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THE ALBANIAN ATHEIST STATE 1967-1991

by

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September 1997**

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS
in
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History knows Scanderbeg as "Athleta Christi" (Pope Nicholas V) whatever his actual religious beliefs may have been. He married an Albanian Orthodox princess. Zog married a Catholic Hungarian noblewoman. Mother Teresa, the first Albanian ever to receive an international prize, is a Catholic Kosovar-- and the Kosovars are close to one-hundred percent Moslem. Yet it was an Albanian born to a Bektashi family who proclaimed Albania the first atheistic country in the world. Let a person fond of rebuses try to make sense of these paradoxes.

--Arshi Pipa, The Politics of Language in Socialist Albania

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

THE ALBANIAN ATHEIST STATE 1967-1991

by Amelia Gallagher

This thesis is an historical examination of the most radical anti-religious policy in Eastern Europe under Communism. It will document the Albanian government's religious policy during the Communist period between 1944-1991, devoting special attention to the policy initiated during the Albanian Cultural Revolution (1967) which outlawed all religious practice of Islam and Christianity, public and private, for a period of twenty-three years. Historical factors which had bearing on the Albanian regime's militant atheism will be surveyed. The ideology of the Albanian Communist Party, the main component of which is nationalism, will be cited as the foundation of the "World's First Atheist State." This research will further address the vulnerabilities of Albanian religious institutions, making possible their abolition by the state, as well as the significant amount of popular resistance to the state's official atheism, ensuring the return of Islam and Christianity to Albanian society.

ABSTRAIT DE THESE
L'ETAT ATHEE ALBANAIS
par Amelia Gallagher

Cette thèse est un analyse historique de l'institution politique anti-religieuse la plus radicale en Europe de l'Est sous le régime communiste. Cela va documenter la politique religieuse du gouvernement albanais pendant l'époque communiste de 1944-1991, avec une attention particulière à la politique qui fut amorcée durant la révolution culturelle albanaise qui a proscrit toute la pratique religieuse, islamique et chrétienne, publique et privée, durant une période de vingt-trois ans. Les facteurs qui ont influencé l'athéisme militant du régime albanais vont être étudiés. L'idéologie du Partie communiste albanaise, dont l'élément principal est le nationalisme, sera cité comme la fondation du <<première État athée au monde.>> Ces recherches dresseront les faiblesses des établissements religieux albanais, et leur abolition par l'État. Également, il sera démontré l'importante puissance de la résistance populaire contre l'athéisme officiel de l'État, assurant le retour de l'islam et du christianisme à la société albanaise.

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INTRODUCTION

Albania is the homeland to four different faiths. Its port city of Durres on the Adriatic is one of the world's most ancient bishoprics. The Schism of 1054 resulted in a mixed population of Byzantine Orthodox and Roman Catholics. Five centuries of Ottoman suzerainty ended with Albania emerging from its nationalist period as the only European state to have a majority of Muslims, with the exception of Turkey. Like their Christian compatriots, Albanian Muslims are also divided between Sunnis and *shi'i* Bektashis. A rough figure of the religious composition of the country in the twentieth century is as follows: 56% Sunni Muslim, 12% Bektashi Muslim, 21% Albanian Orthodox Christian and 11% Roman Catholic.¹ However, this picture has a significant qualification. From the period 1967-1991, official statistics from the Albanian government asserted that the population was 100% atheist.

This research is concerned with a particular segment of the history of Albanian religion-- its abolition. Following the Communist Party's takeover of Albania during World War II, the four religious institutions experienced various degrees of repression similarly witnessed by religious institutions throughout Eastern Europe. However, the Albanian Communist Party surpassed all anti-religious policies with the implementation of the measures taken during the Cultural

Revolution between 1966-1969. All religious institutions, without exception, were closed and all religious practice, public and private, was banned. The Albanian leadership claimed to have created the "World's First Atheist State."

The atheist period (1967-1991) must be understood within the context of Albanian history. This analysis will view the campaign of atheization as a phenomenon of Albanian history as much as it was a phenomenon of Eastern Europe under Communism. The atheist ideologues relied little on Marxism-Leninism, but rather employed Albanian history to achieve the aims of the Cultural Revolution-- specifically the aim to completely eliminate Albania's four religious institutions from public and private life.

Chapter I will survey the history of religion in Albania. Chapter II will examine the Communist period before the Cultural Revolution in which religious institutions were effectively put under government control. Chapter III will be an examination of the atheist period (1967-1991), from the Cultural Revolution until the ban of religion was lifted in Albania as part of the "Great Transformation" of Eastern Europe. Chapter IV will discuss the ideological culture of Albania during this period which motivated the state's atheist policy. This study will make reference to the vulnerabilities found in Albanian religion which made possible the abolition of their institutions. Elements also found in Albanian religion, both Christianity and Islam, will further be examined which ultimately rendered the twenty-three year atheist experiment a failure.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Two areas will be explored in this historical survey. The first is the large amount of conversions to Islam which occurred in Albania during the Ottoman period. This aspect of Albanian religious history contributed to the notion that the authentic Albanian is indifferent to religious matters-- a notion accepted by both the Albanian Labour Party (the Albanian Communist Party) and a school of Albaniologists. The second period in Albanian history that deserves attention is the nationalist era of the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries. This period gave rise to the belief that Albania's religious pluralism was, and continued to be, a threat to Albania's national integrity. This survey is intended to give a religious-historical background to the atheist state, with reference both to the Party's interpretation and the interpretation of Albanian scholars.

PRE-CHRISTIAN ILLYRIAN CIVILIZATION

The Illyrian people established one of the first permanent settlements on the Balkan peninsula roughly 1,000 years before the common era. Evidence of the link between ancient Illyrians and modern Albanians lies in the field of linguistics. The Albanian language occupies a separate branch on the Indo-

European language tree. Most Balkan scholars accept the theory that the Illyrians did not disappear, but evolved into ethnic Albanians in the early Middle Ages.² The Illyrian connection was dear to the Communist Party of Albania, which, since it gained power in 1945, actively sponsored scholarship to further establish this relationship.³ The link between ancient Illyria and modern Albania gives the latter the prestige of antiquity and a culture which antedates Christianity and Islam, facilitating the government's disassociation from the two religions.

In the third century BCE, the Illyrians formed a kingdom around Shkodra (in northern Albania) from which they accosted Roman ships on the Adriatic. Rome responded by imposing its dominion over the Illyrians in 167 B.C.E., commencing the process of Romanization. The indigenous Illyrian culture was pagan as well, but nature-oriented. Official histories of the Albanian Labour Party are fond of exploring the religion of the ancient Illyrians, which translates into an attempt to establish the foundations of the traditional customs and religious beliefs in the pagan era.⁴

CHRISTIANITY IN ILLYRICUM

The Albanian Church claims apostolic foundation. According to Christian scripture, Illyricum was evangelized during the lifetime of Paul of Tarsus. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (XV:19) states, "...from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ." According to St. Gregor

Nazianzeno, the Apostle Andrew was also present in Epirus, part of which is now in southern Albania.⁵ The bishopric of Durrachhium (Dures in central Albania), established in 66, is one of the oldest Sees in the world.⁶ Christianity spread and strengthened so that by fourth century, the bishoprics numbered approximately forty throughout the Illyrian provinces.⁷ However, as official histories of Socialist Albania remark, the highlanders continued to cleave to Illyrian pagan practices even after the Edict of Milan.⁸

By the time of the Ottoman invasion of the fourteenth century, the Albanians were predominantly Catholic in the north and predominately Orthodox Christian in the south. Illyricum, incorporating much of present day Greece, and literally within eyesight of the Italian peninsula, was placed in the middle of the diverging Roman Empire. Southern Illyricum was integrated into the Eastern half of the Roman Empire after its creation in 395 and the remaining provinces followed suit by the time of the sixth century Slavic invasions of the Balkan Peninsula.

Technically under the jurisdiction of Constantinople after the division of the Empire, ecclesiastical matters were overseen by the bishop of Rome until 732 when Emperor Leo the Isaurian designated the Illyrian provinces to the Patriarch of Constantinople.⁹ Although the Latin Church was curtailed, the Archbishopric of Antivari was founded in 1034, which asserted authority over the Catholics of the northern provinces.¹⁰

The circumstances culminating in the Schism of 1054 fostered a competitive religious atmosphere in Albania. The Church of

Rome penetrated the north of old Illyricum via Dalmatia to reassert its influence.¹¹ The power of the Latin Church was also augmented by Charles I of Anjou (1227-1285), King of Naples, who created the "Regnum Albaniae" after occupying Durres in 1272— a kingdom which endured a century. This period also corresponds to the flourishing of the Latin orders— Dominicans, Benedictines and Franciscans, which spread to the region with the specific mission to fortify the Latin Church.¹²

The metropolis of Durres became the foremost scene of ecclesiastical competition between Rome and Byzantium.¹³ In 1082, the Normans took the city, and in 1107 Byzantium took it back. It was then taken by Venice after the fourth crusade of 1204.¹⁴ Religious vacillation accompanied the shifts between temporal powers. It is recorded that feudal lords and even bishops adjusted their loyalties to the Pope or Patriarch accordingly. Nevertheless, violence between the opposing religious factions was not a factor.¹⁵ The *filoque* debate did not inspire riots or wars on the Albanian soil.

The temporal and ecclesiastical competition between Byzantium and the Latin powers created the medieval religious structure of Albania. In the larger sense, two spheres of ecclesiastical dominance were established-- the Catholic in the north and the Orthodox in the south. The religious spheres influenced the culture of these areas accordingly. The people living north of the Shkumbi River came to be known as Ghegs, and the people living south of the river as Tosks. Although the respective dialects of the Albanian language became the main

factor in the distinction between Gheg and Tosk— art, culture and tribal structures also developed somewhat independently in the two regions.

The period of religious reversals between East and West contributed to the stereotype of the Albanian people as opportunistic in religious matters. According to some perspectives, the lack of violence between Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians is indicative of a lack of religious passion. This combined with the evidence of religious vacillations leads to the description of an "amphibious" religious life in Albania on the eve of the Ottoman invasion.¹⁶

OTTOMAN ALBANIA

The "Diyâfi Arnavud" or the "Albanian Expedition" commenced with the Ottoman technique of establishing alliances with the indigenous lords. The second stage of conquest turned these allies into vassals, subsequently asserting direct Ottoman control with the establishment of the Ottoman land system, the *timar* estates.¹⁷ In 1415, Sultan Mehmet I officially converted southern Albania into a region under direct Ottoman control by establishing the *timar* system, thereby obtaining a foothold for the Empire on the Adriatic.¹⁸ In 1421, the Ottoman armies extended to the north, completing the "Albanian Expedition" which endured for five centuries.

The Ottoman presence in Albania would not be secure until after the lifetime of George Kastrioti Skenderbeg (1405-1468).

Born an Orthodox Christian, Skenderbeg's father changed religious loyalty more than once before he bowed to Ottoman suzerainty in 1385.¹⁹ After being taken to Istanbul at the age of nine as a *devsirme*, George was raised in the Sultan's palace, where he took the name Iskender.²⁰ He worked up through the Ottoman ranks eventually earning the title of "Bey," and thus history knows him as "Skenderbeg."

Skenderbeg saw an opportunity to carve for himself independent territory after the Ottomans lost to the Hungarians in the battle of Nis (1443). He embarked for his home in Kruje and replaced the Ottoman flag with the black double eagle banner which was adopted as the official Albanian flag over four centuries later. Skenderbeg denounced Islam and compelled his converted compatriots to follow his example.²¹

In March 1444, Skenderbeg assembled representatives from all of the Albanian provinces to form the League of Lezhe. The League gathered an army which continuously won victories over the Ottomans throughout the 1440s. Consequently, Skenderbeg developed an international policy, forming alliances with Hungary, Naples and commanding the attention of the Papacy.

In 1447, Pope Nicholas V proclaimed this formidable enemy of the Sultan to be an "Atheleta Christi" (Champion of Christendom).²² In 1457 Pope Calixtus II wrote, "I thank the Lord for having placed you in these lands which might have given free passage to the cruel and treacherous enemy to march on Christendom; You, like a cannon and a powerful rampart to keep him in check."²³ Despite the praise, Skenderbeg did not

obtain steady aid from Rome and Naples against the unrelenting Ottoman armies.²⁴ A full-fledged crusade never manifested. Skenderbeg died in 1468 of natural causes and his successor, Lekë Dukagjini,²⁵ defended Skenderbeg's proto-state until the final Ottoman victory in 1478 with the fall of Shkodra.²⁶ Known in Ottoman circles as "*kha'in* (treacherous) Iskender"²⁷ and much worse, Skenderbeg exemplifies the conflict of loyalties faced by his class in Albania during the establishment of Ottoman rule.

Skenderbeg, whether he was "one of the most outstanding champions of Christendom in its war against the Turks,"²⁸ or simply "a combination of Albanian tribal chief and medieval feudal lord,"²⁹ created the only semblance of a unified medieval Albanian state. For that achievement, he was hailed as a national hero by both the leaders of the Albanian national movement of the turn of the twentieth century, and by the leaders of Socialist Albania, despite the fact that he was deemed by four successive popes as a "Champion of Christendom."

Ottoman rule had profound consequences for Albanian religion. With the exception of Bosnia, Albania was the only Balkan region to witness significant conversions to Islam during the Ottoman period. Acceptance of Islam due to genuine religious conviction has generally not been a plausible option for Western scholars.³⁰ Therefore, many explanations have been put forth as to why the Islamization of Albania occurred. What were the converts' motives? What did they gain from conversion? What were the conditions in Albania which made this possible that were not present elsewhere?

Two general schools of thought have sought to interpret the "Albanian exception"-- the phenomenon which resulted in the only European nation to have a Muslim majority other than Turkey. The first school of thought asserts that worldly, temporal motivations such as economic privileges combined with coercion or outright force on the part of the Ottoman government were responsible for the Islamization of Albania. The second school of thought asserts that conversion to Islam was a phenomenon of acculturation-- a fusion of folk-Christianity and folk-Islam evolving into a folk tradition more Islamic in character. The following section will examine the more plausible of these interpretations, for they are not mutually exclusive.³¹

The theory that the Albanian nobility converted to Islam after the Ottoman conquest in order to retain land has been presented so often as to be accepted as a truism. The *timar* estates, in contrast to the estates of hereditary feudalism, were the property of the Sultan. Also the *timar* holders held no hereditary rights, and the system was based on merit. Often referred to as military fiefs, the *timar* administrators became active participants in the Ottoman calvary during military campaigns. In the meantime, they collected the revenue and taxes from the *raeya* (peasants) who worked the *timar* estates.

Following the Albanian conquest, the Ottoman officials conducted a land survey in 1431-1432 of 335 *timar* estates in southern Albania.³² These *defters* (official registers) as analyzed by Halil Inalcik, demonstrate that conversion to Islam was not a pre-condition for control over a *timar* estate. According to the

defters of this early period of Ottoman rule, only 30% of the estates were held by Muslims, these being Turks from Anatolia.³³ After the establishment of the *timar* system the Christian feudal class remained largely intact. However, in order to be granted a *timar*, the nobility was required to swear loyalty to the Sultan by paying taxes and tribute, in addition to their military obligations as *timar* administrators.³⁴

The Ottoman land surveys thus call into question the standard theory which holds that the indigenous Albanian nobility converted to Islam *en masse* to retain economic privilege. It is certain that the land holders were among the first to declare themselves Muslims,³⁵ yet at the same time, the motivations behind these conversions are more complex. Religion was certainly a matter of consideration during the period of *timar* establishment in the early fifteenth century, as political loyalty often entailed religious loyalty. Therefore, the early conversions among the nobles are better viewed as a consequence of temporal loyalty rather than a pre-condition to retaining landed privilege.

Other explanations of the religious conversions put forth rely on force and economic coercion. The facile theory of "Islam or the Sword," has been motivated by modern political considerations in order to denigrate the faith of Albanians and other European Muslims.³⁶ However, it was not necessarily in the Ottomans' interest to convert by force. If large-scale forced conversions did occur in seventeenth and eighteenth century Albania (the evidence is not conclusive), then they were unlawful and unsustainable. That which does qualify as forced conversion, the

devsirme system, had a negligible effect on the religious composition of Albania proper.

The *devsirme* deserves attention for it qualifies as a well documented instance of systematic, sustained and legal forced conversion perpetuated by the Ottomans in Southeastern Europe. A method of recruitment, the *devsirme* system was instituted during the last quarter of the fourteenth century.³⁷ It required the appropriation of children from Balkan Christian families for various functions in the Sultan's service. Ottoman officials would take the boys from their native villages at intervals (perhaps every four to seven years) based on the need of man power for the Sultan.³⁸ Approximately 200,000 children were levied in this manner during the 200 year period in which the *devsirme* was in operation.³⁹

The *devsirme* was a system of slavery, but these children were not sent to the galleys. They received an extensive education in their new religion, Islam. They then went on to perform duties in the Sultan's service, the inner palace (*enderun*), the Janissaries or in the imperial government (*birun*). The practical mentality behind this system was a form of gelding, whereby the potential soldier or administrator is removed from his homeland, insuring protection of the Sultan by having the most key government and military establishments filled by those with distant kin ties.⁴⁰ By this it was hoped the loyalty of the *devsirme* would be only to the Sultan.

The reaction of the families from which this human tax was extracted was ambivalent. The officials who conducted the

transfers were bribed both to include children and not to include them.⁴¹ Through the *devsirme* system Albanians filled high Ottoman posts. The highest rank in the central government, the Grand Vezir, was a position filled by at least twenty-seven Albanians.⁴² However, the *devsirme* system does not account for the marked Islamization in Albania for the *devsirme* children lived elsewhere in the Empire, and therefore would not significantly affect the demographics of their homeland.

The Islamization of the Albania proper took place among the *raeya* in the seventeenth century, mainly among Catholics, and in the eighteenth century, among the Orthodox Christians. It is important first to posit the Christian communities within the Ottoman system at this time, for it was a state constructed upon religious institutions. As Christians, Roman Catholics and Byzantine Orthodox were technically designated as *dhimmi* (protected people of the Book). However, the political situation at this time qualified this designation as instituted in the Ottoman *millet* system, for the Catholic community was not recognized as an official *millet*.

When Mehmed II captured Constantinople in 1453, his Empire contained a majority of Orthodox Christian subjects. In order to augment their loyalty to the Ottoman state, he incorporated the Patriarchate into the Ottoman bureaucracy. Mehmed II greatly increased the power of the Constantinople Patriarch by subordinating to it the semi-independent patriarchates of Ohrid (Bulgaria) and Pec (Serbia). The Patriarch, as leader of the *millet* (*millet basi*) was given legal powers, as well as police and

bureaucratic servants at his disposal. Thus the Patriarch became "a high ranking *pasa* entitled to three *tugs* (horse tails) of the Ottoman Empire, undisputed master of a reunited church, and the official who was responsible for the behavior and loyalty of all the Sultan's Orthodox subjects."⁴³ Conversely, the number of Catholics in the Empire did not warrant great efforts to insure loyalty-- a loyalty which was already held suspect. Nevertheless in 1609 Archbishop Marinus received a *firman* (imperial edict) from the Sultan granting Catholics freedom to practice, but they remained unrepresented by an official *millet basi* in Istanbul.⁴⁴

Catholics in Albania were suspect mainly because of the exploits of Skenderbeg and his allegiances with the Pope. The struggle for domination against the Venetians and the Papal states throughout the seventeenth century also had direct bearing on the Sultan's Catholic subjects for they proved their loyalty in some cases to be firmly behind the Latin powers.

A series of insurrections apart from Skenderbeg occurred among the Albanian population surrounding the Catholic powers. In the year 1645, the beginning of the Venetian-Ottoman war in Crete (1645-70), an alliance was formed between the Archbishop of Antivari and Venice with the objective of making Shkodra a Venetian possession.⁴⁵ Ottoman retaliation forced approximately 3,000 Albanians to emigrate to Venetian Dalmatia.⁴⁶ Then again in 1649, an insurrection occurred in which another Archbishop of Antivari, Joseph-Maria Bonaldo (1646-1654), also conspired with Venice.⁴⁷ According to some sources, it was around these events that the forced conversions occurred.⁴⁸ Turkish historians also

remark that the Porte exerted pressure against the Catholic population as a reaction to collaboration with the Venetians in 1649 and with the Austrians in 1689-90.⁴⁹

The eighteenth century Russo-Turkish wars are similarly used as explanation for the depletion of the Albanian Orthodox Christian population. To account for the conversions among Orthodox Albanians, the same circumstances are asserted as among Catholic Albanians a century earlier.⁵⁰ For example, the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-74 is cited as the main impetus of forced conversions among the Orthodox.⁵¹

In combination with the theory of force is the theory of an economic campaign of Islamization. In other words, Albanian Christians during this period were forced to exchange their faith for lower taxes.⁵² The personal tax for Muslims entailed the *harac* or land use tax, in addition to military conscription. Non-Muslims were required to pay the *cizye*, which was higher in lieu of conscription. The system of *cizye* had historically been divided into three categories-- high, medium and low. However, archival evidence from the *sancak* of Sofia in Bulgaria in 1610 indicates that these categories were ignored, and that all *dhimmi*, regardless of economic status, were required to pay 200 *akçes* of *cizye* annually.⁵³ Peter Sugar makes the point that during this time there was evidence of great irregularities in the collection of *cizye*, including its application to Muslim gypsies.⁵⁴ It is plausible that irregularities similar to those in Bulgaria occurred in Albania as well, although the documentation is disparate.⁵⁵ It follows then, the question as to why Bulgaria did not witness Islamization

by taxation. This also would undermine the purpose of the *cizye*, as it was a continual source of government revenue.⁵⁶

The scant information concerning the conversions of this period comes through diocesan records and the reports of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, these ecclesiastical sources do not distinguish between conversion and the emigration of the Christian population, which in the sixteenth the seventeenth centuries, ran into the tens of thousands.⁵⁸ What is certain through these sources is that organization of the Church suffered through lack of leadership. In the middle of the seventeenth century, five out of the twelve Catholic Sees in the Albanian provinces had no one to fill their offices.⁵⁹

The Orthodox bishoprics were also in flux; Albania for a period fell under the Archbishopric of Ohrid, which in decline for internal corruption.⁶⁰ The Archbishop of Antivari reported to the Vatican in the early seventeenth century, "Most of the priests know very little of their holy office and the number is very insignificant. If Albania is not going to receive some help, in a few years the Christian population will be lost."⁶¹

The Church would not be lost in Albania, nevertheless, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian populations were declining, as attested to by ecclesiastical authorities throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶² Nevertheless, both religious institutions remained a part of the Albanian religious landscape through ecclesiastical, educational and diplomatic solutions.

The Franciscans, which had been present in Albania since 1283, renewed their mission in Albania in the seventeenth century with the specific goal of retaining Catholics.⁶³ Additionally, in order to gain influence in Ottoman territory, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire stipulated in the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz a protectorate over the Catholics in the Empire. It was through Hapsburg aid that Catholic schools and seminaries were founded in northern Albania.

Similarly, after a period of decline, the Orthodox Church experienced a renaissance in Albania largely through education. Kosmas Aitolos (1714-1779) was a traveling monk who founded approximately 200 Greek schools before he was killed in Berat.⁶⁴ The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 established a Russian protectorate over the Ottoman Orthodox population which funded and promoted education among Orthodox Christians.⁶⁵

By the nineteenth century, all of the basic religious demographics were in place. The Muslim population was heavily concentrated in the central lowlands north and south of the Shkumbi River where Ottoman influence was most palatable.⁶⁶ This area also marked the boundaries of the Gheg Catholic population and the Orthodox Christian population. The central cities such as Berat and Elbasan reflected an Islamic culture.⁶⁷ To the north, Catholics remained in the region surrounding Shkodra. And the Orthodox population centered around the southern cities of Korca, Gjirokastra and Janina (now in present-day Greece).

The widespread acceptance of Islam during the Ottoman period defies simple conclusions not only due to the dearth of

documentation but also because the complexity of the phenomenon itself. Political and economic circumstance contributed to the decline of the Albanian Christian Churches, yet similar and even harsher circumstances existed in other Christian regions under Ottoman control without the same effect. The explanation for the decline of the Albanian Christian population must take into consideration internal reasons as well, such as the kind of Christianity practiced in Albania which proved itself to be open to Islamic influence.

As there seems to have been little restriction on Christian-Muslim contact, instances of inter-faith marriage were common during the Ottoman period. Apparently it was customary to give brides to Muslim men,⁶⁸ for in 1637 Catholic missionaries lament this practice, and both the Catholic and Orthodox clergy attempted to discourage this by withholding the sacraments.⁶⁹ To this end, an Orthodox synod was held in the seventeenth century to reprimand priests who baptized "Turkish" babies.⁷⁰ In a village near Durres, the Archbishop of Antivari recorded that in 1610, ten of the sixteen heads of households were Muslim, but they continued to give money to the parish because their wives remained Catholic.⁷¹

A continental observer of Albanian religious life was quoted in 1809:

These people, living between Christians and Mohamadens, declare that they are utterly unable to judge which religion is best but to be certain of not entirely rejecting the truth, they very prudently follow both. They go to the mosque on Fridays

and to the church on Sundays, thus making sure of the protection of the true prophet.⁷²

Such an observation renders "conversion" an inaccurate term, for apostasy was never fully achieved. Acceptance is more indicative for the religious phenomenon which actually occurred.⁷³ The second school of thought views the Islamization of Albania primarily as a religious phenomenon, rather than political. The first premise for this interpretation is an understanding Albanian peasant piety, that is, its folk and non-dogmatic orientation.

According to Nedim Filipovic, "In an area of monotheistic creed there were always present some specific factors in the religion-cultural and socio-political structure of these religions making possible mass Islamization."⁷⁴ John Fine's examination of the conditions in Bosnia during its Islamization bear close similarities to Albania. Before Ottoman rule, both regions hosted competing faiths (Catholic and Orthodox), whose adherents had little comprehension of formal creeds, placing much more emphasis on praxis.⁷⁵

The pronounced Islamization combined with the nature of popular religion in Albania contributed to the perception that Albanians were opportunistic in religious matters. The interwar politician and Orthodox Archbishop Fan Noli once said, "The Albanian is simply a pagan who casts a handful of incense on any altar of any god he has ever heard of."⁷⁶ The integration of Islam and Christianity as it evolved in Albania cast suspicion on

both, as Lord Byron recorded: "The Greeks hardly regard them as Christians, or the Turks as Muslims; in fact they are a mixture of both, and sometimes neither."⁷⁷

The faith that evolved in Albania during the Ottoman period was marked for its syncretism, much like the syncretism of Hinduism and Islam in Bengal, for example. The Catholic Bishop of Shkodra, when reproached by Rome for placing undue emphasis on the feast of St. Nicholas, defended himself by the fact that the majority of the celebrants were Muslims.⁷⁸ Encompassing a patchwork of "magic, animism, monotheistic dogma, polytheistic practices, monism and dualism," strict dogma was foreign to the peasant religious economy.⁷⁹ As one scholar explains, the assurance of good crops and good fortune does not distinguish between the intercession Christian or Muslim saints.⁸⁰ The merger between popular Christianity and Islam took the tangible form of saints' shrines, with the original religious persuasion of the saint often forgotten.⁸¹ The Islamic orders were particularly adept at incorporating Christian saints and shrines into an Islamic context.

THE BEKTASHI ORDER

The history of the Bektashi order came to be closely associated with the Albanian people. The foundation of the order, historically obscure, but well known in legends, lies in thirteenth century Anatolia, when many Christians were still present on the peninsula. The Islamic orders, such as the Bektashis, were

instrumental in their Islamization. Because the Islamic orders are largely credited with the spread of Islam among the Anatolian peasants, historians assume the function of the orders diminished with the subsequent conquest of Europe for no significant amount of Islamization occurred.⁸² The exception of course is Albania.

The founder of the order, Hadj Bektash, his ancestry extending to the Prophet, was born in 1248 (646 A.H.), and died in 1337 (738 A.H.).⁸³ According to legend, Sultan Orhan presented a group of Christian *devsirme* to the Hadj. He blessed the children and declared them to be the *yeni-çeri* (the new troops) and the Janissaries were born.⁸⁴ Stories such as these are disputed by historians of course, but what is certain is that the Bektashi order came to be the official order of the Janissaries; from 1591 onwards the highest ranking Bektashi was given the honorary title, "Colonel of Janissaries."⁸⁵

The Bektashis came to Albania in the middle of the sixteenth century at the latest.⁸⁶ Scholarly and missionary, they preached and established *tekkes* for study.⁸⁷ The substance of their teaching was not "Bektashism" *per se* for at this time they were an integral and respected part of the Sunni Ottoman establishment. This leads to the complex consideration of the Bektashi belief system.

The Bektashi belief system has many features in common with other Islamic Sufi orders.⁸⁸ For example, they place utmost importance in the master-disciple paradigm of religious instruction. The importance of the master in the disciple's

spiritual growth cannot be over-estimated.⁸⁹ Often inaccurately characterized as pantheistic, the Bektashis and other Sufi orders developed the idea of "Oneness of Being" as an understanding of the unity of God (*tahwid*).⁹⁰

H. T. Norris offers a concise characteristic of the Bektashi-- "officially Sunni... essentially Shi'ite."⁹¹ Indeed the beliefs Bektashis share with *shi'i* Muslims are numerous. The most obvious is the central position accorded to Ali, the son in law of the Prophet. The Bektashis elevate Ali's importance further by the idea of a trinity consisting of Allah, Mohammed and Ali.⁹² Bektashis are also known to fast during *matem*, commemorating the deaths of Hasan and Husain, rather than during the fast of Ramadan.

Certain Bektashi beliefs and practices have caused them to be accused of heterodoxy, or of even being outside the pale of Islam. The belief in metempsychosis, for example, has been associated with Bektashism.⁹³ Becoming a *muhhiban* (inner member) is an option open to women, who are deemed as equals.⁹⁴ What whirling is to the Mevlevi order, so wine is to the Bektashi order; they view wine as having a mystical function.⁹⁵ And unlike Sunni Islam, Bektashism has a set hierarchy. Their leader, the *dede*, is followed by *babas*, under which are dervishes. Generally, the dervishes have two branches-- a celibate branch and one which allows dervishes to marry. In Albania, the celibate branch became the more prevalent and respected of the two.⁹⁶

Furthermore, the Bektashis have many practices with sacramental parallels in Christianity. Baptism, confession,

charism, a communal meal (commemorating Husain), and the initiation of celibate dervishes are among Bektashi rituals.⁹⁷ With many similar features to Christianity, combined with their preaching endeavor, "one can easily imagine a friendly Baba pointing out to inquiring Christians these points of resemblance and so winning to the order many who, cut off from Christian leadership would easily move at home in the ritual and symbolism of the sect."⁹⁸

Political circumstances necessitated that Albania be the central headquarters of the Bektashi order. For that which had accorded the Bektashis their power, popularity and prestige, the Janissaries, would become their downfall in Anatolia. In 1826, following the massacre of the Janissaries by Mahmud II, the Bektashis were banned and their properties were confiscated. Many found refuge in Albania, far from the center of power. And although Bektashis were persecuted in Albania, it nevertheless provided relative sanctuary. At the beginning of the nineteenth century important *tekkes* were established in southern Albania.⁹⁹ This period marks the second wave of Bektashi influx in Albania, corresponding at a time when Bektashism and the Sunni Islam of the Ottoman state were acutely diverging.¹⁰⁰ In Albania, the Bektashis evolved from an order into a sect.¹⁰¹ Additionally, their outcast status within the Ottoman Empire gave them a key role in the Albanian nationalist movement.

THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Albania's movement for national independence was a largely secular phenomenon. Unlike nationalist movements among other Ottoman provinces in the Balkans, a particular religious institution did not come to symbolize the destiny of the nation. Religious elements were not given a central role in Albanian nationalist ideology due to the population's confessional pluralism. Nevertheless, Albanian clerics and religious thinkers were indispensable to the nationalist movement and the cultural renaissance which accompanied it.

The secular character of Albanian nationalist ideology is exemplified by the figure of Skenderbeg. His image was resurrected by prominent nationalists, Christian and Muslim, not as a "Athleta Christi," but as an Albanian patriot. The religious elements were further upstaged by the profound emphasis placed upon the Albanian language. It was not coincidental that the theory which traced modern Albanians back to the ancient Illyrians was developed during this time.¹⁰² Scholarship was on the side of the Albanian claims as a separate people with an ancient stake on the Balkan peninsula.¹⁰³

In order to foster the development of the Albanian language, the educational system was in need of reform. As the Bektashi nationalist Sami Frasheri asserted, "Albania cannot exist without Albanians, Albanians cannot exist without the Albanian language and the latter cannot exist without its own alphabet and without schools."¹⁰⁴ It was surrounding these issues-- language,

education, alphabet-- that Albanian religious institutions were viewed as divisive forces in the struggle for national unification.

Education, as an extension of the Ottoman *millet* system, was under the jurisdiction of the respective religious communities. Thus, Albanian Muslims received their education in Turkish, Orthodox Christians in Greek, and Catholics in Italian. Neither the Sultan nor the Patriarch saw it in their best interest to support Albanian education, and thereby fuel nationalism. In 1885, the first independent Albanian school was opened in southern Albania. The Orthodox Archbishop accused the school's director of corrupting the Orthodox population with "free masonry and protestantism," and threatened the school's supporters with excommunication.¹⁰⁵ In this matter, the Sultan and Patriarch acted in conjunction, as the Muslim students were ordered to leave the school.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, in 1891 another school, the first Albanian school for girls, was founded with aid from American and English Protestant missions. As part of a wave of repression in 1904, the school was closed by the Porte.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the obstructions blocking an independent educational system, three scripts were in use at this time to write Albanian-- Arabic, Greek and Latin. Albanian nationalists viewed the unification of the nation as dependent upon a standard script. To the majority of nationalists, the Latin alphabet had the least amount of strings attached. According to the nationalist poet Anton Zako Cajupi (1866-1930): "Let us therefore say to the Greek or Turkish Alphabets: you two are very much interested in

our affairs; you have often been written in blood instead of ink."¹⁰⁸

The Latin script was eventually adopted, despite interference by Turkish authorities. Initially, the Young Turk regime strongly supported the maintenance of the Arabic script. A script meeting was organized in 1910 among Arabic script partisans which succeeded in inciting demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. One is tempted to recall the agitation in northern India surrounding competing scripts during the same time. That is where the similarity ends, however. Instances of religious communalism were scarce in Albania, throughout and after the nationalist era.¹⁰⁹

The Albanian nationalist movement was forced to pick up momentum due to the threat of partition. A concrete political body was necessary to counter the stipulations of the Treaty of San Stefano which Russia imposed upon the Ottomans following the war of 1877-78. The Treaty ceded much of Albania to Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro. Albanian leaders immediately protested these concessions, as did the European powers which were guarding against strong Russian influence in the Balkans. The Berlin Congress convened to revise the treaty as the Albanian League formed in June 1878. The Albanian League sent the Berlin Congress telegrams which expressed their desire of national integrity and that "despite the diversity of religion, the Catholic, Orthodox or Muslim Albanian hates both the Turk and any other foreign domination."¹¹⁰

After the Berlin Congress adjourned some Albanian territory was ceded, but a major catastrophe was averted.¹¹¹ The Albanian League, after surviving the danger of partition, sought autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. To the Porte, the League wired in 1878: "We have decided in our league to declare that we are Albanians and that religion is of no consequence."¹¹²

When the Young Turks forced the Sultan to accept a constitution on 24 July 1908, Albanian nationalists were hopeful. The new regime initially spurred a wave of political and cultural activity, with the establishment of many new schools and periodicals in Albania. However, during the period 1909-1912, the Young Turks appeared as determined as their Ottoman predecessors to maintain the Empire, at the expense of particular national aspirations. According to Stavro Skendi, these repressive years under the Young Turk regime "did more for the development of Albanian national consciousness than decades of slow cultural endeavor would have achieved."¹¹³ By September 1912, a general insurrection had spread throughout Albania. The historic raising of Skenderbeg's flag occurred 28 November 1912. Following the declaration of independence, a national assembly was formed.

Sabrina Ramet's analysis of Church-State relations in Eastern Europe under Communism places utmost emphasis on a particular religious institution's identification with nationalism: "The closer the religio-national symbiosis, the more difficult it is for the state to maintain a purely confrontational attitude toward religion."¹¹⁴ The circumstances of Albania's national formation had direct

bearing on the aims of the Cultural Revolution in 1967. In other words, the religio-national symbiosis was lost in Albania, leaving religious institutions more vulnerable. Those religious institutions at the vanguard of Albanian nationalism-- the Catholic and Bektashi-- were limited to minorities, and therefore not numerically strong enough to be identified with the destiny of the nation in the same way as the Serbian Orthodox Church or the Polish Catholic Church, for example.

Every national formation necessarily reconciles differences whether they be linguistic, ethnic, economic or religious-- at least long enough to achieve statehood. In Albania's case, the task was clearly to establish national unity over religious pluralism. This goal was achieved due not only to the secular character of the movement, but also due to the respective contributions of the religious communities. The historiography of Socialist Albania characterized the religious situation in Albania during its national formation as purely divisive. The general stereotype of this period is exemplified by the verse of the nationalist poet Pashko Vase Shkodrani (1825-1892): "Christian and Moslem priests have benumbed you/ To divide you and impoverish you!/ Look not to churches and mosques/ For the religion of the Albanian is Albanianism!"¹¹⁵

It was the Muslim element in Albanian nationalism which most displeased the Sultan, as it was the first politically meaningful nationalist movement among Muslim people.¹¹⁶ Sultan Abdul Hamid attempted to resurrect the institution of the Caliphate in order to foster the notion of Pan-Islamism as a counter to

Western encroachment, as well as to counter burgeoning nationalisms. This policy succeeded to an extent in associating Albanian Sunni Muslims with the Ottoman Empire.

Conversely, the Bektashis became inexorably linked to Albanian nationalism. Perhaps their adoption of the Albanian cause was in retaliation against the Porte for their persecution after 1826. Given their *shi'i* orientation they were not impressed with the Sultan's claims as Caliph. The Frasheri brothers-- Abdul, Sami and Naim, all lay members of the order, worked to bring the Bektashis to the heart of the cultural and political movement.

Abdul Frasheri was among the first leaders to take action once the treaty of San Stefano became public. He immediately formed "The Central Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Albanian Nationality" which became merged with the Albanian League in Prizen. After the first session of the League, Abdul returned to his native village of Frasher (prominent families often took their birthplace name as a family name) and recruited the support of the Bektashi *tekke* for the aims of the League. The Frasher *tekke*, in turn, gained the support of the southern Albanian notables.¹¹⁷

Sami Bey Frasheri (1850-1904) contributed both to the political ideology of the movement and the accompanying literary revival. He created an alphabet for the Albanian language in 1886, followed by a grammar in 1890.¹¹⁸ His political thought is expressed in the 1889 treatise, "Albania: What She Has Been, What She Is, What She Shall Be." The treatise was an influential polemic against the notion that Albanians be divided according to

religion, (i.e., the Muslims as Turks, the Orthodox as Greeks).¹¹⁹ He also envisaged the religious structure of an independent Albania. The religious communities would be represented by a chief *mufti*, an independent patriarch and a Catholic bishop, each of which "will occupy a place of honor and respect, but will only interfere in matters of faith and belief."¹²⁰

Some consider the "real founder" of Albanian literature to be Naim Frasheri (1845-1900).¹²¹ Judging from the titles and subjects of his body of works, it is fair to categorize him as a religious thinker, as he is so claimed by the Albanian Bektashis. Naim's greatest nationalist endeavor was to strengthen religious tolerance: "Let each worship God as he likes. But this should not divide us."¹²² He saw religious tolerance, in the context of forging Albanian unity, in mystical terms:

All the sons of one Motherland have one faith because all of them believe in One Great and True God who is Lord of (the two) Lives [Mohammed and Jesus] and the endless universe, believe in the Good Ones, and in kindness for the good and in evil for the wicked, therefore all have one faith and one religion.¹²³

In the Notebook of the Bektashis, (1896), Naim describes the Bektashis as those who "love the rest of the Moslems and the Christians as their soul and they get along well with all men. But above all, they love their fatherland and their countrymen, this being the highest of all virtues."¹²⁴ In this treatise, Naim

translated many Bektashi terms from Turkish and Arabic into the Albanian language, making Albanian the *lingua bektachiyya*.

Through the efforts of the Frasheris and other Bektashis, the order became so closely associated with Albanian nationalism that their *tekkes* received the wrath of those interests threatened by Albanian unity. Bektashi *tekkes* were singled out for destruction by the Ottoman government, as well as by the Greek and Serb irregulars during Balkan Wars.

The Catholic clergy of the north made a staggering contribution to the development of the Gheg dialect of the Albanian language, Albanian education and the literary revival. Catholic institutions had a long history of developing the Albanian language; the first written document in Albanian was a baptismal formula composed in 1462, by Pal Engjielli, Bishop of Durres,¹²⁵ and the first monograph was a missal published in 1555 by Fr. Gjon Buzuku.¹²⁶ Moreover, the Austrians saw it in their best interest to augment Albanian national consciousness as a bulwark against Slavic nationalism. Thus, the Albanian language was taught as a subject in Catholic schools.

Gjergji Fishta (1871-1940), a Franciscan, is generally regarded as Albania's greatest epic poet. And like most of the Albanian writers of this period, his pursuits extended beyond the literary. Fishta, along with Preng Doci, the Abbot of Mirdita, Dom Doc Nikaj, Albania's first novelist, and Father Pasko, a folklorist, founded in 1899 the "Bashkim" (Unity) Society. Together they formed the foremost intellectual circle in northern Albania, and

were instrumental in fostering nationalist sentiment and culture.¹²⁷

The Orthodox Christian community faced a complex problem by being under the jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical power with incompatible cultural objectives. The Ecumenical Patriarch, as an official of the Ottoman state, tried to thwart the establishment of an autocephalous Albanian church. Since the formal instruction of the Albanian language would lead to this, it was taught secretly among the Orthodox. Furthermore, instruction of the Albanian language was grounds for ex-communication. It is no surprise that Sami Frasheri viewed the establishment of an Albanian Autocephalous Church next to the Albanian language in importance, for they were two very closely related issues.¹²⁸

As the politics in the Old Country boiled over, one incident demonstrated that the situation for the Albanian Orthodox was intolerable, even in Diaspora. The Albanian Orthodox community in Boston, which was established at the beginning of the twentieth century, began its nationalist leanings with the weekly Kombi (Nation) founded in June 1906.¹²⁹ As Albanian nationalists, the publishers were threatened by the Patriarch in America with excommunication.¹³⁰

In 1907, a young Albanian immigrant residing in Hudson, Massachusetts died. Because he was an Albanian nationalist, the local Greek priest judged him "automatically excommunicated" and refused to perform the burial.¹³¹ The Boston Albanian community then set out to create the Albanian Church.

Unfortunately, this was not accomplished in time to give the man

a proper burial. A young Albanian immigrant with strong national sentiment, Theofan (Fan) Noli (1882-1982), was ordained a priest 8 March 1908. He celebrated the first Albanian liturgy in Boston on 22 March 1908.¹³²

Initially, the Albanian Church was under the jurisdiction of the Russian Patriarch but an independent diocese was established in 1919. In the meantime, the Albanian Orthodox Church was relatively independent and Noli was in a position to aid the nationalist cause.¹³³

Naim Frasheri, Gjergji Fishta and Fan Noli were the three figures of this period signifying the "sacred trinity of the tripartite Albanian genius before the advent of Stalinism."¹³⁴ The Catholic identification with the nationalist movement would be re-written following the Communist takeover. Fishta would be labeled "racist" and "reactionary."¹³⁵ Revisionist historians of the Albanian Communist Party would find it more difficult to shelve Frasheri and Noli, however. Therefore, they attempted to cast doubt on their religious beliefs. According to official history, Frasheri and Noli were actually closet atheists despite the fact that Frasheri's poetry was deeply theological and Noli died a Patriarch.¹³⁶

INDEPENDENT ALBANIA (1912-1939)

The period between national independence and the Communist takeover in World War II was politically an extremely unstable period in Albania. The borders were established in 1913 by the

London Conference of Ambassadors, only to be overrun by the German, Italian, Serb, Montenegrin and Hapsburg armies during the course of World War I. In the interim, Albania was ruled by a German aristocrat, Prince Wilhelm of Wied, for a period of six months in 1914.

Albania was in real danger of partition during this period, for in 1917 the Bolsheviks made public the secret Treaty of London which proposed Albania's division among Italy, Serbia and Greece. The League of Nations did not permit the implementation of this plan and the last Italian occupying army was forced to leave in August 1920.

In domestic politics, the interwar struggle involved the conservative land-owning interests represented by Ahmed Zog and the liberal reformers represented by the Albanian Orthodox Archbishop Fan Noli. Noli was one of a wave of Albanians who re-emigrated to their homeland after World War I.

Noli wrestled the power from Ahmed Zog after a coup in 1924. The Noli government did not last out the year however, as Zog re-entered the country with Yugoslavian mercenaries in December 1924, ending Albania's stint of parliamentary democracy (1921-1924). It is significant that Albania's first links to the international Communist Party were established through the Archbishop. Noli, the "Red Bishop," was one of the first statesmen to recognize Bolshevik Russia. Following his exile imposed by Zog, Noli established the National Revolutionary Committee whose members moved in Communist circles and aligned themselves with Comintern in Moscow.¹³⁷

The interwar period was not as tumultuous for Albania's religious institutions as it was for its political institutions. The political struggles had little bearing on the religious. For example, many Muslims (especially Bektashis) supported Fan Noli and many Catholics supported Zog; religion was simply not a determinant of political allegiance. According to a general report of the League of Nations Commissioners (12 May 1922):

Although differences in religion occasionally have some effect upon the domestic politics of the country, the fanatical manifestations so frequent in other countries which are divided in religion are very rare in Albania. On the contrary, the general rule is remarkable tolerance; for the adherents of the various creeds are often closely related by ties of blood, by tradition and even by common national and religious festivals. The clergy of the three religions (Catholic, Orthodox and Mohammedan) have been known to visit together both the Mosque and the Christian Churches to celebrate solemn services, which proves that the sentiment of patriotism is stronger than religious divergences.¹³⁸

Borrowing from Ramet's analysis of factors which shape Communist regimes' policies towards religious institutions, significant developments emerged in the pre-Communist period of independent Albania. Of the factors cited by Ramet to have bearing in the Communist period is a particular religious institution's allegiance to a foreign authority.¹³⁹ Those institutions without strong allegiances to foreign ecclesiastical authorities generally endured less persecution under Communist governments. Three of Albania's religious establishments--

Sunni, Bektashi and Albanian Orthodox, effectively severed their links to foreign authorities before World War II.

The independence of the Albanian Islamic establishment followed the first publication of the Qur'an in Albanian in 1921.¹⁴⁰ In August 1923, a Muslim Congress was held in Tirana which instituted various modernizing reforms, such as abolition of the *hijab*. The Albanian Muslim Congress also decided to sever religious ties with Turkey. The institution of the Caliphate was deemed not a part of Albanian Islamic organization and the honorary title of "Bey" was likewise discarded.¹⁴¹ The Bektashis also forged for themselves independence from Turkey during the interwar period. Bektashi headquarters were officially relocated to Tirana in 1925, making Albania the center for the world's approximately seven million Bektashis.¹⁴²

The Orthodox community held an Albanian congress in 1921 formally declaring its independence, and the following year, its autocephaly. The autocephaly, however, was not granted by the Ecumenical Patriarch until 1937-- thirty-one years after the first Albanian liturgy was celebrated in Boston. The national structure of the Autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church was in contrast to the Albanian Catholic Church, which astutely maintained its submission to ecclesiastical authority in Rome. This allegiance to a foreign authority would have negative bearing on the Catholic Church after the Communist takeover.

ALBANIAN TRIBAL LAW

The prevalence of tribal law in Albania deserves mention, for just as religious institutions, Communist authorities also infringed upon tribal institutions and traditions. Tribal law played a tremendous role in Albanian social and economic life, especially in the north. Edith Durham was referring to Albanian tribal law when she wrote in 1905: "Their Mohammedanism and their Christianity sit but lightly upon them, and in his heart the wild mountaineer is swayed more by unwritten beliefs that date from the world's wellsprings."¹⁴³ Collectively referred to as the Law of Lekë, Albanian tribal codes regulated agriculture, inheritance, marriage and the structure of the family throughout the Middle Ages and the Ottoman period. Often referred to as the Unwritten Law of Albania, it was not until the Franciscan educator Konstantin Gjecov's research that the Law was actually published in the 1933.¹⁴⁴ The Law of Lekë was in wide use as late as the 1930s; in fact many of its applications are to be found to the present day.

The Law of Lekë crossed religious boundaries, as it was observed by both Catholic and Muslim tribes alike. To what extent the Law of Lekë conflicted with canon law and *shari'a* is not a simple matter. One significant aspect of the Law was the regulation of the Blood Vendetta (*hakmarrje*). As far as blood feuds were concerned, both Catholic and Muslim religious leaders attempted to make this aspect of the Law obsolete.¹⁴⁵ The Jesuit Order especially endeavored to eradicate blood feuds, threatening

to deny a church marriage to those involved.¹⁴⁶ Ironically the Law includes a clause regulating blood feud involving clergy: "The parish is obliged to avenge the honor of its priest." (IV. 10. 1)¹⁴⁷

Apart from *hakmarrje*, the Law of Lekë should not be viewed as a rival to religious law. On the contrary, the tribal code recognized the Church's authority and independence: "The church is subordinate to the control of the head of faith and not to the law of the Kanun: Therefore, the Kanun cannot place any imposition on the church, but has the duty to defend it when it requires help." (I. 3,1) The Law of Lekë requires due punishment for crimes against the church or mosque (VII. 16). And the testimony of a priest equals that of twenty-four men (IV. 10, 6).¹⁴⁸

Those segments of society in which the Law of Lekë prevailed were adversely affected during the Communist period. The Hoxha regime held the Law of Lekë in equal contempt with the religious establishments. Moreover, the survival of this customary law indicates a profound independence on the part of the northern tribes. A unique system with Illyrian foundations, the "Kanun" is credited with the preservation Albanian ethnic identity during five centuries of Ottoman rule. Thus, the traditional law casts doubt on the notion that the anti-religious campaign about to descend upon Albania, culminating in 1967, was an expression of true Albanian *weltanschauung*.

CHAPTER II

FOUR FAITHS, ONE PARTY

The construction of the world's first atheist state was well underway by the time it was announced in 1967. The degree of the Albanian Labour Party's success in this endeavor could not have been possible without the thorough preparation made by the Hoxha government from the time it seized power in November 1944.

Peter Prifti, an expert on Socialist Albania, asserts that the creation of the world's first atheist state was a long-term vision of the Communist Party of Albania. That is, the total ban of religious institutions was not so much an excess of the Cultural Revolution (the ban outlived the Revolution by decades) as it was the ultimate goal of the state's religious policy from the very beginning:

Their larger design, in strict accord with their Marxist-Leninist outlook, was to eliminate religion as a feature of Albanian life. But since "the conditions were not ripe" for such a move, the Party resorted to interim methods in dealing with the Church--methods intended to render the Church impotent as an institutional force but viable enough to be used whenever possible for furthering Communist ends.¹⁴⁹

The following section will examine how the Labour Party of Albania ripened conditions for such a move.

During the course of World War II the official Communist Party of Albania (CPA) was assembled, making it one of the youngest in Europe. The credit for its formal organization goes to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, whose agents unified the various Albanian cells in November 1941.¹⁵⁰ From the creation of the CPA in 1941, Enver Hoxha held the post of Party Secretary until his death in 1985. Hoxha was born in 1908 to a land-owning Bektashi family. In 1931 he went to France to study law, where he began his Communist activity, according to official histories.¹⁵¹ He returned to Albania in 1936 to teach until 1939 when he devoted his time exclusively to the partisan cause.¹⁵²

During the same year, Mussolini invaded Albania on Good Friday, sending Zog into his second and final exile. The puppet government installed in Tirana attempted to co-opt all the religious institutions in Albania. In order to integrate the new Muslim population into the Empire, Mussolini even commissioned the construction of a mosque in Rome. According to Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian foreign minister, "In so far as this proposal concerns the Albanians, we realize that they are an atheistic people who would prefer a rise in salary to a mosque."¹⁵³

Sabrina Ramet's analysis of religious policies in Communist Eastern Europe takes into account a particular religious institution's identification with the fascist occupation.¹⁵⁴ In Albania, this identification with fascism would facilitate many post-war trials and executions, of clergy and laity, Catholic and Muslim, the overwhelming majority of which were conducted in

the north. However, the Catholic clerical establishment was especially implicated in the post-war years.

It is necessary to understand that the Albanian Resistance was divided. The Communist partisans were overwhelmingly Tosk, from the south. Conversely, the non-Communist resistance organizations (both Zogist and democratic) were primarily Gheg, drawn from the north. The resistance organizations' competition for power degenerated into civil war in 1943-1944, despite the denial by official histories.¹⁵⁵ Under the military leadership of Mehmet Shehu, the Communist partisans succeeded in gaining control of Albanian territory from both the Germans and the non-Communist resistance. In essence, the north was "conquered" by the Communist partisans.¹⁵⁶ Consequently, the north was regarded as a hotbed of fascism by the Communist Party.

On 29 November 1944, Hoxha's government was installed in Tirana, making Albania the only Eastern block country to be liberated without the aid of the Red Army.¹⁵⁷ The first policy which adversely affected Albania's religious institutions was a land reform implemented 29 August 1945. According to the reform, religious institutions were to possess no more than 50 acres of property.¹⁵⁸ It was difficult to include religious institutions as part of the exploiting class for, as Hoxha stated in a speech 14 July 1947, all four Albanian religious establishments owned a mere 1.26% of Albanian land prior to the partisan victory. Nevertheless, this amount was reduced to approximately .2% within two years of the land reform.¹⁵⁹ The Muslim

endowments, the *waqf* properties, many maintained for centuries, were virtually dissolved by the measure.

The Constitution adopted on 14 March 1946, like the other constitutions in post-war Eastern Europe, guaranteed its citizens freedom of worship. According to article 18:

All citizens are guaranteed freedom of opinion and belief. The Church is separated from the State. All religious communities are free in matters concerned with their faith as well as in its practice and outward expression. It is forbidden to misuse the Church and religion for political purposes. Similarly, political organizations with a religious basis are forbidden. The State can give religious communities material support.¹⁶⁰

This article of the constitution is significant for two reasons. First, the clause allowing the state to provide material support is in direct contradiction to the notion of separation of church and state. It became apparent in time that this clause was one of the primary means to control the clergy. Government subsidies became essential to the literal survival of the clergy in a country which was forced to ration food. Deprived of education and other sources of revenue, the regime created a situation whereby it could easily label the clergy as parasites during the Cultural Revolution.

Second, this section of the constitution, while simultaneously granting freedom of belief, explicitly forbids any involvement of a religious institution in politics. Therefore, any anti-religious campaign, in order to be constitutional, must not be anti-religious

per se. Thus the government of Socialist Albania before the Cultural Revolution waged the war against religion on political rather than ideological grounds. In this matter, Hoxha followed Stalin's advice. As Hoxha quoted Stalin: "You should never put the struggle against the clergy, who carry out espionage and disruptive activities, on the religious plane... but always on the political plane."¹⁶¹ The struggle on the "religious plane" would commence during the Cultural Revolution. Until then, the struggle was not fought against religion as religion, but against "clericalism" in the service of fascism, Anglo-American imperialism, Vatican reaction and, after 1948, Titoite revisionism.

The last official demographic study based on religious affiliation was conducted by the Italians in 1942. According to that study, 763,723 or 68.9% of Albanians were Muslim. Of that number, 599,524 were Sunni and 164,199 were Bektashi. The Orthodox Christians amounted to 229,080 or 20.7% of the population and the Catholics comprised 10.3% of the population or 113,897 people.¹⁶²

With these divisions in mind, the Hoxha regime's policy was not monolithic but tactical. In addition to the implications of fascism, the regime based its policies on a particular institution's size, its threat to the new order, its susceptibility to co-optation and its political usefulness.¹⁶³ Before the Cultural Revolution, each institution was treated individually based on these criteria.

At the initial post war stage, the regime set out to curtail, co-opt and control the Sunni, Bektashi and Orthodox Christian establishments. The Catholic Church was singled out for the

thorough persecution.¹⁶⁴ The reasons for the Catholic Church's severe treatment were several. As mentioned earlier, it had the strongest of ties to a foreign authority, as the other three religions in Albania had established their independence before the Communists took power. This strict allegiance to the Pope, the "Chieftain of World Reaction," greatly impeded the government's ability to co-opt the clergy. Additionally, the Church ran an extensive educational system which served students of all faiths. In short, "The significance of the Catholic church in the life of northern Albania was out of proportion to its size,"¹⁶⁵-- northern Albania being an area which, it cannot be stressed enough, it was necessary for the Communist partisans to "conquer."

The objectives framing the policy towards the Catholic Church were clearly outlined by Hoxha in October 1945 at the fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPA:

The clergy is influential in Shkodra and the surrounding region and its influence cannot be eliminated merely by administrative measures. The Catholic clergy is a well organized body, with strong traditions and close links with external reaction and the Vatican. Therefore we should confront its organization with our better organization, confront its policy with our correct political line, and oblige it to fight on our ground, and not on its own, or with the slogans it wants to use. We must find the correct method of struggle and appropriate tactics to use against individual elements of the clergy.¹⁶⁶

Hoxha received the Apostolic Delegate to the Vatican, Msgr. Leone G. B. De Nigris in 1945.¹⁶⁷ During their meeting, Hoxha assured the Monsignor of the Church's security in the new state.¹⁶⁸ Shortly after the meeting with Msgr. Nigris, however, Hoxha proposed to the Archbishop of Shkodra, Gasper Thachi, and the Archbishop of Durres, Vincent Predushi, the creation of an independent, national Catholic Church. Both Archbishops unequivocally rejected the proposal.¹⁶⁹ Thus, when Msgr. De Nigris returned to Albania from the Vatican on 24 May he was detained by the authorities and subsequently expelled from the country. Later he was accused of attempting to organize an uprising.¹⁷⁰ The regime then set out to eliminate the power and influence of the Catholic Church in Albania.

The following month (June 1945), a meeting of the Albanian Bishops was held in secret. It became known as the fifth council of the Albanian bishops.¹⁷¹ Because the Apostolic Delegate was expelled, Bishop Fran Gjini, Abbot of Mirdita, was elected regent.¹⁷² Bishop Gjini then attempted to forge a rapprochement with the Hoxha regime, offering the Church's help in "reconstructing the nation," and expressing his "hope for the realization of... spiritual benefits for all Albanians."¹⁷³ But the attempt was useless, and the massive persecution of the Catholic clergy began in August of 1945 with the arrest of Fr. Jak Gardin, S.J. and Professor Gjergj Vata, both sentenced to decades of forced labor.¹⁷⁴

The strict organization and the strong influence of the Catholic orders presented a particular threat to the regime. Party

propaganda portrayed these orders as presenting a threat to national security and territorial integrity. According to official history:

On January 1, 1946 it was made known that the "Albanian Union" was uncovered and several clergymen at its head were arrested. In the search of the monasteries of the Jesuits and the Franciscans in Shkodra, weapons and munitions were found under the altar where the priests preached "Christian Charity."¹⁷⁵

The Party press announced on 17 January 1946 that all Jesuits were under arrest.¹⁷⁶ After the arrests, the press proceeded to implicate the Jesuits in fascist collaboration during the war, in addition to weaving a plot sponsored by the Vatican and Anglo-American imperialists to overthrow the People's government.¹⁷⁷ On 4 March, death sentences were carried out in the Jesuit plot. They included, among others, the rector of the Pontifical Seminary, the Vice Provincial of the Albanian Jesuits and the Muslim defense attorney.¹⁷⁸ With the execution of their leadership and the illegal status of the order, the Jesuits were forced to end their century-long mission in Albania.

Following the ban of the Jesuits, all foreign Catholic clergy were ordered to leave Albania.¹⁷⁹ At the October 1946 Plenum of the Central Committee, Hoxha resolved to "increase vigilance over the activities of the Catholic clergy and the mountain dwellers of the North."¹⁸⁰ In almost mirror circumstances of the Jesuit arrests, in December 1946, the security police allegedly discovered

munitions in the Franciscan Church in Shkodra. Thus the regime now had reason to ban the Franciscan order as well, which they did.¹⁸¹ All told, by the beginning of 1947, twenty priests had been executed and over forty had been sent to prison or labour camps.¹⁸²

The years 1946-1948 witnessed the execution or arrest of virtually all members of the Catholic Church's hierarchy. In addition to archbishops, bishops, monsignors, and provincials, the Albanian Church also lost most of its best writers, educators, philologists and folklorists.

After this campaign against the Catholic Church, Hoxha denied in a September 1949 speech, that which twenty years later would be hailed as the APL's greatest achievement:

All of the propaganda of reaction, interior and exterior, and that of certain reactionary priests claim that we destroy churches and mosques, that we fight those who wish to believe in God, etc., nothing but vile slander. We have never embarked on this way and we never will.¹⁸³

THE ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

In contrast to the campaign waged against the Catholic Church, other religious institutions in Albania were relatively tolerated in the immediate postwar years. The favored status was due to their political usefulness, especially in foreign policy. Co-operative Orthodox and Islamic clergy served as efficient conduits through which the Party could disseminate its views.

For example, the Patriarch of the Albanian Orthodox Church, Kristofer Kissi, spoke against Greek territorial claims to southern Albania in July 1945 on Radio Tirana.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, all institutions without exception encountered problems with the regime in some capacity, necessitating the purge of those bishops, priests, *ulema*, *babas* and dervishes who were cast as traitorous.

The relationship of respective submission and relative tolerance between the Orthodox Church and the regime encountered turbulence in 1949. It was announced on 28 August 1949 that the Orthodox Primate Kristofer Kissi was removed from his position for "plotting to detach the Church from the Eastern Orthodox faith and surrender it to the Vatican."¹⁸⁵

During the period of independent Albania, Archbishop Kissi along with Fan Noli and other prominent Orthodox leaders, engaged in an ecumenical dialogue with the Albanian Jesuits.¹⁸⁶ It is doubtful that subordination to the Vatican was the purpose of these discussions, as Muslim leaders also participated.¹⁸⁷ After the break with Yugoslavia in 1948 and Albania's subsequent alignment with the Soviet Union, the Orthodox Church was pressured to look eastwards, towards Moscow. But when Moscow hosted the 1948 Orthodox Church Conference, Archbishop Kissi was absent.¹⁸⁸ Shortly after the Moscow conference the Albanian Orthodox Church issued the following:

Whereas all the other Churches, and especially the Vatican, wanted to put an end to the existence of the Albanian Church, the Russian Orthodox Church is its great defender. The Russian Orthodox Church is national and patriotic. The emancipated

Albanian nation is moving rapidly along the path of progress and wishes its Orthodox Church to be likewise national and patriotic. In this connection the experience of the Russian Church provides a valuable lesson.¹⁸⁹

Archbishop Kissi was promptly replaced by the pro-Soviet Paisi Vodica, a married priest and therefore ineligible to hold a hierarchical office according to Orthodox canon law.¹⁹⁰ Vodica filled his role well as a spokesperson for the regime. During a Congress held for Albanian Orthodox in February 1950, Vodica asserted that "never has our Church been under such good auspices as it is now under the present regime, which has given and is giving us aid."¹⁹¹ Archbishop Kissi died of torture shortly after his arrest in 1949.¹⁹²

ALBANIAN MUSLIMS

During this phase of Socialist Albania, the leaders of the largest group of believers endured a restrained persecution. The *muftis* of Tirana, Durres and Shkodra were accused of collaborating with the fascist occupiers and subsequently shot or imprisoned immediately following the Communist takeover.¹⁹³ Once such elements were eliminated, the Muslim leadership was not viewed as a major threat to the new order. According to Hoxha:

The Muslim religion and its hierarchy were not as serious an obstacle to the struggle against the Italian occupiers as the Catholic religion was. Even before the occupation of the

country, but still more after it, the hierarchy of the Muslim religion was weak, without any experience to worry us...Among the Bektashi sect, also, a large proportion of the believers traditionally have displayed patriotism and have fought for the liberation of Albania.¹⁹⁴

Sunni Muslims witnessed numerous restrictions to their means of influence, especially in education. The Sunnis overall had the most property appropriated in the post-war years. Additionally, all Friday prayers were forbidden to be said in the Arabic language, in order to insure patriotism.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the *ra'is* (president) of the Albanian Sunni community declared in September 1949, "[I]t is necessary that our Muslim brothers know that our liberties are absolutely guaranteed by the People's Albanian State."¹⁹⁶

In May 1945, the regime insured the formal separation of the Sunni and Bektashi institutions.¹⁹⁷ This dual structure facilitated state policy which differed according to each community. It initially appeared as if the Bektashis would receive the most preferential treatment in the post-war era.

During the war, many Bektashis were among the Communist partisans.¹⁹⁸ However, the leader of the Bektashi Hierarchy, the *dede*, was immediately removed when the Communists took power. Dede Kember who had led the Bektashis from December 1941, died in Hoxha's prison shortly after the war.¹⁹⁹ From February 1945 until August 1945 Dede Xhafer Sadik filled the post, but he died apparently of natural causes.²⁰⁰ He was

replaced in September 1945 by Abazi Hilmi, who had been a Communist partisan during the war.²⁰¹

In addition to Dede Abazi Hilmi, two other prominent Bektashis had formal connections to the Communist Party. Baba Faja Martaneshi and Baba Fejzo Mallakastra were both elected to the People's Assembly in 1945.²⁰² These connections, however, were severed violently. According to official reports of the Albanian government, on 19 March 1947, Dede Abazi Hilmi murdered both Baba Faja Martaneshi and Baba Fejzo Mallakastra, then killed himself. The official explanation stated that this was as a result of a heated religious discussion.²⁰³ The two *babas* allegedly approached Dede Abazi "to discuss the democratization of their religious organization,"²⁰⁴ including such reforms as allowing dervishes to shave their beards, wear civilian clothes and marry.²⁰⁵ The state provided the burial for the two murdered *babas* and Dede Abazi was buried in a common grave.²⁰⁶

The exact circumstances of this double-murder suicide will probably never be uncovered. Rumors surrounding the case were deliberately circulated, such as Dede Abazi was a "heavy drinker."²⁰⁷ According to one theory, the two *babas* were killed by Dede Abazi because they were sent to arrest him.²⁰⁸ However this theory neglects to account for Dede Abazi's partisan background and his cordial relations with the government. It has been observed that generally clergy who cast their lot with the proletariat presented a greater threat to Communist regimes.²⁰⁹ The editors of the Albanian Catholic Bulletin offer the

most plausible explanation of the murders in light of this and of the subsequent events. They contend that it was in the best interest of the regime to eliminate all three former partisans.²¹⁰ The regime was then free to adopt a more confrontational posture towards the Bektashi establishment. Baba Myrteza Faja of Krug, for example, was promptly labeled a "people's enemy," with no high-placed co-religionists to defend him.²¹¹ He then died in police custody, allegedly by killing himself in May 1947.²¹² A number of executions of Bektashis followed in 1947, the precise number of which remains unknown.²¹³

In June 1948, a Bektashi Congress elected the pro-regime Ahmet Myftar as the new *dede* to replace Dede Abazi.²¹⁴ In September 1949 Dede Ahmet Myftar gave an interview to the Paris publication L'Humanité in which he asserted, "Our beliefs are respected. We receive state aid for the reconstruction of our convents."²¹⁵ During the same year, 1949, the Bektashi schools of religious instruction were all closed.²¹⁶

"ON RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES"

The regime succeeded in bringing Albania's religious institutions under its complete control with a series of legislation beginning with the 1949 Decree, "On Religious Communities." The Decree stated: "The activity of religious associations and organizations must take place on a national basis, in that it should serve the interests of the people and the state, and their officials must be loyal to the people and the State."²¹⁷ Then, in November

1949, each of the four institutions were required to compose official statutes to be approved by the government. The regulations for the statutes included: Church and state were separate, religious institutions were responsible for its members' loyalty to the state, and no foreign religious body was permitted to operate in Albania.²¹⁸

The Sunni, Orthodox and Bektashi statutes were all approved in May 1950. The Albanian Orthodox statute stated, "The Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania will report connections or co-operations with the Orthodox sister churches who practice the high principles of the Gospel-- with regard to peace and true brotherhood."²¹⁹ In concrete terms, this clause subordinated the Albanian Orthodox Church to the Russian Patriarchate.²²⁰ This ecclesiastical brotherhood mirrored the political situation at large. Following Tito's break with the Soviet Union in 1948, Albania's major ally and source of economic aid became the Soviet Union. "Peace and true brotherhood" was carried out through a series of Soviet-sponsored peace conferences.²²¹ At one such conference held in Tirana in 1950, Vodica stated:

Our Church must also be faithful to the great camp of peace, to the great anti-imperialist and democratic camp, to the unique camp of socialism, led brilliantly by the glorious Soviet Union and the Great Stalin against every attempt undertaken by enslaving imperialism in order to undermine international peace and throw the world into another butchery and new catastrophe.²²²

The Bektashis' statute included the objective to strengthen relations with other Bektashis throughout the world.²²³ This was in accordance with the order's political purpose to disseminate Party propaganda. The Hoxha regime was fond of the title for the *dede*, "World Grandfather of the Bektashis."²²⁴ The close collaboration between the Dede and the Hoxha government had already resulted in a schism in world Bektashism. A rival *dede* was elected in Egypt, on 30 January 1949, as the *dede* in Albania was viewed as a propaganda tool of the Albanian government, and therefore a false representative of Bektashism.²²⁵ Indeed it is difficult to judge where the rhetoric of the Party ended and where the rhetoric of Albanian Bektashi leadership began in this period. Dede Ahmet Myftar invited all Bektashis to celebrate the 1953 holiday of *ashura* "in hatred of Anglo-American imperialists and love of the People's Power."²²⁶

The statutes of the three religious communities re-enforced their roles as spokesmen of foreign policy. In August 1950, Orthodox and Sunni delegations visited the USSR. The chief *mufti*, Hafiz Musi Haxhi Ali, toured the Islamic monuments of Uzbekistan, expounding on world peace to fellow Muslims.²²⁷ In June 1951, the Bektashi *dede* and the *ra'is* of the Sunnis both sent telegrams to the United Nations protesting American military involvement in Korea.²²⁸

Manipulation of the Catholic clergy proved more difficult, especially since Pope had declared in 1949 that Catholic Communists were ex-communicated. It is no surprise that the Catholic statute encountered the most difficulty. The only living,

free Albanian Catholic bishop in 1950 was the 75-year old Bishop Shllaku of Pulti, who assembled the remaining Catholic clergy to draw a statute. Three statutes were rejected by the regime throughout 1950.²²⁹ In the meantime, Tuk Jakova, the Minister of the Interior, attempted to negotiate with the remaining hierarchy.²³⁰ Apparently Jakova offered some concessions to the Church regarding the possibility of filling the many hierarchical vacancies.²³¹ Yet the intransigence remained as far as severance from the Pope was concerned. In June 1951 this conciliatory approach was abandoned when General Mehmet Shehu took over Tuk Jakova's post in order to better exert pressure on Bishop Shllaku.²³²

The situation surrounding the Catholic statute resulted in the only purge of a Party leader for religious policy. Hoxha stated at the second Party Congress in 1952 that "without seeing the great danger of the reactionary clergy, Comrade Tuk Jakova has not hated them in sufficient measure."²³³ For this he was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison, but died soon after in police custody.²³⁴ Whatever factionalism that may have existed concerning the Party line on religious policy, if there was ever a possibility of a "soft line," it appears to have been cut henceforth. From this point onwards, the chief architect of religious policy appears to have been Hoxha, with no discernible dissent within the ranks of the Party.

On 3 August 1951, over a year after the other statutes were adopted, the statute of the Albanian Catholic Church was published in the Party daily, Zëri i popullit (Voice of the People).

The first article stated: "The Albanian Catholic Church is a national church. It is a legal corporation and has no organizational, economic or political ties with the Pope."²³⁵ Thus, official relations with the Vatican were formally severed as far as the government was concerned. Nevertheless, some sources contend that the statute that which was agreed to by Bishop Shllaku was not the one which was made public.²³⁶

The Tirana publication Drita in 1976 gave insight into the fiction of the statutes which had been adopted over twenty years earlier. The following excerpt indicates that none of the statutes, even the most "liberal," that of the Bektashi's, were agreed to by the communities' leaders, but rather forced upon them:

The reactionary Bektashi said stubbornly: "The Statute we made should not come into effect because it does not give us the rights we would like to have." The heads of Catholicism did not, under any circumstances, want to sign the church Statute and continue to operate as a national Church. [They made] all kinds of demands which, if granted, would have resulted in the clergy not only working as spiritual oppressors of the working masses but also as a legal political tool of the centre of world reaction.²³⁷

In an attempt to recover the Catholic hierarchic organization, Bishop Shllaku invested, though uncanonically, additional bishops. Ernest Coba, the apostolic administrator in Shkodra, also secretly ordained ex-seminarians. Thus, the Catholic Church attempted a recovery, which accounts for a second phase of persecution of the newly created clergy which occurred in the years 1958-1965.²³⁸

Religious persecution in Albania tended to mirror foreign policy. In April 1959, for example, two priests and several laymen were put on trial for sedition against the state in collaboration with Yugoslavian agents.²³⁹ By casting the clergy as subversives, the Party played into public fears of invasion-- fears fed by the propaganda apparatus whose list of enemies was ever-increasing. The public was bombarded throughout the 1950s by numerous reports of near-invasions by Yugoslav and Greek saboteurs.²⁴⁰

Before the Cultural Revolution, much of the arduous work which was required to construct an atheist state had been completed. Most important in this regard was the decimation of Albanian clergy and *ulema*. At the time of the Communist takeover in 1944 Albania had ninety-three native Catholic priests; of this total, 24 were executed, 35 imprisoned, 10 missing, 11 drafted and 3 exiled, leaving a total of 10 in 1953.²⁴¹ Proportionately, it is fair to state that this was the most thorough persecution of a single body of clergy in all of Eastern Europe during the Communist period.

Most Orthodox hierarchs were imprisoned before the Cultural Revolution including at least two archbishops and four bishops.²⁴² Of the Islamic communities, both Sunni and Bektashi, at least twenty-eight of their leaders were executed before the Revolution. However, this figure is undoubtedly much higher. It should be noted that documentation is most thorough concerning the Catholic community in this period, for several reasons. The Albanian Catholic émigré community was able to produce considerable documentation on the subject. Moreover, the

Western press in general has neglected the Muslims of Eastern Europe, a tendency which has continued until very recently. There is also an internal factor behind this dearth of evidence. The Tirana regime, in the interest of good foreign policy relations with Muslim countries, did not see it in its best interest to publicize ill treatment of the *ulema* and Bektashi leadership.

In 1961, four German journalists received visas for an extended stay in Albania. The observations regarding the religious situation were ominous: "Albanian Islam is in its death throes," and "the situation of the Church in Albania seems to be hopeless."²⁴³

By the end of this phase of Albanian religious history, a bleak picture emerges, not unlike those of other Eastern European countries. Albanian religious institutions experienced restrictions similar to other religious institutions throughout Eastern Europe at the time. The social and educational position held by religious communities in Albania had been dramatically reduced. One specific institution, in this case the Catholic Church, had been singled out for special persecution, similar to the Catholic Church in the USSR and the Islamic establishment in Bulgaria. Purged and pliant, Albanian clergy and *ulema* had essentially become another branch of the government bureaucracy. And the structural organizations of all religious establishments had been dictated by the state. Surveying this situation, it has been said that the next phase in Albania's religious history, involving the Party's most radical move, simply gave Albania's religions a

merciful *coup de grace*. From the standpoint of the independence of their institutions, this statement is true.

CHAPTER III

THE WORLD'S FIRST ATHEIST STATE

Commenting on the first stage of the APL's war against religion, official Albanian history states: "The Party could not insult the feelings of a mass of working people, especially in the countryside... but [who] continued to believe in one or the other religion."²⁴⁴ In other words, the Party restrained itself until 1967. Before it took the radical step which made all religious activity illegal, however, the Party's rhetoric shifted from a shrewd anti-clericalism to an ideological war overtly against religion itself, to the contrary of Stalin's advice. At the 1955 Party Plenum, Hoxha declared that "the religious world outlook and the Communist world outlook are irreconcilable."²⁴⁵

The most important precedent of the Cultural Revolution was in foreign policy. Relations between Albania and the Soviet Union had reached the breaking point by 1961 for several reasons, such as Krushchev's de-Stalinization program and his rehabilitation of Tito. Following the break with Krushchev, Albania replaced one strong patron with another-- Mao's China. Simultaneously with the forging of the Chinese alliance, the Albanian Labour Party shifted its focus from political and socioeconomic matters to the cultural and ideological.²⁴⁶ The Chinese leadership offered a method of cultural radicalism the APL was in a position to accept. Nevertheless, Mao was never credited with Albania's version of the Cultural Revolution. The two revolutions shared common

features-- bureaucratic purges, elimination of military ranks and the re-location of many intellectuals from urban areas to the countryside. The differences, however, proved to be greater. The most distinctive feature of the Albanian Cultural Revolution was the abolition of religion, public and private, without exception.²⁴⁷ Additionally, Hoxha did not develop a cult of personality to the extent of Mao's, nor did the Albanian Cultural Revolution become as violent or chaotic. The three years of revolutionary activity in Albania were always tightly controlled by the politburo, despite the claims of spontaneity.²⁴⁸ Mao employed the Red Guards in order to gain complete power over the Party, whereas in Albania, the element most capable of dissent was the youth, as student movements were spreading throughout the world in the late sixties.²⁴⁹ Accordingly, students were employed throughout the three year period to achieve the Party's ends-- such as the closure of all of the nation's religious institutions.

Preparations for the Cultural Revolution were made between the years 1961-1965, with a focus on the "superstructures" of Albanian society.²⁵⁰ A "Communist Education" program was constructed during these years, implementing atheist education. The education program's objective was the creation of the "New Man"-- a being who would possess, according to Hoxha, "new ideas and thoughts, with lofty virtues and morals."²⁵¹ Two mass organizations were mobilized for these efforts, and continued to play a significant role throughout the Revolution, the Albanian Women's Union and the Union of Albanian Labour Youth. The

latter was often referred to in the international press as the "Albanian Red Guards."

On the eve of the Cultural Revolution, the Party was prepared to demonstrate its stance against religion to the world. When Pope Paul VI addressed the United Nations on 5 October 1965 in New York, the Albanian delegation boycotted, creating headlines which read: "Near-Unanimous Greeting Marred Only by Albania."²⁵²

The official commencement of the Cultural Revolution was marked by an open letter from the Central Committee of the Labour Party made public 4 March 1966. Addressed to all Communists, workers, soldiers and officers, the letter asked for their help in the further "revolutionization" of society.²⁵³ At this initial stage, bureaucracy was the main target. The bureaucracy was promptly streamlined; government ministries were reduced from nineteen to thirteen.²⁵⁴ Wall posters (thunder sheets) also made their appearance, at this point denouncing the evils the Soviet model of bureaucracy.²⁵⁵ Also early in 1966, various writers and intellectuals, mainly based in Tirana, were sent to the countryside for a period of manual labour.

The Party adopted the idea of an "Uninterrupted Revolution" as its own. In November 1966, Hoxha stated:

So long as the complete victory of the revolution in the realms of ideology and culture has not been ensured, the victories of the Socialist Revolution in the economic and political fields can neither be secured nor guaranteed.²⁵⁶

In the Party's view, religion fell squarely within the bounds of culture and ideology. The anti-religious phase of the Revolution was launched 6 February 1967 when Hoxha delivered a speech entitled "On the Struggle Against Religion and Religious Preconceptions and Customs."²⁵⁷ In that speech, Hoxha attacked and religious attitudes along with patriarchy and individualism. He asserted: "The history of our people demonstrates clearly how much suffering, distress, bloodshed and oppression have been visited upon our people by religion."²⁵⁸

According to official history, Hoxha's speech of 6 February, which appeared in Zëri i popullit the following day, sparked a spontaneous movement among the youth:

Within the new climate there grew in the heart of young people still at school, an initiative demanding the closure of churches, of mosques, in short of all sacred places--consequently of everything which provided the ecclesiastics with life and work. Very quickly these initiatives were transformed into a great popular movement. Following ardent, passionate debate, numerous popular meetings were organized town and country, during which examples of unworthy behavior on the part of several priests were revealed, electrifying the situation even further.²⁵⁹

Zëri i popullit's headline of 8 February read, "With the Sharp Sword of Party Ideology Against Religious Ideology, Superstitions and Backwards Customs," showing a photo of students from the Naim Frasheri High School reading thunder sheets.²⁶⁰ On 10 February, it was announced that thunder sheets had declared St. Anthony's Church in Lezhe a "House of Culture,"²⁶¹ which was one

of the first official church appropriation of 1967. Initially viewed as a "Red Guard" movement in the international press, the Albanian government took great pains to make it appear as if the closure of churches and mosques was an initiative of the youth which spread throughout the country, inspired by the students of the Naim Frasheri High School. Students were also credited with the early cultural initiative to change the logo of a brand of cigarettes-- from the depiction of a camel before a mosque to an industrial complex.²⁶²

As stated earlier, one of the main political motivations for implementing the Cultural Revolution was strengthening the Party's control over the nation's youth. In one sense, the regime orchestrated its own youth rebellion. However, in a speech on 27 February 1967, as church and mosque closure was getting underway, Hoxha made a statement which clearly demonstrates that the movement was not spontaneous nor improvised:

We have rendered all religious propaganda impossible and especially the publication of books and documents. We have equally forbidden the formation of new ecclesiastics. It is necessary now, therefore, to look for the problem in churches and mosques as being the last places where religious officials can gather their faithful and incite them not to abandon their faith, even if it expresses itself only in limited forms. It is necessary, therefore, for us to pursue the struggle until they have disappeared from our soil.²⁶³

Far from a youth rebellion, students were organized and utilized by the regime for the Party's own objectives outlined by

Hoxha above. Thus the spring and summer of 1967, which witnessed the bulk of anti-religious activity, has been appropriately described as a "wave of controlled revolutionary enthusiasm."²⁶⁴

According to Western correspondents in Tirana, the process of closing churches and mosques followed a general procedure: Assemblies of villages or parishes were called to discuss Hoxha's speech of 6 February. At these meetings, a decision was somehow reached in which the village or parish would formally ask permission of the government to have the local church or mosque closed for its intended purpose. Within a few days of the request, the army would arrive to fulfill the "wishes of the people."²⁶⁵ This protocol would make it appear as if these requests were made freely by the people. Thus, by May of 1967, all of the nation's 2,169 religious institutions-- mosques, churches, *medresehs*, seminaries, *tekkes* and monasteries were closed.²⁶⁶

Through an edict issued in 1967, the head of Albania's Institute of Architectural Preservation curtailed the physical destruction of some religious structures, protecting those with architectural value, such as the historic Ethem Bey Mosque in Tirana.²⁶⁷ But many more religious buildings were razed. A Franciscan monastery in Lezhe, for example, was burned down, with four monks inside.²⁶⁸ Those structures that were not destroyed were boarded up or converted for secular purposes. L'Osservatore Romano reported in April 1973 on the fate of some Catholic

churches-- a "sports palace," warehouse, apartment complex, and one became the headquarters for the *sigurmi* (secret police).²⁶⁹

During this time, teams of young people were dispersed throughout the country on persuasion missions. According to official history, they persuaded people through rational discussions to abandon their beliefs.²⁷⁰ "Accountings" were held where a particular village would assemble to criticize those who observed the fast of Ramadan, for example.²⁷¹ Zëri i popullit denied that the Party had used administrative measures against religion: "It is by persuasion alone that Albanian has become the first atheist state in the world."²⁷²

Members of the clergy and *ulema* who remained in Albania were pressured to renounce publicly their "spiritual exploitation" and parasitism.²⁷³ Zëri i popullit reported in 1967 that 217 clergy were in "re-education."²⁷⁴ In April 1967, the forty remaining Orthodox priests, some of them taken from prison, were transported to the city of Delvino where their beards were shaved in public and their vestments removed and desecrated.²⁷⁵ Henceforth, beards became illegal, even on tourists, due to the fact that they were customarily worn by clergy and *ulema*.

The regime was confident enough by September of 1967 to proclaim in the monthly Nendori that the youth of Albania had created the "first atheist state in the world."²⁷⁶ On 13 November, the preceding measures of anti-religious activity were legislated. Decree No. 4337, "On the Abrogation of Certain Decrees" effectively legalized the ban of religious institutions by superseding all of the former decrees which had legitimized

them. The government could then truthfully declare as Hoxha did, "Albania now presents itself as a country without churches and without mosques, without priests and without imams."²⁷⁷

CONSTRUCTION OF AN ATHEIST SOCIETY

As previously mentioned, Albania's ban of religious institutions outlived the Cultural Revolution. As the Party winded down its organized revolutionary activity in 1969, the war on religion was about to enter into its most significant decade. The tremendous task of building an atheist state was foreseen by Hoxha in 1967, as he addressed the Fourth Congress of the Democratic Front:

It is wrong to maintain that religion means church, mosque, priest, hoxha, ikons, etc., and that if these disappear then religion and its influence on the people automatically will disappear. We must be realists. The struggle against habits, traditions, old norms and religious viewpoints deeply rooted in the course of centuries of the consciousness of the people has not yet come to an end. This is a long, complicated and difficult struggle.²⁷⁸

The Party set out, and in many ways succeeded-- through propaganda, education and legislation-- to completely eliminate all traces of Albania's four religions from society.

The Party had no intention of leaving society in a vacuum. As religion was accused of exploiting people's need for culture and aesthetic beauty, the Party set out to replace this need.²⁷⁹ The artistic establishment was encouraged to fortify the new atheist

state with books, plays and paintings. One book of anti-clerical poetry, "Religion Striped Naked," contained the following verse:

Forever the people swept away,
 These pillars of fanaticism,
 And rid themselves of clericalism,
 Which for many centuries past,
 Using Christ and Mohamet,
 Holy men, saint and prophet--
 Made of life a sorry mess.²⁸⁰

Tirana's publishing houses churned out a wave of anti-religious material such as "The Harm of Religious Rites and Festivals," "The 'Miracles' of Religion" and "We Accuse Religion."²⁸¹ In addition to polemical tracts, some scholarly works were composed which examined anthropological aspects of Albanian religious life, now in the process of extinction.²⁸²

Literary allusions to religion or God were expunged as far as possible. Even religious expressions which had long since lost their meaning were required to be censored before publication.²⁸³ In June 1972 the "Atheist Museum" was opened in Shkodra which housed displays depicting "the inhuman acts committed by those who have worn cassocks or carried the Koran."²⁸⁴

New holidays were invented to replace religious holidays. Many of these, such as "Border Guard Day," were meant to glorify the labour force. Some of the new festivals and anniversaries continued for ten day durations, as the Bektashi fast of *matem*

had been observed earlier.²⁸⁵ "The Festival of Electric Light" was also introduced.²⁸⁶ The religious significance of candles was not missed by the government, which complained that candles were still used by those provided with electricity.²⁸⁷

The Marxist-Leninist notion that religion, far from presenting a basis of sound morality, actually promotes an individualistic immorality, was avidly promoted by the APL. The Party offered its own ethics and guides to normative behavior which served as an answer to the traditional religious alternatives. Hoxha extolled the virtues of "Socialist Humanism," defined as the love a worker expresses through labour for his fellow.²⁸⁸ However, contradictions arose within the "New Morality." The state's birth control policy, due to the Party's desire to increase the population, was more stringent than that advocated by the Vatican's *magisterium*; even natural birth control was discouraged. For the birth of six children, Albanian women received a "Mother's Medal," for nine children, a "Glory Medal," and upon the birth of the twelfth child, women received a "Heroine Mother's Medal."²⁸⁹ Abortions were illegal for they represented "foreign manifestation incompatible with our Socialist norms."²⁹⁰ The atheism promoted by the state was not decadent, but puritanical. Party organs repeatedly spoke out against miniskirts, blue jeans, make-up, rock and jazz music, chewing gum. Nor were pre-marital sex and dirty jokes welcome in the world's first atheist state.²⁹¹ The APL proclaimed its moral righteousness attested to by the intact Albanian family and the

encouragement of prolific child-bearing, unlike trends seen in bourgeois and revisionist societies.²⁹²

With the adoption of the new constitution in 1976, the anti-religious policy was meant to become a permanent feature of Albanian society. Article 37 stated: "The state does not recognize any religion at all and supports and develops atheistic propaganda in order to implant in mankind the scientific materialist worldview." The missionary and messianic tone in the clause is intentional. According to the Premier at the time, Mehmet Shehu, the 1976 constitution "embodies in itself a solemn oath of the existing generations... to keep Albania red, from generation to generation, like the banner of Communism, like the blood of martyrs."²⁹³

It was traditional in Albania to celebrate one's name day rather than one's birthday, as people were usually named after saints and other religious figures. According to ideological ministers, traditional names expressed nostalgia for religion.²⁹⁴ This was changed 23 September 1975 with Decree no. 5339. It stated: "All citizens whose names do not conform to the political, ideological and moral standards of the state are obliged to change them as from 1976."²⁹⁵ A "Dictionary of People's Names" was printed with 3,000 names the state judged appropriate, most of allegedly of Illyrian origin. In addition, new creations such as Marengelen - an amalgamation of Marx, Engels and Lenin, were suggested.²⁹⁶ Names such as Peter, John, Mary, Ismail, Musa and Haxhi were forbidden. A great irony relating to this decree was the origin of the name *hoxha*, a Turkish derivative defined as a "learned one"

in Islam. Over 90 towns and villages were also renamed by decree in September 1975. For example, the village of St. Nicholas in southern Albania was henceforth designated "Red Star."²⁹⁷

Penal codes were issued for crimes specifically of a religious nature. A 1977 penal code banned private religious practice *de jure*:

Fascist, anti-democratic, religious, warmongerish and anti-socialist agitation and propaganda, and also the production, distribution or storage with a view to distribution of literature of this kind, aimed at undermining or weakening the rule of the proletariat, will be punished with imprisonment of between three and ten years. If these actions occur in time of war or if they have caused particularly serious consequences, they will be punished with imprisonment of not less than ten years or with death.²⁹⁸

All evidence indicates strict enforcement of the religious penal codes. Bearing the brunt of this enforcement were former members of the clergy and *ulema*. Fr. Shtjefen Kurti's priestly career, for example, reflects the history of the APL's religious policies. In 1945, charged with spying for the Vatican, he was sentenced to life imprisonment, but served 18 years. In 1967, he was sentenced again, for sixteen years, because he physically resisted government soldiers when they came to close his church. Fr. Kurti was executed in 1972²⁹⁹ for the crime of baptizing the baby of a fellow prisoner. In March 1973, news of Fr. Kurti's execution reached the world press. To this point, the religious

situation in Albania was largely ignored in the mainstream international press. As a reaction to the negative publicity surrounding Fr. Kurti, the Albanian government denied that he was executed for performing a baptism, charging Fr. Kurti with espionage on behalf of the Italians, Germans, British, Americans and the Vatican³⁰⁰ as well as being a "saboteur of the economy."³⁰¹

International attention was also focused on Albania in 1973 after the November death of the Orthodox Archbishop Damian Konessi, who had been in prison since 1967.³⁰² Zëri i rinës warned in January 1973 about priests who had resumed their duties.³⁰³ By 1975, all of the Orthodox bishops were in prison, and most Orthodox priests.³⁰⁴ Many *imams* were also interned, including the last *ra'is*, Hafis Esad Myftia, and the last Bektashi *dede*, Reshat Bardi.³⁰⁵ The three remaining Catholic Bishops were all captured in 1976. Bishop Anton Fishta died the same year. Bishop Ernest Coba, who had been invested by bishop Shllaku, was beaten to death in 1979 for celebrating Easter Mass in prison.³⁰⁶ Bishop Nikoll Troshani was the only Catholic Bishop to survive Albania's atheist period. Arrests of lower clergy continued throughout the 1970s. For example, Father Fran Mark Gjoni was sentenced in 1977 for twelve years for the possession of religious literature.³⁰⁷

According to Radio Vatican in April 1973, "Only vague and rare traces of the Catholic Church remain" in Albanian.³⁰⁸ Pope Paul VI's December 1972 address to the College of Cardinals was an assessment of resignation that the Church in Albania "seems

relegated not only to the peace of suffering but to the peace of death."³⁰⁹ In many ways, this was a fair assessment. The most exhaustive anti-religious campaign had its successes. No visible traces of religion were permitted. A villager in Libohava, for example, was fined for merely mentioning the word "Bayram."³¹⁰ Nearly all minarets had been leveled. The Dictionary of Present Day Albanian defined the word "pray" as a request made to a god or saint "in places where religion still operates."³¹¹

Had religion actually reached the peace of death in Albania? Was Albania truly an atheist state, in that the people were successfully persuaded to accept the atheist ideology of the regime? A revolution, the closure of every religious institution, constitutional reform and penal codes attempted to achieve this, but even the Party admitted that religion continued to be practiced by the people. Anton Logoreci comments that during this period, religious practice had "entered a dark, mysterious zone where no one can say with any degree of certainty what secret forms they might take or whether they will survive or not."³¹² However, it is possible to obtain a rough picture of the form religious practice took during this period through reports which filtered through, attesting to its survival. Ironically, one of the major sources of this information is the propaganda of the Party itself. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the Party had a pre-occupation with "lingering manifestations" of religion and would report on these when discovered.

"LINGERING MANIFESTATIONS"

The realization came early that religion had not been abandoned by the Albania people, but had in fact, been driven underground. In 1970, the publication Nendori admitted that "despite the hard blows religion had suffered through the destruction of its material institutions, religious ideology is still alive."³¹³ The sixth Party Congress held in November 1971 sought vigilance against the "most backward stratum of the working people" who continued to cleave to their respective religious beliefs despite the Party's "historic victory."³¹⁴ The assessment of the religious situation led to Hoxha's admission in 1972 that "the influence of religion does not disappear so easily."³¹⁵ The Party's official history, The History of the Party of Labour of Albania, asserts that Christianity and Islam, as foreign imports, received only a perfunctory and superficial acceptance by the Albanian people. This historical reality, according to the author, facilitated the obliteration of these religious institutions from contemporary Albanian society. However, the same author proceeds to state: "The elimination of churches and mosques did not wipe out religion as a world outlook. Religion is very deep rooted."³¹⁶

What has generally assumed to be the main source of weakness in Albanian religion, Albanian Christianity in particular, has been its non-dogmatic, "superstitious" folk orientation. This characteristic, however, was one of the most important components in its ability to survive through the atheist period.

High religion in all forms-- centered around *medresehs* and seminaries-- had effectively been destroyed. But in many ways, they were not the most important aspect of Albanian religious life. The more typical aspects of Albanian religion were conducted despite the restrictions. Those aspects which contributed to the institutional weakness at the same time were conducive to survival in clandestine circumstances. Pilgrimages, for example, continued to be carried out, in disguise. Shrine devotion was possible in many rural areas. Without the presence of official priests or *imams*-- not an unusual circumstance in Albania's history-- devotion was carried out within the confines of the family.

The Party secretary of the Puka region in northern Albania reported in 1973: "Religious proclaimers are still alive and are active in some places quite openly, in others, secretly, and they do with various new as well as old methods."³¹⁷ Another government organ reported:

Instead of a cross, a laurel branch is used; baptism is celebrated in other ways, as by gifts; name days are celebrated as birthdays; suppers and dinners are held for "spirits of the dead." New religious objects are now manufactured, such as crosses from cloth, rosaries from olive stones, which are also peddled, and blessings are found in the dowry of brides.³¹⁸

Religious holidays were observed year after year. Officials often complained that those "legal" holidays were celebrated with

more enthusiasm when they coincided with former religious holidays.³¹⁹ Zëri i popullit reported in April 1971:

The destruction of places of worship has not destroyed religious petty-bourgeois practices especially in family life. National or Party festivals are often used to camouflage religious festivals. Last year the two national days of the 28th and 29th November coincided with a Muslim festivity which explained the "nationalistic" fervor in some highland communities."³²⁰

Depending upon the liturgical calendar and the Islamic lunar cycle, authorities noted the decline in food consumption during Ramadan and Lent. They also noted the rise in food consumption and absenteeism corresponding to religious feasts. They complained that people dressed better on religious holidays.³²¹ Easter presented a particular problem, especially in former Orthodox Christian areas. At a collective farm in Drenove on Easter in 1973, no one reported for work, including the APL officials.³²²

Disguised pilgrimages taken under secular pretexts were particularly worrisome to authorities, especially when reports spread of miraculous healings as a result of a saint's intervention. At least two Catholic shrines were leveled for this reason.³²³ Rumors also spread that the relatives of high-ranking Party members visited the gutted Rozafat Church in Shkodra, which was the national Marian shrine before 1967.³²⁴ Muslim faith healers also aggravated authorities, especially their alleged success.³²⁵

The Party dreaded "circumcision season" during which, it was discovered in 1972, children throughout the villages in the Durres region (including those of Communist officials) "became Muslims" through the circumcision rite.³²⁶ And then again in 1974, it was discovered that 28 children, five of which belonged to a local Party member, had been circumcised.³²⁷ The 1974 report asserted that circumcision was a "religious custom brought to Albania by foreigners which should have disappeared long ago together with other practices such as Ramazan, fasting, etc."³²⁸ The refusal to eat pork could have been added to the list of foreign imports, a distaste that lingered in atheist Albania.³²⁹

For Christians, the sacrament of baptism remained the most tenacious, even at great risk. In May 1980 Fr. Ndoc Luli was arrested for the baptism of twins, and sentenced to life.³³⁰ In the absence of a priest, the parents usually performed the sacrament.³³¹

The ancient Balkan custom of tattooing one's hands also endured the atheist period. According to the secretary of the Democratic Front in Puka, tattoos of crosses and crescents were discovered on the palms and fingers of even young people, presumably received after such religious symbols were prohibited.³³²

Another Balkan tradition which survived was lamentations for the dead. Essentially a ritualized mourning sung by both Christian and Muslim women, lamentations for the dead were banned in 1967. When it became legal to practice religion again, a group of Bektashis held a blessing of a grave-shrine (*turbe*) in

April 1991, where lamentations were observed publicly. The Bektashi scholar Francis Trix noted that the group of women performing these chants were young-- born since the Cultural Revolution. Thus, this practice was passed down during the atheist period in secret.³³³

Even customs without overt religious significance, such as exchanging blood between members of different tribes and the practice of exogamy were criticized by the Party: "They are essentially religious traditions and serve to promote exogamous marriage and to strengthen the power of the *pater familias*. So, despite the abolition of religion and the emancipation of women, these harmful traditions serve to perpetuate a social evil."³³⁴

Details from the Albanian former religious life often surfaced to attract notice of Party officials. Orthodox continued to observe prayers for the deceased on the third, ninth and eleventh days after death. Graves often faced Mecca, or had homemade crosses placed upon them.³³⁵ Authorities also voiced their concern over the continuing currency of icons.

Marriages, which were required to be civil ceremonies, were criticized in the Party press for their traditional remnants. In 1973, the publication of the Albanian Democratic Front reported, "On the last Sunday in July of this year 116 taxis were reserved. 116 weddings took place that day...the Front organizations in the villages and sections of the city remained silent. They were silent and did nothing about the well known fact that the bridal dress is of religious origin."³³⁶

Another trend indicative of lingering religious practices was documented in an official sociological study conducted in 1980. The study found that inter-faith marriages, historically common in Albania due to the tribal custom of exogamy, were on the decline. Marriages between former Christians and former Muslims accounted for only between 3.7 and 3.8% of new marriages.³³⁷ Marriages between former members of different religions were declining, especially in northern regions where the clergy wielded more influence.³³⁸ This was an important aspect in Albanian society— religiously diverse yet officially atheist, inter-faith marriage represented to the atheist ideologists a "defiance of religion" and a means for the unification of the Albanian people.³³⁹

Party officials divided the population into those with "stable" and "unstable" detachment to religious belief.³⁴⁰ One author's analysis concluded that religious vestiges had currency among a minority of fanatics and conservatives, as opposed to the ideologically sound majority of workers and Communists. The Party must direct its efforts, however, to those "waverers" caught in-between. To combat such depositories, the author recommended that "volk intelligence" be gathered in the most remote villages.³⁴¹

The family remained one of the last sanctuaries in which religious beliefs and customs could be preserved. According to a government study in 1980, the family was the major culprit exposing young people to religious views and customs.³⁴² Thus, children were encouraged to report on their parents' religious

activity. Bashkimi reported in October 1975 that a secret "temple" had been discovered in a private home. What angered the authorities most, however, was the failure of the son to report his parents' shrine: "Such irresponsibility encourages this kind of illegal activity."³⁴³

Anti-religious campaigns during the 1980s carried out in Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia-- far from achieving desired results-- have been at least partially credited with religious revival in these countries.³⁴⁴ No matter how repressive, no state policy was more extreme than Albania's, which banned private religious expression. In the context of East European Communism, Albania's religious situation can not be judged by revival, according to Louis Zanga, but merely by survival.³⁴⁵ However insignificant the indications of religious survivals may seem during this period, it should be noted that these were only visible or discovered manifestations, undoubtedly representative of much more activity carried out underground.

Nearly all articles, pamphlets and speeches concerning religion during this time boast about the victory the Party had achieved over religion-- how in Albania, religion had been "destroyed," "uprooted," "smashed,"-- then, nearly all polemics proceed with significant qualifications to this victory. This is not meant to be taken a resignation of defeat, however, but as an exhortation for greater vigilance. The statements resemble more or less what appeared in Bashkimi 20 February 1975:

Religion has been uprooted in Albania, the economic power of its institutions destroyed, and prejudices and practices inspired by it successfully eliminated. But that does not mean that its influence has been eradicated from the minds of all people. So the campaign must continue for a very long time. In regions like Kavaja religious customs are re-appearing: people observe the Ramazan fast, marriages between people formerly belonging to different persuasions are becoming less frequent, and barbers are again going around the villages offering to perform the illegal practice of circumcision on demand.³⁴⁶

INTERNATIONAL REACTION

International reaction to the situation was anemic until the mid-1980s. The only publication which covered the events promptly in 1967 was L'Osservatore Romano. On 11 July 1967, it reported that "churches in Albania have been closed or damaged in a wave of anti religious violence."³⁴⁷ The World Council of Churches did not address the situation until a Russian Orthodox priest, Gleb Yakunin, serving ten years in a Soviet prison, addressed a letter to the World Council of Churches' 1975 meeting, which brought attention to Albania.³⁴⁸ This lack of response is to be somewhat expected owing to Albania's predominant Muslim population. However, the Kuwaiti publication Al-Ahrabi sounded much like APL propaganda when it asserted that Albanian Muslims, never properly organized, had never been true believers.³⁴⁹ This lack of concern prompted the conclusion of Anton Logoreci: "The great tragedy of the Albanians is that their full awareness of the steel hoops of this modern totalitarian bondage coincided with the discovery that their

recurring nightmare about the icy indifference of the rest of the world may not be a figment of the imagination after all."³⁵⁰

John Paul II mentioned Albania in a 1980 homily: "I cannot but turn my eyes to the heroic Church in Albania, upset by harsh and prolonged persecution, but enriched with testimony of its martyrs."³⁵¹ Then on 26 February 1984 he mentioned Albania again, sparking a war of words across the Adriatic. In the coastal town of Bari, John Paul II directed these words to Albania:

My thought goes from this city also to our brothers and sisters of Albania, who cannot demonstrate externally their religious faith, a fundamental right of the human person...I want to assure these brothers who are so tried that they are particularly present in my heart.³⁵²

Zëri i popullit retorted less than a week later on 2 March 1984, informing the public that the Pope "has appeared on the shores of Puglia, in front of us, to curse the 'irreligious Albanians.'" It further stated:

As for the 'concern' of the Pope over the situation of religion in Albania, it must be said that none has ever been persecuted in new Albania because of his religious sentiments. Our people's power has considered the problem of religious faith as an individual problem, as a problem of one's own conscience. With their own free will and without imposition, our people themselves decided what stand they must adopt towards religion and the religious institutions.³⁵³

The article above demonstrates a shift in the Party line regarding its religious policy by the adoption of cautious denial.

Throughout the 1980s, the Party's stance on the nature of the world's first atheist state was characterized by inconsistency and ambivalence. To this point, the religious policy of the Tirana regime was the most monolithic in Eastern Europe. Throughout the entire decade of the 1980s, the anti-religious legislation remained intact, yet a growing ambivalence is discernible as to how this legislation was explained in the international scene. By the close of the decade, allowances were granted, such as granting visas to émigré clergy, that would have been unthinkable just a few years before.

Small signs of a relaxation in religious policy were detectable as early as 1982, when the Atheist museum in Shkodra was closed. However, these signs are remarked upon only in hindsight, for intense persecution also continued. The last known case of a major crime of a religious nature was that of Father Pjetar Meshkalla's in 1985. The Jesuit priest, then in his eighties, was arrested that year for celebrating mass in a private home. He died in prison, three years later.³⁵⁴

On numerous occasions, Party spokesmen distanced themselves from their nation's militant atheism. In October 1983, a quote attributed to Hoxha was disseminated throughout the world press in which he said, "To believe or not to believe is each person's right."³⁵⁵ However, the quote as it originally appeared in Zëri i popullit, went on to say, "...it is a matter of conscience and not a matter of institutions, or the desires of the mullahs, despots, or

the Pope of Rome"³⁵⁶-- indicating that the institutional ban was still in effect. Moreover, atheist propaganda continued to be actively propagated. "Cultural Youth Brigades," groups of students who traveled the countryside to root out "backward customs, superstitions and recalcitrant religious practices," were still reported active by their publication Zëri i rinisë (Voice of the Youth) as late as July 1987.³⁵⁷

One of the most curious episodes of Albania's atheist period was what has been referred to as Hoxha's "Islamic Relapse." The severing of relations with China in 1978 followed a predictable foreign policy pattern of strong patron-client relations and bitter fallouts.³⁵⁸ Albania was forced to cultivate foreign relations elsewhere. Relations with South Yemen, Syria the Islamic Republic of Pakistan had been established in the 1960s.³⁵⁹ Diplomatic ties were also established with Turkey, Algeria and Libya. Forced to lean on alternative foreign relations, Albania found itself on a course of ideological alignment with countries and figures whose ideology was proclaimed Islamic. A case in point is Hoxha's support for the Iranian Revolution. Regarding the Ayatollah Khomeini, Hoxha wrote, "We are not in agreement with his Islamic idealist philosophy, but we are in agreement with his anti-imperialist and his anti-American struggle and support him in this struggle."³⁶⁰ Islamic countries with political and trade relations rarely, if ever, voiced objection to the state of Islam in Albania. The Ethem Bey Mosque was used only by Muslim diplomats, but no Albanian was permitted to enter.³⁶¹

This double-standard is reflected in Hoxha's compilation, Reflections on the Middle East. One of the essays, "The Glorious Past of Peoples Cannot Be Ignored," which was written in the summer of 1983, presents a relatively sympathetic survey of the history of Islam. Islam in the Middle East was not portrayed negatively as it was in Albania. Hoxha wrote, "At the present stage of development, Islam as a whole is playing an active role in the anti-imperialist liberation struggles of the Moslem peoples."³⁶² As one observer remarked on the contents, any ordinary Albanian citizen would have been jailed for less.³⁶³ It has been suggested that Hoxha, nearing death, came to a deeper appreciation of his own religious heritage.³⁶⁴ But the political motivation behind the cultural patronizing was more compelling. Hoxha viewed the Arab states as potentially powerful allies in a world where allies were becoming scarce: "The Arab people of this great oil-bearing zone have awoken, have risen and are boldly demanding to take their fate into their own hands."³⁶⁵

After Hoxha's death in 1985, the Party still contained many high-ranking atheist ideologues to keep the atheist state alive. Ideological minister Hulusi Hako wrote in 1986 :

Even today we encounter in our life certain manifestations and remnants of religious preconceptions and practices and related superstitions and backward customs. The thrust and forms of these manifestations are much more limited that they were twenty or twenty-five years ago, and the number of people they affect is steadily smaller. But they are still sufficiently extensive and harmful and dangerous to merit the attention of the Party.

Hako, referring to former priests and "recent degenerates," vowed to "sharpen our vigilance and we punish them according to their guilt, from unmasking them in social courts and all the way to handing out penal sentences."³⁶⁶ Simultaneously, other Party spokesmen were distancing themselves. Omari's official history of 1988, regarding the abolition of religion stated, "World history has never known a movement of such character, proportions and concrete results."³⁶⁷ Nevertheless, this 345 page monograph devotes less than three pages to the subject.³⁶⁸

Definitive change of the state's religious policy were attested to by a series of visits of clergy and *ulema*. The first visas to be granted were in November 1986 to the Protestant missionaries Dr. and Mrs. Edwin Jacques who had worked in a mission school in the 1930s. The couple was prohibited from taking their personal bibles into the country, and they reported they had not seen any religious symbols.³⁶⁹ In August 1988, Reverend Imam Vehbi Ismail of the Albanian Muslim Association of Detroit was granted a visa after applying annually since 1960. He was permitted to visit his family for twenty days; he was, however, forbidden to dress as an *imam*.³⁷⁰ Imam Ismail reported that he saw "absolutely no public expression of faith of any kind in Albania." However, Muslims did pray at home the day of a funeral.³⁷¹ Also during the summer of 1988, the Very Reverend Arthur E. Liolin, Chancellor of the Albanian Orthodox diocese in America, was permitted to wear clerical garments during his visit, as well as bring personal religious objects.³⁷² Each religious leader was given certain limitations, by no means uniform. In

September of 1988, Father Ndoc Kelmendi, S.J. was also granted a visa, but was confined to remain in his ancestral village during his stay.³⁷³

The most eminent religious figure to have a visa granted was Mother Teresa. She was born Gonxhe Bojaxhi in 1910 in what is now Skopje, Macedonia, but before World War I was a predominately Albanian area. When she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, the Albanian press did not acknowledge it. Most Albanians were unaware as to who she was, let alone that she was an ethnic Albanian.³⁷⁴ Mother Teresa was granted a visa to visit her family in August 1989 and was officially received by Hoxha's widow Nexhimije, during her stay of three days.

A combination of factors led to the eventual abolition of the concept and reality of the Albanian atheist state, not the least of which were international events. However, the Party continued with the atheist rhetoric until, one might say, the bitter end. In June 1989, Hoxha's widow, two months before she received Mother Teresa, addressed the assembly of the Democratic Front to encourage continuation of anti-religious vigilance:

The Democratic Front has always been in the front lines to free the people from the chains of religion and the savage laws of the unwritten code of the mountains. But this does not mean that we have eradicated all traces of patriarchal, conservative and religious rule.³⁷⁵

Hoxha's successor, Ramiz Alia, who had been one of the main constructionists of the Cultural Revolution, gave all indication that

he would continue his predecessor's militant state atheism. In fact, as late as September 1989, Alia stated that the APL's religious policy would remain intact, unlike the recent reforms in the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary.³⁷⁶

International events such as long overdue pressure from the United Nations and democratic reforms across Eastern Europe, in the end, led Albanian leaders down a path of reform-- a path they would not likely have taken otherwise. In other words, if it were not for international pressure, the religious ban likely would have remained until the regime was replaced altogether.

Throughout the 1980s petitions to the United Nations against the state of affairs in Albania proliferated from human rights and religious organizations such as the International Association for Religious Liberty (Switzerland), Pax Christi (Switzerland), and United Churches of Christ, USA.³⁷⁷ Denmark finally raised the question at the United Nations, of which Albania had been a member since 1955. As the first major step, the Danish representative called for formal protest during the 39th meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in March 1983.³⁷⁸ The most concrete step was taken when the United Nations made a report on the situation in December 1987 followed by specific requests for information to be provided by the Albanian government, which were ignored.³⁷⁹ In January 1988, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Tolerance stated that "the official abolition of religion in Albania has resulted in the persecution of believers and the killing of hundreds of priests and believers."³⁸⁰ The official denial to this

charge was issued by the Albanian representative to the UN, Bashkim Pitarka in May 1988:

There is genuine freedom of conscience in Albania. The question of religious belief in Albania is also regarded as a right, a private issue which is an individual matter of conscience..³⁸¹ Our socialist state, in guaranteeing freedom of conscience, does not protect religion, but neither has it ever allowed any vulgar administrative infringement on the religious sensibilities of citizens who are believers.³⁸²

However, the language of "rights" was not to be found in the domestic press. Zëri i popullit, in December 1988, rallied against the growing trend of reform in Eastern Europe: "The Leninist exhortation of 'He who is no atheist and fails to fight against religion is no Marxist' speaks clearly against the peristroika/revisionist line."³⁸³ Following the official denial, the fortieth session of the UN sub-commission held 31 August 1988, took an unusual measure by going public with the proceedings, "expressing grave concern about the constitutional and legal measures adopted by Albania to forbid religion in any form, including its teaching, practice, texts and symbolism."³⁸⁴

The Albania government was requested in March 1989 to respond to human rights abuse charges, or the matter would go to the United Nations General Assembly.³⁸⁵ The following year, 8 May 1990, it was finally announced that penal code regarding "religious propaganda" was repealed, essentially de-criminalizing private religious practice.³⁸⁶ This announcement came, not

coincidentally, two days before the scheduled arrival of the UN General Secretary, Javier Perez Cuellar.³⁸⁷ Albanian officials also reportedly informed Cuellar during his visit that churches and mosques would be allowed to function.³⁸⁸

Still technically illegal, a public religious ceremony was held on 13 June 1990 in Lac, northern Albania.³⁸⁹ This was the first public religious expression in twenty three years. In September, Tirana's Kindergarten Number 40 was named for Mother Tereza Gonxhe Bojaxhi.³⁹⁰ Also in October, reports from Iran said that prayers were being held in Albanian mosques.³⁹¹ Alia announced 8 November 1990 that the articles of the 1976 constitution pertaining to religion were revoked.³⁹²

During November, the first large-scale religious ceremony was held. It occurred as anti-government demonstrations and rioting were escalating, and should be seen in that context. Fr. Simon Jubani, recently released from a 26 year prison term was informed that over 5,000 people, both Christians and Muslims, had assembled in a cemetery in Shkodra. He performed mass for them, but was arrested soon after. A crowd surrounded the building where he was detained, and thus he was released in time to celebrate mass the next Sunday, to a crowd of 50,000 people.³⁹³ On 16 November, the first mosque officially re-opened, also in Shkodra.³⁹⁴ Although the anti-religious ban was technically lifted on 8 November 1990-- presumably for the entire Albanian state-- public religious activity was expressed first in the north. But by Christmas of 1990, at least three Orthodox Churches were opened in the south.³⁹⁵ The following

year, 1991, Ramadan fell in mid-March and both the fasting and the celebration of Id al-Fitr were observed openly across Albania without impunity. For Albanians, 1991 marks the first full year in which religion was practiced publicly after living underground for over two decades.

CHAPTER IV

IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE ATHEIST STATE

The relationship between religious institutions and the governments of Communist Eastern Europe during the 1970s has been characterized as one of *modus vivendi*. The election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Krakow to the papacy in 1979, followed by the Vatican's increasing focus on religious affairs in Eastern Europe, accompanied by various religious revivals of different faiths-- all contributed to the erosion of relations between governments and religious institutions during the 1980s. Throughout Eastern Europe during the 1980s, new repressive measures were adopted to counter religio-political movements, such as Solidarity, and those movements less political in nature.³⁹⁶

These trends had little bearing on Albania. Far from a *modus vivendi*, the 1970s proved to be the most extreme decade of anti-religious activity on the part of the government. The APL's posture towards the Vatican had been consistently confrontational since the Apostolic Delegate was expelled from the country in 1945. Albania harshly criticized "revisionists" who sought any degree of relations with the Vatican, such as Gromyko when he met with Pope Paul VI in 1966. John Paul II's involvement in East European affairs therefore confirmed every suspicion of the Albanian government. Furthermore, in Albania,

a religious revival of any sort was undetectable. Albanian press often criticized "revisionist" countries for tolerating religion, even holding these governments responsible for the revivals of the faithful. The organ of the Albanian Department of Education in 1984 charged that the Soviet Union "seems to be doing all it can to resurrect religion in all of its forms." And in Czechoslovakia believers are "permitted to poison the minds of youth through the publication of some 30 periodicals, and to manage 6 seminaries which graduate hundreds of students."³⁹⁷

Before the Cultural Revolution, those factors which had adverse bearing on Albanian religious institutions were similar to those throughout Eastern Europe. Like other Communist governments, the Albanian government manipulated these factors in order to weaken religious institutions as rival influences in society. This phenomenon can be seen in terms of a competitive relationship between two often opposing, sometimes compromising, political forces. However, the Albanian regime's religious policy initiated during the Cultural Revolution eliminated this rivalry. Following the removal of religious institutions as political forces from public life, the Party continued the anti-religious struggle, fueled by its ideology. In this chapter, those ideological factors which had significant bearing on the atheization campaign will be examined. The Party's campaign of militant atheism will be shown as both resulting from, and integral to, other ideological features of the Albanian Labour Party-- its totalitarianism, nationalism, and its position regarding the peasantry.

STALINIST TOTALITARIANISM

The Albanian Party's totalitarianism was the most practical tool in the implementation its radical anti-religious policy. The APL had evolved through several stages before it was replaced by a non-Communist government in 1992. Throughout the various foreign alignments-- with Yugoslavia (1941-1948), with the Soviet Union (1948-1961) and with China (1961-1978)-- the Stalinism of the Party was immutable. This was accompanied by a typically Stalinist government apparatus: a highly centralized administration, frequent (and violent) purges within the Party hierarchy, enormous power accorded the secret police and the steady supply of political (and religious) prisoners to fill the extensive prison camp system. According to a 1982 estimate, over 70,000 people had been affected by the APL's war against "internal enemies."³⁹⁸ Considering the fact that the population reached the 3 million mark in 1986,³⁹⁹ this figure is indeed very high. In the 1978 election, 1,436,285 voted in favor of the regime out of a total of 1,436,289 ballots cast.⁴⁰⁰ All Albanian citizens 18 and over were guaranteed the right to vote, "except former ministers and members of the quisling government, political fugitives, war criminals, enemies of the people and others who were deprived of this right."⁴⁰¹

This political hegemony made possible cultural hegemony, such as the imposition of Socialist Realism in the field of arts and letters. The Albanian Party's adoption of cultural Stalinism led to Arshi Pipa's assessment that "Albanian Marxism-Leninist is an

ossified Stalinism which works as a monistic religion, pervading and imbuing nearly all areas of human activity and life."⁴⁰²

In Albania's case, cultural hegemony extended its domination to private religious life. As pointed out earlier, Stalin advised caution on this matter. Hoxha recorded their discussion, which took place in the spring of 1949:

"Do you eat pork, Comrade Enver?"

"Yes, I do!" I said.

"The Moslem religion prohibits this among its believers," [Stalin] said, "this is an old, outdated custom. Nevertheless," he went on, "the question of religious beliefs must be kept well in mind, must be handled with great care, because the religious feelings of the people must not be offended. These feelings have been cultivated in the people for many centuries, and great patience is called for on this question, because the stand towards it is important for the compactness and unity of the people."⁴⁰³

It is difficult to assume, based on this excerpt, that Hoxha looked to Stalin for radical anti-religious inspiration. Stalin merely provided a methodology of enforcement. Mao's program of a cultural revolution was utilized, as a concerted effort to achieve cultural objectives in a short span of time. The Party relied even less on Marxism-Leninism to justify the abolition of religion, aside from a few catch phrases-- "religion is the opium of the people." Dialectical materialism as a metaphysical substitute for the population was used only sparingly. The main ideological inspiration for the total atheization of Albanian society must be found elsewhere. Arshi Pipa refers to the ideology of the

Albanian Labour Party as "Stalalbanianism." Stalin's statue which dominated Tirana's main square was replaced in 1968 by the foremost hero of Albanian nationalism, Skenderbeg. Wherein lies the key to the Party's radical atheism-- the second half of Pipa's fusion-- the "Albanianism."

ALBANIAN NATIONALISM

As the regime was dismantling religious institutions during the course of 1967, Hoxha received an open letter signed by 41 clergy from the Dibra district in southern Albania. They announced that they were turning their buildings over to the people. They collectively stated:

We, the sons of this country and of its people, place our fatherland above everything else. For as you, Comrade Enver, have stated in terms worthy of a poet, "the faith of an Albanian is Albanianism!"⁴⁰⁴

They were, in fact, the words of a poet. The Catholic nationalist, Pashko Vase Shkodrani (1825-1892) had composed the verse to inspire multi-confessional Albanians to unity. The Hoxha government took them literally.

The erratic history of the APL witnessed by intense foreign alignments and radical domestic policies make more sense if viewed from the standpoint of Albanian nationalism.

Nationalism, not Marxism-Leninism, was the most important

ideological factor guiding the policies of the Albanian Party of Labour, according to Peter Prifti.⁴⁰⁵ This includes the policy of atheization, for which the APL will be most remembered.

Albanian nationalism, as guided by the Party, took a defensive character from which some would discern an element of paranoia. However, it was a well justified paranoia. Albania barely escaped partition by its neighbors in 1912. The Secret Treaty of London (1915) attempted partition again. The fascist occupation of Albania was immediately followed by its the planned integration into a greater Yugoslavia. Albanian exiles, backed by the United States and Great Britain, attempted to overthrow the government in 1950. To the present day Greece claims a large portion of southern Albania, referred to by Greek irredentists as "Northern Epirus." All these contributed to a historical memory expertly manipulated by the Party. As Arshi Pipa observes this phenomenon, he asserts that the Albanian Communist Party "grew to unbelievable proportions out of almost nothing because it artfully championed the national feeling of resistance to the foreign invader."⁴⁰⁶

Christianity and Islam were equated with "foreign invaders" rather than the exploiting classes. The Vatican, for example, was denounced because of its anti-Albanian activity, rather than its anti-Marxist stance, for which it is well known.⁴⁰⁷ Economic exploitation by religious institutions would not be enough ideological fuel to perpetuate an anti-religious campaign to the extent of Albania's. The assertion of exploitation through

invasion proved a much more powerful tool. As Halusi Hako presents the rationale:

All religious sects among us were brought to Albania by foreign invaders, and served them and the ruling exploiting classes in the country. Under the robe of religion there lay hidden the fierce law of the foreign invaders and their servants within the country.⁴⁰⁸

Hako proceeds to employ economic exploitation only as a subsidiary argument:

In the general layout of the old villages, the first thing that came to sight were the churches and the minarets...while the peasant masses lived in huts and one-floor dwellings, where sickness and epidemics wreaked havoc, taking the lives of thousands of people.⁴⁰⁹

The main justification for the abolition of religion, and that on which the actions of the Party and the people must be based, was national defense. The Party extended its accusation of sedition against the clergy to include their institutions as well:

Having seen that religion's obedient clergy were servants of every occupier and every enemy, and having seen that they changed their flag according to the foreigner's emblem, experience convinced our people that churches and mosques were the nest of anti-Albanianism and the highest treason against the homeland.⁴¹⁰

In attending to the details which accompanied the construction of the atheist state, the devil of the foreign invader was a continually motivating force. To Hako, the Name Decree of 1975 was an expression of nationalism: "since we have such beautiful national names, we would not be justified to use foreign names, which express nostalgia for religion and a fascination with things foreign."⁴¹¹ The list of names forbidden by the government had religious significance as well as foreign origin-- which were synonymous in the APL's view. One official said of the forbidden names, "The sooner we can abolish these evil footprints left by foreign oppressors, the better it will be for the Albanian people."⁴¹²

Spokesmen for the regime confined their public explanations to the Albanian historical experience. The Albanian foreign minister Reis Malile, in a March 1989 interview, stressed the "historical particularities" of Albania which justified the state's lack of protection of religion. Following the logic that Albanian history precludes religion's right to exist, he asserted that "various invaders have used religion to achieve their objectives in occupying the country in both the distant and recent past."⁴¹³

Regime spokesmen also presented religious pluralism a grave problem in Albania's past. By most historical accounts, religious communalism was the exception rather than the rule in modern Albania. However, Professor Aleks Buda, the Chair of the Albanian Academy of Science, attempted to make it appear endemic in a 1988 interview. He recalled a turn of the century incident in which a slain pig was placed in a Shkodra mosque,

neglecting to inform the interviewer that this was one of the remarkably few communal incidents.⁴¹⁴

When international pressure began to tighten around the APL's religious policies in the mid-1980s, the Party continued to rely on the nationalist imperative above all. Hako writes in "Toward the Creation of a Total Atheistic Society" (1986):

Reactionary world organizations come to its defense with fabrications and accusations that members of this contingent are allegedly persecuted by us on account of their religious convictions. These are political and ideological ruffians. *For all religious ideologies are anational...conforming with the goals of imperialism, modern revisionism, the Vatican and the entire world reaction. [italics mine].*

As an afterthought Hako adds: "It is an anti-Marxist concept that 'religion is a natural right of man.'"⁴¹⁵

Could, in fact, Albanian religious institutions be accurately described "anational," devoid of patriotism? This became a task for state historians, who went to great lengths to obfuscate any contributions clergy or religious communities made to Albanian national development. The April 1988 issue of Rruga e partisë condemned the historical slogan of the Albanian Catholic clergy-- "For Faith and Fatherland" (Për fé e për atdhë)-- when in fact, according to the author, "these clergymen have always labored for denationalization of the Albanian people."⁴¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, Archbishop Fan Noli was hailed by the regime as a sound nationalist only because it was discovered he was also a foe of

religion. This discovery was made by a University of Tirana professor, who interpreted an obscure poem of Noli's as an "anti-religious work of great interest in connection with the development of Noli's world outlook, and especially his attitude toward religion at the end of the 1920s."⁴¹⁷ Those nationalists the Party found impossible to cast as atheists were not to be tolerated according to Hoxha:

Can we go on while, on one hand we wage a sharp struggle against theology, religion, the churches and Moslem houses of worship, priests and *hoxhas*, and on the other hand we exalt those parts of the world of Naim in which he expresses his Bektashian philosophy; or the work of Mjeda in which he speaks of Christian theology... and serve all of this as ideological nourishment to our people simply because these are the figures of the National Rebirth, they are the great men who laid the foundations of our language and helped to cultivate it, and because the lines of their poetry are beautiful and they created pleasant metaphors. No, as Marxists and in the interest of our people and socialism, we must fight these negative sides. Where ideology is concerned, we cannot make any concessions to poetry or language.⁴¹⁸

Throughout the atheist period, Party propaganda and the pronouncements of Hoxha relied on nationalist feelings more than any other sentiment. Hoxha stressed that the patriot, as well the Communist, was obliged to sever all religious loyalties.⁴¹⁹ However, he did not originate the phrase, "The religion of Albania is Albanianism," but took it as his own with a significant modification: "Albania is the world's first atheistic state, whose only religion in Albanianism."⁴²⁰

THE HOMOGENIZED SOCIETY

During the Cultural Revolution and throughout the 1970s the Party consistently endeavored to eliminate traces of foreign culture and institutions. As an extension of this endeavor, the population underwent a campaign of homogenization. The Party's aim to eliminate historical and social distinctions-- between men and women, Gheg and Tosk, peasant and worker-- coincided with the elimination of the most significant source of distinction in Albania, religion.

The "struggle for the emancipation of women" was declared soon after the power seized power. In November 1944, the National Liberation Council accorded women full and equal rights in the state, including their participation in politics.⁴²¹ During the same month, the Union of Albanian Women held its first congress.⁴²² This organization worked to increase the number of women engaged in both productive work and the work of the Party. Many of these objectives were realized: Female membership in the APL steadily increased throughout the 1970s, so that by the time the Communist regime was replaced in 1992, it had the highest proportion of women in senior posts.⁴²³

In the APL's view, the blame for the subordinate status of women in traditional Albanian society rested in two sources, religion (both Christianity and Islam) and the Law of Lekë. As early as 1955, at the Congress of the Union of Albanian Women, Hoxha asserted that religious institutions had "intervened at every moment to keep women in a miserable state of slavery."⁴²⁴

In Marxist terms, he implicated religious institutions by the following accusation:

The canons of the Shariat and of the Church, closely connected to the laws of the bourgeoisie, treated woman as commodity, a thing to be bought and sold by the male...The savage ancient canons of the shariat, the Church, feudalism and the bourgeoisie reduced woman to the proletariat of man.⁴²⁵

The Party attempted to achieve the equation of religion and patriarchy, citing, as Hoxha did in a 1967 speech, religious figures such as St. John Chrysostom and Thomas Aquinas as the founding fathers of patriarchy.⁴²⁶ Single handedly, religion had created the low position of women, had "tortured them savagely and spiritually,"⁴²⁷ and the Party was their savior.

Hoxha was the main ideologue behind the equation of religion and patriarchy, which became an important justification for the abolition of religion. During his speech of 6 February 1967, which commenced the anti-religious phase of the Cultural Revolution, Hoxha declared that the nation should "throw backward customs into the flames and twist the neck of anyone who tramples underfoot the sacred law of the Party in defense of the rights of women and girls."⁴²⁸

Simultaneously citing religion's historical role in the subordination of women, the Party held women, as a group, particularly responsible for the perpetuation of religion during the atheist period. On several occasions, Party publications pointed out women's role in the dissemination of religious beliefs:

"Mysticism about life and death must give way to scientific reality...Special effort must be directed at women who are depositories of religious traditions."⁴²⁹ The Party's enemy in mind was the pious, rural, superstitious grandmother; the Albanian counterpart to the Russian *babushka*. The main culprits behind the perpetuation of the cult of saints, according to Zëri i popullit, were those families dominated by women and "over-fifties."⁴³⁰

Another branch of the homogenization campaign, also with anti-religious overtones, was the creation of "Unified Literary Albanian." The Albanian language had developed as a bidialectal language since the early Middle Ages. As Albanian developed into a literary language in the late nineteenth- early twentieth centuries, two literary dialects likewise emerged, creating a bidialectal literary tradition. Elimination of this distinction was an objective early in the Party's history. In 1952, the League of Albanian Writers agreed to have their works published only in the Tosk dialect.⁴³¹ The year 1967 is often cited as the year of the greatest "radicalization" of Albanian society due to the abolition of religion and the complete collectivization.⁴³² Also in 1967, Pipa points out, the proposal was made for the full integration of the two literary dialects with the publication of Rules of Albanian Orthography.

The Party based its approach on the work of the Soviet linguist N.Y. Marr. Marr theorized that the evolution of language, a superstructural phenomenon, should reflect the political reality. Therefore, the leveling of the Albanian language made the

greatest strides during the Cultural Revolution.⁴³³ Arshi Pipa demonstrates through systematic analysis of "Unified Literary Albanian" that this unification was in reality an imposition of Tosk at the expense of Gheg. This "domestic linguistic colonialism" was not based on sound linguistic theory, as Pipa asserts, but rather on political and ideological motivations. Although Ghegs comprised 67% of the Albanian nation,⁴³⁴ the Communist Party was comprised overwhelmingly of Tosks. The ratio of Tosks to Ghegs in the Politburo from 1948 to 1972 was 4.6 to one.⁴³⁵ Linguistic mutilation was another means by which the Party extended its political domination.

The ideological motivation behind the linguistic reform encompassed the Party's war on religion. Religion, like language, is a superstructure, which also suffered artificial alteration during the Cultural Revolution. These two superstructures, religion and language, should be seen in relation. At the 1969 Congress of the League of Albanian Writers and Artists, it was declared that the rejection of Socialist Realism was equivalent to a "return to the literature of the reactionary Catholic clergy and its followers,"⁴³⁶ i.e., a return to literary Gheg. The literary "giants" of Gheg-- from the first record of written Gheg to the period of the Communist takeover, were disproportionately drawn from the Catholic clergy. Gheg was referred to as "Christ Language" by one Socialist Realist writer due to the clergy's influence the dialect.⁴³⁷ This would have been enough to require the total abolition of literary Gheg, as part of the wider atheization campaign. Coupled with the predominately Tosk background of the Party leadership, this

abolition was accomplished. Pipa assesses the motivations behind the Party's linguistic Toskification bluntly:

"Gheg" to them is one of those unclean words they would like to expunge from all dictionaries. It reminds them of the purge of the entire Gheg old guard, the systematic annihilation of the Gheg Catholic clergy, the torturing and killing of so many Gheg people, Communists and anti-Communists, intellectuals and peasants, Moslems and Christians, as well as the banishment and persecution of their families-- a catalogue of atrocities with no precedent in the history of the Albanian nation.⁴³⁸

THE ALBANIAN VOLK

Pipa's analytical method, which takes into account the background of APL leadership in order to gain insight into their ideology, can also be applied to a class analysis of the Party which, in turn contributes to the understanding of the Party's atheization policy. One of the most disruptive fault lines running through the atheist state was the tremendous gap in the way religion was viewed by the Party, as opposed to the people. This fact is attested to by the hundreds, even thousands of reports citing "lingering manifestations" of religious beliefs and practices. By implication, or more often overtly, the Party held the peasantry most responsible of preservation of religious beliefs and practices. The Party's relationship vis-à-vis religion cannot be separated from the Party's relationship vis-à-vis the Albanian peasantry. In essence, it is one in the same.

As the messiah and savior of the working class, the Albanian Communist Party gained control over a traditional agrarian

society in which a working class was non-existent. A census of September 1945 divided the population between 78.7% rural dwellers versus only 21.3% urban dwellers.⁴³⁹ Thus, when it took control of the country, the Party endeavored to create a working class.⁴⁴⁰ The leadership's desire for a working class can be seen in the wording of the 1946 Constitution, which described Albania as a "state of workers and labouring peasants;"⁴⁴¹ a statement not reflective of reality, but rather of the Party's *desired* composition of society. The proletariat, (in the strict sense, meaning industrial workers) would be created by the obliteration of the Albanian peasantry, economically and culturally: Economically, by the construction of the industrial sector and the abolition of private property; and culturally, by radically disrupting traditional social structures and religious beliefs.

The intense commitment to modernization through industrialization was one of the defining features of the APL.⁴⁴² Based on Stalin's Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR,⁴⁴³ the APL sought, through a succession of five-year economic plans, to evolve Albania from state a with an agrarian-industrial economy to one with an industrial-agrarian economy.⁴⁴⁴ One of the factors which led to the fall-out with Soviet Union under Krushchev, was the latter's hesitancy to develop Albania's heavy industry. Krushchev's suggestion that Albania better develop its citrus fruit crop, for example, was taken as a grave insult by the APL leadership.⁴⁴⁵ Development of heavy industry was one of the perks of the Chinese alliance. Industrial production steadily

surpassed agricultural production throughout the history of Socialist Albania, witnessing the greatest leap of industrial production under Chinese patronage. In 1950 agriculture accounted for 80.1% of Gross Domestic Product; by 1975, that figure had declined to 37.2%, with industry surpassing it, accounting for 62.8% of Gross Domestic Product.⁴⁴⁶

Most of the leaders of the Albanian Communist Party were not drawn from the proletariat, nor the peasantry. The only two founding members with proletariat origin-- Koci Xoxe a tinsmith, and Tuk Jakova, a carpenter, were purged early in the Party's history.⁴⁴⁷ The remainder of the founding leadership hailed from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois backgrounds.⁴⁴⁸ Like Hoxha, who has been described as a "middle-class bohemian intellectual,"⁴⁴⁹ the founders of Albanian Communism adopted their Marxist leanings during their education abroad, returning to Albania often to become school teachers before their political careers.⁴⁵⁰

Peasants constituted the vast majority of the Albanian population, yet the Party did not reflect this. A 1963 analysis finds only 25% of the Party drawn from rural areas.⁴⁵¹ Virtually devoid of representatives from the peasantry, the leaders of the Albanian Communist Party were "as remote from the people as any ruling clique."⁴⁵² The Party conducted the only successful agrarian reform in the history of Albania. However, only those peasants of the central and southern lowlands, where feudalism was most entrenched, concretely benefited from the post-war land reform. The majority of peasants were small landowners. Thus, "when the Party tried to impose on them its policy of

collectivization, encroaching brutally on their customs and religious feelings, they reacted with anger."⁴⁵³ Commenced in 1948, collectivization was accompanied by a "pitiless repression" due to peasant resistance.⁴⁵⁴ By the 1950s, the only private land was located in poor northern highlands.⁴⁵⁵ The fourth five-year economic plan (1966-1970), implemented simultaneously with the Cultural Revolution, called for the complete collectivization of all Albanian land. Collectivization worked in conjunction with ideological control during this period. Due to geographical remoteness and prevalent tribal customs, the Albanian countryside was isolated culturally and politically. Like the Ottoman Sultans, the Party held the least amount of clout in these areas. The campaign of complete collectivization extended to the entire country as even private kitchen gardens were dismantled in March 1967, for they "preserved and cultivated among the working people the attachment to private property and all the evils deriving from it."⁴⁵⁶

The practice of Marxism-Leninism in Albania based class warfare not on economics, but on ideology.⁴⁵⁷ Within this paradigm, peasants could be labeled "class enemies," and often were. According to Party theorists, bourgeois ideology was most clearly manifest among intellectuals, followed by peasants.⁴⁵⁸ Bourgeois ideology was least manifest in the working class, which afterall, was a post-war creation of the APL. Therefore, geographic exchanges were conducted whereby urban workers would reside in rural areas in order to "convey the revolutionary spirit and ideology of the working class to the countryside."⁴⁵⁹

The Party recognized that the most "apathy and alienation" was to be found in the countryside.⁴⁶⁰ The Party also recognized that this was due to the ideological competition offered by religious establishment. Official literature was coloured with references to the perpetual backwardness of the peasant. A major source of this backwardness was their religious tenacity:

A whole world of prejudices and harmful customs inhibited the peasant and hindered the rapid introduction of new ideas to the countryside...Another great hindrance to the progress was the extensive network of religious institutions and the clergy.⁴⁶¹

Religious beliefs and tribal customs were two sides of the same coin which impeded the Party's dominance in these areas. To further extend the Party's ideological domain, Hoxha encouraged scholars to direct their attention to the Law of Lekë:

A study of this work should help our scholars to make a good diagnosis of the present situation in social and private relations in the North in order to detect the upheavals, evolutions and to reinforce our ideological, organization work of propaganda.⁴⁶²

An open letter dated 21 January 1966 and signed by 91 intellectuals initiated a series of "rectification" programs under the guise that artists and intellectuals would be better inspired by a return to manual labour.⁴⁶³ It became apparent, however, that peasants were the ones in need of rectification. Not only

intellectuals, but urban workers also "volunteered" to work in mountain cooperatives in order to help change "the mode of living of the peasants."⁴⁶⁴

Regarding such exchanges, the Party purported to be aiding of the peasantry-- a segment of the society from which they neither came nor from which they could mask their disdain:

Special attention was paid to the improvement of the nutrition of the peasantry, to changing their mode of dressing and extending the use of household furniture and appliances in order to enable them to live in a cultured way and in more hygienic surroundings.⁴⁶⁵

The traditional "mode of dressing" was to be taken out of everyday life and relegated to display at the House of Folk Creativeness in Tirana, just as chalices and old Communion hosts were displayed in Shkodra's "Atheist Museum." Like the "Museum City" of Berat, in which churches and mosques were actually renovated in the early 1970s, folk culture also enjoyed state patronage. While the struggle against "backward customs and religious prejudices" was conducted, state sponsorship of peasant handicrafts, costume and folklore increased. The Party exalted "folk" culture simultaneously constructing policies in direct opposition to the real Albanian "folk"-- their patriarchy, piety, and attachment to private ownership.

When the Party complained about "lingering manifestations" of religion, the phrase "particularly in the countryside" became standard. The equation of "peasant" and "religion" was virtually

constant throughout the atheist period. Citing the causes of the Cultural Revolution, official history explains:

By taking advantage of the remnants of the past, old preconceptions and vain beliefs, fanaticism and backward customs, and patriarchal attitudes toward women and youth, *particularly in the countryside*, the clergy strove to keep the masses weighed down by this heavy load of the old world in order to hinder their all-round emancipation.⁴⁶⁶ [italics mine]

The general assessment can be made, based on the Party's admonishments, that people in rural areas, as opposed to urban areas, were responsible for greater preservation of religious tradition during the atheist period. Francis Trix makes this observation considering the events of 1991, during which religious holidays were celebrated publicly for the first time in twenty-three years. Trix notes that religious festivities in the cities centered around major holidays whereas in a particular southern village, for example, the people embarked upon the reconstruction of the shrine (*turbe*) of a local saint, which had been demolished by the government during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁶⁷ Furthermore, urban centers received funding from abroad for their celebrations. Conversely, the rebuilding of the *turbe*, not a small expense, was financed by the villagers on a local level.⁴⁶⁸ This supports the theory that the Albanian peasantry presented the true antithesis to Party ideology. Not surprisingly, they also represented the strongest resistance to the policy of atheization.

CONCLUSION

In the wider discussion of religion and Communism, the case of Albania has been presented to demonstrate the logical end of religious institutions under Communist political systems. However, the "World's Atheist State" was unique to Albania, a state with one of the youngest Communist parties in Europe. The Albanian Communist Party perpetuated a prolonged *contra* movement, distinct from other anti-clerical and anti-religious campaigns in Eastern Europe by its length, thoroughness and legislation. While in accordance with most Communist governments' hostile policies towards religious organizations, the Albanian case presents an exception by the closure of all religious institutions without exception and the criminalization of private religious practice.

Institutional religion was weak in Albania for much of its history. Before the advent of Ottoman rule, the Albanians were a mixed population representing the Byzantine East and Latin West. During the Ottoman period, Albania proved itself exceptionally susceptible to Islamic influence owing not only to political and economic circumstances, but also to the non-dogmatic, folk character of Albanian Christianity. Large segments of the population accepted the religion of the Ottoman state while still retaining Christian influence and tribal customs. The texture of Albanian religion developed largely along folk lines-- diverse,

syncretic, local, and at the same time, remarkably free from communalism.

Despite the eminent Albanian nationalists which hailed from the clergy of all faiths, the national mythology which formed in Albania was largely devoid of religious foundation. This absence of the national-religious ideological union contributed to the precarious position of religious institutions during the Communist period. This was an especially precarious position in Communist Albania for the ideological foundation of the Albanian Labour Party was built upon nationalism.

The Communist government, after it took power of Albania in 1944, immediately sought to gain control of religious establishments by exploiting institutional weaknesses. In the post-war years, the Hoxha regime guided its policies toward each institution distinctly, as the religious pluralism of the Albanian population was to the regime's advantage. By taking advantage of their independence from foreign authority, the Hoxha regime effectively brought the Sunni, Christian Orthodox and Bektashi establishments under state jurisdiction. Consequently, co-opted members of the clergy were used to promote Albanian foreign policy, such as the tutelage of the Soviet Union. When this proved difficult in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, a national Catholic Church was created under duress.

With the patronage of China, the Albanian Labour Party conducted its own Cultural Revolution, of which the most lasting feature was the proscription of all religious institutions and practice, public and private, without exception. The legislation of

the 1970s, including the constitution of 1976, re-enforced the religious ban in Albania. As part of the "Great Transformation" of Eastern Europe, the Albanian government, led by Ramiz Alia, lifted the ban of religion in 1991 only after international pressure.

The "World's First Atheist State," although existent for twenty-three years, was not successful in its objective. All traces of religion were not eradicated. Despite penal codes, the absence of clergy, and the closure of mosques and churches, religion continued to be practiced, warranting the constant attention of authorities. All religions in Albania were preserved in secret, especially among the peasantry, a segment of the population which remained most independent of the Party's ideology throughout the period of Communist Albania.

The state's imposition of atheism, while promoted as doctrinaire practice of Marxism-Leninism, relied little on this philosophy relative to nationalist ideology and sentiment. The justification for the extreme anti-religious measures were to be found in Albania's past. The regime regarded the abolition of religion as a necessary measure, for religious institutions were brought to Albania through unwanted invaders. Furthermore, the diversity of religion was viewed as a detriment to the unity of Albanian society.

Albania's radical atheism was further supported by the notion that authentic Albanian culture was devoid of religious depth. The notion that Albanians historically regarded religion as a "casual affair" was conceived by nineteenth century orientalists

and travelers. It was also one which endured and became accepted by some contemporary Western scholars. Fortunately, the stereotypical substance of this notion is recognized by other scholars. Mojzes points out that those Albanians living abroad (Italo-Albanians, Kosovars, immigrant communities in North America) who were not forced to abandon their faith, continued to accord religion a central role in their lives and culture.⁴⁶⁹ Nevertheless, these stereotypes were promoted by the Albanian Labour Party and served to enhance their policies.

Albanian religion has been profoundly misunderstood and misrepresented. Observers often blurred the distinction between the weak sense of religious identity, as witnessed during the Ottoman period and following, and the weak sense of religious sentiment. Syncretism, one of the typical stamps of Albanian popular religious tradition, has caused cultural ministers to make the leap that authentic Albanian culture is "in its core atheist."⁴⁷⁰

The lack of communalism in Albania perhaps seems suspect if not inconceivable to any student of the history of Muslim-Christian relations. It is common to judge the religious sentiment to be strong only if it is intolerant. Nevertheless, ecumenicism has been a characteristic strand running through the course of modern Albanian religion, interrupted during the atheist period and carried on abroad. For example, in 1985 on the 40th anniversary of religious persecution in Albania, a two-day solemn observance was held at the University of San Francisco's St. Ignatius Church. Exiled leaders and representatives from all the religions of Albania participated.⁴⁷¹ After the ban of religion was

lifted, this ecumenicism was resumed in Albania proper. In March 1991, representatives from all four religious communities, including Mother Teresa, assembled to publicly celebrate the Bektashi holiday of Nevruz.⁴⁷² At the ceremony, the newly elected *ra'is* of the Sunni community, Hafiz Sabri Koçi addressed the crowd:

Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, whomever, may there be respect for you all, and for Muhammed, Imam Ali, the four caliphs, for Ali and all the Orders, including as well, the Sa'adi, Rufa'i, Halveti, and Melami. All of these are of the Islamic Spirit and come from the Holy Light. On the way of God (*rrugën e Zotit*) may we all be together.⁴⁷³

In addition to the survival of religion in Albania under the most adverse circumstances, the continuing respect of its institutions for one another should serve to bury rather than perpetuate the conception that for Albanians, religion "sits but lightly upon them." Recent history has shown that Albanians have carried their religion with heavy hearts.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Francis Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam in Albania," East European Quarterly 28 (1994): 546. Figures of Albanian religious demographics vary only slightly from source to source. Trix bases these figures on present-day boundaries, with Muslims accounting for a combined percentage of 68%. Of the Muslim percentage, sources usually accord the Bektashis 20%. See John K. Birge, The Bektashi Order of Dervishes (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Press, 1937) 15.

CHAPTER ONE

2. Albanians refer to themselves as "Shqipëtarë," derived either from the word "shqipe" (eagle) or "më shqiptue" (to speak). Ramadan Marmullaku, Albania and the Albanians (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1975) 9.

3. Miranda Vickers, The Albanians: A Modern History (London: I. B. Tauris, 1985) 1.

4. This tactic was also employed by the Soviet government regarding the Muslims of Central Asia. See Sabrina Ramet, Cross and Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 36.

5. Gjon Sinishta, The Fulfilled Promise: A Documentary Account of Religious Persecution in Albania (Santa Clara: H & F Printers, 1976) 29.

6. Bernard Tonnes, "Religious Persecution in Albania," Religion in Communist Lands 4 (1982): 242.

7. Stefanaq Pollo, The History of Albania: From Its Origins to the Present Day (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) 58.

Pollo's monograph is an official history of the Albanian Labour Party (ALP).

8. Pollo, The History of Albania, 58.
9. Stavro Skendi, Albania (New York: Praeger, 1956) 3.
10. Gjon Sinishta, The Fulfilled Promise 3. The city of Antivari (Bar) was ceded to Montenegro after the Treaty of Berlin (1878).
11. Pollo, The History of Albania 60.
12. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution" 242.
13. Stavro Skendi, "Religion in Albania During the Ottoman Rule," Südost Forschungen 15 (1956): 311.
14. Skendi, Albania 3.
15. Stavro Skendi, "The Millet System and Its Contribution to the Blurring of Orthodox National Identity in Albania," Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society, ed. B. Braude and B. Lewis (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982) 243.
16. Skendi, "Religion in Albania" 313.
17. Halil Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," Studia Islamica 2 (1954): 101.
18. Pollo, History of Albania 63. Alain Ducellier, "Genesis and Failure of the Albanian State in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," Studies on Kosova, ed. Arshi Pipa and Sami Repishti (Boulder: East European Monographs) 4.
19. Skendi, "Religion During Ottoman Rule" 314. Halil Inalcik, "Iskender Beg," Encyclopedia of Islam, 1978 ed.
20. The *devsirme* system is discussed on page 17-18.

21. Anton Logoreci, The Albanians: Europe's Forgotten Survivors (London: Gollancz, 1977) 27. Skendi, "Religion During Ottoman Rule" 314.

22. Pollo, The History of Albania 78.

23. Pollo, The History of Albania 80.

24. Pollo, The History of Albania 82-88.

25. Albanian customary law, "The law of Lekë," is named for Lekë Dukagjini, but its origins are much earlier.

26. Different dates are given for the final Ottoman victory. This date is according to Stavro Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening (Princeton: Princeton United Press, 1967) 4.

27. Inalcik, "Iskender Beg."

28. Sinishta, The Fulfilled Promise 4.

29. Inalcik, "Iskender Beg."

30. G. Lederer, "Islam in Albania," Central Asian Survey 13 (1994): 333.

31. Among the less-plausible interpretations for conversion to Islam is the kidnapping of brides, for example. See Nikolai Todorov, The Balkan City, 1400-1900 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983) 51.

32. Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods." These *timar* estates were established in 1415.

33. Skendi, "Millet System" 243.

34. Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods" 114.

35. Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods" 116.

36. According to Todorov, Balkan City 50: "Through forced Islamization of both large groups and individuals, and by means

of the devsirme system, Ottoman authorities not only terrorized the Balkan peoples, they also created a nucleus of loyal followers and supporters." The official view of the APL contended that forced conversions were among the factors which prevented "religion from taking too firm an anchor in the Albanian soul." Pollo, The History of Albania 281.

37. Peter Sugar, Southeastern Europe Under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977) 55.

38. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 55-56.

39. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 56.

40. Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) 15.

41. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 58.

42. Peter Prifti, Socialist Albania Since 1944: Domestic and Foreign Developments (Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1978) 6. This may be an over-estimation, nevertheless the number was significant.

43. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 46.

44. Sinishta, The Fulfilled Promise 33.

45. C. T. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith (Lahore: Ashraf Publication, 1961) 190.

46. Skendi, "Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area Under the Ottomans," Slavic Review 26 (1967): 236.

47. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam 191.

48. Stavrou Skendi is the main proponent of this school of thought. See Skendi, Albania 6.

49. Inalcik, "Arnawutluk," Encyclopedia of Islam, 1960 ed.

50. Skendi, "Religion During Ottoman Rule" 319-320.
51. Derek Hall, Albania and the Albanians (London: Pinter Reference, 1994) 43. Skendi, "The Millet System" 248.
52. Skendi, "Religion During Ottoman Rule" 316. Odile Daniel, "The Historical Role of the Muslim Community in Albania," Central Asian Survey 9 (1990): 7.
53. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 103. This is against the "medium" rate of 45-46 akçes per annum. Inflation caused the akçe to devalue rapidly. By 1684 100 akçe were equivalent to one Austrian gold unit. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 37.
54. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 103.
55. Arnold does not regard the *cizye* as a significant amount during this period. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam 154-155. Pollo estimates the *cizye* as much higher in the 17th century-- "almost impossible to pay." Pollo, The History of the Albanians 90.
56. Stanford Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 19.
57. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam 181.
58. Hall, Albania 6; Logoreci, The Albanians 30.
59. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam 188.
60. Skendi, Albanian National Awakening 11.
61. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 33.
62. Daniel, "The Historical Role" 6.
63. Daniel, "The Historical Role" 2; Skendi, "Religion During Ottoman Rule" 316.
64. Skendi, "Millet System" 246.

65. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 17.
66. Vickers, The Albanians 17.
67. Skendi, "Religion During Ottoman Rule" 318-319.
68. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam 183; Skendi, "Crypto-Christianity" 236. This phenomenon may be explained by the tribal imperative for exogamy.
69. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam 183.
70. Speros Vryonis, "Religious Changes and Patterns in the Balkans: 14th- 16th Centuries," Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change, ed. Henrick Birnbaum and Speros Vryonis (The Hague: Mouton, 1972) 174.
71. Skendi, "Crypto-Christianity" 236.
72. Vickers, The Albanians 17.
73. John Fine, The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation (Boulder: East European Monographs) 386. Fine is referring to the acceptance of Islam by Bosnians; however, circumstances in Albania were similar.
74. Nedim Filipovic, "A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkans under Ottoman Rule," Ottoman Rule in Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries (Prague, 1978) 316.
75. Fine, Bosnian Church 11.
76. Quoted in Edwin Jacques, The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1995) 236.
77. Quoted in Jacques, The Albanians 235.
78. Fredrick William Hasluck, Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans, 2 vols. (Oxford: Claredon, 1929) 1: 71.

79. Vryonis, "Religious Changes and Patterns in the Balkans" 159-160.

80. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 53.

81. See Hasluck, Christianity and Islam 2: 437. Sari Saltuk Dede, a thirteenth century Bektashi saint has been widely associated with St. Nicholas. See F. Babinger, "Sari Saltuk Dede," Encyclopedia of Islam, 1995 ed.

82. Sugar, Southeastern Europe 13.

83. Birge, Bektashi Order of Dervishes 34-35.

84. Hasluck, Christianity and Islam 2: 483

85. Hasluck, Christianity and Islam 2: 490.

86. H. T. Norris, Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina, 1993) 132.

87. Norris, Islam in the Balkans 125.

88. Birge, Bektashi Order 95.

89. See Francis Trix, Spiritual Discourse: Learning With an Islamic Master (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

90. Norris, Islam in the Balkans 194. Distinct from pantheism, Norris defines *al-wahdat al-wujud* (oneness of being) as existential monism; in which "one sees only one essence existing in the world, and any other essence representing its creator" according to Baba Rexhebi, 83.

91. Norris, Islam in the Balkans 89.

92. Norris, Islam in the Balkans 94.

93. Birge, The Bektashi Order 130.

94. Trix, Spiritual Discourse 159.

95. Birge, Bektashi Order 92. Some *tekkes* in Albania were reputed to have used opium to alter consciousness as a vehicle to mystical experience. See Margaret Hasluck, "The Non-conformist Muslims of Albania," Contemporary Review CXXVII (1925): 604.

96. Trix, Spiritual Discourse 159.

97. Birge, The Bektashi Order 216.

98. Birge, The Bektashi Order 218.

99. Vickers, The Albanians 22.

100. Logoreci, The Albanians 44.

101. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 13.

102. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 114. The founder of the Illyrian theory was Gustav Meyer (1850-1900) of the University of Graz.

103. Logoreci, The Albanians 45.

104. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 129.

105. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 137.

106. Vickers, The Albanians 45.

107. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 137.

108. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 140.

109. In Shkodra in 1897, Skendi notes there was one instance of a slain pig discovered in a mosque as retaliation to the desecration of a Catholic cemetery. Skendi The Albanian National Awakening 174.

110. G. Maksutovici, "Albania," Assertion of Unitary, Independent National States in Central and Southeast Europe (1821-1923), ed. E. V. Moisue and I. Calafateano (Bucharest: Eduitura Academiei, 1980) 175.

111. The most important territorial loss was the province of Kosova, which was regained during the fascist occupation in World War II, but returned to Yugoslavia after the war.

112. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 46.

113. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 472.

114. Ramet, Cross and Commissar 58.

115. Prifti, Socialist Albania 158; As quoted in Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 170: "All of you like brothers unite in one faith! Don't pay attention to churches and mosques, The faith of the Albanian is Albaniandom."

116. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 46.

117. Vickers, The Albanians 32; Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 41.

118. G. W. Gawrich, "Tolerant Dimensions of Cultural Pluralism in the Ottoman Empire: The Albanian Community 1800-1912," International Journal of Middle East Studies, 15 (1983): 523.

119. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 167.

120. Norris, Islam in the Balkans 188.

121. Namik Ressuli, Albanian Literature (Boston: Pan-Albanian Federation of America, 1987) 25.

122. Quoted in Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 166, from "Eternal League of the Albanians."

123. Quoted in Ressuli Albanian Literature 52, from "Teachings."

124. Naim Frasheri, "Notebook of the Bektashis," quoted in Skendi, Albania 288.

125. Ressuli, Albanian Literature 10.

126. Marmullaku, Albania 17.

127. Ressuli, Albanian Literature 54.

128. Skendi, Albanian National Awakening 161.

129. Skendi, "The Millet System" 253.

130. Vickers, The Albanians 61.

131. Skendi, "Millet System" 253.

132. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 162.

133. Skendi, The Albanian National Awakening 163.

134. Pipa, The Politics of Language in Socialist Albania (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983) 46.

135. Pollo, The History of Albania 223.

136. Resuli, Albanian Literature 86.

137. Logoreci, The Albanians 71.

138. J. Swire, Albania: The Rise of a Kingdom (New York: Arno Press, 1971) 386.

139 Ramet, Cross and Commissar 16.

140 Daniel, "Historical Role" 17.

141. Vickers, The Albanians 109.

142. Daniel, "Historical Role" 17. The figure is a Bektashi estimate quoted in Birge, The Bektashi Order 15.

143. M. Edith Durham, The Burden of the Balkans (London: Thomas Nelson, 1905) 243.

144. Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit: The Code of Lekë Dukagjini, ed. Shtefën Gjeçov (New York: Gjonlekaj Publishing, 1989) xvii.

145. Hasluck, "The Albanian Blood Feud," Law and Warfare, ed. P. Bohannon (Austin: University of Texas, 1967) 407.

146. Hasluck, "The Albanian Blood Feud" 407-408.

147. Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit 6.

148. Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit (I. 3, 1) 2; (VII. 16) 10; (IV. 10, 6) 8.

CHAPTER II

149. Prifti, Socialist Albania 151. Prifti uses "Church" in the broad sense to include Islamic institutions.

150. Logoreci, The Albanians 71.

151. Pipa dates Hoxha's Communist involvement much later. See Arshi Pipa, "A Book on Hoxha," Albanian Stalinism: Ideo-Political Aspects (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990) 129-130. Pipa doubts that Hoxha began his Communist activity in France, for the reason that he was employed by the Zog government at least twice-- for the Albanian consulate in Belgium and then as a high school teacher in Albania.

152. Prifti, "The Labor Party of Albania," The Communist Parties of Eastern Europe, ed. S. Fisher-Galati (New York: Columbia UP, 1979) 18.

153. Vickers, The Albanians 139.

154. Ramet, Cross and Commissar 16.

155. Logoreci, The Albanians 80.

156. Pipa, "Fifteen Years of Communist Albania," Albanian Stalinism: Ideo-Political Aspects (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990) 16.

157. Prifti, Socialist Albania 23.

158. Logoreci, The Albanians 85.

159. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution in Albania" 253.

160. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution in Albania" 247.

161. Quoted in Lederer, "Islam in Albania" 340.

162. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986) 38.

163. Although Ramet does not treat Albania separately her analysis applies to Albania in the pre-Cultural Revolution period. See Cross and Commissar 16.

164. Janice Broun, Albania: Religion in a Fortress State (Washington: Puebla Institute, 1989) 12; Rexhep Krasniqi, "Persecution of Religion in Communist Albania," ACEN News 128 (1967): 17.

165. Broun, "The Catholic Church in Albania," Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies, Sabrina Ramet, ed. (Durham: Duke University, 1990) 238.

166. Enver Hoxha, Selected Works 2 vols. (Toronto: Norman Bethune Institute, 1977) 1: 373.

167. (4 January and 21 April). The first date is from Chronology of Major Events in Albania 1944-1952 (New York: Free Europe Committee, 1955) 3. The second date is from Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 45.

168. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 45.

169. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 45. Thaci was killed by the security police (*sigurmi*) in 1946 and Prendushi died of torture in

1949. Broun, "The Catholic Church," 241. See also Arshi Pipa, "How Men Die for Ideals" Albanian Catholic Bulletin 10 (1989): 11-14.

170. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 47. See Gjergi Habibaj, "The Aims of Vatican's Propaganda Toward Albania and the Efforts to Unmask It," reprinted in Albanian Catholic Bulletin 10 (1989): 34.

171. The previous councils were held in 1199, 1703, 1871, 1895. "The Catholic Church in Albania; From the Time of the Apostles to the Present," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 7-8.

172. "The Catholic Church in Albania" 8. The incumbent of the diocese of Mirdite was traditionally an abbot who came under the direct jurisdiction of the Vatican. The Mirdite was also the only Albanian tribe which was exclusively Catholic. Skendi, Albania 291.

173. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 16. Bishop Gjini was executed 8 March 1948.

174. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 48. Fr. Gardin's prison memoirs are recorded in Banishing God in Albania (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988).

175. Luan Omari, The History of the Socialist Construction of Albania (1944-1975) (Tirana: Academy of Sciences of the PSR of Albania, 1988) 27.

176. Chronology 33.

177. See Omari, The History of the Socialist Construction 23; Chronology 33.

178. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 48-49. The defense lawyer of the Franciscans, Mustafaer Pipa, was the brother of one of the foremost Albanian scholars, Arshi Pipa, who was also interned.

179. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 51. Of the priests in Albania at this time, 141 were Albanian and 62 were foreign; there were 16 Albanian and 16 foreign monks; and 60 foreign nuns.

180. Chronology 49.
181. Jacques, The Albanians 451.
182. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution" 251.
183. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 50.
184. Chronology 18.
185. Erich Weingartner, The Church Within Socialism (Rome: IDOC International, 1976) 241.
186. "The Jesuits in Albania," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 9 (1988): 67.
187. Daniel, "The Historical Role" 2.
188. Ramet, "The Albanian Orthodox Church," Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 1988) 156.
189. Quoted in Ramet, "The Albanian Orthodox Church" 156.
190. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 15.
191. Chronology 105.
192. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 15 quotes 1958 as the year of death. The date of 1949 seems more likely. See "Fallen for Faith, Justice and Liberty," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 6 (1985): 48.
193. Irwin, "The Fate of Islam in the Balkans: A Comparison of Four State Policies," Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East-European Politics, ed. Sabrina Ramet (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989) 385.
194. Vickers, The Albanians 178.
195. Daniel, "The Historical Role" 20.

196. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 49.
197. Janice Broun, "The Status of Christianity in Albania," Journal of Church and State 28 (1986): 50.
198. Logoreci, The Albanians 73.
199. Lederer, "Islam in Albania" 353. See also N. Clayer, L'Albanie, pays des Derviches: Les ordres mystiques Musulmans en Albanie a l'epoque post-ottomane (1912-1967) (Berlin: Osteuropa-Institut der Freien, 1990) 214-215.
200. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 45.
201. Daniel, "The Historical Role" 20.
202. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 14; Preface to Hamit Beqja and Fatmir Rama, "The Development of Atheistic Education in Albania," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 35.
203. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 48.
204. Skendi, Albania 297, quoted from Bashkimi 20 March 1947.
205. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 49.
206. Daniel, "The Historical Role" 21.
207. Jonathan Crowford, "Repression in Albania: An Analysis," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 10 (1989): 30-31; Lederer, "Islam in Albania" 353.
208. Fred De Jong, "The Takiya of 'Abd Allah Al-Maghawiri in Cairo," Turcica 13 (1981): 249.
209. J. M. Bochenski, "Marxism-Leninism and Religion," Religion and Atheism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, ed. Bohdan Bociurkiw and John Strong (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975) 12.

210. Preface to Beqja and Rama, "Development of Atheistic Education" 35.

211. Chronology 61.

212. Chronology 61.

213. Trix obtained a list of sixteen Bektashi Babas and one dervish imprisoned and killed by the regime in "The Resurfacing of Islam" 546-547. This list is also incomplete, undoubtedly many names of dervishes remain unknown, but it is the most complete source so far in English.

214. Chronology 71.

215. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 49.

216. Broun, Albania: Religion in a Fortress State 14.

217. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution" 248.

218. Chronology 100-101.

219. Ramet, "The Albanian Orthodox Church" 156.

220. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution" 249.

221. Broun, "The Status of Christianity" 50-51.

222. Skendi, Albania 297-298.

223. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution" 249.

224. Skendi, Albania 294.

225. De Jong, "The Takiya of 'Abd Allah Al-Maghawiri" 249. In 1954 another center of Bektashism emerged, the first in North America, with the establishment of the Detroit *tekke* under the direction of Baba Rexhep, who was forced to flee Albania. See Francis Trix, "Bektashi Tekke and Sunni Mosque of Albanian Muslims in America," Muslim Communities in North America, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith (Albany: State University of NY Press, 1994) 368.

226. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 52.
227. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 51. Area Handbook For Albania (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1971) 98.
228. Popovic, L'islam Balkanique 51.
229. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 56.
230. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 55.
231. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 55.
232. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 56.
233. Area Handbook 100.
234. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 56.
235. Kurt Hutten, Iron Curtain Christians: The Church in Communist Countries Today (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967) 412.
236. Sinishta, Fulfilled Promise 59. Shllaku was one of the only Catholic hierarchs in post-war Albania to die of natural causes. "Albanian Bishop Dead," New York Times 25 November 1956.
237. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution" 249.
238. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 20.
239. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution" 252.
240. See Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 157, 142.
241. Area Handbook 99.
242. "Fallen for Faith, Justice" 48. Ramet, "Albanian Orthodox Church" 155-156.

243. H. Hamm, Albania: China's Beachhead in Europe (London, 1963) 55, 56.

CHAPTER III

244. History of the Party of Labour of Albania 1966-1980 (Tirana: "8 Nentori," 1981) 69.

245. Prifti, Socialist Albania 154.

246. Prifti, "The Labor Party of Albania," 15.

247. Anti-religious activity was not a defining feature of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, despite the desecration of many sacred Buddhist sites. See Jiaqi Yan, Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996) 73.

248. N. C. Pano, "The Albanian Cultural Revolution," Problems of Communism 23 (1974): 50.

249. Arshi Pipa, "Party Ideology and Purges in Albania," Albanian Stalinism: Ideo-Political Aspects (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990) 86.

250. Pano, "The Albanian Cultural Revolution" 50.

251. Pano, "The Albanian Cultural Revolution" 48.

252. New York Times 5 October 1965.

253. Logoreci, The Albanians 151.

254. Logoreci, The Albanians 152.

255. Prifti, Socialist Albania 148.

256. Pano, "The Albanian Cultural Revolution" 44.

257. Zanga, "Albania: The World's First Atheist State but with Deeply Rooted Religious Feelings," Radio Free Europe Research (23 May 1984): 5.

258. Irwin, "The Fate of Islam" 385.

259. Pollo, The History of Albania 282.

260. Zanga, "Albania's Cultural Revolution," Eastern Europe 16 (1967): 28.

261. Zanga, "Albania's Cultural Revolution" 28.

262. Zanga, "Albania's Cultural Revolution" 28.

263. Fatos Tarifa and Elira Cela, "Conscience in Albania: The Transition from 'Yes' to 'No,'" Albanian Catholic Bulletin 8 (1992): 31.

264. Pano, "The Albanian Cultural Revolution" 51.

265. Area Handbook 100.

266. The figure 2,169 is most often given. This number is so frequently cited that its original source is no longer remembered. According to Ramet, 608 of these were Orthodox (including monasteries and one seminary). See Ramet, "The Albanian Orthodox Church" 157. The number of Catholic churches closed in 1967 is generally quoted as 157. Thus the remaining figure-- 1,404-- were Islamic institutions.

267. Larry Luxner, "Albania's Religious Rebirth" Aramco World 43 (1992): 43. Of the 1050 mosques that were standing before the Cultural Revolution, according to this author, approximately 250 were physically destroyed.

268. Area Handbook 100.

269. Dennis Dunn, Détente and Papal-Communist Relations, 1962-1978 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979) 177-178.

270. Ramet, "The Albanian Orthodox Church" 157.

271. Bowers, "Church and State in Albania," Religion in Communist Lands 6 (1978): 151.

272. Zëri i popullit 24 July 1973, reprinted in Soviet and East European Abstract Series (ABSEES): 4 (October 1973): 133.

273. Broun, "The Status of Christianity" 54.

274. Broun, "The Catholic Church in Albania" 244. Of this figure, 20 Catholic priests were detained according to Area Handbook 100.

275. H. Poulton, The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict (London: Minority Rights Group, 1991) 196; Jacques, The Albanians 488.

276, Area Handbook 100.

277. Weingartner, Church Within Socialism 245.

278. History of the Party of Labour 2: 72.

279. Zëri i popullit 24 July 1971, reprinted in ABSEES 2 (October 1971): 125.

280. Prifti, Socialist Albania 161.

281. Denis Janz, "Rooting Out Religion: The Albanian Experiment," The Christian Century 107 (1990): 701.

282. See Mark Tirtja, "Survivances religieuses du passé dans la vie du peuple," Éthographie albanaise: Édition spécial à l'occasion de la conference nationale des etudes ethnogrphiques en Albanie (Tirana: Académie des science de la RPA institut de l'histoire, 1976).

283. Zëri i popullit 11 August 1973, reprinted in ABSEES 5 (January 1974): 111-112.

284. Bowers, "Church and State in Albania" 151.

285. Francis Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam in Albania," East European Quarterly 28 (1994): 537.

286. Bowers "Church and State in Albania" 151.

287. Zëri i Popullit 25 March 1972, reprinted in ABSEES 3 (July 1972): 137.

288. Pano, "The Albanian Cultural Revolution," 55.

289. Vickers, The Albanians 194.

290. Bowers, "The Islamic Factor in Albanian Policy," Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs 5 (1983-1984): 132.

291. See Prifti, Socialist Albania 187.

292. Bowers, "The Islamic Factor" 124.

293. Prifti, "Albania's New Constitution," Balkanistica, 5 (1979): 67.

294. Hako, "Towards the Creation," quoted in Jacques, The Albanians, 499.

295. Broun, "The Catholic Church" 233.

296. Vickers, The Albanians 196.

297. Jacques, The Albanians 499.

298. Mojzes, Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR before and after the Great Transformation (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1992) 125, 126.

299. This date is according to Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 26.

300. Broun, "The Catholic Church" 248.

301. This is according to Hoxha, quoted in Habibaj, "The Aims of Vatican's Propaganda Toward Albania" 43.

302. Jacques, The Albanians 496.
303. Sinishta, The Fulfilled Promise 61.
304. Broun Religion in a Fortress State 23.
305. Lederer, "Islam in Albania" 354.
306. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 27.
307. Broun, "The Catholic Church" 245.
308. Dunn, Détente and Papal-Communist Relations 177.
309. Logoreci, The Albanians 156.
310. Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam" 537.
311. Jacques, The Albanians 562.
312. Logoreci, The Albanians 212-213.
313. Area Handbook 101.
314. Omari, The History of the Socialist Construction 304-305.
315. Zëri i popullit 9 February 1979, quoted in Bowers, "The Islamic Factor" 128.
316. History of the Party of Labour of Albania 71-72.
317. Sinishta, The Fulfilled Promise 61.
318. Zëri i popullit 1 June 1975, quoted in Jacques, The Albanians 497-498.
319. Zëri i popullit 25 March 1972, reprinted in ABSEES 3 (July 1972): 137.
320. Zëri i popullit 9 April 1971, reprinted in ABSEES 2 (July 1971): 137.
321. For the decline of food consumption during fasts see Bowers, "Church and State in Albania" 150. For the rise of food consumption see Logoreci, The Albanians 156. For authorities'

criticism see Zëri i popullit 8 July 1972, reprinted in ABSEES 3 (October 1972) 137.

322. Bowers, "Church and State in Albania" 150.

323. Broun, Conscience and Captivity: Religion in Eastern Europe (Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1988) 36.

324. Broun, "The Catholic Church" 246.

325. Bowers, "Church and State in Albania" 150.

326 Zëri i popullit 1 November 1972, reprinted in ABSEES 3 (April 1973): 131.

327. Bashkimi 14 April 1974, reprinted in ABSEES 5 (April 1974): 127.

328. Bashkimi 14 April 1974, reprinted in ABSEES 5 (April 1974): 127.

329. Bowers, "Church and State in Albania" 150.

330. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 27.

331. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 5.

332. Weingartner, The Church Within Socialism 242-243.

333. Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam" 543-544.

334. Zëri i rinisë 15 July 1970, reprinted in ABSEES 1 (January 1971): 125.

335. Bowers, "Church and State in Albania" 150.

336. Weingartner, Church Within Socialism 242.

337. Tonnes, "Religious Persecution in Albania" 255.

338. Zëri i Rinisë 24 October 1970, reprinted in ABSEES 1 (January 1971): 126.

339. Irwin, "The Fate of Islam" 386.
340. Bowers, "Church and State in Albania" 149.
341. "More activity in the struggle against religion," Bashkimi 21 July 1973, reprinted in Weingartner, Church Within Socialism 246.
342. Bowers, "The Islamic Factor" 129.
343. Jacques, The Albanians 498.
344. Ramet, Cross and Commissar 131.
345. Zanga, "Albania: The World's First Atheist State" 5.
346. Bashkimi 20 February 1975, reprinted in ABSEES 6 (April 1975): 143.
347. Prifti Socialist Albania 162.
348. Broun, "Despite Persecution the Faith Lives in Albania," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 60.
349. Daniel, "Historical Role" 24.
350. Logoreci, The Albanians 214.
351. "John Paul II and Albania," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 13 (1992): 38.
352. "Pope John Paul Calls for Religious Freedom in Albania," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 27.
353. "Atheistic Mullahs Attack the Pope," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 28.
354. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 2-4, 28; V. C. Chrypinski, "Albania," Religion in Politics: A World Guide, ed. S. Mews (Harlow: Longman, 1989) 5.

355. Anton Logoreci, "Great Inhumanity Pays Lip Service to Liberal Values," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 49. Lederer, "Islam in Albania" 343.

356. Zëri i popullit 26 October 1983, quoted in "The Triumph of Atheist Thought," reprinted in Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 34.

357. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 24.

358. It has been estimated that Albania received approximately \$5 billion from China since 1954. Prifti, "Labor Party of Albania" 41.

359. Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 301.

360. Enver Hoxha, "Hands Off Iran!" Reflections on the Middle East 1958-1983 (Toronto: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin Institute, 1984) 347.

361. Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam" 537.

362. Hoxha, "The Events Which Are Taking Place in the Moslem Countries Must Be Seen in the Light of Dialectical and Historical Materialism," Reflections on the Middle East 385.

363. Lederer, "Islam in Albania" 343.

364. Pipa, The Politics of Language 253.

365. Hoxha, "The Glorious Past of Peoples Cannot Be Ignored," Reflections on the Middle-East 506.

366. Rruga e partisë March 1986, quoted in Mojzes, Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe 127.

367. Omari, The History of the Socialist Construction 257.

368. Omari, The History of the Socialist Construction 254-257.

369. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 32.

370. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 31.
371. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 37.
372. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 31, 40.
373. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 32.
374. See "Albanian Ignores Mother Teresa," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 1 (1980): 12.
375. Mojzes, Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe 129.
376. Mojzes, Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe 129.
377. "UN Human Rights Commission Goes Public on Albania, Abuse of Religious Rights of Albanian Citizens Singled Out," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 10 (1989): 21.
378. Palok Plaku, "Grave Violations of Religious Rights in Albania," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 6 (1985): 44.
379. Jacques, The Albanians 610.
380. Broun Religion in a Fortress State 33.
381. Jacques, The Albanians 610.
382. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 33-34.
383. Broun, Religion in a Fortress State 31.
384. "UN Human Rights Commission" 22.
385. Jacques, The Albanians 611.
386. Poulton, The Balkans: Minorities and States 197.
387. Mojzes, Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe 130.
388. Poulton, The Balkans: Minorities and States 197.
389. Mojzes, Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe 130.
390. Jacques, The Albanians 619.

391. Poulton, The Balkans: Minorities and States 197.

392. Mojzes, Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe 130.

393. Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam" 538-539.

394. Jacques, The Albanians 661.

395. Jacques, The Albanians 662.

CHAPTER IV

396. Ramet, Cross and Commissar 158-160.

397. "Religion in the Service of Capitalists," Mësuesi 9 September 1984, reprinted in Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 33.

398. Bowers, "The Islamic Factor" 125.

399. N. A. Stavro, "Albania," Yearbook on International Communist Affairs (1987) (Stanford: Stanford Institution Press, 1988) 267.

400. Broun, "The Status of Christianity" 48.

401. Omari, The History of the Construction 41.

402. Pipa, Albanian Stalinism v-vi.

403. This is a quote from Hoxha's fifth meeting with Stalin. Enver Hoxha, Artful Albanian: Memoirs of Enver Hoxha (London: Chatto and Windus, 1986) 129-130.

404. Zanga, "Albania's Cultural Revolution" 29.

405. Prifti, "The Labor Party of Albania" 8.

406. Pipa, "On Albanian Independence," Albanian Stalinism: Ideo-Political Aspects (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990) 3.

407. See Habibaj, "The Aims of Vatican's Propaganda" 40.

408. Quoted from Halusi Hako, "We Accuse Religion," reprinted in "The Catholic Church in Albania," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 5 (1984): 19.

409. Quoted from "We Accuse Religion," in "The Catholic Church in Albania" 19.

410. "The Triumph of Atheist Thought" 34.

411. Quoted in Jacques, The Albanians 499.

412. Jacques, The Albanians 498.

413. "Albanian Foreign Secretary Speaks About Religion," Albanian Catholic Bulletin 10 (1989): 73.

414. Edward Stein, "Albania Sticks to Atheist Line," The Independent 13 May 1988.

415. "Toward the Creation of a Totally Atheistic Society," Rrugë e partisë, March 1986, reprinted in Jacques, The Albanians 571.

416. "Party Journal Regularly Attacks 'Religious Rites and Dogmas,'" Albanian Catholic Bulletin 10 (1989): 72-73.

417. Ressuli, Albanian Literature 88.

418. Quoted in Beqja and Rama, "The Development of Atheistic Education in Albania" 41-42.

419. Habibaj, "The Aims of Vatican's Propaganda" 36

420. Quoted in Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam" 536.

421. Prifti, Socialist Albania 97.

422. Prifti, Socialist Albania 96. The organization was formed in September 1943 as the Union of Anti-Fascist Women of Albania.

423. Jacques, The Albanians 622.

424. Prifti, Socialist Albania 159.

425. Hoxha, Artful Albanian 14.

426. Enver Hoxha, "On Some Aspects of the Problem of the Albanian Women," On the Liberation of Women in Albania (Toronto: Norman Bethune Institute, 1976) 2.

427. Hoxha, "On Some Aspects" 5.

428. Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 259.

429. Rruga e partisë, October 1970, reprinted in ABSEES 1 (October 1970): 125.

430. Zëri i popullit, 13 June 1971, reprinted in ABSEES 2 (October 1971): 125.

431. Pipa, The Politics of Language 4.

432. Prifti, "The Labor Party of Albania" 44.

433. Pipa, The Politics of Language xv.

434. B. Szajkowski, "The Socialist People's Republic of Albania," Marxist Governments: A World Survey, 2 vols. ed. B. Szajkowski (London: MacMillan, 1981) 1: 34.

435. Pipa, The Politics of Language xiv.

436. Prifti, "The Albanian Party of Labor and the Intelligentsia," East European Quarterly 8 (1974): 315.

437. Pipa, The Politics of Language 45.

438. Pipa, The Politics of Language 227-228.

439. Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 28.
440. Pipa, "Fifteen Years" Albanian Stalinism: Ideo-Political Aspects, ed. Arshi Pipa (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990) 19.
441. Szajkowski, "The Socialist People's Republic of Albania" 47.
442. Prifti, "The Labor Party of Albania" 11.
443. Adi Schnytzer, Stalinist Economic Strategy in Practice: The Case of Albania (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 18.
444. Omari, The History of the Socialist Construction 211.
445. Omari, The History of the Socialist Construction 192.
446. Omari, The History of the Socialist Construction 322. See also Schnytzer, Stalinist Economic Strategy 1: Industry in 1938 accounted for 4.4% of net material product, by 1977, "well over half."
447. Pipa, "Party Ideology" 62. Usually Xoxe is the only founding member cited. See Vickers, The Albanians 158.
448. Vickers, The Albanians 146.
449. Pipa, "A Book on Hoxha" 129.
450. Pipa, "Fifteen Years of Communist Albania" 17.
451. Pano, "The Albanian Cultural Revolution" 49.
452. Pipa, "Fifteen Years" 26.
453. Pipa, "Fifteen Years" 22; 23.
454. Pipa, "Fifteen Years" 24.
455. Logoreci, The Albanians 140.
456. Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 249.
457. Pipa, "Party Ideology" 87.

- 458. Prifti, "The Labor Party of Albania," 27.
- 459. Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 251.
- 460. Pano, "The Albanian Cultural Revolution" 49.
- 461. Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 184.
- 462. Hoxha, "On Some Aspects" 4.
- 463. Prifti, "The Albanian Party of Labor and the Intelligensia" 320.
- 464. Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 251.
- 465. Omari, History of the Socialist Construction 220.
- 466. Beqja and Rama, "The Development of Atheistic Education" 40.
- 467. Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam" 453.
- 468. Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam" 453.

CONCLUSION

- 469. Mojzes, Religious Liberty 117.
- 470. This phrase is from Zihni Sako, former spokesman on culture and folklore. Quoted in Prifti, Socialist Albania 157.
- 471. See the commemorative issue of Albanian Catholic Bulletin 6 (1985).
- 472. Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam," This coincided with the opening of the former Bektashi headquarters in Tirana. They had received only one room in 1990, for the rest of the building continued to operate as a convalescent home. One week before the celebration Mother Teresa found homes for the women

residing there, making it possible for the Bektashis to repossess the entirety of their former headquarters.

473. Trix, "The Resurfacing of Islam" 541.

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