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PERFORM

Performing and Responsive Social Sciences



AUTORITETI PËR INFORMIMIN MBI
DOKUMENTET EISH-SIGURIMIT TË SHTETIT

SIGURIMI DEALING WITH SCIENCE

Kundera Popullit e Shtetit

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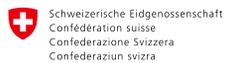
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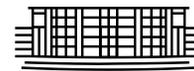
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Contents

Forewords / 06

Sabiha Kasimati / 10

Eqrem Çabej / 18

Gjovalin Gjadri / 26

Arshi Pipa / 32

Aleks Buda / 38

Kolë Kamsi / 46

Petraç Qafoku / 52

Petraç Pepo / 58

Gjergj Kokoshi / 64

FOREWORD

A culture of remembrance is the result of complex interaction between many stakeholders, debates and traditions. Both for individuals and groups, remembrance forms the respective basis for self-reassurance and for action that is directed towards the future. The Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel has pointed out how important it is to combine dealing with the past with the creation of a democratic and peaceful future: "It is wrong to speak of the past if you do not act in the future."

Public debates and interactions require narratives that are based on historical analysis and evidence. All too often such public discourses are hijacked for particular political purposes by feeding them with highly biased information.

The Albanian Authority on Access to Information on the former State Security Service had requested PERFORM – Performing and Responsible Social Sciences, a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation to provide support for research on state security files. The plan was to focus on a particular societal group, identify around 10 individuals, and document and evaluate the content of their secret service files. The narrative from the historical research would be made available to the public and contribute to debates that are based on historical evidence.

PERFORM's goal is to support social sciences and humanities research to contribute to reform and change processes in society by providing evidence from research to decision makers, policy institutions and the public discourse. The research proposed by the Authority was therefore well within PERFORM's mandate and would provide opportunities to Albanian scholars to highlight their role and contribution to the

important societal process of dealing with the past.

Albanian intellectual elites had not been much engaged in the public debate on the need to open up the former security service files, to deal with the historical memory and to rehabilitate the image of important figures, such as scientists, artists, etc. This debate was largely dominated by politicians and the media leaving only a limited space to intellectuals to contribute. The research project proposed by the Authority to PERFORM would provide the space to Albanian researchers to develop an evidence-based narrative for the debate on the communist past.

A group of Albanian historians and staff of the Authority had selected 10 scientists for the research. These scholars had been active during the early phase of the communist regime. Historical research on their files was expected to provide a narrative on the fate of these individual researchers, but also on the role of science and scientific research during that period.

This brochure includes the narrative of 9 scholars of their life during the early communist regime.

We hope that this will be that start of a process in which the Authority can systematically use the capacity and competency of Albanian researchers to evaluate the secret service files of selected individuals, develop narratives and share them with the public.

I would express my appreciation for the very good collaboration with the Authority and with the group of researchers who worked on this project.

Belgrade, February 2019

Dr. H. Martin Dietz

Manager

PERFORM, Performing and Responsive Social Sciences

On the role of science in the development of society during the early years of the Communist Regime

The Authority for Information on Documents of Former State Security Services and the Project PERFORM - Active and Responsible Social Science co-operated throughout a year in building a narrative on the role of science, intellectual elites and scientific researchers in the early years of establishing of the communist regime in Albania (1945- 1954).

The project started at the Academy of Sciences and is focused on the personalities of Gjergj Kokosh, Eqrem Çabej, Sabiha Kasimati, Arshi Pipa, Aleks Buda, Petraq Pepos, Gjovalin Gjadri, Kolë Kamsit and Petraq Qafokut.

Throughout this year, full of challenges, the initiative is materialized in very qualitative researches, analyzing professional personalities of science; providing access on the AIDSSH archives and disseminating this information to an interactive communication platform, finalizing with the bilingual publication of these scientific studies, for youth groups in Albania and many interested people abroad. The studies analyze the work, the contribution of scientists and the reports that the Sigurimi has created about them, shedding light on the difficulties they faced.

The study of the role of science in the development of society during the early years of the communist regime (1945-1954) made together archival researches with the mission of the Authority on the preservation of historical memory and opening of public dialogue on the past.

This is just one of the steps to support scientific research and work with Sigurimi archives and beyond. The Authority will continue its research with other personalities of the decades following, to create an historical, social, political, ideological and cultural framework of communism in Albania.

Gentiana Sula
Chairwoman, Authority for Information on Documents of Former State Security Services



Stories

Sabiha Kasimati

The short life of an anticommunist scientist

The girl who left Turkey and then Italy to build a museum of science and conduct scientific research turned out to be too much for Tirana, which was in search of a different model of the “communist woman.”

When Sabiha Kasimati moved to Albania in 1927, she was 15, and could hardly imagine that this journey would change her life and result in a tragic end. Her life’s caravan would pass through two decades of outrage and fear during which her homeland would try to erase all trace of her existence. In spite of this, she would leave an indelible imprint on the country.

Although Sabiha had been born in Turkey when Albania declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire, and grown up in the city of Adrianople, there was nothing of the Orient in the young girl. Her father, Abdurrahman, was a well-known doctor with good connections among the political and intellectual elite of the Albanian state, who aspired to turn Albania into a modern country.

The Kasimati family settled in Korça. Sabiha and her brother enrolled at the National Lyceum, also known as the French Lyceum, where they studied not only with Albanian but also French teachers, well versed in the culture of Western Europe. While the basic curriculum consisted of the natural and social sciences, it also included civic studies, which sought to turn students into good citizens. It was at this point that Sabiha began to cultivate an interest in cultural life and independent thought and action.

Furthermore, Sabiha came from a good family and spoke several foreign languages with particular fluency in French. She was smart, excelled in her studies, and the only girl in school at all. She had a reputation for being an open-minded and an easy-going nature. Her portrait reveals her beauty and her kindness. Ironically, it is believed that since there were so few educational institutions in Albania



Kundera Popullit e Shtetit

LETËR-RRESHTIMI

Unë Kapiten i I-re Fadil Kapisyzi (5)

qënë se i quajtur Sabiha Kasimati i biri Abdurrëmanit

i Vojo Kushi nga Bari-katave dhe Ar. 99

profesion N.Punes në shënjë

pore së veçanta që pasojnë

at the time, Sabiha may have known Enver Hoxha, who also attended the National Lyceum, and later installed the communist regime in the country.

After graduating from the Lyceum, she started work at the American School of Kavaja in 1932 but later returned to the Lyceum as an elementary school teacher. For reasons of health, she left her job soon thereafter and was hired in Tirana as a French lan-

tunity to take exams during the Fall Session as well, considering the fact that Albanian students were having difficulty with the Italian language and often lacked textbooks. She dedicated her first scientific work - if that's what we can call her diploma thesis, entitled "Ichthyological Fauna of Albanian Fresh Waters" - to her homeland, which at the time was under occupation by the Italian Fascists. By 1941, she had become a teacher of chemistry and hygiene



Sabiha came from a good family and spoke several foreign languages with particular fluency in French. She was smart, excelled in her studies, and the only girl in school at all

guage professor at the Institute for Women - the Nana Mbretreshë ("Royal Mother").

In 1936, Sabiha moved to Turin, Italy to continue her studies in the Biological Sciences, thanks to a scholarship from the Albanian state. Her character and courage to speak her mind was immediately noted when she signed a letter requesting the Albanian Ministry of Education to grant its citizens the oppor-

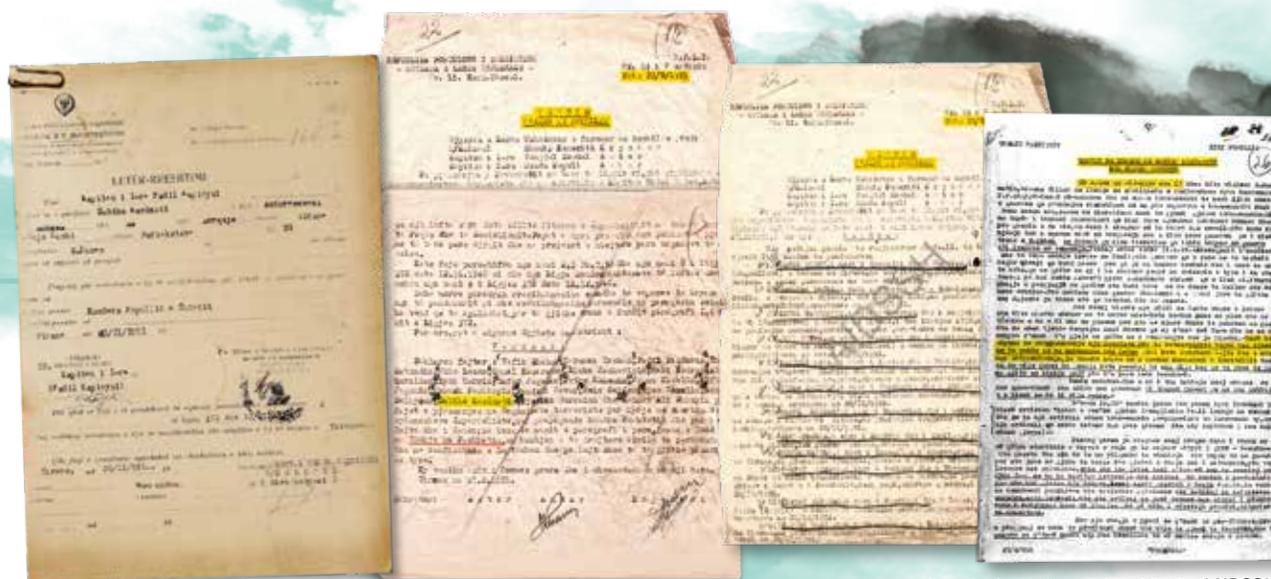
at the High School for Girls - the Nana e Skënderbeut ("Skanderbeg's Mother"). Two years later, however, she came down with tuberculosis, which compelled her to leave her job and seek medical treatment in Italy.

Before she left, she took the first step in realizing one of her most significant contributions as a woman of science. It was a cold January 12, 1943, when professor Sabiha met the head of the Royal Institute

of Albanian Studies, Ernest Kolëiqin, who had been the Minister of Education when she first met him as a student. She told him of her project, which she subsequently detailed in a formal proposal, describing what it entailed: a zoological collection starting with the scientific branch of Ichthyology...; an herbarium because Albanian flora has been a subject of interest among distinguished botanists, especially the Germans but also Europeans in general...; [and] in

derstood the problems Albanian researchers would have, she noted that “it would be of great importance from the linguistic point of view...if we specify, once and for all, the cases for which there are no names or technical terms in Albanian, because this would enrich our national language.”

Sabiha was building a castle in a desert. And she knew it. She was by now 31 years old, intelli-



Documents of persecution and convicting of Sabiha / IDSSH

cooperation with the Directorate of Mines at the Ministry of Economics, [a collection of] different types of minerals and fossils found in layers of Albanian soil.

In her proposal to Kolëiqin, Sabiha also underscored the need for a library with holdings in scientific works and even prepared a bibliography for such a venture. She also proposed a microscopic studies laboratory for scientific research. Since she un-

gent, educated, well-dressed - the beautiful and elegant daughter of a doctor (as well as the sister of a doctor, an engineer, and a lawyer). It was the time of World War II, and Tirana was under the rule of force - first by the Italian Fascists then by the German Nazis - but Sabiha followed her scientific vision and continued to work hard. In February 1943, a month after she submitted her proposal, the Royal Institute of Studies established a Museum of Science and

appointed Sabiha its curator. She immediately began to draw up an inventory of materials needed for the museum's library.

The eventual end of the occupation and liberation of the country along with the installation of a new political system by the victors finds Sabiha devoting herself to scientific research at the Institute of Albanian Studies. In 1946, in co-operation with Gjergj Komnino and Eqrem Çabej and his cohorts, she translates the scientific terminology of the natural sciences into Albanian. She continues working at the Institute even while the new government is reorganizing the Institute in 1947 to bring it in line with Marxist-Leninist ideology. Official documents examined by scholars Ledia Dushku and Doris Pasha (on which this story is based) do not provide any data regarding the nature of the relationship between Kasimati and the Institute. Dushku and Pasha merely point out that the communist government that came into power after World War II did not have a good opinion of intellectuals with undefined political leanings during the war. Nor did the communist regime approve of intellectuals who had studied in Western Europe, nor did it approve of those who had at one time supported the occupation or even showed political indifference, as in the case of biologist Kasimati.

But economic development of the country conferred a special importance to the natural sciences and to Kasimati herself as the first ichthyologist. In 1948, she publishes her article, "Problems of Fish and Fishing in Our Country," in the Science Bulletin, in which she identifies the variety of fish, indicates water quality, and evaluates its production capacity. She is not afraid to list numerous deficiencies involving boats, transport of fish and matters of preservation. She also suggests solutions involving organization of the fishing industry, the modernization of outdated technology and various international regulations. Such outright criticism is audacious considering that in 1946-1947, the regime has already

revealed its retaliatory nature against its opponents. Sabiha herself has already experienced the shock of losing close friends.

Despite the fear that is spreading among the country's intellectuals, Sabiha carries on. The work plan of the Institute of Sciences indicates that she was preparing a scientific monograph, Fish of Albania. However, in 1948, publication of the work is postponed, and in 1949, Sabiha turns to a new research project - Albania's salt water fish. After concluding her study, she publishes her findings in 1950, according to the records of the Institute of Sciences and the archives of State Intelligence. Inexplicably, not a single copy has survived, even though we have a report from a State Intelligence informant nicknamed "The Bearer" indicating that on April 27, 1950, Kasimati herself testifies to its publication:

We have already sent a copy to the typographer to be printed; it is my work. Çabej helped with the overwhelming part. I've just picked up the material from the typographer. I told them that the Control Commission had requested it.

While it is true that persons convicted by the regime were prohibited from publishing their work and that whatever work had been previously published would be destroyed, there is no trace of the book either in the stacks or the listings of the National Library. Researchers Dushku and Pasha have found it hard to prove the widespread belief that the study of Sabiha Kasimati had been appropriated and published in 1958 under the same title but bearing the authorship of three different names.

Sabiha's education in the West, the family origin, her liberal character, her bold and easy-going nature, her willingness to speak out, to express a critical opinion that is contrary to the propaganda fabricated by the regime, her circle of friends, some of whose





Sabiha with her relatives in Italy, '30s / Family Archive

Reports by State informants report that Sabiha appeared to be critical against government reforms and policies, critical of the poverty, openly dissatisfied with the regime and its control of the media, and even disapproving of the speeches made by a powerful man like General Mehmet Shehu regarding the “morals of the youth.”

relatives were imprisoned - these are commonly believed to be the reasons Sabiha Kasimati is placed under surveillance by State Intelligence. What isn't clear, however, are some of the facts surrounding her persecution. We don't know when the persecution actually began, how long it lasted and what exactly provoked it. Equally perplexing is the fact that no file in the Secret Intelligence archives has ever been found under her name. The belief is that the information on Sabiha was actually obtained from the files of friends and associates.

Reports by State informants report that Sabiha appeared to be critical against government reforms and policies, critical of the poverty, openly dissatisfied with the regime and its control of the media, and even disapproving of the speeches made by a powerful man like General Mehmet Shehu regarding the “morals of the youth.” According to the informant's report, she is critical even of the food in the country: “The press and radio say that Americans feed their fugitives horse meat, but what about the canned meat here? What is that like? We do not even get canned meat. It's rarely available even through the mediation of friends. In 1950, Sabiha is criticizing the regime in the language of someone living in a free society:

Our leaders want to appoint persons to the Central Committee whom they trust and remove those they appointed previously... They press useless charges against them and if they have obeyed anything, they have done so upon their order.

Her opinions and her mindset are audaciously daring for the times. It appears that Kasimati is aware of the way in which those in power treated their citizens. The State Intelligence informant named “The Bearer,” reports that Kasimati “meets with sergeants and women whose husbands are notorious criminals.” On September 3, 1950, the official report for the Institute of Sciences describes Sabiha as “hav-

ing nothing in common politically and ideologically with the system." She is regarded as someone who cannot be "re-educated." It is a time when the French Illuminati are being replaced with Marx.

Her surveillance lasts several years. It comes to an end on February 20, 1951, when a bomb explodes in the Soviet Legation in Tirana. Sabiha is arrested along with twenty-one other intellectuals and charged with a terrorist attack. The file on her investigation lists several "sins": during the occupation, she has had relations with fascist elements, Albanian and Italian. She maintains a hostile attitude towards the government; she speaks out against reforms and maintains contact with hostile elements... She has been in contact with the English lawmaker Lester Hutchinson. She maintains contact with members of the English mission...and with J.S. Payne with whom she has kept in close contact. She is a sworn enemy of the current government. She hates it and especially the communists, whom she criticizes for their morals, etc...

According to the records of the Military Court, Kasimati admits some of the charges:

I oppose "popular power" since it is incompatible with my own ideology. I have never thought that communism can be achieved through revolutionary action. Some of my friends have also been enemies of the Communist Party. Among my friends are those who have considered active opposition to their power. I have never carried out any assassination attempt myself nor have I participated in any meeting where any decisions to carry out terrorist acts were made. I have said, however, that another outbreak of war is inevitable and that it would be to the benefit of the Albanian people.

A week after her arrest, Sabiha and the twenty-one other intellectuals are executed without the chance of an appeal. The researchers have their

doubts about the whole investigative process and have concluded that the Military Court reports were forged, in fact, drawn up after the fact. Thus twenty-two innocent people are executed without benefit of a trial. Among them also Sabiha. It took a single week to conduct her from freedom to death.

Sabiha was barely 39 years old when her life was cut short. Her family believes that she was killed because of a letter she sent to Enver Hoxha or because

I oppose "popular power" since it is incompatible with my own ideology.

I have never thought that communism can be achieved through revolutionary action.

Some of my friends have also been enemies of the Communist Party.

she criticized the government to his face in a meeting she had with him. They believe that it was Enver Hoxha who had blacklisted her and had her executed. However, Ledia Dushku and Doris Pasha have failed to find any document in any archive in the country that can certify the existence of Sabiha's letter. The family also maintains that a senior communist official

- a friend of hers - had at one point invited Sabiha for coffee in order to advise her to “keep [her] mouth shut - and not with a pin but a lock..” As for her confessions, they're inconclusive: they fail to tell us what she was thinking, how far she was willing to go, what she was willing to do, what pain she endured, and how she fought back.

When all is said and done, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that communist Albania did not

out to be too much for Tirana, which was in search of a different model of the “communist woman.”

Forty years later, with the regime falling apart in 1991, the Albanian Supreme Court declared Sabiha “not guilty.” Today, 67 years after her voice cannot be heard anymore, leaving behind silence, doubt and pain, the title “Honour of the Nation” has been conferred on her. In 2017, the Museum of Science, the green building in the Tregu Elektrik district, that Sabiha had once



Sabiha with her relatives / Family Archive



have room for an independent-minded woman who was indifferent to politics during the World War II and critical of the events happening in her country after the war. The girl who left Turkey and then Italy to build a museum of science and conduct scientific research turned

curated was renamed in her honour. In a corner of the building by the door, a memorial portrait shows a smiling Sabiha. It tells us that her will is alive and reminds us of her achievements. Sabiha believed that “evolution lies in the nature of things.” Time proved her right.

Surviving through silence

The regime leaves him alive because Çabej no longer needs to be silenced; he has silenced himself.

Though he left no memoir, the facts of his life tell us that he had waged a silent war against his enemies.

A two-story yellow mansion on Qemal Stafa Street is a frequent gathering place in Tirana for local writers and men of letters. It has a spacious yard where you can hear footsteps, the clinking of glasses, and the murmur of voices discussing books, publications, research studies, and memoirs.

One can imagine Eqrem Çabej in the company of such intellectuals at the gatherings on Qemal Stafa Street. After all, he was a man who had spent more than a decade studying abroad. He'd spent his youth in Vienna and Rome and was accustomed to the pleasures of cosmopolitan cities and stimulating conversations. But social gatherings on Qemal Stafa Street were not available to him. He was forced to step aside from life when circumstances dictated by the Communist regime forced him into a self-imposed "house arrest."

His daughter, Brikena, remembers him at home, calm and smiling, his head bowed over his books, in a room filled with notes and manuscripts, some of which can still be seen today. That small space was his preserve, his small quadrangle of freedom. According to Ledia Dushku, the only reason he was still alive was because of his knowledge and expertise. Despite repeated attempts, the Communist regime failed to find a substitute or successor for Eqrem. Ironically, the very knowledge that put his life in danger also protected him. Hence we have the story of Eqrem Çabej - one of the best and brightest in our country. It is the story of a man in pain: from the loss of friends and freedom, from the realization that in a Communist country knowledge kills, thinking kills, ability kills, being cultured kills.

It is on August 6, 1908, in Eshkisehir, Turkey, near Ankara, that Eqrem, the son of Judge Hysen Çabej, is born. When the baby is six months old, Judge Çabej

returns with his family to Gjirokaster, which Eqrem will consider his birthplace for the rest of his life. It is in Gjirokaster that he spends his childhood and finishes primary school. At the age of twelve, accompanied by his father, he travels to Austria. Having received a scholarship from the Albanian government to study abroad, he enrolls, first, at the university in Graz and later in Vienna, where he does graduate work in Indo-European Linguistics and Albanian Language Studies. Professor Norbert Jokl, one of the most

to refuse. The grant he received from the Albanian government to study abroad, which was paid out to him over the course of thirteen years, amounted to twenty-three thousand francs and came with one condition - that after he finishes his studies, he will return to Albania to serve his country for seven years or refund the money. Being still relatively young and coming from a good family, he soon lands a job back home as a professor of Albanian language and literature in Shkodra, Elbasan, Gjirokaster and Tirana. At



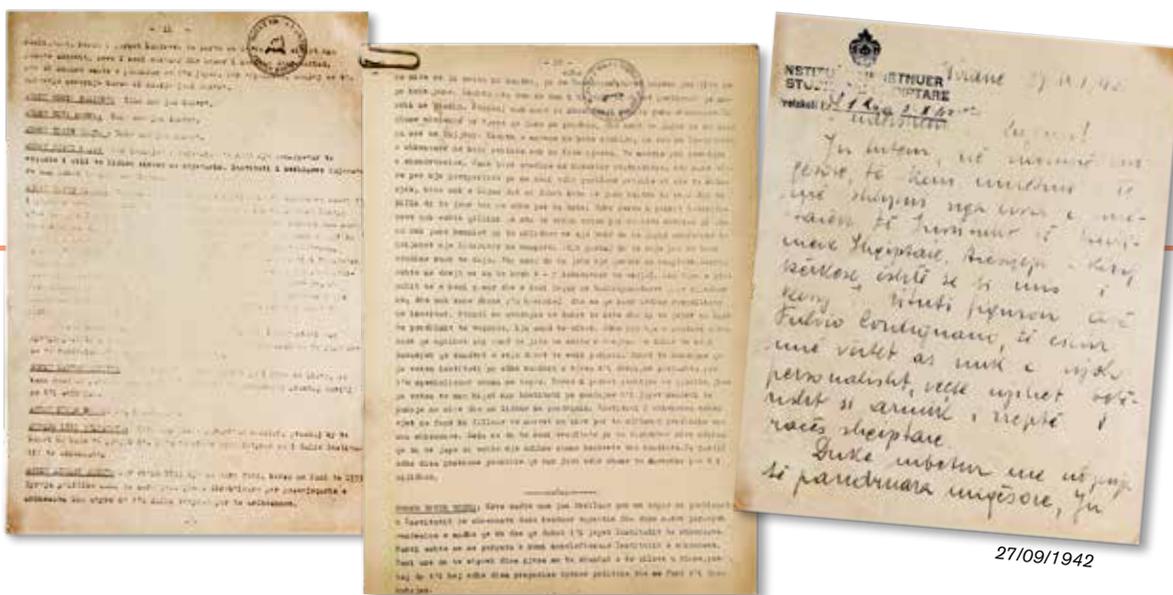
From the beginning, therefore, the Communist government labels Çabej a dangerous element that is ideologically and politically problematic

distinguished Albanologists of the time, becomes his mentor. A cordial relationship develops between the professor and the student, and with Professor Jokl's guidance and encouragement, Eqrem learns to engage in scientific research that culminates in his earning a doctorate at the University of Vienna. The university offers the Albanian young man a position as Professor Jokl's assistant, but Eqrem feels bound

one point, he takes a position as a school principal and works on school textbooks at the Ministry of Education. Various reports speak of him as a professor with a liberal inclination who respects the opinions of his students. He also begins to publish articles in Albanian journals, like the *Hylli i Dritës* (*The Star of Light*), and in 1936, he publishes a textbook called *Elements of Albanian Linguistics and Literature*.

His reputation grows. He's appointed director of the Lyceum in Tirana. His career seems to be taking off. Then in 1940, the local Fascists launch a complaint that "he alone is responsible for the wrongful actions committed by students of the Lyceum in the protests of November 28, 1939." They also complain that Çabej shows no sign of agreeing with fascist policies; they label him "dangerous" and discharge him from his duties at the Lyceum. The 32-year old Çabej is sent to Italy where he is put in charge of

fact, that in 1942, while Albania is still under foreign domination, Çabej writes a daring letter to the director of the Royal Institute, Ernest Kolëiqi, requesting that his name be removed from membership in the Royal Institute for Albanian Studies, indicating that "[one of the members] of the Institute appears to be Father Cordignano, whom indeed I do not know personally, but who is publicly known to be a staunch enemy of the Albanian people." Çabej also rejects the post of Minister of Education in the occupation



The word of Enver Hoxha 24/02/1954

the *Albanian Atlas of Linguistics* at the Academy of Sciences in Rome. There he remains until 1944. During Çabej's stay in Italy, which he calls his "internment," his fate is linked with that of his homeland. He becomes a regular member of the Royal Institute for Albanian Studies. Another regular member is an Italian Albanologist, priest Fulvio Cordignano, a controversial figure in Albania. So controversial, in

government in Tirana, offered to him first by the Italian Fascists in 1942, then by the German Nazis in 1943. He explains later that he turned down the post on the grounds that accepting such a position in an occupation government is "incompatible with my Albanian honor and not to the benefit of my country or my people." Both Ledia Dushku and Çabej's daughter, Brikena, believe that, apart from wanting to avoid

political involvement, Çabej refused the position because the Austrian Nazis had murdered Professor Norbert Jokl, his “spiritual father” in Vienna. By now he has spent four years in Rome, when he learns of the murder of his brother, Selahudini, the Vice-Prefect of Tropoje in Albania. So Çabej returns home.

World War II is drawing to a close, the Communist partisans are proclaiming victory, and Çabej starts work at the Ministry of Education of the new-

mands that science must be placed “in the service of the working class” - the masses - and brought in line with the spirit of the Communist Party. The “new man” is expected to think like Hoxha. The question is how an intellectual of Çabej’s caliber could possibly change his thought processes in order to think like the Party?

Having been shaped by 30 years of life in the “old” Albania with its close ties to Europe, by years



Çabej and his wife, Shyhreti / Family Archive

In 1948, Çabej is in touch with 62 people, by 1953, the number is down to 17. By 1956 he meets only 2 people outside of his immediate family

ly installed Communist government, where he joins Sabiha Kasimati and Gjergj Komnino at the Institute for Albanian Studies to work on the Albanian files in the natural sciences.

The end of the war and the installation of a Communist system entirely changes the relationship between state and science. Instead of science determining policy, the order is reversed and policy starts dictating to science. In his speeches, Enver Hoxha de-

of education abroad, by eminent family backgrounds, people like Çabej do not see the Party as having any connection to their lives nor welcome a regime that interferes with their freedom in the first place. From the beginning, therefore, the Communist government labels Çabej a dangerous element that is ideologically and politically problematic. The Communist Party demands that people like Çabej cooperate or be interned, imprisoned or executed. In September 1946, the 38-year old Doctor Eqrem Çabej is placed under

surveillance by State Intelligence known as the Sigurimi. On September 29th the Sigurimi documents Çabej's transgressions:

During the Fascist years, Çabej was sent to Italy... he must also have maintained good relations with the Germans since they appointed him minister, though he refused the position... We suspect that he has been loyal to Germany until 30-40 Albanians, who had been interned by the Italians, were released and returned to Albania.

As for the interned Albanians, Brikena Çabej and the distinguished writer Petro Marko reveal the other side of the story, crediting the liberation of the Albanian prisoners to Çabej himself. Apparently, a Viennese school friend of Eqrem, who works at the German Embassy in Rome, managed to pass Çabej a document which allowed Petro Marko to secure the release of the Albanian prisoners and repatriate them.

But such services to the state, which should work to Çabej's advantage, along with personal assets like his education in Austria, his fluency in several foreign languages, his "big-name" family background, his work experiences along with his association with the intellectual elite of the time - all that turns against him. Instead State Intelligence manipulates the facts of his life in order to condemn him, claiming that Çabej "welcomed the Fascist occupation, declaring and promoting it as the friend of our people." On October 11, 1950 Sigurimi labels Çabej an "enemy of the people" - associated as he is with a brother killed by Communist partisans before Albania's liberation from Nazi occupation and with a brother-in-law, who is a member of the Balli organization and a fugitive.

The Sigurimi informant, "The Bearer," reports Çabej's meetings with Sabiha Kasimati, in which they purportedly engage in "discussions about culture, science, and the works...of bourgeois writers." The informant goes on to report that "They are con-

temptible of Marxist culture and do not regard the writings of Lenin as literary masterpieces but just ordinary statements prepared for the occasion."

Two years later, Çabej's best friends, including Sabiha Kasimati, are either placed under surveillance or executed, and Çabej himself is accused of " 'anti-popular activity' against the homeland and the people." State Intelligence claims that he developed his Nazi inclinations in Vienna; that his stay in Rome and the two proposals to make him Minister implicate him in anti-government activity; that "he has been seen in the company of suspicious elements." The latter point of information is particularly emphasized by State Intelligence. Eqrem, who is by now 44 years old, does, in fact, meet a woman who was ousted from the Party and put under surveillance during this time. Her name is Shyrete Kurteshi - his future wife. During 1952-1955, State Intelligence takes steps to find incriminating evidence against Çabej by having six secret agents - nicknamed "The Timid", "The Edija", "The Fox", "The Cajup", "The Tarabosh", and the previously mentioned "Bearer" - spy on him. Çabej is followed everywhere; his work and his correspondence are inspected. Sigurimi knows where he goes, with whom he spends his time, whom he meets at the National Library. It knows when he leaves the house and when he returns.

Despite their best efforts, Sigurimi does not find anything seriously implicating. One of the informants, nicknamed "The Edija," is a colleague and former student of Çabej. The report that "The Edija" files does not sound at all incriminating. It claims that Çabej maintains a bourgeois life and is immersed in a bourgeois culture; that Çabej is very intelligent, clever, and cunning; that during the rule of King Zog, "when cafes were the usual place for professors to congregate, [Çabej] chooses to study and is not fond of gambling." In fact, "The Edija" admiringly observes that "there are great men who stand above politics;

they show no interest in it and even defy it." The informant draws attention to Çabej's passion on the subject, saying that Çabej "made me understand that... such an attitude was appropriate to great men..." The Communist Party, however, is less admiring and thinks Çabej is conceited, that he's a person who does not understand that the Party is engaged in a "class struggle" and mistakenly separates science from politics - declaring, therefore, that Çabej is a challenge and a threat to Communist ideology.

So how does Çabej escape execution? The answer: by embracing silence. He stops speaking to anyone about anything. It must have been unbearable for him to see his best friends executed. He must have understood the reason immediately. As his friends are being murdered by the regime, he cuts his ties with the ones who are still alive. His file shows that the number of people he meets shrinks with every passing year. In 1948, Çabej is in touch with 62 people, by 1953, the number is down to 17. By 1956, if we look at the 5 days of surveillance, he meets only 2 people outside of his immediate family, one of whom is his father-in-law. In an interview with Ledia Dushku, Çabej's daughter confirms the qualities in her father that ultimately save him:

[my father] was a moderate man, calm and immensely educated. I have rarely seen him lose his patience or become upset. [He preferred] to leave the room instead. He did not offend anyone and avoided conflict as much as he could. He had principles, which he never violated. He knew how to put his foot down and remain cautious. He never complained although he lived an uneasy life. He never spoke of his own pain.

In other words, the regime leaves him alive because Çabej no longer needs to be silenced; he has silenced himself. But the other reason the regime does not imprison or execute him is that it needs him.

Enver Hoxha, who would check the Intelligence reports himself insisted that "we know...what element Eqrem Çabej represents, but we must try to make him serve our purposes." During meetings held every two years, the dictator would praise "his merits" whenever the Institute or the Sigurimi reported on his capabilities. Sometimes, when the "old-guard" intellectuals toned down their rhetoric a bit, Hoxha urged that a way be found to work with them rather than use police action and violence. At other times, as in 1954, Hoxha would revert back to a hardline position: he'd claim that the expertise of people like Sejfulla Maleshova, Eqrem Çabej...isn't all that valuable to the Institute." In 1955, when the proposal is made to remove Çabej's name from the Institute of Sciences, the dictator's wife, Nexhmije Hoxha, and director of the Sector for Agitation and Propaganda, tries to placate those who are in support of the proposal:

As to Eqrem Çabej, if it is about politics, we can remove the politics, but I think that he himself must not be removed, considering that today he is working for us [in the sciences]"

At this point in his life, Çabej is irreplaceable: he is transcribing the oldest published work in the Albanian language - *The Meshari (Missal)* written in 1555 by the cleric, Gjon Buzuku. It would take Çabej eight years to complete the transcription, thus having to set aside his work on *The Atlas of Albanian History, Language and Literature*, which, according to the complaints of some colleagues, he is reluctant to do. *The Meshari* not only brings into evidence the indispensability of Çabej's expertise but may be the reason for Çabej's reprieve from death. The Party tolerates his bourgeois writing because, for one thing, according to "The Edija's" reports, Çabej's work in Albanian linguistic theory has drawn the attention of international linguists, and, for another, because Çabej is respected for the thoroughness and professionalism of his work and never rushes into publication prematurely.

After 1955, the restrictions imposed on Çabej for the past ten years are relaxed. He is permitted to join Albanian delegations traveling abroad. After 1961 he is awarded two senior prizes. Though his files refer to him as an “enemy of the people”, Hoxha comes to address him in his speeches as “old friend” and “professor of extraordinary achievement.”

If someone like Çabej with his prodigious intellect and linguistic expertise could cast so much scholarly light on the Albanian language and related matters

while laboring under the kind of pressure and mistreatment he had to endure during the course of his life, we can only imagine how much he might have accomplished in a free society. Though he left no memoir, the facts of his life tell us that he had waged a silent war against his enemies. He had escaped prison, but not confinement. Professor Çabej’s case - File No. 2383 - remained open five months after he died on August 13, 1980. It contains the story of a great scholar, an author of dozens of studies, and a tragically diminished and circumscribed life.

Bridge Builder under surveillance

He is not only indifferent, he is completely detached from the Communist system, which indicates just how suffocating and distasteful he finds his environment.

The tall, arch bridge that spans the River Mat is called the King Zog Bridge. Suspended between the two hills that divide two cities, it is one of the most beautiful bridges in Albania and considered a cultural monument.

In 1926, 27-year old named Gjovalin was returning home to Albania with a degree in Civil Engineering from an Austrian university. His education was funded by Austro-Hungary, one of the Great European Powers during the early part of the Twentieth Century. With two degrees in hand, one from Saverian College, the other from the University of Vienna, Gjovalin, the son of a Shkodra merchant, joined the Italian Construction Company, Mezzarana, dreaming of a bright future for himself. He'd had a difficult childhood, his father had died while he was still a boy, and his mother had raised him in a city that was constantly being torn apart by war. But here he was now - a highly educated man. Tall,

broad-shouldered, black-haired, with the looks and character of an Albanian highlander and the manners of a Viennese. He'd left his country a callow youth and returned a gentleman.

Gjovalin finds work at the Ministry of Construction. Fluent in German, Russian, Italian and French, he throws himself into his work with the passion of someone who is working for the betterment of his country, which had been newly liberated after 500 years of Ottoman occupation. As we look at the magnificent view from King Zog Bridge towards the medieval Church of St. Barbara, we forget to ask who was in charge of its construction, who supervised it for months, who stood on the pillars of the bridge, and watched it go up. It was Gjovalin Gjadri, whose career and reputation were launched with his job as Supervising Engineer of Mat Bridge. A year later, he travels to Moscow and stays there till 1932, working as a Design Engineer at the Institute for Bridge Design - "Mostovoi Byro." In 1932, he returns to



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INFORMAȚII:
Peșteră în parcul național de rezervație biosferică "Parcul Național Biosferic", județul Brașov, în apropierea localității Poiana Brașov, în zona rezervatului de biosferă "Parcul Național Biosferic".

ACTIVITĂȚI:
Activități de cercetare științifică și de monitorizare a biodiversității în cadrul rezervației de biosferă.

CONCLUZII:
Rezultatele cercetărilor efectuate în cadrul rezervației de biosferă sunt pozitive și indică o biodiversitate bogată și diversă.

RECOMANDĂRI:
Se recomandă continuarea activităților de cercetare și monitorizare a biodiversității în cadrul rezervației de biosferă.

Albania, to the Ministry of Construction as designer of bridges and director of the construction sector. He designs some of the most famous bridges in Albania, which have been in continuous use ever since: Lana Bridge at Tirana Boulevard (1932); Buna Bridge in Shkodra (1934), Aranika Bridge in Elbasan (1934), and the Bridge of Gjanica in Fier (1940). Gjardri also publishes the research he conducted while studying abroad.

is at the top of his career managing major projects throughout Albania and in love with one of the most eligible girls in Tirana. In fact, Zejnep's father was one of the signatories of Albania's Declaration of Independence and known to be in the vanguard of Albania's march into the modern age. But in a city like Tirana, caught between two cultures - the East and the West - Abdi Toptani, a Muslim representative in the Supreme Council, forbids his daughter to marry



Gjovalin Gjardri and his wife (1935)

Gjovalin Gjardri during the '50s

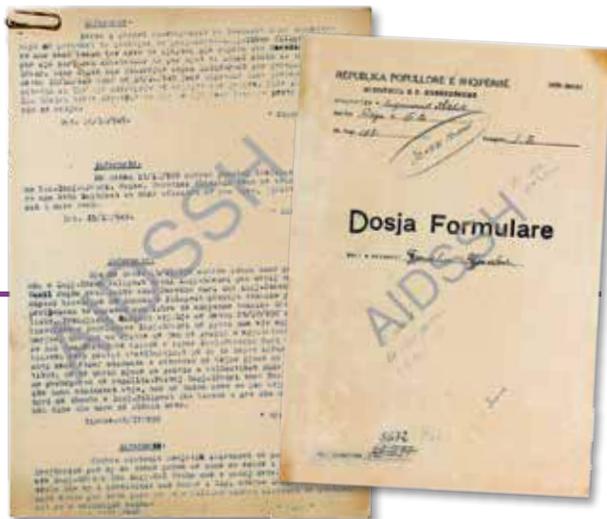
Now that the Communists were in control of the Albanian government, their decisions, Gjardri will observe, are being influenced by the Communists of Yugoslavia.

The 1930s are the happiest years of his life and not only because of his professional accomplishments. He is still working in Moscow, when he meets Zejnep Toptani during his visits to Tirana. Health may be the reason for his periodic visits home, but the beautiful Zejnep, undoubtedly, plays a part as well. Like Gjovalin himself, Zejnep also studied in Vienna, and her ancestors date back to medieval princes and King Zog. Meanwhile, Gjardri

beneath her rank, much less a Catholic. So, flouting convention, Zejnep leaves her parents' home and marries the Shkodra engineer without their consent. The Gjardis are young, happy and in love. Their first and only baby is born, they name him Egon. The young couple and their son get ten happy years. Unfortunately, life for the family changes forever with the occupation of Albania. Zejnep is diagnosed with tuberculosis and sent to Italy for treatment. Despite

Gjovalin's best efforts to keep her alive and her own fight to recover, Zejnepe dies in Rome on August 15, 1941. The shock is great. Gjovalin has become a widower at 42. The ten years Gjovalin and Zejnepe had together seem painfully few.

Gjardi finds it hard to live without his wife. A mere three weeks after her death, still deep in mourning, he writes a memoir in German under the pseudonym



Reports of security agents (1949)

G. Maranaj and calls it *Letters to My Dead Wife*, in which he reveals his grief and his longing for her, his tears and his rage at having her taken away from him. At times, he blames himself, at other times, he blames the war for hindering Zejnepe from seeking treatment in a Viennese sanatorium. He even blames Zejnepe's family and her ancestors who opened their doors and their hearts to their enemy, the Turks, implying that their conversion to Islam was the

reason Zejnepe's family would not bless their union. In 2017, the book is translated into Albanian by Ardian Ndreca; it reveals the human dimension behind the disciplined facade of the professional engineer. Gjardi never remarried, and there were no rumours of any affairs. Gjardi never replaced Zejnepe. He spent the years of World War II in personal anguish and seemed indifferent even to the ultimate liberation of his country. His ideals and those of the intelligentsia in general were being swept aside by the victorious partisans, who installed a Communist regime in Albania.

Now that the Communists were in control of the Albanian government, their decisions, Gjardi will observe, are being influenced by the Communists of Yugoslavia. Historians point out that the Albanian decision-makers lacked scientific expertise or cultural sophistication, but tried to make up for it with absolute ruthlessness in their pursuit of power. As a result, even Enver Hoxha urges the Party to think critically about itself: self-criticism...cleanses people, cleanses our party, and cleanses...the country from...the fleas, speculators, and insects', as Lenin called the corrupt infiltrators of our ranks. The Party demands that you keep your eyes open to everything.

Gjardi understands the threat that intellectuals who oppose Communist dogma represent to the Communist government. That is why the Party denounces them as saboteurs, why they are interned, tortured and executed by firing squad. He has seen his colleagues eliminated, and as a result, in 1945 he feels compelled to defend his own past: "During the Italian occupation, I was not enlisted in the Fascist Part, and I have not collaborated with the Germans during the German occupation." That same year, by decree of Parliament, he is awarded the Order of Merit for Labor - for being "unreservedly engaged despite health problems in the building of all the major bridges. He put his entire technical capacity at the service of the people." But neither Gjardi's

Your removal of my rights reminds me of former times when I was a student in Austria. I felt a longing, but didn't know what I was longing for. I know now that I longed for the fatherland, for which I've always searched for but never found here in Albania...

self-appraisal nor his Order of Merit succeed in protecting him from State Intelligence, which puts him under surveillance. His file with the Sigurimi labels him “clean” at times and at other times “suspicious.” A report dated 1949 casts doubts on his reliability: “He lived in Moscow...[then] left the Soviet Union without an explanation, but because he had studied in Austria, he is suspected of being an agent of Austria-Germany.”

In other words, anyone educated abroad was automatically labeled a foreign agent. But the file on Gjovalin also lists other blemishes, among them his privileged background during the rule of King Zog. Gjadri is listed as having served Fascism and sympathized with such political parties as Balli Kombetar and Legaliteti, both political opponents of Communism. Equally obnoxious to the Party is the fact that Gjadri shows no evidence of resistance to Fascism and remains apathetic on the subject. Almost like an afterthought, the file goes on to

say that “he has always been fond of money and [preoccupied] with his own personal self-interest.” At the time, this was considered a serious offense.

Yet his life is marked by huge professional accomplishments. The Technical Construction Central Archive contains over 75 engineering projects that he built throughout Albania. He also taught at the University of Tirana, was a member of the Institute of Studies, and published volumes on the research he conducted. While working on his 550-page “magnum opus”, The Science of Construction, Gjadri writes a memorandum to the Vice-Premier, Spiro Kolëeka. Because of his deteriorating health, he requests (among other things) that he be relieved of three hours of work each day and that his formal and administrative load be reduced so that he can finish the book. The letter brings to light his courage in making the request and daring to offer comparisons that put Albanian academic practices in a bad light:

In my opinion, it is not a question of how long I spend in the office, but how well I do my job . . . I have information saying that in the Soviet Union those who write books just write books and do not engage in other tasks.

According to Albert Nikolla and Joana Doda, who studied his file (on which this story is based), engineer Gjadri maintained a cold relationship with the regime. He thought of the regime only as his employer; in fact, on July 20, 1949, his file shows that he even argued with the regime about salary. Gjadri requested a salary commensurate with that paid to doctors, as stipulated by the labor law and as promised to him by the ministers. Nikolla and Doda conclude that the regime never saw Gjadri as anything but their enemy, whom they tolerated because of his impressive expertise that had won praise even from abroad.

But he did not win any praise from the locals. There are roughly 30 reports of his activity during 1946-1954, which mention conversations, meetings and requests. The reports are anonymous and deal mostly in gossip. As an example, there's the report dated 1951, which sounds like nothing but slander: it appears that he is indifferent at work... Though we have no concrete or immediate proof, I am of the opinion, which I say with certainty, that he is a dirty Fascist, given that although he is paid all of 10,800 lek per month, he appears to be dissatisfied with his salary. He does not take to meetings well or to political discussions, which he does not regard as serious political analysis and says as much indirectly.

Clearly, Gjadri is not only indifferent, he is completely detached from the Communist system, which indicates just how suffocating and distasteful he finds his environment. While the first half of his life in Western Europe (secondary school and higher education) prepared him for a life of freedom, the

second half took that life away. In its place it put him in a country governed by fear.

He made one last effort to leave Albania. Somewhat naively, he handled his departure with a propriety befitting a relationship between gentlemen - instead of an escape from a jailer. With attempted courtesy and candor, Gjadri addresses the regime in a letter dated March 24, 1947:

Your removal of my rights reminds me of former times when I was a student in Austria. I felt a longing, but didn't know what I was longing for. I know now that I longed for the fatherland, for which I've always searched for but never found here in Albania... instead, to my [dismay and] degradation, I find that my rights and my just claims here in Albania are -unachievable... I wish to leave this Albania. I have a mother and a sister in Austria, who are in hard financial straits, according to information I have received... I urge the ministry to relieve me of my duties and mediate where possible on the issuing of a passport so that I can travel to Austria.

Unsurprisingly, his request is rejected and labelled as "self-compromising." Fortunately for Gjadri, it does not have severe repercussions. However, Gjadri never sees his mother or sister again. In 1956, surveillance of Gjadri finally ends. At the age of 75, the now gray-haired engineer dies in Tirana, leaving behind the only remaining love of his life - the son he had with Zejnepe. He wonders if he will ever see his wife again. His greatest fear was losing her forever. Perhaps that is why he did not fear death and was not afraid of living as though he were a free man, regardless of the consequences.

Raging rivers continue to flow under his bridges, and the bridges continue to hold up. Sometimes you can even hear a passer-by observe in hushed tones, "This bridge was built by engineer Gjadri!"

Thoughts can not be imprisoned

“They shackled my body, but failed to shackle my thoughts. What is extraordinary indeed is that when they turned my body into a living corpse, they liberated my thinking...”

Vlocisht, 1948. Three huts covered with tarpaulin provide shelter for 1,300 to 1,600 prisoners. The stench inside is beyond imagining. Beds consist of three boards. It is July when the 28-year old Arshi Pipa is brought to the camp to join the rest of the prisoners, who have been incarcerated in Vlocisht for three months. Arshi recognizes no one. Starvation and hard labor have changed all of them. There is only one well for the thousand plus prisoners, but they are not allowed to wash in it. Nor is there enough water fit to drink for everyone. Political prisoners share the same space as criminals. As representatives of the “proletariat,” criminals are treated better than political prisoners, who are held in contempt for being intellectuals. Theft is prevalent throughout, but the system treats those who complain more harshly than those who steal. food in the camp is scarce, and when a prisoner gets his hands on food - like a cob in a corn field near some work site - he will submit to a beating rather than stop eating.

Prisoners work barefoot digging ditches, resulting in swollen feet. Death is often the only release from the suffering endured by the prisoners in the camp in Vlocisht. Arshi Pipa keeps a clandestine notebook, consisting of rolled-up sheets of paper. Having been robbed of his life, the former professor, philosopher, critic, and poet seeks to give meaning to the life that has been forced on him by documenting it.

Arshi Pipa was born into an educated family. His father, Mustafa from Libohova, was a judge who had been educated in Istanbul. He married a woman named Hatixhe and they settled in her home city of Shkodra. They had two sons and four daughters. Arshi was closest to his brother, Muzaffer. Arshi received his early education at the Jesuit College, where he acquired a working knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin, languages that appear in his writing throughout his life as evidenced by the translations found in his published manuscript. He began his studies in jurisprudence in Padua, Italy, then moved



to Florence in 1938 to continue his studies in “Letters and Philosophy. He enjoyed his studies and tended to spend his spare time reading. “We have not come here for parties but to study,” he would tell his friends whenever they invited him to go out with them. “Duty comes first. And our duty is to study and to graduate from the university!”

Arshi Pipa is in his second year of studies when the World War II breaks out and Albania is invaded

the French philosopher Henri Bergson, and works at the Shkodra Secondary School. Eventually, he settles in Tirana with his family.

In 1944, he launches a journal, which he calls Criticism, in order to promote literary criticism in Albania and publishes four issues. After the first one, he writes to researcher Aleks Buda in a letter dated March 23 (drawn from the Buda family archive) about not being completely satisfied with it: “I don’t



“They locked me in this prison to suffer. But I hold no grudge against them... in fact, I am sincerely grateful to them”

by the Italian Fascists. Pockets of resistance spring up, and like many other Albanians, his brother is arrested in 1940 for opposition to Fascism and interned on the infamous Ventotene Island. In 1941, Arshi returns to Albania, which is now under Fascist control. He chooses to stay close to his family during these difficult times and works for a year at Tirana Secondary School, prepares his “diploma thesis” on

believe I have entirely succeeded, but I think that the second issue will be richer and more diverse.”

Pipa does not involve himself in the National Liberation Movement. The regime’s internment of his brother is one reason, the other is his opposition to Marxism and the totalitarian model of government. In a 1990 interview, in which he admits to having read

Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, and Stalin and to having been acquainted with their ideologies, he expresses his primary reason for his opposition: "I was raised in a family that could be considered democratic; it had an aversion for dictatorships of any kind." So we have a young man, with a PhD in Philosophy, who is fond of Spinoza and Kant and has no time for Marx or Marxists. The idea of an intellectually bankrupt ideology like Stalinism being imposed on Albania makes him steer clear of the war and its Communist leaders. Although he is recommended for admittance into the National Liberation Movement, he refuses to join.

By the time the war ends and the Communist Party comes into power to strike its first blow against the opposition, Arshi Pipa is a professor at the Institute of Albanian Studies. The first sensational case in the new regime is the "Trial of the Lawmakers," in which the Communist state puts on trial the political elite, who are demanding the installation of a democratic system of government. Their defense lawyer - Arshi's brother, Muzafer. His defense of the accused, his argument with the judge over a point of illegality during the trial, his defense of Catholic priests in a separate trial - spell the end for Muzafer Pipa.

In 1946, Arshi himself is placed under surveillance, of which he is unaware. He continues to express his opposition to the regime. His speech on Migjeni, the writer on poverty, and his comment on a poem found in Goethe's Faust, "Song of the Flea," are considered to be acts of rebellion. As a result, his career takes a downward turn. He is posted to Durrës to work as a schoolteacher, where his every movement and every statement are reported to State Intelligence. The informant is one of his students, who often provokes him deliberately into making self-incriminating statements about Communist luminaries like Mayakovski and Stalin.

His surveillance reaches its culminating point during one literary evening, in which one of the par-

ticipants recites a poem about the construction of a factory. "We shall build it with slogans," quips the young man sitting to Arshi's right. Arshi laughs approvingly. The two exchange derisory remarks about the poem. Their smiles are conspiratorial and sarcastic. Only afterwards does Arshi discover that his witty "friend" was Nako Spiro, one of the communist ring-leaders. Arshi's defiance and insubordination along with the fact that he has an equally rebellious brother with the audacity to defend the lawmakers on trial lead to Arshi's arrest in April 1946.

Pipa is charged with anti-government activities and collaboration with traitors. In November he is sentenced to two years imprisonment in Durrës. According to a study conducted by Andi Pinari and Indrit Qehajaj (upon which this story is based), his sentence is completely arbitrary, as concluded later by official investigators, who examined his case while he was already serving his term. In a document dated December 5, 1947, the investigators argue for a minimal sentence considering that the authorities lacked sufficient evidence to convict him. Consequently, his case is reopened and a second judicial hearing is held. But the state counter-charges Pipa with participation in an organization of saboteurs, meaning the "lawmakers"; accuses him of having an "enemy of the people" and a traitor for a brother; being a member of a democratic organization; associating with clergymen; being linked to parties of the National Front and Legality Movement; opposing and sabotaging the reform of school texts; propagating armed intervention by England and America with the aim of overthrowing the Communist government; publishing Fascist magazines. Pipa is also accused of holding regular meetings at Tirana Lyceum; inviting students to his house in order to disseminate anti-government propaganda; telling students that the government is oppressive and barbaric, that Communist reforms are ruining the country and impoverishing the people; and, finally, that incompetent people are being appointed to the highest reaches of government.

Pipa denies the accusations. He is unaware, he says of any organization that opposes the government and denies the accusations of witnesses. He says he does not know some of these witnesses at all, he has never discussed with them any political issues. The only witnesses he knows are those with whom he's discussed literary matters. He asks the court to remove the witnesses that are strangers to him. He admits to having given private lessons to students, who may have misunderstood his meaning. The prosecution demands the maximum sentence. The prosecutor warns him that he will end up like his brother if he fails to confess. Thus, three months after the fact, Arshi learns of the death by torture of his brother. To cover up Muzafer's death in police custody, his body is thrown out of the window of the building in which he was being held in Shkodra. The authorities claim he died trying to escape. Aware of Arshi's poor health, his sisters keep the news from him. He finds out about it only at his own trial. On December 20, 1947, Arshi Pipa is re-sentenced by the court to twenty years in prison.

Pipa swears that he will find the strength to come to terms with his brother's death and writes an elegy for him in prison. Because of the horrific prison conditions, Pipa develops a lung infection. He notices that the working class' prisoners are regarded with less contempt than intellectuals like himself -which is the reason intellectuals will often dress like villagers or laborers to avoid abuse. The camp at Vloçisht resembles an extermination camp.

In 1949, Enver Hoxha reduces his sentence by ten years. In 1950, after spending a year at the concentration camp, where his health seriously deteriorates, Pipa is transferred to a prison hospital in Durrës. Two years later, he is again transferred, this time to the prison in Gjirokaster, and later still to the prison in Tirana. Once more he falls sick. Once more he is hospitalized. And afterwards he is sent to the most infamous prison of the time in Burreli. It has a

single well but neither rope nor bucket with which to reach the water. The prisoners use whatever comes to hand but even when they succeed in drawing up some water to drink, they discover that the water is polluted and is often filled with worms. Prisoners become ill, hundreds die.

Lying on a mattress placed on the floor, Pipa records his thoughts in a notebook that carries a picture of Stalin. "Could I ever have imagined," he writes, "that man, this creature created in the image of God, could so resemble the beast? I can now understand the reason for depicting those semi-pagan gods, like centaurs and sirens, as semi-human or semi-bestial! In prison I have known the entire range of human viciousness, everything he has inherited from animals, ranging from his unrestrained egocentrism that can wish the death of a friend just to get his chunk of bread all the way to his rabid animal terror that darkens not only human reason but human feelings as well!"

Although Arshi is completely debilitated by disease and starvation, he manages to GET OUT alive from Burreli prison in April, 1956. He also manages to preserve the notes he took during his ten years of imprisonment. He recorded them on sheets of paper, rolled them up and hid them inside his mattress, which the prison guards never thought of checking. In 1956 he smuggles them out of prison in his filthy clothes. The taste of freedom is particularly sweet when he is reunited with his mother and sister. His suffering seems to be over. But only partially. As an ex-convict he finds it hard to find work. He can't do any physical labour because he lacks the strength. With great difficulty, he eventually finds a job as an elementary school teacher in Shkodra, but it brings him no satisfaction. He is, after all, a philosopher. He wants to quit the job on the pretext that he is ill, but the system will not let him. His only recourse is to escape - together with one of his sisters. The historian Uran Kalakulla writes that Arshi and his sister Fehime are assisted by a villager whose house stands close to the Albanian border. Arshi swims across the

Buna River while his sister waits for him on the opposite shore. They arrive at the Yugoslav border crossing, where they are detained for some time in Tivar. But the Yugoslavs do not send them back to Albania. Instead Arshi and his sister head for Sarajevo, where Fehime's fiance lives with his family. There they arrange the pages of his manuscript, which his sister had sewn into her clothes during their escape.

It is now the autumn of 1957. Arshi dreams of living in the West. He moves to Rome and eventually to the United States. He learns English and gradually makes a career in academia. Initially, he teaches general courses in Philosophy and particularly the Philosophy of Christianity. In a 1990 documentary on Albanian Public Television, Pipa admits that his knowledge of religion was minimal at the time. He recalled few things from his studies at the Jesuit College. Nevertheless, there he was a Muslim pedagogue teaching Christian philosophy. While teaching in Detroit, he reworks his "rolls of paper" for publication as a book. He calls it *The Prison Book* and finds a publisher for it in Rome. It is published in 1959 and deals with his harrowing prison experiences.

Thirty years go by before he is able to return home. After his death in 1997, his other sister Nedret has his treatise translated from Italian to Albanian; she wants the book to tell her something about her brother. She wants to get to know the brother with whom she spent so little time in the course of her life. His escape from Albania and her own internment kept them apart for many years. His strength, which she learns about from his book, would become a permanent source of pride to her.

If the question were ever asked, what did Communism do to Arshi Pipa, we would find a surprising answer in the philosophical treatise that he wrote in prison:

They shackled my body, but failed to shackle my thoughts. What is extraordinary indeed is that when

Pipa swears that he will find the strength to come to terms with his brother's death and writes an elegy for him in prison.



they turned my body into a living corpse, they liberated my thinking... They locked me in this prison to suffer. But I hold no grudge against them...in fact, I am sincerely grateful to them. The one who is oppressed by suffering is entitled to damn it. But the one who defeats it, should bless it. Some are degraded by their suffering, others are renewed by it. Sinking beneath it leads to the worm; but rising above it leads to God.

ALEKS BUDA

Between science and politics

He found the space both within and outside himself where he could be safe to pursue his intellectual interests without government interference.

There's a full-length portrait of a man wearing glasses and smiling shyly in the Main Hall of the Albanian Academy of Sciences that you just can't miss. It's the image of Aleks Buda, formerly Director of the National Library and Chairman of the Academy of Sciences during the turbulent days when surveillance was a fact of life and scientists were often incarcerated or even executed just for being men of science. All of Albania's major achievements in the sciences, in history, even in library science, have been attributed to him. Yet a review of documents and files from Central State Archive, State Security and his personal correspondence, currently in the possession of his daughter, Tatjana Haxhimihali, reveal that no intelligence file has ever been kept on him, at least, none that could be found listed under his name. The only references to Aleks Buda that can be found are those mentioned in the files of

colleagues, who were under surveillance by Sigurimi. The story of Aleks Buda is indeed a remarkable story of survival at a time when the life of Albanian citizens was worth less than the life of the Communist Party.

This story is based on a study done by Andi Pinar, who considers Buda to be a major European figure during Albania's era of totalitarianism. He was one of the preeminent personalities of the period, an individual who managed to enjoy an incomparable amount of freedom in one of the most repressive and isolated nations in Europe.

Aleks Buda was born in 1901 into an educated, merchant family - the son of a pharmacist educated in Greece and nephew of a doctor educated in Italy. In fact, the Buda family pharmacy was located in the centre of Elbasan; a notice regarding the pharmacy even found its way into an Austrian newspaper

in 1913. In the interest of supporting the National Renaissance of Albania, Aleks's father, Taq Buda, supported Elbasan High School financially and participated in the Manastir Congress, a landmark event in the destiny of the Albanian language. Later on, Taq Buda became a legislator.

Aleks himself studied in Italy and Austria. He learned Latin and Greek at Salzburg High School and studied pharmacy at the university in accordance with his father's wish. But only for one semester. The following semester he changed his discipline to the Humanities, where he studied History and Literature. He studied under such renowned scholars of the Albanian language as Karl Patsch and Norbert Jokl, with whom he established friendly relations. He also developed friendships with men in Vienna who would go on to become distinguished figures in a variety of fields: Skënder Luarasi, Krist Maloki, Eqrem Çabej, Lasgush Poradeci and others. Buda considered the eighteen years he spent studying in Austria as the most significant years of his education.

During the time when Fan Noli, a political adversary of King Zog, had fled to Austria, the Albanian government would monitor its students studying abroad, especially the ones in Vienna, in order to keep track of their movements. Buda knows that he and his brother, Mihal, were under suspicion by the Albanian Consul in Vienna because of their association with Skënder Luarasi, who had even forfeited his state scholarship for political reasons. In 1938, the year before Albania's invasion by the Italian Fascists, there would be a meeting in Vienna that would permanently change the direction of Buda's life. It happened with the arrival in the Austrian capital of Ali Kelmendi, one of the first politically active Albanian Communists. For several weeks he lodged with Buda, which led to a search of Buda's room by the Vienna police. What they discovered, as pointed out by the historian Pinari, is that politically speaking, Buda appeared to be leaning left: "These fragments from the life of Professor

Buda reveal his leftist affiliations during his years of study, a preference for the European social-democracy model, and a sympathy for Marxism because of the extreme polarization that the times demanded."

After the incident recedes into the past, Buda goes on to pursue the study of Linguistics under the tutelage of the renowned Austrian Albanologist, Norbert Jokl. But when the Nazi persecution against Professor Jokl begins, Buda returns to Alba-

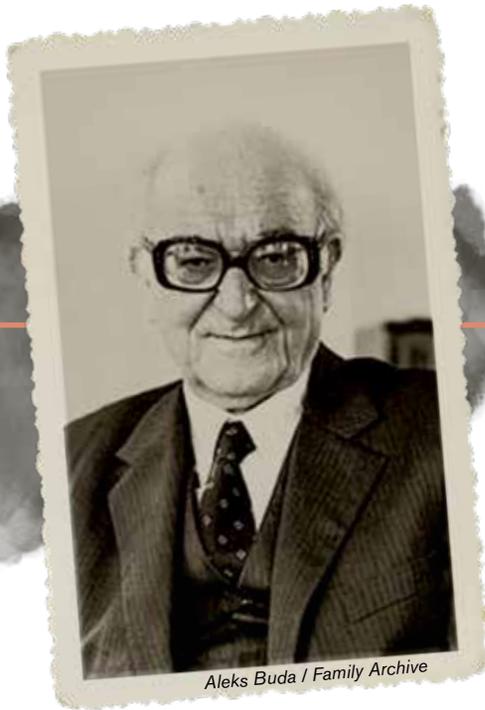
He managed to concentrate on scientific matters without apparent interference from the regime. He found that middle ground at an incredibly dangerous time for educated Albanians.

nia - only to be greeted there with handcuffs. The police interrogate him regarding his relation with Ali Kelmendi and others known to the police as having Bolshevik ideas. Buda remains jailed for twenty days and released. But his resistance against political repression does not end. He continues his resistance in various ways. He participates in the April 7, 1939

demonstration. As a teacher of literature in Tirana High School, he participates in political activities. He stages William Tell with its patriotic aria, “Për Mëmëdhenë” (To Our Homeland), to be sung by his students. The show is immediately closed down for trying to incite nationalistic feelings, and Aleks Buda is escorted to the Ministry of Education to answer questions and later transferred to the Korça Lyceum. In the meantime, the authorities search his house, then convey him to Tirana prison.

By now Buda is 30 years old. He is questioned about his participation in the November 28, 1939 demonstrations and a few days later released and returned to Korça. Next summer he is drafted into the Italian army and sent to Italy together with many other teachers. Buda escapes and returns to Albania to teach in Korça. Six months later he is at the University of Padua studying Balkan linguistics. His forced return to Albania puts an end to his turbulent life. Although his mother is arrested because of his brother, who is part of a partisan unit of Elbasan, Aleks succeeds in getting her released from prison, and he himself takes a teaching position at Tirana High School. At this point, he becomes seriously involved with the illegal National Liberation Council of Tirana, whose meetings are held at his house. Though at this point in time he does engage in politics, Buda is also very much engaged in scholarship. It's in the latter area that he establishes a solid reputation among other Albanian scholars. He corresponds with such intellectuals as Arshi Pipa and Father Zef Pllumbi, both of whom are opposed to the National Liberation Movement of which Buda is a member. Their correspondence covers historical and literary issues. Pinar points to the source of his antagonism against the invaders of Albania as well as his various appointments:

His education with its emphasis on intellectualism and patriotism as well as the influence of his family...made him one of the principal representatives from the intelligentsia in the war against the invaders.



In September 1944, Buda is appointed Vice-Chairman of the National Liberation Council of the Elbasan region. Later he participates in the Berat Congress and is invited to work at the Ministry of Culture.

In 1945, Minister Sejfulla Malëshova appoints him head of the National Library, which at the time contains only 15,000 books. By 1947, the holdings of the National Library will contain 100,000 books, largely through the confiscation of the private libraries of the regime's opponents like Mit'hat Frashëri, the intellectual member of Balli Kombëtar, who had moved to Italy, and other such individuals. Buda also organizes the library collection and creates a bibliography of its holdings. When the archive belonging to the Italian Luogotenca is discovered in dungeons, it becomes the basis of the State Archive. Buda is also assigned to be the literary consultant for the newly established Theatre and director of the History section at the Institute of Sciences.

After this last appointment, Buda is given a genuinely demanding assignment. He is chosen to be a member of the Albanian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. He himself confesses his surprise when he learns from a radio announcement that he is part of the delegation headed by Enver Hoxha and Hysni Kapo. In preparation for the conference, Aleks Buda and Petraq Pepo spend the latter part of July and early August of 1946 studying various documents and literature related to the Albanian issue. Since the Greek government had publicly claimed that Albania was an ally of the Fascist Block, Albania's representatives at the conference will be rebutting these allegations with hard facts and cogent arguments.

In his capacity as director of the National Library, Buda is particularly well placed to search the library's holdings for material relevant to the forthcoming Paris conference, while his fellow delegate, Pepo, combs through the city library of Korça for documents, memoranda and correspondence from the previous

1919-1920 Paris Conference. While in Paris Buda meets Enver Hoxha for the first time. He describes the dictator as an open-minded person, who sat at the table with the rest of the Albanian delegation, and seemed as down-to-earth as any ordinary "commoner" - before the "cult of the individual" went to his head. Buda and Pepo participate in many open debates and ultimately succeed in preserving Albania's southern borders from incursion by Greece. Despite their success in preserving Albanian territory at the Paris Peace conference, they are, nevertheless, targeted for persecution by the Communist regime.

The greatest irony of all is that while Professor Buda is going about the business of saving Albania's territory, his own life and that of his family are at stake. Before he leaves for France, he learns from his wife, Vasilika, that her two brothers have been jailed. Though fine otherwise, they are fearful of being transferred to the infamous Burrel Prison. Buda is shaken by the news; he, too, begins to feel the threatening shadow of Hoxha's regime looming over him. In 1948, his own brother, Stas, as the inheritor of their father's pharmacy, is arrested for not having paid the inheritance tax. But the tax is not compliant with pharmacy income. After being sent to work in the Maliq swamp and after the authorities are finally convinced that he cannot pay, Stas Buda is released after spending a year and a half in jail.

While repression and violence are the usual means of imposing a dictatorship on a country, Pinarri notes that the consolidation of power cannot be achieved without the support - active or passive - of those who stand to benefit from the new order. As a result, the intellectual elite find themselves in one of three categories: those who openly oppose the regime and are harshly punished for it or at times, mysteriously, left alone; those who remain silent and keep their distance from politics, limiting themselves to the academic life; and, finally, those who actively collaborate with the regime. Studies reveal that

Professor Aleks Buda chooses the middle road. He concentrates on his role as intellectual and steers clear of active politics. Such was the approach taken by many renowned Albanian historians - active academically but neutral politically.

a totalitarian state has a double relationship with scholars and academics; they are both controlled and monitored by the state but also, because of their indisputable authority in public, the state finds them useful.

Professor Aleks Buda chooses the middle road. He concentrates on his role as intellectual and steers clear of active politics. Such was the approach taken by many renowned Albanian historians - active academically but neutral politically. Professor Kristo Frashëri points out that given his family background of professionals, Buda understands Albania's need for cultural growth and innovative education. So, he stays away from ideological themes and devotes himself to writing the history of Albania's distant past - from the period of ancient history that starts with the pre-Christian Illyrians all the way to Skanderbeg

and the Middle Ages and, finally, the National Renaissance. Historian Paskal Milo adds that Professor Buda shies away from political engagement due to his Western education and conviction that his role - and pleasure - in life are to engage in science and history. According to Pëllumb Xhufi, Professor Buda uses his good relations with the regime to benefit Albanian studies by, first of all, educating specialists in Latin, Greek and the Ottoman languages. Xhufi is convinced that the Institute of Sciences becomes a protective shield for the sons of the "toppled classes" - the only place they can get employment or a chance to pursue their passion for science. (Except for Skanderbeg, Albania's national hero, whom Buda himself manages to "protect" from the regime's hatred of the upper classes.) Everyone agrees that historical research increases during this period, irrespective of the fact that ideology was doing all it



Buda did not openly rebel against Hoxha's despotic rule; perhaps he realized that at that point in time, rebellion was not an option with any chance of success in Albania.

could to taint history and the sciences. Yet somehow Professor Buda succeeds in pursuing historical research involving all historical periods at a high level of professionalism. In a remarkable example of "working the system," Buda cleverly manipulates the Communists in order to keep them from interfering with the free exchange of scientific ideas at a conference of the Institute of Sciences in 1952. In the Main Hall of the National Library, he displays a quotation spoken by none other than Stalin himself: "No science can move forward without a conflict of opinions and critical freedom." His obvious intention is to remind the communists that even Stalin approved of scientific discussion and, at the same time, to encourage the attending scientists not to be afraid of speaking their mind, thus implicitly suggesting that a failure to express their opinions could, after all, be seen as a violation of Stalin's own directive.

Aleks Buda's great contribution consists of his written record of Albanian history. It was the first time that Albanians themselves were writing their own "story." In the process, Buda establishes for all subsequent historical research in Albania the basic methodological principle of historiography: namely, taking the created files and laying them out in chronological order. On December 24, 1953, State Security receives a report from an informant nicknamed "Folk," who has been eavesdropping on Aleks Buda:

He makes an effort to enhance Marxism-Leninism, he is aware of historical issues, but is also confused. The ongoing work of the Section is primarily on the History of Albania. According to conversations with Aleks Buda, the writing of various monographs has not been based on a joint model nor have the monograph theses been discussed previously (as is done

in the Soviet Union), instead everyone has acted in accord with his own opinion.

Buda also serves two terms (1950-1954 and 1954-1958) as legislator in the People's Assembly. But he is not the only one to have done so from the Institute of Sciences. While he is, therefore, part of the governance structure, his duties as legislator and the People's Assembly itself carried little real power.

Eventually, gray-haired and getting on in years, Aleks Buda retires from those daily walks that take him from Fortuzi Street to his office at the National Library or the Academy of Sciences, where he is remembered as a man who was always trying to help others. But the facts of his life also point to a man who should have been conflicted between the demands of science, politics and family problems, caused by the regime. Yet he didn't appear to be. Professor Buda managed to concentrate on scientific matters without apparent interference from the regime. Somehow or other Buda found that

middle ground between politics and science at an incredibly dangerous time for educated Albanians. We are led to believe that Aleks Buda, who had spent nearly twenty years studying abroad and who had devoted his entire life to the advancement of knowledge, couldn't possibly have approved of the Communist regime's repression of personal freedom or favored its restriction of scientific inquiry or preferred isolating Albania from scientific and cultural contacts with the rest of the world. Yet it's true that Buda did not openly rebel against Hoxha's despotic rule; perhaps he realized that at that point in time, rebellion was not an option with any chance of success in Albania. He saw what happened to his own brother and two brothers-in-law. Buda was like a man on a tightrope, who learned how to walk a fine line. Remarkably, he found the space both within and outside himself where he could be safe to pursue his intellectual interests without government interference. We can even call it a talent for diplomacy. Considering Buda's immense accomplishments, it was a talent that had served his country well.

Kolë Kamsi

The humble man establishing schools

He was saved by his silence. He knew he couldn't criticize the state because he spoke for the entire family and not just himself.

It's New Year's Eve in Vlorë, 1926. The 40-year old teacher from Shkodra, who has taken a simple house in the city by the sea, is sitting at his desk writing. In a slanted but regular hand he is sending in a subscription to the magazine *Diturija* (Knowledge): "As of the beginning of the New Year I wish to be placed on the list of subscribers to your periodical, *Diturija*... I am also forwarding selected excerpts from several foreign writers. Here are some thoughts by French and Italian authors in Albanian translation." Kamsi had once been the headmaster of a school in the *Uji i Ftohtë* neighborhood but had also been responsible for establishing a number of schools throughout the impoverished Albania in the early 1900s.

Kolë Kamsi was a descendant of one of the most prominent families in Albania's history, whose origins went back to the 12th century. There are approximately sixteen documents on parchment tracing the

journey of the Kamsi family from one century to the next. Kamsi's ancestors were once the heads of one of the most highly developed medieval centers in Albania - the town of *Drishti* near Shkodra. Such is the impressive lineage of Kolë Kamsi - folklorist, teacher, school principal, school founder, author, translator, writer of textbooks as well as general prose and fables, publicist, editor and distinguished researcher of the Albanian language and traditions at the Institute of Albanian Studies. Though his name is not widely recognized, Kamsi has left behind a treasure trove of publications, translations, and a series of profiles that he wrote on the greatest historical and literary personalities of the country.

He was born in Shkodra on September 23, 1886, the son of a merchant and a teacher. After his initial schooling locally, he furthered his education in San Demetrio Corone, Italy. In 1907, at the age of twenty-one, he returned to Albania and was

appointed teacher of the Albanian language in the district of Vlorë. His teaching experience is daunting, considering the fact that he was faced with large numbers of illiterate students. But he does not give up. Instead, he sets about to remedy the problems of illiteracy by undertaking the initiative to establish 44 elementary schools in Vlorë and Gjirokastra. Seven years later, in 1916, he is appointed headmaster of the first primary school for boys. Knowing, however, that teachers no less than their pupils also suffered

New Life (1915), the 60-page textbook *Teachings on Nature* (1917), and a 52-page anthology of poems for primary school pupils, "Lulet e mendimit," *Flowers of Thought* (1919). This teacher of children, who by now is himself over 30, participates in the intellectual life of the city and is a member of the club "Labëria." As a member of the intellectual elite, he is also involved with the theatre and stages *The Death of Pyrrhus* by Mihal Grameno, who was a freedom fighter and nationalist. For thirteen years in a row, he opens one school after



A postcard sent to "Diturija" magazine

The study of Kolë Kamsi

“Friends remember him as a man working in silence, consistently and tirelessly. They remember him dedicating his life to education without expecting to be honored”

from low levels of preparation, Kamsi in cooperation with Jani Minga creates a short-term pedagogical course in teaching methodology.

Kamsi goes on to remedy other shortcomings in Albanian education, such as a lack of textbooks. He writes a 72-page primer, the book of ABC's, "Jet e re," called

another in Vlorë; then in 1920, at the end of World War I, which has turned Shkodra into a battlefield, he returns to the city of his birth.

He is appointed to the Franciscan School in Shkodra for two years, while the Education Congress in Tirana elects him to be one of the twelve mem-

bers of the Commission for Education Reform that deals with educational programs and textbooks and charts the progress of Albania's educational system. In 1922, at the request of Luigi Gurakuqi, a middle school is opened in Shkodra and Kamsi is appointed to teach language and literature at the school. Three years later he is appointed director of the pedagogical courses that the Ministry of Education inaugurated to prepare school teachers for the Korça district. His life continues to be hectic since he is also Director of the Commercial Institute in Vloa and in subsequent years is at times director and at other times teacher in various schools. During the occupation, he serves as Director of the Institute "Nana e Skënderbeut" (Mother of Skanderbeg); later he serves on the Technical Commission for the drafting of textbooks; and in 1940 he works at the Institute of Albanian Studies. Then he is back to Shkodra and again to Tirana as researcher in language and the arts. In 1948, Kamsi is working at the Institute of Studies in Tirana as a folklorist when Communism is installed in the country and undertakes to create the "new man." Thus, Albania finds itself in the grip of arrests and internments that sweep through it like a fever.

Kolë Kami survives surveillance and persecution by remaining focused on his academic and educational activities. Inside the "restricted freedom" controlled by the regime, many intellectuals do manage to pursue their interests in literature, history and folklore; they are able to continue studying and writing in their areas of expertise. Yet despite his restraint and silence - his low profile - the teacher who established almost as many schools as the government, does not escape investigation, as confirmed in a study conducted by Enxhi Beka and Eriketa Pandelejmoni, on which this article is based. A local report from Shkodra dating back to 1950 reveals the reason for his interrogation. The regime had questions about his various involvements: whether he had participated in the National Liberation War and what organizations he had belonged to before liberation. Kamsi denies these

involvements; he even denies being in the military and doing military service. But when asked which organization he was part of before liberation, he surprises the authorities by admitting to having been a member of several: "As a teacher I have been a member of the Fascist Party and Professional Union in the Democratic Front organization as part of the Red Cross of the Cultural League." Kamsi is neither arrested nor persecuted and never sentenced with or without a trial. It appears that having already turned 60, he convinces the regime that he has nothing to hide and no power to overthrow the government. Unlike many intellectuals who suffered imprisonment during these politically charged years, he manages to live together with his family relatively undisturbed. His wife, Gjyze-pina Kamsi, is a housewife, one son Paolin Kamsi is a teacher in Rrëshen, his other son Karl Kamsi is a cadet in Tirana, and his daughter, Terezina, a student in Shkodra. After a thorough review "with magnifying glass" of his entire family, the final assessment concludes that Kamsi is an "honest person."

Thus, during the period of 1950-1955, Kamsi is returned to Shkodra as a teacher of language and literature at the secondary school called "29 Nëntori" (November 29) and simultaneously teaches at the pedagogical school called "Shejnaze Juka" (named after a famous woman partisan). Having reassessed his person in 1955, the regime declares him "Candidate of Sciences," while on September 2, 1957 upon the establishment of the Higher Two-Year Pedagogical Institute in Shkodra, Kamsi is appointed Lecturer of Folk Studies and the Albanian language in its Faculty of Language and History. He works there until he dies on February 25, 1960 at the age of 74, after 53 years of service laying the foundations of Albanian education.

While Kamsi is responsible for carrying out numerous studies in various fields, one of his most significant accomplishments is the compilation of the Arberesh-Albanian Dictionary, a task assigned to him by the Institute of Language and History in Tirana.

When he begins to feel the ebbing of his strength and his health, he works day and night to complete the dictionary. He continues to submit his work on the Arberesh-Albanian Dictionary right up until the day before he dies, confiding to Professor Mahir Domi: "I am dying in peace. I have kept the promise I made to the Institute of Language and History in Tirana." He had succeeded in proving that the "Albanian villages of North Calabria and Basilicata have preserved their ethnic character." In other words, he proved that the Albanian language was spoken not only indoors within the family but outside in the community as well.

Since 1907, Kamsi had worked without interruption on phonetics, morphology, and especially the vocabulary of Arberesh (Old Albanian) spoken by the Arberesh people, who left Albania in the Middle Ages to settle in Italy after the Ottoman invasion. This dictionary is considered Kamsi's masterpiece. With about 8,000 words and expressions extracted directly from works by Arberesh writers - from Leke Matranga to the authors of 1960 - the dictionary was published 40 years later. Even though Kamsi finished the dictionary and submitted it ahead of the deadline, dedicating to it even the last hours of his life, the dictionary was ignored in Tirana for the next 40 years. With the help of Bahri Beci, who headed the Institute of Language, Kamsi's son found the manuscript in storage at the Institute. It was proofread by Professor Ferdinand Leka and published in 2000.

Kamsi's Albanian studies include four fields of research: linguistics, literature, folklore, and history. The Practical Manual of the Albanian Language, a bilingual text in Italian and Albanian, is a study of grammatical structure, published in Zare, Dalmatia in 1930, then in Shkodra in 1940 and again in 1941. His monographs, The Life and Work of Frang Bardhi and Some Linguistic Remarks on Pashko Babi, about two medieval clerics who wrote numerous testimonies about the Arbers, the inhabitants of Albania

at that time, were a great contribution to Albanian Studies and Albanian culture in general.

Not only did Kamsi write poems and educational stories for children, he also translated selected works of such writers as Andersen, Lessing, Grimm Brothers, Hugo, Boccaccio, and Tolstoy. In the field of history, he wrote Journey of Skanderbeg in Rome, November 28, Uprising of Malesia e Madhe, and A Letter to Abdyl Frasherri and Francesco Krispi. In 1937, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Albania's Independence, Kamsi had published Documents of Freedom's Dawn, which included petitions, notes of protest, memoranda from the Albanian colonies in Egypt, Romania, and Turkey as well as articles sent to Albanian associations and clubs operating in the Albanian diaspora. It also included documents sent to the great world powers about recognition of Albania as a state and nation.



Kamsi on the left with a close relative

Three years before his death, the distinguished Kolë Kamsi was awarded the "Order of the Flag"

Kamsi had also published studies of distinguished personalities, such as Pashko Vasa, Filip Shiroka, Gjergj Fishta, Luigi Gurakuqi, Fan Noli, Maro Boçari, and Father Justin Rrota. Kamsi devoted special attention to various Albanians of the diaspora, such as Milo Duçi, alias Sulo the Highlander, about whom he writes: "He has been a tireless worker, who with his pen has kept alive the spirit of love for homeland in the Albanian colony of Misir [Egypt], and toiled greatly in the cause of Albania and the Albanian language." Papers that Kamsi had written were published both in Albania and abroad: for example, *Albania* was published in London in 1907, *Combiar Calendar* in Sofia in 1912, and *Përparimi* in Shkodra in 1915. A special Italian issue about Albania, *Corriere della Puglia*, was published in 1917. Finally, the textbooks he had written continued to be used by students for thirty years (1915-1945) until the new regime had them removed in 1945 during the installation of its communist dictatorship.

Three years before his death, the distinguished Kolë Kamsi was awarded the "Order of the Flag" and after the dictatorship was finally toppled, he was awarded the title "People's Teacher." He died on February 25, 1960 and interred in a great ceremony organized and attended by Albania's most prominent intellectuals, representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Academy of Sciences of Tirana, the Pedagogical Institute, the State Gymnasium, and many students, who accompanied the funeral cortege to the sound of the city band and the singing of the national anthem, while carrying wreaths of flowers along the main boulevard.

The well-known writer Petro Marko described his teacher as a "silent man, but a great worker. He taught languages, grammar, reading and composition. I can personally affirm how well he taught us the Albanian language... and our poetry, our historiography, and our culture." Friends remember him similarly as a man working in silence, consistently and tirelessly. They remember him dedicating his life to education without

expecting to be honored, rewarded or glamorized for it. Kamsi's son Karl lost his father about 50 years ago, but remembers him as a modest man:

Father always stayed in the shadows. Even when photographs were taken of him engaging in various activities, you'd never see him taking center stage, you'd find him somewhere in the corner of the picture. At home he was calm, quiet and talked little.

Karl Kamsi was only a child when his father died and so the image of his father consists of fragments of memory and ultimately a vague portrait. After all, his father's career began over a century ago. The son explains: My father "started working as a teacher in 1907, yet even today everyone I meet asks me about him. He was appreciated because of his simplicity, even though that isn't what makes one famous." People remember his father as a humble man of few words, even though he had worked with such illustrious figures as Eqrem Çabej and Aleksandër Xhuvani. When asked whether his father had feared the regime or persecution at a time when many other intellectuals like himself were being arrested, imprisoned and forgotten, Karl Kamsi replied:

I think, he was not afraid. My father was pure and genuine, even though my uncle, my father's brother-in-law, was convicted by the regime. My father was saved by his silence. He knew he couldn't criticize the state because he spoke for the entire family and not just himself. He worked rather than talked forcing the state to concentrate on his merits. He worked right up until the last few days of his life. He fell ill working in Tirana and returned to Shkodra. He was on a bed regime for a month. Then later he died.

Kolë Kamsi is survived by son, Karl, and daughter, Terezina; his other son, Paolin, did not survive his father. Kolë Kamsi's name is still remembered in Shkodra. The street of the Kamsi family is the "street of books" again.

Dignity among authoritarians

Even though he lived the rest of his life with a blemished reputation and continued surveillance, he had succeeded in defending as best as he knew how his friends, his dignity, and his family.

Petra Qafoku was 28 years old when he returned to Albania from the Sapienza University of Rome with a degree in Mining Engineering. His studies had followed the arc of World War II. He began his studies at the beginning of the war in Bucharest and completed them in Rome just as the war was coming to an end. Like the rest of his compatriots, he yearned to rebuild his ruined country.

Petra was orphaned at a young age, and despite a wealthy family background, he had inherited neither property nor assets. Since he graduates from high school with excellent grades, relatives help subsidize his studies abroad. After graduation, he returns to his native hometown of Berat. He could have stayed in post-war Rome and had a better life, but love of homeland and the spiritual climate created by like-minded intellectuals who cared about Albania's future exert an irresistible pull on the young Qafoku.

Petra's idealism is obvious considering the fact that he's under no illusions about just what the Soviet model entails. In a neighbouring country he gets access to literature describing the climate of persecution in the Soviet Union. Despite the rosy picture that Soviet propaganda depicts about life in the U.S.S.R., the educated young Qafoku certainly understands that beyond the great sounding ideas lies a different reality and that one day the truth about the Communist ideology will surface. And it does not take long. By the end of 1944, the military tribunals begin. Albert Nikolla (whose study serves as the basis for this story) considers Qafoku's arrival in Albania as nothing less than heroic, and the idealistic Petra immediately sets to work in the newly established interim government.

The engineer's focus is construction and the economy. The regime has great need for foreign currency, for which it must grow its export sector. At the

end of 1945, therefore, Qafoku is sent to the Selenica Mine to restore production to its previous level, which was destroyed during the war. His expertise is also required in Kuçova, where workers were still working with pickaxes and spades. Lack of machinery was making the realization of goals more difficult.

Despite the fact that the regime needs its highly trained and educated class of workers, it is suspicious of its existent specialists; it considers them "old-timers." It needs them for the time being but it does not trust them. It has not had a chance to indoctrinate them with Communist ideals that would reflect the face of the new regime - the winners of the war. And so, inevitably, despite his extraordinary professional devotion to his work, Petraq Qafoku, like countless other working members of the educated class, begins to experience difficulties with elements of State Security. The regime puts him under surveillance.

One November day in 1946, the National Cinema in Tirana broadcasts the trial of the engineers accused of sabotaging work on the Maliq swamp, not yet drained at this point. Qafoku's colleagues are found guilty of deliberate failure to complete assigned tasks. Documents that are placed at the disposal of the Authority for Information on former State Security files reveal an unimaginable level of lies, deceit, ignorance, intrigue, corruption and the downright evil of investigators, prosecutors, and judges. A year later on September 18, 1947 Petraq Qafoku, the 31-year-old engineer on the Maliq site, is arrested in Tirana. The minutes of his trial indicate that he is being charged with sabotage, collaboration with the regime's adversaries and the implementation of their designs against the nation of Albania:

In its Communique No. 242, the military tribunal presents to the court the minutes prepared by the State Security Section of Tirana accusing the defendant Petraq Qafoku of getting a Fascist education [and for being an active member of the Fascist Party during the Italian occupation of Albania]. He was in-

involved with engineers Taraskoni, Zyber and others in doing their utmost to sabotage the project and inflict financial loss, in violation of the orders of the organization's agents.

The allegations against him all point to the same source: namely, his studies in Italy, which his adversaries take as proof that Qafoku embraced the Fascist culture and actively propagated it. According to investigators, Qafoku "was in communication with [Albanian] political reactionaries who had escaped abroad and that while in Italy, he received contacts and letters addressed to reactionary elements in our country." Due to his acquaintance with Italian engineer Taraskoni and Professor Stanislav Zyber, he was accused of being encouraged to create obstacles and wreak damage on the Kuçova work site.

Incidental conversations he might have had during those three years in the homeland are seen by investigators as conspiracies against the Communist government. They claim that Qafoku "held meetings of a political nature with various seditious elements working in the mine and sabotaged production on the construction site in Selenica." They go on to say that Qafoku lacks the moral predisposition to render an ideological contribution to the building of socialism in Albania - which the engineer has himself admitted with reckless sincerity. Needless to say, taking courses at an Italian university during Fascist times as a student does not automatically make you a Fascist. The logic of that should make one laugh, if it didn't lead to such tragic consequences. Petraq Qafoku understands that a prison sentence is inevitable. That is why he is no longer guarded or defensive. With scathing sarcasm, he tells his interrogators what they want to hear - thus disarming the interrogator. So when Petraq is asked whether his duty as an Albanian was to stand and fight the Fascists that occupied the country or return to the cradle of Fascism in Rome as he had done, Qafoku replies, "well, of course, my duty was to remain in Albania as did my friends and participate in the National Liberation Move-

ment, but I did the contrary, I returned to the university of Fascist Rome; it reveals a bad attitude, very terrible of me." The dialogue between the defendant and the investigator highlight not only the drama being played out, but also the grotesque aspect of the regime. In the opinion of historian Nikolla, Qafoku's admission of guilt on some of the facts presented leads to his sentence but does not amount to a death sentence. Nevertheless, countless attempts are made to break him. He is denied food for twenty-four days and allowed a minimal daily supply of water. According to friends and family witnesses, he is threatened with death during the investigation. He is detained for an entire year in the Investigation Office - all done in the interest of getting him to testify against his colleagues as agents of a foreign intelligence service;

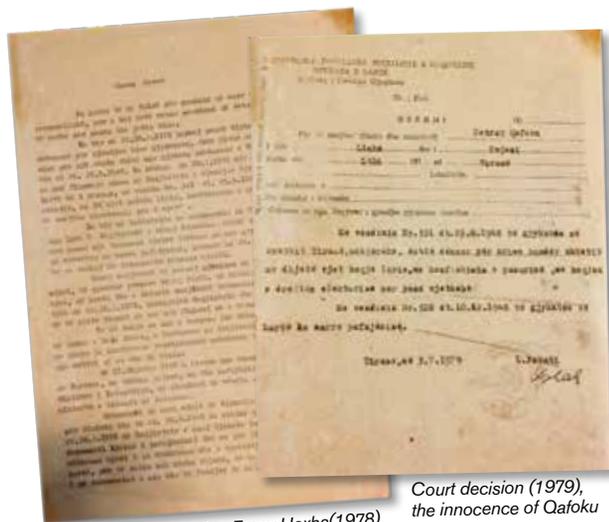
But Qafoku remains steadfast in his honesty. He refuses to deliver false testimonies; he refuses to sign any documents implicating his colleagues. Though he may have been indispensable to the regime in his professional capacity, he is not allowed to live as a free man. The pressure on him persists. Threatened or tortured, nothing breaks him, however. He refuses to confess to lies and inventions: he continues to maintain that he was not part of a cabal in Kuçova; that he did not receive any instructions nor hold any seditious meetings of a political nature; that he did not sabotage production at the construction site of Selenica. His only response is to reiterate: "I have done my utmost for the benefit of the people, right up till the day of my arrest on September 18, 1947" He is sentenced to ten years imprisonment despite his claims of innocence and despite the fact that the judicial system has not found any evidence to support its charge against him.

After Qafoku is notified of the court's decision, the regime comes to realize that it needs his technical expertise. Another judicial session is held, this time in December 1948. The defendant is found not-guilty. There is very little information available cover-



Petra Qafoku with his spouse / Family Archive

“They locked me in this prison to suffer. But I hold no grudge against them... in fact, I am sincerely grateful to them”



Letter addressed to Enver Hoxha(1978)

Court decision (1979), the innocence of Qafoku



**He had managed to live
his circumscribed life
without ever depriving
anyone else of their
freedom**

ing the period between the two decisions. Nothing is known about the reason for the reversal. What changed in three months? What does Qafoku himself think about what happened? All that is known is that after Petraq is set free, he returns to work.

However, the pressure continues. Surveillance at the construction site continues. A mistrustful attitude of party leaders against him continues. He knows that despite having been found innocent at the end, his reputation has been tarnished. Even though he is no longer in prison, he is often offended by his co-workers. At one time in the past he had been awarded a "Distinguished Engineer" medal. Now he's being downgraded; he is awarded the "Distinguished Worker" medal. He is being recognized not as a certified engineer but as a common labourer.

Friends that knew him when he was alive recall that he was an extraordinary person: "A man of great natural authority, not authoritarian like the people around him." His authority originated from his knowledge and dignity not from his rank. Unfortunately, his wife and two sons also suffered as a result of the blemish that had been placed on Qafoku himself. They too were placed under surveillance by State Intelligence. In fact, thirty years later in 1978, the engineer's son, Lluka, who was in the process of preparing a job resume for himself, discovered that his father still appeared in court records as a convicted person. His not-guilty verdict had not been registered. That fact alone could prevent Lluka from ever landing a job. In the face of such absurdity, the 62-year old Petraq Qafoku is forced to humble himself and send a petition to the dictator, Enver Hoxha, himself, the only one who could put this sorry saga to rest: Comrade Enver,

Please forgive me for daring to address you personally, but I do so only because I have a problem that has a great bearing on my life and work. My son had requested a document on my judicial status acknowledging that I have been deemed innocent of the charge that had once been brought against me....

[My son] was issued a document certifying that I still appeared in the Register of Judicial Status of the Supreme Court as a convicted person.... I am writing this letter to you so that my children would not have to be confronted their entire lives with the tarnished reputation of [their father] as a traitor.

Qafoku never received a reply to his letter, but one year later on July 3, 1979, a single sentence was added to the certificate that registered his previous judicial status: "Upon the Supreme Court decision No. 328, dated 10/12/48, [Petraq Qafoku] is found innocent."

As of this writing, Petraq is no longer among us, but his two sons have followed in their father's honourable footsteps: one works at the Academy of Sciences in Tirana; the other works for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Petraq Qafoku had bestowed on his sons his life as an example to be followed. Even though he lived the rest of his life with a blemished reputation and continued surveillance, he had succeeded in defending as best as he knew how his friends, his dignity, and his family. Even more heroically, he had managed to live his circumscribed life without ever depriving anyone else of their freedom.

Surviving, from Illuminists to marxism

The historian who had once espoused the spirit of Paris was now obligated to write history that was in line with the Marxist school of historical thinking, which he was not familiar with.

“It is a noble deed to liberate a people from feudalism, to set the farmer free and to save the state.” Even as a student, Petraq Pepo was an idealist with noble sentiments. In a school report, he describes the journey he took with his high school classmates from Korça to Tirana intending to topple King Zog and his regime. He emphasized the fact that it was their ideals that convinced them to abandon their classes and take to arms. From an early age, Petraq Pepo, the oldest of eight children, born in 1903 in a house on a cobble-stoned street, in the vicinity of the house belonging to renowned patriot Themistokli Gërmenji, appears to be a bold opponent of tyranny.

At fourteen, he is among the first 36 students to register at the French Lyceum and among the first nine to graduate from the school in 1925. Later, he becomes editor-in-chief of the literary magazine

Shpresa (Hope) in which he publishes translations of the French Illuminists - Rousseau and Voltaire - as well as the translations of others like Moliere.

Despite his support for the June Movement and Fan Noli that ousted King Zog (who managed to retake power), the government approves Pepo's request for financial aid to study abroad. He attends the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris and four years later graduates with Licences-Lettres in History and Geography. In 1928, the Albanian student draws the attention of Mario Roques, a specialist in Balkan Studies. Research done by Pepo's son, Leonidha Pepo, shows that Petraq becomes a lecturer in the Albanian language and in the History and Geography of Albania at the University of Lyon.

Upon his return to Korça, Pepo conducts lectures at the Korça Lyceum on ancient Greek and on the History and Geography of Albania. There is little information



are not found in either the state or family archives. After the end of the Second World War, Pepo never - not even within the family circle - talks about supporting or cooperating with Nosi. Having the Special Military Court proclaim Lef Nosi an "enemy of the people" and then sentence him to death puts at risk everyone who has worked with Nosi. Ignorance or silence are two options facing the professor after World War II.

He is an interesting character, because he never showed any enthusiasm or hostility toward the regime. He tried to fit in, but sometimes his rebellious nature did not allow him to do so



Petraq Pepo / Family Archive

about his work in the Thirties. Research at the Central State Archives shows that on several occasions Pepo asks the Ministry of Education to allow him to attend conferences in Austria, France and Italy as well as permission to conduct research. His projects include Athens, Paris, and the Holy See; however, there is no information that they are ever completed. During this time, he corresponds with such distinguished personalities of Albanian culture as Lef Nosi, Ilo Mitke Qafzezi and Mehdi Frashëri. Replies to the letters he sent to Nosi

While information is scarce about his professional activities during the Thirties, his bold opposition is on full display. Following the protests by the Korça Lyceum students in November 1939, Pepo is transferred to Elbasan High School. The Fascist authorities regard this Anti-Italian as someone who "encourages the uprising of students, to whom he talks with exaltation about France." The 36-year old is one of the few professors of the period who refuses to become a member of the National Fascist Party. In fact, given his impulsive nature, he does

not hide his objection to the propaganda of the Italian invaders, who see themselves as having liberated Albania from the “regime of dictator Zog” and feel that they can push ahead on Albania’s National issue.

According to the testimony of Pepo’s colleagues, such opposition to the Fascists’s premises, cause Pepo to be interned in Italy (1941) and imprisoned in Albania at Porto Palermo (1943). However, Sonila Boçi and Kristi Kolëçe, whose research provides the basis for this paper, found no evidence from any primary sources to corroborate the colleagues’ testimonies. Pepo’s son, Leonidha, says that his father was imprisoned because of what he had said in a meeting with Francesco Jakomoni, an envoy of the Italian King. Pepo had said to the envoy: “Who do you think you’re talking to about Fascism? Who do you think you’re telling that Fascism liberated Albania? Your military troops in our country mean only one thing - invasion; Fascism is not about constructing anything, it’s about enslaving.” His internment in 1941 had come as a result of his reaction to a statement made by the Minister of Education, Xhevat Korça, who was fond of saying that “the independence of Albania is assured [because] Albania is protected by Mussolini.” Pepo responded by saying that on the contrary, “Albania is subjugated by Fascism....”

Little is known about his life in forced confinement or even its duration. After he is released, he teaches in Korça and publishes papers in the Albanian press, including the journal *Shkendija* (Spark) headed by Ernest Kolëiqi, former Minister of Education in the post-Fascist period. Professor Pepo does not mention these involvements which took place during the Second World War. He keeps his own counsel regarding his intellectual activities, and does not mention his acquaintance with Lef Nosi. After 1944, the regime stigmatized Nosi and Kolëiqi and persecuted their friends and colleagues.

So how can the student who once objected to King Zog and the professor who contradicted the

envoy of the Italian King and the Minister under the Fascists remain silent during the long period of Communism and even teach Marxism-Leninism? How can the young man who opposed tyranny feel so intimidated as to succeed in keeping his impulsive temperament under control?

Tirana surrenders to the Communists in 1948. The capital witnesses executions and imprisonments of legislators and intellectuals. Numerous public trials in cinema halls send Albanian citizens into a panic. News of accusations made and sentences imposed are broadcast on the radio. Tension sweeps the country, and hope is replaced by fear. The freedom Albanians had obtained during hard times is lost as a result of government decisions.

During the Communist period, Petraq Pepo, one of the founders of the Institute of Sciences, co-authors an official textbook on the history of Albania. At the very time that the first half of the book is being deliberated, this westernized 45-year old is engaged in teaching a course in Marxism-Leninism. Several years later, having already retired, he advises young scholars not only to be scrupulous in their scientific endeavors while examining documents, working on translations, and doing research but also to convey a “Marxist-Leninist flavor” to their intellectual output. It seems that the executions and sentencing of people he knew and had worked with push Pepo into politicizing science, into relying on the “magic” power of ideology to work its charms when doing science in a dictatorship. Uncertainty had tainted the atmosphere of an isolated, Communist Albania, where nothing was connected any more to the principles of France, where he had once studied. No one is allowed to leave the country any longer and no one is allowed to think differently.

Other than attending to assignments, Pepo makes no effort to assert any kind of ideological position personally nor show any devotion toward the regime. In the aftermath of Albania’s liberation from Fascism, Pepo

marries the daughter of the former Minister of Justice during the Zog era, a move that the regime does not approve of. Even though he is not afraid of expressing his opinion, Pepo does his utmost to master Marxist ideology. In 1955, he registers for courses in Marxism and Leninism at the Communist Party School, named "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin," where he excels in his studies.

Kristi Kolëçe and Sonila Boçi offer no definitive conclusions that would explain how ana-political intellectual like Pepo, educated in Western values, who is both intelligent and ambitious, can allow himself to be integrated into a regime in which Marxist-Leninist indoctrination is the basis of everything. At best, the historians merely raise the issue: "Petraq Pepo is an interesting character in relation to this matter, because he never showed any enthusiasm or hostility toward the regime. He tried to fit in, but sometimes his rebellious nature did not allow him to do so."

In fact, scholars in general find it difficult to talk about Pepo's role in the Communist regime in Albania, since Pepo showed no political preferences, neither left nor right. Even though he had once opposed the King and then the Fascists, he was now an a-political intellectual who had to live in harmony with the system. A communist education, therefore, became a tool for survival. The historian who had once espoused the spirit of Paris was now obligated to write history that was in line with the Marxist school of historical thinking, which he was not familiar with.

There are no documents that actually state the reasons for his decision to immerse himself in Marxism. But a data analysis of his activity as a member of the Institute of Sciences discloses that for a historian during the Communist era, knowledge of Marxist theory was a key condition for employment, irrespective of the period of history he worked in.

The data analysis also points to some of the circumstances that helped Pepo survive. First and fore-

most was his acquaintance with Enver Hoxha, who was once a student of his and later a colleague. Both



were sympathetic to the French revolution, but Hoxha was a fan of the Commune of Paris and the Jacobins, while Pepo's idols were the Illuminists. Second, strong anti-fascist feelings, caused by his imprisonment and internment during World War Two, had secured his support of the Communist government. Third, he never expressed any disapproval of the regime. Fourth, his field of study involved a knowledge of the early relations between Greece and Albania, a subject of great importance to the regime, when it came to reconfirming Albania's independence, her borders and her governance. It seems that the Communist government saw him as one of the few intellectuals it could trust.

In July 1946, Professor Pepo is one of two historians that are part of the Albanian delegation headed up by the Communist leadership at the Paris Peace Conference in order to protect Albanian territory from Greek territorial claims. Leonidha Pepo affirms that Enver Hoxha chose Pepo himself. The fact that Albania succeeds in preserving its borders and repelling the claims of its neighbors is due to the contributions of Petraq Pepo and Aleks Buda. Today it is believed that Albania's dignified presentation at the conference must have affected the later development of Pepo's career.

Despite his “silent contract” with the regime, which involves keeping a moderate distance from dissidents and intellectuals out of favor with the government, Pepo still has some youthful rebellion left in him. At work meetings, he is one of the people who is not afraid to express his opinion. During the 1948 annual analysis, he criticizes the leadership responsible for its lack of transparency. Later, he does not hesitate to propose studies on topics that used to be considered difficult and problematic: studies on the Pellazge inhabitants, for example, and Albanian antiquity. There are also cases in which he raises problem issues such as the relation of science to teaching, which happens in a meeting at the Institute of Sciences in 1952. Pepo “discussed the need for cooperation and help from the Ministry of Education with regard to the compilation of textbooks, the organization of expeditions, and the support of scholars of the Ministry in their original works.” Not all of Pepo’s proposals are supported by the head of the Institute and senior political heads. This might have forced the ambitious researcher to find a way to become more involved in the government’s decision-making process.

Boçi and Kolëçe claim that the period between 1947 and 1954 can be considered the years of integration for the man who had been educated in France and did not see communist ideology as his personal cause. But apart from his efforts to be accommodating, he continues with his intellectual pursuits, which include producing important works on the history of Albania, translating documents from Ancient Greek, assisting with the translation of the testaments of Iljaz Bej Mirahori into Albanian, uncovering important data about Korça under Ottoman rule as well as being involved in the organization of the economic and social life of that period. Unfortunately, his professional translations suffered from his imposition of Marxist ideology on historical material. According to Medieval scholar, Andi Rëmbeci, the parts of his translations that ran counter to the ideology of the time were removed. It seems that Pepo had made some compromises for the sake of being allowed to continue working with histor-

ical texts.

His son, Leonidha, remembers with amusement and in fond detail the long hours Pepo spent at his desk: My father was really good at making use of archives. He used to work for hours, about eight a day, and then after coming home from work, he continued working at home. He did not understand how a day could pass without work...no one used to enter our sitting room, because father used to sit there when he was working at home. The entire room is filled with materials he used in his studies...

Pepo’s contributions win the praise of the regime. They confer the Medal of Memory on him in 1950 and two “Orders of Labor” (1958, 1962). He retires in 1968 but does not stop doing research. Nor does he stop seeking praise and recognition by the state. The State Central Archive has his correspondence with Enver Hoxha, whom he asks for help in securing the Award of the Republic (1974) for himself and obtaining the title of “Professor” (1972). “I have intense energy,” Pepo would write, “I am willing to work. Time has not defeated me yet, and I have asked the Institute of History to hire me as a retired professor.” Pepo’s correspondence with Enver Hoxha testifies to the powerful control exerted by the state on science. On his 70th birthday, the Presidium of the People’s Assembly awards Petraq Pepo the First Class Order of Naim Frashëri.

By the time he dies in 1984, he has received a number of prizes for work that remained under strict political control. In Albania, the effort had turned into a lifestyle. The Romanian intellectual Mihai Botez, who sought political asylum in the U.S., sums it up perfectly:

There is in existence a rather sad but perfectly valid concept - “the art of survival” under Communist rule. Even at its most dignified, it involves a combination of calculated subordination, personal management of outside criticism, tactical maintenance of a low profile, and the intelligent exploitation of opportunities. Certainly, for many western intellectuals, such strategies may seem strange

GJERGJ KOKOSHI

The price of opposing communism

An “uncompromising” man, he had the moral strength to surrender power voluntarily when he realized that it was destroying his country and the rights of its citizens.

In 1943, at a time when Tirana was experiencing invasion by two occupying powers in five years, Gjergj Kokoshi, age 39, joined the left-wing National Liberation Front. He was born in Shkodra in 1904, then left his hometown to study philosophy in Italy and France. In Paris he received his PhD in Literature, and in 1930 returned to Albania and worked as a high school teacher in Shkodra and Tirana. Circumstances and the negative influence of Italian Fascism in Albania, as well as his stance against the policies of King Zog, turned him into an anti-Zogist and anti-Fascist. As a result, when he was invited to the First Conference of Albanian Studies in 1940 to mark the establishment of Royal Studies, he refused to attend, citing health issues.

With the start of World War II, Kokoshi affiliates himself with the Communist partisans and their revolutionary movement. He is involved in matters of propaganda, especially the dissemination of anti-Fascist ideas among students. Eventually, he leaves the classroom and joins the armed resistance against the invad-

ers in the northern Albanian town of Diber and even succeeds in rising to the rank of Colonel.

With the establishment of the Communist regime in Albania and his visibility at the Permet Congress, Kokoshi's reputation soars. The philosopher with a doctorate in literature is elected to serve on the General Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council, which was a governance structure at that time. Historian Enriketa Pandelejmoni (whose study is the basis of this article) says by rights he should have been proposed as a chargé d'affaires for education during the May Congress, since his name can be found on an unsigned document. Officially, however, Kokoshi is appointed to the Anti-Fascist and National Liberation Council on June 20, 1944. Enver Hoxha himself introduces Gjergj with great enthusiasm as a participant in the National Liberation Movement and calls him “a man who has not made compromises and is competent and experienced in the field of education.” Four months later at the Berat Council meeting, Kokoshi is appointed Minister of Education in the provisional government led by Hoxha.



Indermar

Kam pregatitur këtë konference:

Shqipëria dhe banorët e saj gjatë periodes proto-istorike

Pikat kryesore

A. Perioda proto-istorike

B. Si ishte bota gjatë periodes proto-istorike si në pikë

krahas dhe në pikë krahas

C. Përfundime të përgjithshme të kësaj periodes

1940

The Sigurimi file on former legislator Selaudin Toto reveals that during the war and well before the Communists had actually taken power, Kokoshi was already showing signs of dissatisfaction with the extremist elements in the Communist Party. But for the time being the former Professor of Literature overlooks his scruples and organizes the Congress of Anti-Fascist Teachers, compiling an educational platform for the Communist regime. Unsurprisingly, Kokoshi's understanding of education clashes with Sejfulla Malëshova's. Kokoshi emphasizes quality in education, whereas Malëshova aims simply to educate as many people as possible without regard for quality. Kokoshi also finds himself doubting the competence of the people in charge of the Ministry of People's Culture and is disturbed over the cut in funding for education, which is reduced from the previous 13% of the 1945 budget. Kokoshi starts to feel out of place among his compatriots in the National Liberation Movement. Having defeated the Fascists and the Nazis, they are now in the process of consolidating their power in ways that strike Kokoshi as undemocratic. He is of the opinion that the National Liberation Movement belongs to all its members and not 100 percent to the extreme Left. Like himself, there are other moderates in the movement, who are in despair over the fact that the extreme left-wing has hijacked the movement and is taking over the government.

After nearly three months in office as Minister of Education, Professor Kokoshi realizes that given the current direction in which things are going, his vision for Albanian education will never be realized. Therefore, on January 13, 1945, he resigns. Malëshova, who is appointed Minister of Culture and Propaganda, eventually becomes Minister of Education as well. Kokoshi remains a member of the National Liberation Council, which in 1945 is renamed the Democratic Front, but he voices his opposition to the new electoral law, which prevents other political parties from participating in elections. His policy regarding electoral laws is in agreement with the condition set by Albania's international allies, like the United States and Britain, for recognizing Albania's new government: namely, the hold-

ing of free and democratic elections - a policy the Communist regime opposes. In local elections, for example, it is the Communist Party that appoints candidates, choosing only the ones that have been "war-tested, determined and loyal to the interests of the people" for inclusion in election lists. The Communist Party is in the process of taking control of the state by, first, eliminating the "representatives of rejection" - like Gjergj Kokoshi, for example, who is discovering that he's not electable. In May 1945, in a local election in Lagjia e Re in Tirana, Kokoshi receives only 17 votes.

By December 2, 1945, the date of the national election, three separate laws are passed that limit the holding of free elections: the Electoral Law, the Law on Constitutional Assembly, and the Law on Voter Lists. The communist Democratic Front has outlawed the establishment of other political parties. According to historian Sonila Boçi, the entire administrative apparatus - from the voting commissions all the way down to the voting monitors - is now in the hands of the Communist Party.

Dissatisfaction among the moderates is widespread. Kokoshi, while he was still Minister of Education and member of the FANÇ Council, argued against the passage of the laws, claiming they were incompatible with democratic principles. Even after their approval, he criticized the measure as undermining the establishment of a democratic and pluralistic society. He noted that in post-war conditions, the law prevented educated and qualified candidates from contributing to the democratic process by depriving candidates that are outside the Liberation Front adequate time to organize and present their candidacies. He stressed that this ran counter to principles of liberal democracy. Even after he resigns as Minister of Education, but continues to be a member of the FANÇ Council, he speaks out against authoritarian measures such as the ones being taken against the families of war criminals. Though he says it might be justifiable to seize the property of those convicted of war crimes, he can't see the justice of impoverishing their families, especially in cases where the war criminal has already died. He even

recommends that care be taken in the levying of taxes on war profits since it seems to be turning into a nightmare for law-abiding merchants.

But no one is listening, and fear is rampant. Kokoshi realizes that Albania has fallen into the clutches of a dictatorship and he does not see himself on the Party's lists as a candidate for any future elections. Even certain elements within the general population can be heard grumbling about the Front. Gjergj Kokoshi decides to reconsider his place within the National Liberation Front and considers the possibility of leaving. Recognizing a sympathizer, anti-communists groups get in contact with him urging him to join them. Though he shares some of their politics and is himself upset about the way elections are being organized, he is afraid of campaigning against the Front. Nevertheless, he meets several times with various intellectuals like Shefqet Beja, Selaudin Toto, Riza Dani, Kosta Boshnjaku, Kolë Kuçali, Irfan Majuni, and Musine e Salim Kokalari, hoping that America would support the establishment of a clandestine party running on principles of western democracy, and that such a party would reach disgruntled social groups and people disaffected by the new regime: merchants, property owners, landowners, and intellectuals who oppose a government of the proletariat.

His fellow centrists advise him to operate within the confines of the Democratic Front, but Kokoshi proposes forming an independent party in which he would appear as a candidate in the December 2nd elections. Needless to say, a political organization such as the one he proposes is going to be pressed for time given the newly passed electoral laws and, therefore, draws a lot of criticism even from his own political allies. Those who are in support of Kokoshi's proposal include the Social Democrat Musine Kokalari as well as the Monarchist Qenan Dibra. But organizing such a political party is no small matter considering the conditions of political terror that are permeating the country. Most notably, the "show trials" of March 1945 that are being orchestrated by the Communist Party initially against "war crim-

inals" and later against anti-communists in the North. Even though the situation does not favor political organizations that oppose the regime, the pressure of the international community, the allowance of foreign journalists at campaign rallies and voting places encourage the non-communists to appear with their lists of candidates. However, gathering enough signatures in order to place a candidate on the ballot is difficult given the time allowed. As a result, only 25-30 signatures are collected, an insufficient number to place Kokoshi on the electoral list. But the opposition forges ahead and on November 17, 1945 it appears under the name of "Democratic Union" - a coalition of the various political wings that are opposed to the Communist regime. At that time, Kokoshi is aware of the need to draft a party platform and submit a petition signed by several "decent people with a correct political attitude." The program he comes up with very much resembles that of the Democratic Front, which, as he points out, is precisely the problem with the current regime - the fact that it does not follow its own party policies.

One of Kokoshi's points of opposition pertains to the government's intention of merging Albania with Yugoslavia. Kokoshi argues that such a union is against the will of the Albanian people, who "wish that Albania remain an independent and sovereign nation; we have to defend such a country but without Gjirokastër and Korçë, there is no Albanian state." As to Albania's conflict with Yugoslavia over the Kosovo issue, he alone argues it be set aside for the time being "given that Yugoslavia is helping us defend our territorial integrity." According to historian Enriketa Pandelejmoni, Gjergj Kokoshi trusted the British and American presence in Albania and believed Albania's international allies could pressure the Communist regime into postponing elections. To the surprise of the participants at their clandestine meeting, he naively proposes that after he meets with British General Hodgson, the petition for postponing elections should be submitted to the Albanian government. Under different circumstances, Kokoshi's step-by-step approach to the formation of a

new party is logical; however, his timing is off.

Kokoshi's proposal is greeted with skepticism even by his political allies. They all know that if they inform the regime of the creation of this new party, they risk arrest, but as Kokoshi points out, they risked arrest the moment they created Democratic Union - the opposition party, which included the Monarchists, the Social Democrats, and the generally disgruntled. There is no disagreement, however, as to the leadership of the new party. Kokoshi is perceived to be the most appropriate person to lead the party for several reasons: for one thing, he had proven himself during the war while fighting at the front; then there are his management skills, his familiarity with the young, his service as Minister of Education, and his overall renown. His name resonated even with Albania's Western allies. In fact, he is the one to notify them of the intended creation of an opposition party, which will embrace several political wings each with its own individual platform and branches in the major cities.

Kokoshi tells the British that in the event of free elections, the opposition would win 20-30% of the vote, hence the need for British support. On November 20th, it is decided to inform the international embassies of the postponement of elections, the shape that the democratic regime would take in the wake of elections, and - depending on the will of the voters - the possible return to power of King Zog. In a subsequent meeting of the opposition, however, a memorandum is drafted stating that free elections are, after all, impossible, since many voters would be casting their ballots for the National Liberation Front out of fear. The memorandum, which Kokoshi drafts, goes on to summarize the political state of affairs in the country and introduces the alternatives offered by the opposition. It underscores the fact that the Communists had fought for a democratic system, and, in fact, promised one, which is why the youngest members of the electorate had never even considered the possibility of a Communist regime in Albania. Kokoshi reminds the foreign powers that the Democratic Front does not allow the creation of alternative political parties and is staunchly

against any political group detaching itself from the Democratic Front. Those who dare to stand in opposition to the Democratic Front are "accused of being saboteurs, fascists, and reactionaries." The memo goes on to argue that the three powers of government - legislative, executive and judicial - which are designed to remain separate in order to guarantee a regime of political freedoms are not independent bodies in Albania's current government. Similarly, freedom of speech and freedom of religion are being "trampled upon." Kokoshi also condemns the communists for the rampant murder of people in the early days of the regime and denounces the exorbitant cost of maintaining an excessively large army and too many people in administration. Finally, he criticizes the Law on Agriculture for nationalizing most of the farm land leaving farmers so little land that they can no longer make a living from it.

The opposition explains that it is not an enemy of Communism but merely a political opponent calling attention to the fact that people's rights are being violated by a despotic government. As an alternative, the opposition offers the immediate installation of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and protection under the law and in the courts through duly elected judges. If elected, the opposition will also seek membership of the country in international organizations, friendly relations with allies and neighbors, territorial integrity, material improvement of the living conditions of the working class, and the inclusion of workers and peasants in Albania's political life. Since the memorandum is addressed to foreign embassies in the country, the opposition is obviously eager to inform the world about the real political situation that is playing out in their nation.

However, the reply from the British officers, Palmer and Arnott, to whom the memorandum is delivered is disappointing. They reply that it is "too late" to postpone any elections, but that they will pass the memorandum on to General Hodgson. Later Lieutenant Colonel Palmer and Major Arnott would deny making any concrete statements to the opposition. They admit

to having secret meetings with the opposition and to being delivered a memorandum but that the memorandum implied the Communist regime would be coming into power through fair elections and a democratic and peaceful process. They do remember that the memorandum requests the British come to the support of the opposition should a large number of its members be arrested. But most significantly, what Major Arnott claimed to remember is that the opposition appeared divided, that their plans seemed weak and ineffectual, and that he got the impression that the opposition would not preserve the confidentiality of their talks.

Given the failure of the opposition's appeal to the British, the Democratic Union considers an uprising against the Communist regime with a protest demonstration scheduled prior to the November 28th elections in order to have it coincide with the Albanian Day of Independence holiday. It would include an address to the people. However, neither uprising nor protest takes place. The would-be demonstrators fear government surveillance and choose instead to distribute leaflets condemning the current regime. The foreign embassies stand by and do not take any steps to have the elections postponed. Disappointment and grief over the passivity of their international allies is huge. In 1972, Musine Kokalari would tell her nephew in secret that they had known that arrests were inevitable and that convictions awaited the members of the opposition who would be accused of attempting to "overthrow the government." Among the first to be arrested in January 1946 is Gjergj Kokoshi himself and Musine Kokalari. By the time the arrests ended, 37 members of the opposition would be imprisoned. Their trial would begin six months later in Tirana on June 17, 1946.

The trial before the Supreme Military Court takes place at the Cinema Nacional in the presence of local journalists and a highly selective audience. It lasts 15 days and is broadcast on the radio so that people all over the country can hear it. The defendants are accused of serious crimes against the state: attempted overthrow of the government, soliciting intervention by foreign imperialists, as well

as forced suicides and attempted murders against the leaders of the regime. Gjergj Kokoshi is also accused of recruiting elements hostile to the regime, instructing them in government sabotage, teaching them how to address reports to foreign embassies, and exploiting the National Liberation Front for opposition purposes.

Professor Kokoshi - humanist, PhD, former colonel, former minister and former head of the opposition - indicates the wish to speak in his own defense. Had he done so it might have sounded something like this: the Communist government did not represent the will of the people and so I joined the opposition. However, since Kokoshi knew that this was a "show trial" and that defense was pointless, he decides not to speak and merely inquires - "So which law of the state have I violated?"

Sentencing takes place on July 2, 1946. Most of the 37 or so defendants are sentenced to anywhere from 8-30 years in prison. Eight are executed. Kokoshi is given the maximum prison sentence - 30 years. Thirty years of compulsory work, loss of civic and political rights, and confiscation of property. After six months in Tirana, he is sent to the high security prison of Burrel. With all its members arrested, the Democratic Union does not participate in the October 2, 1945 elections.

Kokoshi died in Burrel Prison in 1961, having completed a "mere" fifteen of his thirty year prison sentence. He was 57 years old. He had suffered from tuberculosis, which prison conditions had severely exacerbated. The last eighteen years of his life, from the time he entered the Second World War as a Communist partisan, were like a journey toward death. He'd never married, had no children and became embroiled in the politics of the country, which given the turbulent times, destined him for a tragic end. Gjergj Kokoshi is a perfect example of a principled man. He had the moral strength to surrender power voluntarily when he realized that it was destroying his country and the rights of its citizens. Enver Hoxha had indeed spoken the truth in this instance, when he called Kokoshi an "uncompromising" man.

