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The reproduction on the front cover is of a picture of Albania's national hero Gjergj Kastrioti -- Skanderbeg, attributed to Christophano De Altissimo.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

by Eve Bland

In July 1988 I made my first visit to Albania. But unlike many visitors going to the country for the first time, I felt as if I were visiting an old friend, since my father had been involved with the Albanian Society for most of my life. This "familiarity", however, did not mean that I had any real idea as to what I should find there. I had my own interests, and Albania had been one of my father's.

In preparation for my visit, I was aware that some thought should be given as to what clothes I should take. Mini-skirts, cut-away tops were left at home, and my father raised an eyebrow at my red toe-nails.

So, decked in my only long skirt and with naked toe-nails, I set out with my father to be the guests of the Albanian Committee for Cultural and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries. The journey was via Zurich, and I was a little surprised, when we checked in at Heathrow, to find that the Swissair clerk had never heard of Tirana, much less that his airline operated a service there.

While queueing up at the transfer desk at Zurich airport, I amused myself by guessing where our fellow-travellers had come from. There was a British and a German group, and a number of individuals who appeared to be business people.

Our arrival at Tirana's little airport was particularly pleasant. After a short walk down an avenue lined with pink oleanders, we were shown into a large, sunny lounge where we relaxed and were served coffee and delicious fresh lemonade while our passports were being processed. Around us, waiting to board the plane we had left, were tanned tourists, and I was struck by the diversity in their ages and

nationalities.

We were met by a friendly official of our host committee, a fascinating ex-diplomat who had explored the Amazon jungles, who introduced us to our interpreter, Diana Kristo, a lecturer in English at the University, who had given up a fortnight of her summer holiday to escort us (and who had, incidentally, red toe-nails!). We were able to return her many kindnesses to a small extent by recording some English conversation for her students and explaining the meaning of a few English terms of which she was doubtful, such as 'blurb' and 'loss-leader'. Later, since her department is working on the redrafting of the first reading books for children, at her request we sent her some comparable English books.

Friends had said that we should be permitted only to see what they wanted us to see, but this proved to be totally wrong. One of the first things we did on arrival in Tirana itself was to sit down with the Committee and tell them the things we wanted to do over the next two weeks. My father had some people he wanted to meet, some requested books to deliver and some technical questions to ask on behalf of members of the Albanian Society, but for me it was to be merely an exciting holiday.

Our first few days were spent in Tirana, staying at the Hotel Dajti on the boulevard leading to the University, visiting museums and art galleries during the day and wandering the streets on our own in the evenings. It was extremely hot (over eighty degrees). I was disappointed to find that most of the theatres were closed for the July vacation; however, we did manage to catch a concert by the People's Army Ensemble in the attractive open-air theatre in the Great Park.

The absence of private cars made the city centre

pleasant, clean and safe, and I was particularly impressed with Skanderbeg Square, which was on a much larger scale than I had expected and has an equestrian statue of Skanderbeg gazing down paternally on the people promenading in the evening air. The Museum of National History in the square, which we visited, has a wonderful mural depicting symbolically the history of the Albanian people. My father was particularly interested in the new buildings erected since his last visit four years before -- the Palace of Congresses, the almost-completed Enver Hoxha Museum next to the hotel (which will undoubtedly be one of the most unusual works of architecture in Europe), the new sports centre in the hills with its four swimming pools and fun fair complete with dodgem cars, and so on.

My father was able to have a brief meeting -- brief because he was just off on holiday -- with writer Skifter Këlliçi, whose novel 'Assassination in Paris' he is at present translating for an Albanian publishing house.

I had grown quite attached to our hotel in Tirana, with its delicious meals (dinner was served on a moonlit verandah), its friendly waiters, who could converse in many languages and seemed to enjoy their work, and its helpful chambermaids (one of whom politely insisted on rewashing one of my father's shirts which had come out somewhat grey from his own incompetent efforts in the wash-basin). However, after a few days we packed our bags and set off for Durrës, the main port and seaside resort. It was very pleasant to meet here two friends from the Albanian Society, actress Thereas Streatfeild and musician Dave Smith (who were here on holiday), and the Secretary of the German Friendship Association, Rüdiger Pier, and his wife Barbra, who had been escorting a party of German artists round the country. We were also able to meet in Durrës the composer Feim Ibrahimi, the Albanian

Ambassador to the United Nations, and two guides from my father's previous visits. It was pleasant to hear from the three latter that they found the Albanian Society's journal useful in conversing about Albania with foreigners. We inspected the new pier, with its café and pleasure-boat, and I was able to enjoy several swims in the Adriatic. One evening on the terrace we learned an Albanian card game called 'Five Hundred'.

One of the surprises in Durrës was to visit the Archaeological Museum and find that the curator was the poet Moikom Zeqo, translations of several of whose poems have been published in 'Albanian Life'. After our tour, he was kind enough to invite us to his office for coffee and present us with one of his unpublished poems, a translation of which appears elsewhere in this issue.

The next stage of our journey took us to Berat, an ancient town built on a hillside. Here we visited the new museum devoted to the Albanian mediaeval painter Onufri, situated in a former Byzantine church where the beautifully-preserved ornateness and still present smell of past incense plunged one right back into the Middle Ages.

On to the stone city of Gjirokastra, whose impressive hill-top fortress contains an exhibition of weaponry through the ages -- including an American warplane forced down over Albania.

The next stage of our journey was visually the most exciting -- through mountain passes and past villages built on jagged spurs of rock to the southern seaside resort of Saranda on the 'Albanian Riviera', where the sea was amazingly clear and reminiscent of thin, cool honey. On our first night here the workers from a local factory were holding a celebration party on the terrace for having over-fulfilled their

production target, and we dined on fresh fish, salads and fruit.

From Saranda we went on to another seaside resort, Vlora, passing spectacular terraces built by the young people themselves between 1979 and 1981, their work being honoured by a monument. We visited a peach farm and a fig plantation.

Half way on our journey we stopped at a workers' hotel by the sea, run by the trade unions, and ate delicious water melon. While paddling in the sea I met a woman who was a leading trade union official, and she told me how much women's position had changed over the past forty years. Indeed, I had already been struck by the sharply different attitude shown to me by men. Unlike most European countries I have visited, no one leered at me, wolf-whistled or pinched my bottom. During long talks with our guide, Diana, who was only a couple of years older than myself, I discovered that her experience of men had been totally different to my own. When young, I had been encouraged to rebel against attempts to compete with other women for men's attention by striving to make myself as physically attractive a "sex-object" as possible, but I had not been unaffected by the social conditioning and I found that my relationships with men had been much less free and equal than Diana's seemed to be. She had never tried to be anything other than she was, and expected to be loved for her character, ability and qualities rather than for merely looking pretty.

On our return to Tirana we visited a textile factory, which had attractive sculptures and murals (in fact, everywhere we went I was struck by the importance accorded to art in Albania) and a well-equipped and well-staffed hospital. The cardiologist who showed us round was puzzled by my question about "waiting lists". "What a strange idea!", he remarked; "if you

need hospital treatment, of course you come in right away".

For me as an actress, one of the highlights had been a meeting with three actors from the People's Theatre in Tirana. We had a long discussion about our work and lives, and I was struck forcibly by the differences. I have to face auditions in competition with fifty or so others for every production that some entrepreneur thinks may bring him some financial reward; I am compelled to appear in rubbish merely so that I can eat and remain in the acting profession. They are guaranteed a regular wage whether they are appearing in a production or not; their rehearsal periods are some three times the normal allowed for in Britain; and, as members of a company, they have a say in their repertoire. I was struck by the fact that, compared with most actors I know, they seemed totally lacking in neuroses. They told me how much they loved Shakespeare, and I was interested to discover that among recent successful productions had been Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman' and J. B. Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls'. They asked me if I could recommend any other contemporary British or American plays as worthy of consideration, and I have since sent them a copy of Robert Ardrey's 'Thunder Rock'.

During our few last days in Tirana we visited the Skanderbeg Museum in Kruja, which must be the most beautiful museum in Europe, and were entertained to lunch by the President of our host committee, Jorgo Melica, and on another day by art expert Ferid Hudhri (whose book on 'Albania in World Art' is due to be published in English later this year) and Kadrem Isai, the editor of 'Science and Life', who is working on a biography of that intrepid English traveller Edith Durham.

Their television, now in colour, was of a

particularly high technical and artistic standard, and I noticed that it included programmes from Britain, Canada and Australia. The absence of commercials -- and of advertising generally -- was a refreshing change, even though it was a little strange at first to find, in place of posters for Coca-cola, exhortations to "Raise High the Revolutionary Spirit!"

For me the most attractive feature of a planned economy was the obvious sense of security enjoyed by Albanian working people. They seem completely confident that whatever shortcomings there may be in any field, next year things will be better and the year after that better still. As my father remarked in a television interview on our last day, although the average British worker in employment still enjoys a higher material standard of living than his Albanian counterpart, this sense of security is lacking in our society, where even a millionaire never knows whether a stock exchange crash will not wipe out his millions overnight.

This is not to suggest that planning of the economy always works in practice as it should. I observed that most Albanians are extremely smartly dressed, but found on enquiry that those whose clothes I admired had them specially made by state-employed tailors and dressmakers, while the ready-made clothes available in the newly-opened Ma-Po department store in Tirana were rather old-fashioned. It seemed, therefore, that -- at least in this field -- the planners were out of touch with popular taste. Another thing that surprised me, in a country which is now producing complex electronic instruments, was to find that no women's sanitary products of any kind were available, although there is now a large "Parfumëri" in Tirana. It seems illogical to me that half the population should not be able to function efficiently and hygienically every day of the year, while being encouraged to smell nice! Could it be that too many decisions are still

being made by men and that the strong Women's Union which exists has not pressed this elementary demand through some misguided sense of delicacy?

Having read so much in the press about Albania's "isolation", it was a surprise to find all over the country people who knew so much about world culture. This was indeed my strongest overall impression -- an enthusiasm for all that life had to offer, not in a materialistic but in a very pure and spiritual manner.

I left Albania with a tremendous sense of warmth towards the country and its friendly and hospitable people and towards the new society they are building.



Archaeologist/poet Moikom Zeqo in the Archaeological Museum at Durrës.

THE YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGIST

A poem by Moikom Zeqo

From time's first genesis
she travelled two millennia
to reach this dim September day.

And now she puts a coin
into the telephone --
the ferryman of love
to her fiancé.

The sea listens to her words
and promises her a veil of wonder.

Will she invite
the ancient statues
to her wedding?

Oh, what strange wedding guests!

THE SITUATION IN KOSOVA

(A leading article from the Albanian newspaper
'Zëri i Popullit ' (The Peoples Voice))

Several days ago, a special Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was held to discuss, for the second time this year, the situation in Kosova.

The Plenum did not analyse the real causes of the situation in Kosova, but took new measures against the Albanians, against their national and democratic rights. The Plenum was dominated by supporters of "the hard line", who have made intensification of repressive police measures the basis of the CLY's programme for Kosova.

The Plenum resolved that "the CC of the CLY recommends that the responsible organs of the Federation, especially the Presidency, take urgent measures for greater effectiveness on the part of the security services", that is, should despatch further Federal police.

Furthermore, the Plenum recommended the intensification of legal proceedings against the Albanians. It should not be forgotten that during the seven years from 1981 the Yugoslav courts have sentenced to terms of imprisonment more than 15,000 Albanians. Thus, the Serbian chauvinists are reverting to the anti-Albanian repressions of Rankovich.

The Plenum demanded strong measures for the continuous "purge" of leading cadres, that is, for the removal of Albanians from leading positions, and proposed the removal of even the limited rights of national self-government enjoyed by Kosova under the existing Constitution.

The "hard-liners" at the Plenum reduced the problem of Kosova to allegations of "persecution" of Serbs and Montenegrins in the province, to allegations that they are being "driven" from the province. This "problem" has been fabricated in order to camouflage the true situation of the national oppression of the Albanians. Serbs and Montenegro are leaving Kosova not because of "pressure" from the Albanians, but because of the grave economic situation in the province.

The falsity of the charges of Albanian "persecution" are shown clearly by the official crime figures, which show that, despite the large numbers of Albanians who have been convicted of "political offences", the crime rate in Kosova remains the lowest of any sector of Yugoslavia. That this false charge is merely a pretext for moves to do away with the limited autonomy enjoyed by Kosova is also shown by the simultaneous proposal to abolish the autonomous region of Vojvodina in the north of Serbia.

It is, indeed, not merely Kosova and Vojvodina which are under attack by the Serbian chauvinists. Pressure has recently been intensified against Slovenia in particular. The proposal to abolish the autonomous status of Kosova and bring it under the complete control of Serbia is but a part of a wider programme to impose Serbian domination over Yugoslavia as a whole.

The problem of Kosova is difficult, but it is not insoluble. It is, however, a matter for regret that there is thinking in Belgrade which holds that the problem of Kosova can be solved by trampling of the Albanians. This is a blind alley which can only seriously worsen the situation in Kosova and in the country as a whole.

ALBANIANS WILL NOT BE SILENT

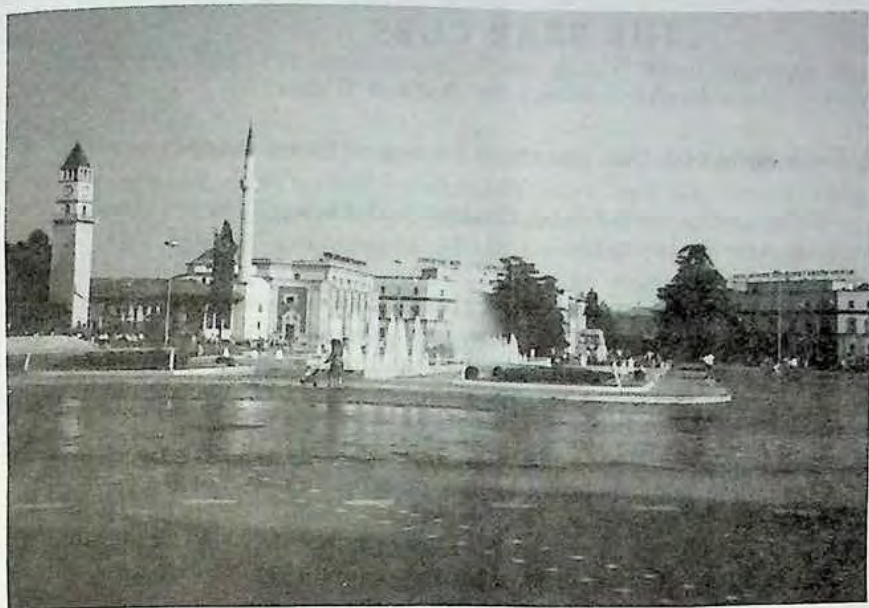
by Sabri Hamiti

(Speech at a discussion meeting organised in Belgrade on 26/27 April 1988 by the Association of Writers of Kosovo and the Association of Writers of Serbia).

Written Albanian culture, which has lived through the centuries, was born and developed in face of the occupation of the Balkans by the Turks. Under Turkish rule it developed in complete illegality. From the beginning the Albanian book was considered dangerous and it is considered so today. According to this theory, in Albanian culture there has always been and is today a Promethean element, an expression of national pride, of resistance to occupiers. And this is true.

Albanian culture survived Roman savagery, Byzantine darkness and Turkish oppression. Under a thousand years of occupation this culture was a powerful weapon in the defence of the national identity of the Albanian people. And the Albanian people will never allow their culture to be destroyed by new barbarians.

Albanians will not be silent!



Skanderbeg Square, Tirana



THE BEAR CUBS

A short story by Roland Gjoza

Zef Voci entered the teachers' room without knocking.

They were seated on chairs and beds, their eyes fixed on the television.

He remained motionless for a moment, seeking to hide his embarrassment. Then, to give an appearance of composure, he took off his cap and struck it against the palm of his other hand to shake off the thin coating of snow which covered it.

One of the young men, Romeo, rose and said cordially to him:

"Sit down. We're just looking at a film".

Zef essayed a smile and sat down on a creaking chair.

"You've been at the maternity hospital? Has your wife had the baby?"

"Yes".

"A boy or a girl?"

"A boy. . . Has anybody got a cigarette?"

"Here you are!", cried Romeo, and offered him a packet.

No one had any matches. Romeo held a piece of paper to the element of the electric fire. It flared up immediately and Romeo used it to light Zef's cigarette.

"How's the baby?", inquired Romeo.

"He was premature. They don't know whether he will live".

The film came to an end, and the room emptied almost completely. Everyone went out into the long, dim corridor, some in pyjamas, some in baggy trousers, some in their underwear. Then someone began to sing in a stentorian voice, someone else turned up his radio to the maximum volume, while in the adjoining room a party began which would last until midnight, perhaps even until daybreak.

All this delighted Zef Voci. Each time he had to come to town now, he would go, not to a hotel but to this strange but welcoming room.

He was about to lie down on one of the beds when someone rapped on the window and shouted:

"Zef! The doctor says your kid is out of danger. Sleep well! We're going back to Qafë Bari".

"You're leaving now? Wait till the morning!"

"No. We have to be at work in the morning. Good night!"

"Good night!"

We heard the crunch of frozen snow beneath the feet of the two men as they went away. Zef sat down on the bed and gave a sigh of relief.

"Who were they, Zef?", I asked him.

He did not reply.

"Did they help you bring your wife to hospital?"

He scratched his head and muttered:

"My wife nearly had a miscarriage because of those two. But it wasn't really their fault".

And he told us the story. . . .

"It had been snowing very hard and the drifts were the height of a man. The two Franes, as we called them, were brothers, and one day they suddenly disappeared from the camp. There was a rumour that they had gone out to mark the trees for felling, but no one knew for certain. One of them, we discovered later, had gone into a cave to hide -- he was fond of practical jokes -- and he had come out a few minutes later laughing and cradling two small bear-cubs in his arms. The engineer had told him to let them go, but he had refused. The brothers had put cords round their necks and led them through the snow as though they were dogs.

That evening in the canteen they ran around on the tables, knocking over cups of tea and trying to bite everybody. They got hold of my cap while I had dozed off and tore it to shreds with their sharp teeth. Everybody laughed at their pranks. They were adorable. Watching them, the lumberjacks who were away from their families were reminded of their children.

When I got home I told the story to my wife, who was very amused. She had never seen a bear-cub and begged me to bring them home the next day for her to see. Being pregnant, she had these strange demands which had to be satisfied. I promised to bring them to the house the next morning, and she went happily off to sleep.

I undressed and got into bed and was just falling asleep when a terrific howl came from the verandah, and something huge hurled itself against the door, which shook on its hinges as though it had been struck with a sledge-hammer.

It was the mother-bear looking for her cubs.

My wife woke up terrified and begged me to tell her what was going on. I went to the door, opened it very slightly and shouted to the top of my voice to the two Franes to let the bear-cubs go. She understood immediately, and asked me, still very frightened:

'Zef, why don't the Franes let the poor things go? Try and convince them. They are young and don't realise what they're doing".

I heard the neighbours swearing at them, but the scoundrels just turned a deaf ear.

I went over to my wife and saw that she was crying.

'Don't cry! It's not all that bad!"

But she interrupted me:

'It's breaking my heart, Zef! Do you hear?'

The bear's howls were now so fierce that I could think only of how to defend myself, but my wife, no doubt because of the maternal love which had already taken root within her, could feel only sympathy for the grief of this mother.

Then, all became silent, and I opened the door a little wider. The Franes had taken the two bear-cubs out on to their verandah, where they ran and rolled about on the steps, The mother bear moved away, and the two cubs followed her meekly, falling over from time to time. Suddenly she stopped, turned her head and licked one of them. Then they resumed their walk side by side into the violent wind which lifted the frozen snow like a dust-cloud, until they disappeared into the forest.

My wife lay moaning on the bed. Her face was twisted in pain. Her labour pains had begun, and she told me so, her cheeks bathed in tears. I could have killed those two Franes. Mad with rage, I left the house, slamming the door behind me, and rushed up to them. They were still on the verandah, heads bowed, not saying a word. One would have thought they were statues. Strangely, they were crying! But why? I didn't know what to say, and I left them.

I took my wife off to hospital, and they insisted

on coming with me. For two days they never left me alone for a moment".

Zef was silent.

"Ah. if only I had a cigarette!", he exclaimed.

"You want one?", inquired Romeo, leaving the room immediately. He returned after a few moments with a lighted cigarette and placed it between Zef's lips.

"Thanks, boys! And that's the story of the bear cubs".

As he said these words footsteps were heard outside the window, and a voice called out:

"Hi, Zef Voci! We've changed our minds. We'll go back tomorrow with you".

"Right!", replied Zef, saying to us; "I thought they'd be back".

"Come in!", Romeo called out to the Franes.

"No, thanks! It's very late. We're going to the hotel".

"We have a bed at your disposal. It's big enough for the two Franes!".

At these words they sniggered childishly.

"Good night!", they called.

"Good night!", we replied.

With that they left, laughing for no apparent reason. The frozen snow crunched beneath their

footsteps.

When we awoke the next morning, we found that Zef had already gone . . .



ESPERANTO

by Miço Samara

Esperanto is an artificial language invented by the distinguished Polish linguist and oculist Dr. Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof in 1887 on the basis of mathematical logic and the structure of several existing languages.

In the 16th century the Spanish Humanist Juan Vives expressed the view that an international language was desirable and thought that this function could be performed by Latin, which was at that time the language in most widespread use in Europe. But this view was opposed by many linguists on the grounds that Latin was a difficult language in which to become fluent.

The first idea for the creation of "a new universal language" came from the French philosopher René Descartes in 1629. After him the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz mapped out a project for such a language and, some years before Zamenhof, the German linguist August Schleicher devised "a universal alphabet" of 28 letters by means of which all the languages in the world could be written. Although his proposed grammar was too difficult, Zamenhof recognised Schleicher as the father of the movement for an international language.

Up to now there have been some thirty projects for an international language, but only 'Dr. Esperanto' ('one who hopes'), Zamenhof's pseudonym, discovered the key to the construction of such a language. Following his first book 'Lingvo Internacia' (1887); in 1905 he published a small book of fifty pages entitled 'Fundamento de Esperanto' containing an introduction by the author, the alphabet of 28 letters, sixteen simple grammatical rules, exercises and a dictionary. Zamenhof himself translated into Esperanto Shakespeare's 'Hamlet', Gogol's 'The Government Inspector' and

Goethe's 'Iphigenie in Tauris'.

A hundred years have passed since then. Esperanto has been learned and has spread in all the continents. It has been supported by scholars and writers such as Tolstoy, Gorky, Einstein and our own Noli. During the Second World War Hitler banned publications in Esperanto and persecuted the family of Zamenhof, who had died in 1917.

There is today a wide literature in Esperanto, both original and translated. The largest library is in Vienna, with some 18,000 volumes, which include many world masterpieces. There are also some 100 newspapers and magazines in Esperanto.

The grammar of Esperanto is extremely simple, making it very easy to learn. Every word is pronounced as it is written, and the accent always falls on the penultimate syllable. All nouns end in -O (e.g., 'patro', father) and all adjectives in -A (e.g., 'terura', terrifying). The plural of nouns is formed by the addition of -J, e.g., 'patroj', fathers). There are only two cases -- nominative and accusative, the latter being formed by the addition of the termination -N. The article, 'la' (the), is not inflected for gender, number or case.

Because of its extremely simple grammatical structure, the translation of works into Esperanto may very easily be carried out by computer.

The aim of Esperantists was put forward by Zamenhof himself at the First Congress of Esperantists, held at Boulogne-sur-Mer in 1905:

"To spread throughout the world a neutral language, without putting on one side existing national languages".



Saranda



Shkodra

THREE POEMS BY BARDHYL LONDO

MIGJENI

(The Shkodran writer Millosh Gjergj Nikolla ("Migjeni") died in 1938 at the age of twenty-seven. He was noted for his verse and for his satirical short stories directed against the social injustices of the time)

Give me a wave --
I'll give you a sea.
Give me a word --
I'll give you a song.
Give me a bird --
I'll give you a sky.
Give me a love --
I'll give you a thorn.
Give me a hope --
I'll give you a life.
Give me a fist --
I'll give you liberty.
Give me a dream --
I'll give you the future.
Give me a God --
I'll give you blasphemy.
Give me
all
that,
Give me
all
this,
I'll give you a name:
MIGJENI

LASGUSH PORADECI

(The lyrical poet Lasgush Poradeci, of Pogradec, died in 1987 at the age of eighty-seven. An obituary was published in the last issue of Albanian Life).

Death had forgotten you. Bewildered,
he had lost his way in your magical verse.
The day you closed your eyes
the lake of Pogradec
became a frozen tear.

CHRONICLE OF A LOVE

On Monday we met.
By Tuesday we were friends;
 life was a smile.
On Wednesday we fell in love
 we wandered through the streets.
On Thursday we quarrelled;
 and life was sad.
On Friday, I relived the days which had passed.
On Saturday, I searched the streets
 to find her.
On Sunday we rediscovered love,
 like Columbus America.
But now it is Monday once more . . .

THE 1957 FOREIGN OFFICE DOCUMENTS ON ALBANIA

by Norberto Steinmayr

In January of this year eighteen Foreign Office files relating to Albania in 1957 were declassified at the Public Record Office in Kew under the thirty-year-rule. One file was retained in its department of origin, while another will remain closed for another twenty years. A scientific and comprehensive analysis of the available British material relating to Albania between 1912 and 1955 is included in A Tangled Web: A History of Anglo-American Relations with Albania (1912-1955) by William Bland and Ian Price. A similar study, but restricted to British documents during the Second World War period, has been made by the Albanian historian Arben Puto in From the Annals of British Diplomacy.

At the 3rd Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania (May-June 1956), which approved the 2nd Five Year Plan (1956-1960), emphasis was laid on the rapid development of agriculture (with the main task of extending collectivisation), together with the raising of the material and cultural well-being of the people. As early as December 1957, in fact, the area collectivised had reached 58% of the cultivated land, so that the socialist sector had become the dominant sector in agriculture as well as in industry. 1957 marked a turning point also in industrial and agricultural production: that year's plan was overfulfilled in all branches of industry, industrial production rising by 26% over the level of 1956 and agricultural production by 15%. Following these successes, from October 1957 the rationing system was abolished and the prices of goods were reduced. With the establishment of the University of Tirana in 1957, education too was raised to a higher level.

No relations had existed between Albania and Britain since the latter had withdrawn its mission from Tirana in April 1946. Indeed, the events which followed the Corfu Channel incident of October 1946 and, in particular, the subsequent retention of the Albanian gold in London made any normalisation of relations between the two countries impossible. Hence, the Foreign Office had to gather its information on Albania from the French, the Italians or the Yugoslavs. Moreover, between the late 1940s and early 1950s a wide variety of considerations (relating, in particular, to Albania's geographical isolation from the Soviet bloc following the expulsion of the Yugoslav "Communists" from the Cominform) had led the British and American governments to believe that Albania represented the most vulnerable spot for subversion in the Soviet bloc. But by 1954 these attempts to detach the country from the socialist camp had proved a total failure.

How, then, was Albania viewed by the Foreign Office at the beginning of 1957? According to the Northern Department there was

" . . . no evidence of any threat to the stability of the regime". (FO371/128397/N 1011/13)

Later, during the summer, however, reports of "greatly increased security measures" led the French to speculate hopefully that it was

" . . . probable that sections of Albanian public opinion had been seriously affected by the events in Hungary and by the evolution of socialism in Yugoslavia. It was not improbable that 'something more liberal' would come out of the present unrest". (FO371/129994/RA 1015/3).

The Austrian Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Wodak, after a short visit to Tirana, confirmed the "very tense" atmosphere existing in the Albanian capital, since

" . . . the Government quarter was heavily guarded, with two policemen and two soldiers at every street corner".

From these two pieces of information, FO official in the Southern Department Kenneth Pidham deduced

" . . . that the turmoil in the Communist world may have hit Albania at last and there are some leanings towards Titoism". (F0371/129999/RA 10392/2).

Analysing Khrushchev's speech at the reception to an Albanian delegation held at the Albanian Embassy in Moscow on 15 April, British Ambassador Sir Patrick Reilly noted that

" . . . there seemed to be some implied criticism of Albanian intransigence when he pointed out that Albania was on worse terms with Yugoslavia than was the Soviet Union",

so that

" . . . it was evident that the Soviet leaders were not anxious to identify themselves with Albanian hostility to Yugoslavia. They may even have encouraged the Albanians to come more into line with their own policy towards that country". (F0371/129998/RA 10338/3).

This view was confirmed by the Italian Ambassador in Tirana, Revadin, according to whom

" . . . the Soviet Union was exerting considerable pressure on the Albanians to persuade them to adopt a more friendly attitude towards Yugoslavia". (F0371/129999/RA 10392/2).

According to the French, one result of this

" . . . would in fact be the return to power of various pro-Yugoslav elements" (FO371/129994/RA 1015/3).

in Albania.

Following a short tour of Kosova and Macedonia at the end of the year, Peter Hayman, Counsellor at the British Embassy in Belgrade, reported his impressions to Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd. Hayman found Kosova

" . . . certainly the most backward region of Yugoslavia";

the smaller towns were

" . . . still miserably poor and dirty",

and

" . . . the school-children were thin and ill-clothed".

In Prishtina Hayman met Kosovar politician Ali Sukrija, who,

" . . . with his suave manner and his expensive suit, was far removed from the tattered and unkempt Shiptars who still throng the streets of Prishtina".

According to Sukrija, there were three underlying reasons for Albania's critical policy towards Yugoslavia:

"a) the need for Enver Hoxha to distract attention from his present economic difficulties and in particular from the low standard of living

in Albania;

b) the demands of Moscow which treated Albania as a kind of Russian colony;

c) the traditional Albanian policy towards Yugoslavia which since the days of King Zog had adopted a mischievous line about Kosova". (F0371/130561/RV 1823/1).

Despite the Greek claim on the existence of a "state of war" with Albania, the Albanian government made efforts during 1957 towards the normalisation of its relations with Greece. The Greeks who had been in Albania since the Greek civil war were repatriated and a joint Albano-Greek decision was taken to clear the Corfu Channel of possible mines. As James Mackenzie, the First Secretary at the British Embassy in Athens, reported:

"The Greek Government themselves were clear in their own minds that the Albanians were deliberately doing all they could to improve their relations",

but explained this on the basis that, since

" . . conditions in Albania were very bad and the position of the Government weak, the resumption of normal relations, with the resultant trade and traffic across the frontier, might help to bolster up the regime".

The Greeks, however, were unwilling to resume diplomatic relations because they, with

" . . their claim on Northern Epirus in mind, had firmly insisted (and still insist) on the need for a treaty". (F0371/129997/RA 10319/2).

Nevertheless, in November 1957 Enver Hoxha was telling

a Greek newspaper correspondent:

"We think the time has come when the relations between the PR of Albania and Greece should be normalised. Regardless of the different form of our regimes, our two countries should live in good neighbourliness, establish diplomatic relations, begin commercial exchanges and also create possibilities for cultural relations".

(E. Hoxha: 'Two Friendly Peoples'; Tirana; 1985; p. 73).

On the question of diplomatic relations between Britain and Albania, Ian Harvey, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, in reply to a parliamentary question on 11 November 1957, stated bluntly that

"Her Majesty's Government are not at present contemplating any steps to establish diplomatic relations with Albania".

According to a minute by Pridham of the Southern Department, this decision had been endorsed at the end of 1955, following Albanian approaches to London, since the British government

" . . . wanted to keep in step with the United States, Turkish and Greek Governments, who also (had) no diplomatic relations with Albania".

Britain, it was stated, would not agree to resume diplomatic relations until Albania

" . . . agreed to pay the damages awarded by the (International) Court"

in the Corfu Channel case. The British government was not prepared to accept the Albanian offer to

" . . . discuss the Corfu Channel claim after resumption of diplomatic relations".

These considerations apart, Pridham concluded that there was

" . . . no great advantage to be expected from the establishment of a British mission in Tirana", principally because

" . . . the intelligence value of such a mission would be small",

ending his minute by declaring:

"We should still in any case need to concert any action with the United States. We hope eventually to compensate ourselves to some extent from the Albanian share in the Gold Pool, which we intend to split with Italy. Negotiations about this are in progress". (FO371/130000/RA 1051/1).

Indeed, the British government had endeavoured to secure satisfaction of its claim for compensation by seizing 2,338.7565 kilograms of Albanian gold looted by the Nazis during the war, despite the fact that Britain was (and still is), together with France and the USA, a member of the Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold and thus an international fiduciary of the looted gold (confirmed as the property of Albania by the 1953 finding of the independent arbitrator appointed by the International Court). However, the Italian claim to the gold had prevented the transfer of this gold to Britain and so the latter was attempting to satisfy its claim by proposing to share the gold with Italy. Pridham minuted on the 8 November:

"This has been difficult since, as one of the

three Custodian Governments of the Gold Pool, we must preserve legal decency".

Italy was still considering the British government's

" . . . latest proposal for division on a legally respectable basis",

while the other two members of the Tripartite Commission would

" . . . in practice accept what we and the Italians agree".

Pridham comments:

"Ultimately any division of the Albanian gold between the UK and Italy will be made public. But we do not wish to reveal now what we are negotiating with Italy, since to do so might stimulate the Albanians to action to renew their own claim and it would certainly upset the Italians. It might also embarrass us over the arrangements now being made for distribution of the major portion of the gold remaining in the Gold Pool". (FO371/130006/RA 1151/2).

Thirty years have passed since then. The scheme to divide the Albanian gold with Italy did not come to fruition, and the gold is still retained in the Bank of England in clear violation of the British government's role as trustee. Its long overdue return would go some way to demonstrating that Britain has put an end to its "cold war" attitude towards Albania. It would therefore open the way to the normalisation of relations with the People's Socialist Republic of Albania -- the only state in Europe and one of the very few in the world with which Britain does not have diplomatic relations.

THE EARTHQUAKE OF 9 JANUARY 1988

by Eduard Sulstarova

On 9 January 1988 at 2.02 a.m., Tirana was struck by an earthquake of magnitude 5.0 on the Richter scale. The epicentre of this earthquake was situated at 41 12' north, 19 48' east, at a depth of 30 km. The earthquake was preceded by a loud underground noise like thunder, Such a sound is heard when the earth undergoes vibrations of a frequency exceeding 8 per second (in the case of the earthquake concerned the frequency exceeded 32 per second).

The earthquake lasted for 8 seconds, while that of 15 April 1979 (intensity 7.2 on the Richter scale) lasted for 30 seconds.

Many people who were out of doors in Tirana at the time observed a bright flash, like lightning. Such a flash is due to electrostatic phenomena. On the night the earthquake occurred, Tirana was covered with electrically-charged clouds which, at the moment of the earthquake, discharged their electricity and caused this flash.

The tremors of the earthquake of 9 January were felt in almost all parts of the country.

The earthquake was followed, up to 17 January, by 197 aftershocks, the most powerful (at 8.11 a.m. on 9 January) having an intensity of 3.5 on the Richter scale.

The earthquake caused some damage (damage grade of 3, in a few areas of 4) to 138 houses in the neighbourhood of Tirana, and to 11 schools in these villages and in the city, but no deaths or injuries resulted.

PERESTROIKA

(A leading article from the Albanian newspaper 'Zëri i Popullit' (The People's Voice))

The reforms undertaken by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union known by the name of 'perestroika' (restructuring) have aroused wide repercussions and have given rise to much discussion at home and abroad. Its inspirer presents perestroika as a new philosophy, as a new political thought, even as a new revolution comparable in importance, dimensions and depth with the Great October Socialist Revolution.

It is not the first time we have heard such "reforms" spoken of in the Soviet Union. It was Khrushchev who, at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, began that great counter-revolutionary transformation, that process of "reforms", which destroyed socialism, paved the way for the restoration of capitalism and brought about all those regressive consequences in the international communist and workers' movement.

Perestroika is broader in extent and deeper in content than all the "reforms" undertaken by Gorbachev's predecessors, and it could not be otherwise. The crisis of Soviet revisionism and the whole Soviet society had reached the point which made such a programme essential.

The Kremlin leadership seeks to present perestroika as the road of recovery for Soviet society. Gorbachev, like Khrushchev before him, speaks of "returning to Lenin", of "increasing democracy". But in fact perestroika is essentially a frontal attack upon Marxism-Leninism and upon scientific socialism.

Gorbachev is seeking to strengthen Soviet social imperialism by removing the last fetters of the former socialist system which inhibit the full development of

the capitalist system.

The claims that that this is "a new development of socialism" are accompanied by a savage campaign of attacks not merely upon Stalin and his Leninist views on socialism, but upon the whole socialist system built up by the heroism and sacrifice of the people under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party with Stalin at the head. All this glorious period is dismissed as one of "crimes" and "deformations". But the aim is not to correct any mistakes which might have occurred, but to denigrate the whole creed of socialism in order to facilitate the erasure of any trace of it in the Soviet Union.

Who is, in fact, to blame for all the evils that Gorbachev is compelled to admit, such as the decline in the rate of production, the appearance of criminality, corruption, parasitism and drug addiction? The blame must be laid at the door of those revisionist leaders who have guided the destinies of the Soviet Union in the thirty-five years since Stalin's death. It must be laid on their deviation from Marxism-Leninism, on the destruction of socialism and the restoration of capitalism initiated by Khrushchev.

Perestroika aims to eliminate everything that hinders the complete transition to unfettered capitalism. In conformity with this strategy, the private sector is developing at a rapid rate both in town and countryside. The new law on private enterprise permits this in some thirty sectors of industry and agriculture, in transport and construction, in intellectual activity, etc. The new system of profit distribution takes a further step in transforming factory directors into an exploiting bourgeoisie.

And parallel with the process of privatisation, perestroika is opening the door wider to the investment

of foreign capital and the creation of joint ventures, the setting up of which has been sanctioned for the first time by Gorbachev. The state and private enterprises and the cooperatives are now permitted to make their own links with foreign firms, so taking a further step in the integration of the Soviet economy with that of world capitalism.

It is natural, therefore, that perestroika should receive the loud support of the leaders of the capitalist world, who praise Gorbachev as "a heroic figure".

Perestroika needs its appropriate psychological and propaganda atmosphere, which is provided by 'glasnost' (openness). Advertised as "a democratic advance", glasnost in fact serves the liberal wing of the new Soviet bourgeoisie in its struggle with the "conservative" wing, the entrenched state bureaucracy which sees in perestroika a threat to its privileges. And the creed of glasnost has opened the way to an explosion of nationalism. The strengthening of the spirit of Great Russian chauvinism which has accompanied the development of social imperialism could not but aggravate national tensions within the Soviet Union, as is seen in the events in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and elsewhere.

Basing himself on the great and real danger to the peoples from nuclear weapons, Gorbachev reduces all the contradictions of the world to a single one -- that between war and peace. In the name of saving mankind from the catastrophe which threatens it, he asks the peoples to give up all their aspirations for national liberation and for socialism. This kernel of Gorbachev's "new" philosophy in the international arena is simply opportunism, which is almost as old as the working class movement itself.

The Party of Labour of Albania, which has waged a great and long struggle against modern revisionism, has been and will be a resolute fighter against every deviation from Marxist-Leninist principles, against revisionism of every hue, and especially against its most dangerous form: Soviet revisionism. We can have no illusions about the "reform" of capitalist and revisionist social systems, which can be changed only by a real revolution of the working class.



Monument in Rrëshen, Mirdita district.
The inscription reads: "Let us raise on high the flag of our heroic Party and the monumental work of Comrade Enver Hoxha!".

ALBANIAN NEWS

(May - August 1988)

POLITICS

May:

May Day was celebrated throughout Albania with the participation of Party and state leaders (1st).

A scientific conference on 'Enver Hoxha's Thought in Accounting and Finance' was held in Vlora (10th).

A plenum of the Central Council of the Women's Union of Albania convened in Tirana (27th).

June:

The 10th Congress of the WUA took place (6-8th).

The Albanian Committee for Balkan Good Understanding and Cooperation convened (16th).

The 3rd session of the 11th legislature of the People's Assembly took place (21st-22nd).

July:

A scientific conference on 'The Thought of Enver Hoxha on Defence' was organised in Tirana (9th).

August:

President Ramiz Alia visited the district of Dibra.

DIPLOMACY

May:

The Albanian Ambassador to Sweden, Petrit Bushati, presented his credentials to King Carl Gustaf.

The Albanian Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic, Ilir Boçka, presented his credentials to President Erich Honecker.

June:

The Peruvian Ambassador, José Urrutia, and the Iranian Ambassador, Hamid Aboutalebi, presented their credentials to President Ramiz Alia.

The Albanian Ambassador to Bangladesh, Justin Papajorgji, presented his credentials to President Hussein Mohammed Ershad.

July:

The Turkish Ambassador, Teoman Surenkok, presented his credentials to President Ramiz Alia.

August:

The Albanian and Greek Foreign Ministers, Reis Malile and Karolos Papoulias, met in Saranda.

Diplomatic relations were established with the People's Republic of Angola.

FOREIGN VISITORS

Among visitors and delegations to Albania during the period under review were:

May:

A Greek delegation from the Prefecture of Corfu.

An Algerian government delegation, headed by Minister of Agriculture Mohammed Rudghi.

June:

A Greek delegation headed by the Secretary-General of the Mercantile Marine, Vasilis Papadopoulos.

Various foreign delegations to the 10th Congress of the WUA.

A delegation of the Vietnamese Committee of Science and Technology, headed by its Chairman, Dong Hu.

The Turkish sopranos Muveddet Gunbay and Isik Kurt.

A group of Senators from Argentina.

July:

The company of Ioannina People's Theatre, Greece.

A Swiss parliamentary delegation, headed by Chairman Rudolph Reichling.

The Secretary of the Albanian Society (Britain), Bill Bland, and his daughter Eve Bland.

August:

The Turkish Foreign Minister, Mesut Yilmaz.

The Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister, Takujiro Hamada.

The Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Commission of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Chairman of the Interparliamentary Union Council, Hans Stercken.

The President of the Mexico-Albania Friendship Association, José Enrice Gama Munoz.

FOREIGN VISITS

Among Albanians and Albanian delegations going abroad during the period under review were:

May:

Prof. Sofokli Lazri, Director of the Current International Relations Study Institute, to France.

A delegation, headed by Minister of Health Ahmet Kamberi, to the 41st session of the World Health Organisation in Geneva.

A delegation of the Party of Labour of Albania, headed by Pirro Kondi, to the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of Brazil.

A delegation of the Albanian Telegraphic Agency, headed by its Director Taqo Zoto, to Greece.

A delegation of the Trade Unions of Albania, headed by its Secretary Strati Marko, to Ghana.

The 'Armenika' Artistic Ensemble (Librazhd) to Turkey.

Writer Ismail Kadare to an international meeting of writers in Lisbon.

June:

A government delegation, headed by Farudin Hoxha, to the Federal Republic of Germany.

A delegation, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Muhamet Kapllani, to the 3rd extraordinary session of the UN General Assembly on disarmament in New York.

A delegation headed by Bardhyl Golemi, head of the Albanian National Commission for UNESCO, to the 13th conference of Balkan national commissions to UNESCO in Ankara.

A delegation of the Labour Youth League, headed by its Secretary Lisen Bashkurti, to the 2nd Congress of the Revolutionary Youth of Canada.

A delegation, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Sokrat Plaka, to the 1st meeting of Balkan Foreign Ministries in Sofia.

July:

An Albanian folklore group to the Balkan Folklore Festival in Ohrid (Yugoslavia).

A group of scholars to the 2nd International Congress on the Study of Folk Choreography in Larisa (Greece).

August:

The string ensemble of the Jordan Misja Arts School to the 5th Balkan Children's Festival in Preveza (Greece).

A group of scholars to the 13th International Congress of Classical Archaeology in West Berlin.

A group of scholars to the 12th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Studies in Zagreb (Yugoslavia).

A government delegation, headed by Minister of Education Skënder Gjinushi to Congo.

A delegation of the Trade Unions of Albania, headed by its Secretary Stavri Rista, to Libya.

FOREIGN TRADE

May:

A protocol on trade for 1988-89 was signed with Malta.

Albania participated in the International Trade Fairs in Graz (Austria) and Paris, and in the International Book and Press Fair in Geneva (Switzerland).

June:

An agreement on economic cooperation was signed with the Federal Republic of Germany.

An agreement on economic, scientific and cultural cooperation was signed with Algeria.

A protocol on scientific cooperation for 1989-90 was signed with Vietnam.

Trade agreements were signed with Belgium and Yugoslavia.

Albania participated in the International Handicrafts Fair in Galatina (Italy).

July:

A protocol on scientific cooperation for 1989-90 was signed with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

August:

A protocol on economic cooperation and an agreement on international road transport were signed with Turkey.

A trade agreement was signed with Japan.

NEW TOWN

During the period under review, the new small town of Povelça, in Fier district, was settled with a population of about 1,000 cooperative farmers from the village of Darézeza (Gramsh district), which will be engulfed by waters from the current Banja hydro-electric project.

CULTURE

May:

A protocol on scientific and educational exchange

was signed between the Enver Hoxha University of Tirana and the University of Athens.

The May Concerts were organised in Tirana.

An agreement on cultural and scientific exchange for 1988-90 was signed with Italy.

June:

A scientific conference on the Albanian League of Prizren was held in Tirana.

August:

An agreement on cultural, educational and scientific exchange for 1988-89 was signed with Vietnam.

Meetings were organised on the 50th anniversary of the death of the writer 'Migjeni' (Millosh Gjergj Nikolla).

Among new books published in the period under review were:

R. Alia: 'Speeches and Talks, 1987'.

E. Çabej: 'Etymological Studies on the Albanian Language', Vol. 3.

E. Hoxha: 'Works', Vol. 60 (Dec. 1976-Feb. 1977).

E. Hoxha: 'Works', Vol. 61 (Mar.-June 1977).

E. Hoxha: 'Diary', Vol. 3 (1960-61).

O. Nishani: 'For a People's Albania'

'The History of the Anti-Fascist War of National Liberation of the Albanian People', Vol. 3.

SPORT

The Tirana Sports Complex, near the artificial lake, was inaugurated on 1 May.

NEW BOOK

Arqile Bërxfholi & Perikli Qiriazi:

ALBANIA : A GEOGRAPHICAL VIEW (134 pages).

The first part of this book (which is in English) contains chapters on the geological structure, seas, climate, hydrography, plant life, animal life, natural regions, population and urbanisation of Albania. The second part, on the country's economic geography, contains chapters on the economic situation before Liberation, economic development during the period of socialist construction, industry, agriculture and transport.

Price (including postage within UK): £2 - 50.



ALBANIAN SOCIETY MEETINGS

On 17 September the South Wales Branch held a meeting in Bridgend at which Ron Gregory spoke on 'Albania and Wales'.

On 20 September South Wales Secretary Ron Gregory gave an illustrated talk to the Swansea Stamp Club on 'Albanian postage stamps since Liberation'.

On 8 October the London and South-East England Branch held a meeting in London at which Laurie Prescott spoke on 'The World as Seen from Tirana' and the film 'Song of Youth' was screened.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

A short Members' Meeting will held in London following the meeting on 27 November.

The Executive will recommend that the Constitution of the Society be amended to provide for its administration by an elected Executive Committee consisting of a President, Secretary and four members.

Nominations should be sent to the Secretary to be received by 20 November.



A scene in Gjirokastra

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THE ALBANIAN SOCIETY

will present

on SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27th 1988 at 3 p.m.

at

THE BRITANNIA HOTEL, Grosvenor Square, London W1

a talk by the Secretary of the Society

BILL BLAND

on

BYRON AND ALBANIA

illustrated by readings from the poet's letters and
poems by actor

PHILIP MADOC

The lecture will be preceding by the screening of a new
documentary entitled

ALBANIA

and followed by that of a new (1987) feature film
entitled

A HARD BEGINNING

which tells of the trials of a new stepmother.

Literature stall.

Refreshments available.