

ALBANIAN LIFE

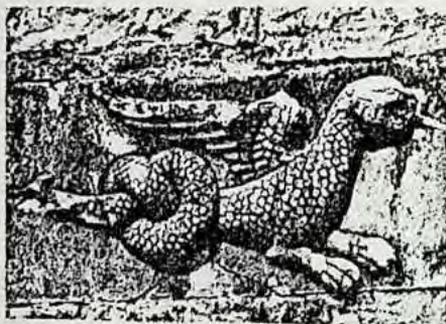


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CONTENTS

SPORT IN ALBANIA, by Besnik Dizdari, Ismet Bellova and Osman Palushi	p. 1
THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY AT APOLLONIA, by Gjergj Frashëri	p. 6
NEW LITERATURE AVAILABLE	p. 15
"THREE GIRLS", a poem by Vorea Ujko	p. 16
Cartoons : "HOW THE WORLD LOOKS FROM TIRANA"	p. 17
"THE SHADOW", a short story by Elena Kadare	p. 18
ALBANIAN SOCIETY MEETINGS	p. 25
THE SHKODRA-TITOGRAD RAILWAY	p. 26
CORRECTION to text of Prof. Martin Smith's lecture	p. 26
SPIRITUALITY IN ALBANIAN POETRY, by Martin Rogan	p. 27
CORRESPONDENCE from Vivien Pixner, Margaret Arkwright p. 32	p. 32
ALBANIAN NEWS (November 1982 - January 1983)	p. 40
BOOK REVIEWS:	
"PORTRAIT OF ALBANIA", reviewed by Steve Day	p. 44
"ALBANIA : A TRAVEL GUIDE", by Philip Ward, reviewed by Tom Blake	p. 45
"THE HAND OF LENIN", a poem by Muharrem Jakupi	p. 48



Bas-relief on the Church of St. Nicolas
in Mesopotam (Saranda district)

SPORT IN ALBANIA

by Besnik Dizdari, Ismet Bellova & Osman Palushi



Prior to Liberation, opportunities for sport in Albania were extremely limited. The Zog regime brought over some fascist instructors from Italy, but placed the main emphasis on utilising sport to inculcate "obedience" in the youth. In 1938 there were in the whole country only 27 physical education instructors, 15 football pitches and 30 fields for volleyball and bas-

ketball. Total membership of sports clubs was only 1,200.

From the first days of Liberation, however, the Party and government concerned themselves with the development of sport. In 1945 Enver Hoxha declared:

"The government will support sport and physical culture in order to strengthen the younger generation and fit it, as worker and warrior, to be master of Albania".

Thus, from the outset sport was seen as a mass activity, the aims of which were to improve the health of the workers, to raise their capacity to work and to defend the Motherland, and to increase their life-span and happiness.

In 1945, therefore, a special section of the Ministry of Education and Culture, concerned with physical culture and sport, was set up. This drew up a programme for the training of instructors, coaches and referees for all kinds of sport and for providing the necessary material facilities.

In the same year the Federation of Albanian Sports was founded, charged with the task of organising and directing the sports movement. It began publication of the journal "Sporti" (Sport), now called "Sporti Popullor" (People's Sport).

A clause of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Albania, adopted in 1946, read:

"The state concerns itself with the physical training of the people, especially of the youth, in order to improve the health and increase the strength of the people for work and for defence".

The Federation of Albanian Sports took the initiative in forming sports clubs in the districts and in the armed forces, and organised the first national championships in the various sports. It also developed international sporting links, both official and friendly, principally with the neighbouring countries of the Balkans.

In 1946 the first championship for women was organised - in volleyball - and the youth of the capital completed the construction of the Qemal Stafa National Stadium, which was inaugurated by the holding of the Balkan Games, at which our national team gained the title of Balkan champions in football.

In 1948 the first sports training school was opened in Tirana, and in the same year a special factory commenced the production of sports equipment.

In the following year the government created a special state organ, the Committee of Physical Culture and Sports, for the administration and allocation of state funds for these activities. And in 1950 the government passed a decree by which sportsmen and sportswomen were granted shorter working hours without loss of pay for training, practice and participation in sporting events. At the same time it introduced titles for distinguished participants in sport, up to that of Master of Sport.

In 1957 the existing sports bodies were dissolved and transformed into a single organisation - the Union of Physical Culturists and Sportspeople, known by its Albanian initials of BFSSH - and in May of the following year the first national conference of BFSSH was held, attended by 200 delegates representing 40.000 members from all parts of the country. This conference adopted a constitution, emblem and flag. In the same year the Vojo Kushi Higher Institute of Physical Culture was opened.

To commemorate the 15th. anniversary of Liberation, the first National Spartakiad was held, with 115,000 participants, in the autumn of 1959.

Three years later, in 1962, the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania adopted a special resolution "On the Further Development of Physical Culture and Sport", which set the orientation in these fields for the next few years. This emphasised:

"Physical culture and sport have an important place in the realisation of the high aim of our Party for the raising of the wellbeing of the people, for ensuring that their life is happy and joyful, since wellbeing and a happy life are linked with the socialism which is flowering in our country, and also with good health, an active life and working capacity.

Therefore, physical culture and sport must enter into the daily lives of the workers, especially of the youth, of our country, wherever they learn and work".

The resolution drew special attention to the importance of drawing girls and women into physical culture and sport.

The collectivisation of agriculture stimulated the creation of sports clubs in the countryside, and in 1962-3 the first National Spartakiad for cooperative farmers was organised, with 50,000 young people from rural areas taking part.

In February 1962 the Albanian Football Federation was established within, and under the general direction of, the BFSSH. The formation

of other specialised federations followed - for athletics, gymnastics, basketball, volleyball, wrestling, weightlifting, swimming, shooting, chess, cycling, hiking, mountaineering, etc.

Important events in the sporting life of the country over the next few years were the second National Conference of BFSSH in 1967, the second National Spartakiad in 1969 (with 250,000 participants) and the third national conference of BFSSH in 1973. The latter was attended by 400 delegates representing more than 3,700 sports clubs. In this last year, too, a Scientific Sports Centre was established at the Vojo Kushi Institute for the study and application of scientific methods to sport.

To commemorate the 30th. anniversary of Liberation, the third National Spartakiad was organised in 1974, with more than 300,000 taking part.

In the new Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, adopted in 1976, Article 36 states:

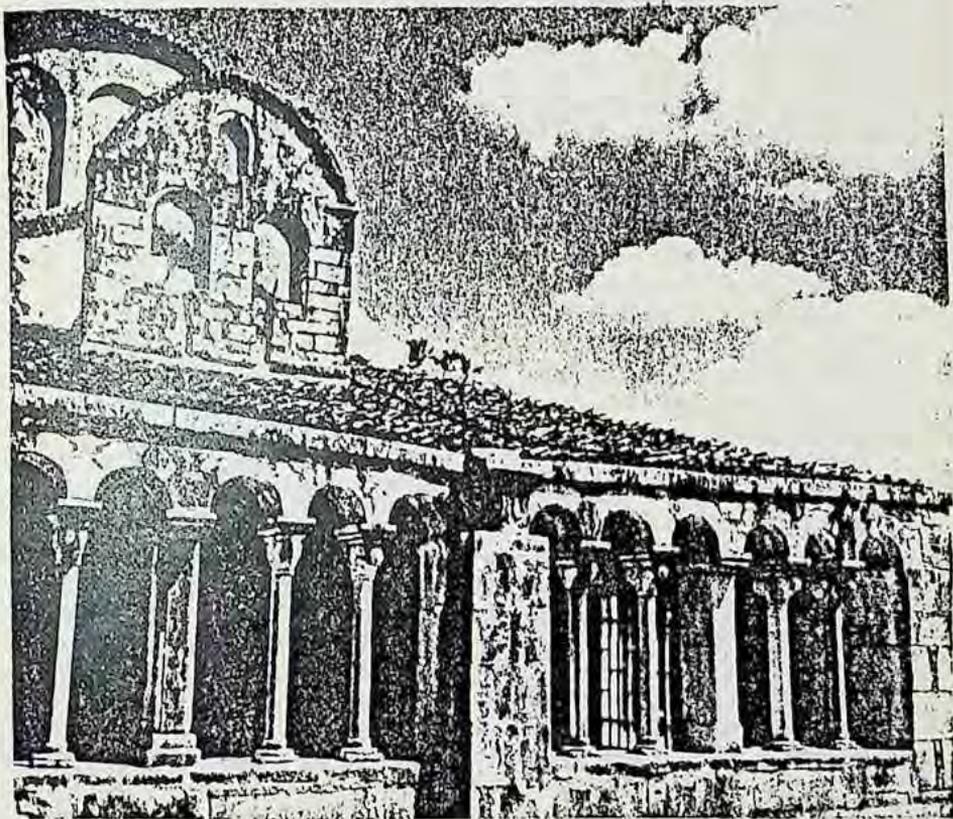
"The state works for the development of physical culture and sports on the basis of the mass movement, for the strengthening of the health of the people, especially of the younger generation, and of their tempering for work and defence"

The fourth national conference of BFSSH was held in March 1980.

Prior to Liberation Albania took little part in international sport, being a member of only two international federations - those of football and athletics. Furthermore, the performance of our national teams was little above that of a village team today. From 1946 onwards, however, our country was accepted into other international federations - for volleyball, basketball, shooting, wrestling, weightlifting, chess, gymnastics and cycling. This acceptance has not always been without strong political resistance on the part of some countries, and Albania's admission to the International Olympic Committee came about only after a long struggle against

American opposition. Now our sportsmen and sportswomen make a modest contribution to world sport in most spheres.

Compared with the pre-Liberation period, the sporting picture in Albania is radically changed for the better. Albania has today (1981 - Ed.) 3,145 sports fields, 502 sports complexes, 42 sports parks, 19 shooting ranges, 6 swimming pools, 5 palaces of sport and 25 sports stadia. There are 374 sports classes in schools, embracing 11,056 pupils, and 5,212 sports teams in workplaces, schools and localities. The country has 385 Masters of Sport, 1,216 trainers and coaches, and 1,766 referees and umpires.



The Exonarthex and Campanile of the Church of St. Mary of Apollonia

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY AT APOLLONIA

by Gjergj Frashëri

In 1976 the Austrian archaeologists Hayde and Helmut Buschauen, specialists in the history of art and architecture, published in Vienna "Die Merienkirche von Apollonia in Albanien" (The Church of Mary of Apollonia in Albania). This church has long attracted the admiration of visitors and the interest of specialists, and much has been written about it.

The great defect of the Buschauzens' study is that the authors have taken their stand, unscientifically, on an a priori premise - that the Albanians in the Middle Ages, divided into Catholic and Orthodox Christians, had insufficient national cohesion to have created an original art, and so must have imported it from outside - from Dalmatia and Montenegro in the north, from the Italian Peninsula in the west, from Epirus and the Greek world in the south, and from Macedonia (and occasionally Bulgaria) in the east.

On the basis of this premise they conclude that the Monastery Church of St. Mary at Apollonia must have been the product of artistic currents emanating from the Byzantines and Normans. According to them, it must have been founded in the 80s of the 11th. century by Normans who accompanied Robert Guiscard into Albania in his campaign (1081-83) against the Byzantine emperor Alexius I Comnenus. They assume that this army brought with them stonemasons who, after Guiscard's defeat, remained in Albania and constructed the church at the commission of the Byzantines. They support this assumption not on the schematic plan of the church - which they accept as in the Byzantine style (in the form of an inscribed cross with a cupola on a tambour) - but on the mode of construction (with large stones taken from classical Apollonia) and on the capitals of the naos or sanctuary, which resemble stylistically those at the entrance of the Church of St. Michael in Monte Sant'Angelo

in Apulia, dating from 1076.

The authors go on to assume that in the first decade of the 12th. century, at the time of the second Norman invasion under Bohemond (1107-08), stonecarvers accompanied them and added to the western side of the church its exonarthex (front portico with arches). According to them, this arcade resembles the closed galleries of the Benedictines in Apulia - particularly that of St. Benedict in Conversano, built just before 1100.

In the absence of written historical data concerning the time of construction of the building, they postulate that the earliest possible date must have been the year of the ascent to the throne of the first Comnenus emperor, Alexius I - that is, 1081 - which happens to coincide with the year in which the Normans first overran Albania.

In fact, after the conversion of St. Irene of Constantinople from a classical basilica into a basilica with a cupola, this model spread throughout the Balkans during the 10th. century.

The Church of St. Mary does not stand as a building alien to its environment, as the Busch-auzens claim. Other ecclesiastical buildings constructed in this region in the 10th.-12th. centuries have the form of a basilica with a single cupola on a tambour - in Gjirokastra and Përmet, for example. The Church of St. Mary of Apollonia is simply the most distinguished example of this Byzantine style in Albania.

The Busch-auzens themselves draw attention to a number of stylistic details which correspond to an earlier date than 1081, and to these we may add the single, relatively large cupola which completely covers the area of the naos, the broad cylindrical tambour pierced only by four small windows set diagonally to the long axis of the building, the covering of the central area with calottes, etc. These elements establish beyond any doubt that the Church of St. Mary - with the exception of the exonarthex, the roof of the narthex and the campanile, which were added later - was constructed during the first half of the

11th. century, and therefore not by the Normans.

Apollonia ranked among the earliest of Albanian bishoprics, in existence since the 3rd. century. Its bishops took part in the Council of Ephesus in 431 and in that of Chalcedon in 451. The presence in late antiquity of a basilica appropriate to an important see can scarcely, therefore, be doubted.

In the 30s. of the 11th. century the Orthodox Church based upon Constantinople was striving to consolidate its position, shaken by the Bulgarian occupation, by the uprisings of the local population, and by the pressure of the Roman Church. It was precisely in this historical environment that the Church of St. Mary was built. And in this situation the Albanian people were not passive, but were actively engaged in armed struggle against the Byzantine Empire, as contemporary records show. Despite their adherence to the Orthodox Church, the Albanians were asserting their ethnic and political identity. If our cultural monuments of this period differ in certain details from the Byzantine canons, it is quite unnecessary to assume their authorship by foreigners. It is indeed absurd to suppose, as do the Buschauzens, that the Church of St. Mary, raised for the Orthodox Church and serving it for centuries after, should have been built and later enlarged by Catholic craftsmen - and this after the schism of the church in 1054.

The fact is that Albania was never the "boundary" between the Eastern Orthodox and the Western Catholic churches, and this argument cannot be used to deny, as do the Buschauzens, any national, cultural cohesion among the Albanian people at this time. On the contrary, the fact that Albania lay at the periphery of the power of these two cults was an important factor in aiding its ecclesiastical architecture to take on a physiognomy differing from that in the other Balkan countries. That is why the Church of St. Mary is not a carbon copy of the contemporary temples of the Byzantine capital, but an original, local creation. It was built between the

20s. and 40s. of the 11th. century for the Orthodox rite, in the period when Byzantium was waging an intensified struggle to stabilise its influence in Albanian territory, on the eve of its decisive break with Rome. It shows nothing foreign in its architecture; it represents the continuation and development of a long-standing Albanian architectural tradition.

* * * * *

The Buschauzens' denial of this tradition reaches its culmination in their treatment of its exonarthex, This is composed of an arcade of twelve rounded arches, supported on eight polygonal columns and three pilasters, their capitals carved with zoomorphic motifs. Because these capitals, according to the Buschauzens, resemble stylistically those of the closed gallery of St. Benedict at Conversano, built shortly before 1100, they postulate that the exonarthex at Apollonia was constructed by Norman artists from Apulia who, they assume, came with Bohemond when he invaded Central Albania in 1107-08.

But it is inconceivable that the Norman invasion of Albania, which was dictated by military motives, had also a cultural content. What kind of cultural monuments could have been created by mobile military units aiming to march further on the Byzantine capital? The fact is that the exonarthex of the Church of St. Mary at Apollonia shows no trace of having been built in the 12th. century. Its whole appearance establishes that it was constructed nearly two centuries later than the imagined coming of Norman stonecarvers from Apulia to Albania.

The existence of Western elements in Albanian architecture in the 11th.-15th. centuries is clear, but their conductors were not Normans. The continuing enemies of the Albanian people during this period were the Byzantine and Ser-

bian feudal lords, to which were added in the second half of the 13th. century the Angevin feudal lords. But the danger stemming from these enemies was not equal: the Byzantines oppressed and exploited the Albanians, but they did not seek to drive them from their lands; the Angevins treated them relatively gently - creating, even though formally, the "Kingdom of Arbëria" and promising them "partnership"; but the Serbians were bent on destroying them ethnically, expelling those who resisted slavisation and replacing them with Serbian immigrants. The Serbian danger, always the greatest, reached its peak in the middle of the 14th. century with Stephen Dushan. To confront this danger the Albanians sought the aid of their less dangerous enemies - the Byzantine and Angevin feudal lords.

It is in this context that must be seen the conversions and reconversions of the Albanian peasantry - sometimes to Byzantine Orthodoxy, sometimes to Roman Catholicism, but never to Serbian Orthodoxy. Albania was not the frontier between the two rites, as the Buschautzens suppose, but an area where they co-existed peacefully. This phenomenon, which embraced the region around Apollonia a little before the middle of the 13th. century, was powerfully expressed a century later in the exonarthex of its church.

Contrary to what the Buschautzens say, the church of Apollonia was one of the last in the Albanian coastal region to be separated from the influence of Byzantium. By an Act of 1297 Apollonia was placed under the administration of the Mataranga feudal lords of Karavasta. In 1319 Pal Mataranga entered an Angevin coalition against the Serbian king Urosh II Milutin, but retained his links with the Eastern Church. This alliance of Apollonia with the Byzantine Empire is expressed in the frescoes of the exonarthex, which portray the family of the emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus (who reigned from 1282 to 1328) together with that of Mataranga. Later Apollonia came under the sway of

the Muzakas of Berat and, after the middle of the 14th. century, was included in the feudal principality of Karl Topia.

To determine the time of construction of the exonarthex and its colonnade we have three pieces of evidence available: the tableaux of the imperial family within it, the inscription on two pieces of stone in its south-western corner, and another inscription on one of the pilasters of the colonnade. We agree with A. Meksi that the tableaux must have been executed at the same time as the exonarthex was built. Although these portray the emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus, we are convinced that this must have been realised after his deposition, since if it had been executed during his reign it would have been placed in a more honourable position - in the naos or at least in the narthex, certainly not outside them. It follows that the year of Andronicus's deposition (1328) must be regarded as the earliest possible date for the construction of the exonarthex.

The inscription on the two pieces of stone refers to the death of a hegumen in 1350, showing that the exonarthex must have been built before that year since the stones were undoubtedly added to it after its construction. It follows that 1350 must be regarded as the latest possible date for its construction.

Support for this conclusion is given by the inscription on the central pilaster of the left wing of the colonnade - a gravestone dated 1380 but turned upside down. This pilaster differs from the others in material and in its carving, demonstrating that it constituted a partial repair of the colonnade - a repair which must have been carried out after 1380.

On the basis of the above evidence it may be regarded as certain that the exonarthex of the Church of St. Mary was added to the original building between 1328 and 1350, and the Busch-
auzens' hypothesis that it was built by Normans from Apulia at the beginning of the 12th. century must be decisively rejected. It was built not 30 years after the construction of the church,

as they suppose, but some 300 years later.

How, then, to explain the great resemblance between the technique of construction and architectural style of the church (11th. century) and those of the exonarthex (14th. century)? The answer is clear. This resemblance was the result of a deliberate attempt to unify the church and its added exonarthex into a single harmonious whole - testifying to the existence of a powerful architectural tradition in the region which can only have been native Albanian.

From which workshop, then, did the exonarthex emanate between 1328 and 1350? The Durrës workshop was renowned for its artistic creations in the Roman style with Gothic and Byzantine influences. Its architects and stonecarvers were famous for their buildings not only in South-Eastern Europe, but beyond. There can be little doubt that the exonarthex of the church at Apollonia was the creation of this workshop, at the dawn of the European Renaissance, to which the Albanian school of art and architecture rendered its own modest contribution.

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The Church of St. Mary at Apollonia demonstrates another very important feature - a relief in stone on the southern face of the building. This consists of two pieces of stone, interlocked under a convoluted cornice. At its left is portrayed an unusual cross composed of a vertical line and two horizontal lines separated from each other. In the centre 46 squares have been carved, with Latin crosses in the upper 26 and Byzantine crosses in the lower 20. At its right is carved a heraldic eagle with its wings spread and its head turned to the right.

The immurement of this relief in the external southern face of the naos leaves no doubt that it was placed there at the time of the construction of the exonarthex - between 1328 and 1350. What does this relief symbolise?

The Buschauzens suppose that it was created in the 12th. century as a modification of the

Byzantine style of relief of the 10th. century under the influence of the western style. In fact, western influences in the art and architecture of Apollonia can be accounted for, on the basis of the historical environment, not earlier than the second half of the 13th. century.

Christianity spread early in Illyrian territory. Its bishoprics are mentioned from the 4th. century. It came from the west, as is shown by the oldest ecclesiastical terminology. The first schism in 732 was reflected in Albania only formally, and the division of Albanians into Orthodox and Catholic Christians came only after the fundamental schism of 1054. It never, however, took the form of the sectarian fanaticism found, for example, among Serbian Orthodox Christians and Croatian Catholics. While mediaeval Albanians had religious consciousness, this remained secondary to their developing national consciousness. If the latter were threatened, they had no difficulty in passing from one rite to another.

At the beginning of the second millennium, the Albanians followed the Eastern rite. But because their territory lay at the periphery of the Byzantine Empire, the pressure of the Church of Constantinople was never powerful enough to endanger their ethnic individuality. On the contrary, they made use of the Byzantine rite during the early Middle Ages to resist the pressure of the pagan Serbs. But this situation changed during the second half of the 11th. century. The Serbian feudal lords had now embraced Christianity of the Eastern rite, and used Byzantine Orthodoxy as an ideological weapon with which to slavise the northern territory of the Albanians. To avert this danger to their ethnic individuality, the Albanians of the northern areas occupied by the Serbs broke with the Eastern rite and embraced Western Catholicism,

linking themselves with the archbishopric of Tivar, created at this time at their demand, which preserved its Albanian character to the end of its existence (1867).

The same thing happened in the eastern areas. Here, in order to resist the pressure of slavisation, the Albanians broke with the Eastern Church in the 12th. century and also embraced Catholicism.

This change of rite on the part of the Albanians was not dictated (as some mediaeval historians, including the Buschauzens, maintain) by motives of opportunism, by a desire to benefit materially by accommodating themselves to an occupying power. On the contrary, it represented a form of ethnic resistance in the field of ecclesiastical ideology. Catholicism spread most rapidly in Northern Albania precisely at the time when the converts were under the rule of the Orthodox Serbian feudal lords.

In Southern Albania, on the other hand, Catholicism never found suitable soil, because here the Eastern rite assisted the people in maintaining and developing their ethnic individuality. The Byzantine Empire at this period did not present any threat of hellenisation of the non-Greek peoples and after 1204 the Byzantine Church became an ideological weapon to resist the Western feudalism of the Crusaders.

Between these two religious zones stood Central Albania, threatened both by the Bulgarians and by Western feudalism, which began with the Normans. This special position was reflected in a distinctive religious outlook, which was in turn reflected in the ecclesiastical art and architecture of the region.

It is clear that the cross in the stone relief of the Church of St. Mary at Apollonia is not a Byzantine cross, as the Buschauzens assert. On the contrary, it is the resultant of the fusion of a Latin cross with a Byzantine cross. Such a cross is, as far as we know, unknown anywhere else in the mediaeval world. It is a distinctively Albanian creation, symbolising the unity of the Albanians of this region,

- * - "The Labour Code"; London; 1983 50p.
 (A complete translation of the
 code of labour law)
- "New Albania", No. 1, 1983 50p.
 (contains articles on energy supplies;
 the Albanian economy in 1982-3); the National Lib-
 rary; the Dajç Cooperative Farm, Shkodra; the
 Profarma pharmaceutical plant; the Motor Vehicle
 Workshop, Shkodra; the UEM electrical works in
 Tirana; the liquidation of the effects of the
 November earthquake; the ballet "Shotem and Azem
 Galica"; the Albanians and the Pelasgians; the
 1982 archaeological year; Albanian carpets; and
 A. L. Lloyd).

Cash with order, please

THREE GIRLS

A poem by Vorea Ujko

("Vorea Ujko" is the pen-name of Domenico Gelci, born in 1931 at Cosenza, Italy, where he still lives. Of Albanian descent, he writes in Albanian, his poems often reflecting the poverty of the Arbëresh people who live in southern Italy).

Three pretty girls,
 three girls, three sisters,
 three embroidered trousseaus.
 "Yes", said the youngest,
 "love will come,
 the dawn will come".

But suddenly came death
 and carried her away.

Two pretty girls,
 two girls, two sisters,
 two embroidered trousseaus.
 "Yes", said the younger,
 "maybe death will come
 and you will be alone".

But suddenly came love,
 which carried her away.
 And now I wait alone.

HOW THE WORLD LOOKS FROM TIRANA



"Social Security"

Cartoon by B. Fico



"In the Name of
the Lord"

Cartoon by K. Raka



"The Pound Slipped Again Today"

Cartoon by E. Veizi

THE SHADOW

A short story by Elena Kadare

It had stopped raining and the sky was clear, as often happens in summer after a shower. The trees and houses glowed red in the last rays of the setting sun. This had lost its heat and its presence could be felt only as a gentle, soothing caress. Outside the window it was warm and soft. Drops of rain trembled on the leaves of the poplars.

It seemed to Martin that this June afternoon would never end. Seated on the divan in the sitting-room of the flat, he was unable to turn his gaze from the view offered to him by the French windows, which revealed part of the town - precisely the part he loved best: the park, where children were at play, and, beyond, the Lana which flowed tranquilly at the feet of the high poplars.

After contemplating this landscape for a while, he turned his head, thinking someone had called to him. But all was silent. He relaxed anew into the quiet contemplation of this June afternoon, which seemed as though it would go on for ever.

When he returned from an official trip, he loved - after a ritual bath - to let his mind wander in this way, without doing anything, awaiting his wife's familiar step. The children had gone out, and she would undoubtedly join him in a few minutes. They would take coffee together and tell each other what had occurred during his absence. Whenever he was away, it was this moment he thought of with most nostalgia.

He heard in the kitchen the sound of running water, broken by the tinkle of pottery. He rose from his seat - then stood undecided for a moment. Moving to the window, he looked again at the outline of the poplars, the tops of which

gleamed brightly with drops of water. He felt a sense of perfect peace. He saw in his mind's eye the smooth hands and slender fingers of his wife washing the dishes in the sink, and longed for her to join in his contentment.

It was only two hours since he had returned from a remote area of the North and, apart from the usual enquiries about the children's health, they had barely exchanged a word. When she had finished her washing-up (what an odd habit women had of washing-up everything immediately!) she would make coffee and they would sit together in front of the French windows. He had so many things to tell her, and she was a good listener. It was his nature to recount the essence of things briefly and concisely, while Voisava told everything in animated detail, with a touch of humour. She was a gifted story-teller, and enriched her news with mimicry and expressive gestures. Although they had been married for fourteen years, the moment when they were alone together after his return from a trip, with the scent of her hair filling the room, remained one of the happiest of his life. There were so many things he prized, although he had never got around to telling his wife. Now he waited for her to join him.

His glance rested on a calendar hanging on the wall, and he smiled at seeing the mark she had pencilled against the date of his departure. The calendar was decorated with such marks. "When we are old", he had once said jokingly to her, "what marks will you put on the calendar then?" "We shall be together then", she had answered seriously, "and I shall have no need of marks".

Martin took up a book lying open on the table and attempted to read it. But he found himself unable to concentrate. "When Voisavã has finished what she has to do", he said to himself, "we can go out for a walk".

Outside, the June afternoon was finally coming to its close. The sun had almost disappeared behind the dense foliage of the poplars, which were now suffused with gold.

Suddenly he realised that the sounds from the kitchen had ceased. He put down the book but, hearing again the sound of running water in the sink, he realised that she had not yet finished.

He frowned. He had the disagreeable feeling that the water had spurted in his face. Then he relaxed and began to follow with his eyes the flight of a long-winged insect as it tried to force a way through the glass of the windows. He smiled and moved the curtain a little to help it escape. He could hear faintly the voices of passers-by in the street and the cries of the children playing in the park. Truly summer was almost here. He could feel it in the life of the street and the rich colours and scents of the June afternoon. He realised that he had been homesick not only for his flat, for his wife and children, but also for this town, this street and the people in it. He began to ponder on what had made his marriage such a happy one. When people spoke of unhappy marriages, he was almost tempted to believe that this happened only in books. If there were no such marriages, how many great novels would never have been written? How could the story of Anna Karenina ever have seen the light of day?

Voisava seemed to have finished her household tasks. He closed his eyes and imagined the curve of her neck as she bent over the sink, the uneven parting in her hair. He waited patiently for the sound of her approaching footsteps. Perhaps, to save time, he might make the coffee himself? But the idea that she would laugh at him made him change his mind. In any case, he reflected, it wouldn't take more than two minutes to make the coffee.

At that moment the telephone rang in the hall. He got up and went to answer it. When he picked up the receiver a voice asked for Voisava. He called her, and she came out of the kitchen, drying her hands on a towel.

"A good thing you were here to answer it!", she said, looking at him in a way he felt was slightly reproachful.

He sensed, without knowing why, that he had irritated her. What had she wished to convey by that look? He went back into the living-room and resumed his seat. At least the sounds from the kitchen had now ceased, and soon they would be sitting together, drinking their coffee and contemplating the peaceful twilight behind the high poplars. Suddenly he felt a touch of anger at the delay.

She continued to speak on the telephone, and he listened to her soft, pleasant voice. She was talking to a woman friend. In spite of himself, he smiled. Her voice had the vivacity of a schoolgirl telling a story in the break. More than once he had thought of criticising this, of reminding her that she was a mature, responsible woman, but he had refrained. And suddenly, for no apparent reason, he recalled a day at the office when two or three people had begun to tell trite stories about marriage. He himself had remained silent.

Voisava finally hung up. As she passed the door of the living-room she glanced at her husband, seated on the divan, an open book in front of him. Then Martin heard once more the sound of water running into the sink. He frowned. "This is intolerable!", he thought. And he got up and went to the door of the kitchen, where he stood for a moment without speaking. She had finished the washing-up and was now scrubbing out the sink. He was tempted to go to her and embrace her, but something checked him.

His gaze turned to the kitchen table, on which lay a notebook with a ball-pen between

its open pages. The sloping hand of his wife was clearly visible. "She must study when the children are asleep", he thought; "I wonder what she is studying". He was suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of tenderness for his wife - this wife who stood at the sink with her back towards him.

She had now finished cleaning the sink and was once more wiping her hands on the towel. He was about to say something when there was a ring at the front door. The sound made him shudder slightly. "Damn!", he thought irritably; "who could be intruding at this hour?".

His wife moved past him to the door, and he heard vaguely familiar voices in the hall.

"Is Martin in?", asked a woman's voice, in a tone which seemed assured of a welcome.

"Yes, he's just got home, and . . .", Voisava broke off as always when she was embarrassed.

Now he recognised the voices as those of Farouk and his wife Paulina. They had met them last year at the seaside resort where they had spent their holidays. They had exchanged addresses and promised to visit each other, but like many such promises this had never been fulfilled.

"Please come in", said Voisava, and led them into the living-room. "I'm so glad you came to see us at last. We'd been meaning to get in touch with you, but somehow . . ." And again she broke off in the middle of a sentence.

When Martin entered the room, Farouk and his wife were already sitting down, and Paulina was admiring the view from the French windows.

"Martin!", exclaimed Farouk, with apparent warmth; "it's good to see you again!"

Martin shook hands with the visitors.

"And how is your son?", asked Voisava politely.

Paulina's brow flickered for a second into a frown.

"You mean our daughter", she said; "we have a daughter".

Voisava reddened.

"Of course", she said; "I'm so sorry".

"She's fine", answered Farouk.

There was an uncomfortable pause.

"And how are things with you?", Martin asked finally.

"Oh, fine!", said Farouk; "just fine!".

"We were just out for a walk when we passed the end of your street, and I said: 'That's where Martin lives. We must call in and see him'".

"I'm so glad you did", said Voisava. Her eyes met those of Martin, and again she reddened slightly.

As Voisava got up to make coffee, Farouk asked:

"What were you doing when we came?"

"Just washing up", said Voisava; "Martin was reading".

It seemed to Martin that she spoke the word "reading" with an odd touch of bitterness.

While Voisava was out of the room, Martin could think of nothing to say and another uneasy silence hung over the room. When she came back with the tray of coffee-cups, Martin looked at her hands and was overcome by a wave of tenderness. Those precious moments to which he had been looking forward so eagerly were being frittered away by these uninvited bores. "If we were alone", he thought, "I would have kissed her".

He took his cup of coffee from the tray stiffly, without speaking.

Their coffee drunk, the guests rose, thanked their hosts politely and departed. He could hear them laughing as they descended the staircase of the flats.

For a moment Martin and Voisava remained standing by the open front door. Then, having closed it, they returned, still silent, to the living-room.

At last the June afternoon had passed away, and the street lamps were on in the street below. The French windows leading on to the balcony were half closed, and Martin threw them wide open. Voisava came up silently behind him. He felt an almost irresistible urge to ask her what was the matter, what was the cause of this strange shadow which seemed to have loomed up between them. But he stopped himself. To question her might only make the shadow more menacing. With the dawn it would, no doubt, like all shadows, melt away.

Voisava picked up the tray of empty cups and went out of the room.

Martin turned and looked after her.

"She knows how much I love her", he thought; "these things are sensed between people who love each other".

Suddenly he was startled to hear a crash from the kitchen, as though someone had hurled a cup against the wall and it had broken into a dozen pieces



ALBANIAN SOCIETY MEETINGS

On March 25th. the Society held a meeting in Edinburgh. Bill Bland, Secretary of the Society, spoke on Anglo-Albanian relations since 1912, and videos of the 1978 Gjirokastra Folk Festival and of the feature film "Old Wounds" were screened.

On March 26th. the Society held its first meeting in Glasgow. Bill Bland came a talk on "Albania Today", illustrated with colour slides, and videos of the films "The Eagles" and "Old Wounds" were screened.

On April 9th. the London and South-East England Branch of the Society held a meeting in North London. Composer Dave Smith gave a short talk on modern Albanian music, illustrated with tapes. The talk prompted many questions, which were ably answered by the speaker, drawing on the experience of his many visits to Albania. The main talk - by Steve Calder, the Branch Secretary, dealt with the struggle of the Albanian people to maintain their independence and, in particular, with the charges made against the former Prime Minister, Mehmet Shehu. The meeting concluded with refreshments and an informal discussion.

Actress Maria Logoreci
in the role of Bernarda
in Garcia Lorca's "The
House of Bernarda Alba"



THE SHKODRA-TITOGRAĐ RAILWAY

(from the Albanian newspaper "Zëri i Popullit")

On April 3rd., 1982 a protocol was signed between the Albanian and Yugoslav governments for the construction of a railway linking Shkodra and Titograd via the border village of Han i Hotit. Work was to be commenced on both sides of the border in July of last year and the work was to be completed by December 1983.

On the Albanian side of the frontier construction work has been proceeding apace since July 1982. To date 24 kilometres of track have been laid and 73 of the 106 engineering works required have been completed.

On the Yugoslav side of the frontier, however, up to the present - April 1983 - work has not even begun, despite a number of Notes from our government to that of Belgrade.

The non-implementation of the agreement brings about serious economic damage to Albania, and we are compelled to ask: Is it the intention of the Yugoslav government to honour its undertaking?

CORRECTION

Professor Martin Smith has asked us to make the following corrections to the text of his lecture published in ALBANIAN LIFE No. 24:

- p. 2, line 25 : "mountain" should read "mountainous"
- p. 3, line 4 : "Avers" should read "Avars";
- p. 9, line 10 : insert after "congress": "The congress, which was held in January 1920 in Lushnja in central Albania, came to several important decisions at this time of crisis".
- p. 10, line 18 : insert after "Albania": "not only . . ."
- p. 10, line 36 : after "no one," insert: "and yields to the threats of no one".

SPIRITUALITY IN ALBANIAN POETRY

by Martin Rogan

As Albania is officially an atheist country one might expect its contemporary poetry to devote little attention to man's spiritual aspect. This expectation would not, however, take into account the unusually strong feeling an Albanian has for his country, language and history. This feeling is so strong that, even though spirituality in a religious sense does not figure in the contemporary poems which have been collected in the Society's anthology*, a type of spirituality is evident in the majority of them.

The poems of Naim Frashëri, although not contemporary, express the "Albanianism" that has superseded conventional religion in modern Albania. In his poem "Hope" he refers to a higher power, not a god but "Providence" - a personified Providence which may "smile on her" (Albania) "and make her blossom". More important for Frashëri, though, is the possibility that Albanians might achieve a oneness with their language and country. The Albanian's being is inextricably linked to his country and language.

It is difficult for an Albanian to accept that he will die and cease to exist. Aleks Çaçi says:

"I do not want to sleep;
there is so much more to see.
I do not tire of gazing at my native land".

In this poem ("I do not want to sleep") there is little sign of belief that the poet's spirit will survive in any way. All through "In the Streets of Tirana", however, he is aware of the presence of a dead comrade-in-arms:

"And as I walk
your shadow follows me".

*"Albanian Poems", published by the Albanian Society at 50p., including postage

Life after death, therefore, can be achieved when one's memory lives on in the thoughts of others. "I do not grow old" seems to contain a refusal to accept death and a belief in the possibility of living on in the thoughts of friends:

"I wish . . .
to defend justice with the others".

In "I want you always near me" the unity of man with the land is expressed where Çaçi wants to identify his own physical sensations with natural phenomena:

"I wish to feel in me
the throbbing of the earth
that gives me strength".

His aim will be to unite himself with the

". . . vast green plains
watered by the sweat of our ancestors".

But he may also live on in others in the same way as he wants to feel

"the glow in the hearts of your men".

In the last poem included here ("I shall always be here") we find a sort of synthesis of these ideas when he says:

"I shall live in every particle of soil",

and

"I shall live -
be sure of it -
with you
on this earth".

In a way, of course, his poetry has made sure that this is indeed the case.

Andon Zako Çajupi takes a gloomier view in his "O World of Deception" when he refers to a world where

"a man lives to die
and does not return",

and in the Albania of his time many people would indeed see no other purpose in their lives. All the same, friends are important to him and he expects they will weep for him when he dies, but

"then - the great forgetting
as though I had not been".

Then he will indeed be dead, and it seems that there is no worse fate for an Albanian than to be forgotten by his own people.

As a counterweight to this sad view, the contemporary poem "In the Museum" by Llazar Siliqi seems to maintain that as long as one Albanian lives free and, to echo Naim Frashëri,

"is one with his language and country",

then none of those who in the past have contributed to that freedom will ever really die.

"Death has not separated us
for life unites us still",

the voice seems to say to Siliqi. They live on in his freedom as long as he recognises their sacrifice, and in this we have one explanation for the quite extraordinary Albanian preoccupation with the country's history:

"We live in every clod of fertile earth,
in every gleaming railway line",

says the voice, telling the poet that as long as he recognises their sacrifice and continues to build on what they have achieved, they will live on in him just as his spirit will live on in the thoughts of those revolutionaries who carry on after him.

This theme is expressed most simply and directly in Vehbi Bala's poem "Sef Kochar and Dervish Pasha":

". . . the Albanian lives on in our songs.
Sef will live till the end of time,
the Pasha is gone like a leaf in the wind".

Again and again the unity of the land and people is stressed. Petrit Hajdini's "28,000" expresses it numerically. Vehbi Bala, in the line from "The Misanthrope" which says

"How I love flowers and children",

does the same thing by placing the offspring of the earth and the offspring of the Albanian people side by side in his affections. Çajupi in "Homeland" sees the people on the most intimate terms with the land:

"Each pebble knows my name".

The importance of the Albanian language is again stated and at the end he appears to conclude that an Albanian who lives and dies in and for Albania lives for ever in the land itself. The poet is much more contented here than in the poem "O World of Deception" which I mentioned earlier. It would be interesting to know if these poems represent different moods of the poet or if one was written much later than the other so that we could see how the poet's feelings had developed, if at all.

But if life can go on after death, death can take hold on an Albanian's life if, like Veli Stafa, he is in exile. In "To the Fountain in my Street" he addresses the source of the life-giving water of his homeland and laments the fact that he cannot be truly alive and at home in Albania. If this can be seen as a living death, it might equally be said that Veli Stafa is now truly alive again for the first time since he left his country, because he is now alive in the consciousness of all Albanians who read his poem and appreciate the sentiments he expresses in it.

In "The Flute", Naim Frashëri sees truth as the ultimate in the universe and that it created man from the fire of love. It is interesting, though, that he also mentions:

"O blessed, holy fire
which moulded me from clay",

not perhaps from any relation this may have to the biblical story of creation but in the context of the idea that I mentioned earlier - that the Albanian people are very much the children of the motherland, almost, in fact, the physical offspring of "Nëna Shqipëri".

To return the basic premise of spirituality in poems where references to a god or to religion are negligible (I exclude the very earliest verses and Migjeni's "Scandalous Song", which is wonderfully evocative, yet as subtle as a bulldozer), the spirituality which runs through most of the poems comes over to me as something of a collective, national soul of which every Albanian is a part. It is, therefore, something indestructible, and it has had to be to survive Albania's history of brutal oppression by invaders. The phrase "indomitable spirit" has become something of a cliché, but in these poems I can see exactly that in the truest and most authentic meaning of the term. The selection's introduction states that the aim was to cover the widest spectrum possible, yet the idea of an eternal Albanian soul comes through in the majority of them and the very fact that this is so is perhaps evidence to indicate that such a national soul exists in reality.

This collection of poems is deeply moving, and to anyone with even a sketchy knowledge of Albanian history it goes some way to explaining how there can in a real sense be a little of Skanderbeg in every Albanian. Albania as a nation is truly like the man in Nonda Bulka's "Song of the Eagles", who has over the centuries said

". . . to death, Die!"

and has earned the right to behold, perhaps through the eyes of his grandchildren, the symbol of the nation's soul:

"the red and black flag which waved proudly and unconquered in the pure air of freedom".

CORRESPONDENCE

I think the latest issue of ALBANIAN LIFE is very good: congratulations!

However, I want to say something about the section of the previous issue devoted to Fan Noli. I am sure that Fan Noli was a remarkable man, of extraordinary ability and versatility, and Albanians today - and no doubt in his day - have, and had, good reason to be grateful to him for - among other achievements - his translations of foreign works of literature. However, it seems to me that it would have been difficult to pick on two more deplorable examples of his writing than the articles about Schubert and about "Don Quixote".

About Schubert (1797-1828) - the article gives no idea at all of the man himself, about the reasons why he was not accepted by 'the establishment', and gives a completely wrong picture of his illness and death. The article seems to be simply a vehicle for a bash at the bourgeoisie, never mind the facts of the case. First of all, Schubert was no businessman - like many another creative artist before and since. He spent his time mainly (a) writing and performing music; (b) relaxing in a rather bohemian manner, with parties, drinking and horseplay. He didn't care for regular hours at all. Furthermore, he was physically unimpressive, being only 4ft. 11ins. in height - too short for acceptance by the Army! He was also rather awkward in manner (perhaps self-conscious because of his tiny size, as one can imagine). In current terms, he would be an undersized hippy - not at all the type to be accepted in Albania today, musical genius or not! As regards his illness and death: the fatal illness was not TB but VD, which he contracted in a virulent form in 1822 and from which he never really recovered. He was treated with mercury (then the standard treatment) and his hair fell out. After being nursed at his parents' home for some time, he had to go into hospital for a while, in 1823. Subsequently he suffered from depression at times. During the last four years of his life his health seemed to improve, and he composed a vast amount of music. By 1828 his work was beginning to be in demand, and he received substantial payments - enough for comfortable living. But his health

worsened again, and he died in November of that year, from syphilis. He did not die "in a hovel", but at the home of his brother Ferdinand, and with proper nursing attendance as well as support from the rest of his respectable family.

Franz Schubert's failure to gain due recognition, or a steady appointment, was certainly not because of his social origin or position: that is absolute rubbish! His brother Ferdinand, though less gifted musically, was by temperament better able to fit in with the requirements of 'establishment' musical society, and did obtain a good, steady appointment, so that he was able to help Franz all along until his death.

As to Goethe's failure to acknowledge Schubert's settings of his poems: at the time when the first lot was sent to him, Goethe (1749-1832) was nearly 70 years old and was accustomed to a very different kind of music from Schubert's: it is hard for us to feel ourselves into the position of someone who found Schubert's music too "modern" and unacceptable. But even now we are not surprised when people of nearly 70 say they don't understand modern music but prefer the kind of music they grew up with and liked and understood when they were young! However, at the time when the first songs were sent to Goethe, his wife was in her last fatal illness - she died about six weeks later - and one can imagine that the poet had other things on his mind than these works by an unknown teenage composer. As to Goethe's social origins - he was as much of a good, solid bourgeois as, say, Karl Marx; his father, like Marx's, was a prosperous lawyer, whose relations were farmers, artisans and innkeepers, etc. Johann Wolfgang was indeed ennobled and got a "von" before his name in the course of his career as what one would call a top civil servant. But he was not born an aristocrat, at a time when being born an aristocrat really meant something.

Similarly, the article about "Don Quixote" gives no indication of what there is in the book that made it so popular at the time and has kept it a classic work, continually in print in many languages for the past 377 years! Again, Fan Noli's main aim seems to have been to use yet another occasion to have a bash at the Albanian bourgeoisie and other backward elements.

Neither article gives the slightest insight into the subject or the circumstances - which is a pity! - and the heavily ironic/sarcastic style does militate against the possibility of the reader gaining any understanding of them.

About Fan Noli's ability as a composer one cannot, of course, judge from the article on the subject. But the articles on Schubert (and Goethe) and on Cervantes' masterpiece, I am afraid, do nothing to enhance his reputation as a literary critic or even a writer interested in objective facts, or indeed anything but bashing the bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, those of us who don't know Albanian well can't judge the quality of Fan Noli's translations of literary works into that language.

Unfortunately, too, people who do know something of the subjects of the two articles printed are bound to get a rather negative impression of Fan Noli - which is regrettable. Perhaps it would have been better to write something about his work and omit the actual examples if no better ones were available. It's too late to do anything about that now, but perhaps in future more care could be taken to check on sources in order to avoid dropping "clangers" of this kind!

Vivien Pixner,
London NW3

The Editorial Committee Replies:

In selecting examples of Fan Noli's writing for No. 23 of ALBANIAN LIFE, we had to take account of the fact that we had recently published what is generally regarded as his finest work of serious criticism, on Beethoven (No. 18) and his analysis of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" (No. 21).

The two articles published in No. 23 were clearly intended by the author to be ironic essays in which he was concerned, as Mrs. Pixner aptly expresses it,

" . . . to have a bash at the Albanian bourgeoisie and other backward elements".

It does not, therefore, seem reasonable to us to criticise the articles for their "heavily ironic/sarcastic style" or for not being biographies or serious works of

artistic criticism. Such barbed essays formed a significant part of Noli's literary output; not to have published them would have been to give a false impression of the writer.

So far as the content is concerned, we must say that we feel that Mrs. Pixner is not being quite fair to Noli, and, as he is unable to reply himself, we take it upon our less capable shoulders to do so.

Mrs. Pixner comments only briefly, but adversely, on the content of Noli's essay on "Don Quixote". The essence of this is that he characterises the Albanian beys of the 1930s as "anachronisms" like the Don, "born too late" since "the world has left them behind". Since Mrs. Pixner herself appears to include the beys in her term "backward elements", we find it difficult to understand why she should object to the point of Noli's essay.

With regard to the essay on Schubert, Mrs. Pixner appears to imply that Noli falsified the cause of the composer's death. At the time, however, the official cause of death was certified as "nervous fever" (1), and this has long been a matter of controversy. When Noli wrote the essay concerned, in 1931, the possibility of his fatal illness having been syphilis had scarcely been raised in public. Forty and more years later, the latest edition of "Everyman's Dictionary of Music" (2) diagnoses this explicitly as "typhoid fever", and this is implied in the latest editions of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" (3), of the "Encyclopaedia Americana" (4) and of "Collier's Encyclopaedia" (5).

Mrs. Pixner objects to Noli's statement that Schubert died "in a hovel". In fact, his last permanent residence (which was retained by him until his death) consisted of shared lodgings on the second floor of a tavern for which "hovel" does not seem an inaccurate description. It is true that he actually died at the home of his brother Frederick, but in any case Frederick's house

"was damp and insanitary; . . . the move hastened his death" (6)

Schubert's extreme poverty at the time of his death, which is surely the essence of Noli's expression, is graphically illustrated by the fact that his total effects were valued at only £2. 50, against debts of

more than fifteen times that amount (7).

Mrs. Pixner objects to Noli's characterisation of Goethe as "aristocratic", on the grounds that he was not born into the aristocracy. But he was ennobled and received into the aristocracy, and it is well-known that persons who rise into a "superior" social class not infrequently exhibit a pronounced snobbery - to a greater extent than those born into that class. In fact, Goethe was noted for his contemptuous attitude towards the "lower orders" as well as for his servile attitude towards royalty. Beethoven describes a chance encounter with the imperial family:

"I saw to my amusement the procession file past Goethe. He stood aside with his hat off, and bending lowly" (8).

That the poet's attitude had become that of the aristocracy rather than that of the bourgeoisie from which he sprang is illustrated by his opposition to freedom of the press (9), by

". . . his antagonism to democracy, political and moral" (10),

and by his virulent hatred of the bourgeois revolutions of 1789 and 1830 (11).

Mrs. Pixner correctly states that when Schubert's setting of Goethe's poem were first sent to the poet (in 1816), the former was "an unknown teenage composer" and Goethe's wife was dying. But this is clearly not the occasion to which Noli refers. When Schubert himself sent his settings to the poet, it was in 1825, a year which

". . . saw the steady growth of Schubert's reputation" (12),

that in which engravings of the composer's portrait had been produced for sale (13), and three years after he had been elected an honorary member of the Graz Music Society (14).

Noli's view that Goethe's snub to the young Schubert (who regarded the former's poems as the greatest inspiration of his life) was dictated by snobbery towards this poor and somewhat uncouth composer rather than (as Mrs.

Pixner suggests) by a failure to appreciate "modern" music is supported by the fact of the poet's warm encouragement, four years earlier, to the young Mendelssohn, who came from a wealthy banking family which had been accepted into the aristocracy.

What, therefore, is the essence of Noli's brief essay on "That Lout Schubert"? That despite his genius and prodigious output, Schubert lived and died in extreme poverty, that he was fleeced by bourgeois music publishers who bought his work for a pittance, and that he was regarded with disdain by the aristocracy. In our view there can be no doubt that all this is incontrovertibly true.

We can understand that some readers might find objectionable the conclusions which Noli draws in the two essays concerned - that the Albanian beys were as much an anachronism as Don Quixote, and that the poverty and exploitation of workers, including those in the field of music, will end only with the abolition of class-divided society - but we do not feel that this would have justified our refusing to publish the essays concerned, nor justifies their description as "clangers".

1. E. Sams: "Schubert's Illness Re-examined", in: "Musical Times", Volume 121, No. 1,643; January 1980; p. 15.
2. E. Blom: "Everyman's Dictionary of Music"; London; 1971; p. 614.
3. M.J.E. Brown, in: "The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia", Volume 16; Chicago; 1974; p. 363.
4. A.M. Lingg, in: "Encyclopaedia Americana", Volume 24; Danbury; 1981; p. 375.
5. M.J.E. Brown, in: "Collier's Encyclopaedia", Volume 20; New York; 1982; p. 491.
6. S. Sadie (Ed.): "The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians", Volume 16; London; 1980; p. 770.
7. Ibid. p. 771.
8. L. van Beethoven, in: A.F. Schindler: "The Life of Beethoven", Volume 1; London; 1841; p. 135.
9. J.P. Eckermann: "Conversations with Goethe"; London; 1970; p. 404.
10. T. Mann: "Goethe and Democracy"; Washington; 1950; p. 9.
11. J.P. Eckermann: op. cit.; p. 36, 351.
12. S. Sadie (Ed.): op. cit; p. 765.

13. Ibid.

14. J. Westrup & F.L. Harrison: "Collins Encyclopaedia of Music"; London; 1976; p. 487.

* * * * *

As a feminist who has long admired the achievements of Albania - not least in its efforts to bring about the emancipation of women - I was shocked to gather from the story "A Woman's Heart", published in the last issue of ALBANIAN LIFE, that abortion on demand is not legal in that country.

This places Socialist Albania behind many capitalist countries, where the right of a woman to control her own body is recognised in law - places its official stand on this question in line with that of the Catholic Church.

A foetus is in no way a rational, self-conscious human being, and to equate abortion with murder is clearly absurd. Furthermore it has long been established that laws prohibiting abortion on demand merely drive women to back-street abortionists, with all the dangers to health which this entails.

Margaret Arkwright,
London NW3

The Editorial Committee Replies:

Albanian society is not based on the principle of maximising individual freedom irrespective of its effects on other human beings and on society as a whole. Ethics - the science of right and wrong in conduct - is seen as based on the interests of society.

It is, of course, true that a foetus is not "a rational, self-conscious human being". Neither is a young baby, but few feminists uphold the right of a parent to kill a baby "on demand".

As we understand it, the Albanian authorities see a zygote (a fertilised ovum), an embryo and a foetus as living organisms of the species Homo sapiens; like a child, they represent a living human being at different stages of incomplete development. Birth is not, therefore, regarded as such a signif-

icant moral dividing line that the killing of a baby after birth is legitimate, while the killing of an unborn baby is legitimate. After all, a prematurely-born baby may be much less developed than a foetus at term.

In slaveowning society, a slave was regarded as the property of the slaveowner, who had the legal right to have the slave killed "on demand". Socialist Albania does not recognise such property rights over other human beings, whether fully or incompletely developed.

Certainly in capitalist societies it is impossible, for economic reasons inherent in the system, for many citizens to find work. Here, therefore, the birth of a large number of babies to the working class is regarded as "dangerous to the stability of society", and Malthusian sociologists refer constantly to the perils of "the population explosion". In Socialist Albania, however, where the right to work is guaranteed by the Constitution, every baby born represents a future worker who will increase the material and cultural life of society, a future soldier who can defend it and its achievements. Thus, in Albania the fact that the country has the highest birth-rate in Europe is a matter for rejoicing.

As Albanian sociologists see it, therefore, the demand for abortion on demand reflects the social conditions of a capitalist society, and is inappropriate for a socialist society. This demand, they assert, is based on the fact that, under capitalism, the negative features of pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing may, in the eyes of the woman involved, outweigh in many cases the positive features. A socialist society, however, works to eliminate these negative features by the provision of paid pregnancy and maternity leave, of ample cheap housing (rents in Albania are equivalent to 3% of earnings), of creche and day nursery facilities for all. Its encouragement of the active role of the father in housework and child-care, and of the extended family, is also a factor in reducing the negative factors which may be associated with the birth of a child.

Regarding abortion on demand as unethical in a socialist society, therefore, the Albanian authorities reject the argument that the negative factors which may be associated with the birth of a child bring about, in a socialist

society, the despair which leads to the activity of back-street abortionists.

Finally, Ms. Arkwright is incorrect in comparing the position of the Albanian authorities on abortion with that of the Catholic Church. The latter forbids abortion in all circumstances, while in Albania abortion is legal and indeed encouraged (as the story "A Woman's Heart" makes clear) where there are medical reasons that make it desirable. In other words, where circumstances force a choice between the health, and perhaps the life, of the mother and the life of the unborn child, the interests of the fully-developed human being are placed above those of the less-developed human being - just as, under Albanian penal law, to kill a man is regarded as ethical and lawful if it is carried out in necessary self-defence.

ALBANIAN NEWS

(November 1982 - January 1983)

ELECTIONS

The election of deputies to the People's Assembly was finalised on November 14th. The turnout was officially declared to be 100%, with over 99% voting for the candidates of the Democratic Front. The deputies are not full-time politicians, but will spend most of their time at their workplaces. They are subject to recall if the electors become dissatisfied with them.

EARTHQUAKE

On November 17th. an earthquake struck the districts of Fier, Lushnja and Berat, killing one person and injuring twelve others. Extensive damage was done to buildings over a wide area. A government commission was immediately set up, charged with rectifying all damage by New Year 1983. On December 29th. it was announced that, thanks to the work of thousands of volunteers from all over the country, the work of the people of the affected areas and the meeting of all expenditure by the state, 16,000 dwellings and 600 public buildings had been repaired and 371 new buildings constructed. Thus the aim to overcome all the damage by the New Year was realised.

POLITICS

On November 22nd. the 1st. Session of the 10th. Legislature of the People's Assembly opened in Tirana. 45% of the deputies had been elected for the first time, and 30% were women. 95 of the 250 deputies were of worker origin, while 73 were drawn from the cooperative peasantry. 4.4% were between 18 and 27 years old, 50% between 28 and 40, 39% between 41 and 60, and 6.6% over 60.

Pali Miska was elected Chairman of the Presidency.

Ramiz Alia was elected President of the Presidium of the People's Assembly (a post equivalent to President of the Republic).

Adil Çarçani was elected Chairman of the Council of Ministers (a post equivalent to Prime Minister).

Çarçani then nominated the new government as follows:

Deputy Prime Ministers:	Manush Myftiu, Besnik Bekteshi
Minister of Foreign Affairs:	Reis Malile
Minister of People's Defence:	Prokop Murra
Minister of Internal Affairs:	Hekuran Isai
President, State Planning Commission:	Harilla Papajorgji
Minister of Finance:	Qirjako Mihali
Minister of Industry and Mining:	Hajredin Çeliku
Minister of Energy:	Lavdesh Hametaj
Minister of Light and Food Industries:	Vito Kapo
Minister of Agriculture:	Themie Thomai
Minister of Construction:	Farudin Hoxha
Minister of Communications:	Luan Babameto
Minister of Internal Trade:	Osman Murati
Minister of Foreign Trade:	Shane Korbeci
Minister of Communal Services:	Kudret Arapi
Minister of Education and Culture:	Tefta Çami
Minister of Health:	Ajli Alushani

On January 29th. the 2nd. Session of the People's Assembly opened. Speaking on the 1982 state plan, Harilla Papajorgji, Present of the State Planning Commission, gave examples of the over-fulfilment of the planned targets. On the 1983 state plan Papajorgji stated that total social product should increase by 8.1%, industrial and agricult-

ural production by 9%.

INDUSTRY

The light and foodstuffs industries now meet more than 85% of the needs of the country for consumer goods, as well as providing much foreign currency through exports.

AGRICULTURE

In Tirana in 1982 the people bought, compared with the previous year, 12% more meat, 12% more sausages, 9% more milk, 10% more cheese, 7% more eggs, 2% more vegetables, 45% more dried onions, 66% more fresh fruits, etc.

DIPLOMACY

The Japanese Ambassador, Tamio Amau, presented his credentials to President Haxhi Lleshi in November. The Swedish Ambassador, Lenhart Myrsten, similarly presented his credentials in the same month.

FOREIGN TRADE

In the period under review protocols on trade for 1983 were signed with the following countries: Hungary, Malta, Yugoslavia, Greece, Vietnam, Turkey and North Korea.

During 1982 Albania participated in international fairs in Paris, Izmir, Salonika, Teheran and Bari.

FOREIGN VISITORS

Among visiting delegations during the period under review was that of the National Union of Working People of Tanzania.

FOREIGN VISITS

Among Albanian delegations travelling abroad during the period under review was a delegation of the Labour Youth Union of Albania to the 3rd. Congress of the Communist Youth Union of Denmark (Marxist-Leninist).

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sokrat Plaka, paid an official visit to Turkey.

EDUCATION

In celebration of the 25th. anniversary of the foundation of the University of Tirana, a photo-exhibition on the theme "The University of Tirana: 1957-82" was opened in the Palace of Culture, Tirana, in November.

HEALTH

Since 1970 the infant mortality rate has been reduced by 50%, and the success of mother-and-child centres is illustrated by the fact that some districts have recorded no instances of infant mortality for several years.

Life expectancy in Albania is now among the highest in the world.

CULTURE

In November the new Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg Museum was inaugurated in Kruja. This fortress has been painstakingly reconstructed over several years. The museum was officially opened by Ramiz Alia, and the main speech was delivered by Professor Aleks Buda, President of the Academy of Sciences.

In November the People's Theatre in Tirana staged the premiere of "The Road of the Flag", on the theme of the National Renaissance.

In the same month the Opera and Ballet Theatre in Tirana presented the premiere of a new ballet, "Shota and Azem Galica".

In December the Festival of Elaborated Folk Song was held in the Opera and Ballet Theatre, Tirana. The first prize was awarded to a song by Aleksandër Peçi.

In the same month the 21st. Radio-Television Song Festival was held in Tirana. First prize was awarded to the song "A Cradlein the Barricades" by Avni Mula and Hysni Milloshi.

Also in December the programme for cultural and scientific exchanges for 1983-4 was signed with France, and the book "The Titoites" by Enver Hoxha was published.

Over 75 new titles for children came off the press in 1982, including books by Albanian authors and translations of children's books from other languages.

During 1982 more than 120 new titles were published altogether. For 1983 more than 150 new books are planned.

SPORT

In November the finals of the National Classical Wrestling Championships took place in Shkodra. The winners were the Tomori club of Berat.

In December an international women's volleyball match was played between Dinamo of Tirana and Eczacibasi of Turkey. Dinamo won 3:0.

LATE NEWS

On April 1st., 1983 the prices of 135 types of drugs and medicines, both home produced and imported, were reduced by amounts varying between 20 and 50%.

BOOK REVIEWS

"PORTRAIT OF ALBANIA"; Tirana; 1982 (533 pages)

Reviewed by Steve Day

Have you ever been talking about Albania with friends and been asked questions you could not answer? If so, this is the book you need. In its five hundred pages are assembled facts on history and geography, on the social and economic system, on education, health and culture; on Albania's foreign policy. Not so much a book to read from cover to cover as one to dip into according to your particular interests (with the aid of a well-laid-out plan of contents at the back), this is almost an encyclopaedia of Albania.

For example, "What are the hours of work in Albania?" In Part Four, Chapter Three we find the relevant section:

"Labour legislation fixes the working day at 8 hours, and 7 hours without reduction in pay for night shift workers; for juvenile workers and certain categories of workers employed underground or in particularly arduous work harmful to health, as well as those engaged in certain kinds of intellectual work (education, the public health service, etc.) the working day is reduced to 5 hours without reduction in pay".

It goes on to outline special arrangements for workers

engaged in study, nursing mothers, etc.

"Do they have pensions in Albania?". Part Four, Chapter Four tells us about retirement pensions, invalidity pensions, family pensions, and pensions for meritorious service. This last includes "all those who have taken part in the movement of the National Renaissance, in the people's movements and the national liberation movement or in anti-fascist movements abroad". We learn in this section the retirement age for different categories: for the majority it is 60 for men and 55 for women. The pension is fixed at 70% of the average monthly pay of the insured person.

These, then, are just two examples of how this book provides invaluable assistance to the reader in answering the questions he may be asked, or which he may want to know himself.

Of course, historians, geographers, sociologists, teachers, doctors, etc. can also read the complete sections on their specialities for a clear and up-to-date outline of how each speciality relates to Albania. Of particular interest in this context is the chapter "Features of a New Ethic", on philosophy. Being concerned with socialist humanism, this chapter is based on the notion that philosophy is the concern of everyone. It shows, with examples, how the new society in Albania is overcoming old ideas of selfishness based on feudal and bourgeois outlooks and replacing it with the principle that "the well-being of each depends on the well-being of all".

This is a book full of interest for the reader - well set out and easy to use for reference purposes. All this and pictures too! Highly recommended.

("PORTRAIT OF ALBANIA" is obtainable from the Albanian Society at £5. 50, including postage)

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"ALBANIA : A TRAVEL GUIDE"; Cambridge; 1983
(166 pages)

By Philip Ward

Reviewed by Tom Blake

Philip Ward is the author of travel books on countries

as far apart as Libya and Thailand. His latest guide, on Albania, is written in a very readable style, is well illustrated and contains much information. Being based, the writer tells us, on a two-week tour of Albania (along with, obviously, considerable reading), it is understandable, but unfortunate, that so much of this information is incorrect. For example, Fan Noli's administration did not last, as Mr. Ward states, for four years; Zogu was not "regent" under the Republic; Midhat Frashëri, far from being "a great Albanian patriot", boycotted the 1912 independence movement and became a leading quisling under the occupation of 1939-44; such writers as Sophocles and Goethe are not proscribed in contemporary Albania; the Balli Kombëtar was not a "nationalist" organisation which "opposed the Italians (and) the Germans" but one which, as the official reports of British and American agents confirm beyond any doubt, collaborated with the occupying forces to fight the National Liberation Army; the 1945 elections were not confined to candidates of the Democratic Front; Stalin did not "overlook" Albania until 1944, but raised the question of Albania's post-war independence with Eden as early as 1941; study abroad is not confined to "medical and surgical specialists"; and so on, and so on.

Mr. Ward gives us a guide to Albanian phrases, but here too he is frequently in error, writing "Vaut të Dejës" for "Vai i Dejës", "atë" for "ai" (he), "xhamië" for "xhamia" (the mosque), "shqipë" for "shqiponje" (eagle), "çestje" for "çeshtje" (subject), etc., and translating "shqiptarja" (the Albanian woman) as "Albania". and "Parti Enver" as "Enver's Party".

However, for those who like a guide book to be filled with the personal opinions of the author rather than accurate information, "Albania : A Travel Book" will, no doubt, appeal. He informs us in his preface that, unique among human beings, he visited Albania with "no preconceptions". In fact, Mr. Ward's prejudices spill over on to almost every page, and they are views so stereotyped as to be virtually a caricature of those of what market researchers refer to as "the average 'Guardian' reader". Predictably, therefore, Mr Ward liked Albanian food and the architecture of Gjirokastra, but disliked intensely socialist realist art; the "platitudes" of the Albanian press are contrasted with the

"responsibly-balanced journalism" of "The Times"; the absence of private cars "sent a shiver" down his spine and by the end of his stay he was "crazy for traffic"; he attributes the relative absence of crime, not to social reasons, but to there being "a vigilant informer in every house" and to his belief that the population is "held in check by fear of the authorities"; he sees working class power as in operation, not in Albania but in Britain!

When I was last in Tirana I was amused by the efforts of a policeman to regulate, with much whistle-blowing, the passage across the street of pedestrians, most of whom ignored him - except for the occasional friend who insisted on kissing him on both cheeks and enquiring after his family; our guide remarked, somewhat apologetically: "I am afraid we are a very undisciplined people". Yet Mr. Ward, who visited the country with "no preconceptions", found the whole Albanian people, with the possible exception of writer Ismail Kadare, to be "servile" and writes that "nobody laughs" in Albania!

Very occasionally Mr. Ward admits to bewilderment when his observations conflict with his very present preconceptions: he was, for example, mystified to find that most families could afford a television set".

Despite the fact that a detailed investigation by a Society delegation in 1982 found that the standard of living of the lowest-paid stratum of the Albanian working people was now higher than that of the lowest-paid stratum of the British working people in employment - a fact which an objective observer might consider a remarkable achievement, since forty years ago Albania was by far the most backward country in Europe - Mr. Ward places the material standard of living in Albania (along with its educational system) as "on the debit side".

There are one or two passages of unconscious humour: Mr. Ward rejoices that he lives "in a free country", but when asked some "embarrassing" questions by Xhevat Lloshi concerning conditions in Britain, he

". . . could not answer them because to reply would call in question our tolerant, complex, plural society".

In comparing earlier Mr. Ward's preconceptions about Albania with those of "the average 'Guardian' reader" I was, perhaps, being unfair to the latter, who would be unlikely to believe that "Albania's interpretation of Marxism-Leninism" was, in 1982, "according to Mao". Nevertheless Mr. Ward's impressions of Albania will, no doubt, obtain his book a more favourable review in "The Guardian" than I am able to give it, for he concludes that, by abolishing private profit and rejecting foreign loans

"Albania . . is making no contribution to the future of the world, and is in danger of becoming a curiosity - a backwater - a museum of past agricultural and industrial techniques"

("ALBANIA : A TRAVEL GUIDE" is obtainable from The Oleander Press, 17, Stansgate Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2QZ, at £12. 50 (hardback) and £5. 95 (softback))

THE HAND OF LENIN

A poem by Muharrem Jakupi

Amid the faded flags
that decorate Red Square,
from a gigantic mural
the hand of Lenin stretches out.

It seems to me this hand
is ordering now
a new assault upon the Kremlin



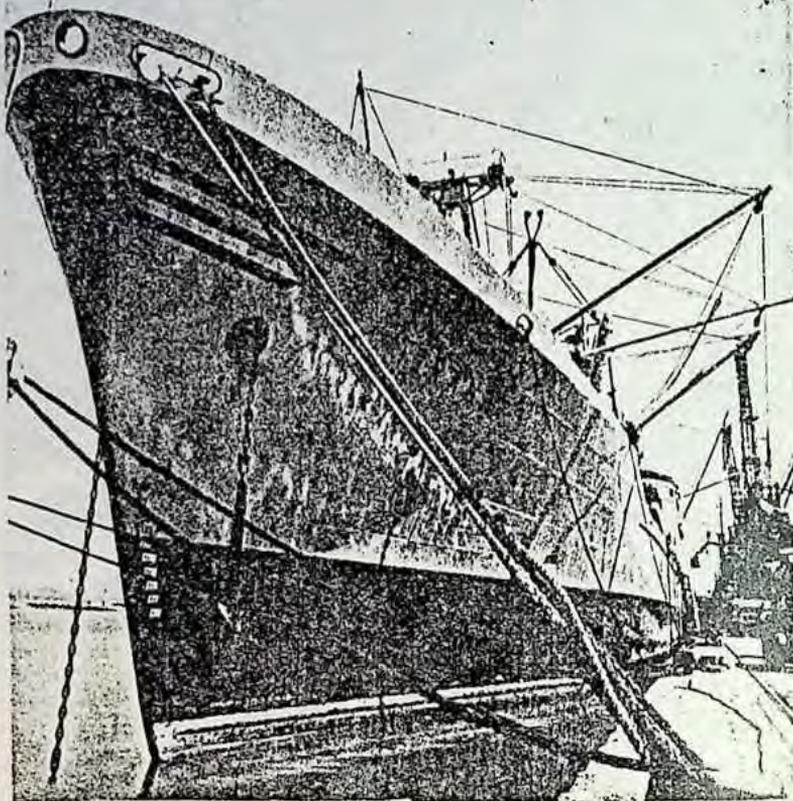
"The Village of Dardha" - landscape by Zamir Mati

ADVANCE NOTICE :

Saturday, September 24th. at 2. 30 p.m.
in the ROXIE CINEMA, Wardour Street, London W1
British Premiere of the Albanian feature film

"POPPIES ON THE WALLS"

Friday 5.35 pm. Bill W. Green Tucks Stn



The Albanian ocean-going cargo ship "Tirana"

The illustration on the front cover is of the photograph "The Joy of Work" by Simon Xhillari

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