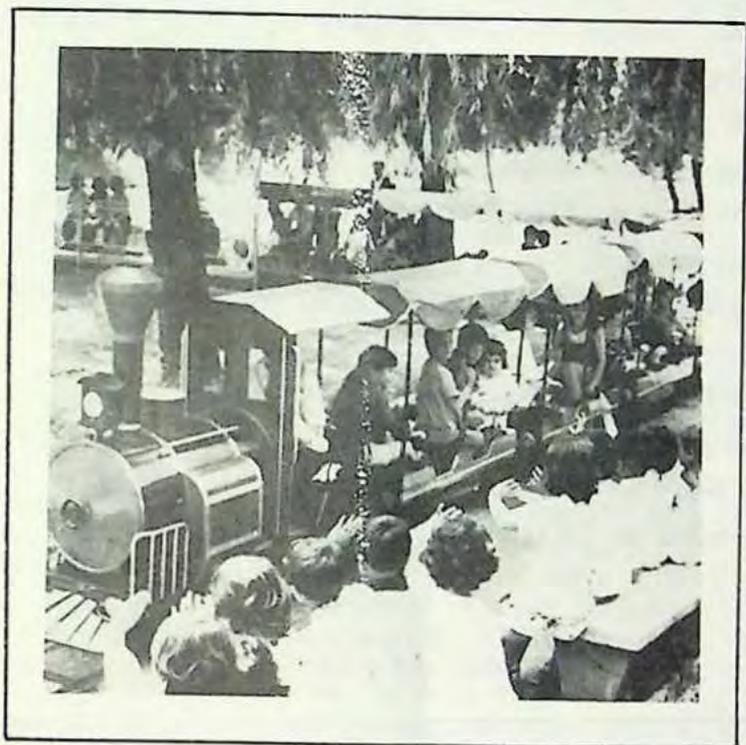


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HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALBANIA

by Bill Bland

(A lecture given by the Secretary of the Albanian Society in St. John's College, Oxford in June 1986 at the invitation of the Oxford Group of Amnesty International)

I think it fair to say that the impression conveyed by Amnesty International reports on Albania is that the country is a vast prison camp.

But if one goes to Albania, one finds a radically different picture. One finds a country where malarial marshes have been drained and transformed into fertile land, where barren hills have been transformed into terraces of citrus fruits. One finds a country where railways, power stations and modern industrial complexes are being built, so that industrial production is today 164 times the level of 1938.

Nor does the lion's share of this rapidly growing wealth go to some privileged class or bureaucratic élite. For Albania is unique in many respects - not least in the fact that differential incomes are limited by law to a maximum of 2:1 - a figure which may be compared with current figures in Britain of 6,000:1 - making it the most equalitarian society in the world. There is no unemployment, and the right to work and to choose one's occupation is written into the Constitution and applied in practice. There is no inflation - the prices of consumer goods consistently fall as production rises - and the citizen pays no rates or taxes. There is a free and non-contributory health service, and pensions - fixed at 70% of retiring pay - are also non-contributory and are payable as young as 50 in certain occupations considered especially arduous. More than 80% of the population live in dwellings built since Liberation in 1944, and rents are fixed at approximately 3% of a single wage. As a result of these achievements, average expectation of life has been

raised from 38 years in 1938 to 70 today. And in the field of culture, there can be few countries with a population of only three million which support seven symphony orchestras.

Clearly, this is not a society - as Amnesty International reports appear to suggest - which cares little for humanity.

True, Albanians regard with great scepticism much of the talk about "human rights" which emanates from Western politicians. As an Albanian worker remarked to me on my last visit: "When Reagan and Thatcher prattle about 'human rights', it usually means they are about to drop bombs on women and children somewhere!" Indeed, Peter Benenson, the founding father of Amnesty International, recently expressed regret in The Observer that the expression "human rights" had become "a weapon in the cold war".

I cannot, of course, speak for the Albanian government or the Albanian people. But I have no doubt that most Albanians recognise the value of much of the work carried out by Amnesty International in exposing what they accept as true violations of human rights in various countries of the world. At the same time, they could, I feel, be forgiven if they have the impression that the members of Amnesty International are largely comfortably-off intellectuals who see human rights mainly in terms of freedom of expression. "What human rights", an Albanian could ask, "does an unemployed black teenager living in a slum ghetto in Liverpool, have?" Yet one finds no mention of such things in Amnesty International reports.

It is also, in my view, very understandable that Albanians should feel that the leadership of Amnesty International, if not itself politically prejudiced, is so concerned to appear politically "neutral" that it feels compelled to present the left-wing régime in Albania, irrespective of facts, in the same unfavourable terms as it correctly portrays right-wing

repressive dictatorships such as those of Chile and South Africa.

Indeed, Albanians could justifiably cite many examples of this lack of objectivity. For example, Amnesty International makes much of the fact that the death penalty is retained in Albania as a non-obligatory "temporary and extraordinary" penal measure for certain crimes considered exceptionally socially dangerous. Amnesty International is, of course, entitled to hold the view that the death penalty is unjustified in all circumstances. Yet if one turns to the British section of Amnesty International's last annual report, one finds no mention of the fact that the death penalty is retained in Britain for certain offences, and is even retained for murder in part of the United Kingdom.

Again, Albanians could point out that Amnesty International claims to base its principles on the United Nations international covenants on human rights. Article 6 of the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights lays down the right to work as one of the fundamental human rights. Yet the British section of Amnesty International's 1985 report makes no mention of the fact that this right is denied to some four million British citizens.

"Democracy"

If you ask an Albanian constitutional lawyer whether he would not prefer to live under "democracy" such as we have in Britain, he could well raise an eyebrow and ask: "What democracy?"

"Your head of state", he might say, "is a hereditary monarch; ours is an elected President. Your elected chamber is constrained by a non-elected upper house, which can hold up legislation; we have a single, directly-elected chamber, the People's Assembly. Your hereditary monarch has the constitutional power to veto

legislation; our elected President does not. Your Prime Minister is appointed by the monarch, and selects his or her Ministers; all our Ministers are elected by the People's Assembly. Your MPs can be elected on a minority vote; our deputies cannot. Your electors have no power to choose who shall be their candidate, only to vote for a party nominee; our electors choose their candidate by a democratic pre-election process. Your elected MPs can cross the floor of the House to another party the day after the election, and there is nothing the electors can do about it for five years; our electors can recall their deputy by a simple petition if he or she fails to live up to expectations. Your judges are appointed from above; ours are directly elected. Your judges can make law; in Albania we have no such thing as case law . . ."

Albanians are normally very polite to questioning visitors, but our Albanian lawyer might well ask: "What gives you the right to come here and lecture us on democracy?"

If you go on to say: "But at least our electors can choose between several parties", our Albanian lawyer might well reply "Your leading jurist Walter Bagehot, like the American Abbot Lowell, has pointed out that parliamentary pluralism can function only when all the parties capable of forming a government are agreed on fundamental social principles. Here in Albania we have transformed society from the roots, abolishing all profit-making private enterprise and establishing a fully-planned socialist economy, geared to maximising the welfare of the people. You could not have pluralist parliamentarism, with its "loyal opposition", in such circumstances and having brought about a revolutionary change which has transformed society to their great advantage, our people are not prepared to allow a counter-revolutionary party to operate. Our Party of Labour is not a political party in your sense. It is an organisation of those who have proved themselves to be the most sincere, the most active, the most dedicated socialists. Building

socialism cannot be a spontaneous process; it requires scientific leadership. Our party has no legislative power; it operates as an organisation of leadership which can function only by persuasion. The confidence of our working people in this leadership rests on its achievements in their interests. But, of course, candidates for office may or may not be members of the Party. Democracy means "government by the common people", and this is what we assuredly have in Albania. We don't measure democracy by the number of parties that exist".

"Freedom of Expression"

And if you say: "But in Albania anti-socialist propaganda is illegal; in Britain we have complete freedom of expression", our Albanian lawyer might well say: "You mean, provided you don't infringe the Trades Description Act; the Official Secrets Act; the Race Relations Act; the laws on blasphemy, obscenity, sedition, contempt of court, contempt of parliament and insulting words and behaviour; or a court injunction".

And he may go on to point out that restrictions on freedom of expression are endorsed by the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 5 of which states:

"Nothing in the present Covenant may be interpreted as implying for any . . . group of person any right to engage in any activity . . . aimed at the destruction of any of the rights or freedoms recognised herein".

But Article 6, of the Covenant, as has been said, recognises the right to work as a fundamental human right, and Albanians agree. And so our Albanian lawyer will argue that to campaign for the restoration of capitalism, for the return of employers with the right to hire and fire workers according to the demands of the profit motive is to campaign, in fact, against the right of all to work, so that the Albanian restriction

on anti-socialist political activity is in defence of human rights.

It should be noted that this restriction in no way means restriction of criticism of official actions. Every town and village has its public notice-board on which citizens may - and do - put up complaints, which must be officially replied to within a few days.

"Freedom of Religion"

Amnesty International is critical of the fact that religious propaganda and activity are prohibited by law in Albania. But Article 18 of the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights lays down that freedom of religion may be subject to

" . . such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect . . morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others".

And so our Albanian lawyer may quote to you the Christian Beatitudes:

"Blessed are the meek. . . .
Blessed are the poor in spirit".

"This is the morality", he will argue, "not of free people, but of slaves - which is no doubt why Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the slave-owning Roman Empire".

And, since Islam was formerly the dominant religion in Albania, he may quote to you the Koran:

"Men are the managers of the affairs of women. Righteous women are therefore obedient. And those you fear may be rebellious: banish them to their couches and beat them".

"So", our Albanian lawyer may insist, "to permit such teachings under the pretence that they are divinely inspired, would be in breach of morality and of the human rights of half the population. Our restrictions on religion are therefore in defence of human rights".

It may be mentioned, however, that no lay person has ever been prosecuted under the law banning religious propaganda.

Exit Visas

Amnesty International is also concerned at the fact that, to travel abroad, an Albanian citizen must obtain an exit visa. This is not because the Albanian authorities believe that masses of Albanians would like to come and live in the "West". Emigration in search of work was, in fact, one of the major curses of pre-war Albania. Hundreds of ordinary Albanians do go abroad each year as members of amateur cultural groups, while the health service provides free treatment abroad for the decreasing number of cases where this cannot yet be provided within the country. And I must say that most Albanians I have met working abroad are only too nostalgic for their motherland.

But freedom to go abroad is empty unless it carries with it the right to foreign currency. This is limited, and its use - for example, for buying imports to further Albania's vast programme of economic development - forms part of the state plan. Thus foreign currency is allocated according to national need, and holidays abroad are not regarded as a first priority in the state plan. I must say, however, that I have never met an Albanian who felt deprived of his human rights by the fact that he was compelled to spend his holidays, subsidised by his trade union, in the sun of the Albanian Riviera instead of wandering round Lowestoft in the rain trying to find a hotel receptionist who spoke Albanian. Of course, if our government could be persuaded to return to Albania her looted gold reserve, which has lain in the vaults of



Hotel at Pogradec on Lake Ohër

This is a very popular resort in summer, being much cooler than the coast. Enver Hoxha passed many holidays here. Trade unions run subsidised holiday hotels here for their members, as they do throughout Albania. Children usually spend their summer holidays in Pioneer Camps, which are also heavily subsidised and are to be found along the coast and in the mountains.

the Bank of England for the last forty years, this would ease the country's foreign exchange problems to some extent.

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So far I have dealt with aspects of Amnesty International reports which are factual, but on the interpretation of which the Albanian authorities - and most Albanian citizens - would disagree. I want to conclude by dealing with aspects which Albanians would agree were violations of human rights, but which they emphatically deny take place in Albania.

Justice

Firstly, Amnesty International reports charge that defendants in criminal cases in Albania do not receive a fair trial.

Far from being a police state, however, one sees very few police in Albania, there are no moves to arm them with water cannon and CS gas, and relations between the police and the public are very different to those that exist in Britain, where an increasing section of the population has come to regard them as formed predominantly of racist thugs who constitute the employers' private army.

Indeed, Albania is unique in that its police have no power of arrest, nor do they investigate alleged crimes. The amount of crime is very small indeed, and the Albanian authorities attribute this to the elimination of many of the social causes of crime which exist in other countries.

An apparent crime is investigated by an investigator of the Ministry of Internal Affairs - the nearest equivalent to which is, perhaps, a French examining magistrate. His task is to ascertain if a crime has been committed and, if so, whether the evidence establishes beyond doubt that it has been committed by a

certain person. If the answer to either of these questions is "no", the case is halted. If the answer to both is "yes", then the investigator may charge the person concerned and send the case to court for trial. The number of criminal cases going to court averages just over 100 a year, and there is nothing sinister in the fact that most defendants are found guilty. The investigator's instructions are that if there is the slightest doubt concerning the guilt of a person, the case shall be halted before going to court. And it must be noted that a mere technical breach of the penal code is not a crime; to become so, the social harmfulness of the act committed must be established.

An Albanian court consists of one professional judge, and two so-called assistant judges drawn from a panel of ordinary citizens. All decisions are by majority vote, so that the two assistant judges may - and sometimes do - outvote the professional judge.

All trials are held in public, except where state secrets or intimate sexual matters are involved. Every defendant is entitled to have an adviser to sit with him, but it is only obligatory in certain cases (for example, where the defendant is under 18 years of age) for this to be a lawyer. In other cases, this is at the discretion of the court. In all cases where a defence lawyer acts, no legal fees are payable by the defendant.

The principal difference between procedure in British and Albanian criminal courts, apart from the greater informality of the latter, lies in the fact that Albanian courts reject the adversarial system. The official view is that it is the task of the court to ascertain the truth, and that it is as important for no person guilty of a crime to escape conviction as for no innocent person to be convicted. Indeed, it is held that the conviction and reeducation of a criminal is not merely in the interests of society, but in the interests of the criminal himself. They thus reject the adversarial system as not the best way of ascertaining

the truth, since under this system a guilty person may employ - if he has the money - a brilliant barrister to try to convince the court, falsely, of his client's innocence.

The Albanian authorities therefore maintain that their system of justice is incomparably fairer and more just than the adversarial system, and can indeed point to numerous examples of admitted miscarriages of justice in other countries which have resulted from the latter system.

The Number of Political Prisoners

Secondly, in its 1984 report on Albania, Amnesty International gives a vague estimate, based on the statements of political émigrés, of "several thousand" persons serving sentences of deprivation of liberty for political crimes.

When I visited Amnesty International headquarters by invitation in early 1983, I discussed with the young woman in charge of Albanian affairs the official figures of political detainees issued by the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha in November 1982, in response to the propaganda then being circulated by the government of Greece - figures which worked out to a total of just over 200. Yet when the report on Albania was published more than a year later it contained the statement on page 36 that there was "a lack of any official figures" on the number of political detainees. This statement was not only untrue, but was known by the leadership of Amnesty International to be untrue more than a year before the report was published.

Torture

Thirdly, and finally, I come to the allegations of torture and ill-treatment of detainees which make up a large part of the 1984 report on Albania.

From discussions with Albanians concerned with the

penal system at levels up to that of judge of the Supreme Court, and from translating the materials used in their training, I am completely satisfied that the whole aim of the Albanian penal system is to transform anti-social offenders into useful members of society. It is clear that the slightest affront to the dignity of a prisoner - let alone his ill-treatment - runs directly counter to this aim, and that is why it is subject to the most severe penalties.

Albanian detainees have the right not only to family visits, but to address letters of complaint to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which must investigate such complaints immediately. The great majority of political detainees are confined in work camps - there are only two small prisons in the country - and they enjoy regular conjugal visits in order that family life may be disrupted as little as possible. Furthermore, a judge who has sentenced a defendant to deprivation of liberty must visit his "patient" (the official term) regularly to ascertain his progress, and may remit the rest of the detainee's sentence when he considers this to be no longer necessary. It is not without interest that, of the nine "case histories" published in the Amnesty International report on Albania, seven narrators state that they were released prior to the expiry of their sentences.

Ethical education - designed to inculcate the attitude that the individual should gain his happiness by working for the happiness of his fellow human beings - is a feature of Albanian society, from the nursery school onward. In the case of a criminal, it is clear that normal ethical education has failed and the purpose of a penal measure such as deprivation of liberty is to create the most effective special conditions in which ethical reeducation may be successful.

In countries where a privileged minority rule over and exploit the majority, their rule cannot be defended by reason. Consequently terror - the instillation of

fear - is an essential part of the penal system of such a society, because "re-education" of the offender to the social justice of the society is logically impossible. But the Albanian authorities maintain that socialist society is so inherently just that it is relatively easy in most cases to reeducate the offender to a true ethical outlook.

The allegations of the "ill-treatment" of prisoners published in the report come from persons claiming to be ex-prisoners, and the report admits (on page 4) that their statements

". . undoubtedly sometimes contain inaccuracies and may be suspected of bias".

It must be remembered that, to the extent that the narrators are genuine émigrés from Albania - and in some cases their stories cast doubt even on this - they arrive abroad in most cases without funds. Many of the allegations made in the Amnesty International report have already been published in the press, which will generally pay well for any "horror story" about Albania, true or false.

Such allegations become evidence only if the author is prepared to submit himself to cross-examination with the aim of testing his truthfulness. The Albanian Society requested Amnesty International for facilities for an objective expert to interview its witnesses with this aim, but the request was refused.

The young woman in charge of Albanian affairs made it clear to me that she did not understand the Albanian language, and was dependent upon émigrés - almost without exception politically hostile to the post-war socialist régime - for most of her information about Albania. Indeed, relations with these émigrés were so close that Amnesty International admitted to me in a letter dated 11 June 1982 that "special permission" had been granted to Anton Logoreci to have access to a report of one émigré which was too confidential for

anyone else to be allowed to see. Logoreci, who had been private secretary to Sir Jocelyn Percy, the British officer in charge of Zog's notoriously repressive gendarmerie, was also permitted to use this otherwise secret report in a book which constituted a vitriolic political diatribe against the People's Socialist Republic of Albania.

When the Greek Alternate Minister for Foreign Affairs, Karolos Papoulias, visited Albania in December 1984 - the first visit by a Greek Minister since World War II - he was asked at a press conference on his return how it was that his favourable account of the country contrasted so markedly with the picture drawn by Amnesty International. He replied:

"Amnesty International has to rely on the accounts of émigrés, which are not always accurate".

Indeed, we may judge the accuracy of Amnesty International's sources of information of Albania merely by looking at the first two pages of its 1984 report. Anyone with an elementary knowledge of the country would know that Albania was not - as is said - annexed by Italy during World War II, that Albania did not break off relations with the Soviet Union in 1961, that Albania did not sever economic links with China in 1978; that political links with China have not been severed.

Conclusion

Amnesty International has, of course, every right to express its opinions about the facts of Albanian life - whether one agrees with those opinions or not. What is, in my view, impermissible for a responsible organisation is to present secret - and mostly anonymous - allegations from politically hostile sources as though they were irrefutable fact. This lowers Amnesty International to the level of The Sun. Not merely the Albanian authorities, but most Albanians, regard, in

particular, the allegations of torture as deeply insulting.

It may be a matter of regret to the leadership of Amnesty International that the Albanians tried and shot their war criminals instead of electing them President.

But I can assure this meeting that, in deciding to deprive themselves of such "Western" amenities as a hereditary monarch and a House of Lords; of bishops, pimps, stockbrokers and porn-shops; of benevolent employers like Rupert Murdoch and films like Rambo; of nuclear weapons and foreign bases; of inflation, unemployment and taxes . . . the overwhelming majority of the Albanian people are convinced that they are not thereby depriving themselves of human rights but, on the contrary, are raising human rights to the most advanced level in the world today.

DELEGATION

A delegation from the Albanian Society has been invited to visit Albania in July as guests of the Albanian Committee For Cultural and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries.

The delegation will be pleased to seek answers to any specialised enquiries from members.

POEM: "CAIN"

A poem by Pjetër Budi

(Pjetër Budi was born in a village in Mat, in central Albania in 1566. After completing his studies at the Theological College in Loreto, he served as priest in various communities, translating and writing himself many poems - the earliest known verse in the Geg dialect - and some religious works. He played a leading role in working for a general uprising against Ottoman rule. In 1621 he was made a bishop, but was drowned in the river Drin under suspicious circumstances two years later)

How could you dare, you blackguard,
to commit such a crime
that the earth has buried you for ever
in darkness?

May you fail
in all you do!

May the grain in your fields
yield no harvest!

For your gaping mouth
drank the blood of your brother,
killed by your hand
in the face of the universe.

VIVALDI'S OPERA "SKANDERBEG"

by Ramadan Sokoli

A distinguished place in the panorama of European music in the 18th century was held by Antonio Vivaldi. Among his many-sided activities (he was composer, conductor, brilliant violinist, teacher, opera director, etc.) he was the composer of an opera entitled "Skanderbeg". And this was certainly not accidental. The fame of the Albanians led by Skanderbeg had crossed the boundaries of time and space: the heroic resistance of our people against the Ottoman invasion inspired many foreign authors. From the 15th century right up to our own days the figure of Skanderbeg as great strategist of the victorious struggles in defence of the independence of the Motherland was made the protagonist of a host of literary works in many European languages; similarly, he was carved in marble, cast in bronze, drawn and painted in many pictures which are found in galleries throughout the world. In music, too, the heroic deeds



Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

of this brave Albanian warrior left echoes. It suffices to recall that in the first half of the 18th century Skanderbeg became the source of inspiration for two Italian operas and a French opera. The first opera about our national hero was composed by Antonio Vivaldi 260 years ago.

Antonio Vivaldi was born in Venice on 4 March 1678. He received his first music lessons from his father. In 1693 he embraced a church career, but after 10 years he renounced the priesthood and was appointed teacher at the Venice Conservatory, where he functioned also as conductor of the choir. In 1713 Antonio Vivaldi began tours of Italy and beyond, directing performances of his own works. Work in the theatre gave him many opportunities to demonstrate his creative ability, bringing him in contact with the public, who demanded ever new productions. It was precisely because of the insistent demands of the public that the performance of some of his works went into rehearsal before the music had been finished. The composer often handed in an opera scene by scene, usually copying out the parts in the theatre itself under the pressure of the director, the librettist, the scenic artist and the singers, and amidst the turmoil of the instrumentalists, the scene-shifters, etc. It was chiefly the poverty and the demands of life which obliged some composers to work in this feverish, unsettling way. It was more or less under these conditions that Antonio Vivaldi composed 47 operas, 2 oratorios, 25 cantatas, 456 concertos (!), 23 symphonies, 75 sonatas, 43 arias, some pieces for organ and perhaps as many other works which remain undiscovered. Some of these works were published, collected in many volumes, but there remain, for the time being, many manuscripts preserved in the archives of many countries of the world (especially in the National Library in Turin). Among these manuscripts are some pieces of the score of the opera "Skanderbeg", about which we shall speak below.

All these works testify that Vivaldi composed continuously and easily, checking the scores in haste.

But in spite of his prolific activity, he died poor and alone (Vienna, 26 August 1741). Later even his grave disappeared off the face of the earth. For a long time it was as if his name was forgotten, since he is not mentioned by musicologists until a discovery by Johann Sebastian Bach reawakened the curiosity of music-lovers in the creativity of this composer. At any rate, Vivaldi's fame, in spite of its ebb and flow, was neither fragile nor temporary. In our time this distinguished personality of the 18th century is valued as a precursor of genius who opened and broadened the paths of concerto and symphonic music, perfecting their forms.

The opera "Skanderbeg" was composed by Vivaldi in the most productive period of his creativity.

The author of the libretto of this opera, Antonio Salvi, was a doctor, but at the same time was occupied with literature and painting. Since he had written many poems, sonnets, lyrics, various verses for cantatas, serenades, etc., he had become well-known, especially in the theatre. Antonio Salvi wrote altogether 19 plays, apart from the libretto of the opera "Skanderbeg". The content of this latter work was based on the work by Sagreda entitled "Historical Memoirs of the Ottoman Monarchs", as well as on the work by P. Dupasset entitled "The Life of Skanderbeg". The content of the drama is, briefly, the story of Gjon Kastrioti, who gave four of his sons (among them the young eight-year-old Gjergj) as hostage to Sultan Murat II. After Gjon's death, Albania was completely occupied by the Ottomans. Then the drama continues with the struggle of the Turks against Hunyadi in the plains of Hungary, closing with the return of Skanderbeg to Kruja.

From the artistic and dramatic viewpoint, this libretto by A. Salvi presents no special value, but it has great importance from another viewpoint: concretely it is one of the first librettos which eschews ancient mythological subjects to embrace an original historical theme. So, in this change of operatic subject, our

national hero was selected as the protagonist from the most distinguished figures of world history.

Vivaldi's opera "Skanderbeg" was constructed in three acts, divided into 38 scenes. The first act has 14 scenes, while the second and third acts each have 12 scenes. The division of the acts into scenes is defined by the entrance and exit of the characters. In the musical dramas of the 18th century, great influence was exerted, in conformity with the principles of Baroque aesthetics, by the current of "bel-canto", which aimed at concerto effects also among the singers, at drawing out more strongly the technical qualities or agilities of their voices, often to the detriment of dramatic development and of the characterisation as a whole. At that time the art and ability of the singers in musical dramas was not evaluated in terms of the truthfulness of the presentation of ideas and characters, but in terms of vocal technical ability. The public waited for the recitatives to end in order to listen attentively to the arias sung by the characters of the opera. So the composers filled the vocal parts with all kinds of difficult subtleties and trills.

The première of the opera "Skanderbeg" took place 260 years ago, on 22 July 1718, on the occasion of the ceremonial reopening of the Teatro della Pergola. Until then performances of such works were given only to restricted circles of the country's aristocracy; but at the première of this opera the people too were allowed to participate, naturally for payment.

According to the contemporary chroniclers of Vivaldi, the presentation of the opera "Skanderbeg" met with little success. Immediately after the performance of the opera, the libretto by A. Salvi (64 pages) was published separately under the title: "Skanderbeg: Musical Drama presented in Florence in the Summer of 1718", etc. On the cover of this publication appears the name of the librettist, and even the name of the scene-painter, but the name of the composer is not mentioned at all. Such a thing could occur only when the composer was very well-known, as was the case with

Vivaldi, who had no need of publicity in the libretto. However, in the National Library in Rome there is preserved an authentic copy of the libretto of the opera "Skanderbeg" (numbered 37-B-31) with a note on the fifth page which states who had composed the music for this drama. Meanwhile the musical score remained in unpublished manuscript form and is now to be found in part in the National Library in Turin, where oblivion covered it for a long time.

Vivaldi's opera "Skanderbeg" is one of the works of art which were inspired by that glorious period of our history which brings us from afar the echo of the heroic deeds of our ancestors.

HOLIDAYS IN ALBANIA

GRAND TOURS are operating a tour of Albania - including visits to Shkodra, Tirana, Kruja, Durrës, Apollonia and Berat. The cost is £425, including return air fare to Titograd. Dates: May 11th-16th, 1987.

Details from: Grand Tours,
9a, Bryanston Square,
London W1H 7FF

Telephone: 01-373-0333

STORY: "A LETTER TO JOHN PAUL II"

by Paulin Selimi

Dear Holy Father,

It is eleven years since an earthquake destroyed our village in Sicily. During this time two previous popes have sent us messages of sympathy, and urged us to show Christian patience. You too, although you come from Poland, have honoured us with your blessing.

We have appealed to the local council and to the government, but the promises conveyed to us by newspapers, radio and television that our houses would be rebuilt have come to nothing. My neighbours have therefore asked me to write to Your Holiness.

Some years ago we were sorry to hear on the radio that there had been in Albania a bad earthquake, which had caused great damage. But we were very surprised to hear, only a few months later, that all the damaged houses had been rebuilt at state expense.

I spoke to our village priest about it. Why, I asked, should this happen in Albania, which he denounces as atheist, while we faithful Catholics are still sleeping in tents eleven years later. "But here the air is free", he said. The air may be free, but food is very expensive; prices are going up all the time, and we are increasingly hungry. And the air, while it may be free, is far from clean, being polluted by harmful fumes from the local chemical works which have caused many children to be born deformed.

The priest tells us that, if we continue to be patient and go to mass regularly, our sufferings will be rewarded with happiness in the life to come, while all Albanians will go to hell. Is the government trying to assist us to attain this heavenly happiness as soon as possible? We should value your theological advice.

NATURE RESERVES IN ALBANIA

by Petrit Kalaja

The protection and increase of fauna and flora has great economic and social importance and is of great aesthetic interest. For this reason, immediately after the Liberation of Albania and continuously since, special attention was devoted to the creation of nature reserves and national parks, as well as to the limitation of hunting by legal provisions.

Bearing in mind that the protection and maximum increase of wild animals and birds requires the protection of their environment and food supplies, 22 nature reserves have been created with a total area of about 38,000 hectares, of which 17,000 hectares are forest. Their creation has the aim of protecting the environment of the existing fauna and flora, while at the same time permitting controlled hunting. In this way the forests, waters and main valleys along the coast, which are the principal centres of hunting in the lowlands, have been protected. This protection is, however, not merely passive: active measures are taken in the nature reserves, on the basis of scientific research: for example, to sow plants for the food of the animals and birds, to maintain the purity of the water, etc.

The first nature reserves were created in 1956, and their number has increased from year to year. One may mention in the coastal zone the reserves at Velipoja (Shkodra district), at Kuna e Vainit (Lezha district), at Fushë-Kuqe (Kruja district), at Rushkull (Durrës district), at Divjak (Lushnja district), at Pishë-Poro (Fier district) and at Pishë-Poro (Vlora district); these are the main centres for water birds and have a great variety of fauna. Thus at Divjak are found two important colonies of pelicans, at Kuna a large colony of herons, etc. In all these reserves,

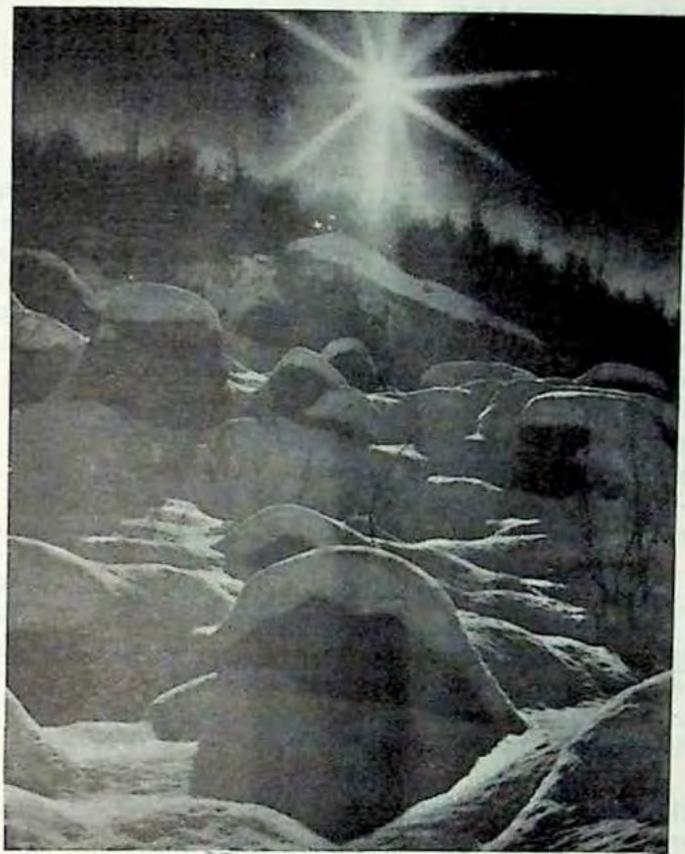
besides various kinds of wild duck and geese, woodcock, quail and turtledoves, one finds pheasant, wild hares, etc. In the reserves of Velipoja and Pishe-Poro (Fier), wild boar are also found.

Other reserves are to be found in the highland zone of our country, as in the districts of Elbasan, Librazhd, Korça, Tirana, Vlora, Skrapar, Berat, Lushnja, Lezha, etc. In them thrive deer, wild boar, wild hare, mountain partridge, etc. - all the principal kinds of game in our country.

In addition to the nature reserves, there are 6 national parks with a total area of 15,000 hectares where, apart from the protection of the flora and rare natural beauty, hunting is prohibited.

Outside the reserves and national parks, hunting is prohibited each year over a quarter of the land area, while the hunting of a species is prohibited in any district if its numbers fall below the optimal number.

In the coastal reserves, centres for the artificial breeding of pheasant and wild duck have been set up, together with a centre for the semi-natural breeding of wild boar. On the other hand, each reserve is a source of game for the population of other areas where hunting is restricted or prohibited.



In the Northern Alps

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor:

The review by Bill Bland (Albanian Life 2/86) of the book The Artful Albanian, edited by Jon Halliday, betrays a singular lack of regard for both context and attribution of contents. Bland accuses Halliday of being 'frightened to draw conclusions' from 'facts presented' thus avoiding the charge of being 'left-wing'. The main fact presented in this review?

"For example, in a note on the former Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, he (Halliday) writes: 'That Mehmet Shehu was a secret agent of the Americans and served them, is also borne out by . . .'"

Pages 375-6 of Halliday's book are clearly entitled "Hoxha's Notes". Indeed, in Note 2 on page 599 of The Titoites (1982) by Enver Hoxha, we find word for word the statement that Bland attributes to Halliday. Furthermore, on the inside front cover of Hoxha's work we read that:

"References and footnotes are of the Institute (of Marxist-Leninist Studies of the CC of the PLA) under the auspices of which this book is published".

Little wonder then that Halliday refused to accept this 'fact' being read as his, Halliday's, endorsement of charges made against Shehu.

When a reviewer's ideological predilections leads him to re-attribute parts of the book he is reviewing and draw spurious conclusions therefrom, one is reminded of Edith Durham's phrase:

"It is not truth that sways men, but what men believe to be true; and that is a very different

thing". ("Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans", p. 278)

P. E. Wynn,
Norwich

The Editorial Committee replies:

We see no reason to disagree with our reviewer's general conclusions with regard to Jon Halliday's editing of Hoxha's diaries under the title of The Artful Albanian - namely, that it exhibits "a political attitude towards recent history little different from that of a journalist on The Sun" and a reluctance "to draw conclusions, even where the facts presented lead to them, which might result in his being accused of being 'left-wing'".

Halliday says, for example:

"He (Hoxha) was not 'Stalinist' in other important respects. He was a cultured and well-read man" (p. 16)

We maintain that to dismiss the political philosophy of "Stalinism" as equivalent to lack of culture and ignorance betrays precisely the political attitude noted by the reviewer.

Among other statements made by Halliday is, in a reference to Hoxha's critique of China, that

"Hoxha has no viable alternative model of socialism to offer" (p. 5)

Since a large part of Hoxha's works is devoted precisely to this question of the alternative to the practices pursued in China and the Soviet Union, it is difficult to conceive of a more outrageously absurd statement by an "expert" on Hoxha. And that the

Albanian model is considerably more than merely "viable" is admitted by Halliday when he says:

"Overall, Albanian economic policy has been a success" (p. 33)

We are indebted to Mr. Wynn for pointing out that the passage on page 376 is a note from The Titoites. However, the sub-title "Hoxha's Notes" on page 375 cannot correctly refer to the passage on page 376, since this latter is a note, as Mr. Wynn himself says, not by Hoxha but by the Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies. The passage concerned is merely headed "Note to p. 331"; it is not placed in quotation marks and no reference is given, and our reviewer was not alone in taking this to be an editorial note by Halliday. That there was not the slightest wish to mislead readers is shown by the fact our reviewer reported Halliday's denial that the view concerned was his, and by the fact that we wrote to him for clarification of the passage concerned, but received no reply. We doubt whether our reviewers's "ideological predilections" were responsible for his assumption that the passage was an editorial note by Halliday. Simplemindedness, perhaps. But we do not accept that a book of this kind should be written in the manner of the cryptic clues in the Guardian crossword! We would therefore add to our reviewer's strictures on the book concerned that of editorial incoherence.

To the Editor:

On the BBC World Service on January 30th, 1987 Geoffrey Stern, of the London School of Economics, declared: 1) that the virtual absence of opposition votes at Albanian elections in recent years is due to the elections not being secret; 2) that since the death of

Enver Hoxha peasants are free to sell the surplus products of their personal plots on the market.

I should be glad to know if these statements are true.

Margaret Halford,
Leeds.

The Editorial Committee Replies:

It is untrue that Albanian elections are not secret. The elector votes in a private room to which officials are not admitted until the closing of voting; he/she votes by means of a ballot paper which, unlike the procedure in Britain, carries no identifying number, so that it is impossible for the authorities to know how a particular elector has voted.

While we would accept that there are still opponents of socialism who vote for the candidates of the Democratic Front, the explanation is not that the elections are not secret, but that the opposition practises what is called here "tactical voting". Firstly, because of the great economic, social and cultural developments brought about by the socialist system - developments which have so radically improved the life of the overwhelming majority of Albanian working people - this opposition is very small; if these opposition elements voted as they feel, the small size of this opposition would be manifest. But if opposition elements vote "yes", this disguises the tiny size of this minority and assists foreign "experts" like Geoffrey Stern to throw doubt on the secrecy of the elections. Secondly, the opposition see no chance of abolishing socialism by democratic means, and place their hopes on infiltrating the system and "reforming" socialism - in fact, undermining it - from within, as has occurred in other formerly socialist countries;

"tactical voting" by these opposition elements is in line with these aims.

It is true that cooperative peasants may sell surplus produce - which forms a tiny proportion of total agricultural production - from their personal plots on local markets, but this has always been perfectly legal. Visitors to Tirana, for example, have long been able to visit the special part of the market set aside for this purpose every Sunday. The only restriction is for the protection of purchasers, namely, that such sales shall be subject to the supervision of inspectors to ensure that the prices charged do not exceed those laid down by the state.

Stern's implication that this practice has been legal only since the death of Enver Hoxha is quite false. It forms part of the wishful thinking of such "experts", who desire to believe that the post-Hoxha leadership is pursuing a policy of "liberalisation" and the restoration of a "market economy".

To the Editor:

I was very interested to hear the speaker at a recent London meeting say that Albanian attitudes towards the Soviet Union had softened, i.e., that she no longer regarded that country as dispensing the same degree of evil around the world as the USA. It has always puzzled me why the equation used to be made.

Regarding the Afghan situation, can it really be, as your speaker indicated, that Albania "approves" of the support given to the rebels by the USA? (It amounts to a great deal more than simple support - the USA are more or less financing the rebel venture).

A few questions: Is it a struggle in the simple

meaning of "desire for freedom"? Could it not be seen as use of simple tribesmen for USA ends? Was the "invasion" of Afghanistan really an invasion? Or did the Kabul government invite the USSR in to avoid a US take-over by its local minions?

The USA has been most successful in propagating the idea of a "Soviet invasion". Ought one not to be a little suspicious of this in view of the fact that the USA has for years been engaged in a global plan to enclose the Soviet Union? Into this a USA-sponsored Afghanistan would fit nicely. We know so little of the background to the Afghanistan affair. Which is to the advantage of the USA.

I cannot conceive that Albania would back the rebels in full knowledge of US involvement. More than any other country she has a true awareness of US machinations.

Mary Cawkell,
London NW5

The Editorial Committee Replies:

The Party of Labour of Albania regards the Soviet Union as no longer a socialist country. Under the "reforms" carried out there, central economic planning has been virtually abolished, and enterprise profit has become the motive and regulator of production; the directors of the enterprises have become a new capitalist class which exploits the Soviet workers. In other words, the Soviet Union has become an imperialist superpower different from the United States only in its superficial political trappings.

Thus in his report to the PLA Congress, Ramiz Alia said:

"Soviet foreign policy is assuming an ever more pronounced aggressive and war-mongering direction, which is expressed in the strengthening of the military machine and the use of force to fulfil its expansionist ambitions. Like the American imperialists, the Soviet social-imperialists, too, have come out openly with an international platform which embodies their ambitions and pretensions to domination and hegemony on a world scale".

(R. Alia: Report to the 9th Congress of the PLA; Tirana; 1986; p. 149-150).

We do not think that this position can correctly be described as a "softening" of the Albanian attitude towards the Soviet Union.

But at any particular time capitalist powers are not equally a threat to world peace. In 1939 Germany and Japan were more aggressive than Britain and France, although all were capitalist states. The quantitative need of a capitalist power for expansion depends on various factors - above all on the relation between its productive power and its potential markets - and it is on this basis, and not on social structure, that the PLA characterises the USA as

" . . .the most aggressive power of our time".
(Ibid.; p. 148)

Albania supports

" . . . the peoples who fight for freedom and independence",
(Ibid.; p. 179)

and it regards the struggle of the Afghan people against the Soviet occupiers of their country as just such a struggle. It understands that the coup which

overthrew the Amin régime in December 1979 was engineered by Soviet agents already in Afghanistan because this refused to accede to Soviet pressure to "invite" Soviet combat troupes into the country, and that Karmal, who was flown into Kabul in a Soviet plane to take Amin's place, headed a mere puppet régime from which the "invitation" for Soviet occupation came.

It is, of course, true that the United States is supporting the people's struggle in Afghanistan, but, in the official Albanian view, this does not alter the fundamental character of the struggle as one for national independence, since correct strategy for a liberation struggle requires the acceptance of aid from any possible source, and it would be foolish for the Afghan liberation fighters to refuse help from the United States, even though the motives for such aid are anti-Soviet rather than genuine sympathy for national liberation. In the same way, the Nicaraguans take advantage of the contradictions between the USA and the USSR to accept aid from the Soviet Union in their struggle against the attempt of the US-financed "contras" to overthrow their democratically-elected government.

In other words, Albania rejects the notion that a struggle for national liberation should not be supported on the grounds that it is aided, for sordid motives, by one or other of the superpowers.

FIVE THOUSAND PAIRS OF SHOES

A poem by Ndoc Gjetja

I see five thousand pairs of shoes,
some with laces, some without,
some with low heels, some with high,
lying in a muddled heap.

It seems that this great pile of shoes,
whose wearers vanished into smoke,
is higher than Mount Everest,
more sacred than Mount Zion.

Silent I stand before this ugly heap,
my heart like lead beneath the evils of the world,
when suddenly the shoes begin to move!
I ask myself: "Is this a dream?"

First one shoe takes a step, and then
a second, then a third;
although I know I do not dream,
five thousand shoes have come alive.

Five thousand shoes begin to march
to find their vanished owners;
one taken in the middle of a smile,
another in the middle of a dance;

one left her little child asleep,
another left his coffee cup undrunk;
one left her mat half shaken,
another in the middle of a kiss . . .

I stare in horror at this spectacle:
five thousand pairs of empty shoes
tramping a meadow wet with tears
beneath the pale light of the moon.

They march and march, left, right, left, right,
their tragic sound deafens the ears;
five thousand pairs of shoes are on the march
to bring to all the memory of slaughtered Jews.

ALBANIAN NEWS

(September - December 1986)

POLITICS

In October:

The "Week of Enver" (related to the 78th anniversary of the birth of Enver Hoxha) was celebrated.

The 16th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania convened to prepare for the 9th Congress of the Party.

In November:

The 9th Congress of the PLA held its proceedings in Tirana (see the special December 1986 issue of Albanian Life).

The 40th anniversary of the creation of the first cooperative farm - the "J. V. Stalin" at Krutja, Lushnja district - was celebrated.

The Plenum of the Central Council of Trade Unions convened in Tirana.

On the 28th and 29th activities were organised to celebrate the 74th anniversary of the proclamation of Albanian independence and the 42th anniversary of Albanian liberation.

In December:

The General Council of the Democratic Front convened in Tirana.

The 107th anniversary of the birth of Josef Stalin was commemorated.

DIPLOMACY

In September:

Diplomatic relations were established between Albania and Spain.

The Albanian Ambassador to Zambia, Mehdi Shaqiri, presented his credentials to President Kenneth Kaunda.

In October:

The Chinese Ambassador, Fan Chenzuo, the Algerian Ambassador Rachid Haddad, and the Yugoslav Ambassador Novak Pribicevic, presented their credentials to President Ramiz Alia.

The Albanian Ambassador to Denmark, Shpëtim Çausi, presented his credentials to Queen Margrethe.

In November:

The Albanian Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Kujtim, Hysenaj, presented his credentials to President Sinan Hasani.

The Egyptian Ambassador, Jusuf Omar Hendi, presented his credentials to President Ramiz Alia.

The Albanian Ambassador to China, Justin Papa-jorgji, presented his credentials to Vice-President Ulanfu.

In December:

The Spanish Ambassador, Luis Cuervo, the Cambodian Ambassador, Meas Sip, the Pakistan Ambassador Mujahid Hussain, presented their credentials to President Ramiz Alia.

The Albanian Ambassador to Algeria, Dhimitër Stamo, presented his credentials to President Bendjedid Chadli.

FOREIGN VISITORS

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

In September:

The Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis.

A Swiss government trade delegation.

The Vietnamese Ensemble of National Songs and Dances.

The Swedish writer Jan Myrdal.

The Turkish writer Qemal Bajram.

In October:

- A group of deputies of the Swedish Parliament.
- A trade union delegation from Argentina.
- Delegations of Marxist-Leninist Parties to attend the proceedings of the 9th Congress of the PLA.

In November:

- A delegation of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- A delegation of the Athens News Agency.
- A delegation of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.
- A government trade delegation from Bulgaria.
- A delegation of the Cambodian National Assembly.

In December:

- Prof. Arthur Karese, Secretary-General of the Balkan Medical Union.
- Luis Echeverria, former President of Mexico.
- Ratko Ivanovich, Chairman of the Executive Council of Titograd, Yugoslavia.
- The Turkish "Juxhelen" string quartet.
- A Turkish government trade delegation

FOREIGN VISITS

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

In September:

- Dritero Agolli, Chairman of the Writers' and Artists' League of Albania, to Denmark for the International Literary Festival.
- A delegation of the Ministry of Agriculture to Greece.
- A trade delegation to Cuba.
- A delegation, led by Foreign Minister Reis Malile, to New York for the 41st session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.
- A delegation of Albanian Radio and Television to Egypt.

A delegation of the Women's Union to Angola for the 6th Congress of the Pan-African Women's Organisation.

In October

A delegation of the Albanian Telegraphic Agency to Sweden.

A trade delegation, led by Minister of Foreign Trade Shana Korbeci, to Romania.

In November:

A delegation of the Enver Hoxha University to Salonika (Greece) for the Rectors' Conference of Balkan Universities.

In December:

A delegation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to France.

A delegation of the PLA, led by Xhemal Dymlyja, to the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

A delegation of the PLA, led by Anastas Kondo, to the 5th Congress of the Communist Party (Reconstructed) of Portugal.

A trade union delegation to Ecuador.

FOREIGN TRADE

In September:

Protocols on trade and payments for 1987 were signed with Cuba and Czechoslovakia.

Freight transport on the Shkodra-Titograd railway line began.

Albania was represented at international fairs in Bari, Gotëborg, Salonika and Vienna.

In October:

A protocol on scientific and technological cooperation was signed with Vietnam.

Albania was represented at the 35th International

Book Fair in Frankfurt.

Protocols on trade for 1987 were signed with Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia.

In November:

A protocol on trade and payments for 1987 was signed with Hungary.

A trade agreement for 1986-90 was signed with Bulgaria.

In December:

Protocols on trade and payments for 1987 were signed with China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Turkey.

CULTURE

In September:

A symposium on "The Protection, Study and Restoration of Monuments of Culture" was held in Tirana.

A monument to Hero of the People Isa Boletini was unveiled in Shkodra.

During archaeological excavations in Durrës, an Illyrian monument dating from the 3rd/2nd century BC was discovered.

In October:

Albanian film festivals were held in Algiers and Puebla (Mexico).

A Mexican film festival was held in Tirana.

A Week of Culture of Albanian Youth was held at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris.

The Palace of Congresses in Tirana was officially opened.

The 2nd National Exhibition of Folk Culture was inaugurated in Shkodra.

In November:

The National Exhibition of Figurative Arts was opened in Tirana.

An Albanian film festival was held in Athens.

An agreement on news exchange was signed with the Athens News Agency.

An agreement on scientific and technological cooperation was signed with the DPR of Korea.

An agreement on scientific cooperation was signed between the Albanian and Austrian Academies of Science.

In December:

Albanian film festivals were organised in Paris, Tunisia and Vietnam.

The 25th Radio and Television Song Festival was held in Tirana.

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Among new books published during the period under review were:

- : "PLA: Main Documents: September 1980
- December 1985;
- : the illustrated album "Enver Hoxha".
- Ramiz Alia: "Speeches: 1985";
- Enver Hoxha: "Works", Volume 51 (May-June 1973);
- Alfred Uçi: "Aesthetics".

SPORT

In September:

At the 44th World Shooting Championship held in the German Democratic Republic, the Albanian team won the bronze medal.

At the Balkan Athletic Championship in Ljubljana (Yugoslavia) the Albanian athlete Ajet Toska won the bronze medal in the hammer throw.

OBITUARY

In November:

The death took place of People's Painter Abdurrahim Buza.

In December:

The death took place of Jaçe Lula, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the People's Army.

LATE NEWS

On February 1st, 1987 elections took place for the deputies to the People's Assembly. It was announced that 100% of the electors had participated in the elections, and 100% had voted for the candidates of the Democratic Front of Albania.

* * * * *

The first session of the 11th legislature of the People's Assembly took place on February 19th - 20th.

The Mandate Commission reported on the composition of the new People's Assembly. 32% of the deputies had been elected for the first time, 48% are under 40 years of age, 43% between 41 and 60 years of age, and 9% over 60 years of age. More than half have been or are workers, while 26% are cooperative peasants. More than 84% have completed higher education.

The principal business of the session was to appoint the new Council of Ministers (government), to discuss and vote upon its programme, to enact laws on the 8th Five Year Plan, and to adopt the plan and budget for 1987.

Ramiz Alia, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania, was re-elected President of the Presidium of the People's Assembly - a post equivalent to that of State President.

Adil Carcani was elected Chairman of the Council of Ministers, a post equivalent to that of Prime Minister.

Rrapi Mino was appointed Attorney-General, Qemal Lama Chairman of the General Investigation Office, Alfred Uçi Chairman of the Committee of Culture and Arts, Ajet Ylli Chairman of the Committee of Science and Technology, and Aranit Çela Chairman of the High Court, with Eleni Selenica and Kleanthi Koçi as Vice-Chairmen. 18 judges of the High Court were also appointed.

The government proposed by Prime Minister Carcani was approved as follows:

2. Besnik Bekteshi, Deputy Prime Minister;
3. Hekuran Isai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs;
4. Manush Myftiu, Deputy Prime Minister;
5. Vangjel Cerrava, Deputy Prime Minister;
6. Reis Malile, Minister of Foreign Affairs;
7. Prokop Murra, Minister of People's Defence;
8. Niko Gjyzari, Chairman of the State Planning Commission;
9. Enver Halili, Chairman of the State Control Commission;
10. Andrea Nako, Minister of Finance;
11. Llambi Gegrikti, Minister of Industry and Mining;
12. Lavdosh Hametaj, Minister of Energy;
13. Vito Kapo, Minister of Light Industry
14. Jovan Bardhi, Minister of the Food Industry;
15. Themie Thomai, Minister of Agriculture;
16. Farudin Hoxha, Minister of Construction;
17. Luan Babameto, Minister of Transport;

18. Osman Murati, Minister of Home Trade;
19. Shane Korbeci, Minister of Foreign Trade;
20. Xhemal Tafaj, Minister of Public Services;
21. Skënder Gjinushi, Minister of Education; and
22. Ahmet Kamberi, Minister of Health.

Prime Minister Adil Çarçani presented the programme of the new government, which was approved, as were the decrees issued by the Presidium since the last session of the Assembly.



A performance of Rossini's "The Barber of Seville" by the Opera and Ballet Theatre

REPORTS OF MEETINGS

On November 29th, 1986 the Albanian Society organised a national meeting at the University of London Union in London to commemorate the 74th anniversary of Albanian Independence and the 42nd anniversary of Albanian Liberation.

A reading was presented of a dramatisation by Bill Bland of the proceedings in the Corfu Channel case before the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 1948-49.

After hearing the evidence and the arguments for both sides, the audience was asked to function as a jury in the case. It decided without dissent that Britain had violated Albanian sovereignty on 22 October 1946 and on 12-13 November 1946, and that the evidence did not justify holding Albania responsible for the laying of the mines concerned in the case. The request was made for one abstention to be recorded.



"Liria", playing at the November meeting in London

The meeting was followed in the evening by a social, with Albanian café music provided by the Liria Ensemble.

The meeting adopted the following resolution for despatch by telegraph to Tirana:

"This meeting, organised in London by the Albanian Society, sends warm greetings to the Albanian people on the occasion of the anniversaries of Independence and Liberation.

It expresses its sincere hope that the progress made by Albania over the past 42 years may continue in peace".

The Secretary received the following telegraphed reply:

"I convey to you my heartfelt thanks for the warm greetings you sent us on the occasion of the November celebrations.

On this occasion we convey to you and to all the members of the Albanian Society our most heartfelt greetings.

Jorge Melica,
Chairman,

Albanian Committee for Cultural and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries".

On Sunday, February 18th, 1987 the London & South-East England Branch of the Albanian Society held a meeting in London at which Laurie Prescott spoke on the recent 9th Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania. A colour video of the 1986 May Day celebrations in Tirana was screened.

NEW BOOKS

	<u>Price (inc postage)</u>
- "The Emancipation of the Albanian Woman (A Symposium)	£2-00
- "Problems of the Formation of the Albanian People, their Language, their Culture (A Symposium)	£4-00
- "The Treasures of Folk Culture" (with colour illustrations)	£2-50
D. Agolli: "Short Stories"	£3-50
R. Alia: Report to 9th Congress of the PLA	£2-50
A. Carçani: Report on the 8th Five Year Plan (1986-1990)	£2.50
I. Lleshi: "Some Aspects of Contradictions in Socialism"	£2-00
L. Omari: "The People's Revolution and the Question of State Power in Albania"	£2-50

NEW MAGAZINES

	Price (inc. postage)
<u>NEW ALBANIA</u> . No. 4, 1986	50p.

The 8th Five Year Plan; Sukth; metallurgists; the colloquium on classical French literature; personal property in Albania; Albanian books abroad; at the beach; Shkodra; Ela Tase, volleyball champion; Albania's shooting champions; the Albanian family today.

<u>ALBANIA TODAY</u> , No. 5, 1986	50p.
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The founding of the Party of Labour; the economic policy of the Party; ideological and cultural emancipation; the juridical sanctioning of the people's

revolution; the creation of socialist property;
Albanian historiography.

ALBANIA TODAY, No. 6, 1986

50p.

This entire issue is devoted to the 9th Congress
of the Party of Labour of Albania.

DICTIONARY OF ALBANIAN LITERATURE

"A Dictionary of Albanian Literature", by Robert Elsie
(192 pages, with bibliography and index) is available
from:

Greenwood Press,
3, Henrietta St.,
London WC2E 8LU

The cost is £31.50 including postage, but 20% deduction
is available if membership of the Albanian Society is
quoted.



The Lenin-Stalin Museum in Tirana

CARTOONS FROM "YLLI"

Cartoons by Kosta Raka:



"Soviet Grain"

"American Petrol"





Harrilla Dhimo: "THE VICTORY OF NOVEMBER 29, 1944"

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ENGLISH TRAVELLERS IN PRE-WAR ALBANIA

EDWARD LEAR

by Bill Bland

EDITH DURHAM

by Steve Day

(illustrated with slides of the travellers' sketches and water-colours, and with extracts from their writings read by actors Philip Madoc and Theresa Streatfeild)