me 1941, Rexhep Krasniqi emnohet Drejtor i Gjimnazit të Parë Shqiptar të Prishtinës. Nën drejtimin e tij të zellëshem e t'urtë, gjimnazi u ba shpejt i njoftun si qendër me randësi dije, kulture e patriotizmi. Pak ma vonë, Krasniqi emnohet Ministër i Arsimit e në këtë pozitë mundohet edhe ma tepër me zgjanue e përparue nivelin mësimor në Kosovë, që para-ardhësi i tij Ernest Koliqi kishte programue.

Fatkeqësisht, lufta civile e okupimi i rij i trojeve shqiptare të Kosovës, Maqedonisë e Malit të Zi në mbarim të vjetit 1944 nga Serbët e Malazezët, (këtë herë me ndihmën e vllazënve komunista shqiptarë) e ndërprenë vepren arsimore e kombëtare të Krasniqit e të shum intelektualve e patriotëve tjerë, ***credo****-ja e të cilëve nuk ishte marxizëm-komunizmi.*

Menjiherë mbas luftës, Dr. Krasniqi largohet nga vendi dhe emigron n'Australi, ku menjiherë punësohet falë edukates e pervojave të tija intelektuale. Me 1956, undhëheqesit antikomunistë të diasporës e miqë e dashamirë, ftojnë Dr. Krasniqin të marrë përsipër drejtimin e Komitetit Kombëtar porsa të formuem SHQIPËRIJA E LIRË. Ai, megjithëse kishte fillue me vu per fije nji jetë të qetë, sakrifikon komoditetin dhe i vehet në krye organizatës së re, tue i përkushtue të gjitha energjit e veta punës së Komitetit, objektivi kryesor i të cilit ishte çlirimi i Shqipërisë nga kulçedra komuniste.

Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi ka drejtue e perfaqsue me zell e dinjitet të rrallë jo vetëm Komitetin SHQIPËRIA E LIRË, por e dhe krejt diasporën antikomuniste shqiptare ndër qarqet e nalta amerikane e



Dr. Rexhep Krasniqi

ndërkombtare. Për 35 vjet rresht, ai me zyrtarët tjerë të Komitetit, kanë qenë në të vertetë "qeveri Shqiptare në mërgim". Ndër suksese të shumta politiko-kulturore e sociale, nuk dubet harrue sjellja n'Amerikë e afro 20.000 refugjatëve shqiptarë e sistemimi i pjesës së madhe të tyne neper qytete a qendra të ndryshme pune—prej New Yorkut deri n'Alaskë!

Këshilli Drejtues i Instituti Katolik Shqiptar "Danijel Dajani, S.J." dhe organi i tij Buletini Katolik Shqiptar falnderojnë Dr. Krasniqin për punën e tij shum të vlerëshme në dobin e kombit dhe i urojnë shndet e jetë të gjatë. AD MULTOS ANNOS!

* * *

Në fillim të vitit 1956, Komitetit Shqipëria e Lirë (K.Sh.H.L.) i kapo themeluar, fillon të botojë buletinin prej dhjetë faqesh në gjuhën anglishte dhe shqipe me titull "The Albanian News Buletin." Ky buletin kishte një tirazh prej afër dy mijë kopjesh dhe qarkullonte në Shtetet e Bashkuara, Kanada,

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Amerikën Latine, Evropë, Turqi, Siri, Australi dhe vende të tjera të lira. Buletini dërgohej edhe në vedet komuniste evropiane dhe në Shqipëri, sidomos u dërgohej instituteve akademike, bibliotekave dhe gazetave të njohura. Në Shqipëri u dërgohej udhëheqësëve të regjimit dhe qendrave të quajtura kulturore. Në fillim, buletini dërgohej me postë ajrore sipas rëndësisë që kishin. Sipas lajmeve që kemi pasur, disa nga marrësit e buletinit në Evropën lindore, në Gjermaninë lindore, në Poloni dhe në Moskë, kanë treguar interes, ndërsa në Shqipëri të gjitha dërgimet e shtypit, grumbulloheshin në një vend të posaçëm të censurës për studim të lajmeve të ndryshme të mërgatës politike shqiptare në botën e lirë. Në nëntor të vitit 1957, buletini zevendësohet me gazetën, "Shqiptari i Lirë." Kjo gazetë, si organ kryesor i K.SH.L., në format të madh me katër faqe, botohej në gjuhën shqipe dhe silleshin edhe artikuj anglisht. Në vitin 1957-1960 është botuar edhe një e përkohëshme në anglisht me titullin "DIGEST OF SHQIPTARI I LIRE".

Gazeta "Shqiptari i Lirë" është botuar për një kohë të gjatë në format të madh pastaj ka vazhduar një herë në dy-tre muaj dhe më vonë në periudha më të gjata duke u botuar si numër i posaçëm që arrinte në 20 faqe. Numri i fundit ka dalë në përmbledhje për periudhen 1983-1987. Të gjitha botimet kanë pasur edhe fotografi të ndryshme politike.

Nga grupi i vogël prej pesë antarësh dhe të një sekretari për punën shumë të gjërë të Komitetit, Vasil Gërmenji ka qenë përfaqësues kryesor i Komitetit pranë Asamblesë të Kombeve të Robëruara Evropiane, ACEN, ku është zgjedhur dy herë kryetar dhe dy herë nënkryetar i kësaj asambleje. Si i tillë ka përfaqësuar asamblenë në Shtetet e Bashkuara, në Evropë, në Azi dhe ku ka qenë nevoja për të luftuar propagandën e fuqishme të regjimit komunist të Shqipërisë dhe kudo tjetër në botë. Nexhat Peshkëpia ka drejtuar gazetën "Shqiptari i Lirë" që dilte e përmuajshme deri në vitin 1970-të, duke pasur ndihmën të shumë llojshme të antarëve të tjerë, në radhë të parë të Rexhep Krasniqit, i cili përveç kryesisë ka qenë referent për zhvillimet historike në Shqipëri dhe shtete të tjera komuniste në Evropë të cilat janë komentuar në gazetën e Komitetit dhe pjesërisht përkthyer në anglishte. Këto analiza janë botuar në të përkohëshmen gjashtë mujore dhe pastaj njëvjetore në buletinin, "A SURVEY OF DEVELOPMENTS IN NINE CAPTIVE NATIONS", buletin i veçantë i ACEN-it deri në vitin 1964. Pas vitit 1970, Idriz Lamaj, ka ndihmuar shtypin e Komitetit në të gjitha fushat duke arritur pozitën e bashkeditorit të gazetës "Shqiptari i Lirë" dhe i shumë librezave speciale të Komitetit. E gjithë kjo punë është kryer me dedikim dhe vullnet shembullor në të cilën kanë marrë pjesë edhe profesor Konstantin Vangjeli (Constantine Vanghele) dhe pastaj Mexhid Dibra si sekretar të Komitetit. Këta të dy, njëri pas tjetrit, kanë qëne të angazhuar në veprimtarinë e rëndësishme të sjelljes dhe të vendosjes së mijëra refugjatëve politik shqiptarë nga Evropa në Shtetet e Bashkuara. Gazeta, siç është thënë më sipër, u është dërguar falas organizatave politike, kulturore, insituteve akademike, gazetave të interesuara, në Shtetet e Bashkuara, Evropë, Shqipëri dhe vende të tjera kumuniste evropiane. Artikuj të kësaj gazete që janë marrë me persekutimet fetare në Shqipëri shpeshë herë janë ribotuar në shtypin amerikan, anglez, francez dhe gjerman si revistet "Chatolic News" e New Yorkut, "Christian News" e New Havenit. Kjo e fundit në faqen e parë me një fotografi të madhe të profesor Krasniqit, autorit të artikullit të cilin fillimisht ia kishte dërguar sekretarit të përgjithëshëm të Kombeve të Bashkuara U' Thant dhe Komisionit për të Drejtat e Njeriut pranë OKB-së. Këto memorandume K.SH.L., i ka përsëritur çdo vit në shtator, në fillim të sesionit vjetor të OKB-së.

Memorandumet më fjalë janë ribotuar në gazetën "Shqiptari i Lirë", në të përkthëshmen "Koha e Jonë" të organizatës Bashkimi Demokrat Shqiptar dhe në librin e Gjon Sinishtës, "The Fulfilled Promise", vepër dokumentare mbi persekutimet e klerit katolik shqiptar nga regjimi komunist.

Ndër këto methana të kufizuara të personelit punues dhe të mjeteve financiare, siç është thënë mësipër, shtypi i Komitetit kishte arritur një qarkullim prej dy mijë kopjesh që janë dërguar falas me postë ajrore në vende të larga, sidomos personalitete politike të perëndimit dhe të lindjes.

Gazeta, "Shqiptari i Lirë" ka pasur një format të gjërë me katër faqe ary këtu me ndonjë fotografi në ndihje me artikujt të posaçem. Ka përdorë ton të ashpër, jo agresiv, me lajme dhe informata siç

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botoheshin në origjinal në shtypin e Tiranës, përcjell nganjëherë me ndonjë anëshkrim kritik. Midis letrave vlerësuese, po shquejmë këtu një paragraf nga letra e profesor Adalber Fekeçit, shkrimtar e autor i njohur në mërgim, drejtor i seksionit të gjuhës shqipe në Institutin Gjuhësor të Ushtrisë Amerikane në Monterey të Kalifornisë. Në letër të datës 29.5.1958 ai shkruante midis të tjerash: "Jam i lumtur t'i bëjë të ditur Komitetit zyrtarisht se katër numrat e gazetës të këtij viti janë me të vërtetë të shkelqyera nga çdo pikëpamje. Ajo që ka bërë përshtypje shumëkujtë është gjuha shqipe e pastër dhe standardi që përdorni, kur them standardi nuk nënkuptoj as toskërishtën as gegërishtën, por shprehjet idiomatike, fjalorin që janë të përbashkëta nga Vermoshi në Konispol dhe artikujë aq të matur dhe të zgjedhur, pa gabime gramatikore të cilat në shtypin e mërgimit shihen përherë dhe na dukën si një mospërfillje ndaj gjuhës sonë dhe ndaj lexuesëve."

Qeveria e Tiranës përpiqej për të organizuar një fushatë jo vetëm midis shqiptarëve, por edhe ndër të gjitha grupet etnike evropiane në Amerikë kundër "imperializmit amerikan" në botë sipas parullave fillestare të Kremlinit të cilat regjimi enverian i përdorte verbërishtë edhe pas përçarjes me Moskën deri në ditët e fundit të katastrofës së regjimeve staliniste në Evropën lindore dhe rokullisjen e permendores monstruoze të despotit Enver Hoxha në sheshin kryesor të Tiranës, nga puntorët dhe rinia universitare.

Për të mbajtur një shtyp në lartësi me rrethanat dhe ngjarjet që kalonte shteti dhe poulli shqiptar ishte nevoja me ndjek dhe studiuar në thellësi shtypin kryesor të regjimit komunist të Tiranës. Kështu me anë të një agjencie çekosllovake në Londër që kishte lejen me ble dhe shitë botime të qendrave kryresore të Evropës lindore komuniste, Komiteti me vjet rresht kishte abonuar gazetat kryesore si, *Zëri i Popullit, Bashkimi, Drita,* Gazetën zyrtare etj. Në mbështetje e studim serioz të këtij shtypi, gazeta "Shqiptari i Lirë" dhe botime të tjera të Komitetit kanë qenë në gjëndje me ndjek në hollësi dhe me i përdorë ngjarjet e brëndëshme dhe të jashtme në atdhe. Pjes me rëndësi të tyre përkthyer në anglisht, janë përdorë në botime të ndryshme të ACEN-it dhe në broshura dhe libreza të posaçme përkatëse shqip dhe anglisht të Komitetit.

Gazeta "Shqiptari i Lirë" është dërguar me postë ajrore për një kohë ndër vende të lira dhe komuniste. Në Shqipëri, megjithë censurën e rreptë, gazeta u është dërguar udhëheqësve të partisë, Bibliotekës Kombëtare, fakulteteve të ndryshme të universitetit, shtëpiave të quajtura kulturore që ishin caktuar si vende për indoktrinim të rinisë. Në shtete komuniste janë dërguar gazeta dhe libreza që merreshin me probleme të ndryshme të "luftës së ftohët" midis lindjes e perëndimit megjithëse ishim të vetëdijshëm për censurën policore, sidomos ndër univeristetet e njohura si ai i Moskës, Varshavës, Pragës, Beogradit dhe universitetit të Leipzingut ku për vite me radhë ka drejtuar studimet shqiptare albanologu i famëshëm, profesor Maksimilian Lambertzi.

Poashtu u janë dërguar agjencive të shtypit në Moskë, e cila me kohë ishte përpjekur me anë të Kanadas të abunohej për dy kopje të "Shqiptarit të Lirë". Zyra e shtypit grek në Athinë zhdrejt interesohej për shtypin e Komitetit. Ndërsa ngjarjet kryesore midis Shqipërisë, botës perëndimore, të Azisë juglindore, etj., janë shquar përherë në botime të ndryshme të Asamblesë të Kombeve të Robruara Evropiane, në New York.

Kimiteti që përbëhej në atë kohë prej antarëve mjaftë të rinjë, i cili kishte nevojë të fuqizohej, kishte një këshill me qendër në Itali, i cili përbëhej prej disa personaliteteve politike shqiptare që jetonin në mërgim si Mehdi Frashëri, ish regjent, kryeministër, përfaqësues kryesor i Shqipërisë në Lidhjen e Kombeve në Gjenevë; Ali Këlcyra, ish deputet në parlamentin e parë shqiptar dhe Karl Gurakuqi, profesor i gjuhës e letërsisë shqipe në universitetin e Palermos. Të tre këto shtylla politike dhe të kulturës shqiptare, ishin mavrisht në moshë të shtyrë dhe pas një kohe të shkurtër u ndanë prej nesh brënda viteve 1963-1971. Dy të partë në Romë dhe profesor Gurakuqi në Bolzano të Italisë veriore. Në listën e këtyre humbjeve tragjike është edhe profesor Nexhat Peshkëpia, antar i Komitetit dhe kryeredaktor i gazetës "Shqiptari i Lirë", 1956-1970. Komentuesi letrar e historik me emër pende, Artan Iliri, në një artikull të hollësishëm ka përshkruar me terma vlerësuese kontributin e kësaj gazete në shesh të ndryshme politike, historike, letrare etj. Një tjetër humbje tragjike jo vetëm për Komitetin po për mbarë mërgatën shqiptare ndodhi në nëntor të vitit 1989, kur Vasil Gërmendji së bashku me bashkëshortën, Germeaine, ranë

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viktimë e një aksidenti automobilistik afër qytetit Inverness të Floridas, ku kalonin kohën e pleqërisë. Vasil Gërmenji ka qenë pasaradhës i fundit i familjes të njohur patriotike, Themistokli dhe Telemak Gërmenji që shpetuan Korçën nga rreziku grek në vitin 1916.

Brënda rethit të përfaqësueseve të Komitetit në Evropë janë për t'u shquar, Dr. Ragip Frashëri në Romë, i cili ka qenë edhe antar i ACEN-it, ndërsa Mark Trobaini ka pasur të njëjtën pozitë për Gjermani dhe Austri, kurse të ndjerët Isuf Begeja dhe Rrok Maloki-diplomat në kohën e Shqipërisë së lirë, kanë përfaqësuar Komitetin në Paris dhe Bruksel.

Për fuqizimin fillestar të Komitetit, "Shqipëria e Lirë", brënda përfaqësive të Asamblesë së Kombeve të Robëruara Evropiane (ACEN), kanë ndihmuar pa kursim diplomatët si Mickolaiczik, ish kryeministër i Polonisë pasë Luftë së Dytë Bortërore, Stefan Korbonski, ish kryetar i qendreses heroike të rinisë poloneze në Varshavë kundër ushtrisë gjermane kur ushtria sovjetike bënte sehir pranë qytetit në një përpjekje deshpruese të fundit të popullit polonez; Bela Varga, ish kryetar i parlamentit hungarez; Ferenc Nagy, Kryeministër në qeverinë hrë hungareze; George Dimitrov, ish deputet dhe revolucionar me famë në Bullgari.

Një pjesë e madhe e refugjatëve shqiparë të ardhur në New York, pasi kishin jetuar me vite nëpër kampe të Evropës gjëndeshin një një gjendje shendetësore shumë të dobët. Mu në këtë kohë dy mjek shqiptarë që kishin fituar të drejtën e praktikimit të profesionit të tyre në Amerikë, u treguan të gatshëm, një herë në javë për t'u kujdesur për ata që kishin nevojë. Këta ishin doktor Hamdi Oruçi, i cili një herë në javë priste vizita pa shpërblime në zyrën e Komitetit dhe doktor Enrik Gurashi, në spitalin që sherbente ose në apartmentin e tij në Monhatën të New Yorkut.

Midis të riardhurëve kishte intelektual të njohur dhe të rinjë të talentuar që për arsye gjuhe nuk kishin mundësi të ndjeknin shkollat përkatëse ose të gjenin punë me përgjegjësi, të parët kanë kontribuar herë pasëhere me artikuj me rëndësi mbi gjendjen arsimore të dobët në përiudhën kalimtare të regjimit të ri komunist, që në fillim ishte nën mbikqyrje të agjentëve jugosllav dhe pastaj të ashtuquajturëve ekspert sovjetik që zakonisht dërgoheshin në kolonit turkomene në Azinë qendrore. Udhëhqja komuniste shqiptare nuk guxonte t'u bënte atyre kundërshtimin më të vogël. "Shqiptari i Lirë" ka sjellur herë pas here arktikuj përkatës të refugjatëve sjhqiptarë, nder të cilët dalloheshin shkrimtarë të njohur si Arshi dhe Fehime Pipa, Sami Repishti, Safete Juka, Zef Nekaj, Mhill Marku, Agim Kosova, Athanas Gegaj, Artan Iliri dhe Idriz Lamaj. Ky i fundit arriti të bëhet bashkë redaktor i gazetës në fjalë dhe i botimeve të tjera të Komitetit, "Shqipëria e Lirë."

Një interes i veçantë për përcjelljen e gjendjes në Shqipëri nga ana e Komitetit mund të shikohet në librin e profesorit të univeristetit Kansas, Harry G. Shafer, në botimin e tij prej 558 faqesh me titull, "The Peoples Republic of Albania: "The Marxist And Non Marxist Views", botuar në vitin 1967. Në pjesën e parë të librit ka botuar vështrimin jomarksist duke e integruar në veprën e vet studimin e botuar në një librezë me titull, "ALBANIA" të autorëve Athanas Gegaj dhe Rexhep Krasniqi, i cili ishte përgaditur nga Komiteti dhe botuar me 1964 në New York nga ACEN-i, me lejen e së cilës e ka botuar profesori Shafer. Në fillim të librit paraqitën biografi të shkurtra të Gegajt dhe Krasniqit. Në vështrimin marksist të këtij botimi përfshihen derklaratat e partisë komuniste të Shqipërisë shkruar nga H. Papajorgji, ekonomist, P. Stambeli, ish ministër i Bujqësisë, P. Mitrojorgji, zevendës ministër i arsimit e kulturës, B. Klosi, ministër i drjetësisë dhe Dr. F. Hoxha, kryetar i klinikave të spitaleve të Shqiprisë.

Gazeta, "Shqiptari i Lirë", është botuar për gati 32 vjet. Pastërtia dhe eleganca e stilit të gjuhës shqipe, shquar mësipër, është merita e kujdesit e zotërimit në përsosmëri të gjuhës shqipe të të ndjerit Nexhat Peshkëpia, megjithse ai ishte profesor i lëndëve reale pranë institutëve të mesme shkollore në Tiranë.

Shtypi i Komitetit edhe në këtë lartësi profesionale, gjëndej para një detyre të vështirë dhe komplekse për të kundërluftuar me sukses propagandën masive e cila çthurur jo vetëm në kolonitë e vjetra shqiptare në Amerikën veriore, në Australi e Amerikën Latine, por edhe në vende të ndryshme afrikane dhe aziatike që kishte për qellim kryesor luftën kundër "imperializmit amerikan" dhe botës së lirë.

Rexhep KRASNIQI

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE "MARIN BARLETI" SHKODER (2018)

DOM NDRE ZADEJA—JETA DHE VEPRAT

Lexuesi shqiptar si mbrenda vendit ashtu dhe jashtë atdheut, së shpejti do të ketë në duer nji liber të ri t'autorit Lec Zadeja. Libri do të shofë driten e botimit në vigjiljen e nji date të shenueme per klerikun e nderuem: 50-vjetorin e pushkatimit të tij (25 Mars 1945).

Dalja e këtij botimi u ba e mundëshme mbas nji pune disavjeçare t'autorit, me qellim që brezit të ri, i cili nuk e njofti fare, t'i bajë të dijtun çfarë shkroi dhe la mbas vdekjes mizore "poeti i ambëlsisë" dhe "bylbyli i Rozafës".

Na i kërkuem autorit të na dergojë disa shenime rreth këtij libri, natyrisht tue mos pretendue per nji reçensjon, që i perket t'a bajë dikush tjeter, mbasi botimi të dalë nga shtypi e të vehet në shitje.

Dhe qe se shka na shkruen autori:

"Dom Ndre Zadeja—Jeta dhe Veprat" asht nji monografi e njenit prej klerikëvet të nderuem që njofti Shqipnija, e që jetoi e punoi mbas Shpalljes së Pamvarsisë. Krahas detyrës së tij të gjatë si klerik, (sherbej per 29 vjet nder famullina të ndryshme malore) Zadeja la nji krijimtari të pasun letrare, e cila u mbulue qellimisht prej pluhnit të harresës per ma se 46 vjet. Ai qe i pari klerik i cili ra viktimë e terrorit të pashembullt komunist.

Vendosja e demokracisë në Shqipni, bani të mundëshme që ky klerik dhe shkrimtar i shquem, të dali në pah persri dhe jeta e veprat e tija të bahen të njoftuna nga mbarë populli e sidomos lexuesit e apasjonuem të tij.

Kështu mbas perkujtimit të 100-vjetorit të lindjes dhe disa veprimtarive t'organizueme per ketë jubile, filloi puna per hartimin e monografisë. Autori, tue qenë pjestar i farefisit dhe tue pasë jetue në perjudha të shkëputuna në vende ku Dom Ndreu ka sherbye si famullitar, e ka njoftë n'imtësi si natyren e temperamentin e tij fisnik e po ashtu ka marrë pjesë aktive në shum melodrama të çfaquna.

Libri perveç pjesës hymëse ka 6 kapituj. Kapitulli i parë shkruen per njoftime të ndryshme historiko-gjeokragike per Dejen e Zadejen; kapitulli i dytë hapet me pershkrimin e jetës dhe punës si klerik e poet të Dom Ndreut, ndersa kapitulli i tretë perfshin krijimtarin letrare që ka lanë kleriku, të ndame në gjini e perjudha. Kapitulli i katertë shkruen per poezin e prozën, konferencat perkujtimore, homeli të mbajtuna në data e ngjarje të shenueme, artikuj të ndryshem me permbajtje fetare, pedagogjike, historike e shoqnore.

Pjesa ma e randësishme e monografisë i kushtohet melodramave. Siç dihet Dom Ndre Zadeja hartoi 6 melodrama, prandej me plot të drejtë mund të konsiderohet si nji nder themeluesit e melodramës shqiptare. Dhe këto janë: "Ora e Shqypnis" çfaqë me 1919 në Shkodër, "Hije të Zesa" çfaqë me 1921 po në Shkodër, "Rozafa", çfaqë me 1936, "Rrethimi i Shkodrës" dhe "Ruba e Kuqe" çfaqë gjatë vjetit 1937, kurse e fundit "Shpella e Bogdanit", kushtue jetës dhe veprimtarisë patriotike të Imzot Pjeter Bogdanit, fatkeqsisht duket se ka hupë, mbas pushkatimit të klerikut dhe prishjes së famullisë së tij në Sheldij.

Kapitulli i pestë dhe i gjashtë perfshijnë "Gjykime dhe Vlersime per D. Ndre Zadejen" si dhe festime të ndryshme kushtue 100-vjetorit të lindjës së poetit të shkretë (3 Nanduer 1991) në Shkodër dhe katunde ku kleriku ka sherbye si meshtar. Libri mbyllet me bibliografinë e treguesin e landës."

Per ta ba ma tërheqës e dokumentues, autori i monografis e ka pasunue librin me rreth 30 foto të ndryshme, faksimile t'afishit per pushkatimin e "14 trathëtarve", partitura të melodramave, të cilat u ruejtën per 47 vjet nga Monsignjor Mikel Koliqi, si dhe fotografina të ndryshme të lidhuna me vepren e jeten e Dom Ndre Zadejës. Të tërheqë nji vemendje të posaçme fotografija e shtratit të klerikut të vramë, të ruejtun në gjendje të mirë deri në ditët tona, nga nji pjestar i farefisit.

Urojmë që monografija per jeten e vepren e Dom Ndre Zadejës t'inspirojë brezat e ardhëshme si duhet me u dashtë e ndeme atdheu e si duhet me sakrifikue, nëse asht nevoja, edhe jeten per me iu ndejtë besnik idealeve të fes, lirisë e drejtësisë.

Mbasi monografija botohet në nji number të kufizuem kopjesh, t'interesuemit duhet ti drejtohen autorit me kon në këtë adresë: Lec Zadeja, Lagja "Ndoc Maz Rrugëza "Pashko Vasa" Nr.142, Shkodër, Albania.

Gjon SINISHTA

BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE "MARIN BARLETI" SHKODER (2018)



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
SHKODER (2018)

Një grup djelmoçash të Shoqërisë së Rrethit "Shën Pjetri" prane Kishës së Jezuitëve, në Tiranë, 1937. Në qendër Át Pjetër Meshkalla, S.J., drejtor i Rrethit. Át Meshkalla do të bahet ma vonë i përmendun për qendrimin e tij të pakompromis kundrejt sistemit totalitar komunist. Jezuitë tjerë që veprues n'atë kohë në Tiranë ishin Etënit Pashko Gjadri, nji veprues i flakët për bashkëpunimin ekumenik me Orthodoksët shqiptarë, Pjetër Tuci, e Mëhil Troshani si dhe fratelat Gjon Radovani, Simon Vocaj, Joakim Bujati. Të gjithë kalvarin herë torturat e tmerrshme të burgjeve e kampeve të çfarosjes.

Me vendosjen e regjimit t'Enver Hoxhës me 1945 Rrethi i "Shën Pjetrit" si dhe shoqnitë tjera katolike u ndaluen e pronat e tyne u sekvestruen ndërsa veprimtarët e drejtuesat u burgosën e disa edhe pushkatuen. Me 1992, me fitoren e demokracisë, Rrethi i "Shen Pjetrit" u hap përsëri e për të nderue kujtimin e ish-drejtorit të tij Át Meshkalla, u pagëzue me eminin "Rrethi Katolik Át Pjetër Meshkalla, S.J." Të shpnesojmë se së shpejti emni i këtij martiri katolik do të nderohet si shëjt e martir edhe në listat e Kishes Katolike Universale në mbarë botën.



BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE
"MARIN BARLETI"
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Një fotografi tjetër historike: Procesjoni i Veprimit Katolik Shqiptar të Tiranës me rasën e festës së Zemres së Krishtit, Tiranë, 1938. Në rreshtin e parë shifet Át Mëhill Troshani, n'anën e djathët të tij Profesor Karl Gurakuqi.

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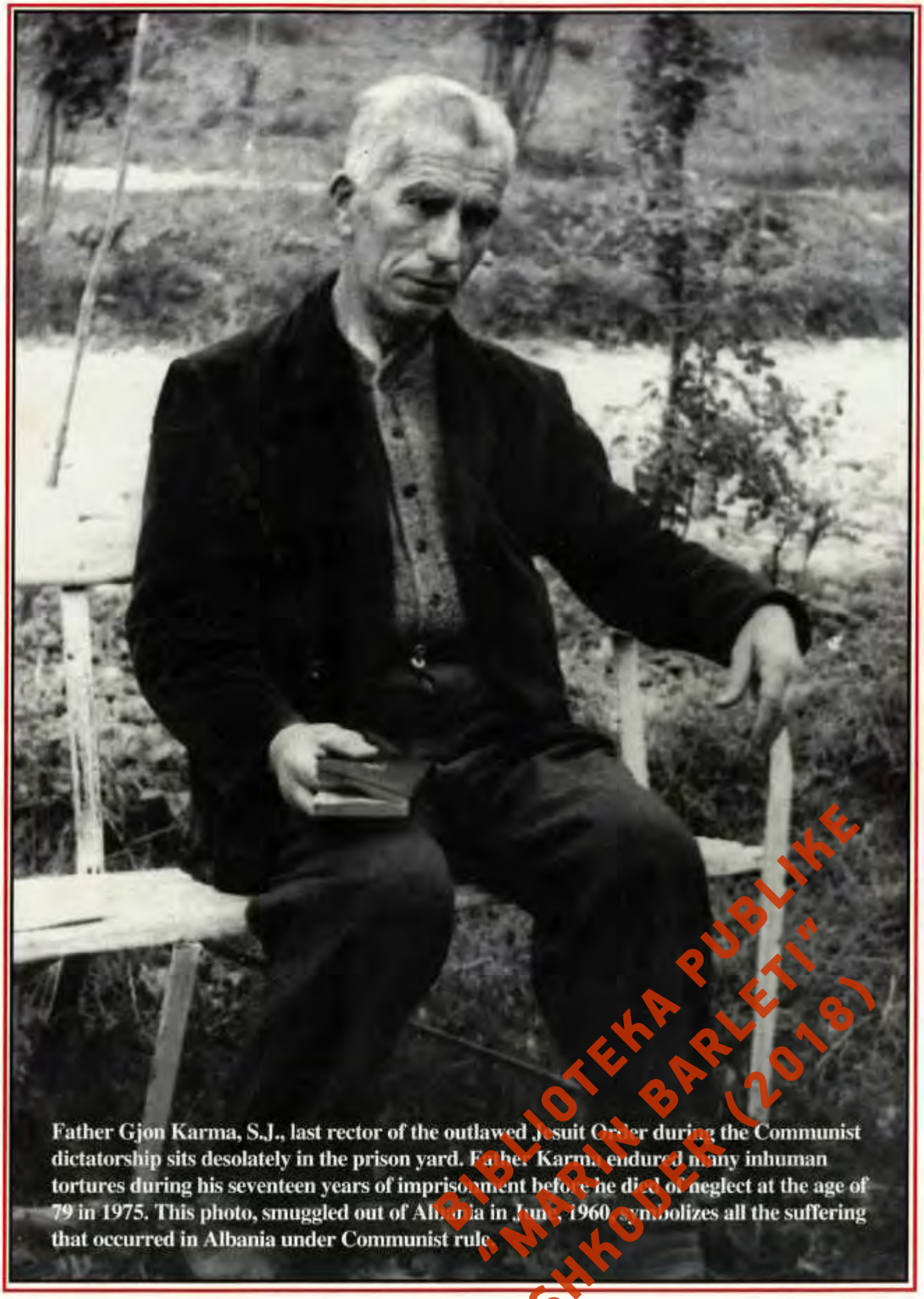
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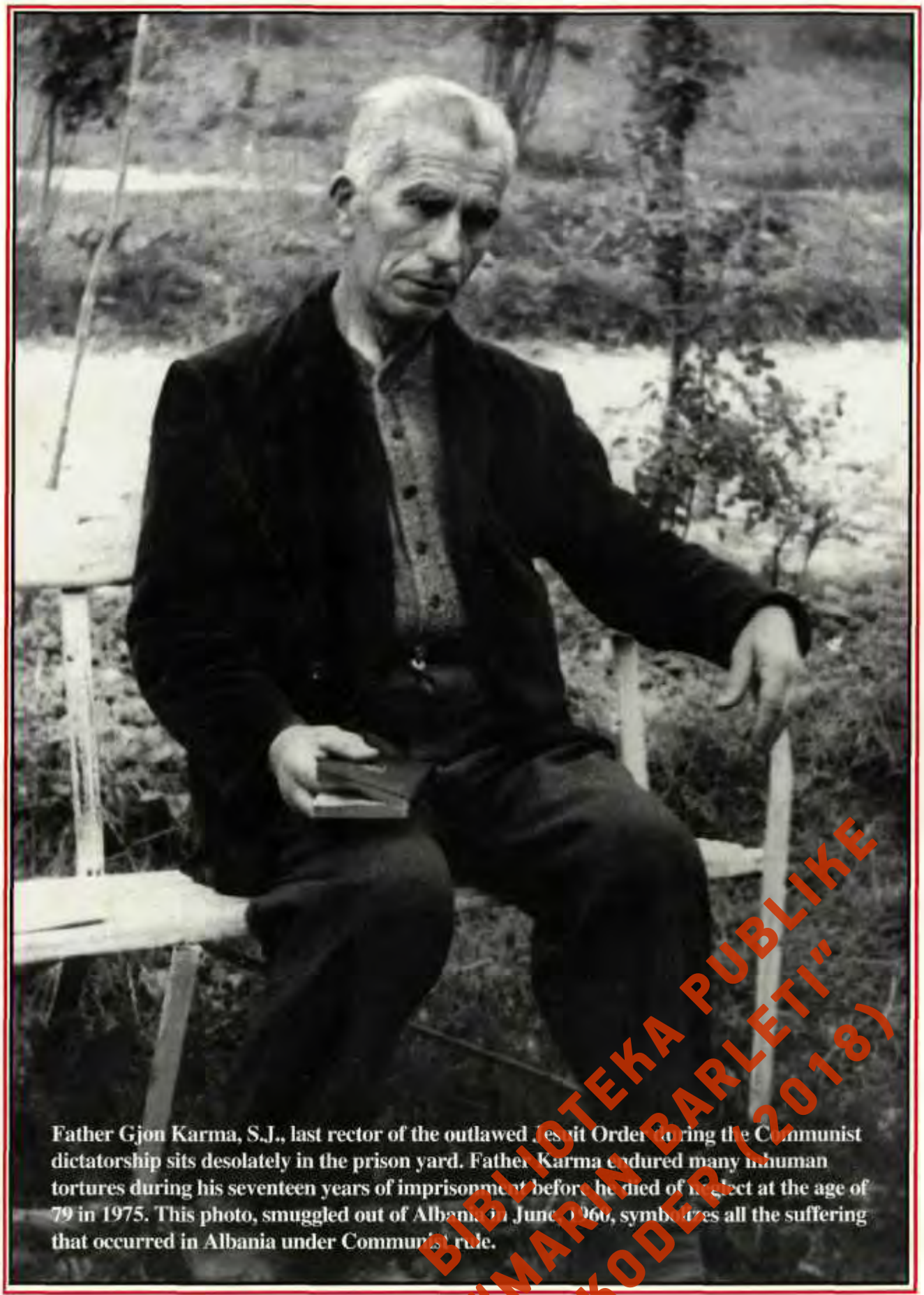
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BIBLIOTEKA PUBLIKE "MARIN BARLETI" SHKODËR (2018)



Father Gjon Karma, S.J., last rector of the outlawed Jesuit Order during the Communist dictatorship sits desolately in the prison yard. Father Karma endured many inhuman tortures during his seventeen years of imprisonment before he died of neglect at the age of 79 in 1975. This photo, smuggled out of Albania in June 1960, symbolizes all the suffering that occurred in Albania under Communist rule.

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