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ALBANIA - 1984

by Bill Bland

Some weeks ago I received, through the Albanian Embassy in Paris, an invitation to visit the People's Socialist Republic of Albania as the guest of the Committee for Cultural and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries, and I set out from London on June 18th.

Perhaps as punishment for going to Albania, the weekly plane from Belgrade has a check-in time of 5.40 a.m. The night porter at the hotel where I passed the night in Belgrade told me that he was really a priest, but worked during the week to augment his meagre income. When he handed me my passport at four o'clock in the morning, he asked me where I was bound so early. When I told him, he shook his head sadly and said: "An ungodly hour for an ungodly country!" "Maybe", I said, "but the only country I know where you can leave your wallet lying around and know that it will be there when you go back!"

I was greeted warmly at Rinas by Theofan Nishku, in charge of relations with friendship societies abroad. Later in the day I met the Committee's new President, Jorgo Melica, who spoke highly of the Society's work and arranged a programme for my visit which met my every request. I visited Korça, Shkodra, Gjirokastra and Saranda, while Mr. Nishku himself was good enough to spend the whole of my last weekend with me at Durrës. My interpreter was a pleasant young school teacher named Viktor Ristani, while my driver, Hodo Meçe, steered carefully past every child and chicken. He was extremely proud of his new Volvo, which he polished at every opportunity and was outraged when, visiting the construction site of the new power-station at Komani on the River Drin, it became spattered with mud.

Albania is changing rapidly, and I noticed many new constructions since my last visit two years ago - from the new ornamental pond with its fountains opposite the Hotel

Dajti in Tirana to the impressive Skanderbeg Museum in Kruja, which tells the story of Albania's national hero in a vivid and artistic way.

In the Greek Minority Area

One of the most interesting experiences of my tour was a visit to the Greek minority in the south. Our first stop here was the village of Goranxi, which lies in the shadow of Mali i Gjere (Wide Mountain). It forms part of the higher-type cooperative farms of Lower Dropull, which embraces 17 villages with a total population of 10,500. I was entertained with raki and llokume (the latter being Albanian "Turkish Delight") in the comfortable, beautifully-furnished home of Pano Tashi, a retired cooperative farmer, and his family. I recorded a long interview with Mr. Tashi. He asserted that the numbers of the Greek minority in Albania were nothing like the figure of 400,000 put forward by the Greek government, although - at 50,000 - it was in fact somewhat larger than the figure given to me on an earlier visit to the country. He ridiculed the stories being put forward by the Greek government to the effect that the Greek minority was "oppressed". He showed me copies of the Greek-language daily newspaper, "Llajko Vima" (The People's Voice); this is a specially prepared edition of the country's leading newspaper of the same name "Zëri i Popullit"; it has a weekly literary supplement devoted entirely to poems and short stories by Greek-speaking writers. He also presented me with several books for adults and children published in the Greek language, and told me with evident pride of the Greek amateur dramatic societies and folk ensembles which flourished in the district, and described some of the films from Greece which he had seen in the past few months.

I asked him about the educational system in the minority area, and he told me of the Greek teachers' training

college in Gjirokastra from which his daughter-in-law had graduated before becoming a teacher in the village eight-year school. Here for the first three years education was conducted entirely in the Greek language; in the fourth year the child was taught the elements of Albanian grammar, and from the fifth year onwards education was carried out principally in Albanian, but with periods devoted to Greek language and literature. In this way the child became bilingual and was able to proceed to secondary or higher education (which is conducted in Albanian) and could undertake any occupation. In fact, I had already discovered in Tirana that members of the minority occupied some of the highest positions in the land - as, for example, the woman Vice-President of the People's Assembly, Vitori Çurri.

As for the alleged "poverty" of the Greek community, he pointed out that Dropull was one of the richest areas of Albania, and said that out of the 190 families in the village, 122 had TV sets and 110 had washing-machines.

Thus, he said, there was not the slightest discrimination against the minority, whose culture was encouraged in every way, and members of the Greek community had equal rights in every way with the majority. Asked to say a few final words, he declared that he would never forget that the British people were allies of the Albanian people in the war and he hoped that the two peoples would always remain friends.

I was told that I was welcome to visit any other house in the village where someone was at home (all but pensioners and recent mothers being at work) to confirm what Mr. Nashi had told me, but I was completely satisfied with his sincerity and did not take advantage of the offer.

In the next village - Dervician - I was shown over the new Palace of Culture with an art gallery, library, restaurant - not to mention a theatre, equipped with a revolving

stage, seating 470. And this was in a village with a population of just under 2,000!

The Penal System

I had asked particularly for detailed information concerning the operation of the penal system in the PSR of Albania, which is the subject of much misinformation in the British press. In this connection Paskal Haxhi, a judge of the Supreme Court, was good enough to accord me two long interviews in which he answered all my questions fully and presented me with several books on the subject. When translated, these and all that Mr. Haxhi (himself, incidentally, a member of the Greek minority) told me will be the subject of an article on the subject in ALBANIAN LIFE.

Among the most interesting facts which emerged was that the police in Albania have the duty of preventing or checking the commission of a crime, but have no power of arrest or of investigation. In the case of a suspected crime, they have power only to establish the identity of any persons they believe to be involved (including possible witnesses) and to report to an investigating magistrate, who alone may investigate and order an arrest.

The amount of crime in Albania, particularly serious crime, is very small as a result, said Mr. Haxhi, of the elimination of many of the social causes of criminality and most cases of petty crime are dealt with outside the courts by public criticism, etc. During the whole of 1982, for example, only 111 people in the whole of Albania (7% of them women) were sentenced to some penalty for criminal offences, and the great majority of these penalties did not involve deprivation of liberty. Of sentences of detention, the majority were of re-education (which is the kernel of the penal system) in labour camps, and only very serious or repeated crimes were the subject of a prison sentence, for which Albania has two small prisons. He was adamant that there was

no truth whatsoever in stories, largely circulated by politically hostile emigres, that detainees were subject to inadequate diet or ill-treatment, which would obviously defeat the fundamental aim of re-education. Prisoners had the right of complaint to the Attorney-General's Office, and all complaints had to be investigated. Further, he - like other judges - visited labour camps and prisons regularly to investigate the progress of his "patients" and could order the cancellation of a remaining sentence where he was satisfied that re-education had been accomplished. It was interesting to discover that detainees in labour camps (but not in prisons) had the right to sexual relations with their wives or husbands during the two-monthly family visits, special accommodation being provided for this.

The death sentence, Mr. Haxhi stated, was a temporary and extraordinary measure applied only in the case of extremely serious crimes such as treason and where it was considered that re-education was unlikely to be successful. No death sentences had been passed in Albania so far during 1984.

Other Interviews

Shortly after my arrival in the country, I was privileged to meet Ali Xhiku, the Dean of the Faculty of History and Linguistics at the University of Tirana, and Professor Shaban Demiraj, who holds the Chair in Albanian Language and Literature. They were delighted to hear from me that the University of London had been granted funds to open an Albanian Department and asked me to convey to Dr. Deletant the offer to help with the provision of books or in any other way. I had been working for some time on a biographical sketch of an Englishman, John Newport, who fought with Skanderbeg, and they arranged a further interview with specialists in this field to help me track down the source of a quotation from him which is cited in the "History of Albania". As a result it is now clear that the original source is

not to be found in Albania and I have to search elsewhere.

I met Vaso Pano, the Director of ALBTURIST, and discussed ways and means of finding a less expensive route for British tourists to reach Albania than by air via Yugoslavia, and one less exhausting than the long journey by coach. Of course, when the Yugoslavs have completed their section of the railway which will link the Albanian rail network with the rest of Europe, this will provide one possibility. The main stumbling block to a quick and relatively inexpensive tourist route from Britain to Albania (via Corfu, for example) is that the Greek government (which regards itself as still in a state of war with Albania) will not, as yet, permit travel to that country other than by air. Nevertheless, Mr. Pano welcomed the first tour to his country organised by the Albanian Society and assured me that he would do everything possible to make this visit an interesting one.

I met two leaders of the Trade Unions of Albania - Qirjako Mino and Islam Bashari - and obtained from them much information on the trade union movement which is the subject of a separate article in this issue of ALBANIAN LIFE. They were also good enough to give me material, including badges, requested by the Museum of Labour History in London. They were extremely well-informed about the miners' strike in Britain, which has been fully reported in the Albanian media.

Another interesting meeting was with Fuad Dushku, the Director of the Gallery of Arts in Tirana, with whom I had a long discussion on the principles of socialist realist art. He is arranging to send to the Society a set of specially-taken colour slides of representative paintings and sculptures exhibited in the gallery.

My final meetings were with Hiqmet Arapi, Vice-Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, and with Estref Bega, Director of the Book Enterprise. With them I discussed ways and means

of improving trade between our two countries. I had brought with me several suggestions from Ramsey Margolis of the Albania General Trading Co. Ltd., (who, I discovered, is remembered throughout Albania as "the vegetarian") on ways of making Albanian products (especially books) more acceptable to the British market. They expressed pleasure at receiving these constructive suggestions and promised to pass them on to the appropriate quarters. I came away loaded with catalogues, and samples of most products - from chrome ore and postage stamps to jam and wine - will shortly be on their way to Mr. Margolis.

Diversions

My trip was by no means all work, however. I visited numerous art exhibitions, saw the visiting Greek folk song and dance ensemble on television and, on one free evening in Tirana went to the cinema. I found all seats booked for the latest Albanian film "The Judgment", even though it was being screened simultaneously at several cinemas. I took myself off, therefore, to the little Agimi (Dawn) Cinema nearby, and saw an Italian film of Donizetti's opera "Lucia di Lammermoor". It was screened without subtitles, but with a synopsis in Albanian before each act. My ticket (there was only one price) cost 1 lek 50 qindarkë - the equivalent of 15 English pence, and I could not but compare this with the £2.50 it would have cost me to see the same film in London.

My ever-solicitous guide and mentor Viktor Ristani insisted that in view of my great age I should rest for four hours each afternoon. I pleaded that this was a waste of time. I reminded him that, because of our atrocious climate, the siesta was not an English custom. I quoted the old Lancashire proverb: "There's time enough to rest when you're under the sod". I told him that I was really only twenty-six and that my decrepit appearance was simply the result of a dissolute life. But all in vain! All this, he replied, made

a siesta even more necessary! In consequence, I was free in the afternoons to wander around wherever we happened to be, searching for books, music, etc. to add to the Society's collection. On one of these trips I discovered a manual of names of Albanian and Illyrian origin and, finding that the name of "Viktor" was not among them, I informed him gravely that he was required to change this by December 1st to "Jaseminë". He seemed to find this shaka angleze (English joke) amusing.

One of the great personal pleasures of my trip was to meet in person the sports commentator and novelist Skifter Këlliçi, whose novel "The Last Days of a Prime Minister" I had just finished translating into English. Another was to meet again Faik Zeneli, who had been my interpreter on my first visit to Albania in 1962, since when he has been Counsellor in Rome and later Ambassador to Tanzania; he is now a Party functionary in his beloved home town of Shkodra, from where he was good enough to escort me to the Përlat Rexhepi State Farm, the Koman dam and several museums.

Reading back over what I have written, I realise that I shall be chided by my old Orkney friend John Broom for not having mentioned any negative features of life in Albania. The fact that I have to think hard to recall any such features of which I became aware is no doubt evidence that my overall impression was extremely favourable. But yes! Although food is plentiful and its distribution seems wholly adequate (there are food shops in almost every block open, on a shift system, from early morning till late at night) I found it difficult in the towns to buy soap powder. This may have been due to my not knowing precisely which type of shop sold it (a kinkaleri, which sells much more than trinkets, a "household goods" shop, a "various goods" shop, etc.). There seems to be no actual shortage of soap powder (at least, Albanian clothes appear spotlessly clean) and I eventually obtained a packet at one of those village stores which sell everything.

Conclusion

On my last evening in Albania I was the guest at a huge seven-course banquet kindly given in my honour by Mr. Melica, which even my capacious stomach could not accommodate.

My final act before catching the plane back to "Christian civilisation" was to be interviewed by radio and television on my impressions of Albania. I replied:

"My impressions are so many and varied that it is hard to summarise them in a few words.

But long after I have left your shores some things will remain vividly in my mind:

the huge dam under construction at Koman;

the breathtaking beauty of the Albanian landscape;

the gaily-painted playgrounds and the beautiful, healthy children playing in them;

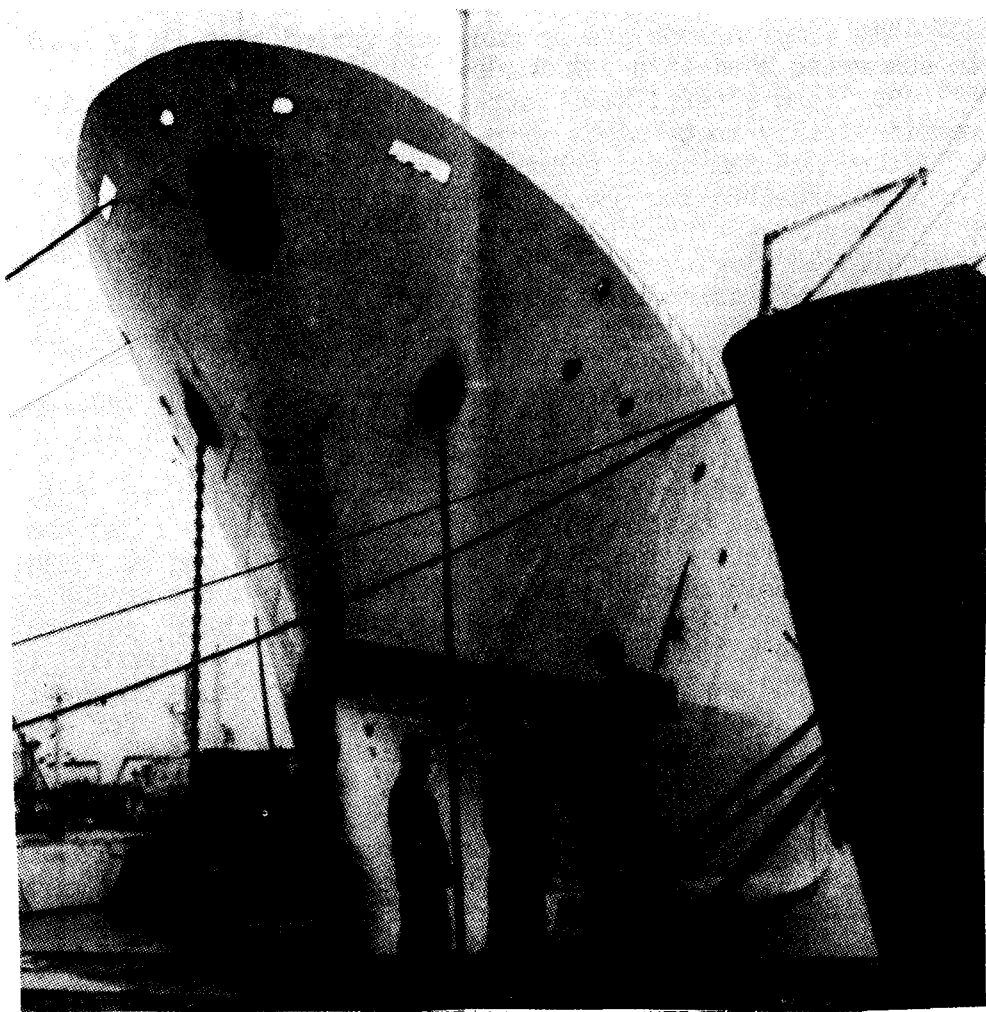
the warm friendliness and hospitality of the Albanian people to those who come to their country as friends and not as enemies;

the blend of the aromas of linden trees and roasting coffee which for me will always symbolise Shkodra at six o'clock in the morning.

But long after all these memories have begun to fade with the passage of time, I shall recall the party I had the privilege of attending in the south. It was given by young people and their teachers to celebrate the former's graduation. They were from Ksamil, where they and their parents have made the wilderness blossom with oranges and lemons. I noted that the girls would invite the boys to dance on equal terms with them - a little thing, but one which for me symbolises the liberation of women which has made such giant strides in Albania. I observed that their toasts to the Party of Labour and its leadership were spontaneous and sincere, and this should not surprise people who are aware of the doors now open to these young people which in the past stood firmly closed. For several hours after I was supp-

osed to leave I stayed on to listen to the throb of Albania's over-powering folk music and to watch with the greatest pleasure as these young people laughed, sang and danced together. It seemed to me that here was embodied in real life the slogan which stands off the beach at Durrës:

'Beautiful is the life we have created,
but brighter still will be the future''



Shipbuilding at Durrës

The 41st Anniversary of the People's Army

by Steve Calder

July 10 this year marks the 41st anniversary of the founding of the Albanian People's Army. On July 10, 1943 the General Staff of the Albanian National Liberation Army was created, and this day is celebrated by the Albanian people every year as one of their most memorable events.

The National Liberation Army was created in the heat of the anti-fascist war of the Albanian people to liberate their country. The army made a heroic contribution to the historic victory over the two big fascist powers, Italy and Germany. Albania was one of the countries that suffered, relative to population, the heaviest losses in human lives and material damage during the Second World War.

Though it was an epic in itself and took place in national and international circumstances quite unlike previous national liberation wars, the struggle of the Albanian people to drive out the fascists and liberate their country cannot be separated from the centuries-long effort of the Albanian people for their independence and for social progress. This revolutionary process leads through the Albanian Renaissance of the last century, through the proclamation of national independence in 1912, rising to a higher plane with the June 1924 revolution (establishing a democratic government until overthrown by Zogu in December 1924), and being crowned with the victory of November 29, 1944.

The Albanian people as a whole threw themselves into the war to free their country and defeat the fascist forces. The Communist Party of Albania (now the Party of Labour of Albania) and the National Liberation General Council issued a call in April 1943, urging the people that "the fate of the country depends on this issue of the war we are waging, and the more fiercely it is waged against the occupier, the nearer the day of liberation". The Albanian people responded, uniting to oust the occupiers and defeat the quislings.

Throughout this armed struggle runs the principle of self-reliance, expressed in the slogan: "Freedom is won through bloodshed and war, and does not come as a gift". With this principle the people and the army, under the leadership of the CPA, not only won their liberation but above all ensured the victory and stability of a new Albania. It is the 40 years of this continued victory and constant progress that the Albanian people celebrate this year.

In defence of new Albania, the army and the people are one and inseparable, for this defence is based on the patriotism of the people and their permanent military readiness. Today the Albanian People's Army is equipped with modern weapons, military means and techniques. It remains the main force for the defence of the homeland, and has as a constant preoccupation its strengthening, modernising and revolutionising.

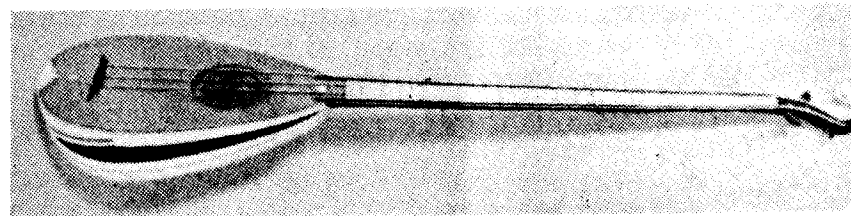


Cartoon-
"Peace on
Earth"

The Kalushun

by Ramadan Sokoli

Besides the mother tongue, customs, songs and dances, there are finely preserved in the traditions of Albanian émigrés many other things in common with our people. Knowledge of these ethno-cultural similarities is important for us, because they testify to the links such émigrés retain with the soil of their ancestors.



Such is the case with the kalushun (pictured above), a string instrument used by the Arbëresh of Italy. It has an almond-shaped body, 42-54 cm. in length and 24-34 cm. in width, and a long neck - up to 135 cm. in length. The neck is divided into 14-24 fretted sections, by means of which the fingers of the left hand can produce a chromatic scale ranging up to two octaves. The prototype of the kalushun had three strings, originally of pig-gut, later of metal, which are plucked with a plectrum, originally of cherry-wood, nowadays more often of plastic. It is tuned in fourths (E-A-D) or fifths. In the past there was also a sub-type of this instrument (the gjysmekalushun, or half-kalushun) which was less than a metre in total length. The kalushun was employed in the folk music of the Arbëresh of southern Italy to accompany songs and dances. It is conjectured that the name of the instrument is derived from the German word "Galizien" (Galicia) or from that of an instrument of ancient Greece called the "kelis". However, the etymology of the name remains as yet uncertain.

Historical evidence establishes that this instrument was widely used in southern Italy during the 17th century. Some musicologists believe that it originated in the East,

from where it spread through France, Germany and beyond until - after the end of the 18th century - it gradually disappeared in these countries, perhaps under the influence of clerical prohibitions.

It is not unimportant for our culture to know whether the Arbëresh took the instrument with them when they emigrated beyond the sea. It is not impossible, indeed, that its playing spread through certain countries of western Europe precisely through the emigrations of Albanians. There are



certain marked similarities between the kalushun and the çifteli, the bakllama and the çyr, and it can be said without fear of contradiction that, both in external construction and in manner of playing, there are links of, one may say, kinship. For this whole family of instruments we have the name "tambura" in southern Albania and "tamërr" in northern Albania. This name has spread through the languages of many peoples, but with various phonetic and semantic changes, although its origin is lost in the mists of time. In a tomb in Thebes dating from 1334-1304 B.C. a female is portrayed playing a similar instrument (pictured left, above). At the time of Alexander the Great the Greeks obtained these instruments from Iran, called them "pandore", which is thought to

be derived from "tambur". In the 10th century the Persian poet Firdusi mentions in his "Shah-Nameh" a long-necked lute by the name of "tunbur", and about the same time the Arab scholar al-Farabi describes various types of tamburas, while the "tambur" is also mentioned in the 10th century Byzantine epic of Digenis Akritas.

It is not known precisely and in what historical circumstances tamburas spread from the Middle East through Asia (as far as Japan), northern Africa and Europe. Naturally such a wide dissemination could not fail to produce a multitude of variants with national and even regional peculiarities. Our tamburas differ from those of Iran, India and Anatolia, as also from the "tamburachkas" of the Southern

Slavs, from the "domras" of the Kirghiz and Ostiaks, etc. In the present state of our knowledge it cannot be said precisely when the use of tamburas began in our country. According to some foreign scholars, these kinds of musical instruments were brought to the Balkan Peninsula through the Ottoman invasions, that is, in the 15th. century. Such a conjecture is not tenable: it is enough to note the so-called "trikordon" of antiquity, and to note that such instruments were depicted at the twilight of the Middle Ages among the inhabitants of Albania - for example, in 14th. century murals in the cathedral of Prizren.

In conclusion, it can certainly be said that instruments derived from abroad did not spread at all easily through our country, especially through the remote mountain districts. Consequently a long period must have been necessary for them to have become traditional instruments of our folklore.

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ALBANIA TODAY, No. 1, 1984

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Health; contradictions in socialist society; national culture; scientific development; post-modernist art; Kosova; the Stockholm Conference.

SHORT STORY

Lara

A short story by Nexhat Tazaj

The rain began to fall furiously, in great drops which fell on the parched earth with a noise which drowned all else. The sky was pitch-black and it was impossible to see more than a few yards. I sheltered under a tree, which at first gave some protection but later, as its branches and leaves became wet, left me at the mercy of the storm. Soon my clothes were soaked through and my feet, in sandals made by my brother from bits of an old tyre tied together with wire, grew red with the cold. After a little while I was joined by five goats, headed by Lara.

The goats surrounded me, and I patted them gently. Lara was usually healthy and full of energy, but today she seemed tired and listless, holding her head down as though she were ashamed of showing weakness. I had noticed that for the last two or three days she had not been eating with her usual appetite - declining to nibble even at the tender hornbeam or the oak at the edge of the precipice. I stroked her nose. Steam rose from her coat and she was shivering slightly. She began to lick my hand. She looked so miserable that I could not bear to look at her. I put a sack over her like a cloak; but this garment upset the other goats, who had not seen me put it on, and I removed it. The rain continued to fall furiously and, as it showed no sign of easing up, I sat down on a stone which I found nearby, and waited. The goats chewed the cud. But Lara suddenly lowered herself to the ground, first on her fore legs, then on her hind legs also. She remained for a while like this, and then lay down completely. "What is the matter?", I thought. At that time Lara was fourteen years old, and I had looked after her for six. I felt that we had become friends, and sometimes I would give her special food, such as a dish of maize, which she would eat with tremendous zest - licking her lips after every mouthful and, when it was all gone, my hand.

I did not like at all the fact that she was lying down. I got up quickly, and this startled her. But she did not move - merely raising her head slightly and scraping her legs impotently along the wet ground. She looked at me sadly for a moment and then closed her eyes. I was very worried. Lara was not only my favourite goat, but she was also the best milker, which was very useful in our large family. She had given birth to two kids, and what kids they were! - varicoloured and healthy, beautiful and lively, and as affectionate as their mother.

The heavy rain continued. Beyond the mountain the sky was split by a brilliant fork of lightning, followed by a great roar of thunder which shook the earth. Once more Lara made an unsuccessful effort to get to her feet. Then I was convinced that she was indeed ill. Our house was a long way off, and I did not know what to do. In such circumstances herdsmen, if they were convinced that there was no hope of the animal recovering, would slaughter it for meat. I knew this. Indeed, I had done it myself with a penknife as sharp as a razor. But I could not do this to Lara. I remembered that my father, when one of the goats fell sick, had drawn a little blood from its ear. I had never tried this, and I did not dare to do so now. I looked at her black ear, its hair dishevelled by the water. Lara felt my presence, opened her eyes, and gazed at me for a moment. Her eyes seemed about to flicker out, like a lamp which was running out of oil. I whispered her name several times. There, in the middle of the forest, I began to feel a terrible despair. I got up and, with a great effort, lifted her on to my shoulders. I would carry her back to the house. She still did not move, and I set off. The other goats followed us. I was bathed in sweat. When I was still a quarter of an hour from home, I met my father. He was wearing a sack over his head to protect him from the rain. He helped me to carry Lara and, as we walked, asked:

"What is the matter with it?"

"I don't know", I replied; "she lay down and couldn't get up".

"Perhaps it fell and hurt itself", he suggested

"No, father. She's been weak for several days".

"You didn't say anything!"

I made no reply. In fact, I had barely seen my father for three days. He worked all day in the fields, while I was occupied with the goats. Almost as soon as I got home, I would go to bed. This was not just because I was tired, but because we had very little food and when one was asleep one did not feel the pangs of hunger. Sometimes I had dreams of tables laden with delicious food . . .

We reached home without speaking another word. I shut the other goats up in the shed, while my father carried Lara into the house. I found her stretched out in front of the hearth, beside a roaring fire. My mother gave me some dry clothes to put on, and I sat down near the fire. My four-year-old sister and my little brothers were silent for once. We all suffered along with Lara, but they sensed that I was suffering the most and they respected my sorrow.

"The animal is dying!", said my father.

He looked at me, puffing away at his pipe. I was upset that he seemed to show so little sympathy for Lara, and I got up and paced the room. Then I realised what must be done. When one of the children had a cough or a fever, my mother would give them some grains of sugar from her hand. Sugar and salt were very precious, and were normally brought out only for visitors. Sugar, I decided, was what was needed to make Lara well again!

I spoke to my mother. She did not reply, and I went to the old worm-eaten chest, unlocked it and took out the little tin in which we kept the sugar. My father had brought the tin some years ago in the market when he had gone into town. My mother took a teaspoon and filled it with sugar. I opened my hand to receive it, and went over to Lara. The fire had dried her coat. She put out her tongue and licked the sugar. Liking the taste, she began to eat it with great enjoyment. She moved her legs a little, but could not get to her feet. The children smiled. Even my father came over and began to stroke her neck. I ran to my mother and begged her

for another spoonful of sugar. She looked at me doubtfully for a moment, but then put a little more into my hand. I went over to Lara once more, sure that this time she would be cured. She ate the sugar, but once more was unable to rise. I felt my hopes fading as she lay there, now with her eyes closed.

My father got up. He had taken his decision. He went to the cupboard and took out the knife he used to cut up his tobacco. He looked at me out of the corner of his eye as he sharpened the knife on the stone we kept for this purpose. I went quickly over to him.

"No!", I begged fearfully.

"We must slaughter it", he said firmly.

"But why?", I begged; "why do you want to kill her?"

"Because I must", he said. He had raised his voice, and I realised he was upset. "You are a brave boy. You must understand".

Usually I did not question what my father did, but in this case I went outside without a word. The rain had ceased. In the coppice a thick fog had come down. I went back into the house and, going to Lara, kissed her and rushed outside again. For twenty minutes, I wandered round the coppice, my feet covered in mud. Great drops of water fell on me from the trees, but I scarcely felt them.

Then my father came out of the house, Lara's body on his back. He hung her up on a hook, and began to skin her. I felt an unbearable pain in my heart and did not know what to do. At that time we ate meat only on rare occasions, and it had been three months since we last tasted it. But I swore that I would never eat Lara's flesh.

When at last I came home, I found that my father had cooked the meat and was carving it at the table. I saw with horrified anger that the little ones had already begun to eat, and I went into a dark corner where the lamplight did not reach. My father looked at me for a moment as if he were

ashamed of what he had done. Then he smiled at me and said:

"I'm very sorry about this. But come to the table. It is very good meat".

I shut my eyes and shook my head

Suddenly a voice was heard outside the door.

"Is anybody home?", someone called out.

My father opened the door, gave a cry of delighted surprise and welcomed the visitors inside. It was my big brother, a partisan, and two of his comrades. I hugged him joyfully. Wet and tired, they hung up their weapons and sat down. I ran outside and brought in some more wood. The fire made the steam rise from their damp clothes.

"Sons and sons-in-law are always welcome", said my father, smiling affectionately at the visitors as he carved more meat.

Everyone was now sitting at the table except me.

"Aren't you going to join us?", asked a man with a black moustache who wore a cap with a star on it.

I shook my head, and my father explained:

"I'm afraid we're eating his pet!"

They all turned to look at me, and I felt embarrassed. My brother came over, hugged me tightly and said:

"You loved it so much?"

I nodded.

"That is good!", he said "that is what we are fighting for. When you grow up, you must be a doctor for animals, because you are so fond of them!"

A doctor for animals! I had never realised that there was such a thing. To us a doctor even for human beings was as far beyond our reach as God himself. "If I had been an animal doctor", I thought, "Lara could have been saved!" . .

Today, now that I am a man, I have the care of hundreds of beautiful farm animals. And when I am treating one, I often think - still with sadness - of my Lara.

The Limitation of Wage Differentials

by Priamo Bollano

In socialist Albania the social product is distributed to the working people according to their social contribution, according to the quantity and quality of work which each performs, according to the principle "equal pay for equal work", without discrimination as to sex, age, nationality or race. Of course, wage categories are adjusted to allow for the complexity and difficulty of the work performed and the qualification of the worker. These categories are uniform throughout the country.

This system stimulates inventiveness and production; it harmonises individual personal interest with the general interest of society.

The Albanian system, however, rejects not only equalitarianism, but also excessive differentials. The experience of the Soviet Union and other former socialist countries has shown that unfounded excessive differentials lead to the creation of a privileged stratum, and eventually to the transformation of this privileged stratum into a new capitalist class which exploits the working class. It leads in time to the restoration of an essentially capitalist society.

Applying the lessons of this experience, in Albania the difference between the highest and lowest incomes in society as a whole is limited to 2:1, that between the director and the workers of an enterprise to 1.7:1.

A KOSOVAR IN TIRANA

by Steve Day

P. . N. . was a tall, burly man. His attention to fashion identified him here in the Hotel Dajti as a foreigner. The Albanians show little interest in the outward displays of life, be it the fancy suit, the false smile or the conspicuous consumption; the reality beneath is thought more important than the veneer.

Nevertheless P. . was Albanian, as he proudly related. A bourgeois from Yugoslavia, a Kosovar businessman here to arrange some imports, he told of his life in Prishtina.

"I have a good life", he said; "two luxury cars and a beautiful house. Plenty of money! Socialism such as they have here would be no good to me! And yet I envy these people, all working for a common goal. In Yugoslavia, with its inflation and unemployment, you have to watch your back if you have money". He sipped his raki appreciatively and continued: "Do you know - I gave my suit to the chambermaid to be cleaned yesterday. I forgot a roll of notes in the trouser pocket - over 5,000 leks. I went off to a meeting in a taxi and when I got back to the hotel discovered I had no money. I asked the taxi-driver to wait while I went into the hotel, but he laughed and said: 'I'll be up at the square; you know where to find me'. Back home they wouldn't let you out of their sight without seeing the colour of your money. To round off the day, when I went into the hotel the desk clerk gave me the money, which the chambermaid had handed in".

The attitude of the Albanians towards money seemed to have made a deep impression on the Kosovar. After all, his life was dedicated to its accumulation, as he freely confessed. Yet there was a deeper sensibility there which made him proud of the achievements of the Albanian people in their own country. He regarded with awe the waiter who politely but persistently declined the 10 lek tip proffered by P. . . Tipping is considered degrading in Albania, and is

not part of the wage in catering jobs as is the case in most countries. Perhaps the most telling point of the last example was when the waiter, not wishing to offend the Kosovar, told him: "Look, if you want to buy me a drink, two leks is plenty".

A confused and complex character, this Kosovar. A thrusting and obviously successful businessman in Yugoslavia, yet here in Albania the higher things in life made him wistful and reflective. His Albanian nationalism showed strongly, and he saw a way of life that had joy and purpose for everybody. Ah, the problems of being a bourgeois!

Perhaps one day people like P. . . will help form the Republic of Kosova within the Yugoslav Federation - a long-standing and legitimate demand of the Kosovars, and one for which thousands have been persecuted, killed and imprisoned in the last few years.



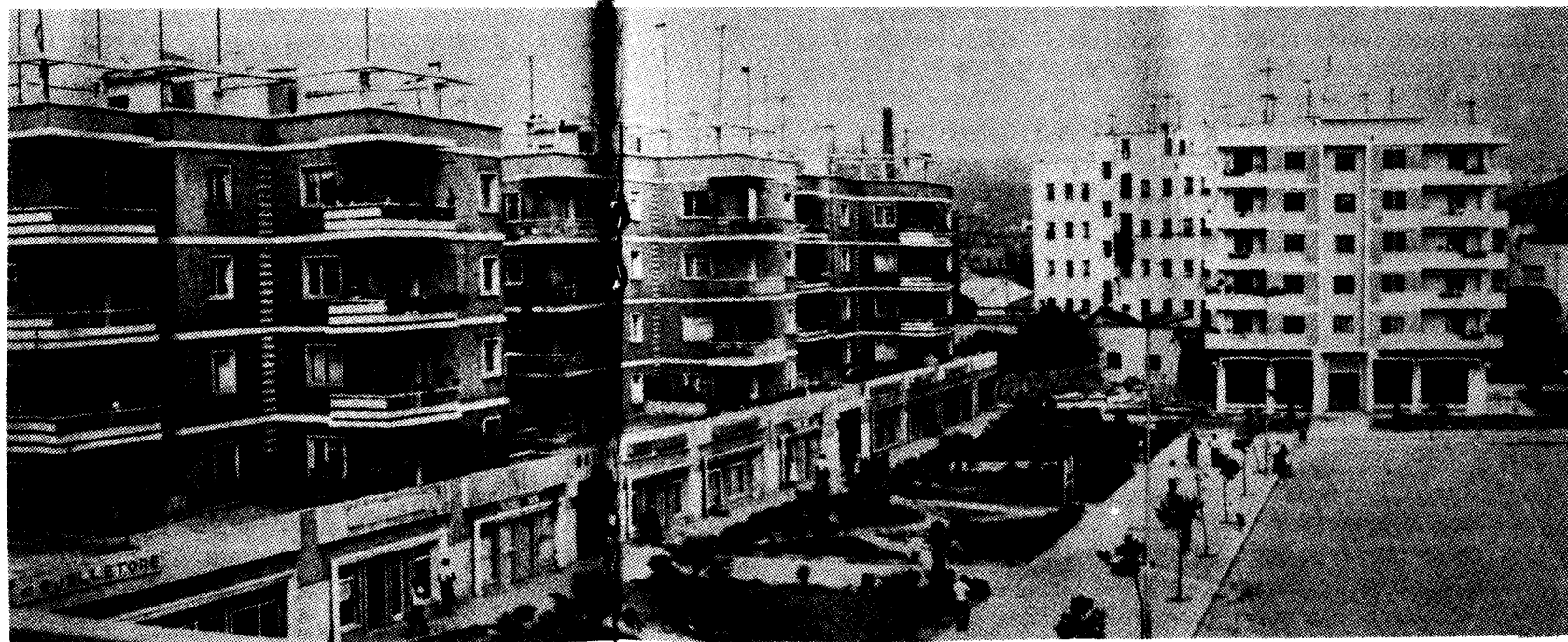
18th Century Dwelling House- Kruja.



DURRES

Left : Children on the Beach

Below : Street Scene



The Trade Unions of Albania

by Bill Bland

Even before the advent of the developed capitalist economy which exists in Britain today, individual workers were finding their ability to defend and improve their wages and working conditions extremely limited.

Thus, trade unions came into existence as collective organisations of workers, as essentially organs of working class struggle against the employing class - a struggle which, from time to time, breaks out into the open battles of the strike and the lockout.

Albania in the 1930s was rather similar to Britain in the 15th century. Its society was semi-feudal. There were many small workshops, but no large factories. The working class was tiny. Under the Zog dictatorship (1924-39) and the occupation of the fascist powers (1939-44), trade unions were banned. Consequently, workers' organisations were either local and clandestine, or were disguised as "friendly societies". Strikes, of course, were also illegal, although there were some notable examples - such as the oil-workers' strike in Kuçova (now Stalin Town) in 1935.

Then came the War of National Liberation, led by the Communist Party of Albania, founded in 1941; during its course, this became transformed from a national struggle into a socialist revolution. Thus, Liberation in November 1944 not only freed Albania from foreign occupation, but also established a new society in which political power lay in the hands of the working class. Then, still under the leadership of the Communist Party (now the Party of Labour), the working people proceeded to abolish the undeveloped capitalist society and to construct a planned socialist economy.

As part of this process, trade unions came into existence in Albania for the first time on January 11th, 1945.

From the outset these naturally had a somewhat different role to play from the trade unions in a capitalist country. For here the working people owned the factories, mines,

etc. through the medium of a state which they controlled. There was no employing class, living on the unpaid labour of the workers and against which they had to struggle for a more favourable division of the value they produced, for better wages and conditions. With the abolition of the exploitation of man by man, workers in Socialist Albania receive the full value of the labour they perform - either directly in wages, or indirectly in social services. Thus, were the oil-workers, for example, to go on strike for higher wages, this demand could only be met by raising the incomes of the oil-workers above the full value of their labour, and reducing those of other sections of the working class below the full value of their labour. In other words, the oil-workers would be exploiting their fellow-workers,

Nevertheless, in Socialist Albania the primary function of the trade unions remains to defend and improve the wages and working conditions of their members. The difference lies in how this function is carried out.

In a genuine socialist society, the only way in which the standard of life of the working people as a whole can be improved is by the advance of social production, by the improvement of labour productivity, by the introduction of new techniques and inventions. Only rarely does this involve struggle against management, and this occurs only when a management has become bureaucratic and is holding back the development of production - and so of the standard of life of the workers. It does, however, involve raising the socialist political consciousness of the workers and this - under the leadership of the Party of Labour - is a very important function of the Albanian trade unions. They are, in Lenin's words:

" . . 'transmission belts' from the vanguard to the masses of the advanced class . . a school of communism".

But the changed role of the trade unions in Socialist Albania in no way signifies that they are impotent or under state control. On the contrary, they are extremely powerful - a factory trade union branch, for example, has the power to remove the factory director in a case such as that touched upon in the last paragraph.

Each factory trade union branch signs an annual collective agreement with management specifying wages and working conditions in detail for each grade of worker; it is responsible for supervising the application of the safety regulations applicable to the plant; it runs the factory canteen and health centre, and its sports centre; it must approve any disciplinary measure proposed by the management against a worker (for such things as persistent lateness, absenteeism, damage to equipment resulting from negligence, etc.); it elects representatives to the local council committees concerned with schools, health centres, housing allocation, etc., relevant to its members and their families.

All draft legislation relating to work must be approved by the trade unions before being placed before the People's Assembly. They participate in the drawing up of production plans at all levels - including the national Five Year Plans. They organise competitions between different factories and districts to stimulate invention and productivity (a process known as socialist emulation). And they run holiday hotels for their members in the countryside, in the mountains and by the sea, at which a fortnight's holiday costs about two day's pay.

Organisation

Until 1957 separate trade unions existed for the principal branches of industry. It was found, however, that in the conditions of Socialist Albania this brought about unnecessary duplication of staff, buildings, etc. In this year, therefore, the trade unions were amalgamated into a single organisation - the Trade Unions of Albania (TUA). This now has 610,000 members - almost 100% of the working class. Members earning less than 450 leks a month pay dues of 1 lek per month in dues, those earning between 450 and 700 leks pay 2 leks, and those earning over 700 leks pay 3 leks.

The TUA holds a congress every four years - the last (the 9th.) having been held in June 1982. It was attended by 2,000 delegates, of whom 37% were women. The congress elects a managing body called the General Council, composed of 151 members, and the General Council in turn elects a Presidium of 21 members and four committees for various

sections of workers:

- 1) for industrial, mining and power workers;
- 2) for agricultural workers;
- 3) for building and transport workers; and
- 4) for workers in distribution, education, health

and culture.

Today, forty years after the socialist revolution, Albania has been transformed from the most backward country in Europe into what is socially the most advanced country in the world.

It is at present the only country in the world to have a fully centrally-planned socialist economy. This has brought about an increase in industrial production in these forty years of 151 times, in agricultural production of 5 times.

Unemployment, like illiteracy, has been eliminated, and the right to work and to choose one's occupation is written into the Constitution.

In place of world-wide inflation, as production rises the prices of consumer goods are constantly falling, while wage levels rise.

To avoid the possibility of the creation of any privileged stratum, income differentials are limited to 2:1 (in contrast to more than 6,000:1 in Britain).

There is a completely free and non-contributory health service.

Pensions too are non-contributory, and retirement pensions (fixed at 70% of last wages) are payable as young as 50 in some occupations.

Women have been to a great extent socially liberated, and now form 47% of the work force. There is, of course, equal pay for equal work. A constantly expanding network of restaurants, laundries and nursery schools is freeing both men and women from many of the household tasks which interfere with the living of a full social life.

And in all these developments, the Trade Unions of Albania have played no insignificant role.

The Painter NDOC MARTINI

by Mikel Prendushi



Ndoc Martini
Self-portrait

In the history of Albanian painting, the name of Ndoc Martin Camaj occupies an important place. As one magazine expressed it prior to Liberation: "He made Albania known in the world of painting".

Born in 1880, he was the son of a poor carpenter of highland origin, and passed his childhood in Shkodra. His father became an assistant in the carpentry workshop of Arsen Idromeno, while his mother worked as a domestic servant in Shkodra. His brother Zefi took over his father's post on his death.

But Ndoc's artistic talent, his indomitable will, the help given him by the painter Kolë Idromeno, the fame brought to him by an exhibition of his work in 1893 (the first such exhibition ever held in Albania) - all these gave him the courage and support to study abroad.

He left Albania in April 1902, at the age of 22, and arrived in Rome. There no one welcomed him, no one assisted him, and he was compelled to work for 5 soldi a day. From this period we know only two works: "Two Highlanders greet each other" (now in Rome) and "The Garden of Gethsemane" (now in Tirana).

It was in this state of desperate insecurity that he met Gaspër Jakov Mërturi, who had gone to Rome from Calabria to take part in a symposium on Skanderbeg. The Albanian professor decided to help him, and arranged for him to take up a post at the Arbëresh college at San Demetrio Corone, where he occupied the chair in Albanian language. Martini felt at home among the Arbëresh and the students from Albania. But the college was not an art school, and Martini was

able to paint only in his spare time. From this period of his activity we know of many works: the landscapes "Mount Poli" (in Calabria) and "The Pyramids of Egypt"; and 14 frescoes, including a self-portrait (reproduced above), portraits of distinguished Arbëreshi and of Galileo, Dante, Raphael, Verdi and Michelangelo. There was also a portrait of Skanderbeg which was in the possession of Luigj Gurakuqi until his death.

About 1909 Martini went to Paris, assisted by Mërturi who was now a Docent at the Sorbonne. Here he worked at the Louvre. From this period we have only an illustration of the Albanian rising of 1911 (published in a Paris magazine)*, an engraving of Skanderbeg in battle (published in the Boston newspaper "Dielli" in May 1912), and the famous portrait "Dr. Prela". We know, however, that he exhibited another portrait of Skanderbeg in an exhibition in Istanbul in 1913, but this was destroyed by fire along with other works.

His only sister, who married in Shkodra, had 17 children, one of whom was the writer Kolë Mirdita (Helenau), author of two plays on Skanderbeg.

Martini suffered from tuberculosis and in the autumn of 1915 caught a severe chill. He died in January 1916 in a Paris sanatorium. His funeral was attended by hundreds of people, testifying to the appreciation which his work had gained in Paris.

Martini was a painter of rare talent, with a rich and varied creative power. A gallery in Paris, near the Louvre, where an exhibition of his work was held, is still known as the "Chambre Martini".

* An illustrated article on this work, known as "The Albanian Joan of Arc", appeared in ALBANIAN LIFE No. 13 (July 1981).

RATE OF EXCHANGE

The tourist rate of exchange is now 10.10 leks to the pound, i.e., 1 lek equals approximately 10 p.

Towards the Light

A poem by Llazar Siliqi

From the new Migjeni Boulevard
a coach bears us towards the light.
It is not the lonely song of the thrush
which waits for us, but Vau i Dejës,
where silence reigns no more,
where the mighty sound of work resounds,
where all that is old crumbles to dust
under the blows of the working class.
The waters of the Drin swirl furiously.
The weather threatens rain,
the wind heralds a storm.
But workers snap their fingers
at obstacles and prejudice,
to shape a radiant sun
of kilovolts.
Every worker
possesses magic fingers.
Every worker
is master of his trade.
You do not need to tell us here
about the social aims
of science and technique.

From rocky slopes - now fertile land -
of Kukës, Tropoja and Puka,
the highlanders have come
to build a dam,
to build our motherland.
Twenty-four hours a day,
three hundred and sixty-five days a year,
under the rain and snow,
beneath the scorching heat,
the hammer strikes the anvil.
What tempering!
What fatigue!
What frost!
Camp and machines, mountains and hills,
are buried beneath the snow.

Here no one is overcome
by the great white solitude.
The new life quells unhealthy feelings,
welcomes the youngest workers
alongside the wizened veterans.
The whirling drills
dig roots in the depths of the earth
to make our country blossom.
Vau i Dejës,
a breakthrough on the battlefield,
a furrow cut across the moors,
a reckless challenge to the dark.

The news flies on golden wings
across Albania -
a page in the lofty dialogue:
People/Party.
And if one falls,
a thousand rise to take his place;
the war-cry echoes everywhere.
We sharpen consciousness and art
upon the whetstone of our life.
Here, where work conquers night,
we openly proclaim
the need to electrify our poetry!



Mural from the Skanderbeg Museum- Kruja.

The Albanian Economy 1983-84

by Qirjako Mihalj (Minister of Finance)

The achievements of the year 1983 in the overall advance of the country on the road of the construction and defence of socialism have been realised in conditions of savage imperialist and revisionist blockade. At the same time we had to cope in 1983 also with the difficulties created by two years of drought.

The overcoming of these difficulties has been a great victory which confirms once again the correctness of the Marxist-Leninist economic line and policy which the Party has always applied, the vitality and stability of our socialist economy in all the grave situations that have been created for us.

During 1983 the socialist reproduction of the country has assumed still greater dimensions. The material base of industry, agriculture and all the other branches of the economy has been further strengthened on the basis of a further increase in the social product, national income, investment and standard of living of the masses over 1982.

Despite the difficulties created by deficits in the production of electric power by the hydro-electric power stations, production in important branches of industry increased in 1982-83 at very rapid rates: coal by 8.4%, copper by 7.9%, steel by 29%, engineering products by 33%, wood and paper by 3.3%, light industry products by 6.4%, processed food products by 4%, and so on. Overall agricultural production is expected to be about 9% above the level of 1982, and significant increases were made in the production of wheat, sunflowers, fruits and olives - in which the planned targets were over-fulfilled. From all the area sown with wheat this year we took 31 quintals per hectare - the highest yield ever achieved in our country. The production of sugar-beet, potatoes, vegetables, milk, eggs, etc. was also greater than last year,

The volume of investment was 4,875 million leks - 4% up on last year. A number of productive and socio-cultural enterprises have been inaugurated. High rates have characterised work at the Enver Hoxha hydro-electric power station at Koman, and on many other projects. This year the state built 10,500 dwellings.

The dynamic development and stability of our economy, the lowering of costs and the increase in efficiency have further strengthened the finances and currency of the country. The real per capita income of the population increased by more than 4%, while the purchasing power of the people increased by nearly 6%. Communal services were further extended, especially in the countryside.

In accordance with the directives of the 8th. Congress of the Party, measures were adopted to improve the relations of production. The cooperative farms of the zone with greatest intensification have been treated on the same terms as the higher-type cooperative farms. With the setting-up of the state farms of Plasa and Grecalia began the process of transforming the higher-type cooperative farms into state farms.

The tasks for 1984 envisage still higher rates of socialist reproduction, relying entirely on our own forces and the existing possibilities.

In industry, overall production is planned to increase by 3.5% over the level of 1983. This increase in production will be based particularly on the development of the power industry - in the first place, of the oil industry - of the minerals industry and of the heavy processing industries. The role of heavy industry as the main factor to guarantee and carry forward all the other tasks in the field of the economy will be further strengthened.

In order to achieve these results, investment in the oil industry will be increased over the figures forecast in the five-year plan. Coal production will be increased by 15.5% over 1983, and electric power production will also increase. The construction of the Enver Hoxha power station will be accelerated, so as to bring into operation two of its turbines by 1985.

The chemical industry, too, will develop further during 1984. The target for the production of chemical fertilisers has been increased over that laid down in the five-year plan.

The volume of consumer goods will increase by 6.4% over the level of 1983.

Overall agricultural production will increase by 14% over 1983, with bread grain 7.3% up, cotton 11.4% up, sugar beet 14% up, sunflower 11% up - mainly by an increase in yields. The production of meat is planned to increase by 17%, milk by 15% and eggs by 21% over 1983. These last increases will be attained in two principal ways: numerical increases in livestock and increase in yields per head.

In the plan for 1984, priority is given to the development of rail transport, which will increase by 10% against 4.8% for transport as a whole. Rail transport will be strengthened by the building of the Bajza-Hani Hotit railway and by the completion of the Fier-Vlora line.

About 77% of state investment in 1984 will be utilised for industry and agriculture. Construction will proceed on 284 major projects, of which 156 will come into operation during 1984. New mines will be built and others extended. Work will be completed on the extension of the existing copper enrichment plant and on the new such plant in Mirdita, on the extension of the fabrics plant in Tirana, on the extension of the Hammer and Sickle Knitwear Combine in Korça, on the textile mill in Shkodra, on factories for the production of sauces and for the processing of olives and fruits.

In agriculture a number of irrigation projects will be brought into operation, increasing irrigation capacity by a further 9,000 hectares. Work will be completed on the building or extension of 6 poultry-raising complexes, 2 turkey-raising complexes, 2 cattle-raising complexes, 1 pig-raising complex, and 3 factories for the processing of animal feed.

The real income per capita of the population is expected to increase by 3.7% against 1983. The state will build a further 10,500 dwellings. In the field of education the total number of pupils and students will reach 726,000.

State budget income is expected to grow by 9.5% against 1983. Of expenditure, 55.3% will be devoted to the economy, 26.2% to socio-cultural provisions, and 11% to defence.

52% of the increase in social production will accrue from an increase in the productivity of labour. The Party has continuously instructed that the key to the solution of the problems of economic growth lies in the ceaseless development of the scientific-technical revolution and the application of labour discipline. Today the possibilities for the implementation of the new achievements of science and technology are greater than ever before.

Our people are building socialism with confidence at a time when the imperialist-revisionist world is in the grip of a grave economic, political and social crisis. Our gains please Albania's friends everywhere in the world, and displease its enemies, who strive to discredit it with various slanders and inventions.

The Government is fully confident that the working people of the whole country, led by the Party with Comrade Enver Hoxha at the head, will multiply their efforts, will go to the 40th. anniversary of Liberation proud of their achievements, and will turn into reality all the tasks the Party and the Plan for 1983 have set them.

A NEW ALBANIAN NOVEL

The Albanian Society has just published the English translation of the novel "THE LAST DAYS OF A PRIME MINISTER", by Skifter Këlliçi. Set in Greece in 1944, it tells the story of three partisans sent from Albania to arrest Zog's former Prime Minister, Koço Kotta, and bring him back to Albania for trial for treason.

It is available at present in photocopy form from the Society at £2.50, including postage.

One Track Mind

A sketch from "YLLI" (The Star)

When my wife Maria came home from work, she found me stretched out on the sofa.

"What's the matter?", she asked. "Are you ill? You look quite green!"

I did not reply. I felt exhausted, shattered. I had just got back from the stadium, where our team had had victory snatched from it by a free kick awarded by a myopic referee.

But she turned to me, placed one hand on her hip, and asked aggressively:

"Do you know what day it is tomorrow?"

"Of course", I replied; "it's Thursday".

"The date!", she insisted; "what date is it?"

"Well", I said, "today's the 19th., so tomorrow must be the 20th."

"Right!", she said; "and what happened on the 20th. of June?"

I thought for a moment.

"Vllaznia won the cup in 1981!", I replied.

"You bastard!", she said; "the 20th. of June is our wedding anniversary! You'd forgotten!"

"Of course I haven't forgotten", I answered; "how could I? It was the day we drew with West Germany in the European Cup!"



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SHORT STORY

THE BEAUTY THAT KILLS

A short story by Migjeni

("Migjeni" was the pen-name of Millosh Gjergj Nikolla, 1911-1938)

The moon, pale as the face of a corpse, looked down from the dark sphere of the heavens. It looked down on a world of mountains turned to crystal by the snow. It looked down on white, silent cottages. Everything was covered by this white blanket of snow. Yet this white beauty was a murderer. It killed the soul of the highlander like the cold, white statue of a nude woman kills the soul of the artist.

And in the cottage which groaned beneath the weight of the snow two colours were visible - red and black. Red, the fire in the hearth in the middle of the cottage. Everything else - black. Outside the glow of the fire could be heard the bleat of a sheep or the tinkle of a cow-bell. The white beauty which kills, kills them too. From their mouths rose the vapour of patient suffering - to fall like hoar-frost to the straw-covered floor. Silence. Everything has turned to crystal. A hand is stretched out, takes up a piece of wood and places it on the fire. The flame licks the darkness and the sparks leap up into the eaves and on to the faces of the human beings around the hearth. Their bodies shake with the cold which comes from the darkness behind them - a darkness which seems always waiting to swallow them up.

Towards midnight, the cold became more penetrating, more biting, and the animals began to stir uneasily. One after the other they gaze appealingly at the men and women around the fire, as if to say: "Let us come a little nearer the fire, for we freeze!". And the men, pitiless towards their kind, gave to the animals their place at the hearth, while they moved back into the darkness. Bariolle the cow was allowed to stretch herself out, blocking the heat of the

fire from the child which slept in its cradle nearby. A cow, after all, was irreplaceable.

Dawn broke in the white beauty which kills. Their bodies stiff with the cold, the men and women rose to their feet for another day of toil. But one tiny figure did not stir in its cradle. Its mother's hand reached out to touch it, and a terrible cry pierced the silence. But it could not wake the child. Its blood had frozen in its veins. It had become a crystal statue. We should take this statue and erect it in the main square of the town! It should be dedicated to the King, or to one of his Ministers. Or, if you can find no one who deserves this, then dedicate it to Him who least deserves it - to God!

ALBANIAN POSTAGE STAMPS

As from June 1st, 1984 the Albania General Trading Co will be supplying New Issues of postage stamps from the People's Socialist Republic of Albania to the British stamp trade. It will also run a New Issues service for collectors and handle their enquiries on current Albanian philatelic matters.

All enquiries should be sent to:

Philatelic Department,
The Albania General Trading Co. Ltd.
788-790, Finchley Road,
London NW11 7UR

ALBANIAN PHILATELIC STUDY CIRCLE

For the past year a small group of philatelists have been meeting in London to discuss informally Albania, its stamps and postal history. It will be meeting next on 2nd. September. Further details from R. F. Gee, 175a, Sherrard Rd., Forest Gate, London E7. Telephone: 01-471-7846.

ALBANIAN NEWS

November 1983 - February 1984

POLITICS

In December:

The 8th. Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania examined the report "On the realisation of the 1983 Plan and the draft plan for 1984".

The 4th. session of the 10th. legislature of the People's Assembly held its proceedings.

In January:

The plenums of the General Council of the Trade Unions of Albania and that of the Women's Union of Albania convened to discuss the 1984 plan.

In February:

Myslim Peza died on February 7th. (see "Late News" in ALBANIAN LIFE No. 1, 1984).

DIPLOMACY

In November:

The Albanian Ambassador to Upper Volta, Nesip Kaci, presented his credentials to President Thomas Sankara; the Ambassador to Portugal, Maxhun Peka, presented his credentials to President Antonio Eanes; the Ambassador to Denmark, Izedin Hajdini, presented his credentials to Queen Margrethe II; and the Yugoslav Ambassador, Milan Georgijevic. presented his credentials to Albanian President Ramiz Alia.

In December:

The Zimbabwean Ambassador, Kennedy Manjika; the Algerian Ambassador, Abderrahman Sherit; and the Guinean Ambassador, Abubakar Kaba; presented their credentials to President Ramiz Alia.

In January:

The Colombian Ambassador, Alvaro de Angulo Arboleda, presented his credentials to President Ramiz Alia.

In February:

The Albanian Ambassador to Colombia, Përparim Sinani, presented his credentials to President Belisario Betancourt.

FOREIGN VISITORS

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

In November:

A government trade delegation from Romania

A delegation of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

A delegation of the Communist Party of Mexico (M-L)

A government delegation from Upper Volta

In December:

A government delegation from Italy

A delegation of the Communist Party of Spain (M-L)

In January:

A delegation of the Youth Federation of Ecuador

A government trade delegation from Greece

A government trade delegation from Vietnam

In February:

An air transport delegation from Turkey

A delegation of the Brazil-Albania Friendship Association

A cultural delegation from Turkey

FOREIGN VISITS

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

In November:

A delegation, headed by Prof. Sofokli Lazri, to the 22nd. general conference of UNESCO in Paris

The Folk Song and Dance Ensemble to Egypt

A delegation of the Trade Unions of Albania to Vietnam

A delegation to the 22nd. session of the FAO Conference in Rome

A government trade delegation to Malta

A delegation of the Writers' and Artists' Union to France

A delegation of the University of Tirana to the international seminar on socialist economy in Lima (Peru).

In December:

A delegation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Sweden

In January:

A cultural delegation to Italy

In February:

The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sokrat Plaka, to Turkey

A delegation of the Chamber of Commerce to Apulia (Italy)

A delegation of Radio-Television to Iran

A delegation of the Labour Youth Union to Upper Volta

A government trade delegation to Turkey

TRANSPORT

In December the Trieste-Durrës freighter line was inaugurated.

FOREIGN TRADE

In November:

Trade agreements for 1984 were signed with Belgium, Malta, Poland and Romania.

Albania was represented at the international fair at Basle (Switzerland).

In January:

Trade agreements for 1984 were signed with Greece and Vietnam.

In February:

A trade agreement for 1984 and an agreement on civil air transport were signed with Turkey.

Albania was represented at the international fair at Utrecht (Holland).

PRIZES

In February the International Academy of Lutetia awarded the Cup of Lutetia to the Institute of Folk Culture for the scientific review "Albanian Folk Culture".

DECORATIONS

In November the title "Hero of Socialist Labour" was awarded to several construction workers on the Enver Hoxha hydro-electric power station at Koman.

CULTURE

Exhibitions

In November the exhibition "The Albanian Export" was opened in Tirana.

In January an exhibition of reproductions of the works of Leonardo da Vinci opened in the Gallery of Arts in Tirana.

Art

In December a meeting was held in Tirana to commemorate the 80th. anniversary of the birth of the sculptor Odhise Paskali.

Music

In December the 22nd song festival of Radio-Television was held in Tirana.

Books

Among new books published during the period under review were:

"The Dictionary of Education";
Enver Hoxha: "Works", Volume 40
Mustafa Demiri: "The Excurrent Flora of Albania"

International Cultural Agreements

In January an agreement for cultural, scientific and educational exchange for 1984-85 was signed with Italy.

In February an agreement on cultural and scientific exchange was signed with Turkey, and a draft programme on cultural cooperation for 1984-85 was signed with Yugoslavia.

SPORT

In November:

17 Nëntori (Tirana) won the national championship in classical wrestling.

In February:

"Dinamo" won the 28th. volleyball cup for men.

LATE NEWS

The Albanian government stated on June 19th that on the previous day at 11 a.m. an unidentified motorboat with three persons on board entered Albanian territorial waters in the neighbourhood of Vrina, coming within 20-30 metres of the shore. Albanian coastguards signalled the vessel to stop, but it did not comply with the instruction and the patrol fired warning shots.

On the same day at 1.20 p.m. the same motor boat again violated Albanian territorial waters in the same zone, coming within 3 metres of the shore. One of the occupants came ashore, but returned to the vessel when, after the vessel again refused to comply with the coastguards' instructions, further warning shots were fired.

On July 3rd. the government issued a further statement denying stories that had appeared in the French press to the effect that the French citizen Jean-Marie Masselin, whose body had been found off the island of Corfu, had been arrested or killed on Albanian territory in this incident..

Albanian Society Meetings

On April 14th the London and South-East England Branch of the Albania held a meeting in London on the subject of "No Inflation, No Unemployment: the Economy of Socialist Albania" and a programme of Albanian songs was presented by the Progressive Cultural Association.

On June 2nd the Midlands Branch of the society held a meeting in Birmingham. Bill Bland, Secretary of the Society, spoke on "The Trade Unions of Albania", and a video of the Albanian feature film "Poppies on the Wall" was screened.

ADVANCE NOTICE

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Liberation of Albania and the 72nd. anniversary of Independence, the Albanian Society will be holding a meeting, which will include music and a film, in the Bishopsgate Institute, 230, Bishopsgate, London EC2 at 3 p.m. on Sunday, November 25th. A social will follow in the evening at the same address.

DAY SCHOOL

In conjunction with the University of Birmingham, the Albanian Society will be holding in Birmingham in December a day school on Albania. The subjects covered will include the history, economy and foreign policy of Albania. Further details will be announced later.

BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

Two Albanian books - "A Guide-book to Albanian" (an Albanian language phrase-book) and "The Earthquake of April 15, 1979" have now been published in Britain by The Albania General Trading Co Ltd.

This means that you can obtain these books through your local library, which will either purchase them for display on their shelves after you have returned them, or will obtain them through the inter-library loan scheme.

The details you need to give the library are as follows:

Title: A Guide-book to Albanian

Author: Zef Mazi

Publisher: The Albania General Trading Co Ltd.

Date of Publication: June 1984

Price: £2.25

ISBN: 0 947636 00 5

Title: The Earthquake of April 15, 1979

Author: Ed. Skënder Dede

Publisher: The Albania General Trading Co Ltd.

Date of Publication: June 1984

Price: £18.50

ISBN: 0 947636 01 3

RECEPTION

On July 1st the Committee of the Albanian Society organised in London a reception for the Secretary of the German-Albanian Friendship Association, Rudiger Pier, who was passing through London. Guests included Barbara Pier of the German Association, and Lyn and Fred Chary of the US-Albania Friendship Association. A very useful exchange of views took place, and the evening passed in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

EASIER COMMUNICATION WITH ALBANIA

As from 1st April, 1984 it has been possible to send telex messages from Britain to Albania by dialling direct. Previously it was necessary to go through the operator. This new service reflects the increased use for trade purposes of telex between the two countries and is due to pressure from users; such as The Albania General Trading Co Ltd, for an improved service.

The photograph on the front cover is a detail from the oil painting "The Metallurgical Workers: by Ç. Ceka

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