
The Albanian Educational System

The struggle for the Albanian school has a long history. From early times, the Albanian people have had to fight, weapons in hand, for their education just as they have had to fight for their freedom. During the late 19th century and early 20th century, there were few schools in existence in Albania. However, during the years of the reactionary Zog regime (1924-39) and those of the fascist occupation of Albania (1939-44), the situation was one of the gloomiest in the history of the school. The broad masses, over 85% of the population, remained illiterate. The number of schools was greatly reduced and the system of school fees meant that the doors of those few existing schools were open only to the children of the wealthy. During the period of the Nazi fascist occupation, the Italian and German policy of de-nationalization was stepped up. Hundreds of teachers left their schools and took up the rifle to fight in the ranks of the partisan units and brigades.

The foundations of the people's education in present day Albania were laid down during the National Liberation War. The Albanian Communist Party (PLA) led the organizing not only of the war effort, but also of the education of the people through the National Liberation Councils. The responsibility involved opening elementary schools and also organizing courses against illiteracy in all the partisan-liberated districts of the country.

After national liberation, Albania pursued a revolutionary course to make education truly the property of the working people, the workers and peasants.

In 1946, educational reform was carried out. Education was proclaimed general and free of charge, elementary schooling was made compulsory, equality of sexes in educational matters was declared, the state and secular character of the school was guaranteed, the right to education in the students' native language was ensured, and so on. In addition, the reform opened the way for the creation of a completely new, popular and democratic school. Radical changes were made in teaching plans, programs and textbooks, as well as in all the methods of teaching and educational work.
During the period from 1945-55, a broad campaign was conducted to abolish illiteracy. This campaign was turned into a major social and national action bringing about the complete liquidation of this age-old plague.

Before liberation, Albania was the only European country without a university. This deficiency was rectified when the University of Tirana was set up in 1957. Later, in Tirana and other cities, many higher schools as, for example, the Agricultural Higher Institute, the Higher Institute of Arts and pedagogical institutes, were set up.

Today, socialist Albania has a complete educational system with a wide network of full and part-time 8-grade schools, secondary schools and many higher schools, not to mention the large number of kindergartens for pre-school children.

In proportion to its population (some 2.8 million), Albania ranks among the first countries in the world today in regard to the number of persons who attend the various categories of school. Today, one out of every three persons in Albania attends a school. The University of Tirana has some seven faculties with 41 specialties and about 20,000 students, in addition to other higher institutes and its branches set up in the other centers of Albania.

The educational system underwent intensive study, discussion and constructive criticism in the late 1960s. The question of the revolutionization of education became a topic involving all of the Albanian people. Responding to the call of the Party, a great popular discussion was initiated all over the country of a massive character unseen before this time.

As a result of these mass discussions and meetings, the new educational system approved in November, 1969 became a powerful weapon in the hands of the working class for the formation of a people's intelligensia loyal to socialism and for the education of the younger generation, which will carry the revolution through to its final and complete triumph.

The reforms have placed the school on the basis of the 'revolutionary triangle'--lessons, productive labor, physical and military training -- with a Marxist-Leninist ideology running through all of them. Its task is to impart to the youth sound, scientific knowledge, to inculcate the Marxist-Leninist world outlook, to give them
professional skills and a correct attitude toward work, to imbue them with a spirit of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism, thus ensuring their moral, physical and cultural education. In Albania, education is under the control and direction of the workers and peasants. The state pays the full cost of the school system in all its links; in Albania there are no fees to pay in any category of school. The state pays for the school buildings, their equipment, the salaries of the teachers and auxiliary personnel. The family pays only for textbooks, the total price of which is on an average only about one and one-half to two days of a worker's salary for each school year!

In addition, the state provides living expenses for students who attend high schools and colleges. It pays full grants to students from families with many dependents, that is, with the lowest per capita income. Other families with few dependents make a reasonable contribution.

On completion of the obligatory 8-grade school, students are free to choose whether they wish to continue with their education or enter the work force. The majority choose 4-year secondary education (general or vocational education) in which there are 65 to 70 topics to choose from. Vocational secondary schools admit students on the basis of the five year economic plan, because the state works out a correct proportion in the training, for example, of nurses, electricians, teachers, economists, etc. Admission to general education is unlimited.

As part of the program to reduce the differences between town and countryside, students from the countryside in the secondary vocational schools in Albania make up more than half of the total contingent of students. This gives greater impetus to the secondary education of the peasant students who, up until recently, had not, nor could they have had, the same opportunities as those students in the cities.

The programs of the vocational secondary schools are such that the subjects of general culture are the same as those of the secondary schools of general education and are designed to elevate the whole cultural level of the working class and peasantry. These effectively prepare the students so that they can continue with higher studies if they wish to do so, and not feel deprived of these opportunities, as they do in many other countries.

Before entering the university, all students must complete a one-year probationary period of productive labor, working alongside the workers and peasants. On completion and as a condition of entry into the university, the students must have a positive recommendation from their fellow workers. Part-time higher schooling has become very extensive throughout Albania and thousands of workers and cooperativists are enrolled in night classes or correspondence courses with many of the schools being attached to the factories. Time off with pay is given to the students to prepare for and take exams.

The educational system also comprises schools for national minorities, taught in the mother tongue. In all the villages of the Greek minority there are 8-year schools, in which the lower cycle program is taught in Greek. The training of teachers for these schools and for the kindergartens is carried out at the teachers' training school in Gjirokastra, in which all the lessons are given in Greek. Likewise, all the textbooks and auxiliary literature for these schools are published in Greek.

Today, the ever-growing needs of the country for specialists with higher schooling are met by the higher schools with their courses in some 60 topics. To date, the Albanian higher schools have trained more than 41,000 specialists, who are making an important contribution to the construction of socialism and to the development of the new Albanian science.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that Albanian graduates do not find themselves confronting the insecurity of no employment when they finish their studies. Because of careful planning there is no unemployment and, while students are able to enter the occupation of their choice, the state organizes employment opportunities in accordance with the needs of society overall.
Health Care in Albania

The example of Albania shows that only socialism creates the conditions needed for the care of the people's health.

In the People's Socialist Republic of Albania medical service is given free of charge. This includes hospitalization, office visits, analyses, treatments, home visits by the doctor, etc. Albania has undertaken this humane task and has spared nothing to ensure for the people total coverage by a qualified medical service established on a scientific basis. Treatment of patients and the distribution of medicines are under no financial restrictions whatsoever. Physicians place the care and cure of the patient above any question of cost involved.

No capitalist country, however highly developed, has such a humanitarian system, since it would run counter to the selfish interests of the rich who profit from the health care system. The cost of medical care and treatment in such countries is extremely high. The so-called "free of charge" medical care in certain bourgeois states, in fact, is based on the funds of "social insurance" created through the contributions of the workers themselves and is, therefore, not a "free medical service" at all. Moreover, health care in these countries is still divided into one system for the rich and a separate, inferior system for the poor.

The doctor-patient relationship in Albania is based upon mutual respect and socialist humanity. The doctors respect their patients, they listen to them carefully and do their utmost to alleviate their suffering. The patients, in their turn, respect the doctors and pay close attention to the advice they give. Today it has become common practice for the doctors to maintain constant contact with the people, meeting with groups of workers, city dwellers and villagers, holding talks and lectures with them in order to raise to a higher level the cultural and sanitary education of the workers.

Medical care in Albania tends to be as close to the people as possible. This is demonstrated by the fact that the network of health institutions has been extended to the most remote districts of the country. This network comprises hospitals which are for the most part new and with the essential services, as well as sanatoriums, maternity homes, day nurseries for babies, dispensaries, health institutions for scientific studies, a wide network of institutions for dental treatment and a pharmaceutical industry. Today, there is one doctor and dentist for every 520 persons, whereas in 1938 the figure was one for about 8,500 persons. These and many other devices testify to the organization and planning on correct criteria for the proportional development of the entire medical service, providing it with the necessary conditions for normal work and the necessary personnel of higher training who constantly strive to serve the people conscientiously and with devotion.

In Albania's medical care institutions, a systematic struggle against various diseases is being waged not only by treating but also, more importantly, by preventing them. Thanks to this preventative and curative work the scourge of malaria has been completely eliminated. Also, there are no traces of syphilis and tuberculosis has been all but eradicated. The average life expectancy has increased from 38 years in 1938 to just over 70 years today!

In order to accurately assess the health service in Albania, it is illustrative to examine the health care for mothers and children, occupational health and treatment of disabled individuals.

Today, Albania has standards of obstetric-gynecologic and pediatric services comparable to or better than many industrialized countries. There are sufficient maternity beds to accommodate all the expectant mothers in both town and countryside. There are midwives in every village, no matter how small their population. In addition, there are day nurseries in every city and village in which a high percentage of Albania's children are growing up. For mothers, there is advanced legislation for paid leave before and after childbirth, for assuring them light work during pregnancy, as well as the right to leave their job every three hours to breast feed their babies. The provision of all medicines for children under one year of age and the supply of vitamins to expectant mothers and their children after birth free of charge, and the subsidizing of nurseries by the state are very important factors which exert an influence on constantly improving
In Albania medical service is given free of charge. Every woman, as soon as she suspects that she is pregnant, reports to the women’s consultation rooms, both in the town and the countryside. The consultant keeps the mother under constant supervision, following the normal development of the child. Should any difficulty arise, a specialist is called in. The pregnant women prepare for the birth by consulting with the midwife or the doctor who is in charge of them, and also by attending special health education courses where they learn how to care for their babies once they are born.

The state also creates the best possible conditions for the broad masses so that they may spend their vacations in the most uplifting and relaxing ways at any of the mountain and seaside resorts where very comfortable, state-subsidized holiday homes have been set up. Vacations are guaranteed by law.

The state compels all enterprises to take the necessary precautions in order to protect the environment from pollution right from the first stages of work on new projects. In addition, the law also charges social organizations as well as every citizen with duties so that the environment may be protected against pollution. It is the people’s responsibility to take a stand when violations of this law are noticed, since pollution is a problem related directly to the protection of the health of the working masses. According to the public health legislation in Albania, it is compulsory for every work center to take measures for the prevention of occupational diseases of the workers, in accordance with the work center and the material handled by the workers. The work center must secure the necessary equipment for ventilation or for the suction of harmful gases, smoke and dust during the production process, and to remove in good time all waste and left-over materials which may be harmful to the environment. The work center must also supply each worker with the necessary means and clothing for their protection during production. For their part, the workers are under an obligation to utilize these means of protection during the work hours. Every worker is given periodic medical examinations. Should the prospective worker be found medically unfit for a particular job, appropriate work will be found for that person.
The state spares nothing in its approach and treatment of disabled children, making huge expenditures to insure them a normal life and to set up special institutions for the correction of various congenital diseases. There is also a central institution for mentally disabled children, where they undergo a psychological pedagogical treatment in addition to other treatment. The results have been very promising and many of these children have since entered the work force.

**Women's Emancipation**

The emancipation and advancement of women are glorious achievements of socialist Albania.

Before liberation, the suppression of women was brutal, despite the fact that in the national folklore of Albania the woman was often treated as a dignified figure, represented in lovely colors and with special tenderness, particularly as a mother. In reality, the woman was divested of every economic right. She could not have a say in family gatherings, nor could she have a voice in the marriage of her sons and daughters. When a young bride, she did not have the right to call her husband by his first name, but had to speak of him as "he". In some sections women, no matter how young, were addressed as "old women" by their husbands. When travelling, the husband would ride while his wife had to follow behind him on foot. The "lashrope", from the bride's dowry that parents had to give their daughters, would be carried along by them when fetching water, going to the mountains for firewood, laboring in the fields or taking wheat to the mill. It was a symbol of medieval backwardness and feudal cruelty toward women.

Women were assigned separate places apart from the men, both in the church and in the mosque. Even at home they had their separate place in the waiting room where, from latticed windows, they were permitted to watch their husbands celebrating at weddings or other family celebrations. Even on mourning days men and women did not come together.

Muslim women had their heads covered with a kerchief and in the towns they wrapped themselves in veils or black cloaks. In the towns Christian women also veiled their faces.

In some regions whenever a woman was spoken ill of, after having her hair cut off, she would then be mounted backward on an ass and paraded through the streets. An old canon said, "The husband is entitled to beat his wife, to bind her in chains when she defies his word and order."

Young women not only had nothing to say about their marriages but they were often sold, even when infants, for future betrothals. Women had a personal name, but after they were married they were referred to as so-and-so's wife, so that their names fell into disuse. And since descent in the female line did not count, their names were not considered worth remembering.

It was against this background of centuries-old tradition, based on the unwritten laws of the canons, that the Communist Party issued the call to women to join the partisan forces of the national liberation war to drive out the fascist invaders. Albanian women had on occasions over the years fought along side their men for freedom from national oppression, but the mass response to the Party's call was epoch-making.

The fascists and traitors to the country left nothing undone to estrange women from the Party, the National Liberation Front and the partisan army. Women were persecuted, imprisoned, deported, tortured and even hanged. But nothing shook them. They stood united in revolutionary combat around the Communist Party of Albania. They saw in the program of the CPA, at long last, the path for their own liberation.

Women joined the Communist Party, where they were assigned to posts of responsibility in the partisan detachments. They were commanders and commissars, and secretaries of Party cells. Of the partisan army of 70,000, 6,000 were women. Today too, they are cadres in the armed forces.

Thus they played a leading role in their emancipation. After liberation, the strength, bravery, maturity and patriotism of the Albanian women burst out with unexampled, ever-increasing vigor. The Party had set up women's councils everywhere, and the Anti-Fascist Women's Union was set up in 1944. The magazine, "Albanian Woman", became a powerful force in the mobilization of women. Today, the Women's Union of
Albania is a strong organization, having 600,000 members. It plays an important role in the political, economic and social life of the country. It held its 9th Congress in 1982 and delegations from various women's organizations from 17 countries were present.

What was the path the Communists set out for the women? They said that there were two basic preconditions for the emancipation of women. The first was that she must be freed from wage slavery. As with all working people, without this, women would still face class oppression and all the ills of capitalism: insecurity, unemployment, inflation, imperialist wars, household bondage, lack of public care for her children, etc. The people's revolution in Albania has long since abolished wage slavery, so this first condition has been fully met.

The second precondition was that women engage in productive social labor. This provides the economic and social basis for equality, allowing women to be independent and equal participants in the struggle for socialist construction. This condition has also been fully met. Women have, for several years now, comprised 46% of the work force. This latter condition had to be organized. At the time of liberation women were not prepared for industrial work, aside from some training in handicrafts. They had to have their self-confidence built up after centuries of being considered mainly chattel. They were 90% illiterate. Today they are active in every field of industry and agriculture that is not injurious to their health. Half of all students are women and girls, and they are being educated in all the various fields of learning, including higher education.

The main ongoing tasks for the complete emancipation of women are to continually raise the participation of women on an equal basis with men in social productive labor and in the whole political and social life of the country, to deliver women from the drudgery of household chores, and to strengthen and promote relations of democracy and equality in the family.

Housework will not be completely eliminated for individuals until it is completely socialized, which requires a higher level of industrialization than Albania has attained at this time. But an educational campaign is being waged for the sharing of household tasks by the entire family. It is even written into law. The Code of the Family, enacted in June, 1982, calls for the equal rights and duties of family members and requires that "spouses assist each other in the fulfillment of all family and social tasks." Increasing numbers of bakeries, laundries, and dining halls are being built. Electricity is available over the entire country and more household appliances are steadily being supplied. Considerable funds have been laid out by the state for women to be able to attend schools, courses, to take part in various political and cultural-artistic activities, or to lighten the burden of child rearing and household work by setting up social institutions and extending the service network to the remotest village. Albanian mothers have free health care, generous maternity leave, birth clinics and nurseries and kindergartens for children, including child care centers at most work places.

Both education and legal action are used to overcome backward attitudes toward women, fitted to suit the time, place and concrete conditions of every region. Hangovers from the past have been more pronounced in the more remote mountainous areas. Persuasion and education are given priority over legal action. In 1967, a plenum of the Central Committee of the PLA was held on just two questions, one of which was "On the Further Deepening of the Struggle for the Complete Emancipation of Women." In that same year, Enver Hoxha said in a speech, "The Party and the whole country should rise to their feet, burn the backward canons and crush anyone who would dare trample on the sacred law of the Party on the protection of the rights of women and young girls." After that speech, many infant betrothals were dissolved voluntarily by the parents. Now it is written into law that no marriages can take place without the consent of the two parties involved, and penal action is taken against violation of this law.

A further example of the educational work done is that Enver Hoxha has recommended that family income be handled by wives. He said, "Having money in her keep, the wife will not only manage it better, but she will also have equal voice in the discussions with her husband."

The new Constitution of Albania adopted in December, 1976, states:
"Equal pay is guaranteed for equal work."

"No restriction or privilege is recognized on the rights and duties of citizens on account of sex."

"The woman enjoys equal rights with man in work, pay, holiday, social security, education, in all social and political activity, as well as in the family."

Under the conditions in Albania, the participation of women in the entire life of the country has become an objective necessity. The efforts, the physical and mental energies of women, too, are necessary to promote the increasing revolution, to strengthen the people's state power and further democratize it through the line of the masses. The efforts of women are necessary too, for the strengthening and defense of the homeland against any enemy through the training of the entire population.

Comrade Enver Hoxha has raised before the whole society that "the Party and the working class should measure the advance toward the complete construction of socialist society with the deepening and progress of the women's revolution within our (i.e. Albania's) proletarian revolution. If the women lag behind, then the revolution marks time." But the tremendous advances made by women in Albania are attested to by their ever increasing role in the entire life of the country. Today women comprise 30% of the membership of the Party of Labor of Albania, the only political party. They make up 30% of the deputies to the People's Assembly, the highest government body in the land. They are 41% of the People's Councils at all levels, 30% of the Higher Court, and some 44% of the leaders of the organizations of the masses. Certainly in no other country in modern history have women attained such a high degree of participation in the social and political life of the nation.

The Greek National Minority

in Socialist Albania

Located in the Dropull area of southern Albania is the center of the Greek national minority, most of whom have been living there for generations, although a few moved there in 1944 because of the right-wing activities
of the National Democratic Greek League under General Napolean Zervas.

In all there are some 50,000 Greeks living in Albania representing about 1.8% of the total population; many live in their own towns and villages.

The Constitution of Albania states in Article 42, the following:

"Protection and development of their people's culture and traditions, the use of their mother tongue and teaching of it in school, equal development in all fields of social life are guaranteed for national minorities.

"Any national privilege and inequality and any act which violates the rights of national minorities is contrary to the Constitution and is punishable by law."

Many visitors from Greece have spent time among the Greek minority in Albania. To quote one visitor in a report made before the Greek Parliament on March 1, 1982: "Today Albania defends the interest of the minorities with the constitution and does not grant them fewer rights than those of the Albanian people. The newspaper of the Greek minority is published in the Greek language (Laiko Vima), the four and eight year schools function in Greek and there is also a school for training elementary level teachers." In addition to these, there are regular radio broadcasts on Radio-Tirana in Greek and also Radio Gjirokaster has regular programming in the Greek language for the surrounding area in which are located many villages of the minority (Dervican and Goranxi, for example). The continuation and development of their own national culture is encouraged; for example, at the 1983 National Folklore Festival in Gjirokaster, members of the Greek minority participated by presenting their own songs (old and new), dances and costumes. Members of this minority permeate all levels of Albanian society including the Central Committee of the PLA. In addition there are several well known writers, artists and actors from the Greek national minority; for example, Viktor Zhusti is a well known actor of the People's Theatre and in the cinema as well as a teacher at the Higher Institute of the Arts.

Aspects of Albanian Culture: Past and Present

The key to Albania's cultural development since its national liberation was given by Enver Hoxha in a report in 1966:

"Our socialist art and culture should be firmly based on our native soil, on our wonderful people, arising from the people and serving them to the fullest. It should be clear and comprehensible but never vulgar and thoughtless. Our Party is for creative works in which the deep ideological content and the broad popular spirit are realized in an artistic form capable of stirring the feelings profoundly and touching the hearts of the people, in order to inspire and mobilize them for great deeds. We must intensify our struggle for a revolutionary art and literature of socialist realism...As in every other field, a sharp class struggle is taking place between the two ideologies, Marxist-Leninist materialist ideology on the one hand and feudal and bourgeois ideology on the other. Decadent bourgeois culture and art are alien to socialism. We oppose them and at the same time we appreciate and make use of everything that is progressive, democratic and revolutionary, critically viewed in the light of our own proletarian ideology."

The Ancient Cultural Heritage Of the Albanian People

The Albanians are the direct descendants of the ancient Illyrians -- Indo-European tribes which occupied the western part of the Balkan peninsula at least as early as four thousand years ago. The Albanian language is a member of the Indo-European languages and is the sole surviving language derived from the ancient Illyrians.

Modern Albanians are justifiably proud of their long history. The knowledge that they are a very ancient people, established in the Balkan peninsula for several millenia, and that they are ethnically and linguistically distinct from their neighbors, has been an important factor in their struggle to gain and maintain independence.

Since liberation in 1944, the Party of Labor of Albania has given great encouragement to archaeology, as
well as to other cultural and educational activities and what has been achieved is truly remarkable. By 1944 most of the treasures found by foreign archaeologists had been taken abroad and the country possessed no experienced archaeologists. Today, as a result of the Party's enthusiastic support for archaeology, a large amount of field and restoration work has been accomplished, museums are found throughout the country and there is a great deal of popular interest as well as scientific accomplishment in the area.

Albanian Folklore

Albania has an inexhaustible treasury of folk songs and dances which has been created through the centuries; since the establishment of people's power, the great wealth of Albania's folk art, the most varied melodies and dances, have been supported and promoted by the government.

Folk songs are the history of the Albanian people in music and each historical song is an expression of their confidence in victory. These songs, the war cry of the Albanians' forebears, are still alive among the highlanders in the North and in the South. In the North the songs are one-voiced, while in the South a complex structure of polyphony exists, unlike any found in other countries.

Lyrical, love, ritual and allegorical songs constitute the fund of Albanian musical folklore, while wedding songs, both in the North and South, stand out for their joyous lyricism and optimism. The Albanian people sing to pure and sincere love with great depth of feeling.

The Albanians are optimistic people. The great wealth of folklore witnesses that they have always sung their songs in times of peace and war, at marriages and birth celebrations. They never wept for heroes who fell in battles; rather they immortalized them through their rhapsodies. The inclination, creative ability, temperament, endurance, optimism together with many aspects of life, are also reflected in the folk dances, which are without doubt, among the most beautiful and most interesting expressions of Albanian folklore.

Albanian folk dances are numerous and varied but in spite of this there are common elements which emanate from the unity of the Albanian tradition. In the past, men and women would always dance in separate lines whereas today many dances have been created in which men and women dance together and new dances continue to be created.

The inventive spirit of the Albanian people manifests itself in the great variety of folk instruments, from percussion instruments such as the drum and tambourine, to the wind instruments such as the flute and bagpipe and to the stringed instruments such as the 'lahuta' (a one-stringed fiddle used to accompany epic songs) and the 'ciftelia', a kind of long-necked mandolin with two strings used mostly by the Northern Highlanders.

The people's government has made great efforts to preserve and record the traditional music, dance and costumes of the Albanian people. It organizes regular folklore festivals and has published and recorded thousands of traditional verses, prose, proverbs and instrumental music. At the same time it is delving into the roots of harmful and reactionary customs which degraded women and those pertaining to the system of patriarchal life because these have acted to impede the development of society and it is important to smash their idealistic reactionary philosophical basis.

Albanian Literature

Although the Albanian language has been spoken for some 3,000 years, the earliest written document which has come down to us dates from only 1462.

At the start of the 18th century, after the mass conversion to the Islamic religion took place in the country, a whole literary trend began under the influence of Middle Eastern literature and this trend lasted for nearly two centuries. It included poets in whose works there is an obvious stress on social protest and anti-feudalism and who were the precursors of the bourgeois critical realism which developed in Albania during the first 40 years of this century.

The National Renaissance of the 19th century produced a flowering of secular romantic literature, but the writer who dominated Albanian literature in this period was the poet Naim Frasheri. Naim's brother, Sami Frasheri was one of the most outstanding Albanian patriots of the 19th century and also authored numerous political, philosophical, literary and scientific works. His
The great wealth of Albania's folk art has been supported and promoted by the people's government.
book entitled "Albania: What It Was, What It Is, and What It Will Be" (1899) became the manifesto of the national movement and was the cause of his arrest by the Turkish authorities.

Indisputably the greatest figure of Albanian science, literature and art who dominated the period following independence in 1912 was Fan Noli, the leader of the bourgeois democratic revolution in 1924. A state leader, historian, author, musicologist and composer, Fan Noli occupies a particular place among the most eminent figures of the Albanian world. The trend of Albanian bourgeois realism, with strong accents on social revolt, was a predecessor of the Albanian literature of socialist realism.

A new epoch in the development of Albanian literature began with the outbreak of the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War of the Albanian people and with it the historic triumph of the people's revolution which brought the country its national freedom, overthrew the old social order, and paved the way to the construction of socialist society and socialist culture.

The revolutionary literature of the war years which came into being in the clandestine communist press was the expression of the anti-fascist resistance of the Albanian people, an artistic portrayal of the patriotic spirit of the masses, of the people and their aspirations for a new world. These motifs were expressed mainly in war poetry, in the patriotic lyric.

Following liberation, revolutionary literature of the anti-fascist resistance was quickly changed into a literature of a new type, pervaded by socialist ideals and the spirit of communist partisanship. All progressive pre-war writers and artists identified with the process of socialist transformation in the country. In addition, a considerable number of young people emerged at the height of the anti-fascist struggle. In 1945 they got together and founded the Union of Albanian Writers. In 1952, artists also joined them.

The literature of the socialist epoch in Albania constitutes the highest stage of artistic development in Albanian society. This has found expression in the richness of content and motifs, in the flowering of all genres, in the variety of styles and the high level of artistic expression. The ideas of the revolution and progress, the aspirations of the masses of the people, liberated once and for all from any sort of material and spiritual bondage, form the true content of present day Albanian literature. The object of its inspiration is the struggle of the masses of people for the thorough transformation of their life and themselves, for the construction of the new society, and the new man who has become the central hero of this literature. Centering its attention on the future of the people and the revolution, the new literature portrays the masses not as victims of history, but as a vigorous and active force, conscious of their historic mission of the construction of a new world, a new humane society, a new man and woman freed from the shackles of the old world. The historical optimism and confidence in the brilliant communist future which fills the spiritual life of socialist society has been turned into an inherent element of the literature which is being developed in present day Albania.

One of the most active genres in present day Albanian literature is poetry. Albanian poets have devoted their efforts mainly to the lyric-epic poem, in which the motifs of building the new life, the ideas of the historic vitality of the Albanian people and the theme of their resistance, and the historic destiny of the nation and revolution, cast in a vivid metaphoric language and powerful poetic symbolism, have revitalized this genre and opened wide vistas for its rapid development.

The best indication of the development of Albanian literature after national liberation, as well as of the artistic level present-day Albanian literature has reached in prose is its two most widely used forms, the short story and especially the novel. Today the novel has emerged as the leading literary form and a number have been translated and achieved world-wide recognition, for example, Ismail Kadare's "The General of the Dead Army" (1964), and "The Castle" and Dritero Agolli's "The Bronze Bust" (1970).

As an artistic expression of Albanian life, present day Albanian literature has a marked national character and a profoundly socialist content. The development of it testifies to the vitality of socialist realism as a new artistic method which gives wide possibilities for the all
round reflection of life and for the flowering of creative artistic styles and individuality.

Keeping in step with the development of literature are aesthetic thought and literary criticism, which base their analysis of artistic phenomena on Marxist-Leninist methodology. Outstanding in this field is Alfred Uci and his work, "Aesthetics, Life and Art" (1970).

Along with Albania's literary development goes the book -- a companion of every Albanian. It has become an inseparable companion not only to "academics" but also the masses of the people working in factories, plants, agricultural cooperatives, to people in the towns and in the remotest mountainous villages. This has been achieved not only because of the low price of books, and the exceptional increase of their editions in comparison with the past (today more than 800 different titles totalling 8.5 million copies are published each year) but especially because of their content, which responds to the requirements and aspirations of the readers.

Musical Development

Albanian musical art, in the true sense of the word, was born in the mountains together with the flames of the liberation war. To the melodies that came down from the mountains with the partisans, were added the songs of new life, the songs of work and joy. The ranks of composers increased with new talent who wrote not only songs, romances, rhapsodies and ballads, but also oratorios, cantatas and musical tableaux which had never been attempted by Albanian composers prior to this time.

In 1947 the Lyceum of Art was inaugurated in Tirana, which in addition to the branches for the training of middle level music cadres, also includes a branch of ballet. Now with the constant increase in artistic education in Albania there are five secondary schools of art in various districts and seven 8-grade art schools.

The Higher Institute of Art which also includes the Conservatory was opened in Tirana in 1961 and it is here that Albania trains its talented singers, instrumentalists, composers, conductors, musicologists and music teachers.

One of the distinctive features of musical development in socialist Albania is the mass participation in scores of workers clubs and in the houses of culture in cities which, together with some hundreds of cultural centers in the countryside, carry out a wide range of artistic activities. Every year festivals of new songs are organized by the Albanian Radio and Television Service, as well as by the houses of culture and young Pioneer's centers in the districts. Every year the May concerts are organized in the capital, Tirana, as well as national contests of variety theater, bands, workers' ensembles, groups from agricultural cooperatives and especially the regional and national folklore festivals. All these contribute to the very vigorous concert life in Albania.

The Theatre

During the war of national liberation, the partisans set up a number of theatrical groups to present the cause of the anti-fascist struggle to the people. On May 24, 1944, on the eve of liberation, the first professional theatre in the history of Albania was established in the historic town of Permet. Today the country has 8 professional drama companies, 15 variety theater companies and 26 puppet theater companies. In addition, almost every factory, cooperative farm and institution has its own amateur theatrical group, the professional and amateur theaters operating on the basis of mutual help. Although each professional theater company has its own well equipped premises, it must stage at least 40% of its annual performances in the enterprises and villages.

In addition to translations from the treasury of world dramas, from the works of Shakespeare, Moliere, Schiller, Ibsen, Brecht and others, there is now an extensive and growing repertoire of Albanian plays based on the artistic concept of socialist realism -- plays devoted to the struggle of the Albanian people for freedom and independence; themes recreating the times of the heroic resistance of the Albanian people to the invasion of the Ottoman Empire and others evoking the glorious epoch of the national liberation war; plays tackling problems connected with the great social transformations and the popular revolution, the land reform and the great socialist nationalizations or confiscations of property, those which take their subject from the work for the further revolutionization of the whole life of the country. Others which deal with the description of the relations between the individual and the collective occupy an important place.
Additionally, many plays underline the role of the masses in the education and transformation of humanity, of the individual whose existence as such is not negated, but on the contrary is held in high esteem as far as this activity responds to the interests of the collective society. Also treated are the relations and contradictions emerging in the course of daily life and the way is shown as to how to overcome these problems.

With the spirit which animates it, it can be truly said of the Albanian theater that it serves both the political and aesthetic education of the broad working masses.

Cinematography

In May 1947, all cinemas in Albania were made state property and in the same month the first Albanian film, a newsreel of the May Day celebrations, was screened.

The films made during the period after liberation bear the imprint of the new reality of Albanian life, of the march of the country on the road of the construction of the new socialist society. Today the films produced by the "New Albanian" film studio reflect the heroic life of the Albanian people, their rich traditions and customs, their aspirations and desires, the historic reality through which they have passed up to the liberation of the country and through which they are passing at present in the construction of socialism. The heroes of the film have always been ordinary people, workers, peasants, soldiers and intellectuals.

The art of film making has reached a high level and it has become over the years more mature from the ideological and aesthetic point of view. Although the youngest in Europe, the Albanian cinema has managed to present itself with dignity in many film festivals throughout the world and some of the films have been honored with awards, such as "Benny Walks On His Own" (1975) and "Poppies On The Wall" (1976).

The film has become a powerful means of educating and entertaining the masses of working people. From 12 small cinemas functioning before liberation, today the country has about 430 cinemas and portable cinematographic installations showing films every day in towns, work centers, and in the most remote villages of the country.

The Press, Radio and Television

Prior to liberation, 85% of the population of Albania was illiterate and there were only 6 newspapers in the country. The largest of these was published in an edition of only 6,000 copies. Today the country has 25 newspapers which total 47 million copies per year.

Also, with the complete electrification of the country in 1970, every Albanian family can now listen to radio and television programs. Unlike the United States, where radio and television are commercial and are primarily organized to make profits for their owners, mass communications in Albania are designed to educate and uplift the people.

The Figurative Arts

The art of the National Renaissance begins after 1880, in the struggle for national independence and freedom from Turkish rule. It is secular, breaking away from the religious iconography and treats patriotic and ethnographic subjects. The main subject of the art of this period is the figure of Albania's national hero, Gjerxh Kastriot Skanderbeg.

Following liberation in 1944, the new people's state gave great support to the arts, and painting and sculpture flourished. Since 1960 while socialist construction has been advanced in a fierce struggle against the internal and external class enemy, resisting the imperialist-revisionist pressures, art in general has become more profound in its content and artistic expression, and more firmly based on its own national experience. The 15th plenum of the Central Committee of the PLA in 1965 reached the conclusion that the artistic concepts of socialist realism had proven themselves and that they should play an even greater role in the education of the masses. Following this decision, a series of revolutionary actions and movements began, led by the Party. Painting, sculpture and graphic art responded to the directives of the PLA and the revolutionization of the country, reflecting the transformations that were taking place and sharpening their proletarian partisanship. With
the improvement of material conditions, the demands of the masses for art increased. Many important national and individual exhibitions were created and artistic expression was enriched. In all forms of the figurative arts, the defense of the homeland as a theme is extensively treated.

In 1973 the 4th plenum of the Central Committee of the PLA criticized bourgeois and revisionist modern influences. This ideological struggle strengthened the art of socialist realism, encouraged the further development of artistic creativity and deepened its proletarian partisanship and national character.

The forty years of socialist construction in Albania have been years of great and persistent work of the PLA for the creation of a new socialist culture, for socialist education and the cultural and ideological formation of the youth and all the working masses. This process has been carried out together with the constant discovery and reassessment and enrichment of all the progressive qualities of Albania's national culture of the past, of the progressive traditions and customs of the Albanian people. The most important events in the history of the people, the most outstanding personalities of their history and culture, their centuries-old experience expressed in their language, their songs, their dances, their proverbs and their customs, all have been made the object of study and research and have entered the treasury of present socialist culture and the spiritual wealth of the Albanian people. And this, not in any passive manner, as a mere testimony of the past, but in an active manner, as a creativeness which arouses aesthetic pleasure in the readers and spectators even today, assists their patriotic, cultural and artistic education and formation, and inspires the artists and writers in the composition and writing of their new works.

The practice of the cultural revolution in Albania proves that socialist culture cannot make progress and develop without relying on, without critically assessing and adopting the soundest and most progressive elements of the national culture of the past, the popular tradition, while on the other hand this tradition is valued, preserved, enhanced and given new life in the conditions of the socialist cultural revolution.