

Terribilis est locus iste. *Cultural Security of Albania in the Time of Enver Hoxha and Its Implications for Society*

Terribilis est locus iste. *Bezpieczeństwo kulturowe Albanii w czasach Envera Hoxhy i jego implikacje dla społeczeństwa*

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Keywords

cultural security, utopia, anti-utopia, Marxism, Albania

Słowa kluczowe

bezpieczeństwo kulturowe, utopia, antyutopia, marksizm, Albania

Abstrakt

Artykuł stanowi studium indywidualnego przypadku albańskiego marksizmu, uwzględnia jego unikatowość i indywidualność, warunki w jakich powstał i jego implikacje dla codziennej egzystencji społeczeństwa. Analizę społeczno-historyczną przeprowadzono z perspektywy antropologicznej i socjologicznej, dokonując między innymi deskrypcji warunków, jakie stworzył reżim dla życia codziennego mieszkańców Albanii. W artykule uwzględniono również konceptualizację toposu w ujęciu *Discourse Historical Approach*, i jego trzech głównych pojęć: krytyki-władzy-ideologii (*critique-power-ideology*).

Marksistowska utopia, w praktyce przekształciła kraj w miejsce jak z horroru. Dlatego dla określenia ontologiczno-funkcjonalnego wymiaru życia społecznego i politycznego w Albańskiej Republice Ludowej, a od 1976 r. Ludowej Socjalistycznej Republice Albanii użyto metafory *locus terribilis*.

Abstract

The article is a study of an individual case of Albanian Marxism, taking into consideration its uniqueness and individuality, the conditions in which it was created, and its implications for the everyday existence of society. The

socio-historical analysis was carried out from an anthropological and sociological perspective, including a description of the conditions created by the regime for the everyday life of Albanians. The article also takes into consideration the conceptualization of the topos in terms of *Discourse Historical Approach*, and its three main concepts: critique-power-ideology. The Marxist utopia, in practice transformed the country into a place like from a horror movie. That's why the metaphor *locus terribilis* was used to describe the ontological and functional dimension of social and political life in the People's Republic of Albania and since 1976 in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania.

Terribilis est locus iste. Cultural Security of Albania in the Time of Enver Hoxha and Its Implications for Society

Introduction

The starting point of the following study is the thesis that the Marxist utopia designed by Talleyrand from Tirana – Enver Hoxha – in practice transformed the country into a place like from a horror movie. In the methodological aspect, the article is a study of an individual case, taking into consideration the uniqueness and individuality of Albanian Marxism, the conditions in which it was created, and above all, its implications for the everyday existence of society. The socio-historical analysis was carried out from an anthropological and sociological perspective, including a description of the conditions created by the regime for the everyday life of Albanians.

Due to the analytical nature of the narration, a detailed research area was selected, exploring the broadly understood areas of cultural security¹. The justification for such a choice is the specificity of cultural security in a socialist state, the penetration of material, mental, and social dimensions of culture in all areas of life. The ultimate goal was to shape “a new man”; and to change a person, new, figurative cultural patterns must be imposed. The time frame of this narration runs from the announcement of the People’s Republic of Albania in 1944 until the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985.

The metaphor *locus terribilis* was used to describe the ontological and functional dimension of social and political life in the People’s Republic of Albania and since 1976 in the People’s Socialist Republic of Albania. It is no coincidence that this metaphor was included in the title. *Locus amoenus*, in the sense given to it by Ernst Robert Curtius, shows a strong connection with utopia – a vision of a perfect and ideal society. Albanian dictator – Enver Hoxha promised Albanians a utopia in a socialist state².

The article also takes into consideration the conceptualization of the topos in terms of *Discourse Historical Approach*, and its three main concepts:

¹ Three dimensions of cultural security have been taken into consideration here – the material, mental and social dimensions.

² Usually, *locus terribilis* is treated as a simple decorative counterpoint to *locus amoenus*, although paradoxically, it most often exceeds this function. For more on this, see: *Le locus terribilis. Topique et expérience de l’horrible*, ed. J. Muela Ezquerro, Bern 2013, especially: I. Aguilá-Solana, „L’Angleterre” *horridior locus dans la correspondance de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, op. cit., pp. 101-128.

critique-power-ideology³. From the perspective of DHA, mutations of classic *loci* are noticeable: material – like a bunker or prison, and also metaphorical ones: for example, hell, hell circles.

The Socialist Republic of Albania was to be the most just socialist paradise on earth, satisfying the interests of the entire society and creating conditions for unlimited development and prosperity⁴. Elements of communising utopias were already present in antiquity – in the works of Plato, Thomas More, Thomas Campanella, Claude de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and finally Robert Owen. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels created utopia on the ontological plane in the form of dialectical materialism, and on the social plane – historical materialism. It was to realize the ideal of a new man and a new society, binding together the state and law, ideology, and politics. Marxism sought not only to understand the world and the mechanisms of the functioning of reality, but also to change it. Building a socialist state was to be a material step preceding social progress.

Enver Hoxha called for a continuous revolution in society as a driving force in the internal politics of the Socialist Republic of Albania. He introduced revolutionary terror to legitimize and then maintain power, recognizing it as the basic tool of struggle on the way to the creation of a new man and the shaping of a modern society. To avoid the discrepancy between the assumed goals and the achieved results, he announced their implementation with the help of propaganda tools.

By implementing the revolutionary methods of socialist work necessary for the development of Albanian society, in his political rhetoric, Hoxha emphasized the political importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat as early as 1976, pointing to the historical necessity of the class struggle essential to cleanse the society of past influences and systems. In the 22nd volume of works, in the chapter *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Albania Lives, Watches, and Works*⁵, he considered it essential to maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat until the complete victory of communism.

³ DHA is a socio-philosophical orientation that is applicable in social sciences. It allows to understand topoi in terms of a reservoir of generalized notions that are used in everyday, extra-literary use. Some of them definitely have a persuasive character and therefore are used, for example, in propaganda discourses. See: M. Reisigl, R. Wodak, *The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251636976_The_Discourse-Historical_Approach_DHA, (access 10.07.2021)

⁴ L. Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu*, part II. *Rozwój* [Main Currents of Marxism, part II. Development], Warszawa 1989, p. 360.

⁵ S. R. Bowers, *Stalinism in Albania. Domestic Affairs under Enver Hoxha*, "East European Quarterly", XXII, no 4, January 1989, p. 443.

Origins of Utopia

Albanians were part of the Ottoman Empire until the proclamation of an independent state in 1912. Despite its sovereignty, Albania remained in a deep crisis. Attempts at democratization undertaken by Fan Noli failed, and the later rule of Ahmet Zogu turned Albania into a country of poverty and illiteracy. This may have been the key to Enver Hoxha's success and his promise of utopia.

The communist regime came to power in Albania at the end of November 1944. Before the outbreak of the war, communism did not have many supporters in this country. Therefore, in June 1941 the Comintern ordered the leader of the then strongest in the Balkans Communist Party of Yugoslavia to consolidate the activities of communists in Albania. Josip Broz Tito appointed for the Albanian section two communist activists from Kosovo: Miladin Popović and Dusan Mugoša, who founded the Albanian communist party, initially consisting of just over 100 people. In November 1941, the Communist Party of Albania was proclaimed and Enver Hoxha was elected its Secretary General. Less than a year later, the National Liberation Movement was established, which gained the approval of the society thanks to contacts with patriotic circles. In March 1943, Hoxha became the Secretary General again, creating the National Liberation Army, following the Yugoslav model; and then the chairman of the Antifascist Committee of National Liberation. In October 1944, the Antifascist Committee was transformed into the Provisional Democratic Government of Albania⁶. The official abolition of the monarchy and the proclamation of the People's Republic of Albania opened a new period in the history of the state.

On December 2, 1945, parliamentary elections were held for the first time with the participation of Albanian women. They confirmed the domination of the Communist Party of Albania, eliminating political competition accused of "collaboration with the occupier." On March 14, 1946, a constitution was adopted, which implemented the supremacy of the People's Assembly as the legislature and the government as the executive branch, leaving (as it will later turn out – only temporarily) the right to private property, means of production, and a vast package of freedoms and civil liberties hitherto unknown to Albanians.

⁶ A. Koseski, *Enver Hodža. Talleyrand z Tirany [Enver Hoxha. Talleyrand from Tirana]*, [in:] *W bałkańskim tyglu [In the Balkan Crucible]*, Pułtusk 2002, pp.25-29.

From Theory to Practice

The conditions for the creation of an Albanian variant of Marxist political practice arose in the contamination of wartime circumstances and internal contradictions right after the end of World War II; albeit Hoxhaism, critical of the Soviet Union and Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslav policy⁷, was fully formed only in the 1970s, as an implication of the split in the Maoist movement between the Communist Party of China, and the Party of Labour of Albania, of which Hoxha was the first secretary.

The final impulse for the formation of a separate system was the Hoxha's response to the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and, consequently, Albania's withdrawal from the alliance and the assurance that it was possible to pursue socialism in its own way. Hoxha emphasized how important it was for the Albanians to win the Maoists in Latin America, mainly the People's Liberation Army and the Communist Party of Ecuador, or the Revolutionary Communist Party of Brazil.

The Albanian dictator saw communism as a force to destroy capitalism, and Marxism as a creative potential for workers, intelligentsia, women, and youth in the struggle for the triumph of socialism. The fight for a just and dignified life, he claimed, was not a permanent triumphal march, but a long march marked by failures. He emphasized that systemic change throughout the history of the development of societies is not sudden, but of a processual nature. All the more, as he pointed out on the example of France, the replacement of feudal exploitation by capitalist exploitation brought the inevitability of a counterrevolution⁸.

Hoxha sought to gain power through revolution and violence. The Albanian regime, the harshest in the region, was based on two tools: propaganda (more on that later) and fear. This was to be a condition for the political stability of the state. The integrity of power structures was achieved through the use of coercive methods against political rivals. An important step towards systemic independence was the Albanian cultural revolution carried out in 1966-1968, the clearest sign of which was the atheization of the state. The revolution started by Enver Hoxha was to replace the archaic mentality

⁷ E. Hoxha, *Eurocommunism is Anticommunism*, The Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies at the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania, Tirana 1980, http://oktobernet.dk/artikler_marxistisk_bibliotek/enver_hoxha/eurocommunism.htm; (access: 10.07.2021) Hoxha believed that Eurocommunism was a revisionism close to social democracy and even fascism, opposed to revolution, Marxism-Leninism and communism, openly fighting against the working class and socialism, and, as he claimed, it discredited itself in the eyes of the workers themselves.

⁸ Ibidem.

inherited from the ancestors with a socialist mentality, based on materialistic rationality, protected from any foreign influences that could distort the pursuit of the paradise coast of communism⁹. Hoxha played the game not only at the level of state power, he also risked diplomatic relations, ultimately breaking off relations with all allies from the Eastern Bloc¹⁰. The extreme isolation of the state allowed the Sigurimi secret service to take complete control of every aspect of Albanian society¹¹.

Education. *Soft Power* and Cultural Security

Hoxha assigned an important role in the process of shaping the new society to the education process, the fundamental goal of which was to eliminate illiteracy and gain a profession under the program of “civic mobilization”, resulting in forced work in a position indicated by the authorities¹². The reorganization of education began immediately after the proclamation of the People’s Republic of Albania. At that time, new teaching methods were adopted on the basis of redrafted textbooks. This was one way to strengthen the stability of the regime¹³. The implementation of the educational process was based on the provisions of the Education Act of August 1946 and allowed free primary and vocational education, to which the basics of Marxism-Leninism and the history of the national liberation war were introduced. Teachers were required to be politically committed, loyal to the authorities, and steadfast in the struggle to defend the values of socialism. The new educational system was based entirely on communist ideology. The indoctrination included the content of education, textbooks, as well as complementary journals. In September 1949, compulsory education was enforced for all illiterate people aged 12-40. Courses for the illiterate were organized by the educational sections of the people’s authorities. All schools came under the supervision and administration of the state.

⁹ M. Kola, *A short review of the Albanian political culture.*, “Journal of Anatolia and Balkan Studies”, 2019, 2 (3), p. 9.

¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 4-6.

¹¹ J. O’Donell, *Albania’s Sigurimi: The Ultimate Agents of Social Control*, “Problems of Post-Communism”, volume 42, 1995, Issue 6, p. 18-22.

¹² In 1946, the illiteracy rate in Albania was very high, at around 60%, which was largely due to the policy of the Ottoman authorities to eliminate the Albanian language from schools. By the end of the 1980s, illiteracy was completely eliminated.

¹³ See more on this topic: J. Sota, *Educational phenomena in Albania in the years of communist dictatorship and the reformation efforts after nineties*, “Journal of Educational and Social Research”, vol.2, no.2 (2012), pp. 31-46.

In 1957, the Enver Hoxha University in Tirana was established. Although Albania deviated from Soviet principles and patterns after 1960, the integrated school system continued to combine elements of ideological, political, moral, military, and physical education. The politicization was particularly evident in the social sciences, developed on the methodological foundation of Marxism, and used in practice to improve the living conditions of Albanians. Education served ideology and pragmatics.

Enver Hoxha attributed a revolutionary role to the literature, which was to pursue the ideological goals of the party, reflecting important political and cultural events in the state. As an educated person, fluent in French, he did not suggest that Albanians should withdraw foreign literatures, but rather a specific type of reading, taking into account cultural and, above all, socio-political differences¹⁴. An example of politically engaged literature is the prose of Ismail Kadare, the greatest Albanian writer, an apologist for Enver Hoxha, and his hometown Gjirokastra¹⁵.

During the cultural revolution, efforts to consolidate political and ideological orthodoxy were intensified. Teaching work was of great importance¹⁶. Although the revolution officially ended in 1969, its achievements were felt strongly throughout the decade of the 1970s, and some aspects of it survived until the death of Enver Hoxha. There was a common belief that the school should function and develop in the service of the revolution, it must focus on comprehensive development, considering the intellectual capabilities and mental needs of workers and peasants. Ramiz Alia, Hoxha's chief ideological adviser, advocated a Beijing-style educational paradigm based on a three-vector approach to all levels of education: teaching, productive work,

¹⁴ Enver Hoxha came from a wealthy family that appreciated "European" education. As a graduate of the high school in Korçë with French as the language of lecture, in 1930 he leaves to study in Montpellier, where he makes first contacts with the communist movement and makes his debut in "L'Humanité" as a journalist, and then goes to Brussels, where he studies at the law faculty. A. Koseski, *Enver Hodža. Talleyrand z Tirany* [Enver Hoxha. Talleyrand from Tirana], [in:] *W bałkańskim tygłu* [In the Balkan Crucible], Pułtusk 2002, p. 26. See also an extensive biography of the dictator: B. Fevziu, *Enver Hoxha. The Iron Fost of Albania*, 2017.

¹⁵ In 1990, Ismail Kadare chose voluntary emigration and, declaring himself a dissident, left for Paris. See: R. Bowers, *Stalinism in Albania. Domestic Affairs under Enver Hoxha*, "East European Quarterly", XXII, no 4, January 1989, pp. 447-448. See also: I. Erkoçi, *Ismail Kadare as tourist attraction*, "Dosalgraves.AMultidisciplinary e-Journal", November 2016, <http://www.dosalgarves.com/rev/N28/1rev28.pdf> (access: 10.07.2021)

¹⁶ B. Williams, *Two Degrees of Separation: Khanfise Keko and the Albanian Children's Film*, "Framework. The Journal of Cinema and Media", April 2013, p. 43.

and physical and military exercise¹⁷. Enver Hoxha believed that education and culture should all become the property of the people and reach the most isolated places, especially those previously affected by illiteracy and backwardness. They were to be a powerful weapon in the fight for the triumph of the ideals of communism. He proudly emphasized that for the first time in centuries-old history, Albanians had their own national opera, theater and cinema. The saturation of culture with socialist and revolutionary content was also supposed to protect citizens from foreign influences¹⁸.

Under the new historical policy, the settlement with the past was implemented. The broad semantic scope of the term *kriminel luftë* (translated as “war criminal”, but also a collaborator) enabled the justified use of the repression apparatus. Historical policy pursued primarily utilitarian goals. The protection of cultural heritage has also entered into historical policy.

We should remember about the special geocultural position of Albania – at the “crossroads”; but nevertheless the Albanian culture was strong enough to resist assimilation and preserve its identity¹⁹. Albanian society was based on a multigenerational family with a strong hierarchy and patriarchy dominance. The rules of conduct were determined by *kanun* – an ancient code of common law defining the Albanian national character and cultural identity of the Albanians. Observing it helped the Albanians to remain separate from foreign influences.

After the proclamation of the Socialist Republic of Albania, cultural policy became a propaganda tool and served to legitimize the communist rule. Pursuant to the Decree No. 568 of March 17, 1948 on the protection of cultural monuments and unique specimens of nature, the entire cultural heritage was nationalized, including, under Act No. 609 of May 24, 1948, monuments under special legal protection²⁰, and by Regulation of the Council of Ministers No. 130 of April 9, 1955 on the measures for the protection of cultural monuments, the object and forms of their protection were specified²¹.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p.44.

¹⁸ E. Hoxha, *The Struggle to Build Socialism – Another Heroic Epic of Our People*, [in:] E. Hoxha, *Speeches and Articles 1963–1964*, Tirana 1977, pp. 348–349.

¹⁹ A. Cara, M. Margjeka, *Kanun of Lëke Dukagjini Customary Law of Northern Albania*, “European Scientific Journal”, October 2015, vol.11, no 28, p. 177.

²⁰ J. Opaska, *Historia i współczesność ochrony zabytków w Albanii [History and the Present Protection of Historical Monuments in Albania]*, “Ochrona Zabytków”, tom 67, no. 2 (265), 2014, pp. 73–107.

²¹ Initially, the authority for the protection of monuments was the Rector of the University of Tirana, and the university was to provide a scientific and methodological base. With time, its place was taken over by specially created state institutions. The control of the regulations was entrusted to the people’s councils of cities, communes, oblasts and districts. All activities in the field of transport, exhibition and research

All these tasks were carried out, as it was emphasized, out of the necessity to provide state protection to significant cultural and artistic values. In 1963, by the decision of the Rector of the University of Tirana, the complexes of furnishings in the family home of Enver Hoxha in Gjirokastra were recognized as cultural monuments and protected objects²². Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 4874 of 23 September 1971 ensured the protection of these places as strategic in the scientific, historical, and cultural sense, and important in the revolutionary and aesthetic education of the working masses²³. Modern urbanization projects also served political and ideological purposes – socialist realist architecture of housing estates and public places, extensive city squares and forums for rallies and demonstrations. Enver Hoxha's fears of a military attack led to the construction of several hundred thousand bunkers and fortifications. As early as December 1960, Albania ratified the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The project of universal fortification of the country became one of the assumptions modeled on the Maoist Albanian cultural revolution of 1966–68. The cultural revolution marked a radical shift in Albanian cultural policy and significantly damaged the foundations of the cultural security of the Albanians. Elements of the “old” identity, defined as “holdovers of common law”, mainly the norms of The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini, Skanderbeg and Laberia – superior to state law and other legal systems – were uprooted from society by force²⁴.

On the Way to an Atheistic Utopia

Immediately after the proclamation of the socialist state, the lack of financial resources made it impossible to rebuild the country from the devastation of the war. Meanwhile, the success of the new government could only be consolidated by satisfying the country's fundamental budgetary needs. For this purpose, there was a justifiable confiscation of goods belonging to those considered enemies of the socialist homeland. To ensure economic security in the state of people's democracy, a drastic fiscal and monetary policy was launched, strategic sectors of industry were nationalized, agriculture was

were supervised by the minister in charge of culture. The newly established Institute of Cultural Monuments took over the previous competences of the university.

²² J. Opaska, *Historia i współczesność...* [*History and the Present...*], op. cit., p. 78.

²³ Ibidem, p. 82.

²⁴ A. Cara, M. Margjeka, *Kanun of Leke Dukagjini Customary Law of Northern Albania...*, op. cit., pp. 174–176. On the rebirth of Kanun see also: S. Voell, *The Kanun in the City. Albanian Customary Law As a Habitus and Its Persistence in the Suburb of Tirana*. Bathore, “Anthropos” 2003, vol. 98, part 1, pp. 85–101.

collectivized, and the economy was completely socialized. No other country in Central and Eastern Europe has carried out such a radical socialization of property and has led to such complete economic isolation as Albania²⁵.

The process of shaping the socialist economy, initiated in 1944, hit religious communities from the very beginning, therefore the beginning of the atheization of the state can be dated from that period. In August 1945, an agrarian reform was carried out which nationalized most of the real estate and land belonging to religious institutions. In December 1945, the first mass arrests of clergymen, who were considered particularly dangerous due to their international contacts, and ordinary believers, who were seen as enemies of communist ideology, began. Criminal trials were conducted by military courts. In March 1946, seven believers were executed²⁶.

Hoxha repeated after Marx that religion is the opium of the people. He argued that all religions had been imported into Albania by foreigners and have served exploitation. From socialist organizations, especially youth organizations, he expected comprehensive measures to atheize society – from indoctrination to transforming sacred buildings into public utility facilities, for example, into auditoriums or sports facilities.

Drastic sanctions affected members of the religious communities themselves, who were considered enemies of the socialist state and, under reeducation through labor, were placed in penal camps and subjected to strict discipline. The most famous site was the Spaç camp in the mountain region, about 100 km from Tirana, where prisoners worked in nearby mines in extreme temperatures. Historian Gjergj Marku compared this Albanian gulag with Dante's hell circles. The bodies of many prisoners have never been found. It is believed that they remained in or near the mine²⁷. Repressions affected not only the clergy themselves. Also their closest family members were subjected to surveillance by the Sigurimi secret police.

Catholic priest Ernest Simoni Troshani was arrested in front of his elderly parents on Christmas Eve 1963 for allegedly anti-communist agitation, propaganda and demoralization of young people. He was urged to accept fabricated charges and spent 18 years in the Spaç political prison in the north, working in the nearby copper and pyrite mines. After serving 20 years in prison, in 1964 another Catholic clergyman, Shtjefën Kurti, was assigned to work in agriculture, where he was followed by 16 state security agents. How-

²⁵ K. Gërxfhani, A. Schram, *Albanian political-economics: Consequences of a clan culture*, "LICOS. Discussion Paper," No. 92, 2000, p. 2.

²⁶ V. Bezati, *How Albania Became the World's First Atheist Country*, August 20, 2019, "Balkan Transitional Justice", <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/08/28/how-albania-became-the-worlds-first-atheist-country/> (access: 10.07.2021)

²⁷ Ibidem.

ever, he did not stop his priestly ministry, especially children's baptism. In 1970, at the age of 72, he was arrested and charged with espionage, sabotage, and clandestine religious ceremonies. The family found out about his execution that took place in September 1971 at the beginning of March 1973, thanks to a news broadcast by an Italian radio station. The place of the body remains unknown to this day²⁸. Muslim cleric Hafiz Sabri Koçi was imprisoned for 20 years after a speech considered anti-communist. Qaramet Koçi, the son of a prisoner, did not see his father throughout his childhood and adolescence. Another Muslim cleric, Hafiz Ali Kraj, also spent 20 years in prison after giving a speech on the consequences of communism for religion and the Albanian people. The clergyman's son, Mehdi, suffered the consequences of his father's activities, enduring numerous harassments and humiliations at school, treated by the teachers as a revisionist and an enemy of the people.

In 1967, Albania became a proclaimed atheist state. After Enver Hoxha's speech on February 6, 1967, the official campaign against "religious ideology" intensified. The speech was sanctioned by an official letter from the Central Committee of the Party of Labour that was to take over the leadership of the campaign. The Decree of November 22, 1967, prohibited the practice of all religions. The doctrine of state communism was implemented and any religious activity was declared a crime. The Party of Labour of Albania fought against all, even the smallest, manifestations of religiosity. All material possessions were taken from the churches and religious communities. The officially introduced atheism intensified the campaign of liquidating places of religious worship, destroying them or transforming them for utility purposes. Many sacred objects, destroyed as a result of atheistic politics, constituted a significant part of the cultural heritage and cultural identity of the Albanians. Clergymen were forced to deny their "ideological" past and seek employment in the agricultural sector or industry. The Albanian press wrote about priests who abandoned their cassocks to devote themselves to work for the people²⁹. The literary monthly "Nëndori" proudly emphasized that Albanian youth were building "the first atheistic nation in the world". The Penal Code of 1977 in art. 55 included a separate category of religious offenses. The security apparatus exercised control over the ban on religious practices. In addition to the most severe, penalties were also imposed on rehabilitation through work and in-depth reeducation to return to the right ideological path. In the public sphere, the celebrations of religious holidays

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ P. Maciejewski. *Religia albańskości [Religion of Albanianness]*, "Znak.Miesięcznik", May 2008.

were replaced with industry, agricultural, and anniversary holidays. Political rhetoric, reinforced by intense media propaganda, was to justify any attacks on sacred buildings and places of religious worship. More than 2,000 religious institutions, mosques, Orthodox churches, Catholic, Ottoman, and Sufi places of worship have been closed.

When the Party of Labour declared Albania the first completely atheistic country in the world in 1976, an absolute prohibition of religious practice was introduced into the constitution and penalties for participation in religious ceremonies and for possession of sacred books and other religious objects were tightened. Article 37 of the Albanian constitution stipulated that the state did not recognize any religion, programmatically supporting atheism and the materialistic scientific worldview, while Article 55 prohibited any organizations of a religious nature or promoting a religious worldview.

A simplified procedure of the lawsuit was used – without evidence and by the prosecution of false witnesses. Clerics were accused of fascist sympathies and anti-state activities. In the 1970s, possession of a Bible was punishable by twelve years in prison and eight years for trying to baptize a child³⁰.

Hoxhism was becoming a new, desirable religion that was “converted” by force³¹. On November 5, 2016, 38 Catholics murdered by the regime were beatified in the cathedral in Shkodër, which was used as a sports hall during Enver Hoxha’s time³².

Visual Message – The Power of Propaganda

The strength of all communist regimes was the excellently developed propaganda system. Visual communication, including film, was often used. The artists served the ideology created within the framework of cultural policy. Albanian propaganda movies slandered the clergy, showing their backwardness, implying a negative, regressive influence on the development of a modern, open society. The clerics were also portrayed as Western agents or armed terrorists seeking a political revolution. The film studio Nova Albania (*Kinostudio Shqipëria e Re*) played a special role, producing several significant antireligious propaganda movies, such as *Liri a vdekje* (*Freedom or*

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ V. Bezati, *How Albania Became the World’s First Atheist Country*, op. cit.

³² *Albanian Catholics killed under Hoxha beatified*, 05.11.2016, <https://www.dw.com/en/albanian-catholics-killed-under-hoxha-beatified/a-36277085>; see also: M. Zorita, *Albania: po beatyfikacji 38 męczenników* [*Albania: After the Beatification of 38 Martyrs*], trans. M. Sadowski, official website: *Pomoc Kościołowi w Potrzebie* [*Help for the Church in Need*], https://pkwp.org/newsy/albania_po_beatyfikacji_38_meczennikow (access: 10.07.2021)

Death) and *Te vdesesh ne kemb* (*To Die on One's Feet*). In these movies, clergy was accused of organizing forced marriages, corruption, attempts to overthrow the government, seeking support from political enemies, and betraying socialist ideals. At this point, it is worth mentioning the first woman in the history of Albanian cinema in the times of Enver Hoxha – the director of Xhanfise Keko, from 1952 associated with *Kinostudio Shqiperia e Re*, working mainly for children's audiences, but also specializing in documentary movies. Honored in 1964 with the title of *Artist I Popullit* (Artist of the People), Keko directed a series of movies about “children's spies” in the years 1977–1980, fulfilling the postulates of a close relationship between cinema and ideology, while meeting the expectations of children in the state where film art was subjected to strict control³³. Keko's movies such as *Tomka dhe shokët e tij* (*Tomka and His Friends*) from 1977, *Pas gjurmëve* (*On the Tracks*) from 1978, and *Partizani i vogël Velo* (*Velo, the Little Partisan*) from 1980³⁴ reflect the educational program of the Albanian cultural revolution. *Velo, the Little Partisan* tells the story of a young boy's desire to become a partisan and avenge the death of his father murdered by Italian fascists. To qualify for partisan, a boy must be twice as tall as his rifle. To do this, Velo spies on a fascist camp, finds a soldier with the appropriate weapon, kills him, and steals a pistol. The movie is an apology of the “little spy” and his participation in anti-fascist activities³⁵.

Albanian cinema played the greatest role in spreading the ideology in the 1970s, when the tradition of two screenings per week was initiated. Propaganda movies were also broadcast on the Albanian state-run TV station. They showed imaginary enemies, individual and group, created an illusion of reality in accordance with Hoxha's message that real art is shaped by revolutionary artists, creating heroes distinguished by spiritual strength and moral purity, ready to sacrifice and devoted to the party, people and socialism.

Escape from Utopia

The emigration is known in the history and collective memory of Albania as *kurbet*. The first mass migrations of Albanians occurred during the conquest by the Ottoman Empire and were related to the wave of persecution, although Albanians also migrated for economic reasons. Later migrations were also caused by the fear of bloodshed at the turn of the 20th century, during the Balkan Wars and then two world wars. After the communists came to power,

³³ B. Williams, *Two Degrees of Separation: Xhanfise Keko and the Albanian Children's Film*, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁴ Ibidem, pp. 40–41.

³⁵ Ibidem, pp. 53–54.

leaving the state without permission was forbidden and all attempts were severely punished, as a result of which few citizens managed to leave the country. Internal migrations were also forbidden, any changes of the place of stay were possible only within the framework of a centrally planned economy. Albania remained closed to outsiders, and only a few academics, students, and members of communist parties with whom diplomatic relations were maintained were granted the right of residence. As early as 1946, the government adopted a new citizenship law. Under it, citizenship was acquired by descent, birth in Albania, naturalization, and international treaties. The regulations made it easier for people of Albanian ethnic and cultural origin to obtain it. The government has also launched procedures for the loss of citizenship by potential enemies of Albania's national interests, including citizens living and staying abroad without consent. Another decree of 1954 gave the Presidium of the People's Assembly greater powers in this area of granting and withdrawing citizenship. During this period, almost everyone who managed to illegally leave Albania obtained refugee status in the countries of settlement³⁶.

Conclusions

Until the end of the 1970s, the mythologization of the creator of socialist Albania was one of the main elements of information policy. He was assigned the role of a liberator, the implementer of the Idea of the Great Reconstruction, a statesman capable of independent defense of the state against internal and external threats. The Hoxha's cult acquired special significance after the suicide of Mehmet Shehu in 1981³⁷.

Enver Hoxha ruled Albania until his death in 1985. A pyramid-shaped mausoleum was built for him in the very center of Tirana. It was a figurative sign of the "long duration" of the dictatorial regime. People were afraid to talk about the past times of communist rule, in which, starting in 1944, more than 10,000 Albanians were killed and more than 40,000 were sent to prisons and labor camps. The dictatorship, isolated from both the West and the Eastern Bloc, shaped the unlimited intervention of the state in all areas of political, social, and cultural life. The use of force, justified by the need to ensure safety, left people with fear and silence for a long time. Society, forced to play the role of passive observers, subordinated to the directives of the ruling power elites, in a state where state institutions determined the political culture, slowly regained faith in civic activity in the public and political

³⁶ J. Vullnetari, *Albania*, "Country Profile", No. 26, April 2013.

³⁷ See: T. Czekalski, *Albania po śmierci Envera Hodży. Destrukcyj systemu komunistycznego* [Albania After the Death of Enver Hoxha. Destruction of the Communist System], Polska Akademia Umiejętności, „Prace Komisji Środkowoeuropejskiej”, Vol. XXI.

spheres³⁸. It was only facilitated by the deep transformation processes that covered all spheres of life in the 1990s³⁹.

When Enver Hoxha's successor Ramiz Alia dismissed political prisoners in early 1991, the inhabitants of nearby villages tried to cover up the material traces of Albanian gulags. However, they remained in the minds of the Albanians as a deep trauma, as did the bunkers, which were a material confirmation of Hoxha's security policy⁴⁰. The revitalization of urban public spaces, including the transformation of gray buildings and housing structures, formerly adapted to a defensive function, designed by Edi Rama, former mayor of Tirana, minister of culture, youth and sport, head of the Albanian government from 2013, was to be a symbolic beginning of a new order and the end of the communist regime of Hoxha⁴¹.

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³⁸ O. Malltezi, *Political Culture in Post-Communist Countries. Albanian Case*, "International Journal of Management Science and Business Administration", volume 2, issue 1, December 2015, pp. 40-49.

³⁹ Ibidem. See also: M. Pajo, *The features of political culture in postcommunist Albania*, <https://dspace.aab-edu.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/1144/07.%20The%20features%20of%20political%20culture%20in%20post-communist%20Albania%20-%20Matilda%20Pajo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (access 05.06.2021)

⁴⁰ F. Lubonja, *Albania - wolność zagrożona. Wybór publicystyki z lat 1991-2002 [Albania - Freedom in Danger. A selection of Journalism from 1991-2002]*, Sejny 2005, p. 8.

⁴¹ P. Kern, *A Cultural Strategy for Albania. Implanting the Cultural Bug*, March 2018, pp. 5-6, <https://rm.coe.int/a-cultural-strategy-for-albania-implanting-the-cultural-bug/1680794665> (access: 10.07.2021)

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